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The Lord's Judgment on Ahaziah - 2 Kings 1:1-18

Topics: Ambassadors, Angels, Consequences, Death, Fear, History, Idolatry, Judgment, Life, Mercy, Obedience, Power, Prophecy, Questions, Respect, Unfaithfulness

Open It

- * 1. At what age did you have the most curiosity about other religions and belief systems?
- 2. Why do you think there is a popular association between being struck by lightning and being judged by God?
- 3. What public figures do you know for whom a certain style of clothing or accessory has become an unmistakable trademark?

Explore It

- * 4. When Ahaziah was injured accidentally, what did he send messengers to do? (1:2)
- * 5. With what message did God send Elijah to intercept the king's messengers? (1:3-4)
- 6. What did the messengers do after speaking with Elijah? (1:5-6)
- 7. How did the messengers describe for the king the man they had met? (1:7-8)
- 8. What did Ahaziah know immediately when he heard the description of the man who sent him the message? (1:8)
- 9. What order from the king was delivered by a captain and fifty men? (1:9)
- 10. What was Elijah's dramatic answer to the captain who came to capture him? (1:10)
- 11. What happened to the second captain and his men? (1:11-12)
- 12. With what attitude did the third captain approach Elijah? (1:13-14)
- 13. How did God instruct Elijah to react to the third captain who came to get him? (1:15)
- 14. What message did Elijah personally deliver to the king? (1:16)
- * 15. What became of Ahaziah, king of Israel? (1:17)

Get It

- * 16. What might have motivated a king of Israel to consult one of the gods of Ekron when he wanted to know the future?
- 17. Why do we have such a strong desire to know what will happen to us in advance?
- * 18. In what ways are modern believers tempted to consult false gods?
- 19. What should Ahaziah have concluded about God because God's prophet intercepted his messengers?
- 20. How might the outcome have been different for Ahaziah had he consulted first with the Lord?
- 21. Why was Elijah hesitant to go back to the king with the captains and their armed men?
- 22. What conclusion should Ahaziah have drawn from the disappearance of the first captain?
- 23. Although we sometimes find ourselves alone as believers, in what sense are we not necessarily at the mercy of our enemies?
- 24. What action of Ahaziah clearly aroused the Lord's anger and led to the Lord's judgment on him?

Apply It

- * 25. What can you do to keep your mind focused on God and His power in your life rather than on other possible sources of strength and wisdom?
- 26. For what positive spiritual trait can you aspire to become "notorious"?

Elijah Taken up to Heaven - 2 Kings 2:1-25

Topics: Awe, Blessing, Devotion, Healing, Heaven, Holy Spirit, Instructions, Insults, Miracles, Partnerships, Prophecy, Shame, Silence, Spiritual Gifts, Swearing, Testing, Waiting

Open It

- * 1. What Christian's spiritual gifts would you like to inherit if that were possible?
- 2. What's good, bad, convenient, or inconvenient about being liked very much by someone else?
- 3. In your opinion are young people more or less respectful today than when you were young? Why?

Explore It

- * 4. Although Elijah and Elisha were in the habit of traveling together, why did Elijah try to go to Bethel on his own? (2:1-2)
- 5. What was Elisha's reply to Elijah's suggestion that he stay behind? (2:2)
- 6. What did the prophets at Bethel want to make sure that Elisha knew? (2:3)
- * 7. What was Elisha's reply to the prophets who told him his master would be taken that very day? (2:3)
- * 8. What journey did Elijah propose to take alone but could not because Elisha would not leave him? (2:4)
- 9. How did the prophets at Jericho greet Elisha? (2:5)
- 10. Where did Elijah and Elisha go? (2:6)
- 11. What remarkable event was witnessed by fifty prophets at the Jordan River? (2:7-8)
- 12. What was Elijah's question for Elisha when they were alone? (2:9)
- 13. What did Elisha want to inherit from Elijah? (2:9)
- 14. On what condition did Elijah say Elisha's prayer would be granted? (2:10)
- 15. What amazing event did Elisha witness? (2:11-12)
- 16. What was Elisha's first test of whether Elijah's power had come upon him? (2:13-15)
- 17. What did Elisha know about whether Elijah could ever be found on this earth? (2:16-18)
- 18. What problem did the city elders bring to Elisha? (2:19-22)
- 19. What befell some youngsters who taunted Elisha? (2:23-25)

Get It

- * 20. Why do you suppose the younger prophet refused to be elsewhere when his master was taken by the Lord?
- 21. What words might describe Elisha's emotions when he saw Elijah taken up?
- * 22. What older Christian could (or does) disciple or help you grow in your faith?
- 23. How can the deeds of believers who have gone before us encourage us today?
- 24. By repeating the parting of the Jordan, what did Elisha know about the power he would have as a prophet?
- 25. What likely effect did Elisha's early miracles have on his popularity?
- 26. Why is scorn for God and the servants of God not a youthful prank to be excused or taken lightly?

Apply It

- * 27. Whom can you seek out this week as a mentor and example for your faith? How?
- 28. In what practical ways can we teach our children to respect faithful servants of God?

Moab Revolts - 2 Kings 3:1-27

Topics: Complaining, Confusion, Decisions, Discouragement, Evil, God's Will, Idolatry, Influence, Insults, Miracles, Partnerships, Promises, Prophecy, Questions, Rebellion, Rejection, Respect, Revenge, Sacrifice, Serving, Surprises, Victory, War

Open It

1. How much difference does it make to you when a person you respect endorses a group that you have doubts about?
2. What does the expression mean, "Don't count your chickens before they hatch"?
- * 3. For what have you heard people blame God?

Explore It

4. What sins of previous kings did Joram discontinue and which did he embrace? (3:1-3)
5. What tribute did the king of Israel require of the king of Moab? (3:4)
- * 6. Why did Joram need to amass an army against Moab? (3:5)
7. Whom did Joram secure as an ally against Moab? (3:6-7)
- * 8. What problem did the three armies encounter after they had been in the desert for seven days? (3:8-9)
9. What part did the king of Israel assume God was playing in his army's predicament? (3:10)
- * 10. What did Jehoshaphat want to do before he jumped to conclusions about God's will? (3:11-12)
11. What sort of greeting did Elisha have for the king of Israel? (3:13)
12. What assumption had driven Joram to seek out Elisha? (3:13)
13. Why did Elisha agree to tell the three kings what God had to say? (3:14)
14. What message did Elisha deliver, accompanied by a harpist? (3:15-19)
15. When was Elisha's prediction proven to be true? (3:20)
16. How had the Moabites responded to the armies gathering against them? (3:21)
17. What did the Moabites incorrectly presume about the redness on the valley floor? (3:22-23)
18. How badly did the battle turn against Moab? (3:24-25)
19. At the siege of what city did the king of Moab offer a staggering sacrifice? (3:27)
20. How did the momentum of the battle change after the king of Moab sacrificed his son? (3:27)

Get It

21. When have you feared the worst and instead seen the Lord intervene for you in miraculous ways?
22. Why are some people so willing to blame God for the troubles they experience?
23. Why might the Lord consider the unauthorized worship of God less of an offense than the worship of other gods?
- * 24. Why do you think Joram was all too ready to blame God for his troubles even though he had not consulted God before he embarked on his enterprise?
25. To what extent did Elisha feel obligated to seek God on behalf of Joram because he was his king?
- * 26. How can we find out God's perspective on the things we want to do?
27. How did Elisha characterize the difficulty (for God) of bringing abundant water in the desert?
28. In what way does God discriminate among whom He preserves and blesses?
29. How does the death of a prominent person sometimes mobilize a group of people to greater heroism?

Apply It

- * 30. For what challenge facing you this week can you seek God's will before you encounter discouragements?
31. What person of faith in potentially compromising company deserves your respect and support?

The Widow and the Shunammite - 2 Kings 4:1-44

Topics: Abundance, Bitterness, Children, Death, Despair, Doubt, Healing, Help, Home, Hospitality, Husbands, Instructions, Miracles, Neighbor, Possessions, Prayer, Promises, Prophecy, Questions, Respect, Resurrection, Rewards, Sickness, Slavery, Stubbornness, Thankfulness, Wealth, Wives

Open It

1. What are the feelings that go along with debt and financial hardships?
- * 2. Whose prayers do you want when you are facing life's most daunting problems?

Explore It

3. What was the predicament of the widow of one of the prophets? (4:1)
4. How did Elisha make use of what little the widow had to provide for her by faith? (4:2-6)
5. When did the oil stop flowing for the widow and her sons? (4:6)
6. How did the miracle of the oil take care of the widow's financial difficulties? (4:7)
7. What do we know about the woman who extended hospitality to Elisha? (4:8-10)
8. What did the woman request when Elisha offered to reward her? (4:11-13)
9. How did Elisha learn of a need the Shunammite woman had but did not verbalize? (4:14)
10. What promise did Elisha make to the Shunammite woman? (4:15-16)
- * 11. What calamity befell the family in Shunem after several years? (4:17-20)
12. What action did the woman take after her son died? (4:21-25)
13. What did the woman tell Gehazi about her predicament? (4:26)
14. How did the woman tell Elisha about her problem? (4:27-28)
- * 15. What did the Shunammite woman insist that Elisha do? (4:27-30)
16. How did Elisha propose to meet the woman's need? (4:29)
17. What different measures were taken before life returned to the widow's dead son? (4:31-35)
- * 18. What was the Shunammite woman's response to the return of her son? (4:36-37)
19. How did Elisha reverse an inadvertent but deadly mistake for a group of prophets? (4:38-41)
20. What resources were at Elisha's disposal when he fed a hundred men? (4:42-44)

Get It

21. What circumstance have you faced in which you were afraid to hope?
- * 22. What were the evidences of faith in how the Shunammite woman behaved after her son's death?
23. In what different ways did Elisha show compassion in this set of incidents?
24. Why do you think God works through the resources we have rather than always doing miracles?
25. What was Elisha's attitude when people came to him with perplexing problems?
26. What can enable you to feel confident about the good things God wants to do in people's lives?
- * 27. When have you hesitated to ask someone to pray for you because you felt self-conscious?
28. What were the "raw materials"—the everyday items and actions—that formed the basis for Elisha's miracles?

Apply It

29. What "insignificant" thing do you have that you can ask God to make sufficient for a practical need you are facing right now?
- * 30. What urgent need should you bring before God more persistently until you see His answer?

Naaman Healed of Leprosy - 2 Kings 5:1-27

Topics: Anger, Appreciation, Assumptions, Blessing, Courage, Deceit, Dishonesty, Faith, Faithfulness, Fear, Forgiveness, Gifts, Greatness, Greed, Healing, Hiding, Idolatry, Impossible, Instructions, Insults, Knowledge, Lying, Perspective, Punishment, Quarrels, Questions, Restoration, Serving, Sickness, Slavery, Victory, Youth

Open It

1. What is the purpose of offering a reward for the return of a missing item, animal, or person?
- * 2. In what way can a serious illness make a person more or less inclined to trust God?

Explore It

3. What made Naaman a “great man” in Aram? (5:1)
4. How was God involved with the fortunes of the pagan nation of Aram? (5:1)
5. How did Naaman learn about the healing powers of the prophet of God? (5:2-3)
6. When the king of Aram approved Naaman’s expedition, to whom did he send the commander? (5:4-6)
7. How did the king of Israel react when he received the letter from the king of Aram? (5:7)
8. What message did Elisha send to the king when he heard of the letter and the king’s reaction? (5:8)
- * 9. What promise did Elisha make to Naaman? (5:9-10)
- * 10. What was Naaman’s reaction to the instructions to wash in the Jordan? (5:11-12)
11. How did Naaman’s servants reason with him to help him overcome his pride? (5:13)
12. What happened when Naaman obeyed Elisha’s instructions? (5:14)
- * 13. How had Naaman changed internally by the time he went back to Elisha? (5:15)
14. What did Naaman offer to Elisha out of gratitude? (5:15)
15. How did Elisha respond to the offer of gifts? (5:16)
16. How did Naaman propose to live as a believer in the Lord God in a pagan land? (5:17-18)
17. On what terms did Naaman and Elisha part? (5:19)
18. What bothered Gehazi about the way Elisha had treated Naaman? (5:20)
19. What did Gehazi try to do, without Elisha’s knowledge, to enrich himself? (5:21-24)
20. How did Elisha find out about what his servant had done? (5:25)
21. What was Gehazi’s punishment for being deceitful and greedy? (5:26-27)

Get It

22. Why was the king of Israel at his wits’ end when he received the request from the king of Aram?
- * 23. How did it help Naaman that God (through Elisha) chose the Jordan to wash and heal him?
- * 24. How can our unwillingness to humble ourselves actually deprive us of good gifts from God?
25. Why do you think Naaman’s cleansing was a conversion experience for him?
26. Why would it have compromised the name of God and His prophet if Elisha had accepted payment for Naaman’s healing?
27. How did Gehazi underestimate Elisha’s relationship with God?

Apply It

- * 28. What tangible benefits do you see in humbling yourself to do what God requires of you?
29. What can you do to serve someone else without payment?

An Axhead Floats - 2 Kings 6:1-7

Topics: Accountability, Despair, Fear, Goals, Help, Miracles, Needs, Plans, Questions

Open It

- * 1. When have you felt the sinking feeling that comes with losing or damaging someone else's property?
- 2. What do you think you would enjoy or loathe about being involved in a church building project?
- 3. Why is the presence and attention of the leader such an encouragement to the people working under him or her?

Explore It

- * 4. Why did the prophets want to build a new community living and meeting space? (6:1-2)
- 5. What hesitations, if any, did Elisha have about the proposed building project? (6:2)
- * 6. What did the prophets want from Elisha? (6:3)
- 7. What building material was chosen by the prophets? (6:4)
- 8. What accident befell one of the workers? (6:5)
- 9. Why was the worker especially distressed about the loss of an axhead? (6:5)
- 10. From what material was the axhead made that was used to cut down trees? (6:5)
- * 11. To whom did the younger prophet turn when he found himself in a predicament? (6:5)
- 12. What question did Elisha ask the prophet who had lost the axhead? (6:6)
- 13. What strange action did Elisha take at the place where the axhead dropped? (6:6)
- 14. What miraculous occurrence followed when Elisha threw the stick in the river? (6:6)
- 15. What command did Elisha issue when the axhead floated up? (6:7)
- 16. How did the potentially disastrous incident of the lost axhead end? (6:7)

Get It

- 17. In your opinion to what extent were the setbacks in the building project a result of someone's disobedience?
- 18. What was a common practice of groups of "prophets" in Elisha's day?
- 19. Why did the prophets who followed Elisha need more room?
- 20. What did the prophets want from Elisha besides his "go-ahead."
- * 21. What is good or bad about having your immediate boss oversee your work?
- 22. What is the most responsible way to handle the situation if you lose or damage someone else's property?
- * 23. How was Elisha's presence important to the miracle of the axhead floating?
- 24. Why is faith the believer's most important tool when beginning a project?

Apply It

- * 25. What project of concern to you could benefit from the presence of an older and wiser member? How?
- 26. What borrowed item do you need to return to its owner in good condition this week?

Elisha Traps Blinded Arameans - 2 Kings 6:8-23

Topics: Accusation, Assurance, Confidence, Death, Fear, Guidance, Help, Mercy, Plans, Prayer, Prophecy, Questions, Resources, Revenge, Security, Strength, Surprises, Unfaithfulness, War

Open It

1. What can inside information about the enemy do for a fighting force?
- * 2. When is the spread of secrets or confidences alarming or dangerous?

Explore It

3. What two kingdoms were at war? (6:8)
4. Who was making the decisions about the movement of the troops of Aram? (6:8)
- * 5. How was the king of Israel avoiding the king of Aram again and again? (6:9-10)
- * 6. How did the king of Aram assume the enemy was getting privileged information? (6:11)
- * 7. What did one of the officers tell the king of Aram about his “security leak”? (6:12)
8. Where did the king of Aram catch up to Elisha? (6:13-14)
9. What was the reaction of Elisha’s servant when he saw the army of Aram surrounding the city? (6:15)
10. Why was Elisha not alarmed by what the servant reported? (6:16)
11. What did Elisha ask God to show his servant? (6:17)
12. What did Elisha ask God to do to the force that was closing in on him? (6:18)
13. With their perception altered, what was Elisha able to do with the army that had come after him? (6:19)
14. Once he had led them to Samaria, what did Elisha ask God to show the Arameans? (6:20)
15. When the king of Israel saw his enemies at his mercy, how did he propose to seize the day? (6:21)
16. To what ethic of warfare did Elisha appeal when he ordered the king to spare the prisoners? (6:22)
17. What was done for the Arameans who found themselves at Israel’s mercy? (6:23)
18. How did the war between Aram and Israel go after this incident? (6:23)

Get It

- * 19. What advantage did Israel have in its conflict with Aram?
20. What negative consequences can issue from a breach of confidence?
- * 21. Why was Elisha not alarmed about a whole army seeking to capture him?
22. What was the purpose of the blindness that God brought on the Arameans?
23. What are the advantages and disadvantages of military versus divine help?
24. How can mercy for one’s enemies show greater strength than vengeance?

Apply It

- * 25. What problem might seem less intimidating if you asked God for His help and intervention?
26. How can you monitor your intentions and behavior so you don’t betray the people who confide in you?

Famine in Besieged Samaria - 2 Kings 6:24-7:2

Topics: Abundance, Bitterness, Death, Doubt, Fairness, Frustration, Help, Hopelessness, Justice, Murder, Promises, Prophecy, Repentance, Serving, Suffering, Swearing, Waiting, War

Open It

- * 1. What are some of your strongest associations with the words famine and starvation?
- 2. Do you believe that hardship brings out the best or the worst in people, and why?

Explore It

- 3. What was the size and origins of the army besieging Samaria? (6:24)
- * 4. What were the living conditions and prices of goods for the people trapped inside the city of Samaria? (6:25)
- 5. Who called out to the king of Israel as he was walking along the wall? (6:26)
- * 6. How did the king express his sense of helplessness in the current conditions? (6:27)
- 7. What awful grievance did the woman detail for the king? (6:28-29)
- 8. What was the king's reaction to the woman's story? (6:30)
- 9. What action symbolic of mourning and repentance did the people see the king had already taken? (6:30)
- * 10. Whom did the king of Israel hold accountable for the suffering in Israel? (6:31)
- 11. What did Elisha predict to the elders assembled with him before it ever occurred? (6:32)
- 12. What was the king of Israel ready to do in his desperation? (6:33)
- 13. What did Elisha prophesy about the suffering in Samaria? (7:1)
- 14. How did Elisha use the values of foodstuffs to illustrate the promised abundance from God? (7:1)
- 15. Who heard Elisha's prophecy and found it incredible? (7:2)
- 16. What did Elisha predict would happen to the doubter? (7:2)

Get It

- 17. What sorts of things were the people of the besieged city reduced to eating?
- 18. What kind of help did the woman expect from the king?
- 19. Why do you think people will do things under extreme hardship that they would consider unthinkable otherwise?
- * 20. What was good and bad about the king's reactions to the hardships of his subjects?
- 21. Are you like or unlike the man who doubted that even God could totally reverse a desperate situation in twenty-four hours?
- * 22. Why is it tempting to blame others when we are suffering?

Apply It

- 23. What practical investment can you make this week in increasing your stamina for waiting for God?
- * 24. Next time you find yourself waiting anxiously for some trial to end, how can you avoid blaming another person?

The Siege Lifted - 2 Kings 7:3-20

Topics: Abandon, Abundance, Assumptions, Awe, Darkness, Death, Deceit, Doubt, Fear, Giving Up, Good News, Hiding, Mercy, Murder, Possessions, Punishment, Right, Risk, Running, Selfishness, Sickness, Wealth

Open It

1. Why would you consider or avoid volunteering for a hazardous mission?
- * 2. When has a piece of news struck you as literally too good to be true?

