

CHAPTER NINE

1 TABERNACLE

2 UNBELIEF

3 JUDGES, KINGS AND PROPHETS

1 THE TABERNACLE

At Mount Sinai, the *LORD* revealed the impossibility of following rules to restore the broken friendship with God. Now the people were ready to learn God's way to acceptance.

Then the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, "...let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Exodus 25:1,8 NKJV

The Israelites were to build a sanctuary,* a sacred place called the *Tabernacle* or the *tent of meeting*. God was not asking them to do this because he needed a house.

*Not to be confused with a church. They are unrelated.

The God who made the world and everything in it, who is Lord of heaven and earth, does not live in temples built by hands.

Acts 17:24 NET

Rather, the *LORD* was creating an elaborate visual aid to help explain what it would take to remove the sin-penalty.

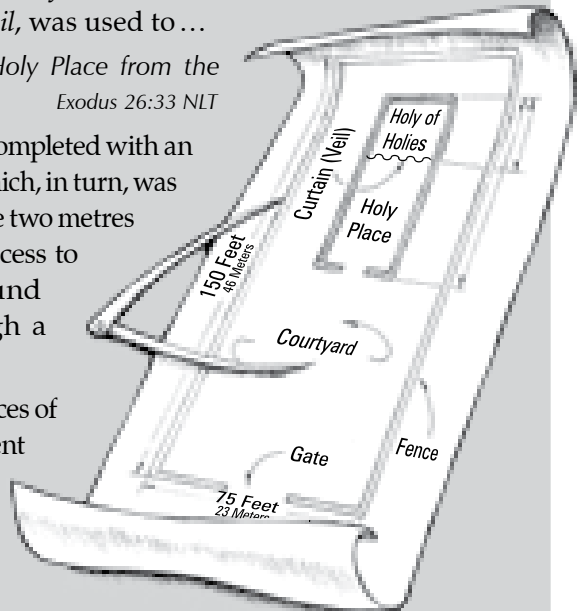
"You must make this Tabernacle and its furnishings exactly according to the plans I will show you." Exodus 25:9 NLT

The Tabernacle could be disassembled and moved. The tent-like portion had solid walls with rug-like coverings for the roof. It was divided into two parts: one-third forming a room called the *Holy of Holies* or the *Most Holy Place*, and the other two-thirds forming the *Holy Place*. A heavy curtain, sometimes referred to as the *veil*, was used to ...

...separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Exodus 26:33 NLT

The Tabernacle was completed with an external courtyard which, in turn, was surrounded by a fence two metres (7 feet) in height. Access to the entire compound was gained through a single gate.

There were seven pieces of furniture inside the tent and outside in the courtyard.¹



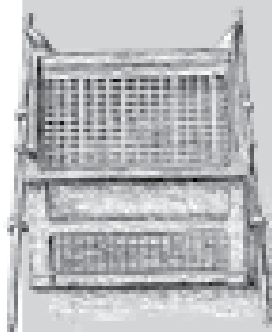
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THE COURTYARD

❶ THE BRONZE ALTAR:

Just inside the courtyard gate was the first piece of furniture. It was quite large, made of wood overlaid with bronze, having four horns on the corners, and long poles on each side so that it could be carried.



❷ THE BASIN:

This large bronze bowl was situated halfway between the Bronze Altar and The Holy Place. Filled with water, it was used for ceremonial washing, and signified that man must be pure when he approached God.



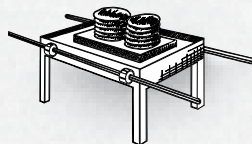
❸ THE LAMPSTAND:

The size of the lampstand was not defined by God, but we know its shape. It had a main shaft branching into seven arms. The fact that it was made of pure gold undoubtedly limited its size.



