

The Divided Kingdom and Exile

by Joelee Chamberlain

Let's talk some more about the kings of Judah and Israel, the two nations of the Jews. All right? But first, let's go back for just a couple of minutes and think about how all of this started. How did there get to be two nations of Jews? In fact, where did the children of Israel, the Jews, come from in the first place?

Well, it goes clear back to the very beginning of the Bible, doesn't it? First God created everything, the sun and earth and plants and animals and people, didn't He? Adam and Eve were in the Garden of Eden, but they ate the fruit they weren't supposed to, and God had to send them out of the Garden of Eden, remember? Then they had lots of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren, and lots of these were very bad. Finally they got so bad that God washed the earth all clean again with the big Flood. But do you remember who was saved from the Flood? Yes, Noah and his 3 sons and their wives. Then these sons began having lots of children and grandchildren and great-grandchildren. And finally God chose Abraham to be the beginning of the Jews. Well, then Abraham had a son named Isaac, and Isaac had a son named Jacob. And God gave Jacob another name. What was that name, do you remember? That's right! It was Israel. So Israel's, (that is Jacob's) descendants were called the children of Israel. And how many sons did Jacob have? Yes, Jacob had 12 sons. Some of the sons' names were Joseph and Benjamin and there was Levi (from whom later the priests would all be descended) and Judah (from whom much later David and the kings of Judah would all be descended.)

But back to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Next after Jacob had these 12 sons, there came the big famine where there was no food, and they all went to live in Egypt where one of the sons, Joseph, was a big leader. In Egypt they had lots of children and grandchildren until finally the descendants of Jacob became a great big nation, and the Egyptians made them be slaves. Then God sent them a leader to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt. Do you remember who that leader was who led them out of Egypt? Yes, it was Moses! Moses led the children of Israel out of Egypt, and when they didn't trust God to take care of them, they had to wander for 40 years in the desert, didn't they? After the 40 years were up, Moses died, and who was the next big leader of the children of Israel, do you remember? That's right, it was Joshua. And Joshua led the children of Israel out of the wilderness and into the land of Canaan which God had promised they would have. And God always keeps His promises, doesn't He?

Well, now that the children of Israel, the Jews, were in the promised land, sometimes they were good, but many times they were bad and would start worshiping idols (which is very wicked and also very silly to do). Then God would let their enemies come in and conquer them so that they would remember to turn back to the Lord God, the only real God. When they would be sorry for their wickedness and turn back to God, then God would send them a judge who would deliver them from their enemies, wouldn't He? Do you remember some of the names of these judges? We talked about Ehud, Gideon, Deborah, and Samson, didn't we? But who was King of the Jews during all of this time? It was the Lord God Himself, wasn't it? But then finally the Jews wanted a man to be their king, a man that they could see. So God had the last judge, Samuel, anoint a man to be their king. Do you

remember this first king's name? Yes, it was Saul. And who was the next king of the Jews, the second one? That's right, it was David. This is the same David who was the great-grandson of Ruth (remember when we talked about Ruth and Boaz?). And this was the same David who had killed the big giant, Goliath. And this was the same David who wrote many of the Psalms in the Bible, and David was descended from Judah. But David became king after Saul was killed in battle, and David loved God very much, and God loved David. The Lord God promised David that David would have a descendant who would be king forever. (That, of course, is Jesus, who was a great-great-great-great-grandson of King David.) When David was very old, David had his son Solomon made to be king. Solomon was the wisest man in the world. But then after Solomon died, the kingdom became divided into two kingdoms.

But why had that happened? Why had God allowed His special people to become two countries instead of just one big kingdom? Do you remember? Yes, it was because of King Solomon, the son of good King David, wasn't it? Remember how the Lord had made Solomon to be the wisest man on earth and the greatest and the richest? At first Solomon had worshipped only the Lord God and followed what the Lord said. And Solomon had built the beautiful temple for God. But then remember how Solomon had married lots of wives from countries that didn't worship the real God; they worshipped idols. Then when Solomon got old, Solomon started building altars to the idols, the false gods for his many wives, and began thinking about those false gods and sort of forgetting the only God, the Lord God. So the Lord had told Solomon that He was going to take 10 parts of the kingdom, 10 of the 12 tribes of Israel, away from Solomon's son after Solomon died. God was only going to leave two parts, two of the tribes, with Solomon's son and grandsons. God was going to leave two tribes with them. One tribe because of David (Solomon's father) and one tribe because of Jerusalem, the city where God had put His own name.

