

# Old Testament History

Lesson #21

2 Kings 14:23-18:8

## Outline

### I. ***The Late Divided Kingdom (2 Kings 8:16-17:41)***

- A. Jeroboam II of Israel (14:23-29).
- B. Azariah of Judah (15:1-7).
- C. Zechariah of Israel (15:8-12).
- D. Shallum of Israel (15:13-16).
- E. Menahem of Israel (15:17-22).
- F. Pekahiah of Israel (15:23-26).
- G. Pekah of Israel (15:27-31).
- H. Jotham of Judah (15:32-38).
- I. Ahaz of Judah (16:1-20).
- J. Hoshea of Israel (17:1-6).
- K. The fall of Samaria to Assyria (17:7-41).

### II. ***The Final Kings Of Judah (2 Kings 18:1-24:20)***

- A. Hezekiah (18:1-20:21).
  1. Hezekiah's reforms (18:1-8).

## Notes

### ***2 Kings 14:23-29***

- The chapter closes with a brief notice of the 41 year reign of Jeroboam II. The era of Jeroboam and Azariah would mark a significant change in the fortunes of God's people. These would be days of unparalleled prosperity for the two kingdoms, both economically and politically. Indeed, together they would acquire nearly the same territorial areas as in the days of the united monarchy.
- The reign of Jeroboam II was the longest of any Israelite king. Jeroboam's external accomplishments were many. In accordance with an unrecorded prophecy of Jonah, Jeroboam fully restored the borders of Israel so that they extended from the entrance of Hamath (located in the great Beqa Valley amid the Lebanese Mountains south of Hamath) to the Sea of Arabah (or Dead Sea). Apparently even Hamath and Damascus came under Israelite control. Amos (Amos 6:13-14) indicates that the Transjordanian territories were probably also recovered at this time.
- Although his reign was one of almost unprecedented wealth and prosperity, it was also one of deep moral corruption. Amos and Hosea frequently attested to both facts. The people would not be humbled by

judgments, and every mercy extended to them was an occasion for deeper guilt.

- Jeroboam II was the most warlike king and the most successful administrator of all the kings who occupied the throne of Israel. He and his priest at Bethel also persecuted the prophets of the Lord (Amos 7:10-17).
- With this period a new stage of prophecy began. Up to this point the prophets had been mainly God-sent teachers and messengers to their contemporaries -- reproofing, warning, guiding, and encouraging. From this point on, the prophetic horizon enlarges. Beyond their contemporaries who were hardened beyond hope of recovery, their outlook was from then on the great hope of the Messianic kingdom. They were despairing of the present, but their thought is of the future.
- However, it is not that the prophets did not have a message for the present as well. Had it been otherwise, they would not have been prophets to, nor yet understood by, their fellow countrymen. This was also a time of vision and prediction, rather than signs and miracles.
- When Jeroboam II died, he left behind a strong kingdom, but, unfortunately, one whose core foundation was so spiritually rotten that the government would not withstand the rising tides of international intrigue and pressure for very long.
- In 1904, in the layer of ruins belonging to Jeroboam's time, a beautiful jasper seal was found at Megiddo, bearing the inscription, "Belonging to Shema, Servant [i.e., official] of Jeroboam." It was later lost in Istanbul.

### **2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-23**

- Whatever motives had determined the selection of Uzziah by the people of Judah as a successor to his murdered father, the choice proved to be a good one. His spiritual guide was Zechariah (2 Chronicles 26:5); this is not the prophet who ministered to Joash (2 Chronicles 24:17-22).
- Never had the power of Judah sunk lower than when, after the disastrous war with Israel, Uzziah was tributary to Jehoash, and the broken walls of Jerusalem left the city defenseless. This was completely reversed under Uzziah, and at its close Judah not only held the same place as Israel under the former reign, but surpassed it in power and glory. There can be little doubt that Jeroboam II retained the hold over Judah which his father Jehoash had gained; and this, not only during the 15 years after his accession, in which Amaziah of Judah still occupied the throne, but even extended into the beginning of the reign of Uzziah.
- Several reasons exist for such a long reign besides the longevity of the king. First, Israel's perennial enemy, Assyria, was in a state of severe decline. Second, relations between Jeroboam II of Israel and Uzziah

remained cordial so that together the two nations were able to eventually acquire nearly the same territorial area as in the days of the united monarchy. Third, Azariah was noted as a man who well-utilized the spiritual heritage that he had gained from his father.

- The mention of the continued worship at the “high places” indicates a state policy of noninterference with competing religious forms that had been in force since at least the time of Joash. By far the most important undertaking of the reign of Uzziah was the restoration and the fortification of the northern wall of Jerusalem, which had been broken down in the time of Amaziah.
- Times of plenty and ease too often lead to spiritual lethargy. God’s abundant blessings can all too easily be taken for granted and become commonplace. The collective prophetic challenge to repent and return to making God primary in the lives of the Israelites reflects the low spiritual condition of the times.
- Great earthly success is seldom well-managed to spiritual benefit. As with Solomon before him, Uzziah’s successes proved to be his undoing. His great power fostered such pride and arrogance that about 750 B.C. he sought to add to his vast power by usurping the authority of the priesthood (2 Chronicles 26:16-21). Challenged by the priests as he attempted to make an offering at the altar of incense, he was instantly judged by God, who smote him with leprosy. During Uzziah’s last decade, due to his leprosy, his son Jotham was made coregent and public officiator, though doubtless Azariah remained the real power behind the throne. The prophet Isaiah received his call to service in the year that Uzziah died (Isaiah 6:1).

### ***2 Kings 15:8-16:18; 2 Chronicles 27:1-28:27***

- While Judah was enjoying a brief period of prosperity, Israel was rapidly nearing its final overthrow. The deep-seated corruption of the land afforded opportunity for a succession of revolutions, in which one or another political or military monarch occupied the throne for a brief period. In the 13 or 14 years between the death of Jeroboam II and Uzziah, Israel was ruled by four kings, of whom each was toppled by military coups.
- The reign of Menahem lasted ten years, and he did wicked deeds which surpassed the heathen. It was truly the beginning of the end, for with it began the dependence of Israel upon Assyria, of which the ultimate outcome was the fall of Samaria and the deportation of Israel into Assyria.
- Menahem paid tribute to Pul (Tiglath-pileser III), king of Assyria. One of Pul’s inscriptions says, “I received tribute from ... of Menahem of Samaria.” Pul’s inscriptions also mention Pekah and Hoshea of Israel.

- Menahem was succeeded in the kingdom by his son Pekahiah, whose reign only lasted two years. He fell victim to another military coup lead by Pekah, the son of Remaliah, probably one of the captains of the king's bodyguard. The manner in which Pekahiah was killed vividly illustrates the moral condition of the people as described by Hosea (4:1-2).
- This revolution took place in the last year of Uzziah. He was succeeded in Judah by his son Jotham, in the second year of Pekah. Jotham was 25 years old when he ascended the throne, and his reign is said to have lasted 16 years. Whether this period is to be reckoned from his co-regency (2 Kings 15:5; 2 Chronicles 26:21), or from his sole rule, is impossible to determine. The chronology of this time period is filled with difficulties.
- The reign of Jotham was prosperous, and only clouded at its end. Jotham continued the worship of God in the temple, however he wisely did not usurp the functions of the priesthood. The internal condition of the country, its prosperity and wealth, and also its luxury and sins, are portrayed in Isaiah 1-6.
- The 16 year reign of Ahaz was disastrous for Judah. It is difficult to determine whether the idolatry described in 2 Chronicles 28:3-4 occurred at the beginning of Ahaz's reign, or was gradually introduced during its course. It was also during the transition of the reigns of Jotham and Ahaz that Rome was founded, who was destined to execute final judgment on apostate Israel.

