

# The Book of Second Kings

Evil Rulers, Idolatry

And A Complacent  
Generation

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## 2 Kings

**OVERVIEW:** SPARKLING as it crashes against boulders along its banks, the river swiftly cascades toward the sea. The current grabs, pushes, and tugs at leaves and logs, carrying them along for the ride. Here and there a sportsman is spotted in a kayak or a canoe, going with the flow. Gravity pulls the water, and the river pulls the rest. . . downward. Suddenly, a silver missile breaks the surface and darts upstream, and then another. Oblivious to the swirling opposition, the shining salmon swim against the stream. They must go upstream, and nothing will stop them from reaching their destination.

The current of society's river is flowing fast and furious, pulling downward everything in its way. It would be easy to float along with the current. But God calls us to swim against the flow. It will not be easy, and we may be alone, but it will be right.

In the book of 2 Kings, we read of evil rulers, rampant idolatry, and a complacent populace—certainly pulling downward. Despite the pressure to conform, to turn from the Lord and to serve only self, a minority of chosen people moved the opposite direction, toward God. The Bethel prophets and others, as well as two righteous kings, spoke God's word and stood for him. As you read 2 Kings, watch these courageous individuals. Catch the strength and force of Elijah and Elisha and the commitment of Hezekiah and Josiah, and determine to be one who swims against the current!

Second Kings continues the history of Israel, halfway between the death of David and the death of the nation. Israel had been divided (1 Kings 12), and the two kingdoms had begun to slide into idolatry and corruption toward collapse and captivity. Second Kings relates the sordid stories of the 12 kings of the northern kingdom (called Israel) and the 16 kings of the southern kingdom (called Judah). For 130 years, Israel endures the succession of evil rulers until they were conquered by Shalmaneser of Assyria and led into captivity in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:6). Of all the kings in both the north and south, only two—Hezekiah and Josiah—were called good. Because of their obedience to God and the spiritual revivals during their reigns, Judah stood for an additional 136 years until falling to Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Throughout this dark period, the Bible mentions 30 prophets who proclaimed God's message to the people and their leaders. Most notable of these fearless people of God are Elijah and Elisha. As Elijah neared the end of his earthly ministry, Elisha asked for a double portion of his beloved mentor's spirit (2 Kings 2:9). Soon after, Elijah was taken to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11), and Elisha became God's spokesman to the northern kingdom. Elisha's life was filled with signs, proclamations, warnings, and miracles.

Four of the most memorable are the flowing oil (2 Kings 4:1-7), the healing of the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kings 4:8-37), the healing of Naaman's leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27), and the floating ax head (2 Kings 6:1-7).

Even in the midst of terrible situations, God will have his faithful minority, his remnant (2 Kings 19:31). He desires courageous men and women to proclaim his truth.

## THE BLUEPRINT

### A. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (2 Kings 1:1-17:41)

Although Israel had the witness and power of Elisha, the nation turned from God and was exiled to Assyria. Assyria filled the northern kingdom with people from other lands. There has been no return from this captivity—it was permanent. Such is the end of all who shut God out of their lives.

1. Elisha's ministry
2. Kings of Israel and Judah
3. Israel is exiled to Assyria

#### 2 Kings 1:1-17:40

After King Ahab's death, the nation of Moab declared its independence from Israel.

[2] One day Israel's new king, Ahaziah, fell through the latticework of an upper room at his palace in Samaria, and he was seriously injured. So he sent messengers to the temple of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether he would recover.

[3] But the angel of the Lord told Elijah, who was from Tishbe, "Go and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, 'Why are you going to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether the king will get well? Is there no God in Israel?' [4] Now, therefore, this is what the Lord says: You will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die.'" So Elijah went to deliver the message.

[5] When the messengers returned to the king, he asked them, "Why have you returned so soon?"

[6] They replied, "A man came up to us and said, 'Go back to the king and give him this message from the Lord: Why are you sending men to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether you will get well? Is there no God in Israel? Now, since you have done this, you will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die.'"

[7] "Who was this man?" the king demanded. "What did he look like?"

[8] They replied, "He was a hairy man, and he wore a leather belt around his waist."

"It was Elijah from Tishbe!" the king exclaimed. [9] Then he sent an army captain with fifty soldiers to arrest him. They found him sitting on top of a hill. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king has commanded you to come along with us."

[10] But Elijah replied to the captain, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" Then fire fell from heaven and killed them all.

[11] So the king sent another captain with fifty men. The captain said to him, "Man of God, the king says that you must come down right away."

[12] Elijah replied, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and destroy you and your fifty men!" And again the fire of God fell from heaven and killed them all.

[13] Once more the king sent a captain with fifty men. But this time the captain fell to his knees before Elijah. He pleaded with him, "O man of God, please spare my life and the lives of these, your fifty servants. [14] See how the fire from heaven has destroyed the first two groups. But now please spare my life!"

[15] Then the angel of the Lord said to Elijah, "Don't be afraid. Go with him." So Elijah got up and went to the king.

[16] And Elijah said to the king, "This is what the Lord says: Why did you send messengers to Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron, to ask whether you will get well? Is there no God in Israel? Now, since you have done this, you will never leave the bed on which you are lying, but you will surely die."

[17] So Ahaziah died, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah. Since Ahaziah did not have a son to succeed him, his brother Joram became the next king. This took place in the second year of the reign of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah. [18] The rest of the events in Ahaziah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[2:1] When the Lord was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, Elijah and Elisha were traveling from Gilgal. [2] And Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Bethel."

But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you!" So they went on together to Bethel.

[3] The group of prophets from Bethel came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?"

"Quiet!" Elisha answered. "Of course I know it."

[4] Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to Jericho."

But Elisha replied again, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together to Jericho.

[5] Then the group of prophets from Jericho came to Elisha and asked him, "Did you know that the Lord is going to take your master away from you today?"

"Quiet!" he answered again. "Of course I know it."

[6] Then Elijah said to Elisha, "Stay here, for the Lord has told me to go to the Jordan River."

But again Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I will never leave you." So they went on together.

[7] Fifty men from the group of prophets also went and watched from a distance as Elijah and Elisha stopped beside the Jordan River. [8] Then Elijah folded his cloak together and struck the water with it. The river divided, and the two of them went across on dry ground!

[9] When they came to the other side, Elijah said to Elisha, "What can I do for you before I am taken away?"

And Elisha replied, "Please let me become your rightful successor."

[10] "You have asked a difficult thing," Elijah replied. "If you see me when I am taken from you, then you will get your request. But if not, then you won't."

[11] As they were walking along and talking, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared, drawn by horses of fire. It drove between them, separating them, and Elijah was carried by a whirlwind into heaven. [12] Elisha saw it and cried out, "My father! My father! The chariots and charioteers of Israel!" And as they disappeared from sight, Elisha tore his robe in two.

[13] Then Elisha picked up Elijah's cloak and returned to the bank of the Jordan River. [14] He struck the water with the cloak and cried out, "Where is the Lord, the God of Elijah?" Then the river divided, and Elisha went across.

[15] When the group of prophets from Jericho saw what happened, they exclaimed, "Elisha has become Elijah's successor!" And they went to meet him and bowed down before him. [16] "Sir," they said, "just say the word and fifty of our strongest men will search the wilderness for your master. Perhaps the Spirit of the Lord has left him on some mountain or in some valley."

"No," Elisha said, "don't send them." [17] But they kept urging him until he was embarrassed, and he finally said, "All right, send them." So fifty men searched for three days but did not find Elijah. [18] Elisha was still at Jericho when they returned. "Didn't I tell you not to go?" he asked.

[19] Now the leaders of the town of Jericho visited Elisha. "We have a problem, my lord," they told him. "This town is located in beautiful natural surroundings, as you can see. But the water is bad, and the land is unproductive."

[20] Elisha said, "Bring me a new bowl with salt in it." So they brought it to him. [21] Then he went out to the spring that supplied the town with water and threw the salt into it. And he said, "This is what the Lord says: I have made this water wholesome. It will no longer cause death or infertility." [22] And sure enough! The water has remained wholesome ever since, just as Elisha said.

[23] Elisha left Jericho and went up to Bethel. As he was walking along the road, a group of boys from the town began mocking and making fun of him. "Go away, you baldhead!" they chanted. "Go away, you baldhead!" [24] Elisha turned around and looked at them, and he cursed them in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty-two of them. [25] From there Elisha went to Mount Carmel and finally returned to Samaria.

[3:1] Ahab's son Joram began to rule over Israel in the eighteenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twelve years. [2] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but he was not as wicked as his father and mother. He at least tore down the sacred pillar of Baal that his father had set up. [3] Nevertheless he continued in the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led the people of Israel to commit.

[4] King Mesha of Moab and his people were sheep breeders. They used to pay the king of Israel an annual tribute of 100,000 lambs and the wool of 100,000 rams. [5] But after Ahab's death, the king of Moab rebelled against the king of Israel. [6] So King Joram mustered the army of Israel and marched from Samaria. [7] On the way, he sent this message to King Jehoshaphat of Judah: "The king of Moab has rebelled against me. Will you help me fight him?"

And Jehoshaphat replied, "Why, of course! You and I are brothers, and my troops are yours to command. Even my horses are at your service." [8] Then Jehoshaphat asked, "What route will we take?"

"We will attack from the wilderness of Edom," Joram replied. [9] The king of Edom and his troops joined them, and all three armies traveled along a roundabout route through the wilderness for seven days. But there was no water for the men or their pack animals.

[10] "What should we do?" the king of Israel cried out. "The Lord has brought the three of us here to let the king of Moab defeat us."

[11] But King Jehoshaphat of Judah asked, "Is there no prophet of the Lord with us? If there is, we can ask the Lord what to do."

One of King Joram's officers replied, "Elisha son of Shaphat is here. He used to be Elijah's personal assistant."

[12] Jehoshaphat said, "Then the Lord will speak through him." So the kings of Israel, Judah, and Edom went to consult with Elisha.

[13] "I want no part of you," Elisha said to the king of Israel. "Go to the pagan prophets of your father and mother!"

But King Joram said, "No! For it was the Lord who called us three kings here to be destroyed by the king of Moab!"

[14] Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord Almighty lives, whom I serve, I would not bother with you except for my respect for King Jehoshaphat of Judah. [15] Now bring me someone who can play the harp."

While the harp was being played, the power of the Lord came upon Elisha, [16] and he said, "This is what the Lord says: This dry valley will be filled with pools of water! [17] You will see neither wind nor rain, says the Lord, but this valley will be filled with water. You will have plenty for yourselves and for your cattle and your other animals. [18] But this is only a simple thing for the Lord, for he will make you victorious over the army of Moab! [19] You will conquer the best of their cities, even the fortified ones. You will cut down all their trees, stop up all their springs, and ruin all their good land with stones."

[20] And sure enough, the next day at about the time when the morning sacrifice was offered, water suddenly appeared! It was flowing from the direction of Edom, and soon there was water everywhere.

[21] Meanwhile, when the people of Moab heard about the three armies marching against them, they mobilized every man who could fight, young and old, and stationed themselves along their border. [22] But when they got up the next morning, the sun was shining across the water, making it look as red as blood. [23] "It's blood!" the Moabites exclaimed. "The three armies have attacked and killed each other! Let's go and collect the plunder!"

[24] When they arrived at the Israelite camp, the army of Israel rushed out and attacked the Moabites, who turned and ran. The army of Israel chased them into the land of Moab, destroying everything as they went. [25] They destroyed the cities, covered their good land with stones, stopped up the springs, and cut down the good trees. Finally, only Kir-hareseth was left, but even that came under attack.

[26] When the king of Moab saw that he was losing the battle, he led seven hundred of his warriors in a desperate attempt to break through the enemy lines near the king of Edom, but they failed to escape. [27] So he took his oldest son, who would have been the next king, and sacrificed him as a burnt offering on the wall. As a result, the anger against Israel was great, so they withdrew and returned to their own land.

[4:1] One day the widow of one of Elisha's fellow prophets came to Elisha and cried out to him, "My husband who served you is dead, and you know how he feared the Lord. But now a creditor has come, threatening to take my two sons as slaves."

[2] "What can I do to help you?" Elisha asked. "Tell me, what do you have in the house?"  
"Nothing at all, except a flask of olive oil," she replied.

[3] And Elisha said, "Borrow as many empty jars as you can from your friends and neighbors. [4] Then go into your house with your sons and shut the door behind you. Pour olive oil from your flask into the jars, setting the jars aside as they are filled."

[5] So she did as she was told. Her sons brought many jars to her, and she filled one after another. [6] Soon every container was full to the brim!

"Bring me another jar," she said to one of her sons.

"There aren't any more!" he told her. And then the olive oil stopped flowing.

[7] When she told the man of God what had happened, he said to her, "Now sell the olive oil and pay your debts, and there will be enough money left over to support you and your sons."

[8] One day Elisha went to the town of Shunem. A wealthy woman lived there, and she invited him to eat some food. From then on, whenever he passed that way, he would stop there to eat.

[9] She said to her husband, "I am sure this man who stops in from time to time is a holy man of God. [10] Let's make a little room for him on the roof and furnish it with a bed, a table, a chair, and a lamp. Then he will have a place to stay whenever he comes by."

[11] One day Elisha returned to Shunem, and he went up to his room to rest. [12] He said to his servant Gehazi, "Tell the woman I want to speak to her." When she arrived, [13] Elisha said to Gehazi, "Tell her that we appreciate the kind concern she has shown us. Now ask her what we can do for her. Does she want me to put in a good word for her to the king or to the commander of the army?"

"No," she replied, "my family takes good care of me."

[14] Later Elisha asked Gehazi, "What do you think we can do for her?"

He suggested, "She doesn't have a son, and her husband is an old man."

[15] "Call her back again," Elisha told him. When the woman returned, Elisha said to her as she stood in the doorway, [16] "Next year at about this time you will be holding a son in your arms!"

"No, my lord!" she protested. "Please don't lie to me like that, O man of God." [17] But sure enough, the woman soon became pregnant. And at that time the following year she had a son, just as Elisha had said.

[18] One day when her child was older, he went out to visit his father, who was working with the harvesters. [19] Suddenly he complained, "My head hurts! My head hurts!"

His father said to one of the servants, "Carry him home to his mother."

[20] So the servant took him home, and his mother held him on her lap. But around noontime he died. [21] She carried him up to the bed of the man of God, then shut the door and left him there. [22] She sent a message to her husband: "Send one of the servants and a donkey so that I can hurry to the man of God and come right back."

[23] "Why today?" he asked. "It is neither a new moon festival nor a Sabbath."

But she said, "It's all right." [24] So she saddled the donkey and said to the servant, "Hurry! Don't slow down on my account unless I tell you to."

[25] As she approached the man of God at Mount Carmel, Elisha saw her in the distance. He said to Gehazi, "Look, the woman from Shunem is coming. [26] Run out to meet her and ask her, 'Is everything all right with you, with your husband, and with your child?' "

"Yes," the woman told Gehazi, "everything is fine."

[27] But when she came to the man of God at the mountain, she fell to the ground before him and caught hold of his feet. Gehazi began to push her away, but the man of God said, "Leave her alone. Something is troubling her deeply, and the Lord has not told me what it is."

[28] Then she said, "It was you, my lord, who said I would have a son. And didn't I tell you not to raise my hopes?"

[29] Then Elisha said to Gehazi, "Get ready to travel; take my staff and go! Don't talk to anyone along the way. Go quickly and lay the staff on the child's face."

[30] But the boy's mother said, "As surely as the Lord lives and you yourself live, I won't go home unless you go with me." So Elisha returned with her.

[31] Gehazi hurried on ahead and laid the staff on the child's face, but nothing happened. There was no sign of life. He returned to meet Elisha and told him, "The child is still dead."

[32] When Elisha arrived, the child was indeed dead, lying there on the prophet's bed. [33] He went in alone and shut the door behind him and prayed to the Lord. [34] Then he lay down on the child's body, placing his mouth on the child's mouth, his eyes on the child's eyes, and his hands on the child's hands. And the child's body began to grow warm again! [35] Elisha got up and walked back and forth in the room a few times. Then he stretched himself out again on the child. This time the boy sneezed seven times and opened his eyes!

[36] Then Elisha summoned Gehazi. "Call the child's mother!" he said. And when she came in, Elisha said, "Here, take your son!" [37] She fell at his feet, overwhelmed with gratitude. Then she picked up her son and carried him downstairs.

[38] Elisha now returned to Gilgal, but there was a famine in the land. One day as the group of prophets was seated before him, he said to his servant, "Put on a large kettle and make some stew for these men."

[39] One of the young men went out into the field to gather vegetables and came back with a pocket full of wild gourds. He shredded them and put them into the kettle without realizing they were poisonous. [40] But after the men had eaten a bite or two they cried out, "Man of God, there's poison in this stew!" So they would not eat it.

[41] Elisha said, "Bring me some flour." Then he threw it into the kettle and said, "Now it's all right; go ahead and eat." And then it did not harm them!

[42] One day a man from Baal-shalishah brought the man of God a sack of fresh grain and twenty loaves of barley bread made from the first grain of his harvest. Elisha said, "Give it to the group of prophets so they can eat."

[43] "What?" his servant exclaimed. "Feed one hundred people with only this?"

But Elisha repeated, "Give it to the group of prophets so they can eat, for the Lord says there will be plenty for all. There will even be some left over!" [44] And sure enough, there was plenty for all and some left over, just as the Lord had promised.

[5:1] The king of Aram had high admiration for Naaman, the commander of his army, because through him the Lord had given Aram great victories. But though Naaman was a mighty warrior, he suffered from leprosy.

[2] Now groups of Aramean raiders had invaded the land of Israel, and among their captives was a young girl who had been given to Naaman's wife as a maid. [3] One day the girl said to her mistress, "I wish my master would go to see the prophet in Samaria. He would heal him of his leprosy."

[4] So Naaman told the king what the young girl from Israel had said. [5] "Go and visit the prophet," the king told him. "I will send a letter of introduction for you to carry to the king of Israel." So Naaman started out, taking as gifts 750 pounds of silver, 150 pounds of gold, and ten sets of clothing. [6] The letter to the king of Israel said: "With this letter I present my servant Naaman. I want you to heal him of his leprosy."

[7] When the king of Israel read it, he tore his clothes in dismay and said, "This man sends me a leper to heal! Am I God that I can kill and give life? He is only trying to find an excuse to invade us again."

[8] But when Elisha, the man of God, heard about the king's reaction, he sent this message to him: "Why are you so upset? Send Naaman to me, and he will learn that there is a true prophet here in Israel."

[9] So Naaman went with his horses and chariots and waited at the door of Elisha's house. [10] But Elisha sent a messenger out to him with this message: "Go and wash yourself seven times in the Jordan River. Then your skin will be restored, and you will be healed of leprosy."

[11] But Naaman became angry and stalked away. "I thought he would surely come out to meet me!" he said. "I expected him to wave his hand over the leprosy and call on the name of the Lord his God and heal me! [12] Aren't the Abana River and Pharpar River of Damascus better than all the rivers of Israel put together? Why shouldn't I wash in them and be healed?" So Naaman turned and went away in a rage.

[13] But his officers tried to reason with him and said, "Sir, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, wouldn't you have done it? So you should certainly obey him when he says simply to go and wash and be cured!" [14] So Naaman went down to the Jordan River and dipped himself seven times, as the man of God had instructed him. And his flesh became as healthy as a young child's, and he was healed!

[15] Then Naaman and his entire party went back to find the man of God. They stood before him, and Naaman said, "I know at last that there is no God in all the world except in Israel. Now please accept my gifts."

[16] But Elisha replied, "As surely as the Lord lives, whom I serve, I will not accept any gifts." And though Naaman urged him to take the gifts, Elisha refused.

[17] Then Naaman said, "All right, but please allow me to load two of my mules with earth from this place, and I will take it back home with me. From now on I will never again offer any burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the Lord. [18] However, may the Lord pardon me in this one thing. When my master the king goes into the temple of the god Rimmon to worship there and leans on my arm, may the Lord pardon me when I bow, too."

[19] "Go in peace," Elisha said. So Naaman started home again.

[20] But Gehazi, Elisha's servant, said to himself, "My master should not have let this Aramean get away without accepting his gifts. As surely as the Lord lives, I will chase after him and get something from him." [21] So Gehazi set off after him.

When Naaman saw him running after him, he climbed down from his chariot and went to meet him. "Is everything all right?" Naaman asked.

[22] "Yes," Gehazi said, "but my master has sent me to tell you that two young prophets from the hill country of Ephraim have just arrived. He would like 75 pounds of silver and two sets of clothing to give to them."

[23] "By all means, take 150 pounds of silver," Naaman insisted. He gave him two sets of clothing, tied up the money in two bags, and sent two of his servants to carry the gifts for Gehazi. [24] But when they arrived at the hill, Gehazi took the gifts from the servants and sent the men back. Then he hid the gifts inside the house.

[25] When he went in to his master, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been, Gehazi?" "I haven't been anywhere," he replied.

[26] But Elisha asked him, "Don't you realize that I was there in spirit when Naaman stepped down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to receive money and clothing and olive groves and vineyards and sheep and oxen and servants? [27] Because you have done this, you and your children and your children's children will suffer from Naaman's leprosy forever." When Gehazi left the room, he was leprous; his skin was as white as snow.

[6:1] One day the group of prophets came to Elisha and told him, "As you can see, this place where we meet with you is too small. [2] Let's go down to the Jordan River, where there are plenty of logs. There we can build a new place for us to meet."

"All right," he told them, "go ahead."

[3] "Please come with us," someone suggested.

"I will," he said.

[4] When they arrived at the Jordan, they began cutting down trees. [5] But as one of them was chopping, his ax head fell into the river. "Ah, my lord!" he cried. "It was a borrowed ax!"

[6] "Where did it fall?" the man of God asked. When he showed him the place, Elisha cut a stick and threw it into the water. Then the ax head rose to the surface and floated. [7] "Grab it," Elisha said to him. And the man reached out and grabbed it.

[8] When the king of Aram was at war with Israel, he would confer with his officers and say, "We will mobilize our forces at such and such a place."

[9] But immediately Elisha, the man of God, would warn the king of Israel, "Do not go near that place, for the Arameans are planning to mobilize their troops there." [10] So the king of Israel would send word to the place indicated by the man of God, warning the people there to be on their guard. This happened several times.

[11] The king of Aram became very upset over this. He called in his officers and demanded, "Which of you is the traitor? Who has been informing the king of Israel of my plans?"

[12] "It's not us, my lord," one of the officers replied. "Elisha, the prophet in Israel, tells the king of Israel even the words you speak in the privacy of your bedroom!"

[13] The king commanded, "Go and find out where Elisha is, and we will send troops to seize him."

And the report came back: "Elisha is at Dothan." [14] So one night the king of Aram sent a great army with many chariots and horses to surround the city. [15] When the servant of the man of God got up early the next morning and went outside, there were troops, horses, and chariots everywhere.

"Ah, my lord, what will we do now?" he cried out to Elisha.

[16] "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs!" [17] Then Elisha prayed, "O Lord, open his eyes and let him see!" The Lord opened his servant's eyes, and when he looked up, he saw that the hillside around Elisha was filled with horses and chariots of fire.

[18] As the Aramean army advanced toward them, Elisha prayed, "O Lord, please make them blind." And the Lord did as Elisha asked. [19] Then Elisha went out and told them, "You have come the wrong way! This isn't the right city! Follow me, and I will take you to the man you are looking for." And he led them to Samaria. [20] As soon as they had entered Samaria, Elisha prayed, "O Lord, now open their eyes and let them see." And the Lord did, and they discovered that they were in Samaria.

[21] When the king of Israel saw them, he shouted to Elisha, "My father, should I kill them?"

[22] "Of course not!" Elisha told him. "Do we kill prisoners of war? Give them food and drink and send them home again to their master."

[23] So the king made a great feast for them and then sent them home to their king. After that, the Aramean raiders stayed away from the land of Israel.

[24] Some time later, however, King Ben-hadad of Aram mobilized his entire army and besieged Samaria. [25] As a result there was a great famine in the city. After a while even a donkey's head sold for two pounds of silver, and a cup of dove's dung cost about two ounces of silver.

[26] One day as the king of Israel was walking along the wall of the city, a woman called to him, "Please help me, my lord the king!"

[27] "If the Lord doesn't help you, what can I do?" he retorted. "I have neither food nor wine to give you." [28] But then the king asked, "What is the matter?"

She replied, "This woman proposed that we eat my son one day and her son the next. [29] So we cooked my son and ate him. Then the next day I said, 'Kill your son so we can eat him,' but she had hidden him."

