

A WALK THROUGH THE OLD TESTAMENT
TIME FRAME #6– THE DIVIDED KINGDOM TO THE FALL OF JUDAH
READING NOTES
722 BC TO 586 BC
SELECTED CHAPTERS IN 2 KINGS

SUMMARY

With the 10 Tribes of Israel deported, the rest of 2 Kings turns its attention to the nation of Judah. While there are revivals under kings like Hezekiah and Josiah, most of the remaining 150 years are spent under evil idolatrous kings like Manasseh. Reaching His breaking point, God brings judgement on Judah through the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and Babylon. However, because of His promise to David, the descendants of this generation will return to the Land, and the line of David will produce Jesus the Messiah.

MAJOR EVENTS

EVENT #59	SCRIPTURE
RULE OF HEZEKIAH	2 KINGS 18-20
NOTES	
<p>1. Hezekiah was one of the godliest kings in the history of Judah. This stands in stark contrast to his father Ahaz, who was one of the wickedest. Ahaz even went so far as to offer one of his sons as a burnt offering to pagan gods. Hezekiah followed God faithfully throughout his life. A summary of his life and rule are given in 2 Kings 18:1-8</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • His life of faith and obedience to God was like that of David. This was a walk with God from the heart that led to a life of obedience to God’s Word.(vs.3) • He destroys the places used to worship false gods. This went beyond what other godly kings before him had done. (vs.4) • He also destroyed the bronze serpent that Moses had made in Numbers 21. The people had begun to bring offerings to it, treating it like a pagan Asherah Pole. This is an example of how the people sometimes mixed pagan worship with worshipping Yahweh. (vs.4) • Hezekiah trusted God throughout his life, more than any other king of Judah before or after him. This would make him the second godliest king in the history of Israel after David himself. (vs.5) • He ‘held fast to the LORD’ – Hezekiah stayed close and committed to the LORD all of his life. Unlike so many of the other godly kings, including Solomon, he did not ‘fade’ as he got older, but followed God and obeyed the Law of Moses. (vs.6) • In return, God was with Hezekiah. He prospered in wealth (as we shall see) and militarily. In the time when Israel to the north fell, Judah remained strong and independent. (vs.7-8) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ He refused to become a vassal state to Assyria. ○ Philistine was an ally of Assyria. Hezekiah launches a preemptive strike against them and establishes the security of that border. <p>2. In contrast to the life of Hezekiah and God’s blessing on him and Judah, Israel is defeated and deported from the land on account of their persistent sin of rebellion and idolatry. This reminder of Israel’s fate and Assyria’s power in that part of the world sets up the next story in the life of Hezekiah. 18:9-12</p> <p>3. The decision to rebel against Assyria (18:7) and refuse to pay tribute was part of a larger resistance against Assyria that included other nations in the area. In time, Assyria marches south and begins to bring those other nations under their power. In time, they arrive in Judah, and begin their conquest. They lay siege to the city of Lachish, an important fortified city located southwest of Jerusalem. Sennacherib, king of Assyria defeated it and burned it to the ground. This left Jerusalem vulnerable. Soon the Assyrian army is at its gates. After Hezekiah reaches out and attempts to placate his enemy</p>	

with tribute fails to satisfy the Assyrian, there is a meeting of officials to determine what demands the Assyrians are going to make. **18:13-18**

- As Hezekiah realizes the revolt has been defeated and he stands alone against the mighty Assyrian army he gives in to fear and offers Judah as a vassal state. He agrees to the terms given and has to strip all of the gold and silver from not only the treasury but from the Temple itself.
- After accepting this tribute, Sennacherib responds by sending a large siege army to Jerusalem. The opportunity for a peaceful resolution to this was past. Judah's rebellion was not going to be forgiven with a cash payment. As we will see, the Assyrian king is determined to deport them from the land. Undoubtedly he fears that left in their city, Judah would eventually rebel again.

(vs.17-18)

- The three officials sent by Sennacherib are two high ranking generals who had the authority of the king to speak for him (Tartan and Rab-saris are their titles, not their names) and the chief cupbearer, who acts as the interpreter and spokesman, for he is fluent in Hebrew (Rabshakeh is his title).
- The three officials sent by Hezekiah were also high level officials in the court and government.

