

SOUTHLAND CHURCH

THE BOOK OF
2 KINGS

24 Day Devotional



foundations
daily devotional

The Kings of Israel							
BC	Yrs	Kings	Reference	BC	Yrs	Kings	Reference
1021	40	Saul	1 Sam 13:1				
981	40	David	1 Ki 2:10-11				
941	40	Solomon	1 Ki 11:42				
Kingdom Splits under Solomon's son Rehoboam (901 BC)							
Judah				Israel			Notes
901	17	Rehoboam (E)	1 Ki 14:21	901-880	22	Jeroboam	1 KINGS 14:19-20
884	3	Abijah (E)	15:1-2				Note: all the Israelite kings are evil. Some Judean kings are good and some are evil, so they are each denoted by a (G) or (E).
881	41	Asa (G)	15:9-10	880-879	2	Nadab	
				879-856	24	Baasha	15:33
				856-855	2	Elah	16:8
				855	7dys	Zimri	16:15
				855-844	12	Omri/Tibni	16:16-28
							Israel split in 2, Tibni & Omri both reign first 5 yrs; Omri defeats Tibni & reunifies Israel. Omri – 12 total yrs.
840	25	Jehoshaphat (G)	22:41	844-823	22	Ahab	16:29
							Ahab & Ahaziah co-reign 2 yrs 824-823.
				824-823	*2	Ahaziah	22:51
				823-812	12	Jehoram	2 KINGS 3:1
815	*3	Jehoram (E)	2KI 8:16-17				Confusing: both Israel & Judah had kings named Jehoram reigning at the same time.
812	1	Ahaziah (E)	8:26				
811	6	Athaliah (E)	11:1-3, 12:1	811-784	28	Jehu	
805	*38	Joash (G) (also 'Jehoash')	12:1	783-767	*17	Jehoahaz	13:1
							Jehoahaz & Jehoash co-reign 3 yrs (769-767)
				769-754	16	Jehoash	13:10
							Confusing: both Israel & Judah had kings named Jehoash reigning at the same time.
767	29	Amaziah (G)	14:1-2,17	753-713	41	Jeroboam (the 2nd)	14:23
738	11	NO KING	14:1,23 + 15:1				
727	52	Uzziah (G) (aka Azariah)	15:1-2	712-690	23	NO KING	
				690	6m	Zechariah	15:8
				689	1m	Shallum	15:13
				688-679	10	Menahem	15:17
				678-677	2	Pekahiah	15:23
675	16	Jotham (G)	15:32-33	676-657	20	Pekah	15:27
659	*14	Ahaz (E)	16:1-2	656-649	8	NO KING	
645	29	Hezekiah (G)	18:1-2 + 16:2 + 17:1 + 18:9-10 = 645BC	648-640	9	Hoshea	17:1
				640	Assyrian Captivity 2 Kings 18:10 (no more political entity Israel)		
616	55	Manasseh (E/G)	21:1	Asterisks from the Kings of Judah list			
561	2	Amon (E)	21:19	116 yrs	1.Jehoram: Jehoram reigned a total of 8 years, but only 3 by himself. He co-reigned with Jehoshaphat 5 yrs in 2 different stints (824-23 & 818-816), only reigning by himself from 815-813.		
559	31	Josiah (G)	22:1		2.Joash: Amaziah began co-reigning with Joash the last 2 yrs of Joash's reign (767-766). Joash actually reigned 40 yrs – 38 by himself.		
528	1	Jehoahaz (E)	23:31		3.Ahaz: Hezekiah began co-reigning with Ahaz the last 2 yrs of his reign (746-745). Ahaz actually reigned 16 yrs but only 14 by himself.		
527	11	Jehoiakim (E)	23:36				
524	Babylonian Captivity 2 Ki 24:1-4						
517	0	Jehoiachin (E)	24:8	18 yrs			
516	11	Zedekiah (E)	24:18, 25:3-21				
506	Jerusalem falls		2 Ki 25:9	No more kings			

Total Period of all the Kings (Judah) : Saul – Zedekiah = 516 yrs (1021 BC – 506 BC)

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DAY 1

Introduction

As its title suggests, 2 Kings is a continuation of 1 Kings. Thus, in order to fully grasp the events in 2 Kings, we must first review the events of 1 Kings. The book of 1 Kings begins with the death of David, King of Israel and man after God's own heart. After a brief rebellion from David's son, Adonijah, the kingdom is passed to Solomon. Solomon begins his reign humbly, asking God for wisdom. He continues on to build the Temple. Despite his early success, Solomon falls into sin by marrying multiple wives and following their false gods. After Solomon's death, tragedy strikes. The nation is divided. The Southern Kingdom (Judah) follows Solomon's son, Rehoboam. The Northern Kingdom (Israel) follows Jeroboam. The story continues by tracing the successive kings in both kingdoms. Some kings are good, making steps to lead their nations toward the true God. However, most kings are evil, establishing idol worship and moral depravity in their lands.

Even in the midst of their rebellion, God remains faithful to His people. He sends several prophets to urge the nations to repent. The most well-known of these prophets is Elijah, who dominates the latter portion of the 1 Kings narrative. God works miracles and displays His glory through Elijah. 1 Kings closes as Elijah passes on his prophetic role to Elisha, a key player in 2 Kings.

We see some consequences to sin in 1 Kings. God destroys the lineages of Kings Jeroboam, Baasha and Ahab. However, in 1 Kings, it is mostly the rulers who face consequences for their sins. They are judged before the general population because they chose to set the nation on the path of destruction. Their lives are also set as a warning to Israel: repent or you also will face the wrath of God. In 1 Kings, God remains patient with the people of Israel and Judah, delaying their judgment that all would have the opportunity to repent.

In 2 Kings, we will see the ministry of Elisha, the continued rebellion of leaders, the glimmers of hope in godly rulers and the eventual judgments of Israel and Judah.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Looking over Israel's history, we see moments of righteousness, but also a decline into greater and greater sin. Reflect on your life and your actions. Is the general tone of your story one that pursues God and His righteousness, or one that pursues sin and selfish desires? Repent as necessary. Ask God to meet with you through your study of 2 Kings. Ask Him to mould you into His image as you pursue Him.
2. Pray for Israel today. A country's political leadership has an immense capacity to influence the nation for good or evil. Pray that God would meet the current leaders of Israel and teach them the truth of their Messiah, Jesus. Pray that God would also prepare the next generation of government to lead the nation in following His ways. Pray that Israel's leaders would be followers of Yahweh – Father, Son, and Spirit – so the nation might be led toward Him.

DAY 2 **READ:** 2 Kings 1

Israel's king, Ahab has just died. He is widely known as the most evil king in Israel's history (1 Kings 16-22). Now his son, Ahaziah, is king of the Northern Kingdom. The writer uses the Moabite rebellion as a timestamp for this story of Ahaziah. We will read more about the rebellion itself in 2 Kings 3. King Ahaziah has fallen and injured himself. Wanting to determine the outcome of his injury, Ahaziah sends messengers to inquire of the Philistine god, Baal-Zebub. While this is happening, the angel of the Lord meets the prophet Elijah with a message: "Is it because there is no God in Israel, that you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? ... You shall surely die" (v 3-4, NASB). Interestingly, Jesus using the name of this particular false god to refer to Satan, "the prince of demons" (Matthew 12:22-28, Beelzebub is the Greek form of Baal-Zebub). Through Elijah, God is rebuking Ahaziah for seeking prophecy through demonic powers rather than the True God, Yahweh.

Upon hearing this message, Ahaziah sends a delegation to meet Elijah. The text does not explicitly say that this is an unfriendly delegation. However, Elijah's response indicates that the group was likely sent to punish the prophet, not commend him. Further, the king would not have sent a captain with fifty of his men with a positive message. This was an arrest warrant which was likely to prove difficult. The captain mocks Elijah, calling him, "man of God," and commands Elijah to come down from the mountain. Elijah replies: If I am truly a representative of God, you must face the consequences for your actions. Elijah then calls down fire from heaven to consume the captain and his men. It is not a minor offense to mistreat the words of the Living God. This scene is then replayed as Ahaziah sends out a second delegation.

