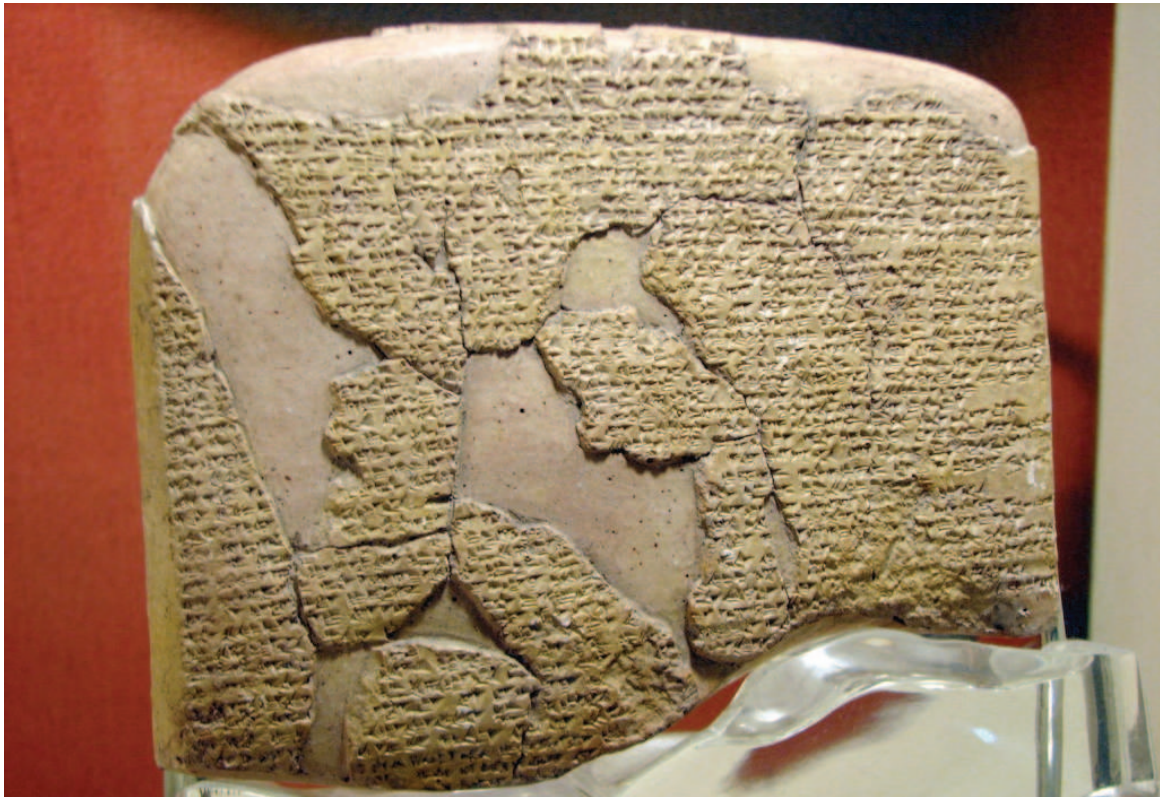


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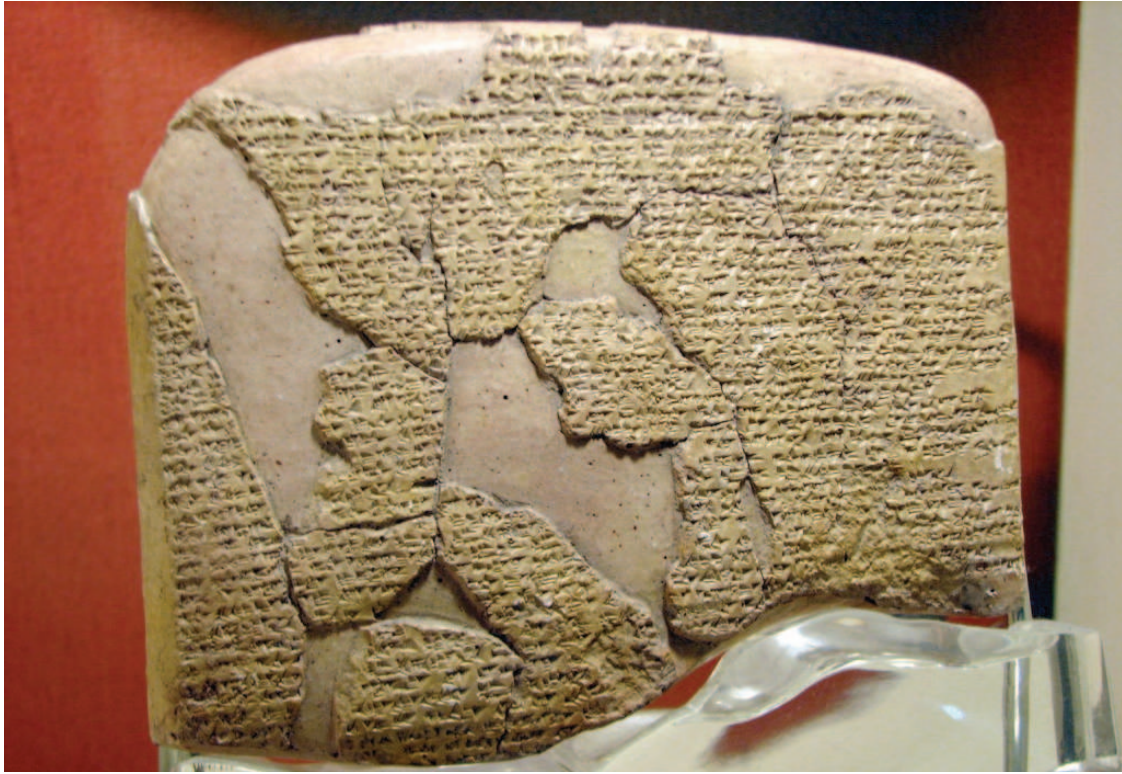


# *Waiting for a King like David*

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings

WRITTEN BY WILLIAM LAKY

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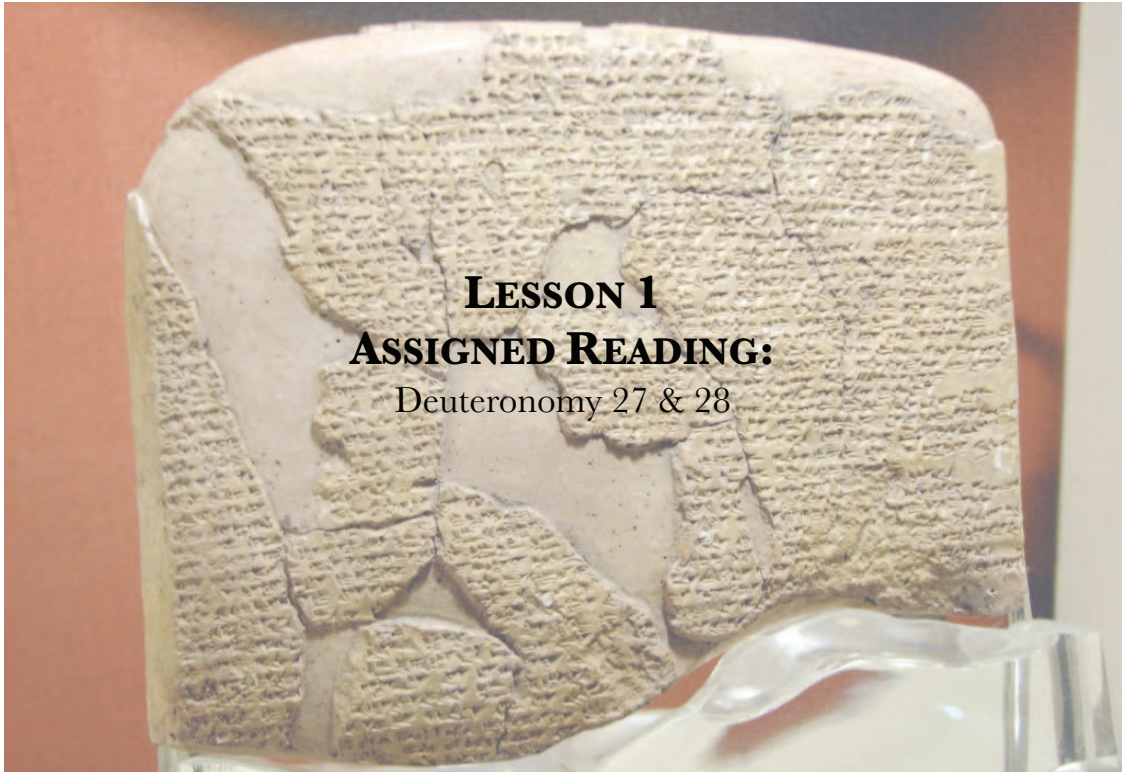
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**LESSON 1**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
Deuteronomy 27 & 28

*Introduction:*

*Kings*

## Introduction:

The books of 1st and 2nd Kings (henceforth just 'Kings' as it was historically written as one unit, but placed on two scrolls for convenience) present the story of the history of Israel from the death of David until the Judean deportation to Babylon. In it we learn about the building of the Temple, the splitting of the monarchy into Northern Israel and Southern Judah, the sins of the kings, the great prophets of old, and the justice of God. Before we can accurately study and learn from the books Kings, we need to understand some of the basics of its genre. Determining the genre of a book enables us to read it through the right lens. Otherwise, we may miss what the author or authors are trying to tell us.

Genre is something which is intrinsically wrapped into our communication as human beings. We naturally read poetry differently than we read prose, watch a music video with a different perspective than we would *Schindler's List*, and so forth. Although this understanding of genre is highly oversimplified, it will help us in our journey in interpreting and learning from the book of Kings!

**Genre Interpretation** is a dirty word in some circles of Christianity, but an important concept. When you watch *Snow White*, you aren't surprised that squirrels are helping her clean house. If this were to happen during *Braveheart*, however, you would do a double-take. Why is this okay in one film and not another? We watch *Snow White* through the lens of 'the Disney Genre' just as we watch *Braveheart* through a lens of 'Historical-Epic Genre.' What if, though, you had never seen a movie before? Such is the challenge of reading a book like Kings, written in a genre that we are not used to! We need to seek to read Kings as the Hebrews would.

Generally speaking, the genre of **Kings is historical narrative**. What this means is that at its core, Kings is telling a story of history. It is not a list of facts, but neither is it fiction. The events that occur within Kings truly did happen, but they are told from a narrative perspective. In order to properly interpret and read Kings, we need to understand this fact. The authors are not as concerned with the specifics of facts or the order of their occurrence as they are with proving a greater goal - why Israel was deported from the Promised Land into exile in Babylon. With that in mind, let's look at some characteristics of historical narrative in relation to the book of Kings.

First things first: **Kings has an agenda**. The book of Kings is not *just* a history book. It is not simply the history of the monarchy; it serves another purpose. From the anointing of Solomon until the exile of Jehoiachin in Babylon, we as readers are being constantly bombarded with the authors' goal. To summarize, we are being told one thing: Israel had to be exiled; it was inevitable and they brought it upon themselves. This is the agenda of Kings and what drives the story line.

As historical narrative, we need to realize that the book of **Kings is not a list of facts**. Even if the facts within it are true, the book is not simply a list of facts. It interprets the events (their causes, effects, etc.) instead of just listing what happened. What I mean by this is that Kings is not a timeline of events. When a king does something evil, we are told that it is an affront to God - we are not simply told that the event happened.

We also need to understand that **Kings is biased**. This isn't heresy; this is truth. The author is biased in favor of the line of David, a supporter of the Southern Kingdom, a scholar of the book of Deuteronomy, and in favor of Yahweh above other gods. We would all agree that these are good biases (because we hold them too!), but they are biases none the less. In order to properly interpret Kings we need to realize the authors' biases.

In addition to this, **Kings gives us glimpses into unseen things**. We see sins of kings; sins that were not known to the public of ancient Israel. We see 'behind the scenes' reasons for illness, war, and death. We have authors who are interpreting the events of Israel's history and who are, in turn, recording history through their own analysis of what happened.

Now that we understand these basic issues, we can look a little more closely at who wrote Kings, when it was written, and why it was written.

### **Authorship & Date:**

The authorship of Kings has been debated for generations, and although some strides have been made, there is still no clear answer. We will focus on what we think we know. (1) The author(s) are from Judah or are at least Judean sympathizers. This is clear enough from the text as David's line is depicted as the true kings of Israel. (2) They are not restrained by the king. What this is to say is that they reveal things about the king that would, in most situations, warrant death. Since it seems as though they do so without such risk, it suggests that they are writing (or at least finalizing) Kings after the fall of the Kingdom or are from some 'prophetic guild'. This suggests someone writing during the exile and working from various historical sources. (3) Although a date is not clear, it is probably safe to suggest that the final form of Kings was not until after 561 B.C.E. when Kings ends.

### **Purpose:**

As I stated earlier, the authors of Kings have an agenda. I already summarized this agenda is explaining how Israel broke the covenant with God and so brought exile upon itself. As you are reading Kings, keep that concept in the back of your mind. Every single time you read a passage ask yourself, *How does this passage further the purpose of Kings?* (Every passage? Yes, every passage. If the authors included it, then it is probably important!)

It is also important to realize that their agenda is based off of the Book of Deuteronomy. In Deuteronomy 27 and following, God enters into a contract with Israel. This contract is conditional. If they obey, they will be blessed, but if they disobey, they will be cursed. Because of this contract, Israel is eventually exiled. Disobedience will cause deportation (Deuteronomy. 28:36).

## **What can you expect from this study?**

In addition to learning about the general history of Israel and the monarchy, the goal of this study is to focus on what I call *pauses* in the text. These are areas where the authors have taken greater lengths to slow down and tell us a story in the midst of a relatively brief overview of history.

By looking at these narrative pauses, we will be able to slow down and explore what the authors are trying to tell us. As we read **Kings** we will constantly be asking ourselves (a) why is this story here, (b) why do the authors focus on this particular character, and (c) how do these stories relate back to Deuteronomy 28.

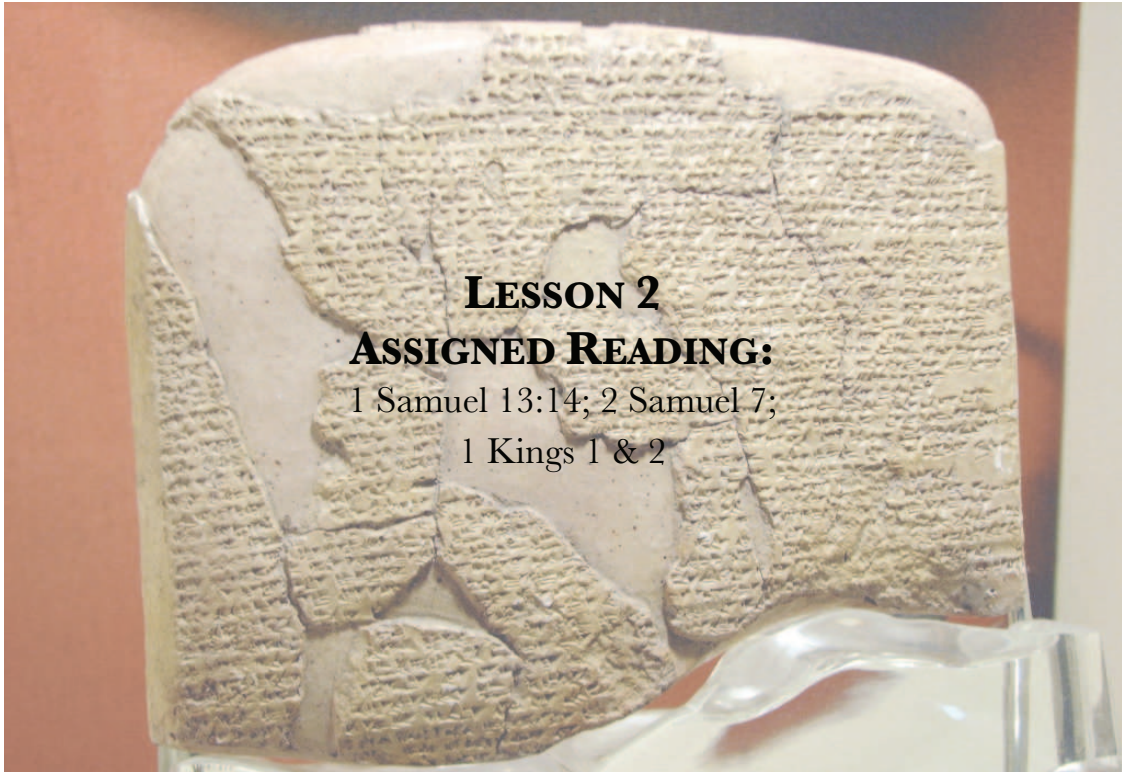
We often read the Old Testament way too quickly, missing many of the subtle hints and winks given to us by the narrator. Our goal is to slow down, enjoy the text, and to develop a deeper love for God and His Word.

## **Think About It:**

**After reading Deuteronomy 27-28, does it surprise you that Israel was disobedient? Why or why not?**

**Does God still function in the same way today? Why or why not? Read John 9:1-7; Does this help explain these things today? Is this always the case or are consequences sometimes a result of sin?**

**The Glory of God** is the reason behind every action in history God has ever sovereignly orchestrated. The glory of God is the reason for our existence, the reason for our salvation, and the purpose behind our lives. Many of the actions of the Church will fade (such as evangelism, for example), but the glorification and worship of God will never end. The Church is a means to an end, and the end is God's fame and glory. Because of this resolute foundation, each chapter will end with a question or two that prompts you to read God's glory out of the lesson. We will constantly ask ourselves, "How does this further the glory of God?"



**LESSON 2**

**ASSIGNED READING:**

1 Samuel 13:14; 2 Samuel 7;

1 Kings 1 & 2

*Vying for the  
Throne*

## Lesson 2: Vying for the Throne

Suppose that I were to make two movies about your life. The first movie only portrayed all the good things that you did. It showed you helping little old ladies cross the street, chasing someone down to give them a five dollar bill they dropped, feeding the homeless, and so forth. Now pretend that I made a second movie which only showed all the bad things you thought and did. (We shudder at the thought!) How would you feel?

Most of us wouldn't have much of a problem with the first movie, but with the second, I think I would have a hard time getting the rights to produce it! Ask yourself, however, would both movies be true? Did those things really happen? This is the primary difference between Kings and Chronicles. Kings is written to highlight Israel's disobedience in order to explain why they were exiled, whereas Chronicles focuses on their obedience to the covenant in order to explain why God let them come back, thereby having a more 'positive' feel.

**Don't believe me?** Take a few minutes to read Manasseh's story in 2 Kings 21:1-18 & versus Manasseh's story in 2 Chronicles 33:1-20. In Kings Manasseh is pictured as the reason for the exile (2 Kings 23:26), whereas in Chronicles we are told that he repents from his sin. Who is right and who is wrong? Well, perhaps they are both right. Manasseh did have two stories made about his life. In the one it talked about all the bad things he did and in the other it showed some of the good things. Are both true? Yes, but the authors have different goals and therefore highlight different aspects of his life.

In the book of Kings, we have a list of good kings and bad kings, but when we read between the lines we realize that even the good kings aren't that good. Kings often accentuates their flaws and their problems. Why? Because its goal is to explain why the Jews brought exile upon themselves. In this way, we begin to wonder, "Was there really ever a good king?" (Don't get me wrong, this doesn't mean that David wasn't "a man after God's own heart," but you can be a man after God's heart and still not be perfect!).

### Read 1 Kings 1:1-10

**Why didn't they just let Bathsheba keep David warm?**

**Why did David's servants bring Abishag (whose name means, "My father unintentionally sins") to serve the king? (v3)?**

By all logic, Bathsheba put off just as many BTU's as Abishag. Still, David's servants go out of their way to bring a new concubine into the mix. (The verb, to lie with the king or cohabit is used only one other time in the Old Testament in conjunction with



Bathsheba and David - the intent is that David was meant to have sexual intercourse with Abishag). A few things may be going on here, and probably there are actually many layers of subtle commentary on David and his line.

1. According to some commentators, it was common practice for kings of the Ancient Near East (ANE) to be assigned a virgin to keep them warm. (This may seem like a quick and easy answer, and perhaps it is the right answer, but I think there may be other issues going on as well.)
2. Perhaps David's servants knew that David was past his years (in other words, he was impotent). By choosing a virgin to sleep with the king, and knowing that the king was impotent, Abishag would be unable to get pregnant and then make a claim for the throne.
3. These verses may be a "commentary" on Bathsheba. Throughout the first few chapters of Kings, Bathsheba is picked on in subtle ways. Keep your eye open for things to come!
4. Perhaps these verses suggest that Bathsheba is no longer David's prize as she once was.

David used to be quite the ladies man, and was almost able to get any woman he wanted. Now, however, the king is unable to lie with a beautiful young virgin who bathes him, feeds him, and sleeps in his bed (such is the cost of age, a cost each of us will pay). The once great king is a shadow of his former self (physically speaking). Are we surprised, then, in what transpires in verses 6 and following?

**It sounds like Adonijah's disobedience has been going on for awhile now. Why would David let Adonijah plot in this fashion?**

Given his father's apparent weakness, Adonijah sees this as an opportune time to seize the throne. Although he isn't necessarily going about it in the same fashion as his

older brother, Absalom, the author draws the comparison (just in case we didn't remember about David's history). All that is to say, this isn't the first time that David has shown himself to be a weak father. In 2 Samuel, David is usurped by his son, Absalom, for a period of time. The authors remind us of this fact by commenting that Adonijah was born right after Absalom and was handsome, just like his brother.

### **What do these verses tell us about David and his weaknesses?**

We would think that if David had already been usurped by a son once before, he would be quick to squash the uprising. This suggests both positive and negative things about David and his character. For one, we see that David was not the best father in the world. As with Absalom, David's weaknesses led to his demise. Absalom pitted David's people against him, convincing them that he didn't care for their needs. Now, Adonijah, campaigns on his father's physical weakness and sees the situation as an opportune time to follow his father as king.

This narrative also might suggest something about David's righteous heart. When Absalom became king in his stead, David counted it as an act of God (perhaps as judgment for his sin with Bathsheba). He refused to take specific action against Absalom, but left Jerusalem by way of the Mount of Olives weeping and mourning. Perhaps something similar is going on here. David sees Adonijah as the God-anointed successor to the throne and does not see himself in a position to go against the Lord.

Still, as we see in the future verses that David made a promise to Bathsheba about Solomon being king, it seems odd that David does not act against Adonijah's actions. We

can assume that as David is now weak physically (verses 1-5), he is also weak as a father and a leader (verses 6-10).

Sometimes when we read the Bible, we have a tendency to put the men and women within scripture on a pedestal as if they didn't do anything wrong. We know that David was a godly man, so we have a hard time acknowledging that he may have been a bad father at times. What we have to remember, however, is that it was not because of his actions that David was godly, but because of his heart before God. The main difference between David and his predecessor, Saul, is that David, when confronted with sin, confessed and repented (2 Sam. 12:13) whereas Saul blame-shifted (1 Sam. 15).

### **Read 1 Kings 1:11-37**

**How do you feel about David's wife and the prophet of God conspiring to get Solomon on the throne? Adonijah was older than Solomon. Shouldn't he have been king first? Is Bathsheba and Nathan's plot deceptive or wise? Why?**

On one level, we are not surprised that someone besides David is calling the shots. Although David is still king on paper, his days of leadership appear to be long gone. The conversation between Bathsheba and Nathan is only further evidence of the situation. Although we know that Bathsheba claims that David made a promise to her about Solomon being king, we do not have it recorded anywhere in 1&2 Samuel. This is not to say that the promise didn't really occur, only that it is not recorded in the older historical accounts. It is suggested in Chronicles, but since the Chronicles was written after Kings, it is feasible that it could have been edited to clarify why Solomon became king.

