



THE BOOK OF 2 KINGS

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INTRODUCTION

The Book of 2 Kings is basically the continued story of 1 Kings. This would make sense as the Jews had both books as one. 2 Kings is a book of history and prophecy concerning the Divided Kingdoms, Israel in the north and Judah in the south.

These kingdoms have fallen so far away from God at this point in history that it's difficult to understand why God would still want anything to do with them because of their idolatrous behaviour.

There are many familiar characters within the book, such as Manasseh, Zedekiah, Jezebel and Nebuchadnezzar, and others, but two of God's prophets, Elijah and Elisha, have leading roles. There are a few miracles recorded that God does through His prophets to instil some kind of hope for a very lost nation.

In the first seventeen chapters, we read about how the kings of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms led their people into more idolatry, which will eventually lead them into exile. These kings disobeyed God in various ways, and it was during the reign of Hoshea that the Assyrians came and took the Northern Kingdom into captivity.

We also read about how Elijah's ministry as a prophet of God comes to an end, but Elisha, whom he's been training for a while, takes his place. Elisha does twice as many miracles as Elijah, as God does His will through Him.

In the final eight chapters, we read that the Southern Kingdom of Judah were almost as bad as the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and they too were going to be judged by God.

WRITER

Although the Jews who first received the writings considered the book to be from the hand of a prophet. Sadly, no one knows who wrote it, although many have suggested that it was written by the prophet Jeremiah.

DATE

Many believe the book was written around 560-538 B.C., which is around the same date as 1 Kings or sometime after 586 B.C., when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and when Jehoiachin was raised up out of prison by Awel-Marduk, 2 Kings 25:27-30.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The death of Solomon ended the greatest period in the history of Israel, the United Kingdom. This was followed by the Divided Kingdom, which lasted three hundred and eighty-eight years.

At Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam ascended the throne. His subjects had long chafed under the heavy taxation of Solomon. Led by Jeroboam, a general of Solomon's, they asked Rehoboam to lighten their load.

Rehoboam foolishly replied, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke,’ 1 Kings 12:14. The people were so angry with this reply that ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam and crowned Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam’s kingdom became known as the northern kingdom of Israel.

Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam in the southern kingdom of Judah. The little tribe of Benjamin was so small it was virtually swallowed up by the tribe of Judah. 2 Kings, and the last part of 1 Kings, and 2 Chronicles, tell the complete story of the Divided Kingdom.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The story of the northern kingdom is not a happy one. During its two-hundred and fifty-three years of history, it had one bad ruler after another, not a single one of its nineteen kings actually being ‘good’.

Nine dynasties or families of kings reigned during this time. Several kings were murdered, and their places were taken by usurpers. Jeroboam was so afraid that the people would go back to Jerusalem in Judah to worship and desire Rehoboam for their king that he set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel for them to worship.

So angered was God at the action that He sent Ahijah to him to predict the downfall of Jeroboam’s house and the doom of Israel. The prophet declared, ‘The Lord shall smite Israel and he shall root up Israel out of this good land and shall scatter them beyond the river,’ 2 Kings 14:15.

After Jeroboam’s death, idolatry became even more rampant than before, and under Ahab, the seventh king, worship of the idol god Baal was introduced. During its first eighty years, the northern kingdom was almost continuously at war with Judah.

The ascension of Ahab to the throne sank Israel to its lowest depths. Ahab married a foreign woman, Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. She brought along her idols and soon abolished the worship of Jehovah in Israel.

It is doubtful that a more evil, unscrupulous woman is described in the entire Bible, and Ahab was so spineless that he yielded to his wife’s evil designs. God sent the prophet Elijah to cry out against this idolatry.

Elijah conducted a contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and when they were proved false, he had them slain. This intensified Jezebel’s determination to kill Elijah, but she never succeeded in her attempt.

Perhaps the best of all the kings of Israel was Jehu, who succeeded Ahab’s son as king. With a ruthless determination, he had Jezebel killed, and Baal worship abolished.

But his zeal ran out, and he never did away with the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. Of most of the kings who followed Jehu, it is said they ‘departed not from the sins of Jeroboam.’

Israel’s political strength reached its greatest height since Solomon under Jeroboam II, but idolatry again grew worse. God carried out His promise made by Ahijah to punish and scatter Israel.

In 722 B.C., the powerful Assyrian king carried the people of Israel into Assyria. They never returned. From this point, the story of the Jews is that of the Kingdom of Judah.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

Judah was smaller and weaker than Israel. Yet, through its three-hundred and eighty-eight years of history, it remained much closer to God. Several kings were very good, and on the whole, the bad were not as evil as those of Israel. All were of the family of David.

Judah began to decline under Rehoboam, but during the reigns of good kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, a great revival swept the land. In the following years, Judah borrowed the religion of Baal from Israel.

It remained for King Hezekiah to completely root out idolatry. He and his great-grandson Josiah were the two best kings to rule Judah. But Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was as evil as Hezekiah was good.

In his fifty-five-year reign, he introduced every form of idol worship he could think of and even burned his own children with fire as a religious rite. This caused God to promise through the prophets that Judah would be sorely punished for its idolatry.

After Josiah became king, he set out to bring the people back to God. When the lost book of the law was found in the temple, Josiah instituted such a religious revival as his people had never seen.

Following Josiah's death, Judah descended rapidly. All the remaining kings were bad and weak. Judah was soon made a 'satellite' of Babylon, and when the kings dared to rebel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 606 B.C. carried most of the people into captivity as the Assyrians had done with Israel over one-hundred years before.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, governed a few that remained, but in 587 B.C., he too and most of the rest were also carried into Babylon. This punishment of God taught the Jews a lesson. Never again did they return to idolatry.

OUTLINE

Transition From Elijah To Elisha. 2 Kings 1-2

Moab's Ruin. 2 Kings 3

Various Miracles. 2 Kings 4

Naaman's Leprosy. 2 Kings 5

The Syrian Siege. 2 Kings 6-7

Elisha's Legacy. 2 Kings 8

End Of The Kingdom. 2 Kings 9

End of Offspring. 2 Kings 10

End of Athaliah. 2 Kings 11

Joash. 2 Kings 12

Various Kings. 2 Kings 13-16

Israel Destroyed. 2 Kings 17

Hezekiah. 2 Kings 13-20

Manasseh. 2 Kings 21

Josiah. 2 Kings 22-23

Judah Destroyed. 2 Kings 24-25

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

‘After Ahab’s death, Moab rebelled against Israel. Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, ‘Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury.’ But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, ‘Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’ Therefore, this is what the LORD says: ‘You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!’ So Elijah went.’ 2 Kings 1:1-4

THE LORD’S JUDGMENT ON AHAZIAH

After the death of Ahab, 1 Kings 22:29-36 / 2 Chronicles 18:28-34, Moab rebelled against Israel, 2 Kings 1:1 / Judges 3:12-14. The Moabites were descendants of Lot, Genesis 19:37, and there was a time when King David overpowered them, 2 Kings 3:4, and wiped out two-thirds of their army, 2 Samuel 8:2. The other third under the reign of Solomon regained their freedom again, but lost it later under the reign of Omri.

Coffman, in his commentary, highlights an important point, which is as follows.

‘Later in 2 Kings 3:4-27, there is a fuller report of this rebellion of Moab, but apparently this brief mention of it occurs here as a preliminary to the explanation of why Ahaziah was unable to suppress the rebellion due to his injury.’

Ahaziah reigned in the north from around 853 to 852 B.C. and, after falling through the framework of his upper room and injuring himself, sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, 2 Kings 1:2.

Notice that Ahaziah didn’t seek to consult God but Baal-Zebub, 2 Kings 1:2, which means ‘Baal of flies’. This tells us just how far from God Israel has now come. In the New Testament, Beelzebub is a common name for Satan himself, or the prince of devils, Matthew 10:25.

God, knowing what was going on, intervened by sending the angel of the LORD, 2 Kings 1:3. Who is this angel of the LORD? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7 / Genesis 21:17-16. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger. Christ is God, not an angel, which becomes clearer in Genesis 16:13.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

The angel of the LORD, Genesis 22:15-16, asks them why they were going to consult Baal-Zebub, 2 Kings 1:3. The angel of the LORD asks them the question, ‘Is there no God in Israel?’ 2 Kings 1:3.

Ahaziah is told he won’t leave the bed he is lying on, and he will certainly die, 2 Kings 1:4. It’s very clear that Elijah is somewhat ridiculing Ahaziah here, and it’s very clear that God wants to bring judgment upon Ahaziah because of his idolatry.

Israel was so far away from God and His will that they totally ignored God’s commandments, and as a result, they will eventually be taken away into captivity as a punishment.

‘When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, ‘Why have you come back?’ ‘A man came to meet us,’ they replied. ‘And he said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you and tell him, ‘This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore, you will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!’ The king asked them, ‘What kind of

man was it who came to meet you and told you this?’ They replied, ‘He had a garment of hair and had a leather belt around his waist.’ The king said, ‘That was Elijah the Tishbite.’ Then he sent to Elijah a captain with his company of fifty men. The captain went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, ‘Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down!’ Elijah answered the captain, ‘If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!’ Then fire fell from heaven and consumed the captain and his men. At this, the king sent to Elijah another captain with his fifty men. The captain said to him, ‘Man of God, this is what the king says, ‘Come down at once!’ ‘If I am a man of God,’ Elijah replied, ‘may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men!’ Then the fire of God fell from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. So the king sent a third captain with his fifty men. This third captain went up and fell on his knees before Elijah. ‘Man of God,’ he begged, ‘please have respect for my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants! See, fire has fallen from heaven and consumed the first two captains and all their men. But now have respect for my life!’ The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, ‘Go down with him; do not be afraid of him.’ So Elijah got up and went down with him to the king. He told the king, ‘This is what the LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel for you to consult that you have sent messengers to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Because you have done this, you will never leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!’ So he died, according to the word of the LORD that Elijah had spoken. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. As for all the other events of Ahaziah’s reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?’ 2 Kings 1:5-18

After Ahaziah’s messengers return to him and inform him of what Elijah had said, 2 Kings 1:5-6, Ahaziah asks them, ‘What kind of man was he?’ 2 Kings 1:7. The clothes which Elijah was wearing were his common clothes, 2 Kings 1:8. His clothes represent the moral and spiritual condition of Israel; they were rough and coarse.

He wore a garment of hair-cloth, and a leather belt, 2 Kings 1:8, which was common clothing for God’s prophets, Matthew 3:4 / Hebrews 11:37, but false prophets wore them too, Zechariah 13:4. If we learn anything from this type of clothing, it’s this: they weren’t comfortable to wear, and they weren’t supposed to be.

There were three captains who came along with their soldiers and approached Elijah. The first two captains invite Elijah to go to the king, but he declines, 2 Kings 1:9 / 2 Kings 1:11, and their arrogance toward Elijah resulted in them and their soldiers being killed by God, 2 Kings 1:10 / 2 Kings 1:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is impossible that such a man as Ahaziah, in such circumstances, could have had any friendly designs in sending a captain and fifty soldiers for the prophet and the manner in which they are treated shows plainly that they went with a hostile intent.’

It wasn’t until the last captain, who showed Elijah some respect, probably because of what happened to the first two captains and their soldiers, that he accepted the invite and the captain and his soldiers were spared, 2 Kings 1:13-15. One possible reason for the first two captains’ deaths and their soldiers was to remind Israel that God still had true prophets among them. In other words, Ahaziah needed to know and be reminded that God was only working through His prophets and not the false prophets of Baal.

Elijah tells Ahaziah what the angel of the LORD told him earlier: he would not leave his bed, and he would die, 2 Kings 1:16 / 2 Kings 1:4. Ahaziah died just as Elijah said he would, in his bed, 2 Kings 1:7, and he left Israel in a state of apostasy, which would eventually lead them into Assyrian captivity. Because Ahaziah had no son, Joram succeeded him, 2 Kings 1:17. Some translations have the name Jehoram, but this is the same person.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is an example of chronological inconsistencies in Kings. A glance at 1 Kings 22:51 / 2 Kings 8:16 / 2 Kings 3:14 shows what the problem is.’ Rawlinson cleared it up by supposing that Jehoshaphat had associated his son Jehoram with him on the throne upon the occasion of his going to war at Ramoth-Gilead. It is strange that both Israel and Judah should have had a king named Jehoram. This happened because Ahab and Jehoshaphat had brought the families together by marriage, and after that, it was natural for the same name to have later appeared in the royal

families of both kingdoms. Jehoram was another son of Ahab and thus a brother of Ahaziah, 2 Kings 8:16. It was his body that Jehu cast upon the plot of ground for which Ahab had murdered Naboth, 2 Kings 9:25.’

The other events of Ahaziah’s reign, and what he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 1:18 / 1 Kings 22:39.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

As Elijah was coming to the end of his ministry, God directed him to anoint a younger man named Elisha to take his place. Elisha was the son of Shaphat and lived in Abel Meholah, 1 Kings 19:16.

In a matter of years, Elisha became God’s spokesman to the northern kingdom of Israel, and his ministry would be one of signs, miracles, proclamations, and warnings. Over a period of time, he would become known as the prophet of peace and healing.

Elijah was commissioned to deliver fearless messages of condemnation and judgment to the king and the people, warning them to turn from sin, and Elisha’s ministry was to build on the work that Elijah had begun by teaching the people God’s ways.

ELISHA’S MINISTRY OF MIRACLES

Elijah’s ministry began by shutting up the heavens for three and a half years, whereas Elisha’s ministry began by healing a spring of water near Jericho, 2 Kings 2:19-22.

This spring of water was unfit to use, and so, Elisha asked to have some salt in a new bowl brought to him; he threw the salt into the spring, and the water was suddenly healed, 2 Kings 2:21.

His second recorded miracle granted an impoverished family of faith a financial blessing. A man dies, and his wife becomes a widow. She was very poor and owned just one item of value, a jar of olive oil.

She had two sons to care for, and she asked Elisha to help her as she feared her sons would be taken away to pay a debt. Elisha instructed her to go to all her neighbours and borrow as many empty jars as she could. The one jar of oil was multiplied miraculously, and she was able to sell enough of the valuable oil to pay off her debt and live off the rest, 2 Kings 4:1-7.

Two more miracles were performed for a married couple living in the town of Shunem. Elisha, the prophet, often stayed at the home of this childless couple, as his ministry would take him from town to town. As a gesture of appreciation for their hospitality, he prophesied that they would have a son who would bring them great joy.

Later, the little boy suffered an illness while out in the field, and his mother went searching until she found Elisha. He went back to her house to see what could be done. The boy had died, but Elisha prayed, and God raised the boy from the dead, 2 Kings 4:8-22 / 2 Kings 4:23-37.

ELIJAH TAKEN UP TO HEAVEN

‘When the LORD was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were on their way from Gilgal. Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Stay here; the LORD has sent me to Bethel.’ But Elisha said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.’ So they went down to Bethel. The company of the prophets at Bethel came out to Elisha and asked, ‘Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?’ ‘Yes, I know,’ Elisha replied, ‘so be quiet.’ Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here, Elisha; the LORD has sent me to Jericho.’ And he replied, ‘As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.’ So they went to Jericho. The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, ‘Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master from you today?’ ‘Yes, I know,’ he replied, ‘so be quiet.’ Then Elijah said to him, ‘Stay here; the LORD has sent me to the Jordan.’ And he replied, ‘As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.’ So the two of them walked on. Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, ‘Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?’ ‘Let me inherit a double portion of your spirit,’ Elisha replied. ‘You have asked a difficult thing,’ Elijah said, ‘yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.’ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw this and cried out, ‘My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!’ And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two.’ 2 Kings 2:1-12

We were first introduced to Elisha back in 1 Kings 19:19-21, when Elijah was preparing him to take over as God’s prophet. God was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, and now was the time when Elisha was to take over as God’s main prophet for His people, 2 Kings 2:1.

Gilgal was about fifteen miles north of Lydda, in the country of Ephraim, not far from Bethel. It was known as the seat of false worship, Amos 4:4 / Hosea 4:15. Elijah tells Elisha to stay where he is because God has sent Elijah to Bethel, but Elisha doesn’t have any of it and refuses to leave him, and so, they go to Bethel, 2 Kings 2:2. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This double oath, repeated three times, 2 Kings 2:4 / 2 Kings 2:6, is very remarkable. The two clauses of it are separately used with some frequency, Judges 8:19 / Ruth 3:13 / 1 Samuel 1:26, etc., but it is comparatively seldom that they are united.’

The company of prophets at Bethel, 2 Kings 2:3, weren’t false prophets but true prophets of God who were under Elijah’s leadership, 1 Samuel 10:9-13. There’s a strong possibility that this was a school for prophets which began with Samuel and continued after his death, 1 Kings 18:4 / 1 Kings 20:35 / Isaiah 8:16.

The company of the prophets come to Elisha and asked him if he was aware that God is going to take Elijah from him today, and Elisha tells them that he is aware but then tells them to be quiet, 2 Kings 2:3.

Then Elijah tells Elisha to stay where he is because God sent Elijah to Jericho, but once again Elisha isn’t having it, he won’t stay and so they travel to Jericho, 2 Kings 2:4.

The company of the prophets appear to travel in groups, and their main homes may have been cities like Bethel, Gilgal, and Jericho, 2 Kings 2:5. This is the first mention of a prophetic community in Jericho, 2 Kings 2:5. Jericho hadn’t long been rebuilt by Hiel, 1 Kings 16:34, in disobedience to Joshua’s words, Joshua 6:26.

The company of the prophets came back to Elisha and asked him once again if he knew that God was going to take Elijah away from him today, and once again, Elisha tells them that he is aware, and once again, he tells them to be quiet, 2 Kings 2:5 / 2 Kings 2:3.

Then Elijah, once again tells Elisha to stay where he is because God has sent Elijah to the Jordan, and once again, Elisha is having none of it, he won’t stay and so the two of them walked on together, 2 Kings 2:6. Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan, 2 Kings 2:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They fully expected this extraordinary event, and they could have known it only from Elijah himself, or by a direct revelation from God.’

Elijah takes his cloak, rolls it up and strikes the water with it, and the water is divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground, 2 Kings 2:8. It’s here we read that they received a revelation from God that Elisha was to take the place of Elijah.

When they had crossed the Jordan, Elijah asked Elisha what he could do for him before he was taken away, and Elisha asked to inherit a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, 2 Kings 2:9.

I don’t believe we’re to believe that Elisha has twice as many miraculous powers as Elijah had; only God could grant such a thing. He was simply asking Elijah for the ‘double portion’ as someone would receive as the firstborn son, Deuteronomy 21:15-17.

Elisha obviously saw himself as the firstborn son of Elijah, hence why he asks for the firstborn privileges. Elisha was asking to be recognised as the ‘heir’ of Elijah in relation to the other prophets.

Elijah tells Elisha that he has asked a difficult thing, yet if he sees Elijah when he is taken from him, it will be his, otherwise, it will not, 2 Kings 2:10. As they walked on together talking suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated them, 2 Kings 2:11.

Elijah was taken up to heaven in a whirlwind, 2 Kings 2:12 / Exodus 19:16-25 / Psalms 18:7-15, and it appears that God wanted Elisha to witness this miracle, as a way of confirming the start of his ministry.

Elijah was taken up in a whirlwind to heaven, and Elisha saw it and cried, ‘My Father, my Father! The chariots of Israel and its horsemen, and he saw him no more, 2 Kings 2:12.

This basically means that one prophet had done more for Israel than all the earthly kingdoms’ chariots and horses. Significantly, these same words were uttered upon the occasion of the death of Elisha, 2 Kings 13:14. Elisha then took hold of Elijah’s garment and tore it in two, 2 Kings 2:12.

‘Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan. He took the cloak that had fallen from Elijah and struck the water with it. ‘Where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ he asked. When he struck the water, it divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over. The company of the prophets from Jericho, who were watching, said, ‘The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha.’ And they went to meet him and bowed to the ground before him. ‘Look,’ they said, ‘we, your servants, have fifty able men. Let them go and look for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the LORD has picked him up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley.’ ‘No,’ Elisha replied, ‘do not send them.’ But they persisted until he was too embarrassed to refuse. So he said, ‘Send them.’ And they sent fifty men, who searched for three days but did not find him. When they returned to Elisha, who was staying in Jericho, he said to them, ‘Didn’t I tell you not to go?’ 2 Kings 2:13-18

Elisha picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan, 2 Kings 2:13. Elisha takes Elijah’s cloak and struck the water and asks, ‘where now is the LORD, the God of Elijah?’ 2 Kings 2:14.

He asks this question because he had been given the responsibility of being God’s prophet but he needed the power of God to demonstrate that God was working through him as He did with Elijah. When Elisha struck the water, Elijah’s cloak divided to the right and to the left, and he crossed over, 2 Kings 2:14.

Elisha had asked for a ‘double portion’ from Elijah, and Elijah’s cloak was the sign of the responsibility that was given to Elisha. In doing so, Elisha was ‘anointed’ and appointed to take Elijah’s place as God’s prophet. God’s power would now come upon Elisha as it did with Elijah, 2 Kings 2:15.

This was going to be demonstrated when Elisha performed miracles, and the people would now know that God was with him and working through him. Here, the fifty prophets now knew that the spirit of Elijah was with Elisha, 2 Kings 2:15.

The prophets, [2 Kings 2:7](#), now go to meet Elisha and bow to the ground before him, [2 Kings 2:15](#), and it appears that they wanted to go and look for Elijah, [2 Kings 2:16](#), simply because no one else had witnessed Elijah being taken up to heaven.

They suggest that the Spirit of the LORD has picked Elijah up and set him down on some mountain or in some valley, but Elisha refuses to let them go, [2 Kings 2:17](#).

They persisted until Elisha was too embarrassed to refuse, and so, Elisha tells them to go and look for Elijah's body, [2 Kings 2:17-18](#). Doing this would remove any doubts about Elisha's account of what happened to Elijah. When they returned to Elisha, he asked them, Didn't he tell them not to go? [2 Kings 2:18](#). They searched for three days, but because they didn't find Elijah's body, this would reinforce the fact that Elijah's departure was miraculous. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Elijah had finished his work as God's prophet; it was an intense work of judgment that became symbolic, [Malachi 4:5-6](#), even idealised, [John 1:21](#), and seen again at the end of the Jewish era in the person of John the Baptist, [Matthew 3:1-10](#). After the work of Moses and Elijah, God had nothing fundamentally new to say to his rebellious people, until the coming of that Holy One whom Moses and Elijah would meet upon the mount of transfiguration, [Matthew 17:1-8](#) / [Mark 9:2-8](#) / [Luke 9:28-36](#) / [2 Peter 1:16-18](#).’

DID ELIJAH DIE AND GO TO HEAVEN?

Before we try to answer the question concerning whether Enoch and Elijah actually went to heaven or not, I think it would be useful to define what we mean when we use the word ‘heaven’.

THREE HEAVENS

The opening words of our Bible tell us that, ‘In the beginning, God created the heavens (plural) and the earth,’ [Genesis 1:1](#). Speaking about himself, the apostle Paul says, ‘I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body, I do not know—God knows.’ [2 Corinthians 12:2](#). So, we have here three ‘heavens’.

1. The heaven, which is God's spiritual, eternal home, [Isaiah 6:1](#) / [Acts 7:55-56](#).

This isn't physical and isn't created. This is the uncreated heaven where God has always been from eternity. It's also described as the third heaven and paradise.

2. The heaven where the stars and planets are, [Psalm 8:3](#).

This is physical and is created.

3. The heaven surrounding the earth where the atmosphere is, and the birds fly, [Psalm 19:1](#).

This is physical and is created.

PARADISE

Notice that Paul says in 2 Corinthians 12:2-4 that he was caught up to the ‘third heaven’, whilst in the same setting he says, caught up to ‘paradise’. Surely, the phrases ‘caught up to the third heaven’ and ‘caught up to paradise’ mean the same thing! Surely, the ‘third heaven’ and ‘paradise’ are one and the same place!

The ‘third heaven’, or ‘paradise’ is God’s spiritual eternal home, which isn’t physical and isn’t created, this is the place where not only Paul found himself, but the place where Lazarus found himself when he died, Luke 16:22, and the place where Jesus and the thief on the cross went to when they died, Luke 23:43.

According to Revelation 2:7, the overcoming church will eat from the tree of life in the eschatological garden. Sin and death through redemption are now cast out of the human experience. The way is open for the faithful to return to the garden of God. ‘Paradise’ is the Christian’s final home.

We understand that God is everywhere, Acts 17:27-28. He is present in all ‘three heavens’, Psalm 115:2-3. We cannot get away from God, Psalm 139:1-16, but it is the ‘third heaven’, God’s spiritual, eternal home, where Enoch, Genesis 5:22-24 / Hebrews 11:5, and Elijah went, as we shall see in this study.

When we read 2 Kings 2:1-12, we read that the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven. The text tells us that Elijah, like Enoch, was not only spared death but also went straight to heaven. There are some who suggest that he went to ‘heaven’ but not the heaven where God dwells.

Earlier, I mentioned that the Bible speaks of three heavens, and if Elijah isn’t in heaven where God dwells, then according to some people, Elijah was taken to the heaven where the stars and planets are or taken to the other heaven, the earth’s atmosphere, where the birds fly.

There are those who suggest that Elijah didn’t go to heaven, but the whirlwind simply took him to another location on Earth. They argue this is why the other prophets searched for him, 2 Kings 2:16-17.

I’m sure you would have noticed that the other prophets couldn’t find him, 2 Kings 2:17, just as people couldn’t find Enoch, Hebrews 11:5. Why? Because his ministry on earth was finished.

Just as Enoch never died but was translated into an eternal fellowship with the Creator. Elijah was received into eternal fellowship with God without being obligated to pass through the experience of death.

ALLEGED CONTRADICTION

In 2 Chronicles 21:12-15, we read that King Jehoram of Judah received a letter from Elijah. But based on the chronology of events in 2 Kings, we know that Elijah had been taken to heaven alive in a whirlwind by that point. How did Elijah send a letter to King Jehoram if Elijah had already been taken to heaven?

SOLUTION

Remember that Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind to God before the reign of Jehoram, 2 Kings 2:11. But it appears that Elijah had prophesied concerning the wickedness of Jehoram, even before Jehoram reigned. Elijah had prophesied against Ahab and Jezebel, the parents of Jehoram’s wife, Athaliah.

It’s not the first time in this book that a prophet has spoken about an upcoming disaster, for kings, before it happens, 2 Chronicles 12:5 / 2 Chronicles 16:7 / 2 Chronicles 19:2 / 2 Chronicles 24:20 / 2 Chronicles 26:16.

However, some commentators believe that Elijah was still alive at this point in time.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only notice which we have of Elijah in Chronicles. As a prophet of the northern kingdom, he engaged but slightly the attention of the historian of the southern one. The notice shows that Elijah did not confine his attention to the affairs of his own state but strove to check the progress of idolatry in Judah. And it proves that he was alive after the death of Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 21:13, a fact bearing.’

1. Upon the chronological order of 2 Kings 2:11.

2. Showing that Elisha, who prophesied in the time of Jehoshaphat, 2 Kings 3:11-19, commenced his public ministry before his master’s translation.

The Apologetic Press say the following.

‘Even if the events in 2 Kings 1-8 are recorded in a more strict chronological order, however, and Elijah had actually left Earth prior to Jehoram’s independent reign as king began, there still is no proven contradiction between these passages and what the chronicler recorded about Elijah’s letter to Jehoram. 2 Chronicles 21:12 does state that “a letter came to” Jehoram “from Elijah the prophet,” but notice that the text does not say that Elijah personally delivered the letter. One simply cannot prove that the text implies that Elijah was still alive. Perhaps the differences are the result of the events of 2 Kings 2, not being placed in a strict sequential order in the text. Or it could very well be that Elijah wrote the letter of 2 Chronicles 21 as a prophetic letter before his departure from Earth and long before Jehoram became the sole King of Judah. One thing is certain: no justifiable contradiction has been proven.’

ANOTHER ALLEGED CONTRADICTION

Some claim that Enoch and Elijah couldn’t have gone to heaven because of what Jesus said to Nicodemus. They say that Enoch and Elijah couldn’t have gone to heaven because Jesus clearly said, ‘No one has ever gone into heaven except Jesus Himself’, John 3:13. In other words, if Enoch and Elijah went to heaven before Jesus, then this would contradict what Jesus says in John 3:13.

SOLUTION

Remember Jesus is speaking with Nicodemus, a Pharisee, and a ruler of the Jews, John 3:1. After acknowledging that Jesus is a teacher from God and the proof was in the miracles He performed, John 3:2.

Jesus now speaks to him about things concerning being ‘born again,’ but Nicodemus didn’t understand because he thought Jesus was speaking about being ‘born again’ literally, John 3:3-12.

I think it’s important to note that Jesus isn’t speaking about being ‘born again’ literally; He is speaking about being ‘born again’ figuratively, that is, baptism, Acts 2:36-38 / Romans 6:3-6.

Notice that Jesus says, ‘We speak of what we know and testify to what we have seen’, John 3:11. A person can only ‘testify’ to something they know and what they have seen. The ‘we’ is Jesus and the Father, John 10:30.

Jesus now says that He is the only person who is qualified to ‘testify’ about ‘heavenly things’ because only He has seen it, only He has come from there, John 3:12 / John 8:23.

There’s not a person who has ever lived or will live who will teach like Jesus. Why? Because He was the only one who came from heaven. Yes, some of the prophets got glimpses of heaven, but only through visions, Ezekiel 1 / Acts 7:55-56 / Revelation 21-22.

God gave them the authority to speak about heaven, about the things He revealed to them, but because Christ had come down from heaven, He had more authority to speak about heaven and ‘heavenly things.’

The point is this: Enoch and Elijah didn’t come back to teach the people after they ascended to heaven. They didn’t come back to ‘testify’ to anyone about things they had ‘seen’.

They did come back on the Mount of Transfiguration, [Matthew 17:1-5](#), but I’m sure you will have noticed that they only spoke to Jesus, not the disciples who were with Him, [Matthew 17:3](#). Remember, Nicodemus acknowledged that Jesus is a teacher from God, and the proof was in the miracles He performed, [John 3:2](#).

And so in relation to those statements, when Jesus says to Nicodemus, ‘No one has ever gone into heaven except the one who came from heaven—the Son of Man,’ [John 3:13](#), He’s simply telling Nicodemus that He came from heaven, and He will return to heaven, [John 16:28](#).

He’s saying to Nicodemus, ‘If you don’t believe me when I tell you (teach you) about things on earth, how will you believe me when I tell you (teach you) things about heaven.’

CONCLUSION

After digging into the texts and providing some reasonable solutions to the alleged contradictions, we are left with no doubts that both Enoch and Elijah went to heaven, God’s dwelling place.

Although the Bible doesn’t tell us why these two men were spared death, it’s possible that God spared them both from physical death because of their faithfulness and obedience to Him.

We certainly know it signalled the end of Elijah’s ministry on Earth, [2 Kings 2:1](#), and we certainly know that Enoch was faithful to God, [Genesis 5:22-24](#), and obedient to Him, [Jude 14-15](#).

It’s also possible that God was signalling to mankind that salvation was indeed possible, that, in time, God would provide it, [John 3:16-18](#), and that it ultimately includes victory over death, [1 Corinthians 15:55-58](#) / [2 Corinthians 5:8-9](#).

HEALING OF THE WATER

‘The people of the city said to Elisha, ‘Look, our lord, this town is well situated, as you can see, but the water is bad, and the land is unproductive.’ ‘Bring me a new bowl,’ he said, ‘and put salt in it.’ So they brought it to him. Then he went out to the spring and threw the salt into it, saying, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘I have healed this water. Never again will it cause death or make the land unproductive.’ And the water has remained pure to this day, according to the word Elisha had spoken.’ [2 Kings 2:19-22](#)

The people of the city tell Elisha that the water is bad and, as a result, the land couldn’t produce any food, [2 Kings 2:19](#). Elisha asks for a new bowl and tells them to put salt in it, and they did what he asked, [2 Kings 2:20](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘new cruse’ and the ‘salt’ are evidently chosen from a regard to symbolism. The foul stream represents sin, and to cleanse it, emblems of purity must be taken. Hence, the clean ‘new’ dish previously unused, and thus untainted and the salt, a common Scriptural symbol of corruption, [Leviticus 2:13](#) / [Ezekiel 43:24](#) / [Matthew 5:13](#), etc.’

Elisha went to the spring and threw salt in it and doesn't hesitate to produce a miracle and so, he asks God to heal the waters so that they will never cause death or make the land unproductive again, and God did so immediately, [2 Kings 2:21](#).

The reason God acted quickly here in performing this miracle was simply to establish and reinforce the fact that God was working through Elisha. The water remained pure, according to the word Elisha had spoken, [2 Kings 2:22](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What Elisha did on this occasion, getting the new cruse and throwing in the salt, was only to make the miracle more conspicuous. If the salt could have had any natural tendency to render the water salubrious, it could have acted only for a short time, and only on that portion of the stream which now arose from the spring; and in a few moments, its effects must have disappeared. But the miracle here was permanent, the death of men and cattle, which had been occasioned by the insalubrity of the waters, ceased, the land was no longer barren; and the waters became permanently fit for all agricultural and domestic uses.’

ELISHA IS JEERED

‘From there, Elisha went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, some boys came out of the town and jeered at him. ‘Get out of here, baldy!’ they said. ‘Get out of here, baldy!’ He turned around, looked at them, and called down a curse on them in the name of the LORD. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of the boys. And he went on to Mount Carmel and from there returned to Samaria.’ [2 Kings 2:23-25](#)

Here we read an account which many believe is very disturbing, a story. On the surface, it seems a little ‘unjust’ for those involved and for some a little ‘over the top’ in terms of their punishment.

It's the account where Elisha receives some verbal abuse from some ‘boys’, which results in those very same boys being eaten by bears. Let's go ahead and look at some background information before we deal with the text.

BOYS!

Elisha, travelling from Jericho, went up to Bethel, [2 Kings 2:23](#), which was at this time the centre of idol worship and home to many false prophets, [1 Kings 12:32-33](#) / [1 Kings 13:1-32](#).

Notice as he is walking along the road, some ‘boys’ came out of the town and jeered at him, [2 Kings 2:23](#). The N.I.V. uses the word, ‘boys’, but other translations like the E.S.V. and the K.J.V. use the words, ‘little children’.

Often, people will ask how Elisha could do such a thing to these ‘little children’? They are only ‘children’, why should they receive such a horrible death? This is a bit much; it's just children being children!

The phrase ‘little children’ or ‘boys’ is very misleading in our English language; the word used is the Hebrew word ‘na'ar’, which is a word used to describe any child from the age of infancy to adolescence, [1 Kings 3:7](#) / [Jeremiah 1:6-7](#).

When we think about this logically, we know that ‘little children’ or ‘very young boys’, wouldn't be roaming around in a forest on their own, never mind roaming around in a forest in gangs of forty or more. The NET uses the words ‘young boys’, and the A.S.V. uses the words ‘young lads’, both of which would indicate that they were probably teenagers.

THE INSULT

Whatever age they were, they were old enough to assume responsibility for their disrespectful behaviour toward a man of God. Remember that Elisha was well known in the area, and these young men would have known him or, at the very least, heard of him.

By telling Elisha ‘to get out of here’, [2 Kings 2:23](#), implies they were saying Elisha didn’t belong amongst them, he wasn’t wanted, and the reason he wasn’t wanted is simply that Elisha was reminding them of the sinful lifestyles they were living.

They wanted to continue in their sin without being reminded of how God felt about their sinfulness. The KJV has the words, ‘go up’, which would indicate they wanted him to leave the earth, just like Elijah did, [2 Kings 2:11](#).

It’s highly possible that Elisha was around thirty years of age during this time, and most commentators agree that he was around eighty years old when he died, [2 Kings 13:14](#).

Twice these youths shouted, ‘Get out of here, baldy!’ [2 Kings 2:23](#). It’s not likely that Elisha was completely bald but possibly starting to go bald, keep in mind that baldness was also the mark of a leper.

Some believe these youths were pronouncing a divine curse upon Elisha, for which baldness was often the outward sign, [Isaiah 3:17](#) / [Isaiah 3:24](#). The point is that these youths were insulting him, an insult which Elisha took as an insult against God Himself.

THE CURSE

When Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord, [2 Kings 2:24](#), we must remember that there are a few words in Scripture used for the word ‘curse’. Here it is the word, ‘qalal’, which simply means a severe rebuke. In other words, Elisha gave them a firm telling off. As we will see in a moment, Elisha wasn’t responsible for their death.

THE TWO BEARS

We know that Elisha wasn’t responsible for the youth’s death because he simply cursed them. He gave them a severe telling off, he rebuked them, and he didn’t call upon the two bears to devour them. It was God who brought the bears to the youths to punish them for their disrespectful and insulting behaviour towards one of His prophets, [2 Kings 2:24](#).

God using animals to punish evil people shouldn’t come as a surprise to us, as God has done this on many occasions. He sent snakes to bite the disobedient Israelites, [Numbers 21:6](#). He sent a lion to punish a disobedient prophet, [1 Kings 13:23-25](#).

It was God who closed the mouths of the lions to protect Daniel whilst he was in the den, [Daniel 6:22](#), and it was God who prepared a great fish to swallow Jonah, [Jonah 1:17](#).

It was God who guided Peter’s hook to the fish He provided to pay the temple tax, [Matthew 17:24-27](#). Surely, this tells us that it was God who brought those bears out of the forest.

Their destruction was a righteous and moral act of God’s judgment upon the wicked. We must remember there were ten offences under the Mosaic Law which carried with it the death sentence, one of those offences was disobedient

children, Deuteronomy 21:18-21. They subsequently reaped the consequences of their insults, receiving immediate judgment from God, 2 Chronicles 36:16.

THE PURPOSE OF THEIR PUNISHMENT

The purpose of the miracle was to instil fear in others to greatly respect Elisha as a prophet of God. The people who lived in and around Bethel would certainly now know that they can't play with God, but they would also know they have to respect Him, Deuteronomy 6:4-5.

It's very easy to read a passage of Scripture without thinking about the background and circumstances. What we've read in 2 Kings 2:23-25 is one of those passages which can easily be misunderstood.

These 'children' were old enough to know what they were doing and old enough to be severely rebuked, but also old enough to be punished for their actions, Deuteronomy 21:18-21. Elisha now goes to Mount Carmel and from there, he returned to Samaria, 2 Kings 2:25.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'On this occasion only do we find Elisha a minister of vengeance. Perhaps it was necessary to show, at the outset of his career as a prophet, that he too, so mild, and peaceful could, like Elijah, wield the terrors of God's judgments, 1 Kings 19:19. The persons really punished were, not so much the children, as the wicked parents, 2 Kings 2:23, whose mouth-pieces the children were, and who justly lost the gift of offspring of which they had shown themselves unworthy.'

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

'Joram, son of Ahab, became king of Israel in Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned twelve years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father and mother had done. He got rid of the sacred stone of Baal that his father had made. Nevertheless, he clung to the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he did not turn away from them.' 2 Kings 3:1-3

Joram, also known as Jehoram, reigned from around 852 to 841 B.C. in the northern kingdom of Israel. While he was reigning in the north, Jehoshaphat was reigning in the southern kingdom of Judah, 2 Kings 3:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the date.

'This date agrees exactly with the statements that Jehoshaphat began to reign in the fourth year of Ahab, 1 Kings 22:41, and Ahaziah in the 17th year of Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings 22:51.'

The good news concerning Joram is that he didn't follow in his parents', Ahab, and Jezebel's footsteps; he didn't get involved and promote the worship of Baal, 2 Kings 3:2 / 1 Kings 16:30-34.

He actually removed the sacred stone of Baal from the temple, 2 Kings 3:2. The bad news is he continued in the sins of Jeroboam, 2 Kings 3:3, that is, he encouraged the two kingdoms to stay separate, he demanded that those in the north should sacrifice to the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

MOAB REVOLTS

‘Now, Mesha, king of Moab, raised sheep, and he had to pay the king of Israel a tribute of a hundred thousand lambs and the wool of a hundred thousand rams. But after Ahab died, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel.

So at that time, King Joram set out from Samaria and mobilised all of Israel. He also sent this message to Jehoshaphat, king of Judah: ‘The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you go with me to fight against Moab?’

‘I will go with you,’ he replied. ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.’ ‘By what route shall we attack?’ he asked. ‘Through the Desert of Edom,’ he answered. So the king of Israel set out with the king of Judah and the king of Edom. After a roundabout march of seven days, the army had no more water for themselves or for the animals with them. ‘What!’ exclaimed the king of Israel. ‘Has the LORD called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab?’ But Jehoshaphat asked, ‘Is there no prophet of the LORD here, through whom we may inquire of the LORD?’ An officer of the king of Israel answered, ‘Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to pour water on the hands of Elijah.’ 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.’ 2 Kings 3:4-12

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Mesha is the monarch who wrote the inscription on the ‘Moabite stone’, 2 Kings 1:1. The points established by the Inscription are as follows.

1. That Moab recovered from the blow dealt by David, 2 Samuel 8:2 / 2 Samuel 8:12, and became an independent state again in the interval between David’s conquest and the accession of Omri.
2. That Omri reconquered the country, and that it then became subject to the northern kingdom, and remained so throughout his reign and that of his son Ahab, and into the reign of Ahab’s son and successor, Ahaziah.
3. That the independence was regained by means of a war, in which Mesha took town after town from the Israelites, including in his conquests many of the towns which, at the original occupation of the holy land, had passed into the possession of the Reubenites or the Gadites, as Baal-Meon, Numbers 32:38, Kirjathaim, Numbers 32:37, Ataroth, Numbers 32:34, Nebo, Numbers 32:38, Jahaz, Joshua 13:18, etc.’
4. That the name of Yahweh was well known to the Moabites as that of the God of the Israelites.
5. That there was a sanctuary of Yahweh at Nebo, in the Trans-Jordanic territory, where ‘vessels’ were used in His service.’

When we read what Mesha, the king of Moab, had to pay Joram, 2 Kings 3:4, it’s understandable that Moab wanted to revolt against him, 2 Kings 3:5. It appears that there was some confusion in the northern kingdom of Israel when Ahab died, 2 Kings 3:5, because Ahaziah’s reign was relatively short in the southern kingdom.

Mesha tried to take advantage of this by getting rid of the burden that the house of Omri had placed on them. Joram sets out from Samaria and mobilises all Israel, and he sends a message to Jehoshaphat informing him that the king of Moab has rebelled against him and asks if he will go with him to fight against Moab? 2 Kings 3:5-6.

Because there was still some kind of alliance between Joram and Jehoshaphat, Joram asks him to help take control of Mesha. Jehoshaphat is ready and willing to help Joram out, which is a little surprising because earlier when Ahab asked him to join him, he received a rebuke from Jehu, God’s prophet, 2 Chronicles 19:2.

Jehoshaphat agrees to go and says, ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses, and then he asks by what route shall we attack? And Jehoshaphat tells him through the Desert of Edom, 2 Kings 3:7-8 / 2 Chronicles 20:22.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We find that Jehoshaphat maintained the same friendly intercourse with the son, as he did with the father, 1 Kings 22:4.’

It appears that Edom was in subjection to Judah, because they are enrolled to join in, to help Joram take control of Mesha. The kings now go to war against Moab, but a drought had removed their water supply, **2 Kings 3:9**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The kings had probably expected to find sufficient water for both men and baggage animals in the Wady-El-Ashy, which divides Edom from Moab, and which has a stream that is now regarded as perennial. But it was dried up, quite a possible occurrence with any of the streams of this region.’

Joram is shocked and asked, has God called us three kings together only to deliver us into the hands of Moab? **2**

Kings 3:10. After Jehoshaphat inquires if there was a prophet in the land, his officer tells him that Elisha is there and ‘he used to pour water in the hands of Elijah’, **2 Kings 3:11**.

This basically means Elisha was a servant of Elijah who met his needs. Jehoshaphat says that the word of God is with him, and so, all three kings go together to meet in battle with the king of Moab.

‘Elisha said to the king of Israel, ‘Why do you want to involve me? Go to the prophets of your father and the prophets of your mother’. ‘No,’ the king of Israel answered, ‘because it was the LORD who called us three kings together to deliver us into the hands of Moab.’ Elisha said, ‘As surely as the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, if I did not have respect for the presence of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, I would not pay any attention to you. But now bring me a harpist.’ While the harpist was playing, the hand of the LORD came on Elisha, and he said, ‘This is what the LORD says: I will fill this valley with pools of water. For this is what the LORD says: You will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and you, your cattle and your other animals will drink. This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD; he will also deliver Moab into your hands. You will overthrow every fortified city and every major town. You will cut down every good tree, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones.’ The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, there it was—water flowing from the direction of Edom! And the land was filled with water.’ **2 Kings 3:13-20**

When Joram met Elisha, Elisha asked them, ‘Why do they want to involve him?’ **2 Kings 3:13**. By asking this question, Elisha was showing great contempt towards Joram because Joram had turned away from God, and he tolerated the false prophets that his forefathers had put in place years before, **2 Kings 3:13**.

Joram says he’s not going to do that because it was God who called the three kings together to deliver them into the hands of Moab, **2 Kings 3:13**. Elisha agrees to inquire of the Lord concerning this upcoming battle with Moab, but only for Judah’s sake, **2 Kings 3:14**. Elisha requests a harpist and while the harpist was playing, **Exodus 15:20**, the hand of God came on Elisha, **2 Kings 3:15**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A person who played on the harp. The rabbis and many Christians suppose that Elisha’s mind was considerably irritated and grieved by the bad behaviour of the young men at Beth-el, and their tragical end, and by the presence of the idolatrous king of Israel; and therefore called for Divine psalmody, that it might calm his spirits, and render him more susceptible of the prophetic influence. To be able to discern the voice of God, and the operation of his hand, it is necessary that the mind be calm, and the passions all in harmony, under the direction of reason; that reason may be under the influence of the Divine Spirit.’

God, through Elisha, says, He will fill this valley with pools of water, **2 Kings 3:16**. God says they will see neither wind nor rain, yet this valley will be filled with water, and they and their livestock will drink, **2 Kings 3:17**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No rain was to fall where the Israelites and their enemies were encamped, there was not even to be that all but universal accompaniment of rain in the East, a sudden rise of wind, **1 Kings 18:45** / **Psalms 147:18** / **Matthew 7:25**. Elisha says that this is an easy thing in the eyes of God, and God will also deliver Moab into their hands, and they will overthrow every fortified city and every major town, cut down every good tree, **Deuteronomy 20:19-20**, stop up all the springs, and ruin every good field with stones, **2 Kings 3:18-19** / **Genesis 26:15-18**.

The next morning, about the time for offering the sacrifice, **1 Kings 18:29**, water flowed from the direction of Edom and the land was filled with water, **2 Kings 3:20**.

The answer to Elisha's prophecy of rain was miraculous in nature, and once again because of the miraculous answer to his prayer, this again would let everyone know that Elisha was God's prophet, and God was working through him, **2 Kings 2:19-22**. The fulfilment of this prophecy would also reassure Jehoshaphat that God would bring about the victory over Moab.

'Now all the Moabites had heard that the kings had come to fight against them; so every man, young and old, who could bear arms was called up and stationed on the border. When they got up early in the morning, the sun was shining on the water. To the Moabites across the way, the water looked red—like blood. 'That's blood!' they said. 'Those kings must have fought and slaughtered each other. Now to the plunder, Moab!' But when the Moabites came to the camp of Israel, the Israelites rose up and fought them until they fled. And the Israelites invaded the land and slaughtered the Moabites. They destroyed the towns, and each man threw a stone on every good field until it was covered. They stopped up all the springs and cut down every good tree. Only Kir Hareseth was left with its stones in place, but men armed with slings surrounded it and attacked it. When the king of Moab saw that the battle had gone against him, he took with him seven hundred swordsmen to break through to the king of Edom, but they failed. Then he took his firstborn son, who was to succeed him as king, and offered him as a sacrifice on the city wall. The fury against Israel was great; they withdrew and returned to their own land.' **2 Kings 3:21-27**

The news got back to the Moabites that war had begun, **2 Kings 3:21**, but notice that 'the sun was shining on the water', **2 Kings 3:22**. Because east of the Jordan was known as being desert land, the sun's reflection off the water gave the impression that it was red in colour, **2 Kings 3:22**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This might have been an optical deception; I have seen the like sight when there was no reason to suspect supernatural agency. The Moabites had never seen that valley full of water, and therefore did not suspect that their eyes deceived them, but took it for the blood of the confederate hosts, who they thought might have fallen into confusion in the darkness of night and destroyed each other, as the Midianites had formerly done, **Judges 7:22**, and the Philistines lately, **1 Samuel 14:20**.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The sun had risen with a ruddy light, as is frequently the case after a storm, compare **Matthew 16:3**, nearly over the Israelite camp, and the pits, deep but with small mouths, gleaming redly through the haze which would lie along the newly moistened valley, seemed to the Moabites like pools of blood. The preceding year, they and their allies had mutually destroyed each other, **2 Chronicles 20:23**.'

Because the Moabites thought there was no water in this area, they mistook the reflection for blood and came to the conclusion that war had already broken out between the three kings, who came to make war against them, **2 Kings 3:23**. It's clear that Joram wants to put Moab under Israelite control once again, and he succeeds, **2 Kings 3:24**. He defeated Mesha's army and destroyed a number of the Moabite cities. However, he was not able to take Kir Hareseth, **2 Kings 3:25**, the capital city of Moab, **Isaiah 16:7 / Isaiah 16:11**. Because Joram didn't take this city, this meant that Mesha could keep his independence from Israel.

Although Mesha now knew that he couldn't defeat the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom, **2 Kings 3:26**, and after the Israelites destroyed most of the towns of Moab, Mesha had become so furious with Israel, that he offered and sacrificed his own firstborn son on the city wall, **2 Kings 3:27**. This shows us how far morally away from God, the people of this time had become.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'When the king of Moab found himself so harassed, and the royal city on the point of being taken, he called a council of his servants, and asked them how it was these Israelites could perform such prodigies, and that such miracles were

wrought for them? His servants answered that it was owing to their progenitor Abraham, who, having an only son, was commanded by Jehovah to offer him in sacrifice. Abraham instantly obeyed and offered his only son for a burnt-offering; and the Israelites, being his descendants, through his merits, the holy blessed God wrought such miracles on their behalf. The king of Moab answered, I also have an only son, and I will go and offer him to my God. Then he offered him for a burnt-offering upon the wall.'

As a result of Mesha sacrificing his own son on the city wall, the Israelites withdrew and returned to their own land in total disgust of what he did, [2 Kings 3:27](#) / [Leviticus 18:21](#) / [Leviticus 20:3](#).

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we read about various miracles of mercy. We know they are miraculous because no one really knows how they were done. We must also bear in mind that [2 Kings 4-8:6](#) isn't in chronological order, but presented in a way to demonstrate the continued work of Elisha in showing the Israelites that God is way more powerful than the Canaanite gods, especially Baal.

'The wife of a man from the company of the prophets cried out to Elisha, 'Your servant, my husband, is dead, and you know that he revered the LORD. But now his creditor is coming to take my two boys as his slaves.' Elisha replied to her, 'How can I help you? Tell me, what do you have in your house?' 'Your servant has nothing there at all,' she said, 'except a small jar of olive oil.' Elisha said, 'Go around and ask all your neighbours for empty jars. Don't ask for just a few. Then go inside and shut the door behind you and your sons. Pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side.' She left him and shut the door behind her and her sons. They brought the jars to her, and she kept pouring. When all the jars were full, she said to her son, 'Bring me another one.' But he replied, 'There is not a jar left.' Then the oil stopped flowing. She went and told the man of God, and he said, 'Go, sell the oil, and pay your debts. You and your sons can live on what is left.' [2 Kings 4:1-7](#)

THE WIDOW'S OLIVE OIL

Since Elisha took over from Elijah, he was constantly proving to himself and those around him that he was a true prophet of God. He did this by performing various miracles.

Here we find God showing he was with Elisha when he performed a miracle of creation. We read of an unknown woman who was married to one of God's prophets, [2 Kings 4:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This woman, according to the Chaldee, Jarchi, and the rabbis, was the wife of Obadiah.'

She cries out to Elisha and tells him that her husband had died and now his creditor has come to make her two sons slaves, [2 Kings 4:1](#). During this time in Israel's history, God's prophets weren't really valued by the people and were not supported.

This poor woman, when her husband died, was left with nothing but debt to pay. We know that her husband revered the Lord, but we can only imagine what this poor woman is feeling right now.

It's bad enough going through the loss of someone close to you, but to be left with a huge debt to pay must have been humiliating and stressful. The creditor wanted to take her two sons as slaves. This was in accordance with God's law; if any debt couldn't be paid, then a person could give themselves to the creditor as a slave until the debt was settled.

The person who gave themselves as a slave had to stay and work for the creditor until the debt was totally cleared or until the year of Jubilee, [Leviticus 25:39-40](#) / [Deuteronomy 15:12-18](#).

She's now a widow, and the only two people who could bring in any kind of income were about to be taken as slaves. She's desperate, she's about to lose everything, and so, it's no wonder she cries out to Elisha for help.

After enquiring what the woman had in her house, she replied nothing except a small jar of olive oil, [2 Kings 4:2](#).

That word 'jar' in Hebrew is the word 'acuwk', and it's the only time the word is found within the Bible.

The jar would have been very small and although the N.I.V. tells us it was 'olive oil' within the jar, we simply don't know, in all likelihood, it would have been very expensive oil, or perfume, [Mark 14:3-9](#), because, after the miracle, she had enough to sell for herself and enough to pay off her debt, [2 Kings 4:7](#).

Notice Elisha tells her to go to her neighbours and get as many empty jars as she can get. Don't just get a few Elisha tells her, get as many as you can, [2 Kings 4:3](#). She and her sons are to go inside her house and shut the door behind them, [2 Kings 4:4](#).

She is to pour oil into all the jars, and as each is filled, put it to one side, [2 Kings 4:4](#). The more jars she brings, the more oil there is, and the oil simply keeps on pouring, until there were no more jars available, [2 Kings 4:5-6](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'While there was a vessel to fill, there was oil sufficient, and it only ceased to flow when there was no vessel to receive it. This is a good emblem of the grace of God. While there is an empty, longing heart, there is a continual overflowing fountain of salvation. If we find in any place or at any time that the oil ceases to flow, it is because there are no empty vessels there, no souls hungering and thirsting for righteousness. We find fault with the dispensations of God's mercy, and ask, Why were the former days better than these? Were we as much in earnest for our salvation as our forefathers were for theirs, we should have equal supplies, and as much reason to sing aloud of Divine mercy.'

Imagine what is going through her and her two sons' minds at this point. Imagine what's going through their minds as this oil just keeps on pouring out. This is not something you witness every day.

From one little jar of oil comes many jars filled with oil. I can imagine them just praising God for what is happening in front of their eyes. She goes to Elisha, who tells them to sell the oil and pay their debts, and she and her sons can have what is left over, [2 Kings 4:7](#).

Those of us who have ever been in debt will know exactly how she's feeling at this point. Remember what it was like when you made that final payment? I can imagine her crying as the pressure of paying the debt and losing her two sons has just been taken away. We can only imagine the joy and relief this family is feeling at this point.

The first miracle and the last miracle recorded in this chapter are similar to the feeding of the four thousand, [Matthew 15:32-39](#) / [Mark 8:1-9](#), and the feeding of the five thousand, [Matthew 14:13-21](#) / [Mark 6:31-44](#) / [Luke 9:12-17](#) / [John 6:1-14](#), as done by Jesus. They are also similar in nature to what Elijah did when he fed the widow of Zarephath and her son, [1 Kings 17:10-16](#).

Henry, in his commentary, says the following.

'God did not provide her with some small gratuity but gave her real help. He set her up in the world to sell oil and put a liberal stock into her possession, to begin with. The greatest kindness one can do for poor people is, if possible, to help them in a way that provides for themselves through their own industry and ingenuity. The great need of our own

nation, currently, is to enable all able-bodied persons to support themselves, instead of merely doling out a monthly check.'

PRACTICAL LESSONS

1. God blesses obedience.

Elisha could have brought her husband back to life, but he didn't. Why? Only God knows the answer to that question, but maybe she and her sons needed to understand that God's grace would be sufficient to help them through, 2 Corinthians 12:9.

It's all very well crying out to God for help in difficult times, but we must do what He says. The very fact that she went to Elisha for help tells us of her great faith in God to help her.

And more importantly, the very fact that she did exactly what Elisha told her to do tells us that her faith needed to be an obedient faith. God told the Israelites He would bless them richly in the Promised Land, if they fully obeyed Him, but as we know they failed, Deuteronomy 28:1-2. In other words, don't expect God to bless your faith if you are not willing to do what He says.

2. God won't hold back.

The little oil that she had was probably her nest egg, her savings for emergencies. It wasn't enough to clear the debt, but it was all that she had. The widow could have easily argued with Elisha and said, 'I've only got one small jar of oil, it's all I have.' But she didn't hold anything back from God; she used the little oil she had and trusted God to take care of her needs for tomorrow.

Just like the widow Jesus saw placing her offering into the treasury, she too put in everything she had and trusted God to take care of her needs for tomorrow, Mark 12:41-44. What about you? Do you ever hold things back from God? Maybe you are like Ananias and Sapphira, you give a certain amount into the offering every week, when God has blessed you with the ability to give more. The amount you give hasn't changed in years, despite you being richer than you were! One of the reasons we hold things back from God is simply because of a lack of trust.

What does God promise in 2 Corinthians 9:6-8? God promises if your heart is to be a cheerful giver, God will make sure you can always fulfil what your heart desires. If you want to be a person who supports the kingdom of God, he'll give you what you need to make sure you can do it.

3. We can't do it alone.

One thing which really stood out to me in this story was the amount of help this widow needed. Not only did she need God's help, which she sought through Elisha, but she also needed help from her neighbours and her sons.

Although there's no record of them asking her why she needed the jars, she obviously had good relationships with her neighbours because they willingly helped her in her time of need. Her sons obviously loved her because they didn't ask any questions but simply did what she asked them to do.

When we find ourselves in desperate times, where do we turn to? Yes, we turn to God, and yes, we turn to our immediate family, but we must also learn to turn to our spiritual family.

All too often, we try to go through things alone, but God blesses us with a church family to help, Romans 12:15. We can't really rejoice with anyone unless we're in their company.

We can't really mourn with anyone unless we are with them, mourning with them. We can't carry each other's burdens, Galatians 6:2, if we don't know what our brothers or sisters' burdens are.

4. God blesses us so that we can bless others.

God blessed the widow and her sons with enough oil to keep them going for a while, 2 Kings 4:7. This wasn't God's way of giving her and her sons a retirement fund where they didn't have to work ever again.

They were given enough to live on, not to retire. They still had to work; that is, they still had to sell the oil to generate an income. She's gone from being a widow in a hopeless situation to a woman who can now provide for her own needs.

She and her sons can now be a blessing to others, as they sell their expensive oil to others. Yes, she will still be mourning the loss of her husband. Yes, her sons will still be missing their father.

But in the midst of all this was God, who was working in and through them despite their loss. And because she and her sons were obedient to God and trusted Him, God blessed them richly. So richly that they went on to be a blessing to others.

When you've gone through desperate times, God blessed you by delivering you from them. When you've gone through hopeless times, God blesses you with help from your church family. What are you going to do? Are you just going to praise God, or are you going to praise God and go on to be a blessing to others?

THE SHUNAMMITE'S SON RESTORED TO LIFE

'One day, Elisha went to Shunem. And a well-to-do woman was there, who urged him to stay for a meal. So whenever he came by, he stopped there to eat. She said to her husband, 'I know that this man who often comes our way is a holy man of God. Let's make a small room on the roof and put in it a bed and a table, a chair, and a lamp for him. Then he can stay there whenever he comes to us.' One day, when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there. He said to his servant Gehazi, 'Call the Shunammite.' So he called her, and she stood before him. Elisha said to him, 'Tell her, 'You have gone to all this trouble for us. Now, what can be done for you? Can we speak on your behalf to the king or the commander of the army?' She replied, 'I have a home among my own people.' 'What can be done for her?' Elisha asked. Gehazi said, 'She has no son, and her husband is old.' Then Elisha said, 'Call her.' So he called her, and she stood in the doorway. 'About this time next year,' Elisha said, 'you will hold a son in your arms.' 'No, my lord!' she objected. 'Please, man of God, don't mislead your servant!' But the woman became pregnant, and the next year, about that same time, she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her.' 2 Kings 4:8-17

Elisha went to Shunem, and what I love about the woman he meets is her faith. She could have easily reaped some benefits from Elijah, who was travelling around, but instead, she used it as an opportunity to glorify God and serve him.

She begged Elisha to eat a meal with her, and so, whenever Elisha was in the area, he would sit down and have a meal with her, 2 Kings 4:8. She knows that Elijah is a holy man of God, 2 Kings 4:9, and she offers him hospitality, food and a room fitted out with everything he needs but she never asks for anything in return, 2 Kings 4:10.

One day when Elisha came, he went up to his room and lay down there and he asks his servant Gehazi to call the woman and he did and she came to him, 2 Kings 4:11-12.

With all this kindness, Elisha wanted to do something nice for her. He wants to know if he wants him to speak to the king or the commander of the army, 2 Kings 4:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Elisha must have had considerable influence with the king, from the part he took in the late war with the Moabites. Jehoram had reason to believe that the prophet, under God, was the sole cause of his success, and therefore he could have no doubt that the king would grant him any reasonable request.’

When he finds out she didn’t have any children because her husband was old, 2 Kings 4:14, and she was probably past the age of giving birth. Remember, being without children in Bible times was seen as being out of favour with God.

People would often look down on you and treat you as an outcast if you had no children. Elisha tells her she will have a son, but she thinks that she is being misled, 2 Kings 4:15-16. But the woman became pregnant, and the next year, about that same time, she gave birth to a son, just as Elisha had told her, 2 Kings 4:17.

Don’t miss the miracle, she was a woman, probably of older age, who couldn’t have children. The miracle which happened here was seen in the fact that God gave her bodily strength to conceive and give birth to a son. This type of miracle has happened many times throughout the Scriptures.

1. The birth of Isaac to Abraham and Sarah, Genesis 18:1-15.
2. The birth of Samson to Manoah and his wife, Judges 13:2-25.
3. The birth of Samuel to Elkanah and his wife Hannah, 1 Samuel 1:1-28.
4. The birth of John the Baptist to Zacharias and Elizabeth, Luke 1:39-57.
5. The birth of our Lord Jesus Christ to the Virgin Mary, Luke 1:26-45.

‘The child grew, and one day he went out to his father, who was with the reapers. He said to his father, ‘My head! My head!’ His father told a servant, ‘Carry him to his mother.’ After the servant had lifted him up and carried him to his mother, the boy sat on her lap until noon, and then he died. She went up and laid him on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and went out. She called her husband and said, ‘Please send me one of the servants and a donkey so I can go to the man of God quickly and return.’ ‘Why go to him today?’ he asked. ‘It’s not the New Moon or the Sabbath.’ ‘That’s all right,’ she said. She saddled the donkey and said to her servant, ‘Lead on; don’t slow down for me unless I tell you.’ So she set out and came to the man of God at Mount Carmel. When he saw her in the distance, the man of God said to his servant Gehazi, ‘Look! There’s the Shunammite! Run to meet her and ask her, ‘Are you all right? Is your husband all right? Is your child all right?’ ‘Everything is all right, she said. When she reached the man of God at the mountain, she took hold of his feet. Gehazi came over to push her away, but the man of God said, ‘Leave her alone! She is in bitter distress, but the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me why.’ ‘Did I ask you for a son, my lord?’ she said. ‘Didn’t I tell you, ‘Don’t raise my hopes?’’ Elisha said to Gehazi, ‘Tuck your cloak into your belt, take my staff in your hand, and run. Don’t greet anyone you meet, and if anyone greets you, do not answer. Lay my staff on the boy’s face.’ But the child’s mother said, ‘As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you.’ So he got up and followed her. Gehazi went on ahead and laid the staff on the boy’s face, but there was no sound or response. So Gehazi went back to meet Elisha and told him, ‘The boy has not awakened.’ 2 Kings 4:18-31

We must take note that when the child grew, 2 Kings 4:18, it doesn’t mean he was an adult, but he was a small boy, we know because the servant easily carried him to Elisha’s private room, 2 Kings 4:23.

He was out in the fields and complained about his head, 2 Kings 4:18-19. We don’t know exactly what the ailment was; it could possibly have been sunstroke, Psalms 121:6 / Isaiah 49:10, but whatever his ailment was, it resulted in his dying, 2 Kings 4:20.

We can only imagine the devastation they are both feeling right now. Their son, their one and only son, was now gone; the grief must have been too much. She went up and laid the child on the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and went out, 2 Kings 4:21.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She had no doubt heard that Elijah had raised the widow’s son of Zarephath to life; and she believed that he who had obtained this gift from God for her could obtain his restoration to life.’

She asks her husband to send her one of the servants and a donkey so she can go to the man of God quickly and return, [2 Kings 4:22](#). Her husband asks why they should go today because it's not the New Moon or the Sabbath, but she said that's alright, [2 Kings 4:23](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'By the Law, the first day of each month was to be kept holy. Offerings were appointed for such occasions, [Numbers 28:11-15](#), and they were among the days on which the silver trumpets were to be blown, [Numbers 10:10](#) / [Psalms 81:3](#). Hence, 'new moons' are frequently joined with 'sabbaths', [Isaiah 1:13](#) / [Ezekiel 45:17](#) / [Hosea 2:11](#) / [1 Chronicles 23:31](#).'

She saddled the donkey and told her servant not to slow down unless she said so, [2 Kings 4:24](#). Both parents knew that their child was dead, but we're not told what kind of help the Shunammite woman expected from Elisha. The dead child's mother was absolutely unwilling to admit the child's death to anyone until she had accomplished her appeal to Elisha.

When she reached Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her from a distance, and his servant Gehazi said, 'Look! There's the Shunammite, [2 Kings 4:25](#). Gehazi runs to meet her and asks her if she's alright, if her husband is alright, if her child is alright, and she tells him, and everything is all right, [2 Kings 4:26](#).

She took hold of Elisha's feet, [Matthew 18:29](#) / [John 11:32](#), but Gehazi pushed her away, but Elisha told him to leave her alone! She is in bitter distress, but the LORD has hidden it from me and has not told me why, [2 Kings 4:27](#). She tells Elisha that she didn't ask for a son, and she told him that he shouldn't have raised her hopes, [2 Kings 4:28](#).

Elisha tells Gehazi to tuck his cloak into his belt, take Elisha's staff in his hand and run; he isn't to greet anyone he meets, and if anyone greets him, don't answer. He is to lay Elisha's staff on the boy's face, [2 Kings 4:29](#).

The child's mother says she will not leave Elisha and so he got up and followed her, [2 Kings 4:30](#). Sadly, Elisha's servant, Gehazi, did as Elisha told him to do, but the boy remained dead and so he goes back to inform Elisha, [2 Kings 4:31](#).

'When Elisha reached the house, there was the boy lying dead on his couch. He went in, shut the door on the two of them and prayed to the LORD. Then he got on the bed and lay on the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. As he stretched himself out on him, the boy's body grew warm. Elisha turned away and walked back and forth in the room, and then got on the bed and stretched out on him once more. The boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes. Elisha summoned Gehazi and said, 'Call the Shunammite.' And he did. When she came, he said, 'Take your son.' She came in, fell at his feet, and bowed to the ground. Then she took her son and went out.' [2 Kings 4:32-37](#)

When Elisha reaches the house and finds the boy dead, he enters the room, shuts the door, and prays, [2 Kings 4:32-33](#) / [James 5:16](#). He then lays upon the child in a strange manner, [2 Kings 4:34](#).

It's difficult to know if he was trying to raise the boy back to life at this point or if he was simply showing remorse over the death of the mother's son. One thing is for sure: God has in mind to bring him back from the dead. He stretched himself out on him, and the boy's body grew warm, [2 Kings 4:34](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Warmth may have been actually communicated from the living body to the dead one, and Elisha's persistence, [Hebrews 11:35](#), may have been a condition of the child's return to life.'

Elisha turns away and walks back and forth in the room, gets on the bed, and stretches out on him once more, and it's then the boy sneezes seven times and opens his eyes, [2 Kings 4:35](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'That is, it sneezed abundantly. When the nervous influence began to act on the muscular system, before the circulation could be in every part restored, particular muscles, if not the whole body, would be thrown into strong

contractions and shivering's, and sternutation or sneezing would be a natural consequence; particularly as obstructions must have taken place in the head and its vessels, because of the disorder of which the child died.'

We can only imagine the joy in the boy's mother's heart as Elisha tells her to take her son, 2 Kings 4:36 / Luke 7:15. Notice that she 'took her son and went out', 2 Kings 4:37. I'm sure this was a time of celebration, where she wanted to share the wonderful news about her son with her friends and neighbours.

I'm also sure that she would have given credit and glory to God as she tells them about what Elisha had done. This, in turn, would let everyone know that Elisha was a true prophet of God and that God was working through him. There are only three resurrection stories recorded in the Old Testament.

1. This one.
2. The raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah, 1 Kings 17:17-23.
3. The resurrection of the man who was being buried, and who, when the burial party was threatened by looters, was hastily cast into the tomb of Elisha and was restored to life by his contact with the bones of that prophet, 2 Kings 13:20-21.

In the New Testament, we have a few more resurrection stories recorded.

1. The raising of the daughter of Jairus, Matthew 9:18-26.
2. The raising of the son of the widow of Nain, Luke 7:12-18.
3. The raising of Lazarus, John 11:1-44.
4. The raising of Dorcas, Acts 9:36-41.
5. The raising of Eutychus, Acts 20:10-12.
6. The resurrection of the saints who came out of their graves after the resurrection of Christ, Matthew 27:53.
7. The resurrection of Jesus Christ, 1 Corinthians 15:5-8.

PRACTICAL LESSONS

1. Use what you have.

The Shunammite woman used what she had to be a blessing. What started out as a simple meal invitation turned into her opening up her home as a hotel, 2 Kings 4:8-10.

Yes, she was a 'well-to-do' woman, which basically means she was financially secure. But just like the widow who was poor and had only one small jar of oil, she did everything she could and used what she had to bless Elisha.

As God's children, we too should practice hospitality, Romans 12:13, and use what we have to bless others. You might not be able to offer someone accommodation, but you can certainly invite them to your home for a meal. You might not be able to offer a homeless person a meal at your home, but you can certainly go out of your way to buy them a sandwich and a drink.

Jesus says even if you offer someone a cup of water in His Name, you will be blessed at a later time, Matthew 10:42. Every day you live is a gift of grace from God to be used to invest in people.

2. Be content with what you have.

The Shunammite woman was content with what she had. Notice Elisha asked her what he could do for her, 2 Kings 4:13. Elisha thought she wanted him to speak to the king or the commander of the king's army on her behalf. It's not every day a prophet comes to your home and asks if they can do something for you.

But she didn't ask for anything. Why? She was content with what she had; she recognised how blessed she already was. She was blessed to be financially secure enough to offer Elisha a meal. She was blessed to have a house big enough to make a room for Elisha. She and her husband had no children, but she never asked for a child.

Even though she could have asked for a child, she didn't, but it's clear from her reaction to Elisha's words that this was something her heart desired, 2 Kings 4:15-16. And like many women today, it appears that they may have been trying to have a child for years, but just accepted that this wasn't going to happen.

How content are you with what God has blessed you with? One of the great disgraces of our day is the huge number of ungrateful Christians. We can spend our entire lives striving for more, and as a result, we miss the joy of being satisfied with what we have today.

3. Evaluate what is important.

The story of the Shunammite woman doesn't finish here. In 2 Kings 8:1-2, we find Elisha warning the Shunammite woman to leave her home and homeland because there was going to be a seven-year-long famine.

And notice that once again, she didn't hesitate to do what Elisha told her to do; she and her family left everything behind. We can only imagine what it is like to leave everything behind.

We see it happening before our very eyes, where people are fleeing from their homes and country because of war. We see it happening when people have to leave everything behind because of an earthquake or flooding. She had to evaluate what was more important in her life. What good is a home if you have no food to eat in it? What good is a family if you can't feed them?

If you invest all your time in building a nice house, saving up for a new car, or protesting about the state the world is in, you'll be in for a shock when Christ returns. Because all of that stuff is going to be incinerated when Jesus comes back. I think it would be better to invest your life in something eternal.

The Shunammite woman didn't treasure her house and land, and we shouldn't treasure worldly things either, Matthew 6:21. If we hold on tight to our worldly things, it could cost us our lives, Luke 17:33.

Use what you have to bless others with. Be content with the blessings God has already given you. Evaluate what is important in your life and invest in things which are eternal.

DEATH IN THE POT

'Elisha returned to Gilgal, and there was a famine in that region. While the company of the prophets was meeting with him, he said to his servant, 'Put on the large pot and cook some stew for these prophets.' One of them went out into the fields to gather herbs and found a wild vine and picked as many of its gourds as his garment could hold. When he returned, he cut them up into the pot of stew, though no one knew what they were. The stew was poured out for the men, but as they began to eat it, they cried out, 'Man of God, there is death in the pot!' And they could not eat it. Elisha said, 'Get some flour.' He put it into the pot and said, 'Serve it to the people to eat.' And there was nothing harmful in the pot.' 2 Kings 4:38-41

When Elisha returns to Gilgal he finds there is a famine in the region, 2 Kings 4:38. This is possibly the same famine which is mentioned in 2 Kings 8:1. Elisha knew there was a famine, he knew there was no food available, but he still told the company of prophets, 1 Kings 20:35, to put the cooker on and cook some stew, 2 Kings 4:38.

It appears that famine was so bad that the company of prophets were cooking anything that could be found in order to eat. They found some herbs and a wild vine, 2 Kings 4:38-39, which wasn't meant for human consumption. After

preparing the stew, they soon realise there is something not right with it and cry out, ‘There is death in the pot!’ 2 Kings 4:40.

It’s clear that this wild vine was extremely toxic, and if they had fully consumed it, they would have died. Notice that Elisha didn’t throw it away; he simply added some flour to the mix, 2 Kings 4:41.

The miracle here is seen in the fact that the contents of the pot could be eaten, but now they are edible, 2 Kings 4:41. Because Elisha performed this miracle, this tells us that the other prophets didn’t have the same miraculous abilities as he.

This miracle would have let the other prophets know that Elisha was God’s ‘special’ prophet, in terms of him taking the lead role after Elijah. This miracle would also let other people know that Elisha was God’s true prophet and that God was working through him.

FEEDING OF A HUNDRED

‘A man came from Baal Shalishah, bringing the man of God twenty loaves of barley bread baked from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain. ‘Give it to the people to eat,’ Elisha said. ‘How can I set this before a hundred men?’ his servant asked. But Elisha answered, ‘Give it to the people to eat. For this is what the LORD says: ‘They will eat and have some left over.’ Then he set it before them, and they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD.’ 2 Kings 4:42-44

Remember, Elisha was in Gilgal and the land was going through a famine, 2 Kings 4:38, and it appears that sometime later they are still going through the same famine. Because we read of one-hundred men who were hungry and needed feeding. We read of an unnamed man who came from Baal Shalishah, 2 Kings 4:42.

The name Baal is usually associated with the Canaanite god, but it can also be associated with the Lord. The name Shalishah means third and is usually associated with the idea of multiplicity because in Hebrew, the number three was the smallest number which set forth the idea of multiplicity.

In other words, Baal Shalishah could mean the Lord who multiplies, which is very significant in terms of what is about to happen. This unnamed man was obviously a follower of God because of what he gave.

Notice that he gave twenty loaves of barley bread from the first ripe grain, along with some heads of new grain, 2 Kings 4:42. We’re not talking about the kind of bread we buy in our shops today; these would be very small flatbreads.

In other words, he brought twenty small flat barley breads and some corn. Normally, the firstfruits were to be given to the Lord and the priests, Leviticus 23:20, but there is a famine happening right now, and this man brought some food for Elisha and the other prophets.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears by this that the Levitical priests, having withdrawn from the land of Israel, 2 Chronicles 11:13-14, pious Israelites transferred to the prophets, whom God raised up, the offerings required by the Law to be given to the priests, Numbers 18:13 / Deuteronomy 18:4.’

In terms of scale, this isn’t a huge amount, but in terms of heart, this man gave all he had. He understood that if he honours God with the firstfruits, God in turn would continue to bless him, Proverbs 3:9-10. He was helping God’s people, Hebrews 6:10, but this man had no idea that God was going to bless the little gift he offered to feed the multitude.

When Elisha tells the man to give it to the people, it’s not surprising that he thought this was a crazy suggestion because twenty small loaves of bread wouldn’t be enough to feed one-hundred men, 2 Kings 4:42.

Didn't the disciples think the same thing when Jesus was about to feed the five thousand? [Matthew 14:15-17](#). Didn't the disciples think the same thing when Jesus was about to feed the four thousand? [Matthew 15:33-34](#). Didn't they stop and think, 'I'm sure we've read somewhere in the Torah about Elisha doing something similar.'

Notice that Elisha tells him to do it anyway, despite the man's doubts and then adds that it was the Lord who said, 'they will eat and have some left over', [2 Kings 4:42-43](#).

When Jesus fed the five thousand men, not including women and children, with five loaves of bread and two fish, by the time they were finished, they had twelve small baskets of leftovers, [Matthew 14:20](#).

When He fed the four thousand men, not including women and children, with seven loaves of bread and a few fish, by the time they were finished, they had seven large baskets of leftovers, [Matthew 15:37](#).

The Lord, through Elisha, said it would happen, and it did; they all ate until they were full, and they had some left over, [2 Kings 4:44](#). The miracle recorded here was shown in the fact that one hundred men could be fed with such a small amount of food. The purpose of the miracle was to once again prove to all the people that Elisha was God's true prophet and that God was working through him.

LESSONS

1. God can meet your needs.

God met the hunger needs of the one-hundred prophets, but let me ask you, do you believe that God cares enough about you to meet your needs? God doesn't meet all your greeds but all your needs, and it does that on a daily basis, [Philippians 4:19](#). If He meets all our needs, is there anything we lack? No, He meets all our needs, not just some.

Isn't that what Jesus was trying to teach us concerning our daily bread? [Matthew 6:11](#). The petition for 'daily bread' isn't for milk and honey, the symbols of luxury, but for bread that will be sufficient for this day. And, as long as it is today, we don't need tomorrow's bread. He doesn't give us as much as we want, but He gives us as much as we need. When you stop and see how He blesses us every day with our daily essentials, like food, water and clothes, [Matthew 6:31](#), maybe then we can see that He does give us the right amount. Our God fed millions in the wilderness with manna every day for forty years, [Exodus 16](#) / [Psalms 78:24-25](#) / [Nehemiah 9:21](#).

He caused ravens to feed Elijah by the brook, [1 Kings 17:4-6](#). He filled Peter's net with fish, [Luke 5:4-11](#) / [John 21:3-11](#). God is well aware of our basic needs, and if he can feed the one-hundred, the five-thousand and the four-thousand, He can certainly take care of our daily bread.

2. God will bless your gift.

The unknown man brought what most people would consider a small gift of bread and corn, and God blessed it abundantly. You have no idea how much God can bless a person who is feeling sick when you go and visit them.

You have no idea how much God can bless a person who is feeling low when you send them a text message. You have no idea how much God can bless a person who has lost someone close to them, and you send them a bunch of flowers and a card telling them you are praying for them.

God doesn't ask us to give what we don't have, but He does ask us to give what we do have, no matter how small it may seem, [Matthew 10:42](#). Never underestimate what God can do with what you think is small.

3. Believe that God will do the impossible.

Even though this unnamed man had no idea what God was capable of doing, Elisha had no doubts about what God could do. Before I became a Christian, my life was in pieces, and I had no reason to carry on living. I was in a hopeless, helpless situation because of the circumstances I found myself in.

But one lady encouraged me to study the Bible and speak to God about it, and a few weeks later, I became a Christian. Jesus put my life back together again, and my life has never been the same since.

If you are not a Christian and your life is in pieces, then let me encourage you to go to the King and ask Him to help you. Because only King Jesus can put your life back together again and give you a reason to live. Only King Jesus can do what you can't do for yourself; only King Jesus can do the impossible, [Matthew 19:24-26](#).

The miracle recorded here was shown in the fact that one hundred men could be fed with such a small amount of food. This miracle and the first miracle recorded in this chapter, [2 Kings 4:1-7](#), are similar to the feeding of the four thousand, [Matthew 15:32-39](#) / [Mark 8:1-9](#), and the feeding of the five thousand, [Matthew 14:13-21](#) / [Mark 6:31-44](#) / [Luke 9:12-17](#) / [John 6:1-14](#), as done by Jesus.

They are also similar in nature to what Elijah did when he fed the widow of Zarephath and her son, [1 Kings 17:10-16](#). This again would prove to all the people that Elisha was God's true prophet and that God was working through him.

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

As we enter this chapter, it's worth noting and remembering the relationship between the people of Israel and the people of Aram, because the two groups of people were actually related.

Abraham was of Aramean heritage because his family came from Haran, [Genesis 12:1](#) / [Genesis 24:4](#). Jacob was also called an Aramean, [Deuteronomy 26:5](#), as was his uncle Laban, [Genesis 25:20](#), and his grandfather, Bethuel, [Genesis 25:20](#) / [Genesis 28:5](#).

NAAMAN HEALED OF LEPROSY

'Now Naaman was commander of the army of the king of Aram. He was a great man in the sight of his master and highly regarded, because through him the LORD had given victory to Aram. He was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy. Now bands of raiders from Aram had gone out and had taken captive a young girl from Israel, and she served Naaman's wife. She said to her mistress, 'If only my master would see the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy.' Naaman went to his master and told him what the girl from Israel had said. 'By all means, go,' the king of Aram replied. 'I will send a letter to the king of Israel.' So Naaman left, taking with him ten talents of silver, six thousand shekels of gold and ten sets of clothing. The letter that he took to the king of Israel read: 'With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy.' As soon as the king of Israel read the letter, he tore his robes and said, 'Am I, God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!' [2 Kings 5:1-7](#)

We read here that Naaman was the commander of the king of Aram's army, and he was highly respected by the king because, through Naaman, God gave victory to Aram, [2 Kings 5:1](#). It's very possible that God gave Aram victory over his enemies because God was working through Naaman to create this opportunity to heal Naaman.

This event shows us how God was actually concerned about other nations, not just Israel. Israel was supposed to bring other nations to God, and here we read about a leader of Aram who was brought to God's prophet, Elisha. By doing so, God would be known as the One true God among this nation.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No peace had been made on the failure of Ahab's expedition, [1 Kings 22:1-36](#). The relations of the two countries, therefore, continued to be hostile, and plundering inroads naturally took place on the one side and on the other.’

Naaman was a valiant soldier, but he had leprosy, [2 Kings 5:1](#) / [Leviticus 13-14](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Here was a heavy tax upon his grandeur; he was afflicted with a disorder the most loathsome and the most humiliating that could possibly disgrace a human being. God often, in the course of his providence, permits great defects to be associated with great eminence, that he may hide pride from man; and cause him to think soberly of himself and his acquirements.’

A young slave girl from Israel, who served Naaman's wife, was taken captive by Aram's raiders, [2 Kings 5:2](#). When she found out that Naaman had leprosy, she told his wife that she knew of a prophet who could cure him of his leprosy, [2 Kings 5:3](#).

Her faith is incredible, as she has the courage to even suggest such a thing to Naaman and his wife. She was well aware that there was only one God, and His prophet was more than capable of healing Naaman.

Naaman asks permission from king Joram, to go and see the prophet, [2 Kings 5:4](#), and so, he goes and takes with him silver, gold, [Exodus 38:24](#), clothing, [Genesis 41:42](#) / [Esther 6:8](#) / [Daniel 5:7](#), and a letter from the king of Aram to Joram, [2 Kings 5:5](#).

The letters says, ‘with this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you so that you may cure him of his leprosy, [2 Kings 5:6](#). However, when Joram read the letter, ‘he tore his clothes’, [2 Kings 5:7](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The action indicated alarm and terror quite as much as sorrow, [2 Samuel 13:19](#) / [Ezra 9:3](#) / [2 Chronicles 34:27](#) / [Jeremiah 36:22](#).’

It appears that Joram totally misunderstood the reason for Naaman's coming, [2 Kings 5:7](#). Naaman was doing the right thing by going to the king of Israel, and he brought the gifts to Joram as a way of being courteous.

Joram was well aware of who Naaman was, and he was well aware of the king of Aram, Ben-Hadad and his military might, and so, it's highly likely that Joram thought that Naaman was here to start a war, [2 Kings 5:7](#). Unknown to Joram, Naaman was in the land to be healed, not to start a war.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joram's failure to think of Elisha in this situation was not due to his ignorance but to his unbelief and his unwillingness to accept the authenticity of Elisha's prophetic ministry. Joram's mistaken notion that Ben-Hadad, the probable king of Syria, who sent Naaman to Samaria, sought a quarrel with him, was not altogether unreasonable. It will be remembered that Ben-Hadad, seeking the subjugation of Ahab, had made unreasonable demands of Joram's father, [1 Kings 20:3-6](#).’

‘When Elisha the man of God heard that the king of Israel had torn his robes, he sent him this message: ‘Why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel.’ So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. Elisha sent a messenger to say to him, ‘Go, wash yourself seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will be restored and you will be cleansed.’ But Naaman went away angry and said, ‘I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, wave his hand over the spot and cure me of my leprosy. Are not Abana and Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus,

better than all the waters of Israel? Couldn't I wash in them and be cleansed?' So he turned and went off in a rage. Naaman's servants went to him and said, 'My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, 'Wash and be cleansed'!' So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy.' 2 Kings 5:8-14

When Elisha heard that Joram had torn his robes, he sent him a message, which asked, why have you torn your robes? Have the man come to me, and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel, 2 Kings 5:8. So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and stopped at the door of Elisha's house, 2 Kings 5:9.

Here we read of the purpose of the miracle, which was going to happen. Naaman would know that there was a true prophet in Israel, and by default, he would know that there is only one true God, the God who could actually heal people, 2 Kings 5:15. Elisha tells Naaman to go and wash himself seven times in the Jordan River, and he would be healed, 2 Kings 5:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The waters of Jordan had no tendency to remove this disorder, but God chose to make them the means by which he would convey his healing power. He who is the author of life, health, and salvation, has a right to dispense, convey, and maintain them, by whatsoever means he pleases.'

It should be noted that the word for 'wash' used here, 2 Kings 5:10, is 'rachats' and it means 'dip' or 'immerse' and it's identified with baptism, 'baptizo' in the New Testament, John 9:7 / Acts 2:38. In other words, Elisha commanded Naaman to be 'immersed' seven times in the River Jordan.

Naaman obviously thought that doing such a thing was a long way for a shortcut, 2 Kings 5:11. He obviously had some kind of faith because he thought to himself, if Elisha just came out and said the 'word' and waved his hand over him, he would be cured. It's also worth noting that Naaman actually knew the name of the God of Israel, 2 Kings 5:11 / 2 Kings 3:4 / Romans 1:21.

The reason he mentioned the rivers in Abana and Pharpar, 2 Kings 5:12, which were located in Damascus, is that these were freshwater mountain rivers; they were a lot cleaner than the river Jordan. It's clear that Elisha told him to go to the Jordan River because he wanted to humble Naaman.

We must remember that there were no healing powers in the water itself; Elisha's instructions were designed to humble this great warrior. After being calmed by his servants, 2 Kings 5:13, he finally obeyed the instruction of Elisha, immersed himself seven times in the Jordan and was cured, 2 Kings 5:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Compare 1 Kings 18:43. In both cases, a somewhat severe trial was made of the individual's faith. Compare the seven compassings of Jericho, and the sudden fall of the walls, Joshua 6:3-20.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The loathsome scurf was now entirely removed, his flesh assumed the appearance and health of youth; and the whole mass of his blood, and other juices, became purified, refined, and exalted! How mighty is God! What great things can he do by the simplest and feeblest of means!'

We can only imagine what was going through Naaman's mind as he dipped himself seven times in the Jordan, but more importantly, we should note that if he had only dipped himself once, twice, or even six times, he would not have been healed. He had to follow God's instructions to be healed, and likewise, today, if we want to be saved, we too must follow God's instructions.

We must hear God's Word, Romans 10:17, we must believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, we must confess His Name before others, Romans 10:9-10, we must repent of whatever sin that is in our lives, Luke 13:3, and we must be baptised for the forgiveness of our sins, Acts 2:38. There are no shortcuts to salvation.

‘Then Naaman and all his attendants went back to the man of God. He stood before him and said, ‘Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. So please accept a gift from your servant.’ The prophet answered, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, whom I serve, I will not accept a thing.’ And even though Naaman urged him, he refused. ‘If you will not,’ said Naaman, ‘please let me, your servant, be given as much earth as a pair of mules can carry, for your servant will never again make burnt offerings and sacrifices to any other god but the LORD. But may the LORD forgive your servant for this one thing: When my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down, and he is leaning on my arm, and I have to bow there also—when I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD forgive your servant for this.’ ‘Go in peace,’ Elisha said.’ 2 Kings 5:15-19

Naaman was obviously grateful, 2 Kings 5:15 / Luke 17:15, and the purpose of the miraculous healing of Naaman was achieved because Naaman now knows that ‘there is no god, except the God of Israel’, 2 Kings 5:15.

Naaman wanted to give Elisha some gifts because he was healed, but Elisha refused, 2 Kings 5:15-17. He asks that God will forgive him when he ‘bows down in the temple of Rimmon’, 2 Kings 5:18. Rimmon was a pagan deity worshipped in Damascus.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Naaman was not prepared to offend his master, either by refusing to enter with him into the temple of Rimmon, or by remaining erect when the king bowed down and worshipped the god. His conscience seems to have told him that such conduct was not right, but he trusted that it might be pardoned, and he appealed to the prophet in the hope of obtaining from him an assurance to this effect.’

Did Elisha actually give his approval to what Naaman suggested here? Some people believe that because Elisha told him to ‘go in peace’, 2 Kings 5:19, this meant that Naaman received assurance that God understood his heart, but this isn’t clear.

The words ‘go in peace’ could actually just be a farewell expression, which means that Elisha wasn’t approving or disapproving of what Naaman was going to do but simply saying that God’s peace be with him as he went away.

Whatever is meant in these passages, we know that not only Naaman came to know the one true God but his servants who witnessed the healing in the River Jordan, and it’s highly probable that when they returned to Aram, they would have told others what the God of Israel had done to Naaman.

‘After Naaman had travelled some distance, Gehazi, the servant of Elisha the man of God, said to himself, ‘My master was too easy on Naaman, this Aramean, by not accepting from him what he brought. As surely as the LORD lives, I will run after him and get something from him.’ So Gehazi hurried after Naaman. When Naaman saw him running toward him, he got down from the chariot to meet him. ‘Is everything all right?’ he asked. ‘Everything is all right,’ Gehazi answered. ‘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.’ ‘By all means, take two talents,’ said Naaman. He urged Gehazi to accept them, and then tied up the two talents of silver in two bags, with two sets of clothing. He gave them to two of his servants, and they carried them ahead of Gehazi. 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. When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, ‘Where have you been, Gehazi?’ ‘Your servant didn’t go anywhere,’ Gehazi answered. But 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? Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.’ Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.’ 2 Kings 5:19-27

Earlier, Naaman offered Elisha some kind of payment, but Elisha refused to take any payment, 2 Kings 5:15-17, and it appears that Gehazi, Elisha’s servant, was greedy, and his greed led him to lie.

Even after spending all this time with Elisha, it appears that Elisha didn’t have any influence on Gehazi because he wanted some kind of payment for something which he hadn’t done, 2 Kings 5:19-20.

Because of his greed, he lies to Naaman and tells him Elisha now wants to be paid for the healing, 2 Kings 5:21-22. Gehazi tells Naaman that Elisha sent him to inform him that 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, 2 Kings 5:22. Naaman is more than happy to pay, and when Gehazi came to the hill, he took the things from the servants and put them away in the house, and he sent the men away, and they left, 2 Kings 5:23-24.

He also tried to lie to Elisha about his whereabouts, 2 Kings 5:25, and so, Elisha rebukes him because he knew full well what Gehazi had done, 2 Kings 5:26. As a result, Gehazi and his descendants end up with leprosy, 2 Kings 5:27. Notice that the leprosy happened straight away, Numbers 12:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The moment the curse was pronounced, that moment the signs of the leprosy began to appear. The white shining spot was the sign that the infection had taken place, Leviticus 13:2 / Leviticus 13:58.’

This is a perfect example of reaping God’s curse because of trying to gain a financial reward for something which God has done, Philippians 1:15 / 1 Timothy 6:5 / Jude 1:11. This event shows us that God didn’t just want Israel to have the right relationship with Him, but all the nations of the world.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we see yet another miracle performed by Elisha, but once again, we read that there is a purpose behind the miracle. The purpose was to reinforce the message that God was still with Elisha and He was working through him. This, in turn, would strengthen the other prophets who were working under Elisha.

AN AXHEAD FLOATS

‘The company of the prophets said to Elisha, ‘Look, the place where we meet with you is too small for us. Let us go to the Jordan, where each of us can get a pole; and let us build a place there for us to meet.’ And he said, ‘Go.’ Then one of them said, ‘Won’t you please come with your servants?’ ‘I will,’ Elisha replied. And he went with them. They went to the Jordan and began to cut down trees. As one of them was cutting down a tree, the iron axhead fell into the water. ‘Oh no, my lord!’ he cried out. ‘It was borrowed!’ The man of God asked, ‘Where did it fall?’ When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it there, and made the iron float. ‘Lift it out,’ he said. Then the man reached out his hand and took it.’ 2 Kings 6:1-7

As we begin to look at the text, the first thing we notice is a problem that we would love to have. The place where the trainee prophets met was too small, and so they suggested to Elisha that they go to the Jordan, where there was an abundance of trees, 2 Kings 6:1-2 / Deuteronomy 34:3 / Judges 1:16.

It appears they love Elisha so much that they wanted to accompany him wherever he went, 2 Kings 6:3. These students wanted to be taught by Elisha; they wanted to spend more time with like-minded people.

Remember, during the days of the kings, Israel was immersed in idolatry, and everyone was drifting further and further away from God and His ways. This tells me that there were a dedicated few who wanted to get back to God

and His ways. More and more people were starting to believe in the One True God, and so, the company of prophets just continued to grow numerically.

Isn't this a problem we would all like to face? Wouldn't we like to have our meeting place so full of people who want to get back to God and His ways that we need to go elsewhere to meet?

Yes, there are times when it appears as though our numbers are dwindling, but we must not give up, Galatians 6:9. God will add the increase when the time is right.

Notice that the prophets wanted Elisha to go with them, 2 Kings 6:3. Why? First of all, because they knew they couldn't grow in their learning without a teacher. We need to recognise the need to be taught God's Word.

On the Day of Pentecost, when God added three thousand souls to His church and the first thing they did was devote themselves to the apostle's teaching, Acts 2:42. They got regularly at the feet of men who were the leaders of the church and said, 'teach us God's word', and you need to do the same thing.

You need to make it a regular habit of coming to this congregation and sitting at the feet of the teachers who have been appointed by this church to feed the flock and soak it up.

You need to be very careful about who's going to be leading you in your new walk with Christ, and what the church does, it says, 'here are men and women who can teach.' You need to come and sit at their feet, and you need to make it a priority to listen and learn Bible-based lessons.

Elisha is happy to go with them, 2 Kings 6:3, but as they were cutting down some trees, an iron axhead fell into the water, 2 Kings 6:4. Notice that it was a 'borrowed' axhead, 2 Kings 6:5. He immediately cried out to Elisha for help because the axhead was borrowed, 2 Kings 6:5.

To you and me, losing an axhead wouldn't be a big deal; we would simply go to the hardware shop and buy another one. But to this prophet, this was a big deal; not only was it now lost, but it wasn't his to begin with; it was borrowed. He obviously didn't have enough money to buy his own axe, so he had to borrow one.

Back in Bible times, an axe was valuable because it took hours of forging to get it into shape and hours getting it sharp. You had to pay the Blacksmith a lot of money to get one made.

The whole idea of borrowing anything from anyone is that you give it back when you are finished with it. He borrowed the axhead, and as long as it was in his possession, it was his responsibility to look after it and return it.

In the law, it stated that if someone borrowed, lost or even destroyed an item which belonged to someone else, that person was held accountable for the cost or had to replace the item, Exodus 22:14.

Have you ever given something to someone because they wanted to borrow it? How did you feel when you never got it back? No wonder the prophet cries out to Elisha for help in desperation, 2 Kings 6:5. The young prophet obviously had no means of replacing the lost axhead, and he becomes desperate and calls for Elisha to help.

Elisha could have told the prophet off and told him how irresponsible he was. Elisha could have just told the man, It's your own fault, it's gone now, it's lost forever.

Elisha could have just jumped into the river and tried to feel his way around under the water to locate the axhead. But he didn't, after asking the prophet the exact location where it fell into the river, Elisha threw in a stick and made the iron float, 2 Kings 6:6.

Think about this for a moment. This was totally impossible because, as we know, iron is heavy. Iron doesn't float; it sinks, but as we have seen time and time again, nothing is impossible for God.

This was totally impossible, but not for God; only He could make iron float on water. Elisha tells the prophet to lift it out of the water, and the man's borrowed axhead was safely back in his hands, 2 Kings 6:7. Can you imagine the relief on this young man's face?

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Several important deductions from what is written here are justified.

1. Elisha’s work had been successful. More and more people were believing in the One God, and the sons of the prophets were increasing in number.
2. Their love for Elisha is evident in their desire that he should accompany them.
3. The sons of the prophets were entitled to be praised for their creative energy and industry.’

LESSONS

1. God is aware of what’s happening in your life.

There are times in our lives when we face some big challenges, and we think God is totally oblivious to what is happening in our lives. He knew the consequences of the man who lost the axhead. He knew he didn’t have the means of replacing it or paying for a new one.

Some of you may be facing some serious health problems right now and starting to question if God is even aware of what you are going through. Some of you may be facing a huge relationship problem right now, but despite praying, you are not sure if God is even listening to your prayers.

Some of you may be facing a massive debt problem, but think that God isn’t interested in your debt problem. Some of you may be facing big problems at your work where you could lose your job, and you’ve prayed about it and are worried about how you’re going to pay your future bills.

Many people look at sparrows and think they are worthless, but God notices them, and He cares for them, Luke 12:6-7. Just as He knows the sparrows, He certainly knows us all on a personal level, even to the point of knowing how much hair we have on our heads. I can imagine over the years, God smiling when He looks at me and says, ‘Ha, there’s another hair gone.’

Don’t ever think that God doesn’t know what’s happening in your life; He is absolutely aware of what’s happening in all of our lives. Mankind is worth far more than the sparrows, and Jesus tells us that God will certainly take care of us because He takes care of the sparrows.

2. God Wants To Save The Lost.

This poor man’s axhead was lost in the depths of the river, but God found it and restored it to the man. Because Christ’s mission was to ‘save’, Luke 19:10, this tells us that we couldn’t save ourselves; Christ had to come and do something for us that we couldn’t do ourselves.

God wants to save the lost, and there are times when He places people in our lives just at the right time. It was no accident that the prophets asked Elisha to go with them.

If Elisha wasn’t there, the axhead would still be at the bottom of the river. God is always one step ahead of us; He knows what’s coming up in our lives when we don’t. He has a habit of putting the right people in the right place at the right time.

We see this with the Samaritan woman at the well who went back and told everyone about Jesus, John 4:1-42. We see this with Philip and the Ethiopian Eunuch, Acts 8:26-40. We see this with Paul, who met a woman named Lydia, Acts 16:11-15. We see God putting people in the right place, at the right time.

Before you became a Christian, can you remember the people God placed in your life to help bring you to salvation? Now that you are a Christian, can you look back and identify those very people who introduced you to Jesus?

From a personal point, if God hadn't put certain people in my life when He did, I probably wouldn't be alive today. God is always one step ahead of us, and it is no accident that God places people in our lives.

Everyone who comes into your life, and everyone who has been called to be in your life, is there for a reason. God puts people into your life at strategic times because He knows what we need. There are circumstances that God has arranged in the past and is arranging right now, long before we know that we'll ever need them.

He knew before you did that you would need His people to support you through that serious health problem. He knew before you did that you would need His people to support you through that relationship problem.

He knew before you did that you would need His people to support you through that debt problem. He knew before you did that you would need His people to support you through that work problem.

If you are not a Christian, ask yourself, why has God surrounded you with His people? Do you think it's just pure luck or chance that Christians are a part of your life? Or has God put His people in your life because ultimately, He wants to save you too? 2 Peter 3:9.

ELISHA TRAPS BLINDED ARAMEANS

'Now the king of Aram was at war with Israel. After conferring with his officers, he said, 'I will set up my camp in such and such a place.' The man of God sent word to the king of Israel: 'Beware of passing that place, because the Arameans are going down there.' So the king of Israel checked on the place indicated by the man of God. Time and again, Elisha warned the king, so that he was on his guard in such places. This enraged the king of Aram. He summoned his officers and demanded of them, 'Tell me! Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?' 'None of us, my lord the king,' said one of his officers, 'but Elisha, the prophet who is in Israel, tells the king of Israel the very words you speak in your bedroom.' 'Go, find out where he is,' the king ordered, 'so I can send men and capture him.' The report came back: 'He is in Dothan.' Then he sent horses and chariots and a strong force there. They went by night and surrounded the city.' 2 Kings 6:8-14

The king of Aram at this time was at war against Israel, probably during the reign of Jehoram, and he decided to set up camp, 2 Kings 6:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the king of Aram.

'This was probably the same Ben-Hadad who is mentioned in 2 Kings 6:24.'

Elisha sent word to the king of Israel and warned him over and over again to be on his guard against the king of Aram and his movements, 2 Kings 6:9-10. The king of Aram gets angry and says to his officers, 'Which of us is on the side of the king of Israel?' 2 Kings 6:11.

It appears that time after time, the king's army's violence toward Israel had led to the defeat of the king's army. He obviously thought that there was a traitor in his ranks who was informing Israel as to his whereabouts.

The king of Aram had no idea that Elisha was telling the king of Israel about everything that was going on about where he and his army were, 2 Kings 6:12. God again, by doing this work through Elisha, was letting the people of Israel know that God was still working in and through His prophet. When the king of Aram discovered it was Elisha who was the one telling Israel what he was up to, he wanted to try to capture Elisha, 2 Kings 6:13.

He probably thought to himself, if he could remove Elisha, that is, kill him, then he could remove Israel's source of miraculous knowledge. After being informed as to Elisha's whereabouts, the king of Aram sends an army in order to trap Elisha in Dothan, 2 Kings 6:13-14 / Genesis 37:17.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Dothan.

‘It was at no great distance from Shechem. Its ancient name still attaches to a Tel or hill of a marked character, 2 Kings 6:17, from the foot of which arises a copious fountain.’

‘When the servant of the man of God got up and went out early the next morning, an army with horses and chariots had surrounded the city. ‘Oh no, my lord! What shall we do?’ the servant asked. ‘Don’t be afraid,’ the prophet answered. ‘Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’ And Elisha prayed, ‘Open his eyes, LORD, so that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the servant’s eyes, and he looked and saw the hills full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha. As the enemy came down toward him, Elisha prayed to the LORD, ‘Strike this army with blindness.’ So he struck them with blindness, as Elisha had asked.’ 2 Kings 6:15-18

The king of Aram went to Dothan with horses and chariots and surrounded the city in order to capture Elisha and kill him, 2 Kings 6:15. When one of Elisha’s servants saw them, he was at a loss as to what to do, 2 Kings 6:15.

Elisha tells him not to be afraid and then he tells him, ‘those who are with us are more than those who are with them,’ 2 Kings 6:16. He saw something which his servant couldn’t see, and so in order for his servant to see what was invisible to the human eye, he prays that God would open his servant’s eyes, 2 Kings 6:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Where is heaven? Is it not above, beneath, around us? And were our eyes open as were those of the prophet’s servant, we should see the heavenly host in all directions. The horses and chariots of fire were there, before the eyes of Elisha’s servant were opened.’

When God miraculously opened his eyes for him to see what couldn’t be seen, he saw a vast army of God with horses and chariots of fire ready to protect them, 2 Kings 6:18 / Romans 8:37. There’s no doubt that these were divine beings, angels, sent by God to protect His prophets, Hebrews 1:14.

Elisha could have easily asked God to wipe the army from the face of the earth, but instead, he asked God to strike them with blindness, 2 Kings 6:18. Interestingly, Elisha was able to see God’s army, but the king of Aram’s army ended up being blind, not being able to see anything which under normal circumstances could be seen.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Syrians, who had been encamped on rising ground opposite the hill of Dothan, now descended and drew near to the city. The blindness with which they were smitten was not real, blindness, actual loss of sight, but a state of illusion in which a man sees things otherwise than as they are, 2 Kings 6:20.’

‘Elisha told them, ‘This is not the road, and this is not the city. Follow me, and I will lead you to the man you are looking for.’ And he led them to Samaria. After they entered the city, Elisha said, ‘LORD, open the eyes of these men so they can see.’ Then the LORD opened their eyes, and they looked, and there they were, inside Samaria. When the king of Israel saw them, he asked Elisha, ‘Shall I kill them, my father? Shall I kill them?’ ‘Do not kill them,’ he answered. ‘Would you kill those you have captured with your own sword or bow? Set food and water before them so that they may eat and drink and then go back to their master.’ So he prepared a great feast for them, and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master. So the bands from Aram stopped raiding Israel’s territory.’ 2 Kings 6:19-23

Because the king of Aram’s army was now blind, Elisha led them to Samaria, 2 Kings 6:19. The trap into which the king of Aram wanted to lead the Israelites became the same type of trap into which Elisha led the soldiers of the king’s army.

After the soldiers received their sight back, 2 Kings 6:20, they found themselves in the middle of the capital city, which they sought to defeat. The reason they weren't killed here was simply that they weren't prisoners of war, and mercy was shown to them, 2 Kings 6:21-22, so that they show mercy towards Israel, James 2:13.

A great feast for them was prepared and after they had finished eating and drinking, he sent them away, and they returned to their master, 2 Kings 6:23. Because the soldiers witnessed God's protection over His people and because of the kindness the king of Israel showed the king of Aram's soldiers, Aram stopped raiding Israel's territory, 2 Kings 6:23.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Jehoram did not merely follow the letter of the prophet's direction, but understood its spirit and acted accordingly. The plundering bands which had been in the habit of ravaging the territory, 2 Kings 5:2, ceased their incursions in consequence either of the miracle, or of the kind treatment which Elisha had recommended.'

FAMINE IN BESIEGED SAMARIA

'Some time later, Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, mobilised his entire army and marched up and laid siege to Samaria. There was a great famine in the city; the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver, and a quarter of a cab of seed pods for five shekels. As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried to him, 'Help me, my lord, the king!' The king replied, 'If the LORD does not help you, where can I get help for you? From the threshing floor? From the winepress?' Then he asked her, 'What's the matter?' She answered, 'This woman said to me, 'Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we'll eat my son.' So we cooked my son and ate him. The next day I said to her, 'Give up your son so we may eat him,' but she had hidden him.' 2 Kings 6:24-29

When it comes to the kings of Aram, especially Ben-Hadad, 2 Kings 6:24, it's never easy to identify which king the text is referring to. One suggestion to help us is this: Ben-Hadad I, the son of Tabrimmon, reigned in the 10th to the early 9th century B.C. 1 Kings 15:18. Ben-Hadad II possibly reigned in the middle of the 9th century B.C.

Hazael reigned in the late 9th century B.C. Then Ben-Hadad III, the son of Hazael, reigned in the early 8th century B.C. Up until this point in time, there was a period of peace between Israel and Aram, but after this period, Ben-Hadad II assumed Aram's hostility against Israel. He laid siege to Samaria in the middle of the 9th century.

Notice that 'the siege lasted so long that a donkey's head sold for eighty shekels of silver', 2 Kings 6:25. They were trapped inside the city, and the price of food rocketed, which tells us how severe the famine was because a donkey's head would be the very last thing which people would eat. They also ate a 'cab of seed pods', 2 Kings 6:25, which is basically a dove's dung, which tells us they will eat anything in order to survive.

As the king of Israel was passing by on the wall, a woman cried out for help, and the king asked her, if God doesn't help her, where can I get help for her? From the threshing floor? From the winepress? 2 Kings 6:26-27. In other words, there is nothing; everything is empty, Hosea 9:2.

Things are so horrendous, and people are so desperate to eat, that one mother suggests to another mother that they eat each other's sons, 2 Kings 6:28. This is nothing short of cannibalism.

They cooked her son and ate him, but the next day she asked her to 'give up her son so they may eat him,' but she had hidden him, 2 Kings 6:29. The event recorded here in this siege is exactly what God, through Moses, said would happen many years before, Deuteronomy 28:53-58.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The prophecy alluded to in the marginal references was now fulfilled, probably for the first time. It had a second accomplishment when Jerusalem was besieged by Nebuchadnezzar, Lamentations 4:10, and a third in the final siege of the same city by Titus.'

‘When the king heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes. As he went along the wall, the people looked, and they saw that, under his robes, he had sackcloth on his body. He said, ‘May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if the head of Elisha son of Shaphat remains on his shoulders today!’ Now Elisha was sitting in his house, and the elders were sitting with him. The king sent a messenger ahead, but before he arrived, Elisha said to the elders, ‘Don’t you see how this murderer is sending someone to cut off my head? Look, when the messenger comes, shut the door and hold it shut against him. Is not the sound of his master’s footsteps behind him?’ While he was still talking to them, the messenger came down to him. The king said, ‘This disaster is from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?’ 2 Kings 6:30-33

When the king of Israel, probably Jehoram, heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes, and when he did, the onlookers noticed that he was wearing sackcloth, 2 Kings 6:30, which was a sign of repentance.

In ignorance, and for reasons we aren’t told, he quickly blames Elisha for what is happening, 2 Kings 6:31, possibly because Elisha had prophesied that Samaria would be victorious over Aram.

One thing is clear: everyone is in a desperate situation here, and if they return to God in faith, if they turn to God in repentance, then God will deliver them from this horrendous situation.

It’s very easy to overlook the fact that Elisha and the elders were also suffering because of the famine, hence why Elisha is sitting in his house, 2 Kings 6:32. Elisha knew exactly what was happening and what was about to happen, he knew that Jehoram was a murderer, and he called him a murderer because he intends to murder Elisha, 2 Kings 6:32.

Jehoram is clearly frustrated and recognises that what’s happening is from God, and he doesn’t want to wait any longer for God to deliver them from this famine, 2 Kings 6:33. This story will continue in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

Not long after a failed attempt to capture and kill Elisha, 2 Kings 6:19-23, the city of Samaria was facing a severe famine. The last chapter ended by telling us that the king, Jehoram, was very frustrated and recognised that everything was happening because God was making it happen. This chapter is a continuation of the previous chapter.

‘Elisha replied, ‘Hear the word of the LORD. This is what the LORD says: About this time tomorrow, a seah of the finest flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.’ The officer on whose arm the king was leaning said to the man of God, ‘Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?’ ‘You will see it with your own eyes,’ answered Elisha, ‘but you will not eat any of it!’ 2 Kings 7:1-2

After the king said, ‘This disaster is from the LORD. Why should I wait for the LORD any longer?’ 2 Kings 6:33, Elisha replies to him and prophesies that the famine was coming to an end very soon.

In fact, it was going to be the next day, 2 Kings 7:1. That would be the day when food would be sold for its normal price, 2 Kings 7:1 / 2 Kings 6:25. It’s clear that the officer struggled to believe what Elisha was saying, 2 Kings 7:2. After all, there was no food to sell at this point.

He was basically asking, if there is no food to sell, then what kind of food is Elisha speaking about? In other words, what Elisha was saying was impossible! Elisha tells him that he will see it with his own eyes, but he won’t eat any of it, 2 Kings 7:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a mere prediction of his death, but not as a judgment for his unbelief; any person in his circumstances might have spoken as he did. He stated in effect that nothing but a miracle could procure the plenty predicted, and by a miracle alone was it done, and any person in his place might have been trodden to death by the crowd in the gate of Samaria.’

THE SIEGE LIFTED

‘Now there were four men with leprosy at the entrance of the city gate. They said to each other, ‘Why stay here until we die? If we say, ‘We’ll go into the city’—the famine is there, and we will die. And if we stay here, we will die. So let’s go over to the camp of the Arameans and surrender. If they spare us, we live; if they kill us, then we die.’ At dusk, they got up and went to the camp of the Arameans. When they reached the edge of the camp, no one was there, for the Lord had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of chariots and horses and a great army, so that they said to one another, ‘Look, the king of Israel has hired the Hittite and Egyptian kings to attack us!’ So they got up and fled in the dusk and abandoned their tents and their horses and donkeys. They left the camp as it was and ran for their lives. The men who had leprosy reached the edge of the camp, entered one of the tents and ate and drank. Then they took silver, gold, and clothes, and went off and hid them. They returned and entered another tent and took some things from it and hid them also.’ 2 Kings 7:3-8

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the lepers being at the entrance of the gate.

‘The position of the lepers is in accordance with the Law of Moses and shows that the Law was still observed to some extent in the kingdom of Israel.’

These four men who had leprosy had to make a difficult decision, and they came to the conclusion that they could die at the city gate or inside the city, [2 Kings 7:3-4](#).

They believe that the only chance they have to live is to beg for mercy at the camp of the Arameans, [2 Kings 7:4](#).

When they arrive at the camp no one was around because God had created a great noise of an army, [2 Kings 7:5-6](#), but they didn’t know it was God who caused the miraculous noise for the Aramean army to hear.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is a matter of no importance whether we say that the miracle by which God now performed deliverance for Samaria consisted in a mere illusion of the sense of hearing, [2 Kings 6:19-20](#), or whether there was any objective reality in the sound.’

In the middle of the night, the Aramean soldiers assumed that the Hittites and the Egyptians had come together to help Samaria, [2 Kings 7:6](#), and so, in fear and confusion they ran for their lives, [2 Kings 7:7](#).

Notice that the four lepers, entered a tent and then ate and drank, [2 Kings 7:8](#). This tells us that Elisha’s first prophecy had been fulfilled, [2 Kings 7:1](#). They also took some valuables from the tents and hid them, [2 Kings 7:8](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The conduct of the lepers following their discovery and of their relieving their hunger is understandable. God had suddenly enriched them, rescuing them from their dependence upon the doubtful charities of a starving city. Their humanitarian concern for others soon asserted itself, and they decided to spread the good news in Samaria.’

‘Then they said to each other, ‘What we’re doing is not right. This is a day of good news, and we are keeping it to ourselves. If we wait until daylight, punishment will overtake us. Let’s go at once and report this to the royal palace.’ So they went and called out to the city gatekeepers and told them, ‘We went into the Aramean camp, and no one was there—not a sound of anyone—only tethered horses and donkeys, and the tents left just as they were.’ The gatekeepers shouted the news, and it was reported within the palace. The king got up in the night and said to his officers, ‘I will tell you what the Arameans have done to us. They know we are starving; so they have left the camp to hide in the countryside, thinking, ‘They will surely come out, and then we will take them alive and get into the city.’

One of his officers answered, ‘Have some men take five of the horses that are left in the city. Their plight will be like that of all the Israelites left here—yes, they will only be like all these Israelites who are doomed. So let us send them to find out what happened.’ So they selected two chariots with their horses, and the king sent them after the Aramean army. He commanded the drivers, ‘Go and find out what has happened.’ They followed them as far as the Jordan, and they found the whole road strewn with the clothing and equipment the Arameans had thrown away in their headlong flight. So the messengers returned and reported to the king. Then the people went out and plundered the camp of the Arameans. So a seah of the finest flour sold for a shekel, and two seahs of barley sold for a shekel, as the LORD had said. Now the king had put the officer on whose arm he leaned in charge of the gate, and the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died, just as the man of God had foretold when the king came down to his house. It happened as the man of God had said to the king: ‘About this time tomorrow, a seah of the finest flour will sell for a shekel and two seahs of barley for a shekel at the gate of Samaria.’ The officer had said to the man of God, ‘Look, even if the LORD should open the floodgates of the heavens, could this happen?’ The man of God had replied, ‘You will see it with your own eyes, but you will not eat any of it!’ And that is exactly what happened to him, for the people trampled him in the gateway, and he died.’ 2 Kings 7:9-20

The four lepers know what they have done wasn’t right and they expect to get punished for what they have done, 2 Kings 7:9. They know it is a day of good news, it’s the day when this good news needs to be shared with others, 2 Kings 7:9.

When they ate and drank and helped themselves to all the valuables, 2 Kings 7:7-8, they only thought about themselves but now they realise that this good news would actually save the lives of many others who were starving to death.

They went and told this good news to the city gatekeepers of Samaria, 2 Kings 7:10. However when they first reported the news the Aramean camp was empty, 2 Kings 7:10.

The city gatekeepers then told the royal palace, but Jehoram didn’t believe them, he thought it was some kind of trap set by the Arameans to entice them out of the city, 2 Kings 7:11-12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jehoram sees in the deserted camp a stratagem like that connected with the taking of Ai, Joshua 8:3-19. The suspicion was a very natural one, since the Israelites knew of no reason why the Syrians should have raised the siege.’

As a result of the king’s doubt, messengers were sent to find out if what the four lepers were saying was true or not, 2 Kings 7:13-14. After the messengers returned and reported that what the four lepers were saying was true, they went out of the city and plundered the camp of the Arameans, 2 Kings 7:15-16.

Remember the Aramean soldiers heard the miraculous noise of God, and though it was the Hittites and the Egyptians coming to help Samaria, they ran for their lives and left everything behind, 2 Kings 7:5-6.

Notice that food was sold again for its normal price, 2 Kings 7:16. This again shows that Elisha’s first prophecy was fulfilled, 2 Kings 7:1. The king tried to control the crowd and even appointed the captain to be in charge of the gate of the city, but he had no chance, 2 Kings 7:17.

The multitudes were so hungry, they didn’t stop at the gate; they trampled him to death, 2 Kings 7:17, which again was the fulfilment of Elisha’s second prophecy, 2 Kings 7:18-20 / 2 Kings 7:2.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It’s such a shame that God had to let them experience this great famine, which led them to eat unclean animals and all the horses in the city, except five, 2 Kings 7:13. This was done to bring Israel to their knees so that they would repent and trust God for deliverance. When they thought they were about to cease to exist, God delivered them.’

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

‘Now Elisha had said to the woman whose son he had restored to life, ‘Go away with your family and stay for a while wherever you can, because the LORD has decreed a famine in the land that will last seven years.’ The woman proceeded to do as the man of God said. She and her family went away and stayed in the land of the Philistines seven years. At the end of the seven years, she came back from the land of the Philistines and went to appeal to the king for her house and land. The king was talking to Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, and had said, ‘Tell me about all the great things Elisha has done.’ Just as Gehazi was telling the king how Elisha had restored the dead to life, the woman whose son Elisha had brought back to life came to appeal to the king for her house and land. Gehazi said, ‘This is the woman, my lord the king, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life.’ The king asked the woman about it, and she told him. Then he assigned an official to her case and said to him, ‘Give back everything that belonged to her, including all the income from her land from the day she left the country until now.’ 2 Kings 8:1-6

THE SHUNAMMITE’S LAND RESTORED

Elisha tells the woman whose son he had restored to life, 2 Kings 4:8-37, to go away for a while because God had declared a famine that would last seven years, 2 Kings 8:1. He wants the Shunammite woman to go to another country, which she did, 2 Kings 8:8.

She went to Philistia for seven years, 2 Kings 8:2. After the seven years had passed, she made an appeal to the king, probably Jehoram, for her land, 2 Kings 8:3. It’s quite clear that someone else had taken possession of her land whilst she was away.

It’s important to note that this account of Gehazi, 2 Kings 8:5, isn’t in chronological order. This incident would have taken place before the healing of Naaman, 2 Kings 5:1-17, because Gehazi hadn’t yet been struck with leprosy.

After the king learned that Elisha had brought the Shunammite woman’s son back to life, he gave her case to an ‘official’, 2 Kings 8:6, who was probably a eunuch, 1 Chronicles 28:1 / Isaiah 56:3-4.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Eunuchs were now in common use at the Samaritan court, 2 Kings 9:32. They are ascribed to the court of David in Chronicles, 1 Chronicles 28:1, and we may conjecture that they were maintained by Solomon. But otherwise we do not find them in the kingdom of Judah until the time of Hezekiah, Isaiah 56:3-4.’

The official then gave the Shunammite woman back everything that was rightfully hers, along with the income, which was raised from her land, 2 Kings 8:6 / Esther 6:1-14 / Romans 8:28. What happened here shows that Elisha’s previous offer to speak to the king for the Shunammite woman, 2 Kings 4:13, wasn’t a waste of time.

HAZAEI MURDERS BEN-HADAD

‘Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, was ill. When the king was told, ‘The man of God has come all the way up here,’ he said to Hazael, ‘Take a gift with you and go to meet the man of God. Consult the LORD through him; ask him, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’ Hazael went to meet Elisha, taking with him as a gift forty camel-loads of all the finest wares of Damascus. He went in and stood before him, and said, ‘Your son Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, has sent me to ask, ‘Will I recover from this illness?’ Elisha answered, ‘Go and say to him, ‘You will certainly recover.’ Nevertheless, the LORD has revealed to me that he will in fact die.’ He stared at him with a fixed gaze until Hazael was embarrassed. Then the man of God began to weep. ‘Why is my lord weeping?’ asked Hazael. ‘Because I know the harm you will do to the Israelites,’ he answered. ‘You will set fire to their fortified places, kill their young men with the sword, dash their little children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women.’ Hazael said, ‘How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?’ ‘The LORD has

shown me that you will become king of Aram,' answered Elisha. Then Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master.

When Ben-Hadad asked, 'What did Elisha say to you?' Hazael replied, 'He told me that you would certainly recover.' But the next day, he took a thick cloth, soaked it in water, and spread it over the king's face, so that he died.

Then Hazael succeeded him as king.' 2 Kings 8:7-15

Elisha went to Damascus, and Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, was ill, 2 Kings 8:7. Some commentators suggest that because God had earlier commanded Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, 1 Kings 19:15, it's here that we read that Elisha carried out this command; this is why he is in Damascus, 2 Kings 8:7.

However, Coffman, in his commentary, offers the following objections.

'Several scholars suppose that Elisha anointed Hazael king over Syria on this trip, but there is nothing here to support such a view. God had commanded Elijah at Horeb to anoint Hazael, 1 Kings 19:15, and there are two ways of understanding what happened.

1. Either Elijah went to Damascus and anointed him without any Scriptural record of it being recorded, or
2. Elijah transferred the obligation to Elisha, who anointed him without any record of it being placed in the Bible.'

Ben-Hadad was ill, and when he was told Elisha was around, he sent Hazael to Elisha with a gift, 2 Kings 8:7-8. It was the practice of the day for someone to make a gift to God's prophet as a kind of offering; if they didn't take a gift, it was seen as disrespectful.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Hazael was no doubt a high officer of the court. The names of Hazael and Ben-Hadad occur in the Assyrian inscription on the Black Obelisk now in the British Museum. Both are mentioned as kings of Damascus, who contended with a certain Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and suffered defeat at his hands. In one of the battles between this king and Benhadad, 'Allah of Jezreel' is mentioned among the allies of the latter. This same Shalmaneser took tribute from Jehu. This is the point at which the Assyrian records first come in direct contact with those of the Jews.'

We should also note that the Hazael here shouldn't be confused with the father of Ben-Hadad, who was called the son of Hazael, 2 Kings 13:3. This Hazael was the son of a nobody, who murdered Ben-Hadad and seized his throne.

Hazael was to consult God through Elisha and ask if Ben-Hadad would recover from his illness, 2 Kings 8:8.

Because of the number of gifts Ben-Hadad gave Elisha, 2 Kings 8:9, shows us just how much he respected Elisha and, by default, the God of Israel. However, just because he showed Elisha and the God of Israel a lot of respect doesn't mean that Ben-Hadad was a convert to the God of Israel.

Because Ben-Hadad was ill, he wanted to find out if he would recover from his illness, 2 Kings 8:9, and when Hazael asks Elisha about Ben-Hadad, Elisha tells him that the king will certainly recover; nevertheless, God has revealed to Elisha that he will, in fact, die, 2 Kings 8:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'That is, God has not determined thy death, nor will it be a necessary consequence of the disease by which thou art now afflicted; but this wicked man will abuse the power and trust thou hast reposed in him, and take away thy life. Even when God has not designed nor appointed the death of a person, he may nevertheless die, though not without the permission of God.'

Elisha stared at Hazael with a fixed gaze until he was embarrassed, and then Elisha began to weep, 2 Kings 8:11.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Elisha fixed on Hazael a long and meaningful look, until the latter's eyes fell before his, and his cheek flushed.

Elisha, it would seem, had detected the guilty thought that was in Hazael's heart, and Hazael perceived that he had detected it. Hence the 'shame'.'

Hazael asks Elisha why he is weeping and Elisha tells him, [2 Kings 8:12](#). Elisha knew what kind of man Hazael was, he was a serious troublemaker, he would commit many murderous acts, [2 Kings 8:12](#) / [2 Kings 10:32-33](#) / [2 Kings 13:3](#) / [2 Kings 13:7](#).

Elisha knew he would cause a lot of trouble for the Israelites, [2 Kings 8:12](#). The terrible crimes mentioned here, which Elisha stated that Hazael would commit, were in no sense offensive to that evil man who would murder his way into becoming king.

Notice that after being told the horrendous things he will do to the Israelites, he asks Elisha, 'How could your servant, a mere dog, accomplish such a feat?' [2 Kings 8:13](#).

Hazael compares himself to a dog, suggesting that a dog isn't capable of doing such horrendous things. He's telling Elisha he's just a slave of Ben-Hadad, and he possessed no power to do the horrendous things which Elisha mentioned.

Elisha doesn't mess with his words here; he plainly tells him of the prophecy of his accession to the throne of Aram, [2 Kings 8:13](#). Hazael returns to Ben-Hadad and lies; he tells him he would recover, [2 Kings 8:13](#), when Elisha told him he would certainly die, [2 Kings 8:10](#). After murdering Ben-Hadad, Hazael became king, [2 Kings 8:15](#), and reigned from 841 to 798 B.C.

JEHORAM KING OF JUDAH

'In the fifth year of Joram, son of Ahab, king of Israel, when Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, began his reign as king of Judah. He was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel, as the house of Ahab had done, for he married a daughter of Ahab. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, for the sake of his servant David, the LORD was not willing to destroy Judah. He had promised to maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever. In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king. So Jehoram went to Zair with all his chariots.

The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night; his army, however, fled back home. To this day, Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time. As for the other events of Jehoram's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Jehoram rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And Ahaziah his son succeeded him as king.' [2 Kings 8:16-24](#)

Whilst Hazael became king of Aram, Jehoram became king of Judah, [2 Kings 8:16](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:4](#). Although it can be confusing at times, we must remember that the name 'Jehoram' appears in the lists of kings of both Israel and Judah, but they are different people. Joram is a shortened version of the name Jehoram, [2 Kings 1:17](#).

Jehoram now becomes king of Judah, and notice he has all his brothers, along with some of the officials of Israel, murdered, [2 Chronicles 21:4](#). Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king and reigned in Jerusalem for eight years, [2 Kings 8:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:5](#).

However, he followed in the ways of the kings of Israel and, as the house of Ahab had done, [2 Kings 8:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:6](#). This means that he committed idolatry and followed the gods of the Canaanites as Ahab did, [1 Kings 16:29-19:18](#).

This possibly happened because he married the daughter of Ahab, whose name was Athaliah, and so, it's possible that she may have influenced him in some way. In some ways, she not only influenced him but influenced the whole nation, because the idolatrous action of Israel was now happening in Judah.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the daughter of Ahab, [2 Kings 8:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:6](#). 'This was the infamous Athaliah, and through this marriage Jehoshaphat and Ahab were confederates, and this friendship was continued after Ahab's death.'

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The very mention of such a thing in this paragraph is a mark of the diabolical threat that existed at this moment in the history of the Chosen People. In these events, Satan was moving swiftly and methodically toward that very goal, the total destruction of the house of David. And when Jehoram’s evil mother Athaliah was finally able to seize power for herself, she all but accomplished it.’

Jehoram did evil in the eyes of God, [2 Kings 8:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:6](#). He committed many acts of sins, one of them was the murdering of his six brothers because he wanted their wealth, [2 Chronicles 21:4](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:20](#). Make no mistake about it, God would have wiped them off the face of the earth because of their idolatry, if it wasn’t for David and the promise He made to David, [2 Kings 8:19](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:7](#) / [2 Samuel 7:12-16](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:12-19](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The natural consequence of Jehoram’s apostasy would have been the destruction of his house, and the transfer of the throne of Judah to another family. Compare the punishments of Jeroboam, [1 Kings 14:10](#), Baasha, [1 Kings 16:2-4](#), and Ahab, [1 Kings 21:20-22](#). But the promises to David prevented this removal of the dynasty; and so Jehoram was punished in other ways, [2 Kings 8:22](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:12-19](#).’

In the time of Jehoram, Edom rebelled against Judah and set up its own king and so, Jehoram went to Zair with all his chariots, [2 Kings 8:20-21](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:8-9](#) / [Genesis 27:40](#).

The Edomites surrounded him and his chariot commanders, but he rose up and broke through by night, [2 Chronicles 21:8](#), his army, however, fled back home, [2 Kings 8:21](#).

We are told that to this day Edom has been in rebellion against Judah. Libnah revolted at the same time, [2 Kings 8:22](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:10](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:16-17](#).

We know that great nations are held together by their loyalty to their kings. God originally created Israel as one nation, and they were to be loyal to Him as their king. Sadly, here we read about what happens when a nation is divided and loyal to various kings.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Edomites had been subjected by David and remained under the dominion of Solomon, from whom they revolted for a time when the kingdom was divided. However, they again came under the dominion of Judah during the reign of Jehoshaphat, but this revolt against Joram resulted in their independence. What seems to be reported here is a disastrous route of Joram’s army and his being surrounded by the Edomite troops. Jehoram, with his chariots, was able to break through the surrounding Edomites and escape with his life, leaving the rest of his army to escape as best they could. This military disaster, which stopped just short of being complete, was followed by the loss of Libnah, a city to the southwest of Judah, probably in the area of the Philistines.’

Jehoram had forsaken God, and so, he built high places that his father had previously destroyed, [2 Chronicles 21:11](#). He did this probably to gain the favour of the people.

By building these high places, Jehoram caused the people to prostitute themselves, that is, commit idolatry, [2 Chronicles 21:11](#) / [James 4:4](#). [2 Chronicles 21](#) tells us that Jehoram received a letter from Elijah the prophet, [2 Chronicles 21:12](#). Remember that Elijah had been taken up in a whirlwind to God before the reign of Jehoram, [2 Kings 2:1](#).

But it appears that Elijah had prophesied concerning the wickedness of Jehoram, even before Jehoram reigned. Elijah had prophesied against Ahab and Jezebel, the parents of Jehoram’s wife, Athaliah.

It's not the first time in this book that a prophet has spoken about an upcoming disaster for kings, before it happens, [2 Chronicles 12:5](#) / [2 Chronicles 16:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 19:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 24:20](#) / [2 Chronicles 26:16](#). However, some commentators believe that Elijah was still alive at this point in time.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the only notice which we have of Elijah in Chronicles. As a prophet of the northern kingdom, he engaged but slightly the attention of the historian of the southern one. The notice shows that Elijah did not confine his attention to the affairs of his own state, but strove to check the progress of idolatry in Judah. And it proves that he was alive after the death of Jehoshaphat, [2 Chronicles 21:13](#), a fact bearing.

1. Upon the chronological order of [2 Kings 2:1](#).

2. Showing that Elisha, who prophesied in the time of Jehoshaphat, [2 Kings 3:11-19](#), commenced his public ministry before his master's translation.’

In an effort to bring the two kingdoms together, Jehoram married Athaliah, [2 Chronicles 21:13](#), but this resulted in evil arising within the family of David in Judah, [2 Chronicles 21:16-17](#).

The prophecy was that Judah would suffer from a great plague, [2 Chronicles 21:14](#), and Jehoram was to be struck with a disease in his intestines, [2 Chronicles 21:15](#).

We are also told in [2 Chronicles 21](#) that the Philistines and Arabians, like the Edomites and Cushites, also took advantage of Judah's weak condition, despite being suppressed earlier during the reign of Jehoshaphat. However, notice this was the Lord's doing, [2 Chronicles 21:16](#).

They plundered the treasury of Judah, and they killed all the descendants of David except for one son, the youngest, Jehoahaz, [2 Chronicles 21:17](#), who was also called Ahaziah, [2 Chronicles 25:23](#). It's an amazing thought that through this one son, the seedline promise of the Messiah that God made to David would continue.

The Lord afflicted Jehoram with an incurable disease of the bowel, [2 Chronicles 21:18](#), which resulted in his bowels coming out, [2 Chronicles 21:19](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:15](#) / [Acts 1:18](#). Notice, when Jehoram died in great pain, there wasn't a lot of sympathy for him.

Because there was little respect for him as a person and king, he wasn't given the honour of being buried in the tombs of the kings of Judah, [2 Kings 8:24](#) / [2 Chronicles 21:19](#).

When he died, there were no regrets, [2 Chronicles 21:20](#). This is seen in that there was no burning of incense for him. The other events of Jehoram's reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? [2 Kings 8:23](#).

Jehoram rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David, [2 Chronicles 21:20](#), and Ahaziah, his son, succeeded him as king, [2 Kings 8:24](#) / [2 Chronicles 22:1](#).

AHAZIAH KING OF JUDAH

‘In the twelfth year of Joram son of Ahab, king of Israel, Ahaziah son of Jehoram, king of Judah, began to reign. Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother's name was Athaliah, a granddaughter of Omri, king of Israel. He followed the ways of the house of Ahab and did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as the house of Ahab had done, for he was related by marriage to Ahab's family. Ahaziah went with Joram, son of Ahab, to war against Hazael, king of Aram, at Ramoth Gilead. The Arameans wounded Joram; so King Joram returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him at Ramoth in his battle with Hazael, king of Aram. Then Ahaziah, son of Jehoram, king of Judah, went down to Jezreel to see Joram, son of Ahab, because he had been wounded.’ [2 Kings 8:25-29](#)

Ahaziah became king in 841 B.C. because the raiders, who came with the Arabs into the camp, had killed all the older brothers, 2 Chronicles 22:1 / 2 Chronicles 21:17. He only reigned for one year, 2 Kings 8:25-26 / 2 Chronicles 22:2.

We are told that Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, 2 Chronicles 22:2. Since his father was forty years old when he died, many commentators suggest that the account of 2 Kings 8, has the correct reading of twenty-two years old, 2 Kings 8:26.

Some translations say that Athaliah was the ‘daughter’ of Omri, 2 Kings 8:26 / 2 Chronicles 22:2. She would have been the granddaughter of Omri, because she was the daughter of Ahab. The word ‘daughter’ is often used to refer to one as a descendant.

Ahaziah followed in the idolatrous ways of Ahab, and his mother encouraged him to act wickedly, 2 Chronicles 22:3 / 1 Kings 16:29-19:18, and did evil in the eyes of the Lord, 2 Chronicles 22:4 / 2 Kings 8:27.

War once again breaks out, and so, Ahaziah and Joram, that is, Jehoram, king of Israel in the north, go out against Hazael at Ramoth Gilead, 2 Kings 8:28 / 2 Chronicles 22:5. They were trying to reclaim the city that was under Aramean control, 1 Kings 22:29-36.

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘Joram was struck by an arrow in the course of the siege, but remained until the place was taken. He then withdrew to Jezreel, 1 Kings 18:45 / 1 Kings 21:1, leaving his army under Jehu within the walls of the town.’

The Arameans wounded Joram, and so he returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him, 2 Kings 8:28-29 / 2 Chronicles 22:5. Then Ahaziah, king of Judah, went down to Jezreel to see Joram, son of Ahab, because he had been wounded, 2 Kings 8:29 / 2 Chronicles 22:6.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

As we enter this chapter, we read about Jehu, who reigned in the Northern Kingdom of Israel from 841 to 814 B.C. What is important about this chapter is seen in the fact that when he is anointed as king, this actually brought an end to the house of Ahab.

JEHU ANOINTED KING OF ISRAEL

‘The prophet Elisha summoned a man from the company of the prophets and said to him, ‘Tuck your cloak into your belt, take this flask of olive oil with you, and go to Ramoth Gilead. When you get there, look for Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi. Go to him, get him away from his companions and take him into an inner room. Then take the flask and pour the oil on his head and declare, ‘This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.’ Then open the door and run; don’t delay!’ So the young prophet went to Ramoth Gilead. When he arrived, he found the army officers sitting together. ‘I have a message for you, commander,’ he said. ‘For which of us?’ asked Jehu. ‘For you, commander,’ he replied. Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet poured the oil on Jehu’s head and declared, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I anoint you, king over the LORD’s people Israel. You are to destroy the house of Ahab, your master, and I will avenge the blood of my servants, the prophets, and the blood of all the LORD’s servants shed by Jezebel. The whole house of Ahab will perish. I will cut

off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah. As for Jezebel, dogs will devour her on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her.’ Then he opened the door and ran.’ 2 Kings 9:1-10

The anointing of Jehu as king of Israel was first given to Elijah, 1 Kings 19:6. Elijah then gave Elisha, his servant, the task of doing this. In these verses, we read that Elisha gave his servant, that is, one of the sons of the prophets, to carry out the command originally given to Elijah, 2 Kings 9:1.

The servant was to tuck his cloak into his belt and take a flask of olive oil, 2 Kings 9:1. This oil was the holy oil, the anointing oil, which was mixed with other ingredients, Exodus 30:23-25.

After his anointing, 2 Kings 9:2-6, Jehu is given the task of restoring Israel; he was to do this by destroying any influence which may come from the house of Ahab and his descendants, 2 Kings 9:7.

God wanted to remove all the idolatrous behaviour from the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jehu did this by going after the leaders, some of whom were related to Ahab and Jezebel and some of whom were the false prophets of Baal.

God says the whole house of Ahab will perish and He will cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slave or free, 2 Kings 9:8. He will make the house of Ahab like the house of Jeroboam and like the house of Baasha, 2 Kings 9:9.

God says that Jezebel will be devoured by dogs on the plot of ground at Jezreel, and no one will bury her, 2 Kings 9:10 / 2 Kings 9:33. Back in 1 Kings 15:29, we read about the destruction of the house of Jeroboam and back in 1 Kings 16:9-12, we read about the destruction of the house of Baasha.

In other words, the house of Ahab had been warned twice about their fate because they turned away from God and His ways, and of course, Ahab himself had been personally warned of his fate back in 1 Kings 21:21-26.

We must remember that the end of Ahab’s reign and the dynasty would have happened a lot quicker if he hadn’t repented as he did earlier. God told him his punishment wasn’t going to happen in his lifetime, but in the lifetime of his son, Joram, 1 Kings 21:29.

‘Then he opened the door and ran. When Jehu went out to his fellow officers, one of them asked him, ‘Is everything all right? Why did this maniac come to you?’ ‘You know the man and the sort of things he says,’ Jehu replied. ‘That’s not true!’ they said. ‘Tell us.’ Jehu said, ‘Here is what he told me: ‘This is what the LORD says: I anoint you king over Israel.’ They quickly took their cloaks and spread them under him on the bare steps. Then they blew the trumpet and shouted, ‘Jehu is king!’ 2 Kings 9:10-13

The prophet then opens the door and runs, 2 Kings 9:10. I find it amusing that the people thought that God’s true prophets were maniacs, 2 Kings 9:11, and yet their own false prophets were sane. This is nothing new because madness was widely associated with prophecy in the Old Testament, Jeremiah 20:26 / Hosea 9:7.

Nothing much has changed today; many people look at Christians as if they are mad for believing in God, while they believe that they are sane because they believe in evolution or atheism.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Was it because he was a holy man of God that he was reputed by a club of irreligious officers to be a madman? In vain do such pretend that they fight for religion, and are the guardians of the public welfare and morals, if they persecute religion and scoff at holy men.’

When we read these verses, we can see how much the officers of Joram didn’t like him, 2 Kings 9:12. There’s almost a sense of relief in their actions and an over-the-top reaction towards their new king.

1. They spread their garments for Jehu to walk upon, 2 Kings 9:13, much like what happened when Christ walked into Jerusalem, Luke 19:29-40.

2. They blew the trumpet, 2 Kings 9:13, which was always associated with proclaiming a new king, 2 Kings 11:14 / 2 Samuel 15:10 / 1 Kings 1:39.

3. They shouted, ‘Jehu is king!’ 2 Kings 9:13.

Because all the leaders of the army took part in the proclamation that Jehu was king, meant that the anointing of Jehu as their new king was a complete success.

‘So Jehu son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, conspired against Joram. (Now Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramoth Gilead against Hazael, king of Aram, but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael, king of Aram.) Jehu said, ‘If you desire to make me king, don’t let anyone slip out of the city to go and tell the news in Jezreel.’ Then he got into his chariot and rode to Jezreel, because Joram was resting there and Ahaziah, king of Judah, had gone down to see him.’ 2 Kings 9:14-16

It appears that Jehu started planning some kind of conspiracy against Joram, 2 Kings 9:14, but these plans may have already been in the pipeline before he was announced king, 2 Chronicles 22:7-9. We don’t really know what Jehu’s motives are, but now that he is king, he can put his plans into action.

We are told Joram and all Israel had been defending Ramoth Gilead against Hazael king of Aram, but King Joram had returned to Jezreel to recover from the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle with Hazael king of Aram, 2 Kings 9:14.

It appears that those who were associated with Jehu immediately proceeded to proclaim him as king, 2 Kings 9:15-16, and so, now all of Israel was under the command of Jehu.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Once any man was proclaimed king during the reign of another king, that automatically meant the death of one of them or the engagement of a long civil war. Jehu said, in effect. All right, you have made me king; now, whatever you do, do not let anyone leave here with that kind of information to be told in Jezreel. And Jehu took a detachment of the troops and headed for Jezreel to kill the king.’

JEHU KILLS JORAM AND AHAZIAH

‘When the lookout standing on the tower in Jezreel saw Jehu’s troops approaching, he called out, ‘I see some troops coming.’ ‘Get a horseman,’ Joram ordered. ‘Send him to meet them and ask, ‘Do you come in peace?’ The horseman rode off to meet Jehu and said, ‘This is what the king says: ‘Do you come in peace?’ ‘What do you have to do with peace?’ Jehu replied. ‘Fall in behind me.’ The lookout reported, ‘The messenger has reached them, but he isn’t coming back.’ So the king sent out a second horseman. When he came to them, he said, ‘This is what the king says:

‘Do you come in peace?’ Jehu replied, ‘What do you have to do with peace? Fall in behind me.’ The lookout reported, ‘He has reached them, but he isn’t coming back either. The driving is like that of Jehu son of Nimshi—he drives like a maniac.’ ‘Hitch up my chariot,’ Joram ordered. And when it was hitched up, Joram, king of Israel and Ahaziah, king of Judah, rode out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu. They met him at the plot of ground that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. When Joram saw Jehu, he asked, ‘Have you come in peace, Jehu?’ ‘How can there be peace,’ Jehu replied, ‘as long as all the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother Jezebel abound?’ Joram turned about and fled, calling out to Ahaziah, ‘Treachery, Ahaziah!’ Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart, and he slumped down in his chariot. Jehu said to Bidkar, his chariot officer, ‘Pick him up and throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite. Remember how you and I were riding together in chariots behind Ahab, his father, when the LORD spoke this prophecy against him: ‘Yesterday I saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, declares the LORD, and I will surely make you pay for it on this plot of ground, declares the LORD.’ Now then, pick him up and throw him on that plot, in accordance with the word of the LORD.’ 2 Kings 9:17-26

There was a lookout standing on the tower in Jezreel, and when he saw Jehu’s troops approaching, he shouted out to Joram, 2 Kings 9:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These watchmen, fixed on elevated places and generally within hearing of each other, served as a kind of telegraph to communicate intelligence through the whole country. But, in some cases, it appears that the intelligence was conveyed by a horseman to the next stage, as in the case before us. At this time, when the armies were at Ramoth-Gilead, they were, no doubt, doubly watchful to observe the state of the country, and to notice every movement, 2 Samuel 13:34.’

Joram sends out two horsemen to ask if Jehu comes in peace, 2 Kings 9:17 / 2 Kings 9:19, but neither of them returns because they switch allegiance and join Jehu, 2 Kings 9:18-20.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Kings 9:20.

‘Jehu was properly ‘the grandson’ of Nimshi, who was probably a more famous person than Jehoshaphat, 2 Kings 9:2.’

We have to wonder, why didn’t Joram see the warning signs when the first messenger didn’t return or even when the second messenger didn’t return? I guess it’s possible he was trying to buy some time to get prepared for war, but more than likely, he was just like his father, who never saw the obvious, 2 Kings 1:9-13.

It appears at this point in history that the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah have a good relationship with one another. The house of Ahab was now on the thrones of both Israel and Judah, but God appears to use Joram’s illness in Jezreel to bring Ahaziah from Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 22:7. In doing so, the two branches of Ahab’s house were brought together and brought to an end at the same time.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Appropriately, the final settlement of God’s account with the house of Ahab would take place at Jezreel, at that very vineyard of Naboth, where through Ahab’s murder of that righteous man, the dogs licked his blood, and, in the next chapter, we shall see how the dogs indeed licked the blood of Ahab in the person of his grandson Ahaziah in the very same place. None of God’s prophecies ever failed!’

Joram and Ahaziah rode out and met Jehu at the plot of ground that had belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, 2 Kings 9:21 / 2 Chronicles 22:7. Remember, Naboth’s vineyard, which was his inheritance, had been stolen by Ahab and Jezebel, 1 Kings 21:1-18, and so, this is the perfect place to bring down the house of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:19.

It’s quite clear that Ahab and Jezebel’s sinful actions involved idolatry and witchcraft, 2 Kings 9:22, and it’s quite clear that these practices were carried on by their son, hence why Joram was killed, and Ahab’s household was coming to an end.

Joram runs away while calling out to Ahaziah, ‘treachery, Ahaziah! 2 Kings 9:23. Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders and the arrow pierced his heart and he slumped down in his chariot, 2 Kings 9:24.

Jehu then commands Bidkar, his chariot officer to pick him up and throw him on the field that belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, 2 Kings 9:25 / 1 Kings 21:1-29. He asks Bidkar to remember how both of them were riding together in chariots behind Ahab, his father, when the Lord said, ‘yesterday He saw the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons, and He will surely make him pay for it on this plot of ground, 2 Kings 9:25-26.

And so, Jehu tells him to pick Joram up and throw him on that plot, in accordance with the word of God, 2 Kings 9:26. Because Jehu understood that his mission was from God, that he was to destroy the house of Ahab, he doesn’t hang around in the task of killing all the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel.

‘When Ahaziah, king of Judah, saw what had happened, he fled up the road to Beth Haggan. Jehu chased him, shouting, ‘Kill him too!’ They wounded him in his chariot on the way up to Gur near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there. His servants took him by chariot to Jerusalem and buried him with his ancestors in his tomb in the City of David. (In the eleventh year of Joram son of Ahab, Ahaziah had become king of Judah.)’ 2 Kings 9:27-

When Ahaziah saw what had happened, he ran to Beth Haggan, 2 Kings 9:27. Ahaziah had a good friendship with Joram, and because of this friendship, Ahaziah joined in with the house of Ahab's sinfulness. This is the reason why Jehu said that he, too, should be killed, 2 Kings 9:27.

They wounded Ahaziah in his chariot on the way up to Gur near Ibleam, but he escaped to Megiddo and died there, 2 Kings 9:27 / 2 Chronicles 22:8-9. Although God had willed the execution of the house of Omri, to whose dynasty Ahab and his evil family belonged, Jehu's murderous deeds in their totality were not approved by God.

Jehu's envoys killed him, but they allowed his servants to bury him, 2 Kings 9:28. Ahaziah's body was taken by chariot to Jerusalem, and they buried him with his ancestors in his tomb in the City of David, 2 Kings 9:28.

We are told that in the eleventh year of Joram, 2 Kings 9:29 / 2 Chronicles 21:18-19. Ahaziah had become king of Judah, 2 Kings 9:29. So there was no one in the house of Ahaziah powerful enough to retain the kingdom, 2 Chronicles 22:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the year.

'The twelfth according to 2 Kings 8:25. The discrepancy may be best explained from two ways of reckoning the accession of Ahaziah, who is likely to have been regent for his father during at least one year, 2 Chronicles 21:19.'

JEZEBEL KILLED

'Then Jehu went to Jezreel. When Jezebel heard about it, she put on eye makeup, arranged her hair, and looked out of a window. As Jehu entered the gate, she asked, 'Have you come in peace, you Zimri, you murderer of your master?' He looked up at the window and called out, 'Who is on my side? Who?' Two or three eunuchs looked down at him. 'Throw her down!' Jehu said. So they threw her down, and some of her blood splattered the wall and the horses as they trampled her underfoot. Jehu went in and ate and drank. 'Take care of that cursed woman,' he said, 'and bury her, for she was a king's daughter.' But when they went out to bury her, they found nothing except her skull, her feet, and her hands. They went back and told Jehu, who said, 'This is the word of the LORD that he spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: On the plot of ground at Jezreel, dogs will devour Jezebel's flesh. Jezebel's body will be like dung on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel.' 2 Kings 9:30-37

Notice when Jehu went to Jezreel, Jezebel prepared herself to look good, 2 Kings 9:30 / Jeremiah 4:30 / Ezekiel 23:40. She was probably thinking that if she did this, she would receive some kind of mercy from Jehu.

It appears that she knew that Jehu was going to kill her, too, and so she reminds him of Zimri, 2 Kings 9:31, who was also murdered in order to seize the throne, 1 Kings 16:8-10.

At that point, two eunuchs appeared at the window near Jezebel, and then a third. It is then that Jehu asks for loyalty to him, 2 Kings 9:32, and they have no hesitation in doing so.

This resulted in Jezebel being thrown out of the window, 2 Kings 9:33, and to show how much they hated Jezebel, they trampled over her body with horses, 2 Kings 9:33.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'What a terrible death! She was already, by the fall, almost dashed to pieces, and the brutal Jehu trampled her already mangled body under his horse's feet!'

Since she was the daughter of a king, Jehu wanted to bury her, 2 Kings 9:34, but it was too late because the dogs had already eaten most of her body, 2 Kings 9:35-36.

Jezebel's body will be like dung on the ground in the plot at Jezreel, so that no one will be able to say, 'This is Jezebel,' 2 Kings 9:37. This was the fulfilment of Elijah's prophecy concerning Jezebel's death, 1 Kings 21:23.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Leaving the mangled body on the bare earth, Jehu went to the banquet. It was, no doubt, important that he should at once show himself to the court as king. In calling Jezebel ‘this cursed one,’ Jehu means to remind his hearers that the curse of God had been pronounced upon her by Elijah, 2 Kings 9:36, and so to justify his own conduct.’

Jezebel’s sin was that she brought her own gods to Israel, namely Baal and Astarte, 1 Kings 16:31, and she ordered the murder of God’s prophets, 1 Kings 18:4. Sadly, Jezebel’s influence was still very much alive metaphorically by the time we get to the New Testament, Revelation 2:20.

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

‘Now there were in Samaria seventy sons of the house of Ahab. So Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria: to the officials of Jezreel, to the elders and to the guardians of Ahab’s children. He said, ‘You have your master’s sons with you, and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city, and weapons. Now, as soon as this letter reaches you, choose the best and most worthy of your master’s sons and set him on his father’s throne. Then fight for your master’s house.’ But they were terrified and said, ‘If two kings could not resist him, how can we?’ So the palace administrator, the city governor, the elders, and the guardians sent this message to Jehu: ‘We are your servants, and we will do anything you say. We will not appoint anyone as king; you do whatever you think best.’ Then Jehu wrote them a second letter, saying, ‘If you are on my side and will obey me, take the heads of your master’s sons and come to me in Jezreel by this time tomorrow.’ Now the royal princes, seventy of them, were with the leading men of the city, who were rearing them. When the letter arrived, these men took the princes and slaughtered all seventy of them. They put their heads in baskets and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel. When the messenger arrived, he told Jehu, ‘They have brought the heads of the princes.’ Then Jehu ordered, ‘Put them in two piles at the entrance of the city gate until morning.’ The next morning, Jehu went out. He stood before all the people and said, ‘You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these? Know, then, that not a word the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail. The LORD has done what he announced through his servant Elijah.’ So Jehu killed everyone in Jezreel who remained of the house of Ahab, as well as all his chief men, his close friends, and his priests, leaving him no survivor.’ 2 Kings 10:1-11

AHAB’S FAMILY KILLED

After the killing of Jezebel, 2 Kings 9:30-37, Ahab still had some descendants who were still living, he had seventy sons, 2 Kings 10:1. Jehu wanted to kill all of Ahab’s descendants and by doing this it would secure his reign as king and it would fulfil the judgment which God placed upon the household of Ahab because of his idolatry, 1 Kings 21:21-26.

It appears that Jehu will go to any lengths to accomplish his plans to kill the descendants of Ahab. Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, demanding the loyalty of others by asking them to kill the seventy sons of Ahab, 2 Kings 10:1-3. These are the same people who had obeyed to the letter the vicious orders of Jezebel to murder Naboth and his sons, 1 Kings 21:7-16.

These men were very much involved in Naboth’s murder, 1 Kings 21:11, and now they have the same attitude towards Jehu, and they are more than willing to carry out Jehu’s order for them to kill Ahab’s seventy sons, 2 Kings 10:4-5. The two kings mentioned, 2 Kings 10:4, are Jehoram and Ahaziah, 2 Kings 9:21-28.

Jehu wrote them a second letter, asking them to take the head of the seventy sons of Ahab and bring them to him, 2 Kings 10:6. After killing the seventy sons, they sent the seventy heads to Jehu in a basket, 2 Kings 10:7. Jehu ordered that the heads be put in two piles at the entrance of the city gate until morning, 2 Kings 10:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Probably placed one on either side of the gateway, to strike terror into the partisans of the late dynasty as they passed in and out of the town.’

The next morning, Jehu went out and stood before all the people and said, “You are innocent. It was I who conspired against my master and killed him, but who killed all these? 2 Kings 10:9.

He says, know, then, that not a word God has spoken against the house of Ahab will fail, God has done what he announced through his servant Elijah, 2 Kings 10:10.

Jehu had killed everyone who was related to Ahab, 2 Kings 10:11, but we must remember that it wasn’t God who moved him to do all these evil things. God knew what Jehu was like before he made him king. God doesn’t create evil, but He uses evil for His purposes. In this case, God used Jehu’s evil character to bring about the judgment upon the descendants of Ahab.

‘Jehu then set out and went toward Samaria. At Beth Eked of the Shepherds, he met some relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah and asked, ‘Who are you?’ They said, ‘We are relatives of Ahaziah, and we have come down to greet the families of the king and of the queen mother.’ ‘Take them alive!’ he ordered. So they took them alive and slaughtered them by the well of Beth Eked—forty-two of them. He left no survivor.’ 2 Kings 10:12-14

Jehu now goes toward Samaria, and at Beth Eked of the Shepherds, he meets some relatives of Ahaziah, the king of Judah and asks who they are, to which they tell him they are relatives of Ahaziah, who have come down to greet the families of the king and of the queen mother, 2 Kings 10:12-13.

Since Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab, these relatives of Ahaziah would have been descendants of Ahab. Because Ahaziah had no brothers, in the usual sense of the word, these relatives were probably his nephews or cousins, 2 Chronicles 22:8. They were relatives of Judah who ministered to Ahaziah.

Jehu appears to be going over the top as his massacre of Ahab’s descendants continues, 2 Kings 10:14. He murders forty-two men, 2 Kings 10:14, probably just in case they were conspiring against him or just in case they continue in the idolatrous behaviour of Ahab and Jezebel.

‘After he left there, he came upon Jehonadab son of Rekeb, who was on his way to meet him. Jehu greeted him and said, ‘Are you in accord with me, as I am with you?’ ‘I am,’ Jehonadab answered. ‘If so,’ said Jehu, ‘give me your hand.’ So he did, and Jehu helped him up into the chariot. Jehu said, ‘Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD.’ Then he had him ride along in his chariot. When Jehu came to Samaria, he killed all who were left there of Ahab’s family; he destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD spoken to Elijah.’ 2 Kings 10:15-17

Jehu now meets Jehonadab, who was on his way to meet him, and Jehu asks are you in accord with me, as I am with him? And Jehonadab says to Jehu, asks for his hand, 2 Kings 10:15-16.

The pledge and the handshake signified a formal coalition between Jehu and the Rechabites, Numbers 24:21 / Jeremiah 35:6-7. Jehu helped Jehonadab up into the chariot and asked him to come and see his zeal for God, and so Jehonadab rode with Jehu in his chariot, 2 Kings 10:16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This has been generally considered as exacting a promise from Jehonadab; but does it mean any more than his taking him by the hand, to help him to step into his chariot, in which Jehu was then sitting? Jehonadab was doubtless a very honourable man in Israel, and by carrying him about with him in his chariot, Jehu endeavoured to acquire the public esteem. ‘Jehu must be acting right, for Jehonadab is with him, and approves his conduct.’

Jehonadab commanded his sons to follow after the laws of God, to refrain from drinking wine, and to live in tents as the Israelites did during their wandering in the wilderness, [Jeremiah 35:6-19](#).

Jehonadab left a legacy of obedience to God in the lives of his sons. He must have told his descendants to live for God because of what he witnessed in the life of Jehu in his zeal to get rid of Baal worship from Israel, [2 Kings 10:16](#). When Jehu arrives at Samaria, he killed all who were left there of Ahab's family, he destroyed them, according to the word of God spoken to Elijah, [2 Kings 10:17](#) / [2 Kings 10:10](#).

SERVANTS OF BAAL KILLED

‘Then Jehu brought all the people together and said to them, ‘Ahab served Baal a little; Jehu will serve him much. Now summon all the prophets of Baal, all his servants and all his priests. See that no one is missing, because I am going to hold a great sacrifice for Baal. Anyone who fails to come will no longer live.’ But Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the servants of Baal. Jehu said, ‘Call an assembly in honour of Baal.’ So they proclaimed it. Then he sent word throughout Israel, and all the servants of Baal came; not one stayed away. They crowded into the temple of Baal until it was full from one end to the other. And Jehu said to the keeper of the wardrobe, ‘Bring robes for all the servants of Baal.’ So he brought out robes for them. Then Jehu and Jehonadab, son of Rekab, went into the temple of Baal. Jehu said to the servants of Baal, ‘Look around and see that no one who serves the LORD is here with you—only servants of Baal.’ So they went in to make sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had posted eighty men outside with this warning: ‘If one of you lets any of the men I am placing in your hands escape, it will be your life for his life.’ As soon as Jehu had finished making the burnt offering, he ordered the guards and officers: ‘Go in and kill them; let no one escape.’ So they cut them down with the sword. The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of Baal. They brought the sacred stone out of the temple of Baal and burned it. They demolished the sacred stone of Baal and tore down the temple of Baal, and people have used it for a latrine to this day. So Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel.’ [2 Kings 10:18-28](#)

Jehu brings all the people together and says to them, ‘Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much, [2 Kings 10:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Having now slain all the issue of Ahab in the kingdom of Israel, and all the influential men of the party, [2 Kings 10:7](#) / [2 Kings 10:11](#) / [2 Kings 10:17](#), Jehu felt that he might begin his reformation of religion. But even now, he uses ‘subtilty’ rather than open violence.’

Then he calls for all the prophets of Baal to be brought to him, [2 Kings 10:19](#). If he wanted to completely get rid of Baal worship, he needed to kill the religious leaders, Baal's prophets from the land, [2 Kings 10:19](#).

Jehu comes up with a plan to get them all together in one place, [2 Kings 10:19-21](#). Jehu asks the keeper of the wardrobe to bring robes for all the servants of Baal, and the keeper did, [2 Kings 10:22](#).

Jehu and Jehonadab go into the temple of Baal, and Jehu asks the servants of Baal to look around and see that no one who serves God is here with you, only servants of Baal, and so, the servants of Baal go in to make sacrifices and burnt offerings, [2 Kings 10:23-24](#).

Jehu had posted eighty men outside with a warning that says if they allow anyone to escape, they themselves will be killed in their place, [2 Kings 10:24](#). As soon as Jehu had finished making the burnt offering, he ordered the guards and officers to kill everyone, and they did, [2 Kings 10:25](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The actual sacrificers were no doubt the priests of Baal, but Jehu is considered to have made the offering, since he furnished the victims, [1 Kings 8:62-63](#).’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Had Jehu been a man of any conscientious principle in religion, he would have finished the tragedy before he offered the burnt-offering, but to a man of no religion, the worship of Jehovah and of Baal are alike. If he prefers either, it is merely as a statesman, for political purposes.’

The guards and officers threw the bodies out and then entered the inner shrine of the temple of Baal, 2 Kings 10:25. They brought out the sacred stone of the temple of Baal and burned it, 2 Kings 10:26 / 1 Kings 14:23.

Notice that they didn’t just kill the false prophets; they destroyed the temple of Baal, they totally destroyed it to such an extent that they left no trace of Baal worship in Palestine, 2 Kings 10:27-28. We shouldn’t underestimate how popular Baal worship was; it totally ruled people’s lives, Hosea 1:1-9.

‘However, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit—the worship of the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. The LORD said to Jehu, ‘Because you have done well in accomplishing what is right in my eyes and have done to the house of Ahab all I had in mind to do, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.’ Yet Jehu was not careful to keep the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit.’ 2 Kings 10:29-31

After murdering all the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel, and after killing all the false prophets of Baal and destroying the temple, Jehu didn’t turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, 2 Kings 10:29.

It’s here that we get a glimpse into Jehu’s real motives for doing what he had earlier done. Yes, he was fulfilling God’s judgment upon Ahab and Jezebel, but he was also fulfilling his own evil desire to remove anyone who would threaten his reign as king.

He continued in the sins of Jeroboam, 2 Kings 10:29 / 2 Kings 10:31, that is, he left the golden calves at Bethel and Dan, 1 Kings 12:25-33. These two altars came to symbolise the division between the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As long as they remained in place, the two kingdoms would never come together as one United Kingdom.

God tells Jehu, because he has done well in accomplishing what is right in God’s eyes and has done to the house of Ahab all God had in mind to do, his descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation, 2 Kings 10:30.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These four descendants of Jehu were Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam the second, and Zechariah, 2 Kings 14 / 2 Kings 15. This was all the compensation Jehu had in either world, as a recompense of his zeal for the Lord.’

Despite God saying this, Jehu didn’t turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, and he wasn’t careful to keep God’s laws, 2 Kings 10:31.

‘In those days, the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael overpowered the Israelites throughout their territory east of the Jordan in all the land of Gilead (the region of Gad, Reuben and Manasseh), from Aroer by the Arnon Gorge through Gilead to Bashan. As for the other events of Jehu’s reign, all he did, and all his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jehu rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. And Jehoahaz, his son, succeeded him as king. The time that Jehu reigned over Israel in Samaria was twenty-eight years.’ 2 Kings 10:32-36

Notice it was during this time that the Lord began to reduce the size of Israel, 2 Kings 10:32 / 2 Kings 8:12. While Jehu was busy securing his reign in central Palestine, Hazael, king of Aram, started to bring the northern portions of Israel under Aramean control, 2 Kings 10:32-33 / 1 Kings 4:13 / 1 Kings 4:19.

God allowed this to happen simply because the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah wouldn’t come together as one to be ruled by God. God allowed them to come under the subjection of the Arameans, and he allowed them to go into captivity.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the loss of all the Trans-Jordanic kingdom of Israel, and also the cutting off of their dominion over Bashan in the land of Edom. The territory lost included that originally settled by the half-tribe of Manasseh and by the tribes of Gad and Reuben, [Joshua 22:1-9](#). With the continued worship of their idols at Dan and Bethel and also Samaria, the total ruin of Northern Israel became inevitable. Their doom, destruction, and captivity, from which they would never return, loomed upon the horizon of the future and in 722 B.C., the fall of Samaria signalled the end of the sinful kingdom.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The family of Ahab had made Jezreel a sort of second capital, and had reigned there, at least in part, [2 Kings 9:15-30](#). Jehu and his descendants seem to have fixed their residence wholly in Samaria, [2 Kings 13:1](#) / [2 Kings 13:10](#) / [2 Kings 14:23](#) / [2 Kings 15:8](#).’

The other events of Jehu’s reign, all he did, and all his achievements, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, [2 Kings 10:34](#). Jehu reigned over Israel for twenty-eight years, and when he died, his son Jehoahaz took over as king of Israel, [2 Kings 10:35-36](#).

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash, son of Ahaziah and stole him away from among the royal princes, who were about to be murdered. She put him and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah; so he was not killed. He remained hidden with his nurse at the temple of the LORD for six years while Athaliah ruled the land.’ [2 Kings 11:1-3](#)

ATHALIAH AND JOASH

Although the text says that ‘Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah’, [2 Kings 11:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 22:10](#), we must remember that sometimes daughters were called ‘mother’.

In [2 Kings](#), we find that Athaliah was actually the daughter of Ahab, [2 Kings 8:18](#) / [2 Kings 8:26](#). She reigned as queen of Judah in the south from 853 to 841 B.C. When Athaliah saw that her son was dead, she proceeded to destroy the whole royal family of the house of Judah, [2 Kings 11:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 22:10](#).

It appears that because she was Ahab’s daughter, her husband Jehoram didn’t get involved with Jehu when he was killing the descendants of Ahab, [2 Kings 11:1-3](#) / [2 Chronicles 22:10-23:21](#).

To make sure Athaliah remained in power, she killed all the sons of Jehoram, not the sons of Athaliah, [2 Kings 11:1-3](#). The royal seed would include the descendants of Jehoshaphat of the Davidic line.

Whilst she killed all the sons of Jeroham, Jehosheba, who was Jehoiada’s wife and Joash’s aunt, took Joash away from Athaliah and hid him, her nephew, [2 Kings 11:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 22:11](#), for six years in the temple, [2 Chronicles 22:12](#) / [2 Kings 11:3](#).

It was during these six years that Athaliah reigned as queen of Judah, not knowing that Joash lived in secret in the temple not far from where she resided, 2 Kings 11:3 / 2 Chronicles 22:11.

This is clearly God working through Jehosheba, 2 Kings 11:2 / 2 Chronicles 22:11, as He was preserving the seedline of David. God had promised that through David, one would come to sit on his throne, 2 Samuel 7:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Nothing but the miraculous intervention of the Divine providence could have saved the line of David at this time, and preserved the prophecy relative to the Messiah. The whole truth of that prophecy, and the salvation of the world, appeared to be now suspended on the brittle thread of the life of an infant of a year old, 2 Chronicles 24:1, to destroy whom was the interest of the reigning power! But God can save by few as well as by many. He had purposed, and vain were the counter-exertions of earth and hell.’

‘In the seventh year, Jehoiada sent for the commanders of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and had them brought to him at the temple of the LORD. He made a covenant with them and put them under oath at the temple of the LORD. Then he showed them the king’s son. He commanded them, saying, ‘This is what you are to do: You who are in the three companies that are going on duty on the Sabbath—a third of you guarding the royal palace, a third at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guard, who take turns guarding the temple—and you who are in the other two companies that normally go off Sabbath duty are all to guard the temple for the king. Station yourselves around the king, each of you with weapon in hand. Anyone who approaches your ranks is to be put to death. Stay close to the king wherever he goes.’ The commanders of units of a hundred did just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. Each one took his men—those who were going on duty on the Sabbath and those who were going off duty—and came to Jehoiada the priest. Then he gave the commanders the spears and shields that had belonged to King David, and that were in the temple of the LORD. The guards, each with weapon in hand, stationed themselves around the king—near the altar and the temple, from the south side to the north side of the temple. Jehoiada brought out the king’s son and put the crown on him; he presented him with a copy of the covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and the people clapped their hands and shouted, ‘Long live the king!’ 2 Kings 11:4-12

Jehoiada sent for the commanders of units of a hundred, the Carites and the guards and had them brought to him at the temple of God, 2 Kings 11:4. The Carites were also known as the Kerethites, 1 Kings 1:38; they were basically soldiers who were employed by kings as their protectors.

They were Philistine soldiers who were very loyal to David and David’s dynasty, 2 Samuel 15:18 / 1 Samuel 30:14 / Ezekiel 25:16 / Zephaniah 2:5. Jehoiada comes up with a great plan on how he can overthrow Athaliah. He hid Joash until he was older, and he went on to secure the loyalty of the commanders and the palace guard by making a covenant with them, 2 Kings 11:4 / 2 Chronicles 23:1. Jehoiada made a covenant with them and put them under oath, and then he showed them the king’s son.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the names mentioned in 2 Chronicles 23:1.

‘The five names do not occur in Kings, only, and incidentally, the five divisions of the royal guard, 2 Kings 11:5.’ He commanded them and tells them they who are in the three companies that are going on duty on the Sabbath, a third of them guarding the royal palace, a third at the Sur Gate, and a third at the gate behind the guard, who take turns guarding the temple and they who are in the other two companies that normally go off Sabbath duty are all to guard the temple for the king, 2 Kings 11:5-7 / 2 Chronicles 23:4-6.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears that Jehoiada chose the Sabbath day to proclaim the young king, because as that was a day of public concourse, the gathering together of the people who were in this secret would not be noticed and it is likely that they all came unarmed, and were supplied by Jehoiada with the spears and shields which David had laid up in the temple, 2 Kings 11:10.’

He then tells them to station themselves around the king, with weapons, and anyone who approaches them is to be put to death, 2 Kings 11:8 / 2 Chronicles 23:7. He tells them to stay close to the king wherever he goes, 2 Kings 11:8 / 2 Chronicles 23:7.

The Levites and the men of Judah do as Jehoiada commanded, 2 Kings 11:9 / 2 Chronicles 23:8. He plans to overthrow the Baal worship with which Athaliah was involved, and because of this, he was easily able to secure the loyalty of the priests of Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 23:4.

The priests wouldn't normally have had weapons, but the text tells us that the weapons had been stored in the tabernacle by David, 2 Kings 11:10-11 / 2 Chronicles 23:9-10, and later placed in the temple by Solomon.

When the day came for the anointing of Joash as king, he was anointed by the High Priest and an official announcement was made with the approval of the people, 2 Kings 11:12 / 2 Chronicles 23:11, and so, Joash was made king at the time, seven years old, 2 Kings 11:21 / 2 Chronicles 24:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Book of the Law’, which was kept in the ark of the covenant, Deuteronomy 31:26. This Jehoiada placed on the king's head at the moment of coronation, perhaps to indicate that the king was not to be above, but under, the direction of the Law of his country.’

‘When Athaliah heard the noise made by the guards and the people, she went to the people at the temple of the LORD. She looked, and there was the king, standing by the pillar, as the custom was. The officers and the trumpeters were beside the king, and all the people of the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Then Athaliah tore her robes and called out, ‘Treason! Treason!’ Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders of units of a hundred, who were in charge of the troops: ‘Bring her out between the ranks and put to the sword anyone who follows her.’ For the priest had said, ‘She must not be put to death in the temple of the LORD.’ So they seized her as she reached the place where the horses enter the palace grounds, and there she was put to death.’ 2 Kings 11:13-16

When queen Athaliah heard the noise, she knew what was happening, 2 Kings 11:13-14 / 2 Chronicles 23:12-13, but wasn't very happy, she tore her robes and cried out ‘treason, treason’, 2 Kings 11:14 / 2 Chronicles 23:13. It's clear that she was caught totally off guard and as a result, everything she did to try and stop Jehoiada from establishing the kingship of Joash was useless.

In order to keep the temple from becoming desecrated, she is taken outside the temple and killed, 2 Kings 11:15-16 / 2 Chronicles 23:14-15. Athaliah was very much like her parents, Ahab and Jezebel; she was a murderer and promoted idolatry, Ezekiel 18:4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They probably brought her out near the king's stables. It has been supposed, from Ezekiel 46:1-2, that the east gate of the inner court was that by which the king entered on the Sabbath day, whereas on all other days he entered by the south gate.

And there was another gate, called the horse gate, in the wall of the city, Jeremiah 31:40, for the king's horses to go out at from the stables at Millo, which is therefore called, 2 Chronicles 23:15, the horse gate toward the king's house.’

‘Jehoiada then made a covenant between the LORD and the king and people that they would be the LORD's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They smashed the altars and idols to pieces and killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, in front of the altars. Then Jehoiada the priest posted guards at the temple of the LORD. He took with him the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards and all the people of the land, and together they brought the king down from the temple of the LORD and went into the palace, entering by way of the gate of the guards. The king then took his place on the royal throne. All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was calm, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the palace. Joash was seven years old when he began to reign.’ 2 Kings 11:17-21

The covenant that Jehoiada made with the Lord, the king, and the people was simply a renewal of that covenant which the Lord had made with Israel through Moses, [2 Kings 11:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 23:16](#) / [Exodus 34:1-27](#). Even though Solomon had built a temple to God, it appears that Baal became so popular that the people demanded that temples be built in order to worship Baal.

Here, the people went to the temple of Baal and tore it down, [2 Kings 11:17-18](#) / [2 Chronicles 23:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 24:7](#). In [2 Kings 10](#), Jehu oversaw the destruction of the temple of Baal in Samaria, but here the temple of Baal in Jerusalem was destroyed by the people. Notice also that they destroyed the sacred objects dedicated to Baal, and they killed Mattan, the priest of Baal, [2 Chronicles 23:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 13:5-10](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The temple worship having been discontinued during Athaliah’s rule, it devolved on Jehoiada now to re-establish it. He had already summoned the Levites out of all the cities of Judah, [2 Chronicles 23:2](#), and had made use of them in the events of the day. He therefore proceeded at once to assign the custody of the temple to a particular course, before conducting the young king to the palace.’

Jehoiada placed the oversight of the temple of the LORD in the hands of the Levitical priests, to whom David had made assignments in the temple, to present the burnt offerings of the LORD as written in the Law of Moses, with rejoicing and singing, as David had ordered, [2 Chronicles 23:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the duty of the priests alone to offer the burnt offerings, [Numbers 18:1-7](#), and of the Levites alone to praise God with singing and music, [1 Chronicles 23:5](#) / [1 Chronicles 25:1-7](#).’

He also stationed gatekeepers at the gates of the LORD’s temple so that no one who was in any way unclean might enter, [2 Chronicles 23:19](#). Jehoiada posted guards at the temple of God and he took with him the commanders of hundreds, the Carites, the guards and all the people of the land, and together they brought the king down from the temple of God and went into the palace, entering by way of the gate of the guards, [2 Chronicles 23:20](#) / [2 Kings 11:18-19](#).

Joash then took his place on the royal throne, [2 Kings 11:19](#). All the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was calm, because Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the palace, [2 Kings 11:20](#) / [2 Chronicles 23:21](#) / [2 Kings 11:16](#).

Selman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The people’s rejoicing augmented the joy of temple worship, and sounded a note unheard since the days of Jehoshaphat, [2 Chronicles 20:27](#).

That the city was quiet was a sign of God’s blessing, which often followed special acts of faith and obedience, [1 Chronicles 4:40](#) / [1 Chronicles 22:9](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:23](#) / [2 Chronicles 14:4-5](#) / [2 Chronicles 20:30](#).’ Joash was now king at the age of seven, [2 Kings 11:21](#); however, he was under the wise guidance of Jehoiada, and he was a good ruler as long as Jehoiada lived.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

‘In the seventh year of Jehu, Joash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother’s name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him. The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.’ 2 Kings 12:1-3

Some translations use the name ‘Jehoash’, but this is simply a variation of the name Joash. Joash reigned in Jerusalem forty years, and his mother’s name was Zibiah, who was from Beersheba, 2 Kings 12:1 / 2 Chronicles 24:1. Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all the years of Jehoiada the priest, 2 Kings 12:2 / 2 Chronicles 24:2.

Because Joash was only seven years old when he began to reign, 2 Chronicles 24:1 / 2 Kings 11:21, he heavily relied on the wise guidance of Jehoiada, who was high priest at the time, 2 Kings 12:2 / 2 Chronicles 24:2. Notice he had two wives, 2 Chronicles 24:3, which tells us he didn’t live according to God’s principles of only having one wife. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Athaliah’s destruction of the royal seed had left Joash without a natural successor, and his marriage at the earliest suitable age was, therefore, a matter of state policy. One of his wives in question was probably ‘Jehoaddan of Jerusalem,’ the mother of Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:1, who must have been taken to wife by Joash as early as his 21st year.’

It appears that in the early years of Joash’s reign, he stayed in Jerusalem and, as a result, Judah didn’t remove all the high places, and so, the people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in idolatrous worship outside of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 12:3 / 2 Chronicles 24:15-27.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The worship on the ‘high places’ seems to have continued uninterruptedly to the time of Hezekiah, who abolished it, 2 Kings 18:4. It was, however, again established by Manasseh, his son, 2 Kings 21:3. The priests at this time cannot have regarded it as idolatrous, or Jehoiada would have put it during his regency. Jehoiada lived after the accession of Joash at least 23 years, 2 Kings 12:6. Thus, the idolatries of Joash, 2 Chronicles 24:18, were confined to his last 10 or 15 years.’

JOASH REPAIRS THE TEMPLE

‘Joash said to the priests, ‘Collect all the money that is brought as sacred offerings to the temple of the LORD—the money collected in the census, the money received from personal vows and the money brought voluntarily to the temple. Let every priest receive the money from one of the treasurers, then use it to repair whatever damage is found in the temple.’ But by the twenty-third year of King Joash, the priests still had not repaired the temple. Therefore, King Joash summoned Jehoiada the priest and the other priests and asked them, ‘Why aren’t you repairing the damage done to the temple? Take no more money from your treasurers, but hand it over for repairing the temple.’ The priests agreed that they would not collect any more money from the people and that they would not repair the temple themselves.’ 2 Kings 12:4-8

When Queen Athaliah reigned, she was so obsessed with Baal worship and the upkeep of the temples of Baal that it’s clear that God’s temple had been totally neglected. She had no respect for God or His temple because she removed some items from God’s temple and placed them in the temple of Baal, 2 Chronicles 24:7.

Because she neglected God’s temple, it was now in need of some serious repair, which was going to cost a lot of money, 2 Kings 12:4-5 / 2 Chronicles 24:4. The collection was to be made throughout Judah, with each of the priests and Levites collecting the temple tax in his own region, 2 Chronicles 24:5.

This money was sourced in three ways.

1. The half-shekel required by the Law, Exodus 30:13.

2. The money paid by those who had devoted themselves or made vows, a variable sum depending on age, sex, and property, **Leviticus 27:2-8 / Numbers 18:15-16**.
3. The money offered in the way of free-will offerings.

They tried to raise enough funds to repair the temple, but sadly, the priests failed to raise enough, **2 Kings 12:6 / Malachi 2:1-2**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In what year Jehoash gave the orders for these repairs, we cannot tell, but the account here plainly intimates that they had been long given, and that nothing was done, merely through the inactivity and negligence of the priests, **2 Chronicles 24:6**.’

Joash then summoned Jehoiada and the other priests and asked them, why aren’t they repairing the damage done to the temple? And tells them to take no more money from their treasurers, but hand it over for repairing the temple, **2 Kings 12:7 / 2 Chronicles 24:6**.

We’re told that the sons of that wicked woman Athaliah had broken into the temple of God and had used even its sacred objects for the Baals, **2 Chronicles 24:7**. The priests agree that they wouldn’t collect any more money from the people and that they would not repair the temple themselves, **2 Kings 12:8**.

‘Jehoiada the priest took a chest and bored a hole in its lid. He placed it beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the temple of the LORD. The priests who guarded the entrance put into the chest all the money that was brought to the temple of the LORD. Whenever they saw that there was a large amount of money in the chest, the royal secretary and the high priest came, counted the money that had been brought into the temple of the LORD and put it into bags.

When the amount had been determined, they gave the money to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. With it, they paid those who worked on the temple of the LORD—the carpenters and builders, the masons, and stonecutters. They purchased timber and blocks of dressed stone for the repair of the temple of the LORD and met all the other expenses of restoring the temple. The money brought into the temple was not spent for making silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets or any other articles of gold or silver for the temple of the LORD; it was paid to the workers, who used it to repair the temple. They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty. The money from the guilt offerings and sin offerings was not brought into the temple of the LORD; it belonged to the priests.’ **2 Kings 12:9-16**

Notice that Jehoiada took a chest and bored a hole in the lid of it, **2 Kings 12:9 / 2 Chronicles 24:8**. This is the first mention of a ‘collection box’ in the Scriptures, **Mark 12:42**.

Jehoiada placed the box beside the altar, on the right side as one enters the temple, **Ezekiel 40:35-43 / 2 Chronicles 24:8**, and the priests who guarded the entrance put into the chest all the money that was brought to the temple, **2 Kings 12:9**.

A proclamation was then issued in Judah and Jerusalem that they should bring to the LORD the tax that Moses the servant of God had required of Israel in the wilderness, **2 Chronicles 24:9**.

A real effort was made by Jehoiada to try and increase the freewill offerings, and so when the people came and saw that the temple was in need of repair due to a lack of funds, they cheerfully put their freewill offerings into the chest, **2 Kings 12:10-12 / 2 Chronicles 24:10-12**.

This tax was originally designated for the purpose of repairing the tabernacle, but in this case, it was used to repair the temple, **Exodus 30:12-16 / Numbers 1:50**. It appears the Levites were neglectful in keeping the temple in repair because of oppressing kings of the past.

The workers pointed out the repairs which were needed to the people, and the people responded by giving their money towards the cost of those repairs, **2 Kings 22:3-7 / Nehemiah 10:32**. I believe people will often freely give more when they can see where their freewill offering is going, **2 Corinthians 9:7**.

Notice that ‘the money brought into the temple was not spent for making silver basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, trumpets or any other articles of gold or silver for the temple of the LORD,’ 2 Kings 12:13-14 / 2 Chronicles 24:13 / 2 Chronicles 24:7.

This statement refers to the time when the repairs were being made to the temple, but 2 Chronicles 24:14, tells us it refers to the time when all the repairs were finished, and then these articles for the temple were made.

Notice also that the guilt offerings and sin offerings, Leviticus 5:14-15 / Numbers 5:8 / Leviticus 6:26-29, weren’t taken into the temple. This money wasn’t to be placed into the chest for the repair work. The money belonged to the priests, 2 Kings 12:16; it was given to them for their private use and maintenance, Numbers 5:10.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In all cases of injury done to another, a man was bound by the Law to make compensation, to the sufferer, if possible; if not, to his nearest kinsman. If the man was dead and had left no kinsman, then the compensation was to be made to the priest, Numbers 5:8. This would form a part of the trespass and sin money. The remainder would accrue from the voluntary gifts made to the priests by those who came to make atonement for sins or trespasses, Numbers 5:10.’

We mustn’t underestimate Jehoiada in regard to his respect for God and His ways. God blessed this man with one-hundred and thirty years of life, which was way beyond the average living age for this time period, 2 Chronicles 24:14. He was so highly regarded that he was buried with the kings in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 24:16.

‘About this time, Hazael, king of Aram, went up and attacked Gath and captured it. Then he turned to attack Jerusalem. But Joash, king of Judah, took all the sacred objects dedicated by his predecessors—Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah, the kings of Judah—and the gifts he himself had dedicated and all the gold found in the treasuries of the temple of the LORD and of the royal palace, and he sent them to Hazael king of Aram, who then withdrew from Jerusalem. As for the other events of the reign of Joash, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? His officials conspired against him and assassinated him at Beth Millo, on the road down to Silla. The officials who murdered him were Jozabad, son of Shimeath and Jehozabad, son of Shomer. He died and was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. And Amaziah his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 12:17-21

Hazael king of Aram goes and attacks Gath and captures it, and then turn to attack Jerusalem, 2 Kings 12:17. We’re not told if Joash was making continuous payments to Hazael, but because Hazael, king of Aram had become such a great threat to Jerusalem, Joash took the treasures of the temple and royal palace and gave them to Hazael as tribute, 2 Kings 12:18.

In 2 Chronicles 24, we read of a coalition of false teachers who remained in the background as the restoration took place when Jehoiada was still alive. These false teachers waited, as false teachers do, in obscurity, until they had an opportunity to influence the king to move toward their views and support, 2 Chronicles 24:17.

Notice they abandoned the temple and worshipped Asherah poles and idols, 2 Chronicles 24:18. This tells us where their loyalty lay; they weren’t interested in repairing the temple, they would rather worship false gods. Because the temple was located in Jerusalem, worshipping these false gods became more convenient for them, and they didn’t have to travel so far.

