



ANTI-CHRIST

PART VI

ISRAEL IN THE LAND THE MONARCHY – DAVID & SOLOMON

Saul ruled over both Judah and Israel. Although Judah was part of the whole nation of Israel, eventually Judah would become distinct from Israel, at least as a civil community. The tribe of Judah occupied the southernmost portion of the Land, sharing a major portion of its northern border with the tribe of Benjamin.

At the time of Saul's death David was staying in Ziklag, a city located somewhere in the Negev within Judah's southern district. He sent word to Jabesh-Gilead, blessing the people there for burying Saul and encouraging them to be strong, and announcing to them that Saul had anointed him king over Judah.

But Abner, the captain of Saul's army, made Saul's son Ish-bosheth king over Israel.

David inquired of YHWH where he should go. YHWH instructed him to go to the town of Hebron, approximately 18 miles southwest of Jerusalem. There, the men of Judah came and anointed David king over the house of Judah.

With Saul's downfall the anti-Christ spirit gained another temporary victory by dividing the two nations. Judah received David as its king, but Israel did not. It would be some seven years before David would rule over Israel, reuniting the twelve tribes as one nation. In the meantime, he would experience numerous conflicts with the anti-Christ spirit in those men and women who succumbed to Satan's deceptions.

The first conflict came with civil war between Israel and Judah, which began with a border skirmish between Judah and Benjamin:

And Abner the son of Ner, and the men of Saul's son Ish-bosheth [Hebrew: "Man of shame"], went out from Mahanaim to Gibeon, and Zeruiah's son Joab and the servants of David went out, and all met together by the pool of Gibeon, and they sat down, the one on the one side of the pool, and the other on the other side of the pool.

And Abner said to Joab, "Let the young men get up now and sport before us."

And Joab said, "Let them get up."

Then there arose and were counted from Benjamin twelve who followed Saul's son Ish-bosheth, and twelve of David's men.

Then each caught the other by the head and thrust his sword into the other's side so that they fell down together. Therefore that place was called Chelqath hats-Tsu-riym ["field of the swords"], which is in Gibeon.

And there was a very severe battle that day, and Abner and the men of Israel were defeated by David's men. (2 Samuel 2:12-17)

From this battle nine of David's men were lost, but three-hundred and sixty Benjamites fell. We don't know if Satan knew specifically that God's plan of salvation rested upon Judah (it was later prophesied by Micah (5:2) that out of Judah the Redeemer would come), but he did know that Israel as a whole fitted into that plan. Therefore he pitted brother against brother beginning with this civil war between the house of Saul (Ish-bosheth) and the house of David.

Abner knew that Saul's house was rejected by God, and that David had been chosen by God to deliver all Israel from its enemies (2 Samuel 3:18), but he chose to side with Saul's son against David until Ish-bosheth angered him with what he claimed was a false accusation (2 Samuel 3:6-11).

Even after Abner went to David promising to deliver Israel to him, David respected Ish-bosheth as the heir to Saul's throne. When the sons of Rimmon, Baanah and Rechab, killed Ish-bosheth on his bed and brought his head to David they expected a reward. But David accused them of murdering an innocent man and had them put to death.

The lesson for us in this act of David is that all authority, even that which opposes God, is established by God and must be respected. David knew that his time would come in which he would be king over all Israel; he did not want that time to come through ungodly means. Yet it was Ish-bosheth's death that occasioned the elders from every tribe of Israel to come to David and make him king over all the nation (2 Samuel 5:1-3)

Even so, the Jebusites, a tribe of Canaanites that lived in and around Jebus (which would be renamed Jerusalem ["God's peace"]), refused to accept David as their king. The anti-Christ spirit in them defied God's order and they even mocked David, claiming that their blind and lame could keep him out of their fortified city (2 Samuel 5:6). But David's army prevailed and he made the city his place of residence. Thus it was called "the City of David."

