

2 Kings & 2 Chronicles (Part 2)

Reading 2 Kings & 2 Chronicles with Associated Psalms (July 15 – August 19):

2 Kings 16-17 & 2 Chronicles 28 – Ahaz, Hoshea, and The Assyrian Exile

-King Ahaz in Judah (2 Chronicles 28; 2 Kings 16): The reign of King Ahaz (732-715 BC) in the southern kingdom takes place while the northern kingdom is being conquered and taken into exile by Assyria. As Ahaz was being crowned, King Pekah was leading the armies of the north into Judah. Ahaz ignored the prophet Isaiah's advice to put his trust in God rather than military alliances (cf. Isaiah 7). Turning to the mighty empire of Assyria, he purchased aid with treasures from the temple and the king's palace. The strategy worked temporarily, as Israel's armies withdrew to defend themselves. But Ahaz opened the doors for later Assyrian invasions into Judah. Worse, he made copies of foreign gods, and set them up in Jerusalem. Under Ahaz, religion in Judah took a significant drop. This is the only reign for which the Chronicler mentions no redeeming feature.

-King Hoshea in Israel & the Assyrian Exile Begins (2 Kings 17): Hoshea (732-722 BC) angered Assyria by turning south to Egypt for aid – the help from Egypt never came. The Assyrians attacked, and after a terrible three-year siege, the capital city of Samaria was conquered (under Shalmaneser V). Assyria deported the vast majority of Israel's population, who became the "ten lost tribes of Israel."

722 BC - SAMARIA, THE CAPITAL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM, IS CONQUERED AND ISRAELITES ARE TAKEN INTO EXILE. JUDAH REMAINS FOLLOWING THE ASSYRIAN INVASION OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM.

2 Kings 18:1-8 & 2 Chronicles 29-31 – King Hezekiah

2 Kings stresses the political side of Hezekiah's reign (715-686 BC). 2 Chronicles reports on his religious reforms. Both were impressive; Hezekiah was one of the best and most important kings of Judah. He immediately stopped idolatry by reopening and cleansing the temple and calling for a period of national repentance (featured in the Chronicler's account). He resurrected the Passover celebration, and worship in Israel reached a peak that had not been seen since the time of David and Solomon. In all this, he listened carefully to advice from the prophet Isaiah. Judah faced imminent danger from Assyria and barely survived an invasion and siege ("Sennacherib Invasion" 701 BC). God honored his faithfulness with a miraculous military intervention; and added 15 years to Hezekiah's life.

-Psalm 48: Zion City of the Great King. Four stanzas allude to Zion's security in all four directions: North [Zaphon v.2], East [east wind v.7], South [right hand v.10], West [next generation v.13].

-Psalm 76: Royal Zion. Tradition holds that this Psalm was written following the Lord's destruction of Sennacherib's army when it threatened Jerusalem.

2 Kings 18:9 – 19:37 – Sennacherib and the Prophet Isaiah

2 Kings 18:9-12 resets the stage introduced in 2 Kings 17:3-7. The Sennacherib invasion is then recounted. Much of Isaiah 36-37 is a parallel, and sometimes a verbatim retelling of what we read in 2 Kings 18:17 – 19:37. See below for the continued parallel in Kings, Chronicles, and Isaiah.

-Psalm 46: A Mighty Fortress is Our God. Martin Luther's great hymns is based on this great Psalm. It is closely related to Psalm 48 & 76 (see above). Zion prevails before, during, after exile.

-Psalm 80: Restore Us, O Lord God Almighty. This prayer for restoration, most likely following the Assyrian invasion that conquered the northern kingdom (2 Kings 17), has five stanzas of four lines each (in Hebrew) with increasing urgency of appeal to “restore us.”

-Psalm 135: Lord over all Nations. Seven stanzas center on God’s saving acts for Israel in Egypt and Canaan (vv.8-12), while beginning (vv.1-2) and end (vv.19-21) with calls to praise. The other stanzas parallel in theme (vv.3-4 with vv.13-14 and vv.5-7 with vv.15-18).

2 Kings 20 & 2 Chronicles 32-33 (& Isaiah 38-39) – Hezekiah’s Illness

The fact that 2 Kings & 2 Chronicles & Isaiah record this incident tells us of its importance. There are distinct emphases in the different accounts, so you should read them all. This is also a great example of “historical contingencies” in the prophets. Isaiah made a prophecy to Hezekiah, following which the king turned to the Lord, and so the Lord ushered a new word through Isaiah.

2 Kings 21 & 2 Chronicles 33 – King Manasseh & King Amon

-All the good Hezekiah did was undone in his son’s 55 year reign (697-642 BC), the worst of Judah’s history. He reversed reforms, brought in all forms of idolatry, killed prophets, erected idols in the temple, and sacrificed his own sons on the altar of a heathen god. The Assyrians took him prisoner, leading him away with a hook through his nose. He later repented, but the damage had been done. God pronounced a judgement on the future of Judah. The 2 Chronicles 33:11-17 account is unique to the Chronicler, in order to show repentance and restoration.

-In his short reign (642-640 BC), Amon continued the evil practices of his father Manasseh. He died at the hands of his officials, who were subsequently killed by the people.

2 Kings 22-23 & 2 Chronicles 34-35 – King Josiah

Judah’s slide to destruction, because of Manasseh and Amon, was interrupted by the remarkable rule (640-609 BC) of Judah’s best king. Josiah came to the throne at just 8 years old, but followed the good counsel of the high priest and carried out the most extensive reforms Judah had ever seen. He removed and destroyed the idols, altars, and symbols of pagan worship throughout the land. He oversaw the rediscovery of the Law of Moses and immediately acted on what it taught. He even extended reforms into the decimated regions of Israel in the north. There was military peace while the reign of the Assyrian empire was disintegrating. His one great mistake was marching against Egypt, where he died suddenly in battle.

-Psalm 74: Prayer of the Exiles. This is a prayer from the nation that has just entered into exile at the hands of foreign nations. The first half (vv.1-11) asks “why” questions. The second half (vv.13-23) focus on the “you” of God himself. Verse 12 captures the theme of the Psalm.

-Psalm 79: Prayer for Forgiveness. Sharing themes with Psalm 74, this Psalm acknowledges that the Lord has used the nations to punish Israel for their sins. This plea for forgiveness also recognizes that the nations have acted out of their hostility for God and his people.

2 Kings 24-25 & 2 Chronicles 36 – The Final Four Kings of Judah & The Babylonian Exile

-The third son of Josiah lasted just three months (609 BC) before being overthrown by the pharaoh.

-The second son of Josiah was a puppet king of Egypt (609-598 BC), whose true alliance was to pharaoh. When Egypt was defeated by the surging Babylonian empire, he shifted allegiance to Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. One of Judah’s worst kings, he tried to have the prophet Jeremiah put to death, rather than listen to God’s word from him. Jeremiah repeatedly speaks scornfully of Jehoiakim. Ultimately, an ill-advised revolt against Nebuchadnezzar results in his death.

-After holding out for three months against Nebuchadnezzar (598-597 BC), Jehoiachin surrenders. He lives in a Babylonian prison for 40 years.

-Ruling for the final 11 years of Judah's existence as an independent state (597-586 BC), Zedekiah was a weak king who listened to bad advice and made unwise decisions. He ignored Jeremiah's prophetic counsel to remain loyal to Babylon, by joining an allegiance against the empire. As a result Nebuchadnezzar laid siege against Jerusalem for 2 years, finally breaching the wall, burning down the temple, palace, and other buildings, and plundering the entire city

586 BC - JERUSALEM, THE CAPITAL OF THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM, IS CONQUERED AND JUDAHITES ARE TAKEN INTO EXILE. ALL "ISRAEL" (ISRAEL & JUDAH) IS NOW IN THE TIME OF THE BABYLONIAN EXILE

See separate reading guides for Hosea, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah