

ISRAEL DEFEATED; JUDAH DEFEATED

2 Kings 13 - 28

STRUCTURE

Key-persons: Kings of Judah: Hezekiah, Manasseh, Josiah; Jehoiakim, Zedekiah; King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. Prophet: Jeremiah.

Key-locations: Israel, Jerusalem

Key-repetitions:

- Provoked the Lord to anger: (2 Kin 21:6, 15; 22:13, 17; 23:19, 26; 24:20).
- Kings who did right in the eyes of the Lord and imitated David: Hezekiah (2 Kin 18:3); Josiah (2 Kin 22:2).
- Kings who did evil in the eyes of the Lord and caused the people to sin. They imitated the kings of Israel, or their ancestors: Manasseh (2 Kin 21:2); Jehoiachin (2 Kin 24:9); Zedekiah (2 Kin 24:19).
- Prophets received the Word of the Lord and spoke the Word of the Lord.
- Fathers and sons who had an opposite kind of relationship with God: Jotham did right (2 Kin 15:34), but his son Ahaz did evil (2 Kin 16:2-3). Hezekiah did right (2 Kin 18:3), but his son was an evil man (2 Kin 21:2-9); Amon did evil and was an idolater (2 Kin 21:19-22), but his son Josiah constantly did what was right, he served the Lord with all his heart (2 Kin 22:2; 23:24-25), but his son Jehoiakim did evil (2 Kin 23:37).
- Israel was attacked by Sennacherib, king of Assyria (2 Kin 17:5-6); Judah was attacked by Nebuchadnezzar; king of Babylon three times.

Key-attitudes:

- The stubborn insubordination of the kings and people of Israel and Judah.
- The calamity of the fall of Samaria.
- The instability of the Israelites that made them vulnerable to the influences of their leaders.
- The inconsistency of the kings of Judah.

- The righteousness of kings Hezekiah and Josiah, and the wickedness of the other kings of Judah.
- The anguish of Jeremiah.
- The calamity of the nation of Judah.
- The arrogance and cruelty of the Babylonians.
- The Lord felt both anger and love for Judah.
- The sovereignty of the Lord God.

Initial-situation:

When Saul, David and Solomon were kings, all 12 tribes of Israel were together in one kingdom. After the death of king Solomon, the Kingdom was divided. Ten tribes rebelled against the king who was David's descendant and became the Kingdom of Israel. Two tribes remained loyal to the king who was David's grandson. They became the Kingdom of Judah.

All of the kings of Israel rejected the covenant with God and served sex-and-religion idols. Israel's worst king was Ahab, who was influenced by his wicked wife, Jezebel.

Some of the kings of Judah imitated David and served the Lord, but most rejected the covenant with God and imitated the kings of Israel.

God constantly sent prophets to the two kingdoms. Elijah and Elisha were the most prominent prophets to Israel. Isaiah and Jeremiah were the most prominent prophets to Judah.

Initial-problem:

All the kings of Israel did evil in the eyes of the Lord by following the sins of Jeroboam who had caused Israel to sin. So the Lord's anger burned against Israel.

Final-situation:

The Babylonians conquered Jerusalem, destroyed the city and carried into exile its citizens.

BIBLE STORY

Israel Exiled

Jeroboam was the first king of Israel. He sinned and caused Israel to sin. Israel's kings who succeeded Jeroboam followed the sins of Jeroboam and did evil in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord's anger burned against Israel (2 Kin 13:1 - 15:31).

God allowed the king of Assyria, to invade the land of Israel. He captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He relocated them in other countries which he had captured (2 Kin 17:5-6). (*The nation of Israel had 19 kings during its 209 years of existence.*)

The exile came about because the Israelites sinned against the Lord their God, who had delivered them from the brutal oppression of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods. They openly built sex-and-religion shrines in all their towns. The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets, "Turn from your evil ways. Observe my commands and decrees." (*Some of God's prophets to Israel were: Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, Amos, and Jonah.*)

The Israelites would not listen. They followed worthless idols, and they themselves became worthless. They frequented the sex-and-religion shrines of Baal. They sacrificed their sons and daughters in the fire. They practiced divination and sorcery and prostituted themselves to do every kind of evil in the eyes of the Lord, provoking him to anger.

