



DAILY
B I B L E G U I D E

The Book of II Kings

Days 116-124 of a Yearly Bible Reading Program

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Daily Bible Reading Plan

Day	Passage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Day 116	II Kings 1-3	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 117	II Kings 4-6	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 118	II Kings 7-9	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 119	II Kings 10-12	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 120	II Kings 13-15	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 121	II Kings 16-17	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 122	II Kings 18-19	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 123	II Kings 20-22	<input type="checkbox"/>
Day 124	II Kings 23-25	<input type="checkbox"/>

Welcome to the Book of II Kings!

The book of II (second) Kings continues the narrative from I Kings. We will see the decline and fall of both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms to foreign powers.

A few quick facts about II Kings:

- Possibly written by Jeremiah
- It covers from the reign of Ahab's son Ahaziah over Israel in 897 B.C. to events after the Babylonian conquest of Judah in 586 B.C.
- The key verse is 21:14-15, where God says, "And I will forsake the remnant of mine inheritance, and deliver them into the hand of their enemies; and they shall become a prey and a spoil to all their enemies; Because they have done *that which was evil* in my sight, and have provoked me to anger, since the day their fathers came forth out of Egypt, even unto this day. "
- A brief outline:
 - The decline and fall of Israel (Northern Kingdom) – Chapters 1-17
 - The decline and fall of Judah (Southern Kingdom) – Chapters 18-25
- Key events:
 - Fall of Israel to Assyria – Chapter 17
 - Fall of Judah to Babylon – Chapter 25

Chapter 1 Notes

In this chapter Ahaziah faces off with Elijah.

vs. 1-8 – The growing weakness of the Northern kingdom is seen in their defeat to the Syrians and the revolt of Moab. Ahaziah had a terrible fall that severely injured him. He sent to the Philistine city of Ekron to enquire of the false god Baalzebub (“fly-lord”) regarding his recovery. God sends Elijah to intercept these messengers and tells them about the message from the Lord that Ahaziah will die. When the messengers return too soon, Ahaziah questions them and finds out it was Elijah the prophet that had sent them back.

vs. 9-18 - Three times Ahaziah sends to bring Elijah to the king. The first two times Elijah calls down fire from heaven that killed the men. The third time a group came their leader begged for mercy from the prophet. God told Elijah to go with this group. Elijah tells the king the message that he will die. So died Ahaziah, but he left no son. His brother Jehoram (yes, we have two kings ruling with the same name) took the throne next.

Chapter 2 Notes

In this Elijah is taken to heaven in the fiery chariot.

vs. 1-14 – Elisha follows Elijah from Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to Jordan. Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah's spirit, likely referring to the law of inheritance for the firstborn (Deuteronomy 21:17). This would mark him as Elijah's successor. Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire that was born on a whirlwind. Elisha tears his own clothes in sorrow before picking up the fallen mantle of his master. He performs his first miracle when he returns to the Jordan and it parts when he hits it with Elijah's mantle. "My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof." This is Elisha describing how important Elijah had been to Israel. It was not the nation's military might, but the power of the prophet that had helped strengthen the nation.

vs. 15-25 - The sons of the prophets appear and wish to seek Elijah, but he is gone. At Jericho he heals a bitter spring by casting a cruse of salt into it. On his way to Bethel, he is mocked by some children, and two she-bears attack them. These were not necessarily infants or tiny children because the word can be used for people 20-30 years old. Likely they were teenage boys.

Chapter 3 Notes

In this chapter the two kingdoms unite to attack Moab and Edom

vs. 1-3 – Jehoram (“whom Jehovah has exalted”). He was not a good king by any stretch but was an improvement in some ways from Ahab and Ahaziah in that he seems to have rejected the idol worship of Baal and restored the corrupted worship established by Jeroboam.

vs. 4-20 – When the kingdom divided, the client states of Moab and Edom were divided also. Judah controlled Edom, and Israel controlled Moab. Sensing weakness after the death of Ahab and his defeat at the hands of the Syrian, Moab rebels under the leadership of Mesha (“freedom”). An alliance of the kings of Israel (Jehoram), Judah (Jehoshaphat), and Edom (an unnamed client king, I Kings 22:47) gather their troops and sweep around south into Edom to attack Moab from an unexpected direction. The combined armies find themselves in arid territory without water. At Jehoshaphat’s insistence, the prophet Elisha is brought in. Elisha’s spirit is stirred in agitation at the presence of the wicked Jehoram, and even though he would prophesy for Jehoshaphat he was in no state to do so. The direction from God is to fill the dry valley with ditches. Water would come sweeping through the valley without warning and fill these prepared retainers with the much-needed water. This appears to have occurred by rain pouring higher in the hills that gathered and flowed swiftly through the valley. This phenomenon is not unheard of still today, but the fact the prophet knew it was coming and they prepared to catch the water was the truly miraculous part of this.

vs. 21-27 – The timing of the miracle is even more astounding when we see that it timed with the arrival of the Moabite army. The Moabites see the sun reflecting off the pools of water and think that it is blood from a fight between the three kings. They are not expecting any resistance when they approach the camp and are driven from the field. The land of Moab is razed by the allied armies. Not only are the armies defeated, but the resources of the land are broken and destroyed. The final refuge for the Moabites was the fortified town of Kirharaseth (“brick fortress”). Mesha attempts to flee with 700 soldiers but is unable to break through the siege. Verse 27 has caused some discussion. Whose “eldest son”. Some say the king of the Edomites, but this seems unlikely since that is an appointed position (I Kings 22:47) and would likely harden the resolve of the attackers. Some point to Amos 2:1 as proof that it was the Edomite’s son, but Amos refers to a “king” and the burning of his “bones” which sounds like a different event. The best explanation is that it was the son of Mesha, king of Moab. He is offering up a human sacrifice of his own son to his god. The

powerful effect of this sacrifice is either in its display of resolve to fight on or in its presumed power as a sacrifice.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 116

One thing that catches my attention in today's reading is the near seamless transition in leadership from Elijah to Elisha. The only smoother transition in Scripture may be from Moses to Joshua. Elijah was brave and bold, Elisha was more reserved. Elisha will end up performing twice as many recorded miracles as Elijah, though most are not as spectacular as Elijah's. Two different men, two different personalities, one God using them mightily. Often we place far too much emphasis on the man and not the God using him. There was only one Elijah, and there was only one Elisha. God used both. God's work is not dependent on one particular leader. If a ministry is so dependent on a man for success, it is likely not built on God's power.

