

Summary

June 11, 2023 8:31 AM

- Takeover of the town of Munster in 1534 by Anabaptists
 - New Jerusalem
- Lutherans surprised, allied due to anti-Catholics, but kicked out
 - Enemy of my enemy....
- Started with Melchior
 - Believed that babies shouldn't be baptised, needs to be a choice
 - Believed the end of the world was coming 1533 edition
 - Very socialist
 - Inspired Mathys
 - Died badly...was not the new Gideon
 - Died in prison
- Ended with John of Leiden
 - Believed himself to be the successor of David
 - Went to his head...pretty ruthless
 - Died badly...very badly
- Why we can't have nice things
- Anabaptists related to amish/menonites



Munster Rebellion

May 22, 2023 7:03 PM

The **Münster rebellion** (*German*: *Täuferreich von Münster*, "Anabaptist dominion of Münster") was an attempt by radical *Anabaptists* to establish a communal sectarian government in the German city of *Münster* – then under the large *Prince-Bishopric of Münster* in the *Holy Roman Empire*. The city was under Anabaptist rule from February 1534, when the city hall was seized and *Bernhard Knipperdolling* installed as mayor, until its fall in June 1535. It was *Melchior Hoffman*, who initiated *adult baptism* in *Strasbourg* in 1530, and his line of *eschatological* Anabaptism, that helped lay the foundations for the events of 1534–35 in Münster.

Rebellion

After the *German Peasants' War* (1524–1525), a forceful attempt to establish theocracy was made at *Münster*, in *Westphalia* (1532–1535). Here the Anabaptists had gained considerable influence, through the adhesion of *Bernhard Rothmann*, the *Lutheran* pastor, and several prominent citizens and leaders, including *Jan Matthys* (also spelled *Matthijs*, *Mathijsz*, *Matthyssen*, *Mathyszoon*), a baker from *Haarlem*, and *Jan Bockelson* (or *Beukelszoon*), a tailor from *Leiden*. *Bernhard Rothmann* was a tireless and vitriolic opponent of Catholicism and a writer of pamphlets that were published by his ally, the wealthy wool merchant *Bernhard Knipperdolling*. The pamphlets at first denounced Catholicism from a radical Lutheran perspective, but soon started to proclaim that the Bible called for the absolute equality of man in all matters, including the distribution of wealth. The pamphlets, which were distributed throughout northern Germany, called upon the poor of the region to join the citizens of Münster to share the wealth of the town and benefit spiritually from being *the elect* of Heaven. With so many Anabaptist adherents in the town, Rothmann and his allies had little difficulty obtaining possession of it at the elections for the magistracy and placing *Bernhard Knipperdolling* as the mayor, after deposing the mainly Lutheran magistrates, who, until then, had seen him as an ally in their own distrust of, and dislike for, Catholics. Matthys was a follower of *Melchior Hoffman*, and after Hoffman's imprisonment at Strasbourg Matthys obtained a considerable following in the *Low Countries*, including Bockelson, who became known as *John of Leiden*. John of Leiden and Gerrit Boekbinder^[u] had visited Münster, and returned with a report that Bernhard Rothmann was in Münster teaching doctrines similar to their own. Matthys identified Münster as the "*New Jerusalem*", and on January 5, 1534, a number of his disciples entered the city and introduced *adult baptism*. Rothmann apparently accepted "rebaptism" that day, and well over 1000 adults were soon baptised. Vigorous preparations were made not only to hold what had been gained but to spread their beliefs to other areas. The many Lutherans who left were outnumbered by the arriving Anabaptists. There was an orgy of *iconoclasm* in cathedrals and monasteries, and rebaptism became compulsory. The property of emigrants was shared out with the poor, and soon a proclamation was issued that all property was to be held in common.^[u]

Siege

The city was besieged by *Franz von Waldeck*, its expelled bishop. In April 1534, on *Easter Sunday*, Matthys, who had prophesied God's judgment to come on the wicked on that day, led a procession from the city with twelve followers, as he *believed himself* the second *Gideon*. He and his followers were cut off and taken. Matthys was killed, his head placed on a pole for all in the city to see, and his genitals nailed to the city gate. The 25-year-old John of Leiden was subsequently recognized as Matthys' religious and political successor, justifying his authority and actions by *claiming visions* from heaven. His authority grew until eventually he proclaimed himself the successor of *David* and adopted royal regalia, honors, and absolute power in the new "*Zion*". There were now in the town at least three times as many women of marriageable age as men, so he made *polygamy* compulsory.^[u] and he himself took sixteen wives. (John is said to have beheaded *Elisabeth Wandschere* in the marketplace for refusing to marry him, though this act might have been falsely attributed to him after his death.) Meanwhile, most of the residents of Münster were starving as a result of the year-long siege. After lengthy resistance, the city was taken by the besiegers on June 24, 1535, and John of Leiden and several other prominent Anabaptist leaders were captured and imprisoned. In January 1536, John of Leiden, Bernhard Knipperdolling and one more prominent follower, *Bernhard Krechting*, were tortured and executed in the marketplace of Münster. Their bodies were exhibited in cages which hung from the steeple of *St. Lambert's Church*. The bones were removed later, but the cages hang there still.

Aftermath



Cages of the leaders of the Münster Rebellion at the steeple of St. Lambert's Church. The Münster Rebellion was a turning point for the Anabaptist movement. It never again had the opportunity of assuming political importance, as both Catholic and Lutheran civil powers adopted stringent measures to counter this. It is difficult to trace the subsequent history of the group as a religious body, through changes in the names used and beliefs held. The *Batenburgers* under Jan van Batenburg preserved the violent *millennialist* stream of Anabaptism seen at Münster. They were polygamous and believed force was justified against anyone not in their sect. Their movement went underground after the suppression of the Münster Rebellion, with members posing as Catholics or Lutherans as necessary. Some *nonresistant* Anabaptists found leaders in *Menno Simons* and the brothers *Obbe* and *Dirk Philips*. Dutch Anabaptist leaders who repudiated the distinctive doctrines of the Münster Anabaptists. This group eventually became known as the *Mennonites* after Simons. They rejected any use of violence and preached a faith based on compassion and love of enemy. In August 1536, the leaders of Anabaptist groups influenced by Melchior Hoffman met in *Bocholt* in an attempt to maintain unity. The meeting included followers of Batenburg, survivors of Münster, *David Joris* and his sympathisers, and the nonresistant Anabaptists.^[u] At this meeting, the major areas of dispute between the sects were polygamous marriage and the use of force against non-believers. Joris proposed compromise by declaring the time had not yet come to fight against the authorities, and that it would be unwise to kill any non-Anabaptists. The gathered Anabaptists agreed to the compromise of no more force,^[u] but the meeting did not prevent the fragmentation of Anabaptism.

From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MNC3%BCnster_rebellion>

From <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/MNC3%BCnster_rebellion>

Anabaptist Dominion of Münster
Täuferreich von Münster
1534–1535
<div></div> <div>The city of Münster under siege by prince bishop Franz von Waldeck in 1534. The picture shows the first attack at Pentecost.</div>
Capital
Münster
Religion
Anabaptism
Government
Communal theocratic monarchy
King
<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">1534-1535 Bernhard Knipperdolling</div>
Historical era
<div><ul style="list-style-type: none">Established February 1534Disestablished 24 June 1535</div>
<div>Preceded by</div>
<div><div><div></div><div>Prince-Bishopric of Münster</div></div><div></div></div>
<div>Succeeded by</div>
<div><div><div></div><div>Prince-Bishopric of Münster</div></div><div></div></div>
Today part of
Münster, North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany



Matthys' apostles found the town council full of Anabaptist sympathisers, who would be a great help and source of support in the coming months. Matthys arrived in Münster, staged a rebellion, and managed to throw out the erstwhile ruler, the Prince Bishop Franz von Waldeck. Matthys and his disciples entered the city in triumph and soon got to work re-baptising thousands of the inhabitants. As part of his program of spiritual purification, Matthys expelled all the Catholics from the city, outlawed money, and forbade anyone from owning property. All goods were now supposed to be held in common. Franz von Waldeck, meanwhile, was busy getting together an army with which to take back his city. He managed to obtain material help from neighbouring princes, as the presence of such a politically and religiously radical community was not in the interests of any of the naturally conservative local rulers. Once assembled, Waldeck's troops besieged the city and proceeded to starve out the city's inhabitants.