Finally, Ahaziah sends a third delegation to meet Elijah. This time, the captain takes a different approach. Instead of mocking Elijah, the captain begs for mercy. The captain heard what happened to his peers and fears the same fate awaits his own men. At this time, the angel of the Lord appears to Elijah. He promises Elijah safety and commands the prophet to go to the king. Elijah obeys and shares his prophetic message face-to-face with King Ahaziah. As God's word in unending, the king dies of his ailments. Ahaziah's brother, Joram then takes the throne of Israel.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. It is important that we revere the words of the Lord. When God speaks to you (promises, direction, correction, etc.), do you believe Him? Do you trust that God's words will come into being?
2. Elijah had faith that God would answer his prayers and bring down fire from heaven. What are you praying for in your life right now? Do you believe that God will respond to your prayers?
3. Spend time praying for the area(s) you mentioned in the previous question. Ask God for direction in how to pray for this area and then pray what He shows you. Ask Him to grow your faith by giving you a greater trust in the things He speaks to you.

DAY 3 **READ:** 2 Kings 2

The death of Ahaziah and subsequent crowning of Joram sets the context for 2 Kings 2. In this time, people clung to political power until death, at which point the next of kin typically became king. In contrast, 2 Kings 2 provides us with a picture of how God transfers authority in His kingdom. It was God who named Elijah's successor, not genetics (1 Kings 19). Elijah did not cling desperately to his role. In fact, he immediately began training Elisha to take over his ministry. During this training Elijah and Elisha developed a close relationship. It is likely that they spent many hours ministering to people and seeking the Lord together. Now, Elijah is about to be taken into heaven. Three times he insists on Elisha staying back. Ever faithful to his friend and leader, Elisha insists on following Elijah until the end. Further, Elisha's fellow prophets twice confirm that Elisha knew Elijah is about to be taken away. Elisha's response is heartbreaking: "Yes, I know, but do not speak of it" (v 3, 5 NIV). It is in these tender moments that we are reminded that Elisha was a human with emotions, reactions and opinions, just as we are. His repeated affirmation of loyalty shows that Elisha knew the cost of following Elijah (in this situation, the pain of losing a friend) and decided it was nothing compared to the goodness of loyalty.

Elijah and Elisha miraculously cross the Jordan River (v 7-9). Then Elijah asks if there is anything more he can do for his protégé. Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's spirit. This reflects the Israelite law that granted the firstborn son a double portion of his father's inheritance (Deut 21:17). Elisha viewed Elijah as his spiritual father. He respected, served, and loved Elijah as a son would a father. Now he knew that it was time to take Elijah's place, just as a son takes the place of his father. And just as a son mourns his father, now Elisha mourns Elijah (v 12).

The rest of 2 Kings 2 consists of three miracles God works through Elisha, which confirm the transfer of prophetic authority. First, Elisha parts the waters of the Jordan, just as Elijah had previously (v 8, 14). Watching this, the company of prophets agrees that, "The spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha" (v 15 NIV). The company of prophets insists on searching for Elijah. Elisha knows this search is futile, but he relents, ashamed that he would be seen as disrespectful of his master. The second miracle happens as God works through Elisha to heal the waters of Jericho. The city would be an ideal settlement if the water were not polluted. Elisha asks for a new bowl, one free of ceremonial impurity. He fills it with salt, a common element in biblical sacrifices (Lev 2:13, Ezek 43:24, Matt 5:13, Col 4:6). With this salt, Elisha purifies the water.

The final miraculous work we witness has a less positive tone. Youths ridicule Elisha as he is travelling. Their insult "baldhead" does not refer directly to Elisha's physical appearance. Rather, it is a reference to the custom of travellers to cover their heads and a jeering remark about association with Elijah. The youths were mocking the prophetic office more than they were mocking Elisha. One of the costs associated with following God is not caring about one's reputation. We must care more about what God thinks of us than about what other people think of us. However, when the world has a negative opinion of God because of their negative opinion of us, God is not pleased. As seen in 2 Kings 1, it is a serious offense to God to ridicule His prophets. God's holiness demands reverence. Thus, Elisha calls a curse upon these youths. Two bears appear out of the woods and maul forty-two of the mockers (v 24).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Elisha treated Elijah as a spiritual father. Think of how God commands parents, children, and siblings to treat each other. Who are “spiritual family members” in your life (these may or may not include your physical family members)? Ask God to show you how He wants you to relate to these people.
2. Elisha knew that a cost associated with being a prophet was not caring about his reputation in man’s eyes. Do you care more about what people think of you or what God thinks of you? Talk to Jesus about this, asking Him to reveal truth to you.
3. The early church often referred to one another as brother, sister, father, mother, son and daughter. Pray that the Church today would grow in unity to become a family. Pray that believers across denominational lines would grow in loyalty and sacrifice for one another. Pray that mature believers would readily disciple younger believers and that younger believers would hunger for the wisdom of their more mature counterparts.

DAY 4**READ:** 2 Kings 3; 1 Kings 12:25-32

The focus now shifts back to the political history of Israel. Before delving into current affairs, Chapter 3 mentions King Joram’s character. He was not as evil as his (grand)parents, Ahab and Jezebel. However, he still affirms the public worship of the calves established by Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:25-32). It is interesting that Joram rejects Baal-worship, while adhering to a different branch of idol worship. Looking to the origin of the calf idols brings clarity to this question. Jeroboam saw that the Southern Kingdom had an advantage: their capital city, Jerusalem, contained Yahweh’s temple. The Israelite king feared that if his citizens went to Jerusalem to worship, their loyalty would return to the house of David and the kingdoms would re-unite. This would end his position of power. Thus, Jeroboam created a false system of worship within his own borders. He hoped to satisfy his subjects’ drive to worship and maintain their loyalty to the Northern Kingdom. Subsequent kings maintained the calf-worship because it was the key issue on which the division of the two kingdoms lay. Joram could repent of Baal worship, but this repentance had no cost. Repenting of the calf worship could cost him his kingdom. True repentance is that which comes regardless of personal cost.

Moab is southeast of Israel, bordering the eastern coastline of the Dead Sea and the southern Jordan River. It became a vassal state to Israel in the time of David. “David also defeated the Moabites So the Moabites became subject to David and brought tribute” (2 Samuel 8:2 NIV). In other words, David did not fully absorb the Moabite territory into Israel. They had an inferior status and were required to pay annual taxes to Israel. However, in daily affairs they retained a degree of independence. When the kingdom split, Moab became a vassal state to the North. Moab had begun to rebel during the reign of Ahaziah (1:1). Now Joram is king and he sees the importance in immediately dealing with this uprising. Moab’s tribute was an important source of income for Israel (v 4). Knowing that the task was too great for his armies alone, Joram seeks the allegiance of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. Jehoshaphat agrees and suggests attacking Moab from the south, through Edom. Edom, laying between Judah and Moab, was Judah’s vassal state (2 Samuel 8:14).

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Reflect on your repentance. Do you repent of all sins, even the ones that seem to benefit you, or only of sins that bring obvious detriments? Ask God to give you a heart of true repentance out of reverence and love for Him.
2. Spend time in confession today. Ask God to reveal any sins hidden in your heart. Confess and ask God to show you any practical steps you need to take in repentance.
3. Just as the Israelites and their neighbours, the Moabites, worshipped false gods, many of our neighbours worship false gods. Pray for people you know who do not serve Jesus. Pray that God would open their eyes to the futility of other religions and the powerful truth found in the Cross of Jesus Christ.

DAY 5**READ:** 2 Kings 4

2 Kings 4 begins a series of stories about the prophet Elisha. These stories are related in two groups. The first group (4:1-6:7) shows Elisha ministering to individuals. The second grouping (6:8-8:15) shows Elisha ministering to the leaders in international affairs. Nobody’s entire life can be contained in one book. It is probable that Elisha ministered in many circumstances not recorded in the Bible. However, the Holy Spirit chose to permanently record certain stories for a purpose. One such purpose is to show that God relates to people on a heart level. For example, His ministry is not effected by our gender or socioeconomic status. The first two stories in this passage illustrate this well. Elisha ministers to a poor widow and a rich married woman. At the time, women and men were not treated as equals in society. Women were dependent on the men in their lives for survival. Here, God tries to correct mankind’s imbalances by showing particular compassion to women. Because he was a man of God, Elisha viewed people with God’s eyes. Society’s labels did not alter how Elisha treated people. When the widow approached Elisha, his response was not to be bothered. Surely many would have “more important” things to do than help a lowly widow. Elisha, operating out of a heart of compassion, responded, “How can help you?” He lived to treat people as God treats people. Likewise, Elisha did not disdain the rich while elevating the poor. He humbly received hospitality from the Shunnamite woman and blessed her in her time of pain. Elisha performed a miracle that echoed his mentor, Elijah, to help this woman (1 Kings 17:7-24).

