

# ANTI-CHRIST

## PART VII

### THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

*by Albert James Dayer*

**N**ot long after Solomon's death (ca. 931. B.C.) God's judgment upon Israel began. The nation would be divided, with the northern ten tribes under the rule of Jeroboam, and the southern tribe of Judah retained by Solomon's son Rehoboam. Because God sees Israel as one kingdom in His eternal plan, this era is called that of the Divided Kingdom. There were two kings sharing the rule over one divided nation.

During these years (931-586) the Assyrian Empire emerged as a great power, followed by the Babylonian Empire under Nebuchadnezzar. Anti-Christ would use both empires to subjugate Israel and Judah, but that was at the behest of YHWH God who was chastizing His people for having fallen into idolatry.

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. He would be the last king to rule over Israel as one, undivided nation. Because of his idolatry God determined that all but the tribe of Judah would be taken from the house of David and given to Jeroboam who at one time had been one of Solomon's greatest warriors.

It began when Rehoboam went to Shechem to be crowned king over all Israel. Jeroboam, who had been in exile in Egypt because of Solomon's displeasure, came to him with an envoy asking that Solomon's yoke upon the northern kingdom be eased:

And it happened that when Nebat's son Jeroboam, who was still in Egypt, heard of it (for he had fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt) they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, "Your father made our yoke difficult. Now therefore, you make the difficult service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve you."

And he said to them, "Leave for three days, then come to me again."

And the people left.

And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men that stood before Solomon his father while he still lived, and said, "How do you advise that I may answer these people?"

And they spoke to him, saying, "If you will be a servant to these people today, and will serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever."

But he rejected the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that had grown up with him and which stood before him. And he said to them, "What counsel do you give that we may answer these people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Make the yoke which your father put upon us lighter'?"

And the young men that had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "You shall say this to these people that spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter for us,' you shall say this to them: 'My little finger shall be thicker than my father's waist. And now, whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke. My father has chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions.'"

So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, "Come to me again the third day."

And the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the old men's counsel that they gave him, and spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke. My father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

Therefore the king did not listen to the people, for the cause was from YHWH so that He might perform His saying which YHWH spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Nebat's son Jeroboam.

So when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, "What portion do we have in David? Nor have we inheritance in the son of Jesse! To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, David!"

So Israel went into their tents. But as for the children of Israel which lived in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.

Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the taxes, and all Israel stoned him with stones so that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam quickly got on his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.

So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

And it happened, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come again, that they sent and called him to the congregation and made him king over all Israel. There were none that followed the house of David except the tribe of Judah only. (1 Kings 12:1-20)

The counsel of the young men was ungodly, but it was used by YHWH to prompt Rehoboam to foolishness. The anti-Christ spirit worked in the young men to push away the ten tribes of Israel so that the nation would be splintered. This may have seemed a good way for anti-Christ to weaken the nation (and it certainly did that) but it was by God's design as a punishment upon Solomon for his idolatry.

Rehoboam's foolishness demonstrates the prophetic nature of Solomon's proverbs:

Yes, I hated all my labor which I had taken under the sun because I should leave it to the man that shall come after me. And who knows whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? Yet he shall have rule over all my labor wherein I have labored, and wherein I have shown myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity. (Ecclesiastes 2:18-19)

Evidently Solomon had no faith in man—even in his own son. He knew he would have an heir to David's throne because God had promised that there would be a descendent to sit on David's throne for all time. That promise was ultimately fulfilled in Jesus Christ. During the Millennium the resurrected David will again rule over all Israel from Jerusalem:

For the Lord YHWH says this: "Behold, I, even I, will both search for My sheep, and seek them out. As a shepherd seeks out his flock in the day that he is among his sheep that are scattered, so I will seek out My sheep in the cloudy and dark day and will deliver them out of all places where they have been scattered. And I will bring them out from the people and gather them from the countries, and will bring them to their own land, and feed them upon the mountains of Israel by the rivers, and in all the inhabited places of the country. I will feed them in a good pasture and their fold shall be upon the high mountains of Israel. There they shall lie in a good fold, and they shall eat in a fat pasture upon the mountains of Israel. I will feed my flock, and I will cause them to lie down," says the Lord YHWH.

