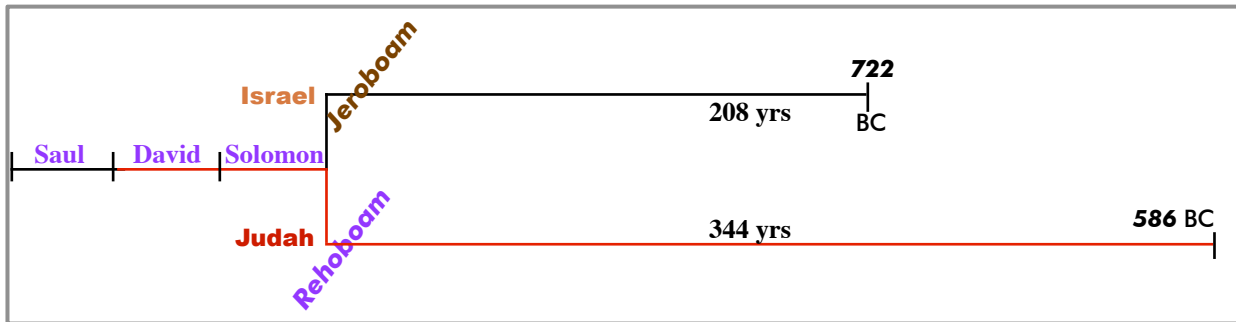


Before starting this lesson, read at least **2 Kings 2, 4, 5, 6, 17, 19, 25**. If possible read the whole book. You may find it helpful to read just the minimum chapters, go thru the lesson and then read the whole book. You will discover what works best for you.

In our study of the Old Testament, we have seen that the Jews began as one nation of 12 tribes or family clans. There were 3 kings over this united kingdom: **Saul, David and Solomon**. Each of them ruled for a period of 40 years. But after Solomon, there is civil war and the nation divides into 2 kingdoms - the north and the south.

In the north, the 10 tribes keep the name **Israel**. Their first king is **Jeroboam**; Samaria becomes their capital.



The southern kingdom is called **Judah**, with the 2 tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Their first king is Solomon's son **Rehoboam** and the capital remains in Jerusalem. It is this southern nation of **Judah** that continues the royal line of David and the family line of Jesus.

First Kings told how the civil war began.

Second Kings tells us how it ends.

This second book covers some 290 years from 852 to 561 BC.

Without an outline, the history in this book is almost impossible to understand or follow.

Typical of Jewish writing, it is arranged by topic, which means not everything is in chronological order.

Chapters 1-9 are about Elisha and his ministry.
 Chapters 10-17, explain why **Israel** goes into exile.
 Chapters 18-25 explain why **Judah** goes into exile.

First Kings told us about Elijah, the first prophet to the northern nation of **Israel**. He had 11 years of ministry by himself. Then he chooses the prophet who will continue his work. His name is Elisha. An easy way to remember who comes first is to once again use our alphabet. Put their names in alphabetical order and they will be in chronological order. Elijah is first, then Elisha.

Elijah spends the next 10 years training and mentoring Elisha. Part of the time they work with the seminaries along the southern border of Israel. These seminaries had been started by Samuel in order to provide more prophets for the nation. There are now over 100 who are in training. At the end of these 10 years, Elijah and Elisha visit all the seminaries and then go east across the Jordan River.

Their relationship has been like a spiritual father and son. So Elisha asks for his spiritual birthright or inheritance. He asks to have a double portion of Elijah's spirit and power. Suddenly a whirlwind appears. Horses and a chariot of fire separate the 2 and Elijah is taken to heaven in the whirlwind. (2:1).

Elijah was a prophet in Israel some 21 years in the 800's BC - from 873-852.



Elisha returns west across the Jordan to begin **his** ministry in the northern nation of **Israel**. Did you notice all the miracles connected with Elisha? There are twice as many recorded for Elisha, to show God answered his prayer and gave him a double portion of Elijah's power.

One of the first needs an explanation.

2 Kings 2:23 says that Elisha is on his way to the town of Bethel, where one of the seminaries is located.. Coming down the road in the opposite direction are more than 42 young men in their late teens or early 20's. The Hebrew word for *young men* is the same word that Solomon used for himself when he was 20 years old.

Because of their number, we would call them a gang. When they see Elisha, they begin to say, *go on up, you baldhead*.

