

Set Apart 5: Worshipping God (Mar. 20, 22 & 24)

INTRODUCTION

(1) How would you define “worship”? (2) Describe a powerful (and memorable) worship experience in your life. (3) What are things that prevent us (distract us) from all-out worship?

VIDEO & GROUP DISCUSSION

By the time Kings Hezekiah and Josiah came along, they had to spend time and energy reforming the kingdom from the negative choices that many bad rulers had made before them. Hezekiah and Josiah are known for having a heart for God and being good leaders of their people. And as we learn from the example of the kings of Israel and Judah, these two factors have a direct correlation.

Q1 – Have you found in your own experience that those who have a heart for God make strong leaders?

Q2 – Would you agree that “as goes the heart of the leader, so the people’s hearts will follow”? Explain your answer.

Read **Exodus 20:3-5**

³ You shall have no other gods before me. ⁴ You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. ⁵ You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I the LORD your God am a jealous God, punishing children for the iniquity of parents, to the third and the fourth generation of those who reject me.

Q3 – What is God’s instruction about the worship of idols?

Q4 – Why does it matter to God whether or not people worship things other than God?

Q5 – What are some of the most common idols of our day?

Q6 – What things have you turned to in the past to “quench your thirst” and meet your needs, only to find that they cannot hold water?

Read **Numbers 21:4-5**

⁴ From Mount Hor they set out by the way to the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; but the people became impatient on the way. ⁵ The people spoke against God and against Moses, “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and we detest this miserable food.”

Q6 – What are the people’s complaints?

Q7 – Share a time when you’ve become impatient while waiting for God’s plans and purposes to be realized in your life.

Read **Numbers 21:6-9**

⁶ Then the LORD sent poisonous serpents among the people, and they bit the people, so that many Israelites died. ⁷ The people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned by speaking against the LORD and against you; pray to the LORD to take away the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people. ⁸ And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." ⁹ So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live.

Q8 – Describe God’s unusual response to the people’s complaints.

In **John 3:14-15**, Jesus makes reference to the bronze serpent on the pole.

¹⁴ And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, ¹⁵ that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

**Q9 – Why does Jesus say he must be lifted up?
How is Jesus’ death the antivenom for sin?**

Read **2 Kings 18:4**

He removed the high places, broke down the pillars, and cut down the sacred pole. He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the people of Israel had made offerings to it; it was called Nehushtan.

**Q10 – What did King Hezekiah do to the bronze snake?
Why did he do this?**

Q11 – How easy is it for us to fall into the trap of worshipping the gift instead of the Giver?

Read **2 Chronicles 30:1**

Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover to the LORD the God of Israel.

Q12 – What was the proclamation of King Hezekiah?

Q13 – How does the practice of lifting God up and remembering God’s mighty acts in our lives keep us centered in a life of true worship?

Application

Q14 – What did you learn about worshipping God this week?

Q15 – What did you learn this week about God? About yourself?

Q16 – What changes have you made – or will make – in your life as a result of studying Hezekiah’s story?

CLOSING PRAYER

(Note for the Leaders & Self- Study guide) for Lesson 5

*The Bible writers are clear that there are good kings and bad kings. The key was the orientation of the king's heart. Bad kings chased after idols. Good kings honored the one true living God. The heart of the king was very important to God because whatever the king worshipped, the people followed.

