

















## 15 studies on 2 Kings – 2nd draft

Presumably, the first readers of the books of 1 & 2 Kings would have been God's people living in exile. It is worth thinking about the overall message that the author of this work is wanting to communicate to them.

Is the author aiming to explain to God's people in exile how they ended up there? i.e., that their current plight was a result of their past rebellion triggering the age-old covenant curses outlined in the books of Moses? Be that as it may the LORD has not abandoned them in the exile. For contrary to how things might seem at the time, the LORD is still their Lord and is working out his age-old promises consisting of both blessings and curses. And even though then they were living in exile, a tangible expression of God's covenant curse having fallen, they still had every reason to trust Him. They might not have been able to see how exactly God would bring to fulfilment his promises. For them the exile was undeniably a crisis of faith. However by the time we reach the NT there were those such as Simeon who had not given up hope and were still waiting for the "consolation of Israel" (Luke 2). The word "consolation" here is a reminder of the opening words of Isaiah 40 where the Lord promised a return from exile. So, theologically, Simeon, was still waiting for a return from exile in the opening pages of the NT.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

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In preparing these studies I've used the following sources: New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan, The Message of Kings by John W. Olley, The First and Second Books of Kings: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections by C.-L. Seow, Isaiah, Book of by C.R. Seitz, Student's Atlas of the Bible Paternoster Press, Kings Behaving Badly 4 studies on 2 Kings 16-25 by Central Sydney Presbyterian Church, God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018, Kings and Catastrophes 19 studies on 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings by St Andrews, Roseville 2014, Matthias Media Interactive Bible Study booklets The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne and Two Cities Isaiah by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris, New Bible Commentary 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, New Illustrated Bible Dictionary, the 2012 sermon series, the Fifth Gospel, at St Andrews, Roseville by John Dickson, sermon by John Dickson on Mark ch 11 at St Andrews, Roseville, 15/3/2015, [www.aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com) and various websites.

## Study 1, Introduction to the Old Testament

The book of 2 Kings is in the Old Testament. To refresh our thinking on the Old Testament I thought it would be fun to read some quotes and listen to some sound bites. Your job is to say where the quote is from and its context in the Bible. I've given the answers but you will need to cut these out before giving the studies to the group so that they can try to work out the answers for themselves.



### 1. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth."

Where? Gen 1:1

Context? creation

### 2. "The LORD had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. "I will make you into a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you I will curse; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you."

Where? Gen 12:1-3

Context? God promises Abram that he will become a great nation and lead them to the Promised Land.

### 3. Play Highway61Short.mp3

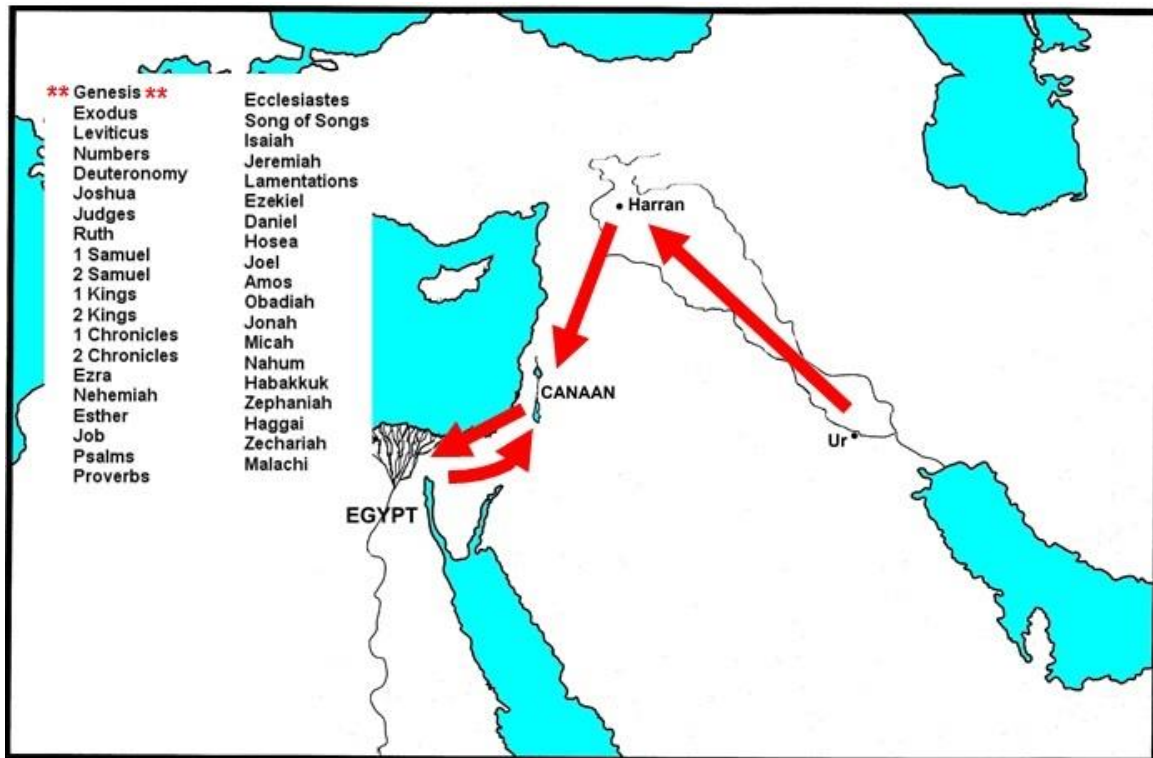
Translation: God said to Abraham "Kill me a son."  
 Abe said "Man, you must be putting me on."  
 God said "No."  
 Abe said "What?"  
 God said "You can do what you want to but, the next time you see me coming you better run."  
 Well Abe said "Where do you want this killing done?"  
 God said "Out on Highway 61."

Bible: Some time later God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!"  
 "Here I am," he replied.  
 Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love—Isaac—and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

Where? Gen 22:1-2

Context? Bible: Abraham & Sarah finally have a son in their old age but God tells Abraham to sacrifice his only son as a test of Abraham's faith.  
 Bob Dylan: You can get away with anything in America, out on Highway 61.

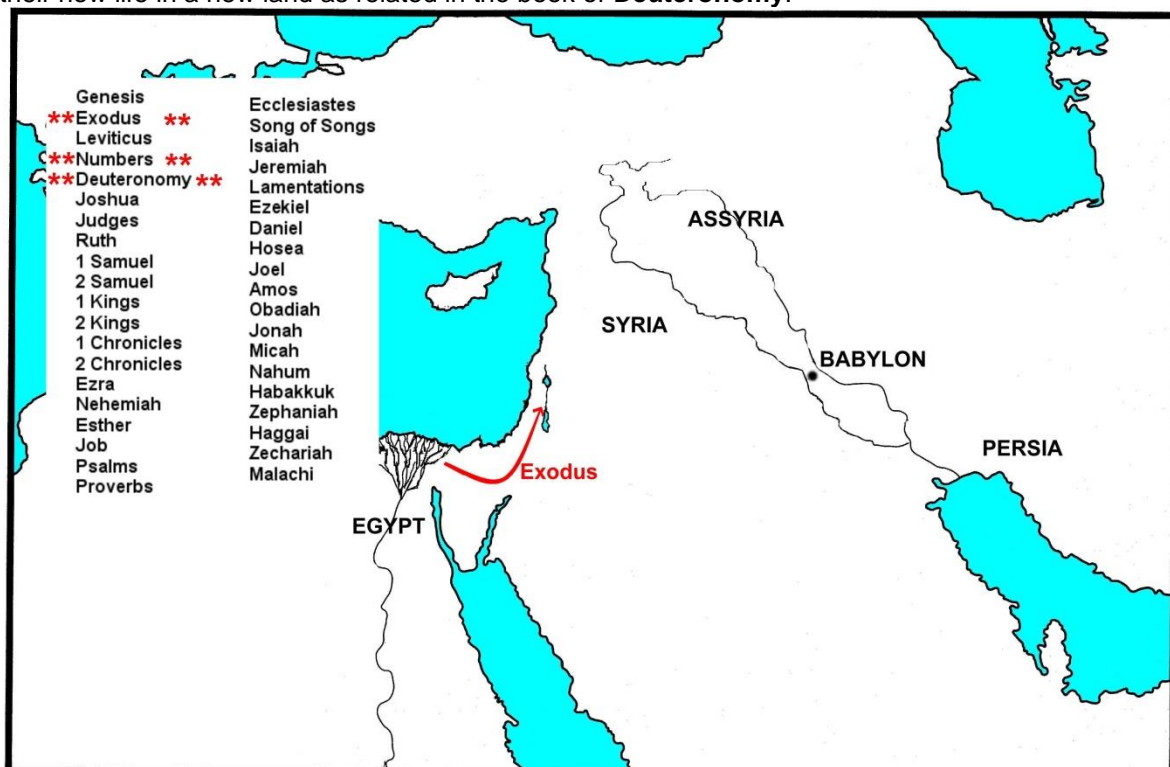
Beginning at roughly 1900 BC, God called Abraham to be a father of a great nation (Gen 12). Genesis relates the story of his travels and eventual settling in the Promised Land, Canaan.



Famine forced God's people to Egypt and they spent more than 400 years in bondage to the Pharaohs. God worked to release them from slavery and, under Moses' leadership, they escaped (the Exodus, roughly 1300 BC) and travelled back to the land God had promised them.

The Egyptians were the major world power from 3000 BC to 1000 BC (these dates are very approximate). The Great Pyramid of Giza was completed in 2600 BC.

The escape from Egypt is described in the book of **Exodus**. The trip of 40 yrs. wandering in the desert before getting to Israel is described in **Numbers**. On the verge of Palestine, Moses lectures his people to prepare them for their new life in a new land as related in the book of **Deuteronomy**.

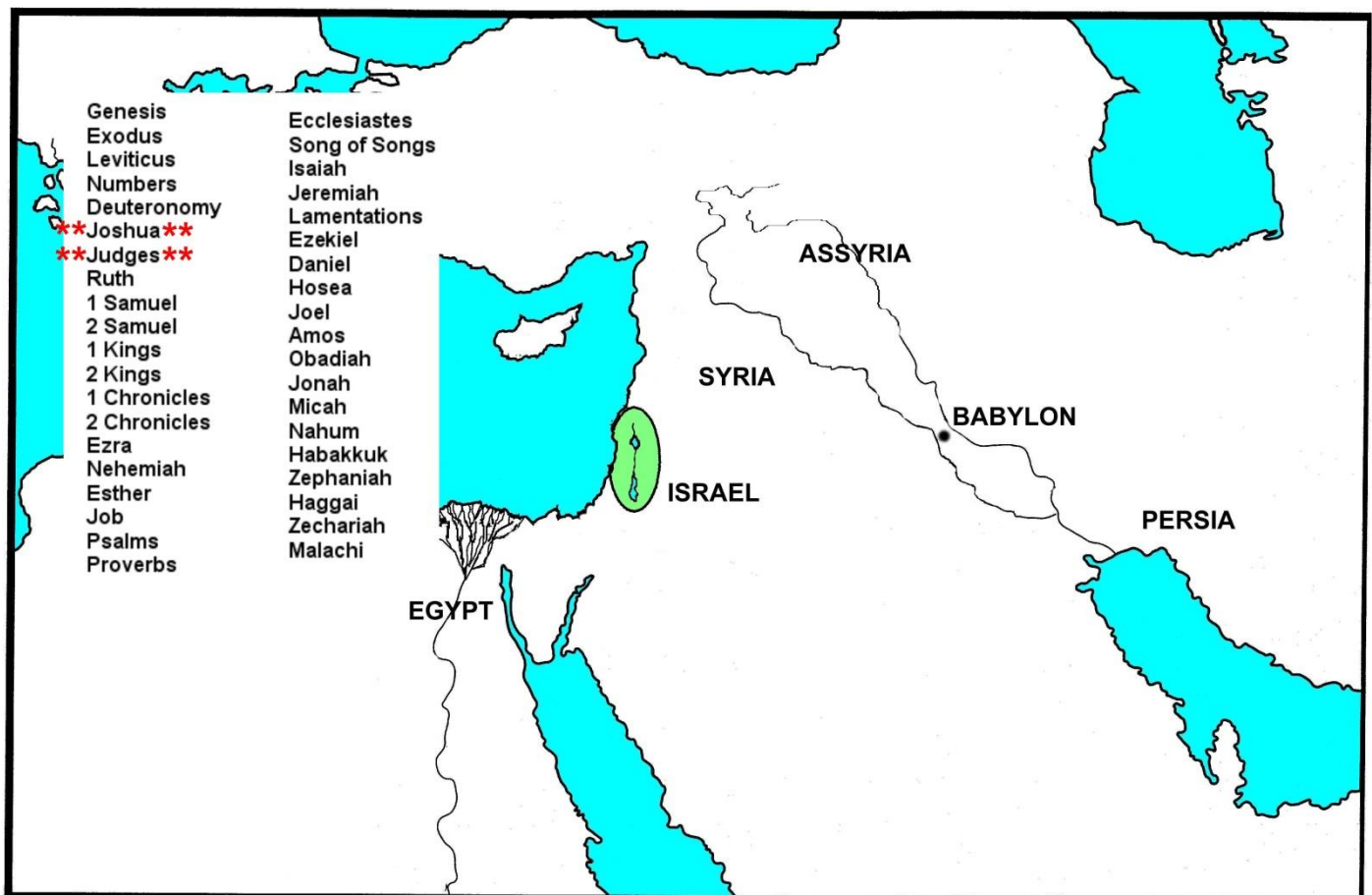


4. "Honour your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your God is giving you. You shall not murder. You shall not commit adultery. You shall not steal. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbour. You shall not covet your neighbour's house. You shall not covet your neighbour's wife, or his male or female servant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbour."

Where? Ex 20:12-17

Context? 10 Commandments made at Mt Sinai while God's people were on their way to the Promised Land.

In Israel, God fights for his people to conquer the indigenous peoples. These battles are described in **Joshua** and **Judges**.



Samuel led God's people after the Judges. After Samuel came the kings with Saul as Israel's first king and David as Israel's second and greatest king until Jesus. David began his reign at about 1000 BC. The history of Samuel and Saul is written in **1 Samuel**.

David was a warrior king and expanded Israel's borders (represented by the green area below). David's story begins at 1 Samuel 16 and continues through **1 and 2 Samuel** and **1 Chronicles**, ending with his death in 1 Kings 2. David was also a singer and musician and he wrote many **psalms** describing his feelings, experiences and prayers.

5. As the Philistine moved closer to attack him, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet him. Reaching into his bag and taking out a stone, he slung it and struck the Philistine on the forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell face down on the ground.

Where? 1 Sam 17:48-49

Context? David kills Goliath, the Philistine champion. Israel has a king, Saul, but David will be the next and greatest king besides Jesus.



## 6. "The Lord is my shepherd I shall not want."

Where? Ps 23:1

Context? Psalm of David. Even in the most difficult of circumstances David trusts God to rescue him and bring him goodness and mercy.

**7. When your days are over and you rest with your ancestors, I will raise up your offspring to succeed you, your own flesh and blood, and I will establish his kingdom. He is the one who will build a house for my Name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his father, and he will be my son. When he does wrong, I will punish him with a rod wielded by men, with floggings inflicted by human hands. But my love will never be taken away from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever.**

Where? 2 Sam 7:12-16

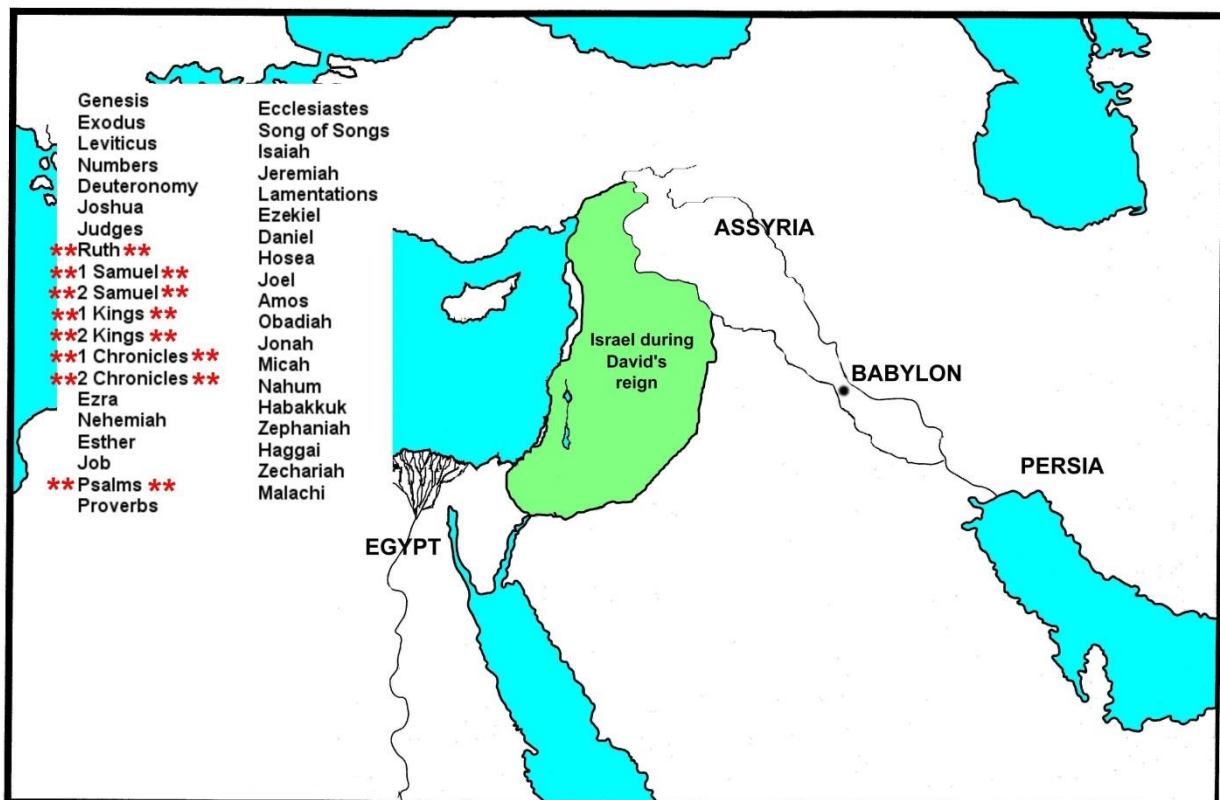
Context? God's line of kings, through David, will be established forever.

Solomon, David and Bathsheba's second son (2 Sam 12), became king in 961 BC. After Solomon Israel was split in two in 922 BC with the northern kingdom called Israel and the southern kingdom called Judah. This division into two kingdoms weakened them both and it wasn't long before other nations threatened them.

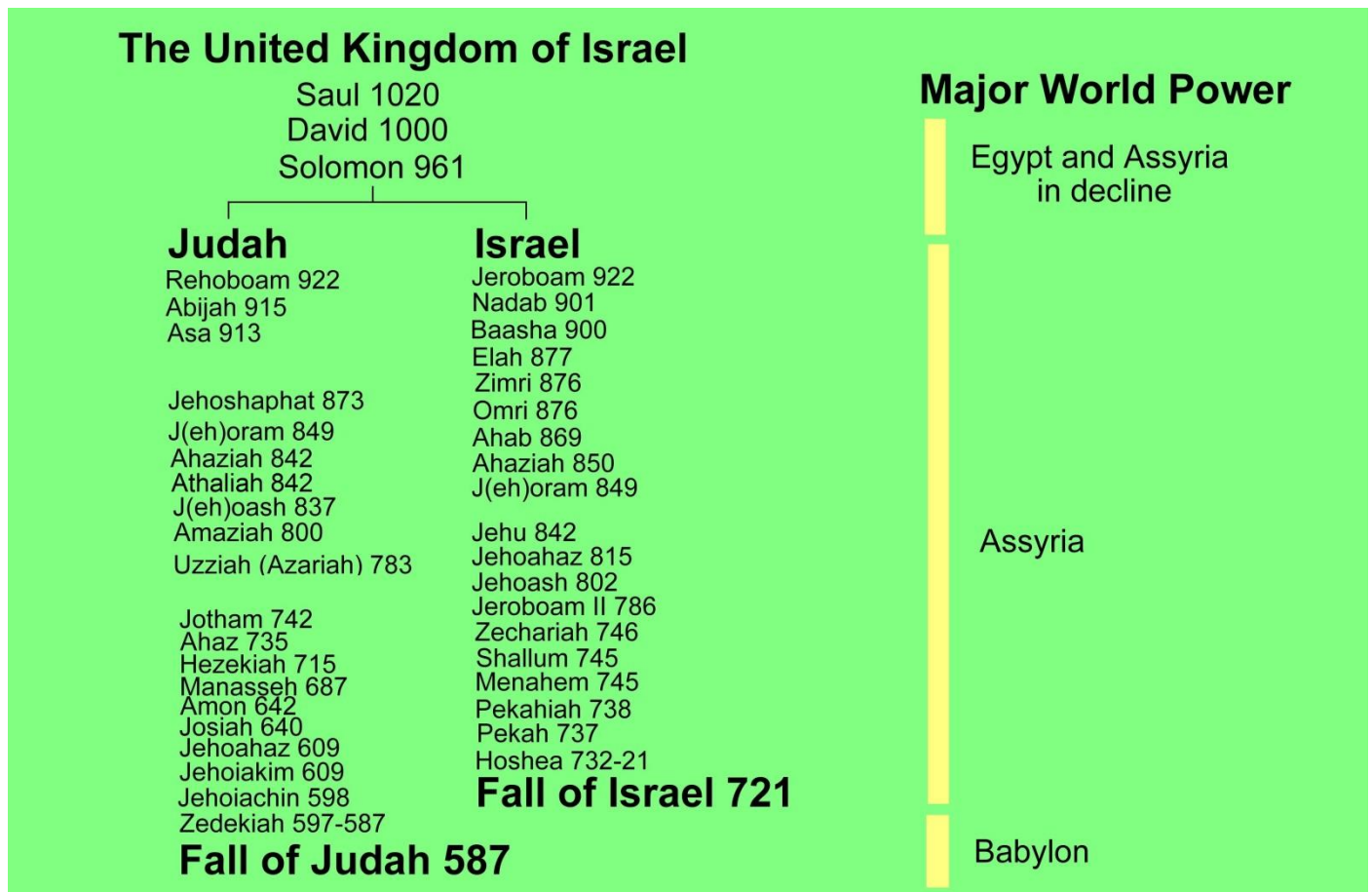
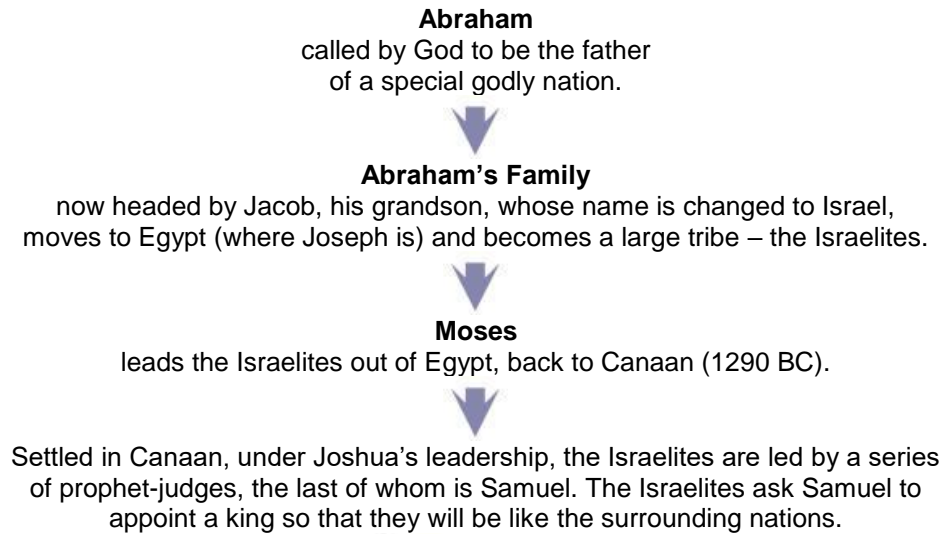
**1 and 2 Kings** account for four centuries of Israel's history with a succession of kings from both the northern and southern kingdoms, ending in exile. 1 and 2 Kings were written as one book from the viewpoint of an Israelite living in exile in Babylon.