Despite God sending prophets to His people, they wouldn’t listen, 2 Chronicles 24:19. The reason for them not listening to the prophets was simply that they had lost their jobs during the restoration from the worship of Baal to the worship of God.

They lost their financial support. By killing only Mattan, the priest of Baal, 2 Chronicles 23:17, it’s reasonable to conclude that other Baal prophets also lost their jobs, but not their lives.

Jehoiada’s son Zechariah, stood up, Nehemiah 8:4, and under the influence of the Spirit of God, Judges 6:34 / 1 Chronicles 12:18, pronounced a severe warning, 2 Chronicles 24:20, but the king’s response was to honour the conspiracy of the evil princes and order the man of God stoned to death within the court of the temple itself, 2 Chronicles 24:21.

Zechariah was murdered in the same place where his father Jehoiada had anointed Joash king, 2 Chronicles 23:10-11. Zechariah's prayer that God would see their terrible crime and pronounce a judgment against them was honoured immediately, 2 Chronicles 24:22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Compare Genesis 9:5 / Genesis 42:22, and contrast the words of Christ, Luke 23:34, and of Stephen, Acts 7:60.

Zechariah's prayer was prophetic, 2 Chronicles 24:23 / 2 Chronicles 24:25 / Luke 11:51.’

Joash looked to Jehoiada as a father, and so, he probably knew Zechariah as a friend for most of his life, 2 Chronicles 24:22. And yet, the persuasion of the idolatrous leaders was so strong that he had his childhood friend Zechariah stoned, 2 Chronicles 24:21.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These two paragraphs, 2 Chronicles 24:20-22, reveal that Joash, at heart, was a true descendant of his evil ancestor Ahab. As long as Jehoiada was available as a wise and able counsellor, Joash did very well, but as soon as Jehoiada was dead, the princes of Judah seduced him with their flattery and induced him to reopen the high places with their licentious worship of the pagan idols.’

A few years ago, with half the number of soldiers, Judah was able to be victorious over an army of one million Cushites during the reign of Asa, 2 Chronicles 14:1-12; however, here, because of Judah's sin, the Arameans with a much smaller army were able to defeat the greater army of Judah, 2 Chronicles 24:23.

God empowered the army of Aram to punish Judah for their sin of apostasy, 2 Chronicles 24:24 / Leviticus 26:8 / Leviticus 26:17 / Leviticus 26:37. It was especially appropriate that the Arameans killed all the princes, the very people who had seduced Joash to accept idolatry.

Significantly, this judgment fell upon Joash and his kingdom within less than a year following the heartless murder of Zechariah. But God was not finished with his judgment against Joash.

We're not told if Joash was making continuous payments to Hazael, but because Hazael, king of Aram, had become such a great threat to Jerusalem, Joash took the treasures of the temple and royal palace and gave them to Hazael as tribute, 2 Kings 12:17-21.

Notice that Joash's officials conspired against him, 2 Kings 12:20 / 2 Chronicles 24:26. It appears that after the death of Jehoiada, Joash may have begun to get involved in idol worship, 2 Chronicles 24:15-22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, 2 Kings 12:17-21 / 2 Chronicles 24:17-27.

‘A conspiracy. Compare the marginal reference. Joash, either from suspicion of intended treason or from some other unknown cause, took up his abode in the fortress of Millo, 1 Kings 9:24. This conspiracy was connected with religion. Soon after the death of Jehoiada, Joash had apostatised, had renewed the worship of Baal, and, despite many prophetic warnings, had persisted in his evil courses, even commanding Zechariah to be slain when he rebuked them, 2 Chronicles 24:18-27. The conspirators, who wished to avenge Zechariah, no doubt wished also to put down the Baal worship. In this, it appears that they succeeded. For though Amaziah punished the actual murderers after a while, 2 Kings 14:5, yet he appears not to have been a Baal-worshipper. The only idolatries laid to his charge are the maintenance of the high places, 2 Kings 14:4, and a worship of the gods of Edom, 2 Chronicles 25:14-20.’

He died and was buried with his ancestors in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings, 2 Kings 12:21 / 2 Chronicles 24:25. The officials who murdered Joash were Jozabad and Jehozabad, 2 Kings 12:21 / 2 Chronicles 24:26.

The other events of the reign of Joash, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 2 Kings 12:18. Including the account of his sons, the many prophecies about him, and the record of the restoration of the temple of God are written in the annotations on the book of the kings, 2 Chronicles 24:27. After the assassination of Joash, Amaziah his son succeeded him as king, 2 Kings 12:21 / 2 Chronicles 24:27.

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we find the focus returning to the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Jehoahaz reigned from 814 to 798 B.C. When we read 2 Kings 13:1, it tells us that he began his reign in the twenty-third year of Joash in the south, which is a total of seventeen years.

This also means that he reigned until the thirty-ninth or fortieth year of Joash. However, when reading 2 Kings 13:10, the text tells us that he died and his son, Jehoash, took over as king of Israel in the thirty-seventh year of Joash. This tells us that 2 Kings 13:1 is referring to his joint reign in his early years, but 2 Kings 13:10 is referring to the total number of years of his reign.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the chronology.

‘The chronology here is thus accounted for. Jehoahaz began his reign at the commencement of the twenty-third year of Joash, and reigned seventeen years, fourteen alone, and three years with his son Joash; the fourteenth year was but just begun.’

JEHOAHAZ KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the twenty-third year of Joash, son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz son of Jehu became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned seventeen years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD by following the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, and he did not turn away from them. So the LORD’s anger burned against Israel, and for a long time he kept them under the power of Hazael, king of Aram, and Ben-Hadad, his son. Then Jehoahaz sought the LORD’s favour, and the LORD listened to him, for he saw how severely the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. The LORD provided a deliverer for Israel, and they escaped from the power of Aram. So the Israelites lived in their own homes as they had before. But they did not turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit; they continued in them. Also, the Asherah pole remained standing in Samaria. Nothing had been left of the army of Jehoahaz except fifty horsemen, ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers, for the king of Aram had destroyed the rest and made them like the dust at threshing time. As for the other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, all he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jehoahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. And Jehoash his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 13:1-9

Jehoahaz ‘did evil in the eyes of the Lord’, because he followed the sins of Jeroboam, 2 Kings 13:1-2, which is idolatry. He wasn’t able to lead Israel, and as a result, he couldn’t fend off Hazael, king of Aram and Ben-Hadad because god wouldn’t allow him to, 2 Kings 13:3. Jehoahaz sought the Lord’s favour, 2 Kings 13:4, and received it in the form of a deliverer, 2 Kings 13:5.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was undoubtedly Joash, whose successful wars against the Syrians are mentioned at the conclusion of the chapter.’

It appears that Hazael had taken the cities, and so, Israel now lived in their own homes, probably tents, as they did before, 2 Kings 13:5 / 1 Kings 8:66. Hazael now controlled the cities, while Israel lived in the rural areas. They didn’t turn away from the sins of the house of Jeroboam, which he had caused Israel to commit, and they continued in them, 2 Kings 13:6.

Notice that the ‘Asherah pole’ is mentioned as still standing in Samaria, 2 Kings 13:6. This tells us how pagan Samaria was; this city had a golden calf just like Dan and Bethel, Hosea 8:6.

Hazael totally destroyed the army of Jehoahaz, he was merciless and brutal, 2 Kings 13:7. He made Israel ‘like the dust at threshing time’, 2 Kings 13:7, which is a metaphor to describe just how merciless and brutal Hazael was, Amos 1:4.

The idea being conveyed here is that Hazael made the defeated soldiers lie down, and then Hazael’s army would drive iron threshing instruments over them to kill them, 2 Samuel 12:31 / Jeremiah 51:33 / Micah 4:12.

The other events of the reign of Jehoahaz, all he did and his achievements, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 13:8. Jehoahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria and Jehoash, his son, succeeded him as king, 2 Kings 13:9.

JEHOASH KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the thirty-seventh year of Joash king of Judah, Jehoash son of Jehoahaz became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit; he continued in them. As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jehoash rested with his ancestors, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne. Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. Now Elisha had been suffering from the illness from which he died. Jehoash king of Israel went down to see him and wept over him. ‘My father! My father!’ he cried. ‘The chariots and horsemen of Israel!’ Elisha said, ‘Get a bow and some arrows,’ and he did so. ‘Take the bow in your hands,’ he said to the king of Israel. When he had taken it, Elisha put his hands on the king’s hands. ‘Open the east window,’ he said, and he opened it. ‘Shoot!’ Elisha said, and he shot. ‘The LORD’s arrow of victory, the arrow of victory over Aram!’ Elisha declared. ‘You will completely destroy the Arameans at Aphek.’ Then he said, ‘Take the arrows,’ and the king took them. Elisha told him, ‘Strike the ground.’ He struck it three times and stopped. The man of God was angry with him and said, ‘You should have struck the ground five or six times; then you would have defeated Aram and completely destroyed it. But now you will defeat it only three times.’ 2 Kings 13:10-19

In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Jehoash became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned sixteen years, 2 Kings 13:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joash, the son of Jehoahaz, was associated with his father in the government two years before his death. It is this association that is spoken of here. He succeeded him two years after, a little before the death of Elisha. Joash reigned sixteen years, which includes the years he governed conjointly with his father.’

Jehoash did evil in the eyes of the LORD and didn’t turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit and he continued in them, 2 Kings 13:11.

The other events of the reign of Jehoash, all he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah king of Judah, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 13:12 / 2 Chronicles 25:20-27.

Jehoash rested with his ancestors, and Jeroboam succeeded him on the throne, 2 Kings 13:13, and we are told that Jehoash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 13:13.

Elisha had become seriously ill, and when Jehoash, king of Israel, went to see him, he wept and called out, ‘My father, my father’, 2 Kings 13:14 / 2 Kings 2:12, which shows us the great respect he had for Elisha.

Elisha prophecies for the very last time, and in this prophecy, he speaks about Israel’s confrontation with Aram, 2 Kings 13:15-16. Notice that Elisha asks him to shoot an arrow towards the east, 2 Kings 13:17, which was symbolic of Israel’s victory over Aphek.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Syria of Damascus lay partly east, but still more north, of the holy land. The arrow was to be shot, eastward, not so much against Syria itself as against the scene of the recent Syrian successes, Gilead, [2 Kings 10:33](#), which was also to be the scene of Joash’s victories over them. Aphek is almost due east from Shunem, where it is not unlikely that Elisha now was.’

When Jehoash is asked to strike the ground, [2 Kings 13:18](#), the number of arrows he struck the ground with would signify how many times he would strike Aram. Sadly, he didn’t strike the ground more than three times, [2 Kings 13:18](#), which meant that he wouldn’t be able to completely destroy the threat of Aram, [2 Kings 13:19](#) / [Mark 6:5-6](#). This was the last recorded prophecy of Elisha, and as we’re going to read next, it was exactly followed just as he said it would be.

‘Elisha died and was buried. Now, Moabite raiders used to enter the country every spring. Once, while some Israelites were burying a man, suddenly they saw a band of raiders; so they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb.

When the body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came to life and stood up on his feet. Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To this day, he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence. Hazael, king of Aram, died, and Ben-Hadad, his son, succeeded him as king. Then Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, recaptured from Ben-Hadad, son of Hazael, the towns he had taken in battle from his father Jehoahaz. Three times Jehoash defeated him, and so he recovered the Israelite towns.’ [2 Kings 13:20-25](#)

After the death and burial of Elisha, [2 Kings 13:20](#), the Moabites would come and raid the country’s farms for food, [2 Kings 13:20](#). The Israelites were burying a man, but when they saw the Moabite raiders, they threw the man’s body into Elisha’s tomb, [2 Kings 13:21](#).

When the man’s body touched Elisha’s bones, the man came back to life, [2 Kings 13:21](#). The reason for this miracle was possibly to reassure Jehoash that God was going to bring about the fulfilment of Elisha’s last prophecy, concerning victory over Aram.

Hazael, king of Aram, oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz, [2 Kings 13:22](#). Because of God’s covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, the Lord was gracious and spared Israel at this time in their apostasy, [2 Kings 13:23](#). It’s important to note that they weren’t spared because of anything they had done. They were spared because of God’s promise to their forefathers.

Hazael died, and Ben-Hadad, his son, succeeded him as king, [2 Kings 13:24](#). It’s clear that these victories took place after Hazael had died because Israel was able to repossess the cities from Ben-Hadad, [2 Kings 13:25](#), which Hazael had earlier taken, [2 Kings 13:5](#).

The Ben-Hadad mentioned here would be Ben-Hadad III, the son of Hazael. We read how Elisha’s last prophecy came into fulfilment as Jehoash had victory over Aram three times, [2 Kings 13:25](#).

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘In the second year of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother’s name was Jehoaddan; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done. In everything, he followed the example of his father, Joash. The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.’ [2 Kings 14:1-4](#)

AMAZIAH KING OF JUDAH

In the second year of Jehoash, king of Israel, Amaziah, king of Judah, began to reign, 2 Kings 14:1. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This second year should be understood as referring to the time when his father Jehoahaz associated him with himself in the kingdom: for he reigned two years with his father; so this second year of Joash is the first of his absolute and independent government.’

He was twenty-five years old and became king of Judah and reigned from 796 B.C. to 767 B.C. 2 Kings 14:1 / 2 Chronicles 25:1. His mother’s name was Jehoaddan, and she was from Jerusalem, 2 Kings 14:2 / 2 Chronicles 25:1. Notice that ‘he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly, 2 Chronicles 25:2. 2 Kings 14:3, says, ‘but not as his father David’. The text doesn’t tell us what he did right, but it’s possible that he didn’t promote the worship of Baal and lead God’s people away from Him. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘There is a curious parity between the lives of Joash and Amaziah. Both were zealous for Yahweh in the earlier portion of their reigns, but in the latter part fell away, both disregarded the rebukes of prophets and both, having forsaken God, were in the end conspired against and slain, 2 Chronicles 24:25 / 2 Chronicles 25:27.’

He also followed the example of his father, Joash, 2 Kings 14:3, which, according to 2 Chronicles 25:14-28, involved him bringing back the pagan gods of Edom to worship them. It is clear, though, that he didn’t serve God with all his heart, because he didn’t remove the high places of worship, 2 Kings 14:4.

‘After the kingdom was firmly in his grasp, he executed the officials who had murdered his father, the king. Yet he did not put the children of the assassins to death, in accordance with what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, where the LORD commanded: ‘Parents are not to be put to death for their children, nor children put to death for their parents; each will die for their own sin.’ He was the one who defeated ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt and captured Sela in battle, calling it Joktheel, the name it has to this day.’ 2 Kings 14:5-7

After taking full control of the kingdom, Amaziah killed the officials who killed his father, 2 Kings 14:5 / 2 Chronicles 25:3, but he didn’t kill the children, 2 Kings 14:6 / 2 Chronicles 25:4 / Deuteronomy 24:16.

The writer tells us who wrote the Book of the Law, that is, the first five books of the Bible, it was Moses, 2 Kings 14:6 / 2 Chronicles 25:4 / 1 Kings 2:3. 2 Chronicles 25 gives us a little more detail here. So that he could strengthen his kingdom and defeat the Edomites, Amaziah gathered together an army of men from Judah and Benjamin, 2 Chronicles 25:5.

Amaziah was the one who went to war and captured Sela, 2 Kings 14:7. Sela was the capital city of Edom, Isaiah 16:1, which today is referred to as Petra, Obadiah 1-4. As a result of Amaziah taking Sela, Edom now belonged to Judah, 2 Kings 14:7.

Amaziah called the people of Judah together and assigned them according to their families to commanders of thousands and commanders of hundreds for all Judah and Benjamin, 2 Chronicles 25:5.

He gathered those twenty years old or more and found that there were three hundred thousand men fit for military service, able to handle the spear and shield, 2 Chronicles 25:5.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Asa’s army had been nearly twice as numerous, amounting to 580,000, 2 Chronicles 14:8. The diminution was due, in part, to wars, 2 Chronicles 21:8 / 2 Chronicles 21:16 / 2 Chronicles 24:23-24, in part, to the general decadence of the kingdom.’

When Amaziah was preparing to invade Edom, he paid a hundred talents in silver to hire some soldiers from the tribe of Ephraim, 2 Chronicles 25:6. A man of God now comes to Amaziah and warns him that these troops must march with him because God isn't with Israel or the people of Ephraim, 2 Chronicles 25:7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Chronicles 25:7.

'The man of God here made it plain that the rebellion of the northern tribes against the Davidic dynasty had forfeited their further identity as God's Chosen People. This is the reason that the Chronicler completely ignored, inasmuch as it was possible, the entire Northern Israel, focusing his attention completely upon the fortunes of Judah.'

The man of God tells Amaziah, even if he goes and fights courageously in battle, God will overthrow him before his enemy, because God has the power to help or to overthrow, 2 Chronicles 25:8.

Amaziah asks the man of God about the hundred talents he paid for the Israelite troops and the man of God tells him that the LORD can give him much more than that, 2 Chronicles 25:9.

Amaziah takes his advice and dismissed the troops who had come to him from Ephraim and sent them home, 2 Chronicles 25:10. However, they were furious with Judah and left for home in a great rage, 2 Chronicles 25:10.

Amaziah marshalled his strength and led his army to the Valley of Salt, where he killed ten thousand men of Seir, 2 Chronicles 25:11. 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, 2 Chronicles 25:12.

The troops that Amaziah sent back raided towns belonging to Judah from Samaria to Beth Horon and killed three thousand people and carried off great quantities of plunder, 2 Chronicles 25:13.

It is clear, though, that he didn't serve God with all his heart, because he didn't remove the high places of worship, 2 Kings 14:1-6. He also followed the example of his father, Joash, which, according to 2 Chronicles 25:14, involved him bringing back the pagan gods of Edom to worship them, 1 Samuel 5:1-2.

Ellison, in his commentary, says the following.

'Amaziah held the debased view that Jehovah was the supreme God, but yet was only one god among many gods. His purpose in carrying away the gods of Edom, of whom we know nothing, was perhaps that of depriving the Edomites of any support they might have been supposed to give Edom. Amaziah's worshipping them and burning incense to them was a cardinal violation of the Law of Moses and the Decalogue, 'thou shalt not bow down thyself unto them, that is, images', Exodus 20:5.'

The people's gods weren't able to defend or help the Edomites, yet Amaziah worshipped them; hence, God sends a prophet to make this point clear to Amaziah, 2 Chronicles 25:15.

While he was still speaking, Amaziah asked him, have we appointed him an adviser to the king? Stop! Why be struck down? So the prophet stopped but said, he knows that God has determined to destroy you, because you have done this and have not listened to his counsel, 2 Chronicles 25:16.

'Then Amaziah sent messengers to Jehoash son of Jehoahaz, the son of Jehu, king of Israel, with the challenge: 'Come, let us face each other in battle.' But Jehoash, king of Israel, replied to Amaziah, king of Judah: 'A thistle in Lebanon sent a message to a cedar in Lebanon, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage.' Then a wild beast in Lebanon came along and trampled the thistle underfoot. You have indeed defeated Edom, and now you are arrogant. Glory in your victory, but stay at home! Why ask for trouble and cause your own downfall and that of Judah also?' Amaziah, however, would not listen, so Jehoash, king of Israel, attacked. He and Amaziah, king of Judah, faced each other at Beth Shemesh in Judah. Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled to his home. Jehoash, king of Israel, captured Amaziah, king of Judah, the son of Joash, the son of Ahaziah, at Beth Shemesh. Then Jehoash went to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate—a section about four hundred cubits long. He took all the gold and silver and all the articles found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria. As for the other events of the reign of Jehoash, what he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah, king of Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jehoash rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel. And Jeroboam his son succeeded him as king.' 2 Kings 14:8-16

Amaziah sends messengers to Jehoash, king of Israel, asking for a face-to-face battle, 2 Kings 14:8 / 2 Chronicles 25:17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was a real declaration of war and the ground of it is most evident from this circumstance, that the one hundred thousand men of Israel that had been dismissed, though they had the stipulated money, taking the advantage of Amaziah’s absence, fell upon the cities of Judah, from Samaria to Beth-Horon, and smote three thousand men, and took much spoil, 2 Chronicles 25:10-13. Amaziah no doubt remonstrated with Jehoash, but to no purpose and therefore he declared war against him.’

Amaziah wanted to punish those who had plundered the cities of Judah, and so, he called upon Joash of Israel to battle. He was very confident he could win; after all, with an army of three hundred thousand men, he just killed twenty thousand Edomites, 2 Chronicles 25:5 / 2 Chronicles 25:11-12.

Jehoahaz of Israel appeared very weak, having only fifty horsemen, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers after being defeated by the Arameans, 2 Kings 13:7. It’s not surprising he’s confident.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following about the parable, 2 Kings 14:9 / 2 Chronicles 25:18.

‘The thistle’ that was in Lebanon, Amaziah, king of Judah, sent to ‘the cedar’ that was in Lebanon, Jehoash, king of Israel, saying, ‘Give thy daughter a part of thy kingdom to my son to wife’, to be united to and possessed by the kings of Judah. And there passed by a ‘wild beast’, Jehoash and his enraged army, and ‘trod down the thistle’, utterly discomfited Amaziah and his troops, ‘pillaged the temple, and broke down the walls of Jerusalem’, 2 Kings 14:12-14. Probably, Amaziah had required certain cities of Israel to be given up to Judah; if so, this accounts for that part of the parable, ‘Give thy daughter to my son to wife’.

The parable was given to Amaziah so that he would back down from his threat, 2 Kings 14:10 / 2 Chronicles 25:19, but it appears that Amaziah was overconfident, probably because he just defeated the Edomites, 2 Kings 14:7.

Amaziah refused to listen, 2 Kings 14:11 / 2 Chronicles 25:20, and so, Judah was routed by Israel, and every man fled to his home, 2 Chronicles 25:22 / 2 Kings 14:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The author of Chronicles notes that Amaziah’s obstinacy, and his consequent defeat and captivity, were judgments upon him for an idolatry into which he had fallen after his conquest of Edom, 2 Chronicles 25:14 / 2 Chronicles 25:20.’

Jehoash captured Amaziah at Beth Shemesh, 2 Kings 14:13 / 2 Chronicles 25:21. Jehoash went to Jerusalem and broke down the wall of Jerusalem from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate, a section about four hundred cubits long, that is, six hundred feet, 2 Kings 14:13 / 2 Chronicles 25:23.

Jehoash then goes on to plunder the treasury of the royal palace and the temple, 2 Kings 14:14 / 2 Chronicles 25:24. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria, 2 Kings 14:14 / 2 Chronicles 25:24.

The other events of the reign of Jehoash, what he did and his achievements, including his war against Amaziah, king of Judah, 2 Chronicles 25:21-24, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 14:15 / 2 Kings 13:12-13. Jehoash rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel, and Jeroboam, his son, succeeded him as king, 2 Kings 14:16.

The two kingdoms of Israel and Judah were now beyond the point of reconciliation, and because Israel was now at war within itself, they became easy targets for the Assyrians. The Northern Kingdom of Israel were soon to go into captivity in Assyria because of their apostasy.

‘Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel. As for the other events of Amaziah’s reign, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? They conspired against him in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish, but they sent men after him to Lachish and killed him there. He was brought back by horse and was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors, in the City of David.

Then all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father, Amaziah. He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors.' 2 Kings 14:17-22

Amaziah lived for fifteen years after the death of Jehoash, king of Israel, 2 Kings 14:17 / 2 Chronicles 25:25. The other events of Amaziah's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel, 2 Chronicles 25:26.

2 Kings 14:18 tells us that they are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah. Because Amaziah was defeated by Jehoash, and because the royal treasury and temple had been plundered, it's no wonder that Amaziah had become very unpopular. The last fifteen years of his life were filled with trouble and distress.

He fled to Lachish, which tells us how unpopular he had become, he was later killed in Lachish, 2 Chronicles 25:27 / Micah 1:13. He was assassinated, just like his father was, 2 Kings 12:20-21, and his death was a complete fulfilment of the prophecy of 2 Chronicles 25:16. The last fifteen years of his life were filled with trouble and distress.

In 2 Kings 14:19, we read about a conspiracy, but we're not told the reason behind it. However, 2 Chronicles 25:27 tells us that many in Judah were still trying to be faithful to the Lord. This may have been the centre of the conspiracy.

It was Amaziah's apostasy from the Lord in bringing in those pagan deities from Edom, 2 Chronicles 25:14-28, that caused the opposition to take his life, 2 Kings 14:19 / 2 Chronicles 25:27.

Amaziah was brought back by horse and was buried in Jerusalem with his ancestors, in the City of David, 2 Kings 14:20 / 2 Chronicles 25:28. Then all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, 2 Chronicles 26:1, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah, 2 Kings 14:21.

We are told that he was the one who rebuilt Elath, 1 Kings 9:26 / 2 Chronicles 26:2, and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors, 2 Kings 14:22.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This city belonged to the Edomites and was situated on the eastern branch of the Red Sea, thence called the Elanitic Gulf. It had probably suffered much in the late war and was now rebuilt by Uzziah, and brought entirely under the dominion of Judah.'

JEROBOAM II KING OF ISRAEL

'In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD and did not turn away from any of the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. He was the one who restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo Hamath to the Dead Sea, in accordance with the word of the LORD, the God of Israel, spoken through his servant Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath Hopher. The LORD had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering; there was no one to help them. And since the LORD had not said he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam son of Jehoash. As for the other events of Jeroboam's reign, all he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Jeroboam rested with his ancestors, the kings of Israel. And Zechariah his son succeeded him as king.' 2 Kings 14:23-29

In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, king of Judah, Jeroboam, king of Israel, became king in Samaria, and he reigned forty-one years, 2 Kings 14:23. Jeroboam II reigned in the Northern Kingdom of Israel from 782 to 753 B.C. Sadly, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord, and he didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam I, 2 Kings 14:24.

In other words, he maintained the division between the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom by promoting loyalty to the altars at Bethel and Dan, 1 Kings 12:25-30.

Because he was a wise leader and a great administrator, he took the Northern Kingdom of Israel to its peak in terms of power and prosperity, 2 Kings 14:25. As a leader, he reclaimed a lot of land that had been taken by the Arameans. There's no doubt that the prophet Jonah mentioned here, 2 Kings 14:25, is the same prophet who wrote the Book of Jonah, Jonah 1:1.

God had seen how bitterly everyone in Israel, whether slave or free, was suffering and that there was no one to help them, 2 Kings 14:26 / 2 Kings 10:32-33 / 2 Kings 13:3 / 2 Kings 13:7 / 2 Kings 13:22.

Since God hadn't said He would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, notice that God 'saved them by the hand of Jeroboam', 2 Kings 14:27. In other words, God saved Israel from total destruction through the leadership of Jeroboam II, and in doing so, He fulfilled the prophecy of 2 Kings 13:5.

The other events of Jeroboam's reign, all he did, and his military achievements, including how he recovered for Israel both Damascus, 1 Kings 20:34, and Hamath, Amos 6:2, which had belonged to Judah, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 14:28 / Amos 7:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'We learn from 1 Chronicles 18:3-11, that David had conquered all Syria, and put garrisons in Damascus and other places, and laid all the Syrians under tribute; but this yoke they had not only shaken off, but they had conquered a considerable portion of the Israelitish territory, and added it to Syria. These latter Jeroboam now recovered; and thus the places which anciently belonged to Judah by David's conquests, and were repossessed by Syria, he now conquered, and added to Israel.'

Jeroboam rested with his ancestors, the kings of Israel and Zechariah his son succeeded him as king, 2 Kings 14:29. There is a sense in which Jeroboam was Israel's last chance to get back to being right with God and repent of their idolatry.

Zechariah who succeeded Jeroboam, was a weak ruler, and with this, Israel began to deteriorate. This deterioration would eventually lead to their destruction, some thirty years after Jeroboam died, Amos 7:10-17.

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

'In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. The LORD afflicted the king with leprosy until the day he died, and he lived in a separate house. Jotham, the king's son, had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land. As for the other events of Azariah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Azariah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in the City of David. And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.' 2 Kings 15:1-7

AZARIAH KING OF JUDAH

Then all the people of Judah took Azariah, who was sixteen years old, 2 Kings 15:2 / 2 Chronicles 26:1, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah, 2 Kings 14:21.

We are told that he was the one who rebuilt Elath, 2 Chronicles 26:2 / 1 Kings 9:26, and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors, 2 Kings 14:22.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This city belonged to the Edomites and was situated on the eastern branch of the Red Sea, thence called the Elanitic Gulf. It had probably suffered much in the late war and was now rebuilt by Uzziah, and brought entirely under the dominion of Judah.’

Uzziah, 1 Chronicles 3:12 / Isaiah 1:1 / Isaiah 6:1, also known as Azariah in 2 Kings, began to reign in the Southern Kingdom of Judah from 767 B.C. to 740 B.C. Jeroboam II of the northern kingdom reigned at the same time as Uzziah, 2 Kings 15:1.

Some commentators suggest that Azariah was his throne name, and Uzziah was his adopted name. We do know that the name Azariah means the Lord helps, and the name Uzziah means the Lord strengthens.

He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years and his mother’s name was Jekoliah and she was from Jerusalem, 2 Kings 15:2 / 2 Chronicles 26:3.

Back in 2 Kings 14:22, the writer tells us that Azariah rebuilt Elath, 2 Kings 15:2, which was Solomon’s port city on the shore of the Red Sea, 1 Kings 9:26. We also know that Azariah led Israel with a strong army, 2 Chronicles 26:6-15.

He did what was right in the eyes of God, and he sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God and as long as he sought God, God gave him success, 2 Chronicles 26:4-5.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘His was a long and powerful reign indeed. He successfully defended Judah against the belligerent Ammonites, Philistines and Arabians, developed a strong standing army, and rebuilt the nation’s fortifications. He even reopened the Red Sea port of Elath and promoted commerce. Elath is the same as Ezion-Geber.’

He did what was right in God’s eyes, 2 Kings 15:3 / 2 Chronicles 26:4-5; however, he didn’t remove the high places, 2 Kings 15:4. These high places had become very important both socially and religiously for the Northern and Southern kingdoms.

They were places where sacrifices were made, and offerings were made to the false gods, 2 Kings 15:4. In effect, these high places took God’s people away from God, hence why both kingdoms fell into idolatry over and over again. Yes, the temples of Baal were destroyed, but these high places remained. God struck Azariah with leprosy because he wasn’t a priest and he wasn’t authorised to burn incense in the temple, 2 Kings 15:5 / 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 / 1 Samuel 13:13.

2 Chronicles 26:6-15 gives us a little more detail. The military accomplishments of Uzziah were fearsome. He suppressed the Philistines, 2 Chronicles 26:6 / 2 Chronicles 21:16, Arabians, 2 Chronicles 26:7 / 2 Chronicles 20:1, Meunites, 2 Chronicles 26:7 / Judges 10:12, and the Ammonites, 2 Chronicles 26:8.

In an effort to secure the land of Judah, he built watchtowers both in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 26:9, and in the areas from where invading armies might come, 2 Chronicles 26:10. The extent of his military campaigns secured territory as far as Israel’s border with Egypt, 2 Chronicles 26:10.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Refuges for the flocks and the herdsmen in the wild pasture country on the borders of the holy land, especially toward the south and southeast. Judaea depends largely on reservoirs for its water supply, in which the rainfall is stored. These are generally cut in the natural rock and covered at the top.’

Notice that Uzziah didn't add much to the military strength of the nation by his conquests, 2 Chronicles 26:11-13. His army exceeds that of his father, Amaziah, by seven thousand five hundred men only, 2 Chronicles 25:5.

He provided shields, spears, coats of armour, bows, and slingstones for the whole army, 2 Chronicles 26:14. The slingstones were used in war by the Assyrians, the Egyptians, the Persians, the Greeks, Romans, and others. The Benjamites used them, Judges 20:16, and by the ten tribes, a century before Uzziah, 2 Kings 3:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning the devices he invented, 2 Chronicles 26:15.

‘This is the very first imitation on record of any warlike engines for the attack or defence of besieged places, and this account is long prior to anything of the kind among either the Greeks or the Romans. The Jews alone were the inventors of such engines, and the invention took place in the reign of Uzziah, about eight hundred years before the Christian era. It is no wonder that, in consequence of this, his name spread far abroad, and struck terror into his enemies.’

Uzziah's fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful, 2 Chronicles 26:15. Power appears to have gone to Uzziah's head and as a result he became unfaithful to God, 2 Chronicles 26:16 / 1 Chronicles 10:13.

It was this same pride and unfaithfulness that would lead the entire nation into exile, 1 Chronicles 5:25 / 1 Chronicles 9:1 / 2 Chronicles 33:19 / 2 Chronicles 36:14.

Uzziah appears to have deliberately determined to invade the priest's office, and so, repeating the sin of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, Numbers 16:1-35. He has obviously become arrogant and full of himself because of all the victories he has won.

His arrogance led him to assume the authority of the Levitical priests and their work in the temple, 2 Chronicles 26:16. He stood against eighty priests who tried to stop him from burning the incense, 2 Chronicles 26:17-18, which was only allowed by the priests, 2 Chronicles 26:18 / Numbers 16:35 / Numbers 18:7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What Uzziah actually violated here was the divine instructions of God himself through Moses in the Pentateuch, Exodus 29:29. Saul lost his kingship for failing to respect those very restrictions.’

Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry and so, God struck Uzziah with leprosy, 2 Chronicles 26:19, because he wasn't a priest and he wasn't authorised to burn incense in the temple, 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 / 1 Samuel 13:13.

When Azariah, the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out, 2 Chronicles 26:20. We are told that Uzziah himself was eager to leave because the LORD had afflicted him, 2 Chronicles 26:20.

Notice that he lived in a separate house, 2 Kings 15:5 / 2 Chronicles 26:21. This was common practice for those who had leprosy, Leviticus 13:45-46. Because God struck him with leprosy, Jotham, his son, administered both his house and the nation in his later years, 2 Kings 15:5.

The other events of Uzziah's reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz, 2 Chronicles 26:22. 2 Kings 15:6 tells us that they are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah.

Azariah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in the City of David, 2 Kings 15:7. According to 2 Chronicles 26:23, we learn that Azariah wasn't buried with his ancestors, but near them; this too was common practice for those who had leprosy, as they were classed as unclean. When Azariah died, Jotham became the king of Judah, 2 Kings 15:7 / 2 Chronicles 26:23.

ZECHARIAH KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned six months. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his predecessors had done. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. Shallum, son of Jabesh, conspired against Zechariah. He attacked him in front of the people, assassinated him, and succeeded him as king. The other events of Zechariah’s reign are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. So the word of the LORD spoken to Jehu was fulfilled: ‘Your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation.’ 2 Kings 15:8-12

Zechariah now becomes the king of Israel; however, his reign was short-lived, just six months, 2 Kings 15:8. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his predecessors had done; he didn’t turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, 2 Kings 15:9.

In a sense, this is where the Northern Kingdom of Israel was about to come to an end. After six months as king, Zechariah was assassinated by Shallum, 2 Kings 15:10.

The other events of Zechariah’s reign are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 15:11. So the word of God spoken to Jehu was fulfilled, your descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation, 2 Kings 15:12 / 2 Kings 10:30.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The most important thing about this man was the fact of his terminating the dynasty of Jehu as related in 2 Kings 15:12. This, of course, had been prophesied by the Lord in 2 Kings 10:30. His violent overthrow also fulfilled the prophecy given by Hosea in which God promised that ‘I will avenge the blood of Jezreel upon the house of Jehu’, Hosea 1:4.’

SHALLUM KING OF ISRAEL

‘Shallum son of Jabesh became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned in Samaria one month. Then Menahem, son of Gadi, went from Tirzah up to Samaria. He attacked Shallum, son of Jabesh in Samaria, assassinated him, and succeeded him as king. The other events of Shallum’s reign, and the conspiracy he led, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. At that time, Menahem, starting out from Tirzah, attacked Tiphseh and everyone in the city and its vicinity, because they refused to open their gates. He sacked Tiphseh and ripped open all the pregnant women.’ 2 Kings 15:13-16

Shallum became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah king of Judah, and he reigned in Samaria one month, 2 Kings 15:13. Menahem went from Tirzah to Samaria, 2 Kings 15:14.

Tirzah once served as the capital of the Northern Kingdom during the reign of Jeroboam I, 1 Kings 14:17. Menahem attacked Shallum in Samaria, assassinated him, and succeeded him as king, 2 Kings 15:14.

The other events of Shallum’s reign, and the conspiracy he led, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 15:15. After the assassination of Zechariah by Shallum, a conspiracy broke out, 2 Kings 15:15, and as a result of this conspiracy, the leadership in the Northern Kingdom began to decline.

Menahem, starting out from Tirzah, attacked Tiphseh and everyone in the city and its vicinity, because they refused to open their gates, and he sacked Tiphseh and ripped open all the pregnant women, 2 Kings 15:16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Menahem is supposed to have been one of Zachariah’s generals. Hearing of the death of his master, when he was with the troops at Tirzah, he hastened to Samaria, slew the murderer, and had himself proclaimed in his stead. But, as the people of Tiphseh did not open their gates to him, he took the place by assault and, as the text tells us, practised the most cruel barbarities, even ripping up the women who were with child!’

MENAHM KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Menahem, son of Gadi, became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria ten years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. During his entire reign, he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. Then Pul, king of Assyria, invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents of silver to gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom. Menahem exacted this money from Israel. Every wealthy person had to contribute fifty shekels of silver to be given to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria withdrew and stayed in the land no longer. As for the other events of Menahem’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Menahem rested with his ancestors. And Pekahiah, his son, succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 15:17-22

Menahem reigned from 752 B.C. to 742 B.C., 2 Kings 15:17, and there’s no doubt that Menahem was a harsh military leader who assassinated Shallum. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and during his entire reign, he didn’t turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, 2 Kings 15:18. During his reign, the Assyrians, under the leadership of Shalmaneser, 858 B.C. to 824 B.C. and Adadnirari, 805 B.C. to 782 B.C., were expanding the Assyrian Empire to the west and south.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

The two things of importance in Menahem’s reign are as follows.

1. His brutal atrocity against the pregnant women of Tiphshah.
2. His becoming a tributary to Tiglath-Pileser. In this latter event, there appeared before the gates of Israel the great Assyrian power that would soon destroy Northern Israel forever.’

Such savage cruelty was typical of those days of the Assyrian terror. It was expected of Hazael, 2 Kings 8:12, perpetrated against Israel by Ammon, Amos 1:13, and was to be part of Israel’s final tragedy, Hosea 14:1.

Then Pul king of Assyria invaded the land, and Menahem gave him a thousand talents, that is, thirty-eight tons of silver, to gain his support and strengthen his own hold on the kingdom, 2 Kings 15:19. Pul is the Babylonian name for the Assyrian king, Tiglath-Pileser.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Compared with the tribute of Hezekiah soon afterwards, 2 Kings 18:14, this seems a large sum, but it is not beyond the resources of such a State as Samaria at the period. The tie which had bound Samaria to Assyria from the reign of Jehu to that of Jeroboam II had ceased to exist during the period of Assyrian depression. Menahem now renewed it, undertaking the duties of a tributary, and expecting the support which Assyria was accustomed to lend to her dependencies in their struggles with their neighbours. Hence, the reproaches of Hosea.’

Menahem knew that he couldn’t win a war against the Assyrians and so he made the rich in Israel pay heavy taxes in order to pay tribute to Assyria, 2 Kings 15:20 / 2 Kings 12:18 / 2 Kings 16:8. Fifty shekels, that is one and a quarter pounds of silver, 2 Kings 15:20. It’s no wonder that Pul withdrew and stayed in the land no longer, 2 Kings 15:20.

PEKAHIAH KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the fiftieth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekahiah, son of Menahem, became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned two years. Pekahiah did evil in the eyes of the LORD. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. One of his chief officers, Pekah son of Remaliah, conspired against him. Taking fifty men of Gilead with him, he assassinated Pekahiah, along with Argob and Arieah, in the citadel of the

royal palace at Samaria. So Pekah killed Pekahiah and succeeded him as king. The other events of Pekahiah's reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel.' 2 Kings 15:23-26

Menahem's son, Pekahiah, reigned for two years in the Northern Kingdom of Israel, from 742 B.C. to 740 B.C. 2 Kings 15:23. He, too, did evil in the eyes of the LORD and he didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, 2 Kings 15:24.

It appears that the rich, who were having to pay the high taxes, 2 Kings 15:20, rebelled against Menahem. No one knows who Argob and Arieh are, 2 Kings 15:25; some people believe they are men, whilst others believe they were statues.

Pekah one of Menahem's commanders helped in a rebellion against Pekahiah, he had fifty Gileadites in the conspiracy with him and murdered Pekahiah in the process, 2 Kings 15:25.

Pekah now becomes king, 2 Kings 15:25. The other events of Pekahiah's reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 15:26.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The low birth of Pekah is probably glanced at in Isaiah's favourite designation of him as 'Remaliah's son', Isaiah 7:4-5 / Isaiah 7:9 / Isaiah 8:6.'

PEKAH KING OF ISRAEL

'In the fifty-second year of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah son of Remaliah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned twenty years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD. He did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit. In the time of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maakah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria. Then Hoshea, son of Elah, conspired against Pekah, son of Remaliah. He attacked and assassinated him, and then succeeded him as king in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. As for the other events of Pekah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?' 2 Kings 15:27-31

Pekah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned for twenty years, 2 Kings 15:27. He reigned from 740 B.C. to 732 B.C. He, too, did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he didn't turn away from the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit, 2 Kings 15:28.

When we read Isaiah 7:1-9 and Isaiah 8:1-8, we read about the plot in which Pekah was ambitious to replace Ahaz, the king of Judah, with a puppet who was favourable to Pekah's plans. The prophet Isaiah frustrated his efforts. The Assyrians took captives of conquered peoples as slaves back to their homeland.

Here we read that Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, assaulted the northern kingdom, defeated Pekah's army, and then took the Israelites captive back to Assyria, 2 Kings 15:29 / 2 Kings 17:6.

Ijon, Abel Beth Maakah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor were places which belonged to Israel and were taken by Ben-Hadad, king of Syria, 2 Kings 15:29, when he was in league with Asa, king of Judah, 1 Kings 15:20. They were regained by Jeroboam II, and now they are taken from Israel once more by Tiglath-Pileser.

Pul and Tiglath-Pileser, kings of Assyria, carried away into captivity the two tribes of Reuben and Gad, and the half-tribe of Manasseh, all that belonged to Israel, on the other side of Jordan, 1 Chronicles 5:26.

These places were never restored to Israel. Because of Pekah's defeat by the Assyrians, Hoshea conspired against him in order to bring Israel under the control of Assyria, 2 Kings 15:30.

Calmet, in his commentary, says the following concerning the chronology in these verses.

‘Hoshea conspired against Pekah, the twentieth year of the reign of this prince, which was the eighteenth after the beginning of the reign of Jotham, king of Judah. Two years after this, that is, the fourth year of Ahaz, and the twentieth of Jotham, Hoshea made himself master of a part of the kingdom, according to [2 Kings 15:30](#). Finally, the twelfth year of Ahaz, Hoshea had peaceable possession of the whole kingdom, according to [2 Kings 17:1](#).’ The other events of Pekah’s reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, [2 Kings 15:31](#).

JOTHAM KING OF JUDAH

‘In the second year of Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother’s name was Jerusha, daughter of Zadok. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Uzziah had done. The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the LORD. As for the other events of Jotham’s reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? (In those days, the LORD began to send Rezin, king of Aram and Pekah, son of Remaliah, against Judah.) Jotham rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David, the city of his father. And Ahaz, his son, succeeded him as king.’ [1 Kings 15:32-38](#)

Jotham became king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. He reigned together with Uzziah from 740 B.C. to 732 B.C., [1 Kings 15:32](#) / [2 Chronicles 27:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 1:7-9](#).

He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem for sixteen years. His mother’s name was Jerusha, daughter of Zadok, [1 Kings 15:33](#) / [2 Chronicles 27:1](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘According to [2 Kings 15:33](#) and [2 Chronicles 27:1](#), Jotham reigned for only 16 years. Strangely enough, this first year of Hoshea is also called, not the fourth, but the twelfth of Ahaz, [2 Kings 17:1](#). The chronological confusion of the history, as it stands, is striking.’

He did what was right in God’s eyes, just as his father Uzziah had done, [1 Kings 15:34](#) / [2 Chronicles 27:2](#), but he didn’t remove the high places, [1 Kings 15:35](#). These high places had become very important both socially and religiously for the Northern and Southern kingdoms.

They were places where sacrifices were made, and offerings were made to the false gods. In effect, these high places took God’s people away from God, hence why both kingdoms fell into idolatry over and over again. Yes, the temples of Baal were destroyed, but these high places remained, [2 Kings 15:1-4](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the wall of Ophel, [2 Chronicles 27:3](#).

‘This wall was part of the old Jebusite city, a very important part of Jerusalem, also called ‘the City of David’.

Jotham’s fortifying of this part of Jerusalem indicated that he feared an external attack, probably from Assyria and Samaria. This faithless trust which Judah at that time put in fortifications was rebuked by the prophets, [Hosea 8:14](#) / [Isaiah 2:15](#).’

He built towns in the hill country of Judah and forts and towers in the wooded areas, [2 Chronicles 27:4](#). Ammon had been subject to Uzziah, Jotham’s father, but they rebelled against Jotham, who put down their insurrection and exacted a heavy toll for three years, [2 Chronicles 27:5](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Ammonites, who had submitted to Uzziah, [2 Chronicles 26:8](#), revolted against Jotham. This revolt he firmly repressed; and, to punish it, he exacted a high rate of tribute for the three years following the termination of the war.

The productiveness of the Ammonite country in grain, which is here indicated, has been remarked upon as extraordinary by modern travellers.’

Jotham became and remained strong, 2 Chronicles 27:6, because he did right in the eyes of the Lord. Sadly, his reign wasn’t very long because the people around him were corrupt.

The other events of Jotham’s reign, and what he did, 2 Chronicles 26:9, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 1 Kings 15:36. In 1 Kings 15:37, we find the words, ‘In those days the LORD began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah’.

