

2 KINGS

Chapter 1

After the death of Ahab, Ahaziah becomes king. Because of his sins calamities befall Ahaziah.

The vassal state of Moab rebelled against Israel because of the high taxes imposed upon them by Ahab.

Ahaziah accidentally falls through the lattice which enclosed the upper chamber and as a result he lingers between life and death. The king sent messengers to inquire of the god of the Philistines as to whether he would recover or not.

But God instructed an angel to visit Elijah and to intercept the messengers and tell them that Ahaziah would die from the effects of his fall.

When the messengers return so soon Ahaziah knew they had not completed the journey. Ahaziah may have suspected that Elijah had intercepted them.

Ahaziah ordered fifty soldiers to arrest Elijah. Elijah prayed that God would protect him and God sent fire and destroyed the soldiers. This had happened twice more.

The angel of God directs Elijah to go to Ahaziah and repeat the message formerly given to his messengers. Shortly thereafter, Ahaziah died and his brother Jehoram ruled.

Chapter 2

Elisha now becomes the constant companion of Elijah.

Elijah wants to spend his last hours on earth alone so he goes to Gilgal, to Bethel, and to Jericho but Elisha would not separate himself from Elijah.

Leaving Jericho and coming to the Jordan River, Elijah took his mantle and rolled it up so that it resembled a rod and smote the water. Instantly the waters parted and they walked across on dry land.

This was a sign to the Israelites that they should regard Elijah and Elisha as a second Moses and a second Joshua and yield to them a ready obedience. A chariot of fire appears pulled by horses of fire and Elijah was taken up into the heavens.

Elisha picked up Elijah's mantle and walked back to the Jordan and did as his master had done and the waters again divided.

The civil authorities of Jericho approached Elisha and ask him to purify a bitter and poisonous spring. The waters were instantly and permanently made whole. Upon returning to Bethel a gang of ruffians viciously mocked him about his baldhead and his "going up" as Elijah had done. God sent two bears to attack the defenders.

Chapter 3

Jehoram was not as wicked as his father Ahab and his mother Jezebel, but he did continue the calf worship. As a result of the heavy tribute imposed upon the Moabites, they rebelled.

Jehoram knowing he would need help to put down the uprising, appealed to Judah for help. The allied kings traveled seven days across the wilderness of Judah and around the Dead Sea to Moab.

Finding a stream that normally flowed with water, dry, they found themselves in a desperate situation. They call upon Elisha to inquire of God as to what they should do.

God told Elisha to tell the kings to dig ditches or pits throughout the valley. God sent a great storm and the ditches or pits were filled with water. The Moabites seeing the sun shining on the pits of water thought it was blood and that the invading army turned against themselves.

As the greedy Moabites went to gather the spoils they were caught in an ambush and destroyed. Chapter 4

Elisha performs many miracles. A destitute widow asked the prophet for assistance. Her husband had been part of the prophetic order over which Elisha presided. The creditors demanded immediate payment of the family loan which she could not pay.

Elisha instructed her to collect as many empty vessels as she could and to pour into them a small amount of oil. As each vessel became full she filled another. When all the vessels were filled the oil ceased. With the oil she satisfied her creditors.

In another situation a woman built a special room for Elisha “on the wall” of their home. To return the favor, Elisha learned she was barren and her husband was old, but he said at this time next year she would be holding a son in her arms. His prophetic utterance came true.

Four or five years later this son accompanies his father to the grain field and becomes a victim of sunstroke. At about noon, he dies and his mother places him in Elisha’s bed hoping that Elisha could restore him.

The mother saddles a donkey and rode for Elisha who was at Mount Carmel. Falling at Elisha’s she tells her sad story. Elisha sent Gehazi to the woman’s house and told him to lay his staff on the child’s face. But the staff produced no results.

Elisha upon reaching the woman’s house stretched himself upon the lad and restored him to his health. Elisha’s next miracle happened while visiting a prophetic school in Gilgal. A famine was happening and to find food the students fanned out to find fruits or vegetables to put into the stew. One lad found a vine containing gourds and picked them to put in the stew, not knowing they were poisonous.

Eating the stew caused many to become sick. Immediately Elisha put some meal in the pot and the stew was then made wholesome.

Chapter 5

Naaman was the captain of Benhadad's army. He was held in honor, he was a mighty man of valor, a good soldier, but he was a leper. During one of Naaman's raids a little girl was captured. She became Naaman's servant and was confident that Elisha could cure him of his leprosy.

Willing to try anything he took an enormous treasure and went to Elisha. Elisha did not greet him upon his arrival but instructed him to go to the Jordan River and dip seven times. Naaman at first refused to dip in the muddy waters of the Jordan River, but his servants convinced him to carry out Elisha's orders. After dipping himself in the Jordan River he was healed of his leprosy.

Elisha refused Naaman's gifts. Naaman then requested two mule loads of earth which he intended to spread on a plot of ground in Rimmon as to concentrate it and make it a suitable place of worship.

Gehazi could not bear the thought of the Aramean going home with all his treasure. He ran after Naaman and told him that Elisha had changed his mind in regard to the gifts. Gehazi accepted Naaman's gift of money and then hid it in the house of his master.

Elisha knew Gehazi had taken the money and so he said that Gehazi would also take of Naaman's leprosy and should he marry he would be childless.

Chapter 6

To enlarge the school of the prophets at Jericho, men began to fell trees and fashion them into beams but the ax head of one man's axe fell into the murky waters. Since he did not own the axe he became distraught. Elisha asked where the ax head had entered the stream. He then cut a branch and cast it into the water and the ax head floated to the surface.

Benhadad again resumed hostilities with his neighbor to the south. Each time he devised his wartime strategies Elisha informed the king of Israel. The king of Aram suspected that one of his top officers was guilty of treason.

Naaman then told Benhadad it was Elisha who through supernatural insight

knew all that transpired in the Aramean court. A strong force was sent to Dotham to kidnap the prophet. Awakening early in the morning Elisha's servant saw the city surrounded by a large military force. Elisha prays that his servant might see the great angelic host that was just beyond the realm of sight and sound.

As Elisha and his servants approached the enemy he prayed that God would blind the Arameans. Elisha convinced them that they had come to the wrong city and led them inside the walls of Samaria. When their sight was restored the soldiers were shocked to realize that they were within the walls of Samaria and surrounded by Israelite soldiers.

These men were not slain but made to realize they needed to respect and fear the God of Israel. After a period of time Benhadad gathered his entire army to invade Israel.

The Israelites withdrew to Samaria where Benhadad blockaded the city and attempted to starve them to death. The situation got so bad that a donkey's head the worst part of an unclean animal, sold for eighty pieces of silver (about \$50) and a pint of dove's dung for five pieces of silver (\$3).

During the blockade a woman appeals to Jehoram because she and another woman had agreed to eat her son and tomorrow they would eat the other woman's son. But when tomorrow came she hid her son. The king was distressed and ordered Elisha be decapitated that very day. Upon arrival of the king he repented of his orders and gave Elisha a final opportunity to live.

Chapter 7

Elisha said to the king that within twenty-four hours a quantity of grain would be available at the city gate of Samaria. One of the king's officers said that was impossible (verse 2). Elisha tells the officer he would see it but not partake of it.

Four lepers dwelling outside the city decided it would be better to go to the enemy than to die of starvation. Entering the Aramean camp, they found no

one because God had miraculously caused them to hear the sound of a large army approaching them, and they fled.

The lepers found an abundance of food and drink and valuables left behind. They intended to remain quiet about their discovery but their conscience bothered them. To withhold such good things from their countrymen would be criminal and God would punish them. They returned to Samaria with the good news.

