



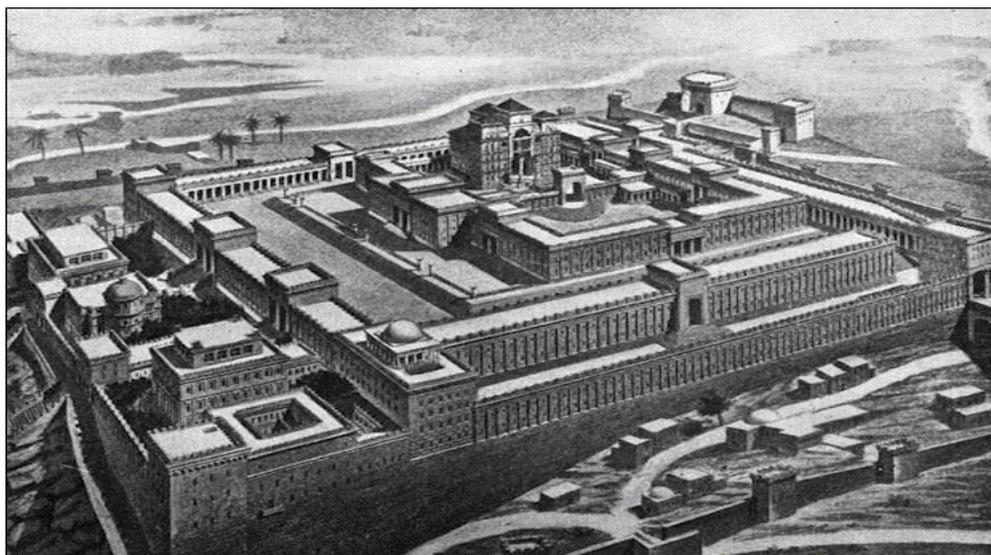
LESSON 9

JUDEAN GOVERNMENT

BABEL-TYPE CENTRALIZATION

As we saw in Lesson 8, the Tower of Babel represented the centralization of power which men have adopted universally for their form of government. Man's efforts at government have always resulted in centralization of power into the hands of a single despot or a small group of men. Such was the case also with the Judean culture as it was a child of its mother, Babylon.

In contrast, prior to king Saul, Israel had functioned under a unique free theocracy with God as King. Through Moses and Joshua, God had set up a system of judges to interpret law, but not make law. Later, however, Israel opted to abandon God's system in favor of a man-made government with human kings and lawmakers. Their first king in that system was Solomon. He built a temple at Jerusalem and he was the central power at that time. David and other kings followed. This led to the Assyrian and Babylonian conquests uprooting the Israelites, rendering them captive. Assyria and Babylon then held power. Later, about 500 BC, the Persian king Cyrus authorized the building of a new temple in Jerusalem with a Babylonian-type central system and religion. Judah was organized into a Persian province with a legislative/judicial body in Jerusalem known as the Sanhedrin or "Council." Babylonian-type synagogues were established in communities with their central feature being Herod's Temple in Jerusalem.



THE TEMPLE: SEAT OF JUDEAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

ISRAEL'S DESIRE FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

After Moses died, Joshua led Israel and possessed Canaan. Under the system of judges Israel recognized only God as her King. Then during Samuel's time as judge came a crucial moment in Israel's history.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 8:1-7.

1. According to verse 4, who gathered themselves together and came to Samuel?
 - A. All the people of Israel
 - B. All the elders of Israel
 - C. All the judges of Israel
2. In verse 5, they asked Samuel to appoint them a _____ to govern them like the other _____.
3. How did Samuel react to their request? (verse 6)
 - A. He was displeased and prayed to God.
 - B. He was in agreement.
 - C. He asked them the reasons for their request.
4. In verse 7, God told that the people had _____ Him, in that they did not want Him to _____ over them.

GOD'S WARNING AGAINST CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

After the elders of Israel demanded a man-made government with a king to rule over them like the other nations, God warned them of the consequences they would suffer under such a system.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 8:9.

5. What did God tell Samuel to do?
 - A. Tell the people they could not have a king other than God.
 - B. Replace the elders who had asked for a king.
 - C. Show the people the manner of king that would reign over them.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read 1 Samuel 8:10-17.