[30] When the king heard this, he tore his clothes in despair. And as the king walked along the wall, the people could see that he was wearing sackcloth underneath next to his skin. [31] "May God kill me if I don't execute Elisha son of Shaphat this very day," the king vowed.

[32] Elisha was sitting in his house at a meeting with the leaders of Israel when the king sent a messenger to summon him. But before the messenger arrived, Elisha said to the leaders, "A murderer has sent a man to kill me. When he arrives, shut the door and keep him out. His master will soon follow him."

[33] While Elisha was still saying this, the messenger arrived. And the king said, "It is the Lord who has brought this trouble on us! Why should I wait any longer for the Lord?"

[7:1] Elisha replied, "Hear this message from the Lord! This is what the Lord says: By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost only half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost only half an ounce of silver."

[2] The officer assisting the king said to the man of God, "That couldn't happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!"

But Elisha replied, "You will see it happen, but you won't be able to eat any of it!"

[3] Now there were four men with leprosy sitting at the entrance of the city gates. "Why should we sit here waiting to die?" they asked each other. [4] "We will starve if we stay here, and we will starve if we go back into the city. So we might as well go out and surrender to the Aramean army. If they let us live, so much the better. But if they kill us, we would have died anyway."

[5] So that evening they went out to the camp of the Arameans, but no one was there! [6] For the Lord had caused the whole army of Aram to hear the clatter of speeding chariots and the galloping of horses and the sounds of a great army approaching. "The king of Israel has hired the Hittites and Egyptians to attack us!" they cried out. [7] So they panicked and fled into the night, abandoning their tents, horses, donkeys, and everything else, and they fled for their lives.

[8] When the lepers arrived at the edge of the camp, they went into one tent after another, eating, drinking wine, and carrying out silver and gold and clothing and hiding it. [9] Finally, they said to each other,

"This is not right. This is wonderful news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone! If we wait until morning, some terrible calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace."

[10] So they went back to the city and told the gatekeepers what had happened—that they had gone out to the Aramean camp and no one was there! The horses and donkeys were tethered and the tents were all in order, but there was not a single person around. [11] Then the gatekeepers shouted the news to the people in the palace.

[12] The king got out of bed in the middle of the night and told his officers, "I know what has happened. The Arameans know we are starving, so they have left their camp and have hidden in the fields. They are expecting us to leave the city, and then they will take us alive and capture the city."

[13] One of his officers replied, "We had better send out scouts to check into this. Let them take five of the remaining horses. If something happens to them, it won't be a greater loss than if they stay here and die with the rest of us."

[14] So two chariots with horses were prepared, and the king sent scouts to see what had happened to the Aramean army. [15] They went all the way to the Jordan River, following a trail of clothing and equipment that the Arameans had thrown away in their mad rush to escape. The scouts returned and told the king about it. [16] Then the people of Samaria rushed out and plundered the Aramean camp. So it was true that five quarts of fine flour were sold that day for half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain were sold for half an ounce of silver, just as the Lord had promised. [17] The king appointed his officer to control the traffic at the gate, but he was knocked down and trampled to death as the people rushed out.

So everything happened exactly as the man of God had predicted when the king came to his house. [18] The man of God had said to the king, "By this time tomorrow in the markets of Samaria, five quarts of fine flour will cost half an ounce of silver, and ten quarts of barley grain will cost half an ounce of silver." [19] The king's officer had replied, "That couldn't happen even if the Lord opened the windows of heaven!" And the man of God had said, "You will see it happen, but you won't be able to eat any of it!" [20] And so it was, for the people trampled him to death at the gate!

[8:1] Elisha had told the woman whose son he had brought back to life, "Take your family and move to some other place, for the Lord has called for a famine on Israel that will last for seven years." [2] So the woman did as the man of God instructed. She took her family and lived in the land of the Philistines for seven years.

[3] After the famine ended she returned to the land of Israel, and she went to see the king about getting back her house and land. [4] As she came in, the king was talking with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God. The king had just said, "Tell me some stories about the great things Elisha has done." [5] And Gehazi was telling the king about the time Elisha had brought a boy back to life. At that very moment, the mother of the boy walked in to make her appeal to the king.

"Look, my lord!" Gehazi exclaimed. "Here is the woman now, and this is her son—the very one Elisha brought back to life!"

[6] "Is this true?" the king asked her. And she told him that it was. So he directed one of his officials to see to it that everything she had lost was restored to her, including the value of any crops that had been harvested during her absence.

[7] Now Elisha went to Damascus, the capital of Aram, where King Ben-hadad lay sick. Someone told the king that the man of God had come. [8] When the king heard the news, he said to Hazael, "Take a gift to the man of God. Then tell him to ask the Lord if I will get well again."

[9] So Hazael loaded down forty camels with the finest products of Damascus as a gift for Elisha. He went in to him and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad, the king of Aram, has sent me to ask you if he will recover."

[10] And Elisha replied, "Go and tell him, 'You will recover.' But the Lord has shown me that he will actually die!" [11] Elisha stared at Hazael with a fixed gaze until Hazael became uneasy. Then the man of God started weeping.

[12] "What's the matter, my lord?" Hazael asked him.

Elisha replied, "I know the terrible things you will do to the people of Israel. You will burn their fortified cities, kill their young men, dash their children to the ground, and rip open their pregnant women!"

[13] Then Hazael replied, "How could a nobody like me ever accomplish such a great feat?"

But Elisha answered, "The Lord has shown me that you are going to be the king of Aram."

[14] When Hazael went back, the king asked him, "What did Elisha tell you?"

And Hazael replied, "He told me that you will surely recover."

[15] But the next day Hazael took a blanket, soaked it in water, and held it over the king's face until he died. Then Hazael became the next king of Aram.

[16] Jehoram son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah began to rule over Judah in the fifth year of King Joram's reign in Israel. Joram was the son of Ahab. [17] Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eight years. [18] But Jehoram followed the example of the kings of Israel and was as wicked as King Ahab, for he had married one of Ahab's daughters. So Jehoram did what was evil in the Lord's sight. [19] But the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah, for he had made a covenant with David and promised that his descendants would continue to rule forever.

[20] During Jehoram's reign, the Edomites revolted against Judah and crowned their own king. [21] So Jehoram went with all his chariots to attack the town of Zair. The Edomites surrounded him and his charioteers, but he escaped at night under cover of darkness. Jehoram's army, however, deserted him and fled. [22] Edom has been independent from Judah to this day. The town of Libnah revolted about that same time.

[23] The rest of the events in Jehoram's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [24] When Jehoram died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Ahaziah became the next king.

[25] Ahaziah son of Jehoram began to rule over Judah in the twelfth year of King Joram's reign in Israel. King Joram was the son of Ahab. [26] Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem one year. His mother was Athaliah, a granddaughter of King Omri of Israel. [27] Ahaziah followed the evil example of King Ahab's family, doing what was evil in the Lord's sight, because he was related by marriage to the family of Ahab.

[28] Ahaziah joined King Joram of Israel in his war against King Hazael of Aram at Ramoth-gilead. When King Joram was wounded in the battle, [29] he returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds. While Joram was there, King Ahaziah of Judah went to visit him.

[9:1] Meanwhile, Elisha the prophet had summoned a member of the group of prophets. "Get ready to go to Ramoth-gilead," he told him. "Take this vial of olive oil with you, [2] and find Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi. Call him into a back room away from his friends, [3] and pour the oil over his head. Say to him, 'This is what the Lord says: I anoint you to be the king over Israel.' Then open the door and run for your life!"

[4] So the young prophet did as he was told and went to Ramoth-gilead. [5] When he arrived there, he found Jehu sitting in a meeting with the other army officers. "I have a message for you, Commander," he said.

"For which one of us?" Jehu asked.

"For you, Commander," he replied.

[6] So Jehu left the others and went into the house. Then the young prophet poured the oil over Jehu's head and said, "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I anoint you king over the Lord's people, Israel. [7] You are to destroy the family of Ahab, your master. In this way, I will avenge the murder of my prophets and all the Lord's servants who were killed by Jezebel. [8] The entire family of Ahab must be wiped out—every male, slave and free alike, in Israel. [9] I will destroy the family of Ahab as I destroyed the families of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah. [10] Dogs will eat Ahab's wife, Jezebel, at the plot of land in Jezreel, and no one will bury her." Then the young prophet opened the door and ran.

[11] Jehu went back to his fellow officers, and one of them asked him, "What did that crazy fellow want? Is everything all right?"

"You know the way such a man babbles on," Jehu replied.

[12] "You're lying," they said. "Tell us." So Jehu told them what the man had said and that at the Lord's command he had been anointed king over Israel.

[13] They quickly spread out their cloaks on the bare steps and blew a trumpet, shouting, "Jehu is king!"

[14] So Jehu son of Jehoshaphat and grandson of Nimshi formed a conspiracy against King Joram. (Now Joram had been with the army at Ramoth-gilead, defending Israel against the forces of King Hazael of Aram. [15] But Joram had been wounded in the fighting and had returned to Jezreel to recover from his wounds.) So Jehu told the men with him, "Since you want me to be king, don't let anyone escape to Jezreel to report what we have done."

[16] Then Jehu got into a chariot and rode to Jezreel to find King Joram, who was lying there wounded. King Ahaziah of Judah was there, too, for he had gone to visit him. [17] The watchman on the tower of Jezreel saw Jehu and his company approaching, so he shouted to Joram, "I see a company of troops coming!"

"Send out a rider to find out if they are coming in peace," King Joram shouted back.

[18] So a rider went out to meet Jehu and said, "The king wants to know whether you are coming in peace."

Jehu replied, "What do you know about peace? Get behind me!"

The watchman called out to the king, "The rider has met them, but he is not returning."

[19] So the king sent out a second rider. He rode up to them and demanded, "The king wants to know whether you come in peace."

Again Jehu answered, "What do you know about peace? Get behind me!"

[20] The watchman exclaimed, "The rider has met them, but he isn't returning either! It must be Jehu son of Nimshi, for he is driving so recklessly."

[21] "Quick! Get my chariot ready!" King Joram commanded.

Then King Joram of Israel and King Ahaziah of Judah rode out in their chariots to meet Jehu. They met him at the field that had belonged to Naboth of Jezreel. [22] King Joram demanded, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?"

Jehu replied, "How can there be peace as long as the idolatry and witchcraft of your mother, Jezebel, are all around us?"

[23] Then King Joram reined the chariot horses around and fled, shouting to King Ahaziah, "Treason, and Ahaziah!" [24] Then Jehu drew his bow and shot Joram between the shoulders. The arrow pierced his heart, and he sank down dead in his chariot.

[25] Jehu said to Bidkar, his officer, "Throw him into the field of Naboth of Jezreel. Do you remember when you and I were riding along behind his father, Ahab? The Lord pronounced this message against him: [26] 'I solemnly swear that I will repay him here on Naboth's property, says the Lord, for the murder of Naboth and his sons that I saw yesterday.' So throw him out on Naboth's field, just as the Lord said."

[27] When King Ahaziah of Judah saw what was happening, he fled along the road to Beth-haggan. Jehu rode after him, shouting, "Shoot him, too!" So they shot Ahaziah in his chariot at the Ascent of Gur, near Ibleam. He was able to go on as far as Megiddo, but he died there. [28] His officials took him by chariot to Jerusalem, where they buried him with his ancestors in the City of David. [29] Ahaziah's reign over Judah had begun in the eleventh year of King Joram's reign in Israel.

[30] When Jezebel, the queen mother, heard that Jehu had come to Jezreel, she painted her eyelids and fixed her hair and sat at a window. [31] When Jehu entered the gate of the palace, she shouted at him, "Have you come in peace, you murderer? You are just like Zimri, who murdered his master!"

[32] Jehu looked up and saw her at the window and shouted, "Who is on my side?" And two or three eunuchs looked out at him. [33] "Throw her down!" Jehu yelled. So they threw her out the window, and some of her blood spattered against the wall and on the horses. And Jehu trampled her body under his horses' hooves.

[34] Then Jehu went into the palace and ate and drank. Afterward he said, "Someone go and bury this cursed woman, for she is the daughter of a king." [35] But when they went out to bury her, they found only her skull, her feet, and her hands.

[36] When they returned and told Jehu, he stated, "This fulfills the message from the Lord, which he spoke through his servant Elijah from Tishbe: 'At the plot of land in Jezreel, dogs will eat Jezebel's flesh. [37] Her body will be scattered like dung on the field of Jezreel, so that no one will be able to recognize her.' "

[10:1] Now Ahab had seventy sons living in the city of Samaria. So Jehu wrote a letter and sent copies to Samaria, to the officials of the city, to the leaders of the people, and to the guardians of King Ahab's sons. The letter said, [2] "The king's sons are with you, and you have at your disposal chariots, horses, a fortified city, and weapons. As soon as you receive this letter, [3] select the best qualified of King Ahab's sons to be your king, and prepare to fight for Ahab's dynasty."

[4] But they were paralyzed with fear and said, "Two kings couldn't stand against this man! What can we do?" [5] So the palace and city administrators, together with the other leaders and the guardians of the king's sons, sent this message to Jehu: "We are your servants and will do anything you tell us. We will not make anyone king; do whatever you think is best."

[6] Jehu responded with a second letter: "If you are on my side and are going to obey me, bring the heads of the king's sons to me at Jezreel at about this time tomorrow."

Now the seventy sons of the king were being cared for by the leaders of Samaria, where they had been raised since childhood. [7] When the letter arrived, the leaders killed all seventy of the king's sons. They placed their heads in baskets and presented them to Jehu at Jezreel. [8] A messenger went to Jehu and said, "They have brought the heads of the king's sons."

So Jehu ordered, "Pile them in two heaps at the entrance of the city gate, and leave them there until morning."

[9] In the morning he went out and spoke to the crowd that had gathered around them. "You aren't to blame," he told them. "I am the one who conspired against my master and killed him. But who killed all these? [10] You can be sure that the message of the Lord that was spoken concerning Ahab's family will not fail. The Lord declared through his servant Elijah that this would happen." [11] Then Jehu killed all of Ahab's relatives living in Jezreel and all his important officials, personal friends, and priests. So Ahab was left without a single survivor.

[12] Then Jehu set out for Samaria. Along the way, while he was at Beth-eked of the Shepherds,

[13] He met some relatives of King Ahaziah of Judah. "Who are you?" he asked them.

And they replied, "We are relatives of King Ahaziah. We are going to visit the sons of King Ahab and the queen mother."

[14] "Take them alive!" Jehu shouted to his men. And they captured all forty-two of them and killed them at the well of Beth-eked. None of them escaped.

[15] When Jehu left there, he met Jehonadab son of Recab, who was coming to meet him. After they had greeted each other, Jehu said to him, "Are you as loyal to me as I am to you?"

"Yes, I am," Jehonadab replied.

"If you are," Jehu said, "then give me your hand." So Jehonadab put out his hand, and Jehu helped him into the chariot. [16] Then Jehu said, "Now come with me, and see how devoted I am to the Lord." So Jehonadab rode along with him. [17] When Jehu arrived in Samaria, he killed everyone who was left there from Ahab's family, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

[18] Then Jehu called a meeting of all the people of the city and said to them, "Ahab hardly worshiped Baal at all compared to the way I will worship him! [19] Summon all the prophets and worshipers of Baal, and call together all his priests. See to it that every one of them comes, for I am going to offer a great sacrifice to Baal. Any of Baal's worshipers who fail to come will be put to death." But Jehu's plan was to destroy all the worshipers of Baal.

[20] Then Jehu ordered, "Prepare a solemn assembly to worship Baal!" So they did. [21] He sent messengers throughout all Israel summoning those who worshiped Baal. They all came and filled the temple of Baal from one end to the other. [22] And Jehu instructed the keeper of the wardrobe, "Be sure that every worshiper of Baal wears one of these robes." So robes were given to them.

[23] Then Jehu went into the temple of Baal with Jehonadab son of Recab. Jehu said to the worshipers of Baal, "Make sure that only those who worship Baal are here. Don't let anyone in who worships the Lord!" [24] So they were all inside the temple to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had surrounded the building with eighty of his men and had warned them, "If you let anyone escape, you will pay for it with your own life."

[25] As soon as Jehu had finished sacrificing the burnt offering, he commanded his guards and officers, "Go in and kill all of them. Don't let a single one escape!" So they killed them all with their swords, and the guards and officers dragged their bodies outside. Then Jehu's men went into the fortress of the temple of Baal. [26] They dragged out the sacred pillar used in the worship of Baal and destroyed it. [27] They broke down the sacred pillar of Baal and wrecked the temple of Baal, converting it into a public toilet. That is what it is used for to this day. [28] Thus, Jehu destroyed every trace of Baal worship from Israel. [29] He did not, however, destroy the gold calves at Bethel and Dan, the great sin that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

[30] Nonetheless the Lord said to Jehu, "You have done well in following my instructions to destroy the family of Ahab. Because of this I will cause your descendants to be the kings of Israel down to the fourth generation."

[31] But Jehu did not obey the law of the Lord, the God of Israel, with all his heart. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

[32] At about that time the Lord began to reduce the size of Israel's territory. King Hazael conquered several sections of the country [33] east of the Jordan River, including all of Gilead, Gad, Reuben, and Manasseh. He conquered the area from the town of Aroer by the Arnon Gorge to as far north as Gilead and Bashan.

[34] The rest of the events in Jehu's reign and all his deeds and achievements are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [35] When Jehu died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jehoahaz became the next king. [36] In all, Jehu reigned over Israel from Samaria for twenty-eight years.

[11:1] When Athaliah, the mother of King Ahaziah of Judah, learned that her son was dead, she set out to destroy the rest of the royal family. [2] But Ahaziah's sister Jehosheba, the daughter of King Jehoram, took Ahaziah's infant son, Joash, and stole him away from among the rest of the king's children, who were about to be killed. Jehosheba put Joash and his nurse in a bedroom to hide him from Athaliah, so the child was not murdered. [3] Joash and his nurse remained hidden in the Temple of the Lord for six years while Athaliah ruled over the land.

[4] In the seventh year of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada the priest summoned the commanders, the Carite mercenaries, and the guards to come to the Temple of the Lord. He made a pact with them and made them swear an oath of loyalty there in the Lord's Temple; then he showed them the king's son.

[5] Jehoiada told them, "This is what you must do. A third of you who are on duty on the Sabbath are to guard the royal palace itself. [6] Another third of you are to stand guard at the Sur Gate. And the final third must stand guard behind the palace guard. These three groups will all guard the palace. [7] The other two units who are off duty on the Sabbath must stand guard for the king at the Lord's Temple. [8] Form a bodyguard for the king and keep your weapons in hand. Any unauthorized person who approaches you must be killed. Stay right beside the king at all times."

[9] So the commanders did everything just as Jehoiada the priest ordered. The commanders took charge of the men reporting for duty that Sabbath, as well as those who were going off duty. They brought them all to Jehoiada the priest, [10] and he supplied them with the spears and shields that had once belonged to King David and were stored in the Temple of the Lord. [11] The guards stationed themselves around the king, with their weapons ready. They formed a line from the south side of the Temple around to the north side and all around the altar.

[12] Then Jehoiada brought out Joash, the king's son, and placed the crown on his head. He presented Joash with a copy of God's covenant and proclaimed him king. They anointed him, and all the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the king!"

[13] When Athaliah heard all the noise made by the guards and the people, she hurried to the Lord's Temple to see what was happening.

[14] And she saw the newly crowned king standing in his place of authority by the pillar, as was the custom at times of coronation. The officers and trumpeters were surrounding him, and people from all over the land were rejoicing and blowing trumpets. When Athaliah saw all this, she tore her clothes in despair and shouted, "Treason! Treason!"

[15] Then Jehoiada the priest ordered the commanders who were in charge of the troops, "Take her out of the Temple, and kill anyone who tries to rescue her. Do not kill her here in the Temple of the Lord." [16] So they seized her and led her out to the gate where horses enter the palace grounds, and she was killed there.

[17] Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the Lord and the king and the people that they would be the Lord's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. [18] And all the people of the land went over to the temple of Baal and tore it down. They demolished the altars and smashed the idols to pieces, and they killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars.

Jehoiada the priest stationed guards at the Temple of the Lord. [19] Then the commanders, the Carite mercenaries, the guards, and all the people of the land escorted the king from the Temple of the Lord. They went through the gate of the guards and into the palace, and the king took his seat on the royal throne. [20] So all the people of the land rejoiced, and the city was peaceful because Athaliah had been killed at the king's palace.

[21] Joash was seven years old when he became king.

[12:1] Joash began to rule over Judah in the seventh year of King Jehu's reign in Israel. He reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother was Zibiah, from Beersheba. [2] All his life Joash did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight because Jehoiada the priest instructed him. [3] Yet even so, he did not destroy the pagan shrines, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense there.

[4] One day King Joash said to the priests, "Collect all the money brought as a sacred offering to the Lord's Temple, whether it is a regular assessment, a payment of vows, or a voluntary gift. [5] Let the priests take some of that money to pay for whatever repairs are needed at the Temple."

[6] But by the twenty-third year of Joash's reign, the priests still had not repaired the Temple. [7] So King Joash called for Jehoiada and the other priests and asked them, "Why haven't you repaired the Temple? Don't use any more gifts for your own needs. From now on, it must all be spent on getting the Temple into good condition." [8] So the priests agreed not to collect any more money from the people, and they also agreed not to undertake the repairs of the Temple themselves.

[9] Then Jehoiada the priest bored a hole in the lid of a large chest and set it on the right-hand side of the altar at the entrance of the Temple of the Lord. The priests guarding the entrance put all of the people's contributions into the chest. [10] Whenever the chest became full, the court secretary and the high priest counted the money that had been brought to the Lord's Temple and put it into bags.

[11] Then they gave the money to the construction supervisors, who used it to pay the people working on the Lord's Temple—the carpenters, the builders, [12] the masons, and the stonecutters. They also used the money to buy timber and cut stone for repairing the Lord's Temple, and they paid any other expenses related to the Temple's restoration.

[13] The money brought to the Temple was not used for making silver cups, lamp snuffers, basins, trumpets, or other articles of gold or silver for the Temple of the Lord. [14] It was paid out to the workmen, who used it for the Temple repairs. [15] No accounting was required from the construction supervisors, because they were honest and faithful workers. [16] However, the money that was contributed for guilt offerings and sin offerings was not brought into the Lord's Temple. It was given to the priests for their own use.

[17] About this time King Hazael of Aram went to war against Gath and captured it. Then he turned to attack Jerusalem. [18] King Joash collected all the sacred objects that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, the previous kings of Judah, had dedicated, along with what he himself had dedicated. He sent them all to Hazael, along with all the gold in the treasuries of the Lord's Temple and the royal palace. So Hazael called off his attack on Jerusalem.

[19] The rest of the events in Joash's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [20] But his officers plotted against him and assassinated him at Beth-millo on the road to Silla. [21] The assassins were Jozabad son of Shimeath and Jehozabad son of Shomer—both trusted advisers. Joash was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Amaziah became the next king.

[13:1] Jehoahaz son of Jehu began to rule over Israel in the twenty-third year of King Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria seventeen years. [2] But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He followed the example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit. [3] So the Lord was very angry with Israel, and he allowed King Hazael of Aram and his son Ben-hadad to defeat them time after time.

[4] Then Jehoahaz prayed for the Lord's help, and the Lord heard his prayer. The Lord could see how terribly the king of Aram was oppressing Israel. [5] So the Lord raised up a deliverer to rescue the Israelites from the tyranny of the Arameans. Then Israel lived in safety again as they had in former days. [6] But they continued to sin, following the evil example of Jeroboam. They even set up an Asherah pole in Samaria. [7] Finally, Jehoahaz's army was reduced to fifty mounted troops, ten chariots, and ten thousand foot soldiers. The king of Aram had killed the others like they were dust under his feet.

[8] The rest of the events in Jehoahaz's reign and all his deeds, including the extent of his power, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [9] When Jehoahaz died, he was buried in Samaria with his ancestors. Then his son Jehoash became the next king.

[10] Jehoash son of Jehoahaz began to rule over Israel in the thirty-seventh year of King Joash's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria sixteen years. [11] But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

[12] The rest of the events in Jehoash's reign and all his deeds, including the extent of his power and his war with King Amaziah of Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [13] When Jehoash died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jeroboam II became the next king.

[14] When Elisha was in his last illness, King Jehoash of Israel visited him and wept over him. "My father! My father! The chariots and charioteers of Israel!" he cried.

[15] Elisha told him, "Get a bow and some arrows." And the king did as he was told.

[16] Then Elisha told the king of Israel to put his hand on the bow, and Elisha laid his own hands on the king's hands. [17] Then he commanded, "Open that eastern window," and he opened it. Then he said, "Shoot!" So he did.

Then Elisha proclaimed, "This is the Lord's arrow, full of victory over Aram, for you will completely conquer the Arameans at Aphek. [18] Now pick up the other arrows and strike them against the ground." So the king picked them up and struck the ground three times. [19] But the man of God was angry with him. "You should have struck the ground five or six times!" he exclaimed. "Then you would have beaten Aram until they were entirely destroyed. Now you will be victorious only three times."

[20] Then Elisha died and was buried.

Groups of Moabite raiders used to invade the land each spring. [21] Once when some Israelites were burying a man, they spied a band of these raiders. So they hastily threw the body they were burying into the tomb of Elisha. But as soon as the body touched Elisha's bones, the dead man revived and jumped to his feet!

[22] King Hazael of Aram had oppressed Israel during the entire reign of King Jehoahaz. [23] But the Lord was gracious to the people of Israel, and they were not totally destroyed. He pitied them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. And to this day he still has not completely destroyed them or banished them from his presence.

[24] King Hazael of Aram died, and his son Ben-hadad became the next king. [25] Then Jehoash son of Jehoahaz recaptured from Ben-hadad son of Hazael the towns that Hazael had taken from Jehoash's father, Jehoahaz. Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad on three occasions, and so recovered the Israelite towns.

[14:1] Amaziah son of Joash began to rule over Judah in the second year of the reign of King Jehoash of Israel. [2] Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Jehoaddin, from Jerusalem. [3] Amaziah did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, but not like his ancestor David. Instead, he followed the example of his father, Joash. [4] Amaziah did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense.

[5] When Amaziah was well established as king, he executed the men who had assassinated his father. [6] However, he did not kill the children of the assassins, for he obeyed the command of the Lord written in the Book of the Law of Moses: "Parents must not be put to death for the sins of their children, nor the children for the sins of their parents. Those worthy of death must be executed for their own crimes."

[7] It was Amaziah who killed ten thousand Edomites in the Valley of Salt. He also conquered Sela and changed its name to Joktheel, as it is called to this day.

[8] One day Amaziah sent this challenge to Israel's king Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz and grandson of Jehu: "Come and meet me in battle!"

[9] But King Jehoash of Israel replied to King Amaziah of Judah with this story: "Out in the Lebanon Mountains a thistle sent a message to a mighty cedar tree: 'Give your daughter in marriage to my son.' But just then a wild animal came by and stepped on the thistle, crushing it! [10] You have indeed destroyed Edom and are very proud about it. Be content with your victory and stay at home! Why stir up trouble that will bring disaster on you and the people of Judah?"

[11] But Amaziah refused to listen, so King Jehoash of Israel mobilized his army against King Amaziah of Judah.

The two armies drew up their battle lines at Beth-shemesh in Judah. [12] Judah was routed by the army of Israel, and its army scattered and fled for home. [13] King Jehoash of Israel captured King Amaziah of Judah at Beth-shemesh and marched on to Jerusalem. Then Jehoash ordered his army to demolish six hundred feet of Jerusalem's wall, from the Ephraim Gate to the Corner Gate. [14] He carried off all the gold and silver and all the utensils from the Temple of the Lord, as well as from the palace treasury. He also took hostages and returned to Samaria.

[15] The rest of the events in Jehoash's reign, including the extent of his power and his war with King Amaziah of Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [16] When Jehoash died, he was buried with his ancestors in Samaria. Then his son Jeroboam II became the next king.

[17] King Amaziah of Judah lived on for fifteen years after the death of King Jehoash of Israel. [18] The rest of the events in Amaziah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [19] There was a conspiracy against Amaziah's life in Jerusalem, and he fled to Lachish. But his enemies sent assassins after him, and they killed him there. [20] They brought him back to Jerusalem on a horse, and he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David.

[21] The people of Judah then crowned Amaziah's sixteen-year-old son, Uzziah, as their next king. [22] After his father's death, Uzziah rebuilt the town of Elath and restored it to Judah.

[23] Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, began to rule over Israel in the fifteenth year of King Amaziah's reign in Judah. Jeroboam reigned in Samaria forty-one years. [24] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit. [25] Jeroboam II recovered the territories of Israel between Lebohamath and the Dead Sea, just as the Lord, the God of Israel, had promised through Jonah son of Amittai, the prophet from Gath-hepher. [26] For the Lord saw the bitter suffering of everyone in Israel, and how they had absolutely no one to help them.

[27] And because the Lord had not said he would blot out the name of Israel completely, he used Jeroboam II, the son of Jehoash, to save them.

[28] The rest of the events in the reign of Jeroboam II and all his deeds, including the extent of his power, his wars, and how he recovered for Israel both Damascus and Hamath, which had belonged to Judah, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [29] When Jeroboam II died, he was buried with his ancestors, the kings of Israel. Then his son Zechariah became the next king.

[15:1] Uzziah son of Amaziah began to rule over Judah in the twenty-seventh year of the reign of King Jeroboam II of Israel. [2] He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. [3] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his father, Amaziah, had done. [4] But he did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense.

[5] The Lord struck the king with leprosy, which lasted until the day of his death; he lived in a house by himself. The king's son Jotham was put in charge of the royal palace, and he governed the people of the land.

[6] The rest of the events in Uzziah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [7] When Uzziah died, he was buried near his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jotham became the next king.

[8] Zechariah son of Jeroboam II began to rule over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria six months. [9] Zechariah did what was evil in the Lord's sight, as his ancestors had done. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit. [10] Then Shallum son of Jabesh conspired against Zechariah, assassinated him in public, and became the next king. [11] The rest of the events in Zechariah's reign are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [12] So the Lord's message to Jehu came true: "Your descendants will be kings of Israel down to the fourth generation."

[13] Shallum son of Jabesh began to rule over Israel in the thirty-ninth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. Shallum reigned in Samaria only one month. [14] Then Menahem son of Gadi went to Samaria from Tirzah and assassinated him, and he became the next king. [15] The rest of the events in Shallum's reign, including his conspiracy, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[16] At that time Menahem destroyed the town of Tappuah and all the surrounding countryside as far as Tirzah, because its citizens refused to surrender the town. He killed the entire population and ripped open the pregnant women.

[17] Menahem son of Gadi began to rule over Israel in the thirty-ninth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria ten years. [18] But Menahem did what was evil in the Lord's sight. During his entire reign, he refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

[19] Then King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria invaded the land. But Menahem paid him thirty-seven tons of silver to gain his support in tightening his grip on royal power. [20] Menahem extorted the money from the rich of Israel, demanding that each of them pay twenty ounces of silver in the form of a special tax. So the king of Assyria turned from attacking Israel and did not stay in the land. [21] The rest of the events in Menahem's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [22] When Menahem died, his son Pekahiah became the next king.

[23] Pekahiah son of Menahem began to rule over Israel in the fiftieth year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria two years. [24] But Pekahiah did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit.

[25] Then Pekah son of Remaliah, the commander of Pekahiah's army, conspired against him. With fifty men from Gilead, Pekah assassinated the king, along with Argob and Arieah, in the citadel of the palace at Samaria. Pekah then became the next king of Israel. [26] The rest of the events in Pekahiah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[27] Pekah son of Remaliah began to rule over Israel in the fifty-second year of King Uzziah's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty years. [28] But Pekah did what was evil in the Lord's sight. He refused to turn from the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam son of Nebat had led Israel to commit. [29] During his reign, King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria attacked Israel again, and he captured the towns of Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, and Hazor. He also conquered the regions of Gilead, Galilee, and Naphtali, and he took the people to Assyria as captives. [30] Then Hoshea son of Elah conspired against Pekah and assassinated him. He began to rule over Israel in the twentieth year of Jotham son of Uzziah. [31] The rest of the events in Pekah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[32] Jotham son of Uzziah began to rule over Judah in the second year of King Pekah's reign in Israel. [33] He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother was Jerusha, the daughter of Zadok.

[34] Jotham did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his father Uzziah had done. [35] But he did not destroy the pagan shrines, where the people offered sacrifices and burned incense. He was the one who rebuilt the upper gate of the Temple of the Lord.

[36] The rest of the events in Jotham's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [37] In those days the Lord began to send King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel to attack Judah. [38] When Jotham died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Ahaz became the next king.

[16:1] Ahaz son of Jotham began to rule over Judah in the seventeenth year of King Pekah's reign in Israel. [2] Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. He did not do what was pleasing in the sight of the Lord his God, as his ancestor David had done. [3] Instead, he followed the example of the kings of Israel, even sacrificing his own son in the fire. He imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. [4] He offered sacrifices and burned incense at the pagan shrines and on the hills and under every green tree.

[5] Then King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel declared war on Ahaz. They besieged Jerusalem but did not conquer it. [6] At that time the king of Edom recovered the town of Elath for Edom. He drove out the people of Judah and sent Edomites to live there, as they do to this day.

[7] King Ahaz sent messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria with this message: "I am your servant and your vassal. Come up and rescue me from the attacking armies of Aram and Israel." [8] Then Ahaz took the silver and gold from the Temple of the Lord and the palace treasury and sent it as a gift to the Assyrian king. [9] So the Assyrians attacked the Aramean capital of Damascus and led its population away as captives, resettling them in Kir. They also killed King Rezin.

[10] King Ahaz then went to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria. While he was there, he noticed an unusual altar. So he sent a model of the altar to Uriah the priest, along with its design in full detail. [11] Uriah built an altar just like it by following the king's instructions, and it was ready for the king when he returned from Damascus. [12] When the king returned, he inspected the altar and made offerings on it. [13] The king presented a burnt offering and a grain offering, poured a drink offering over it, and sprinkled the blood of peace offerings on it.

[14] Then King Ahaz removed the old bronze altar from the front of the Lord's Temple, which had stood between the entrance and the new altar, and placed it on the north side of the new altar. [15] He said to Uriah the priest, "Use the new altar for the morning sacrifices of burnt offering, the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and grain offering, and the offerings of the people, including their drink offerings. The blood from the burnt offerings and sacrifices should be sprinkled over the new altar. The old bronze altar will be only for my personal use." [16] Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz instructed him.

[17] Then the king removed the side panels and basins from the portable water carts. He also removed the Sea from the backs of the bronze oxen and placed it on the stone pavement. [18] In deference to the king of Assyria, he also removed the canopy that had been constructed inside the palace for use on the Sabbath day, as well as the king's outer entrance to the Temple of the Lord.

[19] The rest of the events in Ahaz's reign and his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [20] When Ahaz died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Hezekiah became the next king.

[17:1] Hoshea son of Elah began to rule over Israel in the twelfth year of King Ahaz's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria nine years. [2] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, but not as much as the kings of Israel who ruled before him.

[3] King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked and defeated King Hoshea, so Israel was forced to pay heavy annual tribute to Assyria. [4] Then Hoshea conspired against the king of Assyria by asking King So of Egypt to help him shake free of Assyria's power and by refusing to pay the annual tribute to Assyria. When the king of Assyria discovered this treachery, he arrested him and put him in prison for his rebellion.

[5] Then the king of Assyria invaded the entire land, and for three years he besieged Samaria. [6] Finally, in the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign, Samaria fell, and the people of Israel were exiled to Assyria. They were settled in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes.

[7] This disaster came upon the nation of Israel because the people worshiped other gods, sinning against the Lord their God, who had brought them safely out of their slavery in Egypt. [8] They had imitated the practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land before them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced. [9] The people of Israel had also secretly done many things that were not pleasing to the Lord their God. They built pagan shrines for themselves in all their towns, from the smallest outpost to the largest walled city.

[10] They set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles at the top of every hill and under every green tree. [11] They burned incense at the shrines, just like the nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of them. So the people of Israel had done many evil things, arousing the Lord's anger. [12] Yes, they worshiped idols, despite the Lord's specific and repeated warnings. [13] Again and again the Lord had sent his prophets and seers to warn both Israel and Judah: "Turn from all your evil ways. Obey my commands and laws, which are contained in the whole law that I commanded your ancestors and which I gave you through my servants the prophets."