Go on up means, *we want another whirlwind to come and get rid of you like it did with Elijah. Go on up.*

A baldhead means *you are like a leper, an outcast and unwanted*.

To put it simply, the teenagers are defying God by telling God's prophet, *We want nothing to do with you nor your message. Get out of our lives*.

In response, Elisha calls down a *curse* in the name of Yahweh.

In the Bible, the word **curse** means **God's judgment on a person only in this life**.

Elisha has been threatened and mocked but instead of taking action on his own, he asks **God** to bring judgment if God thinks they deserve it. God thinks they do, so He sends 2 bears to maul the teens. The Hebrew word means *to tear apart*, implying that some are killed.

Society and people of that day had lost their fear of God's consequences. This was to put that fear back in them. God wanted people to know there are consequences when they willfully defy Him.

Elisha lives in the capital of Samaria. During the last 25 years, the Jewish people in Israel had been rejecting God. But Gentile people outside the land have been searching for or following Him. This is why God has reached out to them. Thru Elijah, He helped a Gentile widow in Zarephath. Now thru Elisha, He helps a Gentile man.

In 2nd Kings 5, we are told this man lives in Damascus, the capital of Syria or Aram, a country to the north of Israel. He is Naaman, the army general of Syria. Altho he is very successful in his life and work, he has leprosy. The Hebrew word means *skin disease*. Sometimes in the Bible, the word *leprosy* means Hansen's disease. It isolates people from society and causes them to be outcasts.

Other times the word means a skin disease that disfigures the body but people continue in their jobs, living in the community. This is Naaman's situation. While he is an army general with troops all around him, he is disfigured. Patches of his skin have sores and have turned white. If only his skin could look normal.

Naaman's wife has a Jewish girl working for her. She had been taken captive in a previous war. One day the Jewish girl says, *Naaman should go to the capital of my country to see the prophet. He could heal Naaman*.

Naaman's wife tells her husband and he tells the king. In Syria, the **king** was in charge of the prophets and told them what to say, what to do and where to go. The king assumes the situation is the same in Israel. So the king of Syria sends Naaman with a letter to the king of Israel, telling him to cure his army general.

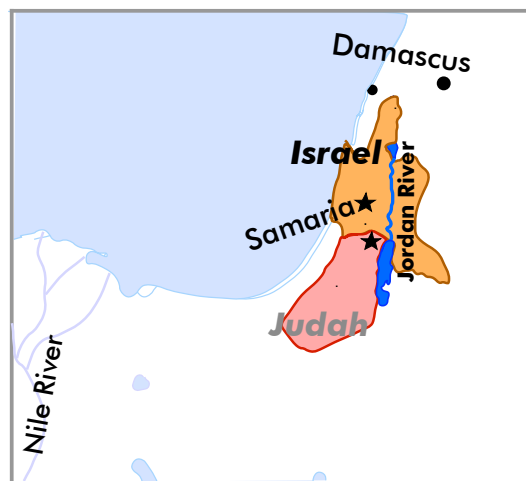
When the king of Israel sees Naaman and reads the letter that commands him, *heal this man*, he goes into a panic. Because he has rejected God, he has ignored God's prophets. He does not even think of Elisha.

But Elisha, who also lives in Samaria, the capital, soon hears about the important military man and why he is there. He sends word to the king, *send Naaman to my house*.

When Naaman arrives, Elisha sends out his **servant** so Naaman will realize the power is not from Elisha, but from God. The servant tells him to go the Jordan River, immerse himself in the water seven times and he will be healed. At first Naaman is insulted and ready to go back home. But then he goes to the river.

He submerges himself two times, three times and then four, but still no change. Being an army general he knows the importance of obeying a command completely. So he continues to the seventh time. When he comes up, he is healed - his leprosy or skin disease is gone.

Thruout the Bible God uses the number **seven** to represent that which is complete. When Naaman shows complete obedience, he is completely healed. His obedience is evidence of his faith - coming to God in God's way - in the way God has said.



Now that he is healed, he wants to pay Elisha or at least give him a gift. He has brought with him 20,000 dollars in silver coins, 60,000 in gold and 10 sets of clothing. Elisha refuses to take anything. Again, he wants everyone to know it is God's power - not his. In addition, he does not want anyone to say he uses God's power to get rich.

