



LESSONS

FROM THE KINGS

A BIBLE STUDY
ON THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH

PART 4 - TO THE FALL OF JERUSALEM



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KING JOTHAM

Around the first thirteen years of Jotham's reign were during the life of his father. Recall how Jotham's father, King Uzziah, had served the Lord faithfully until he entered the temple to offer sacrifice and became afflicted with leprosy.

He carried out projects successfully such as rebuilding a temple gate, building up the city walls, and building towns and towers throughout Judah. Like his father he enjoyed military success and received great amounts of tribute from his enemies.

“Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the LORD his God.” (2 Chronicles 27:6) Compare his success with what happened with his father, Uzziah. “(Uzziah) did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Amaziah had done. He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the LORD, God gave him success.” (2 Ch 26:4-5)

To read about Jotham: 2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chronicles 27

SERVING THE LORD BRINGS HIS BLESSING.

Examine Exodus 19:3-6 to see the special arrangement given to the people of Israel. God's blessings for those who served him were a reminder of his covenant. We can expect God to bring blessings to those who serve him. However, why must we be careful not to equate our country or our household with the successful kings of Judah?

Jotham followed a godly father. But his father's pride went to his head and caused him great trouble. Consider what impact it made on him seeing his sick father for the first ten years of his reign. What reminders of sin can help curb one generation from repeating the mistakes of their fathers?

Jotham lived as a testimony to the goodness of God. He enjoyed great success in Judah as he served the Lord. This happened during one of the most tumultuous and godless times in the northern kingdom which was about to fall into ruin. You are the salt and light in this world as you follow Christ your King. What contrasts do you see between the lives of believers and unbelievers?

Reexamine what should have motivated the people of Israel to serve their Lord according to Exodus 19:4. What motivates us to serve the Lord?

KING AHAZ

Although he had a godly grandfather and father who enjoyed success, Ahaz turned to idolatry and ended up losing much of what had been gained for Judah.

He faced great military threat from the Arameans, the Israelites, the Edomites, the Philistines, and Assyria. He endured crushing blows of defeat and loss. Despite all this the Lord showed him mercy and gave him opportunities to repent. The prophets Isaiah and Micah were active during his time.

Nonetheless, he stubbornly remained loyal to Baal and imported the gods of Damascus to Judah. He sacrificed his sons in the fire and even defiled the temple.

Read about King Ahaz: 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 7:1 - 8:4

SO CLOSE TO LOSING SO MUCH.

What is the greatest sudden loss you have ever experienced? How would you respond if God suddenly intervened and caused that loss to turn around? Read 2 Chronicles 28:1-15. Describe the loss for the people of Judah. What caused the great turn of events to restore the people?

God sent this loss in order to humble Ahaz who had turned to idolatry. How might God use a sudden loss in someone's life to cause them to realize their spiritual danger?

Things were not going well in Israel during this time. Why do you suppose they might have relished their victory over Judah so much? Why does the world relish it when the Church is guilty and must suffer for it?

People listened to the prophet Obed! It just took a handful of God-fearing leaders to change the situation. Can you describe a time when someone responded rightly to a powerful preaching against their guilt?

What does this account teach us about the heart of God when the guilty suffer because of their sins?

WHO YOU GONNA CALL?

When a child falls and gets hurt, where do they most often run? In contrast, when a gangster gets hurt, where does he turn? Read 2 Chronicles 28:16-27 to see how Ahaz displays just the opposite of childlike faith in his Savior God. List the sources of help he turned to in trouble.

“In his time of trouble King Ahaz became even more unfaithful to the Lord.” (2 Chronicles 28:22) God often sends trouble to cause us to repent or bring us to rely more on him. He did that for Ahaz and the people of Israel. Explain why the opposite results will often occur.

“He offered sacrifices to the gods of Damascus, who had defeated him; for he thought, ‘Since the gods of the kings of Aram have helped them, I will sacrifice to them so they will help me.’” (2 Ch 28:23) What apparent sources of strength in this world can become false idols for us?