Then when Solomon died, his son Rehoboam had very foolishly told the people who came to him that he was going to make things even harder for them than his father Solomon had. Remember that? So what had 10 of the tribes done then? That's right. They had gone away from Solomon and chosen Jeroboam to be their king. So now there were two countries of the Jews, just as God had said there would be. These two countries were called Judah and Israel, weren't they? Solomon's son, Rehoboam was king of Judah (2 tribes) in the south of the land. Judah is where the city of Jerusalem and the temple were. And then Jeroboam was king of Israel, the biggest part (the 10 tribes), in the northern part of the land.

Now, all of the kings of the kingdom of Judah would be descended from King David. They were all grandsons and great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons of King David, but none of the kings of Israel were descended from King David.

Well, Rehoboam, Solomon's son (David's grandson), started being king to his two tribes in the land of Judah in the southern part of the country, the two tribes that he had left after the 10 tribes had gone away from him. He built cities to defend Judah and made strong forts and put food and weapons in them.

But in the meantime, Jeroboam was the king of Israel, in the northern part of the land. And

now that Jeroboam was king of the 10 tribes in the north part of the land, what do you think he began thinking about? Well, Jeroboam got to thinking, "We are supposed to worship the Lord in Jerusalem at the temple. And we are supposed to offer our sacrifices to the Lord at the temple in Jerusalem." And that worried him. Jeroboam thought, "If the people all keep going down to Jerusalem in the kingdom of Judah all of the time to offer sacrifices to the Lord, they're going to start wanting to have Solomon's son, Rehoboam, to be their king again. Then they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam, king of Judah." Jeroboam didn't stop to think and then realize that the Lord who had given him, Jeroboam, those 10 tribes could also keep the 10 tribes with Jeroboam. Jeroboam wasn't trusting the Lord to take care of him, was he?

So what do you think Jeroboam, king of Israel did? He did something very, very wicked. Why he built two big altars, one way up in one end of the kingdom of Israel and one way down in the other end of the kingdom of Israel. And he made two statues of calves out of gold and put one with each of the two altars. Then Jeroboam, king of Israel, called his people together and said to them, "Look! See your gods, O Israel, the gods who brought you up out of the land of Egypt!" Now wasn't that both very silly and very wicked of Jeroboam?! Those golden statues of calves hadn't done anything, had they? In fact, he'd just had them made! And statues can't do anything anyway, can they?! So that was a very silly thing to say. But are we supposed to make statues and say they are God or to remind us of God -- are we supposed to make idols? No!! So that was also a very wicked thing for Jeroboam to do as well as being very silly, wasn't it? But Jeroboam had built those idols. He meant for the statues to remind the people of the Lord so that they wouldn't go down to Jerusalem. But, again, shouldn't Jeroboam have trusted the Lord Who had given him the kingdom to let him keep the kingdom?

Well, the people in the kingdom of Israel began offering sacrifices on these two altars and not going down to Jerusalem as they were supposed to do. Do you think the Lord God would like this? Of course not!! The people of Israel were being disobedient and also very wicked in offering sacrifices to those statues. Those Jews in the kingdom of Israel were actually worshipping idols, weren't they?!

Now, when the Lord had told Moses way back in the wilderness how to worship the Lord, the Lord had said that only certain people, the Levites, could do the work for the worship, and only certain Levites, the descendants of Moses' brother Aaron, could be priests. But Jeroboam made his own priests for his golden calf idols from men who weren't Levites. And Jeroboam had the Levites stop being priests in the land of Israel. So the Levites and priests all began going down to the kingdom of Judah and being with King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, there. So, making those idols, those golden calves, the very thing that Jeroboam had done to keep people from going to Judah made some of the really good people actually move down to the kingdom of Judah, didn't it?!