4. At the heart of the Assyrian demands is the peaceful deportation of the Jews to other lands. If they are willing to surrender and agree to relocate, they will be settled in land that is just as fertile and fruitful as Judah. The Assyrians hope to convince the people of the city to do this by trying to undermine their trust in their king. Judah had made an alliance with Egypt for protection as part of this larger rebellion. However, the attempt by Egypt to march up to Jerusalem had failed. So they could not trust in Egypt. They also could not trust in the LORD, for God had sent Assyria to punish Hezekiah for tearing down the worship sites outside of Jerusalem. And if that failed to undermine Hezekiah, they declare that no other god had been able to prevent an Assyrian victory. Their hope is that the city will deliver Hezekiah to them and agree to move. **18:19-37**

- The Assyrians first dash any hope in trusting Egypt to save them. **(vs.19-21)**
- Then they turn to the LORD. They mistakenly believe that Hezekiah offended God by tearing down the places of worship outside of Jerusalem. The assumption is this offended God, Who now had sent the Assyrians to punish Hezekiah. Unlike what will later happen with Babylon, who is sent as an agent of God to punish Judah, God has not sent Assyria. **(vs.22-25)**
- The Jewish officials undoubtedly were surprised to hear the Rabshakeh speaking in Hebrew, the language of the common citizen. They ask to speak in Aramaic, the language of Assyria. As court officials they would have understood the language. By the time of Jesus Aramaic will be the common language in Israel, but at the time of Hezekiah few would have understood it. The Syrians refuse, for they want the soldiers and others on the wall to understand everything they are saying. **(vs.26-27)**
- The Rabshakeh then calls out to the people on the wall, encouraging them to not listen to or trust Hezekiah, for not even the Jew's God would be able to save them. Instead, they are encouraged to surrender to the Assyrians and move to other lands just as fruitful as Judah. **(vs.28-35)**
- Having been instructed by Hezekiah to not respond to the Assyrians, no one says anything. Instead the three Jewish officials go to Hezekiah to report, first tearing their clothes in a sign of distress.

5. King Hezekiah's response to the words of the Rabshakeh is to humbly entrust himself to God. Tearing his clothes indicates distress and need; sackcloth was worn to show humility when seeking God. In addition to going to the Temple himself to pray, he sends a message to the prophet Isaiah, asking him to pray for the people of Judah and their deliverance from Assyria. They emphasize the fact that God has been mocked by them. **19:1-4**

6. Isaiah tells them that God will deliver Judah from Sennacherib and the Assyrians. God will lead the king to battle, where he will be killed on the field. **19:5-7**
7. Sennacherib sends a letter to Hezekiah, taunting him. The LORD will not be able to deliver him any more than the gods of other vanquished nations had been unable to deliver them from the might of Assyria. **19:8-13**
8. This time Hezekiah does not ask Isaiah to pray, but goes before God himself, spreading the letter out before the LORD and asking Him to rise up and strike down this king who defied God. **19:14-19**
 - Hezekiah starts with worship – stressing God’s power and position as the only true God. **(vs.15)**
 - He then asks God to be aware of the mocking words that have been spoken against Him. **(vs.16)**
 - Hezekiah lays out the situation before God. Many other nations had been defeated by Assyria. When they have done so they have destroyed the idols used by their vanquished foe. The reason these other gods had failed to protect their worshippers is because they were not real. **(vs. 17-18)**
 - However, Hezekiah is not praying to a stone statue but to the living God. He asks Yahweh to save Judah, proving to not only Assyria but to all nations that He indeed is God alone. **(vs.19)**
9. Isaiah sends word to Hezekiah that the LORD, the God of Israel has heard his prayer and has every intention of answering it. Speaking with the voice of God Isaiah says: **19:21-34**
 - God declares that Sennacherib has not mocked Judah, but the LORD Himself. **(vs.22)**
 - God then tells the Assyrian king that He, The LORD has given him the victories he brags about. **(vs.23-26)**
 - God will now treat Sennacherib like a rancher would one of his bulls, using a simple ring in its nose to pull it towards any direction he wants. In this case, back to Assyria. **(vs.27-28)**
 - God then tells Judah He will indeed save them. Within three years all of the vineyards destroyed by Syria will have been restored. There will be a new period of prosperity in Judah. **(vs.29-31)**
 - As for Assyria, they will not shoot one arrow into Jerusalem, but will go back to Assyria. **(vs.32-34)**
10. That night God Himself strikes down most of the Assyrian army. Returning to Assyria, Sennacherib is assassinated by his own sons while worshipping his god Nisroch. **(vs.35-37)**
11. **20:1-19** represent a flashback, going back around 12 years before the events with Sennacherib in chapter 19. There is no indication this illness is the result of sin in Hezekiah’s life, nor what the illness itself is. What we do know is it is serious enough for God to tell him to get his affairs in order, for he will soon die. Hezekiah appeals for mercy and healing, and God answers that prayer by granting Hezekiah 15 more years of life.
 - Hezekiah’s prayer focuses on his heart for God and his life of obedience. The fact he faces the wall and weeps shows the depth of his despair and desire for more years to live. **(vs.2-3)**
 - As Isaiah predicts his healing in three days Hezekiah asks for a sign to assure him this will indeed happen. It is good to remember Isaiah had said Hezekiah would soon die just moments earlier! We are not told how God performed the miracle, but the shadow caused by the sun went backwards ten steps. **(vs.5-10)**
12. Like his ancestor David, Hezekiah has a ‘dark side’, where self clouds his judgement and leads to decisions that bear long term consequences. In **20:12-19** we see two of those elements in Hezekiah’s life as he is visited by representatives of an up and coming empire – Babylon. In time Babylon will defeat the Assyrians and assume their position as the most powerful empire in the ancient world.
 - **The first element of this dark side in the life of Hezekiah is pride** – he is proud of his wealth and power. As the representatives from Babylon arrive, Hezekiah’s desire to show his wealth

