

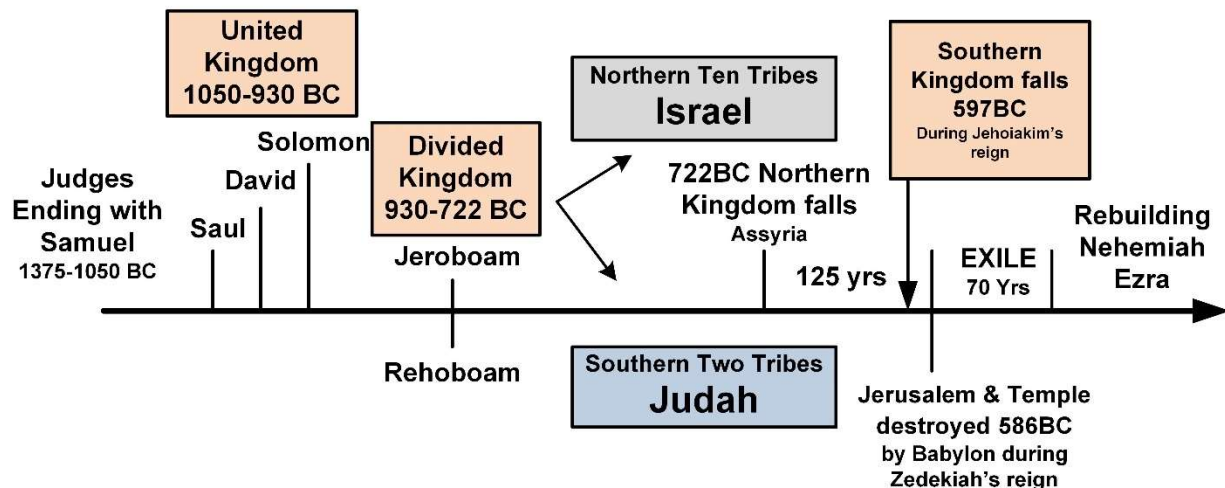
2 Kings 18-25

Kings to exile—Judah

Introduction

This section of **2 Kings** takes us from the tragic **fall** and **exile** of the **Northern Kingdom of Israel** in **722 BC**, to the **fall** and **exile** of the **Southern Kingdom of Judah** in **586 BC**. Therefore, this section **focuses** on **Judah** and its **kings**, in the **decline** of the **Southern** two tribes of Benjamin and Judah. This of course will mark the **end** of the **era** of **monarchs** in **Israel** and **Judah**, who until this day have not had a man to sit **enthroned** as the **nations** earthly king. This of course is one main **reason** why at the **time of Christ** the **nation** was so eager for the **Messiah** to come and take the **throne** over the **nations**. The below **timeline** depicts the **125-year** age **after Israel** had **fallen** to **Assyria** and **Judah** declines and **falls** to **Babylon**.

Israel-Judah History Timeline



Last week the story ended with the **tragic fall** of **Israel** to **Assyria**, and the subsequent **diaspora** of the **Northern ten tribes**.

2 Kings 17:6 - 6 In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and **carried Israel away into exile to Assyria, and settled them in Halah and Habor, on the river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes.** NASU

If you have ever wondered what became of the **Northern ten tribes**, see here they were **largely** carried away into **exile** into the **land** of the **Medes** and **Persians**, and rarely heard from again. There was a small **remnant** from many of the **tribes** which had remained in the **company** of the **Southern Kingdom of Judah**, and this accounts for the remnant of **some** of the **Northern ten tribes** that survived the

exile of **Judah** into **Babylon**, and were thus living in the land during the **time** of **Ezra** and **Nehemiah**, even until the **time of Christ**. Now this exile and diaspora of the Northern Kingdom of Israel came about because of their **great apostacy**, despite the **great patience** of **God**, and His constant **warning** by the **mouths** of His **prophets** for them to return to the Lord.

2 Kings 17:16-18 - 16 **They forsook all the commandments of the Lord their God** and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. **17 Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking Him.** NASU

Sadly, this same **scene** will be **repeated** in **Judah** over the next **century**, and **Judah** will also go into **exile** in **Babylon**. Although there are some **righteous kings** in **Judah** during this time, yet the trend is **downward** into **idolatry** and **wickedness** ending in **apostacy**. But the bright light of **two** of **Judah's** most **faithful kings** (**Hezekiah** and **Josiah**), is contained in our text, beginning with **Hezekiah**.

