

Through the Bible Book by Book

Old Testament

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Second Kings

Theme: The second book of Kings is a continuation of the story of the downfall of Judah and Israel, culminating in the captivity of both. There is the same story of failure on the part of king and people, a story of backsliding and idolatry. Though this was the great prophetic period of Israel, the message of the prophets was unheeded. The reformations that took place under such kings as Hezekiah and Josiah were superficial. The people soon returned to their sins and continued therein until "**there was no remedy**" (II Chronicles 36:15, 16).

Author: The human author is unknown. It is believed that Jeremiah compiled the records made by Nathan, Gad, and others.

Scope: From the reign of Jehoram over Judah and Ahaziah over Israel, to the captivity, covering a period of 308 years from 896-588 B. C.

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- II. The Ministry of Elisha (Chapters 2:14 to 13:21).
- III. The Decline and Fall of Israel (chaps. 13:22 to 17:41).
- IV. The Decline and Fall of Judah (chaps. 18-25).

As the student reads through the chapters, let him make a list of the kings of Judah and Israel, as he did in the first book. We add a parallel list of those kings:

| Kings of Judah | Prophets of Judah | Kings of Israel-Prophets of Israel |
|-----------------------|--------------------------|---|
| Ahaziah | Jehoram | Elisha |
| Athaliah | Jehu | |
| Joash | Jonah | |
| Amaziah | Jehoahaz | |
| Azariah (Uzziah) | Isaiah | Joash |
| Amos | Jeroboam II | |
| Hosea | Zechariah | Joel |
| Shallum | | |

Menahem
Pekahiah
Jotham Hosea
Ahaz Micah
Hezekiah
Manasseh
Amon
Josiah Zephaniah
Jeremiah
Jehoahaz
Jehoiakim Habakkuk
Jehoiachin
Zedekiah

I. The Close of Elijah's Ministry

1. Elijah and Ahaziah (1:1-18).
2. Translation of Elijah (2:1-13).

Who fell sick at this time?

What kind of man was he?

What was his great sin (Exodus 20:3; Deuteronomy 5:7)?

What judgment was pronounced upon him?

How is Elijah described (1:8)?

"Any appearance of cruelty that there is in the fate of the two captains and their men will be removed, on full consideration of the circumstances. GOD being king of Israel, Ahaziah was bound to govern the kingdom according to divine law; to apprehend the Lord's prophet for discharging a commanded duty was the act of an impious and notorious rebel. The captains abetted the king in his rebellion; and they exceeded their military duty by contemptuous insults. In using the term '**man of God,**' they either spoke derisively, believing him to be no true prophet; or if they regarded him as a true prophet, the summons to him to surrender himself bound to the king was a still more flagrant insult, the language of the second captain being worse than that of the first. The punishment was inflicted, not to avenge a personal insult of Elijah, but an insult upon GOD in the person of His prophet; and the punishment was inflicted not by the prophet, but by the hand of GOD."

What had the Lord purposed (2:1)?

Who was acquainted with this fact (2:3)?

What miracle did Elijah perform at the Jordan?

What request did Elisha make?

On what condition was it granted?

II. The Ministry of Elisha

The following are the chief events of Elisha's ministry.

1. Elisha's first miracle - the parting of Jordan's waters (2:14).
2. The healing of the bitter waters (2:19-22).
3. The cursing of the irreverent children (2:23-25).
4. His rebuke of the alliance of Jehoshaphat and Jehoram (3:10-27).
5. The increasing of the widow's oil (4:1-7).
6. The raising of the Shunammite woman's son (4:8-37).
7. The healing of the deadly pottage (4:38-41).
8. The feeding of the 100 men (4:42-44).
9. The healing of Naaman (5:1-27).
10. The recovery of the lost axe (6:1-7).
11. Elisha and the Syrian host (6:8-23).
12. Elisha's promise of food (7:1-20).
13. His prediction of seven years of famine (8:1,2).
14. Elisha's visit to Ben-hadad (8:7-15).
15. His sending of a prophet to anoint Jehu as king (9:1-10).
16. Illness and death of Elisha (13:14-21).

Note reference to the "**sons of the prophets**" (2:3). We learn here that there were schools in those days where the young Israelites were trained for the prophetic ministry (Compare I Samuel 10:5-10; II Kings 6:1).

Chapter 2:23 has presented difficulties to many.

We quote from different commentators:

"The children mentioned here were the infidel or idolatrous young men of the place, who, affecting to disbelieve the report of his master's translation, sarcastically urged him to follow in his glorious career. The expression "**bald head**" was an epithet of contempt in the East, applied even to a person with a bushy head of hair."

"The persons in question were not wanton little children, but youths who knew what they were saying and doing. Neither must we overlook the fact that these youths belonged to a city which was the center and principal seat of apostasy, and which, on this account is called '**Beth Aven,**' i.e., *the House of the Idol*, instead of **Bethel** (*house of GOD*). They were, therefore, literally, the offspring of apostasy and they represented in general the offspring of apostates which was growing up.