"I will seek that which was lost, and bring again that which was driven away and will bind up that which was broken and will strengthen that which was sick. But I will destroy the fat and the strong; I will feed them with judgment....

"And I will set up one shepherd over them, even my servant David, and he shall feed them. He shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd.

And I, YHWH, will be their God, and my servant David a prince among them. I, YHWH, have spoken it. (Ezekiel 34:11-24)

These prophecies of Israel being brought out of all nations "in the cloudy and dark day" have not yet been fulfilled. They obviously pertain to the Millennium. David will rule over Israel even as Jesus rules over all the nations including Israel. This prophecy was written by Ezekiel during the Babylonian captivity, some 400 years after David's death. The return of Israel from that captivity was a preview of the millennial kingdom, but it was not completely fulfilled. Israel was often treated cruelly by the nations after that return, and that cruelty continues to this day in many countries. Israel has never dwelt in safety since the days of Solomon. The end of Israel's glory began with Rehoboam's ascension to the throne. Only the towns of Judah remained loyal to Rehoboam. So he called upon all Judah to fight against Israel and bring the ten tribes back under his rule, but YHWH spoke to Rehoboam and the people through the prophet Shemaiah, telling them not to fight because this was YHWH's doing. To their credit they obeyed the word of YHWH and returned home (1 Kings 12:21-24).

Under Jeroboam Israel's slide into idolatry commenced. Anti-Christ put fear in Jeroboam's heart that the people would give their allegiance to Rehoboam when they went up to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices in the temple:

And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David if these people go up to do sacrifice in the house of YHWH at Jerusalem. Then the hearts of these people will return again to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah."

Whereupon the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and said to them, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Behold your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt."

And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin, for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. (1 Kings 12:26-30)

This was the same sin the Israelites committed in the desert wilderness under Aaron's priesthood while Moses delayed returning from Mount Sinai. Satan knows how fickle man's heart is, and he knows how to play us for the fool. One would think that after the other team ran a particular play our team wouldn't fall for it again. But Israel continued to fall for the anti-Christ's play in spite of the disaster it brought upon them. Satan's influence upon Jeroboam exposed his fear, which was lack of faith. Jeroboam knew of YHWH's prophecy establishing him as king over Israel, but he allowed fear to cloud his judgment and thus led Israel into idolatry. His sin was compounded by the appointment of false priests to offer the sacrifices:

And he made a house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people which were not of the sons of Levi.

And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made, and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart, and ordained a feast for the children of Israel. And he offered upon the altar, and burned incense. (1 Kings 12:29-33)

“Bethel” or “Beth-El” means “house of God,” specifically, “house of El,” “El” being a reference to the God of Israel. Aaron had also told the people that the golden calf was their God YHWH.

Dan was located in the northern part of Israel. Bethel was located in the province of Simeon on the southern border of Israel, only about ten miles north of Jerusalem. It was evidently Jeroboam’s thinking that Bethel would be the perfect place to intercept the people on their way to Jerusalem and give them an excuse not to continue farther.

It was also a psychological ploy. Bethel was the place where YHWH identified Himself to Jacob as “the God of Bethel” (Genesis 31:13). Anti-Christ could use this Scripture to justify in the people’s minds accepting Bethel as a legitimate place to worship YHWH with strange fire.

God sent a prophet from Judah to cry out against the altar at Bethel while Jeroboam stood offering a sacrifice. But Jeroboam called for his men to seize the prophet, whereupon Jeroboam’s outstretched hand became withered. Even though he was in rebellion against YHWH he pleaded with the prophet to pray that YHWH would restore his arm, which He did:

And the king answered and said to the man of God, “Ask now the favor of YHWH your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me again.”

And the man of God besought YHWH, and the king’s hand was restored to him again and became as it was before. And the king said to the man of God, “Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.”

And the man of God said to the king, “If you gave me half your house, I will not go in with you, neither will I eat bread nor drink water in this place, for it was ordered me by the word of YHWH, saying, ‘Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that you came.’”

So he went another way, and did not return by the way that he came to Bethel. (1 Kings 13:6-10)

Jeroboam acknowledged that YHWH was the God of the prophet—“your God.” Even though he called the calves he had made “YHWH,” he knew in his heart that they did not represent YHWH and that the god to whom he was praying was not YHWH. But he himself had become anti-Christ and continued in his idolatry.

Sadly, this prophet who had been faithful up to this point was deceived by another prophet in Israel who convinced him God had told him that the prophet was to come into his house and eat. This resulted in the prophet being killed by a lion after

leaving the Israelite prophet’s home for having disobeyed the clear words of God.

Satan set the trap through the second prophet who considered his desire for the first prophet to remain with him of more importance than God’s word. But the prophet who had confronted Jeroboam also failed because he allowed the words of a man to dissuade him from the words of God.

This is a lesson that is largely unheeded today. Many Christians follow men who claim to be prophets of God yet who give them words contrary to the Word of God. The result is that they are torn by the one who, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour (1 Peter 5:8). The lion that tore this prophet was a type of Satan. His account proves that even true prophets may be deceived by false prophets if they fail to continue trusting the Word of God. Evidently this prophet was in his heart looking for an excuse to take some sustenance (to feed his carnal desires), and willingly succumbed to the lie. But we cannot say, “He lied to me,” when we know that the “prophet’s” words are contrary to God’s Word.

Jeroboam’s sin of leading Israel into idolatry was so great that during his reign God determined to send Israel into captivity. In addition, He declared that Jeroboam’s house would be desolate; all the males in his lineage would be cut off and the kingdom would be given to another not of his household. God spoke these judgments through Ahijah, the same prophet through whom God had promised Jeroboam the throne in Israel:

“Moreover, YHWH shall raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day. But when? Even now.

“For YHWH shall strike Israel as a reed is shaken in the water, and He shall uproot Israel out of this good land which He gave to their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river, because they have made their groves, provoking YHWH to anger.

“And he shall give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam who sinned and who made Israel sin.” (1 Kings 14:14-16)

Having succeeded in turning Israel against God through idolatry, anti-Christ worked on Judah. Rehoboam was Solomon’s son through Naamah, an Ammonite woman. Like his father, he succumbed to an alien wife’s influence, worshipping false gods and leading Judah to do the same:

And Judah did evil in the sight of YHWH, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done. For they also built themselves high places and images, and groves on every high hill, and under every green tree.

And there were also sodomites in the land, and they committed all the abominations of the nations which YHWH cast out before the children of Israel.

And it happened in the fifth year of king Rehoboam that Shishak, king of Egypt, came up against Jerusalem. And he took away the treasures of the house of YHWH, and the treasures of the king’s house. He even took away everything, and he took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made. (1 Kings 14:22-26)

Rehoboam lost the riches of his throne, and Judah came under the rule of Shishak, but God allowed Judah to remain in the land because Rehoboam humbled himself and acknowledged God's justice. It was not time for Judah to go into captivity, so God stayed the hand of anti-Christ at that point.

When Rehoboam died, his son Abijah reigned in Judah. At first Abijah was righteous and relied upon God. When Israel and Judah first went to war against each other Abijah announced to Israel that Judah's faithfulness to God would give Judah victory. And so it was. But as Abijah grew stronger he also abandoned faith in God and committed all the sins of idolatry that his father had committed. But for David's sake God raised up Abijah's son Asa to reign in Judah after Abijah's death:

And Asa did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, as did David his father. And he took the sodomites out of the land and removed all the idols that his fathers had made.

And he also removed even Maachah his mother from being queen because she had made an idol in a grove. And Asa destroyed her idol and burned it by the brook Kidron.