Charioteers were sent to investigate and it was as the lepers had reported. The Israelites feasted and took the spoil, but the officer who had scoffed was trampled in the gate of the city by the mob.

Chapter 8

The Shunamite whom Elisha had warned to go take up residence elsewhere because of the famine, returned to find her properties seized. Elisha sent an officer of the court to restore her property.

Elisha goes to Damascus where Benhadad is quite ill. Benhadad inquires of Elisha as to whether he would live and Elisha instructs Hazael to tell his master that he would recover. However, God had told Elisha, that the king would die of another cause. The cause was Hazael's plot to kill the king. Hazael realizes that Elisha knew of his plan to kill Benhadad.

Elisha then relates to Hazael how he would become the king of Aram and how he would burn cities, slaughter the young, cut children in pieces, and rip open the stomachs of pregnant women.

Hazael went to the king to tell him what Elisha had said but only told him the part that he would recover. The next day Hazael took a thick piece of cloth, dipped it in water and suffocated the king. Hazael then usurped the throne.

Jehoram departed from the godly paths of his father causing God to bring about political chastisements. Jehoram died of a two-year incurable disease of the bowels and Ahaziah became king. During his one-year reign he continued the Baal worship.

Chapter 9

Elisha carried out his commission to transfer the kingdom of Israel from the unworthy dynasty of Omri to a new dynasty. Jehu was anointed as the new king. Jehu was to utterly destroy the house of Ahab and Jezebel was to be eaten by dogs.

Jehu began to make plans to become the new king. Secrecy was absolutely essential to keep Jezebel of preparing a large army causing the entire nation to plunge into a civil war. Jehu gathered a small chariot force and made his way to Jezebel before he became suspicious of rebellion or revolt.

Messengers were sent to Jehu as he approaches the city but he refused to talk to them. Finally, the king and his nephew decide to ride out to meet the great general. Joram suddenly realized his precarious situation but it was too late. Jehu quickly shot an arrow killing Joram.

Orders were then given to slay the family of Ahab. About three hours after Jezebel's son Joram was slain she realized Jehu was coming for her. She put on some eye make-up but Jehu was not deterred.

Jehu ordered that Jezebel's eunuchs throw her down from the window. They carried out his orders and then Jehu had his chariot driven over her corpse. Later, after a week he ordered Jezebel's body be given a decent burial, but the dogs had eaten all but her skull, feet, and the palms of her hands.

Chapter 10

The people ask Jehu to become their king but he refused unless they kill the seventy sons of Ahab. They immediately slew the seventy and brought their heads which were put in two heaps at the city gate.

Jehu did destroy the entire Ahab faction from the land including his Baal priests. To utterly destroy all the Baal worshipers, Jehu pretended to be a Baal worshiper and so invited them to attend a great sacrifice in which all worldly business would be suspended for the sake of a religious gathering. Happily, the Baal officials complied with his order.

When the whole multitude of Baal worshipers entered the sacred precincts to make their sacrifices Jehu gave the orders to have them all executed. Jehu did eliminate the worship of the Baal from Israel. However, Jehu did not return to a full worship of god. His reformation was a half reformation because he retained the calf worship of the North.

God had promised Jehu that four generations of his children would rule on the throne of Israel. In spite of God's promise, Jehu did not serve God with all his heart. Jehu reigned twenty-eight years. He died and was buried at Samaria. His son Jehoahaz succeeded him on the throne.

Chapter 11

This chapter begins where it left off at the end of chapter 8 and concerns the history of Judah.

Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, realized her position as queen mother was in jeopardy so she ordered all the members of the house of David be put to death.

Her efforts were frustrated because Ahaziah's sister stole the youngest son of Ahaziah from the nursery and hid Joash from the executioners. Even though Athaliah worshiped the Baal she apparently was afraid to challenge Jehoiada the high priest. Temple service continued and the priests and Levites continued to serve in their regular course.