The older expositors suppose that the older people had incited the younger ones and that the object was to make the new head of the class of prophets ridiculous and contemptible from the commencement of his career. When, therefore, Elisha threatened with divine punishment the impudent youths, who despised in the holy prophet the holy office to which the Lord had called him, it was no immorality, nor was it unworthy of him; on the contrary, he did what belonged to his prophetic office.

He did not, however, execute the punishment himself; he left that to Him who says, '**Vengeance**

is mine; I will repay.' It was the judgment of GOD that befell these youths, and indirectly, the whole city out of which they came, and it referred back to the threat of the law: **'If ye walk contrary to me and will not hearken unto me . . . I will also send wild beasts among you which shall rob you of your children and destroy your cattle; and your highways shall be desolate'**" (Leviticus 26:21,22).

III. The Decline and Fall of Israel

What nations were sent against Israel (13:22; 15:19, 29)?

What were the Lord's feelings toward Israel (13:23; 14:26, 27)?

Under whose reign did Israel's captivity take place (chapter 17)?

How did he hasten Israel's judgment (17:4)?

Notice GOD's indictment of Israel in chapter 17:7-23.

"The forced emigration of the tribes to Assyria was a result of the despotic principle which was accepted throughout the entire Orient, that it was right to make any revolt of subjugated nations impossible. In this case it was not merely a transportation into another country, but also the commencement of the dissolution of the ten tribes as a nationality.

No one particular province in Assyria was assigned to them as their dwelling place, but several, which were far separated from one another, so that, although this or that tribe may have been kept more or less together, yet the different tribes were scattered up and down in a foreign nation, without the least organic connection with one another.

They never again came together; on the contrary they were gradually lost among the surrounding nations, so that no one knows to this day, what became of them, and every attempt to discover the remains of them has been vain.

In this particular the exile of the ten tribes differs from that of Judah and Benjamin. The exile in Babylon was temporary. It lasted for a definite period which had been foretold by the prophets (II Chronicles 36:21; Jeremiah 29:10). It was not like the Assyrian exile, a period of national dissolution.

Judah did not perish in exile; it rather gained strength, and finally came back into the land of promise, whereas, of the ten tribes only a few who had joined themselves to Judah, and become a part of it, ever found their way back. The ten tribes had, by their violent separation from the rest of the nation, broken the unity of the chosen people, and, in order to maintain this separation, they had revolted from the national covenant with the Lord.

The breach of the covenant was the cornerstone of their existence as a separate nationality. Thereby also they had given up the destiny of the people of GOD in the world's history. They were the larger fragment of the entire nation, but they were only a separated member which was torn away from the common stock, a branch separated from the trunk, which could only wither away.

After 250 years of separate existence, when all the proofs of the divine grace and faithfulness had proved vain, it was the natural fate of the ten tribes to perish and to cease to be an independent nation. The Lord removed them out of His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone (17:18).

The case was different with Judah. Although it had sinned often and deeply against its GOD, yet it never revolted formally and in principle from the covenant, much less was its existence built upon a breach of the covenant. It remained the supporter and the preserver of the Law, and therefore also of the promise.

Its deportation was indeed a heavy punishment and a well-deserved chastisement, but it did not perish thereby, nor disappear as a nation from history - but it was preserved until He came of whom it was said:

"The Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end (Luke 1:32, 33)." - Bahr.

To take the place of the Israelites, the king of Assyria sent colonists from his dominions.

Their idolatry brought upon them the judgment of GOD in the form of the appearing of lions among them. The king of Assyria then sent an Israelitish priest to instruct the colonists in the religion of the Lord. This religion they accepted, but they still continued to worship idols. They mingled with the remnant of the ten tribes left in the land and from their union sprang the Samaritans.

They later abandoned idolatry and became zealous adherents to the law of Moses. After the captivity, anxious to become Israelites, they attempted to join themselves to the two tribes, but were repelled by Ezra and Nehemiah (Ezra 4:1-3).

This gave birth to hatred. The Samaritans later built a rival temple on Mount Gerizim and claimed that it was the true place of worship (John 4:20). This temple was later destroyed by a Jewish king. The Jews hated them and contemptuously referred to them as "Converts of the Lions," from the circumstances of their conversion.

Who, in your opinion, was the best king of Israel? The worst?

IV. The Decline and Fall of Judah.

The kingdom of Judah lasted about 150 years longer than that of Israel. Their history is much brighter than that of the latter. While Israel suffered many changes of dynasty, the kingly line of David was kept intact in Judah. While the history of Israel presents a succession of revolts and usurpations.

The history of Judah is comparatively peaceful. The preservation of Judah may be explained from the fact that through them, the Messiah was to come.

Chapters 24, 25 record Judah's captivity. There are three stages to it:

1. Nebuchadnezzar's first invasion (24:1-2).
2. The first deportation to Babylon (24:11-16).
3. The siege and destruction of Jerusalem and the final deportation (chapter 25).

Note that as in the case of the ten tribes, it was the rebellion of the king of Judah against the invading nation that was the cause of the final captivity (24:20). Read GOD's indictment of Judah (II Chronicles 36:15, 17).

Whose, in your opinion, was the golden reign of Judah? Whose was the worst reign?

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