The Lord became angry with Israel and he removed them from his presence (2 Kin 17:7-23).

Assyria relocated Israel's citizens into different countries that it had conquered. Assyria brought people from other conquered nations and relocated them into the towns of Samaria. Each relocated national group served their own gods in accordance with the customs of the nations from which they had been exiled. At the same time, they tried to worship the Lord God of Israel. The Israelites intermarried with those relocated from other nations. This was the beginning of the Samaritan people (2 Kin 17:24-41).

(When Israel was captured, there only remained the partial kingdom, the Kingdom of Judah. After Israel was defeated, Judah continued for another 134 years. Judah had a total of 20 kings during its 345 years of existence.)

Kings Hezekiah and Manasseh

The Assyrians conquered Israel when Hezekiah was king of Judah. Hezekiah was king 29 years and he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord; he kept to the standards of his ancestor David. He removed the local fertility shrines, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the sex-and-religion Asherah poles. Hezekiah trusted in the Lord God and obeyed the commands the Lord had given Moses. The Lord was with him; he had success in everything he did (2 Kin 18:1-8).

King Hezekiah died and his son Manasseh succeeded him as king. Manasseh ruled 55 years. He did evil. He rebuilt the sex-and-religion shrines his father had destroyed. He erected images to the sex god Baal and the sex goddess Asherah. He put the idol of the sex goddess Asherah into the Temple of the Lord God. He consulted astrologists. He sacrificed his own son in the fire. He practiced black-magic, fortune-telling and held seances to consult spirits from the underworld. He provoked the Lord to anger. Manasseh killed many innocent people (2 Kin 21:1-9).

The Lord spoke through the prophets, "King Manasseh of Judah has led Judah to sin with his idols. I will bring catastrophe on Jerusalem and Judah. I will wipe out Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down" (2 Kin 21:10-15).

King Josiah

King Josiah was Manasseh's grandson. Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he ruled 31 years in Jerusalem. He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and copied the ways of his ancestor David (2 Kin 22:1-2).

When he had ruled 18 years, King Josiah ordered the high priest to repair the Temple. The high priest found the Book of the Law in the Temple (2 Kin 22:3-20; 2 Chr 34:1-28).

King Josiah assembled the leaders of Judah and Jerusalem to the Temple of the Lord. He

read to them all the words of the Book of the Covenant. The king renewed the covenant to follow the Lord and keep his commands with all his heart and all his soul. All the people pledged themselves to the covenant (2 Kin 23:1-3).

Josiah ordered the priest to remove from the Temple and burn everything made for other gods. He did away with the pagan priests. He tore down the living quarters of the homosexual male shrine prostitutes inside the Temple of the Lord. Josiah made impure the local religious shrines where the priests had burned incense. He made impure the sex-and-religion shrines that King Solomon had built (2 Kin 23:4-14).

Josiah invaded Israel and demolished the altar at Bethel, the religious shrine made by Jeroboam, who had caused Israel to sin. Josiah cremated human bones on the altar to make it impure. These things happened as the Lord had prophesied to Jeroboam years before. Josiah removed, destroyed, and made impure all the sex-and-religion shrines that the kings of Israel had built in the towns of Samaria. Then he went back to Jerusalem (2 Kin 23:15-20).

There was no king like Josiah before or after him. He obeyed the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength. Nevertheless, the Lord's fierce anger continued to burn against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to provoke him to anger (2 Kin 23:24-27).

The prophet Jeremiah began his ministry when Josiah was king.

Nebuchadnezzar's Three Invasions of Judah

After King Josiah's death, his son Jehoiakim became king. Jehoiakim did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kin 23:31-37).