As Joash reached his sixth birthday he was anointed king. Athaliah hearing the noise accompanying the coronation she hurried to the temple only to find young Joash occupying the king's platform.

Athaliah was led from the temple to the gate which was used by the royal stables and there she was slain.

Jehoiada helped Joash establish his kingdom by pledging the people to maintain their worship to God by destroying the Baal temple and the appointment of officials in God's house.

Joash got off to a good start. His advisor and protector Jehoiada helped him pursue the right course. But when the old priest died, Joash fell into the snare of pride and apostasy.

Chapter 12

Joash had the priests arrange for the money to repair the temple but the priests were negligent in carrying out the king's orders. A public chest was set up in the temple with the people invited to bring their contributions to the temple. The high priest and a royal secretary emptied the chest and gave it to those making the repairs.

Jehoiada died and Joash allowed idolatry to be introduced again. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, protested but was slain in the temple court.

The invasion of Judah by Hazael seems to be regarded as divine judgment for this murderous deed. Hazael defeated a large Judean army and turned toward Jerusalem. Joash offered the temple treasury to him and he withdrew from Jerusalem. Joash was murdered by two of his servants. Amaziah his son became king.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 takes us from the end of chapter 9 with the death of Jehu.

Jehoahaz succeeded his father on the throne and ruled seventeen years. Jehoahaz sinned by allowing calf worship. God delivered Israel into the Aramean's hand. In the midst of this oppression, Jehoahaz repented and cried out for deliverance. God accepted his repentance.

Over fifty years Israel and Judah began to recover from the Aramean domination. By the time Jehoash ascended the throne Elisha must have been about eighty years of age. Elisha told Jehoash he would be delivered from the Arameans.

Elisha died and was buried in a sepulcher. Some Israelite men were carrying a corpse to be buried and spotted a band of raiders. They hastily cast the corpse in the nearest sepulcher which happened to be Elisha's. When the corpse touched the bones of Elisha, the dead man revived and stood up.

Chapter 14

Amaziah became the king of Judah but failed to remove the high places. As soon as Amaziah had his kingdom firmly under his control he ordered assassinated those who had slain his father.

Amaziah decided to launch an attack on Edom and in the battle killed ten thousand. He also captured and executed another ten thousand throwing them from a high cliff. Later, Amaziah challenged Jehoash, the northern king, to a military showdown. Jehoash responded by means of a fable. (verses 9-10)

The armies of Judah were defeated and Amaziah was captured and forced to open the gates to Jerusalem where Jehoash broke down the wall leaving Jerusalem defenseless.

Amaziah was later assassinated in Lachish and the people selected Azariah to be their king. Azariah is more commonly known as Uzziah.

Israel and Judah achieved their greatest glory under the reign of Jeroboam II and Uzziah. It was during this period that Amos and Hosea write. Jonah also was written during this period and Jeroboam II success is attributed to his guidance by Joash.

Jeroboam died and his son Zechariah became king.

Chapter 15

Uzziah was a good king but his prosperity caused him to be filled with pride. He attempted to usurp the priesthood by taking a censer, entered the temple and proceeded to burn incense on the altar before the vail. As a result God smote him with leprosy.

Being forced to spend the final years of his life outside the city, his son Jotham assumed the kingly functions.

Israel's glory days ended with the death of Jeroboam II. Zechariah was the last king of the Jehu dynasty. He is known as one of the evil kings. His reign lasted only six months before being slain by Shallum.

Shallum's thirty-day reign ended as he was killed by Menahem, who already has his armies ready to march north.

When the city of Tiphshah refused to surrender the pregnant women were ripped open and their unborn children carried about on the soldier's swords.

Menahem died and was succeeded by his son Pekahiah who reigned two years and was killed by Pekah.

Chapter 16

Ahaz became the king of Judah and was one of the three more wicked kings. Only Manasseh and Amon receive greater condemnation. Ahaz introduced Canaanite deities, made molten images for Baal, and made his son pass through the fire.

