

A Divided Kingdom

1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 25

Life Lessons from the Kings
of Israel and Judah

Notes and Comments by John Sullivan

A Divided Kingdom

1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 25

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NOTE TO E-BOOK READERS:

The printed journal, unlike this e-book version, has pages for notes.

You might want to have your own journal, either physical or electronic, because there is a lot of writing recommended in this study.

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*If a kingdom is divided against itself,
that kingdom cannot stand.*

Mark 3:24

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

Psalms 133:1

Introduction
A Kingdom Divided
Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel and Judah

*If a kingdom is divided against itself,
that kingdom cannot stand.*

Mark 3:24

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity!*

Psalms 133:1

About one thousand years before Jesus was born as a man, there was the 120-year Biblical history period usually referred to as *The United Kingdom*. As a kingdom, Israel had a rocky start under the leadership of King Saul. Even though God wanted them to think of Him as their king, he allowed an earthly king to be chosen. Not only did he allow it, he blessed that first king with his Spirit. But Saul left God, and God's Spirit left him. King David, a man after God's own heart, brought the focus back to a relationship with God. In spite of David's own sins, he showed Israel how to walk with the God of all grace. King Solomon reaped the benefits of that faithfulness, and Israel saw unprecedented glory, peace, and unity during his time. They knew the truth of David's words quoted in the psalm at the top of this page.

Solomon, however, did not follow God most of his life. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel quickly fell from the glorious splendor that it once knew. It divided into two nations: the Northern Kingdom (*Israel*) and the Southern Kingdom (*Judah*). We will spend the next six weeks studying that time period, which lasted about 350 years and is usually referred to as the time of *The Divided Kingdom*. The people of that time experienced the truth of Jesus' words quoted in the first Scripture at the top of this page. The primary source of Scriptures for our daily devotional readings will be the books of *1 and 2 Kings*. But we will also refer to the books of *1 and 2 Chronicles* as well. You may not always have the time to read both, but you are encouraged to do so whenever you can.

In addition to the kings of this time, these Scriptures also record the exciting ministry of inspiring prophets, such as Elijah and Elisha. There is so much to be gained from studying this part of God's Word. It's not just history, as we usually think of it – dates and events. It is the story of the LORD working in and through the lives of people who have a covenant with Him.

God bless you as you continue in your determination to know the Bible better and to know Him better!

John Sullivan
January 2022

Map of Palestine During the Divided Kingdom

As you read through these Scriptures, take note of the locations on this map.



The Rise and Fall of Unity

1 Kings 12 – 14

Memory Verse for the Week:

*If a kingdom is divided against itself,
that kingdom cannot stand.*

Mark 3:24

**Week 1
Day 1**

Review of King Saul's Reign

Today's Date: _____

We will start our study with a brief review of the reigns of Kings Saul, David, and Solomon. That time period of Biblical history, which lasted about 120 years, is usually referred to as the time of *The United Kingdom*. Today we will look at King Saul's reign by looking at a few verses from his time.

1. Recall Saul's beginning.
 - Read **I Samuel 9:1 – 2**. What was he like in the beginning?
 - Read **I Samuel 10:6 – 11**. What did the presence of God's Spirit do?
3. Recall Saul's downfall.
 - Read **I Samuel 13:7 – 14**. Describe his first disobedience.
 - Read **I Samuel 15:10 – 26**. Describe this incomplete obedience.
 - Read **I Samuel 28:7 – 25**. What was his sin as recorded here?
3. Read **I Chronicles 10:13 – 14**. Summarize what is said there about his life.
4. Sometimes we can learn good things from bad examples. What do you learn from Saul's life to apply to your life?

As we start our study, meditate and pray about what we can learn from the examples of Biblical history (good and bad) to apply to our devotion to unity.

Also, pray for your brothers and sisters this week as they also study God's word and devote themselves to unity.

As we read yesterday, God wanted to raise up someone after his own heart to replace Saul, and David was known as that person (**Acts 13:22**). That didn't mean that he was perfectly sinless. In fact, the Bible is very clear about his sins. But he always seemed to find his focus back on God and his heart.

1. Near the end of King David's life, he assembled the Israelites and gave them this charge (28:8):

*Be careful to follow all the commands of the LORD your God,
that you may possess this good land
and pass it on as an inheritance to your descendants forever.*

2. He also gave this charge to his son Solomon (28:9):

*Acknowledge the God of your father,
and serve him with wholehearted devotion
and with a willing mind,
for the LORD searches every heart
and understands every motive behind the thoughts.
If you seek him, he will be found by you;
but if you forsake him, he will reject you forever.*

Unfortunately, we know that neither the Israelite community nor Solomon faithfully kept these charges. What stands out to you about these two charges that you want to make sure you consider?

3. David asked the question (29:5):

Now, who is willing to consecrate themselves to the LORD today?

What is your answer to that question?

4. What were David's thoughts about what God had done for him and through him (29:14)?

How does it compare to your attitude?

David clearly had a "Greater Vision" of God than most people have. Meditate and pray about also being a person after God's own heart.

1. What was young King Solomon's prayer in **1 Kings 3:4 – 15**?

How have you applied that prayer to your life?

2. What impresses you about the way King Solomon dedicated the temple (**1 Kings 8:22 – 30**)?

3. Describe the glory of Solomon's vast kingdom (**1 Kings 10:1 – 9**).

4. Describe the sins in Solomon's life that led to his ultimate downfall (**1 Kings 11:1 – 8**).

Now read **1 Kings 11:9 – 13**. Because of Solomon's departure from God's covenant, God told him that the kingdom of Israel was going to be divided. God told a man named Jeroboam, who was one of Solomon's respected leaders, that he would lead the division. In **1 Kings 11:26 – 40**, God said that he would bless Jeroboam's kingdom if he did what was right. (Unfortunately, as we will read in the next couple of devotionals, Jeroboam did not do that.) Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, who then fled to Egypt.

5. What was Solomon's "*conclusion to the matter*" that he wrote near the end of his life in **Ecclesiastes 12:13**?

6. There are obviously many positive aspects of Solomon's life and teachings that are beneficial to apply to our lives. And, as we stated about King Saul, we can also learn some valuable lessons from Solomon's bad decisions. What stands out to you about the life of Solomon that you want to apply to your life?

Meditate and pray about being a person seeking God's wisdom.

This is the beginning of the period in Old Testament history usually referred to as the *Divided Kingdom*. It lasted for about 350 years and began with the tragic story of two new leaders: Rehoboam and Jeroboam.

1. Rehoboam succeeded his father, Solomon, as the next king. When Rehoboam was established as king, Jeroboam came back from his exile in Egypt. He led an assembly of Israelites to the new king asking him to relieve them of some of the heavy burdens that his father had put on them.

To his credit, King Rehoboam sought advice.