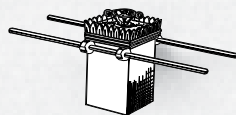
❹ THE TABLE WITH THE BREAD:

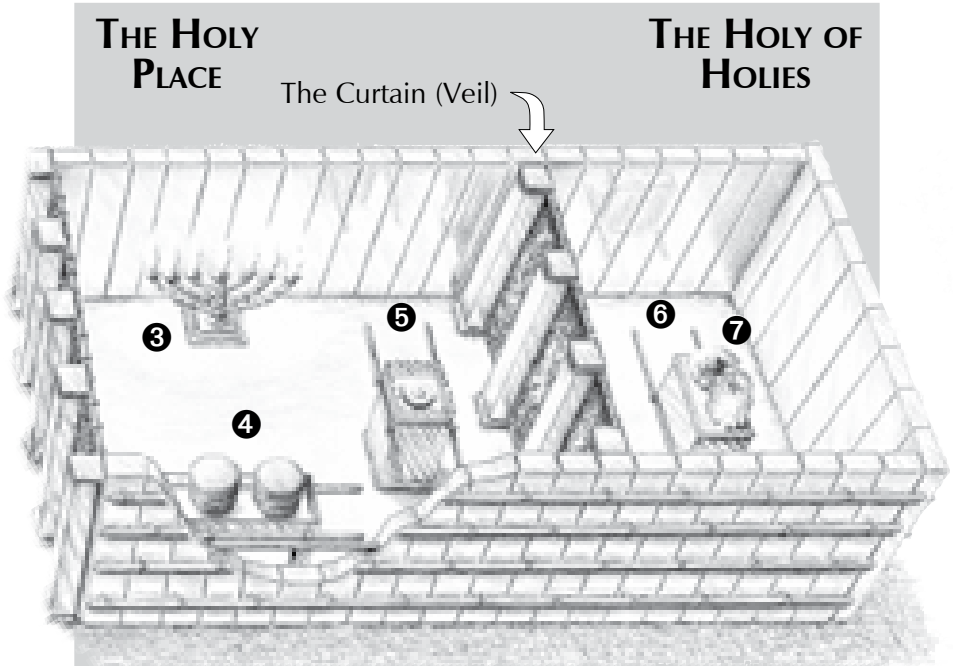
On this special table were placed twelve loaves of bread, each representing one of the tribes of Israel.



❺ THE ALTAR OF INCENSE:

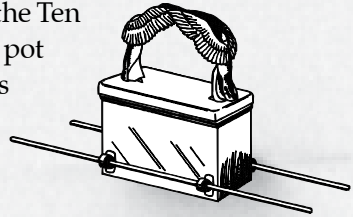
This altar was placed squarely before the curtain that divided *The Holy of Holies* from *The Holy Place*. Incense was offered on it as the Israelites gathered outside to pray. The scent wafting toward the sky was symbolic of prayers going up to God.





⑥ THE ARK OF THE COVENANT:

This small wooden box overlaid with pure gold was designed in part to function as a chest. A couple of the objects it held are already familiar to us—the tablets with the Ten Commandments written on them and a pot containing a sample of the bread God was providing for them in the desert.



⑦ THE ATONEMENT COVER:

The Ark of the Covenant had an intricate gold lid or cover comprised of two angels with outstretched wings. The Ark and its Atonement Cover were the only pieces of furniture placed in the Holy of Holies. God said ...

"There, above the [atonement] cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites." Exodus 25:22 NIV

THE PRIESTS

“Now take Aaron your brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister to Me as priest...”

Exodus 28:1 NKJV

God asked Moses to appoint Aaron and his sons as *priests* in the Tabernacle with Aaron appointed as the *High Priest*. God set these men apart from the others, not because they were special in themselves, but because the LORD wanted the people to respect His holiness. God didn't want an unorganized rabble taking care of the Tabernacle. The priests were specially trained to perform God's instructions and they functioned as custodians, taking care of the Tabernacle as the nomadic Israelites moved from one place to another.

THE TABERNACLE COMPLETED

The entire structure was finished nine months after the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai.