**1 and 2 Chronicles** follow the kings from the line of David, ignoring the northern kings. The Chronicler wrote from the viewpoint of an Israelite who had returned from exile with Ezra and Nehemiah.

In contrast, **Ruth** is a quiet tale of ordinary life where a mother, Naomi, and her daughter-in-law, Ruth, move from Moab to Bethlehem and are treated kindly by Boaz. Boaz and Ruth get married and their great grandson is King David.



To recap:



## 8. Play Redeemer livethShort.mp3

Translation: I know that my Redeemer liveth, and he shall stand at the latter day upon the earth.

Bible: I know that my redeemer lives, and that in the end he will stand on the earth.  
And after my skin has been destroyed, yet in my flesh I will see God;  
I myself will see him with my own eyes - I, and not another.  
How my heart yearns within me!

Where? Job 19:25-27

Context? Bible: Job defends himself against accusations that he has deserved the terrible things that have happened to him. His innocence will ultimately bring him to see God in the flesh.

Handel's Messiah: Comes immediately after the Hallelujah Chorus

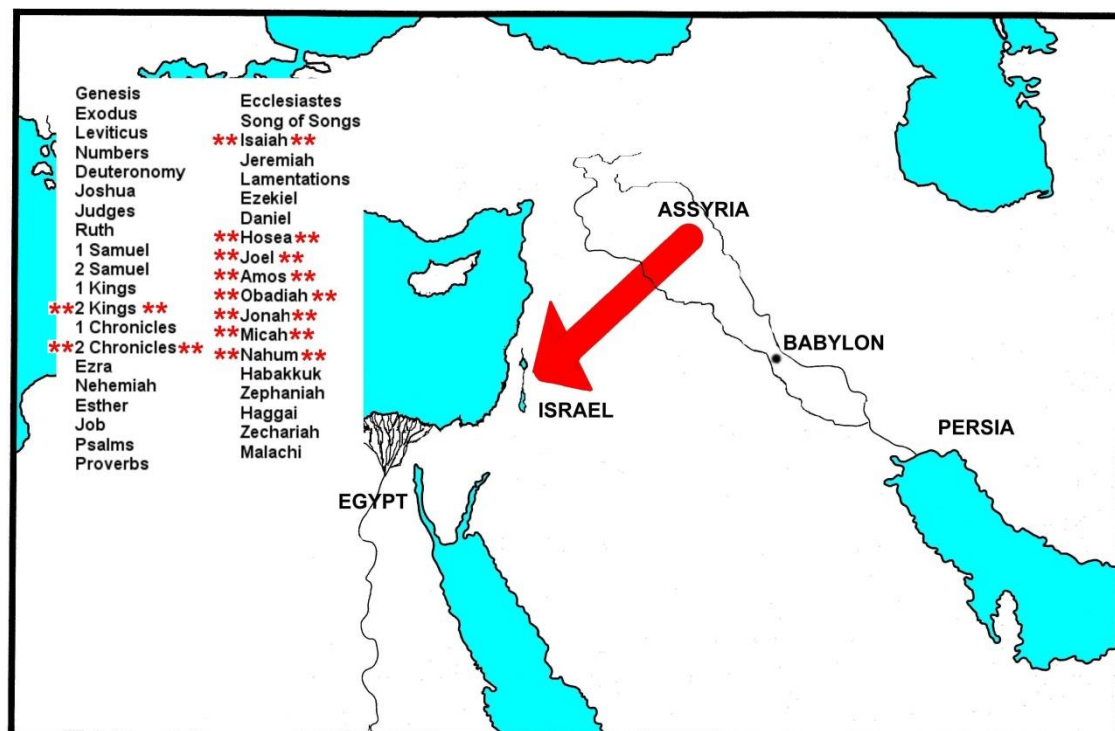
## 9. Play HisBannerOverMelsLoveSHORT.mps

Bible: He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

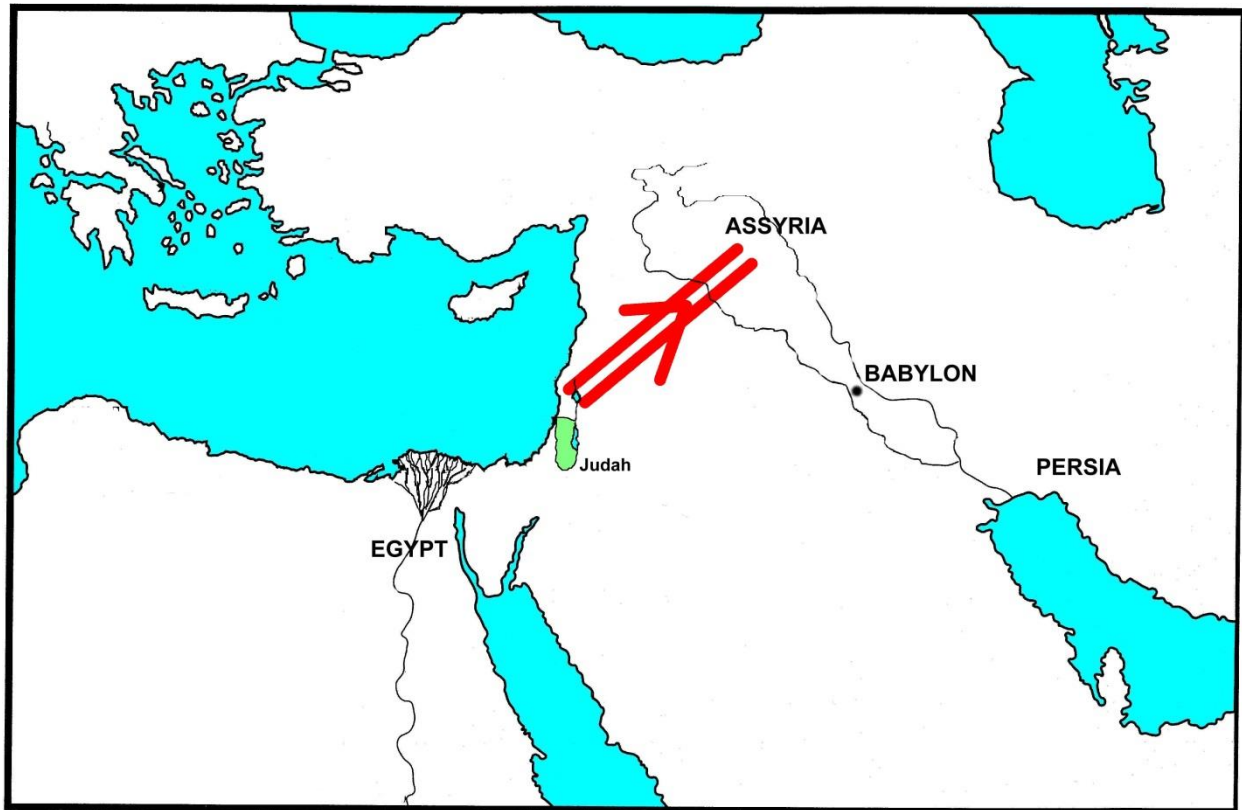
Where? Song of Songs 2:4

Context? Multiple meanings have been suggested for Song of Songs.  
The 2 main ones are that it is an allegory for God's love for Israel/the church  
OR a poem about the love of a man and a woman.

Assyria became the major world power from about 900 BC to 612 BC. **Jonah** preached God's message of repentance to Nineveh, Assyria's capital, at about 800 BC. They did repent and avoided God's judgement for a time only to re-commit their sins bringing on God's warning through **Nahum**. Israel also needed to repent and a number of prophets warned that God's instrument of judgement would be Assyria. **Isaiah**, **Joel** and **Obadiah** warned Judah (the southern kingdom), **Amos** warned Israel (the northern kingdom) and **Micah** and **Hosea** addressed both kingdoms.

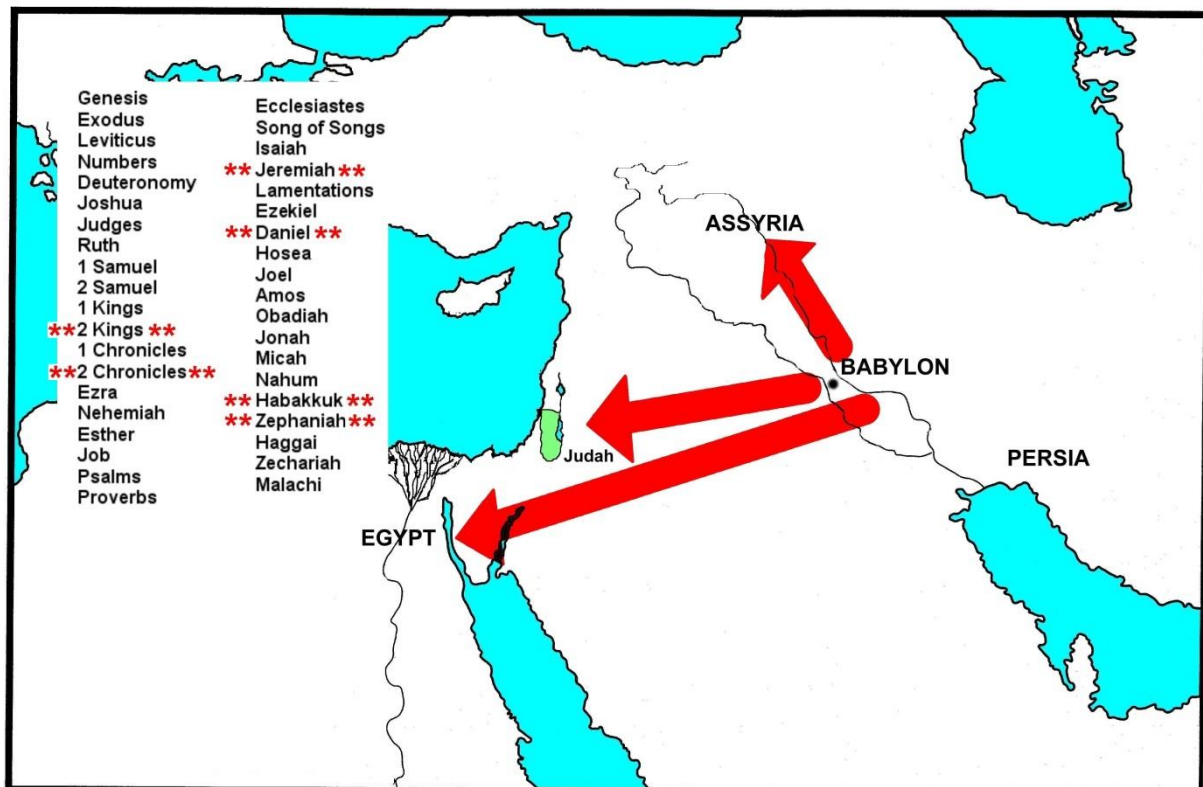


Tiglath-Pileser III became king of Assyria in 745 BC. In 721 BC he defeated Israel (the northern kingdom) and took the people into exile. In 612 BC Nineveh, the capital, was destroyed bringing about the fall of Assyria.



Babylon was the next major world power from 612 BC to 539 BC. They attacked and defeated nearly everybody. **Jeremiah** and **Zephaniah** warned Judah and **Habakkuk** said that, even worse than Assyria, Babylon would be God's instrument of judgement.

Babylon battled with Judah and took people like **Daniel** into exile in 605 BC.



Eventually in 587 BC, Babylon took Jerusalem, destroyed the Temple and drove most of the people to Babylon leaving only the poorest behind. This was known as the Exile.



Some **psalms** were written during the exile.

**Jeremiah** was offered a comfortable life in Babylon but chose to remain in Judah.

**Lamentations** was written, probably by Jeremiah, about the suffering of the people in exile.

**Ezekiel** and **Daniel** had already been taken into exile.

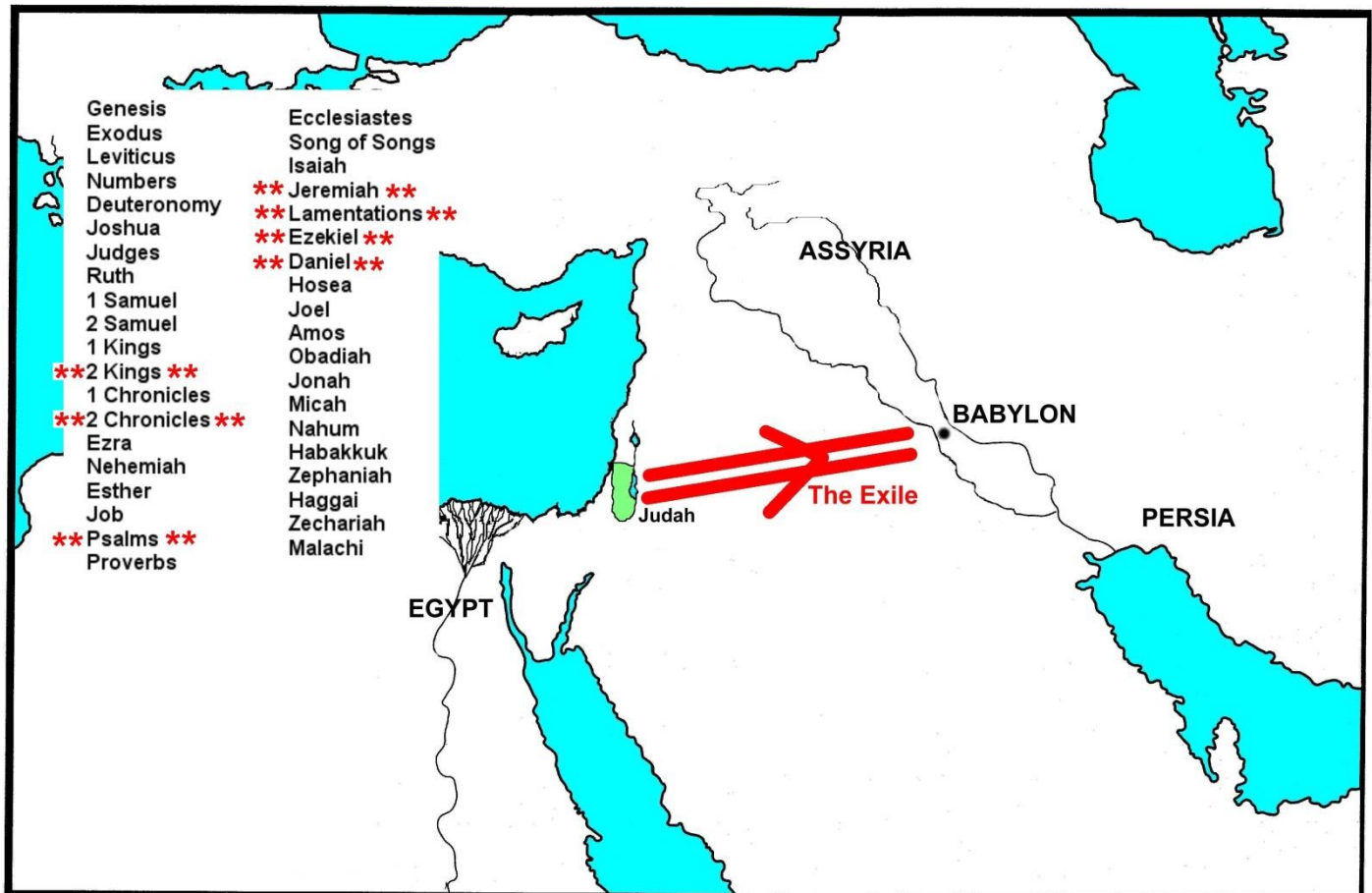
#### 10. Play RiversOfBabylonBoneyMShort.mp3

Translation: By the rivers of Babylon there we sat down. Yeah we wept when we remembered Zion. (twice)  
When the wicked carried us away in captivity, required from us a song. }  
Now how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land. } (twice)

Bible: By the rivers of Babylon we sat and wept when we remembered Zion.  
There on the poplars we hung our harps, for there our captors asked us for songs,  
our tormentors demanded songs of joy; they said, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!"  
How can we sing the songs of the LORD while in a foreign land?

Where? Ps 137:1-4

Context? God's people are in exile in Babylon and living in misery.



**Isaiah**, **Jeremiah** and **Daniel** prophesied the defeat of the Babylonians and the return of the exiles.

## 11. Play EricLiddellReadsIsaiahShort.mp3

As read from KJV: Behold, the nations are as a drop in the bucket and are counted as the small dust in the balance. All nations before him are as nothing. They are counted to him as less than nothing and vanity.  
He bringeth the princes to nothing. He maketh the judges of the earth as a vanity.  
Hast thou not known? Hast thou not heard that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary?  
He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no strength he increaseth might.  
But they that waiteth on the Lord shall renew their strength. They shall mount up with wings as eagles.  
They shall run and not be weary. They shall walk and not faint.

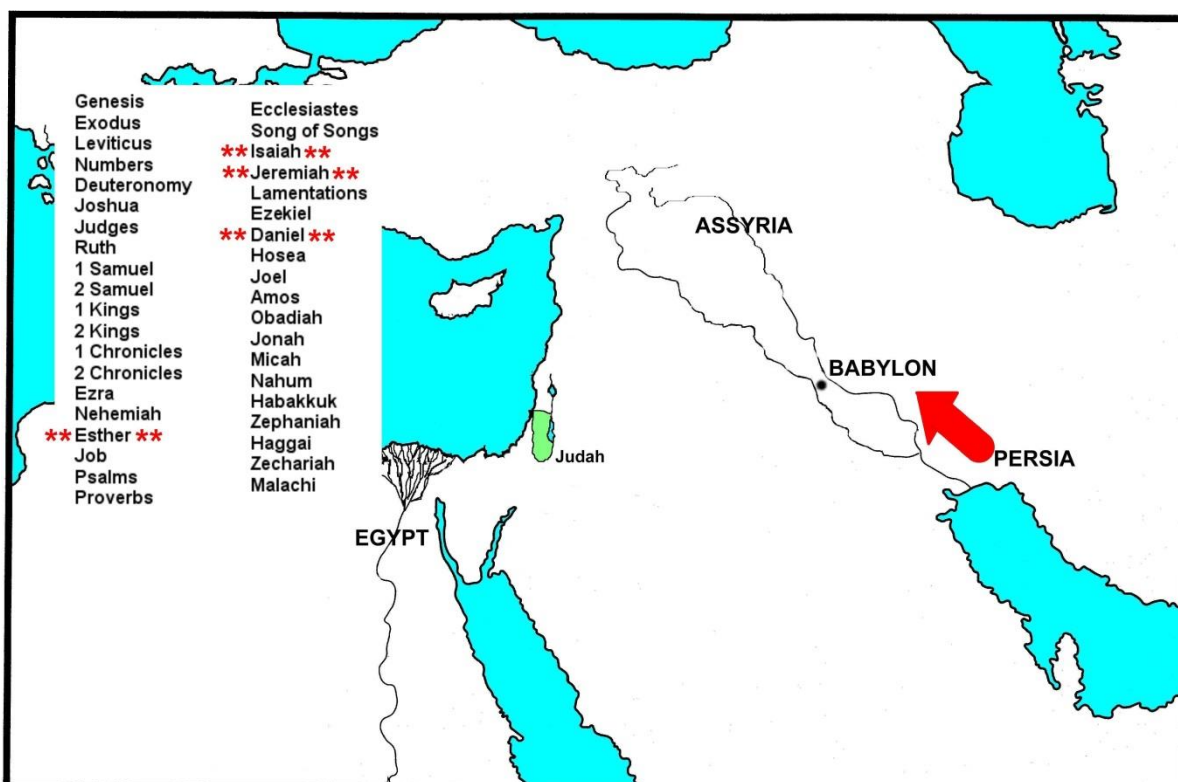
Bible: v 15 Surely the nations are like a drop in a bucket; they are regarded as dust on the scales;  
v 17 Before him all the nations are as nothing, they are regarded by him as worthless and less than nothing.  
v 23 He brings princes to naught and reduces the rulers of this world to nothing.  
v 28 Do you not know? Have you not heard? The LORD is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary,  
v 29 He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak.  
v 31 but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength.  
They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Where? Isaiah 40:15-31

Context? Bible: God is bringing his people out of exile in Babylon and back to the Promised Land.