In 732 B.C. the Assyrians captured Damascus just as Amos had foretold. (Amos 1:4,5) Thirty thousand were carried into captivity at Kir, the home of the Arameans. (Amos 9:7)

Ahaz was forced by Tiglath-pileser to set up an altar in Jerusalem and Ahaz ordered the priests to offer their sacrifices on this new altar. Further innovations were made to God's Temple. The ten bronze lavers were removed and the molten sea or giant laver was removed from the twelve bronze oxen.

Later he shut up the temple and suspended the sacrifices, offerings and burning of incense. (2 Chronicles 28:24; 29:7)

Chapter 17

This chapter tells of Israel's fall to the Assyrians.

Hoshea came to the throne of Israel in 732 B.C. He also did evil in the sight of God. Hosea tried to free himself from the Assyrians but failed. In 732 B.C. Samaria fell and 27,290 persons were carried into captivity.

In spite of Israel's apostasy, God continued to plead with them to repent, but they chose to follow the pagan worship. Judah was preserved for a few years after the destruction of Israel by God's grace, even though they continued to worship the Baal.

The Assyrian king replaced those Israelites taken captive from Samaria with subjects from parts of Assyria. These people were ignorant of God. To teach them a lesson God sent lions against them which killed several of them.

As a result, the Assyrian king ordered that one of the priests of God be sent back to instruct the colonists in the ways of God. In spite of the priests teaching, they continued to worship their native deities.

Chapter 18

2 Kings 18-20 is devoted to the reign of the good king, Hezekiah.

The theme of these chapters is that of Judah trying to throw off the Assyrian shackles. Hezekiah's godliness is due to the influence of Isaiah.

Hezekiah reopened the temple which Ahaz had closed, removing all the filthiness which Ahaz had let accumulate there. Two months later a Passover celebration was observed.

The excitement of the Passover caused the people to go about destroying the Asherim and pagan images. Even the bronze serpent which Moses had erected in the wilderness was destroyed because it had become an object of worship. (2 Chronicles 21:1)

Hezekiah put his whole trust in God and God gave Hezekiah His help against the Assyrians.

Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, attacked Hezekiah but Hezekiah decided it was senseless to continue the rebellion and promised to pay whatever penalty Sennacherib imposed.

In order to meet the tribute demands Hezekiah emptied the temple and palace treasuries. He even stripped the gold from the temple pillars and doors. But the Assyrian king was not satisfied. He wanted the total surrender of Jerusalem. Sennacherib reappeared in 688 B.C. and positioned some of his soldiers at the aqueduct, their main source of water.

The Assyrian officers shouted to the Jewish guards that they had a message for Hezekiah. (2 Kings 18:19-36) Rab-Shakel's efforts to generate some sort of insurrection failed.

Chapter 19

Hezekiah was upset with the report of his ministers and went to the temple to seek God's advice. At the same time, he sent for Isaiah who resided in Jerusalem. Hezekiah's message to Isaiah is found in verses 3 and 4.

Isaiah sent a reply to Hezekiah telling him not to be afraid of the blasphemous words of the Assyrian, God would destroy Sennacherib's army. Rab-shakah carried the message to his master and his master sent a letter to Hezekiah telling him he had been deceived by the prophets of God.

Hezekiah read the letter, took it to the temple, and prayed to God to intervene and save His people from the blasphemous invader. Isaiah was made aware of Hezekiah's prayer through divine revelation and told to answer Hezekiah saying:

No natural barrier can stand in the way of this mighty king.

This king is ignorant of the One who determines the rise and fall of kingdoms.

God knows every movement of Sennacherib and every thought of his heart.

God would turn Sennacherib back.