[14] But the Israelites would not listen. They were as stubborn as their ancestors and refused to believe in the Lord their God. [15] They rejected his laws and the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and they despised all his warnings. They worshiped worthless idols and became worthless themselves. They followed the example of the nations around them, disobeying the Lord's command not to imitate them. [16] They defied all the commands of the Lord their God and made two calves from metal. They set up an Asherah pole and worshiped Baal and all the forces of heaven.

[17] They even sacrificed their own sons and daughters in the fire. They consulted fortune-tellers and used sorcery and sold themselves to evil, arousing the Lord's anger.

[18] And because the Lord was angry, he swept them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained in the land.

[19] But even the people of Judah refused to obey the commands of the Lord their God. They walked down the same evil paths that Israel had established. [20] So the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel. He punished them by handing them over to their attackers until they were destroyed. [21] For when the Lord tore Israel away from the kingdom of David, they chose Jeroboam son of Nebat as their king. Then Jeroboam drew Israel away from following the Lord and made them commit a great sin. [22] And the people of Israel persisted in all the evil ways of Jeroboam. They did not turn from these sins of idolatry [23] until the Lord finally swept them away, just as all his prophets had warned would happen. So Israel was carried off to the land of Assyria, where they remain to this day.

[24] And the king of Assyria transported groups of people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim and resettled them in the towns of Samaria, replacing the people of Israel. So the Assyrians took over Samaria and the other towns of Israel. [25] But since these foreign settlers did not worship the Lord when they first arrived, the Lord sent lions among them to kill some of them.

[26] So a message was sent to the king of Assyria: "The people whom you have resettled in the towns of Israel do not know how to worship the God of the land. He has sent lions among them to destroy them because they have not worshiped him correctly."

[27] The king of Assyria then commanded, "Send one of the exiled priests from Samaria back to Israel. Let him teach the new residents the religious customs of the God of the land." [28] So one of the priests who had been exiled from Samaria returned to Bethel and taught the new residents how to worship the Lord.

[29] But these various groups of foreigners also continued to worship their own gods. In town after town where they lived, they placed their idols at the pagan shrines that the people of Israel had built. [30] Those from Babylon worshiped idols of their god Succoth-benoth. Those from Cuthah worshiped their god Nergal. And those from Hamath worshiped Ashima. [31] The Avvites worshiped their gods Nibhaz and Tartak. And the people from Sepharvaim even burned their own children as sacrifices to Adrammelech and Anammelech.

[32] These new residents worshiped the Lord, but they appointed from among themselves priests to offer sacrifices at the pagan shrines. [33] And though they worshiped the Lord, they continued to follow the religious customs of the nations from which they came. [34] And this is still going on among them today. They follow their former practices instead of truly worshiping the Lord and obeying the laws, regulations, instructions, and commands he gave the descendants of Jacob, whose name he changed to Israel.

[35] For the Lord had made a covenant with the descendants of Jacob and commanded them: "Do not worship any other gods or bow before them or serve them or offer sacrifices to them.

[36] Worship only the Lord, who brought you out of Egypt with such mighty miracles and power. You must worship him and bow before him; offer sacrifices to him alone. [37] Be careful to obey all the laws, regulations, instructions, and commands that he wrote for you. You must not worship any other gods. [38] Do not forget the covenant I made with you, and do not worship other gods. [39] You must worship only the Lord your God. He is the one who will rescue you from all your enemies."

[40] But the people would not listen and continued to follow their old ways.

## **B. THE SURVIVING KINGDOM (2 Kings 18:1-25:30)**

The northern kingdom was destroyed, and prophets were predicting the same fate for Judah. What more could cause the nation to repent? Hezekiah and Josiah were able to stem the tide of evil. They both repaired the temple and gathered the people for the Passover. Josiah eradicated idolatry from the land, but as soon as these good kings were gone, the people returned again to living their own way instead of God's way. Each individual must believe and live for God in his or her family, church, and nation.

1. Kings of Judah
2. Judah is exiled to Babylon

### **2 Kings 18:1-25:30**

Hezekiah son of Ahaz began to rule over Judah in the third year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel. [2] He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother was Abijah, the daughter of Zechariah. [3] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestor David had done. [4] He removed the pagan shrines, smashed the sacred pillars, and knocked down the Asherah poles. He broke up the bronze serpent that Moses had made, because the people of Israel had begun to worship it by burning incense to it. The bronze serpent was called Nehushtan.

[5] Hezekiah trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel. There was never another king like him in the land of Judah, either before or after his time. [6] He remained faithful to the Lord in everything, and he carefully obeyed all the commands the Lord had given Moses. [7] So the Lord was with him, and Hezekiah was successful in everything he did. He revolted against the king of Assyria and refused to pay him tribute. [8] He also conquered the Philistines as far distant as Gaza and its territory, from their smallest outpost to their largest walled city.

[9] During the fourth year of Hezekiah's reign, which was the seventh year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, King Shalmaneser of Assyria attacked Israel and began a siege on the city of Samaria. [10] Three years later, during the sixth year of King Hezekiah's reign and the ninth year of King Hoshea's reign in Israel, Samaria fell. [11] At that time the king of Assyria deported the Israelites to Assyria and put them in colonies in Halah, along the banks of the Habor River in Gozan, and among the cities of the Medes. [12] For they had refused to listen to the Lord their God. Instead, they had violated his covenant—all the laws the Lord had given through his servant Moses.

[13] In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah's reign, King Sennacherib of Assyria came to attack the fortified cities of Judah and conquered them. [14] King Hezekiah sent this message to the king of Assyria at Lachish: "I have done wrong. I will pay whatever tribute money you demand if you will only go away." The king of Assyria then demanded a settlement of more than eleven tons of silver and about one ton of gold. [15] To gather this amount, King Hezekiah used all the silver stored in the Temple of the Lord and in the palace treasury. [16] Hezekiah even stripped the gold from the doors of the Lord's Temple and from the doorposts he had overlaid with gold, and he gave it all to the Assyrian king.

[17] Nevertheless the king of Assyria sent his commander in chief, his field commander, and his personal representative from Lachish with a huge army to confront King Hezekiah in Jerusalem. The Assyrians stopped beside the aqueduct that feeds water into the upper pool, near the road leading to the field where cloth is bleached. [18] They summoned King Hezekiah, but the king sent these officials to meet with them: Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian.

[19] Then the Assyrian king's personal representative sent this message to King Hezekiah:

"This is what the great king of Assyria says: What are you trusting in that makes you so confident? [20] Do you think that mere words can substitute for military skill and strength? Which of your allies will give you any military backing against Assyria? [21] Will Egypt? If you lean on Egypt, you will find it to be a stick that breaks beneath your weight and pierces your hand. The pharaoh of Egypt is completely unreliable!

[22] "But perhaps you will say, 'We are trusting in the Lord our God!' But isn't he the one who was insulted by King Hezekiah? Didn't Hezekiah tear down his shrines and altars and make everyone in Judah worship only at the altar here in Jerusalem?

[23] "I'll tell you what! My master, the king of Assyria, will strike a bargain with you. If you can find two thousand horsemen in your entire army, he will give you two thousand horses for them to ride on! [24] With your tiny army, how can you think of challenging even the weakest contingent of my master's troops, even with the help of Egypt's chariots and horsemen? [25] What's more, do you think we have invaded your land without the Lord's direction? The Lord himself told us, 'Go and destroy it!' "

[26] Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, Shebna, and Joah said to the king's representative, "Please speak to us in Aramaic, for we understand it well. Don't speak in Hebrew, for the people on the wall will hear."

[27] But Sennacherib's representative replied, "My master wants everyone in Jerusalem to hear this, not just you. He wants them to know that if you do not surrender, this city will be put under siege. The people will become so hungry and thirsty that they will eat their own dung and drink their own urine."

[28] Then he stood and shouted in Hebrew to the people on the wall, "Listen to this message from the great king of Assyria! [29] This is what the king says: Don't let King Hezekiah deceive you. He will never be able to rescue you from my power.

[30] Don't let him fool you into trusting in the Lord by saying, 'The Lord will rescue us! This city will never be handed over to the Assyrian king.'

[31] "Don't listen to Hezekiah! These are the terms the king of Assyria is offering: Make peace with me—open the gates and come out. Then I will allow each of you to continue eating from your own garden and drinking from your own well. [32] Then I will arrange to take you to another land like this one—a country with bountiful harvests of grain and wine, bread and vineyards, olive trees and honey—a land of plenty. Choose life instead of death!

"Don't listen to Hezekiah when he tries to mislead you by saying, 'The Lord will rescue us!' [33] Have the gods of any other nations ever saved their people from the king of Assyria? [34] What happened to the gods of Hamath and Arpad? And what about the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah? Did they rescue Samaria from my power? [35] What god of any nation has ever been able to save its people from my power? Name just one! So what makes you think that the Lord can rescue Jerusalem?"

[36] But the people were silent and did not answer because Hezekiah had told them not to speak. [37] Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and Joah son of Asaph, the royal historian, went back to Hezekiah. They tore their clothes in despair, and they went in to see the king and told him what the Assyrian representative had said.

[19:1] When King Hezekiah heard their report, he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and went into the Temple of the Lord to pray. [2] And he sent Eliakim the palace administrator, Shebna the court secretary, and the leading priests, all dressed in sackcloth, to the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. [3] They told him, "This is what King Hezekiah says: This is a day of trouble, insult, and disgrace. It is like when a child is ready to be born, but the mother has no strength to deliver it. [4] But perhaps the Lord your God has heard the Assyrian representative defying the living God and will punish him for his words. Oh, pray for those of us who are left!"

[5] After King Hezekiah's officials delivered the king's message to Isaiah,

[6] the prophet replied, "Say to your master, 'This is what the Lord says: Do not be disturbed by this blasphemous speech against me from the Assyrian king's messengers. [7] Listen! I myself will move against him, and the king will receive a report from Assyria telling him that he is needed at home. Then I will make him want to return to his land, where I will have him killed with a sword.' "

[8] Meanwhile, the Assyrian representative left Jerusalem and went to consult his king, who had left Lachish and was attacking Libnah. [9] Soon afterward King Sennacherib received word that King Tirhakah of Ethiopia was leading an army to fight against him. Before leaving to meet the attack, he sent this message back to Hezekiah in Jerusalem:

[10] "This message is for King Hezekiah of Judah. Don't let this God you trust deceive you with promises that Jerusalem will not be captured by the king of Assyria. [11] You know perfectly well what the kings of Assyria have done wherever they have gone. They have crushed everyone who stood in their way! Why should you be any different? [12] Have the gods of other nations rescued them—such nations as Gozan, Haran, Rezeph, and the people of Eden who were in Tel-assar? The former kings of Assyria destroyed them all!

[13] What happened to the king of Hamath and the king of Arpad? What happened to the kings of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivvah?"

[14] After Hezekiah received the letter and read it, he went up to the Lord's Temple and spread it out before the Lord. [15] And Hezekiah prayed this prayer before the Lord: "O Lord, God of Israel, you are enthroned between the mighty cherubim! You alone are God of all the kingdoms of the earth. You alone created the heavens and the earth. [16] Listen to me, O Lord, and hear! Open your eyes, O Lord, and see! Listen to Sennacherib's words of defiance against the living God.

[17] "It is true, Lord, that the kings of Assyria have destroyed all these nations, just as the message says. [18] And they have thrown the gods of these nations into the fire and burned them. But of course the Assyrians could destroy them! They were not gods at all—only idols of wood and stone shaped by human hands. [19] Now, O Lord our God, rescue us from his power; then all the kingdoms of the earth will know that you alone, O Lord, are God."

[20] Then Isaiah son of Amoz sent this message to Hezekiah: "This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I have heard your prayer about King Sennacherib of Assyria. [21] This is the message that the Lord has spoken against him:

'The virgin daughter of Zion  
despises you and laughs at you.  
The daughter of Jerusalem  
scoffs and shakes her head as you flee.

[22] 'Whom do you think you have been insulting and ridiculing?  
Against whom did you raise your voice?  
At whom did you look in such proud condescension?  
It was the Holy One of Israel!

[23] By your messengers you have mocked the Lord.  
You have said, "With my many chariots  
I have conquered the highest mountains—  
yes, the remotest peaks of Lebanon.  
I have cut down its tallest cedars  
and its choicest cypress trees.  
I have reached its farthest corners  
and explored its deepest forests.

[24] I have dug wells in many a foreign land  
and refreshed myself with their water.  
I even stopped up the rivers of Egypt  
so that my armies could go across!"

