

WHICH KING ARE YOU?

Our personality and character makes us individually unique and special as a person. Certain characteristics are traits we inherit, as we discover when our children are born. One child is easy to discipline, but another may be willful and stubborn. Choice and environment can also change us for good; but sadly many times for hurt - and damage is done. The wonderful news is that Jesus loves us as an individual, the shy one and the extrovert alike. The Bible is full of diverse characters and the choices they made; we can learn so much from looking at the Kings of Israel and Judah and Queens with grace and beauty or pride and cruel ambition. We can learn from their mistakes and emulate their triumphs of faith.

The theme of Kingship is at the very root of the “Kingdom of God.” God is Himself called King often in the Bible, and Jesus is the King of Kings. From this one may conclude that all men and women were created to rule with God. Adam and Eve lost their authority and the world had to wait thousands of years before the perfect man Jesus Christ was born. He demonstrates what it means to be a true King, reigning in life with His father.

God’s rule of Israel:

1. Patriarchs: Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.
2. Judges/Prophets
3. Kings
4. Priests

One of the great themes in the Bible is how our first birth through Adam is of sin and carnal, but the second born is a picture or type of Christ, or the spiritual man. In the Bible we can see this pattern repeated:

The First-born / carnal man	The second / spiritual man
Adam	Christ
Cain	Abel
Ishmael	Isaac
Esau	Jacob
1 st generation out of Egypt	2 nd generation out of Egypt
King Saul	King David

The firstborn of Israel had to be presented to the Lord when they were a month old. Since the firstborn was regarded as God's property, it was necessary for the father to redeem, or buy back, the child from the priest. The redemption price, established by the priest, could not exceed five shekels (Num 18:16). Our first birth needs redemption, Jesus paid for this on the cross; now we can receive new birth and our heritage is to be spiritual, not carnal.

Personality Profiles:

1. **Adam:** Intelligent and powerful, but takes the Word of God lightly. Will allow others to do his dirty work and then blames them and the devil when it all goes wrong. Does not admit his faults but always justifies himself.
2. **Jesus Christ:** the true pattern of Kingship. A perfect, faultless and sinless man, who reigned supreme over everything and moved from one level of rule to another. He ruled first over His own soul, till finally through death and resurrection, He sits as King over all in heaven, earth and under the earth.
3. **Saul,** the first King of Israel: A natural leader who likes to do things his own way trusting in his looks and position. Ruthless and jealous of rivals; insecure and impatient and is unable to wait for others. He rarely apologises except when it works to his advantage.
4. **David,** the second King: A truly spiritual worshipper who gets his courage from an unswerving devotion to God. A great leader showing fairness and generosity. He faces up to his serious faults with genuine brokenness.
5. **Absalom,** the son of David: Greedy and ambitious for power. Disloyal and speaks badly of those in leadership in order to cause division. Believes in himself as the best leader.
6. **Solomon,** the third King: Starts off well as a dedicated Christian with a great preaching ministry. Builds a wonderful prosperous church where all flock to hear his wisdom. His ministry is spoiled by women in his life who draw him away into worldliness. The man who has wisdom for others but not for himself.
7. **Jehoshaphat:** the fourth King of Judah: Mr. Nice Guy. A genuinely committed Christian who makes great changes in his life and puts God first. But a man who wants to please everyone; including the world. Makes bad choices with good motives and has to live with the consequences. Naïve but blessed.
8. **Jeroboam,** the first King of Israel after dividing from Judah. Deliberately evil, accepting the blessing of God as the anointed leader, but choosing to start a sect in order to keep supreme control over the people.
9. **Ahab,** the seventh King of Israel: A compromiser, abandoning spiritual values for political ends. Sulky if he doesn't get his own way and will allow evil means to get what he wants. A bad choice of wife dogs his whole life, but he passively allows his weak character to be influenced by her stronger personality. When on his own however, he is genuinely repentant when confronted by the truth, but doesn't have the moral character to follow through.