But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless, Asa's heart was perfect with YHWH all his days. And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicated, into the house of YHWH, silver, and gold, and vessels. (1 Kings 15: 11-15)

Asa's heart was perfect before God even though he allowed the high places to remain. The high places were places of worship and sacrifice which God had not sanctioned.

One might ask how Asa's heart could be perfect even though he allowed these to remain. We might look at our own hearts. Do we have "high places" in our lives that displease our Lord? Whatever is not of faith is sin; sins are high places that remain even though our hearts may be right with the Lord.

This does not justify the high places, but God knows the imperfection of our flesh. This is why He chose to redeem us in the first place; He loves us as He loves Israel and Judah. Those nations are types of man in many ways: one day righteous, the next day sinning. But God made provision for our sins through the shed blood of Jesus. He has promised that if we confess our sins He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

Every time Israel and Judah repented, God forgave them; when they fell into sin and forgot their source of salvation God chastised them. Yet He never destroyed Israel and Judah just as He has promised never to destroy those who remain faithful to Him:

The steps of a good man are ordered by YHWH and He takes delight in his ways. Though he falls he shall not be utterly cast down, for YHWH holds him up with His hand. (Psalms 37:23-24)

It was during Jeroboam's reign in Israel that God commissioned the prophet Jonah to go to Nineveh with the message to repent. But even Jonah had a touch of the anti-Christ spirit in first refusing to go to Nineveh, and then becoming angry when Nineveh repented and God spared the city. Jonah tried to get as far away as possible in the opposite direction from Nineveh which lay east of the Tigris River across from the site of the modern city of Mosul, Iraq.

The precise location of ancient Tarshish, named after one of the sons of Javan (Genesis 10:4) is not known. There were three possibilities:

- According to the Jewish historian Josephus, Tarshish may have been the city of Tarsus in southern Asia Minor, also called Tarsisi by the ancient Assyrians;
- Some historians identify Tarshish as the city of Tartessos in southern Spain;
- The Septuagint and the Vulgate texts identify Tarshish with Carthage, which was on the northern coast of Africa, near modern Tunis, Tunisia.

It's possible that as the descendants of Javan migrated to various areas they named more than one place Tarshish. In any case, we know that Jonah went to Joppa to catch the ship to Tarshish. Joppa was situated where the modern city of Jaffa, south of Tel Aviv, is located today. It is a port city on the Mediterranean Sea. So if Jonah was taking a ship from Joppa he would have been going west on the Mediterranean Sea. Any of the three possibilities would be among the farthest western points in the known world. But because Tunis was known for its great shipbuilding industry, and Scripture often makes reference to "the ships of Tarshish," most likely the Tarshish to which Jonah was going was the city that would become Carthage in northern Africa.

Jonah's travels demonstrate how diametrically opposed to Christ the anti-Christ is. If Christ says "Go east," anti-Christ will say, "Go west."

Upon Jeroboam's death his son Nadab reigned in Israel. Nadab continued in his father's sins. He reigned only two years in Israel before he was assassinated by Ahijah's son, Baasha, who usurped the throne. Baasha secured his throne by killing every member of Jeroboam's family as prophesied by Ahijah in response to Jeroboam's sin of leading Israel into idolatry.

But Baasha was also evil. He reigned in Israel for twenty-four years and committed the same sins Jeroboam had committed.

During Asa's reign in Judah many from the tribes of Benjamin, Simeon, Manasseh and Ephraim settled in Judah because they recognized YHWH's influence there.

But though Asa's heart may have been perfect before God, there were times when he allowed the anti-Christ spirit to take control. When faced with the army of Israel under Baasha, he allowed fear to take the place of faith. Enlisting the aid of the Syrian king Ben-Hadad, Asa gained victory over Israel, but he had to suffer the consequences:

And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said to him, "Because you have relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on YHWH your God, therefore the king of Syria's army has escaped out of your hand.

"Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge army, with very many chariots and horsemen? Yet because you relied on YHWH He delivered them into your hand. For the eyes of YHWH run back and forth throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose hearts are perfect toward Him. In this you have done foolishly. Therefore from now on you shall have wars."