From <<https://www.dancehistoricalmiscellany.com/munster-rebellion-creation-16th-century-theocracy/>>

Execution of the Tailor-King

The bodies of Jan Bockelson, and two other leaders of the Anabaptist sect, were hung outside the church of St Lambert on 22 January 1536. *Mathew Lyons* | Published in *History Today Volume 71 Issue 1 January 2021*



The cages on the spire of St Lambert's, Münster. Alamy. Today, the spire of the church of St Lambert in Münster still has three unusual adornments: cages. They were first hung on 22 January 1536 to hold the mutilated bodies of Jan Bockelson and two other leaders of the Anabaptist sect that had ruled the north-west German city for 16 months. Anabaptism emerged in the first years of the Reformation, a separatist, communitarian faith. Its leaders were closely aligned with the peasant uprisings that took place across Germany in 1525. History was providential and they were on the right side of it; what need of a master when Christ's millennium was at hand? Those in Münster followed Melchior Hoffman, who preached that the second coming would arrive in Strasbourg in 1533. The authorities there locked him up. Christ did not appear. But there were other prophecies, each more powerful and urgent than the last, and Münster, under Anabaptist control, was ripe for them. In early 1534, the ungodly – some 2,000 unrepentant Catholics and Lutherans – were expelled from the holy city and their property confiscated. This was a compromise: powerful voices had called for their slaughter. What better way to purify Zion than through sacrifice? Münster's prince-bishop Franz von Waldeck laid siege to the city as, inside its walls, Jan Bockelson, a tailor and actor from Leiden, seized power. Hoffman had prophesied that a pious king would lead a 'revolution from above'. Bockelson was that king. In Jan's kingdom, capital offences included blasphemy, slander and idle conversation. Private property was abolished. Those who resisted such appropriations were beheaded. Polygamy was enforced. The more wives a man had, the more Christian he must be, a witness noted. Any sign of disobedience could get a woman beheaded. No one was safe. Doors could not be locked at night, not even closed. The siege ended, betrayed from within, in June 1535. After their executions, the bodies of Bockelson and the others hung outside St Lambert's for some 50 years. Hoffman, in prison in Strasbourg, outlived them all.

GERMANYRELIGION

From <<https://www.historytoday.com/archive/months-past/execution-tailor-king>>

Melchior Hoffman

June 8, 2023 5:49 PM

Melchior Hoffmann

German mystic

Melchior Hoffmann, Hoffmann also spelled **Hoffmann**, (born c. 1495, Schwäbisch-Hall, Swabia [Germany]—died 1543/44, [Strassburg](#) [now Strasbourg, France]), German mystic and lay preacher noted for contributing a [zealous eschatology](#) (doctrine of the end times) to the religious doctrine of the [Anabaptists](#), a [Reformation](#) movement that advocated adult [baptism](#).

A furrier by trade, Hoffmann worked as a [Lutheran](#) lay missionary in [Livonia](#) (modern [Latvia](#) and [Estonia](#)), [Sweden](#), and northern [Germany](#). His fervour made him a competitor of the educated clergy, and he was forced from Wolmar (now Valmiera, Latvia) in 1524 and from Dorpat (now Tartu, Estonia) in 1526. He preached to the German [community](#) in [Stockholm](#) for two years and later received an appointment as minister in [Kiel](#) (now in Germany) from [Frederick I](#) of [Denmark](#).

At the colloquy in [Flensburg](#) (1529), Hoffmann alarmed the Lutheran reformers by rejecting the Lutheran doctrine of the [Eucharist](#), and he was consequently banned from Denmark. Converted to [Anabaptism](#) in Strassburg, he preached doctrines that went beyond both Lutheranism and Anabaptism; he stressed the eschatological aspects of Christian belief, predicting that the end of the world would occur in 1533 and that he would ride into Strassburg with [Christ](#) in the clouds to establish the New Jerusalem. Hoffmann greatly influenced the development of Anabaptism in [Münster](#), where a group of his Dutch followers took control in 1533. Their radical apocalypticism and persecution of their opponents, however, led to their destruction by the forces of the local margrave and [exiled bishop](#) of the city in 1535.

Traveling to the Netherlands in 1530, Hoffmann won converts, who became known as Melchiorites; but upon his return to Strassburg (1533), where he was unpopular with the Anabaptists, he allowed himself to be arrested and imprisoned. Hoffmann died in prison, his prophecy unfulfilled. For a short time afterward, Melchiorite groups persisted in Europe and England, but they eventually disappeared in the larger Anabaptist movement.

From <<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Melchior-Hoffmann>>

Melchior Hoffman (1495-1543)



- Began Anabaptist churches in North Germany & Netherlands
- Taught heavenly or celestial flesh of Christ
 - Mary did not furnish Jesus' flesh but only his nourishment; she was conduit
 - Minimized his humanity; emphasized his deity

New Jerusalem

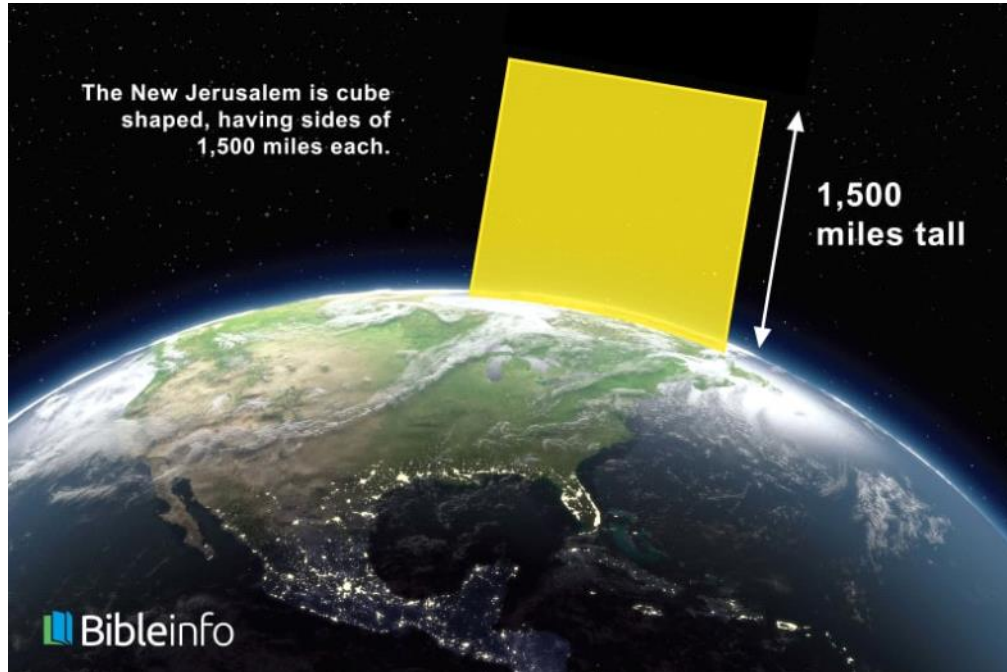
June 11, 2023 8:41 AM

The New Jerusalem is the city of God. It is not like anything humans have seen before. The Biblical description of the New Jerusalem found in Revelation chapters 21 and 22 is even hard to believe.

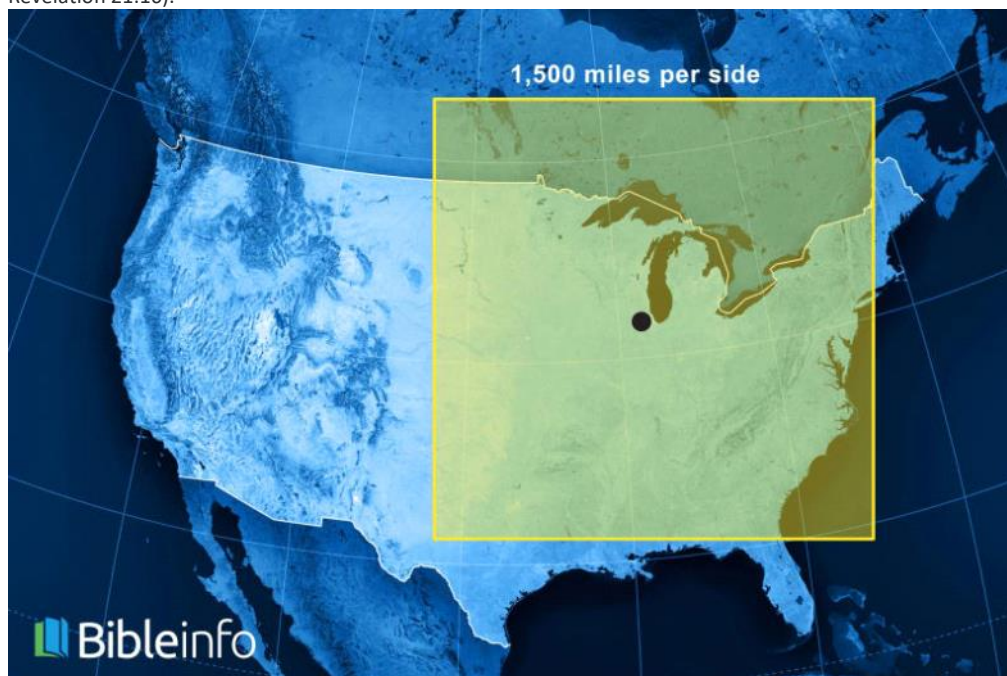
What is the New Jerusalem like?

The following points describe the New Jerusalem and who will be able to enter the city.

1. The New Jerusalem is massive



The New Jerusalem is laid out in the form of a massive cube—it's length, width and height are all equal distance. New Jerusalem is at least 1,500 miles around at its base, while some believe that each side of the city is 1,500 miles in length. (See Revelation 21:16).



The size of New Jerusalem means there is plenty of room for everyone who wants to live in the city. The city is so large that there is enough room for those alive today and all those who have lived in the past.

2. The gates



The city has twelve gates, three per side. Each gate is fashioned from a single pearl with an angel next to it. The pearls have the names of the twelve tribes of Israel written upon them. Best of all, these gates will never be shut—day or night. (See Revelation 21:12, 25).

3. A transparent city



The New Jerusalem is brilliant, shining with the glory of God. The city's light is like that of precious jasper as clear as crystal. New Jerusalem itself is likened to pure gold, as clear as glass. John also writes that the streets are made of pure and transparent gold. (See Revelation 21:11, 18, 21).

4. The foundations

New Jerusalem has twelve foundations made of precious stones with the names of the twelve apostles written on them. (See Revelation 21:14).



[Click to view the 12 foundations infographic](#)

#	Image	Gemstone	Description
12		Amethyst	A variety of quartz, ranging from light pink-violet to a deep purple color.
11		Jacinth	Jacinth or hyacinth is a precious stone of the same color as the hyacinth flower—a dark blue verging on black
10		Chrysolite	The word chrysoprase comes from the Greek word (χρυσός) chrysos meaning 'gold' and (πράσινον) prasinon, meaning 'green'.
9		Topaz	The ancient topaz (topazion) stone is probably our modern-day peridot and is most likely golden-green in color.
8		Beryl	According to Bible commentaries, beryl was a pale-green precious stone. It is of the same species as the emerald.
7		Chrysolite	The chrysolite of Bible times is the equivalent of modern-day topaz and is a precious stone of golden color.
6		Sardius	Related to the chalcedony with two possible varieties: carnelian and sard.
5		Sardonyx	Sardonyx is a combination of onyx and sard in alternating layers. Sardonyx is also related to chalcedony.
4		Emerald	The name emerald comes from the Greek word smaragdus, which means green gem. Emeralds are a variety of beryl.
3		Chalcedony	Chalcedony is a precious stone primarily having a blue grey color. It can also have yellow, blue or purple pigments.
2		Sapphire	The sapphire is a blue and translucent variety of corundum. Commentaries also note that the sapphire of the Bible may be the modern-day lapis lazuli.
1		Jasper	The jasper mentioned as the first foundation may have been clear and almost transparent. Revelation 21:11, states that the city would be like jasper, as clear as crystal.

Foundations of the New Jerusalem (top to bottom)

5. The walls

The city has a great and high wall of pure jasper (Revelation 21:12, 18). Revelation 21:17 adds, "Then he [an angel] measured its wall: one hundred and forty-four cubits, according to the measure of a man, that is, of an angel." So the wall was measured at 216 feet or 144 cubits, which many assume to be the wall's width.

6. The temple



Revelation 21:22, says that God and the Lamb are New Jerusalem's temple. There is no need for an actual temple to house God and veil His glory from sinful mankind because the saved people in New Jerusalem will be able to see God face-to-face.

7. No sun or moon

New Jerusalem is fully illuminated by the glory of God and the light of the Lamb brightens the city (Revelation 21:23). There is no need for the Sun or Moon. Revelation 21:25, even says "there shall be no night there."

8. The River & Tree of Life



Revelation 22:1, speaks of a river flowing from the throne of God and the Lamb. This pure river of water of life is clear as crystal and the tree of life is on each side of the river. This tree produces fruit every month and its leaves are for the "healing of the nations." Ezekiel 47:12, adds that the trees "will bear fruit every month because their water flows from the sanctuary."

9. All are invited



The New Jerusalem's gates are never shut, there is no night there, all are welcome to enter the city. Revelation 22:7 says, "And the Spirit and the bride say, 'Come!' And let him who hears say, 'Come!' And let him who thirst come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely."

10. Who can enter?

Revelation 21:27 adds, that only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life can enter the city and that anything that defiles or causes an abomination will by no means enter the city. Additionally, Revelation 22:14 states that those who do God's commandments have the right to the tree of life and may enter the city.

11. The New Jerusalem is real

John didn't make up the facts about New Jerusalem. In Revelation 21:6, God sends an angel to show John what was to come. "Then he said to me, 'These words are faithful and true.' And the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show His servants the things which must shortly take place."

12. (Bonus) No more suffering or pain



New Jerusalem will be very beautiful. However, the city's beauty will not even begin to compare to the joy of the saved as they experience no more aches and pains, suffering or death. Revelation 21:4 explains that, "God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away."

The New Jerusalem and you

As you ponder New Jerusalem and the beauty of the city, what thoughts come to your mind? Imagine meeting Jesus face-to-face and inviting you to enjoy the city. Imagine Him telling you about the mansion He has prepared just for you.

The Bible says that heaven will be more incredible than we can imagine. 1 Corinthians 2:9 says, "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him."

From <<https://www.bibleinfo.com/en/questions/new-jerusalem>>

Jan Matthys

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Jan Matthys (also known as *Jan Matthias*, *Johann Mathyszoon*, *Jan Mattijs*, *Jan Matthijszoon*; c. 1500 – 5 April 1534) was a charismatic [Anabaptist](#) leader of the [Münster Rebellion](#), regarded by his followers as a prophet.

Jan Matthys

Matthys was born in [Haarlem](#), in the [Holy Roman Empire](#)'s [County of Holland](#), where he worked as a baker, and was converted to Anabaptism through the ministry of [Melchior Hoffman](#) in the 1520s. Matthys baptized thousands of converts, and after Hoffman's imprisonment, rose to prominent leadership among the Anabaptists. Matthys rejected the pacifism and non-violence theology of Hoffman, adopting a view that oppression must be met with resistance.

In 1534, an Anabaptist [insurrection](#) took control of Münster, the capital city of the [Holy Roman Empire](#)'s [Prince-Bishopric of Münster](#). [John of Leiden](#), a Dutch Anabaptist disciple of Matthys, and a group of local merchants summoned Matthys to come. Matthys identified Münster as the "New Jerusalem", and on January 5, 1534, a number of his disciples entered the city and introduced adult baptism. Reformer [Bernhard Rothmann](#) apparently accepted "rebaptism" that day, and well over 1000 adults were soon baptized.

They declared war on [Franz von Waldeck](#), its expelled [prince-bishop](#), who [besieged](#) the [fortified town](#) of [Münster](#). In April 1534, on [Easter](#) Sunday, Matthys, who had prophesied that God's judgment on the wicked would take place on that day, attacked with twelve followers, under the idea that he was a second [Gideon](#), and was cut off with his entire band. He was killed, dismembered and his head stuck on a pike. Later that evening, his genitals were nailed to the city door.

From <https://www.wikiwand.com/en/Jan_Matthys>



Gideon

June 11, 2023 8:39 AM

Who Was Gideon?

Gideon was a judge over Israel. Although the Bible describes him as timid, Gideon is known as the greatest of all the 15 judges.

[HOPE BOLINGER](#)

AUTHOR

FEB 08, 2022



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Gideon said to them, “I will not rule over you, and my son will not rule over you; the Lord will rule over you.” ~ [Judges 8:23](#)

Who was Gideon in the Bible? What makes his story significant for [Christians](#) today?

Gideon in the Bible

Compared with some of the other judges ruling Israel, Gideon seems to get a lot of press in the Old Testament, covering more than two chapters (compared with some of them only getting part of one chapter). Known as the [greatest judge of Israel](#), readers might be surprised when they dive into the narrative to find a timid ruler. In fact, when we first meet him, he’s hiding from the enemies on a threshing floor.

Gideon, from the least of the least in terms of tribes, receives a call from God to take on the Midianites, [a nomadic and huge group of people](#) who depleted Israel’s supplies.

This article will dive into the person of Gideon, what God does to make him an even more unlikely candidate to save Israel, and why

it matters for us today.

When it comes to Gideon, readers actually have quite a bit to unpack in [Judges 6:11- Judges 8:32](#). Although this article won't dive into everything, it'll highlight two major portions of Gideon's story. I highly suggest reading the entirety of the two chapters to get a full picture of Gideon and all God accomplished through him.

Gideon Tested God Using Fleece

When Gideon hears he will save the Israelite people from his oppressors, he doesn't really believe it at first. So he tests God. This, right off the bat, seems to contradict the command not to put the Lord to the test ([Deuteronomy 6:16](#)). But Gideon appears to test God a lot.

- First, he requires God to put dew on a fleece he lays out, instead of on the ground.
- Then, he asks for the opposite, a dry fleece and wet ground.
- Then, once more, the opposite.

As [suggested in this article](#), this wasn't the proper thing to do and came from a lack of faith. Nevertheless, God will pull out all crutches from underneath him and force Gideon to rely on Him in the next part of the story.

Gideon and the Army of 300

When God wanted Gideon to bring an army to take on the enormous Midianite army, he brings 32,000 men ([Judges 7](#)). Although not as sizeable as the Midianites, it's enough for Gideon to be comfortable with leading the charge.

God has other plans. He decides to enlist a series of tests of His own on Gideon, reminiscent of the tests Gideon had for Him in the previous chapter.

- First, he makes Gideon send home anyone who is afraid. It turns out 22,000 of the people in the army have their doubts and head on their way.
- Now, with 10,000 left, God makes them drink water. Apparently, only 300 of the men drank water by putting their hands to their mouths. The other 9,700 who knelt to drink are sent home.

With just 300 men now, Gideon knows he has to rely on God to provide a miracle.

But God has an even odder plan in place. They won't even have to invade or attack to wipe out the Midianites. He has them create as much noise as possible by blaring trumpets and smashing jars.

This confuses the men in the Midianite camp, and they end up killing each other in the chaos.

What Can We Learn from Gideon's Story?

1. God can work with a little bit of faith.

Overall, we can learn that God can work through anyone, even

timid believers of little faith.

A leader doesn't always mean the boldest and most extroverted. God often works through believers who come from the least of the least, like Gideon. When we're hiding from what scares us most, God compels us to tackle it head-on.

2. But God wants us to trust Him.

Second, God doesn't allow metaphorical crutches. Although he plays along with Gideon's fleece tests, when it comes to the actual battle, he refuses to let Gideon have a cushion of a bulky army. Reducing him to the bare essentials of 300, they know they have to rely on God for a victory.

The same happens in our lives.

We can often have various cushions that offer comfort. Maybe we have jobs that provide enough income for a cozy retirement or other members of the church who step up into leadership roles we'd rather not fill ourselves. We can only hide on the threshing floor for so long before God pulls us out of our comfort zones to do His amazing work.

No matter what the case, God will reduce our "numbers" down to 300. When He does so, we have to rely on Him to do what we thought was impossible.

From <<https://www.christianity.com/wiki/people/who-was-gideon.html>>

John of Leiden

June 8, 2023 5:49 PM

John of Leiden

The Dutch Anabaptist John of Leiden (1509-1536) led the Anabaptist attempt to establish by force a "kingdom of God" in Münster, Germany. His excesses unfairly discredited all Anabaptists in the eyes of contemporaries and of succeeding generations.

Also known as Jan Beuckels or Bockelszoon, John was born in a village near Leiden. He practiced various occupations, including those of tailor, merchant, and innkeeper. In November 1533, having been baptized by John Matthys of Haarlem, John became a follower of Anabaptism. He grew quite active in this religious movement and was sent by John Matthys to various parts of the Netherlands as an apostle for this faith. His views at that time were the conventional and generally peaceful Anabaptist ones of the need for the faithful to pray and await the coming of the kingdom of God. But he gradually abandoned those principles in favor of calling the faithful to use the sword against all unbelievers in order to establish the kingdom of God on earth.

In January 1534 John of Leiden took up residence in the episcopal city of Münster in Westphalia, Germany, near the Dutch border. Although he was very active in the revolt that overthrew the bishop and city council, it was John Matthys, who had arrived in Münster in February 1534, who took over power and began the establishment of the kingdom of God. Under his direction, Münster was purged of the "godless," or nonbelievers, and communism of goods, based on biblical texts, was introduced. Matthys, however, was killed in April 1534, and John then replaced him as the new Anabaptist leader in Münster, gaining supreme power by July 1534. Although he effectively coordinated the defense of the city against the army of the bishop of Münster, who had laid siege to the city, his ambition and fanaticism soon led him into more radical behavior. In July 1534 he introduced polygamy, a step that created much opposition. In order to maintain his position, he became increasingly ruthless in the exercise of his power. In September he had himself crowned king of the New Jerusalem. After this, John lived in an increasingly unreal world, parading around Münster in lavish regal costumes and promising his followers to lead them miraculously to the defeat of the besieging army. He managed, however, to keep the city from falling to the episcopal army until June 25, 1535.

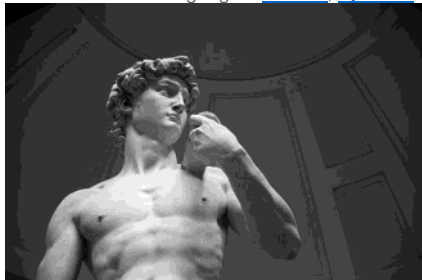
John of Leiden was then arrested, sentenced to death, and executed with horrible tortures on Jan. 22, 1536. His brief reign had tragic consequences for Anabaptism, since contemporaries identified all Anabaptists with the radical variety in Münster. Such an identification led to a constant persecution of Anabaptists by Lutherans, Calvinists, and Catholics.

From <<https://www.encyclopedia.com/people/philosophy-and-religion/protestant-christianity-biographies/john-leiden>>



King David

Available in other languages: [French](#), [Spanish](#)



[David by Michelangelo](#)
[Joe Hunt \(CC BY\)](#)

According to biblical tradition (and some say myth), David (c. 1035 - 970 BCE) was the second king in the ancient [Kingdom of Israel](#) who helped establish the eternal throne of [God](#). A former shepherd, David was renowned for his passion for God, his touching psalms and musical abilities, his inspiring courage and expertise in [warfare](#), his good looks and illicit relationship with Bathsheba, and his ancestral connections to [Jesus of Nazareth](#) in the New Testament. Born around 1000 BCE, David was the eighth son (and youngest) of Jesse, from the tribe of Judah. Like King Saul and King [Solomon](#), David reigned for 40 years in one of the highest and most prosperous periods in [Israel's](#) history - called by many, "The Golden Age" of Israel. Although presented just as flawed or sinful as the kings who preceded and followed him, in [Judaism](#) and [Christianity](#), **King David** is presented in various books of the [Bible](#) (from where most information originates on him, currently) as a model king of piety, repentance, and submission as well a forerunner to the Messiah—the Jewish "anointed one" and champion.

The Traditional Story of King David

In the Hebrew scriptures, 1 [Samuel](#) 16 introduces readers to a young man who will capture not only the heart of the nation of Israel, but also the heart of God. The Old Testament Prophet Samuel (c. 1200–1050 BCE) is sent to Jesse of Bethlehem (a common farmer and shepherd) to anoint one of his sons as the new king - while Israel's first king, Saul (c. 1080–1010 BCE), is still living but failing in his duties to follow Samuel's instructions and rebelling against the authority/commandments of God. After Jesse parades nearly all his sons by Samuel, each one rejected as king, he finally brings his youngest - David, who "was glowing with health and had a new appearance and handsome features" (1 Samuel 16:12). Although David does not look like a king should look, he has the heart of a lion - a courageous spirit - and even more, a deep, unending love for God. Samuel, who has been so depressed over King Saul, finds hope and blessing in the young shepherd from Bethlehem in Judea. After David was anointed, 1 Samuel 16:13 states, "and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came powerfully upon David."

DAVID WAS MORE THAN JUST A MUSICIAN; HE HAD THE HEART OF A WARRIOR & A SET OF SHEPHERDING SKILLS ON THE MASTERS' LEVEL.

The news for King Saul, however, is not at all positive. While David receives the blessings of the Holy Spirit (the Counselor and second person of the [Trinity](#)), "the Spirit of the Lord had departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from the Lord tormented him" (v. 16:14). Saul began to experience periods of mental and emotional suffering, brought on by either a bipolar disorder or an evil spirit (according to the biblical text). One of his servants remembers that David is an excellent musician and recommends Saul employ him as an armor-bearer (the one who carried a large shield and other weapons for the king) and a musical balm of sorts for his tortuous episodes. 1 Samuel 16:23 states, "Whenever the spirit from God came on Saul, David would take up his [lyre](#) and play. Then relief would come to Saul; he would feel better, and the evil spirit would leave him."

[David & Goliath](#)

David was more than just a musician; he had the heart of a warrior and a set of shepherding skills on the masters' level, especially when it came to the use of the sling. One day, the [Philistines](#) and the Israelites were at [war](#); however, the two war parties were on either side of a valley, taunting each other. The Philistines, the non-Semitic people of ancient southern [Palestine](#), had a powerful warrior in their midst, though - Goliath, who (according to the Bible) was nearly ten feet (3 m) tall. Not surprisingly, none of the Israelite warriors dared to fight him.



[David with the Head of Goliath](#)
[Caravaggio \(Public Domain\)](#)

When David hears Goliath's vile words against Israel and God, he volunteers to [battle](#) him. Rather than insist that an older, more experienced officer (or even himself) go out to defend God and Israel against Goliath, King Saul endorses David's wishes. After some wardrobe changes (eventually donning his normal garb), David selects five river stones for ammunition and sets out to face his giant enemy. Goliath stares down at the small, young man, and chides, "Am I a dog, that you come at me with sticks?" (v. 17:43). David's verbal response is as mocking as it is audacious—You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. This day the Lord will deliver you into my hands, and I'll strike you down and cut off your head. This very day I will give the carcasses of the [Philistine](#) army to the birds and the wild animals, and the whole world will know that there is a God in Israel. (vv. 17:45–46)

As Goliath charges toward David, the young man slings a stone, which hits Goliath square in the forehead, knocking him out. David then stands over the giant, grabs the giant's sword, and kills him. Seeing the youngest of Israel so easily dispatch their strongest warrior sent terror through the entire Philistine army and they fled. It also pleased King Saul who basically adopted him into his family. 1 Samuel 18:2–3 states, "From that day Saul kept David with him and did not let him return home to his family."

The Envy of Saul

In consideration of David's frequent success and amazing skills in his service, King Saul promoted David, who continued to amaze his men and all Israel. Unfortunately, Saul had developed an ego problem, so he begins to resent David especially when he hears people singing, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands" (v. 18:7). In bitter envy, Saul tries to kill David, whom he now sees as the enemy instead of a loyal servant. Thus, the arrangement of a marriage between Saul's daughter Michal and David is more about Saul's desire to ensnare or ultimately assassinate David than a holy union, ironically.

Eventually, David goes to his best friend, Jonathan, who is also King Saul's eldest son, for help. Jonathan tries to downplay David's fears, but when Jonathan goes to his father to reassure him that David is his loyal servant, King Saul lashes out at Jonathan, calling him,

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You son of a perverse and rebellious woman! Don't I know that you have sided with the son of Jesse to your own shame and to the shame of the mother who bore you?

(v. 20:30)

It is then that Jonathan finally comprehends how insane his father is with hatred for David. Saul has come to hate David more than he loves God—never a good condition to be in, biblically.



[David & Saul by Rembrandt](#)
[Rembrandt \(Public Domain\)](#)

To the end of his life, Saul's son Prince Jonathan becomes David's protector, pleading for that same devotion from David. 1 Samuel 20:16–17 states, "So Jonathan made a covenant with the house of David, saying, 'May the Lord call David's enemies to account.' And Jonathan had David reaffirm his oath out of love for him, because he loved him as he loved himself."

The rest of 1 Samuel provides the details of an ongoing cat-and-mouse chase between Saul, who is desperately trying to kill David (and his forces) and David, who is desperately trying not to kill Saul, despite the urging of his friends and countrymen. Instead, David shows his noble, compassionate, committed character that God finds so impressive. Despite Saul's wickedness, David does not want to harm Saul, "God's anointed." Saul, on the other hand, has given in to the darkness of his heart and soul, even going so far as to kill some priests of the Lord.

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In fact, David goes out of his way to avoid Saul and/or repays Saul's evil with good. One of the more interesting moments occurs when David sneaks into a cave where Saul is relieving himself and cuts off a corner of Saul's robe to show him that if David wanted to kill him, Saul would already be dead. Once a distance away, David cries out,

See, my father, look at this piece of your robe in my hand! I cut off the corner of your robe but did not kill you. See that there is nothing in my hand to indicate that I am guilty of wrongdoing or rebellion. I have not wronged you, but you are hunting me down to take my life.

(v. 24:11)

Once King Saul realized what has just happened, he weeps bitterly, finally self-aware that he has been unrighteous, blood-thirsty, and ungodly, whereas David has properly and mercifully showed himself to be worthy of being Israel's next king. Before they part, Saul asks David to swear that he will not kill off Saul's children, which David easily does.

SAUL'S MADNESS STILL RAGES INSIDE HIM, SADLY, & CONTINUES TO PURSUE DAVID WHO, IN ANOTHER MOMENT OF OPPORTUNITY, SPARES SAUL'S LIFE.

Saul's madness still rages inside him, sadly, and continues to pursue David who, in another moment of opportunity, spares Saul's life. The whole of Israel mourns, though, at the [death](#) of Samuel, and Saul, knowing that sorcery and witchcraft is forbidden by the [Law](#), goes to Endor to conjure up Saul. Although Saul begs for help from the spirit of Samuel, the dead prophet only replies, "Why do you consult me, now that the Lord has departed from you and become your enemy?" (v. 28:16). Saul collapses, a broken and self-ruined man who only heaped innocent bloodshed atop his arrogant, disobedient acts.

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The book ends with David enjoying more and more success on the battlefield and in his domestic life, but for Saul and his family, the tide will turn and run red at their last battle with the Philistines at Mount Gilboa. In one day, the entire royal line of Saul is lost in battle, with all Saul's sons dying before him, including the noble and beloved Jonathan. Saul is critically wounded, and pleads for a nearby Israelite soldier to kill him, afraid of torture or molestation if he is found alive.

The ending of the book is distressing. 1 Samuel 31:4–6 states,

But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so, Saul took his own sword and fell on it. When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. So, Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day. Seeing the defeat of their army, the Israelites fled the region, opening up the lands to Philistine occupation and exploitation, which was later supported by the Philistines' use and smithing of iron.

David, King of Israel

The book of 2 Samuel begins with David hearing the news that his best friend and God's anointed king have been slaughtered by the Philistines. Stunned, David is also met with news from an Amalekite (a descendant of Esau, son of Isaac the Patriarch) that the man killed Saul, taking his crown and armband for David. Expecting a reward, instead the soldier receives an execution with David asking, "Why weren't you afraid to lift your hand to destroy the Lord's anointed?" (v. 2 Samuel 1:14). If David was unwilling to hurt God's anointed, why would anyone think that he would be alright with King Saul's assassination?

David thereafter offers a memorial to Saul and Jonathan. For Saul, he sings of him being a mighty warrior; for Jonathan, he sings of him being a faithful brother. One might expect David to be jubilant about Saul's death, but David truly never wanted Saul dead. Scholars have long noted that David's hopes for his enemies was for them either to be removed or to repent. In Saul's case, he definitely wished for the latter.



[King David](#)
[Jastrow \(Public Domain\)](#)

The kingship of David described in 2 Samuel 2 is just as exciting and dramatic as his period running away from King Saul. With Samuel's original blessing, David becomes the first king of Judah, but immediately launches into a seven-year civil war with King Saul's son, Ish-Bosheth, that does not end until Saul's son is assassinated in his bed by two Benjamites, the last tribe of Judah and descendants of [Jacob](#) the Patriarch.

Expecting a great reward like the previously mentioned Amalekite, they bring Ish-Bosheth's head to David who immediately executes them for their despicable and criminal activity, saying, "Wicked men have killed an innocent man in his own house and on his own bed" (v. 2 Samuel 4:11). He has the men killed, cuts off their feet and hands, and hangs their bodies in shameful display. Later, he buries Ish-Bosheth's head, properly and respectfully in Abner's [tomb](#) (Abner was Saul's cousin and commander-in-chief of his army).

With Ish-Bosheth dead, David is offered the crown by the elders of Israel, and 2 Samuel 5:4 records, "David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years." He then conquers [Jerusalem](#) - Zion - to which he soon also brings the [ark of the covenant](#). David has hopes to build God's [temple in Jerusalem](#), but that David's offspring will be the one to "build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever" (v. 7:13).

The next few chapters detail and discuss the tremendous victories for David against the Philistines, the Geshurites, the Gittites, the Jebusites, and the Amalekites. 2 Samuel also shares of his marital problems with Saul's daughter Michal, who "when she saw King David leaping and dancing before the Lord, she despised him in her heart" (v. 6:16). It is therefore not too surprising that King David, one of the most virtuous men in the Bible, forgets his place, his responsibilities to God and to his subjects, and starts a love affair with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the [Hittite](#) - one of his Mighty Warriors.

David & Bathsheba

While relaxing at the [palace](#), King David happens to see beautiful Bathsheba, the daughter of Eliam and future mother of King Solomon (c. 990–931 BCE), bathing upon her roof and the temptation is too tempting for him. 2 Samuel 11:4 records, "Then David sent messengers to get her. She came to him, and he slept with her (now she was purifying herself from her monthly uncleanness). Then she went back home." Unfortunately for the pair, Bathsheba becomes pregnant with David's child.

The situation is delicate, at best. Although feminists claim that David forced Bathsheba, and traditionalists claim that Bathsheba seduced David, the truth is more one of mutual culpability except, perhaps, that as king and the model for the Law of God, David had a higher obligation to protect and not exploit Bathsheba. The text does not lay the blame on any one person (somewhat like the Fall in Genesis); however, as bad as things are for the adulterous couple, it is only going to get worse.

RATHER THAN THE NOBLE & VIRTUOUS WARRIOR OF THE LORD, NOW DAVID HAS BECOME AS BAD IF NOT WORSE THAN MURDEROUS SAUL.

David conspires to hide his sin and so, calls Uriah home from the battlefield and tries to get him to sleep with his wife. Uriah, however, is too devoted and too lawful to squander his time while his men are dying in battle. His plans foiled to confuse the paternity of the child, David orders General Joab, his nephew through David's sister Zeruah, to place Uriah in the thick of the most dangerous fighting and then withdraw every one but him. Several things happen because of this. First, poor Uriah gets killed. Second, Bathsheba mourns for Uriah - there is nothing said about this being a unified plan. Most likely, it was David's own attempt to protect his reputation. He quickly moves Bathsheba into the palace and marries her before the child is born. Third, any loyalty of Joab to David is gone. Rather than the noble and virtuous warrior of the Lord, now David has become as bad if not worse than murderous Saul. David's plans soon begin to backfire upon him.

The Prophet Nathan

In his desperation, though, King David forgot that God sees and knows everything. So, God sends the Prophet Nathan, the Prophet Samuel's successor, to deliver a "rhetorical" message of treachery, which makes David burn with anger against the rich man who steals the poor man's one little lamb. David steps into the trap the Lord has laid for him and states, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity" (2 Samuel 12:5).

Nathan immediately pronounces judgment upon David, crying out, "You are the man!" (v. 12:7). Not only was David an adulterer, he also was a murderer and an ungrateful king who abused his position to please his loins and protect his renown. Therefore, Nathan prophesies that David would experience perpetual consequences of warfare within and without his kingdom, and that he would suffer public humiliation because he tried to cover up his horrific sins.

David's response is quite un-Saul-like, though. He humbly replies, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan then informs him that his sins are forgiven, but their child of sin is going to die. David pleads for his son's life, and when the boy becomes ill, David fasts, prays, and deprives himself of sleep, trying to get God to change his mind, but God does not according to the biblical text.

On the seventh day, the son dies, and David's response is amazing. Rather than be bitter or hate God, David got up and "he went into the house of the Lord and worshipped" (v. 12:20). The passage also records that "David comforted his wife Bathsheba, and he went to her and made love to her. She gave birth to a son, and they named him Solomon" (v. 12:24).



[King David Writing Psalms](#)
[Giovanni Francesco Barbieri \(Public Domain\)](#)

Absalom & Amnon

Without his former "golden card" of righteousness, the House of David experiences bad tidings beginning with the rape of David's daughter, Tamar, by her half-brother, Amnon. Tamar comes over to help her brother (Amnon) who pretends to be sick, and when she gets close, he grabs her and molests her. Unlike Shechem, the villain in the book of Genesis (chapter 33:19; 34) who felt a moral obligation to marry Jacob's daughter [Diana](#) after he raped her, Amnon despises Tamar even more, which crushes and humiliates her.

Strangely, Tamar's older brother Absalom comforts her and says, "Be quiet now, my sister ... Do not take this thing to heart" (2 Samuel 13:20), but he never speaks to Amnon about the event. Amnon probably believed he had gotten away with the rape of his half-sister because his father David was mad but did nothing about the crime.

Two years later, though, Prince Absalom enacts his vengeance. Convincing Amnon to travel with him, he gets his half-brother drunk and then has his men murder Amnon, a prince, in revenge for raping his sister. He flees to Geshur and stays with his mother, Michal's family there, and returns three years later with another plan to steal David's throne. He even manages to enlist the king's counselor, Ahithophel (the grandfather of Bathsheba), and

works the Israelite crowd.

As Absalom's conspiracy and its support grows, David flees from the forces of Absalom, not wanting to kill his son. Eventually, though, David's forces clash with Absalom's forces, and as he flees, "Absalom's hair got caught in the tree" (v. 18:9). Left dangling, Joab slays Absalom and buries his body in a deep pit in the wilderness.

As with the death of King Saul, David is devastated by the news, but somewhat confused as to why Absalom was so treacherous and murderous toward David and his men. Hearing that David is mournful beyond consolation, Joab marches into David's house and shames him for humiliating and alienating his men by his great lament for a wicked son. The book concludes with more descriptions of the incessant warfare David was promised by the Prophet Nathan. However, the final two chapters offer a poetical homage to God and to his men.

The Final Years

David's initial zeal for God and for ethical integrity paved the way for his early fame and fortune, although being a man of warfare and blood (according to the scriptures), God decided that David was not suitable to be the one to build God's [temple](#) (that would be placed in the hands of his son, Solomon). Moreover, David's illicit affair and subsequent devious actions (leading to the assassination of Uriah the Hittite and its cover up) complicated the rest of his reign - along with the rape of Tamar, the murder of Amnon, and the attempted coup of Absalom, among other controversies.



[King David & Solomon](#)
[Unknown Artist \(Public Domain\)](#)

By the end of David's life, he had lost touch with Israelite society and eventually lost political control of it, as well. This led to an attempted coup by his son, Adonijah (whose mother was Haggith, David's fifth wife), who proclaimed himself to be king with the assistance of General Joab and Abiathar the Priest; however, the majority of Israel's institutional agents did not support Adonijah's claim. The Hebrew scriptures state that the Prophet Nathan went first to Bathsheba to alert her to Adonijah's usurpation of the throne, who then went to her husband, King David, to break the troubling news to him. Eventually, the Prophet Nathan joined the two, and King David officially made Solomon his heir apparent. David said, "Assuredly Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place" (1 Kings 1).

King David died from natural causes around 970 BCE, was buried in Jerusalem, and, as suggested in the Hebrew and [Greek](#) scriptures, facilitated the establishment of the kingdom of Israel through his piety and lineage. Before his death, David gave his final admonition to his son, Solomon, saying, "Keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, his commandments, his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the Law of [Moses](#), that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn... for you are a wise man." (1 Kings 2)

The Epigraphical & Archeological Evidence For King David

As with his successor, King Solomon, little evidence has been uncovered to prove the historical existence of King David; however, recently discovered direct and indirect evidence provides greater substantiation for David's life and kingship (although little to back up the Biblical assertions and specific events during his reign). In 1993 CE, Avraham Biran discovered the Tel Dan Inscription on a broken stele in northern Israel. The inscription commemorates the victory of an Aramean king over its southern neighbors, and specifically references both the "king of Israel," and the "king of the House of David." This is perhaps the earliest, direct, historical evidence for the Davidic Dynasty in Israel although the Mesha Stele, discovered by Bedouins in the 1800s CE who lived by the [Jordan](#) and Arnon rivers, also mentions "the House of David," written in Moabite around a century after the supposed reign of King David.

As for indirect evidence, under excavations directed by Yosef Garfinkel in 2012 CE, a Canaanite inscription of "Eshba'al Ben Beda," King David's enemy (and King Saul's son who reigned for two years) also known as "Ish-Bosheth" in many biblical translations (2 Samuel 3, 4) was found inside [pottery](#) shards from an ancient jug dated to the 10th century BCE. Additionally, survey data compiled by Avi Ofer in 1994 CE that suggest a doubling of 11th-Century BCE Judean population (particularly in Northern Israel), and potential Jebusite fortresses that were discovered in excavations directed by Yigal Shiloh (1978-1985 CE) - both of which are discussed in the Old Testament - lend credence to the notion that David and the Kingdom of Israel were part of the region's historical and cultural existence.