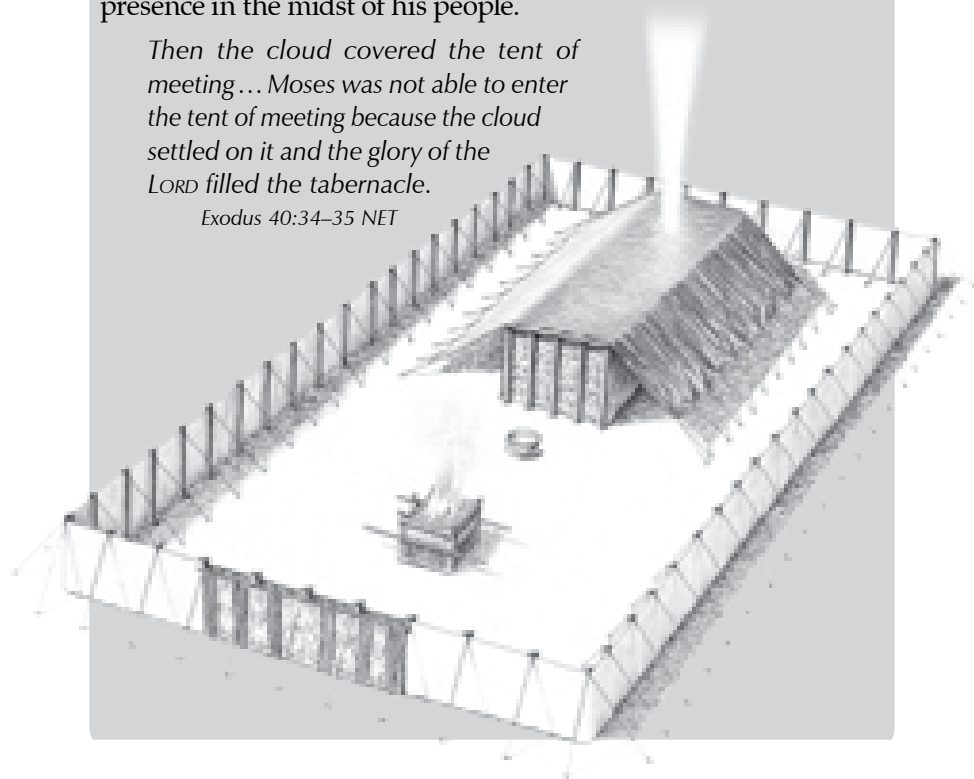
Then Moses looked over all the work, and indeed they had done it; as the LORD had commanded...

Exodus 39:43 NKJV

With the Tabernacle completed, the cloud that led the Israelites moved into position above the Holy of Holies. It signified God's presence in the midst of his people.

Then the cloud covered the tent of meeting... Moses was not able to enter the tent of meeting because the cloud settled on it and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.

Exodus 40:34–35 NET



THE VISUAL AID IMPLEMENTED

With the Tabernacle in place, it was time to implement this large visual aid. God said to Moses ...

“Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘When any of you brings an offering to the LORD, bring as your offering an animal from either the herd or the flock...’”
Leviticus 1:2 NIV

God was telling man to bring a sacrifice to the Tabernacle.

It had to be *“... from the herd...”*
Leviticus 1:3 ESV

It could be a sheep, goat or bullock, but it could not be any other animal such as a pig, horse or camel.

They were to *“... offer a male...”*
Leviticus 1:3 ESV

It was to be *“... without defect...”*
Leviticus 1:3 ESV

There could be no disease nor lameness.

“... He shall bring it to the entrance of the tent of meeting, that he may be accepted before the LORD.”
Leviticus 1:3 ESV

The sacrifice was to be offered just inside the door of the courtyard on the Bronze Altar. In addition to acknowledging oneself as a helpless sinner, this was the first step in approaching God. The individual bringing it was ...

“... to lay his hand on the head of the burnt offering, and it [would] be accepted on his behalf to make atonement for him ...”
Leviticus 1:4 NIV



In placing his hand on the head of the offering, the man identified himself with the sacrifice. The hand on the head symbolized the individual's sin and guilt being moved from the man onto the animal. Because the animal now carried the man's sin, it had to die. *Death is the penalty for sin.* The one offering the sacrifice slit its throat, a final acknowledgment that it was *his* sin that caused the death of the animal. It was a case of *the innocent dying in the place of the guilty*—as a substitute. The Bible says that God accepted the sacrifice on his behalf.

This must have sounded very familiar to the Israelites. Had not their forefathers come to God offering sacrifices? Indeed they had.

A RIGHTEOUS SAVIOUR

Once again, the LORD was reminding his people that the only way to acceptance was to believe that he is ...

... *A righteous God and a Savior ...* *Isaiah 45:21 NASB*

In offering the animal sacrifice, the people were giving outward evidence of an inner trust in God—it showed they believed the LORD. Because death is the penalty for sin, the sacrifice pictured what was necessary for sin to be forgiven.

... *without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.*
Hebrews 9:22 NET

“For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one’s life.” *Leviticus 17:11 NIV*

When God saw the death of the animal, he was satisfied that the requirement of *the law of sin and death* had been justly met—there had been a *death payment* for sin. God would not hold man's sin-debt against him; man would not be judged; the eternal consequences would no longer apply. Instead, the LORD would honour the person's trust in him and credit righteousness to his account, just as he had to Abraham.