Hymn for Day 116

For our hymn today we will have another wonderful spiritual, "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot". Researchers believe it was composed by Wallace Willis and his daughter Minerva who lived near Hugo, Oklahoma, in the late 1860's. It looks forward to the peace and rest in heaven when we, like Elijah, are taken from this world.

Refrain:

*Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home.
Swing low, sweet chariot,
Coming for to carry me home.*

*1. I looked over Jordan, and what did I see?
Coming for to carry me home?
A band of angels, coming after me,
Coming for to carry me home.*

*2. If you get there before I do,
Coming for to carry me home,
Tell all my friends I'm coming too,
Coming for to carry me home.*

*3. I'm sometimes up and sometimes down,
Coming for to carry me home,
But still my soul feels heavenly bound,
Coming for to carry me home.*

Chapter 4 Notes

In this chapter, Elisha ministers to the needs of the sons of the prophets and other faithful friends.

vs. 1-7 – A widow of one of the sons of the prophets is in distress over a debt that must be repaid. The creditor is prepared to exercise his right to take her sons into bond service to pay the debt (see Leviticus 25:39-42). The oil itself was that type used for hygiene, not high enough quality for food. While there seems to be nothing untoward about the debt, it is a great reminder of the dangers of debt.

vs. 8-17 – Shunem (“double resting-place”) was a village a few miles north of Jezreel on the southwestern side of Mount Moreh. As Elisha travelled by this village a wealthy woman moved to bless the prophet. She had an addition added to their home to give him a room to stay in when he travelled through. This room was furnished with not just a bed but also a table and chair so that the prophet could stay and work. Note vs. 13 where Elisha says that he has the power to speak to the king and general on behalf of the woman. The place of the prophets has elevated significantly. God rewards the kindness paid to Elisha by giving the woman a son.

vs. 18-37 – Chronologically there may be a jump in time here. The story and others are likely placed here thematically as the miracles of Elisha are grouped together. Most commentators believe that the unnamed son suffered a sun stroke. The woman travels around 20 miles to reach Elisha at Carmel. Elisha’s servant Gehazi (“valley of vision”) is sent ahead but the boy is dead. Gehazi has not the spiritual power to help. Elisha somewhat follows the example of Elijah’s raising of the widow’s son at Zarephath.

vs. 38-41 – One of the sons of the prophets makes a mistake and puts a dangerous gourd into their pottage. The type of gourd that was used in the poisonous pottage was likely the *Citrullus colocynthis*, which is known by many names including colocynth, bitter apple, or bitter cucumber. Elisha has them put flour into the pottage and it is made wholesome. While adding flour might make a small difference in the bitter flavor, this transformation is truly miraculous.

vs. 42-44 – A man brings a gift of barley cakes and grain to the school of the prophets. It is not enough to feed all the students, but God miraculously multiplies the gift to meet the need.

Chapter 5 Notes

In this chapter the Syrian general Naaman is cured of his leprosy.

vs. 1-7 – This event is also further along chronologically but placed here thematically. Reese dates it to 875 B.C. See II Kings 10:29-33 for probable setting. Evidently lepers were not the societal outcasts in Syria as they were in Israel. Naaman (“pleasantness”) maintains his position as general in the Syrian army. Carroll thinks that he had gained favor in defending against Assyrian incursions. The gift that is sent with Naaman is 10 talents of silver (\$220,635), 6,000 shekels of gold (\$4,032,340), and ten changes of clothes. The king of Israel is unnamed but is perhaps Jehu. This would make sense that he does not know of Elisha since he has not had experience with him.

vs. 8-14 – Whatever Naaman’s expectations were (and they would have pluralistic and pagan), nothing about the encounter goes the way Naaman expects. Elisha communicates with him through a messenger. No dramatic miracle. Just a command to go and dip in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman finally submits to the command after his servants intercede.

vs. 15-27 – The request for soil in vs. 17 was probably intended to be used as an altar or shrine when Naaman returned home. Though Elisha refused any payment or honor for aiding Naaman, Gehazi’s greed causes him to chase after Naaman and take a reward dishonestly. Gehazi received two garments and two talents of silver. For his greed and dishonesty, Gehazi receives Naaman’s leprosy as judgement.

Chapter 6 Notes

In this chapter the Syrian threat grows and Samaria is besieged.

vs. 1-7 – The school of the prophets was growing, and a new location was planned. The students went out to cut lumber, and in the process a borrowed axe head flew off its handle and landed in the river. The need is highlighted in that it was borrowed. We have already seen that these sons of the prophets were not wealthy by any stretch. In all likelihood the one that lost the axe head would have to work off his debt in replacing the cost of it. As so often happens with Biblical miracles, a “sign” element is used that is not the cause of the miracle. The bitter waters of Mara could have been cleansed without tossing a tree into them, but God added a human element to the miracle (Exodus 15:25). So here, where Elijah casts in a stick, not to fetch the axe head but to draw attention to the miracle that was about to take place. The axe head was not caught; it swam up and was able to be retrieved.

vs. 8-23 – The Syrians are at war with Israel again. Multiple times Jehoram was delivered from Syrian attacks by warning from the prophet. The Syrian king sends a great force at night to capture Elisha at Dothan (“two wells”). The next morning the town awoke to find themselves surrounded by the Syrian forces. Elisha’s servant (Gehazi?) panicked and ran to his master with the news. Elisha prayed that the servant’s eyes to be opened, and then he saw the angelic forces that had the Syrians surrounded. God was in control and Psalm 34:7 was proven true. Elisha leads the blinded Syrians into Samaria, some ten miles away. King Jehoram wanted very much to kill the prisoners. Instead, Elisha told him to “kill them with kindness” by feeding them and letting them go. This humiliating loss by the Syrians caused them to stop sending raiding parties into Israel. As we will see in the next section, the next invasion would be massive.

vs. 24-33 - Benhadad II returns with his mighty army and besieges Samaria. It was a time of famine, so food was scarce to begin with. As the siege wore on, food became extremely scarce. The head of a donkey – the least desirable part of the least desirable animal – was sold for 80 shekels, or \$668.³⁷ A quarter of a cab (roughly 1 cup) of “dove’s dung” sold for 5 shekels, or \$42 (I do believe that is literally what it is not and some plant that would have been impossible to forage when under siege). Jehoram finally breaks down when he hears two women discussing eating their own babies. Jehoram blames Elisha and God for their misfortune and pledges to kill the prophet. God warns Elisha of the king’s plan. The messenger that was sent is halted at the door until the king arrives. The last words of vs. 33 appear to be the king’s words, even if delivered from the messenger. He blames God for

what is happening and says he cannot wait any longer for God to move. The story continues in the next chapter.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 117

One of the fascinating aspects of the ministries of Elijah and Elisha is their involvement with the training of other prophets. Many believe that Samuel was the founder of this training system, whose students are often called “sons of the prophets”. It shows a great emphasis was placed on the training of God’s prophets. Yes, prophets could arise from anywhere at any time. God can certainly work that way. But God so often calls men and women to tasks that they must prepare themselves for through discipline and study. We should never dismiss the importance of such preparation.