Well, Jeroboam, king of the kingdom of Israel, decided to have a big sacrifice at one of the altars for the golden calves that he had made. He said there would be a big celebration and big feast, and he called the people of Israel to come to it, and King Jeroboam himself went there to burn incense on the altar of the golden calf.

Well, God sent a man of God, a prophet, from the kingdom of Judah and God had this prophet go up into the kingdom of Israel. We aren't told his name. He is just called "the man of God." Anyway,

this man of God went to where Jeroboam was having the big sacrifice. Jeroboam was standing by the altar of the golden calf and was going to burn incense. (This altar would have had something like a big open box on it and there would be fire burning inside of the box part and ashes in it from the fire.)

The man of God called out to the altar of the golden calf. The man of God said, "O altar, altar, this is what the Lord says, `There will be a descendant of David who will be born. His name will be Josiah. Josiah will come and burn on you the bones of the priests who have sacrificed incense on you!'" Then the man of God said, "This is a sign that it is the Lord who says this. Behold, this altar will break and the ashes that are on it will spill out!"

Well, while the man of God was shouting this, King Jeroboam of Israel was standing right by the altar. King Jeroboam stretched out his hand and said, "Grab him!" But God made Jeroboam's arm stiff so that Jeroboam couldn't bring his hand and arm back down! And what do you think happened to the altar? Why, it broke and the ashes poured out of it, just as the man of God had said it would! That was a miracle, wasn't it?! But what God says will happen, always does happen, doesn't it?

But, as I just said, Jeroboam's arm was all stiff, so Jeroboam said to the man of God, "Oh, please, pray to the Lord your God for me so that my hand will be all right again." I guess he was scared -- or at least he should have been! Anyway, the man of God prayed to the Lord, and Jeroboam's hand was all right again. So that was another miracle, wasn't it?

Then King Jeroboam wanted to give the man of God a reward, but the man of God wouldn't take a reward.

Now, you'd think that after all of that, that Jeroboam wouldn't want to have those idols now, wouldn't you? But he did. He kept right on worshipping the golden calves, and since he was the king, lots of the people in the kingdom of Israel did what the king did and worshipped the golden calves, too. Do you think the Lord liked this? No, of course not! And later a prophet said that the kingdom would be taken away from Jeroboam's family because of these golden idols of calves.

Now, Jeroboam had to know that making these idols was very wicked, didn't he? But he did it anyway. And he'd done it after it had been the Lord, the only real God, who had made him king of Israel! And, remember, kings and other leaders have to be very careful to follow the Lord, because if the leaders do wrong things, then the other people will start doing wrong things. Jeroboam had made the idols, the statues of the calves, and the people were now worshipping them. The king had started this evil worshipping of idols. And just as they had started doing bad things in their worship, having idols, now they also started doing bad things to each other, being mean to each other. They were getting more and more wicked.

Well, Jeroboam was king of Israel for 22 years, and then Jeroboam died and one of his sons became king of Israel. This son was very wicked, but he was only king for 2 years because someone came and killed him and then made himself to be the king of Israel. And Jeroboam's family wasn't king of Israel anymore, just as the prophet had said.

Now, I'm not going to go into all of the details, but the kingdom of Israel, the 10 tribes, didn't stop worshipping idols, and they got more and more wicked because of that, and they were treating each other worse and worse because of that. And they had nothing but trouble because of it. The man who had killed Jeroboam's son in order to be king himself, was king of Israel until he died, and then his son became king. But after a short time someone else came and killed this king and made himself king of Israel, and then that king was killed by someone else who made himself king of Israel. This kept going on and on. A man would kill the king and make himself king. Maybe that man's son and grandson would become kings after him, but eventually someone would kill them and make himself king of Israel.

This went on for many, many years. And in all of that time, there wasn't even one good king of Israel. Just think of that! Not even one good king in the kingdom of Israel that had the 10 tribes! All of their kings worshipped idols and were very wicked. And many of the people of the kingdom of Israel just did what their king was doing and worshipped idols and did other evil things, too. And when people start doing one bad thing, they usually keep on doing more and more bad things, don't they? Well, that is what happened in the kingdom of Israel.