Hezekiah 18:1-20:21

Hezekiah is a **remarkable king** in **Judah** because he is very **zealous** for the **worship** of the **Lord**, and brings about many **reforms** to the nation, which are unprecedented since the time of David. He receives **high praise** indeed here by the **inspiration** of the **Holy Spirit**. Of Hezekiah it is said, "**he trusted the Lord, ... he clung to the Lord following Him,**" and "**after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.**"

2 Kings 18:1-6 - 1 Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. **4 He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan.** 5 **He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him.** 6 **For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.** 7 **And the Lord was with him; wherever he went he**

prospered. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him.
NASU

Not only was **Hezekiah zealous** to **follow** the **Lord** and His commandments, but is seen **bringing reforms** to the **wicked state** of the **nation** by **removing** the **high places**, **breaking** down the **sacred pillars**, **cutting** down the **Asherah**. These are significant accomplishments as **none** of the **Judean kings** before him had achieved this level of **religious reform**. Notice he also **broke in pieces** the **bronze serpent** named Nehushtan, which **Moses** had **made** in the wilderness (Num 21:4-9) and which had recently itself **become** an **object of worship**. This is a refreshing and **wonderful report** for **God** and His **people** in **Judah**. The Lord will show Himself **strong** for **His people** in these days, and **deliver them** from their enemies in profound ways. During **Hezekiah's reign**, since he had **rebelled** against the king of **Assyria** and would not **serve him** as a **vassal king**, Sennacherib the king of Assyria came with a vast army and invaded Judah and seized its fortified cities.

2 Kings 18:13 - 13 Now in the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, **Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them**. NASU

The **chiefs** of the **army** of **Assyria** come up to **Jerusalem** and **mock it** and Hezekiah from below the wall with great **swelling words** of arrogance.

2 Kings 18:28-35 - 28 Then Rabshakeh stood and cried with a loud voice in Judean, saying, "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria. 29 "Thus says the king, **'Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he will not be able to deliver you from my hand; 30 nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, "The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."** 31 'Do not listen to Hezekiah, for thus says the king of Assyria, "Make your peace with me and come out to me, and eat each of his vine and each of his fig tree and drink each of the waters of his own cistern, 32 until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey, that you may live and not die." **But do not listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you, saying, "The Lord will deliver us."** 33 'Has any one of the gods of the nations delivered his land from the hand of the king of Assyria? 34 'Where are the gods of Hamath and Arpad? Where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena and Ivvah? Have they delivered Samaria from my hand? 35 'Who among all the gods of the lands have delivered their land from my hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem from my hand?'" NASU

But **Hezekiah** is a man of faith, and even in the face of a vast invading army, he will seek the Lord for deliverance.

2 Kings 19:1-7 - 19 And when **King Hezekiah heard it, he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth and entered the house of the Lord.** 2 Then he sent Eliakim who was over the household with Shebna the scribe and the elders of the priests, covered with sackcloth, to Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz. 3 They said to him, "Thus says Hezekiah, 'This day is a day of distress, rebuke, and rejection; for children have come to birth and there is no strength to deliver. 4 'Perhaps the Lord your God will hear all the words of Rabshakeh, whom his master the king of Assyria has sent to reproach the living God, and will rebuke the words which the Lord your God has heard. Therefore, offer a prayer for the remnant that is left.'" **5 So the servants of King Hezekiah came to Isaiah. 6 Isaiah said to them, "Thus you shall say to your master, 'Thus says the Lord, "Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have blasphemed Me. 7 "Behold, I will put a spirit in him so that he will hear a rumor and return to his own land. And I will make him fall by the sword in his own land."**"" NASU

Sennacherib sends yet another message to Hezekiah, this time mocking the Lord.

2 Kings 19:10-12 - 10 "Thus you shall say to Hezekiah king of Judah, '**Do not let your God in whom you trust deceive you saying, "Jerusalem will not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria."** 11 'Behold, you have heard what the kings of Assyria have done to all the lands, destroying them completely. So will you be spared?

Hezekiah upon **hearing** this **taunt** from the **Assyrian king** again seeks the **face** of the **Lord**.

2 Kings 19:14-19 - 14 Then **Hezekiah took the letter from the hand of the messengers and read it, and he went up to the house of the Lord and spread it out before the Lord.** 15 Hezekiah prayed before the Lord and said, "O Lord, the God of Israel, who are enthroned above the cherubim, **You are the God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth.** 16 "Incline Your ear, O Lord, and hear; open Your eyes, O Lord, and see; and listen to the words of Sennacherib, which he has sent to reproach the living God. 17 "Truly, O Lord, the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands 18 and have cast their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but the work of men's hands, wood and stone. So they have destroyed them. **19 "Now, O Lord our God, I pray, deliver us from his hand that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You alone, O Lord, are God."** NASU

God gives an **amazing answer** through Isaiah who speaks a prophetic word against the Assyrian king. In Isaiah's amazing prophecy, God announced His own meticulous providence over Assyria's success announcing that He had decreed it from long ago. Then He **turns** upon their **mocking** and **explains** that they will not even **shoot an arrow in Jerusalem**, but rather God shall send them packing back to their own land.