Hymn for Day 117

Our hymn today is “Unseen By Then a Glorious Host” by Thomas MacKellar, first published in 1889. It is inspired by the unseen angels that Elisha revealed to his servant and bids us to rest in God’s care.

*Unseen by them, a glorious host
About God's people stand:
The heavenly watchers hold the post
At his supreme command.*

*There is no child of God too high
To need their constant care,
And none too deep in poverty
Their daily help to share.*

*When loved ones go, and earth is lone,
As if no friend were near,
Then unseen angels from the throne
Bring helpful words of cheer.*

*The sun of hope breaks through our gloom,
And wondering whence it came,
We start, like Mary at the tomb
When Jesus call'd her name.*

*Say, who can snatch from God away
His blood-redeemed ones?
And who the heavenward course can stay
Of God Almighty's sons*

Chapter 7 Notes

In this chapter, God miraculously delivers Samaria as Elijah predicted.

vs. 1-20 – Elijah declares that the siege will be lifted, and food will be abundant again. He proclaims that one seah (7 quarts) of fine flour and two seahs (14 quarts) of barley be sold for one shekel, or roughly \$8.34.42. A doubting aristocrat is told that he will see it happen but will not taste it. Outside the city gate, four lepers make a desperate move to seek mercy from the Syrians. As they leave at dusk to go to the camp, God makes the Syrians hear an approaching army. The Syrians flee for their lives, and the lepers find the camp empty. When the lepers return with the news, scouts are sent out to verify. The doubting aristocrat is killed in the stampede of people rushing out to find food in the abandoned camp.

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Chapter 8 Notes

In this chapter the evil influence of Athaliah is introduced into the Kingdom of Judah.

vs. 1-6 – I think that this famine was during the final years of the of Jehoram's reign (~885 B.C.?) and the king here is Jehu. God arranged it so that the woman's request was made just as Gehazi was telling the king their story. The king is moved to grant her request and restore her property.

vs. 7-15 – Elisha travels to Damascus where Benhadad II is sick. Hazael ("whom God sees") is sent to inquire of Elisha if he will recover. Elisha tells that Benhadad will recover but that Hazael will become king. He also prophesies about the atrocities that Hazael will commit as king. Hazael takes matters into his own hands and assassinates Benhadad.

vs. 16-24 – Yes, we have a Jehoram/Joram on the throne of Israel and a Jehoram/Joram on the throne of Judah. Two different kings, same name. This Jehoram was not a good king and walked in the ways of the wicked Ahab and not those of his good father, Jehoshaphat. Jehoram weakened Judah. Edom revolted and could not be quelled. Libnah, an independent city-state near Philistia, also rebelled. One of his wives is Athaliah ("afflicted of the Lord"), daughter of Ahab, king of Israel. This marriage was presumably made to solidify the alliance between the houses of Omri and Jehoshaphat. Jehoram died after a reign of only eight years and was succeeded by his son Ahaziah ("sustained by the Lord"). He appears to have been a co-regent for the first years of his reign (vs. 16).

vs. 25-29 - Ahaziah's mother is Athaliah, who undoubtedly had a major influence on the boy. He was not a good king and followed the wicked pattern of Ahab. He will meet his end while visiting his cousin, king Joram of Israel, who is recuperating from a battle wound at Jezreel. There are huge debates over reconciling II Kings 8:26 and II Chronicles 22:2 concerning the age of Ahaziah when he took the throne. My theory is that Ahaziah was 22 years old when he became a prince/coregent, possibly with connections to the Northern Kingdom. Ahaziah was 42 years old when he became king of Judah. The writer of II Kings chose to include the time as prince/coregent, and the writer of II Chronicles did not. If you are interested, I have an article where I explain this conclusion:
<https://www.baptistbasics.org/2023/10/14/was-ahaziah-22-or-42/>

Chapter 9 Notes

In this chapter Jehu sweeps onto the scene and ends the house of Omri's rule over Israel.

vs. 1-13 – The armies of Israel were still at the disputed Ramothgilead. There like a whirlwind one of the prophets arrives and anoints Jehu (“Jehovah is he”), general of the army, to be the new king over Israel. Like a tornado he sweeps through the nation of Israel and changes everything in his path. Jehu's commission is to end the house of Omri/Ahab. The soldiers of the army hail him as the new king.

vs. 14-26 - Jehu knows Jehoram is at Jezreel. He speeds his way there before his target can be warned of his coming. Messengers are sent out, but they join his band. Finally, the two kings (Jehoram and Ahaziah) rode out to meet him, still not sure of what is happening. Jehu kills Jehoram with an arrow through his heart while Ahaziah flees. Jehu's lieutenant Bidkar (“son of stabbing, i.e, one who stabs”) takes the body of the king and throws it in the vineyard that was formerly Naboth's, completing the prophecy of I Kings 21:19. Jehu sends his men after Ahaziah, who is killed while trying to flee. Ahaziah is given a decent burial at Jerusalem.

vs. 27-37 - When Jehu arrives at Jezreel to deal with Jezebel, she calls out, “Had Zimri peace, who slew his master?”. This taunt about the ill-fated usurper in II Kings 16:15-20 was meant to dissuade him in his quest, but there was no stopping Jehu. He calls out for an ally in the city and some servants respond. They cast Jezebel from the wall or possibly a tower. Jehu and his men run their horses over her body then celebrate within the city. When they came later to bury the body, only her skull, feet, and hands remained because the dogs had eaten her corpse. Thus was the prophecy fulfilled of I Kings 21:23.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 118

While much of the focus has been on stemming the decline of the Northern Kingdom through the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, the Southern Kingdom is now in dreadful trouble. The close ties between the families of Jehoshaphat and Ahab will almost destroy Judah and end the Davidic line. While it may have seemed like a good idea for the two kingdoms to start to reunite, what happens is the poison of idolatry is injected into Judah through Jezebel's daughter Athaliah. It is dire warning for us today. Unity for unity's sake rarely improves the situation. For Christians, we must focus more on fidelity than fraternity in our partnerships and relationships. Otherwise we will be dragged down by those whose hearts are not as pure as our own.