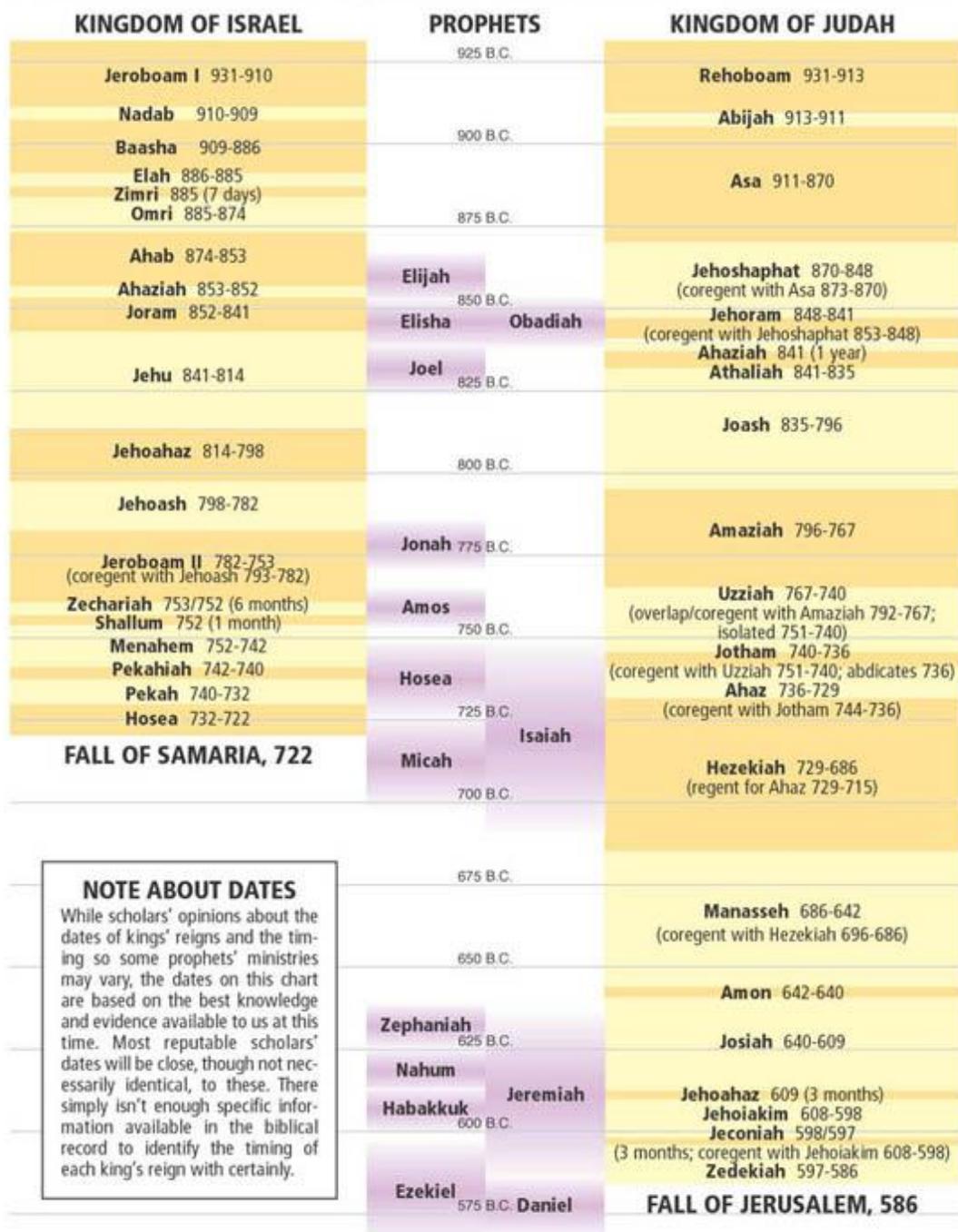
*Idol worship – substituting or supplementing anything for God's place in our lives – not only turns us away from God who is our help, but also turns us toward things that “cannot hold water” (Jeremiah 2:13). In the very first commandments, God clearly states how we are to treat idols.

*On the journey from Egypt to the Promised Land, God's people complain about the lack of food and water. God provides for their needs, but it never seems to be enough.

*Perhaps for years, the bronze snake had been lifted up as a symbol of God's miraculous healing. ***“Here's the snake,”*** they might have said. ***“Look up at it and worship God. Remember God's great gift of healing in our time of need.”*** But over the years, a curious thing happened. The snake, once a gift, became an idol. When people looked at it, they forgot that the power to heal comes from God. The people began burning incense and praying to the bronze snake instead of turning to God.

* Just as with counterfeit goods, the best way to recognize and rid the kingdom of counterfeit gods was to spend time with the real deal. Hezekiah not only kicked out the counterfeits but called people to worship the One, True, Living God.

Rulers and Prophets of Israel and Judah



NOTE ABOUT DATES
 While scholars' opinions about the dates of kings' reigns and the timing so some prophets' ministries may vary, the dates on this chart are based on the best knowledge and evidence available to us at this time. Most reputable scholars' dates will be close, though not necessarily identical, to these. There simply isn't enough specific information available in the biblical record to identify the timing of each king's reign with certainty.