Explore It

- * 3. What decision did four lepers make out of desperation? (7:3-4)
4. What did the lepers find when they entered the Aramean camp? (7:5)
5. Why had the Aramean army panicked and fled? (7:6-7)
6. What did the lepers do when they found all of the abandoned provisions? (7:8)
- * 7. What did the lepers realize was wrong about their behavior? (7:9)
- * 8. How did the news of the abandoned enemy camp reach the king? (7:10-11)
9. What was the king of Israel's theory about the startling turn of events? (7:12)
10. How did one of the officers propose to find out the truth? (7:13)
11. What did the messengers find when they went as far as the Jordan? (7:14-15)
12. How abundant was the provision for Israel from the abandoned enemy camp? (7:16)
13. Whom did the king put in charge of the gate when news of the plunder reached the city? (7:17)
14. How did the manner of his death bear out the prophecy Elisha had spoken against the officer? (7:17-20)

Get It

15. Why, in the cases of the lepers and the scouts, was it worth the risk of leaving the besieged city?
- * 16. Why might the lepers not have felt an immediate need to notify the city?
17. How did the Arameans' beliefs about what was happening line up with what really happened?
18. When have you started on a course of action only to become convinced that it is too selfish?
19. What obligation do we have to share with others?
- * 20. Why do we have an obligation to share with others?
21. Why is it best to act quickly when you become convicted of sin?
22. What is good and bad about habitually mistrusting your enemies?
23. How easy or difficult is it for you to believe that God could turn around a hopeless situation literally overnight?

Apply It

- * 24. What news, possession, or other blessing do you need to share with someone in need during this coming week?
25. With whom can you share on a regular basis? How?
26. How can you cultivate a faith that believes all things are possible for God?

The Shunammite's Land Restored - 2 Kings 8:1-6

Topics: Friendship, Government, Greatness, Home, Instructions, Miracles, Moving, Obedience, Prophecy, Restoration, Resurrection, Timing

Open It

1. How long do you think an owner should be given to reclaim property he or she has abandoned?
- * 2. How do you feel when you approach two people and they say, "We were just talking about you"?
3. If you were forced to leave your native land for some reason, do you think you would want to return as soon as possible or would you be likely to adopt a new homeland? Why?

Explore It

4. What was Elisha's relationship to the woman whom he warned about the famine? (8:1)
5. What was the prophet's instruction for surviving the famine? (8:1)
6. How did the woman respond to Elisha's warning? (8:2)
7. Why did the Shunammite woman return to Israel after seven years? (8:3)
8. What did the woman need in order to resume her life in her homeland? (8:3)
9. To whom did the king happen to be talking when the woman came to him to plead her cause? (8:4)
- * 10. What was the subject of the king's conversation with Gehazi? (8:4-5)
11. What specific story had Gehazi chosen to tell the king? (8:5)
- * 12. What was noteworthy about the timing of the woman's arrival? (8:5)
13. What did the king want to discuss after being introduced to the Shunammite woman? (8:6)
- * 14. How did the king deal with the woman's request to have her house and land restored? (8:6)

Get It

- * 15. How do we know that Elisha put a priority on long-term relationships?
16. If you knew of an impending disaster, what advice would you have for your friends?
17. What are the issues of fairness surrounding the widow's choice to leave and then come back?
- * 18. How did the widow's association with the prophet aid her cause although he was not present to intervene for her?
19. What is so compelling about hearing a story firsthand?
20. What might have motivated the king's generosity toward the widow?
21. When have you seen the hand of God in the timing of events in your life?
22. What would you be willing to risk in terms of goods and relationships in order to be obedient to God?

Apply It

- * 23. What long-standing friendship needs an investment of time and energy from you in order to keep it current?
24. How can you check your spiritual temperature to be sure that earthly attachments would not prevent you from hearing and obeying the Lord?

Hazael Murders Ben-Hadad - 2 Kings 8:7-15

Topics: Answers, Beliefs, Gifts, Knowledge, Murder, Prophecy, Questions, Shame, Sickness, Sorrow, Truth

Open It

- * 1. Why does an unwavering stare tend to make us uncomfortable?
- 2. What person have you known or known of who strikes you as truly unscrupulous?
- 3. Why would you like (or not like) to see into the future?

Explore It

- 4. Where had Elisha journeyed? (8:7)
- * 5. What did the king of Aram want to know about his future? (8:8)
- 6. In what different ways did the king of Aram show respect for God and His prophet? (8:8-9)
- 7. Whom did the king send to inquire of Elisha? (8:8-9)
- 8. What was the discrepancy between Elisha's answer to the king and what he knew would actually happen? (8:10)
- * 9. After Elisha had revealed his insights to Hazael, what did he do? (8:10-11)
- * 10. What was Hazael's reaction to Elisha's stare? (8:11)
- 11. How did Elisha explain his weeping to Hazael? (8:12)
- 12. What awful deeds did Elisha predict for Hazael? (8:12)
- 13. What seems insincere about Hazael's reaction to Elisha's prophecy? (8:13)
- 14. What specific turn of historical events had God revealed to Elisha? (8:13)
- 15. What answer did Hazael report back to the king? (8:14)
- 16. What did Hazael do in fulfillment of Elisha's prophecy? (8:15)

Get It

- 17. Why did Ben-Hadad see Elisha's visit as an opportunity to learn his own fate?
- 18. What are some indications that Ben-Hadad trusted Hazael?
- 19. Why do you think Elisha sent one message to the king but revealed another outcome to Hazael?
- * 20. Why would Elisha's stare have made Hazael feel ashamed?
- 21. What difference does it make that God knows the outcome of our choices before we make them?
- * 22. In what sense was Elisha's God-given knowledge a burden to him?
- 23. Why do you think Hazael acted as if he didn't understand Elisha's implications?
- 24. Do you think his encounter with Elisha in any way changed Hazael's plans? Why?

Apply It

- * 25. How might you use the truth of God's Word to shed light on the choices facing someone in authority?
- 26. What instance of suffering (whether near by or far away) can be the subject of your earnest prayers this week?

Jehoram and Ahaziah - 2 Kings 8:16-29

Topics: Death, Evil, History, Idolatry, Marriage, Mercy, Promises, Rebellion, Relationships, War

Open It

- * 1. In your own life or the life of someone close to you, when have you observed the negative influence of the wrong friends?
- 2. What notorious villain, famous antihero, or popular figure would you least like to have as an in-law, and why?

Explore It

- 3. Who was king of Israel when Jehoram succeeded his father, Jehoshaphat, in Judah? (8:16)
- 4. How long did Jehoram's reign last? (8:17)
- * 5. Why was Jehoram's reign similar to that of the kings of Israel? (8:18)
- * 6. What promise was God honoring when He did not destroy Judah because of the sin of its king? (8:19)
- 7. Which conquered people rebelled against the rule of the king of Judah? (8:20)
- 8. What happened when Jehoram sought to subdue the Edomites with military power? (8:21)
- 9. What two groups rebelled at that time and were not reconquered? (8:22)
- 10. How old was Jehoram's son Ahaziah when he began to reign as king? (8:26)
- 11. How was Ahaziah related to the kings of Israel? (8:27)
- * 12. Why did Ahaziah become an evil man? (8:27)
- 13. Against what foreign king did Ahaziah and Joram go to war? (8:28)
- 14. Which king was wounded in the battle with Hazael? (8:28-29)
- 15. Why did Ahaziah go to visit Joram? (8:29)

Get It

- * 16. How did the son of one of Judah's better kings fall into the sins of the kings of Israel?
- 17. On what did God base His judgment?
- 18. What are some reasons why the army of Judah was quick to disband and give up the fight?
- 19. How did Jehoram's marriage to a daughter of Ahab perpetuate the kingdom's problems into the next generation?
- 20. Why did Joram have to withdraw from the battle against Aram?
- * 21. How much do you think good people influence unsavory characters with whom they associate and vice versa? Why?
- 22. Why isn't it possible to marry someone with very different values from your own and not be influenced by him or her?

Apply It

- * 23. What associations or friendships in your life should you examine to make sure they are not subtly drawing you away from God?
- 24. In what area would you like to ask God to help you overcome the heritage of your own family?

Jehu - 2 Kings 9:1-37

Topics: Escape, God's Will, Help, Idolatry, Justice, Murder, Occult, Peace, Prophecy, Punishment, Questions, Rebellion, Running, Vengeance

Open It

1. What fictional villain or villainess do you find fascinating?
- * 2. What would it be like for our country to be ruled by a tyrant?
3. Who are some of your favorite Christian leaders or teachers? Why?

Explore It

4. Where did Elisha send one of the young prophets on an urgent errand? (9:1)
5. What message was the prophet to convey to Jehu in secret? (9:2-3)
6. How did the young prophet separate Jehu from the group of officers? (9:4-6)
- * 7. According to the prophecy, how was Jehu to carry out God's will concerning Ahab's family? (9:6-10)
8. When the prophet had left, what did the other officers ask Jehu? (9:11)
9. How did Jehu summarize the prophet's actions for his fellow officers? (9:12)
10. How did Jehu's officers respond to the idea of raising up a new king? (9:13)
11. Why was Joram, king of Israel, particularly vulnerable at the time Jehu was anointed? (9:14-15)
12. After asking his supporters to keep his kingship a secret, where did Jehu go? (9:16)
13. What order did Joram give when Jehu's army was spotted coming toward Jezreel? (9:17)
14. What question did the messenger ask of Jehu? (9:18)
- * 15. How did Jehu reply to the king's plea for peace? (9:18-19, 22)
16. What did Joram do when the first messenger didn't come back? (9:19)
17. After the second messenger deserted in the same manner as the first, how did Joram take matters into his own hands? (9:21-22)
18. What happened when Joram tried to flee? (9:23-24)
19. What did Jehu want Joram's chariot officer to do in order to fulfill God's prophecy? (9:25-26)
20. What were the circumstances of Ahaziah's death? (9:27-29)
21. How did Jezebel attempt to show that she was not intimidated by Jehu? (9:30-31)
- * 22. How did Jehu manage to destroy Jezebel without lifting a hand against her? (9:32-33)
23. What did Jehu discover later when he sent servants to bury Jezebel? (9:34-35)
24. What prophecy of Elijah did Jehu realize had been fulfilled? (9:36-37)

Get It

25. How would you explain the haste and secrecy of the errand on which Elisha sent the young prophet?
- * 26. How did Jehu justify the fact that he did not come in peace?
27. When can conflict be a good thing?
28. What or who are some of the enemies of goodness and truth today?
29. What does it mean for us today to avoid "making peace with idolatry and witchcraft"?
30. What responsibility do we have to stand for God, as Jehu did?
31. What do you assume about a government from which there are wholesale defections when the opportunity arises?
- * 32. What loyalty supersedes king and country for every believer?
33. Of what two evils did Jehu claim to want to rid Israel?
34. Why was it significant that the bodies of Ahaziah and Jezebel were thrown unceremoniously on a certain plot of ground at Jezreel?
35. Why is dishonorable treatment of a body after death reserved only for the most hated individuals?