Chariots of Fire: Eric Liddell reads from Isaiah in church before he competes in the 1924 Olympics in Paris.

These prophecies came true when Cyrus the Great defeated the Babylonians in 539 BC and Persia became the major world power.



The Persians allowed the Israelites (the remnant) to return to Judah although some preferred to stay in Persia/Babylon e.g. the Jewish community written up in **Esther**.

In 538/7 the main group of Israelites returned to Judah with Zerubbabel, their leader.

**Haggai** and **Zechariah** were written during the reign of Darius I of Persia (521-486 BC).

Haggai wrote to encourage the re-building of the walls of Jerusalem.

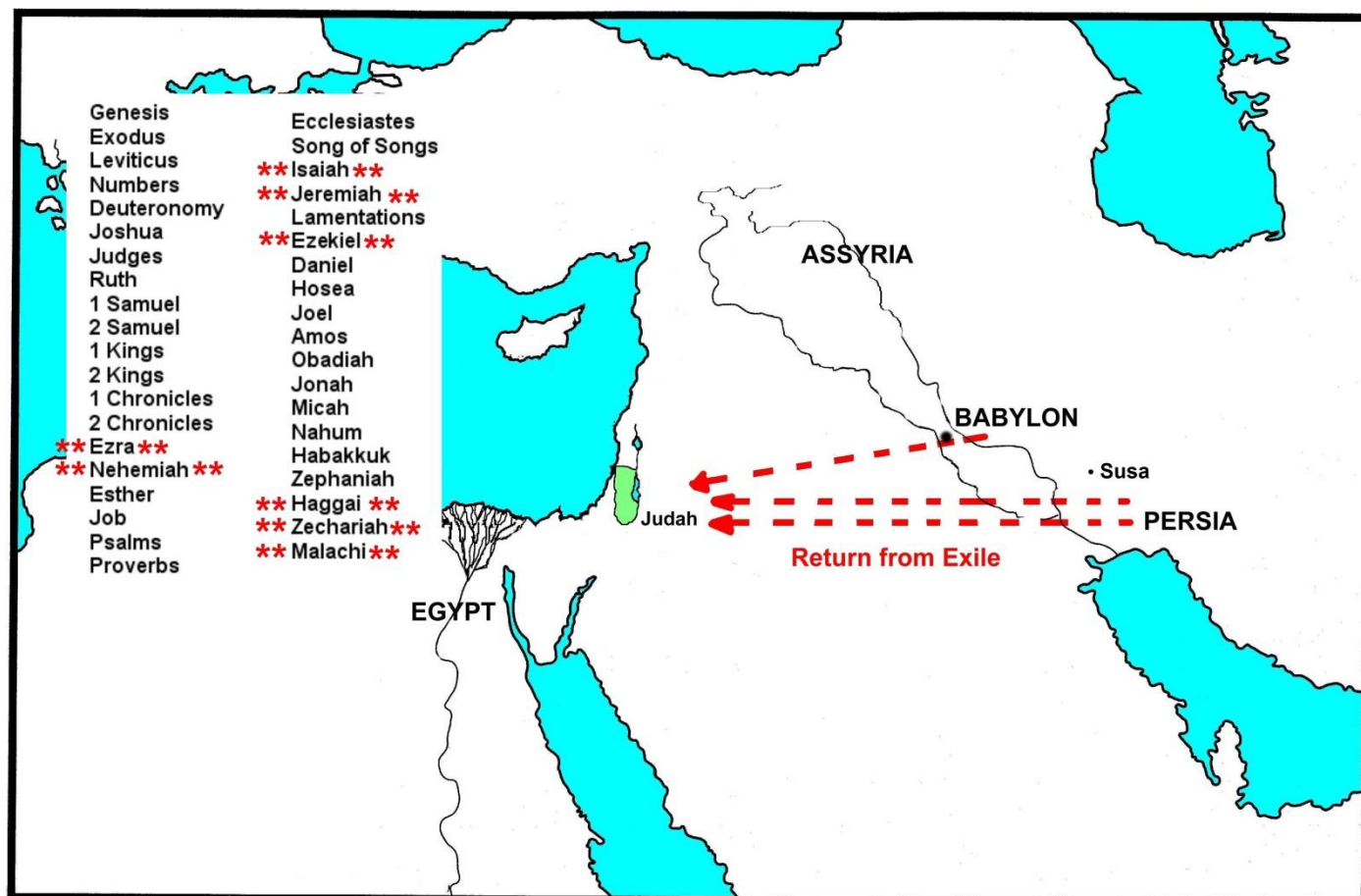
Zechariah looked to the restoration of the Temple and the future of God's people.

(Battle of Thermopylae 480 BC when the Greeks blocked the advance of the massive Persian army under Xerxes I (486-465 BC) depicted in the 2006 movie "300".)

**Ezra** and a group of Israelites returned to Jerusalem in 458 BC to organise the rebuilding of the Temple.

**Nehemiah** returned with his group in 445 BC to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. (Artaxerxes I, son of Xerxes I, was king of the Persians from 465-423 BC, see Neh 2:1.)

**Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Haggai, Zechariah** and **Malachi** all looked ahead to a time beyond the exile, to a time of restoration and a time when God's king, Jesus, would come.



12. 'The time is coming,' declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their forefathers when I took them by the hand to lead them out of Egypt, because they broke my covenant, though I was a husband to them,' declares the LORD.

'This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after that time,' declares the LORD. 'I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will they teach their neighbour, or say to one another, "Know the LORD," because they will all know me, from the least of them to the greatest,' declares the LORD. 'For I will forgive their wickedness and will remember their sins no more.'

Where? Jer 31:31-34.

Context? God's people are in exile in Babylon but Jeremiah looks ahead when there will be a new exodus and a new covenant.

In 331 BC the Greeks, under Alexander the Great, defeated the Persians, under Darius III (336-331 BC).

331-146 BC – Greek rule.

146 BC – 410 AD – Roman rule.

**To finish**

13. Why do we have to study the Bible?



## Study 2, 1 Kings 22:40 – 2 Kings 2:25, Ahaziah (Israel), Elijah and Elisha

### Getting started

1. What's the first thing that comes to mind with the word - learning?

- power?

- save?

- king?



### The story so far . . .

The book of Kings opens towards the end of David's reign with a struggle over which of his sons should succeed him. Solomon emerges victorious over Adonijah and is given instructions by David about how he should rule (1 Kgs. 1:1-2:11). He should keep the law of Moses, so that the LORD will keep his promise to David of an everlasting dynasty over Israel, and he should act as a man of wisdom. The succeeding narrative is constructed around these two ideas of wisdom and law (2:12-11:43). For much of the time Solomon's wisdom functions in a positive way, as the people of Israel enjoy prosperity and peace and see the temple of the LORD built in their midst. At both the beginning and the end of his reign, however, it operates in a more self-interested way, as Solomon eliminates those who threaten his hold on the throne and accumulates vast wealth. For much of the time, the king is presented as someone committed to the LORD and his ways. Yet there are from the very beginning questions about his complete adherence to the law, and eventually he turns away and worships other gods. Surprisingly, however, his disobedience does not lead to the end of the Davidic dynasty. A prophet announces that punishment will be deferred until the days of his son, who is to lose only part of the kingdom, rather than all of it. This alienation of northern Israel from David will itself not last forever. It is only a temporary phenomenon.

The dissolution of the empire is duly described, as Jeroboam, son of Nebat, leads northern Israel into independence from Rehoboam and Judah (1 Kgs. 12:1-24). It is an exodus into slavery, however, as the northern kingdom is immediately captivated by other gods and never again succeeds in breaking free of their influence, whether they be the gods manufactured by Jeroboam (12:25ff.) or those introduced from elsewhere (16:29ff.). Prophets oppose the apostate kings, whose dynasties come and go as the judgment of God falls upon them. The most notable of these prophets are Elijah and Elisha, whose activities take up a substantial part of the narrative throughout 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 13. They themselves in some respects mitigate the full force of God's wrath upon Israel, offering salvation in the midst of judgment.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 10-11.

### Bible

2. Background to 2 Kings ch 1 – Introducing: King Ahaziah, king of Israel in Samaria

Read 1 Kings 22:40, 51-53

In this second short summary statement, King Ahaziah is the subject of each of the following verbs:

- Did
- Walked
- Served
- Worshipped
- Provoked

How would you rate King Ahaziah on each of the above?

**Ahab** was the seventh King of Israel. He reigned for 22 years (871-852 BC). He was the son of Omri. He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, the king of the Sidonians. Ahab, under Jezebel's influence, built a pagan

temple, and allowed idols into Samaria. Elijah the prophet warned Ahab that the country would suffer from drought if the cult of Baal was not removed from the land of Israel.

After three years of drought, Elijah challenged Ahab and his pagan priests on Mount Carmel. God sent down fire to ignite a sacrifice, but the priests of Baal could not summon Baal to do the same. Then the people realized that God was the only true God. (1 Kings 18:18-39). Then, rains came and ended the drought.

Elijah denounced Ahab as a murderer because of the stoning of Naboth, which Jezebel, had instigated. Elijah told Ahab that dogs would lick his blood outside of the city, just as they had licked the blood of Naboth. He also told Ahab that none of his male heirs would survive and that Jezebel would be torn apart by the dogs of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:17-24).

After that, Ahab went into deep repentance, and the fulfillment of the prophecy was postponed. Ahab fought Ben-Hadad the King of Damascus in several wars, and then allied himself with Jehoshaphat, King of Judah to liberate Ramoth Gilead from the Arameans.

Ahab was warned by the prophet Micaiah that he would die in the battle. But Ahab went to battle anyway, disguised as a soldier, and was killed by a stray arrow. When the blood on his chariot was washed off at a pool in Samaria, the dogs licked up his blood as Elijah said. Jezebel, and eventually all of Ahab's male heirs died as the prophet said.

The Bible lists Ahab as the most evil of all the kings before him (1 Kings 16:30). Ahab's son Ahaziah became the new king. The story of Ahab is found in 1 Kings, chapters 16-22.

Archaeological note: Carved ivory plaques were found at the site of Ahab's palace in Samaria. Ahab was known to live in an ivory palace (1 Kings 22:39).

From [www.aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com)

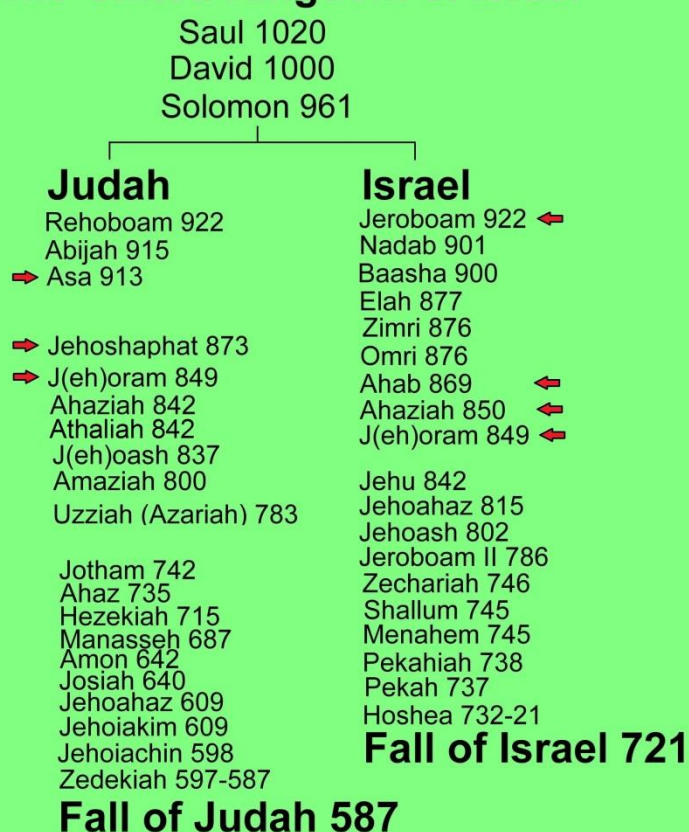
3. Read 1 Kings 20:41-50.

**Jehoshaphat**, the son of King Asa and Azubah, became the fourth King of Judah (873-849 BC) at the age of 35, and reigned for 25 years. During his reign he eradicated the pagan cults and sent priests and Levites all over the country to teach the Law of God.

Jehoshaphat became strong, wealthy and popular, and built fortresses and supply centres throughout Judah. He made a marriage alliance for his son, with the daughter of King Ahab of Israel. Later he went to Samaria and allied himself with king Ahab of Israel, at Ahab's request, to fight the armies of Syria. King Ahab was killed by a stray arrow during the battle and Jehoshaphat returned to Judah. The prophet Jehu met Jehoshaphat and told him not to help the wicked and not to love those who hate the Lord.

From [www.aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com)

## The United Kingdom of Israel



4. Read 2 Kings ch 1.  
What confronting question keeps haunting King Ahaziah through the voice of the prophet Elijah throughout the chapter?

**Samaria:** The capital of the northern kingdom, Israel. The title was also used of the territory surrounding the capital.

**Ekron** – the northernmost of the five chief cities of the Philistines near the Mediterranean Sea and about 66 kms west of Jerusalem (1 Sam 6:16-17). Ekron was apportioned first to the tribe of Judah (Josh 15:45-46), then given to the tribe of Dan (Josh 19:40-43). After David killed Goliath, the Israelites pursued the Philistines to the very gates of Ekron, their fortified stronghold (1 Sam 17:52).

The prophets pronounced God's judgment on Ekron, along with her sister cities (Amos 1:8).  
From New Illustrated Bible Dictionary p 385.

5. It would seem that the king has not really learned any lesson from the judgement that fell on his father Ahab. How is this demonstrated?

6. What about Elijah himself?

(a) Verse 15 seems to indicate that in the previous incidents with the fifty men that Elijah is acting here out of what motive?

(b) We are generally geared to read the actions of the LORD's prophets in a positive light. After all Elijah up to this point seems to have been exemplary in his zeal for the LORD. However maybe the narrator is inviting us to have a more nuanced view here. Should we think of Elijah positively or negatively this chapter? Give reasons.

(c) Read and discuss Luke 9:51-54 by way of comparison as Jesus responds to his disciples' question quite differently. See the notes at the end of the study for more thinking on this.

**Elijah**, a Tishbite from the region of Gilead, was a prophet in Israel during the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah and Jehoram. All his life Elijah was active in the defence of God. His teachings brought him into constant conflict with the Kings of Israel, and on one occasion had to flee for his life. He fought against the cult of Baal, and clashed frequently with Ahab's wife Jezebel, who had introduced the pagan cult in Israel.

Elijah performed some extraordinary miracles as a prophet of God, he brought the dead son of a widow back to life (1 Kings 17:22-23), caused a jar of meal and a jar of oil to constantly refill during a drought, caused fire to come out of the sky and consume a burnt offering, ended a drought, and ran faster than King Ahab's chariot.

In 1 Kings 19 the Lord revealed Himself to Elijah. Elijah parted the waters of the Jordan River, by striking it with his mantle, and crossed on dry ground with his understudy, Elisha. "As they continued walking and talking, a chariot of fire and horses of fire separated the two of them, and Elijah ascended in a whirlpool into heaven" (2 Kings 2:11). The story of Elijah is found in 1 and 2 Kings, and in 1 and 2 Chronicles. The name Elijah means "Yah is my God".

From [www.aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com)

7. Background to 2 Kings ch 2 – Introducing: the prophet Elisha  
We've been introduced to Elisha in 1 Kings 19:15-21 as the LORD God lays out a succession plan for Elijah which includes a flurry of anointings.  
Read 2 Kings ch 2



(a) Is there anything that you notice about the place names that figure in verses 1-6?

(b) What might be the significance of these places?



From Student's Atlas of the Bible Paternoster Press p 7.

**Ammon** and **Moab** were the sons of Lot as the result of incest between Lot and his daughters. Both nations descended from these men were a constant source of aggravation and temptation to Israel during the journey to the



promised land and its conquest and settlement. Moabites are specifically excluded from Israel (even though Ruth was a Moabitess) and the prophets often single both nations out as a people whom God will severely judge.

From Two Cities by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris p 31.

8. What about the parting of the Jordan River? Does this remind you of anything (see Joshua 3:17)?

### **The pattern of 3's and the pattern broken**

Three times Elijah asks his protégé to remain behind but in each case Elisha challenges this request, "As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you."

Twice Elisha is asked by the sons of the prophets, "Do you know that today the LORD will take your master away from over you?". Both times Elisha answers, "Yes, I know it, keep quiet."

### **9. The 4<sup>th</sup> challenge vv9-10**

- (a) Why do you think that Elijah poses so many challenges before Elisha?

- (b) What is the significance of this last one?

Verse 9: Elisha asks to *inherit a double portion of your spirit* (v. 9). A 'double portion' is that due to the first-born son (Deuteronomy 21:17 has the same phrase), so Elisha is not seeking double what Elijah had but requesting recognition as legitimate successor in Elijah's role. He seeks an inheritance not of property (cf. 1 Kgs 19:21) but of *your spirit*, the same Spirit that has been upon Elijah. Elijah's reply may seem to be another example of reluctance, but is more likely recognition that the Spirit is not his to give.

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 216.

**Elisha**, son of Shaphat, was a prophet from Abel Meholah in Gilead. He lived in the northern Kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz and Jehoash. Elisha was Elijah's student.

When Elijah was taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot, Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle, struck it on the waters of the Jordan River and said, "Where is the Lord the God of Elijah?" (2 Kings 2:14). The water then parted and Elisha crossed over, thus beginning his service as a prophet of God.

Elisha, like Elijah, performed some extraordinary miracles as a prophet of God. He brought back to life the dead son of a Shunammite woman; he cured Naaman a general from Damascus, of leprosy; he multiplied loaves of barley and ears of grain to feed a crowd of people; he caused a metal axe head to float on water; he caused an attacking Aramean army to go blind and then returned their sight; and, among other miracles, he filled large empty vessels with oil.

Elisha had a member of his company of prophets anoint Jehu to be king of Israel, and to strike down Jezebel and members of Ahab's household, which Jehu completed.

When Elisha was on his deathbed, he prophesied to Joash, the King of Israel, that Israel will win the next three Battles with Aram. When Elisha was being buried, the body of another man was placed in the same grave. When the dead man's body touched Elisha's body, the dead man came to life and stood on his feet. (2 Kings 13:21). The story of Elisha is found in 1 and 2 Kings. Note: Before Elijah was taken up in the fiery chariot, he asked Elisha "what may I do for you before I am taken from you". Elisha asks, "Please let me inherit a double share of your spirit" (2 Kings 2:9). If you count the recorded miracles in the Bible, Elijah performed eight, and Elisha performed sixteen. The name Elisha means "God is salvation".

From [www.aboutbibleprophecy.com](http://www.aboutbibleprophecy.com)

10. (a) Have a quick look back through the chapter and count the number of times the word "take" is used referring to Elijah.

- (b) Is this significant (see also Genesis 5:24 by way of comparison)?

11. Let the weirdness begin.....  
What do you make the events described in 2 Kings 2:19-25?

The Elijah/Elisha cycle of stories forms part of the larger 1 & 2 Kings narrative. The narrator is certainly inviting us as readers to compare these 2 prophets. The fact that Elisha successfully receives from the LORD double portion of Elijah's spirit naturally leads us to make comparisons between the two.

In doing so, some things stand out: Elijah seems to be the one cast in the more classic mould as a speaking prophet – speaking the word of the LORD to a people who are looking elsewhere as he tries to draw them back to the covenant forged with Moses. Elisha seems to be more of a miracle worker – working a number of strange signs.

We can ask the question whether Elijah at times and perhaps Elisha more often, are being cast in a positive or negative light by the narrator. This maybe a difficult idea for us to accept. We're understandably used to thinking that a prophet of the LORD, called by God and used by Him, must be read in a positive light. Elijah seems mostly to be cast positively. But the narrator may well be much more nuanced in his thinking when it comes to Elisha. For example, is what takes place in 2 Kings 2:23-25 to be understood as good or bad? (We need to be careful even in seeking to answer this question of being moderns i.e. would the original hearers have understood this as being a positive or negative event?)

We need to be careful not to read the character of the later great prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel who were invariably faithful in their ministry, into the character of Elisha. We seek to understand the person and ministry of Elisha in his own context not through the lens of the ministry of the later great prophets.

The bottom line in all this is to say that the attitude of the narrator is quite nuanced. Some events seem to be read in a positive light and some in a negative light. Even the prophet of the LORD seems to be at times flawed.

It could be that the writer is inviting us to see that God is continuing to work his purposes out in fulfilling his age-old promises to his people Israel. He does this through his anointed prophet but also even despite the failings of his anointed prophet. In this respect the narrative is not unlike that recounted by the book of Judges.

Some of the helpful questions to be asking:

- What is God doing in this situation?
- Who is acting most in line with God's will in this particular situation?