“Abraham believed God, and it was credited to him as righteousness.”
Romans 4:3 NET

Because that righteousness was coming from God, it fully provided man with the perfection needed to live in God's presence.

There was nothing new about this at all. It was the way that Abel, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and all the other righteous men down through the ages had come to God.



DEBTOR

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

In fulfilling their duties, the priests had complete freedom within the Tabernacle compound, with one exception. They were absolutely forbidden to enter the Holy of Holies.

The Holy of Holies was where God's presence symbolically lived with man. Sinful man wasn't even to peek into the room. The curtain that hung between the two rooms was thick, shielding all from an inquisitive eye. It protected the most sacred of all places. Even Aaron, as High Priest, was not to enter the Holy of Holies except on the Day of Atonement.²

But only the high priest enters once a year into the inner tent, and not without blood that he offers for himself and for the sins of the people committed in ignorance. Hebrews 9:7 NET

Any violation of this instruction would result in his death.

The LORD said to Moses: "Tell your brother Aaron not to come whenever he chooses into the Most Holy Place behind the curtain in front of the atonement cover on the ark, or else he will die, because I appear in the cloud over the atonement cover."

Leviticus 16:2 NIV

The Day of Atonement offering was a yearly ceremony, a constant reminder of man's need to have his sin hidden from the eyes of a holy God. This ceremony was repeated each year because, although God did not hold man's sin against him, the blood of animals did not remove the sin-debt. The blood was only a temporary covering.

The Tabernacle, the furniture, the priests, the sacrifices, the Day of Atonement—all were part of God's elaborate visual aid. These *visuals* helped to explain what the LORD was planning to do for mankind.

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2 UNBELIEF

The Israelites were learning more and more about the LORD. God was faithfully providing them with food and water. The Bible tells us that God even made their shoes especially durable—they didn't wear out. The Israelites now had a moral code by which to live. Although observing the Ten Commandments did not result in acceptance with God, it did provide a standard of right living that united the nation. They knew what was right, and what was wrong. God had also shown his love by providing a way to be accepted—by

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faith—as evidenced through the blood sacrifice. You would think the Israelites would have been eternally grateful for all that the LORD was doing for them. If they were grateful, their outward actions didn't demonstrate it. They began to grumble—again.

In case we should take a self-righteous attitude and think that it was only the Israelites who were hardheaded, we must remember that we are made out of the same flesh and blood.

In a very real sense, the Israelites were functioning as representatives of the entire human race. As such they were becoming much better acquainted with God each year, but the knowledge they gained also brought additional responsibility. The Bible says ...

From everyone who has been given much, much will be required, and from the one who has been entrusted with much, even more will be asked.

Luke 12:48 NET

Collectively, the Israelites now knew more about God than any other nation on earth.

Then they traveled from Mount Hor by the road to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom, but the people became impatient along the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses, "Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness, for there is no bread or water, and we detest this worthless food."

Numbers 21:4,5 NET

These accusations were not true—God, the Great Provider, was meeting their needs. But instead of thanking the LORD for his daily care, they accused him of neglect. They ignored God's Law, telling lies and dishonouring his name.

As we have seen before, to break a law has consequences. Just as defying God's law of gravity results in fractured bones, so violating God's Moral Law has ramifications.

In the past, God had repeatedly *overlooked their sin—he had been gracious. But the Israelites were no longer beginners in their relationship with their Creator-Owner. They had learned many things about God. They now knew the

* God only overlooks sin for a period of time. He does judge all sin. Compare Acts 17:30

Ten Commandments and that knowledge made them accountable. God could not condone the people's sin and say, "*Oh forget it. We'll pretend it never happened.*" No, sin has its consequences. It always does.

... the LORD sent poisonous snakes among the people, and many were bitten and died.

Numbers 21:6 NLT

From the very beginning, God had said that sin would lead to death—physical, relational and eternal. Now that truth was graphically illustrated as many died.

The Israelites were desperate and realized that only God could save them from his punishment. They were helpless.

Then the people came to Moses and said, “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the LORD and against you. Pray to the LORD that he would take away the snakes from us.” Numbers 21:7 NET

God’s purpose in judgment is to bring about a change of attitude—a change of mind. In the Bible, this change is described by the word *repent*. Only during this life on earth can people repent and be heard by God. After physical death, when the sinner is facing judgment in the Lake of Fire, it is too late to have a *change of mind*.