10. **Athaliah**, daughter of Jezebel, married to Jehoshaphat's son. Like mother – like daughter, a chip off the old block. Very ambitious and scheming and determined to be in control of everyone. She will destroy anyone in her path who gets in her way, even her own friends and family.
11. **Hezekiah**, the 13th king of Judah. A courageous and dedicated man of God determined to stand against the tide of evil around him in the world, and against false worship in the Church. He knows the place of prayer and how to encourage those around him to put their trust in God when things get tough. His only fault was to open his heart to boast of what God had done in and through him when he'd received amazing healing and signs.
12. **Manasseh**, son of Hezekiah, the 14th king of Judah. The son of a great godly leader who rebelled against everything his father stood for. His hatred for the things of God drives him into sin and depravity with the intention of taking as many with him as possible. Desperate trouble causes him to cry out in repentance to the God of his father and he is forgiven and restored. A real prodigal.
13. **Josiah**, the 16th king of Judah. A teachable, lovely character desiring to find God for himself at a young age. He hates worldliness and sin, and seeks God for spiritual revival and a love for the Word of God in the Church. All around him flourish as he gives spiritual leadership and he receives personal prophecy of the approval and favour of God. His flaw is to believe in his own invincibility and that God will protect him in foolish and unnecessary exploits, endangering and cutting short his very blessed life.
14. **Zedekiah**, a weak and indecisive man, often changing his mind through fear of what others think. He is always seeking words from God, but will not act on them.
15. **Vashti**, confident and proud, assuming her good looks and wealth will enable her to get away with bad behavior. She doesn't mind humiliating her husband in public.
16. **Esther**: a gentle sweet character who listens to others, but is courageous and bold to stand up for what is right. Her inner beauty outshines her stunning good looks.
17. **The Herods**:
 - Herod the Great; the ultimate antichrist, ruthless and evil, determined to destroy God's people
 - Herod Antipas; a man led astray by lust: he silences the convicting voice of God and then wonders why He won't speak to him.
 - Herod Agrippa I; arrogant and calculating. He tries to gain popularity at any expense even by destroying others. His inflated ego receives and encourages flattery.

- Herod Agrippa II; listens to the gospel with knowledge and interest but has too much to lose. He is “almost” persuaded.

Tables showing the Kings

King	Start of Reign	Verdict	Length of reign	Prophets
Saul	1051 BC	Good>Bad	40	Samuel
David	1011	Good	40	Nathan
Absalom	?	Bad	days	
Solomon	971	Good>Bad	40	

Kings of Israel	Kings of Judah	Start of Reign	Verdict	Length of reign	Prophets to Judah	Prophets to Israel
1.Rehoboam		931 B.C.	Bad	17		
	1.Jeroboam	931	Bad	22		Ahijah
2.Abijah		913	Good	3		
3.Asa		911	Good	41		
	2.Nadab	910	Bad	2		
	3.Baasha	909	Bad	24		Jehu
	4.Elah	886	Bad	2		
	5.Zimri	885	Bad	7 days		
	6.Omri	885	Bad	12		
	7.Ahab	874	Bad	22		Elijah
4.Jehoshaphat		870	Good	25		Micaiah
	8.Ahaziah	853	Bad	2		Elisha
	9.Joram	852	Bad	12		
5.Jehoram		848	Bad	8		
6.Ahaziah		841	Bad	1		
	10.Jehu	841	Bad	28		
7.Athaliah		841	Bad	6		
8.Joash		835	Good>Bad	40	Joel?	
	11.Jehoahaz	814	Bad	17		
	12.Jehoash	798	Bad	16		
9.Amaziah		796	Good>Bad	29		Jonah
	13.Jeroboam2	782	Bad	41		Amos/Hosea
10.Uzziah		767	Good>Bad	52	Isaiah	
	14.Zechariah	753	Bad	6 months		
	15.Shallum	752	Bad	1 month		
	16.Menahem	752	Bad	10		
	17.Pekahiah	742	Bad	2		
	18.Pekah	740	Bad	20		
11.Jotham		740	Good	16	Micah	
12.Ahaz		732	Bad	16		
	19.Hoshea	732	Bad	9		
13.Hezekiah		716	Good	29		
14. Manasseh		687	Bad>Good	55		
15.Amon		642	Bad	2		Nahum
16.Josiah		640	Good	31	Zeph/Jerem	
17.Jehoahaz		609	Bad	3 months		
18.Jehoiakim		609	Bad	11	Habbakkuk	
19.Jehoiachin		597	Bad	3 months		
20.Zedekiah		597	Bad	11		
		592			Ezek/Daniel	
		587			Obadiah	
		520			Hagg/Zech	
Esther		478	Good			
		458			Ezra	

		445			Nehemiah	
		433			Malachi	
Herod Gt		37 – 4BC	Bad	33	Baby Jesus	
Herod Antipas		4BC – AD39	Bad	43	John Baptist	
Herod Ag I		AD37 – 44	Bad	7	James/Peter	
Herod Ag II		AD50 – 100	Bad	50	Paul	

1. Adam: made to rule creation but who lost his kingship.

Personality: *Intelligent and powerful, but takes the Word of God lightly. Will allow others to do his dirty work and then blames them and the devil when it all goes wrong. Does not admit his faults but always justifies himself.*

Adam was created in the image of God and was created sinless. He was to reign as king over all creation and to guard and cultivate the paradise which was created for him. He named and ruled over all creatures and the keeping of the garden was achieved without the “sweat of his brow.” He was to build a relationship with his wife and walk with God. He had freedom to enjoy and reign over all of creation. Adam’s authority and kingship was a gift of God; an authority derived from a willing and loving submission to his Creator. Satan was allowed to tempt the man and his wife and his kingship was now under threat from the devil.

