

CLASS 2: How Israel Lost Their Heart: Joshua to 2 Chronicles

Review of Class 1

God created people in a paradise where every need was met. After the fall, God worked to establish his people as a sovereign nation through Abraham and then Moses. The laws of Moses provided every citizen with property and even returned it to them if they mishandled their finances. Moses taught Israel to be open-handed and open-hearted toward people in need, reminding them that they were once slaves in Egypt.

Joshua took the people into the promised land, and they served the Lord and enjoyed God's provision... at least for one generation...

1. God knew Israel would be tempted to set up an Empire

The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, "You are not to go back that way again." ¹⁷ He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold.

*¹⁸ When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. ¹⁹ It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees ²⁰ and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel. **Deut. 17:16-20***

- Deut. 17 warned kings not to acquire cavalry, multiple wives, or large amounts of silver and gold. Instead, he was to write for himself a copy of the law, read it every day, and carefully follow God's instructions so that he wouldn't consider himself better than his fellow Israelites.

Samuel told all the words of the Lord to the people who were asking him for a king. ¹¹ He said, "This is what the king who will reign over you will claim as his rights: He will take your sons and make them serve with his chariots and horses, and they will run in front of his chariots. ¹² Some he will assign to be commanders of thousands and commanders of fifties, and others to plow his ground and reap his harvest, and still others to make weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. ¹³ He will take your daughters to be perfumers and cooks and bakers. ¹⁴ He will take the best of your fields and vineyards and olive groves and give them to his attendants. ¹⁵ He will take a tenth of your grain and of your vintage and give it to his officials and attendants. ¹⁶ Your male and female servants and the best of your cattle^[e] and donkeys he will take for his own use. ¹⁷ He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his slaves. ¹⁸ When that day comes, you will cry out for relief from the king you have chosen, but the Lord will not answer you in that day."

*¹⁹ But the people refused to listen to Samuel. "No!" they said. "We want a king over us. ²⁰ Then we will be like all the other nations, with a king to lead us and to go out before us and fight our battles." **1 Samuel 8:10-20***

- Similarly, Samuel, in 1 Sam 8, warned Israel that kings were prone to raise an army, put their children to work for the nation, tax everyone, claim the best for themselves, make people their slaves, until the people cry out to God for relief from the king.
- The people ignored him and said, "We want a king over us. Then we will be like all the other nations."

Before we get too self-righteous in our condemnation of Solomon, let's do a little exercise...

Exercise: Am I Rich?

1. How did you feel about this exercise?
2. Were you surprised by the results?
3. How does this information shape your perspective about your wealth?



SCAN ME

2. God consistently favored the outcast and the desperate

Even during the conquest of Canaan, God was teaching Israel to rely on him.

- He elevated Rahab the prostitute to become a national hero. [outcast]
- He humbled Joshua at the battle of Ai. [desperate]
- The story of Ruth [outcast] demonstrates the power of faithfulness. Ruth chose to be faithful to Naomi's God. Boaz, through his faithfulness to the law of Moses, took care of the widows Ruth and Naomi. Boaz and Ruth became the grandparents of the first great king of Israel, David.
- David started as the runt of the family, ignored by his father Jesse when Samuel was looking for a king. When he was persecuted by Saul, a band of "Distressed, In Debt, & Discontent" brothers were drawn to David in his time of need. [outcast]
- During that time, David wrote some of the most beloved Psalms, describing God's heart for people in need, for the broken, contrite, and desperate who turn to him for help. [desperate]
- Yet when David rose to power, he abused that power, took advantage of Bathsheba, and sowed discontent in his family as Absalom tried to take the throne. [outcast]

3. Israel Became Egypt

- David's son Solomon became the wisest and wealthiest person on the planet.
- Yet he acquired a huge army/cavalry, 700 wives/300 concubines, and riches so vast that silver was considered of little value—all in violation of God's clear instructions!
- The kings of Israel consistently struggled with empire-building rather than following God's laws.

Small Group Discussion: Exploring our own neediness

- 3-5 people suggested in each group
- Take turns reading through Psalm 34 (take turns)
- Discuss your reaction to the text

Suggested questions for discussion

1. How does God use desperation to draw us closer to him and one another?
2. How has he done this in your life? [Share a story of how people helped you]
3. In what ways do you see yourself as an accumulator of things?
4. How can wealth lead to spiritual problems?

➔ Outbrief – share one summary point the group discovered with the class [online: post in the chat]

Questions, Recap, Reminders, & Closing Prayer

1. Any closing questions or thoughts from our discussion?
 - a. How did Israel lose their heart for God?
 - b. How is that temptation relevant to us today?
2. Next week, Corina will be sharing Class 3, *The Wisdom of Caring for the Poor: Ezra to Song of Songs*
3. Closing Prayer