During Saul's reign the Ark of the Covenant had been taken to Abinadab's house in Kiriath Jearim and remained largely ignored by Israel. David conferred with the officers of his army and decided to bring the Ark to Jerusalem, and this was agreed to by all the people. But it had been so long since the Israelites had handled the Ark that the memory of God's instructions on how it must be carried by priests of the Levites had also been forgotten. Even as Israel believed in YHWH, the anti-Christ spirit had succeeded in erasing the memory of His commandments among the people, though not as thoroughly as he had with all the other nations over the centuries. It was the people's lack of diligence to God's commands that they used an ox cart to bring the Ark to Jerusalem:

Again, David gathered together all the chosen men of Israel, thirty thousand. And David arose and went with all the people that were with him from Baale of Judah, to bring up from there the Ark of God, whose name is called by the name of YHWH of hosts who dwells between the cherubim.

And they set the Ark of God on a new cart and brought it out of the house of Abinadab that was in Gibeah. And Uzzah and Ahio, the sons of Abinadab, drove the new cart. And they brought it out of the house of Abinadab which was at Gibeah, accompanying the Ark of God, and Ahio went ahead of the Ark.

And David and all the house of Israel played before YHWH on all manner of instruments made of fir wood, even on harps, and on psalteries, and on timbrels, and on cornets, and on cymbals.

And when they came to Nachon's threshing floor, Uzzah put out his hand to the Ark of God and took hold of it, for the oxen shook it.

And the anger of YHWH was kindled against Uzzah, and God killed him there for his error, and there he died by the Ark of God.

And David was displeased because YHWH had broken out upon Uzzah, and he called the name of the place Perez Uzzah to this day.

And David was afraid of YHWH that day, and said, "How will the Ark of YHWH come to me?"

So David would not move the Ark of YHWH to himself into the city of David, but David carried it aside into the house of Obbededom the Gittite. And the Ark of YHWH continued in the house of Obbededom the Gittite three months, and YHWH blessed Obbededom and all his household. (2 Samuel 6:1-11)

Even David did not understand the holiness of God's commandments pertaining to the Ark. The presence of God dwelt within the Ark; this was understood. But that it must be treated with special honor according to God's commands was not un-

derstood because anti-Christ had removed the memory of those commands from even the Levites. At the least, Israel had become complacent toward them. Whatever the reason, this is why God's anger broke out upon them (1 Chronicles 15:11-16), and Uzzah paid with his life.

God's anger is not so palpable today because of His grace upon His Son whose death atoned for the sins of the whole world (although only those who believe in Jesus have His grace applied to their sins). Yet as long as that grace abounds, the Father's mercy demonstrates that He is slow to anger.

Even in Uzzah's case God was slow to anger. As soon as the Ark was placed upon the ox cart He could have killed those involved. But He waited for His anger to be manifested until Uzzah touched the Ark with his unwashed hands.

We are blessed today to have Jesus as our Intercessor and to enjoy the Father's love and mercy because of our faith in His dear Son. Yet how we must be careful to approach God with pure hearts, attuned to His Word and led by His Spirit. We may not be struck dead by our sins, but we offend Him just the same.

The anti-Christ spirit does not allow us to rest just because we have conquered sin through our faith in Jesus Christ. The battle for our souls continues.

Just so, it did not allow David to rest just because he had conquered the walled city of Jebus and made it the seat of his kingdom. Immediately upon hearing the news that David had been anointed king over all Israel, the Philistines went up in full force to defeat him. But God gave David the assurance of victory and, again, his army prevailed (2 Samuel 5:17-25)

Then David commanded that the Ark of the Covenant be brought to Jerusalem in the proper manner, carried by Levites, with all Israel singing and dancing before the Ark. It is at this point that the anti-Christ spirit welled up in his wife Michal's heart to despise him:

So David, and the elders of Israel, and the captains over thousands, went with joy to bring up the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH out of the house of Obbededom.

And it happened, when God helped the Levites that bore the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH, that they offered seven bulls and seven rams.

And David was clothed with a robe of fine linen, as were all the Levites that bore the Ark, and the singers, and Chenaniah the master of the song with the singers. David also wore an ephod of linen.

