

Dickson Old Testament Commentary

2 KINGS

WRITER

The key character in this book is Elisha and his fifty-year ministry, though it is not believed that he wrote 1 & 2 Kings. Since 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book, then there would have been only one writer. (See “writer” in introduction to 1 Kings.) Who this writer was cannot be determined from the text. Since knowing the writer of a particular book does not determine whether a Bible book is inspired, then we would conclude as the Jews that the book was given to the Jewish nation by God for reasons that did not involve any personal legacy of a writer. Our belief that the book is inspired by the Holy Spirit rests on the faith of the Jews who originally accepted the book as an inspired book. And since there is nothing in the content of the book that would lead us to question its inspiration, we accept without any doubt that this book is from God and for all believers. The Jews who first received the writings considered the book to be from the hand of a prophet.

DATE

The date for this book would be about the same as 1 Kings, or sometime after 586 B.C. when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians and when Jehoiachin was raised up out of prison by Evil-merodach (25:27-30). In reference to the dates assigned to the reign of kings in both Israel and Judah, there is great difficulty. Biblical resources use different dates, depending on the amount of information that was available at the time the resource was written. The Bible student, therefore, should not put too much emphasis on the dates that are assigned to the reign of kings. The dates that are used in these notes are only suggested, and thus should not be considered dogmatically as the exact dates of either events or the reigns of kings. It was not the purpose of the authors of either the Kings or Chronicles to place importance on exact dates for the sake of Hebrew history. What God wanted to communicate were the lessons from history that we should learn.

BOOK

Since 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book, then this book is the continuation of the history of 1 Kings. 2 Kings covers a period of about 250 years, from around 852 B.C. to the time when Jehoiachin was released from prison in Babylonian captivity. The history that is covered is from the death of Ahab to a few years after the final captivity of God’s people and the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Some have suggested that the book was written sometime between 560 and 550 B.C.

1 & 2 Kings focus specifically on the rulers of the northern kingdom of Israel. 1 & 2 Chronicles focus primarily on the kings of Judah, the southern kingdom. Also in the Chronicles there is more emphasis on the temple of Jerusalem and the priesthood.

The purpose of 2 Kings is to remind the people of God why they were taken into captivity. Since both 1 & 2 Kings were written with emphasis on the sin of Israel, it would be correct to assume that the writer wanted to remind the remnant of Israel the reason why God allowed both the Assyrians and Babylonians to remove them from the land of promise. 2 Kings was written in reference to the apostasy of the northern kingdom that continued with Ahab, king of the northern kingdom, until the final captivity of the southern kingdom in 586 B.C. In view of the purpose of the captivities, we would conclude that the purpose of both 1 & 2 Kings was to remind Israel never again to commit those sins that resulted in their removal from the land of promise. When they returned from Babylonian captivity, they had learned from their history. Never again did they centralize their governance around a king on earth, nor did they create any idol gods after their imagination, or adopt any gods from the nations around them. Neither did they idolize and store up their wealth in a temple treasury. Throughout the approximately four hundred years between their final return from Babylonian captivity in 444 B.C. to the time of Jesus, they remained faithful to the Lord.

Close Of Elijah's Ministry

(1:1 – 2:12)

Outline: (1) Sin and sickness of Ahaziah (1:1-4), (2) Elijah's conflict with Ahaziah (1:5-18), (3) Elijah is taken (2:1-12)

Chapter 1

SIN & SICKNESS OF AHAZIAH

1:1-4 Ahaziah: He reigned in the north from around 853 to 852 B.C. **Baalzebub:** Usually when one is near death, he seeks out the foundation of his true beliefs. In this case, Ahaziah revealed how fallen Israel was in that he sought out revelation from Baalzebub ("Baal of the flies"), instead of God. **No God in Israel:** Elijah meant to ridicule Ahaziah with this question. He also

wanted to bring judgment on Ahaziah for his apostasy from God to the point of not first going to the One who brought Israel into existence by bringing the nation out of Egyptian captivity. Thus the writer establishes here the reason for the removal of Israel from the promised land. They had forsaken God, and thus God handed them over to be removed from the land. They were thus responsible for their own captivity. They could not blame God for reaping what they had sown.

ELIJAH'S CONFLICT WITH AHAZIAH

1:5-18 What manner of man:

Elijah was described according to his

common dress. He went about in garments that signified the morally digressed state in which Israel was, that is, in clothing that was rough and coarse. Thus everyone knew his identity by his dress. **Captain of fifty:** There were three captains and their soldiers who approached Elijah. It was not until the last captain who showed respect for Elijah, that Elijah accepted the invitation. The arrogance of the first two captains cost them their lives, as well as the lives of their soldiers. It was not until the fear of God was instilled in the third that he and his soldiers were spared. However, the death of the first two captains and their soldiers was not in vain, for the apostate state of the northern kingdom at this time needed a drastic demonstration of the presence of God in His prophets. Ahaziah needed to be reminded that God was working only through His prophets, not the false prophets of Baal. **So he died:** Ahaziah died and left the nation of Israel in a state of apostasy. He thus continued the legacy of apostasy that prevailed in the leadership of the northern kingdom. Because of this apostasy, the tribes of the north would be taken into Assyrian captivity.

Chapter 2

ELIJAH IS TAKEN

2:1-12 Elisha was briefly mentioned in 1 Kings 19:19-21. It was now time for him to take over as God's primary representative to His people. **Sons of the prophets:** As opposed to the prophets of Baal, these would be the prophets of God who were under the leadership of Elijah (See 1 Sm 10:9-13). This may have been

a school or community of prophets that was originally started by Samuel, but continued many years after him (See 1 Kg 18:4; 20:35; Is 8:16). They were personally called by the leading prophets of the time, and then studied and traveled in groups. Their primary homes could have been in cities as Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. On this occasion, these prophets had received revelation from God that Elisha was to take the place of Elijah. **Double portion of your spirit:** This request has often been misunderstood to mean that Elisha wanted to receive more miraculous power than what Elijah possessed. But this is probably not what is in his mind, since such power is only in the hand of God and administered by God through His prophets according to what a particular situation demanded. No man possessed any miraculous power. All such power is with God. In this request, what Elisha wanted was the "double portion" that one would receive as a firstborn son (See Dt 21:15-17). Elisha considered himself the "firstborn prophet son" of Elijah, and thus sought the firstborn privileges that came with being the successor to Elijah. He would receive the responsibilities of the firstborn, and thus carry a greater burden of ministry since his ministry would take place at the end of the northern kingdom. His ministry lasted for about fifty years. **By a whirlwind into heaven:** The manner by which Elijah was taken from this world was a manner by which God had before revealed Himself to man (See Ex 19:16-25; Ps 18:7-15). In order to inaugurate his ministry, God desired that Elisha wit-

ness this awesome miracle. The miracle was not so much for the purpose of giving Elijah an escape from physical death, but to provide a miraculous testimony to Elisha that God was involved in his life and would be with him throughout the trying years of his ministry.

Ministry Of Elisha

(2:13 – 13:25)

Outline: (1) Beginning of Elisha's ministry (2:13-25), (2) Wars against Moab (3:1-27), (3) A miracle of creation (4:1-7), (4) A miracle of resurrection (4:8-37), (5) Poisoned pottage (4:38-41), (6) Another miracle of creation (4:42-44), (7) Naaman, the leper (5:1-27), (8) Floating ax head (6:1-7), (9) Army smitten with blindness (6:8-23), (10) Samaria saved from a famine (6:24 – 7:20), (11) The influence of Elisha (8:1-6), (12) Prophecy of Ben-hadad's death (8:7-15), (13) Reigns of Jehoram and Joram (8:16-24), (14) Reign of Ahaziah (8:25-29), (15) Reign of Jehu (9:1 – 10:36), (16) Rise and fall of Athaliah (11:1-20), (17) Reign of Joash (12:1-21), (18) Reigns of Jehoahaz and Joash (13:1-9), (19) Death of Elisha (13:10-25)

2:13-18 My father: This was directed toward Elijah, and thus Elisha acknowledged that Elijah was his spiritual father. **The mantle of Elijah:** The mantle was the symbol of responsibility that Elijah bestowed on Elisha. This was the sign of the "double portion" for which Elisha had asked in verse 9. He was thus "anointed" through the receiving of the mantle that he was the rightful successor

to Elijah. With the double portion of responsibility, however, would come God's power that would rest on Elisha as it did on Elijah. Elisha would be God's primary prophet to Israel during her years of apostasy. **Where is the Lord God of Elijah:** Elisha had been given the office of Elijah, but he had to receive also the power of God that was evident in the life of Elijah. In the miracles that followed in the early ministry of Elisha, the people discovered that the Lord God of Elijah was now with Elisha. Once Elisha was established as God's primary prophet to the people, then the people understood that what he spoke was from God. **Go and search for your master:** Since no one had experienced the ascent of Elijah, then certainly they were curious concerning his whereabouts. In order to dispel any doubt concerning the word that Elisha spoke concerning his master being taken directly into heaven, he released the group to go and search for the body of Elijah. Their search would confirm his testimony of the miracle of how Elijah departed.

2:19-22 The water is bad: This miracle before the people happened in order to establish Elisha as one through whom God worked. In this occurrence of a true miracle, there were no incantations or ceremonies. Elisha simply called on God to purify the waters, and the deed was done immediately.

2:23-25 Young lads: We must not think that these were small children. These young men were old enough to assume responsibility for their disrespectful behavior toward a man of God. Since

the young men had possibly heard that Elisha was now the representative of God, they, in their unbelief or influence from the prophets of Baal, jeered the man of God. They subsequently reaped the consequences of their insults, receiving the immediate judgment of God that was pronounced on them by Elisha. The purpose of the miracle was to instill fear in others to greatly respect Elisha as a prophet of God.

Chapter 3 WARS AGAINST MOAB

3:1-3 Jehoram reigned in the northern kingdom from 852 to 841 B.C. His reign in the north coincided with the latter part of the reign of Jehoshaphat, Jehoram and Ahaziah in the southern kingdom. He did not follow in all the corrupt practices of his father and mother, Ahab and Jezebel. Nevertheless, he continued in the sins of Jeroboam. He did not follow in the occult worship of Baal, since he removed the image of Baal from the temple of Baal. However, since he continued in the sins of Jeroboam he encouraged the continued separation of the northern kingdom from the south, demanding the loyalty of the people of the north by their sacrifices before the golden calves at Bethel and Dan.

3:4-12 *Mesha, king of Moab:* Mesha rebelled against Israel. Jehoram, king of Israel, set out to subjugate the Moabites once again to Israelite control. Jehoram succeeded in defeating Mesha's army and destroying several Moabite cities. However, he was not able to take the capital of Moab, Kir Hareseth. For

this reason, Mesha was able to retain his independence from Israel. One of the most significant archaeological discoveries was a monument that was made by this king (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible, A, The Moabite Stone*). **Moab rebelled:** There was confusion in the northern kingdom when Ahab died. The short reign of Ahaziah in the south presented the opportunity for Mesha to throw off the yoke of the house of Omri. Since an alliance between Ahab and Jehoshaphat still existed at the time, Jehoram asked Jehoshaphat to aid him in subjecting Mesha again to his control. **King of Edom:** It seems that Edom was a subject of Judah, and thus Edom was conscripted to join in the effort to subjugate Mesha. **Poured water on the hands of Elijah:** Elisha was a servant to the needs of Elijah.

3:13-20 *What have I to do with you:* Elisha showed disdain toward Jehoram because he had turned from the God of Israel by tolerating the false prophets that had been established in Israel by his forefathers. Nevertheless, for the sake of Judah he said that he would inquire of the Lord concerning the battle that was about to begin with Moab. The answer to Elisha's prophecy of rain was another miraculous confirmation of his ministry as a prophet of God. The fulfillment also reassured Jehoshaphat that there would be victory over Moab.

3:21-27 *The sun shone on the water:* Since the area east of the Jordan was known for being desert, the reflection of the sun off the water gave the impression that it was red in color. Thinking

that there was no water in this region, the Moabites mistook the reflection for blood. They concluded that fighting must have broken out between the three kings who came to war against him. **Offered him as a burnt offering:** This desperate action on the part of Mesha revealed the morally deplorable state to which the nations of these time had digressed. **Great indignation against Israel:** The extremity to which Mesha went in sacrificing his son indicated the extremity of resentment they had toward the Israelites. It seems that the final battle did not occur, and thus Mesha was not totally subdued. **They departed:** It seems that the sacrifice of the oldest son on the wall of the Moabite city repulsed the Israelites (See Lv 18:21; 20:3). Since they had already shown Mesha that he had no chance of victory against the coalition of three nations, Israel, Judah and Edom, the three nations retreated from their war with Mesha after having defeated several of the cities of Moab.