Now, the very worst king of Israel was named Ahab, and King Ahab married a very wicked woman named Jezebel. The Lord had said that the kings of the Jews were only to marry Jewish women. But Jezebel wasn't a Jew; she was from another country, and this other country didn't worship God, they worshipped idols. And Jezebel brought her own idols to Israel with her, and she encouraged Ahab to worship these other idols as well as the golden calves and to do other very bad things. There are some very interesting stories in the Bible about Ahab. There isn't time to tell you these stories now, but I'll tell you some stories about Ahab another time. But for now let's just see what happened to the kingdom of Israel as they were being so wicked.

Well, do you think the Lord was paying any attention to all of this wickedness? Of course He was. And the Lord kept sending prophets to the kings and people of Israel to warn them, to tell them to stop worshipping idols and to warn them to stop being mean to each other. And the prophets also warned them by telling them what would happen if they didn't stop being so wicked. But the people of Israel didn't pay any attention to the prophets. Two of the greatest prophets were named Elijah and Elisha. Elijah was the prophet who warned wicked King Ahab, but Ahab didn't like it and wouldn't be good, and Ahab's wife Jezebel wanted to kill Elijah. But the Lord protected Elijah. At another time I will tell you some very exciting stories about the prophet Elijah and also about the prophet Elisha, but there isn't time to tell them now. And do you know who another of the prophets was? Jonah! Yes, Jonah, the one who was swallowed by the big fish, was a prophet who warned the people of Israel! And I'll tell you about him another time, too. Again, there just isn't time now.

Well, finally the kingdom of Israel was so very wicked that the Lord let some evil people from the country of Assyria come and capture them and take the people of Israel away to other countries. You see, God wasn't protecting Israel anymore, because they were being so wicked and wouldn't pay any attention to the Lord's prophets. Assyria conquered other countries, too. The capital city of the kingdom of Assyria was Ninevah, the city that the Lord had the prophet Jonah go to and preach to. Anyway, after being conquered by the Assyrians, the Jews from the kingdom of Israel had to

live in these other countries, all scattered around away from their own country, for over 200 years until they finally repented, were sorry for being so bad and turned back to the Lord. And then eventually the Lord let them go back to their own land. We're not going to go into that right now, but we'll talk about that in just a little bit.

But, while all of that was happening to the 10 tribes in the kingdom of Israel, what about the kingdom of Judah, where Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was king, the kingdom with just the 2 tribes that would have kings descended from good king David? What were they doing all of this time? Well, first of all, the kings of Judah didn't kill each other like the kings of Israel had done. In Judah, a man would be king until he died, and then his son would become king until he died, and then his son would become king. Judah had some good kings, but they had some bad kings, too. The bad kings worshipped idols. Often the good kings would destroy the idols, but then a bad man would become king, and he would have more idols made. They did this even after they saw how the Lord had let the Assyrians come and take the other Jews in the kingdom Israel away as captives because they had worshipped idols. They just didn't learn, did they?

Now, as I said before, the kings of Judah were all descended from King David. The good kings of Judah and the bad kings of Judah were all grandsons and great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons of David. Sometimes a good man would be king of Judah, and that good king would destroy the idols. Josiah was one of those good kings. Now what had the man of God told Jeroboam that a king named Josiah would do, do you remember? That's right, the man of God had said that a king named Josiah who was descended from David would burn the bones of the priests of that altar right there on the altar, hadn't he? And that's just what Josiah did!

You see, Josiah became king of Judah when he was only 8 years old! Josiah loved the Lord very much, and Josiah hated idols. So when Josiah was grown up, first he broke all of the altars to idols in Judah, and then Josiah went up into Israel and broke down the altars to the idols there, too. And he burned the bones of the dead priests of those idols on Jeroboam's altar, just as the man of God had told Jeroboam that he would. So that prophecy came true, didn't it? But then, of course, all of God's prophecies come true, don't they!?