Sennacherib reigned twenty-four years and never again after 701 B.C. did he come to harass Jerusalem. On the very night after Isaiah's prophecy, the angel of the Lord passed over the Assyrian army and smote 185,000 of them. His army decimated, Sennacherib beat a hasty retreat to Ninevah. Twenty years later, while worshiping in the temple of Nisroch, his sons assassinated him.

Chapter 20

Hezekiah was smitten with some disease and Isaiah warned him to set his house in order for he was going to die. Hezekiah, a great man of prayer, turned in his bed and faced the wall that he might pray to God.

The king's prayer is a model for those who are afflicted with serious illness. He called upon God to remember how he tried his very best to walk so as to meet God's approval.

He said he had done what was good in God's sight.

Tears accompanied his prayer.

At this time Hezekiah had no male offspring to succeed him on the throne.

God heard Hezekiah's prayer and granted him good health for fifteen more years. In addition, God promised to deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from Assyria. To prove to Hezekiah that God's promise was true, he was to choose the sign: either the shadow on the sundial could go forward or backward ten steps. The king requested that the shadow go backward ten steps and God answered his request.

After his recovery Hezekiah made a serious mistake showing Merodach-baladan, the Babylonian king all his treasure, collection of arms, and stores of supplies.

Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah for his error in getting involved with the nation which would ultimately destroy Judah. All his treasures and all his people would be carried off as plunder by the Babylonians.

Hezekiah also built the pool of Siloam in Jerusalem. A tunnel was constructed from the Well of the Virgin in the Kidron Valley to transport water to this pool. Workmen began at both ends and constructed a tunnel out of solid rock 1708 feet in length, four to five feet in height, and two feet wide.

Chapter 21

Hezekiah was followed on the throne by the wickedest king ever to rule Judah, Manasseh. Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign. He reigned for fifty-five years, the longest of any king of Israel or Judah.

Manasseh introduced altars to other gods into the temple. Manasseh dedicated his first-born son to the god Molech as a burnt offering. He also was involved in enchantments, necromancy (call up the dead), and wizards who supposedly had supernatural insight into the future.

Manasseh also setup the Asherah, symbol of the goddess of sex and fertility, possibly within the Holy of Holies. (verse 5-9)

Isaiah may have preached in the early years of Manasseh and Nahum toward the close of his reign.

God was going to bring a great calamity upon Judah, the same as Samaria which had been destroyed in 722 B.C. (verse 13)

Josephus wrote that Manasseh put to death all the righteous of the nation. Tradition says this included Isaiah. After the Babylonians took Manasseh captive he repented of his sins. The Assyrians restored him to his throne where Manasseh made a valiant effort to put away idolatrous practices, repaired the altar of God, and re-established the worship of God. (2 Chronicles 33:11-17)

Amon came to the throne after Manasseh. He was evil like his father and restored all the idolatrous and wicked practices. After two years the king's attendants killed him. They did not have the support of the people and were soon executed.

Chapter 22

A lad of eight was made king after Amos. His name was Josiah. At an early age he determined to follow the path of righteousness. Zephaniah may have had a great influence of the young lad after his father's assassination.

Josiah's reign was the most important period of world history. The Assyrian empire was crumbling and the Median and Chaldea empires were forming. Josiah began to reform Judah in the eighth year of his reign. (verse 2) Several years later Jeremiah began his ministry which must have helped the king's reform efforts.

While preparing to repair the temple the book of the Law of God was found by Shaphan and was read to Josiah. Josiah recognized that Judah was not living according to the Law of God. The prophetess Huldah was consulted about the book and she told Josiah's spokesmen that all the threats in the book would shortly befall Jerusalem and its inhabitants but that the destruction would not take place in Josiah's lifetime.

Chapter 23

After receiving the word from Huldah, Josiah called a great assembly of the nation and had the law read. Josiah renewed the covenant with God which was broken by Manasseh and Amon. The king pledges to obey from the heart the Law of God.

