

QUIET TIME

Theme: The period of the kings in Israel

- Try to make a specific time every day to meet Jesus Christ through reading and meditating his Word.
- Pray, talk with Jesus Christ and make a few short notes about this Bible passage in your notebook.
- Record what you discover, what speaks to your mind and heart, what you find difficult or what you understood.

- Day 1 1 Samuel 8:1-22
Israel rejects God as King by asking for a king
- Day 2 1 Samuel 12:1-25
Samuel's farewell speech as judge of Israel
- Day 3 1 Chronicles 17:1-14
God's covenant promise to David
- Day 4 2 Samuel 11:1-12:25
King David (1011-971 B.C.):
sin and forgiveness
- Day 5 2 Chronicles 20:1-23
King Jehoshaphat (870-846 B.C.):
may look on how God conquers
- Day 6^{BS} 2 Chronicles 26:1-23
King Uzziah (768-750 B.C.):
a good beginning, but a bad end
- Day 7 2 Kings 17:1-34
The end of the northern kingdom of Israel (722-721 B.C.)
- Day 8^{BS} 2 Chronicles 33:1-20
King Manasseh (685-641 B.C.):
a bad beginning, but a good end
- Day 9 2 Kings 23:1-25
King Josiah (638-608 B.C.):
takes measures against idol worship
- Day 10 2 Kings 24:1-25:26
The end of the southern kingdom of Judah
(605-586 B.C.)
- Think about 1 Chronicles 28:9.
This is a possible prayer for leaders: leaders in the world, in your government, in your church or in your organisation. Pray this for yourself as a leader.
 - Pray this week for specific leaders.
 - Pray every day for someone or something specific and wait in expectation for what God is going to do (Psalm 5:3).

STUDY

Theme: The third continuous theme in the Bible: the theocracy

Read study 11 carefully before the next meeting. If you have questions, write them down and mail them to one of your group leaders. We will seek an answer together.

BIBLE STUDY

Theme: A comparison between two kings

If you like, you may already prepare the Bible Study for the coming meeting by reading through the Bible passage. Make use of the 5-step Bible Study method.

The Bible passages are: **2 Chronicles 26:1-23**
2 Chronicles 33:1-20

MEMORISATION

1. Motivation

Jesus memorised Bible verses (Luke 4:4-13). Are you doing that?

2. Memorisation

Memorise this verse in the Bible version of your choice.

THE THEOCRACY

Acts 13:22b

I have found David son of Jesse
a man after my own heart;
he will do everything I want him to do.

Acts 13:22b (NIV)

3. Review and back-review

Review the last 5 memorised verses once every day and back-review all other memorised verses once every three weeks.

4. Memorisation of the Bible books

The 5 books of the Law:

Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy

The 12 historical books:

Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther.

11. The third continuous theme: The theocracy

'Theocracy'¹ means *the reign of God over his people by means of his earthly servants*: (1) By means of the Old Testament prophets: e.g. the prophet and lawyer, Moses (1527–1407 B.C.) (40 years). (2) By means of the judges: e.g. the military leader and judge, Joshua (1497–1387 B.C.) (20 years) and the other judges (1387–1060 B.C.) (327 years). (3) By means of the priests: e.g. Samuel (1060–1032 B.C.). (4) And by means of the kings: e.g. Saul (1032–1011 B.C.), David (1011–971 B.C.), Solomon (971–931 B.C.) and after the division of the kingdom by means of the kings of the southern kingdom of Judah (930–587 B.C.).

This theocracy in the Old Testament was 'a shadow' of 'the reality, namely: God's kingdom in the New Testament by means of the Prophet, High Priest, Judge and King: Jesus Christ.

A. The book of Judges

The book of Judges dates between 1032–1011 B.C.

1. Two kinds of judges in the Old Testament

In the Old Testament there were judicial judges who judged all judicial cases in the land (Deuteronomy 16:18-20). And there were governing judges who God appointed temporarily in the period between Joshua and the kings to lead Israel back to God as their only King by means of mighty acts of salvation. The theme of the book of Judges is the struggle of God to bring his people under his royal authority so that they would serve him. Time and again God had to discipline and correct Israel, because they adopted worldly practices by which they fell into spiritual and moral degeneration. The book of Judges relate God's plan, the degeneration of Israel and God's faithfulness.