Samuel told the people that a man-made king would do the following things:

1. Verse 11: "He will take your _____, and appoint them for himself, for his _____, and to be his _____; and some shall run before his chariots."
2. Verse 12: "He will appoint him captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear (plow) his _____, and to reap his _____, and to make his _____ of war, and instruments of his chariots."
3. Verse 13: "He will take your _____ to be confectionaries, and to be _____, and to be _____."
4. Verse 14: "He will take your _____, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the _____ of them, and give them to his _____."
5. Verse 15: "He will take the tenth of your _____, and of your vineyards, and give to his _____, and to his servants."
6. Verse 16: "He will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his _____."
7. Verse 17: "He will take a tenth of your sheep: and ye shall be his _____."

The above descriptions of plunder and loss of liberty that a human king would bring upon Israel are standard characteristics of man-ruled government. History has proven that man-made governments destroy freedom and enslave the people. Compare Samuel's warnings to how modern governments function, including the U.S. Government.

FIND THE ANSWERS

8. Despite his warnings, verse 19 indicates the people "refused to _____ the voice of Samuel."
9. Verse 20 explains their reason: "That we also may be like all the _____; and that our king may _____ us, and go out before us, and fight our _____."

Israel rejected freedom under God's Kingship. They did not want the responsibility that goes with liberty. They did not want to rely upon God who promised to protect them and fight their battles. Instead, they wanted to be like the other nations – **they wanted kings and central government to be over them.** That was idolatry and adultery against God.

ISRAEL IN CAPTIVITY

The Israelites threw away the system God had given them. Instead they wanted kings. That soon led them into captivity under Assyria and then Babylon. At that point Israel had ceased to be a recognized nation/state. While in captivity, the Israelites were assimilated into Persian (Babylonian) society and religion.

CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT AND PRIESTHOOD

Persian King Cyrus, in about 500 BC, commissioned a large group of his people, including about 50,000 Israelites, to go to Jerusalem. They were led by Zerubbabel (“Son of Babel” - Hebrew), Ezra, and Nehemiah. Cyrus instructed them to build a temple and establish a religious hierarchy in Jerusalem. Once completed, Zerubbabel’s Temple became the seat of government presided over by the “Sanhedrin” or “Supreme Council.” Synagogues (church-like gathering places) were established and authorized by the Sanhedrin for purposes of tax collection, propaganda, and civil order.

THE TEMPLE

The layout of the Temple grounds, like the design of Capitol Hill in Washington DC, was a centralized Babylonian design. The Jerusalem temple served not only as the central place of worship and sacrifice but also as the national seat of government. The temple grounds consisted of a number of buildings, including the palace of the high priest (like the US White House). It housed the priests and temple officers as well as being the seat of power for the Sanhedrin. The national treasury (like the US Treasury) was also kept at the temple grounds.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Matthew 24:1 indicates Jesus’ disciples came to Him to show Him the _____ of the temple.
2. In Luke 22:52 Jesus spoke to the chief priests and _____ of the temple.
3. According to Acts 4:1-3, as Peter and John were teaching the people, the priests and the captain of the _____ laid hands on them and put them in hold (prison).
4. John 8:20 states that Jesus spoke in the _____ as He taught in the temple.

THE SANHEDRIN

The Sanhedrin (or Supreme Council) served as the Judean high court as well as the national legislature. The number of members was usually given as 71. Its president was the high priest. Its members were a hierarchy of priests, scribes, lawyers, and elders (wealthy supporters). These men were members of the sects of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sanhedrin generally met in a hall (Congress) on the temple grounds, but occasionally it convened at the high priest’s palace.

The Sanhedrin exercised great power over the people. Its religious power stretched even to lands beyond Judah. Later, under Rome, the land was renamed Judea. The Roman government allowed the Sanhedrin a great measure of independence, granting it civil and administrative authority. It had officers and the authority of arrest and imprisonment. As a judicial body, the Sanhedrin adjudicated national and other important questions of law. Apparently, a hierarchy of inferior courts (as with America's district, state, county courts), under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, were established throughout the cities of Judea to settle local and less critical matters.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 4:1-22.

1. According to verses 1-3, the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees laid _____ on Peter and John and put them in hold [prison].
2. Verses 5-6 state that the next morning the rulers, and elders, and scribes, and Annas the high priest, ... and kindred of the high priest gathered together at _____.
3. Verse 7 indicates this group of officials questioned Peter's and John's authority for teaching and healing by asking, "By what _____, or by what _____, have ye done this?"
4. According to verse 15, the body of men commanded Peter and John to "go aside out of the _____" so they could confer among themselves.

The word "council" in the above passage is translated from the Greek word **sunedrion** meaning "Sanhedrin." The composition of the group included a high priest. The Sanhedrin was Judea's government under the authority granted them by Rome. Caesar was the ultimate power.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 22:24-23:10.

5. After the Roman centurion realized Paul was a Roman citizen, verse 30 states he commanded the chief priests and all their _____ to appear and brought Paul before them.
6. Chapter 23, verse 2 indicates Ananias, the _____ priest, was in attendance.
7. Verse 6 states that one part of the council (Sanhedrin) were _____ and the other part were _____.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Matthew 26:1-5.

1. According to verses 3-4 the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders of the people gathered together at the _____ of the high priest to consult about how to take Jesus by subtility and _____ Him.
2. According to Mark 14:43, Judas led a great multitude (with swords and staves) from the chief _____, and the _____ and the _____ to arrest Jesus.
3. John 18:3 identifies this multitude as “a band of men and _____ from the chief priests and Pharisees,”
4. Luke 22:66 indicates Jesus was brought before the _____, consisting of the elders of the people, the chief priests and the scribes, where He was tried.
5. Mark 15:1 states that the chief priests held a _____ with the elders, scribes, and the whole _____, and they bound Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate.

The centralized power of the Sanhedrin, under the direction of the high priest, was not only exercised in Jerusalem and Judea, but it was also recognized by adherents outside of Judea.

FIND THE ANSWERS

Read Acts 9:1-2.

6. Saul asked for letters (written authorization) to the synagogues located where?
 - A. Jerusalem
 - B. Samaria
 - C. Damascus
7. What was Saul going to do with these letters?
 - A. Collect tribute from the synagogues.
 - B. Arrest any disciples of the Lord that he found and bring them back to Jerusalem.
 - C. Give warning of arrest to any disciple of the Lord that he found.
8. Verses 1-2 indicate Saul went to the _____ to get this authorization.
9. In Acts 26:12 Paul states, “Whereupon I went to Damascus with _____ and _____ from the chief priests”

SYNAGOGUES

The Greek word from which **synagogue** is translated originally referred to the convening (assembling together) of a group of people for a designated purpose. The term was also used for the place or building where religious people met. The Greek word “sunagoge” is a generic term that can refer to any group of people who assemble together at any place for any purpose.

SYNAGOGUE

The word “synagogue” is translated from the Greek word **sunagoge** meaning “an assemblage of persons; (the meeting or the place).” It comes from the Greek root words **sun or syn** (#4862) “together” and **ago** (#71) “bring or go.” Thus, “bring together.”

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Acts 6:9 states, “Then there arose certain of the _____, which is called the synagogue of the Libertines, and Cyrenians, and Alexandrians, and of them in Cilicia and of Asia, disputing with Stephen.”
 2. In Acts 13:43 of the *King James Bible*, which of the following English words is translated from the Greek word **sunagoge** (#4864)?
A. synagogue B. church C. congregation D. council
 3. According to James 1:1, who is James writing to? _____
 4. In James 2:2 James writes to his brethren concerning how to treat those who may come to their _____ (#4864), **sunagoge**).
- Read Luke 7:1-10.**
5. In verse 5 the Judean elders state that the centurion had built them a _____.

Several important points can be determined from the above verses. First of all, the same Greek word “**sunagoge**” was translated into three different English words: “synagogue,” “congregation,” and “assembly.” Secondly, this Greek word was used for gatherings of Judeans, Romans, and Christians, and it was used for assemblies outside the Palestine area. Thirdly, the term was used for both the gathering of people and the building in which they gathered.

MODERN MEANING OF “SYNAGOGUE”

1. A building or place of meeting for Jewish worship and religious instruction.
2. A congregation of Jews for worship or religious study.
3. The Jewish religion as organized or typified in such local congregations.

The American Heritage Dictionary

Comparing the limited modern meaning of the English word **synagogue** with the generic nature of its Greek equivalent, **sunagoge**, points out the change in usage that has taken place. Today, the word “synagogue” is associated strictly with “Jews” and a religion called “Judaism.” However, the term was originally tantamount to what Judeo-Christians today call a “church.” It is interesting that these “Jews,” who falsely claim **Hebrew** ancestry have adopted a **Greek** term for their meeting hall that approximates the **Judeo-Christian** meeting hall.

The history of the Jewish synagogue can be traced back to a tradition born during the Babylonian captivity when the Israelites' old traditions of temple, public forum, and Persian religious customs, including the synagogue, were adopted. The Greek term "synagogue" was not yet used. But the form was the same (Nehemiah 8:2, 9:1). Later the habit was carried to Judah by those who migrated with Ezra and Nehemiah.

In 1st century Jerusalem the synagogue, and Herod's Temple, had become the established custom along with the recognized authority of the Sanhedrin.

Each town of any size had its own synagogue, and the larger cities, like Jerusalem, had more than one. The synagogues served as local public relations agencies. They were used for worship, prayer, religious instruction, tribunals (courts), and for controlling the masses via propaganda.

Synagogues (like churches) had a structural hierarchy consisting of presiding officers and overseers as well as attendants and assistants. The local synagogues were agencies of Herod's Temple at Jerusalem. Minor court cases involving Judeans were heard and disposed of in the branch synagogues. They had the authority to administer stripes and scourgings as well as to disfellowship or excommunicate members. The synagogue system was a powerful tool to shape and control society.

THE SYNAGOGUE

"The synagogue was more than a place of worship. It was the local school, the community center, and the center of local government. Its elders were the civil authorities of the community, the magistrates and guardians of public morals."

Eerdman's Handbook to the Bible

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Mark 5:22 identifies Jarius as "one of the _____ of the synagogue."

Read Acts 13:13-15.

2. According to verse 14, Paul went into the synagogue which was at _____ .

3. Verse 15 indicates that after the _____ of the law and the prophets, the rulers of the synagogue invited Paul to speak to the people.

4. Acts 18:8 states that Crispus, the _____ ruler of the synagogue in Corinth, believed on the Lord with all his house.

RULER OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The phrases "ruler of the synagogue" and "chief of the synagogue" are translated from the Greek word **archisunagogos** meaning "head of the synagogue." His duties would have been something like the duties of a church pastor.

The above verses indicate the existence of synagogues outside the land of Judea. The custom of centralized worship in temples and established facilities with religious rituals and licensed authorities (like today's churches) took the form of synagogues in Persian and Judean culture.

In lands outside Judea, even among people who weren't directly connected to the Judean synagogue system, their meetings, and meeting places, were also called synagogues. Thus, some of the people who attended the synagogues were sincere but ignorant, and some were open to truth. Some of these people were not necessarily Pharisees or Saducees, but were loosely patterned after them ... like non-denominational churches. Paul and his comrades shared the gospel of the kingdom with some there.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. Matthew 23:6 Jesus states that the scribes and Pharisees love the _____ seats in the synagogues.
2. In Luke 11:43 Jesus accuses the Pharisees of loving the uppermost (Greek, "first") _____ in the synagogues.
3. In Luke 20:46 Jesus says to beware of the scribes who love the _____ seats in the synagogues.

"This part of the synagogue [the front] was naturally the place of honor. Here were the 'chief seats,' for which Pharisees and scribes strove . . . In smaller towns there was often but one rabbi. Where a fuller organization was possible, there was a college of elders, presided over by one who was the 'chief of the synagogue.'"

Smith's Bible Dictionary

SEATS IN THE SYNAGOGUE

The phrase "chief seats," "uppermost seats," and "highest seats" are all translated from the Greek word **protokathedria** meaning "seats in the front row," or "preeminent seats" inferring a high rank. The word "council" can refer to administrative, legislative, or judicial assemblies.

The existence of "preeminent seats" and hierarchical positions of authority is a standard trademark of both religious and government bureaucracy. Men who occupy such positions wield greater power over the assemblies (like church board members: elders, deacons, etc.). The synagogues were obviously precursors to the churches which came later, during the 4th-century Constantinian system.

