

flawed but Called



Study Guide

Reflections on the kings of Judah

Summer 2021 – Belle View Church

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Asa – 3rd after Solomon
2 Chronicles 14-16 (1 Kings 15)

For Background: read 2 Chronicles chapters 14, 15 and 16; and read 1 Kings 15:9-24

14:1 And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. Asa his son succeeded him as king, and in his days the country was at peace for ten years.

2 Asa did what was good and right in the eyes of the Lord his God. 3 He removed the foreign altars and the high places, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. 4 He commanded Judah to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, and to obey his laws and commands. 5 He removed the high places and incense altars in every town in Judah, and the kingdom was at peace under him. 6 He built up the fortified cities of Judah, since the land was at peace. No one was at war with him during those years, for the Lord gave him rest.

How would you describe the Bible's initial depiction of Asa's administration?

“High places, sacred stones, Asherah poles...” what do these things represent? What was Asa's attitude towards them?

In your personal reading, did you see other signs of Asa's qualities as King?

9 Zerah the Cushite marched out against them with an army of thousands upon thousands and three hundred chariots, and came as far as Mareshah. 10 Asa went out to meet him, and they took up battle positions in the Valley of Zephathah near Mareshah.

11 Then Asa called to the Lord his God and said, “Lord, there is no one like you to help the powerless against the mighty. Help us, Lord our God, for we rely on you, and in your name we have come against this vast army. Lord, you are our God; do not let mere mortals prevail against you.”

12 The Lord struck down the Cushites before Asa and Judah. The Cushites fled...

Who were the Cushite's? How did their army measure against Judah's army? What do we learn about Asa from this section of Scripture?

2 Chronicles 15 – Asa continued.

15:1 The Spirit of God came on Azariah son of Oded. 2 He went out to meet Asa and said to him, “Listen to me, Asa and all Judah and Benjamin. The Lord is with you when you are with him. If you seek him, he will be found by you, but if you forsake him, he will forsake you.

What is God’s main message through the prophet Azariah? How did Asa receive it (v.8)?

3 For a long time Israel was without the true God, without a priest to teach and without the law.

Why do you think the God included v.15:3 into this record?

Did you receive any indications what conditions were like in Israel (Northern Kingdom)?

9 Then he assembled all Judah and Benjamin and the people from Ephraim, Manasseh and Simeon who had settled among them, for large numbers had come over to him from Israel when they saw that the Lord his God was with him.

10 They assembled at Jerusalem in the third month of the fifteenth year of Asa’s reign. 11 At that time they sacrificed to the Lord seven hundred head of cattle and seven thousand sheep and goats from the plunder they had brought back. 12 They entered into a covenant to seek the Lord, the God of their ancestors, with all their heart and soul. 13 All who would not seek the Lord, the God of Israel, were to be put to death, whether small or great, man or woman. 14 They took an oath to the Lord with loud acclamation, with shouting and with trumpets and horns. 15 All Judah rejoiced about the oath because they had sworn it wholeheartedly. They sought God eagerly, and he was found by them. So the Lord gave them rest on every side.

How would you describe these events in Asa’s reign? What did the people commit to?

16 King Asa also deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down, broke it up and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

Does this verse tell you anything about Asa’s determination?

17 Although he did not remove the high places from Israel, Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life. 18 He brought into the temple of God the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.

19 There was no more war until the thirty-fifth year of Asa's reign.

What do you think these verses mean? Do you see an ongoing problem?

2 Chronicles 16 – Asa continued.

16:1 In the thirty-sixth year of Asa's reign Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa king of Judah.

What do you think this verse is telling us?

2 Asa then took the silver and gold out of the treasuries of the Lord's temple and of his own palace and sent it to Ben-Hadad king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. 3 "Let there be a treaty between me and you," he said, "as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so he will withdraw from me."

Is this a change in Asa's strategy? Is it a good idea or bad idea?

7 At that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah and said to him: "Because you relied on the king of Aram and not on the Lord your God, the army of the king of Aram has escaped from your hand. 8 Were not the Cushites and Libyans a mighty army with great numbers of chariots and horsemen? Yet when you relied on the Lord, he delivered them into your hand. 9 For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. You have done a foolish thing, and from now on you will be at war." 10 Asa was angry with the seer because of this; he was so enraged that he put him in prison. At the same time Asa brutally oppressed some of the people.

What did God say through the prophet and what did Asa do?

11 The events of Asa's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the book of the kings of Judah and Israel. 12 In the thirty-ninth year of his reign Asa was afflicted with a disease in his feet. Though his disease was severe, even in his illness he did not seek help from the Lord, but only from the physicians. 13 Then in the forty-first year of his reign Asa died and rested with his ancestors. 14 They buried him in the tomb that he had cut out for himself in the City of David. They laid him on a bier covered with spices and various blended perfumes, and they made a huge fire in his honor.