Hymn for Day 118

Our hymn today is "The Successful Resolve" by Edmund Jones, a Baptist pastor who introduced singing into his church in 1759. This hymn appears in John Rippon's 1787 A Selection of Hymns. It is in part inspired by the resolve of the lepers in 7:3-5.

*Come, humble sinner, in whose breast,
A thousand thoughts revolve,
Come, with your guilt and fear oppressed,
And make this last resolve.*

*I'll go to Jesus, though my sin
Like mountains round me close;
I know His courts, I'll enter in,
Whatever may oppose.*

*Prostrate I'll lie before His throne,
And there my guilt confess,
I'll tell Him, I'm a wretch undone,
Without His sovereign grace.*

*I'll to the gracious King approach,
Whose scepter pardon gives;
Perhaps he command my touch,
And then the suppliant lives.*

*Perhaps He will admit my plea,
Perhaps will hear my prayer;
But, if I perish, I will pray,
And perish only there.*

*I can but perish if I go;
I am resolved to try;
But if I stay away, I know
I must forever die.*

*But, if I die with mercy sought,
When I the King have tried,
This were to die (delightful thought!)
As sinner never died.*

Chapter 10 Notes

In this chapter Jehu reigns over Israel and destroys Ahab's descendants.

vs. 1-17 – Jehu defies the remnants of Ahab's house to come and battle him for the kingdom. All are afraid the man who just killed two kings. At his word 70 of Ahab's house are beheaded (vs. 7). He cleans house at Jezreel (vs. 11). He catches 42 relatives of Ahaziah and has them killed (vs. 14). At Samaria he hunted down and killed any that remained. As he heads toward Samaria, he brings Jehonadab ("whom Jehovah impels") into his chariot and makes an alliance with him. Jehonadab is a Rechabite, a branch of the nomadic Kenites, who seems to be faithful to God and established a legacy of faithfulness (Jeremiah 35).

vs. 18-27 – Jehu tricks the Baal worshippers and priests into gathering for a sacrifice. Once they are all gathered, he has his soldiers slaughter them. He destroys the idol and building and erects a latrine or sewer on the site.

vs. 28-36 - While Jehu did well in annihilating the house of Ahab and destroying Baal worship, he did not reestablish true worship. He continued in the corrupted practices of Jeroboam. God honored his completing his assigned tasks concerning Ahab and Baal (though not necessarily his methods, see Hosea 1:4), but Jehu did not serve God with his heart. He was a weaker king than those that came before him, and Syria began to take more territory from Israel. Archaeologists have found the "Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III" which has a depiction of Jehu paying tribute to the Assyrian king. After a reign of 28 years, his son Jehoahaz ("whom the Lord sustains") took the throne.

Chapter 11 Notes

In this chapter Athaliah seizes control of Judah and almost extinguishes the line of David.

vs. 1-3 – Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, and the granddaughter of Omri. She continues their wicked legacy. For the first time, someone who is not of the lineage of David sits on the throne of Judah. For the first time a queen reigns over the Jews. Her brief reign of six years could have destroyed the nation. But God had other plans. Jehosheba (“Jehovah's oath”), sister of the deceased Ahaziah, saves the infant Jehoash (“given by the Lord”) from being executed. He is hidden away in the Temple under the care of High Priest Jehoiada (“Jehovah knows”).

vs. 4-12 – After six years of hiding, Jehoiada orchestrates the coronation of seven-year-old Jehoash. Under heavy guard he is proclaimed king in the Temple.

vs. 13-16 – As the people shouted, “God save the king!”, Athaliah shouted, “Treason! Treason!” She is captured and executed near the palace.

vs. 17-21 - Jehoiada acts as regent while Jehoash is young. He led a great revival that sought to undo the paganization of the land under Athaliah.

Chapter 12 Notes

In this chapter with the reign of Jehoash and his repair of the Temple.

vs. 1-3 – Jehoash was a good king but had two faults: (1) he was faithful while under the influence of Jehoiada and (2) he did not fully restore united worship.

vs. 4-16 – In 854 B.C., Jehoash begins to repair and renovate the temple for the first since its completion in 1004 B.C. There was a delay of some years since Jehoash commanded the work to be done and its inception. It appears any money that was given for the special project was either used for other purposes or possibly stolen. The solution comes when a special chest is constructed for offerings. All the donations were carefully secured and spent on the repair work on the building.

vs. 17-18 – The Syrians are on the move again. They have been attacking Philistia and now turn towards Jerusalem. Jehoash bribes Hazael to leave by giving him the spoils of the palace and Temple.

vs. 19-21 - Jehoash's latter reign is covered more fully in Chronicles, but he was not the same man as he was when Jehoiada the priest was alive (II Chronicles 24:15-12). Jehoash is slain by two of his servants and his son Amaziah ("the strength of the Lord") takes the throne.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 119

God in His great mercy sometimes grants the opportunity to begin anew. Such was the case when Jehu rose to power and eradicated the evil house of Omri. The problem we run into is that we often do not completely seize the opportunity to truly make things right. Just like Jehu, we make things better but not completely right. How often do we fall short when settle or “better” or “adequate” instead of driving to full victory?

Hymn for Day 119

Our hymn today is “Rapturous Anticipation” by Charles Wesley. Its opening verse echoes Jehu’s call to Rechab in 10:15, bringing like-minded souls together. Here is it Christians uniting in worship of God.

*Come let us ascend,
My companion and friend,
To a taste of the banquet above!
If thy heart be as mine,
If for Jesus it pine,
Come up in the chariot of love.*

*Who in Jesus confide,
They are bold to outride
The storms of affliction beneath!
With the prophet they soar
To that heavenly shore,
And out-fly all the arrows of death.*

*By faith we are come
To our permanent home:
By hope we the rapture improve:
By love we still rise,
And look down on the skies,
For the heaven of heavens is love.*

*Who on earth can conceive
How happy we live
In the city of God, the great King?
What a concert of praise,
When our Jesus's grace,
The whole heavenly company sing?*

*What a rapturous song
When the glorify'd throng
In the spirit of harmony join?
Join all the glad choirs,
Hearts, voices and lyres,
And the burden is mercy divine.*

*Hallelujah they cry
To the King of the sky,
To the great everlasting I AM;
To the Lamb who was slain,
And liveth again,
Hallelujah to God and the Lamb.*

*The Lamb on the throne,
Lo! he dwells with his own,
And to rivers of pleasure he leads;
With his mercy's full blaze,
With the sight of his face,
Our beatify'd spirits he feeds.*

*Our foreheads proclaim
His ineffable name;
Our bodies his glory display:
A day without night
We feast in his sight,
And eternity seems as a day!*

Chapter 13 Notes

In this chapter Elisha's ministry ends as Syria presses on Israel.

vs. 1-9 – Jehoahaz, the new king of Israel, followed in the ways of Jehu and Jeroboam. He was not a good king and did not seek the Lord on his own. He reigned 17 years. However, when the Syrians under Hazael continued to menace the kingdom, then Jehoahaz did seek after the Lord (vs. 4). Since Jeroboam is still mentioned, this was not full repentance to return to proper worship but a heartfelt attempt at repentance using Jeroboam's system of religion. But God did answer Jehoahaz and sent a "savior" (vs. 5). This appears to be a military leader that brought them some relief. It is most likely his son Jehoash (see 13:25).

vs. 10-13 – Jehoash continues the pattern of kings of Israel in not following the Lord and continuing the ways of Jeroboam. He reigns sixteen years. His son, Jeroboam II, succeeds him.

vs. 14-21 – Elisha's parting message is to encourage king Jehoash in his battles against the Syrians. He does so with an object lesson using a bow and arrows. The king lacks the zeal to smite the ground multiple times, and God grants him victories only for the three times he smote the ground. An interesting story occurs after the death of Elisha. A dead soldier is cast into Elisha's tomb as the Moabites raided the land. As soon as the corpse touched the bones of Elisha it returned to life.

vs. 22-25 - God judged Israel through these Syrian conquests. Note vs. 23, in that God would not destroy Israel in order to keep His covenant with Abraham. Benhadad III becomes king of Syria after the death of Hazael. Jehoash is able to reclaim their lost territory from him. The Tell al-Rimah stela from the Assyrian ruler Adad-nirari III mentions a "Jehoash the Samarian". The accounts of this ruler's victories show the weakening of the Syrians at the time.

Chapter 14 Notes

In this chapter war breaks out between Judah and Israel.

vs. 1-6 – Amaziah starts well in following the ways of God like his father did in his better days. He has the assassins of his father killed, and in doing so took care to follow the Law (Deuteronomy 24:16). He reigns twenty-nine years total.

vs. 7 - Amaziah led a campaign to subdue Edom and bring it back under Judean control. This is treated in much more detail in II Chronicles 25.

vs. 8-14 – Amaziah is overconfident after his victories against Edom and proposes a war with Israel. Jehoash responds with a parable. In it, the thistle is Amaziah and the cedar is Jehoash. The jest of it is that Amaziah was nothing and would be trampled like a weed. The armies meet at Bethshemesh (“house of the sun”) on the border of Judah and Israel. The battle was a complete disaster for Amaziah and Judah. They are routed from the field and the king is captured. Israel breaks down the 600 feet of the wall around Jerusalem and spoils the city. Perhaps Amaziah ransomed himself with these spoils.

vs. 15-16 – These verses review the information from 13:13

vs. 17-22 – Amaziah falls prey to a conspiracy and is killed at Lachish. His son Azariah (“whom the Lord helps”), a.k.a. Uzziah (“strength of Jehovah”), succeeds him.

vs. 23-29 - Jeroboam II continues in the path of his father Jehoash in strengthening the Northern Kingdom and retaking captured lands. Note the appearance of the prophet Jonah in vs. 25.

Chapter 15 Notes

In this chapter the stable reign of Azariah over Judah and a series of unstable rulers over Israel.

vs. 1-7 – Azariah/Uzziah was a good king that reigned for 52 years over Judah. We will deal further with him when we get into II Chronicles, where it goes into more detail about how he became a leper. He was succeeded by his son, Jotham (“Jehovah is upright”).

vs. 8-12 – There appears to be an interregnum period in Israel of about 12 years between the death of Jeroboam II and ascension of Zachariah, perhaps showing a succession crisis that was slow to resolve. Zachariah was publicly assassinated after a reign of only six months. His death ends Jehu’s dynasty in its fourth generation from its founder, fulfilling the prophecy of II Kings 10:30. Zachariah is succeeded by his assassin, Shallum (“retribution”).

vs. 13-15 – The assassin Shallum is in turn assassinated by Menahem (“comforter”).

vs. 16-22 – Menahem begins his reign by attacking the city of Tirzah that refused to submit to him. We must also note the arrival, and first historical appearance in Scripture, of the Assyrian empire. Historians identify this as the Neo-Assyrian Empire. Be careful not to mix up the Syrian and Assyrian empires. In English these names are similar, but they are two distinct kingdoms. Both are descended from Shem (Genesis 10:22) through Aram (Syria) and Asshur (Assyria). Syria was a regional kingdom around the capital of Damascus. Assyria was a far stronger and more expansive empire centered around the original capital of Asshur. The Assyrian king Pul (“lord”) is generally accepted to be Tiglath-Pileser III, the king who led the resurgence of the Assyrian power. The Assyrians were given a tribute/bribe to leave that was 1,000 talents (\$26,407,417), equal to 3,000,000 shekels. It appears that Menahem put this burden on wealthy individuals in the land, at 50 shekels (a weight that is called a mina) a piece. Thus, there would have been 60,000 men so taxed. This in part proves the testimony of the prophets that the Northern Kingdom was very prosperous and wealthy at this time. Menahem was succeeded by his son Pekahiah (“whose eyes Jehovah opened”).

vs. 23-26 – Pekahiah was yet another wicked king on the throne of Israel. He reigned only two years before being assassinated by Pekah (“open-eyed”).

vs. 27-31 – Pekah is yet another wicked king over Israel. We will look at an expedition Pekah made with Syria against Judah in the next chapter. Tiglath-Pileser III and the Assyrians take large portions of the Northern Kingdom’s territory. The towns and areas in vs. 29 are around

the Sea of Galilee and in the Trans-Jordan. Pekah was assassinated and succeeded by Hoshea (“salvation”), who was a friend of Pekah’s according to Josephus.

vs. 32-38 - Jotham was a good king for Judah, following the pattern of Uzziah in his better days. He was succeeded by his son Ahaz (“possessor”).

Devotional Thoughts for Day 120

I find Elisha's interaction with Joash while on his death bed to be one of the strangest in the Scripture. Why shot an arrow? Why smite the ground with arrows? The object lessons are clearly explained, for which I am very thankful. Why did Joash only smiting with the arrows three times have any meaning? I think because it reveals something of his character. He was obedient to the command, doing just enough without doing extra. This would be a fatal flaw on the battlefield, as demonstrated hundreds of times in history when generals failed to follow through on their victories and crush their enemies. It is the same principle we see in the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14-30, where faithfulness in small affairs is rewarded with greater responsibilities. The truest tests of our character are the small things, not the major things.