The second two stories in this section tell of God's miraculous provision for His followers. In the first, Elisha is with a company of prophets in Gilgal. A famine is ravaging the region. One of the company unwittingly prepares a stew with poisonous gourds. God, through Elisha, heals the stew, allowing the prophets to eat. Next, we see God work through Elisha to multiply a small amount of food to feed one hundred men. This miracle foreshadows Jesus multiplying the fish and loaves (Matthew 14:13-21, 15:32-39). As Jesus' followers were breaking the bread, they surely remembered the prior work of Elisha. They must have thought, "Who is this man, that he can perform miracles fifty times greater than the prophets of our forefathers?" We must remember that the miracles in Scripture, be they performed through Elijah, Elisha or Jesus, occurred only through the power of God Himself. When we long to see miracles and breakthrough in our own lives, we must remember that they will not come by our strength, nor by our power, but by God's Spirit (Zech 4:6).

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. History remembers Elisha as compassionate to all people, regardless of socioeconomic status, gender, age, or marital status. If someone were to write a book based on your life, what would you be remembered for? Do these things reflect a life that is being transformed by Jesus? Ask the Holy Spirit to bring clarity to you on these things.
2. Ask God to show you one act of compassion you can do today and one you can do over the next week. Commit to following through on whatever He shows you.
3. Miracles and breakthroughs come by God's power alone. Think of one miracle you need personally, one needed for a friend or family member, and one needed for the church. Release these needs to God through prayer, acknowledging that only He can move mountains, and pray for these miracles to happen!

DAY 6

 **READ:** 2 Kings 5-6:7

This passage is a continuation of 2 Kings 4, retelling Elisha's ministry to individuals. Chapter 5 relays the healing of Naaman, commander of Aram's army. When Naaman is struck with leprosy, God sovereignly moves to bring him to Elisha. Naaman's wife's maidservant had been taken captive from Israel as a little girl. Year later, she still remembers Elisha and suggests that Naaman visit the prophet. The king of Aram agrees and sends Naaman to the king of Israel. Here we see the king's inadequacy as he cannot help Naaman (v 7). When Elisha hears of the situation, he summons Naaman. Rather than addressing Naaman personally, Elisha gives directions through his messengers. Naaman is to bathe in the Jordan River seven times to receive healing. At first Naaman shows disdain at this directive. However, his servants wisely compel him to obey. How often do we scoff at God's directions, thinking our methods are wiser? One prays to grow in service, expecting his heart to be immediately filled with tender feelings of goodwill toward others. Meanwhile, God is asking him to simply pick up a dish towel or a broom. Another prays for financial provision, expecting immediate blessing. Meanwhile God wants to first bring her through a period of hardship, that He might provide different (and more eternal) blessings. We must be willing to lay down our methods and expectations at God's altar.

Naaman displays a great turnaround in this story. First, he lays his prejudices aside to obey God. Second, he returns to thank Elisha. He does not take this answered prayer for

granted. Naaman offers financial gifts to Elisha. Elisha politely declines these gifts. While it is not a sin for believers to receive gifts, or for professional ministers to accept a salary, God leads Elisha differently here. Elisha practically displays to the newly converted Naaman that money is not the benefit of following Yahweh. Yahweh Himself is the greatest gift we can receive. Naaman is now so zealous for Yahweh that he insists on bringing home soil from Israel on which to build an altar. In a world where gods were associated with specific countries, it would seem natural that Yahweh's altar should be built upon Israeli soil. Naaman had yet to learn that "the earth is the Lord's, and everything in it" (Psalm 24:1 NIV).

After offering thanks, Naaman asks for one indulgence. He requests permission to kneel in Rimmon's temple. This will not be an act of worship to Rimmon, but an act of respect to Naaman's king. Nimmon knows that bowing before another god, whether in worship or not, is a sin. We cannot use this story as license to pretend to serve anyone other than Yahweh. However, Elisha knows that Naaman is young in his faith. His heart is in the right place, even if his actions display immaturity. In the next scene, Elisha punishes his servant Gehazi for sinning. Gehazi sought the financial reward that Elisha specifically rejected. Since Gehazi lives closely with Elisha we can assume he has a degree of spiritual maturity. His sin was direct rebellion. We can see in this story that sin birthed from intentional rebellion must be treated differently than sin birthed from immaturity. Both dishonour God and require wholehearted repentance. However, immaturity requires mercy, while rebellion may require justice.

This section of stories closes with Elisha blessing one of his fellow prophets. The company of prophets associated with Elisha is growing. In fact, they have become so large that they require a bigger building to meet in! What a wonderful problem to have! As the prophets work to build a new meeting shelter, one loses his axe head in the river. Axe heads were rare at the time, making them very expensive. Having to buy a new axe head for his lender would ruin the prophet. Elisha again responds with compassion. He works a miracle and retrieves the axe head, saving his friend.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Is there a situation in your life where you are struggling to submit to God's methods? Maybe you think your prayers should be answered differently or you're having difficulty believing that God can turn a season of hardship into blessing. Pour your heart out to God. Confess any pride or lack of trust in your heart. Ask God to affirm to you that He is good and He "works all things together for the good of those who love Him and are called according to His purpose" (Romans 8:28).
2. When we sin out of immaturity, God longs to forgive us and give us grace to sin no more. He does not condemn us if we repent! Ask God to show you any areas where you walk in false condemnation.
3. Pray for believers in Canada today. Ask God to grow our spiritual maturity. Pray that we would rejoice in obeying God, even while His methods are still a mystery to us. Pray that we would repent from our rebellious natures. Pray that, when we sin out of immaturity, we would quickly receive God's forgiveness and reject self-condemnation.

DAY 7 **READ:** 2 Kings 6:8-7:20

As Elisha continues, we discover the role he played in Israel's international affairs. Israel is at war with their northeastern neighbour Aram. God gives Elisha prophetic insight about Aram's military strategy. Elisha tells the king and Israel thwarts Aram's plan of attack. This scene plays out so many times that the king of Aram assumes that one of his men is spying for Israel. The Arameans surround the city of Dothan to capture Elisha. Elisha's servant becomes fearful when he learns they are surrounded by Aramean armies. Elisha, trusting in God, tells his servant to fear not. As Elisha prays, God shows the servant that they are actually surrounded by heavenly armies and chariots of fire. Those who are with Elisha are greater than those who are with his enemy (6:16). So too, God is with us as we wage spiritual warfare, and He is greater than any that may come against us. While your enemy may seem to be a giant compared to yourself, he is a speck of dust compared to the Maker of the Universe. Next, God blinds the Arameans, in response to Elisha's prayers. Israel's king asks Elisha what he should do with these Aramean captives. Elisha's response (v 22) indicates two things. First, the captives were won by God, not by Israel's king. It was not up to the king to decide their fate. Second, the Law commanded that they love and serve their enemy (Exodus 23:4). By providing for, and then releasing, the Arameans, Israel reflected God's character. Israel created an opportunity for peaceful relations with their neighbour. Now, Aram would be the sole aggressor in any future attacks, reflecting on their own morality.

Sure enough, Aram attacked again, and besieged Israel's capital, Samaria (6:24). The siege lasted long enough that a great famine occurred. The king of Israel blamed Elisha (v 30-31). "If Elisha had only let me put the Arameans to death," thought the king, "we would not be on the edge of starvation." As the king pursues Elisha with evil intentions, Elisha relays a message to the king. In one day, the siege and famine will be over. The king's officer scoffed, thinking this impossible. Elisha declared that the officer would die for his unbelief.

Again, we witness God's faithful fulfillment of His promise. That night, four lepers discover that the Aramean camp is empty. The next day a delegation from Samaria investigates. It is true! The Arameans are gone! God had caused the Arameans to hear the sound of a great army, so they fled. As the scramble to pillage the Aramean camp for food and supplies begins, the unfaithful officer is trampled. God's word, again, is fulfilled.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to show you an area where you are experiencing spiritual opposition. Ask Him to show you a word, thought, picture, or Scripture verse that indicates how He is bigger than your enemy.
2. Sometimes loving our enemies is difficult. It may even seem unwise, just as it seemed unwise to release the Arameans who would later attack again. Ask God to show you one or two practical ways you can love your enemy this week.
3. We are not only commanded to love our enemies, we are also commanded to pray for them (Matthew 5:44). Pray for the person(s) God showed you in the above question. If you aren't sure how to pray you can ask God for direction. You can also simply pray blessings over this person(s) that you would like to receive in your own life!