[25] 'But have you not heard?  
It was I, the Lord, who decided this long ago.  
Long ago I planned what I am now causing to happen,  
that you should crush fortified cities into heaps of rubble.

[26] that is why their people have so little power  
and are such easy prey for you.  
They are as helpless as the grass,  
as easily trampled as tender green shoots.  
They are like grass sprouting on a housetop,  
easily scorched by the sun.

[27] 'But I know you well—  
your comings and goings and all you do.  
I know the way you have raged against me.  
[28] And because of your arrogance against me,  
which I have heard for myself,  
I will put my hook in your nose  
and my bridle in your mouth.  
I will make you return  
by the road on which you came.' "

[29] Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Here is the proof that the Lord will protect this city from Assyria's king. This year you will eat only what grows up by itself, and next year you will eat what springs up from that. But in the third year you will plant crops and harvest them; you will tend vineyards and eat their fruit. [30] And you who are left in Judah, who have escaped the ravages of the siege, will take root again in your own soil, and you will flourish and multiply. [31] For a remnant of my people will spread out from Jerusalem, a group of survivors from Mount Zion. The passion of the Lord Almighty will make this happen!

[32] "And this is what the Lord says about the king of Assyria: His armies will not enter Jerusalem to shoot their arrows. They will not march outside its gates with their shields and build banks of earth against its walls. [33] The king will return to his own country by the road on which he came. He will not enter this city, says the Lord. [34] For my own honor and for the sake of my servant David, I will defend it."

[35] That night the angel of the Lord went out to the Assyrian camp and killed 185,000 Assyrian troops. When the surviving Assyrians woke up the next morning, they found corpses everywhere. [36] Then King Sennacherib of Assyria broke camp and returned to his own land. He went home to his capital of Nineveh and stayed there. [37] One day while he was worshipping in the temple of his god Nisroch, his sons Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with their swords. They then escaped to the land of Ararat, and another son, Esarhaddon, became the next king of Assyria.

[20:1] About that time Hezekiah became deathly ill, and the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz went to visit him. He gave the king this message: "This is what the Lord says: Set your affairs in order, for you are going to die. You will not recover from this illness."

[2] When Hezekiah heard this, he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, [3] "Remember, O Lord, how I have always tried to be faithful to you and do what is pleasing in your sight." Then he broke down and wept bitterly.

[4] But before Isaiah had left the middle courtyard, this message came to him from the Lord:  
[5] "Go back to Hezekiah, the leader of my people. Tell him, 'This is what the Lord, the God of your ancestor David, says: I have heard your prayer and seen your tears. I will heal you, and three days from now you will get out of bed and go to the Temple of the Lord. [6] I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will rescue you and this city from the king of Assyria. I will do this to defend my honor and for the sake of my servant David.' "

[7] Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah's servants, "Make an ointment from figs and spread it over the boil." They did this, and Hezekiah recovered!

[8] Meanwhile, Hezekiah had said to Isaiah, "What sign will the Lord give to prove that he will heal me and that I will go to the Temple of the Lord three days from now?"

[9] Isaiah replied, "This is the sign that the Lord will give you to prove he will do as he promised. Would you like the shadow on the sundial to go forward ten steps or backward ten steps?"

[10] "The shadow always moves forward," Hezekiah replied. "Make it go backward instead."  
[11] So Isaiah asked the Lord to do this, and he caused the shadow to move ten steps backward on the sundial of Ahaz!

[12] Soon after this, Merodach-baladan son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent Hezekiah his best wishes and a gift, for he had heard that Hezekiah had been very sick. [13] Hezekiah welcomed the Babylonian envoys and showed them everything in his treasure-houses—the silver, the gold, the spices, and the aromatic oils. He also took them to see his armory and showed them all his other treasures—everything! There was nothing in his palace or kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them.

[14] Then Isaiah the prophet went to King Hezekiah and asked him, "What did those men want? Where were they from?"

Hezekiah replied, "They came from the distant land of Babylon."

[15] "What did they see in your palace?" Isaiah asked.

"They saw everything," Hezekiah replied. "I showed them everything I own—all my treasures."

[16] Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Listen to this message from the Lord: [17] The time is coming when everything you have—all the treasures stored up by your ancestors—will be carried off to Babylon. Nothing will be left, says the Lord. [18] Some of your own descendants will be taken away into exile. They will become eunuchs who will serve in the palace of Babylon's king."

[19] Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "This message you have given me from the Lord is good." But the king was thinking, "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime."

[20] The rest of the events in Hezekiah's reign, including the extent of his power and how he built a pool and dug a tunnel to bring water into the city, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [21] When Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became the next king.

[21:1] Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. His mother was Hephzibah. [2] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, imitating the detestable practices of the pagan nations whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites. [3] He rebuilt the pagan shrines his father, Hezekiah, had destroyed. He constructed altars for Baal and set up an Asherah pole, just as King Ahab of Israel had done. He also bowed before all the forces of heaven and worshiped them. [4] He even built pagan altars in the Temple of the Lord, the place where the Lord had said his name should be honored. [5] He built these altars for all the forces of heaven in both courtyards of the Lord's Temple. [6] Manasseh even sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced sorcery and divination, and he consulted with mediums and psychics. He did much that was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing his anger.

[7] Manasseh even took an Asherah pole he had made and set it up in the Temple, the very place where the Lord had told David and his son Solomon: "My name will be honored here forever in this Temple and in Jerusalem—the city I have chosen from among all the other tribes of Israel. [8] If the Israelites will obey my commands—the whole law that was given through my servant Moses—I will not send them into exile from this land that I gave their ancestors." [9] But the people refused to listen, and Manasseh led them to do even more evil than the pagan nations whom the Lord had destroyed when the Israelites entered the land.

[10] Then the Lord said through his servants the prophets: [11] "King Manasseh of Judah has done many detestable things. He is even more wicked than the Amorites, who lived in this land before Israel. He has led the people of Judah into idolatry. [12] So this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: I will bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah that the ears of those who hear about it will tingle with horror. [13] I will judge Jerusalem by the same standard I used for Samaria and by the same measure I used for the family of Ahab. I will wipe away the people of Jerusalem as one wipes a dish and turns it upside down. [14] Then I will reject even those few of my people who are left, and I will hand them over as plunder for their enemies. [15] For they have done great evil in my sight and have angered me ever since their ancestors came out of Egypt."

[16] Manasseh also murdered many innocent people until Jerusalem was filled from one end to the other with innocent blood. This was in addition to the sin that he caused the people of Judah to commit, leading them to do evil in the Lord's sight.

[17] The rest of the events in Manasseh's reign and all his deeds, including the sins he committed, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [18] When Manasseh died, he was buried in the palace garden, the garden of Uzza. Then his son Amon became the next king.

[19] Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem two years. His mother was Meshullemeth, the daughter of Haruz from Jotbah. [20] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his father, Manasseh, had done. [21] He followed the example of his father, worshiping the same idols that his father had worshiped. [22] He abandoned the Lord, the God of his ancestors, and he refused to follow the Lord's ways.

[23] Then Amon's own servants plotted against him and assassinated him in his palace. [24] But the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and they made his son Josiah the next king.

[25] The rest of the events in Amon's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [26] He was buried in his tomb in the garden of Uzza. Then his son Josiah became the next king.

[22:1] Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. His mother was Jedidah, the daughter of Adaiah from Bozkath. [2] He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his ancestor David. He did not turn aside from doing what was right.

[3] In the eighteenth year of his reign, King Josiah sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and grandson of Meshullam, the court secretary, to the Temple of the Lord. He told him, [4] "Go up to Hilkiyah the high priest and have him count the money the gatekeepers have collected from the people at the Lord's Temple. [5] Entrust this money to the men assigned to supervise the Temple's restoration. Then they can use it to pay workers to repair the Temple of the Lord. [6] They will need to hire carpenters, builders, and masons. Also have them buy the timber and the cut stone needed to repair the Temple. [7] But there will be no need for the construction supervisors to keep account of the money they receive, for they are honest people."

[8] Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the court secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the Lord's Temple!" Then Hilkiyah gave the scroll to Shaphan, and he read it.

[9] Shaphan returned to the king and reported, "Your officials have given the money collected at the Temple of the Lord to the workers and supervisors at the Temple." [10] Shaphan also said to the king, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a scroll." So Shaphan read it to the king.

[11] When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair. [12] Then he gave these orders to Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam son of Shaphan, Acbor son of Micaiah, Shaphan the court secretary, and Asaiah the king's personal adviser:

[13] "Go to the Temple and speak to the Lord for me and for the people and for all Judah. Ask him about the words written in this scroll that has been found. The Lord's anger is burning against us because our ancestors have not obeyed the words in this scroll. We have not been doing what this scroll says we must do."

[14] So Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam, Acbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to the newer Mishneh section of Jerusalem to consult with the prophet Huldah. She was the wife of Shallum son of Tikvah and grandson of Harhas, the keeper of the Temple wardrobe. [15] She said to them, "The Lord, the God of Israel, has spoken! Go and tell the man who sent you, [16] 'This is what the Lord says: I will destroy this city and its people, just as I stated in the scroll you read. [17] For my people have abandoned me and worshiped pagan gods, and I am very angry with them for everything they have done. My anger is burning against this place, and it will not be quenched.'

[18] "But go to the king of Judah who sent you to seek the Lord and tell him: 'This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says concerning the message you have just heard:

[19] You were sorry and humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I said against this city and its people, that this land would be cursed and become desolate. You tore your clothing in despair and wept before me in repentance. So I have indeed heard you, says the Lord. [20] I will not send the promised disaster against this city until after you have died and been buried in peace. You will not see the disaster I am going to bring on this place.' "So they took her message back to the king.

[23:1] Then the king summoned all the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem. [2] And the king went up to the Temple of the Lord with all the people of Judah and Jerusalem, and the priests, and the prophets—all the people from the least to the greatest. There the king read to them the entire Book of the Covenant that had been found in the Lord's Temple. [3] The king took his place of authority beside the pillar and renewed the covenant in the Lord's presence. He pledged to obey the Lord by keeping all his commands, regulations, and laws with all his heart and soul. In this way, he confirmed all the terms of the covenant that were written in the scroll, and all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

[4] Then the king instructed Hilkiah the high priest and the leading priests and the Temple gatekeepers to remove from the Lord's Temple all the utensils that were used to worship Baal, Asherah, and all the forces of heaven. The king had all these things burned outside Jerusalem on the terraces of the Kidron Valley, and he carried the ashes away to Bethel. [5] He did away with the pagan priests, who had been appointed by the previous kings of Judah, for they had burned incense at the pagan shrines throughout Judah and even in the vicinity of Jerusalem. They had also offered incense to Baal, and to the sun, the moon, the constellations, and to all the forces of heaven.

[6] The king removed the Asherah pole from the Lord's Temple and took it outside Jerusalem to the Kidron Valley, where he burned it. Then he ground the pole to dust and threw the dust in the public cemetery. [7] He also tore down the houses of the shrine prostitutes that were inside the Temple of the Lord, where the women wove coverings for the Asherah pole.

[8] Josiah brought back to Jerusalem all the priests of the Lord, who were living in other towns of Judah. He also defiled all the pagan shrines, where they had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba. He destroyed the shrines at the entrance to the gate of Joshua, the governor of Jerusalem. This gate was located to the left of the city gate as one enters the city. [9] The priests who had served at the pagan shrines were not allowed to serve at the Lord's altar in Jerusalem, but they were allowed to eat unleavened bread with the other priests.

[10] Then the king defiled the altar of Topheth in the valley of Ben-hinnom, so no one could ever again use it to sacrifice a son or daughter in the fire as an offering to Molech. [11] He removed from the entrance of the Lord's Temple the horse statues that the former kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun. They were near the quarters of Nathan-melech the eunuch, an officer of the court. The king also burned the chariots dedicated to the sun.

[12] Josiah tore down the altars that the kings of Judah had built on the palace roof above the upper room of Ahaz. The king destroyed the altars that Manasseh had built in the two courtyards of the Lord's Temple. He smashed them to bits and scattered the pieces in the Kidron Valley. [13] The king also desecrated the pagan shrines east of Jerusalem and south of the Mount of Corruption, where King Solomon of Israel had built shrines for Ashtoreth, the detestable goddess of the Sidonians; and for Chemosh, the detestable god of the Moabites; and for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. [14] He smashed the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah poles. Then he desecrated these places by scattering human bones over them.

