**Kings of Israel and Judah**Israel had no king; everyone did what was right in his own eyes (Judges 21:25). God raised up Samuel to lead the people (1 Samuel 3:4). All of Israel knew that Samuel was established to be a prophet of the Lord (1 Samuel 3:20). Samuel judged Israel all the days of his life, and when he was old he made his sons judges over Israel (1 Samuel 8:1). Israel rejected the sons, refused to obey Samuel and demanded a king (1 Samuel 8:19-20). When Samuel reported their request to God, the Lord answered, “Listen to them and give them a king” (1 Samuel 8:22).  
  
Saul was the first king. He was of the tribe of Benjamin, which, in the days of the judges, had almost been annihilated. Tall, handsome and humble, Saul began his reign with a brilliant victory over the Ammonites. Any misgivings about the new “kingdom” disappeared. But success rapidly went to his head, and humility gave place to pride. He offered sacrifice, which was the exclusive function of priests, showing his presumed self-importance. He deliberately disobeyed God, causing God to tell Samuel; “I am grieved that I have made Saul king, because he has turned away from me and has not carried out my instructions” (1 Samuel 15:10). Saul reigned unsuccessfully from 1049 B.C. to 1009 B.C., then he “took his own sword and fell on it” (1 Samuel 31:4).  
  
David, although anointed as king when just a boy, did not “take the throne” until after Saul’s death (2 Samuel 2:4). David was short of stature, ruddy, of beautiful countenance, handsome, of immense physical strength and great personal attractiveness. He was a man of war, prudent in speech, very brave, very musical and very religious. His most recognized “claim to fame” was God’s promise that David’s family should reign forever. “A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse [David’s father] and from his roots a Branch [Jesus] will bear fruit” (Isaiah 11:1). After Saul’s death, David was made king over Judah, and seven years later he was made king over all Israel. He was 30 years old when he became king and reigned from 1009 B.C. to 969 B.C.  
  
Solomon became king in 971 B.C., possibly two years before his father David died, and reigned until 931 B.C. Solomon was born of Bathsheba, and, though not in line for the succession, he was chosen by David and approved by God to be David’s successor (1 Chronicles 23:1). Solomon had inherited the throne of the most powerful kingdom then existing. It was an era of peace and prosperity with vast business enterprises and literary attainments. God told Solomon to ask what he would, and Solomon asked for wisdom to govern his people. That pleased God, who richly rewarded him with wealth, wisdom, power and the important task of building the temple (1 Chronicles 28:2-6).  
  
After the death of Solomon, the kingdom was divided. Ten tribes formed the Northern Kingdom, called Israel; Judah and Benjamin formed the Southern Kingdom, called Judah. The date of the division of the kingdom is approximately 931 B.C. The following dates are approximate, due to overlapping reigns, associated sovereignty, intervals of anarchy and parts of years referred to as full years. Some of the reigns were, in part, concurrent. All the kings of Israel practiced idolatry; the worst served Baal. Many of the kings of Judah served idols; few served Jehovah faithfully. Some bad kings were partly good; some good kings partly bad.   
**KINGS OF ISRAEL:**  
Jeroboam, bad, 930-909 B.C.  
Nadab, bad, 909-908 B.C.  
Baasha, bad, 908-886 B.C.  
Elah, bad, 886-885 B.C.  
Zimri, bad, 885 B.C.  
Tibni, bad, 885-880 B.C.  
Omri (overlap), extra bad, 885-874 B.C.  
Ahab, the worst, 874-853 B.C.  
Ahaziah, bad, 853-852 B.C.  
Joram, bad mostly, 852-841 B.C.  
Jehu, not good but better than the rest, 841-814 B.C.  
Jehoahaz, bad, 814-798 B.C.  
Joash, bad, 798-782 B.C.  
Jeroboam II (overlap), bad, 793-753 B.C.  
Zechariah, bad, 753 B.C.  
Shallum, bad, 752 B.C.  
Menahem, bad, 752-742 B.C.  
Pekahiah, bad, 742-740 B.C.  
Pekah (overlap), bad, 752-732 B.C.  
Hoshea, bad, 732-722 B.C.  
**KINGS OF JUDAH:**  
Rehoboam, bad mostly, 933-916 B.C.  
Abijah, bad mostly, 915-913 B.C.  
Asa, GOOD, 912-872 B.C.  
Jehoshaphat, GOOD, 874-850 B.C.  
Jehoram, bad, 850-843 B.C.  
Ahaziah, bad, 843 B.C.  
Athaliah, devilish, 843-837 B.C.  
Joash, good mostly, 843-803 B.C.  
Amaziah, good mostly, 803-775 B.C.  
Uzziah, GOOD mostly, 787-735 B.C.  
Jotham, GOOD, 749-734 B.C.  
Ahaz, wicked, 741-726 B.C.  
Hezekiah, THE BEST, 726-697 B.C.  
Manasseh, the worst, 697-642 B.C.  
Amon, the worst, 641-640 B.C.  
Josiah, THE BEST, 639-608 B.C.  
Jehoahaz, bad, 608 B.C.  
Jehoiakim, wicked, 608-597 B.C.  
Jehoiachin, bad, 597 B.C.  
Zedekiah, bad, 597-586 B.C.