DAY 8 **READ:** 2 Kings 8:1-15

This passage concludes the section of 2 Kings that focuses on Elisha. The first story brings our eyes back to the Shunnamite woman from 2 Kings 4:8-37. As Israel faced an imminent famine, Elisha warned the Shunnamite woman to flee with her family. They listened to Elisha, because they had developed a deep trust in him. For seven years this family resided in Philistine territory, waiting out the famine. We do not know how much time passed between Elisha healing the Sunnamite's son and him warning them of the famine. Regardless of time, Elisha still cared deeply for the family. As we read Scripture, it is tempting to think of people like Elisha as spiritual giants. Their experiences, character and personalities seem so different from ours. We picture them as lone wolves, needing only God. However, this is a false view of spirituality. While our deepest need is for God, He created us for community. God longs to minister to us through other believers. He also longs to use us to minister to the hearts of our brothers and sisters in Christ. Elisha had close friends. He loved them, cared for them and protected them. He also received love from them (2 Kings 4:8-10), as true friendships require the mutual giving of love. God used this friendship to bless the Shunnamite woman. In what seems on the surface to be a coincidence, she appears before the king of Israel in the same moment that Elisha's servant is retelling the miracle of her son. This "coincidence" is actually God's sovereign plan. He used this timing to give the Shunnamite woman the land and belongings she left behind in fleeing the famine.

The second story gives us a deeply moving glimpse into Elisha's heart. Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram is ill. Because of his illness, he mistrusts his own gods. Thus, Ben-Hadad sends Hazael to seek direction from Elisha. Elisha tells Hazael, "Go and say to [Ben-Hadad], 'You will certainly recover'; but the Lord has revealed to me that he will in fact die." God shows Elisha that Ben-Hadad will not die from the disease, but at the hand of Hazael. Hazael begins to feel ashamed as Elisha stares at him. While the plan to murder Ben-Hadad may or may not be fully formed in Hazael's mind at this time, the seeds of it surely lie in his heart. Hazael recognizes that the evil in his heart is apparent to Elisha. And Elisha begins to weep. Hazael will become king, as revealed to Elijah (1 Kings 19:15), but he will do much evil to Israel. While he knew this was punishment for Israel's sins, Elisha wept for his people anyway. Elisha cared deeply for Israel. He was troubled by their sins and burdened for their coming harm. God revealed these things to Elisha because He knew Elisha would be heartbroken. This shines a convicting light on our hearts. The selfishness of the human heart cares little for others. This is compounded by a society that teaches us to put our own needs first in all situations. God is looking for people who are broken over the wretched state of their land. He searches for people who mourn for the souls that do not know Him. He yearns for His followers to be deeply troubled over their people, as Elisha was deeply troubled over his people. God spoke to Elisha because He knew Elisha's heart would respond. Are our hearts responsive enough to hear what God longs to reveal about our nation?

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. We are created for deep, meaningful fellowship. Do you have friendships comparable to that between Elisha and the Shunnamite woman? If so, spend time in thanksgiving for them. If not, ask God to show you how to begin cultivating such friendships.

2. It is easier to numb ourselves to the brokenness in our world than it is to actually care. Confess having apathy over the broken state of our society. (We all need to confess this. Every believer can grow in compassion for their nation.) Ask God to show you words, thoughts, pictures or Scripture passages that reveal how He feels about Canada today.
3. In response to what God showed you, spend time today interceding for our nation. Confess specific sins on behalf of our nation. Ask God to forgive us. Pray for labourers to bring in a plentiful harvest in our nation. Ask God how you can commit to praying regularly for our nation. Maybe He wants you to set aside a time each week to pray for Canada or pray together with other believers.

DAY 9

 **READ:** 2 Kings 8:16-9:37

The narrative of 2 Kings now shifts back to the political situation of the day. Jehoram is anointed king over the Southern Kingdom. God is faithful. Jehoram is an evil man, married into the evil family of Ahab. However, God remains true to his promise to David. He will “maintain a lamp for David and his descendants forever” (v 19). This refers to a descendant of David sitting on Judah’s throne and, ultimately, the Messiah coming through David’s line. During Jehoram’s reign, Judah’s vassal state, Edom, rebels. Next, Ahaziah is crowned king of Judah. Like his predecessor, Ahaziah is related to Ahab’s family by marriage. He was also influenced by the great evil of Ahab’s family (v 27). Our relationships have great potential to lead us toward good or evil. During his reign, Ahaziah joins forces with Joram of Israel to wage war against Hazael the Aramean (see 2 Kings 8:7-15). Their military campaign ends in disaster (v 29).

While these events are happening in the Southern Kingdom, God is preparing a new king for the Northern Kingdom. Elisha sends one of the company of prophets to anoint Jehu for the role. He declared that Jehu will eliminate the house of Ahab. Jehu’s fellow army officers are clearly displeased with Joram’s rule as they immediately declare allegiance to Jehu. The story continues as Jehu fulfills his mandate: he kills Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah. After this, he oversees the death of Jezebel, Ahab’s widow.

God’s Word will always be completed. Here we witness the fulfillment of the judgment on Ahab’s house (1 Kings 21:21). Several years have passed since this declaration of judgment and no repentance has occurred. Ahab’s line remains wicked. God is just. He will not allow leaders to remain perpetually in authority if they only use their positions for evil. In His patience, God has given Ahab’s line many chances to repent and they have consistently chosen sin. Now they face a fate chosen by their actions. How God relates to this royal line mirrors how He relates to the broader nation of Israel. He consistently shows Israel patience, giving them opportunities to repent and turn to Him. However, Israel’s time under God’s patience is running short. Without a swift and certain change of course, Israel too will face judgment.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Both Jehoram and Ahaziah were related to Ahab by marriage and were thus influenced by the family’s evil. Reflect on your relationships (family, friends, coworkers, etc.). Do the people you interact with influence you for good or evil? Ask God to speak to you regarding this.
2. Spend time in worship today. Reflect on God’s attributes (ex. His holiness, justice, sovereignty, and patience) and praise Him for these.
3. Pray for your family to develop a greater love for God’s Word. Pray that they would hunger to meet with Him through Scripture. Pray that they would grow in diligent study of His Word and in practical application of it to their lives. Pray that their hearts would be softened and matured as they delve into the Bible.

DAY 10

 **READ:** 2 Kings 10

In chapter 10, Jehu continues his work to rid Israel of Ahab’s wicked legacy. First, he deals with Ahab’s remaining descendants. Jehu sends notice to the officials of Jezreel. They are to select the “best and most worthy” of Ahab’s descendants and place him on the throne of Israel. There is one condition, however. These officials must be so certain of their choice that they are willing to fight for it (v 3). They must be so loyal to their chosen king that they will die for him. Upon hearing this, the officials are afraid. They doubt their ability to obtain victory over Jehu (v 4). They decide it is better to align themselves with Jehu than against him. Thus, Jehu sends orders to the officials to kill all of Ahab’s descendants. The officials oblige and send Jehu the heads of Ahab’s descendants as proof. Jehu displays these heads publicly and addresses the citizens of Israel. While Jehu was the one who killed Joram, surely the work of erasing Ahab’s house was ordained by the Lord (v 9-11). Jehu continues this mission until not one member of Ahab’s family remains.

Next, Jehu deals with the ministers of Baal installed in Israel under Ahab’s reign. Jehu employs trickery to bring these ministers to one place. He ensures that “not one is missing” (v 19). Jehu then commands his guards and officers to kill the ministers of Baal. They obey, killing the wicked priests and destroying their temple to Baal. The sacred stone to Baal is destroyed and turned into a latrine. This is the worth found in the worship of false gods and idols. The shrine dedicated to Baal was as filthy as a latrine. So too, the corners of our own lives dedicated to idols are filthy in God’s sight.