The Israelites recognized that they had sinned, so they repented and asked God to deliver them. They were trusting God again.

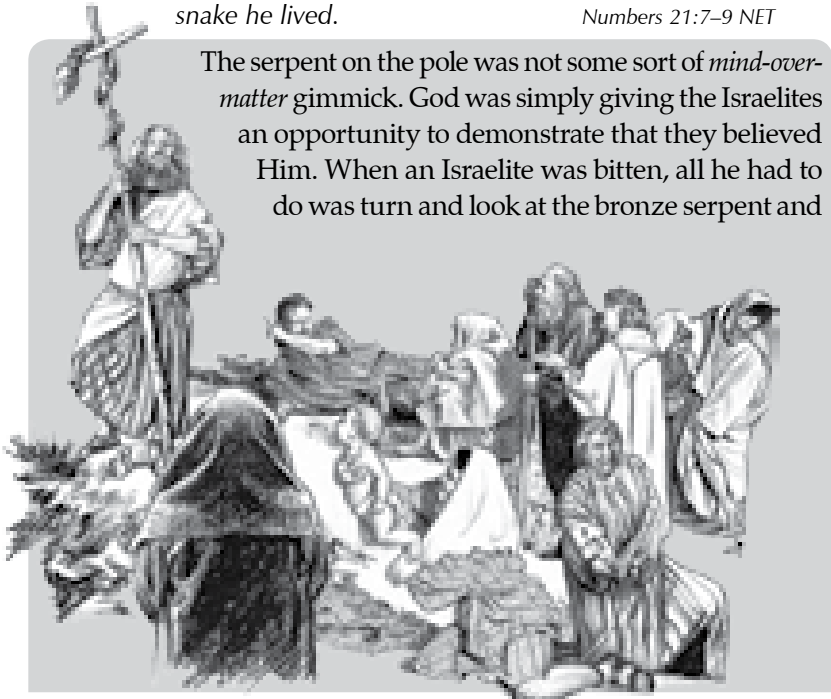
So Moses prayed for the people.

The LORD said to Moses, “Make a poisonous snake and set it on a pole. When anyone who is bitten looks at it, he will live.”

So Moses made a bronze snake and put it on a pole, so that if a snake had bitten someone, when he looked at the bronze snake he lived.

Numbers 21:7–9 NET

The serpent on the pole was not some sort of *mind-over-matter* gimmick. God was simply giving the Israelites an opportunity to demonstrate that they believed Him. When an Israelite was bitten, all he had to do was turn and look at the bronze serpent and



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he would be healed. With that look, the individual expressed his faith in the LORD, trusting him to be true to his word.

Let's suppose one fellow was bitten and did not look at the bronze serpent. Instead he told his friends, "Old Moses is really demented. If he thinks looking at that ridiculous snake is going to heal a venomous bite, he's got to be crazy. I don't believe it." Such a person would have died, not only because of his snake bite, but also because he did not believe God. God honours faith, but judges unbelief.

It is important to understand that God holds us responsible for all that we understand of him. We are accountable for what we know.

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Years later the original serpent made by Moses was destroyed by King Hezekiah because the people were worshipping it, violating one of the Ten Commandments. See 2 Kings 18:4

REVIEW: DEATH

The Bible speaks about death in three different ways:

1. **Death of the body:** Separation of man's spirit from his body
2. **Death to a relationship:** Separation of man's spirit from God
3. **Death to a future joy:** Separation of man's spirit from God forever

... the wages of sin is death ...

Romans 6:23 NKJV

3 JUDGES, KINGS AND PROPHETS

We have now come to a lesson that compresses centuries of events into just a few pages. For those of you who are allergic to history, be assured that it's a painless study and, even if you don't understand it all, you will pick up needed tidbits of background information. It will help if you compare the titles at the head of each section with the time line on pages 156-157.

Forty years passed from the time the Israelites left Egypt until the time they entered Canaan. Moses died before he entered the promised country and was replaced by an able general named Joshua.

After entering the land, it took years before the Israelites were able to fully settle it. The land was divided according to *tribes*, each tribe equating with, for the most part, one of Jacob's (or Israel's) twelve sons.