This is the first intimation of the hostile feelings of the kings of Israel and Syria toward Judah, which led them to form an alliance and make joint preparations for war, 2 Chronicles 27:5. However, war wasn’t actually waged until the reign of Ahaz.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was about this time that the Assyrian wars, so ruinous to the Jews, began, but it was in the following reigns that they arrived at their highest pitch of disaster to those unfaithful and unfortunate people. However much we may blame the Jews for their disobedience and obstinacy, we cannot help feeling for them under their severe afflictions. Grievously they have sinned, and grievously have they suffered for it.’

Jotham rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David, the city of his father. Ahaz, his son, succeeded him as king, 2 Chronicles 26:9 / 1 Kings 15:38.

It’s clear that the Northern Kingdom of Israel failed to humble themselves and failed to seek the Lord, and so, what we see in this chapter is a simple outline of the final destruction of the sinful kingdom of Israel, Amos 9:8.

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

‘In the seventeenth year of Pekah son of Remaliah, Ahaz son of Jotham king of Judah began to reign. Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the LORD his God. He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son in the fire, engaging in the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the high places, on the hilltops and under every spreading tree.’ 2 Kings 16:1-4

AHAZ KING OF JUDAH

Ahaz now becomes king of Judah at the age of twenty, and he reigned in Judah from 732 B.C. to 716 B.C. 2 Kings 16:1-2 / 2 Chronicles 28:1. The writer informs us that he did three things wrong as leader and king of Judah. He didn’t do what was right in the eyes of the LORD, 2 Kings 16:2 / 2 Chronicles 28:1, and we are told why.

1. He didn’t walk in the way of David, 2 Kings 16:2 / 2 Chronicles 28:1-2, that is, a man after God’s own heart, who was obedient to God, Acts 13:22.

2. He offered his son as a burnt offering to Molech, 2 Kings 16:3 / 2 Chronicles 28:3 / 1 Kings 11:7 / 2 Kings 3:27, which was condemned by the prophets, 2 Kings 23:10 / Psalms 106:38 / Jeremiah 7:31 / Ezekiel 16:21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Ahaz adopted the Moloch worship of the Ammonites and Moabites, 2 Kings 3:27 / Micah 6:7, and sacrificed at least one son, probably his firstborn, according to the horrid rites of those nations, and the Canaanite tribes, Deuteronomy 12:31 / Psalms 106:37-38.’

3. He participated in the immoral worship in the high places, 2 Kings 16:4 / 2 Chronicles 28:4. Although just before he died, he did close the temple hall and suspend the temple worship, 2 Chronicles 28:24.

The kings before him accepted Canaanite worship in the high places, but Ahaz is the first king to actually get involved in it. When we compare the words, ‘under every spreading tree’ used here, 2 Chronicles 28:4 / 2 Kings 16:4, with the way Jeremiah uses the phrase over in Jeremiah 3:6, we quickly learn that this phrase is used metaphorically for prostitution, which gives us an insight into the kind of worship Ahaz was involved with.

‘Then Rezin, king of Aram and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, marched up to fight against Jerusalem and besieged Ahaz, but they could not overpower him. At that time, Rezin, king of Aram, recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the people of Judah. Edomites then moved into Elath and have lived there to this day. Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, ‘I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me.’ And Ahaz took the silver and gold found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace and sent it as a gift to the king of Assyria. The king of Assyria complied by attacking Damascus and capturing it. He deported its inhabitants to Kir and put Rezin to death.’ 2 Kings 16:5-9

God had warned both the northern and southern kingdoms that they would eventually be carried away into captivity if they didn’t obey His law. God delivered Ahaz into the hands of the king of Aram, 2 Chronicles 28:5.

He was also given into the hands of the king of Israel, who inflicted heavy casualties on him, 2 Chronicles 28:5.

Rezin and Pekah weren’t successful in their attack against Jerusalem because of the strong fortifications of the city, 2 Kings 16:5.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘2 Kings 16:5, here is practically identical to Isaiah 7:1. In fact, Isaiah probably is the author of a great many passages in Kings. From the account in Isaiah, we learn the reason for this war against Judah. Syria, mentioned first here, was the leader of a coalition in which they had also enlisted Pekah with a projected purpose of forming a widespread alliance against the rising authority of Assyria. They desperately wanted Judah to join this coalition, and when Ahaz refused, Syria and Israel under Pekah decided to replace Ahaz on the throne of Judah with a man of their own choice, Ben-Tabeel, Isaiah 7:6.’

Cook, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A large party in Judah were weary of the house of David, Isaiah 7:13, and were ready to join the coalition. Their siege of Jerusalem was for that purpose, but although they inflicted great damage and casualties upon Judah, they could not compel the removal of Ahaz.’

In one day Pekah son of Remaliah killed a hundred and twenty thousand soldiers in Judah because Judah had forsaken the LORD, the God of their ancestors, 2 Chronicles 28:6.

At that time, Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram by driving out the people of Judah, 2 Kings 16:6.

Although most translations have the word Edomites, 2 Kings 16:6, some translations use the word Syrians, but it really doesn’t make any difference as to how they are described.

Isaiah makes it clear that the goal of this attack was to dethrone Ahaz and set up a Syrian king over Judah, a certain son of Tabeel, Isaiah 7:6. Zikri, an Ephraimite warrior, killed Maaseiah, the king’s son, Azrikam, the officer in charge of the palace, and Elkanah, second to the king, 2 Chronicles 28:7.

They almost succeeded in capturing Ahaz, but they couldn’t actually overcome him, 2 Kings 16:5. However, they did carry away two hundred thousand captives and much spoil, 2 Chronicles 28:8.

When Israel defeated Judah, Israel wanted to take them into captivity and make slaves of one-hundred and twenty-thousand Judean soldiers and two-hundred thousand civilian hostages, but this wasn't to be.

Notice God sent the prophet, Obed, straight away to inform Israel that they were able to defeat their brethren because God was punishing Judah for her sin, [2 Chronicles 28:9](#).

They were to return the captives they took out of Judah and they listened to what Obed had said, and afterwards fed, clothed, and allowed the captives to return to their homes in Judah, [2 Chronicles 28:10-11](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the prophet, Obed.

'God never stopped his pleading with the northern tribes through his holy prophets, despite the fact that within a decade, or a little less time, the Northern Israel would be destroyed and many of them transported as captives by Assyria in 722 B.C. The reign of Ahaz, 735-715 B.C., would not close until after the fall of Samaria. Thus, this change of heart by some of the men of Ephraim came at a time when it was already too late. This act of mercy on their part must therefore be viewed, not as any fundamental change in the apostate Israel, but as an act of God's mercy upon Judah, even in his judgment against them. Significantly, Nothing is known of this prophet Obed, except what is written here. There may have been many such prophets whom God sent in his futile efforts to win back from their rebellion the northern kingdom.'

Then some of the leaders in Ephraim confronted those who were arriving from the war, [2 Chronicles 28:12](#). They warned them not to bring those prisoners here, or they would be guilty before the LORD. Do you intend to add to our sin and guilt?

For our guilt is already great, and his fierce anger rests on Israel, [2 Chronicles 28:13](#). The soldiers gave up the prisoners and plunder in the presence of the officials and all the assembly, [2 Chronicles 28:14](#).

The men designated by name took the prisoners, and from the plunder they clothed all who were naked, [2 Chronicles 28:15](#). They provided them with clothes and sandals, food and drink, and healing balm and those who were weak they put on donkeys, [2 Chronicles 28:15](#). So they took them back to their fellow Israelites at Jericho, the City of Palms, and returned to Samaria, [2 Chronicles 28:15](#).

Ahaz sent messengers to say to Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, I am your servant and vassal. Come up and save me out of the hand of the king of Aram and of the king of Israel, who are attacking me, [2 Kings 16:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 28:16-18](#).

Although most translations have the word Edomites, some translations use the word Syrians, but it really doesn't make any difference as to how they are described. They took captive those of Judah, and the Philistines attacked and became successful in defeating the Judean army.

Notice that God, Himself, humbled Judah because of Ahaz, [2 Kings 16:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 28:19](#) / [Isaiah 7:10-16](#), and it appears that Ahaz couldn't get the message of doom that was sent to him from God, and so chaos ruled.

Sadly, because of his arrogance, he wouldn't lead the people into repentance, and so, the result was a punishment from God upon the whole nation. Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, came to him, but he gave him trouble instead of help, [2 Chronicles 28:20](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The long-time sins and apostasies of the Chosen People had all but completely erased from their hearts those basic truths and the final result of that shameful development would be rapidly revealed in the defeat and deportation, first, of Northern Israel to Assyria, 722 B.C., and later, in the defeat and captivity of Judah in Babylon, 586 B.C.'

Ahaz refused to seek help from God, despite being given a sign of assurance from Isaiah that God would help him, [Isaiah 7:1-12](#). The sad thing concerning Ahaz is that he could have easily avoided all of this if he had listened to and taken Isaiah's advice, [Isaiah 7:4-25](#).

Notice that Ahaz took the gold and silver he found in the temple, 2 Kings 16:8 / 2 Chronicles 28:21. Please note that the word translated ‘gift’ in 2 Kings 16:8 is the same word also rendered ‘bribe’. Despite offering the bribe, it didn’t help him, 2 Chronicles 28:21.

Throughout Israel’s history, the stores of wealth in Jerusalem were often plundered by foreign kings or used by the kings of Judah to buy the allegiance of foreign powers, 1 Kings 14:26 / 1 Kings 15:18 / 2 Kings 12:18. Because Tiglath-Pileser killed Rezin, the king of Syria, 2 Kings 16:9, this meant that the nation of Syria no longer acted as a boundary between Syria and Israel.

‘Then King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria. He saw an altar in Damascus and sent to Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction. So Uriah the priest built an altar in accordance with all the plans that King Ahaz had sent from Damascus and finished it before King Ahaz returned.

When the king came back from Damascus and saw the altar, he approached it and presented offerings on it. He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splashed the blood of his fellowship offerings against the altar. As for the bronze altar that stood before the LORD, he brought it from the front of the temple—from between the new altar and the temple of the LORD—and put it on the north side of the new altar. King Ahaz then gave these orders to Uriah the priest: ‘On the large new altar, offer the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king’s burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering. Splash against this altar the blood of all the burnt offerings and sacrifices. But I will use the bronze altar for seeking guidance.’ And Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had ordered. King Ahaz cut off the side panels and removed the basins from the movable stands. He removed the Sea from the bronze bulls that supported it and set it on a stone base. He took away the Sabbath canopy that had been built at the temple and removed the royal entryway outside the temple of the LORD, in deference to the king of Assyria. As for the other events of the reign of Ahaz, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Ahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. And Hezekiah his son succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 16:10-20

In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the LORD, 2 Chronicles 28:22. Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria and he saw a pagan god altar, 2 Kings 16:10.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Assyrian altars were not very elaborate, but they were very different from the Jewish. They were comparatively small and scarcely suited for ‘whole burnt-offerings.’ One type was square, about half the height of a man, and ornamented round the top with a sort of battlement. Another had a triangular base and a circular top consisting of a single flat stone. A third was a sort of portable stand, narrow, and about the height of a man. This last was of the kind which the kings took with them in their expeditions.’

However, Ahaz didn’t just like the altar, he asks Uriah the priest a sketch of the altar, with detailed plans for its construction, 2 Kings 16:10. He went as far as having a copy of it made and placed in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem, 2 Kings 16:11. It’s possible that he is now introducing these foreign gods to Israel as a way of showing his allegiance to the Assyrians and the Syrians.

Notice that Uriah the priest built the altar, 2 Kings 16:11. He is mentioned as a witness in Isaiah 8:2, but make no mistake about it, by building this altar, he was demonstrating how evil a priest he really was.

He should have refused to build it, just as Azariah did when he refused to obey the king, 1 Chronicles 26:17. When Ahaz comes back from Damascus and sees the altar, he approaches it and presents offerings on it, 2 Kings 16:12. 2 Chronicles 28:23 tells us he offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him because he thought the gods of the kings of Aram had helped them, he will sacrifice to them so they will help me. We are told that they were his downfall and the downfall of all Israel, 2 Chronicles 28:23.

He offered up his burnt offering and grain offering, poured out his drink offering, and splashed the blood of his fellowship offerings against the altar, 2 Kings 16:13.

As for the bronze altar that stood before the LORD, he brought it from the front of the temple, from between the new altar and the temple of the LORD, and put it on the north side of the new altar, 2 Kings 16:14.

The bronze altar was the original bronze altar found within the temple, 2 Kings 16:14 / Exodus 25:40 / Exodus 26:30 / 1 Chronicles 28:19. It wasn't destroyed as some commentators suggest, Jeremiah 52:17-20, but it appears that all of its purposes were transferred to the new altar designed after Ahaz's orders.

Ahaz orders Uriah the priest to offer the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and his grain offering, and the burnt offering of all the people of the land, and their grain offering and their drink offering on the large new altar, 2 Kings 16:15.

Uriah is to slash against this altar the blood of all the burnt offerings and sacrifices, 2 Kings 16:15. It appears that the original bronze altar now has second place. In the eyes of Ahaz, he moves it to a place where he can inquire of the Lord, 2 Kings 16:15 / Ezekiel 21:36. Uriah did just as Ahaz had ordered, 2 Kings 16:16.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The writer condemns the obsequiousness of Urijah, whose conduct was the more inexcusable after the noble example of his predecessor Azariah, 2 Chronicles 26:17-20.'

Ahaz cut off the side panels and removed the basins from the movable stands and removed the Sea from the bronze bulls that supported it and set it on a stone base, 2 Kings 16:17 / Jeremiah 52:17 / Jeremiah 52:20.

He took away the Sabbath canopy that had been built at the temple and removed the royal entryway outside the temple of the LORD, in deference to the king of Assyria, 2 Kings 16:18.

Ahaz gathered together the furnishings from the temple of God and cut them into pieces and shut the doors of the temple and set up altars at every street corner in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 28:24. In every town in Judah, he built high places to burn sacrifices to other gods and aroused the anger of God, 2 Chronicles 28:25.

He blatantly carries on building altars to false gods, and he blatantly encourages the people to be apostates. He brings Judah into such a spiritual state that even the people wouldn't bury him in the tombs of the kings when he died.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'His adoption of the Syrian gods, Hadad, Rimmon, and others, as objects of worship, no doubt preceded the destruction of Damascus by the Assyrians, 2 Kings 16:9.'

The other events of the reign of Ahaz, and what he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah and Israel, 2 Kings 16:19 / 2 Chronicles 28:26 / Isaiah 7:10-13 / 2 Chronicles 29:3 / 2 Chronicles 29:7.

Ahaz rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of Jerusalem, but he was not placed in the tombs of the kings of Israel, 2 Kings 16:20 / 2 Chronicles 28:27. Ahaz was arguably the worst of Judah, and after his death, his son, Hezekiah, became king, 2 Kings 16:20 / 2 Chronicles 28:27.

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

'In the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah, Hoshea son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria, and he reigned nine years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, but not like the kings of Israel who preceded him. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, came up to attack Hoshea, who had been Shalmaneser's vassal and had paid him tribute. But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was a traitor, for he had sent envoys to So, king of Egypt, and he no longer paid

tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore, Shalmaneser seized him and put him in prison.’
2 Kings 17:1-4

HOSHEA, LAST KING OF ISRAEL

Hoshea is now the king of Israel in the north. He reigned for nine years, 2 Kings 17:1, and he is the last king of Israel. He reigned from 732 B.C. to the time of the fall of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. 2 Kings 18:9-12. Although he did evil in God’s eyes, he wasn’t like any of the kings who were before him, 2 Kings 17:2.

Jeroboam went all out to try to discourage people from going to Jerusalem for the temple sacrifices by building alternative altars at Bethel and Dan, 1 Kings 12:25-33.

As a result of building these altars, he ultimately caused division between God’s people, the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The kings who followed Jeroboam continued with this same practise, hence why they are often referred to as continuing ‘in the sins of Jeroboam.’

One reason why Hoshea wasn’t like any king before him was that he allowed the people to go to Jerusalem to offer their sacrifices at the temple for the Passover, 2 Chronicles 30:10-27.

Shalmaneser, 2 Kings 17:3, was the son and successor of Tiglath-Pileser. He is called Shalman by Hosea, Hosea 10:14, and Hoshea became his servant and paid tribute to Shalmaneser, 2 Kings 17:3.

Some think that Hoshea had refused or neglected to pay tribute to Assyria, and this was the reason for Shalmaneser’s invasion. Others think that this coming up of the Assyrian king was merely an expedition of conquest, growing out of the ambition of the new sovereign, and not from any provocation of Hoshea.

Because Israel had great confidence in their alliance with So, the king of Egypt, 2 Kings 17:4, it appears that some people in Israel convinced Hoshea to stop paying tribute to Assyria. Sadly, their confidence was misplaced because their alliance with Egypt failed, and Hoshea ended up being a prisoner of the Assyrians, 2 Kings 17:4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He had endeavoured to shake off the Assyrian yoke by entering into a treaty with So, King of Egypt and having done so, he ceased to send the annual tribute to Assyria.’

‘The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria, and laid siege to it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in the towns of the Medes.’ 2 Kings 17:5-6

Here we read about the tragic end of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, 2 Kings 17:5-6 / Hosea 13:16 / Micah 1:6, all because they refused to listen to God and keep His commandments, 2 Kings 17:7.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Samaria was a powerful stronghold, and it is a credit to the builders and defenders of that city that it withstood a siege for such a long while. It is evident that Assyria scattered her captives among the provinces and that they were not carried to Nineveh, the capital. It was also their policy to place them in small groups so that they would lose their identity and mingle with the local populations. It is not certain as to the exact location of the places mentioned here, but scholars generally suppose that the captives were placed in northern Mesopotamia.’

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Thus ended the kingdom of Israel, after it had lasted two hundred and fifty-four years, from the death of Solomon and the schism of Jeroboam, till the taking of Samaria by Shalmaneser, in the ninth year of Hoshea, after which the remains of the ten tribes were carried away beyond the river Euphrates.’

ISRAEL EXILED BECAUSE OF SIN

‘All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. The Israelites secretly did things against the LORD their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city, they built themselves high places in all their towns. They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the LORD had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that aroused the LORD’s anger. They worshipped idols, though the LORD had said, ‘You shall not do this.’ The LORD warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers: ‘Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees, in accordance with the entire Law that I commanded your ancestors to obey and that I delivered to you through my servants the prophets.’ But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in the LORD their God. They rejected his decrees and the covenant he had made with their ancestors and the statutes he had warned them to keep. They followed worthless idols, and themselves became worthless. They imitated the nations around them, although the LORD had ordered them, ‘Do not do as they do.’ They forsook all the commands of the LORD their God and made for themselves two idols cast in the shape of calves, and an Asherah pole. They bowed down to all the starry hosts, and they worshipped Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practised divination and sought omens and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, and even Judah did not keep the commands of the LORD their God. They followed the practices Israel had introduced. Therefore, the LORD rejected all the people of Israel; he afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers, until he thrust them from his presence. When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam, son of Nebat, their king. Jeroboam enticed Israel away from following the LORD and caused them to commit a great sin. The Israelites persisted in all the sins of Jeroboam and did not turn away from them until the LORD removed them from his presence, as he had warned through all his servants the prophets. So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria, and they are still there.’ 2 Kings 17:7-23

In these verses, we read about the reason why God punished Israel, 2 Kings 17:7, and why they are now going to be taken into Assyrian captivity. There are three main reasons given, 2 Kings 17:7-23.

1. Because of their idolatry, Exodus 20:2-3.

They were offering their children as a sacrifice to their false gods, 2 Kings 16:3. They built high places, as places of worship, Jeremiah 32:35, when they should have destroyed them, Numbers 33:52 / Deuteronomy 12:2-3.

They built two calves, in order to stop people from going to Jerusalem to worship and offer sacrifices at the temple, 1 Kings 12:25-33. They made images of their gods and bowed down to them, 1 Kings 12:28. They bowed down and worshipped the starry hosts, 2 Kings 21:3 / Deuteronomy 4:19 / Deuteronomy 17:3 / Acts 7:42.

2. Because they rejected God’s law, Hosea 2:13 / Hosea 4:13 / Isaiah 65:3.

3. They disregarded the warnings from God’s prophets, Isaiah 55:6-7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God raised up a succession of prophets and seers, who repeated and enforced the warnings of the Law, and breathed into the old words a new life. Among this succession were, in Israel, Ahijah the Shilonite, 1 Kings 14:2, Jehu the son of Hanani, 1 Kings 16:1, Elijah, Micaiah the son of Imlah, 1 Kings 22:8, Elisha, Jonah the son of Amittai, 2 Kings 14:25, Oded, 2 Chronicles 28:9, Amos, and Hosea, in Judah, up to this time, Shemaiah 2 Chronicles 11:2 / 2 Chronicles 12:5, Iddo 2 Chronicles 12:15 / 2 Chronicles 13:22, Azariah the son of Oded, 2 Chronicles 15:1, Hanani, 2 Chronicles 16:7, Jehu his son, 2 Chronicles 19:2, Jahaziel the son of Zechariah, 2 Chronicles 20:14, Eliezer the son of

Dodavah, 2 Chronicles 20:37, Zechariah the son of Jehoiada, 2 Chronicles 24:20, another Zechariah, 2 Chronicles 26:5, Joel, Micah, and Isaiah, besides several whose names are not known. Some of these persons are called ‘prophets,’ others ‘seers.’ Occasionally, the same person has both titles (as Iddo and Jehu, the son of Hanani), which seems to show that there was no very important distinction between them.’

As a result of their sin, they were carried away to Assyria, 2 Kings 17:24 / 2 Chronicles 34:9. The good news is that Israel learned a really tough lesson here because when they finally came out of captivity, they never again committed idolatry.

This should have sent a clear message to the Southern Kingdom of Judah that God won’t tolerate sin, but as we know, they never learned anything from the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

SAMARIA RESETTLED

‘The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Avva, Hamath and Sepharvaim and settled them in the towns of Samaria to replace the Israelites. They took over Samaria and lived in its towns. When they first lived there, they did not worship the LORD; so he sent lions among them, and they killed some of the people. It was reported to the king of Assyria: ‘The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off, because the people do not know what he requires.’ Then the king of Assyria gave this order: ‘Have one of the priests you took captive from Samaria go back to live there and teach the people what the god of the land requires.’ So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria came to live in Bethel and taught them how to worship the LORD.’ 2 Kings 17:24-28

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Sargon is probably the king of Assyria intended, not (as generally supposed) either Shalmaneser or Esar-Haddon.’

The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Kuthah, Ava, Hamath and Sepharvaim, 2 Kings 17:24. These are all lands which the Assyrians had conquered. Notice that they spread them out throughout their entire empire and moved people into the lands they had conquered.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He removed one people entirely, and substituted others in their place, and this he did to cut off all occasion for mutiny or insurrection, for the people being removed from their own land, had no object worthy of attention to contend for, and no patrimony in the land of their captivity to induce them to hazard any opposition to their oppressors.’

They did this so that they could mix the cultures and the religious beliefs of the people, which would then reduce the threat of any kind of revolt against them. The mixing of these people would result in what we now know as the Samaritans. They were basically a cross-race people, those who were left behind in Palestine and those who were put together with them by the Assyrians.

Notice that when they first got there, they didn’t worship God, and so God sent lions amongst them, 2 Kings 17:25. Those who had been brought into the land didn’t know God and didn’t fear God, and so God allowed the population of lions to increase, 2 Kings 17:26, which meant the land now became a very dangerous place.

It’s clear that the Assyrians believed that the lion attacks were a punishment from the God of the land, and so the king commissions a Levite priest to go to the land to teach the people about the commandments of God and how to worship God, 2 Kings 17:27-28. This one Levite put faith in the hearts of the Samaritans, which must have remained with them until they were freed from their captivity.

‘Nevertheless, each national group made its own gods in the several towns where they settled and set them up in the shrines the people of Samaria had made at the high places. The people from Babylon made Sukkoth Benoth, those from Kuthah made Nergal, and those from Hamath made Ashima; the Avvites made Nibhaz and Tartak, and the Sepharvites burned their children in the fire as sacrifices to Adrammelek and Anammelek, the gods of Sepharvaim. They worshipped the LORD, but they also appointed all sorts of their own people to officiate for them as priests in the shrines at the high places. They worshipped the LORD, but they also served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been brought.’ 2 Kings 17:29-33

It appears as if the Levites were encouraging some people to put their faith in God; there were others who were promoting idolatry, 2 Kings 17:29. This is the result of different cultures and religious beliefs coming together in one place.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘Samaritans’ here are the Israelites. The temples built by them at the high places, 1 Kings 12:31 / 1 Kings 13:32, had remained standing at the time of their departure. They were now occupied by the newcomers, who set up their own worship in the old sanctuaries.’

The writer then goes on to give us a list of Babylonian gods who were worshipped by these people, 2 Kings 17:30-33. We don’t know much about the Babylonian god, Succoth-Benoth.

Nergal was a male god who was originally associated with the sun and fire, but later he was made the god of war and hunting, and later still, he was made the god of disasters.

Ashima was the god of the Hamathites and may have been associated with the Asherah. We don’t know a lot about the Babylonian gods, Nibhaz and Tartak, although some commentators suggest that Nibhaz originated from Elam and that Tartak was a Syrian goddess. Adrammelek was a god associated with the Sumero-Akkadian god, Anu, who was associated with human sacrifice.

These different gods give us an insight into the religious practices of the Babylonians, but instead of allowing God to influence their lives, they allowed these man-made images to direct and influence their lives. As a result, the God of heaven became like all the other gods; they just mixed their religion to cover all bases, Acts 17:23.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They did not relinquish their own idolatry but incorporated the worship of the true God with that of their idols. They were afraid of Jehovah, who had sent lions among them, and therefore they offered him a sort of worship that he might not thus afflict them, but they served other gods, devoted themselves affectionately to them, because their worship was such as gratified their grossest passions, and most sinful propensities.’

‘To this day, they persist in their former practices. They neither worship the LORD nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws, and commands that the LORD gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel. When the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites, he commanded them: ‘Do not worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them, or sacrifice to them. But the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, is the one you must worship. To him you shall bow down and to him offer sacrifices. You must always be careful to keep the decrees and regulations, the laws, and commands he wrote for you. Do not worship other gods. Do not forget the covenant I have made with you, and do not worship other gods. Rather, worship the LORD your God; it is he who will deliver you from the hand of all your enemies.’ They would not listen, however, but persisted in their former practices. Even while these people were worshipping the LORD, they were serving their idols. To this day, their children and grandchildren continue to do as their ancestors did.’ 2 Kings 17:34-41

To this day, they persist in their former practices, and they neither worship God nor adhere to the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands that God gave the descendants of Jacob, whom he named Israel, 2 Kings 17:34. When God made a covenant with the Israelites, He commanded them not to worship any other gods or bow down to them, serve them or sacrifice to them, 2 Kings 17:35 / Exodus 20:3 / Deuteronomy 5:7.

It was God who brought them up out of Egypt with mighty power and outstretched arm, Deuteronomy 26:8, and He is the one they must worship, only He is to be bowed down to and have sacrifices offered to, 2 Kings 17:36. They needed to be careful to keep the decrees and regulations, the laws and commands God wrote for them, they must not worship other gods, 2 Kings 17:37.

God says they shouldn't forget the covenant He made with them, and they mustn't worship other gods, rather, worship God because He is the One who will deliver them from the hand of all their enemies, 2 Kings 17:38-39 / Deuteronomy 20:4 / Psalms 34:22.

They would not listen to what God said and persisted in their former practices, 2 Kings 17:40. Even while these people were worshipping God, they were serving their idols, 2 Kings 17:41 / 2 Kings 25:27. It appears that all attempts by the Levites to teach the Samaritans God's laws were only partially successful.

This is understandable, especially when we think that these people who were brought here by the Assyrians to mix, had their own religious baggage, baggage which, for some, was too much to let go of.

It's no wonder people get confused, as they hear a mixture of truth and error. Sadly, some added the God of heaven to their long list of gods and served them all, which their children and grandchildren continued to do, 2 Kings 17:41.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

'In the third year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Hezekiah son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah, daughter of Zechariah. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father David had done. He removed the high places, smashed the sacred stones, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake Moses had made, for up to that time the Israelites had been burning incense to it. (It was called Nehushtan.)

Hezekiah trusted in the LORD, the God of Israel. There was no one like him among all the kings of Judah, either before him or after him. He held fast to the LORD and did not stop following him; he kept the commands the LORD had given Moses. And the LORD was with him; he was successful in whatever he undertook. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him. From watchtower to fortified city, he defeated the Philistines, as far as Gaza and its territory.' 2 Kings 18:1-8

HEZEKIAH KING OF JUDAH

Whilst the Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into captivity, 2 Kings 17:5, Hezekiah now becomes king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah at the age of twenty-five, 2 Chronicles 29:1.

He reigned for twenty-nine years, from 716 B.C. to 687 B.C. 2 Kings 18:1-2 / 2 Chronicles 29:1. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah, 2 Kings 18:2 / 2 Chronicles 29:1, who is probably the person mentioned by Isaiah, as a 'faithful witness', Isaiah 8:2.

When we read Isaiah 36-37, we soon discover that we have a parallel account of what we have recorded here in 2 Kings 18 and 2 Kings 19, it's almost word-for-word. Hezekiah did what was right in the eyes of God, 2 Kings 18:3 / 2 Chronicles 29:2; he trusted God and restored Judah to God.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In 2 Chronicles 29:1-36, of the second book of Chronicles, we have an account of what this pious king did to restore the worship of God. He caused the priests and Levites to cleanse the holy house, which had been shut up by his father Ahaz, and had been polluted with filth of various kinds; and this cleansing required no less than sixteen days to accomplish it. As the Passover, according to the law, must be celebrated the fourteenth of the first month, and the Levites could not get the temple cleansed before the sixteenth day, he published the Passover for the fourteenth of the second month, and sent through all Judah and Israel to collect all the men that feared God, that the Passover might be celebrated in a proper manner. The concourse was great, and the feast was celebrated with great magnificence. When the people returned to their respective cities and villages, they began to throw down the idol altars, statues, images, and groves, and even to abolish the high places; the consequence was that a spirit of piety began to revive in the land, and a general reformation took place.’

Hezekiah also made reforms in the cities, but also in the rural areas, as he removed the high places of the false gods by destroying them, 2 Kings 18:4 / 2 Chronicles 31:20-21 / Deuteronomy 12:2-4 / Deuteronomy 12:11-14 / Leviticus 26:30.

The bronze snake Moses made was now called ‘Nehushtan’, 2 Kings 18:4, which means ‘the bronze thing.’ This tells us that what the snake actually signified from Israel’s past had long been forgotten, Numbers 21:8-9, and was being worshipped.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the altar.

‘But does not 2 Kings 16:14-16 state that Ahaz himself made offerings on that special altar? Yes, indeed, but there is no contradiction here. The Chronicler is merely telling us, and those Levites, that those sacrifices that Ahaz offered on an Assyrian altar were, in no sense, offered unto the God of Israel, but were actually sacrifices to Assyrian gods.’ In doing all these things, he did what the kings before him failed to achieve, Isaiah 52:11. No wonder the Lord was with Hezekiah; he was committed to serving God and restoring the people of Judah back to God, and God was committed to being with him.

Whitcomb, in his commentary, gives us a detailed account of exactly what Hezekiah did.

1. He opened the temple doors, which Ahaz had closed, 2 Chronicles 28:24 / 2 Chronicles 29:3.
2. He ordered the cleansing of the temple, 2 Chronicles 29:4-19.
3. He offered appropriate sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 29:20-36.
4. He invited Israelites of every tribe to come to Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 30:5-12.
5. He also celebrated a Passover that had to be delayed a month to allow the worshippers to become clean, 2 Chronicles 30:1-12.

In doing all these things, he did what the kings before him failed to achieve, 2 Kings 18:5. No wonder the Lord was with Hezekiah. He was committed to serving God and restoring the people of Judah back to God, 2 Kings 18:6, and God was committed to being with him, 2 Kings 18:7 / 2 Chronicles 32:23 / 2 Chronicles 32:27-29.

Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria and refused to serve him, 2 Kings 18:7-8. At first, he was probably against Sennacherib, but after the death of Sennacherib, his revolt was against Sargon.

‘In King Hezekiah’s fourth year, which was the seventh year of Hoshea son of Elah, king of Israel, Shalmaneser king of Assyria marched against Samaria and laid siege to it. At the end of three years, the Assyrians took it. So Samaria was captured in Hezekiah’s sixth year, which was the ninth year of Hoshea, king of Israel. The king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in towns of the Medes. This happened because they had not obeyed the LORD their God but had violated his covenant—all that Moses the servant of the LORD commanded. They neither listened to the commands nor carried them out.’ 2 Kings 18:9-12

In these verses, we read again about the downfall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel. Shalmaneser marched against Samaria and laid siege to it, and at the end of three years the Assyrians took it, 2 Kings 18:9.

Samaria was captured in Hezekiah's sixth year, which was the ninth year of Hoshea, 2 Kings 18:10. The king of Assyria deported Israel to Assyria and settled them in Halah, in Gozan on the Habor River and in towns of the Medes, 2 Kings 18:11.

Some commentators suggest that 'since Shalmaneser had died before the battle against Samaria was completed, the 'king of Assyria' that is mentioned in 2 Kings 18:11, would be Sargon II.

By the time of Assyria's attack on the Southern Kingdom of Judah in 2 Kings 18:13, Sargon had died, and Sennacherib was king of Assyria.' All this happened because God's people refused to be faithful to God, they disobeyed His commandments, created their own laws, they committed idolatry and worshipped idols instead of worshipping the God of Israel, 2 Kings 18:12 / 2 Kings 17:3-7

'In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them. So, Hezekiah, king of Judah, sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: 'I have done wrong. Withdraw from me, and I will pay whatever you demand of me.' The king of Assyria exacted from Hezekiah, king of Judah, three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. So Hezekiah gave him all the silver that was found in the temple of the LORD and in the treasuries of the royal palace. At this time, Hezekiah, king of Judah, stripped off the gold with which he had covered the doors and doorposts of the temple of the LORD and gave it to the king of Assyria.' 2 Kings 18:13-16

Sennacherib in 701 B.C. attacked all the fortified cities of Judah and captured them, 2 Kings 18:13. History tells us that when Sargon was killed in battle in the land of Tabal, a rebellion started throughout many Mediterranean regions where Assyria had formerly conquered several small nations. Hezekiah was one who joined in with this rebellion against the Assyrians, 2 Kings 18:7-8.

At the same time, the Bible tells us that Marduk-Baladan was leading the rise of the Babylonian Empire and encouraged other nations to join in with the rebellion, 2 Kings 20:12-19 / Isaiah 39:1-8.

It was during this time of rebellion that Sennacherib attacked all the cities of Judah. When Sennacherib initially defeated Tyre, then the capital cities, except Ashkelon, Ekron and Jerusalem, Hezekiah submitted to pay tribute to Assyria. However, Sennacherib eventually defeated Ashkelon and wanted to do the same to Ekron.

The Philistines made an alliance with Shabaka of Egypt, who, in turn, called for reinforcements from Ethiopia. But Sennacherib defeated this coalition of nations at Eltekah, north of Ekron.

After his conquest of Eltekah, Timnah and Ekron, Sennacherib headed for Jerusalem. Before arriving in Jerusalem, he engaged Lachish, 2 Kings 18:14, a well-fortified city that was at the time larger than Jerusalem.

Hezekiah wants to know what he has done wrong and tells Sennacherib to back off, and he will pay him whatever he wants, 2 Kings 18:14. Notice that Hezekiah paid a large tribute to Sennacherib, 2 Kings 18:14. This is because he knew he couldn't stop him; he was way too powerful for Judah.

Hezekiah took all the treasures out of the temple and even stripped the gold overlay from the doorposts, 2 Kings 18:15 / 2 Kings 16:8. This was the first invasion of Sennacherib into the land of Judah, but another is soon to follow. When Hezekiah found out that Sennacherib had come to wage war against Jerusalem, he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, 2 Chronicles 32:2-3.

Because Jerusalem's water supply was open to any attack, and since it was dependent on two springs, Hezekiah's plan was twofold: to hide the springs outside the city in order to distress the Assyrians, and to convey their water underground into the city, in order to increase his own supply during the siege, 2 Chronicles 32:4.

Hezekiah rebuilds the broken parts of the wall, 2 Chronicles 32:5, which had obviously been neglected over time, 2 Chronicles 28:1-10, and he pulls down houses to use the material to help towards repairing the wall, Isaiah 22:10.

Hezekiah encourages everyone to be strong and courageous and not to be afraid or dismayed, 2 Chronicles 32:6-7 / Isaiah 22:5-13 / Isaiah 29:3. Notice he says, what Elisha the prophet said, 'there is a greater power with us than with him', 2 Chronicles 32:7 / 2 Kings 6:16.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was soon proved to be true by the slaughter made by the angel of the Lord in the Assyrian camp, 2 Kings 19:35.’

Hezekiah’s faith is seen when he says concerning Sennacherib, ‘with him is only the arm of flesh, but with us is the LORD our God to help us and to fight our battles’, 2 Chronicles 32:8 / 2 Kings 18:14-16. And the people gained confidence from what Hezekiah said, 2 Chronicles 32:8.

SENNACHERIB THREATENS JERUSALEM

‘The king of Assyria sent his supreme commander, his chief officer, and his field commander with a large army, from Lachish to King Hezekiah at Jerusalem. They came up to Jerusalem and stopped at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman’s Field. They called for the king; and Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the secretary, and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder, went out to them.’ 2 Kings 18:17-18

It’s important for us to think about the chronology of these verses; otherwise, we may get a little confused.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 2 Kings 18:17 / 2 Chronicles 32:9.

‘An interval of time must be placed between this verse and the last. Sennacherib, content with his successes, had returned to Nineveh with his spoil and his numerous captives. Hezekiah, left to himself, repented of his submission, and commenced negotiations with Egypt, 2 Kings 18:21 / 2 Kings 18:24 / Isaiah 30:2-6 / Isaiah 31:1, which implied treason against his Assyrian suzerain. It was under these circumstances that Sennacherib appears to have made his second expedition into Palestine very soon after the first.’

Gill, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was after Hezekiah had given him a large quantity of silver and gold to depart, and he did depart from him, 2 Kings 18:14, but he himself laid siege against Lachish, and all his power with him, one of the cities of Judah, Isaiah 36:2, from hence he dispatched them unto Hezekiah king of Judah, and unto all Judah that were at Jerusalem, who had retired thither for safety, upon the invasion of their country by the king of Assyria.’

Sennacherib now sends his supreme commander, chief officer and field commander to Hezekiah, 2 Kings 18:17 / 2 Chronicles 32:9. The K.J.V. uses the word, ‘Tartan’ for ‘supreme commander’, meaning general, commander of the Assyrian army, Isaiah 20:1.

The K.J.V. uses the word, ‘Rabsaris’, for ‘chief officer’ meaning chief eunuch, or bodyguard, Jeremiah 39:3 / Jeremiah 39:13. The K.J.V. uses the word, ‘Rabshakeh’, for ‘field commander’ meaning the chief cup-bearer, a court official often in charge of administrative duties.

They go to Jerusalem and stop at the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman’s Field, 2 Kings 18:17. They called for Hezekiah, but Eliakim, the palace administrator, Isaiah 22:20-22, Shebna the secretary, and Joah, the recorder, went out to them, 2 Kings 18:18.

‘The field commander said to them, ‘Tell Hezekiah: ‘This is what the great king, the king of Assyria, says: On what are you basing this confidence of yours? You say you have the counsel and the might for war—but you speak only empty words. On whom are you depending that you rebel against me? Look, I know you are depending on Egypt, that splintered reed of a staff, which pierces the hand of anyone who leans on it! Such is Pharaoh, king of Egypt, to all who depend on him. But if you say to me, ‘We are depending on the LORD our God’—isn’t he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, ‘You must worship before this altar in Jerusalem’? ‘Come now, make a bargain with my master, the king of Assyria: I will give you two thousand horses—if you can put riders on them! How can you repulse one officer of the least of my master’s officials, even though you

are depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen? Furthermore, have I come to attack and destroy this place without word from the LORD? The LORD himself told me to march against this country and destroy it.’ 2 Kings 18:19-25

Apparently, Rabshakeh was the spokesman in charge of negotiations, and so, he asks on behalf of Sennacherib what is the basis for their confidence? 2 Kings 18:19 / 2 Chronicles 32:9-10.

He tells them that Hezekiah is misleading them, allowing them to die of thirst and hunger, 2 Chronicles 32:11. He mocks them by saying that they have the council and might for war, but they are only empty words, 2 Kings 18:20. They want to know who they are dependent upon to rebel against Sennacherib, 2 Kings 18:20. It appears that Sennacherib knew all the reforms Hezekiah was doing, which included the removal of the high places, 2 Chronicles 32:12 / 2 Kings 18:3-4.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That they may be duly apprised, if they hold on Hezekiah’s side, Jerusalem shall be most straitly besieged, and they be reduced to such a state of famine as to be obliged to eat their own excrements.’

If they say to Sennacherib, they are depending on God, isn’t he the one whose high places and altars Hezekiah removed, saying to Judah and Jerusalem, they must worship before this altar in Jerusalem, 2 Kings 18:22 / 2 Kings 18:4.

Rabshakeh now offers Hezekiah’s representatives to bargain with Sennacherib and they will give Hezekiah two thousand horses, if you can put riders on them, 2 Kings 18:23.

They ask how can you reject one of Sennacherib’s officers offer, even though Hezekiah is depending on Egypt for chariots and horsemen, 2 Kings 18:24. It appears that Sennacherib had forgotten his earlier promise to spare the city for that vast tribute, 2 Kings 18:14.

Notice that Rabshakeh tried to discourage Hezekiah from making this alliance by telling him that he was on a mission from God, 2 Kings 18:25. In a sense, he was, but not in the sense he thought, Isaiah 10:5-11.

However, it wasn’t God’s mission for the Assyrians to take Jerusalem; that mission belonged to the Babylonians. Although Rabshakeh was arrogant, Hezekiah, with the help and guidance of Isaiah, stood firm in her revolt against the Assyrian Empire.

‘Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, ‘Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don’t speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall.’ But the commander replied, ‘Was it only to your master and you that my master sent me to say these things, and not to the people sitting on the wall—who, like you, will have to eat their own excrement and drink their own urine?’ 2 Kings 18:26-27

Here we learn that the two main languages during those days were Aramaic and Hebrew. Here we read of a mixture of truths and some huge lies, in Rabshakeh’s rant, and the representatives of Hezekiah tried to arrange for the mission from Sennacherib to speak in a language the defenders on the walls of the city wouldn’t understand, 2 Kings 18:26. However, this plan was rejected by Rabshakeh, who then finished his insulting speech, addressing it directly to the men on the wall, 2 Kings 18:27 / 2 Chronicles 32:11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘That they may be duly apprised, if they hold on Hezekiah’s side, Jerusalem shall be most straitly besieged, and they be reduced to such a state of famine as to be obliged to eat their own excrements.’

‘Then the commander stood and called out in Hebrew, ‘Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria! This is what the king says: Do not let Hezekiah deceive you. He cannot deliver you from my hand. Do not let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD when he says, ‘The LORD will surely deliver us; this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’ ‘Do not listen to Hezekiah. This is what the king of Assyria says: Make peace with me and come out to me. Then each of you will eat fruit from your own vine and fig tree and drink water from your own cistern, until I come and take you to a land like your own—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and

vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey. Choose life and not death! ‘Do not listen to Hezekiah, for he is misleading you when he says, ‘The LORD will deliver us.’ Has the god of any nation ever delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Have they rescued Samaria from my hand? Who of all the gods of these countries has been able to save his land from me? How then can the LORD deliver Jerusalem from my hand?’ But the people remained silent and said nothing in reply, because the king had commanded, ‘Do not answer him.’ Then Eliakim, son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary, and Joah, son of Asaph, the recorder, went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, and told him what the field commander had said.’ 2 Kings 18:28-37

Now Rabshakeh threatens them on the wall in their Hebrew tongue, 2 Kings 18:28. Notice how arrogant Sennacherib’s officers were, they basically boast about everything they have done in other lands, 2 Chronicles 32:13. They say that their god is greater than any other god, 2 Chronicles 32:14. He tells them not to listen to Hezekiah just because he says God will help you, that’s not true, 2 Kings 18:29-30 / 2 Chronicles 32:14.

He tells them to choose life or death, and if they surrender, they will live in peace in a land of luxury, 2 Kings 18:31-32. He questions their faith and says, if they believe God can deliver them from Sennacherib, how come no other god has been able to stop them, 2 Kings 18:32-35.

Rabshakeh appears to be giving the people a choice: they can choose to live in Assyria in captivity, or they can pay the consequences for rebelling against Sennacherib. Because Sennacherib had conquered many cities, including Samaria, this would certainly discourage the Israelites from rebelling.

However, they continue to speak against God and Hezekiah, 2 Chronicles 32:15-16 / 2 Kings 18:1 / Isaiah 36:1.

Notice also that arrogant Sennacherib also wrote a letter, ridiculing God, saying that the god of Hezekiah won’t be able to save Israel, 2 Chronicles 32:17 / 2 Kings 19:9.

The psychological ridicule continues as the officers cry out to those on the wall, speaking in Hebrew, 2 Chronicles 32:18 / Isaiah 36:11. They did this to frighten Israel and cause confusion among the Israelites in an effort to take the city.

The ridicule continued as they spoke against God, 2 Chronicles 32:19; in other words, they couldn’t see any difference between Israel’s God and any other god, Isaiah 36:19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Sennacherib’s arguments.

1. It is foolish to rely on Egypt for help.

The prophets of God had frequently warned God’s people of such a foolish course, and so this must be understood simply as a fact.

2. This argument was a theological one.

Hezekiah had indeed taken away the high places and the altars mentioned, and Rabshakeh’s false argument was that such must have displeased Jehovah. This, of course, was an outright lie. God was pleased with Hezekiah’s actions.

3. The third argument, 2 Kings 18:23-24, called attention to the overwhelmingly large army of the Assyrians. This was true, but the joker in that argument was that it would take an army of a million just as long to besiege a city as it would take an army of one-tenth that size, and the last thing on earth that Sennacherib wanted at that stage of his operations was a long siege.

4. The most astounding argument of all is the fourth.

Rabshakeh claimed that Jehovah had ordered him to come up and destroy Judah and Jerusalem. This was exactly the manoeuvre of Adolph Hitler, who employed the Big Lie as one of his weapons.