Thus all Israel brought up the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH with shouting, and with the sound of the cornet, and with trumpets, and with cymbals, making a noise with psalteries and harps.

And it happened, as the Ark of the Covenant of YHWH came to the City of David, that Saul's daughter Michal, looking out a window, saw king David dancing and playing, and she despised him in her heart. (1 Chronicles 15:25-29)

Sometimes Satan's greatest victories come on the small battle fronts. Unable to destroy David through all the time of Saul's reign, now upon David's ascension to the throne of Israel he sought to harm him through his wife:

Then David returned to bless his household. And Saul's daughter Michal came out to meet David and said, "How glorious the king of Israel was today, who uncovered himself today in the eyes of the handmaids of his servants, as one of the vain fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

And David said to Michal, "It was before YHWH, who chose me above your father, and above all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of YHWH, over Israel. Therefore I will play before YHWH. And I will still be more vile than this, and will be base in my own sight, and of the maidservants of which you have spoken. I will be held in honor by them."

Therefore Saul's daughter Michal had no child to the day of her death. (2 Samuel 6:20-23)

No matter how great a man may be, those closest to his heart are the ones who can wound him the most. An unloving wife can cause a man to lose heart and give up on life - even give up on serving the Lord. It seems that from that time onward David and Michal no longer had relations. Scripture doesn't go into detail, but certainly this must have hurt him. Fortunately he had other wives and concubines, but his love for Michal must have caused him great pain, and the anti-Christ spirit great joy at seeing that love crushed. Yet David chose to honor God above his wife, which was the proper thing to do, and which was a victory over the enemy.

(As a side note, I've heard people who misunderstand Scripture joke that "David danced naked before the Ark." David was not naked; he wore a linen garment and a linen ephod. Michal's snobby remark insinuated that he had "unclothed" himself by removing his kingly apparel and exposing his human nature to the least of servants, as if that were unfitting for a king.)

David's reign was marked by constant battles with the enemies of Israel. Because Israel had not obeyed God in the past, but allowed His enemies to remain in the land unconverted, the anti-Christ had many opportunities to try to destroy the man to whom God promised an eternal kingdom (2 Samuel 7; 1 Chronicles 17). If Satan could destroy David before the promised son (Solomon) could be born, then God's promise could not come to pass. He came close to accomplishing the task but for one man whose heroism is greatly overlooked in biblical history:

Moreover, the Philistines had war yet again with Israel, and David and his men went down and fought against the Philistines. And David grew faint. And Ishbi-Benob, who was of the sons of the giant, the weight of whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of brass in weight, being equipped with a new sword, thought to slay David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah protected him, and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, so that you do not quench the light of Israel." (2 Samuel 21:15-17)

Every time Satan seems to get the upper hand, God finds a man of valor to stand in the gap. Abishai saved Israel that day.

Under David, Israel compiled victory upon victory over its adversaries. Still, the anti-Christ's design to unravel God's purpose for redemption continued unabated. An overwhelming number of Israel's battles were defensive rather than offensive. As long as a heathen tribe did not attack Israel's army it was pretty much left

alone. Some kings, such as the Ammonite Nahash, even treated David kindly. And David was always gracious to return the favor.

One notable attack by anti-Christ came against David even as he attempted to show kindness to Nahash's son Hanun after Nahash's death:

And it happened after this that the king of the children of Ammon died, and Hanun his son ruled in his place. Then David said, "I will show kindness to Nahash's son Hanun as his father showed kindness to me." And David sent to comfort him by the hand of his servants for his father. And David's servants came into the land of the children of Ammon.

And the princes of the children of Ammon said to Hanun their lord, "Do you think that David honors your father, that he has sent comforters to you? Has not David rather sent his servants to you in order to search the city and to spy it out, and to overthrow it?"

Therefore Hanun took David's servants and shaved off one half of their beards, and cut off their clothes in the middle, even to their buttocks, and sent them away.