2. God's plan: God's people should be a theocracy

In the period of the judges Israel lived in freedom and prosperity in the Promised Land. God himself was the King of Israel. The ark was the visible symbol of God's presence amidst his people. It was God's eternal plan and intention that he himself would be the King of his people (plan A). Therefore he did not appoint a successor after Joshua, but only gave temporary judges to Israel, to lead Israel back to God as their only King whenever Israel strayed away from him (Judges 8:22-23)! God desired that his people would acknowledge him as their only Lord and King! God's people should be *a pure theocracy!*

But time and again it became clear that Israel was not spiritual enough to live under a pure theocracy (1 Samuel 8:7b-9). That is why God finally allowed the institution of *hereditary kingship* in Israel (plan B). God did not change his eternal plan, but changed his approach in carrying out his plan! This change of God's approach in carrying out his eternal plan is called 'God's grief' (Genesis 6:6) or 'God's relenting' (Jeremiah 18:1-12). God's relenting served to bring people to repentance and thus to enable God to nevertheless carry out his eternal plan, even when God does this in another way (e.g. making use of human judges and kings).

3. The process of spiritual and moral degeneration

Time and again Israel fell into spiritual and moral idolatry. This degeneration began with disobedience to God. Israel had not totally destroyed the idolatrous nations in the Promised Land (Deuteronomy 7:1-6) and had not listened to Joshua's warning (Joshua 23:1-14). As a consequence Israel compromised themselves to these idolatrous nations (Judges 3:5-7). They adopted the Canaanite religion and culture (Deuteronomy 18:9-14) and thus lost sight of the Living God (Judges 8:27; 11:31,34). This led to a growing disunity among the tribes of Israel and the tribe of Benjamin was nearly wiped out. In the end everyone began to do what he saw fit (Judges 17:6; 21:25).

4. The unshakable faithfulness of God

A remarkable characteristic of the book of Judges is Israel's repeated unfaithfulness to God's covenant, repaid by God's unshakable faithfulness! During this period Israel had to realise and acknowledge that *she could not realise her divine calling without God, without her future Messiah King and Saviour!*

Every time when Israel called out to God from her anxiety into which she fell due to her own disobedience, God sent a judge to save her from her enemies (Judges 2:16-19). God repeated this many times, because he was the God of the covenant. He did not let go of his people, because he had a much higher goal for Israel, namely, to produce the coming Messiah King and to fulfil his covenant that would be extended to all the nations in the world! The sovereign God does not let go of his eternal plan (Isaiah 14:24,27)!

¹ **Autocracy** = government by one (authoritarian) person only
Democracy = government by the people (direct or representative)
Theocracy = government by God (direct or through servants)

B. The books of Samuel

The books of Samuel date from before 910 B.C.

1. Samuel: judge, priest and prophet

At the end of the period of the judges, Israel was spiritually and morally bankrupt. So God gave Israel its last judge, the priest and prophet Samuel. Since the time of Samuel prophets regularly appeared in Israel. Also during the time of Samuel God allowed the institution of hereditary kingship, which prepared Israel for the coming of the Messiah King.

Samuel regularly received revelations from God (1 Samuel 3:10,19-21), which he proclaimed to the people of Israel (1 Samuel 4:1) and to the king (1 Samuel 15:1). He anointed Saul and David as kings (1 Samuel 10:1; 16:13) and in answer to his prayers God performed miracles (1 Samuel 7:9-10; 12:18). The task of the prophets during the period of the kings was to make God's will known to the highest government officials (2 Samuel 7 and 12) and to oppose the conceited and arrogant actions of the kings (1 Samuel 15:17-23).

2. The theocratic kingship under King Saul

The purpose of the books of Samuel was to describe the origin and history of the theocratic kingship in Israel. The God in heaven desired to reign directly over Israel by means of earthly kings. In the beginning Samuel opposed the institution of kings, because Israel desired to have a king like all the surrounding nations. Nevertheless, God ordered him to anoint Israel's first king, Saul. But Saul did not prove to be a genuine theocratic king as God desired and as Samuel had envisioned. Although Israel received what she desired (a king like the other nations), she was punished together with King Saul. The emphasis of Samuel is the failure of the theocratic kingship of King Saul.

3. The theocratic kingship under King David

God's purpose, namely, a theocratic kingship over his people on earth, may not and could not fail! Therefore the book of 1 Samuel also describes the history of David, "a man after God's own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14). God chose him to be the genuine theocratic king of Israel. David was 'a type' of the true theocratic King of the whole universe, the Messiah King, Jesus Christ (cf. Ezekiel 37:24-27).

His task was to take complete possession of the whole land of Canaan, which God had promised to give to Israel (Genesis 15:18-19), because Joshua had not taken complete possession of the land (Joshua 15:63; 16:10; 18:2-3). Under King Solomon, King David's son, the kingdom of Israel reached its greatest area of land (1 Kings 4:21).

The theocratic king David viewed himself only as a servant of God. He sought advice from the real King every time he had to fight a war. And he brought the ark, which

symbolised God's presence amidst Israel, back to Jerusalem. David was a righteous king and he did "what was just and right for all his people" (2 Samuel 8:15). He was humble and submitted himself to the words of God as spoken by the prophets.

Nevertheless, the prophet Samuel showed that even King David could err (2 Samuel 11 – 12). He committed adultery and murder. This proved that even the ideal theocratic kingship or reign of God by means of earthly kings could not be realised by means of sinful and weak human beings. The institution of hereditary kings in Israel prepared Israel and all other nations in the world that the coming of the only genuine theocratic King, the Messiah, Jesus Christ, was absolutely necessary!

4. The Messiah, Jesus Christ in the books of Samuel

The prophet Samuel prophesied that David's son, King Solomon, would build the temple for God, that he would stand in a close father-son relationship to God and that the throne of his kingdom would be established forever (2 Samuel 7:11-16). But the prophetic writer of the book of Chronicles more clearly prophesied that the Messiah-King would be a descendent of King David (with respect to his human nature), he would have a unique Father-Son relationship with God (with respect to his divine nature) and his kingdom would last forever (1 Chronicles 17:11-14). This prophecy was perfectly fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Isaiah 9:6-7).

In 2 Samuel 23:1-7 King David prophesied that the Messiah would be the righteous Ruler who would bring light, new life and salvation (cf. John 1:4), but also judgment by fire (cf. Matthew 13:40-42). In 2 Samuel 23:5 David connects the Messiah King with the promise in 2 Samuel 7:11-16.

C. The books of Kings

The books of Kings date from before 586 B.C.

1. History: examples with warnings

The kings of Israel ruled under the leadership and guidance of God. Their task was to rule God's people with justice and righteousness, that is, in accordance with God's Word. They especially had to combat religious idolatry and economic corruption.

The purpose of the books of Kings was to describe the history of the kings from a prophetic point of view, that is, to describe their history in the light of God's evaluation! The books of Kings (and Chronicles) are examples of history with warnings. They warn the people and especially the leaders not to set their hearts on evil (1 Corinthians 10:6,11). They warn people not to put God out of their hearts, but to listen to the words of God as spoken by the prophets!

2. The kings needed the prophets and the priests

The tasks of the prophets showed that the kings did not have absolute power in Israel as the kings in the surrounding nations. Every king in Israel stood under the direct and sovereign reign of God by means of the ministry of the prophets. The prophets spoke God's words under inspiration of God's Spirit (2 Peter 1:19-21). Their task was to reveal God's will to the kings, the priests and the people. They spoke with divine authority, were indispensable in their task to keep the kings on the right road and to proclaim God's plan of salvation to the kings, priests and people. The prophets thus had a very important responsibility in the historical books! The great prophets were Elijah (874–845 B.C.), Elisha (874–797 B.C.), Isaiah (740–680 B.C.) and Jeremiah (627–586 B.C.).

Besides the prophets, the kings of Israel also needed the priests. The priests worshipped and served God in the temple. With God's authority the priests taught the kings and the people how they should approach, worship and serve God.

3. The history in the books of Kings is a prophecy

The history in the books of Kings is a prophecy, a proclamation of God, not only through the words the prophets spoke, but also through the events that took place with God's people. The historical books of the Bible reveal that sinful people need a Saviour, who would be an absolute perfect Prophet, High Priest and King! They prove that the ideal theocracy, namely the direct reign of God by means of prophets, priests and kings could not be realised through people that were sinful and weak.

There were also false prophets, corrupt priests and evil kings in Israel (Jeremiah 5:30-31; 6:13-15; 14:14; 23:1-2); (cf. Isaiah 3:12-15; Jeremiah 2:8; 27:9-10; 32:32-35) (*Read* Jeremiah 23:9-40).

The historical books of the Bible are prophetic, because they point forward to the necessity of the coming of the Messiah-King, Jesus Christ, who would be sinless and perfect and who would become the only Prophet, the only High Priest and the only King of his people on earth.

D. The books of Chronicles

The books of Chronicles date from about 400 B.C.

1. God's covenant with Abraham and David culminates in the theocracy

The inspired writer of the books of Chronicles views the history of Israel from a very unique point of view in the Bible. It is *not* the history of the kings of Israel, Israel with its civil laws or the temple with its ceremonial laws that stand in the centre of the books of Chronicles, but rather God's covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! It is *not* the law, which was later added to the covenant, but Gods

covenant itself that determines the relationship between God and Israel!

The writer of the book of Chronicles says that God's covenant with the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is an everlasting covenant (1 Chronicles 16:15-17) and it is continued via the tribe of Judah and the family of Jesse in King David (1 Chronicles 28:4). He clearly regards the election of King David in the light of the Messianic expectation.