Two years after Josiah's death, Nebuchadnezzar began his reign in Babylon, and Babylon became a major power. Prophet Jeremiah asserted that Judah should submit to Babylon. Judah's leaders considered Jeremiah a traitor; he was persecuted and imprisoned (Jer 25 - 28).

Jeremiah dictated the words that the Lord gave him and they were written on a scroll. King Jehoiakim cut the scroll into pieces and threw them into a fire (Jer 36:1-27).

Babylon's first invasion into Judah took place during the first year Nebuchadnezzar was king in 605 B. C. Daniel and his friends were taken captive at this time. Babylon's second invasion into Judah took place during the eighth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king in 597 B.C. The Babylonians emptied the treasures of both the Temple and the palace, and carried the leaders of Jerusalem and the skilled craftsmen into exile.

Nebuchadnezzar chose Zedekiah to be his puppet king in Judah. Zedekiah did evil in the eyes of the Lord (2 Kin 24:18-19; Jer 52:1-3).

The Lord ordered the prophet Jeremiah to make a yoke and put it on his neck. Jeremiah told King Zedekiah to harness himself to the yoke of the king of Babylon and not listen to lying false prophets (Jer 27:1-15).

Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. So Nebuchadnezzar marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. Babylon's third invasion into Judah took place during the eighteenth year that Nebuchadnezzar was king, in 587 B.C. The Babylonians destroyed with fire

the Temple of the Lord, the royal palace, all the houses of Jerusalem, and every important building. They took from the Temple all the articles made of bronze, gold or silver. The Babylonian army broke down the walls around Jerusalem. They carried into exile the people who were in the city, along with the rest of the populace of Judah. But they left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.

So Judah went into captivity, away from her land (2 Kin 25:1-21).

GENERIC DIALOGUE QUESTIONS

1. What catches your attention in the story?
2. Is there anything in the story that is hard to understand?
3. Who are the main characters in the story?
4. What problems did the characters face?
5. How did the characters face their problems?
6. How have you faced similar problems?
7. Is there someone in the story who is similar to you or who is different from you?
8. What does the story tell about God?

SPECIFIC DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What did the nations of Israel and Judah do that provoked the Lord to anger?
2. Who were some of the kings of Judah who imitated their ancestor David and did right in the eyes of the Lord?
3. Who were some of the kings who did evil in the eyes of the Lord and caused the people to sin?
4. Who were the prophets?
5. What are some of the common actions of today that could provoke the Lord to anger?

LIFE-LESSONS

1. People can know God as either their Savior or their destroyer. God delivered his people from slavery in Egypt, and he desired to always be their Savior, liberator and protector. After the Israelites abandoned God to follow the sex-and-religion gods of the people around them, God became their punisher; he destroyed the Kingdom of Israel (2 Kin 17:7-18).
2. Sin moves the person away from the Bible, or the Bible moves the person away from sin. During the reign of the idolatrous and wicked Manasseh, the Law of Moses was lost. During the reign of Josiah who served the Lord, the Law was found (2 Kin 22:8-10). The reading of the Law resulted in repentance, and the king and people worshiped the Lord again (2 Kin 23:1-3; 2 Chr 34: 29-33).
3. Sin provokes God to anger. Manasseh did much evil, provoking the Lord to anger (2 Kin 21:6).
4. God is faithful to keep his promises. He kept his promises and punished Israel and Judah when they abandoned him to serve other gods.
5. People who rebel against the Lord do not want to hear his Word, nor do they respect those who pronounce God's message. King Jehoiakim cut the scroll with the Words of the Lord and burned them in the fire (Jer 36:1-6, 23). King Zedekiah confined the prophet Jeremiah to jail because Jeremiah prophesied the Lord's words (Jer 32:1-44). Zedekiah did not humble himself before the prophet Jeremiah when he spoke the Word of the Lord (2 Chr 36:12).
6. God is sovereign in relation to history. He used King Shalmaneser of Assyria to punish Israel with defeat (2 Kin 17:3-6). God used King Nebuchadnezzar as his instrument to crush Judah politically, economically, and religiously (2 Kin 24:20 - 25:7).