When they told it to David, he sent to meet them, because the men were greatly ashamed. And the king said, "Wait at Jericho until your beards are grown, and then return."

And when the children of Ammon saw that they stank before David, the children of Ammon sent and hired the Syrians of Bethrehab, and the Syrians of Zoba, twenty thousand footmen, and of king Maacah a thousand men, and of Ish-Tob twelve thousand men. And when David heard of it, he sent Joab, and all the army of the mighty men. (2 Samuel 10:1-7)

Men infected with the anti-Christ spirit do not accept kindness without suspicion. As their hearts are evil, so they believe the hearts of all men are evil, particularly the hearts of godly men. Hanun's evil returned to him through Israel's defeat of the Ammonite and Syrian armies. So great was the defeat that the Syrian king Hadadezer made peace with David and was no longer willing to help the Ammonites. The way was made for Israel to later destroy the Ammonites without having to watch their flank for the Syrians.

Every attempt by Satan to destroy Israel was thwarted. But one of the tactics of warfare is to kill or at the least incapacitate the leader of the army in order to throw it into confusion and weaken its ability to defend itself. Unable to shake David's righteousness by any other means, Satan set the stage for an attack on his flank in a more subtle manner. His weapon was named Bathsheba.

The story of David and Bathsheba is known well enough that we needn't go into great detail. Whether or not David's initial encounter with Bathsheba was accidental or contrived on either or both their parts we cannot know. But this we do know: even the man who was so virtuous that God would call him "a man after My own heart" had a weakness of the flesh, and Satan knew it.

It was bad enough that David committed adultery with Bathsheba, which was punishable by death under Moses' law. But to manipulate circumstances to have her husband Uriah killed compounded his sin.

For a brief time, even David succumbed to the anti-Christ spirit. Perhaps he justified his actions because Uriah and Bathsheba were not Hebrews but Hittites. (Bathsheba would not have been a Hebrew because Hebrew women were constrained from marrying non-Hebrew men, although in captivity some, such as Esther, were taken as wives by the heathens. Hebrew men could marry non-Hebrew women since it is the man's seed that determines the lineage of the offspring.)

But where Satan meant it for evil, God turned it to good. Upon Uriah's death, and after Bathsheba's time of mourning, David married her, continuing to cover up his crime. But he couldn't hide it from God. The prophet Nathan came to David with a story about a rich man who had many sheep but stole the one sheep of a poor man. David responded with righteous anger, declaring that that rich man should die for his crime.

And Nathan said to David, "You are the man. Thus says YHWH God of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of Saul's hand, and I gave you your master's house, and your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if that had been too little, I would moreover have given to you such and such things. Why have you despised the commandment of YHWH, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword, and have taken his wife to be your wife, and have slain him with the sword by the children of Ammon. Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

"Thus says YHWH, 'Look, I will raise up evil against you from out of your own house, and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun. For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, and before the sun.'" (2 Samuel 12:7-12)

Confronted with his sins, David repented and accepted God's chastisement. The price was the life of his son born to Bathsheba. Although David had sinned greatly and suffered the consequences, his heart remained steadfast for YHWH. And God blessed him with another son through Bathsheba - Solomon, through whom the lineage to the Messiah would continue.

How often Christians sin and then let the guilt of that sin keep them from continuing to serve the Lord. This is not meant to minimize the sin, but to remind us that if we confess our sins, as David did (albeit after confrontation by Nathan), God is just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us anew from all unrighteousness (1 John 1:9).

The anti-Christ spirit will not let us forget our sins, and that's okay. But he also will do all he can to keep us from trusting God's forgiveness in order to hinder our service to our Lord. We have to confess our sin, suck it up, and go on, even if we feel like a hypocrite. After all, we are hypocrites to some degree. No one lives their public life exactly the same as they live their private life. Convention, particularly in polite western society, requires that we keep the evil in our hearts unexposed. But we cannot keep it unexposed to our Lord. We all sin daily in some way - of

ten several times daily. The knowledge of our sinfulness is used by Satan to keep us from confidently continuing on in our spiritual service.