Then Asa was angry with the seer, and put him in a prison house, for he was in a rage with him because of this thing. And Asa oppressed some of the people at the same time. (2 Chr 16:7-10)

Anti-Christ's anger against God's people is often manifested by influencing others from among God's people to act against them. How often do those who bring truth to the Body of Christ suffer the anger of those who refuse to hear the truth? Asa's treatment of Hanani is certainly a typical example of this. Yet God will judge His own; we must be careful not to judge those who refuse to hear our words. Perhaps their hearts are right but their flesh is still worshipping in a "high place."

There were many evil kings, particularly in Israel's history. The worst of them was Ahab who was influenced by his wife Jezebel. Ahab was evil from the start, but Jezebel has come to epitomize the spirit of anti-Christ. Even today wicked women are referred to as "Jezebels." Through her conscientious idolatry and having the true prophets in Israel put to death, Jezebel exhibited the anti-Christ spirit.

Even after God demonstrated His power on Mount Carmel through the prophet Elijah, Jezebel vowed to kill Elijah:

And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and all about how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time." (1 Kings 19:1-2)

Elijah, though one of God's greatest prophets, allowed fear to overtake him and he fled for his safety. We may take heart that fear may sometimes overtake us, but just as Elijah regained his courage, we may also if we turn and place our trust in the true God of our salvation once again.

As for Jezebel, she paid for her rebellion with her life, being eaten by dogs as prophesied by God through Elisha (2 Kings 9:10-37).

Jezebel is a type of unfaithful Jerusalem which played the harlot by going into idolatry. Her spirit is found in the assembly at Thyatira in the time of the apostle John:

And to the messenger of the called-out in Thyatira write, "These things says the Son of God who has His eyes like a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass: 'I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works—the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against you because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce My servants to commit fornication and to eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her space to repent of her fornication, and she did not repent.

"Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death, and all the called-out shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts, and I will give to every one of you according to your works. (Revelation 2:18-23)

This woman in Thyatira who was usurping the men's place of teaching was corrupting the fellowship with sexual and spiritual fornication. Whether or not her name was actually Jezebel we don't know, but she is called Jezebel for a good reason: she possessed the same anti-Christ spirit that Ahab's Jezebel had.

This period in Israel's history was among the most evil under Ahab's and Jezebel's leadership. It appears as if Ahab was the weaker of the two. But whereas Jezebel was evil continually, Ahab was willing to listen to God in times of distress.

God determined that Israel would survive in spite of its idolatry. After convincing the people of His power on Mount Carmel He sent a prophet to assure Ahab that if he trusted God he would be victorious against Ben-Hadad. This was to prove to Ahab that YHWH is the true God. Ahab trusted YHWH and gained the victory. But once again, anti-Christ took hold of him through Jezebel.

Ahab saw a vineyard that belonged to a man named Naboth, and wanted to buy it. But Naboth replied, "YHWH forbid it of me that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you."

When Jezebel heard from Ahab what happened she committed one of the most ungodly acts recorded in Scripture:

And Jezebel his wife said to him, "Do you now govern the kingdom of Israel? Arise, and eat bread, and let your heart be glad. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, 'You blasphemed God and the king.' And then carry him out and stone him so that he may die."

And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and set Naboth on high among the people. And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him. And the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, "Naboth blasphemed God and the king."

Then they carried him forth out of the city and stoned him with stones so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth is stoned, and is dead."

And it happened, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money, for Naboth is not alive, but dead."

And it happened, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. (1 Kings 21:7-16)

God sent Elijah to Ahab with the word of YHWH that He would cut off every living man in Ahab's house so that the king-

dom would not continue in his lineage. When Ahab heard this he repented. So God determined that the death of his posterity would not occur in Ahab's lifetime, but after his death.

Ahab was a tragic figure—a weak man strongly influenced by an evil, anti-Christ wife. There have been many Jezebels in history, even among the common people of every nation. Strong women with evil intent married to weak-willed men who give in to their wives rather than risk their displeasure. This is why the Word of God says, "It is better to live in a corner of the housetop than with a brawling woman in a wide house" (Proverbs 21:9).