From https://www.worldhistory.org/King_David/

Bernhard Knipperdolling

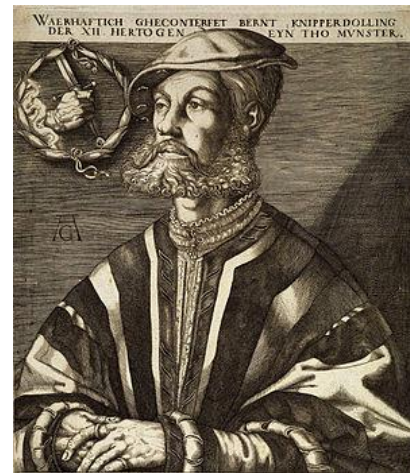
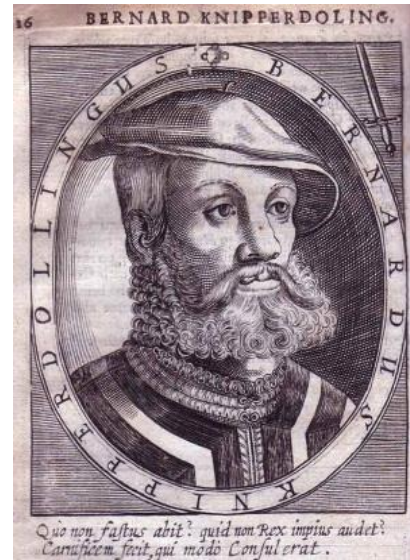
June 8, 2023 5:51 PM

Knipperdolling, Bernt (ca. 1490-1536)

Bernt (Bernhard) Knipperdolling, a leader of the [Anabaptists](#) in [Münster, Westphalia, Germany](#), was a prosperous clothing merchant. His home was located near St. Lambert's Church. He is first mentioned in 1527 when he helped to free Tonies Kruse, who had been imprisoned by the bishop. When the evangelical movement spread in Münster he joined it, particularly in supporting [Bernhard Rothmann](#). When the bishop and the city council lost their influence through the democratic Anabaptist movement, Bernhard Knipperdolling was elected mayor in February 1534. He became a staunch supporter of Jan Matthys and [Jan van Leyden](#) when they arrived. Both were guests in his home. Jan van Leyden married Knipperdolling's daughter. After the 12 elders appointed by Jan van Leyden took over the government, he lost his office as mayor but remained the special representative of Jan van Leyden. When Jan van Leyden proclaimed himself king, Knipperdolling was opposed but finally yielded. After the defeat of Münster he was found in a hiding place and shared the fate of Jan van Leyden and [Bernhard Krechting](#), who were cruelly tortured to death on 23 January 1536. The corpses were hung in the tower of St. Lambert's Church. Numerous portraits of Knipperdolling--paintings, woodcuts, etchings, etc. were produced by artists like H. Aldegrever and Ch. van Sichem (Geisberg).

See also [Münster Anabaptists](#)

From <[<https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Knipperdolling,_Bernt_\(ca._1490-1536\)>](https://gameo.org/index.php?title=Knipperdolling,_Bernt_(ca._1490-1536))>



Who Are Anabaptists? Learn the Origins and History of Anabaptism



SHARE

Anabaptism originated within the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century founded upon a differing belief of baptism from the Catholic Church. The Anabaptist movement directly inspired the development of several Christian groups located around the world today.

Discover the origin, history, and beliefs of Anabaptists below.



Origin of Anabaptism

[Anabaptists](#) are theorized to have originated in the 16th century with the Radical Reformers. Although historians have identified additional specific theologians and groups as their predecessors because of a similar method to their understanding and adherence of the Bible.

According to [Wikipedia](#), Medieval protesters of the Church and Anabaptists who valued a literal interpretation of the [Sermon on the Mount](#) shared the following declarations:

- The believer must not swear oaths or refer disputes between believers to law-courts for resolution, in accordance with [1 Corinthians 6:1–11](#).
- The believer must not bear arms or offer forcible resistance to wrongdoers, nor wield the sword. No Christian has the *jus gladii* (the right of the sword). [Matthew 5:39](#)
- Civil government belongs to the world. The believer belongs to God's kingdom, so must not fill any office nor hold any rank under government, which is to be passively obeyed. [John 18:36](#) [Romans 13:1–7](#)
- Sinners or unfaithful ones are to be excommunicated, and expelled from the sacraments and from intercourse with believers saving that they atone, according to [1 Corinthians 5:9–13](#) and [Matthew 18:15](#), but no violence is to be practiced against them.

Below are three central views on origins of the Anabaptists:

- Anabaptism started with a single movement in [Zürich](#) and developed from there;

- It occurred through several independent movements; and
- It was a continuation of true New Testament Christianity ([apostolic succession](#))



History of Anabaptism

Anabaptism was a movement within the [Protestant](#) Reformation. The movement's most notable position was adult baptism. In its first generation, followers participated in a second baptism, which was a violation condemned by death following the law of that era. Members renounced the name Anabaptist, or Rebaptizer, as they disavowed their own baptism as children as a sacrilegious ceremony. They believed the open declaration of sin and faith, followed by adult baptism, to be the solely righteous form of baptism. Led by the Swiss Reformer Huldrych Zwingli, they regarded that infants are not culpable for sin until they become conscious of good and evil and can practice their own free will, atone, and receive baptism.

The [Anabaptists](#), like much of the Protestant Reformers, were resolved to renew the traditions and essence of the archaic church and frequently recognized their affliction with that of the martyrs of the early Christian era. Many were convinced that they were existing at the end of time, and anticipated the impending return of Jesus Christ.

The intensity of the Anabaptist leaders and the radical implications of their teaching led to their banishment from continuous cities. This actually boosted the momentum of a practical missionary movement. Civil officials took harsher measures, and many of the initial Anabaptist leaders perished in prison or were executed.



Anabaptist Beliefs and Persecution

The name Anabaptist indicates "one who baptizes again". Persecutors called them this, relating to the custom of baptizing persons when they converted or confessed their faith in Christ, even if they had been baptized as newborns. [Anabaptists](#) insisted that baptismal candidates be able to make a declaration of faith that is freely determined and so renounced baptism of infants. The early members of this movement did not accept the name Anabaptist, claiming that infant baptism was not part of scripture and was therefore invalid and meaningless. They said that baptizing self-confessed devotees was their first true baptism:

"I have never taught Anabaptism.... But the right baptism of Christ, which is preceded by teaching and oral confession of faith, I teach, and say that infant baptism is a robbery of the right baptism of Christ." —[Hubmaier, Balthasar](#) (1526), [Short apology](#).

Anabaptists were frequently persecuted starting in the 16th century by both Magisterial Protestants and [Roman Catholics](#), mainly because of their interpretation of the biblical text which put them in opposition with established state church and government. Anabaptism was never instituted by any state authority and consequently never held any of the privileges that come with it.

Most Anabaptists adhered to a strict interpretation of the [Sermon on the Mount](#) which impeded taking oaths, engaging in militant services,

and participating in civil government. Other groups who followed rebaptism, now gone, considered otherwise and obliged with these elements of civil society. They were therefore essentially Anabaptists, however conservative Amish and [Mennonites](#) as some historians regard them excluded from true Anabaptism. [Conrad Grebel](#) wrote in a letter to [Thomas Müntzer](#) in 1524:

"True Christian believers are sheep among wolves, sheep for the slaughter... Neither do they use worldly sword or war, since all killing has ceased with them."

From <<https://www.christianity.com/church/denominations/who-are-anabaptists-learn-the-origins-and-history-of-anabaptism.html>>

What Is Theocracy? Definition and Examples



A theocracy is a form of government in which the ultimate leader is a supreme deity, who rules either directly as a god in human form or indirectly through mortal servants—typically a religious clergy—who rule on the deity's behalf. With their laws based on religious codes and decrees, the governments of theocracies serve their divine leader or leaders rather than the citizens. As a result, theocracies are often oppressive in function, with strict rules and harsh punishments for rule-

Key Takeaways: Theocracy

- A theocracy is a form of government in which priests or religious leaders rule in the name of a deity or deities.
- Serving their divine leader or leaders rather than the citizens, theocracies are often oppressive in function, with harsh punishment for rule-breakers.
- There is no separation of church and state in a true theocracy and the open practice of only the country's prevailing religion is allowed.
- There is no room for democracy and all decisions of a theocracy's leader are unquestionable.

Characteristics of a Theocracy

In a true theocracy, one or more deities are recognized as the supreme ruling authorities, giving divinely inspired guidance to the humans who manage the day-to-day affairs of the government. The head of state is assumed to have a personal connection with the deity or deities of the civilization's religion or spiritual belief. A theocracy is often defined in contrast to an ecclesiocracy, in which religious leaders direct the government but do not claim that they act as earthly instruments of a deity. The papacy in the [Papal States](#) occupies a middle ground between theocracy and ecclesiocracy since the pope does not claim to be a prophet who receives direct revelation from God for translation into civil law.

In theocracies, the ruler is simultaneously the head of government and religion. There is no [separation of church and state](#) and open practice of only the prevailing religion is allowed. The rulers in theocracies hold office by divine grace and conduct their rule based on the prevailing religion. As the source of divine inspiration, sacred religious books and texts govern all state operations and decisions. All power in a theocracy is concentrated in a single institution, with no [separation of powers](#). Since they are assumed to be those that the deity would make, all decisions of a theocracy's leader are unquestionable.

There is no room for the processes of [democracy](#) in a true theocracy. For the population to abide by and respect the will of the ruler and, by extension, that of the deity, those who disagree with or fail to abide by the laws and the dictates of the religion are often repressed and persecuted. Issues like marriage, [reproductive rights](#), [civil rights](#), and punishment of criminals are also defined based on religious text. Under a theocracy, residents of the country typically do not have religious freedom and are not able to vote on governmental decisions.

Secular or non-religious governments can co-exist within a theocracy, delegating some aspects of civil law to religious communities. In Israel, for example, marriage can be performed only by officiates of the religious community to which the couples belong, and no inter-faith or [same-sex marriages](#) performed within the country are legally recognized.