Chapter 4

A MIRACLE OF CREATION

4:1-7 In the supernatural manifestations that continued from the presence of Elisha, God proved among the people that Elisha was a true prophet of God. In this first illustration of God's presence with Elisha, a miracle of creation occurred. **The creditor has come:** The prophets were poor. In this case, the widow of one of the prophets had been left with nothing except debt. It was a time in Israel when the people had little concern for the servants of God. They

were thus supported little or nothing. The prophets were men worthy of their hire, but were given little or nothing. **To be his slaves:** If a debt could not be paid, then one had to give himself into the slavery of another until the debt was settled (Lv 25:39,40). This servitude could be terminated only if the debt were settled by labor, or when all servants were released during the year of Jubilee. **Borrow vessels:** As the creation of fish and loaves at the hand of Jesus, so here is a miracle of creation (Compare Mt 14:13-21).

A MIRACLE OF RESURRECTION

4:8-17 Room ... bed: The faith and religious culture of the woman was manifested in her desire to care for the needs of a man of God who was traveling. Instead of seeing the man of God as someone from whom she could possibly reap benefits, she saw him as an opportunity to glorify God by serving him. **She had no child:** Since the husband was old, it was concluded that she also was too old and past the age of giving birth to children. The miracle, therefore, was in the fact that God gave her body strength to conceive and give birth to a son.

4:18-31 My head: We are not told what the ailment was, but we could assume that he suffered from sun stroke. **She caught him by the feet:** Since both the parents knew that the child was dead, we are not told what help the Shunammite woman expected that Elisha could administer to her. Nevertheless, in her grief she made the journey to find Elisha and bow at his feet for help, possibly receiv-

ing only the comforting words of a man of God. She seems to have received more than she thought she could receive, for her humble actions resulted in the resurrection of her son.

4:32-37 Lay on the child: It seems that there was no consequence concerning the action of Elisha to lay on the child. His actions may simply have been a show of remorse over the death of the son. However, God had more in mind. **Take up your son:** This was a private occurrence of a miracle. However, we are sure that the Shunammite woman, with the neighbors, proclaimed throughout the region the fact that a resurrection had occurred as a result of God working through Elisha. It may have been in the foreknowledge of God that He bless the woman with a son in order to establish an occasion by which He could manifest a miracle through Elisha. We must always keep in mind that God was working in desperate times in order to save His people from total apostasy. He thus worked mightily through His prophets in order to turn His people away from the influence of false gods that they continually created after the imagination of their minds.

POISONED POTTAGE

4:38-41 The famine in the land was so severe that the sons of the prophets were cooking anything that could be found to eat. In this case, they were cooking some wild gourds that were not meant for human consumption. **There is death in the pot:** The contents of the pot were so toxic that if fully consumed someone

would have died. Elisha added meal, but did not discard the contents of the pot. The miracle was in the changing of the toxic contents into that which would not bring death if eaten. This miracle, as other miracles in the presence of the prophets, established Elisha as a special servant of God. God did not instill in the other prophets the supernatural authority that He allowed Elisha to work before the people.

ANOTHER MIRACLE OF CREATION

4:42-44 This miracle was in the fact that one hundred men could be fed by a small amount of food. As in the feeding of both the 5,000 and 4,000 men by Jesus (Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39), this miracle of creation proved that God was with Elisha in all that he did.

Chapter 5

NAAMAN, THE LEPER

5:1-7 It is significant to remember the relationship that the people of Israel historically had with Aram, or Syria. The two peoples were related. Abraham was of Aramean heritage, for his family came from Haran (Gn 12:1; 24:4). Jacob was also called an Aramean (Dt 26:5), as also was his uncle Laban (Gn 25:20), and his grandfather, Bethuel (Gn 25:20; 28:5). **Deliverance to Syria:** It may have been that God worked to deliver Syria from her oppressors in order to establish the occasion for the healing of Naaman. Since Israel was to function as a priesthood to the nations, this incident illustrates how at least a leader in Syria was

brought to the nation of Israel, specifically to a prophet of God, in order that testimony be given to Syria that there was only one true and living God. **He would cure him:** The faith of this little girl would lead to the conversion of one of the most renowned warriors of Syria, and subsequently a testimony through Naaman that there was only one God. We must not underestimate the testimony of our children. **The king of Israel ... tore his clothes:** The king misunderstood the reason for Naaman's coming. Naaman was only being diplomatic in contacting the king of Israel. The bringing of great gifts was an act of courtesy. Since the king knew the strength of Naaman and the Syrians, he wrongly assumed that Naaman was coming for battle. He was mistaken, for Naaman was not coming for political ambitions, but for healing.

5:8-14 The occasion for the healing was to prove that there was only one God who could heal. The point was that Satan did no miraculous works among the pagan nations that surrounded Israel. **Abanah and Pharpar:** These were better rivers than those in Israel in that they were mountain rivers of fresh water, whereas the rivers of Israel were lowland rivers that were often filled with the runoff silt of the lowlands. Elisha's instructions were meant to humble Naaman. There was no ceremonial healing power in the waters of any river, and thus, the test that was given to Naaman by the man of God was to humble him before God. Naaman passed the test with the urging of his servants. In desperation, he obeyed the instructions of Elisha.

5:15-19 **Now I know:** The miracle of healing accomplished its purpose. **When I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon:** We would not bring judgment on Naaman for compromising his new faith. In his position in the army of Syria he had to maintain political loyalty before the people for the sake of the king of Syria. The kings of the land paid homage to the gods the people respected in order to maintain their leadership of the people. Because of his position of influence with the king of Syria, Naaman asked for the pardon of God that his appearance in the house of Rimmon for political reasons not be understood by God that he was compromising his new faith in God. Since faith was individual in reference to God, Elisha reassured Naaman that his ceremonial appearance in the house of Rimmon would not compromise his relationship with God. It was better that Naaman continue with his personal testimony to the one true and living God in Syria in the position that he had in the country, than to sacrifice such in defiance to the king of Syria by not appearing with him in the temple of Rimmon. We would assume that all those who personally knew Naaman were given a testimony for God because they witnessed his healing upon his return to Syria.

5:20-27 Gehazi's greed led him to lies. He failed to be influenced by the example of Elisha to guard himself from receiving payment for something that God had done. The healing of Naaman did not result from any power that Elisha possessed. The miraculous power was

directly from God. If Elisha had received a financial reward for the healing, he, as Gehazi, would have been condemned for his greed. Because Gehazi capitalized on the miraculous work of God, and lied to Naaman, he reaped the consequences of bringing leprosy on himself and his heritage. The lesson is that those who preach for gain, as Balaam, will reap the reward of God's curse.

Chapter 6

FLOATING AX HEAD

6:1-7 This was a miracle to reaffirm the faith of the sons of the prophets. God continued to give witness that Elisha was the principal prophet of God. The impossibility that something as this could naturally happen strengthens the action of the miracle. Only by the direct work of God in the natural affairs of a physical world could iron (or, bronze) float on water. *It was borrowed:* Under the law, if that which was borrowed became lost or destroyed, then the one who borrowed it was accountable for the cost or replacement of that which was borrowed. In this case, the young prophet had no means by which to replace the lost ax head, and thus his desperation was revealed by his statement.

ARMY SMITTEN WITH BLINDNESS

6:8-14 *Syria warred against Israel:* The time of these raids would probably be during the reign of Jehoram, not during the reigns of Jehu, Jehoash or Jehoahaz. *Which of us is for the king of Israel:* Time after time the Syrian ag-

gression against Israel had led to the defeat of the Syrian army. Their defeat happened so many times that the king of Syria assumed that there was a traitor among them who was telling Israel all the military moves of the Syrian army. What was happening in the background was the prophetic counsel of Elisha that was given to the king of Israel. The counsel was given in order to prove that God was still working for Israel, and thus the Israelites should turn from following the prophets of Baal. *Elisha ... is telling the king:* We would assume that the king of Syria would conclude that there was something miraculous about Elisha's knowledge of the movements of his own troops. And such was the case. He thus sought to remove Elisha as an advisor to the king of Israel. In order to do this, the Syrian army trapped Elisha in Dothan with the intent of killing him.

6:15-18 *Those who are with us are more than those who are with them:* The pronoun "those" in this statement of faith referred also to those who could not be seen naturally by the eyes of man. These were the angels of God who protected His prophets. The young man was given a rare opportunity to see beyond the limitations of man's sight that can see only that which is of the physical world. Through the miraculous enhancement of his eyes he was able to witness the great army of God that works to protect the men of God. *Struck them with blindness:* The young man of God was given the power to see the army of God, but the army of the Syrians was stricken with blindness so that they could not even see

men of this world. Those who would bring harm to the men of God are always blinded to the power of God that works through His people.

6:19-23 *He led them to Samaria:* The trap into which the king of Syria sought to lead the Israelites became the same type of trap into which Elisha led the soldiers of the Syrian army. When the soldiers were relieved of their blindness, they found themselves in the midst of the capital of the nation they sought to defeat. They were not killed in this situation because they were not prisoners of war. Mercy was extended to them in order that they extend mercy to Israel (See Js 2:13). ***Syrians came no more:*** The act of mercy accomplished its purpose. They had witnessed the protection of the God of Israel over His people, and thus they concluded that it would be pointless to make war against Israel. The miraculous event certainly intimidated them that they no longer be aggressive against Israel, at least during the life of those who had experienced the blindness and were captured by the power of God.

6:24-29 *Ben-hadad, king of Syria:* There has always been confusion concerning the kings of Syria during this period, specifically in reference to the name, Ben-hadad. A suggested lineage of Syrian kings would be that Ben-hadad I, the son of Tabrimmon, reigned in the 10th to the early 9th century B.C. (1 Kg 15:18). Ben-hadad II possibly reigned in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Hazael reigned in the late 9th century B.C. Then Ben-hadad III, the son of Hazael, reigned in the early 8th century B.C. ***Be-***

sieged Samaria: Until this time, there was a period of peace between Israel and Syria. After this period, however, Ben-hadad II assumed Syria's aggression against Israel. He laid siege to Samaria in the middle of the 9th century. ***A donkey's head:*** In times of peace, this would have been the last meat that anyone would eat. But the eating of a donkey's head at this time during the siege of Samaria manifested the extent to which the famine had devastated the people who were trapped within the walls of Samaria. ***Kab of dove's dung:*** The famine was so great that people ate anything that would preserve life. ***We will eat my son:*** The deplorable state to which the people had digressed in their morals was here revealed by the cannibalism of two mothers.

6:30-33 Jehoram, the king of Israel at the time, wore the sackcloth of repentance. In his ignorance, he blamed Elisha for the plight of Samaria. We are not told why he blamed Elisha. It was probably because Elisha had prophesied that Samaria would be victorious over Syria. But here they were in desperation. However, the nation simply needed to be restored to faith in God who would deliver them after they had been brought to their knees in repentance. ***Elisha sat in his house:*** We must keep in mind that Elisha and the elders were also suffering from the famine. ***Son of a murderer:*** Jehoram was a murderer in the sense that he intended to murder Elisha.

Chapter 7

7:1,2 Elisha prophesied that the end

of the famine was near, for on the next day food would be sold for a normal price. The reason the prophecy was so difficult to believe was that they had no food to sell. So if food were to be sold for the normal price, then what food would it be that could be sold?

7:3-8 Four leprous men: The drama that took place in the lives of these four men led to the announcement that Elisha's prophecy had been fulfilled. As these men sat at the gate of Samaria, they concluded that they would die either there or in the city. Their only chance for life was to beg for mercy at the camp of the Syrians. **Noise of a great army:** What the lepers did not know was the miraculous noise that God caused the Syrian army to hear. In the darkness of the night, the Syrian soldiers assumed that the Hittites and Egyptians had come to the aid of Samaria. In the mass confusion of their terror, they deserted their camp and fled for their lives.

7:9-20 This day is a day of good tidings and we hold our peace: The lepers had a profound message of deliverance to share with others. At the time, they were consumed with satisfying their own lusts. But then they realized that the message they had would lead to the physical salvation of others. Thus when they came to their senses, they went and told the inhabitants of Samaria. When the lepers first reported that the camp of the Syrians was vacant, Jehoram believed that it was a trick of the Syrians to lure him out of the city. Messengers were subsequently sent to determine the truth of the lepers' report. **Plundered the tents**

of the Syrians: In their terror, the Syrians had left everything. And thus, the prophecy of Elisha was fulfilled in that food was again sold for the normal price. God had taken Israel to the depths of a famine in order to produce repentance and trust in Him for deliverance. **Trampled on him at the gate:** The people were so hungry that they rushed as a mob to the deserted camp of the Syrians for food. The captain was in the way at the gate, and thus suffered the prophecy of his death by being trampled on by the people.

Chapter 8

THE INFLUENCE OF ELISHA

8:1-6 Since Gehazi had not yet been stricken with leprosy after the healing of Naaman because of his greed, we would conclude that this incident took place before the healing of Naaman (5:1-27). It possibly took place in the middle of the reign of Jehoram. **Go and sojourn:** It was the advice of Elisha to the Shunammite woman that she go to another country. She went to Philistia for a period of seven years. **Appeal ... for her land:** When the Shunammite woman returned, someone had evidently taken possession of her house and land. The king in this case was Jehoram. Once the king learned that Elisha had raised from the dead this woman's son, he restored all that was rightfully hers.

