

# Three Rejections of God by Ancient Israel: An Object Lesson for Us

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As we have seen in many other [blogs](#), the Bible is not merely a book of history that documents real people and real events; rather, many of the people and events chosen to be recorded in Scripture were selected because they not only focus upon the outworking of the plan of salvation, but they also serve, simultaneously, as object lessons for God's saving plan.

For example, Moses and [Joseph](#) were both real people, and Scripture accurately records historical events from their lives, but they are also prototypes of Christ, individuals who acted the role of savior and deliverer of the people. Likewise, the children of Israel are not only the branch of the human family tree through which Messiah comes, but they also represent the entire human race being pursued by God for salvation.

When Moses set up the [sanctuary theater](#) to dramatically act out the plan of salvation, the Levites were selected to be the priests *and* to represent the priesthood of all believers, those who have entered into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ. In their camp layout, the sanctuary was set up in the center, with the Levites camped on all four sides in between the other twelve tribes and the sanctuary. (Joseph was given two portions, Manasseh and Ephraim, so that 12 tribes camped around the 13th, Levi, with the sanctuary tent in the middle.)

In this layout is a lesson. Salvation is the process of taking sinners who are alienated from God by our sin and bringing them back into at-one-ment—that is, perfect unity—with God. This is achieved via Christ and His sacrifice, which was represented by the sacrificial animal whose blood, which represents the sinless life of Jesus (Leviticus 17:11) being applied via the work of the high priest, who also represents Jesus. God's plan to save sinners from sin was acted out in the various ceremonies of the sanctuary, a process that was intended to lead people away from the ceremonial to the actual, from the metaphorical to the reality of being cleansed in heart and mind from sin. God told them this repeatedly:

What I want from you is plain and clear: I want your constant love, not your animal sacrifices. I would rather have my people know me than burn offerings to me (Hosea 6:5, 6 GNT; see also Micah 6:6-8).

In the sanctuary theater, the Levites represent the converted peoples of the world who are God's representatives, His priesthood of believers, who go out into the world, represented by the other 12 tribes, and witness the gospel to them to bring them back into a saving relationship with God.

There are many lessons we can learn from the biblical account of ancient Israel, below are three rejections of God made by ancient Israel that reveal important lessons to help us avoid similar mistakes as we prepare to enter the heavenly Promised Land.

## **Ancient Israel Rejected God's Plan for Their Diet**

God provided His people manna, bread from heaven, but they craved meat, the "fleshpots" of Egypt (Exodus 16). So, because of their distrust of God and insistence on going their own way, God gave them what they desired and sent them quail; many people died as they gorged themselves on the meat. God had provided them heaven's bread, but they rejected it, choosing the dead flesh of animals instead, and ended up suffering the unavoidable result of rebelling against God and His designs for life and health.

There are two lessons from this account for us today. When the people exchanged the bread of heaven for the dead flesh of quail, many of them died. When we reject the bread of heaven, which represents Jesus (John 6:30-41), and substitute any other soul-food to try to feed our souls, we are rejecting Jesus as the source of life and choosing instead that which is not the source of life but, in fact, that which is dead—and our souls will accordingly wither and die.

The second lesson is a physiological one. Since they insisted on eating animals, God met them where they were and gave them a long list of what animals were authorized to be used for food and how those animals were to be prepared (e.g., draining all the blood and cutting out all the fat and cooking it until it was well done—basically, a slab of protein; see Leviticus 11). This was done to limit the damage to health that comes from eating blood and fat. While the ceremonial laws were done away with at the cross, and we are free to eat any food without concerns for ceremonial uncleanness, the laws of health were not done away with at the cross. If we want to be healthy, we must make healthy decisions regarding the care of our spirit temples (bodies). We must not only avoid toxic substances (drugs, tobacco, alcohol), but we must also intelligently choose foods that are in harmony with physiological health. Too many people today eat dangerously unhealthy diets, violating God's laws of health, and suffer many diseases, such as adult-onset diabetes, obesity, hypercholesterolemia, heart disease,

strokes, and cancers. This not only reduces life expectancy, but it also undermines our fitness to fulfill God's purpose for our lives. If we lose our physical health, then we are less capable of carrying out the duties God has given us. This is why we are to be purposeful and intelligent in what we choose to consume, eating in harmony with God's design—the laws of health.

## **Ancient Israel Rejected God's Plan for the Occupation of the Land**

God had a non-violent plan for how Israel was to occupy the Promised Land:

I will send my terror ahead of you and throw into confusion every nation you encounter. I will make all your enemies turn their backs and run. I will send the hornet ahead of you to drive the Hivites, Canaanites and Hittites out of your way. But I will not drive them out in a single year, because the land would become desolate and the wild animals too numerous for you. Little by little I will drive them out before you, until you have increased enough to take possession of the land (Exodus 23:27-30 NIV84).

God knows the horrible damage that people experience in war, in conflict, in fighting. It is not God's design for one human to kill another. Even the victors in war are traumatized and damaged by their experiences in combat. God did not want His people to fight the way the world does. Why? Because even if the battle is a righteous one, the methods of this world are not righteous and those methods injure all who use them. This is why the apostle Paul wrote:

For though we live in the world, we do not wage war as the world does. The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Corinthians 10:3-5 NIV84).