Let us learn a lesson from David. Once he confessed his sin he continued steadfastly for the Lord, recognizing the justice of the consequences, yet not letting those consequences keep him from the love of God. His lamentations in the Psalms tell his story and reveal the purity of his heart while acknowledging the sinfulness of his nature.

Sadly, David's sin was such that God accused him of despising Him. God's judgment upon David's house gave the anti-Christ spirit inroads into David's life which were not only sanctioned by God, but directed by Him. This was necessary in order to show Israel then, and us today, the seriousness of sin.

Even though God pronounced a judgment upon David's house, He did not judge the nation for David's sins. David's armies continued to defeat and subjugate the nations that opposed Israel: Rabbah of the Ammonites; Moab; Zobah; Damascus; Edom; Hamath - all fell easily and were plundered by the Israelites.

God's judgment upon David's house was stayed for awhile with the birth of Solomon (Heb: *Shelomoh* - "Peaceful") whom Scripture says God loved. Because God loved Solomon He wanted him called *Jedediah* (Heb: *Yedydeyah* - "Beloved by Yah"). As it turned out, Solomon was aptly named in both cases. He was loved by God, and his kingdom was at peace throughout his reign.

In the meantime, though, Israel under David saw no peace. Least of all did David find peace after his son Absalom came of age. Absalom was David's third son, born to him by Maacah the Geshurite (2 Samuel 3:3). The real trouble began when Absalom killed Amnon his half-brother who had seduced Absalom's sister Tamar then discarded her, disgracing her all the more.

This evil was done with the complicity of David's nephew Jonadab who counseled Amnon to fake illness and request that Tamar bring him something to eat. He was infatuated with her beauty, but after taking advantage of her he despised her. Absalom bided his time until he could find opportunity to kill Amnon. Two years later he invited all of David's sons to join him in a feast at Baal Hazor. There he ordered his men to kill Amnon in the presence of David's sons. Upon seeing Amnon slain they all fled in fear. A rumor began (one of Satan's best tactics) that Absalom had killed all of David's sons. Absalom fled in fear and remained in exile until David was persuaded by Joab to allow Absalom to return. David agreed as long as Absalom remained out of his presence.

Through all this intrigue the anti-Christ spirit wormed its way into the household of David and set the stage for David's conflict with one of his most beloved sons.

After some two years Absalom asked Joab to approach David for permission to live in his household. David relented, and Absalom again lived as a prince in his father's palace. But just as God prophesied through Nathan, Absalom - one from within David's own house - would scheme to capture the hearts of the people away from David. While this was part of God's chastisement of David for his murder of Uriah and adultery with Bathsheba, it also exposed the anti-Christ spirit in Absalom's heart.

Jesus said, "Woe to the world because of offenses, for it is necessary that offenses come. But woe to that man by whom the offense comes!" (Matthew 18:7).

We see in Absalom the same spirit that was in Judas. Just as one closest to Jesus betrayed Him with the hope of enriching himself, so Absalom betrayed David with the same hope. Both succeeded for awhile, but both were destroyed. And the ones they betrayed were resurrected - David to reign over the kingdom of Israel; Jesus to reign over the Kingdom of Heaven.

The account of Absalom's death and David's restoration to the throne makes fascinating reading. I will leave it to you to read this for yourself in 2 Samuel 15:1-19:8. There you will see how God uses the evil of Satan and men for His own purposes.

Just as prophesied, conflict remained with David throughout all his years as anti-Christ was given opportunity to cause division among God's chosen people.

Even after David was restored to the throne a dispute arose between the men of Israel and the men of Judah as to which nation should be favored by the king. Because David returned to Judah, the men of Israel were persuaded by Sheba, son of Bicri, a Benjamite, to rebel against David. Joab pursued Sheba to Abel Beth Maacah and threatened to destroy the city. But a wise woman counseled with Joab to spare the city in return for Sheba's head. She then persuaded the people to kill Sheba and have his head thrown to Joab outside the city wall. Joab spared the city, and Sheba's death resulted in Israel again vowing allegiance to David.