[15] The king also tore down the altar at Bethel, the pagan shrine that Jeroboam son of Nebat had made when he led Israel into sin. Josiah crushed the stones to dust and burned the Asherah pole. [16] Then as Josiah was looking around, he noticed several tombs in the side of the hill. He ordered that the bones be brought out, and he burned them on the altar at Bethel to desecrate it. This happened just as the Lord had promised through the man of God as Jeroboam stood beside the altar at the festival. Then Josiah turned and looked up at the tomb of the man of God who had predicted these things. [17] "What is that monument over there?" Josiah asked.

And the people of the town told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted the very things that you have just done to the altar at Bethel!"

[18] Josiah replied, "Leave it alone. Don't disturb his bones." So they did not burn his bones or those of the old prophet from Samaria.

[19] Then Josiah demolished all the buildings at the pagan shrines in the towns of Samaria, just as he had done at Bethel. They had been built by the various kings of Israel and had made the Lord very angry. [20] He executed the priests of the pagan shrines on their own altars, and he burned human bones on the altars to desecrate them. Finally, he returned to Jerusalem.

[21] King Josiah then issued this order to all the people: "You must celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God, as it is written in the Book of the Covenant." [22] There had not been a Passover celebration like that since the time when the judges ruled in Israel, throughout all the years of the kings of Israel and Judah. [23] This Passover was celebrated to the Lord in Jerusalem during the eighteenth year of King Josiah's reign.

[24] Josiah also exterminated the mediums and psychics, the household gods, and every other kind of idol worship, both in Jerusalem and throughout the land of Judah. He did this in obedience to all the laws written in the scroll that Hilkiah the priest had found in the Lord's Temple. [25] Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul and strength, obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since.

[26] Even so, the Lord's anger burned against Judah because of all the great evils of King Manasseh, and he did not hold back his fierce anger from them. [27] For the Lord had said, "I will destroy Judah just as I have destroyed Israel. I will banish the people from my presence and reject my chosen city of Jerusalem and the Temple where my name was to be honored."

[28] The rest of the events in Josiah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah.

[29] While Josiah was king, Pharaoh Neco, king of Egypt, went to the Euphrates River to help the king of Assyria. King Josiah marched out with his army to fight him, but King Neco killed him when they met at Megiddo. [30] Josiah's officers took his body back in a chariot from Megiddo to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb. Then the people anointed his son Jehoahaz and made him the next king.

[31] Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah. [32] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestors had done.

[33] Pharaoh Neco put Jehoahaz in prison at Riblah in the land of Hamath to prevent him from ruling from Jerusalem. He also demanded that Judah pay 7,500 pounds of silver and 75 pounds of gold as tribute. [34] Pharaoh Neco then installed Eliakim, another of Josiah's sons, to reign in place of his father, and he changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Jehoahaz was taken to Egypt as a prisoner, where he died.

[35] In order to get the silver and gold demanded as tribute by Pharaoh Neco, Jehoiakim collected a tax from the people of Judah, requiring them to pay in proportion to their wealth.

[36] Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother was Zebidah, the daughter of Pedaiiah from Rumah. [37] He did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his ancestors had done.

[24:1] During Jehoiakim's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon invaded the land of Judah. Jehoiakim surrendered and paid him tribute for three years but then rebelled. [2] Then the Lord sent bands of Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite, and Ammonite raiders against Judah to destroy it, just as the Lord had promised through his prophets. [3] These disasters happened to Judah according to the Lord's command. He had decided to remove Judah from his presence because of the many sins of Manasseh. [4] He had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord would not forgive this.

[5] The rest of the events in Jehoiakim's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [6] When Jehoiakim died, his son Jehoiachin became the next king. [7] The king of Egypt never returned after that, for the king of Babylon occupied the entire area formerly claimed by Egypt—from the brook of Egypt to the Euphrates River.

[8] Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother was Nehushta, the daughter of Elnathan from Jerusalem. [9] Jehoiachin did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as his father had done.

[10] During Jehoiachin's reign, the officers of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon came up against Jerusalem and besieged it. [11] Nebuchadnezzar himself arrived at the city during the siege. [12] Then King Jehoiachin, along with his advisers, nobles, and officials, and the queen mother, surrendered to the Babylonians.

In the eighth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he took Jehoiachin prisoner. [13] As the Lord had said beforehand, Nebuchadnezzar carried away all the treasures from the Lord's Temple and the royal palace. They cut apart all the gold vessels that King Solomon of Israel had placed in the Temple.

[14] King Nebuchadnezzar took ten thousand captives from Jerusalem, including all the princes and the best of the soldiers, craftsmen, and smiths. So only the poorest people were left in the land.

[15] Nebuchadnezzar led King Jehoiachin away as a captive to Babylon, along with his wives and officials, the queen mother, and all Jerusalem's elite. [16] He also took seven thousand of the best troops and one thousand craftsmen and smiths, all of whom were strong and fit for war. [17] Then the king of Babylon installed Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, as the next king, and he changed Mattaniah's name to Zedekiah.

[18] Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother was Hamutal, the daughter of Jeremiah from Libnah. [19] But Zedekiah did what was evil in the Lord's sight, just as Jehoiakim had done. [20] So the Lord, in his anger, finally banished the people of Jerusalem and Judah from his presence and sent them into exile.

Then Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

[25:1] So on January 15, during the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon led his entire army against Jerusalem. They surrounded the city and built siege ramps against its walls. [2] Jerusalem was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah's reign.

[3] By July 18 of Zedekiah's eleventh year, the famine in the city had become very severe, with the last of the food entirely gone. [4] Then a section of the city wall was broken down, and all the soldiers made plans to escape from the city. But since the city was surrounded by the Babylonians, they waited for nightfall and fled through the gate between the two walls behind the king's gardens. They made a dash across the fields, in the direction of the Jordan Valley.

[5] But the Babylonians chased after them and caught the king on the plains of Jericho, for by then his men had all abandoned him. [6] They brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was passed against him. [7] The king of Babylon made Zedekiah watch as all his sons were killed. Then they gouged out Zedekiah's eyes, bound him in bronze chains, and led him away to Babylon.

[8] On August 14 of that year, which was the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, an official of the Babylonian king, arrived in Jerusalem. [9] He burned down the Temple of the Lord, the royal palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem. He destroyed all the important buildings in the city. [10] Then the captain of the guard supervised the entire Babylonian army as they tore down the walls of Jerusalem. [11] Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, then took as exiles those who remained in the city, along with the rest of the people and the troops who had declared their allegiance to the king of Babylon. [12] But the captain of the guard allowed some of the poorest people to stay behind in Judah to care for the vineyards and fields.

[13] The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the bronze water carts, and the bronze Sea that were at the Lord's Temple, and they carried all the bronze away to Babylon. [14] They also took all the pots, shovels, lamp snuffers, dishes, and all the other bronze utensils used for making sacrifices at the Temple.

[15] Nebuzaradan, captain of the guard, also took the firepans and basins, and all the other utensils made of pure gold or silver.

[16] The bronze from the two pillars, the water carts, and the Sea was too great to be weighed. These things had been made for the Lord's Temple in the days of King Solomon. [17] Each of the pillars was 27 feet tall. The bronze capital on top of each pillar was 7 1/2 feet high and was decorated with a network of bronze pomegranates all the way around.

[18] The captain of the guard took with him as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, his assistant Zephaniah, and the three chief gatekeepers. [19] And of the people still hiding in the city, he took an officer of the Judean army, five of the king's personal advisers, the army commander's chief secretary, who was in charge of recruitment, and sixty other citizens. [20] Nebuzaradan the commander took them all to the king of Babylon at Riblah. [21] And there at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king of Babylon had them all put to death. So the people of Judah were sent into exile from their land.

[22] Then King Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam and grandson of Shaphan as governor over the people left in Judah. [23] When all the army commanders and their men learned that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they joined him at Mizpah. These included Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, and Jaazaniah son of the Maacathite, and all their men.

[24] Gedaliah vowed to them that the Babylonian officials meant them no harm. "Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and all will go well for you," he promised. [25] But in midautumn of that year, Ishmael son of Nethaniah and grandson of Elishama, who was of the royal family, went to Mizpah with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and everyone with him, both Judeans and Babylonians.

[26] Then all the people of Judah, from the least to the greatest, as well as the army commanders, fled in panic to Egypt, for they were afraid of what the Babylonians would do to them.

[27] In the thirty-seventh year of King Jehoiachin's exile in Babylon, Evil-merodach ascended to the Babylonian throne. He was kind to Jehoiachin and released him from prison on April 2 of that year. [28] He spoke pleasantly to Jehoiachin and gave him preferential treatment over all the other exiled kings in Babylon. [29] He supplied Jehoiachin with new clothes to replace his prison garb and allowed him to dine at the king's table for the rest of his life. [30] The Babylonian king also gave him a regular allowance to cover his living expenses until the day of his death.

## **MEGATHEMES**

### **THEME: Elisha**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

The purpose of Elisha's ministry was to restore respect for God and his message, and he stood firmly against the evil kings of Israel. By faith, with courage and prayer, he revealed not only God's judgment on sin, but also his mercy, love, and tenderness toward faithful people.

#### **IMPORTANCE:**

Elisha's mighty miracles showed that God controls not only great armies, but also events in everyday life. When we listen to and obey God, he shows us his power to transform any situation. God's care is for all who are willing to follow him. He can perform miracles in our lives.

### **THEME:**

#### **Idolatry**

#### **EXPLANATION:**

Every evil king in both Israel and Judah encouraged idolatry. These false gods represented war, cruelty, power, and sex. Although they had God's law, priests, and prophets to guide them, these kings sought priests and prophets whom they could manipulate to their own advantage.

#### **IMPORTANCE:**

An idol is any idea, ability, possession, or person that we regard more highly than God. We condemn Israel and Judah for foolishly worshiping idols, but we also worship other gods—power, money, physical attractiveness. Those who believe in God must resist the lure of these attractive idols.

## **THEME: Evil Kings GOOD Kings**

### **EXPLANATION:**

Only 20 percent of Israel and Judah's kings followed God. The evil kings were short-sighted. They thought they could control their nations' destinies by importing other religions, forming alliances with pagan nations, and enriching themselves. The good kings had to spend most of their time undoing the evil done by their predecessors.

### **IMPORTANCE:**

Although the evil kings led the people into sin, the priests, princes, heads of families, and military leaders all had to cooperate with the evil plans and practices in order for them to be carried out. We cannot discharge our responsibility to obey God by blaming our leaders. We are responsible to know God's Word and obey it.

## **THEME: God's Patience**

### **EXPLANATION:**

God told his people that if they obeyed him they would live successfully; if they disobeyed, they would be judged and destroyed. God had been patient with the people for hundreds of years. He sent many prophets to guide them. And he gave ample warning of coming destruction. But even God's patience has limits.

### **IMPORTANCE:**

God is patient with us. He gives us many chances to hear his message, to turn from sin, and to believe him. His patience does not mean he is indifferent to how we live, nor does it mean we can ignore his warnings. His patience should make us want to come to him now.

## **THEME: Judgment**

### **EXPLANATION:**

After King Solomon's reign, Israel lasted 209 years before the Assyrians destroyed it; Judah lasted 345 years before the Babylonians took Jerusalem. After repeated warnings to his people, God used these evil nations as instruments for his justice.

### **IMPORTANCE:**

The consequences of rejecting God's commands and purpose for our lives are severe. He will not ignore unbelief or rebellion. We must believe in him and accept Christ's sacrificial death on our behalf, or we will be judged also.

### **TIMELINE**

Kingdom divides 930 B.C.  
Ahab dies in battle 853  
Elijah's ministry transfers to Elisha 848  
Jehu becomes king of Israel 841  
Joash becomes king of Judah 835  
Elisha's ministry ends 797  
Jeroboam II becomes king of Israel 793  
Amos's ministry begins 760  
Hosea's ministry begins 753  
Micah's ministry begins 742  
Isaiah's ministry begins 740  
Israel (northern kingdom) falls 722  
Hezekiah becomes king of Judah 715  
Josiah becomes king of Judah 640  
Jeremiah's ministry begins 627  
Book of the Law found in the temple 622  
First captivity of Judah; Daniel taken 605  
Second captivity of Judah; Ezekiel taken 597  
Judah (southern kingdom) falls 586

**An invitation is given to open your heart's door.**

**Rev. 3:20**

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

**To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:**

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print