The war between God and Satan, between good and evil, between right and wrong, continues to be fought today. And every single human being is caught up in the middle of this war. One of Satan's tricks is to get good people—people called by God, people who are on a mission from God, people who are seeking to fulfill God's purpose for their lives—to exchange the methods of God for the methods of this world. This is what Israel did. They didn't trust God to bring about the plan in His way and time. They thought they could employ the methods of the world to assist God in fulfilling His plan. But instead of occupying a land that was abandoned, that was no longer desired by its former occupants, the people went to war to take what others still wanted. And by using the methods of the world, they not only damaged themselves through conflict, but they also ended up in a land of perpetual conflict, a never-ending war zone with generational hate and bitterness.

The church of the Dark Ages was duped by the same trick; it sought to advance the Christian faith through the employment of worldly methods and, instead of bringing light, darkness settled upon the people and the gospel was obstructed.

The people of God today are being tempted with the same trick—to advance a godly goal but with worldly methods. God’s kingdom is the kingdom of love, and it is advanced only by presenting the truth, in love, while leaving people free. We can never win God’s cause by using Satan’s methods. As the beastly system of Revelation arises, it will do so in the pursuit of “justice,” of saving lives, of making things better, but the methods it will employ will be the methods of the world: force, coercion, control, pressure upon consciences, fines, termination from employment, restrictions on travel, restrictions on free speech, worship, and assembly.

Haven’t we seen this recently? What was the justification for it? To save lives—yes, a good goal, but how many people were duped into practicing evil methods? As we approach the Second Coming, the entry to our eternal Promised Land, Satan’s forces will be unleashed and we will, just like ancient Israel, be tempted to distrust God and seek to help Him win His cause by using worldly methods. But all who do so will find that they have joined with the beast.

## **Ancient Israel Rejected God’s Plan for Leadership**

After leading Israel into the Promised Land, God established a system of leadership in which He guided through various representatives (spokesmen), one of whom was Samuel. But the people rejected God’s plan for leadership and wanted instead to be like the world. They wanted kings.

God’s system of governing is built upon His character and law of love. In the government of heaven, those with the greatest abilities are the servants of the least; those who are strongest help the weakest; those with the most give to the poorest. In God’s system:

... Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant (Philippians 2:5-7 NIV84).

Jesus governs upon God’s law of love, using God’s methods of giving, advancing God’s principles of beneficence, the protocols upon which life is built; thus, the infinite God sacrificed Himself to save and uplift sinners. God did not take from us; He gave to us! And those who have been reborn to the kingdom of God practice the methods of God:

“Jesus said to them, “The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves” (Luke 22:24-27 NIV84).

“Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap” (Luke 6:38 NIV84).

“One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want. Whoever brings blessing will be enriched, and one who waters will himself be watered” (Proverbs 11:24, 25 ESV).

But Satan’s form of governing is the opposite; it is not self-sacrificial service for the benefit of others. No, Satan seeks to promote self, to rise above others, to rule over masses:

“How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How you are cut down to the ground, you who weakened the nations! For you have said in your heart: ‘**I will ascend** into heaven, **I will exalt my throne** above the stars of God; **I will also sit** on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; **I will ascend above** the heights of the clouds, **I will be like the Most High**’” (Isaiah 14:12-14 NKJV, emphasis mine).

Satan’s kingdom is built upon power, upon rising over others, upon imposed laws enforced through inflicted punishments; it is built upon selfishness, upon a few elites taking from the masses to enrich and empower themselves. All the kingdoms of the world are Satan’s, and all of them function in this way (Matthew 4:8, 9; John 18:36).

God wanted better for His people than for them to be exploited by a few ruling elites. God wanted to be their God, the infinite source of love who would continually give of Himself for their welfare. God had demonstrated His methods of other-centered giving in governing by using His power to deliver them from slavery and providing them water to drink and manna to eat—all at no cost to them. He gave them talents and abilities (Exodus 35:35) and used His power to protect them from natural predators, such as snakes and scorpions. He gave them wisdom on how to organize, live, and protect themselves from sickness and diseases (sanitation and nutrition). God did all of this for their welfare. He did not want the masses exploited by a few ruling elites.

But the people rejected God’s design for governance and sought to be like the other nations, like the exploitive governments of this world, and so God warned them that if they rejected His way and chose the worldly way of kings, such rulers would ultimately exploit the people, tax them, take their best lands, produce, and products and their sons and daughter—all for the benefit of the elites. (See 1 Samuel 8:10-18.) And that is exactly what happened.

The church of the Dark Ages accepted the same distortion, setting up a human leader as a central authority to rule over the people and establishing a system of imposed laws (canon law) that was enforced through violence (Inquisition, burning people at the stake, Crusades) and other forms of coercion, a system that took from the people to empower the few ruling elites. As we near the Second Coming, the people of God will again be tempted to reject the government and methods of God for the governments and methods of this world. The use of state power to enforce a certain agenda will seem so reasonable that it will be overwhelming and irresistible to all except the very elect of God. Only those who know God personally, who have surrendered themselves completely in trust to Him, who live His living design law of love written upon their hearts (Hebrews 8:10), will stand firm and reject the beastly system when it arises.

There are many more object lessons from the history of ancient Israel, lessons we need, truths revealed that will protect us from falling into the same traps. These include the mistakes made at Sinai in

rejecting the gospel covenant and replacing it with a works covenant, of repeated apostasy and idolatry, of rejecting the Son of God and crucifying Him because He didn't fit their expectations, support their power structure, or advance their rules-oriented view of reality.

Yes, as we approach the second coming of Christ, we would do well to study the biblical record and examine the lessons God has recorded there, lest we fail in the same way that ancient Israel did. For only as we trust God, love Him with our entire being and live His methods, are we enabled to win the battles before us. Therefore, reject the methods of this world and embrace and practice only the methods of God.