And of course this all points to the ultimate saving in fulfilment of all God's promises in the person and work of Jesus. Clearly none of the prophets are on a par with Jesus and his work but they do point to him. Romans 15:4 is a brilliant verse for us to keep coming back to.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

## To finish

12. (a) How do you react when someone does not meet your expectations?
- (b) For example, you may have had expectations that all the heroes in the Bible were of exemplary character and always made godly decisions. But in 2 Kings ch 2 Elisha does some things that are, at least, questionable.
- (i) How would you react if your expectations of Elisha have been shattered?
- (ii) How would you react if your expectations of Paul in the New Testament have been shattered?
- (iii) How would you react if your expectations of a minister at church have been shattered?
- (iv) Everyone has "feet of clay" but how do you handle it when you see those feet of clay?

### Study 3, 2 Kings ch 3, Israel, Judah and Elisha vs Moab

#### Getting started

1. (a) What are your expectations when you go to church?

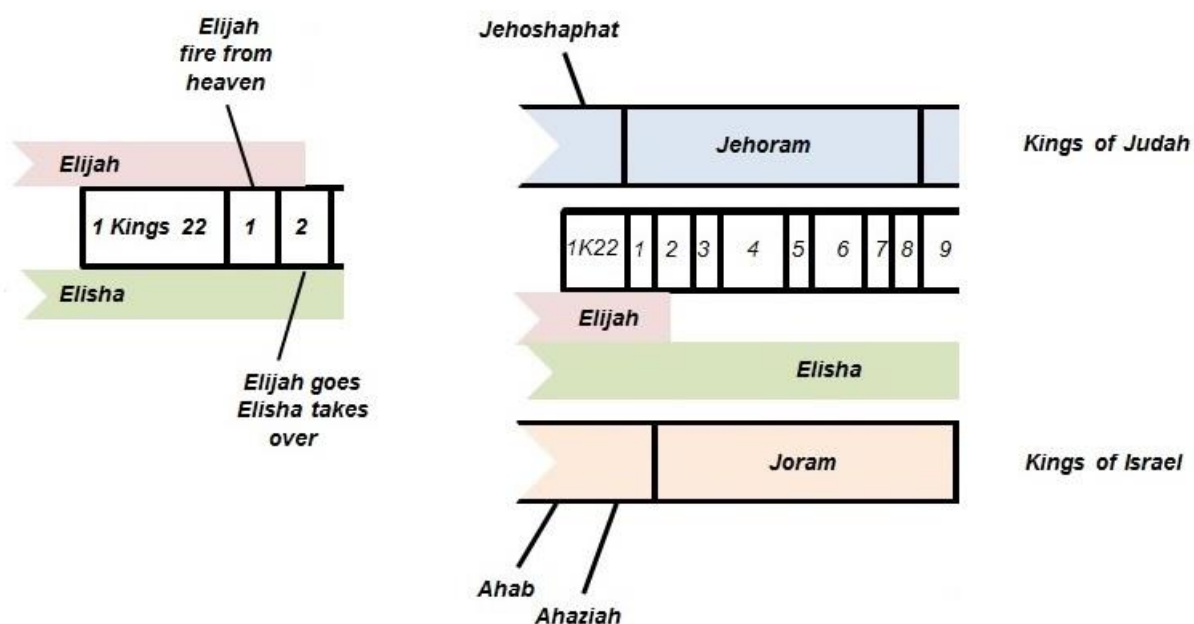


- (b) What would you like to see at church that is unexpected, perhaps?

- (c) Is there room for the unexpected at church? Why/why not?

#### The story so far . . .

At the end of 1 Kings Ahaziah had become king of Israel and Jehoram had become king of Judah. Moab rebelled against Israel. Ahaziah consulted the wrong god and Elijah predicted his death. Ahaziah sent 3 companies of soldiers to Elijah. 2 companies were killed by fire from heaven before the 3<sup>rd</sup> captain plead for mercy. The king died, as prophesied (2 Kings ch 1). Elisha followed Elijah from place to place until Elijah was taken up to heaven. Elisha then continued in Elijah's role by healing the water near Jericho and, strangely, punishing some boys who jeered him (2 Kings ch 2).



#### Bible

2. Read 2 Kings 3.  
What are the unexpected things in this chapter?

Elijah has gone, and Elisha has been authenticated as his successor. We expect, on the analogy of Elijah's own life (and because of God's words in 1 Kings 19:15-18), that succession means involvement in politics, and this is what we now find as Elisha is consulted about a military campaign. . . .

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

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 181, 184.

### To finish

3. (a) Mention a few things in the New Testament that God did that were unexpected.

(b) What is God doing in the world today?

(c) Is it unexpected? Why/why not?

(d) In the Bible God has a record of doing the unexpected.  
Should we expect the unexpected from God?

Why/why not?



## Study 4, 2 Kings chs 4-5, Elisha and Naaman, the Aram

### Getting started

1. What surprises you about God?



### The story so far . . .

At the end of 1 Kings Ahaziah had become king of Israel and Jehoram had become king of Judah. Moab rebelled against Israel. Ahaziah consulted the wrong god and Elijah predicted his death. Ahaziah sent 3 companies of soldiers to Elijah. 2 companies were killed by fire from heaven before the 3<sup>rd</sup> captain plead for mercy. The king died, as prophesied (2 Kings ch 1). Elisha followed Elijah from place to place until Elijah was taken up to heaven. Elisha then continued in Elijah's role by healing the water near Jericho and, strangely, punishing some boys who jeered him (2 Kings ch 2). Chapter 3 recounts Elisha's involvement in the national crisis of the Moabite revolt. Elisha's promise of deliverance is somewhat motivated by respect for Judah's king.

### Bible

2. Group A - The Oil filling station! (2 Kings 4:1-7)  
What is striking about the way that this story is told?  
Imagine for a moment how puzzled the neighbours must have been as they try to discern what is going on behind closed doors.
3. We're not told exactly happens at the end of the story. Why does the writer finish the story in this way?
4. Group B - The Shunammite woman - part 1 (2 Kings 4:8-17)  
Note: Shunem was a town in Israel situated near to Jezreel.  
Why is the woman so hesitant to accept Elisha's promise in verse 15?
5. Group C - The Shunammite woman - part 2 (2 Kings 4:18-37)
  - (a) What is so curious about the way Elisha discovers the problem?
  - (b) Who seems to be deceiving whom?
  - (c) What do you make of her reaction in verse 37?  
Compare this with her words earlier in the story (see verse 9).

Kings is unique amongst contemporary ancient Near Eastern records in its stories about people on the fringe who would otherwise be forgotten.

The ministry of Elisha, even more so than Elijah's, foreshadows the compassionate ministry of Jesus. Here is evident the character of God who 'defends the cause of the fatherless and the widow, and loves the foreigner residing among you, giving them food and clothing' (Deut. 10:18).

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 227.

6. Group D - Wholesomeness and abundance (2 Kings 4:38-44)  
(a) How does the author rate the ministry of Elisha in these two stories?

(b) Does the second story prepare us in any way for Jesus' similar feedings?

7. Read 2 Kings 5:1-19.  
(a) What do you find striking about this story?

(b) In the narrator's mind, who are the heroes and what makes them so?

(c) In the story, a Gentile is healed, while an Israelite is cursed (v14 and v27).  
What is the subtext to this outcome?

8. What does the author of this story want his readers to understand and how can they be comforted by what they read?

God can be generous to people 'like us' (in categories of race, social grouping or theology), but the thought that others might be more blessed is unwelcome! Such reactions show how easily God's grace is distorted into something we deserve because of our faith, or faithfulness, or good character, or similar. The fact remains, God did show favour to an outsider, and the hearers' theology has to adapt (as did Peter's when the Holy Spirit came upon the Gentile Cornelius [Acts 10]).

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 238.

9. Read and compare 2 Kings 1 with 2 Kings 5:1-19.  
Without getting lost in the details what differences do you notice in the events described in the 2 passages?

King Ahaziah, the king of Israel, sends messengers out of Israel to Ekron (a Philistine city), to enquire of Baal-Zebub whether he will recover or not from his accident. The messages return early prompting Ahaziah to ask, "Why have you returned?" The answer of course is their trip was cut short through meeting Elijah on the way who gave them a message for the king. This message is subsequently repeated two more times in the king's hearing, "Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to enquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?"

Naaman, the great Syrian commander and not one of God's people, hearing about the prophet Elisha, comes into Israel from the outside to seek healing from the God of Israel. As a result he declares boldly, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel."

So Israel's king, Ahaziah, chosen by God as king over God's people, is so blinded by his sin that he will look anywhere else but in Israel to find God. And Naaman, the foreigner, coming from the outside finds true faith in the one and only God, the LORD God of Israel, the God of all the earth.

#### The funny side 5:1-18

The author is almost certainly letting us to see the funny side of human behaviour even in the midst of people's misfortune. See below:

- The king of Israel's reaction to the letter he receives. (5:4-7)
- Naaman's angry reaction. (5:11 & 12)
- The diplomatic response of Naaman's servants. (5:13)

#### The tragic side 5:19-26

Read the passage that describes the tragic events leading to the downfall of Gehazi, Elisha's servant.

## CONCLUSION

In the darkest of times God is at work, saving and delivering who are broken, those enslaved to sin and death and living out the consequences of the Fall. God's plans are in no way thwarted by human sin. In what ways can we see in the events described in these chapters, the age-old promises made to Abraham being fulfilled in extraordinary ways. "I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonours you I will curse, and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves." (Genesis 12:3).

Not only is there a prophet in Israel, (2 Kings 5:8b) "there is no God in all the earth but in Israel." (v15). His name is the LORD. Neither Baal-Zebub (the god Ekron) nor Rimmon (the god of Aram) can compare with Him!

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

## To finish

10. How does this story relate to the idea that God is either too weak or too uninterested to do anything about the troubles in our lives and our world?

## Study 5, 2 Kings chs 6-8, Elisha's miracles

### Getting started

1. Think back to the time when God opened your heart to believe in Jesus.  
(a) What did you begin to see that you hadn't seen before?

(b) Mention one thing that you have come to understand as you have matured in your faith.



### The story so far . . .

At the end of 1 Kings Ahaziah had become king of Israel and Jehoram had become king of Judah. Moab rebelled against Israel. Ahaziah consulted the wrong god and Elijah predicted his death. Ahaziah sent 3 companies of soldiers to Elijah. 2 companies were killed by fire from heaven before the 3<sup>rd</sup> captain plead for mercy. The king died, as prophesied (2 Kings ch 1). Elisha followed Elijah from place to place until Elijah was taken up to heaven. Elisha then continued in Elijah's role by healing the water near Jericho and, strangely, punishing some boys who jeered him (2 Kings ch 2). Chapter 3 recounts Elisha's involvement in the national crisis of the Moabite revolt. Elisha's promise of deliverance is somewhat motivated by respect for Judah's king.

Elisha performs miracles (2 Kings ch 4) - to help a family after the husband, a prophet, died.  
- to help a family have a child. The boy grows up but dies and Elisha brings him back to life.  
- to provide food in times of famine.

Elisha cures Naaman, an Aramean commander, of leprosy. In gratitude Naaman offers a gift which Elisha turns down. Gehazi gets some of that gift, lies about it and gets leprosy (2 Kings ch 5).

### Bible

2. Read 2 Kings 6:1-23  
The Syrian king clearly behaves as if he thinks that he has the upper hand. But does he?  
Why is he so greatly troubled (verse 11)?
3. The Syrians are starting to get used to a crucial piece of information. What is it (see 2 Kings 5:8, 6:12)?
4. Seeing and not seeing seems to be a theme throughout this section. Who sees what and who doesn't see?



5. The international conflict gets resolved here, at least for the time being, in a very particular way. What seems to be the king of Israel's attitude to Elisha here?
6. Read 2 Kings 6:24-7:20  
Sometimes there are moments in life when a particular event triggers a moment of terrible realisation of how bad things have become. This is the case for the king of Israel in 2 Kings 6:28-31. See Deuteronomy 28:52-55 where Moses outlines the curses for covenant disobedience.

(a) The people notice that the king is wearing sackcloth under his royal robes. What does a ruler tearing his clothes and wearing sackcloth normally indicate?

How does this seem to be completely at odds with what thing king says next and with how he behaves (see 2 Kings 6:31-33)?

The author brilliantly shows how desperate the situation has become through the dialogue of the lepers in 2 Kings 7:3-4 and that of the king's servant in 2 Kings 7:13.

The donkey 2 Kings 6:25 was an unclean animal. How terrible the siege must have been for this unclean food be sold for such a high price! Compare this with Elisha's prophecy in 2 Kings 7:1-2 which seems completely unreal at that moment in time but is actually realised in 2 Kings 7:16.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

Jehoram's impatience is now matched by his officer's skepticism that such an economic recovery could happen overnight, in the aftermath of such a terrible siege. Where will the sudden abundance come from? What Elisha prophesies is inconceivable, yet his words seem to be sufficient to deflect the king's anger. His head remains on his shoulders (cf. 6:31). The king's officer, however, is not allowed to leave without a further word about his own fate (v. 2). What is possible for God cannot be measured in terms of what is conceivable to mortals. The officer will see the miracle happen, but he himself will not eat. Salvation for the people will involve judgment for this one man, for to mock the prophetic word is to mock the LORD. . . .

The skeptical officer - ironically stationed at the very gate where he had anticipated seeing no trade (v. 2) - is trampled in the scramble to acquire goods (vv. 17-20), fulfilling Elisha's prophecy that he would not share in the bounty. He has stood in the way of God's salvation, as kings and their officials often do in these Elisha stories, and he has died in a rush of judgment, a mocker of God's prophet (cf. 2 Kgs. 2:23-25). It is the humble - in this case the lepers - who are the channels of God's blessing to Israel.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 201, 202.

7. Read 2 Kings 8:1-6  
The Shunammite woman has been away from the land for 7 years. And yet at the very moment that the Israelite king is questioning Gehazi about one particular event in Elisha's ministry she shows up!

## 8. Read 2 Kings 8:7-15

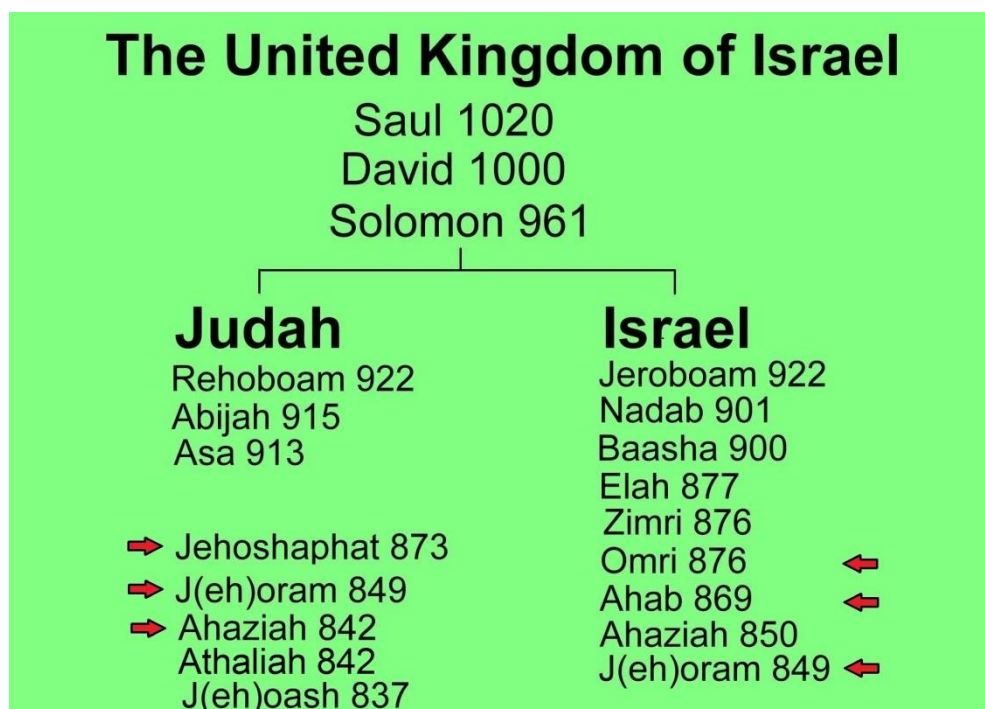
The LORD had instructed Elijah to anoint Hazael king of Syria (1 Kings 19:15). However this has not actually taken place and Elisha is in tears over the prospect of him becoming the king of Syria.

Why the tears (see 2 Kings 13:1-5)?

## 9. Read 2 Kings 8:16-24

Verse 18 tells a sad tale however there is some hope as seen in verse 19.

See other mitigating verses. 2 Kings 3:14 & 13:23 but also 17:19-20



## 10. Read 2 Kings 8:25-29.

**CONCLUSION**

Pray together that we might have soft heart in not refusing the warnings of Scripture. The Lord promises us great hope but also warns us against turning aside and refusing his word. See Hebrews 12:1-2, 25-28

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

**To finish**

## 11. Looking back at how you have matured in your faith:

(a) were there things you missed that seem obvious to you now?

(b) How can you stay aware so that you don't miss things again?

## Study 6, 2 Kings chs 9-10, killings

### Getting started

1. The Handmaid's Tale is an American TV series based on a 1985 Margaret Atwood novel by the same name. In the near future, fertility rates have collapsed as a result of sexually transmitted diseases and environmental pollution. The government of "Gilead" rules the former United States in the aftermath of a civil war. Society is run by male Christian fundamentalists called "Commanders". Women are subjugated and by law are not allowed to work for themselves, own property, handle money, or read. Worldwide infertility has resulted in the conscription of the few remaining fertile women in Gilead, called "Handmaids". They are assigned to the homes of the ruling elite where they must submit to ritualized sex with their Commander in order to become pregnant and bear children. Other classes of women are "Marthas", who are housekeepers and cooks, "Wives", who are expected to run their households, women prisoners are called "Unwomen" and are worked to death clearing toxic waste in the Colonies, "Aunts" train and oversee the Handmaids and "Jezebels" are prostitutes (2 Kings 9:30) in secret brothels catering to the elite ruling class.

Everything in Gilead (Hosea 6:8, 12:11) has a Biblical basis.

Commanders rule because man was made in the image of God while woman was created to be his helper (Genesis 2:18) and the head of a woman is a man (1 Cor 11:3).

Handmaids are given to Commanders because Sarai couldn't have children (at first) so she gave her handmaid, Hagar, to Abram (Gen 16). When Rachel can't get pregnant she gives Jacob her handmaid, Bilhah (Gen 30). Handmaids are saved by bearing children (1 Tim 2:15) and are not to be given any anaesthetics when giving birth (Gen 3:16).

Wives are given the children borne by Handmaids (Gen 30:1).

Women are to grow their hair long (1 Cor 11:15).

Marthas derive their name from the biblical Martha, Mary's sister, who's more interested in preparing food and serving than listening to Jesus' teachings (Luke 10).

Transgressions of the law are dealt with most severely e.g. the death penalty is given for adultery (Lev 20:10) and homosexuality (Lev 20:13). Women are not allowed to be educated but Serena, the wife of Commander Waterford, asks an assembly of Commanders if the daughters of Wives could be allowed to read. As punishment for her "sin" Serena has a finger cut off (and one of the Wives comments that the penalty used to be a hand – Matt 5:30, 18:8).

(a) If Commanders can justify their actions biblically, where have they gone wrong?



(b) What is dangerous about using the Bible to justify our actions?

(c) How can we make sure we don't make the same mistakes in applying the Bible to our lives?

### The story so far . . .

At the end of 1 Kings Ahaziah had become king of Israel and Jehoram had become king of Judah. Moab rebelled against Israel. Ahaziah consulted the wrong god and Elijah predicted his death. Ahaziah sent 3 companies of soldiers to Elijah. 2 companies were killed by fire from heaven before the 3<sup>rd</sup> captain plead for mercy. The king died, as prophesied (2 Kings ch 1). Elisha followed Elijah from place to place until Elijah was taken up to heaven. Elisha then continued in Elijah's role by healing the water near Jericho and, strangely, punishing some boys who jeered him (2 Kings ch 2). Chapter 3 recounts Elisha's involvement in the national crisis of the Moabite revolt. Elisha's promise of deliverance is somewhat motivated by respect for Judah's king.

