



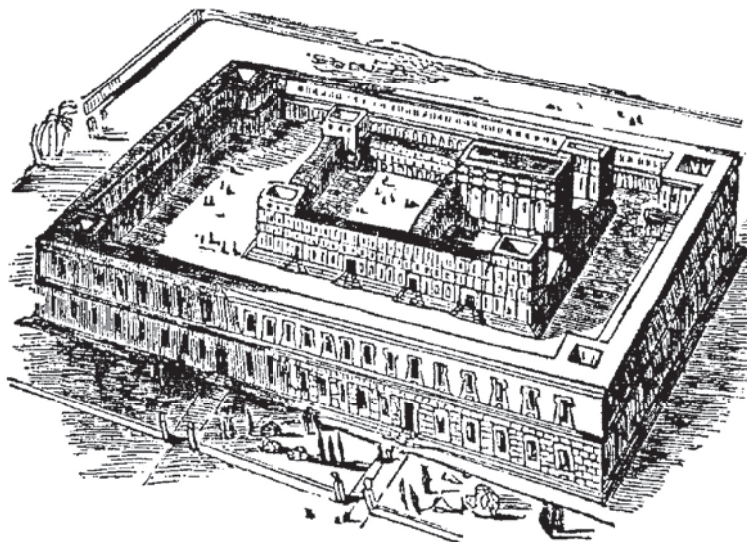
### LESSON 9

## Judean Central Government

### CENTRALIZATION

The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language defines **centralism** as "*the assignment of power and authority to a central leadership in an organization.*" It goes on to define **centralize** as "*to bring under a single, central authority.*" As we saw in lesson eight, this is what men have been doing since the time of the tower of Babel. Man's efforts at government have always resulted in centralization of power and authority into the hands of a single despot or a small group of men. Such was the case of the Judean culture.

Prior to king Saul, Israel functioned under a unique free theocracy with God as the only King. With the advent of human kings, Israel came under centralized government with power and authority concentrated in the hands of the king. Beginning with king Solomon, the temple at Jerusalem was set up as the center of government. Following the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and the destruction of the temple, a remnant of exiled Israelites returned to Jerusalem and rebuilt the temple, re-establishing a centralized government. These Judeans, led by the high priest, established a national legislative/judicial body known as the Sanhedrin or "council" which was located at Jerusalem. Synagogues were then organized in local communities to handle local government affairs, all under the centralized power and authority of the Sanhedrin under the leadership of the high priest.



**THE TEMPLE: SEAT OF JUDEAN CENTRAL GOVERNMENT**

## ISRAEL'S DESIRE FOR CENTRAL GOVERNMENT

Following her conquest of Canaan under the leadership of Joshua, Israel lived in freedom for many years with God as her only King. Then came a crucial moment in Israel's history.

### **FIND THE ANSWERS**

#### **Read 1 Samuel 8:1-7**

1. According to verse 4, who gathered 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 make them a \_\_\_\_\_ to judge them like all the \_\_\_\_\_.
  
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 said 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 asked for centralized government 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 the king who ruled over them 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 (tithe/tax) 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 (tithe/tax) of your sheep: and ye shall be his \_\_\_\_\_."

The above descriptions of plunder and tyranny that a human king would bring upon Israel are standard characteristics of centralized governments of men. History has proven that centralized governments destroy people's freedom and steal their substance. Compare Samuel's warnings to what has happened in America.

## 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 God's leadership. They did not want the responsibility that goes with freedom. They did not want to be responsible for fighting their own battles and for governing themselves. Yet, they did not want God to reign over them. Instead, they wanted to be like the other nations — **they wanted central government to be their god.**



## ISRAEL IN CAPTIVITY

The Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of Israel put an end to Israel's monarchical centralized government. Jerusalem and the temple (seat of government) had been destroyed. For all practical purposes, Israel ceased to be an independent nation. While in captivity, the Israelites had no king of their own and no temple with its structured priesthood and worship.

## JUDEAN CENTRALIZED GOVERNMENT

Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, Ezra and Nehemiah a remnant of Israelites returned to Judea to rebuild the temple and walls of Jerusalem. Once completed, the temple again became the national seat of government. Rather than a king as the central reigning individual, the high priest served as president of a legislative/judicial body (like Congress) known in New Testament times as the "Sanhedrin" or "Supreme Council." Synagogues (churches) were established for purposes of tax promotion, propaganda, brainwashing and public relations.

### The Temple

The temple (Capitol building) at Jerusalem served not only as the national 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 (White House). It housed the priests and temple officers as well as being the meeting place of the Sanhedrin. The national treasury was also kept at the temple.

### **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 priest 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 is usually given as 71. Its president was generally accorded to the high priest. Its members are thought to have consisted of a hierarchy of high priests, scribes and lawyers, and elders (wealthy and elite). These men were members of the sects of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. The Sanhedrin generally met in a hall (Congress/Senate) on the temple grounds, but occasionally it convened at the high priest's palace.