How would you describe the last years of Asa's administration versus the beginning?

What do you suppose caused the change?

Are there any other thoughts or observations you would like to make about Asa's reign as King of Judah?

Jehoshaphat – 4th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 17 (1 Kings 22)

For Background: read 2 Chronicles 17 through 20; and read 1 Kings 22

17:1 Jehoshaphat his son succeeded him as king and strengthened himself against Israel. 2 He stationed troops in all the fortified cities of Judah and put garrisons in Judah and in the towns of Ephraim that his father Asa had captured.

3 The Lord was with Jehoshaphat because he followed the ways of his father David before him. He did not consult the Baals 4 but sought the God of his father and followed his commands rather than the practices of Israel. 5 The Lord established the kingdom under his control; and all Judah brought gifts to Jehoshaphat, so that he had great wealth and honor. 6 His heart was devoted to the ways of the Lord; furthermore, he removed the high places and the Asherah poles from Judah.

How would you describe the Bible's initial depiction of Jehoshaphat's administration?

7 In the third year of his reign he sent ... certain Levites ... 9 They taught throughout Judah, taking with them the Book of the Law of the Lord; they went around to all the towns of Judah and taught the people.

10 The fear of the Lord fell on all the kingdoms of the lands surrounding Judah, so that they did not go to war against Jehoshaphat. 11 Some Philistines brought Jehoshaphat gifts and silver as tribute, and the Arabs brought him flocks: seven thousand seven hundred rams and seven thousand seven hundred goats.

12 Jehoshaphat became more and more powerful; he built forts and store cities in Judah

What key factors does the Bible say contributed to Jehoshaphat's success? Is there a modern day equivalent?

2 Chronicles 18 – Jehoshaphat continued.

18:1 Now Jehoshaphat had great wealth and honor, and he allied himself with Ahab by marriage.

Who was Ahab? What does the Bible say about him? What does v.1 say Jehoshaphat did?

2 Some years later he went down to see Ahab in Samaria. Ahab slaughtered many sheep and cattle for him and the people with him and urged him to attack Ramoth Gilead. 3 Ahab king of Israel asked Jehoshaphat king of Judah, "Will you go with me against Ramoth Gilead?"

Jehoshaphat replied, "I am as you are, and my people as your people; we will join you in the war." 4 But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, "First seek the counsel of the Lord."

What is Ahab trying to accomplish? Does Jehoshaphat's reply seem reasonable?

From your personal reading of vv.18:5-27, how would you describe the key events of this story in your own words?

27 Micaiah declared, "If you ever return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me." Then he added, "Mark my words, all you people!"

*28 So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead...
...34 All day long the battle raged, and the king of Israel propped himself up in his chariot facing the Arameans until evening. Then at sunset he died.*

2 Chronicles 19 – Jehoshaphat continued.

19:1 When Jehoshaphat king of Judah returned safely to his palace in Jerusalem, 2 Jehu the seer, the son of Hanani, went out to meet him and said to the king, "Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, the wrath of the Lord is on you. 3 There is, however, some good in you, for you have rid the land of the Asherah poles and have set your heart on seeking God."

How did this escapade turn out? What did God think about it? How did Jehoshaphat react to God's prophet?

4 Jehoshaphat... went out again among the people from Beersheba to the hill country of Ephraim and turned them back to the Lord, the God of their ancestors. 5 He appointed judges in the land, in each of the fortified cities of Judah. 6 He told them, "Consider carefully what you do, because you are not judging for mere mortals but for the Lord... Judge carefully, for with the Lord our God there is no injustice or partiality or bribery."

Some see meaning in the order of these events. Compare vv. 17:9 and 19:5, do you feel this order reflects something meaningful? In what way?

2 Chronicles 20 – Jehoshaphat continued.

1 After this, the Moabites and Ammonites with some of the Meunites came to wage war...

2 Some people came and told Jehoshaphat, "A vast army is coming against you from Edom, from the other side of the Dead Sea. It is already in Hazezon Tamar" (that is, En Gedi). 3 Alarmed, Jehoshaphat resolved to inquire of the Lord, and he proclaimed a fast for all Judah.

An exceptional move by Jehoshaphat! To call for a nationwide fast is not as common in the Bible as it should be. Read this report and list key actions the king took as you see them.

15 He said: "Listen, King Jehoshaphat and all who live in Judah and Jerusalem! This is what the Lord says to you: 'Do not be afraid or discouraged because of this vast army. For the battle is not yours, but God's ... Do not be afraid; do not be discouraged. Go out to face them tomorrow, and the Lord will be with you.'"