Ahaz was left as a vassal of Assyria. Explain different ways that the expression is true, “Everyone who sins is a slave to sin.”(John 8:34)

Read Isaiah 7:3-14 for God’s promise of peace to Ahaz and his people during times of trouble and fear. List all the enemies our King has defeated that we might trust in him forever.

KING HEZEKIAH



Hezekiah was able to recall the kingdom of his grandfather from when he was young. Under Jotham and his father, Uzziah, the kingdom had reached a height of glory unlike any other since the time of David and Solomon. But he witnessed the ruin of it all by his father, Ahaz. Under Ahaz Judah became a vassal to Assyria and the temple doors were closed.

With a determination to restore Judah he instituted a revival unlike any other in the face of some of the greatest challenges. The people responded by destroying all the shrines to idols and with great dedication to the Lord. His revival and invitation to Israel to celebrate the Passover was enthusiastically accepted.

He made two attempts to regain independence from Assyria. The first failed. The second succeeded when the Lord destroyed the army of King Sennacherib which was besieging Jerusalem. During this siege the people of Jerusalem displayed great loyalty. The prophet Isaiah assured them of the Lord's promises.

*note, there is difficulty in the timeline for Hezekiah due to 2 Kings 18. It mentions the fall of Israel as taking place in Hezekiah's sixth year (722). But the siege by Sennacherib is listed as taking place during his 14th year. (702). One of the best solutions is to keep all the historical dates in place but understand that Hezekiah had a coregency with his father. His official full reign begins when his father dies in 715. (Recall that Hezekiah's grandfather, Jotham had a coregency due to Uzziah's illness. This practice evidently continued as pro-Assyrian and anti-Assyrian factions struggled for a claim over the rule of Judah.) Sometimes a king was dated according to events in the north. This appears to be the case in 2 Kings 18 even though he remained a co-regent. (for further study see <http://wartburgproject.org/?mdocs-file=1596>)

Read about Hezekiah: 2 Kings 18 - 20; 2 Chronicles 29 - 32; Isaiah 36 – 39

RETURN TO THE REMNANT

Describe a time you were eager to carry out a plan but had to wait until you could enact it. How did you feel when you finally got to act on your plans? There is a sense of urgency in Hezekiah's reform efforts. Hezekiah's father died in 715, making his son the sole ruler of Judah. (Before this time, it appears he was a co-regent, see timeline note above regarding 2 Kings 18.) After the death of Hezekiah's godless father, he immediately began to reform the worship life of the people. Read 2 Chronicles 29:3-11.

List some reasons why the people of Judah and the priests would have been so eager to join Hezekiah.

Israel fell to Shalmaneser king of Assyria in 722 BC at the destruction of Samaria. Many were deported, but many also remained behind. Hezekiah did not forget his Israelite brothers in his reform efforts. He invited the now decimated people of the north to reunite with him as a godly king. Read 2 Chronicles 30:1-11. How did the people in the north respond?

How does the response of the northern Israelites reflect what the Church still sees happening today?

While it is easy to focus on the great number of people who disregard the call for spiritual revival, what should we be focusing on as we call others to join us in true worship?

TRUE WORSHIP OF THE LORD

Worship life can be complicated. There are certain customs, important Scriptural principles, and there is a good amount of freedom to navigate. It involves teachers, preachers, and musicians. It calls for participation from all. Read 2 Chronicles 30:12 to 31:21 and identify some good principles for us to follow in our worship together:

Three things credited with fostering worship (30:12)

How to treat new converts/the weak in faith (30:18-20)

How to use God's gifts in worship (30:21-22a)

View of time which gives the most honor to God (30:23)

What heartfelt worship brings to all (30:26)

Who hears worshippers of the Lord (30:27)

The proper response after worship is done (31:1)

Stewardship and the use of God's gifts (31:3-10)

Church finances and money management (31:11-15)

Supporting ministers of the Lord (31:16-18)

YOU CAN'T PAY OFF THE DEVIL

The people of Judah had seen the Assyrian army destroy Samaria just two decades earlier. They witness the Assyrian strategy which was to surround a city and slowly strangle it by capturing the weaker towns around and laying siege to the capital. Samaria fell after a three-year struggle.