Jehu is zealous for God in the big things, such as eliminating Baal worship. For this faithfulness, God rewards him (v 30). However, Jehu holds on to sin in other areas. He is not careful to keep God’s laws, nor does he remove the calf-worship of Jeroboam (v 31). It is probable that the people of Israel follow their leader’s example in ignoring God’s Word. For this, God begins to bring punishment upon the nation. He allows the evil Hazael to take territory from Israel in battle. These territorial losses foreshadow the greater judgment to come.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. An idol is something we fear more than we fear God. Is there anything that holds such a strong grasp on your heart that you struggle to submit it to God's leading? Confess this to God and ask Him for the power you need to release this idol fully to Him.
2. Pray a prayer of recommitment today. Even zealous followers of God need to regularly re-affirm their commitment to God, lest they grow blind to areas of disobedience in their lives. Tell God that your life and all that belongs to you are His and ask Him to use you for His kingdom.
3. Pray for the Church today. Ask God to rid the Church of sin and idols. Ask Him to grow our hearts in pure devotion to Him. Pray that we would find delight in practicing holiness. Pray that we would find joy in pleasing God and experience the great rewards of submitting our lives wholly to Him.

DAY 11**READ:** 2 Kings 11-12

Jehu has killed Ahaziah and Judah is without a king. Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, sees an opportunity. She aims to destroy the entire royal family, with the aim of gaining power for herself. However, one of Ahaziah's sons is saved. Joash's aunt, Jehoshеba, hides him in the temple and preserves the Davidic line. While Joash is hiding in the temple, growing from an infant to a boy, Athaliah reigns over Judah. During this time, she re-instituted Baal-worship. It is interesting that the author of 2 Kings neither directly refers to Athaliah as queen, nor bookmarks her story with the signature introduction and conclusion given to monarchs. It was unacceptable in Judah to have a ruler not from the line of David.

When Joash is seven years old, Jehoiada orchestrates a takeover of the throne. Jehoiada gathers a royal guard and equips them with King David's spears and shields, indicating that they have Davidic authority, which Athaliah does not. He then crowns Joash king over Judah. Athaliah decrees that this is treason. However, the people are with Joash. Athaliah is captured and put to death. "Jehoiada then made a covenant between the Lord and the king and people that they would be the Lord's people. He also made a covenant between the king and the people. All the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and tore it down" (11:17-18a). A renewed covenant and the destruction of Baal's temple – what a triumphant start to the new king's reign!

A primary focus of Joash's reign is the repair God's temple. King Joash orders that the money received from several sources be given directly to the priests to repair the temple. However, after many years, the priests had not even begun work on the temple! When God or a leader entrusts us with a responsibility, it is wise to obey quickly. In order to ensure the project's completion, the responsibility is removed from the priests and given to other craftsmen. As funds came in for the project, they were given directly to the craftsmen. These workers were so honest and trustworthy that careful accounting of the funds was not necessary. This is almost impossible to imagine in a culture where meticulous bookkeeping is vital to our economy!

Joash's reign closes with two events. Hazael threatens to invade Judah. This leads Joash to bribe Hazael with sacred objects and gold from the temple and the palace. Joash later dies when his officials conspire against him and assassinate him.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Ask God to show you one time recently when you were quick to obey direction (either from God or from a leader in your life). Ask Him to show you one time when you were slow to obey.
2. "They did not require an accounting from those to whom they gave the money to pay the workers, because they acted with complete honesty" (12:15). Do you handle your finances with complete honesty? This includes your income, expenditures, giving and taxes. Confess any dishonesty and selfishness in this. Commit to managing your finances in a way that builds God's kingdom, not simply your own. If you need help with this, consider signing up for the Fresh Start Financial course at Southland.
3. Pray for Christian workers in our nation. Pray that God's character would be displayed by how Christians work at their jobs. Pray that their obedience would come out of submission to Christ. Pray that they would joyfully serve their employers, customers and co-workers, because they are truly serving the King of Kings. Pray that believers in our country would look for ways to advance God's kingdom through their workplaces.

DAY 12**READ:** 2 Kings 13

2 Kings 13 recounts the reigns of two kings of Israel, Jehoahaz and Jehoash, as well as the final prophecy and death of Elisha. Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, succeeds his father in ruling Israel. Jehoahaz is an evil king. God is angry at Jehoahaz's wickedness, so he allows Hazael, king of Aram, to rule over Israel. This painful subjugation of Israel to Aram was prophesied by Elisha (8:11-13). Eventually, Jehoahaz is broken. He cannot rescue Israel, so he seeks the Lord. When we come to the end of ourselves and seek God He always responds. The Lord delivers Israel out of Aram's hands. Despite receiving God's miraculous salvation, Jehoahaz continues in his wicked ways. Because of this, God allows Aram to decimate Israel's armies. Jehoahaz dies and is buried with his fathers in Samaria.

Jehoash, Jehoahaz's son, becomes king of Israel. He, too, did evil and failed to repent. During Jehoash's reign, Elisha falls ill. The king visits the prophet and mourns his impending death. Elisha's final prophecy is recorded in this story. Elisha tells Jehoash to take up a bow and arrow and shot out the east window. This prophetic act declares Israel's coming victory over Aram. Next, Elisha tells Jehoash to strike the ground with the arrows. Jehoash strikes the ground three times and stopped. Whatever his motivation for stopping Jehoash fails Elisha's test. Jehoash does not display the zeal and resolve necessary to fully defeat Aram. Thus, Israel will only have a partial victory. Sometime after this meeting, Elisha dies and is buried. God's spirit rested on Elisha so powerfully that a dead man came to life after touching Elisha's bones!

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. God heard Jehoahaz's cry and rescued Israel in their time of need. Is there an area where you need God's powerful deliverance? Ask God to show you how He wants to be your deliverer in this situation.

2. Spend a good amount of time (at least fifteen minutes) interceding for God's deliverance in this situation. Pray for His rescue from the depths of your heart. Our God is strong and mighty to save!
3. God's Spirit was powerful in Elisha's days and it is powerful today. Pray that God would meet people, speaking to them in dreams, healing them physically and emotionally and working miracles in their lives. Pray that the movements of God's Spirit would lead people to submit their lives to Jesus. Pray that, even as you read this, God would move in miraculous ways to bring people into His kingdom.

DAY 13

 **READ:** 2 Kings 14

2 Kings 14 begins with the reign of Amaziah over Judah. Amaziah follows the ways of his father Joash. He has the same zeal for the Lord. Joash had repaired the temple and Amaziah refuses to let it fall back into disrepair. However, Amaziah does not build on his father's legacy. When we inherit a godly legacy, we must do something with it. We cannot be selfish with our inheritance. We stand on the shoulders on giants it is not for a fun ride, but so we can reach higher than even the giants could. For example, the child of godly parents inherits a healthy, biblical example of marriage. This child is now responsible to strive to make their own marriage even stronger than that of their parents. A father expects his son to grow the family business, not maintain the status quo. Congregants of a healthy church must not merely appreciate in the church's mission. They must, in gratitude, as God how they can help the mission reach even farther. God blesses us with an inheritance not primarily for our own benefit. He expects us to multiply our inheritance to bless others.

Judah sees great military success under Amaziah. However, this led Amaziah to become arrogant toward Israel. Amaziah sends Jehoash of Israel a challenge (v 8). Jehoash tempers his response, first giving Amaziah a cautionary warning. Israel is larger and stronger than Judah. It would be unwise for Judah to enter into battle. "Amaziah, however, would not listen, so Jehoash king of Israel attacked" (v 11). This battle leads to an embarrassing defeat for Judah. Years later, Amaziah is assassinated by his own people.

Meanwhile, Jeroboam II becomes king of Israel. Here we see Israel with yet another evil king. Yet, God is sovereign and merciful. He can use an evil king to bring about blessings. Under Jeroboam II, Israel extended its borders. This fulfilled a prophecy of Jonah.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. From whom do you inherit a godly legacy? Ask God how He wants you to multiply this inheritance to bless others.
2. Spend time in thanksgiving for the people who have left you a godly legacy. Thank God for using people to disciple you and train you in His ways. Pray that God would continue to raise up disciple makers who will leave godly legacies.
3. Our God is loving and powerful. He can use even evil circumstances to create good. Ask God to show you how He has used a difficulty or an evil circumstance to work good in your life. Spend time in thanksgiving for this.