Hymn for Day 120

Our hymn today, "There's A Wideness in God's Mercy", by Frederick Faber, reflects the display of God's grace seen in 13:23.

*There's a wideness in God's mercy
like the wideness of the sea;
there's a kindness in His justice
which is more than liberty.*

*There is welcome for the sinner,
and more graces for the good;
there is mercy with the Savior;
there is healing in His blood.*

*For the love of God is broader
than the measure of our mind;
and the heart of the Eternal
is most wonderfully kind.*

*If our love were but more simple,
we would take Him at His word,
and our lives would be illumined
by the presence of our Lord.*

Chapter 16 Notes

In this chapter we have the wicked rule of Ahaz over Judah.

vs. 1-4 – Ahaz breaks from his father and grandfather in becoming a wicked king over Judah that turned from the Lord.

vs. 5-9 – Ahaz faced a combined threat of Israel and Syria. The Syrians took the port of Elath (“a grove”) on the northern tip of the gulf of Aqaba. Ahaz makes an alliance with Assyria to come to his aid by sending them tribute of the treasures of the Temple and palace. The Assyrians conquer the Syrians and Damascus and kill their king.

vs. 10-18 – We saw in vs. 3-4 that Ahaz was himself a pagan. He uses his royal power to remodel the Temple and its services according to pagan practices. He constructs a new altar on the design of one in Damascus. He removes the base of the brazen laver (possibly to use the metal in this remodeling project). He corrupts the practices of the Temple by adding pagan practices from the kingdoms he admired.

vs. 19-20 - Ahaz passes and his son Hezekiah (“the might of Jehovah”) takes the throne of Judah.

Chapter 17 Notes

In this chapter Assyria conquers the Northern Kingdom of Israel.

vs. 1-4 – Hoshea took the throne after another interregnum period of 8 or 9 years. Shalmaneser V of Assyria demanded tribute from Hoshea and Israel, but Hoshea stopped the tribute payments and sought an alliance with Egypt.

vs. 5-23 – The sad end of the Kingdom of Israel. In response to Hoshea's rebellious acts, Shalmaneser V conquers the land and besieges Samaria. Samaria falls in 721 B.C. after a three-year siege. Hoshea appears to have been killed (see Hosea 10:7). God makes it clear the reason for the fall of the Northern Kingdom is because of their rebellion against Him.

vs. 24-41 – This section explains the origins of the Samaritans we read about in the New Testament. That Assyrians famously resettled their conquered foes in new areas to control them. The new settlers they brought into Israel. These would intermarry with the remaining Jews, creating a hybrid culture mixing paganism with truth.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 121

God's judgement against Israel was severe but it was not without warning. There are multiple warnings about the nation being defeated and dispersed in the Law (e.g., Leviticus 26:32-33, Deuteronomy 4:25-28). There are multiple prophets that warned that judgment was coming (e.g., Hosea 13:16, Amos 5:27). God gave His people plenty of chances to repent, yet they refused and faced judgment to purge them from their sins. I believe God still works that way with us. We cannot point to God and accuse Him of not warning us about the consequences of our actions. Sadly, often we are like ancient Israel in closing our eyes to the warning signs God sends until He lays us flat on our backs to make us look up to Him.

Hymn for Day 121

Our hymn today is "O Worship the King", written by Robert Grant in 1833. I have chosen this hymn because it echoes the lesson Israel failed in the closing verses of Chapter 17 – to worship and obey the mighty God that had so wonderfully treated His people.

*O worship the King all-glorious above,
O gratefully sing his power and his love:
our shield and defender, the Ancient of Days,
pavilioned in splendor and girded with praise.*

*O tell of his might and sing of his grace,
whose robe is the light, whose canopy space.
His chariots of wrath the deep thunderclouds form,
and dark is his path on the wings of the storm.*

*Your bountiful care, what tongue can recite?
It breathes in the air, it shines in the light;
it streams from the hills, it descends to the plain,
and sweetly distills in the dew and the rain.*

*Frail children of dust, and feeble as frail,
in you do we trust, nor find you to fail.
Your mercies, how tender, how firm to the end,
our Maker, Defender, Redeemer, and Friend!*

*O measureless Might, unchangeable Love,
whom angels delight to worship above!
Your ransomed creation, with glory ablaze,
in true adoration shall sing to your praise!*

Chapter 18 Notes

In this chapter we have the rise of Hezekiah and his relations with Assyria.

vs. 1-8 – Hezekiah was a good king, to be ranked among the very best that reigned over Israel. He did much to restore true worship and to expand the authority of his kingdom. We will see in greater detail in II Chronicles of his religious reforms. Part of his purging of idolatry was the destruction of Moses’s brazen serpent that they worshipped and called Nehushtan (“a thing of brass”).

vs. 9-12 – The fall of Israel is repeated as time marker in the reign of Hezekiah.

vs. 13-37 - The Assyrian king Sennacherib (“sin, the moon, increases brothers”) sets his sights on Judah, likely because of Hezekiah’s rebellion against him (vs. 7). Sennacherib exacts tribute of 300 talents of silver (\$8,023,567) and 30 talents of gold (\$64,443,475.20). Hezekiah is forced to spoil the palace and Temple of their riches in order to meet the demand. Sennacherib is not satisfied. He is marching south against Egypt and wants to eliminate any threat behind him. He sends three military ambassadors to demand complete surrender. Hezekiah responds to Sennacherib sending three envoys by sending his own three envoys. Had he responded himself it would have shown his subservience to the Assyrian king. Rabshakeh addresses the people of Jerusalem in the Hebrew tongue. He gives six arguments for the surrender of Jerusalem: (1) Egypt could not be trusted to help – vs. 21, (2) Hezekiah had removed their idols – vs. 22, (3) the Assyrian might – vs. 23-24, (4) claim of Jehovah’s blessing upon the Assyrian endeavor – vs. 25, (5) surrender would lead to prospering in captivity – vs. 31-32, and (6) Jehovah would not deliver them just as the gods of their neighbors had also failed – vs. 33-35.

