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| **KINGDOM POLITICS**  **Part Four** |

Forty Daily Devotionals

From the Book of 2 Kings

(Based on the NKJV)

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| **Introduction** |

As I mentioned in the introduction to 1 Kings, 1 and 2 Kings were originally one large book in the Hebrew Scriptures. As we leave the first Book of Kings and venture into the second, this is a continuation of the same story. As a reminder, I must say that the name of the author, or compiler, of this book is never named and there is no conclusive evidence as to who should be credited with this work. In 1 and 2 Kings combined, we read at least part of the stories of 15 of the 42 kings of Israel and Judah. Of the 19 kings who ruled over Israel, which was composed of ten tribes and referred to as the Northern Kingdom, the Bible story concludes that they were all “bad” kings who chose not to honor God and His Word. Eight of the 20 kings of Judah, which included the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and was referred to as the Southern Kingdom, were reported to be “good” kings and one began bad and repented while on the throne. It is believed that the books of 1 and 2 Kings were actually like our “public records” files today. If so, these records certainly contained some very detailed, personal information about the people who are described in them. You will meet some of God’s finest people as you read these pages. However, you will also read about some people who sinned greatly against God and who caused great harm to come against God’s people. May your time spent in this book of the Bible equip you to be like the former and not the latter!

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| **Daily Reading Schedule** |

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| **Day** | **Scripture Reading** | **Date** |  | **Day** | **Scripture Reading** | **Date** |
| 1 | 2 Kings 1:1-18 | 10/24/16 |  | 21 | 2 Kings 14:1-15 | 11/13/16 |
| 2 | 2 Kings 2:1-25 | 10/25/16 |  | 22 | 2 Kings 14:16-29 | 11/14/16 |
| 3 | 2 Kings 3:1-14 | 10/26/16 |  | 23 | 2 Kings 15:1-16 | 11/15/16 |
| 4 | 2 Kings 3:15-27 | 10/27/16 |  | 24 | 2 Kings 15:17-38 | 11/16/16 |
| 5 | 2 Kings 4:1-22 | 10/28/16 |  | 25 | 2 Kings 16:1-20 | 11/17/16 |
| 6 | 2 Kings 4:23-44 | 10/29/16 |  | 26 | 2 Kings 17:1-23 | 11/18/16 |
| 7 | 2 Kings 5:1-14 | 10/30/16 |  | 27 | 2 Kings 17:24-41 | 11/19/16 |
| 8 | 2 Kings 5:15-27 | 10/31/16 |  | 28 | 2 Kings 18:1-16 | 11/20/16 |
| 9 | 2 Kings 6:1-16 | 11/01/16 |  | 29 | 2 Kings 18:17-37 | 11/21/16 |
| 10 | 2 Kings 6:17-33 | 11/02/16 |  | 30 | 2 Kings 19:1-19 | 11/22/16 |
| 11 | 2 Kings 7:1-20 | 11/03/16 |  | 31 | 2 Kings 19:20-37 | 11/23/16 |
| 12 | 2 Kings 8:1-15 | 11/04/16 |  | 32 | 2 Kings 20:1-21 | 11/24/16 |
| 13 | 2 Kings 8:16-29 | 11/05/16 |  | 33 | 2 Kings 21:1-12 | 11/25/16 |
| 14 | 2 Kings 9:1-16 | 11/06/16 |  | 34 | 2 Kings 21:13-26 | 11/26/16 |
| 15 | 2 Kings 9:17-37 | 11/07/16 |  | 35 | 2 Kings 22:1-20 | 11/27/16 |
| 16 | 2 Kings 10:1-17 | 11/08/16 |  | 36 | 2 Kings 23:1-18 | 11/28/16 |
| 17 | 2 Kings 10:18-36 | 11/09/16 |  | 37 | 2 Kings 23:19-37 | 11/29/16 |
| 18 | 2 Kings 11:1-21 | 11/10/16 |  | 38 | 2 Kings 24:1-20 | 11/30/16 |
| 19 | 2 Kings 12:1-21 | 11/11/16 |  | 39 | 2 Kings 25:1-12 | 12/01/16 |
| 20 | 2 Kings 13:1-25 | 11/12/16 |  | 40 | 2 Kings 25:13-30 | 12/02/16 |

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| **Day 1: 2 Kings 1:1-18** |