The history of Israel under David is much like the history of believers throughout the ages. The fickleness of our flesh leads us to sin against our Lord; difficulties lead us back to Him. It seems that we are more inclined to live for Him when life's circumstances leave us most vulnerable to troubles. It is the seesaw character of fallen man that causes us to waver. We should take a lesson from David whose character was much like that of the apostle Paul who said, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need. I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me (Philippians 4:12-13).

Unfortunately, many Christians take this verse to mean that "all things" includes things of the flesh - overcoming opponents in athletics; gaining advantage in business; winning office in politics; gaining health and wealth. But the true meaning is that, whatever situation we find ourselves, we must be content, trusting God to work for and through us. It is a spiritual conquest, not a physical or carnal conquest to which Paul is referring.

David had two particular calamities upon Israel with which he had to deal - one due to Saul's sin; another due to David's sin.

The first was a famine in the land which YHWH sent because Saul had broken the oath that Joshua had made with the Gibeonites to spare their lives in the land:

Then there was a famine for three consecutive years in the days of David, and David inquired of YHWH. And YHWH answered, "It is because of Saul, and because of his bloody house - because he slew the Gibeonites."

And the king called the Gibeonites, and said to them (now the Gibeonites were not of the children of Israel,

but of the remnant of the Amorites; and the children of Israel had sworn to them, and Saul sought to slay them in his zeal to the children of Israel and Judah.), therefore David said to the Gibeonites, "What shall I do for you and how shall I make the atonement so that you may bless the inheritance of YHWH?"

And the Gibeonites said to him, "We will have no silver or gold from Saul, or from his house. Nor shall you kill any man of Israel for us."

And he said, "Whatever you say, that I will do for you."

And they answered the king, "The man who consumed us, and who devised against us that we should be destroyed from remaining in any of the coasts of Israel, let seven men of his sons be delivered to us, and we will hang them up to YHWH in Gibeah of Saul, whom YHWH chose."

And the king said, "I will give them."

But the king spared Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan the son of Saul, because of YHWH's oath that was between them - between David and Jonathan the son of Saul. But the king took the two sons of Aiah's daughter Rizpah, whom she bore to Saul, Armoni and Mephibosheth, and the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she brought up for Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite. And he delivered them into the hands of the Gibeonites, and they hanged them in the hill before YHWH. And all seven together fell and were put to death in the days of harvest, in the first days, in the beginning of barley harvest. (2 Samuel 21:1-9)

The number of sons - seven - has significance in many ways. In Pharaoh's dream, which was interpreted by Joseph, the number seven was prominent regarding that famine. The number seven is also prominent in terms of atonement and restoration (Leviticus 4:6 - 26:28; Numbers 23:1-29; the vial and trumpet judgments of Revelation, etc.). The idea is that YHWH Himself may have inspired the Gibeonites to ask for the seven men from Saul's house in order to make the sacrifice perfect.

Through David's atonement on behalf of Israel for Saul's sins God relieved the famine. By today's western standards this seems like an injustice. To the unbelieving it also seems unloving of God to allow or honor such deaths. But YHWH's justice demands atonement for every evil deed. In this case He punished His own people for the wrong done to the heathen Gibeonites, and allowed the Gibeonites to bless Israel. Understand that the heathen in the land acknowledged YHWH as the God of Israel, just as they honored their own gods. They were not part of Israel, but they knew of YHWH's power being greater than that of their own gods.

Here is what seems like a dichotomy. God had commanded Israel to destroy all the people in the Land He had given to Israel. Israel sinned by making a treaty with the Gibeonites (even though the Gibeonites had tricked them into the treaty). But as long as they had made that treaty God held them to it. For Israel to break that treaty was to bring shame upon YHWH by whom they had sworn the treaty. It wasn't Israel's reputation that was at stake but YHWH's. Thus YHWH exacted a penalty that was required by the injured party. It wasn't YHWH's decision to

destroy the men of Saul's house; it was the Gibeonites' decision. But the wronged party had the right to demand whatever atonement they wished, and YHWH's reputation required that Israel comply. So in this case, the heathen were honored over Israel by Israel's own God.