PROPHECY OF BEN-HADAD'S DEATH

8:7-15 God had earlier commanded Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Syria

(1 Kg 19:15). Elisha carried out this command, and thus he was in Damascus for this purpose. **Take a present:** It was common that when one approached a prophet he was to take an offering. It was disrespectful to expect something of a prophet without first presenting the prophet with a gift. On this occasion, Ben-hadad showed great respect to Elisha and the God of Israel, though we would not assume that Ben-hadad was a convert to the God of Israel. **You will certainly recover:** He would recover from his illness. This statement reveals that Hazael's action to suffocate Ben-hadad was an act of murder, because under normal circumstances he would have recovered. **Hazael reigned:** Hazael murdered Ben-hadad, and thus was known for usurping the throne in Syria. Hazael reigned from 841 to 798 B.C. Archaeologists have discovered a monument inscription in Aramaic at Tel Dan, Israel. Only a fraction of the inscription was recovered, but enough to give the names of eight kings of the Bible. The inscription dated in the middle of the 9th century B.C. Though Hazael's name is not on the inscription, what was recovered indicates that he commissioned the stela (monument) to be made to commemorate his defeat of Joram and Ahaziah at Ramoth Gilead (8:28,29). Hazael's name is mentioned in the records of Shalmaneser III, the king of Assyria. One of the most interesting statements of the Tel Dan monument is the phrase, "House of David," thus giving Bible students evidence of the existence of David as a king of Israel.

REIGNS OF JEHORAM & JORAM
8:16-24 Jehoram ... began to reign:
 The name "Jehoram" appears in the lists of kings of both Israel and Judah. However, these men were two different kings. Joram is a shortened version of the name Jehoram where "Jeho" is shortened to "Jo" (vs 16: 1:17). **As did the house of Ahab:** This was the sin of following after the imagined gods of the Canaanites. Since Jehoram had married the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah, we would assume that she had a significant influence on his beliefs. Through this marriage, therefore, the idolatrous influence of the northern kingdom came into Judah. **For the sake of David:** Judah did not reap the consequences of her idolatry at this time in history because of God's consideration for David. God held back His judgment on the south in order to preserve for as long as possible the influence of David that continued to impact many of the people. When studying through the history of Israel, the Bible student must not forget that God is working with the common people about whom we know little. The records of 1 & 2 Kings focus on the leadership of Israel. We would correctly assume that the leadership affected the people, but not all the people. We must conclude, therefore, that God's preservation of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel was for the sake of the people, not the kings and queens, many of whom had given themselves over to idolatry. **Made a king over themselves:** Nations were held together by their loyalty to a particular ruler. God wanted Israel held together as one nation

because of her loyalty to Him. At this time in the history of the tribes of Israel, they were divided because they were giving their loyalty to different kings on earth.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH

8:25-29 (2 Ch 22:1-6) *One year:* Ahaziah reigned in 841 B.C. ***Daughter of Omri:*** She would have been the granddaughter of Omri, for she was the daughter of Ahab. The word “daughter” was often used to refer to one as a descendant. ***He ... did evil:*** He did evil after the idolatrous behavior of Ahab and Jezebel. ***Ramoth-gilead:*** This was an attempt to reclaim this city that was under Syrian control (1 Kg 22:29-36). ***Joram:*** This would be King Jehoram of the northern kingdom. At this time in the history of Israel there was a good relationship between the northern and southern kingdoms, for the two kings had a good relationship.

Chapter 9

REIGN OF JEHU

9:1-10 *Jehu:* Jehu reigned in the northern kingdom from 841 to 814 B.C. His anointing as the king of the north was a change in dynasty from the house of Ahab to the house of Jehu. ***Smite the house of Ahab:*** Jehu’s task was to restore Israel by eliminating the influence of the descendants of Ahab. In order to accomplish this task, he directed his purge of Israel by going after the leaders, which leaders included those who were the descendants of Ahab, as well as the religious leaders of Baal. God’s in-

tention through Jehu, therefore, was to rid Israel of the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom. In order to do this, all influences with reference to the house of Ahab had to be removed from the society of Israel, which meant the execution of the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel, and the Baal prophets.

9:11-16 *Mad fellow:* This response could explain the manner by which the young prophet entered with a prophetic message. However, we must also understand that because the false prophets of Baal had intimidated the true prophets of God, any religious leader who was not for Baal was considered mad. The prophets of God were not conforming to the norm of theology that was preached by the Baal prophets. ***Jehu is king:*** It may have been that Jehu was planning a conspiracy against Jehoram before the pronouncement of the prophet. Regardless of his motives, the pronouncement was enough to motivate him to carry out his conspiracy. Those who were associated with Jehu immediately proceeded to proclaim him as the king.

9:17-26 Understanding his mission to bring the judgment of God upon the house of Ahab, Jehu wasted no time in carrying out the execution of all who were the descendants of Ahab and Jezebel. ***Met him on the property of Naboth:*** The mention of the property of Naboth was fitting for the occasion of what transpired. Naboth’s vineyard had been stolen by Ahab and Jezebel, and thus, it was the ideal location to bring judgment down on the house of Ahab (1 Kg 21:19). ***I will repay you on this prop-***

erty: The insidious sin of Ahab in reference to Naboth's vineyard was that a government official, Ahab, stole the inheritance of one of the people. The actions of Ahab in doing this manifested the wickedness of his heart. His actions were surely copied by his descendants, and thus his whole house had to be removed from Israel. The judgment of casting down the body of his executed son, Jehoram, was a signal by God that such actions should never be tolerated in a nation. When those in power ignore the civil rights of the common citizen, a nation has fallen. Those in government have no right to use the people for their own financial well being. No person in government has a right to use government to steal the property of another person.

9:27-37 Because Ahaziah was in friendship with Jehoram, he thus agreed with the wickedness of the house of Ahab. For this reason Jehu commanded that he also be judged. **Jezebel:** With the approach of Jehu, Jezebel adorned herself, possibly thinking that she would be granted mercy. **Zimri, your master's murderer:** Jezebel must have known that there was execution on the mind of Jehu. She thus reminded him of Zimri who also murdered in order to seize the throne (See 1 Kg 16:8-10). **Throw her down:** First, two eunuchs appeared at the window near Jezebel, then three. Jehu then asked for a commitment of loyalty to him, which they gladly granted. The result was that they threw Jezebel out the window. In order to show disgust for this wicked woman, they used their horses to trample on her body. By the time Jehu consid-

ered that she should at least be buried, since she was a king's daughter, the dogs had already eaten most of her body. Elijah's prophecy, therefore, had been fulfilled in reference to her death (1 Kg 21:23).

Chapter 10

10:1-11 **Ahab had seventy sons:** It seems that Jehu had two purposes in mind in reference to his extermination of the descendants of Ahab. First, he wanted to secure his reign. Second, he wanted to bring the judgment of God on the house of Ahab for the idolatrous practices of Ahab and Jezebel. In order to accomplish these two objectives, he went to extreme measures to make sure that all the descendants of Ahab were killed. In the case of the seventy sons, he demanded the loyalty of others by asking them to execute the seventy sons. Realizing the strength of Jehu, they performed the deed and sent the heads of the seventy sons to Jehu in a basket. Jehu went beyond the descendants of Ahab in eradicating the influence of Ahab and Jezebel from Israel. He even executed all of Ahab's great men and close acquaintances, even the priests of Baal. The national cleansing of the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel could not have been accomplished without the eradication of all those who either condoned or led in the evil. **Jehu killed all:** We must not make the mistake of assuming that God moved Jehu to perform these wicked deeds. God foreknew that Jehu was disposed to being such a person. Therefore, He anointed him to be king, knowing that

he would take these actions against the house of Ahab. God only used the wicked actions of Jehu to bring down judgment on the house of Ahab and Jezebel.

10:12-14 Brethren of Ahaziah: Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab. Thus these brethren would have been descendants from Ahab that came from the marriage between Ahaziah and Athaliah. Jehu's mad massacre of the descendants of Ahab was thus carried out on these forty-two men, lest they also have thoughts of conspiracy against him, or they continue to promote the evil of Ahab and Jezebel.

10:15-17 Jehonadab: This man left a heritage of obedience to God in the lives of his sons (See Jr 35). He commanded his sons to follow after the laws of God, to refrain from drinking wine, and to live in tents as the Israelites did during their wandering in the wilderness. He surely instructed his descendants to live in such a manner because of what he witnessed in the life of Jehu in his zeal to eradicate Baal worship from Israel.

10:18-28 Call to me all the prophets of Baal: In order to insure the complete eradication of Baal worship from Israel, Jehu eliminated the religious leaders of the cult. In order to do this, he improvised a scheme to have them all come together into one place. Once present, he commanded their execution. Not only did he execute those who led in Baal worship, he destroyed the temple of Baal. This destruction was so complete that to this day there remains no trace of any temple of Baal in Palestine.

The statement of verse 27 was thus the legacy of Jehu. He destroyed Baal out of Israel.

10:29-31 Jehu: See *Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible, B, The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III.* **Jehu took no heed to walk in the law:** It is for this reason that we would question Jehu's true motives in reference to his eradication of all those who might threaten his reign. He knowingly sought to fulfill the prophecy of Elijah. But in doing so he was securing his reign. The fact that he did not continue with total obedience to the law of God leads us to believe that he orchestrated a limited reform, for his motives were primarily to secure his reign. He continued in the sins of Jeroboam in that he left the golden calves at Bethel and Dan. As long as these two altars remained, the twelve tribes would be thinking in the terms of two nations, not one. The sins of Jeroboam included doing anything that kept Israel divided.

10:32-36 The Lord began to cut off ... Israel: While Jehu was securing his reign in the central areas of Palestine, Hazael, king of Syria, began to bring the northern portions of Israel under Syrian control. Since all Israel would not unite under the rule of God, God allowed the nations around them to subject them to their control, and eventually He allowed all the Israelites to be taken into captivity. One reason why they became so vulnerable was that they grew to be autonomous from one another as tribes.

Chapter 11

RISE & FALL OF ATHALIAH

11:1-3 (2 Ch 22:10 – 23:21)

Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab (8:18,26). As the queen of the southern kingdom, she reigned from 853 to 841 B.C. Because she was the daughter of Ahab, it seems that Jehoram, her husband, did not involve himself in the affairs of Jehu while he cleansed the northern kingdom of the descendants of Ahab. In order to secure her power, Athaliah executed all the royal family. These were the sons of Jehoram, but not the children of Athaliah. The royal seed would include the descendants of Jehoshaphat of the Davidic line. However, Jehosheba, the aunt to Joash and wife of Jehoiada (2 Ch 22:11), hid Joash away from the murderous purging of Athaliah. This action was a providential act of God in order to preserve the seedline of David, for God had promised that through David One would come to sit on his throne (See comments 2 Sm 7).

11:4-12 Through his skillful leadership, Jehoiada devised a plan by which he would overthrow Athaliah. Having hidden Joash until he matured, he then secured the loyalty of the captains and palace guard. Since his plan was to overthrow the Baal worship that was promoted by Athaliah, he was able also to secure the loyalty of the priests of Jerusalem (2 Ch 23:4). When the day came for the coronation of Joash, who was at the time seven years old, an official announcement was made with the approval of the people. Joash was thus established as king.

11:13-16 *Treason, treason:*

Athaliah was caught off guard, and thus all her efforts to stop Jehoiada from establishing the kingship of Joash were futile. Her execution was pronounced and carried out outside the temple, lest the temple be desecrated. Thus ended the reign of a murderous woman who lived after the example of her parents, Ahab and Jezebel.

11:17-21 *The house of Baal:* The very existence of a temple that was constructed for the worship of Baal reveals the extent to which the southern kingdom went into apostasy during the reign of Athaliah. Solomon had built a temple to God. When the influence of Baal became so strong in Judah, then the people demanded that a temple be built to Baal. Temples are not built for practical reasons, but as idols through which men worship their gods. The reforms of Jehoiada, therefore, were for the purpose of restoring Judah's covenant relationship with God, lest they also follow after the idolatrous example of the northern kingdom.

Chapter 12

REIGN OF JOASH

12:1-3 (2 Ch 24:1-17) *Jehoash:*

This is a variant spelling for the name, Joash. Since he began his reign as a seven-year-old boy, the authority of his reign rested in Jehoiada who was the high priest at the time. Since Jehoash's early reign was probably confined to Jerusalem, Judah failed to take away the high places where people continued to sacrifice and burn incense in idolatrous wor-

ship in the rural areas (2 Ch 24:15-22).

12:4-8 Athaliah's focus on the worship of Baal and upkeep of her temple of Baal had led to the neglect of the temple of God. She had even taken articles from the temple of God to be used in the temple of Baal (2 Ch 24:7). And thus, the temple of God needed much repair. Funds were sourced from the census assessment (Ex 30:23), the redemption money (Nm 18:15,16), and the freewill offerings. Regardless of their zeal, by the twenty-third year of the reign of Jehoash the priests were not able to complete the repair of the temple.

