

# ***SLIDE FROM KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE TO KINGDOM SUBJUGATION AND CAPTIVITY***

## **COMMENTARY ON BOOK OF 2 KINGS**

### **IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE LEAD TO THE JUDGMENT OF DISPERSION AND BONDAGE FOR BOTH ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

Paul Apple (September 2021)

For each section:

- Thesis statement                      ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline                    ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions                ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations            ... to stimulate deeper insight

**2 Kings 17:7-8** *“Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.”*

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## [BACKGROUND NOTES \[includes some material on 1 Kings since the 2 books are united\]](#)

**GotQuestions.org:** Second Kings depicts the downfall of the divided kingdom. Prophets continue to warn the people that the judgment of God is at hand, but they will not repent. The kingdom of Israel is repeatedly ruled by wicked kings, and, even though a few of Judah's kings are good, the majority of them lead the people away from worship of the Lord. These few good rulers, along with God's prophets, cannot stop the nation's decline. The Northern Kingdom of Israel is eventually destroyed by the Assyrians, and about 136 years later the Southern Kingdom of Judah is destroyed by the Babylonians.

There are three prominent themes present in the Book of 2 Kings.

- First, the Lord will judge His people when they disobey and turn their backs on Him. The Israelites' unfaithfulness was reflected in the evil idolatry of the kings and resulted in God exercising His righteous wrath against their rebellion.
- Second, the word of the true prophets of God always comes to pass. Because the Lord always keeps His word, so too are the words of His prophets always true.
- Third, the Lord is faithful. He remembered His promise to David (**2 Samuel 7:10-13**), and, despite the disobedience of the people and the evil kings who ruled them, the Lord did not bring David's family to an end.

**L. M. Grant:** The second book of Kings continues the history of the two separated kingdoms, Judah and Israel, with the prophet Elisha replacing Elijah as God's witness -- both of truth and grace. Other prophets also witnessed and suffered for their faithfulness. In the books of Kings special prominence is given to the ministry of prophets, in contrast to the books of Chronicles where the priests and Levites are more often noticed. This is consistent with the fact that Kings deals specially with the government of God as the true Ruler over the kingdoms of Israel and Judah, while the books of Chronicles more particularly emphasise the grace of God. For this reason the ten tribes (Israel) are more prominently seen in the books of Kings, while much more is said of Judah in the books of Chronicles.

No believing king is found in Israel, though in Judah there were some. Yet even in Judah there was not one king who had a really bright end to his life. Hezekiah might have had if he had died when the Lord first told him he would, but he spoiled it when the Lord allowed him 15 years extra. Jotham had a relatively good reign, but he did not banish the high places of worship.

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/lmg/2-kings.html>

**J. Sidlow Baxter:** The Second Book of Kings, which opens with the translation of Elijah to heaven, and closes with the transportation of the captive Jews to Babylon, is more tragic than all which have preceded it. Nay, more than that, it is the most tragic national record ever written. The elect people, through whom the gracious purposes of God were to have been developed for the enlightenment and regeneration of the whole race, become more and more steeped in infidelity and moral degradation, until finally the measure of their wickedness is full, judgment falls, pitiless foes wreak vengeance on them, and drag them from their own land into humiliating captivity. . .

“Conquered, captive, castaway” – thus, as one has put it, ends the story of Judah as an independent kingdom. Let us now glance back over 2 Kings, and gather up our main impressions. There is always the double aspect to be kept in view – the human and the Divine. In the foreground, and in the immediate sense, is the human failure, as seen in the kings and the multitude; but in the background, and in the ultimate sense, is the Divine triumph as seen in the prophets and their messages – for let it be remembered that all the great prophets whose writings have come down to us prophesied in the period covered by 2 Kings, and it is the writings of these prophets which finally interpret to us both the present and the future tense of the Israel story.

On the human side we see, above all else, that “where there is no vision, the people perish.” With departure from a simple, sincere worship of Jehovah comes a lost sense of his presence, accompanied increasingly by idolatry, ruinous alliances, inability to discern the hand of God even when it chastises, a losing of the true ideal of national life, so that moral values are belittled, and a conscience eventually so desensitized that even such messages as the inspired prophets delivered failed to arouse response. Yes, this is the message on the human side. Where the vision of God is lost there inevitably ensue, as **Dr. Campbell Morgan** puts it, “degraded ideals, deadened consciences, defeated purposes.” That lesson is as true for Britain and America today as it was for Judah and Israel long ago.

But on the Divine side there is the picture of ultimate triumph. The greatest prophet of the era writes of Jehovah, “*HE shall not fail, nor be discouraged*” (**Isa. xlii. 4**). When the throne of earth falls to pieces the throne in the heavens rides the storm. The chosen people may fail on earth, but the chosen purpose spans the centuries, and the predetermined consummation is beholden through prophets’ eyes.

**John MacArthur:**

**Author and Date:**

Jewish tradition proposed that Jeremiah wrote Kings, though this is unlikely because the final event recorded in the book (see **2 Kin. 25:27-30**) occurred in Babylon in 561 B.C. Jeremiah never went to Babylon, but to Egypt (**Jer. 43:1-7**), and would have been at least 86 years old by 561 B.C. Actually, the identity of the unnamed author remains unknown. Since the ministry of prophets is emphasized in Kings, it seems that the author was most likely an unnamed prophet of the Lord who lived in exile with Israel in Babylon.

Kings was written between 561-538 B.C. Since the last narrated event sets the earliest possible date of completion and because there is no record of the end of the Babylonian captivity in Kings, the release from exile (538 B.C.) identifies the latest possible writing date.

**Kings of Judah and Israel:**

For each reign described, there is the following literary framework. Every king is introduced with:

- 1) his name and relation to his predecessor;
- 2) his date of accession in relationship to the year of the contemporary ruler in the other kingdom;
- 3) his age on coming to the throne (for kings of Judah only);
- 4) his length of reign;

- 5) his place of reign;
- 6) his mother's name (for Judah only); and
- 7) spiritual appraisal of his reign.

This introduction is followed by a narration of the events that occurred during the reign of each king. The details of this narration vary widely.

Each reign is concluded with:

- 1) a citation of sources;
- 2) additional historical notes;
- 3) notice of death;
- 4) notice of burial;
- 5) the name of the successor; and
- 6) in a few instances, an added postscript (i.e., **1 Kin. 15:32; 2 Kin. 10:36**). **Second Kings 18:1–25:21** deals with the time when Judah survived alone (722–586 B.C.).

Two concluding paragraphs speak of events after the Babylonian exile (**2 Kin. 25:22–26, 27–30**).

### Theological Themes:

Three theological themes are stressed in Kings.

- First, the Lord judged Israel and Judah because of their disobedience to His law (**2 Kin 17:7–23**). This unfaithfulness on the part of the people was furthered by the apostasy of the evil kings who led them into idolatry (**2 Kin. 17:21, 22; 21:11**), so the Lord exercised His righteous wrath against His rebellious people.
- Second, the word of the true prophets came to pass (**1 Kin. 13:2, 3; 22:15–28; 2 Kin. 23:16; 24:2**). This confirmed that the Lord did keep His Word, even His warnings of judgment.
- Third, the Lord remembered His promise to David (**1 Kin. 11:12–13, 34–36; 15:4; 2 Kin. 8:19**). Even though the kings of the Davidic line proved themselves to be disobedient to the Lord, He did not bring David's family to an end as He did the families of Jeroboam I, Omri, and Jehu in Israel. Even as the book closes, the line of David still exists (**2 Kin. 25:27–30**), so there is hope for the coming "seed" of David (see **2 Sam. 7:12–16**). The Lord is thus seen as faithful, and His Word is trustworthy.

**Jay Smith:** The book of 2nd Kings is Narrative History and Prophecy concerning the affairs of the divided kingdoms. The author is anonymous; however, some suggest the prophet Jeremiah. It was written about 560-538 B.C. Key personalities are many; they include Elijah, Elisha, the woman from Shunem, Naaman, Jezebel, Jehu, Joash, Hezekiah, Sennacherib, Isaiah, Manasseh, Josiah, Jehoiakim, Zedekiah, and Nebuchadnezzar. Its purpose was to demonstrate the value of those who obey God, and the fate of those who refuse to obey and make Him ultimate ruler. In this book, God performs amazing miracles through his prophets as He sends these messengers to herald His messages. The two kingdoms are far from the Lord and lost in the monotonous confusion of their sins. God's prophets bring the only hope to this lost yet, chosen nation.

- In **chapters 1-17**, we read of the rulers of the divided kingdoms who lead them to their fate in

exile. The prophet Elijah concludes his ministry and hands over the reins to another up and coming prophet who God will use named Elisha. Elisha is an apprentice of sorts, and follows Elijah as he follows God's lead. God took Elijah in a whirlwind to heaven and the apprentice asks for a double portion of Elijah's spirit, and it was granted to him (2:9). In Elisha's ministry, he carries out twice as many miracles, as Elijah, as God does His will through his prophet. We also find in these chapters, details about kings and dynasties, which ultimately disobey and ignore God's orders and provisions. Finally, during the reign of the last evil king, Hoshea, the Assyrians take the Northern Kingdom into captivity. They have neglected the warning and coming judgment announced by the prophet Hosea. It is fitting that the more evil of the two kingdoms (Northern Kingdom) is the kingdom that goes into permanent captivity. There is no record or evidence of these 10 tribes of Israel ever returning from exile.

- In **chapters 18-25**, it is apparent that the Southern Kingdom is not doing much better, and soon would also face God's judgment. *"Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, 'Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets. However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God'" (17:13-14).*

[https://biblehub.com/summary/2\\_kings/1.htm](https://biblehub.com/summary/2_kings/1.htm)

**Gleason Archer:** The theme of these two books was to demonstrate on the basis of Israel's history that the welfare of the nation ultimately depended upon the sincerity of its faithfulness to the covenant with Jehovah, and that the success of any ruler was to be measured by the degree of his adherence to the Mosaic constitution and his maintenance of a pure and God-honoring testimony before the heathen. The purpose of this record was to set forth those events which were important from the standpoint of God and His program of redemption. The author had no intention of glorifying Israel's heroes out of nationalistic motives; hence he omitted even those passing achievements which would have assumed great importance in the eyes of a secular historian. His prime concern was to show how each successive ruler dealt with God in his covenant responsibilities.

**Henry Morris:** The division between 1 Kings and 2 Kings is seemingly quite arbitrary; originally the two were one book. The second book continues the history of Judah and Israel until their eventual captivities. Like 1 Kings, the book of 2 Kings was probably compiled from records of the earlier prophets by Jeremiah or one of the later prophets of Judah. The ministries of Elijah and Elisha constitute the dominant subject of the first third of the book. The portion of the history devoted to Israel is sad in the extreme, with one ungodly king after another leading the people away from God, until finally the Assyrians destroyed their land and carried the people off into captivity. The last king of Israel was Hoshea (**2 Kings 17**). There were, of course, believers and faithful servants of God in the northern kingdom during all those years of spiritual decline and apostasy. The most notable were the prophets Elijah and Elisha, but two of the prophets of the Biblical canon also had ministries primarily in Israel. Hosea's initial ministry to Israel was during the long reign of Jeroboam II, but it evidently continued even beyond Israel's exile into Assyria (**Hosea 1:1**). The prophet Amos was a contemporary of Hosea who also ministered especially in the northern kingdom of Israel (sometimes called Ephraim). In Judah, several of the kings were God-fearing men, and Hezekiah and Josiah in particular led in great national revivals. Of the writing prophets, those whose ministry was mainly centered in Judah were—in more or

less chronological order—Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah and Jeremiah. Isaiah, in the days of Ahaz and Hezekiah, and Jeremiah, during the last days of the kingdom under Josiah and the kings who briefly followed him, had especially significant influence on the kings and the nation as a whole. No doubt because of the influence of these prophets, and the several God-fearing kings of Judah, God allowed Judah to remain in the land for about 130 years after Israel had been carried away to Assyria. Eventually, however, even Judah became so wicked and apostate, especially under her final kings (Jehoiakim, Jeconiah and Zedekiah) that God sent Nebuchadnezzar and the armies of Babylon to destroy Jerusalem with its temple and to carry the king and all the leaders of the people into exile and captivity in Babylon. There were other godly prophets and priests in both Israel and Judah, of course, besides those whose prophecies have been preserved in the Bible. Some among these, no doubt, were the original writers of the records now incorporated in the books of Kings. The last of them, Jeremiah, quite possibly was the man who compiled and edited all of these earlier documents into their present, divinely inspired form.

**Chuck Swindoll:** World affairs played a heavy role in Israel's and Judah's destinies. Yet, the author of 2 Kings directly connected the Israelites' apostasy—led by their wicked kings—to their national destruction, pointing it out as God's judgment on His wayward children. Despite repeated warnings from God's prophets to turn from their ways and return to God, the people continued to live in sin. To their regret, they did not believe that God would allow their nation to be ruined by foreign invaders.

Yet God did not forget His promise to David, either. God saved a remnant from among the people and kept the royal line intact so that one day His people could return to their land to await the promised Redeemer.

**Donald Wiseman:** The history of Kings does not set out to be a complete and exhaustive portrayal of the period but rather a selection made to illustrate God's overall control of history, even when this is not obvious to observers. The historian does this by a judicious use of his sources and by highlighting the lives of certain individuals. Thus David, king of Judah, is the ideal or model ruler, and Jeroboam son of Nebat is typical of those kings of Israel who lead the people into sin. Ahab and Jehu are singled out as those who began well yet, despite the admonishments of contemporary prophets, did not carry reforms to a final conclusion and thus influenced even Judah to err and ultimately to suffer the same fate as their northern neighbours.

One result of this **selectivity** (a common method in historiography) is that there is also emphasis on Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah ('the new David') of Judah and on Ahab as the hoped-for reformer of Israel, while others are treated in a summary fashion. Thus the distinguished ruler Omri of Israel, renowned according to contemporary documents (e.g. The Moabite Mesha' inscription and Assyrian references to the 'House of Omri'), is passed over in only eight verses (**1 Kgs 16:21–28**) and Manasseh's long reign occupies less than a chapter (**2 Kgs 21:1–18**).

Kings is a unified work and, as argued here, probably and largely the work of one historian. The purpose for which the book was written is nowhere explicitly stated and must be deduced from the history as it now stands. **It serves for all time as a warning of the inevitable retributive judgment brought on themselves by those who deviate in worship and practice, yet as an**



**encouragement to follow God and receive the blessings promised for those who are obedient to his law even through times of exile.** It is also a reminder of God's persevering love and grace despite his being rebuffed. Most space is given to those who, at least initially, were viewed as '*doing the right in the Lord's sight*' and thus as practically keeping his law.

Kings then is not just a chronicle, political or religious, but '**sacred**' history with appropriate theological comment, that is, a religious commentary on history. Without the details given, little would be known of the outcome of the experiment in kingship following the promise given to David of an everlasting dynasty. Nor would the wisdom and splendour of Solomon, the exploits of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the event and explanation of the exile of Israel and of Judah, to all of which reference is made elsewhere in Scripture, be known or understood. All peoples, since the earliest societies using writing, have given an account to themselves of the principal events known to them for the benefit of subsequent generations.

**William H. Barnes:** But the books of Kings are, in the end, mostly about **kings**—their many failings, their occasional successes, and the eventual, seemingly inevitable demise of their dynasties. These books, like the book of Judges, **end on a dismal note**, with the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon's Temple ringing in the ears of the hearer. (I mention "hearer" because all ancient books were read aloud, even when the reader was alone.) Yet, in contrast to Judges, the book of 2 Kings concludes with a "note of modest hope" **in 2 Kings 25:27–30** (see **Barnes** 1991:146–149). The exiled King Jehoiachin, in his 37th year of exile (he had been on the throne of Judah only three months before being deposed and exiled by Nebuchadnezzar), was released from prison and given "*a higher place than all the other exiled kings in Babylon.*" He dined in the presence of the Babylonian king "*for the rest of his life.*" Hardly a testimony of ringing triumph, but a testimony of modest hope. Contrary to the era of the judges (and the book of Judges), the era of the kings (and the books of Kings) ended on an **optimistic note**. Yes, the Davidic hope was still alive. Descendants of that line would still exist and still make a difference. And for the Christian believer, who follows Jesus the Christ, "*son of David, king of the Jews,*" this makes all the difference in the world.

**August Konkkel:** The essence of the **covenant** is to reverence Yahweh exclusively. The covenant is the voice of God written in "*the book of this law*" (**Deut. 30:10**); their God demands uncompromising devotion of their mind and desire (cf. **6:1–6**). The words of the covenant are to be kept with the ark (**31:25–26**) as a permanent testimony to their oath of commitment. The priests as the custodians of this book of the law are responsible to renew the covenant every seven years (**31:9–13**); they review its teaching to all the assembly (women, children, and the sojourners are included), gathered at the Feast of Booths.

According to Deuteronomy, the book of this law is the particular responsibility of the king, whom Yahweh will choose. When they come to the land, they are to install their king in accordance with the divine choice (**Deut. 17:15**). The king is required to make a copy of "*this law*" from the book, which is in the charge of the priests (**v. 18**), and the king must read it regularly, so he will learn to reverence Yahweh and learn to observe its requirements (**v. 19**). The king is one with his brothers in the requirement of subservience to the covenant, but the king is responsible to ensure that the practice of the covenant is carried out in the regulations of the kingdom. This becomes the sole criterion of evaluation applied to each of the kings of Israel and

Judah in the history written about them. . .

The fulfillment of prophecy is thus one of the central themes of the books of Kings. The word of Yahweh concerning the requirement of the covenant is clear, although at times the summary judgment is given in general terms, simply saying that the king did not comply with the covenant requirement completely (**1 Kings 11:4; 15:3, 14**). With this determinative principle there is the certain efficacy of the word of God, which does not fail but is invariably fulfilled. Ahijah tells Jeroboam that his family will be terminated (**14:10–11**), an event that is noted as fulfilled when the usurper Baasha destroys the royal house (**15:29**). The judgment against Jeroboam finds its ultimate fulfillment in the end of the nation of Israel (**14:15–16**). An unknown prophet at Bethel specifically tells the idolatrous Jeroboam that a descendant of David named Josiah will kill the priests of his altar and burn human bones on it (**13:1–3**); this is fulfilled when Josiah purges the cultic places (**2 Kings 23:16–18**).

Some of the fulfillments are in reference to prophetic words antecedent to Kings. Joshua placed a curse upon Jericho, saying that anyone who rebuilt it would do so at the cost of an eldest and youngest son (**Josh. 6:26**); in disregard of this, Ahab incites an individual named Hiel of Bethel to rebuild it, with the result that he suffers precisely the penalty prescribed (**1 Kings 16:34**). On the positive side, Yahweh has determined the temple will be built by a son of David (**2 Sam. 7:13**), an achievement brought about by Solomon (**1 Kings 8:20**). Deuteronomistic theology views history as a fulfillment of the will of the Lord and therefore can be announced by the prophetic word. This prophetic word is not so much predictive as declarative of the requirement of the covenant and the consequences of failing to observe it.

**John Dummelow:** The religious history of each of the two kingdoms was characterised by distinct features. In Israel there was no preëminent sanctuary like the Temple at Jerusalem to suggest any restriction upon the practice of worshipping at local shrines ('high places'); and this practice prevailed as long as the kingdom stood. At certain of these shrines Jehovah was worshipped under the emblem of a calf or young bull; and the use of these symbols was maintained by all those kings who upheld the ancestral Hebrew faith. The 'high places,' however, were not always devoted to the service of the Lord, for both the historian and certain contemporary prophets imply that the worship of the Canaanite Baalim was sometimes practised at them (**Hosea 2:13**). And at two periods alien forms of religion were introduced from abroad and diffused through the influence of the reigning sovereign. The first was that of the Phœnician Baal, brought into Israel by the alliance of Ahab with Ethbaal, king of Zidon, and strenuously opposed by the prophets Elijah and Elisha. The second, imported at a later date, was due to connexion with Assyria, and consisted of planet- or star-worship, to the prevalence of which allusion is made by the prophet Amos (**Amos 5:26**).

In Judah the Temple built by Solomon naturally dwarfed the importance of all other sanctuaries, but the 'high places' were nevertheless long maintained even under the rule of pious kings. But in the reign of Hezekiah an attempt was made to suppress them and to confine all national acts of religion to the Temple; and a still more complete reform in this direction was effected by Josiah. The greater success that attended Josiah's efforts was largely due to the discovery of a copy of the book of Deuteronomy, in which the restriction of worship to a single locality is expressly enjoined. In Judah calf-worship never seems to have been practised; and though the worship of



the Lord was often corrupted, its supremacy was never seriously disputed by any other religion during the first half of the history, except in the reign of Athaliah, who was a votary of the Zidonian Baal. Subsequently, however, Assyrian forms of worship penetrated into Judah as they had into Israel. Ahaz was attracted by the rites which he saw at Damascus when summoned thither by Tiglath-pileser, whilst Manasseh is described as having worshipped the 'host of heaven.' After Assyria had fallen before Babylon, Babylonian cults began to be imitated; and both Jeremiah and Ezekiel allude to the worship paid to the 'queen of heaven' (perhaps Ishtar) and to Tammuz, a deity adopted by the Greeks under the name of Adonis (see **Jeremiah 44:18; Ezekiel 8:14**).

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/dcb/2-kings.html>

**Iain Provan:** The book of Kings tells us a story; it is **narrative** literature. It is a story that is certainly about the past (whatever else it may also be about); it is literature with **historiographical** intent. It is, finally, **didactic** literature—it seeks to teach its readers a number of things about God and the ways of God. By way of introduction we shall explore each of these three aspects of the nature of the book further.

### **The Book of Kings as Narrative Literature**

A story is narrated, presenting a number of characters; events follow each other in chronological sequence; and verbal and thematic links bind the whole entity together. The main characters in the story are the Lord God of Israel, various Israelite kings and prophets, and a number of significant foreigners—although it is not always the main characters who are given prominence.<sup>4</sup> The plot is concerned with the attempt that Israel makes (or more often, does not make) under its monarchy to live as the people of God in the promised land and with how God deals with the Israelites in their success and failure. It is a plot worked out gradually, as king succeeds king, from David (**1 Kgs. 1:1**) to Zedekiah (**2 Kgs. 25:7**), with an epilog reserved for Jehoiachin (**25:27–30**), and in an ordered way, as the reign of each king finds its particular place in the book's framework. That framework characteristically tells us when, in relation to another king, a certain monarch came to the throne, how long he reigned, and the name of his capital city. We learn about his death/burial and his successor and about where to look for further information about him. We are offered an evaluation of him in terms of his religious policy. In the case of Judean (rather than northern Israelite) kings, we are told the name of his mother and his age at his accession to the throne. A good example of the full set of these so-called "regnal formulae" occurs in **1 Kings 22:41–43, 45, 50**. With their general regularity of expression throughout Kings, the formulae contribute much to the book's sense of coherence—to the sense that it "hangs together" as a single piece of work (compare, e.g., **1 Kgs. 14:22–24** with **2 Kgs. 16:2–4**, and both with **2 Kgs. 17:7–11**).

### **The Book of Kings as Historiographical Literature**

In summary, my conviction is that, although it is the text that is authoritative for the Church and not the history behind the text—the portrait and not the subject painted—the question of historical referentiality cannot be dodged. Kings must be taken seriously as a narrative about Israel's past.

### **The Book of Kings as Didactic Literature**

The book of Kings is not only a narrative about the past. It is also a narrative that seeks to teach

its readers a number of things about God and his ways. That is, the book of Kings tells us about Israel's past, not so that we should become better informed about it in some abstract, intellectually detached way, but so that we should learn from it (**Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11**). . .

Various themes are prominent in the story. First, God is indeed God. He is not to be confused with the various gods worshipped within Israel and outside—for these are simply human creations (**1 Kgs. 12:25–30; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 19:14–19**). They are part of the created order, like the people who worship them, and they are powerless, futile entities (**1 Kgs. 11:5; 16:13; 18:22–40; 2 Kgs. 17:15; 18:33–35**). The Lord, by contrast, is the incomparable Creator of heaven and earth (**1 Kgs. 8:23; 2 Kgs. 19:15**), utterly distinct from the world created (**1 Kgs. 8:9, 14–21, 27–30; 18:26–38**), yet powerfully active within it. It is God, and not any god, who controls nature (**1 Kgs. 17–19; 2 Kgs. 1:2–17; 4:8–37; 5:1–18; 6:1–7, 27**). It is God, and neither god, nor king, nor prophet, who controls history (**1 Kgs. 11:14, 23; 14:1–18; 22:1–38; 2 Kgs. 5:1–18; 10:32–33; 18:17–19:37**). This latter point is perhaps illustrated most clearly in the way that prophets generally function within the book, describing the future before God brings it about (**1 Kgs. 11:29–39; 13:1–32; 16:1–4; 20:13–34; 2 Kgs. 19:6–7, 20–34**). Nothing can hinder the fulfilment of this prophetic word—although God in divine freedom can override its fulfilment for divine purposes (**1 Kgs. 21:17–29; 2 Kgs. 3:15–27**). There is only one living God; it is the Lord (**1 Kgs. 18:15; 2 Kgs. 5:15**).

Secondly, as the only God there is, the Lord demands exclusive worship. God is not prepared to take a place alongside the gods or to be displaced by them. God is not about to be confused with any part of the created order. God alone will be worshipped, by Israelite and foreigner alike (**1 Kgs. 8:41–43, 60; 2 Kgs. 5:15–18; 17:24–41**). Much of Kings therefore addresses the problem of illegitimate worship. The main interest is in the content of this worship, which must not involve idols or images nor reflect any aspect of the fertility and other cults of “the nations” (**1 Kgs. 11:1–40; 12:25–13:34; 14:22–24; 16:29–33; 2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 17:7–23; 21:1–9**). There is subsidiary concern about the place of worship, which is ideally the Jerusalem temple and not the local “*high places*” (**1 Kgs. 3:2; 5:1–9:9; 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs. 18:4; 23:1–20**). The book is also concerned to describe the moral wrongs that inevitably accompany false worship. For as the worship of something other than God inevitably leads to some kind of mistreatment of fellow-mortals in the eyes of God (**1 Kgs. 21; 2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 21:1–16**), so true worship of God is always bound up with obedience to the law of God. By the same token, true wisdom is defined in terms of true worship and wholehearted obedience. It is not something that can be divorced from either (**1 Kgs. 1–11**). Worship and ethics are two sides of the same coin, in Kings as elsewhere in the OT.

Thirdly, as the giver of the law that defines true worship and right thinking and behavior generally, the Lord is also the one who executes judgment upon wrongdoers. The world of Kings is a moral world in which wrongdoing is punished, whether the sinner be king (**1 Kgs. 11:9–13; 14:1–18**), prophet (**1 Kgs. 13:7–25; 20:35–36**), or ordinary Israelite (**2 Kgs. 5:19–27; 7:17–20**). It is not a vending-machine world, however, in which every coin of sin that is inserted results in individually packaged retribution. There is no neat correlation between sin and judgment in Kings, even though people are told that they must obey God if they are to be blessed (**1 Kgs. 2:1–4; 11:38**). This is largely because of the compassionate character of the Judge, who does not desire final judgment to fall upon beloved creatures (**2 Kgs. 13:23; 14:27**) and is ever ready to

find cause why such judgment should be delayed or mitigated (**1 Kgs. 21:25–29; 2 Kgs. 22:15–20**). God’s grace is to be found everywhere in the book of Kings, confounding the expectations that the reader has formed on the basis of law (**1 Kgs. 11:9–13; 15:1–5; 2 Kgs. 8:19**). Sin can, nevertheless, accumulate to such an extent that judgment falls not only upon individuals but upon whole cultures, sweeping the relatively innocent away with the guilty (**2 Kgs. 17:1–23; 23:29–25:26**).

This brings us at the last to the theme: promise. It is promise that is usually found at the heart of the Lord’s gracious behavior towards the people of God. The most prominent of the promises in Kings is God’s promise to David of an eternal dynasty. It appears in a curiously paradoxical form. In much of the narrative it provides us with an explanation as to why the Davidic dynasty survives, when other dynasties do not, in spite of the disobedience of David’s successors (**1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19**). The promise is viewed, in other words, as unconditional. At other times, however, the continuance of the dynasty is because of the obedience of David’s successors (**1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–5**). The promise is treated as conditional. As the book progresses this latter view seemingly prevails; accumulating sin puts the promise in its unconditional aspect under too much stress and in the end brings God’s judgment down upon Judah just as severely as upon Israel (**2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 21:1–15; 23:31–25:26**). And yet, Jehoiachin lives (**2 Kgs. 25:27–30**). His survival in the midst of near total disaster, like that of Joash before him (**2 Kgs. 11**), holds out the possibility of recovery for the Davidic line—the possibility that the promise transcends sin after all and that David will indeed rule again over all Israel, as **1 Kings 11:39** implies. It suggests that grace may triumph over law in the story of Israel’s future, as in so much of the story of her past. A similar possibility is clearly in mind with regard to the other great promise in the book—the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of descendants and everlasting possession of the land of Canaan. This too is a promise that influences God’s treatment of his people in the story (**2 Kgs. 13:23**, and implicitly in **1 Kgs. 4:20–21, 24; 18:36**), and it is a promise that lies in the background of Solomon’s prayer in **1 Kings 8:22–53**, as he looks forward to the possibility of forgiveness after judgment. Grace may not be presumed upon, but it can be hoped for on the basis of God’s character and promises.

**Paul House:** In many ways, it is probably most accurate to call 1, 2 Kings “**prophetic narrative**.” After all, the prophets’ lives and predictions help structure the books. Prophetic theological themes such as covenant, sin, punishment, and renewal, permeate 1, 2 Kings. Understanding God’s work in history is as important to the prophets as it is to the author of 1, 2 Kings. . .

Prophetic narrative has at least five distinguishing characteristics.

- First, it assesses the past based on God’s covenant with Israel.
- Second, it predicts the future by noting how God has blessed or punished Israel in the past and by noting what promises God has made to individuals (e.g., David in **2 Sam 7:7–17**) or to the nation as a whole.
- Third, it creates its plot by emphasizing events that fulfill a prophetic view of the past and future.
- Fourth, it assesses characters based on how they accelerate or retard the blessings or judgments God sends to Israel.
- Fifth, like the prophets did when they preached in Israel, prophetic narrative instructs its

audience to turn to the Lord so they can receive blessing instead of punishment.

These characteristics are evident throughout Joshua-Kings and also in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets.

### **Pat Seiler: Leading Themes**

#### **The Temple**

There is too much written regarding the temple in 1 & 2 Kings not to take note of it. **1 Kings 5-9** provide details about its elaborate design and dedication. It is not too hard to imagine the joy and vibrancy of the people as they worshipped there. The ensuing chapters make consistent reference to its plundering both by enemies of Israel (**1 Kings 14:25-28**) and even their own leaders (**2 Kings 12:17-18**). It seems that the state of the temple closely paralleled the people's spiritual state.

#### **The Prophets**

There are two leadership roles in Kings: prophets and kings. Bad kings delivered bad leadership, taking the nation farther from God. It was the role of the prophet to deliver God's word of warning and judgement. On occasion, a good king, like Hezekiah, would seek the advice and intercession of a prophet, as he did with Isaiah (**2 Kings 19**). Prophets like Elijah and Elisha demonstrated the power, and thus the superiority, of God through miracles

#### **God and the Nations.**

God moves the hearts of individuals, but He also moves nations to accomplish His will. Most notably, he used Assyria (**2 Kings 17**) and Babylon (**2 Kings 25**) to bring judgement upon the peoples of Israel and Judah. But we also see His sovereign hand in the division of Israel and Judah (**1 Kings 12:15**), the raising up of Solomon's enemies (**1 Kings 11:14-25**), and the defeat of the Assyrians against Hezekiah (**2 Kings 19:35**).

#### **The Cost of Compromise**

Solomon strayed away from the word of God. In fact, he completely ignored God's commands. He let his heart be influenced by his ungodly wives which led to his horrible downfall. It is likely that he reasoned that he was just being like all the other kings around him, or that God would approve of his behaviour since He had appeared to him. But his compromise came at a high price, not just for himself and his subjects, but for future generations.

#### **The Impact of Leadership**

David's leadership impacted the generations after him. God tore the kingdom apart, partially because He wanted one tribe to remain in David's line (**1 Kings 11:13**). But the greater example here is that each of Judah's and Israel's kings were responsible before the Lord for the direction of their respective kingdoms. If any of them would seek the Lord with all their heart, He would be faithful to protect and bless them.

**Constable:** The Books of Kings teach that failure to honor the revealed will of God always brings ruin and destruction. The writer traced this theme through the 411-year monarchy, from Solomon to the Babylonian Captivity. He did so both in the national affairs of Israel and Judah and in the lives of representative individuals, notably the kings.

"The entire history of the monarchy in Israel hinges on the word of the Lord. Having established the basis of his covenant relationship with David, God faithfully demonstrates the veracity of his word. From the first chastisement against Solomon to the ultimate deportation of the nation, God's word of the covenant controls history."

O. Palmer Robertson

The United Kingdom of Israel attained its largest extent geographically, as well as its greatest influence, under Solomon. However, it ended in discord and ruin because of Solomon's failure to honor the Mosaic Covenant faithfully.

In the period of the Divided Kingdom, the writer evaluated each king by his allegiance to that covenant. He showed that Yahweh either blessed him for his fidelity, or cursed him for his infidelity to it. Also the writer opened windows into the lives of the ordinary citizens. God dealt with them as He did the kings. He consistently applied these principles to the common people's lives as well as the kings' reigns. As the people departed from God, He raised up His servants the prophets to call them back to trust and obedience.

To review, during the divided monarchy there were in Israel nine dynasties and 20 kings, of whom seven were assassinated. The writer evaluated all of them as bad, but Ahab was probably the worst and Jehu the best. In Judah there was only one dynasty, with 19 kings, plus one queen who usurped the throne. Five of these rulers suffered assassination. Twelve were bad, eight were good, and four of the good kings were reformers (very good). Manasseh was the worst king, and Josiah was probably the best. In the history of the Surviving Kingdom, the writer emphasized that ultimately, deportation (unrest) and captivity (enslavement) are the inevitable consequences of persistent departure from God and His will.

The church operates under a different covenant than Israel did, and what God requires of us is different in many respects from what He required of the Israelites. Nevertheless, He still deals with us in the same way He dealt with Israel. He blesses those who trust and obey Him, and He disciplines those who do not (cf. **Rom. 11:21-22**). God has preserved the Books of Kings to teach us how consistently He deals with people on this basis.

### John Gates: Historical Background

In David's day Egypt's power had waned and Assyria was weak; hence there were impotent nations on both of Israel's frontiers. However, Assyria soon awakened under Tiglath-pileser III (also called Pul, **II Kgs 15:19**; 745-727 B.C.). In 721 B.C. Samaria fell under the attack of Shalmaneser and Sargon. Later, under Sennacherib, Assyria invaded Judah and took many cities but failed to take Jerusalem because of the rear-guard threat of Egypt. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal extended Assyrian hegemony to Egypt.

In Josiah's time Pharaoh-necho went up to help Assyria against Babylon at Carchemish, but the two allies were defeated. Shortly the victorious Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine, and on his third attack against Jerusalem, plundered and destroyed the city, carrying the people off to final captivity (586 B.C.).

2 KINGS: THE DIVIDED KINGDOM TAKEN CAPTIVE						
CONCLUSION OF ELIJAH'S MINISTRY	ELISHA'S MINISTRY	THE PROGRESSION TOWARDS JUDGMENT	THE CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL (722 B.C.)	THE REIGN OF HEZEKIAH	THE REIGN OF JOSIAH	THE CAPTIVITY OF JUDAH
1:1-18	2:1-8:15	8:16-16:20	17:1-41	18:1-21:26	22:1-23:33	23:34-25:30
ONE GODLY PROPHET				TWO GODLY KINGS		
ISRAEL AND JUDAH – A DIVIDED KINGDOM				JUDAH – A SURVIVING KINGDOM		
ISRAEL DEPORTED TO ASSYRIA				JUDAH DEPORTED TO BABYLON		
853-722 B.C. (131 years)				715-560 B.C. (155 years)		
THEME: God demonstrates through the dissolution of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah that success and failure is determined by faithfulness (or unfaithfulness) to God's revealed wisdom.						

Author: Unknown captive in Babylon  
Date: ca. 600-586 B.C.

Key verses: 17:6-8; 25:21  
Key words: captive; "did not tear down  
the high places"

<https://pilgrimbobby.wordpress.com/a-battle-of-the-books/old-testament-2/histories/2-kings/>



Charles Swindoll:

## SECOND KINGS

	<b>Northern Kingdom</b> Israel <i>ISRAEL'S FALL TO ASSYRIA 722 BC</i> <b>CHAPTERS</b> 1–10		<b>Both Kingdoms</b> (Alternating) <i>JUDAH'S FALL TO BABYLON 586 BC</i> <b>CHAPTERS</b> 11–17	<b>Southern Kingdom</b> Judah <b>CHAPTERS</b> 18–25
<b>Northern Prophets</b>	Elijah Elisha		Jonah Amos Hosea	
<b>Southern Prophets</b>		Obadiah Joel Micah Isaiah		Nahum Zephaniah Jeremiah Habakkuk
<b>Northern Kings</b>	Ahaziah to Hoshea			
<b>Southern Kings</b>		Jehoram to Zedekiah		
<b>Key Chapters</b>	17 and 25			
<b>Theme</b>	God is patient, but He does not allow persistent sin to go unpunished.			
<b>Key Verses</b>	17:22–23			
<b>Christ in 2 Kings</b>	Foreshadowed in the faithfulness of some Judean kings; seen in the healing ministry and compassion of Elisha.			

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<https://www.insight.org/resources/bible/the-historical-books/second-kings>

ConformingtoJesus.com List of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Kings of Israel (North)	Kings of Judah (South)
<b>Jeroboam I:</b> Led secession of Israel	<b>Rehoboam:</b> Son of Solomon; first king
<b>Nadab:</b> Son of Jeroboam I	<b>Abijah (Abijam; Abia):</b> Son of Rehoboam
<b>Baasha:</b> Overthrew Nadab	<b>Asa:</b> Probably son of Abijah
<b>Elah:</b> Son of Baasha	<b>Jehoshaphat:</b> Son of Asa
<b>Zimri:</b> Overthrew Elah	<b>Jehoram (Joram):</b> Son of Jehoshaphat; husband of Athaliah
<b>Omri:</b> Overthrew Zimri	<b>Ahaziah:</b> Son of Jehoram and Athaliah
<b>Ahab:</b> Son of Omri; husband of Jezebel	<b>Athaliah:</b> Daughter of King Ahab of Israel and Jezebel; wife of Jehoram; only queen to rule over Judah
<b>Ahaziah:</b> Son of Ahab	<b>Joash (Jehoash):</b> Son of Ahaziah
<b>Jehoram (Joram):</b> Son of Ahab	<b>Amaziah:</b> Son of Joash
<b>Jehu:</b> Overthrew Jehoram	<b>Uzziah (Azariah):</b> Son of Amaziah
<b>Jehoahaz (Joahaz):</b> Son of Jehu	<b>Jotham:</b> Regent, later King; son of Uzziah
<b>Jehoash (Joash):</b> Son of Jehoahaz	<b>Ahaz:</b> Son of Jotham
<b>Jeroboam II:</b> Son of Jehoash	<b>Hezekiah:</b> Son of Ahaz; husband of Hephzi-Bah
<b>Zechariah:</b> Son of Jeroboam II	<b>Manasseh:</b> Son of Hezekiah and Hephzi-Bah
<b>Shallum:</b> Overthrew Zechariah	<b>Amon:</b> Son of Manasseh
<b>Menahem:</b> Overthrew Shallum	<b>Josiah (Josias):</b> Son of Amon
<b>Pekahiah:</b> Son of Menahem	<b>Jehoahaz (Joahaz):</b> Son of Josiah
<b>Pekah:</b> Overthrew Pekahiah	<b>Jehoiakim:</b> Son of Josiah
<b>Hoshea:</b> Overthrew Pekah; kingdom overthrown by Assyrians under Sargon II	<b>Jehoiachin:</b> Son of Jehoiakim
<input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Bad <input type="checkbox"/> Mixture of good & bad	<b>Zedekiah:</b> Son of Josiah; kingdom overthrown by Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar

[https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/kings\\_of\\_israel-judah\\_chart.htm](https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/kings_of_israel-judah_chart.htm)

## Kings of Judah and Israel

Saul	1050-1010 BC
David	1010-970
Solomon	970-930

Judah (and Benjamin)					Israel (Ten Northern Tribes)				
King	Reign		Character	Prophets	King	Reign		Character	Prophets
1. Rehoboam	931-913	17 years	Bad	Shemaiah	1. Jeroboam I	931-910	22 years	Bad	Ahijah
2. Abijah	913-911	3 years	Bad		2. Nadab	910-909	2 years	Bad	
3. Asa	911-870	41 years	Good		3. Baasha	909-886	24 years	Bad	
					4. Elah	886-885	2 years	Bad	
					5. Zimri	885	7 days	Bad	
4. Jehoshaphat	870-848*	25 years	Good		6. Omri	885-874*	12 years	Bad	Elijah
5. Jehoram	848-841*	8 years	Bad		7. Ahab	874-853	22 years	Bad	Micaiah
6. Ahaziah	841	1 years	Bad		8. Ahaziah	853-852	2 years	Bad	
7. Athaliah	841-835	6 years	Bad		9. Joram	852-841	12 years	Bad	Elisha
8. Joash	835-796	40 years	Good	Joel	10. Jehu	841-814	28 years	Bad	
9. Amaziah	796-767	29 years	Good		11. Jehoahaz	814-798	17 years	Bad	Jonah Amos Hosea
10. Uzziah (Azariah)	767-740*	52 years	Good		12. Jehoash	798-782	16 years	Bad	
11. Jotham	740-732*	16 years	Good	Isaiah	13. Jeroboam II	782-753*	41 years	Bad	
12. Ahaz	732-716	16 years	Bad	Micah	14. Zechariah	753-752	6 mo	Bad	
13. Hezekiah	716-687	29 years	Good		15. Shallum	752	1 mo	Bad	
14. Manasseh	687-642*	55 years	Bad-repent		16. Menahem	752-742	10 years	Bad	
15. Amon	642-640	2 years	Bad	Nahum	17. Pekahiah	742-740	2 years	Bad	
16. Josiah	640-608	31 years	Good	Habakkuk	18. Pekah	740-732*	20 years	Bad	
17. Jehoahaz	608	3 mo	Bad	Zephaniah	19. Hoshea	732-712	9 years	Bad	
18. Jehoiakim	608-597	11 years	Bad		722 BC Fall of Isreal / Assyrian Captivity				
19. Jehoiachin	597	3 mos	Bad	Daniel					
20. Zedekiah	597-586	11 years	Bad	Ezekiel					
Destruction of Jerusalem, 9th Av, 586 BC, Babylonian Captivity									

<https://www.squanlife.com/.a/6a010534a97010970b01b8d25006d4970c-popup>

## OUTLINE OF 2 KINGS

### ***SLIDE FROM KINGDOM INDEPENDENCE TO KINGDOM SUBJUGATION AND CAPTIVITY***

### **IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE LEAD TO THE JUDGMENT OF DISPERSION AND BONDAGE FOR BOTH ISRAEL AND JUDAH**

#### **(1:1-18) TRANSITION –END OF ELIJAH’S MINISTRY – FOLLY OF IDOLATRY – DENYING ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESISTING GOD PROVE DISASTROUS SINCE GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE**

##### **A. (:1-8) Don’t Forget Your Accountability to God**

1. (:1-2) Weakness Reveals the Object of our Faith –  
Where do we turn for help?
  - a. (:1) Weakness Politically in Ahaziah’s Kingdom  
Exploited by Moab
  - b. (:2a) Weakness Physically Due to Ahaziah’s Fall
  - 3) (:2b) Weakness Drove Ahaziah to Baal Instead of to the Lord
2. (:3-4) Prophetic Intervention Condemns the Folly of Idolatry –  
Is there no God in Israel?
  - a. (:3a) Messengers of Ahaziah Intercepted by Elijah
  - b. (:3b) Misdirected Inquiry of Ahaziah
  - c. (:4a) Mortal Injury Prophecied
  - d. (:4b) Mission of Intervention Ended
3. (:5-8) Even Powerful Kings Cannot Escape Divine Accountability –  
There is a God in Israel
  - a. (:5-6) Reporting to Ahaziah the Prophecy of His Death
  - b. (:7-8) Revealing the Identity of the Prophet

##### **B. (:9-16) Don’t Fight Against God**

1. (:9-10) First Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah
  - a. (:9) Contempt for God’s Power and Truth
  - b. (:10) Consuming Fire from God
2. (:11-12) Second Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah
  - a. (:11) Contempt for God’s Power and Truth
  - b. (:12) Consuming Fire from God
3. (:13-16) Third Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah
  - a. (:13-14) Conciliatory Approach
  - b. (:15) Courageous Confrontation
  - c. (:16) Condemnation Repeated

**C. (:17-18) Epilogue – Concluding Summary of Ahaziah’s Reign**

1. Death
2. Succession
3. Timing
4. Recorded Deeds of Ahaziah

**I. (2:1 – 8:15) IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE CONFRONTED BY THE PROPHETIC MINISTRY OF ELISHA – IMPORTANT LESSONS REGARDING BOTH SALVATION AND JUDGMENT**

**A. (2:1-25) AUTHORITY AND POWER FOR PROPHETIC MINISTRY TRANSFERRED FROM ELIJAH TO ELISHA --**

1. (:1-6) Farewell Tour – Loyalty of Elisha to Elijah in Preparation for the Prophet’s Ascension and Transfer of Authority and Power
  - a. (:1) Departure from Gilgal
  - b. (:2) Continuation to Bethel
    - 1) Lobbying for Elisha to Stay by Elijah
    - 2) Loyalty of Elisha
  - c. (:3-4) Continuation to Jericho
    - 1) (:3) Lament by the Sons of the Prophets
    - 2) (:4) Loyalty of Elisha
  - d. (:5-6) Continuation to the Jordan River
    - 1) (:5) Lament by the Sons of the Prophets
    - 2) (:6) Loyalty of Elisha
2. (:7-14) Authority and Power of Elijah Transferred to Elisha
  - a. (:7-8) The Miraculous Crossing of the Jordan River by the Authority and Power of Elijah
    - 1) (:7) Observation by the Fifty Sons of the Prophets
    - 2) (:8) Operation of Crossing the Jordan River Orchestrated by Elijah
  - b. (:9-11) The Transporting of Elijah Up to Heaven
    - 1) (:9-10) Special Request by Elisha for a Double Portion of Elijah’s Spirit
    - 2) (:11) Special Effects in Conjunction with Elijah’s Ascension
  - c. (:12-14) The Miraculous Crossing of the Jordan River by the Authority and Power of Elisha
    - 1) (:12) Observation of Elisha
    - 2) (:13-14) Operation of Crossing the Jordan River Orchestrated by Elisha
3. (:15-18) Authority and Power of Elisha to Prophecy the Truth
  - a. (:15) Recognition of Transfer of Authority and Power
    - 1) Summation of Their Testimony Regarding Transfer from Elijah to Elisha
    - 2) Submission to the New Leadership of Elisha
  - b. (:16a) Request to Search for Body of Elijah
  - c. (:16b-17) Relenting Under Pressure to Allow for a Search

- 1) (:16b) Conviction Expressed -- that Elijah Would Not Be Found
    - 2) (:17a) Conviction Investigated
    - 3) (:17b) Conviction Substantiated
  - d. (:18) Repetition of His Earlier Prophecy
- 4. (:19-22) Confirming Sign #1 = Authority and Power of Elisha to Bless and Give Life
  - a. (:19) Curse of Jericho Needs Healing by Appeal to Elisha
  - b. (:20-21) Curse of Jericho Receives Healing by the Instrumentation of Elisha
  - c. (:22) Curse of Jericho Maintains its Healing by the Word of Elisha
- 5. (:23-25) Confirming Sign #2 = Authority and Power of Elisha to Curse and Destroy
  - a. (:23) Disrespect Shown to the Prophet of God
  - b. (:24) Divine Judgment
    - 1) Judgment Initiated by the Curse of Elisha
    - 2) Judgment Executed by Two Female Bears
  - c. (:25) Departure of the Prophet of God

**B. (3:1-27) ELISHA'S PRESCRIPTION FOR VICTORY =  
DEPEND SOLELY ON GOD – NOT TRUSTING THE ARM OF THE FLESH OR JUST  
OBEYING PARTIALLY**

- (:1-3) Prologue – Jehoram's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:1) Selected Touchpoints of Jehoram's Reign
  - b. (:2-3) Theological Evaluation of Jehoram's Reign
- 1. (:4-10) Trusting in the Arm of the Flesh Leads to Despair
  - a. (:4-5) The Crisis – Rebellion by the King of Moab
    - 1) (:4) Submission and the Payment of Tribute
    - 2) (:5) Rebellion and the Loss of Revenue
  - b. (:6-7) The Consultation – Rallying Powerful Forces
    - 1) (:6) Rallying Forces from Israel –  
Jehoram Consults only with Himself
    - 2) (:7) Rallying Forces from Judah –  
Jehoram Consults with Jehoshaphat
    - 3) No Consultation with the Lord
  - c. (:8-9) The Course of Action – Reversing the Approach
    - 1) (:8) Strategic Evaluation
    - 2) (:9) Shortsighted Ending
  - d. (:10) The Cry of Despair – Regretting the Course of Action
- 2. (:11-19) Turning to the Lord for Deliverance
  - a. (:11-12) Seeking Counsel from Elisha = the True Prophet of the Lord
    - 1) (:11) Identifying a True Prophet of the Lord
    - 2) (:12) Inquiring of the True Prophet of the Lord
  - b. (:13-15) Seeking Deliverance from the Lord
    - 1) (:13) Rejecting the Desperation of Faithless Jehoram
    - 2) (:14-15) Accepting the Covenant Connection of Jehoshaphat
  - c. (:16-19) Securing Deliverance from the Lord
    - 1) (:16) Prescription that Defies All Reason
    - 2) (:17) Promise of Abundant Provision



- 3) (:18) Power of God Demonstrated in Unimaginable Victory
  - 4) (:19) Plan to Wipe out the Moabites for the Long-Term
- 3. (:20-27) Tasting Victory But Failing to Swallow
  - a. (:20) Delivering Abundant Water
  - b. (:21-23) Deceiving the Moabites
    - 1) (:21) Anticipating a Rout
    - 2) (:22) Assessing the Situation
    - 3) (:23) Assuming the Battle was Over
  - c. (:24-25) Defeating the Moabites and Destroying All but the Capital City
    - 1) (:24) Slaughter of the Moabites
    - 2) (:25a) Spoiling the Cities, the Land, the Water Supplies and the Trees
    - 3) (:25b) Siege of the Capital City
  - d. (:26-27a) Desperate Measures by the King of Moab
    - 1) (:26) Foiled Attempt to Seek Help from Edom
    - 2) (:27a) Final Attempt to Seek Help from Chemosh by Sacrificing His Oldest Son
  - e. (:27b) Diversion of the Troops from Their Final Objective
    - 1) Wrath against Israel
    - 2) Withdrawn Troops

**C. (4:1 – 6:7) MIRACLES OF ELISHA --  
DEMONSTRATING GOD’S ABUNDANT AND GRACIOUS PROVISION FOR HIS  
PEOPLE**

- 1. (4:1-7) Replenishing of Widow’s Oil -- God Provides Generously for the Helpless and Vulnerable Who Trust in Him – Supreme over Debt
  - a. (:1) Multiple Major Problems -- Desperate Circumstances
    - 1) Anguished Appeal to God’s Representative
    - 2) Relational Impact of the Death of this Prophet
    - 3) Faithful Testimony of His Devotion to the Lord
    - 4) Compounding Heartache of Losing Her Two Children to the Creditor
  - b. (:2-4) Multiplying Limited Resources
    - 1) (:2) Start with What You Have
    - 2) (:3) Think Big in Terms of Expecting God to Abundantly Provide
    - 3) (:4) Trust God to Abundantly Provide
  - c. (:5-6) Miraculous Provision -- According to the Measure of Faith
  - d. (:7) Material Security for the Future of Her Family
- 2. (4:8-37) Raising Up the Shunammite’s Son – God Provides Life and Restores Life for Those Who Trust in Him – Supreme over Death
  - a. (:8-17) God Provides Life
    - 1) (:8) History of Hospitality
    - 2) (:9-10) Hosting God’s Holy Man
    - 3) (:11-14) Happy with Her Home Situation – But Childless
    - 4) (:15-16) Hoping in God’s Promise of a Son
    - 5) (:17) Having a Son According to God’s Promise
  - b. (:18-37) God Restores Life

- 1) (:18-20) Unexpected Death of the Son
- 2) (:21-25a) Relentless Pursuit of the Man of God
- 3) (:25b-28) Emotional Appeal
- 4) (:29-31) Failed Attempt by Gehazi to Revive the Son  
Using Elisha's Staff
- 5) (:32-37) Divine Power of Resurrection Activated  
by the Prayers of Elisha
3. (4:38-41) Curing the Death in the Pot – God Provides Healing Where There is Harm  
for Those Who Trust in Him – Supreme over Danger
  - a. (:38) Good Intentions of Elisha to Provide Food for His School of  
Prophets in Time of Famine
  - b. (:39) Gourds of Poison Unknowingly Cast into the Stew
  - c. (:40) Great Distress over the Death in the Pot
  - d. (:41) God-Directed Miracle to Salvage the Stew
4. (4:42-44) Feeding of the Multitude – God Provides Abundant Sustenance Where  
There Is Scarcity for Those Who Trust in Him – Supreme Over Deficiency
  - a. (:42) Dedicating Limited Resources to Feed the Hungry People
  - b. (:43) Denying Any Limitations on God's Ability to Provide by His Word
  - c. (:44) Distributing the Food to Satisfy Everybody with Some Left Over
5. (5:1-19) Healing of Naaman the Leper – God's Grace to Heal the Leprosy of Sin  
Extends to Gentiles Who Turn from Their Pride and Submit to His Simple Plan of  
Salvation – Supreme over Disease and Disability
  - a. (:1-8) Need for Salvation Exposes Man's Inability and  
Glorifies God's Ability
    - 1) (:1) Health Crisis Involving a Powerful Military Leader from Aram
      - a) Official Position = Captain of Army of King of Aram
      - b) Prominence
      - c) Reputation for Military Success
      - d) Bravery in Battle
      - e) Insurmountable Disability
    - 2) (:2-6) Request for Healing Directed to the King of Israel
      - a) (:2-3) Confidence of the Captive Israelite Girl
      - b) (:4) Consultation between Naaman and the King of Aram
      - c) (:5-6) Correspondence Delivered to the King of Israel
    - 3) (:7-8) Two Different Perspectives on Request for Healing Ministry
      - a) (:7) Perspective of Faithless King of Israel =  
Anticipation of Failure = Doom and Gloom
      - b) (:8) Perspective of Faithful Man of God =  
Anticipation of Success = Opportunity for the Word of God  
to be Magnified
  - b. (:9-14) Way of Salvation Seems Like Foolishness to the Proud
    - 1) (:10) Simple Solution Proposed by Elisha –  
God's Ways are not Man's Ways –  
Plan of Salvation Incredibly Simple – "*Just Trust and Obey*"
      - a) (:9) Humbling Reception
      - b) (:10) Bizarre Prescription

- 2) (:11-12) Prideful Rage of Unsubmissive Naaman –  
Natural Reason Stumbles over False Expectations of Divine  
Methodology – God Resists the Proud but Gives Grace to the  
Humble -- “*You’ve Got to be Kidding Me!*”
  - a) (:11a) Angry Response
  - b) (:11b) Grandiose Expectations
  - c) (:12a) Rationalistic Limitations
  - d) (:12b) Angry Response
- 3) (:13) Wise Counsel of Naaman’s Servants – All of God’s Grace  
and None of Man’s Works -- “*What do You Have to Lose?*”
- 4) (:14) Submissive Obedience Results in Miraculous Healing for  
Naaman – Glorious Salvation Involves Simply Taking God at His  
Word – “*Wash Me and I Will be Whiter than Snow*”
- c. (:15-19) Response to Salvation Should be Worship and Testimony
  - 1) (:15-16) Response Never Involves Any Form of Compensation –  
Integrity of the Prophetic Ministry
    - a) (:15a) Testimony to the One True God
    - b) (:15b) Offer of Compensation
    - c) (:16a) Rejection of Any Compensation
    - d) (:16b) Repeating the Offer and the Rejection
  - 2) (:17-18) Response of Worship Back in Syria
    - a) (:17) Cultural Superstitions Still Persist
    - b) (:18) Compromising Situations Require Forgiveness
  - 3) (:19) Response of Testimony Back in Syria
6. (5:20-27) Rebuking Gehazi – Condemnation of Greedy Ministry Exploitation –  
Supreme over Discernment and Deception
  - a. (:20-21a) Motivation of Covetousness
    - 1) (:20a) Profit Opportunity Clouds the Thinking
    - 2) (:20b-21) Pursuit of Covetousness
  - b. (:21b-24) Motivation of Deception
    - 1) (:21b-22) Lying to Obtain Riches from a Thankful Recipient  
of God’s Blessing
    - 2) (:23) Acquiring Excessive Riches under False Pretenses
    - 3) (:24) Hiding the Riches in a Secure Location
  - c. (:25-27) Motivation of Exposure and Condemnation
    - 1) (:25) Inquisition – What Gives?
    - 2) (:26) Indictment – 2 Key Principles of Accountability
      - a) God Sees All
      - b) God Judges All
    - 3) (:27) Sentence of Judgment
7. (6:1-7) Recovery of the Floating Axe Head – Ministers of the Word Should Turn to  
the Master in Crisis Situations Because He Will Show Concern and Exercise Control –  
Supreme over Disaster and Despair
  - a. (:1-4) The Master’s Concern for the Ministers of the Word
    - 1) (:1-2) Provision of Adequate Living Quarters
      - a) (:1) Cramped Living Quarters

- b) (:2) Construction Proposal
  - 2) (:3-4) Presence to Encourage and Bless
    - a) (:3) Solicitation of Elisha's Participation
    - b) (:4) Sharing in the Construction Project
- b. (:5-7) The Master's Control Over Crisis Situations
  - 1) (:5) Devastating Loss
  - 2) (:6-7) Directed Recovery
    - a) (:6) Divine Miracle
    - b) (:7) Human Responsibility

**D. (6:8 – 8:15) MINISTRY OF ELISHA –  
FAITHFULLY PROCLAIMING THE PERSON OF GOD AND HIS MESSAGE OF  
SALVATION AND JUDGMENT**

1. (6:8-23) Opening Eyes to Who God Is –

We All Need God to Open Our Eyes to His True Character

- a. (:8-14) God's Complete Omniscience and Sovereignty –  
Futility of Fighting Against God
  - 1) (:8-10) Futility Because the Omniscient God Protects Against All Attacks
    - a) (:8) God's Enemies Make Strategic Plans to Attack God's People
    - b) (:9) God is Always a Step Ahead with Divine Counter Intelligence
    - c) (:10) God's People are Able to Defend Themselves and Avoid Disaster
  - 2) (:11-12) Futility Because God is Always in Complete Control
    - a) (:11) Anger Over Lack of Control
    - b) (:12) Awareness of God's Invincible Control
  - 3) (:13-14) Futility Because New Plans Have No Greater Chance of Success
    - a) (:13) New Strategy
    - b) (:14) Numbers Don't Determine the Outcome
- b. (:15-20) God's Awesome Power and Illumination –  
Only Illumination from God Can Remove Blindness
  - 1) (:15-17) Removing the Blindness of Believers
    - a) (:15) Focusing Only on Outward Circumstances Leads to Panic
    - b) (:16) Focusing on Spiritual Forces Removes Our Fear
    - c) (:17) Blindness Must Be Removed and Our Eyes Opened to God's Power
  - 2) (:18-20) Removing the Blindness of Unbelievers
    - a) (:18) Blindness Exposes the Inability of Unbelievers
    - b) (:19) Blindness Makes One Dependent on Others
    - c) (:20) Blindness Must Be Removed by the Lord to Accurately See One's Position
- c. (:21-23) God's Surprising Kindness and Mercy –

God Treats His Enemies with Kindness and Mercy

- 1) (:21) Bloodthirsty Vengeance is the Cry of Natural Man Towards His Enemies
  - 2) (:22) Kindness and Mercy towards Enemies Are a Surprising Strategy
  - 3) (:23) Kindness and Mercy Proved to be Israel's Best Defense
2. (6:24 – 7:20) Proclaiming God's Salvation –  
Siege of Samaria Provides Opportunity for Four Salvation Lessons –  
Never Dispute the Lord's Promise of Salvation – No Matter How Desperate the Situation
- a. (6:24-33) Preparation for Salvation Must Not Be Resisted
    - 1) (:24-25) Desperation is the Preparation for Salvation
      - a) (:24) Samaria was Under Siege by Powerful Forces
      - b) (:25) Samaria was Devastated by a Great Famine
    - 2) (:26-31) Desperate Life Stories Should Stir Repentance Not Blame Shifting
      - a) (:26-27) There is No Deliverance Apart from God
      - b) (:28-29) The Depths of Depravity are Heartbreaking
      - c) (:30) Sorrow for the Situation Does No Good Apart from Repentance
      - d) (:31) Angry Blame Shifting Only Brings Greater Condemnation
    - 3) (:32-33) Don't Give Up on Salvation Coming from the Lord
      - a) (:32) The Word of the Messenger of God Cannot be Eliminated – Elisha Has Calm Confidence despite the King's Malicious Intentions
      - b) (:33) The Word of the Messenger of the Wicked King Cannot be Accepted – The King Despairs of God's Deliverance
  - b. (7:1-9) Promise of Salvation Must Be Appropriated
    - 1) (:1-2) Disputing God's Promise of Salvation Brings Condemnation
      - a) (:1) Good News Proclaimed
      - b) (:2a) Good News Disputed
      - c) (:2b) Bad News Delivered
    - 2) (:3-4) Designated Recipients of God's Gift of Salvation are Humble and Downtrodden
    - 3) (:5-7) Description of the Outworking of God's Plan of Salvation = the Fleeing of the Aramean Troops
    - 4) (:8) Desiring to Deceptively Hoard the Riches of Salvation Is the Wrong Approach
  - c. (7:9-15) Plenitude of Salvation Must Be Proclaimed
    - 1) (:9-10) Commitment to Witnessing
      - a) (:9) Mandate for Witnessing to God's Salvation
      - b) (:10) Mission of Testifying Seeks Widespread Proclamation
    - 2) (:11-15) Checking Out the Message
      - a) (:11) Spreading the Word

- b) (:12) Suspicion Regarding the Message
    - c) (:13) Strategic Counsel to Investigate the Truth of the Testimony
    - d) (:14-15) Substantiating the Message
  - d. (:16-20) Prophecies Associated with Both Salvation and Judgment Must Be Fulfilled
    - 1) (:16) Fulfillment of Prophecy Regarding Riches of Salvation – More Food than One Could Ever Desire
    - 2) (:17-20) Fulfillment of Prophecy of Judgment Against the Disputer – Trampled at the Gate
- 3. (8:1-6) Expecting Remnant Protection and Restoration – Watchcare over the Shunammite Woman – God’s People Can Expect to Return from Exile and Take up Possession of Their Rightful Standing in the Promised Land
  - a. (:1-3) God Protected the Shunammite Woman in Exile from the Seven Year Famine in Israel
    - 1) (:1-2) Mercy Triumphs over Judgment
      - a) (:1) Elisha Mercifully Remembers the Shunammite Woman
      - b) (:2) Escape from the Hardship of God’s Judgment
    - 2) (:3) Major Problem of Land Confiscation Requires Seeking Restoration from the King
  - b. (:4-6) God Restored the Rightful Ownership of Property to the Shunammite Woman
    - 1) (:4) Curiosity Regarding Elisha’s Miracles on the Part of the King
    - 2) (:5-6a) Coincidence by Divine Providence in the Appearance and Appeal of the Shunammite Woman
      - a) (:5a) Timely Appearance of the Shunammite Woman
      - b) (:5b) Testifying Account of Gehazi
      - c) (:6a) Tenacious Appeal
    - 3) (:6b) Corrective Action Directed by the King
      - a) Appointing a Trustworthy Officer
      - b) Restoring Her Rightful Property
      - c) Paying Her Proceeds from the Past Seven Years
- 4. (8:7-15) Proclaiming Judgment While Weeping – God Both Judges and Weeps – The Severe Judgment of God Displays Itself in Tension against His Weeping for the Sins Necessitating Such Judgment
  - a. (:7-10) Man of God Executes His Mission – Delivering the Cryptic Message
    - 1) (:7-8) Background for the Mission = Setting up a Strategic Encounter
      - a) (:7a) Mission into Enemy Territory
      - b) (:7b) Mission Raising Expectations
      - c) (:8) Mission Focusing on Strategic Encounter with Hazael
    - 2) (:9) Basis for the Mission =



## Serious Sickness Raises Questions about the Future

- a) Impressive Gift to Solicit a Favorable Prophecy
- b) Desperate Inquiry in Seeking a Favorable Outcome
- 3) (:10) Boldness of the Mission = Speaking the Truth of God
- b. (:11-13) Man of God Maintains His Focus – Detecting the Hidden Agenda
  - 1) (:11) Reflecting the Righteous Heart of God –  
Passion for Lost Souls
    - a) Firm on Judgment –  
Convicting Hazael with His Stare-down
    - b) Tender on Compassion –  
Feeling the Future Suffering of Israel
  - 2) (:12) Revealing (Exposing) the Wicked Plans of the Enemy –  
God Knows
  - 3) (:13) Refuting the Lame Excuses of the Culpable
    - a) Denial = I am a Nobody
    - b) Dominion = Pin the Tail on the Donkey
- c. (:14-15) Man of God Proven to Be a Reliable Predictor of Future Events
  - 1) (:14) Deceptive Communication – Hazael Tells the King only  
Half the Story
    - a) Desperate Response
    - b) Disingenuous Report
  - 2) (:15) Treacherous Coup – Hazael Kills the King and Seizes  
the Throne
    - a) Killing the King
    - b) Seizing the Throne

## II. (8:16 -17:41) TRACKING BOTH KINGDOMS LEADING UP TO THE FALL OF SAMARIA AND THE ASSYRIAN CAPTIVITY OF ISRAEL

### **A. (8:16 – 13:25) EVENTS LEADING UP TO THE DEATH OF ELISHA – PARTIAL AND TEMPORARY REFORMS CANNOT PREVENT COMING JUDGMENT**

1. (8:16-29) Judah Looks No Better than Israel –  
The Combination of Intermarriage to Foreign Pagans and Wicked Parental Models  
Weakens the Kingdom of Judah
  - a. (:16-24) Joram's Evil Reign in the South
    - 1) (:16-19) Selected Touchpoints of Joram's Reign
    - 2) (:18-19) Theological Evaluation of Joram's Reign
    - 3) (:20-22) Revolt of Edom and Libnah
      - a) (:20) Revolt of Edom – Breaking Free from Vassal Bondage
      - b) (:21) Military Engagement with Edomites
      - c) (:22) Revolt of Libnah – Seceding from Judah
    - 4) (:23-24) Concluding Summary of Joram's Reign
  - b. (:25-29) Ahaziah's Evil Reign in the South
    - 1) (:25-27) Selected Touchpoints of Ahaziah's Reign

- 2) (:27) Theological Evaluation of Ahaziah's Reign
- 3) (:28-29) Interaction between Ahaziah and Joram in Military Conflict against Hazael
  - a) (:28) Ahaziah Fighting with Joram against Hazael at Ramoth-gilead
  - b) (:29a) Joram Finding Refuge in Jezreel after being Wounded
  - c) (:29b) Ahaziah Following Joram to Jezreel to Check on His Condition
2. (9:1 – 10:36) Reforms Under Jehu – Attacking Baal Worship in Israel
  - a. (9:1-13) Anointing of Jehu King Over Israel as God's Instrument of Judgment – The Certainty and Suddenness of God's Judgment – Despite its Seeming Delay
    - 1) (:1-3) Top Secret Mission – Command to Anoint Jehu King of Israel – Judgment is Secretive
      - a) (:1) Need for Speed in Accomplishing the Mission
      - b) (:2) Need for Secrecy in Accomplishing the Mission
      - c) (:3a) Clearly Defining the Mission
      - d) (:3b) Need for Speed and Secrecy to Escape after Completing the Mission
    - 2) (:4-10) Termination Commission – Purpose of Anointing Jehu King of Israel -- Judgment is Certain
      - (:4) Prelude – Arrival
      - a) (:5) Targeted Message
      - b) (:6) Textbook Anointing
      - c) (:7-10a) Termination Commission
        - 1)) (:7) Summary of Avenging Devastation Against House of Ahab
        - 2)) (:8) Specific Assassination of all Males of the House of Ahab
        - 3)) (:9) Similar Treatment to Judgment Against Jeroboam and Baasha
        - 4)) (:10a) Special Degrading Treatment for Jezebel and Her Corpse
      - (:10b) Postlude – Departure
    - 3) (:11-13) Trumpeted Confession – Recognition of Jehu as King of Israel – Judgment is Sudden
      - a) (:11) Confusion Regarding the Nearness of God's Judgment
      - b) (:12) Full Disclosure Reveals the Surprise of Imminent Judgment
      - c) (:13) Need for Speed in Recognizing Jehu as King
  - b. (9:14-37) Jehu – Instrument of Divine Execution – Divine Executions Display the Irony of Prophetic Fulfillment and the Horror of Gruesome Desecration
    - 1) (:14-23) No Peace for the Wicked – Jehu Chases Down Joram

- a) (:14-16) Plotting to Kill Joram
  - 1)) (:14a) Conspiracy Set in Motion
  - 2)) (:14b-15a) Convalescence of Joram
  - 3)) (:15b) City of Ramoth-gilead Sealed Off
  - 4)) (:16a) Chariot Ride to Jezreel
  - 5)) (:16b) Catching Ahaziah Visiting at Jezreel
- b) (:17-23) Pursuing Joram –  
Series of 3 Investigations by Joram to See if Jehu was on a Mission of Peace
  - 1)) (:17-18) First Investigation
  - 2)) (:19-20) Second Investigation
  - 3)) (:21-23) Third Investigation
- 2) (:24-29) Execution of Joram and Ahaziah
  - a) (:24-26) Execution of Joram
    - 1)) (:24) His Death
    - 2)) (:25-26) His Deserving Desecration
  - b) (:27-29) Execution of Ahaziah
    - 1)) (:27) His Death
    - 2)) (:28) His Deserving Burial in Jerusalem
    - 3)) (:29) Summary of Reign of Ahaziah over Southern Kingdom
- 3) (:30-37) Execution of Jezebel
  - a) (:30-31) Jezebel's Final Defiance
    - 1)) (:30) Shameless Presentation
    - 2)) (:31) Sarcastic Taunt
  - b) (:32-33) Jezebel's Fatal Dashing
    - 1)) (:32) Betrayers Solicited
    - 2)) (:33) Bloody Spectacle
  - c) (:34-37) Jezebel's Foretold Desecration
    - 1)) (:34) Dining in the Royal House a Priority over Burial
    - 2)) (:35) Dismembered Carcass All that Remains
    - 3)) (:36-37) Divine Prophecy of Her Demise Fulfilled in Detail
- c. (10:1-36) Mixed Reviews as Jehu Purges House of Ahab and Baal Worshipers – Zeal for the Lord without Wholehearted Obedience Undermines Jehu's Record of Reforms
  - 1) (:1-11) Purging of Royal Family of Ahab in Jezreel
    - a) (:1-5) Securing the Submission of Rivals to Power
      - 1)) (:1a) Family of Ahab = Potential for Opposition
      - 2)) (:1b-3) First Letter – Challenging Jezreel's Appetite for Defiance
      - 3)) (:4) Fear Exaggerated by the Demise of the Two Kings
      - 4)) (:5) Final Unconditional Surrender
    - b) (:6-11) Slaughtering the Potential Rivals in Gruesome

## Fashion

- 1)) (:6a) Second Letter – Challenging their Loyalty
  - 2)) (:6b-7) Slaughter of King's Sons Executed
  - 3)) (:8-10) Spectacle and Speech
  - 4)) (:11) Savage Bloodshed Beyond the Scope of God's Mandate
- 2) (:12-17) Purging of Relatives of Ahaziah and Supporters of Ahab in Samaria
- a) (:12-14) Purging of Relatives of Ahaziah on Road to Samaria
    - 1)) (:12a) New Target
    - 2)) (:12b-13) Unsuspecting Relatives of Ahaziah
    - 3)) (:14) Collateral Damage
  - b) (:15-17) Purging of Supporters of Ahab in Samaria with Jehonadab's Complicity
    - 1)) (:15) Soliciting the Support of Jehonadab
    - 2)) (:16) Sanctioning His Brutality under the Guise of Zeal for the Lord
    - 3)) (:17) Slaughtering the Remaining Ahab Loyalists in Samaria
- 3) (:18-28) Purging of Baal Worshipers in Samaria
- a) (:18-21) Deceptive Gathering of the Prophets and Priests of Baal
    - 1)) (:18) Claim of Loyalty to Baal Worship
    - 2)) (:19) Collecting All the Baal Worshipers for Slaughter
    - 3)) (:20) Calling for a Special Worship Service
    - 4)) (:21) Confining All in the House of Baal
  - b) (:22-23) Distinguishing Between Worshipers of Baal and Servants of the Lord
    - 1)) (:22) Dressing the Baal Worshipers in Special Garments
    - 2)) (:23) Dismissing All of the Servants of the Lord
  - c) (:24-28) Destroying Baal Worshipers and Temple
    - 1)) (:24a) Cloaking Destruction in Deception
    - 2)) (:24b) Confining the Targeted Enemy for Eradication
    - 3)) (:25-27) Killing and Executing Destruction and Desecration
    - 4)) (:28) Eradicating Baal out of Israel
- 4) (:29-36) Concluding Summary of Jehu's Reign
- a) (:29-31) Theological Evaluation of Jehu's Reign – Wavering between Success and Failure
    - 1)) (:29) Failure
    - 2)) (:30) Success
    - 3)) (:31) Failure
  - b) (:32-33) Weakening of the Kingdom

- c) (:34-36) Recorded Deeds, Death, Burial and Succession
- 3. (11:1 – 12:21) Reforms Under Joash – Attacking Baal Worship in Judah
  - a. (11:1-21) Preserving the Messianic Line from the Jezebel of Judah – Loyalty to the Messianic Line (Avoiding Extinction) Enthrones Young Joash While Executing Treacherous Athaliah
    - 1) (:1-3) Concealment of Joash Saves the Davidic Line from Extinction –  
Loyalty to the Messianic Line Demands Brave Risk Taking
      - a) (:1) Threat of Extinction of the Davidic Line
      - b) (:2) Tactics of Concealment of Joash
      - c) (:3) Tyranny of Usurping Queen for Six Years
    - 2) (:4-11) Commanding the Coup to Restore Davidic Rulership  
Loyalty to the Messianic Line Demands Aggressive Action
      - a) (:4-8) Explaining the Plan
        - 1)) (:4a) Assembling the Key Military Leaders
        - 2)) (:4b) Swearing Them to Secrecy
        - 3)) (:5-8) Positioning Them to Protect the King
      - b) (:9-11) Executing the Plan
        - 1)) (:9a) Summary of Faithful Execution
        - 2)) (:9b) Strategic Coordination
        - 3)) (:10) Superior Weapons
        - 4)) (:11) Secure Protection
    - 3) (:12-16) Coronation of Joash and Execution of Athaliah Restores Davidic Rulership  
Loyalty to the Messianic Line Demands Celebrating His Reign and Opposing His Enemies
      - a) (:12) Stages in the Coronation Process of Joash
        - 1)) Revealing the Legitimate Davidic King
        - 2)) Crowning the Legitimate Davidic King
        - 3)) Investing the Legitimate Davidic King with the Law of God
        - 4)) Anointing the Legitimate Davidic King
        - 5)) Celebrating the Legitimate Davidic King
      - b) (:13-14) Surprising Reversal of Fortunes for Athaliah
        - 1)) (:13-14a) Revelation of the Newly Crowned King
        - 2)) (:14b) Rejoicing of the People
        - 3)) (:14c) Response of Athaliah
      - c) (:15-16) Seizure and Execution of Athaliah
        - 1)) (:15) Execution Forbidden in the

Holy Temple

- 2)) (:16) Execution Authorized in a Place of Humiliation

- 4) (:17-20) Covenant Renewal Sparks Religious Reforms

Loyalty to the Messianic Line Demands Covenant Fidelity

- a) (:17) Significance of the Covenant Renewal
- b) (:18a) Smashing the Foundations of Baal Worship
- c) (:18b) Structuring the Renewal of Temple Worship
- d) (:19) Seating Joash on the Throne
- e) (:20) Securing Peace for Judah

- (:21) Epilogue

- b. (12:1-21) King Joash – Tragic Example of a Propped Up Faith –  
Finishing Strong Requires Being Relentless in the Pursuit of Righteousness  
5 Keys to Finishing Strong

- 1) (2 Kings 12:1-3) You Can't Be Careless About Sin –  
You Must Take Sin Seriously and Stamp it Out

- 2) (2 Kings 12:4-16) You Can't Be Casual or Neglectful about  
Spiritual Service –  
You Must Maintain Spiritual Priorities

- 3) (2 Chron. 24:17-18) You Can't Consort with Spiritual Idolatry –  
You Must Worship in Spirit and in Truth

- a) (:17) Different Agenda – Replacing Counsel of God with Counsel of Man -- Looking for Guidance in All the Wrong Places and for All the Wrong Reasons
- b) (:18a) Different Allegiance – Replacing Worship of God with Worship of Idols -- Rejection of God's Revealed Worship Plan and of the Faith of Their Fathers
- c) (:18b) Different Adjudication -- Replacing Grace and Blessing with Guilt and Condemnation -- Result of Rebellion: Guilt / Wrath

- 4) (2 Chron. 24:19-22) You Can't Contend against the Word of God (and Kill the Lord's Messenger Who Comes with a Word of Warning and Expect to Escape God's Judgment) –  
You Must Listen to the Word of God and Repent

- a) (:19) Sent Multiple Prophets -- Patience and Longsuffering of the Lord
- b) (:20) Sent Prominent Prophet/Priest -- Clear Warnings
- c) (:21-22) Will Send Wrath -- Futile Opposition from Hardened Hearts

- 5) (2 Kings 12:17-18) You Can't Compromise What Is Sacred by Forsaking God and Making Alliances with God's Enemies –  
You Must Remain Loyal to God and Continue to Walk by Faith

- a) (2 Kings 12:17) Humiliating Selection by God of Hazael for the Appointed Instrument of Judgment
- b) (2 Chron. 24:23-24) Humiliating Defeat on the Battlefield
- c) (2 Kings 12:18) Humiliating Payoff by Joash

(2 Kings 12:19-21) Conclusion – Sad Ending for Those Who Fail to Finish Strong – Those Who Turn Away from the Lord Leave a Shameful Legacy

- a) Health Destroyed
- b) Security Compromised -- Betrayal by Close Confidants
- c) Dead Body Disgraced

4. (13:1-25) Jehoahaz and Jehoash Fail to Reform Israel – The Goodness and Graciousness of God Reflect His Ongoing Covenant Loyalty to Israel despite the Wicked Reigns of Jehoahaz and Jehoash – (Events Leading to the Death of Elisha)

a. (:1-9) Reign of Wicked Jehoahaz in Israel –

Goodness of God Did Not Lead to Repentance

- 1) (:1) Significant Touchpoints of His Reign
- 2) (:2-3) Theological Evaluation and Divine Discipline
- 3) (:4-7) Significant Event – Deliverance from the Arameans but Persistent Idolatry
  - a) (:4) Crisis Entreaty
  - b) (:5) Gracious Deliverance from the Arameans
  - c) (:6) Persistent Idolatry
  - d) (:7) Hamstrung Military

4) (:8-9) Concluding Summary of His Reign

b. (:10-25) Reign of Wicked Jehoash in Israel –

Graciousness of God Demonstrated in Ongoing Covenant Loyalty

- 1) (:10-13) Overall Summary of His Reign
  - a) (:10) Introductory Summary
  - b) (:11) Theological Evaluation
  - c) (:12-13) Concluding Summary
- 2) (:14-17) Symbolic Arrow of Gracious Victory at Aphek
  - a) (:14) Final Interaction with Elisha
  - b) (:15-17) Final Instructions from Elisha
- 3) (:18-19) Symbolic Arrows of Failure to Appropriately Full Victory
  - a) (:18) Failure to Trust God for Full Victory
  - b) (:19) Frustration Expressed by Elisha
- 4) (:20-21) Resurrection Impact of the Bones of Elisha
  - a) (:20a) Death and Burial of Elisha**
  - b) (:20b-21a) Burying a Man in the Grave of Elisha
  - c) (:21b) Dead Man Revived by the Bones of Elisha
- 5) (:22-25) God's Ongoing Covenant Loyalty to Israel
  - a) (:22) Israel Oppressed by Hazael
  - b) (:23) God Gracious to Israel
  - c) (:24) Succession after Death of Hazael
  - d) (:25) Limited Victories by Jehoash to Recover Cities of Israel

**B. (14:1-29) REIGN OF AMAZIAH IN JUDAH AND JEROBOAM II IN ISRAEL -- GOD REMAINS FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD AND TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE**

## **DESPITE THEIR FAILURE TO REMAIN LOYAL IN TRUSTING HIM**

1. (:1-22) Amaziah's Righteous Reign in the South
  - a. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:3-4) Theological Evaluation
    - 1) (:3) Righteous after the Pattern of His Father Joash
    - 2) (:4) Blemish on His Record
  - c. (:5-7) Strategic Conquests
    - 1) (:5-6) Internal Conquests
    - 2) (:7) External Conquests
  - d. (:8-16) Amaziah's Foolish Challenge of Jehoash of Israel
    - 1) (:8-10) Brazen Challenge
    - 2) (:11-14) Humiliating Defeat
    - 3) (:15-16) Concluding Summary of Reign of Jehoash in the North
  - e. (:17-22) Concluding Summary of Reign of Amaziah in the South
2. (:23-29) Jeroboam's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:23) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:24) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:25-27) Significant Accomplishment by God's Grace
    - 1) (:25) Security by the Hand of the Lord
    - 2) (:26) Compassion of the Lord
    - 3) (:27) Mercy of the Lord
  - d. (:28-29) Concluding Summary of Reign of Jeroboam in the North

## **C. (15:1-38) UNSTABLE SUCCESSION OF KINGS IN ISRAEL SANDWICHED BETWEEN TWO RIGHTEOUS KINGS IN JUDAH SHOW THE CONTRAST BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH – YET CONSISTENT DECLINE**

1. (:1-7) Amaziah's Righteous Reign in the South
  - a. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:3-5) Theological Evaluation of His Reign
    - 1) (:3) Summary Evaluation
    - 2) (:4) Blemish on His Record
    - 3) (:5) Divine Discipline
  - c. (:6-7) Overall Summary of His Reign
2. (:8-16) Zechariah's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:8) Selective Touchpoints
  - b. (:9) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:10) Death and Succession
  - d. (:11) Recorded Deeds
  - e. (:12) Fulfilled Prophecy
3. (:13-15) Shallum's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:13) Selective Touchpoints
  - b. (:14) Death and Succession
  - c. (:15) Recorded Deeds
4. (:16-22) Menahem's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:16) Defining Atrocity
  - b. (:17) Selected Touchpoints



- c. (:18) Theological Evaluation
  - d. (:19-20) Paying Off Assyria
  - e. (:21) Recorded Deeds
  - f. (:22) Death and Succession
- 5. (:23-26) Pekahiah's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:23) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:24) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:25) Death and Succession
  - d. (:26) Recorded Deeds
- 6. (:27-31) Pekah's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:27) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:28) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:29) Assyrian Conquests and Captivity
  - d. (:30) Death and Succession
  - e. (:31) Recorded Deeds
- 7. (:32-38) Jotham's Righteous Reign in the South
  - a. (:32-33) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:34-35) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:36) Recorded Deeds
  - d. (:37) Attacks from Foreign Adversaries =  
Instruments of Divine Judgment
  - e. (:38) Death, Burial and Succession

**D. (16:1-20) AHAZ'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH –  
WHEN LEADERS GOVERN BY COMPROMISE INSTEAD OF CONVICTION THE  
SHORT TERM GAINS WILL BE WIPED OUT BY DIVINE JUDGMENT**

- 1. (:1-4) Moral Compromise
  - a. (:1-2a) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:2b-4) Theological Evaluation
- 2. (:5-9) Political Compromise
  - a. (:5-6) Resistance to Anti-Assyrian Alliance
    - 1) (:5) Siege Against Jerusalem
    - 2) (:6) Seizing Control of Elath
  - b. (:7-9) Reliance on Assyria
    - 1) (:7) Plea for Help
    - 2) (:8) Present of Silver and Gold
    - 3) (:9) Petition Answered with Powerful Deliverance
- 3. (:10-18) Religious Compromise
  - a. (:10-11) Mimicking the Pagan Altar
  - b. (:12-14) Making the New Altar Primary while  
Relegating the Bronze Altar to a Subordinate Position
  - c. (:15-16) Mandating Public Role for the Pagan Altar  
and Private Role for the Bronze Altar
  - d. (:17-18) Major Revisions to the Temple in Jerusalem
- 4. (:19-20) Concluding Summary of His Reign

**E. (17:1-41) END GAME FOR ISRAEL – HOSHEA’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH - THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM AND THE ASSYRIAN RESETTLEMENT WITH ITS SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION**

1. (17:1-23) Privileged Israel Finally Faces Captivity and Exile for Her Covenant Unfaithfulness and Persistent Idolatry

a. (:1-5) Final Failure of Leadership in Israel – Hoshea’s Evil Reign in the North

- 1) (:1) Significant Touchpoints of Reign of Hoshea
- 2) (:2) Theological Evaluation of Reign of Hoshea
- 3) (:3-4) Shalmaneser Seeks His Tribute
- 4) (:5) Siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser

**b. (:6) Foreign Capture and Deportation of Israel**

c. (:7-18) Fear of God Replaced by Idolatry –

Culpability of Israel Catalogued as Deserving of Divine Wrath

- 1) (:7-12) Devotion to Idolatry = Deserving of Divine Wrath
  - a) (:7-8) Rejecting Their Spiritual Heritage
  - b) (:9-12) Recounting Their Idolatrous Practices
- 2) (:13-15) Divine Revelation Rejected = Deserving of Divine Wrath
  - a) (:13) Repeated Prophetic Warnings
  - b) (:14-15) Resistance and Futility
- 3) (:16-18) Depths of Depravity = Deserving of Divine Wrath
  - a) (:16) Depraved Worship
  - b) (:17) Depraved Religious Practices
  - c) (:18) Deserved Divine Wrath = Deportation from the Promised Land

d. (:19-23) Fatal Flaw Resulting in Captivity and Deportation

- 1) (:19-20) Synergy Between Culpability of Judah and Israel
  - a) (:19) Culpability of Judah after the Pattern of Israel
  - b) (:20) Casting Out of Israel from the Promised Land
- 2) (:21-23) Sins of Jeroboam Highlighted
  - a) (:21a) Tearing Apart of the Kingdom
  - b) (:21b) Turning the People Away from Following the Lord
  - c) (:22) Template for Continued Rebellion
  - d) (:23) Termination in Exile

2. (17:24-41) Syncretistic Religion (Practiced by Samaritans as Patterned after Apostate Jews) Nullifies the Fear of God and Violates the Exclusivity of the Covenant Relationship

a. (:24-28) Syncretistic Religion Nullifies the Fear of God – Predicament of Religious Ignorance of the Samaritans

- 1) (:24) Displaced -- Origin of the Samaritans
- 2) (:25-28) Desperate -- Indoctrination into the Practices of Judaism
  - a) (:25) Physical Threat Attributed to Failure to Fear the Lord of the Land
  - b) (:26-28) Priestly Teaching of the Practices of Judaism

- Designed to Placate the Lord of the Land
- 3) (:29-31) Depraved -- Embracing Religious Multiplicity
    - a) (:29-31a) Making Familiar Idols
    - b) (:31b) Maintaining Abominable Practices
  - 4) (:32-33) Double-Minded -- Attempting to Both Fear the Lord and Continue to Serve Their Pagan Gods
    - a) (:32) Attempting to Fear the Lord
    - b) (:33) Continuing to Serve Their Pagan Gods
  - b. (:34-40) Syncretistic Religion Violates the Exclusivity of the Covenant Relationship
    - 1) (:34) No Exclusive Fear of God and No Covenant Obedience
    - 2) (:35-39) Fear of Other Gods in Violation of the Exclusivity of the Covenant
      - a) (:35) Covenant Stipulations
      - b) (:36) Covenant Faithfulness on the Part of God
      - c) (:37-38) Covenant Requirements for God's People
      - d) (:39) Covenant Promise for the Faithful
    - 3) (:40) Divine Revelation Replaced with Religious Tradition
  - (:41) Epilogue – Syncretistic Religion of the Samaritans
    - 1) Practicing Duplicity
    - 2) Perpetuating Duplicity

### **III. (18:1 – 25:21) TRACKING JUDAH'S KINGS LEADING UP TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY**

#### **A. (18:1 – 20:21) HEZEKIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

- 1. (18:1-37) History Threatens to Repeat Itself – Judah Under Attack – In Times of Crisis Satan Uses Many Crafty Arguments to Try to Undermine Our Faith
  - a. (:1-8) Commending Faith – Introduction to Reign of Hezekiah
    - 1) (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints
    - 2) (:3-6) Theological Evaluation
    - 3) (:7-8) Divine Blessing
      - a) (:7a) General Prosperity
      - b) (:7b) Breaking Away from Assyria
      - c) (:8) Victories over the Philistines
  - b. (:9-16) Caving Faith – History Threatens to Repeat itself
    - 1) (:9-12) Review of Israel's Fall from Shalmaneser and Deportation to Assyria
      - a) (:9) Siege of Samaria
      - b) (:10) Capture of Samaria
      - c) (:11) Deportation to Assyria
      - d) (:12) Fatal Flaw = Transgressing the Covenant
    - 2) (:13-16) Reality of Judah's Imminent Threat from Sennacherib of Assyria
      - a) (:13) Faith Does Not Mean No Attacks
      - b) (:14-16) Faith Does Not Mean We Never Cave

- c. (:17-25) Challenging Faith – Engaging the Enemy Exposes God’s People to Crafty Arguments
  - 1) (:17-18) Confrontation at Jerusalem
    - a) (:17) Key Leaders of Assyria
    - b) (:18) Key Leaders of Judah
  - 2) (:19-25) Crafty Arguments of the Enemy
    - a) (:19-20) Questioning Your Confidence for Deliverance
    - b) (:21) Questioning the Strength of Your Allies to Deliver You
    - c) (:22) Questioning the Ability of Your God to Deliver You
    - d) (:23) Offering a Mockery of a Peace Treaty
    - e) (:24) Questioning Your Ability to Survive Even the Slightest Attack
    - f) (:25) Questioning Which Side Your God is Really on
- d. (:26-35) Contradicting Faith – Engaging the Enemy Exposes God’s Leaders to Mockery, Attack and Humiliation
  - 1) (:26-27) Public Forum for Interaction
    - a) (:26) Judah Prefers Limiting Negotiations to the Leadership
    - b) (:27) Assyria Prefers Attacking the Leaders via Public Propaganda
  - 2) (:28-35) Propaganda Designed to Humiliate Hezekiah and Force Surrender – Don’t Trust the Words of Hezekiah
    - a) (:28-30) You Can’t Trust Hezekiah
    - b) (:31-32a) You Can Trust Cutting a Sweetheart Deal with Assyria
    - c) (:32b-35) You Should Learn a Lesson from History
- (:36-37) Epilogue – Response = Desperation But Not Surrender
  - 1) (:36) Desperate People – They Still Obey Hezekiah and Stay Silent
  - 2) (:37) Desperate Leaders – They Display Their Anguish But Don’t Demand Surrender
- 2. (19:1-37) The Holy One of Israel Defends His People and His City – The Best Defense is a Divine Defense
  - a. (:1-7) The Best Defense Looks to the Lord for Deliverance – Seeking God’s Word and Calling Out in Prayer
    - 1) (:1) Humbling Oneself before the Lord
    - 2) (:2) Seeking the Word of the Lord
    - 3) (:3-4) Utilizing Prayer as the #1 Strategy
      - a) (:3) Recognizing Our Own Lack of Strength
      - b) (:4a) Rebuking Those Who Reproach the Lord
      - c) (:4b) Relying Mainly on Prayer
    - 4) (:5-7) Believing the Prophetic Word of the Lord
      - a) (:5) Appealing to Isaiah for a Word from the Lord
      - b) (:6) Addressing Fear and Resisting Intimidation
      - c) (:7) Anticipating Deliverance

- b. (:8-13) The Best Defense Ignores Enemy Lies and Propaganda
    - 1) (:8) Counterattacks Can Divert the Enemy
    - 2) (:9) Clout of the Enemy Can be Overestimated
    - 3) (:10-13) Claims of the Enemy Rely on Unsanctified Reasoning
      - a) (:10) Seeking to Undermine Faith
      - b) (:11-13) Finding Security in a Wrong View of History
  - c. (:14-19) The Best Defense Petitions God for Deliverance in Accordance with Glorifying His Name
    - 1) (:14) Casting Our Cares upon God
    - 2) (:15-19) Calling upon God to Deliver His People and Glorify His Name
      - a) (:15) Invocation – Transcendence of God = Master of the Universe
      - b) (:16-18) Complaint – Immanence of God = Familiarity with Our Situation
      - c) (:19) Petition – Intervention of God = Deliver Us / Glorify Your Name
  - d. (:20-28) The Best Defense Aggressively Rebukes God’s Enemies
    - (:20) Getting God’s Attention
    - 1) (:21-22) Rebuke for Underestimating Your Opponent
      - a) (:21) You Will be Mocked by God’s People as You Retreat
      - b) (:22) You are Messing with the Wrong God!
    - 2) (:23-24) Rebuke for Overestimating Your Strength and Achievements – Your Ego is Misinformed
    - 3) (:25-26) Rebuke for Ignorance of God’s Sovereignty – Your Past Military Successes were Completely Due to God
    - 4) (:27-28) Rebuke for False Confidence in Your Own Sovereignty – Your Submission to God will be Complete and Humiliating
      - a) (:27) God Know All About You
      - b) (:28) God Will Control Your Every Movement
  - e. (:29-31) Promise of Immediate (and Future) Deliverance
    - 1) (:29) Sign of Harvesting Crops
    - 2) (:30) Surviving Remnant Will Again Prosper
    - 3) (:31) Salvation Comes from the Lord
  - f. (:32-37) The Best Defense is a Divine Defense
    - 1) (:32-33) The Enemy Will Not Achieve His Goal
      - a) (:32) His Intentions Will Be Frustrated
      - b) (:33) His Path Will Be Reversed
    - 2) (:34) God Will Defend His City and His People
    - 3) (:35-37) The Enemy Will Be Utterly Defeated
      - a) (:35) Slaughter of Sennacherib’s Army
      - b) (:36) Retreat of Sennacherib to Nineveh
      - c) (:37a) Assassination of Sennacherib
      - d) (:37b) Succession of Sennacherib by Esarhaddon His Son
3. (20:1-21) Hezekiah’s Last Days – Healed and Humbled –

Righteous Hezekiah Holds on at the End of His Reign as His Life is Miraculously Extended and His Vanity is Prophetically Chastized

- a. (:1-11) Hezekiah Healed
  - 1) (:1-3) Reacting to the Pronouncement of Imminent Death
    - a) (:1a) Mortal Illness
    - b) (:1b) Prophetic Pronouncement
    - c) (:2-3a) Desperate Plea
    - d) (:3b) Bitter Grief
  - 2) (:4-6) Receiving the Merciful Good News
    - a) (:4-6a) Good News of Personal Healing
    - b) (:6b) Good News of National Deliverance
  - 3) (:7) Recovering by Means of a Simple Treatment
  - 4) (:8-11) Ratifying (Confirming) His Healing by a Miraculous Sign
    - a) (:8) Seeking a Sign
    - b) (:9) Setting the Stage
    - c) (:10) Selecting the Spectacular
    - d) (:11) Switching the Shadow
- b. (:12-19) Hezekiah Humbled
  - 1) (:12) Foreign Delegation
  - 2) (:13) Full Disclosure
  - 3) (:14-19) Forensic Dialogue
    - a) (:14-15) Three Investigative Questions
    - b) (:16-18) Divine Judgment
    - c) (:19) Response of the Rebuked
- (:20-21) Epilogue – Concluding Summary of Reign of Hezekiah
  - 1) (:20) Recorded Deeds
  - 2) (:21a) Death and Burial
  - 3) (:21b) Succession

**B. (21:1-26) MANASSEH AND AMON – THE END OF THE LINE --  
THE APEX OF APOSTASY AND IDOLATRY UNDER MANASSEH AND  
AMON ELICITS SEVERE JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM**

- 1. (:1-18) Manasseh's Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (:1-9) Marks the Height of Apostasy and Idolatry
    - 1) (:1) Selected Touchpoints
    - 2) (:2-9) Theological Evaluation – Intensified Paganism and Covenant Apostasy
      - a) (:2) Summary Evaluation of Pagan Idolatry
      - b) (:3-8) Specific Examples of Apostasy and Pagan Idolatry
      - c) (:9) Stubborn Persistence in Pagan Idolatry
  - b. (:10-15) Prophetic Pronouncement of Severe Judgment
    - 1) (:11) Necessity of Severe Judgment
    - 2) (:12-14) 4 Images of Divine Judgment
      - a) (:12) Image #1 – Emphasizing the Severity of the Coming Judgment

- b) (:13a) Image #2 – Emphasizing the Historical Precedent of Judgment
    - c) (:13b) Image #3 – Emphasizing the Complete Destruction of Jerusalem
    - d) (:14) Image #4 – Emphasizing Their Helplessness in the Face of Judgment
  - 3) (:15) Necessity of Severe Judgment
- c. (:16-18) Concluding Summary of Reign of Manasseh
  - 1) (:16) Overall Evaluation
  - 2) (:17) Recorded Deeds
  - 3) (:18a) Death and Burial
  - 4) (:18b) Succession
- 2. (:19-26) Amon's Evil Reign in the South as the Clone of Manasseh
  - a. (:19) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:20-22) Theological Evaluation
    - 1) (:20-21) Followed in the Sinful Path of His Father
    - 2) (:22) Forsook the Path of Covenant Faithfulness
  - c. (:23-24) Assassination Drama in Kingdom Succession
    - 1) (:23) Killing of the King by an Internal Conspiracy
    - 2) (:24) Killing of the Conspirators by the People of the Land
  - d. (:25-26) Concluding Summary of Reign of Amon
    - 1) (:25) Recorded Deeds
    - 2) (:26a) Burial
    - 3) (:26b) Succession

### **C. (22:1 – 23:30) JOSIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

- 1. (22:1-20) Reforms under Josiah Begin with the Recovery of God's Word as the Nation Refocuses on Top Level Priorities
  - (:1-2) Prologue – Introductory Summary of Josiah's Righteous Reign
    - 1) (:1) Selected Touchpoints
    - 2) (:2) Theological Evaluation
  - a. (:3-7) Refocusing on the Priority of the Temple Reflected in the Administration of Temple Repairs
    - 1) (:3) Initiation of Administration
    - 2) (:4-6) Investment of Administration
      - a) (:4) Counting the Donations
      - b) (:5-6) Paying the Workers
    - 3) (:7) Integrity of Administration
  - b. (:8-13) Refocusing on the Priority of God's Word as the Book of the Law is Recovered
    - 1) (:8-10) Treasuring the Recovery of God's Word
      - a) (:8) Prioritizing the Reading of God's Word
      - b) (:9-10) Prioritizing the Impact of God's Word
    - 2) (:11-13) Trembling at the Impact of God's Word
      - a) (:11) Immediate Impact of God's Word
      - b) (:12-13) Investigating Further the Extent of Disobedience and

the Resulting Wrath of God

- c. (:14-20a) Refocusing on the Priority of God's Message which Integrates Judgment and Mercy – cf. Two Prophecies by Huldah Regarding Jerusalem and Josiah
  - (:14) Soliciting the Word of the Prophetess Huldah
  - 1) (:15-17) Prophecy #1 – Judgment – Addressed to the People Regarding the Fate of Jerusalem
    - a) (:15-16) Severe Judgment on Jerusalem and its People
    - b) (:17) Sentence Justified by Unfaithful Idolatry Evoking Unrelenting Wrath
  - 2) (:18-20a) Prophecy #2 – Mercy – Addressed to the King Regarding the Favor Shown to Josiah
    - a) (:18) Personal Message Delivered to the King
    - b) (:19) Posture of Humility and Repentance Earned a Hearing
    - c) (:20a) Peaceful Departure Promised by God's Mercy
  - (:20b) Epilogue – Reporting Back to Josiah
- 2. (23:1-30) Reformation (Josiah's Covenant Renewal and Widespread Reforms) without Inward Transformation Can't Divert God's Judgment
  - a. (:1-3) Inclusive Covenant Renewal
    - 1) (:1-2) Public Reading of the Book of the Covenant
      - a) (:1) Gathering the Leaders
      - b) (:2a) Assembling Everyone at the Temple
      - c) (:2b) Reading the Book of the Covenant
    - 2) (:3) Profession of Covenant Renewal
      - a) Profession by the King
      - b) Purpose of the Covenant Commitment
      - c) Profession by the People
  - b. (:4-20) Impressive List of Reforms to Purify National Worship – Josiah's Twelve Step Program
    - 1) (:4) Removing Pagan Vessels from the Temple
    - 2) (:5) Removing Pagan Priests Who Promoted Idolatry
    - 3) (:6) Burning and Pulverizing the Asherah Image
    - 4) (:7) Destroying the Houses of the Cult Prostitutes
    - 5) (:8-9) Defiling Judah's High Places and Deposing Their Priests
    - 6) (:10) Defiling Topheth = Place of Child Sacrifice
    - 7) (:11) Destroying the Objects Associated with Sun Worship
    - 8) (:12) Destroying the High Profile Altars of Previous Kings
    - 9) (:13) Defiling the Worship Sites Built by Solomon and Associated with Pagan Gods
    - 10) (:14) Destroying the Images Associated with Fertility Worship
    - 11) (:15-18) Demolishing and Defiling Jeroboam's Bethel Worship Center
      - a) (:15-16) Action
      - b) (:17-18) Aside – Leaving Undisturbed the Grave of the Man of God and Prophet Who Denounced the Altar in Bethel



- 12) (:19-20) Purge in Samaria of Pagan Worship Sites and Priests
- c. (:21-23) Reinstitution of the Passover Observance
  - 1) (:21) Commandment to Celebrate the Passover
  - 2) (:22) Neglect of Celebrating the Passover
  - 3) (:23) Observance of the Passover
- d. (:24-30) Concluding Summary of Incomparable Reign of Josiah
  - 1) (:24) Removal of Spiritual Abominations
  - 2) (:25) Commendation as the Greatest King in Terms of Instituting Reforms
  - 3) (:26-27) Unrelenting Wrath of God in Judging Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple
  - 4) (:28-30) Transition from Josiah to Jehoahaz

**D. (23:31 – 24:20) JUDAH’S KINGS SEEMINGLY CONTROLLED BY EITHER EGYPT OR BABYLON – BUT GOD’S CONTROL OF THE NATIONS CONTROLS THE FATE OF HIS PEOPLE**

- 1. (23:31-34) Jehoahaz’s Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (:31) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:32) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:33a) Imprisonment
  - d. (:33b) Imposition of Taxes
  - e. (:34a) Succession – Transition from Jehoahaz to Jehoiakim
  - f. (:34b) Death of Jehoahaz
- 2. (23:35 – 24:7) Jehoiakim’s Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (23:35) Progressive Taxation of Judah for the Egyptian Pharaoh
  - b. (23:36) Selected Touchpoints of Reign of Jehoiakim
  - c. (23:37) Theological Evaluation of Reign of Jehoiakim
  - d. (24:1-4) Divine Control of World Events Impacting Judah
    - 1) (:1) Subjugation to Nebuchadnezzar and Subsequent Rebellion
    - 2) (:2-4) Series of Destructive Raids by Foreign Troops
  - e. (24:5-7) Conclusion of His Reign
- 3. (24:8-17) Jehoiachin’s Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (:8) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:9) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:10-17) Subjugation to Babylon
    - 1) (:10-11) Siege Against Jerusalem
    - 2) (:12-16) Capture, Plundering and Exile
    - 3) (:17) Succession – Transition to Zedekiah
- 4. (24:18-20) Zedekiah’s Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (:18) Selected Touchpoints
  - b. (:19) Theological Evaluation
  - c. (:20) Misguided Rebellion

**E. (25:1-21) THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY -- DESTRUCTION, DEPORTATION, DESECRATION, EXECUTION AND EXILE –**

## **GOD TURNS THE LIGHTS OUT ON HIS HOLY CITY AND EXILES HIS APOSTATE PEOPLE**

1. (:1-7) Subjugation of Jerusalem and the Royal Family
  - a. (:1-2) Siege of Jerusalem
    - 1) (:1) Beginning of the Siege
    - 2) (:2) Duration of the Siege
  - b. (:3-4) Starvation Forcing Desperate Escape
    - 1) (:3) Starvation
    - 2) (:4) Desperate Escape
  - c. (:5-7) Slaughter and Subjugation
    - 1) (:5-6) Pursuit and Capture of the King (and Scattering of His Army)
    - 2) (:7) Punishment of the King
2. (:8-12) Destruction and Deportation
  - a. (:8-10) Destruction
    - 1) (:8) Destruction Commanded by Nebuzaradan
    - 2) (:9) Destruction Involved Burning All the Significant Houses
    - 3) (:10) Destruction Involved Demolishing the Walls around Jerusalem
  - b. (:11-12) Deportation
    - 1) (:11) Most of the People Deported
    - 2) (:12) Some of the Poorest Left Behind to Work the Land
3. (:13-17) Desecration of Yahweh's Temple
  - a. (:13) Desecration of the Pillars, the Stands and the Bronze Sea
  - b. (:14-15) Desecration of Temple Vessels and Instruments of Worship
  - c. (:16-17) Desecration of the Pillars, the Stands and the Bronze Sea
4. (:18-21a) Execution of Jerusalem's Prominent Leaders
  - a. (:18-19) Selecting the Prominent Leaders to Execute
    - 1) (:18) Five Chief Priests
    - 2) (:19) Other Prominent Leaders
  - b. (:20) Staging the Execution at Riblah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar
  - c. (:21a) Striking Them Down

### **(:21b) Epilogue – Exile into Babylonia**

## **(25:22-30) HINT OF HOPE -- TWO APPENDICES -- TYING UP SOME LOOSE ENDS -- DESPITE JUDAH'S SAD ENDING, ALL IS NOT LOST FOREVER**

### **A. (:22-26) APPENDIX #1 –**

#### **WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JEWS WHO REMAINED IN JUDAH?**

#### **EXILED TO EGYPT AFTER SLAYING GEDALIAH**

1. (:22) Feudal Leadership of Gedaliah Appointed in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar
2. (:23) Fighting Forces Rally around Gedaliah at Mizpah
3. (:24) Formula for Peaceful Existence in Promised Land under Babylonian Rule
4. (:25) Fate of Naive Gedaliah
5. (:26) Flight to Egypt to Avoid Babylonian Reprisal

**B. (:27-30) APPENDIX #2 –**

**WHAT HAPPENED TO JEHOIACHIN IN BABYLON?**

**ELEVATED TO POSITION OF FAVOR AFTER BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON**

1. (:27) Released from Prison
2. (:28-30) Restored to Position of Favor as an Encouragement to God's People
  - a. (:28a) Kind Words
  - b. (:28b) Elevated Prestige and Authority
  - c. (:29a) Changed Condition
  - d. (:29b) Place at the King's Table
  - e. (:30) Lifelong Provision

TEXT: 2 Kings 1:1-18

TITLE: FOLLY OF IDOLATRY -- IS IT BECAUSE THERE IS NO GOD IN ISRAEL?

**BIG IDEA:**

**DENYING ACCOUNTABILITY AND RESISTING GOD PROVE DISASTROUS  
SINCE GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter wraps up the story of the reign of Ahaziah that was begun at the end of 1 Kings – showing that the break between 1 and 2 Kings is very artificial. The impact of Ahab and Jezebel continues in the idolatry and hatred for the Word of God demonstrated by their son. It should be shocking to the readers to see the King of Israel consulting Baal in a time of crisis. Elijah reinforces the certain connection between idolatry and judgment. God is a consuming fire and cannot be ignored or resisted.

**William Barnes:** Yahweh simply will not tolerate (for the good of his people) any formal religious “inquiries” of any other deities (who, after all, do not even exist) . . . Yahweh will not be mocked. His people and their leadership, if they try to sneak off to seek direction from such “deities,” had better be ready to face disaster as severe as any described in the present chapter. It cannot be otherwise. Of course, our God is a God of love, incredible patience, and amazing grace; but even in the New Testament, lies and subterfuge on the part of God’s people (such as Ananias and Sapphira in **Acts 5:1–11**) may lead to sudden death and severe fear falling upon “*the entire church and everyone else who heard what had happened*” (**Acts 5:11**). That is surely the primary message of the present chapter of 2 Kings.

**Donald Wiseman:** The historian shows that the clash between Elijah, with his belief in the Lord God (Yahweh) as supreme, and the Israelite monarchy who still relied primarily on other deities, continues. Ahaziah is reproved for consulting a foreign god (**vv. 2–8**) and his attempt to reverse the judgment pronounced by Yahweh upon him is shown dramatically (**vv. 9–17a**). The issue is still the same as at Carmel. God demonstrates by fire that he will not share his supremacy with any other. The second book of Kings follows the first without a break

**August Konkel:** The prophet Elijah did not envision a pluralistic society that would seek to equally accommodate all versions of faith and values. In his context it was intolerable that the king should actively adhere to the religious values of a surrounding culture. In this he fearlessly confronted the state authority. The modern ideals of pluralism are good and necessary; coercion in matters of faith is not God’s way. However, justice in such a plurality is an exceedingly difficult matter, and the church increasingly will find the power of the state oppressive. This should not cause fear or despair; Christ will build his church, and government authority will not prevail against it.

## I. (:1-8) DON'T FORGET YOUR ACCOUNTABILITY TO GOD

### A. (:1-2) Weakness Reveals the Object of our Faith –

#### Where do we turn for help?

#### 1. (:1) Weakness Politically in Ahaziah's Kingdom Exploited by Moab

*“Now Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Second Kings begins on a positive note: **Ahab is dead**. You may think that is a nasty sentiment, but you must remember that Ahab was a conduit that allowed pagan sewage to engulf Israel (**1 Kings 16:29–34**), one who tolerated injustice (**1 Kings 21**), and who hated God's word (e.g., **1 Kings 22**). But the Ahabs always die—that is good news. The bad news is that Ahab, Jr., follows him. Ahaziah is a chip off the old, dead block. Welcome to Israel, 852 bc.

**Peter Pett:** One of the consequences of this was that Moab, parts of which had been tributary to Israel for ‘forty years’ (per the Moabite Stone), since the time of Omri, rebelled and obtained their freedom. The news of Ahaziah's accident might well have been the spur to Mesha of Moab to make the attempt, although preparations for the rebellion may well have commenced during the last days of Ahab. Ahab may well have intended to crush the rebellion after he had reclaimed Ramoth-gilead.

#### 2. (:2a) Weakness Physically Due to Ahaziah's Fall

*“And Ahaziah fell through the lattice in his upper chamber which was in Samaria, and became ill.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** Most commentators think the reference is to a trellis or screenlike structure over a window or the open area of the roof (so **Thenius, Kittel, Burney**).

**Qimhi** took it to be a skylight covering.

**MacArthur:** Ahaziah's rooftop room was enclosed with crossbars of interwoven reed or wood strips, which shut out direct sunlight while letting in cool breezes. It was not sturdy enough to keep Ahaziah from falling to the ground below (for unexplained reasons).

#### 3. (:2b) Weakness Drove Ahaziah to Baal Instead of to the Lord

*“So he sent messengers and said to them, ‘Go, inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this sickness.’”*

**William Barnes:** This is one of the five Philistine cities, located on the border between Judah and Philistia (cf. **Josh 13:3**), thus some distance southwest of Samaria. Perhaps the unexpectedness of this location (Baal Zebul was worshiped particularly in the land of Phoenicia, northwest of Israel) was an attempt to confuse Elijah and his God (cf. the similar pattern, in a number of respects, found in **1 Kgs 14:1–18**, which also involved the life-threatening illness of a royal personage and an analogous attempt to disguise the nature of the formal inquiry being made to the deity as to the likelihood of his recovery).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** We also meet a trenchant idolatry here. We must not think Ahaziah's resort to Baal-zebub was simply a sudden act of desperation in a moment of weakness. Flip back your Bible page to **1 Kings 22:52–53**, where the writer summarizes the policy of Ahaziah's reign. '*He served Baal and bowed down to him*' (v. 53). In **verse 2** (of the present text) Ahaziah only displays the consistency of his 'faith'. His appeal to Baal was not a knee-jerk reaction in a sudden emergency. Baal has always been Ahaziah's deity of choice; he has had no place for Yahweh. His idolatry was due to preference, not to ignorance or weakness.

**William Barnes:** The Hebrew "name" for this god means "*lord of the flies*," but this was not his original name or title! Presumably, the deity in question is a local manifestation of Baal Hadad, otherwise known in Phoenicia as Baal Zebul ("*Baal the prince*"). The Hebrew here thus employs the similar-sounding pejorative word *zebub* ("*flies*") for the original epithet *zebul* ("*prince*"). This mocking substitution is also attested in the New Testament references to Satan as "*Beelzeboul*" and "*Beelzebub*" (cf. the NLT mg for **Matt 10:25; 12:24; Mark 3:22; Luke 11:15**). A comparable phenomenon in the OT is the sarcastic pattern of substituting the term *bosheth* [TH1322, ZH1425] (*shame*) for Israelite names containing references to Baal. See, e.g., "*Ishbosheth*" for *Esh-baal* in **2 Sam 4:1** (cf. NLT mg); "*Mephibosheth*" for *Merib-baal* in **2 Sam 4:4** (cf. NLT mg); and "*Jerub-besheth*" for *Jerub-baal* (another name for Gideon) in **2 Sam 11:21** (cf. NLT mg).

**Charles Swindoll:** God is displeased with any occult involvement. God is dishonored by any specific pursuit of the future that does not find its source in His Word. But let me reassure you, God is delighted when we trust Him only. The Lord strengthens those who put their trust in Him.

## **B. (:3-4) Prophetic Intervention Condemns the Folly of Idolatry – Is there no God in Israel?**

### **1. (:3a) Messengers of Ahaziah Intercepted by Elijah**

*"But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria'"*

**Constable:** The angel of the Lord here (v. 3) was perhaps the pre-incarnate Christ (**Gen. 16:9; 1 Kings 19:7; 2 Kings 19:35**; et al.).

**August Konkel:** The impact of the struggle in the narrative is achieved through the double meaning of the word "*messenger*" (*mal'āk*). This Hebrew word refers to both the "*angel [of the Lord]*" and to the "*messengers [of the king]*" (v. 3). God exercises his authority through the first messenger, while King Ahaziah can do nothing more than extend his power through military messengers. The divine messenger counters the first messengers of the king, subverting their quest. The king's messengers in effect return with an oracle from Yahweh rather than Baal-Zebub (**1:5–6**).

2. (:3b) Misdirected Inquiry of Ahaziah

*“and say to them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh’s words are repeated three times (vv. 3, 6, 16)—clearly they highlight the central concern of the narrative. When Ahaziah sends to Philistia he implies Israel has no God; when he appeals to Baal-zebub he is implying that Yahweh is either non-existent or irrelevant and inadequate. (Is this not, in principle, the essence of all our idolatry? By taking first recourse to other helps and supports we subtly confess the inadequacy and insufficiency of Yahweh to handle our dilemmas.) So Yahweh’s intrusion is anything but affable and courteous. He sends Elijah to cut off and stifle the king’s godless expedition.

3. (:4a) Mortal Injury Prophecied

*“Now therefore thus says the LORD, ‘You shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but you shall surely die.’”*

4. (:4b) Mission of Intervention Ended

*“Then Elijah departed.”*

**C. (:5-8) Even Powerful Kings Cannot Escape Divine Accountability –  
There is a God in Israel**

1. (:5-6) Reporting to Ahaziah the Prophecy of His Death

*“When the messengers returned to him he said to them, ‘Why have you returned?’ 6 And they said to him, ‘A man came up to meet us and said to us, Go, return to the king who sent you and say to him, Thus says the LORD, Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The swift return of the messengers assured the king that they had not had time to go to Ekron, about seventy-two kilometres from Samaria, and return, hence the question. God intervened yet again through his servant to keep the messengers from their destination, for if Ahaziah had obtained a verdict from Baal-Zebub it might have belittled Yahweh in the popular estimation. . .

If, however, Yahweh is **severe**, he is at the same moment **merciful**. His nasty interruption of Ahaziah’s mission is, if the king could only see, a last opportunity. Yahweh did not allow Ahaziah’s idolatry to proceed in peace but invaded his space and rubbed his face in the first commandment again. Again we see our uncomfortable God: Yahweh is furious, not tolerant; holy, not reassuring; loving, not nice. But there is love in his fury. He won’t let you walk the path to idolatry easily; his mercy litters the way with roadblocks. That is a wonder considering he so detests our idols.

**Dilday:** This official delegation from the king would certainly not have turned back from their royal assignment just because some anonymous wayfarer asked them to.

There must have been an irresistible quality to Elijah's personality, a forceful spiritual presence, that compelled them to obey this stranger even though they didn't know who he was.

## 2. (:7-8) Revealing the Identity of the Prophet

*"And he said to them, 'What kind of man was he who came up to meet you and spoke these words to you?' 8 And they answered him, 'He was a hairy man with a leather girdle bound about his loins.' And he said, 'It is Elijah the Tishbite.'"*

**MacArthur:** Elijah wore a coarse wool garment girded at the waist with a leather belt.

**Whitcomb:** the king's messengers were stopped en route by God's war machine, equipped with nothing but a garment of hair and a leather girdle. This dress was a forceful rebuke of the sinful luxury of the aristocracy of Israel, and became such a symbol of prophetic power that false prophets would *"wear a hairy mantle to deceive"* (**Zech. 13:4**)! Speaking of Elijah's later counterpart, John the Baptist, our Lord asked: *"What went ye out to see? A man clothed in soft raiment?"* (**Matt. 11:8**; cf. **3:4**). But it was more than his rough garments and rugged visage that gave him power against Baal's henchmen – it was special authority from God Himself.

**Keil and Delitzsch:** This does not mean a man with a luxuriant growth of hair, but refers to the hairy dress, i.e., the garment made of sheep-skin or goat-skin or coarse camel-hair, which was wrapped round his body; (**2 Kings 2:8**; **1 Kings 19:13**), or (**Zech. 13:4**, cf. **Matt. 3:4**, **Heb. 11:37**), which was worn by the prophets, not as mere ascetics, but as preachers of repentance, the rough garment denoting the severity of the divine judgments upon the effeminate nation, which revelled in luxuriance and worldly lust. And this was also in keeping with *"the leather girdle,"* (**Matt. 3:4**), whereas the ordinary girdle was of cotton or linen, and often very costly.

## **II. (:9-16) DON'T FIGHT AGAINST GOD**

### **A. (:9-10) First Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah**

#### 1. (:9) Contempt for God's Power and Truth

*"Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty. And he went up to him, and behold, he was sitting on the top of the hill. And he said to him, 'O man of God, the king says, Come down.'"*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Do you send a fifty-man posse to procure a consultant? Some interpreters never understand this passage because they never consider Ahaziah's intention. **Ellison** is right: 'The fifty men were not intended to be a guard of honour! It was an open declaration of hostilities, and Elijah treated it as such.' Ahaziah planned to silence the word of God through Elijah—probably by liquidating Elijah (cf. the implied danger to Elijah's life in the angel of Yahweh's words in **v. 15**). The king was not inviting Elijah to dinner. Why is this so hard to see? Here is an undefended prophet



accosted by royal military muscle. The palace intends to use its police in order to dispose of the prophet.

**Constable:** Ahaziah showed complete contempt for God's prophet and Yahweh, whom he represented, by sending soldiers to arrest Elijah. He apparently wanted to get a reversal of the prophecy against him and resorted to massive force to secure it.

**Guzik:** There were many reasons why Ahaziah wanted to arrest Elijah, even though he already heard the prophecy through Elijah. Perhaps he wanted Elijah to reverse his word of doom and would use force to compel him to do it. Perhaps he just wanted to show his rage against this prophet who had troubled him and his father Ahab for so long. Perhaps he wanted to dramatically silence Elijah to discourage future prophets from speaking boldly against the king of Israel. God assured Elijah that he had nothing to fear from Ahaziah.

2. (:10) Consuming Fire from God

*“And Elijah answered and said to the captain of fifty, ‘If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.’ Then fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Fire links Elijah with Moses again (**Lev. 10:2; Num. 11:3**) and should have reminded the king that God had already revealed himself and authenticated Elijah by that means (**1 Kgs 18:38–39**).

**Constable:** There is wordplay in the Hebrew text that is helpful in appreciating the dialog between Elijah and the first two captains. The first two captains commanded the "man of God" to "come down" (**vv. 9, 11**). Elijah replied, "If I am a man [Heb. 'ish] of God, let fire [Heb. 'sh] come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty" (**vv. 10, 12**). Sure enough, fire came down on them proving that Elijah was indeed a man of God.

**Clarke:** Some have blamed the prophet for destroying these men, by bringing down fire from heaven upon them. But they do not consider that it was no more possible for Elijah to bring down fire from heaven, than for them to do it. God alone could send the fire; and as he is just and good, he would not have destroyed these men had there not been a sufficient cause to justify the act.

**B. (:11-12) Second Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah**

1. (:11) Contempt for God's Power and Truth

*“So he again sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. And he answered and said to him, ‘O man of God, thus says the king, Come down quickly.’”*

2. (:12) Consuming Fire from God

*“And Elijah answered and said to them, ‘If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.’ Then the fire*

*of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.”*

**Wiersbe:** These two episodes of fiery judgment were dramatic messages from the Lord that the king and the nation had better repent or they would all taste the judgment of God. The people had forgotten the lessons of Mount Carmel, and these two judgments reminded them that the God of Israel was “a consuming fire” (**Deut. 4:24** and **9:3**; **Heb. 12:29**).

**Keil and Delitzsch:** The repetition of this judicial miracle was meant to show in the most striking manner not only the authority which rightfully belonged to the prophet, but also the help and protection which the Lord gave to His servants. At the same time, the question as to the “morality of the miracle,” about which some have had grave doubts, is not set at rest by the remark of **Thenius**, that “the soldiers who were sent come into consideration here purely as instruments of a will acting in opposition to Jehovah.”

### **C. (:13-16) Third Delegation Sent by Ahaziah to Summon Elijah**

#### 1. (:13-14) Conciliatory Approach

*“So he again sent the captain of a third fifty with his fifty. When the third captain of fifty went up, he came and bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, ‘O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14 Behold fire came down from heaven, and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight.’”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** After two unsuccessful attempts at ordering the prophet down from his mountain perch, during which two companies met a fiery death, a third officer is shown, on his knees, pleading for his life and the lives of his men. As in other narratives of this cycle, Elijah is portrayed as an uncompromising man of God, zealous in his demand for exclusive loyalty to YHWH and terrifying in his acts of retribution (cf. **1 Kgs 17:24**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This third captain does not spout the previous arrogance (**vv. 9, 11**). He is different in his posture (*‘and knelt on his knees before Elijah,’ v. 13b*), in his purpose (*‘and he made a plea for grace to him,’ v. 13c*), and in his petition (*‘O man of God, let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be valued in your eyes,’ v. 13d*). The man was clearly terrified, for he fully knew what had happened to the former two contingents. In **verse 14** he so much as says, ‘I know I am within a centimeter of destruction—please spare me.’ He knelt, he pled, he trembled—he lived.

**August Konkel:** The life of Ahaziah calls on the Israelites to make a choice. They can be the people of God and have life, or they can follow the ways of the nations and have death. Will the Israelites choose life in hearing the words of the prophets, or will they be like Ahaziah and seek to escape the divine word of judgment? For the authors of Kings, this power struggle between king and prophet is not a question of political

control. Rather, it is a question of the survival of the nation itself. The appeal of the third captain makes this choice clear (1:14); the king is powerless before the messenger of Yahweh. He can do nothing more to save the nation than to save himself.

## 2. (:15) Courageous Confrontation

*“And the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, ‘Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.’ So he arose and went down with him to the king.”*

**August Konkell:** When the king gets his request to meet his nemesis Elijah face to face, the result is nothing more than a repetition of the inevitable oracle of doom. The repeated exchange of the messengers dramatizes the superior and dangerous power of God connected with the prophetic oracle. God emerges from his remote recess and takes control, first delivering his prophecy through the messengers of Ahaziah and then through Elijah. Each of Ahaziah’s actions moves him inexorably toward the judgment reserved for him because of his rejection of the God of the covenant.

**Paul House:** A third captain takes a very practical approach to bringing Elijah to Ahaziah. Rather than order him to come, as the previous two captains had done, he begs for his life and the lives of his men and confesses that he knows Elijah has the power to kill them all. This man understands that the prophet serves an authority other than the king and that he cannot manipulate the Lord’s messenger. Because of the captain’s humility and because God’s angel instructs him to go, Elijah goes to see the king.

## 3. (:16) Condemnation Repeated

*“Then he said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron-- **is it because there is no God in Israel** to inquire of His word?-- therefore you shall not come down from the bed where you have gone up, but shall surely die.’”*

# **III. (:17-18) EPILOGUE – SUMMATION OF AHAZIAH’S REIGN**

## **A. (:17) End of Ahaziah’s Reign**

### 1. Death

*“So Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The evaluation of Ahaziah’s reign has already been given (1 Kgs 22:52–53).

### 2. Succession

*“And because he had no son, Jehoram became king in his place”*

### 3. (:17c) Timing

*“in the second year of Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.”*

## B. (:18) Recorded Deeds of Ahaziah

*“Now the rest of the acts of Ahaziah which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When you are under pressure, where do you turn for help?
- 2) Why does King Ahaziah act so irrationally in continuing to send military troops to summon Elijah even after God has demonstrated His power as a consuming fire?
- 3) What changed in Elijah’s makeup so that now he could courageously challenge the king?
- 4) What are some of the ways in which you fight against God?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** One cannot understand **2 Kings 1** unless one remembers **1 Kings 18**. The latter passage relates the ‘god contest’ on Mount Carmel, Yahweh versus Baal. Fire was the burning issue of the day: the God who answered by fire would show himself to be the real God (**1 Kings 18:21, 23–24, 36–39**). It was a matter of proof. That is the function of the fire in **2 Kings 1** as well. Oh, it should have been unnecessary. King Ahaziah surely knew what had taken place just a few years before at Mt. Carmel. It was a public, prime-time affair covered (if one may be anachronistic) by all the major news networks. It was not done in a corner. It scared the liver out of the folks who saw it and they never stopped talking about it. Carmel Day made the point: Yahweh is the real God, Baal a sorry non-entity. But Ahaziah didn’t get the point. When he has an urgent need for health care, he appeals to Baal (v. 2)—Baal the loser (**1 Kings 18**). What do you do when someone is so dense, so ‘thick,’ that he doesn’t grasp what fire (**1 Kings 18:38**) means? You send more fire (**2 Kings 1:10b, 12b**)! The point is the same, i.e., Yahweh is the only God, but the fire is not only demonstrative (as at Carmel in **1 Kings 18**) but destructive (102 seared remains, thanks to Ahaziah). The first commandment really matters to Yahweh, and Ahaziah just doesn’t get it.

The fire, however, also functions as protection. Here it is Yahweh’s means of defending the bearer of his word, his undefended prophet. . . Does not Ahaziah represent the power of any kingdom, any throne, any ruler, any government that tries to stifle Yahweh’s word and silence his witnesses? And does not this little scenario testify that no king, no despot, no tyrant will ever be able totally to extinguish the witness of the word of God in this world?

**William Barnes:** As **Gina Hens-Piazza** (2006:230–232) has effectively argued, King Ahaziah participated in a kind of **dangerous deception** even beyond his attempt to fool Elijah and Elijah's God:

*[The] refusal to acknowledge God's ultimate reign in all matters encourages delusions that one can manipulate reality. It supports our inclinations to serve our self-interests and to use others to do so.*

*Ahaziah participated in this kind of deception. First, he believed he could be privy to what is beyond human capacity to know. He refused to acknowledge his human limitations regarding the ultimate questions surrounding life and death.... Confronted by his officers with evidence of an alternative power in the form of the word of the Lord through Elijah, the king must make a choice. Either he must give up his self-deceiving belief system, acknowledge his vulnerability, and embrace the Lord, or he must become even more fixed and adamant in his false sense of being in charge....*

*When human power competes with divine power it often yields tragic outcomes. The first two companies of men that Ahaziah sends up the mountain are destroyed. Innocent lives are put in harm's way. But to keep the delusion alive, the abuse of power becomes imperative.... Thus a third company of men is sent.*

*Such power that functions without controls, believing it can manipulate reality—even ultimate reality—eventually self-destructs. Ahaziah's death confirmed the prophet's word and thus became a witness to the ultimate truth and power of God's word. But it also teaches something else. It illustrates the relationship between lack of faith in the omnipotent Lord and the human potential for abuse of power. When we lose sight of the all-powerful God who controls matters of life and death, we are drawn to other false groundings for our hope. In turn, putting trust in other false controls over our destiny can breed a misuse of power. Keeping such delusions alive not only leads to using or sacrificing others for our self-interests, but can eventually cost us our own lives as well. Ahaziah's story serves as a witness.*

### **Robert Leroe: Fire from Heaven**

Trusting idols over God was hardly out of character for a descendant of Ahab. Such behavior shows that the king did not regard Jehovah as the only deity. He was playing with fire. Elijah the prophet learns of this, and pronounces a message of judgment, that for his rejection of God the king will certainly die. Ahaziah gets an answer all right, but not from the source he sought. Why did he go elsewhere? Elijah asks. *"Is it because there is no God in Israel?"* We might ask the same question when we see evil abound. Is there no God in America? To follow in the way of idols--substitutes for God--only leads to moral decay and death.

Where do we go when we're in trouble? Who do we follow? People become like that which they serve. They reflect their priorities. If we follow anyone or anything other than God, our end will be that of destruction. This incident is a call for us to consider what's most important in our lives, and where God fits in. God is not to be trifled with

or treated lightly; we ignore Him at our peril. There are consequences for rejecting God's will in this life...and beyond death's door. . .

People joke about God; they speak irreverently about Him, and abuse His Name. Others ignore God; they treat Him with indifference, in the vain hope that they won't have to answer for their apathy. Still others go their own way, denying that there is a God, which means no accountability. They're counting on it. They will be more than embarrassed on the Day of Reckoning. Our sovereign God is a consuming fire, One to be feared. We need to wake up from our lethargy and respond to the One who warrants our reverence, awe and devotion. . .

God's wrath is His resolute and relenting opposition to evil, unbelief, and indifference. It is His refusal to compromise with, or tolerate evil, along with a commitment to act righteously against evil and injustice.

If we're not following God, we're following self...or other gods. Idolatry is trusting substitutes.

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/fire-from-heaven-robert-leroe-sermon-on-god-s-wrath-180549>

### **Phil Johnson: Fire from Heaven**

Now this is the first mention of Baalzebub in Scripture. Baalzebub was a Philistine deity. His name meant, "*Lord of the flies*." That was fitting, for the land of the Philistines was thick with flies; that area still is to this day. And the Philistines evidently believed the infestation of flies signified that the Lord of the flies lived in their land, so they made this fly-god one of their main deities. They had some famous oracles who claimed to be able to tell the future. They usually gave flattering prophecies with predictions so ambiguous that they could hardly miss, but the Philistine oracles nonetheless had gained fame throughout Israel. They were sort of the "Psychic Friends Network" of Elijah's time. And Ahaziah decided he would send messengers to the fly-god's oracles to tell him if he could expect to live. This occult curiosity about the future cost him his life. God despises all forms of occult fortune-telling, and He strictly forbade His people to engage in that sort of evil. Listen to **Deuteronomy 18:9-12**. . .

#### Spiritual Lessons:

##### **1. HOW LOW SIN BROUGHT AHAZIAH**

Many wicked men sat on the throne of Israel after Jeroboam's revolt. But this episode was something of a low point for the whole era -- that an Israelite king would inquire of a Philistine god.

##### **2. HOW FAR FAITH HAD BROUGHT ELIJAH**

There's a remarkable contrast between the Elijah of this episode and the immature prophet who ran from Jezebel all the way to the southern end of the Sinai peninsula. Here we see Elijah confident, bold, unmovable.



Some people have trouble reconciling this passage with **Luke 9:55**, where James and John wanted to call down fire from heaven against some Samaritans because they refused to allow Jesus to pass through their village on His way to Jerusalem. And Jesus rebuked James and John. And what about **John 3:17**? *"For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him."* **2 Kings 1 24** Just to be clear; Scripture never condemns what Elijah did, because it wasn't even Elijah who did this; God did it. Contrary to what a lot of people think, the New Testament doesn't promote a pacifist agenda. What happened when Elijah encountered these messengers was an act of God, done for God's own glory. As a matter of fact, Jesus Himself will one day destroy His enemies with a fiery retribution from heaven.

### 3. HOW PATIENTLY GOD'S MERCY PURSUES THE WICKED

In fact, contrast Ahaziah's fate with that of his soldiers, who were destroyed on the spot with no opportunity to seek any remedy. God is not unrighteous to judge instantly and summarily like that. But so often He does not. I would guess that there is not a person in this room who has not been the beneficiary of the kind of Divine mercy that fires a warning shot before dispensing justice. God often gives us time to reflect and warning signs to reflect on before He makes us taste the consequences of our sin. And those are opportunities for repentance.

This whole episode reminds us that *"It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God"* (**Hebrews 10:31**). *"our God is a consuming fire"* (**Hebrews 12:29**).

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/1122141027492.pdf>

#### **Richard Rohlin: Falls, Flies, Fire**

##### **Are you hiding from God?**

- Ahaziah's father (Ahab) was killed in battle by a "chance" arrow.
- Now, Ahaziah himself refuses to go to war even with the Moabites having rebelled against Israel.
- He is unable to avoid judgment simply by staying home: even the palace itself proves dangerous to him.

- Are you "hiding" from God and from others by living a life that externally seems to be in order, but in reality is marked by hidden sin and hypocrisy?
- Are you "hiding" from God in the church, telling yourself that being a part of a good church, a good family, or a strong marriage will be enough?

##### **Are you ignoring God?**

- Baal-zebub was a "baal" – a pagan Canaanite deity. This is not the same Baal (Baal-Hadad). He was specifically linked with both flies and the healing of diseases.
- It was believed, at the time, that flies were a direct cause of illness.
- Ahaziah sends a messenger to the temple of Baal-zebub, thus further angering God.

- Are you trusting to your own wisdom, plans, or devices to accomplish things that you have prayed for?
- Have you made a higher place in your life for the world's wisdom and solutions than you have for the Word of God?
- Are you willfully ignoring God's calling for your life?

### **Are you fighting God?**

- The first captain mockingly challenges Elijah's credentials.
  - The second captain is emphasizing his own credentials as acting upon the authority of the king.
  - God intervened on Elijah's behalf, not to protect Elijah (God could have done that any number of ways), but to protect the glory of His name.
- 
- Do you mock, deride, or make fun of those who have higher standards than you?
  - Do you challenge the calling or credentials of those who disagree with you?
    - Are you exalting education, teaching, degrees, or credentials above the Word of God and His calling?

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/13012155555.pdf>



TEXT: 2 Kings 2:1-25

TITLE: AUTHORITY AND POWER TRANSFERRED FROM ELIJAH TO ELISHA

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE MIRACULOUS ASCENSION OF ELIJAH COMPLETES THE  
TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY AND POWER TO ELISHA**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This passing of the mantle from Elijah to Elisha demonstrates the ongoing authority and power of the Lord as He leads and protects and provides for His people. Once again we see both mercy and judgment. But Elisha will stand resolutely for the truth and prophecy faithfully the Word of God just as his predecessor. The signs that are performed by Elisha confirm that the spirit of Elijah has now been transferred to Elisha.

**Peter Pett:** The events that will follow, in which YHWH's power through his prophet Elisha is remarkably revealed, were crucial to the maintenance of faith in YHWH at a time of gross apostasy. Just as YHWH through Moses had boosted the faith of Israel at the Exodus with specific miracles, and just as Jesus Himself would evidence His Messiahship by even greater miracles (**Matthew 11:2-6**), followed by miracles which accredited His Apostles (**Mark 16:17-18; Acts 4:29-30; Acts 5:12; Hebrews 2:3-4**) so now in these perilous times for Yahwism (the worship of YHWH, the God of Israel), God encouraged the faithful by miracles, some of which were remarkably similar, although lesser in extent, to those of Jesus. To call them pointless, as some have done, is to ignore the privations and dangers facing the '*sons of the prophets*' and all true Yahwists, dangers under which the very core of the faithful in Israel were living. Under such circumstances they needed their faith boosted in special ways.

**Donald Wiseman:** Elijah's successor had already been designated (**1 Kgs 19:19-21**), but the dramatic event which marks Elijah's unique departure or ascension (**vv. 1-18**) also introduces the commissioning of his successor who is immediately confirmed as, and by, having similar miraculous powers. These are not the mere emphasis of an expansionist editor but a fitting climax in confirmation of Elisha's commission by God. Two examples given, the healing of the waters (**vv. 19-22**) and the judgment on mockers (**vv. 23-25**), can be shown to have a moral, ethical and didactic purpose.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Just as **Joshua 1** addresses the question, How shall we go on now that Moses has died?, so **2 Kings 2** raises—and answers—the question, How can we go on when Elijah is going to be taken from us? . . . So Elijah has been '*taken*'. But it's all left—power and wisdom, grace and judgment. Elisha asked the right question: Where is the God of Elijah? Answer: Right here, with his struggling, suffering servants. Elijah is gone, Yahweh remains.

**August Konkell:** Elijah and Elisha had a particular calling and mission during a critical period of Israel's history, when power of the Baal cult was extended through the alliances of Israel and Judah and the intermarriage of the royal families. The supporters of these two prophets in their struggle against the Baal cult were designated as "*sons of the prophets*." Prophecy manifested itself in a variety of forms in ancient Israel; its function was always to call for faithfulness to the covenant. Inspired prophecy was the means God used to confront false teaching at the highest levels of power. Followers of Elijah who had not bowed before Baal were both recipients of a revelation that the mantle would be transferred to another prophet and witnesses to the anointing of Elisha as the prophet who would bring an end to the power of the house of Omri.

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** The section we are dealing with in 2 Kings describes the transition of power from Elijah to Elisha. While there were a number of prophets in Israel, it would seem that Elijah was the "senior prophet" of his time. After his departure, it was necessary that his successor be designated in a way that would make it clear he was the one in whom the spirit of Elijah had come to abide.

### **(:1-6) FAREWELL TOUR – LOYALTY OF ELISHA TO ELIJAH IN PREPARATION FOR THE PROPHET'S ASCENSION AND TRANSFER OF AUTHORITY AND POWER**

#### **A. (:1) Departure from Gilgal**

*"And it came about when the LORD was about to take up Elijah by a whirlwind to heaven, that Elijah went with Elisha from Gilgal."*

**Peter Pett:** Note the stress on the fact that Elijah's being taken up in a whirlwind was to be the sovereign act of YHWH. There is no suggestion that Elijah or anyone else sought it. It was YHWH's sovereign choice. He had planned to take him up.

**MacArthur:** Although some take this to be the Gilgal located W of the Jordan River near Jericho (cf. **Jos 4:19; 5:9**), the close affinity to Bethel (v. 2) and its distance from Jericho (v. 4) seem to indicate that the Gilgal mentioned here was located in the hill country of Ephraim about 7 mi. N of Bethel.

**Peter Pett:** The significance of the details of the journey should not be overlooked. They moved from Bethel, to Jericho, to the Jordan, followed by the miraculous crossing of the Jordan, which was the precise reversal of what had happened when Israel had first taken possession of Canaan under Joshua. In view of the parallel miracle at the Jordan this surely cannot be coincidental. Elisha would then reverse the journey the opposite way round. It was an indication that YHWH was offering Israel, through Elisha, a new beginning, something which increases the significance of what then happened at Bethel.

**Sermonwriter.com:** Gilgal is where the Israelites crossed the Jordan River to occupy the Promised Land (**Joshua 4:1-9**). Bethel is mentioned several times in the account of Israel occupying the Promised Land (**Joshua 7:2, 8:9, 12, 17; 12:9, 16; 16:1**). Jericho was the site of Israel's first great victory in the occupation of the Promised Land

(Joshua 6). The Jordan River is the barrier that the Israelites crossed to occupy the Promised Land (Joshua 3). By visiting these places, Elijah is reconnecting with the great Joshua narratives of Israel's early history.

**B. (:2) Continuation to Bethel**

1. Lobbying for Elisha to Stay by Elijah

*"And Elijah said to Elisha, 'Stay here please, for the LORD has sent me as far as Bethel.'"*

2. Loyalty of Elisha

*"But Elisha said, 'As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they went down to Bethel."*

**MacArthur:** A town in Benjamin about 8 mi. N of Jerusalem where one of Israel's false worship centers was located.

**C. (:3-4) Continuation to Jericho**

1. (:3) Lament by the Sons of the Prophets

*"Then the sons of the prophets who were at Bethel came out to Elisha and said to him, 'Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?' And he said, 'Yes, I know; be still.'"*

**MacArthur:** "take away" – The same term was used of Enoch's translation to heaven in **Ge 5:24**.

**John Gates:** God had revealed to Elijah that he was soon to depart. And Elijah had made known the revelation in order to prepare both Elisha and the sons of the prophets for his going.

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** this journey is divinely directed. God instructed Elijah to go to Bethel (**verse 2**), then Jericho (**verse 4**), and finally the Jordan (**verse 6**). I believe God wanted Elijah to visit the prophets one last time. I believe this is where the "school of the prophets" was located, and that God directed Elijah and Elisha there so that these prophets would prophecy concerning Elijah's departure. As a result, virtually every prophet in Israel knew this was Elijah's day to "depart," to be "taken from Elisha." It would appear that God wanted Elijah to make this last circuit with Elisha, so that by the time the day was over all the prophets would realize that Elijah was gone and that Elisha was his replacement. God was orchestrating the final events of Elijah's life in such a way as to designate and accredit Elisha as his replacement.

2. (:4) Loyalty of Elisha

*"And Elijah said to him, 'Elisha, please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to Jericho.' But he said, 'As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.' So they came to Jericho."*

#### **D. (:5-6) Continuation to the Jordan River**

##### **1. (:5) Lament by the Sons of the Prophets**

*“And the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho approached Elisha and said to him, ‘Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?’ And he answered, ‘Yes, I know; be still.’”*

##### **2. (:6) Loyalty of Elisha**

*“Then Elijah said to him, ‘Please stay here, for the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.’ And he said, ‘As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them went on.”*

#### **I. (:7-14) AUTHORITY AND POWER OF ELIJAH TRANSFERRED TO ELISHA**

##### **A. (:7-8) The Miraculous Crossing of the Jordan River by the Authority and Power of Elijah**

##### **1. (:7) Observation by the Fifty Sons of the Prophets**

*“Now fifty men of the sons of the prophets went and stood opposite them at a distance, while the two of them stood by the Jordan.”*

##### **2. (:8) Operation of Crossing the Jordan River Orchestrated by Elijah**

*“And Elijah took his mantle and folded it together and struck the waters, and they were divided here and there, so that the two of them crossed over on dry ground.”*

**MacArthur:** Elijah rolled up his cloak into a kind of rod and struck the water of the Jordan River. Immediately, the water parted, leaving a dry path through the river bed for the two prophets to cross. Elijah’s act recalled Moses’ parting of the Red Sea with his rod (**Ex 14:21, 22**) and the parting of the Jordan when Israel crossed over into the Land (**Jos 3:14-17**). The crossing put Elijah on the Jordan’s E bank, the area where Moses’ life came to an end (**Dt 34:1-6**).

##### **B. (:9-11) The Transporting of Elijah Up to Heaven**

##### **1. (:9-10) Special Request by Elisha for a Double Portion of Elijah’s Spirit**

*“Now it came about when they had crossed over, that Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.’ And Elisha said, ‘Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.’ And he said, ‘You have asked a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be so.’”*

**David Guzik:** The idea of a double portion was not to ask for twice as much as Elijah had, but to ask for the portion that went to the firstborn son, as in **Deuteronomy 21:17**. Elisha asked for the right to be regarded as the successor of Elijah, as his firstborn son in regard to ministry. Yet Elisha had already been designated as Elijah’s successor (**1**

**Kings 19:19).** This was a request for the spiritual power to fulfill the calling he already received.

**Sermonwriter.com:** most think that he is asking for the double-portion of the inheritance that is the right of the firstborn son (**Deuteronomy 21:17**). A double portion of an inheritance would not be twice the father's material worth. On the contrary, the father would divide the inheritance into equal parts—the number of parts equal to the number of sons plus one. For instance, a father with five sons would divide the inheritance into six parts. He would give the firstborn son two parts and every other son one part. The firstborn son would thus inherit twice as much as any of his brothers, but far less than his father's total worth—certainly not double his father's worth.

## 2. (:11) Special Effects in Conjunction with Elijah's Ascension

*"Then it came about as they were going along and talking, that behold, there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire which separated the two of them. And Elijah went up by a whirlwind to heaven."*

**Meyer:** "As they continued on and talked" -- What sublime themes must have engaged them, standing as they did on the very confines of heaven, and in the vestibule of eternity! The apostasy of Israel and its approaching doom; the ministry just closing, with its solemn warnings; the outlook towards the work upon which Elisha was preparing to enter – these and cognate subjects must have occupied them.

**Constable:** The whirlwind (shekinah?) took Elijah miraculously into heaven, not the fiery horses and chariot (v. 11).

## **C. (:12-14) The Miraculous Crossing of the Jordan River by the Authority and Power of Elisha**

### 1. (:12) Observation of Elisha

#### a. Awe

*"And Elisha saw it and cried out, 'My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!'"*

**Sermonwriter.com:** We can't know with certainty what Elijah means by this phrase. He could be seeing a grand vision of a heavenly host, or he could be referring to Elijah's ministry to Israel—a ministry more powerful than chariots and horsemen.

**Dan Bockenfeld:** In what Elisha says, we can see how deep of a relationship that they had. Elisha calls Elijah his father. They had been together for so many years that their relationship was like that of a father and son. They cared for each other and treated each other like family. There was no animosity or patronizing, but there was grooming. Their relationship was not haphazard; it was deliberate. The Lord told Elijah to search for his successor in Elisha and Elijah sought him out. This allowed Elijah to know without a doubt that Elisha would be his successor.

b. Finality

*“And he saw him no more.”*

c. Grief

*“Then he took hold of his own clothes  
and tore them in two pieces.”*

2. (:13-14) Operation of Crossing the Jordan River Orchestrated by Elisha

a. (:13) Assuming the Mantle of Elijah

*“He also took up the mantle of Elijah that fell from him,  
and returned and stood by the bank of the Jordan.”*

**Wiersbe:** in taking up Elijah’s mantle, Elisha was making clear that he accepted the responsibilities involved as he succeeded the great prophet and continued his work. By using the mantle to open the waters of the Jordan, he was declaring that his faith was not in the departed prophet but in the ever-present living God.

b. (:14a) Addressing the God of Elijah

*“And he took the mantle of Elijah that fell from him, and struck  
the waters and said, ‘Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’”*

**Constable:** By asking, *“Where is Elijah’s God?”* (v. 14), Elisha was calling out to Yahweh to demonstrate His power through him as He had done through Elijah.

c. (:14b) Accomplishing the Miracle of Dividing the Waters

*“And when he also had struck the waters, they were divided here  
and there; and Elisha crossed over.”*

**II. (:15-18) AUTHORITY AND POWER OF ELISHA TO PROPHECY THE TRUTH**

**A. (:15) Recognition of Transfer of Authority and Power**

1. Summation of Their Testimony Regarding Transfer from Elijah to Elisha

*“Now when the sons of the prophets who were at Jericho opposite him  
saw him, they said, ‘The spirit of Elijah rests on Elisha.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh’s power is still available through Elisha.

2. Submission to the New Leadership of Elisha

*“And they came to meet him  
and bowed themselves to the ground before him.”*

**MacArthur:** This action symbolized the submission of the prophets to the preeminence of Elisha as the prophet in Israel.

**B. (:16a) Request to Search for Body of Elijah**

*“And they said to him, ‘Behold now, there are with your servants fifty strong men, please let them go and search for your master; perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has taken him up and cast him on some mountain or into some valley.’”*

**C. (:16b-17) Relenting Under Pressure to Allow for a Search**

1. (:16b) Conviction Expressed -- that Elijah Would Not Be Found

*“And he said, ‘You shall not send.’”*

2. (:17a) Conviction Investigated

*“But when they urged him until he was ashamed, he said, ‘Send.’ They sent therefore fifty men;”*

3. (:17b) Conviction Substantiated

*“and they searched three days, but did not find him.”*

**D. (:18) Repetition of His Earlier Prophecy**

*“And they returned to him while he was staying at Jericho; and he said to them, ‘Did I not say to you, Do not go ’?”*

**III. (:19-22) CONFIRMING SIGN #1 = AUTHORITY AND POWER OF ELISHA TO BLESS AND GIVE LIFE**

**A. (:19) Curse of Jericho Needs Healing by Appeal to Elisha**

*“Then the men of the city said to Elisha, ‘Behold now, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the land is unfruitful.’”*

**B. (:20-21) Curse of Jericho Receives Healing by the Instrumentation of Elisha**

*“And he said, ‘Bring me a new jar, and put salt in it.’ So they brought it to him. And he went out to the spring of water, and threw salt in it and said, ‘Thus says the LORD, I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.’”*

**MacArthur:** The healing of Jericho’s water, through Elisha, freed the city from Joshua’s curse, making it habitable for humans once again (cf. **Jos 6:26; 1 Ki 16:34**).

**C. (:22) Curse of Jericho Maintains its Healing by the Word of Elisha**

*“So the waters have been purified to this day, according to the word of Elisha which he spoke.”*

**Constable:** God's permanent healing of the spring would have served as a continuing reminder of Yahweh's ability to bring fruitfulness and blessing out of the deadly sterility of idolatry.



#### **IV. (:23-25) CONFIRMING SIGN #2 = AUTHORITY AND POWER OF ELISHA TO CURSE AND DESTROY**

##### **A. (:23) Disrespect Shown to the Prophet of God**

*“Then he went up from there to Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, young lads came out from the city and mocked him and said to him, ‘Go up, you baldhead; go up, you baldhead!’”*

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** It was, indeed, a long, hot twenty-five mile trek from Jericho (some 1300 feet below sea level) to Bethel (which was 2,000 feet above sea level). Bethel was not just any Israelite city, either. Bethel was one of two cities that Jeroboam had designated as places of worship for the northern kingdom of Israel when Solomon’s kingdom was divided between his son Rehoboam and his enemy, Jeroboam. Jeroboam feared that these two kingdoms might be tempted to re-unite because of the one central place of worship (Jerusalem) which was located in Judah. And so Jeroboam made a bold move—he established two places of counterfeit worship in Israel. One was in Dan, at the northern edge of Israel. The other was in Bethel, at the southern edge of Israel, a mere 12 miles from Jerusalem. One of the golden calves Jeroboam had provided for Israel to worship was placed in Bethel (see **1 Kings 12**). This was a very pagan place, where God and His Word were no longer revered. The disrespect which Elisha received by these young Bethel boys was typical of the attitude of the general population in Bethel toward any true prophet of God. . .

These were not innocent little boys, naively teasing a prophet in an inappropriate fashion. Elisha was not needlessly harsh, nor was God. God’s judgment was poured out on those who rebelled against God, who disobeyed His Word, and who mocked His servants, the prophets. If there was one lesson that the people of Bethel learned that day, it was that they must reverence God and His spokesmen.

**Dilday:** The lack of hair was not a result of old age; since he lived about fifty years after this incident, he was at the time a relatively young man. Elisha’s baldness must have been in striking contrast to Elijah’s hairy appearance.

**Peter Pett:** Hair was seen as a sign of virility, and long hair was a sign of being dedicated to YHWH (**Numbers 6:5; Judges 13:5**). . . Thus the suggestion that he was ‘bald’ was a deliberate denigration of his status. It was saying that his claim to dedication was false. There may be behind this the idea that without Elijah being with him he was to be seen as ‘shorn’, and therefore helpless. This would tie in with their suggestion that he should ‘go up’ as Elijah had. They may well have been belittling the idea of his succession to Elijah as the prophet of YHWH supreme and suggesting that if he really was he should demonstrate it by copying him.

##### **B. (:24) Divine Judgment**

###### **1. Judgment Initiated by the Curse of Elisha**

*“When he looked behind him and saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD.”*



**Constable:** These youths were typical of a nation that *"mocked the messengers of God, despised His words and scoffed at His prophets"* (**2 Chron. 36:16**). Not motivated by personal pride but by a desire for God's glory, Elisha pronounced God's curse on them for their disrespect of His prophet and Himself (**v. 24**; cf. **2 Peter 3:3-7**). As before, God used wild animals to judge the rebels (cf. **1 Kings 13:24**).

**John Schultz:** Elisha did not call for bears to come and devour the boys; that was God's doing. In cursing them he took them, so to speak, out from under the umbrella of God's blessing upon Israel. And, as suggested above, we could see this as God's punishment upon those who had turned from His worship to the service of idols.

## 2. Judgment Executed by Two Female Bears

*"Then two female bears came out of the woods  
and tore up forty-two lads of their number."*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Had Elisha been wrong to curse, one would assume Yahweh would not have fulfilled the curse. That Yahweh did so validates Elisha's curse. Here is not an irritable prophet but a judging God.

**John Whitcomb:** No wild animals could match the savage cruelty that would be heaped upon this hardened people by that specially-prepared rod of God's anger, the Assyrian army; and that rod would strike within four generations.

**August Konkel:** The first event confirming the anointing of Elisha demonstrates the power of prophetic blessing to those who affirm the prophet. The second event demonstrates the power of a curse that rests on all who deny him.

## **C. (:25) Departure of the Prophet of God**

*"And he went from there to Mount Carmel,  
and from there he returned to Samaria."*

**Iain Provan:** The succession narrative ends with Elisha's trip to Mount Carmel (**v. 25**), the scene of Elijah's great victory over the priests of Baal. It is an appropriate ending since it reminds us of Elisha's place in the story of Israel taken as a whole. His prophetic credentials having been established, he is now ready to pick up where Elijah left off in the war against Baal. It is to pursue that war that he returns to Samaria.

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) How can we tell whether we are putting our trust in a spiritual leader rather than in the Lord Himself?

- 2) What are some similarities and some differences in the personality and ministries of Elijah and Elisha?
- 3) What lessons can we learn from how the Lord brought healing to the cursed water and land of Jericho?
- 4) What type of judgment will God show to those who disrespect Him or His designated spiritual leaders?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

### Dale Ralph Davis:

First, note the structure. Geography shapes the chapter. The original starting-point is Gilgal (v. [1](#)—probably not the one near Jericho and the Jordan) and the ultimate destination is Samaria via Mt. Carmel (v. [25](#)). But between these points we find a distinct geographical pattern:

Elijah and Elisha	}	Bethel, v. <a href="#">2</a> Jericho, v. <a href="#">4</a> Jordan, v. <a href="#">6</a>
Elisha Alone	}	Jordan, v. <a href="#">13</a> Jericho, v. <a href="#">19</a> (cf. v. <a href="#">18</a> ) Bethel, v. <a href="#">23</a>

**Constable:** This account presupposes previous revelation, not in Scripture, that this day was to be Elijah's last on earth (v. [3](#)). By granting Elisha permission to remain behind (v. [2](#), et al.), Elijah was testing Elisha's commitment to himself and to his calling as Elijah's successor (cf. **Matt. 4:1-11**; **Luke 22:31-62**; **John 21:15-25**). Elisha's refusal to speak of Elijah's departure (vv. [3](#), [5](#)) probably reflects Elisha's sorrow at the prospect of losing his friend and mentor. It was not uncommon for prophets to give a valuable parting blessing (cf. **Gen. 49**; **Deut. 33**), and Elisha did not want to miss that. A prophet's mantle (cloak) was the symbol of Elijah's authority as God's spokesman (cf. **1 Kings 19:19**). As Moses had parted the Red Sea with his rod, so Elijah parted the Jordan River with his mantle (v. [8](#); cf. **Exod. 14:21-22**). Israel's God was as able as ever to lead His people out of bondage and into promised blessing.

### David Guzik: Both Moses and Elijah:

- Stood alone for righteousness.
- Were associated with fire upon mountains.
- Were associated with the desert.
- Met God on Sinai.
- Were chased out of their countries by pagan rulers.
- Knew God's miraculous provision for food and water.

- Wandered in the desert for a period measured by 40.
- Fasted for 40 days.
- Were powerful examples of praying men.
- Parted waters.
- Had close associates who succeeded them.
- Had successors who parted waters also.
- Had mysterious or strange deaths.

**August Konkel:** The stories that initiate the prophetic role of Elisha (2:19–25) have a parallel with the final challenge of Ahaziah against Elijah (1:9–14). The status of the prophet is challenged in both episodes. Elijah is ordered to come down from Carmel to face Ahaziah (1:9) and Elisha is taunted by the disbelieving juveniles to go up to Carmel (2:23). Elijah is described as “hairy” (1:8) while Elisha is ridiculed for being bald (2:23). The judgment in each case is described in parallel phrases. Fire came down from heaven and consumed the king’s soldiers (1:10), while two female bears come out from the forest and maul the insolent taunters (2:24). Together, the two chapters constitute a succession of the prophetic office.

**Wiersbe:** Gilgal, Bethel, Jericho, and the Jordan River were important places in Hebrew history, each of them carrying a significant message. Before he left the land and went to heaven, Elijah wanted to visit these sites one last time and take Elisha with him. Our eternal God doesn’t reside in special places, but we who are creatures of time and history need these visible reminders to help us remember and better understand what God has done for his people. The past is not an anchor to hold us back but a rudder to guide us, and the Lord can use these “tangible memories” to strengthen our faith.

TEXT: 2 Kings 3:1-27

TITLE: *FALLING SHORT OF GOD'S GRACIOUS GAME PLAN FOR TOTAL VICTORY*

**BIG IDEA:**

**TOTAL VICTORY CANNOT COME BY TRUSTING THE ARM OF THE FLESH OR EVEN BY PARTIALY OBEYING GOD'S REVEALED WORD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Further confirmation of Elisha's new role as the chief prophet of God comes from his interaction with the kings of Israel and Judah in their warfare with rebellious Moab. The death of Ahab left a power vacuum and the King of Moab took the opportunity to try to break away from paying tribute to Israel. Jehoram acted completely independently of the Lord and self-confidently put together an alliance with Judah and Edom to try to bring Moab back into submission. But their short-sighted game plan did not take into account the rigors of travel in the desert and they were forced to turn to the Lord for deliverance when they ran out of water. God graciously responded by promising abundant provision and military victory through His prophet Elisha. But the allied troops failed to fully obey the game plan and fell short of completing the mission.

**Donald Wiseman:** The historian now selects an event which will show that Elisha's word is as powerful and his prophecy as effective as had been another's in similar circumstances (**1 Kgs 22**).

**August Konkel:** Elisha's continuation of Elijah's work is illustrated in the battle against Moab. It bears obvious similarities to the coalition of Jehoshaphat with Ahab in the battle against Ramoth Gilead (**1 Kings 22**). In both events there is an alliance between Jehoshaphat, the God-fearing king of Judah, and the apostate northern king following in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat. Jehoshaphat asks for the assistance of a true prophet of God. The confirmation of the prophetic word and the power of the God of Israel in the covenant are seen in the outcome of the events.

The similarity extends to the phrases used in the solicitation of the alliance (**1 Kings 22:4; 2 Kings 3:7**) and of the prophet (**1 Kings 22:7; 2 Kings 3:11**). These stories were a part of prophetic tradition expressed in its own distinct vocabulary and literary style. The war against Moab in prophetic history shows how political events concerning Israelite and Judean relations with surrounding nations accomplishes the work of Yahweh through the word of his prophets.

**(:1-3) PROLOGUE – JEHORAM'S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:1) Selected Touchpoints of Jehoram's Reign**

1. Which Kingdom Did He Rule?

*“Now Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria”*

Ahaziah’s brother (**1 Kings 22:51**) – sometimes called Joram because Jehoshaphat also has a son called Jehoram

2. When Did He Reign?

*“in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah,”*

3. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned twelve years.”*

**B. (:2-3) Summary Evaluation of Jehoram’s Reign**

1. (:2a) Characterization of His Reign

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,”*

2. (:2b) Credit: Mitigating Positive Reform

*“though not like his father and his mother;  
for he put away the sacred pillar of Baal which his father had made.”*

**MacArthur:** This image was only put in storage, not permanently destroyed, because it reappeared at the end of Jehoram’s reign (**10:26-27**).

3. (:3) Charge: Overall Negative Practice

*“Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat,  
which he made Israel sin; he did not depart from them.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Do you feel the bristling impatience in this text? You see the dual point the text is making? On the one hand, the text recognizes degrees of evil. Jehoram suppressed at least some of the raw paganism of Baal worship; admittedly, it’s better to have someone ruling whose wickedness is not as lurid as Ahab and Jezebel’s. It’s not good, but, in a relative sense, it’s better. Yet Jehoram clung (note the strong verb, *dābaq*, used in **Genesis 2:24** of the man clinging to his wife) to the refined paganism of Jeroboam’s cult (see **1 Kings 12:25–33**). English translations rightly render the *raq* (‘only’) that begins **verse 3** as ‘nevertheless’. ‘Nevertheless he clung to the sins of Jeroboam.’ For all the qualification of **verse 2**, don’t you sense the impatience of the Bible’s ‘Nevertheless’ here? The Bible is never satisfied with anything less than total submission. It’s as if our writer throws his pen down in disgust and hollers, ‘That’s not enough! It won’t do to go around saying it’s not as bad as it could be. Anything less than thorough-going, faithful first-and-second-commandment worship just won’t cut it!’ . . . This impatience of the Bible that refuses to accept anything less than total fidelity is only a reflection of the intolerant God of the Bible who insists on having all your affections.

## **I. (:4-10) TRUSTING IN THE ARM OF THE FLESH LEADS TO DESPAIR**

### **A. (:4-5) The Crisis – Rebellion by the King of Moab**

#### 1. (:4) Submission and the Payment of Tribute

*“Now Mesha king of Moab was a sheep breeder, and used to pay the king of Israel 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams.”*

#### 2. (:5) Rebellion and the Loss of Revenue

*“But it came about, when Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.”*

**Craig Scott:** Jehoram’s first problem as king was to deal with Moab. They were a vassal nation to Israel. They were supposed to supply Israel with 100,000 lambs and 100,000 rams with the wool. But Moab fortified their border and rebelled against Israel — **2 Kings 3:4-5.**

This created many serious problems for the new king and the nation.

- First, it made Jehoram and the nation look weak.
- Second, Moab could become a lethal threat to Israel by joining up with Damascus and attacking Israel’s southern border.
- Third, economically, Moab’s rebellion would have negative impact on Israel’s textile and agricultural industry. It would be like Taiwan, Thailand or Japan shutting down business with us. The economic impact from this would bring shortages and high prices.

Notice the census taken in **2 Kings 3:6**. Apparently, Israel did not feel confident enough to take Moab in a head-on battle. So Jehoram sought to make a league with Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

### **B. (:6-7) The Consultation – Rallying Powerful Forces**

#### 1. (:6) Rallying Forces from Israel – Jehoram Consults only with Himself

*“And King Jehoram went out of Samaria at that time and mustered all Israel.”*

#### 2. (:7) Rallying Forces from Judah – Jehoram Consults with Jehoshaphat

*“Then he went and sent word to Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, saying, ‘The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?’ And he said, ‘I will go up; I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.’”*

#### 3. No Consultation with the Lord

**John Whitcomb:** Jehoram, now coregent of Judah, was married to Joram’s sister Athaliah, so it seemed only right for Joram to ask King Jehoshaphat to go with him to punish Moab.

**MacArthur:** Mesha used Ahab's death as an opportunity to cast off the political domination of Israel with its heavy economic burden. Moab's rebellion took place in 853 B.C. during the reign of Ahaziah (1:1). Jehoram determined to put down Moab's rebellion upon his accession to Israel's throne in 852 B.C. He mobilized Israel for war (v. 6) and asked Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in the battle (v. 7).

**Iain Provan:** Immediately, then, we are quite deliberately reminded of the earlier story and invited to make comparisons. This being so, we can hardly fail to notice that whereas, earlier, Jehoshaphat was very concerned to discover "*the counsel of the Lord*" before going off to war (22:5), he now moves directly from agreement to tactics (3:8, though it is not clear who is asking the question and who is answering it) and from tactics to action (v. 9). There is no prophet in sight. Is this the pious Jehoshaphat of earlier days? Why is he going off to war without consulting the Lord? Something seems amiss.

### **C. (:8-9) The Course of Action – Reversing the Approach**

#### 1. (:8) Strategic Evaluation

*"And he said, 'Which way shall we go up?'*

*And he answered, 'The way of the wilderness of Edom.'"*

**MacArthur:** This was the long and circuitous route by the lower bend of the Dead Sea, the arid land in the great depression S of the sea known as the Arabah, or an area of marshes on Edom's western side. According to the Moabite Stone, Mesha's army firmly controlled the northern approach into Moab. Therefore, an attack from the S had a much better chance of success. It was the most defenseless position and Mesha could not enlist help from the forces of Edom (v. 9).

#### 2. (:9) Shortsighted Ending

*"So the king of Israel went with the king of Judah and the king of Edom; and they made a circuit of seven days' journey, and there was no water for the army or for the cattle that followed them."*

What did you think would happen after seven days in the desert?

**Wiersbe:** The two kings decided not to attack from the north because the northern border of Moab was heavily fortified and the Ammonites might interfere, but to make an attack from around the southern extremity of the Dead Sea. Joram's army would march south through Judah and pick up Jehoshaphat's men, and then both armies would march through Edom and join with the Edomite army at the more vulnerable southern border of Moab.

The plan was a good one. Joram's army left Samaria and after a three-day march joined Jehoshaphat's army in Judah, probably at Jerusalem. Then both armies proceeded south to Edom, a journey of about four days. So, after this seven-day march, the armies arrived at the alley at the southern end of the Dead Sea, between the mountains of Judah

and Moab. Everything was going well except that they were out of water. The soldiers were thirsty and so were the baggage animals and the cattle brought along for food.

#### **D. (:10) The Cry of Despair – Regretting the Course of Action**

*“Then the king of Israel said, ‘Alas! For the LORD has called these three kings to give them into the hand of Moab.’”*

Now Jehoram blames divine providence for his predicament even though he had not even considered consulting with the Lord for direction before deciding on his course of action.

## **II. (:11-19) TURNING TO THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCE**

### **A. (:11-12) Seeking Counsel from Elisha = the True Prophet of the Lord**

#### 1. (:11) Identifying a True Prophet of the Lord

*“But Jehoshaphat said, ‘Is there not a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?’*

*And one of the king of Israel’s servants answered and said, ‘Elisha the son of Shaphat is here, who used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.’”*

#### 2. (:12) Inquiring of the True Prophet of the Lord

*“And Jehoshaphat said, ‘The word of the LORD is with him.’ So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat and the king of Edom went down to him.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Jehoram despairs while Jehoshaphat looks to God. The lessons of the encounter at Ramoth-Gilead were remembered (**1 Kgs 22:7–20**) and Jehoshaphat demands assurance from his God. In ancient warfare it was customary to enquire (‘consult’) the divine will (**v. 11**) by oracle at different stages.

### **B. (:13-15) Seeking Deliverance from the Lord**

#### 1. (:13) Rejecting the Desperation of Faithless Jehoram

*“Now Elisha said to the king of Israel, ‘What do I have to do with you? Go to the prophets of your father and to the prophets of your mother.’*

*And the king of Israel said to him, ‘No, for the LORD has called these three kings together to give them into the hand of Moab.’”*

**Mordecai Cogan:** The expression *mal-lî wālak* means “What business can we have together?” (so, **1 Kgs 17:18**) or “What have we in common?” (cf. **2 Sam 16:10; 19:23**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Why this sudden interest, Elisha seems to say, in Yahweh’s word? Go to the Baal prophets your mother fed (**1 Kings 18:19**) or to the bootlickers your father kept at court (**1 Kings 22:6–8**). Apparently there was no seeking of Yahweh’s guidance before this military venture, but, now that Jehoram is in a jam, he seeks Yahweh. And all of a sudden Jehoram has this belief in the sovereignty of Yahweh (expressed again in **v. 13b**). (Always beware of folks who cite the sovereignty of God in order to excuse or accuse but not to worship and adore.)



**Wiersbe:** Once again, it is God's covenant with David that introduces the grace of God and brings about God's rescue of His people.

2. (:14-15) Accepting the Covenant Connection of Jehoshaphat

a. (:14) Explanation for Receptivity

*“And Elisha said, ‘As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I regard the presence of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would not look at you nor see you.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** He is saying that Jehoram is beyond the help of Yahweh's word—if it weren't for Jehoshaphat. That is a frightening implication: you can place yourself beyond the point of receiving direction or help from God. How might you know if you are in danger of doing that? Well, if your pattern is to seek God, like Jehoram, only for your convenience, so that you are trifling with God. You may be interested only in escape from trouble not in the path of discipleship. That was Jehoram. He wanted to use the word of God in the moment but not to submit to it long-term. Jehoramites view the word of God as something for emergency only, but not for normal days. God is simply the airbag in the disasters of life—which you hope you never have to use. If that is your pattern, you may be placing yourself beyond the help of God's word. That is the alarming danger of the word of God.

b. (:15) Preparation for Revelation

*“‘But now bring me a minstrel.’ And it came about, when the minstrel played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.”*

**MacArthur:** The music was used to accompany praise and prayer, which calmed the mind of the prophet that he might clearly hear the word of the Lord. Music often accompanied prophecies in the OT (cf. **1Ch 25:1**).

**Donald Wiseman:** Music was one means of the hand (Heb. ‘*hand, power*’) of the Lord coming upon a person, whether to calm or control (as with Saul in **1 Sam. 16:16, 23**).

**John Gates:** God answered by foretelling the success of the campaign. He would use it to show his people the abominable aspect of heathen worship.

**C. (:16-19) Securing Deliverance from the Lord**

1. (:16) Prescription that Defies All Reason

*“And he said, ‘Thus says the LORD, Make this valley full of trenches.’”*

Your soldiers are worn out and exhausted and dehydrated; I want them to work hard at digging a bunch of trenches.

**Wiersbe:** The kings were to command their soldiers to dig ditches or pits in the dry valley. God would send rain in the distant mountains, but the Moabite army wouldn't know it because there would be no sound of wind or storm. The rain would create a

flood that would move down from the mountains and cover the arid plain. Some of the water would collect in the pits or trenches and be available for the men and beasts to drink. But God would also use those pools to deceive and defeat the Moabite army. Elisha didn't explain how.

**Craig Scott:** “*Make this valley full of ditches*” – **2 Kings 3:16**. Do you know how hard it is to dig trenches in the hot arid lands of Moab? It is filled with rocks. The troops were already suffer from thirst. This was not just a few holes. God said, make “*this valley full of ditches*.” God often asks us to step out on faith before there are any results. He may be calling you to do something that is very difficult. He promises you that it will get you out of your predicament, but from your standpoint it will take a miracle.

2. (:17) Promise of Abundant Provision

*“For thus says the LORD, 'You shall not see wind nor shall you see rain; yet that valley shall be filled with water, so that you shall drink, both you and your cattle and your beasts.'”*

3. (:18) Power of God Demonstrated in Unimaginable Victory

*“And this is but a slight thing in the sight of the LORD; He shall also give the Moabites into your hand.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** ‘*This is too trivial a matter in Yahweh’s eyes—so he will give Moab into your hand.*’ ‘*This*’ refers to Yahweh’s supplying water for the whole famished army. Elisha is saying that rehydrating Israel’s parched troops and pack animals is a ‘piece of cake’ for Yahweh, or, more accurately, ‘small potatoes.’ So Yahweh will not limit himself to such trivial work but also hand Moab over as well. This is the typical tendency. Yahweh not only addresses the immediate dilemma but has the penchant to do far more than was asked. This is vintage Yahweh. You come to him seeking grace and you receive ‘*grace on top of grace*’ (**John 1:16**). Yahweh’s goodness tends toward extravagance—even for the likes of Jehoram (**vv. 13–14**). Water plus Moab is an equation highlighting both the **generosity** and **omnipotence** of God. Watering a languishing army? That’s simply not grand nor lavish enough for Yahweh!

4. (:19) Plan to Wipe out the Moabites for the Long-Term

*“Then you shall strike every fortified city and every choice city, and fell every good tree and stop all springs of water, and mar every good piece of land with stones.”*

**III. (:20-27) TASTING VICTORY BUT FAILING TO SWALLOW**

**A. (:20) Delivering Abundant Water**

*“And it happened in the morning about the time of offering the sacrifice, that behold, water came by the way of Edom, and the country was filled with water.”*

**B. (:21-23) Deceiving the Moabites**

1. (:21) Anticipating a Rout

*“Now all the Moabites heard that the kings had come up to fight against them. And all who were able to put on armor and older were summoned, and stood on the border.”*

2. (:22) Assessing the Situation

*“And they rose early in the morning, and the sun shone on the water, and the Moabites saw the water opposite them as red as blood.”*

**MacArthur:** As the Moabites looked down at the unfamiliar water in the ditches dug in the valley below them, the combination of the sun’s rays and the red sandstone terrain gave the water a reddish color, like pools of blood. Unaccustomed to water being in those places and having heard no storm (see v. 17), the Moabites thought that the coalition of kings had slaughtered each other (v. 23) and so went after the spoils. The coalition army led by Israel defeated the Moabites, who had been delivered into their hands by the Lord (see vv. 18, 24).

3. (:23) Assuming the Battle was Over

*“Then they said, ‘This is blood; the kings have surely fought together, and they have slain one another. Now therefore, Moab, to the spoil!’”*

**Constable:** The border where the Moabites were stationed early in the morning was the boundary between Moab and Edom east and south of the Dead Sea. Not expecting water, the Moabites assumed that the water shining in the sunlight was blood. So the Moabite army erroneously concluded that the Israelites, Judahites, and Edomites had had a falling out and had slaughtered each other—not an unrealistic possibility. Rather than advancing with weapons drawn for battle they ran to plunder the “dead” soldiers’ armor and weaponry. But instead, they ran into the waiting ranks of their enemies. Defenseless, the Moabites . . . fled before the Israelites. The Israelites, and presumably their allies with them, invaded Moab, slaughtered the people, destroyed many towns, and did to the fields, springs, and trees what God had instructed (cf. **2 Kings 3:19**). But Kir Hareseth, the major city, could not be taken. It was situated at the end of a valley and successfully resisted the attacks of the stone slingers surrounding it

**C. (:24-25) Defeating the Moabites and Destroying All but the Capital City**

1. (:24) Slaughter of the Moabites

*“But when they came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites arose and struck the Moabites, so that they fled before them; and they went forward into the land, slaughtering the Moabites.”*

2. (:25a) Spoiling the Cities, the Land, the Water Supplies and the Trees

*“Thus they destroyed the cities; and each one threw a stone on every piece of good land and filled it. So they stopped all the springs of water and felled all the good trees,”*

3. (:25b) Siege of the Capital City

*“until in Kir-hareseth only they left its stones;  
however, the slingers went about it and struck it.”*

**William Barnes:** *covered ... stopped up ... cut down* . See **3:19**, where these same aggressive actions are listed in reverse order, with only minor variations in vocabulary. The Hebrew imperfect forms of the verbs used in the present verse vividly denote the actions as ongoing in nature, and thus convey “a graphic picture of the progress of the battle” (**Cogan and Tadmor** 1988:46, citing **Driver**).

#### **D. (:26-27a) Desperate Measures by the King of Moab**

##### 1. (:26) Foiled Attempt to Seek Help from Edom

*“When the king of Moab saw that the battle was too fierce for him, he took with him 700 men who drew swords, to break through to the king of Edom; but they could not.”*

##### 2. (:27a) Final Attempt to Seek Help from Chemosh by Sacrificing His Oldest Son

*“Then he took his oldest son who was to reign in his place, and offered him as a burnt offering on the wall.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The human sacrifice of the crown-prince publicly on the wall of the capital was a rare practice (**Judg. 11:31, 39**) used to appease the national god Chemosh ‘who was angry with his land’ (Moabite Inscript.) and had showed his displeasure in their calamitous defeat.

#### **E. (:27b) Diversion of the Troops from Their Final Objective**

##### 1. Wrath Against Israel

*“And there came great wrath against Israel,”*

Identify whose wrath is in view here and the nature of that wrath --

##### Possible view:

Difficult to determine whose wrath is in view here. The phrase usually refers to Yahweh’s wrath. Here it is directed specifically against Jehoram and the Israelite troops of the Northern Kingdom – probably for their lack of faith despite the Lord’s gracious dealings in this battle. But according to this view there does not seem to be a direct connection to the preceding account of the human sacrifice – except for its testimony to the futility and abomination of heathen paganism and idolatry.

Alternate view: we contend that “the great wrath against Israel” was the wrath of the Moabites. The text never says that the wrath was God’s wrath. Instead, after seeing such a great and terrible display of human sacrifice, this most likely galvanized the Moabites into fighting even harder against Israel, causing Israel to withdraw. After seeing the king’s son killed, they fought even more fiercely against Israel.

<https://www.evidenceunseen.com/bible-difficulties-2/ot-difficulties/1-samuel-2-chronicles/2-king-327-did-god-have-anger-at-israel-for-this-moabite-human-sacrifice/>

**R. D. Patterson: Keil** (in loc.) suggests that God's fury was against Israel because of the lengths to which their pressure had driven the Moabite kings.

**MacArthur:** It seems best to understand that the king's sacrifice inspired the Moabites to hate Israel more and fight more intensely. This fierceness perhaps led Israel to believe that Chemosh was fighting for the Moabites. Thus, the indignation or fury came from the Moabites.

**Dale Ralph Davis:**

View one points out that *qeṣep* usually refers to Yahweh's wrath. Moreover, whenever one meets the phrase 'great wrath' (*qeṣep gādōl*, used here) elsewhere, it refers to Yahweh's wrath. If the text refers to Yahweh's anger, why is he angry? **Seow** suggests divine anger is 'for the violation of the deuteronomic prohibition of the scorched-earth policy in war'. But we have already rejected the view of **verse 19** on which his suggestion is based.

View two agrees with view one that the wrath is divine but assigns it to a different divinity. In this view, the wrath belongs to Chemosh, the god of Moab. Mesha sacrifices, Chemosh becomes angry and causes Israel to flee in panic from the land. A little polytheism anyone? Did a crypto-Chemoshite sneak in and doctor a biblical text? Are such scholars serious? Yes, they are. But this view is untenable even on the suppositions many Old Testament critics have about the books of Kings. They hold that Kings was edited (probably more than once) by 'Deuteronomists', vigilant theologians who shaped the Kings material in line with their point of view. They were death on paganism, abominated syncretism, and pressed exclusive Yahwism. If **3:27** refers to Chemosh's wrath and 'activity', one cannot explain how that could ever have gotten past the alleged Deuteronomic censors. They would have nailed it. A gremlin would have had to have broken into the redaction factory and given tranquilizers to all the Deuteronomists working there for such a text with such a meaning to survive. Of course I don't buy this Deuteronomistic theory, so I am content to say that no convinced Yahwist would have allowed Chemosh even one square inch of Yahweh's sovereignty.

View three holds that the wrath or fury is that of the Moabites themselves, so that Mesha's troops 'respond to this desperate act with a superhuman fury that carried them to victory'. Seeing how their king was driven to such an extreme measure so enraged the Moabite army that they drove Israel from the field.

View four agrees with view three that the 'wrath' is human but assigns it to Israel rather than Moab. This view takes the preposition 'al as 'upon' rather than 'against' (it can mean either depending on the context). If the indignation is 'upon' Israel, it can mean that Israel has or manifests the indignation. The text then refers to the indignation, horror, or repugnance Israel felt at Mesha's act. Hence they quit the field without total victory.

All that over, ‘*great wrath/indignation was upon Israel.*’ On balance, **I follow view four**. The wrath or indignation is not explicitly said to be God’s. If it were, one would expect some indication of its basis (which is absent). Moreover, the clause comes immediately after the report of Mesha’s sacrifice and so likely depicts a reaction to that gruesome event. . .

**Verse 27** is a picture of ‘seeking god’ in paganism. You have to coerce and manipulate—perhaps in the most costly way (cf. **Micah 6:6–7**). Even not very faithful Israelites are repulsed and horrified. Do you see the message for Israel here? It’s as if Yahweh says: ‘See where pagans go in their desperation? See where paganism leads? Do you savvy at all the matchless gift you have in a God who lives and hears and speaks and delivers without bribery?’ It’s as if the writer is pleading: ‘O Israel, do you realize the treasure that you have in Yahweh? You never need to resort to stuff like this.’ In Moab you can bash your head against the wall or sacrifice your son on it. Both are equally futile. But to Israel Yahweh has given prophets through whom one can receive the light and help one needs (see **Deut. 18:15–22** in light of **18:9–14**). Here is the easy yoke of the word of God. What a relief biblical religion is! If you don’t believe it, try paganism.

**John Whitcomb:** This was the supreme act of devotion to a pagan deity, and Jehovah had long since warned Israel against such abominations (**Deut. 12:31; Micha 6:7**). The superstitious (and increasingly polytheistic) Israelites were so terrified at the prospect of what Chemosh, the god of Moab, would do in response to this supreme sacrifice, that they gave up the siege and returned to their own land! And so it was, as in the days of Elisha’s predecessor, that the nation continued to halt between two opinions as to who their God really was.

## 2. Withdrawn Troops

*“and they departed from him and returned to their own land.”*

Identify the pronouns here and their antecedents –

### Possible view:

The other two kings witnessed the wrath of Jehovah against Jehoram and departed from him and left the battlefield so the victory was incomplete.

### Alternate view:

All 3 kings departed from fighting against the king of Moab so the victory was incomplete.

**Wiersbe:** Twice Joram had questioned whether Jehovah could or would do anything (**vv. 10, 13**), and Elisha made it clear that he wasn’t paying any attention to the apostate king (**vv. 13-14**). Yet Joram was sharing in a great victory because of the faith of the king of Judah! Perhaps the Lord demonstrated His wrath against the army of Israel alone to teach Joram a lesson, just as He sent drought and fire from heaven to teach his father, Ahab, a lesson. When Israel had to leave the field, the other two kings left with

them, and this ended the siege. The capital city was not destroyed and the Moabite king and his forces were neither captured nor killed, so it was an incomplete victory. However, for the sake of the house of David, God in His grace gave victory to the three kings.

**August Konkel:** The final outcome of the campaign fails to regain control over the territory and restore the tribute of Moab. Neither the presence of Jehoshaphat nor the word of Elisha can turn the tide of judgment against Israel. In spite of the rout of the Moabites through divine intervention, Joram cannot achieve his goal to subjugate Mesha; rather, he is forced to retreat precipitately.

**Peter Pett:** As a result of YHWH's activity this was accomplished quite easily, until it was suddenly brought to a halt (with Moab meanwhile having been devastated) when in a last ditch attempt to save what was probably his capital city Mesha sacrificed his firstborn son and heir as a burnt offering on the wall (presumably to Chemosh, the god of Moab) in full view of the besieging enemy. The horror of this in Israelite eyes so disturbed the armies of Israel that they recognized in it a signal that YHWH's anger would be directed on them if they proceeded further, and they thus immediately withdrew from the siege and returned to their own country, their mission on the whole accomplished.

**John Gates:** The author seems to be asking: If Israel was so deeply moved in this case, why was she not shocked enough to forsake her own idolatry? But idolatry continued in Israel and in Judah.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of example and impact will you have on succeeding generations?
- 2) Do we fail to give God our devotion and attention until we are in some type of dire situation where we need Him to bail us out?
- 3) What types of ditches has God called us to dig in our Christian experience as we look to Him for deliverance and victory?
- 4) How do we sometimes snatch defeat from the jaws of victory?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Before we leave this section, however, we must deal with a problem, for some of you are upset. Some have been muttering that this idolatrous rascal Jehoram



doesn't deserve such benefits. Of course he doesn't. But notice why he received them—because of Jehoshaphat, the king of David's line (see Elisha's clear explanation in v. 14). Jehoram received these benefits because of another. And it is the same with you. If you receive any benefit from God it is because you stand next to the Davidic king—Jesus, the descendant of David and Jehoshaphat. You are in exactly the same position as Jehoram. You don't deserve heaven's crumbs but receive massive mercies only because Jesus, the Davidic king, stands beside you.

**Iain Provan:** Elisha did not lie. There is in his prophecy, nevertheless, a certain economy with the truth. All that he said about the Moabite campaign was true, but the whole truth was not spoken. Some crucial information (about its end) was withheld—information whose absence led the recipients of revelation (and the reader) to have quite mistaken expectations about what would happen. The Lord did hand Moab over to the kings (3:18)—but only up to a certain point. After that point, he handed the kings over to Moab. In the light of 1 Kings 22, we can scarcely doubt that this was his intention from the start. Total victory was never on the agenda, in spite of the way Elisha's words might have been construed. Once again a wicked Israelite king has been lured to disaster, this time not by a lying spirit speaking through false prophets, but by the Spirit of God revealing partial truth to a true prophet. Perhaps Jehoshaphat, who had seen it all before, should have probed more deeply—particularly when the prophecy so clearly raised questions in terms of Deuteronomy's rules of war (Deut. 20:19–20). But then, Jehoshaphat was apparently prone to forgetfulness where prophets were concerned.

A central lesson of the chapter is this: prophets do not control the prophetic word. It is something given to them by God (2 Pet. 1:21). They are simply channels through which it passes. We have been confronted with this lesson before (cf. 1 Kgs. 13:1–10; 14:1–18; 18:1–15). Nothing could make it clearer, however, than a story in which an indisputably true prophet is presented as unaware (fully) of God's plans (cf. further 2 Kgs. 4:27). God does not always reveal the entirety of the divine will, particularly when faced with wicked Israelite kings destined for judgment. Revelation cannot be taken for granted, just because it is the option that God so frequently chooses. This is a significant lesson to be reminded of at this point in our reading of Kings, when we have seen the regularity of God's self-revelation through the prophets. Like the other characters here—the pious Judean who fails to consult the Lord; the son of Ahab who takes the Lord's name upon his lips—God, too, can behave in ways that defy our expectations. God is not bound by conventions.

**J. Hampton Keathley:** Series on **The Life of Elisha**

First there is Elisha, the prophet of God, a man who always took God seriously--God and His Word was his life. Then there was Jehoshaphat, a good king, a man who generally took God seriously and sought the way of the Lord, yet at times, he too failed. Finally there was Jehoram, king of Israel, an evil king. He believed in the fact of the Lord of the Old Testament, but he never took God seriously, at least not until he got into a jam, and even then, it was only by way of expediency, a way to get out of his predicament.



Godliness (taking God seriously according to His Word) or the lack of it, is never, ever, without serious implications and results. We reap what we sow. Life is full of causes and effects. God is sovereign, but man is responsible. To a large degree, we are a product of the choices we make in our daily walk. . .

Their [Moabites] rebellion was not only a threat to the northern kingdom of Israel, but also to Judah. This rebellion was undoubtedly a test designed by the Lord to get Jehoram's attention. How would Jehoram respond? Would he turn to the Lord or to the arm of the flesh, to his own solutions? . . .

Life's problems, and pressures are God's agents and "attention grabbers." They are designed to be tools of God, mirrors of reproof, and divine instructors, but for them to have their effect, we need see them as such through the divine viewpoint of Scripture and respond as is necessary according to the Word of God. I am reminded of the words of Psalmist in **Psalm 119**.

**67** *Before I was afflicted I went astray, But now I keep Your word.*

**71** *It is good for me that I was afflicted, That I may learn Your statutes.*

**75** *I know, O Lord, that Your judgments are righteous, And that in faithfulness You have afflicted me. . .*

By this wise strategy they [alliance of the 3 kings] thought they would surprise and defeat the Moabites. But remember:

**Proverbs 14:12** *There is a way which seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.*

**Jeremiah 10:23** *I know, O LORD, that a man's way is not in himself; Nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.*

**Psalm 33:16-18** *The king is not saved by a mighty army; A warrior is not delivered by great strength. 17 A horse is a false hope for victory; Nor does it deliver anyone by its great strength. 18 Behold, the eye of the Lord is on those who fear Him, On those who hope for His lovingkindness . . .*

In all of man's plans and preparations, he should always consult the Lord because as we can see from the verses above, it is not within man's ability and wisdom to direct, to prepare, plan and establish his way. . .

**vv.10 ff** - Here is a typical "no water" problem of life, a test, a trial, a problem suddenly interjected into life's experience. What would you do? What about the problems you are facing right now or that you faced last week or might face in the week to come? As with the three kings, we have two choices:

- (a) [Jehoshaphat] we can take God seriously and respond to Him in faith or
- (b) [Jehoram] we can react, blame God and others and act in unbelief.

Our passage gives us an illustration of both responses. . .

Significantly, Elisha was known not for his dynamic or scintillating personality nor for his oratorical skill, but for two simple but profoundly important characteristics that marked him off as a man of God. He was known as a servant, as one who poured water on the hands of Elijah (cf. **Mark 10:45**), and as one who was faithful to proclaim the Word of the Lord, “*The word of the Lord is with him.*” . . .

**vs. 14** --Note two things that Elisha’s statement teaches us about his ministry and life:

- (a) it declares the reality of God and His power as the Lord of armies to deliver us.
- (b) It further declares Elisha was aware of God’s presence and that he was a personal representative of God, one sent there to minister the word of God uncompromisingly, and one protected and enabled by the Lord who was always with him. . .

**vv. 16-17** -- The provision of water in this miraculous way became a guarantee, an incentive to obedience by illustrating God’s power and the means of the defeat of the Moabites. How like God’s miraculous provision of the Spirit, whom the Lord likened to rivers of living water (**John 7:37-39**), as our means of deliverance and incentive to obedience. Victory would be theirs if they were obedient to their human responsibilities of digging the ditches. This would demonstrate their dependence on the Lord, a change from their former self-dependence which, without the Lord’s help, had already failed them. . .

**v. 20** -- Special note is made of the fact that the water did not come until the time of the morning offering (**vs. 20**). As the Old Testament offerings pointed to the Savior, waiting until the time of the morning offering may well portray the suffering Savior followed by His gift of the Holy Spirit whom He likened to rivers of living water (**John 7:37-39**). Water was not given until this time in keeping with the principal that the Holy Spirit could not be given until the Lord had died, risen and was ascended. Such blessings of grace only come through the Lord Jesus Christ (cf. **John 7:37-39; 14:17-30; 15:26; 16:7**). The basis of the gift of the Holy Spirit and all victory is the death, resurrection, ascension and session of the Lord, the victorious Savior. . .

In **verses 26-27** we see two attempts by the idolatrous king of Moab to escape total defeat. The first is by means of breaking through to the king of Edom. Apparently he either assumed he could induce Edom to turn against Israel and Judah or he assumed this was the weakest link in the three-nation alliance. Either way he was badly mistaken and his attempt failed because the real strength of this alliance through the ministry of Elisha now lay in the power of God.

The second attempt is seen in **verse 27** and sadly it did appear to be effective, but only because of the incomplete obedience of the three kings. Idolatry which has its source in the demonic powers of Satan, a murderer and hater of mankind, often included human sacrifice, especially the offering of children. In fact, “defeat in battle was regarded by

pagan Near Eastern warriors as a sign that their gods were angry with them. To propitiate his god, Chemosh (**1 Kings 11:7, 33; 2 Kings 23:13**), Mesha offered his firstborn son, the heir to his throne, as a human sacrifice on top of the city wall.” [John Walvoord] . . .

the act of **child sacrifice** illustrates the results of ungodliness, idolatry, and what happens when people turn away from the revelation of God. When men turn away from the Lord, they are turned over to the vile imaginations of their own depraved hearts and all the escape and defense mechanisms that the human mind can imagine. This includes the gamut from the mental escapes routes--resentment, criticism, hiding, rationalization, etc., to the lower forms of man’s sinfulness like homosexuality and idolatry in its various forms even leading to the murder of children. The Moabite king rationalized this would appease his god and deliver his city.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/7-victory-over-moab-2-kings-316-27>

### **Caleb Nelson: Partial Obedience . . . Partial Victory**

**Proposition:** Jehoram partially obeyed God, and God partially granted him victory.

The king of Israel grumbled in the wilderness. He charged God with bringing the three kings out to hand them over to Moab. In this complaint, he sounds a lot like the faithless Exodus generation, which passed through this same territory. Rather than trusting God, Jehoram prefers to complain about Him. He wants to charge God with hurting them. As **Dale Ralph Davis** points out, don’t trust people who only acknowledge God’s sovereignty when they want to shift the blame. It was Jehoram who had led the army out, apparently without even consulting God. Yet when the pinch comes, he blames God for his situation.

Do you ever do this? Do you sometimes fall back on the truth of God’s sovereignty to minimize your own mistakes? Brothers and sisters, don’t do it. Everything that happens is indeed part of God’s plan. But the minute you pin your failings on Him, or the minute you accuse Him of trying to harm you, you have left behind both biblical truth and common sense. If God really had it out for you, would whining about it be smart? And Scripture tells us that God afflicts His children for their profit. Every little piece of suffering is at the same time an invitation from God with the words “Trust Me” written on it. If through your own folly you’re lost in the desert, that’s a good opportunity for you to trust God. If through your own disastrous choices you’re divorced and homeless, that’s a good opportunity for you to trust God. But that’s exactly what Jehoram didn’t do. . .

Notice the two blessings promised here. **First, God will supply water** — not by natural means of a rainstorm, but simply by filling the dry riverbed. Presumably the water would flow in from elsewhere, but the point is that God will supply the water just when His people need it.

On top of that, **God promises to give victory**. He describes in detail what the Israel-led coalition will do, and how it will hurt Moab. Badly. Do you see how our God works?

Not only does He answer the complaint; He goes far above and beyond. He actually says that simply to provide water would be too easy. Simply watering a whole army in the desert isn't majestic enough for Him. He will also deliver the Moabites into Israel's hand. What a glorious promise! Isn't that vintage Yahweh? His generosity should stun you. . .

Finally, our chapter tells us to **stick by David's Son**. The only reason Elisha gave Jehoram the time of day was that Jehoshaphat was with him. Every blessing and benefit that you get from God ultimately comes only in and through Christ. He is generous, like His Father. He is jealous, like His Father. And He promises to save to the uttermost everyone who seeks to come to God through Him. Won't you seek Him? He promises that you will find Him. Don't seek Him halfheartedly and only find part of his blessing. Seek Him wholeheartedly, and find the whole Christ. He is wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, redemption — and victory. Seek Him, and when you find Him, stay with Him. His **total victory** will then be yours.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/81171222197.pdf>

TEXT: 2 Kings 4:1-44

TITLE: GOD'S ABUNDANT PROVISION FOR THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PERFORMANCE OF MIRACLES BY ELISHA DEMONSTRATES GOD'S ABUNDANT AND GRACIOUS PROVISION FOR HIS PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This series of miracles focuses on the ministry of Elisha – looking back to similar incidents in the ministry of Elijah – and looking forward to Messianic events. God demonstrates His gracious and abundant provision in a number of different contexts towards those who trust Him.

**August Konkel:** In this chapter Elisha shows that his name, “*my God saves*,” is a truth to live by. . . Elisha is the focus of these stories, to the exclusion of all other detail. None of the other characters or events is given so much as a name, let alone some context in other events of their life and times. Elisha is the ordained benefactor who brings mercy in times of need. . .

In these stories the miraculous comes to those powerless to address their own need, but are submissive to the divine will in looking to the man of God as their spiritual leader and provider in time of need. The prominence of Elisha in these stories emphasizes his vocation, not only to call for faithfulness to God but also to demonstrate God's faithfulness to those who trust him.

**Donald Wiseman:** Continuing the Elijah group of episodes these stories now recount similar miraculous happenings associated with Elisha. While they show that he was a worthy successor who could act in a similarly effective way as his master, the main purpose is to show his, and thus God's, support for those who fear the Lord. The incidents, apart from those connected with the sons of the prophets, may not be arranged in chronological order.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Now we enter a segment of Elisha's ministry in which he shows that Yahweh's power is triumphant over debt (4:1–7), death (4:8–37), drought (4:38–44; two episodes), disease (5:1–27), and difficulty (6:1–7). It is, in its own way, quite a sustained argument. One might compare the section to the battery of Jesus' miracles in Mark's Gospel (4:35–5:43). Some of these Elisha stories are extended narratives (e.g., **ch. 5**), while others are very brief clips that are stingy with extras. Our current text, 4:1–7, is one of the latter. . .

Apparently the writer is following a topical arrangement here, piling up story after story in order to make a point. What point? Is it not to show the **supremacy of Yahweh** and his power over debt (vv. 1–7), death (vv. 8–37), danger (vv. 38–41), and deficiency (vv.

42–44)? Isn't he showing us our omnipotent God?

**Brian Bell:**

- We witnessed a husband die, yet God met the needs of the family.
- We witnessed a son die, yet God raised him & restored the family.
- We witnessed a group of prophets almost die because of poisoned stew, yet God removed the danger.
- We witnessed a group of believers almost die, yet God multiplied the bread & sustained them.

## **I. (:1-7) GOD PROVIDES GENEROUSLY FOR THE HELPLESS AND VULNERABLE WHO TRUST IN HIM – SUPREME OVER DEBT**

### **A. (:1) Multiple Major Problems -- Desperate Circumstances**

#### 1. Anguished Appeal to God's Representative

*"Now a certain woman of the wives of the sons of the prophets cried out to Elisha,"*

Not just facing one insurmountable problem

#### 2. Relational Impact of the Death of this Prophet

##### a. Servant of Elisha

*"Your servant"*

##### b. Husband of this Widow

*"my husband is dead,"*

#### 3. Faithful Testimony of His Devotion to the Lord

*"and you know that your servant feared the LORD;"*

#### 4. Compounding Heartache of Losing Her Two Children to the Creditor

*"and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves."*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** it was a revelation to the remnant in Israel that Yahweh, Israel's God and our God, is the help of the helpless and of the nameless. That is the anchor point; Here was a woman in double desperation. She had lost her husband by death and, as if that grief weren't enough, she is going to lose her sons by insolvency. Now that she is a widow her sons are her means of support, her lifeline; but they can be nothing of the kind when they are hauled off into debt slavery. We cannot say that the creditor was necessarily harsh—we do not know. Possibly he was simply operating within his rights. The lads would have to work off the debt, which must have been substantial.

This widow, however, is dealing with more than death and destitution. There is an aggravation in her desperation. Note her words: *'And you know that your servant was fearing Yahweh, but the creditor is coming ...'* Her husband had been faithful to

Yahweh and to his true worship in a time when such fidelity could cost something. It may have been during the regime of Ahab, when Jezebel liquidated Yahweh loyalists with such gusto (cf. **1 Kings 16:29–34; 18:4, 13**). If not, there was always the religious ‘status quo’ in the northern kingdom—the perverted state-sponsored worship at Bethel (**1 Kings 12:25–33**). But this disciple of Elisha and servant of Yahweh had bucked the religious trends of the day; he swam against the stream of his culture and government. And yet his loved ones face disaster. Do you feel the rub she expresses? . . .

Insofar as this woman appeals to Elisha, Yahweh’s servant, she appeals to Yahweh; as she casts her burden on Elisha she casts it on Yahweh. And so we see a familiar combination: she is in trouble and she believes. . . She has access to God in her troubles. You may have no particular status, but have you thought of what you have, if, through Jesus, you have the privilege of access and can bring your troubles to God? What a mercy **Psalms 142:2** describes!

### **B. (:2-4) Multiplying Limited Resources**

#### 1. (:2) Start with What You Have

*“And Elisha said to her, ‘What shall I do for you? Tell me, what do you have in the house?’ And she said, ‘Your maidservant has nothing in the house except a jar of oil.’”*

#### 2. (:3) Think Big in Terms of Expecting God to Abundantly Provide

*“Then he said, ‘Go, borrow vessels at large for yourself from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few.’”*

#### 3. (:4) Trust God to Abundantly Provide

*“And you shall go in and shut the door behind you and your sons, and pour out into all these vessels; and you shall set aside what is full.”*

**John Schultz:** Bible scholars believe that the amount of oil the widow had in her possession was a flask used for anointing people. **Donald J. Wiseman**, in 1 and 2 Kings, observes: “The ‘pot’ (*ʿasuk*) of oil’ AV, NIV a little) is a unique word here, possibly for a small anointing flask. Relief often begins with the little we have at hand. Elisha elicits faith and action by questions, encouragement (‘not a few’) and word. . .

The point of the story is obviously to show God’s love for under-privileged people. As David writes in one of his psalms: “*A father to the fatherless, a defender of widows, is God in his holy dwelling.*” In this case, God defended this poor widow from the greed of her creditors, who had hoped to find an easy target. These people were, evidently, members of the same group Jesus would later condemn when He said to the Pharisees: “*They devour widows’ houses and for a show make lengthy prayers. Such men will be punished most severely.*”

### **C. (:5-6) Miraculous Provision -- According to the Measure of Faith**

*“So she went from him and shut the door behind her and her sons; they were bringing the vessels to her and she poured. 6 And it came about when the*

*vessels were full, that she said to her son, 'Bring me another vessel.' And he said to her, 'There is not one vessel more.' And the oil stopped."*

**Donald Wiseman:** *She kept pouring*; the piel participle stressing the ongoing action of faith (cf. **John 2:7**).

**Guzik:** The miracle was given according to the measure of her previous faith in borrowing vessels. She borrowed enough so the excess oil was sold and provided money to pay the debt to the creditor and to provide for the future. Had she borrowed more, more would have been provided; had she gathered less, less would have been provided.

**August Konkel:** The story of God's provision is told without embellishment. Elisha asks two questions about the widow's need and resources, to which she responds. He then tells her what to do, and she dutifully obeys. The provision of oil takes place behind closed doors, with only the woman and her sons present. The oil is a divine gift that is not dependent on the presence of the man of God and cannot be viewed as some kind of trick. The unusual form of the verb "*pour*" seems to indicate that the oil is made to pour continuously until all the jars are filled (**v. 5**). No details are given following Elisha's final instruction (**v. 7**), but it may be assumed that the woman obeys without question. Her debts are paid, and her family remains together.

#### **D. (:7) Material Security for the Future of Her Family**

*"Then she came and told the man of God. And he said, 'Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest.'"*

**Wiersbe:** Grace pays the debt. . . It didn't cost Elisha anything for God to provide the needed money to pay the debt, but it cost Jesus Christ His life to be able to forgive us our sins.

#### **Constable: God's Care of the Faithful in Need --**

It was common in the ancient Near East for creditors to enslave the children of debtors who could not pay. The Mosaic Law also permitted this practice (**Exod. 21:2-4, Lev. 25:39**). However, servitude in Israel was to end on the Year of Jubilee. God provided miraculously for the dire needs of this widow who had put God first, in contrast to the majority who did not do so in Israel (cf. **Matt. 6:33**).

**Donald Wiseman:** One lesson implied by the historian here is that God does not fail as the God of the widow and fatherless (**Deut. 10:18; Jas 1:27**) as do some earthly rulers.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The widow gets all her cues from '*the man of God*.' He gives her three commands: sell, pay, live. Sell the oil, pay the debts, live on the leftovers. Yahweh grants an abundance far beyond the immediate need: '*and you and your sons can live on the rest*.' Yahweh had his eye on both the immediate emergency (debt) and the ongoing need (sustenance). We shouldn't be surprised. It is Yahweh's way to do more than we ask, to meet not only present need but continuing need.



**Alan Carr: When You Reach the End of Your Rope**

v. 1 -- GOD KNOWS OUR PROBLEMS

- There Was Despair In Her Family
- There Was Death In Her Family
- There Was Debt In Her Family
- There Was Devotion In Her Family

v. 2-4 – GOD RELEASES OUR POTENTIAL

- v. 2a How God Erases Our Faith
- v. 2b-5 How God Expands Our Faith
  - v. 2b He Expands Our Faith Personally
  - v. 3 He Expands Our Faith Publically
  - v. 4-5 He Expands Our Faith Privately

vv. 5-7 – GOD GIVES OUR PROVISION

- v. 5 The Lesson Of God’s Provision
- v. 6 The Limit Of God’s Provision
- v. 7 The Largeness Of God’s Provision

**II. (:8-37) GOD PROVIDES LIFE AND RESTORES LIFE FOR THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM –  
SUPREME OVER DEATH**

**A. (:8-17) God Provides Life**

1. (:8) History of Hospitality

*“Now there came a day when Elisha passed over to Shunem, where there was a prominent woman, and she persuaded him to eat food. And so it was, as often as he passed by, he turned in there to eat food.”*

**MacArthur:** “prominent” -- The woman was “great” in wealth and in social prominence.

**Albert Barnes:** *And it fell on a day* - The original of the expression here used, which occurs three times in the present narrative **2 Kings 4:11, 2 Kings 4:18**, is also found in **Job 1:6, Job 1:13; Job 2:1**. The character of the expression perhaps supports the view that the author of Kings has collected from various sources his account of the miracles of Elisha, and has kept in each case the words of the original writer.

2. (:9-10) Hosting God’s Holy Man

*“And she said to her husband, ‘Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually. 10 Please, let us make a little walled upper chamber and let us set a bed for him there, and a table and a chair and a lampstand; and it shall be, when he comes to us, that he can turn in there.’”*

### 3. (:11-14) Happy with Her Home Situation – But Childless

*“One day he came there and turned in to the upper chamber and rested. 12 Then he said to Gehazi his servant, ‘Call this Shunammite.’ And when he had called her, she stood before him. 13 And he said to him, ‘Say now to her, Behold, you have been careful for us with all this care; what can I do for you? Would you be spoken for to the king or to the captain of the army?’ And she answered, ‘I live among my own people.’ 14 So he said, ‘What then is to be done for her?’ And Gehazi answered, ‘Truly she has no son and her husband is old.’”*

Expressing her contentment

### 4. (:15-16) Hoping in God’s Promise of a Son

*“And he said, ‘Call her.’ When he had called her, she stood in the doorway. 16 Then he said, ‘At this season next year you shall embrace a son.’ And she said, ‘No, my lord, O man of God, do not lie to your maidservant.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Only God’s grace can impart life, whether to a barren womb or to a dead boy, and only God’s grace can impart spiritual life to the dead sinner (**John 5:24; 17:1-3; Eph. 2:1-10**). It was God who gave the boy life, but He used Elisha as the means to do it.

**Albert Barnes:** “do not lie” -- Compare a similar incredulity in **Genesis 17:17; Genesis 18:12; Luke 1:20**.

### 5. (:17) Having a Son According to God’s Promise

*“And the woman conceived and bore a son at that season the next year, as Elisha had said to her.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** What to do for the woman who has everything? Gehazi has an idea. He informs Elisha of two facts: the woman has no son and her husband is old. So Elisha announces God’s gift: ‘At this season, about this time next year, you shall embrace a son’ (v. 16, esv). The woman thinks this incredible (v. 16b), but the Bible doesn’t; it continues on in its laconic, ‘of-course’ style: ‘So the woman became pregnant and gave birth to a son’ just when and as Elisha had predicted (v. 17). . .

**2 Kings 4** is unique among all these instances of the ‘barren woman’ pattern. In all other cases either the birth of the child is essential for continuing a covenant people or the child becomes a significant leader in a time of crisis for Israel. Had Isaac and Jacob not been born, the slender line of the covenant people would have gone extinct. Without Joseph, Jacob’s family would have perished in famine. Samson was at least a wild boar in the Philistines’ vineyard that kept them from ever relaxing. Samuel proved to be the glue that held Israel together during the turbulent transition to monarchy. And John the Baptist (of Elizabeth) prepared a people for the long-expected Jesus. None of this applies in **2 Kings 4**. Obviously, the birth of this child is not essential to national

continuity; there are plenty of Israelite kids floating around. Nor does he become an outstanding leader or prominent figure in Israel's life. He probably farmed the home place and died again. We don't even have his name. What's the point? That sometimes Yahweh gives such a gift not because he will fulfill some grand redemptive-historical function but simply because he wants to make a woman happy with a child. Sometimes it's far simpler than we imagine.

## **B. (:18-37) God Restores Life**

### 1. (:18-20) Unexpected Death of the Son

*"When the child was grown, the day came that he went out to his father to the reapers. 19 And he said to his father, 'My head, my head.' And he said to his servant, 'Carry him to his mother.' 20 When he had taken him and brought him to his mother, he sat on her lap until noon, and then died."*

### 2. (:21-25a) Relentless Pursuit of the Man of God

*"And she went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, and shut the door behind him, and went out. 22 Then she called to her husband and said, 'Please send me one of the servants and one of the donkeys, that I may run to the man of God and return.' 23 And he said, 'Why will you go to him today? It is neither new moon nor sabbath.' And she said, 'It will be well.' 24 Then she saddled a donkey and said to her servant, 'Drive and go forward; do not slow down the pace for me unless I tell you.' 25 So she went and came to the man of God to Mount Carmel."*

### 3. (:25b-28) Emotional Appeal

*"And it came about when the man of God saw her at a distance, that he said to Gehazi his servant, 'Behold, yonder is the Shunammite. 26 Please run now to meet her and say to her, Is it well with you? Is it well with your husband? Is it well with the child?' And she answered, 'It is well.' 27 When she came to the man of God to the hill, she caught hold of his feet. And Gehazi came near to push her away; but the man of God said, 'Let her alone, for her soul is troubled within her; and the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me.' 28 Then she said, 'Did I ask for a son from my lord? Did I not say, Do not deceive me?'"*

**Wiersbe:** Gehazi's attitude toward the woman's coming reveals a dark streak in his character that shows up even more in the next chapter (v. 27; see **Matt. 15:23; 19:13-15**). Perhaps the woman and her servant intruded on their afternoon siesta. But Elisha discerned that something was wrong that the Lord hadn't revealed to him.

### 4. (:29-31) Failed Attempt by Gehazi to Revive the Son Using Elisha's Staff

*"Then he said to Gehazi, 'Gird up your loins and take my staff in your hand, and go your way; if you meet any man, do not salute him, and if anyone salutes you, do not answer him; and lay my staff on the lad's face.' 30 And the mother of the lad said, 'As the LORD lives and as you*

*yourself live, I will not leave you.’ And he arose and followed her. 31 Then Gehazi passed on before them and laid the staff on the lad's face, but there was neither sound nor response. So he returned to meet him and told him, ‘The lad has not awakened.’”*

**MacArthur:** Elisha sent Gehazi ahead because he was younger and, therefore, faster. He may have expected the Lord to restore the child's life when his staff was placed upon him, viewing that staff as representative of his own presence and a symbol of divine power (cf. **2:8**).

**Constable:** The distance between Shunem and Mount Carmel was around thirty two kilometres (over twenty miles). Thus by this time the child had been dead for at least two days, even granted that the ass had been pressed hard. It would certainly have needed rest periods in the burning heat, or it would have come to a halt. And there had been preparation time at the beginning, and the time needed to explain things to Elisha. So when Elisha came into the house the child was clearly dead, and was still laid out on his bed.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The text shows the man of God (the term occurs eight times in **vv. 8–37**) limited in knowledge (because Yahweh withheld it, **v. 27**; contrast **2:16–18**) and limited in power (**vv. 29–31**, the staff episode), and so he can only come in earnest prayer (**v. 33**). True, one might say that means are used in **verse 34**, but the stress is not on Elisha's ingenuity but on his utter dependence. One might even say that Elisha's action in **verse 34** is an expression or extension of his prayer of **verse 33**. The power then is wholly Yahweh's, for which Elisha can only pray. The text suggests the **limitations of all God's servants**.

5. (:32-37) Divine Power of Resurrection Activated by the Prayers of Elisha

*“When Elisha came into the house, behold the lad was dead and laid on his bed. 33 So he entered and shut the door behind them both, and prayed to the LORD. 34 And he went up and lay on the child, and put his mouth on his mouth and his eyes on his eyes and his hands on his hands, and he stretched himself on him; and the flesh of the child became warm. 35 Then he returned and walked in the house once back and forth, and went up and stretched himself on him; and the lad sneezed seven times and the lad opened his eyes. 36 And he called Gehazi and said, ‘Call this Shunammite.’ So he called her. And when she came in to him, he said, ‘Take up your son.’ 37 Then she went in and fell at his feet and bowed herself to the ground, and she took up her son and went out.”*

**Constable: God's Blessing of those who Honor Him --**

Only God's power made active by petition could restore the boy's life (**v. 33**). Elisha's physical contact with him connected the power of God through the prophet and the miracle unmistakably (**v. 34**; cf. **1 Kings 17:21-23**). Seven sneezes, not more or less, would have signified an act of God to ancient Near Easterners (cf. **Gen. 1; 2 Kings 5:14**).

**August Konkel:** The death of the child comes as a complete surprise to Elisha (v. 27), so the woman appropriately challenges the efficacy of the promise concerning the gift of the child (v. 28). She refuses to leave the prophet (v. 30), insisting that he personally be present at the side of the child (v. 32). Once at Shunem, the resuscitation is a process in which the woman participates; she waits outside the room as Elisha first prays for the child (v. 33), then warms the body of the child by stretching (*ghr*) his own body over it (v. 34), and after pacing the house returns to repeat the motion until the child sneezes and opens his eyes (v. 35). The Shunammite is then invited into the room, where she receives the child alive into her arms and reverences the man of God for his care and provision in her time of grief.

**John Schultz:** But the dead boy is brought back to life by the divine power of resurrection. This story is an Old Testament prefiguring of God's power in the resurrection of Jesus Christ, through whose death and resurrection we live, even when we die. Jesus said to Martha, Lazarus' sister: *"I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die."* And to His disciples and us He says: *"Because I live, you also will live."*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Now this is a 'clue' episode. That is, this restoration is a specimen, a sign, a pledge, a preview of the victory God can and will grant his people at the last. Sometimes the question comes up: Why doesn't God do this now? For the same reason that most dead folks stayed dead in Jesus' time—it's not time yet for all to be raised. Did Jesus restore people to life? Certainly (**Matt. 11:4–5; Mark 5:35–43; Luke 7:11–17; John 11:38–44**), but apparently not all that many. He didn't empty the cemeteries during his earthly ministry. It wasn't time yet. His people will be raised on Resurrection Day at his second coming (cf. **1 Thess. 4:13–18**). But until then the Lord gives his people '**previews**' to assure them that death will not have the last word with them. I take **2 Kings 4** as one of those. After all, how were believing Israelites to understand this story? Were they not to infer that the God of Israel can deliver his people even from death? . . .

So why this story? So you'll know about the Shunammite and Elisha? Hear of an instance of Iron Age home remodeling? No, the story is here to reveal your God—the God who delights to amaze his 'ordinary' people with his good gifts; who sometimes baffles us with the mysterious sorrow he brings; who places limitations upon his servants so that we will never esteem them too highly; and who gives us a sneak preview in 800 bc that not even death will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

**Brian Bell:** In the NT, the village of Shunem was no longer inhabited. The population of the town had gathered around a new Village less than 2 miles away, called Nain.

1. Surely the people of Nain remembered how the prophet Elisha had come to "their" village 8 centuries before and raised a young boy from the dead.

2. So when Jesus brought back to life the son of a widow in Nain the awestruck people explained, a great prophet has appeared among us. **Lk.7:11-17**

### **III. (:38-41) GOD PROVIDES HEALING WHERE THERE IS HARM FOR THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM – SUPREME OVER DANGER**

#### **A. (:38) Good Intentions of Elisha to Provide Food for His School of Prophets in Time of Famine**

*“When Elisha returned to Gilgal, there was a famine in the land. As the sons of the prophets were sitting before him, he said to his servant, ‘Put on the large pot and boil stew for the sons of the prophets.’”*

**Ray Dillard:** It is striking how many of the stories about Elijah and Elisha have to do with food. It is difficult for modern Western readers to understand what life in an agrarian society of basically subsistence levels meant for the average individual in ancient Israel. Starvation and hard times were never far away ... In modern Western countries, food is a far smaller part of a household budget than it has ever been; the time invested in gathering it is ordinarily limited to how long one spends in a supermarket or convenience store and perhaps a small family garden. Life was very different in ancient Israel. In subsistence or marginal economies, providing daily bread may represent the largest expenditure one makes and may also consume almost every waking moment.

#### **B. (:39) Gourds of Poison Unknowingly Cast into the Stew**

*“Then one went out into the field to gather herbs, and found a wild vine and gathered from it his lap full of wild gourds, and came and sliced them into the pot of stew, for they did not know what they were.”*

#### **C. (:40) Great Distress over the Death in the Pot**

*“So they poured it out for the men to eat. And it came about as they were eating of the stew, that they cried out and said, ‘O man of God, there is death in the pot.’ And they were unable to eat.”*

#### **D. (:41) God-Directed Miracle to Salvage the Stew**

*“But he said, ‘Now bring meal.’ And he threw it into the pot, and he said, ‘Pour it out for the people that they may eat.’ Then there was no harm in the pot.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** However, not only does a visible sign accompany this miracle, but the miracle itself constitutes a **prophetic sign**, a **preview** of what is yet to come. The miracle certainly involves the removal of harm, and yet that may also be considered as a precursor of the final reversal of the curse (à la **Isaiah 11:6–9** and **65:17–25**), a small sign of what is coming.



**John Schultz:** The **Pulpit Commentary** observes: “Either the bitter flavor alarmed them, or they began to feel ill effects from what they had swallowed, which, if it was colocynth, might very soon have produced stomachache or nausea. Rushing, therefore, at once to the worst possible supposition, they concluded that they were poisoned, and exclaimed, ‘*O man of God, there is death in the pot!*’ ‘If eaten in any large quantity,’ says [one Bible scholar], ‘colocynths might really produce death.’”“ If Elisha’s remedy in adding some flour to the stew was not a miracle, it would not have been worth mentioning in Scripture. We may assume that normally, flour would not counteract poison. In a similar way Moses made bitter water into drinkable by throwing a piece of wood into it.

#### **IV. (:42-44) GOD PROVIDES ABUNDANT SUSTENANCE WHERE THERE IS SCARCITY FOR THOSE WHO TRUST IN HIM – SUPREME OVER DEFICIENCY**

##### **A. (:42) Dedicating Limited Resources to Feed the Hungry People**

*“Now a man came from Baal-shalishah, and brought the man of God bread of the first fruits, twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain in his sack. And he said, ‘Give them to the people that they may eat.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This text is so encouraging because we find here this citizen of Baal-shalishah who is still serving Yahweh in the midst of an apostate nation. **1 Kings 19:18** is true. Yahweh was right. There will be a remnant of faithful believers in this corrupt and hardened nation. God does preserve a people in the thick and thin of evil society. Who knows where you’ll find them? Maybe in Baal-shalishah.

**John Whitcomb:** Little things become great things when they are dedicated to God.

##### **B. (:43) Denying Any Limitations on God’s Ability to Provide by His Word**

*“And his attendant said, ‘What, shall I set this before a hundred men?’ But he said, ‘Give them to the people that they may eat, for thus says the LORD, They shall eat and have some left over.’”*

##### **C. (:44) Distributing the Food to Satisfy Everybody with Some Left Over**

*“So he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The emphasis falls upon the **bare word of Yahweh** in this episode. There is no visible sign this time around, no throwing in salt or flour, no stretching oneself on top of a corpse. To his servant’s objection Elisha simply orders, ‘*Give to the people and let them eat,*’ and then explains, ‘*for here is what Yahweh says, “Eating and leaving” ’*’ (v. **43b**). That is, they’ll eat and have so much there will be leftovers. And that’s what happened, ‘in line with the word of Yahweh’ (v. **44**). Yahweh will feed a hundred men with a few measly barley loaves if that’s what he says he will do.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does the oil symbolize in vv. 1-7?
- 2) Why does God allow many faithful wives to remain barren rather than blessing them with children as he did in this instance?
- 3) Why did God wait so long to raise the woman's son from the dead if He was planning to raise the son anyway?
- 4) Where have we dedicated some small resource to God and found Him to abundantly multiply that resource to serve others?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**August Konkell:** The final two stories deal with another fundamental need of life. Both stories involve the prophetic bands that support Elisha in his efforts to teach the ways of the covenant in a state devoted to the Baal cult. In the first story (4:38–41), a famine leaves the band short of food, with the necessity of foraging for what they can find. Ignorance results in a “death pot” that threatens the health of the men. Elisha responds immediately to the crisis with the authority that is his alone as the man of God; the food is made wholesome and the welfare of the band preserved.

In the second story a stranger offers food to the band, but it is insufficient for the entire group. Elisha twice gives exactly the same command: “*Give it to the people to eat*” (vv. 42, 43). The protest that it will be insufficient is met with a word from Yahweh indicating that it will be more than sufficient. This word is fulfilled (v. 44); Elisha provides for his prophets, just as he had for the widow. Each of these events establishes the authority of Elisha with the prophets as well as his ability to care for them.

**J. Hampton Keathley III:**

#### **I. God's Supply in the Midst of Poverty (4:1-7)**

Our needs are never unknown to our sovereign Lord. Though our God is transcendent, above and sovereign over this world, He is also immanent, very much involved with His creation and with His people and the details of their lives. This will be clearly emphasized in the story of the ax head that will follow in **chapter 6**. Since her husband was one who feared the Lord and since she appealed to the prophet, she was certainly a believer, an Old Testament saint who had a relationship with God. As an Old Testament believer she was the special recipient of God's very personal care as one of His special children (**Phil 4:19**). . .



As a man of God, Elisha was as available to a poor widow woman as he was with kings, so he was quick to come to her aid. As God shows no favoritism, but treats all men alike if they will come to Him in faith, so the people of God should show no favoritism and be just as available to minister to the poor as to the rich and the powerful. . .

She was so destitute, that the only thing she had was this oil, which was used for anointing the body or for cooking--or she may have been saving it for her burial. But there is a principle here which we find repeated in Scripture: the way God generally meets our needs is to take what we have and to multiply it as we turn our lives over to Him and obey the principles of His Word. This is true of our talents, gifts, finances, or physical assets. . .

## **II. The Shunammite Woman Receives a Son (4:8-17)**

From our passage it is easy to see that she was a prominent lady in the community, was somewhat wealthy, and undoubtedly exercised a considerable influence by her spiritual perception and godly character. She was a great lady for a number of reasons--she was full of faith and good works and undoubtedly had a great deal of love and respect for the teaching of the Word. . .

When Elisha, being appreciative for her warm hospitality, wished to reward her by offering to use his influence with the king or his military commanders, she politely refused. She had no desire for worldly advancement; she was not wanting to climb the social ladder of success. She was content with what God had provided her and with her place of service and ministry in the community. She was content with her home, her position, her friends, and her ministry. What a rare attitude! She knew and believed she was where God wanted her and with that she was content. This lady had it together! Compare **1 Timothy 6:6**. . .

In this story we see a great lady, a lady of faith, appreciated and soon rewarded and blessed for her service to the Lord and to His prophet. But I think there are some things that need to be said here lest we come away with a wrong perspective, a one-sided perspective, especially in our day.

First, people are not always appreciated, thanked, and encouraged for their work and ministries, nor do we always appreciate others as we should. . .

Second, many times we see some rewards for our service in this life in special blessings which God lovingly gives us. But we need to remember we may not and often do not. But that does not mean we are not rewarded. It just means God is waiting for eternity or for a better time and a better reward.

## **III. The Shunammite's Son Resurrected (4:18-37; Hebrews 11:35)**

May I suggest that we can see here at least five key lessons in the life of faith from **4:8-37**:

(1) The Shunammite was a well-to-do lady, but since financial prosperity can never

insulate us from sin and the trials and stresses of life, she still had to learn to live by faith because “*without faith it is impossible to please God.*” In fact it is often more difficult to live by faith with plenty because of man’s tendency to trust in money and the things it can buy than it is to live by faith when people have very little and are forced to turn to the Lord. She illustrates the principle of **1 Timothy 6:17-19**:

- (a) she did not trust in the uncertainty of riches,
- (b) she was not proud and arrogant over her wealth, and
- (c) she used her wealth for others in need, laying up treasures in heaven.

(2) She believed in the value of God’s Word and thereby supported the ministry of the prophet. This was a testimony to her faith and values as products of her faith. It was also a means of her faith, for faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of God (**Rom. 10:17**). The principle here is that our faith must have the right object and for that we need the inspired revelation of God.

(3) She demonstrated her faith was growing and active by her attitudes and her works. This is the concept of **James 2:14-18**. Faith needs to grow; it cannot stand still. Either it grows or it will regress. We must progress in our life of faith and grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (cf. **Rom 4:19-20**). The Shunammite’s faith grew: her faith was demonstrated by her desire to know the Word, by her hospitality, by her contentment (see **verse 13**), by being willing to take a risk, and finally, by her calm dependence in the midst of great sorrow as she sought God’s solution and answer to the loss of her son.

(4) To truly live by faith means we must learn to be vulnerable and to trust God with all our fears and anxieties and unknowns if we are going to experience the maximum out of life and see the power of God (**Heb. 11:8**).

(5) To live by faith also means learning to immediately go to the Lord in all of life, not only in its trials, pressures, or calamities, but in everything because we believe that He is the God of all wisdom and comfort and He alone is able to direct our lives. (**Jer. 10:23; Prov. 16:1; 2 Cor. 1:3-5**). We may not see an immediate solution or deliverance from our calamity as did the Shunammite in receiving her son back to life, but believing in the Lord’s compassion, love and eternal purposes we can find comfort and hope and know that God will answer our need and our prayers in a better time and in a better way (cf. **Heb 11:38-40; 12:25-29**).

#### **IV. Death in the Pot (4:38-41)**

To grasp the significance of the miracles of Elijah and Elisha, it is important to remember that nearly everything they did in their ministries, especially their miracles, was done against the backdrop of the idolatrous cult of Baalism as a polemical statement against the evil of Baalism and its futility in contrast to the righteousness, power, and activity of Yahweh, the true and covenant God of Israel.

In the northern kingdom of Israel where Elijah and Elisha ministered, the people, including their leaders, had abandoned the Lord and His Word and had gone into

Baalism like an adulterous wife playing the prostitute. . .

It was for this purpose that God raised up Elijah and Elisha, two mighty prophets of God, men through whom God performed miracles to authenticate the reality and truthfulness of the Word of God. Through these men the Lord sought to turn Israel back to Himself and His Word and away from the idolatrous cults of the nations and their false philosophies of life. As always, miracles were performed as authenticating tools of God's messenger with God's message. The miracles were first and foremost signs to authenticate the messenger, but only in order to authenticate the message. . .

This verse reveals they got the ingredients for the pottage, wild herbs, from the field. "Field" is the Hebrew *sadeh* which refers to an open, uncultivated area of land where you can only find that which grows wild. The unnamed gatherer of the herbs went out and found what he thought would make a good stew. These herbs were soft, succulent plants without a lot of woody tissue; they were palatable, and often used for medicinal purposes or for their sweet flavor and aromatic scent. But what he found out in the field (a picture of the world) were poisonous herbs. Untrained in these matters, he mistook the wild vine for an edible cucumber or squash. What he found is believed to be the citrallus colocynthus, which had a leaf like a squash but was bitter and poisonous due to its very severe purgative qualities. If eaten in large amounts it would tear up the digestive tract and could even cause death. In small amounts you might not die, but you might think you were going to--and might even want to. . .

Meal or flour is used in making bread and Jesus Christ is the **Bread of Life**. Further, there were the Old Testament **meal offerings** which stood for the person of Jesus Christ, but they were always offered with the animal sacrifices, a picture of the death of Christ (cf. **Num. 15:1f**). This demonstrates the absolute necessity of both the person and work of Jesus Christ. There can be no salvation and forgiveness apart from both.

But from the standpoint of the offerer, the meal offering represented the offerer's property, his possessions which, when presented with the animal sacrifice, showed the connection between pardon from sin and devotion to the Lord. Devotion to the Lord flows out of our pardon for sin. Being saved to serve is the obvious picture.

So the meal stands as a picture of Jesus Christ, the Living Word of God, the Bread from heaven, who of course is revealed only in the Bible, the written Word.

The point of the lesson is that only God's Word which reveals Jesus Christ is the antidote to the death in the pot. Only Jesus Christ can give life and remove the spiritual famine of the world or feed us in the midst of famine. . .

## **V. The Miracle of the Bread (4:42-44)**

*shalishah* mean's "third" and can stand for the idea of "multiplicity" because in Hebrew the number three was the smallest number which set forth the idea of multiplicity. So the name Baal-shalisha could mean "*the Lord of multiplicity*" or perhaps, "the Lord who multiplies." So here a man, a worshipper of Yahweh, the true God and husband of

Israel, was coming to the true prophets of God with bread and grain which Yahweh would miraculously multiply as the God of multiplicity. This would again demonstrate that He alone was the true God who would meet their needs and multiply their ministries. . .

So the issue here was not the small number of loaves, but the ability to see beyond the loaves to the Almighty. It was an issue of having the wrong perspective, a perspective which measures our ability by who and what we are and have rather than by who and what God is to us.

The key lesson of the passage is that God's wants us to learn to measure life by God's infiniteness which is without measure. . .

For us today, the words, "*thus says the Lord*," stand as an illustration and a picture of our need to know and understand the principles and promises of the Word and then count upon them for the provision of God. Elisha was teaching these prophets (and us) what God will always be to us if we will adopt the disposition of faith in the Word and the promises of God that Elisha had toward the Word of the Lord.

George Müller's life so beautifully illustrates one who truly believed God's Word and His promise to provide our needs. Mr. Müller established several orphanages solely by faith that God was leading him to do so and he believed God's promise that He would provide their needs. Needs were never made known, no indirect hints were made that funds were needed, and even when in dire straits, those who inquired as to the needs were never informed so that the ministry would be a testimony to God's faithfulness. Mr. Müller said he was kept in peace by "not looking at the little in hand, but at the fulness of God." His desire was to prove to all men that it is safe to trust only in the living God.

### **Richard Rohlin: Stewardship – Not Just for Rich People**

#### Stewardship

- There are many inappropriate theologies and beliefs regarding money, prosperity, and how to think about prosperity and poverty.
- God's way for dealing with the question of wealth is stewardship:
- Stewardship is using God's blessing in a way that reflects the character and nature of the giver.

#### Prosperity Theology

- Prosperity theology considers those who are rich to be more righteous than those who are poor.
- At its core is a belief that it is God's plan for every believer to be healthy, prosperous, with a happy home life and no money problems.
- Extreme versions of this theology teach that those who are lacking in one of these areas are in sin or do not have enough faith.

#### Poverty Theology

- Poverty Theology is the belief that those who are poor are more righteous than those who are rich.
- It includes the belief that material wealth keeps you from serving God and that those who choose to live in poverty are more particularly devoted to God than those who do not.

### Biblical Prosperity

- 1) Prosperity (or the lack thereof) is for God's glory
- 2) Prosperity (even supernatural blessing) comes through work
- 3) God's blessings are enough
- 4) God gives prosperity to meet needs, not egos

### Stewardship is hospitable

- Hospitality is a "gift" that all Christians are commanded to practice – not just those who are well-off.
- "Cheerfully sharing food, shelter, and spiritual refreshment with those whom God brings into my life."
- Scripture is full of exhortations to hospitality.

### Gain & loss

- To only see the hand of God in the good things we are given is to make two dangerous mistakes:
  - It denies God's ability to work through our difficult situations
  - It is to have a very limited, one-dimensional view of God that praises Him for the good things but then leaves us to "muddle through" in the bad times

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/12212137564.pdf>

### **Bob Deffinbaugh: The Life and Times of Elisha the Prophet— Two Women and Two Meals**

#### Elisha and the Widow in Need

Elisha provides for this woman's needs in a way that allows her and others to participate. This woman and her children gather the empty containers and fill them. Then she sells the oil and pays off her debts. The neighbors also play a part, and in so doing, they must have been aware of the way God provided for this woman. The Old Testament law instructed the Israelites not to cut the corners of their fields so that the poor could glean from what remained in the field (**Leviticus 23:22**). Welfare programs should not encourage the needy to sit, inactive, while others harvest, winnow, and cook their food. There seems to be a trend today to return to a more biblical model, establishing help programs that enable the recipient to retain their dignity by doing what they can to provide for themselves. This is what the Bible has taught from the beginning. And it is what Elisha did as well. This woman and her children were encouraged to work hard, and thus to participate in God's provision for them.

She was to obey what God commanded, even though it did not make sense to her, and even though she did not know the outcome. She was to obey God's command, without being told why.

We must trust God because we love Him, and because we know His character and attributes. We must obey His commandments, not because He has explained why He has instructed us to act in a particular way, but because He is God, and we are His servants. This woman was instructed to do some very unusual things, without knowing where all this would lead. But she obeyed, trusting God and His spokesman, Elisha. And in the end, she saw how God provided for her in His wisdom and mercy.

#### Elisha and the Shunammite Woman

These two women are very different, but there is a point of commonality. Both of these women had a problem related to children. The widow could not provide for her children, who were about to be taken from her. The Shunammite woman could not produce children, though one was to be given to her. The problem these women shared in common in our text is that they had a need which they were unable to meet. In both cases, God met this need.

#### Poison in the Pot: The Saving of the Stew

It may well be that the last available ingredients had been put in that pot, so that throwing it all out and starting over was impossible. These visiting prophets were hungry after their journey, and they would have to be fed before they could be sent on their way. What was to be done? The solution was to “save the stew.”

#### The Feeding of the One Hundred

The similarity of this to the feedings of the 5,000 and the 4,000 is obvious. This miracle is a prototype of the bread our Lord will provide, in even greater quantities. He who was able to “heal” the waters of the spring at Jericho was also able to “save the stew” and to “stretch a meal” far beyond its normal limits. Did Elijah provide food for the widow and her son? Elisha provided oil for a widow and her children, which put food on their table for a long time. Elisha also provided bread for 100 people. Surely Elisha is able to do what Elijah did, and perhaps even more. Elisha is surely Elijah’s replacement.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/life-and-times-elisha-prophet-two-women-and-two-meals-2-kings-41-44>

TEXT: 2 Kings 5:1-19

TITLE: MINISTRY OF SALVATION TO NAAMAN THE LEPER

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S GRACE TO HEAL THE LEPROSY OF SIN EXTENDS TO GENTILES WHO TURN FROM THEIR PRIDE AND SUBMIT TO HIS SIMPLE PLAN OF SALVATION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This account probably took place at a later point in time since Gehazi is still viewed with some measure of respect in the following chapters. The record in the Book of Kings is not always presented in strict chronological sequence.

Obviously this account of healing the powerful military leader of Syria of his leprosy pictures for us the gracious salvation from sin which the Lord provides – even to Gentiles! The many contrasts in the story highlight the different theological points and reinforce the practical applications. We especially see the fundamental principle that *God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble*. The concluding story of Gehazi's covetousness and deception is an integral part of the story as the leprosy is removed from Naaman but comes to rest on Gehazi and his descendants. But we will reserve that narrative for a subsequent sermon.

**Constable:** This story contains many of the motifs we have been observing throughout 1 and 2 Kings: the fertility motif, the sovereignty motif, the faith motif, the reversal-of-fortune motif, and others. The unique contribution of this chapter is that it shows Yahweh's superiority over Baal in physical healing and ritual cleansing. The worshippers of Baal gave him credit for controlling both of these things. As in **1 Kings 17:8-24**, we see that, ironically, faith in Yahweh was stronger in some individuals outside Israel than it was in Israelites in whom it should have been the strongest. God blesses those who obey His Word to some extent, regardless of who they are, or what else they may believe, or do, or be.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The opening verse sets out the theme: Naaman, whose victories over Israel earn him a high position at the court of Damascus, does not recognize that the author of his good fortune is *yhwh*, the God of Israel. It is through his cure, then, instigated by the prophet, that he is brought to the awareness: "*Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel*" (v. 15). By forsaking his master's gods and acknowledging the supremacy of *yhwh*, Naaman, in effect, becomes a "proselyte." Like other foreigners in this early period (e.g., Ruth), he is admitted into the community of the worshippers of *yhwh* without the requirements of rite of conversion or polemic which were the hallmarks of the post-exilic period.

**Donald Wiseman:** In the days of Jesus Christ the episode of Naaman was well known and cited as a unique case of a non-Israelite leper being cleansed through obedience to God's word through a prophet, at a time when many Jews did not heed the call of the prophet of their day (**Luke 4:27**).

**August Konkel:** The story shows the powerlessness of the king and the power of the prophet, the reign and grace of God extending outside Israel, the commendation of a foreign military chief, and the condemnation of a deceitful assistant to the prophet. Naaman's healing points toward a changed relationship between Israel and Syria as the worship of God extends beyond the borders of Israel by a general who has been raiding the land of Israel.

## **I. (:1-8) NEED FOR SALVATION EXPOSES MAN'S INABILITY AND GLORIFIES GOD'S ABILITY**

### **A. (:1) Health Crisis Involving a Powerful Military Leader from Aram**

#### 1. Official Position = Captain of the Army of the King of Aram

*"Now Naaman, captain of the army of the king of Aram,"*

#### 2. Prominence

*"was a great man with his master,"*

**MacArthur:** a man of high social standing and prominence

#### 3. Reputation for Military Success

*"and highly respected,  
because by him the LORD had given victory to Aram."*

**MacArthur:** Naaman's military success was attributable to the God of Israel, who is sovereign over all the nations (cf. **Is 10:13; Am 9:7**).

#### 4. Bravery in Battle

*"The man was also a valiant warrior,"*

#### 5. Insurmountable Disability

*"but he was a leper."*

**Wiersbe:** Like leprosy, sin is deeper than the skin (v. 3), it spreads (v. 7), it defiles, and it is fit only for the fire.

**David Guzik:** Ancient leprosy began as small, red spots on the skin. Before too long the spots got bigger, and started to turn white, with sort of a shiny, or scaly appearance. Pretty soon the spots spread over the whole body and hair began to fall out – first from the head, then even from the eyebrows. As things got worse, fingernails and toenails become loose; they start to rot and eventually fell off. Then the joints of fingers and toes began to rot and fall off piece by piece. Gums began to shrink and they couldn't



hold the teeth anymore, so each of them was lost. Leprosy kept eating away at the face until literally the nose, the palate, and even the eyes rotted – and the victim wasted away until death.

**Rick Ezell:** Notice how verse one concludes. ". . . *but he had a skin disease*" (**2 Kings 5:1**). He could think about all of his accomplishments; he could enjoy his power and position and prestige; he could admire his home and his wealth; but they all seemed to vanish as he stared into the mirror each day. Each time he looked at himself there was something looking back that defined his life. He was a leper, and nothing could change that fact. . .

By the way, what is your hideous birthmark? What is your leprosy? What problem are you trying to conceal? What hurt are you trying to cover up? What prevents you from getting close to other people? Where do you need to be touched?

## **B. (:2-6) Request for Healing Directed to the King of Israel**

### 1. (:2-3) Confidence of the Captive Israelite Girl

#### a. (:2) Her Providential Role

*"Now the Arameans had gone out in bands, and had taken captive a little girl from the land of Israel; and she waited on Naaman's wife."*

**Schultz:** Evidently, the king of Aram had made raids into Israel and taken captives, among which a young girl who became the slave girl of Naaman's wife.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And yet, in Yahweh's providence, in this story everything hangs on this little girl, on her tragic servitude. Without her Naaman would never have been healed. People are often brought into the kingdom of God at great cost to other people. Sometimes the means God uses to bring people to himself seem ... well, so incidental. A little captive girl. . .

Do you see how in two verses this text teaches you that both international politics (**v. 1**) and individual circumstances (**v. 2**), both world affairs (**v. 1**) and personal dilemmas (**v. 2**) are under Yahweh's sway? Both the big picture and the minor details belong to him. His sway extends from parliaments and war departments to the doorknobs and phone calls and parking places of life. For Yahweh there is no tension between **Isaiah 66:1** and **Matthew 10:29**.

#### b. (:3) Her Promise of Healing

*"And she said to her mistress, 'I wish that my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria! Then he would cure him of his leprosy.'"*

**Constable:** The faith of the slave girl (**v. 3**) contrasts with the general unbelief that prevailed in Israel at this time (cf. **Luke 4:27**). This humble girl also contrasts with the great commander whom she helped.

**J. Hampton Keathley III:** Though small, weak, and insignificant, this little girl knew the omnipotent and sovereign Lord of the universe with whom there was healing. She was willing to point others to the most significant Being of the universe, YAHWEH OF ISRAEL, who alone could cure Naaman's disease.

Why do you suppose Naaman listened to her? After all what could a slave know? May I suggest that he listened because perhaps her life spoke volumes! Her life had been such a testimony that it gave credibility to her words.

2. (:4) Consultation between Naaman and the King of Aram

*"And Naaman went in and told his master, saying, 'Thus and thus spoke the girl who is from the land of Israel.'"*

3. (:5-6) Correspondence Delivered to the King of Israel (Jehoram)

a. (:5a) Game Plan

*"Then the king of Aram said, 'Go now, and I will send a letter to the king of Israel.'"*

**The Pulpit Commentary:** The letter made no mention of Elisha. Ben-Hadad assumed that, if the King of Israel had in his dominions a person able to cure leprosy, he would be fully cognizant of the fact, and would at once send for him, and call upon him for an exertion of his gift or art. He is not likely to have comprehended the relations in which Kings of Israel stood towards the Jehovistic prophets, but may probably have thought of Elisha 'as a sort of chief magus, or as the Israelitish high priest' ..., whom the king would have at his beck and call, and whose services would be completely at his disposal.

b. (:5b) Gifts

*"And he departed and took with him ten talents of silver and six thousand shekels of gold and ten changes of clothes."*

**J. Hampton Keathley III:** Money, power and wealth cannot save us, make us spiritual, effective witnesses, or deserving of responsibility or leadership in the body of Jesus Christ. Only God's grace and his gifts and blessings in Jesus Christ can do that.

c. (:6) Grave Request

*"And he brought the letter to the king of Israel, saying, 'And now as this letter comes to you, behold, I have sent Naaman my servant to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy.'"*

**C. (:7-8) Two Different Perspectives on the Request for Healing Ministry**

1. (:7) Perspective of Faithless King of Israel = Anticipation of Failure = Doom and Gloom

*"And it came about when the king of Israel read the letter, that he tore his clothes and said, 'Am I God, to kill and to make alive, that this man*

*is sending word to me to cure a man of his leprosy? But consider now, and see how he is seeking a quarrel against me.”*

**David Guzik:** When the king of Israel (Jehoram) read the letter, he was understandably upset. First, it was obviously out of his power to heal Naaman’s leprosy. Second, he had no relationship with the prophet of the God who did have the power to heal. He thought the king of Syria sought a quarrel.

**Terrell Carter:** Naaman traveled down to Israel with an enormous cargo of gifts to present to the king of Israel. The gifts were not for trade, but the foreigner Naaman was trying to create a social bond with the Israelite king. By creating a social bond through gifts, it obligated the Israelite king to give hospitality, and in this case to find a cure for the general’s leprosy. But these gifts put the Israelite King in a bind. He could not refuse the gift, as it would be like a new bride and groom refusing a wedding gift from a guest. By accepting the gift yet not curing the leprosy, the king would violate the required social responsibility. He could sense an impending confrontation with the Aramaeans.

2. (:8) Perspective of Faithful Man of God = Anticipation of Success = Opportunity for the Word of God to be Magnified

*“And it happened when Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his clothes, that he sent word to the king, saying, ‘Why have you torn your clothes? Now let him come to me, and he shall know that there is a prophet in Israel.’”*

**II. (:9-14) WAY OF SALVATION SEEMS LIKE FOOLISHNESS TO THE PROUD**

**A. (:10) Simple Solution Proposed by Elisha –  
God’s Ways are not Man’s Ways -- Plan of Salvation Incredibly Simple –  
“Just Trust and Obey”**

1. (:9) Humbling Reception

*“So Naaman came with his horses and his chariots, and stood at the doorway of the house of Elisha.”*

2. (:10) Bizarre Prescription

*“And Elisha sent a messenger to him, saying, ‘Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you and you shall be clean.’”*

**B. (:11-12) Prideful Rage of Unsubmissive Naaman –  
Natural Reason Stumbles over False Expectations of Divine Methodology –  
God Resists the Proud but Gives Grace to the Humble --  
“You’ve Got to be Kidding Me!”**

1. (:11a) Angry Response

*“But Naaman was furious and went away”*

**Wiersbe:** Quoting **Dr. Donald Grey Barnhouse**, “Everybody has the privilege of going to heaven God’s way or going to hell their own way.” . . . To quote **D. L. Moody**, “He lost his temper; then he lost his pride; then he lost his leprosy; that is generally the order in which proud rebellious sinners are converted.”

**Rick Ezell:** So Naaman goes to Elisha in Samaria. Remember Samaria? If Israel were a second rate, third world country, Samaria would have been the armpit of the second rate, third world country. Samaria was despised even by the Israelites. When Naaman arrives at Elisha's dusty enclave, a far cry from Jerusalem's splendor, Elisha sends out his servant. Naaman had been remarkably flexible and amiable, willingly traveling out to the prophet's remote outpost to ask for the healing touch. But, when Elisha's servant shows up at the door with the instructions for the cure, he is incensed. Outraged. Ticked off. He's not only sweating bullets from the dirty, dusty desert; he is ready to spit bullets in the direction of Elisha.

Prophets have that effect on people. They don't beat around the bushes. They lack tact. They get to the point. They tell it like it is. They often times offend and insult. But they speak the truth. And when you are face to face with a disease that is going to take your life you have got to decide if you want comfort and convenience or a cure. . .

Naaman was part of the 'pastor only crowd.' Some believe that they cannot be ministered to if the pastor doesn't do the ministering; they can't be prayed for if the pastor doesn't do the praying; or preached to if the pastor doesn't do the preaching; or visited if the pastor doesn't do the visiting.

## 2. (:11b) Grandiose Expectations

*“and said, ‘Behold, I thought, ‘He will surely come out to me, and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and cure the leper.’”*

**MacArthur:** Because of his personal greatness (v. 1), his huge gift (v. 5), and diplomatic letter (v. 6), Naaman expected personal attention to his need. However, Elisha did not even go out to meet him. Instead, he sent his instructions for healing through a messenger (v. 10). Naaman was angry because he anticipated a personal cleansing ceremony from the prophet himself.

## 3. (:12a) Rationalistic Limitations

*“Are not Abanah and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?”*

**David Guzik:** **Spurgeon** saw Naaman attacked by two enemies: **Proud Self**, who internally demanded that Elisha come out and see him, and **Evil Questioning**, who questioned why he should wash in the Jordan when he had better rivers back in his homeland. Naaman overcame these two enemies and did what God told him to do.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I don't think I am 'spiritualizing' to point out how Naaman's complaints are the very objections many people make to the gospel. Naaman (and perhaps you?) didn't like the humiliation of the gospel (vv. 9–11a), nor the simplicity of the gospel (vv. 10, 11b; 'wash and be clean'), nor the narrowness of the gospel (v. 12). It was too much for a man who thought he was somebody.

4. (:12b) Angry Response

*"So he turned and went away in a rage."*

**C. (:13) Wise Counsel of Naaman's Servants – All of God's Grace and None of Man's Works --**

**"What do You Have to Lose?"**

*"Then his servants came near and spoke to him and said,  
'My father, had the prophet told you to do some great thing,  
would you not have done it?*

*How much more then, when he says to you, Wash, and be clean ?'"*

**J. Hampton Keathley III:** What does the Scripture teach about the pride of man?

God hates "*haughty eyes, or the proud look*" (**Prov. 6:17**).

*"When pride comes, then comes dishonor . . ."* (**Prov. 11:2**).

*"Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling"*  
(**Prov. 16:18**).

*"A man's pride will bring him low . . ."* (**Prov. 29:23**).

Naaman had to be brought low; he had to be knocked off his high horse! (cf. Obadiah 3 and 4). God cannot and will not bless us as long as we are full of pride.

Why will a man's pride bring him low? James gives us part of the answer. After telling us about the grace which God gives, he also reminds us that "*God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble.*" Who can experience God's grace? The humble! Then from whom does God withhold his grace? The proud! Who are the proud? Those who are indifferent to God's plan, who refuse to commit themselves to God's plan, who attempt to handle life by their own abilities or strategies.

**D. (:14) Submissive Obedience Results in Miraculous Healing for Naaman – Glorious Salvation Involves Simply Taking God at His Word –**

**"Wash Me and I Will be Whiter than Snow"**

*"So he went down and dipped himself seven times in the Jordan,  
according to the word of the man of God;  
and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean."*

**Constable:** Even though Jehoram was not a faithful representative of Yahweh, Elisha was (v. 8). Elisha treated Naaman as a superior would treat an inferior (v. 10). Socially Naaman was superior to Elisha, but really Elisha, as God's man, was superior to the vice-regent of Ben-Hadad. Elisha's coolness may have sent a message to Naaman that Elisha was not a wonderworker who expected payment or that he wanted no political involvement with Aramea. Possibly he may have been testing Naaman's faith. Naaman's cure, of course, was not due to the quality of the Jordan River water, but to his obedient trust in God's promise that His prophet delivered. Overcoming his pride, Naaman obeyed and was washed clean—body and soul (v. 14). Dipping seven times would have signified to everyone in that culture that his healing that followed was a work of God. His flesh experienced healing from the leprosy and even returned to the texture of a child. Perhaps this reflected Naaman's child-like faith.

**Timothy McGhee:**

*Obedience is doing what God says...*

**When He tells you**

*Beware of delayed obedience*

**The way He tells you**

*Beware of partial obedience*

*You do not have to understand to obey.*

**You have to obey!**

*Obedience is the pathway to blessing!*

### **III. (:15-19) RESPONSE TO SALVATION SHOULD BE WORSHIP AND TESTIMONY**

#### **A. (:15-16) Response Never Involves Any Form of Compensation – Integrity of the Prophetic Ministry**

##### 1. (:15a) Testimony to the One True God

*“When he returned to the man of God with all his company, and came and stood before him, he said,*

*‘Behold now, I know that there is no God in all the earth, but in Israel;’”*

##### 2. (:15b) Offer of Compensation

*“so please take a present from your servant now.”*

**Schultz:** After being healed, Naaman goes back to the place where Elisha lived in order to express his gratitude and give Elisha a substantial present. This time he meets Elisha personally. The prophet refuses any kind of recompense. Naaman not only had experienced physical healing, he also realized that the God of Israel was the only real God. This implies that he recognized that the idols that were worshipped in Aram were no gods at all. The present was meant to be an act of worship to the God of Israel, of whom Elisha was the representative.

### 3. (:16a) Rejection of Any Compensation

*“But he said, ‘As the LORD lives, before whom I stand, I will take nothing.’”*

We can’t allow anything to obscure the gospel of God’s grace.

**August Konkel:** Elisha refuses his proffered reward with a vow (5:16); Elisha can accept no responsibility for the mercy received. Grace granted by God cannot be rewarded with material benefits.

### 4. (:16b) Repeating the Offer and the Rejection

*“And he urged him to take it, but he refused.”*

## **B. (:17-18) Response of Worship Back in Syria**

### 1. (:17) Cultural Superstitions Still Persist

*“And Naaman said, ‘If not, please let your servant at least be given two mules’ load of earth; for your servant will no more offer burnt offering nor will he sacrifice to other gods, but to the LORD.’”*

**MacArthur:** In the ancient Near East it was thought that a god could be worshiped only on the soil of the nation to which he was bound. Therefore, Naaman wanted a load of Israelite soil on which to make burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord when he returned to Damascus. This request confirmed how Naaman had changed – whereas he had previously disparaged Israel’s river, now he wanted to take a pile of Israel’s soil to Damascus.

**J. Hampton Keathley III:** This certainly illustrates the kind of concern God’s people should have regarding their worship, their testimony and the appearance of evil. Naaman knew that he would have to return to his old environment and live in the midst of idolatry and evil. He was concerned that he might have a proper means of worship for he could no longer worship in the house of Rimmon. He would not compromise Yahweh. He needed a place and a means for worship, so he asked for permission (note the sudden change in attitude) to take two loads of soil back home. The exact reason is not specified, only implied. Some believe it was so he could erect an altar to Yahweh for a memorial or witness to the God of Israel in his own land. On this he could offer sacrifices as an evidence of his determination to forsake all other gods.

### 2. (:18) Compromising Situations Require Forgiveness

*“In this matter may the LORD pardon your servant: when my master goes into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leans on my hand and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, when I bow myself in the house of Rimmon, the LORD pardon your servant in this matter.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Naaman says that as part of his job description he must escort the king when the latter goes to worship Rimmon. Naaman seems to say that he himself will not be worshiping Rimmon when he goes through this formality but that it goes



with his position (as we say, it ‘goes with the territory’) and he can scarcely avoid it. Naaman will, of course, be worshiping on Israelite dirt somewhere close to his house. But for this cultic irregularity Naaman seems to be pleading for pardon in advance.

**John Gates:** Naaman showed a tender conscience about appearing to worship idols, and he received assurance that God understood his heart.

**August Konkel:** Chiastic structure –

For this thing  
    may the Lord pardon your servant  
        when my lord comes to the house of Rimmon to worship there  
            and he leans on my hand  
        and I worship in the house of Rimmon (when I worship in the  
            house of Rimmon)  
    may the Lord pardon your servant  
for this thing.

### **C. (:19) Response of Testimony Back in Syria**

*“And he said to him, ‘Go in peace.’ So he departed from him some distance.”*

**Wiersbe:** This was the usual covenant blessing the Jews invoked when people were starting on a journey. The prophet would pray for him and trust God to use him in his new ministry in Syria. Naaman’s leprosy was gone, he still had the treasures, he carried soil from Israel, and knew the true and living God. What a witness he could be in that dark land – and Naaman’s servant girl would join him.

**House:** One man goes away healed because of his obedience, while the other man, indeed the one who should have known what matters most, walks away with leprosy. Yet another Israelite has made the tragic mistake of choosing a substitute for the Lord, while a Gentile convert has discovered that what his servant girl said about the Lord's prophet is true.

**David Guzik:** By generally approving but not saying specifically “yes” or “no,” it seems that Elisha left the matter up to Naaman and God. Perhaps he trusted that the LORD would personally convict Naaman of this and give him the integrity and strength to avoid idolatry.

**Donald Wiseman:** Naaman’s relation with Elisha is couched in diplomatic language. ‘Go in peace’ is not simply ‘farewell’ (as neb), but an acknowledgment that the recipient is in covenant relation with the speaker and his god.

\* \* \* \* \*



## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When have God's ways seemed foolish to us but proved out in the end to be just what we needed?
- 2) What does the role of the captive slave girl teach us about God's providential control and willingness to use seemingly insignificant instruments to accomplish his purposes?
- 3) Where have we lost out on God's blessing because of our pride?
- 4) What threatens the simplicity of the gospel message in our Christian context today?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Whitcomb:** No magic incantation or mysterious hand-waving (nor all the clean waters of the rivers of Damascus) could solve this man's problem – only the direct intervention of the living God. Would he be willing to do a very simple and apparently foolish thing, believing that God could meet his need according to His promise? That is the essence of the gospel as it goes forth to men today. The vast majority of men consider the crucified Jesus to be an utterly foolish way to deal with the leprosy of sin (**1 Cor. 1:23**); but to those who have taken god at His word, such a message has become the very power and wisdom of God (**1 Cor. 1:24; Rom. 1:16**).

**House:** This text contains one of the great Gentile conversion accounts in the Old Testament. Like Rahab (**Josh 2:9-13**), Ruth (**Ruth 1:16-18**), and the sailors and Ninevites in Jonah (**Jonah 1:16; 3:6-10**), Naaman believes in the Lord. From **Gen 12:2-3** onward in the Old Testament, God desires to bless all nations through Israel. This ideal becomes a reality here due to the witness of the Israelite servant girl and the work of the Israelite prophet.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** We can plot out the overall structure of **2 Kings 2:1–8:6** as follows:

A Introduction: A true man of God ministering grace & judgment, **ch. 2**

B Grace to Israel, **ch. 3** (King Jehoram)

C Grace to the remnant, **ch. 4** (3–4 episodes)

D Grace to the gentile, **ch. 5** (Naaman)

C' Grace to the remnant, **6:1–7**

B' Grace to Israel, **6:8–23; 6:24–7:20**

A' Conclusion: What shall we say to these things? **8:1–6**

**Iain Provan:** Various NT themes are evoked here, all clustering around the question of conversion. New birth is required to see the kingdom of God (**John 3:1–8**), which is inhabited by little children (those who humbly serve) and not by the great or the wealthy (**Matt. 18:1–5; 19:13–15; Mark 9:33–37; 10:13–16; Luke 9:46–48; 18:15–17**). The rite of passage into new life is a washing that makes one truly clean (**Rom. 6:1–5; 1 Cor. 6:11; Col. 2:11–15; Titus 3:4–7**). Naaman embodies new life, and Gehazi embodies the old, crying “*Lord, Lord*” (v. 20) while his actions reveal where his heart really lies (**Matt. 6:19–24; 7:21–23**). From this point of view, Jehoram’s words about life and death in relation to Naaman (v. 7) begin to look prophetic.

**Terrell Carter:** Are any of us like Naaman? We know that we have a need, but instead of humbly seeking God’s face to fulfill that need, we have an attitude of entitlement. Instead of seeking God’s help from a position of being powerless, we instead approach God as if God owes us something. Instead of seeking a solution first through the simplicity of prayer and trusting God, we hurry up chasing solutions that lead us away from God and further away from the fulfillment of our need. Naaman almost missed out on what he wanted and needed from because it didn’t take the form that he expected.

The most obvious suggestion to counter this is also simple. Stop. Seek God first. Seek God first from a position of powerlessness, acknowledging that God is all powerful and is aware of your need. Second, seek the support of those with kindred hearts, sharing your needs and concerns with the children of God.

<https://wgbaptist.com/2013/07/07/sermon-big-blessings-from-small-actions-2-kings-51-14/>

### **Brian Sandifer: Something Else**

The LORD delights to surprise us with both hard truth and extravagant grace. In this story of a highly regarded, hyper-successful pagan military general who seeks a cure for his leprosy, his search yields something else—a renewed heart for God. Have God’s “clues” surprised you with “something else” yet?

The main point of any Bible passage need not be overshadowed, but is highlighted by other bits of truth we might find in it.

## **I. The Clues of God**

### **A. A mature faith is a child-like faith (vv. 2-3, 14)**

In the Bible, the Lord intended Israelites to be evangelistic witnesses to the nations, but examples of this kind of testimony are rare in the OT. In this case, a young girl tells her mistress, the wife of the soldier who captured her and dragged her away from home into a foreign land, about the goodness of the LORD, the God of Israel. The LORD can cure her master’s leprosy through the prophet who wields God’s miraculous healing power.

The nameless, little girl had kept her faith in God in a pagan land while serving her captors, who evidently had been treating her kindly. And she spoke with such confidence—ready with an answer for her faith in the God of Israel (**1 Pet 3:15**). Her faithfulness, even though it does not lead to her release, served as a model for God's people of every era who have opportunity to point Gentiles and pagans to the LORD God of Israel (cf. **Neh 2; Dan 1**).

**B. Worldly and public affairs can blind you to hope hidden in plain sight (vv. 7-8)**

Syria's king incorrectly assumes Israel's king (likely Joram) controls his own prophets. That's not the way it works with true prophets in Israel! Joram is estranged from the LORD and his prophet, so he doesn't consider Elisha, and may not even realize that Elisha can work the requested miracle in God's name. And who could blame the king, saddled in a brewing conflict with a powerful rival nation demanding his full attention? There is enough tension between the two nations that Joram concludes Syria is picking a fight by asking for a miracle for its commander standing before him. In Joram's opinion, the Syrian king's letter represents another excuse for a military raid on his people.

The king can't cure Naaman's leprosy! Who can? Only God can kill or make alive (**Dt 32:39; 1 Sam 2:6**). So the king tore his clothes, showing hopelessness, sorrow (**Gen 37:34; 2 Sam 13:31; 2 Kgs 6:30; Job 1:20; 2:12; Isa 37:1**) and consternation (**2 Kgs 2:11-13; 22:11-13**).

**C. God loves to humble (and embarrass) you, but only because he loves you (vv. 1, 5, 9-27)**

1. Here we have a clue that God is not impressed with your position or possessions.

Naaman in the kind of person who excels in both categories. Consider his position. He's the five-star general of the army...of Syria. That country was a rising power in the region after the Assyrian Empire farther north fell apart. No one outranked Naaman but his king, who considered him "*a great man*" and held him in "*high favor*." Why? Naaman had won impressive military victories for Syria (courtesy of Israel's God!). Naaman was "*a mighty man of valor*" and the king loved him because his right hand man brought glory to king and country. Consider his possessions—the stuff at his disposal that he hauls down to Israel. "*Ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold, and ten changes of clothing*." That's 750 pounds of silver and 150 pounds of gold. In 1 today's US dollars the silver and gold equal \$750 million! And those 10 sets of clothes were something to behold. The man was quite impressive.

2. Naaman was off-the-charts rich, proud, and entitled. But God loved him despite it all.

And God loved him enough to sneer at his accolades, assets, and entourage. The Bible says over and over that God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble (**Jas 4:6; 1 Pet 5:5**). Elisha also loved Naaman. Otherwise he would not

have offered him the cure for leprosy. Naaman needed to learn that grace is not impressed, grace is not for sale, and grace is unmerited favor simply because God loves to shower his mercy on sinners. Even if they must be humiliated first.

## **II. The Surprises of God**

### **A. You have leprosy in your soul, but there is a cure (vv. 3, 11-12, 20-27; cf. Lk 4:16-30)**

Are you surprised? Readers throughout history who rightly interpret God's clues have always discerned Naaman's story is the mirror image of Gehazi's story. Both had leprosy of the soul, and both responded in contrasting ways that instruct us. Because their story is our story, my story, your story. Naaman the proud, pompous, pagan leper is certainly a sinner. But he is also every sinner. Although he came to Israel's God a social pariah with skin defiled by a dreaded, incurable, degenerative disease, God knew his leprosy was more than skin-deep. So is mine. So is yours. Leprosy is a picture of sin and the uncleanness that prevents any relationship with the holy God. Elisha's servant Gehazi is racist, resentful, and rapacious with greedy visions of attaining the good life. He is no less a sinner. And he also is every sinner. Although he is a privileged insider in God's kingdom, the personal assistant to the LORD's prophet, admired and revered for his reputation for godliness, God knew his religion was only skin-deep. Clean on the outside, leper on the inside. Apart from God's grace and mercy, so am I, so are you. This type of leprosy of the soul cannot protect even the servants of God from temptations to abuse status and take advantage of others. Gehazi is a portrait of a hypocrite who does not take in the benefits of grace that surround him.

### **B. No matter who or where you are, you can have a right relationship with God (vv. 1-3, 17)**

God providentially placed a young servant girl, a kidnapped captive, in Syria for a purpose—to be a light to the nations testifying to the goodness of the LORD God of Israel. It didn't matter that she was outside the Promised Land, in a place where no one worshiped the living God. She remained faithful to God's purpose. Naaman was a pagan from far away. But God found and redeemed him too.

### **C. Forsaking your idols to serve God exclusively is not constraining, but liberating (vv. 17-19)**

The dialogue between Naaman and Elisha surprises with tantalizing possibilities. Once Naaman sees he's healed, his heart is converted away from worshiping Rimmon (Syria's version of Baal) to serve only Israel's God. Next Elisha refuses any payment for God's miracle. So Naaman ask for two favors: a load of holy dirt, and a pagan temple pardon. It appears he wants the dirt to build a holy altar to the LORD back home in Syria. Who could object to that? So far so good. But then there's this problematic detail about his job. Whenever the king of Syria worships in the temple of Rimmon, he requires Naaman to assist him in bowing down to the idol. Naaman no longer wants to do it, and he won't be worshiping Rimmon in his heart, but helping the king worship is part of his job description. Must Naaman quit his high-paying, illustrious job and become a poor monk or something? Serious question: what do you think? The faithful man of God does not constrain his new convert, but sets him free to worship the LORD

in the messiness of real life. What a surprise!

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### **Larry Yeager: Great Expectations**

**Introduction:** The passage reveals very different expectations of people concerning the power and grace of God.

#### **I. A Test of Faith (1-14) Where has each person put their trust?**

##### **A. Naaman**

1. A “*Great Man*” AND
2. A leper! - not necessarily what we think of as leprosy – but a skin disease

##### **B. A little girl**

- a young Israelite
- A captive, torn from her home and family
- Secure in her faith and trust
- Bold in her witness

**THEOLOGICAL NOTE:** The most shocking thing in this opening? In 2 verses:

1. God’s absolute sovereignty is affirmed over nations and armies; AND
2. Over individual, personal circumstances!

##### **C. Israel’s king?**

1. Syrian king’s request – heal him!
2. Israel’s faithless king - He does not worship the God of Elisha
3. Fear!! Contrast of Expectations:

**QUESTION:** Who are you usually like?

1. A faithful little servant girl
2. A faithless king

##### **D. Elisha**

1. Send him to me – There is a prophet in Israel! (**v.8**)
2. Naaman’s expectation?? - Show him respect!! Deference.
3. A “cold” welcome - Naaman must be humbled before the Lord. - He is treated like a leper who needs to be healed! Because he is!
4. Unwelcome instructions (**v.10ff**)
  - a. Naaman is offended. Why the Jordan River?  
NOTE: The Gospel is, to many, offensive and exclusive.
  - b. Servants focus on the words of the prophet. “*Wash, and be clean!*”
5. God heals Naaman - According to the word of the prophet of God.

#### **II. A True Conversion – Center of the passage, center of the ministry of Elisha. God is calling the Gentiles to Himself! (Eph.3:6)**

##### **A. Only one true God in all the Earth**

1. His testimony! (Read **v.15**)

2. His resolve
3. His active conscience

B. Message to Israel - Where is their testimony? Resolve? Tender Conscience?

Jesus interprets this message. **Luke 4; Luke 17:11-18**

God is calling the Gentiles & turning away from Israel!

Jews in Nazareth got it!

C. Naaman's gift? (v.16)

1. The grace of God is a free gift.
2. The "gift of God" is eternal life.

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TEXT: 2 Kings 5:20-27

TITLE: CONDEMNATION OF GREEDY MINISTRY EXPLOITATION

**BIG IDEA:**

**COVETOUSNESS SEVERELY COMPROMISES MINISTRY INTEGRITY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The temptation of greed and covetousness always poses a serious threat to ministry integrity. The servant of God is all too familiar with the material sacrifices he has made and the worldly riches he has forsaken in order to pursue ministering to others. When Gehazi sees Elisha pass up the opportunity to receive legitimate lavish gifts from a thankful Naaman, he concocts a plan of deception to acquire the riches for himself. Rather than trusting in God to provide all his needs on a day-to-day basis, he chooses to pursue security and pleasure in the riches of this world.

**Dilday:** We see here a pagan who by an act of faith is cured of leprosy and an Israelite who by an act of dishonor is cursed with it.

**I. (:20-21a) MOTIVATION OF COVETOUSNESS**

**A. (:20a) Profit Opportunity Clouds the Thinking**

*“But Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, thought, ‘Behold, my master has spared this Naaman the Aramean, by not receiving from his hands what he brought.’”*

**B. (:20b-21) Pursuit of Covetousness**

*“As the LORD lives, I will run after him and take something from him. So Gehazi pursued Naaman.”*

**II. (:21b-24) METHODOLOGY OF DECEPTION**

**A. (:21b-22) Lying to Obtain Riches from a Thankful Recipient of God’s Blessing**

*“When Naaman saw one running after him, he came down from the chariot to meet him and said, ‘Is all well?’ 22 And he said, ‘All is well.’ My master has sent me, saying, ‘Behold, just now two young men of the sons of the prophets have come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two changes of clothes.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Gehazi had been decaying in his spiritual life, and this was the climax. He had pushed away the woman whose son died (4:27), and he had no power to raise the boy to life (4:31). Now his covetousness took control, it led to lying, and it finally resulted in Gehazi becoming a leper. The disease on the outside typified the decay on the inside.

**B. (:23) Acquiring Excessive Riches Under False Pretenses**

*“And Naaman said, ‘Be pleased to take two talents.’ And he urged him, and bound two talents of silver in two bags with two changes of clothes, and gave them to two of his servants; and they carried them before him.”*

**Clarke:** The fact that he handed them to two of his servants shows that this was a lot of silver. It required two servants to carry these two talents, for, according to the computation above, each talent was about 120 lbs. weight.

**C. (:24) Hiding the Riches in a Secure Location**

*“When he came to the hill, he took them from their hand and deposited them in the house, and he sent the men away, and they departed.”*

**III. (:25-27) MORTIFICATION OF EXPOSURE AND CONDEMNATION**

**A. (:25) Inquisition – What Gives?**

*“But he went in and stood before his master. And Elisha said to him, ‘Where have you been, Gehazi?’ And he said, ‘Your servant went nowhere.’”*

**B. (:26) Indictment – 2 Key Principles of Accountability**

1. God Sees All

*“Then he said to him, ‘Did not my heart go with you, when the man turned from his chariot to meet you?’”*

2. God Judges All

*“Is it a time to receive money and to receive clothes and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and male and female servants?”*

**David Guzik:** It seems that Elisha had no absolute law against receiving support from those who were touched by his ministry. Yet it was spiritually clear to Elisha, and should have been clear to Gehazi, that it was not appropriate at this time and circumstance.

**C. (:27) Sentence of Judgment**

*“Therefore, the leprosy of Naaman shall cleave to you and to your descendants forever.’  
So he went out from his presence a leper as white as snow.”*

**Whitcomb:** In proportion to his privileges, so also was his judgment – perpetual, inheritable leprosy! And thus, for one more of God’s privileged servants came the judgment that Paul feared so much: *“lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected” (1 Cor. 9:27).*

**MacArthur:** Gehazi’s greed had cast a shadow over the integrity of Elisha’s prophetic office. This made him no better in the people’s thinking than Israel’s false prophets,



who prophesied for material gain, the very thing he wanted to avoid (vv. 15, 16). Gehazi's act betrayed a lack of faith in the Lord's ability to provide. As a result, Elisha condemned Gehazi and his descendants to suffer Naaman's skin disease forever. The punishment was a twist for Gehazi, who had gone to "*take something*" from Naaman (v. 20), but what he received was Naaman's disease.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Finally, the suggestion to take vv. 20–27 as a secondary development (so **Gray**) should be rejected. The artful reversal of roles exhibited in the opening and closing verses points to the primary unity of the chapter: the notable foreigner who trusts in the prophet is healed of his leprosy, while the unfaithful attendant trades places with him, afflicted now by this same terrible disease.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What contributed to Gehazi's spiritual decay and problem with contentment?
- 2) What are the practical implications of the principles of accountability from this text?
- 3) What forms of deception are practiced today under the pretext of gospel ministry?
- 4) How can ministers of the gospel obscure the free nature of God's grace?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Donald J. Wiseman:** Gehazi's action broke the relationship when he sought to enrich himself. His attitude was one of avarice (v. 22), deception (vv. 23–25) and derogation of superiors (v. 20 '*this Aramean*'). Moreover he swore deceitfully by the LORD (v. 20, contrast Elisha, v. 16) and covered up for it and so was justly punished (**Lev. 19:12; Acts 5:2–3**). Naaman was more faithful to his new LORD than Gehazi was to his.

**Iain Provan:** Gehazi, on the other hand, has not grasped the meaning of what has happened, or does not care. His "grasping" is of a baser sort. He pursues profit (vv. 20–21). He concocts a story that is designed to explain Elisha's change of heart (he has two new arrivals to provide for, v. 22). It is a clever ploy, for the amount requested is not excessive in relation to the massive sum Naaman was originally prepared to pay (v. 5)—one talent of silver and two sets of clothing out of ten. Refraining from asking too much (and particularly from asking for any gold), he is unlikely to arouse suspicion. And so it proves. Unsuspecting Naaman gladly divests himself of his goods. Presumably Gehazi has calculated that Elisha will not be aware of what has happened. He knows, after all, that the Lord sometimes conceals things from him (4:27). Unfortunately for him, however, Elisha has on this occasion "seen" only too clearly,

and judgment is fierce, as Naaman's disease becomes Gehazi's and he turns as white as snow (v. 27). The fierceness is unsurprising, given the heinousness of the crime. Gehazi has sought to cash in on an act of God (cf. **Josh. 7; Acts 8:18–24**). He utters words that imply belief but does not have faith (as the Lord lives, v. 20; contrast v. 16, with its significant addition "*whom I serve*"). His aspirations to wealth and status (olive groves, vineyards, etc.; cf. the royal wealth of **1 Sam. 8:14–17**, and particularly the verb *lqh*, take, as here) have led him to forget the Lord (**Deut. 6:10–12**). His initial "investment" for his future (money, clothes) has garnered only negative interest.

### Scott LaPierre: Parallels Between Covetousness of Judas and Gehazi

- (Part I) Justified their covetousness (**2 Kin 5:20; Jam 1:13; John 12:4-6**).
- (Part II) Hid their covetousness (**2 Kin 4:27-31; Matt 26:21-22**).
- (Part III) Made covetousness their master (**Matt 6:24, 26:25, 49**).

### Taylor Dunham: Gehazi's Greed and Punishment

#### I. RACISM

(**1 Sam 16:7; Acts 10:34; 17:26-27; Rom 2:11; 3:29-30; 1 Cor 12:13; Col 3:11**)—"discrimination or prejudice based on race."

A. Nobody deserves God's free grace.

(**Deut 7:7; 9:5; Dan 9:18; Ezek 36:32; Rom 3:23-24**) – all have sinned and fall short

B. God's plan of redemption has always included Gentiles.

(**Isa 49:6; 56:3; Jn 10:16; Mat 28:19**)

1. In the OT, God accepted any Gentiles who wanted to join His people.

(**Isa 56:3, 6-8**)

2. In the NT, Jesus opened the door and invited people from all nations to come.

(**Mat 28:19; Lk 13:28-30**)

C. The gospel dispels any notion of ethnic superiority. (**Rom 3:10, 22-24; 4:16**)— none of us deserve the kindness of God's free grace.

1. All nations descended from one man. (**Act 17:26**)—Adam, corrupted by sin

2. Jesus reconciles people of all nations to one another.

(**Eph 2:14-19; Gal 3:28- 29; Col 3:11**)

3. The church is made up of people redeemed from every tribe and nation.

(**Rev 7:9-10**)

#### II. GREED—the love of money

A. Greed is idolatry. (**Mat 6:24; Col 3:5**)—eclipses the love and fear of God

B. Greed makes a person susceptible to corruption. (**1 Tim 3:3; 6:9-10**)—a root of all kinds of evil

C. Greed undermines our witness.

D. We must guard our hearts from greed. (**Prov 4:23**)

1. Feeling Entitled
2. Resenting God's Generosity to someone else.

### **III. LYING (25; Prov 6:16-17; 12:22)—deception**

#### **A. Motives**

1. To take advantage of someone—in this case Naaman
2. To cover another sin—to keep his sin secret from Elisha

#### **B. Why God Hates It**

1. Lying is contrary to His nature. (**Jn 14:16; Heb 6:18**)
2. Lying is the language of the devil. (**Jn 8:44**)
3. Lying destroys relationship. (**1 Jn 1:6-9**)
4. Lying (refusing to confess sin) mocks God. (**1 Jn 1:10; Act 5:4, 9**)

### **IV. LEPROSY (Isa 64:5b-6)—a picture of our human condition apart from Christ**

#### **A. Gehazi's Punishment is a Revelation of Inner Reality: an ugly soul.**

1. Religious does not mean Righteous.
2. Nothing is hidden from God, except what is covered by Christ. (**Heb 4:13**)

#### **B. Disease is a Picture of Our Fallen Condition: Unclean (Isa 64:5b-6)**

1. Spiritually unfit (**Rom 3:22b-23**)—cursed by God, separated from Him
2. Socially debilitating (**Lev 13:45-46**)—shunned by people, unfit for company

#### **C. Healing is a Picture of God's Free Grace: Christ (Rom 6:4; Col 2:12-14)**

1. Power to Heal (**Heb 7:25**)—physically & spiritually, completely, ultimately
2. Willingness to Heal (**Jn 6:37; Mat 8:2-3**)
3. Restored Relationship—with God and with other people.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/3102101491433.pdf>

### **Evie Megginson: The Greed of Gehazi**

#### **WE SEE IN THIS SERMON:**

- THE DESIRE OF GEHAZI,
- THE DECISION OF GEHAZI,
- THE DECEPTION OF GEHAZI,
- THE DECREE OF NAAMAN,
- THE DEMAND OF ELISHA,
- THE DECLARATION OF ELISHA, AND
- THE DEFILEMENT OF GEHAZI.

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/the-greed-of-gehazi-evie-megginson-sermon-on-money-70374>

### **Ted Gray: Gehazi's Greed Exposed and Judged"**

#### **I. The Root of All Kinds of Evil**

As we see Gehazi running after Naaman, to get something from him, we are reminded that the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil. It is not money that is the root of all kinds of evil. **1 Timothy 6:10** is often misquoted as people say that money is the

root of all kinds of evil. But money itself is necessary. As we have seen, Elisha certainly had need of money, just as you and I do. Money pays the mortgage or the rent, buys the daily bread, and pays the other expenses that are an inevitable part of life.

Because of that, money is a blessing from the Lord. But like every blessing from God, the evil one, and those who are evil, pervert the blessings from God. Love becomes lust. Daily bread becomes a yearning for a gluttonous feast. And money, a great blessing when used properly, becomes a terrible taskmaster that never gives peace to those who are enslaved by their love for money.

He who loves money, **Ecclesiastes 5:10** points out, will not be satisfied with money, nor he who loves wealth with his income; this also is vanity. And that is where we find Gehazi, unsatisfied with what he had because of his love for money. He was certainly provided for. Elisha knew that his servant had material needs. And just as Elijah had provided for Elisha in years past, so too now, we can be sure that Elisha provided for his servant Gehazi.

But whatever provision Gehazi received, it wasn't enough in his eyes. He had covetous eyes, and having seen the amount of gold and silver, along with those 10 exquisite suits that Naaman had, Gehazi's covetous mind went into action.

It has been pointed out the tenth commandment, commanding us not to covet, is often broken before any others. And as Gehazi coveted Naaman's treasures we see how his covetous love for money, like all sin, caused a "chain reaction". His coveting led to a lie. And perhaps you noticed it was quite an elaborate lie. In **verse 22** he said to Naaman, *"My master sent me to say, 'Two young men from the company of the prophets have just come to me from the hill country of Ephraim. Please give them a talent of silver and two sets of clothing.'"*

To come up with a story which most likely had no basis in fact, and to tell it so convincingly, leads us to believe that Gehazi had lied many times before. Often when we hear of someone who professes to be a Christian, who is caught in a heinous public sin, we express great surprise and shock. But with further reflection we realize that whatever heinous public sin was committed and discovered, had undoubtedly been going on for some time in secret.

As one commentator notes: "Gehazi's ... hypocrisy speak(s) to considerable practice in the art of deceit. Such ready audacity, so great perfection in the arts of lying and concealment, are not attained at the first attempt. No man becomes a rogue quite suddenly. Elisha was probably no more deceived in the character of Gehazi than Jesus was in the character of Judas, who was secretly 'a thief,' and 'had the bag, and bare what was put therein.'" (J. Orr)

As we see that one sin leads to another, we see that one lie, always begets another lie. After lying to Naaman, and receiving the goods, we hear Gehazi lie to Elisha. In **verse 25** Elisha asked him, *"Where have you been, Gehazi?"*

*“Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered.*

And as we hear Elisha’s response, we also see where the sin of coveting, deeply rooted in the heart and mind of Gehazi, was focused. It was focused on fancy clothes, olive groves, vineyards, flocks, herds, menservants and maidservants. That is what Elisha’s response is getting at when Elisha said to him in **verse 25**, *“Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?”*

There is no such thing as committing one sin. One sin always leads to another. And perhaps you noticed, Gehazi took the Lord’s name in vain when he decided to go after what his heart coveted so fervently. He said, in **verse 20**, *“As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”* His act of bringing the Lord into the sin is reminiscent of Jacob’s infamous act of deceit, who when questioned by his father, Isaac, as to how he had gotten the game so quickly said, *“The Lord your God gave me success.” (Genesis 27:20)*

## **II. Uncovered before God’s Sight**

Not only do we see, in this tragic account, that one sin always leads to another, but we also see that there is no way to hide from the Lord. In **verse 24** we read how when Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house. He sent the men away and they left. The hill was in a strategic spot. Undoubtedly Gehazi had taken note of how the hill blocked the view that Elisha would have of him, should Elisha be looking his way as he returned from getting the goods from Naaman.

In case you wonder why he had two servants with him carrying the silver is that one talent of silver was about seventy five pounds. And Naaman had shown extreme generosity, in giving Gehazi double what he had asked for. In **verse 22** he had asked for a talent of silver – he had figured that seventy five pounds of silver would be a pretty nice haul. But Naaman had shown his generosity and had given him two talents of silver – one hundred fifty pounds.

But as he had these two servants carrying the one hundred fifty pounds of silver, along with the two exquisite suits, he knew that he had to stash them away before he came to the crest of the hill. He had it all figured out in his mind and heart. He had quite likely taken note of the hill as he pursued Naaman. Now he had cleverly used the hill to block the view of Elisha. He could stash the silver and the suits away undetected. And then what better way to look nonchalant, as though he had done nothing wrong, then to saunter into Elisha’s presence just as though he was at his service like any other day?

But God had revealed to Elisha the sins that Gehazi had committed with great cunning and deceit, for **Hebrews 4:13** declares, *Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must*

*give account.*

Can you imagine, how his heart must have sunk, as Elisha said to him, *“Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves?”*

Gehazi was finding out the truth of what would be written later in **Ecclesiastes 12:14**: *For God will bring every deed into judgment, including every hidden thing, whether it is good or evil.*

Gehazi was finding out the truth of what would be written later, in **Colossians 3:25**: *For the wrongdoer will be paid back for the wrong he has done, and there is no partiality.*

He was finding out the truth that the Holy Spirit would inspire the Apostle Paul to write in **Romans 2:16**, concerning the Day of Judgment, *on that Day ... God (will) judge the secrets of men by Christ Jesus*. That final Day of Judgment is indeed coming. And when it comes you can be sure that God’s judgment will be just, just as it always has been.

### **III. God’s Just Judgment**

Gehazi wanted what Naaman had. It is ironic that he had said to himself in **verse 20**, *“As surely as the Lord lives, I will run after him and get something from him.”* He got exactly what Naaman had. He got some silver and some nice clothes, but he also received Naaman’s leprosy, and it was leprosy that would affect his children and grandchildren for generations to come. Elisha pronounced this judgment on Gehazi: *“Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and your descendants forever.”*

It was a just punishment. And that is true for all the judgments of God upon sin. God often uses the sin that people commit to come back against them as their own judgment. For example in **Matthew 7:2** Jesus says, *“For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.”*

Or consider the words of Jesus to Peter, when he used his sword to sever the ear of the servant of the high priest. Jesus said, in **Matthew 26:52**, *“Put your sword back into its place. For all who take the sword will perish by the sword.”*

We see that people’s sin comes back upon themselves as judgment in some of the classic surprises of Scripture. Consider that Haman was hanged on the gallows that he had made for Mordecai. Or consider the lesser known, but equally equitable example, of Adoni-bezek, one of the Canaanite kings. Whenever he would capture another king he would cut off their thumbs and their big toes. By removing their big toes he hampered their mobility. And by severing their thumbs he made it virtually impossible for them to grip a sword in retaliation. It was also an act of great humiliation for the seventy kings Adoni-bezek had captured.

But then his day came; he was captured. You can guess, if you're not familiar with the account in **Judges Chapter 1**, what happened to him. They cut off his big toes and his thumbs and he acknowledged the justice of the punishment. In **Judges 1:7** we read: Adoni-bezek said, *"Seventy kings with their thumbs and their big toes cut off used to gather up scraps under my table; as I have done, so God has repaid me."* So they brought him to Jerusalem and he died there.

Do not be deceived, **Galatians 6:7** warns: *God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.*

God's judgments are always just, but they are not always immediate the way Gehazi's judgment was immediate. There will be many surprises on judgment day. There will be many, like Gehazi, who seem to be righteous, working faithfully in the kingdom of God, but only as a cover-up for their sin, whether it be sins of lust or greed or sloth, or any number of other sins. There are many who use the ministry as a cover-up for their sin.

Their judgment will be severe. The Lord gave this warning through Ezekiel, in **Ezekiel 34:2**: *This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "Woe to you shepherds of Israel who only take care of yourselves! Should not shepherds take care of the flock?"*

Jeremiah adds, in **Jeremiah 23:1**, *"Woe to the shepherds who destroy and scatter the sheep of my pasture!" declares the LORD.*

Some receive that woe in this life, as Gehazi did, and others will receive that judgment on the last day. **1 Timothy 5:24** points out, *The sins of some men are obvious, reaching the place of judgment ahead of them; the sins of others trail behind them.*

<https://theseed.info/sermon.php?id=1570>

TEXT: 2 Kings 6:1-7

TITLE: MIRACLE OF THE FLOATING AXE HEAD

**BIG IDEA:**

**MINISTERS OF THE WORD SHOULD TURN TO THE MASTER IN CRISIS SITUATIONS BECAUSE HE WILL SHOW CONCERN AND EXERCISE CONTROL**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This is a very interesting short story from the standpoint of biblical hermeneutics. What is the point of the author? What main theme was he trying to communicate to his original audience? Why is this story included at this point of the narrative? **Dale Ralph Davis** (below) gives a good synopsis of some of the different approaches one can take. Usually I would argue against some of the more speculative **allegorical** or **moral object lesson** approaches. Partly that is due to my mindset of interpreting the OT prophecies in a **literal** rather than allegorical fashion. But I must admit that I am probably too unbalanced towards that side of the spectrum when it comes to historical stories such as the one we have here. Certainly, the applications drawn by **Tony Warren** (see below and in the Notes section in the full pdf download) centering around the redemptive work of Jesus Christ on the cross seem to have merit here. Why else would Elisha use the instrumentation of the cut off stick to perform the miracle of recovery from death in the Jordan? Also the story is directly connected to the account of Naaman's cleansing in the same Jordan River which is clearly **redemptive** in motif. However, I would bring out those redemptive lessons more by way of application than interpretation of the historical details.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** You can go off in the **wrong direction** with this text. In one sense, it's easy to do because this little incident is such a teaser. You ask yourself: Why is this story about the aquatic axe in Scripture? Answer: It shows the power of Yahweh working through the prophet. True, but ... it seems so trivial, so senseless, so unnecessary, so outlandish. Besides, what substantial teaching can we get from it? So there are various approaches—that go off . . . in the wrong direction.

Some **rationalize** the episode. What really must have happened, buried as it is under all manner of inevitable accretions and well-meant embellishments, is that Elisha poked around with that branch he hacked down in the place indicated until he successfully inserted it into the socket of the axe-head and lifted it to the seminarian's waiting hands. Or it could be that the prophet simply scooted the axe-head with his branch into shallower water where the fellow could retrieve it. Never mind that the text does not read this way. Others do not bother to rationalize the story but simply declare it 'clearly legendary', an event blown out of proportion by the admirers/disciples of Elisha.



Still others, perhaps with more reverence for Scripture, will **allegorize** this text; that is, they hold that the text means something other than what it says. For example, the iron axe-head is man's soul, the Jordan stands for judgment. So man's soul is hopelessly lost beneath the waters of judgment. The stick or branch is wood, of course—and so is the cross. When the cross of Jesus enters the situation man's soul is rescued. Nevertheless, faith is necessary—the man had to 'reach out his hand' and take it.

Others **moralize** the text, that is, they find in it some lesson they fancy it teaches. Imagination can run riot here. The story is a rebuke for borrowing other folks' property. Or maybe we could couch it in proverb-form: Don't cut wood near a river. If you think about it, that proverb has multiple applications. Maybe it's a tract against building programs. Or does it suggest we should license axes and/or ban the lending of them? Some of this is clearly ridiculous; but if moralizing is the way, it can be difficult to isolate the more excellent moralizings.

**Can we take it straight?** And, if so, what does this text intend to teach us?

- **God's concern for a simple need (v. 5a)**

If we don't believe correctly here, then the little problems, the small details, the insignificant matters will pile up and we won't cast them on our Father because surely he can't be bothered, so we will think on them, brood on them, fear over them—all because we're too proud to say, 'My axe-head's in the water!' Do you see the God you have? Heaven is his throne and earth is his footstool (**Isa. 66:1**)—and your axe-head matters to him.

- **God's power for a genuine need (v. 5b)**

The text seems to say that you can expect God's supply for a genuine need. We may often need divine wisdom to make clear what our real need is. This is especially true for Christians in the west, where we have inflated 'need' to cover so much. And we must understand that God may supply need in either a marvelous or a mundane way. However, this text (as the rest of the Bible) testifies that our destitution is the arena for Yahweh's help and that our emergencies are the props for his finest acts.

- **God's providence for a future need (vv. 3–4a)**

There was some jot-and-tittle type of occurrence that never fazed your mind. And later you recognize that it was the hinge of Yahweh's immense goodness to you. Here is God's hilarious way of being for his people in the puniest circumstances for their good and deliverance. What should we do but adore and worship?

- **God's appeal to a spiritual need**

Here I want to focus on the possible message of this little story as a whole. I admit this procedure can be somewhat speculative but the exercise is, I think, worth our time. I want us to consider how Israel might have heard this little narrative—or how they

should have heard it. We know that 1–2 Kings wasn't completed until after Judah was captive in Babylon (see **2 Kings 24–25**). So we might ask: how would the exiles in Babylon hear this story some 300 years after Elisha?

In order to answer this question we must link up **6:1–7** with the four stories in **4:1–44**. Those stories, along with **6:1–7**, show Yahweh delivering and helping the believing remnant in Israel. Here among the faithful minority were various folks, each with his/her own version of desperation, to whom Yahweh brings his grace and help. The combined testimony of **4:1–44** and **6:1–7** reminds me of the final line in **J. Wilbur Chapman's** hymn: 'Saving, helping, keeping, loving, he is with me to the end.' That is precisely what Yahweh is doing for his faithful servants in their emergencies, large or small.

Now how might such a testimony strike the people of Judah, years later, who had lost their land and kingdom and had been carted off to Babylon? Could we not understand these stories (**6:1–7** among them) as an appeal to this people who had lost their way and had preferred apostasy to fidelity? Are they not saying, 'Israel, here is the God available to you'? 'See,' so they imply, 'how Yahweh's arm works for those who fear him, how near he is to the broken-hearted, to the poor and needy. Turn and seek this God who offers himself to you.'

#### 1) Example of Allegorizing the text:

**Tony Warren:** The question is often asked of me, "what is the significance of the floating axe head?" Was it just to show that Elisha did great miracles by the power of God? Was it to demonstrate that God cares about His people being in debt? Was it a caution to us that we must make sure we return all tools and equipment we borrow? Or perhaps it was just to make a display of the awesome power of God? All of these questions can be categorized as true of course, but is that the point of this miracle performed by Elisha? Why were these logs being cut near the Jordan River that has an obvious spiritual connotation? Why did the prophet Elisha throw in a new piece of wood or branch cut from a tree to retrieve the iron? Why was it an axe head that was lost in the river Jordan? Why did God choose a miracle of making the iron axe head swim or flow to the surface? What part did the branch play in the iron floating? Indeed, why would Elisha do such a miracle at all, since God could have just moved it out of the water with a word, or simply have the axe replaced for the student. The fact is, this sign or miracle is God breathed in all its elements because God wants us to consider it as a token or signification of something far more important than literal iron floating on water. The floating axe head, and indeed the pattern of all God's miracles recorded in Scripture, always have some deeper spiritual meaning to them. From the creation of the world in seven days, to the clean and unclean animals in the flood by twos and sevens in Noah's day, to the parting of the red sea, to the five loaves of bread feeding five thousand. They all point to some deeper spiritual truth concerning the gospel of Christ toward His people. In understanding this we know that the primary lesson for the church in the lost axe head that did swim, is its message concerning God's relationship to His people. So let's briefly look at seven verses that immediately speak to this question. . .

This story of the miracle of Elisha raising the lost axe head that is recorded in **2nd Kings 6:1-7**, is the **sign** (miracle = sign) of the debtor's recovery and restoration through Christ Jesus. We see through this story that Elisha used the wood to remove this student's debt, and this redemption was made through the water of Jordan. This whole episode demonstrates to us the condescension of the Son of God in humbling himself that he might be nailed to a tree (become a curse for us) and come through the waters of death to provide solution for our debt. The miracle performed by the power of God through Elisha of retrieving the axe head by the tree is a spiritual portrait of the work of Christ in redemption through the spiritual water of the river Jordan. A river that we know must be passed over in order to reach the Promised Land. The miracle of the lost axe head teaches us of God's providential purpose in signs, that we might grow in grace in the revealed vision of His completed/satisfied work. This whole collection of seven passages is a powerful message to us that reveals the ultimate power in "*God our Savior*" and our help in times of need. Scripture is always, and has always been pointing us to the deliverer Christ, and has been speaking to us through the Spirit of truth. "Christ our Savior" is the miracle of the tree that remedies the problem of His prophet under law, by paying the debt that the law justly requires.

2) Example of moralizing the text:

**Wiersbe:** The good news is that the Lord can recover what we have lost and put us back to work. If we lose our "cutting edge," He can restore us and make us efficient in His service. The important thing is to know that you have lost it, and when and where you have lost it, and honestly confess it to Him. Then get back to work again!

3) Some other approaches:

**J. Hampton Keathley III:** Though the lessons are many, the primary lesson in the lost axe head that was made to float is its **message concerning God's relationship to us**, especially as His people in the minutia or the small things of life. May I suggest three things for us to ponder about this primary lesson.

**(1) God knows us intimately.** No detail of our lives, no matter how small, escapes his loving and omniscient eyes. This is clear from **Psalms 139**. But this is not just a matter of information. It is a matter of an intimate knowing that stems from an intimate and personal love that has promised to never leave nor to forsake us.

**(2) He cares about us.** No matter what we may be facing, not only does He know it, but He cares and wants to use it to draw us to Himself, build our faith, and change our lives. The problem is, too often we only want God the Rewarder and not God the Reward; we want a solution, not a Savior or His solution. We must never divorce the responsibility of casting our cares on Him and the promise that He cares for us from the preceding verse, "*Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God . . .*"

**(3) He is gracious.** In the miracle of the axe head, we are reminded again of how God is not only able to do super abundantly above all we are able to ask or think no matter how small or how large the problem, but He is available in His loving care to reach out to us

in our need. This is not to suggest that He always will remove the problem or the pain, but it does stress that He is with us through the problem to comfort and give us strength to bear it.

There is a secondary, but still an important lesson to be learned in this story. It shows us the divine approval and value for God's people to work hard and do things for themselves when they can. We always need to work in the strength which He supplies, but we must put our hands to axe and even reach into the water to pull out the floating axe head when God does work above the natural order of creation.

**Peter Pett:** By this lesson the prophets were made to recognise that without God the truth that they presented would have no cutting edge. It was also an indication to them that God would always help them in their difficulties, especially when disaster struck. The story is a reminder to us that life will not necessarily always go smoothly but that our Father is aware of our needs and of our circumstances, and will meet us at the point of our need when the time is right.

**Greg Allen: When the Ax Head Floated**

**Theme: The story of the floating ax head teaches us some important spiritual principles about trusting in God's faithful help in times of crisis.**

- WE BEST PREPARE FOR A CRISIS THAT MAY COME LATER WHEN WE INVITE GOD'S PRESENCE IN OUR LIVES NOW.
- NO CRISIS IS EVER HOPELESS SO LONG AS WE CRY OUT TO GOD FOR HELP IN THE MIDST OF IT.
- GOD IS ABLE TO USE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE CRISIS ITSELF IN ORDER TO BRING ABOUT A SOLUTION TO IT.
- GOD WILL ONLY MEET OUR NEEDS IN A CRISIS AS FAR AS IS NECESSARY FOR US TO DO OUR PART.

<https://bethanybible.org/new/sermon/sermons-2012/2012-02-26/when-the-ax-head-floated-%E2%80%932-kings-61-7>

**House:** Elisha's next miracle parallels the multiplying of the oil (2 Kgs 4:1–7), the curing of the stew (2 Kgs 4:38–41), and the feeding of one hundred (2 Kgs 4:42–44). Each of these stories portrays Elisha saving the prophets or the prophets' families from physical want or financial disaster. His miraculous powers help him to be the perfect "master" in these crisis situations.

## **I. (:1-4) THE MASTER'S CONCERN FOR THE MINISTERS OF THE WORD**

### **A. (:1-2) Provision of Adequate Living Quarters**

#### **1. (:1) Cramped Living Quarters**

*"Now the sons of the prophets said to Elisha, 'Behold now, the place*

*before you where we are living is too limited for us.”*

2. (:2) Construction Proposal

*“Please let us go to the Jordan, and each of us take from there a beam, and let us make a place there for ourselves where we may live.’  
So he said, ‘Go.’”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** The recovery of a sunken ax head is recorded immediately following the story of Naaman because of the associative link created by their common reference to the Jordan. It is as if the storyteller had said, “Here is another tale about Elisha and the River Jordan.”

**B. (:3-4) Presence to Encourage and Bless**

1. (:3) Solicitation of Elisha’s Participation

*“Then one said, ‘Please be willing to go with your servants.’  
And he answered, ‘I shall go.’”*

2. (:4) Sharing in the Construction Project

*“So he went with them;  
and when they came to the Jordan, they cut down trees.”*

**II. (:5-7) THE MASTER’S CONTROL OVER CRISIS SITUATIONS**

**A. (:5) Devastating Loss**

*“But as one was felling a beam, the axe head fell into the water;  
and he cried out and said, ‘Alas, my master! For it was borrowed.’”*

**B. (:6-7) Directed Recovery**

1. (:6) Divine Miracle

*“Then the man of God said, ‘Where did it fall?’ And when he showed him the place, he cut off a stick, and threw it in there, and made the iron float.”*

2. (:7) Human Responsibility

*“And he said, ‘Take it up for yourself.’  
So he put out his hand and took it.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) How big of a crisis was this for the young prophet who had borrowed and lost the axe head?

2) Why did the author choose to include this story at this point in the narrative? What was the author's objective?

3) How do you evaluate the different hermeneutical approaches to this story (i.e. – straight history, allegorical, morality lesson, etc.)?

4) What was the significance of Elisha using a cut off stick in the performance of the miracle?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### **Tony Warren: The Miracle of Elisha and the Floating Axe Head**

The name "Elisha" means [*God is Savior*] and is from the Hebrew elements [*el*] meaning "God" and [*yasha*] meaning "help" or Savior. The title "God is Savior" is very appropriate for the miracles Elisha does, since Elisha is a type of Christ (**2nd Kings 4:33-35**) and his miracles are to signify some particular aspect of the gospel message of salvation.

The sons of the prophets refer to his spiritual children the prophets who are characteristic of Christian workers. In the historical narrative they were the assemblage and community of prophets who had flocked to him for the advantage of learning and wise counsel. Their place was more like a school for the prophets of God, and they sat to learn both under Elijah and Elisha (**2nd Kings 2:3**) to be educated on Godly matters.

The story and context of this event actually begins earlier as the work and miracles done by the Lord through His prophet Elisha had brought great accessions of pupils to him eager to learn of the glory of God. Clearly their numbers had increased so that the laborers needed more space (Luke 10:2). Thus they made it known to Elisha that the place (common habitation of meeting) where they "sat" down to hear Elisha speak had become too strait (meaning too narrow or confining) for their growing numbers, and they wanted his approval of their solution, which was to go and build a bigger place where they could dwell together comfortably.

Obviously the prophets were austere men that took great value in the assent of Elisha to their plan, and paid much reverence to Him in asking his approval to go and do this thing. They were a community of saints who labored together and held Elisha in great esteem in their service of God. Their prayer and plan was that they could go to Jordan, where there would be sufficient wood along its banks for building. The decision was made that every man of them should take from there a beam, or a piece of wood fit to build with, and construct a new house to dwell there. So Elisha, under inspiration of God, gives these young servants his blessing to take their leave that they may enlarge their dwelling place.

Not only did the prophets seek out the permission of Elisha to build this house, but they also desired the presence of man of God with them. There was no pre-plan that Elijah would go with them, but one of his disciples respectfully asked if he would be content (*pleased*) to go with them. Let's not lose sight of fact that Elisha was an important prophet, a busy man, a man of teachings and obligations and responsibilities. And yet we are struck by his humility that He answers the request with, "*I will go [with you].*" In the historical narrative they asked no doubt because of their great love, reverence and respect for him personally, and with an eye toward his sage advice and wisdom. But make no mistake about it, his assent was because it was always God's divine purpose and sovereign good will that Elisha accompany them. Elisha had to be there in order to demonstrate God's miraculous power in the miracle he performed as a model or figure for so great salvation in the work of Christ Jesus. So we read in this verse that Elisha gives his assent to the young prophet that he indeed will also accompany them as they journey to build the dwelling place for God's servants.

Thus Elisha went with his disciples to the Jordan river where they found great trees on its banks to build their new dwelling place, and they began to cut wood from the trees for the construction of this building. The Jordan River in Scripture represents death, that which separates the children of God from the promised land that lies on the other side of it. It is a symbol representing a type of hell or separation from God. Indeed the very topography of Israel and requirement of its children needing to cross this river in order to enjoy that land, bore witness to its type or representation of the kingdom of heaven, which is the true promised land. The Lord God in this miraculous event is intent on demonstrating to us who would come after that there is a fundamental problem (**Psalms 127:1**) with the building of this house. Namely, that God's prophet has a debt to pay, and that debt can only be satisfied by the miraculous work and power of Christ to redeem or make compensation for that which was lost, the fault of the builder. We can see this illustrated in the following passages of this chapter:

When one of the prophets was swinging the axe, the axe head slipped off of the stick handle, as they would sometimes do (**Deuteronomy 19:5**) in those days, and the iron axe head was lost as it sank to the bottom of the Jordan river. This caused consternation to this prophet because he was acutely aware that borrowed items should be used with care so that once the task is completed, it can be returned unbroken to its rightful owner. If not, there is a debt that is owed. Thus the good servant was terribly distressed, because in anguish he exclaimed, "Alas, master, for it was borrowed!" In other words, it was with great dismay the prophet said this over the loss of this axe head incurring debt. This is because an axe of iron in those days was no small purchase. Even in our day a Axe big enough to chop down trees is minimum \$70.00. Think what the cost would be in those days when \$70 would be over a month's wages. This prophet was fully aware that he was now indebted and would have to make good on the cost of the axe (**Exodus 22:14-15**). The text within this passage also suggests that the prophet is distressed because he did not have the means to purchase a new one, nor to replace the one lost. i.e., this poor man was now in debt to the owner, who the law required restitution.

The law requires justice in compensation. Moreover, the axe head in Scripture represents judgment, which is the penalty one must pay for the debt that he owes. In this instance, because the prophet lost the axe head, he lawfully owed a debt because the axe was borrowed. The judgment of law is that now He had to pay that debt he owes. The axe itself can easily be shown to be used of God as the representation of God's tool of judgment.

*"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." -  
Matthew 3:10*

*"And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire." -  
Luke 3:9*

The servant of God losing the axe head in the river Jordan signifies the man owe a great debt, and are under the judgment of the law for it. This truth characterized by it falling into the river that separates the people of God from the promised land. The axe head lost causing debt, and the law requiring that debt must be paid. Thus Elisha is divinely inspired to cut a stick from a tree, that through the power of God it would bring up the axe head, removing the judgment by removing the debt. When the axe head is restored, the servant is now free from debt. It signifies that debt is no longer owed and God's servant is no longer under judgment of the law concerning it. This is why Elisha, the great man of God and type of Christ, had compassion on Him and through divine intervention took action to release (**Deuteronomy 15:1-2**) him from this debt, and as a type of Christ these Scriptures point to our deliverer from Debt, Christ our Saviors. As we continue, we see that Elisha spoke to the saddened prophet and asked to be shown specifically where the axe fell.

Elisha (*God is Savior*), having come with them by divine and sovereign providence of God, is right there where he should be, representing Christ, our ever present help in time of trouble. We also note that He pointedly asks the servant exactly where in the water the iron had fallen, and the prophet shows him the place. In other words, the implication is, did you recognize exactly where you lost it, or where the debt was incurred that you need to be redeemed from. The servant knew where and he showed Elisha the place. I believe the Spiritual message here is that Salvation is for those who know where their debt is, and for those who desire Christ's help that they can be set free of it. Indeed, the only way to be free of it is to recognize where and how you have lost it, and that you are in need of help.

*"But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to*



*call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."*  
**Matthew 9:12-13**

Like the Pharisees here, if we say we have no sin or we have no debt, then Christ the physician cannot relieve you of what you claim not to have. He came for debtors, and we need to confess that place of debt to Him (**Psalms 51:17**) that we are redeemed from the law. We must be broken in order to recognize our place of debt to that law. When the prophet shows Elisha the place where the axe was lost, Elisha then went and cut a piece of wood or stick from a tree and he cast it into the water at the place the prophet confessed the axe head fell. That stick represents the work of Christ on the cross to remove the curse of the law, the debt that requires judgment. That Hebrew word in **2nd Kings 2:6** [ets] that is translated stick, is the exact same word that is translated "gallows" (**Esther 5:14**), representing the tree, a tool of hanging. Likewise it is the same word translated tree in **Deuteronomy chapter 21**:

*"And if a man have committed a sin worthy of death, and he be to be put to death, and thou hang him on a tree: His body shall not remain all night upon the tree, but thou shalt in any wise bury him that day; (for he that is hanged is accursed of God;) that thy land be not defiled, which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance." -Deuteronomy 21:22-23*

This is precisely why Christ was hung and crucified on a tree, that he would redeem His people from the debt that the law required them to pay. It shows that it is Christ that by means of a stick or tree has rescued us from the consequences of our debt, the curse of the law. In other words, by being made a curse for us, He has removed all our obligations to the law. Indeed this very passage in Deuteronomy is referenced in Galatians when it speaks about the redeeming work of Jesus Christ.

*"Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:" -Galatians 3:13*

The stick or tree (translated both) represents the power or work of Christ in the redemption of the debt. It was for this reason that Christ died on the tree. It was by this methodology that we are redeemed from the law which was a curse to us because no one could keep it sufficiently to be saved. It is the law which threatens us because of the debt we owe. Note that Elisha did not use the old wood helve (handle) of the axe head to throw into the water to retrieve that which was lost. Instead he cut an entirely new stick to cast into the Jordan river. This was because the stick represents the work of Christ, and it had to be untainted illustrating a new and living way of redemption. When Elisha cut off and cast "this" stick into the place of debt, it was only then that the iron did miraculously swim or flow to the surface of the water to be reclaimed.

Of this miracle there are many (even professing Christians) who ridicule and scoff at it, but this is only illustrating either a terrible lack of understanding of the miraculous power of God, or the deeper spiritual truths such miracles signified. These stories aren't superficial exaggerations, the miracles illustrate eternal truths that were true historically, and are just as relevant for today for what they ultimately represented. Every miracle performed in Scripture is a allegory or parable that was specifically done for our Spiritual understanding of the gospel of Christ. It is truly sad that some professing Christians are so concerned about not taking historical events as representing a type or allegory, that they avoid seeing Christ in the miracles altogether. In truth, that is the whole point of miracles, the signs that we ought to notice some aspect of Christ in them. Otherwise we are left with simple demonstrations of power, historical events or examples of moral and life guidelines. As Bible-believing Christians we must remember that these historical accounts of Elisha's miracles are not only totally true, but are also "signs" or significations--tokens of some God-breathed and hidden (**Proverbs 25:2**) Spiritual truths about God's salvation economy. Just as His turning water to wine, healing the blind, raising the dead, or casting out Devils are examples of this same Biblical principle. They're not just stories about miracles, they are models illustrating the Spiritual work of Christ and are revealed by His Spirit (**1st Corinthians 2:10**). This could not have been a natural occurrence, as no man of Himself can cause iron to rise or flow to the top of water and float. Clearly this was a miraculous token of retrieving that which was lost, which the Lord performed through Elisha to demonstrate some aspect of His great and magnificent salvation program for His people.

*"How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?" -Hebrews 2:3-4*

Miracles are done to be a sign, indicator, a witness to so great a salvation that comes only in Christ our Savior. The ensign in this episode with Elisha is that it was the wood of a tree that was cut off (a representation of the work of Christ) that was the key to resurrecting the iron from the depths of the river Jordan. The same portrait of wood that we can see when the children of Israel thirsted in the wilderness, and the Lord told Moses to cast a tree (same word) into the poisoned water to make it sweet and drinkable (**Exodus 15:25**). The wood stick of the tree represents the efficacious power of Christ in the water whereby Christ redeems it making it clean. Elisha, a type of Christ, uses this same stick cut off so that the axe head can be redeemed from being lost. In other words, it was because of the stick cast into Jordan (representing death) that the iron did float and thus could be retrieved by God's servant.

## **2nd Kings 6:7**

*"Therefore said he, Take it up to thee. And he put out his hand, and took it."*

A portion of Scripture that exemplifies this command of Elisha to me is when Christ performed the miracle of healing the man that was lame (**John 5:11**). Christ made him whole and said "*take up thy bed, and walk.*" It was the power of God that gave this man the ability to put out his hand and take up his bed. Likewise, Elisha through the power of the wood that was cut off, redeemed the axe head, making it possible for the prophet to do what he could never have done otherwise. Elisha said, "*take it up to thee.*" And he put forth his hand and received that which was lost. The man who had suffered loss and thus owed a debt, could now put out his hand and that debt was taken away from him. By this miracle we once again see that all things are possible with God (**Mark 2:23-24**). Just as we who have lost all and are in debt to God by the sin of Adam, have through the power of this tree been returned to that image of God (**Romans 8:29-30**). The prophet through Elisha (God our Savior) has taken away this servant's debt, pointing to our same redemption through Christ, God our Savior. Moreover, as we have had our debt expunged, so we should follow Christ and in that same way forgive our debtors.

*"The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt." -Matthew 18:26-27*

This is the compassion of God, and we should be just as compassionate to those who are indebted to us. The compassion Elisha had on his disciple for his debt is a portrait of the compassion God has upon us for ours.

<http://www.mountain-retreat.org/faq/miracle-of-elisha-and-the-floating-axe-head.html>

### **J. Hampton Keathley III: The Lost Axe Head**

#### **I. The Condition and Character of the Sons of the Prophets –**

First, let's not miss the fact that this account **stands in contrast with the story of Gehazi**. In contrast to the materialism, the unfaithfulness, and the hypocrisy of Gehazi, we are given a picture of a whole school of men who were faithful, sacrificial, and devoted to the spread of the Word of the God by working toward larger quarters to accommodate their growing numbers. Among God's people, there are usually some Gehazi-like people, but we should never allow this to discourage us or cause us to become cynical, because if we will look around we can usually find those who are faithful. Our need, as the Lord exhorts us, is to pray to the Lord of the harvest to thrust these out into the fields (**Luke 10:2**). Or as in Elijah's day--to get them out of the caves.

Second, we see that Elisha and the school of the prophets of God were **growing**. As in the ministry of our Lord and the disciples that followed him, the purpose of the ministry and miracles of both Elijah and Elisha was to authenticate the messenger as the one who was truly carrying the message of God. Though the miracles demonstrated God's love for His people, the primary purpose was to demonstrate the futility of Baal and any way of life that departed from the Lord. God had warned them of this earlier in Deut. with the promises of blessing for obedience and cursing for disobedience. . .

The college here spoken of seems to be that at Gilgal, for there Elisha was (**ch. 4:38**), and it was near Jordan; and, probably, wherever Elisha resided as many as could of the sons of the prophets flocked to him for the advantage of his instructions, counsels, and prayers. Everyone would covet to dwell with him and be near him. Those that would be teachers should lay out themselves to get the best advantages for learning. The school could just as well have been located at Jericho (see **ch. 2:4f**).

Third, we are told that the prophets told Elisha, “*the place before you where we are living is too limited for us*” (**vs. 1**). **With growth we always experience growing pains**, particularly the need for more space and resources to continue the growth of reaching, teaching, and building people in the Lord. Growth is always exciting and a desired commodity in ministry. It can be a sign of a spiritually-healthy church, but in our consumer-oriented society that so often depends on Madison Avenue tactics for growth, we must guard against evaluating success or the work of God by names, nickels, and noses. . .

## **II. The Concern and Character of Elisha**

Not only did Elisha give his permission for the project, but he was also willing to accompany them in order to lend his support and encouragement. It was an opportunity for on-the-job training and an opportunity to study these men in their work. It would aid his own ability to minister more effectively to his students. Pastors and teachers alike need opportunities to get to know their flock and to let their flock know them.

Not only did Elisha show interest and concern for the project as a whole, but he demonstrated his involvement even in the smallest of matters as in the loss of the axe head. Of course this incident was no small matter to the man who lost it, but in the final analysis it was a small thing. Rather than write it off as trivial, he reached out to this simple need. When Elisha stepped forward, inquired concerning the place where the axe head went into the water, and made the iron swim with the stick he cut, he was giving this entire school of prophets a wonderful illustration of the sovereign care and providence of God.

God is interested and cares about even the small and trivial incidents in our lives. He tells us to pray about everything and to cast all our cares on Him. Why? Because Peter reminds us in **1 Peter 5:7**, “*He cares for us.*” This statement is given as part of the reason and motivation for submitting ourselves under God’s providential hand by casting all our cares, every single one on the Lord. . .

The miracle of the axe head illustrates how God uses our everyday circumstances to teach us about Himself and His providential purpose to work all things for our growth if we will only trust Him, and in that trust, have the vision to see Him at work.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/15-lost-axe-head-2-kings-61-7>

### **Fr. Lawrence Farley: The Floating Axe Head**

In this story, as in most of the Old Testament stories, **cultural context** is

everything. Elisha and his band of prophets lived in a day when their message of pure Yahwism and the necessity of rejecting the syncretistic worship of Baal and other gods, was unpopular. The king said that the worship of Baal and other gods was part of a generous, large-hearted, ecumenism, but Elisha and his prophetic commune knew otherwise. Combining the worship of Baal with the worship of Yahweh, they said, was not generous large-hearted ecumenism, but simply apostasy, a betrayal of Yahweh who insisted that He alone be worshipped by His people. Turning to Baal or to other gods was not spiritual generosity, but idolatry, an adulterous defection from the God who led Israel out of Egypt and entered into a covenant with them on Mount Sinai. Elisha and his band of prophets were therefore profoundly unpopular in Israel, and were under constant threat.

They lived together in a kind of commune or monastic skete. As their numbers grew, they needed to build so that they could survive. They decided therefore to go to the banks of the Jordan River (then heavily forested) to cut logs to build a place where they could find stability and peace. As one of their number lifted up his axe to cut the logs, the axe-head flew from the handle and vanished into the depths of the Jordan River. This was no small catastrophe. In those days, Israel was technologically inferior to the surrounding nations, and an iron implement such as an axe-head was invaluable. Losing it then was not like losing an axe-head now, when we can simply go the hardware store and buy another axe. In Elisha's day, it was less like losing a replaceable tool, and more like totalling a friend's borrowed Lamborghini: the cost of replacing it was prohibitive, and in Elisha's day would have involved the borrower possibly selling himself into slavery to pay for the loss. As well as causing an immediate work stoppage and a failure to build the required place for the prophets, the borrower would have also forfeited his future. No wonder the one who lost the axe-head cried out, "*Alas, my master! For it was borrowed!*" For all intents and purposes, his life was now over.

Elisha remained serene, trusting in Yahweh. He cut a piece of wood and threw it into the Jordan River, and at once the iron axe-head floated to the top of the river where it was recovered. The man's life was saved, and the building could continue.

What did this miracle mean? In its original context, this miracle revealed that if Israel would hearken to the word of Elisha and the prophets, Israel could remain at peace, safe from the threat of invasion, disaster, and captivity. Elisha and the prophets proclaimed that Israel must reject the worship of Baal and the other gods, and cling to Yahweh alone. If Israel would hearken to Elisha when he told them to shun idolatry as the man hearkened to Elisha when he told them to cast a stick of wood into the Jordan River, all would be well. If Israel hearkened to the prophetic word and shunned idolatry, they could avoid invasion from foreign armies and national disaster, but if they continued along the path of idolatry, foreign nations would invade and destroy them, and they would be taken away as slaves and into foreign captivity (as eventually happened, when they ignored the words of the prophets). If they obeyed the word of Elisha, they could continue to build a home for themselves and grow and remain secure—even as the followers of Elisha did after building with the logs they took from the banks of the Jordan. This was the original message of the floating axe-head. The story was not

simply about what it took for Elisha to build a place for his community, but what it would take for Israel to build a place for their future.

Christians continued to read this passage in the light of their experience of Christ. In particular, Christian exegetes asked the question, “Why did Elisha throw a stick of *wood* into the Jordan? Why did he not just throw another rock into it? Or dirt? Or why did he not just say, ‘Let the iron axe-head float?’ Why did he throw *anything* into the river?” The answer, of course, was **the wood of the Cross**. The wooden stick prefigured **the Cross of Christ**. This was not hard to figure out, and the writer of the canon for the Third Sunday in Great Lent, writing about the Cross of Christ, figured it out pretty quickly. One of the stichs on the eighth ode of that canon says, “Come, Elisha the prophet, and tell us plainly: What was the wood that you threw into the water? ‘It was the Cross of Christ, which draws us up the depths of corruption and we venerate it with faith forever!’”

Just as the iron axe-head floated into defiance of the laws of nature and arose from the depths of the Jordan River, so we also, in defiance of the laws of nature, shall arise from the depths of the grave at resurrection of the dead. After the depths of the Jordan swallowed up the axe-head, it should have remained in those watery depths forever. In the same way, the abyss of death will one day swallow us all up, and there can no escape from its depths. But since the wood of the cross has been cast into the depths of death, the laws of nature will work backward, and we will arise from the depths of corruption. The wood makes all the difference: it makes unfloatable iron to float, and it makes mortal bodies to arise immortal.

This story of seven brief verses, buried in the long narrative of 2 Kings, has immense significance for all of us who face the certainty of death. Death will one day swallow us up, and the grave will close over us, even as the waters of the Jordan closed over the sinking axe-head in the days of Elisha. Well may we cry, “Alas!” as did the owner of the axe! But the wood of the Cross makes all the difference. It made the iron axe-head to float, in defiance of nature’s laws, and the Church has never forgotten it. The Lord Himself promised the same thing: “*He who believes in Me, though he die, yet shall he live*” (**John 11:25**). And His Church has never ceased to proclaim the same miracle of us rising from the depths of corruption: every year the Church exults and sings, “Christ is risen from the dead, trampling down death by death, and upon those in the tombs bestowing life!”

<https://orthochristian.com/120884.html>

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** While Elisha did see fit to employ a miracle to retrieve a lost axe head, consider what he did not provide. Elisha did not seek to utilize supernatural means to construct the new dwelling for the prophets. (I’ll bet they would rather have had God build it!) If God’s prophet could retrieve lost axe heads, then why could he not also construct buildings? The truth is that God is able to do all things, but Elisha did not ask God for such things. What God did provide through Elisha was a tool—an axe head—so that this prophet could cut down trees and limb them, and then cut them into poles for construction. How many times I have wished that God would do the job

Himself, supernaturally, and not leave any of the hard work to me. But what we read in our text is very true to the way God works. He provides us with the means—the tools—to do what He has purposed, and then He expects us to labor to accomplish it. These “tools” are not just material things, like axe heads, but are divine enablements such as spiritual gifts (see **1 Corinthians 12:1ff.**).

TEXT: 2 Kings 6:8-23

TITLE: LORD, OPEN OUR EYES

**BIG IDEA:**

**WE ALL NEED GOD TO OPEN OUR EYES TO HIS TRUE CHARACTER**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Elisha performs his function here as the man of God, as the prophet of God, in pointing people to the true character of God in every situation. Despite the pressure from the attacks against God's people and the desperate outward circumstances, Elisha remains calm and confident due to his vision of faith. Once our blindness is removed, we too can see the power of God at work protecting His people. God's enemies receive surprising kindness and mercy as the goodness of God seeks the repentance of the pagan nation.

**Whitcomb:** Long before the healing of Naaman, while Benhadad I was still king of Syria (**II Kings 6:24**), a most remarkable thing happened: an entire Syrian army was captured alive by Elisha the prophet!

**John Schultz:** We could treat this story as a parable of Jesus' teaching about spiritual blindness. We read: "*Jesus said, 'For judgment I have come into this world, so that the blind will see and those who see will become blind.'* Some Pharisees who were with him heard him say this and asked, 'What? Are we blind too?'" *Jesus said, 'If you were blind, you would not be guilty of sin; but now that you claim you can see, your guilt remains.'*" But this does not mean that it is not a report of a real incident that happened in Israel's relationship with Aram, which made raids into Israeli territory.

**Donald Wiseman:** The record of miraculous incidents with moral lessons continues, vision contrasts with blindness, spiritual resources with man-made tactics (**vv. 15–16**), etc. It is a prelude to the dealings of Elisha with the court and his conduct in the Aramean war (**6:24–7:20**). Elisha had close relations with the unnamed king of Israel for whom he provided an efficient intelligence service.

**William Barnes:** Physical sight and spiritual blindness can often occur together, but rarely are these phenomena juxtaposed so dramatically as in the present text of 2 Kings. Elisha can see, spiritually—and sometimes literally—heavenly realities, and for a brief instance, so can his servant (**6:16–17**). Elisha can also pray for supernatural blindness to fall upon his foes (**6:18**), so that the enemies of God's people Israel can be led helplessly into the very center of the Israelite capital. Finally, Elisha can ask that Yahweh open the enemies' eyes (**6:20**), so that they could see immediately what predicament they were in and be moved to reach an amicable military solution with a minimum of bloodshed. In sharp contrast to the next several sections of 2 Kings, the present passage ends with a peaceful resolution between Arameans and Israelites,



including a “*great feast*” celebrating the onset of that very status. Equally surprisingly, hints are given concerning continued peaceful relations between Israelite prophet and king (see **6:9–10, 21**), with the latter following the advice of the former, and even calling him “*my father*”. When God’s leadership stands united, absolutely amazing things can happen.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The prophet’s unique powers are again at stage center in the present story, as in the other stories of the Elisha cycle. Here Elisha shows himself to be the possessor of “second sight.” He has the ability to see hidden things: the ambush of the Aramaeans planned in the private quarters of the king of Aram (**vv. 10–12**); the fiery cavalry of yhwh (**v. 17**). At his command, the eyes of his enemies are closed and opened (**vv. 18, 20**).

## **I. (:8-14) GOD’S COMPLETE OMNISCIENCE AND SOVEREIGNTY -- FUTILITY OF FIGHTING AGAINST GOD**

### **A. (:8-10) Futility Because the Omniscient God Protects Against All Attacks**

#### 1. (:8) God’s Enemies Make Strategic Plans to Attack God’s People

*“Now the king of Aram was warring against Israel; and he counseled with his servants saying, ‘In such and such a place shall be my camp.’”*

#### 2. (:9) God is Always a Step Ahead with Divine Counter Intelligence

*“And the man of God sent word to the king of Israel saying, ‘Beware that you do not pass this place, for the Arameans are coming down there.’”*

**Guzik:** Elisha did not support the corrupt monarchs of Israel, but he knew that it was even worse for Israel to be conquered and subjugated under Syria. Therefore, he gave the king of Israel information from divinely inspired espionage.

#### 3. (:10) God’s People are Able to Defend Themselves and Avoid Disaster

*“And the king of Israel sent to the place about which the man of God had told him; thus he warned him, so that he guarded himself there, more than once or twice.”*

**MacArthur:** Elisha, receiving supernatural revelation, continually identified to Jehoram the Israelite towns which the king of Aram, or Syria, planned to attack. Jehoram then took the proper precautions and appropriately fortified those towns so as to frustrate the Syrian plan.

**John Schultz:** quoting **Pulpit Commentary** -- it agrees better with the prophet’s injunction, “*Beware that thou pass not such a place,*” to suppose that he merely sent out scouts to see if the place were occupied or no, and finding, in each case, Elisha’s warning true, he avoided the locality.

### **B. (:11-12) Futility Because God is Always in Complete Control**

#### 1. (:11) Anger Over Lack of Control

*“Now the heart of the king of Aram was enraged over this thing; and he called his servants and said to them, ‘Will you tell me which of us is for the king of Israel?’”*

2. (:12) Awareness of God’s Invincible Control

*“And one of his servants said, ‘No, my lord, O king; but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the words that you speak in your bedroom.’”*

**C. (:13-14) Futility Because New Plans Have No Greater Chance of Success**

1. (:13) New Strategy

*“So he said, ‘Go and see where he is, that I may send and take him.’ And it was told him, saying, ‘Behold, he is in Dothan.’”*

**MacArthur:** A town in the hill country of Manasseh located about 10 mi. N of Samaria and 12 mi. S of Jezreel. Dothan commanded a key mountain pass along a main road that connected Damascus and Egypt (cf. **Ge 37:12**).

**Wiersbe:** The logical solution then was to eliminate Elisha. Once again you see the ignorance of the king, for if Elisha knew every scheme the king planned for the border raids, surely he would know this scheme as well – and he did!

2. (:14) Numbers Don’t Determine the Outcome

*“And he sent horses and chariots and a great army there, and they came by night and surrounded the city.”*

**MacArthur:** In contrast to the smaller raiding parties (**vv. 8, 23**), the king of Syria sent a sizable force, including horses and chariots, to take Elisha prisoner. Arriving at Dothan, the army encircled the town.

**Peter Pett:** The king’s evil intent was made clear when he sent a large host with chariots and horsemen in order to abduct Elisha. And they came and surrounded Dothan by night. It was an indication of Elisha’s reputation that such a large force was felt to be necessary, and that they recognized that they would have to take him by surprise.

**II. (:15-20) GOD’S AWESOME POWER AND ILLUMINATION – ONLY ILLUMINATION FROM GOD CAN REMOVE BLINDNESS**

**A. (:15-17) Removing the Blindness of Believers**

1. (:15) Focusing Only on Outward Circumstances Leads to Panic

*“Now when the attendant of the man of God had risen early and gone out, behold, an army with horses and chariots was circling the city. And his servant said to him, ‘Alas, my master! What shall we do?’”*

2. (:16) Focusing on Spiritual Forces Removes Our Fear

*“So he answered, ‘Do not fear,*

*for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.”*

**3. (:17) Blindness Must Be Removed and Our Eyes Opened to God’s Power**

*“Then Elisha prayed and said, ‘O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ And the LORD opened the servant's eyes, and he saw; and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.”*

**Guzik:** Elisha did not pray that God would change anything in the situation. His only request was that his servant could actually see the reality of the situation. Yet, Elisha also did not try to persuade the servant of the reality of those who are with us. The servant could not have this explained to him nor could he be persuaded into it. He had to see it.

**Peter Pett:** This extraordinary vision is of great importance, for it is a reminder to us also that the invisible forces of God are ever watching over and protecting His own. It is a reminder to us that as Christians we live in a sense in two places. In our bodies we live in, and are limited to, the physical world, but in our spirits we live in, and have contact with, ‘*the heavnlies*’ (**Ephesians 1:3; Ephesians 2:6; Ephesians 6:10-18**), where we are seated with Christ, and under His personal protection, and where we engage in warfare against the forces of evil (**Ephesians 6:10-18**). We can compare this with the temple in **Ezekiel 40** onwards. That too had come down from YHWH and was invisibly present in Israel so that although the returned exiles appeared only to have a rough altar which they had built in Jerusalem at which to worship, they could be sure that it served a huge invisible temple which had ‘*come down*’ from YHWH on a mountain outside Jerusalem, and already provided an assurance that He was with them. In the same way as ‘*heirs of salvation*’ we are watched over by ‘*ministering spirits*’ (**Hebrews 1:14**) and protected by His chariots and horses of fire.

**Morgan:** Faith is never the imagining of unreal things. It is the grip of things which cannot be demonstrated to the senses, but which are real. The chariots of horses and fire were actually there.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** How might this revelation of Yahweh’s unseen protection have come across to Israel in later years? Remember that this is not simply an incident that occurred in the ninth century bc; but this account is part of **1–2 Kings**, which, as a book, was originally directed at Israel in exile, after the Babylonians had decimated Jerusalem and Judah (see **2 Kings 24–25**). How would such exiles in Babylon 300 years after the event read **6:8–23**? Especially the repentant remnant? Cut off from their homeland, under a pagan superpower, were they to be swallowed up as a chunk of ethnic trivia and be flushed down the stool of history? No, for ‘*those who are with us are more than those who are with them*’ (v. 16). But they probably didn’t see the horses and chariots of fire.

**B. (:18-20) Removing the Blindness of Unbelievers**

**1. (:18) Blindness Exposes the Inability of Unbelievers**

*“And when they came down to him, Elisha prayed to the LORD and said, ‘Strike this people with blindness, I pray.’ So He struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha.”*

**MacArthur:** “blindness” – This word occurs only here and in **Ge 19:11**. The term is related to “light” and seems to mean “a dazzling from bright light” (note the “*chariots of fire*” in **v. 17**). Both biblical uses of the term involve a miraculous act with angelic presence and both are used in the context of deliverance from danger.

## 2. (:19) Blindness Makes One Dependent on Others

*“Then Elisha said to them, ‘This is not the way, nor is this the city; follow me and I will bring you to the man whom you seek.’ And he brought them to Samaria.”*

**Wiersbe:** The soldiers weren’t made totally blind, otherwise they couldn’t have followed Elijah; but their sight was clouded in such a way that they were able to see but not comprehend. They were under the delusion that they were being led to the house of Elisha, but Elisha was leading them to the city of Samaria!

## 3. (:20) Blindness Must Be Removed by the Lord to Accurately See One’s Position

*“And it came about when they had come into Samaria, that Elisha said, ‘O LORD, open the eyes of these men, that they may see.’ So the LORD opened their eyes, and they saw; and behold, they were in the midst of Samaria.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** That is not the sort of ‘care’ one expects between enemies. It is rather exceptional. And the Syrians knew this all too well. One can almost hear their hearts thud when Yahweh opened their eyes after Elisha’s prayer: ‘*they looked and—ah!—in the middle of Samaria!*’ (**v. 20b**). They knew it was ‘curtains’. And yet they were spared. If then the Syrians really had eyes to see they would understand that they had come under Yahweh’s protection; it was offered to the likes of them. For here Yahweh not only protected Elisha and Israel by disabling the Syrians but protected the Syrians by restraining Israel’s king. Not only Israel but unwashed gentiles can have Yahweh as sun and shield. What an opportunity this was for these Syrians if they had had eyes to see it. This text is joyful news we can bring to all: it’s not just for churchy folks—the shelter of the Lord is open to you. One is tempted to tamper with **Joseph Hart**’s marvelous hymn—‘Come, ye Syrians, poor and wretched, weak and wounded, sick and sore.’

## **III. (:21-23) GOD’S SURPRISING KINDNESS AND MERCY – GOD TREATS HIS ENEMIES WITH KINDNESS AND MERCY**

### **A. (:21) Bloodthirsty Vengeance is the Cry of Natural Man Toward His Enemies**

*“Then the king of Israel when he saw them, said to Elisha, ‘My father, shall I kill them? Shall I kill them?’”*

**Constable:** King Jehoram referred to Elisha respectfully as his father (v. 21) because he realized this great victory had come from Elisha, who was superior to him for accomplishing it.

**August Konkell:** In the final episode the king of Israel believes he has an opportunity to inflict a debilitating defeat on the Aramean army (6:21–23). Matters, however, are not in his control; he has not been responsible for taking the soldiers captive and requires permission from the prophet, respectfully and unusually addressed as “father” (v. 21). The prophet instead follows the wisdom of a proverb: “*If your enemy hungers, give him food to eat; if he is thirsty, give him water to drink. In doing this, you will heap burning coals on his head, and the Lord will reward you*” (Prov. 25:21–22). These soldiers are not to be slain or taken captive as the spoils of war and made slaves; instead, they are treated lavishly with food and drink and sent on their way. The result is a halt of the border wars.

**B. (:22) Kindness and Mercy Towards Enemies Are a Surprising Strategy**

*“And he answered, ‘You shall not kill them. Would you kill those you have taken captive with your sword and with your bow? Set bread and water before them, that they may eat and drink and go to their master.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Had Joram defeated this army in battle? No! If he had, he could kill his prisoners; but if he hadn’t, then whoever captured the prisoners would decide what to do. These were not prisoners of war; they were Elisha’s guests, so the king’s responsibility was to feed them. Joram knew that having a meal with them was the same as making a covenant with them (Gen. 26:26–31), but he obeyed. In fact, he went beyond the prophet’s request for bread and water and prepared a great feast for the soldiers.

**C. (:23) Kindness and Mercy Proved to be Israel’s Best Defense**

*“So he prepared a great feast for them; and when they had eaten and drunk he sent them away, and they went to their master. And the marauding bands of Arameans did not come again into the land of Israel.”*

**Whitcomb:** this would be one more opportunity to confirm in the thinking of the Syrians that “the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings” (I Kings 20:31, because their God is a merciful God. The Syrians must have been greatly impressed, not only with Jehovah’s mercy, but also with Elisha’s superhuman insight, “for the bands of Syria came no more into the land of Israel” (II Kings 6:23).

**House:** Elisha counsels leniency, so the Israelites feed the Syrians and send them home, obviously humbled. In effect, then, Elisha brings peace through divine intervention. Everyone concerned receives safety from their enemies because of the prophet’s ministry.

**Guzik:** Instead of killing these enemy soldiers, Elisha instead commanded the king of Israel to treat them with kindness and generosity. This practice of answering evil with good successfully changed the policy of free-lance raiders from Syria.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How do we foolishly fight against God?
- 2) Where do we need God to open our eyes to His power so that we can walk by faith and triumph over our enemies?
- 3) When have we shown kindness and mercy towards our enemies?
- 4) Why doesn't God answer our prayers instantly and dramatically, as He did Elisha's prayers?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis: Structure –**

Sparing Israel, vv. 8–10  
Frustration and disclosure, vv. 11–12  
The right place, vv. 13–14  
Crisis of fear, v. 15  
Prayer for sight, vv. 16–17a  
Answer to prayer, v. 17b  
  
Crisis of 'attack,' v. 18a  
Prayer for blindness, v. 18b  
Answer to prayer, v. 18c  
The wrong place, v. 19  
Disclosure and danger, vv. 20–21  
Sparing Aram, vv. 22–23

**Mathew Henry:** When we are magnifying the causes of our fear we ought to possess ourselves with clear, and great, and high thoughts of God and the invisible world. If God be for us, we know what follows, **Rom. viii. 31.** ... The opening of our eyes will be the silencing of our fears. In the dark we are most apt to be frightened. The clearer sight we have of the sovereignty and power of heaven the less we shall fear the calamities of this earth.

### Steven Cole: The Man Who Saw the Unseen

This story has two main themes: The all-sufficiency of God to meet any crisis we face; and, that prayer is our means of access to the all-sufficient God.

Since God is our all-sufficient resource, believers should pray and not panic when trials hit.

#### 1. God is our all-sufficient resource in times of trial.

The greatness of God's knowledge, power, and sovereignty dominate this story. It's interesting that of all the major characters, no one, except Elisha, is mentioned by name—not the kings or Elisha's servant. Even Elisha is called three times "the man of God (**6:9, 10, 15**). One commentator says that this may suggest that readers should focus on the Lord and His prophet (**Thomas Constable**, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* [Victor Books], 1:549). When we look at God, we learn three things in relation to our trials:

A. OUR GOD IS OMNISCIENT.

B. OUR GOD IS OMNIPOTENT.

C. OUR GOD SOVEREIGNLY PROTECTS HIS OWN ACCORDING TO HIS WILL.

The Lord provides a clue in a minor detail of the text that we might easily miss. Did you notice where Elisha was when this army surrounded him? He was in Dothan (**6:13**). It seems like more than coincidence that this town is mentioned only one other time in the Bible. It was the town where Joseph found his brothers when his father sent him to find out how they were doing (**Gen. 37:17**). He hadn't been able to locate them and he was wandering in a field when a man told him that they had gone to Dothan. When Joseph arrived there his brothers threw him in a pit and were about to kill him when a caravan passed by heading for Egypt. So instead they sold him into slavery.

You know the story, how, after many years as a slave and prisoner, God finally appointed him over all Egypt under Pharaoh. As he sat in the pit in Dothan or as he traveled in chains to Egypt or as he sat in chains in the Egyptian dungeon, Joseph never had a vision of chariots of fire surrounding him. Where were the angels and chariots when Joseph was suffering? Joseph later looked back on the years of trials and told his brothers, "*You meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive*" (**Gen. 50:20**). Even though he didn't see any angels and even though he went through years of agony, Joseph knew that God was sovereignly directing all of his circumstances.

Even though you or I may never get a vision of God's angels surrounding us, they are there! Even if you spend years in a dungeon, our sovereign, omniscient, omnipotent God has not abandoned you. Elisha's servant was safe because he was with his master. Even so, we are safe because we are identified with our Master, Jesus Christ, who said that our Heavenly Father even has our hairs numbered! Therefore He said, "*Do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able*



*to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matt. 10:28).*

But, how can we not panic when trials hit?

## **2. Prayer is the way to have peace, not panic, when trials hit.**

A. PRAYER REPLACES PANIC WITH WISDOM FOR DEALING WITH TRIALS.

B. PRAYER OPENS OUR EYES TO SPIRITUAL REALITY.

C. PRAYER MAKES POSSIBLE WHAT IS HUMANLY IMPOSSIBLE.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/lesson-6-man-who-saw-unseen-2-kings-68-23>

### **Summitchurch.com: “Clear Eyes, Full Heart” // Something Better, Something Greater**

Spiritual sight is 10,000x more important than physical sight. Spiritual sight is how you perceive God. Without spiritual sight you’ll miss out on the most glorious displays in the universe. One of the most tragic curses of the fall was that our sin left us spiritually blind, and perhaps worse, unaware that we were blind. We still think we can see. The miracle of the prophet Elisha we are going to look at today addresses spiritual blindness.

As I’ve explained to you, “Elisha, the greater prophet,” is just a foreshadowing of Jesus, the greatest of all prophets. Elisha’s ministry was remarkable, doing things that no prophet who had come before him had ever done. And Jesus would do them all to a greater degree. Elisha’s name in Hebrew means “*God saves*.” His ministry existed to demonstrate the saving power of God. So you have to read this story of Elisha healing blindness through the lens of what Jesus accomplished for us.

The plot of this story revolves around 2 sets of blind people: one, a believer; the other of a group of unbelievers. What both most need is to have their eyes opened.

Let’s talk first about...

### **I. The Blindness of the Believer**

Elisha’s servant was terrified because he saw the size of the army against him. But he was blind to the presence of the God who was fighting for him and the size of the army that he fought with. Essentially, he doubted two things:

- The steadfastness of God’s love and the strength of his power.
- He thought God had abandoned them. “We’re surrounded. We’re abandoned. There is no hope.”
- The essence of sin, for a believer or an unbeliever, is a lack of faith in God’s goodness.



- The reason we reject God's ways and pursue our own path is we don't think God is infinitely good, or trustworthy. We don't trust him.
- The reason we are afraid or worried is we don't believe God's promises—that he is good, that he is always fighting for us, that he will never leave us or forsake us, or that he is working all things for good.
- **Martin Luther** said that every sin begins with an evil heart of unbelief.
- 
- Religious people, like this servant, often doubt God's goodness and love as much as unbelievers do. Unbelievers show their unbelief by walking away from God. Believers show it by
  - being constantly worried and fearful about their lives, or about their futures.
  - Or, how about this: religious people show their unbelief in God's goodness by thinking they have to perform at a certain level before God will love and accept and bless them. They see God as an adversary who has to be won over through their good works. "God, I've done this much... won't you bless me, now? Won't you receive me into heaven?" **Martin Luther** said that our good works are a "defense against the goodness of God." Think of the irony of that statement! Our good works are a defense against God's goodness declared in the gospel, because we don't really believe it, so we try to earn his love by their good works. So God, in answer to prayer, opens the eyes of this servant to see that the armies of God's love surround this murderous hoard of Syrians, and that this huge Syrian army is nothing compared to the millions upon millions of angels that God has surrounding those that he loves.

When you are afraid, you need clearer vision. Here's what Paul prayed for the Ephesians:

- *"I pray that you... may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ that surpasses all knowledge, that you may be filled with all the fullness of God."*  
**Eph 3:18–20**

So to the believer: Open your eyes of faith... Listen:

- **Ps. 34:7–10**, *"The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him, and he delivers them. Oh, taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him. Oh, fear the Lord, you his saint... for those who seek the Lord lack no good thing!"*

What you need, believer, is not a new "sight" of the angels but "insight" into the heart

of God.

- o You see these setbacks you are going through as permanent.
  - § This broken relationship will destroy your life
  - § This failure ruins your career
  - § You are worthless. Nothing but failure and pain are in your future.
- o All lies! “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him. Oh taste and see that the Lord is good! Blessed is the man who takes refuge in him!”
- o The battle for your life has been completely won. So just hold onto God’s hand and let it play out! So, the blindness of the believer.

Now we deal with...

## **II. The Blindness of the Unbelievers**

How are they blind?

- Well, they think God (and his people) are their enemies, and that if they can just capture and eliminate the man of God, their problems would be over. So Elisha strikes them with a kind of physical blindness, which you can see is a picture of spiritual blindness. (Remember, what he gives them is a delusion. They think they can see but they really can’t. That’s how the whole life of an unbeliever is. They think they can see clearly, but they can’t.) Elisha then confounds them. He tells them they are seeking the wrong person, and then walks them into Israel’s capital, which puts them into a completely indefensible, vulnerable state. This is what God does. Paul says that he confounds the plans of the wise brings it to ruin.
- The wise people at the tower of Babel tried to rebel against God, so God confounded their language so that they can’t understand each other.
- Abraham’s son Isaac tried to rebel against God by giving the blessing to Esau, his favorite son, rather than Jacob, who was God’s choice. God blinded Jacob so that he mistakenly confers the blessing onto Jacob.
- This is what always happens, and you’ll never know it’s happening until it’s too late because you are under a delusion... So Elisha confounds them, and leads them to a position of complete vulnerability... but then does something no one is expecting. He throws them a huge feast and lets them go. When they finally snapped out of their blindness, they expected an onslaught of judgment. Instead, Elisha gave them a feast of grace.
- Don’t miss the irony here. They thought the resolution to their problems would come through capturing and destroying God’s man. Instead, they found blessing when they were captured by God’s man. <https://summitchurch.com/GetFile.ashx?Guid=5c2543f3-ef44-40f2-84f6-11bdb242e46d>

TEXT: 2 Kings 6:24 - 7:20

TITLE: *SIEGE OF SAMARIA AN OPPORTUNITY FOR SALVATION LESSONS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**NEVER DISPUTE THE LORD'S PROMISE OF SALVATION – NO MATTER HOW DESPERATE THE SITUATION – HE WILL ALWAYS COME THROUGH --  
4 SALVATION LESSONS FROM THE SIEGE OF SAMARIA**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The account of the Siege of Samaria continues the series of salvation lessons from the ministry of Elisha. The promise of God to deliver His people in His timing and according to His methodology and for His purposes might frustrate the patience of the king and his court, but the certainty of fulfilment should never be disputed or mocked or challenged. God always comes through on His Word and Elisha is a faithful communicator of that Word. The privilege of first discovering the fruits of salvation fall to four desperate lepers, not to some prominent or wealthy or powerful individuals – another example of God exhibiting His power through our weakness. The judgment upon the official who scorned God's promise would be comical if it were not so tragic and a foretaste of the eternal judgment upon all who reject God's truth.

**Constable:** Chapter 7 is one of many sections in Scripture composed in a chiasmic literary structure that stresses a particular point in the story. We could outline this story as follows.

[Elements from **Dale Ralph Davis** were wrapped into this chiasmic structure]

- A The royal officer's unbelief vv. 1-2a
- B Elisha's prediction of relief v. 2b
- C The lepers' decision vv. 3-5
  - Lepers outside the gate, v. 3a
    - o Decision, vv. 3b-4
      - Action, v. 5
- D Yahweh's salvation v. 6-7**
- C' The leper's deliverance vv. 8-10
  - Action, v. 8
    - o Decision, v. 9
  - Lepers back to the gate, vv. 10-11
- B' The fulfillment of Elisha's prediction vv. 11-15
- A' The royal officer's judgment vv. 16-20

This structure emphasizes the central element, **Yahweh's salvation**, and teaches other lessons in concentric circles of significance. These points include the role of the lepers in bringing news of deliverance to the doomed Samaritans. They were evangelists in the

truest sense: heralds of good news. The value of God's revelation is another lesson, as is the folly of rejecting that revelation.

## **I. (6:24-33) PREPARATION FOR SALVATION MUST NOT BE RESISTED**

### **A. (:24-25) Desperation is the Preparation for Salvation**

#### 1. (:24) Samaria was Under Siege by Powerful Forces

*“Now it came about after this, that Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army and went up and besieged Samaria.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Yet at a later date war broke out again between Ben-Hadad II and Jehoram. Perhaps the miraculously arranged temporary lull had been divinely designed to teach Israel God's abiding love and concern for his people, to whom he had sent his duly authenticated prophet, Elisha. But with no evidence of repentance by Israel, God withdrew his protective hand; and Israel faced a full-scale Syrian invasion. The Arameans were eminently successful, penetrating to the very gates of Samaria itself, and putting the city under a dire siege.

#### 2. (:25) Samaria was Devastated by a Great Famine

*“And there was a great famine in Samaria; and behold, they besieged it, until a donkey's head was sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a fourth of a kab of dove's dung for five shekels of silver.”*

**Whitcomb:** As the siege continued, the plight of the surrounded Israelites became desperate. Even an ass's head (not ordinarily a choice item) brought 80 shekels of silver; and four pints of dove's dung was worth five shekels of silver (for fuel). Just as God had warned through Moses long before, willful national rebellion against His Word would reduce His proud and privileged people to savage cannibalism (Lev. 26:29; Deut. 28: 53; cf. Lam. 4:10), as He gave them up to the outworking of their own carnal desires.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The effectiveness of the Aramaean siege is described in terms of the extremes to which the population of Samaria was brought: buying repulsive items, which were normally discarded, at exorbitant prices.

### **B. (:26-31) Desperate Life Stories Should Stir Repentance Not Blame Shifting**

#### 1. (:26-27) There is No Deliverance Apart from God

*“And as the king of Israel was passing by on the wall a woman cried out to him, saying, ‘Help, my lord, O king!’ 27 And he said, ‘If the LORD does not help you, from where shall I help you? From the threshing floor, or from the wine press?’”*

#### 2. (:28-29) The Depths of Depravity are Heartbreaking

*“And the king said to her, ‘What is the matter with you?’ And she answered, ‘This woman said to me, Give your son that we may eat him today, and we will eat my son tomorrow. 29 “So we boiled my son and*

*ate him; and I said to her on the next day, Give your son, that we may eat him'; but she has hidden her son.”*

**MacArthur:** The curses of the Mosaic Covenant, especially for the sin of apostasy, predicted this sort of pagan cannibalism (**Lv 26:29; Dt 28:52-57**). The way in which the woman presented her case without feeling added to the horror of it.

**August Konkel:** The pathos of the story surfaces in the appeal of the woman who cries out to the king for help (**6:26–31**). Her complaint is not that she had been reduced to eating the corpse of her own child for food, but the injustice she feels when her neighbor refuses to honor the agreement they have to equally share their grisly fare. Her complaint to the king is legal; it is an appeal for justice in the deception of her neighbor. The revulsion of the story is her apparent lack of feeling for the death of her own child and that of her neighbor; the normal compassion of motherhood is subordinated to the desperation to survive.

**3. (:30) Sorrow for the Situation Does No Good Apart from Repentance**

*“And it came about when the king heard the words of the woman, that he tore his clothes-- now he was passing by on the wall-- and the people looked, and behold, he had sackcloth beneath on his body.”*

**Wiersbe:** What good is sackcloth if there’s no humility and repentance in the heart?

**4. (:31) Angry Blame Shifting Only Brings Greater Condemnation**

*“Then he said, ‘May God do so to me and more also, if the head of Elisha the son of Shaphat remains on him today.’”*

**John Schultz:** Although we do not read this specifically, we may assume that the siege of Samaria by the Aramean army was aimed specially for the purpose of capturing the prophet Elisha. This seems clear from the fact that the king of Israel blamed Elisha for the famine caused by the siege, saying: *“May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!”* . . .

Up to this point the king had not considered arresting Elisha and handing him over to the king of Aram, which would have ended the siege. But being made aware of the incident of cannibalism in the city, he decides that that would be the only solution

**C. (:32-33) Don’t Give Up on Salvation Coming from the Lord**

**1. (:32) The Word of the Messenger of God Cannot be Eliminated – Elisha Has Calm Confidence Despite the King’s Malicious Intentions**

*“Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. And the king sent a man from his presence; but before the messenger came to him, he said to the elders, ‘Do you see how this son of a murderer has sent to take away my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold the door shut against him. Is not the sound of his master's feet behind him?’”*

**Constable:** Jehoram planned to murder Elisha as his father Ahab had murdered Naboth (v. 32; cf. 1 Kings 21:1-16). He also grew impatient with the Lord, as Saul had grown impatient with Samuel (v. 33; cf. 1 Sam. 15:11). We see the king's real wickedness in his behavior.

**William Barnes:** Thus, this son of Ahab and Jezebel (assuming Joram is the king in question) was not one simply to emulate the coldly cruel actions of his mother (cf. especially her active part in the execution of Naboth in 1 Kgs 21). Rather, this king was genuinely heartbroken over the fate of his people. But he was a villain nonetheless, for he did seek the severed head of the prophet rather than the prophetic word from the prophet's mouth, the only word which could save the city.

2. (:33) The Word of the Messenger of the Wicked King Cannot be Accepted – The King Despairs of God's Deliverance

*“And while he was still talking with them, behold, the messenger came down to him, and he said, ‘Behold, this evil is from the LORD; why should I wait for the LORD any longer?’”*

Varying interpretations as to whether this comment comes from the king's messenger or directly from the king himself who has just arrived.

**MacArthur:** Jehoram rightly viewed the Lord as the instigator of the siege and famine in Samaria and declared that he saw no hope that the Lord would reverse the situation.

**The Pulpit Commentary:** The narrative is very compressed and elliptical. Some suppose words to have fallen out ... but this is unnecessary. The reader is expected to supply missing links, and to understand that all happened as Elisha had predicted and enjoined — that the messenger came, that the elders stopped him, and that the king shortly arrived. The king was, of course, admitted, and, being admitted, took the word, and said, Behold, this evil is of the Lord; what — rather, why — should I wait for the Lord any longer? Jehoram had, apparently, to some extent repented of his hasty message, and had hurried after his messenger, to give Elisha one further chance of life. We must understand that they had been in communication previously on the subject of the siege, and that Elisha had encouraged the king to ‘wait for’ an interposition of Jehovah. The king now urges that the time for waiting is over; matters are at the last gasp; “this evil” this terrible suffering which can no longer be endured — ‘is of the Lord,’ has come from him, is continued by him, and is not relieved. What use is there in his “waiting” any longer? Why should he not break with Jehovah, behead the lying prophet, and surrender the town? What has Elisha to say in reply?”

**Iain Provan:** The niv gives the impression that the king is present during this interchange. This interpretation may be influenced by 7:17–18, which says that the king “came down” to Elisha and that he spoke the prophecy “to the king.” There is no king in the Hb. text of v. 33, however. The words are certainly his but they are spoken by the messenger he has sent. We are no doubt to understand that the king arrives shortly after

his hit man (cf. “footsteps behind him” in v. 32), at which point the prophecy that Elisha has directed to him is reported to him by the messenger, and the conversation in 7:2 ensues.

## **II. (7:1-9) PROMISE OF SALVATION MUST BE APPROPRIATED**

### **A. (:1-2) Disputing God’s Promise of Salvation Brings Condemnation**

#### 1. (:1) Good News Proclaimed

*“Then Elisha said, ‘Listen to the word of the LORD; thus says the LORD, Tomorrow about this time a measure of fine flour shall be sold for a shekel, and two measures of barley for a shekel, in the gate of Samaria.’”*

**John Schultz:** Most Bible scholars agree that the division of chapters in this book is unfortunate and illogical. Chapter seven simply continues the story of the previous chapter.

The people of Israel would not have to wait long for the promised salvation from the Lord. Tomorrow was designated as the day of salvation.

**Donald Wiseman:** Elisha had made a prophetic utterance (had said) that was fulfilled in the successful outcome of the siege (v. 1, cf. 10:18–20) which would lead to the price of basic commodities falling well below the normal price. Such a prophecy was the more effective since no crops could grow in time to restore supplies. The gate was the market-place as well as the local court of justice.

#### 2. (:2a) Good News Disputed

*“And the royal officer on whose hand the king was leaning answered the man of God and said, ‘Behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could this thing be?’”*

**Wiersbe:** To the humble heart that’s open to God, the Word generates faith but to the proud, self-centered heart, the Word makes the heart even harder. The same sun that melts the ice will harden the clay.

**R. D. Patterson:** The aide’s words are filled with ridicule and heaped with sarcasm, as if to say, “Oh sure, Yahweh is even now making windows in heaven! So what? Could this word of yours still come to pass?” . . . he was skeptical of the whole thing.

**David Guzik:** All in all, the officer well illustrates the conduct of unbelief:

- Unbelief dares to question the truthfulness of God’s promise itself.
- Unbelief says, “This is a new thing and cannot be true.”
- Unbelief says, “This is a sudden thing and cannot be true.”
- Unbelief says, “There is no way to accomplish this thing.”
- Unbelief says, “There is only one way God can work.”
- Unbelief says, “Even if God does something, it won’t be enough.”



### 3. (:2b) Bad News Delivered

*“Then he said, ‘Behold you shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.’”*

#### **B. (:3-4) Designated Recipients of God’s Gift of Salvation are Humble and Downtrodden**

*“Now there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate; and they said to one another, ‘Why do we sit here until we die? 4 If we say, We will enter the city, then the famine is in the city and we shall die there; and if we sit here, we die also. Now therefore come, and let us go over to the camp of the Arameans. If they spare us, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall but die.’”*

**Whitcomb:** Four humble and desperate men, ostracized from the community because of their leprosy, were honored by God with the great discovery (cf. **Ps. 113:7, 8**); and fearing divine punishment if they failed to share the good news with their starving countrymen, they hurried back to Samaria to inform the porter at the city gate. . . . The responsibility we bear is far greater than that of the four lepers of Samaria.

**Spurgeon:** If you were to take out of the Scriptures all the stories that have to do with poor, afflicted men and women, what a very small book the Bible would become, especially if together with the stories you removed all the psalms of the sorrowful, all the promises for the distressed, and all the passages which belong to the children of grief! This Book, indeed, for the most part is made up of the annals of the poor and despised.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The discovery of God’s work is placed in the hands of the unclean and the unnamed. Surely we feel this text grabbing us by the lapels and pulling us down to kneel and praise. Here Yahweh uses neither the healthy nor the prominent. Doesn’t God deserve high praise for the lowly servants he uses?

#### **C. (:5-7) Description of the Outworking of God’s Plan of Salvation = the Fleeing of the Aramean Troops**

*“And they arose at twilight to go to the camp of the Arameans; when they came to the outskirts of the camp of the Arameans, behold, there was no one there. 6 For the Lord had caused the army of the Arameans to hear a sound of chariots and a sound of horses, even the sound of a great army, so that they said to one another, ‘Behold, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians, to come upon us.’ 7 Therefore they arose and fled in the twilight, and left their tents and their horses and their donkeys, even the camp just as it was, and fled for their life.”*

**David Guzik:** Everything was left behind, leaving the unlikely lepers to spoil the camp. As a result, the siege for Samaria was over – even though no one in the city knew it or enjoyed it.



“Everybody who went to bed that night felt that he was still in that horrible den where grim death seemed actually present in the skeleton forms of the hunger-bitten. They were as free as the harts of the wilderness had they known it: but their ignorance held them in vile durance [imprisonment].” (Spurgeon)

**D. (:8) Desiring to Deceptively Hoard the Riches of Salvation is the Wrong Approach**

*“When these lepers came to the outskirts of the camp, they entered one tent and ate and drank, and carried from there silver and gold and clothes, and went and hid them; and they returned and entered another tent and carried from there also, and went and hid them.”*

**III. (7:9-15) PLENITUDE OF SALVATION MUST BE PROCLAIMED**

**A. (:9-10) Commitment to Witnessing**

1. (:9) Mandate for Witnessing to God’s Salvation

*“Then they said to one another, ‘We are not doing right. This day is a day of good news, but we are keeping silent; if we wait until morning light, punishment will overtake us. Now therefore come, let us go and tell the king's household.’”*

2. (:10) Mission of Testifying Seeks Widespread Proclamation

*“So they came and called to the gatekeepers of the city, and they told them, saying, ‘We came to the camp of the Arameans, and behold, there was no one there, nor the voice of man, only the horses tied and the donkeys tied, and the tents just as they were.’”*

**B. (:11-15) Checking Out the Message**

1. (:11) Spreading the Word

*“And the gatekeepers called, and told it within the king's household.”*

2. (:12) Suspicion Regarding the Message

*“Then the king arose in the night and said to his servants, ‘I will now tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know that we are hungry; therefore they have gone from the camp to hide themselves in the field, saying, When they come out of the city, we shall capture them alive and get into the city.’”*

3. (:13) Strategic Counsel to Investigate the Truth of the Testimony

*“And one of his servants answered and said, ‘Please, let some men take five of the horses which remain, which are left in the city. Behold, they will be in any case like all the multitude of Israel who are left in it; behold, they will be in any case like all the multitude of Israel who have already perished, so let us send and see.’”*

#### 4. (:14-15) Substantiating the Message

*“They took therefore two chariots with horses, and the king sent after the army of the Arameans, saying, ‘Go and see.’ 15 And they went after them to the Jordan, and behold, all the way was full of clothes and equipment, which the Arameans had thrown away in their haste. Then the messengers returned and told the king.”*

**Wiersbe:** The men found the camp devoid of soldiers. Then they followed the escape route all the way to the Jordan River, a distance of twenty-five miles, and saw on the ground the clothing and equipment that the Syrians had discarded in their flight.

### **IV. (:16-20) PROPHECIES ASSOCIATED WITH BOTH SALVATION AND JUDGMENT MUST BE FULFILLED**

#### **A. (:16) Fulfillment of Prophecy Regarding Riches of Salvation – More Food than One Could Ever Desire**

*“So the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. Then a measure of fine flour was sold for a shekel and two measures of barley for a shekel, according to the word of the LORD.”*

#### **B. (:17-20) Fulfillment of Prophecy of Judgment Against the Disputer – Trampled at the Gate**

*“Now the king appointed the royal officer on whose hand he leaned to have charge of the gate; but the people trampled on him at the gate, and he died just as the man of God had said, who spoke when the king came down to him. 18 And it came about just as the man of God had spoken to the king, saying, ‘Two measures of barley for a shekel and a measure of fine flour for a shekel, shall be sold tomorrow about this time at the gate of Samaria.’ 19 Then the royal officer answered the man of God and said, ‘Now behold, if the LORD should make windows in heaven, could such a thing be?’ And he said, ‘Behold, you shall see it with your own eyes, but you shall not eat of it.’ 20 And so it happened to him, for the people trampled on him at the gate, and he died.”*

**David Guzik:** Perhaps the king did this to rebuke his officer. The man would have to personally supervise the people responding to the provision he said could never come, because he could not understand how God could bring the supply despite the siege.

**Donald Wiseman:** The test of true prophecy is its fulfilment (Deut. 18:21–22). This section is no mere doublet or dittography, but a moralizing summary to emphasize the historian’s view on this episode. God never fails to meet the need of his people when they trust him.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of blame shifting do we see when we witness to unbelievers?
- 2) Why are there so many stories about lepers in the Scriptures?
- 3) How does this story impact your motivation to witness?
- 4) What should unbelievers fear when they dispute or mock or reject the claims of the gospel?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**William Barnes:** Neither the palace entourage nor the despairing citizens of the capital city should have given up on the saving power of the God of Israel, who is often called “*Yahweh, the God of the Heavenly Armies.*” Literally, “*Yahweh of Hosts*” (*yhwh tseba’oth* [TH3068/6635, ZH3378/7372]), this phrase was a traditional epithet used for the Israelite God, Yahweh, as demonstrated some years ago by **Cross** (1973:68–71, 90–111, 121–144; cf. the classical formulation found at the beginning of the “Song of the Sea” back in the days of Moses [**Exod 15:3**; cf. NLT mg note there]). Although rare in the books of 1-2 Kings, the epithet “*Yahweh of Hosts*” occurs some 285 times in the Hebrew Bible (**TDOT** 12.216–217), and, as is made quite clear in David’s diatribe against Goliath in **1 Samuel 17:45**, the epithet is clearly military in nature. (As David himself insists, “*everyone assembled here will know that the Lord rescues his people.... This is the Lord’s battle, and he will give you to us!*” [**1 Sam 17:47**]). Thus, it is once again Yahweh who is the true Divine Warrior of the land of Israel.

### **J. Hampton Keathley, III: Final Episodes in the Life of Elisha**

The mention of the siege of Samaria in **verse 24** stands in strong contrast to the peaceful conditions that had resulted from the ministry of Elisha. How much later, we are not told, but sometime later Ben-hadad besieged the city of Samaria. One of the messages of the prophets, and this was undoubtedly true of both Elijah and Elisha, was to remind Israel that God had promised blessing for obedience to His covenant with them, but cursing for disobedience. Certainly, the temporary lull brought about by the ministry of Elisha had been divinely designed to remind Israel of God’s steadfast love and ever present involvement with his people. God had sent and authenticated men like Elijah and Elisha by the miracles He performed through these men of God, but typically (especially in the northern kingdom) there was no evidence of repentance by Israel or her kings. So in keeping with His warning in **Deuteronomy 28-30**, God withdrew his protective hand. As a consequence Israel faced a full-scale Aramean (Syrian) invasion. The Arameans had been so successful they were able to penetrate the land of Israel and put the city of Samaria under siege. . .

Why [the king] blamed Elisha is not stated. Perhaps he thought Elisha should have prayed for a miracle as he had done in the past. Or perhaps he looked back and thought Elisha should have ordered the death of the Syrians when they had them within the walls of their city. . .

In this scenario, the king despaired and his first officer mocked. Things seem totally impossible. But our extremities are God's opportunities to demonstrate His power for His own purposes that we might learn He is able to do super abundantly above all we can ask or even think (**Eph. 3:20**). But consistently, the Lord acts for his people when they come to the end of themselves and find their strength is gone. (**Deut. 32:36; 2 Cor. 12:9-10**).

Finally, Elisha's words to the royal officer poses a warning to all of us. He told the officer that though he would witness the miraculous provision, he would not be able to eat of it (see **7:17-18**). When we fail to believe the promises of God, we fail to experience the blessings of God whether for salvation or in sanctification.

**Richard Carlson: This Day is a Day of Good News**

Here's hoping this message today will fill your heart, and thrill your soul, and still your fears. We have arrived at a message that speaks about God's mighty ability and His mighty desire to supply all our needs. As a nine-year old boy, over 65 years ago, when Dad had his first heart attack, I fell into the role as the eldest son of doing a man's work. It wasn't easy to shovel over a ton of stoker coal from the front yard into the window of our basement where we had our coal bin. Every time our old hand auger stoker coal furnace burned up a ton, we had another ton of coal delivered to our front yard, dumped, and it was my job to shovel the stoker coal into our basement coal bin. Those were the days when our family of seven children lived on \$200.00 a month, when all our supporters remembered to send support to Dad and Mom as they were home missionaries in the Blue Ridge Mountains of Appalachia. Dad superintended the Kentucky Mountain Mission headquartered in Hazard, Kentucky. During those days, Mom was prolific in writing songs as her outlet for living out her faith and expressing her love and worship to the Lord. Many of Mom's songs I sing to this day, but one of my favorite songs fits the message today: "My God Shall Supply." It is a powerful testimony to the many miracles God did in our lives living on Middle Big Creek.

"My God shall supply, supply your every need;  
to rush about and worry so, Is unbelief indeed.  
The banks of earth may close; not so the Bank of Heaven,  
According to His riches in Glory, By Christ Jesus, your need will be given."

Every time God comes through for us, that day is a day of good news.

Our message today is all about what happens when the Word of the Lord is given, what happens when it is believed, and what happens when it is not believed. For many of us, we have no real measure of how vital it is that we believe His Word and that we remain among those who believe His Word. Five ways this is true!

THE WORD OF THE LORD IS GOOD NEWS FOR HUNGRY SOULS WHEN IT IS GIVEN BY MEN AND WOMEN OF GOD WHO BELIEVE IT.

THE WORD OF THE LORD IS ABOUT GOD'S PLAN TO REDEEM THE LOST AND HE CAN USE US OR LEPERS TO FULFILL HIS WORD.

THE WORD OF THE LORD BRINGS GIFTS THAT CANNOT BE HOARDED, OR HE WILL JUDGE US FOR OUR GUILTY SILENCE.

THE WORD OF THE LORD WILL COME TRUE AS HE HAS ORDAINED IT AND HE USES MIGHTY, AWESOME MIRACLES TO ACHIEVE IT.

THE WORD OF THE LORD IS BAD NEWS FOR THOSE WHO MOCK IT, DOUBT IT, AND LIVE TO SEE IT FULFILLED WITHOUT TASTING IT.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/102819151024363.pdf>

**I. Gordon: Waiting is a hard thing.** In my experience God often makes us wait longer than we would like. And He is often more silent than we would like. But continue to trust for *'perseverance produces character; and character, hope.'* I'll just leave you with the words of a song that I like that seem appropriate.

**'God will lift up your head' (Jars of Clay - based on an old hymn)**

Give to the wind your fears, Hope and be undismayed  
God hears your sighs and counts your tears  
God will lift up, God will lift up, lift up your head  
God will lift up your head. He will lift up your head...  
Leave to His sovereign sway To choose and to command  
Then shall we wandering on His way  
Know how wise and how strong  
How wise and how strong God will lift up your head. How strong is His hand...  
Through waves and clouds and storms, He gently clears the way  
Wait because in His time, so shall this night  
Soon end in joy, soon end in joy Soon end in joy, soon end in joy  
God will lift up your head. Soon end in joy...

<https://jesusplusnothing.com/series/post/elisha7>

TEXT: 2 Kings 8:1-6

TITLE: *WATCHCARE OVER THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S PEOPLE CAN EXPECT TO RETURN FROM EXILE AND TAKE UP POSSESSION OF THEIR RIGHTFUL STANDING IN THE PROMISED LAND**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The impact on the exiles in Babylon of this short story of **God's watchcare** over the Shunammite woman cannot be underestimated. Have they lost their standing in the Promised Land? What will be their future status in the program of God? Will God continue to care for them and meet their needs despite their present hardship in captivity? The exile-return contrast tracks throughout the Old Testament.

In addition the watchcare shown to this woman who had previously ministered hospitality to Elisha teaches that God does not forget such acts of kindness but will provide abundantly for those who help sustain His prophets (or ministers). Elisha had acted dramatically to restore life to her dead son. And now he continues to remember her and acts to spare her the hardship of the seven year famine while still protecting her ongoing rights to legal ownership of her property in the Promised Land.

The king of Israel plays an important role in this providential care. He shows great curiosity about the deeds of Elisha and is now attracted to God's agenda rather than so adversarial. But he seems to fall short of embracing an honest repentance and full commitment to the covenant-keeping God.

As believers we should marvel at the working of God's providence in our lives to provide ongoing watchcare in every situation we face. We live as pilgrims (similar to exiles) in this world and long for our rightful possession in that future city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God.

**August Konkell:** This story about the appeal of the woman of Shunem to the justice of the king is a natural sequel to the story of the desperate woman calling out to the king for justice in the famine at Samaria (**6:26**).

**Wiersbe:** Famines remind us that God alone can make nature fruitful, and death reminds us that God alone gives life and has the power and authority to take it away. . .

Our English word "providence" comes from two Latin words, pro and video, which together mean "to see ahead, to see before." God not only knows what lies ahead; but He plans what is to happen in the future and executes His plan perfectly. Perhaps a better word is "pre-arrangement." In no way does God's providence interfere with our power of choice or our responsibility for the choices we make and their consequences.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Why is this text placed here? The king (presumably Jehoram) hears this testimony of ‘*all the great deeds*’ Elisha had done (for us this would = **chapters 2–7**, for Jehoram the parts of that record of which he had no personal knowledge). He knew not only mercies that had been extended to him (**chapters 3** and **6:8–7:20**) but mighty acts of deliverance, even from death. All this makes the king terribly accountable. How will he respond to this massive testimony of the grace of God? Elisha had once scored him for false allegiance (**3:13–14**). Has he changed? Will he change? According to the summary in **3:1–3** (especially **3b**), Jehoram made no single-minded commitment to Yahweh.

But he was very impressed with the testimony of Yahweh’s power through Elisha. Impressed enough to give the Shunammite justice (**v. 6b**). Clearly he’s interested in the stories, is apparently fascinated with the testimony, but remains unchanged (**3:1–3**). So we have a king who was curious but not committed, attracted to Elisha’s works but not submissive to Elisha’s Lord; it was fascination not faith. . .

That is the Jehoram syndrome. One can recognize something of the power and pull of the gospel without embracing that gospel. There is, it seems, a vast gulf between being charmed by the truth and being converted to the truth. The men of Nineveh will likely stand up at the judgment and condemn Jehoram and his heirs for they repented when they had only a simple word of judgment but no catalog of grace (cf. **Luke 11:32**).

**Caleb Nelson:** But think with me about the original audience of this book in its final form. They were exiles in Babylon, driven out of the Promised Land and away from the presence of God. What message did this account have for them? It told them that God provides for exiles, that He cares about those who have been driven from their ancestral land by divine judgment. To them, it was an invitation to trust the God who had brought one of His people through a mini-exile.

**Paul Rendall:** We as Christians, ought to be those who are particularly thankful for the **Lord’s watchcare** over our lives, all through our lives, from beginning to end. I am speaking of the Lord’s providentially so ordering things in our lives that it becomes apparent to us that the Lord is working all things together for our good, and for His glory in the particular places that He leads us, and in the way that He brings to other people’s attention, the great things that He has done for us, so that we become witnesses to His loving care for us. We see this watchcare recounted for us in the history of the Shunammite’s life, culminating in her interview with the king and the restoration of her lands. Tonight we want to look,

- 1st of all, at the Lord’s watchcare over this notable woman of Shunem, during the time of a famine in Israel.
- 2nd – We want to think together about the Lord’s watchcare when the king asked Gehazi about the great things which Elisha had done for the Shunammite.
- 3rd – We want to consider the Lord’s watchcare over the Shunammite lady’s lands while she was away from them.



May the Lord, through this study, convince us of His great care over our lives.

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## **I. (:1-3) GOD PROTECTED THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN IN EXILE FROM THE SEVEN YEAR FAMINE IN ISRAEL**

### **A. (:1-2) Mercy Triumphs over Judgment**

#### 1. (:1) Elisha Mercifully Remembers the Shunammite Woman

*“Now Elisha spoke to the woman whose son he had restored to life, saying, ‘Arise and go with your household, and sojourn wherever you can sojourn; for the LORD has called for a famine, and it shall even come on the land for seven years.’”*

Her husband was probably already dead since he is not mentioned here.

**MacArthur:** The fact that the famine was localized in Israel demonstrated that this was a curse, a punishment for apostasy (cf. **Dt 28:38-40**), because of Israel’s disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So here was God’s kindness in his famine warning system. Think what it must have meant to her. Admittedly, these two verses are not the main focus of the story, but what an encouragement Elisha’s tip must have been to her, assuring her that the Keeper of Israel had by no means forgotten her. A small kindness carries a massive encouragement.

#### 2. (:2) Escape from the Hardship of God’s Judgment

*“So the woman arose and did according to the word of the man of God, and she went with her household and sojourned in the land of the Philistines seven years.”*

**William Barnes:** Long famines are recorded both in biblical texts (**Gen 41:30–31; Ruth 1:1–6**) and extrabiblical texts; the present famine (which was “called” by the Lord) need not be related to the “famine” described in the city of Samaria in the preceding story. Perhaps it was, however, the same famine mentioned in **4:38**. Possibly we are also to notice that this famine was twice the length of the infamous famine or drought in Elijah’s time (**Luke 4:25**; cf. **1 Kgs 17:1; 18:1–2**). This is another literary signal of Elisha as a “twofold” prophet in comparison with Elijah.

**Caleb Nelson:** This is the ultimate reason that you can’t “allegorize” this text, and why I don’t think I am allegorizing it. If the Promised Land is read as a code for Heaven pure and simple, then Elisha was telling this woman to leave Heaven for heathendom for the sake of material prosperity. What kind of spiritual advice is that? No. The reality is that the Promised Land is a **type of Heaven** — that is, **a historical reality showing us something of what the greater reality of Heaven is like**. But Israel is not itself Heaven, and Philistia is not Hell. . .



I'm saying that the **pattern of exile and restoration** seen here echoes and points to the macrocosmic pattern of exile and restoration that will be ultimately consummated in restoration to Heaven. This microcosmic story is a promise of ultimate life in the land, and an invitation to experience that life. But the way to access that meaning is not by "allegory" as we understand that term, but rather by **close attention to this story's place in the larger story of the Bible.**

**B. (:3) Major Problem of Land Confiscation Requires Seeking Restoration from the King**

*"And it came about at the end of seven years, that the woman returned from the land of the Philistines; and she went out to appeal to the king for her house and for her field."*

**Constable:** Evidently the woman had sold her property before she left Israel and now wished to buy back her family inheritance. This was a right that the Mosaic Law protected (**Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7; cf. 1 Kings 21:3**). Another view is that the woman had left her property and "the crown" had taken it over. In such a situation the state held the land until the legal owner reclaimed it (**Exod. 21:2; 23:10-11; Deut. 15:1-2**). Her position was similar to that of Naomi in the Book of Ruth. She had fled a famine, lost her male supporter, and was at the mercy of the political system.

**The Pulpit Commentary:** During her prolonged absence, some grasping neighbor had seized on the unoccupied house and the uncultivated estate adjoining it, and now refused to restore them to the rightful owner. Widows were especially liable to such treatment on the part of greedy oppressors, since they were, comparatively speaking, weak and defenseless (see ... **Isaiah 10:2; Matthew 23. 14**). Under such circumstances the injured party would naturally, in an Oriental country, make appeal to the king (comp. ... **2 Samuel 14:4; ... 1 Kings 3:16; ... 2 Kings 6:26**, etc.).

**August Konkel:** The text indicates that the problem is one of **confiscation**; in her absence the properties have been taken over, possibly by another family member or neighbor. Earlier the woman lived securely among her people without need (**4:13**), but her situation has drastically changed. The property is legally hers, possibly through inheritance, but she has no access to it.

**II. (:4-6) GOD RESTORED THE RIGHTFUL OWNERSHIP OF PROPERTY TO THE SHUNAMMITE WOMAN**

**A. (:4) Curiosity Regarding Elisha's Miracles on the Part of the King**

*"Now the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, 'Please relate to me all the great things that Elisha has done.'"*

**David Guzik:** Perhaps his motive was nothing more than curiosity, yet it was still a significant testimony to the king of Israel. He knew that God was with the actions of Elisha, giving evidence that He was also with the word of Elisha.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** ‘Tell’ (*sāphar*) is the key word here; it appears three times in **verses 4–6**. What does the king want to be told? He wants to hear about Elisha’s deeds that weren’t so public. Some of Elisha’s work was well known to the king (see **ch. 3; 6:8–23; 6:24–7:20**), but he’d doubtless heard rumors about astounding things Elisha had done among the remnant or his inner circle and he wanted to hear about those deeds. Those would include all the matters in **chapter 4** plus **6:1–7**—and perhaps others not recorded in the 2 Kings text.

**Caleb Nelson:** Jehoram heard everything we’ve just heard, from 2 Kings 2 onward. Not only did he hear it; he lived it! Yet his heart was hardened against it. When it came right down to it, not even the miracles of Elisha could change his heart. Surely this warns us not to long for miracles. Miracles don’t save. Only the Holy Spirit saves. God’s saving might was available to Jehoram, but the king missed it.

## **B. (:5-6a) Coincidence by Divine Providence in the Appearance and Appeal of the Shunammite Woman**

### 1. (:5a) Timely Appearance of the Shunammite Woman

*“And it came about, as he was relating to the king how he had restored to life the one who was dead, that behold, the woman whose son he had restored to life, appealed to the king for her house and for her field.”*

**Paul House:** In a happy “coincidence” the king sits chatting with Gehazi about what Elisha did for the woman’s son at the very moment she arrives with her request. When she verifies the incident, the king orders an official to settle her case and restores whatever income may have been gleaned from it during the difficult years of her absence. Elisha does not even have to appear in order to help her. His very reputation and Gehazi’s witness are enough to restore her financial security, and this restoration validates his advice about leaving the country in the first place.

### 2. (:5b) Testifying Account of Gehazi

*“And Gehazi said, ‘My lord, O king, this is the woman and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life.’”*

### 3. (:6a) Tenacious Appeal

*“When the king asked the woman, she related it to him.”*

**Wiersbe:** Years before, when her son had died, little did the mother realize that one day that bitter experience would play an important part in the preservation of her property.

## **C. (:6b) Corrective Action Directed by the King**

### 1. Appointing a Trustworthy Officer

*“So the king appointed for her a certain officer, saying,”*

### 2. Restoring Her Rightful Property

*“Restore all that was hers and all the produce of the field”*

**Donald Wiseman:** God often uses the authorities to make provision for widows and the fatherless as a charge on the state (**Deut. 10:18; 24:19-20; Jer. 7:6-7**).

**August Konkell:** This king acts much more nobly than his predecessor Ahab, who had no hesitation in confiscating the property of Naboth. The reputation of Elisha and his legacy influence the king to act immediately; the woman of Shunem receives back her properties with all the attendant revenues due to her.

### 3. Paying Her Proceeds from the Past Seven Years

*“from the day that she left the land even until now.”*

**Peter Pett:** Due to the famine it would not be a very large amount, although the fields may have been extensive.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What does this story contribute to the thread throughout the Old Testament of exile-restoration narratives?
- 2) Why did the woman have a legal claim on the property she had left seven years ago?
- 3) Why don't the observation and awareness of miracles generate saving faith in the spiritually curious?
- 4) How has God demonstrated His providential watchcare over your life and family in special ways?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** The chronological question of when the events recounted in these verses took place in Elisha's ministry has been much detailed. Interpreters hold to one of 3 positions:

- 1) The encounter between the Shunammite woman, the king of Israel, and Gehazi took place toward the end of the reign of Jehoram in Israel. However, this would mean Gehazi was in the presence of the king (**vv. 4, 5**) although afflicted with leprosy (**5:27**) and King Jehoram was asking what great things Elisha had done after personally witnessing the events recorded in **6:8 – 7:19**.
- 2) Because the king of Israel did not know Elisha's exploits, some interpreters place

the final encounter during the early reign of Jehu. However, there are still the issues of Gehazi's leprosy and Jehu's being well acquainted with the prophecy of Elijah (9:36, 37, 10:17) that predicted Elisha's ministry (1Ki 19:15-18).

3) The best explanation is that the record is out of chronological sequence, being thematically tied to the subject of famine in 6:24 – 7:20, but having occurred earlier in the reign of King Jehoram of Israel, before the events recorded in 5:1 – 7:20.

**Donald Wiseman:** The king was the court of appeal for all matters of land tenure (cf. 1 Kgs 21), so she went to the king as the owner of all property taken over during her absence. That she went to “*cry out*” (Heb. *s'q*) for her house (v. 5) indicates that this was a legal term of stronger import than beg (NIV or ‘sought an audience of the king’ to beg, NEB, REB; ‘appealed,’ RSV). ‘Lodge a claim’ (JB) bring out the sense well (as in Akkad. *ragâmu*). The king (v. 4) is not named, and since Gehazi is in the royal presence it may be assumed that this was before his dismissal as Elisha's servant (5:27). If so, the king might be Jehu, for J(eh)oram knew Elisha well (3:13).

**William Barnes:** This sequel to the Shunammite story found in 4:8–37 may seem oddly placed in the Elisha cycle, but that may say more about our own literary tastes than those of the ancient compilers of the prophetic traditions. For example, **Leithart** (2006:207) has helpfully isolated the following palistrophe, which incorporates this story with its immediate predecessor, thus shedding significant light on how we should understand its editorial underpinnings:

- A. King's impotence: woman's appeal; king wants to kill Elisha (6:24–31)
- B. Elisha's prophecy (6:32–7:2)
- C. Four lepers discover the camp: They plunder it  
(7:3–8: If we die, we die)
- D. Lepers bring good news (7:9–10)
- C'. Five horses discover the camp: Samaritans plunder it  
(7:11–16a: If they die, they die)
- B'. Elisha's prophecy fulfilled (7:16b–20)
- A'. King's potency: Shunammite's appeal; king honors legacy of Elisha (8:1–6)

Here we find that the king of Israel is the primary character both at the beginning and at the end of this editorial sequence (a sequence which has incorporated two separate stories, including the sequel to the Shunammite tradition found in ch 4). And it is the king, of all people, who has changed the most! Perhaps due to the remarkable miracle that the lepers (of all people!) discovered, the king now seemingly wants to hear about the exploits of Elisha (from, of all people, Gehazi—himself now a leper?). **Cogan** and **Tadmor** (1988:88) note that the detail about Gehazi regaling his royal audience with Elisha stories shows us how the great exploits of Elisha were told and retold, not only by the “sons of the prophets,” but also at the royal court of Samaria and at Damascus, too (cf. 8:7). This time, the king (presumably the same king as in 6:24–7:20) was willing to do his part to vindicate both Elisha and his patron, the Shunammite. With the Shunammite's resurrected son standing right next to her (8:5), what else could the king

do? I would submit that, contrary to expectations (but in line with some hints from the Samaria-siege story), this king, who had already exhibited a number of appealing qualities, was never entirely beyond redemption. In any case, both king and prophet end up, in a sense, redeemed (not necessarily indicating that the king here is vindicated over against the prophet, as, e.g., **Hobbs** [1985:96–98] argues; cf. my rejoinder to that suggestion found in **Barnes** 1997a:407–411). In any event, this corresponds quite nicely with the literal redemption of the Shunammite’s property. Thus, we find a proper end to the Israelite portion of the Elisha cycle (except for its sequel in **13:14–21**): **prophet and king properly exercising their redemptive roles to bring salvation and blessing to both rich and poor alike in the land of Israel.**

**Iain Provan:** Throughout the Elisha story he has been portrayed as a **channel of God’s salvation**, not only to Israel in general, but also to Israelite and foreign individuals (cf. **2 Kgs. 4–5; 6:1–7**). Now, after the long narrative about the siege of Samaria but before we hear of Hazael, we are told again about the Shunammite woman of **4:8–37**. The key to understanding this new story appears to be **4:13**, where Elisha makes her an offer of help. The woman declines, for she has “*a home among [her] own people*.” In **8:1–6**, however, she no longer has such a home; she has followed Elisha’s advice and avoided famine by sojourning in Philistia. While she has been away, someone seems to have taken her land. Perhaps it is even Jehoram himself, showing the same land-grabbing proclivities as his parents (cf. **1 Kgs. 21**). Providentially, however, just at the moment she arrives at the royal court after seven long years to beg for her house and land, Gehazi is telling the king all about her. His words serve as the advocacy on her behalf that Elisha had had in mind in **4:13**; and the king takes steps to ensure the return, not only of everything that belonged to her, but also of all the income from her land that she would have received had she stayed in the country. God looks after those who look after his prophets (**Matt. 10:40–42**).

**Caleb Nelson: A Place in the Promised Land**

**Proposition:** The Shunammite’s exile and restoration stand as both an invitation to and a promise of life in the Land for all who heed Yahweh’s word and seek His royal favor.

I. Mercy in Judgment, vv. 1-2

A. A Prophetic Warning, v. 1a

B. A Divine Judgment, v. 1b

C. God Provides in Exile, v. 2

II. Restoration after Judgment, vv. 3-6

A. The (Apparently Coincidental) Event, vv. 3-6

1. A Woman’s Petition, v. 3

2. A King’s Interest, vv. 4-5a

3. A Resurrection Verified, v. 5b

4. Land and Livelihood Restored, v. 6

## B. The Promise

1. Mercy in Judgment
2. Provision in Exile
3. A Place in the Promised Land

## C. The Invitation

1. To Jehoram
2. To Israel in Exile
3. To You
  - a) Restoration for those who heed Yahweh's Word
  - b) Life in the Land for those who seek Yahweh's Favor

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, dwelling in the land is a prominent theme throughout the entire Bible. Why? Because the Promised Land is an earthly stand-in for **Heaven!** Anyone who longs to live in the Promised Land ultimately is looking for that *city with foundations whose builder and maker is God*. Yet opposite to the blessing of life in the land stands the **curse of exile** — of being cast out of the land, forced to dwell away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power. This **exile-return contrast** formally dominates the Old Testament, of course, as the story of God's people begins in Babylon, only to take them into the Promised Land and then see them exiled to Egypt, brought back to the Land in the Exodus, but finally exiled to Babylon — where, in fact, the narrative comes to a close. Yet that large-scale paradigm of exile and return, of life in the land and its unholy counterpart of perishing away from God, is echoed repeatedly in Scripture in intimately scaled narratives such as the one we just read. In these verses of 2 Kings 8, we have a domestically-scaled version of the contrast between exile and return. The Shunammite woman of chapter 4 reappears in the narrative in order to tell us about God's mercy in judgment and His restoration after judgment. Once again, brothers and sisters, I hope to show you the deeper resonances of this text with the larger Biblical narrative. What we will see tonight is that the Shunammite's exile and restoration stand as both an invitation to and a promise of life in the Land for all who heed Yahweh's word and seek His royal favor. Did you hear that? This story is not just about someone else's return from exile. It is an invitation to you to heed Yahweh's word and seek Yahweh's royal favor so that you too can dwell in the land. As Jehoram and the Judahite exiles in Babylon were asked, so this text demands of you an answer to the question of how you will respond to the relentless stories of God's power over every threat that assaults His people.

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TEXT: 2 Kings 8:7-15

TITLE: WHAT MAKES A MAN OF GOD WEEP?

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD BOTH JUDGES AND WEEPS -- THE SEVERE JUDGMENT OF GOD DISPLAYS ITSELF IN TENSION AGAINST HIS WEEPING FOR THE SINS NECESSITATING SUCH JUDGMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Our minds find it difficult to hold two contrasting attributes or actions in a state of tension. Usually we come down hard on one side or the other; we emphasize one attribute and avoid the other; we over-emphasize one action and minimize the other. This story shows Elisha as the man of God reflecting the heart of God in prophesying the way Hazael will be used as an instrument of YHWH's judgment against Israel; while at the same time we see Elisha weeping at the same prospect. God is not some vengeful despot taking great joy in exacting pain and suffering as He pours out His wrath.

He is the **compassionate Lord** we see lamenting the blindness of His elect nation in **Luke 19:41:42:**

*“When He approached Jerusalem, He saw the city and wept over it, saying, ‘If you had known in this day, even you, the things which make for peace! But now they have been hidden from your eyes . . . you did not recognize the time of your visitation.’”*

He is the **disappointed Lord** who weeps over the lack of faith in Mary and Martha evidenced at the death of Lazarus who had just been laid to rest in a tomb:  
**John 11:32-35**

*“Therefore, when Mary came where Jesus was, she saw Him, and fell at His feet, saying to Him, ‘Lord, if you had been here, my brother would not have died.’ When Jesus therefore saw her weeping, and the Jews who came with her also weeping, he was deeply moved in spirit and was troubled, and said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ They said to Him, ‘Lord, come and see.’ Jesus wept.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This moment marks a **turning-point** in the ministry of Elisha. As one eavesdrops here on his conversation with Hazael, one can't help but remember what Yahweh had told Elijah at Mt. Horeb (**1 Kings 19:15–17**). Elijah was to anoint three instruments of judgment to scourge unfaithful Israel: Hazael, Jehu, and Elisha. He did claim Elisha for Yahweh's service (**1 Kings 19:19–21**) but we hear nothing of Hazael and Jehu. Whatever we make of this, it appears the writer intends us to see Elisha now setting apart Hazael as Yahweh's instrument to bring judgment on Israel



(see v. 12). In **chapters 2–7** Elisha had served primarily as a minister of the grace of God, but in **chapters 8–10** he will appear as a minister of the judgment of God. Israel is sinning away her day of grace.

## **I. (:7-10) MAN OF GOD EXECUTES HIS MISSION – DELIVERING THE CRYPTIC MESSAGE**

### **A. (:7-8) Background for the Mission = Setting up a Strategic Encounter**

#### 1. (:7a) Mission Into Enemy Territory

*“Then Elisha came to Damascus.”*

**MacArthur:** It was unusual for a prophet to visit foreign capitals, but not unknown (cf. **Jon 3:3**). Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Syria, to carry out one of the 3 commands God had given to Elijah at Horeb (**1Ki 19:15, 16**).

**Wiersbe:** It took faith and courage for Elisha to travel to Damascus. . . The fact that Ben Hadad the Syrian king was very ill and wanted help from the Lord made Elisha’s arrival more significant. This was a pagan Gentile king seeking the help of a prophet of Jehovah, but perhaps the conversion of Naaman had something to do with it.

#### 2. (:7b) Mission Raising Expectations

*“Now Ben-hadad king of Aram was sick, and it was told him, saying, ‘The man of God has come here.’”*

#### 3. (:8) Mission Focusing on Strategic Encounter with Hazael

*“And the king said to Hazael, ‘Take a gift in your hand and go to meet the man of God, and inquire of the LORD by him, saying, Will I recover from this sickness?’”*

**MacArthur:** His name means “*God sees*” or “*whom God beholds*.” Hazael was a servant of Ben-hadad and not a member of the royal family. Assyrian records called Hazael the “son of a nobody” and his lineage was not recorded because he was a commoner.

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** I think this king had been very closely associated with Naaman in his healing from leprosy at the hand (or, more accurately, at the command) of Elisha, and in his turning to faith in the God of Israel (see **2 Kings 5:1-27**). This king was probably the one who allowed Naaman to travel to Israel to seek healing at the hand of the prophet. This king of Syria may have provided the gifts that Naaman took with him to pay for his healing. He would then also be the one who wrote the letter to the king of Israel, asking him to see to it that his servant was healed. He would have been the king who leaned on Naaman’s arm as he worshipped his pagan deities (see **2 Kings 5:15-19**). It is my personal opinion that Naaman openly shared his new-found faith with Ben Hadad, and when his life was at risk, he went to the only God he knew he could trust—the God of Israel. How amazing!



**William Barnes:** “audience gift” similar to that of Naaman

**B. (:9) Basis for the Mission = Serious Sickness Raises Questions about the Future**

1. Impressive Gift to Solicit a Favorable Prophecy

*“So Hazael went to meet him and took a gift in his hand,  
even every kind of good thing of Damascus, forty camels' loads;”*

**MacArthur:** The city of Damascus was a trade center between Egypt, Asia Minor, and Mesopotamia. It had within it the finest merchandise of the ancient Near East. Ben-hadad evidently thought that an impressive gift would influence Elisha's prediction.

2. Desperate Inquiry in Seeking a Favorable Outcome

*“and he came and stood before him and said, ‘Your son Ben-hadad king of Aram has sent me to you, saying, Will I recover from this sickness?’”*

**C. (:10) Boldness of the Mission = Speaking the Truth of God**

*“Then Elisha said to him, ‘Go, say to him, You shall surely recover,’ but the LORD has shown me that he will certainly die.”*

You will recover from the illness but die from another means.

**II. (:11-13) MAN OF GOD MAINTAINS HIS FOCUS – DETECTING THE HIDDEN AGENDA**

**A. (:11) Reflecting the Righteous Heart of God – Passion for Lost Souls**

1. Firm on Judgment – Convicting Hazael with His Stare-down

*“And he fixed his gaze steadily on him until he was ashamed,”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** He kept his face motionless for a long while. Heb. *he ‘ēmid* (“to set, make stand”), together with *pānîm*, can only mean “to make the face stop, keep motionless, expressionless.”

Commentators are divided as to the subject of this clause; though most favor Elisha, it is puzzling to have “*the man of God*” specified at the end of v. 11 as the one who burst into tears if he was the subject of the preceding verbs. **Josephus**'s exposition of the scene recommends itself: “And while the king's servant (i.e., Hazael) was grieving at what he had heard, Elisha began to cry ...” (Antiquities ix. 90). (Note that Vulg. et conturbatus est, “he was appalled” [Heb. *wayyishšōm*]  
—adopted by **Klostermann, Benzinger, Kittel, Šanda, Montgomery-Gehman, Gray**—may reflect this same tradition.) Hazael was overcome by the implications of the duplicity suggested by Elisha; his stupor was only broken by the prophet's weeping.

**MacArthur:** With a fixed gaze, Elisha stared at Hazael because it had been revealed to him what Hazael would do, including the murder of Ben-hadad (v. 15). Hazael was embarrassed, knowing that Elisha knew of his plan to assassinate the Syrian king.

**Donald Wiseman:** This verse is also not clear, since the subject is not specified. Heb. *‘He set his face until he was ashamed’* (cf. neb *‘the man of God stood there like a man stunned until he could bear it no longer’*), assuming that Hazael found the meeting with an ecstatic prophet uncomfortable, takes him to be the subject throughout, while niv (*He [Elisha] stared at him ... until Hazael felt ashamed*) allows a change of subject. This may be the best solution.

2. Tender on Compassion – Feeling the Future Suffering of Israel  
*“and the man of God wept.”*

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** Elisha must proclaim the bad news to Israel, as he has been doing all along. Now, he must announce that an even greater judgment is coming upon Israel, and for a longer period. But we must carefully note his spirit in all of this. He is not angry or bitter with Israel, or with God. He proclaims the future, but with tears in his eyes, and looking Hazael squarely in the eyes, he also reveals the wickedness of Hazael’s heart and plans. We cannot avoid the doctrine of God’s righteousness and of man’s sinfulness, and the judgment that must come on sinners. It is an essential part of the gospel, and a truth to which the Holy Spirit bears witness.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** we need to stay a moment and watch Elisha weeping. For in Elisha’s attitude in **verses 11–12** we see Yahweh’s attitude (**Ezek. 33:11**) and Jesus’ attitude (**Luke 19:41–44**). Yahweh is just and righteous and so will and must judge an apostate people, but he is so slow to anger and full of mercy that **there is an element of divine sadness in his judgment**. **Andrew Bonar** captured this point in his own vivid way: ‘I think He will weep over the lost as He did over Jerusalem. It will be something to be said for ever in heaven, “Jesus wept as He said, Depart, ye cursed.” But then it was absolutely necessary to say it.’ Or, again, vintage **Bonar**: ‘I think that the shower of fire and brimstone was wet with the tears of God as it fell, for God has “no pleasure in the death of him that dieth”.’

Hazael is enthusiastic over the fine future before him, a future in which he will batter and crush Israel. But Elisha is depressed. He knows there must be a Hazael as Yahweh’s instrument to judge his faithless people. But, for Elisha, judgment is both necessary and sad. Elisha’s tears are sent from above, for that is how Yahweh views it. There is no fiendish delight in Yahweh’s judgment. Here is your God and you should prize him for his nature, the God who mingles his tears with the fire and brimstone.

You may think this is not the most spellbinding narrative in the Bible, but it is instructive nonetheless. In one kindness the woman received you see a kindness that should hearten you; in the truth the king received you see a responsibility that should alarm you; in the tears the prophet shed you see a judgment that should sadden you. You have seen here the Lord who revives and now slays.

**B. (:12) Revealing (Exposing) the Wicked Plans of the Enemy – God Knows**  
*“And Hazael said, ‘Why does my lord weep?’*

*Then he answered, 'Because I know the evil that you will do to the sons of Israel: their strongholds you will set on fire, and their young men you will kill with the sword, and their little ones you will dash in pieces, and their women with child you will rip up.'"*

**John Schultz:** Not only would he assassinate his king, but he would also brutally attack Israel and commit war crimes in Elisha's country. In making war against Israel he would not only kill the young men who were serving in the army, but murder little children in a most gruesome way and kill pregnant women by ripping open their bellies.

### **C. (:13) Refuting the Lame Excuses of the Culpable**

#### 1. Denial = I am a Nobody

*"Then Hazael said, 'But what is your servant, who is but a dog, that he should do this great thing?'"*

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** Hazael is a cruel and violent man. Elisha's prophecy is not a shockingly evil possibility to Hazael; it is a description of greatness and success. He does not say, "How could I do such a wicked thing?" He asks rather, "*Who am I to be able to accomplish such a great thing?*" Elisha explains that he will be able to do these things because he is going to become the king of Syria.

#### 2. Dominion = Pin the Tail on the Donkey

*"And Elisha answered, 'The LORD has shown me that you will be king over Aram.'"*

**David Guzik:** As it turned out, God knew the actions of Hazael, but He did not make Hazael do it.

"It was absolutely foretold that Hazael would be king of Syria. The prophet knew the fact right well, and he clearly descried the means; else, why should he look into Hazael's face, and weep? God foreknew the mischief that he would do when he came to the throne; yet that foreknowledge did not in the least degree interfere with his free agency." (**Spurgeon**)

"The predestination of God does not destroy the free agency of man, or lighten the responsibility of the sinner. It is true, in the matter of salvation, when God comes to save, his free grace prevails over our free agency, and leads the will in glorious captivity to the obedience of faith. But in sinning, man is free, – free in the widest sense of the term, never being compelled to do any evil deed, but being left to follow the turbulent passions of his own corrupt heart, and carry out the prevailing tendencies of his own depraved nature." (**Spurgeon**)

## **III. (:14-15) MAN OF GOD PROVEN TO BE A RELIABLE PREDICTOR OF FUTURE EVENTS**

### **A. (:14) Deceptive Communication – Hazael Tells the King only Half the Story**

#### 1. Desperate Response

*“So he departed from Elisha and returned to his master,  
who said to him, ‘What did Elisha say to you?’”*

2. Disingenuous Report

*“And he answered, ‘He told me that you would surely recover.’”*

**B. (:15) Treacherous Coup – Hazael Kills the King and Seizes the Throne**

1. Killing the King

*“And it came about on the morrow, that he took the cover  
and dipped it in water and spread it on his face, so that he died.”*

**MacArthur:** His cold-blooded murder of Ben-hadad demonstrated that a new scourge in the hand of God was now ready (in spite of Hazael’s mock humility – **II Kings 8:13**) for the chastening of His stubborn people.

**John Schultz:** he murdered his king by smothering him with a wet blanket. This kind of murder would leave no trace of violence. It would appear as if the king had died a natural death.

2. Seizing the Throne

*“And Hazael became king in his place.”*

**Paul House:** Hazael rules from about 842 to 806 B.C. and, despite some setbacks at the hands of Assyria, manages to wield serious military influence in his region.<sup>78</sup> Israel is forced to yield to him throughout his reign.

**Peter Pett:** As Elisha foresaw Hazael was a constant aggressor against Israel (**2 Kings 8:28; 2 Kings 9:15; 2 Kings 10:32; 2 Kings 13:3; 2 Kings 13:22**; see also **Amos 1:3-5**), and also against Judah from whom at one stage he stripped all its treasures, being ‘bought off’ when he planned to besiege Jerusalem (**2 Kings 12:18**).

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How does the willingness of Elisha to carry God’s message to Damascus contrast with the reticence of Jonah to obey his commission to preach to Nineveh?
- 2) What was the expectation of Ben-hadad in soliciting insight from Elisha?
- 3) Where have you had occasion to weep over lost souls as a reflection of the heart of God?
- 4) How can we develop a heart that is more like Jesus when it comes to the lost?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wiersbe:** When the Lord met with the Prophet Elijah on Mount Horeb (**I Kings 19:8-18**), He gave him a threefold commission: to anoint Hazael king of Syria, to anoint Jehu king of Israel, and to anoint Elisha to minister as his successor (**I Kings 19:15-16**). Before his translation to heaven, Elijah had fulfilled only one of those commissions, the anointing of Elisha (**I Kings 19:19-21**), so we assume that he told Elisha to take care of the other two assignments.

**The Pulpit Commentary:** It has been usual to connect this visit of Elisha's to Damascus with the commission given to Elijah many years previously, to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria (... **1 Kings 19:16**). But it is certainly worthy of remark that neither is Elijah authorized to devolve his commission on another, nor is he said to have done so, nor is there any statement in the present narrative or elsewhere that Elisha anointed Hazael. It is therefore quite possible that Elisha's journey was wholly unconnected with the command given to Elijah. It may, as [one Bible scholar] imagines, have been the consequence of disorders and dangers in Samaria, growing out of the divergence of views between Jehoram and the queen-mother Jezebel, who still retained considerable influence over the government; and Elisha may have taken his journey, not so much for the sake of a visit, as of a prolonged sojourn. That he attracted the attention both of Benhadad and of his successor Hazael is not surprising.

### **James Hollandsworth: Why Men of God Weep**

Our culture tends to teach us that it is not macho for men to show deep emotion and cry. But look in the Bible at all the macho men who wept. We need a tender heart that will sympathize with others. **Vs. 11** – “*the man of God wept*” – Why did he weep? Many reasons that people cry:

- Out of pain because the body hurts
- Out of grief for losing a loss one
- Out of sorrow over a setback in life (cf. friends of Job)
- Out of joy
- Out of broken-heartedness because we have sinned and broken the heart of God (cf. Peter)

There is another reason that people cry – it is a spiritual reason for crying.

**Vs. 7** – Elijah goes to Damascus; probably the oldest continually inhabited city in the world; it has been there forever; cf. Apostle Paul on the road to Damascus; capital of Syria; city with much history; enemy territory for Israel back in the day; Elisha is on a mission for God with a message for God; willing to go into enemy territory

**1 Kings 19:15** – Lord commissioning Elijah – but this event never took place in his lifetime; his successor carries out the assignment to anoint Hazael king over Syria;

Ben-Hadad learns of Elisha's arrival and sends for him; knows of his power from God; earlier had been used of God to heal Naaman, prominent Syrian general; sends one of

his most trusted advisors to ask the key question regarding his future; people want to know their future:

- When will I die?
- Will I spend eternity in heaven or hell?

Our Lord Jesus Christ is the only one who is worthy to know and reveal the future (**Rev. 5**). Judgment is surely coming – the Great Tribulation – to bring the nation of Israel back to repentance. Only through the blood atonement of Jesus Christ can you escape the torment of the eternal lake of fire. Why would anyone reject such a gracious offer of salvation?

Ben-Hadad fears for his life. He is a pagan. He wants to know his future.

A camel is a huge beast of burden – think of the impressive sight of 40 of them laden with gifts. Capable of carrying massive loads; gold, silver, jewels, spices, meats, cheeses, etc. Salvation cannot be purchased or earned – it is a free gift; according to His mercy that He saves us. Elisha did not care about these impressive gifts – we assume he doesn't even accept them. He turns to the business at hand.

**Vs. 10** – interesting response – You will recover, as far as God is concerned from the disease; but God knows that a sinister plan is brooding that will end in your death. The king will be murdered and Elisha knows it and stares into the face of the murderer until Hazael becomes ashamed and looks away. The sinner can't stand the presence of a righteous one. They try to get out from under the glare of the spotlight. We are salt in this world to the unrighteous. Our righteous life and empowered testimony bring guilt and conviction.

**Vs. 11** – heart of our message – *man of God wept* – burdened with a thought he has not yet expressed to Hazael in words.

**Vs. 12** – Why are you crying? We know the end of the story;

2 Reasons why Men of God weep:

**1) They weep because the enemy is winning victories –**

I know the evil that you will do to the people of Israel. Become enslaved to the enemy = Satan – who is winning victories and capturing former **strongholds**; cf. apostate churches; blinding the mind of those who believe not; defeating Christians in their daily lives; destroying families, churches, etc. making sure we stumble and fall; cf. the awful consequences of sin in this world; addictions; crime; etc.

**2) They weep because lost souls are perishing –** carnage upon the Israelites

Satan is a murderer; trying to lead lost souls into eternal destruction; dragging souls into the lake of fire; bodies will be eternally tormented without being totally consumed; no party in hell; sensation of falling forever = bottomless pit; place of outer darkness; flames of hell are real; no more opportunity for reconciliation with God;

You can't manufacture such a temperament – you can't just flip a switch and start

weeping sincerely

How do you become such a Man of God who weeps?

1) We grow to become such men and women who weep for lost souls **by Obeying the Great Commission** – as you go out and start witnessing you will become burdened for them; **Ps. 126:6** – the weeping comes as you are going – that is how you develop a passion for souls

2) We grow to weep **by experiencing the heart of Jesus** – no one cares for souls like Jesus

2 Occasions in NT where Jesus wept:

**Luke 19:41-44** – referring to time of destruction of temple and Jerusalem in 70 A.D. = “*time of visitation*” – privileged upbringing of Israel and yet they spurned the Messiah; Jesus weeps; He came unto His own and they received Him not; whenever D. L. Moody preached on hell, he wept; Jesus can see the eternal destiny of His lost people

**John 11:35** – Jesus goes to the gravesite of Lazarus with Mary and Martha and the weeping Jews; Yes, Jesus is grieved for the family; but Jesus knows that Lazarus is about to get up out of the grave; He is weeping for the despair of these lost souls who have no hope of eternal life

Primary ministry of Jesus today is that of intercession; we need to pray as well and weep for lost souls; His heart will be mirrored in your heart;

*They that sow in tears will reap in joy;*

<https://www.sermonaudio.com/saplayer/playpopup.asp?SID=32706223057>

TEXT: 2 Kings 8:16-29

TITLE: *JUDAH LOOKS NO DIFFERENT THAN ISRAEL*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE COMBINATION OF INTERMARRIAGE TO FOREIGN PAGANS AND WICKED PARENTAL MODELS WEAKENS THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Davidic kingdom in Judah continues to slide downward until God's people look no different than the people of the world. Evil parenting models exemplified by King Ahab as well as the idolatry introduced by intermarriage with foreign pagans produce weak and ineffectual rulers like Joram and Ahaziah. The resulting weakness leads to the revolt of the vassal state of Edom and the secession of Libnah. The rulers of both Israel and Judah end up together in Jezreel in preparation of God using Jehu to wipe out the household of Ahab.

**Wiersbe:** The wall of separation was gradually crumbling between David's dynasty in Judah and the descendants of Ahab in Israel. The future of God's great plan of salvation depended on the continuation of the Davidic dynasty, so Jehoram was playing right into the enemy's hands. By compromising with the evil rulers of Israel, Jehoram displeased the Lord and weakened the nation.

**David Guzik:** The story of the kings of Judah really paused at **1 Kings 22:50**, where Jehoshaphat the son of Asa ended his 25-year reign and his son Jehoram came to the throne. Now we pick up the story of Jehoram again.

**Peter Pett:** The main lesson that comes out of this passage is similar to that which comes out with regard to the majority of the kings, and that is that if we walk faithfully with God and are obedient to His will and covenant, we can be sure that He will bless us in our lives in the long term, but that if we turn from Him and disobey His laws and covenant He will finally bring chastisement and judgment on us. This is indeed the author's continual emphasis.

**Caleb Nelson:** For the last several months, we have focused exclusively on events in Northern Israel under the reigns of Ahaziah and Jehoram, kings of Israel and sons of Ahab. Now we switch briefly back to Judah and see two kings named . . . Jehoram and Ahaziah! What do you think the narrator is trying to tell us? That Judah and Israel are starting to look so much like each other that even the names of their kings are difficult to tell apart.

**I. (:16-24) EVIL REIGN OF JORAM IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (:16-19) Selected Touchpoints of Joram's Reign**



1. (:16) When Did He Become King

*“Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Jehoshaphat being then the king of Judah, Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat king of Judah became king.”*

**MacArthur:** Jehoram of Judah served as co-regent with his father Jehoshaphat for the final 4 years of his reign, 853-848 B.C. Joram (Jehoram) became king of Israel during the second year of this co-regency, 852 B.C. Jehoram of Judah ruled alone for 8 years after his father’s death, until 841 B.C. (cf. **2Ch 21:15**). Most likely, Obadiah prophesied during his reign.

2. (:17a) How Old Was He When He Became King?

*“He was thirty-two years old when he became king,”*

3. (:17b) How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned eight years”*

4. (:17c) Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“in Jerusalem.”*

**B. (:18-19) Summary Evaluation of Joram’s Reign**

1. (:18) Followed in the Steps of Wicked Ahab

*“And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab became his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.”*

**MacArthur:** Jehoram officially sanctioned Baal worship in Judah as Ahab had in Israel (**1Ki 16:31-33**). Jehoram was married to Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (v. 26).

**Donald Wiseman:** The influence of an evil woman, as of an evil man, can persist. The historian views evil in Judah as worse than in Israel, and this forms the backdrop of God’s covenant mercy (v. 19).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** One wonders why Jehoshaphat cemented an alliance with Israel (**1 Kings 22:44**) by marrying his son (Jehoram) to Ahab’s daughter (**2 Kings 8:18; 2 Chron. 18:1**). Perhaps he thought it a suave move in face of the resurging Assyrian menace under Ashurnasirpal II and Shalmaneser III. But it was a spiritual, moral, national disaster. Jehoshaphat seemed to be long on piety and short on sense.

2. (:19) Forbearance of the Lord on Account of David

*“However, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David His servant, since He had promised him to give a lamp to him through his sons always.”*

**William Barnes:** In the present instance, we are encouraged that despite the negative events which attend Jehoram's reign, Yahweh will be faithful to his covenant with David.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The figure of a "lamp" as a sign of life and hope appears in Abishai's oath to David: "*You shall not go with us into battle anymore, lest you extinguish the lamp (nēr) of Israel!*" (2 Sam 21:17). Contrast, too, the simile "*They would quench my last remaining ember*" (2 Sam 14:7) and its Akkadian counterpart, *PN ša kinūnšu bilû*, "PN whose brazier has gone out"; CAD B 73a; K 394b. Finally, the promise of a "lamp" for David finds its late reflection in Ps 132, in which Deuteronomistic echoes are patent: "*I have arranged a lamp (nēr) for my anointed one*" (v. 17).

**J. Orr:** Grieved though God was with his conduct, he would not destroy Judah, having pledged himself to David to perpetuate his line. The descendants of holy men and women do not know how much of God's mercy and forbearance they often owe to, their ancestral connection. God spares them for their fathers' sakes (Romans 11:28).

### C. (:20-22) Revolt of Edom and Libnah

#### 1. (:20) Revolt of Edom – Breaking Free from Vassal Bondage

*"In his days Edom revolted from under the hand of Judah, and made a king over themselves."*

**Caleb Nelson:** Jehoram's leadership cost Judah its most important vassal ally, and thus access not only to the Red Sea at Ezion Geber but also trade routes to Arabia. Ouch. God is at work for judgment in the lives of those who deliberately and passionately pursue wickedness.

#### 2. (:21) Military Engagement with Edomites

*"Then Joram crossed over to Zair, and all his chariots with him. And it came about that he arose by night and struck the Edomites who had surrounded him and the captains of the chariots; but his army fled to their tents."*

**Peter Pett:** Jehoram (now Joram, a shortened form of the same name) went south to quell the rebellion, but seemingly with insufficient forces, with the result that he was outmaneuvered and surrounded by what was probably a much larger force of Edomites. Rather than recording it as a defeat, however, his annalists ignored that idea (in typical Near Eastern fashion) and described the heroic way in which, in a surprise night foray, by means of his chariot force he broke through the ranks of the enemy who considerably outnumbered him, thus allowing many of his people to escape with him. But the truth comes out in that these then '*fled to their tents* (homes)', always a sign of defeat. In other words his defeated army dispersed. '*Fled to their tents*' was a technical phrase brought forward from wilderness days.

3. (:22) Revolt of Libnah – Seceding from Judah

*“So Edom revolted against Judah to this day.  
Then Libnah revolted at the same time.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I think the writer wants us to look on Edom and Libnah as Yahweh’s initial scourges upon Jehoram.

**Constable:** Jehoshaphat appointed his son Jehoram coregent the year Jehoshaphat went off to join forces with Ahab in battle at Ramoth-gilead (853 B.C.). For the next five years Jehoram served with his father. In 848 B.C. he began ruling alone and did so for the next eight years (until 841 B.C.). His reign overlapped the reigns of Ahaziah and Jehoram (whom the NASB called Joram from now on) in Israel. It is possible that the writing prophet Obadiah ministered and wrote the Bible book that bears his name during Jehoram's reign. Rather than following the godly example of his father, Jehoram chose to pursue idolatry and infidelity to Yahweh like his wife Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel.

**D. (:23-24) Overall Summary of Joram’s Reign**

1. (:23) Recorded Deeds of Joram

*“And the rest of the acts of Joram and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

2. (:24a) Death and Burial

*“So Joram slept with his fathers,  
and was buried with his fathers in the city of David;*

**David Guzik:** According to **2 Chronicles 21:12-15**, Elijah wrote Jehoram a letter, condemning him for his sins and predicting that judgment would come upon him and disaster upon the nation. At the age of 40, Jehoram was struck with a fatal intestinal disease and he died in terrible pain (**2 Chronicles 21:19**).

**J. Orr:** Presumptuous transgressors are rightly visited with judgments of exceptional severity (cf. **Acts 12:23**). It is the memory of the just that is blessed, but the name of the wicked shall rot (**Proverbs 10:7**).

3. (:24b) Succession

*“and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.”*

**Paul House:** Jehoram’s eight-year reign (ca. 848–841 B.C.) is characterized by three comments.

- First, he sins as did Ahab’s house, primarily because he marries Ahab’s daughter, Athaliah (cf. **2 Kgs 8:26**), a woman who becomes quite important later in the story.
- Second, the writer claims that Yahweh only permits Jehoram and Judah to survive *“for the sake of his servant David.”* This conclusion echoes sentiments already expressed in the text (cf. **1 Kgs 11:34–39; 15:3–5; cf. 2 Chr 21:4, 10**).

- Third, Jehoram is unable to put down an Edomite revolt and just manages to escape with his life. Like Israel's loss of its Moabite vassal (**2 Kgs 3:1-27**), this humiliation at the hands of the Edomites demonstrates how weak Judah has become since the glory days of David and Solomon.

## **II. (:25-29) EVIL REIGN OF AHAZIAH IN THE SOUTH**

### **A. (:25-27) Selected Touchpoints of Ahaziah's Reign**

#### 1. (:25) When Did He Become King?

*"In the twelfth year of Joram the son of Ahab king of Israel, Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah began to reign."*

**Constable:** There were two King Ahaziahs as there were two King Jehorams, one of each in each kingdom. Both Ahaziahs reigned only one year each, but their administrations did not overlap. The administrations of the two Jehorams did overlap. Ahaziah of Israel reigned 11 years earlier than Ahaziah of Judah. In Judah, Jehoram (853-841 B.C) preceded Ahaziah (841 B.C.), but in Israel Ahaziah (853-852 B.C.) preceded Jehoram (852-841 B.C.). Ahab had two sons, Ahaziah and J(eh)oram, who reigned successively in Israel; Jehoshaphat had a son, Jehoram, and a grandson, Ahaziah, who reigned successively in Judah.

**John Gates:** The ascension of Ahaziah marked the turning point in Judah, from which she never recovered.

#### 2. (:26a) How Old Was He When He Became King?

*"Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king,"*

#### 3. (:26b) How Long Did He Reign?

*"and he reigned one year"*

#### 4. (:26c) Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*"in Jerusalem."*

#### 5. (:26d) Who Was His Mother?

*"And his mother's name was Athaliah the granddaughter of Omri king of Israel."*

**R. D. Patterson:** Ahaziah, too, was under the paganistic spell of wicked Athaliah (v. **26b**; cf. **2 Chron 22:3-5**) and perpetuated the Baalism that his father had fostered (v. **27**). Likewise, at the first opportunity he joined in with Ahab's son Jehoram in renewed hostilities with the Arameans in Ramoth Gilead (v. **28**; **1 Kings 22:1-40**). Once more the battle went badly for Israel and Judah, for in that battle King Jehoram was sorely wounded and returned to Jezreel for rest and recovery from his wounds (v. **29**; cf. **9:14-16**). The chapter ends with a concerned Ahaziah going to visit Jehoram in Jezreel. He would not return to Jerusalem alive (cf. **9:16, 24-29**).

**B. (:27) Summary Evaluation of Ahaziah's Reign**

*“And he walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab had done, because he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.”*

**C. (:28-29) Interaction with between Ahaziah and Joram in Military Conflict Against Hazael**

1. (:28) Ahaziah Fighting with Joram against Hazael at Ramoth-gilead

a. War Against Hazael

*“Then he went with Joram the son of Ahab to war against Hazael king of Aram at Ramoth-gilead,”*

b. Wounding of Joram

*“and the Arameans wounded Joram.”*

2. (:29a) Joram Finding Refuge in Jezreel after being Wounded

*“So King Joram returned to be healed in Jezreel of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramah, when he fought against Hazael king of Aram.”*

3. (:29b) Ahaziah Following Joram to Jezreel to Check on His Condition

*“Then Ahaziah the son of Jehoram king of Judah went down to see Joram the son of Ahab in Jezreel because he was sick.”*

**MacArthur:** Ahaziah's travel to visit the recuperating Joram (also called Jehoram) king of Israel placed him in Jezreel (W of the Jordan, SW of the Sea of Galilee) during Jehu's purge of the house of Omri (see **9:21-29**).

**Paul House:** Four items highlight his reign.

- First, his mother is Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab (**2 Kgs 8:18**) and granddaughter of Omri. This second reference to Athaliah prepares the reader for her prominence in **2 Kgs 11:16**.
- Second, Ahaziah acts like the house of Ahab because he is “related by marriage to Ahab's family.” According to **2 Chr 22:3** his mother “*encouraged him in doing wrong.*”
- Third, because of the family ties (**2 Chr 22:4-5**) he fights Syria alongside Joram of Israel.
- Fourth, he visits Joram when the Israelite king returns to Samaria to recover from wounds received while fighting Syria. This final item places Joram and Ahaziah at the same place at the same time, a fact that will matter a great deal in the next chapter.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is it so important not to date or marry unbelievers?
- 2) What type of negative impact can evil parents have on their offspring – especially in a royal setting where they are preparing children for future leadership roles?
- 3) Should you expect judgment from the Lord when the church looks no different than the world in its moral behavior?
- 4) How does the faithfulness of God secure the perpetual testimony to the light even in the midst of overwhelming darkness?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**William Barnes:** Influence of parents notwithstanding, the major issue in both this and the preceding section must be the **dangers of intermarriage with foreigners**, that is, nonbelievers (at that time, non-Israelites would normally worship their own national god, not Yahweh, the national God of Israel or Judah). Of course, most such intermarriages took place for diplomatic reasons, and in a real sense, the royal family of the northern kingdom of Israel did not fit completely into the category of “foreigners”; but still, the danger of foreign influence had long been recognized in Judah (highlighted especially in the book of Deuteronomy. . .), and for the Deuteronomistic Historian, the results of borrowing practices from non-believers can only be disastrous. To be sure, things get tricky when mothers-in-law get involved and arranged marriages take place, but the warning remains—marry the unbeliever, get the unbelief (thrown in for free, as it were). This is especially true when the marriage partner is vigorous in personality or from a home with parents of vigorous personalities. Ahaziah in his single year of reign (perhaps encompassing only several months or so. . .), would hardly have done much actual harm, but the Deuteronomistic evaluation must nonetheless be. . . As is generally the case, the history here is written with a clear contemporary agenda. And in this case it is that thou shalt not marry unbelievers (cf. **2 Cor 6:14**, also the commentary on **1 Kgs 11:1–13** for Solomon’s particularly notorious failings in this area).

### **Caleb Nelson: One Big Evil Family**

**Proposition:** God’s providential work in judgment and salvation is at work in the destinies of nations and in the places of your everyday life.

#### **I. Jehoram ben Jehoshaphat, Ahab’s son-in-law, vv. 16-24**

A. His Basic Information, vv. 16-17, 23-24

B. The Evil of his Reign, vv. 18-22

1. Its Source: Ahab’s Household
2. Its Penalty Postponed: God’s Promise to David
3. Its Consequences

- a) Edom's Revolt
- b) Libnah's Revolt

## **II. Ahaziah ben Jehoram, Ahab's grandson, vv. 25-29**

- A. His Basic Information, vv. 25-27
- B. The Setup of his Downfall, vv. 28-29
  - 1. Ramoth Gilead, the place of Ahab's wounding
  - 2. Ramoth Gilead, the place of Joram's wounding
  - 3. Jezreel, the place of Naboth's Vineyard

## **III. Application**

### **A. Trust God's Providential Work in Salvation**

What should our lives look like based on this text? First of all, we should trust that God is work in the places where we go, the places where our families have lived for only a few weeks or for generation upon generation. His promise of salvation in Christ still stands. If He spared Judah for the sake of that promise, He will spare you too if you are united to Christ by faith.

### **B. Fear His Providential Work in Judgment**

But beware that for those who do not trust Christ, God is at work for judgment. He can and will make life very difficult for those who refuse to submit to Him. Church revolts and splits are one potential sign of His disfavor. So don't fight Him. Don't resist Him. Fear Him, and trust His promise to David's Son.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/1031171127108.pdf>

## **Larry Yeager: Cleaning House in Judah**

**Theme:** God will expose and judge the sin (darkness) of his people in order to preserve the light of his promise to David, the promise of the light of Christ. He will judge the sin in his people today to let the light of Christ shine more brightly in us.

**Background & Introduction:** Returning to Judah after a long focus on Israel

## **I. Setting the Stage (1-15)**

- A. A divine "coincidence" (1-6) - The truth of God's Word is confirmed - As well as his care for his people
- B. Raising an instrument of judgment (7-15)
  - 1. Going back to Elijah (1 Kings 19:15-17) - Anoint Hazael (in Syria), Jehu (in Israel), and Elisha
  - 2. Hazael will be king - Murdering Ben-Hadad
  - 3. Elisha's grief - Divine sorrow (Ezekiel 33:11; Luke 19:41-44)

## **II. A Quiet Invasion (16-24)**

- A. Judah follows Israel
  - 1. Jehoshaphat's alliance with Ahab (1 Kings 22:44)
  - 2. Jehoram marries Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah

3. Walking in the ways of the house of Ahab! (18) –  
See also **2 Chronicles 21**
4. Bringing disgrace upon the house of David!

B. Judah's waning power

1. Edom revolts
2. Libnah secedes from Judah

C. Judging Jehoram's house (see **2 Chronicles 21:16-19**)

1. A devastating invasion
2. Taking his wives and children into captivity - Only Athaliah and his youngest Ahaziah/Jehoahaz escape
3. A painful, lingering death

**III. Judah in Israel's Service (25-29)**

A. Ahaziah reigns (see **2 Chronicles 22:1-9**) - Athaliah is "in charge"

B. Azariah in the House of Ahab (27) - Remember Ramoth-Gilead?  
(**1 Kings 22**)

**IV. Preserving Judah's Lamp (19)**

A. God's discipline of Judah

1. Forsaking the law and promises of God
2. Leading the people astray

B. Not for destruction, but for deliverance

1. God has not forgotten his promise (**Isaiah 42:3**) - David's son will sit on the throne (**2 Samuel 7:12-16**)
2. To purify His people
3. To keep the lamp lit

**V. Preserving the Light of Christ**

A. Judgment coming on the Church?

1. Pressure from without to conform to the world - To accept and follow the way of the world
2. Pressure from within What they discovered? Regarding their "beliefs". - "Moralistic, Therapeutic, Deism"

B. How bright is the light?

1. Has it been dimmed by the culture?
2. Is "teaching" enough?
3. God give you a Joash!

C. What will we need to stand fast?

1. People – the community, the body of Christ
2. Perseverance



3. Passion

4. The Promise – Holding it tightly, not loosely

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TEXT: 2 Kings 9:1-13

TITLE: *ANOINTING OF JEHU KING OVER ISRAEL AND GOD'S INSTRUMENT OF JUDGMENT*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE CERTAINTY AND SUDDENESS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT – DESPITE ITS SEEMING DELAY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Despite God's promise of judgment against those who oppose Him and persist in their rebellion and sins, people tend to disregard or mock His threat. They imagine that life will go on along its present course without any divine intervention and righting of wrongs. The more powerful their status, the more their false confidence fortifies their wicked behavior. Here we see Jehu commissioned as God's instrument of certain and sudden judgment against the idolatrous house of Ahab.

**August Konkel:** The oracle has the two standard elements: There is a judgment relevant to the immediate situation (v. 7), followed by the stereotyped curse (vv. 8–9). The oracle against Jezebel (v. 10) is specifically a fulfillment of the prophetic word (1 Kings 21:23). The judgment speech brings to a climax the accumulated sins of Israel from Jeroboam to Joram.

**Iain Provan:** The twelve years of Jehoram, son of Ahab, are completed (2 Kgs. 3:1; 8:25); and the time for judgment has come (1 Kgs. 21:21–29). Elisha is still with us, and Hazael—though not in the way first planned—is king of Aram. Ahab's drama is approaching its final curtain. Of the players mentioned in 1 Kings 19:15–18, we await only Jehu. Right on cue, he now makes his entrance. Israel will be purged at last of Ahab's house and the worship of Baal it has introduced. Judah, too, will be cleansed. Even the Davidic line will seem under threat. God's quiet ways are, for the moment, at an end. Earthquake is the order of the day.

**G. Campbell Morgan:** It is indeed a terrible chapter in which the truth of the divine government is written no longer in the gentle words of patient mercy, but in flames of fire. At last the day of God's patience had passed, and the devouring sword fell on the chief persons in the household of Ahab, who had done so much to encompass the ruin of His ancient people.

**John Gates:** Because idolatry threatened to destroy all remaining good influences in Israel and to invade Judah and so destroy the whole nation, the house of Ahab was marked for extinction.

## **I. (:1-3) TOP SECRET MISSION – COMMAND TO ANOINT JEHU KING OF ISRAEL – JUDGMENT IS SECRETIVE**

### **A. (:1) Need for Speed in Accomplishing the Mission**

*“Now Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, ‘Gird up your loins, and take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead.’”*

Nobody is privy to God’s secret timetable regarding His appointed judgments. It seems as if life will continue to go on as in the past without any divine intervention. But God sets judgment in motion in top secret fashion. That’s why *“Today is the day of salvation.”* We have no guarantee of tomorrow.

**Matthew Henry:** Elisha did not go himself to anoint Jehu, because he was old and unfit for such a journey and so well known that he could not do it privately, could not go and come without observation; therefore he sends *one of the sons of the prophets* to do it.

### **B. (:2) Need for Secrecy in Accomplishing the Mission**

*“When you arrive there, search out Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in and bid him arise from among his brothers, and bring him to an inner room.”*

**MacArthur:** A private room that could be closed off to the public. Elisha commissioned one of the younger prophets to anoint Jehu alone behind closed doors. The rite was to be a secret affair without Elisha present so that Jehoram would not suspect that a coup was coming.

### **C. (:3a) Clearly Defining the Mission**

*“Then take the flask of oil and pour it on his head and say, ‘Thus says the LORD, I have anointed you king over Israel.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Elisha sends a member of a prophetic group (cf. **1 Kgs 20:35**) to fulfil the task of anointing Jehu that Elijah had passed on to him (**1 Kgs 19:16**). This unnamed young prophet is identified in Jewish tradition (Seder Olam) with Jonah (**2 Kgs 14:25**) and involves a foreign mission. Doubtless Jehu was motivated also by personal ambition and the current disaffection with the regime and its heavy taxation. He was, however, God’s agent using the army to end it just as the army had originally brought Omri to power.

### **D. (:3b) Need for Speed and Secrecy to Escape after Completing the Mission**

*“Then open the door and flee and do not wait.”*

## **II. (:4-10) TERMINATION COMMISSION -- PURPOSE OF ANOINTING JEHU KING OF ISRAEL – JUDGMENT IS CERTAIN**

### **(:4) Prelude -- Arrival**

*“So the young man, the servant of the prophet, went to Ramoth-gilead.”*

**A. (:5) Targeted Message**

*“When he came, behold, the captains of the army were sitting, and he said, ‘I have a word for you, O captain.’  
And Jehu said, ‘For which one of us?’ And he said, ‘For you, O captain.’”*

**B. (:6) Textbook Anointing**

*“And he arose and went into the house, and he poured the oil on his head and said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, I have anointed you king over the people of the LORD, even over Israel.’”*

**C. (:7-10a) Termination Commission**

1. (:7) Summary of Avenging Devastation Against House of Ahab

*“And you shall strike the house of Ahab your master, that I may avenge the blood of My servants the prophets, and the blood of all the servants of the LORD, at the hand of Jezebel.”*

2. (:8) Specific Assassination of all Males of the House of Ahab

*“For the whole house of Ahab shall perish, and I will cut off from Ahab every male person both bond and free in Israel.”*

3. (:9) Similar Treatment to Judgment Against Jeroboam and Baasha

*“And I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah.”*

**MacArthur:** God would thoroughly annihilate Ahab’s line in the same way as Jeroboam’s dynasty and Baasha’s dynasty had previously ended violently (**1Ki 15:27-30; 16:8-13**).

**Caleb Nelson:** Why did God’s word set up Jehu like this to be king? Well, the text tells us at length. It was to avenge the blood of the prophets and the blood of all God’s people who had suffered under the depredations of Ahab and Jezebel. God highlights the fact that He is giving royal power to Jehu so that Jehu can take vengeance. Vengeance belongs to God, but in this case He is delegating it to a human agent.

4. (:10a) Special Degrading Treatment for Jezebel and Her Corpse

*“And the dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and none shall bury her.”*

**(:10b) Postlude -- Departure**

*“Then he opened the door and fled.”*

**John Gates:** A predictive act indicating the swiftness and awfulness of the destruction to follow.

### **III. (:11-13) TRUMPETED CONFESSION – RECOGNITION OF JEHU AS KING OF ISRAEL – JUDGMENT IS SUDDEN**

#### **A. (:11) Confusion Regarding the Nearness of God's Judgment**

*“Now Jehu came out to the servants of his master, and one said to him, ‘Is all well? Why did this mad fellow come to you?’ And he said to them, ‘You know very well the man and his talk.’”*

**August Konkell:** Calling the prophet a “*madman*” (9:11) is a derogatory reference to the eclectic nature of prophets. Prophets were those “crazy preachers”; the description does not refer to their activity in prophesying but to their manner of life and speech. But prophets did have influence, even when their ability to declare the divine will was disregarded. The officers know the prophetic emissary with Jehu, and his announcement is regarded as the occasion to act. The followers of Jehu immediately turn the bare steps into an ascent to a royal dais and declare Jehu as king. Blowing a trumpet was customary in installing a king (cf. **1 Kings 1:34, 39**). It served as a public announcement to formally submit to the new monarch. Following the accession ceremony, a proclamation to announce the anointed as king was normal procedure (cf. **1:11, 13, 18**). Though the prophetic herald is spoken of disparagingly, his word is effective.

**Ellicott:** *Ye know the man.*—There is emphasis on the *ye*. Jehu apparently implies that the man was sent to him by his fellow-generals—that they had planned the whole thing. His purpose is to find out their disposition. Or, more probably, his reply may simply mean: “Why ask me, when you yourselves must have divined the right answer to your question?”

#### **B. (:12) Full Disclosure Reveals the Surprise of Imminent Judgment**

*“And they said, ‘It is a lie, tell us now.’ And he said, ‘Thus and thus he said to me, Thus says the LORD, I have anointed you king over Israel.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Jehu's associates, of course, are incurably curious—what did this whacko want with him (v. 11a)? Jehu seems to dismiss the matter. But, unless Jehu had quick access to a shower and shampoo, it would be difficult to hide both the sight and the fragrance of the anointing oil on his head. When Jehu comes clean there is a spontaneous coronation (vv. 12–13). One infers that Joram was hardly the poster-boy of the army. So the conspiracy is on (v. 14a), all furloughs are cancelled (v. 15b), and the mad ride to unseat the king begins (v. 16).

**The Pulpit Commentaries:** And they said, It is false. There was no rudeness in the reply. It merely denied that Jehu's supposition was correct. There had been no collusion between the spiritual and temporal authorities. The captains had no knowledge of the young prophet's errand. Tell us now. “Tell us,” *i.e.*; “what the young prophet said, since we are completely in the dark upon the subject.” And he said, Thus and thus spoke he to me, saying, Thus saith the Lord, I have anointed thee king over Israel. Jehu declared to them without any reserve all that the young prophet had said to him. He accepted their declaration that they were not in league with him, and then gave them an exact account

of all that had occurred. He left it for them to determine what, under the circumstances, they would do.

### C. (:13) Need for Speed in Recognizing Jehu as King

*“Then they hurried and each man took his garment and placed it under him on the bare steps, and blew the trumpet, saying, ‘Jehu is king!’”*

They wasted no time in expressing their loyalty to the new king and recognizing his authority and anticipating his mission of swift judgment.

**Donald Wiseman:** The army officers took their cloaks and placed, spread or ‘set’ them under him to acclaim him as king. The act of spreading out the garment was one of recognition, loyalty and promise of support (cf. the people to Christ in **Matt. 21:8; Luke 19:36**). The place where they did this is not clear, for the word translated bare steps (Heb. *gerem*) occurs only here. If the same as ‘bone’ it is taken as the steps ‘themselves’, on the basis of the Hebrew reflexive based on ‘my bone’, i.e. myself. It may well be an architectural term, the landing part-way down the steps (**Gray**) or a raised supported structure (cf. Akkad. *girnû*). The trumpet (*šôpār*)-call (as used in the coronation of Solomon, **1 Kgs 1:34**; and Joash, **2 Kgs 11:14**) was to herald a public proclamation and assembly. It may be noteworthy that they said ‘Jehu rules as / is king’ rather than the popular acclamation ‘Long live the king’ which was only made when the full public assent had been made: as for Saul (**1 Sam. 10:24**), Absalom (**2 Sam. 16:16**), Solomon (**1 Kgs 1:34, 39**), Joash (**2 Chr. 23:11**) and Josiah (**2 Kgs 11:12**). Negotiations to that end for Jehu still lay ahead.

**Iain Provan:** When Jehu tells them what has been said, they immediately proclaim him king (v. 13; cf. **1 Kgs. 1:34, 39; Matt. 21:8; Mark 11:8; Luke 19:36**). They seem most eager to do so. Perhaps Jehoram’s lack of military success had already caused unrest in the army.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should we respond to people who mock the threat of judgment at the Second Coming of Christ?
- 2) When have we been tempted to imagine that God’s delays regarding His promises are actually denials?
- 3) Have you experienced God’s timetable operating in seemingly slow motion and then without warning switching over to lightning speed?
- 4) Why were members of Israel’s military so quick to throw their loyalty behind Jehu?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dan Bockenfeld:** The sin of Baal worship in the northern kingdom was running rampant. There were so many detestable practices to Baal worship like ritual prostitution and the sacrifice of the first-born child to appease Baal. Baal worship was like a cancer for the nation and the tumor needed to be cut out. That tumor was Ahab's family, Jezebel and the priests of Baal. Jehu took his charge very seriously and you can see in the passage that many times he refers to his mission as fulfilling God's word. God had promised to destroy Ahab's family and Jehu's hands were the ones to do it. It's amazing to see how many people turn on Ahab's family, Jezebel and the servants of Baal. Even though it was so prevalent, there must have been so many people who were very unhappy with Baal worship and when an opportunity arose, the people were very quick to switch sides.

[https://iitubf.org/sermons/2015/06/21/the\\_price\\_of\\_sin.html](https://iitubf.org/sermons/2015/06/21/the_price_of_sin.html)

**Richard Carlson:** As I have studied this bloody purge of the house of Ahab and Jezebel, that's all I can think of is—Tell us Lord, “What things really matter most to You?” As I have pursued these 37 verses, there are five things that seem to float to the top of the pile as we read about this reign of King Jehu of Israel. These five desires of God are

- for His personal assignments to be followed,
- His justice to be fully meted out,
- His suffering saints to be not forgotten, but vindicated,
- His worship to be found and restored, and
- for His Word to be final and unshakable.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/11320221621725.pdf>

**Ligonier.org:** **Waiting for the Lord to bring judgment** on all His and our enemies is surely one of the most difficult things to do as a believer. We long for the day when everything will be set right, when God's people no longer have to suffer mocking and even worse forms of persecution. Scripture recognizes the difficulty we have in waiting for the judgment of the Lord. Several psalms, including **Psalms 13**, feature the psalmist crying out to our Creator, asking Him with urgency how long it will be until he is avenged. Perhaps even the saints in heaven find it hard to wait for the Lord to judge our enemies. After all, **Revelation 6:9–11** depicts the souls of the martyrs asking the Lord how long it will be before He avenges their blood shed in bearing witness to Christ.

Naboth's family may have wondered when the line of Ahab would finally suffer the Lord's judgment. After Ahab stole Naboth's vineyard and had Naboth killed, God promised to bring an end to Ahab's line, but not until the reign of Ahab's son (**1 Kings 21**). Moreover, Ahab's wife persecuted and killed many of the prophets of the Lord (**18:13**). This would have made the faithful remnant in Israel long for the day when their deaths would be avenged. And all these individuals had to wait for many years for the Lord to act. Ahab's first son to sit on the throne of Israel, Ahaziah, reigned for two years (**22:51–53**). Then, Ahab's other son, Ahaziah's brother Jehoram of Israel, became

king and ruled for twelve years (**2 Kings 1:17–18; 3:1**). God did not act immediately to end Ahab's line; His people had to wait.

Today's passage reveals the instrument that the Lord would finally use to fulfill His promise of judgment on the house of Ahab. God had told Elijah to anoint Jehu king over Israel many years earlier (**1 Kings 19:16**), and it fell to Elisha to carry out this command. Sending one of the sons of the prophets to Ramoth-gilead, Elisha had him anoint as king over Israel Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi (not the same Jehoshaphat who was one of the kings of Judah; **2 Kings 9:1–3**). In so doing, the young man whom Elisha sent proclaimed that Jehu would be the one to cut off the house of Ahab, to bring an end to Ahab's line (**vv. 4–10**). Jehu was a commander in the army, and at least a good portion of the army celebrated his anointing (**vv. 11–13**). God's people had to wait no longer. Their enemies were finally about to be eliminated.



TEXT: 2 Kings 9:14-37

TITLE: JEHU – INSTRUMENT OF DIVINE EXECUTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**DIVINE EXECUTIONS DISPLAY THE IRONY OF PROPHETIC FULFILLMENT AND THE HORROR OF GRUESOME DESECRATION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Jehu is God's avenging instrument of execution to purge both Israel and Judah of the wicked influence of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel and their promotion of Baal worship. He strikes decisively to eliminate Joram, Ahaziah and finally Jezebel. He is ruthless and relentless in fulfilling his divinely appointed mission. There is no peace for these wicked rulers.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** the demise of the wicked should be the joy of the righteous. It may sound crude to put it that way but that's only because the church has stopped living in, for example, **Psalms 83** and **94** and has been sucking up the bland milk of tolerance from the breasts of an anemic culture for far too long. There is no biblical spine in our theology.

**I. (:14-23) NO PEACE FOR THE WICKED -- JEHU CHASES DOWN JORAM**

**A. (:14-16) Plotting to Kill Joram**

1. (:14a) Conspiracy Set in Motion

*"So Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi conspired against Joram."*

2. (:14b-15a) Convalescence of Joram

*"Now Joram with all Israel was defending Ramoth-gilead against Hazael king of Aram, 15 but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds which the Arameans had inflicted on him when he fought with Hazael king of Aram."*

3. (:15b) City of Ramoth-gilead Sealed Off

*"So Jehu said, 'If this is your mind, then let no one escape or leave the city to go tell it in Jezreel.'"*

**MacArthur:** For Jehu to succeed in his revolt and to avoid a civil conflict, it was important to take Joram totally by surprise. Therefore, Jehu ordered the city of Ramoth-gilead where he had been anointed (vv. 2, 3) to be sealed lest someone loyal to Joram escape and notify the king.

4. (:16a) Chariot Ride to Jezreel

*“Then Jehu rode in a chariot and went to Jezreel,  
for Joram was lying there.”*

**Wiersbe:** It was about forty-five miles from Ramoth Gilead to Jezreel, but Jehu was a fast and daring charioteer and his men were accustomed to traveling at speeds that were alarming in those days.

5. (:16b) Catching Ahaziah Visiting at Jezreel

*“And Ahaziah king of Judah had come down to see Joram.”*

**B. (:17-23) Pursuing Joram –**

**Series of 3 Investigations by Joram to See if Jehu was on a Mission of Peace**

1. (:17-18) First Investigation

*“Now the watchman was standing on the tower in Jezreel and he saw the company of Jehu as he came, and said, ‘I see a company.’ And Joram said, ‘Take a horseman and send him to meet them and let him say, **Is it peace?**’ 18 So a horseman went to meet him and said, ‘Thus says the king, **Is it peace?**’ And Jehu said, ‘What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me.’ And the watchman reported, ‘The messenger came to them, but he did not return.’”*

2. (:19-20) Second Investigation

*“Then he sent out a second horseman, who came to them and said, ‘Thus says the king, **Is it peace?**’ And Jehu answered, ‘What have you to do with peace? Turn behind me.’ 20 And the watchman reported, ‘He came even to them, and he did not return; and the driving is like the driving of Jehu the son of Nimshi, for he drives furiously.’”*

**David Guzik:** Jehu was such an intense man that his personality could be easily seen in the way he drove a chariot.

3. (:21-23) Third Investigation

*“Then Joram said, ‘Get ready.’ And they made his chariot ready. And Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah went out, each in his chariot, and they went out to meet Jehu and found him in the property of Naboth the Jezreelite. 22 And it came about, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, ‘**Is it peace, Jehu?**’ And he answered, ‘What peace, so long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcrafts are so many?’ 23 So Joram reined about and fled and said to Ahaziah, ‘There is treachery, O Ahaziah!’”*

**David Guzik:** This was the land that Ahab and Jezebel had so wickedly obtained by murdering the innocent owner of the land – Naboth. On this very land – which, as far as God was concerned, still belonged to Naboth – the dynasty of Omri would meet its judgment.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Joram, of course, had no idea what it all meant: that's why he dispatched horsemen to ask, literally, *'Is it peace?'* (vv. 18, 19). I think this is meant, as some translations (e.g., njb, njps) have it, in the sense of *'Is all well?'* Joram had no idea of what might have happened at Ramoth-gilead. Conceivably Jehu may be bringing word of a victory, or, more likely, of disaster. Some commentators wonder why, after both horsemen did not return, Joram (and Ahaziah) drove out to meet Jehu (v. 21) without protection. But the text does not say he was without support—he may well have had a bodyguard. Joram's suspicions were likely raised when his two emissaries did not return, but what choice did he have? He had to find out what was going on. If one is to be alarmed he must know what to be alarmed about!

## **II. (:24-29) EXECUTION OF JORAM AND AHAZIAH**

### **A. (:24-26) Execution of Joram**

#### 1. (:24) His Death

*"And Jehu drew his bow with his full strength and shot Joram between his arms; and the arrow went through his heart, and he sank in his chariot."*

**Donald Wiseman:** God's word that Ahab's house would be destroyed was brought about through the brash actions of his agent Jehu. The experienced warrior deliberately aimed to shoot Joram. A technical archery term is used: *'filled his hand with the bow'* (mt; cf. Akkad. *qašta mullû*), that is, stretched the bow 'with his full strength' (rsv after Rashi). Sidkar was Jehu's, or, less probably, Ahaziah's third man in the chariot (Heb. *šālîš*, i.e. not the driver, or just an officer, but the royal aide-de-camp; cf. **2 Kgs 7:2**). It is possible that Bidkar was driving his own chariot alongside.

#### 2. (:25-26) His Deserving Desecration

*"Then Jehu said to Bidkar his officer, 'Take him up and cast him into the property of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite, for I remember when you and I were riding together after Ahab his father, that the LORD laid this oracle against him: 26 Surely I have seen yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, says the LORD, and I will repay you in this property, says the LORD. Now then, take and cast him into the property, according to the word of the LORD.'"*

**MacArthur:** Jehu viewed himself as God's avenging agent fulfilling Elijah's prediction.

**Constable:** Jehu desired to fulfill the prophecy of Ahab's punishment (v. 26; cf. **1 Kings 21:21-22**). God had mitigated Ahab's judgment because he had repented (**1 Kings 21:29**), but now his descendants were reaping the consequences, as God had promised. **Verse 26** adds that Jezebel had executed Naboth's sons, too. The writer did not record this earlier. Perhaps she sought to preclude any claims that Naboth's descendants could have made to his lands later. These additional murders also violated the Mosaic Law (**Lev. 25:25; Num. 36:7**).

**Peter Pett:** Turning his chariot Jehoram sought to flee crying out to Ahaziah that treachery was afoot, but as he fled Jehu drew his bow, and with a well-aimed arrow, struck him between the arms so that he sank down in his chariot. Then Jehu commanded that his body be taken and cast onto the plot of land stolen from Naboth by Ahab and Jezebel as a kind of atonement for the land, and punishment from YHWH. All Israel would recognise from this that Jehu was simply doing YHWH's will, while Jehu gained the satisfaction of knowing that he had been YHWH's chosen instrument.

## **B. (:27-29) Execution of Ahaziah**

### 1. (:27) His Death

*"When Ahaziah the king of Judah saw this, he fled by the way of the garden house. And Jehu pursued him and said, 'Shoot him too, in the chariot.' So they shot him at the ascent of Gur, which is at Ibleam. But he fled to Megiddo and died there."*

### 2. (:28) His Deserving Burial in Jerusalem

*"Then his servants carried him in a chariot to Jerusalem, and buried him in his grave with his fathers in the city of David."*

**Wiersbe:** Ahaziah was wounded as he fled from Jezreel (v. 27). He made it to Beth-haggan and then turned northwest at the Ascent of Gur and headed for Megiddo where he tried to hide from Jehu. But Jehu's men tracked him down and killed him at Megiddo. Ahaziah's servants carried his body from Megiddo to Jerusalem where he was buried with the kings, for he was a descendant of David. Had he not compromised with Joram, worshiped Baal, and followed his mother, Athaliah's counsel, he would have been spared all this shame and defeat.

**Constable:** Jehu's assassinations terminated not only two kings of Israel and Judah but the alliance of the two nations as well.

### 3. (:29) Summary of Reign of Ahaziah over Southern Kingdom

*"Now in the eleventh year of Joram, the son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah."*

**Peter Pett:** The whole passage from **2 Kings 8:25** is now summed up by a repeat of the fact concerning Ahaziah's succession, so that **2 Kings 8:25** and **2 Kings 9:29** form an inclusio. (It will be noted that it is also required for the chiasmus). The difference lies in the fact that here the Israelite method of reckoning regnal years (eleven years excluding the accession year) is used instead of that used in Judah (twelve years including the accession year). This is interesting evidence that the passage includes information extracted from both the annals of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, with the statements being extracted from each without being altered.

## **III. (:30-37) EXECUTION OF JEZEBEL**

### **A. (:30-31) Jezebel's Final Defiance**

1. (:30) Shameless Presentation

*“When Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel heard of it, and she painted her eyes and adorned her head, and looked out the window.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Doubtless Jezebel’s adornment was intended to create a queenly appearance in the face of impending death and served as a royal burial preparation.

**John Kitto:** “*Painted her eyes*” is the correct reading, as given in the margin and read in the Septuagint and Vulgate. This custom, which our translators do not to have comprehended, is universal among the women the East, and sometimes is also adopted by the men. They eyelid is tinged with a metallic black powder, which is called *surmeh* the Turks and Persians, and *kohol* by the Egyptians. It is rather a delicate operation, which is thus performed: The eye is closed, and a small ebony rod smeared with composition is squeezed between the lids, so as to tinge their edges with the colour. This is considered to add greatly to the brilliancy and power of the eye, and to deepen the effect of the long black eye-lashes of which the Orientals are proud. The same drug is employed on the eyebrows -- used thus, it is intended to elongate, not to elevate, the arc, so that the inner extremities are usually represented as meeting between the eyes. To a European the effect produced is seldom, at first, pleasing; but it soon becomes so. The Egyptian monuments confirm the intimation which the present text affords of the antiquity of the custom.

**NET Bible** quoted **by Constable:** On the surface Jezebel's actions seem contradictory. On the one hand, she beautifies herself as if to seduce Jehu, but on the other hand, she insults and indirectly threatens him with this comparison to Zimri. Upon further reflection, however, her actions reveal a clear underlying motive. She wants to retain her power, not to mention her life. By beautifying herself, she appeals to Jehu's sexual impulses; by threatening him, she reminds him that he is in the same precarious position as Zimri. But, if he makes Jezebel his queen, he can consolidate his power. In other words through her actions and words Jezebel is saying to Jehu, 'You desire me, don't you? And you need me!'

**John Schultz:** Jezebel will be killed next, but she will not die quietly. She puts on makeup, fixes her hair, and waits for Jehu by her window. This is no attempt to seduce the rebel. Rather, she does these things to look like, and die like, a queen. When Jehu arrives, she sarcastically asks if he has come in peace. She then insults him by calling him Zimri, the ineffectual, short-lived usurper of Elah’s throne (cf. **1 Kgs 16:8–20**). Of course, Jehu is the killer of his master, so it may be the insinuation of a brief reign that provides the bite to her accusation/insult.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** If Joram’s end highlights the **irony** of God’s judgment, Jezebel’s displays the **horror** of that judgment. Jehu enters Jezreel. Jezebel in the meantime has been briefed on what has occurred (**v. 30a**) and apparently divines what is coming. She is hardly unnerved. Out come the cosmetics; she gets on her mascara, teases and fixes her hair, and, looking like the queen, peers through the window as Jehu comes through the gate (**v. 30b**). Her sarcasm is in top form: she asks Jehu, *‘Is all well, Zimri,*

*murderer of his master?*” (v. 31b). There are some who think Jezebel here holds out an offer of negotiation (lit., ‘*Is it peace?*’) to Jehu and that she dolls herself up in order to allure or seduce him to take over the harem and thereby rule by being united to Ahab’s dynasty. But, as **Cohn** notes, ‘the parallel between Jehu’s treason and Zimri’s [on whom see **1 Kings 16:8–20**] is too strong to be ignored and the epithet “*murderer of his master*” is hardly designed to flame Jehu’s desire.’ Instead Jezebel gussies herself up in her full regalia as an act of defiance to Jehu. She will go out in style—or so she thinks.

## 2. (:31) Sarcastic Taunt

*“And as Jehu entered the gate, she said,  
‘Is it well, Zimri, your master's murderer?’”*

**MacArthur**: In referring to Jehu by that name, Jezebel sarcastically alluded to the previous urge of Zimri (**1Ki 16:9-15**). Since Zimri died 7 days after beginning to reign, Jezebel was implying that the same fate awaited Jehu.

## **B. (:32-33) Jezebel’s Fatal Dashing**

### 1. (:32) Betrayers Solicited

*“Then he lifted up his face to the window and said, ‘Who is on my side? Who?’ And two or three officials looked down at him.”*

### 2. (:33) Bloody Spectacle

*“And he said, ‘Throw her down.’ So they threw her down, and some of her blood was sprinkled on the wall and on the horses, and he trampled her under foot.”*

**Meyer**: Jehu emphatically answered her question about **peace**. There cannot be true peace so long as we permit the infidelities and charms of some Jezebel of the soul-life to attract and affect us... Whatever its charms, it must be flung out the window before we can be at peace.

## **C. (:34-37) Jezebel’s Foretold Desecration**

### 1. (:34) Dining in the Royal House a Priority over Burial

*“When he came in, he ate and drank; and he said, ‘See now to this cursed woman and bury her, for she is a king's daughter.’”*

**August Konkil**: Jehu returns to Jezreel to deal with Jezebel; her attendants join the revolt and throw her down to be trampled on the ground. Though the versions say she is trampled by the horses, the Masoretic text is singular, indicating that she is trampled by Jehu (**9:33**). Jehu goes on to celebrate (v. 34), possibly a meal in which he secures the support of the leaders at Jezreel and assures them of his goodwill.

**Adam Clarke**: She is a king's daughter. Jezebel was certainly a **woman of a very high lineage**. She was daughter of the king of Tyre; wife of Ahab, king of Israel; mother of Joram, king of Israel; mother-in-law of Joram, king of Judah; and grandmother of Ahaziah, king of Judah.

## 2. (:35) Dismembered Carcass All that Remains

*“And they went to bury her, but they found no more of her than the skull and the feet and the palms of her hands.”*

**The Pulpit Commentary:** History presents no parallel to such an indignity. Kings and queens had been, time after time, removed by violence; their lives had been taken; they had been transplanted to another sphere of being. But the open casting forth from a window of a crowned head by the menials of the court, at the command of a usurper, was a new thing, unprecedented, unparalleled. It must have been a shock to all established notions of propriety. In commanding it Jehu showed his superiority to existing prejudice, his utter fearlessness, and his willingness to create a new precedent, which might seriously shake the monarchical principle.

## 3. (:36-37) Divine Prophecy of Her Demise Fulfilled in Detail

*“Therefore they returned and told him. And he said, ‘This is the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Elijah the Tishbite, saying, In the property of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; 37 and the corpse of Jezebel shall be as dung on the face of the field in the property of Jezreel, so they cannot say, This is Jezebel.’”*

**Peter Pett:** When this was reported back to him he drew attention to the fact that it was the fulfilment of YHWH’s word through Elijah, cited in **1 Kings 21:23** as, ‘*The dogs will eat Jezebel by the walls of Jezreel*’. This fuller version of the prophecy, which we have no reason for doubting as authentic, although possibly paraphrased by Jehu, was probably recorded in a different original record. It is sufficiently different from the facts to indicate that it was not just invention. It included not only the thought that Jezebel would be eaten by scavenger dogs, but that her remains would act as fertiliser in the area of Jezreel, with nothing remaining to remember her by. There would be insufficient preserved remains for anyone to be able to say, ‘*This is Jezebel*’. She had become a **nothing**.

**Adam Clarke:** As she could not be buried, she could have no funeral monument. Though so great a woman by her birth, connections, and alliances, she had not the honour of a tomb! There was not even a solitary stone to say, Here lies Jezebel! not even a mound of earth to designate the place of her sepulture! Judgment is God's strange work; but when he contends, how terrible are his judgments! and when he ariseth to execute judgment, who shall stay his hand? How deep are his counsels, and how terrible are his workings!

\* \* \* \* \*

## **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How was Jehu able to secure the secrecy of his mission?
- 2) Why does the Lord sanction such horrific executions?



3) Who is on the Lord's side when it comes to willingness to tackle distasteful tasks for God's glory?

4) What was Jezebel's attitude towards Jehu as he approached the royal house?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### **Ligonier.org: Retributive Justice**

Justice, it seems, has fallen on hard times in our day. According to divine revelation, the principle of retribution should govern how crime is punished (**Ex. 21:23–25**). However, more often than not, rehabilitation is the primary driver of the modern criminal justice system. Attempts to rehabilitate offenders are often prized above ensuring that they receive a just punishment for their crimes. Our modern culture is so averse to biblical justice that many people have trouble with the Old Testament. Retributive justice appears again and again in the history of old covenant Israel.

We see this in today's passage. King Joram (or Jehoram) of Israel, the son of Ahab, had been injured in a battle against Syria and had gone to the city of Jezreel so that he could recover (**2 Kings 9:14–15**; see **3:1**). Jehu, seeing an opportunity to fulfill his calling to put an end to Ahab's line and become king of Israel, told his army not to announce in Jezreel that he had been anointed king in place of Joram, and he set out for Jezreel (**9:13–16**). Seeing Jehu's approach, Joram sent emissaries to find out if Jehu was coming in peace, but they joined Jehu when they learned he would attack Joram (**vv. 17–20**).

Finally, Joram himself went to meet Jehu, along with his friend and ally King Ahaziah of Judah (**v. 21**; not the same Ahaziah as the earlier king of Israel described in **ch. 1**). King Ahaziah had been visiting Joram at Jezreel (**9:16**), and the king of Israel wanted help in case Jehu was against him. So, Ahaziah and Joram met Jehu at Naboth's vineyard, where years earlier Elijah had predicted that Ahab's line would end and that Ahab's son would be killed at the very place Ahab and Jezebel stole from Naboth, whom Jezebel had murdered (**1 Kings 21:1–24**). At that place, Joram was killed for "*the whorings and the sorceries of . . . Jezebel*"—a reference to Jezebel's leading Israel away from the Lord and into idolatry and the dark arts of sorcery (**2 Kings 9:21–26**; see **Deut. 18:10**; **Ezek. 16:1–58**; **Hos. 1:2–3**). Then, Jehu killed King Ahaziah of Judah, another idolater (**2 Kings 9:27–29**; see **8:25–27**). Finally, Jehu executed Jezebel, fulfilling Elijah's prophecy about her (**9:30–37**; see **1 Kings 21:23**).

Many modern people might be horrified at all this bloodshed, but what happened to Joram of Israel, Ahaziah of Judah, and Jezebel was just. All of them had committed capital crimes such as idolatry and murder (**Gen. 9:6**; **Deut. 13**; **18:9–14**). They were repaid what they deserved. They received **retributive justice**.



Jerry Thrower:

## SCORECARD ON AHAB'S HOUSE AND INFLUENCE

<u>ISRAEL (Northern Kingdom)</u>	<u>JUDAH (Southern Kingdom)</u>
<b>OMRI</b> X [Came to reign by a narrow margin when he prevailed against the people that followed <b>Tibni</b> ] [12 yr. reign]	<b>ASA</b> ✦ [Great-great grandfather <b>David</b> ; great-grandfather <b>Solomon</b> ; grandfather <b>Rehoboam</b> ; father <b>Abijah</b> ] [41 yr. reign]
<b>AHAB*</b> X ( <i>Omri's son</i> ) [22 yr. reign]	<b>JEHOSHAPHAT*</b> ✦ [25 yr. reign]
===== >>>	<b>JEHORAM (a/k/a JORAM)**</b> X (Married <b>Athaliah</b> , <i>Ahab's daughter</i> ) [8 yr. reign]
<b>AHAZIAH*+**</b> X ( <i>Ahab's eldest son</i> ) [2 yr. reign...had no sons]	<b>AHAZIAH***</b> X ( <i>Ahab's grandson</i> ) [1 yr. reign killed by Jehu]
<b>JEHORAM (a/k/a JORAM)**+***</b> X (Also <i>Ahab's son, Ahaziah's brother, and Athaliah's brother</i> ) [12 yr. reign killed by Jehu]	<b>ATHALIAH****</b> X ( <i>Ahaziah's mother and Ahab's daughter</i> ) {She destroyed all the royal seed except <b>Joash</b> the son of <b>Ahaziah</b> who was just 1 year old when <b>Ahaziah</b> died...he was hidden for six years} [6 yr. reign]
End of the house of <b>Ahab!</b> =====	End of <b>Ahab's</b> influence! =====
<b>JEHU****+*****</b> X (Used of the LORD to bring an end to <b>Ahab's</b> house, but walked in idolatry!) [reigned 28 yrs...dynasty of 113 yrs.]	<b>JOASH (JEHOASH)*****</b> ✦ ( <i>Ahaziah's son; king at age 7</i> ) (reigned 40 yrs.)

### Notes:

**Asterisks** on the left side reigned with those corresponding on right side!

✦ = Mostly good

X = Evil

TEXT: 2 Kings 10:1-36

TITLE: *MIXED REVIEWS AS JEHU PURGES HOUSE OF AHAB AND BAAL WORSHIPERS*

**BIG IDEA:**

**ZEAL FOR THE LORD WITHOUT WHOLEHEARTED OBEDIENCE  
UNDERMINES JEHU'S RECORD OF REFORMS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

It's possible to be zealous for the Lord but with impure motives. Jehu is an example of a powerful leader who is blessed by God with improbable victories, yet fails to act from pure motives and fails to put a priority on wholehearted obedience across the spectrum of covenant obligations. He focuses on the task at hand in terms of carrying out the divine prophecy regarding the judgment against the house of Ahab. But he falls short of earning full commendation from the Lord for his overall motives and actions (cf. **Hosea 1:4** where Jehu is called out for excessive bloodshed in his purge of Ahab's household at Jezreel).

**Donald Wiseman:** The history is here concerned to show the zeal of Jehu, acting as the divine agent, to obliterate completely all descendants and relatives of Ahab and Amaziah who might perpetuate evil of any type in opposition to God in both Israel and Judah (**vv. 1-14**). Jehu also acted to forestall any continuing blood feud and to protect his newly founded dynasty. He also massacred Baal worshippers in Samaria (**vv. 15-27**). These actions were considered to go beyond Jehu's remit and were severely disapproved by Hosea (**Hosea 1:4**).

**Knapp:** The great lesson to be drawn from this remarkable man's life is that of being constantly on guard, as servants of God, lest we be found doing His work – whether it be in the exercise of discipline, or the accomplishment of reformation – in a spirit of unbrokenness and without due exercise of heart and conscience between Him who is 'a God of judgment,' and by whom 'actions are weighed.'

**Dale Ralph Davis:** If we cannot dispute Jehu we may be tempted to question Yahweh. **Why does he work like this?** Why does he allow the gore of man to carry out the will of God? Couldn't he operate in a cleaner way? Perhaps. But we must remember two points. First, the Bible shows that God frequently works, we might say, indirectly—through human instruments, and, unlike surgeons, God has no sterilized instruments; all of them are flawed and many of them opportunistic, self-serving Jehus. So God uses wicked people to carry out his divine design. Second, this is a situation involving the judgment of God, and it is very difficult to make judgment pleasant.

**William Barnes:** Alas, the killing continues in what **Cogan** and **Tadmor** (1988:117) have described as the "longest sustained narrative in 2 Kings" (the entirety of the Jehu

tradition in **chs 9–10**). The penetrating intensity of the present narration equals that of the main protagonist, Jehu himself. This passage presents the relentless, wholesale extermination of anyone, relative or friend, who could possibly bring back Ahab's dynasty (or properly, Omri's dynasty; or even stand up in its defense (thus the eventual killing of all the relatives and friends of King Ahaziah of Judah in **10:12–14**). As is often said, the best defense is a good offense, and Jehu is clearly very much on the offensive here. But even by Old Testament standards, the violence seems extreme. . . But for the present, the perverse brilliance of Jehu's fanatic excesses is mainly meant to be noticed and, in a strange sense, appreciated.

**August Konkel:** The destruction of Ahab's house is described in two episodes. The first episode deals with the purging of the entire royal family while Jehu is still in Jezreel (**10:1–11**). The second describes two events on the road to Samaria (**vv. 12–17**); these serve as a literary transition to the elimination of the house of Baal in Samaria. The first event is an encounter with royal members of Judah (**vv. 12–14**) and provides an opportunity for Jehu to eliminate all opposition from the house of Ahaziah. Jehu then meets an enigmatic Jehonadab, described as a Recabite, who allies with him against Baalism (**vv. 15–16**). Upon his arrival in Samaria, Jehu executes all who remain of the house of Ahab in order to eliminate all sources of resistance to his rule (**v. 17**). Both massacres are justified with an appeal to the word of Elijah being fulfilled (**vv. 10, 17**).

## **I. (:1-11) PURGING OF ROYAL FAMILY OF AHAB IN JEZREEL**

### **A. (:1-5) Securing the Submission of Rivals to Power**

#### 1. (:1a) Family of Ahab = Potential for Opposition

*"Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria."*

#### 2. (:1b-3) First Letter – Challenging Jezreel's Appetite for Defiance

*"And Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, the elders, and to the guardians of the children of Ahab, saying, 2 'And now, when this letter comes to you, since your master's sons are with you, as well as the chariots and horses and a fortified city and the weapons, 3 select the best and fittest of your master's sons, and set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.'"*

**MacArthur:** Realizing potential conflict existed between himself and Ahab's family, Jehu was demanding that Ahab's appointed officials either fight to continue the royal line of Ahab or select a new king from Ahab's descendants who would fight Jehu in battle to decide which family would rule Israel (cf. **1Sa 17:8,9; 2Sa 2:9**).

**Peter Pett:** The 'sons' (descendants) of Ahab were all to be found in Samaria which still remained to be captured, and Jehu had to decide how to go about the taking of the city. His letter was in fact almost certainly intended to be an ultimatum. Either they could surrender to him, or they could appoint a king from the seed royal. As Jehoram of Israel had probably succeeded to the throne at a young age (his father Ahaziah had only reigned for about a year - **1 Kings 22:51**), and had only reigned for twelve years, the

seed royal would all be minors. Thus their choice lay between a seasoned warrior, supported by the army, or a king who was young and inexperienced with only the support of Samaria behind him. Recognising the strength of the rebellion, which included all the active army commanders, and was almost certainly supported by the common people who had nothing but hatred for the foreign innovations of Jezebel, the leading men in Samaria decided on the most sensible way out. They would surrender on Jehu's terms, terms which would not in fact have come as any surprise to them for the reasons mentioned above.

**William Barnes:** The name Ahab is not found in the original, which simply reads “*put him on the throne of his father*” (who was Ahab). Strictly speaking, Ahab's father Omri was the founder of the dynasty, but time and again it is the name Ahab that the narrator uses to designate that line of kings (cf. **1 Kgs 21:29**).

### 3. (:4) Fear Exaggerated by the Demise of the Two Kings

*“But they feared greatly and said, ‘Behold, the two kings did not stand before him; how then can we stand?’”*

Jehu actually did not have a very strong army. He would have faced a difficult battle if the inhabitants of Jezreel had decided to fight. He was able to bluff his way through the situation as his providential executions of the two kings was perceived as a show of stronger forces than he actually commanded.

### 4. (:5) Final Unconditional Surrender

*“And the one who was over the household, and he who was over the city, the elders, and the guardians of the children, sent word to Jehu, saying, ‘We are your servants, all that you say to us we will do, we will not make any man king; do what is good in your sight.’”*

**MacArthur:** These two officials were the palace administrator and the city governor, probably the commander of the city's fighting force. These officials and leaders transferred their allegiance from the house of Omri to Jehu.

**Wiersbe:** Three different groups of leaders had to unite on this decision, and these men knew that Jehu had killed two kings and disposed of Jezebel. Furthermore, he seemed invincible, for nobody had stood in his way. The message they sent to Jehu at Jezreel was one of complete unconditional surrender. They promised to do whatever he commanded and they agreed not to name a new king. In short, they accepted Jehu as their king.

## **B. (:6-11) Slaughtering the Potential Rivals in Gruesome Fashion**

### 1. (:6a) Second Letter – Challenging their Loyalty

*“Then he wrote a letter to them a second time saying, ‘If you are on my side, and you will listen to my voice, take the heads of the men, your master's sons, and come to me at Jezreel tomorrow about this time.’”*

**Peter Pett:** Jehu could, of course, have demanded that they be handed over alive, but he wanted the responsibility for the executions to fall squarely on the people themselves. This was a wise move politically, for it ensured that in future the direct blame could not be laid at his door. It would mean that they would be seen to have cooperated with him in it.

## 2. (:6b-7) Slaughter of King's Sons Executed

*“Now the king's sons, seventy persons, were with the great men of the city, who were rearing them. 7 And it came about when the letter came to them, that they took the king's sons, and slaughtered them, seventy persons, and put their heads in baskets, and sent them to him at Jezreel.”*

**Trapp:** This was suitable to Ahab's sin. He had sent for baskets of grapes out of Naboth's vineyard at Jezreel; and now the heads of his sons are brought thither in baskets.

## 3. (:8-10) Spectacle and Speech

### a. (:8) Spectacle to Intimidate Opponents

*“When the messenger came and told him, saying, ‘They have brought the heads of the king's sons,’ he said, ‘Put them in two heaps at the entrance of the gate until morning.’”*

**MacArthur:** The practice of piling the heads of conquered subjects at the city gate was common in the ancient Near East, especially by the Assyrians. The practice was designed to dissuade rebellion.

### b. (:9) Speech to Vindicate His Actions

*“Now it came about in the morning, that he went out and stood, and said to all the people, ‘You are innocent; behold, I conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these?’”*

**John Gates:** He sought to give the impression that he had nothing to do with this massacre, alleging that, although the seventy died by their act, yet they died because of the sentence of Elijah's prediction.

**Peter Pett:** it is clear that his main purpose was to vindicate his own actions, while seeking to maintain their (possibly reluctant) approval, in the light of what he was going to do next. For having dealt with all possible claimants to the throne in Samaria, he was now about to remove all supporters of Ahab's house in Jezreel.

**Donald Wiseman:** Jehu, in a formal assembly (stood before all the people), either absolved the people from blame for the holocaust (you are innocent, Heb. *‘righteous’*) on the grounds that it was a fore-ordained action or put the onus on them to decide whether his action had their approval (‘you are fair judges. If I conspired against my master and killed him, who put all these to death?’ neb), thus they had already implicated themselves.

c. (:10) Support Cited from Elijah's Prophecy of Judgment

*"Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the LORD, which the LORD spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the LORD has done what He spoke through His servant Elijah."*

4. (:11) Savage Bloodshed Beyond the Scope of God's Mandate

*"So Jehu killed all who remained of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, and all his great men and his acquaintances and his priests, until he left him without a survivor."*

**MacArthur:** Jehu went beyond God's mandate and executed all of Ahab's officials, a deed for which God later judged Jehu's house (cf. **Hos 1:4**).

**House:** Jehu's killings exceed reform and become atrocities, ... a fact **Hos 1:4-5** makes clear. Eventually, Jehu becomes very much like those he replaces, which makes him more of a political opportunist than a catalyst for change.

## **II. (:12-17) PURGING OF RELATIVES OF AHAZIAH AND SUPPORTERS OF AHAH IN SAMARIA**

### **A. (:12-14) Purging of Relatives of Ahaziah on Road to Samaria**

1. (:12a) New Target

*"Then he arose and departed, and went to Samaria."*

2. (:12b-13) Unsuspecting Relatives of Ahaziah

*"On the way while he was at Beth-eked of the shepherds, 13 Jehu met the relatives of Ahaziah king of Judah and said, 'Who are you?' And they answered, 'We are the relatives of Ahaziah; and we have come down to greet the sons of the king and the sons of the queen mother.'"*

3. (:14) Collateral Damage

*"And he said, 'Take them alive.' So they took them alive, and killed them at the pit of Beth-eked, forty-two men; and he left none of them."*

**Wiersbe:** He then left Jezreel and went to Samaria to claim his throne. On the way, he met a group of travelers who were going to Jerusalem to visit King Ahaziah, who was related to them. They didn't know that King Ahaziah, King Joram, and Queen Jezebel were all dead and that Jehu had killed them and was now in charge. Since Ahaziah had married into Ahab's family (**8:18**), it seemed logical to Jehu that anybody related to Ahaziah belonged to the enemy, so he had all forty-two men slain. But these men weren't related by blood to Ahab; they were descendants of David! Jehu was now attacking the Davidic dynasty! (See **2 Chron. 22:8**.)



## **B. (:15-17) Purging of Supporters of Ahab in Samaria with Jehonadab's Complicity**

### 1. (:15) Soliciting the Support of Jehonadab

*"Now when he had departed from there, he met Jehonadab the son of Rechab coming to meet him; and he greeted him and said to him, 'Is your heart right, as my heart is with your heart?' And Jehonadab answered, 'It is.' Jehu said, 'If it is, give me your hand.' And he gave him his hand, and he took him up to him into the chariot."*

**Wiersbe:** Jehu now encountered an ally, Jehonadab the Rechabite, and used him to give respectability to his own ambitions. The Rechabites were a people that belonged to Kenites, the descendants of Moses' brother-in-law Hobab (**Judg. 4:11**). They identified with the tribe of Judah (**Judg. 1:16**) but stayed to themselves and followed the traditions laid down by their ancestors (**Jer. 35**). They were respected highly by the Jewish people, but, being nomads and tent-dwellers, the Rechabites were separated from the everyday city life and politics of the Jews.

Jehonadab was just the kind of man Jehu needed to make his crusade look credible. . . Every ambitious leader needs a respectable second man to help "sell" his policies and practices to the public. It was bad enough that Jehu had begun to murder innocent people, but now he was "using" an innocent man to make his crimes look like the work of the Lord. However, this is the way many unscrupulous leaders operate.

**Iain Provan:** The theme throughout the chapter is essentially "who is on the Lord's side, who is in the right?" The leading men of Samaria (who do not side with one of Ahab's "sons," claiming him to be "right," **v. 3**) and Jehonadab (on his way to meet Jehu, rather than to visit the apostate royal families) are on the right side, and they live; Ahaziah's relatives and the servants of Baal are not, and they die.

**R. D. Patterson:** Jehonadab was the leader of an aesthetic group that lived an austere, nomadic life in the desert, drinking no wine and depending solely on the Lord for their sustenance. Separatist to the core and strong patriots, they lived in protest to the materialism and religious compromise in Israel.

### 2. (:16) Sanctioning His Brutality under the Guise of Zeal for the Lord

*"And he said, 'Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD.' So he made him ride in his chariot."*

**Matthew Henry:** This ["see my zeal for the LORD," **v. 16**] is commonly taken as giving cause to suspect that the zeal he [Jehu] pretended for the Lord was really zeal for himself and his own advancement. For,

- (1) He boasted of it, and spoke as if God and man were mightily indebted to him for it.
- (2) He desired it might be seen and taken notice of, like the Pharisees, who did all to be seen of men.

**Knapp:** His ostentatious display of his reforming zeal revealed how little he had God's glory in mind in the midst of all his feverish activity and abolition.

3. (:17) Slaughtering the Remaining Ahab Loyalists in Samaria

*"And when he came to Samaria, he killed all who remained to Ahab in Samaria, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke to Elijah."*

**III. (:18-28) PURGING OF BAAL WORSHIPERS IN SAMARIA**

**A. (:18-21) Deceptive Gathering of the Prophets and Priests of Baal**

1. (:18) Claim of Loyalty to Baal Worship

*"Then Jehu gathered all the people and said to them, 'Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much.'"*

2. (:19) Collecting All the Baal Worshipers for Slaughter

*"And now, summon all the prophets of Baal, all his worshipers and all his priests; let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal; whoever is missing shall not live.' But Jehu did it in cunning, in order that he might destroy the worshipers of Baal."*

**Peter Pett:** That Jehu went far beyond what YHWH had required comes out here. Not satisfied with a thorough purge in Samaria, Jehu now turned his attention to the rest of the country. His purpose now was to root out all the foreign influence of Jezebel and her cult of the Phoenician Baal, and he performed his task meticulously and mercilessly, without giving any opportunity for repentance. This was not YHWH's way. And by it he was unwittingly destroying Israel's superstructure, for these Baal worshippers were a major part of the aristocracy which ruled the land. It cannot be denied that he had a 'zeal for YHWH', but as will be subsequently made clear it was not in accordance with righteousness (with living rightly by the covenant). For he was returning Israel, not to the true and pure worship of YHWH deserted by Jeroboam the son of Nebat and all the kings who had succeeded him, but to Jeroboam's own syncretistic form of Yahwism, one that was abominated by YHWH Himself. YHWH's final verdict on Jehu would not be one of approval. Instead of being seen as submitting to YHWH and His prophets, he was seen as having chosen the way of Jeroboam, a way that would lead to Israel's final destruction.

**William Barnes:** Cunning, clever, effective, all-encompassing—these are proper characterizations of Jehu's actions as he successfully exterminates every single prophet, priest, and minister of Baal he can find.

3. (:20) Calling for a Special Worship Service

*"And Jehu said, 'Sanctify a solemn assembly for Baal.' And they proclaimed it."*



4. (:21) Confining All in the House of Baal

*“Then Jehu sent throughout Israel and all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come. And when they went into the house of Baal, the house of Baal was filled from one end to the other.”*

**B. (:22-23) Distinguishing Between Worshipers of Baal and Servants of the Lord**

1. (:22) Dressing the Baal Worshipers in Special Garments

*“And he said to the one who was in charge of the wardrobe, ‘Bring out garments for all the worshipers of Baal.’ So he brought out garments for them.”*

**John Gates:** Jehu allayed the people’s suspicions by pretending to worship Baal. This act, which was one of his falsehoods, showed his bloodthirstiness. ... But Jehu did it in subtlety. Jehu planned a trap. The garments (v. 22) were to make it easier to identify the priests of Baal. Gathering them in the outer-court confines of the Temple (v. 21) made it easier to effect their death. ... Only the priests of Baal were to be put to death. Jehu intended to break the power of Ahab’s dynasty completely by removing these adherents, and he hoped at the same time to gain the support of those loyal to Israel’s God, thus securing his own position.

2. (:23) Dismissing All of the Servants of the Lord

*“And Jehu went into the house of Baal with Jehonadab the son of Rechab; and he said to the worshipers of Baal, ‘Search and see that there may be here with you none of the servants of the LORD, but only the worshipers of Baal.’”*

**C. (:24-28) Destroying Baal Worshipers and Temple**

1. (:24a) Cloaking Destruction in Deception

*“Then they went in to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings.”*

2. (:24b) Confining the Targeted Enemy for Eradication

*“Now Jehu had stationed for himself eighty men outside, and he had said, ‘The one who permits any of the men whom I bring into your hands to escape, shall give up his life in exchange.’”*

3. (:25-27) Killing and Executing Destruction and Desecration

*“Then it came about, as soon as he had finished offering the burnt offering, that Jehu said to the guard and to the royal officers, ‘Go in, kill them; let none come out.’ And they killed them with the edge of the sword; and the guard and the royal officers threw them out, and went to the inner room of the house of Baal. 26 And they brought out the sacred pillars of the house of Baal, and burned them. 27 They also broke down the sacred pillar of Baal and broke down the house of Baal, and made it a latrine to this day.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The person who made the sacrifice is not stated, it may be indefinite (*‘one made’*), niv supplies Jehu. The text does not say that Jehu acted as sacrificing priest (cf. **1 Kgs 8:5**).

**Constable:** Jehu also converted the temple of Baal into a public latrine, the greatest possible insult to Baal, the god of fertility. His act made Baal's temple an unclean place as well. Jehu thus effectively eradicated the Baal worship that Ahab and Jezebel had officially established as Israel's religion.

4. (:28) Eradicating Baal out of Israel  
*“Thus Jehu eradicated Baal out of Israel.”*

**Iain Provan:** Baal-worship in Israel is officially at an end. It has neither royal patronage nor royal tolerance.

**MacArthur:** Jehu rid the northern kingdom of royally sanctioned Baal worship. It was done, however, not from spiritual and godly motives, but because Jehu believed that Baalism was inextricably bound to the dynasty and influence of Ahab. By its extermination, he thought he would kill all the last vestiges of Ahab loyalists and incur the support of those in the land who worshiped the true God. Jonadab didn't know of that motive, so he concurred with what Jehu did.

**Wiersbe:** Jehu's plan worked and enabled him in one day to wipe out Baal worship in the land. By lying to the people, he accumulated a larger crowd of Baal worshippers than if he had gone after them one by one, but it's unfortunate that his first public act as king in Samaria was an act of deception. Would anybody trust him after that?

**Peter Pett:** What he had done, however, had gone considerably beyond YHWH's remit to him, and it will be noted that no opportunity had been given for any to return to YHWH. That was not YHWH's way. Furthermore by his action Jehu had undoubtedly destroyed the very foundations of Israel's bureaucracy, and decimated its leadership, undermining the strength and stability of the country. It was no wonder that as a result he had to yield fealty to, and pay tribute to, Shalmaneser III of Assyria, something which we learn from Assyrian inscriptions. Another alternative open to him would have been total commitment to YHWH. Then Elisha would have been with him and things would have been very different. But such a commitment he was not willing to make, as we will now learn. And had he genuinely been walking closely with YHWH he would undoubtedly not have slaughtered so many.

#### **IV. (:29-36) SUMMARY EVALUATION OF JEHU'S REIGN**

##### **A. (:29-31) Wavering between Success and Failure**

1. (:29) Failure

*“However, as for the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin, from these Jehu did not depart, even the golden calves that were at Bethel and that were at Dan.”*

## 2. (:30) Success

*“And the LORD said to Jehu, ‘Because you have done well in executing what is right in My eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in My heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.’”*

## 3. (:31) Failure

*“But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, which he made Israel sin.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Jehu was to prove a disappointment to God; for his reform was soon seen to be political and selfish rather than born of any deep concern for God (v. 31). Not only did he not keep the law in his heart, but he perpetuated the state cultus of the golden calf established by Jeroboam I (v. 29). Therefore God allowed the Arameans to plunder and reduce systematically the size of Israel, beginning with the loss of Israel’s Transjordanian holdings (vv. 32-33).

**Donald Wiseman:** He seems to have been driven more by a political desire to secure his own position on the throne of the Northern Kingdom than by a desire to serve the LORD. In this he was guilty of using God’s judgment on the house of Ahab to satisfy his self-interest.

**David Guzik:**

- Jehu carried out God’s will, but he went too far and executed more people than God intended.
- Jehu carried out God’s will, but he did it for personal glory and out of pride.
- Jehu carried out God’s will, but he only did it partially. He stopped the idolatry of Baal, but he continued the sinful idolatry of Jeroboam.

## **B. (:32-33) Weakening of the Kingdom**

*“In those days the LORD began to cut off portions from Israel; and Hazael defeated them throughout the territory of Israel: 33 from the Jordan eastward, all the land of Gilead, the Gadites and the Reubenites and the Manassites, from Aroer, which is by the valley of the Arnon, even Gilead and Bashan.”*

**MacArthur:** Because Jehu failed to keep the Lord’s law wholeheartedly (v. 31), the Lord punished him by giving Israel’s land E of the Jordan River to Syria. This lost region was the homeland of the tribes of Gad, Reuben, and half of Manasseh (Nu 32:1-42).

**Donald Wiseman:** Meanwhile the Arameans took advantage of the new political situation in Israel and the cessation of pressure from the Assyrians, engaged elsewhere, to reduce or ‘make gashes in’ (mt) Israelite territory making attacks on their northern

border and regaining land east of Jordan which had been so often the area of contention between them.

**August Konkel:** The Deuteronomic History is not an account of victory over evil but one of being caught in a cycle of evil. **The old covenant fails;** Jehu is further testimony to its failure. The prophet Jeremiah declares that the failure of the old covenant will inaugurate the new covenant (**Jer. 31:31**). Under this new covenant, victory over evil and the powers of darkness will be achieved by God's power in ways most **unlike the motives and tactics of Jehu.**

### C. (:34-35) Summary Touchpoints

#### 1. (:34) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jehu and all that he did and all his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

#### 2. (:35a) Death and Burial

*“And Jehu slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria.”*

#### 3. (:35b) Succession

*“And Jehoahaz his son became king in his place.”*

#### 4. (:36) Length of His Reign

*“Now the time which Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.”*

**William Barnes:** Still, we are also reminded that Jehu did enjoy a relatively long reign and that he was afforded a proper burial in his capital city, with his son Jehoahaz securely on the throne (eventualities quite different from those experienced by his predecessor). Earlier we were also reminded that his dynasty would endure (and, as we will later see, even at times flourish) for four generations—a generous span of history by the brutal standards of the ancient Near East. Such is our final impression of this strangely bold, clearly gifted, but bizarrely zealous king, who did not bring *shalom* [TH7965, ZH8934] (peace) but rather *mirmah* [TH4820, ZH5327] (treachery) to the land of Israel. . .

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why do God's prescribed punishments for sin seem too harsh to many people?
- 2) Where do you think Jehu was on track in executing God's mission of judgment and where do you think his actions were excessive (such as Hosea calling him out for unnecessary bloodshed)?

3) When has your supposed zeal for the Lord actually been a cloak to disguise other selfish motivations?

4) How does Jehu compare morally to other kings of the northern kingdom?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**House:** Despite his attacks against Baalism, Jehu does not lead the nation into separatist Yahwism. He allows the worship instituted by Jeroboam to continue. In effect, then, he expels the foreign religion (Baalism) in favor of the long-standing Israelite state religion begun by Jeroboam. Apparently he believes reform beyond the elimination of Ahab's children, Ahab's wife, and Ahab's religion, that is, what secures his power, does not concern him. Indeed he acts as the instrument of punishment against the corrupt Omride dynasty, but he does not operate out of Elijah-like motives. Rather, he is, like Syria, Assyria, and Babylon, an instrument that punishes but exhibits few personal moral strengths. Israel is now back to where it was before Ahab and Jezebel assumed leadership, but it has certainly not come back to the Lord.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This is a sobering summary, for it is telling us that one instrument of Yahweh's judgment (Hazeal) is raised up to bring judgment on a previous instrument of Yahweh's judgment (Jehu). This tale will repeat itself. Though Yahweh will use Assyria as the rod of his anger against his own people, as the axe that whacks down his own covenant nation, yet Yahweh will destroy the axe for forgetting it was merely an axe in the divine Lumberjack's hands (**Isa. 10:1–19**). Yahweh will give Judah and surrounding countries to his 'servant', the Babylonian Nebuchadnezzar, '*until the time of his own land comes*' (**Jer. 27:7**). Yahweh presses kings and other reprobates into his service but such servants seldom accept servanthood and so Yahweh raises up another servant to consign his previous servant to the dumpster of history.

All this is scary, however, because it doesn't merely involve the movers and shakers and swelled heads of politics. Jehu's story testifies that one can be used by God and judged by God. We need go no farther than **Matthew 7:21–23** to find the Jehu paradigm in the New Testament. **You can be both used by Christ and rejected by Christ.** Just because you have at some time in some way been the Lord's servant does not mean you are viewed with the Lord's pleasure. It is very solemn. Let Jehu haunt us—to **fear and faithfulness**.

**See Huang Lim: the Word of God will come to pass.** These events are a fulfilment of Elijah's prophecy in **1 Kings 21**. After King Ahab killed an innocent man, prophet Elijah sent him a word of God's judgment. Let's turn to read **1 Kings 21:21–24**,

*“Behold, I will bring disaster upon you. I will utterly burn you up, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel. And I will make your house*

*like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the anger to which you have provoked me, and because you have made Israel to sin.”*

And of Jezebel [Ahab’s notorious wife] the Lord also said,

*“The dogs shall eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel.’ Anyone belonging to Ahab who dies in the city the dogs shall eat, and anyone of his who dies in the open country the birds of the heavens shall eat.”*

Now let’s return to today’s passage, **2 Kings 10**. After Jehu kills the 70 sons of Ahab, he says this in **verse 10**, “*Know then that there shall fall to the earth nothing of the word of the Lord, which the Lord spoke concerning the house of Ahab, for the Lord has done what he said by his servant Elijah.*” In other words, Jehu saw himself as carrying out God’s prophecy.

After Jehu finishes his bloody business, the Word of God comes to him in **verse 30**, “*And the Lord said to Jehu, ‘Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.’*” And God does keep his promise to Jehu, if you read a few chapters later in chapter 15.

What all this tells us is that when God promises something, he will bring it to pass. For us today, do we believe God when his Word promises something?

<http://ibf.visithp.jp/en/2-kings-10-sermon-jehu-and-the-word-of-god/>

### **Bob Deffinbaugh: Jehu Cleans House (Ahab’s House)**

In our text, it is Jehu who “cleans house.” It is the house (dynasty) of Omri and his son Ahab that needs to be purged from Israel. It has been a leavening agent in the northern kingdom of Israel for too long, and the time has finally come to “clean up.” In this regard, Jehu will do a very thorough job, with only one exception: Jehu does not rid the nation of all false worship. Nevertheless, Jehu’s rise to power is a day of reckoning for those who have played a part in promoting evil in the land of Israel. . .

**Second Kings 10** describes the way in which Jehu “followed through” by eliminating all the remaining heirs and political allies of Joram, and a number of those who supported Ahaziah. While his campaign is a violent one, it is exceedingly skillful and precise, as I will attempt to demonstrate. Let us proceed, then, to the events of **2 Kings 10** and to the description of Jehu’s consolidation of his kingdom.

### **I. (:1-11) Destroying a Dynasty**

How was Jehu going to seize control of Samaria with all of its defenses when he had so few men with him? And how was he to identify and eliminate Joram’s sons when the nobility of Samaria were charged with keeping them, and when they most certainly would not be disposed to handing them over to Jehu for execution? What could Jehu possibly do to accomplish the mission God had given to him?

Jehu's approach betrays a real genius. He does not march on Samaria with his handful of a "few good men." Had the people of Samaria seen the size of Jehu's "army," they would most certainly have chosen to fight. They might even have laughed. Jehu made an incredibly bold move. He sent a messenger to Samaria, with letters addressed to the leaders of the city, challenging them to fight. He does not make any claims or boasts; he simply reminds them of their assets. They have the heirs to the throne in their city. They are within fortified walls, and they have the chariots and the weapons with which to fight. In effect, Jehu has given them every good reason to fight him. And so he issues the challenge: Let them choose which heir will be their next king, and then let them fight. . .

Jehu bluffed, and it worked. Word of their surrender reached Jezreel. They would do whatever Jehu asked. Jehu still does not leave Jezreel and march on Samaria. If they saw the meager size of his "army," they would immediately change their minds and fight. And so Jehu makes yet another bold move. He sends another message to the leaders of Samaria in response to their unconditional surrender. They said they would do whatever he commanded, and so Jehu ordered them to execute the sons of the king, who would be heirs to the throne. So far as our text tells us, Jehu never mentioned how many sons there were. I doubt that he knew at this moment in time, but he did not let them know. And, so that there would be proof and verification of their compliance with his demands, they must place the heads of these sons in baskets and deliver them to him at Jezreel within 24 hours.

## **II. (:12-28) Jehu's Journey to Samaria**

The more I read this account, the more amazed I am at the ways in which God providentially places His enemies in the hands of Jehu and his men. . .

Once again, we need to ponder the difficulty of the task at hand. If you were given the assignment of identifying all the Baal worshippers in the country, and of executing them, how would you do it? How would you identify them? How would you track them down and execute them? Jehu did not pursue the Baal worshippers; he got them to come to him. When Jehu arrived in Samaria, no one there was likely to have known about his God-given mission. His words may not have surprised anyone, and they would have delighted the Baal worshippers: If they thought Ahab was a Baal worshipper, they had not seen anything yet. Jehu will outdo the "king" of Baal worship.

It did not appear to be wise to offend Jehu. The heads had already begun to roll, literally, and no one wanted to be next. The Baal worshippers were probably ecstatic. Since the appearance of Elijah and Elisha, Baal worship may have begun to dwindle, but now there was a king who said that he would make Baal worship bigger and better than it had ever been. All of the prophets of Baal, their servants, and the pagan priests were gathered for the great celebration Jehu had prepared. No Baal worshipper was allowed to be absent. No Yahweh worshipper was allowed to be present.

Jehu did not have to search for the worshippers of Baal; they all came to him, eagerly. They made no attempt to conceal their identity as those who served Baal. Indeed, with a king like Jehu, they could worship openly and be proud of it, or so they thought. They arrived from all over Israel. . .

### **III. (:29-36) So Far, So Good, But Not Good Enough**

It is most interesting to read this inspired evaluation of Jehu's life, compared to the assessment of some. They would have us believe that Jehu went too far, that he killed too many, and all for self-serving purposes. This assessment does not square with what God has said in **verse 30**. I'll settle for **God's assessment**. It's not really surprising, though, because there are many who wish to think that God would never deal severely with men, no matter how great their sin. It is our sovereign God who sets the standards, and who rewards and punishes men on the basis of these standards. **It is not the severity of God's judgment which should distress us, but the immensity of man's sin.** As we read through the history of Israel in the Old Testament, we should be amazed at God's patience and longsuffering, delaying His judgment and urging men to repent and avoid His wrath. This is why He sent the prophets—to point out sin and its consequences—and to urge men to repent and avoid God's judgment.

While some may protest that Jehu went too far, the author of our text tells us that **Jehu did not go far enough**: *"But Jehu did not carefully and wholeheartedly obey the law of the LORD God of Israel. He did not repudiate the sins which Jeroboam had encouraged Israel to commit" (verse 31).* . .

Jehu did well in carrying out every command that was specifically addressed to him, but he did not do well in carrying out the more general commands of God, namely the law. If you remember, God spoke about the need for kings to ponder and to obey the whole law: **Deut. 17:14-20.** . .

What a difference there is between David and Jehu. Jehu obeys only those commands addressed specifically to him. David sought to obey every command of God, not just the times when God spoke directly to him, but when God spoke in principle or precept through His Word. He sought to read between the lines and to discern the heart of God. He sought not only to avoid what would displease God and bring His discipline, but he endeavored to learn what pleased God, and to do that.

There also may be another factor involved in Jehu's failure to deal with the false worship introduced by Jeroboam. Jeroboam's false worship had been around a lot longer than the Baalism introduced by Ahab and Jezebel. Jeroboam's false worship was not a "foreign import," as Baalism was. He introduced a counterfeit version of the only true religion, the worship of Yahweh. I believe it was relatively easy to rid the nation of Baal worship, but the worship that Jeroboam established was now "the national religion" of the northern kingdom. When patriotism, nationalism, and religion are merged, it is not healthy. One may be reluctant to deal with religious error because it is a part of one's culture and national identity.



The consequences for Jehu's failure were not as dramatic as God's judgment on the house of Ahab, but they were nonetheless painful and apparent. God began to nibble away at Israel's borders, reducing its size, power, and stature. Hazael attacked from the east, conquering the land of Gilead, and seizing property in the territory of God, Reuben, and Manasseh. Disobedience always has consequences.

Jehu's life is summed up in but two chapters. His days of glory, though few, dominate the text devoted to him. His failure and its consequences are described in very few words.

TEXT: 2 Kings 11:1-21

TITLE: *PRESERVING THE MESSIANIC LINE FROM THE JEZEBEL OF JUDAH*

**BIG IDEA:**

**LOYALTY TO THE MESSIANIC LINE (AVOIDING EXTINCTION)  
ENTHRONES YOUNG JOASH WHILE EXECUTING TREACHEROUS  
ATHALIAH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

It is difficult for us to imagine the level of tension in Judah over the apparent eradication of the Davidic Messianic line. It seems as if the covenant promises of God have been overturned by the usurping agenda of wicked Queen Athaliah. She functions as the Jezebel of Judah and continues to promote Baal worship while seeking to exterminate any legitimate heirs to the throne in Jerusalem. She reigns unchallenged for six years with the nation having little visible reason for continued hope in the promises of God. But God uses seemingly insignificant figures to step out in faith and bravery to preserve the life of Joash and install him as the rightful Davidic king.

**House:** Meanwhile, an extraordinary thing occurs in Judah. A usurper replaces David's descendants on the throne in Jerusalem, which is the only time such an event happens. Even more unusual is the fact that it is a woman, Ahaziah's mother, who seizes control. Of course, queen mothers are prominent in 1, 2 Kings, since each one in Judah is named with two exceptions, but no other woman formally rules the nation. This daughter of Ahab (**2 Kgs 8:18, 27**) certainly imitates Jezebel's decisiveness, cruelty, and sheer pluck. She thinks she has all heirs to the throne killed and assumes power. For six years she rules, never discovering that one of her grandsons, Joash, has escaped the cold-blooded coup. Only a baby (cf. **2 Kgs 11:3, 21**), Joash is hidden by a nurse. God's promise of an eternal kingdom for David is kept alive, but just barely.

**Peter Pett:** The prophetic author's derisory view of Athaliah is brought out by the fact that she has no opening or closing formula applied to her. She is seen as a blip in the succession rather than as an integral part of it. She was, of course, not of the house of David.

August Konkel: The restoration of the Davidic dynasty and the renewal of the covenant are the essence of being God's people. The report of the restoration of the temple and the destruction of the Baal temple is concluded by summarizing statements of the coronation of the king and the death of Athaliah (**11:19–20**). The repetition joins the making of the covenant with the restoration of the dynasty. The summary provides more details on the crowning of the king. Joash is escorted from the temple to the palace, where he is placed on the throne. Guards provide security along a route through Guard's Gate. The procession goes south from Temple Mount toward the "City of

David.” The restoration of a true Davidide king and the death of Athaliah bring an end to the domination of the Baal cult in Judah.

**Caleb Nelson:** We see in this chapter that our God keeps His promises through the work of His people. We see that His coming Messiah cannot be blocked or stopped. And we also see how God’s people ought to respond when they come under the rule of one typologically like that Messiah.

**Robert Rayburn:** Athaliah had no loyalty to the house of David or to Yahweh’s promise to David’s line. Baal was her god as he had been the god of her parents. There was a Jezebel in Judah too! So Athaliah attempted to eradicate the Davidic line by killing every possible descendant of Ahaziah, whom Jehu had killed. It looked very much as if the Davidic line would come to an end and the promises of God regarding an eternal king to sit on David’s throne would come to nothing. But in a story full of high drama, the line is rescued in one little child thanks to a faithful woman, the wife of a faithful priest (**2 Chron. 22:11**). . .

No doubt it occurred to you that this is by no means the only time in the history of redemption that the prospects of the kingdom and people of God hung by the thread of an infant boy whose life was being sought by cruel rulers. Moses was allowed to live when he was supposed to be killed upon his birth; he was hidden after he was born because of the anti-Jewish pogrom then underway in Egypt, and then, the Egyptians all unsuspecting, allowed him to grow up in their midst unrecognized for who and what he was to become. And still more important, the Lord Jesus was spirited away from Bethlehem to Egypt for a time and then grew up unrecognized in Nazareth of Galilee, right under the noses of other so-called “kings” of the Jews. [**Provan**, 221] And, in those cases also those babies were saved from death by the bravery, the determination, and the hutzpah of some faithful people, just as Joash, all unknowing, was saved by Jehosheba and Jehoiada and a cast of minor characters.

## **I. (:1-3) CONCEALMENT OF JOASH SAVES THE DAVIDIC LINE FROM EXTINCTION –**

### **LOYALTY TO THE MESSIANIC LINE DEMANDS BRAVE RISK TAKING**

#### **A. (:1) Threat of Extinction of the Davidic Line**

*“When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she rose and destroyed all the royal offspring.”*

Not a model grandmother!

**MacArthur:** A granddaughter of Omri (**8:26**) and daughter of Ahab and Jezebel. She was zealous to rule after the death of her son, Ahaziah (**9:27**) and was dedicated to seeing the worship of Baal officially sanctioned in Judah. She reigned for 6 years (**v. 3**) ca. 841-835 B.C. The previous deaths of Jehoram’s brothers (**2Ch 21:4**) and Ahaziah’s brothers and relatives (**10:12-14; 2Ch 21:17**) left only her grandchildren for Athaliah to put to death to destroy the Davidic line. Though the Lord had promised that the house

of David would rule over Israel and Judah forever (2Sa 7:16), Athaliah's purge brought the house of David to the brink of extinction.

**Clarke:** How dreadful is the lust of reigning! It destroys all the charities of life; and turns fathers, mothers, brothers, and children, into the most ferocious savages!

### **B. (:2) Tactics of Concealment of Joash**

*"But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah and stole him from among the king's sons who were being put to death, and placed him and his nurse in the bedroom. So they hid him from Athaliah, and he was not put to death."*

**MacArthur:** Jehosheba – She was probably the daughter of Jehoram by a wife other than Athaliah, and so a half-sister of Ahaziah, who was married to the High-Priest, Jehoida (2Ch 22:11).

### **C. (:3) Tyranny of Usurping Queen for Six Years**

*"So he was hidden with her in the house of the LORD six years, while Athaliah was reigning over the land."*

## **II. (:4-11) COMMANDING THE COUP TO RESTORE DAVIDIC RULERSHIP -- LOYALTY TO THE MESSIANIC LINE DEMANDS AGGRESSIVE ACTION**

### **A. (:4-8) Explaining the Plan**

#### 1. (:4a) Assembling the Key Military Leaders

*"Now in the seventh year Jehoiada sent and brought the captains of hundreds of the Carites and of the guard, and brought them to him in the house of the LORD."*

**MacArthur:** *captains of hundreds* – These were the commanders of each 100 soldier unit; 2Ch 23:1, 2 names 5 of these commanders. The bodyguards were "Carites" associated with the Pelethites (2Sa 20:23) who were mercenary soldiers serving as royal bodyguards. The escorts, lit. "runners," were probably another unit of royal bodyguards who provided palace security (see 1Ki 14:27).

#### 2. (:4b) Swearing Them to Secrecy

*"Then he made a covenant with them and put them under oath in the house of the LORD, and showed them the king's son."*

#### 3. (:5-8) Positioning Them to Protect the King

##### a. (:5-6) Guarding the King's Palace

*"And he commanded them, saying, 'This is the thing that you shall do: one third of you, who come in on the sabbath and keep watch over the king's house 6 (one third also shall be at the gate Sur, and one third at the gate behind the guards), shall keep watch over the house for defense.'"*

b. (:7) Guarding the Lord's Temple

*"And two parts of you, even all who go out on the sabbath, shall also keep watch over the house of the LORD for the king."*

c. (:8) Guarding the King Himself

*"Then you shall surround the king, each with his weapons in his hand; and whoever comes within the ranks shall be put to death. And be with the king when he goes out and when he comes in."*

**Wiersbe:** Jehoiada's plan was simple but effective. The five officers each commanded one hundred men. Two companies would ordinarily be on duty daily and be replaced on the Sabbath Day, but on this particular Sabbath they would remain on duty and guard the king. A third company would guard the palace where Athaliah lived, and this would give her a false sense of security. A fourth company was assigned to the gate Sur which may have led from the nearby palace to the temple area. The fifth company assembled at the gate behind the guardhouse, a normal place for the temple guards to gather. Anybody watching at the temple would have no reason to suspect that anything dramatic was about to occur. They would see the guards march in and take their usual places, and they might notice that the crowd of worshipers in the temple was larger than usual.

**B. (:9-11) Executing the Plan**

1. (:9a) Summary of Faithful Execution

*"So the captains of hundreds did according to all that Jehoiada the priest commanded."*

2. (:9b) Strategic Coordination

*"And each one of them took his men who were to come in on the sabbath, with those who were to go out on the sabbath, and came to Jehoiada the priest."*

3. (:10) Superior Weapons

*"And the priest gave to the captains of hundreds the spears and shields that had been King David's, which were in the house of the LORD."*

**MacArthur:** These were probably part of the plunder David captured from King Hadadezer of Zobah (**2Sa 8:3-12**). Dedicated to the Lord by David (**2Sa 8:7, 11**), these articles were stored in the temple. Since the soldiers were already armed, these additional ancient weapons symbolically reassured the soldiers that the temple authorities approved of their actions.

4. (:11) Secure Protection

*"And the guards stood each with his weapons in his hand, from the right side of the house to the left side of the house, by the altar and by the house, around the king."*

**Peter Pett:** The result was that there were armed guards everywhere, assembled without the least suspicion, and all stood ready with their weapons in their hands, both to the right side of the Temple and to the left side of the Temple, and along by the altar and the sanctuary, and at the king's side and around the king himself as he was brought out.

### **III. (:12-16) CORONATION OF JOASH AND EXECUTION OF ATHALIAH RESTORES DAVIDIC RULERSHIP – LOYALTY TO THE MESSIANIC LINE DEMANDS CELEBRATING HIS REIGN AND OPPOSING HIS ENEMIES**

#### **A. (:12) Stages in the Coronation Process of Joash**

##### 1. Revealing the Legitimate Davidic King

*“Then he brought the king's son out”*

##### 2. Crowning the Legitimate Davidic King

*“and put the crown on him,”*

##### 3. Investing the Legitimate Davidic King with the Law of God

*“and gave him the testimony;”*

**MacArthur:** *the testimony* – This was a copy of the whole law (**Ps 119:88**). According to **Dt 17:18-20**, a copy of the law was to be kept with the king always so that it became his guide for life.

##### 4. Anointing the Legitimate Davidic King

*“and they made him king and anointed him,”*

##### 5. Celebrating the Legitimate Davidic King

*“and they clapped their hands and said, ‘Long live the king!’”*

#### **B. (:13-14) Surprising Reversal of Fortunes for Athaliah**

##### 1. (:13-14a) Revelation of the Newly Crowned King

*“When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she came to the people in the house of the LORD.*

*14 And she looked and behold, the king was standing by the pillar, according to the custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king;”*

##### 2. (:14b) Rejoicing of the People

*“and all the people of the land rejoiced and blew trumpets.”*

##### 3. (:14c) Response of Athaliah

*“Then Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, ‘Treason! Treason!’”*

**Wiersbe:** How paradoxical that she should shout “*Treason! Treason!*” when **she** was the real traitor. Joash was a descendant of David and had every right to the throne, while Athaliah had seized the throne and had no claim to it.

### **C. (:15-16) Seizure and Execution of Athaliah**

#### 1. (:15) Execution Forbidden in the Holy Temple

*“And Jehoiada the priest commanded the captains of hundreds who were appointed over the army, and said to them, ‘Bring her out between the ranks, and whoever follows her put to death with the sword.’ For the priest said, ‘Let her not be put to death in the house of the LORD.’”*

#### 2. (:16) Execution Authorized in a Place of Humiliation

*“So they seized her, and when she arrived at the horses' entrance of the king's house, she was put to death there.”*

**John Gates:** Jehoiada’s faithfulness prevented the politically expedient policy of Jehoshaphat from resulting in the extinction of David’s line. However, the priest’s act only put off Judah’s final downfall.

**R. D. Patterson:** When the clamor of the people reached the ears of Athaliah, she made her way to the scene of jubilation (v. 13). The sight that greeted her eyes doubtless made her heart sink (v. 14). There, on the royal dias at the eastern gate of the inner court to the temple, stood a newly crowned king, surrounded by the high officials both in the religious order and in the military, amid great fanfare and the joyous shouts of the people. She shrieked out here condemnation: it was treason. But her cry was to have as little effect as that of Israel’s Jehoram to Athaliah’s son Ahaziah (9:23). At Jehoiada’s command she was seized and escorted to the gate used for the palace horses and put to death by the sword (vv. 15-16). Thus Athaliah, the most infamous queen of Judah, died at the hands of her executioners, much as did her mother, Jezebel, queen of Israel (9:27-37).

## **IV. (:17-20) COVENANT RENEWAL SPARKS RELIGIOUS REFORMS – LOYALTY TO THE MESSIANIC LINE DEMANDS COVENANT FIDELITY**

### **A. (:17) Significance of the Covenant Renewal**

*“Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, that they should be the LORD's people, also between the king and the people.”*

- Initiator of the Covenant Renewal = Jehoiada
- Players involved = the Lord, the king and the people
- Purpose of the Covenant Renewal = “*that they should be the Lord’s people*”

**Peter Pett:** Such a renewing of the covenant on important occasions can be paralleled in **2 Kings 23:3; Deuteronomy 5:1 ff; Joshua 8:30-35; Joshua 24:2-25; 2 Samuel 5:3 with 1 Chronicles 11:3; 2 Chronicles 29:3 ff**). It was an essential part of returning

to the true worship of YHWH. By it the people were acknowledging YHWH as their sole God and Overlord, and their responsibility to be His holy people and observe His laws and commandments.

**John Schultz:** The essence of the covenant that Jehoiada made between the Lord, the king and the people, was that the king would reign, not as absolute monarch, but as God's representative.

### **B. (:18a) Smashing the Foundations of Baal Worship**

*“And all the people of the land went to the house of Baal, and tore it down; his altars and his images they broke in pieces thoroughly, and killed Mattan the priest of Baal before the altars.”*

**MacArthur:** “house of Baal” – A temple that had been built in Jerusalem and used by Athaliah to promote the worship of Baal in Judah. As Jezebel had promoted Baalism in Israel, her daughter Athaliah had sought its sanction in Judah. During Athaliah's reign as queen, Baalism gained its strongest foothold in Judah. This purge of Baalism in Judah paralleled the earlier purge of Baalism led by Jehu in the northern kingdom (10:18-29).

**House:** This religious reform parallels Jehu's in some ways yet diverges in certain crucial areas. Baal's temple is destroyed in both instances, but only the leader of Baalism is killed in Judah's reform. Baalism is removed as the state religion in each case, yet the people dominate the reform in Judah, whereas the new king orchestrates the changes in Israel. Prophetic predictions fuel Jehu's purge, while a priest drives the people forward in Judah. In the north separatist Yahwism seems to have no real voice after the coup, and Jeroboam's cult appears to resume its earlier role as state religion. In Judah the high places are not removed (cf. **2 Kgs 12:3**), but separatist Yahwism has been returned to the temple by its champion, Jehoiada. From this analysis it seems likely that the reform in the south has more popular support, more institutional backing, and more chance of long-term survival. Neither reform, though, goes as far as the narrator thinks is necessary.

**Caleb Nelson:** The second thing the Judeans got rid of was the **idolatrous apparatus** — the altar and the images. Again, we need to apply this personally, in our lives, our homes, and the businesses and other institutions we control. Does the machinery or apparatus of idolatry exist in your home? If you worship the God of entertainment, the apparatus you use is a big TV and a powerful sound system. If you worship the God of convenience, the apparatus with which you do it may be a big smartphone or an Amazon Echo. If you worship the god of human relationships, the apparatus with which you do it may be clothes, makeup, and other image and status artifacts. If you worship the god of prosperity, the apparatus may be your tools or your bank accounts. If you worship the God of the Bible, but reduced to a size and level you can control, you may have images of God and Jesus in your house. You may not be able to get rid of certain of these different apparatuses of idolatry, and some of them have legitimate uses. But brothers and sisters, if you are confirmed money-worshipper you may need to severely



curtail your bank account. If you are a food-worshipper you may need to keep an empty fridge. If you are an images-of-Christ worshipper, you may need to get rid of your idolatrous pictures.

**C. (:18b) Structuring the Renewal of Temple Worship**

*“And the priest appointed officers over the house of the LORD.”*

**D. (:19) Seating Joash on the Throne**

*“And he took the captains of hundreds and the Carites and the guards and all the people of the land; and they brought the king down from the house of the LORD, and came by the way of the gate of the guards to the king's house. And he sat on the throne of the kings.”*

**E. (:20) Securing Peace for Judah**

*“So all the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet.  
For they had put Athaliah to death with the sword at the king's house.”*

**Wiersbe:** What a joyful crowd it was that escorted the king from the temple to the palace, where they placed him on the throne! Satan's attempt to end the Davidic line had failed, and the messianic promise was still in force. The people had done the will of God and obeyed His Word, and for the first time in many years, righteousness and peace reigned in the land.

**John Schultz:** Then the new young king is led to the throne room of the royal palace and put on the throne to the joy of all the people. There must have been the noise of celebration, but we read that the city was quiet, which may be read as that there was no opposition from the side of former Athaliah supporters, if there had been any.

**(:21) EPILOGUE**

*“Jehoash was seven years old when he became king.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** After the departure of the deposed Athaliah, Jehoiada led the king and the people in a twofold ceremony of covenant renewal: on the one hand, the king and the people swore their unswerving allegiance to God; on the other, the people affirmed their unfailing support of the reconstituted Davidic line (v. 17). In attestation to their vows, a thorough cleansing of the land followed (v. 18). Baal's temple was torn down, his priest Mattan slain before the images, and the altar thoroughly pulverized (2Chron 23:17). Not only was the pagan worship of Baal put away, but a reorganization of the temple worship followed that was in accordance with the law of Moses and that followed the order instituted by David.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) When circumstances look the bleakest, what should give us hope in the triumph of God's kingdom agenda?
- 2) What type of seemingly insignificant figures in church history has God used to accomplish great things for the kingdom?
- 3) Where has God required bravery of you to faithfully accomplish some spiritual mission?
- 4) How shocked are the wicked when their outwardly prosperous and successful life is overturned by God's sudden judgment?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis: Structure**

Death and preservation, vv. 1–3

Secret plan, vv. 4–12

Revealing king's son, v. 4

Priest's instructions, vv. 5–8

Compliance, vv. 9–11

Coronation, v. 12

Public event, vv. 13–19

Revealing king's son, vv. 13–14

Priest's instructions, v. 15

Compliance, v. 16

Covenant + destruction, vv. 17–18

Installation, v. 19

Death and peace, v. 20

I have tried to show that this episode is of immense importance in redemptive history because the covenant with David was almost dead and buried under Athaliah's rampage. She had almost succeeded in writing 'finis!' over Yahweh's kingdom plan. Yahweh is so vigilant in maintaining his king and his kingdom! I think the writer of **2 Kings 11** would agree that it was his intent to show that.

But how does he do it? Does he explicitly state Yahweh's intervention or record any word or directive of Yahweh's? Note how the whole narrative is simply descriptive—there is no 'Yahweh said' this or 'Yahweh did' that. To be sure Yahweh is mentioned

but all are ‘third person’ references: nine times in the phrase ‘the house of Yahweh’ and twice where the writer refers to him. But you see how indirect it is? Never does Yahweh even interject a word nor is there any reference to any explicit activity on his part. We’ve seen this before; here’s another sample of Yahweh’s hidden and roundabout work.

**Wiersbe:** When God began to restore true worship in Jerusalem and Judah, He started with one dedicated couple – Jehoiada the high priest and his wife, Jehosheba. They enlisted the nurse who cared for Joash, and God protected all four of them for six years. Then Jehoiada enlisted the five military captains, who in turn assembled their five hundred soldiers. The scattered priests, Levites, and people of the land came together as one to honor the Lord and obey His Word. Sin was purged, God’s will was accomplished and the name of the Lord was glorified!

**Caleb Nelson: Returning to the Rule of David’s Son**

**Proposition:** The restoration of Davidic rule in Judah in 836 B.C. shows us what our own submission to Christ’s rule should look like.

**I. The Event Itself: A Carefully Planned Coup, vv. 4-12**

- A. The Co-Conspirators: Yahweh’s Priest and the Army of Judah, **v. 4**
- B. The Plan: Double or Triple Guards on Duty, **vv. 5-11**
- C. The Coronation, **v. 12**

**II. The Event’s Results, vv. 13-20**

- A. The Joy of Yahweh’s People, **v. 14**
- B. The Death of the Usurping Queen, **vv. 13-16**
- C. A Renewed Covenant Between God, His King, and His People, **vv. 17a-b**
- D. A Covenant Between the King and the People, **v. 17c**
- E. The Destruction of the Idols, **v. 18a-c**
  - 1. Idolatrous Institutions, **v. 18a**
  - 2. Idolatrous Apparatus, **v. 18b**
  - 3. Idolatrous Leaders, **v. 18c**
- F. The Institutional Renewal of True Religion, **v. 18d**
- G. The Rule of David’s Son, **v. 19**
- H. The Joy of Yahweh’s People, **v. 20a**
- I. The Peace of Yahweh’s City, **v. 20b**

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/12517122101.pdf>

**Bob Henkins: Keeping His Promise**

The bible is a book of promises given to us by God. He has kept all of them except for those that are to come. God’s promised to send the Messiah and he kept it by sending Jesus. Even when Jesus came, it looked like God’s promise was being directly attacked when they killed him. But God used it for his own good purpose to actually fulfill his promise. This was a direct attack upon God’s promise to David. Satan attacks but God is almighty and there is nothing that can keep him from keeping his promise. In this passage Satan attacks God’s promise to send the Messiah and it’s almost destroyed,

down to the last of David's kingly line, however God protected the baby and kept his promise. If God has proven faithful in keeping all his promises it gives us a good indication that he will keep those he made for the future. Before Jesus was killed, he promised that he would come again. The first time he came humbly as a baby in a manger, but when he comes again, he will come as King and Lord.

[https://iitubf.org/sermons/2015/06/28/keeping\\_his\\_promise.html](https://iitubf.org/sermons/2015/06/28/keeping_his_promise.html)

### **Bob Deffinbaugh: Jezebel II**

When the government changed hands in the northern kingdom of Israel, it was frequently violent. The usurper would often kill the existing king, all of his heirs, and those in the aristocracy who supported his administration. The southern kingdom of Judah was much more stable, because God had promised to preserve “*a lamp*” for Israel. This “lamp” was a descendant of David, who would maintain the David line from which the Messiah would come (**1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; 2 Chronicles 21:7; Psalm 132:17**; see **Revelation 22:5**).

There was one moment in Israel's history when all hope for “a lamp” in Israel seemed lost. Jehu had killed Ahaziah, the king of Judah, along with Joram, the king of Israel. Jezebel, too, had been put to death. These things happened in fulfillment of God's Word, as spoken through Elijah. Ahab and Jezebel had a daughter named Athaliah, who married Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram, who was then king over Judah. When Athaliah learned that her son, Ahaziah, had been put to death, she sought to eliminate all of the heirs to his throne and to reign herself, as queen over Israel. This was the only “king” over Judah who was not of the Davidic line, and it looked for some time as though there were no heirs of David left. These were dark days for the people of Judah, and for Israel as well. This time was a kind of “tribulation” period, meant to prepare Judah for the day when the legitimate heir to the throne of David would be presented to the people and installed as their king. In some ways, I wish that I could say that after wicked Athaliah was executed and this Davidic king was enthroned, everyone “lived happily ever after,” but this is not the case. . .

Athaliah was the only ruler of Judah who was a woman and who was not a descendant of David. Think of the implications if this wicked woman—Judah's Jezebel—had succeeded in killing every heir to the throne of David. She would have nullified God's covenant with David and put an end to Israel's hope of a Messiah.

We know, of course, that this was impossible. God would not allow anyone to thwart His covenant promises. But for the godly saints of Judah, these must have been very troubling times. From all appearances, every descendant of David who was heir to the throne had been killed. And as if this were not enough, a wicked woman was now established on the throne (see **2 Chronicles 23:17; 24:7**). She reigned for nearly seven years, and I cannot help but look at this period as a kind of a “tribulation period” for Judah. It certainly prepared them for the unexpected appearance of the legitimate king, who would sit on the throne of his father, David.

The appearance was that evil had won the day, that Athaliah had seized the throne and succeeded in terminating the dynasty of David. But appearances were not reality. The reality of the situation was that there was one heir to the throne who was spared from death at the hand of Athaliah. Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram (but apparently not a daughter of Athaliah) and sister of Ahaziah was determined to spare Joash (also called Jehoash), a son of Ahaziah, from death. This child was only a year old or so when Athaliah set out to kill every heir to the throne. Jehosheba was able to hide the child and its nurse in a kind of storage room, where beds and bedding were stored. . .

Jehoiada drew up a covenant between the LORD, the new king, and the people. It would seem that the people of Judah—and especially Jerusalem—were ready for religious reform, and ready to return to worshipping the LORD in the temple. This was a popular movement, because we are told that all the people tore down the temple of Baal, smashing its altars and idols to bits. They also killed Mattan, the priest of Baal. The officers who made up the royal guard were positioned so that the king could walk from the temple to the royal palace. Joash then took his rightful place on the royal throne. The people celebrated, and the city finally had rest.

TEXT: 2 Kings 12:1-21; 2 Chron. 24:1-27

TITLE: KING JOASH – TRAGIC EXAMPLE OF A PROPPED UP FAITH

**BIG IDEA:**

**FINISHING STRONG REQUIRES BEING RELENTLESS IN THE PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Jesus gave us the illustration of **two different houses** built on two very different foundations. The one was solid – built on rock – able to stand on its own and endure any type of trial. This house spoke to the type of faith that finishes strong and leaves a good legacy. But the other house was built on sand. It didn't look very different for quite some time. It might even have seemed very attractive – plenty of bedrooms with walk-in closets; modern kitchen; even a screened in porch. But it was **propped up** by favorable conditions. Once the supporting props were removed and the strong winds blew, its weak foundation was exposed.

How strong is your faith? Are you being propped up by your parents or by some Christian leader or some strong spiritual mentor that guides you? When you are completely on your own and tough times come, how will you react? What happens when you go off to high school or college? What decisions do you make when you don't have a large crowd of Christian friends to pressure you in the right direction? We want to learn a lesson today about finishing strong in our Christian life. We want to make sure that we are depending directly on the grace of God and the sufficiency of Jesus Christ – not on someone else to give us spiritual strength.

We are going to study the life of the Boy-King Joash – the one who came to the throne at the young age of 7 (hard to imagine) and ruled for 40 years over Judah. His life is broken into 2 halves. His early reign looks fairly strong under the spiritual guidance of the wise old high priest Jehoiada who lived to be 130 (talk about a generation gap! – Must have been some interesting dynamics). But after his death, King Joash showed his true colors and turned away from the Lord big time. Unable to form his own godly convictions and live them out, he turned to some other poor counselors and followed their foolish advice. Hopefully, we will learn from his failures how to finish strong in our Christian walk.

**FINISHING STRONG REQUIRES BEING RELENTLESS IN THE PURSUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**5 KEYS TO FINISHING STRONG**

Two part message: today look at Joash with Jehoiada; next week Joash after the death of Jehoiada – 2 very different characters

[Synoptic Approach – like with the Gospels – a harmony of 2 different accounts]

**BACKGROUND FOR THE REIGN OF JOASH: 2 KINGS 11**

**1) (11:1) Desperate Times for the Nation –**

**Ed Anderson:** **Athaliah** married Jehoram; daughter of king and now the wife of a king; and became the mother of a king; that still wasn't good enough – became king herself! One problem

– she missed killing one of the heirs; his aunt shielded him and hid him in the temple; that aunt had married the high priest; Athaliah put to death by the order of the high priest

looked like the seed of David had been extinguished; What about the promises of God?? What about the coming of the Messiah through the house of David? 2 Kings 11 – Athaliah, the mother of the slain Ahaziah had taken over the throne – only time you see a woman on the throne in the southern kingdom of Judah; she was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel = nice set of parents; she tried to destroy all of the royal offspring,

## **2) (11:2-8) Divine Preservation of the Messianic Seed**

but the half sister of Ahaziah – so not her daughter (but the wife of the high priest Jehoiada) had protected one small infant = Joash and hid him away until the right time to install him as king – the wonderful sovereignty of God to protect the line of David  
Tremendous risk taken by the high priest and his wife to protect Joash; described later as showing great kindness

## **3) (11:9-16) Dramatic Coronation of the Young Boy King -- Joash**

Very detailed plans for performing the coup before Athaliah could get wind of what was happening and respond

## **4) (:17-21) Dedication to the Lord and Destruction of the House of Baal**

Seems like Joash is off to a great start; maybe the nation is on the verge of another major revival in terms of embracing their role as the people of God

## **5 KEYS TO FINISHING STRONG**

### **I. (2 Kings 12:1-3) YOU CAN'T BE CARELESS ABOUT SIN – YOU MUST TAKE SIN SERIOUSLY AND STAMP IT OUT**

*In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah of Beersheba. 2 And Jehoash did right in the sight of the LORD all his days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him. 3 Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places. (2 Kings 12:1-3)*

*Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Zibiah from Beersheba. 2 And Joash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days of Jehoiada the priest. 3 And Jehoiada took two wives for him, and he became the father of sons and daughters. (2 Chron. 24:1-3)*

Joash is shortened form of Jehoash – same person; additional confusion because same name becomes king over Israel during his reign

For the most part Joash (spelling of his name in Chronicles) practiced righteousness – but only because he had the godly Jehoiada guiding him.

Provision of 2 wives was important –

- At least not the mess Solomon made of things with all his wives and concubines
- Chosen by godly Jehoiada
- Two allowed for possibility of one being infertile – talk about pressure to produce a

male child!

The problem of worshipping at shrines described as “the high places” was a common one throughout Israel’s history. Sacrificed and burned incense here. You see it was not very convenient for everyone to travel to the temple in Jerusalem to worship. People liked the **high places** for a **variety of reasons**:

- Personal Comfort – Who likes the hardship of following all of God’s regulations?
- Independent Control – Why submit to God’s plan for worship when we can come up with a plan that better suits our schedule and our interests?
- Self-appointed Leadership – What difference can there possibly be between the Levite priests who regulate the worship at the temple and our own leaders who can conduct sacrifices on a local level?

**Silversides:** **bad tradition** becomes entrenched as a matter of attachment and pride; very difficult to reform

**Small cracks in the dam that holds back the flood waters of sin can widen into huge holes.**

Look at other examples where the **small seeds of sin** grew into huge stumbling blocks:

- Adam and Eve – just a bite out of the fruit of the forbidden tree – just one bite – how significant could that possibly be?? **Rom. 5:12** “*through one man sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men*”  
**5:18** “*through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men*”  
Talk about huge consequences of sin!
- Judges – did not completely exterminate the wicked Canaanites from the promised land – Huge sin – problems down through the ages – still impacting Joash; **Judges 1:19**; chap. 2
- King Saul -- left King Agag alive and some of the best livestock and spoil from the conquest of Israel’s enemies – lost the kingdom -- **1 Samuel 15:9**
- Ananias and Sapphira – just a small lie about what proportion they gave to the Lord – instant judgment and execution – **Acts 5**

What small sins are you putting up with in your life? Where are you playing the dangerous game of how close to the line can you get? How far can you push the envelope?

You must be ruthless in the pursuit of righteousness; take sin seriously; listen to your conscience; stamp out sin completely

**II. (2 Kings 12:4-16) YOU CAN’T BE CASUAL OR NEGLECTFUL ABOUT SPIRITUAL SERVICE – YOU MUST MAINTAIN SPIRITUAL PRIORITIES**  
[similar to message of Book of **Haggai 1:4-8**]

*Then Jehoash said to the priests, "All the money of the sacred things which is brought into the house of the LORD, in current money, both the money of each man's assessment and all the money which any man's heart prompts him to bring into the house of the LORD, 5 let the priests*



take it for themselves, each from his acquaintance; and they shall repair the damages of the house wherever any damage may be found. 6 But it came about that in the twenty-third year of King Jehoash the priests had not repaired the damages of the house. 7 Then King Jehoash called for Jehoiada the priest, and for the other priests and said to them, "Why do you not repair the damages of the house? Now therefore take no more money from your acquaintances, but pay it for the damages of the house." 8 So the priests agreed that they should take no more money from the people, nor repair the damages of the house. 9 But Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid, and put it beside the altar, on the right side as one comes into the house of the LORD; and the priests who guarded the threshold put in it all the money which was brought into the house of the LORD. 10 And when they saw that there was much money in the chest, the king's scribe and the high priest came up and tied it in bags and counted the money which was found in the house of the LORD. 11 And they gave the money which was weighed out into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders, who worked on the house of the LORD; 12 and to the masons and the stonecutters, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the damages to the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it. 13 But there were not made for the house of the LORD silver cups, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver from the money which was brought into the house of the LORD; 14 for they gave that to those who did the work, and with it they repaired the house of the LORD. 15 Moreover, they did not require an accounting from the men into whose hand they gave the money to pay to those who did the work, for they dealt faithfully. 16 The money from the guilt offerings and the money from the sin offerings, was not brought into the house of the LORD; it was for the priests. **(2 Kings 12:4-16)**

4 Now it came about after this that Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. 5 And he gathered the priests and Levites, and said to them, "Go out to the cities of Judah, and collect money from all Israel to repair the house of your God annually, and you shall do the matter quickly." But the Levites did not act quickly. 6 So the king summoned Jehoiada the chief priest and said to him, "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and from Jerusalem the levy fixed by Moses the servant of the LORD on the congregation of Israel for the tent of the testimony?" 7 For the sons of the wicked Athaliah had broken into the house of God and even used the holy things of the house of the LORD for the Baals. 8 So the king commanded, and they made a chest and set it outside by the gate of the house of the LORD. 9 And they made a proclamation in Judah and Jerusalem to bring to the LORD the levy fixed by Moses the servant of God on Israel in the wilderness. 10 And all the officers and all the people rejoiced and brought in their levies and dropped them into the chest until they had finished. 11 And it came about whenever the chest was brought in to the king's officer by the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, then the king's scribe and the chief priest's officer would come, empty the chest, take it, and return it to its place. Thus they did daily and collected much money. 12 And the king and Jehoiada gave it to those who did the work of the service of the house of the LORD; and they hired masons and carpenters to restore the house of the LORD, and also workers in iron and bronze to repair the house of the LORD. 13 So the workmen labored, and the repair work progressed in their hands, and they restored the house of God according to its specifications, and strengthened it. 14 And when they had finished, they brought the rest of the money before the king and Jehoiada; and it was made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and the burnt offering, and pans and utensils of gold and silver. And they offered burnt offerings in the house of the LORD continually all the days of Jehoiada. 15 Now when Jehoiada reached a ripe old age he died; he was one hundred and thirty years old at his death. 16 And they buried him in the city of David among the kings, because he had done well in

*Israel and to God and His house. (2 Chron. 24:4-16)*

**A. Recognition of the Need to Repair the Temple**

Temple has fallen into major disrepair; Joash led the rebuilding and repairing of the temple

**B. Failure of Plan A** – relying on the priests to push the construction work forward and collect and use the funds to get the job done

Jehoiada seems to have some culpability in this; Joash seems to take some excellent leadership steps here

How many times do you have to reinforce your priorities to make sure they are carried out??

Variety of different offerings in Israel: (not just one simple tithe)

Annual census with offering associated with it; free will offerings = for the temple

High priest had not followed through and completed the task

**C. Switch to Plan B – Special Collection Box**

Principles of financial accountability instituted

Principle: worker is worthy of his hire – not expected to work on the house of the Lord for nothing

Priests still provided for under this plan

Guilt offerings, Sin offerings = for the priests

Record old age for Jehoiada – he finished well – long time to persevere in the faith

Seems to be off to a good start; some chinks in the armor; but overall on the path of righteousness – then Jehoiada dies ... what happens next ....

***TRAGIC EXAMPLE OF A PROPPED UP FAITH***

\* \* \* \* \* 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Message next week

Now the Prop of the godly Jehoiada is removed; let's see how King Joash responds

He lived a long time – gracious for God to prop up the king for that long; but he had to die at some point

But now the floodgates of sin and rebellion open up

**Cf. Judges 2:8-12** *“Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of the Lord, died at the age of one hundred and ten . . . Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of the Lord and served the Baals, and they forsook the Lord”*

### **III. (2 Chron. 24:17-18) YOU CAN'T CONSORT WITH SPIRITUAL IDOLATRY – YOU MUST WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND IN TRUTH**

**Rugh:** Chronicles gives fuller account of southern kingdom; Kings gives fuller account of northern kingdom

#### **A. (:17) Different Agenda – Replacing Counsel of God with Counsel of Man -- Looking for Guidance in All the Wrong Place and for All the Wrong Reasons**

*“But after the death of Jehoiada the officials of Judah came and bowed down to the king, and the king listened to them.”*

Leadership transition periods are very vulnerable times; Critical part of a relay race is always the passing of the baton; very important to pass the baton of a life of faith and obedience to God's revelation

**2 Tim. 2:1-2** *“You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also.”*

Officials of Judah sensed that this was the time to push a new agenda on young King Josiah: Use of flattery to try to improve their influence with the king; Jehoiada had been able to see through their transparent hypocrisy; Joash did not have the same value system or discernment antenna

Teaching regarding Flattery: political scheming at the highest levels

**Psalms 12** – great insights -- (:2-4) THE WORD OF THE WICKED (contrasted with vs. 6-7 = the Word of the Lord) – characterized by:

- Falsehood -- empty talk  
*“They speak falsehood to one another”*
- Flattery -- smooth talk  
*“With flattering lips ...”*
- Deceit -- double talk  
*“and with a double heart they speak”*
- Boasting -- big talk  
*“the tongue that speaks great things”*
- Threatening -- trash talk  
*“with our tongue we will prevail”*
- Rebellion against the authority of God – bigshot talk  
*“our lips are our own; who is lord over us?”*

**Prov. 26:28** *“A lying tongue hates those it crushes, and a flattering mouth works ruin.”*

**Jude 16** *“they speak arrogantly, flattering people for the sake of gaining an advantage”*

Business owners – very important who they listen to – how important do they judge character to be vs just short term bottom line results??

**Who do you listen to?** Voice of Truth is calling out and demanding a hearing  
Not just wisdom in abundance of counselors – but abundance of **godly** counselors

**B. (:18a) Different Allegiance – Replacing Worship of God with Worship of Idols -- Rejection of God’s Revealed Worship Plan and of the Faith of Their Fathers**

*“And they abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their fathers, and served the Asherim and the idols;”*

Dramatic turn of events so quickly after the priest died – Amazing defection and apostasy  
Why would they choose to abandon the house of the Lord and the religious heritage of their fathers? Must be associated with lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes and the pride of life ...  
something that appealed to pleasure and pride  
Switching Loyalties to Glamour and Glitz

Asherim – associated with high places, with burning of incense to other gods, with the offering of sacrifices; all types of practices related to idolatry

**J. Barton Payne:** The images (Heb. Massebot) were Canaanitish stone pillars, thought to contain the local fertility-gods, the Baalim. The term groves (Heb. Asherim) refers, actually, to Baal’s goddess-consort Asherah, believed to reside in a wooden pole beside the stone pillar. Btoh, when carved, became idols (cf. 1 Kings 15:12). The images are now known, from archaeology to have been incense-stands.

**1 Cor. 10:14** – *“Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.”* After warning us to heed the lessons of history

**Where are your loyalties today?** Are you a follower of Jesus just when others drag you along and prop up your faith? Can you dare to be a Daniel and dare to stand alone – willing to fellowship with the sufferings of Jesus Christ – or are you a fair-weather Christian?

**C. (:18b) Different Adjudication -- Replacing Grace and Blessing with Guilt and Condemnation -- Result of Rebellion: Guilt / Wrath**

*“so wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem for this their guilt”*

never worth it

Things are now spiraling downward out of control; going from bad to worse

Wrath should never be associated with God’s elect nation and chosen land – but these people did not have a true heart for God; they never had genuine faith; they had a propped up faith – but once it was convenient and easy for them to defect, they showed their true allegiance

Guilt brings condemnation and wrath of God; there must be just forgiveness by God’s grace and justification so that there can be peace with God and blessing

**Are you under God’s wrath or enjoying His blessing?**

**IV. (2 Chron. 24:19-22) YOU CAN’T CONTEND AGAINST THE WORD OF GOD (AND KILL THE LORD’S MESSENGER WHO COMES WITH A WORD OF WARNING AND EXPECT TO ESCAPE GOD’S JUDGMENT) – YOU MUST LISTEN TO THE WORD OF GOD AND REPENT**

**A. (:19) Sent Multiple Prophets -- Patience and Longsuffering of the Lord** – seeking repentance and restoration

*“Yet He sent prophets to them to bring them back to the LORD; though they testified against them, they would not listen.”*

Failure to listen and respond

Not a pleasant mission; not met with any success

People need spiritual ears and hearts with fertile soil, prepared by the Lord, to respond

Faithful prophets were abused and probably persecuted; maybe martyred

If you are faithful in delivering God’s reformation message you don’t always meet with any visible success – not a good measurement of faithful service

Problem is not with the messenger – let’s see what happens when we send the best possible messenger; the one who should be the most persuasive and have the most clout with the leaders as well as with the people

Like God saying: surely they will listen to my Son! Parable of Landowner – **Matt. 22:33-46**

**B. (:20) Sent Prominent Prophet/Priest -- Clear Warnings** – last chance to avert disaster

*“Then the Spirit of God came on Zechariah the son of Jehoiada the priest; and he stood above the people and said to them, 'Thus God has said, 'Why do you transgress the commandments of the LORD and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you.'”*

Spoke through Zechariah, the son of the godly high priest Jehoiada

Bold message from God – did not shrink back from delivering it

Did not preach it in secret – “*stood above the people*”

You are clueless about why prosperity eludes you

Why do you persist in the path of futility??

How you treat God is how God will treat you – ultimate Golden Rule!

*“Because you have forsaken the LORD, He has also forsaken you”*

**C. (:21-22) Will Send Wrath -- Futile Opposition from Hardened Hearts**

*“So they conspired against him and at the command of the king they stoned him to death in the court of the house of the LORD. Thus Joash the king did not remember the kindness which his father Jehoiada had shown him, but he murdered his son. And as he died he said, ‘May the LORD see and avenge!’”*

Look at the heinous nature of this crime:

- blatant misuse of God delegated power – “*at the command of the king*”
- affront to the kindness of God shown through parents of Zechariah
- affront to the innocence of Zechariah – killing an innocent man
- rejection of God Himself by killing His ambassador
- affront to the sacred ground of the *house of the Lord*

**Rugh:** see how quickly sin hardens a heart; he couldn’t have had a better influence than Jehoiada for so many years; he has conformed but has not been converted; his heart had never been transformed; now he goes the direction he really wants to go

The Lord will see and will avenge – Ultimate Sovereign will judge the kings of the earth

**V. (2 Kings 12:17-18) YOU CAN'T COMPROMISE WHAT IS SACRED BY FORSAKING GOD AND MAKING ALLIANCES WITH GOD'S ENEMIES – YOU MUST REMAIN LOYAL TO GOD AND CONTINUE TO WALK BY FAITH**

**A. (2 Kings 12:17) Humiliating Selection by God of Hazael for the Appointed Instrument of Judgment**

*“Then Hazael king of Aram went up and fought against Gath and captured it, and Hazael set his face to go up to Jerusalem.”*

Look at prophecy of Elisha in **2 Kings 8:7-15**

Kings should thing long and hard before beginning a military campaign against God's chosen land and people – but in this case Hazael is sent by God and blessed by God

**B. (2 Chron. 24:23-24) Humiliating Defeat on the Battlefield – despite superior forces**

*“Now it came about at the turn of the year that the army of the Arameans came up against him; and they came to Judah and Jerusalem, destroyed all the officials of the people from among the people, [and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus.] Indeed the army of the Arameans came with a small number of men; yet the LORD delivered a very great army into their hands, because they had forsaken the LORD, the God of their fathers. Thus they executed judgment on Joash. “*

Small numbers defeated a great army – we are used to being on the other side of this equation; but now God's favor and blessing has been removed and placed upon these pagan forces; clear that this defeat was a judgment of God upon the nation

Prophecy of Moses – **Lev. 26:17** *“I will set My face against you so that you will be struck down before your enemies; and those who hate you will rule over you, and you will flee when no one is pursuing you.”*

**C. (2 Kings 12:18) Humiliating Payoff by Joash – exposing complete vacuum of faith**

*“And Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred things that Jehoshaphat and Jehoram and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had dedicated, and his own sacred things and all the gold that was found among the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram. Then he went away from Jerusalem.”*

How can you take what has been dedicated to God by faithful people and just hand it over to the enemy?? Look at church buildings of apostate denominations ... look at the laws of our land as their basis in righteousness is eroded

Bought off King Hazael so he would go away

It is impossible to live a life of faith apart from a **foundation of integrity**.

**(;19-21) CONCLUSION – SAD ENDING FOR THOSE WHO FAIL TO FINISH STRONG –THOSE WHO TURN AWAY FROM THE LORD -- SHAMEFUL LEGACY**

*Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 20 And his servants arose and made a conspiracy, and struck down Joash at the house of Millo as he was going down to Silla. 21 For Jozacar the son of Shimeath, and Jehozabad the son of Shomer, his servants, struck him, and he died; and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David, and Amaziah his son became king in his place. (2 Kings 12:19-21)*

*25 And when they had departed from him (for they left him very sick), his own servants conspired against him because of the blood of the son of Jehoiada the priest, and murdered him on his bed. So he died, and they buried him in the city of David, but they did not bury him in the tombs of the kings. 26 Now these are those who conspired against him: Zabad the son of Shimeath the Ammonitess, and Jehozabad the son of Shimrith the Moabitess. 27 As to his sons and the many oracles against him and the rebuilding of the house of God, behold, they are written in the treatise of the Book of the Kings. Then Amaziah his son became king in his place. (2 Chron. 24:25-27)*

**A. Health Destroyed**

Wounded in battle, Sick, Vulnerable at the end of his life – still a young man (47) – should be in the prime of his strength

**B. Security Compromised -- Betrayal by Close Confidants**

Look at the wives of those who rose up against him – from the enemies of Judah – the Ammonites and the Moabites [different names given in Kings vs Chronicles; multiple opponents]

**C. Dead Body Disgraced**

Contrast in Burial – God making a clear distinction between Jehoiada who was not a king and yet was granted the honor of being buried with David and the kings vs Joash who was a king and yet was shamed by being buried apart from the sepulchers of the kings

**APPLICATION: Call to Repentance in order to Finish Strong: Ezekiel 18:24-32**

*"But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die. 25 "Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right? 26 "When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. 27 "Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life. 28 "Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. 29 "But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right? 30 "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct," declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. 31 "Cast away from you all your transgressions which you*



*have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! For why will you die, O house of Israel? 32 "For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies," declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live."*

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are the **two** wives which the high priest provided for Joash presented as a positive or negative impact?
- 2) What lessons can we take away about **financial accountability** and checks and balances in ministry?
- 3) What aspects of the **kindness of God** towards us should we spend more time considering?
- 4) Despite the most godly influences, how is it that someone can **apostatize** in their latter years?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

### **Gil Rugh: Godless After All**

King in N. Kingdom and S. Kingdom will overlap with same name. Harmony of the Gospels – here we have harmony of Samuel and Kings and Chronicles;

The revival under Jehoiada was not very deep. The other officials did not exemplify godly character. God was gracious to send His prophets to bring them back.

### **David Silversides: False Profession Abandoned and Judged**

#### **1. (:1-3) Running Well**

Gave a credible profession; as far as the outward form he did what was right; seemed to trust and love the Lord; but given the real cause; but due to the influence of Jehoiada; dreadful change when high priest died;

bad tradition = did not take away high places; places of unauthorized worship of the Lord; not unique to reign of Joash; even godly kings failed in this point; seems that the high priest went along with this; when tradition is entrenched it is difficult to remove it; reformation extremely difficult; bad tradition is difficult to change!

#### **2. (:4-16) Some Reformation**

Reformation proposed (:4) – priority of the building of the spiritual temple of the people of God in the church age; no application to physical church buildings today; certain monies to be used for temple rebuilding – 3 categories of offerings: half shekel (Ex. 30:13); redemption price of everyone who was devoted to the Lord (Lev. 27:1); and free will offerings

Repairing restored (:6-10) – special offering box;

Work moves forward –

#### **3. (:17-18) Apostasy Judged**

The payoff (:18) – we are struck by how drastically things changed; might have seemed like



Judah was on the verge of another great age of reformation; but suddenly we see this humiliating payoff from the treasures of the house of God; fuller picture given in 2 Chron. 24; the princes came and flattered him; told him it was time to assert himself; free of influence of the old man; time to do your own thing; casts off all that he had been taught; allows idolatry  
Quadruple outrage: murder of an innocent man; a true prophet of God; son of man who had cared so much for him since his childhood; had brought him up in the truth of God

#### **4. (:19) Judged and Unlamented in the End**

May have been wounded in battle; not buried in sepulcher of kings where high priest had been honored with burial; mark of distinction between these two; Joash had returned evil for good; many faithful servants of God slain by apostate Israel (Jesus quoted this – between Abel and Zechariah)

#### **Lessons:**

- Profession out of regard only to others is not real and usually does not last
- The unregenerate heart can lie concealed for a very long time – surprising account –
  - o Apostasy can happen after many years of seemingly faithful commitment
- The Lord answered Zechariah's prayer – brought judgment

#### **Ed Anderson: Temple Repairs and the Joash Chest**

[this sermon does not take into account the additional details from 2 Chron. 24]

“Sin begins with the hiss of the serpent and ends with the groan of death and in between am I.”

#### **1. Instituted National Identity act: decree / destruction / delight**

Joash began his career as monarch by making a decree (**2 Kings 11:17**) – 1 Pet. 2:9 we are to live as the true people of God; **national identity act** followed by destruction of idols; establishing officers over the house of the Lord; but the high places were not taken away; what is an idol? Something in life that comes between us and God; identify idols and exclude them; 1 Cor. 10:14; may be something you do possess or coveting something you don't have; a delight among the people

#### **2. Instituted a Temple Restoration Act**

Funding method proposed; plan was not followed through; sometimes need to go to plan B; came up with special treasury box for offerings; bank teller means counter; counting the money; not going to micromanage the contractors; going to trust them; they replaced what was broken or damaged; 1 Cor. 9 – the laborer is worthy of his hire;

#### **3. Instituted a National Protection Act (12:17)**

In this one, he blew it; extortion by king of Syria; Judah paid him off; protection money; It's one thing to start well; it's another to finish well; but fear got the better of him;

**1 Cor. 16:13 – Josh. 1:6 –**

#### **(:20-21) Tragic End of the Story**

[www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)

TEXT: 2 Kings 13:1-25

TITLE: JEHOAHAZ AND JEHOASH FAIL TO REFORM ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE GOODNESS AND GRACIOUSNESS OF GOD REFLECT HIS ONGOING COVENANT LOYALTY TO ISRAEL DESPITE THE WICKED REIGNS OF JEHOAHAZ AND JEHOASH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

With the death of Elisha the prophet, certainly the nation of Israel had cause to wonder if God would now completely forsake them. But time after time God demonstrated His goodness and graciousness despite their unwillingness to reject the idolatry of their fathers. God's covenant loyalty brought deliverance in time of crisis, resurrection from the dead, and three successive victories over the Arameans as Israel was able to recapture some of their previously lost cities. There would be hope for the future despite the coming judgment and captivity because of their idolatry.

**John Gates:** This section demonstrates how insidiously sin entrenches itself and spreads in spite of repeated efforts to eradicate it.

**Iain Provan:** Yet there are hints now of a darker future, a future in which Israel will have to do without their great protector Elisha; a future of defeat and exile in a foreign land. It is the end of an era in which two mighty prophets have walked the land. What will happen now?

**William Barnes:** In any case, we truly know that God's people have not been forgotten by their loving and gracious deity—that is the unequivocal message we can take away from the present chapter. And that is no small consolation to any contemporary reader of this ancient portion of the Word of God.

**I. (:1-9) REIGN OF WICKED JEHOAHAZ IN ISRAEL – GOODNESS OF GOD DID NOT LEAD TO REPENTANCE**

**A. (:1) Significant Touchpoints**

1. When Did He Reign?

*“In the twenty-third year of Joash the son of Ahaziah, king of Judah,”*

2. Who Was His Father?

*“Jehoahaz the son of Jehu”*

3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*“became king over Israel at Samaria”*

4. How Long Did He Reign?  
*“and he reigned seventeen years.”*

**B. (:2-3) Summary Evaluation and Divine Discipline**

1. (:2) Summary Evaluation

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin; he did not turn from them.”*

2. (:3) Divine Discipline

*“So the anger of the LORD was kindled against Israel, and He gave them continually into the hand of Hazael king of Aram, and into the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael.”*

**Peter Pett:** The consequence of YHWH’s anger at Israel’s disobedience to His covenant resulted in a number of Aramaean invasions by Hazael and his son Benhadad (acting as Hazael’s commander-in-chief) in which Israel were badly mauled. Indeed we learn later that as well as being unable to recover Transjordan from Hazael (see **2 Kings 10:32-33**), he also lost a number of cities to him west of Jordan (**2 Kings 13:25**).

**C. (:4-7) Significant Event –  
Deliverance from the Arameans but Persistent Idolatry**

1. (:4) Crisis Entreaty

*“Then Jehoahaz entreated the favor of the LORD, and the LORD listened to him; for He saw the oppression of Israel, how the king of Aram oppressed them.”*

2. (:5) Gracious Deliverance from the Arameans

*“And the LORD gave Israel a deliverer, so that they escaped from under the hand of the Arameans; and the sons of Israel lived in their tents as formerly.”*

**Constable:** Aram's oppression moved Jehoahaz to seek Yahweh's help, which He graciously provided in spite of the king's unfaithfulness. The deliverer God raised up (v. 5) was probably King Adad-Nirari III of Assyria (810-783 B.C.) who attacked Damascus as well as Tyre, Sidon, Media, Edom, and Egypt. The Arameans consequently stopped attacking Israel and turned to defending themselves against their neighbor to the east, Assyria. Another way God disciplined Israel at this time was by reducing her army through casualties (v. 7). This had begun in Jehu's reign (**10:32-36**) but continued during Jehoahaz's administration.

**Peter Pett:** Other saviours have been suggested such as Elisha on the basis of **2 Kings 13:14-20**, Joash on the basis of **2 Kings 13:17**; **2 Kings 13:19**; **2 Kings 13:25**, and even Jeroboam II on the basis of **2 Kings 14:27**. But none of them really fit the situation unless we see the answer to prayer as very much delayed, which is not the impression we are given.

**Paul House:** Despite their release, the people fail to credit God for their peace and security. In return for the Lord's goodness, the nation continues in Jeroboam's cult and returns to Asherah worship. The futility of such worship is highlighted by the fact that Syria brought Israel to its knees by decimating its armies while they rebelled against the Lord. As in the times of Amos, it seems that the more the Lord does to change Israel's habits the more the people choose a destructive path (cf. **Amos 4:6–12**). When Jehoahaz dies, he is replaced by his son Jehoash, who becomes the second descendant of Jehu to rule. God continues to be faithful to Jehu.

3. (:6) Persistent Idolatry

*“Nevertheless they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, with which he made Israel sin, but walked in them; and the Asherah also remained standing in Samaria.”*

**Wiersbe:** Did the promised blessing of God change the king? Apparently not, for he didn't remove the idols from the land (**v. 6; 1 Kings 16:33**) nor did he encourage the people to return to the Lord. Crisis faith is rarely deep or lasting. Once people see hope of deliverance and their pain eases up, they forget the Lord and return to their old ways until the next crisis.

4. (:7) Hamstrung Military

*“For he left to Jehoahaz of the army not more than fifty horsemen and ten chariots and 10,000 footmen, for the king of Aram had destroyed them and made them like the dust at threshing.”*

**MacArthur:** Syria was able to dominate Israel militarily because the Lord had left Jehoahaz only a small army with very few chariots. The army of Israel was so inconsequential, particularly when compared to the armies of Syria and Assyria, that it was likened to the dust left over after grain had been winnowed at a threshing floor.

**D. (:8-9) Overall Summary of His Reign**

1. (:8) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, and all that he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

2. (:9a) Death and Burial

*“And Jehoahaz slept with his fathers, and they buried him in Samaria;”*

3. (:9b) Succession

*“and Joash his son became king in his place.”*

## II. (:10-25) REIGN OF WICKED JEHOASH IN ISRAEL – GRACIOUSNESS OF GOD DEMONSTRATED ONGOING COVENANT LOYALTY

### A. (:10-13) Overall Summary of His Reign

#### 1. (:10) Significant Touchpoints

##### a. When Did He Reign?

*“In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah,”*

##### b. Who Was His Father?

*“Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz,”*

**Constable:** Again two kings with the same name ruled over the Northern and Southern Kingdoms at the same time, though they ruled contemporaneously for only about two years (798-796 B.C.). Jehoash of Israel's dates are 798-782 B.C., and Jehoash of Judah's are 835-796 B.C.

##### c. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*“became king over Israel in Samaria,”*

##### d. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned sixteen years.”*

#### 2. (:11) Summary Evaluation

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not turn away from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, with which he made Israel sin, but he walked in them.”*

#### 3. (:12) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Joash and all that he did and his might with which he fought against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

#### 4. (:13a) Death of Joash

*“So Joash slept with his fathers,”*

#### 5. (:13b) Succession

*“and Jeroboam sat on his throne;”*

#### 6. (:13c) Burial of Joash

*“and Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.”*

**Peter Pett:** Because the prophetic author wished to keep the episode concerning Elisha's death outside the regular regnal pattern, the life of Jehoash of Israel is summed up and closed off in the usual way, although in very abbreviated form, before the description of Elisha's final acts, and the opening of Amaziah's reign then follows the Elisha incident. We can compare the same pattern with regard to **chapter 2**, where the taking of Elijah

and the establishment of Elisha as his successor takes place after the closing of Ahaziah's reign but before the opening of Jehoram's. Furthermore we may also note the fact that Jehoram of Israel's reign (**2 Kings 3:1** to **2 Kings 9:26**) which incorporates the other Elisha material was never itself closed off with a closing formula. This deliberate exclusion from the lives of the kings highlights the 'otherness' of the death scene of Elisha, and the fact of its heavenly connection.

## **B. (:14-17) Symbolic Arrow of Gracious Victory at Aphek**

### 1. (:14) Final Interaction with Elisha

*"When Elisha became sick with the illness of which he was to die, Joash the king of Israel came down to him and wept over him and said, 'My father, my father, the chariots of Israel and its horsemen!'"*

**MacArthur:** Jehoash acknowledge through this metaphor that the Lord, through Elisha, was the real strength and power of Israel against all her adversaries.

**Peter Pett:** Significance = Will the death of Elisha bring to an end YHWH's activity on behalf of Israel?

### 2. (:15-17) Final Instructions from Elisha

#### a. (:15-17a) Shoot the Arrow

*"And Elisha said to him, 'Take a bow and arrows.' So he took a bow and arrows.*

*Then he said to the king of Israel, 'Put your hand on the bow.' And he put his hand on it, then Elisha laid his hands on the king's hands.*

*And he said, 'Open the window toward the east,' and he opened it.*

*Then Elisha said, 'Shoot!' And he shot."*

**Peter Pett:** In the first passage (in **chapter 2**) the message was one of **hope**, with Elijah being taken and Elisha entering Israel over the miraculously parted Jordan and advancing on Jericho and Bethel to take possession of the land. Now that period is over and Elisha is dying, but he wants Jehoash to recognise that the future is still one of hope if only he will trust in YHWH, and he does it by vivid symbolism which indicates that the chariots and horsemen of Israel and the armoury of God (represented by the arrow of YHWH's victory) will still be with them if they are faithful to YHWH. . . Unlike the servant of Elisha previously (**2 Kings 6:17**), Elisha knew that the king was not spiritually attuned enough to see chariots and horses of fire at the ready to fight for

Israel. Thus he gave him instead a visible sign of YHWH's victory, one that he could understand and appreciate. And he was to see the arrows as the arrows of YHWH.

b. (:17b) Significance of the Arrow

*“And he said, ‘The LORD’s arrow of victory, even the arrow of victory over Aram; for you shall defeat the Arameans at Aphek until you have destroyed them.’”*

**Constable:** The bow and arrows were symbols of the **strength and victory** God would give Jehoash. By taking them in hand the king was symbolically becoming God's agent of power. Elisha put his own hands on the king's to illustrate that the king's power would come from Yahweh, whom Elisha represented. The east window opened toward Aram from Israel. By shooting the first arrow Jehoash was appropriating the victory symbolized by the arrow. As he shot, Elisha explained to him that the arrow represented victory over Aram at Aphek (cf. **1 Kings 20:30**).

The prophet then instructed Jehoash to shoot the remaining arrows at the ground. The Hebrew makes this translation preferable. He was to strike the ground by shooting the arrows at it.

"It is ... a symbolic action, like that of Joshua thrusting with a spear at Ai (Jos. 8:18)." **Wiseman**

Elisha was angry when Jehoash shot only three more arrows because in doing so the king was demonstrating weak faith. Jehoash knew what shooting the arrows signified (v. 17). Perhaps the king did not believe God could or would give him as much victory as Elisha had implied. He failed to trust God even though he knew what God had promised.

**C. (:18-19) Symbolic Arrows of Failure to Appropriate Full Victory**

1. (:18) Failure to Trust God for Full Victory

*“Then he said, ‘Take the arrows,’ and he took them.*

*And he said to the king of Israel, ‘Strike the ground,’ and he struck it three times and stopped.”*

**Tony Evans:** **Most of the time God’s promises are in your reach. They are not in your hand.** Like Joshua, who had been promised every place the sole of his foot touched, and like this king, you have to go and get them. **God’s promises for you don’t come about by you simply sitting around and waiting for them. They require you to act in faith,** to live out the principles taught in His Word, and more—to align your life under God’s truth.

With the first arrow that Elisha called, *“The lord’s arrow of victory,”* the promise of victory for king Joash had been established. Yet the king was told to shoot more arrows out the window. We know that at a minimum he had at least six arrows in his quiver because of what Elisha said to him. But the king chose to shoot only three. Maybe he wanted to save his remaining arrows for the upcoming battle. Maybe he didn’t want them damaged, or maybe he didn’t want to have to retrieve them, or lose them altogether. The king was obviously covering himself in keeping back a few of his



arrows. Yet for whatever reason, the prophet had given him an instruction, and he had held back. **He quit long before he ever should have.**

<https://tonyevans.org/gods-promises-are-in-your-reach/>

**David Guzik:** Elisha clearly asked Joash to do something that modeled prayer.

- Shooting the arrows required effort and aim.
- Shooting the arrows required instruction and help from the prophet of God.
- Shooting the arrows had to be done through an open window.
- Shooting the arrows had to be done without knowing the exact outcome ahead of time. The target was only fully known by faith.
- Shooting the arrows was ineffective because it was not repeated enough, reflecting a lack of confidence in the process.
- Shooting the arrows had its strategic moment, and when that moment passed it was gone.
- Failing to shoot the arrows hurt others, not only himself.

#### 2. (:19) Frustration Expressed by Elisha

*“So the man of God was angry with him and said, ‘You should have struck five or six times, then you would have struck Aram until you would have destroyed it. But now you shall strike Aram only three times.’”*

**David Guzik:** We think of all the excuses that Joash could have made; yet none of them are valid.

- “I stopped shooting because I didn’t want to be presumptuous and ask for too much.”
- “I stopped shooting because I’m not a very good archer.”
- “I stopped shooting because Elisha didn’t help me more.”
- “I stopped shooting because I thought three was plenty.”
- “I stopped shooting because I didn’t think it would do any good.”
- “I stopped shooting because I wasn’t in a shooting mood. I didn’t feel like it.”
- “I stopped shooting because I didn’t want to get over-excited.”

**Dale Ralph Davis:** It is important, then, to see how **verses 10–13** and **verses 14–19** fit together. **Verses 10–13** summarize Jehoash’s whole reign, but **verses 14–19** capture his most crucial moment—standing before the word of Yahweh. Hence this latter vignette gets more space than the king’s whole ‘bio’ in **verses 10–13**. The text makes a value judgment: **how a man responds to Yahweh’s word is more significant than all the achievements and honors of a lifetime.**

#### **D. (:20-21) Resurrection Impact of the Bones of Elisha**

##### 1. (:20a) Death and Burial of Elisha

*“And Elisha died, and they buried him.”*



2. (:20b-21a) Burying a Man in the Grave of Elisha

*“Now the bands of the Moabites would invade the land  
in the spring of the year.*

*And as they were burying a man, behold, they saw a marauding band;  
and they cast the man into the grave of Elisha.”*

3. (:21b) Dead Man Revived by the Bones of Elisha

*“And when the man touched the bones of Elisha  
he revived and stood up on his feet.”*

**MacArthur:** A dead man returned to life after touching Elisha’s bones. This miracle was a sign that God’s power continued to work in relationship to Elisha even after his death. What God had promised to Jehoash through Elisha when he was alive would surely come to pass after the prophet’s death (cf. **vv. 19-25**) in the defeat of the enemy, the recovery of the cities that had been taken, and their restoration to the kingdom of Israel (**vv. 22-25**).

**Constable:** Why did the writer place the record of the resuscitation (**vv. 20-21**) within the story of the Aramean army's defeat (**vv. 14-25**)? Probably he intended the resuscitation incident to illustrate the fact that God would also revive Israel by defeating Aram, as He had revived the dead man.

**John Schultz:** This miracle of Elisha’s after his death is more surprising than any of those which he performed during his lifetime. The Jews regarded it as his highest glory (compare Ecclesiasticus 48:13,14). It may be said to belong to a class of Scriptural miracles, cases, i.e. where the miracle was not performed through the agency of a living miracle-worker, but by a material object in which, by God’s will, ‘virtue’ for the time resided (compare **Acts 19:12**). The primary effect of the miracle was, no doubt, greatly to increase the reverence of the Israelites for the memory of Elisha, to lend force to his teaching, and especially to add weight to his unfulfilled prophecies, as to that concerning the coming triumphs of Israel over Syria. In the extreme state of depression to which the Israelites were now reduced, a very signal miracle may have been needed to encourage and reassure them.

**Paul House:** Not even death stops this prophet’s ministry. His predictions about Syria’s defeat live on, of course, but so do his miraculous powers. A group of men burying a corpse are interrupted by Moabite raiders, which forces them to throw the body in a tomb that just happens to be Elisha’s. The deceased man revives. This final Elisha story provides a fitting summary of the prophet and his ministry. **Long** says, “As he was a man of power in life (**chaps. 2–7**), moving and persuasive even in stories told about him (**2 Kgs 8:1–6**), so now his awesome powers continue working in death, confirming the prophet and foreshadowing the victory to come.” Elijah has gone to heaven without dying; Elisha has kept giving Israel life after he has died.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** You should remember that the Old Testament has no corner on bizarre episodes. The New Testament quite keeps pace with its ‘parallel’ in **Matthew**

## 27:51b–53:

*(51b) And the earth shook, and the rocks were split, (52) and the tombs were opened; and many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; (53) and when they came out of the tombs after his resurrection, they entered the holy city and appeared to many.*

Matthew places this right after he reports Jesus' death (v. 50). Following **J. W. Wenham** we place a stop after 'opened'. Many bodies of dead believers were raised (v. 52b) and **verse 53** refers to this when it says they '*came out of the tombs*' and that this occurred '*after his resurrection*'. So their 'resurrection' didn't occur until after Jesus' resurrection, but the tombs were opened at Jesus' death. Naturally this raises a host of unanswered questions. I once heard a New Testament scholar say he didn't know what to do with this passage. But, if it is strange to us, it is clear what Matthew intends. He wants us to understand that Jesus in his death has conquered death, that **Jesus' death gives us life**. Jesus died and tombs were opened.

### **E. (:22-25) God's Ongoing Covenant Loyalty to Israel**

#### 1. (:22) Israel Oppressed by Hazael

*"Now Hazael king of Aram had oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz."*

#### 2. (:23) God Gracious to Israel

*"But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them and turned to them because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them or cast them from His presence until now."*

**Peter Pett:** YHWH had not yet cast off Israel, for He still remembered His promises to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in which Israel had a part. As a result of these promises He was gracious to Israel and had compassion on them (that is why He had sent them a '*saviour*'), and did not as yet destroy them or cast them off. Thus their main antagonist, Hazael, died, and YHWH began to revivify Israel. He had still not forgotten them.

#### 3. (:24) Succession after Death of Hazael

*"When Hazael king of Aram died, Ben-hadad his son became king in his place."*

#### 4. (:25) Limited Victories by Jehoash to Recover Cities of Israel

*"Then Jehoash the son of Jehoahaz took again from the hand of Ben-hadad the son of Hazael the cities which he had taken in war from the hand of Jehoahaz his father. Three times Joash defeated him and recovered the cities of Israel."*

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How many opportunities has God given you to repent of your sins?
- 2) How has God demonstrated His loyal faithfulness to you in His grace and goodness?
- 3) How can you trace the message of the gospel through the events of this passage?
- 4) How would you compare and contrast the ministries of Elijah and Elisha?

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## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** The record of the reign of Jehoahaz, the king of Israel, has literary and verbal **similarities to the book of Judges**:

- 1) Jehoahaz did evil in the sight of the Lord (v. 2; cf. **Jdg 2:11-13; 3:7**),
- 2) the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel and He delivered them over to their enemies (vs. 3; cf. **Jdg 2:14, 15; 3:8**),
- 3) Jehoahaz cried out to the Lord who saw their oppression (v. 4; cf. **Jdg 2:18; 3:9**),
- 4) the Lord raised up a deliverer for Israel who rescued them out of the hand of their enemies (v. 5; cf. **Jdg 2:16, 18; 3:9**); and
- 5) Israel continued in her evil ways with the result of further oppression (vv. 6, 7; cf. **Jdg 2:19; 3:12-14**).

**Wiersbe:** Consider five facts about Jehoash:

**1) He followed the wrong examples (vv. 10-13).**

Like his father, he modeled himself after Jeroboam I, the first king of Israel. This meant he visited the golden calves and bowed down to idols.

**2) He made a wise decision (v. 14).**

The king of Israel went to inquire of Elisha after over forty years of silence. . .

**3) He made a great mistake (vv. 15-19).**

The number of times he smote the ground determined how many victories God would give him. Because Jehoash had ignorant faith, he limited himself to only three victories over the Syrians. As sick as he was, the Prophet Elisha expressed righteous anger over the king's ignorance and unbelief.

**4) He received a great encouragement (vv. 20-21).**

This miracle told him that, though the prophet was dead, Jehovah was still the living God and the God of power. His promises would not fail.

**5) He won the three victories (vv. 22-25).**

The Syrians were determined to destroy Israel and make it a part of their empire, but the Lord had other plans. . . King Jehoash won three great victories against the Syrians,

and this was sufficient to enable him to recover towns that Hazael and Ben-Hadad had taken from Israel, and then King Jeroboam II recovered the rest of the land. The Lord enabled Jehoash to increase his military power (v. 7) and overcome the Syrians led by Ben-Hadad III. God's promise came true and God's people were spared.

**Kevin Schreiner:** This is a reminder to me of how important it is to see what God is looking for behind what he is asking. Sometimes God gives me direction, not so much because he wants me to arrive at a particular destination, but for the reason of testing my heart to see if I will give him my best effort or believe with unreserved faith. When God communicates something to me, it not just about obeying even though this is essential in my Christian walk, it is more about my attitude and the effort I put out in faith. Will I believe and act because of obedience or will I please God by acting in faith. Will I believe for his best and give everything I have to see what He wants happen. Joash's lack of faith stood in the way of what God really wanted to do. I don't want my heart to trying and limit what God wants to do in my or through me. Joash should have shot the entire collection of remaining arrows at the ground. I don't want to be known for my lack of faith. Lack of faith in action would be not give all that I can, because I stopped short of my best effort. It would like giving a little less than my best when I prepare a message; a little less than my best when I plan a evangelist outreach; a little less than my best when I spend time with my boys; stopping short of given my best effort when I prepare a paper for a class; a little less than my best as walk past the trash in the my home or God's sanctuary; a little less than my best when I stop short from confronting someone about an area of their life that is out alignment with God; a little less than my best when I am courteous but not courageous with talking to the people at Martial Arts and Starbucks that God has purposely put in my path to share his story; a little less than my best when I give up on someone who I could do a little bit more for; a little less than my best when I decide to stop praying for a miracles in an impossible situation, because I have prayed ninety nine prayers. All these would be like striking the ground with only some of the arrows instead of believing and striking with all.

<https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/21533-strike-the-ground-with-your-best>

**Iain Provan:** There was indeed oppression (vv. 4, 22) throughout the reign of Jehoahaz, but God was gracious and compassionate because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. This reason for Israel's survival during Jehoahaz's reign is a deeper one than that given in **2 Kings 10:30**. Long before making promises to Jehu about kingship, long before making a covenant with David (**2 Sam. 7:1–17**), God was dealing with Israel's ancestors (**Gen. 15:1–21; 17:1–27**; etc.), committing to Israel as a people and promising it a land. It is this everlasting covenant that is now mentioned as the fundamental reason for God's help in the midst of oppression. That is why Aram was kept at bay during the reign of Jehoahaz, in spite of sin, and that is why the equally sinful Jehoash was able to lead Israel to recovery during the reign of Ben-Hadad son of Hazael (but not at the beginning, cf. v. 3), recapture towns earlier lost to Aram, and defeat the Arameans (as Elisha had promised) three times. It was a matter of **grace**. . .

Elisha, the great protector of Israel, is dead. His was an age when “*God saved*” Israel (cf. the Hb. root *yš‘* underlying the name “*Elisha*” and the words “*deliverer*” in v. 5 and “*victory*” in v. 17), even in the midst of great sin (cf. 13:1–7, 14–19). With the passing of that era, Israel has entered a time in which devastating judgment will not long be held at bay. They are shortly to enter the tomb of exile, to be cast out of God’s presence with not so much as a remnant left (cf. Ps. 88:3–12. . . Yet even in exile, there is hope. If contact with the great prophets of the past is maintained, through obedience to their teachings (we presume), death may yet be followed by unexpected resurrection (cf. Ezek. 37:1–14), defeat by victory. For God’s love is ultimately strong enough to overcome death. It is no coincidence that the first allusion in Kings to exile as an aspect of Israelite experience appears in a chapter that contains the first mention of the covenant with the patriarchs. Only a promise like that can offer Israel any comfort in the midst of the devastation that it is shortly to endure.

### **Bob Deffinbaugh: Grave Matters Or Runaway Corpse**

The question might arise in the readers mind: “How can God be both the cause of Israel’s suffering, and the source of their deliverance as well?” If you stop to think about it, it is not such a difficult question to answer. If God brought Israel’s adversity upon them, then who else would we expect to end it? It was Elijah who announced that a drought would come upon the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 17:1). Why, then, would we be surprised to learn that it was also Elijah who announced the end of this drought (1 Kings 18:1, 41–45)? . . .

Although the people of the northern kingdom of Israel are now living in peace, they fail to address their sins, which are the source of their affliction. They do not do away with the false system of religious worship instituted by Jeroboam. Indeed, there was even an Asherah pole plainly visible in Samaria. The point seems to be that they persisted in their sins and did not even attempt to hide them. They persisted in open sin and rebellion against God, in spite of His mercy and compassion. The author refers to the accomplishments of Jehoahaz, but he does not cite them. He merely provides a kind of footnote, so that the reader could consult another source for further information if he chose to do so (verse 8). Jehoahaz died and was buried in Samaria, and then was replaced as king by his son, Joash. This is the first of four burials in our text. . .

Here, then, is the way I understand the visit of Joash to the dying prophet, Elisha. Joash was not a man of faith. He did not lead Israel in the ways of God. He did evil in God’s sight. He was not willing to rid Israel of the religion introduced by Jeroboam, but neither was he willing to rid the nation of belief in the LORD, as proclaimed by prophets like Elisha. By protecting and promoting several religions at the same time, he was trying to “cover all the bases.” Joash did not see Elisha as “public enemy number one,” as Ahab and Jezebel had once done with Elijah and other prophets. Joash saw Elisha as one part of his “religious portfolio,” a part that he did not wish to lose. And so, when the prophet drew near to his death Joash was panic-stricken. This was one of his “arsenals of defense.” Elisha was to Joash what my granddaughters’ “security blankets” are to them. Joash felt safe with Elisha nearby, and he was frightened by the approach of his death.

At first, I thought Joash's tears were tears of love and of sorrow, prompted by the approaching death of a confidant and friend. But that is not really the case, as our author has indicated. Joash is concerned for himself, and for his kingdom, and no wonder. We have just been informed that under Jehoahaz Israel's military forces had been greatly reduced by the king of Syria (**2 Kings 13:7**). I would assume that this was still the case when Joash became king. God was a kind of "last resort" to Joash, and when Elisha was dying, the king feared that he might lose his "point of contact" with God. His tears, then, were tears of fear, and perhaps even of self-pity, more than tears prompted by love.

Why, then, would Joash virtually repeat the words of Elisha, spoken at the time of Elijah's departure into heaven?

*"My father, my father! The chariot and horsemen of Israel!"* (**2 Kings 13:14b**).

I think that Joash is saying something like this:

"Oh no! Elisha, you are about to die, and when you die we will lose your access to the heavenly army of angelic beings (*"the horsemen and chariots of fire"*). These angelic forces were at Elisha's disposal, to protect him and Israel. They were only seen when Elisha was present, and now that you are leaving us, we no longer have these "resources" available to us."

Joash is not happy for Elisha, because of the marvelous exodus that he will soon experience. Joash is sorry for himself, because his primary source of divine intervention is leaving, and along with him, it would seem, the angelic forces of heaven. I believe that the context of our passage bears me out on this interpretation. What happens next in the chapter? The first and only other thing we read about Elisha and Joash is the incident with the arrows in **verses 15-19**.

Is Joash fearful that with the death of Elisha Israel's security ends? He is wrong, and Elisha is going to show him that this is not the case. . .

We then come to the story of the "runaway corpse," in which a dead body that is being buried providentially comes into contact with the bones of Elisha the prophet. The dead body comes to life. Remember that Joash is not a godly king. He is the king who is the recipient of the prophecy given through Elisha while he is dying. The context seems to make it clear that Joash was afraid of what would happen to his kingdom after Elisha died. Now that Elisha is dead, Joash may very well have reasoned that this prophecy was no longer valid. I believe this bizarre miracle was divinely designed to give Joash courage and hope, so that he would engage Syria in battle, and thus experience the victories that God had promised.

Did the king fear that a dead man's (Elisha's) prophecies were now lifeless as well? News of this miracle certainly reached the city and the ears of the king. If Elisha's

bones still had power in the tomb, then surely his words were also to be trusted. I therefore believe that this miracle was specifically aimed at Joash. I am sure that the dead man appreciated the miracle as well, but I believe that this great manifestation of God's power through the prophet spoke volumes to the king.

This is the reason this chapter in **2 Kings** ends as it does. Syria oppressed Israel, we are told, throughout the reign of Jehoahaz and was likewise trying to do the same in the reign of Joash. But God felt sorry for His people as He looked upon their suffering. In addition, God was committed to keep His promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And so it was that God gave Israel victory over the king of Syria at the hand of Joash. It is no coincidence that the last sentence of **2 Kings 13** informs us that Joash defeated Ben Hadad of Syria three times. . .

With this chapter, we come to an end of an era—the times of Elijah and Elisha. Other prophets will preach to the northern kingdom of Israel, but the time for Israel to repent is certainly running out. Israel's day of judgment is coming. As we look at the “deliverer” or “savior” that God sent Israel, we are reminded that God's salvation is not the divine response to Israel's piety, and not even to her repentance. God brings deliverance to Israel because of His compassion and because of His unmerited grace. This is emphasized in the first and the last verses of the chapter. . .

Finally, our text reminds us of the way a resurrection demonstrates the power of God and the certainty that His promises will be fulfilled. Elisha's words to Joash may have been spoken in a weak and faltering voice. They were surely the words of a dying man. But the resurrection of that corpse spoke volumes to Joash and the people of Israel concerning the power of God through His prophet. It assures us that what God says, He will do.

<https://bible.org/seriespage/25-life-and-times-elisha-prophet-grave-matters-or-runaway-corpse-2-kings-131-25>



TEXT: 2 Kings 14:1-29

TITLE: REIGN OF AMAZIAH IN JUDAH AND JEROBOAM II IN ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD REMAINS FAITHFUL TO HIS WORD AND TO HIS CHOSEN PEOPLE  
DESPITE THEIR FAILURE TO REMAIN LOYAL IN TRUSTING HIM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

How many times did God come to the aid of His people and bail them out of desperate situations? How many gracious victories did He grant and how much prosperity did He shower down upon them? Yet they persisted in their downward spiral of pride and faithlessness and idolatry. In this chapter we have the interwoven records of the reigns of kings in both the Northern and Southern countries.

**Constable:** Amaziah's life is an example of how one who follows God's Word and consequently experiences His blessing can become proud when he or she forgets that his or her blessings come from God's grace.

**R. D. Patterson:** Two dramatic events were to mark Amaziah's reign:

- (1) his God-given victory over Edom and
- (2) his self-inflicted loss to Israel.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** In terms of content the chapter covers the reigns of Amaziah of Judah (vv. 1–22) and Jeroboam II of Israel (vv. 23–29). They are a study in contrast: the disintegration of Amaziah (a reasonably good start, followed by unteachable arrogance, humiliating defeat, and bloody conspiracy) is followed by the success of Jeroboam, who gives Israel her 'October'. Amaziah only gets **verses 1–7 and 18–22** strictly to himself. He actually stands in the shadow of Jehoash of Israel in **verses 8–14**—and Jehoash's obituary appears a second time in **verses 15–16/17** (cf. **13:12–13**). When the Jeroboam section (vv. 23–29) is added, it looks like the writer's primary interest is still the northern kingdom.

**August Konkel:** This whole segment is concerned with the fulfillment of the prophetic word. The three strikes of the arrows find their fulfillment in the three attacks against the Arameans (**13:18, 25**). More important, the promise to Jehu that his descendants will rule for four generations is shown to be true in spite of the idolatry of the northern kings (**10:30**). Amaziah faces the hostility of his countrymen from the start; though he does exercise constraint in securing his rule (**13:5–6**), following the directives of the covenant that the innocent not be punished, he can only be said to have done good to the measure of his father Joash. He finally dies by conspiracy in exile in Lachish (**14:19**), sharing in the judgment that befell his father. The Israelite kings, by contrast, experience success and the restoration of territory (**13:25; 14:25**) in spite of their apostasy. The first of these is assured by Elisha, the second by the prophet Jonah. In



spite of its disobedience, Israel receives divine mercy—its destiny according to the word of the prophets.

## **I. (:1-7) AMAZIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

### **A. (:1-4) Selected Touchpoints**

#### 1. (:1a) When Did He Become King?

*"In the second year of Joash son of Joahaz king of Israel,"*

#### 2. (:1b) Who Was His Father?

*"Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah became king."*

#### 3. (:2a) How Old Was He When He Became King?

*"He was twenty-five years old when he became king,"*

#### 4. (:2b) How Long Did He Reign?

*"and he reigned twenty-nine years"*

#### 5. (:2c) Which Kingdom Did He Rule

*"in Jerusalem."*

#### 6. (:2d) Who Was His Mother?

*"And his mother's name was Jehoaddin of Jerusalem."*

### **B. (:3-4) Summary Evaluation**

#### 1. (:3) Righteous after the Pattern of His Father Joash

*"And he did right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like David his father; he did according to all that Joash his father had done."*

#### 2. (:4) Blemish on His Record

*"Only the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."*

**Peter Pett:** Like his father Joash, and a number of kings before him, Amaziah had not stamped down on the high places where illegal syncretised YHWH worship was carried out, often at hillside sanctuaries associated with Baal and Asherah.

### **C. (:5-7) Strategic Conquests**

#### 1. (:5-6) Internal Conquests

##### a. (:5) Killed the Slayers of His Father

*"Now it came about, as soon as the kingdom was firmly in his hand, that he killed his servants who had slain the king his father."*

##### b. (:6) Spared the Sons of the Slayers

*"But the sons of the slayers he did not put to death, according to*

*what is written in the book of the law of Moses, as the LORD commanded, saying, 'The fathers shall not be put to death for the sons, nor the sons be put to death for the fathers; but each shall be put to death for his own sin.'"*

**Constable:** One of Amaziah's acts of goodness that the writer of Kings included was his obedience to the Mosaic Law in the matter of not executing children for their fathers' crimes (**Deut. 24:16**). Kings of other ancient Near Eastern countries commonly practiced such executions. Amaziah instead trusted God to control the potential rebels.

## 2. (:7) External Conquests

*"He killed of Edom in the Valley of Salt 10,000  
and took Sela by war, and named it Joktheel to this day."*

**John Schultz:** The text refers further to Amaziah's victory over the Edomites without giving any details. For that again we have to go to **Second Chronicles**, where we read: *"Amaziah then marshaled his strength and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where he killed ten thousand men of Seir. The army of Judah also captured ten thousand men alive, took them to the top of a cliff and threw them down so that all were dashed to pieces."*

**Peter Pett:** Renaming a city was a comparatively rare occurrence and indicated permanent occupancy. By this means he was seeking to redress the previous failure of Jehoram (**2 Kings 8:20-22**).

**August Konkel:** There were two main centers in Edom, Petra in the south and Bozrah (Buseirah) in the north, between Sela and Punon. The initial conquests in the north are probably achieved with the assistance of the king of Israel, with the aim of dominating the southern portion of the King's Highway on the east side of the Jordan rift. The conflict with Edom goes back to the days of Joash, when Edom gained independence (cf. **2 Kings 8:20-22**). Control over Edom is temporary; by the time of Ahaz, Edom has regained its independence (**16:6**).

**Wiersbe:** Because he finally obeyed the Lord, Amaziah's army defeated the Edomites. They killed ten thousand men in the Valley of Salt, where David had won a great victory (**I Chron. 18:12**). Then they destroyed ten thousand prisoners of war by casting them down from the heights of the city of Sela (Petra) that was cut right out of the mountain (**Obad. 1-4**). So elated was Amaziah with his achievement that he renamed the city "Joktheel," which means "God destroys" (**14:7**).

## **II. (:8-14) AMAZIAH'S FOOLISH CHALLENGE OF JEHOASH OF ISRAEL**

### **A. (:8-10) Brazen Challenge**

*"Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel, saying, 'Come, let us face each other.' 9 And Jehoash king of Israel sent to Amaziah king of Judah, saying, 'The thorn bush which was in*

*Lebanon sent to the cedar which was in Lebanon, saying, Give your daughter to my son in marriage. But there passed by a wild beast that was in Lebanon, and trampled the thorn bush. 10 You have indeed defeated Edom, and your heart has become proud. Enjoy your glory and stay at home; for why should you provoke trouble so that you, even you, should fall, and Judah with you?"*

**David Guzik:** **2 Chronicles 25:5-16** gives more background to this event. When Amaziah sent away the Israelite mercenaries, they were not happy – even though he paid them for not fighting against Edom (they probably counted on receiving much more from the spoil of battle). As they returned to Israel, they raided the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth Horon, killed three thousand in them, and took much spoil (**2 Chronicles 25:13**). This was the political motivation for Amaziah's attack against Israel.

**Mordecai Cogan:** “*thistle*” -- A wild thorny plant which grows in unattended fields (cf. **Job 31:40**) and abandoned sites (**Hos 9:6; Isa 34:13**).

**Constable:** Amaziah's heart became proud because of this victory. He concluded that his superior power had gained it rather than God's might. This led him to challenge Israel in battle. King Jehoash's parable (vv. **9-10**) hurt Amaziah's pride (cf. Jotham's fable, **Judg. 9:8-15**). Instead of backing down he insisted on a confrontation. God permitted this situation to punish Amaziah, because after subduing the Edomites, he had brought some of their idols into Jerusalem and worshipped them (**2 Chron. 25:14, 20**). The army of Israel took Amaziah prisoner (vv. **13-14**). It was probably at this time that Amaziah's son "Azariah" ("*Yahweh Has Helped*") began to reign in Jerusalem as his father's coregent (790 B.C.).

**Peter Pett:** Jehoash of Israel tried to warn him off, probably not so much out of consideration for him as in order not to have to waste his own resources in fighting against Judah when the driving out of Aram was his prime concern. His warning was in the form of a parable and followed a well-known pattern (compare **Judges 9:7-15**). He was stressing to Amaziah both his arrogance and his smallness. Compared with Israel Judah was like a thistle contrasted with a cedar, a thistle that could easily be trodden down. Let him therefore continue to glory in his victory over Edom and not be foolish enough to take on someone as large as Israel, something which could only result in he himself being hurt. Again the author of Kings is seeking to bring out Amaziah's foolhardiness.

**John Schultz:** Jehoash's answer in the form of a parable is in the typical style of the time and area in the same way as Jesus' teaching in parables was. **The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary** comments: “People in the East very often express their sentiments in a parabolic form, especially when they intend to convey unwelcome truths, or a contemptuous sneer. This was the design of the admonitory fable related by Joash in his reply. The thistle, a low shrub, might be chosen to represent Amaziah, a petty prince; the cedar, the powerful sovereign of Israel; and the wild beast that trod down the thistle, the overwhelming army with which Israel could desolate Judah. But,

perhaps, without making so minute an application, the parable may be explained generally, as describing, in a striking manner the effects of pride and ambition, towering far beyond their natural sphere, and sure to fall with a sudden and ruinous crash. The moral of the fable is contained in **2 Kings 14:10.**”

**B. (:11-14) Humiliating Defeat**

*“But Amaziah would not listen. So Jehoash king of Israel went up; and he and Amaziah king of Judah faced each other at Beth-shemesh, which belongs to Judah. 12 And Judah was defeated by Israel, and they fled each to his tent. 13 Then Jehoash king of Israel captured Amaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoash the son of Ahaziah, at Beth-shemesh, and came to Jerusalem and tore down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, 400 cubits. 14 And he took all the gold and silver and all the utensils which were found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house, the hostages also, and returned to Samaria.”*

**Peter Pett:** This description of the denuding of Judah of its treasures is regularly the author’s way of expressing YHWH’s displeasure. There is in it also a warning against trusting in fleeting riches. See **2 Kings 12:18; 2 Kings 18:15; 1 Kings 15:18** where it happened to ‘good’ kings, and **2 Kings 16:8; 2 Kings 24:13; 1 Kings 14:6** where it happened to ‘bad kings’.

**MacArthur:** Jehoash plundered both the temple at Jerusalem and the palace of Amaziah. The value of the plundered articles was probably not great, because Jehoash of Judah had previously sent the temple and palace treasures to pay tribute to Hazael of Damascus (**12:17, 18**). Jehoash probably took hostages from Jerusalem to Samaria to secure additional payments of tribute in view of the small war booty.

**III. (:15-16) SUMMARY OF REIGN OF JEHOASH IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:15) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoash which he did, and his might and how he fought with Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

**B. (:16a) Death and Burial**

*“So Jehoash slept with his fathers and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel;”*

**C. (:16b) Succession**

*“and Jeroboam his son became king in his place.”*

**IV. (:17-22) SUMMARY OF REIGN OF AMAZIAH IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (:17) Length of Reign after Death of Jehoash of Israel**

*“And Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah lived fifteen years after the death*

*of Jehoash son of Jehoahaz king of Israel.”*

**B. (:18) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Amaziah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

**MacArthur:** His apostasy (2Ch 25:27), his disastrous war with Israel, the ruinous condition of Jerusalem, the plunder of the temple, and the loss of hostages lost him the respect of his people who rebelled and killed him.

**C. (:19-20) Death and Burial**

1. (:19) Death

*“And they conspired against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish; but they sent after him to Lachish and killed him there.”*

2. (:20) Burial

*“Then they brought him on horses and he was buried at Jerusalem with his fathers in the city of David.”*

**D. (:21-22) Succession**

1. (:21) Coronation of Azariah

*“And all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in the place of his father Amaziah.”*

2. (:22) Rebuilding of Elath

*“He built Elath and restored it to Judah, after the king slept with his fathers.”*

**V. (:23-29) JEROBOAM’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:23) Selected Touchpoints**

1. (:23a) When Did He Become King?

*“In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash king of Judah,”*

2. (:23b) Who Was His Father?

*“Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel”*

3. (:23c) Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*“became king in Samaria,”*

4. (:23d) How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned forty-one years.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The historian shows his selectivity by giving remarkably little space to this most illustrious, long-reigning (793–753 bc) and prosperous king of Israel. Jeroboam, the fourth king of the dynasty of Jehu, followed up the victories of Jehoash

over Ben-Hadad III of Aram (**2 Kgs 13:25**). He was able to carry on Jehoash's aggressive policy of expansion because the campaigns of Adad-nirari III had broken the heart of the Aramaean coalition and the Assyrians had now turned to campaigning in Urartu (Armenia) leaving Jehoash, whom they record as a vassal or tribute-paying servant of Assyria (see on **2 Kgs 13:10**), free to become a powerful force in the area and to restore the northern boundary of Israel to what it had been in the days of David.

The resultant prosperity, however, which ended in the wrong use of power in luxury and the oppression of the poor, was denounced by the contemporary prophets, especially Amos (**Amos 2:6–7; 8:4–6**); Isaiah (**Isaiah 3:18–26; 5:8–13**) and Micah (**Micah 2:2**). They saw the state's security as false (**Amos 6:1–8**) and behind it all an empty religious ritual (**Amos 5:21–24**).

#### **B. (:24) Summary Evaluation**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.”*

**Wiersbe:** He was not a good king when it came to spiritual matters, but he brought prosperity to the nation and delivered it from its enemies. Even back in those ancient days, the average citizen didn't care about the character of the nation's leaders so long as the people had food on their tables, money in their purses, and no fear of being invaded by their enemies.

#### **C. (:25-27) Significant Accomplishment by God's Grace**

##### 1. (:25) Security by the Hand of the Lord

*“He restored the border of Israel from the entrance of Hamath as far as the Sea of the Arabah, according to the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, which He spoke through His servant Jonah the son of Amittai, the prophet, who was of Gath-hepher.”*

##### 2. (:26) Compassion of the Lord

*“For the LORD saw the affliction of Israel, which was very bitter; for there was neither bond nor free, nor was there any helper for Israel.”*

**The Pulpit Commentary:** Apart from Jehovah, Israel had no one to come to her aid. Judah would not help her, for Judah had just suffered at her hands (**vers. 11-14**); still less would Philistia, or Moab, or Ammon, who were her constant enemies. Her isolation rendered her all the more an object for the Divine compassion.

##### 3. (:27) Mercy of the Lord

*“And the LORD did not say that He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, but He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh is still the same exodus God who sees the affliction of his people (**Exod. 3:7**). One senses that Israel might be on the verge of being wiped out but

that Yahweh is still loath to take them there.

Now then we see a corollary of our main point: **prosperity may be a sign of Yahweh's compassions but not of his commendation**. It is easy to misread signs. . .

Observe that **conventional formulas** dominate Jeroboam's entry. The only piece relating to Jeroboam's achievement is **verse 25a—verses 25b–27** explain why it was Jeroboam was able to achieve what he did. It was all due to **Yahweh's word** and **Yahweh's mercy**. These verses also need to temper our all too natural secularism. It is too easy for us to say that Jeroboam and Israel flourished because Assyria was in eclipse just then, and because Egypt was an international cipher at that time. Historicism would be happy with that but we should not be. Rather, those were the conditions in which Jeroboam prospered but **the cause of his prosperity was the merciful, sovereign Yahweh who directs the fortunes of the Assyrias and Egypts of this age**.

**R. D. Patterson:** In all this the faithfulness of God, despite Israel's unfaithfulness (cf. **Hos 2:2 – 3:5; 11:1 – 14:8; Amos 3:1-15**) is evident. Because Israel had fallen into such desperate spiritual conditions (**vv. 26-27**), a merciful God had acted on behalf of his people. As he had granted them deliverance from external pressures by sending Adad-Nirari III of Assyria against the Arameans (cf. **13:5, 22-23**) initiating a period of recovery under Jehoash (**13:25; 14:14-15**), so now in a grander way he culminated that deliverance with full victory over the Arameans, one that included Israel's recovery of its former boundaries (**vv. 27-28**).

When Jeroboam II died in 752 B.C., he left behind a strong kingdom but, unfortunately, one whose core foundation was so spiritually rotten that the edifice of state would not long withstand the rising tide of international intrigue and pressure.

#### **D. (:28-29) Overall Summary**

##### 1. (:28) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam and all that he did and his might, how he fought and how he recovered for Israel, Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

##### 2. (:29a) Death and Burial of Jeroboam

*“And Jeroboam slept with his fathers, even with the kings of Israel,”*

**John Bright:** With the death of Jeroboam ... the history of the northern state becomes a tale of unmitigated disaster. Her internal sickness erupting into the open, Israel found herself racked with anarchy at the very moment when she was called upon to face in resurgent Assyria the gravest threat of her entire history. Within twenty-five short years she had been erased from the map.



**Peter Pett:** And Jeroboam died peacefully and slept with his fathers, *‘even with the kings of Israel’*. Unusually there is no mention of where he was buried, which may help explain the phrase *‘even with the kings of Israel’* which in **2 Kings 13:14** indicated being buried in Samaria. This may have been because as YHWH’s saviour the author did not want to describe Jeroboam as ‘buried in Samaria’, which serve to suggest that he saw such a fate as being in total contrast to the privilege of being ‘buried in Jerusalem’. It indicated being buried in pagan ground.

### 3. (:29b) Succession

*“and Zechariah his son became king in his place.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why didn’t more kings follow in the pattern of King David whose heart was loyal to the Lord?
- 2) What would the impact of fulfilled prophecy be on the exiles who were the original audience for the Book of Kings?
- 3) What are some of the typical bad outcomes resulting from victory and prosperity?
- 4) How are you encouraged by the compassion and mercy and faithfulness of the Lord despite the persistent faithlessness of His people?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Peter Pett:** Jeroboam II succeeded Jehoash of Israel at a time when Israel’s fortunes were rising. The might of the powerful kingdom of Aram, with its satellites, to the north had been broken by the incursions of the kings of Assyria, who had, however, having destroyed the power of Aram, then necessarily turned elsewhere in order to deal with other threats on their northern borders coming from the growing power of Urartu. Thus Israel, having initially paid light tribute to Assyria under Jehoash, was left free to prosper and expand with little interference. And this it accordingly did. Indeed Jeroboam’s might was such that he expanded the power and influence of Israel over the countries to the north as far as Lebo-Hamath, and to the south in Transjordan as far as the sea of Arabah (the Dead Sea?), while at the same time remaining on good terms with Judah. It was a period of expansionism. This meant that the trade routes (e.g. the King’s Highway in Transjordan, the routes through the valley of Jezreel, the Negeb trade routes, and the port of Elath/Ezion-geber) which were so often a great bone of contention between rival kings in the area, were now mainly under the control of Israel and Judah, resulting in a subsequent rise in prosperity for both. But sadly, as so often,



prosperity did not lead to spiritual advancement, and thus in Israel especially, moral bankruptcy set in. The Laws of Moses, with their stern requirement of social justice, were being ignored, and the wealthy were making themselves even more wealthy by grinding down the righteous and the poor. Amos vividly summed it up in the words, “*they have sold the righteous for silver, and the needy for a pair of shoes*” (**Amos 2:6**). Thus to the prophetic author the reigns were not a success. Furthermore he could add from the spiritual angle, “*you gave the Nazirites (those who were dedicated to YHWH) wine to drink, and commanded the prophets saying, ‘prophesy not’.*” No wonder then that he glided over Israel’s ‘achievements’ at this time. It was because he recognised both their temporary nature and their resulting godlessness. In his view their attitudes were rather the result of their commitment to a form of syncretistic idolatry (especially so in the case of Israel, but also to a lesser extent in Judah) and the turning of their backs on YHWH’s covenant. Yet in spite of this he stressed that, despite their unbelief, YHWH had not as yet fully rejected them and had therefore come to their aid in spite of their lack of deserving. It was their last chance as a nation. If only they had responded, how different things might have been. But they did not respond and the opportunity was allowed to slip away.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I’m interested in what happens in the wake of these royal deaths. Things remain stable. In Israel, whose throne was no stranger to conspiracies and assassinations, the kingdom moved smoothly from Jehoash to Jeroboam II (v. 16b). In Judah, even with the upheaval of a conspiracy against Amaziah it never seemed to cross anyone’s mind to bring on a non-Davidic king. Azariah may be the hated Amaziah’s son, but he has been confirmed as king.

And of course we know that this political stability rests on divine promises. Yahweh had promised Jehu a four-generation dynasty (**10:30**); Jeroboam II is the fourth link in Jehu’s line. But Yahweh had promised David an unending dynasty (**2 Sam. 7:12–16**) and, in spite of a Judean conspiracy, Azariah is the current proof that that promise holds true. Just because obituaries seem dull we should not miss the point: Yahweh’s promises direct history, and, if there is order and stability in early eighth century Israel and Judah, it is because Yahweh’s promises rule.

Now the Jehu promise was temporary, as **2 Kings 15** will show. But the David promise is abiding and still controls history. Even when the Davidic king was unseated at the exile (**2 Kings 24–25**), the Davidic line went on and resurfaces in **Matthew 1** in Jesus who is called Messiah (**1:16**). He moves from ministry to crucifixion to resurrection to ascension to enthronement at the place of supreme authority and power in the universe (**Eph. 1:20–22**). And in its time that hidden reign will be visibly imposed and obvious to all (cf. **Rev. 11:15**).

**Mordecai Cogan:** The fate of Amaziah after his capture however, remains a riddle. The chronological data in **14:2, 23** and the unusual notation in v. 17—“*Amaziah ... lived fifteen years after the death of Jehoash*”—are commonly taken to mean that Azariah was placed on the throne while his father was prisoner in Samaria. There is no way, however, to know just how long he was kept there. Even more obscure are the

circumstances surrounding his assassination. The conspiracy originated in Jerusalem; but Amaziah escaped to Lachish, where he found no quarter and was killed. Who were the conspirators and what was their purpose? Had Amaziah attempted to regain the throne and remove Azariah from his regency? From the fact that Azariah is not reported to have avenged the blood of his father (contra. **14:5–6**), the conspirators may have been men of rank and of wide following; perhaps Azariah may have himself been implicated in the regicide. Nevertheless, slain Amaziah was returned to the capital and given a royal burial in the sepulcher of the Davidides.

**William Barnes:** This is, however, the last time we read such positive sentiments concerning the north or any of its kings. Although six northern kings are yet to be discussed, their history basically goes downhill from here. As Amos straightforwardly prophesied in reference to the future of King Jeroboam's nation: "*The people of Israel will certainly become captives in exile, far from their homeland*" (**Amos 7:17b**; cf. **Amos 7:10–11**). As will also be the case with Judah's King Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, a lengthy period of time on the throne may well come to represent something quite different than the clear blessing of God. Present successes can still lead to future disasters. Therefore, let us not lose sight of such sobering realities: In any era, a long and seemingly successful career, whether in politics, academia, or even ministry, may not necessarily indicate the unequivocal seal of God's approval on an individual or that individual's accomplishments. Maybe it is, after all, quite appropriate that we find here little discussion about the accomplishments of King Jeroboam II of Israel, but a fair amount about the love and faithfulness of his (and our) God.

**Robert Rayburn:** **Fundamental to any genuinely biblical world view is the effect that sin has upon human reasoning and the hardness of the human heart.**

The great new thing in the history reported in **2 Kings 14**, the so far unprecedented development is the **sacking of Jerusalem**, the city of the Lord, by an enemy. What we have here is a prolepsis, an anticipation of what would happen to Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Then not just a long section of the city wall but the entire thing would be torn down. The city would be burned. The temple not simply plundered but destroyed. Again and again in Kings the Lord warns his people of what must come if they will not return to him in faithfulness, if they will not repent, if they will not trust and obey. The warnings have been made repeatedly by the Lord's prophets repeating the warnings that were written down from the beginning in the covenant the Lord made with Israel. But not only were warnings repeatedly given.

Foretastes of judgments were also sent as still more powerful reminders of what the Lord had promised to do if his people did not repent. There were, in fact, warnings aplenty, if only anyone would heed them. But no one did then and few do today. It is the great mystery of sin that it blinds a man or woman to what ought to be perfectly obvious. Idolatry was not blessing Israel and Judah. It had diminished them dramatically. They were a pale shadow of what they had been under David and Solomon. Again and again they had suffered the consequences of their unfaithfulness to the Lord and again and again they refused to connect the dots.

And then, according to some prophet's word, the Lord would give them relief. Jehoash would succeed against Syria and Amaziah against Edom. But rather than draw the obvious conclusion, that the Lord had done this, prophesied it and brought it to pass, they took their victory as somehow proof that they were on the right track and should stay the course. Over and over again a spiritually minded and sensitive reader of Kings wants to wring these kings' necks. Here is Amaziah, as any reader of Kings would know, a man who had defeated Edom and then brought Edom's gods back to Jerusalem to worship. "Hello!"

Do you want to know why things go so wrong in the world? Why they so constantly and repeatedly go wrong? Well Kings provides the answer: it is the **obduracy of the human mind and heart**. There is something mysterious in the power of unbelief to blind a human being to the most obvious facts of life. We see this everywhere we look. The sexual revolution was a blunder of almost indescribable proportions and the evidence of its folly is everywhere we look. We see it in the horrific statistics – unwed mothers, children without fathers, sexually transmitted diseases, divorce, etc. – and in the experience of the lives of so many people that we know. The carnage this revolution has wrought is so obvious that it cannot be denied. But is anyone in our elite culture – the culture that is the equivalent to the royal court in those long ago days of Jehoash and Amaziah – is anyone proposing to admit that a terrible error has been made and we must correct it as quickly and as thoroughly as possible? Hardly! They can't wait to take the next step down that steep road that leads to the edge of that high cliff over which our society is preparing to hurl itself. This is the momentum of unbelief and it is the story of human life and you will never begin to make sense of the world you live in until you accept this fact. It is why God's grace must be sovereign, must be wielded by almighty power. Nothing less can break the grip of the lie on the human heart and mind.

TEXT: 2 Kings 15:1-38

TITLE: KINGDOM SANDWICH

**BIG IDEA:**

**UNSTABLE SUCCESSION OF KINGS IN ISRAEL SANDWICHED BETWEEN TWO RIGHTEOUS KINGS IN JUDAH SHOW THE CONTRAST BETWEEN NORTH AND SOUTH – YET CONSISTENT DECLINE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Here you have a kingdom sandwich = 5 wicked kings of Israel sandwiched between 2 somewhat righteous reigns in Judah. As both kingdoms continue to decline, there is less of a moral distinction between God's covenant people and the surrounding pagan nations. The transfer of power becomes the focus of much intrigue and treachery. Pride and selfish ambition fuel the lust for power as both Israel and Judah are viewed as justifiably headed for God's judgment.

**Wiersbe:** In this section of 2 Kings, we meet with five kings of Israel who were notorious for their godless character and evil deeds. Four of them were assassinated! Shallum reigned only one month, Zechariah six months, and Pekahiah for two years. Menahem, the cruelest of them all, reigned for ten years, and Pekah for twenty years. As the Northern Kingdom stumbled toward destruction, their rulers hastened the coming of the judgment of God.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Israel is in a race to ruin, running pell-mell to extinction. If civil stability is a divine gift (cf. **1 Tim. 2:1-2**), it has been withdrawn from Israel. Her own chaos is a sign that God is in the process of destroying her.

**I. (:1-7) AMAZIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints**

1. (:1a) When Did He Become King?

*"In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel,"*

2. (:1b) Who Was His Father?

*"Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah became king."*

**Wiersbe:** His given name was Azariah, which means "*Jehovah has helped*," but when he became king of Judah at age sixteen, he took the "throne name" Uzziah which means "*Jehovah is strength*." The people made him king when his father Amaziah was taken to Samaria after his foolish war against Jehoash, king of Israel (**2 Kings 14:13**).

3. (:2a) How Old Was He When He Became King?

*"He was sixteen years old when he became king,"*

4. (:2b) How Long Did He Reign?  
*“and he reigned fifty-two years”*

5. (:2c) Over Which Kingdom Did He Reign?  
*“in Jerusalem;”*

6. (:2d) Who Was His Mother?  
*“and his mother's name was Jecoliah of Jerusalem.”*

## **B. (:3-5) Moral Evaluation of His Reign**

1. (:3) Summary Evaluation  
*“And he did right in the sight of the LORD,  
according to all that his father Amaziah had done.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Jerusalem was fortified and given modern defence artillery with the army reorganized and re-equipped. Economically all was well, but when Uzziah became famous and very powerful his pride led to unfaithfulness and to his fall (**2 Chr. 26:8, 15–16**). Yet at the very time of his death the Lord called Isaiah to an initial or new vision of himself (**Isa. 6:1; John 12:41**).

2. (:4) Blemish on His Record  
*“Only the high places were not taken away;  
the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”*

3. (:5) Divine Discipline  
*“And the LORD struck the king, so that he was a leper to the day of his death. And he lived in a separate house, while Jotham the king's son was over the household, judging the people of the land.”*

**MacArthur:** Azariah suffered from leprosy as punishment for usurping the priestly function of burning incense on the altar in the temple.

**Peter Pett:** His reign is summed up in terms of his wrong attitude towards YHWH, as is evidenced by the fact that YHWH smote him with skin disease. As with Naaman this was not true leprosy (Naaman had been able to continue serving the king and even to be present in the house of Rimmon), and it only happened in the latter years of his reign. He was not totally excluded from society. But it was sufficient to exclude him from entering the Temple of YHWH, and from taking his part in the worship there, and thus from fulfilling all his functions as the king. It also resulted in his living apart from the palace in his own separate house, because his presence in the palace, which was connected with the Temple, would have rendered the palace ritually ‘unclean’ and have tainted the Temple. (Compare how the skin-diseased had to live outside the camp in **Leviticus 13:46**). And his son Jotham took over the king’s household (in other words the court and its authority) and the general rulership of the ‘people of the land’.

### C. (:6-7) Overall Summary of His Reign

#### 1. (:6) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Azariah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

**Constable:** Azariah was one of Judah's most popular, effective, and influential kings. He expanded Judah's territories, fortified several Judean cities, including Jerusalem, and reorganized the army (v. 22; cf. **2 Chron. 26:6-14**). The combined territories over which he and Jeroboam II exercised control approximated those of David and Solomon.

**David Guzik:** **2 Chronicles 26** tells us much more about the successful reign of Uzziah (Azariah):

- He began his reign when he was only 16 years old (**2 Chronicles 26:3**).
- He reigned during the ministry of Zechariah the prophet (**2 Chronicles 26:5**).
- He defeated the Philistines and took many of their cities, and also kept the Ammonites in tribute (**2 Chronicles 26:6-8**).
- He was internationally famous as a strong king (**2 Chronicles 26:8**).
- He was an ambitious builder and skilled in agriculture (**2 Chronicles 26:9-10**).  
“He probably gave special attention to the tillage of the soil because of the prophecies of Hosea and Amos concerning the scarcity about to come. (See **Hosea 2:9; 4:3; 9:2; Amos 1:2; 4:6-9; 5:16-19**).” (**Knapp**)
- He built up and organized the army, introducing several new items of military technology (**2 Chronicles 26:11-15**).

#### 2. (:7a) Death and Burial

*“And Azariah slept with his fathers, and they buried him with his fathers in the city of David,”*

**Wiersbe:** A good beginning is no guarantee of a successful ending, and the sin of unholy ambition has ruined more than one servant of the Lord. Uzziah the soldier was defeated by his pride; Uzziah the builder destroyed his own ministry and testimony; and Uzziah the farmer reaped the painful harvest of what he had sown. He is a warning to all who nurture unholy ambitions to intrude into that which God hasn't appointed for them.

#### 3. (:7b) Succession

*“and Jotham his son became king in his place.”*

**Paul House:** Judah could not have realized it at this time, but the nation has enjoyed one of its last peaceful periods. Except for a few years in Josiah's reign (640–609 B.C.), the people will now always be at the mercy of some other nation, or at least under constant pressure from some external force. It will indeed take longer for Judah to fall, but fall it will. Again the respite is over.

Events now move swiftly, and none of them are kind to Israel. At just the moment that Assyria becomes a belligerent, conquering nation, Israel suffers through a succession of

weak kings who come to power usually through intrigue and assassination. Of course, the author does not view these events as simply bad luck and poor timing. God is at work, punishing the sins of a stubborn people. Two hundred years of rebellion will soon be judged.

## **II. (:8-16) ZECHARIAH'S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

### **A. (:8) Selective Touchpoints**

#### 1. When Did He Become King?

*"In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah king of Judah,"*

#### 2. Who Was His Father?

*"Zechariah the son of Jeroboam"*

#### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*"became king over Israel in Samaria"*

#### 4. How Long Did He Reign?

*"for six months."*

### **B. (:9) Summary Evaluation**

*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as his fathers had done; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin."*

**Constable:** "Zechariah" ("Yahweh Remembers") reigned only six months (753-752 B.C.) before his successor Shallum assassinated him. Zechariah was the fifth and last king of Jehu's dynasty (v. 12; cf. 10:30). The fact that the people made Shallum king after he killed Zechariah suggests that Zechariah was not popular.

"Zechariah's reign also is noteworthy in that it begins an era of **intrigue**. Shallum becomes the first person of this current era to come to power through conspiracy and assassination." -- **House**

"The death of this last king of the dynasty of Jehu (v. 12) saw the end of the Northern Kingdom proper. In the last twenty years six rulers were to follow each other, but only one was to die naturally. Anarchy, rivalry and regicide led to terminal bloodshed which fulfilled Hosea's prophecies (1:4)." - **Wiseman**

### **C. (:10) Death and Succession**

*"Then Shallum the son of Jabesh conspired against him and struck him before the people and killed him, and reigned in his place."*

**MacArthur:** Assyrian records call Shallum "the son of nobody," indicating that he was not from the royal family.

### **D. (:11) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Zechariah, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.”*

**E. (:12) Fulfilled Prophecy**

*“This is the word of the LORD which He spoke to Jehu, saying, ‘Your sons to the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.’ And so it was.”*

**III. (:13-15) SHALLUM’S BRIEF EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:13) Selective Touchpoints**

1. Who Was His Father?

*“Shallum son of Jabesh”*

**Jerry Thrower:** SHALLUM’S name means recompense, retribution, or spoilation. Well, he was recompensed by receiving what he dished out! (i.e. A takeover by assassination)

2. When Did He Reign?

*“became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah,”*

3. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned one month”*

4. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*“in Samaria.”*

**B. (:14) Death and Succession**

*“Then Menahem son of Gadi went up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and struck Shallum son of Jabesh in Samaria, and killed him and became king in his place.”*

**John Schultz:** The rapid successions on the throne of Israel and the violence that accompanied them indicate in what state of anarchy the nation had fallen. All this was the result of the fact that they had abandoned the true worship of YHWH. The Book of Proverbs states: *“Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint; but blessed is he who keeps the law.”*

**C. (:15) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Shallum and his conspiracy which he made, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.”*

**IV. (:16-22) MENAHEM’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:16) Defining Atrocity**

*“Then Menahem struck Tiphshah and all who were in it and its borders from Tirzah, because they did not open to him, therefore he struck it; and he ripped up all its women who were with child.”*



**Constable:** As the history of Israel unfolds, the reader cannot help noticing how the kings increasingly behaved as their Gentile neighbors, who had no special regard for God's Law.

**Peter Pett:** It would appear that Tiphsach was Shallum's power base. Thus when Shallum took the throne after assassinating Zechariah without popular support, not only was he killed by Menahem in his turn but Tiphsach, which refused to yield and surrender to Menahem, was put to the sword, and every man, woman and child killed. Menhem is thus revealed as a man without mercy. The reference to the resistance of Tiphsach may suggest that that was where Shallum's sons had holed up. But the fact that Menahem received the kingship suggests either that he was acting with the support of the people of the land, or that he was a powerful military commander with great influence in the army, or indeed both. Shallum clearly had little support. He was simply an opportunist. Apart from this we know nothing of either man.

**Wiseman:** The action by Menahem against the inhabitants of Tiphseh is unparalleled for brutality by any Israelite. Here it may mark the increasing influence of the surrounding nations. It was a foreign practice inflicted on the Israelites themselves by Aram (2 Kings 8:12), Ammon (Amos 1:13) and Assyria (Hosea 13:8).

#### **B. (:17) Selected Touchpoints**

##### 1. When Did He Become King?

*"In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah,"*

##### 2. Who Was His Father?

*"Menahem son of Gadi"*

**Jerry Thrower:** Now, MENAHEM'S name means "comforter". Of course he wasn't much of a comforter to SHALLUM! And he wasn't much of a comforter to some of the people of ISRAEL!

##### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*"became king over Israel"*

##### 5.. How Long Did He Reign?

*"and reigned ten years in Samaria."*

#### **C. (:18) Summary Evaluation**

*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin."*

#### **D. (:19-20) Paying Off Assyria**

*"Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land, and Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver so that his hand might be with him to strengthen the kingdom under his rule. 20 Then Menahem exacted the money from Israel, even from all*

*the mighty men of wealth, from each man fifty shekels of silver to pay the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria returned and did not remain there in the land.”*

**E. (:21) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Menahem and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

**F. (:22) Death and Succession**

*“And Menahem slept with his fathers, and Pekahiah his son became king in his place.”*

**V. (:23-26) PEKAHIAH’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:23) Selected Touchpoints**

1. When Did He Become King?

*“In the fiftieth year of Azariah king of Judah,”*

2. Who Was His Father

*“Pekahiah son of Menahem”*

3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule?

*“became king over Israel in Samaria,”*

4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned two years.”*

**B. (:24) Summary Evaluation**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.”*

**C. (:25) Death and Succession**

*“Then Pekah son of Remaliah, his officer, conspired against him and struck him in Samaria, in the castle of the king's house with Argob and Arieah; and with him were fifty men of the Gileadites, and he killed him and became king in his place.”*

**Peter Pett:** Pekahiah (*‘YHWH is open eyed’*) succeeded his father, but it was as king of a country seething with discontent at having had to pay tribute to Assyria. Few in Israel actually really knew what they were now dealing with. To most the kings of Assyria were simply booty seeking kings who came and went (as they had done in the past), similar, for example, to the kings of Aram. The vision of a powerful country which exceeded the strength of all the surrounding nations put together and was building a great empire was outside their conception. Thus when Pekahiah came to the throne, and had presumably indicated that he would continue his father’s policy of submission to Assyria, it was inevitable that there would be a reaction. And that reaction took the form of his deputy who had been ruling on Menahem’s behalf in Gilead (or had set up a

rival kingship in Gilead). He also was named Pekahiah, and therefore Pekah for short, (or took the name on becoming king), and he was himself anti-appeasement. He assassinated Pekahiah in Samaria, and took over the throne, presumably with the consent of most of Israel who favoured the anti-appeasement policy. They would learn their lesson too late.

#### **D. (:26) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Pekahiah and all that he did, behold they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.”*

### **VI. (:27-31) PEKAH’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

#### **A. (:27) Selected Touchpoints**

##### 1. When Did He Become King?

*“In the fifty-second year of Azariah king of Judah,”*

##### 2. Who Was His Father?

*“Pekah son of Remaliah”*

**Jerry Thrower:** Though PEKAH’S name means “opening of the eyes” or “watchfulness”, he was just as spiritually blinded as all the kings of ISRAEL before him!

##### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Ruler Over?

*“became king over Israel in Samaria,”*

##### 4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned twenty years.”*

#### **B. (:28) Summary Evaluation**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he made Israel sin.”*

#### **C. (:29) Assyrian Conquests and Captivity**

*“In the days of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria came and captured Ijon and Abel-beth-maacah and Janoah and Kedesh and Hazor and Gilead and Galilee, all the land of Naphtali; and he carried them captive to Assyria.”*

**Constable:** Part of Pekah's reason for opposing Menahem seems to have been a difference in foreign policy. Menahem was willing to submit to Assyrian control (vv. 19-20). Pekah evidently favored a harder line of resistance since he made a treaty with Rezin, the king of Damascus, against Assyria. This resulted in Tiglath-Pileser invading Israel, along with Philistia and Aram, in 734-732 B.C. (**2 Chron. 28:5-8**). He captured much of Israel's territory (v. 29) and deported many Israelites to Assyria about 733 B.C.

"This was to be the beginning of the elimination of Israel as an independent state." -- **Wiseman**

Israel's defeat encouraged Hoshea to assassinate Pekah and succeed him in 732 B.C. Tiglath-Pileser claimed to have had a hand in setting Hoshea on Israel's throne. Obviously Assyria was in control of affairs in Israel at this time.

**John Schultz:** Quoting **Donald J. Wiseman**: "The Assyrians moved west up the valley to Kedesh ... and to Janoah ... thus cutting northern Israel off from possible Aramean aid. So all Galilee and Gilead were now lost and Israel was pressed back into the 'Ephraim' hill country. . . This first reference to the practice of removing leaders and selected experts into exile shows that the next step had now been taken towards making Israel a vassal-state. Some action had provoked the Assyrian Tiglath-pileser III who records 'From Israel (Bît Humria) ... I led off its inhabitants and possessions to Assyria' ... Deportation served as a punishment to rebels, weakening possible centers of resistance, as well as warning of exile for continuing offenders. It was to be expected as a punishment for any deviation from a covenant-treaty made with the Assyrians or Babylonians."

#### **D. (:30) Death and Succession**

*"And Hoshea the son of Elah made a conspiracy against Pekah the son of Remaliah, and struck him and put him to death and became king in his place, in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah."*

#### **E. (:31) Recorded Deeds**

*"Now the rest of the acts of Pekah and all that he did, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel."*

**Paul House:** Israel cannot afford many more political miscalculations. Alternating appeasement of, then rebellion against, Assyria simply does not work. Poor leadership, coupled with spiritual and social decline, is proving a deadly combination. As **Bright** says, "Only uncommon wisdom could possibly have saved Israel in this desperate predicament, if indeed anything could have. But instead of exhibiting wisdom, her leaders manifested a complete inability to assess the realities of the situation." Tiglath-Pileser III seems to understand the situation, though, so Israel is in deep trouble.

Judah's ultimate downfall only occurs more slowly than Israel's because its kings adopt a consistently pro-Assyrian policy. Otherwise, it is safe to say that Judah is weaker than Israel, almost as corrupt, and certainly no wiser than the Northern Kingdom. Its leaders fail to grasp the importance of covenant faithfulness. Though destruction comes later, the seeds of that devastation are sown as much in this era as in the decades that follow.

### **VII. (:32-38) JOTHAM'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

#### **A. (:32-33) Selected Touchpoints**

##### 1. When Did He Become King?

*“In the second year of Pekah the son of Remaliah king of Israel,”*

2. Who Was His Father?

*“Jotham the son of Uzziah king of Judah became king.”*

3. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*“He was twenty-five years old when he became king,”*

4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned sixteen years”*

5. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

6. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother's name was Jerusha the daughter of Zadok.”*

**B. (:34-35) Moral Evaluation**

1. (:34) Summary Positive Evaluation

*“And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD;  
he did according to all that his father Uzziah had done.”*

2. (:35a) Negative Caveat

*“Only the high places were not taken away;  
the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”*

3. (:35b) Significant Accomplishment

*“He built the upper gate of the house of the LORD.”*

**Peter Pett:** Jotham was in fact an effective king (see **2 Chronicles 27:1-9**), however, the sole achievement mentioned by the prophetic author connected with his reign is that of repairing one of the Temple gateways, which demonstrated his concern for YHWH. To the author only what we do for God counts for anything.

**C. (:36) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jotham and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

**Wiersbe:** Like his father, Uzziah, Jotham was both a builder and a warrior. He repaired the walls of Jerusalem and the Upper Gate of the temple. He also built cities in the Judean mountains and fortresses and towers in the wooded areas. His army confronted the armies of Israel and Syria, and he won a great victory over the Ammonites and put them under a very heavy annual tribute.

**William Barnes:** King Jotham is a sort of “placeholder,” a “Zechariah of the south,” as it were, a nondescript loop in the chain of Davidic kings linking the lengthy and mostly

positive reign of his father Uzziah to the relatively short and mostly disastrous reign of his son Ahaz. But not all of the present description of Jotham's reign is so colorless. As already noted, **15:37** gives us the unsettling indication that something new is on the horizon. God is again at work, and as Isaiah put it (in reference to events not far from that time), God's work may well be characterized as "*a strange thing*" and "*an unusual deed*" (see **Isa 28:21–22**). So it is here. For it was certainly God's prerogative, and evidently it was God's plan, to send the two infamous kings (both usurpers?), Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel, against his own people in Judah—and for reasons which seem clear only to him. We will have to wait for the Ahaz passage, and its parallels in Chronicles and Isaiah, to find out more. King Jotham remains, for the moment, the calm before the storm (cf. **Isa 8:5–10**). Placeholders do have their rightful place in the Kingdom of God.

#### **D. (:37) Attacks from Foreign Adversaries = Instruments of Divine Judgment**

*"In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah against Judah."*

**Peter Pett:** Apart from the building work carried out on the Temple the most notable feature of his reign from the author's point of view was that YHWH demonstrated His discontent with the spiritual condition of Judah by sending against them Rezin the king of Aram and Pekah the son of Remaliah, the king of Israel. As we have already seen this was because they wanted to pressurise Judah into joining an alliance against the king of Assyria by establishing a puppet king over them, but the author recognised in it the hand of YHWH. It was a sign that He did not see all as right with Judah. Jotham died before their action began in earnest (*'they began to --'*). It was his son Ahaz therefore who would bear the full brunt of the attack.

#### **E. (:38) Death, Burial and Succession**

*"And Jotham slept with his fathers, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Ahaz his son became king in his place."*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why are the accounts of these kings so brief?
- 2) Where do you see fulfilled prophecy in the events described here?
- 3) How would you interpret the symbolic impact of the skin disease of Uzziah?
- 4) What was the significance of the type of brutality exacted by Menahem?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**R. D. Patterson:** Counting his coregencies, Azariah ruled some fifty-two years. Several reasons may be found for such a lengthy reign besides the longevity of the king.

- First, Israel's perennial enemy, Assyria, was in a state of severe decline. After the death of the vigorous king Adad-Nirari III (810-783), Assyria was ruled by three weak kings – Shalmaneser IV (782-774), Assur Dan III (773-756), and Assur Nirari V (755-746) – who strove desperately to maintain themselves against the advance of their hostile northern neighbors, Urartu, and campaigned mainly to the south and east. Moreover Assyria was rocked internally by plagues in 765 and 759 and by internal revolts (763-759).
- Second, relations between Jeroboam II of Israel and Azariah remained cordial so that together the two nations were able eventually to acquire nearly the same territorial dimension as in the days of the united monarchy. Indeed the Chronicler makes it clear that the era of the early eighth century B.C. was one of great expansion militarily, administratively, commercially, and economically, a period whose prosperity was second only to that of Solomon (2 Chron 26:1-15).
- Third, and more basically, Azariah was noted as a man who utilized well the spiritual heritage that he had gained from his father (v. 3; cf. 2 Chron 26:4-5). Accordingly God's abundant blessing was shed on him (2 Chron 26:6-15) so that his fame spread throughout the Near Eastern world (2 Chron 26:8, 15).

**Caleb Nelson:** **Violated Bodies, Violated Boundaries: Fast-Forward to Destruction**

**Proposition:** God's righteous judgment on His own people is symbolized and enacted in the violation of political, social, and bodily boundaries.

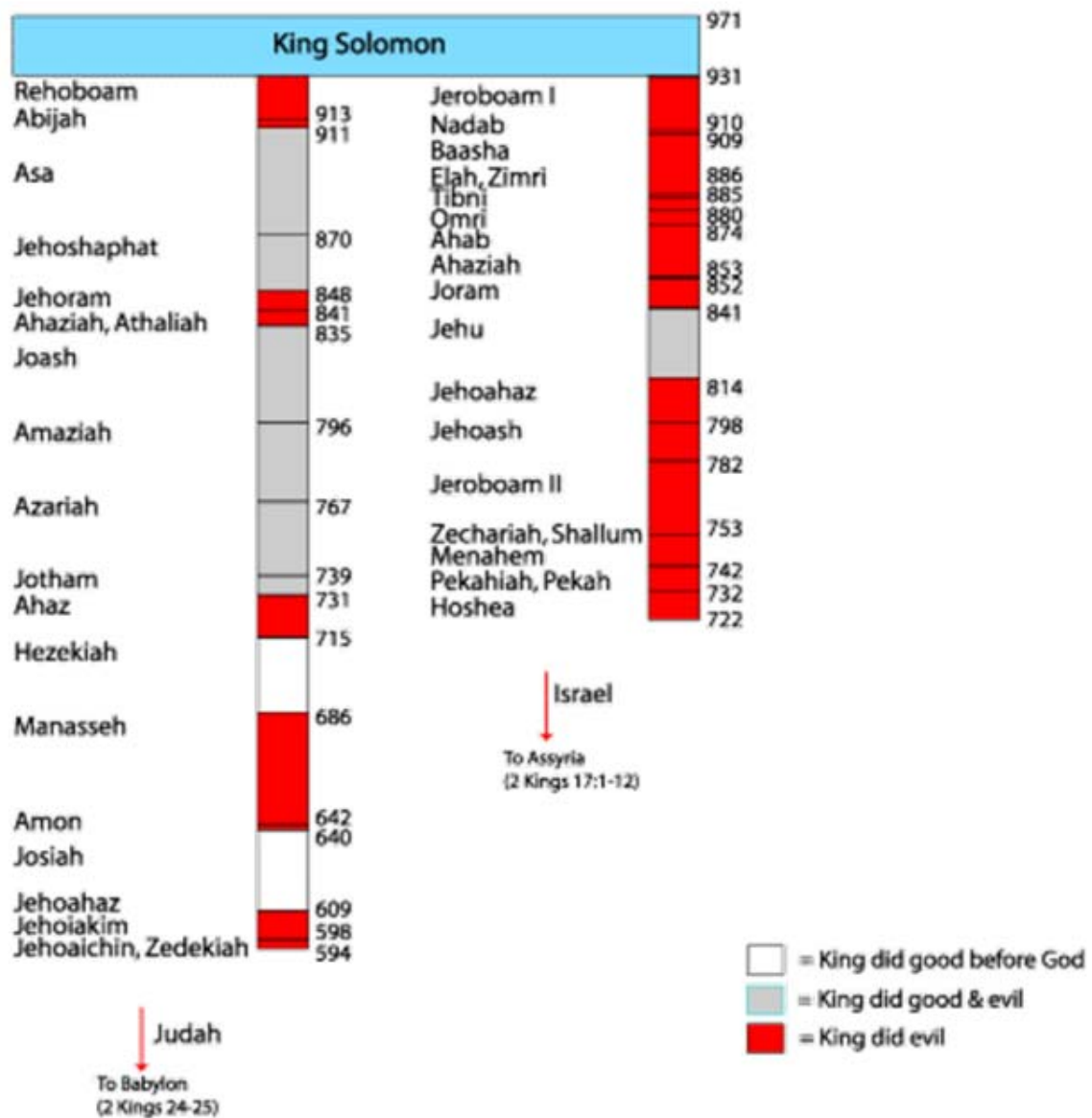
### Outline

- I. Uzziah: The Leprous Rot Comes to Judah, vv. 1-7
- II. Zechariah: Jehu's Line Cut Off, vv. 8-12
- III. Shallum: Hastening on to Destruction, vv. 13-15
- IV. Menahem: Violator of Bodies and the Body Politic, vv. 16-22
- V. Pekahiah: A Dynasty Soars — and Crashes, vv. 23-26
- VI. Pekah: Invasion and Exile Comes to Israel, vv. 27-31
- VII. Jotham: Builds God's Gate while God Violates His Borders, vv. 32-38

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/116181237451.pdf>

Jeremiah Cochran:

## THE KINGS OF ISRAEL & JUDAH



<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/8132005121089.pdf>

Larry Yeager: Israel's Demise -- From Monarchy to Anarchy (2 Kings 15:8-31)

A. Jehu's legacy ends

1. Jeroboam II reigns 41 years – never forsakes the sins of Jeroboam I



2. Zechariah succeeds his father – Jehu's fourth generation – lasts only 6 months  
- Assassinated

B. A dramatic downward spiral

1. Shallum – 1 month  
- Assassinated
2. Menahem – 10 years
  - a. Ruthless treatment of those who questioned his authority (16)
  - b. He needs the help of Pul (Tiglath-Pileser) to maintain his power (19)
3. Pekahiah, Menahem's son – 2 years (23)
4. Pekah – 20 years - Plagued with the rising power of Assyria  
- Assassinated
5. Hoshea – 9 years from Samaria (for not much else is left to Israel)

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/8152021525178.pdf>

TEXT: 2 Kings 16:1-20

TITLE: AHAZ'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH

**BIG IDEA:**

**WHEN LEADERS GOVERN BY COMPROMISE INSTEAD OF CONVICTION  
THE SHORT TERM GAINS WILL BE WIPED OUT BY DIVINE JUDGMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Ahaz proves to be the master of compromise and religious syncretism. He relies on powerful foreign governments like Assyria instead of turning to the Lord alone for deliverance. He makes deals that may bring some immediate relief but pave the way for long term disaster. He fails to maintain the uniqueness of covenant faithfulness and the revealed form of worship and instead tacks on pagan religious elements. He puts the nation of Judah on a downward course to defeat and captivity.

**R. D. Patterson:** The account of Ahaz's wicked reign . . . centers around three main subjects:

- (1) his character (vv. 1-4),
- (2) his war with Rezin and Pekah (vv. 5-9), and
- (3) his further apostasy as consequence of his reliance on Tiglath-pileser III (vv. 10-18).

God was superintending the whole complex undertaking. He would deal with an apostate Israel (cf. 17:5-18; 18:11-12), thwart the satanically inspired plans against the house of Israel by bringing defeat to Rezin and Pekah (Isa 7:5-16), and bring chastisement to a spiritually bankrupt Ahaz (2 Chron 28:5, 19).

**Peter Pett:** Ahaz came to the throne of Judah as sole ruler at a crucial time in Judah's history. Never before in that history had they faced the challenge of becoming permanently subservient to a large Empire whose requirements would include the placing of their gods in the Temple of YHWH. But as Ahaz faced up to the invasion of Judah by Israel and Aram, who were seeking to depose him and set up a puppet king, probably because of Jotham and Ahaz's refusal to join in an alliance with them against Assyria, he found himself in a great quandary. As the son of David should he look to YHWH alone for protection, and trust Him for deliverance, or should he bastardise that sonship and submit to the king of Assyria as his 'father', and call on his assistance, with the inevitable result that he would become his vassal, along with all the consequences that would follow from that?

**I. (:1-4) MORAL COMPROMISE**

**A. (:1-2a) Selected Touchpoints**

**1. When Did He Become King?**

*"In the seventeenth year of Pekah the son of Remaliah,"*

2. Who Was His Father?

*“Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king.”*

**Peter Pett:** The full name of Ahaz was Jeho-ahaz. It may be that his behaviour was seen as so abominable that the name of YHWH was dropped from his name. In an Assyrian list of kings who paid tribute to Assyria he was named as Ya-u-ha-zi of Ya-u-da-aia. But it may even be that Ahaz chose to drop the name of YHWH from his name himself when he became an apostate. The discovery of a seal bearing the inscription, ‘Ashan, official of Ahaz’ would appear to confirm the use of the shorter name officially.

3. How Old Was He When He Became King?

*“Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king,”*

4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned sixteen years”*

5. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

**B. (:2b-4) Moral Evaluation**

1. (:2b-3a) Summary Evaluation

*“and he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David had done. 3 But he walked in the way of the kings of Israel,”*

2. (:3b) Shocking Act of Abomination

*“and even made his son pass through the fire, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had driven out from before the sons of Israel.”*

**MacArthur:** As a part of the ritual worship of Molech, the god of the Moabites, children were sacrificed by fire (cf. **3:27**). This horrific practice was continually condemned in the OT (**Lv 18:21; 20:2-5; Dt 18:10; Jer 7:31; 19:5; 32:35**).

3. (:4) Systemic Idolatry

*“And he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places and on the hills and under every green tree.”*

**MacArthur:** Ahaz was the first king in the line of David since Solomon who was said to have personally worshiped at the high places. While all the other kings of Judah had tolerated the high places, Ahaz actively participated in the immoral Canaanite practices that were performed at the “*high places*” on hilltops under large trees (cf. **Hos 4:13**).

## II. (:5-9) POLITICAL COMPROMISE

### A. (:5-6) Resistance to Anti-Assyrian Alliance

#### 1. (:5) Siege Against Jerusalem

*“Then Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to wage war; and they besieged Ahaz, but could not overcome him.”*

**MacArthur:** The kings of Syria and Israel wanted to overthrow Ahaz in order to force Judah into their anti-Assyrian coalition. The two kings with their armies besieged Jerusalem, seeking to replace Ahaz with their own king (cf. **Is 7:1-6**). The Lord delivered Judah and Ahaz from the threat because of His promise to David (cf. **Is 7:7-16**).

#### 2. (:6) Seizing Control of Elath

*“At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram, and cleared the Judeans out of Elath entirely; and the Arameans came to Elath, and have lived there to this day.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And there was bad economic news: Rezin recovered the port of Elath (restored to Judah by Azariah, **14:22**), cleared out the Judeans there, and, apparently left it for Edomites to resettle (v. 6). Elath (on the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea) sat at the terminus of two important land routes (one of which was the King’s Highway running through Transjordan all the way north to Damascus) and as a port offered links to Arabia, Africa, and even India.

**Mordecai Cogan:** Finally, the chronological significance of the phrase *‘ad hayyôm hazzeh*, “until this day,” should not be overlooked. It occurs three times in Kings in territorial contexts:

**2 Kgs 8:22**—“So Edom has rebelled against the authority of Judah until this day.”

**2 Kgs 14:7**—“He defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and he captured Sela in battle, and named it Joktheel (as it is called) until this day.”

**2 Kgs 16:6**—“Edomites came to Elath and settled there until this day.”

The common denominator in these three verses is their topic: Judahite-Edomite relations.

### B. (:7-9) Reliance on Assyria

#### 1. (:7) Plea for Help

*“So Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, saying, ‘I am your servant and your son; come up and deliver me from the hand of the king of Aram, and from the hand of the king of Israel, who are rising up against me.’”*

**Peter Pett:** Ahaz recognised that he was in desperate straits, and as the Book of Isaiah reveals, he was torn three ways. Some called on him to join the anti-Assyrian alliance with Aram and Israel, others called on him to submit to the king of Assyria as his vassal thus obtaining his aid, and still others, no doubt partly influenced by Isaiah, called on him to look to YHWH alone for help. The full story can be found in **Isaiah 7** onwards. But Ahaz, in spite of an unprecedented offer from YHWH, would choose to submit himself to the king of Assyria and therefore sent messengers offering his submission, promising tribute, and calling for his assistance.

**August Konkel:** The historian portrays Ahaz as voluntarily submitting to the Assyrian yoke, a grievous misdeed in addition to his promoting idolatry in the high places.

## 2. (:8) Present of Silver and Gold

*“And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a present to the king of Assyria.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Ahaz is in deep trouble and appeals for help—to Assyria (vv. 7–8). He acts not as a covenant believer but as a shrewd politician. Ahaz sells his birthright at the very first: *‘I am your servant and your son’* (v. 7a). I’ve a note here in my old study Bible to 2 Samuel 7:14, which says that the Davidic king will be Yahweh’s ‘son.’ Ahaz repudiates the Davidic covenant as he licks Tiglath-pileser’s boots. He wants to accept the Assyrians as his personal savior—*‘Come up and save me from the grip of the king of Syria and from the grip of the king of Israel who are attacking me’* (v. 7b). And, as usual in politics, a handsome bribe (v. 8) buys salvation (v. 9). It may have been blatant unbelief but it was successful policy; he may repudiate the Davidic covenant but he saves his own skin.

Ahaz could have put his attitude in verse (sung to the tune Gordon/Caritas = ‘My Jesus, I Love Thee’):

*My Tig, I bribe thee, you know I’m your man;  
for thee Yahweh’s promises I view as mere sand.  
You mighty oppressor, my savior art thou,  
if ever I needed you, dear Tiglath, ’tis now.*

## 3. (:9) Petition Answered with Powerful Deliverance

*“So the king of Assyria listened to him; and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it, and carried the people of it away into exile to Kir, and put Rezin to death.”*

# **III. (:10-18) RELIGIOUS COMPROMISE**

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Structure of vv. 10-18

- The new altar: vv. 10–11

- The new arrangements: vv. 12–14
- The new regulations: vv. 15–16
- The new rationale: vv. 17–18

#### A. (:10-11) Mimicking the Pagan Altar

*“Now King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser king of Assyria, and saw the altar which was at Damascus; and King Ahaz sent to Urijah the priest the pattern of the altar and its model, according to all its workmanship. 11 So Urijah the priest built an altar; according to all that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus, thus Urijah the priest made it, before the coming of King Ahaz from Damascus.”*

**MacArthur:** When Ahaz traveled to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser III, he saw a large altar (v. 15) which was most likely Assyrian. Ahaz sent a sketch of this altar to Urijah the High-Priest in Jerusalem and Urijah built an altar just like it. The serious iniquity in this was meddling with and changing, according to personal taste, the furnishings of the temple, the design for which had been given by God (Ex 25:40; 26:30; 27:1-8; 1 Ch 28:19). This was like building an idol in the temple, done to please the pagan Assyrian king, whom Ahaz served instead of God.

**Paul House:** Readers could hardly miss the similarities between Jeroboam, the father of institutionalized idolatry in Israel, and Ahaz, the Judahite king who makes polytheism acceptable nationwide.

#### B. (:12-14) Making the New Altar Primary while Relegating the Bronze Altar to a Subordinate Position

*“And when the king came from Damascus, the king saw the altar; then the king approached the altar and went up to it, 13 and burned his burnt offering and his meal offering, and poured his libation and sprinkled the blood of his peace offerings on the altar. 14 And the bronze altar, which was before the LORD, he brought from the front of the house, from between his altar and the house of the LORD, and he put it on the north side of his altar.”*

#### C. (:15-16) Mandating Public Role for the Pagan Altar and Private Role for the Bronze Altar

*“Then King Ahaz commanded Urijah the priest, saying, ‘Upon the great altar burn the morning burnt offering and the evening meal offering and the king's burnt offering and his meal offering, with the burnt offering of all the people of the land and their meal offering and their libations; and sprinkle on it all the blood of the burnt offering and all the blood of the sacrifice. But the bronze altar shall be for me to inquire by.’ 16 So Urijah the priest did according to all that King Ahaz commanded.”*

**Peter Pett:** What followed was unquestionably a bastardization of the Temple. The ‘true’ altar of YHWH was replaced with one based on a foreign pattern, and the

offerings made on that altar would partly be to the gods of Assyria and partly to YHWH (possibly often both at the same time in the eyes of different worshippers). The Temple had thus become similar to the syncretistic sanctuaries at Dan and Bethel. This was further confirmed by the fact that the Temple ceased to be the royal chapel, with the special passageway leading from the palace to the Temple being closed, in recognition of the new situation whereby the Temple was now under the sovereignty of Assyria. Furthermore, the altar of YHWH became Ahaz's own altar for the purposes of divination, and all signs of the special relationship of YHWH with Judah, indicating His rule over the twelve tribes, such as the twelve oxen under the molten sea, and the lions, oxen and cherubim on the plates covering the laver stands, were removed. Judah was now to be seen as wholly subservient to Assyria in both its worship and its rule. It was not that the Assyrians sought to interfere with the local gods of their vassals, they simply required that the gods of Assyria be acknowledged as well, and that Assyria be pre-eminent. But Ahaz took it further than required. . .

We can almost hear the scandalised note in the author's voice as he explains that the High Priest made no objection to all this, but carried out all the instructions of Ahaz. He did not seek to defend the purity of Yahwism in any way. He took the way of compromise. Such was the situation in Yahwism at that time. (And this would be in the face of Isaiah's protests).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** evil is helped by **weakness** as much as by **wickedness** (vv. 10–11, 15–16). This implication depends on a particular view of Uriah (or Urijah) the priest as our writer portrays him. 'Uriah the priest' is mentioned five times (vv. 10, 11 [twice], 15, 16), and he does whatever King Ahaz tells him to do (vv. 11, 16). He raises no protests, he takes no stand. Whatever Ahaz commands, Uriah does.

#### **D. (:17-18) Major Revisions to the Temple in Jerusalem**

##### 1. (:17a) Changes to the Stands and the Laver

*"Then King Ahaz cut off the borders of the stands, and removed the laver from them;"*

##### 2. (:17b) Changes to the Molten Sea

*"he also took down the sea from the bronze oxen which were under it, and put it on a pavement of stone."*

##### 3. (:18) Changes to the Entry Ways

*"And the covered way for the sabbath which they had built in the house, and the outer entry of the king, he removed from the house of the LORD because of the king of Assyria."*

#### **IV. (:19-20) OVERALL SUMMARY OF HIS REIGN**

##### **A. (:19) Recorded Deeds**

*"Now the rest of the acts of Ahaz which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"*

**B. (:20a) Death and Burial**

*“So Ahaz slept with his fathers,  
and was buried with his fathers in the city of David;”*

**C. (:20b) Succession**

*“and his son Hezekiah reigned in his place.”*

**Paul House:** When Ahaz dies about 715 B.C., he is succeeded by Hezekiah, his son. He leaves a legacy of appeasement and syncretism unmatched to this time. Assyria can count on him for money, loyalty, and zealous acceptance of their gods. Judah's king seems genuinely pleased to serve a powerful master who can deliver him from regional foes. No doubt he feels safe, but the historian duly notes the ways in which he has exceeded Jeroboam's wickedness. If Jeroboam's practices are worth condemning, what will happen to a nation who rejects the Lord even more clearly?

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What types of moral compromises do we see church leaders make today?
- 2) What types of political compromises do we see church leaders make today?
- 3) What types of religious compromises do we see church leaders make today?
- 4) When is innovation in worship a dangerous thing?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Peter Pett: Overall Analysis.**

- a Details of the commencement of his reign (**2 Kings 16:1-2**).
- b His behaviour and actions in the eyes of YHWH (2 Kings 16:3).
- c The invasion of Judah by Rezin of Aram and Pekah of Israel. Judah is despoiled (**2 Kings 16:4-6**).
- d The submission of Ahaz to Tiglath Pileser in Damascus (**2 Kings 16:7-11**).
- c The subsequent bastardisation of the Temple resulting from that submission. The Temple is despoiled (**2 Kings 16:12-18**).



b Ahaz's further actions to be found in the official annals of the kings of Judah (**2 Kings 16:19**).

a Details of the cessation of his reign (**2 Kings 16:20**).

**Wiersbe:** Ahaz thought that the Lord would be pleased with sacrifices offered on this magnificent new altar, but he was wrong. The Lord doesn't want sacrifice; He wants obedience (**1 Sam. 15:22-23**); and Ahaz worshiped the gods of the heathen nations (**2 Chron. 28:23**). No fire from heaven ignited the sacrifices placed on that pagan altar (**Lev. 9:24**), because the Lord had rejected it. The religious novelties in churches today may excite and entertain the people, but they don't edify the church or exalt the Lord. The sanctuary becomes a theater, worship becomes entertainment, ministry becomes performance, and a congregation becomes an audience. The measure of all this is not the glory of God but the applause of the people.

But replacing God's altar was just the beginning. King Ahaz also "remodeled" the laver and the ten movable stands that held the ten basins for preparing sacrifices (**1 Chron. 28:17; 1 Kings 7:23-40**). Apparently he needed the precious metal for his own purposes, so he took it from the Lord. But to please the king of Assyria, Ahaz had to remove his own royal entryway to the temple as well as the royal canopy (or dais for his throne) that he had placed in the temple. Tiglath-pileser was now in charge, not King Ahaz.

**Charles Swindoll:** We usually expect that godly parents are going to bring up godly children. But that isn't always the case. Jotham, for the most part, followed the Lord. But when his son Ahaz came into power, he did the exact opposite. There is no formula for parenting. We can't explain why godly parents sometimes have prodigals and ungodly parents sometimes have mature Christian children. Each of us is dependent on God for His grace. Where we think we are strong, we may actually be weak. Where we know we are weak, we may be laying the groundwork for our children's excellence. The one constant is that God is in control. He is the One we must turn to for wisdom, guidance, and strength.

**August Konkell:** The choices of Ahaz are typical of the values of the wealthy seeking security for their possessions. He chooses to trust political and economic forces rather than God. In so doing he is willing to not only desecrate the temple by robbing it of its valuable metals, but to set up in its precincts foreign altars. In all of this, God is still with Ahaz. During his reign the kingdom of Israel disappears entirely, the nation that he so fears, but his own people come under the domination of the same Assyrians. Wealth is important to life in this world, but not as an end in itself. Pursued as a goal, it brings judgment and is lost. Wealth used in dependence on God and in furthering the kingdom of God enables his presence and blessing. But Ahaz chooses to make the security of his wealth through temporal forces his god, and in so doing he loses the blessing of the sign of Immanuel. Christians, who have experienced the blessing of the fulfillment of Immanuel, must beware of falling into the same condemnation.

TEXT: 2 Kings 17:1-23

TITLE: END GAME FOR ISRAEL = CAPTIVITY AND EXILE

**BIG IDEA:**

**PRIVILEGED ISRAEL FINALLY FACES CAPTIVITY AND EXILE FOR HER COVENANT UNFAITHFULNESS AND PERSISTENT IDOLATRY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

God's patience and repeated warnings provide many opportunities for repentance. But in the end, a stiff-necked and rebellious people eventually receive their deserved judgment. The consistent pattern of evil kings in Israel comes to a screeching halt with the final imprisonment of Hoshea and capture of Samaria. God's people are removed from the Promised Land and foreigners are imported to repopulate the territory. The futility of rejecting the worship of the true God for pagan idols now hits home. Unfortunately Judah in the south fails to learn the obvious lessons from Israel's demise.

**Wiersbe:** God had given His people so many blessings, and now those blessings would fall into the hands of Assyria and Babylon. The Jews had a living Lord, but they replaced Him with dead idols. Their wealthy land was confiscated by enemy nations, the people were taken captive, and eventually Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed (586 B.C.). God in His mercy preserved a faithful remnant so a light would remain shining and he could fulfill the promises He had made to His people.

**Constable:** Israel had suffered for 209 years under 20 different kings from 9 different families, sometimes called dynasties. The heads of these ruling families were Jeroboam I (two kings), Baasha (two kings), Zimri (two kings), Omri (four kings), Jehu (five kings), Shallum (one king), Menahem (two kings), Pekah (one king), and Hoshea (one king). Seven of these kings died at the hands of assassins: Nadab, Elah, Jehoram, Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah. All of them were evil. They did not comply with the will of Yahweh as contained in the Mosaic Law and the revelations of His prophets.

**Paul House:** A long time has passed since the prophet Ahijah told the wife of Jeroboam I that idolatry would lead to Israel's exile (**1 Kgs 14:14-16**). Over these two hundred years Israel has seemed determined to make this prophecy come to pass. No reform occurs. No real repentance emerges. No leader calls a halt to pagan worship. No prophet is taken seriously. Thus the spare, unadorned description of Samaria's fall is dramatic only in the sense that it is Israel's final scene. God's grace alone has delayed the fall this long.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I was recently reading a discussion by **Walter Kaiser** in which he stated, 'Whenever we are at a loss as to what we should preach on a passage, we will never go wrong if we focus on God, his actions and his requirements.' I propose we

approach verses 7–23 this way. This passage breaks down into three distinct parts, a reference to ‘provoking’ (or ‘exasperating,’ Heb. *kā’as*) Yahweh coming near the end of the one section (v. 11b) and at the end of another section (v. 17b). So our divisions are: verses 7–12, 13–17, and 18–23. Each of these begins with a distinct theological affirmation: Yahweh brought Israel up from Egypt (v. 7); Yahweh warned Israel by his prophets (v. 13); and Yahweh was very angry with Israel—enough to banish them from his presence (v. 18).

**Iain Provan:** The “uprooting” and “scattering” of Israel (1 Kgs. 14:15) has long been delayed because of God’s promises and character (2 Kgs. 10:30; 13; 14:23–29). God has continually saved (Hb. *yš’*) it from its enemies: through Elisha, through Jeroboam (2 Kgs. 14:27), through other unnamed saviors (2 Kgs. 13:5). There have been signs in the preceding chapters, however, that deliverance is now at an end, that the “exile” of 2 Kings 13:5 was a dry run for a now imminent main event. The most recent act of “salvation,” in fact (16:7–9, cf. “*save me*,” *yš’*, in 16:7) was in reality an act of judgment upon Israel that brought the Assyrian king to within striking distance of Samaria (15:29). The third siege of the city (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:1ff.; 2 Kgs. 6:24ff.) will be the last. There will be no prophet like Elisha to announce God’s intervention. The king will stand alone. And though his name promises much (Hoshea, “*salvation*”), he—unlike the prophet—will have no power to fulfill its promise.

## **I. (:1-5) FINAL FAILURE OF LEADERSHIP IN ISRAEL – HOSHEA’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

### **A. (:1) Significant Touchpoints of Reign of Hoshea**

#### 1. When Did He Become King?

*“In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah,”*

#### 2. Who Was His Father?

*“Hoshea the son of Elah”*

#### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*“became king over Israel in Samaria,”*

#### 4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned nine years.”*

### **B. (:2) Summary Evaluation of Reign of Hoshea**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, only not as the kings of Israel who were before him.”*

**Peter Pett:** This rather enigmatic statement is not easy to interpret. It would suggest that he did not lay any emphasis on Jeroboam’s false cult, but nevertheless did not truly turn to YHWH. It may also indicate that he had more concern for social justice. Possibly he was in fact lukewarm towards religion generally, although perfunctorily engaging in the worship of the Assyrian deities, simply because he had no choice in the matter.

**Wiseman:** He seems not to have inaugurated or continued the anti-Yahwistic practices for which Israel itself is condemned.

### **C. (:3-4) Shalmaneser Seeks His Tribute**

#### 1. (:3) Pattern of Hoshea Paying Tribute

*“Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up against him, and Hoshea became his servant and paid him tribute.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Six times in these verses he refers to the ‘*king of Assyria*’. He fills the landscape and horizon. And because the king of Assyria so dominates the scene, Israel will cease to exist. Israel has lived in Assyria’s shadow for some time but now she will be caught in Assyria’s vise. The writer’s preoccupation with the ‘*king of Assyria*’ is his way of getting you into the mood of this chapter.

**Peter Pett:** This tribute then continued for some years. But at some point Hoshea apparently felt that with Egypt’s offered help, he could take the risk of withholding tribute. The initiative may well have come from Egypt who wanted to set up a buffer between Egypt and Assyria. We can understand Hoshea’s error. Egypt had no doubt always been looked on as a powerful country, even if at present inactive in Palestine, and Hoshea was not to know that at this time it was divided up and weak, and simply trying to protect itself by stirring up people against Assyria. He no doubt felt that with Egypt behind him he, along with other states, would now be able to resist Assyria. But he was gravely mistaken. No actual help would come from Egypt.

#### 2. (:4) Prison for Hoshea for Conspiracy to Avoid Paying Tribute

*“But the king of Assyria found conspiracy in Hoshea, who had sent messengers to So king of Egypt and had offered no tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year; so the king of Assyria shut him up and bound him in prison.”*

**MacArthur:** Instead of paying his yearly tribute owed as a vassal of Assyria, Hoshea tried to make a treaty with Osorkon IV (ca. 727-716 B.C.), king of Egypt. This was foolish because Assyria was powerful. It was also against God’s will, which forbade such alliances with pagan rulers (cf. **Dt 7:2**). This rebellion led to Israel’s destruction (**vv. 5, 6**).

### **D. (:5) Siege of Samaria by Shalmaneser**

*“Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land and went up to Samaria and besieged it three years.”*

## **II. (:6) FOREIGN CAPTURE AND DEPORTATION OF ISRAEL**

*“In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.”*

**MacArthur:** The capture of Samaria marked the end of the northern kingdom. According to Assyrian records, the Assyrians deported 27,290 inhabitants of Israel to distant locations. The relocation of populations was characteristic of Assyrian policy during that era. The Israelites were resettled in the upper Tigris-Euphrates Valley and never returned to the Promised Land. “*Halah*” was a city NE of Nineveh. The “*Habor*” River was a northern tributary of the Euphrates. The “*cities of the Medes*” were NE of Nineveh. Samaria was resettled with foreigners (v. 24). God did what He said He would do in **Dt 28**. The Jews were carried as far E as Susa, where the book of Esther later took place.

**Peter Pett:** These would be the cream of the city, including all the princes, aristocrats and businessmen. Their journey would not have been a pleasant one as they would be shamed and chained (compare **Isaiah 20:4** of captured Egyptians) but eventually they would be settled in the places mentioned.

**David Guzik:** When the Assyrians depopulated and exiled a conquered community, they led the captives away on journeys of hundreds of miles, with the captives naked and attached together with a system of strings and fishhooks pierced through their lower lips. God would make sure they were led in this humiliating manner through the broken walls of their conquered cities (**Amos 4:2-3**).

### **III. (:7-18) FEAR OF GOD REPLACED BY IDOLATRY – CULPABILITY OF ISRAEL CATALOGUED AS DESERVING OF DIVINE WRATH**

#### **A. (:7-12) Devotion to Idolatry = Deserving of Divine Wrath**

##### 1. (:7-8) Rejecting Their Spiritual Heritage

*“Now this came about, because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods & walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced.”*

**MacArthur:** The primary cause of Israel’s exile was the worship of other gods. The fear of the Lord led to listening to His Word and obeying His ordinances and statutes (**Dt 4:10; 5:29; 6:24**), but the fear of the gods of Canaan led Israel to obey the laws of the Canaanite gods (v. 8). The result of this obedience to false gods is recorded in **vv. 9-12, 16, 17**.

**Wiersbe:** These verses read like a legal court case against the northern kingdom of Israel. The law as a gift from God, an agreement that guaranteed His provision and protection if the people did His will. But they forgot how God had delivered them from Egypt and set them free. They ignored the Law of Moses that commanded them not to worship false gods but to destroy the heathen idols, temples, and shrines (**Deut. 7, 13**).

Israel began with secret worship of idols (v. 9), but this eventually became public, and Jehovah was acknowledged as one god among many. The Lord sent prophets who admonished and warned the people, but the people paid little attention.

**R. D. Patterson:** Their historical foundation was essentially a spiritual one. Having brought Israel from bondage to glorious freedom, God had every right to expect them to walk in newness of life, as befitting a redeemed people (cf. **Deut 5-6; 10:12 – 11:32**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** But our summary also notes the standard they followed: ‘*they walked in the statutes of the nations whom Yahweh had driven out*’ (v. 8a), and ‘*they made offerings on all the high places like the nations Yahweh had exiled before them*’ (v. 11a). Not Yahweh’s design, to be sure. Before Israel entered Canaan, Moses told them that they were to have absolutely no truck with the peoples in the land (i.e., à la **Deut. 7:1–5**, show no mercy to them, enter into no covenants with them, make no marriages with them, harbor no curiosity about their worship), ‘*for,*’ Moses continued, ‘*you are a people holy to Yahweh your God*’ (**Deut. 7:6**). So Israel is ‘holy’—distinct, different, unique, unusual, unconventional. Israel’s history did not follow Israel’s call. Rather they were diligent to conform to the nations, to ape them and blend with them.

## 2. (:9-12) Recounting Their Idolatrous Practices

*“And the sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right, against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. 10 And they set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, 11 and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. 12 And they served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, ‘You shall not do this thing.’”*

**Paul House:** Now [vv. 7-13] the author summarizes why Israel has fallen. None of these reasons should surprise readers, for they have been mentioned over and over again. Israel’s most fundamental error all along has been covenant breaking, the most obvious manifestation of which is idolatry. The people forgot the exodus and all it stood for: God’s power and grace, God’s acts on their behalf, and their responsibility to reciprocate God’s goodness with faith, undivided allegiance, and pure worship. Instead, they worshiped local deities, adopted corrupt ethical practices, and ignored the Lord’s prophets who were sent to warn them. By the time God’s patience was exhausted and judgment fell, the rebellion was two hundred years old, thus fully mature.

## **B. (:13-15) Divine Revelation Rejected = Deserving of Divine Wrath**

### 1. (:13) Repeated Prophetic Warnings

*“Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah, through all His prophets and every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I*



*commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Both kingdoms were warned by their own prophets who proclaimed that deviation from the law was the result of obstinacy (‘stubborn’, stiff-necked; **Deut. 10:16; Jer. 7:24**) which leads to ‘no faith, no stability’ (**Isa. 7:9**). A lack of response (obedience) to God’s word shown in infidelity to the Lord’s words (**v. 15**) always leads to worthless objectives sought by ‘worthless lives’ (reb), pursuing empty phantoms such as the bull-calves at Bethel and Dan (**1 Kgs 14:15**), and so themselves becoming empty (**v. 15, neb**).

## 2. (:14-15) Resistance and Futility

*“However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. 15 And they rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers, and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them.”*

**Peter Pett:** In spite of YHWH’s efforts Israel had not heard Him. They had ‘hardened their necks’ in the same way as their fathers had, who had also not ‘believed in YHWH their God’. Their fathers had also similarly not trusted God and obeyed Him, as had been made clear throughout the Pentateuch and the ‘historical books’, compare, for example, Exodus 32; Numbers 13-14; Judges 2. For ‘hardened-necks’ see **Deuteronomy 10:16; Exodus 32:9; Exodus 33:3; Exodus 33:5; Exodus 34:9; Deuteronomy 9:6; Deuteronomy 9:13; Deuteronomy 31:27**. For ‘believing, not believing, in YHWH their God’ see **Genesis 15:6; Exodus 4:31; Exodus 14:31; Numbers 14:11; Deuteronomy 1:32; Deuteronomy 9:23**.

## **C. (:16-18) Depths of Depravity = Deserving of Divine Wrath**

### 1. (:16) Depraved Worship

*“And they forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So we cannot be surprised at **verses 15–17**. They are sad but not surprising. Read through **verses 15–17** at a deliberate pace. Feel the increasing weight each main clause adds to this mass of apostasy. Three verses and ten main clauses summarize 200-plus years of infidelity and crush the reader under its load:

- ‘So they rejected his statutes and his covenant ... and his testimonies’
- ‘(And) they went after worthlessness ... and after the nations ...’
- ‘They forsook all the commandments of Yahweh ...’
- ‘They made for themselves molten (things)—two calves’
- ‘They made an Asherah’
- ‘They worshiped the host of heaven’

- *'They served Baal'*
- *'They made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire'*
- *'They practiced divination ...'*
- *'They sold themselves to do what was evil ...'*

## 2. (:17) Depraved Religious Practices

*"Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him."*

## 3. (:18) Deserved Divine Wrath = Deportation from the Promised Land

*"So the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah."*

**Peter Pett:** And all these were the reasons why YHWH was very angry with Israel and thus removed them out of His sight. It was because, instead of worshipping Him fully, and in spite of the great efforts of the prophets, especially Elijah and Elisha, they had bastardised Yahwism and diluted it until it had lost all its content. Even official Yahwism had become syncretistic and blurred, and open Baalism had become common. That was the result of *'the sin of Jeroboam'*. Judah had done a little better for they had the original Ark of the Covenant, and at least in the Temple (apart from the aberrations of those influenced by their connection with the house of Ahab, and of course Ahaz) had maintained a kind of purity of religion, at least ritualistically (but even then see **Isaiah 1:11-18**), while their flirting with the gods of Canaan was both unofficial, and even probably officially frowned on. Thus they alone of the tribes (*'the tribe of Judah'* here indicated all who permanently lived in Judah seen in terms of the dominant tribe) were spared YHWH's anger, at least for a time, although with a timely warning added.

**David Guzik:** This was the end of the ten northern tribes as an independent kingdom. When they were dispersed by the Assyrians, some assimilated into other cultures, but others kept their Jewish identity as exiles in other lands.

Yet, it is a mistake to think of these ten northern tribes as **lost**. Far back in the days of Jeroboam and his original break with the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the legitimate priests and Levites who lived in the northern ten tribes did not like Jeroboam's idolatry. They, along with others who set their hearts to seek the LORD God of Israel, then moved from the Northern Kingdom of Israel to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (**2 Chronicles 11:13-16**). So actually, the Southern Kingdom of Judah contained Israelites from all of the ten tribes.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** But the dominant note of this section is the tragedy of judgment. We hear it three times:

- *'So he removed them from his presence' (v. 18a)*
- *'... until he threw them away from his presence' (v. 20b)*
- *'... until Yahweh removed Israel from his presence' (v. 23a)*



#### **IV. (:19-23) FATAL FLAW RESULTING IN CAPTIVITY AND DEPORTATION**

##### **A. (:19-20) Synergy Between Culpability of Judah and Israel**

###### 1. (:19) Culpability of Judah after the Pattern of Israel

*“Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God, but walked in the customs which Israel had introduced.”*

###### 2. (:20) Casting Out of Israel from the Promised Land

*“And the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them out of His sight.”*

##### **B. (:21-23) Sins of Jeroboam Highlighted**

###### 1. (:21a) Tearing Apart of the Kingdom

*“When He had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king.”*

**Paul House:** Of course, Jeroboam I receives the most blame for Israel’s religious decline. He takes the people away from the Davidic dynasty, institutes a new religion, and generally sets in motion destructive behaviors that become permanent. As God promises in **Leviticus 26** and **Deuteronomy 27–28**, these sins can only lead to exile. Ultimately, then, Jeroboam I leads Israel to division from each other, from the Lord, and from the land.

###### 2. (:21b) Turning the People Away from Following the Lord

*“Then Jeroboam drove Israel away from following the LORD, and made them commit a great sin.”*

###### 3. (:22) Template for Continued Rebellion

*“And the sons of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did; they did not depart from them,”*

###### 4. (:23) Termination in Exile

*“until the LORD removed Israel from His sight, as He spoke through all His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away into exile from their own land to Assyria until this day.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Why doesn’t the judgment of captivity and deportation fall on the most wicked of the kings of Israel?

2) Can you imagine the pressure and fear of living in a city that was under siege for a period of three years?

3) How important should it be for us to cling tightly to the promises of God?

4) Where are we stubborn and stiff-necked in the face of divine revelation?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur: vv.7-23** – In these verses, the writer departs from quoting his written sources and gives his own explanation for the captivity of Israel. Judah is included, though her captivity did not occur until 605/604 – 586 B.C. at the hands of the Babylonians. Her sins were the same. Here is a very full and impressive vindication of God’s action in punishing His privileged but rebellious and apostate people. In **v. 7**, he begins by stating that the Israelites had sinned against the Lord who had redeemed them from Egypt. Gross perversion of the worship of God and national propensity to idolatry finally exhausted divine patience. The idolatry of Israel is described in **vv. 7-12**. In response to Israel’s actions, the Lord sent His prophets to Israel and Judah with a message of repentance (**v. 13**). However, the people failed to respond to the prophets’ messages, because, like their fathers, they did not have faith in the Lord (**v. 14**). Their lack of faith resulted in disobedience to the Lord’s commands and the further pursuit of idolatry (**vv. 15-17**). The idolatry of Israel (and Judah) brought forth the anger of the Lord, which resulted in exile (**v. 18**). The “*great sin*” of both Israel and Judah was their continual following of the sinful pattern of Jeroboam I, departing from the Lord and practicing idolatry, thus bringing down the judgment of captivity predicted by the prophets (**vv. 19-23**).

**Whitcomb:** So tragic and shocking was this catastrophe that the author of Kings paused in the midst of his narrative to list about twenty reasons why god’s judgment was so richly deserved (**II Kings 17:7-18**). God was not helpless to rescue Israel from her enemies. In fact, He was the One who raised them up and brought them to destroy His people. Nor had He broken His covenant promises to the nation; for a remnant of each of the northern tribes had long since fled to the tribe of Judah to perpetuate their identity there (cf. **II Chron. 11:16; Acts 26:7; James 1:1**; and the reference to Anna “*of the tribe of Asher*” in **Luke 2:36**).

We may imagine his tears falling upon the parchment as the author of Kings penned Israel’s epitaph: “*So Israel was carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day*” (**II Kings 17:23**). And the tragedy was compounded because Judah refused to learn spiritual lessons from the experience of her sister kingdom to the north (**II Kings 17:19; cf. Ezek. 16:46-59**), thus explaining why the author of Kings was himself in far off Babylon when he completed his book (**II Kings 25:27-30**).

**Constable: The reasons for the captivity 17:7-23**

In this section the writer catalogued Israel's transgressions of God's Word that resulted in her going into captivity. Ironically, Israel's last king had sought help from Egypt, from which Israel had fled 724 years earlier.

1. They feared other gods (v. 7; cf. **Exod. 20:3; Judg. 6:10**).
2. They adopted Canaanite customs (v. 8; cf. **Lev. 18:3; Deut. 18:9**).
3. They adopted customs condemned by the Mosaic Law (v. 8; cf. **16:3; 17:19**).
4. They practiced secret sins (v. 9).
5. They built pagan high places (v. 9; cf. **Deut. 12:2-7, 13-14**).
6. They made many sacred pillars and Asherim (v. 10; cf. **Exod. 34:12-14**).
7. They burned incense to other gods (v. 11).
8. They did evil things that provoked Yahweh (v. 11).
9. They served idols (v. 12; cf. **Exod. 20:4**).
10. They refused to heed God's warnings (vv. 13-14).
11. They became obstinate (v. 14; cf. **Exod. 32:9; 33:3**).
12. They rejected God's statutes (v. 15).
13. They rejected God's covenant (v. 15; cf. **Exod. 24:6-8; Deut. 29:25**).
14. They pursued vanity (v. 15; cf. **Deut. 32:21**).
15. They became vain (v. 15).  
"The picturesque notion of the noun and its derivative verb is lost in these translations; it is a puff of air that they followed, and so they became light as air." (Montgomery)
16. They followed foreign nations (v. 15; cf. **Deut. 12:30-31**).
17. They forsook Yahweh's commandments (v. 16).
18. They made molten calves (v. 16; cf. **Exod. 20:4**).
19. They made an Asherah (v. 16; cf. **Exod. 20:4**).

20. They worshipped the stars (v. 16; cf. **Deut. 4:15, 19; Amos 5:26**).
21. They served Baal (v. 16).
22. They practiced child sacrifice (v. 17; cf. **Lev. 18:21; Deut. 12:31**).
23. They practiced witchcraft (v. 17; cf. **Lev. 19:26; Deut. 18:10-12**).
24. They sold themselves to do evil (v. 17; cf. **21:20**).

Though God allowed Judah to remain, she was not innocent (v. 19). The cult of Jeroboam was the major source of Israel's apostasy (vv. 21- 22).

### **Larry Yeager: The Fall of Israel (2 Kings 17)**

#### **A. Too little, too late**

1. Hoshea – not the worst of the kings (2)
  2. Treacherous - Vassal state of Assyria, he turns to Egypt
  3. Samaria is captured after 3 year siege
  4. Israel is carried away (6)
    - God removed them out of his sight (18)
- NOTE: The Kingdom of Israel ceases to exist.

#### **B. The Lord's indictment of Israel (17:7-23;34-41)**

1. God is jealous for his people! (7a)
  - a. Recounting the Lord's faithfulness
  - b. Remembering God's covenant (35-40)
  - c. Holding out his promise! Return to me! (13)
2. His people were not jealous for their God!
  - a. The "people" sinned against the LORD! (7)
 

NOTE: They got the kings they deserved and wanted!

    - Worshiped the gods of the nations (8)
    - Establishing high places and Asherim (9,10)
    - Ignoring the Lord's warnings (13)
    - Despising the Lord's statutes and covenant (15)
    - Sacrificed their children to their "gods" (16,17)
    - Provoking God to anger! (11, 17,18)
  - b. They did not "*fear the LORD*"
    - They "feared other gods" (7) (Love, devotion)
    - Like the nations that would flood Israel (41)
3. They were judged!
  - Their hearts did not belong to the LORD!
  - They were no longer "Israel"

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**Michael Leach: Exile Resulting from Reckless Rejection** -- 3 certainties:

**I. ENGAGEMENT: RETALIATION FROM ITS ILLICIT PARTNERS 1-6**

Failure to trust God leads to frantically entering into fruitless alliances which are doomed to fail from the start

- A. THE DISCOURAGING DESCRIPTION OF THE TIMES **1-2**
- B. THE DESPERATE DUPLICITY OF THE KING **3-4**
- C. THE DISGRACEFUL DISPLACEMENT OF THE NATION **5-6**

**II. ENTANGLEMENT: RITUALS OF THE IDOLATROUS PEOPLES 7-12**

Ultimate cause of the exile = blatant, forthright covenant rebellion, especially sin of idolatry. A reversal of the Exodus and a refusal to fulfill covenant commitments flowing from and excellently condensed in **Ex 20:2-4**.

- A. THE SUMMARY CONDEMNATION **7-8**
- B. THE "SECRET" CONDUCT **9**
- C. THE SPECIFIC CORRUPTION **10-12**

**III. ENFORCEMENT: REWARD OF ITS INTENSE PERVERSIONS 13-18**

Fulfilling **Lev 26:14-39**. OT equivalent of **Rom 6:23**

- A. THE CONTEMPTUOUS DENIAL OF WARNINGS **13-14**
- B. THE CHARGING DESCENT INTO WICKEDNESS **15-16**
- C. THE CULMINATING DEPTHS OF WAYWARDNESS **17-18**

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**Caleb Nelson: How to Forfeit Blessings**

**Proposition:** The fall of Israel warns us that the same God who showers us with copious blessings will judge us when we despise them.

**I. Introduction: Does 2 Kings 17 "Blame the Victim"?**

**II. Blessings Lost, vv. 1-6**

- A. Meet "Jesus," the Best King of Israel, vv. 1-4
  - 1. He Did the Best, vv. 1-2
  - 2. He Suffered the Worst, vv. 3-4
- B. Kingless, Northern Israel Forfeits Life in the Land, vv. 5-6

**III. Blessings Despised, vv. 7-23**

- A. The Blessings of God's Redemption, vv. 7-12
- B. The Blessings of God's Word, vv. 13-15
- C. The Blessings of God's Worship, vv. 16-17
- D. The Blessings of God's Presence, vv. 18-23
- E. The Blessings of God's Anointed King, vv. 21-22

#### **IV. Application: Make Your Blessings Count!**

A. Stop Taking God's Blessings for Granted

B. True Worship Is the Proper Response to Blessing

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TEXT: 2 Kings 17:24-41

TITLE: SAMARITANS PRACTICE A SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION PATTERNED AFTER APOSTATE JEWS

**BIG IDEA:**

**SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION NULLIFIES THE FEAR OF GOD AND VIOLATES THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

**INTRODUCTION:**

These events mark a major watershed in the history of the Jewish nation. After repeated warnings and persistent pleas by the prophets, the judgment of the Assyrian Captivity finally arrives in 722 B.C. How tragic for the cream of the crop of Israel's men to be removed from the Promised Land and from their families and deported into unfamiliar cities in Persia – far from the blessings of the covenant nation. These events foreshadow the coming Babylonian Captivity in 586 B.C. for the southern nation which failed to learn the lessons of history. Syncretistic religion is nothing more than superstition and going through the motions of religious rites – devoid of a personal relationship with the living God who demands exclusive loyalty and devotion.

**Kathleen Kenyon:** God's people had become disloyal to their Suzerain who had brought them redemptively out of Egyptian servitude. They had expressed disloyalty by worshipping other gods (17:15-17). And they did all this despite his persistent reminders to them through his spokesmen, the prophets, that what they were doing constituted high treason. The inevitable result was the judgment of God, a judgment which took the form of exile from the land of promise.

**I. (:24-28) SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION NULLIFIES THE FEAR OF GOD –  
PREDICAMENT OF RELIGIOUS IGNORANCE OF THE SAMARITANS**

**A. (:24) Displaced -- Origin of the Samaritans**

*“And the king of Assyria brought men from Babylon and from Cuthah and from Avva and from Hamath and Sephar-vaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the sons of Israel. So they possessed Samaria and lived in its cities.”*

**MacArthur:** After its conquest by the Assyrians, the central hill and coastal plain region of the former northern kingdom of Israel became an Assyrian province, all of which was called “Samaria” after the ancient capital city (cf. vv. 28, 29). The Assyrian king, Sargon II, settled alien people, who came from widely scattered areas also conquered by Assyria, into the abandoned Israelite towns. Babylon and Cuthah were located in southern Mesopotamia. Hamath was a town on the Orontes River in Syria. The exact location of Avva and Sepharvaim are unknown. These people, who intermarried with the Jews who escaped exile, became the Samaritans – a mixed Jew and Gentile people, later hated by NT Jews (cf. Mt 10:5; Jn 4:9).

**Whitcomb:** Isaiah had predicted that the process of deporting Israelites and importing foreigners with the consequent destruction of the ethnic identity of the northern kingdom (and the formation of a new mongrel race called Samaritans) would take sixty-five years beginning in 734 B.C. (**Isa. 7:8**). Thus, “*the king of Assyria*” in **II Kings 17:24** who completed this monumental task must have been Esarhaddon, the grandson of Sargon, whose reign ended in 609 B.C., exactly sixty-five years after Isaiah’s prophecy. This is confirmed by the fact that the Samaritan half-breeds who hindered the work of Zerubbabel and Joshua in rebuilding the Jerusalem temple insisted that “*we sacrifice unto him since the days of Esar-haddon king of Assyria, who brought us up hither*” (**Ezra 4:2**).

**B. (:25-28) Desperate -- Indoctrination into the Practices of Judaism**

**1. (:25) Physical Threat Attributed to Failure to Fear the Lord of the Land**

*“And it came about at the beginning of their living there, that they did not **fear the LORD**; therefore the LORD sent lions among them which killed some of them.”*

**MacArthur:** Lions were employed occasionally as instruments of punishment by God (cf. **1Ki 13:24; 20:36**).

**Whitcomb:** It is noteworthy that so many Israelites vanished for the scene during those years that lions began to multiply beyond control. God had long since warned the nation: “*If you walk contrary to me . . . I will send the beast of the field among you, which shall rob you of your children, and destroy your cattle, and make you few in number; and your ways shall become desolate*” (**Lev. 26:21-22**; cf. **Exod. 23:29**). Having utterly rejected the mild warnings of two she-bears in the days of Elisha (cf. **II Kings 2:24**), the land was now literally overrun with thousands of lions.

**2. (:26-28) Priestly Teaching of the Practices of Judaism Designed to Placate the Lord of the Land**

**a. (:26) Ignorance of Judaism is the Perceived Problem**

*“So they spoke to the king of Assyria, saying, ‘The nations whom you have carried away into exile in the cities of Samaria do not know the custom of the god of the land; so he has sent lions among them, and behold, they kill them because they do not know the custom of the god of the land.’”*

**b. (:27) Instruction by the Jewish Priest Should Solve the Problem**

*“Then the king of Assyria commanded, saying, ‘Take there one of the priests whom you carried away into exile, and let him go and live there; and let him teach them the custom of the god of the land.’”*

**Peter Pett:** The problem was severe enough for the new inhabitants to appeal to Sargon pointing out that because “*they did not know the law of the land*” the god of the land had



sent lions among them to kill them. It should be noted that while on the one hand the Assyrian kings could be cruel in their tyranny, they were also on the other hand concerned for their subjects once they had colonized them. They wanted them to be semi-independent while looking to their ‘father’ the king of Assyria. After all satisfied people contributed to the wealth of Assyria. Thus he took notice of their complaint.

c. (:28) Indoctrination Program Implemented

*“So one of the priests whom they had carried away into exile from Samaria came and lived at Bethel, and taught them how they should **fear the LORD.**”*

**R. D. Patterson:** One of Israel’s exiled priests returned to the land and reinstituted the worship of the Lord at Bethel, the traditional cult center of the northern kingdom. The religion, however, that such a priest would teach would be the false worship institute by Jeroboam. The result was a mixture of truth combined with the corrupted experience of Israel (now deepened by two centuries of growing apostasy) and the pagan rites brought by the new settlers.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Then too the priest who comes to enlighten these pagans settles in Bethel, one of the original sites for calf worship (**1 Kings 12:25–33**). Does that indicate his preference for Jeroboam theology? In any case, any priest from the former northern kingdom would likely propagate more syncretism than orthodoxy.

**Albert Barnes:** The priest sent to the colonists was not a true Yahweh-priest, but one of those who had been attached to the calf-worship, probably at Bethel. Hence, he would be willing to tolerate the mixed religion, which a true Yahweh-priest would have unsparingly condemned.

**Peter Pett:** This is the first mention of the term ‘Samaritans’ in the Bible, but we must not mix these up with the Samaritans of New Testament times who were ardent monotheists based around Shechem, who had their own copy of the Law which they sought to live by.

**C. (:29-31) Depraved -- Embracing Religious Multiplicity**

**1. (:29-31a) Making Familiar Idols**

*“But every nation still made gods of its own and put them in the houses of the high places which the people of Samaria had made, every nation in their cities in which they lived. 30 And the men of Babylon made Succoth-benoth, the men of Cuth made Nergal, the men of Hamath made Ashima, 31 and the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak;”*

**MacArthur:**

- *Nibhaz.* A dog-like idol.
- *Tartak.* Either a donkey or a celestial body, Saturn.

- *Adrammelech*. Perhaps the same as Molech, worshiped in the form of the sun, a mule or a peacock.
- *Anammelech*. A rabbit or a goat idol.

**Peter Pett:** This multiplicity of gods are now described. ‘Succoth-benoth’ probably means ‘the booths of Banitu’, a Babylonian goddess also known as Ishtar/Astarte (parallel with Asherah). As the name implies (‘the booths of prostitutes/daughters’) it was probably not a very savoury religion. Yahwism was unusual in expecting an ethical response. ‘Nergal’ (‘lord of the great city’) had his cult centre in Cuthah and was noted for bringing havoc on the world through plagues, war, pestilence and floods. His consort in the under-world was Ereshkigal. Ashima, Nibhaz and Tartak would be local deities of their own people. Adram-melech (or Adar-melech - ‘the lordship of Melech’) and Ana-melech (possibly Anu-melech - ‘the king Anu’) had similar features to Melech of the Ammonites and encouraged child sacrifice. Thus the gods that Samaria had previously turned to (**2 Kings 17:16-17**) were simply introduced in another form.

2. (:31b) Maintaining Abominable Practices

*and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire to Adrammelech and Anammelech the gods of Sepharvaim.*

**D. (:32-33) Double-Minded -- Attempting to Both Fear the Lord and Continue to Serve Their Pagan Gods**

1. (:32) Attempting to Fear the Lord

*“They also **feared the LORD** and appointed from among themselves priests of the high places, who acted for them in the houses of the high places.”*

2. (:33) Continuing to Serve Their Pagan Gods

*“They **feared the LORD** and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile.”*

**Whitcomb:** Each group of importees from Babylon, Cuth, Hamath, Avva, and Sepharvaim (from various extremities of the Fertile Crescent – **II Kings 17:24, 30, 31**) maintained their basic loyalty to their own gods, and either added Jehovah to the already crowded pantheon or perhaps called their favorite god by the name of the local deity, Jehovah, whom they sought to placate by this means.

**Biblical Illustrator:** The first thought which I think suggests itself to our mind, is of the curious **inconsistency** of their conduct. They worshipped the true God; and, along with Him, they worshipped various false gods. Now, this seems strange to us. We cannot imagine a man being at once a Christian, a Mohammedan, a Jew, a heathen, and an atheist. You must make your choice what religion you will profess: you cannot profess several inconsistent religions together. But it is just because Christianity has so thoroughly leavened our ways of thinking, that there appears to us anything strange in the conduct of these inhabitants of Samaria. For Christianity, we all know, is an

exclusive religion. It not merely calls men to believe in itself, but to reject every other faith. It not merely claims to be right and true: but it boldly says that every other faith is wrong and false. The God of the Bible not merely commands us to worship Him: He commands us to worship no one else. This is their great characteristic as compared with all other religions. Christianity is a faith which admits no rivals, no competitors: it demands to stand alone. And the true God is not the God of this land or that land: He is the God of all the earth: He tolerates no brother near His throne. But it was not so at all with the gods of false religions: with the gods whom these poor Samaritans worshipped; no, nor with the gods and goddesses who were worshipped by the polished nations of Greece and Rome. It did not follow that because you held Jupiter to be a true god, you held Mercury or Apollo to be false gods. It did not follow because you worshipped Dagon, that you failed to worship Moloch. It did not follow that Beelzebub would feel himself slighted, because you offered a sacrifice to Rimmon. Each false god had his own province, and he held by that. And so you can see that these ignorant Samaritans, when they “*feared the Lord, and served their own gods,*” had no sense at all of the inconsistency,--of the self-contradiction,--of what they did, such as that which we might feel.

## **II. (:34-40) SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION VIOLATES THE EXCLUSIVITY OF THE COVENANT RELATIONSHIP – PATTERN OF COVENANT VIOLATION BY THE JEWS**

### **A. (:34) No Exclusive Fear of God and No Covenant Obedience**

*“To this day they do according to the earlier customs: they do not **fear the LORD**, nor do they follow their statutes or their ordinances or the law, or the commandments which the LORD commanded the sons of Jacob, whom He named Israel;”*

**August Konkel:** The end of Israel becomes the occasion for a concluding exhortation on the failure of the covenant from the time of the Exodus “*to this day*” (v. 34). This phrase resumes the prophetic sermon describing disobedience that led to the end of Israel “*to this day*” (v. 23; niv, “*and they are still there*”), which was broken off by the description of the repopulation of Samaria (vv. 24–33). The final summary repeats the phrase: “*To this day*” the people fail to observe the loyalty of the covenant oath they have taken (vv. 40–41). Repetitive phrases are typical in Hebrew narrative to mark the beginning and end of a distinct literary unit within a larger composition.

### **B. (:35-39) Fear of Other Gods in Violation of the Exclusivity of the Covenant**

#### 1. (:35) Covenant Stipulations

*“with whom the LORD made a covenant and commanded them, saying, ‘You shall not **fear other gods**, nor bow down yourselves to them nor serve them nor sacrifice to them.’”*

#### 2. (:36) Covenant Faithfulness on the Part of God

*“But the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and with an outstretched arm, **Him you shall fear**, and to Him you*

*shall bow yourselves down, and to Him you shall sacrifice.”*

**Adam Clarke:** We see in this verse three important points:

1. The object of their worship.
2. The reasons of that worship; and,
3. The spirit and manner in which it was to be performed:
  - a. In fear
  - b. Humility
  - c. By sacrifice.

3. (:37-38) Covenant Requirements for God’s People

*“And the statutes and the ordinances and the law and the commandment, which He wrote for you, you shall observe to do forever; and you shall **not fear other gods**. 38 And the covenant that I have made with you, you shall not forget, nor shall you **fear other gods**.”*

**John Gates:** This is a clear reference to the fact that Exodus and Deuteronomy were written by Moses and could not have been composed at a later date. If these books were done at a later date, as the critics hold, how could God have deported his people for sinning against his commandments and statutes?

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Note how stringently the covenant insists on **exclusive devotion** to Yahweh. One runs into three negativized verbs in **verse 35**: Israel must not bow down, serve, or sacrifice to other gods. **Verses 36–37** invert normal grammar and put the direct or indirect objects first in the clauses for emphasis:

*But **Yahweh** who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great might and with an arm stretched out—**him** you must fear, and to **him** you must bow down, and to **him** you must sacrifice, and the statutes and ordinances and instruction and commandment which **he wrote** for you, you must be careful to do ...*

He does the same in **verse 38** (*‘the covenant’*) and **verse 39** (*‘but Yahweh your God you must fear’*). And lest we miss the point, he hammers it into us three times: *‘You shall not fear other gods’* (**vv. 35, 37, 38**). Covenant religion is **exclusive religion**, the faith that bashes our both-ands to bits with its either-or.

4. (:39) Covenant Promise for the Faithful

*“But the LORD your God **you shall fear**;  
and He will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.”*

**C. (:40) Divine Revelation Replaced with Religious Tradition**

*“However, they did not listen, but they did according to their earlier custom.”*

**(:41) EPILOGUE – SYNCRETISTIC RELIGION OF THE SAMARITANS**

**A. Practicing Duplicity**

*“So while these nations **feared the LORD**, they also served their idols;”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So pagan religion creates what it likes; biblical faith receives what is revealed. Pagans worship based on what they prefer; biblicists must worship based on what God declares. The biblical worshiper must submit; the pagan worshiper may concoct. . .

**Verse 41** breathes such an air of hopelessness, succeeding generations aping the commitments of the former ones. Religion is not necessarily a good thing. There’s such a thing as **condemning religion**; there’s such a thing as a religion that damns.

### **B. Perpetuating Duplicity**

*“their children likewise and their grandchildren,  
as their fathers did, so they do to this day.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What was the basis in the days of Jesus for the hatred between the Samaritans and the Jews?
- 2) Where do we just try to tack Jesus and religion on to our everyday practices rather than allowing Him to transform our lives?
- 3) How do some people treat Jesus as just a local deity with very limited authority to just certain realms of life?
- 4) What type of revelation and warnings had the Jewish people stubbornly resisted over the years?

\* \* \* \* \*

### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Spurgeon:** Is not worldly piety, or pious worldliness, the current religion of England? They live among godly people, and God chastens them, and they therefore fear him, but not enough to give their hearts to him. They seek out a trimming teacher who is not too precise and plain-spoken, and they settle down comfortably to a mongrel faith, half truth, half error, and a mongrel worship, half-dead form, and half orthodoxy.

**Mordecai Cogan:** This section, like the previous one, divides structurally and thematically into two units:

- (1.) **Verses 24–33** tell of the foreign settlers brought to Samaria over a period of

decades and the circumstances under which they adopted Israelite religious practices. In addition to the renewed yhwh cult at Beth-el, they continue to worship the gods of their homelands.

(2.) **Verses 34–40** condemn the “*sons of Jacob*” for their abandonment of yhwh’s Teaching.

**Verse 41** rounds off both units, by resuming unit 1. (Note the same procedure above in **v. 23**, which resumes **v. 6**.)

Unit 2 is independent of unit 1 and should be seen within the larger context of **2 Kgs 17**, particularly the homily in **vv. 7–23**. There one reads that the abandonment of the teaching led to Israel’s removal from the land “*until this day*.” The phrase “*until this day*” is taken up again in **v. 34** by means of Wiederaufnahme—“resumptive repetition”—and marks unit 2 as the continuation of **v. 23**, its subject being the Israelites after the fall of Samaria. The view expressed in unit 2 states: Even after punishment—i.e., exile—Israel persisted in following “*their earlier practices*” and sought no return to yhwh.

Therefore suggestions to see unit 2 as a late, postexilic addendum further condemning the mixed ritual of the settlers in Samaria already excoriated in unit 1, cannot be accepted. It is highly unlikely that any postexilic writer would speak of the foreigners as “*sons of Jacob*,” bound by the covenant obligations of the torah (**vv. 34, 35, 37**). Furthermore idolatry among the residents of Samaria is never an issue in the literature of the Persian period. Even when the Samaritans represent themselves as worshippers of yhwh for many generations (**Ezra 4:2**), reference is not made to the mixed cult depicted in **2 Kgs 17:24–33**. Their rejection by the returnees from Babylonian exile is based rather on their ethnic foreignness. Therefore unit 1, as well, should not be regarded as a postexilic polemic.

Both units should be seen against the background of Josiah’s cultic reforms and his expansion into the former territory of the northern kingdom. Josiah moved into Samaria to destroy the altar in Bethel and purge the other cities of their bāmôt-shrines (**2 Kgs 23:15–19**). The priests who served at these sites were slaughtered (**v. 20**), as one would slaughter pagan priests under the law of *herem*. Who else but the priests “*appointed*” to serve at the shrines of the new settlers (cf. **17:32**) would be so treated? To further legitimize Josiah’s claim as the heir to northern Israel, the author of unit 2 discredits the Israelite exiles, who by their continued idolatry forfeit any rights to their former inheritance.

**Biblical Illustrator:** This fragment of Israelitish history brings under our notice four subjects which run through all human history, and which find their illustration in the events of modern as well as ancient life.

**I. The tyranny of man.** Here we find the Assyrians committing two great enormities on the men of Israel, driving them out of their own land into Assyria, and taking

possession of their own country and home.

**II. The retributions of life.** Probably the lions had been in the land of Samaria before the settlement of the Assyrian colonists, but after their settlement these furious beasts of prey seem to have multiplied. The law of retribution is ever at work in human history, not only in the lives of nations but in the lives of individuals. No man can do a wrong thing without suffering for it in some form or other. Nemesis surely, though silently, treads on the heels of wrong. The lions of retribution track our steps as sinners; stealthily, and are ready to spring at any moment. We are far enough from saying that retribution here is adequate and complete, hence there is within all a “fearful looking for” of some future judgment.

**III. The prostitution of religion.** The Assyrian king, it would seem, in answer to the alarm which his people, whom he had settled in Samaria, felt concerning the lions, conceived the plan of adopting religion as the remedy. Here you have one of the million examples of that religion of policy that has abounded in all lands and times. In every page in history, nay, in every scene of life, we find religion taken up as a means to an end, rather than as the grand end of being.

**IV. The theistic hunger of souls.** All these men, both the colonists and the Israelites, would have their gods; a god seemed to them as necessary almost as their life. (*David Thomas, D. D.*) . . .

### **True and false fear**

*“The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge”*--*“the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom,”* are two of Solomon’s most pregnant maxims (**Proverbs 1:7; Proverbs 9:10**); or rather two forms of the same, which is again repeated in the Book of Psalms (**Psalms 111:10**). The word *“beginning”* in all these cases, may be strictly understood as having reference to time. This is the point from which all successful students of true wisdom must set out. Their first lesson is to fear the Lord. *“The fear of the Lord,”* which is thus both the Alpha and Omega of the spiritual alphabet, may be taken either in a generic or a specific sense. The former is, in fact, co-extensive with the general idea of religion or true piety, including, either directly or by necessary inference, every right disposition and affection on the part of man, as a dependent and unworthy creature, towards the infinitely great and holy God. All such affections may be readily deduced from fear, in its specific sense, as signifying not a slavish but a filial feeling, not mere dread or terror, which, from its very nature, must be always tinged with hate, or at least with repugnance, but a reverence impregnated with love. This genuine and spurious fear of God, unlike as they may seem, and as they are, have often been confounded, on account of their having something really in common, to wit, a sense of God’s power and an apprehension of His wrath as awaiting all transgressors of His will. But this common element, which justifies the use of the word fear in reference to both these dispositions, is blended in the one case with a consciousness of alienation and hostility, while in the other it is lost, as it were, in the feeling of attachment, confidence, and common interest. The varying proportion, in which these distinctive qualities are blended with the fundamental property of fear,



determines the facility with which a filial awe may be confounded with a slavish dread. To discriminate between the two might sometimes be impossible, but for a practical criterion or test which the Word of God has laid down, in accordance with our Saviour's fundamental rule of moral diagnosis, "*By their fruits ye shall know them.*" This intimate connection between genuine fear and obedience is recognized in the law itself, when Moses warns Israel "*to do all the words of this law that are written in this book, that thou mayest fear the glorious and fearful name, the Lord thy God*" (**Deuteronomy 28:58**). The negative aspect of the same truth is exhibited by Job, when he winds up his sublime inquiry after wisdom with the solemn declaration, "*Behold, the fear of the Lord, that is wisdom, and to depart from evil is understanding*" (**Job 28:28**). Here, then, is the touchstone of a genuine and a spurious fear of God. The one disposes us to do His will, from a sincere complacency and acquiescence in it. The other prompts us rather to resist it, except so far as our compliance may seem necessary to escape His wrath, which is the only real object of this slavish dread. The one is a fear of punishment as the consequence of sin; the other a fear of sin itself, as intrinsically evil, or, which amounts to the same thing, as opposed to the will of God, and to His very nature, which is thus assumed as the ultimate criterion of right and wrong, of good and evil. Only a filial fear disposes men to serve God. Selfish and slavish fear disposes them to flee from Him. This distinction, however obvious as it is in Scripture and familiar in experience, is not practically recognized by all men. There seems to be a natural propensity to look upon fear, blank fear, as the essence of devotion, as the whole of what is due to God, the rendering of which absolves from all obligation to believe, to trust, to love, or to obey. Among the heathen this idea of religion is perhaps predominant, or certainly far more prevalent than we frequently imagine. It may well be questioned whether their deities are ever the objects of their love, excepting in those cases where the god is but a personification of some darling lust. Beyond this homage rendered to the unchecked sway of their own appetites and passions, there is strong reason for believing that their devotion is nothing but the tribute of their fears to a superior power which they hate, and which they look upon as hating them. The service rendered under the influence of such a motive is in no ease more than they regard as absolutely necessary to secure them from the wrath of the offended godhead. But this universal and unconquerable sense of guilt may co-exist with an indefinite variety of notions as to the means of propitiation, and the extent to which those means must be applied. Some men may feel it to be necessary to expend their whole time in appeasing the Divine wrath; but by far the greater number, under every known form of idolatry, consider less than this sufficient, and rejoice to appropriate the residue to self-indulgence. They give no more than is extorted by their fears, and have no conception of religious service as a voluntary, cheerful, joyous consecration of the whole man to an object which he venerates and loves, and in the doing of whose will he finds his highest happiness. The only service of this free, spontaneous, and absorbing nature that the heathen devotee pays, is the service rendered to himself, in the indulgence of his own corrupt desires. He gives even to his chosen idol only what he is unable to withhold, his fears; and by so doing proves himself a stranger to all genuine religious fear, which cannot be divorced from the willing and devoted service of its object. An apt illustration of this general truth is afforded by a singular and interesting passage of the sacred history. The King of Assyria had carried into exile the ten tribes of Israel, and supplied



their” place with settlers from his own dominions. These were heathen, and brought with them their own idols and idolatrous rites. Having no knowledge of Jehovah, whom their predecessors had professed to worship, even under the forbidden form of golden calves, they had, of course, no fear of His displeasure, till He sent wild beasts among them, and slew some of them. Regarding this correctly as a penal visitation from the God of the land, they procured from their own sovereign the assistance of an Israelitish priest to teach them how to worship Him. He accordingly taught them, as the narrative expresses it, “*how they should fear the Lord,*” and they acted promptly upon his instructions. They took care, however, to provide gods of their own, each tribe or nation for itself, while at the same time they offered to Jehovah a worship of fear prompted more by the recollection of lions than by faith or reason. “*So they feared the Lord, and served their own gods.*” How far the sacred writer was from recognising this as any genuine religious fear at all, we learn from his saying, in the very next sentence, “*unto this day they do after the former manners; they fear not the Lord.*” Why! Because “*they feared the Lord, and served their own gods.*” We may be disposed to smile with some contempt at the absurd and inconsistent conduct of these wretched pagans. But wherein did their folly and their sin consist? Certainly not in being afraid of the displeasure of Jehovah and in seeking to avert it; for in this they acted wisely. But it lay in their imagining that forms of worship, extorted from them by their selfish fears, would be sufficient to propitiate the Most High and secure them from His vengeance; while their voluntary service, their cordial and habitual devotion, was expended on His enemies and rivals. If this is the absurdity which we condemn, our judgment is a just one; but let us impartially condemn it wherever we may find it, whether in ancient or in modern times, whether in Eastern or in Western climes, whether in heathendom or Christendom, whether in our neighbours or ourselves. To make the transition easier from the heathen to the Christian world, we may begin with our own heathen, the heathen at our own doors, in our own streets; I mean those who approach nearest to the heathen both in the positive and negative circumstances of their spiritual state, their ignorance of truth, and their enslavement to sin. Look at the worst part of your population, as it pours its turbid streams along in times of more than usual excitement; hear its muttered or vociferated curses; mark the bestial character of its propensities and habits. All this you have seen, and as you saw it, you have been disposed perhaps to say that here, at least, there is no divided worship or allegiance; here, at least, are men who serve their own gods, but who do not, even in profession, fear the Lord. No, in profession, certainly not; in form, in purpose, not at all; but do you think they never fear Him, that is, feel afraid of Him? Be not precipitate in drawing such conclusions. In the vast mixed multitude of those whom you regard as the most ignorant, and reckless, and besotted of your countrymen, observe, on some occasion of extraordinary concourse, how many haggard faces, and contracted brows, and strangely gleaming eyes encounter yours. Do you believe all this expression of anxiety and dread to be the fruit of poverty, or sickness, or domestic cares? If so, you are mistaken; for the same expression may be seen in those who are not poor, who are not sick, or outwardly distressed at all; and on the other hand, its absence may be marked in thousands who are poorer, and who suffer more from care and sickness than do any of those whom you are observing. There is something back of all these causes to produce this uniformity of countenance, and I will tell you what it is--it is fear. You fear the Lord; you are unwilling to provoke His anger;

you acknowledge your obligation to serve Him, and you discharge that obligation by attending on His worship; but is He the master that you daily serve? Where is your treasure and your heart? By whose will do you regulate your life? A man may so far fear the Lord as to frequent His house, and join in the external acts of worship there; but what if he has other gods at home, and there bows down to Mammon or to Belial? What if the world is in his heart, and the prince of this world on the throne of his affections? Will the stain of these habitual idolatries be washed out by patiently enduring the penance of a Sabbath service? Will the Lord, who is thus feared with a slavish dread of His displeasure, be contented, for the sake of this, to pass by all the rest--all that is done, or all that is not done, in defiance of His absolute authority and positive command? The charge which is here brought is not one of hypocrisy. It is one of delusion. I do not say that those of whom I speak pretend to fear the Lord when they know they fear Him not. I say that they believe they fear Him, when in fact they fear Him not. Or rather, which is really the same thing in another form, they do fear Him; but it is not with a fear which honours, or conciliates, or pleases Him, as they imagine; and here, just here, is their delusion. They are sincere enough in thinking that they fear God; but they are terribly mistaken in supposing that they fear Him as they ought. This is a painful truth to those of us whom it concerns; but it is one which, sooner or later, must be told. And it requires not many words to tell it. It may be summed up in this short sentence: If you do not serve the Lord, you do not fear Him. You may attend upon His worship, you may respect religion, you may believe the Bible to be true, you may hope to be saved through Christ, you may expect to die the death of the righteous.

*(F. Addison Alexander, D. D.)*

<https://www.studydrive.org/commentaries/eng/tbi/2-kings-17.html>

### **Dr. W. A. Criswell: Mixed-Up Religion**

And so it was, at the beginning of their dwelling there, that they feared not the Lord. They were heathen idolaters, and when they came into the land, transplanted by the king of Assyria, they brought with them their heathen idols and they worshiped their heathen gods. They feared not the Lord. They came into the land, and they lived in houses that were already built. They drank of the fruit of vineyards that were already planted. They tilled fields that were already cleared and they had nothing but contempt for Jehovah God for had not the gods of the kings of Assyria swept before them Jehovah and Israel, like you would scatter dust before the storm?

So when they came into the land, these transplanted colonists, they feared not the Lord and they worshiped their heathen gods. Then the Lord did something – He always does something. Therefore, the Lord sent lions among them, which slew them. Isn't that a remarkable thing – what happens when people don't fear God – when they don't reverence the Lord – something always happens. . .

Now, it says here they wanted to know the manner of the God. That is, they were not interested in being converted. They were not interested in being saved. They weren't interested in being born again, and they weren't interested in worshiping the true Jehovah God. But they wanted to know the rites and the rituals and the ceremonies and the sacraments and the creeds and the professions by which they could be introduced to

the God of the land.

Well it was very easy, for this Bethelite priest, oh, thus to introduce Him. For all his life he had worshiped God under the form, under the image, of a golden ox, a golden calf. So it was easy for him to teach these people how it was; you could worship God and, at the same time, bow down before graven images.

So there you have them. They are converted by the lions. They don't love the Lord. They don't love the land. They just feared the lions and they're interested in some kind of a manner, some kind of a ritual, some kind of a sacrament, by which they can appease God and at the same time bow down before their golden images. And that's exactly what they did. . .

Our religion is to be a religion of the spirit. It's to be a religion of the soul. It's to be a religion of the heart. It's a religion of devotion. It's a religion of commitment. It's a religion of holiness. It's a religion of being born again. It's a religion of giving your life to God. It's a religion of the love, and the worship, and the devotion to Jesus our Lord. It's on the inside and all of the accouterments we have are in themselves nothing at all.

TEXT: 2 Kings 18:1-37

TITLE: HISTORY THREATENS TO REPEAT ITSELF – JUDAH UNDER ATTACK

**BIG IDEA:**

**IN TIMES OF CRISIS SATAN USES MANY CRAFTY ARGUMENTS TO TRY TO UNDERMINE OUR FAITH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This historical scene in Judah is set in opposition to the preceding account of the Fall of Samaria in Israel. Once again we have a crisis facing God's covenant people with a severe threat from Assyria against the Promised Land. Will history repeat itself? The difference is that Judah has a righteous king in Hezekiah who is commended for his faith after the pattern of David. Yet despite his overall righteous reign, he initially caves when confronted by superior military force. As the enemy lays siege to Jerusalem, the various arguments are presented to seek to undermine the faith of God's people.

**William Barnes:** We now come to the final section of **1-2 Kings**, a section which can perhaps simply be entitled, "**Judah Alone**." For Israel, the northern kingdom, has now irrevocably disappeared from the scene. After the stirring sermon of **chapter 17** describing the reasons for its fate, we know that Israel was doomed by its continued preoccupation with idolatry and religious syncretism. We also suspect that Judah will eventually be subjected to the same fate, unless something dramatically different takes place. And sure enough, with the onset of the reign of good King Hezekiah (**chs 18–20**), the dramatic turnaround we are seeking seems indeed on the horizon. This will, however, prove to be only a delay in the demise of the southern kingdom, as Hezekiah himself will come to recognize (see **20:19**). In fact, even good King Josiah (**22:1–23:30**), the great-grandson of Hezekiah and probably the "hero" of the Deuteronomistic History, will not succeed in halting permanently the seemingly inevitable course of this tragic history (see **22:15–20**). Inevitably doomed, yet always containing a glimmer of hope—that is Judah's nature in the final section of **1-2 Kings**.

**Peter Pett:** The story of Hezekiah is portrayed as of one who was victorious on every hand, and who eventually stood up against the great king of Assyria, emerging weakened and battered, but triumphant. In some ways it can be seen as similar to the story of David against Goliath. Both dealt with those who '*defied the living God*' (**2 Kings 19:6**), and both emphasised the weak facing the strong and overcoming them in the power of YHWH. Indeed that is one of the themes of these chapters, the effective power of YHWH, for great emphasis is laid on the impossibility of anyone successfully defying the king of Assyria, apart, of course, from YHWH.

**I. (:1-8) HEZEKIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH – COMMENDING FAITH**

## A. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints

### 1. When Did He Reign?

*“Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel,”*

### 2. Who Was His Father?

*“that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king.”*

### 3. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*“He was twenty-five years old when he became king,”*

### 4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned twenty-nine years”*

**MacArthur:** The 29 years given here indicate only those years after his co-regency with Ahaz was over, when he was the actual sovereign. During Hezekiah’s reign, the prophets Isaiah (**19:2; Is 1:1; 37:21**) and Micah (**Mic 1:1**) continued to minister in Judah.

### 5. Over Which Kingdom Did He Reign?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

### 6. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah.”*

**Robert Rayburn:** Hezekiah was the son of the wicked king Ahaz. Under what influences he came to repudiate his father’s perspective and program we are not told. But it seems clear, even more so in Chronicles than in Kings, that we are to look to his mother. He had a godly mother and she made all the difference to her son and so to Judah as a kingdom.

## B. (:3-6) Moral Evaluation

### 1. (:3) Summary Evaluation

*“And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So David reigns again! It was almost too much to hope for. Think of Hezekiah’s reign in light of Judah’s previous 150 years. Godly Jehoshaphat’s stupid marriage alliances with Ahab’s family not only guaranteed wicked kings (Jehoram, Ahaziah) to Judah but nearly wiped out the Davidic dynasty (Athaliah). Kings followed who were doing ‘what was right’ but never getting extreme about it (Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, and Jotham). Then with Ahaz (**ch. 16**) it looks like Judah is plunging into the pit. How amazing that after Ahaz we have David *redivivus*.

### 2. (:4) Significant Reforms

#### a. Eradicate the Idolatrous Worship Centers

*“He removed the high places*

*and broke down the sacred pillars  
and cut down the Asherah.”*

**Peter Pett:** Internally Hezekiah was determined to bring Judah back to the true worship of YHWH. He removed the syncretistic high places, broke the pillars which represented Baal, and cut down the Asherah images (or wooden poles) which represented the mother goddess of the Canaanites.

b. Demolish the Bronze Serpent

*“He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan.”*

**David Guzik:** God’s people must likewise be on guard against idolatry today. There are many dangers of idolatry in the modern church:

- Making leaders idols.
- Making education an idol.
- Making human eloquence an idol.
- Making customs and habits of ministry an idol.
- Making forms of worship an idol.

**Chuck Smith:** "What does it Mean When People Start Worshipping Relics or Idols?"

A. They have lost their consciousness of God's presence.

1. In reality He is always there, "*for in Him we live.*" "*Where can I flee from thy presence?*"

- We are not always aware of Him.

B. Somehow within we are trying to recapture that which was lost.

1. The day we felt God's presence and power.

2. That time when God's joy filled our lives.

3. How did we ever lose it?

- The cares of this life;

- the deceitfulness of riches,

- the lust for other things.

**Biblical Illustrator:** That a blind veneration for the past is always an obstacle in the path of progress. An intelligent regard for the past is, of course, a help and not a hindrance in the direction of all true advance. But a clinging to customs, institutions, modes of thought and worship, and a refusal to surrender them for no other reason than that they have existed for centuries--this is an unintelligent attachment to the past, and has often obstructed progress. Right across the path of Hezekiah, in his endeavours to purify the religious life of Ins people, stood this blind veneration for the brasen serpent. They could have given no intelligent account of their burning incense to this image; only, it had long ago been a medium of healing influence; and as, doubtless, their fathers had burnt incense to it, why should not they? But Hezekiah rose above the superstition which blinded his countrymen.

### 3. (:5-6) Steadfast Faith, Loyalty and Obedience

#### a. (:5) Steadfast Faith

*“He trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel;  
so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of  
Judah, nor among those who were before him.”*

**MacArthur:** The most noble quality of Hezekiah (in dramatic contrast to his father, Ahaz) was that he relied on the Lord as his exclusive hope in every situation. What distinguished him from all other kings of Judah (after the division of the kingdom) was his firm trust in the Lord during a severe national crisis (**18:17 – 19:34**). Despite troublesome events, Hezekiah clung tightly to the Lord, faithfully following Him and obeying His commands (v. 6). As a result, the Lord was with him and gave him success (v. 7).

#### b. (:6a) Loyalty

*“For he clung to the LORD;  
he did not depart from following Him,”*

**Constable:** Regarding his faith, Hezekiah was the greatest Judahite king (v. 5). He did not depart from Yahweh later in life (v. 6).

#### c. (:6b) Obedience

*“but kept His commandments,  
which the LORD had commanded Moses.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** While the writer of Kings concentrates on the political events of Hezekiah’s reign, the author of Chronicles gives supplemental information as to Hezekiah’s continuing reformation. Hezekiah’s spiritual concern brought about a cleansing of the temple, thus undoing the evil deeds of Ahaz (**2 Chron 29:3-19**). This was followed by a reconstruction and rededication of the temple (**2 Chron 29:20-36**), accomplished with proper sacrifices (vv. 20-24), with sincere worship (vv. 25-30), and with glad service to God (vv. 31-36). Hezekiah’s further reforms included the reinstitution of the Passover (**2 Chron 30**), an observation performed with careful forethought (vv. 1-12) and in accordance with the divine command, tempered with mercy (vv. 13-22) and with protracted festivity (vv. 23-27). The author of Chronicles tells of still later iconoclastic purges in which all the people of Israel participated (**2 Chron 31:1**) and of Hezekiah’s further attention to spiritual details and provisions (**2 Chron 31:2-19**), closing with the notice that Hezekiah characteristically lived out his life in utter devotion to God and so was successful in all that he did (**2 Chron 31:20-21**).

### **C. (:7-8) Divine Blessing**

#### 1. (:7a) General Prosperity

##### a. Blessed with the Presence of the Lord

*“And the LORD was with him;”*

- b. Blessed with Overall Prosperity  
*“wherever he went he prospered.”*

2. (:7b) Breaking Away from Assyria  
*“And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.”*

3. (:8) Victories over the Philistines  
*“He defeated the Philistines as far as Gaza and its territory,  
from watchtower to fortified city.”*

## **II. (:9-16) HISTORY THREATENS TO REPEAT ITSELF – CAVING FAITH**

### **A. (:9-12) Review of Israel’s Fall from Shalmaneser and Deportation to Assyria**

1. (:9) Siege of Samaria  
*“Now it came about in the fourth year of King Hezekiah, which was the  
seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah king of Israel, that Shalmaneser king  
of Assyria came up against Samaria and besieged it.”*

**MacArthur:** These verses [9-12] flash back to the time just before Israel’s destruction and captivity to give a summary of the fall of Samaria (more fully narrated in **17:5-23**) as a graphic reminder of the Assyrian power and the threat they still were to Judah. This review sets the scene for the siege of Jerusalem with its reminder of Israel’s apostasy against which Hezekiah’s faith in the Lord was a bright contrast.

**Constable:** Verses 9-12 serve a double purpose. They relate the Assyrian defeat of Samaria to Hezekiah's reign, and they explain again the spiritual reason for that defeat (v. 12).

2. (:10) Capture of Samaria  
*“And at the end of three years they captured it;  
in the sixth year of Hezekiah, which was the ninth year of Hoshea  
king of Israel, Samaria was captured.”*

3. (:11) Deportation to Assyria  
*“Then the king of Assyria carried Israel away into exile to Assyria,  
and put them in Halah and on the Habor, the river of Gozan,  
and in the cities of the Medes,”*

4. (:12) Fatal Flaw = Transgressing the Covenant  
*“because they did not obey the voice of the LORD their God,  
but transgressed His covenant,  
even all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded;  
they would neither listen, nor do it.”*



**Peter Pett:** And what happened to Samaria was because they did not obey the voice of YHWH their God, but transgressed His covenant, that is, did not hear or do all that Moses His servant commanded. This again is in contrast with the fact that Hezekiah did cleave to YHWH, and did keep His commandments which He had commanded Moses (**2 Kings 18:6**). Thus the basis of Jerusalem's deliverance is made clear.

## **B. (:13-16) Reality of Judah's Imminent Threat from Sennacherib of Assyria**

### 1. (:13) Faith Does Not Mean No Attacks

*"Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them."*

### 2. (:14-16) Faith Does Not Mean We Never Cave

*"Then Hezekiah king of Judah sent to the king of Assyria at Lachish, saying, 'I have done wrong. Withdraw from me; whatever you impose on me I will bear.' So the king of Assyria required of Hezekiah king of Judah three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. 15 And Hezekiah gave him all the silver which was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house. 16 At that time Hezekiah cut off the gold from the doors of the temple of the LORD, and from the doorposts which Hezekiah king of Judah had overlaid, and gave it to the king of Assyria."*

**R. D. Patterson:** Hezekiah's generosity served only to whet Sennacherib's appetite. Doubtless he reasoned that these could only be a token payment; surely immense stores of wealth must lie hidden within the fortified walls of Jerusalem. Accordingly, as he continued operations in the Lachish area and laid plans for the capture of Ekron, Sennacherib sent a strong contingent under the direction of senior members of his staff to place Jerusalem under siege.

**Peter Pett:** In order to obtain the required gold Hezekiah had to strip the pillars (and possibly the doorposts, the word occurs nowhere else) of the Temple because all his limited amount of gold had been used for the purpose of honouring YHWH. Both the references to the silver and the gold would suggest that Hezekiah was finding it hard to achieve the required level of tribute, which may well have contributed to Sennacherib's dissatisfaction with the situation. We must remember that as a result of the circumstances of the invasion Hezekiah had limited opportunities for exacting taxes in order to supplement what was in the treasuries.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So the trust and obedience **verses 1-8** speak of are what Hezekiah came to have as a result of the whole Assyrian threat. True, **verses 1-8** specify some of Hezekiah's initial reforms; but primarily they are giving an evaluation of Hezekiah's total reign not of a particular failure. There is no conflict between an overall trend of faith that nevertheless experiences lapses of faith. Sometimes faith has its 'wobblies'—and they can be severe.

### **III. (:17-25) ENGAGING THE ENEMY EXPOSES GOD'S PEOPLE TO CRAFTY ARGUMENTS – CHALLENGING FAITH**

#### **A. (:17-18) Confrontation at Jerusalem**

##### 1. (:17) Key Leaders of Assyria

*“Then the king of Assyria sent Tartan and Rab-saris and Rabshakeh from Lachish to King Hezekiah with a large army to Jerusalem. So they went up and came to Jerusalem. And when they went up, they came and stood by the conduit of the upper pool, which is on the highway of the fuller's field.”*

**Constable:** "Rabshakeh" was an Assyrian title equivalent to commander-in-chief of the army. **Whitcomb** defined the titles of the various Assyrian officers mentioned in **verse 17** as follows: "Tartan" ("Field Marshal" or "Second In Rank"; cf. **Isa. 20:1**), "Rab-saris" ("Chief Eunuch"; cf. **Jer. 39:3**), and "Rabshakeh" ("Chief Officer").

**Whitcomb:** The location of the confrontation was significant: *“the conduit of the upper pool, which is in the highway of the fuller's field” (II Kings 18:17)*. It was here, on the high ground overlooking the city from the northwest, where laundrymen (fullers) found sufficient water for their trade, that Isaiah had challenged wicked Ahaz thirty-three years earlier with a divine alternative: either trust Jehovah or face the Assyrians (**Isa. 7:3-17**). Ahaz, on behalf of his people, made his decision, and God's warning was now being fulfilled.

##### 2. (:18) Key Leaders of Judah

*“When they called to the king, Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph the recorder, came out to them.”*

#### **B. (:19-25) Crafty Arguments of the Enemy**

##### 1. (:19-20) Questioning Your Confidence for Deliverance

*“Then Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Say now to Hezekiah, Thus says the great king, the king of Assyria, What is this confidence that you have?’ You say (but they are only empty words), ‘I have counsel and strength for the war.’ Now on whom do you rely, that you have rebelled against me?”*

##### 2. (:21) Questioning the Strength of Your Allies to Deliver You

*“Now behold, you rely on the staff of this crushed reed, even on Egypt; on which if a man leans, it will go into his hand and pierce it. So is Pharaoh king of Egypt to all who rely on him.”*

##### 3. (:22) Questioning the Ability of Your God to Deliver You

*“But if you say to me, ‘We trust in the LORD our God,’ is it not He whose high places and whose altars Hezekiah has taken away, and has said to*

*Judah and to Jerusalem, 'You shall worship before this altar in Jerusalem '?"*

**MacArthur:** The Rabshakeh mistakenly thought Hezekiah's reforms in removing idols from all over the land and reestablishing central worship in Jerusalem (18:4; 2Ch 31:1) had removed opportunities to worship the Lord, and thus cut back on honoring Judah's God, thereby displeasing Him and forfeiting His help in war. That all worship should center in Solomon's temple was utterly foreign to the polytheistic Assyrians.

**Constable:** The Rabshakeh used six arguments to persuade Hezekiah to surrender:

1. Egypt was an undependable ally (vv. 19-21).
2. The altars to Yahweh throughout the land had been removed (v. 22).
3. The Assyrian army was overwhelmingly large and powerful (vv. 23- 24).
4. Yahweh had told Sennacherib to attack Jerusalem (v. 25).
5. Conditions for the Israelites would be paradisiacal if they surrendered (vv. 31-32).
6. No other god was able to save the nations that the Assyrians had attacked (vv. 33-35).

4. (:23) Offering a Mockery of a Peace Treaty

*"Now therefore, come, make a bargain with my master the king of Assyria, and I will give you two thousand horses, if you are able on your part to set riders on them."*

5. (:24) Questioning Your Ability to Survive Even the Slightest Attack

*"How then can you repulse one official of the least of my master's servants, and rely on Egypt for chariots and for horsemen?"*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** But it is sad when an Assyrian has to teach you how flimsy and foolish and fragile is the object of your trust. It's sad when an Assyrian can divine that you trust Egypt more than Yahweh. It's sad when an Assyrian can expose your folly rather than your faith.

6. (:25) Questioning Which Side Your God is Really on

*"Have I now come up without the LORD's approval against this place to destroy it? The LORD said to me, 'Go up against this land and destroy it.'"*

**IV. (:26-35) ENGAGING THE ENEMY EXPOSES GOD'S LEADERS TO MOCKERY, ATTACK AND HUMILIATION –**

## **CONTRADICTING FAITH**

### **A. (:26-27) Public Forum for Interaction**

#### **1. (:26) Judah Prefers Limiting Negotiations to the Leadership**

*“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, and Shebnah and Joah, said to Rabshakeh, ‘Speak now to your servants in Aramaic, for we understand it; and do not speak with us in Judean, in the hearing of the people who are on the wall.’”*

**Peter Pett:** This was probably not a plea based on their fear of the people’s response. It would hardly have been wise to make the request in this way if that was so, as the reply given could only have been expected. Rather it was a firm affirmation that they did not need to be treated like barbarians as though they could not understand Aramaic, as in fact they could speak it quite adequately. Thus they were requesting that negotiation take place in the diplomatic language recognized by all and that they be treated as intellectual equals in the negotiations. Such things were for negotiators, not for common people. In a sense it was a question. Were these serious negotiations, or were they just propaganda? They soon received their answer.

#### **2. (:27) Assyria Prefers Attacking the Leaders via Public Propaganda**

*“But Rabshakeh said to them, ‘Has my master sent me only to your master and to you to speak these words, and not to the men who sit on the wall, doomed to eat their own dung and drink their own urine with you?’”*

**Peter Pett:** His crude way of putting things stands in contrast to the dignified attempt of the three Judaeans negotiators to keep things on a high level. There may in all this well be an intended contrast, stressing the polite diplomacy of Judah, and the arrogant and crude diplomacy of Assyria. Judah are clearly gentlemen, whereas Assyria are merely bullies.

### **B. (:28-35) Propaganda Designed to Humiliate Hezekiah and Force Surrender – Don’t Trust the Words of Hezekiah**

#### **1. (:28-30) You Can’t Trust Hezekiah**

*“Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, saying, ‘Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. 29 Thus says the king, Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; 30 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’”*

- Hezekiah can’t deliver you
- the Lord can’t deliver you

#### **2. (:31-32a) You Can Trust Cutting a Sweetheart Deal with Assyria**

*“Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, ‘Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of*

*his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die.”*

### 3. (:32b-35) You Should Learn a Lesson from History

*“But do not listen to Hezekiah, when he misleads you, saying, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’ 33 Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 35 Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the LORD should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And it is a telling argument; it can claim **history** as its witness. Off the top of his head the Rabshakeh names half a dozen hopeless cases. The Assyrian steamroller flattens every land in its path. No divinity has been able to protect its people from the invincible hosts of the god Assur (cf. **v. 35a**). And then the Rabshakeh said something asinine (**v. 35b**). By a leap of faith and defect of logic he assumes that Yahweh is simply another generic deity of a minuscule kingdom who is no match for a world-class empire. Something snapped somewhere when he said that. He had stepped over a line. He had gone too far. It was the beginning of the end.

### **(:36-37) EPILOGUE – RESPONSE = DESPERATION BUT NOT SURRENDER**

#### **A. (:36) Desperate People – They Still Obey Hezekiah and Stay Silent**

*“But the people were silent and answered him not a word, for the king's commandment was, ‘Do not answer him.’”*

**Paul House:** The people remain silent because Hezekiah has anticipated such tactics and commanded them to do so. Too, they may not trust the speaker. Of course, the Assyrian line would be hard to sell anyway, since their reputation has preceded the invasion and other Judahite cities lie in ruins. While Hezekiah's officials report back to him, the Assyrians wait, the defenders wait, and the reader waits.

#### **B. (:37) Desperate Leaders – They Display Their Anguish But Don't Demand Surrender**

*“Then Eliakim the son of Hilkiah, who was over the household, and Shebna the scribe and Joah the son of Asaph, the recorder, came to Hezekiah with their clothes torn and told him the words of Rabshakeh.”*

**David Guzik:** Though they were silent, they were still deeply affected by this attack. They had the same experience Paul described in **2 Corinthians 4:8-9**: *We are hard pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed.* Things were hard, but the battle was not yet lost.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** After the Rabshakeh ceased his bluster all was quiet. The king's orders were to give no response. The Rabshakeh stands there expectantly, but Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah turn and walk off. With robes ripped in anguish they come and report all to Hezekiah. The fortunes of Judah will change soon but don't rush from **chapter 18** too quickly. Let the scene of **verses 36–37** sink into your soul. It's quite authentic. Do not the affairs of Yahweh's people in this world often look just that bleak?

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did Hezekiah cave so quickly to the demands of Assyria?
- 2) What types of internal arguments does Satan use to try to undermine your faith?
- 3) How easily are you intimidated by those who try to mock your confidence in the Lord Jesus?
- 4) How was Hezekiah able to maintain the loyalty of his key leaders and of the people in general?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Before wading into the exposition of the chapter, I want to provide an overall sketch of its development; sometimes it is useful to see the 'bones' of a long piece of text.

A breath of fresh air (Hezekiah), **vv. 1–8**

A blast of stale air (Assyria), **vv. 9–16**

Shalmaneser '*came up*' ('*ālāh*), **vv. 9–12**

Sennacherib '*came up*' ('*ālāh*), **vv. 13–16**

First speech: trust (*bāṭah*), **vv. 17–25**

Exposure (Egypt), **vv. 21, 24b**

Politics, **v. 22**

Mockery, **vv. 23–24a**

'Revelation,' **v. 25**

Second speech: deliverance (*nāṣal*), **vv. 26–35**

The power of intimidation, **vv. 26–27**

The attempt at division, **vv. 28–32**

## The logic of history, vv. 33–35

### The end to a dark day, vv. 36–37

**Whitcomb:** From a negative standpoint, there was much destruction and removal of the symbols of pagan idolatry that had accumulated during his father's reign (**II Kings 18:4**; cf. **II Chron. 31:1**). Among the things destroyed was the *brazen serpent* which Moses had made in the wilderness seven hundred years earlier (**Num. 21:8, 9**)! Instead of serving as a reminder of the blessed truth that salvation comes by obedient faith in God's promises, the famous relic had become an idol before which men bowed and offered incense! . . .

From a positive standpoint, Hezekiah opened the temple doors which Ahaz his father had closed (**II Chron. 29:3**; cf. **28:24**), commissioned the priests and Levites to cleanse the temple (**II Chron. 29:4-19**), offered appropriate sacrifices (**II Chron. 29:20-36**), planned a special Passover which had to be delayed one month because so few were ceremonially qualified (**II Chron. 30:1-4**), and invited people from every tribe, not only from the south, but also from the northern areas that had suffered the loss of their king and capital city a few years earlier (**II Chron. 30:5-12**). . .

Rabshakeh used six arguments to pressure the Jews into the immediate surrender of their city. . .

The first argument was actually quite valid: Egypt was an undependable and weak reed to lean upon as far as military alliance was concerned. . .

The second argument, a theological one, must have seemed laughable to most of the listening Jews. Hezekiah had removed all the "Jehovah altars" throughout the land (**II Kings 18:4**; cf. **II Chron 31:1**), and destroyed Moses' brazen serpent (**II Kings 18:4**). Sure, then, the Assyrians insisted, the Jews could no longer count on any help from Jehovah, whose honor and glory had thus been reduced by Hezekiah's fanatical iconoclasm! Such reasoning might have seemed impressive to idolaters who thought that the size and number of idols erected in honor of a particular deity would be a valid measuring-stick of the amount of blessing that could be expected from him; but even the average Jew could see through such religious logic (cf. **Isa. 10:10, 11**).

Rabshakeh's third argument was simply that the Assyrian army was overwhelmingly large and powerful (**II Kings 18:3, 24**; cf. **I Kings 20:10**). The point was undeniable, except that a gigantic army would presumably require just as much time to conquer a well-fortified city like Jerusalem as a moderate-sized army, and a lengthy siege was probably the last thing the Assyrians wanted to engage in at this time.

The most astonishing argument of all was probably the fourth one: "*Am I now come up without Jehovah against this place to destroy it? Jehovah said unto me, Go up against this land, and destroy it*" (**II Kings 18:25**). . . Even if Rabshakeh did quote from



Isaiah's sermons, he failed to consider the possibility that Jehovah's wrath upon Judah would be averted if the people repented of their sins and prayed to their God.

Rabshakeh's fifth argument (**II Kings 18:31, 32**) must go down in history as one of the clumsiest and most transparent propaganda appeals on record. If you will just surrender unconditionally to us, said the Assyrian, we will provide for you free transportation to a beautiful land far away, where each of you will have a private cistern surrounded with vines, grain, and both olive and fig trees – like the Garden of Eden! The only problem with this impressive travel and settlement plan was that the sponsors had a very bad reputation! . . .

Sixth, and finally, another religious argument (**II Kings 18:33-35**). (In our day of near-total secularism, it is difficult to appreciate how great a role religion played in the ancient Near East, even in military and political affairs.) Other gods, that had protected greater cities than Jerusalem (the gods of Hamath, Arpad, Shepharvaim, Hena, Ivvah, and even – how pitiful! – Samaria), had proven to be utterly ineffective against the might of Ashur, god of the Assyrians. So what could Jehovah do except to surrender His city to prevent its destruction? This argument, like the second one (**II Kings 18:22**), must have seemed quite unimpressive to those Jews who had any concept whatsoever of the absolute uniqueness of Jehovah.

**Rich Cathers:** 5 Arguments of the Assyrians:

**#1 – Distortion**

:21 *thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed...Egypt*

The truth is that though Egypt is an ally, Judah is not trusting in Egypt to deliver them.

**#2 – Deception**

:25 *The LORD said to me, Go up against this land, and destroy it.*

He's trying to say that Yahweh, the God of Judah, actually wanted the Assyrians to come up and fight against Judah.

**#3 – Dread**

:26 *Speak, I pray thee, to thy servants in the Syrian language ...*

The Assyrian delegation had been speaking in Hebrew so everyone on the wall of Jerusalem could hear. Hezekiah's delegation asks them to change to Aramaic, the language of the Syrians, so that the common people wouldn't understand.

Rabshakeh wants the common people to hear this threat.

He's hoping that the frightened people will pressure the king into surrendering.

**#4 – Doubt**

:30 *Neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD*

**#5 – Despair**

:33 *Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria?*



TEXT: 2 Kings 19:1-37

TITLE: THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL DEFENDS HIS PEOPLE AND HIS CITY

**BIG IDEA:**  
**THE BEST DEFENSE IS A DIVINE DEFENSE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

You have heard the saying in the sports world: The best defense is a good offense. Here we see in the spiritual and political realm: The best defense is a Divine Defense. When God is on our side we have nothing to fear. In fact God's first word to us as we turn to Him for deliverance is always: "Fear not!" There are many important principles about prayer that we can learn from Hezekiah's approach to God here. The judgment of God against His enemies may not be immediate, but it is certain and it is devastating.

**Constable:** Hezekiah's response to this crisis was to turn to Yahweh in prayer and to His prophet for an answer. He sensed his position under Yahweh's authority, humbled himself, and sought God's help (cf. **2 Sam. 7; 1 Kings 8**). God rewarded Hezekiah's attitude and assured him of success because the Assyrians had challenged the reputation of Yahweh.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Structure:

King's plea, vv. 1–4  
Prophet's assurance, vv. 5–7  
Assyria's propaganda, vv. 8–13  
  
King's prayer, vv. 14–19  
Prophet's assurance, vv. 20–34  
Assyria's termination, vv. 35–37

**I. (:1-7) THE BEST DEFENSE LOOKS TO THE LORD FOR DELIVERANCE  
– SEEKING GOD'S WORD AND CALLING OUT IN PRAYER**

**A. (:1) Humbling Oneself Before the Lord**

*"And when King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes,  
covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the LORD."*

**MacArthur:** A reaction that symbolized Hezekiah's grief, repentance, and contrition. The nation had to repent and the king had to lead the way.

**Whitcomb:** Having been thoroughly chastened by his experience with the Assyrians, Hezekiah now set the pattern for his people in following God's way of dealing with a great crisis:

- (1) self-humiliation – **19:1a**;
- (2) going to the appointed place of worship – **19:1b**;
- (3) consulting the Word of God through His prophets – **19:2**; and
- (4) putting God's honor and glory above everything else – **19:4**.

## **B. (:2) Seeking the Word of the Lord**

*“Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz.”*

**Paul House:** Hezekiah knows he needs a word from the Lord, so he sends Eliakim, Shebna, and some priests to the prophet Isaiah. Again, the king's behavior is extraordinary in light of past kings. Before, the prophets sought the kings, only to be rebuked. Now, the king actually wants a prophetic word. He is not simply acting out of desperation (Ahaz took quite another route when he was desperate. Hezekiah acts out his personal convictions).

## **C. (:3-4) Utilizing Prayer as the #1 Strategy**

### 1. (:3) Recognizing Our Own Lack of Strength

*“And they said to him, ‘Thus says Hezekiah, This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth, and there is no strength to deliver.’”*

**Peter Pett:** In his message to Isaiah Hezekiah likens the situation of the anguished nation to that of a woman having great difficulties in bringing forth a child that was overdue, something that all would understand. She was continuing to suffer the anguish of her labour, but she was so weak after what she had already suffered that the child just would not be born. Many would see such a situation as an indication that YHWH was rebuking her, and that in some way she was in disgrace. She herself would certainly feel the disgrace of it.

His point was that in the same way Judah was undergoing its own ‘labour pains’. It was in anguish, it was in great trouble, it was aware that it was under the judgment of YHWH, it was aware of its own disgrace. But it was too weak to produce anything.

**Mordecai Cogan:** Hezekiah's message to the prophet is twofold. It conveys the sense of humbling which Sennacherib's victories have induced, here termed “*rebuke*”; and at the same time, it calls attention to the blasphemies against yhwh hurled by the Rab-shakeh.

### 2. (:4a) Rebuking Those Who Reproach the Lord

*“Perhaps the LORD your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the LORD your God has heard.”*

**Whitcomb:** If the thrice-holy God of Israel had honored the sincere repentance of a wicked king like Ahab (**I Kings 21:29**), and later honored the repentant prayer of another wicked king named Manasseh (**II Chron. 33:12, 13**), He would surely respond to this king of a prayer from this king of a king. And Hezekiah was not disappointed. The Lord promised through Isaiah that the blasphemies of Rabshakeh would be dealt with. With regard to Sennacherib, God would maneuver him back to Nineveh (possibly by a report of potential rebellion there) and cause him to be killed at the hand of assassins.

3. (:4b) Relying Mainly on Prayer

*“Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.”*

**D. (:5-7) Believing the Prophetic Word of the Lord**

1. (:5) Appealing to Isaiah for a Word from the Lord

*“So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah.”*

**Peter Pett:** The servants were the servants of ‘king’ Hezekiah. Here was represented all the might and authority of the kingdom, and its appeal was to Isaiah the prophet of YHWH. The kingdom could now do nothing. It had fought until it was on its knees. He was their last hope. But they did not come in despair. They came because they did believe that Isaiah, as the voice of YHWH, would tell them what to do.

2. (:6) Addressing Fear and Resisting Intimidation

*“And Isaiah said to them, ‘Thus you shall say to your master, Thus says the LORD, Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me.’”*

Message of support and encouragement

**Paul House:** Isaiah’s response to the envoys’ visit is clear, concise, confident, and comforting. He, too, reflects on the military and religious issues at hand, with the primary emphasis on the spiritual matters, which he in turn believes will decide the military concerns. Hezekiah need not fear, for the Lord will make himself known to the Assyrian king who has blasphemed him. Isaiah offers very specific promises, ones that will prove he is either a true prophet or a liar. His words also take Hezekiah one step further in his quest to serve the Lord. He knows now that the Lord promises to help him, yet he must believe this new promise, just as he has believed in the past.

3. (:7) Anticipating Deliverance

*“Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land.  
And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land.”*

**Peter Pett:** As with most prophecy no time scale was laid down. That was not the point of prophecy. The point was its **inevitability**. The departure of Sennacherib would certainly happen shortly, as indeed is evidenced by the silences in the Assyrian

inscriptions themselves, but his falling by the sword in his own land would happen at YHWH's discretion. The point was that his death, whenever it came, was totally in the hands of YHWH Who had even decided how and where it would take place. It would not necessarily happen immediately, but it would necessarily happen as YHWH had said. And as we know from the inscriptions, when the time came, that was precisely how it happened. Thus YHWH's power over Sennacherib was seen as total.

## **II. (:8-13) THE BEST DEFENSE IGNORES ENEMY LIES AND PROPAGANDA**

### **A. (:8) Counterattacks Can Divert the Enemy**

*"Then Rabshakeh returned and found the king of Assyria fighting against Libnah, for he had heard that the king had left Lachish."*

**Constable:** God's method of deliverance involved harassing the Assyrian army. First Libnah, a town a few miles northeast of Lachish, needed Sennacherib's attention. Then he received word that the king of Cush (southern Egypt) was coming to attack from the southwest, the direction opposite from Libnah and Jerusalem. These divinely sent diversions caused Sennacherib to suspend his siege of Jerusalem.

### **B. (:9) Clout of the Enemy Can be Overestimated**

*"When he heard them say concerning Tirhakah king of Cush,  
'Behold, he has come out to fight against you,'  
he sent messengers again to Hezekiah saying,"*

**R. D. Patterson:** The reason for Sennacherib's removal follows in v. 9: it had been reported to him that the Egyptian army under Tirhakah was even now advancing through the Philistine coast to aid the Philistine city of Ekron. Apparently by-passing Ekron, the Assyrian king was able to bring his forces safely to El Tekeh, where he met and defeated the Egyptian troops. After the victory at El Tekeh, Sennacherib turned back inland to capture Timnah and then Ekron itself.

While Sennacherib was thus engaged in fighting, he sent a siege contingent to Jerusalem so that Hezekiah could not attack from the rear. As well he sent the Rab Shakeh back to Jerusalem with a message for Hezekiah designed to continue the psychological warfare.

### **C. (:10-13) Claims of the Enemy Rely on Unsanctified Reasoning**

#### **1. (:10) Seeking to Undermine Faith**

*"Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah,  
'Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying,  
Jerusalem shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.'"*

#### **2. (:11-13) Finding Security in a Wrong View of History**

##### **a. (:11) Inevitability of Defeat**

*"Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done*

*to all the lands, destroying them completely.  
So will you be spared?”*

b. (:12-13) Inequality of Deities

*“Did the gods of those nations which my fathers destroyed deliver them, even Gozan and Haran and Rezeph and the sons of Eden who were in Telassar? 13 Where is the king of Hamath, the king of Arpad, the king of the city of Sepharvaim, and of Hena and Ivvah?”*

**MacArthur:** The conquered cities mentioned here lay between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers in Mesopotamia, and were cities of Syria that had recently fallen to Sennacherib and the Assyrians.

**Mordecai:** These references were intended to impress upon Hezekiah that continued rebellion would only lead to disaster, as it had in Israel.

### **III. (:14-19) THE BEST DEFENSE PETITIONS GOD FOR DELIVERANCE IN ACCORDANCE WITH GLORIFYING HIS NAME**

**A. (:14) Casting Our Cares Upon God**

*“Then Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD.”*

**B. (:15-19) Calling Upon God to Deliver His People and Glorify His Name**

*“And Hezekiah prayed before the LORD and said,”*

**Peter Pett:** His prayer was simple and to the point.

- Firstly he considered just Whom it was to Whom he was speaking. It was the God of Israel, the One Who sits between the cherubim, the one Who is the only God and God alone, the Creator of Heaven and earth.
- Then he called on God to hear and look and consider the situation, and especially these words that he had received from the king of Assyria, which He should note were in defiance of Him as the living God.
- Then he humbly acknowledged the truth of what Sennacherib had written. It was true that the kings of Assyria had laid waste the lands and cities mentioned, and had cast their gods into the fire. But that had been because they were no-gods, and simply the works of man’s hands (he had been well taught by Isaiah - see **Isaiah 40:18-20; Isaiah 44:9-20**). It was that that explained how they could be burned.
- And finally he called on YHWH to demonstrate to all the kingdoms of the earth that He was different from all others, so that they might know that He alone was God.

Thus having reached the end of his resources Hezekiah had recognized that his only hope lay in God, and his approach was not on the basis of his own need, nor of the need of his people, but on the basis that Sennacherib had insulted YHWH and that YHWH should vindicate His Name for His own glory. His concern was for the honour and Name of YHWH. That should be at the root of all prayer.

1. (:15) Invocation – Transcendence of God = Master of the Universe

*“O LORD, the God of Israel,  
who art enthroned above the cherubim,  
Thou art the God, Thou alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth.  
Thou hast made heaven and earth.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Hezekiah comes to a God of intense presence (*‘enthroned above the cherubim’*), sovereign sway (*‘God ... of all the kingdoms ...’*), and massive power (*‘you have made heaven and earth’*). Yahweh is specially present to Israel in his temple (*‘enthroned above the cherubim’*) but that does not mean he has gone AWOL among the nations or throughout the world. In one sentence Hezekiah confesses that he approaches a God who is near, vast, and mighty. One who is accessible, sovereign, and able. He packs a three-point sermon into the opening lines of his prayer! And the twist is that it’s not only true but helpful. Is this not precisely what Hezekiah needs to remember in the present distress? What better way for Hezekiah to encourage Hezekiah than to rehearse God’s majesty as he requests God’s help? Speaking truth about God to God may stir up assurance in God. Is this a cue for us to take more care about our address to God, about the way we begin our prayers?

2. (:16-18) Complaint – Immanence of God = Familiarity with Our Situation

a. (:16) Apply Your Senses = Hear / See / Listen

*“Incline Thine ear, O LORD, and hear;  
open Thine eyes, O LORD, and see;  
and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to  
reproach the living God.”*

b. (:17) Admit Reality

*“Truly, O LORD, the kings of Assyria  
have devastated the nations and their lands”*

c. (:18) Appeal to the Uniqueness of Judah’s Situation

*“and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods  
but the work of men's hands, wood and stone.  
So they have destroyed them.”*

3. (:19) Petition – Intervention of God = Deliver Us / Glorify Your Name

*“And now, O LORD our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand  
that all the kingdoms of the earth may know  
that Thou alone, O LORD, art God.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Hezekiah's petition is two-pronged—**emergency** and **testimony**. 'And now, Yahweh our God, save us from his hand' (v. 19a). Requests are fairly simple and direct when the terror of the world is outside your walls. But there is an additional petition (which actually indicates the result should Yahweh save Jerusalem): 'And let all the kingdoms of the earth know that you, Yahweh, are God all by yourself' (v. 19b). Yahweh's deliverance at Jerusalem will magnify Yahweh's reputation throughout the world. Dozens of deities had proven helpless against the mighty Sennacherib and Sennacherib's lord, Assur; but when Assur meets Yahweh and gets creamed he will go (as it were) and join the other loser gods. Hezekiah's plea has its eye on his trouble and on Yahweh's glory—and when we are concerned with God's glory we are likely to be heard. . .

When the driving passion of our prayers is Yahweh's honor a strange confidence begins to seep into them.

Prayer is frequently unnerving because it is the activity we engage in between catastrophe and deliverance. But if we pray truth, as Hezekiah did, we will find it not only reaches God but anchors us.

#### **IV. (:20-28) THE BEST DEFENSE AGGRESSIVELY REBUKES GOD'S ENEMIES**

##### **(:20) Getting God's Attention**

*"Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying,  
'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,  
Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria,  
I have heard you.'"*

**R. D. Patterson:** The Lord's answer was not long in coming. Isaiah sent a message from God to Hezekiah, assuring him that his prayer had been heard. The major portion of that message is composed within a threefold poetic utterance:

- (1) for Sennacherib there is a reply to his misguided boasting (vv. 21-28);
- (2) for Hezekiah God gives a sign that he would deal with Sennacherib and deliver his people (vv. 29-31); and
- (3) for all there is a prophetic declaration that Sennacherib would not even begin the battle of Jerusalem let alone conquer it (vv. 32-34).

**Iain Provan:** A second Isaianic prophecy, in three parts, brings God's response to Hezekiah's prayer. The first part (vv. 20-28) opens with general indications about the consequences of Sennacherib's blasphemy and pride in terms of his future downfall, when he will be despised and mocked by Jerusalem as he flees (vv. 21-22). His mistake has been to imagine that his military accomplishments have been achieved in his own strength (vv. 23-24). In reality, however, the Lord ordained and planned it all (vv. 25-26). Assyria was merely the rod of his anger (to use another Isaianic phrase; cf. Isa. 10:5-11), something already implied, unwittingly, in Sennacherib's use of the verb *h̄rm*, "destroy," in 19:11 (cf. 1 Kgs. 9:21 and 20:42 for the characteristic use of *h̄rm* in



relation to the Lord). Now the judgment of the all-knowing God (v. 27) will come upon Assyria instead, and Sennacherib will be forced to return by the way he came (v. 28).

**Peter Pett:** The oracle divides up into four main sections:

- 1) Judah's Scorn At Sennacherib For Setting Himself Up Against YHWH  
(2 Kings 19:21-22).
- 2) A Description Of The Boasting And Defiance Of Sennacherib  
(2 Kings 19:23-24).
- 3) YHWH's Response That Sennacherib In Fact Owes All His Success To Him  
(2 Kings 19:25-26).
- 4) An Assurance That Because Of Sennacherib's Taunts YHWH Intends To Act Against Him And Transport Him Back Like A Captive Wild Beast To Nineveh  
(2 Kings 19:27-28).

**A. (:21-22) Rebuke for Underestimating Your Opponent**

1. (:21) You Will be Mocked by God's People as You Retreat

*"This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: 'She has despised you and mocked you, The virgin daughter of Zion; She has shaken her head behind you, The daughter of Jerusalem!'"*

**Whitcomb:** God's answer to this humble and discerning prayer involved three distinct ideas:

- (1) Sennacherib is a mere instrument in the hands of a sovereign God – **II Kings 19:21-28**;
- (2) the remnant of Israel will prosper again – **II Kings 19:29-31**; and
- (3) the Assyrians will not touch Jerusalem – **II Kings 19:32-34**.

**Mordecai Cogan:** No small amount of irony is involved here, as the prophet depicts the attacked consoling the attacker, and this by saying, "Poor Assyria, how you do suffer!"

**R. D. Patterson:** The term "*virgin*" emphasizes that Jerusalem would not be violated by Sennacherib. By the use of a rhetorical question, God points out that Sennacherib had not wisely considered his course of action. His pride and arrogance had caused him to insult the Holy One of Israel. God's own holiness had been manifested clearly through his chosen people Israel (**Ps 89:18**), however much they may have failed him or poorly represented him (cf. **Ps 78:41**). What Sennacherib needed to understand was that a holy God would not countenance sin, whether in his own people (cf. **Isa 1:4-31**) or in those nations whose destinies he controls (**Jer 50:29**).

**David Guzik:** Jerusalem could be called the virgin, the daughter of Zion for several reasons:

- She was unpolluted with the gross idolatry of the pagans.



- God would defend her from the intended rape by Sennacherib and the Assyrians.
- She had never been invaded or conquered by another since the days of David.

2. (:22) You are Messing with the Wrong God!

*“Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised your voice, And haughtily lifted up your eyes?  
Against the Holy One of Israel!”*

**Paul House:** God’s response begins with the promise of a reversal of fortunes. Assyria has been oppressing Judah, and certainly expects to continue doing so. Their king has mocked Judah’s king and Judah’s God. But everything will soon change. Jerusalem is personified as a virgin daughter who tosses her head in disdain at the proud, once-powerful Assyrians, who believe they have made themselves great. Indeed they have been great, but their reputation will not be “enhanced” by the rape of this virgin. Why? Because in insulting the virgin they have insulted the virgin’s protector, who happens to rule the universe.

**B. (:23-24) Rebuke for Overestimating Your Strength and Achievements – Your Ego is Misinformed**

*“Through your messengers you have reproached the Lord, And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I came up to the heights of the mountains, To the remotest parts of Lebanon; And I cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypresses. And I entered its farthest lodging place, its thickest forest. 24 I dug wells and drank foreign waters, And with the sole of my feet I dried up All the rivers of Egypt.’”*

**C. (:25-26) Rebuke for Ignorance of God’s Sovereignty – Your Past Military Successes were Completely Due to God’s Working**

*“Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps. Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength, They were dismayed and put to shame; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** God then confronted Sennacherib with that which he had apparently not considered. Sennacherib’s successes were foreordained by God (v. 25). Moreover God’s purposes had not been done in secret; he had proclaimed them through his prophets of all ages and even then was bringing them to pass. The result had been that Sennacherib had been able to wreak havoc on people who were totally powerless and as helpless as tender herbage and plants before the blasts of the Sirocco (v. 26). No, Sennacherib should not boast as though what he had done was either self-generated or self-accomplished. It was God’s divine government that was at work; Sennacherib was but God’s instrument of correction for Israel and the nations.

**D. (:27-28) Rebuke for False Confidence in Your Own Sovereignty –  
Your Submission to God will be Complete and Humiliating**

**1. (:27) God Know All About You**

*“But I know your sitting down, And your going out and your coming in,  
And your raging against Me.”*

**2. (:28) God Will Control Your Every Movement**

*“Because of your raging against Me, And because your arrogance has  
come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My  
bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came.”*

**Constable:** Assyrian conquerors pictured themselves, on some monuments, as leading their captives with a line that passed through rings that they had placed in their victims' noses. God promised to do to them as they had done to others (v. 28; cf. **Gal. 6:7**).

**V. (:29-31) PROMISE OF IMMEDIATE (AND FUTURE) DELIVERANCE**

**A. (:29) Sign of Harvesting Crops**

*“Then this shall be the sign for you: you shall eat this year what grows of itself,  
in the second year what springs from the same, and in the third year sow, reap,  
plant vineyards, and eat their fruit.”*

**Peter Pett:** There is a deliberate change here from poetic metre to prose indicating emphatically that this is a new prophecy and not a part of the prophecy in **2 Kings 19:21-28**. It is a **promise of immediate deliverance**.

**Whitcomb:** there was hope for the remnant of Judah. The fruitful fields and vineyards which the Assyrians had devastated (cf. **Isa. 7:18-25**) would be resown and replanted, and by the third year the normal agricultural cycle would function again. To encourage his people, it is quite possible that Hezekiah wrote **Psalms 126**. The first three verses of this psalm reflect the national and international astonishment that Jerusalem could be delivered so suddenly from such a peril (cf. **II Chron. 32:22, 23**). Verse 4 is a prayer for the return of prosperity. And verses 5 and 6 are an encouragement to the remnant of Judah to sow their precious seed (instead of eating it), for even though it might involve weeping and tears, yet great joy would come with the harvesting of sheaves.

**Constable:** An immediate sign helped Hezekiah believe in the long-range deliverance God promised (v. 29). Signs were either predictions of natural events, which came to pass and thus confirmed the prediction (cf. **Exod. 3:12; 1 Sam. 2:34; Jer. 44:29**), or outright miracles that proved God's work in history (cf. **Isa. 7:14; 38:7**). The Israelites had not been able to plant crops around Jerusalem because of the besieging Assyrians. God promised to feed His people for two years with what came up naturally, as a result of previous cultivation. This was a blessing of fertility for trust and obedience (cf. **Deut. 28:33**). In the third year, the people would again return to their regular cycle of sowing and reaping. Like the crops, the remnant of the people remaining after the invasions of

Israel and Judah would also multiply under God's blessing. As for Sennacherib, God would keep him away from Jerusalem (vv. 32-33).

B. (:30) Surviving Remnant Will Again Prosper

*“And the surviving remnant of the house of Judah shall again take root downward and bear fruit upward.”*

**Iain Provan:** The second part of the prophecy looks beyond the withdrawal of the Assyrians from Judah, addressing the question of what will happen then. Recovery will be slow, but the remnant remaining in Jerusalem will survive (cf. 19:4) and go on to take root in the land and prosper (vv. 30-31). The sign that this human recovery will take place in the long term is to be found in the way the remnant will be provided for in the short term. In the aftermath of the Assyrian assault, life will be bleak. But the people will be able to survive because of the crops that spring up from what is already in the ground, and in the third year it will be possible to resume normal agricultural practice. The initial fragility of both human and economic conditions, in other words, should not be a reason for despair. This is not a people under God's judgment, like those in verse 26—grass sprouting on the roof, withering in the sun for lack of deep roots. This is a people under God's providential care, guaranteed to bear fruit (cf. Matt. 13:1-30, 36-43; Mark 4:1-20; Luke 8:1-15).

C. (:31) Salvation Comes from the Lord

*“For out of Jerusalem shall go forth a remnant, and out of Mount Zion survivors. The zeal of the LORD shall perform this.”*

**MacArthur:** The same confirmation of God's promise in 19:7 assured the future establishment of the messianic kingdom. Deliverance from Sennacherib in Hezekiah's day was a down payment on the literal, final restoration of Israel at Christ's second coming.

**Wiseman:** The doctrine of the remnant (vv. 4, 30) left by God's grace through times of trial was demonstrated by Isaiah, whose son was named Shear-Jashub, ‘remnant will return’ (Isaiah 7:3; 37:30-32). Israelites fled to Judah so that in one sense Judah also included the remnant of Israel to carry on God's name and work.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So Yahweh's encouragement to his hopeless people is: you will survive and be provided for and begin to prosper again.

The prophet then adds another assurance (vv. 32-34) meant to quiet Jerusalem's fears. Yahweh explains that Sennacherib's return to his own land (cf. v. 28b) will be before he can even lay a finger on Jerusalem. He will not enter the city, shoot an arrow against it, bring on his infantry with their shields, or start moving dirt for a siege ramp (v. 32). Sennacherib will simply go home (v. 33), Isaiah says, because Yahweh is our Shield and Defender (v. 34). He, not Sennacherib, will surround the city to save it for his own praise (‘for my own sake,’ here likely means to show his supremacy in face of Assyrian

blasphemy) and for his own promises (*‘for the sake of David my servant,’* i.e., because of his covenant to maintain David’s royal line until the new David appears).

Yahweh, then, not only blasts Assyria’s pride (vv. 20–28) but is careful to quiet his people’s fears (vv. 29–31, 32–34). The latter is as essential as the former and Yahweh does not forget to do so.

## **VI. (:32-37) THE BEST DEFENSE IS A DIVINE DEFENSE**

*“Therefore thus says the LORD concerning the king of Assyria,”*

### **A. (:32-33) The Enemy Will Not Achieve His Goal**

#### 1. (:32) His Intentions Will Be Frustrated

*“He shall not come to this city or shoot an arrow there;  
neither shall he come before it with a shield,  
nor throw up a mound against it.”*

**Peter Pett:** Like modern politicians ancient kings could not resist a ‘photo-call’. They wanted to go down in history. Thus at any great victory, especially towards the end of a siege, they would arrive and make some military gesture towards the enemy that could later be recorded on stone. This might take the form of shooting an arrow, brandishing a shield and sword, or ostentatiously supervising the building of siege works. But in this case YHWH promised that this would not happen, simply because the victory would not be achieved. There would be no crowning moment.

#### 2. (:33) His Path Will Be Reversed

*“‘By the way that he came, by the same he shall return,  
and he shall not come to this city,’ declares the LORD.”*

### **B. (:34) God Will Defend His City and His People**

*“For I will defend this city to save it  
for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.”*

### **C. (:35-37) The Enemy Will Be Utterly Defeated**

#### 1. (:35) Slaughter of Sennacherib’s Army

*“Then it happened that night that the angel of the LORD went out,  
and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians;  
and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead.”*

**Iain Provan:** *The angel of the Lord.* There is a play on the Hb. word *mal’āk* (“angel, messenger”) similar to that in **1 Kgs. 19:1–8**. Sennacherib’s messengers speak many words against the Lord (**2 Kgs. 19:9, 14, 23**), but neither Sennacherib nor his messengers have any power to act. The Lord has power of both speech and action and a messenger who is terribly effective.

2. (:36) Retreat of Sennacherib to Nineveh

*“So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home,  
and lived at Nineveh.”*

3. (:37a) Assassination of Sennacherib

*“And it came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his  
god, that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword;  
and they escape  
d into the land of Ararat.”*

4. (:37b) Succession of Sennacherib by Esarhaddon His Son

*“And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Some twenty years later (681 B.C.), two of Sennacherib’s own sons assassinated him and successfully escaped to Urartu. Another son, Esarhaddon (681-686), succeeded Sennacherib as king. The last vestige of the divine prophecy stood complete. While God’s program may seem to tarry (cf. **2 Peter 3:4-9**), it will be accomplished. The mills of God grind slowly but exceedingly fine.

**Paul House:** Isaiah’s predictions have all come true now. Sennacherib has heard a rumor, has gone home, and has now been killed (cf. **2 Kgs 19:7**). In other words, Isaiah’s predictions are not just short-term in nature, they also cover long-term events. Thus, God is in control of all occurrences. Nothing happens outside the Lord’s realm of authority, not even if it has no direct impact on Israel because contrary to Sennacherib’s words the Lord is not a local deity nor a mere idol.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What is our first reaction when faced with a crisis? Where do we turn for help?
- 2) How does God respond when His enemies mock Him?
- 3) What principles about prayer from this passage can help you in your prayer life?
- 4) When we are under pressure, how can we exercise patience and wait for the salvation that only comes from the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Paul House:** His prayer consists of three parts, which **Hubbard** notes follow “a format typical of the most common kind of psalm, an ‘individual complaint’ (see **Pss 6; 13; 102**) to meet a personal need.” First, Hezekiah recognizes the Lord’s greatness. He

notes that the Lord is “*enthroned between the cherubim*,” a reference to the ark of the covenant, the ancient symbol of the covenant between Israel and their God. Hezekiah furthers the image beyond Israel, though, by stating that the Lord is “*God over all the kingdoms of the earth*” because he has “*made heaven and earth*.” If the Lord is creator and ruler of all nations, then Hezekiah can hope for deliverance in this seemingly impossible situation.

Second, Hezekiah explains his problem to the Lord. Again he speaks first about Assyria’s insults against Yahweh, and only then addresses his military dilemma. He admits that Assyria has conquered the nations already mentioned, but he separates his God from those nations’ deities on the grounds that they are not real. So how could they help their worshipers? Yahweh, on the other hand is not “*fashioned by men’s hands*” and can therefore aid those who pray to him.

Third, Hezekiah asks directly for God’s assistance against the Assyrians. Even in this direct petition, though, the king bases his request on a concern for God’s honor, for he wants God to be worshiped because of the proposed great deliverance. Clearly, Hezekiah wants freedom for himself and for his people, yet he never loses sight of Israel’s responsibility to bring recognition and glory to their Lord. Having prayed, he must wait to see what God will do, though he may expect the prophetic word already given to come true.

**Biblical Illustrator:** He appealed to Jehovah as the maker of “*heaven and earth*.” Heaven and earth to the Jewish mind included all things. In this sublime idea of God is involved—

1. That He is eternal. He existed before all things; delighting in the glory of His own nature before the worlds were made; no material form nor spiritual existence sharing that eternity with Him.
2. That He is separate from His works. The universe is not He, as the ancient pantheists taught, and as some teach now. He is immanent in all His creations, but independent of them. The maker is not His work. God transcends all beings and worlds.
3. That He is omnipotent. He who made the universe must be Almighty. Its greatness is inconceivable, and the power that produced it must be infinite.
4. That He has an absolute right to control all things. The maker has indefeasible rights in His productions.
5. That He has all things under His direct control. As He has created all forces, and laws, and agencies, all worlds, all angels, all men, He has them under His immediate direction, and can turn them “*whithersoever He will*.” This conception of God afforded solid ground for Hezekiah’s faith.

**Courtney -- Women Living Well Ministries: 7 LESSONS FROM THE PRAYER  
LIFE OF HEZEKIAH**

Lesson 1: When crisis hits, Hezekiah immediately goes to the house of the Lord.

Lesson 2: Hezekiah needed a gentle reminder from God, to not be afraid.

Lesson 3: Hezekiah knew his only hope was God. He went straight to the house of the Lord and spread the letter out before the Lord.

Lesson 4: Hezekiah did not go flippantly to the Lord in prayer. He saw God as He is, enthroned above the cherubim, as the one and only, King of heaven and earth.

Lesson 5: Hezekiah did not just want God to hear his own words, but he wanted God to hear the words of his enemy too.

Lesson 6: Hezekiah asks God to save them, not for his own glory but for God's glory.

Lesson 7: God took away Hezekiah's fears by removing the enemy.

<https://womenlivingwell.org/2020/02/7-lessons-from-the-prayer-life-of-hezekiah/>

TEXT: 2 Kings 20:1-21

TITLE: HEZEKIAH'S LAST DAYS – HEALED AND HUMBLLED

**BIG IDEA:**

**RIGHTEOUS HEZEKIAH HOLDS ON AT THE END OF HIS REIGN AS HIS LIFE IS MIRACULOUSLY EXTENDED AND HIS VANITY IS PROPHETICALLY CHASTIZED**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Hezekiah goes into the record books as one of the greatest of the kings of Judah. By his own testimony he “*walked before God in truth and with a whole heart, and did what is good in God’s sight.*” But his last days were not without peril and extreme drama. After being instructed by the prophet to put his house in order and prepare to die, his effectual prayer secured him an additional 15 years on this earth (debatable whether that was a blessing or a snare). Puffed up with an inflated sense of his own importance, he foolishly displays all of the kingdom’s riches to the visiting emissaries from Babylon. Subsequently the prophet Isaiah pronounces future judgment upon the southern kingdom as the culmination of Judah’s history of unfaithfulness.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The chapter provides two pictures of Hezekiah. In one he walks by faith (vv. 1–11); in the other he walks by sight (vv. 12–19). In the first section he seems to believe ‘Yahweh is all you need’, while in the second he seems to say, ‘I’m not so sure about that.’

Overall Structure:

- Time and circumstance, v. 1a
- Coming of prophet, v. 1b
- Message (death), v. 1c
  - Hezekiah’s response, vv. 2–3 (prayer)
- Message (deliverance), vv. 4–6
  - (Fulfillment, v. 7)
  - Hezekiah’s response, vv. 8–11 (sign)
- Time and circumstance, vv. 12–13
- Coming of prophet, v. 14a
- + questions and answers, vv. 14b–15
- Message (exile), vv. 16–18
  - Hezekiah’s response, v. 19

**Iain Provan:** It seems that the veiled threats in 2 Kings 16–17 with regard to Judah have come to nothing. Jerusalem has not suffered the same fate as Samaria. Yet the Davidic promise has been cited in 2 Kings 16–19, not in relation to a wicked king, but in



relation to the most pious king Judah has had (19:34). This creates the impression that in these days of accumulated sin, even a good king requires God's special grace if the kingdom is to survive. It brings into question, therefore, whether Judah may expect in the future, under apostate kings, the kind of special treatment it has received in the past (1 Kgs. 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19). Is the protection of Jerusalem to go on forever? **Second Kings 20** hints that it will not.

## **I. (:1-11) HEZEKIAH HEALED**

### **A. (:1-3) Reacting to the Pronouncement of Imminent Death**

#### 1. (:1a) Mortal Illness

*"In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill."*

How do you respond in the face of a serious health crisis?

**Constable:** refers to the year Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem (701 B.C.) since Hezekiah died 15 years later in 686 B.C.

**R. D. Patterson:** In the light of chronological difficulties, it therefore seems best to take the phrase "*in those days*" to be a general statement referring to some time in the reign of Hezekiah. If so, the events of **chapter 20** (cf. **Isa 38-39**) probably belong chronologically before those of **18:7b – 19:37**, these latter verses being recorded beforehand simply as the example par excellence of Hezekiah's trust in God (cf. **18:7a**). If Young is correct, that Isaiah's prophecy in **chapters 36-39** forms the basis for the text in Kings, and that the events of **Isaiah 36-37** (cf. **2 Kings 18:7b – 19:37**), though occurring later, are given first to round off his discussion dealing with the Assyrian period of his ministry before moving on to the Babylonian period (**Isa 40-66**, introduced by **chs. 38-39**), then the author of Kings may be following the thematic order of Isaiah. If so, there is a double reason for the present order in Kings, neither of which is caused by chronological considerations.

In those critical days, then, when Sargon was moving toward Ashdod to deal with the western rebels (among whom Hezekiah himself had been somewhat implicated), Isaiah delivered God's message to a sick Hezekiah. It was time for Hezekiah to put his house in order; for as things stood, he would surely die. Hezekiah needed to be certain that not only were the affairs of state in order, but that he and his house were on proper terms with God.

#### 2. (:1b) Prophetic Pronouncement

*"And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him,  
'Thus says the LORD, Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'"*

**Peter Pett:** But with Assyria threatening there was no successor yet old enough to take the throne. It is understandable therefore why Hezekiah would be so distressed. Looking from the divine point of view we might suggest that God had brought this on Hezekiah

in order to make him consider what the situation was and prepare him for it. For this verse with its subsequent narrative is quite remarkable. It demonstrates that even *‘the word of YHWH’* can be reversed by repentance. Here indeed is a prophetic word which will be so altered. What seems to be a situation which cannot be altered, is thus altered through prayer. The same was in fact always true of God’s judgments (compare Jonah and Nineveh, and Ahab and Israel - **1 Kings 21:27-29**).

**Guzik:** We know from comparing **2 Kings 18:2** with **2 Kings 20:6** that Hezekiah was 39 years old when he learned he would soon die.

### 3. (:2-3a) Desperate Plea

*“Then he turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 3 ‘Remember now, O LORD, I beseech Thee, how I have walked before Thee in truth and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in Thy sight.’”*

How did Hezekiah receive this dramatic news?

**Biblical Illustrator:** Hezekiah’s plea that he had lived a good life was an argument that prevailed with God. It is worthy of remark that the prayers recorded in the Old Testament are full of argument. Men approach God with reasons. They tell Him why He should grant their requests. Evidently they think Divine wisdom “easy to be entreated.” They recount mercies past as a reason for expecting renewed favours. They speak of His goodness. Of their great needs they make a plea. By the littleness and brevity of life they lay claim to mercy. So Hezekiah did not hesitate to find in his past life reasons for its continuance.

**R. D. Patterson:** Hezekiah was a man of faith. Turning his face to the wall, thereby both dismissing Isaiah and entering into solitary communion with God, Hezekiah poured out his heart to his lord. Hezekiah reminded God of his faithfulness, both in his personal conduct and in his righteous deeds, and of his wholehearted devotion to God. Hezekiah then wept bitterly. God knew the yearning of his heart that he did not express. In accordance with God’s own promises, Hezekiah had a right to expect a longer life than that which appeared to be forthcoming (cf. **Exod 20:12; Deut 5:29; 30:16**). So much was true. But Hezekiah’s concerns were deeper than any personal desire for added years. This is clear from the Lord’s answer to Hezekiah’s prayer (**vv. 5-6**). What would become of that nation? His reforms were barely yet in progress. What would become of Judah? There was so much more to be done. Deeper still, he would die without a male heir, for no son had yet been born to him, What, then, would become of the house of David? The program and person of God were at stake, and Hezekiah believed that somehow he was vitally involved in them. How could it end like this?

### 4. (:3b) Bitter Grief

*“And Hezekiah wept bitterly.”*

Not exactly the response advocated by **Tim McGraw** in “*Live Like You Were Dying*”

He said  
"I was in my early forties  
With a lot of life before me  
When a moment came that stopped me on a dime  
I spent most of the next days  
Looking at the x-rays  
And talkin' 'bout the options  
And talkin' 'bout sweet time"  
I asked him  
"When it sank in  
That this might really be the real end  
How's it hit you  
When you get that kind of news?  
Man, what'd you do?"

And he said  
"I went skydiving  
I went Rocky Mountain climbing  
I went 2.7 seconds on a bull named Fumanchu  
And I loved deeper  
And I spoke sweeter  
And I gave forgiveness I'd been denying"  
And he said  
"Someday I hope you get the chance  
To live like you were dying"

**B. (:4-6) Receiving the Merciful Good News**

1. (:4-6a) Good News of Personal Healing

*“And it came about before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, that the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 5 ‘Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, Thus says the LORD, the God of your father David, I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD. 6 And I will add fifteen years to your life,’”*

2. (:6b) Good News of National Deliverance

*“and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.”*

**Adam Clarke:** This is the first and only man who was ever informed of the term of his life. And was this a privilege! Surely no. If Hezekiah was attached to life, as he appears to have been, how must his mind be affected to mark the sinking years! He knew he was to die at the end of fifteen years; and how must he feel at the end of every

year, when he saw that so much was cut off from life? He must necessarily feel a thousand deaths in fearing one. I believe there would be nothing wanting to complete the misery of men, except the place of torment, were they informed of the precise time in which their lives must terminate. God, in his abundant mercy, has hidden this from their eyes.

### C. (:7) Recovering by Means of a Simple Treatment

*“Then Isaiah said, ‘Take a cake of figs.’*

*And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered.”*

**Whitcomb:** With his faith confirmed by the sign of the retreating shadow, Hezekiah gladly submitted to a fig poultice treatment on his deadly boil. The “*cake of figs*” did not heal him, but was a physical token of the work that God was doing, even as Jesus on one occasion put wet clay on the eyes of a blind man while healing him (**John 9:6**).

### D. (:8-11) Ratifying (Confirming) His Healing by a Miraculous Sign

#### 1. (:8) Seeking a Sign

*“Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me, and that I shall go up to the house of the LORD the third day?’”*

**William Barnes:** Hezekiah’s demand for a “sign” here is meant to be sharply contrasted with his father Ahaz’s overly “pious” refusal to seek one (**Isa 7:10–12**), a fact that explains Isaiah’s exasperated response to that king in **Isa 7:13–14**.

#### 2. (:9) Setting the Stage

*“And Isaiah said, ‘This shall be the sign to you from the LORD, that the LORD will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?’”*

Peter Pett: Assur, chief god of Assyria, was associated with the sun, and presided over gods and goddesses associated with the moon and stars. The Assyrians worshipped ‘the host of heaven’. Thus by demonstrating His power over the activity of the sun YHWH was indicating quite clearly why Hezekiah had nothing to fear. Not only would he heal Hezekiah who would thus be able to intercede in the house of YHWH, but through his intercession He would bring victory to Judah by driving back the one who claimed to have behind him the light of the sun.

#### 3. (:10) Selecting the Spectacular

*“So Hezekiah answered, ‘It is easy for the shadow to decline ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** A sign to authenticate a prophet’s word that it is God who is acting is not uncommon. It was natural (‘*a light thing*’ mt) for the shadow to move forward, so this reversal of the natural order by regression would be more significant and less unmistakable than a rapid advance. The degrees or steps have best been interpreted as ‘upper chamber’ or ‘sundial’.

#### 4. (:11) Switching the Shadow

*“And Isaiah the prophet cried to the LORD, and He brought the shadow on the stairway back ten steps by which it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.”*

**Dummelow:** Probably a platform surrounded by steps and surmounted by a pillar, the shadow of which fell upon a smaller or larger number of the steps according as the sun mounted or declined in the sky.

## **II. (:12-19) HEZEKIAH HUMBLLED**

### **A. (:12) Foreign Delegation**

*“At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick.”*

### **B. (:13) Full Disclosure**

*“And Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house, nor in all his dominion, that Hezekiah did not show them.”*

**Guzik:** We can imagine that this was flattering for King Hezekiah. After all, Judah was a lowly nation with little power, and Babylon was a junior superpower. To receive this notice and recognition from the king of Babylon must have really made Hezekiah feel he was important.

**Biblical Illustrator:** Further, we see that pride led Hezekiah to miss a grand opportunity of glorifying God. Here were heathens in his presence. He might have spoken of what wonders God had wrought for him: of the deliverance effected, of the health restored. He might have led them up to the temple to see the purity of the Divine worship. He might have told them of the laws of Moses and of their beneficent tendencies; of the traditions, history, and sacred proverbs his scribes had copied out. Nothing of the kind did he. He let slip a chance that came but seldom, and thus neglected to glorify his God. Alas! many have imitated him.

### **C. (:14-19) Forensic Dialogue**

#### 1. (:14-15) Three Investigative Questions

Isaiah comes to investigate the crime committed by Hezekiah;

a. (:14a) What Did They Say?

**How could you be deceived so easily?**

*“Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, ‘What did these men say,’”*

b. (:14B) Where Did They Come From?

**Why didn't you perceive the threat?**

*"and from where have they come to you?' And Hezekiah said, 'They have come from a far country, from Babylon.'"*

c. (:15) What Did They See?

**How bad was the damage?**

*"And he said, 'What have they seen in your house'" So Hezekiah answered, 'They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.'"*

**R. D. Patterson:** Hezekiah had been foolish. Not only would the extent of Jerusalem's wealth now be known and desired by all (cf. Sennacherib's demands in **18:13-16**), but one day this same Babylon would invade the land and carry off its populace and all its treasures (v. 17). Yes, even Hezekiah's own descendants would be taken captive and employed in the service of a Babylonian king (v. 18; cf. **24:12-16; 2 Chron 33:11; Dan 1:3-5**). Quite out of keeping with his righteous character, Hezekiah's folly would prove to be a contributing factor in the fulfillment of the ancient prophecies (**Lev 26:33; Deut 28:64-67; 30:3**). Hezekiah's experience remains a stern warning to all the perils of pride (cf. **Prov 16:5, 18; 28:25-26; 29:23**).

## 2. (:16-18) Divine Judgment

*"Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, 'Hear the word of the LORD. 17 Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, says the LORD. 18 And some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you shall beget, shall be taken away; and they shall become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'"*

**Peter Pett:** This stripping away from Judah of all that it possessed has been a theme of Kings. The prophetic author clearly wanted to bring home the lesson of the temporary nature of earthly possessions.

**Guzik:** Hezekiah faced – and failed under – a temptation common to many, especially those in ministry – the **temptation of success**. Many men who stand strong against the temptations of failure and weakness fail under the temptations of success and strength. Think about the extent of Hezekiah's success:

- He was godly.
- He was victorious.
- He was healed.
- He had experienced a miracle.
- He had been promised a long life.
- He had connection to a great prophet.
- He had seen a remarkable sign.
- He was wealthy.
- He was famous.

- He was praised and honored.
- He was honored by God.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So flattery can be fulfilling and plots are thrilling—and all of it idolatrous. You cannot, Isaiah would say, lean on Yahweh’s arm (cf. **Isa. 33:2**) and on Babylon’s arm (here) or on Egypt’s arm (**Isa. 30:1–5; 31:1–3**). Hence both the stockpiles Hezekiah boasts of and the sons he fathers will be carted off; both possessions and people are destined for Babylon.

### 3. (:19) Response of the Rebuked

*“Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, ‘The word of the LORD which you have spoken is good.’ For he thought, ‘Is it not so, if there shall be peace and truth in my days?’”*

**Constable:** In pride, as a result of his healing, Hezekiah evidently wished to impress his Babylonian visitors with his wealth and power (cf. **2 Chron. 32:25, 31**). Isaiah prophesied that Babylon would take Judah into captivity one day (**vv. 17-18**). While Hezekiah would have been sorry to hear this prophecy, he evidently accepted it as the Lord’s will for Judah and was glad it would not happen in his lifetime (**v. 19**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** What then do we see here in verses 12–19? We see a king who finds it hard to be steadfast. We see a king who seems to do better in sickness (**vv. 1–11**) than in health (**vv. 12–19**), who perhaps handles blight better than blessing. This is the king of **18:1–8**, who trusted Yahweh (**18:5**), and yet seems to think Yahweh needed a little help from Babylon. How fragile our faithfulness; how changing our consistency; how easily our faith can fade.

## **(:20-21) EPILOGUE – CONCLUSION OF REIGN OF HEZEKIAH**

### **A. (:20) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit, and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

**Constable:** Hezekiah’s 1,777-foot long tunnel (**v. 20**) was a noteworthy accomplishment. It brought water from the Gihon spring outside the city wall, under the wall of Jerusalem, and into the city, specifically to the pool of Siloam. This made Jerusalem much more self-sufficient in times of invasion than it would have been otherwise.

### **B. (:21a) Death and Burial**

*“So Hezekiah slept with his fathers,”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Hezekiah was buried on the sloping hill where the tombs of David’s descendants were cut (**2 Chr. 32:33**). This was because the royal Iron Age burial caves



north of the city were full by this time and hereafter no Judean kings were buried in the rock-hewn caves there.

### C. (:21b) Succession

*“and Manasseh his son became king in his place.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How would you change the way you are living right now if you knew the timing of your departure from this world?
- 2) What would you find positive and what would you find negative about knowing exactly when you are going to die?
- 3) What was the essence of Hezekiah’s foolish display of riches before the emissaries from Babylon?
- 4) Why is it so difficult for God’s servants to finish strong?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Whitcomb:** There are several reasons for believing that Hezekiah’s sickness and recovery, and the visit of the ambassadors from Babylon, took place before the attack by Sennacherib as recorded in the previous two chapters.

In the first place, when God responded to Hezekiah’s prayer and promised to heal him, He also promised: *“I will deliver thee and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for mine own sake, and for my servant David’s sake” (II Kings 20:6)*. Such a promise would seem unnecessary if the Assyrian army had just been destroyed and Sennacherib had returned to Nineveh.

Secondly, it would seem highly unlikely that Hezekiah could show the Babylonian ambassadors *“all the house of his precious things, the silver, and the gold . . .” (II Kings 20:13)*, if he had just stripped both the temple and the palace of all its gold and silver (including the plating on the doors and pillars) to buy off the Assyrians (**II Kings 18:15, 16**).

Thirdly, II Chronicles 32:25, 26 informs us that after God healed him, *“Hezekiah rendered not again according to the benefit done unto him; for his heart was lifted up: therefore there was wrath upon him, and upon Judah and Jerusalem. Notwithstanding Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, both he and the inhabitants of*



*Jerusalem, so that the wrath of Jehovah came not upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”* It seems quite clear from this statement that the payment of heavy tribute and the threat of siege by Rabshakeh came **after** Hezekiah was healed of a deadly disease.

**William Barnes:** Hezekiah was a reformer par excellence, a risk-taker who nearly lost his kingdom (and certainly did lose most of its wealth) contending against the mighty empire of Assyria. He was one who also had to contend (in essence) with the prophet Isaiah several times. And in a sense, he had to contend even with Yahweh (at least in the matter of his sudden death sentence in **20:1–3**). . . this much is clear: Hezekiah proved to be a powerful role model for the later reformer king Josiah, and thus supported the major agenda of the book itself. And thus it truly was the case with King Hezekiah that “*there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before or after his time*” (**18:5**). No wonder the book of Isaiah devotes four chapters to this king (plus numerous allusions to him elsewhere in the book), and the book of 2 Chronicles four lengthy chapters as well (with three of them [**2 Chr 29–31**] nearly totally independent of the Kings material). **Hezekiah was a great king**—flawed to be sure, but nevertheless a truly great king. And that man could pray!

**Mordechai Cogan:** The nature of the embassy from distant Babylonia has intrigued ancient and modern commentators alike; all agree that more than meets the eye is behind the statement that the Babylonians came to visit the ailing Hezekiah. The Chronicler reasoned that whereas the Babylonians were famed for their interest in astronomy and astrology, they naturally came to inquire about the wondrous retreat of the shadow (cf. **2 Chr 32:31**). **Josephus**, perhaps basing himself upon **Berosus**, speculated that the King of Babylon sent envoys . . . “to Hezekiah and invited him to become his ally and friend.” This approach, which has adherents down to this day, looks for corroborative evidence in the history of Merodach-baladan. Since he was Assyria’s constant foe, the visit to Judah is to be viewed within the wider political context of his anti-Assyrian activity. . .

Returning to the question raised at the outset as to the nature of the embassy, there is no hint in the story that its purpose was to instigate rebellion. Its mission was the **maintenance of diplomatic good will** with the strongest of Assyria’s western vassals. Judah apparently was still free to conduct relations with its neighbors, and the Babylonians—who probably travelled to the West by the Arabian desert route rather than the north-Syrian-Damascus route—may have been interested in promoting trade in the West through the brokerage of their Arab allies. Comparable to the Babylonian embassy would be the visit of the queen of Sheba, probably economic in purpose, but certainly not lacking political implications (**1 Kgs 10:1–10**).

### **Brian Sandifer: A Tragic Reprieve**

**Introduction** – The distance between two points can be near or far, but sometimes bridging the gap is not easy.

**Background** – **2 Kings 20** narrates events that occur chronologically before **chapters 18–19**. It seems the author is following the standard arrangement of presenting positive

stories about each king before listing the sins and shortcomings that demonstrate he is not the hoped-for messianic son of David. Except for **chapter 20's** concluding summary of Hezekiah's last days, this chapter tells us what happened to Hezekiah before Assyria attacked, somewhere near the mid-point of his tenure as king of Judah.

## **I. God's Providence Is Often Merciful and Gracious**

### A. Hezekiah's prayer and God's promise to heal and protect (vv. 1-7)

The first thing we should note are the good gifts of God. Hezekiah was not old yet, around 37-38 years old, but he got so sick the prophet Isaiah paid him a visit to deliver God's message. Isaiah told the king he would not recover so he should get his royal affairs in order. But Hezekiah was a good and faithful man. **Verse 3** recounts his simple one-sentence prayer, how he pleaded with God to remember his own undivided covenant loyalty, and how afterward he turned in his bed toward the wall and wept bitterly. The word of the LORD, a new message, came to Isaiah as soon as he left the palace and temple precinct. God would add 15 years to Hezekiah's lifespan. God also promised to protect Jerusalem from the menacing Assyrian empire. Not on the basis of Hezekiah's righteousness, but for God's own sake and the sake of King David his servant. Upon this merciful news, Isaiah ordered a cake of figs to be medicinally applied to Hezekiah's boil for healing. This is magnificent mercy on full display! The LORD is merciful when he doesn't give us what we deserve (death).

### B. God's miraculous sign confirming his promise (vv. 8-11)

Hezekiah received a good word from God, and then he asked for a sign to confirm God's promise. Isaiah offered a choice: say the word and God will cause the shadow to move forward or backward on the steps, presumably on a time-keeping staircase erected by Hezekiah's father king Ahaz. The sun's shadow supernaturally retreated 10 degrees on Ahaz's sun-steps. Having already received mercy in a promise of healing and protection, Hezekiah also gained grace from the LORD. For Hezekiah, God's grace came in the form of a miraculous sign that confirmed his promise. For us, all the good things we don't deserve but still receive from God's hand come to us through the riches of Jesus Christ.

## **II. God's People Can Be Confident and Calculating**

### A. A flagrant display of wealth and strength (vv. 12-13)

Then God tested Hezekiah's heart to see what return the king would give for the show of mercy and grace. Will he trust the LORD for the promised deliverance of his kingdom? The Babylonian king sent envoys to Jerusalem to comfort Hezekiah but also investigate the sign (**2 Chr 32:25, 31**). It seems Hezekiah, who had earlier followed his heart's cry for mercy and grace, now follows his head in sensing a political opportunity. "I'll impress these guests with my wealth and power!" And so he showed Babylon all the treasures in his palace and storehouses. In the king's mind, he is not a steward of God's wealth (**1 Cor 4:7**), since all these by divine right must belong to the crown.

### B. A strategic move to forge a foreign alliance (vv. 14-15)

The ascendant kingdom of Babylon was seeking a political alignment with Judah and Egypt to oppose the Assyrians, and Hezekiah was keen to the notion because he knew

Assyria was the immediate threat to his own nation. Maybe Hezekiah wondered, “Is an alliance with the Babylonian international coalition God’s means of keeping his promise to protect his people? It makes sense in my head!” In principle, seeking political alliances was a denial of the covenant nature of the royal office in Israel and Judah (**2 Sam 24:2**). Hezekiah is evidently proud of his wealth and power, but the Scripture says pride comes before a fall (**Prov 11:2**).

### **III. God’s Plans Are Always Just and Good**

#### A. God’s severe justice can be reprieved, but only for a time (vv. 16-18)

Although Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys as friends, their reception brought the exact opposite of what he desired and expected. All the treasures and armory that Hezekiah showed the envoys will be carried off to Babylon! Isaiah delivered this devastating message from the LORD to the king as a rebuke to naïve Hezekiah (cf. **Isa 39:1-8**). This prophecy was fulfilled in the Babylonian invasion of Judah in 598 BC, and the Babylonian exile in 586 BC, at least 115 years later (**2 Kgs 24:13; 25:13-17; cf. Ezr 1:7-11**). Not even Hezekiah’s descendants will be spared. Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, was exiled by the Assyrians and held captive in Babylon (**2 Chr 33:11-13**). Other descendants followed during the Babylonian deportations of 605 BC (**2 Kgs 24:1; Dan 1:1-7**), 597 BC (**2 Kgs 24:10-12; 2 Chr 36:10**), and finally 586 BC (**2 Kgs 25:5-7; 2 Chr 36:20; Jer 39:1-7; 52:4-15**) to become eunuchs in the Babylonian king’s palace (cf. **2 Kgs 24:15; 25:6-7**).

#### B. God is always good in his kind mercy to us (vv. 19a)

Even Hezekiah admitted God’s word was good. From a doctrinal perspective, every Christian with any familiarity with the Bible knows that every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is good. But again, most believers don’t live in their heads. Our hearts, the way we feel, so often contradict what we know in our heads. Every single Christian ought to confess that same truth. “God is always good in his kind mercy to us.” “God’s plans are always just and good.” (**Rom 8:28-31**)

#### C. Where will the kindness and severity of God lead you? (vv. 19b-21; Rom 11:22)

This is where it gets complicated. I’m not sure what Hezekiah meant by his last words in 2 Kings. But here are three possible ways to read the text.

- (1) A head and heart aligned but without repentance.
- (2) A head and heart divided, with a head acknowledgement of God’s way as good, but a heart that was not really repentant.
- (3) A head and heart aligned in repentance, thankfulness, and humble submission to God’s kind mercy and severe justice, because if God is in it, it must somehow, someday be good.

Based on the available evidence in this passage and in parallel accounts (**Isa 38-39; 2 Chr 32**), it is difficult to discern Hezekiah’s heart. But it is pretty clear in the **2 Kings** account the author intended to portray Hezekiah in a comparatively negative light in this last recorded episode of his life. Again we see the king, this son of David, is not the Messiah—the final, true Son of David, the one David called “my Lord” (**Pss 110:1; cf. Lk 20:41-44**). Which way will your head and heart go?

**Conclusion** – Though the distance between your head and your heart is a vast chasm, the LORD is merciful and gracious. But his mercy and grace are not merely gifts. They are faith tests. After he shows himself trustworthy, he often tests our covenant loyalty. Will you look by faith to Jesus as you seek to bridge the gap between your head and heart, letting him set your priorities, making the glorious gospel of God your chief concern and driving force, and demoting all other concerns for the sake of knowing only Christ and him crucified? The message of the OT and NT agree, if you want to be saved from a tragic reprieve, if you want to unite your head and heart and unite them both to Jesus, then rekindle your first love. Will you?

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/912201943221196.pdf>

TEXT: 2 Kings 21:1-26

TITLE: MANASSEH AND AMON – THE END OF THE LINE

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE APEX OF APOSTASY AND IDOLATRY UNDER MANASSEH AND AMON ELICITS SEVERE JUDGMENT UPON JUDAH AND JERUSALEM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Judah and Jerusalem have now arrived at the end of the line. They failed to learn any lessons from God's dealings with Samaria and Israel. They have abused God's patience and forbearance to the point where they have run out of rope. Instead of continuing the reforms of Hezekiah, they revert back to the most extreme levels of apostasy and pagan idolatry under Manasseh and his clone Amon. There are no boundaries they won't transgress in forsaking the God of their covenant promises. The pronouncement of prophetic judgment with its tone of certainty and severity should shake them to their core. But they stubbornly refuse to listen to any of God's warnings. Destruction and exile to Babylon are just over the horizon.

**August Konkell:** Manasseh is an example of how the consequences of sin are not confined to the sinner. The consequences of his sin results in the eventual exile of the entire nation; God decides "*to remove [Judah] from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood ... the Lord was not willing to forgive*" (24:3b–4). The effects of Manasseh's deeds are irreversible; the announcement of exile made to Hezekiah becomes a pronouncement of irreversible judgment against the nation (21:10–15). Manasseh, uniformly and unambiguously, is the worst king of Judah in the valuation of the Deuteronomistic Historians.

**Mordechai Cogan:** King Manasseh as described by the Deuteronomist was an enthusiastic idolator, wholly bent on abandoning the Mosaic Law in his private worship, as well as in the public cult. An inveterate sinner, Manasseh is compared to another infamous sinner, Ahab king of Israel, whose cultic offenses had led to the downfall of the dynasty of Omri. To support his charge against Manasseh, the worst of all the kings of Judah, Dtr. compiled the longest list of misdeeds of any he assembled. Above and beyond this, Manasseh is accused of "*shedding innocent blood,*" filling Jerusalem to the brim (cf. v. 16). Later tradition interpreted this in light of Ahab's judicial murder of Naboth, and so told of the persecution of yhwh's prophets, unto death, by Manasseh. But unlike Ahab, who was personally held responsible for his sin (see 1 Kgs 21:20–22, 22:38), Manasseh enjoyed a long reign of fifty-five years, the longest in the history of the Davidic dynasty.

## **I. (:1-9) MANASSEH'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH MARKS THE HEIGHT OF APOSTASY AND IDOLATRY**

### **A. (:1) Selected Touchpoints**

#### 1. How Old Was he When He Became King?

*"Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king,"*

#### 2. How Many Years Did He Reign?

*"and he reigned fifty-five years"*

**Constable:** "Manasseh" (lit. *"Making Forgetful"*) began reigning as vice-regent with his father Hezekiah when he was 12 years old, in 697 B.C. This arrangement continued for 11 years until Hezekiah died in 686 B.C. For a total of 55 years Manasseh was king of Judah (697-642 B.C.). He reigned longer than any Hebrew king, and he was Judah's worst king spiritually.

**David Guzik:** This was both a remarkably long and a remarkably evil reign. A long career or longevity is not necessarily evidence of the blessing and approval of God.

#### 3. Over Which Kingdom Did He Rule?

*"in Jerusalem;"*

#### 4. Who Was His Mother?

*"and his mother's name was Hephzibah."*

### **B. (:2-9) Moral Evaluation – Intensified Paganism and Covenant Apostasy**

#### 1. (:2) Summary Evaluation of Pagan Idolatry

*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel."*

**MacArthur:** *"abominations of the nations"* – The detestable practices of the Canaanites were enumerated in **Dt 18:9-12**. Israel's reproduction of these abominable practices of the nations that preceded her in the land was forbidden in **Dt 12:29-31**. The idolatry of Manasseh is detailed in vv. 3-9 (cf. 17:7-12, 15-17).

**Whitcomb:** Cultured, and even godly, homes are no guarantee of high quality among children, because each child begins at zero, spiritually speaking (**Ps. 51:5; 58:3**).

#### 2. (:3-8) Specific Examples of Apostasy and Pagan Idolatry

##### a. (:3) Both Old and New Forms of Idolatry

*"For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them."*

**David Guzik:** Manasseh did not only bring back old forms of idolatry; he also brought new forms of idolatry to Judah. At this time the Babylonian Empire was rising in

influence, and they had a special attraction to astrological worship. Manasseh probably imitated this.

b. (:4-5) Desecration of the Temple

*“And he built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put My name.’ 5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD.”*

**Wiersbe:** There was to be but one altar in the temple court, but Manasseh added altars dedicated to various gods (see **16:10-16**) and thus made Jehovah one “god” among many. Yet the Lord had put His name in only one place – the temple in Jerusalem (**21:4, 7; Deut. 12:11; 1 Kings 8:20, 29; 9:3**); and now a multitude of false gods shared that honor with Him.

**Wiseman:** Yahweh’s exclusive Name, denoting his character and presence, must always dominate worship of him (see **1 Kgs 8:16–19; Exod. 20:24**).

c. (:6a) Occult Abominations

*“And he made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists.”*

**August Konkel:** Passing the sons through the fire is named along with sorcery and consultation of mediums. This again is a specific violation of the covenant (**Deut. 18:10–11**). Passing one’s sons through the fire probably concerns funeral rites, as may be suggested by its association with consultation of ghosts and spirits of the dead. Rituals that involved children do not indicate that the children were slaughtered for these rites (cf. **Jer. 7:32; 19:5; 32:35**). Incineration of bodies took place at a dedicated location called a tophet by archaeologists (based on the Hebrew references). Such a place had a low enclosure wall and was used for generations. Those buried were primarily premature, stillborn, and young infants, buried with a special ceremony.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Deuteronomistic terminology distinguishes between the practice of the nations who “burn” (\*šārôp) their children in service of their gods (**Deut 12:31; 2 Kgs 17:31**) and the practice of apostate Israelites who “pass their sons and daughters through fire” (\*he’ēbîr bā’ēš) (**16:3; 21:6**). If this distinction is not merely euphemistic, then something other than actual sacrifice is meant by “passing through fire.” In **Deut. 18:9**, “passing through fire” appears together with sundry Canaanite divinatory acts which are outlawed in Israel;

d. (:6b) General Summary of Evil Practices

*“He did much evil in the sight of the LORD provoking Him to anger.”*

e. (:7) Desecration of the Temple

*“Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the LORD said to David and to his son Solomon, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever.’”*

**Peter Pett:** The setting up of the Asherah with its evil and lascivious associations appears to have been looked on, if that were possible, as even more serious than the pillars and altars of Baal (compare **2 Kings 13:6**; **1 Kings 16:33**). The sexual extravagances associated with Asherah are here set in stark contrast to the purity of the Name of YHWH.

f. (:8) Overall Covenant Apostasy

*“And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The presence (v. 7) and promise (v. 8) of Yahweh are his people’s infinite treasure and highest privilege. And Manasseh despised them.

3. (:9) Stubborn Persistence in Pagan Idolatry

*“But they did not listen, and Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the LORD destroyed before the sons of Israel.”*

**David Guzik:** This was a transformation of the culture from something generally God-honoring to a culture that glorified idolatry and immorality. In general, we can say this happened because the people wanted it to happen. They didn’t care about the direction of their culture.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Now step back from this pile of paganism and note the common virus that infects it all. It’s all about **control**. In fertility worship I use my practice of sex to manipulate or encourage the heavenly powers to act in the same way and grant fertility. In astral worship I seek out omens that are indicators of future events; likewise in spiritism I want the secret knowledge that will enlighten me on how to act or react in view of what is coming. By sacrificing my child I show how dead earnest I am, what an extreme price I am willing to pay, and so should be able to ‘purchase’ the favor I desire. Paganism is the way I manage my life over against the various ‘powers’ that may determine it. Paganism is light years away from biblical religion with its sovereign God who walks before and beside me in both green pastures and dark valleys all the way to my final residence.

**William Barnes:** Although this entire section represents sharp condemnation of the king as “leading” the people into evil, quite similar to what Jeroboam I had done for Israel, there are also a few reminders in this section that the people were far from guiltless (cf. **21:13–15**. . .



## II. (:10-15) PROPHETIC PRONOUNCEMENT OF SEVERE JUDGMENT

*“Now the LORD spoke through His servants the prophets, saying,”*

**Paul House:** The prophetic messages of warning have been shaped by theological reflection upon the covenants, the flow of Israelite history, and the activity of God within that history. They also speak from their knowledge of the Lord’s character, such as his mercy, kindness, righteousness, and insistence on accountability. Therefore their words about the future are not only the product of divine revelation but are based upon their knowledge of God. As always the prophetic word does not fail, though in this case this fact saddens readers.

### A. (:11) Necessity of Severe Judgment

*“Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;”*

**Constable:** Not only did Manasseh apostatize personally, he also led the nation in departing from God (v. 11). The *"line of Samaria"* (v. 13) refers to the righteous standard that God had used to measure Samaria's fidelity to His will. The *"plummet of Ahab's house"* (v. 13) was the same plumb line of righteousness by which God had judged Ahab's family. God would abandon His people temporarily, but not permanently (v. 14; cf. **Deut. 28:63-64**). The *"remnant"* that God said He would *"abandon"* probably refers to the Southern Kingdom of Judah (cf. **17:18**). It, too, in addition to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, would go into captivity.

### B. (:12-14) 4 Images of Divine Judgment

*“therefore thus says the LORD, the God of Israel,”*

#### 1. (:12) Image #1 – Emphasizing the Severity of the Coming Judgment

*“Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears shall tingle.”*

**Wiersbe:** This describes a frightening response to news so terrible that it’s like hearing a loud noise that makes your ears ring. The Hebrew word *salal* means “to tingle, to quiver,” and is related to the word for cymbals and bells. When they heard the news of the approaching Babylonian army, it would be like hearing a sudden clash of cymbals! Wake up! Wake up! But it would be too late.

#### 2. (:13a) Image #2 – Emphasizing the Historical Precedent of Judgment

*“And I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab,”*

**MacArthur:** These were weighted lines dropped from walls to see whether they were structurally straight (cf. **Is 28:17; Am 7:7, 8**). Walls out of line were torn down. The

Lord had measured Jerusalem by the standard of His Word and had determined that the fate of Samaria (Israel) was also to befall Jerusalem.

3. (:13b) Image #3 – Emphasizing the Complete Destruction of Jerusalem

*“and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish,  
wiping it and turning it upside down.”*

**Wiseman:** To wipe a dish and turn it upside-down to drain signified the depopulation of the land (cf. **Jeremiah 51:34**).

**William Barnes:** The image here is not of thoroughly washing and drying a dish, but of wiping it clean to get each and every morsel of food, leaving absolutely nothing behind (see **Cogan** and **Tadmor** 1988:269).

**Mordechai Cogan:** The turning over of a dish at the completion of a meal indicates satiation—i.e. no further consumption of the table’s spread. Vividly conveyed by this image are two statements: not only are a city and its people wiped out, but yhwh as well, has had his fill of Judah’s sinning and can take no more.

4. (:14) Image #4 – Emphasizing Their Helplessness in the Face of Judgment

*“And I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance  
and deliver them into the hand of their enemies,  
and they shall become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies;”*

It must be understood that God’s covenant promises were to the **nation of Israel**. That did not mean that every individual Israelite would enjoy the benefits of those promises; instead, if they were unfaithful and apostate and unbelieving, they would personally be subject to judgment rather than blessing. As well, there was corporate discipline upon the nation as a whole, but never abandonment of the promises of the covenants.

**Wiersbe:** The word “forsake” in **21:14** means “to give over to judgment.” God promised never to abandon His people (**1 Sam. 12:22**; **2 Sam. 7:23-24**), but He also warned that He would chasten them if they disobeyed Him. God didn’t break His promises; it was the people who broke His covenant. God is always faithful to His covenant, whether to bless obedience or punish disobedience.

**C. (:15) Necessity of Severe Judgment**

*“because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger,  
since the day their fathers came from Egypt, even to this day.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This is a solemn matter: that iniquity can pass a point that places a nation, or an individual, beyond hope of recovery and makes judgment irreversible. The fact that we don’t know where that point is should sober us. . . That’s how it is with idolatry and depravity. There’s a line we can cross and we don’t know where it is. This ought to scare us into repenting. A broken and crushed heart (**Ps. 51:17**) doesn’t look all that bad when one considers the alternative.

### III. (:16-18) SUMMARY OF EVIL REIGN OF MANASSEH

#### A. (:16) Overall Evaluation

*“Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the LORD.”*

**MacArthur:** The reference here is ambiguous and several interpretations have been offered:

- 1) child sacrifice (cf. v. 6);
- 2) oppression and persecution of the weak (**Jer 7:6; 22:3, 17; Eze 22:6-31**); or
- 3) the martyrdom of God’s prophets (cf. v. 10)

A combination of all 3 is most likely. Jewish and Christian tradition alike report that Manasseh had Isaiah sawn in two inside a hollow log (cf. **Heb 11:37**).

**David Guzik:** We see the tragic progression in Manasseh’s sin.

- First, idolatry is tolerated among God’s people.
- Then idolatry is promoted.
- Then idolatry is supported and funded.
- Then the worship of the true God is undermined.
- Then the worshippers of the true God are persecuted and murdered.
- Then the judgment of God soon comes.

**Peter Pett:** The full evil of the life of Manasseh is brought out by a detailed description of all the abominations that he committed (**2 Kings 21:3-7**), followed by two summaries, one in **2 Kings 21:9** and one in **2 Kings 21:16**, thereby making up a threefold indictment of the ‘completeness’ of his evil.

#### B. (:17) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh and all that he did and his sin which he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

#### C. (:18a) Death and Burial

*“And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza,”*

#### D. (:18b) Succession

*“and Amon his son became king in his place.”*

#### **IV. (:19-26) AMON'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH AS THE CLONE OF MANASSEH**

##### **A. (:19) Selected Touchpoints**

1. How Old Was He When He Became King?  
*"Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king,"*
2. How Long Did He Reign?  
*"and he reigned two years"*
3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?  
*"in Jerusalem;"*
4. Who Was His Mother?  
*"and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah."*

##### **B. (:20-22) Moral Evaluation**

1. (:20-21) Followed in the Sinful Path of His Father  
*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, as Manasseh his father had done. For he walked in all the way that his father had walked, and served the idols that his father had served and worshiped them."*

**Caleb Nelson:** And, in case 55 years wasn't enough, Manasseh left behind a clone of himself. Three times in **vv. 20-21** we are told that Amon imitated his father. The son was just like his daddy, only he did not die in peace. He was murdered after only two years of his carrying-on in the palace.

2. (:22) Forsook the Path of Covenant Faithfulness  
*"So he forsook the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD."*

##### **C. (:23-24) Assassination Drama in Kingdom Succession**

1. (:23) Killing of the King by an Internal Conspiracy  
*"And the servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house."*

**Patterson and Austel:** Although the Scriptures give no reason for the conspiracy, its cause may lie within the tangled web of revolts that Asurbanipal suppressed from 642-639 and that caused him to turn his attention to the west... Amon's death may thus reflect a power struggle between those who wished to remain loyal to the Assyrian crown and those who aspired to link Judah's fortunes to the rising star of Psammetik I (664-609) of Egypt's Twenty-Sixth Dynasty.

**Wiersbe:** Amon was probably pro-Assyrian – after all they had released his father from prison – while the officials were pro-Babylonian, not realizing that the rise of Babylon

would ultimately mean the fall of Judah. Amon's son Josiah was definitely pro-Babylonian and even lost his life on the battlefield trying to stop the Egyptian army from assisting Assyrian against Babylon. The fact that the people made Josiah the next king would suggest that they didn't want a pro-Assyria king.

2. (:24) Killing of the Conspirators by the People of the Land

*“Then the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon,  
and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place.”*

**William Barnes:** recurring references to a distinct group of powerful individuals (landed aristocrats?), who remained loyal to the Davidic ancestral line, stepping forward whenever that dynasty was threatened (cf. **23:30, 35** [?];

**Mordechai Cogan:** Throughout this period, the stabilizing factor in Judah was the *‘am hā’āreš*, “the People of the Land,” who remained loyal to the Davidides. As in the case of Jehoash (**2 Kgs 11**), so here too they appear at a moment of dynastic crisis to insure the continuation of the House of David, by placing Josiah on the throne. If the analogy to Joash be extended, it can also be argued that even though the *‘am hā’āreš* avenged the violent death of Amon, they were not supporters of the religiopolitical policies of Manasseh and his successor. This is seen from the thrust of Josiah's actions, after a decade of rule by the *‘am hā’āreš* during Josiah's minority; the influence upon the king of these circles, loyal to Israelite tradition was striking. From the death of Amon until the fall of Judah in 586, the “People of the Land” repeatedly came forward whenever the dynasty was endangered. They were also among the first to be punished by Judah's conquerors (cf. e.g. **23:35**).

**D. (:25-26) Overall Summary of Reign of Amon**

1. (:25) Recorded Deeds

*“Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

2. (:26a) Burial

*“And he was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza,”*

3. (:26b) Succession

*“and Josiah his son became king in his place.”*

**Dilday:** The only positive contribution Amon made to the history of Judah was to produce one of the best kings to reign on the throne of Jerusalem.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What is the significance in terms of parenting of contrasting examples of Manasseh rejecting his godly heritage and Amon following after the pattern of his ungodly father?
- 2) What role did the people play throughout this narrative?
- 3) Why does the author omit the record of the repentance of Manasseh near the end of his life as recorded in Chronicles?
- 4) How does sin promote conspiracies and drama?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Paul House:** During this time Assyria's Sennacherib dies in about 681 B.C. and is followed first by Esarhaddon (ca. 681–669 B.C.), then by Ashurbanipal (ca. 669–627 B.C.). None of these men allows Assyria to lose its position as the world's dominant power. **Bright** states that though Manasseh rebels against Assyria at least once (cf. **2 Chr 33:10–13**), he is “a loyal vassal of Assyria throughout his long reign. Esarhaddon lists him among twenty-two kings required to forward building materials for his building projects, while Ashurbanipal names him as one of a number of vassals who assisted his campaign against Egypt.” Judah's anti-Assyrian days are over. Manasseh adopts what he no doubt believes is a prudent policy.

Besides these “secular” matters, the text mentions at least seven separate religious offenses Manasseh commits.

First, he reverts to worshiping idols in the same manner as the nations Israel expelled from the land. By doing so the covenant people prove as unworthy of the promised land as their predecessors.

Second, Manasseh allows high places to flourish again. Now his standards are no higher than those of Jeroboam I.

Third, he sinks to Ahab's religious level, reintroducing the worship of Baal and his consort Asherah (cf. **1 Kgs 30–33; Deut 16:21**). Polytheism reenters Judahite society with royal approval.

Fourth, Manasseh also bows down “*to all the starry hosts*.” Astral deities were popular throughout the ancient world before, during, and after this time. **J. McKay** believes “there can be no question that the Sun, the Moon and perhaps Venus were worshiped in Judah” and that “it can hardly be doubted that in this age of vassaldom Assyrian influence must have contributed much to the upsurge of the astral cults in Palestine.”

Fifth, Manasseh builds altars to these gods in the temple of the Lord, as Ahaz his grandfather does in **2 Kgs 16:10–16**. If these are Assyrian deities, he probably hopes to please the gods he thinks can make him as powerful as his masters, or at least he hopes to please his masters.

Sixth, he also imitates Ahaz's practice of child sacrifice (cf. **2 Kgs 16:3**), and,

Seventh, he consults "mediums and spiritists," both in direct violation of Moses' law (cf. **Lev 18:21; Deut 18:9–13**).

Given this summary, it is clear that Manasseh follows all the wrong role models. He imitates the detestable Canaanites, Jeroboam I the builder of high places, Ahab the advocate of Baal worship, Ahaz the proponent of child sacrifice, and Saul the visitor of mediums. It is hard to imagine a more damning critique (cp. vv. 3, 6 with **17:16–17**). **21:7–9**

Stated simply, Manasseh, the representative of the royal house, violates three fundamental tenets of Old Testament life.

First, he certainly fails to follow David's example, thus breaking the Davidic Covenant (cf. **2 Sam 7:7–17**).

Second, he defiles with idolatry the central sanctuary chosen by the Lord (cf. **Deut 12:1–32; 1 Kgs 9:1–9**), a sin that will lead to destruction and exile (cf. **1 Kgs 9:6–9**).

Third, he rejects Moses' covenant, which means the promised land will be forfeited (cf. **Deut 28:49– 63**).

Thus, Manasseh not only acts opposite of Hezekiah, but he also scorns the examples of Moses, Joshua, David, and Solomon as well. . .

The Chronicler's account of Manasseh's life varies from the one in **2 Kgs 21:1–18** in one significant respect. Though **2 Chr 33:1–9** agrees with the completely negative assessment found in **2 Kgs 21:1–9**, the Chronicler also recounts a time of repentance late in Manasseh's life (**2 Chr 33:10–17**). Oppression by Assyria initiates prayer and contrition on Manasseh's part, which leads to release from his immediate problem and a removal of idols he has erected. These reforms are portrayed as limited and short-lived, however, so the results of his reign remain the same. His support of idolatry leads to corruption that Josiah will have to combat later, a point the Chronicler makes clear in the survey of Josiah's life (cf. **2 Chr 34:1–35:27**). In both histories, then, Manasseh's long period of rule is portrayed as an ultimately damaging era in Israel's history at a moment when such leadership could not be afforded.

**Wiseman:** Manasseh was born after Hezekiah's illness (20:6) and lived during the height of Assyrian power which, under Esarhaddon (681–669 bc) and Ashurbanipal (669–627 bc) controlled as far west as Upper Egypt, and from 671 onwards Judah was a steady and stable vassal of the Assyrians, allowing them free passage on the coastal route. Manasseh is named in Assyrian annals (Menasi or Minse, king of Yaudi) among twelve rulers of Palestine who brought tribute in kind to their overlord. There is, however, no evidence that the Assyrians forced any vassal to change his religious policy except in so far as he had to acknowledge his overlord's god as the one who would exact revenge for any infringement of a covenant-treaty, a copy of which would have to be laid up in the temple. Manasseh's sin in reversing his father's purification of the cult (18:3–5) and in reverting to Ahaz' practices (16:3) would have been his own decision. This may have been encouraged by a pro-Assyrian or pro-Egyptian party gaining the ascendancy.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Though Dtr. depicted Manasseh as solely responsible for Judah's apostasy, it is unlikely that acts such as those listed to his discredit could have succeeded for so long without support in court circles and among the people. It may be submitted that the idolatry of Manasseh's age was a popular reaction to the religious policies of Hezekiah, which set in after that king's death. Hezekiah's cult reform did not prevent the disastrous rout of Judah at the hands of Assyria. Rather than meeting defeat and disaster on the hills of Judah, as prophesied by Isaiah (cf. e.g. Isa 10:12–19), Assyria reached the apogee of its power. During the reign of Esarhaddon, Assyria reasserted its presence in the West and after several campaigns against the Nubian kings, went on to conquer Egypt (671 b.c.e.). The promised salvation did not come; the time was ripe for reaction. Groups directly hurt by the Hezekian reforms, the rural priesthood and perhaps even prophets outside the Isaianic circle, might well have supported the retrograde policies of Manasseh. Clearly these would hardly have been the innovations of a teenage king. Yet one should not exclude the personal element in this. Manasseh rejected his father's zealous pietistic ways, perhaps not unlike Sennacherib's total reversal of the political and religious policies of Sargon, his father (whom he never mentions in any of his inscriptions).

**Caleb Nelson:** “I’ll Clean Up This Town”

**Proposition:** God will not turn a blind eye toward sin, even among His own chosen people, and even in one of the ancestors of Jesus.

## **I. Manasseh's Evil Contrasted with God's Righteousness, vv. 1-16**

- A. The Mystery of Providence, v. 1
- B. Manasseh Un-hallows the City of God, vv. 2-4
- C. Manasseh Un-hallows the Temple of God, vv. 5-8
- D. God Promises to Forsake His Chosen People, vv. 9-15
- E. Manasseh Murders the People of God, v. 16

## **II. Manasseh's Sin-Soaked Epitaph, vv. 17-18**

## **III. Manasseh's Wicked Clone, vv. 19-26**



## **Introduction**

Dearly beloved congregation of our Lord Jesus Christ, our text this evening presents Manasseh's evil. As we saw last time, judgment very nearly fell on Judah in 701 B.C., and only Hezekiah's intercession and God's mercy postponed it. Yet Hezekiah's own son Manasseh was already an agent of judgment, and one who sealed the fate of Judah. Because of his wickedness, exile was certain. Our text is not afraid to juxtapose God's promise that Israel would remain in the land with God's other promise to deliver in Israel into the hands of its enemies. Indeed, the bulk of our text is given over to presenting Manasseh's wickedness and God's verdict on that wickedness. The thing that we see preeminently here is that God will not turn a blind eye toward sin, even if it's in His chosen people, even if it's in David's line. God sees sin and He will wipe it out from among His people as a man wipes a dish. That's the message of this chapter — and it's one that behoves us to hate and flee sin!

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/410181143520.pdf>

TEXT: 2 Kings 22:1-20

TITLE: REFOCUSING ON TOP LEVEL PRIORITIES

**BIG IDEA:**

**REFORMS UNDER JOSIAH BEGIN WITH THE RECOVERY OF GOD'S WORD AS THE NATION REFOCUSES ON TOP LEVEL PRIORITIES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Judgment against Judah and Jerusalem has already been proclaimed. The wrath of God is about to be unleashed because of Judah's spiritual apostasy and persistent idolatry as they engage in abominable pagan practices. Yet in God's mercy we see the righteous reign of Josiah emerge as the Word of God is recovered and reforms are initiated. However, it will be too little too late in terms of preventing the Babylonian Captivity.

**Peter Pett:** It will be noted that, as so often in the book of Kings, we are given little detail of the king's reign. All the concentration is rather on the cleansing and restoration of the Temple, which resulted in the discovery of an ancient copy of the Book of the Law, the reading and interpreting of which gave impetus to reforms already begun, indicating that one of the author's aims was to bring out how everything that was done (even what was done before it was found) was done in accordance with the Book of the Law.

As ever the author was not interested in giving us either a chronological or a detailed history. He was concerned as a prophet to underline certain theological implications, and the history was called on for that purpose (although without distorting it) and presented in such a way that it would bring out the idea that he wanted to convey, which was that Josiah sought to fulfil the Law of YHWH with all his heart, and that all that he did was in accordance with that Law.

**Iain Provan:** Judgment has been announced. It is now simply a matter of timing. At this juncture in Judean history, strangely enough, Judah finds herself with yet another righteous king—a second Moses to match her second David (Hezekiah). Josiah is a king long-awaited (**1 Kgs. 13:2**). He is the best of all kings, but he is a king come too late.

**Constable:** "*Josiah*" ("The Lord Supports") was one of Judah's best kings, if not the very best. He is the only king of whom the writer wrote that "*he did not turn aside to the right or to the left*" (v. 2), a condition that God specified for His kings in relation to His law (**Deut. 17:20**). Josiah was one of the reformers who followed David's good example (v. 2) all his life. A young unnamed prophet from Judah had predicted his birth, by name, long before he was born (**1 Kings 13:1-2**; cf. **Isa. 44:28; 45:1; Mic. 5:2**). Unfortunately, he came to the throne of Judah too late to prevent the demise of his nation.

**Peter Pett:** The fact that reform did take so long initially must be attributed firstly to the continuing influence of Assyria, whose representatives would for some years still hold undisputed sway in Judah's affairs, secondly, to the king's youthfulness, and thirdly to the strength of the opposition parties who clearly encouraged the worship of local deities. All these would mean that Josiah had to walk carefully.

**Wiseman:** The structure of the history follows the normal pattern, with an introduction (22:1–2) and notes on historical highlights, notably the temple repairs (vv. 3–7) and the discovery of the Book of the Law (vv. 8–10) with the king's response to it. Next there is the answer by the prophetess Huldah when consulted (vv. 14–20), in two prophecies, one concerning the fate of Jerusalem (vv. 15–17), the other the favour to Josiah in avoiding the final fall of the city (vv. 18–20).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The story breaks down into three distinct sections:

- Priestly discovery, vv. 3–10
- Royal distress, vv. 11–14
- Prophetic clarity, vv. 15–20

## **(:1-2) PROLOGUE: JOSIAH'S RIGHTEOUS REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

### **A. (:1) Selected Touchpoints**

#### 1. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*"Josiah was eight years old when he became king,"*

#### 2. How Long Did He Reign?

*"and he reigned thirty-one years"*

**MacArthur:** 640-609 B.C. During Josiah's reign, power in the ancient Near East passed from Assyria to Babylon. Nineveh, the capital of Assyria, was destroyed by the Babylonians in 612 B.C. and the whole Assyrian empire fell in 609 B.C. Josiah was the last good king of the Davidic line prior to the Babylonian exile. Jeremiah (**Jer 1:2**), possibly Habakkuk, and Zephaniah (**Zep 1:1**) were prophets to Judah during the reign of Josiah.

#### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*"in Jerusalem;"*

#### 4. Who Was His Mother?

*"and his mother's name was Jedidah  
the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath."*

### **B. (:2) Moral Evaluation**

*"And he did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left."*

## **I. (:3-7) REFOCUSING ON THE PRIORITY OF THE TEMPLE -- IMPORTANCE OF THE TEMPLE REFLECTED IN THE ADMINISTRATION OF TEMPLE REPAIRS**

### **A. (:3) Initiation of Administration**

*“Now it came about in the eighteenth year of King Josiah that the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam the scribe, to the house of the LORD saying,”*

### **B. (:4-6) Investment of Administration**

#### 1. (:4) Counting the Donations

*“Go up to Hilkiah the high priest that he may count the money brought in to the house of the LORD which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people.”*

**August Konkel:** The disastrous state of the temple must have taken place during the apostate reign of Manasseh. In that time the book of the covenant seems to have been entirely forgotten. . .

Throughout Judah’s history, repairs to the temple were a continuous necessity. Joash had initiated a policy for financing temple maintenance (**2 Kings 12:9–15**), and the procedures initiated by Josiah follow that same procedure.

#### 2. (:5-6) Paying the Workers

*“And let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages of the house, 6 to the carpenters and the builders and the masons and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the house.”*

**Peter Pett:** Hilkiah was being called on to weigh and ‘*sum up*’ the ‘silver’ (possibly by turning it into ingots. There were no official coins in those days) which had been gathered for the purpose of the repair work, and had been brought into the house of YHWH. The ‘*keepers of the threshold*’ were high Temple officials (in terms of New Testament days ‘chief priests’) who were responsible to ensure the sanctity of the Temple by excluding from it any unauthorised persons. Their post would make them ideal for the collecting of gifts to the Temple, and watching over them. Hilkiah, having assessed the value of the gifts, was then to call on the keepers of the threshold to deliver the silver into the hands of the workmen who had oversight of the house of YHWH, in our terms the priestly architects and structural engineers. They in their turn were to arrange for the work to be done by organised priestly workmen set apart for the work and were to pay over the silver accordingly. This work would be performed by suitably trained priests. The aim was to ‘*repair the breaches in the house*’, in other words to carry out needed building repairs to the decaying and neglected building.

### C. (:7) Integrity of Administration

*“Only no accounting shall be made with them for the money delivered into their hands, for they deal faithfully.”*

**Peter Pett:** The **honesty** of those involved was considered to be such that it was felt unnecessary to call for an account of how the silver was spent. Comparison with **2 Kings 12:15** suggests that this was regularly a recognised part of any such contract. To have taken up any other position would seemingly have been seen as insulting to the priest-workmen. Such an attitude was only really possible in times of ‘revival’ when there was a new spirit of dedication around.

## II. (:8-13) REFOCUSING ON THE PRIORITY OF GOD’S WORD -- IMPACT OF THE WORD OF GOD REFLECTED IN THE RECOVERY OF THE BOOK OF THE LAW

### A. (:8-10) Treasuring the Recovery of God’s Word

#### 1. (:8) Prioritizing the Reading of God’s Word

*“Then Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe,  
‘I have found the book of the law in the house of the LORD.’  
And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan who read it.”*

**Wiseman:** It could have been found in the box when the silver was ‘*poured out*’ (**2 Chr. 34:14**).

**Constable:** “*The book of the law*” here seems to refer to the Book of Deuteronomy, since the phrase “*the book of the law*” is used in the Pentateuch only of Deuteronomy (**Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; cf. also Josh. 1:8; 8:30-35; 23:6; 24:26**).

**Peter Pett:** In spite of the fact that the majority of scholars see The Book of the Law as being simply a portion of Deuteronomy, (although with a multitude of related theories and datings connected with that idea), that must in our view be seen as very unlikely for a number of reasons.

The first good reason that counts against it is that the book inspired an observance of the Passover that exceeded all that had gone before it following the time of Joshua (**2 Kings 23:21-22**). The Book is described as ‘*the book of the covenant which was found in the house of YHWH*’ (**2 Kings 23:2**), a description which is then followed up in **2 Kings 22 :2 Kings 23:21-23** with the words, ‘*and the king commanded all the people saying, “Keep the Passover to YHWH your God, as it is written in this book of the covenant. Surely there was not kept such a Passover from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel, nor of the kings of Judah. But in the eighteenth year of king Josiah was this Passover kept to YHWH in Jerusalem*’.

The impression gained here is not only that it stirred the people to keep the Passover, but also that it guided them into doing so in such a way that it exceeded anything done since the time of the Judges. In other words it took them back to the way in which it

was observed in the early days under Moses and Joshua (the assumption being that in their days it was properly and fully observed).

However, when we actually look at what the Book of Deuteronomy has to say about the Passover we find that the details given concerning the observing of the Passover are in fact extremely sparse. These details are found in **Deuteronomy 16:1-8** and it will be noted that the only requirements given there are the offering of the sacrifice of the Passover itself, without any detail as to whether it was to be one sacrifice or many (although possibly with a hint of multiplicity in that it is from *‘the flocks and the herds’*), and the eating of unleavened bread for seven days. In other words it details the very minimum of requirements, and clearly assumes that more detail is given elsewhere, something very likely in a speech by Moses, but in our view unlikely in a book which purportedly presents the full law. It is hardly feasible that these instructions produced a Passover in such advance of all those previously held that it was seen as excelling all others, for the instructions given were minimal. . .

There are a number of other indications that suggest that the Law Book consisted of more than Deuteronomy. For example, if we compare the words in **2 Kings 23:24** with the Pentateuch we discover again that, if we are to take them as echoing what had just been discovered, more than Deuteronomy is required. For example in **2 Kings 23:24** we read of *‘those who have familiar spirits’*. But this is a way of putting it which is paralleled only in **Leviticus 19:31; Leviticus 20:6**, (compare also **Leviticus 20:27**), whereas Deuteronomy, in its only mention of familiar spirits, speaks of *‘consulters of familiar spirits’* (**Deuteronomy 18:11**). The terminology used in **2 Kings 23:24** is thus unexpected if it was inspired by a section of Deuteronomy, but fully understandable in the light of Leviticus. . .

## 2. (:9-10) Prioritizing the Impact of God’s Word

### a. (:9) Recovery of the Money and its Impact

#### 1) Its Recovery

*“And Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, ‘Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house,’”*

#### 2) Its Impact

*“and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD.”*

### b. (:10) Recovery of God’s Word and its Impact

#### 1) Its Recovery

*“Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’”*

#### 2) Its Impact

*“And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king.”*

## **B. (:11-13) Trembling at the Impact of God's Word**

### **1. (:11) Immediate Impact of God's Word**

*"And it came about when the king heard the words of the book of the law, that he tore his clothes."*

**Whitcomb:** King Josiah was utterly overwhelmed when he heard God's description of apostasy and its consequences echoing through the centuries from the time of Moses, and feared that it might already be too late to bring the nation to repentance.

**Paul Elliott: God's Word in the Rubbish Heap** -- Josiah's reaction to the rediscovered imperatives of the Word of God was a reaction of indignation, a reaction based on fear of the consequences of the long neglect of God's Word. And Josiah's reaction demonstrated a vehement desire, a zealous desire, to personally submit to the full authority of the Word of God, and to lead the nation in repentance and turning away from idols to serve the one true and living God.

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### **2. (:12-13) Investigating Further the Extent of Disobedience and the Resulting Wrath of God**

*"Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, 'Go, inquire of the LORD for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the LORD that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.'"*

**Wiseman:** This is an official delegation asking for interpretation not by divination but through a spokesman of God. The reply was needed both by the king and by the people of Judah. Both must act in accord.

## **III. (:14-20a) REFOCUSING ON THE PRIORITY OF GOD'S MESSAGE -- INTEGRATION OF JUDGMENT AND MERCY REFLECTED IN TWO PROPHECIES BY HULDAH REGARDING JERUSALEM AND JOSIAH**

### **(:14) Soliciting the Word of the Prophetess Huldah**

*"So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her."*

**MacArthur:** *"the Second Quarter"* – This district of Jerusalem was called *"second"* because it comprised the city's first major expansion. It was probably located on the western hill of Jerusalem, an area enclosed by the city wall and built during the reign of Hezekiah. The expansion of the city during Hezekiah's reign was perhaps to accommodate Jewish refugees who had escaped from the Assyrian invasion of Israel.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Huldah was a court prophet, consulted on state matters, as required by the code in **Deut 18:1–8**.

**Wiersbe:** Along with Huldah, the prophetesses in Scripture include Miriam (**Ex. 15:20**), Deborah (**Judg. 4:4**), Naodiah (**Neh. 6:14**), the wife of Isaiah the Prophet (**Isa 8:3**), Anna (**Luke 2:36**), and the four daughters of Philip the evangelist (**Acts 21:8-9**).

**Wiseman:** The reply is in two parts, one each for the king and for the people.

**A. (:15-17) Prophecy #1 – Judgment – Addressed to the People Regarding the Fate of Jerusalem**

1. (:15-16) Severe Judgment on Jerusalem and its People

*“And she said to them, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Tell the man who sent you to me, 16 thus says the LORD, Behold, I bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read.’”*

2. (:17) Sentence Justified by Unfaithful Idolatry Evoking Unrelenting Wrath

*“Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched.”*

**B. (:18-20a) Prophecy #2 – Mercy – Addressed to the King Regarding the Favor Shown to Josiah**

1. (:18) Personal Message Delivered to the King

*“But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the LORD thus shall you say to him, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel, Regarding the words which you have heard,’”*

2. (:19) Posture of Humility and Repentance Earned a Hearing

*“‘because your heart was tender  
and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse,  
and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me,  
I truly have heard you,’ declares the LORD.”*

3. (:20a) Peaceful Departure Promised by God’s Mercy

*“Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers,  
and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace,  
neither shall your eyes see all the evil which I will bring on this place.”*

**Whitcomb:** It may seem strange indeed that God would have promised Josiah: “*thou shalt be gathered to thy grave in peace*” (**II Kings 22:20**), when, as a matter of fact, he



was killed by an Egyptian pharaoh on the field of battle! (cf. **II Chron. 35:23**). The problem is solved, however, when we realize that for the Israelite, to die “*in peace*” meant to die in a state of fellowship with God as a true believer, whether in the front line of battle or at home in bed. In contrast to this, “*there is not peace, saith my God, to the wicked*” (**Isa. 57:21**).

**Constable:** This prophecy may have expressed God's desire and intent for Josiah. The fact that he died in battle, not in peace (**23:29**), may have been the result of his departing from God's will by confronting Pharaoh Neco in battle. A better explanation is that the prophecy was fulfilled in that Josiah died before the violent destruction of Jerusalem. His death in 609 B.C. was four years before King Nebuchadnezzar's first attack on Jerusalem in 605 B.C.

**R. D. Patterson:** “*To be gathered to one's fathers*” may also contain an underlying hint of an OT hope for life after death. That the reality of a conscious afterlife existed in OT times may be seen from **Gen 22:5; Job 14:14-15; 19:25-27; Pss 16:9-11; 22:22-24; 49:14-15; 73:23-26; Isa 25:8; 26:19; Dan 12:2-3; Hos 13:14**.

**August Konkel:** The only mitigation to be found in the words of Huldah is a personal application to the king. His penitence will prevent the disaster of the Exile from taking place during his lifetime. The “*desolation and curse*” on the inhabitants of the kingdom cannot be averted (**2 Kings 22:19**, nasb; cf. **Deut. 28:37**), but Josiah will die in peace. In all other circumstances this would signify a natural death, not a death in war as befalls Josiah (**2 Kings 23:29–30**). Only in such a circumstance of disaster can Josiah's burial in Jerusalem be described as peaceful. Peace for Josiah means he will be buried in his own grave with other distinguished kings of Judah.

## **(:20b) EPILOGUE – REPORTING BACK TO JOSIAH**

*“So they brought back word to the king.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How can we improve the administration of the monetary gifts that people donate to the work of the Lord?
- 2) What lessons can we learn from the recovery of the Word of God at the time of the Reformation and its subsequent publication and distribution so that the common people could access it?
- 3) How can America as a nation humble itself before the Lord in light of our serious transgressions despite the privilege of receiving so much grace and opportunity from the Lord?

4) Where do we see the Lord's message of both judgment and mercy applied to the church in our day?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Whitcomb:** In passing, we must comment on one of the most fantastic fables ever foisted upon the Church by "*the father of lies*." Nineteenth century A.D. negative critics of the Old Testament, especially a German scholar named **Julius Wellhausen**, insisted that the book of Deuteronomy was invented by an unknown contemporary of King Josiah. Making the scroll to read like an original production of Moses himself, he planted it in the rubbish heaps of the Temple in order that it might be discovered during the time of cleansing and repair! The true tragedy of this fantastic theory is that the vast majority of Old Testament scholars in Europe and America adopted it, and its influence continues to the present hour, even though the theory has experienced many modifications (see *The New Bible Commentary*: Revised, 1970, pp. 34-40).

**William Barnes:** Josiah had no more reason to suspect a sharply negative result from a prophetic word stemming from his well-intentioned efforts to cleanse the Temple of Yahweh than Hezekiah, three-quarters of a century earlier, would have had from his efforts to show off the wealth and power of his kingdom to some Babylonian visitors. And Josiah was equally blindsided by the prophetic words read to him by Shaphan the court secretary from the "*Book of the Law*"; he had no reason to suspect their ferocity. People say that our true nature is revealed during a totally unexpected crisis. Well, if that is the case, it appears that Josiah acted more nobly than Hezekiah did (at least in this case, for at other times Hezekiah's bravery and nobility are truly without peer). In any case, Josiah certainly did the right thing; he sought out a prophet and listened carefully to her word from Yahweh (which showed that she was quite aware that Yahweh knew all about Josiah's previous acts of contrition and repentance [cf. **22:19**; these are details the narrator had only mentioned in the briefest fashion back in **22:11**]). As a result, he would act most decisively to bring about the most ferocious (in both positive and negative senses) campaign of cult-reform to be found in the Bible. Josiah was not to be deterred! A personal word of exemption from the future cataclysm (which was even more clearly spelled out for Josiah than it had been for Hezekiah) did not stay the hand or stop the voice of this youthful reformer. If anything, I suspect it gave him even more energy and focus to make sure the task was accomplished. No wonder that, in the opinion of the Deuteronomistic Historian, King Josiah is to be ranked "best in show" when it comes to evaluating the various kings of Israel and Judah. And as we soon shall see, the continuing efforts of Josiah will proceed apace, until the task is done.

**August Konkel:** Judgment against Jerusalem is delayed but cannot be averted, not even by one of the noblest kings to reign on the throne of Judah. Josiah is the long-awaited king promised by the prophet of Judah to reverse the cursed idolatry introduced by Jeroboam (**1 Kings 13:2**). He is described as following in the ways of David (**2 Kings**

22:2), but he is also described in the same terms as the ideal king of Deuteronomy (**Deut. 17:20**). Josiah does not turn from the teaching of the covenant to the right or to the left (**2 Kings 22:2**). There is no king like him; he exceeds even Hezekiah in his devotion to the teaching of Moses, from which he does not deviate (**23:25**). Josiah is a second Moses to complement King Hezekiah, who had been the ideal second David.

One might expect that the expansive reforms of Josiah, instituting the centrality of the temple in worship, and his renewal of the covenant as directed by the Law of Moses (**Deut. 31:9–13**) would bring about at least a temporary change in the fortunes of Judah. Instead, Josiah dies at the hands of a foreign king (**2 Kings 23:29**), and the reforms he instituted perish immediately with the succession of his son Jehoahaz. Manasseh is responsible for the death of Josiah; his sin dooms the reform to futility. Josiah's reign is the first stage on the way to exile.

### **Phillip Way: The Ways of Josiah**

#### **I. Josiah's Right Walk – 2 Chron. 34:1-2; 2 Kings 22:1-2**

- A. Age 8 -- Began Reign (640-609 BC)
- B. Did Right in God's Sight
- C. Walked in the Ways of David without Wavering

#### **II. Josiah's Removal of Wickedness – 2 Chron. 34:3-7**

- A. Age 16 -- Began Reform in 628 BC
- B. Zephaniah Prophesied 635-625 BC
- C. Removed Idols from the Land

#### **III. Josiah's Response to the Word – 2 Kings 22:3-20**

- A. Age 26 -- Found the Law in 622 BC
- B. Heard the Law
- C. Responded to the Law with Humility and Sorrow – Zeph. 3:12
  - 1. Contrite Heart – Psa. 34:18; 51:15; Isa. 57:15; 66:2
  - 2. Humility – Psa. 10:17; 18:27; 25:9; 147:6; Matt. 18:4; Rom. 12:16; James 4:6, 10
  - 3. Weeping – Psa. 30:5; Joel 2:12

#### **IV. Josiah's Restoration of Worship – 2 Kings 23:1-25**

- A. Read the Word
- B. Restored the Covenant
- C. Reinstated Passover
- D. Remained Righteous

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### **Ty Blackburn: After Darkness, Light**

The motto of the **Reformation** is inscribed in the midst in huge letters inscribed across this great wall: *Post Tenebras Lux, after darkness, light*. That's the message of the Reformation and that is the thank you that they were saying: thank you for sending the light into our darkness.

After darkness, light. That's the title of our message this morning. After darkness, light. What we're going to see is that's really the story of the Bible in general and there tend to be these patterns through history and we're going to see an archetype of it in **2 Kings 22** and essentially what we see is that the Reformation, the reason that the light came back, was that **the Bible was recovered**. For basically a thousand years, the Bible, or almost a thousand years, the Bible had been locked away in a dead language. After the fall of Rome, less and less people spoke Latin. It continued to be the language of the intelligentsia and the universities but the common man did not speak Latin all over Europe, but the Bible was only read in Latin. The Bible was only available in Latin. The Catholic Church forbade the Bible to be translated into any other language. This was one of the evidences of their heretical nature, that they kept the Bible from the people locked away in a mystical language and hidden behind all kinds of traditions that choked out the light of God's word. So what happened when the Reformers came to see the Gospel, they started studying the Scripture like Luther did in the Greek and Hebrew because he was a monk and he was trained in those languages, the word of God set his life ablaze with the light of the Gospel of the glory of God in the face of Christ, and then he wanted to see the Scriptures translated and so he translated the New Testament and the Old Testament into German and that happened all over Europe. William Tyndale did that in England and died for it. . .

when the Reformers saw the power of the word of God impact their lives and they translated the Bible into the languages and they started printing Bibles in English, in German, and people for the first time held the word of God in their hands and began to read the word of God and to teach the word of God to one another, families around the Bible, God's word, the light of God's word flooded into an area that had been formerly deep darkness and that's what *post tenebras lux* means, **after darkness, light**. And we see in this amazing passage in the Old Testament, the story of Josiah, really almost unbelievable and yet we see in this exactly what I was just talking about, the tendency of the people of God to lose the Bible, to lose the book.

Sermon Structure:

- I. The very real danger of **losing the book**.
- II. The life and death urgency of **finding the book**.
- III. The transforming power of **living the book**.

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TEXT: 2 Kings 23:1-30

TITLE: JOSIAH'S COVENANT RENEWAL AND WIDESPREAD REFORMS

**BIG IDEA:**

**REFORMATION WITHOUT INWARD TRANSFORMATION CAN'T DIVERT GOD'S JUDGMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

What an impressive list of worship reforms! It's no surprise that the wrath of God was targeting a nation that had become so apostate and idolatrous. But despite all of the efforts of Josiah, it was not in time to salvage the fate of Judah. In fact the people did not show evidence of lasting repentance and conversion. God had already determined to scatter His people into captivity. Given that Josiah is characterized as the greatest king in the line of David when it comes to covenant obedience, including David himself, it is surprising that his life story is not given more play in Christian preaching and teaching.

**Whitcomb:** Truly, Josiah was a great and godly king; but it would take more than a Josiah to reverse the downward trend of the nation: *"Though Moses and Samuel stood before me, yet my mind would not be toward this people: cast them out of my sight, and let them go forth"* (Jer. 15:1).

**Peter Pett:** The long list of Josiah's reforms emphasizes how far Judah had sunk into 'abominations' of many kinds and does serve to demonstrate that, apart from a small remnant, it had outwardly become almost as pagan as the nations round about. Church history reveals how the same thing happened to the church. In both cases it was only due to the grace of God and the faithful remnant of His people who remained true that the truth was preserved. The list makes crystal clear that the palace, the Temple and the worship of the ordinary people had all been deeply affected. On the other hand the fact that the reforms were at least successful for the remainder of his reign indicates how much support they had among many of the common people. In their hearts many had still yearned after YHWH.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Chronicles is clear: Josiah's reforms were both begun and to a large extent complete before Hilkiah's discovery of the Book of the Law. Why does Kings relate them after that discovery, giving the impression that the Book of the Law drove those reforms? Is that not deceptive or misleading?

So we need to look at **2 Kings** again.

- First, note that Kings implies that Josiah's reforms were underway before Hilkiah's discovery of the Law (**22:3-7**), for it would seem likely that repairing the temple also involved at least some purging of the temple.
- Secondly, note that the covenant renewal (**23:1-3**) and the Passover celebration

(23:21–23) are specifically tied to the book that was found (23:2, 3, 21), as are the reforms of **verse 24**, but that nothing in the reforms of 23:4–20 is related to that book.

- Thirdly, anyone in a reflective mood might wonder whether all the reforms (and travel required) in 23:4–20 could have been carried out within the confines of one year (the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign).

Hence, I think the writer of Kings has left us clues about what he is doing in 23:4–20: he is giving us a **topical survey** of Josiah's reforms out of strict chronological order (a perfectly legitimate practice, by the way).

Now why would he want to do that? Why would he insert 17 verses itemizing Josiah's reforms along with the covenant renewal and Passover celebration? Because he is building up to the climax of his chapter in **verses 26–27**. He wants to beef up (and that truly) the record of Josiah's reforms, to depict how very intense and massive and detailed those reforms were, so that **verses 26–27** will slap his reader in the face with the greatest force. He wants to send us reeling and the way he does so is to pack the chapter full of all Josiah's reforms so that **verses 26–27** will deliver their maximum jolt to us.

**William Barnes:** Yet, great as Josiah was, he could not save his nation from destruction. Manasseh could doom the nation, but Josiah could not save it (**Hens-Piazza** 2006:389). As **Seow** (1999:287) concludes:

*The most important lesson of all that the passage offers is a negative one. It teaches that human acts of righteousness, even those as thorough and as sincere as Josiah's, are no guarantee of salvation. ... Josiah initiated an ancient equivalent of a 'back to the Bible' movement, as it were, but the rediscovery of the law does not save. Despite his zealous adherence to 'the book,' there is no salvation for Judah. Salvation, if it comes at all, will be by the grace of God alone, through faith (**Eph 2:8**).*

Sobering words, I submit, for any generation, including our own, which tries so hard to legislate morality.

## **I. (:1-3) INCLUSIVE COVENANT RENEWAL**

### **A. (:1-2) Public Reading of the Book of the Covenant**

#### 1. (:1) Gathering the Leaders

*“Then the king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem.”*

**Peter Pett:** Note the distinction between the elders of Jerusalem and the elders of Judah. As the city of David Jerusalem was administratively separate from Judah. In Jerusalem the king had direct authority and could act as he wished, in Judah he had to consider local custom and respect the authority of the elders of Judah, the princes and the tribal aristocrats.

2. (:2a) Assembling Everyone at the Temple

*“And the king went up to the house of the LORD  
and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him,  
and the priests and the prophets and all the people,  
both small and great;”*

3. (:2b) Reading the Book of the Covenant

*“and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant,  
which was found in the house of the LORD.”*

**MacArthur:** “book of the covenant” -- Although this designation was used in **Ex 24:7** with reference to the contents of **Ex 20:22 – 23:33**, it seems here to refer to a larger writing. Since the larger part of the Pentateuch focused on the Mosaic Covenant, these 5 books came to be called thusly.

**Peter Pett:** The emphasis is on the fact that the whole stratum of people were represented, rather than on suggesting that all the people would be literally present and able to hear the words that would be read out. The point that is being stressed was that the covenant was being made by the whole people.

**B. (:3) Profession of Covenant Renewal**

1. Profession by the King

*“And the king stood by the pillar  
and made a covenant before the LORD,”*

**David Guzik:** King Josiah stood before the people and publicly declared his commitment to obey the word of God to the very best of his ability.

2. Purpose of the Covenant Commitment

*“to walk after the LORD, and to keep His commandments and His  
testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul,  
to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book.”*

3. Profession by the People

*“And all the people entered into the covenant.”*

**Wiersbe:** We must never assume today that because our churches are growing and our ministry prospering that God’s people are necessarily at their best. There are times when corporate renewal of our dedication to Christ is the right thing to do.

**II. (:4-20) IMPRESSIVE LIST OF REFORMS TO PURIFY NATIONAL  
WORSHIP – JOSIAH’S TWELVE STEP PROGRAM**

**A. (:4) Reform #1 -- Removing Pagan Vessels from the Temple**



*“Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel.”*

**MacArthur:** Josiah burned everything in the temple that was devoted to idolatry. This was done in the lower portion of the Kidron Valley, E of the city of Jerusalem (cf. **v. 6**).

Located about 10 mi. N of Jerusalem, Bethel was one of the two original places where Jeroboam I established an apostate worship center (**1 Ki 12:28-33**). Bethel was located just N of the border of Judah in the former northern kingdom, which was then the Assyrian province of Samaria. With a decline in Assyrian power, Josiah was able to exert his religious influence in the N. He used the ashes of the burned articles of idolatry to desecrate Jeroboam’s religious center (cf. **vv. 15-20**).

**Peter Pett:** As a ritual seal on the covenant the leading priests (compare **Jeremiah 52:24**) were then called on to bring out all the vessels within the Temple that had been used in false worship so that they could be burned outside Jerusalem in the fields of Kidron, after which their ashes were carried to Bethel to be disposed of, probably in order to defile the altar set up by Jeroboam I (compare **1 Kings 13:2**). Whether Bethel was under Josiah’s jurisdiction at this time (which it probably was) is irrelevant. All that mattered was that they had access to it. . .

Kidron was the place where Asa had previously burned defiling effigies (**1 Kings 15:13**; compare **2 Kings 23:6** below and see **2 Chronicles 29:16**; **2 Chronicles 30:14** under Hezekiah), and was clearly a place marked down for such activity, being already defiled by what Asa had done. Importantly it was outside Jerusalem so that Jerusalem would not be defiled by the activity.

#### **B. (:5) Reform #2 -- Removing Pagan Priests Who Promoted Idolatry**

*“And he did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven.”*

**Peter Pett:** **vv. 5-20** -- What is now described would have commenced well before Josiah’s eighteenth year as the Temple was purified preparatory to its being repaired and restored, and it would have continued on throughout his reign as he was able to establish his rule further and further afield because of the waning power of Assyria and his own growth in political power. It is thus a summary of the whole process of his reforms carried out throughout Judah and Samaria, not just a description of what he did in his eighteenth year. It will be noted that the author’s sole concentration is on Josiah’s reforming activity. The fact that Josiah had made Judah strong, independent, and prosperous, and had then extended his rule throughout Samaria with similar consequences, was seen as peripheral. What mattered to the author was the establishing



of the Rule of YHWH, and the purifying of the means of worship throughout all areas under his control.

**David Guzik:** Josiah's reforms did not only remove sinful things, but also the sinful people that promoted and permitted these sinful things. The idols that filled the temple did not get there or stay there on their own – there were idolatrous priests who were responsible for these sinful practices.

**C. (:6) Reform #3 -- Burning and Pulverizing the Asherah Image**

*“And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and ground it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people.”*

**MacArthur:** The Kidron Valley contained a burial ground for the common people (cf. **Jer 26:23**). Scattering ashes from the object of idolatry [Asherah] is said in **2Ch 34:4** to have been on the graves of those who sacrificed to that idol. The “common people” had followed their leaders to apostasy, defilement, and damnation – all symbolized by the act of scattering the ashes.

**D. (:7) Reform #4 -- Destroying the Houses of the Cult Prostitutes**

*“He also broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the LORD, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah.”*

**Peter Pett:** He also broke down the houses of the cult prostitutes (both male and female) which had been set up in the house of YHWH, in order to support the degraded worship of Canaanite gods, and was where women had woven hangings for the Asherah. The hangings may have been paraphernalia hung from the Asherah images, or robes for the Asherah priests, or cords to be placed round the heads of cult prostitutes.

**Dilday:** The word translated ‘*hangings*’ likely refers to a fabric woven by idol worshippers for curtains behind which the ritual obscenities were practiced.

**Wiseman:** used by the priests or statues or to denote the ‘plaited cord’ round the head as worn by Babylonian women prostitutes.

**William Barnes:** vv. 6-7 -- removed ... took ... outside ... burned ... ground ... to dust ... tore down . Here is a sampling of the forceful verbs used to describe Josiah's thoroughgoing actions of cult cleansing and altar destruction. Other verbs include “defiled” (23:8); “destroyed” (23:12); “smashed ... to bits” (23:12); “scattered” (23:12); “desecrated” (23:13); “smashed” (23:14); and “demolished” (23:19). This king certainly had his work cut out for him, and he certainly went at it with “all his heart and all his soul.”

**E. (:8-9) Reform #5 -- Defiling Judah's High Places and Deposing Their Priests**

*“Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he*

*broke down the high places of the gates which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers."*

**MacArthur:** Geba was located about 7 mi. NE of Jerusalem at the far N of Judah and Beersheba was located ca. 45 mi. S of Jerusalem at the southern end of Judah. Thus, this phrase was an idiomatic way of saying "throughout all of Judah."

**F. (:10) Reform #6 -- Defiling Topheth = Place of Child Sacrifice**

*"He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech."*

**MacArthur:** *Topheth* – Meaning "a drum" and identifying the area in the Valley of Hinnom where child sacrifice occurred (cf. **Is 30:33; Jer 7:31, 32; 19:5, 6**). Perhaps called "drum" because drums were beaten to drown out the cries of the children being sacrificed.

**Peter Pett:** '*Topheth*' means 'fireplace' or 'hearth' (the vowels deliberately connect the name with the Hebrew word for 'shame' (*bosheth*)). This was seemingly a sophisticated and gruesome set-up, either erected or dug in the ground, which was established in the Valley of Hinnom (compare **Joshua 18:16**) for the purpose of sacrificing children to Molech. The valley of Hinnom would later become Jerusalem's rubbish dump (if it was not so already). That the actual sacrificing of children is in mind is confirmed in **Jeremiah 19:5**.

**G. (:11) Reform #7 -- Destroying the Objects Associated with Sun Worship**

*"And he did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which was in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire."*

**MacArthur:** The horses and the chariots of the sun were probably thought to symbolize the sun blazing a trail across the sky and were a part of worshiping the sun. Recently, a religious shrine with horse figurines has been found in Jerusalem (cf. **Eze 8:16**).

**H. (:12) Reform #8 -- Destroying the High Profile Altars of Previous Kings**

*"And the altars which were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, the king broke down; and he smashed them there, and threw their dust into the brook Kidron."*

**I. (:13) Reform #9 -- Defiling the Worship Sites Built by Solomon and Associated with Pagan Gods**

*"And the high places which were before Jerusalem, which were on the right of the mount of destruction which Solomon the king of Israel had built for*

*Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled.”*

**MacArthur:** Solomon had built high places E of Jerusalem on the Mt. of Olives, renamed after the desecration, to be used in worship of foreign gods, e.g., the fertility goddess Ashtoreth from Sidon, the Moabite god Chemosh, and the Ammonite god Molech (**1Ki 11:7**). These altars existed for over 300 years before Josiah finally destroyed them. The placing of human bones defiled them and, thus, rendered these sites unclean and unsuitable as places of worship.

**Wiersbe:** On the southern slope of the Mount of Olives, Solomon had provided special altars for his heathen wives where they could worship their gods (**I Kings 11:5-6**), and these altars and idols Josiah removed and destroyed. To make sure the area would never be used for idol worship again, he buried human bones there and defiled it (**Num. 19:16**).

**J. (:14) Reform #10 -- Destroying the Images Associated with Fertility Worship**  
*“And he broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones.”*

**K. (:15-18) Reform #11 -- Demolishing and Defiling Jeroboam’s Bethel Worship Center**

1. (:15-16) Action

*“Furthermore, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. 16 Now when Josiah turned, he saw the graves that were there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones from the graves and burned them on the altar and defiled it according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things.”*

**MacArthur:** Seeing graves nearby, perhaps where idolatrous priests were buried, Josiah had their bones removed and burned on the altar at Bethel to defile it. This action fulfilled a prophecy given about the altar approximately 300 years before (**1Ki 13:2**).

2. (:17-18) Aside – Leaving Undisturbed the Grave of the Man of God and Prophet Who Denounced the Altar in Bethel

a. (:17) Grave of the Man of God

*“Then he said, ‘What is this monument that I see?’ And the men of the city told him, ‘It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel.’”*

b. (:18) Grave of the Prophet

*“And he said, ‘Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones.’ So*

*they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** We must go back and sneak a look at Josiah’s desecration of worship centers in the former northern kingdom, especially in Bethel. There stood Jeroboam I’s high place (see **1 Kings 12:25–33**). Josiah pulls it down, burns it, beats it to dust (v. 15) and defiles the altar by burning human bones on it (**v. 16a**)—to which our writer adds: ‘*in line with the word of Yahweh which the man of God had preached who had proclaimed these events*’ (**v. 16b**). He refers to that fascinating story in **1 Kings 13** of the man of God from Judah who interrupted Jeroboam’s dedication service by preaching to the altar:

*Altar, altar, here’s what Yahweh says: See! A son is going to be born to the house of David—Josiah his name—and he shall sacrifice upon you the priests of the high places who make offerings upon you, and they will burn human bones on you (**1 Kings 13:2**).*

Here in **2 Kings 23:16** our writer is saying: ‘Well, there you have it; Josiah exactly fulfilled that “Bethel prophecy” from 300 years ago.’ Yahweh’s word never falls to the ground; it will infallibly come true.

This prophetic fulfillment packs a solid assurance. In the present context it bolsters Huldah’s prophecy of **22:15–20**. If Yahweh’s word from 930 bc has come to pass, then surely his word through Huldah in 622 will as well. And if Yahweh’s centuries’ old prophecies come so clearly to pass, should we not count every syllable from God’s mouth as unquestionably reliable?

Let me add, however, that the prophecy of Josiah’s purging work carries the promise of still more. In **1 Kings 13:2** he is called ‘*a son to be born to the house of David*’.

**De Graaf** picks up the cue:

*The son of David’s house had come as an avenger of the Lord’s rights, which had been violated. One day David’s great Son will also bring judgment. Then the claims of the Lord’s covenant will be fully restored.*

What we see in Josiah signals that there is something more to come.

**Mordecai Cogan:** By eradicating the ancient cult center at Bethel, a symbol of Jeroboam’s rebellion, Josiah squared the account once and for all and reestablished Jerusalem’s centrality.

## **L. (:19-20) Reform #12 – Purge in Samaria of Pagan Worship Sites and Apostate Priests**

### 1. (:19) Purge of Pagan Worship Sites

*“And Josiah also removed all the houses of the high places which were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made provoking*

*the LORD; and he did to them just as he had done in Bethel.”*

2. (:20) Purge of Apostate Priests

*“And all the priests of the high places who were there  
he slaughtered on the altars and burned human bones on them;  
then he returned to Jerusalem.”*

**MacArthur:** These non-Levitical priests, who led apostate worship in the former northern kingdom, were idolaters who seduced God’s people into idolatry. They were put to death in accordance with the statutes of **Dt 13:6-18; 17:2-7**, and their graves were doubly defiled with burned bones.

**Peter Pett:** We naturally react against the idea of the slaughter of these men, but we must remember they were at the time seen as traitors to YHWH and his covenant, and therefore as worthy of death. No one in those days would have doubted that their crimes were deserving of the death penalty, for they were seen as in direct rebellion against YHWH. Furthermore it is probable that at the time they were not seeking to submit to the king and pleading for mercy, but were fiercely seeking to defend their high places, which they saw as sacred, against the assaults of Josiah’s men.

**Iain Provan:** vv. 15-20 -- A marked feature of the Josianic reform is that he not only destroys but also desecrates (vv. 8, 10, 13), particularly by placing items considered to be holy in proximity with graves and human bones (vv. 6, 14; cf. **Num. 19:1-22** for the idea of death as a pollutant, esp. v. 18). It has already been hinted in **verse 4** that this procedure is to be extended to Bethel, where Josiah takes the ashes of the idolatrous vessels brought out from the temple, but it is only in **verse 15** that this line of narrative is picked up. Jeroboam, it will be recalled, had started out as a new Moses and finished up instead as a second Aaron, fashioning calves for the people and instituting a new cult focused on Bethel (see the commentary on **1 Kgs. 12-13**). Josiah now takes action against this cult, which has lived on in the activities of the new settlers in the land of Israel (cf. **2 Kgs. 17:24ff.**). He does so in a way that recalls Moses’s own action against the first golden calf. He burns the high place (along with the Asherah pole) and grinds it to powder (cf. Hb. *šrp*, “to burn,” and *dqq le ‘āpār*, “to grind to powder,” in v. 15 and **Deut. 9:21**, noting also **23:6**). He then defiles the altar with bones taken from the surrounding tombs, in accordance with the prophecy of the man of God in **1 Kings 13:2** (cf. also **13:11-32** for the background to vv. 17-18).

### **III. (:21-23) REINSTITUTION OF THE PASSOVER OBSERVANCE**

#### **A. (:21) Commandment to Celebrate the Passover**

*“Then the king commanded all the people saying, ‘Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God as it is written in this book of the covenant.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Josiah ruled at a time when Assyria was on the decline and Babylon hadn’t yet reached its zenith, the times were more peaceful, and the people could travel in

greater safety. The celebration was indeed a great rallying time for the Jewish people from both Judah and Samaria.

**Constable:** Josiah also replaced pagan worship with revived Yahweh worship. He conducted his Passover celebration with more attention to the Law than anyone had done since the days of the judges.

**Peter Pett:** The feast of the Passover, which celebrated the deliverance from Egypt, would have been seen as a very appropriate feast for celebrating the new deliverance from Assyria which was now being enjoyed and celebrated as the chains of Assyria were being flung off by the removal of all that was connected with the worship of Assyrian gods. No wonder that it was celebrated with such fervour.

#### **B. (:22) Neglect of Celebrating the Passover**

*“Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah.”*

#### **C. (:23) Observance of the Passover**

*“But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was observed to the LORD in Jerusalem.”*

**Whitcomb:** Three points of special interest should be noted in this account:

- First, it appears that conditions had deteriorated so badly in the Temple since the days of Hezekiah that faithful Levites had removed and hidden the Ark of God! (**II Chron. 35:3**). Josiah ordered it to be returned, for there could be no proper observance of the Passover without it.
- Second, the Levites showed extraordinary zeal in preparing Passover lambs, not only for themselves, but also for the priest, the singers, and the porters (**II Chron. 35:11-15**; cf. **Ezra 6:20**).
- Third, this was the greatest Passover since the days of Samuel the prophet 500 years earlier (**II Chron. 35:18**), because of the obstacles that had to be overcome and because it was done with such great zeal and according to the Law (Hezekiah’s Passover had to be held on the second month because so many were ceremonially defiled – **II Chron. 30:2, 3, 17-20**).

### **IV. (:24-30) OVERALL SUMMARY OF INCOMPARABLE REIGN OF JOSIAH**

#### **A. (:24) Removal of Spiritual Abominations**

*“Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the LORD.”*



**David Guzik:** The great reformation in the days of Josiah is an example of simply going back to the word of God and seeking to base all thought and practice on what God has revealed in His word. It was an Old Testament example of the Reformation principle of *sola scriptura*.

**B. (:25) Commendation as the Greatest King in Terms of Instituting Reforms**

*“And before him there was no king like him who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.”*

**MacArthur:** Of all the kings in David’s line, including David himself, no king more closely approximated the royal ideal of **Dt 17:14-20** than Josiah (cf. **Mt 22:37**). Yet, even Josiah fell short of complete obedience because he had multiple wives (cf. **vv. 31, 36**). However, even this righteous king could not turn away the Lord’s wrath because of Manasseh’s sin (**vv. 26, 27**). See **chaps. 17, 18**.

**R. D. Patterson:** The author of Kings approaches the end of Josiah’s just reign. The thought of Josiah’s strict piety in keeping the laws of the Passover leads to the further observation that he was ever consistent in his application of the law (**v. 24**). As Josiah had meticulously fulfilled the requirements of the law relative to Israel’s ceremonial worship with his many reforms, his repair of the temple, and his reinstitution of the Passover, so had he put away the evils of false personal religion. This included both those who dealt in spiritism and all sorts of objects of detestable idolatry. In summary, it could be said of Josiah that none of the kings of Israel and Judah was his equal in zeal for the law (**v. 25**). As Hezekiah had been unequalled in **faith** among the kings (**18:5**), so Josiah knew no rival in **uncompromising adherence to the law of Moses**.

**C. (:26-27) Unrelenting Wrath of God in Judging Judah, Jerusalem and the Temple**

*“However, the LORD did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. 27 And the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, My name shall be there.’”*

**Peter Pett:** His activity was, however, too late to prevent God’s wrath being visited on Judah. Even his righteousness was not sufficient, and this was because Manasseh’s sin, and Judah’s sin, had been too great and was too firmly imbedded within the psyche of Judah. It was not, of course, that YHWH would not have forgiven them had they truly repented. And had every king who followed Josiah behaved like he did then the outpouring of God’s wrath would certainly have been continually delayed. But the fact was that YHWH knew the truth about men’s hearts, and was already aware of what Josiah’s sons would do, and what Judah would do. He was thus aware that within twenty five short years all would be over.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** As we have seen already, Manasseh (**ch. 21**) had put Judah beyond the line of hope. It is very sobering: there is such a thing as the hot heat of Yahweh's anger that no amount of repentance or reform can dampen or douse. We've already known this but somehow the weight of the point falls on us far more heavily when stated after twenty-five verses describing perhaps Judah's finest hour. Wrath is consuming and coming and certain.

But Josiah already knew all this. Huldah's prophecy (**22:16–17, 20**) had made that clear. Yet he pressed on in fidelity to the covenant, in commitment (**vv. 1–3**), sacrament (**vv. 21–23**), and worship (**v. 24**). But why? Would it make any eventual difference? Would it last? Would it save the nation? Would it cool God's wrath? No, to all these. But Josiah's is a faithfulness that does not confuse obedience with pragmatism and so pushes on, not because it will change anything but simply because God demands it. Obedience without incentives is likely genuine. **DeGraaf** says it well:

*Josiah knew that the judgment upon Judah was sure to come, but he wanted to press ahead with the reformation of Judah anyway. In this he showed a diligence unmatched by any king before or after him. He did not declare that there was no point in reformation since it could not save Judah anyway. He wanted to go ahead with the reformation solely for the sake of the honor and righteousness of the Lord. The Lord has a right to be served, even if our service does not bring about our salvation.*

Josiah's 'nevertheless' obedience conjures up Jesus' defense of Mary of Bethany. She stirs a furor of supposedly righteous indignation by pouring expensive ointment on Jesus' head. But Jesus commends her and says, among other things, '*She has done what she could*' (**Mark 14:8**). One might say something similar of Josiah—and of any of the Lord's people who remain faithful with no relief in sight.

#### **D. (:28-30) Transition from Josiah to Jehoahaz**

##### 1. (:28) Recorded Deeds of Josiah

*"Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"*

##### 2. (:29-30a) Death and Burial of Josiah

*"In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when Pharaoh Neco saw him he killed him at Megiddo. 30 And his servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb."*

**Constable:** The king seems to have preferred Babylon to Assyria in his foreign policy. When Egyptian armies moved up the Mediterranean coast to join Assyria in resisting Babylonian advance westward, Josiah intercepted Pharaoh Neco II (609-595 B.C.) at Megiddo and tried to stop him.<sup>2</sup> Unfortunately for Judah, the Egyptians killed Josiah there in 609 B.C. Egypt continued north, united with Assyria, and battled Babylon at



Carchemish on the upper Euphrates River. There Babylon defeated the allies and broke the domination of the Assyrian Empire over the ancient Near Eastern world. The Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. was one of the most important in ancient Near Eastern history for this reason.

Josiah died in battle (**23:29-30**). The promise of his dying in peace (**22:20**) therefore may mean that he would die before God ended the peace of Jerusalem by bringing Nebuchadnezzar against it. Some commentators have taken the promise as referring to the fact that Josiah evidently died at peace with God. I think that the prophecy that he would die in peace presumed that Josiah would continue to follow the will of Yahweh. But by going into battle against Pharaoh Neco, Josiah departed from God's will and so nullified the prophecy (cf. the prophesied death of King Ahab; **1 Kings 21:19; 22:38**).

Josiah was a strong influence for righteousness in his day and a very capable ruler. The success of his far-reaching reforms indicates his ability to overcome much popular opinion that must have opposed his convictions. His influence for good extended even into the fallen territory of Israel. The fact that his nation quickly abandoned the Lord after his death seems to indicate that Josiah's reforms while official, did not result in a spiritual revival among his people. Unfortunately, this great king died prematurely as a result of his unwise decision to challenge Pharaoh Neco (cf. **2 Chron. 35:20-27**). Josephus wrote that the prophet Jeremiah composed an elegy to lament Josiah, which was still extant when Josephus wrote. Unfortunately, it no longer exists.

**Peter Pett:** Josiah's glorious reign came to a sorry end when he made a fatal miscalculation without consulting YHWH. Assyria were by this time in dire straits after the sack of Nineveh and fighting for their very existence against the Babylonians, Medes and Scythians. The result of this was that Egypt decided in their own interests to aid Assyria's survival in order that they might act as a barrier between Egypt and the aggressors, and so as to ensure their own control over the lands south of the Euphrates. They did not want a powerful Assyrian empire to be replaced by an equally powerful Babylonian one on their own doorstep. So with this in mind Pharaoh Neco marched his troops northward to Assyria's aid. But this meant that they passed through the plain of Esdraelon on Judah's borders (Megiddo, on the western side of the Vale of Esdraelon was probably already in Egyptian hands and fortified by them, having been taken over from the Assyrians. It had been the administrative centre of the Assyrian province of Megiddo). We are given no reason why he made his decision, but we learn here that for some reason Josiah decided that he must prevent Egypt's progress, evidently without consulting YHWH. This may simply have been a defensive move, with Josiah seeing Egypt's aim as control of all the lands south of the Euphrates, but the more probable reason was that he had some form of treaty with the Babylonian alliance (otherwise why not consult YHWH?). If so it was a fatal move. As Hezekiah had before him Josiah was dallying with major players who could swallow Judah up whole.

As so often in Kings the author tells us what happened historically but does so with a theological motive. He expects his readers to recognise in what happened the hand of YHWH, and clearly saw Josiah's action as a sin against YHWH, especially in view of

YHWH's promise of peace in Josiah's day. The result would be the death of Josiah at a time when Judah could least afford it, surrounded as it was by powerful nations combating each other. Furthermore his decision to fight the Egyptians would give Egypt the excuse (if any were needed) to be the first to swallow up Judah.

**Iain Provan: vv. 26-30** -- Yet Judah's fate was already settled. The Lord had decided to remove Judah and to reject Jerusalem and its temple. Josiah's reforms changed none of that, even though **Deuteronomy 17:14-20** had promised a long-lasting dynasty to the king who turned from the law neither to the right nor the left (cf. **2 Kgs. 22:2**). Even Josiah himself did not come to a happy end. Unwisely interposing himself between Egypt and Assyria, he was killed at Megiddo, suffering the same ignominious exit from the stage as his apostate ancestor Ahaziah (cf. **2 Kgs. 9:27-28**): carried by chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried ... in his own tomb (v. 30; cf. **22:20**). That the best king of Judah should end his days in the same way as one of the worst indicates the way things are now going. The delay of judgment for Jerusalem and its kings is utterly at an end.

### 3. (:30b) Succession by Jehoahaz

*"Then the people of the land took Jehoahaz the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father."*

**Wiersbe:** From the death of Josiah in 608 to the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon in 586 – a period of twenty-two years – four different kings sat on David's throne, three of them sons of Josiah but not imitators of his faith. Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin each reigned for only three months. It was a sad time for the people of God, but there was still a believing remnant that followed the Lord and helped seekers in each new generation to know the Lord.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why do so many efforts to bring about social justice and reforms in society fail to produce any lasting positive effects?
- 2) Which of Josiah's reforms (when you think of modern day parallels and applications) strike you as most needed in today's church scene?
- 3) Can you imagine a church scenario where the ordinance of the Lord's Supper was not observed for centuries?
- 4) How many messages have you heard about the worship reforms of Josiah who was the most faithful king in terms of covenant obedience? Doesn't he deserve more attention?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Whitcomb:** What was really accomplished by this great reformation? Were any of the fundamental spiritual problems of the people solved? Was there a widespread turning of hearts to the Lord? Was the nation now in a position to serve and glorify their God? The answer to these questions, unfortunately, is no. This might come as a great surprise to many in our own day who feel that their best energies should be spent on reform movements, purging the nation of this or that physical or moral evil. That such evils are ruining the nation and should be uprooted no sensible person would deny. But the problem is how to deal with the **source**, not the final product; with the **root**, not the ultimate fruit. Every true Christian is (or should be) concerned with the problems of environmental pollution, drugs, crime, pornography, governmental inefficiency, communism, war, etc., etc., which threaten the health, morals, and very existence of our society. But if the source and root of these problems is not recognized and dealt with in the light of God's Word, nothing of permanent value can be accomplished for anyone.

Our Lord told of a man (or, in our case, a nation) from which an evil spirit was expelled (**Matt. 12:43**). Returning, he found that there had been a great reformation – he found it “*empty, swept, and garnished*.” “*Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more evil than himself, and they enter in and dwell there; and the last state of that man [or nation] became worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this evil generation*.” Here is the abiding lesson Josiah's reforms. “*Out of the heart come forth evil thoughts, murders . . .*” (**Matt. 15:19**; cf. **12:33-35**), and unless the heart is dealt with by the Holy Spirit speaking through His Word, there can be neither salvation nor permanent reformation (cf. **Heb. 4:12**; **Eph. 2:1-10**; **Rom. 8:1-4**; **Ezek. 36:26, 27**).

**William Barnes:** In any case, as already noted in the commentary on **22:1-7**, nearly the entire account of Josiah's reign can be arranged in a striking palistrophe, as **Peter Leithart** (2006:268) has pointed out:

- A. Opening: Josiah does not turn to right or left (**22:1-2**)
- B. Book of the Torah found (**22:3-20**)
  - C. Renews covenant according to “*book of the covenant*” (**23:1-3**)
  - D. Reforms of Josiah (**23:4-20**)
- C'. Passover according to “*book of the covenant*” (23:21-23)
- B'. All the words of the Torah (**23:24**)
- A'. Closing: Josiah turns to Yahweh with heart, soul, strength (**23:25**)

Thus, Josiah's reform is literarily framed by two ceremonies: **the covenant renewal (23:1-3)** and **the Passover (23:21-23)**, both said to be held in Josiah's 18th year. And within this palistrophe, there is overall organization to the reform, with focus mostly on Jerusalem and the Temple in **23:4-7**, and then moving outward from there to nearby environs in **23:8-14**, and then moving on to Bethel, the notorious northern shrine set up three centuries earlier by Jeroboam I (**23:15-18**, in fulfillment of prophecy given to that tenth-century northern king by the “*man of God*” from Judah). Finally, he cleansed the

rest of “Samaria” (i.e., the old northern kingdom of Israel, or at least the Assyrian province of that name, which encompassed much of that area [cf. **Wiseman** 1993:303–304]), destroying the pagan shrines and executing their priests. Thus, Josiah’s “reforms” were vigorously undertaken, comprehensive in scope, and devastating in results. And as **Leithart** (2006:268) puts it, “Josiah reverses the order of Joshua: Joshua begins in Passover (**Josh. 5**) and then embarks on a conquest to destroy the shrines of the Canaanites, while Josiah destroys the shrines of Canaanite-Israel and then celebrates Passover.”

**August Konkel:** The inevitability of judgment on Jerusalem announced by Huldah is a call for Josiah to take immediate action to renew the vow of the covenant collectively, as prescribed in the book that was found (e.g., **Deut. 31:9–13**). The inclusion of both civil and religious leaders as representatives makes the covenant effective in both civil and religious jurisdictions. This is a high point in the history of the nation; the people not only enter into a covenant with God, but the covenant becomes the legal foundation of the political order. Renewal of the covenant is enacted with the purification of worship at the orders of King Josiah. . .

**Josiah’s legacy.** It is God’s nature to extend mercy for the most abominable unfaithfulness (cf. **Ex. 33:19; 34:6**), but there is a limit to his longsuffering nature. Moses received assurance of the divine presence at the abomination of the golden calf (**33:12–14**), but such mercy is no longer available for Judah. In thematic terms, Josiah’s reign is climactic in the books of Kings. It is the high point of the Deuteronomistic History, which began with the renewal of the covenant at the time of the entrance to the Promised Land. The discovery of the book of covenant renewal inspires the effort of reform and centralization of worship at the temple (**2 Kings 23:4–20**).

Josiah is the only king to turn to God “*in accordance with all the Law of Moses*” (**23:25**). Josiah is the converse of Manasseh, who followed the abominations of the nations (**21:2**); Josiah does not deviate in any matter (**22:2**). Manasseh extended worship at the high places (**21:3–5, 7**); Josiah terminates the foreign priests and purges their places of worship (**23:5**).

Josiah rectifies three alienations that developed in the history of the kingdom. The first is that created by Manasseh; the second is the division caused by Solomon that left only Judah as the kingdom where the descendants of David ruled; in the last, Josiah destroys all the foreign worship introduced by Solomon and, for good measure, ensures their disuse (**23:13–14**). Removal of barriers with the north is further achieved by the incineration of the high place at Bethel (**v. 15**). As much as possible, Josiah rectifies the causes of the Assyrian exile of Israel.

TEXT: 2 Kings 23:31 – 24:20

TITLE: *JUDAH'S KINGS CONTROLLED BY EITHER EGYPT OR BABYLON*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S CONTROL OF THE NATIONS CONTROLS THE FATE OF HIS PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Powerful nations like Egypt and Babylon act in their own self-interests under the direction of their sovereign leaders. But true sovereignty in world events belongs to God alone who orchestrates all the details to weave the tapestry of events destined to provide the outcome He has determined for His people.

**Donald Wiseman:** The historian concludes his history with abbreviated summaries of the last four kings; Jehoahaz (23:31–35) as an introduction to the reign of Jehoiakim (23:36–24:6); Jehoiachin (24:8–17); and Zedekiah (24:18–20) as leading on to the fall of Jerusalem and the exile (25:1–21). Two appendices are added which give information to those in the Babylonian diaspora:

- (i) the history of Judah under Gedaliah and the exile into Egypt (25:22–26) and
- (ii) the release of Jehoiachin (25:27–30).

**William Barnes:** For the final time we encounter the short, stereotypical notices of some “lesser” kings (see 15:8–31 for earlier parallels in Israel). Historically, these four successors to King Josiah (three of them his sons, and one, Jehoiachin, his grandson) hardly present themselves with distinction, although two of them, Jehoahaz and Jehoiachin, are said to have been on the throne for only three months each (the curious symmetry here is three months, then 11 years, then again three months, then again 11 years). Overall, it is a relatively quick and seemingly relentless plunge downhill to exile. Not that the Judahites were resigned to their fate—quite the contrary. **Malamat** (1975:125) counts some six changes of Judahite loyalty between Egypt and Babylon in these 20-some years. It will be our melancholy task to document these six shifts in allegiance as the Judahite people and their kings attempt to avoid the inevitable demise of the nation. The first shift is documented in these few verses on Jehoahaz—from Babylon to Egypt.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** At least three distinct acts of stupidity parade themselves in the story of Judah's downfall. Two of these are the revolts of Jehoiakim (24:1) and Zedekiah (24:20), the third is Ishmael's assassination of Gedaliah (25:22–26).

**I. (23:31-34) JEHOAHAZ'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (23:31) Selected Touchpoints**

1. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*“Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king,”*

**Adam Clarke:** This was not the eldest son of Josiah, which is evident from this, that he was twenty-three years old when he began to reign; that he reigned but three months; that, being dethroned, his brother Eliakim was put in his place, who was then twenty-five years of age. Eliakim, therefore, was the eldest brother; but Jehoahaz was probably raised to the throne by the people, as being of a more active and martial spirit.

2. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned three months”*

**Constable:** "Jehoahaz" (*"The Lord Has Grasped"*), whose other name was Shallum, was the middle of Josiah's three sons, all of whom ruled Judah after Josiah. Jehoahaz was the people's choice (v. 31), but he reigned for only three months in 609 B.C.

3. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

4. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother's name was Hamutal  
the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.”*

**Peter Pett:** One of the problems with kings having multiple wives was that they did not have a close rapport with their sons, and the result was that the major influence in their bringing up was in the hands of their mothers and their advisers (note the constant importance of the queen mother in the narrative). This would partly explain why Josiah's godliness had not been passed on to his sons, and why on his death his sons reverted back to Baalism. Such kings did not choose their wives because of their spiritual status, but because of their political influence.

**B. (23:32) Moral Evaluation**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,  
according to all that his fathers had done.”*

**C. (23:33a) Imprisonment**

*“And Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath,  
that he might not reign in Jerusalem;”*

**Peter Pett:** he would know that he had little option, when he was summoned to Riblah by Pharaoh Neco (or went there of his own volition seeking peace terms) but to attend and accept his fate. What had happened to Josiah had already brought home the folly of armed resistance against such a powerful foe. Once there he was put in chains and carried off to Egypt as a royal hostage, where he remained until he died. (see here Ezekiel's vivid picture in **Ezekiel 19:3-4**; and compare **Jeremiah 22:10-12**). There is no closing formula to his reign because he did not die in office. He just disappeared

from the scene. And in the author's eyes it was because he *'did evil in the sight of YHWH'*.

**Adam Clarke:** But what was the cause of his putting him in bands? It is conjectured, and not without reason, that Jehoahaz, otherwise called Shallum, raised an army, met Nechoh in his return from Carchemish, fought, was beaten, taken prisoner, put in chains; and taken into Egypt, where he died; **2Ch 23:34**, and **Jeremiah 22:11-12**. Riblah or Diblath, the place of this battle, was probably a town in Syria, in the land or district of Hamath.

**D. (23:33b) Imposition of Taxes**

*"and he imposed on the land a fine  
of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold."*

**MacArthur:** The tax imposed on Judah, whose king was imprisoned, was 750 lbs. of silver and 7.5 lbs. of gold.

**E. (23:34a) Succession – Transition from Jehoahaz to Jehoiakim**

*"And Pharaoh Neco made Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim."*

**MacArthur:** In 609 B.C. Pharaoh Neco II placed Jehoahaz's older brother on the throne of Judah. Neco changed his name from Eliakim, meaning "God has established," to Jehoiakim, "the Lord has established." The naming of a person was regarded in the ancient Near East as sign of authority; so by naming Jehoiakim, Neco demonstrated that he was the lord who controlled Judah. As vassal of Egypt, Judah risked attack by Egypt's enemy Babylon.

**John Dummelow:** Jehoahaz had been chosen by the people without the sanction of Nechoh, who therefore asserted his authority by deposing him, and substituting his brother.

**Constable:** When Pharaoh Neco defeated Josiah at Megiddo (v. 29), Judah fell under Egyptian control. Neco summoned Josiah's successor Jehoahaz to meet him at Riblah. This town stood about 65 miles north of Damascus in central Aramea. The meeting took place before the battle of Carchemish. Neco found Jehoahaz obstinate, as his father had been, so he imprisoned him and sent him back to Egypt (v. 34) where he died later (**Jer. 22:10-12**). Neco also imposed a heavy tax on Judah (v. 33) and installed Jehoahaz's older brother Eliakim on Judah's throne as his puppet.

**Adam Clarke:** These names are precisely the same in signification: ELIAKIM is God shall arise; JEHOIAKIM, Jehovah shall arise; or, the resurrection of God; the resurrection of Jehovah. That is, God's rising again to show his power, justice. The change of the name was to show Nechoh's supremacy, and that Jehoiakim was only his vassal or viceroy.



**F. (23:34b) Death of Jehoahaz**

*“But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there.”*

**II. (23:35 – 24:7) JEHOIAKIM’S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (23:35) Progressive Taxation of Judah for the Egyptian Pharaoh**

*“So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco.”*

**Peter Pett:** Jehoiakim then set about gathering the tribute required by the Pharaoh by means of levying taxation on the people of the land ‘*according to the commandment of Pharaoh*’. The phrase is significant. It was no longer YHWH’s commandments that were being observed in Judah, but Pharaoh’s. As a result each man in Judah was assessed, and was then called on to contribute in accordance with his ability to pay. It would appear from this that while the Temple had been restored it had few treasures in it of which it could be stripped. Such poverty, the author wants us to know, was the consequence of its history (it is in total contrast to the wealth of Solomon with which the book began).

Throughout the book of Kings the prophetic author has constantly and deliberately emphasised the source from which tribute was paid. Initially and regularly it was paid from the Temple and palace treasuries (**2 Kings 12:18; 2 Kings 16:8; 1 Kings 14:26; 1 Kings 15:18**) then by stripping the Temple of its gold (**2 Kings 18:16**). Now it was down to everyone making a contribution. The royal treasuries were finally empty. This was the consequence of disobedience to YHWH.

**David Guzik:** Jehoiakim was nothing more than a puppet king presiding over a vassal kingdom under the Egyptians. He imposed heavy taxes on the people and paid the money to the Egyptians, as required.

**B. (23:36) Selected Touchpoints of Reign of Jehoiakim**

1. How Old Was He When He Became King?

*“Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king,”*

2. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned eleven years”*

3. Which Kingdom Did He Rule Over?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

4. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother’s name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah.”*



### C. (23:37) Moral Evaluation of Reign of Jehoiakim

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,  
according to all that his fathers had done.”*

**Wiersbe:** It was Jehoiakim who cut to pieces and burned to ashes the scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecy (**Jer. 36**). Unlike his father, Josiah, he had no respect for the Lord or His Word (**Jer. 22:1-23**).

**Josephus:** He was of a wicked disposition, and ready to do mischief; nor was he either religious towards God, or good-natured towards men.

**Adam Clarke:** He was a most unprincipled and oppressive tyrant. Jeremiah gives us his character at large, **Jeremiah 22:13-19**, to which the reader will do well to refer. Jeremiah was at that time in the land, and was an eyewitness of the abominations of this cruel king.

### D. (24:1-4) Divine Control of World Events Impacting Judah

#### 1. (:1) Subjugation to Nebuchadnezzar and Subsequent Rebellion

##### a. Subjugation to Nebuchadnezzar

*“In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and  
Jehoiakim became his servant for three years;”*

##### b. Subsequent Rebellion

*“then he turned and rebelled against him.”*

**Whitcomb:** After three years of paying tribute to Nebuchadnezzar, he finally decided, against the vigorous warnings of Jeremiah (cf. **Jer. 36:29**), to rebel against the Babylonian monarch (**II Kings 24:1**). But God raised up various marauding bands from the north and east to harass Jehoiakim until he was finally killed in early December, 598 B.C. Jeremiah had predicted that *“they shall not lament for him, saying, Ah lord! Or, Ah his glory! He shall be buried with the burial of an ass, drawn and cast forth beyond the gates of Jerusalem”* (**Jer. 22:18-19**; cf. **36:30**). Furthermore, *“he shall have none to sit upon the throne of David”* (**Jer. 36:30**), which must have been an anticipation of the curse which would fall upon his son, Jehoichin.

#### 2. (:2-4) Series of Destructive Raids by Foreign Troops

*“And the LORD sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of  
Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them  
against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD, which  
He had spoken through His servants the prophets. 3 Surely at the  
command of the LORD it came upon Judah, to remove them from His  
sight because of the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done,  
4 and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem  
with innocent blood; and the LORD would not forgive.”*

**Peter Pett:** But in the eyes of the author the main cause for this activity was not Nebuchadnezzar, but the word of YHWH (after all, unknown to Nebuchadnezzar, he was YHWH's servant - **Jeremiah 25:9**). Thus in the author's view it was primarily because of Judah's sins that these attacks were being carried out, in accordance with the words of YHWH's servants the prophets. History was being seen as subject to His will.

The author then again stressed that all that was happening was '*at the commandment of YHWH*'. And this was because He had determined to remove Judah out of His sight as He had warned as long ago as **Leviticus 18:28**. He was sick of them. And this situation had come about because of the sins of Manasseh and what he had done, and because of the innocent blood which he had shed, and the fact that he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. It had been so bad that it was something that YHWH could not overlook because, although the reign of Josiah had at first altered the picture, Judah had turned back to the same behaviour as before, something evidenced by the slaying of Uriah the prophet by Jehoiakim (**Jeremiah 26:20-23**). Josiah's death had resulted in YHWH's covenant being openly slighted on a continual basis and it revealed Judah's permanent hardness of heart, something which even Josiah had been unable to remedy. That was why Judah was doomed. Compare **Deuteronomy 29:20**.

**David Guzik:** Many in the days of Jehoiakim believed that God's will was to deliver them from their enemies and to preserve an independent Judah. Yet that was not God's will; it was His will to bring Judah into judgment (knowing they had not genuinely repented and would not). The best thing for Judah to do was to submit to this will of God, as Jeremiah told them to do – despite great opposition.

#### **E. (24:5-7) Conclusion of His Reign**

##### 1. (:5) Recorded Deeds

*"Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?"*

##### 2. (:6) Death and Succession

*"So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place."*

##### 3. (:7) Babylonian Domination

*"And the king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates."*

**MacArthur:** In 601 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar again marched W against Egypt and was turned back by strong Egyptian resistance. However Egypt, though able to defend its own land, was not able to be aggressive and recover its conquered lands or provide any help for its allies, including Judah.

**R. D. Patterson:** War had cost both the Chaldeans and the Egyptians dearly, so that Nebuchadnezzar was unable to mobilize the troops and equipment to deal with

impudent Judah, now newly allied to his Egyptian adversary, Neco. Accordingly Nebuchadnezzar spent the next few years in rebuilding his armed might in anticipation of the time when he could deal with the insurgents. Meanwhile he moved against the Arameans and Arabians, thus strengthening his hold on Judah's Egyptian flank (v. 2). This also put him in a position to utilize the Transjordanian tribes to send raiding parties into Judah. The author of Kings reports that that harassment found its ultimate origin in God's command to bring judgment to a wicked Judah that had followed in the train of Manasseh's wickedness, a judgment the prophets had repeatedly warned about (vv. 3-4; cf. e.g., **Jer 15:1-9; Hab 1:2-6; Zeph 1:4-13; 3:1-7**).

In 598 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar was ready. Gathering his huge force, he set out for Jerusalem and the impenitent Jehoiakim. But Nebuchadnezzar was not to avenge himself on the Judean king personally; for even as he set out for Judah, Jehoiakim lay dead, succeeded by his son, Jehoiachin.

**Peter Pett:** Nebuchadnezzar's control of the land south of the Euphrates, down almost to the borders of Egypt (to the Wadi of Egypt, just north of the border), had become such that the king of Egypt did not venture beyond his borders. All that he had previously gained had been lost and any assistance that he may have promised to Judah would thus come to nothing. He was no match for the forces of Nebuchadnezzar.

**Wiseman:** Some scholars think that here ended the original book of Kings, the remainder being a series of appendices.

### **III. (24:8-17) JEHOIACHIN'S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

#### **A. (:8) Selected Touchpoints**

##### 1. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*"Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king,"*

##### 2. How Long Did He Reign?

*"and he reigned three months"*

##### 3. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*"in Jerusalem;"*

##### 4. Who Was His Mother?

*"and his mother's name was Nehushta  
the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem."*

#### **B. (:9) Moral Evaluation**

*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,  
according to all that his father had done."*

#### **C. (:10-17) Subjugation to Babylon**

##### 1. (:10-11) Siege Against Jerusalem

*“At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it.”*

## 2. (:12-16) Capture, Plundering and Exile

### a. (:12) Capture of the Royal Family

*“And Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign.”*

**MacArthur:** For the first time, the books of Kings dated an event in Israelite history by a non-Israelite king. This indicated that Judah’s exile was imminent and the land would be in the hands of Gentiles.

### b. (:13) Plundering of the Treasures

*“And he carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the LORD, just as the LORD had said.”*

**Cf. 20:16-18**

### c. (:14-16) Exile

*“Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 And all the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon.”*

**MacArthur:** Nebuchadnezzar took an additional 10,000 Judeans as captives to Babylon, in particular the leaders of the nation. This included the leaders of the military and those whose skills would support the military. Included in this deportation was the prophet Ezekiel. Only the lower classes remained behind in Jerusalem. The Babylonian policy of captivity was different from that of the Assyrians, who took most of the people into exile and resettled the land of Israel with foreigners (17:24). The Babylonians took only the leaders and the strong, while leaving the weak and poor, elevating those left to leadership and thereby earning their loyalty. Those taken to Babylon were allowed to work and live in the mainstream of society. This kept the captive Jews together, so it would be possible for them to return, as recorded in Ezra.

3. (:17) Succession – Transition to Zedekiah

*“Then the king of Babylon made his uncle Mattaniah, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.”*

**IV. (24:18-20) ZEDEKIAH’S EVIL REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (:18) Selected Touchpoints**

1. How Old Was He When He Began to Reign?

*“Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king,”*

2. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned eleven years”*

3. Which Kingdom Did He Reign Over?

*“in Jerusalem;”*

4. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah.”*

**B. (:19) Moral Evaluation**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.”*

**C. (:20) Misguided Rebellion**

*“For through the anger of the LORD this came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.”*

**MacArthur:** In 588 B.C., Apries (also called Hophra), the grandson of Neco, became Pharaoh over Egypt. He appears to have influenced Zedekiah to revolt against Babylon (cf. **Eze 17:15-18**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And Zedekiah’s mind changed with the wind. After reading Jeremiah’s prophecy (especially **chs. 37–39**) one wonders if Zedekiah ever had a conviction about anything. Perhaps he and a majority of his advisors actually thought Pharaoh Hophra would come to Judah’s aid. But Egypt was all mouth and hot air. Hophra apparently sent some kind of force to meet the Babylonians (**Jer. 37:5–11**) but it was quickly driven back and the Babylonians resumed their stranglehold on Jerusalem. Zedekiah was not merely befuddled—he was brainless.

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How should we view the chaos of world events from the perspective of how God directs the course of history in relationship to caring for His people?
- 2) Why such an emphasis on who was the mother of each king?
- 3) When has the Lord wanted you to submit to unpleasant circumstances?
- 4) How can Judah be so central to God's kingdom agenda for all of history and yet appear here as merely a pawn in the power struggle between Egypt and Babylon?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Peter Pett:** Nothing good is said about Jehoiakim in either Kings or Chronicles, whilst Jeremiah portrays him as an oppressive and covetous ruler (**Jeremiah 22:17**) who presided over a period of religious decay during which the syncretistic high places were restored (e.g. **Jeremiah 25:5-7; Jeremiah 26:5-6; Jeremiah 35:14-15**). He also introduced hideous Egyptian rites and filled the land with violence (**Ezekiel 8:5-17**; compare **Jeremiah 22:17**), capping it by murdering Uriah the prophet for opposing him (**Jeremiah 26:20-23**). Unlike his father, who had ruled justly and wisely, his thoughts were only for himself, and he built himself a palace without adequately paying his workforce (**Jeremiah 22:13-16**), thinking to aggrandise himself, but only thereby revealing his folly and that he had little regard for others. But none of this is described here in Kings in detail. Rather it is brought out by the prophetic author in his usual indirect way by referring to the fact that he '*did evil in the eyes of YHWH*' (always an indication of a restoration of idolatry) and then describing the judgments that came on him as a result of YHWH's hand at work. This was then followed by bringing out that this was because he was following in the footsteps of Manasseh. But he was not to be seen as being alone in being judged, for YHWH's judgment was to fall on Judah as a whole, in fulfilment of the words of the prophets which portrayed the depths of sin into which they had fallen (**2 Kings 24:2**). This time they had gone too far. Manasseh had not been alone in his sinfulness. His people had shared in his sin with him. And that was why YHWH would not pardon, and why they would therefore share in the consequent judgment.

We note especially that the author avoids mentioning the arrival of the main Babylonian army to besiege Jerusalem because he wants us to see that the build-up of YHWH's judgment is occurring stage by stage (**2 Kings 24:2**). But he makes crystal clear that the end of it will be the destruction of Judah, because YHWH's hand is against them, and that meanwhile there is no help to be had from Egypt. Judah will be left isolated, to stand, and fall, alone. It is in fact only when we get to the reign of his son Jehoiachin

that we learn that calamity is awaiting Jerusalem, and had already been threatening in the final days of Jehoiakim.

**MacArthur:** Nebuchadnezzar II was the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon from 626-605 B.C. As crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar had led his father's army against Pharaoh Neco and the Egyptians at Carchemish on the Euphrates River in northern Syria (605 B.C.). By defeating the Egyptians, Babylon was established as the strongest nation in the ancient Near East. Egypt and its vassals, including Judah, became vassals of Babylon with this victory. Nebuchadnezzar followed up his victory at Carchemish by invading the land of Judah. Later, in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar took some captives to Babylon, including Daniel and his friends (cf. **Da 1:1-3**). Toward the end of 605 B.C., Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar succeeded him as king of Babylon, 3 years after Jehoiakim had taken the throne in Judah (**Jer 25:1**). Nebuchadnezzar reigned from 605 – 562 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar returned to the W in 604 B.C and took tribute from all of the kings of the W, including Jehoiakim of Judah. Jehoiakim submitted to Babylonian rule from 604-602 B.C. In 602 B.C. Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon, disregarding the advice of the prophet Jeremiah (**Jer 27:9-11**).

**Biblical Illustrator: The retribution of heaven.**

1. In the retribution here displayed we are reminded of two facts: That the sins of one man may bring misery on millions. *“Surely at the commandment of the Lord came this upon Judah, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he did; and also for the innocent blood that he shed: for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; which the Lord would not pardon,”* All the misery here recorded comes to the people *“for the sins of Manasseh.”* Here is the **hereditary principle** of Divine government.

Will not the following facts anyhow modify the severity of the complaint?

- (1) That no man is made to suffer more than he actually deserves on account of his own personal sin.
- (2) That the evils which thus descend to us from our ancestors are not to be compared with those we produce ourselves.
- (3) That whilst the hereditary principle of the Divine government entails evils, it also entails good. Great as are the evils that have come down to us from posterity, great also is the good.
- (4) This hereditary principle tends to restrain vice and stimulate virtue. The parent knowing, as all parents must know, the immense influence he exerts upon his offspring, and having the common natural affection, will be set more or less on his guard; he will restrain evil passions which otherwise he would allow to sport with uncontrolled power, and prosecute efforts of a virtuous tendency, which otherwise he would entirely neglect.



2. The pernicious influence of a man's sin in the world may continue after his conversion. Manasseh repented of the sins he had committed, and received the favours of his God. Notwithstanding we find men here suffering on account of the sins he had committed.

3. That retribution, though it may move slowly, yet will move surely. A hundred years had well-nigh passed away, and several generations had come and gone since Manasseh had gone to his grave. Yet avenging justice appears at last, and wreaks upon others the terrible effects of his crimes. The tardy march of retribution men have made the occasion and the reason of continued depravity," Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily," etc. (David Thomas, *D. D.*)

**Dale Ralph Davis: Chronology**

**Jehoahaz (23:31)**, 609 bc

**Jehoiakim (23:36)**, 609–598 bc

Battle of Carchemish (cf. **24:7**), 605

Deportation No. 1 (cf. **Dan. 1:1–4**)

Jehoiakim rebels (**24:1**), 601 (?)

**Jehoiachin (24:8)**, 597 bc

Deportation No. 2 (**24:10–16**; cf. **Ezek. 1:1–3**)

**Zedekiah (24:18)**, 597–587 bc

Zedekiah rebels (**24:20**), after 593 (cf. **Jer. 51:59**)

Babylonian siege (**25:1–2**), 589

Jerusalem falls (**25:3–10**), 587

Deportation No. 3 (**25:11–12**)

Judah's end was a fulfillment of Yahweh's word and in bringing an end to Judah Yahweh was being faithful to that word. It may seem a negative faithfulness but it is faithfulness nevertheless. Yahweh is a faithful God even when he destroys. One sees this in **24:2**: Yahweh sent out Chaldean, Aramaean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against Judah to '*destroy it in line with the word of Yahweh which he had spoken by the hand of his servants the prophets*'. The reference, of course, is to **21:10–15** and **23:26–27**. Yes, the historians may be right—these raiders in **24:2** may have been egged on by Nebuchadnezzar; it may have been inconvenient for him to squash Jehoiakim after Babylon got beaten up so badly on the Egyptian frontier in 601. The raiders may have been his interim solution to Jehoiakim's asinine rebellion. But our writer-theologian has the real scoop on the matter and Nebuchadnezzar doesn't really figure in it—Yahweh sent those raiders to destroy Judah and fulfill his word.

**Caleb Nelson: God's Project Fails, 2 Kings 23:31–25:26**

**Proposition:** The end of Judah shows us God's flair for the dramatic. God demonstrates His wrath against His people's sin. God will judge His people if they persist in wickedness



### **I. God Judges Judah Completely**

- A. Her Kings
- B. Her People
- C. Her Temple
- D. Her Empire, **24:7** with **Genesis 15:18**

### **II. God Judges Judah Speedily**

- A. Four Kings
- B. Twenty-Two Years
- C. Three Deportations, **24:1, 14; 25:11**
- D. One Assassination, **25:25**

### **III. God Judges Judah Poetically**

- A. Jericho: The Place of Entry to the Land, **25:6**
- B. Egypt: The Place of God's Redeeming Power, **25:26**
- C. Babylon: The Place of Abraham's Birth, **24:14-16**

### **IV. God Judges Judah Mercifully**

- A. The Third and Fourth Generations
- B. The High Priest's Line Spared, **25:18-21; 1 Chron. 6:14-15**
- C. The Royal Line Spared

TEXT: 2 Kings 25:1-21

TITLE: THE FALL OF JERUSALEM AND THE BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY --  
DESTRUCTION, DEPORTATION, DESECRATION, EXECUTION AND EXILE

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD TURNS THE LIGHTS OUT ON HIS HOLY CITY AND EXILES HIS  
APOSTATE PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Judgment Day has finally arrived for the city of David and for its inhabitants. It is not a pretty sight. The reputation of God suffers serious desecration as the pagan forces of Nebuchadnezzar successfully conquer the city, plunder the temple and subjugate the people. King Zedekiah witnesses the slaughter of his sons, has his eyes gouged out and then is completely humiliated and led away captive to Babylon. The defeat is devastating but it is not permanent. God's covenant promises will still be fulfilled just as His promises of judgment for rebellion and apostasy.

**Peter Pett:** Kings began with a description of the building of the house of YHWH and of the king's house (**1 Kings 5:1 to 1 Kings 7:12**), and of the making of the pillars of bronze and the brazen sea (**1 Kings 5:13** onwards), and it now ends with a description of their destruction, along with all the larger houses in Jerusalem. And it all occurred because they had incurred the wrath of YHWH. The continual downward slide to this point, in spite of the constant efforts of the prophets, is one of the themes of the book. . . The walls also of the city were broken down all round the city. Jerusalem was to be left a ruin, almost uninhabited and totally defenseless.

**Morgan:** Thus the nation called to peculiar position of honor, became a people scattered and peeled, losing all their privileges because of their failure to fulfill responsibility.

**August Konkel:** The destruction of Jerusalem is thorough. Temple, palaces, and houses are burned, the temple vessels including the enormous bronze Sea and the wheeled bronze stands are broken and taken as booty—all those items described in the account of Solomon's construction of the temple. The temple is of chief concern, since it served as a symbol of the legitimacy of the monarchy. With the capture and destruction of Jerusalem, the kingdom of Judah ceases to exist.

**I. (:1-7) SUBJUGATION OF JERUSALEM AND THE ROYAL FAMILY**

**A. (:1-2) Siege of Jerusalem**

**1. (:1) Beginning of the Siege**

*“Now it came about in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, that Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, camped against it, and built a siege wall all around it.”*

## 2. (:2) Duration of the Siege

*“So the city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.”*

**Wiseman:** The one and a half year siege may be due to

- (i) Nebuchadnezzar’s absence at Riblah and concern with containing the Phoenician seaports and,
- (ii) his watchfulness against Egypt’s potential intervention on behalf of Zedekiah (**Jer. 37:5, 11**).

The Babylonians relied initially on tight control using ‘*watchtowers*’ (neb, ‘siege-towers’, reb; Heb. *dāyēq*) rather than siege works (rsv, niv), allowing those who wished to leave to do so (cf. v. 11, **Jer. 38:19; 39:9**), but starving out the city (**Jer. 38:2–9**).

## **B. (:3-4) Starvation Forcing Desperate Escape**

### 1. (:3) Starvation

*“On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land.”*

### 2. (:4) Desperate Escape

*“Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah.”*

## **C. (:5-7) Slaughter and Subjugation**

### 1. (:5-6) Pursuit and Capture of the King (and Scattering of His Army)

*“But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him.”*

**David Guzik:** This was a considerable distance from Jerusalem. Zedekiah probably thought that his strategy was successful, and that he had escaped the judgment that prophets such as Jeremiah had promised. Yet God’s word was demonstrated to be true, and he was captured in the plains of Jericho.

Dilday: It seems ironic that here, at the very spot where Israel first set foot on the Promised Land, the last of the Davidic kings was captured and his monarchy shattered. Here, where Israel experienced her first victory as the walls of Jericho fell before unarmed men who trusted God, was the scene of her last defeat.

**MacArthur:** Located on the Orontes River about 180 mi. N. of Jerusalem, Riblah was Nebuchadnezzar’s military headquarters for his invasion of Judah. This location was

ideally situated as a field headquarters for military forces because ample provisions could be found nearby (cf. **23:33**).

2. (:7) Punishment of the King

*“And they slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes,  
then put out the eyes of Zedekiah  
and bound him with bronze fetters  
and brought him to Babylon.”*

**MacArthur:** Jeremiah had warned Zedekiah that he would see Nebuchadnezzar (see notes on **Jer 32:2-5; 34:3**), while Ezekiel had said he would not see Babylon (see note on Eze 12:10-13). Both prophecies were accurately fulfilled.

## **II. (:8-12) DESTRUCTION AND DEPORTATION**

### **A. (:8-10) Destruction**

1. (:8) Destruction Commanded by Nebuzaradan

*“Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.”*

2. (:9) Destruction Involved Burning All the Significant Houses

*“And he burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every great house he burned with fire.”*

3. (:10) Destruction Involved Demolishing the Walls Around Jerusalem

*“So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem.”*

### **B. (:11-12) Deportation**

1. (:11) Most of the People Deported

*“Then the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile.”*

2. (:12) Some of the Poorest Left Behind to Work the Land

*“But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** vv. 8-12 – About one month later, Nebuzaradan, the commander of Nebuchadnezzar’s own imperial guard, arrived in Jerusalem to oversee its despoliation and destruction (v. 8). Having set fire to all of Jerusalem’s permanent buildings, including the temple and palace (cf. **Jer 52:13**), the Chaldeans demolished the city’s walls (vv. 9-10). Then they deported certain valued elements of the citizenry of Jerusalem and the populace of the surrounding countryside, some of whom apparently

willingly defected to the invaders (v. 11; cf. **Jer 39:9; 52:15**). Only the poorest of the people were left. These were to work the nearby fields and vineyards so that a stratum of inhabitants unlikely to cause further insurrection might be left to care for the basic needs of the remaining people of the land (v. 12; cf. **Jer 39:10; 52:16**).

**Dilday:** In Hebrew, the first twelve verses of the chapter are one long sentence, each verse beginning with 'and.' Clause is heaped upon clause in a kind of cadence, as if each one were another tick of the clock counting down Jerusalem's final hours.

### **III. (:13-17) DESECRATION OF YAHWEH'S TEMPLE**

#### **A. (:13) Desecration of the Pillars, the Stands and the Bronze Sea**

*"Now the bronze pillars which were in the house of the LORD, and the stands and the bronze sea which were in the house of the LORD, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried the bronze to Babylon."*

**Peter Pett:** The pillars of bronze and the brazen sea which Solomon had made were broken in pieces and their bronze carried back to Babylon. The last remnants of their former glory were being removed. All that Judah had built up was being broken down. Such was the consequence of their disobedience.

#### **B. (:14-15) Desecration of Temple Vessels and Instruments of Worship**

*"And they took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, and all the bronze vessels which were used in temple service. The captain of the guard also took away the firepans and the basins, what was fine gold and what was fine silver."*

#### **C. (:16-17) Desecration of the Pillars, the Stands and the Bronze Sea**

*"The two pillars, the one sea, and the stands which Solomon had made for the house of the LORD-- the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a bronze capital was on it; the height of the capital was three cubits, with a network and pomegranates on the capital all around, all of bronze. And the second pillar was like these with network."*

**Constable:** The writer's emphasis on the desecration of Yahweh's temple (vv. 13-17) illustrates God's abandonment of His people (cf. **1 Kings 9:7-9**). His special interest in the pillars (v. 17) draws attention to the fact that Israel, which God had established (Jachin), had suffered destruction. Israel's strength (Boaz) had also departed from her because of her apostasy (cf. Samson). Most scholars believe the Babylonians either destroyed the ark of the covenant, perhaps when they burned the temple, or took it to Babylon from which it never returned to Jerusalem (but cf. **2 Chron. 5:9**). A few believe the Jews hid it under the temple esplanade. Another tradition is that Jeremiah took the Tent of Meeting, the ark, and the altar of incense to Mount Nebo, where he hid them in a cave, believing that when the Lord restored the Israelites, He would reveal the hiding place to His people (2 Macc. 2:4-8).

#### **IV. (:18-21a) EXECUTION OF JERUSALEM'S PROMINENT LEADERS**

##### **A. (:18-19) Selecting the Prominent Leaders to Execute**

###### 1. (:18) Five Chief Priests

*“Then the captain of the guard took Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest, with the three officers of the temple.”*

**Peter Pett:** The prominent people in Jerusalem were now to be called to account, and the first were the five ‘chief priests’. They would be seen as important supporters of the revolt.

###### 2. (:19) Other Prominent Leaders

*“And from the city he took one official who was overseer of the men of war, and five of the king's advisers who were found in the city; and the scribe of the captain of the army, who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city.”*

##### **B. (:20) Staging the Execution at Riblah at the hands of Nebuchadnezzar**

*“And Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah.”*

##### **C. (:21a) Striking Them Down**

*“Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath.”*

#### **(:21b) – EPILOGUE – EXILE INTO BABYLONIA**

*“So Judah was led away into exile from its land.”*

**MacArthur:** Exile was the ultimate curse brought upon Judah because of her disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant (cf. **Lv 26:33; Dt 28:36, 64**). The book of Lamentations records the sorrow of Jeremiah over this destruction of Jerusalem.

**Whitcomb:** In the meantime, the starved survivors in Jerusalem, reduced in some case to cannibalism by the prolonged siege (**Lam. 4:8-10**; cf. **Jer. 37:21; 38:9; 52:6**), were brutally mistreated by Babylonian soldiers (**Lam. 5:11-13; II Chron. 36:17; Jer. 38:22-23**), and then herded together and chained like wild animals for deportation to Babylon (**Jer. 39:9; 40:1**). The only ones that were not deported were poor country people who were left to care for vineyards and orchards (**Jer. 39:10**); Gedaliah to serve as the governor of this pitiful remnant; certain guerilla fighters who had been hiding in the hills (**Jer. 40:7-8**); and a few other Jews who had fled to surrounding countries and were now returning (**Jer. 40:11-12**).

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why did God wait so long to carry out His promised judgment against the city of Jerusalem?
- 2) What is the worst defeat you have ever experienced and how did it make you feel and how did God use it in your life?
- 3) How precious is God's promise to you that He will never leave you or forsake you?
- 4) What impact did this devastating defeat have on the reputation of Israel's God before the surrounding pagan nations?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Whitcomb:** The first phase of Israel's experiences as a divinely-established theocratic kingdom on earth had come to an end. The period of Babylonian captivity and of Gentile dominion now began; and Jehovah's purposes for His people Israel took a new course. *"For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king and without prince, and without sacrifice . . . afterward shall the children of Israel return, and seek their God, and David their king, and shall come with fear unto Jehovah and to his goodness in the latter days"* (**Hos. 3:4-5**).

Why did God permit Judah to suffer the horrors of Babylonia captivity? The Chronicler lists three reasons.

- First, Zedekiah refused God's Word through Jeremiah and broke his oath to Nebuchadnezzar (**II Chron. 36:12-13**).
- Second, the priests and the people adopted heathen customs, polluted the Temple, and scoffed at God's prophets (**II Chron. 36:14-16**),
- And third, God's provision for the sabbatical year (cf. **Lev. 25:4; 26:34**) had been neglected for centuries; therefore, *"as long as it lay desolate it kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years"* (**II Chron. 36:21**).

The history of Israel from Solomon to the Babylonian Exile is a four-hundred year demonstration of God's faithfulness to His Word in both promise and warning. He is a God who never changes (**Mal. 3:6**). He can be depended upon from generation to generation. And what He proved Himself to be for Israel, He proves Himself to be for us, as we heed His warnings and put our complete trust in His gracious promises. *"Now these things happened unto them by way of example, and they were written for our*

*admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages are come. Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall . . . but God is faithful . . .”* (I Chron. 10:11-13).

**Constable:** There were three Babylonian invasions of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar.

- The first occurred in 605 B.C., during Jehoiakim's reign, when Nebuchadnezzar took many of the nobles captive, including Daniel and his three friends.
- The second invasion and deportation occurred in 597, during the reign of Jehoiachin, when Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin, Ezekiel, and about 10,000 other Jews into exile.
- The third invasion and deportation took place in 586, during the reign of Zedekiah, when Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem, destroyed the temple, and took Zedekiah and all but the poorest of the remaining Jews captive.

The Jews returned to the land from Babylon in three waves: in 536, 458, and 444 B.C. Ezekiel and Daniel both ministered in Babylon during the Captivity: Ezekiel to the exiles in their settlement, and Daniel to the Babylonians and Medo-Persians in their capitals. The context of the Book of Esther is also the Babylonian captivity and the Persian capital.

**Biblical Illustrator:** Now let us consider what sins Zedekiah had committed, which brought down upon him and his family and the people of God this terrible punishment.

**1.** We know from **2 Kings 24:19** that he did not seek the glory of God in his reign. *“He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all which Jehoiakim had done.”* By studying the history of the reign of his brother Jehoiakim we know that this “evil” consisted in the fact that he did not oppose and overthrow idolatry in the kingdom. We have no evidence that Zedekiah was himself an idolater, but we are responsible to God not only for what we say and do, but for our influence over others.

**2.** Another sin of Zedekiah’s was his revolt from the King of Babylon, and we learn from the punishment visited upon Judah’s king the sacredness of an oath in God’s sight.

**3.** Zedekiah broke a solemn covenant which he had made with the people, that all Jews held in bondage should be set free. In accordance with the king’s command, this degree of emancipation was carried out, and no Jew throughout Judah was a slave. But when it was known that the Egyptian army was coming to help them, then Zedekiah thought that he would not need the assistance of these freedmen in the battle with the enemy, and so the order of emancipation was revoked, and slavery was re-established in the land (**Jeremiah 34:16-17**).

**4.** Zedekiah’s treatment of the prophet was another cause which led to his overthrow. Although in the beginning of the national peril he had sent to Jeremiah with the urgent message, *“Pray now unto the Lord our God for us,”* yet we read (**Jeremiah 37:2**), *“Neither he, nor his servants, nor the people of the land, did hearken unto the words of the Lord, which he spake by the prophet Jeremiah.”* And not only did he refuse to follow the prophet’s advice, but he yielded to the enemies of this fearless man of God,



and suffered them to imprison and maltreat him. There are some very solemn lessons which we learn from the sad life and tragic end of this last king of Judah.

They are--

1. The first and indispensable requisite to success is for one to gain the victory over his own lower nature. So long as we are slaves to sin, we cannot be great in any path of life, but he who keeps self under, who has conquered passions and appetites for the sake of God and His cause, is sure to live a royal life, though he may never sit on a throne.
2. The fact that any one is our enemy does not relieve us from the obligation to keep faith with him (**Joshua 9:19**). Perjury is always a terrible sin.
3. If our trust is in God, we need never fear what our enemies may do, for with God on our side all must be well. Zedekiah feared his nobles because he had no faith in God.
4. The Christian is the only one who can be absolutely fearless of the future, for around him are the everlasting arms. Zedekiah put his trust in the fortifications around Jerusalem; if he had trusted in Jehovah and believed the words of Jeremiah, his life would have been safe and his kingdom would have been preserved. David sang: "*In God is my salvation and my glory; the rock of my strength and my refuge is in God.*"
5. We never gain by doing wrong. When we do evil that good may come, we are always disappointed.
6. God is not mocked. If He determines to punish, no walls or weapons can defeat His purpose. When He says to us that all other paths but the one which he has marked out lead to destruction, we may be sure that our disobedience will in the end prove His words to be true (**Jeremiah 2:17; Hosea 13:9**). (A. E. Kitteridge, D. D.)

### **Captivity of Judah**

If we come to the fall of Jerusalem with the desire to see not merely a special judgment of God, but to gain lessons from the operation of what are commonly called natural causes, we shall discover three facts to which it was largely due.

1. **Bad economic conditions.** Judah fell into the hands of the Babylonians because her kings had wasted her resources. David gave a united nation to Solomon, who in turn passed it, still entire, to Rehoboam. Under this its fourth king the nation was broken into two hostile kingdoms. The narrative gives the cause explicitly,--unendurable taxation. The glory of Solomon, his navy and palaces and harem and chariots, had been purchased at the price of great suffering on the part of the people. Had Rehoboam followed the advice of his older counsellors and lightened taxation, Jeroboam would never have become his rival, and the confederation of the twelve tribes, none too strong at best, would not have wasted its strength in civil war.
2. **Moral degeneracy.** But back of the bad financial policy of the nation lay its moral weakness. For a nation whose God was Jehovah, the Jews were wonderfully prone to idolatry. If we except a few years of David's reign, there was not a moment, from the Call to the Return, when Israel was not itching to run after strange gods. Solomon was a

typical eclectic in religion, permitting heathen divinities to be worshipped by the side of his great temple. The reforms of such kings as Hezekiah and Josiah were short-lived, and served but to set in strange contrast the popular worship in the high places and the groves.

**3. Disregard of religious teachers.** Nothing is more dramatic than the struggle between the prophets and the kings of Israel. Samuel with the gigantic Saul cowering at his feet; Elijah defying Ahab, slaying the prophets of Baal, and running from Jezebel; Elisha travelling up and down a half-converted land; Isaiah outspoken and dying a martyr's death; Jeremiah deep in the filth of his prison,—are but leaders in the noble army of prophets whom God sent to guide Israel through the paths of national success, in the face of the bitterest opposition. Each of them was faithful and spoke his message; but his words passed unheeded, or only excited anger and persecution. Neither people nor king cared to follow the stern words of their religious teachers except as they were threatened by some overwhelming disaster. Then perhaps, for a few days or months, the worship of Jehovah was reinstated in its proper place, and the prophetic office was again honoured. Judah is the type of the world. Had its king listened to God's servants, the nation would have weathered its financial distress and been cured of its wickedness. In their words lay the only hope; and Judah laughed at them and stoned them. Jerusalem, the Zion of David, became the execution city of the prophets. Judah fell, just as any nation will fall that fails to apply religion to national problems. The one great lesson of the captivity of Judah is this: the fearless application of Christianity to living questions is the duty of both clergy and laymen, and the hope of the state. (S. Matthews.)

**William Barnes:** We finally come to the actual destruction of the first Temple and the capital city of Jerusalem. “More attention is paid to the temple than to the city, for it was the symbol of God's presence and glory now departed” (Wiseman 1993:313). Commentators often remark on how objective the tone of the narrative is—especially in light of the horrendous events being described (for emotional accounts of these events, mostly by eyewitnesses, see the book of Lamentations). Sadly, the cautionary prediction given nearly four centuries earlier to King Solomon (**1 Kgs 9:6–9**; cf. the notes there for details) proved remarkably accurate (“*I will make Israel an object of mockery and ridicule among the nations*”; 1 Kgs 9:7). Other ties with the Solomonic material include parallel accounts of the various Temple accoutrements and architectural features (cf. the notes on **25:13** and **25:16–17** for specific references).

By now, we are familiar with why these horrible events were allowed to transpire: The people had refused to obey the Torah, especially in regard to the worship of idols and of other gods (cf. **24:20**). Of course, the sins of Manasseh were an important issue as well (see the note on 24:3), but that was a moot point in the early sixth century. Admittedly, even the labors of Josiah cited in **chapters 22–23** were not able to cancel the Exile, a vivid reminder of how limited our “good deeds” can be in the area of atonement for past sins. But the main point of the present passage is merely to recall, in stunned disbelief, what actually took place, and why. As Lamentations reminds us:

*Jerusalem, once so full of people,  
is now deserted.  
She who was once great among the nations  
now sits alone like a widow.  
Once the queen of all the earth,  
she is now a slave. (Lam 1:1)*

How sad it still is to contemplate all the efforts of Solomon and of his successors—now for naught. Of course, Yahweh had warned his people and their leaders, time and again, that this could happen. But it never did ... until now.

TEXT: 2 Kings 25:22-30

TITLE: HINT OF HOPE -- TWO APPENDICES – TYING UP SOME LOOSE ENDS

**BIG IDEA:**

**DESPITE JUDAH'S SAD ENDING, ALL IS NOT LOST FOREVER**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Judah is finally a barren land – even abandoned by those who had not been carried off to Babylon. The failed leadership of Nebuchadnezzar's appointee, Gedaliah, could not sustain a stable remnant in the Promised Land. After his assassination, the perpetrators fled to Egypt, fearing Babylonian reprisal. The Davidic dynasty has been snuffed out ... and yet the covenant promises of kingdom restoration and blessing still remain. The story of the elevation of Jehoiachin would serve as an encouragement to the exiles in Babylon that there is yet reason for hope.

**Peter Pett:** There can be no question that the purpose of this final narrative is to indicate that YHWH's hand was still on the house of David. It is demonstrating that He had not forgotten His promise of the continuation of David's seed, and that Judah and Israel had therefore hope for the future. Though history had consigned Jerusalem to destruction, God still had His hand on history and was preparing for the fulfilment of His purposes in the coming of Jesus Christ. This comes out especially in that he was '*set above the kings who were in Babylon*'. The author probably had in mind the Psalm which speaks of the son of David as '*the highest of the kings of the earth*' (**Psalms 89:27**; compare Psalms 2). It was a portent of what was coming.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** the Jehoiachin restoration (vv. 27–30) is meant to stand as a positive scenario over against the Gedaliah fiasco of **verses 22–26**. **Bähr** sums it up well:

The two brief narratives [vv. 22–26 and 27–30] by which the author closes his work are not mere appendages to the history, but the proper epilogue to the words: "*So Judah was carried away out of their land*" [v. 21b].

I think this is a cogent way to look at the end of the book. Ishmael's sheer malice and harebrained stupidity along with the survivors' flight to Egypt (vv. 25–26) dash any hopes of a viable life and rump regime in Judah. It is telling that this group's 'final exile finds them back in a "pre-exodus" place' and yet 'Jehoiachin lives on in Babylon, from which the next exodus will take place'. Jehoiachin's treatment in **verses 27–30** may seem a very pastel hope but it is quite a turn-around when viewed through the Zedekiah and Ishmael disasters.

**Caleb Nelson:** We see first of all the fate of the Judean state. But then we fast forward twenty-five years and see the 55-year-old Jehoiachin released from a Babylonian dungeon and given a seat at the table. What does this mean? Well, we already know that

the fate of God's people depends on the fate of David's line. And we see very clearly, in history, even in the midst of exile, that David's line has its head lifted up.

**I. (:22-26) APPENDIX #1 –**

**WHAT HAPPENED TO THE JEWS WHO REMAINED IN JUDAH?  
EXILED TO EGYPT AFTER SLAYING GEDALIAH**

**A. (:22) Feudal Leadership of Gedaliah Appointed in Judah by Nebuchadnezzar**

*“Now as for the people who were left in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon had left, he appointed Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan over them.”*

**MacArthur:** In an attempt to maintain political stability, Nebuchadnezzar appointed a governor from an important Judean family. A more detailed account of Gedaliah's activities is found in **Jer 40:7 – 41:18**. Gedaliah's grandfather, Shaphan, was Josiah's secretary, who had implemented that king's reforms (**22:3**). His father, Ahikam, was part of Josiah's delegation sent to Huldah (**22:14**) and a supporter of the prophet Jeremiah (**Jer 26:24**).

**B. (:23) Fighting Forces Rally Around Gedaliah at Mizpah**

*“When all the captains of the forces, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah to Mizpah, namely, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, and Johanan the son of Kareah, and Seraiah the son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, they and their men.”*

**MacArthur:** Mizpah – Located about 8 mi. N of Jerusalem, Mizpah became the new center of Judah. Mizpah might have been one of the few towns left standing after the Babylonian invasion.

**Peter Pett:** The ‘*captains of the forces*’ were commando leaders, either of bands who had hidden in the mountains when Nebuchadnezzar first invaded, or of remnants of the army who had escaped from Jerusalem at the same time as Zedekiah had tried to make his escape, and had taken to the mountains. When they heard that Gedaliah had been appointed governor they came to him in Mizpah, probably hoping for a new beginning. With Jerusalem in ruins and their kings exiled in Babylon there was little left to fight for.

**C. (:24) Formula for Peaceful Existence in the Promised Land under Babylonian Rule**

*“And Gedaliah swore to them and their men and said to them, ‘Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans; live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will be well with you.’”*

**Wiseman:** Gedaliah swore an oath as part of his undertaking official duties as governor, or gave his word in God's name that loyalty would ensure safety. He urged acceptance

of the judgment God had inflicted on Judah by maintaining a pro-Babylonian policy. Settle down in the land peaceably was also Jeremiah's message to the exiles (29:4–7). When it is recognized that a foreign ruler has been the divine agent for punishment, such passive resistance is all the more powerful.

**William Barnes:** The remarkable naivete of Gedaliah is illustrated in more detail in **Jer 40:13–16**. **Josephus** (Antiquities 10.9.1.155) notes that Gedaliah had a reputation for being both gentle and generous.

**Benson Commentary:** Assured them by his promise and oath, that if they would be patient and peaceable under the government of the king of Babylon, and would conduct themselves properly, they should be kept from the evils which they feared. This he might safely swear, because he had not only Nebuchadnezzar's promise, and interest too, but also God's promise, delivered by Jeremiah. And it might seem that a fair prospect was now again opening for them. But, alas! This hopeful settlement was soon dashed to pieces, not by the Chaldeans, but by themselves. The things of their peace were so hid from their eyes that they neither knew when they were well, nor would believe when they were told so even by God himself.

#### **D. (:25) Fate of Naive Gedaliah**

*“But it came about in the seventh month, that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck Gedaliah down so that he died along with the Jews and the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah.”*

**MacArthur:** Ishmael probably assassinated Gedaliah because he wished to reestablish the kingship in Judah with himself as king, since he was of royal blood (cf. **Jer 41:1**).

**Peter Pett:** The main aim of the author was to bring home to us the fact that by this means YHWH was fulfilling His promise that the whole of Judah would be driven from the land.

**Wiersbe:** Several factors were involved in this vicious assassination plot. To begin with, Ishmael had designs on the throne and resented Gedaliah's appointment as governor and his submission to the Babylonians (See **James 4:1-6**). The army officers told Gedaliah that the king of the Ammonites had sent Ishmael to take over the land (**Jer. 40:13-16**), but Gedaliah refused to believe them. Had Gedaliah listened to this sound advice and dealt sternly with Ishmael, things would have been different for the remnant in Judah, but he was too naïve to face facts. A third factor was the arrival in Judah of a large group of Jews who had fled to neighboring lands (**Jer. 40:11-12**). Their allegiance was questionable and perhaps they were too easily influenced by Ishmael. All the neighboring nations had suffered from Babylon's expansion and would have been happy to be set free.

### **E. (:26) Flight to Egypt to Avoid Babylonian Reprisal**

*“Then all the people, both small and great, and the captains of the forces arose and went to Egypt; for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.”*

**Wiersbe:** In a show of hypocritical piety, Johanan and the leaders asked Jeremiah to seek the mind of the Lord about the matter, and he agreed to do so. The Lord kept them waiting for ten days and during that time proved that He could keep them safe and well in their own land.

Jeremiah's message to the remnant (**Jer. 42:7-22**) was in three parts.

- First, he gave them God's promise that He would protect them and provide for them in their own land (**vv. 7-12**).
- Then he warned them that it was fatal to go to Egypt (**vv. 13-18**). The sword of the Lord could reach them in Egypt as well as in their own land. There could be no temporary residence in Egypt and then a return to Judah, for none of them would return.
- Finally, Jeremiah revealed the wickedness in their hearts that led them to lie to him and pretend to be seeking God's will (**vv. 19-22**). These leaders were like many people today who “seek the will of God” from various pastors and friends, always hoping that they will be told to do what they have already decided to do.

The Jews rejected God's message and went to Egypt, taking the Prophet Jeremiah with them (**Jer. 43:1-7**).

**Constable:** It is ironic that the Judahites who rebelled against the Babylonians and God's will in an attempt to secure their independence ended up fleeing back to Egypt. Their forefathers had been slaves there, and God had liberated them from Egypt 850 years earlier (**v. 26**; cf. Deut. 28:68).

**Wiseman:** The story of Gedaliah's assassination here is brief compared with that in **Jeremiah 40:13–41:15** which shows that men from Shechem, Shiloh and Samaria were also killed. Such anti-Babylonian direct action inevitably produced reprisals and the people were justly fearful of the Babylonians. The prophet Jeremiah was forced reluctantly into exile in Egypt where Apries (Hophra) was king (**24:20**). He argued that they were acting against God's word by leaving (**Jer. 42:7–43:7**). The Babylonian reaction came in 582/1 bc when Nebuzaradan took away a further 745 Judeans into Babylonian exile and Judah was temporarily made part of the province of Samaria (**Jer. 52:30**; Josephus, Ant. Jud. x.9.7). The story ends with Judah under Samaria, the old Northern Kingdom which had been the first of God's people to be taken into exile. The Samaritans were to be constant opponents of the Jews.

### **II. (:27-30) APPENDIX #2 –**

#### **WHAT HAPPENED TO JEHOIACHIN IN BABYLON?**

#### **ELEVATED TO POSITION OF FAVOR AFTER BEING RELEASED FROM PRISON**



#### **A. (:27) Released from Prison**

*“Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, that Evil-Merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison;”*

**MacArthur:** The son and successor of Nebuchadnezzar, Evil-merodach ruled as king of Babylon from 562-560 B.C To gain favor with the Jews, the king released Jehoiachin from his imprisonment and gave him special privileges.

**William Barnes:** Most commentators suggest a kind of amnesty given to commemorate Evil-merodach’s accession or the like (cf. **Cogan** and **Tadmor** 1988:329; **Sweeney** 2007:469–470).

**Matthew Henry:** Jehoiachin was released out of prison, where he had been kept 37 years. Let none say that they shall never see good again, because they have long seen little but evil: the most miserable know not what turn Providence may yet give to their affairs, nor what comforts they are reserved for, according to the days wherein they have been afflicted. Even in this world the Saviour brings a release from bondage to the distressed sinner who seeks him, bestowing foretastes of the pleasures which are at his right hand for evermore. Sin alone can hurt us; Jesus alone can do good to sinners.

**Caleb Nelson:** He is lifted out of the dungeon. What is this but a foreshadowing of the fact that Judah, too, will someday be released from exile? The fate of the nation mirrors the fate of the king. This means that Judah once again has a chance. Judah will not remain in exile forever.

**Pulpit Commentary:** The writer of Kings, whose general narrative, since the time of Hezekiah, has been gloomy and dispiriting, seems to have desired to terminate his history in a more cheerful strain. He therefore mentions, as his last incident, the fate of Jehoiachin, who, after thirty-six years of a cruel and seemingly hopeless imprisonment, experienced a happy change of circumstances. The king who succeeded Nebuchadnezzar, his son, Evil-Merodach, in the first year of his sovereignty had compassion upon the miserable captive, and releasing him from prison, changed his garments (**ver. 29**), and gave him a place at his table, among other dethroned monarchs, even exalting him above the rest (**ver. 28**), and making him an allowance for his support (**ver. 30**). This alleviation of their king's condition could not but be felt by the captive Jews as a happy omen - a portent of the time when their lot too would be alleviated, and the Almighty Disposer of events, having punished them sufficiently for their sins, would relent at last, and put an end to their banishment, and give them rest and peace in their native country.

#### **B. (:28-30) Restored to Position of Favor as an Encouragement to God’s People**

##### 1. (:28a) Kind Words

*“and he spoke kindly to him”*



**Constable:** God is faithful to His promises. God's mercy to His people is one of the persistently recurring motifs in Kings. The way was now open for return and restoration, which we read about in Ezra and Nehemiah (cf. **2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4**).

2. (:28b) Elevated Prestige and Authority

*“and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon.”*

3. (:29a) Changed Condition

*“And Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes,”*

**Caleb Nelson:** The new clothes symbolize a **changed condition**. Like Joseph, Jehoiachin no longer belongs in prison. Isaiah had used this clothing symbolism a century before, speaking of the garments of salvation with which God would clothe His people during the second exodus. Brothers and sisters, each additional detail only highlights the deeper reality that God will act to lift His people's head.

4. (:29b) Place at the King's Table

*“and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life;”*

**Caleb Nelson:** Jehoiachin is also given a place at the table, eating before the king. He is not an equal with the king of Babylon, of course, but he is recognized as dwelling in the same social orbit. No longer is he scum beneath the boot heels of the Babylonian monarch.

5. (:30) Lifelong Provision

*“and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.”*

**MacArthur:** This good word from the king of Babylon to the surviving representative of the house of David served as a concluding reminder of God's good Word to David. Through the curse of exile, the dynasty of David had survived. There was still hope that God's good Word to David concerning the seed who will build God's temple and establish God's eternal kingdom would be fulfilled (cf. **2Sa 7:12-16**). The book of **2 Kings** opened with Elijah being carried away to heaven, the destination of all those faithful to God. The book ends with Israel, and then Judah, being carried away to pagan lands as a result of failing to be faithful to God.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I think verses 27–30 point not merely to a general hope about the survival of the people but to a focused hope about the line of David. More ‘nuanced’ scholars will raise eyebrows. But I think the writer probably had a reason for twice dubbing Jehoiachin ‘*king of Judah*’ in **verse 27**. And even when Yahweh was ready to rip the Davidic kingdom apart, he clearly told Jeroboam, ‘*I will afflict the seed of David on account of this—only not all the days*’ (**1 Kings 11:39**). It seems to me a text like

that stands behind a passage like this. Or one could simply say that Yahweh's **2 Samuel 7** word is not something either Babylon or apostate Judah can falsify. It seems to me then that biblical theology would lead us to see a ray of hope in this kindness done to the exiled Davidic king.

**William Barnes:** in this final appendix to this long and involved history of God's people, we are reminded that one era may be over but another lies ahead. And as I so often have noted throughout this commentary, the Davidic hope still lives! And all peoples on earth will eventually be blessed by that wonderful fact. To God be the glory!

**August Konkel:** There are also a number of comparisons that can be made with Mephibosheth. Both have a place at the king's table (cf. **2 Sam. 9:7, 11, 13**) and both suffer a disability (cf. 4:4; 9:3, 13). The fate of Saul's house seems to be recalled at the end of the Davidic dynasty in the tearing apart of the kingdom (1 Sam. 15:28; 28:17; 1 Kings 14:8; 2 Kings 17:21). Both Mephibosheth and Jehoiachin seem to represent a **dynasty that survives**, though incapable of functioning as a royal order. The parallels to Mephibosheth suggest that Jehoiachin is testimony to the survival of Israel, even in exile. . .

Faith and promise are preserved among the exiles in Babylon, where the temple vessels, the king, the priests, and other leaders are located. Hope is found among those whose trust is in the God of the covenant; the One who redeemed them from Egypt can also bring them back from Babylon.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What motivated the rejection of the leadership of Gedaliah in the land of Judah?
- 2) What contrast is the author trying to draw by juxtaposing these two stories at end of the book of Kings?
- 3) What parallels do you see in the blessings heaped upon Mephibosheth and the favor shown to Jehoiachin?
- 4) How would this last story give a glimmer of hope to the exiles in Babylon regarding future promises of Davidic Kingdom restoration?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**R. D. Patterson:** The account of the fortunes of the Judeans is brought to a close with a postscript concerning the later lot of Jehoiachin, son of Jehoiakim. Since he was

seemingly considered by the Judeans the last legitimate king, news of his later condition would be of great significance. After the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 561 B.C., his son and successor, Evil-Merodach (561-560), released the Judean king from prison and accorded him due royal recognition. This included a place at the king's table and regular allowance for the rest of his life (cf. **Jer 52:31-34**).

Thus the final curtain falls on the drama of the divided monarchy. What had been a note of dark despair is illuminated by the light of God's gracious concern for his own. Although God's people had been judged as they must, yet God would be with them even in the midst of their sentence. Jehoiachin's release and renewed enjoyment of life thus stands as a harbinger of the further release and return of all the nation, in accordance with God's promises (cf. **Jer 31:18; Lam 5:21**). The spiritually minded believers perhaps would see in this incident an assurance of God's greater redemption from bondage of those who looked forward to him who gives release and eternal refreshment to all who love his appearing.

**Pulpit Commentary:** Gedaliah made Mizpah, near Jerusalem, his residence; and here he was shortly joined by a number of Jews of importance, who had escaped from Jerusalem and hidden themselves until the Babylonians were gone. Of these the most eminent were Johanan the son of Kareah, and Ishmael, a member of the royal house of David. Gedaliah urged the refugees to be good subjects of the King of Babylon, and to settle themselves to agricultural pursuits. His advice was accepted and at first followed; but presently a warning was given to Gedaliah by Johanan that Ishmael designed his destruction; and soon afterwards, as Gedaliah took no precautions, the murder was actually carried out. Other atrocities followed; but after a time Johanan and the other leading refugees took up arms, forced Ishmael to fly to the Ammonites, and then, fearing that Nebuchadnezzar would hold them responsible for Ishmael's act, against Jeremiah's remonstrances, fled, with the great mass of the Jews that had been left in the land, from Judaea into Egypt. Here our writer leaves them (**ver. 26**), without touching on the calamities which befell them there, according to the prophetic announcements of **Jeremiah 44:2-28**.

**Keil and Delitzsch:** After Ishmael had performed this deed, and had also treacherously murdered a number of men, who had come to the temple with a sacrifice from Shechem, Shiloh, and Samaria, he took the Jews who were at Mizpah prisoners, with some kings' daughters among them, intending to take them over to the Ammonites; but as soon as his deed became known, he was pursued by Johanan and the rest of the military chiefs and was overtaken at Gibeon, whereupon those who had been led away by him went over to Johanan, so that he was only able to make his escape with eight men and get away to the Ammonites (**Jeremiah 41:4-15**). Johanan then went with the rest of the military commanders and the people whom he had brought back into the neighbourhood of Bethlehem, with the intention of fleeing to Egypt for fear of the Chaldeans. There they did indeed have recourse to the prophet Jeremiah, to inquire of him the word of the Lord; but they did not allow themselves to be diverted from their intention by the word of the Lord which he announced to them, that if they remained in the land they need not fear anything from the king of Babel, but if they went to Egypt

they should all perish there with sword, hunger, and pestilence, or by the prediction that the Lord would also deliver Pharaoh Hophra into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar (**Jeremiah 42**). They went to Egypt notwithstanding, taking the prophet himself with them, and settled in different cities of Egypt, where they gave themselves up to idolatry, and did not suffer themselves to be drawn away from it even by the severe judgments which the prophet Jeremiah predicted as sure to fall upon them (**Jeremiah 43:1-13 and 44**). In the verse before us we have simply a brief allusion to the eventual result of the whole affair. "*Because they were afraid of the Chaldeans,*" namely, that they might possibly take vengeance upon them for the murder of the governor.

**Caleb Nelson: God's Enduring Promise**

**Proposition: The fate of God's people depends on the fate of David's line — and David's line will have its head lifted up.**

**I. Epilogue I: The Failure of the Judean Rump State, vv. 22-26**

A. The Question Raised: Can Judah Exist Subservient to Babylon?, **vv. 22-24**

Could the Judeans transition, however violently, from an independent life as a religious-political commonwealth to life under Babylonian politics while maintaining their core identity as citizens of God's chosen nation on earth? That was the question. Gedaliah believed it could be done.

B. The Question Answered: No, **vv. 25-26**

**II. Epilogue II: The Success of God's Promise to David's Son, vv. 27-30**

Yet that failure of Gedaliah's attempt to salvage something of a Judean identity is not the failure of God's promise. God had promised David that He would not take away His steadfast love from David's descendants, as He took it away from Saul. He promised that "*your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever*" (**2Sa 7:15-16 NKJ**). Yes, God had chastened David's son with the rod of men, and the stripes of the sons of men. But His steadfast love remained with David's seed. The author thus fast-forwards 25 years to close his book with a brief but very suggestive incident.

A. The Date: 560 B.C., **v. 27a**

B. The Event: Jehoiachin's Head Lifted, **vv. 27b-30**

1. Release from Prison
2. Kind Words
3. The Highest Seat
4. New Clothes
5. A Place at the Table
6. Lifelong Provision

C. The Significance: God Will Keep His Promise

The comparison with **Mephibosheth** the son of Jonathan the son of Saul is obvious. He too was received kindly and ate at David's table. This was simultaneously a sign of David's mercy and of the reality that Saul's line was finished and that no monarch would ever come from it again. And many commentators see exactly the same point here. Just as Saul's house would never rise again, so the fact that Jehoiachin is royally entertained at the king of Babylon's table is proof positive that David's line is finished and that no monarch will ever come from it again.

This is **half true**, of course. No earthly monarch ever did come from David's line again. The highest any of Jehoiachin's descendants rose, in earthly terms, was to being governor in the days of the Persian empire (e.g., Zerubbabel ben Shealtiel). And yet, though the comparison with Saul is obvious, God headed that comparison off at the pass. The key difference lies not in the relative position at a greater king's table, but rather in God's promise to never remove His steadfast love from David's line. David's ultimate descendant, Jesus the Messiah, was chosen by God, plucked from obscurity in Nazareth. He was the Savior of the World, and He was a carpenter. He was not a king by birth, but an artisan. Yet God highly exalted Him to a greater than earthly dominion.

Brothers and sisters, the end of Kings leaves open the possibility for God to fulfill His promise to David in some as-yet-undreamed-of way. It hints broadly that **David's line will have its head raised**, and that God's people will be raised along with that rising. But it is not the book of Revelation, nor even Daniel. It deals with the past, not the future. It tells us about how God dealt with His people of old so that we can see who He is and how faithful He is. It leaves us with only a hint — a hint that **better things are coming for God's anointed king and for God's scattered, suffering people**. But all of that is yet future. Those things are hidden in the plan and purpose of the God who directs history and human life, and who rules all things for the sake of His people.

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