36. In what sense is a proper burial a sign of respect?

Apply It

- * 37. How can you show your support for a Christian leader or teacher?
- 38. For what fulfillment of prophecy do you praise God?

Ahab's Family Killed - 2 Kings 10:1-17

Topics: Approval, Challenge, Children, Death, Example, Family, Fear, Friendship, Loyalty, Murder, Promises, Prophecy, Rebellion, Relationships, Serving, Swearing, Teamwork, Zeal

Open It

1. Whom would you want to raise your children should something happen to you and your spouse?
- * 2. What are some of the ways that politicians form alliances?

Explore It

3. When Joram and Jezebel were dead, what threats to Jehu's kingship still remained? (10:1)
4. What challenge did Jehu issue to the elders and guardians of Joram's children? (10:2-3)
5. Why were the officials in Samaria afraid of Jehu? (10:4)
6. Instead of mounting a defense, what message did the officials send back to Jehu? (10:5)
7. What request of the officials did Jehu make by return message? (10:6)
- * 8. Why were all of Joram's potential heirs in one place and vulnerable? (10:6)
- * 9. What action did the guardians take against their charges? (10:7-8)
- * 10. For which violent acts did Jehu take responsibility, and which ones did he lay at the feet of the people? (10:9)
11. Who was guilty of what? (10:9-11)
12. How extensive did Jehu plan to make his cleansing of Israel? (10:10-11)
13. What citizens of Judah were included in Jehu's purge of Israel? (10:12-14)
14. Whom did Jehu meet while en route to Samaria? (10:15)
15. How did Jehu see his various actions against the house of Ahab? (10:16)

Get It

- * 16. In what way does shared guilt bind people together?
17. What was effective about Jehu's strategy of telling Ahaziah's officials to prepare to defend their master's dynasty?
- * 18. Why was it shrewd for Jehu to let others do some of the killing?
19. In our day and age how do people show "zeal for the Lord"?
20. Besides fulfilling Elijah's prophecy, what pragmatic purpose did Jehu have in destroying all of the family, friends, and allies of Ahaziah?
21. How would you feel if you were appointed by God to carry out a judgment against someone else?

Apply It

- * 22. As a Christian how can you free yourself from people who want to control you with shared guilt?
23. What tasks can you delegate among fellow family members, church members, or employees so that individuals have more of a sense of ownership in the enterprise as a whole?

Ministers of Baal Killed - 2 Kings 10:18-36

Topics: Achievements, Compromise, Death, Deceit, Escape, Faults, Flattery, Heart, Idolatry, Instructions, Law, Life, Motives, Murder, Obedience, Plans, Preparation, Punishment, Purpose, Rewards, Right, Sacrifice, Separation

Open It

1. What are some ways that criminals can be lured into a trap and then arrested?
- * 2. What is one job or project that you would like to see completed?
3. What place or building would you like to see reduced to rubble and never rebuilt? Why?

Explore It

4. How did Jehu deliberately misrepresent himself when he first began to rule in Israel? (10:18)
5. Why was Jehu eager to gather every priest of Baal in one place? (10:19)
6. Who came to the assembly proclaimed by Jehu? (10:20-21)
7. With what attention did Jehu flatter the assembled priests? (10:22)
8. What did Jehu and Jehonadab do to make sure they didn't destroy any innocent people? (10:23)
9. What orders did Jehu give to eighty men outside the temple? (10:24)
10. What did Jehu's guards and officers do to the priests of Baal? (10:25)
11. What became of the temple of Baal? (10:26-27)
- * 12. Which of God's mandates did Jehu fulfill completely? (10:28)
- * 13. What unorthodox religious practices did Jehu fail to eliminate? (10:29)
14. Why did the Lord promise Jehu that his descendants would sit on the throne to the fourth generation? (10:30)
- * 15. What was the condition of Jehu's heart before God? (10:31)
16. What was happening to the kingdom of Israel during Jehu's reign? (10:32-33)
17. How long did Jehu reign in Samaria? (10:36)

Get It

18. Why is shrewdness sometimes as important as zeal in achieving specific goals?
19. What could Jehu have done short of deception to be sure he destroyed every last prophet of Baal?
20. How did Jehu and Jehonadab manipulate the gathering of prophets to make their "devotion" look genuine?
- * 21. What was the danger in leaving the temple of Baal standing, even though all the priests were dead?
- * 22. Why is unwavering obedience over a long time more difficult than a single instance of bold, zealous action?
23. In what areas do Christians today have difficulty being consistent?
24. Whom does God use to carry out His purposes?
25. To you what is most difficult about being consistent with your stated beliefs?

Apply It

- * 26. What habit can you cultivate that will help you to keep the law of the Lord with all your heart?
27. How can careful planning help you to achieve a goal you have set for yourself?

Athaliah and Joash - 2 Kings 11:1-21

Topics: Armor, Children, Covenant, Death, Hiding, Idolatry, Instructions, Joy, Murder, People, Plans, Protection, Purity, Quiet, Rebellion, Swearing, Timing, Vows

Open It

1. What are the pros and cons of religious officials becoming involved in government affairs?
2. When do you most long for “peace and quiet”?
- * 3. How would you finish the sentence “A grandmother is . . .”?

Explore It

- * 4. How did the king of Judah’s mother show herself to be ruthless? (11:1)
- * 5. How was one of Ahaziah’s sons saved from the massacre? (11:2)
- * 6. Where was the child prince kept safe while Athaliah ruled? (11:3)
7. How long did Athaliah rule unchallenged? (11:4)
8. What leaders of Judah were called together by Jehoiada the priest? (11:4)
9. What did Jehoiada require of everyone before he revealed the existence of a legitimate heir? (11:4)
10. What natural routine did Jehoiada alter slightly in order to give the young king the maximum protection? (11:5-7)
11. What were the guards instructed to do if anyone tried to approach Joash? (11:8)
12. How did Jehoiada arm the troops that would guard the young king? (11:10)
13. When the guards were in place, what did Jehoiada do in the presence of the assembled people of Judah? (11:12)
14. How did Athaliah find out that something unusual was happening? (11:13)
15. What did Athaliah see taking place in the temple? (11:14)
16. What was Athaliah’s reaction to the plan Jehoiada was carrying out? (11:14)
17. Why were the commanders careful to seize and kill Athaliah before she reached the temple? (11:15-16)
18. What two covenants did Jehoiada institute? (11:17)
19. How did the people respond to the restoration of the rightful king and the covenant with God? (11:18)
20. What was the mood in Jerusalem when the new king was taken up to the throne? (11:20)

Get It

21. Why was Athaliah willing to destroy members of her own family?
- * 22. Why was it so important to the future of Judah that at least one of Ahaziah’s sons was rescued?
23. How do you think the loyal commanders reacted when they learned that an heir to the throne had been kept alive?
24. Why was Jehoiada in an ideal position to muster protection for the young king?
25. What is particularly repugnant about a person who will even destroy his or her own relatives in order to reach his or her ambitions?
26. Why do you suppose Athaliah had few if any supporters in Judah?
27. Why does the exercise of raw power not always inspire loyalty?
- * 28. How did Jehoiada show respect for God even in the destruction of His enemies?

Apply It

- * 29. To what child in a difficult situation can you reach out with the love of God? How?
30. How could you personally reaffirm the covenant between the Lord and yourself?

Joash Repairs the Temple - 2 Kings 12:1-21

Topics: Accountability, Advice, Death, Disobedience, Employment, Enemies, Family, Gifts, Guilt, Honor, Instructions, Integrity, Money, Rebellion, Right, Sin, War, Wealth, Work

Open It

1. What aspect of personal finances do you find most trying?
2. What do you appreciate most about honest tradesmen?
3. In what situations is honesty very important to you?
- * 4. What are the pros and cons of doing home repairs yourself versus calling a professional?

Explore It

5. How long did Joash reign in Judah? (12:1)
6. What was a major factor in making Joash's reign pleasing to God? (12:2)
7. What displeasing practices from earlier monarchs did Joash not eliminate? (12:3)
- * 8. What was the original plan for funding and accomplishing the repairs on the temple? (12:4-5)
9. How much time elapsed without any real change in the condition of the temple? (12:6)
- * 10. What change did Joash order in the procedure for repairing the temple? (12:7-8)
11. What was Jehoiada's innovation, which allowed only two people to handle the money that came in? (12:9-10)
- * 12. Who received the money and channeled it into the work in the new arrangement? (12:11-12)
13. What ceased when repairs on the temple speeded up? (12:13-14)
14. How reliable were the on-site supervisors of the temple repairs? (12:15)
15. What types of offerings were being received by the priests? (12:16)
16. What military threat did Israel face during Joash's reign? (12:17)
17. What did Joash decide to give away in order to stave off an invasion? (12:18)
18. What brought about the end of Joash's reign? (12:20-21)
19. Who succeeded Joash as king of Judah? (12:21)

Get It

20. What interpersonal relationship proved beneficial for Joash and for Judah?
21. What popular practice of the people of Judah did Joash and Jehoiada decline to challenge?
- * 22. Why were the repairs to the temple less than successful when each priest was given supplementary money and expected to do the work himself?
23. How did Joash ensure that the money given to the temple restoration was used wisely?
24. What does it mean to use money wisely?
25. What are the advantages of having organizational funds handled by the fewest individuals possible?
26. How did Jehoiada make sure that the needs of the priests were still met when the accounting system changed?
- * 27. How did Jehoiada ensure that all the work got done and all responsibilities were carried out satisfactorily?
28. What difference does it make how honest we are?
29. What was good and bad about the way Joash held off the threat from Hazael?
30. What are the pitfalls of "buying off" a bully?

Apply It

- * 31. In what area of life where you guide or supervise others could you call forth the best in them by trusting them with more responsibility?
32. What is one thing you can do to earn the trust of your boss, spouse, or other important person this

week?

33. In what situation do you need to trust God instead of “buying” security for the moment?

Jehoahaz King of Israel - 2 Kings 13:1-9

Topics: Anger, Escape, Evil, Freedom, Habits, Listening, Oppressed, Repentance, Sin

Open It

- * 1. What do you think you would find hardest about being a slave?
- 2. Why do you think bad habits are so hard to break?

Explore It

- 3. Who was king of Judah when Jehoahaz took over in Israel? (13:1)
- * 4. Why did the Lord view Jehoahaz as evil? (13:2)
- * 5. What hardship did God use to punish Israel for its unfaithfulness? (13:3)
- * 6. Why did God listen to Jehoahaz' plea for help? (13:4)
- 7. How was the suffering of Israel alleviated for a time? (13:5)
- 8. What vestiges of idolatry did the people fail to give up even when God had mercy on them? (13:6)
- 9. What was the condition of Israel's army after the war with the king of Aram? (13:7)
- 10. Who succeeded Jehoahaz as king when he died? (13:9)

Get It

- * 11. What sin kept cropping up in Israel and bringing suffering on the people?
- 12. Why does the Bible contain so many mentions of the need for repentance?
- * 13. What can we glean from this passage about God's sense of pity for sufferers?
- 14. Why is "home" one of our most cherished possessions?
- 15. Why is a sin of society seldom limited to one generation?

Apply It

- * 16. For what suffering person can you pray and appeal to God's care for that person's pain?
- 17. What act of praise and thanksgiving can express your gratitude for your political freedom?

Jehoash King of Israel - 2 Kings 13:10-25

Topics: Achievements, Anger, Body, Compassion, Covenant, Death, Evil, Grace, History, Idolatry, Miracles, Mourning, Oppressed, Resurrection, Sickness, Sin, Sorrow, Testing, Victory, War

Open It

1. How do you respond to contemporary stories of miracles occurring in certain special locations?
- * 2. Why do some people make a deathbed visit when they have not seen the dying person in many years?

Explore It

3. How long did Jehoahaz' son Jehoash reign in Israel? (13:10)
4. With what kingdom was Israel at war during Jehoash's reign? (13:12)
5. How ill was Elisha when the king visited him? (13:14)
6. What was Jehoash's demeanor when he came to Elisha? (13:14)
- * 7. What symbolic action did Elisha have Jehoash make, which then became a prophecy? (13:15-17)
- * 8. After the first favorable prophecy, what did Elisha tell Jehoash to do next? (13:18)
- * 9. Why was Elisha angered that Jehoash only struck three times? (13:19)
10. What additional miracle is associated with Elisha even after his death? (13:20-21)
11. Why did the Lord have compassion on Israel after they had suffered for a time under the oppression of Aram? (13:22-23)
12. Once Hazael was dead, what was Jehoash able to recapture from Aram? (13:24-25)

Get It

- * 13. Why do you suppose the king went down to see the dying prophet Elisha when the king was not living in accordance with God's will?
- * 14. What about the intentional blessing of the next generation by the elders before they die would be good for us to do today?
15. After being told that he would prevail in his first battle with Aram, how did Jehoash evidence a lack of faith in the way he responded to Elisha's next command?
16. What did the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob have to do with God's relationship with Israel under Jehoahaz and Jehoash?
17. How was Elisha's prophecy of the arrows fulfilled during Jehoash's reign?

Apply It

18. In what area of your life would you like to pray for greater courage to pursue what God has for you to do?
- * 19. What can you do to learn from an elderly believer who could give you wisdom or advice?

Amaziah King of Judah - 2 Kings 14:1-22

Topics: Achievements, Ambition, Challenge, Children, Comparisons, Confidence, Death, Example, Home, Justice, Law, Listening, Murder, Name, Parents, Punishment, Rebellion, Restoration, Revenge, Right, Running, Sacrifice, Victory, War, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What are some of the honorable and dishonorable reasons that people fight one another?
- 2. How do you feel about laws that require sentencing of parents when juveniles break the law?
- 3. What instance do you know of in which one success made someone too cocky and willing to take risks?

Explore It

- 4. Who was king of Israel during most of Amaziah's reign in Judah? (14:1)
- 5. How did Amaziah compare spiritually with David? (14:3)
- 6. Whose reign did Amaziah's most resemble in terms of faithfulness to God? (14:3-4)
- 7. What did Amaziah do in response to the rebellion that had ended his father's life? (14:5)
- 8. Why did Amaziah decide not to execute the sons along with the fathers, as was often the practice in the ancient world? (14:6)
- 9. What was Amaziah's greatest military victory? (14:7)
- * 10. After Amaziah's victory over the Edomites, what message did Amaziah send to Jehoash? (14:8)
- * 11. What was the parable that Jehoash used to demean Amaziah but also to discourage a confrontation? (14:9-10)
- 12. Where did the confrontation between Israel and Judah take place? (14:11)
- * 13. What was the outcome of the battle between Israel and Judah? (14:12-14)
- 14. What was the extent of Jehoash's destruction and plundering in Judah? (14:13-14)
- 15. How did Amaziah die? (14:19-20)

Get It

- 16. Where would you place Amaziah on the spectrum of kings of Judah, from godly to evil?
- 17. What seems wise or unwise about Amaziah's decision to execute only the assassins and not their families?
- * 18. What do you suppose motivated Amaziah to issue a challenge to the king of Israel?
- 19. What evidence is there that Jehoash's reply to Amaziah was designed to defuse conflict? to spark conflict?
- 20. What reasons can you see for Amaziah's unpopularity?
- * 21. What verbal goads and challenges to pride do you often see and hear?
- 22. If you were a coach, how would you speak to your team about their first big victory?
- 23. What are some areas in which Christians can and should resist the competitive rivalries that pervade our society?
- 24. What spiritual tools are at our disposal to keep us from becoming unwisely carried away with our own successes?
- 25. What are the greatest challenges to your pride?

Apply It

- 26. What do you need to remember the next time you are feeling particularly successful?
- * 27. How can you respond the next time someone tries to goad you into a confrontation through an attack on your self-respect?

Jeroboam II King of Israel - 2 Kings 14:23-29

Topics: Achievements, Evil, History, Influence, Mercy, Prophecy, Restoration, Salvation, Sin, Suffering, War

Open It

- * 1. What, in your mind, is an unforgettable example of helplessness?
- 2. What person in your life could be seen as one who comes to the rescue of others? How?
- 3. When have you relied on someone else to get you out of a jam?

Explore It

- 4. Who was king in Judah when Jeroboam took over in Israel? (14:23)
- 5. What was God's evaluation of Jeroboam, like so many other kings of Israel before him? (14:24)
- 6. What were Jeroboam's historic accomplishments? (14:25)
- * 7. Who predicted what? (14:25)
- 8. What did God see with regard to the plight of Israel? (14:26)
- * 9. Who was suffering? Why? (14:26)
- * 10. How did Israel get out of the mess it was in? (14:26-28)
- 11. What had God not said with regard to Israel? (14:27)
- 12. Who actually saved Israel, and who was His instrument? (14:27-28)
- 13. By whom was Jeroboam succeeded after his death? (14:29)

Get It

- 14. How do we know that God is not limited to using only "righteous" people to accomplish His purposes?
- 15. What limits does God put on His acts of discipline?
- 16. What is striking to you about the spiritual evaluation of Jeroboam and the record of his exploits?
- * 17. In what sense was the restoration of territory for Israel "bigger than the king"?
- 18. What has God been known to do for either individuals or nations that have no helper?
- * 19. How can this story inspire humility in us?
- 20. How can the biblical evidence of God's pity on suffering be an encouragement to you or someone near you when you find yourself in dire circumstances?

Apply It

- * 21. The next time you see that you have been used of God, how can you remember to give credit to God?
- 22. For what "rescue" from suffering do you want to praise God today?

Azariah King of Judah - 2 Kings 15:1-7

Topics: Children, Family, Government, History, Parents, Right, Separation, Sickness, Traditions

Open It

- * 1. Why do you think so many people take notice when a prominent person gets sick or contracts an illness?
- 2. What advantages and disadvantages do you see in a government ruled by one person who is succeeded by his son from generation to generation?

Explore It

- 3. How far into Jeroboam's reign in Israel did Azariah take the throne in Judah? (15:1)
- 4. How old was Azariah when he assumed the throne? (15:2)
- 5. How long was Azariah king in Judah? (15:2)
- 6. Unlike some of the sons of the kings of Judah, what was the national origin of Azariah's mother? (15:2)
- * 7. What did God think of Azariah's deeds? (15:3)
- 8. How were Azariah and his father alike? (15:3)
- 9. What ongoing sin of the people of Judah was not addressed under Azariah? (15:4)
- * 10. What was the cause of Azariah's unusual isolation? (15:5)
- * 11. Who actually conducted the affairs of government during Azariah's reign? (15:5)
- 12. Who was Azariah's successor? (15:7)

Get It

- 13. What qualities do you think a leader would have needed in order to remove the high places from Israel?
- * 14. Why do you think Azariah is credited with the accomplishments of his reign although the Scripture records that his son was the "power behind the throne"?
- * 15. How does it feel to have someone else get the credit when you have done most of the work?
- 16. Judging from this passage, how do we know that an illness or disability is not necessarily a sign of God's disapproval?
- 17. What difference might it have made that Azariah's mother was from Jerusalem?
- 18. How would you feel if you could know exactly what God thinks of the life-style you lead?
- 19. Why was Jotham more qualified than most royal heirs to succeed his father?

Apply It

- * 20. How might you be able to help someone who is not receiving the credit he or she is due?
- 21. Whom do you know who is working hard "behind the scenes" and would appreciate a gesture of thanks from you this week?

Kings of Israel - 2 Kings 15:8-31

Topics: Ambition, Bargaining, Enemies, Evil, Murder, Prophecy, Rebellion, Sin

Open It

- * 1. In your experience how often is it true that “those who live by the sword will die by the sword”?
- 2. In your opinion what is good or bad about a total change of staff when a new president is elected?
- 3. What examples have you seen of power changing a person?

Explore It

- 4. After Jeroboam (the king who had restored some of Israel’s territory) died, how long did his son last as king? (15:8)
- 5. What was God’s evaluation of Zechariah son of Jeroboam? (15:9)
- * 6. How did Zechariah die and lose the kingship? (15:10)
- 7. What prophecy was fulfilled when Shallum assassinated Zechariah and took over as king? (15:12)
- 8. While the succession was happening peacefully in Judah, what happened to Shallum in Israel? (15:13-14)
- 9. What example do we have of the way Menahem used violence and intimidation to consolidate his power? (15:16)
- 10. How long did Menahem reign after he assassinated his predecessor? (15:17)
- 11. Why did God see Menahem as no better than his predecessors? (15:18)
- 12. How did Menahem use a foreign invader to strengthen his own hand in Israel? (15:19-20)
- 13. What became of the threat of Assyrian invasion during Menahem’s reign? (15:20)
- 14. What happened after Menahem’s death? (15:21-22)
- * 15. How was the succession to the throne of Israel determined again after Pekahiah? (15:25)
- 16. After Pekah son of Remaliah became king by assassinating Pekahiah, what changes did he make in the way Israel related to God? (15:28)
- 17. What foreign king invaded significant portions of Israel during Pekah’s reign? (15:29)
- * 18. How did Pekah son of Remaliah die? (15:30)

Get It

- 19. What judgment is repeated over and over again about the kings of Israel?
- * 20. How many of the kings in this period died by assassination and were succeeded by someone unrelated to them?
- 21. What do you suppose God would have liked to see the threat of foreign invasion inspire in the leaders and people of Israel?
- 22. How secure would you feel if you were able to pay someone with superior strength to leave you alone?
- 23. Which king, of those mentioned in this passage, seemed particularly evil? Why?
- * 24. What’s wrong with the thinking that ruthlessness is necessary for success in leadership?
- 25. How do you suppose the average citizen of Israel was affected by this succession of selfish and violent kings?

Apply It

- * 26. For what leaders of our country or the world do you feel moved to pray this week?
- 27. In what role of leadership in your life (whether formally recognized as a position or not) can you ask God to temper your ambition with concern for those you lead?

Jotham and Ahaz - 2 Kings 15:32-16:20

Topics: Ambassadors, Children, Disobedience, Enemies, Evil, Fear, Flattery, Gifts, Help, History, Idolatry, Instructions, Parents, Right, Sacrifice, Submission, War, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What changes might you be willing to make in order to show your loyalty to a new boss?
- 2. In what ways do you think of yourself as flexible or inflexible when it comes to styles of worship?

Explore It

- 3. Who was king in Israel when Jotham succeeded his father in Judah? (15:32)
- 4. What religious practice of the people did Jotham leave unchallenged? (15:34-35)
- 5. What restoration was Jotham able to accomplish in Jerusalem? (15:35)
- 6. What nations were hostile toward Judah during Jotham's reign? (15:37)
- 7. How did Ahaz son of Jotham compare to his father? (16:2)
- 8. What nations did Ahaz' religious practices resemble? (16:3)
- 9. Besides the sacrifices in the high places, which had been going on for generations, what did Ahaz add? (16:4)
- 10. How did the kings of Aram and Israel fare in their war against Judah? (16:5-6)
- 11. To whom did Ahaz appeal for help against his enemies? (16:7)
- * 12. How did Ahaz buy the friendship of Tiglath-Pileser? (16:8-9)
- * 13. What new religious idea did Ahaz send home during his visit to Damascus? (16:10-11)
- * 14. What new practices did Ahaz inaugurate when he returned to Judah? (16:12-14)
- 15. How did Ahaz order the priest to reorder the sacrificial practices? (16:15)
- 16. How did Uriah the priest respond to the changes in worship ordered by Ahaz? (16:16)
- 17. Why did Ahaz feel it was necessary to remove some of the more glorious elements of Hebrew worship? (16:17-18)

Get It

- 18. Since the Scripture says, "the Lord began to send Rezin king of Aram and Pekah son of Remaliah against Judah," what might God have been hoping that Judah would do in response?
- * 19. What was good and bad, for the average Israelite, about Ahaz' willingness to appease the king of Assyria?
- 20. To what extent do we have the freedom to innovate in our worship of the Lord God?
- 21. Why do political leaders, even those who are not religious, often want the approval of religious figures for their actions?
- * 22. If you had been the chief priest under Ahaz, how do you think you would have responded to his orders?
- 23. To what extent are the ministers of God responsible for the continuing faithfulness of their people to God's commands?

Apply It

- 24. How can you be open to different styles of worship without giving up on the essentials of the faith?
- * 25. To what church or political leader can you write to encourage him or her not to compromise on important values?

Israel Exiled because of Sin - 2 Kings 17:1-23

Topics: Anger, Covenant, Disobedience, Enemies, Evil, Forsake, History, Idolatry, Influence, Law, Occult, Peer Pressure, Power, Prophecy, Rejection, Sacrifice, Sin, Slavery, Stubbornness, Suffering, War, Worship

Open It

- * 1. What warning from your parents or teachers do you wish you had heeded?
- 2. Why do you think human beings rarely avoid the mistakes of previous generations?

Explore It

- 3. How long did Hoshea son of Elah reign in Israel? (17:1)
- 4. To what foreign power was Israel paying tribute? (17:3)
- 5. Why was the king of Assyria angry with the king of Israel? (17:4)
- * 6. What became of the kingdom of Israel during the reign of Hoshea? (17:5-6)
- 7. To where were the Israelites deported by the Assyrians? (17:6)
- * 8. Why did disaster befall the people of Israel? (17:7-8)
- 9. What secret practices were flourishing in Israel at the time of its downfall? (17:9-12)
- * 10. What had the Lord done through the years to offer Israel and Judah an alternative to their idolatry? (17:13)
- 11. How did God characterize the people of Israel from one generation to the next? (17:14)
- 12. How do we know that God's people were aware that they were disobeying God? (17:15)
- 13. What were some of the different gods that were worshiped in Israel? (17:16)
- 14. What practices were common in Israel that were particularly hateful to God? (17:17)
- 15. When Israel was deported, what did that represent in terms of God's relationship with them? (17:18)
- 16. How did the tribe of Judah differ from Israel with regard to its obedience to God? (17:19)
- 17. What was the final result of the hardships God brought on Israel? (17:20)
- 18. What was the error of Israel's first king that eventually led to its collapse as a kingdom? (17:21-23)

Get It

- 19. How long had God been working with Israel and Judah to make them a people set apart?
- * 20. Why were a multitude of worship places and gods unacceptable for the children of the Holy One of Israel?
- 21. How did the overwhelming evil of Israel affect it?
- 22. What led to Israel's conquest?
- * 23. What emotion do we provoke in God when we knowingly disobey His commands?
- 24. What would be particularly difficult about the job of a prophet?
- 25. What do you think motivates people to do what they see other people doing?
- 26. Why isn't God endlessly patient with sin in individuals and nations?
- 27. Why should we take God seriously?
- 28. Why should we take sin seriously?
- 29. In what way do we benefit ourselves when we respect God's wishes and obey?

Apply It

- * 30. What warning from Scripture would you do well to take seriously in your life this coming week?
- 31. In what area would you like to ask God to help you resist the pressure of the culture around you?

Samaria Resettled - 2 Kings 17:24-41

Topics: Children, Compromise, Covenant, Disobedience, Enemies, Forget, Idolatry, Ignorance, Listening, People, Persistence, Power, Punishment, Sacrifice, Teaching, Worship

Open It

1. What amusing anecdotes do you know about foreigners trying to interpret or imitate American culture?
- * 2. What conflicting loyalties do people sometimes try to maintain?
3. What are some examples of stubbornness?

Explore It

4. What peoples were brought by the Assyrians to settle in the land vacated by the Israelites? (17:24)
5. What happened to the people when they first settled in the land of Israel? (17:25)
6. What did the king's officials decide that the settlers needed to know? (17:26)
- * 7. Why did the king send a priest back to the land of Israel after exiling the Israelites? (17:27-28)
- * 8. What religious practices flourished in addition to what was taught by the priest of the Lord? (17:29)
9. What different nationalities brought their religious practices into the land of Israel? (17:30-33)
10. How did the new inhabitants of the land adjust their life-style once they were settled? (17:34)
- * 11. What specific prohibition was part of God's original covenant with Israel? (17:35-38)
12. What did God promise to do for the people if they would worship Him alone? (17:39)
13. How closely did the people who heard God's commands live by the conditions He set down for them? (17:40-41)

Get It

14. What was the king of Assyria hoping to accomplish by moving his captives to unfamiliar lands?
15. What response did God make to a total absence of the worship of Yahweh in the land that had belonged to His people?
16. How did the Assyrian governors view the worship of God?
- * 17. How did God view the Assyrians' compromise—reintroducing worship of God alongside worship of idols?
- * 18. Why isn't God satisfied when people merely add worship of Him to their other spiritual practices?
19. Why does God command us not to serve other gods at the same time He commands us to serve Him?
20. What does God consistently do for those who serve Him and Him alone?
21. What idolatries in modern life are Christians tempted to mix with their worship of God?
22. How can we tell when some person or thing has usurped God's proper place in our lives?

Apply It

- * 23. What question would help you know when something or someone has become an idol to you?
24. What missionary would appreciate your prayers and a note of encouragement and as he or she seeks to convert people from the worship of idols to the true and living God?

Hezekiah King of Judah - 2 Kings 18:1-16

Topics: Comparisons, Covenant, Faithfulness, Gifts, Idolatry, Law, Obedience, Rebellion, Renewal, Right, Submission, Success, Trust, Victory, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What reformer of the church or society do you admire?
- 2. What five years of your life do you view as the most successful, and why?

Explore It

- 3. How long was the reign of Hezekiah son of Ahaz in Judah? (18:1-2)
- 4. How did Hezekiah compare to King David? (18:3)
- 5. What were some of the ways that Hezekiah brought Judah into compliance with God's law? (18:4)
- 6. Why did Hezekiah destroy a historical national artifact? (18:4)
- * 7. Where does Hezekiah stand morally among the kings of the separate kingdom of Judah? (18:5)
- * 8. To what did Hezekiah turn for direction in governing Judah? (18:6)
- * 9. How did God reward Hezekiah for his faithfulness? (18:7-8)
- 10. What was happening in Israel at the time Hezekiah assumed the throne in Judah? (18:9-11)
- 11. Why did misfortunes come upon some of the Hebrew people, the kingdom of Israel? (18:12)
- 12. What happened in the fourteenth year of Hezekiah's reign? (18:13)
- 13. With what message did Hezekiah appease the king of Assyria, to whom he had not been paying the expected tribute? (18:14)
- 14. What price did Hezekiah have to pay to get the Assyrian army to leave Judah? (18:14-16)

Get It

- 15. Why was David always the standard of comparison for the kings of Israel and Judah?
- 16. What symbol of the mercy of God had itself become an idol in Judah?
- 17. Why did Hezekiah destroy the bronze snake that Moses had made?
- 18. How is it possible for symbols of Christian faith and history to become idols to us?
- 19. What do we need to do whenever a thing or person becomes an idol to us?
- * 20. What are the stark contrasts between the kingdoms of Israel and Judah at this point in history?
- 21. Why is it noteworthy when someone consistently obeys God?
- 22. What indications do we have of the intimidating power of Assyria?
- 23. What was difficult about what Hezekiah did in obeying God?
- * 24. Why is obedience to God's commands part and parcel of truly worshiping Him?
- 25. In what way is it difficult to serve God?

Apply It

- * 26. What can you do this week to remind yourself that God is above all things and people in your life?
- 27. What difficult Christian responsibility do you want to fulfill more consistently?
- 28. What call for reform can you help your church to take seriously?

Jerusalem Delivered from Sennacherib - 2 Kings 18:17-19:37

Topics: Answers, Bargaining, Blasphemy, Challenge, Death, Deceit, Depend, Earth, Enemies, Fear, Giving Up, God's Will, Heaven, Idolatry, Insults, Intimidation, Life, Listening, Mourning, Murder, Obedience, Peace, People, Prayer, Pride, Prophecy, Repentance, Reputation, Salvation, Shame, Silence, Sovereignty, Trust, Weaknesses, Zeal

Open It

- * 1. When is a threat most intimidating?
- 2. How do you feel when someone threatens you?
- 3. What is disconcerting when you discover that someone knows a lot about you that you didn't reveal?
- 4. What is one of the most arrogant statements you have ever heard?

Explore It

- 5. What officials of the king of Judah went out of Jerusalem to meet with representatives? (18:17-18)
- 6. What did the Assyrians despise as they called Hezekiah to make a bargain? (18:19-23)
- * 7. What claim did the king of Assyria make in order to intimidate and demoralize Judah? (18:25)
- 8. Why did the Assyrian messengers refuse to speak to the officials of Judah in a language that the people on the walls of the city could not understand? (18:26-27)
- * 9. What message did the Assyrians address directly to Hezekiah's subjects? (18:28-32)
- 10. What examples did the Assyrians offer to urge the people to give up? (18:33-35)
- 11. Why were the people silent in the face of the taunts of the Assyrians? (18:36)
- 12. What was the attitude of the officials of Judah after they heard the provocation of the Assyrians? (18:37; 19:1)
- * 13. What did Hezekiah hope would motivate the Lord to respond with a rebuke to the king of Assyria? (19:3-4)
- 14. What message did Isaiah send back to the king of Judah? (19:5-6)
- 15. What prediction did Isaiah make concerning the field commander who had uttered the threats? (19:7-8)
- 16. What rhetorical questions filled the second message that the king of Assyria sent to Hezekiah? (19:9-13)
- 17. What did Hezekiah do with the letter from the king of Assyria? (19:14)
- 18. Whom did Hezekiah rightly perceive to be the brunt of the Assyrian insults? (19:15-16)
- 19. How did Hezekiah show that he understood the difference between the true God and the gods of the other nations Assyria had conquered? (19:17-18)
- 20. On what basis did Hezekiah ask God to deliver Judah? (19:19)
- 21. What answer did God send to Hezekiah through Isaiah the prophet? (19:20)
- 22. How did God show that He understood the thinking of someone like the king of Assyria? (19:23-24)
- 23. Where did the power of Assyria originate? (19:25-26)
- 24. How did God promise to deal with the arrogance of the Assyrian king? (19:27-28)
- 25. With what promises did God reassure Hezekiah? (19:29-34)
- 26. In what amazing way did God show His power over Assyria? (19:35)
- 27. What was the fate of Sennacherib, king of Assyria? (19:36-37)

Get It

- 28. What did Sennacherib misunderstand about Judah's recent cleansing of the high places and how that affected their relationship with God?
- 29. What could have happened if the people of Jerusalem had turned against Hezekiah and his

officials?

30. What was Sennacherib's insult against Hezekiah?
31. What was Sennacherib's insult against God?
- * 32. How did Sennacherib try to intimidate Hezekiah?
33. What were the signs of humility in Hezekiah's requests to Isaiah?
34. What did Hezekiah understand that Sennacherib did not?
35. What did Hezekiah want the whole world to understand through this unique confrontation?
36. What elements of Isaiah's prophecy against Sennacherib should have given him pause?
37. Who allows the despots of this world their temporary power?
- * 38. Why is it better to pray for God to avenge His own name rather than that He will avenge us?
39. Why can't we afford to believe everyone who claims to be doing God's bidding?
40. How can we tell when someone who claims to be on God's side really isn't?

Apply It

- * 41. What concerns do you have currently in which you could rightly ask God to vindicate His name?
42. As you review the ways in which God is not like the other "gods" of this world, which of the Lord's qualities can become the subject of your praise this week?

Hezekiah's Illness - 2 Kings 20:1-21

Topics: Achievements, Ambassadors, Death, Ego, Faithfulness, Foolishness, Gifts, Goodness, Healing, Ignorance, Miracles, Peace, Prayer, Preparation, Pride, Promises, Prophecy, Questions, Remembering, Salvation, Security, Sickness, Sorrow, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. If it were up to you, what age would you like to be when you die?
- 2. How do you feel when someone shows you all of his or her most valuable possessions?
- 3. What do most parents want for their children and their children's children?

Explore It

- * 4. What message from the Lord did Isaiah carry to Hezekiah when he was at the point of death? (20:1)
- * 5. How did Hezekiah respond to his own impending death? (20:2-3)
- * 6. What second message and set of promises did God give to Hezekiah? (20:4-6)
 - 7. After Hezekiah had heard God's promises, what did he request from God? (20:8)
 - 8. Of the signs that Isaiah offered to show Hezekiah, which did Hezekiah choose and why? (20:9-11)
 - 9. Who sent letters and a gift to Hezekiah when he was ill? (20:12)
 - 10. What did Hezekiah show the messengers from Babylon? (20:13)
 - 11. When Isaiah heard what had happened, what did he predict about Babylon? (20:14-18)
 - 12. Why did Hezekiah call the prophecy about Judah's future good? (20:19)

Get It

- * 13. In what sense might it have been better for Judah if Hezekiah had died at the earlier date?
- * 14. From God's perspective why do you think our heart's desire is or is not always best for us?
 - 15. What was good or bad about Hezekiah asking for a sign that God's promise regarding his illness would be fulfilled?
 - 16. In what ways did the Lord show patience to Hezekiah?
 - 17. What would have been a better reaction to the news that Hezekiah's descendants would suffer for his folly?
 - 18. What is unwise about boasting and showcasing our possessions?
 - 19. What drives us to try to impress our peers?

Apply It

- * 20. What prayer that reflects your heart's desire do you need to submit to the wisdom of an all-knowing God?
- 21. In what company might it be wise for you to resist talking about your "blessings" because it might stir up envy or covetousness in your listeners?

Manasseh King of Judah - 2 Kings 21:1-26

Topics: Anger, Children, Death, Enemies, Evil, Forsake, Idolatry, Influence, Injustice, Judgment, Law, Leadership, Listening, Murder, Name, Occult, Parents, Prophecy, Rebellion, Sacrifice, Sin, Worship

Open It

1. What is one of the worst disasters you've ever heard about through the news media?
2. Who is one person you know who turned out to be quite different from his or her parents?
- * 3. In what situation have you seen a flagrant abuse of power?

Explore It

4. How long did Hezekiah's son Manasseh reign over Judah? (21:1)
5. What kings did Manasseh resemble in the way he handled the spiritual life of Judah? (21:2-3)
- * 6. What were some of Manasseh's many deeds that angered the Lord? (21:2-6)
- * 7. What changes did Manasseh make in the temple of God? (21:4-5, 7)
8. What wonderful promises had God made that depended on whether the people kept the Law? (21:7-8)
- * 9. For what portion of the sin of Judah was Manasseh responsible, and for what portion were the people responsible? (21:9)
10. How did Judah of Manasseh's time compare with the nations that God had driven out in order to give them the land? (21:9, 11)
11. Who spoke the word of the Lord with regard to Judah's despicable condition? (21:10)
12. What was the extent of the disaster that God promised to visit on Judah? (21:12)
13. What standard of judgment would be used against Judah? (21:13)
14. What image did the prophecy contain concerning how God would deal with Judah? (21:13)
15. What punishment would God mete out against His people for their disobedience from the days of Moses onward? (21:14-15)
16. What were God's two chief complaints against Manasseh as the leader of His people? (21:16)

Get It

17. How could the son of a righteous king become one of the most evil kings in the history of all Israel?
18. How did Manasseh go one step beyond the rebuilding of the high places and the erection of altars to foreign gods?
19. What special relationship had Judah had with the Lord up to this time?
20. In what way is God's patience limited?
- * 21. To what extent is a leader responsible for causing followers to sin?
- * 22. How did Manasseh abuse his power?
23. In what sense were Manasseh's sins abuses of the power granted him by God?

Apply It

- * 24. What recourse do you have as a Christian whenever a leader, boss, or authority asks you to break God's law?
25. What is one thing you can do to cultivate a love for God's law and a hate for sin?

The Book of the Law Found - 2 Kings 22:1-20

Topics: Anger, Answers, Children, Comparisons, Conscience, Disobedience, Faithfulness, Forsake, Humility, Idolatry, Instructions, Integrity, Law, Peace, Prophecy, Punishment, Questions, Repentance, Right, Sensitivity, Sorrow, Words, Work

Open It

- * 1. What interesting item have you found while sorting through an attic, basement, or old box?
- 2. What is the best way to deliver bad news?
- 3. When someone must deliver bad news to you, what do you most want that person to do?
- 4. How do you feel when someone responds defensively to valid criticism? when he or she responds with a humble apology?

Explore It

- 5. How old was Josiah when he was made king of Judah? (22:1)
- 6. What kind of a king did Josiah prove to be? (22:2)
- 7. As a young man, what important work did Josiah want to see resumed? (22:3-5)
- 8. How did Josiah want the supervision and payment of the repair work to be handled? (22:4-7)
- 9. What news did the high priest give to Josiah's trusted secretary? (22:8)
- 10. What did Shaphan the secretary do with the book shown to him by the high priest? (22:8)
- 11. What two parts did Shaphan's report contain when he returned to the king? (22:9-10)
- * 12. What did Shaphan do in the presence of the king? (22:10)
- * 13. How did Josiah react to the words of the book that was read? (22:11)
- 14. What instructions did Josiah give his most trusted officials? (22:12-13)
- 15. From reading the book, what did Josiah know about God's feelings toward Judah? (22:13)
- 16. To whom did Josiah's officials go to "inquire of the Lord"? (22:14)
- 17. Which part of the prophetess' answer confirmed Josiah's worst fears? (22:15-17)
- * 18. What promise did the prophetess communicate to Josiah personally? (22:18-20)
- 19. Why was the Lord favorably inclined toward Josiah? (22:19)

Get It

- 20. What does it indicate about the spiritual condition of Judah that the Book of the Law had been missing for a long time?
- 21. What attitude did Josiah have toward the supervisors and their workmen?
- 22. What important choices did Shaphan the secretary make after he received the book from the priest?
- 23. What makes the job of delivering bad news so difficult?
- 24. When should we be willing to deliver bad news?
- 25. How does it feel to receive the news that it is too late to remedy a situation?
- 26. What are some of the different ways people respond when they hear that they are not obeying God?
- * 27. What is admirable about the way Josiah responded when he heard the Book of the Law read?
- 28. What was it about Josiah that enabled him to tear his robes in repentance when he realized that he and his people had not been obeying God?
- * 29. Why was God favorably disposed toward Josiah?
- 30. What can we learn about God from the fact that though Josiah's repentance pleased God, it was not enough to turn away His anger from Judah?
- 31. What conclusions can we draw from the fact that Josiah was the son and grandson of wicked kings?

Apply It

- * 32. What is one concrete step can you take to make sure that God's Word is not lost to you and your family?
- 33. What relationship in your life gives you an opportunity to work on an attitude of faithful service?

Josiah Renews the Covenant - 2 Kings 23:1-35

Topics: Anger, Celebration, Covenant, Death, Evil, Follow-Through, Heart, Idolatry, Initiative, Judgment, Law, Leadership, Name, Obedience, Occult, People, Prophecy, Purity, Rejection, Renewal, Sacrifice, Slavery, Soul, Words, Zeal

Open It

1. How would you dispose of an object if you wanted to make sure that no one would ever recognize it or use it again?
- * 2. What does each member of your family contribute to the overall tone and personality of the whole?
3. What is satisfying about conquering a tough cleanup job?

Explore It

- * 4. To whom did Josiah the king read the recently discovered book of God's law? (23:1-2)
- * 5. What did the king and the people do in response to the words they heard? (23:3)
- * 6. What did Josiah do with the objects, buildings, and priests associated with pagan worship in Judah? (23:4-7)
 7. How did Josiah treat the high places and shrines where people had worshiped other gods? (23:8)
 8. Prior to Josiah, what privileges did the pagan priests have in Judah? (23:9)
 9. What were some of the gods represented by the altars that Josiah desecrated and made unusable? (23:10-14)
 10. What important, historic symbol of disobedience did Josiah destroy at Bethel? (23:15)
 11. Whose tomb did Josiah happen upon while using human bones to desecrate pagan worship sites? (23:16-18)
 12. What practices of the kings of Israel did Josiah root out of the remnant of God's people in Judah? (23:19-20)
 13. What did the king order the people to do when his cleansing work had been completed? (23:21)
 14. How long had it been since Israel had celebrated the Passover as commanded by God? (23:22-23)
 15. What abhorrent spiritual practices did Josiah eliminate? (23:24)
 16. How did Josiah compare with other kings? (23:25)
 17. What had provoked God to be angry enough to destroy Judah before Josiah had ever come on the scene? (23:26-27)
 18. How did Josiah's death and burial fulfill the prophecy that he would not see the judgment that was coming upon Judah? (23:29-30)
 19. How did Jehoahaz compare to his father, Josiah? (23:32)
 20. What foreign king removed Jehoahaz from the throne and replaced him with his brother? (23:33-34)

Get It

21. Why do you suppose Josiah called the whole nation to repentance even though he had already heard the prophecy of doom for Judah?
- * 22. What did Josiah's actions do for Judah's relationship with God?
23. What did Josiah contribute to the nation of Israel?
- * 24. For whom do you set an example (whether you intend to or not)?
25. In what various ways had the temple of God been defiled and compromised?
26. What foreign influences were represented in the panoply of shrines and worship sites?
27. Why was it not sufficient for Josiah to halt the pagan worship practices?
28. Why do you suppose that the presence of human bones was a universally recognized desecration that would prevent worship in that site ever again?
29. Why do you think people fall out of the habit of observing traditional celebrations, even those

with religious significance?

30. What mood do you suppose prevailed in Judah during Josiah's reforms?

Apply It

- * 31. What opportunities do you have to set a moral example for others this week?
- 32. The next time you learn of an area of disobedience to God's Word in your life, how can you respond to fulfill your desire to obey?
- 33. What step of obedience, however small, can you offer to God as a confirmation of His covenant with you?

Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin - 2 Kings 23:36-24:17

Topics: Enemies, Evil, Giving Up, God's Will, History, Justice, Murder, Prophecy, Punishment, Rebellion, Rejection, Slavery, Wealth

Open It

1. What do you imagine to be some of the hardships of living in a small country that is continually being conquered by one large neighbor or another?
- * 2. If you had to choose between these two options, would you prefer to be banished from your native country for life or confined in your current home under house arrest?

Explore It

3. How long did Jehoiakim (who was installed and renamed by the Pharaoh Neco of Egypt) rule in Jerusalem? (23:36)
4. What kind of a king was Jehoiakim? (23:27)
5. How did Jehoiakim's relationship with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon change during his rule? (24:1)
6. When raiders from Babylon and other countries attacked Judah, what prophecy was being fulfilled? (24:2)
- * 7. When the Lord executed judgment against Judah, what sins in particular was He unwilling to forgive? (24:3-4)
8. Who succeeded Jehoiakim on the throne of Judah? (24:6)
9. Why was the king of Egypt no longer a potential ally and protector for Judah against Babylon? (24:7)
10. How long did Jehoiachin sit on the throne of Judah? (24:8)
- * 11. What happened when Nebuchadnezzar and his army laid siege to Jerusalem? (24:10-12)
- * 12. What was left of Judah's people and wealth after Nebuchadnezzar captured the king and the city? (24:13-14)
13. Who were some of the notable people taken captive to Babylon? (24:15-16)
14. What was the relationship of Nebuchadnezzar's puppet king to the previous king? (24:17)

Get It

15. Why did Nebuchadnezzar install a new king rather than deal with the old one?
16. Who were the various enemies that contributed to the downfall of Judah?
- * 17. According to the prophets, why was Judah destroyed?
18. Why does God take it upon Himself to avenge "innocent blood"?
19. In what ways did Judah push God too far?
20. What are the pitfalls of relying on someone else's strength, whether physical or spiritual?
21. What advantage was there in Nebuchadnezzar taking captive all but the poorest people of Judah?
- * 22. What "riches" and "strength" do we possess in Christ that cannot be taken away by anyone?

Apply It

- * 23. How can you reaffirm your relationship with Christ and that you are not depending on anyone else's faith or goodness to save you?
24. For what innocent or defenseless person could you step forward? In what way?

The Fall of Jerusalem - 2 Kings 24:18-25:30

Topics: Alone, Death, Escape, Evil, Fear, Honor, Kindness, Punishment, Rebellion, Running, Serving, Suffering, Wealth

Open It

- * 1. What is painful about watching people who refuse to learn from their mistakes?
- 2. Why is the punishment for a second or third infraction of the law usually more severe than for the first?

Explore It

- 3. How long did Zedekiah (the king installed by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon) rule in Jerusalem? (24:18)
- * 4. How was Zedekiah like so many of the earlier kings of Judah? (24:19)
- * 5. What was the final result of God's anger, which the people had provoked for so long? (24:20)
- * 6. What happened in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign? Why? (25:1-7)
- 7. How long did Nebuchadnezzar lay siege to Jerusalem? (25:2)
- 8. What did the army attempt when there was no food left in the city? (25:3-4)
- 9. What happened to Zedekiah and his army? (25:5-6)
- 10. How did the Babylonians punish Zedekiah for his rebellion? (25:6-7)
- 11. Whom did the king of Babylon send back to Jerusalem to deal with the rebels? (25:8)
- 12. What became of the landmarks of Jerusalem when the Babylonians invaded? (25:9-10)
- 13. What did the commander of the guard do with most of the people in the city? (25:11-12)
- 14. What items of religious and monetary value were broken up and taken by the Babylonians? (25:13-17)
- 15. What became of the leaders of the city who remained after Zedekiah and the army had fled? (25:18-21)
- 16. With most of the people in captivity, who was appointed to rule over Jerusalem? (25:22)
- 17. How did Gedaliah advise the men who remained in the land? (25:23-24)
- 18. What happened to Gedaliah and the people loyal to him? (25:25)
- 19. Why did the few remaining people in Judah flee to Egypt? (25:26)
- 20. How did the fortunes of Jehoiachin (the first king of Judah deported to Babylon) change after thirty-seven years? (25:27-30)

Get It

- 21. How would you summarize the last years of the kingdom of Judah?
- * 22. How did God use the motives of evil men to fulfill His Word and drive the people of Judah from His presence?
- 23. Why did the king who surrendered peacefully fare better than those who rebelled against Babylon?
- 24. What evidence is there that God remembered His people while they were in Babylon?
- 25. When Judah went into captivity, what chapter in their history were they revisiting?
- 26. What gift that God had originally given to His people did He take away because of His anger?
- 27. Which of the awful events of the last years of the kingdom do you think were most traumatic for the Jews?
- * 28. Why is it instructive for us to know that we serve a God who has limits to how much evil He will tolerate?

Apply It

- 29. For what contemporary crisis can you pray, confident that God can use even evil people to accomplish His purposes?

* 30. For what great gift from God (which you might otherwise take for granted) do you want to thank and praise God today?