*“Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab.” (2 Kings 1:1)*

Moab had lived in servitude to Israel since the time of David. Back in 2 Samuel 8:2, we saw where “the Moabites became David’s servants, and brought tribute” (paid taxes) to Israel. Later in that same chapter, Moab was listed as one “the nations which he (David) had subdued” (2 Samuel 8:11-12). One might wonder what, after so many years, might have motivated Moab now to “rebel against Israel.” Part of the answer to that question might be found in the story about Ahaziah that begins in the second verse of 2 Kings where we read that Ahaziah had fallen “through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured” (2 Kings 1:2). The fact that Ahaziah “sent messengers” to “inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron” as to whether or not he would “recover from this injury” (v. 2) is a clear indication as to how little respect the people of Israel now had for the Almighty God who had delivered them from their cruel bondage in Egypt and had given them a land of their own! Ahaziah’s evil father, Ahab, had “served Baal and worshiped him” and had even “set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria” (1 Kings 16:31-32). The last few verses of the final chapter of 1 Kings reported that Ahaziah “did evil in the sight of the LORD…for he served Baal and worshiped him” and that his actions “provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger” (1 Kings 22:52-53). I am not trying to defend Ahaziah’s evil actions, but since his evil father, Ahab had reigned for 22 years, it is possible that this new king never knew what it meant to serve anything but false gods. In any case, they were going to learn that Moab had been “subdued” because they feared the God of the Israelites and not the Israelites themselves. Israel’s rebellion against God had cost them their testimony before the nations.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that the world holds little respect for a Christian nation (so called) that does not respect God! **Pray** that our nation would return to having a reverential respect for God and His Word.

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| **Day 2: 2 Kings 2:1-25** |

*“Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” (2 Kings 2:11)*

Three times in the earlier verses of today’s chapter we read where Elijah asked the younger Elisha to “stay” behind as he went first on to Bethel, then to Jericho, and finally to the Jordan (2:2, 4, & 6). Each of those requests was met by the same response from Elisha: “As the LORD lives, and as your soul lives, I will not leave you!” Both Elijah’s requests and Elisha’s response came at the time “when the LORD was about to take Elijah into heaven by a whirlwind” (2:1). We know that Elisha was aware of this soon coming event because when asked by the “sons of the prophets” the question: “Do you know that the LORD will take away your master from over you today?” Elisha had responded, “I know” (2:3). Elisha’s promise to not leave Elijah was sincere because we read after each vow words like, “So *they* went down to Bethel” (v. 2), “so *they* came to Jericho” (v. 4), and “so the two of them went on” (v. 6). I am sure that the younger prophet knew that he had made a right decision when, upon reaching the banks of the Jordan River with Elijah, he watched as his mentor “took his mantle, rolled it up, and struck the water; and it (the river) was divided this way and that, so that *the two of them* crossed over on dry ground” (v. 8). It was only after Elisha’s refusal to leave Elijah, and his willingness to follow him to and through the Jordan River, that the older prophet asked the younger, “What may I do for you, before I am taken away from you?” To that request Elisha responded, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me” (v. 9).

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** the importance of steadfastness! **Refuse** to abandon your calling and stick as close as possible to those who have faithfully mentored you in your Christian walk.

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| **Day 3: 2 Kings 3:1-14** |

*“But Jehoshaphat said, ‘Is there no prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of the LORD by him?’ So one of the servants of the king of Israel answered and said, ‘Elisha, the son of Shaphat is here, who poured water on the hands of Elijah.’” (2 Kings 3:11)*

As we consider the thirty-nine different kings that ruled over the kingdoms of Israel and Judah after the division, only eight of them could be declared to be godly. Jehoshaphat, like his father before him, was one of those godly kings. The last chapter of 1 Kings introduced us to this godly king by saying, “Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem…and he walked in all the ways of his father Asa…doing what was right in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Kings 22:42-43). But there is another important point made about Jehoshaphat in that final chapter of 1 Kings. We are also informed that, “Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel” (1 Kings 22:44). Today’s Scripture reading tells us that “Jehoram the son of Ahab became king over Israel at Samaria in the eighteenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah” (3:1). Even though Jehoram was an improvement over Ahab and Jezebel, we are still told that he “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (3:2). Evil or not, he still had the wisdom to come to godly Jehoshaphat for help when “the king of Moab rebelled” (v. 5) against him. When the combined armies faced hardships, faithless Jehoram declared that God seemed to be about to “deliver them into the hand of Moab” (v. 10). But godly Jehoshaphat wasn’t ready to give up on God just yet. He suggested that they seek spiritual counsel, and that suggestion led to Elisha being recommended as a possible counselor. Verse 13 reveals that Elisha had no desire to spend time with Jehoram, the king of Israel. However, verse 14 teaches us that, out of respect for godly Jehoshaphat, Elisha was willing to help them.

**Prayer Emphasis: Live** your life with an awareness that the world is watching. **Ask** yourself, “If I was on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence to convict me?”