The reformation began with the cleansing of the temple and the removal of all vessels dedicated to Baal, Asherah, and the host of heavens. Josiah tore down the house of the male temple prostitutes.

The spot where sacrifices were offered to Molech, was defiled by Josiah so that the abominations practiced there would forever cease. The sacred horses used in the sun worship at one of the temple entrances were removed and their wooden chariots burned.

Not since the days of the Judges had the Passover been observed.

In spite of Josiah's efforts, it was too late to escape God's anger. The people's hearts were still corrupted by the sins of Manasseh and Omri. The twenty-three years after Josiah's reign was the "dying time" for the kingdom of Judah. In spite of Jeremiah's preaching Judah sank deeper and deeper into apostasy and rebellion.

Pharaoh Necho decided to intervene in the tottering of the Assyrian kingdom. This Egyptian army had to go through a narrow pass at Megiddo.

Josiah decided to stop him but Necho assured Josiah that it was God's will, and that he should join forces. The battle was joined and Josiah was killed in battle. He actually died on the way to Jerusalem. Shallum was then made king in place of his father. Shallum's name was changed to Jehoahaz. Jehoahaz was wicked and later died in Pharaoh's military prison.

Necho then installed Eliakim, Josiah's oldest son, on the throne. His name was changed to Jehoiakin. Idolatrous practices were reintroduced. Jeremiah condemned Jehoiakin for building for himself a fancy new palace. Jeremiah was in danger on more than one occasion. Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian crown prince, went up and besieged Jerusalem. Jehoiakin gave the Chaldean prince some of the valuable temple vessels and some prize youth of the land such as Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abed-nego.

Chapter 24

Nebuchadnezzar bound Jehoiachim to take him to Babylon but for some reason changed his mind and left him on the throne of Jerusalem as his vassal. As Nebuchadnezzar received a rather severe blow in his battle with the Egyptians in 601 B.C. he was unable to attend his rebellion vassal in Jerusalem. When he was able to return to Jerusalem, Jehioakim had already died. (Jeremiah 22:18-19) His young son was left to fight the mighty Nebuchadnezzar. Jehoachin reigned three months. Nebuchadnezzar had Jerusalem surrounded during Jehoiachin's reign. Finally, he and the leading citizens of Jerusalem walked through the gates and surrendered on March 16, 597 B.C.

Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple vessels, furniture, and carried into captivity all the important people such as princes or nobles, professional soldiers, and skilled craftsmen, a total of ten thousand captives. Mattaniah was then made king of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar. Mattaniah was the third son of Josiah. He changed his name to Zedekiah. The reign of Zedekiah was the most tragic in the history of God's people because they lost the protecting power of God. Judah's territory was diminished and many cities severely destroyed. The population was drastically reduced by captivity.

Pharaoh Hophra encouraged a western coalition against Babylon which Zedekiah entered wholeheartedly.

Chapter 25

In January 588 B.C. the Babylonian army arrived at Jerusalem. The siege wall around Jerusalem began to take its toll as the city began to suffer from famine. In July 587 B.C. the Babylonians were able to make a breach in the walls and entered Jerusalem. Zedekiah and the men of war escaped but were soon captured.

Zedekiah was taken to Riblah where he stood trial before Nebuchadnezzar. He was forced to witness the execution of his sons and with a red hot iron rod they put out Zedekiah's eyes and put him in bronze fetters carrying him to Babylon where he died while in prison. Jerusalem was destroyed and its inhabitants deported to Babylon. Only the poorest were allowed to remain in the land.

The temple was ravaged and then burnt. The religious leaders and officials of the state were executed. Gedaliah set about to rebuild Judah but was murdered by Ishmael. The Book of Kings closes with the account of the release of King Jehoiachin who was taken to Babylon in 597 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar died and his son came to power in 562 B.C. He restored Jehoiachin to royal favor and ordered him released from prison. He was not allowed to return to Jerusalem but resided with the Babylonian king.