

2 KINGS

COMMENT: The second book of Kings continues the record begun in the first book of Kings. In fact, there does not seem to be a proper division between the two books. Ahaziah's reign in Israel is begun in 1 Kings and concluded in 2 Kings.

The king and the prophet take the place of the priest as God's instruments of communication.

Chapter 1 — Ahaziah king of Israel, son of Ahab and Jezebel, fell down through a lattice and was seriously injured. Greatly influenced by his mother Jezebel, he sends messengers to Ekron to inquire of Baal if he would be healed.

Elijah, in his last public act as prophet, is sent by the Lord to meet the messengers with a stern rebuke, "Is it because there is not a God in Israel that thou sendest to inquire of Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron?" Then Elijah pronounces the death sentence upon Ahaziah.

Elijah brings down fire from heaven to destroy the two detachments of fifty sent by the king to get him. Then Elijah goes with the third detachment and personally delivers the death message to Ahaziah — which was fulfilled.

Chapter 2 — This chapter records the translation of Elijah. He goes from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan river, accompanied by Elisha. Elijah promises Elisha a double portion of his spirit if he witnesses his departure. Elijah strikes the waters of Jordan with his mantle, and they two go over. Elijah departs from him in a chariot of fire (v. 11) and Elisha witnesses it (v. 12). Elisha returns over Jordan by using Elijah's mantle to smite the waters.

Elisha makes the bitter waters sweet at Jericho.

On his return to Bethel he is met by a crowd of roughnecks and hoodlums who ridicule him. This incident has been derided by the critic who seems to be totally unaware of the facts.

And he went up from thence unto Bethel; and as he was going up by the way, there came forth little children out of the city, and mocked him, and said unto him, Go up, thou bald head; go up, thou bald head. (2 Kings 2:23 KJV)

"Little children" is *nahar* or *naar* in Hebrew. It was used of Isaac when he was 28, of Joseph when he was 39, and of Rehoboam when he was 40. It also was used for the sons of Jesse (1 Samuel 16:11) and of the

Hebrew children (Daniel 1:4, 17) who were at least 17 at the time of captivity, and also for the Sodomites who attacked the home of Lot. These “little children” were not from a nursery school. Elisha did not bring out the bears — God was responsible. God still judges sin and blasphemy.

They were ridiculing Elisha and scoffing at the translation of Elijah. Their irreverence was blasphemy, as it attacked one of the great doctrines of Scripture:

Knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying, Where is the promise of his coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation. (2 Peter 3:3, 4)

See also 2 Timothy 3:1-9 and Jude 7-15. The one obvious fact from this episode is that Elisha was bald.

Chapter 3 — King Ahaziah, son of Ahab, had no son as his successor so that his brother Jehoram (Joram) reigns after him.

Moab rebels against Israel. Jehoshaphat joins forces with Jehoram to go against Moab. Jehoshaphat again calls for a prophet of Jehovah. Elisha refuses at first, but responds because of the presence of Jehoshaphat (v. 14). Elisha announces that God would give them both water, which they sorely needed, and victory over Moab, which was granted.

Chapter 4 — This chapter contains five miracles performed by Elisha. While there is a similarity between the miracles of Elisha and Elijah, the miracles performed by Elisha were more extensive and greater to a degree.

(1) A widow of one of the prophets is in dire circumstances — her two sons are about to be sold into slavery. Elisha multiplies the pot of oil.

(2) A “great woman” of Shunem entertains Elisha (v. 10). Elisha promises she would have a son.

(3) When the son was grown to manhood, he died, and Elisha restores him to life (using the same method as Elijah had).

(4) Sons of the prophets are eating a soup in which there was poison, and Elisha makes it harmless.

(5) Elisha feeds 100 men with food for one man.

Chapter 5 — Naaman, captain of the army of Syria and a great man but a leper, comes to Elisha for healing at the suggestion of his wife's maid (a Hebrew girl taken captive). Elisha refuses to see him but sends a messenger to tell him to go wash in the Jordan seven times (v. 10). Naaman, because of pride, refuses to go at first (vs. 11, 12). He is persuaded to swallow his pride and obey the prophet. He is healed.

Gehazi, servant of Elisha, extracts a reward from Naaman without Elisha's permission. Elisha pronounces judgment upon him, and he becomes a leper.

Chapter 6 — The miracle of the floating axe head reveals the character of the prophet Elisha. Elisha is the popular professor of the school of the prophets. They need larger quarters (vs. 1, 2), and Elisha goes with them to cut down timber in the Jordan valley where the accident occurs. The borrowed axe head slips off and falls into the river (vs. 4, 5). Some consider the young student careless and feel that he should not have borrowed the axe. Both charges seem unjustified, for Elisha did not rebuke him. The miracle of making an axe head float may seem "much ado about nothing" since it is not spectacular like bringing fire down from heaven. Here we see the contrast between Elijah and Elisha. Elijah would not have done it this way or bothered with it at all. I think he would have said, "Son, forget it." But not Elisha. Like our Lord, he is interested in the individual and his little problems. There is a great spiritual lesson here. Man is lost and the dark waters of defeat and death have passed over him. Only when the stick, representing the cross, is placed in the waters of death can man be recovered (saved) and restored to his God-given purpose and pursuit in time and eternity (vs. 5-7).

Elisha warns the king of Israel concerning the plot of Ben-hadad and thereby saves his life, not once but many times. Ben-hadad attempts to capture Elisha by sending a great host to Dothan where the prophet is staying. The servant of Elisha thinks this will be their finish, but Elisha prays that the Lord would open his servant's eyes. God does "and, behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire round about Elisha" (v. 17). Elisha leads the blinded Syrians to Samaria as captives.

Ben-hadad lays siege to Samaria, and the inhabitants of the city are starving. The king of Samaria blames the prophet and tries to destroy him.

Chapter 7 — Elisha promises an abundance for the very next day. Four leprous men outside the city enter the camp of the Syrian army in

desperation and find it deserted. During the night the Lord had caused the superstitious Syrians to hear a great noise, which they interpreted as the great host of a hired army coming to attack them. They fled in panic, leaving all their supplies behind. The lepers report to the starving populace of Samaria that there is an abundance of food in the deserted camp.

Chapter 8 — Elisha predicts a famine of seven years and urges the Shunammite mother to leave the area. She returns at the end of the drought and appeals to the king to restore her land. After learning who she is, he does so.

Elisha goes to Damascus, predicts the death of sick Ben-hadad and the ascension of Hazael (who will in turn destroy Israel) to the throne. Hazael pleads innocent of all such plans but carries them out.

Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat, begins to reign with his father. He walks in the ways of the kings of Israel, for he had married the daughter of Ahab. Edom revolts against him, also Libnah. Jehoram dies after an eight-year reign. He is succeeded by Ahaziah his son, who joins with Joram, king of Israel, against Hazael of Syria in war. Joram is wounded.

Chapter 9 — Elisha sends one of the sons of the prophets to Jehu in Ramoth-gilead to anoint him as king of Israel and to pronounce judgment on the house of Ahab. Jehu is proclaimed king by the army. He slays Joram king of Israel, Ahaziah king of Judah, and Jezebel. Jezebel attempts to win Jehu over by her appeal as a woman (v. 30), but she is too old (v. 33). The prophecy of Elijah is literally fulfilled (vs. 36, 37). It is the frightful finish of a frightful woman.

Chapter 10 — The house of Ahab is exterminated by the slaying of his seventy sons. Jehu slays what remained. Jehu also kills the brethren of Ahaziah king of Judah.

Jehu pretends to turn to Baal worship in order to gather together Baal's followers. When they come together, Jehu has all of them slain (v. 25). Jehu destroys Baal worship from Israel (vs. 27, 28), but he does not return to the worship of Jehovah. He merely comes back to the low level of calf worship that had been established by Jeroboam (v. 29). However, God does recognize and reward him (v. 30).

Israel begins to decline as a great kingdom (v. 32).

Jehu dies and his son Jehoahaz succeeds to the throne (vs. 34, 35).

Chapter 11 — When Athaliah sees that her son Ahaziah was slain by Jehu, this bloody daughter of Jezebel tries to destroy all the line of

David. She destroys all the princes of the royal line except Joash who was hidden by a sister of Ahaziah.

When Joash is seven, he is revealed to the rulers of the kingdom who in turn plot the overthrow of bloody Athaliah. She is slain, and Joash (Jehoash) becomes king at seven years of age (v. 21).

Jehoiada, the priest, leads in a movement to return to the worship of Jehovah (v. 17). The Baal worship that had invaded Judah is exterminated (v. 18).

Chapter 12 — Jehoash reigns forty years, and he does that which is right in the eyes of the Lord (v. 2). The corruption of the priesthood is corrected and the Temple repaired.

The Syrians take Gath, and Jehoash has to pay a ransom to Hazael, king of Syria, to save Jerusalem. Jehoash is slain by a conspiracy of his servants. Amaziah, his son, succeeds him.

Chapter 13 — Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, reigns over Israel for seventeen years, and he follows in the sinful steps of Jeroboam.

In desperation he turns to the Lord when oppressed by the king of Syria. The Lord delivers them, but they return to the sins of Jeroboam. Jehoahaz dies a natural death.

Joash (Jehoash) son of Jehoahaz succeeds his father to the throne. Nothing of consequence is done in his reign except he renews the war against Judah during the reign of Amaziah.

Elisha becomes sick with a fatal illness. He is visited by King Jehoahaz of Israel, to whom the prophet promises victory over the Syrians. Elisha dies. The Syrians oppress Israel, but God is gracious (v. 23).

Chapter 14 — Amaziah son of Joash succeeds to the throne of Judah and he, too, does that which is right in the sight of the Lord — but does not quite measure up to David's standard (v. 3). He is defeated by Jehoash, king of Israel, who takes Jerusalem, breaks through the wall for 400 cubits and removes all the gold and silver that remain in the house of the Lord. Amaziah is slain in a conspiracy at Lachish.

Azariah (Uzziah), son of Amaziah, succeeds to the throne. Jeroboam II, king of Israel, reigns forty-one years and does evil according to the sins of Jeroboam I. He restores the border of Israel according to Jonah, son of Amittai, the prophet. This is the historical reference to Jonah and confirms the fact that Jonah was a real person and a prophet in Israel (v. 25). Jeroboam II dies a natural death, and his son Zechariah succeeds him.

Chapter 15 — Uzziah king of Judah is a good king, but because he intrudes into the priest's function, he is smitten with leprosy (2 Chronicles 26:15-21). Jotham his son succeeds him (see Isaiah 1:1).

Zechariah, last of the line of Jehu, is slain by Shallum after he had reigned only six months. Shallum reigns only one month. Menahem overthrows and slays Shallum. Then he reigns ten years and does evil as had Jeroboam.

At this time, Pul, king of Assyria, comes against Israel, and Menahem pays 1,000 talents of silver to preserve his kingdom. At his death, Pekahiah his son succeeds to the throne but reigns only two years, when Pekah, his captain, conspires and slays him.

During the reign of Pekah, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, comes against Israel and takes captive the tribe of Naphtali. Pekah is slain by Hoshea. Jotham reigns in Judah and is recognized as a good king.

Chapter 16 — Ahaz, son of Jotham, succeeds him to the throne. He is a wicked king who walks in the evil ways of the kings of Israel (vs. 2, 3).

Rezin, king of Syria, and Pekah, king of Israel, invade Judah but cannot take Jerusalem (see Isaiah 7—10). Ahaz appeals to Assyria for help, and the Assyrians take Damascus.

The term “Jews” is used for the first time in the Bible (v. 6).

IV. Captivity of Israel by Assyria, Chapter 17

Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, captures the northern kingdom and exacts tribute from them. When he discovers that King Hoshea had formed a conspiracy against him, he besieges Samaria and, after three years, takes the northern tribes into captivity.

These are the reasons God permitted Israel to go into captivity:

- (1) Disobeyed God (v. 13)

Yet the LORD testified against Israel, and against Judah, by all the prophets, and by all the seers, saying, Turn ye from your evil ways, and keep my commandments and my statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by my servants the prophets.

- (2) Doubted God (v. 14, see also 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16)

Notwithstanding, they would not hear, but hardened their

necks, like the neck of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.

- (3) Defied God (v. 15) in that they refused to observe the sabbatic year for 490 years

To fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her sabbaths; for as long as she lay desolate she kept sabbath, to fulfill threescore and ten years. (2 Chronicles 36:21)

The story of this nation is the story of every individual (Romans 1:5; 16:20, 26; Acts 7:51; Hebrews 12:16).

Assyria brings in foreigners to colonize the land — first mention of Samaritans (v. 29).

V. Decline and captivity of Judah by Babylon, Chapters 18 — 25

Chapter 18 — Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, succeeds him to the throne and is an exceptionally good king (v. 3). There is a revival during his reign (vs. 4, 5).

Hezekiah is able to overcome the Philistines, but Sennac-herib, king of Assyria, invades Judah and threatens Jerusalem. Rab-shakeh, captain of Assyria, insults Hezekiah and attempts to frighten him.

Chapter 19 — He is successful in this, for Hezekiah puts on sack-cloth and goes to the house of God to pray. In the meantime, he sends a messenger to Isaiah. Isaiah returns a message of encouragement (vs. 6, 7). Rab-shakeh becomes bold and challenges the God of Israel by sending an insulting letter to Hezekiah. Hezekiah goes into the house of the Lord and spreads the letter before God. God answers through Isaiah that He will turn the hosts of Assyria back (vs. 28, 32-34). God destroys 185,000 of the Assyrian army, and Sen-nacherib returns home where he is slain.

Chapter 20 — Hezekiah takes sick and his time is come to die (v. 1). He prays for a recovery, and God hears his prayer. This is a time when a man should have died at the appointed time. After his recovery, he commits three foolish acts:

- (1) He permits the ambassadors from Babylon to see his treasures (vs. 12-19).
- (2) He fathers Manasseh, the worst king of all (21:2, 9, 16, 17).
- (3) Hezekiah's heart becomes full of pride (2 Chronicles 32:25).

That this is an important section is evident from its being recorded three times in the Word of God (in 2 Chronicles and Isaiah).

Chapter 21 — Manasseh, son of Hezekiah, is the most wicked king of all, even surpassing Ahab and Jezebel. (Since Manasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign and Hezekiah reigned fourteen years after his illness, Manasseh was born after the recovery of Hezekiah.) Amon succeeds Manasseh and is evil, as was his father (v. 20). His servants conspire against him and slay him in his own house. Josiah his son succeeds him.

Chapters 22, 23 — Josiah begins to reign when he is eight years old, and he reigns thirty-one years (22:1). He is one of the best who reigned after Solomon (22:2). A great and needed revival comes to the nation. Hilkiah, the high priest, is his counselor, assistant, and adviser. The steps of revival are given:

- (1) Temple repaired (22:3-6);
- (2) Return to the Word of God (22:8-10);
- (3) Convicted of sin (22:11-13);
- (4) Put away idolatry (23:4);
- (5) Put away immorality (23:7);
- (6) Reinstated the Passover (23:21-23 and 2 Chronicles 35:18);
- (7) Further reformation (23:8-20).

Josiah is slain by Pharaoh-neco, king of Egypt. Josiah's son Jehoahaz reigns three months, then the king of Egypt makes Eliakim king, another son of Josiah, and changes his name to Jehoiakim. Jehoiakim does that which is evil (v. 37).

Chapter 24 — Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, comes against Jehoiakim, and Judah is destroyed (v. 2). This is God's judgment upon the nation because of the sins of Manasseh (vs. 3, 4).

After the death of Jehoiakim, who reigns eleven years, his son Jehoiachin comes to the throne for three months. He is an evil ruler (v. 9). The king of Bablyon captures him, sacks Jerusalem, and takes captive all the leaders of Jerusalem — among whom is Daniel and the three Hebrew children (vs. 14, 15). Nebuchadnezzar also takes Jehoiachin into Babylonian captivity and makes his uncle, Mattaniah, king over Judah and changes his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah is also an evil king, and he rebels against Nebuchadnezzar (vs. 19, 20).

Chapter 25 — Nebuchadnezzar comes up against Jerusalem,

destroys it, and deports the people into captivity. The eyes of Zedekiah are put out after he witnesses the slaying of his own sons (v. 7). Nebuchadnezzar burns the Temple (v. 9) and transports all things of value to Babylon, including the vessels of the Temple. Jerusalem is totally destroyed.

Gedaliah is made governor and becomes the abject subject of King Nebuchadnezzar (v. 24). Before long he is murdered, and the people who remain flee to Egypt.

Jehoiachin is released from prison in Babylon and given a place of prominence there.