5. The fifth argument was such a monumental falsehood that one may well wonder at the stupidity of the man who told it.

‘If you will just surrender, we will provide you free transportation to a beautiful land far away, just like the Garden of Eden!’ How stupid was Rabshakeh that he supposed the Jews could have forgotten ‘that free transportation’ provided the Northern tribes, who were driven on foot, linked together with long cables fastened in the lips, ears, cheeks or noses of their victims into northern Mesopotamia, or how all of them were put to work in fields, factories, or brickyards, where they were only slaves, starved, worked, or beaten to death.’

‘Those gracious, kind, and gentle Assyrians, which Rabshakeh pretended they were, had earned the title of ‘The Breakers’ all over the world of that era, and their cruelties and brutalities were the worst mankind ever saw. They flayed their victims alive. They impaled them. They starved and beat them unmercifully.’

6. Number six was another religious argument.

‘None of the gods of all the cities and countries that had fallen into the hand of Sennacherib had ever been able to deliver them. Therefore, Jehovah, the God of Judah, would not be able to deliver them. Rabshakeh himself was due to learn something with regard to this argument, as shall be dramatically revealed in 2 Kings 19.’

Hezekiah’s representatives didn’t answer them because Hezekiah had commanded them not to, 2 Kings 18:36.

Hezekiah didn’t give in to Sennacherib; he trusted what God had told Isaiah, that Sennacherib wouldn’t enter the city, 2 Chronicles 32:9-19.

Notice also that Eliakim, Shebna, and Joah went to Hezekiah, with their clothes torn, to tell him what Rabshakeh said, 2 Kings 18:37. Although they were deeply discouraged by what Rabshakeh had said, Hezekiah continued to trust in God to deliver Judah from the threat of the Assyrians.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It was the custom of the Hebrews, when they heard any blasphemy, to rend their clothes, because this was the greatest of crimes, as it immediately affected the majesty of God, and it was right that a religious people should have in the utmost abhorrence every insult offered to the object of their religious worship. These three ambassadors lay the matter before the king as God’s representative, he lays it before the prophet, as God’s minister, and the prophet lays it before God, as the people’s mediator.’

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

‘When King Hezekiah heard this, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the temple of the LORD. He sent Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary, and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz. They told him, ‘This is what Hezekiah says: This day is a day of distress and rebuke and disgrace, as when children come to the moment of birth, and there is no strength to deliver them. It may be that the LORD your God will hear all the words of the field commander, whom his master, the king of Assyria, has sent to ridicule the living God, and that he will rebuke him for the words the LORD your God has heard. Therefore, pray for the remnant that still survives.’ When King Hezekiah’s officials came to Isaiah, Isaiah said to them, ‘Tell your master, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard—those words with which the underlings of the king of Assyria have blasphemed me. Listen! When he hears a certain report, I will make him want to return to his own country, and there I will have him cut down with the sword.’ 2 Kings 19:1-7

JERUSALEM'S DELIVERANCE FORETOLD

In his earlier years, Hezekiah had heavily relied on an alliance with Egypt, 2 Kings 18:19-25, even though Isaiah had warned him over and over again that he must rely on God to protect Judah, 2 Chronicles 32:9-19. The situation he finds himself in here is extreme, and so he now turns to Isaiah.

It appears that the message that Rabshakeh told Eliakim and Shebna not only deeply discouraged them, 2 Kings 18:28-37, but also deeply discouraged Hezekiah.

This is seen in the tearing of his clothes and wearing a sackcloth, 2 Kings 19:1. He then sends Eliakim, the palace administrator, Shebna, the secretary and the leading priests, all wearing sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah with a message, 2 Kings 19:2.

This is the first mention of Isaiah in Kings, but we do know that Isaiah himself had prophesied even in the days of Hezekiah's father Ahaz, Isaiah 7:10-17, but that ruler had shunned Isaiah's warnings.

He basically tells Isaiah that the people are deeply distressed with no strength left, just as a woman at the moment she is about to give birth, 2 Kings 19:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The Jewish state is here represented under the emblem of a woman in travail, who has been so long in the pangs of parturition that her strength is now entirely exhausted, and her deliverance is hopeless, without a miracle. The image is very fine and highly appropriate.’

He hopes that God heard what Rabshakeh said, and then he asks Isaiah to pray for those who survive, 2 Kings 19:4.

Notice that Hezekiah refers to the Lord as ‘your God’, 2 Kings 19:4; he doesn't say ‘my God’ or ‘our God’.

However, we mustn't mistake this as a lack of faith on Hezekiah's part; it was more of a confession that he hadn't been as faithful as he should have been.

When Eliakim, Shebna and the leading priests report to Hezekiah what Isaiah told them, 2 Kings 19:5, Isaiah tells Hezekiah that if they don't get help from God, then Judah will fall into the hands of the Assyrians, Isaiah 37:1-13.

There are four things the Lord said here.

1. Do not be afraid and listen, 2 Kings 19:6.

2. He would hear a certain report, 2 Kings 19:7 / 2 Kings 19:35-37.

We are not told where he would hear this certain report from or what the certain report was.

3. He would return to his own land, 2 Kings 19:7.

The prophets were telling Hezekiah that God would spare a remnant of His people. Because the Northern Kingdom of Israel had already been taken into Assyrian captivity, 2 Kings 17:5-6, the rest of God's people, Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, remained in the Southern Kingdom.

It is clear that Hezekiah believed that Judah was that remnant, as we know, Judah was going to be taken into captivity by the Babylonians. The remnant, therefore, was a few from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and a few from the other tribes, which were taken to Assyria.

4. In that land, he would fall by the sword, 2 Kings 19:7.

The result of his hearing this certain report would be his return to his own land, where he would be killed.

‘When the field commander heard that the king of Assyria had left Lachish, he withdrew and found the king fighting against Libnah. Now Sennacherib received a report that Tirhakah, the king of Cush, was marching out to fight against him. So he again sent messengers to Hezekiah with this word: ‘Say to Hezekiah king of Judah: Do not let the god you depend on deceive you when he says, ‘Jerusalem will not be given into the hands of the king of Assyria.’ Surely you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the countries, destroying them completely. And will you be

delivered? Did the gods of the nations that were destroyed by my predecessors deliver them—the gods of Gozan, Harran, Rezeph and the people of Eden who were in Tel Assar? Where is the king of Hamath or the king of Arpad? Where are the kings of Lair, Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?’ 2 Kings 19:8-13

Rabshakeh, Sennacherib’s commander of his army, left Lachish and found Sennacherib fighting against Libnah, 2 Kings 19:8. Tirhakah, the king of Cush, that is, Egypt, wanted to come to Hezekiah’s rescue, 2 Kings 19:9. Unfortunately, Sennacherib sent another dispatch of soldiers to Hezekiah, saying that Egypt wasn’t going to help them, 2 Kings 19:10-13. They must have seen how vast an army Sennacherib had with him, 2 Kings 17:24 / 2 Kings 19:12.

Sennacherib basically offers Hezekiah a choice: those living in Jerusalem could swap living in captivity for death. It would have been so easy to surrender to Sennacherib and his army, but Hezekiah stood firm in his faith that God would deliver them.

HEZEKIAH’S PRAYER

‘Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of the LORD and spread it out before the LORD. And Hezekiah prayed to the LORD: ‘LORD, the God of Israel, enthroned between the cherubim, you alone are God over all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth. Give ear, LORD, and hear; open your eyes, LORD, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to ridicule the living God. ‘It is true, LORD, that the Assyrian kings have laid waste these nations and their lands. They have thrown their gods into the fire and destroyed them, for they were not gods but only wood and stone, fashioned by human hands. Now, LORD our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you alone, LORD, are God.’ 2 Kings 19:14-19

After receiving the letter from the messengers, Hezekiah goes to the temple and spreads out the letter before God, 2 Kings 19:14.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The temple was considered to be God’s dwelling-place, and that whatever was there was peculiarly under his eye. Hezekiah spread the letter before the Lord, as he wished him to read the blasphemies spoken against himself.’

He now prays and notice he mentions that God is enthroned between the cherubim, 2 Kings 19:15.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The reference is to the Shechinah, or miraculous glory, which from time to time appeared above the mercy-seat from between the two cherubim, whose wings overshadowed the ark of the covenant, 1 Kings 6:23-27 / Exodus 25:22 / Leviticus 16:2, etc.’

He now prays to God and notice that he says that God is over all the kingdoms of the earth, 2 Kings 19:15. This tells us that God wasn’t just concerned about Israel as a nation, but all nations throughout the earth, Isaiah 37:14-20 / Jonah 1:1-2 / Jonah 4:11 / John 3:16.

God obviously doesn’t have physical eyes and ears, 2 Kings 19:16, these are used as metaphors so that we can relate to God in human terms, John 4:24. Hezekiah knows that the Assyrian gods were not real gods; they were made of wood and stone and made by humans, 2 Kings 19:17-18.

Hezekiah says there is a clear distinction between these man-made gods and the living God of Israel; it was God who created Israel, and He was working in and through them, 2 Kings 19:19.

ISAIAH PROPHECIES SENNACHERIB'S FALL

‘Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent a message to Hezekiah: ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer concerning Sennacherib king of Assyria. This is the word that the LORD has spoken against him: ‘Virgin

Daughter Zion despises you and mocks you. Daughter Jerusalem tosses her head as you flee. Who is it you have ridiculed and blasphemed? Against whom have you raised your voice and lifted your eyes in pride? Against the Holy One of Israel! By your messengers, you have ridiculed the Lord. And you have said, ‘With my many chariots I have ascended the heights of the mountains, the utmost heights of Lebanon. I have cut down its tallest cedars, the choicest of its junipers. I have reached its remotest parts, the finest of its forests. I have dug wells in foreign lands and drunk the water there. With the soles of my feet I have dried up all the streams of Egypt.’ ‘Have you not heard? Long ago, I ordained it. In days of old, I planned it; now I have brought it to pass, that you have turned fortified cities into piles of stone. Their people, drained of power, are dismayed and put to shame. They are like plants in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up. ‘But I know where you are and when you come and go and how you rage against me. Because you rage against me and because your insolence has reached my ears, I will put my hook in your nose and my bit in your mouth, and I will make you return by the way you came.’

‘This will be the sign for you, Hezekiah: ‘This year you will eat what grows by itself, and the second year what springs from that. But in the third year sow and reap, plant vineyards, and eat their fruit. Once more, a remnant of the kingdom of Judah will take root below and bear fruit above. For out of Jerusalem will come a remnant, and out of Mount Zion a band of survivors. ‘The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this. ‘Therefore, this is what the LORD says concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He will not enter this city or shoot an arrow here. He will not come before it with shield or build a siege ramp against it. By the way that he came, he will return; he will not enter this city, declares the LORD. I will defend this city and save it, for my sake and for the sake of David my servant.’ 2 Kings 19:20-34

Isaiah sends a message to Hezekiah telling him what God has said. God has heard his prayer, and God is about to act upon his prayer, 2 Kings 19:20-21. What the Lord says about Sennacherib is clearly a rebuke which would have hit hard in the arrogant heart of Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19:21-22 / Isaiah 37:21-38.

Notice that Sennacherib’s views against Judah were actually viewed as against the God of all creation. He is the Holy One of Israel, 2 Kings 19:22 / Isaiah 5:24 / Isaiah 30:12 / Jeremiah 50:29 / Jeremiah 51:5 / Psalms 71:22 / Psalms 78:41 / Psalms 89:18.

Sennacherib, who was so arrogant and full of pride, had been ridiculing Judah because their army, 2 Kings 19:23-24, which was hiding behind the walls of Jerusalem, was so small compared to God. The way God felt towards Sennacherib and his army should have been the way Judah felt towards them.

God asks Sennacherib Have you not heard? Long ago God ordained it, Isaiah 10:5. In days of old God planned it and now He has brought it to pass, that He has turned fortified cities into piles of stone, 2 Kings 19:25 / Isaiah 10:13.

It was God who drained the people of power and put them to shame. It was God who planted them like a plant in the field, like tender green shoots, like grass sprouting on the roof, scorched before it grows up, 2 Kings 19:26. God know where Sennacherib is, 2 Kings 19:27, and says He will turn Sennacherib back to where he came from, 2 Kings 19:28 / Isaiah 10:12-19.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Kings 19:28.

‘This seems to be an allusion to the method of guiding a buffalo, he has a sort of ring put into his nose, to which a cord or bridle is attached, by which he can be turned to the right, or to the left, or round about, according to the pleasure of his driver.’

The sign is for Hezekiah, 2 Kings 19:29.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The prophet now once more addresses Hezekiah, and gives him a ‘sign,’ or token, whereby he and his may be assured that Sennacherib is indeed bridled, and will not trouble Judaea anymore. It was a sign of the continued freedom of the land from attack during the whole of the remainder of Sennacherib’s reign, a space of 17 years.’

Judah has obviously been trapped inside the city walls of Jerusalem for some time, and as a result, they haven't been able to plant any food in the fields. However, as these words were being spoken, plants that grow by themselves would provide the food they needed, when the Assyrian army had left, 2 Kings 19:29.

This harvesting of these self-growing plants would continue into the second year because of what was happening, and in the third year, 2 Kings 19:29, they would be able to get back to farming on their own.

Those who survived in Jerusalem would be the remnant of Israel that would repopulate the land, 2 Kings 19:30-31.

We see this fulfilled later in 2 Kings 23:15-20.

God now gives six proofs that Jerusalem will not be taken by Sennacherib, 2 Kings 19:32-33.

1. Sennacherib will not enter the city, 2 Kings 19:32.
2. He won't get close enough to shoot an arrow, 2 Kings 19:32.
3. He won't be able to bring an army before it, 2 Kings 19:32.
4. He won't be able to use a shield against it, 2 Kings 19:32.
5. He won't be able to use a siege ramp against it, 2 Kings 19:32.
6. He will go back the way he came, 2 Kings 19:33.

Why did God make these promises to Hezekiah? Simply because of God's own sake and for the sake of David, 2 Kings 19:34 / 2 Kings 19:10-12 / 2 Samuel 7:10-16.

In other words, because God promised David that the Messiah, who would sit on David's throne, would come through him, Psalms 132:12-18. When this prophecy was fulfilled, Judah would then know that God was still with them.

‘That night, the angel of the LORD went out and put to death a hundred and eighty-five thousand in the Assyrian camp. When the people got up the next morning—there were all the dead bodies! So Sennacherib, king of Assyria, broke camp and withdrew. He returned to Nineveh and stayed there. One day, while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisrok, his sons Adrammelek and Sharezer killed him with the sword, and they escaped to the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon, his son, succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 19:35-37

If these verses don't put the fear of God in people, I don't know what will. Here we find the angel of the Lord, Genesis 16:7 / Exodus 3:2 / Zechariah 1:12, that is, just one angel totally wiping out one hundred and eighty-five thousand, of God's enemies in just one night, 2 Kings 19:35.

Who is this angel of the LORD? This is a Christophany, which suggests that this is a preincarnate appearance of Christ, Genesis 12:7. Remember the word ‘angel’ in Hebrew is ‘malak’, and it simply means messenger. Christ is God, not an angel, Genesis 16:13.

Haynes Jr, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A study of these passages reveals that the Angel of the Lord appeared in human form, Genesis 18:2 / Genesis 22:1-18 / Hebrews 13:2, and performed normal human functions, Genesis 32:24 / Numbers 22:23 / Numbers 22:31, yet he was an awe-inspiring figure, Genesis 32:30 / Judges 6:22 / Judges 13:22, exhibiting divine attributes and prerogatives including predicting the future, Genesis 16:10-12, forgiving sin, Exodus 23:21, and receiving worship, Exodus 3:5 / Judges 13:9-20.’

God decided enough was enough and sent the angel of the LORD to deal with the Assyrian army. We know it happened all in one night because in the morning when the people woke up, they saw all the dead bodies, 2 Kings 19:35.

Sennacherib returned to Nineveh, 2 Kings 19:36 / Jonah 3:2-3 / Jonah 4:11, but notice the text doesn't tell us he was killed immediately. According to Assyrian history, he was killed around twenty years after he returned to Nineveh. He was killed by his sons, Adrammelek and Sharezer, 2 Kings 19:37 / 2 Chronicles 32:20-21. They flee to Ararat, and Esarhaddon, another son of Sennacherib, now becomes king of Assyria, 2 Kings 19:37.

ANNALS OF SENNACHERIB

In the British Museum, we can see ‘the Annals of Sennacherib,’ also called ‘the Taylor Prism.’ Sennacherib, 705-681 B.C., was an Assyrian king noted for his campaigns against Judah. The prism was found at Nineveh in 1830.

The best-known passage on this prism describes that because Hezekiah had not submitted to the Assyrian ‘yoke,’ Sennacherib laid siege to forty-six fortified Judean cities, deported 200,150 people, and shut up Hezekiah in Jerusalem ‘like a caged bird.’

It reads as follows.

‘As to Hezekiah, the Jew, he did not submit to my yoke, I lay siege to 46 of his strong cities, walled forts and the countless small villages in their vicinity, and conquered them by means of well-stamped earth-ramps, and battering-rams brought thus near to the walls combined with the attack by foot soldiers, using mines, breeches as well as sapper work. I drove out of them 200,150 people, young and old, male and female, horses, mules, donkeys, camels, big and small cattle beyond counting, and considered them booty. Himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage.’

The prism tacitly agrees with the Biblical version by making no claim that Jerusalem was taken, [Isaiah 36-37 / 2 Kings 18-19](#). The Greek historian Herodotus tells of ‘field mice’ eating ‘leather handles, quivers, and bow strings’ of the Assyrian army.

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

‘In those days, Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. The prophet Isaiah, son of Amoz, went to him and said, ‘This is what the LORD says: Put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover.’ Hezekiah turned his face to the wall and prayed to the LORD, ‘Remember, LORD, how I have walked before you faithfully and with wholehearted devotion and have done what is good in your eyes.’ And Hezekiah wept bitterly. Before Isaiah had left the middle court, the word of the LORD came to him: ‘Go back and tell Hezekiah, the ruler of my people, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of your father David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears; I will heal you. On the third day from now, you will go up to the temple of the LORD. I will add fifteen years to your life. And I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria. I will defend this city for my sake and for the sake of my servant David.’ Then Isaiah said, ‘Prepare a poultice of figs.’ They did so and applied it to the boil, and he recovered.’ 2 Kings 20:1-7

HEZEKIAH’S ILLNESS

Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death, [2 Kings 20:1](#). There is no doubt that this chapter, along with the parallel accounts found in [Isaiah 38](#) and [Isaiah 39](#), is really difficult to put into place chronologically. Some believe that Hezekiah was taken ill before the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The incidents related in this chapter probably took place before Sennacherib’s invasion, for (a) the deliverance from the Assyrians is still future, 2 Kings 20:6, (b) Hezekiah is in possession of great treasures, 2 Kings 20:13, which could scarcely have been the case after the surrender described in 2 Kings 18:14-15, (c) Merodach Baladan, king of Babylon, was driven from his throne before Sennacherib attacked Judah. Chronologically, therefore, this chapter should precede 2 Kings 18:7.’

The events recorded in 2 Kings 18:13, through to 2 Kings 19:37, would have taken place during the extra fifteen years of life that were given to Hezekiah. Because God answered his prayer, it’s clear that God wanted Hezekiah to lead Judah through all these difficult years of the Assyrian invasion, 2 Chronicles 32:24-26 / Isaiah 38:1-8.

God speaking from Isaiah tells Hezekiah he hears his prayers and tells him to get his ‘house in order’ because he was going to die, 2 Kings 20:1. After hearing this, he turned and faced the wall to pray, 2 Kings 20:2-3, and notice he wept bitterly, 2 Kings 20:3 / Isaiah 38:9-22.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The old covenant promised temporal prosperity, including length of days, to the righteous. Hezekiah, conscious of his faithfulness and integrity, 2 Kings 18:3-6, ventures to expostulate, 2 Kings 21:1. According to the highest standard of morality revealed up to this time, there was nothing unseemly in the self-vindication of the monarch, which has many parallels in the Psalms of David, Psalms 7:3-10 / Psalms 18:19-26 / Psalms 26:1-8, etc.’

God tells him He has ‘heard his prayers’ and ‘seen his tears’ and tells him, ‘He will heal him,’ 2 Kings 20:4-5. God blessed Hezekiah with another fifteen years of life for Israel’s sake, 2 Kings 20:6, not necessarily for Hezekiah’s sake. Isaiah asks for a poultice of figs to be prepared, and they did, they applied it to the boil, and Hezekiah recovered, 2 Kings 20:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We cannot exactly say in what Hezekiah’s malady consisted. The word shechin signifies any inflammatory tumour, boil, or abscess. A poultice of figs might be very proper to mature a boil, or to discuss any obstinate inflammatory swelling.

‘Hezekiah had asked Isaiah, ‘What will be the sign that the LORD will heal me and that I will go up to the temple of the LORD on the third day from now?’ Isaiah answered, ‘This is the LORD’s sign to you that the LORD will do what he has promised: Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps?’ ‘It is a simple matter for the shadow to go forward ten steps,’ said Hezekiah. ‘Rather, have it go back ten steps.’ Then the prophet Isaiah called on the LORD, and the LORD made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz.’ 2 Kings 20:8-11

Hezekiah asks Isaiah what the sign will be that the Lord will heal him, 2 Kings 20:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Asking for a sign is a pious or a wicked act according to the spirit in which it is done. No blame is attached to the requests of Gideon, Judges 6:17 / Judges 6:37 / Judges 6:39, or to that of Hezekiah, because they were real wishes of the heart expressed humbly. The ‘evil generation’ that ‘sought for a sign’ in our Lord’s days did not really want one, but made the demand captiously, neither expecting nor wishing that it should be granted.’

Isaiah asks him, Shall the shadow go forward ten steps, or shall it go back ten steps? 2 Kings 20:9. Hezekiah appears to think it’s too easy for the shadow to go forward ten steps, and so, he asks to have the shadow go back ten steps, 2 Kings 20:10.

Isaiah calls upon God, and God made the shadow go back the ten steps it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz, 2 Kings 20:11 / 2 Kings 9:13. This is miraculous as God turned back time by a total of forty minutes. Of course, this isn’t the first time God has miraculously changed time, Joshua 10:13.

ENVOYS FROM BABYLON

‘At that time, Marduk-Baladan, son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah letters and a gift, because he had heard of Hezekiah’s illness. Hezekiah received the envoys and showed them all that was in his storehouses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the fine olive oil—his armoury and everything found among his treasures. There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.’ 2 Kings 20:12-13

Marduk-Baladan decided to send letters and gifts to Hezekiah because they heard he was ill, 2 Kings 20:12 / 2 Chronicles 32:31. It’s more probable that they did this just to spy, Isaiah 39:1-8.

Hezekiah was concerned about the threat of the Assyrians, and so, he wasted no time in providing many different gifts for the Babylonians, 2 Kings 20:13 / Isaiah 39:2 / 2 Chronicles 32:31.

He probably thought the Assyrians could help him with his struggles against the Assyrians. One thing is clear, though: these envoys were more interested in Jerusalem’s wealth than they were in Hezekiah’s health.

‘Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked, ‘What did those men say, and where did they come from?’ ‘From a distant land,’ Hezekiah replied. ‘They came from Babylon.’ The prophet asked, ‘What did they see in your palace?’ ‘They saw everything in my palace,’ Hezekiah said. ‘There is nothing among my treasures that I did not show them.’ Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the LORD: The time will surely come when everything in your palace, and all that your predecessors have stored up until this day, will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the LORD. And some of your descendants, your own flesh and blood who will be born to you, will be taken away, and they will become eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’ ‘The word of the LORD you have spoken is good,’ Hezekiah replied. For he thought, ‘Will there not be peace and security in my lifetime?’ 2 Kings 20:14-19

God’s prophet Isaiah goes to Hezekiah and asks him, ‘Where did these men come from and what did they see?’ 2 Kings 20:14-15. And the answer was simple, they were from Babylon, and they saw everything that Hezekiah had because he showed them everything, he had, 2 Kings 20:14-15 / 2 Kings 20:12-13.

Isaiah says they came from Babylon not to see how Hezekiah was doing, but to see how much wealth he had. They were spying out the place so that they could come back again to take all the treasures away from the temple and the royal court in 586 B.C. 2 Kings 20:16-17.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was fulfilled in the days of the latter Jewish kings, when the Babylonians had led the people away into captivity, and stripped the land, the temple, of all their riches, Daniel 1:1-3.’

Isaiah tells Hezekiah that the sons born to him will be taken away and become eunuchs in Babylon, 2 Kings 20:18 / 2 Kings 24:13-15 / 2 Chronicles 33:11 / Daniel 1:1-3 / Isaiah 24:10-17. Hezekiah correctly thought that the tragedy which Isaiah spoke about wouldn’t take place in his lifetime, 2 Kings 20:19.

‘As for the other events of Hezekiah’s reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Hezekiah rested with his ancestors. And Manasseh, his son, succeeded him as king.’ 2 Kings 20:20-21

Everything Hezekiah did was written in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, 2 Chronicles 32:32 / Isaiah 1:1 / Isaiah 36:1; they are also written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel, 2 Kings 18:1.

The other events of Hezekiah’s reign, all his achievements and how he made the pool and the tunnel by which he brought water into the city, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 2 Kings 20:20 / 2 Chronicles 32:24-33.

Before Hezekiah died, he brought water into the city, 2 Chronicles 32:32-33. The tunnel he made is still in existence today and is called ‘Hezekiah’s tunnel’ for obvious reasons.

Experts tell us that the water was channelled through solid rock from the Pool of Gihon on the outside of the city wall, and the tunnel itself is about five-hundred and thirty-three meters long, that is, one-thousand, seven-hundred and fifty feet.

The reason for building the tunnel was simply to bring water into the city of Jerusalem, especially during times of siege. Hezekiah's son Manasseh took over his reign, [2 Kings 20:21](#).

He was buried on the hill where the tombs of David's descendants are, [2 Chronicles 33:20](#) / [2 Kings 21:18](#) / [2 Kings 21:26](#) / [2 Kings 23:30](#). All Judah and the people of Jerusalem honoured him and Manasseh, his son, took over and reigned as king of Judah, [2 Kings 20:21](#) / [2 Chronicles 32:33](#).

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

‘Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother's name was Hephzibah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites. He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab, king of Israel, had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshipped them. He built altars in the temple of the LORD, of which the LORD had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put my Name.’ In the two courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts. He sacrificed his own son in the fire, practised divination, sought omens, and consulted mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger. He took the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in the temple, of which the LORD had said to David and to his son Solomon, ‘In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander from the land I gave their ancestors, if only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them.’ But the people did not listen. Manasseh led them astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed before the Israelites.’ [2 Kings 21:1-9](#)

MANASSEH KING OF JUDAH

Hezekiah named his son Manasseh, possibly because God helped him forget his illness. The name Manasseh means ‘forget’, [Genesis 41:51](#). He became king when he was only twelve years old and reigned for fifty-five years, [2 Kings 21:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 33:1](#), which means he was the longest-reigning king of Judah after the division of Israel during the reign of Rehoboam.

He reigned together with his father, Hezekiah, from about 696 to 687 B.C. His mother's name was Hephzibah, [2 Kings 21:1](#) / [Isaiah 62:4](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was born about three years after his father's miraculous cure; he was carried captive to Babylon, repented, was restored to his kingdom, put down idolatry, and died at the age of sixty-seven years, [2 Chronicles 33:1-20](#).’

He didn't start off well as the king, because he did evil in God's eyes, by getting involved in detestable practices of the nations, [2 Kings 21:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 33:2](#). He erected altars to Baal, made an Asherah pole, [2 Kings 21:3](#) / [2 Chronicles 33:3](#) / [2 Kings 17:10](#) / [2 Kings 21:7](#) / [Jude 1:4](#).

Worshipped the starry hosts, 2 Kings 21:3 / 2 Chronicles 33:3 / Jeremiah 19:13 / Acts 7:42-43. He built altars in God's temple, 2 Kings 21:4 / 2 Chronicles 33:4. He basically undone everything his father, Hezekiah, had achieved to keep Judah right with God.

In the two courts of the temple of the LORD, he built altars to all the starry hosts, 2 Kings 21:5 / 2 Chronicles 33:6. He also sacrificed his own son through the fire, 2 Kings 21:6 / 2 Chronicles 33:6, in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom.'

In other words, he sacrificed several of his children to Molek, 2 Chronicles 33:6. He was involved in idolatry, witchcraft, and child sacrifice, 2 Kings 21:6 / 2 Chronicles 33:6. He did much evil in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger, 2 Kings 21:6.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Manasseh, during his minority, naturally fell under the influence of the chief Jewish nobles, with whom the pure religion of Yahweh was always unpopular, 2 Chronicles 24:17-18 / Jeremiah 8:1-2. They seem to have persuaded him, not only to undo Hezekiah's work, but to proceed to lengths in polytheism, magic, and idolatry, unknown before. The sins of Manasseh's reign appear to have been those which filled up the measure of Judah's iniquity, and brought down the final sentence of doom on the last remnant of the chosen people, 2 Kings 23:26 / Jeremiah 15:4.' He took the image, that is, the carved Asherah pole he had made and put it in God's temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, 'In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever, 2 Kings 21:7 / 2 Chronicles 33:7.

Manasseh totally disobeyed God and His commands, and because he and the people wouldn't listen to God or obey His ways, 2 Kings 21:8 / 2 Chronicles 33:10, Manasseh totally took the people away from God to such an extent that Judah was worse than the nations that God had destroyed before, 2 Kings 21:9 / 2 Chronicles 33:9 / Genesis 15:16.

'The LORD said through his servants the prophets: 'Manasseh, king of Judah, has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols. Therefore, this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle. I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance and give them into the hands of enemies. They will be looted and plundered by all their enemies; they have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger from the day their ancestors came out of Egypt until this day.' Moreover, Manasseh also shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end—besides the sin that he had caused Judah to commit, so that they did evil in the eyes of the LORD. As for the other events of Manasseh's reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace garden, the garden of Uzza. And Amon, his son, succeeded him as king.' 2 Kings 21:10-18

Manasseh totally disobeyed God and His commands because he and the people wouldn't listen to God or obey His ways, 2 Chronicles 33:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Kings 21:10.

'The prophets were Hosea, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Isaiah. The following verses contain the sum of what these prophets spoke.'

God says Manasseh has committed these detestable sins and he has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him and has led Judah into sin with his idols, 2 Kings 21:10-11.

This is not good news for Manasseh and Judah; judgment is being announced here by God because of Manasseh's sinful actions, 2 Kings 21:12. God is going to bring such a disaster to Jerusalem and Judah that everyone who hears of it will 'tingle', 2 Kings 21:12.

The tingle will be like a sharp discordant note that pains one's ears; tingling ears are a sign that an especially severe judgment was coming, 1 Samuel 3:11 / Jeremiah 19:3.

God is going to stretch out over Jerusalem ‘the measuring line’, 2 Kings 21:13. In other words, when measured with God’s standard, that is, His Word, Jerusalem, just like Samaria and the house of Ahab, will be seen to be crooked. God is going to wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down, 2 Kings 21:13. God is going to forsake the remnant, 2 Kings 21:14-15, that is, the Southern Kingdom of Judah, because they didn’t repent, Luke 13:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘One part, the ten tribes, was already forsaken, and carried into captivity; the remnant, the tribe of Judah, was now about to be forsaken.’

God was going to forsake the remnant because Manasseh had shed so much blood during his reign, 2 Kings 21:16. This probably isn’t just referring to the blood he shed when he sacrificed his sons, 2 Kings 21:6 / 2 Chronicles 33:6, it’s also probably referring to all the prophets that God sent to Judah at this time, who were killed by him, 2 Kings 21:10 / Hebrews 11:32.

According to Jewish legend, it was during this time that the prophet Isaiah was executed by Manasseh by being sawn in two, Isaiah 57:1-4 / Jeremiah 2:30 / Hebrews 11:37.

Whilst he reigned, Judah was subjected to Assyria, 2 Chronicles 33:10, who eventually placed him in prison in Babylon. He had a hook put through his nose, and he was bound with bronze shackles, 2 Chronicles 33:11 / 2 Kings 25:7.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In 2 Chronicles 33:11, we read that the Assyrians took Manasseh, bound him with fetters, and took him to Babylon that there he repented, sought God, and was, we are not told how, restored to his kingdom, that he fortified the city of David, destroyed idolatry, restored the worship of the true God, and died in peace.’

It appears the only thing that would get him back on track with God was to spend some time in captivity, 2 Chronicles 33:12. After praying to God, humbling himself and repenting of his sinfulness, he went back to Jerusalem to begin a campaign to get God’s people back on track with God, 2 Chronicles 33:13.

Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is God, 2 Chronicles 33:13, but that didn’t last long. The good news in all of this was that the Israelites never again got involved in worshipping false gods.

Manasseh now begins to rebuild the outer wall of Jerusalem, Nehemiah 3:15, but makes it higher, 2 Chronicles 33:14. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah, 2 Chronicles 33:14.

He gets rid of all the foreign gods and removes all the images and altars and throws them outside the city, 2 Chronicles 33:15. After restoring the altar of the LORD, they offered fellowship and thanksgiving offerings on the altar and encouraged the people to serve God, the God of Israel, 2 Chronicles 33:16.

Notice, however, that he didn’t get rid of the high places, and so, the people continued to sacrifice in those high places, but only to God, 2 Chronicles 33:17. It appears that Manasseh could only undo some of the evil practices that he had done before his repentance.

The other events of Manasseh’s reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 2 Kings 21:17.

Everything Manasseh had done, his prayer and the words the seer spoke to him, 2 Kings 21:11-15, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel, 2 Chronicles 33:18-19.

Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace, 2 Chronicles 33:20. However, 2 Kings 21:18 tells us he was buried in the garden of Uzza. This simply means that he was buried in the garden of his house, in the garden of Uzza.

Only Manasseh and Amon are recorded to have been buried in the garden of Uzza, [2 Kings 21:18](#) / [2 Kings 21:26](#), because of their awful sins. We can safely know that this place was a disgraceful location; it wasn't a place where faithful royals were buried.

Manasseh's son Amon now becomes king, [2 Kings 21:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 33:20](#). It's important to note that Manasseh's son was named Amon. This is the name of the Egyptian god, who was the god of the wind and certain powers of generation, [Nahum 3:8](#).

Despite his repentance, Manasseh will go down in history and be remembered for his sin. Many commentators suggest that Manasseh is more responsible for bringing the kingdom of Judah to an end than any other person, [2 Kings 23:26](#) / [2 Kings 24:3](#) / [Jeremiah 15:4](#).

AMON KING OF JUDAH

'Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother's name was Meshullemeth, daughter of Haruz; she was from Jotbah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, as his father Manasseh had done. He followed completely the ways of his father, worshipping the idols his father had worshipped, and bowing down to them. He forsook the LORD, the God of his ancestors, and did not walk in obedience to him. Amon's officials conspired against him and assassinated the king in his palace. Then the people of the land killed all who had plotted against King Amon, and they made Josiah, his son, king in his place. As for the other events of Amon's reign, and what he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. And Josiah his son succeeded him as king.' [2 Kings 21:19-26](#)

Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king of Judah and he reigned for two years, 642 to 640 B.C. [2 Kings 21:19](#). His mother's name was Meshullemeth daughter of Haruz and she was from Jotbah, [2 Kings 21:19](#). Amon was certainly following in the footsteps of his father Manasseh, [2 Kings 21:20-22](#), and it appears there was some kind of conspiracy among Amon's officials which led to him being assassinated, [2 Kings 21:23-24](#). Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'At Manasseh's death, the idolatrous party, held in some check during his later years, [2 Chronicles 33:15-17](#), recovered the entire direction of affairs, and obtained authority from Amon to make once more all the changes which Manasseh had made in the early part of his reign. Hence, we find the state of things at Josiah's accession, [2 Kings 23:4-14](#) / [Zephaniah 1:4-12](#) / [Zephaniah 3:1-7](#), the exact counterpart of that which had existed under Manasseh.' The murderers put Josiah on the throne as king, [2 Kings 21:24](#). Since Josiah was only eight years old, it appears that some of Amon's officials, or priests of the temple, were irritated with the apostasy that was led by Manasseh and Amon, [2 Chronicles 33:21-25](#). In other words, they wanted a change; they wanted someone who was young enough that they could train to be king.

The other events of Amon's reign, and what he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, [2 Kings 21:25](#). He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza, [2 Kings 21:18](#), and Josiah, his son, succeeded him as king, [2 Kings 21:26](#).

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

‘Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother’s name was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and followed completely the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left. In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent the secretary, Shaphan son of Azaliah, the son of Meshullam, to the temple of the LORD. He said: ‘Go up to Hilkiah the high priest and have him get ready the money that has been brought into the temple of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. Have them entrust it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple. And have these men pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD—the carpenters, the builders, and the masons. Also, have them purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple. But they need not account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings.’ 2 Kings 22:1-7

Josiah is now king of the Southern Kingdom of Judah and he was eight years old when he became king and reigned for thirty-one years, 640 B.C. to 609 B.C, 2 Chronicles 34:1.

His mother’s name was Jedidah daughter of Adaiah and she was from Bozkath, 2 Kings 22:1. Josiah did what was right in God’s eyes and loved and obeyed God as David did, 2 Kings 22:2 / 2 Chronicles 34:2 / Acts 13:22.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was one of the best, if not the best, of all the Jewish kings since the time of David. He began well, continued well, and ended well.’

Shaphan, 2 Kings 22:3 / 2 Chronicles 34:8, was the father of Jeremiah’s friend Ahikam, Jeremiah 26:24, and the grandfather of Gedaliah, who was made governor of Judea by the Babylonians after the fall of Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:22. Shaphan and Nathan-Melek’s, 2 Kings 23:11, names also appear on ancient records of those who lived during these times.

Hilkiah, 2 Kings 22:4 / 2 Chronicles 34:9, was the father, or grandfather, of Seriah, Nehemiah 11:11, who was high priest at the time of the captivity, and an ancestor of Ezra the scribe.

Hilkiah was a priest and the grandfather of Ezra, 1 Chronicles 6:13-14 / 1 Chronicles 9:11 / Ezra 7:1. Hilkiah’s name also appears on the seal of another son named Hanan.

Josiah wanted some repair work done on the temple, 2 Kings 22:4 / 2 Chronicles 34:8-9, and so he set about raising the funds needed for the repairs, similar to the way Jehoash did many years ago, 2 Kings 12:9-15.

The doorkeepers collected from the people, and they entrusted it to the men appointed to supervise the work on the temple, 2 Kings 22:4-5 / 2 Chronicles 34:9.

They are to pay the workers who repair the temple of the LORD, the carpenters, the builders and the masons, and also they are to purchase timber and dressed stone to repair the temple, 2 Kings 22:5-6 / 2 Chronicles 34:10-11. Notice they didn’t account for the money entrusted to them, because they are honest in their dealings, 2 Kings 22:7 / 2 Chronicles 34:12.

The workers laboured faithfully under the direction of Jahath and Obadiah, Levites descended from Merari, and Zechariah and Meshullam, descended from Kohath, 2 Chronicles 34:12.

The Levites were all skilled in playing musical instruments, and they had charge of the labourers and supervised all the workers from job to job, 2 Chronicles 34:12-13.

Some of the Levites were secretaries, scribes and gatekeepers, 2 Chronicles 34:13. Josiah makes a lot of effort in restoring the neglected temple, much as his predecessor Hezekiah had done, 2 Chronicles 29.

THE BOOK OF THE LAW FOUND

‘Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, ‘I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the LORD.’ He gave it to Shaphan, who read it. Then Shaphan the secretary went to the king and reported to him: ‘Your officials have paid out the money that was in the temple of the LORD and have entrusted it to the workers and supervisors at

the temple.’ Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.’ 2 Kings 22:8-10

Hilkiah discovers ‘the Book of the Law’, 2 Kings 22:8 / 2 Chronicles 34:14-15. Jeremiah 1:1-2 tells us that Jeremiah was the son of Hilkiah, which tells us that Jeremiah began his ministry during the reign of King Joash.

2 Chronicles tells us that Josiah’s reforms had already been going forward for several years. He began the purging of the temple and Jerusalem in his twelfth year, six full years before the events in 2 Kings 22:8, and the repairs on the temple mentioned in 2 Kings 22:9 were probably commenced at the same time.

Although each king was supposed to have a copy of the Book of the Law, Deuteronomy 17:18-20 / Deuteronomy 31:9-13, we have no idea how long they have been without the Law of Moses, that is, the first five books of the Old Testament, but because only those portions that referred to the responsibilities of the king were immediately read before Josiah, 2 Kings 22:10 / 2 Chronicles 34:16-18.

‘When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes. He gave these orders to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Akbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant: ‘Go and inquire of the LORD for me and for the people and for all Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the LORD’s anger that burns against us because those who have gone before us have not obeyed the words of this book; they have not acted in accordance with all that is written there concerning us.’ 2 Kings 22:11-13

Remember nobody had seen the Book of the Law for years and so when Josiah heard the word of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes, 2 Kings 22:11 / 2 Chronicles 34:19 / Genesis 37:29 / Job 1:20 / 1 Kings 21:27. In other words, God’s Word moved him to repentance, and as a result of his repentance, the whole of Israel was deeply moved toward God again.

Josiah commands the priests Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan the secretary and Asaiah the king’s attendant to speak to God on behalf of himself, the people and all of Judah about what was written in the book, 2 Kings 22:12 / 2 Chronicles 34:20.

The good news is that Josiah didn’t just go out of his way to get Israel to worship and obey God how they were supposed to in the first place, 2 Kings 22:13 / 2 Chronicles 34:21, he actually went on to destroy anything which involved idolatry and the worshipping of false gods.

‘Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Akbor, Shaphan and Asaiah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter. She said to them, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me, ‘This is what the LORD says: I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and aroused my anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.’ Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, ‘This is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says concerning the words you heard: Because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken against this place and its people—that they would become a curse and be laid waste—and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. Therefore, I will gather you to your ancestors, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.’ So they took her answer back to the king.’ 2 Kings 22:14-20

Hilkiah the priest and others went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was Shallum’s wife, who lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter, 2 Kings 22:14 / 2 Chronicles 34:22.

It should be noted that other prophets were now on the scene at this time. Prophets like Zephaniah, Zephaniah 1:1, and Jeremiah, Jeremiah 22:15-16, who were both warning God’s people about their upcoming exile into Babylon. It’s possible that they went to Huldah because she was closest to them, but she is a prophetess, Exodus 15:20 / Numbers 12:2 / Judges 4:4, and they went to inquire of the Lord.

Priestley, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It pleased God to distinguish several women with the spirit of prophecy, as well as other great attainments, to show that in his sight, and especially in things of a spiritual nature, there is no essential pre-eminence in the male sex, though in some things the female be subject to the male.’

It’s interesting because we don’t know what they asked, but we do know they did enquire about the newly discovered Book of Law.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 2 Kings 22:15-16 / 2 Chronicles 34:23-24.

‘The ‘words’ here intended are no doubt the threatenings of the Law, particularly those of Leviticus 26:16-39, and Deuteronomy 28:15-68. Josiah had probably only heard a portion of the Book of the Law, but that portion had contained those awful denunciations of coming woe. Hence, Josiah’s rending of his clothes, 2 Kings 22:11, and his hurried message to Huldah.’

Huldah tells them that God says that He will bring disaster upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah because of their apostasy, 2 Kings 22:15-17 / 2 Chronicles 34:23-25 / Jeremiah 19:13 / Jeremiah 32:29 / 2 Kings 21:3, but the disaster wouldn’t come anytime during the reign of Josiah.

God delayed judgment on Josiah as he did with Ahab, who responded to a word of warning with a kind of repentance, 1 Kings 21:25-29. Josiah has now received news about this upcoming disaster twice, once from God’s Word and now from God’s prophet, 2 Kings 22:18-20 / 2 Chronicles 34:26-28. And so, they took her answer back to Josiah, 2 Kings 22:20 / 2 Chronicles 34:28.

Although Josiah had religiously cleaned up Judah by the standards of God’s Word, sadly, his descendants went back to idolatry and undone everything he had achieved.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From the account in the above chapter, where we have this business detailed, we find that Josiah should not have meddled in the quarrel between the Egyptian and the Assyrian kings, for God had given a commission to the former against the latter; but he did it in error, and suffered for it. But this unfortunate end of this pious man does not at all impeach the credit of Huldah; he died in peace in his own kingdom. He died in peace with God, and there was neither war nor desolation in his land, nor did the king of Egypt proceed any farther against the Jews during his life, 2 Chronicles 35:21-24.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The death of Josiah in battle, 2 Kings 23:29, is in verbal contradiction to this prophecy, but not in real opposition to its spirit, which is simply that the pious prince who has sent to inquire of the Lord shall be gathered to his fathers before the troubles come upon the land which are to result in her utter desolation. Now those troubles were to come, not from Egypt, but from Babylon; and their commencement was not the invasion of Necho in 608 B.C., but that of Nebuchadnezzar three years later. Thus was Josiah ‘taken away from the evil to come,’ and died ‘in peace’ before his city had suffered attack from the really formidable enemy.’

CHAPTER 23

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. He went up to the temple of the LORD with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests, and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the LORD.’ 2 Kings 23:1-2

JOSIAH RENEWS THE COVENANT

Hilkiah the priest discovered ‘the Book of the Law’ in the temple, 2 Kings 22:8-10 / 2 Chronicles 34:14-15, and informed Josiah that he had found it. Josiah now calls the people together to read it out, 2 Kings 23:1-2 / 2 Chronicles 34:29-30. This law was supposed to be read out to the people throughout history, Deuteronomy 31:9-13.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The present passage is strong evidence that the Jewish kings could read. The solemn reading of the Law, a practice commanded in the Law itself once in seven years, Deuteronomy 31:10-13, had been intermitted, at least for the last 75 years, from the date of the accession of Manasseh.’

Because they didn’t have a copy of the Book of the Covenant, 2 Kings 23:2, they were obviously ignorant of God’s law, Hosea 4:6. It is also possible that they didn’t look hard enough in the first place to find a copy of the law.

Because Josiah read out all the words of the Book of the Covenant, he personally stood before the people and read from the Word of God, 2 Chronicles 34:31.

He got everyone else to stand as a demonstration of their agreement with the covenant, Genesis 15:17 / Jeremiah 34:18 / 1 Samuel 8:11-17 / 1 Samuel 10:25 / Joshua 24. In other words, he assumed the position of spiritual leadership just like Joshua did many years before him, Joshua 24:15.