Naaman leaves and heads back to Damascus. Elisha's servant Gehezi knows about all that money and clothes and thinks to himself, *If Elisha does not want any of it, I sure would like to have some.* So he runs after Naaman and tells him two prophets have just come. Elisha wants one piece of silver and two sets of clothes for them. This is a complete lie, but Naaman has no reason to doubt his story.

Naaman gives him the clothes and insists on giving him two pieces of silver - about \$4,000. Gehezi takes the money and clothes, hides them and then returns to the house. Elisha says, *where have you been?* Gehezi replies, *I've been here all the time.* Once again he lies. Elisha responds, *Did not my heart go with you when you went after Naaman?*

Now look at 5:27 *Naaman's leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever. Then Gehezi went from Elisha's presence and he was leprous, as white as snow.* This does not mean he will be an outcast, but like Naaman, he will have a skin disease that leaves him disfigured with patches of his skin that have turned white.

At first it may seem the punishment is too severe. But it fits with God's **principles**.

The more knowledge and responsibility a person has, the greater the consequences when there is disobedience.

Gehezi lived and worked with the prophet, listening to his teaching day in and day out. He knew right from wrong. He had far more **knowledge** than the rest of the Jews. Because he represented the prophet, he also had great **responsibility**. Therefore the punishment was fair.

But there is an added part that **is** hard to understand. This skin disease is going to continue in his family, generation after generation. That is not fair. But sin is **never** fair. Satan, the author of sin is certainly not fair. This is why sin needs to be taken more seriously. It not only hurts us – it also hurts innocent people - people who do **not** deserve it.

The first 20 years of Elisha's ministry are filled with miracles. God uses them to not only encourage the Jews but also to reprove or reprimand them. When Naaman, the *Gentile* is healed, this one miracle changes his life. He turns from idolatry and says, *Now I know that there is no God in all the world except Yahweh, the God of Israel.* 5:15

In contrast, the *Jews* have had miracle after miracle. But instead of turning to God, they **continue** in idolatry. God is saying to His people, *Look at Naaman - the Gentiles listen to Me better than you do.*

Elijah had a ministry of **21** years.
Elisha has a ministry of **60** years - from 862-798 BC.

After his death, God raises up **three more prophets** for the northern nation of Israel.

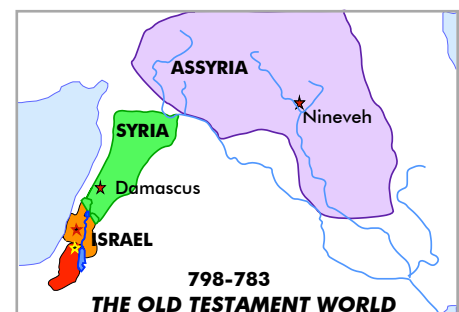
From Ahab onward, every king and every generation hears God's message from one of the main prophets, *return to Me; I will forgive you. If you reject Me, I will let a foreign nation take you into exile.*

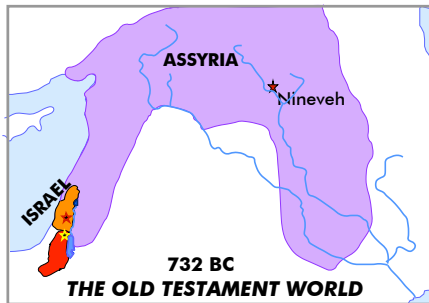
In spite of all the miracles and warnings, in 208 years, not one of Israel's 19 kings followed God. Because of this, God allows the nation of Assyria to conquer Israel.

The names **Syria** and **Assyria** are mentioned thruout the Old Testament. Altho their names are similar, they are 2 different countries.

Syria is north of Israel with its capital in Damascus. The country and capital are still in existence today.

Assyria was northeast of Israel with its capital in Nineveh. Looking on an Old Testament map, you will find Nineveh between the 2 northern branches of the Tigris River. There is no country nor people of Assyria today. They became extinct by the 500's BC. The *name* Assyria is sometimes associated with groups today, but only as a name.





However in the 700's BC, **Assyria** was a *powerful* empire. God uses them to punish Israel.

First they come and **take into exile the Jews living on the east side the Jordan River**. (732 BC Tiglath-Pileser - 2 Kings 15:29)

This should have made the king of Israel see his need for God. But no, he ignores God and turns to Egypt for help. (2 Kings 17:4) God waits seven years, giving the king and people a final opportunity to repent. But they go further from Him. So God lets Assyria return.

2 Kings 17:5 says **Assyria** puts the capital of Israel under siege for three years. Finally **they conquer Samaria and the nation in 722 BC**.

God does not leave us to wonder why this happened. He uses all of chapter 17 to explain the reasons.

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against Yahweh their God, ... They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations Yahweh had driven out. 17:7 Yahweh warned them thru all His prophets ... But they would not listen 17:13 ... They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, provoking Him to anger. 17:17.

Remember, the Jews used extreme words for non-extreme meanings.

When our Bibles used the phrase **God's anger**, it always means **God's response to evil or disobedience**. Using that meaning, verse 17 says,

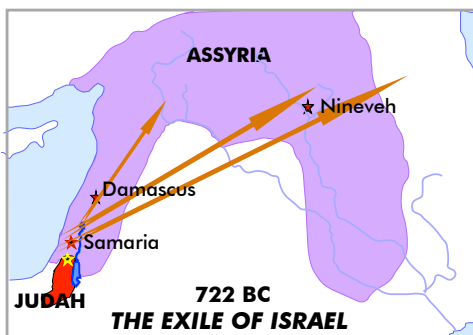
They sold themselves to do evil in the eyes of Yahweh, causing Him to respond

Verse 18.

So Yahweh firmly responded to the disobedience of Israel and removed them from His presence.

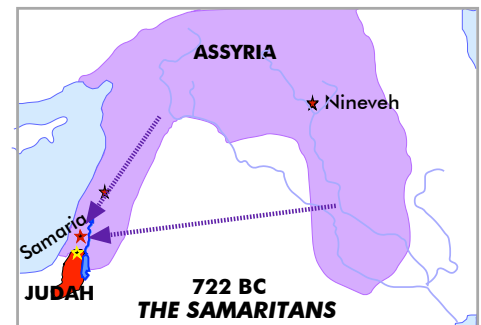
This tells us God separated Himself **from** their sin.

Only the tribe of Judah was left. This is the consequence **for** their sin. The northern nation of Israel was taken off the map as a nation. She no longer existed.



Over the years, the Assyrians learned if they left conquered people in their **own** land, the people continually rebelled.

But if they moved them to another land, the people would never rebel because they were not fighting for their homeland. This does not mean they are taken prisoners or put in a prison camp, only that they are resettled.

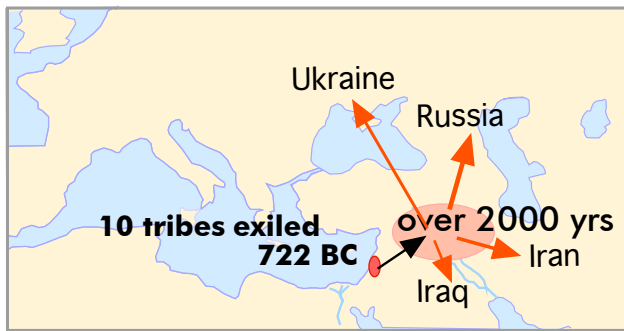


So in 722, the Assyrians take the Jews from the land of Israel and move them to the countries of northern Syria and Assyria. They give them land and housing as well as encourage the Jews to start businesses and thrive.

Then to repopulate the land of Israel, the Assyrians bring in Gentiles from Babylon and northern Syria - other people they had conquered. Because they are settled in Samaria, these people are called *Samaritans*. They bring with them their own religious beliefs. 17:33

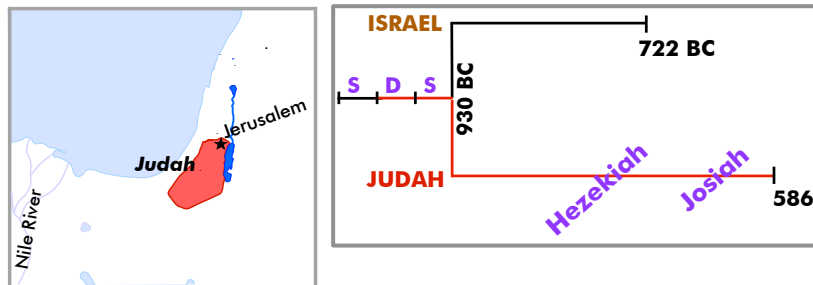
Assyria deported the upper and middle class Jews, but left the poorest Jews in the land. After awhile, the Gentile Samaritans and the Jews who were left begin to intermarry. They eventually become the Samaritan race who are part Gentile and part Jew, with a mixture of Jewish and pagan religious beliefs.

Chapters 10 thru 17 of 2 Kings describe the exile of Israel in the north. Because there were 10 tribes, eventually they became known as the 10 lost tribes. But they were never lost. They were resettled, never to return as a unit or nation to the land of Israel.



If we look at a map of today, we discover the 10 tribes were sent to what we know today as northern Syria, Iraq, Iran and what used to be the Soviet Union. It explain why up until recently there were tens of thousands of Jews living in these countries and why there were over 2 million Jews in Russia. They developed over the last 1700 years from the 10 tribes who were exiled by the Assyrians. Over the centuries they became comfortable and wanted to stay in that location.

The history of the northern nation of **Israel** ended in 722 BC.



So we now turn to the history of **Judah** in the south. Over the years she has good kings and bad kings.

We will look at 2 of her good kings - **Hezekiah** and **Josiah**.

Hezekiah is king # 13.

He comes to power in 726 BC, just 5 years before the north is taken into exile. Like the north, **Judah** had forgotten God. Hezekiah is a godly king. He removes all the idols from his land; he cleans and repairs God's temple that has been closed and begins the celebration of the Passover.

After 14 years as king, Hezekiah becomes sick. God tells him it is time for him to die. Instead of praying, *please give me more years to live IF it is Your will*, he weeps and begs to the point of demanding, *I want more time to live*. God finally answers his prayer and gives him 15 more years. (In 726 BC he became king - his illness is in 712 BC.)

The tragedy is that Hezekiah squanders the time and extra opportunities God gives him.

In the same year he is healed, he becomes proud and careless; he does not ask God for wisdom and gives information to an enemy nation who will eventually destroy them. (He shows Babylon his riches **after** his illness but **before** the Assyrian attack.)

Three years after being healed, in 709 BC, he has a son.

Eight more years go by.

During this time the Assyrian empire has conquered more nations so that only Judah and Egypt have remained independent. Hezekiah is now in his 26th year as king, (701 BC) but he is not the spiritual king he used to be.

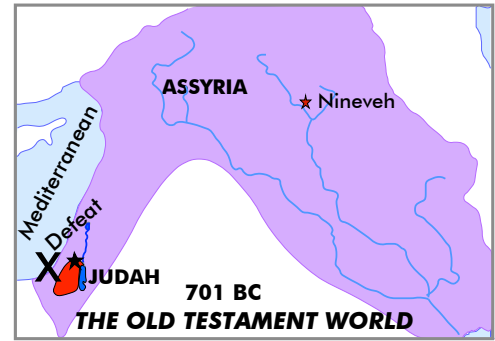
When the Assyrian armies come to take his country, instead of turning to God for help, he turns to the silver and gold of the nation. He takes everything of value and gives it to Assyria. In other words, he buys his freedom and bankrupts the nation. (It has now been 21 yrs. since Assyria deported Israel in the north).

Satisfied, the Assyrian king and army leave, but only for a few months. Within the same year the king sends an army unit back to Jerusalem. The commander threatens Hezekiah and ridicules Yahweh God. It is this that re-awakens Hezekiah's faith. He realizes there is no country to help him and no more money to bail him out. He has nothing left but God.

What is so amazing is that in spite of how much Hezekiah has ignored God, now when Hezekiah prays and asks God for help, God shows mercy and begins to work.

First, the army unit has to leave to help their king in a unexpected battle 25 miles to the southwest. Then the king hears a rumor the Egyptian army is going to attack him near the coastline. Knowing he cannot return to capture Jerusalem immediately, he sends Hezekiah a letter that basically says,

The God you trust in has told you I will not conquer you. But that is not true. Your God has deceived you. I have far more power than your God. 19:10



With this, Hezekiah's faith really goes into action and is commendable.

Hezekiah received the letter from the messengers and read it. Then he went up to the temple of Yahweh and spread it out before Yahweh. 19:14

Obviously God knows what the letter says. This is for Hezekiah's benefit. He does something physical in a time of crisis when he is absolutely helpless.

He presents the letter to God and prays – not for his safety, but for God's glory.

Give ear, O Yahweh, and hear; open your eyes, O Yahweh, and see; listen to the words Sennacherib has sent to insult the living God. 19:16 Now, O Yahweh our God, deliver us from his hand, so that all kingdoms on earth may know that You alone, O Yahweh, are God. 19:19

Hezekiah prays that everyone in the Middle East of that day would know that *Yahweh* God is the only God. According to chapter 19:35, that night, before the king of Assyria has time to make any further plans, God takes action. He sends an angel who kills 185,000 of the army as they camp near the Mediterranean coast. The Greek historian Herodotus tells us they died from bubonic plague. Notice however that the king is not killed. When he gets up the following morning, he is able to see the evidence of *Yahweh* God and His power. He is a humiliated king who turns around and goes back to Nineveh with his few remaining troops. God gives this king, Sennacherib, 20 more years to consider what he has seen and heard, but he never responds. Then one day, while worshipping idols in his temple, he is killed by his 2 sons.

Hezekiah lives 3 more years after this miraculous deliverance. In the 15 years of extended life, this is the only thing he did to honor God and it was wonderful. But the rest of the time he wasted the opportunities, living only for himself. The greatest tragedy of all is the son who was born during this time. In the 12 years Hezekiah has with him, he makes no effort to teach him about God. This is unbelievable. Hezekiah had spent his first 14 years as king teaching the **nation** about God, but now in his last 12 years as king, he does not teach his own **son**.

After the extra 15 years, Hezekiah dies and this son becomes king. He is only 12 years old. Obviously his guardians rule for him for the first 5-8 years. But then he rules on his own.

He becomes the most wicked and cruel king that Judah ever had. During a 40 year period he kills as many godly Jews as possible and worships as many foreign idols as possible. To make it even worse, he rules longer than any other Jewish king. He is in power for 55 years. Finally he dies and his son is king for 2 years. He dies and his son becomes king. This is now the great-grandson of Hezekiah. The line of David is continuing from generation to generation.

The name of this new king is **Josiah** king #16. 640-609 BC.

He is made king when he is 8 years old. Again, guardians rule for him during the next 8 years. Then at 16, Josiah wants God in his life and in the life of the nation. At 20, he starts a national reform. Over the next 6 years he gets rid of all the idols in the country, repairs the temple in Jerusalem and restores the celebration of the Passover.

While the temple is being repaired, the workmen find a copy of God's law, the book of Deuteronomy. They bring it to Josiah and read it to him. As he listens, he realizes how much the nation has broken God's law. In the past, this book was memorized by the children as part of their schooling. Everyone automatically knew God's law. But over the years the book of Deuteronomy had been forgotten. Altho they were God's people living in God's land, everything about God had been removed from their lives.

Josiah calls the people together and has the law read to them. Then he commands the people to obey. There is national revival. But a short time later, God tells Josiah that in spite of the reform, Judah will be sent into exile because of her disobedience. Isa 29:13

This comes as a shock. How could this happen? Two kings have led the nation in reform. God promised in Deuteronomy that if His people repented, He would forgive them and bring blessing to their land. So why is God ignoring their repentance? God answers their questions thru one of the prophets.

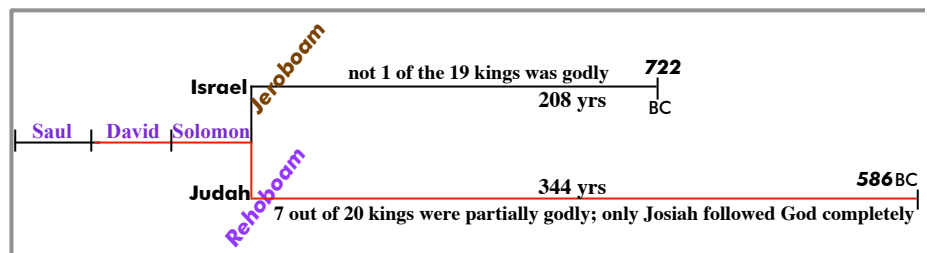
*From the least to the greatest, all are greedy for gain; prophets and priests alike, all practice deceit... Stand at the crossroads and look... ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you (the people) said, 'We will **not** walk in it.'* Jeremiah 6:13, 16

The people had destroyed the idols because Hezekiah and Josiah commanded it. There was outward reform because of the laws, but there was no **inward** change. The proof is in their history.

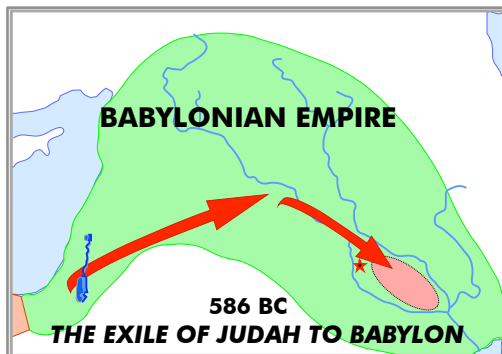
Hezekiah had spent 14 years in national reform. Yet the minute he dies and his 12 year old son takes over, the nation immediately returns to idols. It is as if they can hardly wait to go back to what they used to do.

After Josiah dies, the people immediately return to idolatry. Outwardly it looked like reform, but inwardly the people had not changed. God saw there was no **true** repentance and therefore He **could not** forgive them.

In 344 years of existence, 7 of their 20 kings partially followed God. There was only partial obedience. Only Josiah – one king out of 20 – followed God completely. So God brings judgment on the nation of **Judah**. But it will not be thru Assyria.



In the last 100 years the world has changed dramatically. The great Assyrian empire is gone. It has been conquered by the Babylonians who now have their empire. God uses Babylon first to conquer Judah, putting her under their authority. However they let the people remain in the land, living as they always had. In unbelievable patience and mercy, God gives Judah 14 more years to repent. But the people and leaders refuse.



So in 586 BC, the Babylonian army returns, destroys Jerusalem, burns the Temple and deports the entire nation to the east in Babylonia. Judah is now taken off the map.

After being in exile a few years, the Jews from Judah start asking questions. Why did God let this happen to us? What about our future as a nation and people? The Levite **historians** had brought all their historical records with them.

So God directs the Levite **scribes** to go thru the last 400 years of their historical documents. They are to take out all the parts that show **what God did** and **how the nation responded to God**. They are to combine that information and put it in a book. The people can then read how in spite of God's miracles and warnings, they and their kings continually disobeyed God. They, God's people, are in exile and God's Temple is burned because they rejected God. The scribes form this book in 580 BC, just 6 years after the exile.

Our books of **1 and 2 Kings** are a copy of what the scribes put together.
 1 Kings **begins** with the building of the Temple;
 2 Kings **ends** with the burning of the Temple.
 Everything in between explains **why** God let it happen.

When the Jews were taken into exile, they were not made captives or put into prison. However, there is one exception. The Babylonians had taken the king of Judah, brought him to their capital of Babylon and put *him* in prison. Twenty years go by and then in 560 BC, God changes the hearts of the Babylonian leaders. They recognize the king is part of the Jewish royal family - the family of David. As a result, they free him and treat him as royalty.

The Holy Spirit directs the scribes to add this event to the end of the book they had earlier written. It is important for the people to know and read about their Jewish king who was freed. It assures them, because David's line still exists, God's promises that come thru that line can still be fulfilled. They as a people **have** a future. Just as their disobedience took them *out* of the land of promise, repentance can put them back *into* the land.

This book has been 300 years of Jewish history. But the Bible is more than history. Paul said the Old Testament stories are for our instruction. There is certainly instruction about how God deals with nations. But there is also instruction for our personal lives, in the area of prayer.

Hezekiah insisted God give him more years to live rather than accepting God's will. He got those years, but they were the worst 15 years of his life both personally and spiritually. He brought tragedy to his own life, the lives of others and to his nation.

In our lives, God wants us to pray and ask Him for things. He delights in giving answers. But there are times we can want something so badly, we ignore God's answers of *no*. If we keep insisting, He often lets us have our way, but it will damage our personal and spiritual life. It will never give us the joy or happiness we expected.

God's instruction for us is that when we desperately want something for ourselves – when we want it at any cost, we need to see the danger. This is the most important time to add, *if it is **Your** will*. While it will never be easy, we can be assured, God always gives the **best** to those who leave the choice with Him.

There is also a 2nd lesson. When Hezekiah received the threatening letter, he spread it out before God and said, *Look at the situation. Provide an answer so everyone can know **You** are God.*

There may be times we will receive devastating news and feel absolutely helpless. This is the time to present it before God saying, *Look at the situation. Give me wisdom to know what to do. Give me strength to do it. Provide me with answers so others see there **is** a God and **You do** make a difference in my life.*

This is the kind of prayer God delights to answer

BIBLE DEFINITIONS

Curse

God's judgment on a person in this life

God's anger

God's response to evil or disobedience.