### **2 Kings 15:29-16:20**

- Pekah's stormy beginning would characterize his short independent rule. In 734 B.C. Tiglath-pileser III swept out of Assyria on a second western campaign that was to break the anti-Assyrian coalition headed by the Syrian king Rezin and Pekah of Israel. By 732 B.C. the alliance was broken and Damascus had fallen. All the western Fertile Crescent, from the Taurus Mountains on the north to the border of Egypt on the south, lay in Assyrian hands. The Syrian states were divided into five provinces, Israel into three. The battle against Israel centered in Galilee. Pekah's anti-Assyrian policy had brought Israel to the point of extinction.
- The reign of Jotham was a continuation of that of his father, Azariah (Uzziah). Already coregent for at least a decade, political and religious conditions remained largely as they were in Azariah's day; the country's prosperity continued as well (2 Chronicles 27:1-4).
- The account of Ahaz's wicked reign as given by the author of Kings centers around three main subjects: (1) His character (vss. 1-4); (2) his war with Rezin and Pekah (vss. 5-9); and, (3) his further apostasy as

consequence of his reliance on Tiglath-pileser III (vss. 10-18). Because of his reliance on Assyria, Isaiah appeared to him with warnings about the alliance (Isaiah 7-8). It was during these prophecies that the great prophecy of Christ was given (Isaiah 7:14). The knowledge that Ahaz had appealed to Assyria for help induced the kings of Syria and Israel to return to their countries.

- One of Ahaz's achievements was dedicating the Valley of the Son of Hinnom to Baal. Josiah later desecrated that valley and made it a garbage dump, and the term "Ge-Hinnom" ("valley of Hinnom") became "Gehenna" in the Greek, a name for hell.
- There had previously been wars between Israel and Judah; but never one in which Israel had joined themselves to a pagan power for the purpose of overthrowing the house of David, and placing on its throne a Syrian king. It must have awakened great religious and patriotic feelings to see 200,000 Judean women and children driven into Samaria (2 Chronicles 28:8).
- Ahaz sent away to Tiglath-pileser III and hired his deliverance from what seemed certain defeat (cf. 2 Chronicles 28:16, 21). Tiglath-pileser complied all too readily, eventually subduing the Syrians completely, taking Damascus and deporting its inhabitants, and executing Rezin. Israel was spared only through Hoshea's coup and swift submission to Assyria, a takeover that cost Pekah his life.
- After Tiglath-pileser III had secured Damascus, he apparently summoned his new vassals there to receive their tokens of submission, among whom was Ahaz. All of the changes noted in vss. 10-18 not only speaks of Ahaz's corrupt spiritual condition but were probably carried out as an expression of his goodwill toward Tiglath-pileser. Second Chronicles 28:20-27 tells us that this friendship with Assyria led Ahaz into idolatry. Officially nothing offensive to the Assyrian king would henceforth be practiced. Thus did Ahaz go to his reward, clothed, spiritually speaking, in an Assyrian mantle.

### **2 Kings 17:1-41**

- From the seemingly innocuous event of setting up calves in Dan and Bethel to the taking away of the people captive, the Israelites truly proved that if evil goes unchecked, it will progressively get worse (2 Timothy 3:13).
- Hoshea had been granted the throne by the military in a purge that was largely a placating move toward Assyria, for Hoshea had promised to pay tribute to the king of Assyria. An inscription of Tiglath-pileser III says, "Israel [lit., Omri-land] ... all its inhabitants [and] their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king Pekah and I placed Hoshea

as king over them. I received from them 10 talents of gold and 1,000 talents of silver as their tribute and brought them to Assyria.”