- First, he consulted the elders who had served his father Solomon during his lifetime. What advice did they give the new king?
 - He rejected that advice and went to some of his friends that he had grown up with. What advice did they give him?
 - Which advice did he take?
 - What was the result?
2. Jeroboam, on the other hand, had actually been told by God even when Solomon was still alive that he would also be king (**1 Kings 11:26 – 40**).
 - As a review of what we read yesterday: what counsel did God give Jeroboam at that time (**1 Kings 11:38**)?
 - Did he choose to take God's guidance?
 - What was the result of his choice?
 3. Note Jeroboam's predicament as he saw it in **1 Kings 12:26 – 27**. As far as he could see, there was no other option but to set up his own version of worship, and he was successful in doing so. We are not told how God would have dealt with Jeroboam's problem, but it is clear that he did not ask God for any wisdom on that subject. He certainly did not have a very big vision of God. When the only option that we see out of a situation is to sin, we probably are not clearly seeing the power of God.

From this point on, the Kingdom of Israel is divided. The Northern Kingdom (known as *Israel*) had 10 tribes; the Southern Kingdom (known as *Judah*) had 2 tribes. The ultimate result of the divided kingdom was that neither part could survive. Recall our memory verse: *A kingdom divided against itself cannot stand.*

Meditate about what you learn from these bad examples and continue to pray about your devotion to unity.

An unnamed prophet came from Judah to Bethel to confront King Jeroboam about the idolatrous alter he had built there. [NOTE: throughout this study refer to the map on page ii for the locations mentioned in the readings.]

1. Note the prophecy about King Josiah who would come 300 years later.

- The prophet told Jeroboam that Josiah would abolish the idol worship (13:1 – 3). We'll read about Josiah's reforms near the end of our study.

How do you feel knowing that God knows the future so well?

- Jeroboam saw some powerful acts of God that day (his hand withered and restored; stone of the altar split). What was his reaction to seeing all of this (13:33 – 34)?

2. While the two kingdoms were disunified in many areas, they were unified in committing some of the same sins. What sin was present in both kingdoms?

What were the results?

3. There are other interesting events in these two chapters. What else stands out to you?

4. The title of this week's devotionals is *The Rise and Fall of Unity*. One obvious theme from a study of *The Divided Kingdom* is the importance of unity and the tragic results of the loss of that unity. However, God in his Word shows us that unity, as important as it is, is not the only goal – especially if it is unity based on following a man. Unity must be connected to following God. Israel's departure from God led to their division, which then led to their downfall. So, throughout this study, let these history lessons teach us to fortify our devotion to God and devote ourselves to his unity.

As mentioned in the introduction to this study (page i), our devotional readings will primarily come from **1 & 2 Kings**. However, additional information is also given about some of these kings in the books of **1 & 2 Chronicles**, which, in general, tend to focus more on the kings of the Southern Kingdom. So, throughout this devotional booklet you will often see suggestions for additional readings from those two books. You may not always have time on any given day to read the Scriptures from *Chronicles*, but try to read them eventually.

For more study about Rehoboam, see **2 Chronicles 10 – 12**.

Meditate about the importance of staying unified in our singular devotion to God. Pray about it and act on your prayers.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these two chapters of *1 Kings* and what they teach you about God's heart.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

Elijah the Prophet

1 Kings 15 – 22

Memory Verse for the Week:

*Elijah went before the people and said,
"How long will you waver between two opinions?
If the LORD is God, follow him,
but if Baal is God, follow him."*

1 Kings 18:21

Week 2
Day 1

More Kings

Read 1 Kings 15 – 16.

Today's Date: _____

For the next 50 years, the Northern Kingdom (*Israel*) was ruled by six kings who continued to follow the evil ways of Jeroboam. This period was climaxed by the evil King Ahab and his notorious wife, Jezebel. The Southern Kingdom (*Judah*) showed some signs of godliness during the long reigns of Kings Asa and Jehoshaphat.

1. Don't worry; you won't be tested on the names of these kings! It might be helpful, though, to frequently refer to the chart called *The Kings of Israel and Judah* on p. 38 of this journal. Three kings of Judah (Abijah, Asa, and Jehoshaphat) are mentioned in today's reading. What stands out to you about them?

2. Six kings of Israel are also mentioned in these two chapters: Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab. You will notice the violence and treachery that accompanied their reigns. (One of them only lasted 7 days!)
 - King Omri is said to have sinned more than all the other kings before him. What city did he build (16:24)?

(This became the capital city of the Northern Kingdom. That whole area was known by that name in Jesus' day.)
 - How did Ahab view sin (16:31)?

3. What famous city was rebuilt during this time (16:34)?

What happened? (Recall **Joshua 6:26**.)

For more details about these three kings of Judah, read **2 Chronicles 13 – 17**.

Meditate about what you learn from the stories of these kings. Also, pray for your brothers and sisters all week as they also apply these devotionals to their lives.

During this time period, God sent his word through prophets. Perhaps the most famous one is the one we will read about this week – Elijah. He was from the area known as Tishbe, which was east of the Jordan River. (See your map on page ii for the locations mentioned throughout today's readings.)

1. Elijah prophesied to King Ahab about the up-coming draught (17:1). Read **James 5:17 – 18**. What does that tell you about Elijah, and how does it inspire your faith?

2. God told Elijah to retreat from Ahab's threats to an area east of the Jordan, by the Kerith brook that feeds into the Jordan River. This was probably an area he was familiar with. Food was brought to him by the "Raven Food Delivery Service." How would you like that kind of food delivery system?

3. When the brook dried up, God told Elijah to go up north to the town of Zarephath in the Gentile area of Sidon, along the Mediterranean coast. God said there was a widow there that he had told to take care of him.
 - The widow was in a desperate situation, preparing to make what she thought was the dying meal for her and her son. Elijah knew that the LORD had already prepared her for this moment and that she was going to be blessed tremendously. But first he asked her to make a meal for him. That could be an incredibly selfish and insensitive request, but it seems more likely that he is testing her faith.
 - What do you learn from her faith and from the way Elijah was willing to test her faith?
 - How did Elijah take care of the widow and her son?
 - It's interesting that this is the same region where Jesus healed the Gentile woman's daughter (**Mark 7:24 – 30**). Jesus also referred to Elijah and the widow in Zarephath (**Luke 4:24 – 27**), when he made the point about God's outreach towards people of all nations. That comment caused such turmoil that the people in his own home town tried to kill him.

Elijah illustrates a very important and common theme in the Bible: he trusted God for his own welfare and did not hesitate to teach others to do the same.

Meditate about how God has and is working in your life. Pray about your commitment to trust God the way Elijah did and the way he taught others to do.

Read *1 Kings 18*.

1. Obadiah (not the minor prophet by that same name) seems to be an admirable character. He shows us how it is possible to be faithful to God, even when we are surrounded by evil leaders. It's interesting to note that Elijah and these other prophets lived in the Northern Kingdom. They would have had a lot to say to the evil kings, such as Ahab, and would have spent a lot of time trying to keep people faithful to God during those trying times. You can see that their faithfulness cost them a lot in terms of their own safety and comfort. What do you learn from Obadiah and the 100 prophets of God to apply to your life?
2. King Ahab called Elijah "*the troubler of Israel*." Why do you think he said that?

It's clear from this reading that Ahab was doing everything he could to find and kill Elijah.

3. Elijah chose the location for the famous contest with the 450 prophets of Baal to be on Mt. Carmel, which was a known connection to Baal worship at that time. (Again, see the map.) What life lessons do you learn from:
 - Elijah's trust in God?
 - Elijah's courage?

Verse 29 has the statement about the results of the attempts to call on Baal:

"But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention."

That's because, of course, no one was there. No one was home! Let's make sure that we appreciate the fact that the total opposite of these statements is true about the true LORD.

He responds; he answers, he pays attention.

4. Compare Elijah's call to make a decision (our memory verse this week) with Joshua's challenge to the people of his day in **Joshua 24:14 – 15**.

Meditate on God's power over and above all the false things we could worship today. Pray about having the faith and courage that Elijah and the other prophets had.

1. Even a faithful man like Elijah experienced a time when his vision of himself was clearly not what God wanted him to have. Why do you think Elijah was so down and discouraged after such a great victory?

Have you ever experienced that kind of discouragement after a time of encouragement?

2. Summarize what God did in helping Elijah's physical, emotional, and spiritual health during this time.

- What did God have Elijah do for his physical well-being?
- How did the LORD help Elijah with his emotional feelings of loneliness and uselessness?
- What do you think the experience of the gentle whisper taught Elijah about his spiritual health? **(NOTE:** It took Elijah 40 days to travel to Mt. Horeb. We don't know exactly where that mountain is, but it is thought to be the same as Mt. Sinai where Moses encountered the LORD. For Moses, it was thunder; for Elijah it was a gentle voice.)

Do you think God's method worked?

What do you learn from Elijah's experience to apply to your times of discouragement or to your opportunities to encourage others?

3. Note that God told Elijah that there were 7000 people in the predominantly idolatrous Northern Kingdom who had not yet bowed to Baal (19:18). It's not hard to imagine that Obadiah, Elijah, and the 100 prophets that we noticed yesterday had a lot to do with that.

4. Think about God's question to Elijah: *What are you doing here?* (19:9, 13)

This question helped Elijah when he was down and discouraged. But it could also help us anytime we just want to evaluate our lives. *Why am I here? What am I doing here?*

Think about that question. Our answers could help us to fix our eyes on Jesus, and remind us to seek his direction in our lives. It's encouraging to remind ourselves that we are here, living in this specific place, doing God's will at this time. What are your answers? *What are you doing here?*

Meditate about how much God cares for you personally, even during your down times. Pray about your willingness to ask for, seek, and receive his help.

1. Aram (Syria) was a frequent antagonist of Israel. Their main city was Damascus, and they will often come up in our readings. (See the map.) They did not know the LORD and made the mistake of assuming, after losing the first battle with Israel, that the LORD was the "*God of the hills, but not the valleys.*" (20:23, 28)

Note that the king of Israel at this time was the wicked king Ahab. An unnamed prophet is mentioned several times in this story, showing that the LORD had not given up on Israel and was still trying to show them his power and love.

You can also tell from verse 28, that the LORD was particularly concerned that people of both nations (and us) learn about his true nature.

Throughout the readings in the history part of God's Word, you often see the stories alternate between big national events and small events that impact only one individual or family. They clearly show that God is interested in and has the power to work in both the small and the big events. That may be making too much of the phrase "*God of the hills, but not the valleys,*" but it is clearly a principle found throughout the Bible and one that the LORD wanted to emphasize in this event. So, we want to make sure we get it: *don't leave God out or underestimate him in any area of your life – big or small.*

Do you think you ever limit God to only certain portions of your life?

2. Chapter 21 describes the story of Ahab and Jezebel's injustice towards an Israelite named Naboth. You can see, as mentioned above, God's history book turning from his involvement in a "*big*" international event to a "*small*" private story. You also see that Ahab did not learn from the big event anything about following God in his personal life. Elijah told Ahab and Jezebel what was going to happen to them and their descendants because of this injustice. We will read the fulfillment of those prophecies in later readings.

Describe Ahab's humility after hearing Elijah's words (21:27 – 29).

3. Chapter 22 describes another battle with Aram. This time the southern king, Jehoshaphat, joined forces with Ahab. Jehoshaphat, who is described elsewhere as having some faithful traits, encouraged Ahab to consult a prophet of the LORD. That prophet, Micaiah, used a phrase that is found many times in Scripture "*sheep without a shepherd.*" (22:17) Why do you think that idea might be so important to God (and to us)?

You can read more about Judah's kings of that time in **2 Chronicles 18 – 21**.

Meditate about your view of God (limited or unlimited?). Pray about your determination to let him rule your whole life. He is not just "*God of the hills.*"

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these chapters of *1 Kings* and what they teach you about God's heart and power – how much he cares and what he is capable of doing.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

Elisha the Prophet

2 Kings 1 – 8

Memory Verse for the Week:

*"Don't be afraid," the prophet answered.
"Those who are with us are more than those
who are with them."*

2 Kings 6:16

**Week 3
Day 1**

Chariots of Fire

Read 2 Kings 1 – 2.

Today's Date: _____

God told Elijah that Elisha was going to be the one to succeed him (**1 Kings 19:16**). From that time on, Elisha was Elijah's attendant. You can imagine what he learned during that time. It reminds you of the way Moses trained Joshua, Paul trained Timothy, and Jesus trained the Twelve.

1. "Is it because there is no God in Israel?" (1:3, 6, 16)

This is the question the LORD told Elijah to ask King Ahaziah when he sent his men to consult a false god about his injury. One of the amazing things about the Northern Kingdom is that, in spite of the predominant idol worship, the true God was still there working in and through the lives of the faithful.

It's possible that we also might be tempted to forget about the powerful and loving resources of our LORD when we are in need, as if there is no God in our lives. What do you learn from that?

2. Elijah's departure from this world was in a whirlwind amid the famous *chariots of fire*. What did Elisha receive from God at this time?
3. What could happen if you make fun of bald heads?

Meditate and pray about your continued faith in the same God that worked powerfully in Elijah's and Elisha's lives. Let's be determined that we will not react to difficult situations *as if there is no God in our lives*.

All this week, also continue to pray for your brothers and sisters as they too dig into God's powerful Word.

We read yesterday about the miraculous powers that had already been exhibited through Elisha. Here we read more about that power.

1. *"This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD."* (3:18)

The history of the Northern and Southern Kingdoms oscillates between being enemies of one another and being allies of one another. At this time, their two kings unite to fight a common enemy.

King Jehoshaphat asks for a prophet of the true God so they could *"inquire of the LORD through him."* (3:11) King Joram reluctantly calls on Elisha who prophesies that God would hand them the victory.

Elisha makes the statement in verse 18 quoted above. That showed his understanding about the power of God – a principle that is frequently emphasized in Scripture. How does that principle apply to your life?

2. One of the most famous miracles that God performed through Elisha involved the widow's oil (4:1 – 7). Here we see another example of God's involvement in the *"big"* events of history, such as the one in chapter 3, as well as the *"small"* concerns of individuals such as this woman.

What do you learn from that miracle about:

- God's care for people in need?
- God's power to provide?
- The role of our faith?

We can always trust God's care and his power. Jesus showed us that and so did Elisha. *This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD.* Let's make sure our vision of God keeps us from pursuing actions in times of trouble as if there is no God in our lives or as if our situation is too hard for him.

3. How did Elisha bless the family from Shunam?

4. What stands out to you about the other miracles that God performed through Elisha?

It has already been mentioned that there are more details about King Jehoshaphat in **2 Chronicles 17 – 20**. There are some interesting and inspiring stories there.

Meditate about what these miracles teach you about God and pray about how your knowledge of him will impact your life of faith.

Read *2 Kings 5*.

Naaman was commander of the army of Aram. We read about Aram and Damascus earlier (page 11 of this journal). The Aramaic language of Jesus' day descended from them. So, Naaman was neither from the Northern Kingdom nor the Southern Kingdom. In fact, his nation was a long-time enemy of both kingdoms, from the earlier days of the Judges and even long after this favorable event with their popular commander.

1. Naaman was a very prominent man in Aram, highly regarded, and known as a valiant soldier. When he was afflicted with leprosy, one of his servant girls told him about Elisha.
 - How did this girl happen to be in Naaman's household?
 - What stands out to you about her attitude and about her faith?
2. The king of Aram sent Naaman to be cured by the king of Israel, who was upset about by this seemingly impossible request. Elisha heard about it and said "*have the man come to me and he will know that there is a prophet in Israel*" (5:8). Reminds us of Jesus' confident statement: "*Bring the boy to me.*" (**Mark 9:19**) Only a true understanding of God can produce such faithful confidence!
3. How would you say God tested Naaman in the way he provided this healing?

Note the unfortunate result of Gehazi's greed in the follow-up to this story.

4. What does this story teach you:
 - about faith?
 - about obedience?
 - about tests from God?
 - about grace?

Jesus also referred to Naaman in the same discussion in Nazareth that we referred to on page 8, when he spoke of Elijah and the widow in Zarephath (**Luke 4:24 – 27**). His emphasis on the Gentile's faith and God's grace to them made his home town angry enough to try to kill him. Hopefully, our study of this story strengthens our understanding of faith and God's grace available for all people.

Meditate and pray about how God's grace inspires you to live a life of faith and obedience.

1. The floating axhead (6:1 – 7).

- Before the exiting story of the great military victory, there is this small story about a floating axhead.
- "It was borrowed." (6:5) See, even back then they borrowed tools!
- Do you think God really cares about small things like this?

2. The Chariots of Fire (6:8 – 23)

Note that this invasion was from Aram, Naaman's country.

Elisha clearly had a *greater vision of God*. What great principle was he teaching his servant (and us) in 6:16, our memory verse for the week?

How does this compare with the words of encouragement found in **1 John 4:4**?

Think also about Elisha's prayer "*open his eyes*" and how that applies to your prayers, both for yourself and others. Are your eyes opened?

3. Later, Ben-Hadad from Aram attacked again and laid siege to the city of Samaria (6:24 – 7:20).

"Ben-Hadad" means the "*son of Hadad*." Hadad was a god of their country and many of their kings used that name.

- How bad was the situation in Samaria at that time?
 - It was so hopeless that only God could fix it! What did God do as prophesied by the prophet Elisha?
4. Four lepers were the first ones to discover that the enemy had deserted. They concluded that it would not be right to keep the good news of this discovery to themselves (7:9).

What do you learn from their statement that applies to the good news you have?

Let's not miss the importance of God's teachings from these stories. Meditate about these words of encouragement and pray for your eyes to be opened to see God and his angels surrounding you.

1. God's continued his care for the Shunamite woman and her son (8:1 – 6).

Earlier this week, we read about Elisha helping this woman in chapter 4. Now we read about the next seven years of her life. Gehazi, Elisha's servant, just happened to be talking to the king about her when she came to ask him for help. (Do you think that was a coincidence?) The king is not named here. The context seems to indicate it was Joram, king of Israel. Keep in mind that this was the Northern Kingdom, which indicates that there was still some elements of justice alive even there.

What stands out to you about the way God continued to take care of her?

2. Elisha and the king of Aram (8:7 – 15).

Not only did Elisha bring the Word of God to the evil kings of the Northern Kingdom, he also went to Damascus to talk to the kings of Aram. (Recall that this is where Naaman was from.) This shows us that God's care and power were not limited to Israel.

What stands out to you about Elisha's prophecy there?

3. The rest of the chapter (8:16 – 29) describes more kings from both Judah and Israel. It's not very exciting or inspiring to read about their sins, is it?

- How do you feel when you read about all of these evil kings and think about the impact they had on the lives of the people under their rule?
- How do you think God might have felt at that time?
- What do you continue to learn from their bad examples to apply to your life today?

As mentioned on page 11 of this journal ("*God of the Hills, but Not the Valleys*"), we continue to see God's power in both the huge, national events and the smaller, personal events. Do you see how that is still God's character today?

You can read more details about these kings of Judah in **2 Chronicles 21 – 22**.

Meditate about God's patience and persistence. Pray about how you will avoid the evil that you read about here.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these chapters of 2 Kings and what they teach you about God's heart and power – how much he cares and what he is capable of doing.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

Destruction of the Northern Kingdom

2 Kings 9 – 17

Memory Verse for the Week:

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.

2 Kings 17:7

**Week 4
Day 1**

Jehu's Partial Reform in Israel

Read 2 Kings 9 – 10.

Today's Date: _____

As we noted last week, it's not particularly fun to read about all of the sinful kings during this time. We can imagine how God felt about it!

1. The prophet anointed Jehu to be the next king of Israel. His main task was to inflict God's punishment on Ahab (9:6 – 10). Note the reference to the injustice about Naboth's vineyard (9:26), which was only one of Ahab's crimes.
2. What happened to Jezebel, as prophesied by Elisha (9:30 – 37)?
3. What happened to the priests of Baal and to the temple of Baal (10:18 – 27)?
4. King Jehu's "zeal for the LORD" (10:16) obviously involved a bloody task. Even though it was punishment from God for some very evil people, it's still hard to read about their destruction. How did God bless Jehu for carrying out his punishment on the house of Ahab (10:30)?
5. In what ways did Jehu fail to do God's will (10:31)?

Meditate about God's patience and pray about your desire to have complete obedience.

Also, continue to pray for your brothers and sisters this week as they, too, experience God's grace acting through their faith.

While the LORD was dealing with the Northern Kingdom under King Jehu and his son Jehoahaz, a lot was going on in the Southern Kingdom as well.

1. Ahaziah was king in Judah for only a year. He followed the ways of the evil northern king Ahab, whom he was related to by marriage (8:26-27). When Ahaziah died, his mother Athaliah ruthlessly tried to kill all the royal family, and she reigned as queen for six years (11:1 – 3). Jehosheba, one of King Ahaziah's daughters took her younger brother, Joash, and hid him from Athaliah.

Jehoida, a priest, protected the young Joash from being killed by his own grandmother. After he anointed the seven-year old Joash as king, he had the queen and her followers put to death, and he made a covenant between the LORD and himself and the people (11:17). The covenant simply stated as God's covenant with his people always had that "*they would be the LORD's people*." What did the people do as a result of that covenant?

2. In verse 2 of chapter 12, there is that simple but refreshing statement that "*Joash did what was right in the eyes of the LORD*." How many times have we read about kings of both kingdoms doing just the opposite?

What was the priest Jehoida's role in the young kings' life?

What was the main focus of Joash's reform?

3. How can all of this apply to you?

For more information about King Joash, read **2 Chronicles 23 – 24**.

Meditate on the simple, but powerful thought: "*he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD*." Pray about how you can imitate that heart. Let us never forget our covenant; *we are the LORD's people!*

1. King Jehoahaz (of Israel) "*did evil in the eyes of the LORD*" (13:2), the phrase that we have seen all too often. But when Israel was being oppressed by Aram, Jehoahaz "*sought the LORD's favor*" (13:4).

Amazingly, God answered that prayer and sent a deliverer to help them. I say "*amazingly*" because of my fleshly perspective of impatience and judgment. But this was nothing out of character for the LORD.

What did the people of Israel do as a result of the grace that the LORD gave to them (13:6)?

*As God's fellow workers we urge you
not to receive God's grace in vain. For he says,
"In the time of my favor I heard you,
and in the day of salvation I helped you."
I tell you, now is the time of God's favor,
now is the day of salvation.*

2 Corinthians 6:1 – 2

We know that there is nothing we can do to demand God's grace, nor to even come close to actually paying it back. But we certainly don't want to receive his grace in vain. What does that mean to you today?

2. Jehoash, the son of Jehoahaz, became the next king of Israel. Imagine the confusion between those names!
 - What was this king like (13:11)?
 - What was the Elisha's prophecy to him (13:14 – 19)?
3. Unlike Elijah, Elisha died without much fanfare. The Scripture simply states that "*Elisha died and was buried.*" (13:20) However, an amazing thing happened after he was buried. What was that miracle?
4. Note the extent of God's patience and grace as described in verse 23. We'll see how God had to finally punish them in our next two devotionals, but it is clear that God was extremely patient before punishing them and gave them (as he does us) plenty of time to repent.

Continue to meditate about God's grace and patience, and pray about how you will NOT receive his grace in vain.

1. Chapter 14 describes the next king of Judah, Amaziah.
 - Amaziah was partially a good king. However, as is noted in other Scriptures, the "*high places*" where personal idol worship took place were still not removed. So there seemed to be a tendency among many people, not just the king, to want to follow God and yet do some things their own way – they were "*in, but not all in*" (something that is not uncommon today also). How does that usually work out for people?
 - King Amaziah challenged the northern king, who responded with some trash talk of his own (14:8 – 10). Amaziah didn't consult the LORD about this, and it ended poorly. **2 Chronicles 25:14 – 28** gives more detail about Amaziah's sin and the hand of God in this punishment.
2. During the reign of Amaziah in the South, another man with the name of Jeroboam became king in the North (14:23). He is usually referred to in Bible references as Jeroboam II. What was he like?
 - The prophet Jonah was around during this time (14:25). You can see why he was reluctant to go to Nineveh, the capital of Assyria.
 - It's amazing to see that God still had mercy on the people of the Northern Kingdom at that time, in spite of their idolatry (14:26 – 27).
3. The next southern king was a man named Azariah, also known as Uzziah (15:1). He had a very long reign of 52 years, and was succeeded by his son Jotham (15:32).
 - They were both known as generally good kings, with still that exception: *the high places were not removed* (15:4 and 15:35). Do you still have any exception clauses in your commitment to the LORD?
 - King Uzziah seemed to be a fairly popular king, and Judah had a relatively peaceful time during his long reign. It was during the year that Uzziah died that the prophet Isaiah had his famous vision (**Isaiah 6**).
4. On the other hand, the next few kings of Israel continued to do "*evil in the eyes of the LORD*." It's hard to keep up with even the names of all their kings during this time. Assyria, who was a big world power at that time, came in for their first invasion of Israel. Two kings of Assyria: Pul (15:19) and Tiglath-Pileser (15:29) are mentioned in this chapter. At that time, they had control over the affairs of the Northern Kingdom. We will read tomorrow about their final destruction of Israel.

For more information about these kings of Judah, see **2 Chronicles 25 – 27**.

Meditate and pray about our wholehearted commitment to God.

Many times in the Scriptures we have been reading you have seen how much God wanted to show mercy to his people. In fact, he delayed action in punishing them because of his grace. But the time came for there to be no more delay. As tragic and discouraging as some of the previous chapters have been, these two chapters are even worse – both in the Northern Kingdom and in the Southern Kingdom.

1. Ahaz, the next king of Judah, went back to doing evil, unlike his father and his grandfather. The extent of his evil is described in chapter 16. He surrendered himself to Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria to save his kingdom from the attack of Israel and Damascus. His plan actually succeeded, but at a terrible cost.
 - Ahaz visited Damascus after it had been conquered by Tiglath-Pileser. What did he do about an altar that he saw there?
 - Ahaz then completely remodeled the temple in Jerusalem, moving aside the sacred articles of worship that the LORD had ordained to make room for the articles involved in worshipping a false god. It's certainly hard to read about the extent of his fall from the ways of the LORD.
 - Ahaz died and was replaced by his son Hezekiah. Next week, we will read about him and his refreshing reforms.
2. Meanwhile, Assyria, under a new king, attacked Israel again. This resulted in the final destruction of the Northern Kingdom, around 721 BC, as described in chapter 17.
 - The king of Assyria deported the Israelites to towns in the Assyrian regions (17:6) and brought in people from those regions to live in Samaria (17:24). That resulted in the mixture of worship among the people ultimately known as the Samaritans in Jesus' day.
 - You can see the summary given in 17:7 – 23, which also contains our memory verse for the week, of why God had to do this.
 - Verse 18 states the harsh reality of this punishment. Can you possibly imagine how God felt at that time?
3. Some famous prophets lived and prophesied during this time, including Isaiah and Micah. Micah prophesied to the Northern Kingdom and to Assyria, as well as to the Southern Kingdom. We will read more about Isaiah next week, but for today read **Micah 1:1 – 9** for just a small glimpse of Micah's words.

For more information about King Ahaz of Judah, see **2 Chronicles 28**.

Meditate and pray about how you will let the seriousness of these bad examples help you in your life today.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these chapters of 2 Kings and what they teach you about God's heart and power – how much he cares and what he is capable of doing.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

The Reformation Kings

2 Kings 18 – 23

Memory Verse for the Week:

The king stood by the pillar and renewed the covenant in the presence of the LORD – to follow the LORD and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul, thus confirming the words of the covenant written in this book. Then all the people pledged themselves to the covenant.

2 Kings 23:3

Week 5
Day 1

Hezekiah and Isaiah

Today's Date: _____

Read 2 Kings 18 – 19.

While the Northern Kingdom was being destroyed by Assyria, Hezekiah was the king of the Southern Kingdom. He was a good king, and his reforms restored worship to the LORD. He even removed the *high places* that we have seen in many of our earlier readings (18:1 – 6).

1. What was the bronze snake that Hezekiah broke into pieces (18:4)?

Refer to **Numbers 21:4 – 9**. Isn't it amazing that something God instituted for their benefit became something they worshipped as an idol?

2. When the Assyrians started attacking his kingdom, what did Hezekiah do?

He did not make the mistake that we read about earlier of not being aware that God was in their lives. What happened as a result of Hezekiah's prayers and Isaiah's prayers? (This is also described in detail in **Isaiah 36 – 37**.)

If you look at a map specifically showing that time period, you will see how tiny Judah was in comparison to Assyria. Yet God was still in their lives. Like David against Goliath, they turned to God. They trusted in God; God protected them. No army is powerful enough to overcome him!

For more information about Hezekiah's reforms, see **2 Chronicles 29 – 32**.

Meditate on the power of God at work in your life. Pray about how faithful you are going to be to him today. Also, pray all week for your brothers and sisters as they have the same determination that you do.

After Hezekiah had reigned for about 10 years, he was struck with an illness. The prophet Isaiah came to him with the words, "*Put your house in order, because you are going to die, you will not recover.*" (20:1)

- I. When Hezekiah heard these words, he immediately turned in prayer to the LORD. God told Isaiah to tell him that his prayers were heard, he was going to recover from the illness and 15 years would be added to his life.

NOTE: Isaiah also applied the recommended medical procedure of that day in addition to their prayers (20:7).

- Hezekiah was given a choice about the sign that God would give him as assurance of His promise. What amazing sign did he see?
 - This miraculous sign is probably an example of the type of thing that Elisha said many years before Hezekiah's time: "*This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD.*" (**2 Kings 3:18**) But think for a moment about all of the physical actions involved in having the shadow from the sun move backwards 15 steps. It's impossible, of course, at least from our human perspective. But "*the things that are impossible with people are possible with God.*" (**Luke 18:27**)
 - Can you imagine how Hezekiah felt about God, having seen all the things he witnessed in his life?
 - How about you? How do you feel?
2. What tactical mistake did Hezekiah make with the messengers from Babylon?

What did that cost his kingdom later on?

Continue to meditate and pray about your amazement about the heart and power of God and your desire to be faithful to him.

Just when you thought things were really going to turn around for Judah, the next two kings come along and reverse the trend once again.

1. Manasseh became king when he was 12 years old and reigned for 55 years (21:1). He is said to be even more wicked than all the kings before him.

Note some of the details about his wickedness:

- He rebuilt the "*high places*" that Hezekiah removed, where the people could offer their prayers to any god they chose (21:3).
- He re-established the worship of Baal and Asherah as Ahab, king of Israel had done (21:3).
- Once again, he even put articles of idol worship in the temple itself (21:4, 7). This was the same thing Ahaz, the wicked king of Judah had done many years earlier (16:10 – 18).
- He even sacrificed his own son on one of the altars. He also practiced sorcery and consulted mediums (21:6).
- This lasted for 55 years! His leadership not only cost him his own soul, he also led the people astray (21:9). As we have seen in other readings of the kings, good people can still be faithful under bad leadership, but it's not easy.

What was God's prediction as a result of Manasseh's sins (21:10 – 15)?

2. Manasseh's son, Amon was the next king. He also did all the evil that his father did (21:19 – 22).
He only reigned for two years. What happened to him (21:23 – 24)?

His eight-year old son, Josiah, was crowned the next king. We will read about his refreshing reforms in the next two chapters.

For more information about kings Manasseh and Amon, read **2 Chronicles 33**.

Meditate on the positives: God's patience, power, and love! Continue to pray about what you will do to not only avoid what you read about here, but also be a positive influence in your world around you.

Josiah was only eight when he became king. He reigned for 31 years. We've seen other kings who were very young when they were crowned. Those early years would have been heavily influenced by those who were taking care of the young king. Remember that Josiah came to be king as a result of the assassination of his father (21:23 – 24).

1. Josiah is said to be a good king who "*did what was right in the eyes of the LORD*." He is always remembered for being the great reform king, similar to the earlier reforms of Joash and Hezekiah. **2 Chronicles 34:3 – 8** gives us more details about his early years. We are told there that he began those reforms in the 8th year of his reign. At age 16, he "*began to seek the God of his Father David*." Four years later he purged the land of all of the idols that his father and grandfather had established.
2. In the 18th year of his reign, while the temple was being repaired, the high priest "*found the Book of the Law in the temple*" (22:8). Sounds like it had not been read for awhile! Even the temple secretary, Shaphan, didn't seem to know what it was. He told the king that the priests had given him "*a book*" (22:10). Obviously during the 57 years of the previous two kings and the first 18 years of this king, this "*book*" was unknown to everyone.
 - What was Josiah's reaction when the word of God was read to him (22:11 – 13)?
 - Can you relate to that (not the part about not having read the Bible for years, but the part about reacting to the Word)?
3. Hilkiyah the priest went to the prophetess Huldah to inquire of the LORD. What did God tell her about his response to Josiah's repentance?
4. Take a look at your devotion to God's Word. Is there anything you need to do today to strengthen that devotion?

For more information about Josiah's early reforms and this discovery of God's Word, see **2 Chronicles 34**.

Meditate about the privileges and responsibilities associated with being the people of God's Word. Pray about your devotion to him and to his Word.

Josiah assembled the people of Jerusalem and read to them the words from *The Book of the Covenant*. Remember that God had always wanted the kings to write their own copy of these words, follow them with all their heart, and lead the people in following them (**Deuteronomy 17:14 – 20**). We can only imagine what these years of Biblical history involving those kings would have been like if they had done that!

1. Josiah was a man who clearly was "*all in*" for God. What was the covenant that Josiah made with God (our memory verse for the week)?

What was the reaction of the people to Josiah's *heart-and-soul* covenant?

2. What are some of the things Josiah removed from the temple?

Can you imagine how God felt to see these things going on in his temple?

3. In addition to all the idols he destroyed in Jerusalem, he even went up to Bethel and destroyed the idols there (23:15 – 16). Remember that this had been predicted to Jeroboam some 300 years earlier (**1 Kings 13:1 – 3**).
4. What did he do concerning the Passover (23:21 – 23)?
5. Remember that you are God's temple. How can you apply the conviction of Josiah to your temple today?
6. After Josiah died, two evil kings, Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim, reigned for the next 11 years (23:31 – 37). We'll read more about them next week.

For more information about Josiah's reforms, see **2 Chronicles 35**.

Meditate about the covenant you have made with the LORD. Pray about your promise to follow him with all your heart and with all your soul.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these chapters of 2 Kings and what they teach you about God's heart for his covenant.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

Exile of the Southern Kingdom

2 Kings 24 – 25

Memory Verse for the Week:

It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence.

2 Kings 24:20

**Week 6
Day 1**

The First Defeat by Babylon

Read 2 Kings 24.

Today's Date: _____

Too little, too late! The Southern Kingdom had shown some great signs of repentance under the reformation kings. But it did not last, and God had to finally punish them as well.

1. The next two kings of Judah had confusing sound-alike names: Jehoiakim and Jehoiachin. Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, invaded the land. What did he do?
2. As an example of the spiritual condition of King Jehoiakim, read what he did to Jeremiah's words that were written to him (**Jeremiah 36:19 – 26**).
3. According to the somber words in this week's memory verse (24:20), why did all of this happen?

We know that even a punishment like this is part of God's active love to motivate good-hearted people to repent. We want to make sure we apply this to ourselves in a healthy way of motivation, not discouragement. Nevertheless, how would you feel if the words of verse 20 were said about you?

Meditate about how you feel about God's presence in your life and pray about your determination to never leave him. Also, continue to pray for your brothers and sisters all week, as they have the same determination.

1. What happened during the final stages of the Babylonian attack?

2. How was the Babylonian treatment of the Southern Kingdom different from the Assyrian treatment of the Northern Kingdom?

The first deportation of the Israelites to Babylon took place around 605 BC. The second one took place around 586 BC. The total captivity lasted for about 70 years. Interestingly, this time is referred to in the Scripture below as the sabbath rest for the land.

*The land enjoyed its sabbath rests;
all the time of the desolation it rested,
until the seventy years were completed
in fulfillment of the word of the LORD spoken by Jeremiah.*
2 Chronicles 36:21

Let's not wait until God makes us rest before we enjoy the rest that he provides for us.

3. As often is the case, this time of adversity produced some great examples of faith, such as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Esther, and Daniel.

4. This is the end of the kings of Judah and Israel. When they returned from the Babylonian captivity, there were no more kings. As you have looked at the lives of over 40 kings lasting for almost 500 years, what is your opinion of Israel's desire to have a king?

Who is the King of your heart?

For more information about these last days of Judah as a kingdom, read **2 Chronicles 36**.

Meditate on your King. Listen to Him; pause and be silent in His presence; be in awe of His power, His glory, and His mercy. Then approach His throne of grace with confidence (**Hebrews 4:16**) and pour out your heart to him.

Unity and Disunity: Causes and Effects

The subtitle of this journal is *Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel and Judah*. For the next three days, we will review and summarize some of these life lessons.

One obvious life lesson that stands out in a study of *The Divided Kingdom* involves the causes and effects of unity and disunity. We can learn a lot from their loss of unity.



The spiritual causes and effects of unity and disunity are like a spiral: Unity is an upward spiral that calls us higher, while disunity is a downward spiral that brings us lower.

1. Some causes of unity or disunity

- In a direct way, God himself brought about the division in Israel. He told Jeroboam that the kingdom would be divided as a result of Solomon's sins and that he would be the king of the divided group (**1 Kings 11:29 – 39**). God had a plan that this punishment should only be temporary (11:39), but their division was the result of God's punishment to humble them and wake them up to what caused it.
- But the human cause of that divisive spirit was idolatry. The "spiral effect" is the fact that not having unity with godly people means that we don't have others who encourage us to put God first. The lack of unity and the ungodliness feed each other, bringing us down even more.
- On the other hand, the opposite of that is the cause of unity. "We can work this out because we are both followers of the one true God."

2. Some effects of unity or disunity

- We saw the ultimate effect of their disunity: their divided kingdom could not stand (as Jesus said in **Mark 3:24**).
- The immediate effects that we also saw in their lives involved more idolatry, immorality, and injustices towards their fellow humans. In fact, even "unity" when it is based on following a person rather than God has these kinds of effects. (Recall the unified attempt of the tower of Babel.)
- On the other hand, the opposite effects showed up when they were united in the LORD. They saw what we see, in David's words (**Psalms 133:1**) about how good and pleasant unity is. "Because we are united in the LORD, we can help each other through trying times."

Our fellowship with God allows us to be united with godly people where we can be blessed by them and be a blessing to them. Our unity and godliness feed each other in an upward spiral. Meditate about the causes and effects of unity and disunity in our lives today, and pray about how you will apply that to your life.

Review 2:
Our Covenant with God

Today's Date: _____

God's covenant with his people is another theme found in these Scriptures.

- I. A covenant is a promise between two parties. In this case, it is God's promise to us and our promise to him – simple, but powerful.

*I will walk among you and be your God,
and you will be my people.*
Leviticus 26:12

- See also **Exodus 6:7; Jeremiah 31:33, 32:38; Ezekiel 37:23,27; Zechariah 8:8, 13:9; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Hebrews 8:10; Revelation 21:3** to see the prevalence of this two-way promise in Scripture. It's hard to overemphasize the importance of our promise to be God's people and His promise to be our God.
 - God is, by his very nature, extremely faithful to his part of the covenant. The problem has always been our lack of faithfulness.
2. The covenant during the times of the kings.
 - Both Israel and Judah were frequently unfaithful to their promise. We saw over and over again kings who "*did evil in the eyes of the LORD.*" We also saw the popularity of the "*high places*" where individuals often practiced their private worship of idols.
 - On the other hand, we also saw admirable examples, such as the renewals of the covenant during the days of King Joash (**2 Kings 11:17**) and during the days of King Josiah (**2 Kings 23:3**).
 - It seems clear: if they would have stayed faithful to the covenant, they would have stayed united; and if they were united they would have helped each other stay faithful to the covenant (the "*upward spiral*").
 3. The Book of the Covenant
 - One of the keys to Josiah's reforms was restoring the importance of God's Word, *The Book of the Covenant* (**2 Kings 23:2**).
 - Moses had instructed that every king was to write for himself his own copy and to continually read and practice it (**Deuteronomy 17:18 – 20**). Do you think the kings of Israel and Judah did that?
 - We can't miss the importance of *The Book* in our lives as well.

There's a simplicity in the promise God wants us to make. He's not asking us to never make a mistake, but to plainly tell him "*We will be your people.*" That's certainly not a casual promise, but it's not a threatening one either.

We will review more thoroughly the powerful impact of God's promise to us in tomorrow's review devotional. For today, meditate and pray about your covenant with God. Remind yourself of your promise: "*I'll be your person.*"

The promise from the LORD in our covenant with him is simply stated: "*I will be your God.*" In some ways that is the key test in our trust of God: do we trust him to be God? Or, do we worry that God can't get it right? The people in the times of the kings are like people of all times – some trusted; some didn't.

1. Recall Jeroboam's predicament (**1 Kings 12:26**).

- When Jeroboam became king, he "*thought to himself*" that he would lose his kingdom if people kept going to Jerusalem to the temple to worship. So he thought that the only solution to that predicament was to develop his own brand of idol worship with its altars and priests. He might have had a point about his predicament, but he showed no interest in inquiring of God nor trusting him to solve the problem. When the only solution we see to a difficult situation is to sin, we probably are not trusting God.
- We are not told how God would have solved Jeroboam's problem. But do you think he could have?

2. Ahaziah's predicament (**2 Kings 1:6, 16**) "*Is there no God in Israel?*"

- Ahaziah also had a legitimately difficult situation. Like Jeroboam, he also showed no interest in inquiring of God nor trusting him to solve the problem.
- What do you think: Was there a God in Israel? Do you think God could have helped Ahaziah by either healing him or helping him survive?

3. Elisha's trust: "*This is an easy thing in the eyes of the LORD.*" (**2 Kings 3:18**)

- Elisha gave them a difficult sign to show that the LORD would handle their difficult situation.
- His trust about God, though, was that this was an easy thing for God. This is like what Jesus said in **Luke 18:27**. Do we trust God that way?

4. Elisha's perspective: "*Those who are with us are more than those who are with them.*" (**2 Kings 6:16**)

- Elisha wanted his aide to have his eyes opened (6:17) to see what he saw: God's invisible army with horses and chariots of fire all around them.
- Like **1 John 4:4**, does our perspective see what is the truth about God and his mighty presence in all of our situations?

Meditate about God's trustworthiness and pray that our eyes will be open so that we will not approach difficult situations as if there is no alternative but to sin, or as if there is no God in our lives, or as if this is too difficult for Him.

Knowing Your Bible/Knowing Your God

As you close this week's devotionals, write a summary of what you know about these last two chapters of *2 Kings* and what they teach you about God's heart for unity.

Put it in your heart.

Quote the memory verse for the week and think about how it affects your life.

Share it.

Call or visit someone and share your thoughts from this week's studies.

This week you have been focusing on what you can learn from the examples of these kings. Before you meet with your brothers and sisters for worship and fellowship, pray for them. What are some specific ways you can encourage someone today in these areas?

Conclusion
A Kingdom Divided
Life Lessons from the Kings of Israel and Judah

Thank you for taking the time to get to know the Bible better and to get to know God better.

Reading the history sections of God's Word can be challenging at times, but there is so much to be gained from it. We have seen the patience and compassion of God's heart put to the test of mankind's almost unlimited ability for worshipping false gods, living immoral lives, and practicing injustice for others. All of these human traits led to their loss of unity, and that division helped to foster these evil tendencies. That downward spiral of disunity and ungodliness fostering each other can only be overcome when we turn back to our covenant with God and, once again, fix our eyes on Jesus.

We clearly saw in these Scriptures an example of Jesus' words:

*If a kingdom is divided against itself,
that kingdom cannot stand.*

Mark 3:24

We also clearly saw the tragic opposite of David's words:

*How good and pleasant it is
when God's people live together in unity.*

Psalms 133:1

Meanwhile, our focus on the LORD hopefully leads us to a profound understanding of the depth of his grace. He waited so patiently during times of unbelievable ungodliness. He gave them plenty of time to turn to him. But we also clearly saw that he means what he says. Knowing both the grace and the judgement of God hopefully helps us respect him even more, with a healthy balance of love and fear.

We also saw that, in spite of the horrible examples of the leaders of the countries of Israel and Judah, there were often great examples of individuals leading a life committed to the LORD. That hopefully gives us encouragement for today. While it would be a blessing to live in a country with godly national and religious leaders, our personal and our church's covenant with God can remain strong even with ungodly leaders.

May God bless you as you continue to strengthen your ROOTS by knowing his word and knowing his heart better!

John Sullivan

The United Kingdom

<i>King</i>	<i>Approximate Dates* (BC)</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
Saul	1050 – 1010	Samuel
David	1010 – 970	Nathan
Solomon	970 – 931	

The Divided Kingdom

Judah (The Southern Kingdom)

Israel (The Northern Kingdom)

<i>King</i>	<i>Approximate Dates* (BC)</i>	<i>Prophet</i>	<i>King</i>	<i>Approximate Dates* (BC)</i>	<i>Prophet</i>
Rehoboam	931 – 913		Jeroboam I	931 – 910	
Abijah	913 – 911				
Asa	911 – 870		Nadab	910 – 909	
			Baasha	909 – 886	
			Elah	886 – 885	
			Zimri	885	
			Omri	885 – 874	
Jehoshaphat	870 – 848		Ahab	874 – 853	Elijah/Micaiah
Jehoram	848 – 841		Ahaziah	853 – 852	
Ahaziah	841		Joram	852 – 841	Elisha
Athaliah (Queen)	841 – 835		Jehu	841 – 814	
Joash	835 – 796		Jehoahaz	814 – 798	
Amaziah	796 – 767		Jehoash (Joash)	798 – 782	
Azariah (Uzziah)	767 – 740	Hosea	Jeroboam II	782 – 753	Jonah/ Amos
			Zechariah	753 – 752	
		Isaiah	Shallum	752	
Jotham	740 – 732	Isaiah	Menahem	752 – 742	
			Pekahiah	742 – 740	
Ahaz	732 – 716	Isaiah	Pekah	740 – 732	
			Hoshea	732 – 721	
Hezekiah	716 – 687	Isaiah/Micah			
Manasseh	687 – 642	Nahum			
Amon	642 – 640	Zephaniah Habakkuk			
Josiah	640 – 608				
Jehoahaz	608				
Jehoiakim	608 – 597	Daniel			
Jehoiachin	597	Jeremiah			
Zedekiah	597 – 586	Ezekiel			

* All dates are approximate. Different resources estimate them differently.

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