Hezekiah witnessed the Assyrians slowly decimating Judah and preparing for their siege of Jerusalem. So, in desperation he made his own preparations for the siege. (A tunnel recorded in 2 Kings 20:20 was discovered in 1837 with an inscription by Hezekiah's workers.) Read 2 Kings 18:13-16. How far was Hezekiah willing to go to get the Assyrians to leave? Evaluate his approach.

The ploy of Hezekiah to get the Assyrians to leave did not work. They did not keep their end of the bargain. Instead, they moved to destroy Jerusalem. Where should we draw the line when it comes to appeasing those who are in opposition to the Church?

We deserved far worse than an attacking army. Because of our sins we deserved death and hell. What was our King Jesus willing to give up to redeem us from death and hell?

TRUE WORSHIPPERS ARE TAUNTED

Taunting on the sports field can give you an edge as you psyche out your opponent. Taunting on the battlefield can give you a faster victory as your opponent gives up. What about taunting over spiritual matters? Read the taunt of King Sennacherib of Assyria against Hezekiah and the people in 2 Kings 18:17-37. Who is the taunting really directed at?

Describe the types of attacks which God's people will receive from their spiritual enemies at various stages in life.

How does the devil present the same type of bargaining to people today which was made in 2 Kings 18:31-32?

The people did not respond because Hezekiah commanded "Do not answer him." How is that good advice when dealing with taunts?

How did our King respond to those who taunted him? What gave him the strength to endure it?

GOD ALWAYS GETS THE FIRST & LAST WORD

Just before the people escaped from the armies of Egypt Moses told the people, “The LORD will fight for you; you need only to be still.” (Ex 14:14) Similarly, just before the people escaped from Sennacherib’s army Isaiah told the king, “This is what the LORD says: Do not be afraid of what you have heard.” (2 Kings 19:6) God had a plan to deal with the enemy which would surprise everyone.

Read 2 Kings 19:14-37 to see Hezekiah’s response to that letter and the Lord’s response.

Isaiah’s prophecy shares the irony of Sennacherib claiming power over the Lord. What had God already foretold would happen long before Sennacherib’s time? (Consult Micah 1:6-7)

How does Hezekiah’s response serve as a powerful reminder for God’s people?

How does the Lord’s response serve as a powerful reminder for God’s people?

POWER OF PRAYER

Have you ever felt something was so certain it wasn't worth bringing to God in prayer? Recall how Hezekiah prayed even while the city was surrounded and seemed doomed. Now it is equally personal and seemingly hopeless. Hezekiah, though faithful in service to the Lord was told his life was about to end in illness. He did not yet even have an heir for the throne. He no doubt felt the real danger for Judah during this uncertain time. Read 2 Kings 20:1-11 What do we learn about the power of prayer in this section?

God answered his prayer "for my sake." He always acts in such a way to display his grace and the glory of his name. Why is that important to remember in our prayers?

Examine Hezekiah's Psalm in Isaiah 38:10-20. What does he say about the reason for suffering, the problem of sin, and the result of his suffering?

Both Hezekiah and Jesus prayed when they knew their life was near its end. Explain why our King Jesus did not pray for his life to be extended and to be spared from his suffering and death.

THE DESTRUCTIVE POWER OF PRIDE

When God healed Hezekiah, he had given him a sign that he would live which involved the shadow of the sun going backwards ten steps on his stairway. Word of his healing, the miraculous sign, and no doubt the defeat of Sennacherib's army reached the Babylonians (2 Chronicles 32:31). Read Isaiah 39.

What should have been the first thing Hezekiah shared with the envoy from Babylon? Why do you suppose he wanted to show off his great wealth?

What is the first thing that you like to show people when they come to your house? What are some ways that you can reflect thanks to God and glorify him when people are interested in learning more?

Even the best of the kings of Jerusalem had faults that are recorded for us. What does that impress on us?

No other King has more recorded on their life in Scripture than Jesus. Why is it so important that Scripture emphasizes his faultless character for us?

KING MANASSEH



Manasseh's reign was marked with relentless wickedness. He worked hard to undo all the reforms of his father Hezekiah. He traveled throughout the land to firmly establish idol worship. He was ruthless and murdered countless innocent lives so that he "shed so much innocent blood that he filled Jerusalem from end to end." (2 Ki 21:16) He sacrificed his children in the fire to the god Molech. He built altars for false gods in the temple of the Lord. In addition to pagan worship with Baal and Ashtoreth he instituted worship of the stars and planets.

The Lord was patient with such great sin, but the king and people were obstinate. "Manasseh seduced Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the people of Israel. The LORD spoke to Manasseh and to his people, but they paid no attention." (2 Chr 33:9-10)

When the Lord humbled Manasseh and made him a prisoner of the King of Assyria, he repented. He was returned to the throne. Then he enacted sweeping reforms with earnest faith. His own soul was saved, but his reforms came too late to undo the damage already done to his kingdom. Despite his miraculous conversion and repentance, Manasseh is labeled the vilest of all kings and is credited with the cause for Judah's downfall. (2 Kings 23:26-27, 2 Kings 24:3-4, Jeremiah 15:4)

Read about Manasseh: 2 Kings 21:1-17; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

HOW GREAT IS GOD'S PATIENCE!

Discuss what is often considered and implemented as the best strategy for doing mission work. Should we send missionaries only to places which are receptive to our preaching or should we target places where there is great rejection of the Lord? Which is easier? Which does God will we work toward? Read 2 Chronicles 33:1-10

Manasseh had a godly father, had many prophets sent to him, and had a long reign (55 years). Despite all this his wickedness even exceeded that of the godless nations that came before Israel. What does that fact impress on us?

God kept sending prophets to Manasseh and the people, but they kept not paying any attention. God is patient. He also wants us to be careful not to let those who despise him despise his gifts. "Do not give dogs what is holy, and do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they will trample them under their feet and turn and tear you to pieces." (Mt 7:6) Discuss: How do you determine if it is worthwhile or wise to try to reach someone who is persistent in evil?

Consider how much of God's working in your life is a result of his wonderful patience and grace for sinners. In unbelief we cannot respond, but in faith we respond to his grace. Identify two or more appropriate responses to his rich patience and grace for you.

HOW GREAT IS GOD'S MERCY!

Name some people from Scripture who come to mind when you think of grand displays of conversion and repentance. What do you find more amazing: God's mercy and patience or their blindness to their own sins up until they repented? One of the Bible's greatest conversion stories is found in only a few verses. Read 2 Chronicles 33:10-17

The details surrounding Manasseh's conversion are not shared. List at least three important aspects of Manasseh's conversion that help us to see God's great mercy in this chapter.

In what ways do we also need that same type of mercy which God displayed for Manasseh?

How does the mercy of God and the accounts of conversions' like Manasseh's influence the way we carry out God's call to "make disciples of all nations?"

KING AMON

Amon followed the evil of his father, but not the conversion of his father. His reign was a short two years. His servants assassinated him in a conspiracy to take over the throne. But the people in turn killed his assassins and made his son, Josiah, the new king.

Perhaps Manasseh's conversion came too late for him to influence his twenty-two year-old son, Amon. "He did what was evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father Manasseh had done. Amon sacrificed to all the images that Manasseh his father had made, and he served them. But he did not humble himself before the LORD, as Manasseh his father had humbled himself. Instead, Amon even multiplied the guilt." (2 Ch 33:22–23)

Why is the home sometimes the hardest place to initiate spiritual reform? Why should it be the first place we work to reform?

Amon's brief account can be read in: 2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-24

KING JOSIAH

Josiah came to the throne at the young age of eight after the people killed his father's assassins. Josiah would have been around 5-6 years old when his grand-father, Manasseh was enacting his reform efforts after so much evil. The seed of faith planted in his youth grew stronger throughout his life.

His conscience was stricken when he learned the Scriptures, leading him to enact many reforms. But he would end up being the final godly king of Judah.

After his death, the people abandoned his reform efforts and reverted back to evil. His own sons wouldn't live into old age but would be swept away as the kingdom of Judah came to an end.

Josiah met an early death when he tried to stop the Egyptians from marching across his land to fight in an alliance with Assyria against the Babylonians, Medes, and Persians. The Egyptians killed king Josiah. However, they ended up losing the battle at Carchemish in 605 B.C. This marked the end of Egypt's' intervention in foreign affairs and the sudden rise of power of Babylonia. God would use Babylon's control to bring an end to Judea.

Read about Josiah: 2 Kings 22:1 - 23:30; 2 Chronicles 34:1 - 35:27

THE GREATEST DISCOVERY

In 1947 A Bedouin shepherd discovered a cave near Khirbet Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea. In it he found ancient scrolls which he ended up selling for \$28. Many other scrolls were found in eleven caves around the region. It turned out they were manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible dating to before the time of Christ. Their discovery was a priceless find containing nearly all of the oldest copies of the Bible ever found. Josiah's efforts to clean and restore the temple led to the discovery of "The Book of the Law" given through Moses. Whether it was a copy overlooked during Manasseh's wicked purge or an even older original it was a priceless find. Read 2 Chronicles 34 regarding this discovery.

What events led to the Bible being lost and found in ancient Israel? How could this same loss or discovery happen in someone's household today?

Identify some of the good response of Josiah after the Book of the Law had been discovered. How can a spiritually sliding home emulate this type of a response to the Word of the Lord?

Explain: "There is more than one way to lose a Bible."

What aspect of God's grace is evident in this chapter?

THE GREATEST SPIRITUAL REVIVAL EFFORT

What steps have you taken when you have been sick? Describe some of the measures that hospital staff will take to help a severely ill person become healthy again. Josiah's efforts to return the spiritually lost people of Judah back to the Lord are comprehensive. Read 2 Kings 23:1-27

Josiah's act of defiling these centers of false worship was to render them unfit for any future rituals by those who followed the wicked practices. Describe all the things which Josiah did to reform the worship in Judah.

Why do you suppose some of these artifacts of idolatry were able to stand for so long?

Exercise: Make a list of influences in your life which threaten to become something you fear, love, or trust more than the Lord. Identify which ones are obstacles to your worship of the Lord with all your heart, soul, and mind. Evaluate the dangers. Teach your family about the dangers. And remove anything that threatens your household's faith.

Apart from tearing down idolatry, what else must be included in a healthy spiritual revival?

PAINS THAT COME AFTER SPIRITUAL REFORM

The “Thirty Years War” began in 1618, 99 years after the start of the Lutheran Reformation. Catholic forces threatened Protestant faith groups. Battles raged across central Europe and ended up taking the lives of an estimated 4.5 to 8 million people. Some estimate over half the population of Germany perished. The fall of Jerusalem would occur about one hundred years after Manasseh’s wicked practices and a few years after Josiah’s reforms. Many might argue that religion is the cause of many wars. But in truth the devil’s attacks against the body always follow his failed attack against the soul. Spiritual revival will often lead to physical attacks from the world. It includes God’s judgment on unbelief and his means for testing and purifying his own people.