DAY 14

 **READ:** 2 Kings 15-16

2 Kings 15 takes us through a quick succession of kings in Israel and Judah. We begin with Azariah, also known as Uzziah, reigning over Judah. He is generally a godly king, but fails to remove the high places. Later in Azariah's reign, God afflicts him with leprosy. This means that Jotham, the king's son must run the palace's daily affairs. In the sixth year of Azariah's reign, Zechariah becomes king over Israel. Zechariah is an evil king. However, he is allowed to reign so that God can fulfill His promise to Jehu (v 12). Following Zechariah, Shallum becomes king of Israel. Shallum is also an evil king. Following Shallum, Menahem is king over Israel. During Menahem's reign we begin to see Assyria as an aggressor toward Israel. Assyria's aggression will soon play an important role in Israel's history. The next kings in Israel are Pekahiah and Pekah. Again, both are sinful leaders. In the second year of Pekah's reign, Jotham becomes king of Judah. He is a godly leader overall. However, he also fails to remove the high places.

It is interesting that each leader is personally noted as good or evil. The Scriptures remember whether kings followed God wholly, somewhat, not at all, or if they gave themselves to foreign gods. The Holy Spirit decided to cover the history of seven kings in only thirty-eight verses. Would it not have been more concise to say "Kings A, B, and D were good, while kings C, E, and F were evil"? The Holy Spirit chose to be less concise for a purpose. Evaluating each king individually reminds us of the role of free will. Each king had the opportunity to repent and change the trajectory of his nation. Each king exercised free will in how he reigned. Without free will, we are left to believe that the kings had no choice but to act in an evil way. We know that a good, just God would never allow this to be so. God never predestines a person for evil.

Before He created the world, God wanted each person to choose Him over sin. Throughout history, He pursued people, giving them opportunities to follow Him. Today, also, He pursues people, giving them every chance needed to choose Him.

In contrast to many of Judah's kings, who were described as generally good, Ahaz is patently evil. He follows other gods, even to the point of sacrificing his own son. Under Ahaz's reign, Judah loses in battle against Aram. The Aramean oppression of Judah leaves Ahaz desperate. He contacts Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, for help. Ahaz declares that he will be Tiglath-Pileser's servant, if the Assyrians will help Judah. Further, Ahaz pays a huge tribute to Assyria for their help. The decision to establish a relationship with a foreign king instead of asking Yahweh for help sets Ahaz up for even greater sin. When visiting Damascus, Ahaz sees an altar that he likes and commissions an identical altar for Judah. At this point, Ahaz's idolatry has become so ingrained in Judah that the chief priests agrees to build a pagan altar in the temple. Further, Ahaz re-organizes worship in the temple. He sacrifices on the new altar, while retaining the old altar for seeking guidance. Ahaz only maintains a façade of worship to Yahweh when it benefits himself. Ahaz makes many other "alterations" to the temple during his reign, in deference to the king of Assyria. All of this amounts to sacrilege. How sad it is when our worship is structured to please man instead of God.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Before He created the world, God wanted each person to choose Him over self and sin. Have you ever felt that it was completely hopeless to pray for someone's salvation, that they could never choose Jesus? Confess this to God and pray for this person's (or these people's) salvation today.
2. What is your greater motivation in worshipping and serving God: pleasing man or pleasing the King of Kings? Ask Jesus to speak to you about this and commit to worshipping and serving the Lord wholeheartedly.
3. Our leaders in government have the same opportunity to choose godly leadership as the kings of Israel and Judah had millennia ago. Pray that our government would choose policies that line up with God's Word. Pray that individuals within government would boldly stand for God's truth. Pray that they would find their identity in Christ, not in voter opinions.

DAY 15**READ:** 2 Kings 17:1-23

This is one of the saddest passages in Scripture. Hoshea has become king of Israel. At some point, Hoshea sets up a vassal relationship with Assyria. In order to maintain a degree of national sovereignty and not be subsumed, Israel will pay yearly tributes to Assyria. However, Hoshea defaulted on his promise. He secretly approached Egypt for help and stopped paying tribute to Assyria. This angered the Assyrian king, who attacked Israel. Samaria lay under Assyrian siege for three years and was eventually captured. With the capitol captured, Israel ceases to exist. Its people are deported to Assyria. The exile is complete. There will be no more kings of Israel as the northern kingdom never recovers from this exile.

It can be easy to think God judged Israel based solely on the actions of its kings. After all, this entire book is centered on the sin and repentance of leadership. However, if judgment were based solely on the actions of leadership, Israel likely would have been exiled under Ahab, not Hoshea, who was less evil than some of his predecessors (v 2). Further, the Holy Spirit takes care to note that the entire nation was mired in sinful rebellion (v 7-23). This passage reminds us of how good God is to His people and how unfaithful we are in return. We forget about the deliverance He provides for us. We dedicate ourselves to other gods. We complain about His laws, forgetting the fact that they were created to bring us freedom from bondage. God faithfully gave Israel the opportunity to repent. It was only once the nation proved themselves hard-hearted that He sent punishment. Even in the exile, God did not wipe His people from the nation. He allowed them to survive; He merely removed them from the Promised Land. He also retained Judah, giving them more time to repent. God is a good, patient Father. He disciplines His children, giving them opportunities to learn and mature. His heart is broken when they constantly rebel and curse His name. Eventually, like any good father would, God draws a line. He must say, "Enough is enough," and not stand by letting Israel rebel. Israel must be left to choose their own path and face the consequences of their actions. And, like any good father, God is waiting, eagerly longing for His children to return home.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Re-read verses 7-23, asking God to reveal His heart to you. Record any observations, areas where you need to confess or steps of obedience that God shows you in your journal.
2. Ask God to speak to you about how He is your Father. Record what He reveals to you in your journal.
3. Pray for the Jews. God is still their Father and He still eagerly longs for their return to Him. Pray that they would grow in understanding of His heart and His character. Pray that Jesus would meet many Jews personally, revealing that He is the Messiah – the answer to their prayers.

DAY 16**READ:** 2 Kings 17:24-40

This passage reads as a post-script to The Exile. Now that Israel no longer occupies the land, Assyria must find people to live there. They import people from surrounding pagan nations to replace the Israelites. The giving of the land to Israel is officially reversed. In Joshua's time, God began to rid the land of pagan nations and fill it with Israelites. Now the Israelites have been removed and the land is, once again, filled with pagans. An interesting thing happens, though. The Israelites no longer occupy the land, but it still operates according to God's principles. When the pagan inhabitants break God's law, He sends punishment. The Assyrians take note and send an Israelite priest back to Bethel to teach the pagans how to follow God's laws. Only a sovereign, powerful God could use something as tragic as the exile to preach salvation to those who do not know Him! The pagan groups began to worship Yahweh, however they do not lay aside their foreign gods. They group Yahweh in with the host of deities they already serve. Once more, we see people worshipping the Lord only for personal benefit. True worship demands that we lay down our false gods. We must worship God primarily for His benefit. Yes, God wants to bless us. However, the blessings and benefits we receive must flow from God obtaining the glory first and foremost.

**JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Re-read verses 34-39 – these directions apply to us today! Ask God to speak these truths directly to you and record whatever He shows you in your journal.
2. Scripture is quick to note the legacy a person's relationship with God leaves for future generations (v 41). Based on the condition of your heart before God, as revealed by your actions, will your children and grandchildren love and fear Him wholeheartedly?
3. Pray for young people in the Church today. While many have a godly heritage, they are living in an increasingly sinful, rebellious world. Pray that they would find their identity in Christ at an early age, and thus be protected from many schemes of the enemy. Pray that they would know Christ intimately and have a deep love of His written word. Pray that this would equip them for the many battles they will have to face in their lives. Pray that they would find strength in godly community and learn to fight the good fight of faith with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

DAY 17 **READ:** 2 Kings 18-19

Scripture has now mourned the exile of Israel. Judah stands alone. The remaining chapters of 2 Kings focus on the former Southern, and now only, kingdom. Hezekiah is king. In contrast to the sin and rebellion of former kings, Hezekiah is a long-awaited righteous ruler! He removes idol worship and holds fast to the Lord! With God's blessing, Hezekiah successfully rebels against the Assyrians and defeats the Philistines as far as Gaza (18:7-8).

Years later, after the exile of Israel, Assyria attacks Judah again. In exchange for Assyrian withdrawal, Hezekiah pays a large tribute to the Assyrian king. This, however, only appeases the Assyrian king temporarily. He sends his supreme commander, chief officer, and field commander with a large army to Hezekiah. They taunt Hezekiah, Judah and Yahweh. The taunts are so distasteful that Eliakim asks the Assyrian delegation to speak Aramaic instead of Hebrew. Eliakim does not want the residents of Jerusalem to understand the Assyrians' message. The delegation continues – in Hebrew. However, Hezekiah had wisely warned the residents of Jerusalem not to respond to anything the Assyrians say.

When word of the Assyrian threats reaches Hezekiah, the king tears his clothes and mourns. Assyria could easily defeat Judah in a military struggle. Isaiah (the same prophet who authored the Biblical book, Isaiah), responds to Hezekiah's mourning with a hopeful prophecy. God will move miraculously to deliver Jerusalem. Assyria's field commander withdraws.

Shortly thereafter, the Assyrian king receives word that Egypt is about to attack his nation. In an attempt to gain power over the region and prevent an Egyptian attack, the Assyrian king sends another message to Hezekiah. This message also consists of threats and mockery. Again, Hezekiah's response to danger is to call on the name of the Lord. In response to Hezekiah's prayer, God gives a message to Isaiah. Judah will surely face deliverance. The very night Isaiah prophesies, God moves. He strikes down one hundred eighty-five thousand men in the Assyrian camp. The rest of the Assyrian army retreats and Judah is safe again.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Hezekiah brought his burdens to the Lord. Spend time crying out to God for the situations you face today.
2. Hezekiah was a godly king in the middle of a bleak history. Our society is similarly bleak today. Ask God to show you some righteous leaders who stand for truth today (these may be leaders in the marketplace, government, church, family, etc.). Spend time in thanksgiving for these people. Ask God how you can pray specific blessings over these leaders.
3. God gave messages to Isaiah in response to Hezekiah's prayers. Ask God if He wants to give you a message for anyone today. Bearing in mind our church's guidelines for prophecy (no mates, dates, births, deaths, direction or correction), share this message with the person God brought to mind.

DAY 18 **READ:** 2 Kings 20

While 2 Kings 18 and 19 reveal Hezekiah's godliness, chapter 20 reveals that he also has faults. He is righteous, but also struggles with human weakness. In the first story, we see Hezekiah's humanity displayed via emotion. The king falls ill and the prospects are not good. Isaiah comes with a message: Hezekiah should get his house in order, for he will not recover. Hezekiah is troubled by the prognosis, just as you or I would be. He turns away from Isaiah and prays to God. Hezekiah pleads for God to change His mind. His prayers are reminiscent of Abraham's pleas for Sodom (Genesis 18:16-33). God responds to Hezekiah's prayers. He will give Hezekiah another fifteen years to live and will deliver Jerusalem from Assyria (v 6). The king hears this message and wants to test it. While Isaiah has proven himself a trustworthy prophet, it is always wise to test major, directional prophecies. Isaiah allows Hezekiah to choose the sign he wants, and the Lord let it be so.

Upon hearing that Hezekiah is ill, the king of Babylon sends Hezekiah gifts via messenger. Hezekiah gives the messengers a tour. "There was nothing in his palace or in all his kingdom that Hezekiah did not show them" (v 13). Here we see Hezekiah's humanity displayed through self-centeredness. He could merely have received the Babylonian king's gifts and returned a heartfelt message of gratitude. Instead, he used the opportunity to boast about his treasures. At this, Isaiah prophesies that Judah's eventual demise will be at the hands of the Babylonians (v 16-18). Hezekiah wanted to appear grand before the very people who would one day shame his ancestors.

 **JOURNALING AND PRAYER**

1. Hezekiah was weak, but still righteous. This is great encouragement: all people are weak, but we can all please God anyway! Read 2 Corinthians 4:7. Ask God how He wants to use your weakness to glorify His name.
2. In this passage we read about how Hezekiah reacted to bad news. How do you respond to bad news? Are you honest about how it makes you feel? Do you bring those feelings to God and ask for His help?
3. Pray for your family today. Reflect on the areas in which God had been growing you as you've been studying 2 Kings. Ask God to grow your family members in these same areas.

DAY 19 **READ:** 2 Kings 21

After the breath of righteousness provided by Hezekiah, we now witness two evil kings. Manasseh, Hezekiah's son, succeeds to the throne at the age of twelve. He is certainly the most evil of Judah's kings thus far. The record of his sins includes building altars to false gods and starry hosts, practicing sorcery, sacrificing his own son, shedding innocent blood, and leading the people of Judah astray, "so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites" (v 9). Manasseh's wickedness brings judgment upon the entire land (v 10-15). Following Manasseh's death, his son Amon takes over the throne. Amon is evil, just as his father.

For a moment, good reigned in Judah. Hope was restored that Judah would return to the Lord their God. However, proper caution was not taken in preparing the next generation of rulers to serve under Yahweh. In our own lives, we cannot grow complacent in our walks with God. Whenever we stop standing guard against sin, sin re-enters our hearts.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Ask God to show you any areas where you have grown lazy in your fight against sin. Confess this and repent.
2. Ask God to show you a positive step He wants you to take in your walk with Him. Commit to obedience in this area.
3. Pray for the churches in Uganda today. Pray that the work of God they are experiencing would be permanent. Pray that this generation of leaders would prepare the next generation to serve God wholeheartedly.

DAY 20



READ: 2 Kings 22

The spiritual inheritance left to us by our parents affects us, but it does not determine us. Hezekiah left a godly legacy, yet Manasseh and Amon chose wickedness. Manasseh and Amon left an ungodly legacy, yet Josiah chooses righteousness. In the eighteenth year of his reign, Josiah begins to repair the neglected temple. During the renovation process, Hilkiah, the high priest, finds the long-forgotten Book of the Law. 2 Kings 22 is unclear as to exactly which document this is. It is likely either the Book of Deuteronomy or a complete copy of the Pentateuch (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy). Shaphan, the secretary, brings this Book to Josiah and reads it to him. Upon hearing the Law aloud, Josiah tears his robes. Judah has been provoking the Lord to anger for generations. Josiah orders his advisers to inquire of the Lord for him. The advisers go to the prophetess, Huldah. God's Spirit moves through women and men! She confirms Josiah's suspicions. The Lord will bring judgment upon Judah for their transgressions. However, God has seen Josiah's repentance and will reserve judgment for after his death. God temporarily withholds judgment to bless Josiah. However, Judah is still guilty. One man's repentance cannot atone for an entire nation that refuses to repent. God, while merciful to the repentant, will forever be just. He will treat us according to the condition of our hearts before Him.



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. The spiritual legacy left to us by our parent affects us, but it does not determine us. What legacy did your parents leave you? How has this affected who you are today? Ask God how He wants you to choose to react to this legacy. This may mean choosing gratitude and walking in the footsteps of your forefathers, beginning a journey of generational healing, etc.
2. Josiah responding wholeheartedly to the Word of God. Scripture is powerful and it should have a profound effect on us. When you read Scripture, do you approach it with a soft, receptive heart? Ask God to soften your heart as you study His Word. Pray for humility that you might readily receive His guidance.

3. Ask God to show you two people in your life who need prayer today. Let Him show you how to pray for these people, and then intercede for them. Ask God if He wants to speak a word, thought, or picture of encouragement to these people through you. If He gives you something, share it with them.

DAY 21



READ: 2 Kings 23:1-30

2 Kings 23 continues the triumphal history of Josiah's reign. He begins by reading the Book of the Law publically. He proceeds to renew the covenant between God and Judah. Judah will serve Yahweh alone. After the ceremony is complete, Josiah begins a thorough cleansing of his kingdom. He travels to each corner of the nation, destroying altars and tearing down high places. He kills priests of false gods and burns the implements of their worship. Josiah even tears down the altar built by Jeroboam, which led Israel into sin (15). Overlooking this altar is the very sin Josiah's predecessors were rebuked for. Once this cleansing is complete, Josiah returns to Jerusalem. There he reinstates the Passover. The Passover had not been celebrated to the Lord since the time of the judges – not even under the reign of godly kings like Hezekiah.

Scripture's memory of Josiah is clear. "Never before nor after Josiah was here a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses" (v 25).



JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Josiah's ministry begins with the public reading of Scripture. Reading God's Words corporately is powerful. Ask God if there is anywhere He would like you to intentionally read His Word together with other people.
2. Meditate on the Bible's summary statement of Josiah's reign (2 Kings 23:25). Ask God to make you like Josiah – that you would turn to Him with all your heart, soul and strength.
3. Our nation needs men and women like Josiah. People so dedicated to God that they will do whatever it takes to lead our country back to Him. Pray that God would raise up warriors for His kingdom. Pray that these workers would be deeply moved by the things that move God's heart.