Chapter 19 Notes

In this chapter God delivers Hezekiah and Judah from the Assyrian threat.

vs. 1-7 – Hezekiah humbles himself and seeks the Lord. The prophet Isaiah is sought who declares that God will deliver Judah from the Assyrians.

vs. 8-13 – Sennacherib is forced to change tactics with a new threat rising in Tirhakah of Ethiopia. He sends a threatening letter to Hezekiah to press him to surrender so he can focus on this new threat.

vs. 14-19 – Hezekiah literally lays out his problem before the Lord by taking the letter to the Temple to pray for guidance and aid.

vs. 20-34 – Isaiah prophesies of the deliverance of Jerusalem and the downfall of Sennacherib.

vs. 35-37 – The death of 185,000 Assyrians in vs. 35 is a common target of skeptics. II Chronicles does not give number but Isaiah 37:36 does, adding credibility to the account. The Greek historian Herodotus wrote about an infestation of mice in the Assyrian camp, leading some to believe it was bubonic plague behind the death. Sennacherib's own monuments are strangely silent regarding what happened, pointing to a potential coverup. The defeat, which the Bible is honestly the best explanation for, so weakened Assyria that it was over ten years before they made another military campaign into the Holy Land. Sennacherib himself died around that same time.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 122

It is part of the human experience that the highest highs are often followed by a plunge into the depths of depression. Elijah had utterly humiliated and defeated the prophets of Baal, but the threat of Jezebel sent him running for his life. Note God's care for his weary prophet. He provides food and rest. Then he provides a fellow laborer in Elisha, and the work continued on. It is a comfort to know that God does not dispose of us when we grow tired or depressed. He is patiently restores us and continues to use us.

Hymn for Day 122

Our hymn today, "Tis So Sweet To Trust In Jesus", was written by Louisa M. R. Stead in 1882. It echoes the trust that Hezekiah's trust in God that is displayed in 18:5-6.

*Tis so sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to take Him at His Word;
Just to rest upon His promise,
And to know, "Thus saith the Lord!"*

*Refrain:
Jesus, Jesus, how I trust Him!
How I've proved Him o'er and o'er;
Jesus, Jesus, precious Jesus!
Oh, for grace to trust Him more!*

*Oh, how sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just to trust His cleansing blood;
And in simple faith to plunge me
'Neath the healing, cleansing flood!*

*Yes, 'tis sweet to trust in Jesus,
Just from sin and self to cease;
Just from Jesus simply taking
Life and rest, and joy and peace.*

*I'm so glad I learned to trust Thee,
Precious Jesus, Savior, Friend;
And I know that Thou art with me,
Wilt be with me to the end.*

Chapter 20 Notes

In this chapter Hezekiah is healed of a deadly illness and makes a tragic mistake.

vs. 1-11 – There is evidence that the events of this chapter take place before the troubles with Sennacherib in chapters 18 and 19. The promise of 20:6 points to a future deliverance that must be that just covered. Also, Hezekiah is able to show off the wealth of his kingdom that he would have given as tribute to the Assyrians. This illness seems to have been a check on Hezekiah's growing pride (compare to II Chronicles 32:25). The use of a sundial is interesting to note. This is the only Biblical appearance of one, and some instead wish to explain it not as a sundial but as a series of steps. However, the sundials of various designs were known to exist in during this time. Since it is attributed to Ahaz, we might assume he copied something he saw in Damascus (see 16:10). Regardless of its actual design, it is obvious that it was a means of calculating time through the movement of shadows.

vs. 12-19 - Berodachbaladin, king of Babylon and known to history as Marduk-apla-iddina I, heard of the miraculous recovery of Hezekiah and sent envoys to meet him. Isaiah confronts him for revealing the wealth of the kingdom and says that the Babylonians will one day come and conquer Judah.

vs. 20-21 - Hezekiah passes and his son Manasseh ("forgetting") takes the throne.

Chapter 21 Notes

In this chapter we have the terrible reigns of Manasseh and Amon.

vs. 1-9 – Manasseh had the longest reign of any Jewish monarch – 55 years – and is generally considered the worst of the kings over Judah or Israel. Some think that he was coregent with Hezekiah for around ten years, but it is disputed. The drastic difference between the son and his father seems to me to indicate that there was no overlap in their rules. All progress that Hezekiah had made in restoring true worship was lost. Idolatry multiplied and prevailed. The Temple was desecrated. Judah sunk to its lowest levels in these decades.

vs. 10-16 – Manasseh’s plunge into depravity was not without warnings against his actions. God sent the prophets to bear witness against the wickedness of the day. Sadly, Manasseh did not heed them. Josephus writes that “he barbarously slew all the righteous men that were among the Hebrews; nor would he spare the prophets, for he every day slew some of them, till Jerusalem was overflown with blood.” Tradition says that Isaiah was sawn in half during this bloody purge.

vs. 17-18 - Manasseh passes and his son Amon (“builder”) takes the throne.

vs. 19-26 - Amon followed in the evil ways of his father before him, perhaps even acceding them (II Chronicles 33:23). Rabbinical writings suggest the sins of his grandfather Ahaz grew worse in his father Manasseh and even worse in Ahaz. His brief reign of two years comes to an end when he is assassinated in his palace. These conspirators were put to death and Amon’s son Josiah (“whom Jehovah heals”) was placed on the throne.

Chapter 22 Notes

In this chapter Josiah repairs the Temple and rediscovers the Law of Moses.

vs. 1-2 – Josiah was the prophesied ruler of I Kings 13:2 and the last good king of Judah.

vs. 3-7 - In the eighteenth year of his reign (623 B.C.), Josiah begins to rebuild the neglected and desecrated Temple. This is the first recorded repairs since the days of Jehoash in 825 B.C. (II Kings 12:5).

vs. 8-11 - In the process of rebuilding the Temple, a copy of the Law is discovered. It had been gone for so long that Shaphan the scribe merely mentions its discovery after a financial report. When it is read before the king, Josiah immediately rends his clothes as a sign of repentance and mourning.

vs. 12-20 - Fearing the wrath of the Lord upon their sins, the prophetess Huldah (“weasel”) is sought to discern the Lord’s will for them. God’s justice would surely be administered in the future, but for now Josiah’s humility would stay the judgment until after his death.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 123

It is hard to imagine that the Jewish priests and Levites had somehow misplaced the Law of Moses, but it happened! Of course, considering the reigns of some of the evil kings before it may not be surprising that it was hidden away. We so easily take for granted having the Word of God in our possession. We may also forget it, if only in our hearts and minds. Stay in the Word, hide it in your heart, and keep it always before you.

Hymn for Day 123

Today's hymn is "Oh, For That Tenderness of Heart" by Charles Wesley. It displays the heart of repentance seen in Josiah when he encountered God's word.