Assuming that David did, in fact, make a promise to Bathsheba about Solomon being king, it seems odd that her reasoning for wanting her son as king is not that it is promised by David and by God, but that she fears death - both for herself and for her son. If Solomon truly was God's choice, as seems to be the case since he takes the throne,

taking matters into their own hands by conspiring to convince David otherwise, seems manipulative and very contrary to an act of faith. By sending Bathsheba in to talk to David first and by timing Nathan's entrance, they have created the appearance of sovereignty of God when it is, in fact, an act of man.

Like the previous sections, this account sheds more light on David's weaknesses. We have seen him to be weak physically and as a father. Now he is revealed to be a weak leader who goes back on his promises, and a disloyal spouse. He promised Bathsheba something which he had since forgotten. Who knows the circumstances of the promise. We could conjecture that it was done in light of their affair or in light of her being David's favorite wife. Either way, we do not have the answer, but we do know that he went back on his promise (or forgot it) which makes his apathy towards Adonijah in verse 6 all the worse.

**Read 1 Kings 1:38-53; 2:1-12**

**“Be strong and courageous” is a typical phrase in the OT. Here David says to be strong and become a man. Why the difference? Do you think David has “acted like a man” thus far in Kings? Why or why not?**

As we know, Solomon is the first leader who is blessed to reign during a time of relative peace. Perhaps the answer to the difference in his phrase is as simple as the fact that Solomon has less of a reason to be “courageous” than his father David did. Solomon, on the other hand, will be more concerned with leading, building the temple, and other more judicial and administrative duties.

There has also been some suggestion that this may be a comment on Solomon's youth or immaturity - both of which are viable options. Still, the statement seems ironic in light of the way David has behaved during 1 Kings 1&2. To be perfectly blunt: David hasn't acted like a man at all in the way that the world would define one. He was unable or unwilling to sleep with Abishag, he ignored the actions of Adonijah, he forgot his

promise to Bathsheba, and has been an all around weak leader. What then are the authors trying to say? (Remember, the authors are trying to explain why the kingdom failed.)

Perhaps this is a statement about what it truly means to “be a man.” As David explains, Solomon is to be a man according to the precepts of God. Although David may not have acted like a man physically speaking or in terms of his relationships with people, David is a man of God. 1 Samuel 13:14 tells us that David is loyal to YHWH; this has continued through David’s life - which is more than we can say for most of the kings of Israel to come. It is fitting and curious, then, that David, the king who has displayed earthly weakness is the king who becomes the measuring rod for all future leaders. He was, after all, a man of God. So did David act like a man? According to the world, no. According to God, yes!

**In verses 2:1-4, David refers to the covenant Yahweh made with him in 2 Samuel 23:1-7. There it sounds unconditional; here it sounds as though there are added conditions. Why would the authors change it?**

The obvious and primary answer is that the kingdom falls at the end of Kings. Since Kings is probably completed during the exile, the authors would have been well aware of what happened when Israel and her kings were disobedient.

On a side note, we don’t know whether or not the authors of Kings ever thought that the Israelites would be allowed back into the land. You can make an argument on both sides of the coin. Perhaps being in exile, seeing the fall of the kingdom, the authors didn’t know whether or not to record the “Davidic Covenant” as conditional or unconditional. We are privileged to see it come to pass in Jesus Christ, but for people living in the moment, it would have been much less clear!

**In the following verses, David gives his ‘godfather’ speech about who to knock off after he is dead. Are these deaths justified? Joab did many great things for David, including setting up the death of Uriah to cover David’s sin. Still, David demands his death. How do you react to this?**

If you were to trace the history of Joab, you would realize that he was a powerful warrior and a loose cannon - a deadly combination for any new king to have around. Although David was able to trust Joab, there is no guarantee that Solomon can do the same. Joab has already aligned himself with Adonijah, and even if he is willing to follow Solomon, there is the fear of what threat Joab would hold politically against the family of David. We see this tension in the movie *Gladiator* as the emperor’s son, Commodus, would have Maximus killed since he holds too much of a threat as a star general. Similarly, Solomon is an unexperienced youth with no battle experience. How difficult would it be for Joab to rally people around himself and turn against Solomon? Perhaps too easily!

On another level, we know that Joab knew of all of David’s dirty work. It was Joab who had Uriah killed, and Joab who had Absalom killed (some have suggested that Bathsheba convinced Solomon or David to kill Joab as vengeance for her late husband, Uriah). Still, David does not have Joab killed for these things, but for the deaths of Abner and Amasa, a very peculiar situation indeed. Still, the point is the same - Joab, for many reasons, is too dangerous to have around, even after a life of service to the king.

**Read 1 Kings 2:13-46**

**Sleeping with the king’s concubine was considered an attempt to usurp the throne. Solomon realizes this when Adonijah asks about Abishag, but Bathsheba does not (or she is acting). What does this say about Bathsheba?**

Back in 2 Samuel 16, when David learns of Absalom's rebellion, he leaves Jerusalem with all his wives except for ten concubines. When Absalom arrives at the palace, his advisors suggest that the first thing he does is go in and sleep with David's concubines. This was a Canaanite custom of claiming the throne. By sleeping with the king's concubines, a person was showing that they were making a direct attempt on the throne. Having lived through the situation with Absalom, Bathsheba should have known this.

**From one perspective, Bathsheba has routinely been picked on in these first two chapters (1:1-4; 1:11-37; 2:13-22). Do you think this is true or an over-interpretation of the text?**

Perhaps Bathsheba's weakness is revealed in light of Solomon's failures in his later years. Is Solomon's weakness due to David or Bathsheba?

**Did Adonijah deserve to die? What about Joab and Shimei? Why or why not?**

By executing these men, Solomon takes "a secure" hold of the kingdom. Since he cannot flaunt his military prowess like his father, Solomon is forced to exercise his authority in other ways. His actions are both necessary and wise.

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**If David is like this, what do you think we can expect from the kings who follow?**

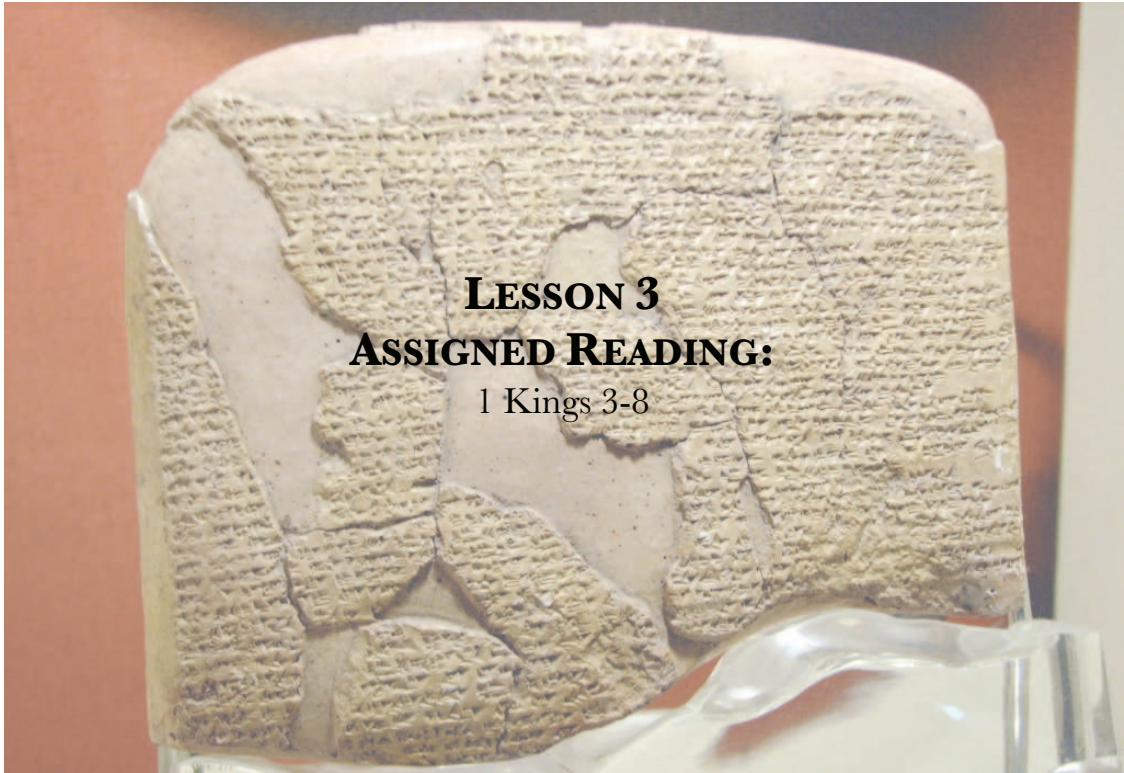
**How are we like David? Does having a heart for God mean you are perfect?**

**What was David's hope and what is our hope?**

**The Glory of God:**

Having briefly reflected on David's failures and the succession of Solomon, how do we see God's glory manifested in these first few chapters of the book of Kings? What characteristic of God is evident? How can you worship God in response to His revealed glory and character?





**LESSON 3**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
1 Kings 3-8

*Building a  
House for God*

### **Lesson 3: Building a House for God**

In chapters 3-5, we read that God offered a special blessing to Solomon on the foundation of the Davidic Covenant. In 3:5, God offers Solomon anything that he wishes for. Solomon asks God for wisdom to rule the nation of Israel and to be a good leader. Since Solomon did not ask for wealth, but for wisdom, God was gracious and gave him wisdom, wealth, and fame (1 Kings 3). Because of Solomon's wisdom and the hard work of his father, David, chapter 4 tells us that Solomon lived in abundance. Since he lived in such a prosperous time, he could fulfill his father's dream of building God a permanent dwelling place to replace the tabernacle. In chapter 5 of 1 Kings, Solomon makes a treaty with his father's friend, King Hiram of Tyre, in order to begin construction of the Temple in Jerusalem.

**What's so special about the temple anyway?** In the Ancient Near East, the temple was where the patron god of the nation lived, and where the people believed that they could meet him or her. If the temple was destroyed or if there was no temple, how would they meet with their god? This same idea is prevalent in Hebrew thought. When we read Ezekiel, we see that the people of Judah do not believe that the exile will come because the temple still stands. To show the people that Babylon will, in fact, deport them, Ezekiel has a vision of God leaving the temple - thereby opening up the city to the destruction of the Babylonians.

In Deuteronomy 12:5, God makes it clear that worship in Israel is supposed to be centralized. Yahweh never intended for people to worship wherever they saw fit, but to worship in "Spirit and in Truth" (like Jesus talks about in John 4). The truth aspect of worship is that Israel had to worship according to God's stipulations and not according to how they felt like worshipping God. On Mount Sinai, after the Exodus, God gave the Israelites instructions for building the tabernacle. In 2 Samuel, David wants to make the tabernacle permanent by building a temple in Jerusalem, the home of the king. With this history behind us, we are in a better position to understand the gravity of 1 Kings 6-8 and the temple building.

#### **Read 1 Kings 6**

**Why is it significant that no iron tool was used in the building of the temple? (hint: read Exodus 20:25 and Deuteronomy 27:5-6)**

The work was done with reverence to God and to His laws.

**Verses 11-13 report to us the third time that God stresses that His promises to David are contingent upon Solomon's obedience to His commands. God's promise, which is reminiscent of Leviticus 26:11-12 and Exodus 29:45, solidifies the temple work, but the covenantal threat is still there. Why is this important for how we read the story of Solomon and for the book of Kings?**

In Leviticus 26:11-12, we learn that God will live with Israel and be their God. Deuteronomy 12:5 made it clear that Jerusalem would be the place of God's dwelling. The threat of the covenant is important to our reading of this narrative because it is due to the breaking of the covenant that the Israelites were exiled and the kingdom fell.

As we read about the beauty and glory of the temple, we cannot help but imagine what it would have been like. In Ezra-Nehemiah when the returned Judeans finish rebuilding the destroyed temple, those who had seen the former temple wept. They were not weeping for joy, however, but out of sadness at having seen the former beauty that was lost. What is striking is that even with the glory of Solomon's temple, God is not impressed. He desires obedience, not fancy pillars and gold-plated decorations. A temple, no matter how beautiful, will not pardon Israel of their disobedience.

**Read 1 Kings 6:38 - 7:51**

**1 Kings 7:1-13 diverges from the temple to discuss Solomon's palace. Why?**

After finishing discussing the exterior of the temple, we expect to read about the interior of the temple and its furniture. Instead, however, we read a 13 verse side note on

the palace of Solomon. This should immediately cause us to question why the divergence. Was the paragraph put in the wrong spot? Is this a scribal error? Actually, in light of 6:38, it is clearly intentional. The question now remains: what do the authors want us to see?

**Why do the authors tell us that the temple was built in seven years while the palace was built in thirteen?**

On one level, we should not be surprised that the palace took more time. After all, it was a larger establishment. Still, the authors are trying to prove a point. In verse 2, we learn that the palace had so much cedar that it was nicknamed the “Forest Palace.” This may hint that it had more cedar than the temple of God.

**In 7:1 in Hebrew, the authors say that Solomon completed the “whole” of his house. Why are they mentioning this? What does this mean?**

More important than the length of time, however, is a small word that is often left out in our English translations. In verse 1, we learn that Solomon completed the “whole” of his house. Notice that he did not complete the whole of the temple, but after completing the exterior, he was sidetracked to work on his own dwelling place (even though a king’s palace was already in existence under David’s reign). The idea is that Solomon pushed the completion of the palace through at the expense or detriment of the

work being done to the Temple. Already, we see that wise Solomon's focus is shifting from God to other pursuits. The commitment he made to God in 5:3-6 seems far from his mind as Solomon has dreams of sleeping in his wood-paneled palace.

**Read 7:40. The same verb is used to describe Solomon's house in 7:1 being completed, except in God's house, a foreigner finishes the work. What is the significance of this?**

As with the preceding questions, we see that Solomon was more concerned with other issues. Surely after he was done having his palace built then he was concerned with moving in, getting settled, etc. Meanwhile, a foreigner completes the job that was prepared by David (cf. Chronicles) while David's son concerns himself with other issues. It is sad and ironic that a foreigner spends more time on God's temple than Israel's own king.

**Do you think it was wrong of Solomon to have foreigners build God's temple?**

This is a difficult question. On one hand, Hiram may have been Jewish. We know that his mother was an Israelite widow who remarried a man from Tyre. It is possible that Hiram's birth father was an Israelite as well which would make him 100% Israelite. Still, other men foreigners helped build the temple as well. It is clear from the way that Hiram is described (compare 1 Kings 7:14 with Exodus 31:3; 36:1) that God has endowed him to

work on the temple. In this way, I suppose we are unable to point any fingers of blame or fault.

### **Read 1 Kings 8**

**Read Exodus 40:34-35. What is the significance of the cloud of Yahweh filling the temple in 8:11?**

This is exactly what happened at the dedication of the tabernacle. This is proof to Judah and to all of Israel and the Israelites that God is choosing to live in Jerusalem in accordance with Deuteronomy 12:5. In this way, no other “high place” can make a claim to have the presence of God. God approves of the temple that Solomon has built for him (even if it was done with a semi-committed heart). God lives in Jerusalem as He promised that He would!

**Why does Solomon say that he built the house for God in 8:13? What are your reactions to this?**

Perhaps we, as observers who are aware of more than the characters involved in the story, know where Solomon’s true focus was, and may feel as though he is being dishonest. Solomon signed the papers and paid the bills, but his father designed the Temple and Hiram organized and did most of the work. Was Solomon in charge of holding the coffee mug while he relaxed in his “forest palace?”

**If God lives in heaven and not on the earth (verse 27), why did they build the temple?**

God had determined that Jerusalem would be the place of his dwelling. By building the temple God is, however, doing more than simply fulfilling his promises. In a land of 12 tribes, there is bound to be division (as we will see following Solomon's reign). By having the temple in Jerusalem and having God anoint the temple with his presence, no one can claim a place of power or centrality outside of the capital city. If God views Jerusalem as the capital and center of all of Israel (and the whole world - Ezekiel 5:5), and considers the ark to be His footstool, then no one can claim any other place and the meeting place of God cannot move to a new location like the tabernacle could have.

**Why is it significant that Solomon rehashes the covenantal promises in verses 31-53 (especially verses 46 and following)?**

This covenant will eventually cause their exile. Although Solomon begins by presuming obedience, his prayer develops into presuming disobedience. It is also significant in that before every major change in Israel's history (conquest, kingship, etc) the Deuteronomic covenant is rehashed. The people are reminded time and time again about the commitment they have to YHWH and the promise they made at either the reward of blessings or the expense of cursings (Deuteronomy 27&28). In this way, they are without excuse when they forget YHWH and turn to worship other gods. They have been warned and reminded time and time again.

**In Solomon's benediction (verses 54-61), he asks God to incline the hearts of Israel towards himself. Is this a comment on Israel's faithfulness? Is it pointing towards the New Covenant? What do you think?**

In Deuteronomy 6:5, God commands Israel to love God with all of their heart. This, simply put, is impossible to do. How could God command the impossible? Because as a holy God he has to be approached on in holiness and not in any other way. In this way, Solomon's benediction is a glimpse towards the New Covenant when God's children will, in fact, have their hearts inclined towards God.

This could also be viewed as supplication, however, in that perhaps there is already wandering within Israel. We know this to be definitely true because Israel was never obedient. There never were any "good ol' days" when Israel followed their God. In this way, Solomon's request to incline the peoples' hearts towards God could be prayed every day throughout Israel's history.

**Think about it:**

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**Sometimes Solomon's priorities were backwards. Do you care more about your "house" or the things of God?**



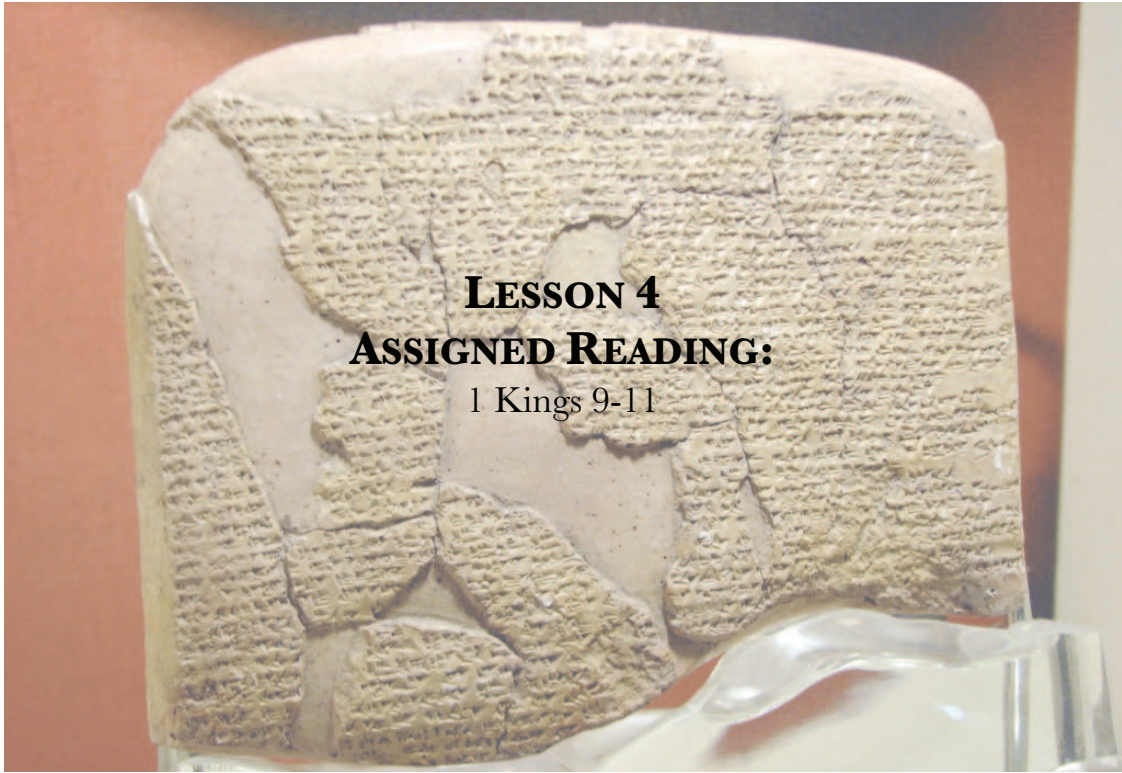
**What role does the temple (presence of God) play for us as New Testament believers? (cf. Mark 15:38; Hebrews 10:19-22)**

It is only because of Christ's actions that we can enter into the presence of God. Now that the curtain is torn and Jesus has paved the way with his blood, we can commune with God in purity, holiness, and any time that we want!

**On what basis does God bless Israel? On what basis does He bless us?**

**The Glory of God:**

Reread 8:22-26. List 5 characteristics of God that are evident in this section? How can you worship God in response to His revealed glory and character? How does this chapter promote God's glory?



**LESSON 4**

**ASSIGNED READING:**

1 Kings 9-11

*Finishing Like  
He Started?*

## **Lesson 4: Finishing Like He Started**

At first glance, we think that Solomon is a king just like his father, David. In chapter 11, however, we learn that Solomon turned away from God. As a consequence for his sin, the kingdom is divided. Never again will a king of Judah preside over the entire nation of Israel until Jesus does so in the Millennial Kingdom.

As we learn about Solomon's apostasy, many questions come to our mind. How could a man who is said to be the wisest who ever lived do something so foolish? How could the son of David himself so quickly abandon what his father had taught him? As we reread the first 11 chapters of Kings, however, we begin to ask a different question: "Was Solomon ever truly obedient?" The authors make him sound like a great king at

first, but included in the historical accounts are subtle winks about the king's true heart. If Solomon, son of David, wisest of all the kings of Israel, was not obedient, does anyone else stand a chance? Does the breakdown of the kingdom mean that God's promise to David in 2 Samuel 7 is null and void? Thus is the situation at the end of Kings 11. As the reader, it is up to us to address these doubts and decipher their intended meaning in light of the rest of Kings.

### **Read 1 Kings 9:1-9**

**Again God warns Solomon of apostasy. It is as if the author of Kings is setting us up for the events that will follow. What are the crimes that God warns them of?**

**Who is King Hiram of Tyre?** Hiram has been a major player in the construction of the temple of God and Solomon's palace. 1 Kings 7:13-14 tells us that his mother was an Israelite widow and his father was from Tyre. Since his mother was a widow, it is possible that Hiram himself was 100% Israelite. In this way, he is not just "some gentile." The way he is described in 7:14 is exactly the way that Bezalel, who made the tabernacle, is described in Exodus 31:3 and 36:1. Although Hiram was now living in Tyre, it is clear that God had endowed him with the ability needed to oversee the building of the temple.

God encourages Solomon to serve him with integrity and sincerity. God warns Solomon to never fail to obey the regulations and rules God instructed him to keep or to worship other gods. If Solomon or his sons take any part in these actions then God will abandon the Temple and remove Israel from the land. It doesn't matter how beautiful the

temple is, if Solomon or his sons turn from God, YHWH will make them into a disgrace!

**Why does God hate these acts of disobedience?**

We often talk about how God is holy. This means more than that God is perfect; it means that he is set apart and entirely separate from His Creation. As a holy God, he deserves more than what people give him. Because he is holy and he alone deserves to be worshipped, he is jealous for his own glory. To abandon the true God (by forsaking his laws or by worshipping idols) is the ultimate offense to a God who has made humankind in His image. These acts are direct defiance against God and they provoke his wrath!

**Can God's wrath be a testimony or serve evangelical purposes? Explain your answer.**

A king receives glory from his battles in two ways. For one, a king is glorified by his subjects when he wins. They rejoice over his victories, over his strategic insight into battle, and his strength and might. Likewise, a king is also glorified by the destruction of his enemies. The scriptures say that one day every knee will bow. This does not necessarily mean that every knee will bow willingly. Some knees will bow in fear as they acknowledge their defeat. Both - a bowing out of love and a bowing out of fear - are a testimony of God's glory.

Likewise, by using Israel as an object lesson, foreign nations would recognize that YHWH was serious about his commands. Surrounding nations had heard that God had brought the Israelites out of Egypt. They knew that Israel's God had power to destroy. Once Israel was decimated, however, God promised Solomon that surrounding people would look at the temple and know that the reason Israel fell was because they abandoned their God.

**To which chapter of scripture do these warnings sound similar? What does this tell us about the authors and their purposes?**

These warnings should remind us of Deuteronomy 28, which we read the first week. It is clear, in sections like this, that the authors are using Deuteronomy 28 as their guide for the recording of the historical narratives. This reinforces our suggestion that Kings is written to explain why Israel was exiled. Kings is full of Deuteronomistic language!

**Read 1 Kings 9:10-10:29**

**In 1 Kings 5:8,10, Hiram provided Solomon with as much cedar and cypress as he desired. In return, Solomon gives him 20 cities nicknamed “good for nothing.” What does this say about Solomon?**

In verse 14 we learn that thus far Hiram had given Solomon over 9,000 lbs. of gold in addition to other supplies. These cities were less than desirable. This speaks

volumes about Solomon. Perhaps he was taking his “wisdom” to a point of shrewdness. Was he now using his wisdom to take advantage of people where he once was using it to govern people?

**Even though he was disappointed in Solomon’s gift, Hiram continues to bless the king with gold and jewels (9:26-28; 10:11-12, 22). Is this evidence of Solomon’s blessing and wisdom or of dishonest business?**

Perhaps the wisdom that Solomon was supposed to use to govern his people has now been utilized for his own purposes. Hiram continues to trust Solomon, either out of faith in YHWH or some other purpose, but Solomon continues to take advantage of him. The amount of gold brought to Solomon from Ophir is over 30,000 lbs. worth!

**In 9:15, we learn that the labor described in 5:1-18 was forced. Solomon used slave labor to build his own house, the temple, the Millo, the wall, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. Who did Solomon use as slaves? Why is this a problem?**

First of all, Solomon did not use this task force just to build the temple, but kept them around for at least another thirteen years to complete his palace as well. Secondly, Solomon used the Canaanites who were not killed as slaves. Solomon has led the Israelites to do exactly what Egypt did to them during their 400 years of slavery. In one way, the authors are drawing this comparison by showing us that Solomon isn’t acting like a Jew,

but like a foreigner.

**In 1 Kings 9:24, we read about Pharaoh's daughter, who was originally introduced in 3:1. This means that Solomon married her at the beginning of his reign. Literarily speaking, why delay this information till now?**

In light of the above question, it should not surprise us that Solomon, as he acts like an Egyptian, married an Egyptian. When we first read of Pharaoh's daughter in chapter three, it sounds like a wise political decision. Here, she is introduced in light of the various foreign peoples that should have been eradicated. The authors are painting a picture for us of what caused Solomon's downfall without actually condemning him on the spot!

**In 10:6-9, the Queen comments on Solomon's wisdom being a blessing to the royal court. Read between the lines here - who is Solomon's wisdom not blessing (compare with 4:20,25)?**

When Solomon is first praised for his wisdom earlier in Kings, we are told that his wisdom is a blessing to all of Israel (4:20; 25). Here, however, the queen comments on those within his inner circle receiving the blessing. Perhaps Solomon's wisdom, which was given to bless Israel, is now being squandered on those who are in his court. Is Israel truly being blessed by Solomon's reign?

**Earlier we learned that Solomon had many horses and chariots. Now we learn that his horses are from Egypt. Read Deuteronomy 17:16. Reactions?**

Solomon wasn't supposed to have horses from Egypt because Israel was supposed to trust in God instead of in the strength of man. It seems as though this has been happening for some time! Wise king indeed!

### **Read 1 Kings 11**

**Solomon loved the Lord (3:3), but he also loved foreign wives. Which won out in the long run? Why was loving foreigners forbidden? What does this teach us about marrying non-believers?**

Solomon's love for his foreign wives slowly corrupted his heart. He allowed them to woo him from what should have been his first love, YHWH, and instead he followed after their other gods. How tragic this is that the son of David and the builder of the temple would turn from the living God to serve statues of rock and clay.

Marrying non-believers is a sore spot in evangelical Christianity. It is easy for us, like Solomon, to come up with good reasons to marry someone who believes differently than us. After all, Solomon's marriages were probably good for politics as he was able to make various treaties with kings by marrying their daughters. Still, it led to Solomon's downfall and the splitting of the kingdom. Likewise, Christians may marry non-Christians with good intentions, but the danger is apparent. A heart against the Lord can have incredible power over a heart that loves the Lord. We need to be careful lest we, like



Solomon, allow our relationships to pull us from YHWH! Paul warns of this very concept in 2 Corinthians 6:14ff by quoting Leviticus 26:12.

**God promises Solomon that the kingdom will be torn from him (11:9ff), but it will not happen in Solomon's lifetime on the basis of the faith of David. How was David different from Solomon?**

Although we saw that David wasn't the perfect father, husband, or leader, he was strikingly different from Solomon in one main way - he was loyal to YHWH. This loyalty, or as some translations put it "a heart after God's own heart", separates him from all the other kings. Although David wasn't perfect in the flesh, he was loyal to God. He didn't waste his life away by worshipping other gods. He wasn't perfect, but he was a man of God!

**Hadad, the Edomite (11:14-22) fought against Solomon after David's death. Rezon was an adversary "all the days of Solomon" (11:25). Earlier we were told that Solomon was at peace (5:4). Why hide this fact until now?**

In 1 Kings 5:4, Solomon claims to be at peace on all fronts. Here we learn that he was at war most of his life. The author, in a brilliant literary move, has flipped our expectations of Solomon upside down. The things which we thought we knew about Solomon turn out to be negative characteristics (his wives, his horses, forced labor, etc).

Solomon hasn't "gone downhill." He never was like his father David.

**When were the "good old days"?**

**Was Solomon ever a good king? Why or why not?**

**Think About It:**

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

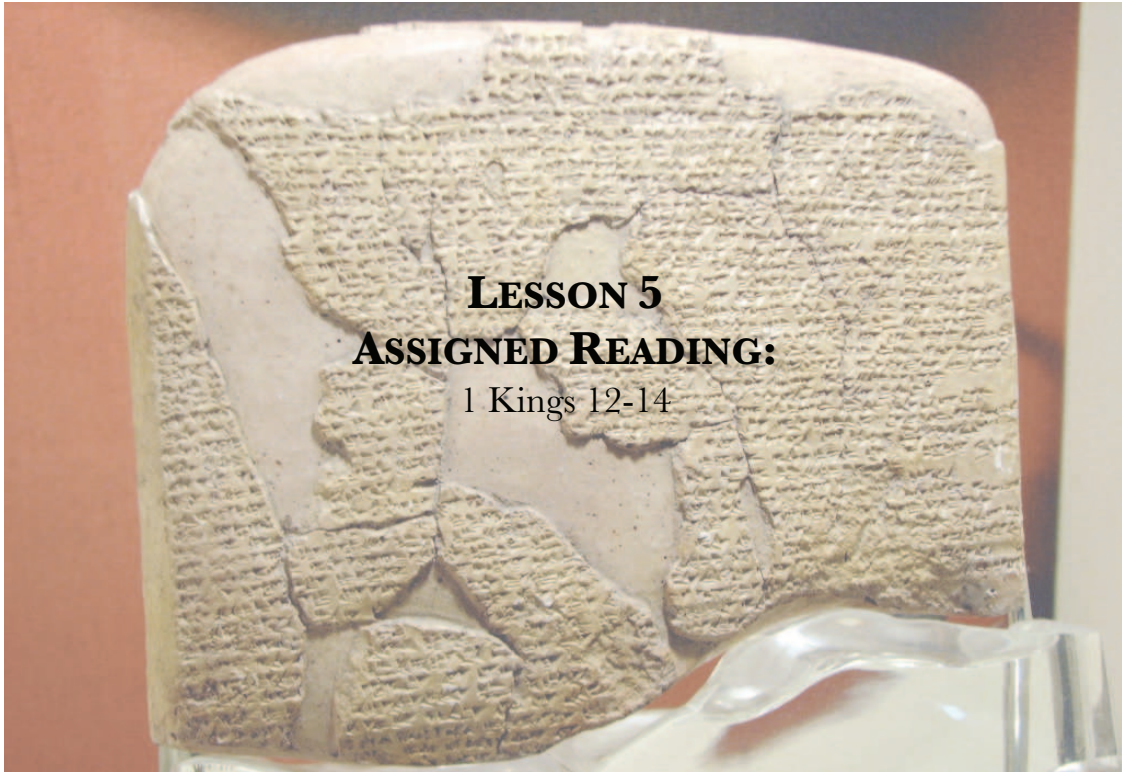
**Sometimes Solomon's priorities were backwards. Do you care more about your "house" or the things of God?**

**What role does the temple (presence of God) play for us as New Testament believers? (cf. Mark 15:38; Hebrews 10:19-22)**

**On what basis does God bless Israel? On what basis does He bless you?**

**The Glory of God:**

What does God's patience with Solomon reveal about his character? How can you worship God in light of this aspect of his being?



*Golden  
Calves...Again*

## Lesson 5: Golden Calves...Again

With Solomon dead, his son, Rehoboam, is set to become king. Solomon reigned as king for 40 years (11:42), and his son, Rehoboam was 41 years old when he became king (14:21). This means that Rehoboam was born before Solomon became king. His mother was Naamah the Ammonitess (14:22). What does all of this mean? Solomon was gathering wives long before the end of his life - he actually was marrying foreigners before he even became king (David was probably arranging the marriages for him). Rehoboam was alive while David was still living (since Solomon became king while David was still alive). Rehoboam observed his father's reign from day one and he followed in his footsteps.

We will not make a judgment call here as to whether or not Solomon was a good

father, but it is clear that Rehoboam was destined to be a bad king. The kingdom would be split under his reign, as prophesied in chapter 11, and he would show no respect for his father (12:10) or his father's court (12:6-8). Rehoboam is just a blip on the radar though; the real focus of these chapters is Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom.

### Read 1 Kings 12

**The Davidic Covenant (2 Sam. 7) talks about the house of David reigning over Israel. Since Israel was in rebellion against the house of David from this point on (12:19), can we say that any king from here on out is the "king of Israel"?**

**"If you will be a servant..."** Solomon's elders counseled Rehoboam to be a servant to his people, and in turn they would serve him forever (12:7). This is the exact method of leading that Jesus took as the descendant of David. He did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45). This idea of servant leadership is the only lasting, successful way to lead a people. People will follow someone who has their best interest in mind, as a servant does, because they feel as though they can trust him or her. How about you? Are you leading in your life situation (marriage, job, church, etc.) as a servant like Jesus or with an iron fist like Rehoboam?

I can't really make up my mind here. On one hand, it seems clear that the kings of Judah are counted as the "kings of Israel" in a spiritual sense. Still, none of them actually rule the entirety of Israel. The authors of kings even go far enough as to count Israel as the northern kingdom and Judah as the southern. So on the one hand, the kings of Judah

are still Israelite kings, but on the other hand, they never really rule all of Israel.

### **What does this mean in relationship to the Davidic Covenant?**

God's promise to David has not been abandoned. We may be tempted to think that "this is the end" of the Davidic line if we did not know the story and were 'first time readers,' but God continues to preserve the line of David in the following chapters. Although the kings are weak and turn from the Lord, God continues to be true to David and His covenant, even when the kings are disobedient. The fruits of blessing, on one level, are dependent upon obedience, but God still blesses despite disobedience. YHWH has by no means abandoned his promises to David or David's line, even though the kingdom is split.

On a second note, not until Jesus reigns will a king of David rule over the nation as one body!

**Jeroboam, who was formerly a taskmaster under Solomon (11:28), now is declared king by the northern tribes. They have rejected one bad leader for another. Stupidity or sovereignty of God? What do you think?**

12:15 says that the king rejected the pleas of the people so that the word of the Lord would be fulfilled. It appears as though they have made a choice in accordance with God's Word, but the choice definitely does not seem to be a healthy one. The ironic thing is that 1 Kings 11:27 and following tells us that the main reason Jeroboam turned against

Solomon was because he received a prophesy about his future reign and Solomon heard about it and sought to kill him. This sounds a lot like David and Saul. Think about, however, how differently David functioned. Where as it is clear that David also believed he was meant to be king, he waited on God's timing. Jeroboam flees to Egypt but we don't see his patience as an act of faith as much as an act of fear. The whole account has similarities with David and Saul, but stark contrasts as well.

**Jeroboam realized that as long as the temple still stood in Jerusalem, he was going to have a problem keeping the northern tribes following his reign. After all, how could the people follow him and then go to Rehoboam's hometown to sacrifice to Yahweh? Scouring through the history books, he found a story from Israel's past (Exodus 32) and duplicated it. Like Aaron, he made a golden calf (two of them actually) and placed them at two famous 'high places' where Israel used to worship before the temple was built.**

**Jeroboam made the golden calves as a way to protect his reign, but didn't God promise him a kingdom? What can we learn from Jeroboam's lack of faith in God's promises?**

As the question states, God promised Jeroboam the kingdom. Because he feared that people would return to Judah due to the temple, he set up places of worship at Bethel and Dan using the golden calves. This shows the clear contrast between a trusting heart and a doubting heart. He trusted God enough to believe that he would be king, but once he was king, he clung to that power and feared that it would be taken away from him. He had no reason to create the two areas of idol worship. God had split the kingdom as a punishment for Solomon; it was God's plan. Jeroboam had no reason to think that God wouldn't be faithful to His prophecy and protect Jeroboam as long as he was true to YHWH and the Law. Instead, Jeroboam takes the wisdom of the world instead of the

wisdom which comes from fearing the Lord.

**List some of the sins Jeroboam commits through making the golden calves in 12:25-33**

**Read 1 Kings 13**

**Jeroboam was promised a dynasty (11:38) but not a place of worship. As a sign against his sin, his hand “dries up” but then just as quickly God heals it. Why the mercy?**

Jeroboam stands at the brink of dedicating his temple to God (like Solomon had done in 8:22), but unlike the temple in Jerusalem, God does not recognize this false center of worship. Instead of the presence of God filling the room, a prophet comes to speak out against Bethel.

**Why does God punish the prophet from Judah and not the false prophet who deceived him?**



It seems that the general idea in this section is that God means business about His Word and it will be carried out. God's commands and laws are required of everyone - even kings and prophets. In addition to this, we see that God does not change his mind. He would not tell the prophet to do one thing and then surprise him with a change of plans, as if God were strapped into a human timeline and had no knowledge of what would happen.

Still, it seems odd that we see the prophet of Judah receiving ample destruction while the other prophet goes free. Perhaps this is because his curse and his destruction has already been predicted and proclaimed by the Judean prophet earlier in chapter 13. The false prophet's end is already sealed.

### **Why do the authors pause to include this story in the middle of Kings?**

The general message seems to be that God is holy and will abide by his own word. If he has commanded Israel to worship in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:5), has split the kingdom due to Solomon's disobedience (1 Kings 11), and even slays his own prophets when they disobey, how much more will the prophecy about Josiah and the destruction of Bethel & Dan come to pass! God's word is strong, firm, and immutable. This is good news for David's line and for Judah, but it is sour news for the disobedient Israelites who worship God as if he wore an idol made of rock.

### **Read 1 Kings 14**

**Even though we have a new kingdom, David continues to be the measuring rod whereby all other kings are compared (14:8). After an extremely awful report from Ahijah the prophet, the wife of Jeroboam is told to go home and pass on the bad news. God says through his prophet that He**

**will uproot Israel and remove her from the Promised Land on account of the sin of Jeroboam.**

**The sin of Jeroboam becomes the primary area of condemnation against the north. As such, it is important that we know what it is and understand why it is sin. So, what is it and why is it sin?**

Deuteronomy 12:5 states that Israel would have a centralized place of worship. With the completion of the Temple, God displayed his approval of David & Solomon's construction by filling the building with his glory - exactly as he had done with the tabernacle during the days of Moses. Since the temple was clearly God's designated place of dwelling, it was blatant sin for Israel to worship at Bethel, Dan, or any other high place in the Promised Land.

In addition to this, the Northern Kingdom worshipped God in the form of a golden calf - exactly what the Israelites had done under Aaron while Moses was on Mt. Sinai. This was a direct violation of God's command against graven images, and reflected the fact that they were trying to worship God as an idol made in their image instead of the one true God. As the God of gods, YHWH demands to be worshipped on his terms, not on our own.

**Why is it significant to the story of Kings that the temple and the palace are stripped of their wealth?**

We can see the degradation of Israel. The “golden age” of Solomon is replaced by the “bronze age” of Rehoboam. The relative peace of Solomon is replaced with continual warfare (verse 30). Even though the former days weren’t necessarily good, they were better than they are now! Things are getting much worse, and we are only a quarter of the way through Kings.

**Rehoboam’s mother was an Ammonite, a tribe associated with the Moabites (the people who hired Balaam to curse Israel in Deuteronomy 23:4). Why would David allow his son, Solomon, to marry her?**

Who knows; perhaps for treaty or some other “higher” purpose. The general idea, however, is obvious in light of Israel’s history with the Ammonites: “What else would you expect from the son of an Ammonite woman?”

**Would Israel be having these problems if they had obediently destroyed all the nations of the land of Canaan?**

If they had destroyed the nations then they would have been obedient. If they were obedient, then they wouldn’t be having these problems. Still, they are sinful by nature so the problems would still arise. So, yes I think so.

**It is easy to gloss over these kings because they are all so bad. How can we learn from them? What aspects of disobedience do Jeroboam and Rehoboam commit that you see in yourself?**

**Think About It:**

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**Why does God care where and how people worship Him? How does this apply to today's pluralistic society?**

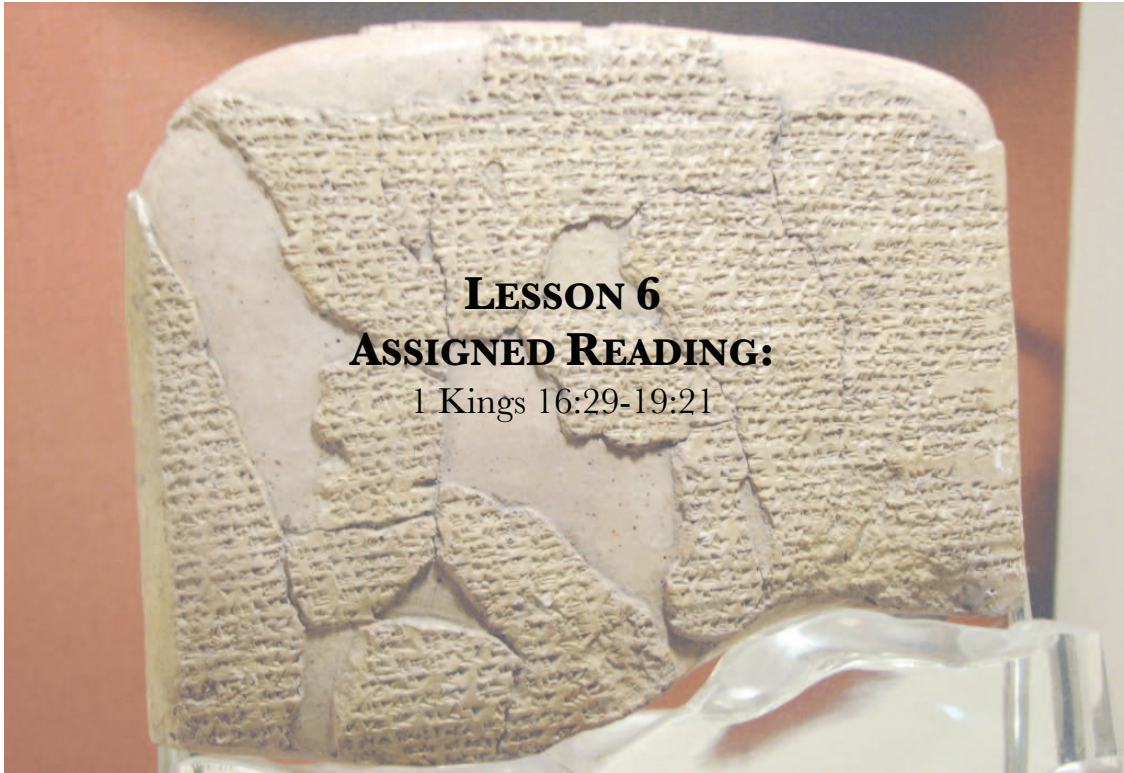
Jesus told the woman at the well that God would be worshipped in spirit and in truth. There was never a time in history that people could approach God however they saw fit, but that is exactly what our country believes. There are not many paths to God just as there are not many Temples in the Old Testament. Although we can "come as we are," that doesn't mean that we can worship God as a God He is not. God commands holiness, purity, sacrifice, and perfection. We have been given these requirements through Jesus Christ alone.

**Imagine these kings in today's society. Would we still think that they were bad or would we define them as tolerant of other people and religions? What does**

**this say about the state of our “God-fearing” country? How do we balance this with showing love to other people?**

**The Glory of God:**

How does God glorify himself by splitting the kingdom? Does that seem backwards to you in your human mind? How can we worship him in light of his judgment to split the nation in two?



**LESSON 6**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
1 Kings 16:29-19:21

*Fighting Lightning  
with Lightning*

## **Lesson 6: Fighting Lightning with Lightning**

Rehoboam's son, Abijam, was just as evil as his father. If you notice, Abijam's mother, Maacah (15:2) and the mother of his son, Asa, are one and the same person (15:10). Even though he was the product of an incestuous relationship, however, Asa managed to follow the Lord. He reigned from 911- 870 B.C.E. and removed the idols set in place by his mother and father. Instead of caring more about his own palace, he brought his silver and gold into the house of the Lord (15:15).

Meanwhile, the Northern Kingdom was plagued with assassination after assassination. During Asa's reign in Judah, the North went through seven kings (including Ahab, who was still alive when Asa died). In 16:29, we are introduced to Ahab, our next

big player in the Kings narrative. Ahab did what was evil in the eyes of the Lord (16:30) and he counted sinning as commonplace and trivial (16:31). In addition to this, he worshipped Ba'al, the predominant god of the Canaanite people. In the midst of Ahab's evil lifestyle, we are introduced to Elijah, the first "big" prophet in the book of Kings.

**Ba'al, the storm god:** Ba'al was the primary god in the Canaanite pantheon of gods. He was the god of the storm and as such was also responsible for the fertility of the land. In the Ba'al Cycle, a series of myths regarding Ba'al, he conquers the god of the sea and earns the right to become king of the gods. In many artistic depictions, he is seen wielding a lightning bolt as his weapon. Remember this as you read through the Old Testament, as God often uses the weapons of Ba'al to defeat the Canaanites. Keep your eye out for examples of this in this lesson's chapters. Does God have a sense of humor? It appears that He does!

### **Read 1 Kings 16:29-17:24**

**Why would God use a drought to punish Ahab and the Northern Kingdom?**

We learned in 16:24 that Ahab did worse than his father Jeroboam and pursued the worship of the Sidonians - Ba'al. Ba'al is a god from the Canaanite pantheon of gods. He has had different names and faces throughout the ages, but has remained, for the most part, the same god. In ancient Akkadian religions, he was known as Adad. In Levantine religions, such as we see here, he was referred to as Hadad or more often simply Ba'al (meaning lord). Simultaneously and as he progressed throughout history he was

worshipped was Teshub in Anatolia, Set in Egypt, Zeus during the Greek times, and Jupiter during the Roman Empire. We can only guess where Ba'al is now!

Generally speaking, Ba'al was the god of the storm. He was also known as the lord of the sky who governed the rain and thus he had direct control over the germination of plants. He was the protector of life and growth to the agricultural people of the region. The Canaanite's believed that the absence of Ba'al caused dry spells, starvation, death, and chaos. During the dry time of year, they assumed that Ba'al was at battle with other gods (some suggest his battle with Mot, the god of death, as a representative of this - you can read about this in the Ba'al Cycle or get an overview on wikipedia). If there was no rain for an extended period of time, it would act as a direct attack against Ba'al's ability to provide for the people who worshipped him. Where was Ba'al that the rains had ceased? Was he defeated by Mot? Was there a problem? These would be the thoughts that would be on the minds of Ahab and other Ba'al worshippers.

**The Kerith Valley (17:5) was inhospitable even when the rains were plentiful. Why would God send Elijah there in the midst of a drought? What does this say about God?**

Ba'al is unable to take care of his people by providing rain because he is, as we know, not a god at all. Compare him to YHWH who can provide for his people no matter where they are. Our God doesn't need a lush fertile valley to provide for us - he can bring life out of death and sustenance out of want and lacking situations. In addition to this, God is more than just the God of the rain, but also the God of the ravens and the whole world. In addition to being able to provide rain, God can provide bread and meat through the seemingly meaningless raven. Being in the Kerith Valley would require total faith on Elijah's part and total provision from God. In this way, God receives more glory than if Elijah settled down in a food silo containing the country's grain surplus. In the past, God had provided for his people while they were in the wilderness. Now God does



the same and even more liberally as he gets both bread and meat twice a day instead of getting each once a day.

**What is the significance of the widow giving Elijah food first instead of giving him leftovers from her own meal? How can you apply this principle to your own life?**

Against all parental instinct, God instructs her to put Elijah first instead of her son. She performs a mighty step of faith by doing this. In response, she and her son are blessed. In life, it seems easy to do what we can in our flesh and then rely on God for the leftovers or after we have exhausted our human efforts. In one way, this woman had nothing to lose, but on the other hand she puts the Lord's commands in front of her own instinct. She discovers firsthand that Elijah's God is the God who is alive and provides. She can trust in Him to care for her and for her needs, but she needs to put Him first.

**In the Canaanite Ba'al Cycle, Ba'al battles against Mot, the god of death, every so often. While he is battling Mot, the rains cease and do not return until Ba'al is 'resurrected' from his battle with death (this is an oversimplification of the myth, but you can read it online for free as it is public domain). Once he is resurrected, the rains return. In 1 Kings 17, God overcomes death twice. In the Canaanite Ba'al Cycle, Ba'al is incapable of saving himself but has to be rescued from Mot by another god.**

**With this understanding of Ba'al and Ahab's belief system as a Ba'al worshipper, what do you think the authors are saying here in 1 Kings 17?**

We have routinely seen that God is alive and able to bring life out of death in this chapter. Elijah reminded us of this in his oath (verse 5), God proved it in the wilderness (verses 3-7), we saw it exhibited in God's care for the widow (verses 8-16), and it was obvious in the healing of the widow's son (verses 17-24). Whereas Ba'al cannot act when he is battle with Mot, God is the God who lives and is alive. He is not controlled by others and he can bring both rain and dew to the land. The Lord, not Ba'al, determines fertility and provision, not based upon his current inabilities or condition, but according to His will. How much greater and more powerful is God than the Canaanite concept of Ba'al? God is much more glorious than any human mind could ever invent!

### **Read 1 Kings 18**

**After three years, Elijah confronts Ba'al's prophets on Mt. Carmel for a showdown. Elijah explains that the people of Samaria (the Northern Kingdom) have brought the drought upon themselves. How?**

As we read in Deuteronomy 28 at the beginning of this study, Israel was meant to interpret what we may be tempted to deem as "natural" occurrences as actually divine acts of judgment from YHWH. When the rain did not fall, or when the crops did not grow, the Deuteronomic Law leads us to accept that Israel has abandoned God and is no longer worshipping him as he demands. They have abandoned God by worshipping Ba'al, worshipping at an illegitimate place of worship in Bethel & Dan, and so on and so forth. These are the same sins we have been rehashing week after week.

### **React to 18:27-29 in light of Psalm 115:1-9.**

Psalm 115 (ESV)

<sup>1</sup> Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory,  
for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!

<sup>2</sup> Why should the nations say,

“Where is their God?”

<sup>3</sup> Our God is in the heavens;

he does all that he pleases.

<sup>4</sup> Their idols are silver and gold,

the work of human hands.

<sup>5</sup> They have mouths, but do not speak;

eyes, but do not see.

<sup>6</sup> They have ears, but do not hear;

noses, but do not smell.

<sup>7</sup> They have hands, but do not feel;

feet, but do not walk;

and they do not make a sound in their throat.

<sup>8</sup> Those who make them become like them;

so do all who trust in them.

<sup>9</sup> O Israel, trust in the Lord!

He is their help and their shield.

Reading this we can see how foolish it is to trust in idols for our lives. They cannot help, they cannot hear, they cannot do anything, because they are not real gods, but are creations of our own hands and minds. Mankind, the creation, has forsaken the Creator, and recreated new gods who are subservient to us. How pitiful!

**What is the significance of the failure of the prophets of Ba'al?**

## **What is the significance of the method in which Yahweh lit the sacrificial fire?**

As the god of the storm, Ba'al, if anyone *should* have been able to light the altar. The Canaanite people, and now the Northern Kingdom, believed him to wield the lightning bolt as his weapon (like we would picture Zeus or Jupiter from our Greek Mythology books). Surely this would be a simple task for Ba'al! He need only hurl down one lightning bolt from his heavenly abode and ignite the altar in flame. Alas, he cannot because he does not exist. The prophets of Ba'al even mutilate themselves out of frustration and cultic worship (another allusion to the Ba'al Cycle) and still nothing happens.

YHWH, however, ignites the altar when it is drenched with water, immediately after being asked, and in the presence of all of His enemies (the prophets of Ba'al). Which God is bigger? God defeats the followers of Ba'al with Ba'al's own weapons. Instead of Ba'al wielding the fire from heaven, YHWH wields it. This is an utter mockery of Ba'al worship; he is "defeated" by his own weapons.

### **Read 1 Kings 19**

#### **Why do you think that Elijah is afraid of Jezebel?**

Up until this point, Jezebel has primarily been in the background of the story. Now, however, we see that she is the real brains behind the outfit. She was the one who rounded up all the prophets of God to have them killed (18:4), it was Jezebel's table (and not her husband the king's) that the prophets sat at (18:19), and given her track record of

killing people, she is not one to be messed with. In some ways, Elijah is right to fear this woman, but after such a success, it does seem unexpected. Just like us, Elijah wrestled with doubts even with such incredible evidence of God's working.

**This scenario is unexpected after such a victory. What is Elijah dealing with right now?**

The food provided by God is a gentle and subtle reminder of Israel's and Elijah's past. Has not God provided for his people throughout history, fed and cared for Elijah in the wilderness, and just defeated so many of his enemies at Mt. Carmel? Elijah seems to have forgotten, at least for the time, these miraculous moments and mighty acts of God. When God invites him to speak in verse 9, he doesn't speak of these miracles, but only exclaims his loneliness and overwhelming emotions. The single threat of Jezebel overshadows all of the glorious things he has witnessed. He now needs to be reminded of the past so that he can remember who God is and what He has done. He needs to be gently reminded of God's love and softly rebuked for thinking that he is the only one left who is obedient to God. As one author put it, "Somewhere between exaggerated self-loathing and exaggerated self-importance - both partly the product of selective memory - there is a quiet place where Elijah must rest content with who he is and what he has done" (Provan, pg. 145).

Elijah arrives at Mt Horeb, the mountain of God, but will he act like stubborn Israel or faithful Moses? This mountain is where Israel was given the Law and met with the Lord.

**Why does Elijah cover his face when he hears the soft whisper?**

Who can stand before God and live to tell about it? Moses desired to see just a little bit more of God's glory but was told that he couldn't handle any more without dying. How overwhelming the presence and glory of God is! Elijah had seen the power of God. He was used to that, but could He handle the still small voice?

**What do you think is the significance of God being in the whisper and not the elements?**

The emphasis of God on Mt. Carmel was fire - a mighty display of his power and sovereignty. Here, however, God is not in the mighty wind, the powerful earthquake, or the scorching fire; He is in the whisper. There is more to God than just "firepower" and perhaps that is what Elijah needs to learn from. It reminds me of what Jesus says to his disciples when they returned from casting out demons and performing miraculous signs. "Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:20).

**As human beings, we are very passionate about external displays of power. Do you think that there is a principle of ministry we can learn from God's display on Mt. Horeb?**

Why do we pursue God? Do we pursue Him for power, healing, security, or something else that is given by His hand or do we pursue Him for some greater purpose? We pursue God, not because of what He gives, but because of who He is. God, not His provision, is the goal of our faith. We fall in love with Him, not His gifts.

**Do you ever feel as though it all rests on your shoulders? What is the danger in this thinking?**

Of course, we all do, but it leads to pride, arrogance, self-reliance, and forgetting that God is the Creator and we are the created.

**What can you learn from Elijah's error in how he currently views his situation?**

**Elisha followed Elijah after saying goodbye to his parents. Today, we demand signs or confirmation before we follow God. Are you guilty of delayed obedience? In what way?**

**Think About It:**

What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?

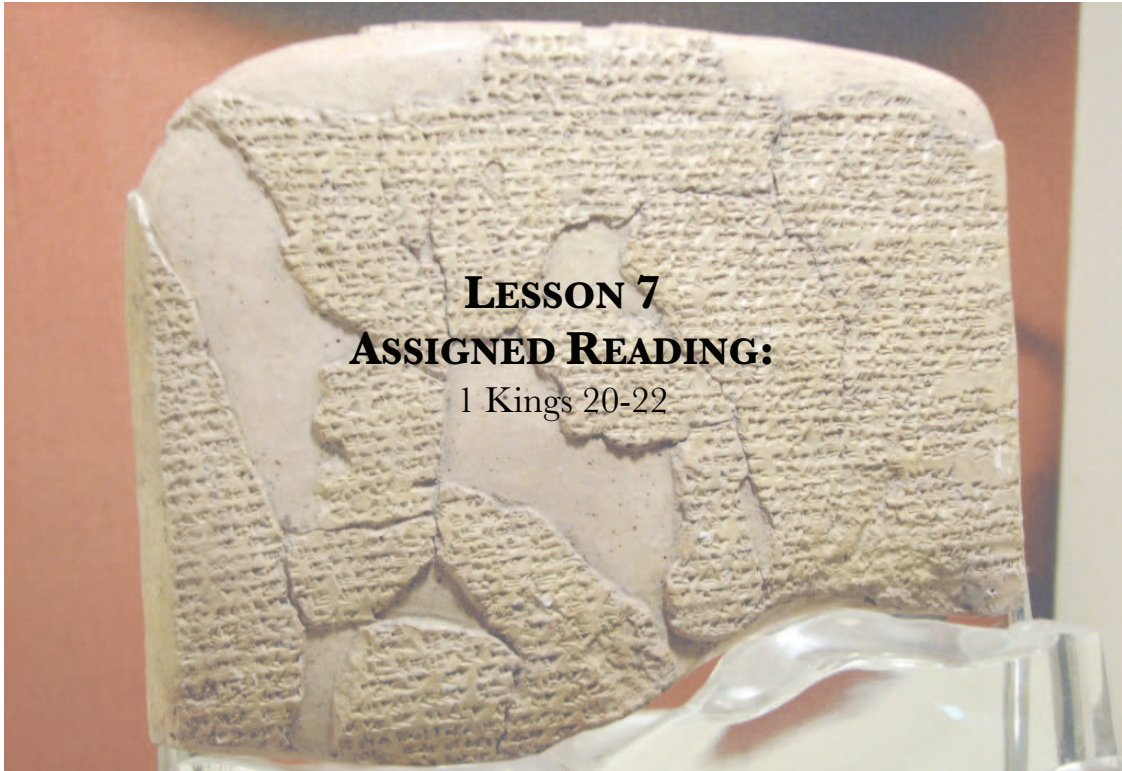
We live in a country and a world that tolerates idolatry. God does not. What areas of idolatry in your life need to be removed?

Elijah was a weak human being just like you and I, yet God did mighty things through him. Are these displays of power and glory reserved for people like Elijah or for everyone?

**The Glory of God:**

Why do you seek God? Daniel Henderson, president of Strategic Renewal International often says, "The only enduring motivation for prayer is that God is worthy to be sought." Reflect on the worthiness of God, not in what he gives you, but in who he is as displayed in these last few chapters.





**LESSON 7**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
1 Kings 20-22

# *Ahab and the Arameans*

## Lesson 7: Ahab and the Arameans

Following the prophesies of 1 Kings 19 and the anointing of Elijah's successor, Elisha, we would expect chapters 20-22 to refer to the anointing of Hazael, as king over Aram, and Jehu, as king over Israel (19:15-18). Instead, however, we are introduced to a new player in Kings and a new prophet. We can either gloss over these three chapters and view them as an anomaly or we can try to figure out why the authors have included them.

In 1 Kings 19, we see Elijah complaining that he is the only servant God has left (19:9-10, 14). God reminds him that there are 7,000 men and women in the Northern Kingdom alone who have not "bowed the knee to Ba'al" (19:18) and are still obedient and loyal to Yahweh. Chapters 20-22 prove this claim to the

reader as we see that God is working even when Elijah is not around.

The last three chapters of 1 Kings, then, seem to serve at least two purposes. First, we see that God is at work through people besides Elijah and Elisha. Second, we have been observing the evils of Ahab with expectation of judgment but have yet to observe it. With these two themes, chapters 20-22 are not an awkward mistake, but add cohesion to the book of Kings.

### Read 1 Kings 20

**Ben-Hadad, the enemy of the Northern Kingdom who partnered with Judah in 1 Kings 15:18-22, once again attacks Samaria. This time, however, Samaria defeats him with ease. Why does God have mercy on the Northern Kingdom?**

**Who wears the pants?** If you have been reading Ahab's historical account closely, you may have raised your eyebrow once or twice at the mention of his wife, Jezebel. She was first introduced to us in 16:31 as the daughter of a Sidonian king who worshipped Ba'al. Notice in chapter 18 that it was Jezebel who took the initiative to get things done, not her husband. It was Jezebel who rounded up the prophets and had them killed. It was Jezebel whom Elijah identified as the focal point of the opposition (18:19). Finally, in chapter 19, Ahab reports to his wife as if she were in charge. Who is king? Wimpy Ahab or his foreign wife? What does this say about Ahab and his leadership?

Although the Northern Kingdom has been disobedient and has worshipped other gods, YHWH is a forbearing and patient God who shows covenantal faithfulness to multiple generations. Even the language used in the first half of chapter 20 leading up to the battle sounds like “conquest” language from Joshua when the Lord would lead the army into battle. This reminds us of God’s role in Israel’s history and in Israel’s dealings with other countries. The battle, hence, sounds like a holy war, *herem*, and we pause to wonder what will happen. Will Ahab be faithful like Joshua or disobedient like Achan?

God is faithful in the midst of Israel’s faithlessness because he is patient and slow to anger!

**After defeating Ben-Hadad’s army in the mountains, Ahab’s forces defeat them again in the plains. What is God’s reason?**

As we read the logic of Ben-Hadad’s commanders (mainly, Israel’s God is a God of the hills), we know that it is foolish advice. In the previous three chapters we saw what happened when people believed in these geographical or power specific gods. We know that God isn’t just a god of the hills, but he is the one true God. He is God of the storm, the plains, the hills, the provider of life from death, and so on. He is I AM, perhaps “I am how I define myself.”

The mind boggling defeat of the Arameans reminds Israel and the opposing nation that YHWH, and not some pagan god, is in charge. YHWH shows that he is truly God, both in the defeat of the foot soldiers and in the miraculous deaths caused by the fallen wall. (Perhaps the wall would remind us of Jericho and God’s mighty victory there!)

**Do you think God’s intention was fulfilled?**

Yes and no. On one level we see that the Arameans were defeated, but on the other hand, Ahab, like Achan in the story of Jericho, isn't fully obedient. God had set Ben-Hadad apart for death at Ahab's hand.

### **Why was it wrong for Ahab to make a covenant with Ben-Hadad?**

In the story of Achan, in Joshua 7, he sets apart booty from Jericho for the wrong purposes. Here, Ahab sets Ben-Hadad aside as booty for his own purposes as well.

By declaring the battles to be a holy war (verses 13, 22, 28), the Lord had put Ben-Hadad and the Syrians under Deuteronomistic law. This means that they belonged to the Lord and were destined to be destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:2; 20:16). Since Ahab let Ben-Hadad go free and made a covenant with him, he disobeyed the law. God declares that now Ahab must suffer the destruction in place of his enemy, Ben-Hadad (1 Kings 20:35-43). Although God offered Ahab multiple opportunities to return to loyal faith, now it appears that Ahab's judgment is inevitable.

### **Read 1 Kings 21**

**Read Leviticus 25:23-28. Why does Naboth, out of loyalty to Yahweh, refuse to sell his land to Ahab?**

As Naboth states, the land is the inheritance of his fathers. As Iain Provan explains in his commentary on 1 & 2 Kings, "It is fundamental to the OT understanding of land that it belonged, not to the families who technically owned it, but to God. God brought

Israel into the land in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise, driving out the previous inhabitants; and he had, through Joshua, allocated it to the tribes as their inheritance. It was therefore not open to individuals to sell land in perpetuity, and complicated laws existed that were designed to keep land in the family and to prevent its accumulation in the hands of a few. Naboth is obligated to refuse Ahab's offer, then, and in making it Ahab has disregard Israelite law" (Provan, p. 157). Simply put, the land wasn't Naboth's to sell permanently and Ahab, as king, should have known that!

**The term used for vegetable garden in the Hebrew of verse 2 is used only one other place in the Old Testament (Deuteronomy 11:10) to describe Egypt. Ahab's request is not an innocent desire. What do you think he is after?**

We learned in chapters 9-11, that Solomon was, in many ways, mimicking the lifestyle of an Egyptian. He married Pharaoh's daughter, collected horses, used slave labor, and so on and so forth. Ahab is, in many ways, doing the same thing. The garden he desires is a garden just like Egypt. Rather than wanting to be like God, follow the Deuteronomistic Law, and grow in godliness, Ahab wants to be like the Egyptians. His desires and his aspirations are tainted. He would rather be like all the other nations than obey God's Law (cf. Leviticus 25:23-28).

In addition to this, the garden described in Deuteronomy 11:10 draws the comparison of a garden that requires man's hands to flourish versus one that requires God's hand to flourish. "When one realizes that Israel is sometimes portrayed in the OT as a vine under God's special care, then it becomes clear that Ahab's desire to replace a vineyard with a vegetable garden is meant to be seen as symbolic of a deeper desire" (Provan, p. 157). Part of the provision from God in the Promised Land was that God would cause the land to be fruitful. Ahab's desire to tend land with his own two hands is a subtle usurpation of God's authority.

**React to the relationship here between Ahab and Jezebel. What does this say about Ahab? Are there any lessons you can learn here?**

It seems consistent with what we have observed between Ahab and Jezebel over the last few chapters that Ahab would run to his room like a baby and mope around because he didn't get his own way. Jezebel truly wears the pants in their relationship. She takes matters into her own hands and writes a letter in Ahab's name. This is a larger commentary on Ahab's leadership. She rules Israel, in Ahab's name, just as she sends out this letter in his name. He has failed as a leader in Israel and as a leader in his marriage.

**Typically God has been pouring judgment out on the son of the king instead of the king. It appears as though God was going to punish Ahab during his lifetime until he repented. What does this say about the severity of Ahab's sin?**

**Read 1 Kings 22:1-40**

**The King of Judah and Ahab, the King of Samaria, make a pact to defeat the king of Aram. Before they go up, however, Jehoshaphat desires to consult Yahweh. Ahab, meanwhile, wants to consult the prophets. What is the difference? Why does Jehoshaphat respond as he does in verse 7?**

The general idea we are supposed to infer is that the prophets that Ahab questions are not the prophets of the Lord. Perhaps they are 400 new prophets of Ba'al who took the place of the 400 who were slain by Elijah. As with the encounter on Mt. Carmel, one prophet is pitted against a score of false prophets. Jehoshaphat, unlike his cohort in the north, seems to still be loyal to YHWH.

**Micaiah, the true prophet of the Lord, states that Israel would be like sheep without a shepherd. What is he saying here?**

**Ahab does not believe Micaiah but still goes into battle under disguise. Why?**

Perhaps Ahab suspects something is amiss, but doesn't have the guts to disobey all the other prophets and his wife. He goes into battle disguised, but the reader knows that it doesn't matter what he does - he is doomed. The Lord has decreed that Ahab will die, and so we know that no disguise whatsoever will save him.

**Why is it significant that we are told the harlots bathed where Ahab's blood was licked up by the dogs?**

In many ways, Ahab was a dog and a harlot. He brought an entire generation of idolatry into northern Israel. “He has fed the people idolatry, and now he is consumed by it” (Provan, p. 165). Deuteronomy 23:17-18 may refer to a male prostitute as a “dog.” The authors are drawing a similarity here between Ahab’s demise and the way he lived his life.

**Read 1 Kings 22:41-53**

**Which other king built ships to travel to Ophir for gold (1 Kings 9:26-28)?**

**Why are the authors drawing this similarity?**

This reminds us of Solomon and his glory days, when the whole world contributed to the wealth of Israel. But these days are not days of glory but of humbling. The ships never went to Ophir, but were wrecked as they lay in port. The hope of returning to the golden age of Solomon seems to be dwindling.

**Why is it significant that the ships were broken at Ezion-geber?**

The authors build up our expectations of the glory days only to have them crashing down.



**Why is it significant that Jehoshaphat will not let the men of Israel (north) on his ships? How is this different from Solomon?**

In this way, Jehoshaphat is more like the early, obedient, Solomon. He won't let foreigners on his ships, unlike Solomon who actively mingled and did business with other people. All this stands in stark contrast to Ahab who embodied so many of Solomon's negative characteristics and then more on top of that! Jehoshaphat is not perfect, but he strives to do what is right in the eyes of the Lord.

**Think About It:**

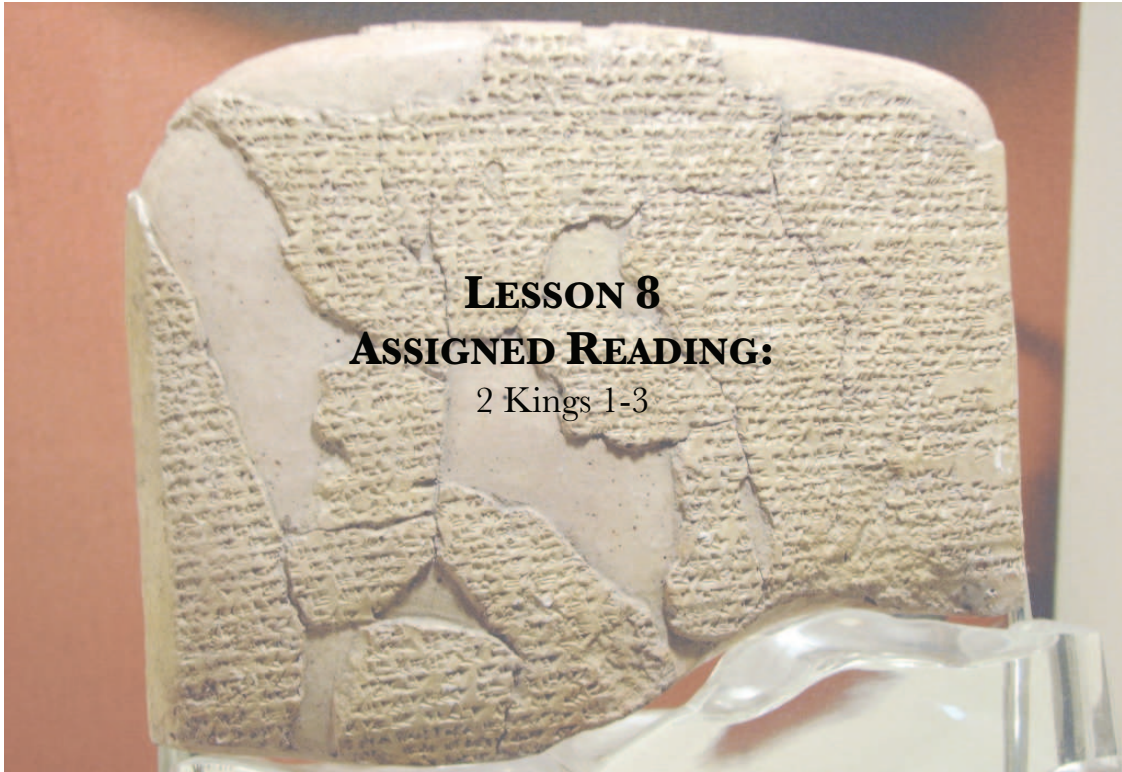
**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**Can we outrun our sins? How does the justice of God work in our lives as Christians?**

Although we are pardoned from the eternal consequences of our sin (e.g. hell), we still may reap the earthly ramifications of our sin (AIDs, broken families, etc.).

**The Glory of God:**

The wrath of God is something that is, in many ways, a "no-no" topic to discuss in church. Perhaps a big part of this is because of the violence and human wrath we see in false religions today. Still, the wrath of God is holy and deserving of honor. Think about the fulfillment of God's word against Ahab and spend time worshipping God as a God of holy wrath.



**LESSON 8**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 1-3

# *Passing the Mantle*

## Lesson 8: Passing the Mantle

Elijah and Elisha are as modern day comic book superheroes of Kings. The miracles and acts of God's power that they perform are so incredible that it is easy to see why skeptics doubt them to be real. Nevertheless, since we believe the Bible to be the inspired Word of God, we know that these stories are not fiction, but represent true events. As readers who are being faithful to the text, we need to try and understand why these prophets are thrust on the scene in such a way. After all, more time is given to Elijah and Elisha than most of the kings of Israel! Why is this?

Chapter 1 of 2 Kings shows us the death of Ahab's son, Ahaziah, but not as we would suspect based upon the prophecies against Ahab at the end of 1 Kings. In chapter 3, we learn that the ease of Ahaziah's death is due to the fact that Ahab still has another son, Jehoram, who will receive the bulk of Ahab's curse. Ahaziah, who dies after an accident, gets off the hook relatively easily compared with what could have been. Before we learn about Jehoram, however, Elijah is taken into heaven and Elisha becomes the premier prophet in the Northern Kingdom.

**What is a faithful reader?** The authors of the Bible did not write a serial narrative like Joshua through Kings in one night. They painstakingly spent hours doing research on various stories from across the two kingdoms, interpreted the local histories in light of Deuteronomy 28, and took the time to weave a thread of God's covenant and judgment throughout the books. Since they spent so much time preparing this narrative, it would be disrespectful of us to gloss over various stories or to read too quickly. As faithful readers, we need to ask ourselves why the authors felt it was important to include every story. Often some of the greatest points are subtle and require us to be careful readers.

### Read 2 Kings 2

**The Lord's presence was connected with a whirlwind in Job 38:1; 40:6; Jeremiah 23:19; 25:32; 30:23; and Zechariah 9:14. This also could be understood as a storm of thunder and lightning. Why is this a fitting way for Elijah to "go out with style"? Give some references**

Elijah battled against the prophets of Ba'al on Mt. Carmel. There God disgraced Ba'al by using his own weapons against the pagan deity (drought, lightning, rain, etc). By

utilizing these similar elements in Elijah's departure from earth, it is as if God is claiming these displays for his own purpose. Is YHWH the God of the storm? Yes! Is He the God of the mountains? Yes! He, contrary to what Ben-Hadad's advisors suggested, is also the God of the Plains. He is the God of everything, but is not everything as pantheism would teach. I AM that I AM might mean, "I am what I claim to be" lest the Israelites would assign a particular function or assignment to God like the pagans did. God is God of everything because He is the only true God.

**Elijah told Elisha to stay behind three times (v2, 4, 6). Why does he do this if he knows Elisha is to be his successor (1 Kings 19:13-21)?**

Perhaps on one level Elijah is reluctant to relieve his post. Sometimes when another person comes onto the picture who can do our job it is hard for us to accept that we aren't nearly as important as we thought that we were. Our pride gets in the way. We have a hard time believing that someone can lead, teach, preach, serve, or do our job as good as we can. Even if in our hearts we want our successor to succeed, our flesh sometimes secretly despises their success. Elijah was a human being just like you and me; should he be immune to such feelings that we can all relate to?

**Do you think Elijah still has a little bit of the "I am the only faithful person left in Israel" mentality?**

## **Why is Elisha persistent to follow him?**

Elisha knows that he is supposed to be Elijah's successor. It is good for him to be persistent and to follow Elijah. In this way, he may be acting more righteously than his master.

**Joshua crossed the Jordan River repeating Moses' action (Joshua 3). Now Elisha crosses the Jordan just like his predecessor Elijah had done (2 Kings 2:14). What does this mean?**

This authenticates Elisha as the legitimate successor of Elijah. It does more than simply reinforce this in Elisha's mind, but the people of the city of Jericho see him do this. This reinforces Elisha as the successor in his eyes, in the eyes of the people, and before the prophetic guild.

**In 2 Kings 2:19-22, Elisha purifies the waters of Jericho so that the city can be habitable once again. Read Joshua 6:26 and 1 Kings 16:34. Why is his action significant?**

Joshua cursed Jericho in Joshua 6:26, “At that time Joshua pronounced this solemn oath: “Cursed before the LORD is the man who undertakes to rebuild this city, Jericho: At the cost of his firstborn son will he lay its foundations; at the cost of his youngest will he set up its gates.” In 1 Kings 16:34, this prophecy is fulfilled. Here we learn that the death of the firstborn was not the end of the curse but that the waters are also putrid. Here God uses Elisha to remove the cursed water from Jericho.

In the situation, there seems to be a parallel with the spiritual condition of Israel. Like Jericho, the Northern Kingdom has been poisoned. Idolatrous worship of Ba’al is making Israel unproductive and spiritually dead. Like during the time of Elijah’s drought, Ba’al, the pagan god who should bring fertility to the land, is incapable of healing the waters at Jericho. Instead, Elisha speaks the Word of the Lord, “I have healed this water”, and cures the problem. There is no magic or supernatural event like the people would be used to in Ba’al worship - simply a proclamation from God and the use of a new bowl (perhaps representing Elisha as the new instrument in God’s hand).

Another possibility in this story is an intriguing parallel with Canaanite religion. In the Ba’al cycle, Ba’al battles Yam, the god of the sea or salt water. In the Northern Kingdom, where they worshipped Ba’al, it might seem odd to them to add salt to the water in order to ‘cure’ the curse. This would be contrary to their worldview. Still, Elisha adds salt and proclaims the water’s purification, thereby belittling Ba’al even more.

**In verses 23-25, why should it not surprise us that there were people mocking the prophet of God at Bethel? (cf. 1 Kings 12:25-13:34)**

Bethel was the home of the counterfeit altar where the people “worshipped” YHWH. It is the root of so much of Israel’s sin and what led to their ultimate downfall.

**What do these three signs (the Jordan, Jericho, and Bethel) reinforce about Elisha?**

**Read 2 Kings 3**

**Jehoram is a better king than his father Ahab or his brother Ahaziah, but he is still considered evil. Although he doesn't worship Ba'al, he still tolerates Ba'al worship - much like a modern day politician would tolerate things that are detestable to God (cf. Romans 1:32). Why does God detest partial obedience?**

We are commanded to love YHWH with all of our heart, mind, soul, & strength (Deut. 6:5). God desires all of our heart. Partial obedience is not obedience at all!

**The similarities between 2 Kings 3 and 1 Kings 22 are obvious. This forces us to look at the differences. Why is Jehoshaphat not as eager to seek the Lord as he was in 1 Kings?**

We wondered about Jehoshaphat in 1 Kings 22. On one level, he seemed to be ushering in a new age (building the ships), but then we find that the 'good ol days' are

never to return (the ships never leave port). It appears that Solomon's legacy is at work in Judah's current king. He seems to have wandered the way of his fathers. Rather than seek YHWH before the battle to see if he should even be there, the king doesn't seek the prophets of God until they are in dire conditions. It appears that his faith may be faltering. This supports the goal of Kings: to show why the kingdom had to fall.

**It is not until the kings find themselves dying of thirst in the desert that they inquire of the Lord. This is typical of so many of us in our walks with the Lord. What does this say about the kings in chapter 3 and what does it say about us?**

Daniel Henderson, president of Strategic Renewal International often says, "Prayerlessness is our declaration of independence from God." When we don't consult the Lord or approach God in our lives, we are essentially telling him that we don't need his help. We think that we can do it all on our own. It also speaks plainly about our heart. When people are close to God (whether in the Bible or in life) they bring everything to God. This doesn't mean that they are afraid to act or that they don't use common sense, but they don't use their own human ability as an excuse to ignore the Lord. God wants to be involved in every area of our life. We are supposed to love God with all of our heart all of the time - not just when it benefits the outcome of our battle.

**Elisha seems to give the kings good news on one level, but is still in opposition to Jehoram (verses 10, 13). Do you think Elisha is telling the truth when he says that Moabites will lose or is he trying to trick him like Micaiah did with Ahab in 1 Kings 22? Why?**



I am undecided based upon the rest of the story. On one level, I think that he is being deceptive because the Moabites eventually force the Israelites to retreat. On the other hand, God fulfills the things he said he would fulfill.

**All seems to be going well until the last two verses. In a turn of events, the king of Moab sacrifices his oldest son, and heir to the throne, to his god as a last plea to be delivered from the Israelite army. Verse 27 reads, “And there came great wrath against Israel, and they departed from him and returned to their own land.” Did God respond to this child sacrifice? What is going on here?**

I see two options:

- 1) God intended for this to happen and his prophesy through Elisha was a form of judgment (like Micaiah).
- 2) The Israelite forces were so infected with a pagan worldview, that as they saw the Moabite king sacrifice his child they feared the ramifications. Perhaps instead of believing that YHWH was the only God, they viewed him as one god among many. They might have anticipated the wrath of Chemosh to arise following the sacrifice. Perhaps they fled, not because they should have, but because they had an unnecessary fear. In addition, the forces of Moab had a rush of adrenaline or fervor as they expected their God to now help them. This, coupled with Israelite fear based upon a pagan worldview, led to their defeat.

### **Did everything Elisha predict happen?**

Yes it did. God did hand the Moabites into their hands. He never promised entire annihilation. Perhaps God planned for the twist at the end of the battle and Elisha didn't know about it? It is hard to determine if this was trickery or if it was lack of faith.

### **What does this say about the nature of prophecy? Is it the prophet's message or God's (cf. 2 Peter 1:21)?**

The message is not the prophet's but God's. In this way, Elisha is simply telling what God had him say - he has no power over the results or even knows if it is necessarily true. The nature of biblical prophecy is that the person prophesying doesn't always know what it means!

### **How does chapter 3 reinforce Elisha as Elijah's successor?**

As the prophet who washed Elijah's hands, he is automatically recognized as being the real deal. God does provide water as Elisha said that He would, and Elisha also shows himself to stand against the king of Israel. In this way, he is just like Elijah!

**Think About It:**

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

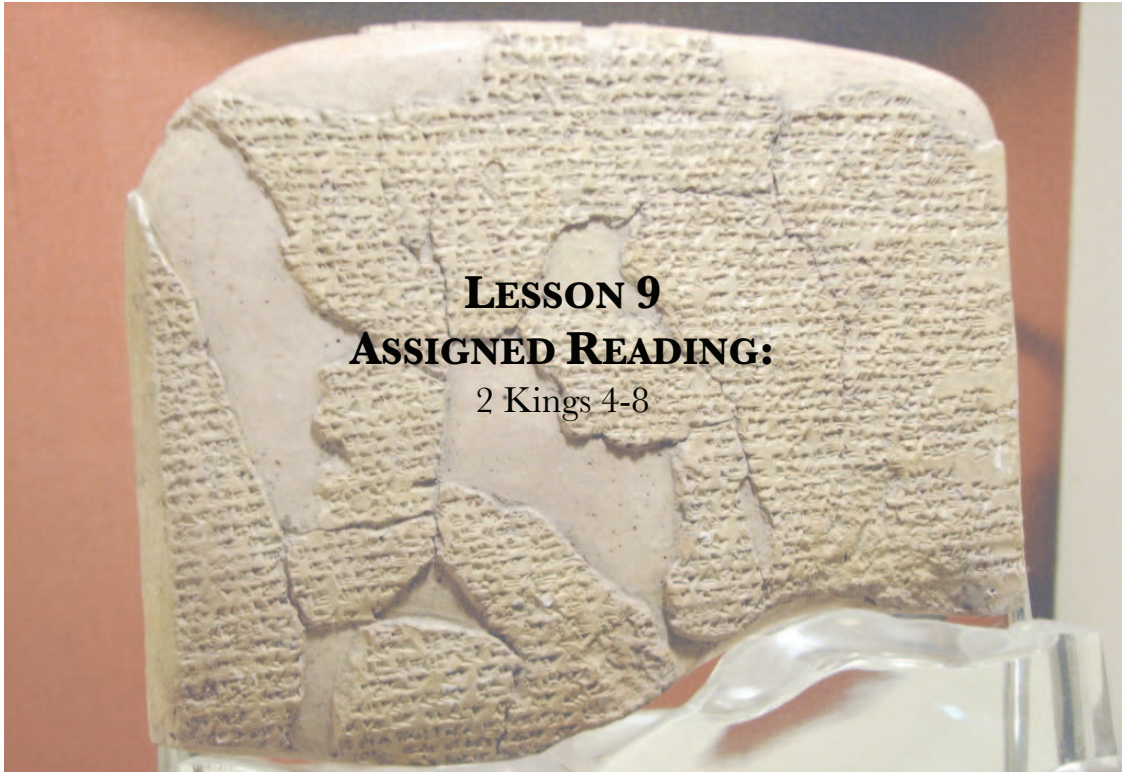
**What do these stories teach us about God's sovereignty?**

This final story may be an example of the difficulty of understanding the balance of man's choice and God's sovereignty. God has determined that Israel would have victory over Moab, but did the Israelites fail to embrace the victory in faith?

**Does God use unbelievers to fulfill his purposes? Explain and given an example from your own life.**

**The Glory of God:**

Imagine that you were an obedient Hebrew involved in the battle with Moab. After suffering defeat, you returned to your home and desired to worship God. How does Israel's defeat glorify God? Worship God in response to this historical account.



**LESSON 9**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 4-8

# *Elisha's Double Portion*

## **Lesson 9: Elisha's Double Portion**

Although most readers would be expecting some form of explanation after Israel's defeat at Moab, instead the next few chapters bring us more examples of Elisha's miracles. Chapters 4 and 5 reveal some private miracles that the prophet performs, whereas 6 and 7 place Elisha more in the center of international activity.

Since we receive no explanation of 2 Kings 3:26-27, we may assume that the battle story from the previous chapter has more to do with Elisha as Elijah's successor than anything else. Elisha, like Elijah, is a prophet involved with international politics and God will use him to bring judgment or mercy upon whomever He wishes. Chapters 4-7 continue to reinforce Elisha's authority as the prophet of God.

### **How do we read the Old Testament?**

The Old Testament can be challenging to read. Often these stories become either illustrations or victims of eisegesis (where we force a meaning into the text). A classic example of this is the story of the widow in 2 Kings 4:1-7. Normally this passage is studied with the conclusion that "God can bless you with overflow" or He will bless you "according to your faith." Although these things may be true, are they the only reason the authors included them in Kings? Of course not. Our challenge, then, is to realize that these stories are not here "for application" alone, but serve a deeper purpose, and to discover what that purpose is!

### **Read 2 Kings 5**

**Why is it significant that a little girl is the one who tells Naaman's wife about Yahweh and his healing powers?**

Although Naaman had orchestrated battles against Israel and had interacted, no doubt, with the king or his messengers, he had no knowledge of YHWH or his prophets.

If he did have knowledge of Israel's God, he never necessarily gave it much thought. Here, however, we have a little girl who tells Naaman's wife about Elisha and his God. This may be a subtle attack against Israel's leadership. Israel was supposed to learn about God from the Levites, but instead the kings set in place random men to govern the altars at Bethel and Dan. Likewise, Israel was ordained by God to be a Kingdom of Priests and a lighthouse to the nations. Although the leaders of Israel fail in this respect, a little girl, who by custom and culture has no power, fulfills her role more than the king of Israel!

### **Why does Namaan's messenger go to the king of Israel first?**

The king of Aram would expect that the king of Israel would have a knowledge of his own patron god, YHWH, and would be able to council Namaan in this matter. As we know from the Bible and from the accounts in Kings, YHWH is no mere patron god but is the God of gods. It is ironic that the king of Israel's response is, "Am I God? Can I kill and bring back to life? Why does this fellow send someone to me to be cured of his leprosy? See how he is trying to pick a quarrel with me!" when this is exactly what YHWH can do! Rather than be excited at a chance to share the power of his God with the Arameans, the king of Israel is nervous. Why? Because he, even as the king, has no faith in his own God, YHWH.

In other Ancient Near Eastern cultures it was unheard of for a king to not follow his own patron god. This shows the faithlessness of Israel's kings. Even the surrounding kings had more faith in their false gods than Israel had towards the true God.

### **Why is Namaan initially upset about Elisha's command? How does his view change after he is obedient?**

An Ancient Near Eastern perspective on prophets was that they were in complete control over their prophetic gift like sorcerers or magicians. Namaan, like others, believed that Elisha or any prophet would be able to heal him by his own power. What he failed to recognize was that unlike the false gods, YHWH is not some mere god to be called upon

at the whim of one of his conjurers like a genie or Djinn. It is not the prophet who can heal, but the prophet's God. All this is to say, when Elisha sends a messenger, instead of coming himself, and then tells Namaan to bathe in the Jordan River, which sounds more like ritual cleansing than a miracle, Namaan is furious. He is trying to fit Elisha into the mold of one of Syria's (Aram's) prophets. When Elisha doesn't fit the mold, Namaan gets upset.

Elisha's servants humbly compel Namaan to do as Elisha has suggested. After doing so, he is miraculously cured. Namaan's reaction is, "Now I know that there is no God in all the world except in Israel" (v15). Namaan has become convinced that God is real. By having the healing happen in this way God, and not Elisha, was able to receive all of the credit. What did Elisha do? Nothing! In this way, YHWH is alive and interacts with Namaan directly. Namaan has experienced God, not God's prophet.

**What contrast are we supposed to gather from the characters of the little servant girl, Gehazi, and Namaan?**

The little servant girl and Namaan, a pagan, understand who the true God is. The little girl believes enough to encourage a pagan to go and seek him out. Namaan understands enough to shout his confession of faith. Gehazi, however, who sits at the feet of the prophet and should know better than anyone is blinded by his own idolatry: greed. His ploy is clever, not asking for too much so as to arouse suspicion, but he should know that the Lord sees all and knows all. Perhaps Gehazi treats YHWH like a patron god more than Namaan the pagan!

**Read 2 Kings 6:1-23**

Conditions between Aram and Israel have deteriorated since chapter 5 and once again the nations are at war. In the midst of the chaos, however, we are reminded that

God is sovereign over all people. Through a series of miracles, God brings the Aramean army into Samaria at the mercy of Israel's king. Instead of striking them down, Israel blesses them with a feast. In this way, the current disaster is averted, but the peace is short-lived.

**Read 2 Kings 6:24-7:20**

**Who is Ben-Hadad? Where have we seen him before? Give references.**

In 1 Kings 15:18, Asa, king of Judah, employed a Ben-Hadad to invade Israel. Years later, Ben-Hadad's son, by the same name, was engaged in a long war with the Northern Kingdom. We have already seen him in 1 Kings 20 & 22.

**Why is there famine in Samaria?**

Deuteronomy makes it clear that famine (and even cannibalism) is a curse for forsaking the Lord. It is part of the "natural" consequences for spiritual disobedience. In Leviticus 26, God says that an obedient Israel will eat their fill of bread, but a disobedient Israel will, instead, never be satisfied and eat their own children.

**Why does Jehoram blame Elisha for the famine and cannibalism present in his land?**



It appears that Jehoram has the same misunderstanding that Namaan had before he was cleansed by God. The king of Israel is viewing YHWH as one god among many and his prophet as a conjurer of tricks. He thinks that Elisha is to blame and that if he can just take care of the prophet then everything will go back to normal - almost as if the prophet was some form of a witch-doctor. How backwards this is! Like Namaan before him, Jehoram needs to realize that Elisha is the mouthpiece of God. God is the one who controls the rain and the growth of crops. Killing Elisha won't stop the famine; only true repentance (not faking repentance by wearing sackcloth) will bring about real change. The king of Israel would rather blame the prophet than take any guilt on his own head.

**Why does God provide food for this disobedient people?**

God does more than simply provide for his disobedient people; he provides overnight. The gravity of such a turnaround was enough to make the king of Israel doubt that the words of the prophecy could be true, but God follows through on His Word (as He has consistently done throughout Kings). Why does God do it? Because He is the God of the covenant and He is a loving God who shows kindness to those who are unworthy (just like us!). His kindness is not founded on merit, but on His timeless promises to us.

**Does it surprise you that the Northern Kingdom still does not repent and follow God wholeheartedly? Why or why not?**

## **Read 2 Kings 8**

**Why is it significant that Ben-Hadad inquires of Elisha regarding his illness?**

Namaan's testimony (and the testimony of the little slave girl) appears to have had reaching impact on the people of Aram. It is ironic for us to find that Ben-Hadad knows of and 'believes' in YHWH enough to consult Elisha about his illness when the king of Israel wishes that Elisha was off the map! In similar circumstances in Israel, the king instead sought the opinion of pagan gods like Ba'al and Ba'al-Zebub (2 Kings 1:2). What a difference. The authors may be commenting on the utter unfaithfulness of Israel by drawing the pagan nations as more on target than God's own people!

**Hazael seems surprised at his pronouncement to be the future king of Aram. God commanded Elijah in 1 Kings 19:15 to anoint Hazael with oil as the future king. Are we to assume then that Elijah never fulfilled this command?**

It appears that Elijah, in the midst of his moping around, failed to anoint Hazael to be the future king of Aram. Although he failed in God's command, however, God's plan is not to be thwarted or changed. Elisha informs him and Hazael acts upon it immediately. Taking the prophecy as truth, he smothers his master with a wet cloth and somehow takes power.

Telling and important to note in our theme and agenda of Kings is that Elijah was disobedient by not anointing Hazael. This does not mean that Elijah was bad or evil by any means, but what it does mean is that “no man is good, no not one.” David, Solomon, Elijah, and everyone in Israel (north and south) fall short of God’s standard. The kingdom was destined to fall!

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Israel’s treachery has infected Judah. As Solomon was “unequally yoked” to his wives, so the Judean kings have become unequally yoke to theirs and their children are the consequence of forbidden marriages. Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah who was pious in his youth, allowed his son to marry Ahab’s daughter. Just as Jezebel had incited Ahab to evil, so the daughter of Jezebel leads Jehoshaphat’s son to rebel against God.

2 Kings informs us that Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram, has the same name as Ahab’s son in Samaria and this is fitting since they behave in the same way. Still, God has mercy on Judah for the sake of His servant David.

Likewise, Jehoram, king of Judah’s, successor, Ahaziah, had the same name as his father’s cousin in the North, Ahaziah, who reigned in Israel for only one year before he his death. Like Ahab and his two sons, the Judean Ahaziah was equally evil because he was a son-in-law of Ahab (8:27). His existence was just as short-lived as his northern relative by the same name.

It seems peculiar that these kings all have the same name and lived during the same time. Frequently throughout the Old Testament, God threatens to blot out the names of people from memory as a way of punishment. What if Ahaziah and Jehoram were not the real names of the kings of Judah, but the authors of Kings record them as such to “blot out their names”? In this way, they are shamed because no one remembers their real names, just that they acted like their Northern relatives.

**Is this a possibility? Why or why not?**

This is an opinion question, but something to consider is the story of Ruth. The rightful kinsmen redeemer of Ruth refuses to redeem Ruth because she is a Moabitess and he is concerned about his name & reputation (we know this because he is interested in her until he learns she is from Moab). Boaz, however, who wants to do the right thing and wants to honor this God-fearing woman, doesn't care about his reputation, but about honoring God. What happens in the story? Boaz goes down in history and the rightful kinsmen redeemer never even has his name recorded. He who was concerned about his name is left nameless (literally, so & so). Now that's what we call ironic!

**Think About It:**

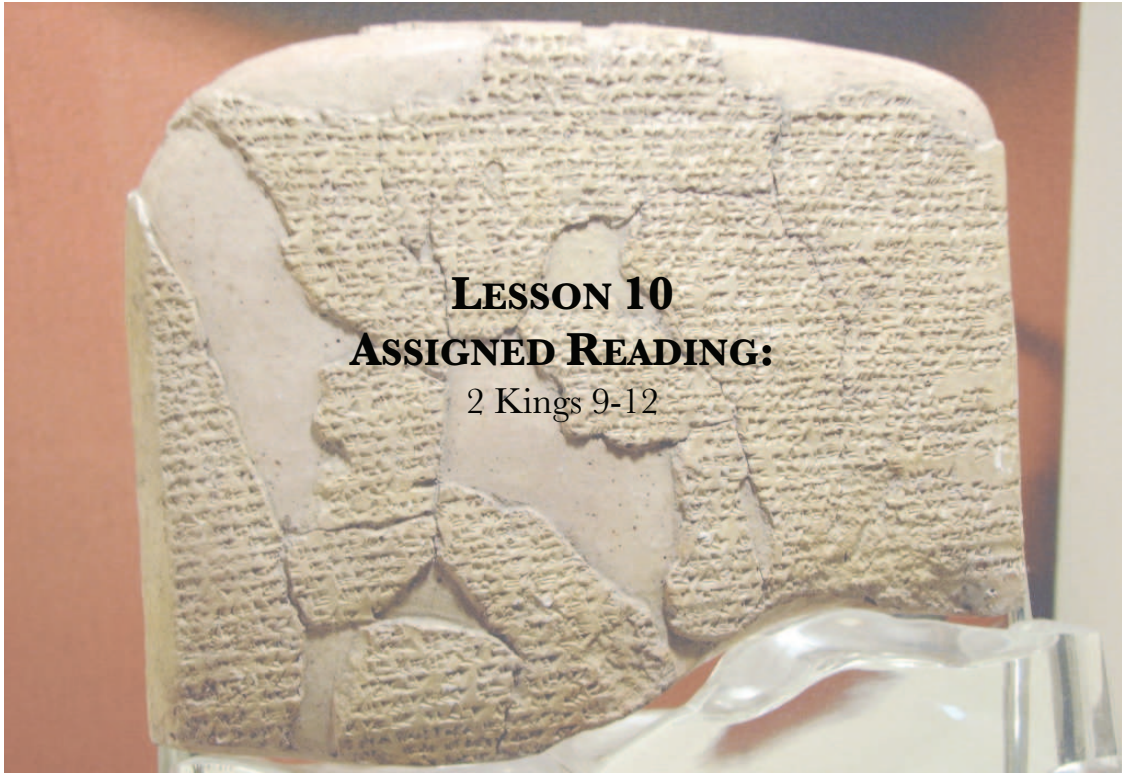
**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

The goal of Kings is to explain why the exile had to happen. Here we see that the pagans are more godly than the Israelites. Even Elijah failed to be obedient to God in the Lord's command to anoint Hazael.

**God continues to take care of his children (faithful and unfaithful). How does it make you feel that God shines upon the righteous and the wicked? Why does God let the wicked prosper?**

**The Glory of God:**

After his healing, Naaman exclaims in 2 Kings 5:15, "For sure I know that there is no God in all the earth except in Israel!" Worship God as the one true God. What makes YHWH unique and holy compared to the false gods in this world?



**LESSON 10**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 9-12

*Jehu & the  
Wrath of God*

## Lesson 10: Jehu and the Wrath of God

Like the build to climax in an epic war movie, we have been patiently waiting for the fall of Ahab's family since 1 Kings 21. Up until this point, it has almost appeared as though God has forgotten about the prophecies He gave to Elijah concerning the kings of Northern Israel. Having used Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram to serve His purposes, however, God's promise is now poised for completion.

Jehoram, son of Ahab, has been king for twelve years and the time of fulfilling judgment against his idolatrous house has come (1 Kings 21:21-29). Elisha is still with us, and Hazael is king of Aram. Of the prophecies and people presented in 1 Kings 19:15-18 to Elijah, only Jehu has yet to come on the scene. In the grand drama that has been prepared by Yahweh for years, Jehu arrives just in time to purge Ahab's house from

Samaria and to purify the corruption that has crept into the Davidic line of kings. The day of reckoning has come.

As we read about the cleansing of Northern Israel in chapters 9 and 10, we cannot help but wonder if God will show mercy to the house of Judah - for they too have become corrupted by Ahab's harlotry.

### **Read 2 Kings 9-10**

**Read 1 Samuel 9:27-10:16. Jehu, in 2 Kings 9, is one of three kings to be anointed in this fashion (including Saul and Solomon). List some similarities between Saul and Jehu.**

**The Word of the Lord.** In Isaiah 40:7-8, we read that humanity is like grass that dries up and blows away but the word or decree of our God is forever reliable. In today's lesson we learn that God's decrees, even though they may appear delayed, will be brought to fulfillment. This is bad news for the family of Ahab, but this is good news for us. It is because of the eternal nature of God's decrees and promises that we are able to enjoy salvation as co-heirs with Christ. The promises God gave to Abraham, Moses, and David provide us with blessings we could never earn. It is because of the faithfulness of our God that we can, in return, have faith and trust in Him!

Like Saul, Jehu is anointed with oil from a flask (Saul is the only other anointing done in this fashion in the OT.). Afterwards, like Saul, he is reluctant to be responsible for his anointing or respond to questions. At first Jehu does not want to tell his friends and

comrades about what the prophet told him. Similarly, Saul tells his uncle that the prophet Samuel only wanted to talk to him about the donkeys; he doesn't mention the monarchy.

**Why do you think Jehu's comrades are so quick to proclaim him as king?**

**Do you think this is a subtle mocking of Jehoram? Why or why not?**

If Jehoram is anything like his father Ahab, he probably isn't the best fighter or warrior we have ever seen. Ahab hid his identity by wearing fake clothes in the battle that led to his death (hardly an honorable way to die). Jehoram is back in town recovering from wounds he received during battle. Although we do not know what kind of wounds they were, they cannot be too bad since he drives out on a chariot later to meet up with Jehu.

All this is to say, warriors want to follow a warrior. They never want to follow a politician. Perhaps this is one of the reasons why David was such a king of God and a king of the people. At his start, he was a run-of-the-mill, blue-collar, tough, man's man. He was the kind of leader that any warrior would want to follow. After all, he was a mercenary! Jehu's comrades-in-arms are much more apt to follow him, a guy they have

fought next to, than Jehoram, a wimp.

**As Jehoram and Ahaziah come out to meet Jehu, we find that they are on the land which belonged to Naboth (1 Kings 21:1-16). Why is this significant?**

As Jehu says later, the land where Jehoram was thrown is the same land where the doom of Ahab and his dynasty was pronounced by God. Although God did not destroy Ahab's dynasty during Ahab's life because of his repentance, the end of his family was inevitable. It is fitting that the family who brought the idolatrous worship of Ba'al into the Northern Kingdom should die in the same exact plot of land where their judgment was given. For the reader, this ties up loose-ends and helps us to make a mental connection with Ahab's judgment in case we forgot about the prophecy in 1 Kings 21. Once again, we are reminded by the authors that God's word is true and always comes to pass!

**Jehu shoots Jehoram with an arrow to slay him. Why is death in this fashion significant?**

Like father, like son. Ahab was pierced by an arrow "by accident" while he was dressed as a regular soldier instead of the king. In a similar fashion, Jehoram is pierced through the back by Jehu's arrow. His death is one of shame. He is killed in the land of Naboth, he is killed by his own commander, and he is shot in the back while he is running



away. His death is filled with shame and dishonor just like his father's.

**Even Ahaziah, a king of Judah, since he was infected by the line of Ahab, receives judgment as he is killed in his chariot. What does this say about the state of the Davidic line at this time?**

2 Kings 8:25-29 tells us that Ahaziah was an evil king. He was related to Ahab's family and this infection spread to his spiritual and political life. He worshipped Ahab's gods instead of worshipping the Lord. Politically, he aligned himself with Northern Israel unlike his grandfather Jehoshaphat who wouldn't even let people from the Northern Kingdom on his ships. Ahaziah is a different kind of king. This shows us that the Davidic line has not only been corrupted by Ahab's blood, but also by Ahab's worship.

**What do you notice about the way Jezebel is adorned in chapter 9? Read Ezekiel 23:36-49 if you need a hint. What are the authors trying to say by depicting her in this fashion?**

From history, we know that this kind of eye-painting can represent two things. One, we know that it was common in Egypt. Egypt, as we have seen previously, can symbolically represent idol worship and materialism in the Bible. In this regard, Jezebel announces that she wants to look queenly for Jehu's arrival. Two, prostitutes would adorn

themselves in this fashion to woo would-be clients. Jezebel has played the whore with Israel for too long. She infected the kingdom with spiritual idolatry (adultery) and through her actions killed many innocent men and women of God. It is fitting that Ahab, her husband, had his blood licked in the place where prostitutes bathed and that she is adorned as a harlot. It is no wonder that the term Jezebel has become synonymous with promiscuous, evil women.

**In 10:1-11, Jehu writes letters to the leading people of Samaria and tells them that if they are in support of him they must kill Ahab's sons. Who else in the story of Ahab wrote a letter to have someone killed? Is this coincidence or does it show literary intention?**

We know from 1 Kings 21 that Jezebel wrote a letter in her husband Ahab's name to have Naboth killed. She called forth fake witnesses to manufacture lies against an innocent man so that Naboth would be executed and Ahab could take his vineyard for a vegetable garden. Now Jehu writes a letter to have her grandchildren executed and their heads piled high. Ironic, isn't it?

**Jehu destroyed the Baal cult, but failed to do anything about the golden calves (10:29). Still he is declared righteous and promised descendants (10:30). Why?**

There are a few important things to note here. 1) Ba'al worship has consumed our story since 1 Kings 16. This is a key blow against Ba'al worship in Israel and is extremely significant. No, Jehu does not destroy all idolatry, for the people still worship at Bethel & Dan, but his actions are so severe that God declares him as righteous. Compared to every king in the north since Jeroboam, who allowed idolatry to flourish, married foreign wives, and played the harlot with other gods, Jehu is a saint. 2) Jehu is the only king not in the Davidic line who is considered to be righteous (Heb. *yasar*). This is significant in that because of his actions he is given a 'David-like dynasty'. His dynasty is not eternal, but it is also not conditional. He is promised four generations of kings, no matter how evil they may turn out to be!

All of this is to emphasize the severity of Ba'al worship in Israel and underline God's hatred for idolatry. Jehu's actions are so great in God's eyes that God is lenient towards some of his other law-breaking actions on account of his zeal for God. Similarly, David was not a perfect man, but God knew that he was a man after God's own heart, or in today's vernacular, a man who was "loyal" to God. Jehu proves himself to be loyal to God in a nation where everyone seems to be loyal to Ba'al.

### **Read 2 Kings 11-12**

After such devastation in chapters 9-10, including the death of Judah's king, the reader wonders if there is any hope for the Davidic line. Indeed, as we read about Athaliah and how she destroys the entire royal family so that she can become ruler of Judah, we fear the worst. Thankfully, however, the people of Judah are different from those in Samaria and faithful men and women are to be found. Joash, a prince of the king, is smuggled away and raised in the temple in secret until those faithful to Yahweh are ready to dethrone the "Jezebel of the South."

**Why is it significant that Joash was raised in the temple under the tutelage of Jehoida, the priest?**

As we stated above, Judah is an entirely different place than Samaria (or so it seems). It is significant that Joash is raised in the temple because it sparks us with hope for the Davidic kingdom and for the children of Israel as a whole. Perhaps things can still turn around. This fact of Joash's upbringing is the first good sign in a long time!

**The king and people have a covenant renewal ceremony. Why is this significant?**

After such corruption from foreign influences (Ba'al worship, etc), it is necessary for the people of Judah to reevaluate and re-establish what they stand for. By going through another covenant ceremony, they are recommitting themselves publicly to the things that they are supposed to be committed to. It is similar to what we would think of as public baptism or a marriage ceremony. This covenant renewal redefines what the people stand for.

**Why was it important for the people to go and destroy the Baal centers of worship in 11:17-20?**

Judah has been defined by pagan worship in recent years instead of by YHWH worship. By destroying these pagan centers for worship, the people of Judah are guarding themselves against future sin. They are, essentially, doing what should have been done years ago.

**In chapter 12, Joash orders the restoration of the temple, something which had been in neglect under the former kings. We find that the priests, including Jehoiada, are not overly anxious to spend the donated money for the restoration. Why?**

It seems as though Jehoiada and the other priests are zealous for the Davidic line and for YHWH to an extent, but, like the former kings, are not as committed as they appear on the surface. They are represented by the authors as being more concerned with their own benefit than that of the temple as they take the money even though they are well provided for by the sacrificial system. Apparently the High Priest, Jehoiada, has zeal for the Lord, but it is hindered by his greed. Ironically, the royal secretary and political men, who are not necessarily religious men, act with complete honesty. What a sad testimony for the priests and “people of God.”

**Does this surprise you?**

Since the goal of 1 & 2 Kings is to explain why the kingdom fell, these actions come as no surprise. Another thing to consider is, if Joash was such a godly king, how

come it took so long for him to realize that the temple wasn't being repaired? When was the last time he was in the temple that he didn't realize no work was being done?

**Is this foreshadowing of future events in Judah or is this just part of the story? Why or why not?**

**Thing About It:**

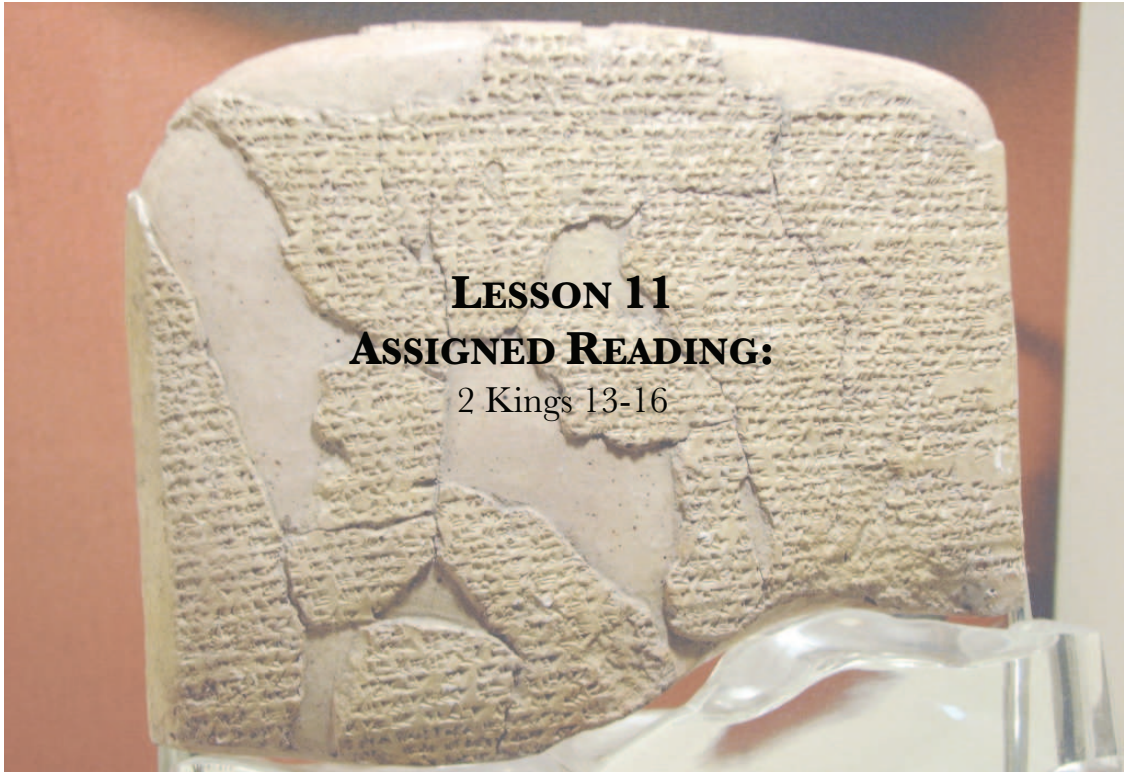
**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**There are times when all of us have to have our own “covenant renewal ceremony” like Judah did. It is easy for us to become distracted and focus on the created rather than the Creator. Do you need to recommit yourself to God?**

**Money has incredible power over people. All of us can be just like the priests in 2 Kings 12. Think about how you spend your money. What do you cherish? God or money?**

**The Glory of God:**

In this section, God is glorified as His Word comes to fruition. How encouraging it is for us to know that when God says something will happen - it is so! Worship God in prayer today as you focus God's faithfulness to His promises.



**LESSON 11**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 13-16

*So Long,  
Elisha*



## **Lesson 11: So Long, Elisha**

For the bulk of the Kings narrative, the Northern Kingdom of Israel has had a divine protector - one who stands on the side of the Lord and proclaims His truth to the people. With the death of Elisha and no successor named, we as readers should feel a strange sense of nervousness. Elisha has been a voice of truth and light in an evil empire. What will become of these people now that he is gone?

These three chapters in the book of 2 Kings bring us through the reigns of five kings in Judah and seven kings in Israel over the course of 100 or so years. The pace is definitely quickening. Seemingly gone are the days when the kings of Judah and Israel would rule their people for a generation (40 years in the Bible) and die in peace. As we

approach the end of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 17), the drums of war resound. With the death of Elisha and the quick turnover of kings, we as readers are expecting disaster. How much longer will God be patient with His people? When will disaster strike?

### **Read 2 Kings 13**

**Jehu's son, Jehoahaz, was an evil king who followed in the "sins of Jeroboam". This phrase occurs 15 times in Kings. What does it mean?**

**Who is Tiglath Pileser III?** After a hundred-year reprieve, Tiglath-Pileser III (also known as Pul), the founder of the Neo-Assyrian empire, began to invade south towards Syria and Israel. In 743 B.C.E., he received tribute from Syria and Menahem of Israel (2 Kgs. 15:19, 20). Faced with an impending attack from Rezin of Syria and Pekah of Israel, King Ahaz of Judah sent tribute to Tiglath-Pileser III in exchange for his help to defeat these kings (2 Kings 16:5-16; cf. Isaiah 7). Tiglath-Pileser III subdued Damascus and installed Hoshea over Israel after King Pekah was assassinated (2 Kgs. 15:29-30).

As we have seen time and time again, the sin of Jeroboam refers primarily to the worship of YHWH (or some idol version thereof) at the pagan sites of Bethel and Dan where the false altars and golden calves were set up. This was not only idol worship, but a direct violation of Deuteronomy 12:5 which stated that there would be one, national

place of worship.

**Why will God be patient with the descendants of Jehu even though they may be evil and experience some form of divine discipline (e.g. invading armies)?**

In the last lesson, we saw that God had given Jehu a Davidic-like dynasty which would last four generations. The dynasty would be Davidic in that it was a) given to him because Jehu was righteous in God's eyes, and b) his descendants would have the throne for four generations regardless of how they behaved.

**On Elisha's deathbed, godly Joash came to visit him. There Joash received a prophecy from the Lord about Judah's battles with Aram. Why did Elisha grow angry with Joash? Do you think this was justified?**

So far in chapter 13, we have seen that Jehu's family is prone to partial obedience. In verse 4, Jehoahaz sought the favor of the Lord, and the Lord listened to him but he, nevertheless, did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam (verse 6). His son, Jehoash or Joash, was just like his father. He partially obeyed, but also refused to fully obey.

When we arrive at this story, however, it seems as though he obeys fully in action, but perhaps not in heart. His motive for visiting Elisha is not that he is mourning the loss of the prophet of God, but that the chariots of Israel have been destroyed (verse 14). When Elisha tells him to strike the ground, he strikes it only three times and then stops. Perhaps his enthusiasm is lacking?

**Is there a difference between obedience and “enthusiastic” obedience?  
Explain.**

**Why did the authors include the strange story of the Moabite man’s resurrection?**

**In light of the prophecy against Joash in verse 19, why is this resurrection story important?**

As we have seen time and time again, such as in the story of Namaan for example, the pagans of the ancient world believed that the prophet or the witchdoctor were the ones with the power. The gods were, in their minds, manipulated into performing various curses or miracles with power objects (This is why they would prefer things such as child sacrifice, cast the evil eye, or wear amulets). By having the Moabite man be resurrected, it shows that Elisha still has power even though he is dead. We can be assured that the judgment pronounced by God through Elisha will still occur even though he is no longer alive.

This also may be symbolic of the Israelite exile and return. As the dead man was thrown into the tomb, Israel will be thrown into exile. Like the Moabite man (who worships pagan gods just like Israel), God will resurrect Israel when he brings them back into the land. Since the authors of 1 & 2 Kings had no knowledge of the return from exile, however, it seems more likely that the former interpretation is more accurate.

**In 13:23, we finally see why God has been as gracious as He has been towards the Northern Kingdom. In hindsight, how does this verse change the way we read the Kings narrative? What does it teach us about God?**

“But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now.”

Some of these things we already know as New Testament believers. We have already acknowledged these truths in the life and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Still, this gives us promise to look forward to and trust in God’s covenants. Whatever God has promised must come to pass for he cannot go back on his Word!

## **Read 2 Kings 14**

**Amaziah, king of Judah, did right in the eyes of God, but not like David. He taunts Jehoash of the North to battle and loses at the expense of Jerusalem. Why did God side with Samaria? (Hint: compare with Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12)**

In Rehoboam's case and here, the aggressor is the one who loses. God had forbidden the two nations, who were brothers, to go to war against one another. Whoever instigated the battle lost. Another thing to realize is that Jehoash is still under a special period of blessing because of Jehu. Perhaps God is being merciful to his promise while he allows Amaziah to reap his own disobedience.

**We are told that Amaziah was captured in verse 13, but we are never told of his release. Is this to suggest that Judah was temporarily under Northern control?**

In verse 17 we have a deviation from the typical summary of a king's life. We are told that Amaziah *lived* rather than reigned 15 years after the death of Jehoash (some translations take the liberty of "correcting" this issue). It appears as though the house of Judah has been humbled through their act of disobedience in attacking Israel more than we originally thought.

In verse 22 “...after the king slept with his fathers,” the NIV assumes that the king is Amaziah. Perhaps, however it is actually Jehoash. It is not until the Israelite king dies that the Judean heir is able to begin work again in the southern kingdom.

**Why does God continue to be faithful to Jeroboam and grant him military victories (verses 23-27)?**

Jeroboam is able to recapture all (or almost all) of the land that had been stripped from Israel by the Arameans. Why does God bless him? Is it because he is a good king? By no means! At this point in time there is still victory to be found in the northern kingdom. God’s dynastic promise to Jehu still stands (2 Kings 10:30). God still has compassion on an oppressed Israel (verse 26). Although judgment is certain for the north, it is not certain yet.

### **Read 2 Kings 15**

With the death of Jeroboam II, we are not surprised to find that his son suffers a violent death. God’s promise to Jehu was to the fourth generation. Zechariah, his son, is the fifth. We can now expect the Northern kingdom to return to their previous “Ahab” state of unrest.

**Does Zechariah’s death make you feel as though there was an accumulation of God’s wrath that was ready to burst as soon as he assumed the throne?**

**Based upon Israel's future, why is it ironic that Menahem, king of Israel, paid tribute to Pul (Tiglath-pileser, king of Assyria) so as to buy peace?**

One day, it is Assyria who will be their greatest enemy. They will replace Aram and be the end of the North.

**Read 2 Kings 16**

During these last few chapters, the authors have given us cursory views of the kings. As they record Ahaz's reign, however, they slow down, inviting us to take a closer look. As faithful readers we need to take notice of this pause.

**Under Ahaz, Judah once again has sanctioned idolatry - this time the "tolerant" king even introduces child sacrifice. Read 1 Kings 11:7; 14:23-24. There is a close similarity in language here. Why?**

The passages in 1 Kings are where we first heard of pagan idolatry in Judah. Now we see the same things creeping in.

**Ahaz turns to Tiglath-pileser instead of Yahweh for help. Notice there has been no mention of the Davidic promises for quite some time. What does this make us think about Judah?**

**Ahaz, the ecumenicist, liked the king of Assyria's altar so much that he changed God's temple to look more like the pagan one. How far the descendants of David have come! When do you think all this disobedience began?**

Was there ever a time when it wasn't there?

**Think About It:**

**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

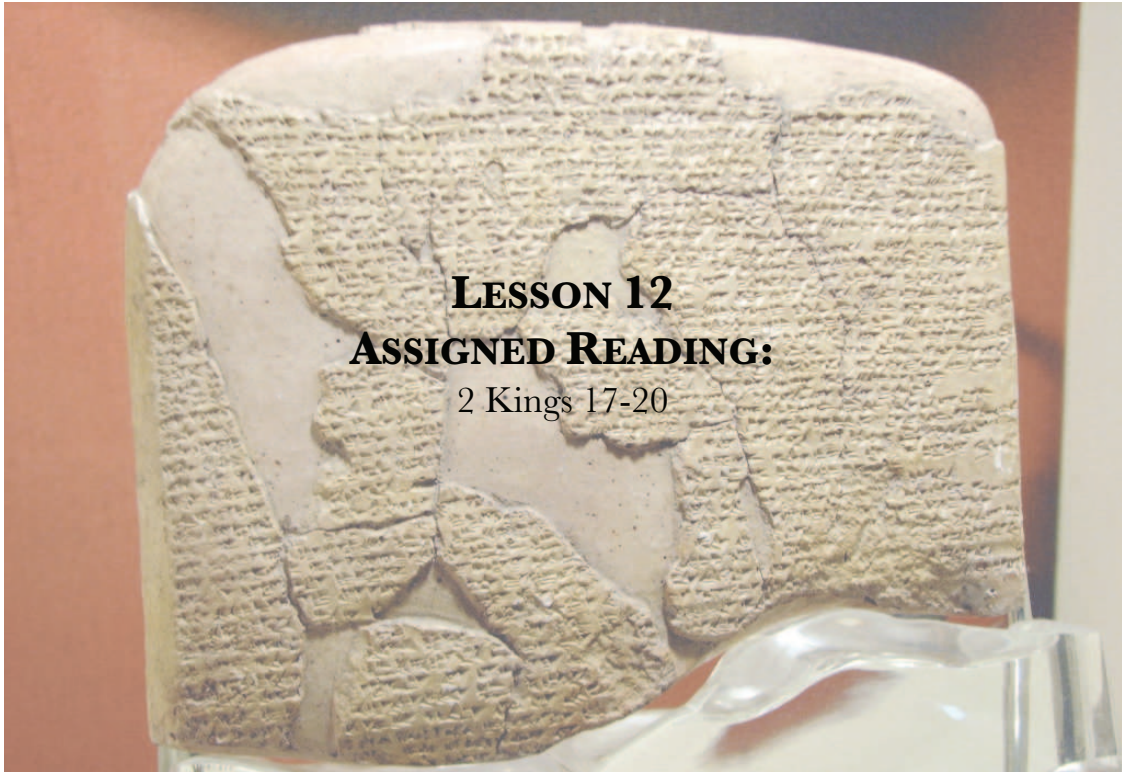


**Are you obedient or are you enthusiastically obedient? Give specific examples.**

**The kings of Judah and Samaria are called evil for being tolerant and ecumenical. Should we be tolerant people? How can we balance tolerance with love? What does this look like in today's world?**

**The Glory of God:**

Reflect on how exceedingly patient God has been with his people. It is easy to think that God is short-tempered since these stories occur over a few paragraphs, but in reality we are talking about long periods of time. How does God's patience further His glory? Spend time worshipping God in response to this.



# *The End of Samaria*

## **Lesson 12: The End of Samaria**

The removal and scattering of Israel, prophesied about in 1 Kings 14:15 on account of their idolatry, was predicted almost 200 years prior to Hoshea's reign in the North. As the evil king politically maneuvers himself between Egypt and Assyria, it is clear that he is playing with fire. Such actions, especially in light of Israel's promised deportation, cause us as readers to wait with anticipation for the hammer of God's wrath to fall. Whereas we, even after a cursory view of the last 200 years of history, feel as though we are ready for Israel's judgment, God has displayed great patience as he has observed their sins for so long. Now, it seems that the end is inevitable. There are no more prophets to stand in mediation of God's judgment. It is the time for Israel to reap what they have sown.

**So if the North is Samaria, who are the Samaritans?** Following the Assyrian exile of the Northern Kingdom, the Assyrians imported people from various cultures and lands back into Northern Israel (17:24ff). The Israelites who had escaped exile intermarried with these foreigners and, over time, their Israelite traditions became corrupted by the foreign influences. This is especially true during the Babylonian exile and post-exile. To cite one difference between the people groups, the Samaritans thought God should be worshipped on Mt. Gerizim as opposed to the temple on Mt. Moriah.

As we read about the fall of the North, we cannot help but wonder what will come of Judah. Will God pardon them on account of his servant David? Will they too fall to the might of the Assyrians? How did the people of God go from slavery in Egypt to deportation in the East in such a short period of time?

### **Read 2 Kings 17**

**We are surprised to find that Hoshea isn't as bad as the other kings before him (verse 2). If he wasn't as bad, why did God still punish Northern Israel?**

The first thing to realize is that how we read the fact that Hoshea was not like the other kings is open to interpretation. We have already been surprised that certain kings were considered righteous (Jehu) even when they committed sins that were evil. Kings

does not define the kings, necessarily, as evil because of their actions but because of their actions plus the unstated condition of their heart. David was given a dynasty because of his heart and Jehu was rewarded, despite the fact that he did not turn away from the sins of Jeroboam, because of his zealous heart for YHWH. Hoshea, we see, is not as bad as the other kings before him, but he still is not righteous. Despite his mediocrity, he still manipulates foreign affairs through clandestine treaties instead of turning to the Lord for protection. In a sense, with all his back and forth diplomacy between Assyria and Egypt, he reaps what he sows. A person cannot deceive such mega-powers in their flesh and not expect ramifications.

**The authors are not nearly as concerned with explaining how Israel fell as they are with why she fell. In case we just tuned in to the story, the authors add their own commentary to the historical situation in verses 7-23. Here we receive a summary of why Israel fell. Give one example from the book of 1 & 2 Kings that meets the criteria of this passage (perhaps a favorite story we have discussed thus far). What happened? How does it show Israel's sin? What were the consequences of the historical event?**

**Who was it who brought Judah into sin like Israel (verse 19)? Explain your answer.**

**Explain the significance of 2 Kings 17:24-41. Did the people who stayed or were brought back learn anything?**

**Read 2 Kings 18**

**Finally we have a king who was like David! Hezekiah is the first king to totally eradicate all the high places. Just for clarification, what are the “high places” (cf. Deuteronomy 12:2-7, 13, 14)?**

The high places were former areas of worship that were used for other gods. The Israelites would simply worship YHWH at the former holy sites. This shows their pagan view - that they believed the site itself had power.

**If “no one trusted God like Hezekiah” (v5), why does he pay tribute to the Assyrians (18:14-16)?**

Hezekiah's epitaph may have stated that no one trusted God like he did, but at this point in the story he has not yet earned that title. *Literarily*, given the way that Hezekiah is interacting with the Assyrians, we are tempted to wonder if the same fate that befell Israel will befall Judah.

**Sennacherib, the Assyrian king, was not satisfied with Hezekiah's tribute so he came to taunt the people of Jerusalem (18:17-37). One of his claims was that none of the other gods of the lands saved their victims from the Assyrians, why would Yahweh be any different (verses 33-34). What makes Yahweh different?**

**Read 2 Kings 19 (cf. Isaiah 36-37)**

**Isaiah encourages Hezekiah that God has heard the taunts of the Assyrians and has seen the faithful obedience of Hezekiah. He promises that God will put a spirit in Sennacherib so that he returns to his own land and he will die by his own people. After this promise, Sennacherib sends another threat which drives Hezekiah to his knees in prayer. What value is there in "delayed" promises from God or promises that are not immediately fulfilled?**

Instead of asking Isaiah to pray for him like in previous situations, this time Hezekiah himself comes to the Lord in prayer. True faith and true trust is not displayed by God's immediate response, but by the perseverance of his people to trust him when

everything seems as though it is hopeless. As human beings we want security and promises and we do cling to God's promises, but we often do so on our terms. Hezekiah believed God would deliver them, but he thought he would deliver them immediately after hearing God's prophecy through Isaiah. Instead, God made him wait. The result? A deeper desire to seek the Lord, to glorify the Lord, and to pursue holiness. These are God's goals for our life.

**What is the basis of Hezekiah's plea to God in 2 Kings 19:14-19?**

**Summarize God's response to Hezekiah through Isaiah in 2 Kings 19:20-28.**

Essentially God is saying that he raised up Assyria to be a tool in his hand for his purposes. We saw the fulfillment of those purposes in the destruction of Israel. Now, however, God's tool has turned against him and mocked the One True God. In response, God will not tolerate their actions and will turn his wrath away from the Hebrews and onto the Assyrians.

**Why is it significant that the Angel of the Lord killed the Assyrians instead of Hezekiah's army? How does this make the story more powerful?**

**Read 2 Kings 20 (cf. Isaiah 38-39)**

**Why did Hezekiah show the Babylonians the treasures of the kingdom?**

Although Hezekiah is perhaps the most righteous king since David, he is also like Solomon in the way that he parades the Lord's blessings.

**Why does Hezekiah say that "the word of the Lord which you have spoken is good" (20:19)?**

Having been recently rescued from death, it almost seems as though Hezekiah is content to have peace and security as long as it is during his lifetime. He appears disinterested to know that it may happen during the lives of his children or descendants.



**Think About It:**

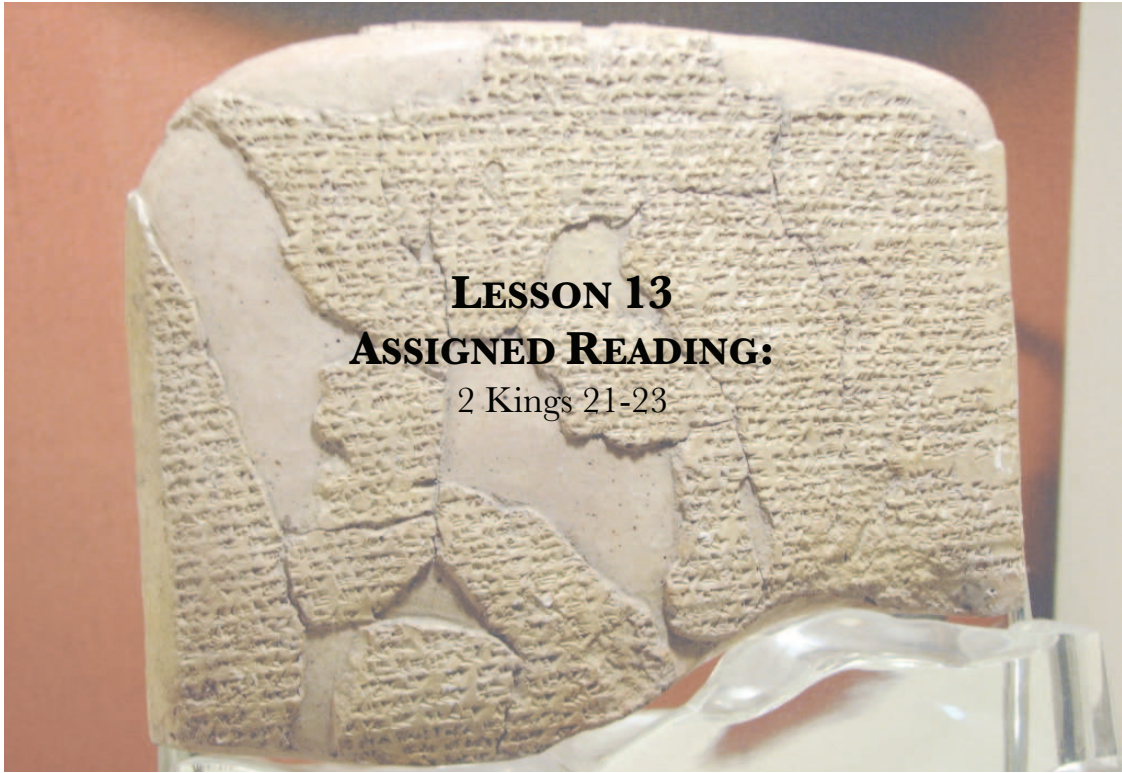
What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?

What's the difference between demolishing all the high places versus just the ones inside Jerusalem like other kings had done? How can we apply this principle to our own lives?

What made Hezekiah a king like David? What can we learn from him? Give a specific way in your life that you can be more like Hezekiah.

**The Glory of God:**

Look back at 2 Kings 19:14-19. In this passage, Hezekiah essentially asks God to act in such a way that He would defend His own glory. Think about something that has been on your heart lately and pray for an outcome in light of and to further God's glory. Perhaps your prayer may be entirely different. Maybe your initial request isn't honoring to God at all.



**LESSON 13**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 21-23

# *Josiah, the Great Reformer*

### **Lesson 13: Josiah, the Great Reformer**

Despite Hezekiah's faithfulness and his cleansing of Judah, it appears as though the Southern Kingdom is too far gone. Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, reinstates all of the heinous pagan acts of worship that his father had removed. Eventually, Manasseh becomes worse than the nations that God originally uprooted from the Promised Land on account of their wickedness (Deuteronomy 9:4-5).

Manasseh's grandson, Josiah, however, develops into a man of great reform. Under the tutelage of a newly rediscovered book of the Law by Hilkiah, Judah undergoes a series of cleansings. Idolatry is removed from the land, the passover is reinstated, and things seem to be turning around for the greater. We are surprised then, almost in a twist

of the story, to find that despite Josiah's faithfulness, Judah will not be spared. The sins of their past have been too great.

Their judgment is secure. Even if Moses and Samuel were to intercede on behalf of Judah, God would still not relent from his anger (Jeremiah 15:1-4).

#### **Read 2 Kings 21**

Manasseh is a picture of relativism. He practices child-sacrifice, divination, sorcery and astrology; he encourages the worship of Ba'al, Asherah, and Molech; and he diminishes Yahweh to a god among many, making him no different from the other pagan gods. In some cultures today, Manasseh might even be considered a good, tolerant leader. In the eyes of God, however, he brings Judah into the greatest apostasy they have ever seen.

**Two Kings?** According to the numbers given in Kings and Chronicles, Manasseh began to reign as co-regent alongside his father, Hezekiah, in 695 B.C.E. Since the years of the subsequent royal reigns in Judah total 10 years longer than the actual historical period, it seems that Manasseh ruled alongside his father from the time he was twelve till he was 22. Hezekiah, a king like David, took every care to groom his son to be a good king. It turns out, according to the Kings authors, that Manasseh became the worst king in the history of Judah! With such an obedient father and such careful training, how could Manasseh turn out to be so evil? What do you think went wrong?

**Read Deuteronomy 12:29-31; 18:9-12. Why are all of the actions practiced by the Canaanites and Manasseh detestable to God?**

The root of these practices is idolatry. The practices themselves disregard and abandon the truth of God. Having created us in the image of God, man has now “recreated” God into their own image. Since man is the glory of God, when we worship other things we are a direct offense against God’s glory.

**Many people have said that it was wrong and evil of God to demand the Israelites destroy the Canaanites entirely. Why would God command this genocide?**

Deuteronomy 18:12 states, “And because of these abominations the Lord your God is driving them out before you.” Although it may seem like an overdone answer, I truly believe that the core issue in the judgment and destruction, even the genocide, of the Canaanite people is about the holiness and justice of God. These things are difficult to fathom for us because we are corrupted by a worldly understanding of justice.

Perhaps the true heart of the issue is that we have a mindset that we start with a blank slate and then get dirty or sinful over time. When we adopt this view, it seems unimaginable that God could command the destruction of children, babies, etc. The truth is, however, that we are by our very nature children and objects of wrath (Ephesians 2:1-3). *We are not sinners because we sin; we sin because we are sinners.* We are not condemned because we do bad things; our condemnation is evidenced by our actions. So for God to command genocide is justice, and for God to allow us to live another day is mercy. These are hard things to think about. For more study on this matter, I would recommend reading [Show Them No Mercy: 4 Views on God and Canaanite Genocide](#) published by Zondervan. The book presents four views ranging from Radical Discontinuity (God acted differently in the O.T. than in the N.T.) to Spiritual Continuity (Essentially what God commands Israel is what Jesus does in the spiritual realm in the N.T.).

**2 Kings 21:7-9 is a reference to 2 Samuel 7:8-10 and the Davidic Covenant. Here, the covenant sounds conditional, but in 2 Samuel it sounds unconditional. Can you explain why there is a difference between these two parts?**

For one thing, the whole purpose of *Kings* is to explain why the sons of Israel had to be exiled and how the people brought it on themselves. In addition to this, the verse, perhaps can be explained as to present both unconditional *and* conditional promises. It reads, “In this house, and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my name forever. And I will not cause the feet of Israel to wander anymore out of the land that I gave to their fathers, if only they will be careful to do according to all that I have commanded them, and according to all the Law that my servant Moses commanded them.”

The unconditional promise is that God will put his name forever in Israel. The conditional promise is “I will not cause the feet to wander out of the land.” The promise of the Davidic line, the eventual restoration of Israel, and the fulfillment of the promises given to Abraham are unconditional. Whether or not the Jews stay in the Land, however, is conditional.

Another thing to realize is that the people writing *Kings* probably didn’t know that the covenant was unconditional. If there are unconditional aspects of the book, they are from the Holy Spirit’s leading and not necessarily because of an author’s understanding of the way of the world and the things of God.

**Are the authors leading us to believe that, like Ahab, David’s line will end in destruction?**

## **Read 2 Kings 22**

Compared to his father Manasseh, the evil actions of king Amon at the end of chapter 21 are almost a footnote. On the heels of Amon's reign, comes Josiah, a great king of obedience like David.

**When the book of the Law is read to Josiah for the first time, Josiah rips his clothes and mourns as he realizes the sins of his ancestors. Recall when you were first convicted of your sins. What was it like?**

**Imagine what it would be like to find the only remaining copy of the Bible. How differently you would you cherish it, follow its commands, or share its message with others?**

**Notice God responds to Josiah's repentant heart (verses 19-20). Sometimes we try to impress God with our actions instead of giving Him our hearts. How does Josiah seem like David in this passage? How can you be more like Josiah in this regard?**

1 Samuel 13:14 says that David was loyal to God or a man after his own heart. Here, we see some of that same concept in Josiah. He could have said, “Oh, these are just old rules,” or “Well none of that stuff has happened yet,” but instead he repents, he mourns, and he weeps. He doesn’t just weep over his own sin, but he weeps and mourns over the sin of his land, the sin of his community, and the sin of his ancestors. In this way, Josiah shows himself to be a righteous man like Isaiah, David, or one of the great men of God in the Bible. When was the last time you wept over the sin of your community? Not got angry about it and complained to your friends, but wept and mourned (there is a difference!).

### **Read 2 Kings 23**

**Why is it significant that the leaders led the people into commitment to God?**

**As a leader, what can you learn from this?**

Perhaps one of the core truths of ministry (or leadership) is that a church group, company, small group, or anything will only go as far as the leader. If a pastor isn’t passionate about missions, then his church never will be either. If a small group leader doesn’t make transparency a way of life, then his or her group will be equally shallow. Leaders set the tone and the trend for the way that their group or organization will function. Just think about how much children are impacted by the lives of their parents. It is the same principle.

**As a member of a congregation or a greater body of believers what can you learn from this?**

- 1) I need to be keeping my leaders in prayer for constant renewal, repentance, and spiritual refreshing.
- 2) I need to follow my leader in his or her zeal and commitment to the Lord. I do not grow because of the faith of my leader or my leader's understanding of scripture. I cannot depend on his or her spiritual connection with God. It is a personal relationship. I should follow his or her godly example and pursue God in my own life as well.

**Josiah burned the idols and ground them to dust (verses 3-6). What can we learn from Josiah about the way we treat idols in our lives?**

Simply put, they cannot be tolerated. God knows the hearts of man. There is a reason he commanded the Israelites to destroy all of the idols in the Promised Land when they entered in - he knew they would be coerced to turn away!

Along the same line, those things that are potential for idolatry in our lives that not necessary parts of living (e.g. don't grind your children to dust please) should be removed if they pose a serious threat.

**Give a specific example of something in your life that has potential to lead you into idolatry. What type of actions could you take to avoid idolatry in this area?**

**In verse 26-27, we learn that even though Josiah was obedient, God's wrath is still coming upon Judah, and Manasseh gets all the blame. Is it really**



**Manasseh's fault? Why do you think the authors presented Judah's fate in this way?**

The scriptures make it clear in Jeremiah and in Kings that Manasseh is to blame, but we also know that there has been a long line of disobedience in Israel stretching back to the beginning of time. More recently, however, the kingdom never truly returned to its Davidic state. Although Josiah was a glimmer of hope, God had already pronounced judgment to Hezekiah concerning the Babylonians. Perhaps as Ahab is the poster child for disobedient Samaria, in 2 Kings, Manasseh summarizes disobedient Judah. If good kings are like David, bad kings are like Manasseh and Ahab.

Josiah is killed in a way that is very reminiscent of Ahaziah (2 Kings 9:27-28). The fact that his death, despite his righteousness, is similar to the death of a wicked king is not necessarily a good sign for Judah. It appears as though Judah is past the point of no return.

**Following Josiah's death, and Jehoahaz's imprisonment (verses 28-33) Pharaoh Neco made Josiah's son, Eliakim, king and changed his name to Jehoiakim. Unlike his father, he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Considering Solomon, Adonijah, Rehoboam, Manasseh, and Jehoiakim, how is that sons can be so different from their godly fathers?**

In some ways we are definitely directly impacted by our parents. It is amazing to see just how much we become more like them with each passing year. On the other hand,

we are our own people. Our parents' faith is not our faith. We cannot live off of their relationship with God. We may reap the benefits and the fruit of their relationship with God, but we must develop faith in God for ourselves. This, in one way, is what Paul talks about when he says that real Jews are not Jews by birth but by belief - no heritage will save you from your sins, only personal faith in Jesus Christ.

**Think About It:**

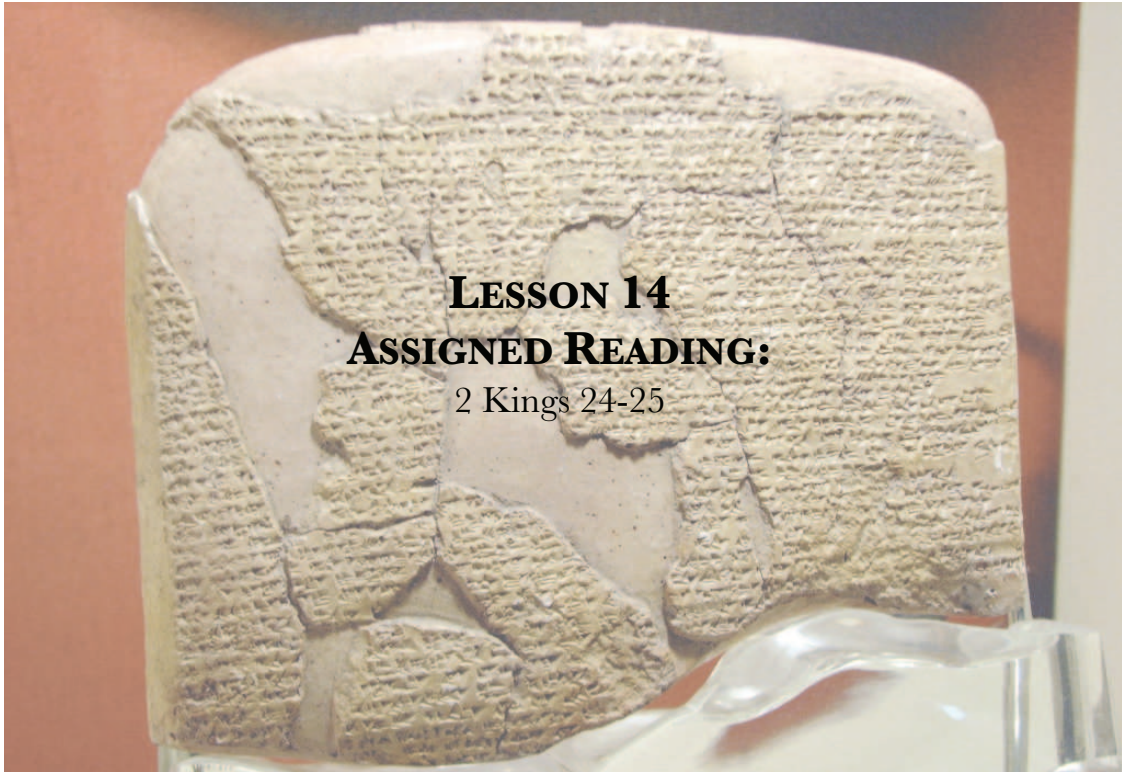
**What do these stories tell us about the goal of Kings?**

**We are so blessed to have easy access to the scriptures. How can we be more like Josiah in the way you view the Scriptures?**

**Clearly even good fathers can have bad children. What can we do to help raise our children to follow God?**

**The Glory of God:**

How do these stories further the glory of God? How does God receive more glory by following through with the exile than by allowing Judah to continue?



**LESSON 14**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
2 Kings 24-25

# *The End of Judah?*

## **Lesson 14: The End of Judah**

Nebuchadnezzar II was the son of Nabopolassar, king of Babylon who reigned from 626-605 B.C.E. As the prince, he had led his father's army against Pharaoh Neco (2 Kings 23:34) and defeated the Egyptians at Carchemish along the Euphrates in Northern Syria (605 B.C.E.). By defeating the Egyptians, Babylon became the strongest nation in the Ancient Near East. All of the lands controlled by Egypt, including Judah, entered into Babylonian control with Nebuchadnezzar's victory.

Under Babylonian domination and failed Judean rebellions (2 Kings 24:1-5), Judah went through two waves of deportations.

During the first wave of deportation, Babylon removed most of the people from

**Ezekiel:** After studying these last few chapters of Kings, it is fascinating to read through Ezekiel. The first part of Ezekiel is written after the first deportation, but prior to the destruction of Jerusalem. Many of the exiles living in Babylon thought that Jerusalem would never fall because the Temple of the Lord still stood. To show the exiles that God's Word was firm and that Jerusalem would be destroyed, God gave Ezekiel a vision of the glory of the Lord leaving the Temple. With God's glory departed, there was nothing left to protect Jerusalem and there was no reason for God to be gracious. With a better understanding of Kings, you will now have a richer experience as you read the Prophets!

Jerusalem, including king Jehoiachin, Daniel, and the soon to be prophet Ezekiel. All that remained within Judah were the poorest of the poor, and as we read in 2 Kings 25, soon they would be killed or scattered as well. Judah's sin has finally bloomed. They have reaped the consequences of their disobedience. The kingdom has ended...or has it?

### **Read 2 Kings 24**

**Again we are told that Judah's destruction is due to the sins of Manasseh (24:3). Do you think this is describing Manasseh's sins specifically or are the authors using the phrase "sins of Manasseh" similar to "sins of Jeroboam" to describe a type of sin?**

*Author's personal reflection - feel free to disagree: In light of the last few chapters, I think this is specific to Manasseh. Part of me is tempted to think this is odd because it is not as though there were other kings who weren't just as bad as Manasseh, but I think Manasseh is exceptionally bad for a few reasons.*

- 1) *He returns from following YHWH to following pagan gods. He was co-regent with his father for the first decade of his reign. Hence, his worship of idols isn't just "I was born into it," but it is a conscious choice*
- 2) *He is "in the wrong place at the wrong time." God already said that the Babylonians would carry away the treasures of Judah during Hezekiah's reign. Since the Babylonians are on the scene, it can't be too far off - regardless of who is king*
- 3) *Jeroboam, Ahab, and all these evil kings were predominantly in the North. There were still bad kings in the South, but the fact that Manasseh is evil like them, if not greater, and in the South is bad news for Judah.*
- 4) *Only Manasseh and one other king (Ahaz) practiced child-sacrifice.*

*Manasseh is obviously a bad guy. The description of Manasseh in Chronicles even carries with it a defensive citation, as if the author had to justify what he was writing about Manasseh in his positive historical account.*

**Unlike Hezekiah, who turned to the Lord, Jehoiachin surrenders to the invaders. Do you think God would have pardoned Judah had Jehoiachin turned to Him or is it too late for the Southern Kingdom?**

That is a big "if." It is almost hard to fathom the question. We may suppose if he had truly repented God may have delayed it for a period of time, but the end of the south is inevitable. If Josiah's faithful actions couldn't stop the wrath of God then perhaps

repentant Jehoiachin couldn't either.

**In 2 Kings 24:13-14, we see a reverse of what happened during Solomon's reign. The temple is "deconstructed" as the gold is cut up and brought to Babylon. Instead of coming from afar to see Solomon and the temple, the nobles, craftsmen, and people of importance are now escorted into captivity. Why do you think the authors form this "bookend"?**

It is fitting that, on one level, the corruption began with Solomon and so we see the kingdom come together and essentially unfold in Solomonic fashion. This reminds the reader of the cause of the exile, which really was founded on Solomon's disobedience in marrying foreign wives and the splitting of the kingdom. It paints a picture in our mind that the only time the kingdom was good was under David (which is also arguable). Solomon through Jehoiachin is almost a parenthesis. On one level we go from David to Jesus, the other kings are important, but because of their disobedience they can be 'in a way' be overlooked.

### **Read 2 Kings 25**

Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, was appointed as steward over Jerusalem by the Babylonian king and changed his name to Zedekiah. Zedekiah ruled under Babylonian sovereignty for ten years before attempting to throw off the shackles of Babylon. This final act of rebellion brought the wrath of Babylon upon the city of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is eventually sacked and the king is captured. The last thing he sees, before his eyes are gouged out, is the slaughter of his sons.

**Why does God allow the Babylonians to burn the temple (25:9)?**

God will not spare the temple because to God it is merely a building. Ezekiel had a vision of God's glory leaving the temple, paving the way for the judgment of God to fall on the city of Jerusalem. The fact that the temple is destroyed reinforces this prophesy.

**Over time, the people who remained in the land of Judah assassinated the governor set in place by Babylon and fled to Egypt fearing reprisal from their sovereign master. Why is their flight to Egypt significant? How does this serve as a bookend for the history of the Jews up until this point in time?**

The Hebrews have embraced a voluntary return to Egypt. God brought them out of slavery in Egypt to form them into a nation of priests only to have the people disobey their God and, eventually, voluntarily return to their captors. Ironic and sad.

**In 25:27, we discover that Jehoiachin is still alive in exile. David's line is still intact! Eventually the ex-king of Judah is removed from prison and allowed to sit at the king's table "all the days of his life." Is this a positive note showing that there may be hope for the line of David to reclaim the throne?**

I don't know if we can necessarily see it as potential to have a kingdom again, but it does show that David's descendants are not all dead and that his line is still alive. Even if they are not on the throne, because the throne is destroyed, we can have hope that the moment the throne is rebuilt, there will be someone there to fill it (Jesus!).

**Is this a negative note because the king found favor with “Evil-merodach”, Nebuchadnezzar's son who only reigned for two years?**

The situation may underline the responsibility of the people at this point in time. In verse 24, “And Gedaliah swore to them and their men, saying, “Do not be afraid because of the Chaldean officials. Live in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it shall be well with you.” God showed grace to Jehoiachin by allowing him to eat at the king's table - even if it was an evil king. Perhaps now the Jews should focus on being submissive to their new masters while still obeying the Lord - then it will go well with them.

**What would be going through your head if you were an exiled Judean on the road to Babylon?**

How did we get here? Is God real?

**Would you be wondering if God had abandoned you? Would you be wondering if God was truly God at all?**



**In light of the previous question, summarize the purpose of the book of Kings. How does Kings help answer those doubts?**

The book of Kings helps us to see that the Jews were not exiled because God lacked the power, the sovereignty, or the desire to protect them from their adversaries. On the other hand, God has proven himself time and time again to be the God of gods and the great I AM. The fact that the exile occurred shows the disobedience of the people - the fact that they brought it on themselves - and that God punished them because of their disobedience. This is not a failure of God, but a failure of the Israelites.

**How does the book of Kings help you to appreciate Jesus, the son of David, the King of kings in a greater way?**

**How would the book of Kings help you to look forward with anticipation towards the Messiah if you were a Jew reading this narrative before the birth of Christ?**

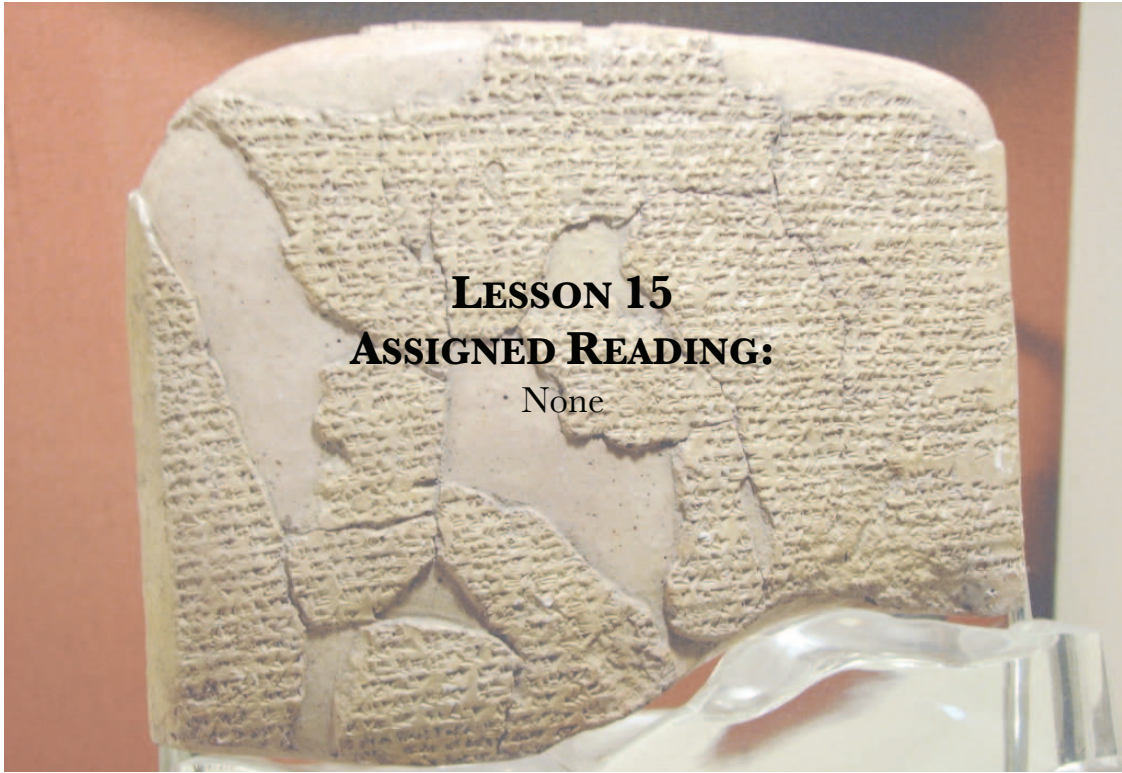
**Think About It:**

Is there a point in time when God “stops being merciful” to us as Christians and gives us the fruit of our disobedience like He did with Judah and Samaria? Why or why not?

What are the three primary characteristics of God you understand better in light of Kings? How does a better knowledge of those characteristics encourage you to live your life differently?

**The Glory of God:**

Look at the last question again. Spend time worshipping God in prayer, scripture reading, and song in response to these three characteristics.



**LESSON 15**  
**ASSIGNED READING:**  
None

*Conclusion*

## **Author's Conclusion:**

As I was writing this study, I received many questions from those who were reading it as to how Kings applies to our lives. I hope that the questions we have discussed up until this point have caused you to meditate and focus on that very issue, but having completed our study of Kings, I thought it would be helpful to overview some of the conclusions studying Kings may bring us to.

At the core, application is not a list of do's and don'ts, but a deeper understanding of who God is. When Paul instructs his readers in his epistles, he teaches a core truth about God, and then provides application points. Learning from the Old Testament, in this way, can be more difficult because we have to do the legwork ourselves. To state this plainly, Paul is teaching based upon his knowledge of God from the Old Testament and the Holy Spirit's guidance. In the same way, when we read the Old Testament we are given the same task as Paul or other New Testament writers. As you have studied Kings, I have tried to give you questions that would cause you to learn about God (e.g. His justice). Based upon God's characteristics, we develop our own application (e.g. Since God is just his actions are righteous. Hence, I should be content in my current situation which God has allowed).

So, with that foundation set in place, what are some of the *core* things that I continually thought about as I studied kings?

### **Righteousness is not a question of action but an issue of the heart.**

I found it quite intriguing that although David had his shortcomings (as a king and as a father), he was still counted as righteous before God and became the measuring rod by which all other kings were compared. How is it that God could be so impressed with David despite his actions? Simple, God looks at the heart.

There are times when all of us feel as though we are unfit and unrighteous based upon our actions, our minds, etc. These moments drive us to brokenness as we realize our desperate need for God. God, as our Creator, desires for us to need him. Autonomy, or a desire to be independent from God, is at the root of all sin. When we acknowledge our sinfulness, however, we turn to God just like David. We do not have to worry about trying to impress God - His Son already did the work - all God desires of us is a heart loyal to

him; obedience will flow (in varying degrees) from a heart set right before God.

**Will there ever be another king like David? Yes, and his name is Jesus.**

As I read Kings, I consistently imagined what it would have been like when a new king came to power. I pretended to be a commoner in the land and thought about the questions that would be going around their kitchen table. “Will this new king be like David or will he be like Ahab?” “Do you think this one loves the Lord or is it all an act?” You can sense the disappointment that the people would have felt as so many kings were evil and far from the Lord.

In this way, the Jewish anticipation for a king who would “be like David” and our thankfulness for the King of kings sent into the world to redeem us from our sins should be apparent. Jesus Christ is the perfect king because, like David, his heart was and is entirely loyal to God. He came to this earth in obedience to the Father, he died in obedience to the Father, and he does whatever the Father desires. His heart is totally loyal to the Father. Our salvation is because of Jesus’ faithfulness and not our own.

**No man is good, no not one.**

Even the “good kings” of Israel seemed to be pretty lousy. The story of Solomon, especially, is laden with subtle hints, forcing us to doubt the sincerity of his heart. After writing this study, I truly feel as though an entire book could be written on the ambiguity of 1 Kings 1-11 alone. How does this apply to us?

We are not sinners because we sin. We sin because we are sinners. In today’s culture, we define our sinfulness by our actions, when in reality our actions are merely symptoms of the problem. Often, as we read scriptures, we place these men and women on pedestals - thinking that they are so far beyond what we could ever be. What we must realize is that these Bible figures are men and women just like us - people who are fallen, frail, disloyal, dishonest, and unfaithful to God. None of us are perfect; this evidences our need for a savior. I am glad that I can relate to the men and women in the Bible instead of feeling as though I am so sinful compared to them.

## **God is just and His ways are true.**

In the book of Revelation, the angels in heaven rejoice as God pours His wrath upon the world. How is it that they could rejoice over such an awful thing? In the same way, how is it that a just God could command the genocide of the Canaanites? Our problem with these sections of scripture is not because they aren't inspired or true, but because we do not have a healthy understanding of the justice of God and perhaps never will until we are in glory with Him.

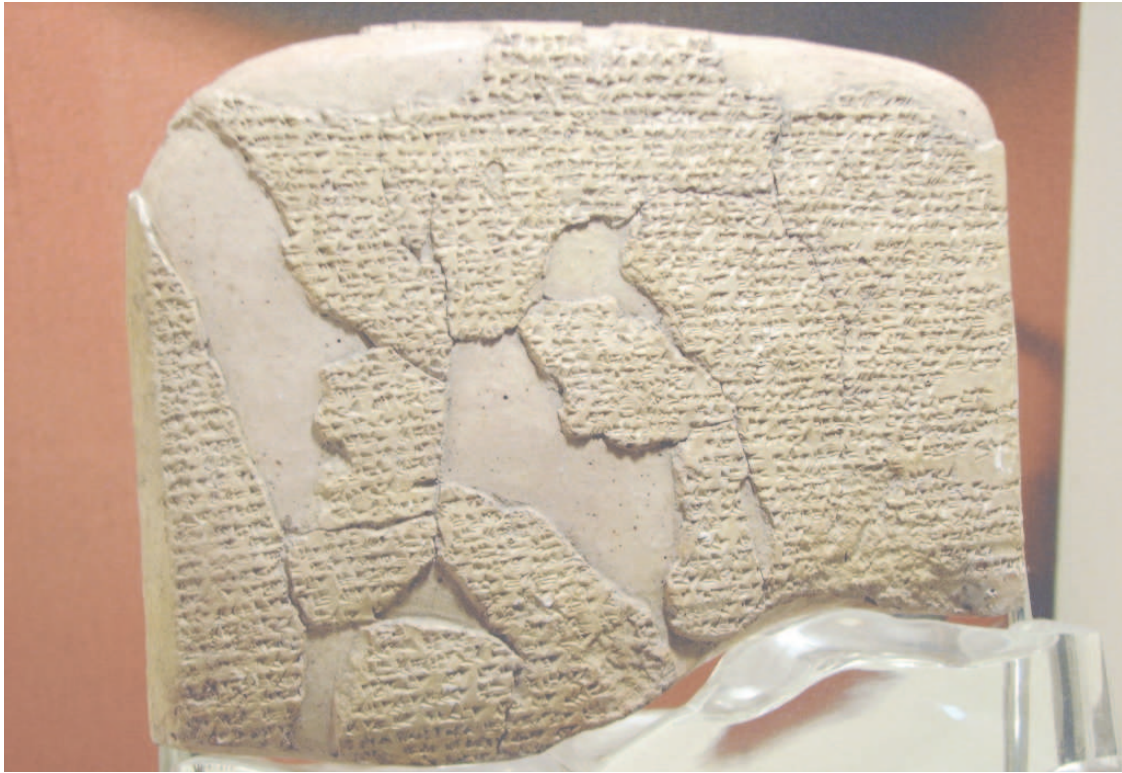
God is a holy God and he cannot tolerate sin or disobedience. This is why Jesus came to earth to receive God's wrath. By being our substitute, Jesus received the punishment that you and I deserve. All mankind deserves to die. Is it wrong for God to pardon some when all deserve punishment? Of course not. The pardon of some is an act of mercy, not an act of cruelty. God is just and His ways are true.

### **To summarize:**

It is my prayer that this study of Kings has provided you with a richer understanding of the history of Israel. The themes and motifs that we study here are woven throughout the Old Testament. Most of the prophetic books are written during this time period and so could be read in unison with the narrative. Were you to sit down and read the entire Old Testament narrative section from Joshua to Kings in one sitting, a difficult task I know, you would find countless similarities. The literary artistry in this section of Scripture is absolutely breathtaking.

It has also been my prayer that this study will give you a deeper love for God's Word and a desire to study it in a more profound way. God's word is like a river. It is shallow enough that the weak can wade in, but it is deep enough that the strong can swim deep. The more time you spend in God's word, the deeper your love will grow for Him.

Dive into God's word. You will never regret it.



*Some  
Suggestions for  
Leaders*

**Discussion:**

As with all Bible studies, I am a firm believer that discussion is the key to a deep, dynamic, rewarding, and even intimate time. When I first taught this Bible study at my local church, I only gave the students the questions - the paragraphs of comments beneath each question were only visible to me. In this way, I was able to truly bring about some incredible discussion from the group. By having open ended questions (instead of simply regurgitating facts), the group actually became more interested in conversing as the study progressed instead of getting worn out over time.

One thing that may frustrate you, as a teacher, and your students is that many of the questions posed in this guide do not have a definite answer. After teaching this study in three times, I have routinely found that most Christians are conditioned to think that everything in scripture is cut and dry or black and white. In many cases, and with the OT narratives especially, this is not the norm. On the contrary, the narratives are often more ambiguous in the original language, as if the authors intent was to spark dynamic discussion. The “Big Ideas” are black and white, but many of the nuances of the stories are not.

Don't shy away from discussion, but also don't let it run wild. Keep the course on track, always bring the conversation back to the “goal” of Kings. In this way, the class will fully grasp the common thread that the authors so painstakingly try to get across.

**Homework:**

For a study of this intensity, as I hope I have designed it to be, it is absolutely imperative that members of the class or small group read the scriptures and try to answer the questions before they come to discuss it. With all of the names and stories found within the book of Kings, a person will be absolutely lost if they do not prepare. Most of the 40 people who attended my class on Kings completed the course, but of those who did not, it was almost entirely due to missing a week or two and then becoming lost and/or confused in the narrative. Weekly reading and homework is essential to a successful completion of this study!

**Dynamic Storytelling:**

Rather than reading the scriptures each week as we discussed the questions, I often “told the story.” By doing this, I was able to speed up or slow down as much as I wanted to and try to bring the emotions within the text to life (This will require preparation for you as the leader). I was in the habit of reading the assigned passages four times versus the student's one time. By the night of our class, I knew the stories backwards and forwards. Don't skimp out on your own preparation due to procrastination or laziness! You can only bring your class as far into the scriptures as you are yourself.

**Repetition:**

Guess what? Hebrew thought is repetitive. It is not as linear as western thought, but instead often presents itself in circles. Don't allow the repetition of the “moral of the story” to manifest into apathy. If the Hebrew people needed to be reminded of the cause of their exile in 100 different ways then we, as likewise fallen people, need to be reminded just as much.

**Be yourself, have fun, and love God's Word:**

If you aren't Charles Stanley, don't try to teach this study like Charles Stanley. If you are Charles Stanley, then I hope you enjoy my study guide. Seriously though, one of the greatest mistakes teachers and preachers make is that they try to emulate someone who they like instead of teaching/preaching in accordance with their personality. You



may notice that my style of writing is casual and approachable. I did not sit down and say to myself, “I want to write this study in a casual and approachable way.” I simply wrote it in accordance with my personality. If it were written by a philosophical thinker, I am sure it would have a different tone. Teach according to your personality, and don’t try to be someone you aren’t.

A lot of people don’t read Kings because they think it is boring. This is one of the main reasons why I wanted to write this study. I was convinced that people could have fun and learn a ton about the book of Kings at the same time. Use props (but don’t rely on them), use videos (if necessary), and use visuals. I always kept a whiteboard with me in the room so I could draw pictures, answer questions, write things down, etc.

Friends, fall in love with God’s Word. As you dig deeper into the scriptures, it is a natural outcome that you have a greater appreciation for God and His Revelation. Let that appreciation shine. People know when you are excited and when you are bored. Be excited! This is God’s Word we have the privilege of teaching!

**Prayer:**

Prayer is not ministry item #87. It is not something that we tack onto the beginning and end of a meeting. Prayer is the work of the ministry. Find a way to incorporate prayer into your study time. I tried to give you a jump-start on this idea with my “Glory of God” block at the end of each study, but in the end it will depend upon your leading and the Holy Spirit. When I first taught the study, we would finish by discussing the characteristics of God revealed in the week’s lesson. We would then spend a half of an hour worshipping God for those characteristics and submitting our lives in light of them. It was a powerful time and it helped make the lesson real to our hearts. You don’t have to do the same thing, but please do something!

I hope that this brief teacher’s guide offers you some suggestions. In the end, however, teach the study how you see fit. After all, I want you to teach it like you would teach it - not how I would teach it!