

## AP 32

### 2 Kings / מלכים ב / *Melekim 2*

As noted previously, First and Second Kings - originally one book - is the history of the kings of Israel (and Judah after the split) and is also a history of the prophets who were sent by God to correct the ways of the kings and the Israelites. Second Kings continues the history from about 853 BCE, picking up where First Kings ended. The great prophet Elijah is taken up into heaven - without dying - and Elisha succeeds him. The early part of 2 Kings tells about the miraculous activities of Elisha and his engagement with the kings of Israel and Judah. In 722 BCE, the powerful nation of Assyria invaded the northern kingdom (Israel) and took them captive. Judah (southern kingdom where Jerusalem is located) remained independent. In 612 BCE, the Babylonians took the Assyrian capital of Nineveh and defeated the Assyrians. The Babylonian conquest continued with the capture of Judah by 605 BCE. Key people in Judah, including the royal family, were taken captive, and relocated to Babylon. Only Judah remained intact. The Promised Land is badly damaged by the Babylonian army and the "people of God" are scattered. By the end of Kings, only a remnant of the people of God inhabited their Promised Land.

The years covered by 2 Kings is also the time of most of the prophets of Israel who wrote their prophecies: Amos and Hosea were sent to the people of Israel (10 tribes). Prophets to Judah (2 tribes) during this period included: Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah. For both nations, the messages the prophets brought were the same: repent and return to God or bad things will happen. There were also prophecies of restoration.

Unfortunately, none of the kings of Israel were righteous and turned to God. Of the kings of Judah, only Joash, Uzziah, Hezekiah, and Josiah were righteous, but ultimately Judah failed to repent and follow God's law and garnered the curses foretold by Moses (Deuteronomy 28).

#### **Sunday, July 3**

2 Kings 2:9-25; 4:1-7; 4:42-44 (spotlight verse 4:42-44)

**For Reflection:** Consider the Spirit that Elisha received, and the Spirit Jesus promised to His followers - including you. Consider how Elisha used his gifts from God - and how you use the gifts God has given you. Elisha provided a community safe drinking water with his gifts from God. He prevented a widow from losing her family. He fed one hundred hungry people. With the gifts God has given you, could you also do such things in the name of Jesus? Listen for the Spirit's guidance on the use of your gifts.

**Lagniappe:** Acts 2:38; 1 John 3:16-18

#### **Monday, July 4**

2 Kings 8:7-29; 9:6-37 (spotlight verses 8:11-19)

**For Reflection:** The laws that had been given to Moses came with promises if they were obeyed and curses if they were not obeyed (see Deuteronomy 28). Consequences of turning from God was seen in the Bible to set consequences in motion that could last generations. Think about your relationship with God. Can you see a connection between trying to follow God's will and

the quality of your life (more blessings, fewer curses)? When bad things happen, is it always the result of sin?

**Lagniappe:** Exodus 34:5-7

**Tuesday, July 5**

2 Kings 11:12 – 12:20 (spotlight verses 12:1-3)

**For Reflection:** Joash was a king of Judah that listened to the instructions of Jehoiada, the priest, and “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.” However, the people of Judah continued with idol worship. The priests were not focused on serving God and the treasure collected for the temple was used to buy off an invading king. How far does God call us to trust and follow Him, rather than modern-day idols, and to repair God’s temple - ourselves?

**Lagniappe:** Matthew 6:31-33; 1 Corinthians 6:19

**Wednesday, July 6**

2 Kings 19 (spotlight verses 19:32-34)

**For Reflection:** King Hezekiah, when faced with an overwhelming threat, prayed to God for help that God might be recognized as the only true God. The prophet Isaiah brought back a message of encouragement to Hezekiah. When you feel overwhelmed and pray, how would your prayers change if you considered the nature of God, how answering your prayer will glorify God? How has God given you answers through others? Has God provided you signs along the path to the answered prayer that provided you encouragement? Are you looking expectantly?

**Lagniappe:** John 17:1-5

**Thursday, July 7**

2 Kings 22 (spotlight verses 22:15-20)

**For Reflection:** Josiah was a righteous king and when the Book of the Law was found and read to him, he tore his clothes as an expression of remorse. Huldah, the prophetess, brings God’s word that disaster is coming to Judah because they have forsaken God. God’s blessing to Josiah is that he will die in peace before the disaster. When have you experienced a death, or other seemingly bad event, or a weakness that, upon reflection or later, seems like a blessing from God?

**Lagniappe:** 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

**Friday, July 8**

2 Kings 23:1-26; 24:1-4 (23:3, 26-27)

**For Reflection:** King Josiah worked diligently to restore Judah to righteousness - even though he knew that he could not prevent the disaster that would come because of prior sin. Does our repentance and God’s forgiveness always undo the harm and consequences caused by our sin? What actions should follow repentance?

Lagniappe: Isaiah 1:16-18

**Saturday, July 9**

2 Kings 25 (spotlight verses: 25:8-12)

**For Reflection:** The conquest by the Babylonians completely destroyed the temple and displaced the people of Jerusalem. Worship as they knew it ended. Sacrifices for forgiveness of sins could no longer be offered. Yet God was in charge. This was repeated soon after Jesus ascended to heaven. In our day we have somewhat similar (though certainly not as extreme) discouragement as the Presbyterian church (and other mainline denominations) are in decline, our traditions are being toppled, and an assumption of Christian faith is no longer valid in the United States. How can we believe that God is in charge? What are we called to do and be in such challenging times?

**Lagniappe:** Matthew 24:1-3; 42-46