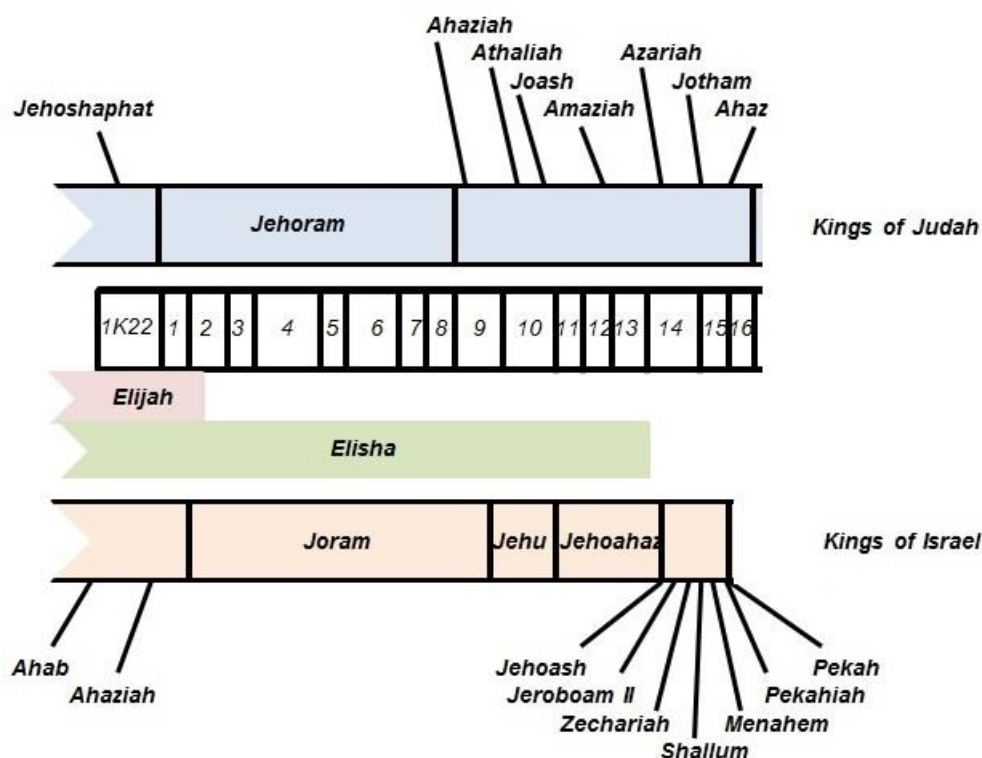
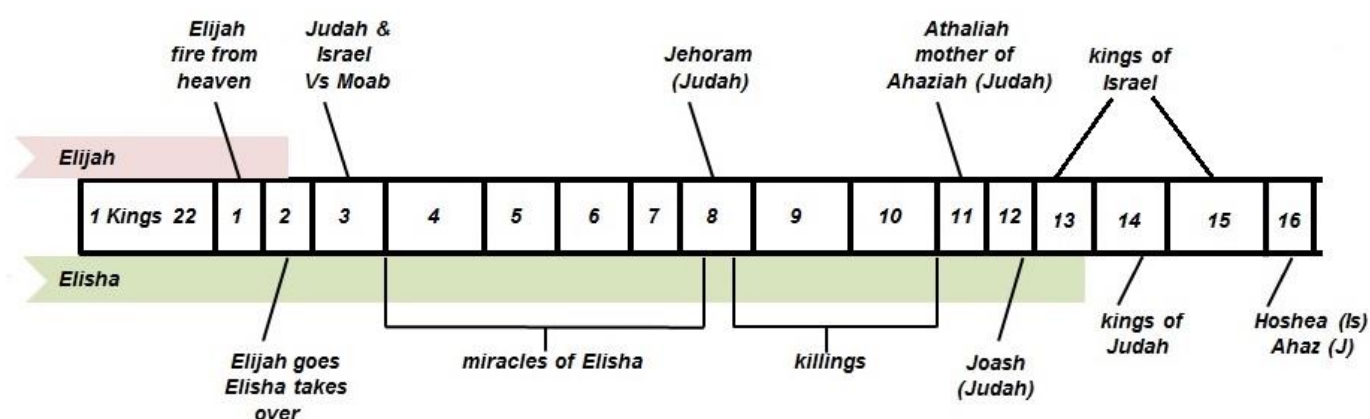
Elisha performed miracles (2 Kings ch 4)

- to help a family after the husband, a prophet, died.
- to help a family have a child. The boy grows up but dies and Elisha brings him back to life.
- to provide food in times of famine.

Elisha cured Naaman, an Aramean commander, of leprosy. In gratitude Naaman offered a gift which Elisha turned down. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, got some of that gift, lied about it and comes down with leprosy (2 Kings ch 5).

Elisha performed another miracle by making an axe-head float. The king of Aram realised that Israel had an advantage with Elisha (and God) on their side. He surrounded Elisha but God struck them blind and Elisha led them to their enemy at Samaria. Rather than kill the Arameans Elisha suggested they feed them and send them on their way. This resulted in a temporary peace between Israel and Aram. The king of Israel blamed Elisha for the famine and Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, took advantage of the situation and attacked Samaria (2 Kings ch 6). Out of desperation four lepers went to the Aramean camp to look for food and found that God had scared them away. The rest of the Samaritans raided the Aramean's as well (2 Kings ch 7).

Elisha helped a Shunammite woman, the same one Elisha helped in chapter 4, get her land back. Ben-Hadad is murdered by Hazael who became king of Aram. Judah and Edom went to war. Ahaziah became king of Judah and joined forces with Israel to fight Aram. Joram, king of Israel, was wounded in the battle (2 Kings ch 8).



## Bible

- Read how the author of 1 & 2 Kings evaluates Ahab's reign in 1 Kings 21:25-29. Review the account of Ahab's death in 1 Kings 22:29-38.

3. Read 2 Kings 9:1-13 to see how Jehu's anointing actually takes place.  
The killing spree that purges Ahab's family line takes place in quick succession after this.

On his way to Samaria Jehu meets and slaughters an unsuspecting group of forty-two of Ahaziah's relatives who are clearly aligned with the Omrides (vv. 12-14). A similar fate awaits remnants of *Ahab's family* in Samaria (v 17). Does the fact that 'such annihilation of ruling families was common practice' and that it was according to the word of the LORD spoken to Elijah (v 17) justify the action? The question remains.

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 262.

4. Read the references below:

(a) Joram and Ahaziah (2 Kings 9:14-29). How does this passage echo Ahab's death?

(b) Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30-37).

Jehu now approaches Jezreel in search of Jezebel. He discovers her sitting at a window, adorned as a prostitute (9:30, cf. Eze 23:36-49) – as befits the greatest of all the patrons of the fertility cult.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 210.

(c) Ahab's line in Jezreel and Samaria (2 Kings 10:1-17)

(d) The prophets of Baal (2 Kings 10:18-27)





5. Jehu - instrument of God's judgement, nevertheless profoundly flawed.  
Read 2 Kings 10:28-36. See also Hosea 1:4  
On a score of 1-5 (1 being -ve and 5 being +ve) what score would our narrator have given to Jehu? Why?

10:29-31 / The narrative has concentrated upon the worship of Baal since 1 Kings 16:29ff. Had we not been reminded by 1 Kings 22:52 and 2 Kings 3:3, it would have been easy to forget that this kind of idolatry represents for the authors only a particularly bad form of the general idolatry practiced in Israel since Jeroboam's time (1 Kings 12:25ff.). Jehu has decisively dealt with Baal-worship, and yet, it turns out, he does nothing at all about the worship of the golden calves (vv. 29, 31). It is somewhat surprising, then, to find him addressed in verse 30 as one who has done what is right in the eyes of the LORD. . . . It is even more surprising to find Jehu receiving a David-like dynastic promise. His descendants will sit on the throne of Israel to the fourth generation. This is not the same thing as a promise of eternal dynasty. It is, nevertheless, extraordinary. Jeroboam, it will be recalled, was promised a dynasty like David's if he "did what was right" in the LORD'S eyes (1 Kgs. 11:38). He did not do so (1 Kgs. 14:8), and his son was overthrown (15:25ff.). The same fate befell Baasha (15:33-16:14). All this happened because of participation in the sins of Jeroboam—the very sins of which Jehu stands accused in 2 Kings 10:29, 31 (cf. 1 Kgs. 15:29-30, 34; 16:7). Yet now the idolater is promised a dynasty stretching to the fourth generation. Evidently the eradication of Baal-worship is so significant that, for the moment, participation in the sins of Jeroboam pales into insignificance. What Jehu has done that is right (v. 30) far outweighs what he continues to do that is wrong (vv. 29, 31).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 216.

6. The nation's fortunes are continuing to track in a downward spiral - 2 Kings 10:32-33. Read also 2 Kings 17:1-23, 33-41.

## To finish

7. What do you think about all the killing in these 2 chapters?
8. Is war ever justifiable? Why/why not?
9. Is holy war justifiable? Why/why not?



## Study 7, 2 Kings ch 11, Athalia (Judah) and Jehoiada, the priest

### Getting started

1. (a) What is a covenant?

(b) What covenants are you involved in?



### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. By the time we get to 2 Kings ch 9 Ahaziah is king of Judah and Joram is king of Israel. Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, is anointed king of Israel. Jehu killed Joram and Ahaziah and had Jezebel, Ahab's wife, thrown out the window and eaten by dogs (2 Kings ch 9). Jehu killed all of Ahab's sons and some of Ahaziah's relatives and all the prophets of Baal (2 Kings ch 10).

### Bible

2. Read 2 Kings 11:1-3.  
How do you explain Athaliah's actions in destroying the whole royal line?  
What could possibly be her motive for completely wiping out even her own future dynasty?

**Athaliah** could well have been a daughter of Jezebel (cf. 2 Kgs. 8:26); she certainly displays the same ruthless streak. Her son dead, she proceeds to destroy the whole royal family (lit. "the seed of the kingdom"). Family ties mean nothing if power is at stake. This comes as something of a shock to the reader, the whole royal family? Surely David has not been left without a descendant? Happily, Hebrew "kol", "all," is not always to be taken quite literally. We find out immediately that at least one royal prince has been saved. Smuggled away by his aunt Jehosheba, baby Joash is hidden with his nurse in the temple of the LORD. He survives, perhaps unrecognized rather than undetected, since the palace and temple are in such close proximity, for the six years of Athaliah's rule. He is apparently all that remains to shield David's "lamp" (8:19) from the winds of irreversible change.

2 Kings 11:1 She proceeded to destroy: This is not the only time in the Bible when God's promises hang by the slender thread of a baby boy whose life is threatened by wicked rulers. Moses is hidden away in the midst of Egyptian genocide, growing up unrecognized for who he is, under Pharaoh's very nose (Exod. 2:1-10). Jesus, himself a "son" of David, is removed from Herod's dominion in the face of a similar threat (Matt. 2:13-18). He, too, grows up, his true identity concealed, under the gaze of other "kings of the Jews."

2 Kings 11:2 She put him and his nurse in a bedroom: The Hb. is simply "him and his nurse in the bedroom," the governing verb being the earlier "she stole away." The bedroom, in other words, is the place from which the child was taken. The only "hiding" that occurs takes place in the temple. The nurse contrasts sharply, of course - in her willingness to share danger with the child whose care she has - with those spineless men in 2 Kgs. 10:1-7. Not for the first time in 2 Kgs., the lowly come out very well when compared with the great.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 219, 221.

3. Read 2 Kings 11:4-12.

Verse 4: *Captains of the Carites*: probably the 'Cherethites' in 2 Sam 20:23; in 2 Chr 23:1-21 the Levites take the place of the Carites.

From New Bible Commentary 3<sup>rd</sup> edition p 356.

The Carites: These have appeared so far only in the consonantal Hb. text of 2 Sam. 20:23, where they form part of the elite royal bodyguard. They may well be the same body as the Kerethites, the name the Masoretic scribes wish us to read in 2 Sam. 20:23.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 219, 221.

The Kerethites and the Pelethites: We deduce from the various contexts in which these troops appear (cf. prior to 1 Kings 1:38 in 2 Sam 8:18, 15:18, 20:7, 23) that they were David's own personal guard, probably mercenary troops drawn from among the non-Israelite population of Canaan, most likely (as the names imply) of Cretan and Philistine origin. David had spent some time among the Philistines (1 Sam 27, 29-30, cf. 30:14, "the Negev of the Kerethites"), and had known their loyalty as soldiers before (2 Sam 15:19-22).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 29.

(a) What was the covenant (v 4)?

(b) What was the covenant (v 12)?

4. Read 2 Kings 11:13-21.

(a) Why does Athaliah proclaim "treason" (v 14)?

(b) Why was Athaliah put to death (v 16)?

(c) Why does the LORD seem to be silent about her behaviour? Why is Elisha not sent to intervene?

The writer does not make any of the customary summary statements about Athaliah that he uses to sum up the life and rule of all the other rulers. Why is this?

So anomalous is Athaliah's "reign" that she does not receive the opening and closing regnal formulas that are attached elsewhere to the reigns of even wicked (but legitimate) rulers (e.g., 2 Kgs. 8:16-17, 23-26). So far as the authors of Kings are concerned, she did not really "reign" at all.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 222.

(d) What are these covenants (v 17)?

(e) Why did Jehoiada insist on so much security?

(f) What does the rejoicing in 2 Kings 11:20 seem to infer about her reign?



### To finish

5. (a) What other covenants are mentioned in the Old Testament?

(b) What covenant are you under now?

(c) How does it affect you personally?

## Study 8, 2 Kings ch 12, Joash (Judah)

### Getting started

- What method do you use to rate your leaders
  - at school/college/university?
  - at work?
  - at home?
  - at church?



### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. By the time we get to 2 Kings ch 9 Ahaziah is king of Judah and Joram is king of Israel. Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, is anointed king of Israel. Jehu killed Joram and Ahaziah and had Jezebel, Ahab's wife, thrown out the window and eaten by dogs (2 Kings ch 9). Jehu killed all of Ahab's sons and some of Ahaziah's relatives and all the prophets of Baal (2 Kings ch 10).

When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah, found out that Ahaziah was dead she killed the rest of the royal family so that she could rule as queen. But Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister, hid Joash, Ahaziah's baby son, for 6 years. Jehoiada, the priest protected Joash, proclaimed him as king and had Athaliah killed (2 Kings ch 11).

### Bible

- Read 2 Kings ch 12.  
How does Joash rate as a king (see also 2 Chr 24:17-27)?

Pros

Cons





**The temple of the LORD**, we assume, had suffered from some neglect (though it was not entirely abandoned, cf. v. 18) during the years in which the worship of Baal was encouraged. Joash now undertakes its repair. His initial plan is to leave it to the priests (vv. 4-5), but the priests (it is implied) are not anxious to spend good money on mere buildings (vv. 6-8). Joash therefore takes control of the project, ensuring that money is truly set aside for it (cf. the chest of v. 9, beside the altar of uncertain identity) and that all this money goes to the men appointed to supervise the work (vv. 9-12). The repairs are duly carried out, but it is a sorry episode that reflects well on neither king nor priests.

**The priests** are represented as being more concerned about their own benefit than that of the temple. They divert funds to themselves (vv. 7-8), even though they are well provided for under the normal laws of sacrifice (v. 16; cf. 1 Sam. 2:12-17, 27-29, for a similar situation). Even Jehoiada's zeal for the LORD does not, apparently, extend as far as his pocket (v. 7). He is to be trusted only so far as the royal secretary can see him (v 10). The priests needed to be watched we are told – thus the chest, perhaps a secure box (with a hole in it for deposits) that could not be stark contrast to the supervisors, who acted, we are explicitly told, with complete honesty.

**The king**, however, does not come out of the story any better. We are not told exactly when his building plan was initiated. It either takes him a long time to begin to think about the temple (cf. the twenty-third year of v. 6), or an incredibly long time to "discover" that nothing is being done about his instructions for its repair. This, too, speaks of no great zeal for the LORD nor of great wisdom; his achievements are, indeed, somewhat mediocre. Although Joash resembles Solomon in reigning for forty years (1 Kgs. 11:42) and in (re)building the temple (compare vv 11-12 and 1 Kings 5:15-18), his temple is but a poor reflection of its former glory (contrast v 13 with 1 Kings 7:50).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 223-224.

### To finish

3. If you are one of the leaders you rated in question 1 - what do you think of the way people rate you?

- how can you pick up your game?

4. Is it sinful to rate your church leaders? Why/why not?

## Study 9, 2 Kings ch 13, Elisha dies

### For starters

1. (a) What is grace?



- (b) How could you give grace to people?

Patricia was a mother of a well-off English family living in Fiji in the 1950s. They had servants which was customary in that context. Patricia discovered that one servant had been stealing. Her first reaction was to sack her but Patricia had recently become a Christian and she wanted to think through what believing in God's grace meant to her life. She prayed about it and reasoned that her servant had stolen because she was poor and needed the money to feed her family. Patricia decided that God would not want her to sack her servant but to give her a raise which was what she did.

The servant was astounded and became a devoted household maid. Patricia's act of grace was an overflow of the grace she had received from God and it was life changing for her servant. Later Patricia led her to faith in Jesus Christ.

Grace is getting what we don't deserve. We deserve death and God's judgement but, because of Jesus' life, death and resurrection we get what we don't deserve - life, the Holy Spirit, fellowship with God, church, gifts . . . think of all the other things God gives us. But it doesn't stop there. Like Patricia, we can give grace as it overflows from the grace we have received from God. We can do grace/give grace, and it may be life changing for the people who receive it.

From a eulogy by Tony Golsby-Smith at his mother's funeral.

### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. By the time we get to 2 Kings ch 9 Ahaziah is king of Judah and Joram is king of Israel. Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, is anointed king of Israel. Jehu killed Joram and Ahaziah and had Jezebel, Ahab's wife, thrown out the window and eaten by dogs (2 Kings ch 9). Jehu killed all of Ahab's sons and some of Ahaziah's relatives and all the prophets of Baal (2 Kings ch 10).

When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah, found out that Ahaziah was dead she killed the rest of the royal family so that she could rule as queen. But Jehosheba, Ahaziah's sister, hid Joash, Ahaziah's baby son, for 6 years. Jehoiada, the priest protected Joash, proclaimed him as king and had Athaliah killed (2 Kings ch 11).

Joash collected money to repair the temple but when Hazael attacked Jerusalem he used the money, sacred objects and gold to pay off the Arameans. Joash was murdered by his officials (2 Kings ch 12).

### Bible

2. Read 2 Kings ch 13.  
(a) What did Elisha do?

(b) Some of the things Elisha did sound like folklore. How do you which things are true?

Surprised by Moabite troops, some Israelites in a burial party hurriedly throw a corpse into Elisha's tomb, and there is a resurrection! Evidently, Elisha's powers live on (cf. 2 Kgs. 4:8-37). But why should we be told this here? What is the point?

The connection between this story and the verses that follow seems to lie in the use in verse 21 of that same verb *slk* that is found in verse 23 and in 2 Kings 17:20. The Israelites "throw" the body (presumably unwillingly) into the tomb; God unwillingly "throws" Israel into exile. The point appears to be this: Elisha, the great protector of Israel, is dead. His was an age when "God saved" Israel (cf. the Hb. root *ys* underlying the name "Elisha" and the words "deliverer" in v. 5 and "victory" in v. 17), even in the midst of great sin (cf. 13:1-7, 14-19). With the passing of that era, Israel has entered a time in which devastating judgment will not long be held at bay. They are shortly to enter the tomb of exile, to be cast out of God's presence with not so much as a remnant left (cf. Ps. 88:3-12).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 230.

(c) Reflecting on the life of Elisha as we've seen it in 2 Kings, how was Elisha like Jesus?

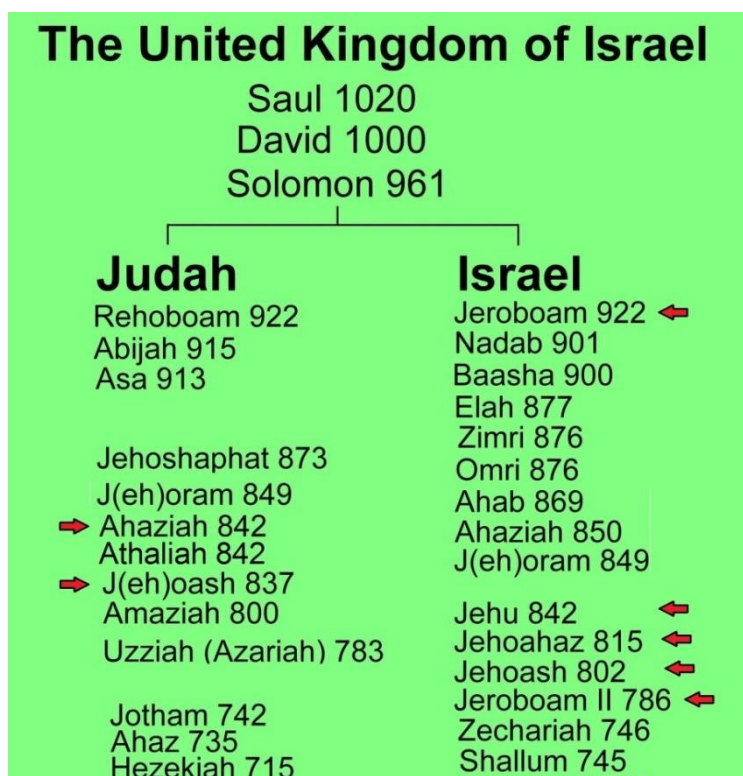
**Elisha** is mentioned only once in the NT, in Luke 4:27, where he functions typologically in respect of Jesus. Jesus' mission embraces the Gentiles, as the mission of Elisha did; what Jesus will do is analogous to what Elisha did when healing Naaman. Implicit connections between the two, however, are frequent in the Gospels. Jesus heals lepers, just like Elisha (2 Kgs. 5; Matt. 8:1-4; 10:8; 11:5; Mark 1:40-45; Luke 5:12-16; 7:22; 17:11-19; cf. also John 9:1-12 for a different kind of healing story that has analogies to the Naaman narrative). He transforms water (2 Kgs. 2:19-22; John 2:1-11) and suspends the laws of gravity in relation to it (2 Kgs. 6:1-7; Matt. 14:22-33; Mark 6:45-51; John 6:16-21). He raises the dead (2 Kgs. 4:8-37; Mark 5:21-24, 35-43; Luke 7:11-17; John 11:17-37) and multiplies food (2 Kgs. 4:1-7, 42-44; Matt. 14:13-21; 15:29-39; Mark 6:30-44; 8:1-10; Luke 9:10-17; John 6:1-15). He does all this especially for the benefit of the humble, who are generally more open to God's salvation than are the great. He mediates salvation, but he also brings judgment. He utters prophetic curses (2 Kgs. 2:23-25 and Matt. 21:18-22; Mark 11:12-14, 20-21, noting also Matt. 25:41). He comes so that those who see will become blind, even as those who are blind gain their sight (2 Kgs. 6:8-23; John 9:35-41; 12:37-41). He is the initiator of the coming of God's kingdom, when all will know divine justice (Matt. 13:36-43 etc.).