This demonstrates the holiness of God and His perfect justice which confounds men. It also demonstrates God's love for the Gentiles, which would later be manifested in the proclaiming of the Gospel throughout all nations.

The other calamity specifically involved the anti-Christ's influence of David:

And Satan stood up against Israel and provoked David to number Israel. And David said to Joab and to the rulers of the people, "Go, number Israel from Beersheba even to Dan, and bring the number of them to me so that I may know it."

And Joab answered, "YHWH make His people a hundred times so many more as they are! But, my lord the king, are they not all my lord's servants? Why then does my lord require this thing? Why will he be a cause of trespass to Israel?"

Nevertheless the king's word prevailed against Joab. Therefore Joab departed and went throughout all Israel, and came to Jerusalem. (1 Chronicles 21:1-4)

The second book of Samuel records this differently:

And again the anger of YHWH was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, "Go, number Israel and Judah." (2 Samuel 24:1)

Was it YHWH or Satan that moved David? The answer is both. The reason for YHWH's anger against Israel isn't stated in this instance. But whatever the reason, He employed Satan to prompt David into calling for a census of the men who could be mustered for his army. Joab tried to reason with David from the position of YHWH's righteousness, but David did not listen to him. Now here's the twist that confounds men's minds:

YHWH wanted to punish Israel but for some unstated reason He used David, the man after His own heart, to accomplish this. Even though Satan is God's enemy and the enemy of God's people, he must comply with God's wishes. He cannot touch God's anointed without God's permission or order. The account of his attacks against Job reveals this. In this case Satan is moved by YHWH to tempt David. David could have resisted the temptation, but he didn't. This gave YHWH occasion to punish Israel for David's sin. He gave David three choices to atone for his sin:

And David's heart struck him after he had numbered the people. And David said to YHWH, "I have sinned greatly in what I have done, And now, I beseech You, O YHWH, take away the iniquity of Your servant, for I have done very foolishly."

For when David was up in the morning the word of YHWH came to the prophet Gad, David's seer, saying, "Go and say to David, 'Thus says YHWH, "I offer you three things; you choose one of them so that I may do it to you.'"

So Gad came to David and told him, and said to him, "Shall seven years of famine come to you in your land? Or

will you flee three months before your enemies while they pursue you? Or that there be three days' pestilence in your land? Now advise, and see what answer I shall return to Him who sent me."

And David said to Gad, "I am in great trouble. Let us fall now into the hand of YHWH, for His mercies are great, and let me not fall into the hand of man."

So YHWH sent a pestilence upon Israel from the morning even to the time appointed, and there died of the people from Dan even to Beersheba seventy thousand men.

And when the angel stretched out his hand upon Jerusalem to destroy it, YHWH turned Himself from the evil and said to the angel that destroyed the people, "It is enough. Now stay your hand." (2 Samuel 24:10-16)

Let us not think that every evil of the anti-Christ comes without the hand of God involved. Satan is used by God to test the hearts of men. Even the worst that the anti-Christ spirit can do is no more than God allows or, in such a case as this, directs.

It is true that God tempts no man (James 1:13). But that doesn't mean that God does not allow, or even direct, Satan to tempt men in order to test them. God knows the heart. He knew David would be susceptible to this particular temptation in which he placed his confidence in numbers of men rather than in God. (Remember Gideon's three hundred.) He also knew that David's choice would be to allow a plague upon Israel rather than be pursued by men. It was because of God's anger with Israel that He allowed David to be put in that position. Interestingly, while David wanted a census as a means to place his trust in men, he did not trust men enough to be put in their hands. He learned a valuable lesson about trusting in God, but the price was high for Israel.

Yet through all his failures, David remained strong for YHWH and subdued the Land for Israel so that when he died he left his son Solomon with the peaceful conditions under which Solomon could build the first temple.

SOLOMON'S REIGN

Anti-Christ was surprisingly inactive during Solomon's reign. YHWH had promised that as long as Solomon remained faithful He would bless his kingdom with peace. Yet at the very beginning Satan was at work to dislodge him through Adonijah his older brother. Adonijah believed that the people wanted him to be king, but he also acknowledged that YHWH had chosen Solomon. His heart was against YHWH's choice and he supposed that if he could marry Abishag the Shunammite, he could have a part in the throne. Abishag had been one of David's wives or concubines, and it would have been a dishonor for one of David's sons to take her as a wife. He asked his mother Bathsheba to request Abishag as his wife, which Bathsheba agreed to do. Perhaps Bathsheba did not understand this impropriety and the treachery behind it, but Solomon did:

And king Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also, for he is my older brother - even for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah."

Then king Solomon swore by YHWH, saying, "God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life. Therefore now, as YHWH lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day."

And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell upon him so that he died. (1 Kings 2:22-25)

This occasion prompted Solomon to purge his throne of Abiathar the priest whom he replaced with faithful Zadok, and to execute Joab who had conspired with Adonijah (1 Kings 2:28). Thus, Solomon's kingdom was secured:

And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. (1 Kings 4:25)

With all his wisdom and his love for YHWH, Solomon had one fatal flaw: he loved foreign women to his own hurt. And in his last days the anti-Christ spirit was resurrected from the pit:

But king Solomon loved many alien women together with the daughter of Pharaoh - women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites - from the nations concerning which YHWH said to the children of Israel, "You shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in to you. For surely they will turn away your heart after their gods."

Solomon embraced these in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned away his heart.

For it happened, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart away after other gods, and his heart was not perfect with YHWH his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. And Solomon did evil in the sight of YHWH, and did not go entirely after YHWH, as did his father David.

Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that faces Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. And he did the same for all his alien wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

And YHWH was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned from YHWH God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep that which YHWH commanded.

Therefore YHWH said to Solomon, "Inasmuch as this is done by you, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. Notwithstanding, I will not do it during your days for your father David's sake, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away all the kingdom, but will give one tribe to your son for David My servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (1 Kings 11:1-13)

Solomon's account is a type of the Millennial Kingdom during which the whole earth will enjoy peace, but after which Satan will be loosed for a season to deceive the nations to rebel against God.

Because of Solomon's idolatry YHWH caused the kingdom to be split in two, allowing Solomon's house to retain rule over Judah, while the northern kingdom of Israel was given into the hands of Jeroboam son of Nebat, from the tribe of Ephraim:

And it happened at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way. And he had clad himself with a new garment, and the two were alone in the field. And Ahijah took the new garment that was on him and tore it in twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "You take ten pieces, for thus says YHWH, the God of Israel, 'Look, I will tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and will give ten tribes to you, but he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, because they have forsaken Me and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways, to do that which is right in My eyes, and to keep My statutes and My judgments, as did David his father.

"However, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him prince all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, because he kept My commandments and My statutes. But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand and will give it to you - even ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe so that David My servant may have a light always before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself to put My name there. And I will take you, and you shall reign according to all that your soul desires, and shall be king over Israel.

"And it shall be, if you will obey all that I command you, and will walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight to keep My statutes and My commandments as My servant David did, that I will be with you and build you a secure house as I built for David, and will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the seed of David for this, but not forever."

Therefore, Solomon sought to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose and fled into Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. (1 Kings 11:29-40)

Solomon's death is recorded with just a few brief statements. But it marked a dramatic turn of events in the warfare between anti-Christ and God's people.

Judah remained as Solomon's inheritance, but the ten tribes of Israel were taken from him. The priestly tribe of Levi (the twelfth piece of Ahijah's garment), which had no inheritance in the land, remained throughout both Israel and Judah.

The history of both nations reveals the anti-Christ's design to destroy the means by which God's Messiah would come. ❖