The end of this story was telegraphed all along! God wins in remarkable fashion! How would you describe Jehoshaphat's leadership style from this report?

18 Jehoshaphat bowed down with his face to the ground, and all the people of Judah and Jerusalem fell down in worship before the Lord.

20...Jehoshaphat stood and said, "Listen to me, Judah and people of Jerusalem! Have faith in the Lord your God and you will be upheld; have faith in his prophets and you will be successful.

21 After consulting the people, Jehoshaphat appointed men to sing to the Lord...saying: "Give thanks to the Lord, for his love endures forever." (Ps 136)

27 Then, led by Jehoshaphat, all the men of Judah and Jerusalem returned joyfully to Jerusalem

29 The fear of God came on all the surrounding kingdoms when they heard how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel. 30 And the kingdom of Jehoshaphat was at peace, for his God had given him rest on every side.

31 So Jehoshaphat reigned over Judah. He was thirty-five years old when he became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother's name was Azubah daughter of Shilhi. 32 He followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. 33 The high places, however, were not removed, and the people still had not set their hearts on the God of their ancestors.

Jehoshaphat's epitaph is about as good as any king on record...however he was not completely successful. Why do you suppose that was the case?

35 Later, Jehoshaphat king of Judah made an alliance with Ahaziah king of Israel, whose ways were wicked...Eliezer...prophesied against Jehoshaphat, saying, "Because you have made an alliance with Ahaziah, the Lord will destroy what you have made."

The only two marks on Jehoshaphat's career was his making alliances is Israel. What do you think caused him to do that?

Might there have been consequences to this weakness?

2 Chronicles 21:4 When Jehoram established himself firmly over his father's kingdom, he put all his brothers to the sword along with some of the officials of Israel.

Are there any other thoughts or observations you would like to make about Jehoshaphat's reign as King of Judah?

Uzziah – 10th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 26 (2 Kings 15)

Read 2 Chronicles 26 and 2 Kings 15 for background

26:1 Then all the people of Judah took Uzziah, who was sixteen years old, and made him king in place of his father Amaziah. 2 He was the one who rebuilt Elath and restored it to Judah after Amaziah rested with his ancestors.

3 Uzziah was 16 years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-two years. His mother's name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem. 4 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. 5 He sought God during the days of Zechariah, who instructed him in the fear of God. As long as he sought the Lord, God gave him success.

Uzziah had a mentor named Zechariah. He is not any of the other Zechariah's mentioned in the Bible. Still, Scripture tells us that he was very helpful to King Uzziah.

Uzziah was also successful at war and in public works.

8 The Ammonites brought tribute to Uzziah, and his fame spread as far as the border of Egypt, because he had become very powerful.

9 Uzziah built towers in Jerusalem at the Corner Gate, at the Valley Gate and at the angle of the wall, and he fortified them. 10 He also built towers in the wilderness and dug many cisterns, because he had much livestock in the foothills and in the plain. He had people working his fields and vineyards in the hills and in the fertile lands, for he loved the soil.

...His fame spread far and wide, for he was greatly helped until he became powerful.

Do you get the feeling as the reader, you're being set up for a change in direction?

16 But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall. He was unfaithful to the Lord his God, and entered the temple of the Lord to burn incense on the altar of incense.

Why was this a problem?

Why do you think God arranged it so that the king could not be a priest?

17 Azariah the priest with eighty other courageous priests of the Lord followed him in. 18 They confronted King Uzziah and said, “It is not right for you, Uzziah, to burn incense to the Lord. That is for the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who have been consecrated to burn incense. Leave the sanctuary, for you have been unfaithful; and you will not be honored by the Lord God.”

19 Uzziah, who had a censer in his hand ready to burn incense, became angry. While he was raging at the priests in their presence before the incense altar in the Lord’s temple, leprosy broke out on his forehead. 20 When Azariah the chief priest and all the other priests looked at him, they saw that he had leprosy on his forehead, so they hurried him out. Indeed, he himself was eager to leave, because the Lord had afflicted him.

21 King Uzziah had leprosy until the day he died. He lived in a separate house—leprous, and banned from the temple of the Lord. Jotham his son had charge of the palace and governed the people of the land.

22 The other events of Uzziah’s reign, from beginning to end, are recorded by the prophet Isaiah son of Amoz. 23 Uzziah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in a cemetery that belonged to the kings, for people said, “He had leprosy.” And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

Why do you think Uzziah wanted to serve as a priest?

Have you ever felt as if you wanted to do something different, but God wouldn’t allow it?

How do you think all of this affected Jotham, Uzziah’s son?

Are there any other thoughts or observations you would like to make about Uzziah’s reign as King of Judah?