The little good in Ahab's life was greatly outweighed by the evil. More often than not, he refused to listen to God's true prophets and surrounded himself with false prophets. This was his undoing when God used an anti-Christ spirit to entice Ahab to try to regain Ramoth Gilead from the king of Syria with Judah's king Jehoshaphat's help:

And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "I ask you to inquire at the word of YHWH today."

Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together—about four hundred men—and said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall I desist?"

And they said, "Go up, for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not a prophet of YHWH here besides, that we might inquire of him?"

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of YHWH, but I hate him because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil."

And Jehoshaphat said, "Do not let the king speak so."

Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, "Hasten here Micaiah the son of Imlah."

And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on their robes, each sat on his throne in an empty place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made himself horns of iron and said, "This says YHWH: 'With these you shall push the Syrians until you have consumed them.'"

And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-Gilead and prosper, for YHWH shall deliver it into the king's hand."

And the messenger that had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Look now, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one mouth. Let your word, I ask you, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good."

And Micaiah said, "As YHWH lives, what YHWH says to me, that I will speak."

So he came to the king. And the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-Gilead to battle, or shall we desist?"

And he answered him, "Go, and prosper, for YHWH shall deliver it into the hand of the king."

And the king said to him, "How many times shall I charge you that you tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of YHWH?"

And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills as sheep that do not have a shepherd, and YHWH said, 'These have no master; let every man of them return to his house in peace.'"

And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil?"

And he [Micaiah] said, "You hear therefore the word of YHWH. I saw YHWH sitting on His throne, and all the host of Heaven standing by Him on His right hand and on His left. And YHWH said, 'Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead?'"

"And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. And there came forth a spirit, and stood before YHWH and said, 'I will persuade him.'"

"And YHWH said to him, 'How?'"

"And he said, 'I will go forth and I will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.'"

"And He said, 'You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go forth, and do so.'"

"Now therefore, look, YHWH has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and YHWH has spoken evil concerning you."

But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, "Which way did the Spirit of YHWH go from me to speak to you?"

And Micaiah said, "Behold, you shall see in that day when you shall go into an inner chamber to hide yourself."

And the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah and carry him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son, and say, 'The king says this: "Put this fellow in the prison and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace.'"

And Micaiah said, "If you return at all in peace, YHWH has not spoken by me."

And he said, "Listen, O people, every one of you!"

So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth-Gilead. (1 Kings 22:5-29)

The anti-Christ spirit in Ahab was so strong that he refused to hear Micaiah regardless of what he had to say. He wanted Micaiah to prophesy good, but when he did, Ahab rebuked him for not telling the truth. When Micaiah prophesied the truth, Ahab had him put in prison. The lying spirit in the false prophets prevailed, and Ahab went to his death in battle where the dogs licked his blood as prophesied.

But even as he went to battle he thought he could outsmart God by disguising himself as a common man while Jehoshaphat went in his royal robes. A "random" arrow found the small, unprotected spot in Ahab's armor and mortally wounded him.

Many people think to outsmart God by various means, even when they know they are going against His will. But their sin is the chink in the armor which will allow the enemy to destroy them.

Jehoshaphat also incurred the wrath of God because he willfully joined with Ahab and rejected the counsel of God's true prophet. At the least he should have taken Micaiah's defense and pleaded with Ahab to let him go free. But he had joined in an unholy alliance because he considered Ahab his Israelite brother.

Even so, Jehoshaphat is considered among the more righteous of Judah's kings.

A significant anti-Christ was Athaliah, mother of Judah's king Ahaziah. She sought to kill every descendant of the royal line of David:

And when Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal seed. But Jehosheba, the daughter of king Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Ahaziah's son and stole him from among the king's sons which were slain. And they hid him in the bedchamber from Athaliah—even him and his nurse—so that he was not slain.

And he was hidden with her in the house of YHWH six years. And Athaliah reigned over the land. (2 Kings 11:1-3)

Had Athaliah been able to kill Joash, anti-Christ would have succeeded in destroying the royal line of David, and God's promise of His Redeemer would have been nullified. Athaliah's actions demonstrate the abominable evil of the anti-Christ spirit. She was ready to kill every male relative including her own grandson in order to usurp the throne of David. She remained on the throne for six years until Jehoiada the high priest commissioned the rulers and the army to bring Joash back:

And he brought forth the king's son and put the crown upon him, and gave him the testimony. And they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands, and said, "God save the king!"

And when Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people into the temple of YHWH. And when she looked, behold, the king stood by a pillar, as the manner was, and the princes and the trumpeters by the king, and all the people of the land rejoiced, and blew with trumpets.

And Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, "Treason! Treason!"

But Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of the hundreds, the officers of the army, and said to them, "Take her forth outside the ranges, and him who follows her kill with the sword."

For the priest had said, "Let her not be slain in the house of YHWH."

And they laid hands on her, and she went the way by which the horses came into the king's house, and there she was slain.

And Jehoiada made a covenant between YHWH and the king and the people, that they should be YHWH's people—between the king also and the people.

And all the people of the land went into the house of Baal, and broke it down—they thoroughly broke his altars and his images in pieces, and slew Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

And the priest appointed officers over the house of YHWH. And he took the rulers over hundreds, and the captains, and the guard, and all the people of the land, and they brought down the king from the house of YHWH, and came by the way of the gate of the guard to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.

And all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was in quiet. And they slew Athaliah with the sword beside the king's house.

Joash was seven years old when he began to reign. (2 Kings 11:12-21)

It is characteristic of anti-Christ to protest "treason" when anti-Christ itself is treasonous to begin with. How often do anti-Christ politicians, or even regular folk for that matter, impute to their opponents the ungodly character of which they themselves are guilty. Liars protest when the truth is said of them.

During this time in Israel's history anti-Christ continued to deceive the world and substitute man's wisdom for God's truth. The birth of philosophy is attributed to three men who lived from the time of Josiah to the Babylonian Captivity. Long before Greece would become the dominant world power, Thales and two of his contemporaries—Anaximander and Anaximenes—began to take a scientific interest in natural phenomena. Thales taught that observation and reason were necessary to understand the underlying nature of the cosmos. Born into aristocracy in the city of Miletus on the west coast of Asia, Thales developed what came to be called the "Milesian School."

Philosophy is man's way of explaining nature and human existence apart from God's revealed Word. All philosophy is basically humanistic in nature, and, while it has discovered some truths related to nature and life, it can never come to a full knowledge of truth because it does not rely upon God's Word and His Holy Spirit to illuminate His Word. Thus it has devised pseudo-sciences such as psychiatry and psychotherapy to explain and deal with man's aberrant expressions of living. Anti-Christ has successfully used these pseudo-sciences to not only keep people dependent upon man, but alienated from God.

The history of Israel testifies to the influences of anti-Christ in the lives of its kings. God's prophets were constantly persecuted and murdered by the anti-Christ kings of Israel. With the exception of Jehu who started out righteous, then fell away, every king in Israel was anti-Christ, doing evil and practicing idolatry.

Judah's kings were a mixture of good and evil. A few began righteous but fell away. Only Asa, Hezekiah, and Josiah were faithful to YHWH throughout their reigns. All others either fell away or were anti-Christ in their character from the start.

Because of Israel's unfaithfulness God sent the anti-Christ Assyrians to remove Israel from the Promised Land. Judah was slightly more righteous than Israel and God allowed the nation to remain about 136 years longer. Eventually He sent the Babylonians to take Judah captive. From Assyria Israel was dispersed throughout the nations and became known as "the lost ten tribes." Judah eventually returned from Babylon, but her former glory would never return.

Following on the next page is a list of Judah's and Israel's kings, noting which were righteous and which were anti-Christ. Those who fell away were not necessarily anti-Christ, but those who were evil from the beginning were certainly anti-Christ in their spirits. ❖