

# Old Testament History

Lesson #22

2 Kings 18:9-25:30

## Outline

### I. ***The Final Kings Of Judah (18:1-24:20)***

- A. Hezekiah (18:1-20:21).
  - 1. Hezekiah and Shalmaneser (18:9-19:37).
  - 2. Hezekiah's sickness (20:1-11).
  - 3. Hezekiah and Merodachbaladan (20:12-21).
- B. Manasseh (21:1-18).
- C. Amon (21:19-26).
- D. Josiah (22:1-23:30).
- E. Jehoahaz (23:31-35).
- F. Jehoiakim (23:36-24:7).
- G. Jehoiachin (24:8-17).
- H. Zedekiah (24:18-20).

### II. ***The Babylonian Exile Of Judah (2 Kings 25:1-30)***

- A. The fall of Jerusalem (25:1-21).
- B. Gedaliah (25:22-26).
- C. Jehoiachin in exile (25:27-30).

## Notes

### ***2 Kings 18:9-19:37; 2 Chronicles 32:1-23; Isaiah 36:1-37:38***

- Although the beginning of Hezekiah's reign was primarily devoted to the first and most important task of religious reform, other matters of a pressing nature were not overlooked. The same wisdom which marked his restoration of the temple services also guided his other administration, and the same good results occurred with both.
- Hezekiah rebelled against the king of Assyria and defeated Philistia from one end to the other. All Hezekiah's deeds, even his military accomplishments, stand in stark contrast to the example of fearful Israel that died because of unbelief and disobedience.
- The time of Hezekiah's rebellion and occupation of Philistia must lie late in his reign, probably near the middle of the last quarter of the eighth century B.C. Hezekiah's early years were doubtless devoted to religion and internal affairs.
- The date of Sennacherib's campaign must be calculated from the time of Hezekiah's independent rule in 715, a date that harmonizes well with the data from Assyrian sources. Sennacherib (705-681 B.C.) was at first occupied with affairs close to home and so was not free to deal with Hezekiah. His first two campaigns were launched against the greater

problem, the continuing presence of Merodach-Baladan in Babylon and the strong Arameans, problems he inherited from his father. But having secured the empire in the south and east, Sennacherib was free to deal with the west, against which he launched his third campaign.

- Having taken Ashkelon and deported its king to Assyria, Sennacherib turned his attention inland in a thrust that would not only secure the key city of Lachish but would effectively separate the remaining Philistines and Judeans from Egyptian help.
- Hezekiah, feeling threatened by the presence of the Assyrians, made several preparations. First, he cut off the water supply for the besieging army. He filled in the upper pool and brought the water in through an aqueduct into a large reservoir between the upper and the lower city (cf. Isaiah 22:8-14). Second, he repaired all of the walls that were broken down. Third, he gathered his men and captains, assuring them that One greater than the Assyrians was with them.
- Overwhelmed by a sense of certain tragedy, he acted out of human weakness and sent a letter of submission to Sennacherib, indicating that he would agree to whatever terms of tribute Sennacherib would demand. In meeting Sennacherib's levy, Hezekiah went beyond the terms, emptying the coffers of both temple and palace and even stripping off the gold from the doors and door posts of the temple. Unfortunately, Hezekiah's generosity served only to whet Sennacherib's appetite. The king of Assyria took the money and turned around and invaded Judah anyway. Isaiah called the move "treachery" (Isaiah 33:1-8), for Assyria did not keep her promise.

### **2 Kings 18:17-19:37**

- The Assyrian delegation came to the aqueduct of the Upper Pool, on the road to the Washerman's Field (cf. Isaiah 7:3). There they sent for Hezekiah, who sent three chief officials to deal with the three Assyrian delegates. There was perhaps no greater occasion in which faith in the unseen was put to a more severe test than in the conference between these men.
- The Assyrian message to Hezekiah was psychological warfare. Sennacherib's warning is given in two stages: in vss. 19-22 he pointed out that Hezekiah's tactics and trust were ill conceived; in vss. 23-25 he suggested that Hezekiah's supposed strengths were really weaknesses.
- Sennacherib's message was that faith in Egypt's power would be his ruin. Furthermore, he said that Hezekiah had removed all opportunities for people to worship so Hezekiah could repeal Sennacherib. Lastly, Sennacherib told Hezekiah that it was the Lord Himself who told him to attack and destroy Judah.