TIME OF THE JUDGES

For a period of time the Israelites trusted God, but then they began to drift from the truth, and ended up believing in idols. The LORD punished Israel for worshipping false gods by allowing them to be overrun by foreign nations who forced Israel to serve them and pay tribute. After a time the Israelites would repent and call on God to deliver them from their oppressors. God would raise up a leader, called a *Judge*, and the Israelites would throw out the foreign conquerors. So began a cycle that was to last approximately 300 years. This cycle occurred over and over again. During this time there were fifteen Judges.



Some people believe that if you *trust in God* then you're okay. But in the back of their minds they believe that all roads—all beliefs—ultimately lead to the same God. This is not what the Bible teaches. The Scriptures tell us that there are many false gods, but only one true God. The Israelites were judged when they trusted a false god.

TIME OF THE KINGS

Of all the nations of the world, Israel was the most fortunate, for God himself was their Leader and King. But as time passed and the Israelites observed other nations, they rejected God and demanded a human king. God granted their request, but their propensity to wander off and trust false gods remained.

Israel was to have many kings, but only a few believed and obeyed the LORD. Because of this, the cycle of earlier years continued, only instead of a *Judge*, they now had a *King*.

Several of the kings were especially noteworthy. Probably the greatest and best known of Israel's monarchs was David. Unlike many of the other kings who ruled over Israel, King David truly trusted God. He believed that only God could save him from the consequences of sin. David called the LORD, "*my Saviour*."

King David was also a great Prophet, inspired by God to write down Scripture. He is noted for the songs he wrote, praising God for his love and mercy. David wrote specifically about THE PROMISED DELIVERER, and God made a pledge to him that THE ANOINTED ONE

would be one of his descendants.³ King David had a great ambition to replace the portable tabernacle with a permanent structure of a similar design. It would be called the *Temple*. He wanted to build it in Jerusalem, which had become the capital of the country during his reign. Although David gathered the building materials, it was his son, Solomon, who actually saw the task accomplished.

King Solomon is known for two things: his great wisdom and the Temple he built. This magnificent structure was constructed in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, possibly on the same site where Abraham was prepared to offer Isaac.

After Solomon's death, the nation split in two: the northern ten tribes retained the name *Israel*, while the southern two tribes became the nation of *Judah*. This division seemed to be the Israelites' first step towards a semi-permanent distance from God. The northern tribes led the way. The people went through the motions of doing what the LORD said, but their hearts were far from God.

PROPHETS

God sent prophets, men who not only preached against the wandering morals of the people, but also warned of judgment to come.



Many of these prophets were also prompted by God to write Scripture. Some of them gave specific information about the coming PROMISED DELIVERER.

Generally speaking, the prophets were not well received by the Israelites or their respective kings. There was a reason. The prophets were giving them a message they did not want to hear. For example, the prophet Isaiah told the people ...

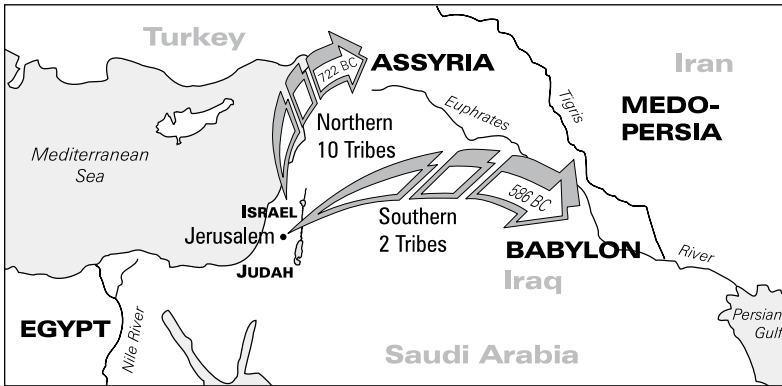
The LORD says: "These people come near to me with their mouth and honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. Their worship of me is made up only of rules taught by men."

Isaiah 29:13 NIV

The majority despised the prophets' message and refused to trust God. They persecuted and killed them. To complicate matters further, false prophets inspired by Satan churned the spiritual scene. Even though God provided clear instructions to enable his people to discern the difference between truth and error, the false prophets were much more popular, for they were telling the people the very things they wished to hear.

DISPERSAL OF ISRAEL

Eventually the LORD did send judgment. The Assyrians invaded the ten northern tribes in 722 BC and took them into captivity. The Bible does not record an organized return of these people to the land of Israel.



