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2 Kings



Bible Book Overviews - Steve Gregg

In "2 Kings", Ahab is succeeded by his son Ahaziah, who consults the false god Baal Zebub before dying after being told by Elijah that he would. Elijah mentors Elisha and performs various miracles, some of which are similar to those performed by Jesus. The book covers the First Temple period in which both the northern and southern kingdoms become corrupt, with the northern kingdom being wiped out and the southern kingdom eventually falling to Babylonian conquest. The end of the book includes an epilogue describing the last governor appointed by Babylon and the eventual release of King Jehoiachin from prison.

Transcript

Alright, now we're going to go through the book of 2 Kings. And at the end of 1 Kings, Ahab died. A lot of the latter part of 2 Kings took place during the lifetime of Ahab, actually.

He rises in chapter 16, or 17 I should say, and then he's ruling until chapter 22 when he dies. So a lot of time is given to the reign of Jezebel and Ahab, more than to most of the kings, partly because he's so significant as such an evil man. And I haven't told you all the evil things he did, we don't have time for all of that.

But we move on. At the beginning of 2 Kings, Ahab having died, he's left his son Ahaziah to reign in his place. Now Ahaziah didn't reign for very long, only 2 years.

He had an injury. Not entirely clear what the nature of the injury was. He fell through the lattice of his house.

I don't know if he was in the first story, second story, or third story or what. But he was badly injured. And enough so that he wasn't sure he was going to survive.

And so he sent servants of his to go to a false god, Baal-zebub, a Philistine god, to inquire to find out whether he was going to live or die. Now as these messengers were on their way to inquire of this false deity, God told Elijah the prophet to go and intercept them. And to tell them, to tell King Ahaziah that he is actually going to die.

And don't even bother going to Baal-zebub to ask about it. Go just tell him he's going to die and not live. Because he decided to ask of Baal-zebub instead of a god.

So these guys came back to Ahaziah and said, well, we met this guy who told us to come back and give you the message from God that you're going to die. Because you inquired of Baal-zebub. And the king said, who was this guy that you spoke to? They said, well, we don't we didn't know his name, but he's a hairy man.

He said, oh, it's Elijah the prophet. Just from that description, he was Elijah the prophet. No doubt Elijah was like John the Baptist, like Samuel, like Samson, a Nazirite.

Probably had never cut his hair or his beard, so he was a hairy guy. And there are some famous prophets who had this Nazirite vow. Like I said, Samuel did.

Samson was a judge who had that vow. John the Baptist had the vow. And apparently Elijah did too.

So anyway, he was a hairy guy. And so the king sent his soldiers out, sent 50 men under a captain to arrest Elijah for having given him this bad prophecy that he's going to die. And so they found Elijah sitting on a mound, I think somewhere, a hill.

And they said, men of God, the king orders you to come with us. And Elijah said, if I'm a man of God, may fire come down from heaven and consume you and your 50 men. And it happened.

They were all burned up right then and there. So Ahaziah heard about it. He sent a captain with 50 more men.

They made the same mistake the first guys did. They said, man of God, the king commands you to come down here. And Elijah said, if I'm a man of God, may fire come down and consume you and your 50 men.

And it did. So 100 men and their captains were destroyed by supernatural fire called down by Elijah. Now you might say, why? What did these guys really do wrong? Well, Elijah apparently indicated that if you're calling me a man of God, if I really am a man of God, shouldn't you be treating me a little more respectful than giving me orders around from some tin horn king who's about ready to die for his infidelity to God? I mean, if I'm a man of God, then you're, you're insulting God by ordering me around like that.

You should show some respect for a minute. God, let's see if I am or not. If I am, let fire come down and destroy.

Oh yeah, I must be. And the king sent another 50 with another captain. This guy's a little smarter.

He, he, when he showed up, he said, man of God, have mercy. I'm a married man with

children. He actually didn't say that, but he did say, would you please possibly be willing to come down and talk to the king? He requests your presence.

And God told Elijah, go with him. So he went and he spoke to a, as I, who was apparently bedridden and near death. And Elijah just told him in person what he'd told him through the messengers, because you went to inquire bail, Zeebel, you're going to die.

And he does. And that's what happens in the end of chapter one. So as I dies and his son, Jehoram becomes king in the North after him.

And he rains for about 12 years. I don't think the notes, by the way, some of you have, and some of you don't have these notes here, a list of the kings of Judah and Israel. I mistakenly didn't print up enough copies of this.

I have, I had more copies of these notes than I had of this. I thought there were equal numbers. There were not.

So if you didn't get one of these, you didn't get one. You can probably go online and find something equivalent, but it shows the kings of Israel and Judah. Anyway, that's what happened at the beginning of that chapter.

Now, the ministry of Elijah comes to an end in the next chapters because in chapter two, Elijah is going to be called up into heaven. He did not die. As far as we know, he didn't die.

The Bible doesn't say he didn't die, but apparently he didn't. He was caught up to heaven, apparently alive. Now, by the way, this last act that we read of him, we're actually calling fire out of heaven on the hundred guys and their captains.

You might remember there's a story in Luke chapter nine of Jesus as he was on his way to Jerusalem. Was going through Samaria and he was not able to find anyone able to show hospitality in Samaria and two of his disciples in particular, the sons of thunder, James and John. They were very offended that the Samaritans wouldn't welcome Jesus.

And they said, Lord, should we call fire out of heaven like Elijah did? So they were referring to this story in second Kings chapter one, where Elijah called fire out of heaven and they wanted to bring it down on these Samaritans. And Jesus said, you don't know. You don't know what manner of spirit you're of.

The Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them. And so that was the that's a New Testament reference to this story. We just were talking about.

Now, Elijah going up was preceded by him visiting all the different companies of the prophets in the different communities that where they were. He had been sort of their mentor. Elisha, his servant, would soon be their mentor, but that wasn't established yet.

Elisha was a man that Elijah had earlier called to follow around with him. And he is described as the one who poured water on the hands of Elisha. So, in other words, Elisha served Elijah like a menial servant.

During Elijah's lifetime. But Elisha wanted to be a prophet like his master. And as he went from town to town to visit these companies of prophets.

They would come out and tell Elisha, they say, you know, today's the day your master is going to be taken out for. He says, I know it. And and Elijah would say to Elisha, I'm you stay here.

I'm going to go on a bit on my own. And Elisha said, no, I'm not going to leave you. And so he's OK with me.

Come on. So he went and he went from town to town. He got the same message from all the sons of the prophets.

And Elijah several times said, OK, like you just stay here. I'll move. I'll go along.

No, I'm not going to leave you. And so they went down to the Jordan River. And Elijah rolled up his mantle.

He struck the Jordan River and it split open. And he and Elisha walked through sort of like the people had done with Joshua when they had crossed the Jordan to enter the promised land. And on the other side of the Jordan, a whirlwind came and a chariot of fire was seen and Elijah was taken up.

But before that happened, Elijah said, you like you. What are you hanging on to me like this for? What do you want? And he likes to say, I want a double portion of your spirit. And he likes to say, well, if you see me when I go up, then know your wishes granted.

Otherwise, I can't do anything for you. And Elisha did see him go up. And therefore, he now was the new anointed prophet.

Now, by the way, double portion of your spirit. Some people say he actually did get twice as much power as Elijah, because if you count up the miracles, some say you'll count twice as many miracles from Elisha as from Elijah. And so maybe he did get a double portion, literally, but actually in the Jewish mind to say, I want a double portion.

It's basically saying I want to be the heir. Because the one who had the firstborn of a family would receive the double portion of the inheritance of the father. In other words, I want to be the heir.

I want to be the one who succeeds you and has your anointing and carries on your ministry when you're gone. And that is what happened. Elisha did become the heir to the power that was on Elijah.

And he, as he went back to the Jordan, he had to cross it again. So he found Elijah's mantle there and he rolled it up and struck the river and said, where is the God of Elijah? And the river opened up and he walked across all the sons of the prophets on the other side, saw it happening. Whoa, you know, the spirit that was on Elijah is on Elisha now.

So he had the reputation now with all the prophets, all the lesser prophets that he's the mighty man of God now. Not everyone liked him, though. He's going through one town and a bunch of youths started mocking him.

Apparently he was older, at least balder than Elijah. And they started mocking his bald head. They were saying, go up, bald head, go up, bald head.

And it's not entirely clear what that mockery meant. Although that may be that they knew that Elijah had gone up and were challenging Elisha to see if he could go up to old bald head. And by the way, I remember distinctly the first time I heard this story told it and taught on was from Chuck Smith.

And Chuck Smith was prematurely bald. He's in his 40s and he's like a marble tabletop. And and he he kind of warned the audience not to chuckle at that line.

He didn't say, but I think he might have called fire out of heaven. People who would laugh at that. But the truth is that Elijah, Elisha cursed them in the name of the Lord and moved on.

Now, we're told that two she bears came out of the wilderness and tore these kids up. Forty two of them were at least injured, if not killed by these bears. This bothers a lot of people.

They say, what kind of a God would kill 42 children because they mocked, you know, a minister? Well, apparently the God of Elijah and Elisha would do that if they died. We're not told. It says the bears came and tore them.

It doesn't say they died. They might have been maimed only. They might have lived to learn their lesson.

I don't know. But also, unfortunately, the King James Version refers to these people as children. The word children in the Hebrew is the same word that Jews of Joseph in the Old Testament when he was 17 years old.

It means young men. These were not toddlers. These were not, you know, grammar school children.

These were young men who ought to know better, probably adolescents. And they were, you know, they're making fun of the prophet of God in doing so. It showed what their view of God was.

And so he didn't actually say God send bears to kill him. He just cursed him and went on his way. Apparently, after he was gone, these bears came along and mauled them and everyone understood.

That must be because of what they said to Elisha. Anyway, that's that's what happened there very early on in the ministry of Elisha. His ministry is found in some detail in chapters two through eight of Second Kings.

We won't go into much detail about it, but he did, as I said, some miracles resembling those of Jesus. He multiplied food for the sons of the prophets when they were in need of food and they didn't have very much. He did some other pretty amazing things.

He caused an axe head to float because the sons of prophets had gone out into the woods to build a little compound, I guess, for their ministry. And as they were cutting down trees, an axe head flew off an axe handle and went into the water. And the son of the prophet who was who lost the axe head said to Elisha, oh, I'm in trouble.

This is a borrowed axe. I can't return it now because we've lost the axe head. So Elisha just stuck his stuck the axe handle in the water and the axe had floated up to the top and they grabbed it.

This is the kind of stuff Elijah did from time to time. Both Elijah and Elisha apparently raised the dead. And a very notable case, Elisha and his servant now Gehazi, as they walked from place to place, they passed a certain house on a regular basis.

And there's a woman and her husband that lived in a house and saw them walking by. And she invited them in for food and got to know them. And then when they were gone, she said to her husband, you know, these guys come by here a lot.

Why don't we build an extra room on top of our house? And when they come by, they can be refreshed there. We can just kind of show hospitality to the prophets whenever they're in the area. So her husband agreed and they built a room on top of their house and offered it to Elisha.

So he and Gehazi regularly stayed there when they're in the area. And once he and Gehazi were up in the upper room just talking and he called for the woman to come up and she said, he said, you've shown all this kindness to us, but we haven't done anything for you. What can we do for you? And she says, he says, shall I commend you to the king? And she says, no, no, no, just leave it be.

It's okay. She didn't want anything. And when she left, he said to Gehazi, what can we do for Gehazi? Well, do you notice they don't have any kids? And so Elisha called her up again, said this time next year, you're going to have a child.

A son. And she said, oh, don't lie to me. She was her husband was old.

And so the likelihood of her ever having a child apparently had not seemed great. And so she'd kind of given up on having children. Well, sure enough, a year later, she did have a child.

And as the story is told, the child had apparently sunstroke or something. He's real young. My impression is about five years old.

As I read it recently, it doesn't really give his age. Pretty young. He was out working in the field with his father.

He just started, my head, my head. And he passed out and his father sent him home to his mother. And she held him on his lap, on her lap until noon when he expired, he died.

And so she laid him on the bed in the prophet's quarters upstairs. And she saddled a donkey and she went as fast as she could to the prophet. And I saw her coming and said, Elisha, there's someone coming.

It looks like it's the woman that we helped. And Elisha says, well, what is it? The Lord has withheld me from knowing what her errand is. I don't know what it is.

And so he went out and he said, it's all well. And she said, did I ask you to give me a son? My wife knows I can't tell this story without getting choked up. I don't know why.

There's certain stories in the Bible like that. One of them is when Joseph reveals himself to his brothers. I cannot tell that story without getting choked up.

I cannot tell this one without getting choked up. She said, did I ask you to give me a son? And then Elisha knew something had happened to the kid. And he said his servant ahead of him said, go ahead of me.

I'll come later and, you know, lay my rod over the child's body. And Elisha came in and he actually laid his own body on top of the child's body and breathed into his mouth I think a few times. I forget how many times he did it.

And then the child finally started coughing and came to life and was healthy again and lived on. I don't know why that story more than others is so moving to me, but it really is, maybe because my own children were so precious to me. The thought of losing a child is pretty hard.

Anyway, the rest of Elisha's ministry is told in not so much detail. There's some skipping over things. He actually dies in Chapter 13, and there's another story about his death.

But between 8 and 13, there's some more things. One of the things that Elisha did was to send one of the sons of the prophets to one of the generals under the king Jehoram. No, I think it was the king Ahaziah.

I'm having a hard time now remembering which king it was. I think it was - yeah, I think it's Ahaziah. Anyway, he sent a prophet to one of the generals of Israel's army and told him to anoint Jehu the general with oil and declare him to be the king.

And Jehu, then the head of the army, took that seriously, and he went on a wild rampage of killing off all of Ahab's offspring, including his own king and Jezebel. He killed Jezebel too. He didn't kill her personally.

It's interesting. When he got to Jezreel where she was living, she was up in a tower, and she looked down on him, and she said, Oh, Jehu, are you some kind of a tough guy rebelling against your king? And Jehu shot up there and said, Who's up there? And a bunch of servants were up there with her and looked down, and he said, Push her out of the window. And so the servants pushed her out of the window, and she fell and broke her neck and died.

And Elijah the prophet had prophesied that she would not be buried, but she would be eaten by dogs. Well, when her body fell with a splat at the bottom of the tower, Jehu and his men went in and ate and drank, and when they came back out, there was nothing left of her that the dogs had left except her hands and her scalp, I think. She was eaten by dogs, which was a fit end for that woman.

But Jehu then kind of let the power go to his head, and he started killing more people. He killed 42 brothers of the king, and it so happened that the king of Judah was up visiting and some of his relatives, and Jehu killed them too. And so he just went on a killing spree, killed anybody that might be regarded as a rival to himself.

He pretended to be very zealous for God. He killed a bunch of priests of Baal, for example, but then he ended up being no better, and he was one of the bad kings, or they were all bad kings of the northern kingdom, though he was used to purge the wicked house of Ahab and get rid of everybody. Now, the queen mother of Judah, all this happened in the northern kingdom of Israel, when Jehu killed the king of Judah as well as the king of Israel.

And the queen mother, hearing that her son was dead, rather than grieving for her son, she decided to kill all her grandchildren, who were the heirs to the throne, and become queen herself. Her name was Athaliah. Now, she happened to be the daughter of Jezebel, which was, I guess, no big surprise.

She was similar. She killed all her grandsons, and her son was dead, and she made herself queen, and she ruled for six years. One of her grandsons, however, escaped because of an aunt of his who heard about this killing rampage of Athaliah, and she took this infant, Jehoahaz, and hid him in the temple, and the priest in the temple raised him for six years secretly.

And when he was like seven years old, they brought him out and showed that the king had a legitimate heir still living, and Athaliah came and found out about it, and she said, "Treason, treason!" And yet the priest said, "This is the murderous woman. Take her," and the soldiers took her out and killed her." And so Jehoahaz, though a young boy, became king. And initially, he was a pretty good king, although sadly, he eventually went dead himself.

But he was good. He's remembered as a good king. He reigned for 40 years, but he ended up killing a prophet.

The last of the prophets, Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was killed by Joash. Strange things. These people are not one-dimensional characters.

People who are mostly good sometimes do some really bad things. But anyway, that story, that particular story about the killing of that prophet is in Chronicles, not in Kings. We'll talk about Chronicles next time.

So in chapters... The story of Athaliah is in chapter 11. Chapters 12 through 16 is really just more rotten kings of Israel and rotten and a few good kings of Judah, just gone through rather quickly, not much that we need to dwell on here during this period of time. Chapters 12 through 16.

We will bring a few things out. In chapter 13, Elisha died, but before he died, he was very sick. He was sick for a period of time before he died.

Interesting, he'd raised the dead, but he died sick. And while he was sick, the king of Israel was a wimpy king who realized that without Elisha around, the nation would be greatly weakened. And he came to him in his sickbed and said, you know, what should I do? What should I do? The Syrians are coming against us.

And Elisha said, take some arrows and shoot them out the window. And he shot three arrows. And Elisha was mad at him and said, you should have shot more than that, because now you'll only have three victories over the Syrians.

If you'd shot more, you would have had complete victory. Then Elisha died and he was buried. And there's a little anecdote given in the end of chapter 13 about during a battle with the Syrians.

Israel lost a soldier in a particular battle near the place where Elisha was buried. And they saw some troops of the enemy coming. They needed to get the disposal of the body quickly.

They threw this dead body of their companion into the tomb of Elisha. The dead body touched the bones of Elisha and sprang to life again. And so Elisha not only raised the dead when he was alive, he raised the dead when he was dead.

He didn't raise himself from the dead, but he raised someone else from the dead when he was dead. His bones did. And that's the last story of Elisha in the Bible.

That's in chapter 13 here. Then we have the stories that follow of the good reign of Hezekiah, which took place after the fall of the Northern Kingdom. Chapter 17 is the fall of the Northern Kingdom.

After a series of 19 wicked kings, God finally brought the Assyrians, which was the most powerful pagan nation around and were very cruel to the people they conquered, came and they destroyed Samaria, the capital of the Northern Kingdom, and carried them all away into captivity. Now what Assyria then did is they deported most of Israel into foreign lands where they ended up intermarrying with the Gentiles. And they brought Gentiles in to intermarry with the Jews, the Israelites that were still there, so that the Northern Kingdom all intermarried so thoroughly that their tribal identities pretty much disappeared.

They're called ten lost tribes. Now there are theories about what happened to them. The Anglo-Israelites believed they sailed to England and became the British.

The Mormons believed that they sailed to the Americas and became the American Indians. These are all theories that people have about the ten lost tribes. Well, there are not ten lost tribes.

They assimilated. They were carried away into Gentile lands by their captors, and they didn't go anywhere. They just married and had children and grandchildren and grandchildren, and the racial lines were blurred so much there just aren't any people from that kingdom left anywhere.

But, of course, some of the individuals from the ten tribes had already relocated to the south before the Northern Kingdom fell. So there are still survivors, at least there were in New Testament times, of people from all the tribes. For example, the old woman who was in the temple when Jesus was brought in as a baby, Anna, she was of the tribe of Asher.

Elizabeth and the priests were from the tribe of Levi. There's other tribal people from other tribes of Israel that are still around in the New Testament times. In fact, James addresses his epistle to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad.

So even though the ten tribes of the north ceased to exist as tribal national entity, there were individuals of those tribal groups that survived because they had earlier defected from the Northern Kingdom to the Southern Kingdom, which survived. Now, when Assyria destroyed the Northern Kingdom in 722 B.C., that was the end of the divided kingdom because there was only one kingdom now, Judah, that survived in the south. The Assyrians also tried to destroy Judah somewhat later.

I think it was in the year 701 B.C., but I'm not sure about the date of that. Sennacherib, the king of Assyria, came against Jerusalem and besieged it with hundreds of thousands of soldiers. Hezekiah happened to be the king in Judah at that time, and he happened to be one of the few good ones.

He was a godly king, and he lived at the same time as Isaiah the prophet. Isaiah was a relative of the king and had ready access to him and gave him regular counsel. Now, in Hezekiah's day, because Assyria had wiped out the Northern Kingdom and was threatening to do the same thing with the Southern Kingdom, there were people in Judah that were telling Hezekiah, you should surrender to the Assyrians and make a pact with them.

There were others in Jerusalem saying, no, you should send messengers down to Egypt and see if they'll send troops up to help you. And then there was a third party, and that was Isaiah's party, who were saying, don't make a pact with the Assyrians and don't make a pact with the Egyptians. Just seek God, and he'll protect you.

And although he was under pressure from many political groups giving different advice, Hezekiah obeyed what Isaiah told him to do, and he went. He had a letter that the Assyrian general had sent to him, threatening to destroy him. He took the letter into the temple and opened it for the Lord to read and said, this is what the enemy is saying, but we're looking to you to save us.

And so God did save them. And at night, an angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers outside the city of Jerusalem, and Jerusalem was spared. Not forever, though.

They went on for another century and a quarter or century and a third, and they had a series of kings, still mostly bad ones. Manasseh was not born. Well, this is an interesting story.

Manasseh was born three years after Hezekiah got a supernatural extension of life. When Hezekiah was sick near the end of his life, Isaiah told him, the Lord says you're going to die, so get your house in order. But Hezekiah didn't have any children, any sons to leave the kingdom to.

And he turned his face to God, and he cried out to God and said, remember, I've been on your side, I've been a faithful man, please give me longer to live. And so Isaiah was sent back to him, you're going to have 15 more years. God's going to give you 15 more years.

Well, so Hezekiah, his life was extended 15 years, but three years later, his son Manasseh was born. So Manasseh was 12 years old when Hezekiah died and became the most wicked king ever. He reigned for 50 years, longer than any other Judean king, and he was the worst.

He led the people into idolatry. Now, 2 Kings doesn't tell us this story about Manasseh,

but Chronicles does. 2 Chronicles tells us that at one point after Manasseh had been doing really bad stuff for a long time, he was captured and taken away into captivity.

And he was kept in a dungeon. And he turned and he repented and he cried out to God. This wicked king, Manasseh, turned to God.

And God released him and returned him to his kingdom in Judea. And he reformed. He tore down the altars to Moloch and all the bad stuff.

He continued the reforms his father Hezekiah had done. But it didn't work because when he died, his son just went back to all the idolatry that he had, that Manasseh had set up earlier. So the nation was not improved.

In fact, many years later, when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians, the writer says this happened because of all the evil things Manasseh had done. Although there were other kings who did bad things, Manasseh held the record for doing the very worst things. Well, but Manasseh's grandson was Josiah.

Manasseh's son, Ammon, just restored all the idolatry that Manasseh had repented of. But Ammon's son, Josiah, became king at age eight and became a good king. Now, when Josiah was young, they were renovating the temple, which had fallen into ill repair.

And one of the workmen under the priest Hilkiah found something in the temple that they didn't recognize. It was a scroll. Turns out it was the book of Deuteronomy.

But for generations, the scriptures have been so neglected, they didn't even know what it was when they found it. They found the book of Deuteronomy and said, what's this? We better show the king this. And so someone came and read it to Josiah.

And the book of Deuteronomy, of course, states in no uncertain terms, if you break my covenant, I'm going to destroy you as a people. But if you obey my covenant, then I'll bless you. And of course, there's a lot of the laws, strong emphasis, don't follow idols and so forth.

And when Josiah heard the book read to him, he tore his clothes in repentance and said, we are under the curse of God. We're all the curses of this book belong to us. And so he began reforms.

He began to tell her to tear down all the high places, drive out all the sodomites from the land, all the witches and all the sorcerers and all the idols and stuff were removed. And he really did a wholehearted attempt to totally eradicate all idolatry from Judah, which he succeeded in doing. But the sad thing is it was strictly a top down revival.

The people, their hearts were not in it. So when he died, they went back to idolatry again. You know, sometimes we think, oh, if we had a Christian president or Christian

legislators or Christian Supreme Court, we could save this country.

Well, they could make all Christian laws, I suppose, although the Constitution forbids it. But so they probably wouldn't if they're good people. But the truth is, even if you had all Christian laws, if the people don't want Christ.

They'll vote in other people. They'll get as soon as these guys are out of office, the nation will go back. Revival has to happen from the bottom up.

You can't have some top down political authority. We're going to be Christians in this country. You just can't make people Christians by decrees and laws.

They have to want it. And that Josiah's revival failed because he wanted everyone to be godly, but they didn't want to be. He did outlaw all idolatry and all, you know, gross sin, like the law said to do.

But when he died, his son, Jehoiah, has the second. He just went back to idolatry. So did Jehoiakim, his grandson.

I'm sorry, his other son, actually three of Josiah's sons reigned after him. After Josiah died, his son Jehoiah has reigned for three months and was captured and taken into Egypt. And then another son of Josiah reigned, Jehoiakim.

He reigned for 11 years, but he rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and he was carried away into Babylon. And then another son of Josiah, Jehoiakim, reigned for three months and not, obviously not for long. And he was replaced by his uncle, Zedekiah, who was the last king of Judah.

He reigned 11 years and he rebelled against Babylon. Babylon at this time had risen to power where Assyria had once been as the ruler, biggest power in the region and had basically had conquered Jerusalem in 605 BC, but had not destroyed it. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had come in 605 BC and subdued Jerusalem and took some captives too, but not many.

Daniel was one of the captives and Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. They were carried away into Babylon in 605. But Nebuchadnezzar didn't disrupt things very much in Jerusalem.

He just subdued them and got them to, you know, pledge loyalty to him. But he came back in 597 and he took some more captives, including Ezekiel, who went into captivity in Babylon. And then in 586, because of the rebellion of Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar came back and took all the rest of them back into Babylon, leaving only a few very poor dirt farmers, peasants in the land, and virtually everyone else was taken into Babylon as captives.

That's how 2 Kings ends. So we've seen David's kingdom intact at the beginning of the Book of Kings, leaving it to a promising son, Solomon, leaving him wealthy with instructions to build the temple and to rule righteously and giving him all the resources to do it. Solomon is corrupted.

His son loses the kingdom, most of it, splits up into two. Eventually the northern kingdom is so corrupt that God has to wipe them out in 722 BC. And then even the southern kingdom becomes so corrupt, despite a few half-hearted revivals by some good kings.

The kings were not half-hearted, but the people were. And the nation just never recovered, so they went into Babylon. Now they were in Babylon for, depending on the way you reckon it, Jeremiah said they'd be 70 years.

And if you judge from the time that the temple was destroyed until the new temple was built again, it was 70 years, just about exactly to the year. There are other ways to calculate the 70 years. But the point is the Jews did come back, not all of them, but a remnant of them, came back with Zerubbabel, and the Book of Ezra tells about that.

One of the books we'll cover later. But when they did come back, most of the Jews did not return. After 586 BC, when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, from that time to this, to this very day, most Jews have lived elsewhere than Israel.

To this day, there's far more Jews living elsewhere than Israel. Israel has only a minority of the Jewish population. The rest are scattered throughout the world.

They became scattered because of Babylon. And after the Babylonian captivity ended, only a remnant returned, even with Zerubbabel, only 50,000. The majority stayed in Babylonian and Persian lands and Greek lands, and their descents are still there today, although the majority of them are now in America, I think, which was not one of the lands available for them to be in then.

But the Jews have been scattered throughout the world from that day to this, for the most part. A remnant of them came back. They did rebuild the temple.

It was burned down by Nebuchadnezzar. It was rebuilt by Zerubbabel, and the nation had another lease on life. The time after the exile is called Second Temple Period because Solomon's Temple was the first, and it was destroyed by the Babylonians.

When Zerubbabel rebuilt the temple, it was the Second Temple Period. And Jesus was born and ministered during the Second Temple Period, about 500 years after the Second Temple was built. But that Second Temple was destroyed in 70 A.D. by the Romans, 40 years after Jesus lived here.

So that, and it's been, and frankly, the temple has not been rebuilt since. Some people believe there will be a third temple. I don't have any reason to believe so, but, you know,

the Bible doesn't predict it, but there could be one.

The point is that this basically, the Book of Kings covers the whole period that we call the First Temple Period. It's in First Kings that the first temple was built by Solomon, and at the end of it, it's burned down. So the Book of Kings, or two Books of Kings are now, they begin with the building of the temple and end with the burning down of the temple.

And so that's a big swath of history, and it's an interesting one with lots of interesting details. The Book of Second Kings ends, Chapter 25, verses 22 through 30. That's not very many verses, let's just read it.

This is actually the epilogue of the whole story. Second Kings 25, 22 through 30, says, Then the Babylonian emissary of Nebuchadnezzar, whose name is Nebuzeritan, he made Gedaliah the son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, governor over the people who remained in the land of Judah. Now this is after the temple was destroyed, and King Zedekiah, the last king, had been taken into captivity, blinded.

His eyes had been put out only after he watched his son slain in front of him, then his eyes were put out by the Babylonians. And he was taken away into captivity. There never was a king in Judah again, but for the few people who were left behind, a governor was put up by the Babylonians named Gedaliah.

And it says, over the people who remained in the land of Judah, whom Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, had left. Now when all the captains of the armies, they and their men, heard that the king of Babylon had made Gedaliah governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah, Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, Johanan the son of Charia, Sariah the son of Tanhumath, the Nedaphithite, and Jazaniah the son of Amakithite. They and their men, and Gedaliah took an oath before them and of their men and said to them, Do not be afraid of the servants of the Chaldeans, meaning the Babylonians.

Dwell in the land and serve the king of Babylon and it shall be well with you. But it happened in the seventh month that Ishmael the son of Nethaniah, the son of Elisha, of the royal family, came with ten men and struck and killed Gedaliah. The Jews as well as the Chaldeans who were with him at Mizpah and all the people, small and great, and the captains of the armies arose and went to Egypt for they were afraid of the Chaldeans.

Now here, Nebuchadnezzar had conquered the city, burned down the city, burned down the temple, taken the king and captains, left a governor there to kind of govern the peasants that were left, and this outsider comes in and kills the governor. Now the people who were there peaceably living under the Babylonian rule, they thought, Oh great, these guys killed the governor of the Babylonians, now the Babylonians come and wipe us all out. So they realized they had to flee.

Jeremiah was among those people and he and others fled to Egypt at that time. It says in

verse 26, All the people, small and great, the captains and the armies arose and went to Egypt for they were afraid of the Chaldeans, which means the Babylonians. Now it came to pass in the 37th year of the captivity of Jehoiakim, king of Judah, in the 12th month, on the 27th day of the month, that evil Merodot, the king of Babylon, this is much later after Nebuchadnezzar was dead, the new king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, released Jehoiakim, king of Judah, from prison.

Now Jehoiakim had been all this time a prisoner of war in a prison in Babylon, and now a later king of Babylon decides to show some kindness to him, but it doesn't result in him going back and rebuilding Jerusalem. This is all, he remains in Babylon, but under somewhat better conditions. Verse 28, He spoke kindly to him and gave him more prominent seat than those of the kings that were with him in Babylon.

So Jehoiakim changed from his prison garments, and he ate bread regularly before the king all the days of his life, and as for his provisions, there was a regular ration given to him by the king, a portion for each day and all the days of his life. Now, a strange way for the book to end, but perhaps this little bright spot at the end is to say, well, the Jews are in Babylon, they're captives, their city is destroyed, their nation is no more, but there's a little glimmer of hope that God seems to be showing a little bit of favor to the house of David. The surviving king who'd been in prison is shown a little bit of kindness by a later king of Babylon.

This didn't result in the restoration of the nation. It was later when the Persians conquered Babylon that the Persians let the Jews go back and rebuild the temple. But this shows a little bit of that, even though the Jews have been really wicked and they've suffered terribly as a result of what they deserve, frankly, as what is suggested.

Yet, after several years, God shows that he's actually not done with them yet. Here's, you know, the imprisoned former king of Judah, been in jail. He takes off his prison clothes.

He eats at the king's table. He's given a position above the other captive kings in Babylon. And so I think this probably is intended to close the story out by saying, well, they're in Babylon, but the story is not necessarily over.

There's still a God showing favor. And there, of course, there were promises made by Isaiah and Jeremiah that the Persians would come and destroy Babylon and send the Jews back to their own land, which did happen. And the book of Ezra tells that story.

Now, by the way, the books of Chronicles remain ahead of us, and they cover the same material, not all the same material, but the same period of time and much of the same material as the books of Samuel and Kings. The book of First Chronicles parallels much of the books of Samuel. The book of Second Chronicles parallels almost exactly the books of Kings.

So the story is the same in Chronicles as in Samuel and Kings, but different emphases, different points are brought out. Some of the stories are verbatim the same, and some of them are modified slightly with new details. But when we get to Ezra, which is after Chronicles, we do see the restoration of the Jews from Babylon.

And we'll, of course, see that some months hence, because we're going rather slowly. Only one book a month, usually. So next time, we'll go through the books of Chronicles.