- That this was a placating move can be seen in that when the opportunity presented itself, Hoshea quickly attempted to throw off the Assyrian yoke by entering into an anti-Assyrian coalition. That effort, however, failed, a failure that would seal the fate of the northern kingdom. When Tiglath-pileser III died in 727 B.C. and was succeeded by his son Shalmaneser V, the time seemed ripe for some of the states to renounce their vassal status.
- Second Kings 17:2 suggests that Hoshea would have liked to lead the nation into a better way; 2 Chronicles 30:6-11 indicates that he permitted his citizens to share in the “great Passover” called by Hezekiah. But the king had sold himself to Assyria, and it was too late to change. He even revolted against Assyria by refusing to pay the annual tribute and made a secret treaty with Egypt.
- The author rehearses the causes that necessitated the divine punishment. His indictment of Israel begins with a reminder that God alone had released the Israelites from their oppression and bondage in Egypt and had brought them to Canaan. Their historical foundation was essentially a spiritual one. Sad to say, had Israel’s first king, Jeroboam, walked in the ways of the Lord and led his nation to obey the law, the history of Israel would have been different. They had heard preachers like Elijah, Elisha, Amos, Hosea, and Isaiah, yet refused to bow the knee to the Lord. There is no cure for apostasy. All God can do is judge, and then take a believing remnant and start over again.
- Shalmaneser marched quickly into Israel, secured its submission, and imprisoned Hoshea. Subsequently he again invaded the land, devastating it in its entirety, and he placed Samaria under siege in the year 725 B.C. It was a strongly fortified city and did not fall until 722 B.C. The Assyrians took the best citizens to their own land, while dispersing the rest of the surviving inhabitants in Mesopotamia and Media.
- The beginning of the deportation of the northern kingdom by Tiglath-pileser III is recorded in Tiglath-pileser’s inscription: “The people of the land of Omri [i.e., Israel] I deported to Assyria, with their property.” An inscription of Sargon says, “In my first year I captured Samaria. I took captive 27,290 people. People of other lands, who never paid tribute, I settled in Samaria.”
- A historical note is appended to the demise of Israel and her indictment. In accordance with the deportation system used by Tiglath-pileser III and followed by his successors, a vast transplantation of populaces occurred. Israelites were sent to Mesopotamia and beyond; Babylonians

and Syrians were transferred to Israel. This must have taken place many years after the taking of the capital of Israel.

- When the settlers arrived, they faced lions because of their lack of faith, and many of them lost their lives. They immediately suspected that “the god of the land” was punishing them because of their failure to worship him. Therefore, they sent a report to the Assyrian king for some religious leadership. The Assyrian king granted the request. Accordingly, one of Israel’s exiled priests returned to the land and reinstated the worship of the Lord at Bethel, the traditional religious center of the northern kingdom. Thus this Samaritan worship from the onset was syncretistic, an Old Testament “ecumenical” movement. While the various people observed the worship of the Lord, they also continued their own religious practices.
- Despite all that God had done for His people, their thankless, hardened, and apostate hearts had led them into spiritual, moral, and social corruption and thus to their own demise. Israel’s checkered history should have provided a lesson for Judah; unfortunately, it went unheeded.
- Ultimately this cancer of idolatry spread to Judah, and it was taken into captivity. A remnant returned under Ezra and Nehemiah, and the nation began to blossom again. But when God sent Christ to His people, they rejected Him, and once again divine judgment had to fall. In A.D. 70 Jerusalem was destroyed, and the nation scattered across the world. It was simply one more illustration that godless leaders produce godless generations of citizens (vs. 41).

### ***2 Kings 18:1-8; 2 Chronicles 29:1-31:21***

- There is not a more striking instance of divine mercy than Ahaz being succeeded on the throne of Judah by Hezekiah. Hezekiah ascended the throne towards the close of the third year of Hoshea’s reign in Israel. He was therefore a witness of the events which befell Samaria. Hezekiah would feel the power of Assyria even before he came into actual conflict with it.
- The events recorded in the reign of Hezekiah are not in their chronological order, for Hezekiah’s sickness occurred during the siege (20:6), and the visit from the Babylonian leaders followed his recovery.
- Religion was the central principle of his reign and the secret of his success. The first act of his reign was to abolish every kind of idolatry, whether of foreign or domestic origin. In fact, the Bible describes Hezekiah as unequalled in religious earnestness and in conformity to the divine law. It places him on the level of his father David.
- While the writer of Kings concentrates on the political events of Hezekiah’s reign, the author of Chronicles gives supplemental

information as to Hezekiah's continuing reformation. Hezekiah's spiritual concern brought about a cleansing of the temple, thus undoing the evil deeds of Ahaz. This was followed by a reconstruction and rededication of the temple, accomplished with appropriate sacrifices and sincere worship. Hezekiah's further reforms included the reinstating of the Passover. The author of Chronicles tells of later purges and closes with the notice that Hezekiah lived out his life in complete devotion to God and was successful in all that he did.