*O for that tenderness of heart
Which bows before the Lord,
Acknowledges how just thou art,
And trembles at thy word!*

*O for those humble contrite tears
Which from repentance flow,
That consciousness of guilt, which fears
The long suspended blow!*

*Saviour, to me in pity give
The sensible distress,
The pledge thou wilt at last receive,
And bid me die in peace!*

*Wilt from the dreadful day remove
Before the evil come,
My spirit hide with saints above,
My body in the tomb.*

Chapter 23 Notes

In this chapter Josiah leads Judah in a final time of revival before its destruction.

vs. 1-20 – After being exposed to the Law in the previous chapter, Josiah sets to work with a series of reform initiatives in the nation. He has the Law read to the people who once again covenanted themselves to follow it. The pagan corruption is cast out of the Temple and the country is swept clean of idolatry. He even destroys Jeroboam's altar at Bethel, fulfilling the prophecy of I Kings 13:2.

vs. 21-23 – II Chronicles 35 gives a fuller account of this celebration of the Passover.

vs. 24-30 - Josiah's reign was one of the high points of the kingdom of Judah. It is regrettable that such a great revival should come so late into the life of the kingdom. The accumulated sins were too great and the depravity of the people too deep, so that the only hope for true restoration was through the refining fires of judgment. Sadly, it seems much of his reform work had made only superficial changes to the nation and did not bring about true repentance. Josiah is killed trying to prevent the Egyptian army from marching to the relief of Assyria, who was losing ground to the rising power of Babylon. Josiah is succeeded by his son Jehoahaz ("whom the Lord sustains"), who is also called Shallum ("retribution").

vs. 31-35 – Jehoahaz has a brief reign of only three months. Jehoahaz is deposed when Necho II returns to Egypt from his battle against the Babylonian forces. He is taken prisoner back to Egypt. Necho places the kingdom under a tribute of 100 talents of silver (\$2,674,521) and 1 talent of gold (\$2,148,062). He places Jehoahaz's brother Eliakim ("raised up by God") on the throne and changed his name to Jehoiakim ("whom Jehovah sets up") was placed on the throne.

vs. 36-37 - Jehoiakim was yet another wicked king and his reign lasted for eleven years.

Chapter 24 Notes

In this chapter Babylon begins to assert its power over Judah.

vs. 1-7 – Jehoiakim saw his kingdom conquered by Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar II. Nebuchadnezzar had taken much of Egypt's territory since defeating them at the Battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Other regional powers seize the opportunity to also attack the weakened Judah. No details are given in Scripture concerning his death, but Josephus writes that the Babylonians attacked Jerusalem, killed the king, threw his body off the walls, and made his son Jehoiachin ("whom Jehovah has appointed") king.

vs. 8-9 – We have another instance where two ages are given for the beginning of a reign. In II Kings 24:8 Jehoiachin is said to be eighteen while in II Chronicles 36:9 he is said to be eight. This can easily be explained, like that supposed discrepancy in Ahaziah's age, in that he began to rule as a crown prince at age eight but took the throne at age eighteen. His father's reign of eleven years would support this since both could have been given their respective titles at the same time.

vs. 10-17 – Nebuchadnezzar returns to Jerusalem to besiege it. King Jehoiachin submits quickly. The royal house and the "best and brightest" of the land are taken to Babylon as captives. The Temple is spoiled of its remaining treasures. Nebuchadnezzar places Jehoiachin's uncle Mattaniah ("gift of Jehovah") on the throne but changes his name to Zedekiah ("justice of Jehovah").

vs. 18-20 - Zedekiah proved to be yet another wicked king. It is through him that God facilitated the downfall of Judah and Jerusalem.

Chapter 25 Notes

In this chapter Judah falls and the 70-year Babylonian Captivity begins.

vs. 1-21 – Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon according to Jeremiah 52:3. Babylon responds by besieging Jerusalem for 18 months. The city falls in 586 B.C. when its food runs out. Zedekiah is captured near Jericho after attempting a desperate escape from the falling city. He is taken prison to Nebuchadnezzar's campaign headquarters at Riblah ("fruitful"), a city north of Damascus. The last thing he sees is his sons executed before his eyes are put out. Jerusalem is systematically destroyed. The Temple is demolished. The palace and homes are burned. The walls are torn down. Anything of value is carried as spoils back to Babylon. Most of the people are taken captive to Babylon. Some of the poorest are left to keep the land because it was not resettled with another nation. Some officials are taken to Riblah and executed.

vs. 22-26 – The Babylonians made the area of Judah into province called Yehud. Gedaliah ("God is my greatness") is appointed governor of the area under Chaldean authority. In a final act of defiance against Babylon, Ishmael ("whom God hears") leads an attack that kills the Gedaliah and his Jewish and Chaldean staff. The remnant of the people fled to Egypt for fear of Babylon.

vs. 27-30 – We jump ahead to 561 B.C. as Nebuchadnezzar was followed by his son Evilmerodach (known to history as Amel-Marduk). At his ascension to the throne, he pardoned the imprisoned Jehoiachin and gave him a place in the royal court. It appears the Evilmerodach had been imprisoned himself at some point (possibly in a failed coup against his father), and it is supposed that he may have met Jehoiachin while they were prisoners together.

Devotional Thoughts for Day 124

How could God allow His people to fall to Babylon? How could He allow the Davidic line to cease ruling? I think we must look at this differently than any other historical defeat. It is not about victory or power. It is about cleansing. The sins of the Israelites had to be purged, and God did so with the Babylonian Captivity. When they finally return they are a different people. God largely breaks them from their proclivity towards worshipping idols moving forward. We must likewise consider the sin in our own lives. We do not need simple victory over it: we need cleansing from it. Christ provides that for salvation, but sometimes in our lives God will still take drastic measures in our sanctification to break us from our faults.

Hymn for Day 124

Our hymn today is “This New Built Bethel Now Is Done”. It was written by John Winebrenner, but the fourth verse was borrowed from John Newton’s “Dear Shepherd of They People Hear”. It reflects the themes of rededication seen in Josiah’s revival.

*This new built Bethel now is done,
And here we've met today,
To dedicate this house to God,
To preach, to sing, to pray.*

*Here may the pray'r of faith prevail,
Here may the Gospel run;
And every true believer feel,
The bliss of heav'n begun.*

*May sinners here their sins renounce
And yield their all to God;
From sin and hell redemption find,
By faith in Jesus' blood.*

*Within these walls let holy peace,
And love and concord dwell;
Here give the troubled conscience ease,
The wounded spirit heal.*

*And when before thee we appear,
In our eternal home;
May growing numbers worship here,
And praise Thee in our room*