and power clouds his judgement and concern for Judah's security. There is nothing he conceals from them, including his armory! (vs.12-13)

- **The second element of this dark side is selfishness.** As Isaiah tells Hezekiah about the coming judgement coming on his descendants through these Babylonians, Hezekiah responds with a callous, "At least it will not happen to me". The Babylonians will not forget the wealth they have seen. Hezekiah's pride has made the nation of Judah a target. When the time is right, God will raise Babylon up as an instrument to discipline His people. (vs.14-19)

13. **2 Kings 20:20-21** brings the life of Hezekiah to a close. The pool and conduit mentioned was an engineering feat that brought the main water source for Jerusalem from outside the city walls to inside. This was crucial in future times when Jerusalem is under siege.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:

EVENT # 60	SCRIPTURE
RULE OF JOSIAH	2 KINGS 22-23
NOTES	
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. After the death of Hezekiah his son, Manasseh reigned for 51 years. He was an evil idolater, and led the nation of Judah away from the LORD as he rebuilt the pagan high places. His son reigns just two years before being assassinated. That leads to young Josiah coming to the throne at the age of eight. Joash will be a man like David, and follows after God consistently throughout his life. 22:1-2 2. Josiah embarks on a project to repair the Temple. Undoubtedly it was neglected over the 50+ years under his grandfather and father. He sends an official named Shaphan to ensure the money for these repairs was available and used properly. 22:3-7 3. As the Temple is being renovated the High Priest finds a copy of the Law. Apparently it had been hidden away during the reign of Manasseh. Shaphan reads the Scriptures and then gives it to King Josiah. While Josiah had a heart for God and sought to honor Him by destroying pagan worship in Judah he now reads the actual Law the nation was to be following for the first time. He would have read the warnings for disobedience in the book of Deuteronomy as well as the promises given for obedience. As he reflects over the decades of evil under his father and grandfather, he asks that a prophet be found to inquire of the Lord. What is His intentions for Judah? 22:8-13 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is not surprising Josiah had no knowledge of the actual Bible/Law, having been raised in a palace where pagan gods had been worshipped and not Yahweh. • It is apparent the Josiah recognizes the consequences of Judah's turning away from God as he reads passages like Deut. 28. • Josiah's heart for God is seen by his humble response to God's holiness, as he tears his clothes and seeks a word from God. 4. The prophetess Huldah reveals that God is going to judge Judah for her sins of rebellion and idolatry. They will be over-run and removed from the Land. However, because of Josiah's humble repentant response to what he read, God will not bring this judgement during his lifetime. 22:14-20 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Josiah's heart was penitent and he had humbled himself before God. (vs.19) 	