- As the field commander continued his remarks, he shouted to the people that Hezekiah was not to be trusted. Hezekiah could not deliver them from the Assyrians, and the Lord would not do so. Rather than believing their king, they should align themselves with the “rising star” of Sennacherib.
- There was a tremendous contrast between the boastful Assyrian and the humble Hezekiah. When he heard the report of his delegation, he was filled with grief. Tearing his clothes and donning sackcloth, he went with heavy heart to the temple to pour out his soul before God. God’s very name and reputation were at stake in this time of national crisis.
- Hezekiah’s trust in God and confidence in Isaiah were not misplaced. Isaiah did have a message for the repentant Hezekiah. He was not to fear the blasphemous words of Sennacherib. Indeed, Sennacherib, rather than adding Jerusalem to his list of conquests, would himself be given a spirit of fearfulness, so that when distressing news came to him out of Assyria, he would give up the siege and head for home immediately.
- The Lord’s answer was not long in coming. The major portion of that message is composed within a threefold message: (1) A reply to Sennacherib’s boasting (vss. 21-28); (2) a sign for Hezekiah that God would deal with Sennacherib and deliver His people (vss. 29-31); and, (3) a declaration that Sennacherib would not even begin the battle of Jerusalem, let alone conquer it (vss. 32-34).
- That very night the prophetic word was fulfilled. As the Assyrian army slept, the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 of the soldiers. Having already just received alarming news from home (cf. vs. 7), and with his army now decisively depleted, Sennacherib broke camp and returned to Nineveh. Though he would yet fight another five campaigns, he would never again return to Judah. About 20 years later (681 B.C.), two of Sennacherib’s own sons assassinated him and successfully escaped to Urartu. Another son, Esarhaddon (681-668), succeeded Sennacherib as king.

**2 Kings 20:1-21:26; 2 Chronicles 32:24-33:25; Isaiah 38:1-39:8**

- Taken at face value, the opening phrase seems to place the events of this chapter near the time of Sennacherib’s invasion in 701 B.C. However, it is probably a general statement referring to some time in the reign of Hezekiah. Thus the events in these chapters are not recorded in their exact order, for Hezekiah’s sickness occurred during the siege (cf. 20:6), and the visit from the Babylonian leaders followed his recovery.
- As Hezekiah lay sick, Isaiah was directed to go and tell him to set his house in order because his illness would be terminal. The announcement

produced great alarm in Hezekiah. After he prayed to God, Isaiah was sent back to him to tell him that God had given him 15 more years of life.

- Hezekiah asked for a confirmatory sign that what Isaiah had said was true. Isaiah asked Hezekiah whether the sun's shadow should go forward or return ten places. Hezekiah reasoned that going backward would be the greater sign, since that would contradict the natural processes. In accordance with Hezekiah's choice, Isaiah prayed to the Lord, and it came to pass.
- The author of Chronicles records that Hezekiah did not fully respond to God's kindness toward him. Rather, he became proud so that God's wrath came on him and his people, a judgment that was averted only when Hezekiah humbled himself and repented (2 Chronicles 32:25-26, 31).
- This part of Hezekiah's life reinforces the instructions of Jesus in Luke 18:1. We should always pray and not faint, for our heavenly Father wishes to bless us. When we look back on our lives, we undoubtedly have many instances of answered prayer. The lessons Hezekiah learned were of tremendous benefit to him during the years of the Assyrian invasion.
- The fame of Hezekiah's healing spread far and wide. Since Merodach-baladan was expelled from Babylon by 710 and did not get back there, except very briefly in 704 or 703, the evidence points very strongly to a date of no later than 711 for the arrival of his envoys at Jerusalem -- subsequent to Hezekiah's illness. This shows that the placement of his sickness after the narrative of Sennacherib's invasion was due, not to chronological sequence, but to a shift of topic, which served some other purpose than a sequential order of events. From this standpoint Isaiah 39 forms an appropriate introduction to the subsequent chapters of Isaiah's prophecy, all of which were probably composed in the reign of Hezekiah's son, Manasseh. Chapter 40 presupposes the Babylonian captivity. The focus of attention is largely diverted from Assyria to the future crisis of Nebuchadnezzar's destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of the Jews.
- As Hezekiah would have told his guests about his miraculous healing and the retreating of the sun's shadow, he went beyond stories to impress them by showing them the vast store of riches contained in the palace. When the Babylonian embassy had left, Isaiah immediately confronted Hezekiah, who was still dazzled by the fact that he could have been so famous in Babylon. He freely told Isaiah all that had transpired. Rather than earning the prophet's commendation, Hezekiah drew his condemnation. Not only would the extent of Jerusalem's wealth now be known and desired by all (cf. Sennacherib's demands in

18:13-16), but one day this same Babylon would invade the land and carry off its populace and all its treasures.

- Born soon after the crisis with Sargon, Manasseh must have seen God's great deliverance at Jerusalem. It would have taken great strength to resist temptation, but Manasseh was reckless and selfish. Upon his father's death, he soon plunged into every manner of spiritual wickedness. All of the idolatry of the past was not only brought back, but was taken to its highest level.
- One can hardly avoid the inference that these forms of idolatry were encouraged for the sake of the sins connected with them. Thus is involved not only religious, but mainly moral degeneracy. Prophets came to warn Judah of their doom, but they went unheeded. It is significant to note that the names of these divine messengers are not mentioned here. In truth, it was a time of martyrdom rather than preaching. Historians may have exaggerated in their accounts, such as Josephus recording that Manasseh killed some of the prophets everyday, and that Manasseh ordered Isaiah to be sawn in two. But the scriptures do record that Manasseh had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood.
- In figurative language, the desolation of Jerusalem would be as complete as that of Samaria and of the house of Ahab -- as it were, a razing to the ground, so that the builder might stretch over it the measuring line and apply the plummet, as if nothing had stood there. However, Manasseh did repent (2 Chronicles 33:11-19). It was not a shallow "fox-hole" conversion, for once back on the throne, he immediately began to repair the damage he had done. He had the longest reign of any Hebrew king, yet he accomplished almost nothing.
- The short reign of Amon was a replay of the earlier period of his father, Manasseh. The author of Kings notes simply that he was as evil as his father and so perpetuated all of Manasseh's earlier idolatry. The author of Chronicles (2 Chronicles 33:21-23) adds that Amon failed to humble himself but rather "increased his guilt." In 640 B.C., the wicked Amon was assassinated by his own officials who, in turn, were executed by the populace.

### ***2 Kings 22:1-23:23; 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:19***

- Because of Josiah's young age, he was probably tutored by godly men who would have informed him that the brightest memories of the royal house of Judah were associated with the names of David, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Uzziah, and Hezekiah, and that the times of greatest national prosperity had been those of faithful and earnest allegiance to God.
- First and foremost in the reign of Josiah was the measures of religious reformation. These comprise the preliminary abolition of idolatry, the repair of the temple, the discovery of the book of the law, and the

national observation of the passover. The main topic in Kings is the religious reformation, while the main topic in Chronicles is the passover observance.