JUDAH TAKEN CAPTIVE

The two southern tribes continued as a distinct political entity until 586 BC, when the *Babylonians ravished the city of Jerusalem, demolished the great temple of Solomon and took them into exile.

While in exile, the people began to be called *Jews*, a reference to the fact that most of them were from the tribe of Judah. With the temple no longer available as the center of worship, the Jews introduced the **synagogue as a place for social interaction, teaching and the study of the Scriptures.

*People from the area where the tower of Babel was built.

**Greek for the word *assemblies*.

The exile continued for 70 years, but in 536 BC the two southern tribes began to trickle back to their homeland to settle in and around Jerusalem, in the area formerly occupied by the tribe of Judah. The temple was rebuilt, though not in the grandeur of Solomon's day, and the sacrificial system was reinstated.

THE INFLUENCE OF THE GREEKS

Around 400 BC, the biblical record pauses and remains silent for a period of some four centuries. History didn't stand still though. Alexander the Great, the brilliant general of the Greeks, swept through the Middle East engulfing the Jews in the process. His emissaries introduced *Greek* as the trade language and the Hellenistic culture became a status symbol for centuries to follow.

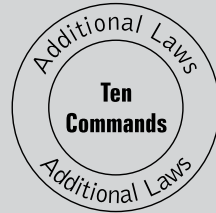
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Some Jews freely embraced the Greek culture, combining it with their beliefs about God. These people were called *Sadducees*. Though small in number, they were people of wealth and influence. They tended to control the high priest, a position that had come to be bought and sold. Unfortunately, they also denied parts of the Bible as being true. **The Sadducees took away from God's Word.**

For about two hundred years, the Jews knuckled under a succession of Greek occupying forces and then in 166 BC they revolted. Judas Maccabeus led the people into a period of autonomy.

During this time a party of Jewish religious zealots, called *Pharisees*, came to the forefront. The Pharisees fought the influence of the Greek culture and clung to the *law* given to Moses. In their zeal, they created a protective ring of other laws around Moses' law so that none of the *real law* would be broken. These additional laws became an authority of their own, assuming equal weight with *the law of Moses*. **The Pharisees added to God's Word.**



Another significant social force in Jewish life was the *Scribes*, the human equivalent to photocopiers. Long before the advent of printing presses, these men copied the Word of God with extreme care over and over again. The term *Scribe* implied education and religious fervor. It was more of a job description than a religious or political party.



THE ROMANS

The Jews' liberty under the Maccabean leadership lasted barely 100 years. The iron heel of Rome crushed the Jews' freedom in 67 BC when General Pompey entered Jerusalem.

Rome was quite accommodating of the Jewish religion as long as the Jews paid their taxes and did not foment rebellion. The civilized world of the day had entered into an uneasy peace.

The Roman empire was far too large to be administered effectively from Rome, so local leaders were selected to rule the different regions. In Judea, now a province of Rome, a man named Herod was appointed as a puppet king. He would come to be known as *Herod the Great*. Cruel beyond belief, Herod was a follower of the Jewish religion in name only. Under Rome's authority, he and his descendants would rule the resentful Jewish world for the next one hundred years. The people yearned for rescue—for one who could give them relief.

More than two thousand years had passed since God first promised Abraham that one of his descendants would be THE PROMISED DELIVERER. Throughout the centuries God had those people, sometimes only a few, who believed His Word and were right with him. They had waited in eager anticipation for THE ANOINTED ONE to come. In these early years of the Roman empire, those who clung tenaciously to God's promises were still waiting to see them fulfilled. The time had come, but they were unaware of it. The stage was now set. The angels of Heaven must have hushed. Satan must have shuddered. Who would this PROMISED DELIVERER be?