12:9-16 Chest: An effort was made to increase the freewill offerings. When those who came to the temple realized that there was a lack of funds for completing the repair, they willingly gave into the chest their freewill contributions. Sufficient funds were thus raised in order to complete the repair. As the workers pointed out the specific repairs that needed to be made, the people gave to complete what was identified to be repair. **There were not made ... bowls ... snuffers ... basins:** This statement of verse 13 refers to the time when the repairs were being made. However, the 2 Chronicles 24:14 account refers to the time when the repairs were completed, and then the articles for the temple were made. **Trespass money:** See Lv 6:2-6; Nm 6:6-8. **Sin money:** The priest was not to receive a gift in reference to the sin offering. It may have become a custom, however, to give the priest something for his trouble in carrying out the sin offering (See Nm 5:10).

12:17-21 When Hazael, king of Syria, became a threat to Jerusalem, Joash took the treasures of the temple and royal palace and gave them to Hazael as tribute, though we are not told if this was a continual payment (2 Ch 24:23,24). **His servants ... made a conspiracy:** It may have been that after the death of Jehoiada that Joash gave himself over to worship idol gods (See 2 Ch 24:15-22). If this were the case, then he would have betrayed the very reason for his kingship. Those who were in charge of the spiritual leadership of Israel rebelled against him.

Chapter 13 REIGNS OF

JEHOAHAZ & JOASH

13:1-9 The writer at this point returns to a history of the northern kingdom. The reign of Jehoahaz was from 814 to 798 B.C. Verse 1 states that Jehoahaz in the north began to reign in the 23rd year of Joash in the south. He reigned seventeen years. Jehoahaz thus reigned until the 39th or 40th year of Joash. But verse 10 states that he died and his son Jehoash succeeded him in the 37th year of Joash. We would thus understand the reign of Jehoahaz in verse 1 as a coregent reign in the early years of his reign, whereas in verse 10 emphasis was on the total length of his reign. **Evil in the sight of the Lord:** Jehoahaz perpetuated the sins of Jeroboam, and thus his reign was tarnished with sin. As a king, he could not lead Israel to withstand the attacks of Hazael, king of Syria. **Dwelt in their tents:** It seems that Hazael had

taken the cities, and thus relegated the Israelites to living as they did in the wilderness. They lived in tents in the rural areas, whereas Hazael controlled the cities.

DEATH OF ELISHA

13:10-19 (14:15,16) In the record of Joash's reign, the beginning of his reign (vss 10,11) is immediately followed by the conclusion of his reign (vss 12,13), which conclusion is again stated in verses 14:15,16. **O my father:** Contrary to many kings of the northern kingdom, Joash had great respect for Elisha. In his last prophecy concerning Israel's confrontation with Syria, Elisha asked Joash to shoot an arrow toward the east, symbolizing Israel's victory in Aphek. When Joash was asked to strike the ground, the number of times that he struck the ground with his arrows would indicate how many times he would strike Syria. Unfortunately, he did not strike the ground more than three times. He would thus not be able to completely destroy the threat of Syria.

13:20-25 Raiding parties: These Moabite raids were not on the cities, but on the farms. They raided the farms for food. **Touched the bones of Elisha:** Though dead, God continued to work through Elisha. The miracle was possibly given for the purpose of reassuring Joash that God would bring about the words that Elisha had spoken concerning his victories over Syria. These victories took place after the death of Hazael, for Israel was able to recover the cities from Ben-hadad, the son of Hazael,

that Hazael had earlier taken from Israel. **Ben-hadad:** This would be Ben-hadad III, the son of Hazael. The *Tell al-Rimah Stele* of Adadnirari III, who was king of Assyria during these years, mentions Jehoash and Ben-hadad III. The inscription of this archaeological discovery also mentions the fact that Adadnirari received tribute from Mari of Damascus and "Joash, the Samaritan." **Lord was gracious:** Because of His covenant with the fathers of Israel (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), God spared Israel at this time in their apostasy. They were not spared because of any righteousness on their part. They were spared because of God's promise to their fathers. God often has compassion on the children for the sake of the fathers.

Decline And Fall Of The Northern Kingdom (14:1 – 17:41)

Outline: (1) Reign of Amaziah (14:1-22), (2) Social decay in the north (14:23 – 15:38), (3) Reigns of Ahaz and Hoshea (16:1 – 17:41)

Chapter 14 REIGN OF AMAZIAH

14:1-4 (2 Ch 25:1-28) Amaziah: Amaziah began his reign in the north in 796 B.C. and reigned until 767 B.C. It is stated that he did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not as David. Though it is not explained what he did right, we assume that he did not serve the Lord with all his heart. He possibly did not promote the worship of Baal, and thus led the people away from God. Nev-

ertheless, he did not remove the places of false worship.

14:5-7 *Did not kill the ... murderers:* See Dt 24:16. ***The book of the law of Moses:*** This reference, with the one in 1 Kings 2:3, affirms the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch. Since no other person is given credit for writing the first five books of the Bible, then we must assume that this inspired affirmation is sufficient to credit Moses with the inspired authorship of Genesis through Deuteronomy. ***Took Selah by war:*** See 2 Ch 25:3-13. Selah was the capital of Edom (Is 16:1), which today is referred to as Petra (See Ob 1-4). The result of this war was that Edom became the vassal of Judah.

14:8-16 *Let us look one another in the face:* This was an invitation for war against the northern kingdom. It was possibly made in response to raids that the northern kingdom had made on the northern cities of Judah (2 Ch 25:1-13). ***The thistle:*** This fable of Jehoash was delivered to Amaziah in order that he back down from this threat. It seems that Amaziah's victory over the Edomites had made him over confident. But Amaziah would not listen. As a result, Jehoash defeated the army of Amaziah, pursuing him even to Jerusalem. Jehoash then plundered the national treasury of the royal palace and temple. What had now happened in the history of Israel as a whole was that the two kingdoms of Israel, the north and south, had alienated themselves from one another to the point that they would go to war against one another. The time of this battle between

Jehoash and Amaziah was about 65 years from the captivity of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians that occurred in 722/21 B.C. Now that Israel was at war with itself, the northern kingdom easily became the prey of the Assyrian Empire that was beginning to spread from the northeast of Palestine. The destruction of the northern kingdom of Israel loomed in the air as they sunk deeper into apostasy.

14:17-22 *A conspiracy:* We are not told the reason for this conspiracy. However, some have assumed that it was because of Amaziah's weakness in his war with Jehoash. He was unwise in going to war against the northern kingdom, and subsequently humiliated Judah when the north plundered the treasures of the royal palace and temple. Since many in Judah were still trying to remain faithful to the Lord, some have also suggested that the real reason why Amaziah was killed was because of his apostasy to serve other gods (See 2 Ch 25:27).

SOCIAL DECAY IN THE NORTH

14:23-29 *Jeroboam:* This was Jeroboam II who reigned in the northern kingdom from 782 to 753 B.C. Because he was a wise military leader, and a good administrator in government, Jeroboam took the northern kingdom to the zenith of its prosperity and power. He led the north in reclaiming much of the territory that was lost to the Syrians. Unfortunately, he continued in the sins of Jeroboam I in maintaining a separation between the north and south by promoting loyalty to the altars at Bethel and Dan.

Jonah: This would be the prophet Jonah who wrote the book of Jonah. **He saved them by the hand of Jeroboam:** At this time in history, God saved Israel from total destruction through the leadership of Jeroboam II, thus fulfilling the prophecy of 13:5. Unfortunately, from the time of the death of Jeroboam II Israel began to decline, a decline that would lead to her destruction that would come only about thirty years after Jeroboam died.

Chapter 15

15:1-7 (2 Ch 26:1-23) Azariah:

Azariah reigned in the southern kingdom from 767 to 740 B.C. He was also referred to as Uzziah (2 Ch 26; Is 1:1; 6:1). The name “Azariah” means “the Lord helps” and the name “Uzziah” means “the Lord strengthens.” In 14:22 it is stated that he reclaimed Elath that was Solomon’s port city in the Gulf of Aqabah (1 Kg 9:26). He led Israel with a strong army (2 Ch 26:6-15). Because God struck him with leprosy, Jotham, his son, administrated both his house and the nation in his latter years. When he died, Jotham became the king of Judah. **Leper:** 2 Chronicles 26:16-23 explains that God struck Azariah with leprosy because of his presumptuous actions that he did in the temple (Compare Lv 13:45,46). **The high places were not removed:** There was great social attachment to the high places of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel (See introductory notes). The use of the high places is not clear, other than the fact that they were places to which people went for the sacrificial offerings that were made, and the

worship that was associated with other gods. They were thus places where the people lost their focus on God as the only true and living God, and focused on their own carnal desires and beliefs. The temples of Baal were often destroyed by the reforming leaders of the north and south, but the high places remained. It may have been that because the people enjoyed the high places for their immoral and apostate practices that it was a political move to allow them to remain, though the temples to the false gods were often destroyed in the cities during the restorations of some kings. The high places were possibly used primarily by the rural people to focus on false religious behavior, and the temples were used by the urban people.

15:8-22 Zechariah ... reigned:

Zechariah’s reign was short lived. This was the beginning of the end of the northern kingdom. **Shallum:** After six months as king, Zechariah was assassinated by Shallum. This conspiracy began a decline in the stability of the leadership of the northern kingdom. This was one factor that led to the downfall of the north. Zechariah’s assassination signalled the end of the house of Jehu, thus fulfilling the prophecy concerning his household (10:30). **Menahem:** Menahem, a cruel military leader, assassinated Shallum. He subsequently reigned from 752 to 742 B.C. During the reign of Menahem, the Assyrians, under the leadership of Shalmaneser (858-824 B.C.) and Adadnirari (805-782 B.C.), were expanding the Assyrian Empire to the west and south. **Pul:** This is the Babylonian name

for the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser. Since Menahem knew that he could not win in a military conflict with the Assyrians, he subjugated the rich in Israel to heavy taxation in order to pay tribute to Assyria.

15:23-26 Pekahiah: This son of Menahem reigned in the north for only two years from 742 to 740 B.C. However, it seems that the rich, who were subjected to the high taxation of Menahem, rebelled against his reign. One of his captains, Pekah, was thus aided in an insurrection against Pekahiah, murdering Pekahiah in the process. Pekah subsequently reigned from 740 to 732 B.C.

15:27-31 Captive to Assyria: The Assyrians introduced a new foreign policy in their conquest of nations. They took captives of conquered peoples as slaves back to their homeland. In this case Tiglath-pileser assaulted the northern kingdom, defeated Pekah's army, and then took Israelites captive back to Assyria (See 17:6). **Hoshea:** Because of Pekah's defeat by the Assyrians, Hoshea conspired against him in order to bring Israel under the control of Assyria.

15:32-38 (2 Ch 27:1-8) Jotham: Jotham reigned in the southern kingdom from 740 to 732 B.C., though he reigned coregently with Uzziah from 750 to 740. **In those days the Lord began to send ... Rezin ... and Pekah:** With the conquest of Assyria over Israel through the leadership of Tiglath-pileser, the end of the northern kingdom loomed in the near future. These events are recorded from 2 Kings 15:27 to 17:1. Because of the brevity of what is recorded, it is some-

times difficult to picture all that went on during these years of national chaos. In reference to the 2 Kings record, the events of 15:32 – 16:18 occurred before the events that are recorded in 15:29. 2 Kings 15:32 – 16:18 explain in greater detail the brief mention of historical events in 15:29. According to the listing of Assyrian kings, the Tiglath-pileser who is mentioned here in the biblical text was Tiglath-pileser III. There is a great deal of archaeological evidence in reference to the exploits of the Assyrian Empire at this time in the history of the world. Tiglath-pileser III revived the Assyrian Empire at this time in history. Information in his personal annals of Assyrian history mention that he defeated a coalition of kings that was led by Azariah, the Judean king. This decisive victory took place in the middle of the 8th century B.C. This was the time when the northern kingdom, under Menahem, was subjected to pay tribute to Assyria (15:19). Following these events, Pekah of the north apparently formed an alliance with Rezin of Syria in order to throw off the Assyrian yoke. Pekah and Rezin also made a move against Judah (16:5; Is 7:1-17) while Tiglath-pileser was occupied with taking Uartu. It is possible that these two kings, Pekah and Rezin, coerced Philistia and Edom to join with them in their campaign against Assyria, and possibly Judah (15:37). However, Jotham would not join the coalition, assuming that the end of the northern kingdom was imminent. Pekah and Rezin subsequently made war with Judah during the reign of Ahaz, which war is called the Syro-Ephraimite

War (16:5; Is 7:1,2). The war of Pekah and Rezin against Ahaz motivated Ahaz to send a gift to Tiglath-pileser in order to gain his support against Pekah and Rezin (16:7-9). Subsequently, Tiglath-pileser attacked Syria (16:9). He then moved against the northern kingdom of Israel. This was when Tiglath-pileser carried away captives of the north into Assyrian captivity (15:29). The cost to Ahaz for buying the support of the Assyrians was that Assyrian gods were introduced into the worship of Judah as a political move to continue the security that came with an alliance with Assyria (16:10-18). This weakened the commitment of the south to God, which would later lead to its downfall. But in the north, Tiglath-pileser III began the downfall of Israel, which was later finalized by Shalmaneser III, who followed Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria.