Most theocratic governments function similarly to either [monarchies](#) or [dictatorships](#), as those who hold political power serve the god of their religion first and the citizens of the country next. Future leaders gain their positions either through family inheritance or by having been chosen by the previous leaders.

Living in a Theocracy

Most people would find life under theocratic rule too limiting. It does not allow people to live an individualistic "me-first" lifestyle. No single political party or organization can come into power and what the rulers say is the law. Considering the restrictive nature of their rule, it could be easy to assume that theocratic countries are hotbeds of dissent. This, however, is rarely the case. Theocratic systems rely on leadership from a deity that the people believe to be omnipotent. As a result, the people trust that being empowered by that deity, their leaders will never deceive or mislead them.

Theocratic governments are typically efficient and streamlined, with all directives rapidly implemented down to the community level. The process of governing will not be slowed by the conflict between opposing political parties. All political and social leaders within a theocratic society will quickly fall in line with the rules established by the upper echelons of their society. Unified by the same beliefs, people and groups within a theocracy will work harmoniously toward the same goals.

Since people who live in a theocracy are quick to adhere to the law, crime rates are comparatively low. Similar to most people who have grown up in democracies, citizens of theocracies have been raised and thus conditioned to believe that their way of life is the best way to exist. Most believe that remaining devout and serving their deity is the only true way for them to exist. This helps to keep them committed to their deity, government, culture, and way of life.

However, there are, of course, drawbacks to living under theocratic rule. Incompetent or corrupt leaders are rarely challenged. To challenge a theocratic ruler or group is often viewed as questioning the deity that they represent—potentially a sin.

Theocratic societies are generally intolerant and do not welcome immigrants or people of different cultures or ethnic groups, especially those who do not share the same religious beliefs as them. Minorities within a theocracy are usually forced to either assimilate to the main culture or be shunned and potentially exiled from the country.

Theocratic societies tend to be static, rarely changing or allowing innovations to impact people. While some members of a theocratic society might enjoy modern luxury goods and items, the vast majority of the population might not have access to them. This means that things such as cable TV, the internet, or even cellphones will be viewed as tools for increasing sin and noncompliance. Many people would be fearful of using these things and being influenced by outsiders who use them.

Feminism, LGBTQ advocacy, and similar gender equality movements are seldom tolerated in a theocratic society. Many theocracies conduct their systems based on their deity's religious mandates. If those mandates prescribe certain roles and duties to a specific gender, then speaking out against them will not be allowed.

While people can own and operate businesses within a theocracy, those businesses must follow established rules, laws, and norms mandated by the theocratic belief system. These rules may prohibit businesses from innovating and maximizing profits. While some businessmen inside of a theocracy will be able to operate relatively freely, most will not.

Similarly, while the average person can work, they cannot maximize their earning potential. Theocratic society provides few opportunities for wealth, encourages cooperation over competition, and generally negatively views material goods.

Theocracies in History

Throughout recorded history, many nations and tribal groups have existed under a theocratic government, including many early civilizations.

Ancient Egypt

One of the best-known known examples of theocratic governments was that of [Ancient Egypt](#). Though it is divided into different periods, the theocratic rule of Egypt lasted for about 3,000 years, from around 3150 BCE to around 30 BCE, creating and maintaining one of the world's greatest ancient cultures in the process.

The government of ancient Egypt was a theocratic monarchy as the kings, or pharaohs, ruled by a mandate from the gods, initially was seen as an intermediary between human beings and the divine and were supposed to represent the gods' will through the laws passed and policies approved. They were thought of as direct descendants of the [Sun God, Ra](#). While the pharaohs were the top representatives of the gods, they were also guided by advisors and high priests in carrying out the gods' wishes for constructing new temples, creating laws, and providing for defense.

Biblical Israel

The term *theocracy* was first used by Jewish priest, historian, and military leader Flavius Josephus in the first century AD to describe the characteristic government of the Jews. Josephus argued that while mankind had developed many forms of rule, most could be subsumed under the following three types: monarchy, oligarchy, and democracy. However, according to Josephus, the government of the Jews was unique. Josephus offered the term "theocracy" to describe this form of government in which God was the sovereign and His word was law.

Describing the government of biblical Israel under [Moses](#), Josephus wrote, "Our legislator...ordained our government to be what, by a strained expression, may be termed a theocracy, by ascribing the authority and power to God." The Hebrews believed that their government was by divine rule, whether under the original tribal form, the kingly form, or the high priesthood after the Exile in 597 BCE until the rule of the Maccabees around 167 BCE. The actual rulers or rulers, however, were held responsible directly to God. As such, their deeds and policies could not be arbitrary. They did, however, occasionally deviate from the divine task as shown by the examples of Kings [Saul](#) and [David](#). Witnessing such lapses, the prophets sought to correct them in the name of an angry God.

Ancient China

During its nearly 3,000 years of recorded history, early China was ruled by several [dynasties](#) that practiced theocratic forms of government, including the Shang and Zhou Dynasties. During the Shang Dynasty, the priest-king was thought to communicate and interpret the wishes of the gods and their ancestors. In 1046 BCE, the Shang Dynasty was overthrown by the Zhou Dynasty, which used a claimed "Mandate of Heaven" as a way to overthrow the government. This mandate stated that the current ruler was chosen by a divine force.

Josephus' first-century definition of theocracy remained widely accepted until the [Enlightenment era](#), when the term took on more universalistic and negative connotations, especially when German philosopher Friedrich Hegel's commentary on the relationship between religion and government contrasted sharply with established theocratic doctrines. "[i]f the principle of the state is a complete totality, then church and state cannot possibly be unrelated," he wrote in 1789. The first recorded English use of theocracy meaning, "a sacerdotal government under divine inspiration" appeared in 1622. "Sacerdotal" doctrine ascribes sacrificial functions and spiritual or supernatural powers to ordained priests. The more commonly recognized definition as a "priestly or religious body wielding political and civil power" was recorded in 1825.

Modern Theocracies

The Enlightenment marked the end of theocracy in most Western countries. Today, only a handful of theocracies remain. The most recent theocracy to adopt a different form of government is Sudan, whose [Islamic](#) theocracy was replaced in 2019 by a struggling democracy. Contemporary examples of theocracies include Saudi Arabia, Afghanistan, Iran, and Vatican City.

Saudi Arabia

As an Islamic theocratic monarchy, and home to two of Islam's most holy sites, the cities of Mecca and Medina, Saudi Arabia has one of the most tightly controlled governments in the world. Ruled exclusively by the House of Saud since 1932, the family has absolute power. The Holy Quran and the Sunni School of Islam serve as the country's constitution. Despite the lack of a traditional constitution, Saudi Arabia does have a Basic Law of Governance that guides justice, which must follow the rulings and teaching of Islamic law. Although the law does not directly forbid other religions to be practiced in the country, the practice of religions other than Islam is abhorred by the Saudis' muslim-majority society. Those who reject the Islamic religious teachings within the country are given strict punishment, which in some cases can include the death penalty.

Afghanistan

Similar to Saudi Arabia, Islam is the official religion of Afghanistan. The major foundations of the country's political institutions are based on Islamic [Sharia Law](#). Political power lies almost exclusively in the hands of the religious leaders of the regime, currently the Taliban Islamic Movement. The stated ultimate goal of this fundamentalist Islamic regime is to unify the Afghani people under a common religious law.

Iran

Located in what is considered the Middle East, the government of Iran is a mixed theocratic government. The country has a supreme leader, president, and several councils. However, the laws of the constitution and justice in the state are based on Islamic law. In this manner, the government and constitution of Iran mix both theocratic and democratic principles and elements. The constitution denotes that the ruler of the state is the best-qualified mortal to interpret Islam and to ensure that the people of the state strictly adhere to its principles. Before the formation of the Islamic Republic of Iran, the country was ruled by Shah Muhammad Reza Pahlavi, who was well-known for his secular and U.S.-friendly attitudes. Following a revolution in 1979, the Shah was overthrown from his position by the Grand Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini, who then became the leader of Iran's new Islamic State. Best remembered for orchestrating the [Iran Hostage Crisis](#) of 1979, Khomeini implemented a political system based on traditional Islamic beliefs, a role held today by Khomeini's ardent student and ally, Ali Khamenei.

Vatican City

Officially considered a [city-state](#), the Vatican City is the only country in the world with an absolute theocratic elective monarchy that is guided by the principles of a Christian religious school of thought. Sometimes called the Holy See, Vatican City's government follows the laws and teaching of the [Catholic religion](#). The [Pope](#) is the supreme power in the country and leads the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the Vatican government. This is also perhaps the only monarchy in the world that is non-hereditary. While the country does have a president, that president's rule can be overturned by the Pope.

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