‘The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD—to follow the LORD and keep his commands, statutes, and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant. The king ordered Hilkiah the high priest, the priests next in rank and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the articles made for Baal and Asherah and all the starry hosts. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron Valley and took the ashes to Bethel. He did away with the idolatrous priests appointed by the kings of Judah to burn incense on the high places of the towns of Judah and on those around Jerusalem—those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and moon, to the constellations and to all the starry hosts. He took the Asherah pole from the temple of the LORD to the Kidron Valley outside Jerusalem and burned it there. He ground it to powder and scattered the dust over the graves of the common people. He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes that were in the temple of the LORD, the quarters where women did weaving for Asherah. Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense. He broke down the gateway at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which was on the left of the city gate. Although the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, they ate unleavened bread with their fellow priests. He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek. He removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melek. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun. He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the LORD. He removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley. The king also desecrated the high places that were east of Jerusalem on the south of the Hill of Corruption—the ones Solomon, king of Israel, had built for Ashtoreth, the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh, the vile god of Moab, and for Molek, the detestable god of the people of Ammon. Josiah smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles and covered the sites with human bones.’ 2 Kings 23:3-14

After the covenant was renewed with the people, Deuteronomy 5:2, everyone ‘pledged’ themselves to the covenant, 2 Kings 23:3-4 / 2 Chronicles 34:32. The K.J.V. uses the word ‘stood’.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The covenant renewal was expressed as follows.

1. In general.

To walk after Jehovah, to have no gods besides him.

2. To take his law for the regulation of their conduct.

3. In particular.

To bend their whole heart and soul to the observance of it, so that they might not only have religion without, but piety within. To this, all the people stood up, thus giving their consent, and binding themselves to obedience.’

It was very important that everyone pledged to keep the covenant, as this would make it easier for Josiah to get the temple back for God’s use only. It would make it easier to remove all those places of idol worship and to get rid of all the priests of Baal from the land if they didn’t repent.

In the eighth year of his reign, he began to seek the God of his father David, **2 Chronicles 34:3**. Under his direction, the altars of the Baals were torn down, and he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols, **2 Kings 23:4 / 2 Chronicles 34:3-4**.

Baal and Asherah worship was seriously promoted by Ahab and Jezebel and had been a problem in Israel for many years, **2 Kings 11:17-20 / 2 Kings 18:4-5 / 2 Kings 14:23-24 / 2 Kings 16:32**. By the time Josiah became king, God’s temple had essentially become a place for Baal worship.

He took the Asherah pole and removed it not just from the temple but from Jerusalem and burned it, **2 Kings 23:4**.

Male and female prostitution was involved in Baal worship.

And so, he tore down the male shrine prostitutes, and the place where the women did weaving for Asherah, **2 Kings 23:5-7 / Ezekiel 8:14 / Ezekiel 16:16 / Amos 2:8 / Amos 5:26**.

In the towns of Manasseh, Ephraim and Simeon, as far as Naphtali, and in the ruins around them, he tore down the altars and the Asherah poles and crushed the idols to powder and cut to pieces all the incense altars throughout Israel, **2 Chronicles 34:6-7**.

Josiah brought all the priests from the towns of Judah and desecrated the high places, from Geba to Beersheba, where the priests had burned incense, and he broke down the gateway at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua, the city governor, which was on the left of the city gate, **2 Kings 23:8**.

Notice that ‘the priests of the high places did not serve at the altar of the LORD,’ **2 Kings 23:9**. The reason they didn’t come was that their income came from those who worshipped in the high places.

The Levites who had accepted positions at the high places were brought back to Jerusalem and maintained there, but they were never again accepted as true priests with access to the Lord’s altar, **Ezekiel 44:10-14**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As these priests had offered sacrifices on the high places, though it was to the true God, yet they were not thought proper to be employed immediately about the temple but as they were acknowledged to belong to the priesthood, they had a right to their support; therefore a portion of the tithes, offerings, and unleavened bread, shew-bread, was appointed to them for their support. Thus, they were treated as priests who had some infirmity which rendered it improper for them to minister at the altar, **Leviticus 21:17 / Leviticus 21:22-23**.’

He desecrated Topheth, which was in the Valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molek, **2 Kings 23:10**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The word Topheth, or Topher, variously derived from toph, ‘a drum’ or ‘tabour,’ because the cries of the sacrificed children were drowned by the noise of such instruments; or, from a root taph, or toph, meaning ‘to burn’, was a spot in the valley of Hinnom. The later Jewish kings, Manasseh and Amon or, perhaps, Ahaz, 2 Chronicles 28:3, had given it over to the Moloch priests for their worship; and here, ever since, the Moloch service had maintained its ground and flourished.’

He removed from the entrance to the temple of the LORD the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, and we are told that they were in the court near the room of an official named Nathan-Melek, 2 Kings 23:11. Josiah then burned the chariots dedicated to the sun, 2 Kings 23:10.

He pulled down the altars the kings of Judah had erected on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the temple of the LORD and he removed them from there, smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley, 2 Kings 23:12.

There’s no doubt that Ahab was more than likely the first person to introduce human sacrifice to the false god Molek, 2 Kings 16:3 / 2 Kings 19:1-9. Josiah also desecrated the high places, 2 Kings 23:13 / 1 Kings 11:7. Remember, God told Israel during the days of Joshua that these high places were to be totally destroyed, Numbers 33:52 / Leviticus 26:27-30.

These structures, which were originally built by Solomon, were still in existence, some four hundred years later. Israel had obviously become entrapped in the worship of false gods and took pleasure in satisfying the sensual lusts through them.

No one knows where the ‘Hill of Corruption’, 2 Kings 23:13, is located, but some have suggested it’s a reference to the Mount of Olives, which was located east of Jerusalem. Josiah totally destroys everything that had anything to do with Molek throughout the land, 2 Kings 23:13-14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the human bones, 2 Kings 23:14.

‘The Law attached uncleanness to the ‘bones of men,’ no less than to actual corpses, Numbers 19:16. We may gather from this and other passages, 2 Kings 23:20 / 1 Kings 13:2, that the Jews who rejected the Law were as firm believers in the defilement as those who adhered to the Law.’

‘Even the altar at Bethel, the high place made by Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had caused Israel to sin—even that altar and high place he demolished. He burned the high place and ground it to powder, and burned the Asherah pole also. Then Josiah looked around, and when he saw the tombs that were there on the hillside, he had the bones removed from them and burned on the altar to defile it, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by the man of God who foretold these things. The king asked, ‘What is that tombstone I see?’ The people of the city said, ‘It marks the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and pronounced against the altar of Bethel the very things you have done to it.’ ‘Leave it alone,’ he said. ‘Don’t let anyone disturb his bones.’ So they spared his bones and those of the prophet who had come from Samaria. Just as he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria and that had aroused the LORD’s anger. Josiah slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them. Then he went back to Jerusalem.’ 2 Kings 23:15-20

Josiah continued in his restoration of the land by going beyond the borders of Judah to Bethel, 2 Kings 23:15. It appears that he has now taken charge of the Northern Kingdom of Israel since they have now been taken into captivity, 2 Kings 17:5-6.

The altar, which was destroyed here, 2 Kings 23:15, was the altar that Jeroboam had originally built to encourage the northern tribes to stay away from Jerusalem.

The destruction of the altar was the fulfilment of God’s prophecy to Jeroboam, 2 Kings 23:16. God’s prophet actually names Josiah as the one who would destroy it, 1 Kings 13:1-3 / 1 Kings 13:30-31.

Josiah was totally unaware of the fulfilment of the prophecy, but the citizens of the place, who remembered it well, told him about it, **2 Kings 23:17**. We read of the same kind of prophecy concerning the name of Cyrus, **Isaiah 44:28-45:1**.

Although there were many false prophets around before and during this time, and many unrighteous kings before Josiah came to the throne, many of the priests remained faithful to God and His Word. He burned the bones of the priests on their altars, and so he purged Judah and Jerusalem, **2 Chronicles 34:5**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the purging.

‘Jeremiah’s first prophecies, **Jeremiah 2-3**, appear to have been coincident with Josiah’s earlier efforts to uproot idolatry, and must have greatly strengthened his hands.’

After enquiring about the tomb, Josiah tells them to leave it alone, and don’t let anyone disturb his bones, and so, they spared his bones and those of the prophet who had come from Samaria, **2 Kings 23:17-18 / 1 Kings 13:32**.

Just as he had done at Bethel, Josiah removed all the shrines at the high places that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria and that had aroused the LORD’s anger, **2 Kings 23:19**.

He then slaughtered all the priests of those high places on the altars and burned human bones on them and then goes back to Jerusalem, **2 Chronicles 34:7 / 2 Kings 23:20**.

Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve God, and as long as he lived, they did not fail to follow God, **2 Chronicles 34:33**.

Although Josiah had religiously cleaned up Judah by the standards of God’s Word, sadly, after his death, his descendants went back to idolatry and undone everything he had achieved.

JOSIAH CELEBRATES THE PASSOVER

‘The king gave this order to all the people: ‘Celebrate the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ Neither in the days of the judges who led Israel nor in the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah had any such Passover been observed. But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was celebrated to the LORD in Jerusalem.’ **2 Kings 23:21-23**

Josiah now tells the people it’s time to celebrate the Passover according to how it was written in the Book of the Covenant, **2 Kings 23:21**, which implies they hadn’t celebrated the Passover correctly up until this point, **2 Chronicles 35:1 / 2 Chronicles 35:18-19 / Deuteronomy 16:1-8**.

Josiah appointed the priests to their duties and encouraged them in the service of the LORD’s temple, **2 Chronicles 35:2**. Josiah tells the Levites to put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built but the ark, ‘is not to be carried about on your shoulders’, **2 Chronicles 35:3**. The KJV, says ‘it shall not be a burden upon your shoulders.’

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Josiah means shall not henceforth be your duty. The ark shall remain undisturbed in the holy of holies. You shall return to your old employments, to the service of God and the instruction of the people.’

Josiah tells the Levites to prepare themselves by families in their divisions, according to the instructions written by David, king of Israel and by his son Solomon, **2 Chronicles 35:4**.

He tells them to stand in the holy place with a group of Levites for each subdivision of the families of their fellow Israelites, the lay people, **2 Chronicles 35:5**.

They are to slaughter the Passover lambs, consecrate themselves and prepare the lambs for their fellow Israelites, doing what the LORD commanded through Moses, **2 Chronicles 35:6**.

Notice Josiah himself provided thirty thousand lambs and goats for the Passover sacrifice, as well as three thousand cattle, **2 Chronicles 35:7**. His officials also contributed voluntarily to the people and the priests and Levites. Hilkiah, Zechariah and Jehiel, the officials in charge of God's temple, gave the priests twenty-six hundred Passover offerings and three hundred cattle, **2 Chronicles 35:8**.

Konaniah, along with Shemaiah and Nethanel, his brothers, and Hashabiah, Jeiel and Jozabad, the leaders of the Levites, provided five thousand Passover offerings and five hundred head of cattle for the Levites, **2 Chronicles 35:9**. This was more than double the previous Passover celebrations during the reign of Hezekiah, **2 Chronicles 30:24**. The service was arranged, and the priests stood in their places with the Levites in their divisions as Josiah had ordered, **2 Chronicles 35:10**. The Passover lambs were slaughtered, and the priests splashed against the altar the blood handed to them, while the Levites skinned the animals, **2 Chronicles 35:11**.

They set aside the burnt offerings to give them to the subdivisions of the families of the people to offer to God and they did the same with the cattle, **2 Chronicles 35:12**.

They roasted the Passover animals over the fire as prescribed, and boiled the holy offerings in pots, caldrons and pans and served them quickly to all the people, **2 Chronicles 35:13**.

They made preparations for themselves and for the priests, because the priests, the descendants of Aaron, were sacrificing the burnt offerings and the fat portions until nightfall, **2 Chronicles 35:14**. So the Levites made preparations for themselves and for the Aaronic priests, **2 Chronicles 35:14**.

In other words, the people were served first and then the priests and finally the Levite leaders. He also put singers in their places, **2 Chronicles 35:15**; however, God didn't command any kind of singing during the Passover celebrations. So at that time the entire service was carried out for the celebration of the Passover and the offering of burnt offerings on the altar of the LORD, as Josiah had ordered, **2 Chronicles 35:16**. The Israelites who were present celebrated the Passover at that time and observed the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days, **2 Chronicles 35:17**.

The Passover hadn't been observed like this in Israel since the days of the prophet Samuel and none of the kings of Israel had ever celebrated such a Passover as did Josiah, with the priests, the Levites and all Judah and Israel who were there with the people of Jerusalem, **2 Chronicles 35:18**. This Passover was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign, **2 Chronicles 35:19**.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This Passover was utterly unlike the one kept in the reign of Hezekiah, in several important particulars.

1. It was kept at the prescribed time, **Numbers 9:1-5** / **2 Chronicles 30:1-3**.
2. The ceremonial cleanness of participants was observed.
3. And all the particulars of the Mosaic instructions were strictly observed.
4. Although the singers were mentioned, the instruments of music were not mentioned, and apparently not used.

These important distinctions fully justify the statement in **2 Chronicles 35:18**, that, ‘from the days of Samuel the prophet, none of the kings of Israel kept such a Passover as Josiah kept’.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning **2 Kings 23:22-23** / **2 Chronicles 35:18**.

It's superiority to other Passovers seems to have consisted of the following.

1. In the multitudes that attended it.
2. In the completeness with which all the directions of the Law were observed in the celebration, **Nehemiah 8:17**.

‘Furthermore, Josiah got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods, the idols and all the other detestable things seen in Judah and Jerusalem. This he did to fulfil the requirements of the law written in the book that Hilkiah the priest had discovered in the temple of the LORD. Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who

turned to the LORD as he did—with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses.’ 2 Kings 23:24-25

Josiah is really making every effort to rid the land of anything sinful and idolatrous, especially those who teach falsehood, 2 Kings 23:24. He takes this as seriously as Elijah did when he opposed Ahab and Jezebel, 1 Kings 18:16-19. He has the false prophets executed, 2 Kings 23:20, which was the punishment for those who practised these things, Leviticus 20:27.

They were paramount in leading Israel away from God and leading them deep into idolatry. Notice that Josiah was doing all of those reforms according to the commandments of God in the Books of Moses, 2 Kings 23:25.

‘Nevertheless, the LORD did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to arouse his anger. So the LORD said, ‘I will remove Judah also from my presence as I removed Israel, and I will reject Jerusalem, the city I chose, and this temple, about which I said, ‘My Name shall be there.’ 2 Kings 23:26-27

Despite this great restoration effort by Josiah, it appears that the damage was already done; everything which Manasseh did couldn’t be undone by Josiah.

God was still angry with His people, 2 Kings 23:26 / 2 Chronicles 34:33, and promised that Judah would also be taken into captivity, 2 Kings 23:27. This may seem like a drastic reaction by God, especially in light of everything Josiah has done and is doing.

However, God knows that the only way His people will be totally restored from their sinful behaviour is to be taken into captivity. History tells us that when God’s people returned from captivity, they learned their lesson and never committed idolatry again.

‘As for the other events of Josiah’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Necho, king of Egypt, went up to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out to meet him in battle, but Necho faced him and killed him at Megiddo. Josiah’s servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. And the people of the land took Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, and anointed him and made him king in place of his father.’ 2 Kings 23:28-30

The other events of Josiah’s reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 2 Kings 23:28 / 2 Chronicles 35:26-27. Here we read of a conflict which took place near the end of Josiah’s reign, which involved his being killed, 2 Kings 23:29 / 2 Chronicles 35:24 / 2 Kings 22:20.

Pharaoh Necho of Egypt wanted to come to the rescue of the Assyrians at Carchemish, 2 Kings 23:29 / 2 Chronicles 35:20. Necho sends messengers to Josiah, asking what quarrel is there, king of Judah, between you and me?

It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry, so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you, 2 Chronicles 35:21.

Josiah stubbornly refused to hear this warning, which was actually from God. For some reason, possibly pride, he went into battle with Necho when he didn’t need to.

Josiah wouldn’t turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle, and so, Josiah engaged him in battle at Megiddo, 2 Kings 23:29 / 2 Chronicles 35:22. It was during this period that we find a world power struggle taking place between the Assyrians and the Babylonians.

That king of Assyria was Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and this pharaoh was Pharaoh-Necho II. The history of this event is very complex. That king of Assyria was Nabopolassar, the father of Nebuchadnezzar, and this pharaoh was Pharaoh-Necho II.

Coffman, in his commentary, gives the following useful insight.

‘The Assyrian empire was in a state of collapse. Nineveh had fallen in 612 B.C., and Pharaoh Necho was ambitious to succeed Assyria as the world ruler. It is not exactly clear why Josiah felt it necessary to challenge the king of Egypt, but he did, losing his life as a result. Yes, God had promised through Huldah that Josiah would die in peace, but it is sinful to allege the fact of his being killed in battle as ‘a contradiction’.

1. The ‘in peace’ of God’s promise may have referred to the fact that Jerusalem would not be under attack at the time of his death.
2. All of God’s promises are conditional, **Jeremiah 18:7-10**, and it is simply astounding how many learned men apparently remain ignorant of this simple truth. In light of it, Josiah’s engagement of the king of Egypt in battle might have been contrary to God’s will, nullifying the promise altogether.

Archers shot King Josiah, and he told his officers to take him away because he was badly wounded, **2 Chronicles 35:23**. Josiah’s servants brought his body in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and he died, **2 Chronicles 35:24**. They buried him in his own tomb, **2 Kings 23:30**. He was buried in the tombs of his ancestors, and all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him, **2 Chronicles 35:24**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The fate of Josiah was unprecedented. No king of Judah had, up to this time, fallen in battle. None had left his land at the mercy of a foreign conqueror. Hence, the extraordinary character of the mourning, **Zechariah 12:11-14**.’ Notice that Jeremiah lamented for Josiah, **2 Chronicles 35:25**. He probably was wondering why the righteous died in the way Josiah did. He was so popular that even the entire nation lamented over his death, **2 Chronicles 35:25**. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The exact place of the battle seems to have been Hadad-Rimmon, in the valley of Megiddo, for there Zechariah tells us, **Zechariah 12:11**, was the great mourning for Josiah.’

The people of the land took Josiah’s son Jehoahaz and anointed him and made him king in place of his father, **2 Kings 23:30 / 2 Chronicles 36:1**.

JEHOAHAZ KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother’s name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his predecessors had done. Pharaoh Necho put him in chains at Riblah in the land of Hamath so that he might not reign in Jerusalem, and he imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim, son of Josiah, king in place of his father Josiah and changed Eliakim’s name to Jehoiakim. But he took Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt, and there he died. Jehoiakim paid Pharaoh Necho the silver and gold he demanded. In order to do so, he taxed the land and exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land according to their assessments.’ **2 Kings 23:31-35**

Following the death of Josiah, Jehoahaz became king of Judah and reigned for only three months, **2 Kings 23:31**, before Pharaoh Necho put him in chains, **2 Chronicles 36:1-4**.

His mother’s name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah, and she was from Libnah, **2 Kings 23:31**. Jehoahaz was probably a throne name, for his personal name was Shallum, **Jeremiah 22:11 / 1 Chronicles 3:15**. His older brother was Eliakim.

The Jeremiah mentioned here, **2 Kings 23:31 / Ezekiel 10:1-9**, isn’t the prophet Jeremiah because he was from Anathoth, **Jeremiah 1:1**. Jehoahaz did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his predecessors had done, **2 Kings**

23:32. Jehoahaz became king, before Pharaoh Necho put him in chains, [2 Kings 23:33](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:1-4](#) / [Jeremiah 22:11-12](#).

When Pharaoh heard that they had made Jehoahaz king, he immediately sent a detachment of soldiers to Jerusalem and deposed of him and placed Eliakim on the throne, [2 Kings 23:34](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:3](#). Judah was now under the control of Egypt and they had to pay a heavy levy to Egypt for as long as they stayed under their control, [2 Kings 23:35](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Pharaoh-Necho, after bringing Phoenicia and Syria under his rule, and penetrating as far as Carchemish, returned to Southern Syria, and learned what had occurred at Jerusalem in his absence. He sent orders to Jehoahaz to attend the court which he was holding at Riblah, and Jehoahaz fell into the trap, [Ezekiel 19:4](#).’

JEHOIAKIM KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother’s name was Zebidah, daughter of Pedaiah; she was from Rumah. And he did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his predecessors had done.’ [2 Kings 23:36-37](#)

Jehoiakim now becomes king of Judah at the age of twenty-five, and he reigned for eleven years, 608 B.C. to 597 B.C. [2 Kings 23:36-37](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:5-8](#) / [Ezekiel 19:5-7](#) / [Jeremiah 22:13-17](#) / [Jeremiah 26:20-23](#).

His mother’s name was Zebidah, daughter of Pedaiah, and she was from Rumah, [2 Kings 23:36](#). Although Judah was under Egypt’s control in the early part of his reign, later Judah would come under the control of the Babylonians, [2 Kings 23:34](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:3](#) / [2 Kings 24:1](#).

Jehoiakim did evil in the eyes of the LORD, [2 Chronicles 36:5](#) / [Jeremiah 22:13-19](#), just as his predecessors had done, [2 Kings 23:37](#). There’s no doubt that Jehoiakim was a very greedy king who oppressed God’s people.

He was an idolater, he killed innocent people, introduced forced labour and was far from being a just king, [Jeremiah 22:13-17](#). He even killed Uriah, God’s prophet, for prophesying that Jerusalem is going to be destroyed, [Jeremiah 26:20-23](#).

CHAPTER 24

INTRODUCTION

In the last chapter, regardless of all the reforms that Josiah had done, we saw that God was going to send the Southern Kingdom of Judah into Babylonian captivity because of the sins of Manasseh, [2 Kings 23:26-27](#).

In this chapter, we read about how God fulfilled His will in sending them to Babylon. This is the beginning of the seventy years of captivity for God’s children, just as Jeremiah had prophesied, [Jeremiah 25:11](#).

THE STAGES OF THE EXILE

The exile of Judah took place in three specific stages.

THE FIRST STAGE

The first stage took place in 605 B.C. On his way back from victory in Egypt, Nebuchadnezzar, general of the armies of Babylon, laid siege to Jerusalem and took some of the leading nobles and young men from the city of Jerusalem as hostages and carried them back to Babylon.

It is at this point that Daniel and his three friends are carried off, [Daniel 1:1-7](#). Most of the citizens are still in the land of Judah but are certainly subservient to Babylon. It is possible that it was at this point that Jeremiah prophesied the seventy-year captivity, [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#).

Nebuchadnezzar had just vanquished the Egyptians at the Battle of Carchemish, thus establishing Babylon as the new ruler of the eastern Mediterranean world. Nebuchadnezzar was establishing Babylonian dominance over all that area and had come to Jerusalem and laid siege to the city.

Hearing of his father's death, he took several young men from the royal family as hostages and trainees for his court, including Daniel and his three friends, according to [Daniel 1:1-7](#).

He also made King Jehoiakim a vassal, [2 Chronicles 36:6](#), and then hastened back to Babylon to establish himself on the throne. Nebuchadnezzar and a small military force took the short route across the desert, sending the captives with his greater army along the Fertile Crescent.

At this point, though most of her citizens were yet in the land of Judah, the nation was subservient to Babylon. It is at this point that Jeremiah prophesied that Judah would be carried off to Babylon for seventy years.

Therefore, most scholars believe that the seventy-year captivity began with this event. This would coincide well with the decree for the first return around 538 B.C., which would be followed by that return and the beginning of the temple rebuilding process around 537/536 B.C.

THE SECOND STAGE

The second stage took place in 597 B.C. Jehoiakim rebels against Nebuchadnezzar, about 602 B.C., who finally comes and attacks Jerusalem, on March 10th 597 B.C., carrying off ten-thousand captives to Babylon.

After rebelling against Nebuchadnezzar, King Jehoiakim died on December 10th 598 B.C., so by the time Nebuchadnezzar arrived to punish Jerusalem for its rebellion, his son Jehoiachin, had been on the throne for three months and ten days.

In other words, Jehoiachin was in the wrong place at the wrong time and would essentially pay for the rebellion of his father against Babylon. Jehoiachin was taken captive to Babylon and remained a prisoner there until the death of Nebuchadnezzar in 561 B.C. [2 Kings 25:27-30](#).

Nebuchadnezzar also carried off the wealthy elite from Jerusalem, including Ezekiel, the prophet. Although Ezekiel wasn't actually called to the prophetic ministry until after he had been carried off to Babylon, probably about 593 BC.

THE THIRD STAGE

The third stage took place in 586 B.C. King Zedekiah ignores the warnings of Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 27-28](#), and plots against Babylon once again, so that Nebuchadnezzar returns, lays siege against Jerusalem, January 15th, 588 B.C., to July 18th, 586 B.C., and captures it. One month after the city fell, the captain of Nebuchadnezzar's army burned the city and the temple.

It is interesting that the temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. and would not be completely rebuilt until February/March of 516 B.C., seventy years after its destruction. So, not only were the Jews in captivity for a minimum of seventy years, but the temple would not exist for seventy years as well.

A tiny remnant of Jews, including Jeremiah, was left in Judah under Gedeliah, who was appointed governor. When Gedeliah was murdered, those Jews feared reprisal and fled to Egypt, taking Jeremiah there against his wishes, [Jeremiah 40:13-16](#).

‘During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he turned against Nebuchadnezzar and rebelled. The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against him to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants, the prophets. Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive. As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors. And Jehoiachin, his son, succeeded him as king. The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.’ [2 Kings 24:1-7](#)

Jehoiakim reigned in 597 B.C., [2 Kings 23:36](#), and he was the victim of God's judgment that was now coming upon Judah, [2 Chronicles 36:9-10](#). He had no choice but to surrender to the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, [2 Kings 24:1](#).

This invasion took place in the fourth year of Jehoiakim's reign, and the first year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, [Jeremiah 25:1](#) / [Jeremiah 46:2](#). At God's command and in accordance with His prophets, [2 Kings 22:16](#) / [Jeremiah 14-16](#), Nebuchadnezzar's march against Syria and Palestine took Jerusalem and carried the king, Jehoiachin and captives away to Babylon, [2 Kings 24:2-3](#).

Manasseh had ‘filled Jerusalem with innocent blood’, [2 Kings 24:3-4](#). Just as Ahab and Jezebel abused their positions of power to take Naboth's vineyard, [1 Kings 21:1-21](#), Manasseh had abused his position of power.

The Lord would not forgive them, [2 Kings 24:4](#) / [Jeremiah 15:1](#), because of the measure of their sin and injustice. The other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, [2 Kings 24:5](#).

Notice that ‘Jehoiakim rested with his ancestors’, [2 Kings 24:6](#). This isn't a contradiction to Jeremiah's prophecy in [Jeremiah 22:19](#), where he tells us that Jehoiakim ‘He will have the burial of a donkey—dragged away and thrown outside the gates of Jerusalem.’

Jehoiakim had revolted again, and [2 Chronicles 36:6](#) tells us that ‘Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon’.

Jehoiachin now succeeds Jehoiakim as king, [2 Kings 24:6](#). Nebuchadnezzar was now the supreme power during this time; he ruled from the border of Egypt to the Euphrates, [2 Kings 24:7](#), and for seventy years, Judah would be slaves to the Babylonians in captivity. This was the end of the Southern Kingdom of Judah, [Amos 9:8](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was so crushed by the Babylonians that he was obliged to confine himself within the limits of his own states, and could no more attempt any conquests. The text tells us how much he had lost by the Babylonians, 2 Kings 24:1.’

JEHOIACHIN KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother’s name was Nehushta, daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done. At that time, the officers of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. Jehoiachin, king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles, and his officials all surrendered to him. In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace and cut up the gold articles that Solomon, king of Israel, had made for the temple of the LORD. He carried all Jerusalem into exile: all the officers and fighting men, and all the skilled workers and artisans—a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left. Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king’s mother, his wives, his officials, and the prominent people of the land. The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans. He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin’s uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.’ 2 Kings 24:8-17

Jehoiachin was now king of Judah. He became king at the age of eighteen, 2 Kings 24:8 / 2 Chronicles 36:9. He reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days, 2 Kings 24:8 / 2 Chronicles 36:9.

He is also known as Jeconiah, Matthew 1:11 / 1 Chronicles 3:16 / Jeremiah 22:24. His mother’s name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan and she was from Jerusalem, 2 Kings 24:8.

He was just as evil as his father, 2 Kings 24:9, Jehoiakim, which is surprising considering he only reigned for three months, 2 Kings 24:8 / 2 Chronicles 36:9. But in those three months, he murdered men and ravaged their wives, Ezekiel 19:5-7.

The officers of Nebuchadnezzar now advance on Jerusalem and lay siege to it, and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it, 2 Kings 24:10-11. Jehoiachin, his mother, his attendants, his nobles, and his officials all surrendered to him, and Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin prisoner, 2 Kings 24:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the year, 2 Kings 24:12.

‘Jeremiah calls it the seventh year Jeremiah 52:28, a statement which implies only a different manner of counting regnal years.’

Just as God said would happen, Nebuchadnezzar removed the treasures from the temple and from the royal palace, and cut up the gold articles that Solomon, the king of Israel, had made for the temple, 2 Kings 24:13 / 2 Chronicles 36:7 / Daniel 1:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It has been remarked that Nebuchadnezzar spoiled the temple three times.

1. He took away the greater part of those treasures when he took Jerusalem under Jehoiakim: and the vessels that he took then he placed in the temple of his god, Daniel 1:2.

And these were the vessels which Belshazzar profaned, Daniel 5:2, and which Cyrus restored to Ezra, when he went up to Jerusalem, Ezra 1:2. It was at this time that he took Daniel and his companions.

2. He took the remaining part of those vessels, and broke them or cut them in pieces, when he came the second time against Jerusalem under Jeconiah, as is mentioned here, 2 Kings 24:13.

3. He pillaged the temple, took away all the brass, the brazen pillars, brazen vessels, and vessels of gold and silver, which he found there when he besieged Jerusalem under Zedekiah, 2 Kings 25:13-17.’

Notice what Nebuchadnezzar does; he takes all the skilled workers away from Jerusalem, but he leaves behind all those who didn't have any skill, [2 Kings 24:14](#) / [Jeremiah 52:28](#).

This was his way of removing anyone who may rebel against him, and of course, this would mean that the skilled workers would work for him in building up his empire.

Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin to Babylon, along with his mother, his wives, his officials, and the prominent people of the land, [2 Kings 24:15](#).

Nebuchadnezzar also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand skilled workers and artisans and he made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah, [2 Kings 24:16-17](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:10](#).

This was the first conquest of Jerusalem, which occurred in 597 B.C., but because Jehoiachin surrendered, there was very little destruction to the city. A second conquest of the city occurred in 586 B.C. to stop the rebellion of Mattaniah, that is, Jehoiachin's uncle, whose name was changed to Zedekiah, [1 Chronicles 3:15](#).

It was during this conquest that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, [2 Kings 25:1-7](#). The third and final assault on Jerusalem took place in 582 B.C. [Jeremiah 52:29-30](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Nebuchadnezzar spoiled Solomon's temple three times.

1. He took some of the treasures away when Jehoiakim was king, placing the golden vessels in the temple of his god in Babylon, [Daniel 1:2](#). These were the vessels profaned by Belshazzar, [Daniel 5:2](#).
2. He continued the destruction by taking many other treasures, breaking, and cutting them into pieces when he came up against Jeconiah, as in this chapter.
3. He thoroughly looted and destroyed the temple, even cutting up the brass and all other metal objects of value when the city fell a third time at the end of the reign of Zedekiah, [2 Kings 25:13-16](#).'

ZEDEKIAH KING OF JUDAH

'Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done. It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end, he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.' [2 Kings 24:18-20](#)

Zedekiah is now king of Judah, and he began his reign when he was twenty-one years old and reigned for eleven years, [2 Kings 24:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:11](#) / [Jeremiah 52:1-3](#). His mother's name was Hamutal, daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah, [2 Kings 24:18](#).

He, too, did evil in God's eyes, and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, [2 Kings 24:19](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:12](#), because it was Nebuchadnezzar who placed him on the throne, [2 Kings 24:17](#).

We can be sure that he was totally in submission to the Babylonian king. He probably would have had to swear an oath to Nebuchadnezzar, which would have involved invoking the Name of the Lord. The change of his name to Zedekiah was an essential element in the whole procedure, [2 Kings 24:17](#).

Jeremiah tells us his rebellion against Babylon was also a rebellion against God, [Jeremiah 31:1-40](#) / [Ezekiel 17:13](#).

He should have never rebelled in the first place because it was totally against everything God had said to His prophet Ezekiel, [Ezekiel 8:1-18](#), and against everything God had said to His prophet Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 25:11-12](#) / [Jeremiah 28:1-4](#) / [Jeremiah 34:8](#).

Zedekiah broke his oath of allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar, 2 Kings 24:20 / 2 Chronicles 36:13, and when Nebuchadnezzar came up once more to destroy Jerusalem, Zedekiah asked Jeremiah to pray for the city, but God declared that He would fight against Zedekiah and the city and destroy them, Jeremiah 37:1-21.

Notice that God ‘thrusts them from his presence’, 2 Kings 24:20. The sin of people had become so bad that God couldn’t even bring Himself to look at them any longer, Isaiah 6:9-10. This is one of the saddest descriptions of God looking at His people in the Scriptures.

The Northern Kingdom of Israel was taken into Assyrian captivity because their sins were too great, 2 Kings 17:5-6 / 2 Chronicles 36:14, and here we read that the Southern Kingdom of Judah were just as bad, and they too were taken into Babylonian captivity for seventy years.

Jehoiachin was the last king of Judah and was so recognised by the Jews. Because Zedekiah was merely a hand puppet of Nebuchadnezzar and because of his foolish rebellion, Jerusalem fell a third time. We will read about that sad event next.

CHAPTER 25

INTRODUCTION

‘So in the ninth year of Zedekiah’s reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it. The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. By the ninth day of the fourth month, the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat. Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king’s garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city. They fled toward the Arabah, but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, and he was captured.

He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon.’ 2 Kings 25:1-7

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

God sent word to His people through His messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on His dwelling place, 2 Chronicles 36:15. However, they mocked God’s messengers, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets until the wrath of the LORD was aroused against his people and there was no remedy, 2 Chronicles 36:16.

It was in the ninth year of Zedekiah, when Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:1, he did this for a year and a half, 2 Kings 25:2 / Jeremiah 39:1-10. The people in Jerusalem were desperate because there was no food, 2 Kings 25:3.

Despite fleeing from the city, they had no chance against the mighty Babylonian army, 2 Kings 25:4-5 / Jeremiah 52:4-27. Both Jeremiah, Jeremiah 38:23, and Ezekiel, Ezekiel 12:13, said this would happen, and the latter had also prophesied the dispersion of the troops, 2 Kings 25:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘A breach was made about midnight in the northern wall, [Ezekiel 9:2](#), and an entry effected into the second or lower city, [2 Kings 22:14](#), which was protected by the wall of Manasseh, [2 Chronicles 33:14](#).’

Zedekiah was captured, and his son was killed before his eyes, [2 Kings 25:6-7](#) / [Jeremiah 39:6](#) / [Jeremiah 52:10](#), because of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, [2 Kings 24:20](#).

Then they put out Zedekiah’s eyes, bound him with bronze shackles, and took him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar had shown mercy to Jehoiachin, but none was shown to Zedekiah, hence the harsher treatment he received, [2 Kings 25:7](#).

‘On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. The whole Babylonian army under the commander of the imperial guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guard, carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon. But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields. The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD, and they carried the bronze to Babylon. They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls—all that were made of pure gold or silver. The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed. Each pillar was eighteen cubits high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was three cubits high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.’ [2 Kings 25:8-17](#)

The Babylonians under Nebuzaradan, who was the commander of the army of Nebuchadnezzar, came to Jerusalem, [2 Kings 25:8](#), and went about totally destroying it, [2 Chronicles 36:17-20](#) / [Jeremiah 52:12-23](#).

Nebuchadnezzar knew if he wiped out Jerusalem, then he would totally wipe out Israel’s pride and joy. This is why he burned the city, but especially the temple, [2 Kings 25:9](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:18-19](#). Jeremiah tells us how he felt about it in [Lamentations 5:11-12](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Compare the prophecies of Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 21:10](#) / [Jeremiah 34:2](#) / [Jeremiah 38:18](#) / [Jeremiah 38:23](#). [Psalms 79:1-13](#) / [Psalms 79:1-13](#), is thought to have been written soon after this destruction of the temple.’

They broke down the walls around Jerusalem, and Nebuzaradan carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had deserted to the king of Babylon, [2 Kings 25:10-11](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:20](#).

Nebuchadnezzar had totally destroyed the city of Jerusalem, and earlier he had already destroyed Lachish, Debir and Beth Shemesh, but he did, however, spare some of the rural areas and left the people to continue farming, [2 Kings 25:12](#).

All the bronze and gold articles of both the royal palace and temple were cut into pieces in order to be transported to Babylon, [2 Kings 25:13](#) / [2 Chronicles 36:18](#) / [Jeremiah 52:17-23](#). They take away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service, [2 Kings 25:14](#).

They also took away the censers and sprinkling bowls, all that were made of pure gold or silver, [2 Kings 25:15](#).

Everything was taken away to Babylon, [Jeremiah 39:8-9](#) / [Jeremiah 52:14](#) / [Jeremiah 52:23](#).

The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed, [2 Kings 25:16](#).

The pillars were eighteen cubits high, [2 Kings 25:17](#), that is, twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was three cubits high, that is, four and a half feet high, and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around, and we are told the other pillar was similar, [2 Kings 25:17](#).

They totally destroyed everything as it was prophesied many years before by God to Solomon, [1 Kings 9:8](#).

Everything which Solomon had built, Jerusalem, the very essence and heartbeat of Israel, was now in ruins.

‘The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of the conscripts who were found in the city. Nebuzaradan, the commander, took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed. So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.’ 2 Kings 25:18-21

Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest, [Jeremiah 40:2-5](#), and three doorkeepers, were taken into Babylonian captivity, [2 Kings 25:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The temple ‘door-keepers’ in the time of Solomon numbered twenty-four, [1 Chronicles 26:17-18](#), who were probably under six chiefs. After the captivity, the chiefs are either six, [Ezra 2:42](#) / [Nehemiah 7:45](#) or four, [1 Chronicles 9:17](#).’

Nebuzaradan now takes those still in the city, the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers, [2 Kings 25:19](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘In [Jeremiah 52:25](#), it is said he took seven men who were near the king’s person, and the same number is found in the Arabic in this place, and the Chaldee has no less than fifty men; but in Jeremiah this, as well as all the rest of the versions, reads seven. Probably they were no more than five at first, or, perhaps Jeremiah reckoned with the five the officer that was set over the men of war, and the principal scribe of the host mentioned here, as two with the five and thus made seven in the whole.’

He took all the people who were encouraging the rebellion against Babylon, [2 Kings 25:19](#). He takes the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of the conscripts who were found in the city, [2 Kings 25:19](#). He took them all, he took them to Babylon, and now Judah find themselves in captivity, [2 Kings 25:20-21](#).

In [Jeremiah 41:16-18](#), we learn that several Jews, after the murder of Gedaliah, went to Egypt, but many of the captives were taken to Babylon. Jeremiah the prophet would have also been taken away, but Nebuchadnezzar ordered that he should be privileged and not restrained in any manner, [Jeremiah 39:10-12](#) / [Jeremiah 52:24-30](#).

The reason for the special treatment of Jeremiah is possibly because he actually prophesied that Babylon would conquer the city, [2 Chronicles 36:17-20](#) / [Jeremiah 52:4-27](#) / [Jeremiah 39:11-18](#). Notice that the land enjoyed its sabbath’s rest, [2 Chronicles 36:21](#) / [Leviticus 26:34-43](#) / [Daniel 9:2](#), that is, the land rested from being used for crops.

‘Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed Gedaliah, son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah—Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maakathite, and their men. Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. ‘Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials,’ he said. ‘Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you.’ In the seventh month, however, Ishmael, son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah. At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.’ 2 Kings 25:22-26

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah to be over the people he left behind, [2 Kings 25:22](#) / [Jeremiah 26:24](#). The name Gedaliah means ‘Yahweh is great’, and he was a grandson of Shaphan, head of a prominent family in Judah. Gedaliah was favoured by Nebuchadnezzar, [2 Kings 25:23](#), possibly because his father had taken measures to spare Jeremiah when his life was threatened by those who were rebellious in Judah before the coming of the Babylonians, [Jeremiah 38:24](#). They had supported the reforms of Josiah and were friendly and helpful to Jeremiah, [Jeremiah 26:24](#).

Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men, he says, do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials, settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you, 2 Kings 25:24.

The full story of the shameful treachery of Ishmael and his murder of Gedaliah, 2 Kings 25:25, is found in Jeremiah 40:7-9 / Jeremiah 41:1-3 / Jeremiah 41:16-18. The army officers were a part of Zedekiah's army, which had deserted him on the plains of Jericho and left him to the mercy of Nebuchadnezzar.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following about Gedaliah.

‘Gedaliah was a man of honour and good sense, and Ishmael's treacherous murder of this good man was probably due to two things.

1. The jealousy that Gedaliah had been appointed governor instead of himself, a member of the royal seed.
2. The ambition of the king of the Ammonites, who, for his own selfish reasons, wished to destroy Gedaliah. Gedaliah had been warned of Ishmael's enmity but unwisely refused to believe the warning.’

The murderers then fled to Egypt, 2 Kings 25:26, believing that Nebuchadnezzar would again come and take vengeance on those who killed his governor, Jeremiah 43:5-7.

JEHOIACHIN RELEASED

‘In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Awel-Marduk became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. He did this on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month. He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honour higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. Day by day, the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.’ 2 Kings 25:27-30

Jehoiachin had been in prison for thirty-seven years but was released by Awel-Marduk, the king of Babylon, 2 Kings 25:27. He was given a seat of honour for being the king of Judah, and thus honoured in Babylon, 2 Kings 25:28, as such, Jeremiah 52:31-34.

This is one reason why Ezekiel focused his prophecies on the reign of Jehoiachin and not Zedekiah, Ezekiel 1:1-2. Zedekiah wasn't considered a king of Judah simply because he was set up as king by a foreign power.

Awel-Marduk blessed Jehoiachin by allowing him to eat at his table, 2 Kings 25:29 / 1 Kings 2:7, and providing a daily allowance, 2 Kings 25:30 / Jeremiah 52:34.

Although Judah had been destroyed and the Israelites were going to be in captivity for seventy years, 2 Kings 21:10-15 / 2 Kings 23:26-27 / 2 Kings 24:3-4 / 2 Kings 24:20, there is a glimmer of hope for Israel through Jehoiachin.

In a sense, it was God who was still taking care of him at this time, 2 Samuel 7:14 / 2 Samuel 7:15, and the Messiah would eventually come through David's descendants, Matthew 1:1-17.

CYRUS

Although it's not mentioned in 2 Kings, I thought it would be useful to read about Cyrus and his role. The first year of Cyrus, king of Persia, 2 Chronicles 36:22, refers to the first year of his reign over the Babylonian lands in 538/537 B.C.

His actual reign over the Medes and Persians began earlier in 557 B.C. He was known as Cyrus the Great, and he is the very person whom Isaiah names in his prophecy, [Isaiah 45:1](#), who would help Israel rebuild the temple and Jerusalem, [Isaiah 44:28-45:7](#).

Jeremiah had prophesied that the Israelites would go into seventy years of captivity, [2 Chronicles 36:22](#) / [Jeremiah 29:10](#); however, as we now know, the people didn't listen. The seventy years of captivity were coming to an end just as Jeremiah had said, [Jeremiah 15:12-14](#) / [Jeremiah 29:10-12](#).

The seventy years are calculated from the first captivity during the days of Daniel and his friends, [Daniel 1:1](#), to the first return of the captives in 536 B.C. There is no doubt that the Jews saw what was happening as a fulfilment of the prophecies.

It would be easy for God to move the heart of Cyrus, [2 Chronicles 36:22](#), especially if someone pointed out to Cyrus that his name actually appears in the prophecies of Isaiah, which were written many years before, [Isaiah 44:28](#) / [Isaiah 45:1-4](#) / [Isaiah 24:13](#).

Cyrus then goes on to make a proclamation not only verbally but also in writing, [2 Chronicles 36:22](#) / [2 Kings 19:9-14](#). The accounts of this proclamation here, [2 Chronicles 36:23](#), and in [Ezra 1:1-4](#), were the public proclamations of the decree.

The quotation of the proclamation in [Ezra 6:3-5](#) was the official recording of the decree. It's possible that each group would receive a different letter with the same thing written on it.

Cyrus gives credit to God and proclaims that he will build a temple for God in Jerusalem, [2 Chronicles 36:23](#) / [1 Chronicles 17:11-12](#) / [1 Chronicles 22:10](#) / [1 Chronicles 28:6](#) / [2 Chronicles 6:9-10](#).

He then proclaims that God's people may return home to help with the building work, [2 Chronicles 36:23](#). Sadly, only a small number of Jews decided to return home from exile, as Isaiah had prophesied, [Isaiah 10:22](#).

After the deportations only the poor of the land, the vine-growers and farmers were left, [2 Kings 25:12](#) / [Jeremiah 39:10](#) / [Jeremiah 40:7](#) / [Jeremiah 52:16](#). Notice that Cyrus also proclaims freewill offerings, [Ezra 1:4](#). This tells us that it wasn't just about the remnant returning to Jerusalem to live but they were to return to also rebuild the temple, [Ezra 1:1-4](#).

THE CYRUS CYLINDER

If you visit the British Museum in London, you will see on display an original pair of cufflinks based on the Cyrus Cylinder. The cufflinks are made from 24k plated bronze and are supplied in a presentation box. The Cyrus Cylinder is one of the most famous objects to have survived from the ancient world.

The cylinder was inscribed in Babylonian cuneiform, which is the earliest form of writing, on the orders of the Persian King Cyrus the Great, 559-530 B.C., after he captured Babylon in 539 B.C.

It is often referred to as the first bill of human rights, as it appears to encourage freedom of worship throughout the Persian Empire and to allow deported people to return to their homelands. The cylinder was found in Babylon, modern Iraq, in 1879 during a British Museum excavation.