The Sanhedrin exercised great power over the Judean people, its authority being recognized even among Judeans residing beyond Judea. The Roman government allowed the Sanhedrin a great measure of independence, granting it civil and administrative authority. It had officers at its disposal and the power of arrest and imprisonment. As a judicial body, the Sanhedrin constituted a supreme or high court for adjudicating national and other important matters. Apparently, a hierarchy of inferior courts (district, state, county), under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin, were established throughout the cities of Palestine to adjudicate local and less important matters.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

### Read Acts 4:1-22

1. According to verse 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 men questioned Peter 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** (#4892 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "a joint session, i.e. (specially) the Judean Sanhedrin." The composition of the group, which included the high priest, combined with the fact they were meeting at Jerusalem, leaves no doubt it was indeed the Sanhedrin.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

### Read Acts 22:24-23:10

5. After the chief captain 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. 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 how to take Jesus 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 high priests.
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 and authority of the Sanhedrin, under the direction of the high priest, was not only exercised in Jerusalem and Judea, but it also extended beyond the limits of Palestine.

## 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 disciples of the Lord that he found.
8. Verse 1 indicates 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 (bringing together) of a group of people for a designated purpose. Later, the term was also used for the place or building where the people met. The Greek word "sunagoge" is a generic term that can refer to any group of people who meet (assemble together) at any place for any purpose.

### Synagogue

The word "synagogue" is translated from the Greek word **sunagoge** (#4864 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "an assemblage of persons; (the meeting or the place)." It comes from the Greek root words **sun** (#4862) meaning "together" and **ago** (#71) meaning "bring."

### 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** (#4864) was translated into three different English words: "synagogue," "congregation" and "assembly." Secondly, this Greek word was used for gatherings of both Judeans and Christians, and it was used for assemblies beyond the Palestine area. Thirdly, the term was used for both the gathering of people and the building in which they met.

### 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 root word **sunagoge**, points out the change in usage that has taken place. Today, the word "synagogue" is monopolized by a people called "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 and Israelite ancestry, cling so adamantly to a term of Greek origin.

The history of the synagogue can be traced back to the Babylonian captivity when the Israelites, their temple and central control having been destroyed, had no ethnic public forum and centralized religion. In lieu of a temple, the synagogue system was established. Later it was carried back to Palestine with those who returned with Ezra and Nehemiah. By the New Testament era, the synagogues had evolved into highly structured branch bureaucracies under the jurisdiction of the Sanhedrin and temple at Jerusalem.

Each town of any size had its own synagogue, and the larger cities had more than one. Jerusalem had many. The synagogues served as local public relations offices. They were used for worship and 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 merely puppets of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem. All minor court cases involving Judeans were heard and disposed of in the synagogues. Synagogues had the power and authority to administer stripes and scourgings as well as to disfellowship or excommunicate members. As a result, the synagogue wielded much power over the people.

### The Synagogue

"The synagogue was more than a place of worship. It was the local school, the community centre, and the centre 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, believed on the Lord with all his house.

### Ruler of the Synagogue

The phrases "ruler of the synagogue" and "chief ruler of the synagogue" are translated from the Greek word **archisunagogos** (#752 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "director of the synagogue services." Thayer's Greek Lexicon explains this person's duties as selecting the readers and teachers in the synagogue, examining the discourses of the public speakers, and overseeing all things.

The above verses indicate the existence of an authority structure within the synagogues. There was clearly a person "in charge" of each synagogue. The use of the word "director" in Strong's definition suggests a centralization of authority. The lexicon description of this person's duties indicates that he approved the speakers and their discourses as well as any of the activities conducted in the synagogue. This would imply rules of order to which conformity was required.



## FIND THE ANSWERS

1. In 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 \_\_\_\_\_ 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 so eagerly . . . 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 phrases "chief seats," "uppermost seats," and "highest seats" are all translated from the Greek word **protokathedria** (#4410 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "a sitting first (in the front row), i.e. preeminence in council." 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 government bureaucracy. Men occupying such positions have the tendency to wield greater power over the assemblies (like church board members: elders, deacons, etc.). The synagogues were no exceptions.

## 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 translated from the Greek word **aposunagogos** (#656 in Strong's Concordance), meaning "excommunicated." 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 sign of humiliation and disgrace. This dreaded fear 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 (loss of salvation) has been a favorite and most effective weapon of centralized government and churches at all levels.

It is commonly thought throughout Christendom 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, but they also used it extensively to control and subjugate the people. It all began with Israel's insistence, 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 been suffering under the central governments of men.

We have seen how Paul, prior to his conversion by Jesus Christ, and acting under the authority and commission of the chief priests, was used as a tool of the tyrannical Judean central government against those who believed on King Jesus (Acts 22:19). Since that time, ungodly central government continues to persecute them.

## FIND THE ANSWERS

4. Acts 8:3 states, "As for Saul, 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, mistranslates the Greek word **ekklesia** (#1577 in Strong's Concordance) into the word "church." This error has caused great confusion within Christendom. 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

### Page 82

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

### Page 83

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

### Page 84

1. buildings
2. captains
3. temple
4. treasury

### Page 85

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

### Page 85 cont'd

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

### Page 86

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

### Page 87

1. synagogue (referring to an assembly of men)
2. C (congregation)
3. the 12 tribes which are scattered abroad (referring to Christian Israelites)
4. assembly
5. synagogue (#4864, **sunagoge**)



**Page 88**

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

**Page 89**

1. chief (those in front)
2. seats
3. highest

**Page 89 cont'd**

4. councils; scourge
5. beaten
6. synagogues; magistrates

**Page 90**

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

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**Notes:**