ADAM
EVE

Cain
ABEL
SETH

Enosh
Kenan
Mahalaleel
Jared
Enoch
Methuselah
Lamech

Japheth

NOAH **Ham**

SHEM

Arphaxad
Shelah
Eber
Peleg

Nahor
Ishmael
Hagar
ABRAHAM
SARAH
(SARAI)

ISAAC

Haran
Lot

JACOB
(ISRAEL)

Esau

Reuben
Simeon
Levi
JUDAH
Dan
Naphtali
Gad
Asher
Issachar
Zebulun
Joseph
Benjamin

Nahshon
Amminadab
Ram
Hezron

Perez

Aaron

Moses

Joshua

A FAMILY TREE: FROM ADAM TO JESUS

Solid line indicates ancestral line
Bold face indicates stories covered in detail

Chapter 4

DATES

Chapter 5

UNCERTAIN⁴

Chapter 6

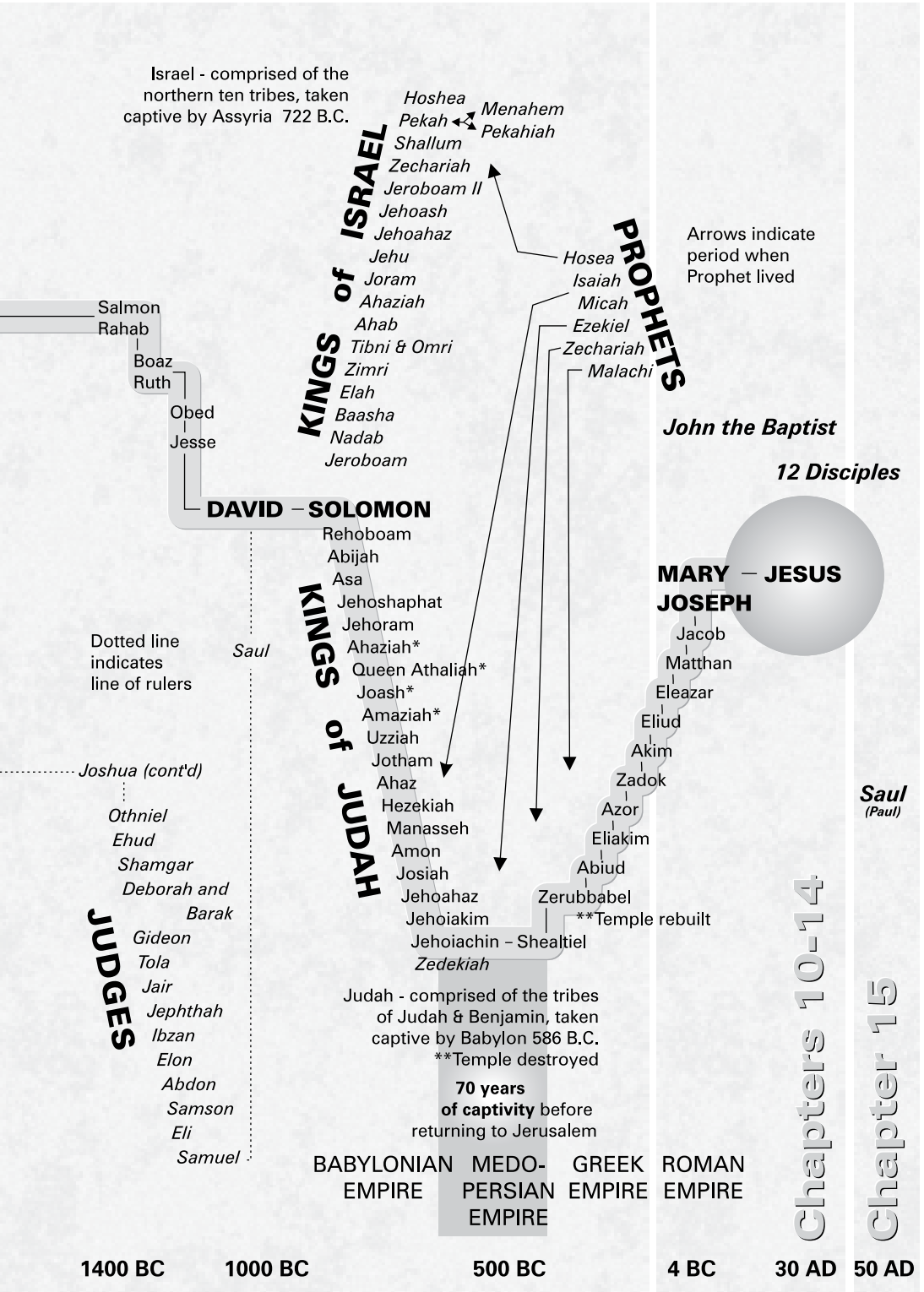
2100 BC

Chapters 7, 8

1900 BC

Chapter 9

1550 BC



*Rulers that do not appear in Matthew's account of Jesus' ancestral line.