POWERS OF THE SYNAGOGUE

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. In Matthew 10:17 Jesus warned His disciples, "But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the _____, and they will _____ you in their synagogues."
5. In Mark 13:9 Jesus said, "But take heed to yourselves: for they shall deliver you up to councils; and in the synagogues ye shall be _____ . . ."
6. According to Luke 12:11, Jesus prophesied that His disciples would be brought unto the _____ and unto _____.

FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In John 16:2 Jesus warned His disciples they would be “put out of the _____.”

Read John 9:1-23.

2. Verse 22 indicates the blind man’s parents did not admit that Jesus had healed their son for fear of being “put out of the _____.”

3. According to John 12:42, many of the chief rulers believed on Jesus but did not confess Him out of fear that the Pharisees would put them out of the _____.

PUT OUT OF THE SYNAGOGUE

The phrase “put out of the synagogue” is the equivalent to being “excommunicated” from a church. *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* further defines this word as “excluded from the sacred assemblies.”

The above verses indicate the amount of power the synagogue and its rulers exercised over the people. Excommunication from the synagogue was considered to be a grave humiliation and disgrace. This dreaded edict was used by the Judean rulers to control the conduct of the people and keep them in line. This threat of rejection, expulsion, and isolation (perceived to being cut off from God) has been a favorite and most effective weapon of centralized government and churches at all levels.

It is commonly thought that the Judeans, while under Roman subjugation, had little or no government of their own. However, in this lesson we have seen otherwise. Not only did the Judeans have a centralized governing structure, they also used it extensively to control and subjugate the people. The seeds of this sorry state were sown back in 1 Samuel 8 when Israel insisted, despite God’s warnings, on having a king like the other nations. From the time of King Saul until the time of Jesus, Israel had labored under ungodly regimes ... first under their own kings, and then under foreign kings.

We have seen how Paul, prior to his confrontation by Jesus on the road to Damascus, acted under the authority and commission of the chief priests in Jerusalem. He was used as a tool of the evil Judean government (the Sanhedrin) to persecute those who believed on King Jesus (Acts 22:19). Today, churches, synagogues, and central governments continue that tradition.

FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Acts 8:3 states, “As for Saul (Paul), he made _____ of the **ecclesia** (Christian community), entering into every house, and haling men and women committed them to prison.”

5. According to Acts 8:1, “And at that time (following the death of Stephen) there was a great _____ against the **ecclesia** which was at Jerusalem”

In the above verses the *King James Bible*, like most other translations and versions, deceptively renders the Greek word **ecclesia** as “church.” This deception has caused great confusion with church-goers. In the next lesson, we will examine this misuse of the word “church” and discover the true meaning of the **ecclesia**.



LESSON 9

JUDEAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

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1. B (all the elders of Israel)
2. king; nations
3. A (He was displeased and prayed to God)
4. rejection; reign
5. C (Show the people the manner of king that would reign over them)

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1. sons; chariots; horsemen
2. ground; harvest; instruments
3. daughters; cooks; bakers
4. fields; best; servants
5. seed (offspring); officers
6. work
7. servants
8. obey (listen to)
9. nations; judge (govern); battles

Page 84

1. buildings
2. captains (officers)
3. temple
4. treasury

Page 85

1. hands
2. Jerusalem
3. power; name (i.e. authority)

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4. council
5. council
6. high
7. Sadducees; Pharisees

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1. palace; kill
2. priests; scribes; elders
3. officers
4. council (Sanhedrin)
5. consultation; council (Sanhedrin)
6. C (Damascus was in Syria)
7. B (indicating jurisdiction over Judeans outside of Palestine)
8. high priest (chief of the Sanhedrin)
9. authority; commission

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1. synagogue (an assembly of men)
2. C (congregation)
3. the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad (i.e., Christian Israelites)
4. assembly (Gk. sunagoge)
5. synagogue (Gk. sunagoge)

Page 88

1. rulers (chiefs)
2. Antioch (in Pisidia)
3. reading
4. chief

Page 89

1. chief (seats in front)
2. seats
3. highest (Greek: "first seats")

Page 89 (continued)

4. councils (courts); scourge
5. beaten
6. synagogues; magistrates and powers
(Greek: chiefs and authorities)

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1. synagogues
2. synagogue
3. synagogue
4. havock
5. persecution

NOTES