Chapter 16

REIGNS OF AHAZ & HOSEA

16:1-4 (2 Ch 28:1-17) Ahaz: Ahaz reigned in Judah from 732 to 716 B.C. Under the reigns of Azariah and Jotham, Judah experienced a period of prosperity and national confidence. It was a time of luxury and self-sufficiency during which Isaiah and other prophets preached to a society that trusted in the material security of their wealth (Is 2–6). It was a time of apostasy that was supported by the security of a materialistic life-style among the leaders of the nation. God thus sent the coalition of Rezin and Pekah against Judah as punishment for their indifference toward the law of God (15:37;

2 Ch 28:5-7). In his arrogance, and refusal to turn to God, Ahaz went to the Assyrians, a foreign power, in order to be delivered from the threat of Israel and Syria. Judah's coalition with a foreign power marked the end of Judah, for it manifested their trust in men and not in God. They had thus become a secular nation where God was divorced from the leadership of the people. **Made his son pass through the fire:** Ahaz worshiped Molech with human sacrifice, a practice that was vehemently condemned by the prophets (23:10; Ps 106:38; Jr 7:31; Ez 16:21).

16:5-9 The Syro-Ephraimatic War lasted for some time. However, Rezin and Pekah were not successful in their attack against Jerusalem because of the strong fortifications of the city. **Edomites:** Some translations read, "Syrians." However, the stronger manuscript evidence supports the reading, "Edomites," which most modern translations use. **The treasury:** The royal house and temple were used as the central banks of the kingdoms. Through taxation, storage was made of gold and silver in the royal houses and temples of the nations. Throughout the history of Israel, the stores of wealth in Jerusalem were often plundered by foreign kings or used by the kings of Judah to buy the allegiance of foreign powers (See 1 Kg 14:26; 15:18; 2 Kg 12:18). **Killed Rezin:** Tiglath-pileser killed the king of Syria, and thus Syria was no longer a buffer nation that stood between Assyria and the northern kingdom of Israel.

16:10-20 He saw an altar: On his

visit to meet with Tiglath-pileser in Damascus, Ahaz liked an altar there that had been built for sacrifices to pagan gods. He had a copy of this altar built in the courtyard of the temple in Jerusalem. It could have been that he was also introducing into the worship of Israel the gods of the Assyrians and Syrians. Since the worship of a foreign god was a political practice that manifested one's allegiance to the nation of the god, we could assume that at this time Ahaz was showing his allegiance to the Assyrians by building a copy of the Assyrian altar. **Because of the king of Assyria:** There may have been political reasons why Ahaz introduced the religious influence of Assyria into Judean religious ceremonies. This would not have been difficult for Ahaz to do since he had gone to the extremity of honoring the god of Molech.

Chapter 17

17:1-4 Hoshea: Hoshea reigned in the north from 732 to the time of the fall of Samaria in 722/21 B.C. He was the last king of the northern kingdom. This chapter ends the history of the northern kingdom that was started with the reign of Jeroboam in 931 B.C. The historical lesson here is significant. The history of Israel began with their exodus from Egypt in 1445 B.C. It ended with the coming of the Messiah when all men were brought together into the spiritual nation of Israel, the church, wherein there is neither Jew nor Gentile (Gl 3:26-29). Within this period of time, the northern kingdom of Israel existed for a brief period from the division of the kingdom of

Israel as a whole in 930 at the beginning of the reign of Jeroboam to the time they fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. Thus in a period of 210 years the nation came to an end after dividing itself from Judah. The brevity of its existence in reference to the 1445 years of Israelite history exemplifies the curse of idolatrous state religion that Jeroboam introduced among God's people. **Not as the kings of Israel who were before him:** This could be a reference to Hoshea allowing people to go to Jerusalem for the Passover, which thing was discouraged by other kings of Israel. One of the sins of Jeroboam was to discourage people from going for the temple sacrifices in Jerusalem. He built the altars in Bethel and Dan in order to provide an alternative, and thus fostered the continued division of Israel by keeping worshipers away from Jerusalem. Kings after Jeroboam continued this policy, and thus "the sins of Jeroboam," which God never intended by giving Jeroboam the northern ten tribes, included a prohibition of people from going to Jerusalem. But according to 2 Chronicles 30 Hoshea allowed such (2 Ch 30:10-27). **Shalmaneser:** See the *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, Archaeology and the Bible, B, The Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III. Shalmaneser followed Tiglath-pileser to the throne of Assyria. **So, king of Egypt:** Some in Israel convinced Hoshea to discontinue paying tribute to Assyria. Their confidence was probably in an alliance they made with So. But the alliance failed and Hoshea was imprisoned by the Assyrians.

17:5,6 Only two verses of scripture

are given to the tragic end of 210 years of history of the northern kingdom. What Jeroboam had started in rebellion against Rehoboam ended in national tragedy with the carrying away of Israelites out of their promised land into a foreign country. All was the fulfillment of prophecy, and the work of God to punish His people for living after their own desires and not after His commandments. **The king of Assyria:** It is not clear in history whether reference here was to Shalmaneser or Sargon II. The archaeological discovery of the *Babylonian Chronicle* gives credit to Shalmaneser for the victory. When considering all historical records, it seems that Shalmaneser began the three-year battle against Samaria, but died before the city was finally taken. Sargon II finished the siege, and thus took credit for defeating Samaria. The date for the fall is usually given as 722/21 B.C. The fall of the northern kingdom is given as 722/21 B.C. with the fall of Samaria, though Assyria had earlier subjugated northern areas of Israel before this date. **Halah ... Habor ... cities of the Medes:** Following the practice that was started by Tiglath-pileser, the king of Assyria took captives from Israel and moved them to different regions throughout the Assyrian Empire. What the Bible student must remember is that when the Babylonian Empire eventually overcame the Assyrian Empire in the years to come, Babylon assumed control of these territories of the Assyrians. When the time came for the return of the remnant of Israel from captivity, there was a remnant of the northern tribes in Halah, Habor, and

the cities of the Medes who returned to the land of Palestine. And thus, a remnant of all twelve tribes of Israel returned to the land of promise in order to await the coming of the promised Messiah and Savior of the world.

17:7-23 Pass through the fire: Though in occult worship some gave their young children as offerings, others evidently forced their children who were older to walk through coals of fire in order to prove their loyalty to false gods. Though not necessarily connected with worship of false gods, this practice still exist today in various cultures of the world among some who seek to prove their mental strength. **Yet the Lord testified against Israel:** The historical lesson is that throughout the centuries, cultures progressively become more wicked. They do not develop higher moral standards. When people seek to follow after their own lusts, they will refuse to hear the word of God, and thus digress into moral decay. **Fearred other gods:** They created imagined gods in their minds that they believed existed. They thus walked in the fear of their own minds, for they made themselves the center of their own desires. Idolatry is the desire to live according to one's own self by imagining gods and spirits in one's own mind. **Statutes of the nations:** Instead of cleansing the land of the nations who obeyed customs that were contrary to the will of God, they compromised with the nations, and thus fell under the influence of sinful foreign customs. **Did secretly:** They thought they could sin without the knowledge of the omnipresent God of heaven.

Built ... high places: Not only did they fail to tear down these centers where worship was conducted to false gods, they built their own. **Two calves:** These were the golden calves in Bethel and Dan that Jeroboam had made in order to keep the people from going to the annual sacrifices in Jerusalem. **Images:** After the spirit of idol worship, they formed with their hands physical representations of the gods they imagined in their minds. **Provoke the Lord to anger:** They were not ignorant of the law, for the prophets spoke throughout their apostasy. They arrogantly chose not to obey the One who formed them as a nation by delivering them from the bondage of Egypt. They refused to repent (Is 55:6,7). **Carried away out of their own land to Assyria unto this day:** From this statement we would conclude that 1 & 2 Kings were written sometime after 722/21 B.C., but before the return from the Babylonian exile that occurred in 536 B.C. Somewhere during this 185 year period these two books, and possibly 1 & 2 Chronicles, were written in order to warn the returning exiles never to walk in the sins that led them into captivity. Because the returning exiles never again appointed for themselves a king on earth, or followed after idolatry, then we would assume that they learned from their history.

17:24-28 Assyria brought people from Babylon ... Cuthah ... Ava ... Hamath ... Sepharvaim: Not only did the Assyrians take captives from the lands they conquered and scatter them among the territory of their Empire, they also

transplanted other people from their Empire into the lands they conquered. The reason for this was to break down the national loyalty of the people. They assimilated cultures with one another in order to lessen the threat of revolt against the Empire. What also happened during this cultural mixing was that the gods of the peoples of different lands were integrated into the religion of each group of people. The result of the mixing of the races in this case produced what later became known as the Samaritans. These were a racial cross between the Israelites who were left in the land of Palestine and the other races of people who were brought into Palestine by the Assyrians. **The Lord sent lions:** Because those who were brought into the land did not know or fear the God of heaven, God allowed the population of lions in the depopulated land to increase. The land, therefore, became a dangerous place in which to live. **Teach them the custom of the god of the land:** Because the Assyrians concluded that the lion attacks were the result of the God of the land who was punishing the people, he commissioned that a Levite priest be sent to the land to teach the people the commandments of God. We would assume, therefore, that the faith of the Samaritans that existed at the time when the Jews returned from captivity in 586 B.C. came as a result of the teaching of this one Levite priest who was sent to teach the people in the land of Palestine after the captivity of the northern kingdom. We must never underestimate the power of the word of God in the hands of just one person.

17:29-33 *Every nation made gods of their own:* The lone Levite priest who was sent to teach the people the law of God had competition. We must not underestimate the initiative of people to create gods after their own imaginations. What seemed to have happened in this case was that the people who were transplanted in the land mixed their beliefs with the word of God. *Succoth-benoth:* We know little about this Babylonian god. *Nergal:* This male god was originally associated with the sun and fire. He was then made the god of war and hunting, and later the god of disasters. *Ashima:* This was the god of the Hamathites and may have been associated with the Asherah. *Nibhaz and Tartak:* We know little about these two gods. Some have suggested that Nibhaz originated from Elam and that Tartak was a Syrian goddess. *Adrammelech:* This god was associated with the Sumero-Akkadian god, Anu, which was associated with human sacrifice. Since these gods were the religious reflection of the culture of the people who had imagined them, then what Israel did was allow the culture of the people to influence them. Instead of being influenced by the word of God, they allowed others to dominate their beliefs and behavior. *Burned their children in fire:* This would be the practice of offering small children as burnt offerings to false gods. Similar practices prevail today among witch doctors and tribal groups who steal away small children in order to use various body parts for spiritualistic ceremonies.

17:34-41 The attempt to teach the

Samaritans the law of God was only partially successful. The religious beliefs of the people who were imported into Palestine were too strong. The result was a mixture of truth and error. Thus unto the time 1 & 2 Kings were written, the people continued to believe in the gods of the lands from which they originated. However, in many ways they also accepted belief in the God of Israel because of the teaching of the Levite priest who was sent to teach the word of God. But what they did was add the God of Israel to their polytheistic system of belief in many gods. *As did their fathers:* The fathers established belief and behavior that was continued through their children. In a world where obedience to God is often difficult, if the fathers do not set an example of obedience to God, then the children have little chance of being faithful.

Decline And Fall Of The Southern Kingdom (18:1 – 25:30)

Outline: (1) Reign of Hezekiah (18:1 – 20:21), (2) Reigns of Manasseh and Amon (21:1-26), (3) Reformation of Josiah (22:1 – 23:30), (4) National turmoil and captivity (23:31 – 24:20), (5) Fall of Jerusalem (25:1-30)

Chapter 18 REIGN OF HEZEKIAH

18:1-8 (2 Ch 29:1 – 32:32; Is 36 – 39) *Hezekiah:* Hezekiah reigned over the southern kingdom from 716 to 687 B.C. His reign is explained almost equally in the accounts of 2 Kings, 2

Chronicles and Isaiah. **He removed the high places:** Hezekiah's reign was considered righteous before God because of his trust in God and the extent to which he restored Judah to God. He not only made reforms in the cities, but also in the rural areas by removing the high places where wicked retreats were conducted to false gods. **Nehushtan:** Since the meaning of this name is "the bronze thing," we could assume that this was a derogatory reference of Hezekiah toward this relic of the past (Nm 21:8,9). The fact that the people made it an object of religious respect teaches that God's people should never be left some relic of the past that He used in His work with His people. Men often have an uncontrolled desire to place an object before them that reminds them of their relationship with God and encourages their faith. Spiritually minded people do not need such objects. Disciples are to be known by their love for one another (Jn 13:34,35) **The Lord was with him:** God is with those who make a total commitment to serve Him. In this context, the commitment of Hezekiah was manifested by what he did in restoring the people to God. Commitment must be manifested by the works of those who seek to restore themselves to God. Corrections in theology, though necessary, are not sufficient alone. God is with those who take action for Him. **Against ... Assyria:** At first he was probably against Sennacherib, but after the death of Sennacherib, his revolt was against Sargon.