Jotham – 11th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 27 (2 Kings 15)

Jotham is considered one of the entirely good Kings of Judah

1 Jotham was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. His mother's name was Jerusha daughter of Zadok. 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Uzziah had done, but unlike him he did not enter the temple of the Lord. The people, however, continued their corrupt practices. 3 Jotham rebuilt the Upper Gate of the temple of the Lord and did extensive work on the wall at the hill of Ophel. 4 He built towns in the hill country of Judah and forts and towers in the wooded areas.

Who was Jotham's mother? What can you tell about her from this Scripture?

How did Jotham specifically differ from his father? Do you think that is relevant to us?

5 Jotham waged war against the king of the Ammonites and conquered them. That year the Ammonites paid him a hundred talents of silver, ten thousand cors of wheat and ten thousand cors of barley. The Ammonites brought him the same amount also in the second and third years.

6 Jotham grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God.

7 The other events in Jotham's reign, including all his wars and the other things he did, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. 8 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. 9 Jotham rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Ahaz his son succeeded him as king.

2 Chronicles 28:1-2 Ahaz was twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem sixteen years. Unlike David his father, he did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. 2 He followed the ways of the kings of Israel and also made idols for worshiping the Baals.

How did Uzziah and Jotham have such an heir?

Are there any other thoughts or observations you would like to make about Jotham's reign as King of Judah?

Hezekiah – 13th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 29-32 (2 Kings 18-20) Isaiah 36-39

Some scholars say that Hezekiah was the best post-kingdom king in Judah's history. It will bless you to read his accounts in 2 Chronicles and 2 Kings.

1 Hezekiah was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-nine years. His mother's name was Abijah daughter of Zechariah. 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father David had done.

3 In the first month of the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the temple of the Lord and repaired them. 4 He brought in the priests and the Levites, assembled them in the square on the east side 5 and said: "Listen to me, Levites! Consecrate yourselves now and consecrate the temple of the Lord, the God of your ancestors. Remove all defilement from the sanctuary.

Excellent start! Why did Hezekiah have to fix the doors (hint 28:24)

6 Our parents were unfaithful; they did evil in the eyes of the Lord.... They turned their faces away from the Lord's dwelling place and turned their backs on him...9 This is why our fathers have fallen by the sword and why our sons and daughters and our wives are in captivity.

v.6 describes the conditions that Hezekiah grew up with both personally and nationally.

10 Now I intend to make a covenant with the Lord, the God of Israel, so that his fierce anger will turn away from us. 11 My sons, do not be negligent now, for the Lord has chosen you to stand before him and serve him, to minister before him and to burn incense."

To whom was Hezekiah giving this inspirational speech? What does that say about his leadership style and the conditions he inherited?

The following abbreviated section highlights the care they took to get everything right for renewing Temple sacrifices after the reign of evil king Ahaz.

15-36 (truncated) They assembled their fellow Levites and consecrated themselves, then went in to purify the Temple as the king had ordered...finishing on the 16th day of the first month.

They reported to King Hezekiah: "We have purified Temple, the altar of burnt offering with all its utensils, and the table for the consecrated bread. We have consecrated all the articles King Ahaz removed in his unfaithfulness. They are now in front of the Lord's altar."

Early the next morning King Hezekiah gathered the city officials together and went up to the temple of the Lord...and presented ... a sin offering to atone for all Israel...When the offerings were finished, the king and everyone present knelt down and worshiped.

The service of the Temple was reestablished. Hezekiah and all the people rejoiced...

King Hezekiah ordered and financed this entire exercise. What does that say about his devotion? What might it say to us today?

2 Chronicles 30 – Hezekiah continued.

1 Hezekiah sent word to all Israel and Judah and also wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh, inviting them to come to the temple of the Lord in Jerusalem and celebrate the Passover to the Lord, the God of Israel.

Notice who Hezekiah invited, read vv. 5-12 in your personal Bible to get the details.

2 The king and his officials and the whole assembly in Jerusalem decided to celebrate the Passover in the second month. 3 They had not been able to celebrate it at the regular time because not enough priests had consecrated themselves and the people had not assembled in Jerusalem. 4 The plan seemed right both to the king and to the whole assembly.

**Passover was supposed to be the 1st month, was this decision legal? (Numbers 9:10-11)
Read these highlights from Hezekiah's Passover celebration (a.k.a. Unleavened Bread).**

13 A large crowd assembled in Jerusalem to celebrate the Festival of Unleavened Bread in the second month... 15 They slaughtered the Passover lamb on the 14th day of the 2nd month.

21 The Israelites who were present in Jerusalem celebrated the Festival of Unleavened Bread for seven days with great rejoicing, while the Levites and priests praised the Lord every day with resounding instruments dedicated to the Lord...