2 Kings 19:20-33 - 20 Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah saying, **"Thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, 'Because you have prayed to Me about Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard you.'** 21 "This is the word that the Lord has spoken against him: 'She has despised you and mocked you, The virgin daughter of Zion; She has shaken her head behind you, The daughter of Jerusalem! **22 'Whom have you reproached and blasphemed? And against whom have you raised your voice, And haughtily lifted up your eyes? Against the Holy One of Israel!** 23 'Through your messengers you have reproached the Lord, And you have said, "With my many chariots came up to the heights of the mountains, To the remotest parts of Lebanon; And I cut down its tall cedars and its choice cypresses. And I entered its farthest lodging place, its thickest forest. 24 "I dug wells and drank foreign waters, And with the sole of my feet I dried up All the rivers of Egypt." **25 'Have you not heard? Long ago I did it; From ancient times I planned it. Now I have brought it to pass, That you should turn fortified cities into ruinous heaps. 26 'Therefore their inhabitants were short of strength, They were dismayed and put to shame; They were as the vegetation of the field and as the green herb, As grass on the housetops is scorched before it is grown up. 27 'But I know your sitting down, And your going out and your coming in, And your raging against Me. 28 'Because of your raging against Me, And because your arrogance has come up to My ears, Therefore I will put My hook in your nose, And My bridle in your lips, And I will turn you back by the way which you came.... 32 'Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, "He will not come to this city or shoot an arrow there; and he will not come before it with a shield or throw up a siege ramp against it. 33 "By the way that he came, by the same he will return, and he shall not come to this city," declares the Lord. 34 'For I will defend this city to save it for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.'"**

Now what is **recorded next** is an **astonishing** and **miraculous deliverance** from God that is **mind blowing** indeed! In **fulfilment** of **Isaiah's prophecy**, the king of **Assyria** is given **good reason to go home**. And when he does, **Isaiah's earlier prophecy** about his **death** in **19:7**, also comes to **pass**.

2 Kings 19:35-37 - 35 Then it happened that night that the angel of the Lord went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians; and when men rose early in the morning, behold, all of them were dead. **36** So Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and returned home, and lived at Nineveh. **37** It came about as he was worshiping in the house of Nisroch his god, **that Adrammelech and Sharezer killed him with the sword**; and they escaped into the land of Ararat. And Esarhaddon his son became king in his place. NASU As is recorded in **2 Chronicles 32**, God was with **Hezekiah** and **prospered him**, and the people were **happy** and **blessed under** his rule because of His faithfulness to God.

2 Chronicles 32:20-23 - 20 But King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, the son of Amoz, prayed about this and cried out to heaven. **21** And the Lord sent an angel who destroyed every mighty warrior, commander and officer in the camp of the king of Assyria. So he returned in shame to his own land. And when he had entered the temple of his god, some of his own children killed him there with the sword. **22** So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib the king of Assyria and from the hand of all others, and guided them on every side. **23** And many were bringing gifts to the Lord at Jerusalem and choice presents to Hezekiah king of Judah, so that he was exalted in the sight of all nations thereafter. NASU See how **Hezekiah followed the Lord**, and **clung to Him**, and **sought His help** in times of need. Hezekiah was a **man of faith** that **sought to exalt God** is the **eyes** of His people and **remove the wickedness** and **idolatry** from among **the land**. See an example here that even though **family generations** may have **declined** and **forsaken the Lord**, yet when **one turns to the Lord** and **seeks His face** and **obeys His commandments**, God shows **Himself faithful** and **returns with blessing** for those who **fear Him** and **walk in His ways**.

What is recorded next, actually happened some **12 years earlier**, before the **Assyrian invasion of Judah**, as verse 6 indicates.

2 Kings 20:1-7 - 1 In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, "Thus says the Lord, 'Set your house in order, for you shall die and not live.'" **2** Then he turned his face to the wall and prayed to the Lord, saying, **3** "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech You, how I have walked before You in truth and with a whole heart and have done what is good in Your sight." And Hezekiah wept bitterly. **4** Before Isaiah had gone out of the middle court, the word of the Lord came to

him, saying, 5 "Return and say to Hezekiah the leader of My people, 'Thus says the Lord, the God of your father David, "**I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will heal you.**" On the third day you shall go up to the house of the Lord. 6 "**I will add fifteen years to your life, and I will deliver you and this city from the hand of the king of Assyria; and I will defend this city for My own sake and for My servant David's sake.**" 7 Then Isaiah said, "**Take a cake of figs.**" And they took and laid it on the boil, and he recovered. NASU

Another remarkable event is when Hezekiah asks Isaiah for a sign that the Lord will heal him. In response Isaiah allows Hezekiah to determine a supernatural sign of the sun going up or down on the steps. Hezekiah picks and it happens. No explanation is given here except that clearly supernatural ability of Isaiah to prophesy, and far greater still, God turning back the hand of time.

2 Kings 20:8-11 - 8 Now Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "**What will be the sign that the Lord will heal me,**" and that I shall go up to the house of the Lord the third day?" 9 Isaiah said, "**This shall be the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do the thing that He has spoken: shall the shadow go forward ten steps or go back ten steps?**" 10 So Hezekiah answered, "It is easy for the shadow to decline ten steps; no, but let the shadow turn backward ten steps." 11 Isaiah the prophet cried to the Lord, and He brought the shadow on the stairway back ten steps by which it had gone down on the stairway of Ahaz. NASU

Although Hezekiah was a faithful worshipper of the Lord and a righteous king in Judah, he is not perfect. This can be seen in his attitude and posture with the surrounding nations, and his attitude concerning the future of Israel. Obviously proud of his wealth and success, he makes an unwise blunder when visited by the king of Babylon.

2 Kings 20:8-11 - 12 At that time Berodach-baladan a son of Baladan, king of Babylon, sent letters and a present to Hezekiah, for he heard that Hezekiah had been sick. 13 Hezekiah listened to them, and showed them all his treasure house, the silver and the gold and the spices and the precious oil and the house of his armor and all that was found in his treasuries. There was nothing in his house nor in all his dominion that Hezekiah did not show them.

14 Then Isaiah the prophet came to King Hezekiah and said to him, "What did these men say, and from where have they come to you?" And Hezekiah said, "They have come from a far country, from Babylon." 15 He said, "What have they seen in your house?" So Hezekiah answered, "They have seen all that is in my house; there is nothing among my treasuries that I have not shown them."

16 Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, "Hear the word of the Lord. 17 'Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and all that your fathers have laid up in store to this day will be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,' says the Lord. 18 'Some of your sons who shall issue from you, whom you will beget, will be taken away; and they will become officials in the palace of the king of Babylon.'" 19 Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the Lord which you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Is it not so, if there will be peace and truth in my days?" NASU

Here notice how apathetic he is to the future prosperity of the nation being concerned only with the time of his day. Here again is yet another reminder that even the most righteous of earthly kings leaves us looking forward and longing for the only truly righteous and holy Divine King to come, Jesus Christ.

2 Kings 20:8-11 - 20 Now the rest of the acts of Hezekiah and all his might, and how he made the pool and the conduit and brought water into the city, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 21 So Hezekiah slept with his fathers, and Manasseh his son became king in his place. In preparation for the Assyrian attack, Hezekiah had an additional tunnel cut that diverted water from the Gihon Spring directly underground to the Pool of Siloam.

Manasseh and Amon 21:1-26

The son of Hezekiah, Manasseh is nothing like his father, but is indeed the most wicked and evil of all the Judean kings. Just the opening narrative of his reign is vile and repulsive enough to give us a vision of his apostasy.

2 Kings 21:1-9 - 1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hephzibah. 2 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord dispossessed before the sons of Israel. 3 For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; and he erected altars for Baal and made an Asherah, as Ahab king of Israel had done, and worshiped all the host of heaven and served them. 4 He built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "In Jerusalem I will put My name." 5 For he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. 6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord provoking Him to anger. 7 Then he set the carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the Lord said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this house and in Jerusalem, which

I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever. 8 "And I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers, if only they will observe to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them." **9 But they did not listen, and Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel.** NASU

Not only did he reverse all his father's reforms, but he even built altars to the host of heaven and an Asherah right inside the court of the Temple in Jerusalem. He even burned his own children and sought the witches and mediums.... "6 He made his son pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and used divination, and dealt with mediums and spiritists. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord provoking Him to anger." Surely this will be the beginning of the end for Judah for if the Lord previously drove out before the people of Israel the nations that did these things, what will happen now to Judah? So profane was this reign of Manasseh, he caused the sons of Israel to do more evil than even the Canaanites whom God had driven out before them. Notice verse 9, "Manasseh seduced them to do evil more than the nations whom the Lord destroyed before the sons of Israel."

2 Kings 21:10-15 - 10 Now the Lord spoke through His servants the prophets, saying, **11 "Because Manasseh king of Judah has done these abominations, having done wickedly more than all the Amorites did who were before him, and has also made Judah sin with his idols;** 12 therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel, **'Behold, I am bringing such calamity on Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle.** 13 'I will stretch over Jerusalem the line of Samaria and the plummet of the house of Ahab, and I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down. **14 'I will abandon the remnant of My inheritance and deliver them into the hand of their enemies, and they will become as plunder and spoil to all their enemies;** 15 because they have done evil in My sight, and have been provoking Me to anger since the day their fathers came from Egypt, even to this day.'" NASB

Another evil that was attributed to Manasseh was the shedding of innocent blood. The Bible does not expound on this, but a Jewish tradition holds him responsible for killing the prophet Isaiah by sawing him in two.

2 Kings 21:16-18 - 16 Moreover, **Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin with**

which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord. 17 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh and all that he did and his sin which he committed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 18 And Manasseh slept with his fathers and was buried in the garden of his own house, in the garden of Uzza, and Amon his son became king in his place.

What is **absolutely amazing**, and **displays the mercy of God beyond our ability to grasp** is what the **Chronicles** records **concerning Manasseh**.

2 Chronicles 33:10-20 - 10 The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. 11 Therefore the Lord brought the commanders of the army of the king of Assyria against them, and **they captured Manasseh with hooks, bound him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon.** 12 **When he was in distress, he entreated the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers.** 13 **When he prayed to Him, He was moved by his entreaty and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God.** 14 Now after this he built the outer wall of the city of David on the west side of Gihon, in the valley, even to the entrance of the Fish Gate; and he encircled the Ophel with it and made it very high. Then he put army commanders in all the fortified cities of Judah. **15 He also removed the foreign gods and the idol from the house of the Lord, as well as all the altars which he had built on the mountain of the house of the Lord and in Jerusalem, and he threw them outside the city.** 16 **He set up the altar of the Lord and sacrificed peace offerings and thank offerings on it; and he ordered Judah to serve the Lord God of Israel.** 17 Nevertheless the people still sacrificed in the high places, although only to the Lord their God. 18 Now the rest of the acts of Manasseh even his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the Lord God of Israel, behold, they are among the records of the kings of Israel. 19 His prayer also and how God was entreated by him, and all his sin, his unfaithfulness, and the sites on which he built high places and erected the Asherim and the carved images, before he humbled himself, behold, they are written in the records of the Hozai. 20 So Manasseh slept with his fathers, and they buried him in his own house. And Amon his son became king in his place.

NASU

Let us learn here, that **no one**, even the **chief of sinners** is **beyond** the great **mercy** and **grace** of our **God**. Behold the grace of God in forgiving Manasseh! And even

though **one man comes** to the **Lord** in **repentance**, and **serves Him** and **follows Him**, yet **his children** may be as **wicked** as the **devils**. So is the case with Amon.

2 Kings 21:19-26 - 19 Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Meshullemeth the daughter of Haruz of Jotbah. **20 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, as Manasseh his father had done. 21 For he walked in all the way that his father had walked, and served the idols that his father had served and worshiped them. 22 So he forsook the Lord, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord. 23 The servants of Amon conspired against him and killed the king in his own house.** 24 Then the people of the land killed all those who had conspired against King Amon, and the people of the land made Josiah his son king in his place. 25 Now the rest of the acts of Amon which he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 26 He was buried in his grave in the garden of Uzza, and Josiah his son became king in his place. NASU

The record of **Amon's life** is **short**, and so is the **name** of the **wicked**, whose **memory fades** into the **dust** as quickly as it appeared.

Josiah 22:1-23:30

Now another **righteous king** arises in **Judah**, and **Josiah** is one of the **most zealous** and **righteous kings** to ever **rule** in **Judah**. Some would argue that Josiah is more **faithful** than even **David** or **Hezekiah**, based on **2 Kings 23:21-25**. **Josiah's story begins** by telling how the "**book of the Law**" was found in the "**house of the Lord.**"

2 Kings 22:8-13 - 8 Then Hilkiyah the high priest said to Shaphan the scribe, "**I have found the book of the law in the house of the Lord.**" And Hilkiyah gave the book to Shaphan who read it. 9 Shaphan the scribe came to the king and brought back word to the king and said, "Your servants have emptied out the money that was found in the house, and have delivered it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the Lord." 10 Moreover, Shaphan the scribe told the king saying, "Hilkiyah the priest has given me a book." **And Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. 11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes. 12 Then the king commanded Hilkiyah the priest, Ahikam the son of Shaphan, Achbor the son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns**

against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us." NASU

Remarkable indeed must the **words** of the **"book of the Law"** been to **Josiah** when he **heard** them. No doubt he may not have **even known** there was a **"book of the Law,"** which most likely is a **copy** of the **Book of Deuteronomy,** since the phrase **"Book of the Law"** is used in the **Pentateuch** only in reference to **Deuteronomy.** The idea that Hilkiah the Priest **"found"** the book **implies** that it was previously **lost** or **unknown.** But upon hearing its words notice verse **"11 When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his clothes."** Josiah is greatly moved by the words of the book and immediately wants to know what **God thinks** so he says, **"13 "Go, inquire of the Lord for me and the people and all Judah concerning the words of this book that has been found, for great is the wrath of the Lord that burns against us, because our fathers have not listened to the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."** So the royal officials seek out a prophetess of the Lord, Huldah.

2 Kings 22:14-20 - 14 So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, the son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in Jerusalem in the Second Quarter); and they spoke to her. 15 She said to them, "Thus says the Lord God of Israel, 'Tell the man who sent you to me, **16 thus says the Lord, "Behold, I bring evil on this place and on its inhabitants, even all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. 17 "Because they have forsaken Me and have burned incense to other gods that they might provoke Me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore My wrath burns against this place, and it shall not be quenched."** 18 "But to the king of Judah who sent you to inquire of the Lord thus shall you say to him, 'Thus says the Lord God of Israel, "Regarding the words which you have heard, 19 because your heart was tender and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before Me, I truly have heard you," declares the Lord. 20 "Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes will not see all the evil which I will bring on this place.'"**"** So they brought back word to the king. NASU

One great **enemy** and **blight** on any **human culture** and its **flourishing** is a lack of **knowledge** of **God** and His **Word.** Hosea said, *"my people perish for lack of knowledge,"* (Hosea 4:6), and Isaiah, *"My people go into exile for their lack of*

knowledge,” (Isa 5:13). For years Israel had languished with no understanding of God and His righteous requirements for His people to flourish and be blessed under His rule. Therefore, they languish in sin and shame, destroying and being destroyed by their mindless idolatry, plunging deeper and further into judgment and bringing down the curses of God upon the land. But when Josiah finds the Book of the Law and is suddenly enlightened into the knowledge and fear of God, He can quickly amend the ways of his people and bring them back into the favor of the merciful and gracious God. Tragically, Judah had for way too long been sinking into judgment and alienating themselves from God, provoking Him to anger by their idolatries and wickedness. Although in Josiah’s day there will be blessing, it won’t last and the nation will be brought to ruin and exile. But now as Josiah has heard the words of God, his heart is moved within him and he quickly wants the people of Judah to hear the words of the Bible!

2 Kings 23:1-3 - 3 Then the king sent, and they gathered to him all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem. 2 The king went up to the house of the Lord and all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem with him, and the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great; and he read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant which was found in the house of the Lord. 3 The king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the Lord, to walk after the Lord, and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people entered into the covenant. NASU

Josiah then begins sweeping reforms greater than even his great grandfather Hezekiah.

2 Kings 23:4-9 - 4 Then the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the doorkeepers, to bring out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven; and he burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron, and carried their ashes to Bethel. 5 He did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven. 6 He brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron, and ground it to dust, and threw its dust on the graves of the common people. 7 He also broke down the houses of the

male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah. 8 Then he brought all the priests from the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had burned incense, from Geba to Beersheba; and he broke down the high places of the gates which were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the city gate. 9 Nevertheless the priests of the high places did not go up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers. NASU

Reading through this narrative one can see how deeply the Israelites have descended into shameless idolatry, immorality, and debauchery, which has provoked God to bring His own people into judgment, destruction, and exile. The rampant wickedness that these false Gods bring embeds itself in every part of the culture. And Josiah is determined to uproot and destroy every single representation of it.

2 Kings 23:10-14 - 10 He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech. 11 He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had given to the sun, at the entrance of the house of the Lord, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which was in the precincts; and he burned the chariots of the sun with fire. 12 The altars which were on the roof, the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars which Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the Lord, the king broke down; and he smashed them there and threw their dust into the brook Kidron. 13 The high places which were before Jerusalem, which were on the right of the mount of destruction which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. 14 He broke in pieces the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with human bones. 15 Furthermore, the altar that was at Bethel and the high place which Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin, had made, even that altar and the high place he broke down. Then he demolished its stones, ground them to dust, and burned the Asherah. NASU

Josiah turns to the north, where Israel had defied God and poisoned the land with its idolatries. There as he destroys the altar at Bethel, he learns that this is in fulfilment of a prophecy spoken about him some 300 years earlier.

1 Kings 13:1-3 - 13 Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the Lord, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense. 2 He cried against the altar by the word of the Lord, and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the Lord, 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'"

So zealous is this king of Judah he even seeks to cleanse the land of the northern kingdom. He is determined to annihilate all forms of cultic and idolatrous religious practice, even killing the priests and sacrificing them upon the altars of their gods.

2 Kings 23:15-20 - 16 Now when Josiah turned, he saw the graves that were there on the mountain, and he sent and took the bones from the graves and burned them on the altar and defiled it according to the word of the Lord which the man of God proclaimed, who proclaimed these things. 17 Then he said, "What is this monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed these things which you have done against the altar of Bethel." 18 He said, "Let him alone; let no one disturb his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria. 19 Josiah also removed all the houses of the high places which were in the cities of Samaria, which the kings of Israel had made provoking the Lord; and he did to them just as he had done in Bethel. 20 All the priests of the high places who were there he slaughtered on the altars and burned human bones on them; then he returned to Jerusalem.

All of these remarkable reforms were undertaken by Josiah when he discovered God's Word in the Book of the Law. Zealous for obedience to God, the Holy Spirit has recorded all of these great exploits of religious faithfulness on his part, and thus he goes down in biblical history as the most faithful and zealous king in the history of Judah and Israel.

2 Kings 23:21-25 - 21 Then the king commanded all the people saying, "Celebrate the Passover to the Lord your God as it is written in this book of the covenant." 22 Surely such a Passover had not been celebrated from the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and of the kings of Judah. 23 But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, this Passover was observed to the Lord in Jerusalem. 24 Moreover, Josiah removed the mediums and the spiritists and the teraphim and the idols and all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he

might confirm the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. 25 **Before him there was no king like him who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the law of Moses; nor did any like him arise after him.** NASU

We see in **Josiah** what **true zeal** for the **Lord looks like**, and he gives us a bright **shining example** of **religious leadership** for us to follow. May God give us **worshippers** like him who **live their life seeking to please God** above all. As Huldah had **prophesied**, and even after all of **Josiah's reforms**, Judah remained under God's judgment. Here are some of the **most tragic words** in all the **Bible**.

2 Kings 23:26-27 - 26 However, **the Lord did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him.** 27 The Lord said, **"I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, 'My name shall be there.'"**

Now the **death** of **Josiah** is **recorded**.

2 Kings 23:28-30 - 28 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah? 29 **In his days Pharaoh Neco king of Egypt went up to the king of Assyria to the river Euphrates. And King Josiah went to meet him, and when Pharaoh Neco saw him he killed him at Megiddo.** 30 **His servants drove his body in a chariot from Megiddo, and brought him to Jerusalem and buried him in his own tomb.** Then the people of the land took **Jehoahaz** the son of Josiah and anointed him and made him king in place of his father.

The End of Judah 23:31-25:30

In the death of Josiah, Judah is now brought under Egyptian rule, and Jehoahaz is deposed and sent to prison by Pharaoh.

2 Kings 23:31-33 - 31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he **reigned three months in Jerusalem**; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 **He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done.** 33 **Pharaoh Neco imprisoned him at Riblah in the land of Hamath, that he might not reign in Jerusalem;** and he imposed on the land a fine of one hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold.

Pharaoh replaces **Jehoahaz** with his brother **Jehoiakim**. Even with such a **righteous father as Josiah**, his sons did **not learn to walk in the ways of the Lord**.

2 Kings 23:34-37 - 34 Pharaoh Neco made **Eliakim the son of Josiah king in the place of Josiah his father, and changed his name to Jehoiakim**. But he took Jehoahaz away and brought him to Egypt, and he died there. 35 So Jehoiakim gave the silver and gold to Pharaoh, but he taxed the land in order to give the money at the command of Pharaoh. He exacted the silver and gold from the people of the land, each according to his valuation, to give it to Pharaoh Neco. **36 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem**; and his mother's name was Zebidah the daughter of Pedaiah of Rumah. **37 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done**. NASU

Jehoiakim is left in the middle of a **great struggle for power** between **Egypt and Babylon**. **God's sovereignty** is a **constant theme** through these **narratives**, and **everything is happening in fulfilment of the Word of the Lord**.

2 Kings 24:1-4 - 1 **In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years; then he turned and rebelled against him. 2 The Lord sent against him bands of Chaldeans, bands of Arameans, bands of Moabites, and bands of Ammonites. So He sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the Lord which He had spoken through His servants the prophets. 3 Surely at the command of the Lord it came upon Judah, to remove them from His sight because of the sins of Manasseh**, according to all that he had done, 4 and also for the innocent blood which he shed, for he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood; and the Lord would not forgive. 5 Now the rest of the acts of Jehoiakim and all that he did, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?

Yet **another son** doing **evil** according to **all his father had done** when **Jehoiachin** reigns. In spite of this his **life ends** remarkably **well**, **2 Kings 25:27-29**.

2 Kings 24:6-9 - 6 So Jehoiakim slept with his fathers, and Jehoiachin his son became king in his place. 7 The king of Egypt did not come out of his land again, for the king of Babylon had taken all that belonged to the king of Egypt from the brook of Egypt to the river Euphrates. 8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and **he reigned three months in Jerusalem**; and his mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. 9 **He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father had done**.

Now under the **reign of Jehoiachin, Jerusalem falls** without much of a **battle**.

2 Kings 24:10-16 - 10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon went up to Jerusalem, and the city came under siege. 11 And Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon came to the city, while his servants were besieging it. 12 Jehoiachin the king of Judah went out to the king of Babylon, he and his mother and his servants and his captains and his officials. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign. 13 He carried out from there all the treasures of the house of the Lord, and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the vessels of gold which Solomon king of Israel had made in the temple of the Lord, just as the Lord had said. 14 Then he led away into exile all Jerusalem and all the captains and all the mighty men of valor, ten thousand captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained except the poorest people of the land. 15 So he led Jehoiachin away into exile to Babylon; also the king's mother and the king's wives and his officials and the leading men of the land, he led away into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. 16 All the men of valor, seven thousand, and the craftsmen and the smiths, one thousand, all strong and fit for war, and these **the king of Babylon brought into exile to Babylon**. NASU

Zedekiah is made king by Nebuchadnezzar, and lives under his rule as a vassal king.