Well, Josiah loved God very much and worshipped only the Lord God, but after Josiah died, Josiah's sons and grandsons who became kings after him worshipped idols and were very wicked. I'm not sure, but it sounds like maybe they had actually even taken idols inside the Lord's temple! And all of this time God had been sending prophets to Judah to warn them over and over again that God would punish the kingdom of Judah if they didn't stop being so wicked, just as the kingdom of Israel had been punished for their own wickedness. Two of the prophets were named Isaiah and then later Jeremiah. You may have heard of them.

Now, not everyone in Judah was worshipping idols, but lots and lots of them were. So finally, after warning and warning them for many years, the Lord punished the kingdom of Judah by letting the Babylonians with Nebuchadnezzar as their king come in and conquer Judah. Remember how the Assyrians had conquered the kingdom of Israel? Well, that was a long time before this, and now Assyria wasn't a big important country anymore, but Babylon was. And the king of Babylon,

Nebuchadnezzar took the people of Judah away as captives and destroyed the beautiful temple Solomon had made and broke down the city and walls of Jerusalem. The Lord let Nebuchadnezzar do this to the people of Judah because the Lord loved them and needed to punish them in order to teach them to stop being so very wicked and especially to teach them that those idols weren't gods at all. Only God is God, isn't He? Those false gods couldn't help them, could they?

Some of the young men of Judah were taken to Babylon and sent to school there and then they worked for Nebuchadnezzar. Four of these young men of Judah were Daniel and his friends Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego! You've heard of them, haven't you?! Also Ezekiel, the great prophet, was carried away to Babylon.

Now, the Lord had said through his prophets that the people of the kingdom of Judah would be captives in Babylon for 70 years. And, of course, whatever the Lord says, whatever He prophesies, always happens, doesn't it? Well, during that 70 years when the Jews were captives in Babylon is when Daniel became very important in the kingdom of Babylon, and he was a prophet, too. It was also during this time that Nebuchadnezzar had Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego thrown into the fiery furnace but God protected them from the fire and they were all right. (You know that story, don't you?!) But after a while God had other people called the Medes and Persians come in and conquer the whole kingdom of Babylon. And the Medes and Persians had Daniel still be a very important man in their kingdom. And it was during that time that Daniel, who was an old man by then, was thrown into the lions' den, but the Lord saved him from the lions, didn't He. Another time I'll tell you those stories about Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, but not right now. There isn't time now.

Well, during that 70 years that the Jews were captives of the Babylonians and then of the Medes and Persian, the Jews realized how very wicked they had been to forget about the Lord God and to worship idols and do all sorts of other evil things. They were sorry about it and they turned back to the Lord and asked Him to forgive them.

So at the end of the 70 years, the Lord kept another of His promises to the Jews. You see, way before Nebuchadnezzar was born, even way before good king Josiah was born, in fact, about 100 years before Jerusalem was destroyed, the Lord had a prophet named Isaiah to tell them that a man named Cyrus would give orders that the city of Jerusalem was to be rebuilt and that the Lord's temple was to be rebuilt. And the Lord always keeps His promises, doesn't He?

So at the end of the 70 years, the Lord kept this prophecy, this promise to the Jews by having Cyrus, who was then the king of Persia, give orders that the Jews could go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the city of Jerusalem and rebuild the temple of the Lord God. Many of the Jews both from the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah went back then and finally rebuilt the temple, though they didn't rebuild the city of Jerusalem yet. Later a man named Ezra led another group of Jews back to Jerusalem. Then a few years later a man named Nehemiah went and encouraged them and helped them with the rebuilding of the city of Jerusalem itself. We have books named Ezra and Nehemiah in the Bible, don't we? These books tell about that time when the Jews went back and rebuilt the temple and then rebuilt the city of Jerusalem. I'll tell you more about Ezra and Nehemiah another time. Again, there just isn't time now.

And it was during these times that beautiful Esther was queen of Persia. I'm sure you've heard about Esther. I'll tell you more about beautiful Queen Esther another time, too.