23 The whole assembly then agreed to celebrate the festival seven more days; so for another seven days they celebrated joyfully. 24 Hezekiah king of Judah provided a thousand bulls and seven thousand sheep and goats for the assembly...

26 There was great joy in Jerusalem, for since the days of Solomon son of David king of Israel there had been nothing like this in Jerusalem.

Why do you think this was such a significant event in the history of the Jews?

2 Chronicles 31 – Hezekiah continued.

1 When all this had ended, the Israelites who were there went out to the towns of Judah, smashed the sacred stones and cut down the Asherah poles. They destroyed the high places and the altars throughout Judah and Benjamin and in Ephraim and Manasseh. After they had destroyed all of them, the Israelites returned to their own towns and to their own property.

Looks like the people ‘caught Hezekiah’s vision’ do you think it will last? Why or why not?

Hezekiah now set out to restore provisions for the Temple. The order of events is noteworthy, below is a truncated selection but if you are led to read the entire account you may do so from your own Bible, verses 2 through 20.

2 Hezekiah assigned the priests and Levites to divisions according to their duties...

3 The king contributed from his own possessions for the morning and evening burnt offerings...

4 He ordered the people living in Jerusalem to give the portion due the priests...

5 As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave...

8 When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the Lord and blessed his people Israel...

9 Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; 10 and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, “Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the Lord has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over.”

11 Hezekiah gave orders to prepare storerooms in the temple of the Lord, and this was done. 12 Then they faithfully brought in the contributions, tithes and dedicated gifts...

20 This is what Hezekiah did throughout Judah, doing what was good and right and faithful before the Lord his God. 21 In everything that he undertook in the service of God’s temple and in obedience to the law and the commands, he sought his God and worked wholeheartedly. And so he prospered.

Do you notice sound logic in Hezekiah’s strategy to renew the Temple giving? How would you describe the order of the steps he took?

2 Chronicles 32 – Hezekiah continued.

This story about Sennacherib threatening Hezekiah and Jerusalem is an inspiring read! I recommend everyone read it for themselves when they can...

1 After all that Hezekiah had so faithfully done, Sennacherib king of Assyria came and invaded Judah. He laid siege to the fortified cities, thinking to conquer them for himself. 2 When Hezekiah saw that Sennacherib had come and that he intended to wage war against Jerusalem, 3 he consulted with his officials and military staff about blocking off the water from the springs outside the city, and they helped him.

This story of Hezekiah channeling water into the city is famous. You can visit Hezekiah's tunnel in Jerusalem today. Was digging a tunnel faithless on Hezekiah's part? Explain...

The record here and in 2 Kings 18 about the details of the siege is remarkable. Notice how Hezekiah and Isaiah respond and what God ultimately does.

20 King Hezekiah and the prophet Isaiah cried out in prayer to heaven about this. 21 And the Lord sent an angel, who annihilated all the fighting men and the commanders and officers in the camp of the Assyrian king. So he withdrew to his own land in disgrace. And when he went into the temple of his god, some of his sons, his own flesh and blood, cut him down with the sword.

22 So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all others. He took care of them on every side. 23 Many brought offerings to Jerusalem for the Lord and valuable gifts for Hezekiah king of Judah. From then on he was highly regarded by all the nations.

Read the record in 2 Kings 19 this is a remarkable turn supported in secular history.

24 In those days Hezekiah became ill and was at the point of death. He prayed to the Lord, who answered him and gave him a miraculous sign. 2 Kings 20 offers more details

Hezekiah was given an additional 15 years of life...what positives and negatives do you think can come from such an event?

25 But Hezekiah's heart was proud and he did not respond to the kindness shown him; therefore the Lord's wrath was on him and on Judah and Jerusalem. 26 Then Hezekiah repented of the pride of his heart, as did the people of Jerusalem; therefore the Lord's wrath did not come on them during the days of Hezekiah.

Hezekiah's pride was judged by God and announced by the prophet Isaiah. You can read more of the record in 2 Kings 20:12-21. What do you think Hezekiah was thinking?

27 Hezekiah had very great wealth and honor, and he made treasuries for his silver and gold and for his precious stones, spices, shields and all kinds of valuables. 28 He also made buildings to store the harvest of grain, new wine and olive oil; and he made stalls for various kinds of cattle, and pens for the flocks. 29 He built villages and acquired great numbers of flocks and herds, for God had given him very great riches.

At the end of the story, Hezekiah is considered one of the best kings in Judah's history. Don't overlook Isaiah's writing during this same period. How do you judge Hezekiah next to other kings of Judah? How do you judge Hezekiah next to David and Solomon?

Are there any other thoughts or observations you would like to make about Hezekiah's reign as King of Judah?

Manasseh – 14th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 33 (2 Kings 21)

As good as Hezekiah was, Manasseh was evil. Verse 2 says much of what needs to be said about his administration. Ironically, it could have been the longest in Israel's history.

1 Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem fifty-five years. 2 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites.

3 He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had demolished; he erected altars to the Baals and made Asherah poles. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. 4 He built altars in the temple of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, "My Name will remain in Jerusalem forever." 5 In both courts of the temple of the Lord, he built altars to all the starry hosts.

How can this be? Such a good king in Hezekiah and his son so evil? Some scholars see a relationship with the fact that Manasseh was born during Hezekiah's 'bonus years' what do you think? Do you think his age is a mitigating factor?

6 He sacrificed his children in the fire in the Valley of Ben Hinnom...

This was something the Canaanites did, sacrificed their children to the fake god Moloch.

7 He took the image he had made and put it in God's temple...

9 Manasseh led Judah and the people of Jerusalem astray, so that they did more evil than the nations the Lord had destroyed before the Israelites.

He did evil and led the people to do evil. Does it seem to you that the people are turning away from God rather quickly? Why do you think that is?

10 The Lord spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they paid no attention. 11 So the Lord brought against them the army commanders of the king of Assyria, who took Manasseh prisoner, put a hook in his nose, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.

We could end the story here and it would make perfect sense. Yet, God has a better idea...

12 In his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his ancestors. 13 And when he prayed to him, the Lord was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord is God.

What do you think about God’s mercy? Manasseh certainly doesn’t deserve it! What message does this send to the rest of humanity?

14 Afterward he rebuilt the outer wall of the City of David, west of the Gihon spring in the valley, as far as the entrance of the Fish Gate and encircling the hill of Ophel; he also made it much higher. He stationed military commanders in all the fortified cities in Judah.

15 He got rid of the foreign gods and removed the image from the temple of the Lord, as well as all the altars he had built on the temple hill and in Jerusalem; and he threw them out of the city. 16 Then he restored the altar of the Lord and sacrificed fellowship offerings and thank offerings on it, and told Judah to serve the Lord, the God of Israel.

It's all good, yes? Manasseh repents and all is forgiven. All of the evil he did is in the past...

17 The people, however, continued to sacrifice at the high places, but only to the Lord their God.

Oops! What does this say about the consequences of sin even after repentance and forgiveness?

Extra Credit

18 The other events of Manasseh’s reign, including his prayer to his God and the words the seers spoke to him in the name of the Lord, the God of Israel, are written in the annals of the kings of Israel. 19 His prayer and how God was moved by his entreaty, as well as all his sins and unfaithfulness, and the sites where he built high places and set up Asherah poles and idols before he humbled himself—all these are written in the records of the seers. 20 Manasseh rested with his ancestors and was buried in his palace. And Amon his son succeeded him as king.

Any thoughts on who the “seers” are?

Do you have other thoughts or observations about Manasseh, King of Judah?

Josiah – 16th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 34-35 (2 Kings 22-23)

Josiah was a ‘rock-star king’ and much beloved by his people.

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem thirty-one years. 2 He did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of his father David, not turning aside to the right or to the left.

3 In the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David. In his twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles and idols. 4 Under his direction the altars of the Baals were torn down; he cut to pieces the incense altars that were above them, and smashed the Asherah poles and the idols.

A true reformer! Are you more impressed by his age? Have you seen similar young leaders in other walks of life?

8 In the eighteenth year of Josiah’s reign, to purify the land and the temple, he sent Shaphan son of Azaliah and Maaseiah the ruler of the city, with Joah son of Joahaz, the recorder, to repair the temple of the Lord his God. 9 They went to Hilkiah the high priest and gave him the money that had been brought into the temple of God ...11 They also gave money to the carpenters and builders to purchase dressed stone, and timber for joists and beams for the buildings that the kings of Judah had allowed to fall into ruin.

12 The workers labored faithfully.

All of this disrepair took place over 50 (+/-) years. Despite Manasseh’s repentance and Amon’s short reign, why do you think things got so bad so quickly?

14 While they were bringing out the money that had been taken into the temple of the Lord, Hilkiah the priest found the Book of the Law of the Lord that had been given through Moses.

We don’t know which ‘Law’ Hilkiah found, tradition says it was part of Deuteronomy.

15 Hilkiah said to Shaphan the secretary, “I have found the Book of the Law in the temple of the Lord.” He gave it to Shaphan....18 Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, “Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.” And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king.

19 When the king heard the words of the Law, he tore his robes. 20 He gave these orders...21 “Go and inquire of the Lord for me and for the remnant in Israel and Judah about what is written in this book that has been found. Great is the Lord’s anger that is poured out on us because those who have gone before us have not kept the word of the Lord...”

22 Hilkiyah went to speak to the prophet Huldah, who was the wife of Shallum son of Tokhath. She lived in Jerusalem, in the New Quarter.

Josiah heard Scripture for the first time! His ancestors were evil and ignored or destroyed all the scrolls they could find. The prophet gives a fearful and inspiring message of God's judgment for forsaking His law, but God continues to promise Josiah that he will not see that day because he was faithful. Can you imagine not having any Bible at all?

...So they took her answer back to the king.

29 Then the king called together all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem. 30 He went up to the temple of the Lord with the people of Judah, the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the priests and the Levites—all the people from the least to the greatest. He read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant, which had been found in the temple of the Lord. 31 The king stood by his pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the Lord—to follow the Lord and keep his commands, statutes and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, and to obey the words of the covenant written in this book.

32 Then he had everyone in Jerusalem and Benjamin pledge themselves to it; the people of Jerusalem did this in accordance with the covenant of God, the God of their ancestors.

33 Josiah removed all the detestable idols from all the territory belonging to the Israelites, and he had all who were present in Israel serve the Lord their God. As long as he lived, they did not fail to follow the Lord, the God of their ancestors.

Does it appear to you as if Josiah wasted any time gathering the people after he heard the Word of God? Could there be a message for us in Josiah's example? Explain?

2 Chronicles 35 – Josiah continued.

Josiah celebrates a wonderful Feast of Unleavened Bread and Passover. Something that hadn't been done since his great grandfather Hezekiah. It's an inspiring read.

1 Josiah celebrated the Passover to the Lord in Jerusalem. The Passover lamb was slaughtered on the 14th day of the 1st month....19 This was celebrated in the eighteenth year of Josiah's reign.

After Passover, Josiah gets involved in a dubious exchange that proves disastrous...

20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Necho king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah marched out to meet him in battle. 21 But Necho sent

messengers to him, saying, “What quarrel is there, king of Judah, between you and me? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you.”

22 Josiah, however, would not turn away from him, but disguised himself to engage him in battle. He would not listen to what Necho had said at God’s command but went to fight him...

23 Archers shot King Josiah, and...his chariot brought him to Jerusalem, where he died.

There are a number of curiosities about this event:

Why did Josiah insist on fighting the king of Egypt?

The king of Egypt claimed he was on a mission from God...what do you think?

The Bible mentions twice that God instructed Necho...what are your thoughts?

Josiah was the last good king of Judah before the Babylonian Exile. Do you have any further observations or questions regarding Josiah’s reign that you’d like to share?

Final Four 17th through 20th after Solomon
2 Chronicles 36 (2 Kings 23-25)

1 And the people of the land took Jehoahaz son of Josiah and made him king in Jerusalem in place of his father.

Jehoahaz King of Judah

2 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. 3 The king of Egypt dethroned him in Jerusalem and imposed on Judah a levy of a hundred talents of silver and a talent of gold. 4 The king of Egypt made Eliakim, a brother of Jehoahaz, king over Judah and Jerusalem and changed Eliakim's name to Jehoiakim. But Necho took Eliakim's brother Jehoahaz and carried him off to Egypt.

Jehoiakim King of Judah

5 Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord his God. 6 Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon attacked him and bound him with bronze shackles to take him to Babylon. 7 Nebuchadnezzar also took to Babylon articles from the temple of the Lord and put them in his temple there.

8 The other events of Jehoiakim's reign, the detestable things he did and all that was found against him, are written in the book of the kings of Israel and Judah. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.

This was the first exile (605) when Daniel was taken. Other notes about Jehoiakim:

Jehoiachin King of Judah

9 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months and ten days. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. 10 In the spring, King Nebuchadnezzar sent for him and brought him to Babylon, together with articles of value from the temple of the Lord, and he made Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, king over Judah and Jerusalem.

This was the second exile (597) when Ezekiel was taken. Other notes about Jehoiachin:

Zedekiah King of Judah

11 Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. 12 He did evil in the eyes of the Lord his God and did not humble himself before Jeremiah the prophet, who spoke the word of the Lord. 13 He also rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar, who had made him take an oath in God's name. He became stiff-necked and hardened his heart and would not turn to the Lord, the God of Israel. 14 Furthermore, all the leaders of the priests and the people became more and more unfaithful, following all the detestable practices of the nations and defiling the temple of the Lord, which he had consecrated in Jerusalem.

Read also Jeremiah 39. Do you have other questions or observations about Zedekiah?