King David is a 'type' (symbol) of the coming Messiah-King. He possesses the special characteristics of that coming Messiah-King. God's covenant with David would reach its fulfilment in the Messiah-King (1 Chronicles 17:7,11-14): "This is what the Lord Almighty says: I took you from the pasture and from following the flock, to be the ruler over my people Israel. When your days are over and you go to be with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring (Hebrew: zera) to succeed you, one of your own sons (Hebrew: mi-baneka) (cf. Matthew 1:1), and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for me (i.e. the Church) (cf. Matthew 16:18), and I will establish his throne forever (cf. Matthew 28:18). I will be his father (Hebrew: ab), and he will be my son (Hebrew: ben) (cf. Matthew 3:17), I will never take my love away from him, as I took it away from your predecessor (king Saul). I will set him over my house (cf. Ephesians 1:20-23) and my kingdom (cf. 2 Peter 1:11) forever; his throne will be established forever."

The writer pictures the history of Israel as *a theocracy that in the future would be manifested on a much higher and extended plane (i.e. the kingdom of God)*. It would not be connected to the ceremonial and civil laws of the nation of Israel! The everlasting covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (1 Chronicles 16:15-17) would culminate in God's kingship over the hearts and lives of people in *all the nations* on the earth. Therefore, all the nations on earth are called to proclaim God's salvation and declare God's glory (1 Chronicles 16:8,23-24,28)! And all people among the nations should respond: "The LORD reigns!" (1 Chronicles 16:31) Note that Jesus Christ begins his ministry with the proclamation of the good news that the time for God's kingdom has come (Mark 1:14-15).

2. The essence of Israel's history is the theocracy

The writer of the books of Chronicles regards *the theocracy as the centre around which the history of Israel turns: God reigns by means of the prophets, priests and kings. God is regarded as the real King of Israel.*

That is why the writer says that king Solomon sits on 'God's throne' and 'rules for the LORD' (2 Chronicles 9:8). The southern kingdom of Judah that remained faithful to the Lord in the time of David and Solomon is called 'the kingdom of the LORD' (2 Chronicles 13:8).

The book of Chronicles speaks of ‘God’s land’ (2 Chronicles 6:27), ‘God’s cities’ (1 Chronicles 19:13), ‘God’s army’ (cf. 2 Chronicles 14:12) and “the battle was God’s” (1 Chronicles 5:22) or “With us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chronicles 32:8).

The writer of the book Chronicles also regards *the religious life of Israel as the outward form of the theocracy* (cf. Ezekiel chapters 40 – 48). He emphasizes the deeds of certain kings of Judah to keep the religion of Israel pure. King David reorganised the tribe of priests (Levi) and developed the temple service (1 Chronicles chapters 23 – 26). King Solomon built the first temple in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles chapters 2 – 7). See also Asa (2 Chronicles 14:2-4), Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 29:2-3) and Josiah (2 Chronicles 34:2-7).

3. The theocracy finds its fulfilment, not in the kingdom of David or Solomon (Israel), but in the kingdom of the Messiah, Jesus Christ!

Everything in the history of Israel leads in the first instance to the election of king David and Jerusalem. The books of Chronicles deal with the southern kingdom of Judah, king David and Jerusalem. The northern kingdom of Israel had placed itself outside the theocracy by following the evil practices of king Jeroboam and his gross idolatry (1 Kings 12:25-33). The northern kingdom of Israel had broken the covenant with God and as a consequence was left out of the description of God’s history with his covenant people. That is also why the southern kingdom of Judah is often called ‘Israel’ – in the sense of ‘God’s covenant people’ (2 Chronicles 12:1,6; 15:17; 23:2; 24:16; 28:23).

God’s promise to David in 1 Chronicles 17:11-14 is regarded as ‘a covenant’ which God made with David (2 Chronicles 6:16; 7:18; Psalm 132:11-12; 89:3-4). And this covenant is seen in the light of the coming Messiah (Compare 2 Samuel 7:11-16 with 1 Chronicles 17:11-14). The writer of the books of Chronicles changed the references to the son of David (Solomon) in the book of Samuel to references to the coming Messiah-King in the book of Chronicles (cf. Micah 5:2)! In this way the inspired writer of the book of Chronicles throws more light on the future of the theocracy! He announced that *the theocracy would not find its ultimate fulfilment in the kingdom of David and Solomon (that is, in Israel), but in the eternal kingdom of the Messiah-King, Jesus Christ!* The writer of the books of Chronicles expected the coming of the Messiah-King.

Although the kings who followed king David failed to realise the theocracy, the coming Messiah-King would not fail! He would establish the true theocracy, the kingdom of God and his Christ (2 Peter 1:11).

Jesus Christ went proclaiming the good news of God: “The time has come. The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news” (Mark 1:14-15). The kingdom of God had definitely come at the first coming of Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:28)! Jesus Christ himself proclaimed it (Matthew 4:23), the Twelve apostles proclaimed it (Luke 9:2,6), the apostle Paul proclaimed it (Acts 20:24-45; 28:23,31) and other Christians proclaimed it (Luke 9:60; Acts 8:12).