- Nearly 250 years had passed since the former restoration by Joash (2 Kings 12:4-16), and the temple must have suffered greatly under the idolatrous kings, especially during the late reigns of Manasseh and Amon. Because the restoration was along the same lines as the former under Joash, the accounts are similar.
- As with many religious revivals, the religious men around him were convicted about the need of restoration, but not the people. There is substantial confirmation of this fact from the prophets who describe the moral and religious condition of the people, and describe the superficial character of the reformation. Thus we can understand why the changes made could not avert the divine judgment from the nation -- only from their king.
- It was during the extensive repairs in the temple that a discovery was made of the greatest influence on the restoration of the nation. Josiah knew that he and the people had fallen woefully short of God's law. Evidently, everything that Josiah did was motivated more than just a wish to avert punishment. A solemn national "covenant" was made in the temple and the clearing of the land of idolatrous practices and the removal of the non-Levitical priesthood from office took place.

### ***2 Kings 23:29-36; 2 Chronicles 35:20; 36:5***

- Josiah's death at Megiddo can be attributed to his part in the complicated international events of the last quarter of the seventh century B.C. With the death of Ashurbanipal in 626, the already decaying Assyrian Empire began to crumble quickly. By 625 the Chaldean king Nabopolassar had been able to achieve independence for Babylon. From that point onward throughout the course of the next two decades, the Assyrian territory was systematically reduced, especially as Nabopolassar fought against Assyria. In 614 the capital of Assyria, Asshur, fell to the Medes. In 612 Nineveh itself fell to the coalition of Chaldeans, Medes, and Ummanmande, the surviving Assyrian forces under Ashur-u-ballit fleeing to Haran.
- Concerned with the rising power of the new Mesopotamian coalition, Egypt's Pharaoh, Neco, honored the previous diplomatic ties with Assyria. As Neco's predecessor, Psammetik I, had come to the aid of Assyria in 616 B.C., so Neco moved to join the surviving Assyrian forces under Ashur-u-ballit. It was to prevent this movement of Egyptian aid that Josiah deployed his forces in the Valley of Megiddo in 609. That action cost Josiah his life, though it did delay the Egyptian forces from linking with their Assyrian allies before Haran fell to the Chaldeans and

Medes. A subsequent attempt to retake Haran failed completely; and the best Egypt could give the doomed Assyrians was a four-year standoff, the opposing armies facing each other at Carchemish, on the western Euphrates.

- The Chronicler (2 Chronicles 35:20-25) reports that Josiah had refused Neco's attempts to avoid the scene at Megiddo and rather, having disguised himself, had personally fought against the Egyptians until he was mortally wounded. He did not seek the will of the Lord; in fact, he deliberately disobeyed God's will. At that point Josiah was rushed back to Jerusalem where he was buried in his own tomb. Understandably he was lamented by all the people, including the prophet Jeremiah.

### ***2 Kings 24:1-25:30; 2 Chronicles 36:5-23***

- The reign of Jehoiakim was disastrous, and was in effect the beginning of the end. Jehoiakim's government was characterized by violence, oppression, and covetousness. While the land was impoverished, the king indulged in luxury and built magnificent palaces and upgraded towns by forced labor. Furthermore, the reformatory work of Josiah was replaced by a restoration of the former idolatry. As in previous reigns, it was connected with a complete demoralization of the people (Jeremiah 7:9-15; 17:2; 19:4-9; Ezekiel 8:9-18). This not only occurred among the people, but also among the priests and prophets (Jeremiah 23:9-14).
- After the final defeat of the combined Assyrian and Egyptian forces at Carchemish, Nebuchadnezzar overtook the remaining Egyptian forces at Hamath. In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar defeated Jehoiakim and took temple treasures as well as the sons of prominent families, including Daniel, to Babylon (2 Chronicles 36:6-7; Daniel 1:1-3). Although Jehoiakim served Nebuchadnezzar for the next three years, he apparently awaited an opportunity to throw off the Babylonian yoke. When in 601 Neco turned back Nebuchadnezzar's forces at the Egyptian border, Jehoiakim assumed that his moment had arrived and so rebelled.
- In 597 B.C., with his father dead, Jehoiachin was faced with the awesome threat of the advancing armies of Nebuchadnezzar. Certainly he would get no help from Egypt, for Neco was in no position to challenge Nebuchadnezzar again. Nor did the young man have the spiritual maturity to be able to utilize godly wisdom. The armies of Nebuchadnezzar soon arrived and placed Jerusalem under a siege. At the appropriate time, Nebuchadnezzar himself appeared before the besieged city, to whom Jehoiachin, the royal family, and the officials of state made their surrender. Nebuchadnezzar took the rest of the treasures, as well as Jehoiachin and 10,000 of the princes, officers, and

prominent citizens to Babylon. Among those taken captive was the prophet Ezekiel.

- Late in 588 B.C., Zedekiah, like other Judean kings, was lured into the foolish mistake of rebelling against Babylon. There seems little doubt that his decision to do so was related to a renewed confidence in Egypt, on whom Israel and Judah had relied mistakenly so many times before. In 586 B.C. the Babylonians came again. They burned Jerusalem, tore down its walls, put out the eyes of Zedekiah, and carried him in chains to Babylon with 832 captives. Jeremiah (32:4-5; 34:1-7) and Ezekiel (12:13) both prophesied that Zedekiah would not escape. He would see the king of Babylon, but he would not see Babylon itself. All that was left in the land was a remnant of the poorest class of people (Jeremiah 52:28-30). Jeremiah graphically described the destruction of Jerusalem in Lamentations.
- It took the Babylonians a year and a half to subdue Jerusalem (January 15, 588-July 19, 586). In total, it took Nebuchadnezzar 20 years to destroy Jerusalem. He could have done it at first, had he wanted to. But he only wanted tribute. Daniel, whom he took to Babylon at the beginning of the 20 years, soon became Nebuchadnezzar's friend and adviser and may have had a restraining influence on him. In the end, it was Judah's persistence in making an alliance with Egypt that forced Nebuchadnezzar to destroy Jerusalem.
- The captivity of Judah by Babylon had been predicted 100 years before by Isaiah and Micah (Isaiah 39:6; Micah 4:10). Now that it was accomplished, Jeremiah predicted that it would last 70 years (Jeremiah 25:11-12; 29:10-14). Second Chronicles 36:20-21 says that the 70 years of captivity were calculated from the "sabbatical years" of captivity (Leviticus 25:1-7; 26:34; cf. Jeremiah 34:8-22).
- Gedaliah, whose father was a noted official (2 Kings 22:12), was made the Babylonian-designated governor over the newly-formed district. Many of the people went back to Jerusalem to live. Even Jeremiah at first went to Mizpah to assist Gedaliah (Jeremiah 40:6). Trouble soon arose, however, in a conspiracy hatched by Baalis, the Ammonite king (Jeremiah 40:13-15), and a young noble named Ishmael. Ishmael was successful in assassinating Gedaliah (cf. Jeremiah 41:1-3). Although Ishmael was dealt with severely by Johanan ben Kareah, he succeeded in escaping to Ammon (Jeremiah 41:11-15). Because the refugees feared reprisal for Gedaliah's murder, Johanan led a large contingent of them into Egypt, including Jeremiah, whom the fleeing Jews took along despite his warnings (Jeremiah 41:16-43:7). In 581 B.C., five years after the burning of Jerusalem, the Babylonians came again and took 745 more captives (Jeremiah 52:30).

- Nebuchadnezzar burned the cities of Lachish and Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:9; Jeremiah 34:7); massive destruction levels have been found at both cities. At Lachish a broken piece of pottery with writing on it speaks of the cities of Lachish and Azekah (cf. Jeremiah 34:7). In Jerusalem, massive destruction by the Babylonians has been found by Shiloh's excavations in the old City of David and by Nahum Avigad (a defensive tower, ash, and arrowheads) in the Jewish Quarter of the Old City.
- Everything that God had given the Jews was taken from them. This awful siege was but a forerunner of the terrible destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.