The Fall of Jerusalem

15 The Lord, the God of their ancestors, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. 16 But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of the Lord was aroused against his people and there was no remedy. 17 He brought up against them the king of the Babylonians,[g] who killed their young men with the sword in the sanctuary, and did not spare young men or young women, the elderly or the infirm. God gave them all into the hands of Nebuchadnezzar. 18 He carried to Babylon all the articles from the temple of God, both large and small, and the treasures of the Lord's temple and the treasures of the king and his officials. 19 They set fire to God's temple and broke down the wall of Jerusalem; they burned all the palaces and destroyed everything of value there.

20 He carried into exile to Babylon the remnant, who escaped from the sword, and they became servants to him and his successors until the kingdom of Persia came to power. 21 The land enjoyed its sabbath rests; all the time of its desolation it rested, until the seventy years were completed in fulfillment of the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah.

22 In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, in order to fulfill the word of the Lord spoken by Jeremiah, the Lord moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia to make a proclamation throughout his realm and also to put it in writing:

23 "This is what Cyrus king of Persia says:

"The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Any of his people among you may go up, and may the Lord their God be with them."

Notes

Appendix

Divided Kingdom									
Judah					Israel				
Years	King	Start / End	Prophet	Scripture	Years	King	Start / End	Prophet	Scripture
931 - 913	Rehoboam (Son)	Evil / Evil	Shemaiah	1 Ki 12, 14 2 Ch 10-12	931 - 910	Jeroboam I (servant)	Evil / Evil	Ahijah	1 Ki 12-14 2 Ch 10
913 - 911	Abijah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 15 2 Ch 13					
911 - 870	Asa (Son)	Good/Good	Hanani	1 Ki 15 2 Ch 14-16	910 - 909	Nadab (son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 15
					909 - 886	Baasha	Evil / Evil	Jehu	1 Ki 16
					886 - 885	Elah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 16
					885	Zimri (Captain)	Evil / Evil	Micaiah	1 Ki 16
					885 - 874	Omri (Captain)	Evil / Evil	Elijah 1 Ki 17-19 1 Ki 21 2 Ki 1-2	1 Ki 16
870 - 848	Jehoshaphat (Son)	Good/Good		1 Ki 22 2 Ch 17-20	874 - 853	Ahab (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 17 2 Ch 18
848 - 841	Jehoram (Son)	Evil / Evil	Obadiah(?)	2 Ki 8 2 Ch 21	853 - 852	Ahaziah (Son)	Evil / Evil		1 Ki 22 2 Ki 1
841	Ahaziah (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 8-9 2 Ch 22	852 - 841	Joram (Son of Ahab)	Evil / Evil	Elisha 1 Ki 19 2 Ki 2-9 2 Ki 13	2 Ki 3
841 - 835	Athaliah (mother)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 11 2 Ch 22-23	841 - 814	Jehu (Captain)	Good / Evil		2 Ki 9-10
835 - 796	Joash (son of Ahaziah)	Good / Evil	Joel	2 Ki 11-12 2 Ch 23-24	814 - 798	Jehoahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 13
796 - 767	Amaziah (son)	Good / Evil		2 Ki 14 2 Ch 25	798 - 782	Jehoash (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 13-14
767 - 740	Uzziah aka Azariah (Son)	Good/Evil	Isaiah Micah	2 Ki 15 2 Ch 26	782 - 753	Jeroboam II (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 14
					753 - 752	Zechariah (Son)	Evil / Evil	Amos Hosea	2 Ki 15
					752	Shallum	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
					752 - 742	Menahem	Evil / Evil	Jonah (2 Kings 14:25; Jonah 1:1)	2 Ki 15
748 - 732	Jotham (Son)	Good/Good		2 Ki 15 2 Ch 27	742 - 740	Pekahiah (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
732 - 716	Ahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 16 2 Ch 28 Is 7	742 - 740	Pekah (Captain)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 15
716 - 687	Hezekiah (Son)	Good/Good		2 Ki 18-20 2 Ch 29-32 Is 36-39	732 - 722	Hoshea	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 17
687 - 642	Manasseh (Son)	Evil / Good		2 Ki 21 2 Ch 33	Israel into Assyrian captivity - 722 BC				
642 - 640	Amon (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 21 2 Ch 33					
640 - 608	Josiah (Son)	Good/Good		2 Ki 22-23 2 Ch 34-35					
608	Jehoahaz (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 23 2 Ch 36					
608 - 597	Jehoiakim (Son of Josiah)	Evil / Evil	Habakkuk Zephaniah Jeremiah Ezekiel (Lamentations)	2 Ki 23-24 2 Ch 36					
597	Jehoiachin (Son)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 24-25 2 Ch 36					
597 - 586	Zedekiah (Son of Josiah)	Evil / Evil		2 Ki 24-25 2 Ch 36					
Judah into Babylonian captivity - 586 BC									
586-450			Jeremiah Haggai Zechariah Malachi						
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