Given the many links between the two, including the fact that the names "Joshua," "Elisha," and "Jesus" have essentially the same meaning ("God saves"), and that John the Baptist is so clearly identified in the Gospels with Elijah, it is intriguing that more is not explicitly made in the NT of the Jesus-Elisha connection. Yet it may be that it is precisely because both Joshua and Elisha are successors to more famous men that this kind of thinking was inhibited. There would have been a natural desire within the church to avoid the suggestion that Jesus was John's successor in any sense that detracted from his pre-eminence—particularly since this was apparently a live issue in some quarters (note the careful way in which John 1:1-42 addresses the issue). Thus it is not surprising that the typological significance of Elisha in relation to Jesus has been downplayed.

Solomon and Elijah are presented in the NT as those from whom Christian believers can learn. Whether Elisha is presented in this way is less clear. Hebrews 11:34-35 (and possibly v. 36, if the boys from Bethel are in mind) may be taken as referring to him, and the early church certainly exercised faith of the kind being exhorted in Hebrews 11, in their mediation of both salvation and judgment in the manner of Elisha and Jesus (cf. Acts 5:1-11; 9:36-43).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 233-234.

(d) How do you rate Jehoahaz, son of Jehu (Israel), and Joash, son of Ahaziah (Judah)?



Jehoahaz, son of Jehu (Israel)

Pros

Cons

Joash, son of Ahaziah (Judah)

Pros

Cons

3. (a) Who is God gracious to (vv 22-23)?

(b) Why is God gracious to them?

4. Overall it would seem that the kings of Israel and Judah are no better than those of the surrounding nations.  
(a) What is the result of this and what effect does have for the life of God's people?

(b) And yet the LORD does not choose to abandon his people completely.  
What does this tell us about the LORD's commitment to keep his promises?

**To finish**

5. How is God gracious - in salvation?

- in other ways besides salvation?



## Study 10, 2 Kings chs 14-15, kings

### Getting started

1. "All power corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely".  
This quote from the English historian, Lord Acton, was from a letter in 1887 which actually said "Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men."

(a) Do you think it's true that "all power corrupts"? Why/why not?



(b) What does it mean if power goes to someone's head?

(c) Have you seen power corrupt anyone you knew? If so, how did power effect their actions?

### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. By the time we get to 2 Kings ch 9 Ahaziah is king of Judah and Joram is king of Israel. Jehu, a commander in Israel's army, is anointed king of Israel. Jehu killed Joram and Ahaziah and had Jezebel, Ahab's wife, thrown out the window and eaten by dogs (2 Kings ch 9). Jehu killed all of Ahab's sons and some of Ahaziah's relatives and all the prophets of Baal (2 Kings ch 10).

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Joash collected money to repair the temple but when Hazael attacked Jerusalem he used the money, sacred objects and gold to pay off the Arameans. Joash was murdered by his officials (2 Kings ch 12).

Jehoahaz became king of Israel after Jehu and Israel was under the thumb of Aram until Jehoahaz asked God for help. Jehoash succeeded Jehoahaz, then Jeroboam II. Elisha performed miracles even after he died. Israel's struggles with Aram continued (2 Kings ch 13).

### Bible

2. Read 2 Kings 14:1-7.  
How would you rate Amaziah, king of Judah?

Pros

Cons

The introductory regnal formulas for Amaziah are the standard ones for relatively good (non-idolatrous) kings of Judah: he did what was right (v. 3) but failed to centralize the worship of the LORD in Jerusalem (the high places ... were not removed, v. 4). In Amaziah's case, however, we find an additional criticism: in his "doing right" he was not like David, but like his father Joash (v. 3). This is a curious statement, whose meaning is never explicitly unpacked in the text. It is difficult to see any real difference in religious policy between the early Solomon, Asa, and Jehoshaphat, on the one hand ("like David" explicitly, 1 Kgs. 3:3; 15:11, or implicitly, 1 Kgs. 22:43), and Joash and Amaziah ("not like David" implicitly, 2 Kgs. 12:2, or explicitly, 2 Kgs. 14:3), on the other. The piety of Amaziah is, indeed, emphasized by verse 6, which tells us of adherence to the Law of Moses (rather than to custom) in dealing with the families of those who had murdered his father (cf. Deut. 24:16). Yet we shall not read of another Judean king who is "like David" until we read of Hezekiah (2 Kgs. 18:3; contrast 15:3, 34). There seems to be some doubt in the authors' minds about

the wholeheartedness of the Davidic kings' commitment to the LORD throughout the period from Joash to Jotham, but they have not revealed to us their reasons for holding this opinion.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 235.

3. Read 2 Kings 14:8-18.

(a) Was he arrogant (v 10)? Why/why not?

(b) Do you know of any other world leaders today who are arrogant?

(c) Is this how wars start? Why/why not?

4. Read 2 Kings 14:19-29.

How would you rate Jeroboam II, king of Israel?

Pros

Cons

5. Read 2 Kings ch 15.

Rate each of the kings below and note how long they reigned.

Azariah (Uzziah), king of Judah vv 1-7.

Zechariah, king of Israel vv 8-12.

Shallum, king of Israel vv 13-15.

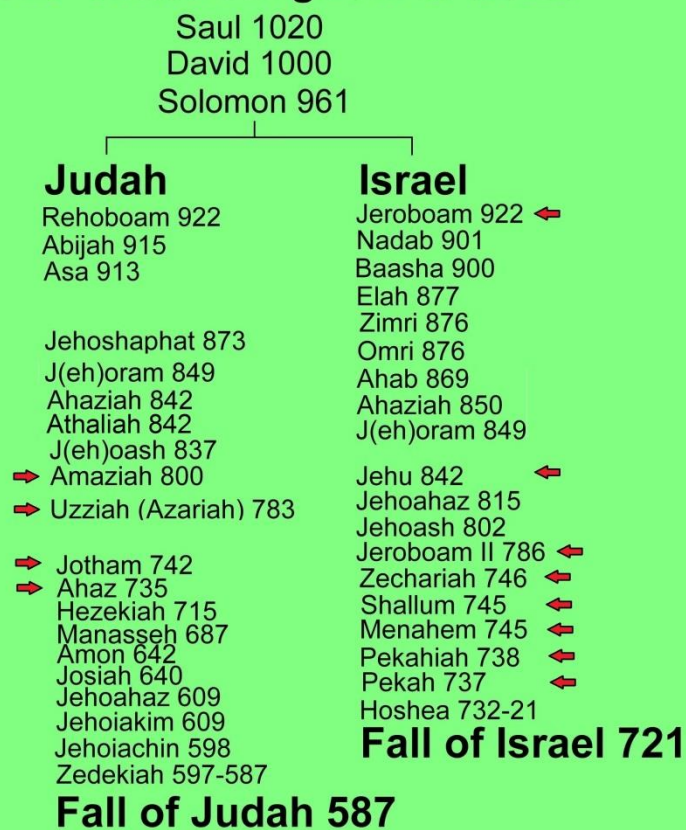
Menahem, king of Israel vv 16-22.

Pekahiah, king of Israel vv 23-26.

Pekah, king of Israel vv 27-31.

Jotham, king of Judah vv 32-38.

## The United Kingdom of Israel

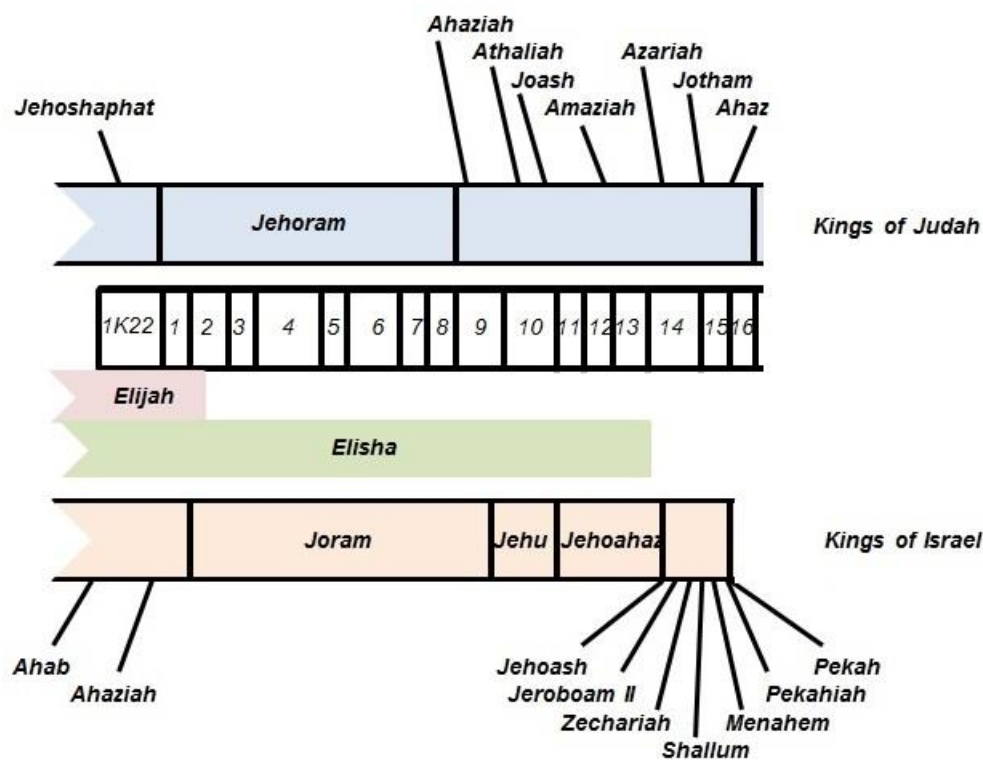


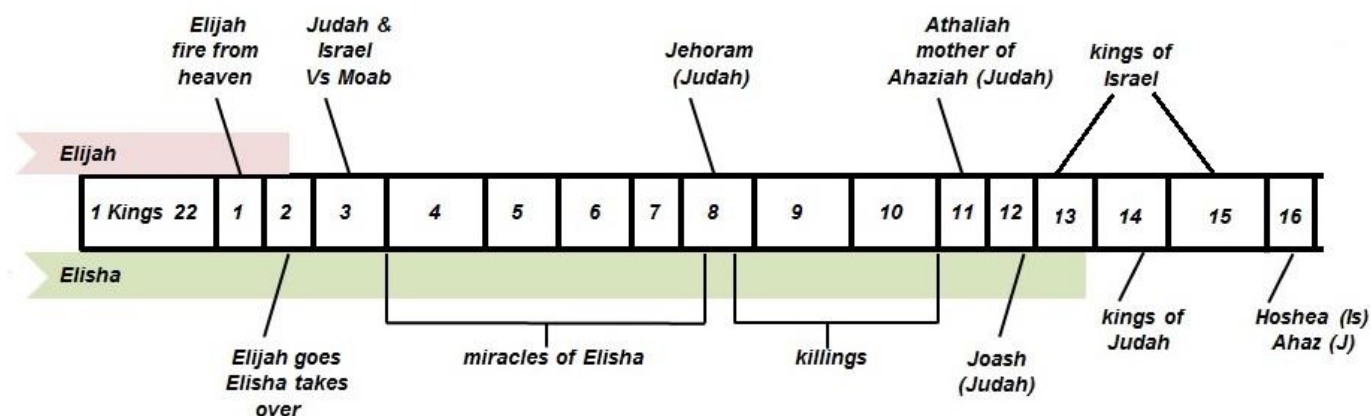
## Major World Power

Egypt and Assyria  
in decline

Assyria

Babylon





6. Let's step back and think about the whole series from 2 Kings chs 1 to 15.

(a) From this period of Israel and Judah's history what were:

(i) the highlights?

(ii) the lowlights?

(b) What have you learned from this series about God and his ways?

(c) Would you say that your answer above has helped you to trust Him more? If so, in what ways?

### To finish

7. (a) Have you seen people change when they are given power? Give examples.

(b) Why does power change/corrupt people?

(c) How can this be avoided?

## Study 11, 2 Kings chs 16-17 and Hosea, Assyria, Israel goes into exile

### Getting started

1. Describe a time when you were particularly jealous.



### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven (2 Kings ch 2) and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. Elisha performed miracles even after he died (2 Kings ch 13). After a succession of kings, wars and assassinations Ahaz, son of Jotham, was king of Judah and Hoshea was king of Israel (2 Kings ch 15).

### Bible

Hosea gives us an insight into the relational impact of idolatry on the Lord through the haunting image of an adulterous wife. Israel is deported because of her marital unfaithfulness.

One of the biggest problems we have in thinking about God is that we move so quickly to abstract ideas or general principles. So what is the problem? Well it's when we do this we forget we are dealing in the Bible with the personal God. It is easy when we hear about judgement coming closer and closer to Israel, because of its idolatry, that we are only dealing with some sort of 'spiritual' cause and effect and that God is somehow personally disconnected from the process. If we are tempted in this direction, the prophet Hosea, presents us with a living picture of how idolatry impacted the relationship between the LORD and Israel and we are left with the clear impression that there is no disconnected cause and effect going on.

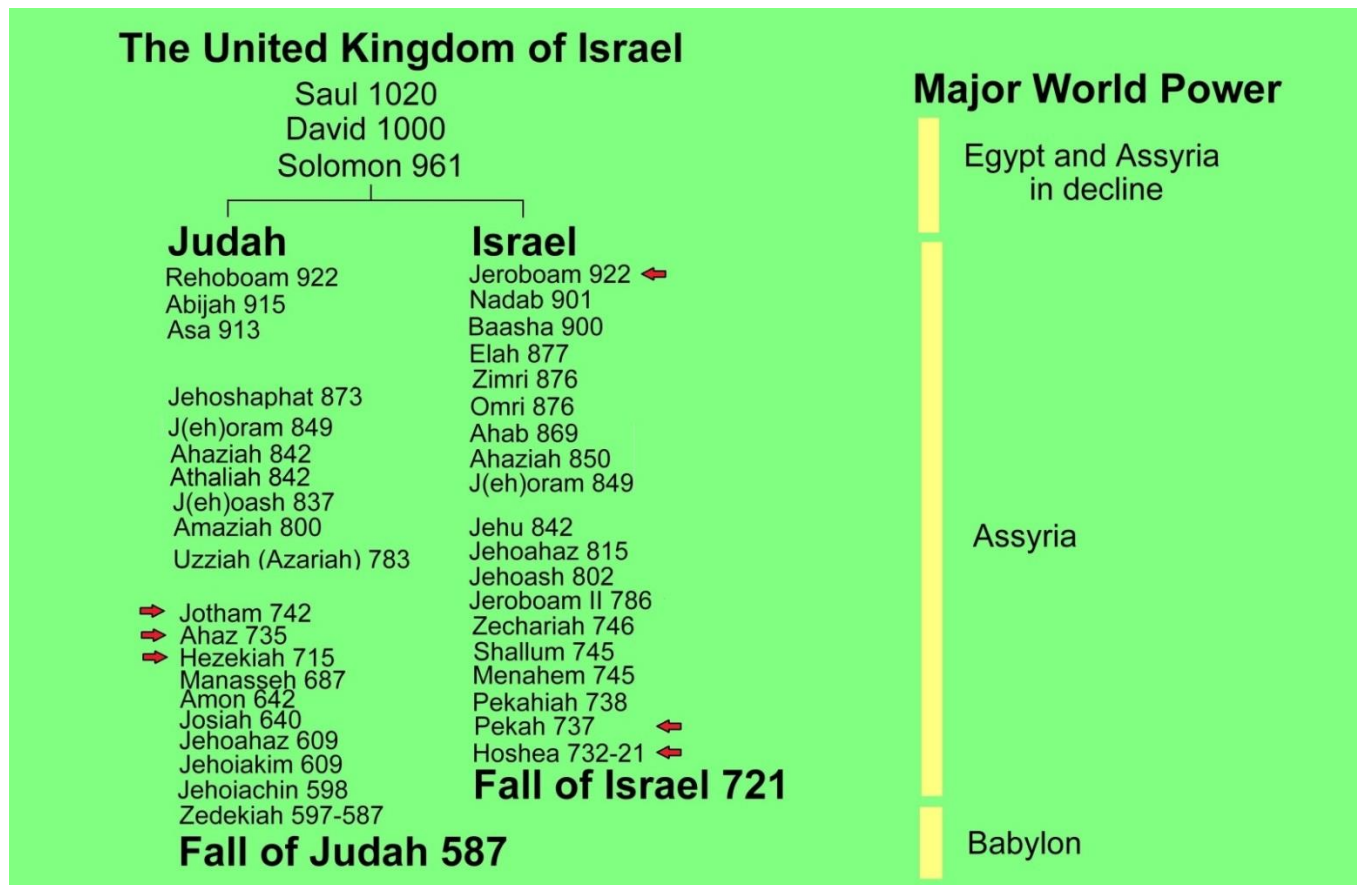
From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

2. Read Hosea 1-3.
  - (a) How is Hosea's relationship with Gomer an accurate acting out of the LORD's relationship with Israel?
  - (b) Put yourself in Hosea's place. How would you feel being treated by your partner in this way?
  - (c) There are two movements in Hosea's relationship with Gomer; rejection/judgement and reconciliation. Map out this in the first three chapters?
  - (d) How does Hosea's experience tell us about the LORD's pain in judgement?
3. Read 2 Kings ch 16.
  - (a) From our reading of 2 Kings so far, why is Judah being invaded (2 Kings 16.1-4)?
  - (b) When Ahaz is in trouble, he doesn't repent and turn to the LORD. Who does he turn to (2 Kings 16.7-19)?



Ahaz is a prime exemplar of those who do not trust (Is 7:9) but rely on a distorted, short-term tunnel vision. He represents all who see solutions using political strategy and economic resources as means of self-protection and success. In contrast, Ahaz's son Hezekiah will grapple positively with what is involved in 'trust' in the face of Assyrian might (chs 18-20).

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 302.



4. Read 2 Kings ch 17.

The "uprooting" and "scattering" of Israel (1 Kgs. 14:15) has long been delayed because of God's promises and character (2 Kgs. 10:30; 13; 14:23-29). God has continually saved (Hb. ys) it from its enemies: through Elisha, through Jeroboam (2 Kgs. 14:27), through other unnamed saviours (2 Kgs. 13:5). There have been signs in the preceding chapters, however, that deliverance is now at an end, that the "exile" of 2 Kings 13:5 was a dry run for a now imminent main event. The most recent act of "salvation," in fact (16:7-9, cf. "save me," ys, in 16:7) was in reality an act of judgment upon Israel that brought the Assyrian king to within striking distance of Samaria (15:29). The third siege of the city (cf. 1 Kgs. 20:1ff.; 2 Kgs. 6:24ff.) will be the last. There will be no prophet like Elisha to announce God's intervention. The king will stand alone. And though his name promises much (Hoshea, "salvation"), he - unlike the prophet - will have no power to fulfill its promise.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 247.

(a) What is the relationship between idolatry and crimes against humanity (vv 13, 17)?

(b) What did 'exile' entail? Why was it so tragic?

(c) Why is Israel sent into Exile?

The Assyrians may have been the first empire to use deportation as a method of preventing subsequent local rebellion (cf. 16:9), dispersion being also a means to lessen ethnic identity. The northern kingdom of Israel, the nation of 'ten tribes' (1 Kings 11:31), has come to an end. That dramatic point is where the writer pauses the narrative for lengthy sermonistic analysis. . . .

Although Judah is mentioned explicitly only in verses 13, 18-19, hints throughout show that the sermon is addressed to the southern nation: it is *about* Israel *to* Judah. There are warnings if Judah acts like Israel, and the judgment of verse 20 includes Judah. . . .

If read in narrative time, i.e., following the storyline of Kings, the sermon is a warning to Judah at a time soon after the fall of Samaria and its subsequent resettlement. The readers of Kings however are exiles in Babylon . . . as well as all subsequent generations to the present. The sermon affirms that persistent idolatry leads to destruction, a result of not accidents of history but an act of God. That in itself becomes a pointer to ways forward.

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley pp 304-306.

(d) Verse 20 reads, "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."

(i) How is this verse both an act of judgment and salvation?

(ii) How does Jesus enact these verses in the New Testament?

(e) John Dickson in preaching on this chapter said "There were two kinds of exclusivity God demanded of Israel; vertical and horizontal; spiritual and social."

(i) What does this mean?

(ii) How do we ensure we do both?

## To finish

5. Richard Dawkins describes God as "the God of the Old Testament is jealous and proud of it." How does God's jealousy for his people differ from Dawkins' description of it?

## Study 12, 2 Kings chs 18-21, Hezekiah (Judah)

### Getting started

1. In what ways have you followed in your father's or mother's footsteps?



### The story so far . . .

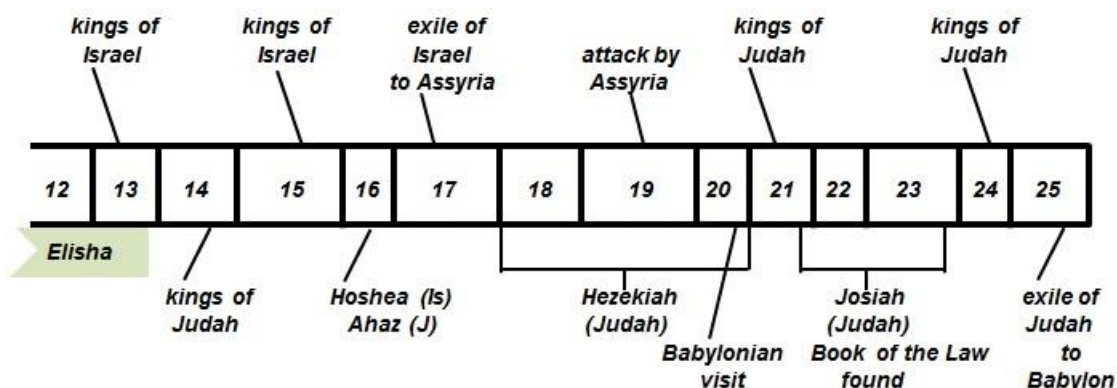
Elijah was taken up to heaven (2 Kings ch 2) and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. Elisha performed miracles even after he died (2 Kings ch 13). After a succession of kings, wars and assassinations Ahaz, son of Jotham, was king of Judah and Hoshea was the last king of Israel (2 Kings ch 15). Israel and Aram went to war against Judah so Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help (2 Kings ch 16). Assyria defeated Aram and deported the inhabitants of Damascus. They also captured Samaria and sent the Israelites into exile. Assyria re-settled Samaria with its own people who worshipped their own gods as well as the Lord (2 Kings ch 17).

### Bible

We know that the kingdom of Judah will follow Israel into exile but there are still one or two good kings to come and Hezekiah is one of the best.

In our culture there is a big debate about nature versus nurture. In the story of the kings of Judah we are constantly surprised; bad kings produce good kings and good kings produce really bad kings. Good king Hezekiah is the son of one of the worst kings of Israel and he is the father of the worst king of Israel. But if the truth be told even the good kings, by now, can be a mixed bag.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.



2. Read 2 Kings ch 18.  
(a) How is this a really promising start to Hezekiah's reign (vv 1-12)?

Even the most righteous of the Judean kings thus far have failed to act against the shrines outside Jerusalem. The recurrent complaint has been that the high places "were not removed" (Hb. habbamat lo saru, 1 Kgs. 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs. 12:3; 14:4; 15:4, 35). The possibility has always existed, therefore, that they would become focal points for the kind of slide from authentic worship into apostasy that happened during the reign of Solomon (compare 1 Kgs. 3:2-3 with 11:7-8, noting the continuing effects in 14:22-24). This is precisely what has occurred during the reign of Ahaz (2 Kgs. 16:4; the "he" indicates royal promotion of the fertility cult, of course, rather than personal visitation of all the shrines). Hezekiah now appears as the one who at last addresses this issue: he removed the high places (Hb. hu hesir 'et-habbamat, 2 Kgs. 18:4). He also took action in relation to other aspects of the cult introduced by his father, the sacred stones (cf. 1 Kgs. 14:23; 2 Kgs. 17:10) and the Asherah pole (MT; NIV's poles; cf. the additional note to v.

4). Finally, he broke into pieces the bronze snake of the wilderness story (Num. 21:4-9; cf. 1 Kgs. 8:1-9 for other religious items from the Mosaic age that had been deposited in the temple). . . .

Thus Hezekiah was not merely one in a line of kings, as these verses [18:5-8] go on to emphasize. In at least one respect, the way in which he trusted in the LORD (v. 5), there was no one like him among all the kings of Judah. This evidenced itself in the way that he held fast to God (Hb. dbq) and kept the law of Moses throughout his life, in contrast to Solomon, who in his old age "held fast" to foreign wives (Hb. dbq, 1 Kgs. 11:2; cf. also Jehoram in 2 Kgs. 3:3) and broke the law. The consequence of this religious faithfulness was that Hezekiah's military exploits paralleled David's in a way that was not true of any of the rest of his descendants. Only of David and Hezekiah among the Davidic kings is it said that the LORD was with him (v. 7; cf. 1 Sam. 16:18; 18:12, 14; 2 Sam. 5:10) and that the king was successful in war (Hb. skl, v. 7; cf. 1 Sam. 18:5, 14, 15). Only David and Hezekiah, furthermore, are said to have defeated the Philistines (Hb. nkh, v. 8; cf. 1 Sam. 18:27; 19:8; etc.). As similar to David as he was, he was by the same token utterly dissimilar to Ahaz, for he would not continue to serve the king of Assyria (Hb. bd; contrast Ahaz's description of himself as "servant" in 2 Kgs. 16:7) but rebelled against him. Foreign influence or domination, of whatever kind, was rejected.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 252-253.

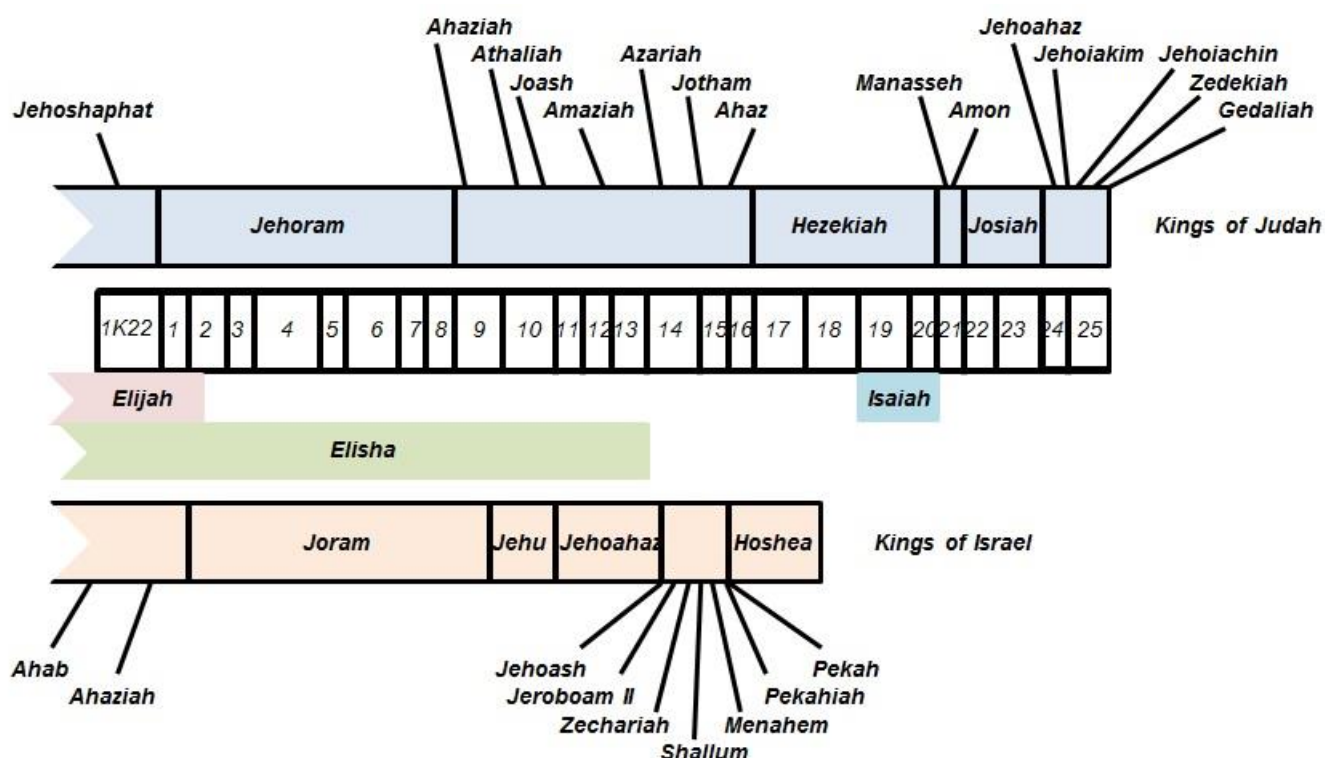
(b) Is this an act of trust in the Lord (vv 13-18)?

(c) How does the field commander of the Assyrians misrepresent the reforms instituted by Hezekiah (vv 19-35)?

Information from the concluding regnal summary statement (20:20), the book of Isaiah and archaeology shows how Hezekiah changed the water supply and extended the city walls because of the Assyrian threat. Sennacherib then says these preparations are 'mere words': they can do nothing. This is not only Sennacherib's interpretation: in Isaiah, the prophet brings Yahweh's word of judgment because the city of Jerusalem was relying on military preparation rather than on turning to God (Is 22:8-11). . . .

Next Sennacherib surprisingly claims that *the Lord himself told me to march against this country and destroy it* (v 25)! He has support from an unexpected source: some thirty years earlier Isaiah had prophesied that Assyria would be 'the rod of [God's] anger', the agent of God's judgment upon a disobedient, faithless Israel and Judah, although in turn Assyria would be judged for her own arrogance (Is 10:5-19 . . .). Whatever the reason for making his statement, Sennacherib is right – he has been sent by Yahweh. But that is only part of the story.

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley pp 321-323.



### 3. Read 2 Kings ch 19.

19:1 He tore his clothes: We have grown accustomed to monarchs tearing their clothes, signifying deep emotion (1 Kgs. 21:27; 2 Kgs. 5:7-8; 6:30; 11:14). The contrast between wicked Jehoram and pious Hezekiah, in their reaction to enemies at their gates, is particularly interesting. Jehoram tears his clothes and, unwilling to wait for God, looks to kill God's prophet (2 Kgs. 6:30-31). Hezekiah tears his clothes and humbly requests prophetic prayer.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 261.

(a) Compare Hezekiah's response to Sennacherib's attacks in 18:4-16 and then in 19:1-4. How do you account for the difference?

(b) How does Hezekiah define the problem rightly (vv 1-4)?

(c) How does Hezekiah's knowledge of God put him in good stead to deal with Sennacherib's threats?

(d) Where does the Assyrian field commander aim his criticisms of Israel?

(e) Isaiah is clear as to what the real issue is and what is about to happen (vv 5-7, 20-34). What are they?

With a catalogue to justify his arrogance, he [Sennacherib] boastfully lists gods that have been powerless against the whole line of Assyrian rulers (vv 11-13). It is unmistakably a confrontation between the awesome military machine of Assyria with its powerful king and Yahweh.

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 326.

As people in exile hear this narrative the focus on Hezekiah's 'trust', rather than religious reforms, becomes pertinent. They have lost king and temple and know Babylon's scorn (portrayed in Isaiah 47), but they can still look to Yahweh, who alone is 'God over all the kingdoms of the earth' and who has 'made heaven and earth' (19:15), and they can still have 'confidence' and pray that 'all kingdoms on earth may know that you alone, Lord, are God' (19:19).

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 331.

### 4. Read 2 Kings ch 20.

Hezekiah's new lease on life doesn't bring him any more glory - his great concern for his own life is not matched by his concern for the health and life of the kingdom of Judah after him.

Hezekiah's sickness mirrors Jerusalem's sickness – his faithful prayer postpones a sentence of judgment spoken by the prophet Isaiah [20:1]. The key verse in this regard [20:6] links Hezekiah's recovery to the recovery of the city, even though this upsets the narrative depiction of chs [18-19], where the deliverance of the city had already been concluded [19:36-37].

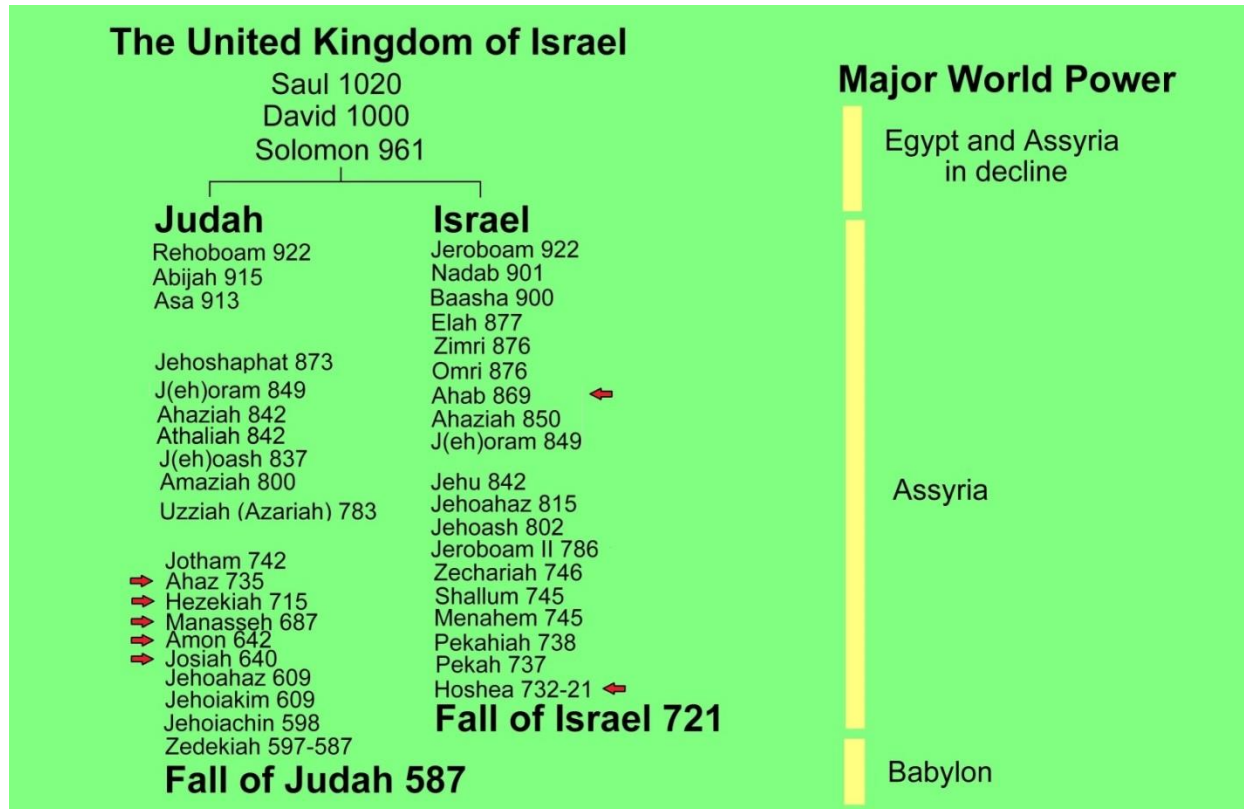
From Isaiah, Book of by C.R. Seitz p 481.

A question lingers: lengthening the king's life can be regarded as merely delaying death, so will the city's deliverance also be temporary? Readers in exile already know the answer which is now announced. The visit of *envoys of Marduk-Baladan . . . king of Babylon* was no doubt associated with seeking Hezekiah's help against the Assyrians, as the Chaldean leader was a key instigator of Babylonian independence from Assyrian rule. For the first time in Kings we read of Babylonian activity, and while Hezekiah sees no threat, readers are aware of what followed a hundred years later. Clearly Hezekiah was willing to join any alliance, showing the full range of resources he could contribute. . . .

The first group 'taken away' was to be in 605 BC (Dan 1:1-7), followed by a larger group in 597 BC (24:12-16), before final destruction in 587/6 BC (ch 25).

From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley pp 334-335.

5. Read 2 Kings ch 21.  
How is Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, the straw that breaks the camel's back of the Lord's patience?



6. Read Psalm 13 as an apt expression of frustration about Israel's dogged sinfulness.

### To finish

7. Prayer is sometimes and after-thought rather than first thought.  
How do both Hezekiah and Jesus challenge this reality?
8. Common responses to hardships include stoicism, escapism, denial and blame.  
How does Christian prayer challenge these responses?



## Study 13, 2 Kings 22:1-23:30, Josiah (Judah)

### Getting started

1. What were you doing as an eight year-old?



### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven (2 Kings ch 2) and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. Elisha performed miracles even after he died (2 Kings ch 13).

After a succession of kings, wars and assassinations Ahaz, son of Jotham, was king of Judah and Hoshea was the last king of Israel (2 Kings ch 15). Israel and Aram went to war against Judah so Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help (2 Kings ch 16). Assyria defeated Aram and deported the inhabitants of Damascus. They also captured Samaria and sent the Israelites into exile. Assyria re-settled Samaria with its own people who worshipped their own gods as well as the Lord (2 Kings ch 17).

Assyria attacked Judah as well and, at first, Hezekiah paid them off (2 Kings ch 18). After Isaiah's encouragement and Hezekiah's prayer God wiped out the Assyrians (2 Kings ch 19). Hezekiah was near death but he prayed and God extended his life for 15 more years. As a sign God made the shadow on the temple steps go backwards. Hezekiah received an envoy from Babylon and showed off all their riches. Isaiah predicted that all those riches would be taken away by the Babylonians (2 Kings ch 20).

Manasseh and Amon follow Hezekiah but reverted back to idolatry and God promised punishment for their sins (2 Kings ch 21).

### Bible

Josiah is the best king Judah ever had up till this point, even better than David. Josiah loved the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. We are nearing the end of the tragic story of 2 Kings. Some of you may well be thinking, 'Thank the Lord', but there is one last great story - the rule of king Josiah - it is as if the Lord has saved the best till last.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

2. Read 2 Kings ch 22.

(a) Read the summary statements of Josiah's reign 2 Kings 22:2, 23-25. Just how good a king is Josiah?

The verses that introduce Josiah alert us to the kind of king he is going to be. There is reference to David - as we would expect. More significantly, however, there is an unmistakable allusion to Deuteronomy 17:20, where the ideal king is one who does not "turn" (Hb. swr, as in 2 Kgs. 22:2) from the law to the right or to the left. This is only the first of many references in 2 Kings 22-23 that link Josiah with the law of Moses in general and the figure of Moses in particular. For the authors of Kings, Josiah was the best of all kings, transcending even David and Hezekiah in his faithfulness to God (cf. 23:21-25). Never had anyone turned to the LORD as Josiah did, in accordance with all the law.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 270.

(b) How did Hilkiah, the high priest, come to find the Book of the Law?

(i) Why was it such a meaningful discovery?

**Shaphan** and his family also provide an example of faithful leadership through generations: his son **Ahikam** (vv 12, 14) later was a protector of **Jeremiah** (Jer 26:24), and Ahikam's son **Gedaliah** was appointed by Nebuchadnezzar as governor of Judah after the destruction of Jerusalem and looked after Jeremiah (2 Kings 25:22, Jer 39:13-41:3); another son, **Elasah**, was entrusted with Jeremiah's letter to the exiles in Babylon (Jer 29:3); and yet another, **Gemariah**, provided the room from which **Baruch** read Jeremiah's scroll to the people, which was heard by Gemariah's son, **Micaiah**, who urged the king not to burn the scroll (Jer 36:10-17, 25). . . .

It was likely during Manasseh's reign that the book was removed from beside the ark.  
From The Message of Kings by John W. Olley p 349.

(c) Josiah's response to reading the book is surprising (v11, 19). Why do you think he reacted in such a way?

(d) What is it that really shapes Josiah as a good king?

(e) What does this tell us about how God's people lose their way?

A couple (at least) of interesting questions are raised by this passage. The first of these is: Which "book" has been found? This seems a straightforward question to answer; the phrase book of the law is used in the Pentateuch only of Deuteronomy (Deut. 28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26; cf. also Josh. 1:8; 8:30-35; 23:6; 24:26). It is Deuteronomy that is read to the king and that provides the basis for his actions in the remainder of the narrative.

A more difficult question is this: How long is the book envisaged as having been out of the public domain? We are not explicitly told, but the impression throughout Kings has been that it was available to the various rulers of Israel and Judah. They did not conform themselves to its laws by chance, nor did they fail to do so through ignorance. Their success and failure in keeping the law had to do, rather, with their will. Thus Solomon is charged with keeping the law of Moses (1 Kgs. 2:3); Jehu criticized for not keeping it with all his heart (2 Kgs. 10:31); Amaziah commended for acting in accordance with it (14:6); and the Israelites in general condemned for ignoring it (17:13-14; cf. also 17:34, 37). As recently as 2 Kings 18 Hezekiah has been commended for keeping this law (v. 6), after a description of religious reform that clearly recalls Deuteronomy 12:1-7. There is no reason to think, then, that the loss or concealment of the book is being presented as anything other than a recent event, occurring during the long reign of the apostate Manasseh. It is easy to imagine (though again we are not told) why it may have been removed from its proper position beside the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26) during his reign. It is a book whose laws Manasseh systematically infringed - whose authority over him he refuses, as king, to acknowledge (Deut. 17:18-20). It is not a book that he would want to have in the temple. Nor would the priests have wished to provoke him by leaving it there. Whether Hilkiah really found it, of course, or whether his choice of words is dictated by a desire to remain distanced from it until he discovers how Manasseh's grandson will react, must remain open to question. The circumstances in which it "comes to light" are entirely veiled in mystery.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 271.

(f) What message does Josiah get from Huldah (vv 15-20)?

The prophet chosen by Josiah's officials for consultation was not Jeremiah, whose ministry had begun five years earlier (according to Jer. 1:2), nor Zephaniah (Zeph. 1:1), but Huldah, a resident of Jerusalem's Second District (wherever that might have been) and the wife of the keeper of the wardrobe (v. 14 - perhaps a temple official, cf. 2 Kgs. 10:22).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 271-272.

3. Read 2 Kings ch 23.  
 (a) Josiah does three things. What are they?  
 23.1-3

23.4-20

23.21-24

Significantly, however, there is no prayer for deliverance, no call for God to turn back the word of judgment. . . Josiah's initial desire to turn back God's wrath (22:13) is met by the prophetic word stating the inevitability of destruction for Judah (22:16-17). Still, Josiah proceeds with the reforms. One gathers, then, that we obey God neither for the sake of rewards nor for the aversion of judgment. Rather, obedience to God is simply what faith brings about. From The First and Second Books of Kings: Introduction, Commentary, and Reflections by C.-L. Seow p 286.

(b) It seems that Josiah's reforms were too little, too late. What concession does God make because of Josiah's obedience and what happens after his death?

4. How does Josiah show us that even though we know that judgement is coming on this world, that doesn't mean we should give up or disengage from trying to make this world the best it could be?

### To finish

5. In what ways does Josiah challenge us when it comes to responding to the Bible?
6. When it comes to applying the bible to our lives, there's a continuum with blind thoughtless obedience on one end and sceptical questioning on the other.  
 (a) Where should we sit and why?
- (b) What unique challenges does our culture present us with as we apply the scriptures?

## Study 14, 2 Kings 23:31-25:30 and Isaiah ch 40, Judah goes into exile

### Getting started

1. Jesus aside, who do you think is the most influential person to have ever lived and why?



### The story so far . . .

Elijah was taken up to heaven (2 Kings ch 2) and Elisha continued his role as prophet and miracle worker. Elisha performed miracles even after he died (2 Kings ch 13).