So the Jews, both from the kingdom of Israel and the kingdom of Judah, the Jews who wanted to, finally were able to go back to their land. And they never, ever worshipped idols again. But they never had another king of their own again. Always some other country had a king over them. Remember, the Babylonians had captured Judah and carried them away captive. But, remember, after a while the Medes and Persians had captured the kingdom of Babylon. And that is where the history in the Old Testament ends, while the Persians are in power. But the Old Testament also ends with the promise of the Messiah who would come. But then later, after the end of the Old Testament writings, we know from history that the Greeks came and conquered the kingdom of Persia and all of the lands around them. Alexander the Great was their king when the Greeks first conquered them. Maybe you've heard of Alexander the Great? Then after a long time with the Greeks ruling everyone, then the Romans with Julius Caesar as their king came and conquered all the lands there, including the land of the Jews. The Romans ruled for many, many years. And it was the Romans who were ruling during the whole time of the New Testament. The Romans were ruling when Jesus, the Son of God, came to earth and died on the cross for our sins. You see, Jesus was this Messiah that the Old Testament had talked about.

Now, do you remember Daniel, the one who was thrown into the lions' den? Well, Daniel had prophesied that all of these nations would come! Yes, Daniel had prophesied about Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonian empire and about the Medes and Persians and their empire and about the Greek empire. And Daniel had prophesied about another great empire that would come (we know now this was the Roman empire), and Daniel had prophesied about the Messiah, the Christ, who would come and would die for our sins. (That's Jesus, of course, isn't it?) And all of those things happened didn't they? What God's prophets say always happens, doesn't it!?)

Now, as I just said it was prophesied that Jesus would come and die for our sins. And we're all sinners, aren't we? And we all deserve to be punished for our sins, don't we? And that punishment would be that we couldn't go to heaven and be with God. But remember, if we trust Jesus to take the punishment for us, He will forgive us and then someday when we die, we can go to heaven and be with Him forever.

But do you remember that I said that one time that the Lord had promised King David that he would have a descendant who would sit on the throne of David forever? If the Jews never had a king of their own again, how would God keep His promise to them? Yes, that's right! God will keep His promise through Jesus! The Lord Jesus Christ is the Messiah, isn't He? Remember, Mary, the mother of Jesus, was a great-great-great-granddaughter of King David. And someday Jesus, who is alive in heaven, someday Jesus, the great-great-great-great-grandson of King David, will come back to earth, and Jesus will be King of everyone then, won't He? And He will be our King forever. God always keeps His promises, doesn't He?!

Wow! There is a lot we talked about today! And I have sort of rushed through a lot of this,

haven't I? But I wanted you to get an idea of the whole story first. I'll go back other times and fill in with some of the other exciting stories, such as about wicked King Ahab and the prophet Elijah, and about some of the prophet Elisha's miracles, and about Jonah who gets swallowed by the big fish, and about Ezra and Nehemiah, and about Daniel, and about beautiful Queen Esther. But there just isn't time now for all of those stories this time, but, you can see that there are lots and lots of good stories left to tell, aren't there?!

So, now, let's just think a minute more. What have we talked about this time? That's right. We've talked about how the kingdom of the Jews was divided into two kingdoms, Judah and Israel. Then Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, was the king of Judah, and Jeroboam was the king of Israel. We talked about how Jeroboam started the worship of the golden calves and made it so that the Jews in the kingdom of Israel began to sin by worshipping idols. Then God had a prophet tell Jeroboam that the kingdom would be taken away from his family, and, of course it was. We talked about how there wasn't even one good king of Israel. They were all very wicked, and they all worshipped idols. And Ahab was the worst of those bad kings. And then finally God had the Assyrians come and capture the kingdom of Israel and take them away as captives. And that was the end of the kingdom of Israel with the ten tribes, wasn't it?

Then next we talked the kingdom of Judah with the two tribes of Judah and Benjamin and how all of their kings were David's grandsons and great-grandsons and great-great-grandsons. Some of them were good kings, like Josiah, but some of them were bad kings. But finally they got so bad that God had Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, come and capture them and take them away for 70 years.

And then lastly we talked about how the Jews finally realized how wicked they had been and turned back to God, so finally after the 70 years, Cyrus, king of Persia, allowed them to go back to the land of Judah and live there and rebuild the temple and rebuild the city of Jerusalem.

This is all told about in several books of the Bible. I and II Kings tells mostly about the kings of Israel. Then II Chronicles tells mostly about the kings of Judah. Then next in the Bible come the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, and they tell about when the Jews went back and rebuilt the temple and the city of Jerusalem. And some of the other stories are told in the book of Esther and in the books written by the prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel.

But what is the most important things to remember in all of this? The most important thing of all is to remember that we must always worship God and nothing else. Nothing else is God, is it? Only God is God. And the Lord God tells us about Himself in the Bible. And the most important thing that the Bible tells us is how we can have our sins forgiven and be able to go to heaven and be with Him, isn't it? And how do we do that? Why, by believing in the Lord Jesus Christ who died on the cross for our sins, by trusting Him to save us. God said He would save us if we believe on Jesus, and God always keeps His promises, doesn't He? And if we do trust the Lord Jesus to save us, we will want to obey the Lord, the One we trust, too, won't we?

Now, let's think for just a minute. Remember that I said that the prophets of the Lord God made prophesies about what would happen? Remember how I said that Daniel prophesied about the

kingdoms of Babylon and of the Medes and Persians and of the Greeks and of another kingdom? And that all happened, didn't it? It came true. Well, Daniel also prophesied about the Messiah, about Jesus, that Jesus would come someday and destroy all the wicked kingdoms and set up a kingdom that was only good and that Jesus would be the king of that kingdom!

And remember how I said that Isaiah had prophesied about Cyrus and how Cyrus would have Jerusalem and the temple rebuilt after 70 years? Did that happen? Did that prophecy of Isaiah come true? Yes, of course! Well, Isaiah had also prophesied that Jesus would come and die for our sins. Did that happen? Did Jesus come and die for our sins? Yes, of course! Now, that would be the first time that Jesus came to earth. Isaiah prophesied a lot of things about Jesus, and they all happened. But Isaiah also prophesied that Jesus would come again, a second time. In the book of Isaiah in the Bible we can read about what a wonderful time that will be when Jesus comes again. Why, the animals will all get along with each other and with people! Lions and lambs will lie down together to rest. And everything will be beautiful, too. Why, Isaiah tells us that when Jesus, the Messiah, comes back to earth, that even the desert will be full of flowers and plants, sort of like the Garden of Eden! Won't that be wonderful? And Jesus will be the king of all of this! And God has promised through His prophets that someday no one will ever get sick anymore and no one will die anymore and no one will ever be unhappy again anymore at all.

Now, all of this that the Lord's prophets said, do you think it will all really happen? Will Jesus really come back someday and destroy everything that's bad and set up a very, very good kingdom and be king of it and make everything good? And someday will no one ever be unhappy or sick or die? Of course, because that's what God's prophets said in the Bible!! Why, the prophets said that Jesus would come the first time and die for our sins, and Jesus did. Right? And we know that whatever God's prophets say will happen always does happens doesn't it? So we know that someday Jesus will come back again, and He will make everything all good and beautiful and happy, and if we have trusted Jesus to save us from our sins, we will be with Jesus forever and ever!! God has promised that in the Bible, so we know it's true, don't we? And Isaiah and Daniel weren't the only prophets in the Bible to tell us about this. There are many other books in the Bible written by other prophets that talk about it, too. When you get older, you can read those for yourself.

My! That was a lot for one time, wasn't it? I hope you enjoyed it, though.

Have you liked hearing about the kingdoms of Judah and Israel? Even though the countries disobeyed and God had to punish them, when they were sorry for their sins and turned back to God, they were able to go back to their own land. Other times I plan to go back and fill in stories about people who lived during this time. Stories about the great prophet Elijah and wicked King Ahab, and stories about the prophets Elisha and Jonah and Daniel and about Ezra and Nehemiah and about beautiful Queen Esther. Would you like that?