2 Kings 24:17-19 - 17 Then the king of Babylon made his uncle Mattaniah king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah. 18 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem; and his mother's name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 19 He did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that Jehoiakim had done.

Its not long before **Zedekiah** has provoked the **King of Babylon** to anger and he rebels against him and Nebuchadnezzar besieges Jerusalem again. Zedekiah meets a tragic end.

2 Kings 24:20-25:7 - 20 For through the anger of the Lord this came about in Jerusalem and Judah until He cast them out from His presence. And Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. 25 Now in the ninth year of his reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came, he and all his army, against Jerusalem, camped against it and built a siege wall all around it. 2 So the city was under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 4 Then the city was broken into, and all the men of war fled by night by way of the gate between the two walls beside the king's garden, though the Chaldeans were all

around the city. And they went by way of the Arabah. **5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho and all his army was scattered from him. 6 Then they captured the king and brought him to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and he passed sentence on him. 7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, then put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him with bronze fetters and brought him to Babylon.**

Nebuchadnezzar is furious and burns and plunders the city, destroys the Temple, and more Israelites are taken away captive into Babylon.

2 Kings 25:8-17 - 8 Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. **9 He burned the house of the Lord, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every great house he burned with fire. 10 So all the army of the Chaldeans who were with the captain of the guard broke down the walls around Jerusalem. 11 Then the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of Babylon and the rest of the people, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried away into exile. 12** But the captain of the guard left some of the poorest of the land to be vinedressers and plowmen. **13 Now the bronze pillars which were in the house of the Lord, and the stands and the bronze sea which were in the house of the Lord, the Chaldeans broke in pieces and carried the bronze to Babylon. 14 They took away the pots, the shovels, the snuffers, the spoons, and all the bronze vessels which were used in temple service. 15 The captain of the guard also took away the firepans and the basins, what was fine gold and what was fine silver. 16** The two pillars, the one sea, and the stands which Solomon had made for the house of the Lord — the bronze of all these vessels was beyond weight. 17 The height of the one pillar was eighteen cubits, and a bronze capital was on it; the height of the capital was three cubits, with a network and pomegranates on the capital all around, all of bronze. And the second pillar was like these with network.

See here **Isaiah's prophecy to Hezekiah** is fulfilled and the **Babylonians** carry away all the **treasures** of the **house of the Lord**. More, as a result of **Zedekiah's rebellion**, the **leaders** of the city are **held responsible** and **killed**.

2 Kings 25:18-21 - 18 Then the captain of the guard took **Seraiah the chief priest and Zephaniah the second priest, with the three officers of the temple. 19 From the city he took one official who was overseer of the men of war, and five of the king's advisers who were found in the city; and the scribe of**

the captain of the army who mustered the people of the land; and sixty men of the people of the land who were found in the city. 20 Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard took them and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. 21 Then the king of Babylon struck them down and put them to death at Riblah in the land of Hamath. So Judah was led away into exile from its land.

What's left in the land is quite a **mess**, and no **stable ruler** remains in the land. The **one governor** that is appointed by the King of Babylon, **Gedaliah**, is **murdered**. After this, whatever few Israelites are left, **flee to Egypt** in **fear** of the King of Babylon. The last lines recorded in the **book** of the **Kings** are a **remarkable mercy** from **God** upon the **Judean king Jehoiachin**.

2 Kings 25:27-29 - 27 Now it came about in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, **that Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he became king, released Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison; 28 and he spoke kindly to him and set his throne above the throne of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes and had his meals in the king's presence regularly all the days of his life; 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.** NASU

Looking back on the **history** of the **Israelites** after **God** had **brought them** up from the **land** of **Egypt** and into the **Promised Land**, the **story** has come to a **very tragic junction** indeed. As **Moses** had **warned them** that if when they came **into the land** and they **worshipped** and **served other gods**, that the **curses** and **judgment** of **Yahweh** would surely come down upon them, **so it happened**. The **promise** of a **Messianic King** who would come through **David's line** has obviously not happened, but **every single one** has come up short in bringing the **everlasting Kingdom of God**. This leaves us **longing** for that **good** and **righteous Divine King** who is **yet to come**, and who in **due time**, even after the great **Babylonian Exile** of **Judah**, will **finally come** and **save God's** people from **their sins**. What follows Kings and Chronicles is the **post-exile** books of **Ezra**, **Nehemiah**, and **Esther**.