18:9-12 See 17:1-6. **Because they did not obey:** The reason is given for the

downfall of the northern kingdom. The northern kingdom fell as a people of God because they refused to be faithful to the commandments of God. They created and obeyed their own commandments, and thus created their own false gods whom they assumed would condone their sin. **King of Assyria:** Since Shalmaneser died before the battle against Samaria was completed, the "king of Assyria" that is mentioned in verse 11 would be Sargon II. By the time of Assyria's attack of the southern kingdom in verse 13, Sargon had died and Sennacherib was king of Assyria. **Cities of the Medes:** We must keep in mind that in the Assyrian captivity some of the northern ten tribes of Israel were taken into lands of captivity that were later taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire, which was subsequently taken over by the Medo-Persian Empire. When the southern kingdom of Israel fell in 586 B.C., and subsequently taken into Babylonian captivity, the land of the Medes to which they were taken was part of the Babylonian Empire. Therefore, there were Jews from the northern kingdom already in the land of the Medes when the captivities of the southern kingdom arrived as captives after 586 B.C. When King Cyrus of the Medo-Persian Empire allowed the Jews to return to Palestine after the seventy years of captivity, a remnant of all twelve tribes return to rebuilt the temple (See comments of Ezra).

18:13-16 Sennacherib: The two kings of Assyria, Sargon and Sennacherib, left many annals concerning their military campaigns into Pales-

tine. These archaeological discoveries have aided our understanding of the conflicts between Assyria and Judah (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide*, Archaeology and the Bible, D, E, and F). ***Sennacherib ... came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them:*** When Sargon was killed in battles in the land of Tabal, revolts started in the Mediterranean regions where Assyria had formerly conquered several small nations. Hezekiah was one who joined in these revolts against the Assyrians (vss 7,8). At the same time, Merodach-baladan was leading the rise of the Babylonian Empire. He also encouraged other nations to rebel against Assyria (20:12-19; Is 39). These revolts occurred at the beginning of the 8th century B.C. In 701 Sennacherib, who succeeded Sargon, determined to subdue these revolts. It was during this time that Sennacherib came against the cities of Judah. When Sennacherib initially defeated Tyre, then the city-states, except Ashkelon, Ekron and Jerusalem, submitted to pay tribute to Assyria. However, Sennacherib eventually crushed Ashkelon, and then intended to do the same with Ekron. The Philistines then made an alliance with Shabaka of Egypt, who in turn called for reinforcements from Ethiopia. But Sennacherib defeated this coalition of nations at Eltekah, north of Ekron. After his conquest of Eltekah, Timnath and Ekron, Sennacherib headed for Jerusalem. Before arriving at Jerusalem, he engaged Lachish, a well-fortified city that was at the time larger than Jerusalem. On the wall reliefs of the temple-palace of Nineveh, archaeologists

have discovered a description of how Sennacherib defeated Lachish. When Hezekiah realized that Sennacherib could not be stopped, he submitted. As a result, Sennacherib laid on them a heavy tribute, which Hezekiah paid. However, in order to pay this tribute, Hezekiah had to strip all the treasures of the temple, even taking the gold that overlaid the doors and doorposts. It is assumed that this completed the first invasion of Sennacherib to the land of Judah. Another was to follow, during which the army of Sennacherib would be slain by an angel of God.

18:17,18 *The king of Assyria sent Tartan:* Some have affirmed that there was a period of about twelve years between verses 16 and 17, and thus the narrative that follows is the description of a second invasion into Palestine by the Assyrian army. The reason for this assumption is that in the first invasion, Hezekiah submitted to Sennacherib and paid tribute (vss 13-16). In the context of the communications from 18:17 to 19:37, mention is made of Hezekiah paying tribute. During this second confrontation with Sennacherib beginning with verse 17, Isaiah is with Hezekiah, and thus Hezekiah is defiant to the proposals made by Sennacherib. The second reason why this was probably a second invasion is in the fact that Tirhakah (19:9) was an Ethiopian. In archaeological discoveries he was a coregent ruler of Egypt with his brother Shebitko in 690/89. Therefore, he could not have been in power to lead Egyptian forces into Palestine as early as 701 B.C. The Egyp-

tian army that Sennacherib engaged at Eltekah was not the same army that was led by Tirhakah. A third reason why this narrative would be considered a second invasion is in the nature of the messages of Isaiah. Messages that Isaiah pronounced from around 705 to 701 indicate that Isaiah was against Hezekiah's rebellion against Assyria (See Is 28:14-22; 30:1-17; 31:1-3). However, other messages indicate that God would break the yoke of Assyria, which messages were directed to Judah concerning Assyria's second invasion (See Is 10:24-27; 14:24-27; 29:5-8). This was Hezekiah's message to Sennacherib on this occasion (19:20-34). Add to this the fact that the threat of Sennacherib against Jerusalem was suddenly terminated on this occasion with the death of 185,000 of his men. Since after the first invasion, Hezekiah sent tribute to Nineveh, no such tribute would have been sent after the sudden death of the army of Sennacherib that is explained in this account. The date for this encounter was around 688 B.C. **Lachish:** This was an ideal location from which the Assyrian army could bring under control threats from Egypt, as well as bring under subjection again the rebellious cities of Judah. **Tartan:** This was a title, not a name. He was the general of the Assyrian army (Is 20:1). **Rabsaris:** This title could have referred to the captain of the king's bodyguard (Jr 39:3,13). **Rabshakeh:** This was the spokesman for Sennacherib.

18:19-25 This bruised reed: Rabshakeh arrogantly ridiculed Hezekiah's alliance with Egypt, which he

referred to as a broken staff upon which one should not rest for security. **Pharaoh:** This would have been Tirhakah (or, Taharqo) who was a coregent with his brother in 690/89 B.C (19:9). **The Lord said to me:** In order to discourage Hezekiah, Rabshakeh claimed to be on a mission from God, which, if he had known of Isaiah's message of Isaiah 10:5-11, he most certainly was. But it was not God's mission for Assyria to take Jerusalem at this time. That mission would be assigned to the Babylonians. All of what Rabshakeh said to Hezekiah was from the typical Assyrian position of being arrogant against those whom they sought to conquer. However, at this time in the history of Judah, through the faith of Hezekiah, and with the backing of Isaiah, Judah stood firm in her revolt against the Assyrian Empire. It was not the time when God would take the southern kingdom into captivity. God did not want the southern kingdom to be taken to the same regions as the northern kingdom, but into the regions of Babylonia. We must keep in mind that in the captivities God was establishing Jews throughout the ancient world in order to set the stage for the evangelization of the world after the establishment of the church in Acts 2. In the land to which the Jews were scattered, they maintained their faith, and hope of the Messiah. When the gospel was first preached by the early evangelists in the 1st century, they went first to the synagogues of the Jews in the lands to which they had been taken captive.

18:26,27 The Syrian language: This would be Aramaic, and is thus con-

firmed here as the official international language of the day. **The Jews' language:** This would be Hebrew, but specifically the dialect of Hebrew that was spoken by those in Judah at the time of this encounter with the Assyrians.

18:28-37 The content of Rabshakeh's speech to the people was to give them the alternative of living in Assyria in captivity as opposed to the consequences of resistance against Sennacherib. Assyria's conquest of all the cities he mentioned in this context, as well as the fall of Samaria, would certainly be discouraging for Israelites who were held up in Jerusalem. Nevertheless, Hezekiah stood firm, trusting the message of Isaiah that Sennacherib would not enter the city. Though he did not understand the message of Isaiah, he had faith in the message of God. **With their clothes torn:** These were times for faith and leadership. Hezekiah manifested both to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Though Eliakim and Shebna expressed their deep discouragement as a result of the words of Rabshakeh, Hezekiah did not move from his determination to trust in God to deliver Judah from the threat of the Assyrian Empire.

Chapter 19

19:1-7 **He tore his clothes:** The message from Rabshakeh not only discouraged Eliakim and Shebna who reported it to Hezekiah, it also greatly discouraged Hezekiah. **Isaiah the prophet:** Though Hezekiah had launched out on faith, the message of Rabshakeh brought a reasonable conclusion to any resistance

to Sennacherib. Any city without the help of God would fall to the Assyrians. Hezekiah thus needed reassurance, and for this reason, he sent to Isaiah who was also in the city. **Prayer for the remnant:** Hezekiah had been listening to the prophets, for they were saying that God would spare a remnant of His people. The northern kingdom had already gone into captivity. Only Judah, with Benjamin, was left. Hezekiah considered Judah the remnant that was left in the land. But even Judah would eventually be taken into captivity. Only a remnant of them would eventually return to Palestine with a remnant from each of the northern tribes. **Hear a rumor ... fall by the sword:** We are not told from where he would hear the rumor, or what rumor would be heard. The result of his hearing the rumor would be his return to his own land where he would be killed.

19:8-13 **King of Ethiopia:** The word "Ethiopia" stands for Egypt, and thus some translations will read "king of Egypt." Sennacherib had gone from Lachish to Libnah. Tirhakah was seeking to come to the rescue of Hezekiah, but Sennacherib sent another dispatch to Hezekiah, saying that Egypt would offer no help. Sennacherib's message revealed that Assyria had a formidable army that no nation at the time could defeat. Sennacherib's offer to Hezekiah, therefore, was reasonable. The inhabitants of Jerusalem could exchange captivity for death. Surrender was better than resistance in view of such a great army. But because of his belief in the deliverance of God, Hezekiah was willing to risk the

lives of all the inhabitants of Jerusalem. These were times when the greatness of Hezekiah's leadership was revealed.

19:14-19 God ... of all the kingdoms of the earth: The theology of this statement is profound. It is one that must never be forgotten when studying the Old Testament history of the nation of Israel. We must not assume that God was concerned only with Israel. He was King of kings, and Lord of lords over all His creation. As revealed through His commission of Jonah to Nineveh, God was the God of the Assyrian Empire that was at this time seeking to destroy Israel. Though men have throughout the ages created gods after their own rebellious imaginations, God is still the one true and living God. Israel was chosen only for the purpose of preserving a segment of world society in order to bring the Messiah into the world for the salvation of all the world. Jesus was not the Messiah for the Jews only, but also for the Gentiles. He was given by God to "whosoever" believes (Jn 3:16). **Ear ... eyes:** These were metaphors, or anthropomorphisms. This figure of speech uses a physical characteristic of man in reference to God who is spirit (Jn 4:24). God who is spirit has no physical ears and eyes, and thus the symbols refer to God responding to Hezekiah's plea and seeing the deplorable situation of Judah. **For they were not gods:** The existence of the nation of Israel, born out of Egyptian captivity, was evidence that Israel could never have become a nation if it had not been for the work of God. Other nations first existed, and then they created their

gods after their imaginations. They then formed their gods in stone and wood by the work of their hands. But the God of Israel first existed, created all things, and then formed Israel by bringing her out of Egyptian captivity. We must not miss Hezekiah's argument here for the existence of God through the existence of Israel. Misguided societies create their own gods. God created His own society of Israel.

19:20-34 This stern message of rebuke and chastisement certainly stunned the arrogant and proud Sennacherib. This was a message where Judah revealed her contempt and scorn for Assyria. Sennacherib had been mocking the insignificant army of Judah that was held up behind the walls of Jerusalem. However, God's message reversed the feelings of contempt and scorn. These were feelings that should be expressed by Judah toward the Assyrians who had no business threatening God's people. In fact, Sennacherib's contempt and scorn of Judah was viewed as contempt and scorn against the God of all creation. Those who do not know the one true and living God will behave in such a manner. In their ignorance and arrogance they condemn themselves through their mockery of God's work through His people. **Holy One of Israel:** See Is 5:24; 30:12. **I will turn you back:** See Is 10:12-19. **A sign to you:** Upon the fulfillment of that which Isaiah here prophesied, Judah would determine that the events that would soon transpire were a sign that God was still with her. **Things that grow of themselves:** Because of the length of

time they were shut up in Jerusalem, they had not been able to plant in their fields. And thus, volunteer crops were growing even as these words were spoken. They would eat of these volunteer crops, for the Assyrian armies would be gone in the year of these events. This harvesting of volunteer crops would continue into the second year because of the calamity that was transpiring. In the third year they would be able to return to normal farming. ***Out of Jerusalem will go forth a remnant:*** The survivors of the city of Jerusalem would be the remnant of Israel that would repopulate the land. ***For My own sake ... and David's sake:*** God had made a promise to David (2 Sm 7:10-16). From his seed One would sit on his throne. The One to whom God referred in the context of 2 Samuel 7 had not yet come into human history, and would not for another six hundred years. Thus for the sake of bringing the Christ into the world, the inhabitants of Jerusalem at this time in history would be spared in order to repopulate Israel. For the sake of God's eternal plan through Jesus Christ, the remnant of Israel that was sealed up behind the walls of Jerusalem were not to be obliterated from history. God's plan through Israel had not yet been completed in human history.

19:35-37 *Angel of the Lord:* See Gn 16:7; Ex 3:2 Zc 1:12. ***Killed 185,000:*** It was time for action. Various explanations have been given for the cause of this death, for in archaeological records there is mention of a demise of the Assyrian army while they were in Palestine. But most of these explanations center

around natural occurrences as diseases. The problem with these explanations is that the biblical text states that the deaths occurred in one night, and that in the morning people arose and saw the dead bodies. The deaths did not occur over a period of time, but in one night. ***Now it came to pass:*** The biblical text does not state that Sennacherib would be immediately assassinated upon his return to Nineveh. In fact, according to Assyrian records, his death did not occur until about twenty years after he returned from Palestine. ***His sons killed him:*** From the archaeological records of ancient Assyria, the death of Sennacherib can be reconstructed in reference to the reign of Esarhaddon. The oldest son of Sennacherib had been taken captive to Elim. Arda-Mulishi, who was possibly the next oldest son, probably expected to be the new king of Assyria. (Historians believe that Arda-Mulishi in Assyrian annals was the same as Adrammelech in the biblical text.) However, Sennacherib chose Esarhaddon instead of the older brothers of the family. So while Esarhaddon was traveling away from Nineveh, Arda-Mulishi murdered Sennacherib in order to assume the throne. But when Esarhaddon returned, much of the army of Assyria sided with him, and thus Arda-Mulishi fled.

Chapter 20

20:1-7 *Hezekiah was sick:* Chronologically, the sickness of Hezekiah would have taken place before the invasion of Sennacherib in 701 B.C. The events described in 18:13 – 19:37 would

have taken place during the extra fifteen years of life that were given to Hezekiah. We would conclude, therefore, that in answer to his prayer, God wanted Hezekiah to be the leader of Israel who would take Judah through the testing years of the Assyrian invasion. ***I have heard your prayer:*** God had advised Hezekiah to get his house in order. Realizing that death was imminent, Hezekiah “*turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the Lord*” (vs 2). God’s answer was, “***I have heard your prayer. I have seen your tears: surely I will heal you***” (vs 5). God changed the hour in which He knew Hezekiah was going to die. The event of Hezekiah’s death was changed by a divine response to a man’s prayer. We must conclude, therefore, that God can answer prayer in order to change history. In answering prayer we must consider that God can know all options of life. He can know all that could happen as a result of any particular thing we might do. Simply because He can know all the options does not mean that the options are predestined. It simply says that He is omniscient. Hezekiah had two options that God knew in reference to his health. If Hezekiah continued on his present course of life, the option of death stood before him. God simply came to him and told him what is going to happen. In this case, however, Hezekiah believed that God could switch his life over to the other option. That option was life. However, we assume that the extending of Hezekiah’s life was to further God’s purpose with Israel. We must always understand the principle of life and death

that Paul stated to the Philippians. He wrote that he had a “*desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better*” (Ph 1:23). Hezekiah’s situation may have been similar to Paul’s in reference to the church. “*Nevertheless to remain in the flesh is more needful for you*” (Ph 1:24). God gave Hezekiah fifteen more years for Israel’s sake, and not specifically for the sake of Hezekiah. We must conclude this because for some reason God came to give him the option of fifteen more years of life. God knew that Hezekiah would turn in tears, and thus He could be granted another option and more time to guide Israel on the right path. There is something greater in the context here than simply giving Hezekiah fifteen more years of life.

20:8-11 *Let the shadow turn backward:* It was certainly a miracle for the shadow of the sundial to go backward ten steps. The miracle was the reversal of the shadow, with no emphasis being placed on a reversal of the earth’s rotation. God could have reversed the rotation of the earth if He so desired, but it is more probable that He bent the rays of the light.

20:12,13 *Berodach-baladan:* Or, Merodach-baladan (Is 39:1). This was a spy mission from Babylon. While Hezekiah was concerned about the threat of the Assyrians, he catered to the Babylonians, thinking possibly that they might aid him in any confrontation with the Assyrians. The emissaries, however, came from Babylon with more interest in the wealth of Jerusalem than the health of Hezekiah.

20:14-19 *What have they seen in your house:* What the Babylonian emissaries had seen was all that Hezekiah had. The ground work had been laid, therefore, for the Babylonians to come again in 586 B.C. in order to take away the treasures of the temple and royal palace. *Your sons ... will be taken away:* See 24:10-17. *Peace and truth in my days:* Hezekiah correctly understood that the calamity about which Isaiah spoke would not take place in his life time.

20:20,21 *Brought water into the city:* See *Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible*, E, "Hezekiah's Tunnel." This waterway was constructed in order to bring water into the city of Jerusalem, specifically during times of siege. It was surely in existence shortly after 701 B.C. when Sennacherib invaded Palestine and threatened to take Jerusalem. Water was channeled through solid rock from the Pool of Gihon on the outside of the city wall. The tunnel was about 533 meters long (1750 feet) and bears the name of Hezekiah.

Chapter 21

REIGNS OF MANASSEH & AMON

21:1-9 (2 Ch 33:1-20) *Manasseh:* Manasseh officially reigned in Judah from 687 to 642 B.C. He was the longest reigning king of Judah after the division of Israel during the reign of Rehoboam. He initially did evil in the sight of the Lord in that he followed after idolatry, witchcraft, and the sacrifice of children during the latter part of his reign. During his reign, Judah was subjected to

Assyria, who eventually placed him in prison in Babylon. Upon his repentance, he returned to Jerusalem to initiate many reforms to faith in God (2 Ch 33:11-17). Archaeologists have found his name in history, specifically on a seal that he probably used during his coregent rule with Hezekiah, his father. Since he reigned during the kingship of both Esarhadon and Ashurbanipal of Assyria, Manasseh's name appears in the historical annals of these kings. *He built altars in the house of the Lord:* The writer of both Kings and Chronicles wanted the initial readers to understand that Manasseh, and leaders like him, led Israel to the judgment of captivity that they were experiencing at the time they read these words. Since the "book of the law" was found during the repairs of the temple that took place during the reign of Josiah, the grandson of Manasseh, we would conclude that the people had no written copy of the law when Manasseh reigned. Nevertheless, they had both the religious heritage of Israel, as well as the prophets of God who spoke during these years of apostasy. The nations of the north and south were destroyed because of their lack of knowledge of the word of God (Hs 4:6). But they refused to have the knowledge of God in their lives. Their judgment by God was just because God made available the sources (the prophets) from which they could understand that they were sinning against God.

21:10-18 *The measuring line ... and the plummet:* When measured with the standard of God's word, Jerusalem, as Samaria and the house of Ahab, was

crooked. The result of their apostasy that was led by Manasseh would be captivity. Manasseh's own time in prison did not encourage him to totally repent of all that he had led Judah to do in following after divination and witchcraft (2 Ch 33:11-13). The legacy of his reign, therefore, was not one of repentance, but of idolatry. He sought to correct the sin of his early reign, but he had led the people too far away from God. They were set on a course for destruction. **The remnant:** That is, the southern kingdom of Judah. **Shed much innocent blood:** This would not only include the sacrifice of his son (vs 6), but surely referred to the death of some of the prophets that God sent to Judah at this time in history (vs 10; compare Hb 11:32-40). **Garden of Uzza:** Since it is recorded that only Manasseh and Amon were buried at this site, we could assume that they were buried in a disgraceful location, not a site where honored royalty were buried.

21:19-26 (2 Ch 33:21-25) Amon: The reign of Amon from 642 to 640 B.C. was a continuation of the apostasy of his father, Manasseh. There was a conspiracy in the inner court of Amon that led to his assassination. Those who murdered him placed Josiah on the throne. Since Josiah was only eight years old when he was placed on the throne, we would assume that some in the inner court, or priests of the temple, were frustrated with the apostasy that was led by Manasseh and Amon. They were looking for a change, and thus placed on the throne one whom they had trained for the position.

Chapter 22

REFORMATION OF JOSIAH

22:1-7 Josiah: Josiah reigned from 640 to 609 B.C. **Repair the damages of the house:** In the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign he initiated repair of the temple similar to the objective of Jehoash who had sought to do the same (12:9-15). What is historically significant about the characters who are mentioned in the events of this chapter is their mention in discovered annals and royal seals that date to the time of Josiah. The name of Hilkiah appears on the seal of Azariah who was a priest and the grandfather of Ezra (1 Ch 6:13 – 14; 9:11; Er 7:1). Hilkiah's name appears also on a seal of another son named Hanan. Ahikam's son, Gadaliah, was appointed governor of Judah by Nebuchadnezzar (25:22). Shaphan (22:3) and Nathan-melech's (23:11) names also appear on ancient records of those who lived during these times.

22:8-10 I have found the book of the law: We are not told how long Israel was without a copy of the Torah (Gn – Dt). We assume that what was discovered was the first five books of the Old Testament, though only those portions that referred to the responsibilities of the king were immediately read before Josiah.

22:11-13 He tore his clothes: It is possible that Josiah had been taught concerning the existence of a written law that God had given to Israel in the past. Neither he nor the priests at the time had seen a copy. When this most significant discovery was made, and the actual law was

read in the presence of the king, Josiah's heart was moved to great repentance. This repentance initiated the greatest restoration movement in the nation of Israel. From the time when Solomon led Israel astray after the gods of his wives, no greater restoration to God had been initiated. Josiah did not simply seek to reform the existing religious ceremonies and practices of Israel. He set out to destroy all that related to idolatrous worship. The difference between a reformation and a restoration is that in a restoration adherents seek to go back to the original teaching concerning religious beliefs and practices. In a reformation existing beliefs are modified and the existing ceremonies are adjusted to conform to the change in beliefs. Josiah led a restoration, not a reformation. He made every effort to destroy the existing ceremonies that were based on erroneous beliefs.

22:14-20 Huldah: The prophets Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Habakkuk were into their ministry during this period. All were warning of the impending exile that was coming. It seems that Huldah was immediately accessible, and thus Josiah went straight for her counsel. **Thus says the Lord:** Huldah's message was clear. First, God would bring calamity upon the southern kingdom of Israel because of her apostasy to idolatry (vss 15-17). Second, the calamity would not come to pass in the days of Josiah (vss 18-20). Josiah thus received the proclamation of calamity come from two sources, the book of the law and the prophetess, Huldah. There was no contradiction in what was

to come about in the history of Judah, the last remaining remnant of God's people in the promised land. The extent to which Josiah went in the restoration of the faith of Judah was revealed by the intensity of his destruction of all that surrounded idolatrous religion. **Your eyes will not see:** God's judgment had already been established. The restoration of Josiah only prolonged it until the reign of another king. The historical point is that restoration movements always circle around and become that from which the fathers of the movement fled. Though Josiah religiously cleaned up Judah by the word of God, his descendants returned to that from which he and his generation had fled. Apostasy is only one generation away.

Chapter 23

23:1,2 He read ... the book of the covenant: The law was to be read to the people throughout their history (Dt 31:9-13). Since they did not have a copy of the law of the covenant, the people were ignorant of the law (See Hs 4:6). Or, the case may have been that they refused to take advantage of seeking out the word of God. In this case, Josiah assumed spiritual leadership of the people (Compare Ja 24:15). He personally stood before the people and read from the word of God.

23:3-14 The King ... made a covenant: In order for religious paradigm shifts to be made in a society, the leadership of the society must make a covenant with God. Social paradigm shifts include great social chaos, and thus resistance

comes from those who are comfortable with the present state of sin. Leaders must make a resolve to stand against such resistance in order to do that which must be done to bring the people back to God. If the leadership does not make this resolve, the resistance of the masses will discourage them, and thus thwart the restoration. **All the people committed to the covenant:** Not only must leadership commit to the restoration, the people also must commit themselves to follow in order to restore their lives to God. In the restoration events that followed, which probably took over one year to accomplish, Josiah led and the people followed. His attack was not based on reforming temple worship, but in eradicating the land of all references and places of idol worship, as well as those who led in such worship. The fact that his restoration extended over a period of time gave the priests of Baal time to repent. Those who did not repent were eliminated from the society of Judah. **Baal ... Asherah:** Under the leadership of Ahab and Jezebel, this worship had infected Israel for many years (11:17-20; 18:4,5; 1 Kg 14:23,24; 16:32; 18). At the time the restoration began, the temple in Jerusalem was essentially a temple for Baal worship. **Sodomites:** Prostitutes were introduced into the worship that was associated with Baal. **Priests of the high places did not come:** There was opposition to the restoration of Josiah by those priests whose salaries depended on the offerings that people brought to the high places. **Molech:** Ahab was probably the first to introduce human sacrifice to

Molech (16:3; see 19:1-9). Josiah destroyed all that pertained to this abomination in the land. **Mount of corruption:** Some have stated that this was a reference to the Mt. of Olives east of Jerusalem. **Solomon had built:** These structures had been in existence since the days of Solomon, about 400 years.

23:15-20 Bethel: The restoration went beyond the borders of Judah. Since the northern kingdom had been taken into Assyrian captivity, Judah assumed some leadership over this territory. The altar that was built by Jeroboam to keep the northern tribes away from the temple had become an altar to false gods and a symbol of the division of the tribes of Israel. The destruction of this altar was the fulfillment of prophecy (See 1 Kg 13:1-3). Since Bethel was in the territory of the Assyrian Empire after the fall of Samaria, some have suggested that Josiah's restoration in the north took place after the fall of the Assyrian Empire in 612 B.C., the year that Nineveh was defeated by the Babylonians and Medes. But we could also assume that many Assyrians had withdrawn from the northern kingdom by the time of Josiah in order to face the threat that the Babylonians and Medes were presenting to Nineveh. **The tomb of the man of God:** The restoration actions of Josiah had been prophesied years before by a prophet whose name we do not know. His prophecy was recorded only in 1 Kings 13:1,2 (See 1 Kg 13:30,31). The people knew this prophecy only by word of mouth until it was written by the writer of the Kings. What the prophet had said had been pre-

served in the oral teachings of the priests until the fulfillment of the prophecy in the restoration of Josiah. We conclude, therefore, that many of the priests remained faithful to the word of God regardless of the false prophets and unrighteous kings.

23:21-23 (2 Ch 35:1-19) *Keep the Passover:* The writer states that this Passover was unusual in that the Passover had not been kept in such a manner since the time of the judges. We are not told with what regularity the Passover had been kept. We could assume that it became only one of many feasts that were combined with idolatrous worship. The Passover was Israel's day of independence, and yet, in their idolatrous worship they lost its significance, possibly attributing their existence as a nation in some ways to the work of their idolatrous gods.

23:24,25 In order to accomplish this social paradigm shift, those who led in the apostasy had to be put away. This was not a confrontation in leadership between two religions. It was a competition between truth and error. Those who led in error had to be eliminated in order for the truth to be restored. The execution of the false prophets revealed that Josiah was serious about the restoration, as Elijah was in his opposition to the false prophets of Ahab and Jezebel. The execution of the false prophets indicated that the work of the false prophets was actually treasonous work against the people of God. They led the nation of Israel into the beliefs and behavior of

foreign gods.

23:26,27 *I will remove Judah:* The extent of the moral and social decay that was promoted by Manasseh could not be corrected by the extremity of the restoration of Josiah. Josiah's restoration was a historical sermon, but the sermon could not correct the sin of the generations before him. The only way that Judah could be purged was that God had to take the people into captivity. This would happen when Josiah's restoration would eventually circle around and again become that from which he led the people.

23:28-30 There was a clash of kingdoms during the end of the reign of Josiah, in which he involved himself, and subsequently was killed. The nations involved were the Assyrians, the rising Babylonians and Medes, and the Egyptians. Josiah initiated his restoration in Israel as the Assyrian Empire began to fall. The Assyrian city of Asshur fell to the Medes, and then Nineveh to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. Haran fell to a force of both the Babylonians and Medes in 610 B.C. Pharaoh Neco of Egypt, sought to come to the rescue of the Assyrians at Carchemish. While on his way there Josiah engaged him in battle at Megiddo. However, Josiah was mortally wounded, and subsequently died. The Assyrians were defeated by the Babylonians and Medes at the battle of Carchemish in 609 B.C. From the time of this battle, there was a change in world empires from the Assyrians to the Babylonians (See comments Dn 2).

NATIONAL TURMOIL & CAPTIVITY

23:31-37 (2 Ch 36:1-4) *Jehoahaz:*

He reigned in 609. *Jeremiah:* This was not Jeremiah, the prophet. Jehoahaz reigned only three months before Pharaoh Neco put him in bonds. *Eliakim:* Pharaoh Neco changed his name to Jehoiakim. Throughout their history, Judah digressed from God-anointed kings, to people-appointed kings, and now to foreign-appointed kings. Judah was now again under the control of Egypt. As long as Judah was subjugated to Egypt, she had to pay tribute. *Jehoiakim:* Jehoiakim's reign lasted from 608 to 597 B.C. Judah was a vassal of Egypt during the early part of his reign, but later Babylon took control of Judah (vs 34, 24:1). It was at this time that there was again great turmoil in the international scene. Nebuchadnezzar II was one of the longest reigning kings of the Babylonian Empire. He had succeeded his father, Nabopolassar, who had engaged in war at Carchemish a coalition of forces between Egypt and Assyria. It was there that the Egyptian and Assyrian armies were defeated. However, Nabopolassar died and Nebuchadnezzar, his son, came to the throne of Babylon. After the battle Carchemish, the Babylonians terminated their march into Palestinian territory, for when Nabopolassar died in 605 B.C., Nebuchadnezzar returned to Babylon in order to secure the throne. However, Nebuchadnezzar later returned to Palestine. It was probably at this time that Jehoiakim was subjected to Babylonian control, and thus assessed to pay tribute

to Babylon. However, in 601, in a battle between the armies of Egypt and Babylon, Pharaoh Neco inflicted great casualties on the army of Babylon. It was at this time that Jehoiakim took the opportunity to rebel against the weakened Babylonian forces. Jehoiachin later assassinated Jehoiakim, and began his reign. But in the same year Nebuchadnezzar squashed the Judean rebellion and Jehoiachin, the son of Jehoiakim, was taken into Babylonian captivity. Zedekiah was then appointed king of Judah.

Chapter 24

24:1-17 (2 Ch 36:9,10) God was determined to remove the remainder of the Israelites from the land because of the sins of Manasseh. *Jehoiachin:* Jehoiachin, who reigned in 597 B.C., was the victim of God's judgment that was now to be brought down upon Judah. As a young king, he surrendered to Nebuchadnezzar. The discovery of the *Babylon Chronicle* gives details of Nebuchadnezzar's march against "Hattiland" (Syria & Palestine). The *Chronicle* states that he took Jerusalem and carried the king (Jehoiachin) and captives away to Babylon. The *Babylonian Chronicle* also states that Nebuchadnezzar appointed a new king of Judah, which king is probably a reference to Zedekiah. *Innocent blood:* As with Ahab and Jezebel, who used their government positions to kill Naboth in order to confiscate his vineyard, so did Manasseh. Civil government is established in order to protect the people. But when government attacks its own people, the society is ru-

ined. In this case, Manasseh's state sin would not go unpunished. **Craftsmen and smiths ... poor:** Nebuchadnezzar took the skilled people from the society. He left those who were unskilled, and thus those who would not necessarily organize another rebellion. The skilled artisans would help build the Babylonian Empire, whereas the unskilled who were left in Palestine would not develop the Israelites into a formidable nation that would be able to rebel against Babylon. Certainly, some of the poor were such because they were unproductive. But it could have been that they were thrown into poverty because wicked kings as Manasseh had stolen their land as Ahab and Jezebel had stolen the vineyard of Naboth. When Nebuchadnezzar left the poor in the land, they could have been able to reclaim their inheritances, and start again to build their families around their inherited land. The captivity, therefore, extracted those who benefited from the sins of Manasseh, while it was a blessing to the poor who had been robbed of their inheritances during his reign. **He carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon:** This was the initial conquest of Jerusalem which occurred in 597 B.C. There was little destruction to the city during this conquest because Jehoiachin surrendered. A second conquest of the city occurred in 586 B.C. in order to put down the rebellion of Zedekiah. It was during this conquest that Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple (25:1-7). Another third and final raid of the land took place in 582 B.C. (Jr 52:29,30).

Chapter 25

FALL OF JERUSALEM

25:1-7 Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem for a year and a half. **Killed his sons:** Nebuchadnezzar had shown mercy to Jehoiachin. However, Zedekiah had betrayed him, causing him to bring his army from Babylon to subdue the insurrection. He was thus given harsher treatment.

25:8-17 (Jr 52:12-23) Nebuzaradan: This was the general of the army of Nebuchadnezzar. **Burned:** Nebuzaradan conducted a complete destruction of Jerusalem. It was the goal of Nebuchadnezzar to terminate the existence of the center of Jewish pride. Thus all the major buildings of the city were burned, specifically the temple. At this time in the history of Israel the temple represented the religious pride of the people. In order to humble and humiliate the Jews, Nebuchadnezzar wanted the temple destroyed. All the bronze and gold articles of both the royal palace and temple were cut in pieces in order to be transported to Babylon. The destruction was total, and thus the fulfillment of prophecy (1 Kg 9:8). All that Solomon had built for the pride of Israel and centralization of the Israelites' faith was either destroyed or taken to Babylon. God's purpose for the destruction was to remove the center of reference for government and religion of the Jewish people. Nebuchadnezzar's purpose was to complete the conquest of a nation. And in order to do this, he had to destroy the nation's capital. If Israel had followed

God's original instructions for the social structure of Israel there would have been no king to carry into captivity, no temple to destroy, and no capital to tear down. They would have remained an agricultural nation that God would have protected from invading raiding parties of the nations around them.

25:18-21 (Jr 52:24-30) During the destruction of Jerusalem, Nebuchadnezzar gave special instructions concerning the treatment of Jeremiah, probably because Jeremiah had prophesied that Babylon would conquer the city (See Jr 39:11-18). ***The king of Babylon struck them:*** He killed those who had encouraged rebellion against Babylon. Among these were the chief priest and the local officials. There were also in this group possibly provincial leaders who would not accept the prophecy of Jeremiah that Jerusalem would fall. Before the coming of the Babylonians to Judah, they had persecuted Jeremiah for making statements of conquest. Their rejection of the message of Jeremiah revealed that they were loyal to Zedekiah and his rebellion. They thus fought against the will of God that the city be destroyed. These and others were taken into exile to Babylon (Jr 52:29). If they would have listened to Jeremiah they could have fled the city and gone back to the farms. But at this time in the history of Israel, the people were not interested in listening to the man of God. Their fate was sealed by their own rebellion against God. What happens in the religious behavior of nations that are doomed for destruction is that they give up on God, and thus God gives

them over to the demise of their own making.

25:22-26 (Jr 40:1-12) Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the city of Jerusalem. Lachish, Debir and Bethshemesh had already been destroyed in previous campaigns. Possibly other minor cities had also been destroyed. However, the rural areas were spared, and the people left to continue farming the land. Gedaliah was appointed as governor, thus making Palestine a province of the Babylonian Empire. Gedaliah was favored by Nebuchadnezzar, possibly because his father had taken measures to spare Jeremiah when his life was threatened by those who were rebellious in Judah before the coming of the Babylonians (See Jr 38:24). ***Ishmael:*** Gedaliah sought to serve the king of Babylon, but a group of defiant insurrectionists were suspicious of his leadership. He, and others who were aligned with him, were subsequently murdered. The murderers then fled to Egypt, believing that Nebuchadnezzar would again come and take vengeance of those who killed his governor (Jr 43:5-7). It is possible that Nebuchadnezzar did come again in 582 B.C., taking again more captives to Babylon (See Jr 52:30). Ishmael was of the Davidic line of kings (Jr 41:1). He possibly assassinated Gedaliah in order to establish the Davidic line of kings. A bulla (a day seal clay impression) has been discovered on which it is stated, "Belonging to Ishmael the king's son." The style of the script of this bulla is from the late 7th or early 6th century B.C. It is possible that this bulla was written by Ishmael. An-

other bulla has been discovered what states, "Belonging to Elishama the king's son." This person may have been Ishmael's grandfather (See 2 Kg 25:25).

25:27-30 (Jr 52:31-34) Jehoiachin:

After about thirty-seven years in prison, Evil-merodach (Amel-Marduk) released Jehoiachin from prison. He was given consideration for being the king of Judah, and thus honored in Babylon as such. For this reason, Ezekiel focused his prophecies on the reign of Jehoiachin and not Zedekiah. Zedekiah was not considered a king of Judah simply because he was set up as king by a foreign power. ***A daily ration for every day:*** One of the exciting discoveries made by archaeologists was the discovery Babylonian ration receipts by the Ishtar Gate in Babylon. These receipts mention Jehoiachin (See *Encyclopedic Study Guide, Archaeology and the Bible*, F, Jehoiachin's food rations).

With the destruction of Jerusalem a chapter was concluded in the history of Israel, and new one opened. God had allowed them to follow a personality as their leader on earth from the days of Saul, their first king. With the Babylo-

nian captivity came the termination of kings, and the beginning of their trust in God through what was written in the law, history and the prophets. Malachi concluded the writings of the prophets, and the Kings and Chronicles were records of their digression into apostasy. From the time of the first captivities returned in 536 B.C., Israel had to depend on their lessons from history that were written in the Kings and Chronicles, and moral direction from the law and the prophets. God intended that they be preserved as a nation until the coming of the Messiah by following the written word. Since the church would be directed by the written word of God throughout the centuries, God prepared the Jews to be word directed. They would be so directed until the coming of the Messiah. From the first century on, God's people would continue to be word directed. For almost two thousand years the church has existed because men have trusted the message of the New Testament. God proved that Israel could continue by trusting in the written word. The existence of the church today proves the same.