DAY 22



READ: 2 Kings 23:31-24:20

This passage gives us an overview of the final four kings of Judah. First, we read of Jehoahaz, son of Josiah. Unlike his father, Jehoahaz chooses to walk in evil. The Egyptian Pharaoh, Neco, captures Jehoahaz and imposes a large levy on Jerusalem. Neco places Jehoahaz's brother, Eliakim, on the throne in Jerusalem. Neco changes Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim imposes a tax on Judah in order to pay Neco's levy. Like his brother, Jehoiakim is an evil rule. During Jehoiakim's reign, Babylon begins to invade Judah. For three years, Jehoiakim is a vassal to Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. This is the beginning of the judgment decreed by God for Judah's sins (24:3-4).

When Jehoiakim dies, Jehoiachin takes the throne. Judah has yet another evil king. At this time, Nebuchadnezzar's armies lay siege on Jerusalem. Jehoiachin surrenders. Nebuchadnezzar strips Jerusalem of all of its valuables and takes most of its citizens captive. Only the "poorest of the poor" – those Nebuchadnezzar wrongly views as not useful – are left behind (24:14). Nebuchadnezzar puts Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah on the throne of Judah. In this act, Mattaniah is renamed Zedekiah. Zedekiah, too, is an evil king.

The end is in sight for Judah. Its list of sins is long and final judgment nears.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Nebuchadnezzar wrongly viewed the poor as disposable and valueless. The truth is that God views everyone as valuable, regardless of their socioeconomic status. Pray for the poor in our country today. Pray that they would find their identity in Jesus, not in the labels thrown at them by society. Pray that God would move the Church to help the poor in loving, sustainable ways.
2. Pray for Israel today. Just as in the days of the kings, modern Israel is surrounded by hostile neighbours. Pray that God would protect the nation from attack. Pray for wisdom and strategy for the country's government – that they would be able to steer their nation through the many potential conflicts they face. Pray that many Israelis would come to know Jesus. Pray for the country to repent of their sins and turn to God, His Laws, and His Messiah.

DAY 23

 **READ:** 2 Kings 25

Jerusalem's takeover by Babylon has begun. Zedekiah is king over Judah – a king installed by Babylon. Despite warnings from the prophet Jeremiah, (Jer. 27:1-8), Zedekiah rebels against Babylon. This rebellion incites the powerful Babylon to attack the weak Judah. The Babylonians lay siege to Jerusalem. The prolonged siege led to great famine in the city. The citizens were too weak to defend their home. Babylonian armies broke through Jerusalem's walls and captured King Zedekiah.

Jerusalem was once a glorious city – a capitol selected by David and home to the Lord's temple under Solomon. Now it lays in ruin. Overrun by a foreign army, Jerusalem is defeated. One of the worst parts of the Babylonian conquest is the destruction of the temple. The author goes into great detail about how the Babylonians ransack and destroy God's temple. They do not understand that this temple is unlike those in other lands. This is the temple to the only true God, the God who orchestrated this very exile.

After destroying the temple, the Babylonians round up the remaining Judahites for exile (many had already been exiled to Babylon, 2 Kings 24:15-16). Nebuchadnezzar left a remnant of Judah's population to work the land. Over these workers he appointed Gedaliah – a Jew – as governor. How merciful is our God. Even in the exile He allows some of His people to remain in the land. However, Ishmael, a man of royal blood, assassinates Gedaliah. At this, all of those remaining in the land flee to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.

The author of 2 Kings leaves us with another glimpse into God's wonderful mercy. Jehoiachin, the previous king of Judah, is released. He is granted a regular allowance and given a place to dine at the Babylonian king's table. This leaves us to wonder – is there still hope for Judah?

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Judah saw God's incredible mercy, even in the midst of incredible hardship. Ask God to show you specific ways He has shown you mercy during times of hardship.
2. Read Jeremiah 25:11-12 and Jeremiah 29:10-14. Even before the exile, God promised to bring Judah back to the Promised Land. Spend time meditating on God's goodness. How is His goodness revealed through the exile of Judah?
3. Pray for someone you know who is experiencing a season of deep hardship. Ask God to reveal His goodness, mercy, and sovereign power to this person. Pray that they would find comfort in His presence, even when life is chaotic and painful.

DAY 24

Conclusion

 **READ:** Psalm 19

Spend time today reflecting on what you have learned in 2 Kings. Do this with a grateful heart. The King of Kings and Lord of Lords has met you through these pages! What an honour! Now, you must not forget what wondrous things He has done. Israel's history is filled with amazing works of God. However, throughout the generations, they forgot and turned to sin. We must learn from their example. We must cherish our history with God and commit to continuing our journey with Him in the future.

JOURNALING AND PRAYER

1. Reflect on what God has shown you through 2 Kings. In your journal, write down:
 - Key events and characters in 2 Kings
 - Major themes or lessons in 2 Kings that are universal (they apply to everyone)
 - Specific, rhema words God revealed to you through this book
2. Ask God to show you how you've grown through your time with Him in 2 Kings
3. Are there any steps of obedience that God gave you through 2 Kings that you haven't yet completed? Repent of this disobedience. If possible, complete the assignment God gave you.

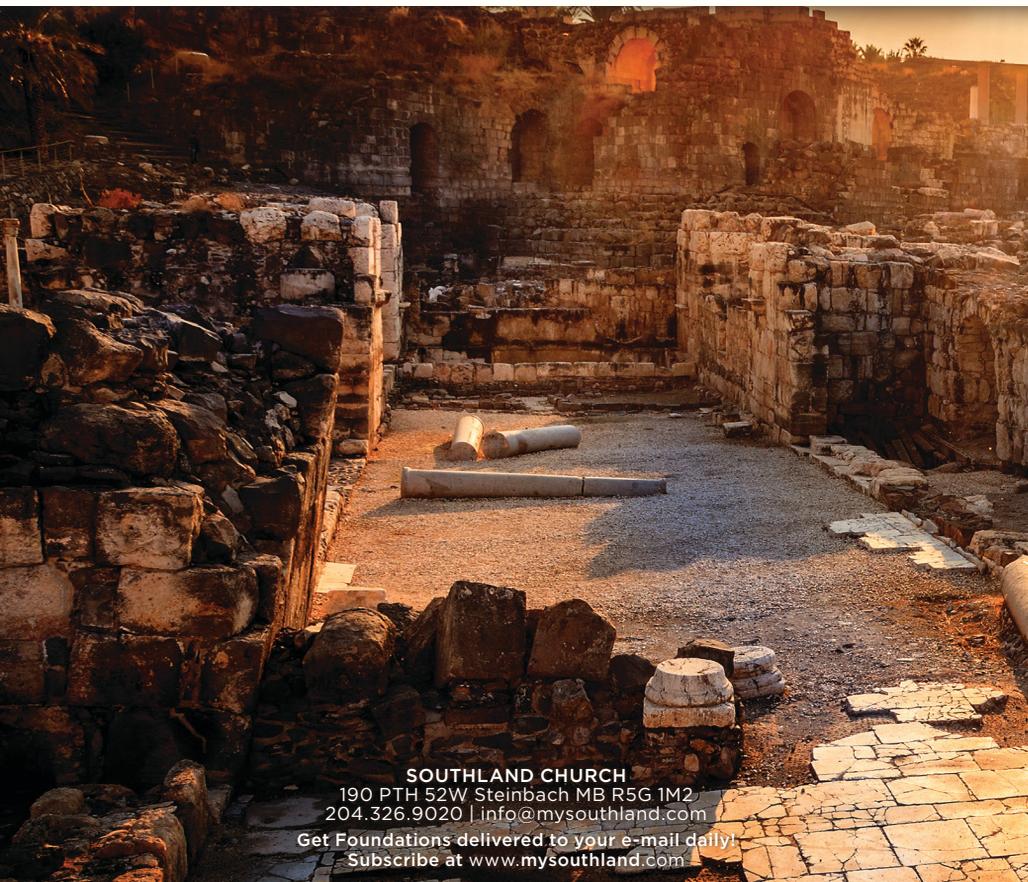


The Book of 2 Kings

2 Kings records the history of Israel and Judah. It reveals God's amazing patience, faithfulness, and justice. In this book we read of godly kings and sinful ones. We read of the importance of leaving a legacy. We read of personal repentance and the eventual exiles of Israel and Judah.

2 Kings 17:7 (NIV)

"All of this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them out of Egypt"



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