- Tearing his clothes and crying out to God were expressions of a humble appeal to God's mercy. **(vs.19)**
 - It is interesting Josiah did not appeal to God based on his personal holiness, nor did God commend him for what he had done regarding pagan worship. Josiah appealed to God's mercy and God recognized a contrite and humble heart. **See Psalm 51:16-17.**
5. Despite the announced judgement coming on Judah, Josiah determines to lead Judah in a revival of worshiping and following God. The first thing he does is bring the people together to hear the Law read. This would have specifically been the book of Deuteronomy. He then makes a covenant to follow and obey God with all his heart. The people then join him in this covenant. **23:1-3**
 6. Josiah then initiates sweeping reforms in Judah, wiping out the people and implements that had been used in pagan idolatry. The list of reforms reveals the extent of the paganism that had be introduced by the kings before Josiah. **23:4-20**
 - He removed all of the implements used for to worship Baal and Asherah from the Temple. The Kedron valley had been associated with idol worship since the days of Solomon. It is highly symbolic to burn the items associated with that idolatry there. He also removes the pagan priests from their positions. **(vs.4-6)**
 - He removes the male prostitutes associated with the worship of Baal as well as the women who made the sacred clothing used in that worship at the Temple. **(vs.7)**
 - Bringing the priests from the Temple, Josiah defiles and destroys the high places that had been used by the people to offer sacrifices to Baal. One specific site was where children had been offered as burnt sacrifices. **(vs.8-10)**
 - He removed the horses that had been dedicated to the sun and destroyed the chariots drawn by them. **(vs.11)**
 - Josiah destroyed the altars that had been built on the roof of the palace. Some were built by Solomon. It is sobering to see the consequences of his introducing idolatry centuries before. **(vs.12-14)**
 - Because of the decline of Assyria, Josiah had been able to take territory that had been part of Israel. This included the southern worship area created by Jeroboam using the golden calf. This area is destroyed by Josiah. The use of people's bones to desecrate ground was commonly practiced in the ancient world. This action would prevent that ground from being used for religious practice again. This was all fulfilling a prophecy given in **1 Kings 13:11-32. (vs.15-20)**
 7. Next Josiah restores the observing of the Passover. The last mention of the nation observing this most sacred festival was Joshua 5. Not even David had led the nation in observing the Passover. **23:21-23**
 8. Next Josiah removes the things used by people locally and in their homes for idolatry. It was common to go to spiritualists (mediums and necromancers) to inquire of the spirits instead of seeking God. Also, people had small idols for use in their homes. No king had even led a revival as sweeping as Josiah's. Some had been godly, but had not removed all of the things and places used for idol worship. This had been part of the reason Judah had so easily returned to idol worship. **23:24-25**
 9. All of this delayed God's judgement of Judah but it will not prevent that judgment from coming. **23:26-27**
 10. The king of Egypt, Neco, allied himself with Assyria in an attempt to stop Babylon's rise to power. As Neco marches north with his army to join forces with Assyria Josiah marches out in an attempt to stop him. Either he sees this as an opportunity to ingratiate Judah with Babylon or he sees a revived Assyria as a threat to Judah's security. During that battle Josiah is killed. With his death, God's judgement against Judah through the armies of Babylon is only 12 years away.

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS:

EVENT # 61	SCRIPTURE
THE FALL OF JUDAH	2 KINGS 23:31-25:30

NOTES

1. After Josiah's death his son Jehoahaz becomes king. His reign is brief! After the unsuccessful attempt to stunt Babylon's power, Neco returns to Egypt. On his way south he removes Jehoahaz from power, replacing him with his brother, whom he renames Jehoiakim. Neco demands tribute and taking Jehoahaz with him, returns to Egypt. Even during a three month reign, Jehoahaz is proven to be an idolater. **2 Kings 23:31-35**
2. During the early reign of Jehoiakim Babylon extends her power to Palestine, replacing Egypt as the power broker in the region. After three years of paying tribute, Judah rebels. For the rest of his life God sends raiding bands from various nations to harass the people of Judah. This is the beginning of the end for the nation of Judah. God's hand of judgement has begun to move. **23:36-24:7**
3. Soon after Jehoiakim son Jehoiachin comes to power, Nebuchadnezzar and his army arrive and lay siege to Jerusalem. As the city surrenders, the Babylonian king plunders the city of its wealth and its key people. Among those deported at this time was Ezekiel the prophet and Daniel and his friends. Jehoiachin is removed from power and replaced by his uncle, renamed Zedekiah. **24:8-17**
4. Zedekiah rules for 11 years. He rebels against God, as his fathers had done. He also rebels against Babylon. God is now ready to remove Judah from the Land – and will use Babylon to do it. **24:18-20**
5. Soon Nebuchadnezzar personally comes with his army to lay siege to Jerusalem. After two years, with famine facing him, Zedekiah attempts to flee, but is captured before he can get to the safety of the wilderness. Zedekiah is forced to watch each one of his sons be killed (wiping out his family line) and then has his eyes removed. He is then taken as a prisoner to Babylon. **25:1-7**
6. Returning to Jerusalem from capturing Zedekiah and the army of Judah, the Babylonian army destroyed the city. The Temple is knocked to the ground; the royal palace is destroyed, the walls destroyed and all valuables taken away. The majority of people are taken away, with only the poorest left behind to tend the crops. These were uneducated people who would be no threat to Babylon. The leaders left in Jerusalem are rounded up, taken to Nebuchadnezzar and executed. With this, the nation of Judah, like Israel, is out of the Land. Unlike the 10 tribes of Israel, some of the children and grandchildren of Judah will return. **2 Kings 25:8-20**

PERSONAL OBSERVATIONS: