

IMPORTANT BIBLE PASSAGES: THE KINGS AFTER SOLOMON

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Nihil Obstat

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Censor Deputatus

November 6, 2018

Permission to Publish

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November 6, 2018

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Acknowledgements

Cover design by Vanessa Mendozzi

Editing by Geoffrey Stone and Paul Wonders

Timelines, as well as adaptations to the family trees and maps, courtesy of April Stefanic

Introduction

As in most Catholic schools and religious education programs, the 6th graders in my Bible class use the Old Testament as their curriculum. Once we finish learning about King Solomon, I tell the class, “After this next unit, you’re all going to know more about this section of the Bible than your parents.”

Most of us believers recognize this statement as true. We all have “gaps” in our faith knowledge. These gaps, however, can be debilitating for us: We don’t feel confident to explain certain parts of the Bible, so we gloss over it when it’s time to share it with others. The problem is that we’re missing out on an important part of salvation history. The Bible itself says that ALL Scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching (2 Timothy 3:16). This section of the Bible has much to teach us about what to do, and what not to do, when relating to God.

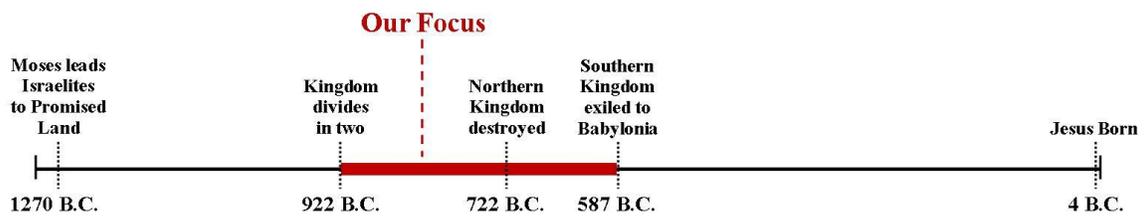
St. Jerome famously said, “Ignorance of Scripture is ignorance of Christ”. By selecting and explaining passages from this very difficult section of the Bible, I’m hoping to decrease our ignorance of Christ.

I first gave these lessons in 2018 to the 6th grade class at Holy Family Catholic School in Bensenville, IL. This book is dedicated to them—and their parents.

Passage 0: This Section of the Bible

Most of us are familiar with the major events of the Bible: how Moses parts the sea, for example, or Jesus' birth in a manger.

This book covers a section in the Bible between those two famous events:



Passage 1: The Kingdom Divides

Date

930 B.C. (Approximate date of Jeroboam's revolt)

Summary

The twelve tribes of Israel are united under the rule of King Rehoboam, who has recently inherited the throne from his father, Solomon. Jeroboam, a general, goes with a delegation from the ten northern tribes to make a request of King Rehoboam: take away the heavy taxes your father, Solomon, put on us, and we will serve you. Rehoboam asks two groups of people for advice: the elders who assisted his father and the friends he grew up with. The elders tell him to grant the people their petition to secure their loyalty. His childhood friends, on the other hand, advise him to be harsh. Rehoboam decides to follow the counsel of his friends.

As a result, the northern tribes of the kingdom rebel and form the kingdom of Israel, installing the general Jeroboam as their king. The southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin remain loyal to Rehoboam, forming the kingdom of Judah.

Map

Below in blue is the northern kingdom of Israel (sometimes called Ephraim). The southern kingdom of Judah is in gold.



1 Kings 12:3-20

³Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and they said to Rehoboam,
⁴“Your father put a heavy yoke on us. If you now lighten the harsh servitude and the heavy yoke your father imposed on us, we will be your servants.” ⁵He answered them, “Come back to me in three days,” and the people went away.

⁶King Rehoboam asked advice of the elders who had been in his father Solomon’s service while he was alive, and asked, “How do you advise me to answer this people?”
⁷They replied, “If today you become the servant of this people and serve them, and give them a favorable answer, they will be your servants forever.” ⁸But he ignored the advice the elders had given him, and asked advice of the young men who had grown up with him and were in his service. ⁹He said to them, “What answer do you advise that we should give this people, who have told me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father imposed on us?’” ¹⁰The young men who had grown up with him replied, “This is what you must say to this people who have told you, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy; you lighten it for us.’ You must say, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins. ¹¹My father put a heavy yoke on you, but I will make it heavier. My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions.’” ¹²Jeroboam and the whole people came back to King Rehoboam on the third day, as the king had instructed them: “Come back to me in three days.” ¹³Ignoring the advice the elders had given him, the king gave the people a harsh answer. ¹⁴He spoke to them as the young men had advised: “My father made your yoke heavy, but I will make it heavier. My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions.” ¹⁵The king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD: he fulfilled the word the LORD had spoken through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam, son of Nebat. ¹⁶When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king:

“What share have we in David?

We have no heritage in the son of Jesse.

To your tents, Israel!

Now look to your own house, David.”

So Israel went off to their tents. ¹⁷But Rehoboam continued to reign over the Israelites who lived in the cities of Judah.

¹⁸King Rehoboam then sent out Adoram, who was in charge of the forced labor, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam then managed to mount his chariot and flee to Jerusalem. ¹⁹And so Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. ²⁰When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, they summoned him to an assembly and made him king over all Israel. None remained loyal to the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone.

Memorable Phrase

“My father beat you with whips, but I will beat you with scorpions” (1 Kings 12:11).

Christ Connection

All the Scriptures point to Jesus, and so I offer these “Christ connections” as a way for us to recognize key moments of foreshadowing.

In today’s story, Rehoboam gets good advice but doesn’t follow it. Jesus often criticized people for being too stubborn to listen to the good people God sent. He once told a parable concerning rich brothers who were doomed because they wouldn’t receive any godly instruction: “If they will not listen to Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded if someone should rise from the dead” (see Luke 16:19–31 for the whole parable).

Life Application

Take good advice when it’s offered to you! The kingdom divided because a foolish king followed bad advice. If we allow bad influences to move us, bad things usually happen.

Passage 2: Egypt Invades the South

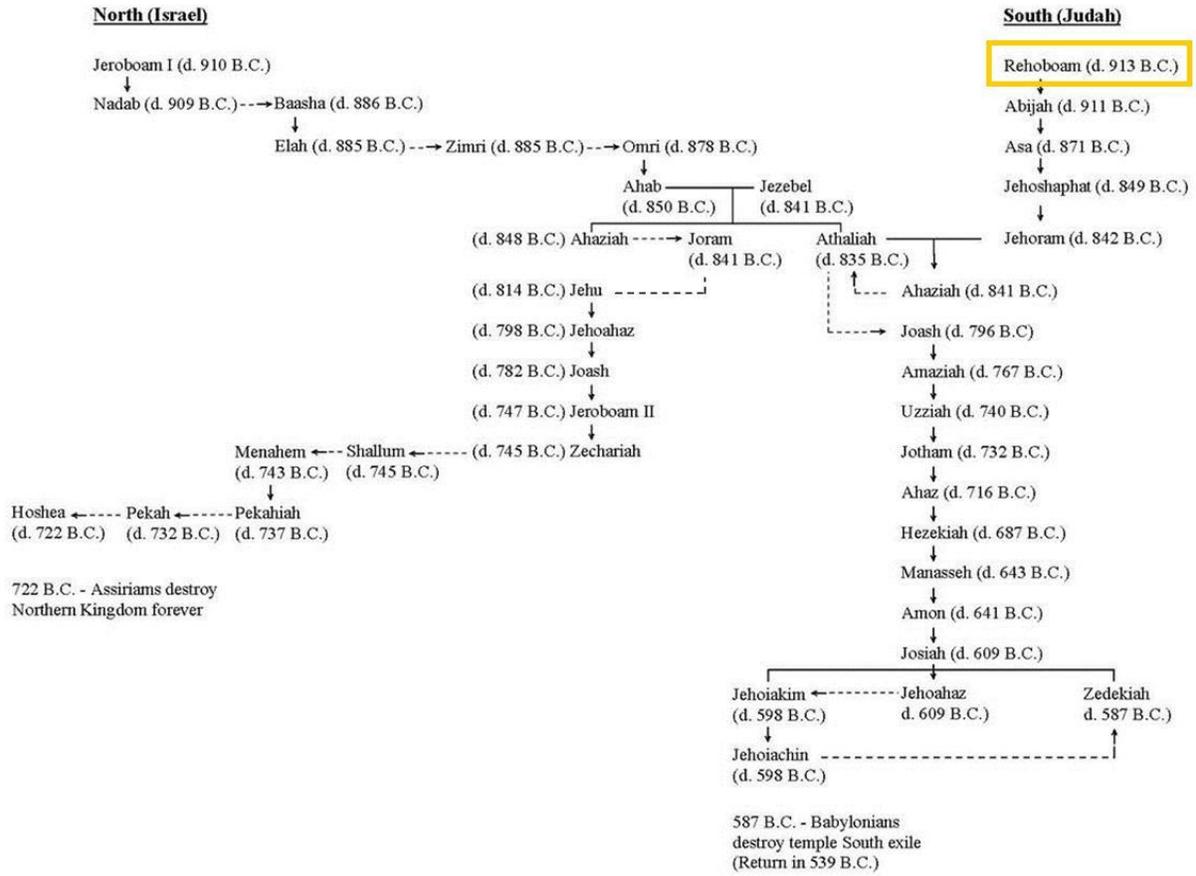
Date

925 B.C. (Approximate date when Egypt begins to occupy Judah)

Summary

Once Rehoboam establishes his political strength, he and all the people separate themselves from God. Soon after, King Shishak of Egypt attacks and occupies the kingdom of Judah. The prophet Shemaiah tells Rehoboam that just as they all abandoned God, God will abandon them to the Egyptians. Convicted, Rehoboam repents for what he's done, and God hears his repentance. However, the prophet says the people of Judah will still serve under the Egyptian king Shishak for a time, so that they learn the difference between serving God and serving human rulers. God allows King Shishak to rob the temple of the golden shields. The author declares that although the kingdom did not fully descend into wickedness under the reign of Rehoboam, he was a bad king because he didn't have his heart set on seeking the Lord.

Family Tree



Map

We see where the Egyptians attack Judah.



2 Chronicles 12:1–16

¹Once Rehoboam had established himself as king and was firmly in charge, he abandoned the law of the LORD, and so did all Israel with him. ²So in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem, for they had acted treacherously toward the LORD. ³He had twelve hundred chariots and sixty thousand horsemen, and there was no counting the army that came with him from Egypt— Libyans, Sukkites, and Ethiopians. ⁴They captured the fortified cities of Judah and came as far as Jerusalem. ⁵Then Shemaiah the prophet came to Rehoboam and the commanders of Judah who had gathered at Jerusalem because of Shishak, and said to them: “Thus says the LORD: You have abandoned me, and so I have abandoned you to the power of Shishak.”

⁶Then the commanders of Israel and the king humbled themselves saying, “The LORD is in the right.” ⁷When the LORD saw that they had humbled themselves, the word of the LORD came to Shemaiah: Because they have humbled themselves, I will not destroy them; I will give them some deliverance, and my wrath shall not be poured out upon Jerusalem through Shishak. ⁸But they shall be his servants. Then they will know what it is to serve me and what it is to serve the kingdoms of the earth. ⁹Thereupon Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem and took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king. He took everything, including the gold shields that Solomon had made. ¹⁰To replace them, King Rehoboam made bronze shields, which he entrusted to the officers of the attendants on duty at the entrance of the king’s house. ¹¹Whenever the king visited the house of the LORD, the attendants would carry them, and then return them to the guardroom. ¹²Because he had humbled himself, the anger of the LORD turned from him so as not to destroy him completely; in Judah, moreover, there was some good.

¹³King Rehoboam was firmly in power in Jerusalem and continued to rule. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city in which, out of all the tribes of Israel, the LORD chose to set his name. His mother’s name was Naamah, the Ammonite. ¹⁴He did evil, for he had not set his heart to seek the LORD. ¹⁵The acts of Rehoboam, first and last, are recorded in the history of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer (his family record). There were wars between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. ¹⁶Rehoboam rested with his ancestors; he was buried in the City of David. His son Abijah succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

“You have abandoned me, and so I have abandoned you” (2 Chronicles 12:5).

Christ Connection

We hear in Scripture that Jesus is always faithful, even if we aren’t: “If we are unfaithful he remains faithful, for he cannot deny himself” (2 Timothy 2:13). It’s impossible for God to abandon us; if he stopped loving us for one second, we’d stop existing. This is a common theme

in this section of the Bible: people turn away from God, but he embraces the repentant. God “abandoned” Judah for a time, so that they could learn the difference between serving the Egyptians and serving God. However, he returned to them.

Life Application

Decide which areas in your life are “well established,” and remind yourself that it can go away in a second! Often when we become successful, we don’t think we need God anymore. Or we pray a lot when we’re sick, but forget about God once we’re healthy. We read that as soon as Rehoboam became established and strong, he abandoned the Law of the Lord. We must remember that we’re never too “established” to escape our reliance upon God!

Passage 3: Jeroboam Builds False Worship Sites

Date

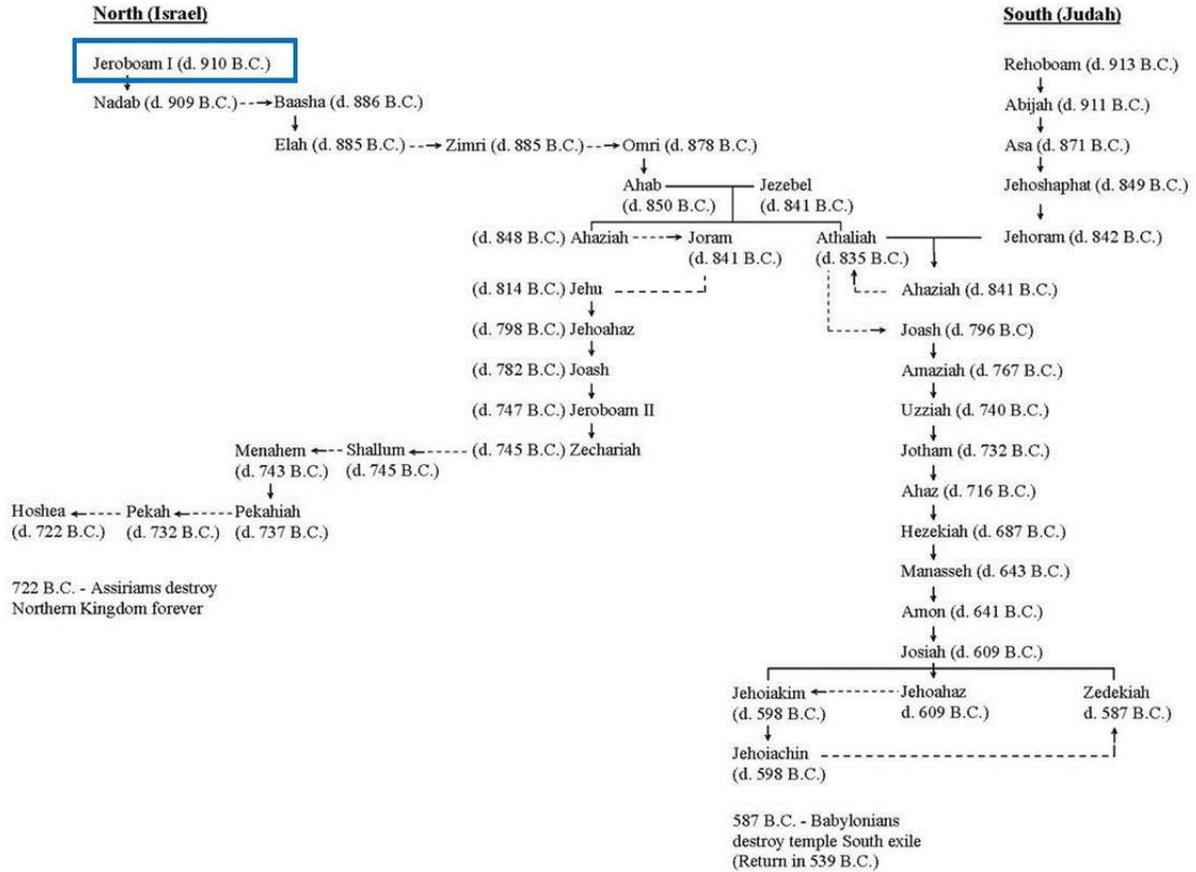
925 B.C. (Approximate date when Jeroboam builds worship sites in Dan and Bethel)

Summary

After settling into his new kingdom, Jeroboam becomes scared that people will give their allegiance to Rehoboam if they continue to travel to his kingdom to worship God in Jerusalem. So he constructs two golden calves in the cities of Dan and Bethel. These new “substitute gods” effectively keep the northern kingdom from worshiping the true God for around 200 years. As we’ll see though the northern kingdom’s history, Jeroboam’s action has terrible consequences.

Family Tree

Jeroboam starts a new kingly line in the northern kingdom of Israel.



Map

Marked in red are Dan and Bethel (spelled “BeitEl” in some places, like this map), where Jeroboam builds shrines for his people.



1 Kings 12:25–33

²⁵Jeroboam built up Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. Then he left it and built up Penuel.

²⁶Jeroboam thought to himself: “Now the kingdom will return to the house of David.

²⁷If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, the hearts of this people will return to their master, Rehoboam, king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam, king of Judah.” ²⁸The king took counsel, made two calves of gold, and said to the people: “You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt.” ²⁹And he put one in Bethel, the other in Dan. ³⁰This led to sin, because the people frequented these calves in Bethel and in Dan. ³¹He also built temples on the high places and made priests from among the common people who were not Levites.

³²Jeroboam established a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month like the pilgrimage feast in Judah, and he went up to the altar. He did this in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. He stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places he had built. ³³Jeroboam went up to the altar he built in Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, the month he arbitrarily chose. He established a feast for the Israelites, and he went up to the altar to burn incense.

Memorable Phase

“You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt” (1 Kings 12:28).

Christ Connection

Jesus tells the parable of a young man who leaves his father’s house to pursue false gods like pleasure and immoral living (Luke 15:11–32). The young man eventually comes to his senses and returns to his father’s house. Unfortunately, of the people in the northern kingdom who abandoned the main house of worship (i.e., the Jerusalem temple), only a few would come to their senses and return.

Life Application

The more you demand loyalty, the more you lose it. If you construct false reasons for people to stay by your side, it may end up working for a while (like in the case of Jeroboam). But such a manipulative strategy won’t work in the long run, as we’ll see in future passages. Jeroboam successfully maintained the people’s loyalty by constructing false gods, but the spiritual cost was disastrous.

Passage 4: The Death of Jeroboam

Date

920 B.C. (Approximate date of the battle between Abijah and Jeroboam)

Summary

In this passage, both kings meet in the northern kingdom (called Ephraim) for a battle. Abijah points out all the key differences between the kingdoms: The southern kingdom was borne from king David, while the northern kingdom was borne of rebellion against God. In the south, all priests are descendants of Aaron according to God's command; in the north, anyone who brings enough animals to sacrifice may serve as a priest. The southern kingdom has kept the worship requirements; the northern kingdom has forsaken them.

During Abijah's speech, the northern army encircles the southern army. When Abijah realizes the danger, he cries out to the Lord, and the Lord makes the southern kingdom victorious. Jeroboam continues to suffer more defeats at the hands of Judah until his death.

Map

Marked in red is the battle site between the armies of Jeroboam and Abijah.



2 Chronicles 13:1–23

In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, Abijah became king of Judah; ²he reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother was named Micaiah, daughter of Uriel of Gibeah. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam.

³Abijah joined battle with a force of four hundred thousand picked warriors, while Jeroboam lined up against him in battle with eight hundred thousand picked and valiant warriors. ⁴Abijah stood on Mount Zemaraim, which is in the highlands of Ephraim, and said: "Listen to me, Jeroboam and all Israel! ⁵Do you not know that the LORD, the God of Israel, has given David kingship over Israel forever, to him and to his sons, by a covenant of salt? ⁶Yet Jeroboam, son of Nebat, the servant of Solomon, son of David, arose and rebelled against his lord! ⁸But now, do you think you are a match for the kingdom of the LORD led by the descendants of David, simply because you are a huge multitude and have with you the golden calves which Jeroboam made you for gods? ⁹Have you not expelled the priests of the LORD, the sons of Aaron, and the Levites, and made for yourselves priests like the peoples of other lands? Everyone who comes to consecrate himself with a young bull and seven rams becomes a priest of no-gods. ¹⁰But as for us, the LORD is our God, and we have not abandoned him. The priests ministering to the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites also have their offices. ¹¹They sacrifice burnt offerings to the LORD and fragrant incense morning after morning and evening after evening; they set out the showbread on the pure table, and the lamps of the golden menorah burn evening after evening; for we observe our duties to the LORD, our God, but you have abandoned him. ¹²See, God is with us, at our head, and his priests are here with trumpets to sound the attack against you. Israelites, do not fight against the LORD, the God of your ancestors, for you will not succeed!"

¹³But Jeroboam had an ambush go around them to come at them from the rear; so that while his army faced Judah, his ambush lay behind them. ¹⁴When Judah turned and saw that they had to battle on both fronts, they cried out to the LORD and the priests sounded the trumpets. ¹⁵Then the Judahites shouted; and when they shouted, God struck down Jeroboam and all Israel before Abijah and Judah. ¹⁶The Israelites fled before Judah, and God delivered them into their power. ¹⁷Abijah and his people inflicted a severe defeat upon them; five hundred thousand picked men of Israel fell slain. ¹⁸The Israelites were humbled on that occasion, while the Judahites were victorious because they relied on the LORD, the God of their ancestors. ¹⁹Abijah pursued Jeroboam and seized cities from him: Bethel and its dependencies, Jeshanah and its dependencies, and Ephron and its dependencies. ²⁰Jeroboam did not regain power during Abijah's time; the LORD struck him down and he died, ²¹while Abijah continued to grow stronger. He married fourteen wives and fathered twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters.

²²The rest of the acts of Abijah, his deeds and his words, are recorded in the midrash of the prophet Iddo. ²³Abijah rested with his ancestors; they buried him in the City of

David and his son Asa succeeded him as king. During his time, the land had ten years of peace.

Memorable Phrase

“See, God is with us, at our head” (2 Chronicles 13:12).

Christ Connection

According to the letter to the Hebrews, Jesus is the true high priest, and making priestly sacrifice is a calling from God: “No one takes this honor upon himself but only when called by God, just as Aaron was” (Hebrews 5:4). Jesus the high priest receives his call from his heavenly father (Hebrews 5:5). In contrast, Abijah criticizes Jeroboam in this passage because he has named his own priests and his own places of worship; these new positions are obviously the work of man, not of God.

Life Application

If you do something wrong, you can be assured that someone is going to call you out on your behavior. We just saw how King Abijah calls out King Jeroboam for all the evil he establishes in Israel. If you have declared yourself as leader of something you have no business leading, you should relinquish that authority and make amends for overstepping your boundaries.

Passage 5: Good King Asa

Date

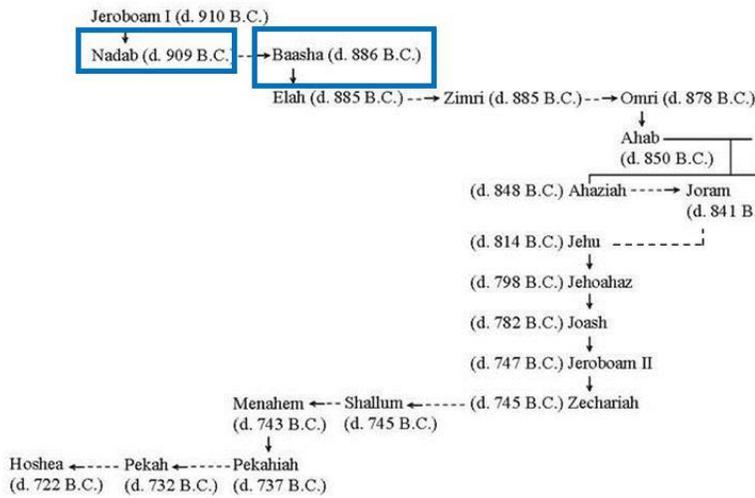
890 B.C. (Approximate date of battle between Asa and Baasha)

Summary

This passage has three distinct parts:

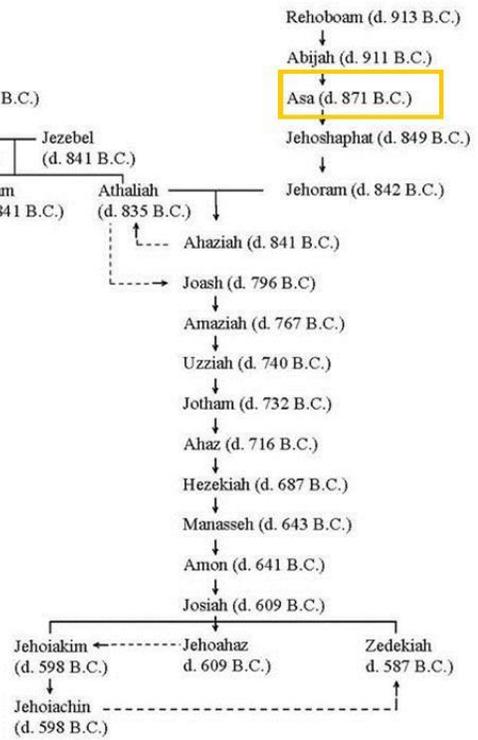
- 1) In the southern kingdom, after Abijah dies of natural causes, his son Asa takes the throne. Asa is considered a good king because he gets rid of idols, deposes his own grandmother from her office because she had made images of the god Ashera, and drives out all the male prostitutes who work in idolatrous places.
- 2) Meanwhile in the northern kingdom, Jeroboam's son Nadab takes over after his father's death. But his reign is short-lived. A citizen named Baasha wants the throne and kills Nadab, along with all of Jeroboam's descendants. As we'll see in other biblical passages, in the case of grave wrongdoing, blame and punishment could extend to the entire family.
- 3) The longest section of this passage is the war between Asa and Baasha. Asa pays the Syrian king, Ben-hadad I, to break a treaty he had formed with Israel. Ben-hadad I breaks the treaty, defeats Baasha, and gains some territory for himself. Syria will continue to fight with the northern kingdom in future passages.

North (Israel)



722 B.C. - Assyrians destroy Northern Kingdom forever

South (Judah)



587 B.C. - Babylonians destroy temple South exile (Return in 539 B.C.)

Map

Circled is Syria, also called Aram-Damascus. King Asa pays them to break their treaty with the north and attack them.



1 Kings 15:9–31

⁹In the twentieth year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Asa, king of Judah, became king; ¹⁰he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Maacah, daughter of Abishalom. ¹¹Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD like David his father, ¹²banishing the pagan priests from the land and removing all the idols his ancestors had made. ¹³He also deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother, because she had made an outrageous object for Asherah. Asa cut down this object and burned it in the Wadi Kidron. ¹⁴The high places did not disappear; yet Asa's heart was entirely with the LORD as long as he lived. ¹⁵He brought into the house of the LORD his father's and his own votive offerings of silver and gold and various vessels. ¹⁶There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, all their days. ¹⁷Baasha, king of Israel, attacked Judah and fortified Ramah to blockade Asa, king of Judah. ¹⁸Asa then took all the silver and gold remaining in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the house of the king. Entrusting them to his ministers, King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad, son of Tabrimmon, son of Hezion, king of Aram, who ruled in Damascus. He said: ¹⁹"There is a treaty between you and me, as there was between your father and my father. I am sending you a present of silver and gold. Go, break your treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me." ²⁰Ben-hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the leaders of his troops against the cities of Israel. They attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Chinnereth, besides all the land of Naphtali. ²¹When Baasha heard of it, he left off fortifying Ramah, and stayed in Tirzah. ²²Then King Asa summoned all Judah without exception, and they carried away the stones and beams with which Baasha was fortifying Ramah. With them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah. ²³All the rest of the acts of Asa, with all his valor and all that he did, and the cities he built, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. But in his old age, Asa had an infirmity in his feet. ²⁴Asa rested with his ancestors; he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David his father, and his son Jehoshaphat succeeded him as king.

²⁵Nadab, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah. For two years he reigned over Israel.

²⁶He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, walking in the way of his father and the sin he had caused Israel to commit. ²⁷Baasha, son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, plotted against him and struck him down at Gibbethon of the Philistines, which Nadab and all Israel were besieging. ²⁸Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa, king of Judah, and succeeded him as king. ²⁹Once he was king, he killed the entire house of Jeroboam, not leaving a single soul but destroying Jeroboam utterly, according to the word of the LORD spoken through his servant, Ahijah the Shilonite, ³⁰because of the sins Jeroboam committed and caused Israel to commit, by which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger.

³¹The rest of the acts of Nadab, with all that he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Memorable Phrase

“Go, break your treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, that he may withdraw from me” (1 Kings 15:19).

Christ Connection

Jesus says that the bonds of faith are even stronger than the bonds of family: “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me” (Matthew 10:37). If our mother or father is doing something that’s damaging our relationship with God, we can’t stand by and let that happen. For example, they might advise us to engage in dishonest business practices or to lie to avoid negative consequences. In this passage, Asa deposes his own grandmother because she made an image of the false god Asherah for worship. We can’t let others lead us away from Jesus, even if they are members of our family.

Life Application

Do you have the courage to challenge a person if you know he or she is doing wrong? Asa was courageous enough to depose his own grandmother when she strayed from the true God. May God give you the courage to confront those who are harming others, whether in your school, workplace, or household.

Also, sometimes following God requires you to make hard sacrifices. In terms of financial sacrifice, Asa has to empty out the treasuries to get the king of Syria to fight on his side against Israel. In terms of relational sacrifice, Asa has to discipline his own grandmother when she starts making idols. For these reasons, the biblical author says, “Asa’s heart was entirely with the LORD as long as he lived” (1 Kings 15:14).

Passage 6: The Emergence of Omri

Date

884 B.C. (Approximate date when Omri takes the throne)

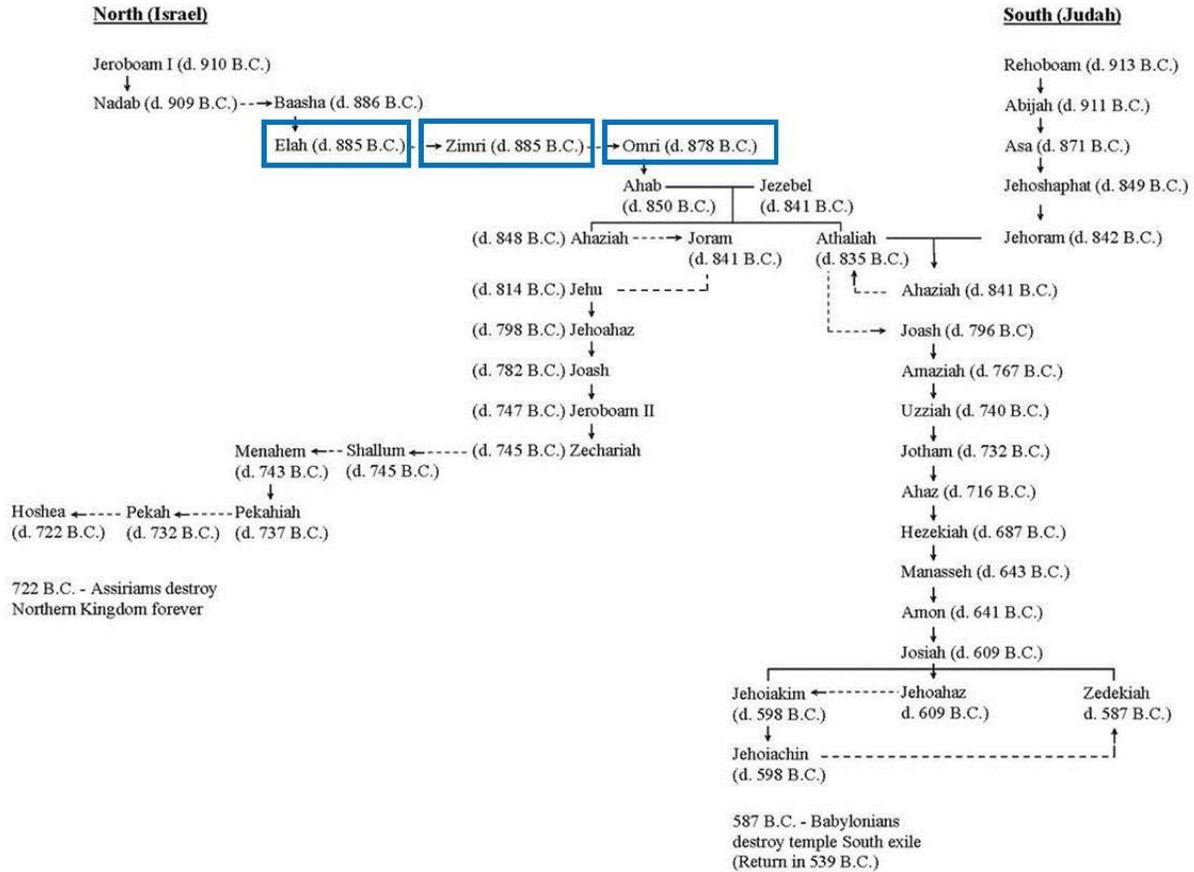
Summary

Baasha's son Elah takes over as king of Israel. After two years, one of his servants, Zimri, kills him and assumes the throne. However, when the people learn what Zimri has done, they declare Omri, a northern general, their rightful king. The nation marches en masse to Zimri's palace. When Zimri sees that he's about to lose his crown, he sets fire to himself and the whole palace, ending his tenure after only seven days.

However, Omri's power is not yet secure. Many people in the kingdom support a different man, Tibni, as their preferred king. Omri prevails against the challenger and reigns as king for twelve years.

Family Tree

We turn our attention now solely to the northern kingdom, and in this passage we look at the next three kings after Baasha: Elah, Zimri, and Omri.



Map

Marked in red is Tirzah, where Zimri burns himself in the palace as Omri and the people approach.



1 Kings 16:8–23

⁸In the twenty-sixth year of Asa, king of Judah, Elah, son of Baasha, became king of Israel in Tirzah for two years.

⁹His servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, plotted against him. As he was in Tirzah, drinking to excess in the house of Arza, master of his palace in Tirzah, ¹⁰Zimri entered; he struck and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, and succeeded him as king. ¹¹Once he was king, seated on the throne, he killed the whole house of Baasha, not sparing a single male relative or friend of his. ¹²Zimri destroyed the entire house of Baasha, according to the word the LORD spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet, ¹³because of all the sins which Baasha and his son Elah committed and caused Israel to commit, provoking the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger by their idols.

¹⁴The rest of the acts of Elah, with all that he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

¹⁵In the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, Zimri became king for seven days in Tirzah.

The army was encamped at Gibbethon of the Philistines ¹⁶when they heard, “Zimri has formed a conspiracy and has killed the king.” So that day in the camp all Israel made Omri, commander of the army, king of Israel. ¹⁷Omri and all Israel with him marched up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah. ¹⁸When Zimri saw that the city was captured, he entered the citadel of the king’s house and burned it down over him. He died ¹⁹because of the sins he had committed, doing what was evil in the LORD’S sight by walking in the way of Jeroboam and the sin he had caused Israel to commit.

²⁰The rest of the acts of Zimri, with the conspiracy he carried out, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

²¹At that time the people of Israel were divided in two, half following Tibni, son of Ginath, to make him king, and half for Omri. ²²The partisans of Omri prevailed over those of Tibni, son of Ginath. Tibni died and Omri became king.

²³In the thirty-first year of Asa, king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel for twelve years; the first six of them he reigned in Tirzah.

Memorable Phrase

“Omri and all Israel with him marched up from Gibbethon and besieged Tirzah” (1 Kings 16:17).

Christ Connection

Jesus tells a parable of a man who had mercy on one of his servants. That servant, however, proceeds to deny mercy to a fellow servant. When all the other servants see this, they report to the master so that justice can be served (see Matthew 18:21–35 for the whole parable). In this passage we see how all the “servants” of Israel respond to Zimri’s coup. With their king assassinated, there is no “master” to go to, so the people go to the general Omri to correct the injustice.

Life Application

Remind yourself of Zimri the next time you feel tempted to get ahead through deceit or force. It probably won’t work out well for you. If you plot against somebody (through rumors,

backstabbing, or even violence), you can rest assured that any gains will be temporary and costly.

Passage 7: The Prophet Elijah

Date

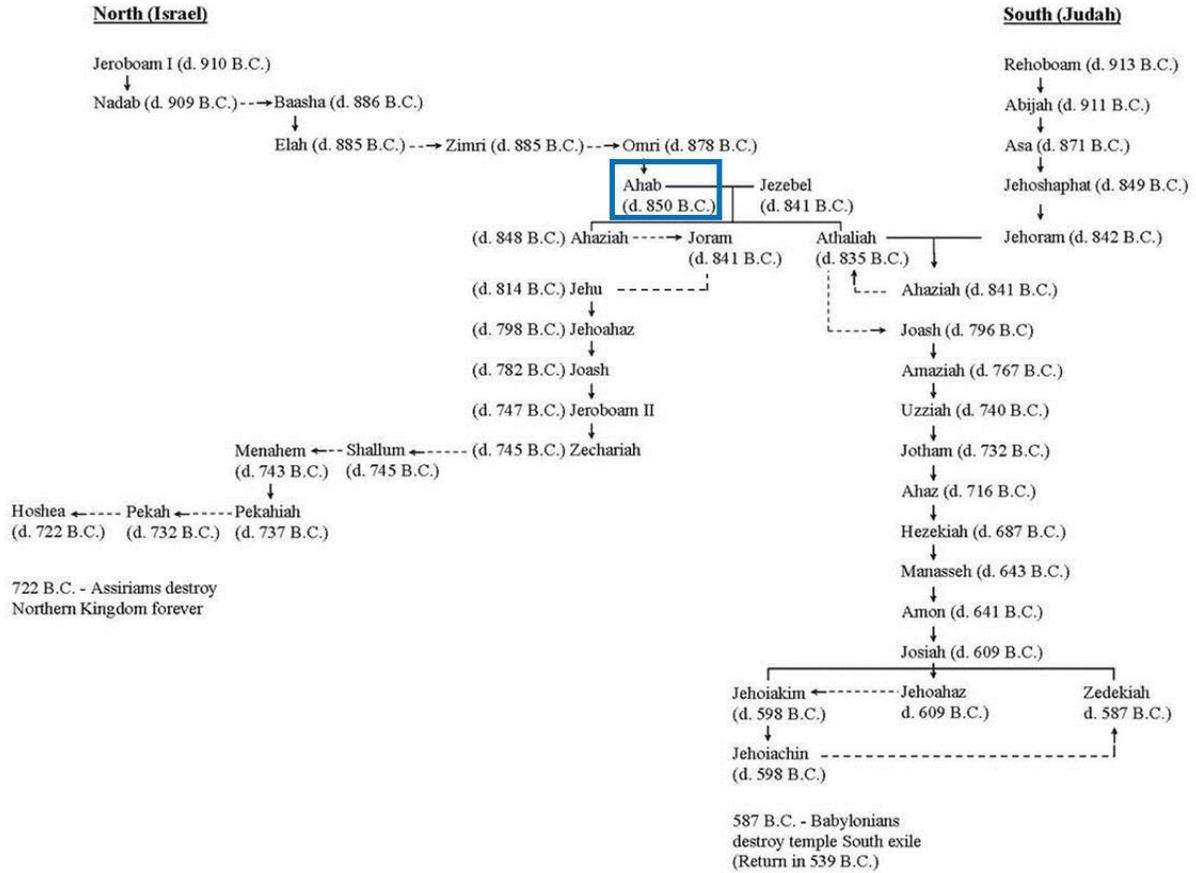
870 B.C. (Approximate date of famine in Israel)

Summary

Omri's son, Ahab, takes the throne and reigns for a long time in Israel. His main adversary is the prophet Elijah, who constantly rebukes him and tells him to correct his ways. In this passage, Elijah announces to King Ahab that the sky will not produce rain for three years as a sign of God's anger for the nation's idolatry. The drought arrives as prophesied, and everyone is hungry, including Elijah. But God provides for Elijah. First God sends ravens to give Elijah food. God later sends Elijah to a widow in Sidon (neighbors to the north of Israel). When Elijah arrives, the widow takes him in, but says she only has enough food for one last meal for her and her son. Elijah tells her not to worry: the oil in her bottle and flour in her jar will not run out until the rain returns. And that's exactly what happens.

Family Tree

Many stories in 1 Kings have to do with King Ahab.



Map

Marked in red is the town of Zarephath, where Elijah receives food from a widow during the famine.



1 Kings 17:1-16

¹Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab: “As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, during these years there shall be no dew or rain except at my word.” ²The word of the LORD came to Elijah: ³Leave here, go east and hide in the Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁴You shall drink of the wadi, and I have commanded ravens to feed you there. ⁵So he left and did as the LORD had commanded. He left and remained by the Wadi Cherith, east of the Jordan. ⁶Ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the wadi.

⁷After some time, however, the wadi ran dry, because no rain had fallen in the land. ⁸So the word of the LORD came to him: ⁹Arise, go to Zarephath of Sidon and stay there. I have commanded a widow there to feed you. ¹⁰He arose and went to Zarephath. When he arrived at the entrance of the city, a widow was there gathering sticks; he called out to her, “Please bring me a small cupful of water to drink.” ¹¹She left to get it, and he called out after her, “Please bring along a crust of bread.” ¹²She said, “As the LORD, your God, lives, I have nothing baked; there is only a handful of flour in my jar and a little oil in my jug. Just now I was collecting a few sticks, to go in and prepare something for myself and my son; when we have eaten it, we shall die.” ¹³Elijah said to her, “Do not be afraid. Go and do as you have said. But first make me a little cake and bring it to me. Afterwards you can prepare something for yourself and your son. ¹⁴For the LORD, the God of Israel, says: The jar of flour shall not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, until the day when the LORD sends rain upon the earth.” ¹⁵She left and did as Elijah had said. She had enough to eat for a long time—he and she and her household. ¹⁶The jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD spoken through Elijah.

Memorable Phrase

“The jar of flour did not go empty, nor the jug of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD spoken through Elijah” (1 Kings 17:16).

Christ Connection

Jesus mentions this story when his own townspeople refuse to believe he was sent by God. He says that prophets are never welcome in their hometown, and that God often uses foreigners (in this case the Sidons) to manifest his glory (see Luke 4:16–30 for the whole story).

Life Application

The widow in this passage tells Elijah that after using the last of her flour and oil, she and her son will die. When we lose hope, it comes across in how we speak. Although she has given up all hope, Elijah has confidence in God’s faithfulness. Remind yourself that it’s not over until God says it’s over. You might think your illness, unemployment, or grief will never end; but God sends us the right people at the right time.

Passage 8: Baal Priests vs. Prophet Elijah

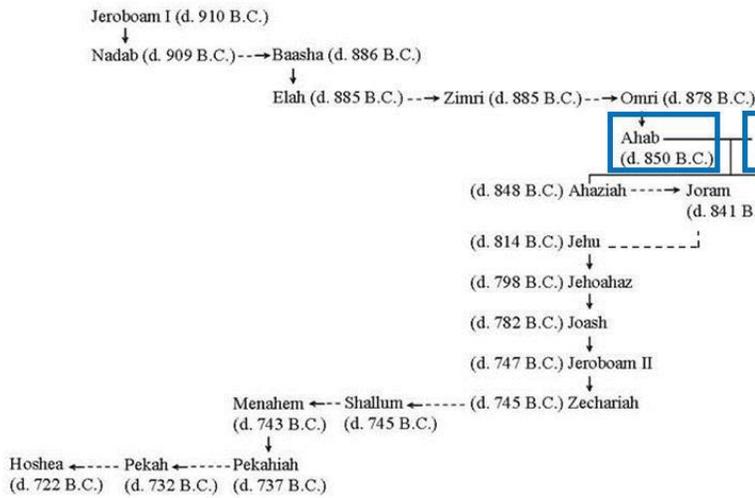
Date

867 B.C. (Approximate date of the battle between Elijah and the priests of Baal)

Summary

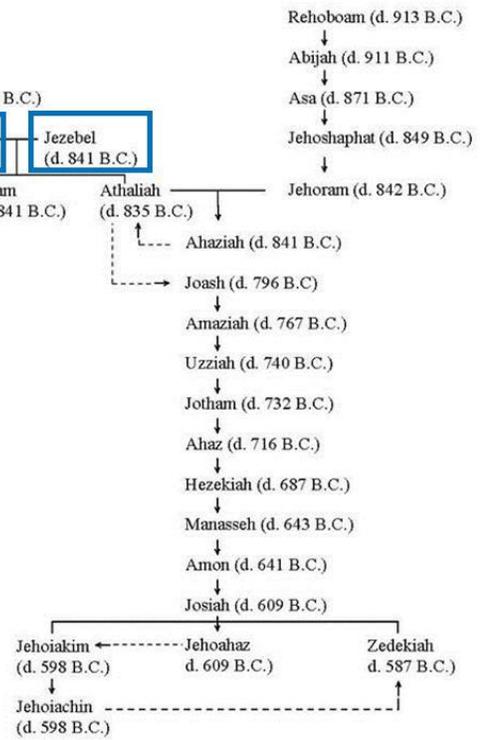
Elijah is one of the great prophets in the Bible, and here we read about his most intense battle. He must face off alone against the priests of Baal, a rain god endorsed by King Ahab and his wife Jezebel. Elijah meets face to face with King Ahab and tells him that in encouraging the worship of Baal, the king has cursed his own nation. Then Elijah challenges the priests of Baal to a duel: The deity that sends fire down upon an animal sacrifice is the God Israel should serve. The 450 priests of Baal go first; they cry out to Baal and even cut themselves. However, no fire descends. Elijah then has the people pour water over the animal sacrifice, over the altar, and even inside a pit around the altar. He then calls upon the Lord to bring down fire, which God does. The people recognize the Lord as the true God, and Elijah commands that the priests of Baal be killed.

North (Israel)



722 B.C. - Assirians destroy Northern Kingdom forever

South (Judah)



587 B.C. - Babylonians destroy temple South exile (Return in 539 B.C.)

Map

Marked in red is Mount Carmel, where the battle between Elijah and the priests of Baal takes place.



1 Kings 18:17-40

¹⁷When Ahab saw Elijah, he said to him, "Is it you, you disturber of Israel?" ¹⁸He answered, "It is not I who disturb Israel, but you and your father's house, by forsaking the commands of the LORD and you by following the Baals. ¹⁹Now summon all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, as well as the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah who eat at Jezebel's table." ²⁰So Ahab summoned all the Israelites and had the prophets gather on Mount Carmel.

²¹Elijah approached all the people and said, "How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him." But the people did not answer him. ²²So Elijah said to the people, "I am the only remaining prophet of the LORD, and there are four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. ²³Give us two young bulls. Let them choose one, cut it into pieces, and place it on the wood, but start no fire. I shall prepare the other and place it on the wood, but shall start no fire. ²⁴You shall call upon the name of your gods, and I will call upon the name of the LORD. The God who answers with fire is God." All the people answered, "We agree!"

²⁵Elijah then said to the prophets of Baal, "Choose one young bull and prepare it first, for there are more of you. Call upon your gods, but do not start the fire." ²⁶Taking the young bull that was turned over to them, they prepared it and called upon Baal from morning to noon, saying, "Baal, answer us!" But there was no sound, and no one answering. And they hopped around the altar they had prepared. ²⁷When it was noon, Elijah taunted them: "Call louder, for he is a god; he may be busy doing his business, or may be on a journey. Perhaps he is asleep and must be awakened." ²⁸They called out louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears according to their ritual until blood gushed over them. ²⁹Noon passed and they remained in a prophetic state until the time for offering sacrifice. But there was no sound, no one answering, no one listening.

³⁰Then Elijah said to all the people, "Come here to me." When they drew near to him, he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been destroyed. ³¹He took twelve stones, for the number of tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the LORD had said: Israel shall be your name. ³²He built the stones into an altar to the name of the LORD, and made a trench around the altar large enough for two measures of grain. ³³When he had arranged the wood, he cut up the young bull and laid it on the wood. ³⁴He said, "Fill four jars with water and pour it over the burnt offering and over the wood." "Do it again," he said, and they did it again. "Do it a third time," he said, and they did it a third time. ³⁵The water flowed around the altar; even the trench was filled with the water. ³⁶At the time for offering sacrifice, Elijah the prophet came forward and said, "LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. ³⁷Answer me, LORD! Answer me, that this people may know that you, LORD, are God and that you have turned their hearts back to you." ³⁸The LORD'S fire came down and devoured the burnt offering, wood, stones, and dust, and lapped up the water in the trench. ³⁹Seeing this, all the people fell

prostrate and said, "The LORD is God! The LORD is God!"⁴⁰ Then Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of Baal. Let none of them escape!" They seized them, and Elijah brought them down to the Wadi Kishon and there he slaughtered them.

Memorable Phrase

"How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Christ Connection

Before the duel, Elijah forces the people of Israel into a decision: "How long will you straddle the issue? If the LORD is God, follow him; if Baal, follow him."

Although few people today are tempted to follow Baal, there are many gods vying for our attention, like money, prestige, and power. You may feel your heart divided between these things and the true God, but Jesus demands that you make a decision: "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matthew 6:24).

Life Application

It is time to make a decision: You must either serve God, or serve something else. Determine the nature of the "Baals" in your life that are hard to resist. Then make the firm decision to serve the true God.

Passage 9: Elijah Anoints Elisha

Date

867 B.C. (Approximate date of Elisha's call)

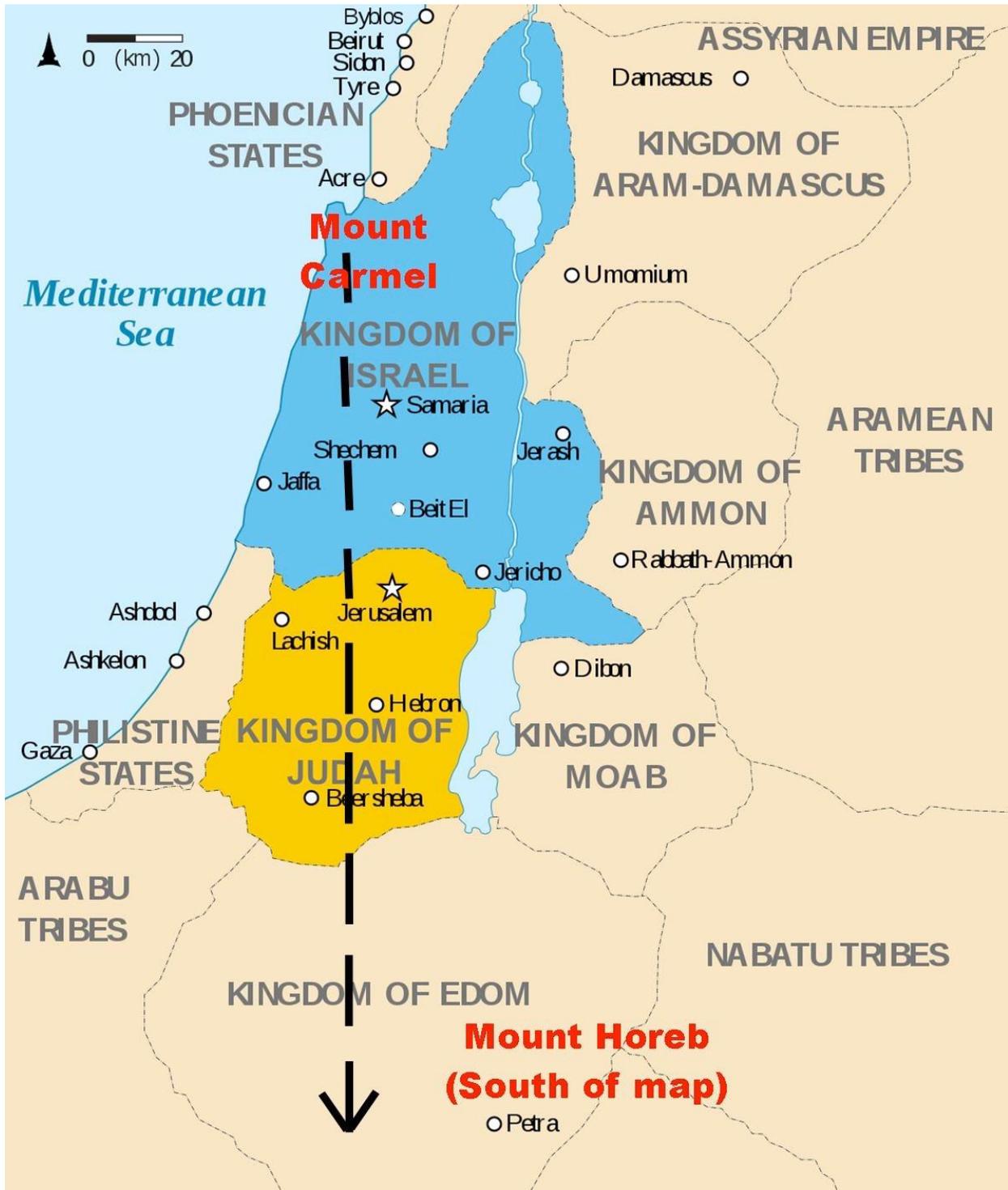
Summary

After Elijah defeats the 450 priests of Baal, King Ahab's wife Jezebel gets angry and wants to kill Elijah. Elijah flees to a mountain where God says he will manifest himself. It's important to note how God does that: not in a big fire or a big earthquake, but in a little whisper.

What's also very important is the content of God's message: The northern kingdom has sinned so greatly that God is going to use foreign kingdoms to put Israel on the right path. It will require a group effort to get rid of Ahab and all his descendants. God then tells Elijah who to recruit and anoint: Elisha will be the new prophet in Elijah's stead; Jehu (a northern kingdom war general) will be the future king of Israel; and Hazael (a Syrian war general), future king of Aram, will join the fight. This passage ends with Elijah calling Elisha to follow him.

Map

Below is a map of Elijah's route as he escapes from Mount Carmel to Mount Horeb.



1 Kings 19:1–21

¹Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done—that he had murdered all the prophets by the sword. ²Jezebel then sent a messenger to Elijah and said, “May the gods do thus to me and more, if by this time tomorrow I have not done with your life what was done to each of them.” ³Elijah was afraid and fled for his life, going to Beer-sheba of Judah. He left his servant there ⁴and went a day’s journey into the wilderness, until he came to a solitary broom tree and sat beneath it. He prayed for death: “Enough, LORD! Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors.” ⁵He lay down and fell asleep under the solitary broom tree, but suddenly a messenger touched him and said, “Get up and eat!” ⁶He looked and there at his head was a hearth cake and a jug of water. After he ate and drank, he lay down again, ⁷but the angel of the LORD came back a second time, touched him, and said, “Get up and eat or the journey will be too much for you!” ⁸He got up, ate, and drank; then strengthened by that food, he walked forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.

⁹There he came to a cave, where he took shelter. But the word of the LORD came to him: Why are you here, Elijah? ¹⁰He answered: “I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my life.” ¹¹Then the LORD said: Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD; the LORD will pass by. There was a strong and violent wind rending the mountains and crushing rocks before the LORD—but the LORD was not in the wind; after the wind, an earthquake—but the LORD was not in the earthquake; ¹²after the earthquake, fire—but the LORD was not in the fire; after the fire, a light silent sound.

¹³When he heard this, Elijah hid his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave. A voice said to him, Why are you here, Elijah? ¹⁴He replied, “I have been most zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts, but the Israelites have forsaken your covenant. They have destroyed your altars and murdered your prophets by the sword. I alone remain, and they seek to take my life.” ¹⁵The LORD said to him: Go back! Take the desert road to Damascus. When you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael as king of Aram. ¹⁶You shall also anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, as king of Israel, and Elisha, son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah, as prophet to succeed you. ¹⁷Anyone who escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill. Anyone who escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill. ¹⁸But I will spare seven thousand in Israel—every knee that has not bent to Baal, every mouth that has not kissed him.

¹⁹Elijah set out, and came upon Elisha, son of Shaphat, as he was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen; he was following the twelfth. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak on him. ²⁰Elisha left the oxen, ran after Elijah, and said, “Please, let me kiss my father and mother good-bye, and I will follow you.” Elijah answered, “Go back! What have I done to you?” ²¹Elisha left him and, taking the yoke of oxen, slaughtered them; he used

the plowing equipment for fuel to boil their flesh, and gave it to the people to eat. Then he left and followed Elijah to serve him.

Memorable Phrase

“Get up and eat or the journey will be too much for you!” (1 Kings 19:7).

Christ Connection

When Elijah calls Elisha to follow him, Elisha hesitates out of concern for his family. A similar scene plays out as Jesus calls out to three different men to follow him (see Luke 9:56–62). All three men express interest but are conflicted. One man says, “I will follow you wherever you go,” but changes his mind when Jesus reminds him of the comforts he’ll be giving up. The other two men have obligations at home to attend to first. But Jesus replies: “Let the dead bury their dead. But you, go and proclaim the kingdom of God.”

None of these three men ultimately choose to follow Jesus. Yet Elijah allows Elisha to kiss his parents goodbye before he went to be a prophet.

What’s the difference between these two cases? Why does Elijah excuse Elisha, while Jesus requires his candidates to stay with him?

In the case of Jesus, these particular men were casual observers who saw Jesus and his disciples as they were walking down the road. It is unlikely that they understand the full cost of discipleship, which is why Jesus answers them so harshly. In the case of Elisha, he’s willing to slaughter his oxen and use the plowing equipment to fuel a fire that boils its flesh. These actions show he is aware of the great vocation God is calling him to.

Life Application

They say we measure success by succession: If future generations continue fighting for the same things we do, then it’s a good sign we’re leaving behind a good legacy. Here, God calls Elijah to anoint his new disciple, Elisha. You should reflect on the potential “Elishas” in your life: people God has placed in your life so they can carry on what you’ve done.

Passage 10: Ahab, Jezebel, and the Vineyard

Date

849 B.C. (Approximate date when Ahab takes Naboth's vineyard)

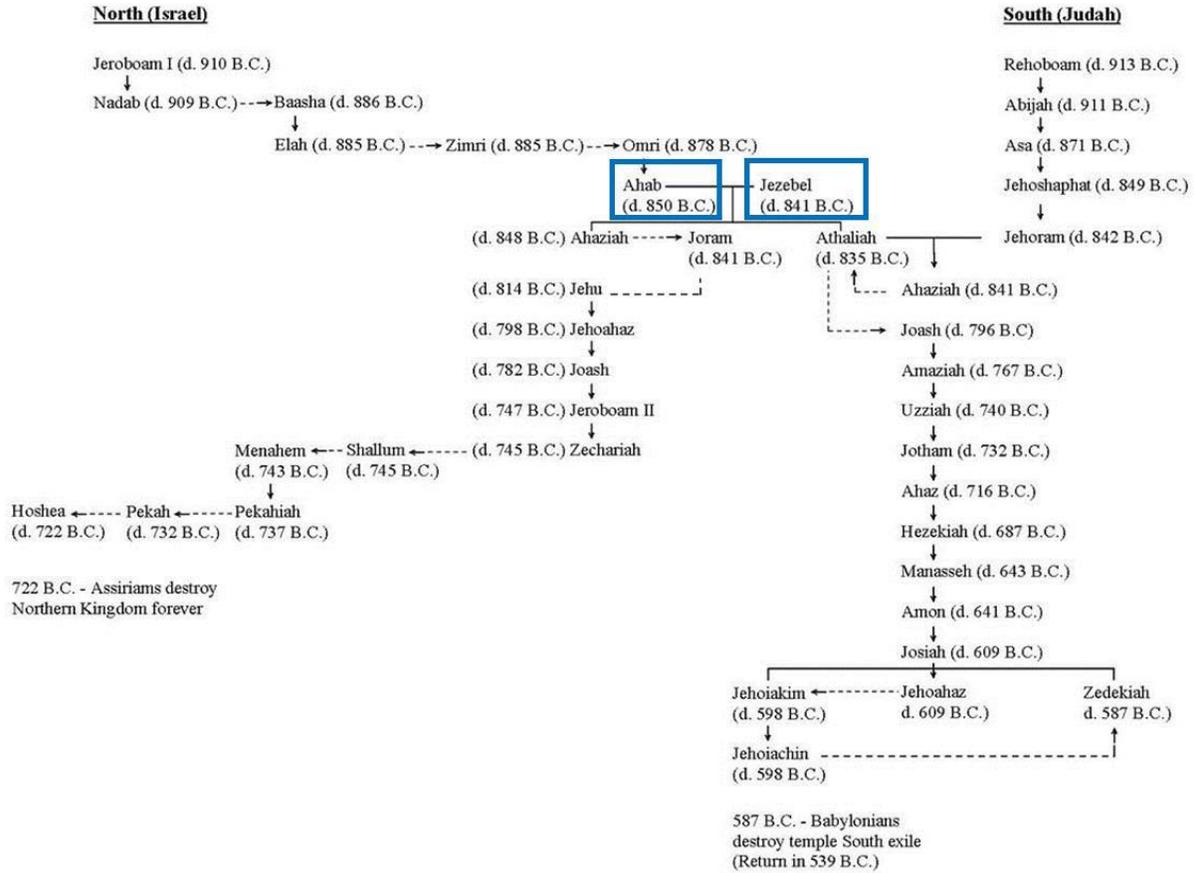
Summary

While Elijah is preparing his disciple Elisha, Ahab and Jezebel continue to lead the people away from God. This story shows how evil Jezebel really is. It is bad enough that she turns Ahab's heart to the false god Baal; it is bad enough that she resolves to kill the prophet Elijah after he defeats the priests of Baal. But here she kills an innocent man just to get his vineyard.

Her victim, Naboth, owns a vineyard next to Ahab's palace. Ahab wants to buy it, but Naboth refuses since it is the inheritance of his forefathers. Ahab, depressed, explains the situation to his wife. Jezebel then takes matters into her own hands. She uses the king's name to write a letter instructing the elders to proclaim a religious fast, putting Naboth in charge of it. She then instructs the elders to contract two witnesses to lie about Naboth, falsely claiming that he has blasphemed against God and the king. The elders carry out the instructions, and Naboth gets stoned to death. When Jezebel finds out, she informs Ahab he is free to take the vineyard. The prophet Elijah finds out what happened and condemns Ahab and his wife for their actions. Elijah proclaims that Ahab, his wife, and his posterity shall disappear in violent ways. Ahab repents, and so the Lord says calamity will not fall on Ahab. But disaster will still come to his descendants—and to Jezebel.

Family Tree

Both Ahab and Jezebel are highlighted here, since they both play a role in Naboth's death.



Map

Naboth's vineyard is close to Ahab's palace in Samaria, marked in red.



1 Kings 21:1–29

¹Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard in Jezreel next to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. Some time later, ²Ahab said to Naboth, "Give me your vineyard to be my vegetable garden, since it is close by, next to my house. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or, if you prefer, I will give you its value in money." ³Naboth said to Ahab, "The LORD forbid that I should give you my ancestral heritage." ⁴Ahab went home disturbed and angry at the answer Naboth the Jezreelite had given him: "I will not give you my ancestral heritage." Lying down on his bed, he turned away and would not eat. ⁵His wife Jezebel came to him and said to him, "Why are you so sullen that you will not eat?" ⁶He answered her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Sell me your vineyard, or, if you prefer, I will give you a vineyard in exchange.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" ⁷Jezebel his wife said to him, "What a king of Israel you are! Get up! Eat and be cheerful. I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

⁸So she wrote letters in Ahab's name and, having sealed them with his seal, sent them to the elders and to the nobles who lived in the same city with Naboth. ⁹This is what she wrote in the letters: "Proclaim a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹⁰Next, set two scoundrels opposite him to accuse him: 'You have cursed God and king.' Then take him out and stone him to death."

¹¹His fellow citizens—the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city—did as Jezebel had ordered in the letters she sent them. ¹²They proclaimed a fast and set Naboth at the head of the people. ¹³Two scoundrels came in and sat opposite Naboth, and the scoundrels accused him in the presence of the people, "Naboth has cursed God and king." And they led him out of the city and stoned him to death. ¹⁴Then they sent word to Jezebel: "Naboth has been stoned to death."

¹⁵When Jezebel learned that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, "Go, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite which he refused to sell you, because Naboth is not alive, but dead." ¹⁶When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he started on his way down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

¹⁷Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: ¹⁸Go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, who is in Samaria. He will be in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone to take possession. ¹⁹Tell him: "Thus says the LORD: After murdering, do you also take possession?" And tell him, "Thus says the LORD: In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs shall lick up your blood, too."

²⁰Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me out, my enemy?" He said, "I have found you. Because you have given yourself up to doing evil in the LORD'S sight, ²¹I am bringing evil upon you: I will consume you and will cut off every male belonging to Ahab, whether bond or free, in Israel. ²²I will make your house like that of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and

like the house of Baasha, son of Ahijah, because you have provoked me by leading Israel into sin.”

²³Against Jezebel, too, the LORD declared: The dogs shall devour Jezebel in the confines of Jezreel.

²⁴Anyone of Ahab’s line who dies in the city,
 dogs will devour;
Anyone who dies in the field,
 the birds of the sky will devour.

²⁵Indeed, no one gave himself up to the doing of evil in the sight of the LORD as did Ahab, urged on by his wife Jezebel. ²⁶He became completely abominable by going after idols, just as the Amorites had done, whom the LORD drove out of the Israelites’ way.

²⁷When Ahab heard these words, he tore his garments and put on sackcloth over his bare flesh. He fasted, slept in the sackcloth, and went about subdued. ²⁸Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, ²⁹Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Since he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his time. I will bring the evil upon his house in his son’s time.

Memorable Phrase

“I have found you. Because you have given yourself up to doing evil in the LORD’S sight” (1 Kings 21:20).

Christ Connection

Naboth isn’t the only innocent man to die because of lying witnesses. Jesus faced the same thing (Mark 14:55–59). In fact, in this gospel passage, it says that the testimonies of the false accusers didn’t even agree. In the case of Naboth, Elijah brings the truth to light. In Jesus’ case, the witnesses to the resurrection bring the truth to light. In all cases, God raises up the innocent when they are falsely accused.

Life Application

Sometimes the innocent are unjustly condemned. Jezebel unjustly kills Naboth just to get his vineyard. But Elijah reminds her that nothing escapes divine justice. God may not work on our timetable, but he’s always at work. Reflect on a time you were innocent but suffered injustice. Pray that you may have the same patience and faith to endure the persecution, remaining blameless.

Passage 11: The Death of Ahab

Date

852 B.C. (Approximate date of Ahab's death in the battle of Ramoth-Gilead)

Summary

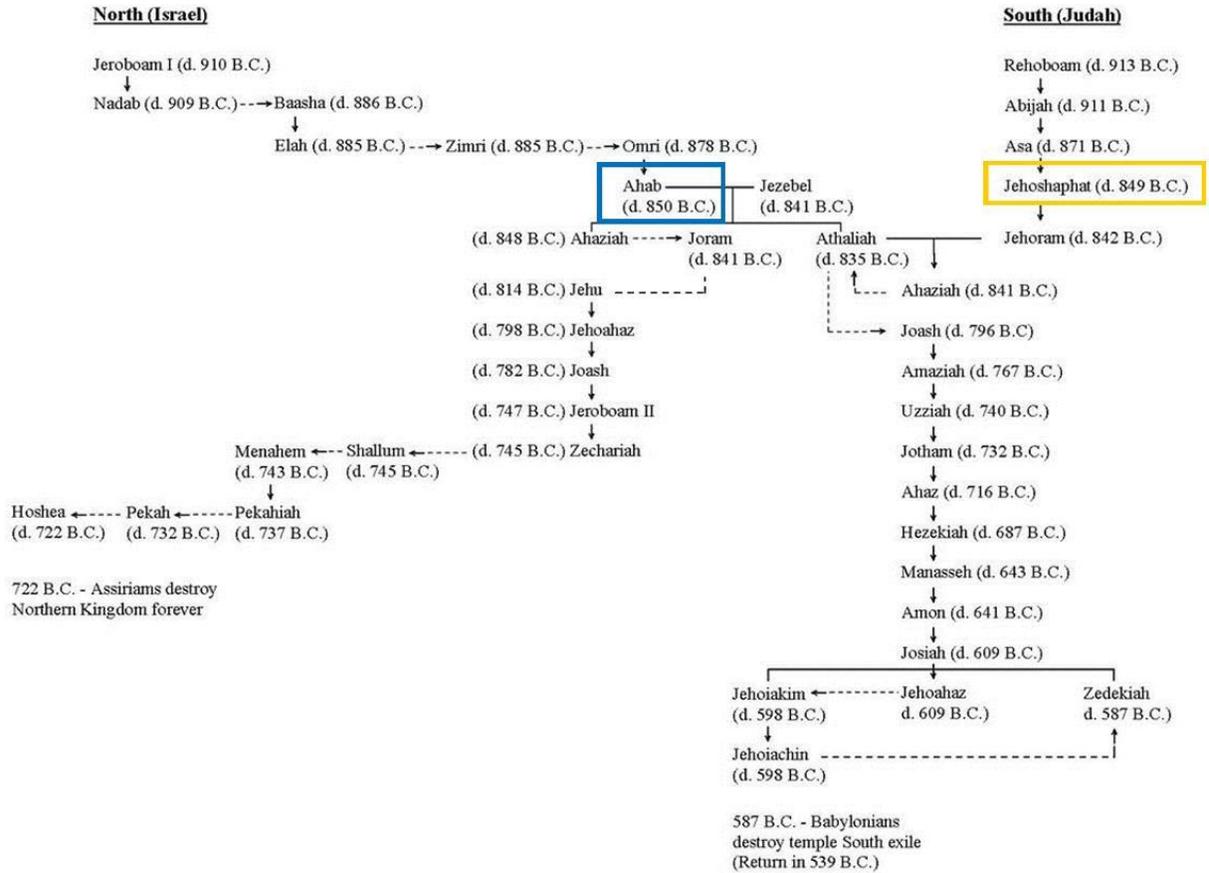
Although Ahab has been fighting battles with Elijah the prophet, he is at peace with the southern kingdom. That's because Jehoshaphat and he are allies through marriage: Jehoshaphat's son married Ahab's daughter. In fact, both of them join in battle together against the Syrians in this passage.

Jehoshaphat visits Ahab in his palace. He convinces Ahab to go to battle against Syria and wants to know what the different prophets think about this matter. So Ahab consults four hundred of his prophets, all of whom say Ahab will triumph. But one prophet, Micaiah (who never gives Ahab good news), tells the king that he will die. Micaiah goes on to say that in heaven, God has already planned Ahab's demise. One of the angels in heaven offered to put a lying tongue into the four hundred prophets so that Ahab would be convinced to ascend to Ramoth-gilead and to his death. Ahab is obviously not happy about this prophecy and sends Micaiah to prison.

To protect himself in battle, Ahab dresses like a normal soldier and not like the king. He does fool the Syrian army into cornering a different person, but a stray arrow ends up killing Ahab in battle. Jehoshaphat, for his part, does survive the battle.

Family Tree

We see here Ahab and Jehoshaphat connected though marriage: Ahab's daughter, Athaliah, marries Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram.



Map

Syria is also called Aram-Damascus. Ahab's final battle at Ramoth-gilead is marked in red.



2 Chronicles 18:1–34

¹Jehoshaphat therefore had wealth and glory in abundance; but he became related to Ahab by marriage. ²After some years he went down to Ahab at Samaria; Ahab slaughtered numerous sheep and oxen for him and for the people with him, and incited him to go up against Ramoth-gilead. ³Ahab, king of Israel, asked Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, "Will you come with me to Ramoth-gilead?" He answered, "You and I are as one, and your people and my people as well. We will be with you in the battle."

⁴Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "Seek the word of the LORD at once."

⁵The king of Israel assembled the prophets, four hundred of them, and asked, "Shall we go to fight against Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" They said, "Attack. God will give it into the power of the king." ⁶But Jehoshaphat said, "Is there no other prophet of the LORD here we might consult?" ⁷The king of Israel answered, "There is one other man through whom we may consult the LORD; but I hate him, because he prophesies not good but always evil about me. He is Micaiah, son of Imlah." Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say that." ⁸So the king of Israel called an official, and said to him, "Get Micaiah, son of Imlah, at once." ⁹The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were seated, each on his throne, clothed in their robes of state in the square at the entrance of the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets were prophesying before them.

¹⁰Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, made himself two horns of iron and said: "The LORD says: With these you shall gore Aram until you have destroyed them." ¹¹The other prophets prophesied in the same vein, saying: "Attack Ramoth-gilead, and conquer! The LORD will give it into the power of the king." ¹²Meanwhile the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah said to him: "Look now, the words of the prophets are as one in speaking good for the king. Let your word be at one with theirs; speak a good word." ¹³Micaiah said, "As the LORD lives, I shall speak whatever my God says."

¹⁴When he came to the king, the king said to him, "Micah, shall we go to fight at Ramoth-gilead, or shall I refrain?" He said, "Attack and conquer! They will be delivered into your power." ¹⁵But the king answered him, "How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?" ¹⁶So Micaiah said:

"I see all Israel
scattered on the mountains,
like sheep without a shepherd,
And the LORD saying,
These have no masters!
Let each of them go back home in peace."

¹⁷The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not tell you, he does not prophesy good about me, but only evil?" ¹⁸Micaiah continued: "Therefore hear the word of the LORD. I saw the LORD seated on his throne, with the whole host of heaven standing to his right and to his left. ¹⁹The LORD asked: Who will deceive Ahab, king of Israel, so that he will go up and fall on Ramoth-gilead? And one said this, another that, ²⁰until this spirit

came forth and stood before the LORD, saying, 'I will deceive him.' The LORD asked: How? ²¹He answered, 'I will go forth and become a lying spirit in the mouths of all his prophets.' The LORD replied: You shall succeed in deceiving him. Go forth and do this. ²²So now the LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouths of these prophets of yours; but the LORD himself has decreed evil against you."

²³Thereupon Zedekiah, son of Chenaanah, came up and struck Micaiah on the cheek, saying, "Has the spirit of the LORD, then, passed from me to speak with you?" ²⁴Micaiah said, "You shall find out on the day you go into an innermost room to hide." ²⁵The king of Israel then said: "Seize Micaiah and take him back to Amon, prefect of the city, and to Joash the king's son, ²⁶and say, 'This is the king's order: Put this man in prison and feed him scanty rations of bread and water until I come back in safety!'" ²⁷But Micaiah said, "If ever you return in safety, the LORD has not spoken through me." (He also said, "Hear, O peoples, all of you!")

²⁹and the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into battle. But you, put on your own robes." So the king of Israel disguised himself and they entered the battle. ³⁰In the meantime, the king of Aram had given his chariot commanders the order, "Fight with no one, great or small, except the king of Israel alone." ³¹When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, "There is the king of Israel!" and wheeled to fight him. But Jehoshaphat cried out and the LORD helped him; God induced them to leave him alone. ³²The chariot commanders, seeing that he was not the king of Israel, turned away from him. ³³But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the joints of his breastplate. He ordered his charioteer, "Rein about and take me out of the ranks, for I am wounded." ³⁴The battle grew fierce during the day, and the king of Israel braced himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. He died as the sun was setting.

Memorable Phrase

"But the king answered him, 'How many times must I adjure you to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?'" (2 Chronicles 18:15).

Christ Connection

When the prophet Micaiah speaks the hard truth to the king, a member to the king's court slaps him. Micaiah defends himself by telling this court member that he will experience this prophecy of doom.

During Jesus' trial, the high priest questions Jesus about his teaching. Jesus says the high priest should ask his disciples about his teachings. The guard slaps Jesus, but Jesus defends himself by saying to the guard, "If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong; but if I have spoken rightly, why do you strike me?" (John 18:23). Jesus and the prophet are both able to stand firm to their message despite physical abuse.

Life Application

Sometimes you may be the only one in the crowd who is able to express the truth. In this passage, the prophet Micaiah has the unfortunate job of predicting Ahab's death while everyone else is predicting victory. Think of a hard truth you need to tell someone... then brace yourself for the harsh reaction you may receive.

Passage 12: Good King Jehoshaphat

Date

849 B.C. (Approximate date of Jehoshaphat's death)

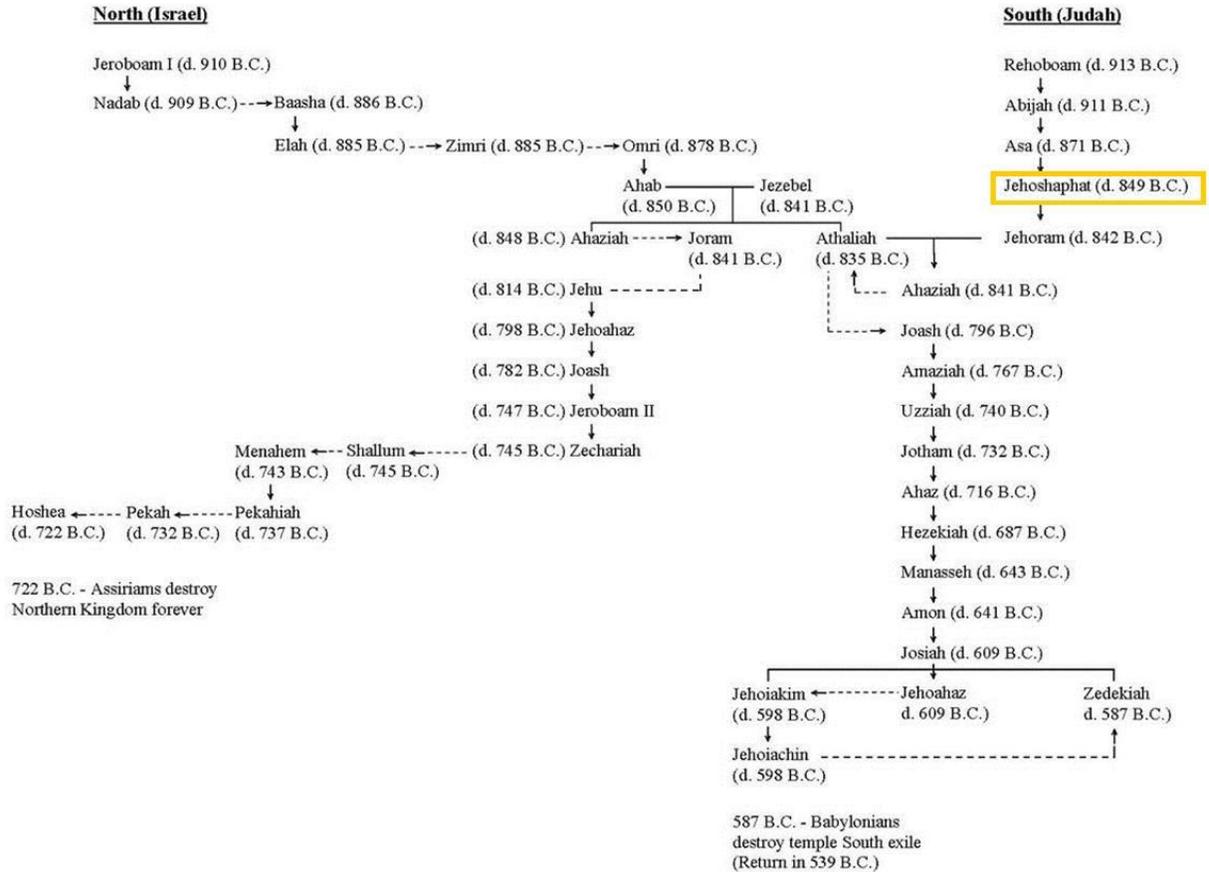
Summary

This passage starts with Jehoshaphat returning home safely after the battle against the Syrians. A prophet reproaches Jehoshaphat for allying himself to those who hate God (i.e., Ahab). However, God recognizes the good Jehoshaphat has done by getting rid of the shrines to false idols throughout the southern kingdom.

To further the worship of the one true God, Jehoshaphat sets up judges and priests to judge civil and religious cases throughout the southern kingdom. He reminds all of them to judge fairly, because they will have to answer to God.

Family Tree

As mentioned in the last passage, King Jehoshaphat is related by marriage to Ahab, and escapes the battle in Ramoth-gilead. Jehoshaphat is considered one of the few good kings of the southern kingdom.



Map

Jehoshaphat (like all the other kings of the south) rules from Jerusalem.



2 Chronicles 19:1–10

²Jehu the seer, son of Hanani, went out to meet King Jehoshaphat and said to him: “Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the LORD? For this reason, wrath is upon you from the LORD. ³Yet some good has been found in you, since you have removed the asherahs from the land and have set your heart to seek God.”

⁵He appointed judges in the land, in all the fortified cities of Judah, city by city, ⁶and he said to them: “Take care what you do, for the judgment you give is not human but divine; for when it comes to judgment God will be with you. ⁷And now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Act carefully, for with the LORD, our God, there is no injustice, no partiality, no bribe-taking.” ⁸In Jerusalem also, Jehoshaphat appointed some Levites and priests and some of the family heads of Israel for the LORD’S judgment and the disputes of those who dwell in Jerusalem. ⁹He gave them this command: “Thus you shall act: in the fear of the LORD, with fidelity and with an undivided heart. ¹⁰And in every dispute that comes to you from your kin living in their cities, whether it concerns bloodguilt or questions of law, command, statutes, or ordinances, warn them lest they incur guilt before the LORD and his wrath come upon you and your kin. Do that and you shall not incur guilt.”

Memorable Phrase

“And now, let the fear of the LORD be upon you. Act carefully, for with the LORD, our God, there is no injustice, no partiality, no bribe-taking” (2 Chronicles 19:7).

Christ Connection

As we’ve seen in the Bible, God gives humans authority, but we can’t abuse it. This is why Jehoshaphat exhorts his priests and judges not to base decisions on reputations or gifts, but to remove prejudice and maintain a pure heart.

As humans we have a natural inclination toward corruption, but we can restrain ourselves by remembering that our judgments will come back to us. Jesus says something very similar: “For as you judge, so will you be judged, and the measure with which you measure will be measured out to you” (Matthew 7:2).

Life Application

We must establish fairness not only in ourselves, but also make sure everyone around us practices fairness as well. Here we see how good King Jehoshaphat appoints judges in the different cities of Judah and reminds them to judge fairly. We should take the advice of King Jehoshaphat—reject bribery and do not allow partialities to prevent you from making just decisions.

Passage 13: Jehoram's Painful Demise

Date

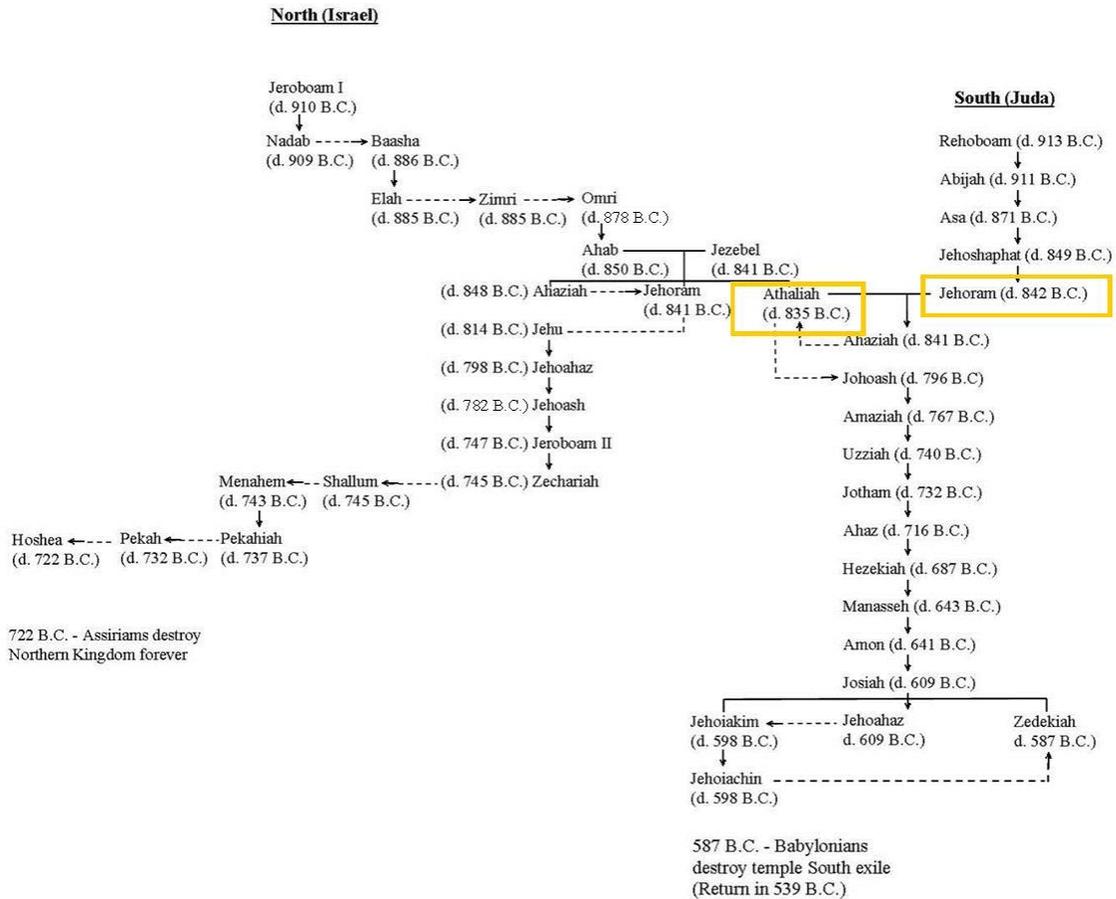
842 B.C. (Approximate date of Jehoram's death)

Summary

After Jehoshaphat dies, Jehoram, the eldest son, takes over as king. Just to reaffirm his power, Jehoram kills his five brothers. Like other bad kings, Jehoram turns the people away from the true God. The author attributes his evil to the fact that he is married to King Ahab's daughter Athaliah. During Jehoram's reign, many nations rebel against the southern kingdom, and Jehoram loses a portion of his power. As painful as that is, the prophet Elijah predicts something even more painful: Jehoram will become very sick, and his bowels will expel themselves from his body. After two years of suffering, that's exactly what happens.

Family Tree

Although Jehoshaphat is a good king, his son Jehoram definitely is not. Jehoram is married to Ahab's daughter Athaliah.



Map

Jehoram is a southern king, ruling from the palace in Jerusalem.



2 Chronicles 21:1–20

¹Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors; he was buried with them in the City of David. Jehoram, his son, succeeded him as king. ²He had brothers, Jehoshaphat's sons: Azariah, Jehiel, Zechariah, Azariah, Michael, and Shephatiah; all these were sons of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. ³Their father gave them many gifts of silver, gold, and

precious objects, together with fortified cities in Judah, but the kingship he gave to Jehoram because he was the firstborn.

⁴When Jehoram had acceded to his father's kingdom and was firmly in power, he killed all his brothers with the sword, and also some of the princes of Israel. ⁵Jehoram was thirty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned eight years in Jerusalem. ⁶He walked in the way of the kings of Israel as the house of Ahab had done, since the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did what was evil in the LORD'S sight. ⁷Even so, the LORD was unwilling to destroy the house of David because of the covenant he had made with David and because of his promise to leave him and his sons a holding for all time.

⁸During his time Edom revolted against the rule of Judah and installed its own king. ⁹Thereupon Jehoram with his officers and all his chariots crossed over. He arose by night and broke through the Edomites when they had surrounded him and the commanders of his chariots. ¹⁰To this day Edom has been in revolt against the rule of Judah. Libnah also revolted at that time against his rule because he had abandoned the LORD, the God of his ancestors. ¹¹He also set up high places in the mountains of Judah, prostituting the inhabitants of Jerusalem, leading Judah astray.

¹²A letter came to him from Elijah the prophet with this message: "Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: Because you have not walked in the way of your father Jehoshaphat, nor of Asa, king of Judah, ¹³but instead have walked in the way of the kings of Israel, leading Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into prostitution, like the harlotries of the house of Ahab, and because you have killed your brothers of your father's house, who were better than you, ¹⁴the LORD will strike your people, your children, your wives, and all that is yours with a great plague. ¹⁵You shall have severe pains from a disease in your bowels, which will fall out because of the disease, day after day."

¹⁶Then the LORD stirred up against Jehoram the animosity of the Philistines and of the Arabians who were neighbors of the Ethiopians. ¹⁷They came up against Judah, breached it, and carried away all the wealth found in the king's house, along with his sons and his wives. He was left with only one son, Jehoahaz, his youngest. ¹⁸After these events, the LORD afflicted him with a disease of the bowels for which there was no cure. ¹⁹Some time later, after a period of two years had elapsed, his bowels fell out because of the disease and he died in great pain. His people did not make a fire for him as they had for his ancestors.

Memorable Phrase

"You have killed your brothers of your father's house, who were better than you" (2 Chronicles 21:13).

Christ Connection

This is the most graphic death that any king from either kingdom will experience. Elijah says that Jehoram earned this suffering by killing his brothers and leading the people to prostitute themselves to other gods.

The most graphic imagery Jesus uses for punishment is that of wailing and grinding of teeth. Jesus uses this image multiple times to describe what will happen to those who are not spiritually ready when God comes to judge the world at the end of time (see Matthew 13:36–43 and Luke 13:22–30). Some examples of “not ready” would be lack of forgiveness in our hearts or refusing to recognize Jesus as Messiah.

Life Application

Whether out of jealousy or because we feel threatened, we want to tear down people who are “better than we.” Here the prophet Elijah reproaches Jehoram for killing his brothers, “men who were better than you.”

In our case, we shouldn’t cling to power like Jehoram did. He decides to kill his brothers *after* he establishes his power. Once he obtains his power, he strives to keep it at any cost.

Passage 14: Elijah and Ahaziah

Date

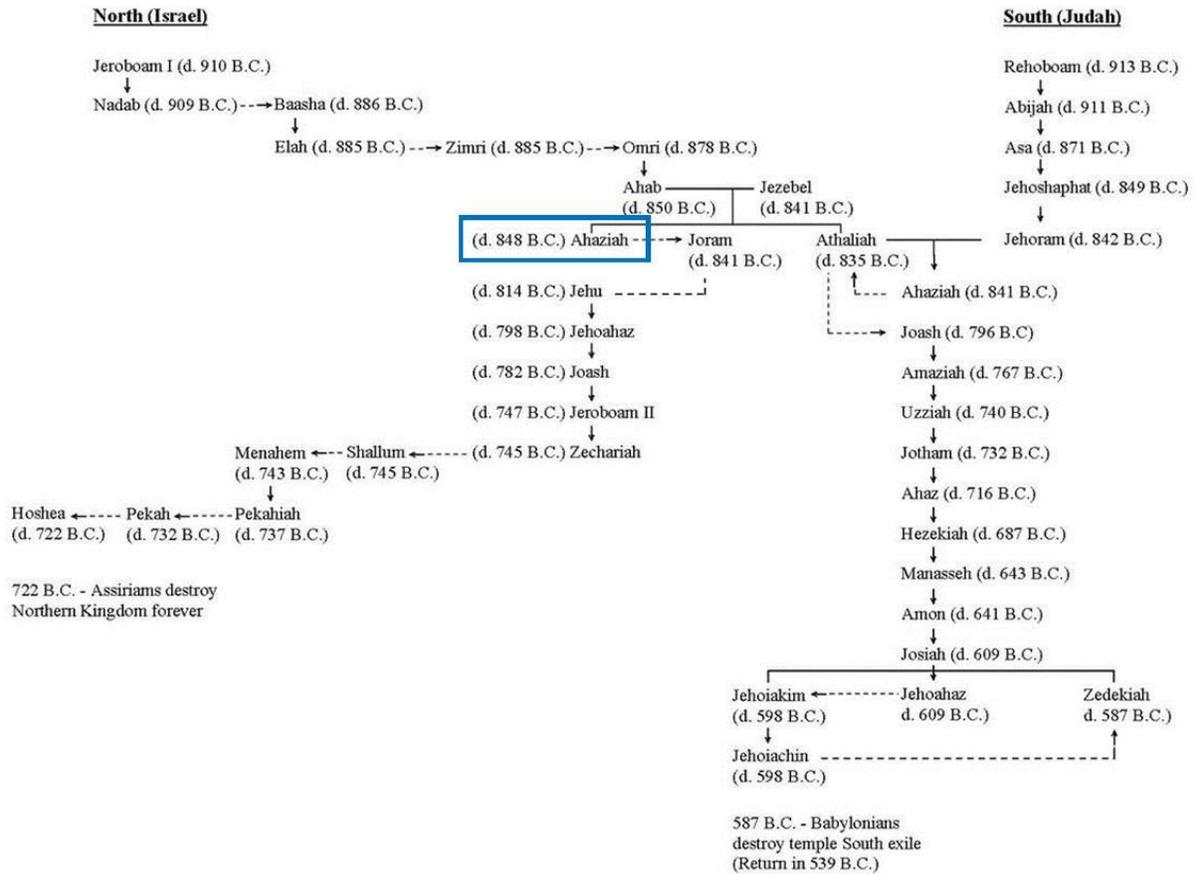
849 B.C. (Approximate date of Ahaziah's death)

Summary

Ahaziah falls out of a window in his palace and hurts himself. He wants to know if he'll recover, so he sends his messengers out to consult the god Baalzebub. As the messengers go out, God tells the prophet Elijah to go and meet them with this message: "Is there no God in Israel, that you have to consult the god of Ekron?" Furthermore, Elijah tells the messengers that Ahaziah will die in his bed and then sends them back to the king. When the king hears this news, he knows it was Elijah who made this prophecy and sends a leader along with fifty soldiers to capture Elijah. Elijah calls down fire from the sky (just like when he did in the showdown with the priests of Baal) to consume the leader and fifty men. The king sends a second group of fifty, and the same thing happens. When the king sends a third group, an angel tells Elijah that it's safe go with them and meet the king. Elijah meets the king at his bedside and personally tells His Highness that he will die.

Family Tree

While Ahab's daughter Athaliah is married to the king in the south, Ahab's son Ahaziah rules in the north after Ahab's death.



Map

Ahaziah is bedridden in Samaria, the capital of the northern kingdom.



2 Kings 1:1-18

²Ahaziah fell through the lattice of his roof terrace at Samaria and was injured. So he sent out messengers with the instructions: “Go and inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury.”

³Meanwhile, the messenger of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite: Go and meet the messengers of Samaria’s king, and tell them: “Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?” ⁴For this, the LORD says: You shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead, you shall die. And Elijah departed. ⁵The messengers then returned to Ahaziah, who asked them, “Why have you returned?” ⁶They answered, “A man met us and said to us, ‘Go back to the king who sent you and tell him: The LORD says: Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are sending to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? For this you shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead, you shall die.’” ⁷The king asked them, “What was the man like who met you and said these things to you?” ⁸They replied, “He wore a hairy garment with a leather belt around his waist.” “It is Elijah the Tishbite!” he exclaimed.

⁹Then the king sent a captain with his company of fifty men after Elijah. The prophet was seated on a hilltop when he found him. He said, “Man of God, the king commands you, ‘Come down.’” ¹⁰Elijah answered the captain, “Well, if I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. ¹¹The king sent another captain with his company of fifty men after Elijah. He shouted up and said, “Man of God, the king says, ‘Come down immediately!’” ¹²Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men.” And divine fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty men. ¹³The king sent a third captain with his company of fifty men. When the third captain had climbed the hill, he fell to his knees before Elijah, pleading with him. He said, “Man of God, let my life and the lives of these fifty men, your servants, count for something in your sight! ¹⁴Already fire has come down from heaven, consuming the first two captains with their companies of fifty men. But now, let my life count for something in your sight!” ¹⁵Then the messenger of the LORD said to Elijah: Go down with him; you need not be afraid of him. So Elijah left and went down with him to the king. ¹⁶He declared to the king: “Thus says the LORD: Because you sent messengers to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron—do you think there is no God in Israel to inquire of?—you shall not leave the bed upon which you lie; instead you shall die.”

¹⁷Ahaziah died according to the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah. Since he had no son, Joram succeeded him as king, in the second year of Joram, son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

¹⁸The rest of the acts of Ahaziah, which he did, are recorded in the book of chronicles of the kings of Israel.

Memorable Phrase

“Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going to inquire of Baalzebub, the god of Ekron?” (2 Kings 1:3).

Christ Connection

There’s an episode in the Gospels where a synagogue official’s daughter dies. Instead of running to false gods for help (like Ahaziah), this official runs to the true God, Jesus. Jesus tells the synagogue official, “Do not be afraid; just have faith,” (Mark 5:36) and cures the girl (see Mark 5:21–43 for the whole story).

Life Application

C. S. Lewis said, “It’s not that Christianity has been tried and found lacking, it’s that it hasn’t been tried.” You might want to go to other gods because our god “isn’t working for you.” That’s what King Ahaziah tries here, and he gets a stern reproach from the prophet Elijah. If you find yourself trying new things apart from God because you feel your relationship is “dry” or “pointless,” you must remind yourself that the grass isn’t greener on the other side. You should try to improve your relationship with God wherever you are.

Passage 15: Elijah Lifted to the Skies

Date

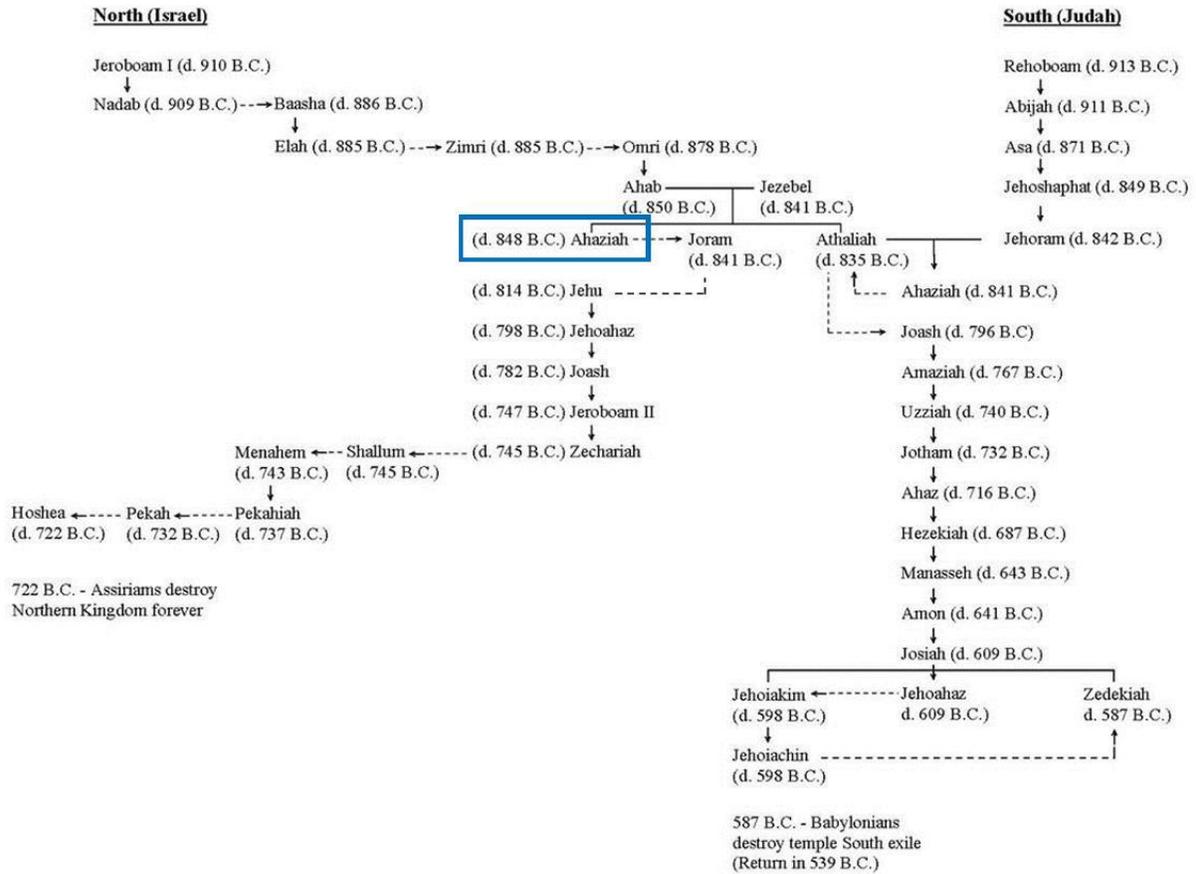
850 B.C. (Approximate date when Elijah ascends to the heavens)

Summary

As you may remember from a few passages ago, Elijah has a disciple named Elisha who is to be his successor. Now Elijah is taken away from Elisha. Elisha (and fifty other prophets) follow Elijah to Bethel, then Jericho, and then across the Jordan River. Once they arrive, Elisha makes a very bold request: that Elijah give him a double portion of his spirit. Elijah says that if Elisha sees him physically going to heaven, then his wish will be granted. Elisha does indeed see Elijah carried into heaven on a fiery chariot. During this whole time, the company of fifty prophets watches from a distance. When Elisha returns to them, they all realize that the spirit of Elijah is now resting on Elisha. As a final gesture, the fifty prophets search three days for Elijah, just in case God has taken him to a different mountain. However, they aren't able to find him—he really was taken up in the sky.

Family Tree

After Elijah's episode with King Ahaziah, he leaves this earth and God takes him into heaven.



Map

Marked in red is the spot across Jericho where Elijah was taken from the earth.



2 Kings 2:2-18

²Elijah said to Elisha, “Stay here, please. The LORD has sent me on to Bethel.” Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they went down to Bethel. ³The guild prophets who were in Bethel went out to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master from you?” He replied, “Yes, I know that. Be still.”

⁴Elijah said to him, “Elisha, stay here, please. The LORD has sent me on to Jericho.” Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So they came to Jericho. ⁵The guild prophets who were in Jericho approached Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that today the LORD will take your master from you?” He replied, “Yes, I know that. Be still.”

⁶Elijah said to him, “Stay here, please. The LORD has sent me on to the Jordan.” Elisha replied, “As the LORD lives, and as you yourself live, I will not leave you.” So the two went on together. ⁷Fifty of the guild prophets followed and stood facing them at a distance, while the two of them stood next to the Jordan.

⁸Elijah took his mantle, rolled it up and struck the water: it divided, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground.

⁹When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Request whatever I might do for you, before I am taken from you.” Elisha answered, “May I receive a double portion of your spirit.” ¹⁰He replied, “You have asked something that is not easy. Still, if you see me taken up from you, your wish will be granted; otherwise not.” ¹¹As they walked on still conversing, a fiery chariot and fiery horses came between the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind, ¹²and Elisha saw it happen. He cried out, “My father! my father! Israel’s chariot and steeds!” Then he saw him no longer.

He gripped his own garment, tore it into two pieces, ¹³and picked up the mantle which had fallen from Elijah. Then he went back and stood at the bank of the Jordan. ¹⁴Wielding the mantle which had fallen from Elijah, he struck the water and said, “The LORD, the God of Elijah—where is he now?” He struck the water: it divided, and he crossed over.

¹⁶They said, “Among your servants are fifty brave men. Let them go in search of your master. Perhaps the spirit of the LORD has lifted him up and left him on some mountain or in some valley.” He answered, “Do not send them.” ¹⁷But they kept urging him, until he was embarrassed and said, “Send them.” So they sent the fifty men, who searched for three days without finding him. ¹⁸When they returned to Elisha in Jericho, where he was staying, he said to them, “Did I not tell you not to go?”

Memorable Phrase

“May I receive a double portion of your spirit” (2 Kings 2:9).

Christ Connection

In a very important story about Jesus, he ascends body and soul into heaven forty days after rising from the dead. Just as Elijah gave his disciple Elisha a double portion of his spirit before

he went up into heaven, Jesus promises before his ascension that his apostles will be able to cure the sick, expel demons, speak new languages, and resist the effects of snake bites and poison (Mark 16:17–18).

Faith Note

Even though Elijah left the earth body and soul, neither he (nor any of the other holy people who died before the coming of Jesus) were able to enjoy full communion with God until Jesus' death on the cross. This was because there was still a separation from God resulting from Adam's original sin. All these holy people had to wait until Jesus died and rose from the dead to enjoy the full happiness of God in heaven.

Life Application

Every parent wants his child to achieve more than he could. Every teacher wants her prized student to carry on the work she started. Today we see Elijah pass on his legacy to his disciple, Elisha. If you are a mentor or a teacher, you should find ways to help your students have "twice your spirit."

Passage 16: Elisha Cures the Syrian

Date

845 B.C. (Approximate date when Elisha cures General Naaman)

Summary

Now that Elisha is the main prophet in Israel, he goes and does many miraculous things. The following passage about the curing of the Syrian general Naaman is his most famous miracle.

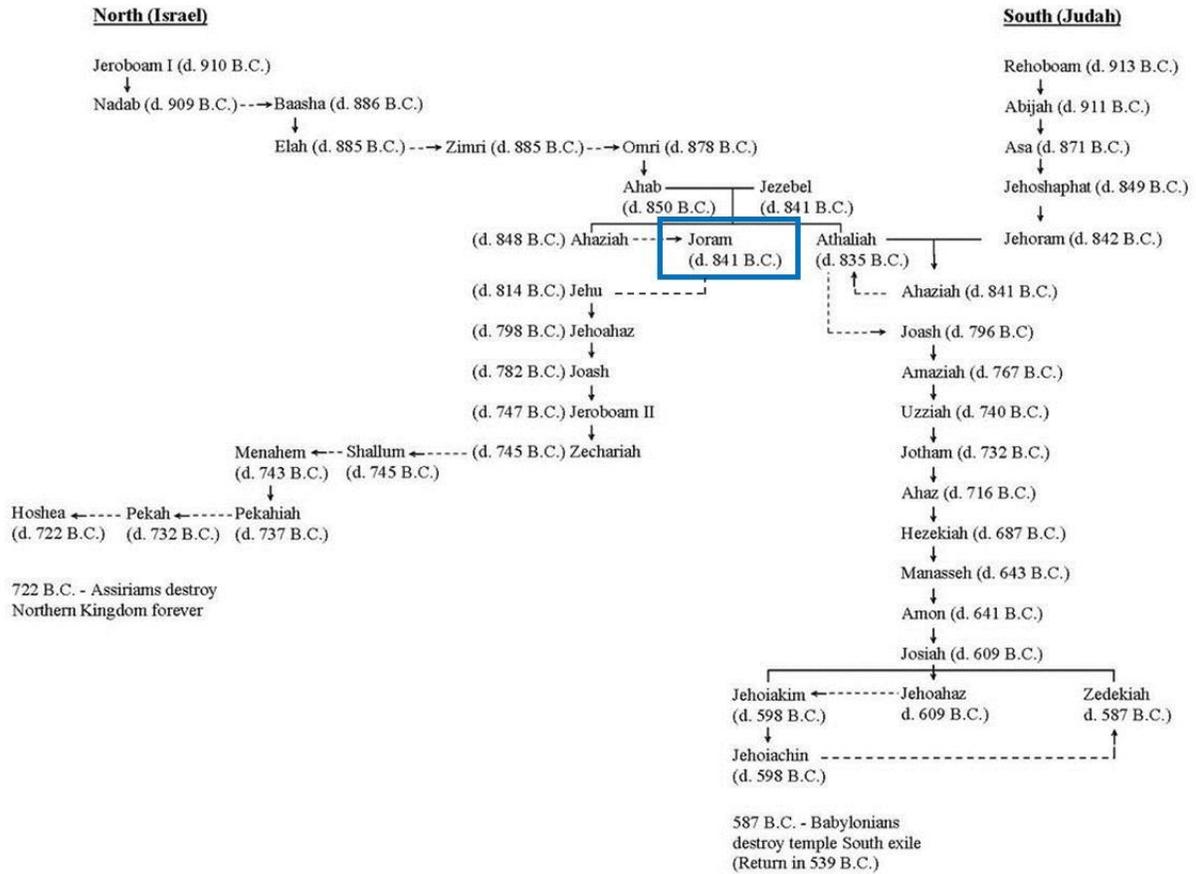
General Naaman is a good and honorable man who suffers from leprosy. A servant Israelite girl working in Naaman's house says that a prophet in Israel can cure him. Naaman relays her message to the Syrian king, who sends Naaman with a load of gifts to the king of Israel. The king of Israel is shocked at the request for Naaman's healing, and he thinks that the Syrian king simply wants to provoke war.

When Elisha hears of this news, he tells the king of Israel to send Naaman to his house. Upon Naaman's arrival, the prophet tells the general to wash in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman scoffs at that request, because he was expecting the prophet to invoke God and touch his leper sores. However, one of Naaman's servants convinces him to do as Elisha says, telling him that if the prophet asked him to do something complicated, he would have agreed. Why shouldn't he do something simple?

After Naaman washes in the river, he is cleansed and gives thanks to God by promising to only worship the true God. He tells Elisha that he'll still have to kneel in the pagan temple when the Syrian king worships, but Elisha assures Naaman that he can go in peace.

Family Tree

Joram is king when Elisha heals the Syrian.



Map

The Jordan River, marked in red, is where Naaman washes himself and is cleansed from leprosy.



2 Kings 5:1–19

²Now the Arameans had captured from the land of Israel in a raid a little girl, who became the servant of Naaman's wife. ³She said to her mistress, "If only my master would present himself to the prophet in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy."

⁴Naaman went and told his master, "This is what the girl from the land of Israel said." ⁵The king of Aram said, "Go. I will send along a letter to the king of Israel." So Naaman set out, taking along ten silver talents, six thousand gold pieces, and ten festal garments.

⁶He brought the king of Israel the letter, which read: "With this letter I am sending my servant Naaman to you, that you may cure him of his leprosy." ⁷When he read the letter, the king of Israel tore his garments and exclaimed: "Am I a god with power over life and death, that this man should send someone for me to cure him of leprosy? Take note! You can see he is only looking for a quarrel with me!" ⁸When Elisha, the man of God, heard that the king of Israel had torn his garments, he sent word to the king: "Why have you torn your garments? Let him come to me and find out that there is a prophet in Israel."

⁹Naaman came with his horses and chariot and stopped at the door of Elisha's house. ¹⁰Elisha sent him the message: "Go and wash seven times in the Jordan, and your flesh will heal, and you will be clean." ¹¹But Naaman went away angry, saying, "I thought that he would surely come out to me and stand there to call on the name of the LORD his God, and would move his hand over the place, and thus cure the leprous spot. ¹²Are not the rivers of Damascus, the Abana and the Pharpar, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be cleansed?" With this, he turned about in anger and left.

¹³But his servants came up and reasoned with him: "My father, if the prophet told you to do something extraordinary, would you not do it? All the more since he told you, 'Wash, and be clean'?" ¹⁴So Naaman went down and plunged into the Jordan seven times, according to the word of the man of God. His flesh became again like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean.

¹⁵He returned with his whole retinue to the man of God. On his arrival he stood before him and said, "Now I know that there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel. Please accept a gift from your servant." ¹⁶Elisha replied, "As the LORD lives whom I serve, I will not take it." And despite Naaman's urging, he still refused. ¹⁷Naaman said: "If you will not accept, please let me, your servant, have two mule-loads of earth, for your servant will no longer make burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the LORD. ¹⁸But may the LORD forgive your servant this: when my master enters the temple of Rimmon to bow down there, as he leans upon my arm, I too must bow down in the temple of Rimmon. When I bow down in the temple of Rimmon, may the LORD please forgive your servant this." ¹⁹Elisha said to him, "Go in peace."

Memorable Phrase

“My father, if the prophet told you to do something extraordinary, would you not do it? All the more since he told you, ‘Wash, and be clean’?” (2 Kings 5:13).

Christ Connection

When Jesus returns to his hometown to tell them he’s the promised messiah, the people don’t believe him. He responds by saying that no prophet is accepted in his own hometown. Then he gives examples of when God used foreigners to reveal his glory, including this story about Naaman (see Luke 4:16–30). In fact, Elisha would have a lot of experience with the Syrians during his life, because God used them whenever Israel got on the wrong path.

Life Application

Sometimes we want things to be harder than they need to be. Here Naaman expects Elisha to do something spectacular to cure his leprosy, and he becomes very angry when Elisha tells him to simply bathe in the Jordan River. Don’t make things so complicated! If a solution is straightforward, don’t be suspicious or get angry about it, but be thankful.

Passage 17: Hazael Anointed King

Date

842 B.C. (Approximate date when Hazael takes control of Aram)

Summary

Not all of Elisha's jobs as prophet were inspirational miracles. In this passage, he anoints a new king in Syria, a king he knows will bring much hardship to the people of the northern kingdom.

Elisha arrives in Demarcus, the capital of Syria, to visit the ill king, Ben-hadad. The king sends his servant, Hazael, to welcome Elisha and give him gifts. Elisha tells Hazael that the king will recover, yet will die soon after. Elisha also tells Hazael he will be the new king of Syria, and Elisha starts crying because he knows Hazael will cause much suffering to the Israelites. What Elisha says comes to pass: Ben-hadad recovers from his illness, but the next day Hazael suffocates him and takes over as king.

Map

Damascus, the capital of Syria and where Hazel is anointed king, is circled in red.



2 Kings 8:7-15

Elisha came to Damascus at a time when Ben-hadad, king of Aram, lay sick. When he was told, “The man of God has come here,”⁸ the king said to Hazael, “Take a gift with you and go call on the man of God. Consult the LORD through him, ‘Will I recover from this sickness?’”⁹ Hazael went to visit him, carrying a present, and with forty camel loads of the best goods of Damascus. On his arrival, he stood before Elisha and said, “Your son Ben-hadad, king of Aram, has sent me to you to ask, ‘Will I recover from my sickness?’”¹⁰ Elisha answered, “Go and tell him, ‘You will surely recover.’ But the LORD has showed me that he will surely die.”¹¹ Then he stared him down until he became ill at ease. The man of God wept,¹² and Hazael asked, “Why are you weeping, my lord?” Elisha replied, “Because I know the evil that you will inflict upon the Israelites. You will burn their fortresses, you will slay their youth with the sword, you will dash their little children to pieces, you will rip open their pregnant women.”¹³ Hazael exclaimed, “How can your servant, a dog like me, do anything so important?” Elisha replied, “The LORD has showed you to me as king over Aram.”

¹⁴Hazael left Elisha and returned to his master, who asked, “What did Elisha tell you?” Hazael replied, “He said, ‘You will surely recover.’”¹⁵ The next day, however, Hazael took a cloth, dipped it in water, and spread it over the king’s face, so that he died. And Hazael succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

“How can your servant, a dog like me, do anything so important?” (2 Kings 8:13).

Christ Connection

Near the time of Jesus’ crucifixion, he enters Jerusalem and begins to cry for the city. He cries for Jerusalem for the same reason Elisha cries for Israel: He knows of the doom that is coming. In the case of Jesus, he says that Jerusalem will be surrounded by enemies who will tear down Jerusalem’s inhabitants and their children (Luke 23:28–29).

Life Application

Sometimes we have to take an action that we know will have painful consequences. Elisha prophesies Hazael’s rise as king of the Syrians, even though he knows that God will use the Syrians to punish the Israelites for their unfaithfulness. Accept God’s will, even when it’s not something you would have picked. Elisha is upset knowing what was going to happen to the Israelites—but he continues in his own vocation, knowing that God is with him.

Passage 18: Jehu Takes the Throne

Date

841 B.C. (Approximate date Jehu kills Jezebel, Jehoram, and Ahaziah)

Summary

Elisha anoints Jehu, prophesying that he shall be the next king of Israel. Jehu then travels to where both Joram (Israel's present king) and Ahaziah (king of Judah) are staying. Ahaziah is visiting Joram, who was wounded in a previous battle with the Syrians.

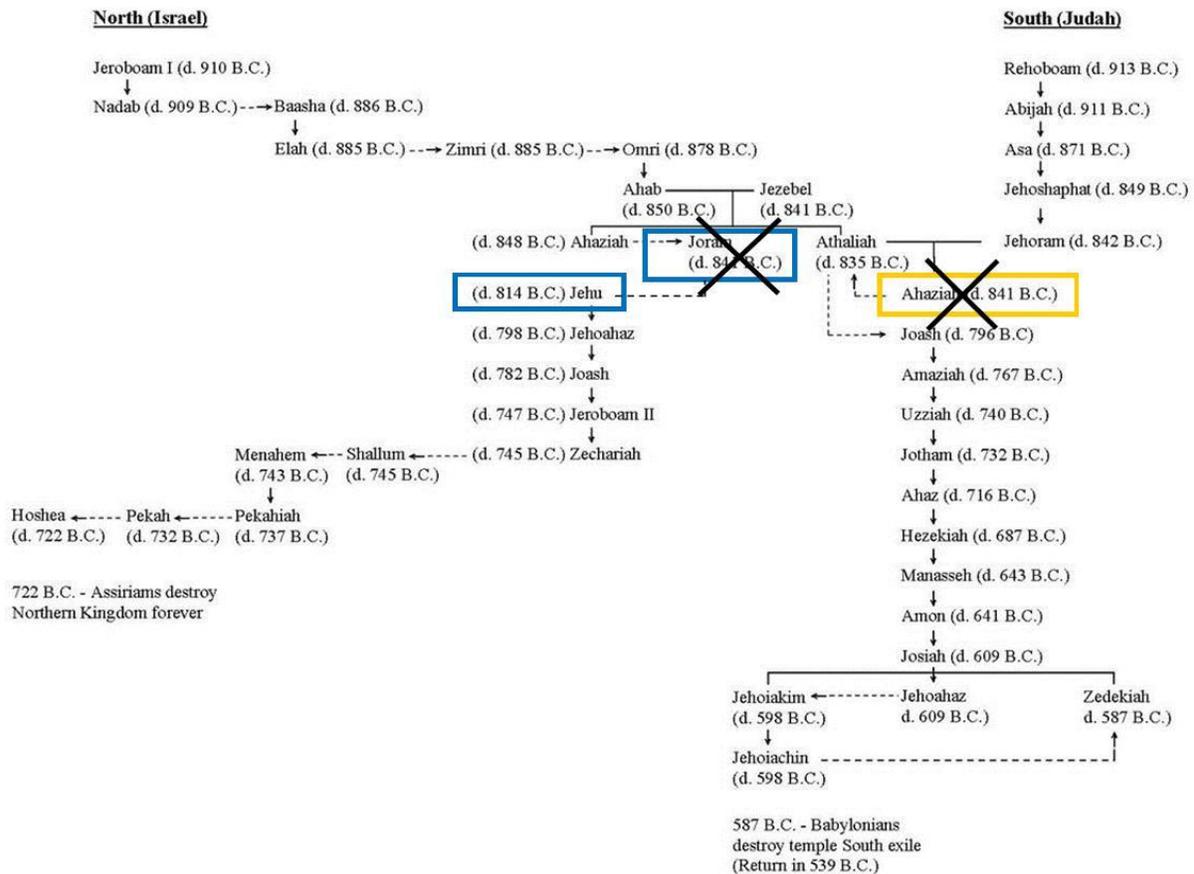
As Ahaziah sees Jehu coming, he sends out various messengers to see if he is bringing peace. Each time, Jehu tells the messengers to get behind and follow him, which they do.

Finally, King Joram goes out to meet Jehu. He asks if Jehu brings peace, to which Jehu replies, "How can there be peace, while your mother Jezebel keeps committing these fornications?" At this, Joram realizes that Jehu wants to take control of the kingdom, and screams out, "Treachery, Ahaziah!" Jehu chases both kings down and kills them.

But Jehu's not done yet—he still has to find Jezebel. Remember when Jezebel used trickery to kill Naboth and get his vineyard (Passage 10: 1 Kings 21:1–29)? Back then, the prophet Elijah said that one day dogs would lick blood off the ground of that vineyard. That comes to pass here: On Jehu's command, two men throw Jezebel out of the palace window, then horses trample on her remains and dogs devour what is left.

Family Tree

Having anointed Hazael as king of Syria, Elisha now anoints Jehu (a northern kingdom general) as king of Israel. After his anointing, Jehu takes the throne by killing both the northern and southern kings.



Map

Jehu is fighting in Syria when Elisha anoints him. He then travels to Samaria to kill the kings of both Israel and Judah.



¹Elisha the prophet called one of the guild prophets and said to him: "Get ready for a journey. Take this flask of oil with you, and go to Ramoth-gilead. ²When you get there, look for Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi. Enter and take him away from his companions and bring him into an inner chamber. ³From the flask you have, pour oil on his head, and say, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.' Then open the door and flee without delay."

⁴The aide (the prophet's aide) went to Ramoth-gilead. ⁵When he arrived, the commanders of the army were in session. He said, "I have a message for you, commander." Jehu asked, "For which one of us?" "For you, commander," he answered. ⁶Jehu got up and went into the house. Then the prophet's aide poured the oil on his head and said, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: I anoint you king over the people of the LORD, over Israel. ⁷You shall destroy the house of Ahab your master; thus will I avenge the blood of my servants the prophets, and the blood of all the other servants of the LORD shed by Jezebel. ⁸The whole house of Ahab shall perish:

I will cut off from Ahab's line every male,
whether bond or free in Israel.

⁹I will make the house of Ahab like that of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, and like that of Baasha, son of Ahijah. ¹⁰In the confines of Jezreel, the dogs shall devour Jezebel so that no one can bury her." Then he opened the door and fled.

¹¹When Jehu rejoined his master's servants, they asked him, "Is all well? Why did that madman come to you?" He replied, "You know that kind of man and his talk." ¹²But they said, "Tell us another lie!" So he told them, "This is what the prophet's aide said to me, 'Thus says the LORD: I anoint you king over Israel.'" ¹³At once each took his garment, spread it under Jehu on the bare steps, blew the horn, and cried out, "Jehu is king!"

Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, son of Nimshi, formed a conspiracy against Joram. (Joram, with all Israel, had been besieging Ramoth-gilead against Hazael, king of Aram, ¹⁵but had returned to Jezreel to be healed of the wounds the Arameans had inflicted on him in the battle against Hazael, king of Aram.) Jehu said to them, "If this is what you really want, see that no one escapes from the city to report in Jezreel."

¹⁶Then Jehu mounted his chariot and drove to Jezreel, where Joram lay ill and Ahaziah, king of Judah, had come to visit him. ¹⁷The watchman standing on the tower in Jezreel saw the troop of Jehu coming and reported, "I see chariots." Joram said, "Get a driver and send him to meet them and to ask whether all is well." ¹⁸So a horseman went out to meet him and said, "The king asks, 'Is everything all right?'" Jehu said, "What does it matter to you how things are? Get behind me." The watchman reported to the king, "The messenger has reached them, but is not returning." ¹⁹Joram sent a second horseman, who went to them and said, "The king asks, 'Is everything all right?'" "What does it matter to you how things are?" Jehu replied. "Get behind me." ²⁰The watchman reported, "He has reached them, but is not returning. The driving is like that of Jehu, son

of Nimshi; he drives like a madman.”²¹“Hitch up my chariot,” said Joram, and they hitched up his chariot. Then Joram, king of Israel, and Ahaziah, king of Judah, set out, each in his own chariot, to meet Jehu. They reached him near the plot of ground of Naboth the Jezreelite.

²²When Joram recognized Jehu, he asked, “Is everything all right, Jehu?” Jehu replied, “How could everything be all right as long as all the harlotry and sorcery of your mother Jezebel continues?”²³Joram reined about and fled, crying to Ahaziah, “Treason, Ahaziah!”²⁴But Jehu had drawn his bow and he shot Joram between the shoulders, so that the arrow went through his heart and he collapsed in his chariot.²⁵Then Jehu said to his adjutant Bidkar, “Take him and throw him into the plot of ground in the field of Naboth the Jezreelite. For remember when you and I were driving teams behind Ahab his father, the LORD delivered this oracle against him:²⁶As surely as I saw yesterday the blood of Naboth and the blood of his sons—oracle of the LORD—I will repay you for it in that very plot of ground—oracle of the LORD. So now take him and throw him into this plot of ground, in keeping with the word of the LORD.”

²⁷Seeing what was happening, Ahaziah, king of Judah, fled toward Beth-haggan. Jehu pursued him, shouting, “Him too!” They struck him as he rode through the pass of Gur near Ibleam, but he continued his flight as far as Megiddo and died there.²⁸His servants brought him in a chariot to Jerusalem and they buried him in his grave with his ancestors in the City of David.²⁹In the eleventh year of Joram, son of Ahab, Ahaziah became king over Judah.

³⁰Jehu came to Jezreel, and when Jezebel heard of it, she shadowed her eyes, adorned her hair, and looked down from her window.³¹As Jehu came through the gate, she cried out, “Is all well, you Zimri, murderer of your master?”³²Jehu looked up to the window and shouted, “Who is on my side? Who?” At this, two or three eunuchs looked down toward him.³³“Throw her down,” he ordered. They threw her down, and some of her blood spurted against the wall and against the horses. Jehu trod over her body³⁴and, after eating and drinking, he said: “Attend to that accursed woman and bury her; for she was the daughter of a king.”³⁵But when they went to bury her, they found nothing of her but the skull, the feet, and the hands.³⁶They returned to Jehu, and when they told him, he said, “This is the word the LORD spoke through his servant Elijah the Tishbite: In the confines of Jezreel the dogs shall devour the flesh of Jezebel.³⁷The corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung in the field in the confines of Jezreel, so that no one can say: This was Jezebel.”

Memorable Phrase:

“How could everything be all right as long as all the harlotry and sorcery of your mother Jezebel continues?” (2 Kings 9:22).

Christ Connection

In one of his teachings, Jesus says, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword.” He refers to the division that will happen between those who give their loyalty to Jesus, and those who choose to be loyal to other things (Matthew 10:34–39). We hear numerous times in this passage, “Do you bring peace?” Jehu explains why there can’t be peace: Jezebel has switched the people’s loyalty from the real God to her false gods.

Life Application

Peace is the result of right relations—between individuals, families, nations, and ultimately God. If there’s no right relation, we can’t expect peace. That’s why Jehu can’t answer “yes” when he’s asked, “Is everything all right, Jehu?” We should find places in our lives that lack peace; it’s a good sign of a damaged relationship.

Passage 19: Jehu Kills Ahab's Descendants

Date

841 B.C. (Approximate date elders in Israel deliver Ahab's sons' heads to Jehu)

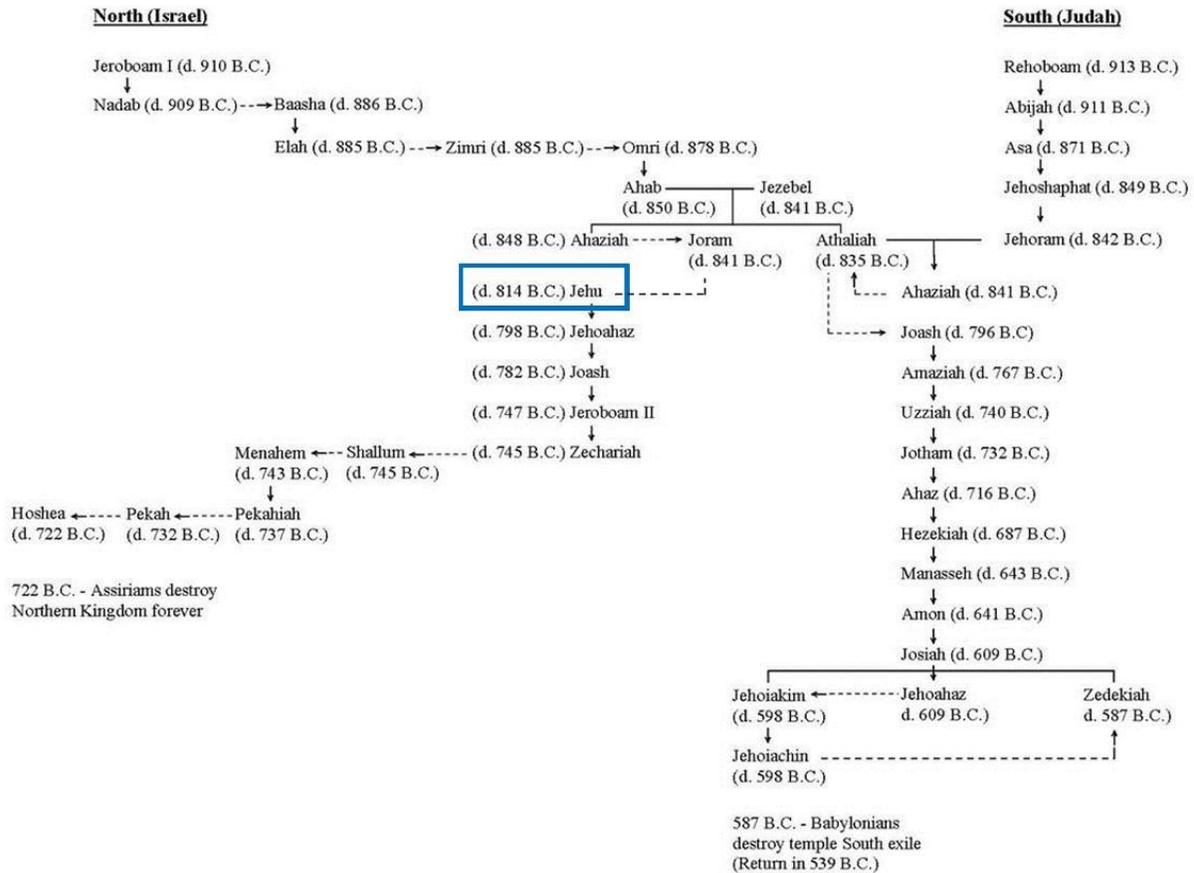
Summary

Now that Jehu has killed Ahab's son, he wants to get rid of the rest Ahab's descendants, as well as everyone else associated with Ahab. This is exactly what the prophet Elijah had predicted before.

As we've seen with other kings in the Bible, Ahab had numerous wives and therefore numerous children—seventy sons in all, who are all potential heirs to the throne. Jehu, after killing the kings of both Israel and Judah, sends word to all the nobles and caretakers to send Ahab's seventy sons to the capital city and determine the new king. The nobles and caretakers, fearful of Jehu, tell him they'll leave the throne vacant and defer to Jehu. Knowing that these elders will do what he says, Jehu changes his plan—he orders them to kill the sons, put their heads in baskets, and deliver them to the capital. Jehu then gathers all the priests of Baal to the capital to kill them as well. After getting rid of Ahab's descendants, God says that Jehu's descendants will reign until the fourth generation. However, all is not well. Remember when Jeroboam put the golden calves in the cities of Dan and Bethel (Passage 2)? Jehu will cause the people to sin by turning their hearts to these false gods.

Family Tree

Although Jehu kills the kings of both Israel and Judah, he only wants to control the northern kingdom. Here Jehu takes out the rest of Ahab's descendants.



Map

Circled in red is Samaria, where Jehu presents the heads of all of Ahab's descendants, and also where he kills the priests of Baal.



¹Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. Jehu wrote letters and sent them to Samaria, to the elders who were rulers of Jezreel and to Ahab's guardians. Jehu wrote: ²"Since your master's sons are with you, as well as his chariots, horses, fortified city, and weaponry, when this letter reaches you ³decide which is the best and the fittest of your master's sons, place him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house."

⁴They were overcome with fright and said, "If the two kings could not withstand him, how can we?" ⁵So the master of the palace and the chief of the city, along with the elders and the guardians, sent this message to Jehu: "We are your servants, and we will do everything you tell us. We will proclaim no one king; do whatever you think best."
⁶So Jehu wrote them a second letter: "If you are on my side and will obey me, bring along the heads of your master's sons and come to me in Jezreel at this time tomorrow." (The seventy princes were in the care of prominent men of the city, who were rearing them.)

⁷When the letter arrived, they took the princes and slew all seventy of them, put their heads in baskets, and sent them to Jehu in Jezreel. ⁸A messenger came in and told him, "They have brought the heads of the princes." He said, "Pile them in two heaps at the gate of the city until morning."

⁹In the morning he came outside, stood there, and said to all the people: "You are guiltless, for it was I who conspired against my lord and slew him. But who killed all these?" ¹⁰Know that not a single word which the LORD has spoken against the house of Ahab shall fail. The LORD has accomplished what he decreed through his servant Elijah."
¹¹(And so Jehu slew all who were left of the house of Ahab in Jezreel, as well as all his powerful supporters, intimates, and priests, leaving him no survivor.) ¹²Then he went back inside.

He set out for Samaria and, at Beth-eked-haroim on the way, ¹³Jehu came across relatives of Ahaziah, king of Judah. "Who are you?" he asked, and they said, "We are relatives of Ahaziah. We are going down to visit the princes and the family of the queen mother."¹⁴"Take them alive," Jehu ordered. They were taken alive, forty-two in number, then slain at the pit of Beth-eked. Not one of them survived.

¹⁵When he set out from there, Jehu met Jehonadab, son of Rechab, on the road. He greeted him and asked, "Are you with me wholeheartedly, as I am with you?" "Yes," he replied. "If you are, give me your hand." He gave him his hand, and he had him mount his chariot, ¹⁶and said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD." And they took him along in his chariot.

¹⁷When he arrived in Samaria, Jehu slew all who were left of Ahab's line in Samaria, doing away with them completely, according to the word the LORD spoke to Elijah.

¹⁸Jehu gathered all the people together and said to them: "Ahab served Baal to some extent, but Jehu will serve him yet more. ¹⁹Now summon for me all Baal's prophets, all

his servants, and all his priests. See that no one is absent, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is absent shall not live.” This Jehu did as a ruse, so that he might destroy the servants of Baal.

²⁰Jehu said further, “Proclaim a solemn assembly in honor of Baal.” They did so, ²¹and Jehu sent word of it throughout all Israel. All the servants of Baal came; there was no one who did not come; they came to the temple of Baal, and it was filled from wall to wall. ²²Then Jehu said to the custodian of the wardrobe, “Bring out garments for all the servants of Baal.” When he had brought out the garments for them, ²³Jehu, with Jehonadab, son of Rechab, entered the temple of Baal and said to the servants of Baal, “Search and be sure that there is no one who serves the LORD here with you, but only servants of Baal.” ²⁴Then they proceeded to offer sacrifices and burnt offerings. Now Jehu had stationed eighty troops outside with this warning, “Any of you who lets someone escape of those whom I shall deliver into your hands shall pay life for life.”

²⁵As soon as he finished offering the burnt offering, Jehu said to the guards and aides, “Go in and slay them. Let no one escape.” So the guards and aides put them to the sword and cast them out. Afterward they went into the inner shrine of the temple of Baal, ²⁶and took out the pillars of the temple of Baal. They burned the shrine, ²⁷tore down the pillar of Baal, tore down the temple of Baal, and turned it into a latrine, as it remains today.

²⁸Thus Jehu destroyed Baal in Israel.

²⁹However, Jehu did not desist from the sins which Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit, the golden calves at Bethel and at Dan.

³⁰The LORD said to Jehu: Because you have done well what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in my heart, your sons to the fourth generation shall sit upon the throne of Israel. ³¹But Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD, the God of Israel, with all his heart, since he did not desist from the sins which Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit. ³²At that time the LORD began to dismember Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout their territory ³³east of the Jordan (all the land of Gilead, of the Gadites, Reubenites, and Manassites), from Aroer on the wadi Arnon up through Gilead and Bashan.

³⁴The rest of the acts of Jehu, with all that he did and all his valor, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ³⁵Jehu rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria, and his son Jehoahaz succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

“They were overcome with fright and said, ‘If the two kings could not withstand him, how can we?’” (2 Kings 10:4).

Christ Connection

Jesus warns us about the consequences of failing to completely eliminate a sinful practice or influence from our lives. He says that if a house is cleansed from an evil spirit, eventually the evil spirit brings back seven more spirits to the house and the original situation is made worse (Matthew 12:43–45). And we've seen several instances in these passages where a king tries to reform the land while allowing some idols or shrines to remain; in time, widespread worship of those idols will return worse than before. Of course, while our own spiritual reform does not involve violence, the biblical authors viewed Ahab's heirs' deaths as a sign that Israel had closed this chapter on Ahab, Jezebel, and their whole family. (Well, not the whole family—Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athalia, is still alive in Judah. We'll read about her in the next passage.)

Life Application

If we want to get rid of sin, we have to get rid of it all the way. We can't leave room for it to come back in our lives. Jehu eliminates all of Ahab's descendants so that there's no chance Ahab's evil influence comes back. Decide which areas in your life you've been successful at eliminating sin—and take an extra step to eliminate it completely (without resorting to Jehu's violent behavior).

Passage 20: Athaliah, Queen of Judah

Date

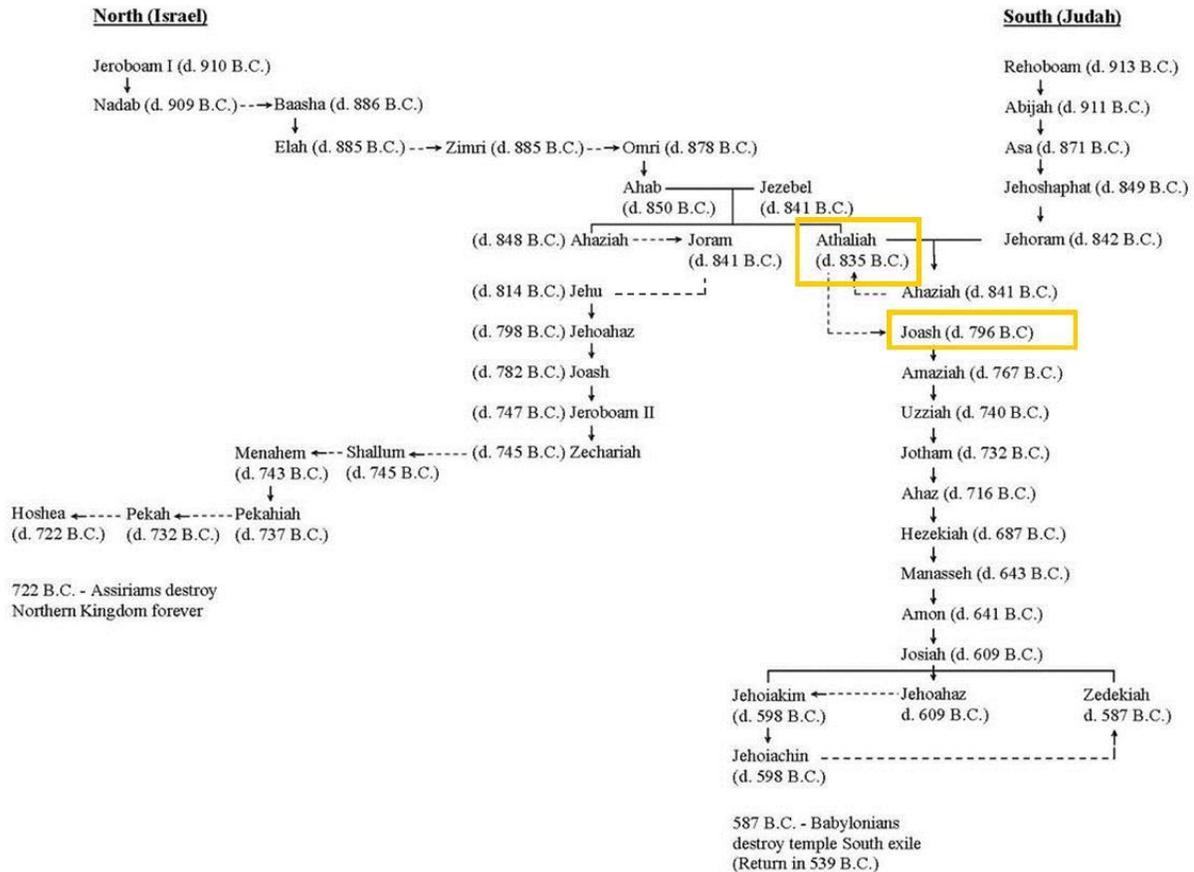
835 B.C. (Approximate date Athaliah is dethroned and killed)

Summary

After the death of her son, Athaliah determines to rule over Judah herself—so she kills all the potential successors to the throne (yes, some of which are her own grandchildren). In the midst of the slaughter, one of the potential heirs, baby Joash, is saved by Jehosheba, Athaliah's niece and wife of the main temple priest, Jehoiada. After six years of Athaliah's reign, Jehoiada decides it's time to take over the throne and replace the queen with little Joash. So Jehoiada divides the commanders of Judah and stations them at three locations around the temple. Then he brings out Joash and announces him king. When Athaliah hears all the commotion going on at the temple, she travels there to investigate. The commanders arrest Athaliah immediately, then escort her from the temple and kill her, leaving Joash as the king.

Family Tree

Now we switch to the southern kingdom, where Ahab's daughter Athaliah takes the throne. Her son, Ahaziah was killed in Jehu's takeover, so she is now the queen of Judah. Because she wants power for herself, she attempts to kill all potential heirs to the throne. Only one heir, Joash, is hidden and saved.



Map

Athaliah's death occurs in the Jerusalem temple.



2 Kings 11:1–20

¹When Athaliah, the mother of Ahaziah, saw that her son was dead, she began to kill off the whole royal family. ²But Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram and sister of Ahaziah, took Joash, Ahaziah's son, and spirited him away, along with his nurse, from the bedroom where the princes were about to be slain. He was concealed from Athaliah, and so he did not die. ³For six years he remained hidden with her in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah ruled as queen over the land.

⁴But in the seventh year, Jehoiada summoned the captains of the Carians and of the guards. He had them come to him in the house of the LORD, made a covenant with them, exacted an oath from them in the house of the LORD, and then showed them the king's son. ⁵He gave them these orders: "This is what you must do: one third of you who come on duty on the sabbath shall guard the king's house; ⁶another third shall be at the gate Sur; and the last third shall be at the gate behind the guards. You shall guard the palace on all sides, ⁷while the two of your divisions who are going off duty that week shall keep guard over the house of the LORD for the king. ⁸You shall surround the king, each with drawn weapons, and anyone who tries to approach the guard detail is to be killed; stay with the king, wherever he goes."

⁹The captains did just as Jehoiada the priest commanded. Each took his troops, both those going on duty for the week and those going off duty that week, and came to Jehoiada the priest. ¹⁰He gave the captains King David's spear and quivers, which were in the house of the LORD. ¹¹And the guards, with drawn weapons, lined up from the southern to the northern limit of the enclosure, surrounding the altar and the temple on the king's behalf. ¹²Then Jehoiada brought out the king's son and put the crown and the testimony upon him. They proclaimed him king and anointed him, clapping their hands and shouting, "Long live the king!"

¹³When Athaliah heard the noise made by the people, she came before them in the house of the LORD. ¹⁴When she saw the king standing by the column, as was the custom, and the captains and trumpeters near the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets, Athaliah tore her garments and cried out, "Treason, treason!" ¹⁵Then Jehoiada the priest instructed the captains in command of the force: "Escort her with a guard detail. If anyone follows her, let him die by the sword." For the priest had said, "She must not die in the house of the LORD." ¹⁶So they seized her, and when she reached the Horse Gate of the king's house, she was put to death.

¹⁷Then Jehoiada made a covenant between the LORD and the king and the people, by which they would be the LORD'S people; and another between the king and the people. ¹⁸Thereupon all the people of the land went to the temple of Baal and demolished it. They shattered its altars and images completely, and slew Mattan, the priest of Baal, before the altars. Jehoiada the priest appointed a detachment for the house of the LORD, ¹⁹and took the captains, the Carians, the guards, and all the people of the land, and they led the king down from the house of the LORD; they came through the guards' gate to the

king's house, and Joash took his seat on the royal throne. ²⁰All the people of the land rejoiced and the city was quiet, now that Athaliah had been slain with the sword at the king's house.

Memorable Phrase

“Athaliah tore her garments and cried out, ‘Treason, treason!’” (2 Kings 11:13).

Christ Connection

The book of Matthew starts, “The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham” (Matthew 1:1). In earlier sections of the Bible, God made a promise to Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 26:4), and to David that his descendants would last forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Today we read how David's lineage was almost destroyed. But God makes good on his promise, and we will read more about Jesus' genealogy later in the Bible.

Life Application

We see that power blinds both sexes. Athaliah wants to maintain power after her son's death, and so is willing to kill her own grandchildren to satisfy her ambition. We must remind ourselves that all of us are susceptible to the lures of power—men and women alike.

Passage 21: Joash Repairs the Temple

Date

820 B.C. (Approximate year Joash collects funds to rebuild the temple)

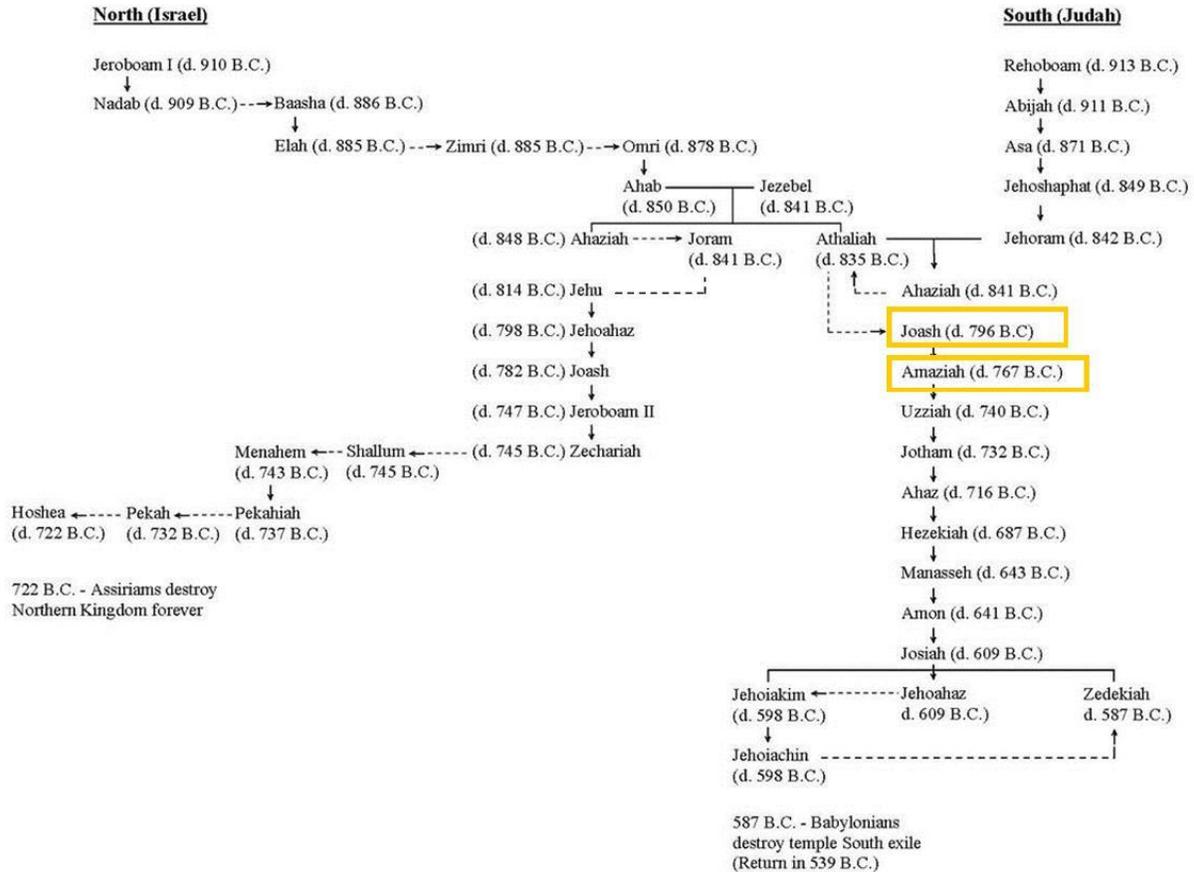
Summary

In the previous section, we read about King Joash, who was hidden as a baby during Queen Athaliah's reign. The high priest Jehoiada brought him out at the age of seven to assume the throne. Now we fast-forward to Joash's adulthood. He sees that the Levites have been neglecting the temple, so he decides to put up an ark in the entrance gate, instructing people from all over Judah and Jerusalem to fill it with donations. The people respond, giving all that is needed to fix the temple.

The people worship in the temple while the high priest Jehoiada is alive. But when he dies, other court officials persuade Joash to turn away from God. Jehoiada's son, Zechariah, tries to convince the people to return to God, but Joash has him stoned. As punishment, God allows the small Syrian army to attack and rob the temple. Joash is assassinated by two people wishing to avenge Zechariah's death.

Family Tree

Joash is seven years old when he takes the throne, and he reigns forty years. His kingship can be divided into two parts: the first is when Joash is under the guidance of the priest Jehoiada and does good in the sight of God. The second is after Jehoiada's death, when Joash turns away from God. After Joash's death, his son Amaziah reigns.



Map

Circled is Jerusalem again, where the temple is located.



2 Chronicles 24:1–27

¹Joash was seven years old when he became king, and he reigned forty years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Zibiah, from Beer-sheba. ²Joash did what was right in

the LORD'S sight as long as Jehoiada the priest lived. ³Jehoiada provided him with two wives, and he became the father of sons and daughters.

⁴After some time, Joash decided to restore the house of the LORD. ⁵He gathered together the priests and Levites and said to them: "Go out to all the cities of Judah and gather money from all Israel that you may repair the house of your God over the years. You must hurry this project." But the Levites did not. ⁶Then the king summoned Jehoiada, who was in charge, and said to him: "Why have you not required the Levites to bring in from Judah and Jerusalem the tax levied by Moses, the servant of the LORD, and by the assembly of Israel, for the tent of the testimony?" ⁷For the wicked Athaliah and her sons had damaged the house of God and had even turned over to the Baals the holy things of the LORD'S house.

⁸At the king's command, therefore, they made a chest, which they put outside the gate of the LORD'S house. ⁹They had it proclaimed throughout Judah and Jerusalem that the tax which Moses, the servant of God, had imposed on Israel in the wilderness should be brought to the LORD. ¹⁰All the princes and the people rejoiced; they brought what was asked and cast it into the chest until it was filled. ¹¹Whenever the chest was brought to the royal officials by the Levites and they noticed that there was a large amount of money, the royal scribe and an overseer for the chief priest would come up, empty the chest, and then take it back and return it to its place. This they did day after day until they had collected a large sum of money. ¹²Then the king and Jehoiada gave it to the workers in charge of the labor on the LORD'S house, who hired masons and carpenters to restore the LORD'S house, and also iron- and bronze-smiths to repair it. ¹³The workers labored, and the task of restoration progressed under their hands. They restored the house of God according to its original form, and reinforced it. ¹⁴After they had finished, they brought the rest of the money to the king and to Jehoiada, who had it made into utensils for the house of the LORD, utensils for the service and the burnt offerings, and basins and other gold and silver utensils. They sacrificed burnt offerings in the LORD'S house continually all the days of Jehoiada. ¹⁵Jehoiada grew old, full of years, and died; he was a hundred and thirty years old. ¹⁶They buried him in the City of David with the kings, because of the good he had done in Israel, especially for God and his house.

¹⁷After the death of Jehoiada, the princes of Judah came and paid homage to the king; then the king listened to them. ¹⁸They abandoned the house of the LORD, the God of their ancestors, and began to serve the asherahs and the idols; and because of this crime of theirs, wrath came upon Judah and Jerusalem. ¹⁹Although prophets were sent to them to turn them back to the LORD and to warn them, the people would not listen. ²⁰Then the spirit of God clothed Zechariah, son of Jehoiada the priest. He took his stand above the people and said to them: "Thus says God, Why are you transgressing the LORD'S commands, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have abandoned the LORD, he has abandoned you." ²¹But they conspired against him, and at the king's command they

stoned him in the court of the house of the LORD. ²²Thus King Joash was unmindful of the devotion shown him by Jehoiada, Zechariah's father, and killed the son. As he was dying, he said, "May the LORD see and avenge."

²³At the turn of the year a force of Arameans came up against Joash. They invaded Judah and Jerusalem, killed all the princes of the people, and sent all their spoil to the king of Damascus. ²⁴Though the Aramean force was small, the LORD handed over a very large force into their power, because Judah had abandoned the LORD, the God of their ancestors. So judgment was meted out to Joash. ²⁵After the Arameans had departed from him, abandoning him to his many injuries, his servants conspired against him because of the murder of the son of Jehoiada the priest. They killed him on his sickbed. He was buried in the City of David, but not in the tombs of the kings. ²⁶Those who conspired against him were Zabad, son of Shimeath from Ammon, and Jehozabad, son of Shimrith from Moab. ²⁷An account of his sons, the great tribute imposed on him, and his rebuilding of the house of God is written in the midrash of the book of the kings. His son Amaziah succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

"All the princes and the people rejoiced; they brought what was asked and cast it into the chest until it was filled" (2 Chronicles 24:10).

Christ Connection

Joash calls on all the people in the land to give money to the temple, and they do. We can assume that people gave different amounts, since "the tax of Moses in the wilderness" didn't set a fixed amount for each family (see Exodus 25:1-9).

In Mark 12:41–44, Jesus notices people giving different amounts to the temple treasury—some give large amounts, but one woman gives a few small coins. Jesus praises her above the others, because she gave from her livelihood, while the others, even though they gave more money, had given out of their surplus.

Life Application

When we all participate together we can accomplish very good things. Joash is able to repair the temple—but only with the help of everyone's donations. Find a place where you can help just a little, and let other people help as well. Together, all our small, individual contributions add up.

Passage 22: Jehu's Descendants

Date

832 B.C (Approximate date of Elisha's death)

Summary

There are three distinct parts to this passage:

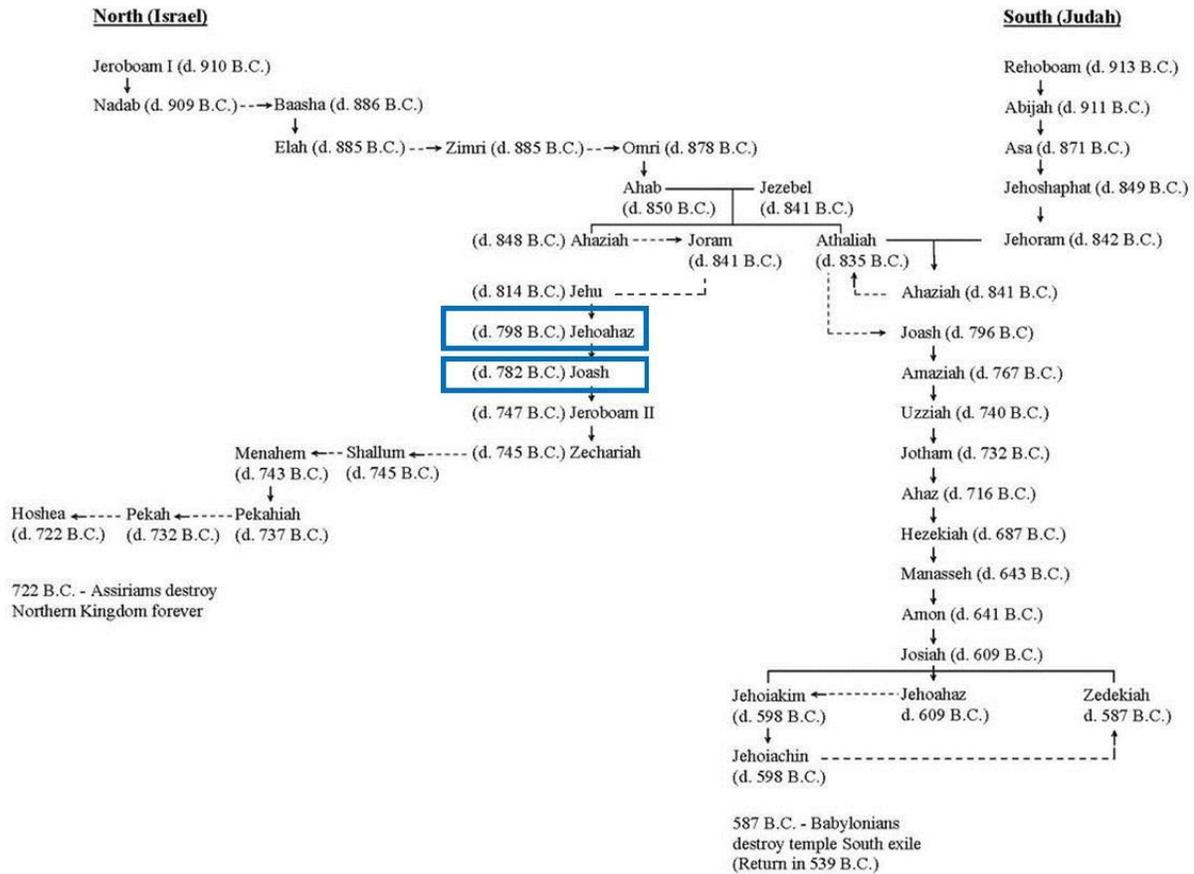
Jehoahaz's struggles with Syria. Jehoahaz prays to God for help, and God raises up a liberator who helps defeat the Syrians and brings a temporary peace.

Joash's reign. (Yes, for a time Israel and Judah were both ruled by kings named Joash.) Like all northern kings, he turns the people away from the true God. The most interesting part in this passage is Joash's conversation with the prophet Elisha. Joash visits the prophet because Elisha is near the end of his life. So Elisha tells Joash to shoot an arrow out of the window. Joash does, and Elisha calls it the arrow of salvation. Elisha then tells Joash to strike the floor with the rest of the arrows. He does so three times. Elisha gets mad, saying that if Joash would have struck five or six times, the Syrians would have been defeated forever. Now, however, there will only be three victories. Luckily, three victories are enough for Israel to recover the cities they had previously lost.

The death and burial of Elisha. Sometime later, robbers beset a burial party, and so the people hastily throw the body into Elisha's nearby tomb. Once the dead man touches Elisha bones, he recovers his life and stands up on his feet.

Family Tree

We turn to the northern kingdom, where Jehu's descendants are now reigning. This passage contains the reigns of Jehu's son and grandson, Jehoahaz and Joash.



Map

Circled in red is Syria (also called Aram-Damascus), the constant enemy of the northern kingdom.



¹In the twenty-third year of Joash, son of Ahaziah, king of Judah, Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, became king over Israel in Samaria for seventeen years.

²He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight: he did not depart from following the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. ³The LORD was angry with Israel and for a long time gave them into the power of Hazael, king of Aram, and of Benhadad, son of Hazael. ⁴Then Jehoahaz entreated the LORD, who heard him, since he saw the oppression to which the king of Aram had subjected Israel. ⁵So the LORD gave Israel a savior, and the Israelites, freed from the power of Aram, dwelt in their own tents as formerly. ⁶Nevertheless, they did not desist from the sins the house of Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit, but persisted in them. The Asherah remained even in Samaria. ⁷No army was left to Jehoahaz, except fifty horses with ten chariots and ten thousand foot soldiers, since the king of Aram had destroyed them and trampled them like dust.

⁸The rest of the acts of Jehoahaz, with all that he did and his valor, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ⁹Jehoahaz rested with his ancestors; he was buried in Samaria and his son Joash succeeded him as king.

¹⁰In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Joash, son of Jehoahaz, became king over Israel in Samaria sixteen years.

¹¹He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight; he did not desist from any of the sins Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit, but persisted in them.

¹²The rest of the acts of Joash, with all that he did and his valor, and how he fought with Amaziah, king of Judah, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹³Joash rested with his ancestors. Then Jeroboam sat on his throne. Joash was buried in Samaria with the kings of Israel.

¹⁴When Elisha was suffering from the sickness of which he was to die, Joash, king of Israel, went down to weep over him. "My father, my father!" he exclaimed, "Israel's chariot and steeds!" ¹⁵Elisha said to him, "Take bow and arrows," and he took bow and arrows. ¹⁶Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Rest your hand on the bow," and he rested his hand on it. Elisha placed his hands over the king's hands ¹⁷and said, "Open the window toward the east." He opened it. Elisha said, "Shoot," and he shot. He said,

"An arrow of victory for the LORD!

An arrow of victory over Aram!

You will beat Aram at Aphek and finish him!"

¹⁸Then he said to the king of Israel, "Take the arrows," which he did. Elisha said to the king of Israel, "Beat the ground!" He beat the ground three times and stopped. ¹⁹The man of God became angry with him and said, "You should have beat five or six times. You would have beaten Aram and finished him. Now you will beat Aram only three times."

²⁰And so Elisha died and was buried.

At that time of year, bands of Moabites used to raid the land. ²¹Once some people were burying a man, when suddenly they saw such a raiding band. So they cast the man into the grave of Elisha, and everyone went off. But when the man came in contact with the bones of Elisha, he came back to life and got to his feet.

²²King Hazael of Aram oppressed Israel all the days of Jehoahaz. ²³But the LORD was gracious with Israel and looked on them with compassion because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He was unwilling to destroy them or to cast them out from his presence even up to now. ²⁴So when King Hazael of Aram died and his son Ben-hadad succeeded him as king, ²⁵Joash, son of Jehoahaz, took back from Ben-hadad, son of Hazael, the cities Hazael had taken in battle from Jehoahaz, his father. Three times Joash beat him, and thus recovered the cities of Israel.

Memorable Phrase

“An arrow of victory for the LORD!

An arrow of victory over Aram!

You will beat Aram at Aphek and finish him!” (2 Kings 13:17).

Christ Connection

There are many times in the Bible when the Jewish people pray for liberation from a foreign oppressor. During the time of Jesus, people are praying for liberation from the Romans. For example, when the temple servant Anna sees the baby Jesus, she speaks of him to those awaiting the redemption of Israel (Luke 2:38). After Jesus died on the cross, two of his disciples say they had hoped he would be the redeemer of Israel. Jesus did bring “arrows of salvation,” but not in the political sense many were hoping for.

Life Application

We all struggle with something: a bad habit, maybe even an addiction. It may seem like things won't get better, but don't stop petitioning God. The northern kingdom had been fighting the Syrians for multiple generations. However, Kings Jehoahaz and Joash both receive relief because of their persistent faith in God. Find a struggle you've been battling for years, and determine to continue praying to God for help.

Passage 23: Judah and Israel at War Again

Date

785 B.C (Approximate date of Ahaziah's battle with Joash)

Summary

The two kings involved in this passage are Joash of Israel (the one from the last passage, who visits Elisha and shoots the arrows), and Amaziah of Judah (the son of the Joash who starts reigning as a little boy).

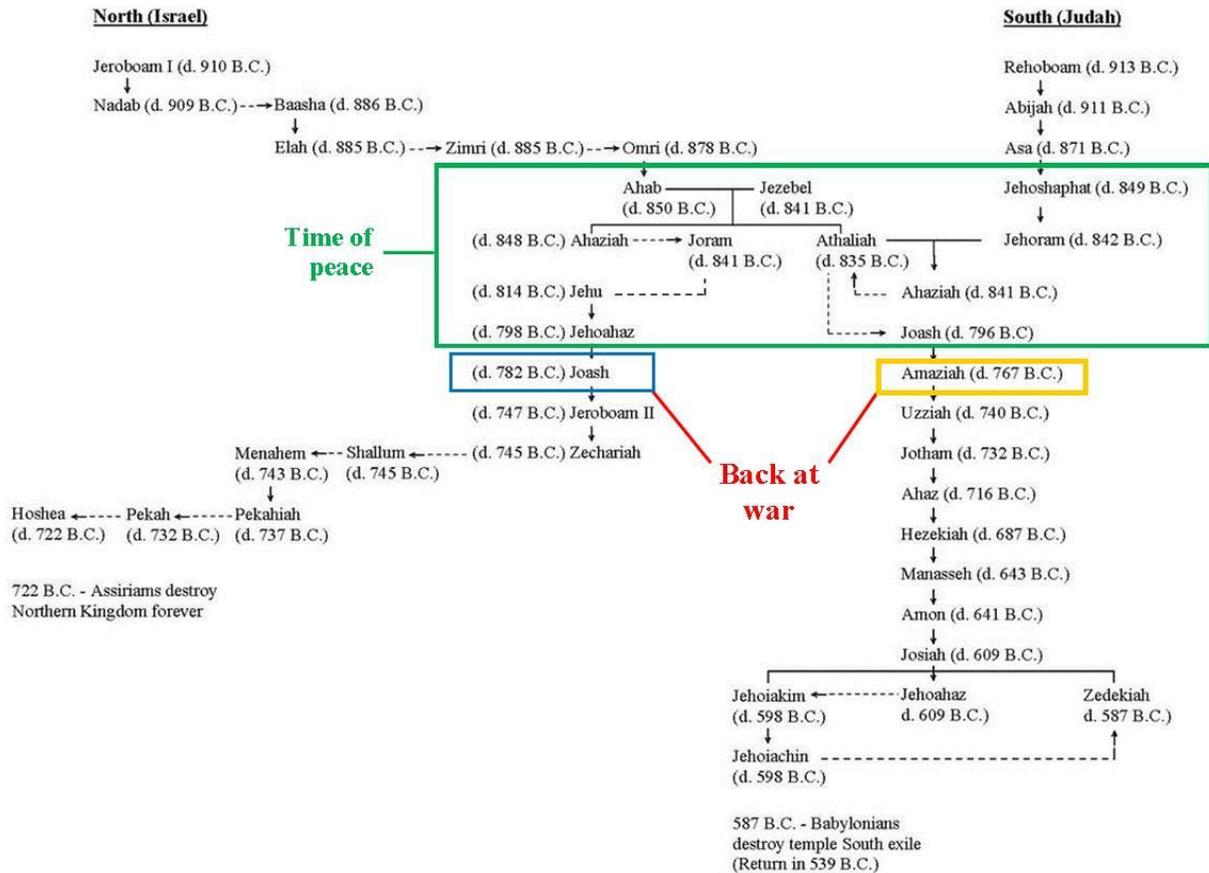
Amaziah kills all the people who assassinated his father. Afterwards, he contracts soldiers from neighboring Israel to help in a war against Edom. But a man of God tells King Amaziah that the Lord is not with Israel, so he should dismiss them. Amaziah asks what he is supposed to do with all the money he spent contracting the soldiers. The man of God says that God will give the king much more than what he lost.

As you would imagine, Joash takes offense at being dismissed. As Judah goes off to war, the northern soldiers start attacking different cities in the south.

Amaziah comes back victorious from his battle with the Edomites, but he brings back their idols and worships them. Feeling very confident, Amaziah decides to challenge the northern kingdom in war. King Joash warns that a little thistle (Judah) shouldn't be challenging a large cedar tree (Israel). But Amaziah doesn't listen. He fights and loses. Israel breaks down Jerusalem's walls, robs the temple, and takes Amaziah captive. Fifteen years later, Amaziah dies.

Family Tree

Since Passage 11, when Ahab's daughter married Jehoshaphat's son, Israel and Judah have been at peace. That changes here, as King Amaziah of Judah challenges King Joash of Israel.



Map

Circled in red is the kingdom of Edom, the kingdom Amaziah defeats.



2 Chronicles 25:1–25

¹Amaziah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jehoaddan, from Jerusalem. ²He did what was right in the LORD'S sight, though not wholeheartedly. ³When he had the kingdom firmly in hand, he struck down the officials who had struck down the king, his father. ⁴But their children he did not put to death, for he acted according to what is written in the law, in the Book of Moses, which the LORD commanded: "Parents shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their parents; they shall each die for their own sin."

⁵Amaziah gathered Judah and placed them, out of all Judah and Benjamin according to their ancestral houses, under leaders of thousands and of hundreds. When he made a count of those twenty years old and over, he found that there were three hundred thousand picked men fit for war, capable of handling lance and shield. ⁶He also hired a hundred thousand valiant warriors from Israel for a hundred talents of silver. ⁷But a man of God came to him and said: "O king, let not the army of Israel go with you, for the LORD is not with Israel—with any Ephraimite. ⁸Instead, go on your own, strongly prepared for the battle; why should the LORD hinder you in the face of the enemy: for with God is power to help or to hinder." ⁹Amaziah answered the man of God, "But what is to be done about the hundred talents that I paid for the troops of Israel?" The man of God replied, "The LORD can give you much more than that." ¹⁰Amaziah then disbanded the troops that had come to him from Ephraim, and sent them home. But they became furiously angry with Judah, and returned home blazing with anger.

¹¹Amaziah now assumed command of his army. They proceeded to the Valley of Salt, where they killed ten thousand men of Seir. ¹²The Judahites also brought back another ten thousand alive, led them to the summit of Sela, and then threw them down from that rock so that their bodies split open. ¹³Meanwhile, the troops Amaziah had dismissed from going into battle with him raided the cities of Judah from Samaria to Beth-horon. They struck down three thousand of the inhabitants and carried off much plunder.

¹⁴When Amaziah returned from his conquest of the Edomites he brought back with him the gods of the people of Seir. He set these up as his own gods; he bowed down before them and offered sacrifice to them. ¹⁵Then the anger of the LORD blazed out against Amaziah, and he sent a prophet to him who said: "Why have you sought this people's gods that could not deliver their own people from your power?" ¹⁶While he was still speaking, however, the king said to him: "Have you been appointed the king's counselor? Stop! Why should you have to be killed?" Therefore the prophet stopped. But he said, "I know that God's counsel is your destruction, for by doing this you have refused to listen to my counsel."

¹⁷Having taken counsel, Amaziah, king of Judah, sent word to Joash, son of Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, the king of Israel, saying, "Come, let us meet face to face."

¹⁸Joash, king of Israel, sent this reply to Amaziah, king of Judah: "A thistle of Lebanon

sent word to a cedar of Lebanon, 'Give your daughter to my son in marriage,' but an animal of Lebanon passed by and trampled the thistle underfoot. ¹⁹You are thinking, 'See, I have struck down Edom!'

Your heart is lifted up,
And glories in it. Stay home!
Why bring misfortune and failure
on yourself and on Judah with you?"

²⁰But Amaziah did not listen; for it was God's doing that they be handed over because they sought the gods of Edom.

²¹So Joash, king of Israel, advanced, and he and Amaziah, king of Judah, met face to face at Beth-shemesh of Judah, ²²and Judah was defeated by Israel, and all fled to their tents. ²³But Amaziah, king of Judah, son of Joash, son of Jehoahaz, was captured by Joash, king of Israel, at Beth-shemesh. Joash brought him to Jerusalem and tore down the wall of Jerusalem from the Gate of Ephraim to the Corner Gate, four hundred cubits. ²⁴He took all the gold and silver and all the vessels found in the house of God with Obed-edom, and in the treasuries of the king's house, and hostages as well. Then he returned to Samaria.

²⁵Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, survived Joash, son of Jehoahaz, king of Israel, by fifteen years.

Memorable Phrase

"Why bring misfortune and failure
on yourself and on Judah with you?" (2 Chronicles 25:19).

Christ Connection

Jesus grew up in the town of Nazareth. It was a small town, and its residents were despised by those who hailed from other bigger places. "Can anything good come from Nazareth?" asks Nathanael, one of Jesus' soon-to-be disciples. But Jesus is not insecure about his humble origins, and his disciples do not lash out on his behalf. They simply invite Nathanael to "come and see." (See John 1:43–51 for the whole story.) Nathanael sees, and the rest is history.

Life Application

We all feel the temptation to prove ourselves: Maybe we want to show people how smart or strong we are. Amaziah falls into this trap, challenging the more powerful northern kingdom in battle. It doesn't work out so well for him. Don't go around picking fights. Resist the temptation to assert yourself simply because you want to prove a point.

Passage 24: Uzziah's Pride

Date

750 B.C. (Approximate date Uzziah tried to offer incense in the temple)

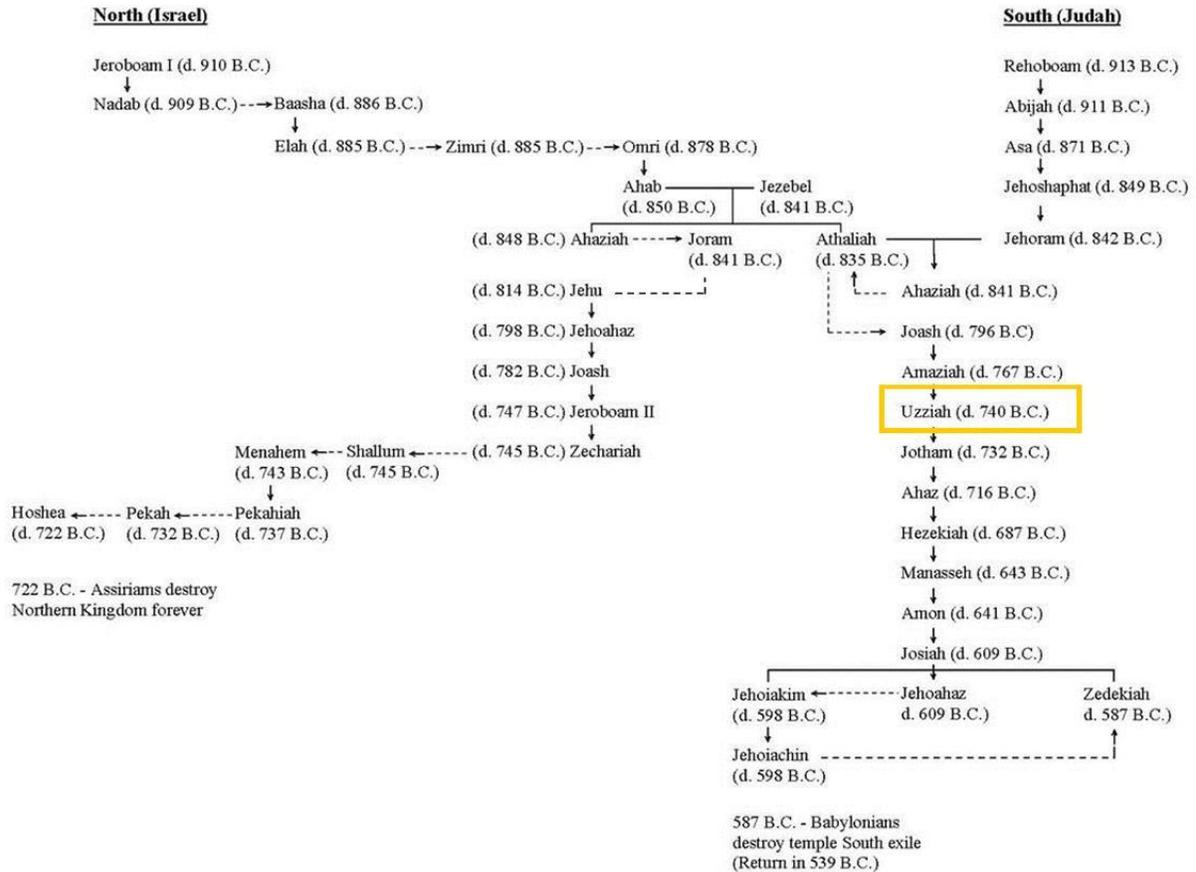
Summary

Uzziah has a lot success as a king: He strengthens the cities of Judah and builds war machines that defend the city walls by throwing arrows and stones. He's a man "devoted to agriculture," keeping the vineyards and cattle numerous and healthy. He wins wars against neighboring nations, and he even walks on the path of God—the author says God was with Uzziah in everything.

Unfortunately, Uzziah becomes filled with pride. In addition to his responsibilities as king, he wants to fulfill priestly duties. So he goes to the temple to burn incense. The priest Azariah, along with eighty other priests, stop the king from burning incense. Azariah tells the king that this ministry is reserved only for the tribe of Levi. This upsets the king, and he begins to threaten the priests. Immediately, leprosy breaks out on his forehead. He remains a leper for the rest of his life.

Family Tree

Here we have King Uzziah. As we can see, this is a pretty straightforward section of the family tree.



Map

The temple is located in Jerusalem, where Uzziah reigned.



2 Chronicles 26:1–21

¹All the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was only sixteen years old, and made him king to succeed Amaziah his father. ²It was he who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah, after the

king rested with his ancestors. ³Uzziah was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jecoliah, from Jerusalem. ⁴He did what was right in the LORD'S sight, just as his father Amaziah had done.

⁵He was prepared to seek God as long as Zechariah lived, who taught him to fear God; and as long as he sought the LORD, God made him prosper. ⁶He went out and fought the Philistines and razed the walls of Gath, Jabneh, and Ashdod, and built cities in the district of Ashdod and in Philistia. ⁷God helped him against the Philistines, against the Arabians who dwelt in Gurbaal, and against the Meunites. ⁸The Ammonites paid tribute to Uzziah and his fame spread as far as Egypt, for he grew stronger and stronger. ⁹Moreover, Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate, and at the Angle, and he fortified them. ¹⁰He built towers in the wilderness and dug numerous cisterns, for he had many cattle. He had plowmen in the Shephelah and the plains, farmers and vinedressers in the highlands and the garden land. He was a lover of the soil.

¹¹Uzziah also had a standing army of fit soldiers divided into bands according to the number in which they were mustered by Jeiel the scribe and Maaseiah the recorder, under the command of Hananiah, one of the king's officials. ¹²The entire number of family heads over these valiant warriors was two thousand six hundred, ¹³and at their disposal was a mighty army of three hundred seven thousand five hundred fighting men of great valor to help the king against his enemies. ¹⁴Uzziah provided for them—for the entire army—bucklers, lances, helmets, breastplates, bows, and slingstones. ¹⁵He also built machines in Jerusalem, devices designed to stand on the towers and at the angles of the walls to shoot arrows and cast large stones. His name spread far and wide; the help he received was wondrous, so strong did he become.

¹⁶But after he had become strong, he became arrogant to his own destruction and acted treacherously with the LORD, his God. He entered the temple of the LORD to make an offering on the altar of incense. ¹⁷But Azariah the priest, and with him eighty other priests of the LORD, courageous men, followed him. ¹⁸They stood up to King Uzziah, saying to him: "It is not for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the LORD, but for the priests, the sons of Aaron, who have been consecrated for this purpose. Leave the sanctuary, for you have acted treacherously and no longer have a part in the glory that comes from the LORD God." ¹⁹Uzziah, who was holding a censer for burning the incense, became angry. But at the very moment he showed his anger to the priests, while they were looking at him in the house of the LORD beside the altar of incense, leprosy broke out on his forehead. ²⁰Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests examined him, and when they saw that his forehead was leprous, they rushed him out. He let himself be expelled, for the LORD had afflicted him. ²¹King Uzziah remained a leper till the day he died. As a leper he lived in a house apart, for he was excluded from the house of the LORD. Therefore his son Jotham was master of the palace and ruled the people of the land.

Memorable Phrase

“But after he had become strong, he became arrogant to his own destruction and acted treacherously with the LORD, his God” (2 Chronicles 26:16).

Christ Connection

In all societies, there are certain responsibilities that correspond to certain people. In the life of Jesus, there are instances where he says a certain thing corresponds to his heavenly father, and not to Jesus himself (like Matthew 24:36).

Paul considers all of the church as the body, with Christ as the head. He says that we all form different parts, as it wouldn't make sense for everyone to be an ear, or an eye (1 Corinthians 12:14–18).

In Uzziah's case, he wants to do what priests do because he is filled with pride. Pride has a tendency to make us reach for what doesn't properly belong to us—just ask Adam and Eve!

Life Application

Just because we're successful in one area of life, we shouldn't become prideful and think we can do it all. Uzziah has many military successes, but that makes him think he can act like a priest as well. Take care not to overstep your bounds! If God has blessed you in one area of life, you shouldn't think that God has now called you to be in charge of everything.

Passage 25: High Turnover in the North

Date

747 B.C. (Approximate date of Jeroboam II's death, the end of the last stable reign in the north)

Summary

We come back to the northern kingdom, whose end is near. We are introduced to a series of short-lived kings who try and fail to stabilize the kingdom.

a) Jeroboam II

This king reigns for more than forty years, and the northern kingdom enjoys its greatest level of political and economic prosperity during his reign. And yet he only gets seven verses. This is because the biblical authors believe a king's devotion to the true God—especially when imitated by the people—is a truer sign of success than earthly prosperity. In fact, we've seen biblical authors dedicate a lot of chapters to short-reigning kings so we learn what *not* to do.

Within Jeroboam's history, we read a shortened account of Uzziah—referred to here as "Azariah"—the king of Judah who wants to offer incense like a priest and contracts leprosy as punishment for his sacrilege.

b) Zechariah and Shallum

Both of these kings rule for a very short time (six months and one month respectively) before being assassinated by their successors. As with all northern kings, they do evil in the sight of the Lord.

c) Menahem

This ruthless king rips babies out of the wombs of the women in the city of Tirzah because they won't open the city gates for him. During his reign, he makes peace with King Pul (also called Tiglath-pileser) of Assyria by taxing the northern citizens and giving King Pul the money.

d) Pekahiah

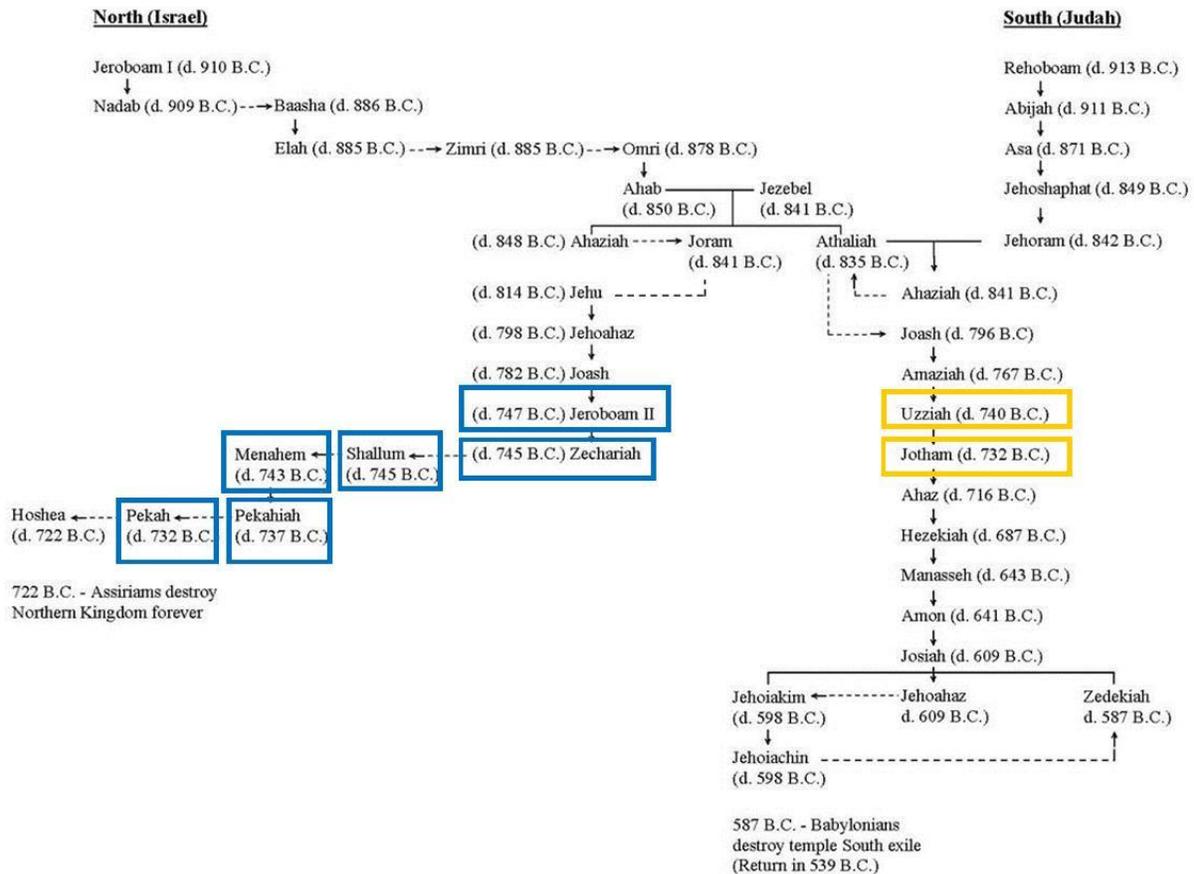
He only reigns for two years and does evil in the sight of the Lord. Then he is assassinated.

e) Pekah

During his reign, Tiglath-pileser invades some cities in the north, and takes these inhabitants to Assyria. Pekah carries out attacks against Jotham, now the king of Judah. Pekah is eventually assassinated.

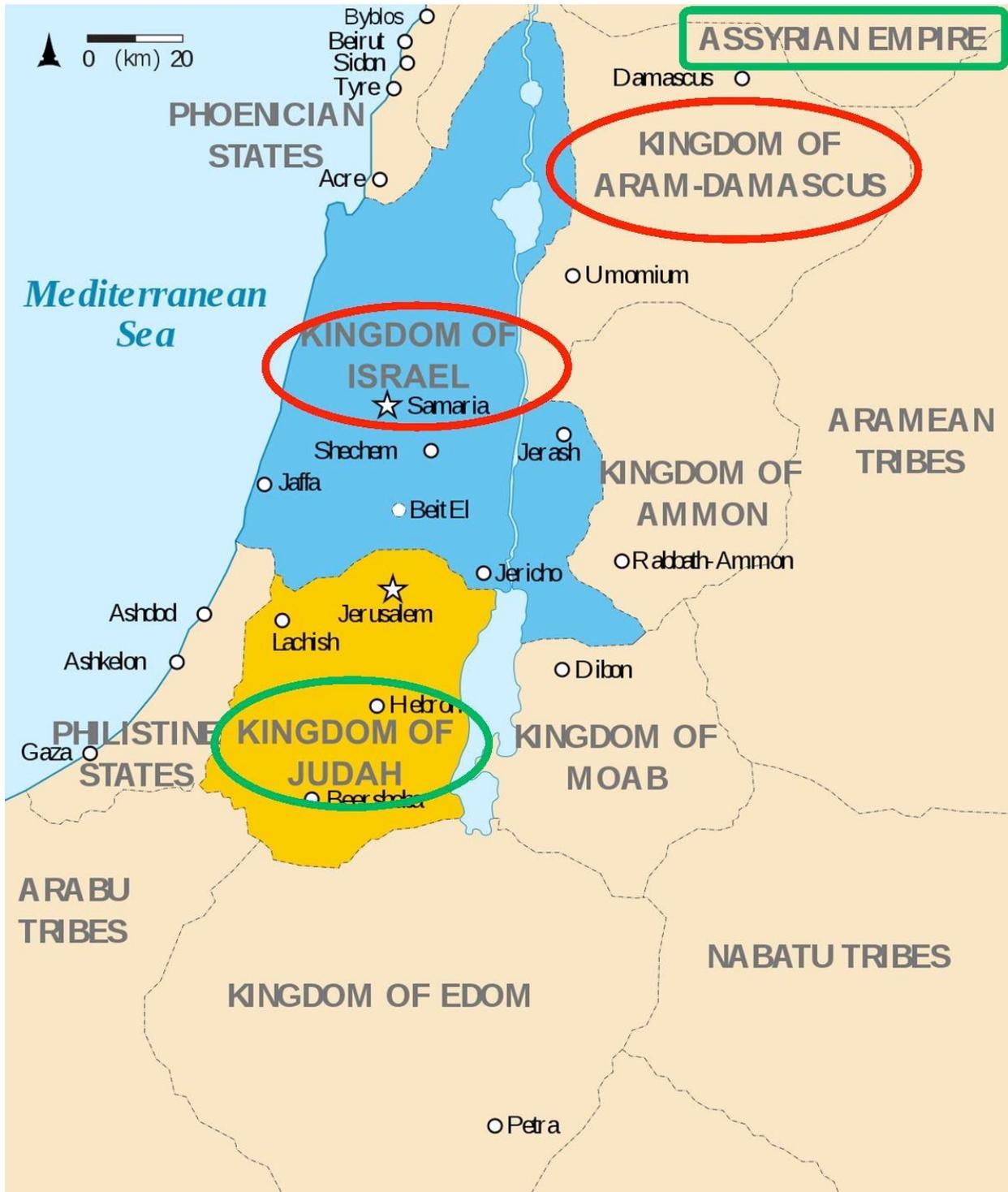
Family Tree

In a little over one chapter, we'll encounter eight different kings: six in Israel and two in Judah. On the family tree, here are the names we'll be reading about.



Map

Here we have the main countries involved in this passage: Syria, Assyria, Judah, and Israel.



2 Kings 14:23—15:38

²³In the fifteenth year of Amaziah, son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam, son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria for forty-one years.

²⁴He did evil in the LORD'S sight; he did not desist from any of the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. ²⁵He restored the boundaries of Israel from Lebo-hamath to the sea of the Arabah, as the LORD, the God of Israel, had foretold through his servant, the prophet Jonah, son of Amittai, from Gath-hepher. ²⁶For the LORD saw the very bitter affliction of Israel, where there was neither bond nor free, no one at all to help Israel. ²⁷Since the LORD had not resolved to wipe out the name of Israel from under the heavens, he saved them through Jeroboam, son of Joash.

²⁸The rest of the acts of Jeroboam, with all that he did and his valor, how he fought, and how he regained Damascus and Hamath for Israel, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ²⁹Jeroboam rested with his ancestors, the kings of Israel, and his son Zechariah succeeded him as king.

¹In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Azariah, son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. ²He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jeholiah, from Jerusalem.

³He did what was right in the LORD'S sight, just as his father Amaziah had done, ⁴though the high places did not disappear, and the people continued to sacrifice and to burn incense on the high places. ⁵The LORD afflicted the king, and he was a leper until the day he died. He lived in a house apart, while Jotham, the king's son, was master of the palace and ruled the people of the land.

⁶The rest of the acts of Azariah, and all that he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. ⁷Azariah rested with his ancestors, and was buried with them in the City of David, and his son Jotham succeeded him as king.

⁸In the thirty-eighth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Zechariah, son of Jeroboam, became king over Israel in Samaria for six months.

⁹He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, as his ancestors had done, and did not desist from the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit.

¹⁰Shallum, son of Jabesh, plotted against him and struck him down at Ibleam. He killed him and reigned in his place.

¹¹As for the rest of the acts of Zechariah, these are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹²This was the word the LORD had spoken to Jehu: Sons of your line to the fourth generation shall sit upon the throne of Israel; and so it was.

¹³Shallum, son of Jabesh, became king in the thirty-ninth year of Uzziah, king of Judah; he reigned one month in Samaria.

¹⁴Menahem, son of Gadi, came up from Tirzah to Samaria, and struck down Shallum, son of Jabesh, in Samaria. He killed him and reigned in his place.

¹⁵As for the rest of the acts of Shallum, with the conspiracy he carried out, these are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹⁶At that time, Menahem attacked Tappuah, all its inhabitants, and its whole district as far as Tirzah, because they did not let him in. He attacked them; he even ripped open all their pregnant women.

¹⁷In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Menahem, son of Gadi, became king over Israel for ten years in Samaria. ¹⁸He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight as long as he lived, not desisting from the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. ¹⁹Pul, king of Assyria, came against the land. But Menahem gave Pul a thousand talents of silver to have his help in holding onto his kingdom. ²⁰Menahem paid out silver on behalf of Israel, that is, for all the people of substance, by giving the king of Assyria fifty shekels of silver for each one. So the king of Assyria went home and did not stay in the land.

²¹The rest of the acts of Menahem, with all that he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ²²Menahem rested with his ancestors, and his son Pekahiah succeeded him as king.

²³In the fiftieth year of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekahiah, son of Menahem, became king over Israel in Samaria for two years.

²⁴He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, not desisting from the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. ²⁵His adjutant Pekah, son of Remaliah, conspired against him, and struck him down at Samaria within the palace stronghold; he had with him fifty men from Gilead. He killed him and reigned in his place. ²⁶As for the rest of the acts of Pekahiah, with all that he did, these are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

²⁷In the fifty-second year of Azariah, king of Judah, Pekah, son of Remaliah, became king over Israel in Samaria for twenty years.

²⁸He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, not desisting from the sins that Jeroboam, son of Nebat, had caused Israel to commit. ²⁹In the days of Pekah, king of Israel, Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, came and took Ijon, Abel-beth-maacah, Janoah, Kedesh, Hazor, Gilead, and Galilee—all the land of Naphtali—deporting the inhabitants to Assyria.

³⁰Hoshea, son of Elah, carried out a conspiracy against Pekah, son of Remaliah; he struck and killed him, and succeeded him as king in the twentieth year of Jotham, son of Uzziah.

³¹As for the rest of the acts of Pekah, with all that he did, these are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

³²In the second year of Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, Jotham, son of Uzziah, king of Judah, became king. ³³He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jerusha, daughter of Zadok.

³⁴He did what was right in the LORD'S sight, just as his father Uzziah had done,
³⁵though the high places did not disappear, and the people continued to sacrifice and to burn incense on the high places. It was he who built the Upper Gate of the LORD'S house.

³⁶The rest of the acts of Jotham, with what he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. ³⁷It was at that time that the LORD began to unleash Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, against Judah. ³⁸Jotham rested with his ancestors; he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David his father, and his son Ahaz succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

"Since the LORD had not resolved to wipe out the name of Israel from under the heavens, he saved them through Jeroboam, son of Joash" (2 Kings 14:27).

Christ Connection

Our Lord reminds his disciples that those who live by the sword, will die by the sword (Matthew 26:52). In today's passage, a number of northern kings reach the throne by assassinating their predecessor, only to be assassinated by their successor.

Life Application

As we can see in the family tree, we're coming to the end of the northern kingdom. This is the way things occur: things spiral out of control until a terrible end. In your own spiritual life, the sooner you recognize the spiral, the better off you'll be. May we recognize when things are getting out of control in our lives, then quickly put on the brakes.

Passage 26: King Ahaz Gets Reassurance from Isaiah

Date

735 B.C. (Approximate date when Ahaz, Pekah, and Rezin are at war)

Summary

Israel and Syria keep attacking Judah, and now they plan to team up to take down Ahaz. Once they kill him, they'll replace him with a king of their choosing.

Ahaz is pretty scared, and so God tells the prophet Isaiah to talk to him. Isaiah reassures the king that the southern kingdom will reign forever because of the promise God made to King David. He further reassures Ahaz that his enemy, King Resin of Aram (Syria), will only reign in the capitol city of Damascus.

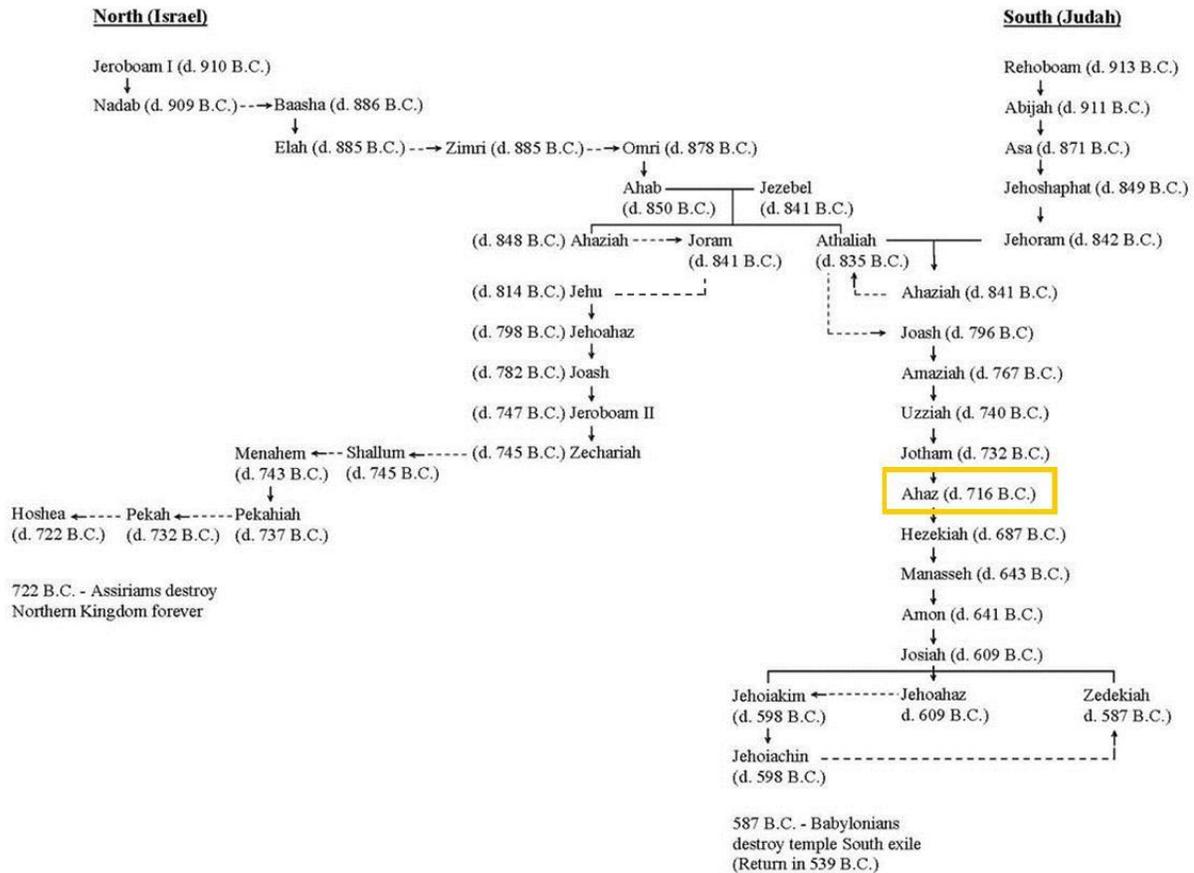
Regarding the other enemy, Israel, Isaiah says Remaliah's son (King Pekah) will only reign in Samaria, the capital city of Israel (here called Ephraim). In fact, in sixty-five years the northern kingdom will cease to exist altogether.

To reassure Ahaz even further, God tells Ahaz to ask for a sign. But Ahaz doesn't want to test God. So a frustrated Isaiah tells Ahaz that a virgin will bear a child, and the child will be called Emmanuel (meaning "God with us"). Before the child is an adult, both the kingdoms of Aram and Ephraim will be put to waste.

The passage concludes with Isaiah saying that God has used Assyria like a razor to humiliate those that have opposed him, shaving off their head, beard, and private parts.

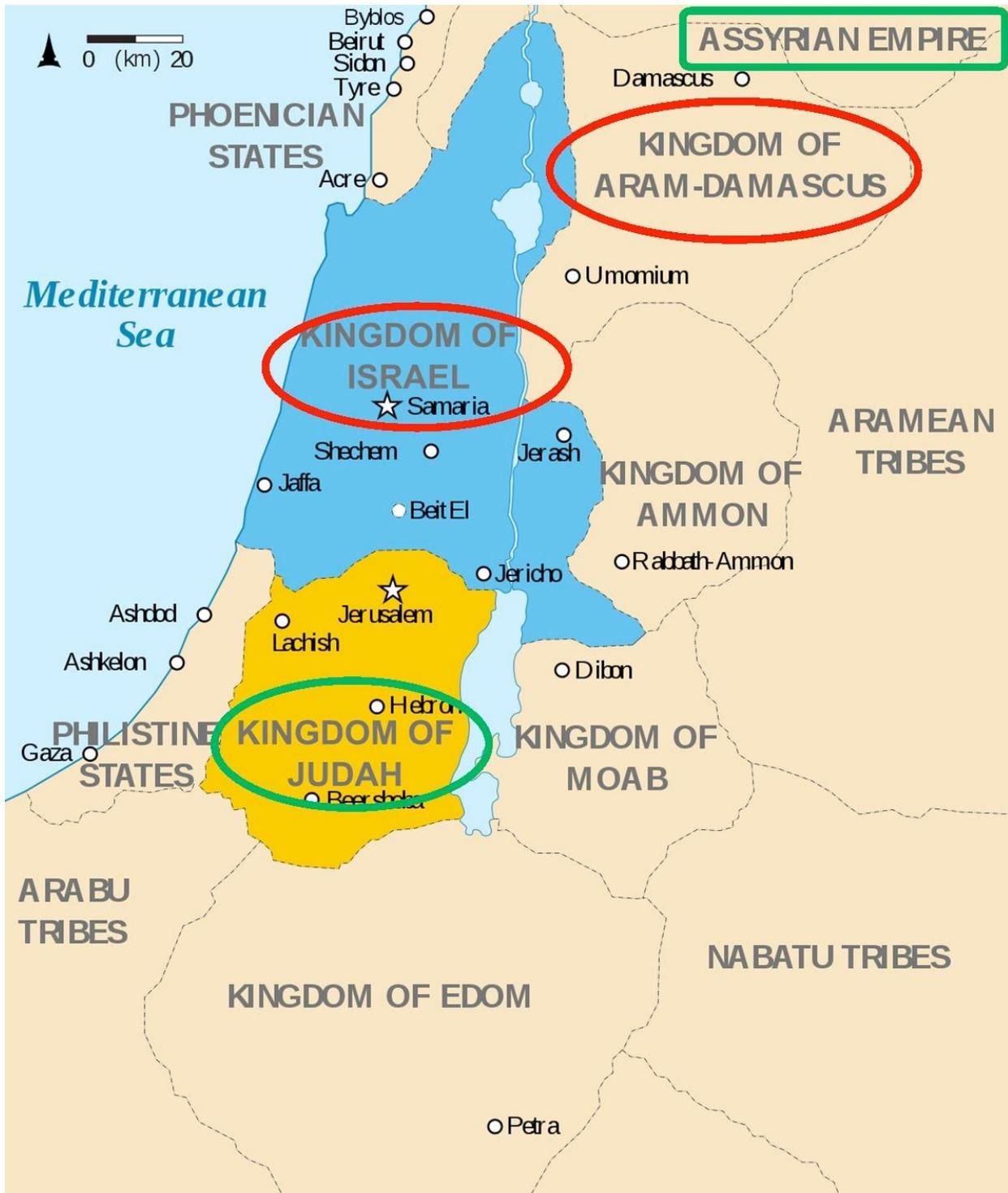
Family Tree

As Israel continues its free fall, Judah gets a new king, King Ahaz. Although Israel has had the most trouble with Assyria and Syria, Judah is having problems as well.



Map

King Ahaz's father (Jotham) is being attacked by Syria and Israel, and the attacks continue into Ahaz's reign. In this passage, four main kingdoms are in play: Judah, Israel (also called Ephraim), Syria (also called Aram), and Assyria. Israel and Syria are both circled in red because they are ganging up against Judah. We'll see in the next passage why Judah and Assyria are both circled in green.



Isaiah 7:1–20

¹In the days of Ahaz, king of Judah, son of Jotham, son of Uzziah, Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, king of Israel, son of Remaliah, went up to attack Jerusalem, but they were not able to conquer it. ²When word came to the house of David that Aram had allied itself with

Ephraim, the heart of the king and heart of the people trembled, as the trees of the forest tremble in the wind.

³Then the LORD said to Isaiah: Go out to meet Ahaz, you and your son Shear-jashub, at the end of the conduit of the upper pool, on the highway to the fuller's field,⁴and say to him: Take care you remain calm and do not fear; do not let your courage fail before these two stumps of smoldering brands, the blazing anger of Rezin and the Arameans and of the son of Remaliah—⁵because Aram, with Ephraim and the son of Remaliah, has planned evil against you. They say, ⁶“Let us go up against Judah, tear it apart, make it our own by force, and appoint the son of Tabeel king there.”

⁷Thus says the Lord GOD:

It shall not stand, it shall not be!

⁸The head of Aram is Damascus,
and the head of Damascus is Rezin;

⁹The head of Ephraim is Samaria,
and the head of Samaria is the son of Remaliah.

Within sixty-five years,
Ephraim shall be crushed, no longer a nation.

Unless your faith is firm,
you shall not be firm!

¹⁰Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz: ¹¹Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God; let it be deep as Sheol, or high as the sky! ¹²But Ahaz answered, “I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!” ¹³Then he said: Listen, house of David! Is it not enough that you weary human beings? Must you also weary my God? ¹⁴Therefore the Lord himself will give you a sign; the young woman, pregnant and about to bear a son, shall name him Emmanuel. ¹⁵Curds and honey he will eat so that he may learn to reject evil and choose good; ¹⁶for before the child learns to reject evil and choose good, the land of those two kings whom you dread shall be deserted.

¹⁷The LORD shall bring upon you and your people and your father's house such days as have not come since Ephraim seceded from Judah (the king of Assyria). ¹⁸On that day

The LORD shall whistle
for the fly in the farthest streams of Egypt,
and for the bee in the land of Assyria.

¹⁹All of them shall come and settle
in the steep ravines and in the rocky clefts,
on all thornbushes and in all pastures.

²⁰On that day the Lord shall shave with the razor hired from across the River (the king of Assyria) the head, and the hair of the feet; it shall also shave off the beard.

²¹On that day a man shall keep alive a young cow or a couple of sheep, ²²and from their abundant yield of milk he shall eat curds; curds and honey shall be the food of all who are

left in the land. ²³On that day every place where there were a thousand vines worth a thousand pieces of silver shall become briars and thorns. ²⁴One shall have to go there with bow and arrows, for all the country shall be briars and thorns. ²⁵But as for all the hills which were hoed with a mattock, for fear of briars and thorns you will not go there; they shall become a place for cattle to roam and sheep to trample.

Memorable Phrase

“Unless your faith is firm,
you shall not be firm!” (Isaiah 7:9).

Christ Connection

In Matthew 1:23, Jesus is called Emmanuel (“God with us”), a phrase taken from today’s passage. Here we see something very important about the Bible: In certain passages, the human author is thinking of one thing, while the divine author (God) has an even deeper meaning in mind. In the case of this child Emmanuel, the human author was referring to Ahaz’s son, Hezekiah. We know this because the passage says both Syria and Israel will be gone in sixty-five years and will be laid to waste by the time this child is an adult. God, however, knows that future generations would look at this passage and not see Hezekiah, but rather Jesus. He’s the reassurance that God’s promise to David will last forever.

Life Application

If people are ganging up against us, it’s hard not to lose hope. The northern kingdom and the Syrians wanted to occupy Judah, so Judah’s king is naturally worried. But the prophet Isaiah reminds him (and us) that unless our faith is firm, we shall not be firm. Do not give up just because the numbers are not on your side—if you’re convinced God is on your side, don’t give in too easily!

Passage 27: Ahaz Pays Off the Assyrians

Date

734 B.C. (Approximate date Assyria attacks Syria)

Summary

Ahaz plans to liberate himself from the constant attacks of his two enemies, Israel and Syria. Ahaz sends messengers to King Tiglath-pileser of Assyria, asking him to attack Syria and Israel. He pays the Assyrian king with the silver and gold of the temple and of the royal palace. In return, King Tiglath-pileser defeats the Syrians. He kills King Resin of Syria and takes over the capital city of Damascus.

A very grateful King Ahaz travels to Damascus to meet with King Tiglath-pileser. He is impressed with the altar there and desires to reconstruct the same altar in Jerusalem and offer sacrifices upon it. The priest Uriah follows Ahaz's instructions, even though that means relocating the altar for the true God. Also, out of deference to the king of Assyria, Ahaz removes the sabbath canopy from the temple and from the temple's royal entrance. Of course, the biblical author is not happy with these adjustments Ahaz has made. But Tiglath-pileser is appeased, and, as we will see in the next passage, he turns his sights to the northern kingdom.

Map

Damascus is circled, the city where Ahaz meets Tiglath-pileser after he defeats the Syrians.



2 Kings 16:1–20

¹In the seventeenth year of Pekah, son of Remaliah, Ahaz, son of Jotham, king of Judah, became king. ²Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem.

He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God, as David his father had done. ³He walked in the way of the kings of Israel; he even immolated his child by fire, in accordance with the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites. ⁴Further, he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places, on hills, and under every green tree.

⁵Then Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, son of Remaliah, king of Israel, came up to Jerusalem to attack it. Although they besieged Ahaz, they were unable to do battle. ⁶(In those days Rezin, king of Aram, recovered Elath for Aram, and drove the Judahites out of it. The Edomites then entered Elath, which they have occupied until the present.)

⁷Meanwhile, Ahaz sent messengers to Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria, with the plea: "I am your servant and your son. Come up and rescue me from the power of the king of Aram and the king of Israel, who are attacking me." ⁸Ahaz took the silver and gold that were in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house and sent them as a present to the king of Assyria. ⁹The king of Assyria listened to him and moved against Damascus, captured it, deported its inhabitants to Kir, and put Rezin to death.

¹⁰King Ahaz went to Damascus to meet Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria. When he saw the altar in Damascus, King Ahaz sent to Uriah the priest a model of the altar and a detailed design of its construction. ¹¹Uriah the priest built an altar according to the plans which King Ahaz sent him from Damascus, and had it completed by the time King Ahaz returned from Damascus. ¹²On his arrival from Damascus, the king inspected the altar; the king approached the altar, went up ¹³and sacrificed his burnt offering and grain offering, pouring out his libation, and sprinkling the blood of his communion offerings on the altar. ¹⁴The bronze altar that stood before the LORD he brought from the front of the temple—that is, from the space between the new altar and the house of the LORD—and set it on the north side of his altar. ¹⁵King Ahaz commanded Uriah the priest, "Upon the large altar sacrifice the morning burnt offering and the evening grain offering, the king's burnt offering and grain offering, and the burnt offering and grain offering of the people of the land. Their libations you must sprinkle on it along with all the blood of burnt offerings and sacrifices. But the old bronze altar shall be mine for consultation." ¹⁶Uriah the priest did just as King Ahaz had commanded. ¹⁷King Ahaz detached the panels from the stands and removed the basins from them; he also took down the bronze sea from the bronze oxen that supported it, and set it on a stone pavement. ¹⁸In deference to the king of Assyria he removed the sabbath canopy that had been set up in the house of the LORD and the king's outside entrance to the temple.

¹⁹The rest of the acts of Ahaz, with what he did, are recorded in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah. ²⁰Ahaz rested with his ancestors; he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David, and his son Hezekiah succeeded him as king.

Memorable Phrase

“In deference to the king of Assyria he removed the sabbath canopy that had been set up in the house of the LORD and the king’s outside entrance to the temple” (2 Kings 16:18).

Christ Connection

It’s good to show gratitude, as long as our expressions of thanks take us in the right direction. There’s a story where the Jewish people take a Roman soldier to Jesus because they are grateful to him for building their synagogue. In fact, Jesus is impressed with the soldier’s faith as well (see Luke 7:3–10 for the whole story).

In Ahaz’s case, his gratitude to Tiglath-pileser turns everyone away from the true God. In the Gospel of Luke, the people’s gratitude leads the foreign soldier to the true God, Jesus.

Life Application

Sometime in our eagerness to receive help, we compromise our principles. That’s what happens in this passage: The Assyrians help Judah against Israel and Syria, but then King Ahaz ends up showing more devotion to the Assyrian king than to God. You must ask yourself: “In what areas of my life have I been too deferential? Have I surrendered too much?”

Passage 28: The Fall of the North

Date

722 B.C. (Approximate date when the Assyrians exile the people of Israel)

Summary

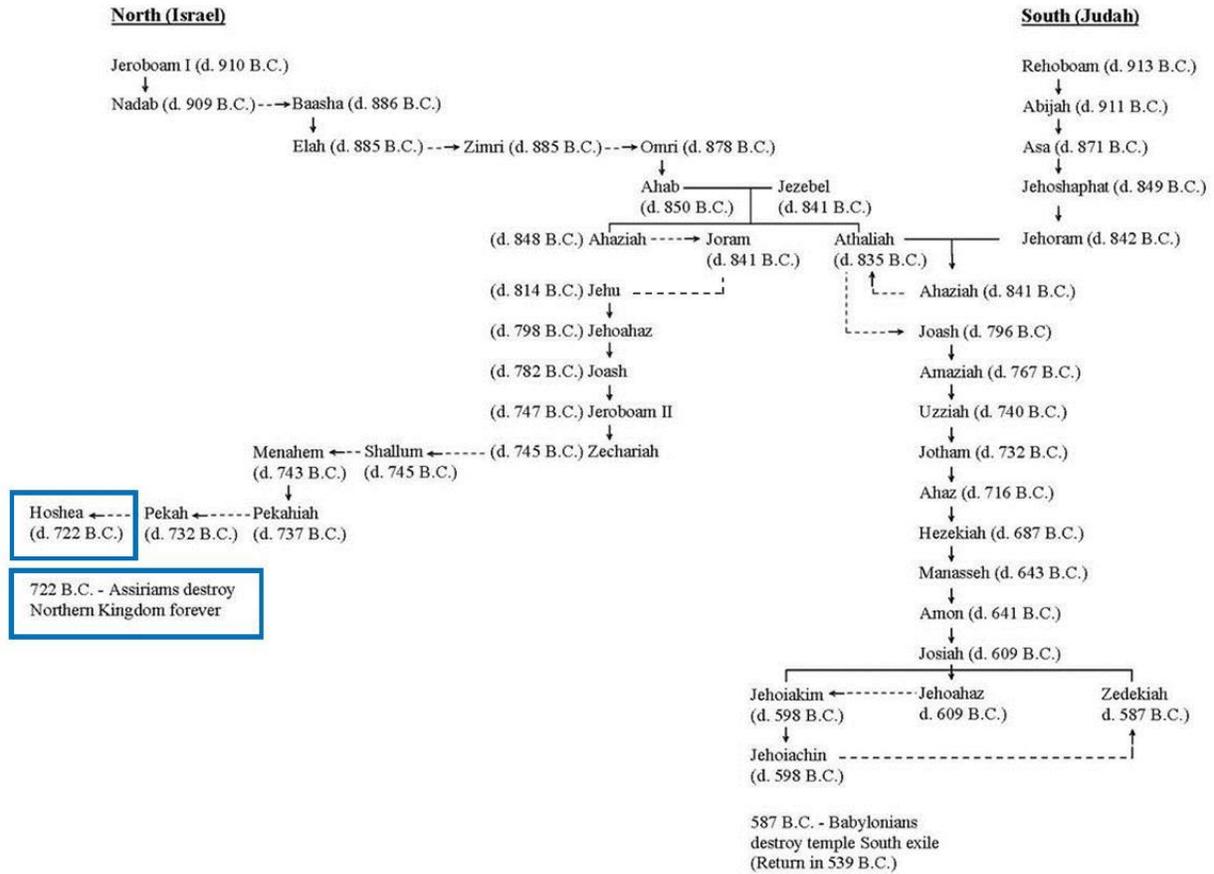
King Hoshea of Israel is tired of paying tribute to the Assyrians, and he rebels against them. The Assyrian king, Shalmaneser, defeats the rebellion and destroys the northern kingdom forever.

The biblical author spends the middle section of this passage commenting on why all of this has happened: The north turned away from the true God by worshiping idols, disobeying God's commandments, and ignoring the prophets. God only leaves the southern kingdom of Judah intact because of the promise he made to David. However, Judah is also guilty of sinning against the Lord.

To make sure Israel stays defeated; the Assyrians exile many of the Israelites to Assyria and repopulate the northern kingdom with Assyrian residents. The Assyrians who end up living in the northern kingdom bring their gods with them and don't worship the true God. As divine retribution, lions eat some of these new residents. Word gets back to King Shalmaneser, and he sends some of the exiled Israelite priests back to Samaria to instruct the people how to worship. The people begin worshiping the true God but also continue worshiping their own gods. This polytheism remains for generations.

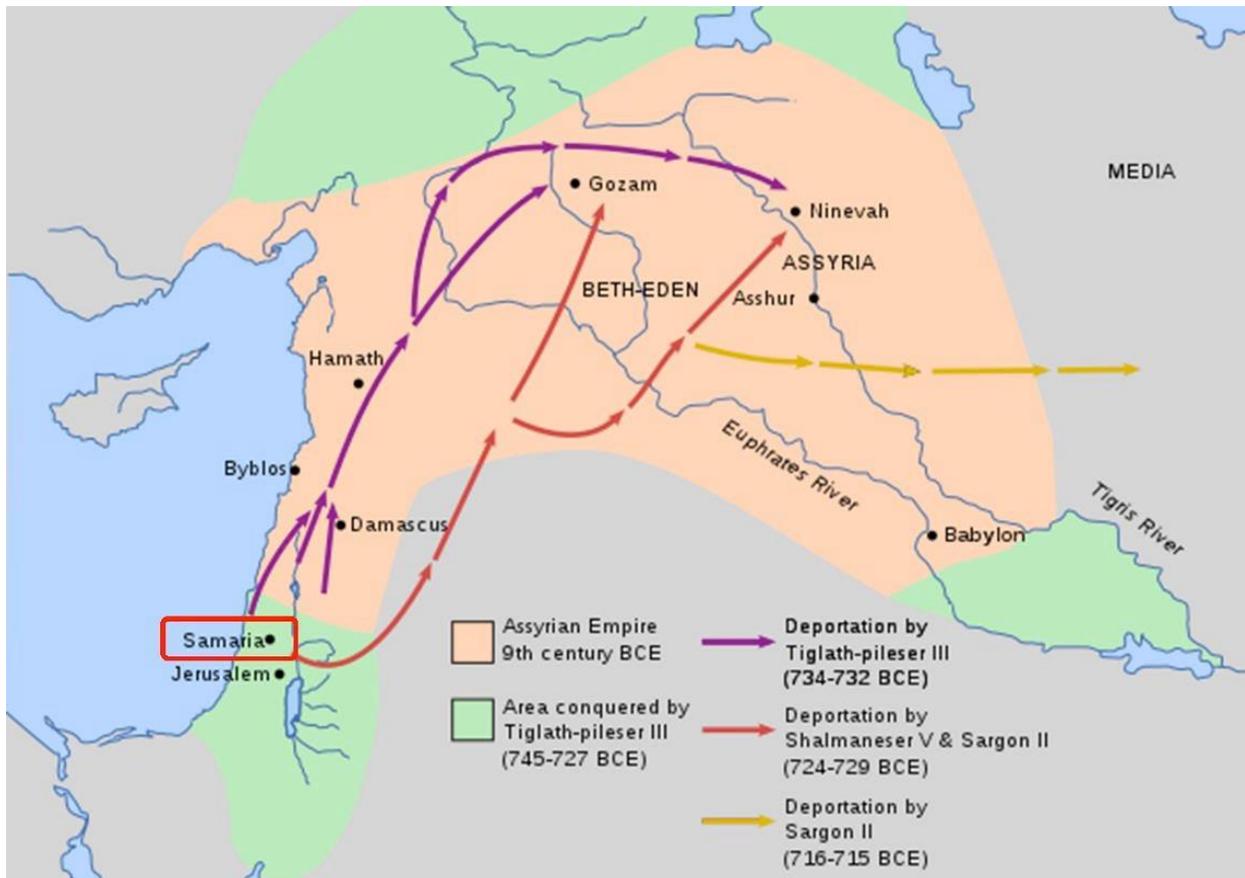
Family Tree

In the last passage, we saw how Assyria brutally defeated Syria. Here we'll see how they brutally defeat Israel.



Map

We see the region of the former northern kingdom circled in red. Assyrians bring in their native population to Samaria and exile the Israelites to Assyria (red and purple arrows).



2 Kings 17:1–41

¹In the twelfth year of Ahaz, king of Judah, Hoshea, son of Elah, became king in Samaria over Israel for nine years.

²He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, yet not to the extent of the kings of Israel before him. ³Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, advanced against him, and Hoshea became his vassal and paid him tribute. ⁴But the king of Assyria found Hoshea guilty of conspiracy for sending messengers to the king of Egypt at Sais, and for failure to pay the annual tribute to the king of Assyria. So the king of Assyria arrested and imprisoned him. ⁵Then the king of Assyria occupied the whole land and attacked Samaria, which he besieged for three years.

⁶In Hoshea's ninth year, the king of Assyria took Samaria, deported the Israelites to Assyria, and settled them in Halah, and at the Habor, a river of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. ⁷This came about because the Israelites sinned against the LORD, their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. They venerated other gods, ⁸they followed the rites of the nations whom the

LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites and those that the kings of Israel had practiced. ⁹They adopted unlawful practices toward the LORD, their God. They built high places in all their cities, from guard post to garrisoned town. ¹⁰They set up pillars and asherahs for themselves on every high hill and under every green tree. ¹¹They burned incense there, on all the high places, like the nations whom the LORD had sent into exile at their coming. They did evil things that provoked the LORD, ¹²and served idols, although the LORD had told them: You must not do this.

¹³The LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and seer: Give up your evil ways and keep my commandments and statutes, in accordance with the entire law which I enjoined on your ancestors and which I sent you by my servants the prophets. ¹⁴But they did not listen. They grew as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who had not believed in the LORD, their God. ¹⁵They rejected his statutes, the covenant he had made with their ancestors, and the warnings he had given them. They followed emptiness and became empty; they followed the surrounding nations whom the LORD had commanded them not to imitate. ¹⁶They abandoned all the commandments of the LORD, their God: they made for themselves two molten calves; they made an asherah; they bowed down to all the host of heaven; they served Baal. ¹⁷They immolated their sons and daughters by fire. They practiced augury and divination. They surrendered themselves to doing what was evil in the LORD'S sight, and provoked him.

¹⁸The LORD became enraged, and removed them from his presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left. ¹⁹Even the people of Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD, their God, but followed the rites practiced by Israel. ²⁰So the LORD rejected the entire people of Israel: he afflicted them and delivered them over to plunderers, finally casting them from his presence. ²¹When he tore Israel away from the house of David, they made Jeroboam, son of Nebat, king; but Jeroboam lured the Israelites away from the LORD, causing them to commit a great sin. ²²The Israelites imitated Jeroboam in all the sins he committed; they would not depart from them.

²³Finally, the LORD removed Israel from his presence, just as he had declared through all his servants, the prophets. Thus Israel went into exile from their native soil to Assyria until this very day.

²⁴The king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Avva, Hamath, and Sepharvaim, and settled them in the cities of Samaria in place of the Israelites. They took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities. ²⁵When they first settled there, they did not venerate the LORD, so he sent lions among them that killed some of them. ²⁶A report reached the king of Assyria: "The nations you deported and settled in the cities of Samaria do not know the proper worship of the god of the land, so he has sent lions among them that are killing them, since they do not know the law of the god of the land." ²⁷The king of Assyria gave the order, "Send back some of the priests you deported, to go there and settle, to teach them the proper worship of the god of the land." ²⁸So one of the

priests who had been deported from Samaria returned and settled in Bethel, and began to teach them how to venerate the LORD.

²⁹Thus each of these nations continued to make its own gods, setting them up in the shrines of the high places the Samaritans had made: each nation in the cities in which they dwelt. ³⁰The Babylonians made Sukkot-Benot; the people of Cuth made Nergal; those from Hamath made Ashima; ³¹those from Avva made Nibhaz and Tartak; and those from Sepharvaim immolated their children by fire to their city gods, King Hadad and King Anu. ³²At the same time, they were venerating the LORD, appointing from their own number priests for the high places to officiate for them in the shrines on the high places. ³³They were both venerating the LORD and serving their own gods. They followed the custom of the nations from among whom they had been deported.

³⁴To this very day they continue to act according to their former customs, not venerating the LORD nor observing the statutes and regulations, the law and commandment, that the LORD enjoined on the descendants of Jacob, whom he had named Israel. ³⁵When the LORD made a covenant with them, he commanded them: You must not venerate other gods, nor bow down to them, nor serve them, nor offer sacrifice to them, ³⁶but only to the LORD, who brought you up from the land of Egypt with great power and outstretched arm. Him shall you venerate, to him shall you bow down, and to him shall you offer sacrifice. ³⁷You must be careful always to observe the statutes and ordinances, the law and commandment, which he wrote for you; you must not venerate other gods. ³⁸The covenant I made with you, you must not forget; you must not venerate other gods. ³⁹You must venerate only the LORD, your God; it is he who will deliver you from the power of all your enemies. ⁴⁰But they did not listen; they continued to act according to their former customs.

⁴¹But these nations were both venerating the LORD and serving their own idols. Their children and children's children are still acting like their ancestors, to this very day.

Memorable Phrase

“But these nations were both venerating the LORD and serving their own idols” (2 Kings 17:41).

Christ Connection

The northern region (now no longer a kingdom) keeps the name “Samaria” up through Jesus’ time. The Jews of Jesus’ time look down on the Samaritans because of what happened in this passage: Once part of the same nation, the same family, now they have been compromised by Assyrian heritage and religious customs.

There is an episode where Jesus meets a Samaritan woman, and he asks her for a drink. She is surprised that a Jewish man would even talk to a Samaritan woman. Even for a Samaritan woman, she is held in low esteem by society because she’s been married five times and the current man she’s with is not her husband. Jesus and she have a conversation and by the end she realizes that Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus tells her that the hour has arrived when true

worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth. At Jesus' words, this woman goes to the city and tells everyone about him (see John 4:1–42 for the whole story).

Life Application

If we do two things half-heartedly, we end up doing neither well. Israel tried to achieve both worldly position and godly esteem, but neither worked out. When they are defeated by Assyria, they incorporate the Assyrian gods into their worship of the true God, making a mixture religion that sticks around until the time of Jesus. Try to recognize areas in your own life where you are half-hearted—worshiping one thing, but serving something else.

Passage 29: King Hezekiah Defeats Assyria

Date

701 B.C. (Approximate date when Assyrians besiege Jerusalem)

Summary

With Israel gone, our remaining five passages deal with the southern kingdom of Judah. This passage is one of the most famous in the Old Testament—so famous that it's recorded in three different Old Testament books (Isaiah, 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles). It's the story of King Hezekiah's victory over the Assyrian army.

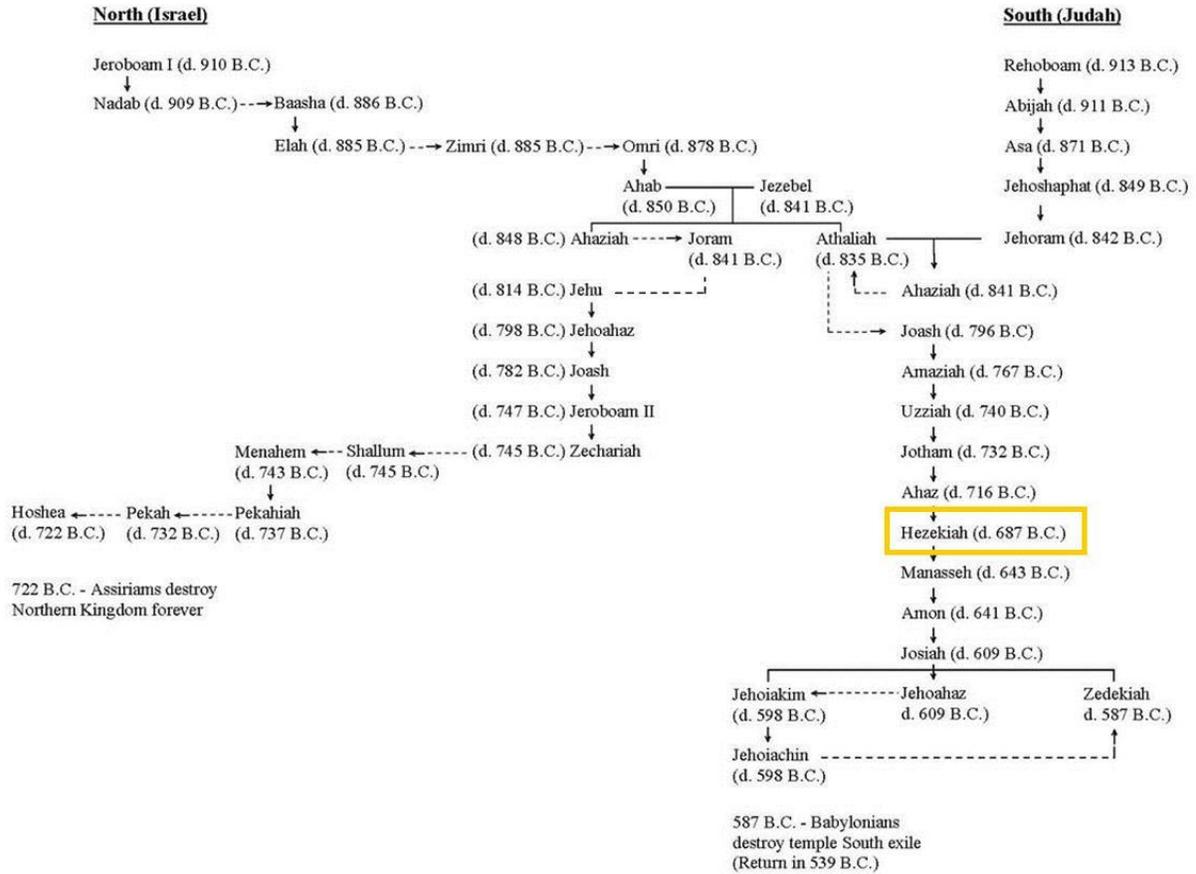
Hezekiah is at war with Assyria, whose king is now Sennacherib. Sennacherib is intent on destroying all of Judah, so he attacks every city he passes on the way to Jerusalem. To defend against Sennacherib's attack, Hezekiah strengthens Jerusalem's walls and cuts off the water supply in the area, so the Assyrians won't have access to water.

Sennacherib camps outside Jerusalem with his soldiers, and he sends a messenger to the city walls to talk to Hezekiah. The messenger says many intimidating things to the king in Hebrew; the guards at the wall can understand their conversation and are intimidated as well.

Hezekiah is very worried, so he and the prophet Isaiah pray to God for help. The next day, an angel wipes out most of the Assyrian army. Sennacherib retreats to his kingdom, where his sons later assassinate him.

Family Tree

Below is Hezekiah and his position on the family tree.



Map

This battle takes place in Jerusalem.



2 Chronicles 32:1–33

¹But after all this and all Hezekiah's fidelity, there came Sennacherib, king of Assyria. He invaded Judah and besieged the fortified cities, intending to breach and take them. ²When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib was coming with the intention of attacking Jerusalem, ³he took the advice of his princes and warriors to stop the waters of the springs outside the city; they promised their help. ⁴A large force was gathered and stopped all the springs and also the stream running nearby. For they said, "Why should the kings of Assyria come and find an abundance of water?" ⁵He then looked to his defenses: he rebuilt the wall where it was broken down, raised towers upon it, and built another wall outside. He strengthened the Millo of the City of David and made a great number of spears and shields. ⁶Then he appointed army commanders over the people. He gathered them together in his presence in the open space at the gate of the city and encouraged them with these words: ⁷"Be strong and steadfast; do not be afraid or dismayed because of the king of Assyria and all the horde coming with him, for there is more with us than with him. ⁸He has only an arm of flesh, but we have the LORD, our God, to help us and to fight our battles." And the people took confidence from the words of Hezekiah, king of Judah.

⁹After this, while Sennacherib, king of Assyria, himself remained at Lachish with all his forces, he sent his officials to Jerusalem with this message for Hezekiah, king of Judah, and all the Judahites who were in Jerusalem: ¹⁰"Thus says Sennacherib, king of Assyria: In what are you trusting, now that you are under siege in Jerusalem? ¹¹Is not Hezekiah deceiving you, delivering you over to a death of famine and thirst, by his claim that 'the LORD, our God, will rescue us from the grasp of the king of Assyria'? ¹²Has not this same Hezekiah removed the Lord's own high places and altars and commanded Judah and Jerusalem, 'You shall bow down before one altar only, and on it alone you shall offer incense'? ¹³Do you not know what my fathers and I have done to all the peoples of other lands? Were the gods of the nations in those lands able to rescue their lands from my hand? ¹⁴Who among all the gods of those nations which my fathers put under the ban was able to rescue their people from my hand? Will your god, then, be able to rescue you from my hand? ¹⁵Let not Hezekiah mislead you further and deceive you in any such way. Do not believe him! Since no other god of any other nation or kingdom has been able to rescue his people from my hand or the hands of my fathers, how much the less shall your god rescue you from my hand!"

¹⁶His officials said still more against the LORD God and against his servant Hezekiah, ¹⁷for he had written letters to deride the LORD, the God of Israel, speaking of him in these terms: "As the gods of the nations in other lands have not rescued their people from my hand, neither shall Hezekiah's god rescue his people from my hand." ¹⁸In a loud voice they shouted in the language of Judah to the people of Jerusalem who were on the wall, to frighten and terrify them so that they might capture their city. ¹⁹They spoke of the God of Israel as though he were one of the gods of the other peoples of the earth, a work of human hands. ²⁰But because of this, King Hezekiah and Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, prayed and cried out to heaven.

²¹Then the LORD sent an angel, who destroyed every warrior, leader, and commander in the camp of the Assyrian king, so that he had to return shamefaced to his own country. And when he entered the temple of his god, some of his own offspring struck him down there with the sword. ²²Thus the LORD saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib, king of Assyria, as from every other power; he gave them rest on every side. ²³Many brought gifts for the LORD to Jerusalem and costly objects for Hezekiah, king of Judah, who thereafter was exalted in the eyes of all the nations.

²⁴In those days Hezekiah became mortally ill. He prayed to the LORD, who answered him by giving him a sign. ²⁵Hezekiah, however, did not respond with like generosity, for he had become arrogant. Therefore wrath descended upon him and upon Judah and Jerusalem. ²⁶But then Hezekiah humbled himself for his pride—both he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and therefore the wrath of the LORD did not come upon them during the time of Hezekiah.

²⁷Hezekiah possessed very great wealth and glory. He made treasuries for his silver, gold, precious stones, spices, jewels, and other precious things of all kinds; ²⁸also storehouses for the harvest of grain, for wine and oil, and barns for the various kinds of cattle and flocks. ²⁹He built cities for himself, and he acquired sheep and oxen in great numbers, for God gave him very great riches. ³⁰This same Hezekiah stopped the upper outlet for water from Gihon and redirected it underground westward to the City of David. Hezekiah prospered in all his works. ³¹Nevertheless, in respect to the ambassadors of the Babylonian officials who were sent to him to investigate the sign that had occurred in the land, God abandoned him as a test, to know all that was in his heart.

³²The rest of Hezekiah's acts, including his good deeds, are recorded in the vision of Isaiah the prophet, son of Amoz, and in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel.

Memorable Phrase

“He has only an arm of flesh, but we have the LORD, our God, to help us and to fight our battles” (2 Chronicles 32:8).

Christ Connection

Jesus reminds his disciples numerous times not to be afraid of those trying to intimidate them: “You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved” (Matthew 10:22).

King Hezekiah and his people have to stand firm despite the very intimidating and graphic threats issued by the Assyrian army (for more details on what the messengers were saying, read the account of this story told in 2 Kings 18:17–36). But just as Jesus tells his disciples to stand firm, King Hezekiah stands firm and lets God take care of the rest.

Life Application

We have all encountered bullies: people who want to intimidate us into doing what they want, even though it's not best for us. The general of Assyria tries to bully King Hezekiah, but Isaiah tells him to stay strong. Ask yourself, "Are there people trying to bully me like Sennacherib tried bullying Hezekiah?" If so, hold steady, and trust in God—he will give you victory!

Passage 30: King Manasseh's Repentance

Date

675 B.C. (Approximate date of Manasseh's capture by Assyrians)

Summary

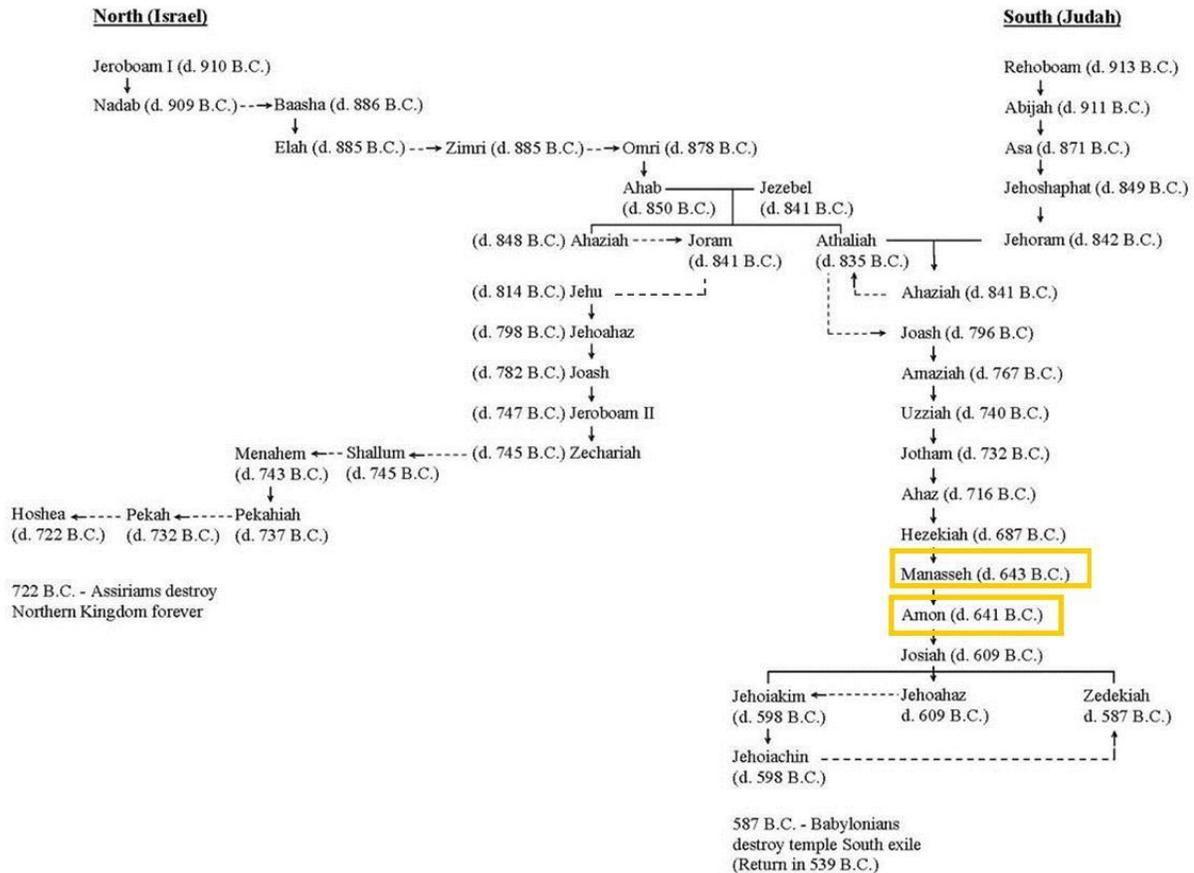
Manasseh is Hezekiah's son. He takes the throne at the age of twelve, after his father dies. He does evil in the sight of the Lord, putting up idols in areas his father had destroyed. He practices witchcraft and puts up images of false gods in the temple. Most appallingly, he burns his own children as a sacrifice to the false gods. The people follow Manasseh's bad example of worshiping other gods.

God tries to get Manasseh to change, but he won't listen. So God allows Assyria to invade Judah and take Manasseh captive to the city of Babylon. While captive, he repents of all he has done against God. God allows Manasseh to be freed and return to Jerusalem. Manasseh gets rid of the idols he worshiped before—but, unfortunately, the people keep worshiping the false gods.

When Manasseh dies, his son Amon takes the throne. Amon does evil in the sight of the Lord, just like his father Manasseh. However, unlike Manasseh, Amon never repents for his wrongdoing. Amon only reigns for two years, at which point his officials assassinate him. The people in turn kill Amon's assassins and install his son Josiah as king.

Family Tree

Hezekiah is a good king, but his son Manasseh strays far from God. In this passage, we read about how he strays from God, but then repents and turns back. After Manasseh, his son Amon reigns.



Map

Circled in blue are Jerusalem, where Manasseh reigns, and Babylon, where he is held captive



2 Chronicles 33:1-25

¹Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. ²He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, following the abominable practices of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the Israelites. ³He rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had torn down. He set up altars to the Baals, and also made asherahs. He bowed down to the whole host of heaven and served them. ⁴He built altars in the house of the LORD, of which the LORD had said: In Jerusalem shall my name be forever; ⁵and he built altars to the whole host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the LORD. ⁶It was he, too, who immolated his children by fire in the Valley of Ben-hinnom. He practiced soothsaying and divination, and reintroduced the consulting of ghosts and spirits.

He did much evil in the LORD'S sight and provoked him to anger. ⁷An idol he had made he placed in the house of God, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon: In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I shall set my name forever. ⁸I will no longer make Israel step out of the land I assigned to your ancestors, provided that they are careful to observe all I commanded them, the entire law, the statutes, and the ordinances given by Moses.

⁹Manasseh misled Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem into doing even greater evil than the nations the LORD had destroyed at the coming of the Israelites. ¹⁰The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention.

¹¹Therefore the LORD brought against them the army commanders of the Assyrian king; they captured Manasseh with hooks, shackled him with chains, and transported him to Babylon. ¹²In his distress, he began to appease the LORD, his God. He humbled himself abjectly before the God of his ancestors, ¹³and prayed to him. The LORD let himself be won over: he heard his prayer and restored him to his kingdom in Jerusalem. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD is indeed God.

¹⁴Afterward he built an outer wall for the City of David to the west of Gihon in the valley, extending to the Fish Gate and encircling Ophel; he built it very high. He stationed army officers in all the fortified cities of Judah. ¹⁵He removed the foreign gods and the idol from the LORD'S house and all the altars he had built on the mount of the LORD'S house and in Jerusalem, and cast them outside the city. ¹⁶He restored the altar of the LORD, and sacrificed on it communion offerings and thank offerings, and commanded Judah to serve the LORD, the God of Israel. ¹⁷Though the people continued to sacrifice on the high places, they now did so to the LORD, their God.

¹⁸The rest of the acts of Manasseh, his prayer to his God, and the words of the seers who spoke to him in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, are written in the chronicles of the kings of Israel. ¹⁹His prayer and how his supplication was heard, all his sins and his treachery, the sites where he built high places and set up asherahs and carved images before he humbled himself, all this is recorded in the chronicles of his seers. ²⁰Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his own palace. His son Amon succeeded him as king.

²¹Amon was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned two years in Jerusalem. ²²He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight, as his father Manasseh had done. Amon offered sacrifice to all the idols his father Manasseh had made, and served them. ²³Moreover, he did not humble himself before the LORD as his father Manasseh had humbled himself; on the contrary, Amon only increased his guilt. ²⁴His officials plotted against him and put him to death in his palace, ²⁵but the people of the land then slew all who had plotted against King Amon, and the people of the land made his son Josiah king in his stead.

Memorable Phrase

“In his distress, he began to appease the LORD, his God. He humbled himself abjectly before the God of his ancestors” (2 Chronicles 33:12).

Christ Connection

God is always ready to take back someone who is repentant, just like we read with Manasseh in this passage. To illustrate the value of repentance, Jesus once posed a situation to the religious authorities: A man has two sons and asks both to work in his vineyard. The first son says no to the father, but later changes his mind and works the field. The second says he will go work in the father’s field, but later doesn’t go. Which of them has done the father’s will? The religious authorities said the first. Jesus compares this first son to the prostitutes and tax collectors: at first they rejected God, but then they repented at the preaching of John the Baptist. On the other hand, the religious authorities are like the second son who says yes with their mouths but doesn’t really do the will of the father (see Matthew 21:28–32 for the whole parable).

Life Application

God will forgive even the most grievous sins. Here Manasseh burns his own child in deference to a false god. Later, while captured in a foreign prison, he repents, and God sets him free. Ask yourself, “What is the thing I don’t think God can forgive me for?” Then remind yourself that God can forgive anything!

Passage 31: Good King Josiah

Date

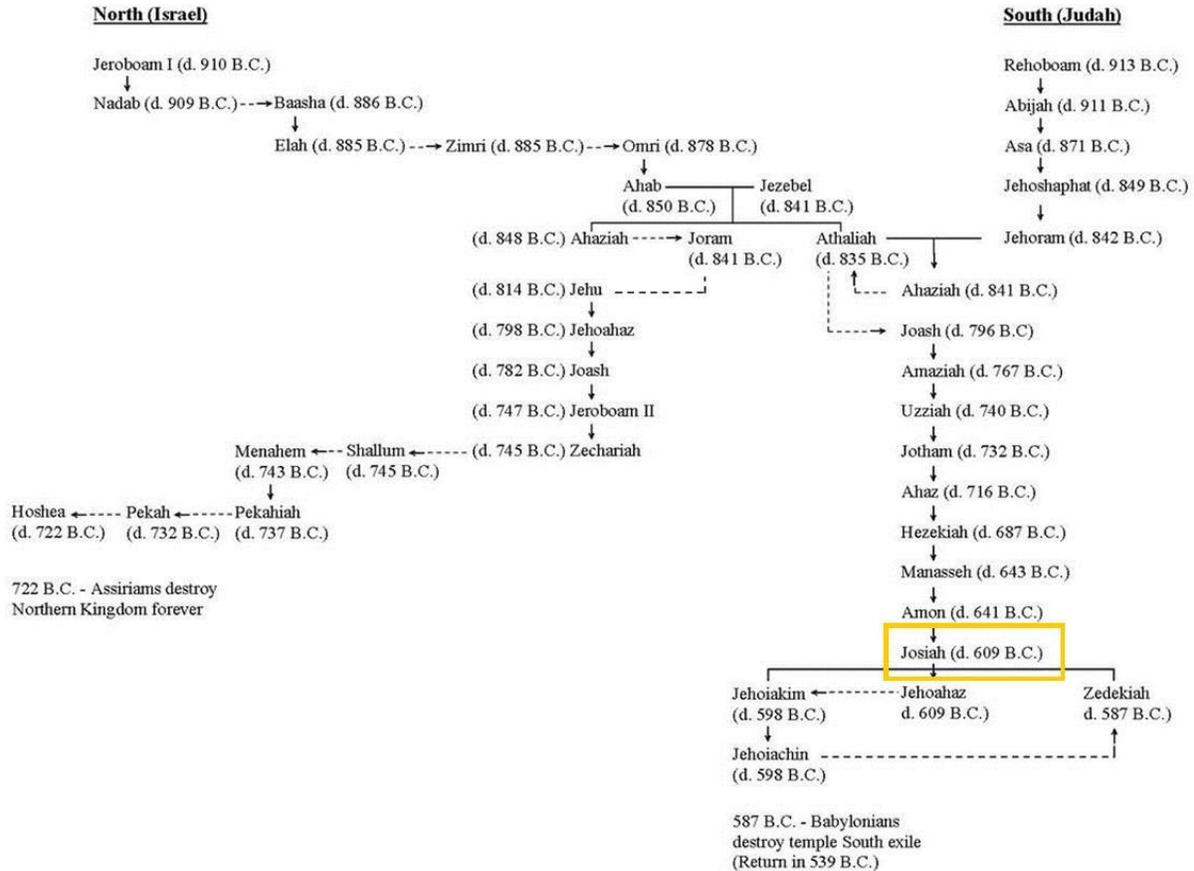
622 B.C. (Approximate date when the book of the Law is found in the temple)

Summary

Josiah is eight years old when he becomes king. As a young adult, he tells the high priest Hilkiah to gather labor and resources to fix the temple. Hilkiah finds the book of the Law of Moses, which was previously lost. He tells the court chronicler Shaphan to show it to the king. King Josiah is very distraught that everyone has ignored this Law for many years. He wants to put it into practice, and he asks for guidance on how to interpret the Law. Josiah's advisors find the prophetess Hilda, and she informs them that all the punishments foretold in the book will come to pass. However, these punishments won't occur during the lifetime of Josiah, because he has paid attention to what the Law has said and is sincerely saddened that it has been ignored.

Family Tree

King Amon is followed by his son, Josiah. Of all the kings of Judah, Josiah is most praised by the biblical authors. We'll see why in these next few stories.



Map

The people find the lost book of the Law in the temple of Jerusalem.



2 Kings 22:1–20

¹Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah, daughter of Adaiah, from Bozkath.

²He did what was right in the LORD's sight, walking in the way of David his father, not turning right or left.

³In his eighteenth year, King Josiah sent the scribe Shaphan, son of Azaliah, son of Meshullam, to the house of the LORD with these orders: ⁴"Go to the high priest Hilkiah and have him calculate the valuables that have been brought to the house of the LORD, which the doorkeepers have collected from the people. ⁵Then have him turn them over to the master workers in the house of the LORD, and have them give them to the ordinary workers who are in the house of the LORD to repair its breaches: ⁶to the carpenters, the builders, and the masons, and to purchase wood and hewn stone. ⁷No reckoning shall be asked of them regarding the funds provided to them, because they hold positions of trust."

⁸The high priest Hilkiah informed the scribe Shaphan, "I have found the book of the law in the temple of the LORD." Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, who read it. ⁹Then the scribe Shaphan went to the king and reported, "Your servants have smelted down the silver deposited in the temple and have turned it over to the master workers in the house of the LORD." ¹⁰The scribe Shaphan also informed the king, "Hilkiah the priest has given me a book," and then Shaphan read it in the presence of the king. ¹¹When the king heard the words of the book of the law, he tore his garments.

¹²The king then issued this command to Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, son of Shaphan, Achbor, son of Micaiah, Shaphan the scribe, and Asaiah the king's servant: ¹³"Go, consult the LORD for me, for the people, and for all Judah, about the words of this book that has been found, for the rage of the LORD has been set furiously ablaze against us, because our ancestors did not obey the words of this book, nor do what is written for us." ¹⁴So Hilkiah the priest, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophet, wife of Shallum, son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe; she lived in Jerusalem, in the Second Quarter. When they had spoken to her, ¹⁵she said to them, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Say to the man who sent you to me, ¹⁶Thus says the LORD: I am about to bring evil upon this place and upon its inhabitants—all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read. ¹⁷Because they have abandoned me and have burned incense to other gods, provoking me by all the works of their hands, my rage is ablaze against this place and it cannot be extinguished.

¹⁸"But to the king of Judah who sent you to consult the LORD, give this response: Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: As for the words you have heard, ¹⁹because you were heartsick and have humbled yourself before the LORD when you heard what I have spoken concerning this place and its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse; and because you tore your garments and wept before me, I in turn have

heard, oracle of the LORD. ²⁰I will therefore gather you to your ancestors; you shall go to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the evil I am about to bring upon this place.” This they reported to the king.

Memorable Phrase

“He did what was right in the LORD’S sight, walking in the way of David his father, not turning right or left” (2 Kings 22:2).

Christ Connection

Josiah is attentive to the Law and knows that all that was written in it will happen. Jesus has the exact same attitude about the Law: He says in Matthew 5:17–18: “Do not think that I have come to abolish the law or the prophets. I have come not to abolish but to fulfill. Amen, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or the smallest part of a letter will pass from the law, until all things have taken place.” Even though many of the Jewish regulations in the Law don’t apply to us now, it’s a mistake to completely ignore them or think that Jesus has completely separated us from the Law of Moses. We have to interpret all the revelations of the Old Testament in the light of the ultimate revelation of Jesus (which is the intended purpose of these *Christ Connections*).

Life Application

We all miss important things out of ignorance or carelessness. In these cases, we need humility to change our ways. That’s what Josiah does when he discovers that the kings had been ignoring the Law of Moses for so many years. Admit quickly and sincerely when you make a mistake—and then work to fix the situation.

Passage 32: Josiah Gets Rid of Idols

Date

615 B.C. (Approximate date of Josiah's trip to Bethel to destroy altars)

Summary

In the previous passage, Josiah finds the book of the Law and tries to follow it. Here the whole Judaic community is on board. They cleanse the temple of all false gods, getting rid of any people associated with idol worship in the temple.

Then Josiah turns his sights to the rest of his kingdom—he goes to other cities in Judah and gets rid of those altars. He also takes down the altars his predecessors (Manasseh, Ahaz, and Solomon) had made.

Then Josiah travels outside his borders to Samaria, the neighbor to the north. Back when the united kingdom of Israel was divided into northern and southern kingdoms, the northern king put up idols in Bethel and Dan to prevent his people from worshiping the true God across the border in Jerusalem (see Passage 3). Josiah now destroys the idols in Bethel, its altars, and even the bones of their priests. Then he goes and does the same thing in the other cities of Samaria. After all that, Josiah goes home.

Map

Circled are Jerusalem and Bethel, the main places where Josiah demolishes idols.



2 Kings 23:1–20

¹The king then had all the elders of Judah and of Jerusalem summoned before him. ²The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the people of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem: priests, prophets, and all the people, great and small. He read aloud to them all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. ³The king stood by the column and made a covenant in the presence of the LORD to follow the LORD and to observe his commandments, statutes, and decrees with his whole heart and soul, and to re-establish the words of the covenant written in this book. And all the people stood by the covenant.

⁴Then the king commanded the high priest Hilkiah, his assistant priests, and the doorkeepers to remove from the temple of the LORD all the objects that had been made for Baal, Asherah, and the whole host of heaven. These he burned outside Jerusalem on the slopes of the Kidron; their ashes were carried to Bethel. ⁵He also put an end to the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense on the high places in the cities of Judah and in the vicinity of Jerusalem, as well as those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun, moon, and signs of the zodiac, and to the whole host of heaven. ⁶From the house of the LORD he also removed the Asherah to the Wadi Kidron, outside Jerusalem; he burned it and beat it to dust, in the Wadi Kidron, and scattered its dust over the graveyard of the people of the land. ⁷He tore down the apartments of the cult prostitutes in the house of the LORD, where the women wove garments for the Asherah. ⁸He brought in all the priests from the cities of Judah, and then defiled, from Geba to Beer-sheba, the high places where they had offered incense. He also tore down the high places of the gates, which were at the entrance of the Gate of Joshua, governor of the city, north of the city gate. ⁹(The priests of the high places could not function at the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem; but they, along with their relatives, ate the unleavened bread.)

¹⁰The king also defiled Topheth in the Valley of Ben-hinnom, so that there would no longer be any immolation of sons or daughters by fire in honor of Molech. ¹¹He did away with the horses which the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun; these were at the entrance of the house of the LORD, near the chamber of Nathan-melech the official, which was in the large building. The chariots of the sun he destroyed by fire. ¹²He also demolished the altars made by the kings of Judah on the roof (the roof terrace of Ahaz), and the altars made by Manasseh in the two courts of the LORD'S house. He pulverized them and threw the dust into the Wadi Kidron. ¹³The king defiled the high places east of Jerusalem, south of the Mount of the Destroyer, which Solomon, king of Israel, had built in honor of Astarte, the Sidonian horror, of Chemosh, the Moabite horror, and of Milcom, the Ammonites' abomination. ¹⁴He broke to pieces the pillars, cut down the asherahs, and filled the places where they had been with human bones.

¹⁵Likewise the altar which was at Bethel, the high place built by Jeroboam, son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin—this same altar and high place he tore down and

burned, grinding the high place to powder and burning the asherah. ¹⁶When Josiah turned and saw the graves there on the mountainside, he ordered the bones taken from the graves and burned on the altar, and thus defiled it, according to the LORD'S word proclaimed by the man of God as Jeroboam stood by the altar on the feast day. When the king looked up and saw the grave of the man of God who had proclaimed these words, ¹⁷he asked, "What is that marker I see?" The people of the city replied, "The grave of the man of God who came from Judah and proclaimed the very things you have done to the altar in Bethel." ¹⁸"Let him be," he said, "let no one move his bones." So they left his bones undisturbed together with the bones of the prophet who had come from Samaria. ¹⁹Josiah also removed all the temples on the high places in the cities of Samaria which the kings of Israel had built, provoking the LORD; he did the very same to them as he had done in Bethel. ²⁰He slaughtered upon the altars all the priests of the high places that were there, and burned human bones upon them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Memorable Phrase

"He pulverized [Manesseh's altars] and threw the dust into the Wadi Kidron" (2 Kings 23:12).

Christ Connection

As we see, Josiah's actions are pretty intense. Jesus uses a parable to explain that God likewise does intense things to those who reject him. He tells the religious leaders of his time that they are like those who reject the king's invitation to a wedding banquet, even killing the messengers who brought the invitation (symbolizing the Old Testament prophets). The king will send his army to destroy such people and burn their cities (Luke 22:5-7).

Life Application

God always calls us to put our own house in order, which means that we need to make sure our hearts are cleared of idols like anger, greed, or jealousy. Sometimes, however, he calls us to put into order places outside our immediate responsibility. Josiah is called not only to fix his own southern kingdom of Judah, but also to go to Samaria (the former northern kingdom) and get rid of idols there. After setting your own house in order, ask yourself, "Is God calling me to help my neighbor in setting his or her house in order, too? Do I need to help this person rid his/her life of bitterness or despair?"

Passage 33: King Jehoiakim Burns Jeremiah's Prophecy

Date

600 B.C. (Approximate year when King Jehoiakim burns Jeremiah's scrolls)

Summary

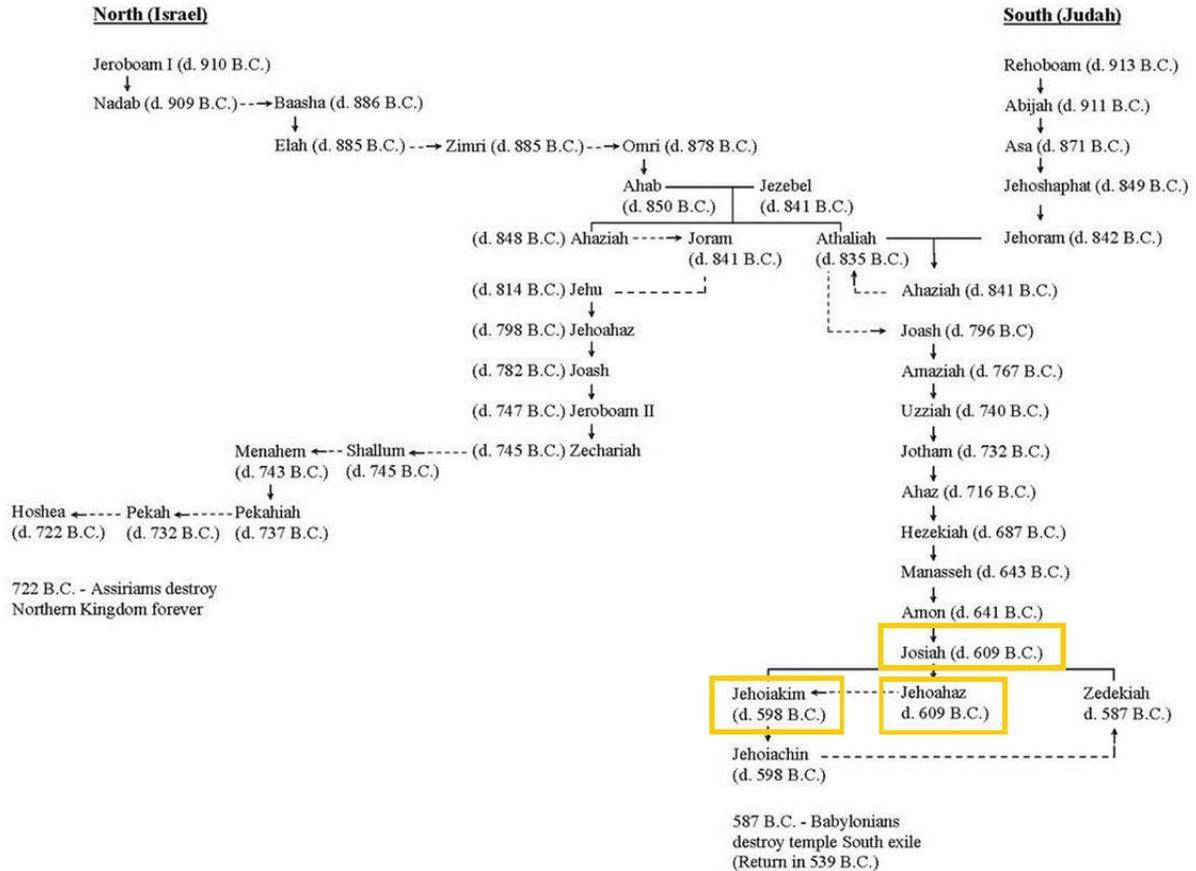
Josiah's son, Jehoiakim, decides not to listen to the prophet Jeremiah, burning the pages of his prophecy.

Baruch, Jeremiah's secretary, writes down all the punishments that await the kingdom if the people don't repent. Jeremiah and Baruch then deliver this volume to King Jehoiakim's advisors. The advisors are upset and know the king won't take this news well. They tell Jeremiah and Baruch to go into hiding.

The advisors go before the king and read the prophecy three or four columns at a time. After each reading, Jehoiakim cuts out that portion of the scroll and throws it into a fire. After hearing the prophecies, the king shows no sign of repentance—as the advisors predicted, the king commands that Jeremiah and Baruch be killed. But the prophets are nowhere to be found. God tells Jeremiah to make an even larger volume of prophecies.

Family Tree

After Josiah dies, his son Jehoahaz rules only for a little while before the Egyptians capture him and send him into exile. They install Josiah's other son, Jehoiakim, as king.



Map

The burning of these pages takes place in King Jehoiakim's palace in Jerusalem.



Jeremiah 36:20–32

²⁰They went in to the king, into the courtyard; they had deposited the scroll in the room of Elishama the scribe. When they told the king everything that had happened, ²¹the king sent Jehudi to get the scroll. Jehudi brought it from the room of Elishama the scribe, and read it to the king and to all the princes who were attending the king. ²²Now the king was sitting in his winter house, since it was the ninth month, and a fire was burning in the brazier before him. ²³Each time Jehudi finished reading three or four columns, he would cut off the piece with a scribe's knife and throw it into the fire in the brazier, until the entire scroll was consumed in the fire in the brazier. ²⁴As they were listening to all these words the king and all his officials did not become alarmed, nor did they tear their garments. ²⁵And though Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them. ²⁶He commanded Jerahmeel, a royal prince, and Seraiah, son of Azriel, and Shelemiah, son of Abdeel, to arrest Baruch, the scribe, and Jeremiah the prophet. But the LORD had hidden them away.

²⁷The word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, after the king burned the scroll and the words Jeremiah had dictated to Baruch: ²⁸Take another scroll, and write on it all the words in the first scroll, which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, burned. ²⁹And against Jehoiakim, king of Judah, say this: Thus says the LORD: You are the one who burned that scroll, saying, "Why did you write on it: Babylon's king shall surely come and ravage this land, emptying it of every living thing?" ³⁰The LORD now says of Jehoiakim, king of Judah: No descendant of his shall sit on David's throne; his corpse shall be thrown out, exposed to heat by day, frost by night. ³¹I will punish him and his descendants and his officials for their wickedness; upon them, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the people of Judah I will bring all the evil threats to which they did not listen.

³²Then Jeremiah took another scroll and gave it to his scribe, Baruch, son of Neriah, who wrote on it at Jeremiah's dictation all the words contained in the scroll which Jehoiakim, king of Judah, had burned in the fire, adding many words like them.

Memorable Phrase

"And though Elnathan, Delaiah, and Gemariah urged the king not to burn the scroll, he would not listen to them" (Jeremiah 36:25).

Christ Connection

Many times during Jesus' ministry, he performs signs in the towns where he is preaching, but nobody repents. These people are similar to King Jehoiakim—they hear the message but don't want to listen and repent. Jesus says: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you!" (Matthew 11:21–22).

Life Application

Nobody likes hearing bad news. Sometimes we decide to ignore a message we receive, even though we ignore it to our own detriment. God has Jeremiah write down all of God's grievances against Judah and deliver it to the king so he might repent. Instead, the king burns all the pages of the prophet's message. Accept bad news when it comes—don't dismiss it or toss it into the fire!

Passage 34: Judah Is Exiled to Babylon

Date

587 B.C. (Approximate date of the destruction of Jerusalem's temple)

Summary

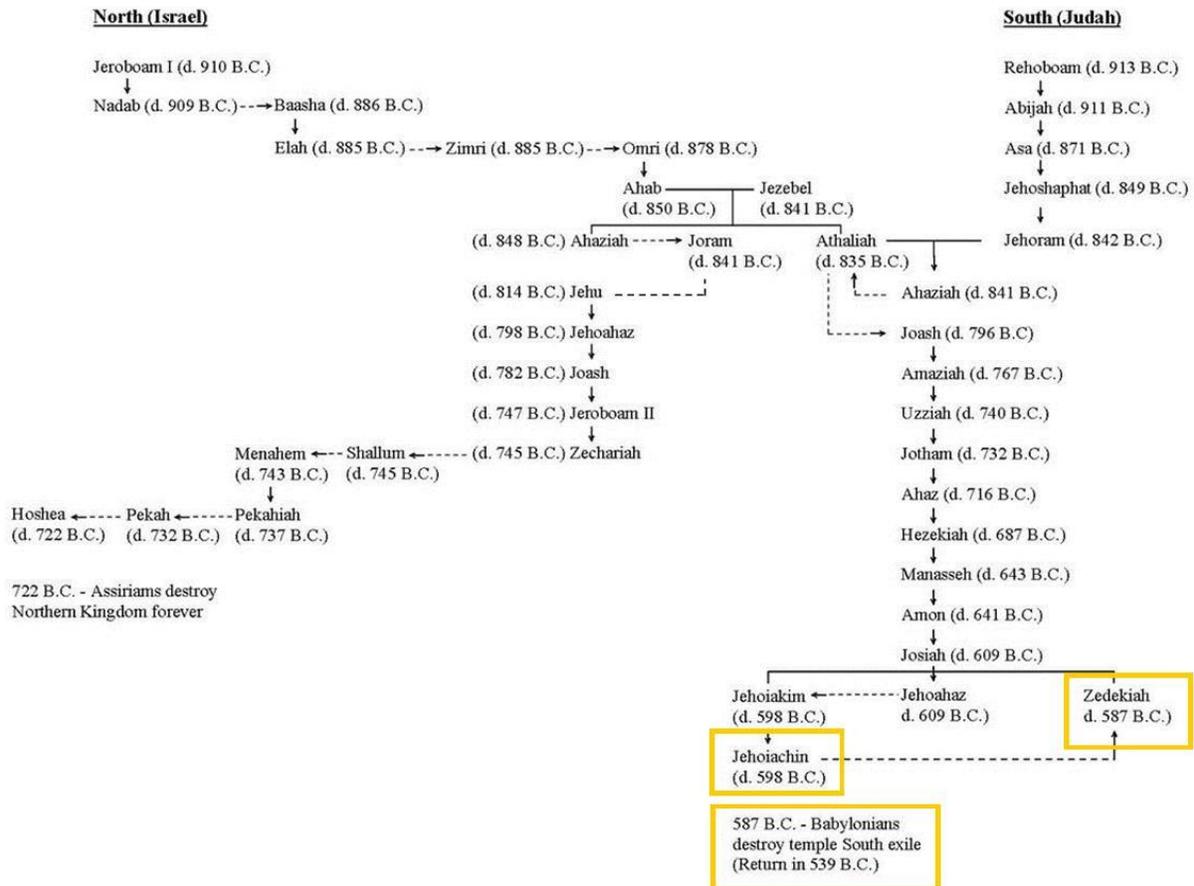
With this passage we end the history of the Divided Kingdom. Judah falls to Babylon, and the people are thrown into exile.

Babylon is the major empire during the last days of the southern kingdom. Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, the last two kings of Judah, each agree to serve under the king of Babylon. However, both eventually rebel, with each then taken into captivity. After these rebellions, the king deports the vast majority of the population to Babylon as well.

To make matters worse, the king robs the temple of all its wealth and burns it to the ground. The people of Judah remain in exile for around seventy years.

Family Tree

Below are the two last kings of the southern kingdom. Jehoiachin only reigns three months before he rebels and gets deported. Zedekiah reigns eleven years before his own rebellion and exile.



Map

The two green arrows represent the two deportations of Judah to Babylon.



2 Chronicles 36:9–21

⁹Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem. He did what was evil in the LORD'S sight. ¹⁰At the turn of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and had him brought to Babylon, along with precious vessels from the house of the LORD. He made his brother Zedekiah king over Judah and Jerusalem.

¹¹Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned eleven years in Jerusalem. ¹²He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, his God, and he did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke for the LORD. ¹³He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him swear by God. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart rather than return to the LORD, the God of Israel.

¹⁴Likewise all the princes of Judah, the priests, and the people added treachery to treachery, practicing all the abominations of the nations and defiling the LORD'S house which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

¹⁵Early and often the LORD, the God of their ancestors, sent his messengers to them, for he had compassion on his people and his dwelling place. ¹⁶But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the LORD'S anger against his people blazed up beyond remedy. ¹⁷Then he brought up against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in their own sanctuary, with compassion for neither young men nor young women, neither the old nor the infirm; all of them he delivered into his power. ¹⁸All the utensils of the house of God, large and small, the treasures of the LORD'S house, and the treasures of the king and his princes, all these he brought to Babylon. ¹⁹They burnt the house of God, tore down the walls of Jerusalem, burnt down all its palaces, and destroyed all its precious objects. ²⁰Those who escaped the sword he carried captive to Babylon, where they became servants to him and his sons until the Persian kingdom came to power. ²¹All this was to fulfill the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah: Until the land has retrieved its lost sabbaths, during all the time it lies waste it shall have rest while seventy years are fulfilled.

Memorable Passage

“But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words, and scoffed at his prophets, until the LORD'S anger against his people blazed up beyond remedy” (2 Chronicles 36:16).

Christ Connection

Even though things look bleak for the Jewish people now, God knows this is just one moment in the larger timeline of salvation. When recounting Jesus' descendants, the author makes note that there were fourteen generations from Abraham to David, fourteen generations from King David to the Babylonian Exile (shown in this passage), and fourteen generations from the exile to Jesus' birth (Matthew 1:17). The Bible uses all moments of Jewish history—even its disasters—to point to its Messiah.

Life Application

When we commit sins, we usually can see the natural consequences of our actions. In today's passage we hear about why Judah is defeated and thrown into exile: Their kings ignore the prophets' warnings, betray the oaths they agreed to, and cause everyone else to sin. Ask yourself: “Have I ignored biblical warnings? Betrayed any oaths? Caused anyone to sin?” If so, you must repent, or suffer the consequences!

Conclusion: “What Should I Do?”

Some final thoughts on where to go from here:

Read the word of God: This book is meant to present particular Bible passages so that the reader can better understand the kings after Solomon. Now that we've done that, I recommend you read the entirety of this section of the Bible: 1 Kings 13–25, all of 2 Kings, and 2 Chronicles 10–36. You'll find other stories that weren't mentioned in this book, but are still important to know. For example, you can read about the prophet Hanani's words of confrontation to the good king Asa (2 Chronicles 16:7-14), or the miracle that let King Hezekiah know he would live another fifteen years (2 Kings 20:1-11).

Pray the Word of God. After reading these sections in their entirety, I recommend taking time to pray with these passages. You can pray with a whole passage, or just with the “memorable phrases.” Praying with this section of the Bible will help us see how God is working in our own lives and how we can apply God's work among the kings of Israel and Judah to our situation today.

Here's an example from the memorable phrase in passage 27: “Lord, ‘In deference to the king of Assyria he removed the Sabbath canopy that had been set up in the house of the LORD and the king's outside entrance to the temple’” (2 Kings 16:18).

“Lord, you know my heart. You know that I have a tendency to give too much deference to other people's preferences. Most of the time it's because I want people to like me, the way King Ahaz wanted King Tiglath Pileser to like him. Give me the strength to do what I know is right, even if it's hard. Amen.”

Live the word of God: The “life applications” listed here are just some of many ways to allow these passages to affect how we live. I'm sure God will help you, the reader, apply his word in other ways as well.

Appendix 1: Kings and the Prophets Who Preached to Them

Capitalized Names: These prophets have their own books in the Bible

Northern King	Start/End	Prophet
Jeroboam	Bad/Bad	Ahijah (Passage 1)
Nadab	Bad/Bad	Jehu (Passage 6)
Baasha	Bad/Bad	
Elah	Bad/Bad	
Zimri	Bad/Bad	
Omri	Bad/Bad	
Ahab	Bad/Bad	-Elijah (Passages 7–10, 13–14) - Micaiah (Passage 11)
Ahaziah	Bad/Bad	Elijah (Passage 15)
Joram	Bad/Bad	
Jehu	Good/Bad	Elisha (Passages 16–17)
Jehoahaz	Bad/Bad	
Jehoash	Bad/Bad	Elisha (Passage 22)
Jeroboam II	Bad/Bad	
Zechariah	Bad/Bad	
Shallum	Bad/Bad	
Menahem	Bad/Bad	
Pekahiah	Bad/Bad	

Pekah	Bad/Bad	
Hoshea	Bad/Bad	

Southern King	Start/End	Prophet
Rehoboam	Bad/Bad	Shemaiah (Passage 2)
Asa	Good/Good	Hanani (See 2 Chronicles 16)
Jehoshaphat	Good/Good	
Jehoram	Bad/Bad	
Ahaziah	Bad/Bad	
Athaliah	Bad/Bad	
Joash	Good/Bad	
Amaziah	Bad/Bad	
Uzziah	Good/Bad	
Jotham	Good/Good	
Ahaz	Bad/Bad	ISAIAH (Passage 26)
Hezekiah	Good/Good	ISAIAH (Passage 29)
Manasseh	Bad/Good	
Amon	Bad/Bad	
Josiah	Good/Good	
Jehoahaz	Bad/Bad	JEREMIAH (See Jeremiah 22)

Jehoiakim	Bad/Bad	JEREMIAH (Passage
Jehoiachin	Bad/Bad	JEREMIAH (See Jeremiah 52)
Zedekiah	Bad/Bad	JEREMIAH (See Jeremiah 34)

Appendix 2: Glossary of Biblical Terms

Asherah: A mother goddess that the Israelites were tempted to follow.

Leprosy: A contagious skin disease that causes deformities.

Milo of the City of David: A tower like structure around Jerusalem, possibly for military purposes.

Miracle: A direct intervention of God that can't be explained by the laws of physics.

Prophet: Someone who speaks on behalf of God. Sometimes a prophet will preach conversion of heart; other times a prophet will predict future events.

Thanks for Reading!!

**If you have any questions/comments, you can email them to
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