After a succession of kings, wars and assassinations Ahaz, son of Jotham, was king of Judah and Hoshea was the last king of Israel (2 Kings ch 15). Israel and Aram went to war against Judah so Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help (2 Kings ch 16). Assyria defeated Aram and deported the inhabitants of Damascus. They also captured Samaria and sent the Israelites into exile. Assyria re-settled Samaria with its own people who worshipped their own gods as well as the Lord (2 Kings ch 17).

Assyria attacked Judah as well and, at first, Hezekiah paid them off (2 Kings ch 18). After Isaiah's encouragement and Hezekiah's prayer God wipes out the Assyrians (2 Kings ch 19). Hezekiah was near death but he prayed and God extended his life for 15 more years. As a sign God made the shadow on the temple steps go backwards. Hezekiah received an envoy from Babylon and showed off all their riches. Isaiah predicted that all those riches would be taken away by the Babylonians (2 Kings ch 20). Manasseh and Amon followed Hezekiah but reverted back to idolatry and God promised punishment for their sins (2 Kings ch 21).

Hilkiah, the high priest, found the Book of the Law and had it read to Josiah, king of Judah (2 Kings ch 22). Josiah destroyed all the idolatry in Judah but this did not avert God's promise of judgement (2 Kings 23).

### Bible

Judah is near the end and is in the death throws, engaging in the dangerous game of playing off one super power against the other and all the while ignoring the Lord. Judah goes into exile. She couldn't change the trajectory of death. Isaiah lets us know that the best is yet to come.

From God's World in Wild Times 5 studies on 2 Kings by Crossroads Christian Church, Canberra, 2018.

2. Read 2 Kings 23:29-37.

23:34 Pharaoh . . . changed Eliakim's name: To give some-one a new name is to make clear that one has power over the other person. In both 23:34 and 24:18, loss of name symbolizes loss of power. Judah no longer controls its own destiny. It is dictated to by others.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 281.

(a) What is the experience of Judah living under the rule of Pharaoh?

(b) Why is Egypt in control of Judah?

(c) Is Judah or her king acknowledging what the real problem is?

3. Read 2 Kings chs 24 & 25.  
 (a) What were the “sins of Manasseh” (24:3) and why was his behaviour the final straw (see also 2 Kings 21:1-6)?



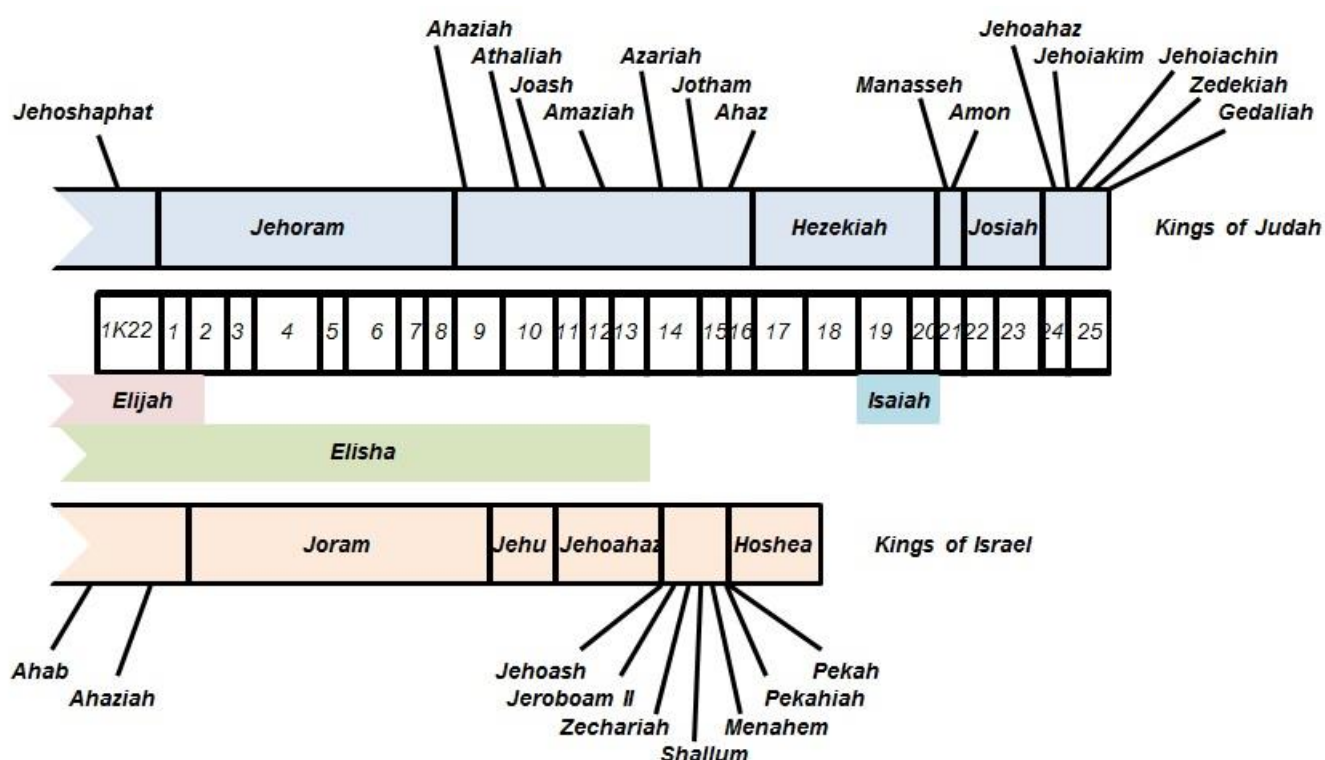
- (b) What is the experience of Judah living under the rule of Nebuchadnezzar?
- (c) Why is Babylon in control of Judah?
- (d) Is Judah or her king acknowledging what the real problem is?
- (e) Read again 2 Kings 25:27-29. What hope, if any, is found in these verses (see also Isaiah 11:1-5, 10)?

Solomon's glory has departed to Babylon. The empire has dissolved. The Babylonian king has destroyed Solomon's city, his palace and his temple; he controls Solomon's empire, and he possesses all Solomon's wealth. Now Solomon's last-surviving successor (so far as we know) sits, amply provided for, at the Babylonian table: the great symbol of imperial power (1 Kgs. 4:27). He sits; he eats; and then (it is implied) he dies. The exiles (it is implied) ought to behave in the same way, accepting the advice of Gedaliah to the people in Judah: "Settle down ... serve the king ... and it will go well with you" (v. 24). Yet it is difficult to believe that this is all there is to it. The fact is that the authors of Kings have chosen to tell us that Jehoiachin lived on (in contrast to Jehoahaz, 23:34), when they could have allowed him to dwell (with Zedekiah) in obscurity. They have also chosen to contrast the fate of Jehoiachin's family (exile, 24:15) very clearly with that of Zedekiah's (death, 25:7). It is Zedekiah, and not Jehoiachin, who ends up effectively as "a eunuch in Babylon" (20:18), a mutilated man deprived of heirs who might later claim the throne. These distinctions between the two must be significant; the parallels drawn between the house of David and the house of Ahab in 2 Kings 21-23 distinctly implied that the destruction of David's house would be total. There would be no escape of the kind that occurred in Athaliah's day (2 Kgs. 11:1ff.). Yet Jehoiachin lives, and his reappearance in the narrative is strikingly reminiscent of the reappearance of Joash after that earlier destruction of the "whole royal family." He survives, unexpectedly, in the midst of carnage, and he represents, like Joash during Athaliah's "reign," at least the potential for the continuation of the Davidic line. All is not yet necessarily lost after all; the destruction of the family of the "last king of Judah" does not mean that there is no member of the house of David left. As the prayer of Solomon in 1 Kings 8:22-53 looks beyond the disaster of exile, grounding its hope for the restoration of Israel to the land in God's gracious and unconditional election of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (cf. also 1 Kgs. 18:36-37; 2 Kgs. 13:23; 14:27); as it refuses to accept that God's words about the rejection of people, city and temple (e.g., 2 Kgs. 21:14; 23:27) are God's final words; so too 2 Kings 25:27-30 hints that the unconditional aspects of the Davidic promise may even still, after awful judgment has fallen, remain in force. These verses express the hope that grace may, in the end, triumph over law; that, God's wrath having been poured out upon good Josiah's sons, his (admittedly wicked) grandson might still produce a further "lamp for Jerusalem," as his (equally wicked) forefathers did (1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19). These verses look back beyond Kings, in fact, to Samuel, and they hang on tenaciously to the words of 2 Samuel 7:15-16: "my love will never be taken away from him ... your throne will be established forever."

From *New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings* by Iain W. Provan pp 280-281.

### The story ends . . .

Egypt became a threat to Judah (2 Kings ch 23) then Babylon defeated them and exiled the army and all the important people (2 Kings ch 24). The Babylonians raided Jerusalem, broke down the city walls, destroyed the temple and took more people into exile. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, appointed Gedaliah governor over Judah. When Gedaliah was assassinated the people fled to Egypt (2 Kings ch 25).





## The Exile

Jehoiachin reigned a month or two until the city [Jerusalem] fell and he was taken into exile in Babylon (597 BC). . . . The throne of Judah was given to Zedekiah, yet he failed to learn the lesson, falling prey to Egypt's lures as his predecessors had done.

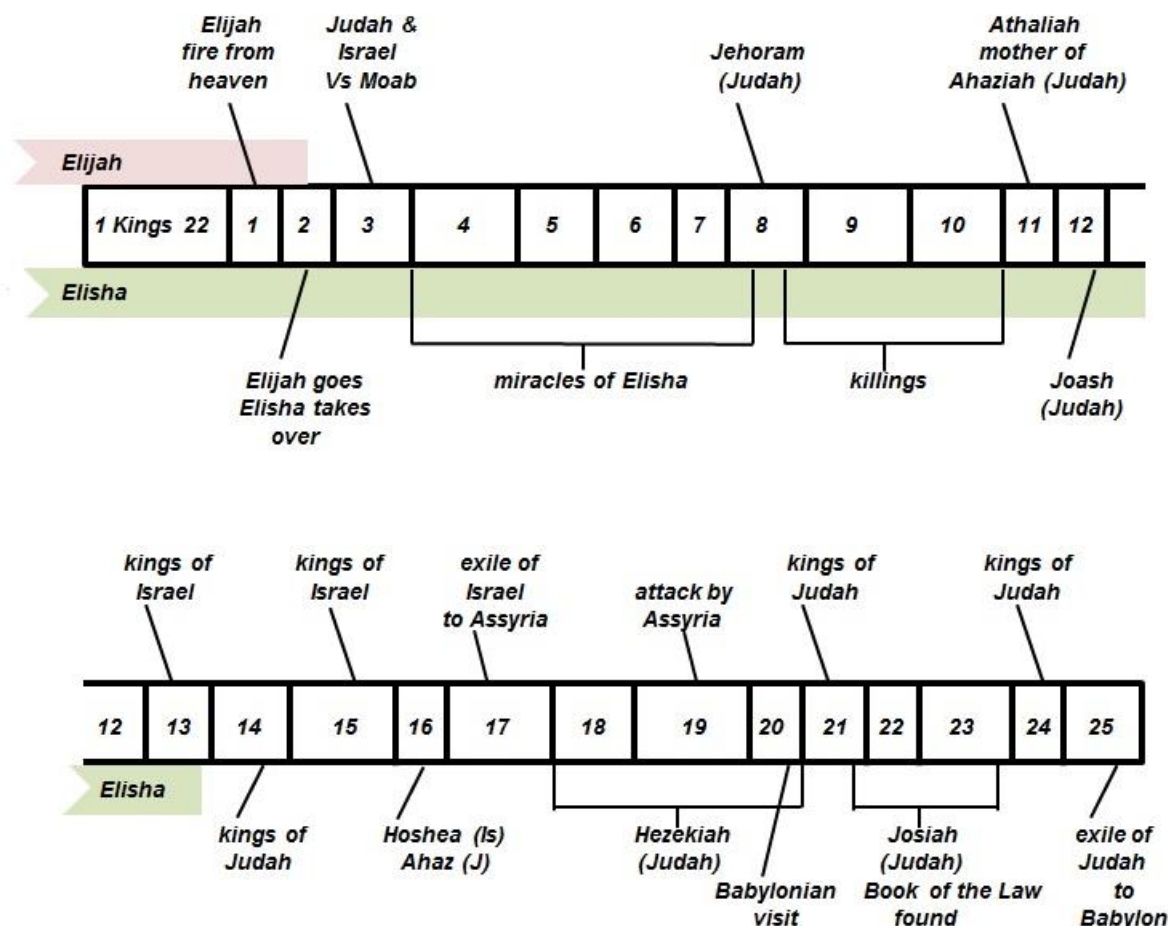
Judah's fate was inevitable. Babylonian forces attacked again, took Jerusalem and sacked it (587/6 BC). Large numbers of surviving citizens were settled in Babylonia, and the territory of Judah was placed under a governor.

The exiles seem to have been moved to Babylonia itself, living in various towns and villages as well as in the capital city. They were free to establish themselves as part of the community, so far as can be discovered, to maintain their own traditions and to practise their own religion as they wanted. No doubt the new surroundings and the refurbished splendour of ancient Babylon (justifying Nebuchadnezzar's boast, 'Is not this great Babylon, which I have built'; Daniel 4:30) awed the men of Judah. . . . Others certainly found a profitable way of life in their new surroundings. Others longed to return to the promised land (see Psalm 137). . . .

Yet the empire of the Chaldean [Babylonian] kings was not to last. As Isaiah, Jeremiah and Daniel foresaw, the hill-men of the east and north would overcome it. The picture, vague in Isaiah and Jeremiah, is clear in Daniel. Media grew ever more powerful after ridding herself of Scythian rule. By 585 BC the Median yoke extended half-way across Anatolia. And Media was clearly a rival to Babylon when, in 550 BC, her vassal, Cyrus the Persian, seized the throne.

In Babylon, Belshazzar governed while his father Nabonidus lived in northern Arabia. The king returned only to see his realm fall to Cyrus in 539 BC. The new king's policies were generally peaceable, and he liberally allowed Jews to return and restore Jerusalem's temple as he restored many other shrines.

From the Lion Handbook to the Bible Second Revised Edition p 413.



(f) Israel has gone into exile, Judah has gone into exile. The Temple is destroyed and burnt, there are no sacrifices, no king and the people are far away from the land.

Read Isaiah 40. What message does Isaiah give to a people apparently devoid of hope?

In Isaiah 40, the prophet is told to proclaim that God is about to prepare a way out of exile. God himself will dramatically and publicly intervene in history and lead his people through the desert to Palestine. . . .

On being commanded to cry out (Isaiah 40:6) Isaiah sums up the depression of the people in these verses. "In other words, Isaiah is asking God: "What on earth can I say to a people who are so desperate and depressed and who feel that their situation is hopeless?"

From Two Cities Isaiah by Andrew Reid and Karen Morris p 45.

(g) How does knowing that "God works his loftiest plans through the lowliest of means" prepare us for this bleak part of scripture?

## To finish

4. John Dickson in preaching on these chapters said "The whole sermon series has not really been about us, sin, weakness or troubles, but about God: his tenacious power and love".  
How has the story demonstrated this and how does this inspire us to live lives of worship?

5. "The God of the Old Testament is violent, vindictive and petty." Having spent all this time in the Old Testament, how would you respond to this?

Jesus' own fate in the midst of all this judgment is to die, like righteous Josiah (cf. John 19:37), at the hands of a foreign power, a suffering servant to his people. His fate is also to be "restored to health" after three days (like Hezekiah; cf. b. Ber. 10b for the rabbinic view that Hezekiah's recovery was a near-resurrection from the dead, comparable to the Elisha miracle in 2 Kgs. 4:18-37). There will be a second coming, when Jerusalem and her remnant will once again know salvation. Victory, rather than defeat, will be experienced at Megiddo (=Armageddon, Rev. 16:16), as the nations are defeated and Babylon is brought low by the Davidic King (Rev. 16-19). The kingdom of God will have fully arrived. The Lamb will sit forever upon his throne (Rev. 21-22).

Like Solomon, then, both Hezekiah and Josiah function typologically within the whole canon of Scripture, preparing the way for the one who is ultimately to sit upon David's throne and usher in God's kingdom. Like Solomon, however, they can also serve as models for behaviour for those called to follow Jesus with their cross. They remind us of how the believer should trust and pray in a crisis, even when besieged by a great army of enemies or troubles (2 Kgs. 18:17-20:7; Matt. 26:36-46 and parallels; Luke 21:34-36; John 14:13-14; Acts 4:23-31; 16:25-34; Rom. 15:30-33; Eph. 6:10-18; Phil. 4:6-7; Jas. 5:13-16). They remind us of the importance of ongoing reform in worship, of the importance of ensuring that God alone is the focus of our attention and that what we do is in complete conformity to God's will (2 Kgs. 18:1-8; 23:1-25; Matt. 6:1-34; 19:16-24; Luke 18:9-14; Rom. 12:1-2; 1 Cor 10-14). They remind us, finally, of the necessity of obedience to God's Word, as it addresses us in the present through the inspired writings of the past (2 Kgs. 22:11ff.; Matt. 5:17-20; 2 Tim. 3:14-17), of the necessity of such obedience even where it goes against the grain of the surrounding culture, and even where it offers no immediate prospect of reward. This is a fitting note upon which to end our reading of Kings, as we turn from the text and seek to apply Scripture to life.

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan p 284.

## Study 15, Zechariah ch 9 and Luke ch 19, Jesus

### Getting started

1. What is the best leadership maxim you've come across?



### The story . . .

Jeroboam, son of Nebat, leads northern Israel into independence from Rehoboam and Judah (1 Kgs. 12:1-24). It is an exodus into slavery, however, as the northern kingdom is immediately captivated by other gods and never again succeeds in breaking free of their influence, whether they be the gods manufactured by Jeroboam (12:25ff.) or those introduced from elsewhere (16:29ff.). Prophets oppose the apostate kings, whose dynasties come and go as the judgment of God falls upon them. The most notable of these prophets are Elijah and Elisha, whose activities take up a substantial part of the narrative throughout 1 Kings 17-2 Kings 13. They themselves in some respects mitigate the full force of God's wrath upon Israel, offering salvation in the midst of judgment. Final judgment is in any case slow in coming, because of God's promises and his compassion for his people (2 Kgs. 10:30; 13:23). Eventually, however, it arrives; northern Israel is sent into exile in Assyria (2 Kgs. 17).

Although the religious situation in Judah is initially no better than that in Israel (1 Kgs. 14:22-24; 15:3-5), Judah's story thereafter is not one of continuous apostasy. Relatively good kings do rule in the gaps between the wicked kings (1 Kgs. 15:9-22:50; 2 Kgs. 12:1-15:38), and towards the end of the story, we meet two of the very best kings there ever were (2 Kgs. 18:1ff.; 22:1ff.) - kings who reform Israelite worship and obey and trust in God. Sin gradually accumulates, nevertheless, and although it at first appears that, because of a deep commitment to David, God will treat Judah with less severity than Israel, in the end this commitment only delays judgment rather than averting it. The sins of Manasseh are too much to bear (2 Kgs. 21), and Judah is duly exiled to Babylon (2 Kgs. 24-25). The future of the Davidic line apparently hangs by the slender thread of a displaced ruler sitting at the table of the king of Babylon (25:27-30).

From New International Biblical Commentary 1 and 2 Kings by Iain W. Provan pp 10-11.

### Bible

2. After studying 2 Kings jump forward approx. 600 years.
  - (a) What is the experience of Judah living under the rule of the Romans?
  - (b) Why is Rome in control of Judah?

Under David and Solomon, Israel had been a safe and prosperous nation. According to his promises to Abraham, God had planted them in the Promised Land, subdued their enemies, and blessed them with prosperity. This was the historical high point of Israel as a nation.

From that point on, things went downhill. Israel was destroyed because of its chronic apostasy and rebellion against God. By the time of the Exile to Babylon in 587 BC, the everlasting kingdom promised to David in 2 Samuel 7 was in ruins (see Ps 89).

But all was not lost. God's promise to Abraham still stood. As Israel's fortunes declined, the prophets emphatically declared that God would restore his kingdom. . . .

The Jews of Jesus' day were sick of being losers. Nearly five centuries had passed since the last of the Old Testament prophets, and during that period, with a few exceptions, Israel had suffered nothing but humiliation at the hands of the Gentiles (first the Greeks and then the Romans). . . .

Into this mixed environment of messianic hope strode Jesus, proclaiming that the time had finally come - the kingdom of God was at hand.

From The Good Living Guide Matthew 5:1-12 (The Beatitudes) pp 9-11 by Phillip D. Jensen and Tony Payne.

(c) Read Luke 3.1-14. What is significant about the way that John's ministry is announced in the gospel?

(d) In rejecting Jesus, the one John pointed to, is Judea acknowledging what the real problem is?

3. Read Zechariah 9:9-17, Luke 19:28-44.

(a) How would Israel recognize when the true king appeared?

(b) What leadership qualities/characteristics would he possess?

(c) (i) Why is Zechariah 9:9b somewhat of a surprise?

(ii) How do we reconcile power and humility in kingship?

(d) (i) Describe the two different responses to Jesus' arrival into Jerusalem.

(ii) How does Jesus' response in Luke 19:40 inform us of the magnitude of the Pharisees' error?

**To finish**

4. That Jesus rode on despite his opponents reveals a wonderful truth about his commitment to serving humanity.  
(a) What is Jesus' commitment to serving humanity?

(b) What comfort should it bring?

5. "God doesn't do things for us because we deserve them, but because he loves us."  
How can this truth contribute to our sharing of the faith?