- Adam chose deliberately to disobey the command of God
- Creation was no longer under his control – the ground was cursed, the environment became hostile
- Adam and Eve lost access to the tree of life and closeness to God
- His own son, Cain, killed his brother Abel.
- Sin and death now reigned

2. Jesus Christ, the true pattern of Kingship.

Personality: *the true pattern of Kingship. The perfect, faultless and sinless man, reigning supreme over everything and moving from one level of rule to another. He ruled first over His own soul, till finally through death and resurrection, He sits as King over all in heaven, earth and under the earth.*

Jesus is called the second Adam – the Son of God sent to redeem us from the curse of the fall. He shows the true pattern of kingship.

And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. (1 Cor 15:45)

For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous. (Rom 5:19)

- Jesus Christ was born of the line of David through his stepfather, Joseph, which made Him the legal heir to the throne of Israel. It would have been King Joseph His father, and Queen Mary His mother! He was of the seed of David through His mother who was of the line of David through Nathan whereas Joseph was of the line of David through Solomon.
- Jesus was born to be King even though He was not able to take the throne during His life time because of the usurper Herod. When Jesus was born, Herod was troubled as is every man who has usurped the place of Jesus. (Matt 2:2-6). Herod tried to kill the Messiah! This is an incredible pride since He believed the prophecy of Messiah.
- John Baptist came announcing the coming Kingdom of Messiah. Matt 3:2. He baptized Jesus and God anointed Him King and Priest at the Jordan.
- Jesus resisted temptation in the wilderness and thus proved Himself King of the first realm – that of our own body and mind.
- Jesus taught the manner of the kingdom in the sermon on the mountain. Here He taught:
 1. The door to the Kingdom – the beatitudes 5:1-12.
 2. The righteousness of the Kingdom – chapter 5.
 3. The Priesthood of the Kingdom – chapter 6.
 4. The assurance of the Kingdom on judgment day – chapter 7
- Jesus ruled over sickness, and death by His royal will: 8:3.
- The Church would have a major role in the Kingdom but the Kingdom is greater than the Church. (16:19).
- The King who will judge the world Matt 25.
- The communion – the feast of the Kingdom 26:26.
- The King crowned with thorns 27:27-30 ruling the midst of spite and mocking.
- The King in the Resurrection given all power and authority in heaven and earth 28:18.

3. Saul the first King of Israel and a type of the carnal man.

Personality: *A natural leader who likes to do things his own way trusting in his looks and position. Ruthless and jealous of rivals; insecure and impatient and is unable to wait for others. He rarely apologises except when it works to his advantage.*

Saul was the first King of Israel and as such was the type of the carnal man. Saul was given the Kingdom but lost his position through carnality.

The roots of Saul's carnality:

Saul neglected the ark and the presence of God. 1 Chronicles 10:13 tells us that Saul did not enquire of the Lord. 1 Chronicles 13:3 also tells of the fact that Saul did not enquire of the ark which symbolizes the Presence of God. The result of this tragic neglect was that Saul slowly became deaf to God. He did not listen to God and therefore did not obey the Lord. The most stinging rebuke ever given to a man in the Bible is the rebuke of Samuel in 1 Samuel 15:22-23. These verses speak of the Lord's displeasure in Saul because he would not listen or obey. Saul's attempt to sacrifice to the Lord was rejected because the Lord values obedience above sacrifice, and listening above the fat of rams.

The signs of Saul's carnality:

- **Saul disobeyed.** He tried to sacrifice when he was forbidden to do so by the written word of God. Saul was not of Levi, he was of Benjamin, and so committed a direct act of disobedience when he approached the altar of the Lord: 1 Samuel 13:10-14.
- **Saul made foolish vows and commandments,** he tries to hold power over his people by ordering them to fight without eating; and yet backs down from punishing Jonathan when the people oppose such an irrational act of slaying the one who had brought victory. 1 Sam 14:45
- **Saul was filled with fear in the face of his enemies:** 1 Samuel 17:11. Saul was the tallest man in the army of Israel and also was the only soldier who had iron armour; but his heart was fearful because he had neglected the word and presence of the Lord. Fear drives out faith. Faith drives out fear. The choice is either to seek His word or be a victim of the spirit of fear.
- **Saul was jealous of the success of men around him,** especially David. This led him to be filled with murderous thoughts of destroying David: 1 Samuel 18:8-9, and 19:10. Saul was so consumed with this jealousy that he became irrational and close to madness: 1 Sam 19:24.
- **Saul became paranoid** and believed there was a conspiracy against him involving everybody: 1 Sam 22:8. This is paradoxical since no one was against him. Saul is chronically depressed and troubled by a demon: 1 Sam 16:14. It is at this point that the

Spirit of the Lord leaves Saul (1 Sam 16:14). It must be remembered that this was not a hasty departure by the Spirit. The Spirit of the Lord had been grieved for years but had not left him, and it was only after many years that the Spirit finally left him.

- **Saul confesses his sin without true repentance:** when confronted with David's forgiveness and lack of vengeance, he admits he is wrong, but is not able to change and deeply repent: 1 Sam 26:21.
- **Saul murders the priests of God,** and commits a great sin against God himself: 1 Sam 22:16-19.
- **God refuses to speak to Saul** at the end of his life. 1 Sam 28:6 He is so isolated and cut off from God through years refusing to obey His voice. This is a most serious sign of carnality, and indicates a spiritual state in serious decline.
- **Saul enquires of a witch:** 1 Sam 28:8, when unable to hear God, he quickly turns to the witch of Endor - backsliding completely from a zeal that had filled his heart in earlier days: 1 Sam 28:3 and 9.
- **Saul is driven to complete defeat and finally to suicide:** 1 Sam 31:4.

4. David a man after God's own heart.

Personality: *A truly spiritual worshipper who gets his courage from an unswerving devotion to God. A great leader showing fairness and generosity. He faces up to his serious faults with genuine brokenness.*

David is a type of the spiritual man and demonstrates the keys to spiritual authority.

David's spirituality:

David is a spiritual man, and his spiritual life is presented to us in his prayer life in the Psalms. He meditates in God's word (Psalm 1:2-3). He waits on God (Psalm 62:1). He loves God's presence (Psalm 23). He is filled with praises (Psalm 34:1). David has an inner life that is filled with praises and love for God.

The marks of David's spirituality:

- **David is able to hear God's voice:** 1 Sam 23:2-5. Meditating on God's word, waiting quietly on God, loving God, all these things make the heart sensitive to His voice.
- **David is fearless in the face of opposition.** He fearlessly attacks the bear, the lion and Goliath: 1 Sam 17:34-36.
- **David loves his enemies** even after they have tried to kill him: 2 Sam 19:6. This love for his enemies includes Saul whom he is unable to kill: 1 Sam 24 and 26.
- **David is able to encourage himself** in the face of disaster, and when all are against him: 1 Sam 30:6. He does not give into the depression that threatens his soul.
- David sinned with Bathsheba and his sin was very grievous; but he was able to find the place of repentance very quickly and completely. He did not become depressed and

morose like Saul, but brought himself to God for cleansing: Psalm 51. As a result he was able to face the future with a sense of fresh cleansing and without condemnation.

- **David was able to humble himself** and submit to Saul's leadership even though he knew Saul was an unspiritual man. He honored the Lord's anointed: 1 Sam 24:10 and 26:9-10. David saw himself as a flea or dead dog: 1 Sam 24:14. It is this ability to assess his life accurately despite his great successes in battle that made David bring peace to Israel and thus maintain unity.

The healing of divisions caused by a clash of personalities:

This can be achieved through a humbling and dying to self, leading to a love for those who sometimes seem to be our enemies. David could point to the prophetic guidance of Samuel the man of God who anointed him king: 1 Sam 16:1. He could point to superiority over Saul in the battle with Goliath, but none of these things made him hurry or spoil God's plans by fighting carnally for his rights.

Dying to self, preferring of others as higher than ourselves, and love for our enemies, are the simple keys to unity amongst God's servants.

5. Absalom, the usurper and the cause of division and strife.

Personality: *Greedy and ambitious for power. Disloyal and speaks badly of those in leadership in order to cause division. Believes in himself as the best leader.*

David's guilt and sin with Bathsheba was at the root of his son Absalom's rebellion. David's inability and lack of will to deal with the problem over Tamar and his eldest son probably made Absalom take the law into his own hands.

- Absalom was the most handsome man in Israel and had many talents and abilities. But he was also spoiled, impatient, and overly ambitious.
- He kills his half brother for violating his sister Tamar then goes into exile.
- David his father eventually brings him back to Jerusalem but does not see him.
- Absalom secretly charms and wins over the people and then is anointed king
- David flees Jerusalem; the army of Absalom is defeated. David mourns deeply.

Absalom's vanity and pride led to his tragic death. His body was cast into a pit, over which a great heap of stones was piled as a sign of contempt (2 Sam 18:17). In Church life ambitious men can disturb the harmony of the Church by promoting themselves and seeking to take over the functions of the leader. Usurping leads to disaster and is not the spirit of the kingdom. Men must submit even to lesser men, awaiting God's appointed time.

6. Solomon, the man who had wisdom for others but not for himself.

Personality: *Starts off well as a dedicated Christian with a great preaching ministry. Builds a wonderful prosperous church where all flock to hear his wisdom. His ministry is spoiled by women in his life who draw him away into worldliness. The man who has wisdom for others but not for himself.*

Great beginnings as the third king of Israel:

- Became king at the age of 20 at a time of great material and spiritual prosperity
- Solomon's first act as king was to offer sacrifice to God at Gibeon
- God blesses his request for wisdom and adds to him riches and honour if he will walk in the steps of his father David.
- Solomon becomes famous as a man of wisdom, many come from afar to hear him
- He builds and dedicates the Temple with a great spirit of devotion
- Solomon becomes the ruler of a huge commercial empire

Solomon's sins:

- His greatest sin was loss of devotion to God: 1 Kings 11:4.
- The constant influx of wives and concubines (probably given with trade agreements) eventually led to his downfall. 1 Kings 11:1.
- Foreign wives were allowed to practice their pagan religions: 1 Kings 11:2.
- Solomon participated in these idolatrous acts: 1 Kings 11:5-6
- Near the end of his life, the king lost the ideals of his youth, becoming restless and unsatisfied. His writings in Ecclesiastes, proclaiming that "all is vanity," support the view that the world's wisest man had become a pathetic figure in his old age.

Conclusion:

Solomon had a great beginning but it is how we finish that matters most. Building godly character is difficult in times of success that can lead to indulgence and self

congratulation. Many Christians start with youthful zeal and dedication, but don't carry it through into mature years. He was a man of peace at any cost and stopped drawing lines to limit idol worship. He lost the sense of moral clarity for the sake of peace.

7. **Jehoshaphat: The man who wanted to please everyone but lacked foresight of the consequences of his actions. Mr. Nice Guy - Naïve but blessed.**

Personality: *Mr. Nice Guy. A genuinely committed Christian who makes great changes in his life and puts God first. But a man who wants to please everyone; including the world. Makes bad choices with good motives and has to live with the consequences. Naïve but blessed*

The fourth King of Judah - "Jehoshaphat, who sought the Lord with all his heart." (2 Chron 22:9).

Jehoshaphat received an excellent heritage from his father Asa, who in the earlier years of his reign showed a reforming spirit in seeking God (2 Chron 15). Jehoshaphat's faith in God led him to "delight in the ways of the Lord" (2 Chron 17:6). He attacked pagan idolatry and he sent teachers to the people to teach them more about God (2 Chron 17:6-9). In affairs of state, Jehoshaphat also showed a willingness to rely on the Lord. In a time of danger he prayed for God's help (2 Chron 20:6-12).

Alliance with evil:

But in his dealings with Ahab, king of Israel, Jehoshaphat made some serious mistakes. Through the marriage of his son, Jehoram, to Ahab's daughter, Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab (2 Chron 21:5-6). This alliance led to even further dealings with the wicked king of Israel (2 Chron 18), which the prophet Jehu rebuked (2 Chron 19:1-3). Jehoshaphat lacked the moral courage to say no to Ahab. This nearly led to his death. He lacked the spiritual clarity to see the disastrous consequences of marrying his son off to the daughter of Jezebel. This led to the death of all his great grandchildren except one.

Jehoshaphat and his father Asa are bright lights against the dark paganism that existed during their time. Both father and son had certain weaknesses, but their faith in the Lord brought good to themselves as well as God's people during their reigns.

8. Pure evil - Jeroboam, the idolatrous first King of the north.

Personality, *Deliberately evil, accepting the blessing of God as the anointed leader, but choosing to start a sect in order to keep supreme control over the people.*

The first king of Israel after dividing from Judah (the ten northern tribes, or the Northern Kingdom), a state established after the death of Solomon (1 Kings 11:26-14:20). The son of Nebat and Zeruah, Solomon's son, Rehoboam, dealt foolishly with his inherited kingdom causing the northern ten tribes to leave under the leadership of Jeroboam. He was given a wonderful prophecy by Ahijah before he became King:

"However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in my ways and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you." 1 Kings 11:37-38

To prevent them from journeying to Jerusalem for the festivals and observances at the Temple of Solomon; Jeroboam told his countrymen: "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kings 12:28). One golden calf was erected in Bethel and one in Dan.

Once committed to this sinful direction, Jeroboam's progress was downhill. He next appointed priests from tribes other than Levi. He offered sacrifices to these images and gradually polluted the worship of Israel. The Lord confronted Jeroboam by sending him an unnamed prophet who predicted God's judgment on the king and the nation.

Although outwardly he appeared to be repentant, Jeroboam would not change his disastrous idolatry. His rebellious, arrogant attitude set the pattern for rulers of Israel for generations to come. Eighteen kings sat on the throne of Israel after his death, but not one of them gave up the golden calves.

9. Ahab, the compromiser, abandoning spiritual values for political ends. His marriage to Jezebel magnified his evil tendencies.

Personality: *A compromiser, abandoning spiritual values for political ends. Sulky if he doesn't get his own way and will allow evil means to get what he wants. A bad choice of wife dogs his whole life, but he passively allows his weak character to be influenced by her stronger personality. When on his own, however, he is genuinely repentant when confronted by the truth, but doesn't have the moral character to follow through.*

The son of Omri and the seventh king of Israel (1 Kings 16:30). He made a political marriage to Jezebel, the notoriously wicked daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians (1 Kings 16:31).

Jezebel's evil influence led Ahab to:

- Build a temple to Baal in which he erected a "wooden image" of the Canaanite goddess Asherah (1 Kings 16:33).
- Oppose the worship of Jehovah, destroy His altars, and kill His prophets.
- Obtain Naboth's vineyard through lies and murder (1 Kings 21:1-16).
- Seek the life of Elijah to destroy him.

When Elijah met Ahab in Naboth's vineyard, the judgment of God was first to Ahab himself. 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' 1 Kings 21:19. Ahab was guilty for allowing his wife Jezebel to do all kinds of evil without stopping her. The judgment of God was severe on them both; but Ahab humbled himself in sackcloth before the Lord:

Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: "Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son."

1 Kings 21:28-29.

10. Athaliah, the anti-Christ spirit trying to prevent the birth of Messiah.

Personality: *Like mother – like daughter, a chip off the old block. Very ambitious and scheming and determined to be in control of everyone. She will destroy anyone in her path who gets in her way, even her own friends and family.*

Athaliah, who married Jehoshaphat's son, inherited her mother Jezebel's ruthlessness. She was a tyrant whose every whim had to be obeyed. As her mother had done in Israel, Athaliah introduced Baal worship in Judah and in so doing destroyed part of the Temple. Athaliah married Jehoram (or Joram), son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. Jehoram reigned only eight years and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who died after reigning only one year. Desiring the throne for herself, Athaliah ruthlessly killed all her grandsons-except the infant Joash, who was hidden by his aunt (2 Kings 11:2). God had promised to bring the Messiah through the line of David; the anti-Christ spirit tries to eradicate the people of God, as did Haman, Herod and Hitler.

11. Hezekiah, man of faith, with a minor flaw.

Personality: *A courageous and dedicated man of God determined to stand against the tide of evil around him in the world, and against false worship in the Church. He knows the place of prayer and how to encourage those around him to put their trust in God when things*

get tough. His only fault was to open his heart to boast of what God had done in and through him when he'd received amazing healing and signs.

The 13th king of Judah. "Jehovah is strength"

Reformer.

- As a godly king his first act was to purge, repair, and reopen the Temple
- He rooted out Canaanite fertility cults and other pagan contaminations.
- He removed "the high places" - centres of contaminated worship on hilltops
- He removed and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the asherah (2 Kings 18:3-7; 2 Chron 29:1).
- A still more decisive act was the destruction of the bronze serpent of Moses (cf. Num 21:9), which had become an idolatrous object.
- His great reformation was followed by the celebration of the Passover (chap. 30), to which not only all Judah was summoned but also the remnant of the ten tribes.

Warrior.

- He retook the Philistine cities that his father had forfeited.
- He dispossessed the Philistines of their own cities except Gaza and Gath
- He built up his country's defenses so that he might eventually throw off the Assyrian yoke his father had saddled upon it by alliance (2 Kings 16:7-9).
- Jerusalem was given an adequate water supply in the event of siege (32:30)
- Sennacherib, the Assyrian king captures the fortified cities of Judah and Hezekiah tries to buy peace with all his gold, and temple treasures.
- The Assyrians, despite their boasts, were not able to take Jerusalem.
- At the height of the siege, Hezekiah cries to the Lord and an Angel destroys 185,000 of the Assyrian camp. Sennacherib returns to Nineveh in defeat.

When Hezekiah experienced a serious illness, the prophet Isaiah informed the king that he would die. In response to Hezekiah's prayer for recovery, God promised him 15 additional years of life. God also provided a sign for Hezekiah as evidence that the promise would be fulfilled. The sign,

one of the most remarkable miracles of the Old Testament, consisted of the sun's shadow moving backward ten degrees in the Sundial of Ahaz (Isa 38:1-8).

Shortly after he recovered from his illness (Isa 39:1), Hezekiah received visitors from the Babylonian king, Merodach-Baladan (2 Kings 20:12). They came with letters to congratulate Hezekiah on his recovery and to inquire about the sign (2 Chron 32:31) in the land. But their real reason for visiting may have been to gain an ally in their revolt against Assyria. When they lavished gifts upon Hezekiah, he in turn showed them his wealth - an action that brought stiff rebuke from Isaiah (2 Kings 20:13-18).

12. Manasseh, the evil dictator.

Personality: *The son of a great godly leader who rebelled against everything his father stood for. His hatred for the things of God drives him into sin and depravity with the intention of taking as many with him as possible. Desperate trouble causes him to cry out in repentance to the God of his father and he is forgiven and restored. A real prodigal.*

The 14th king of Judah, the son of Hezekiah, born to Hephzibah (2 Kings 21:1-18). Manasseh reigned longer (55 years) than any other Israelite king and had the dubious distinction of being Judah's most wicked king. He came to the throne at the age of 12, although he probably co-reigned with Hezekiah for ten years. His father's godly influence appears to have affected Manasseh only negatively, and he reverted to the ways of his evil grandfather, Ahaz.

Committed to idolatry, Manasseh restored everything Hezekiah had abolished. Manasseh erected altars to Baal; he erected an image of Asherah in the Temple; he worshiped the sun, moon, and stars; he recognized the Ammonite god Molech and sacrificed his son to him (2 Kings 21:6); he approved divination; and he killed all who protested his evil actions. It is possible that he killed the prophet Isaiah; rabbinical tradition states that Manasseh gave the command that Isaiah be sawn in two. Scripture summarizes Manasseh's reign by saying he "seduced them [Judah] to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel" (2 Kings 21:9).

Manasseh was temporarily deported to Babylon where he humbled himself before God in repentance (2 Chron 33:11-13). Upon Manasseh's return to Jerusalem, he tried to reverse the trends he had set; but his reforms were quickly reversed after his death by his wicked son Amon.

13. Josiah, the spiritual man whose flaw was to believe in his own invincibility.

Personality: *A teachable, lovely character desiring to find God for himself at a young age. He hates worldliness and sin, and seeks God for spiritual revival and a love for the Word of God in the Church. All around him flourish as he gives spiritual leadership and he receives*

personal prophecy of the approval and favour of God. His flaw is to believe in his own invincibility and that God will protect him in foolish and unnecessary exploits, endangering and cutting short his very blessed life.

The 16th king of Judah (2 Kings 21:23-23:30).

Background:

The deep repentance of Josiah's grandfather, Manasseh, made little impact on his wicked son Amon; who reigned only two years before being assassinated. The people anointed Josiah as king when he was only eight years old and apparently was blessed with God-fearing advisors who resisted the idolatrous influence of his father. More importantly, however, at the age of 16, Josiah personally "began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chron 34:3).

Judah's happiest years:

The three decades of Josiah's reign were characterized by peace, prosperity, and reform. King Josiah devoted himself to pleasing God and reinstating Israel's observance of the Mosaic Law.

The three stages of Josiah's reform:

- Ascending to the throne at age eight, Josiah was blessed with God-fearing advisors who resisted the idolatrous influence of his father. At the age of 16 Josiah personally "began to seek the God of his father David" (2 Chron 34:3).
- At the age of 20, Josiah began to cleanse Jerusalem and the land of Judah of idolatrous objects (2 Chron 34:3-7). His reform was even more extensive than that of his predecessor, Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4; 2 Chron 29:3-36). Josiah extended his cleansing of the land into the territory of fallen Israel; at the time Israel was nominally controlled by Assyria. Josiah personally supervised the destruction of the altars of the Baals, the incense altars, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images as far north as the cities of Naphtali..
- At the age of 26, Josiah ordered that the Temple be repaired under the supervision of Hilkiah, the high priest. In the process, a copy of the Book of the Law was discovered (2 Chron 34:14-15). When it was read to Josiah, he was horrified to learn how far Judah had departed from the law of God. This discovery provided a new momentum for the reformation that was already in progress.

Untimely end:

In 609 BC Josiah attempted to block Pharaoh Necho II of Egypt as he marched north to assist Assyria in her fight with Babylon for world supremacy. Necho warned Josiah in the name of the Lord not to oppose him, but Josiah engaged Necho in battle at Megiddo. He was

seriously injured and died in Jerusalem, after reigning 31 years. His death was followed by widespread lamentation (2 Chron 35:20-27).

14. Zedekiah, the foolish King who would not heed the warnings of the prophets.

Personality: *a weak and indecisive man, often changing his mind through fear of what others think. He is always seeking words from God, but will not act on them.*

The last king of Judah (597 BC - 586 BC). The son of Josiah, Zedekiah was successor to Jehoiachin as king (2 Kings 24:17-20; 25:1-7; 2 Chron 36:10-13). After Jehoiachin had reigned only three months, he was deposed and carried off to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar installed Zedekiah on the throne as a puppet king and made him swear an oath that he would remain loyal (2 Chron 36:13; Ezek 17:13). Although he reigned in Jerusalem for 11 years, Zedekiah was never fully accepted as their king by the people of Judah.

Because Zedekiah was a weak and indecisive ruler, he faced constant political unrest. Almost from the first he appeared restless about his oath of loyalty to Babylon, although he reaffirmed that commitment in the fourth year of this reign (Jer 51:59). However, he was under constant pressure from his advisors to revolt and look to Egypt for help. A new coalition composed of Edom, Moab, Ammon, and Phoenicia was forming against Babylon, and they urged Judah to join (Jer 27:3). Adding to the general unrest was the message of false prophets who declared that the yoke of Babylon had been broken (Jer 28).