Josiah was the polar opposite of Manasseh. He worked toward a spiritual revival. But it seemed to be to no avail. “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 strength, according to all the Law of Moses, and after him no one like him arose. ²⁶But even so, the LORD did not turn from his great wrath which burned against Judah because of all the offenses with which Manasseh had provoked him.” (2 Ki 23:25–26)

What does God encourage us when it seems like all our spiritual struggles for the truth lead to further pain and hardship and loss? “Do not fear anything that you are about to suffer. Look, the Devil is about to throw some of you into prison so that you will be tested, and you will suffer for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)

KING JEHOAHAZ



Josiah was the last king of Israel to enjoy an independence from foreign powers. He died at the hands of the Egyptian army when he tried to stop them from marching across their land. The people made his son, Jehoahaz king in his place.

Though Jehoahaz was not the oldest, it seems the people preferred him as king because of his opposition to Egyptian rule. The twenty-three-year-old king is described as doing evil.

He only ruled for three months before Egypt took him prisoner and made his older brother King and demanded that Judah pay them a tribute.

What dangers are there in focusing on political prosperity over spiritual?

Read about Jehoahaz: 2 Kings 23:31-35; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4

KING JEHOIAKIM



Jehoiakim is the first king (18th of the line) in Judah to be placed on the throne by a foreign nation. He ruled for eleven years and did evil. He first ruled as a vassal to Egypt, then later as a vassal to Babylon.

His reign is marked with selfishness. He made the people pay a heavy tribute to Egypt. He also used forced labor to build himself extravagant mansions.

The prophet Jeremiah rebuked him and contrasted Jehoiakim with his father, Josiah: “Does it make you a king when you are extravagant with cedar? Didn’t your father eat and drink, and do what was just and right?” (Jeremiah 22:15)

Jehoiakim rebelled against the Babylonian King, Nebuchadnezzar, who then came against him. But the city wasn’t destroyed. Instead, the people betrayed their king and threw him over the wall. (Jeremiah 22:18-19) Jehoiakim was bound and taken prisoner to Babylon.

Read about Jehoiakim: 2 Kings 23:36 - 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8, Jeremiah 36

THE WORD IS DESPISED

A public bible burning is about as close as you can get to the opposite of a healthy spiritual revival. Jehoiakim's father Josiah treasured the Word greatly. But Jehoiakim despised it. God sent him prophets, but he persecuted them and tried to have them killed. At one point he had all of the prophet Jeremiah's writings burned. Read Jeremiah 36.

Why did the Lord continue to provide his Word to the people in Jehoiakim's days?

Explain: "The call to repent is just as urgent today as it was during the days of Jehoiakim."

What was the king's solution to the call to repent? In what ways might we begin to treat God's Word as only fit for the ash heap?

What comfort do you find at the end of this account regarding the Word of God?

KING JEHOIACHIN



Jehoiachin took the throne after his father had been handed over to King Nebuchadnezzar. He proved to be just as rebellious as his father. After only three months Nebuchadnezzar came and attacked Jerusalem. The city surrendered and tens of thousands of people were carried off to exile in Babylon, including thousands of skilled workers and fighters. Jehoiachin remained in exile in Babylon for the rest of his life, eventually serving under their government.

Jehoiachin's story: 2 Kings 24:8-17, 25:27-30; 2 Chronicles 36:9-10

KING ZEDEKIAH



Zedekiah was the 20th and final sovereign king over Jerusalem. “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD his God. He did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke from the mouth of the Lord.” (2 Ch 36:12)

He was the uncle of Jehoiachin and had been placed on the throne by Nebuchadnezzar. He was supposed to rule as a vassal to Babylon. When he came to the throne in 597 Nebuchadnezzar had full power over the land. Zedekiah’s army had been deported and most of the skilled workers had been deported to Babylon. But in the ninth year of his reign, Zedekiah began his futile, puny rebellion.

Jerusalem labored under a siege for three summers. But when the wall was breached the people fled the city. The king fled under the cover of darkness but was captured.

Read about Zedekiah: 2 Kings 24:17 - 25:21; 2 Chronicles 36:11-20

IT IS HARD TO KICK AGAINST THE PRICKS

“It is hard to kick against the pricks.” This was a Greek expression which the people were familiar with in the New Testament. When an ox was plowing the field, it would be directed by a metal goad. If the ox resisted, it would experience further pain for its resistance as the goad tore at its flesh. Jesus used this expression when talking about Paul’s defiance against his gospel advancing. The prophet Jeremiah warned Zedekiah that resisting Babylon was futile and would only make things worse for him.

Read 2 Chronicles 36:11-16 & Jeremiah 38 to read about Zedekiah’s stiff-necked refusal to surrender. Why do you suppose Zedekiah wanted to both hear Jeremiah and yet hide his message?

In what ways might we try to “hide” God’s message instead of sharing it?

Explain why Jesus our prophet, priest, and king has a message which we desire to make known to all creation.

IT WILL NOT END WELL WITHOUT THE KING'S MERCY

Have you ever had to plead guilty before a judge? Why do you suppose that those who plead guilty are often sentenced less harshly? Zedekiah could have given up and begged for mercy. The Lord urged him to through the prophets. But he chose to live by his own strength in defiance of the king of Babylon and defiance against God. Read Jeremiah 52:1-11 to learn about Zedekiah's cowardly attempt to flee.

Explain how God used irony to capture Zedekiah as the prophecy of Ezekiel was fulfilled: "The prince who is in their midst will carry his baggage on his shoulder at dusk and go out. They will dig through the wall to bring him out through it. He will cover his face, so he will not see the ground with his own eyes. I will spread out my net for him, and he will be caught in my trap. I will bring him to Babylon, to the land of the Chaldeans, but he will not see it, and there he will die." (Ezekiel 12:12-13)

Discuss some of warnings regarding sin which many are blind to today. What is the end result of the refusal to repent?

God has more than a net of judgment. He has a net of mercy. How ought his warnings regarding sin impress on us the importance of our task to be "fishers of men"?

What tools (nets) do we have to rescue people from the grip of sin's curse and depths of hell?

THE FALL OF JERUSALEM

The fall of David's throne is tragic. It is recorded in several places. (2 Kings 25:1–21; 2 Chronicles 36:15–21; Jeremiah 39:1-10; 52:4–30)

Yet throughout all the prophecies of warning are contained a word of hope for those who trust in the Lord. He promised a king from David's line who would rule forever (2 Samuel 7:11-16). Jesus, the Son of David now sits on his throne over all creation. He will return soon in great glory. He will restore the broken and fallen. He will lift up the lowly.

Even in the face of destruction the prophet Micah could cry out: "Do not rejoice over me, my enemy. When I fall, I will rise. When I sit in the darkness, the LORD will be a light for me." (Mic 7:8)

How does the history of the line of David's kings help you better understand the depravity of the human heart and God's patience?

HOPE REMAINS

God is serious about sin's consequences. He warns his people of what it brings. Scan through Deuteronomy 28. Explain: "God warned Israel of what would happen when they rejected him. He did this out of love." What are some of the strongest warnings which have been impressed on you after reading through the record of the kings of Israel and Judah?

Looking at the account of the kings has led to many important truths. Lessons were learned about the heart's deceitfulness and the devil's tactics. Lessons were learned about the need for a king who is stronger, wiser, and more benevolent than what we can find in any human heart. Lessons were learned as God's providence, patience, and faithfulness stood in striking contrast to mankind's weakness, impatience, and unfaithfulness. God's judgment is just and true. But his faithfulness and mercy remained even as his people were entirely unfaithful. "If we are faithless, he remains faithful, because he cannot deny himself." (2 Ti 2:13) Jesus, the Son of David, our King, is wonderful. We know that full well!

What is your biggest comfort from reading through the account of the kings?



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