In his ninth year Zedekiah revolted against Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah and besieged Jerusalem. While Jerusalem was under siege, other Judean cities were falling to the Babylonians (Jer 34:7).

The final months of the siege were desperate times for Zedekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. The king made frequent calls on the prophet Jeremiah, seeking an encouraging word from the Lord. Jeremiah's message consistently offered only one alternative: surrender to Nebuchadnezzar in order to live in peace and save Jerusalem. To his credit, Zedekiah was not arrogant and heartless (Jer 36:22-23). But he regarded God's prophetic word superstitiously and "did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord" (2 Chron 36:12).

In July, 586 BC the wall of Jerusalem was breached, and Zedekiah fled the city. The army of the Babylonians pursued the king, overtaking him in the plains of Jericho. He was brought before Nebuchadnezzar and forced to watch the slaying of his sons. Then his own eyes were put out and he was led away to Babylon (2 Kings 25:6-7). Zedekiah died during the years of the CAPTIVITY of the Jewish people in Babylon. His reign marked the end of the nation of Judah as an independent, self-governing country.

15. Vashti: the queen who shamed her husband in public

Personality: *confident and proud, assuming her good looks and wealth will enable her to get away with bad behavior. She doesn't mind humiliating her husband in public.*

VASHTI - (one who is desired) - the beautiful queen of King Ahasuerus (Xerxes I), whose Empire covered most of the known world.

She was banished from court for refusing the king's command to come wearing her royal crown so that he could display her beauty to the nobles (Est 1:11). Vashti's refusal to come brought great shame and dishonor to the King and humiliated him in public. Some may sympathise with her courage and refusal to be shown-off, but it seems that her downfall came because of pride in her beauty and position. Vashti lost access to the King through lack of respect and thought she would get away with it because of her beauty and crown.

16. Esther: the woman who risked her life for the good of Israel.

Personality: *a gentle sweet character who listens to others, but is courageous and bold to stand up for what is right. Her inner beauty outshines her stunning good looks.*

The Jewish queen of the Persian king Ahasuerus (Xerxes). Esther saved her people, the Jews, from a plot to eliminate them. A daughter of Abihail (Est 2:15; 9:29) and a cousin of Mordecai (Est 2:7,15), Esther was raised by Mordecai as his own daughter after her mother and father died. Esther was a member of a family carried into captivity about 600 BC that later chose to stay in Persia rather than return to Jerusalem. Her Jewish name was Hadassah, which means "myrtle" (Est 2:7).

The story of Esther's rise from an unknown Jewish girl to become the queen of a mighty empire illustrates how God used events and people as instruments to fulfill His promise to His Chosen People. Ahasuerus had "all the beautiful young virgins" (Est 2:3) of his kingdom brought to his palace to choose Vashti's replacement.

Scripture records that "the young woman [Esther] was lovely and beautiful" (Est 2:7). The king loved Esther more than all the other women. He appointed her queen to replace Vashti (Est 2:17).

At the time, Haman was Ahasuerus' most trusted advisor. An egotistical and ambitious man, Haman demanded that people bow to him as he passed-something which Mordecai, a devout Jew, could not do in good conscience. In rage, Haman sought revenge, not only on Mordecai but also on the entire Jewish population of the empire. He persuaded the king to issue an edict permitting him to kill all the Jews and seize their property.

With great tact and skill, Esther exposed Haman's plot and true character to the king. As a result, Ahasuerus granted the Jews the right to defend themselves and to destroy their enemies. With ironic justice, "they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai" (Est 7:10).

Even today Jews celebrate their deliverance from this edict at the Feast of Purim (Est 9:26-32), celebrated on the 14th and 15th days of the month of Adar.

17. The Herods: the unlawful Kings, ruling without right.

Personalities:

- *Herod the Great; the ultimate antichrist, ruthless and evil, determined to destroy God's people*
- *Herod Antipas; a man led astray by lust: he silences the convicting voice of God and then wonders why He won't speak to him.*
- *Herod Agrippa I; arrogant and calculating. He tries to gain popularity at any expense even by destroying others. His inflated ego receives and encourages flattery.*
- *Herod Agrippa II; listens to the gospel with knowledge and interest but has too much to lose. He is "almost" persuaded.*

The Herods were a family dynasty which got into power through cooperation with Rome. They were Idumeans, who were descendants of Esau (Edomites). Antipater was installed as procurator of Judea by Julius Caesar, the emperor of Rome, in 47B.C. He appointed two of his sons to ruling positions. One of these was Herod the Great, who was appointed governor of Judea.