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| **Day 4: 2 Kings 3:15-27** |

*“‘But now bring me a musician.’ Then it happened, when the musician played, that the hand of the LORD came upon him.” (2 Kings 3:15)*

It is interesting to note that when Elisha received the message from God for Jehoram and Jehoshaphat, it was said “that the hand of the LORD came upon him” (v. 15). That statement immediately brought Ezekiel 1:3 to mind. There we are told that, “the word of the LORD came expressly to Ezekiel…and the hand of the LORD was upon him there.” In today’s story about Elisha, we are told that it was only after “the hand of the LORD came upon him” that he delivered his “Thus says the LORD” (v.16) message to the two kings who stood humbly before him. It is also interesting to note that Elisha’s hearing from God came just after he had been ministered to by a musician. We are not told what kind of instrument was played or what kind of song or psalm was performed, but we are told that the music helped Elisha in the performance of his duty as a prophet of God. Godly music can certainly help any of us to become more sensitive to the Spirit of God and His work in our hearts. Music can feed either our old, sinful nature or our new, spiritual nature. Every Christian should be careful about which nature we are feeding when we make our choices about music. I am sure that this anonymous musician never dreamed that his music ministry was going to help lead God’s people to a great military victory. Neither can we know how God can use our “joyful noise” to inspire others to do great things for Him!

**Prayer Emphasis: Pray** for those in our music ministry today. **Encourage** someone involved in that ministry by taking the time to thank them for their efforts and their willingness to serve.

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| **Day 5: 2 Kings 4:1-22** |

*“Now it came to pass, when the vessels were full, that she said to her son, ‘Bring me another vessel.’ And he said to her, ‘There is not another vessel.’ So the oil ceased.” (2 Kings 4:6)*

Just before Elijah’s glorious departure he had asked Elisha, “What may I do for you?” Elisha had responded, “Please let a double portion of your spirit be upon me” (2 Kings 2:9-10). Some have suggested that the granting of Elisha’s request is made evident by the fact that Elijah has eight recorded miracles in the Bible while Elisha has sixteen! We will deal with one of those sixteen miracles in today’s devotional. Since the “certain woman” that is mentioned in 4:1 was a widow of one of the “sons of the prophets,” it is possible that Elisha knew her. From her remarks to Elisha, it is pretty certain that she knew him. She told the prophet a sad story and concluded it by saying, “The creditor is coming to take my two sons to be his slaves.” Compare the question that Elisha asked her to the one that Elijah had earlier asked him (see 2:9) and you will see that Elisha was patterning his first act of ministry after the style of his mentor. When he asked the woman what she had in her house that she might sell to pay her creditor, she responded, “Your maidservant has nothing in the house but a jar of oil” (4:2). Because of the Hebrew word used here, it is possible that she was speaking of a small bottle of olive oil that was set aside for anointing. The prophet sent her to borrow some empty vessels from “all” her neighbors. When she had gathered all that she would, she was told to begin to pour the oil from her small bottle into those borrowed pots. To her amazement (and mine!), she was able to fill every pot from her one, small bottle! The oil only ceased to flow when the last vessel was filled.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that God’s answers are sometimes limited by our faith. The miraculous flow of oil did not cease until the woman had filled the last pot that she had borrowed. **Refuse** to limit God’s blessing because of any lack of faith or obedience on your part.

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| **Day 6: 2 Kings 4:23-44** |

*“Then they served it to the men to eat. Now it happened, as they were eating the stew, that they cried out and said, ‘Man of God, there is death in the pot!’ And they could not eat it.” (2 Kings 4:40)*

In the break room of a Christian school with which I was once associated, there was a sign on the stand on which the coffee pot stood that read, “There is death in the pot!” While that sign solicited many laughs, the situation that resulted in the mournful complaint of the students of this Old Testament “school” was no laughing matter. Verse 38 mentions that “the sons of the prophets were sitting before” Elisha. This implies that they were in a classroom type environment and that these prophets were learning from Elisha. At some point in the day Elisha instructed his servant to “put on the large pot, and boil stew for the sons of the prophets” (v. 38). Because of the gathered ingredients that are mentioned in verse 39, it seems that this “stew” was actually going to be more like a large pot of vegetable soup! This was probably because of the fact that “there was a famine in the land” (v. 38) at that time. To say the least, the “wild gourds” that were “sliced” and then “put into the pot” were bitter to the taste and possibly even poisonous. Scholars believe that the “wild gourds” that are referenced here are the “wild cucumbers” that still grow in that area of the world today. They have a very bitter taste and can produce colic. Symptoms of this painful ailment are severe stomach cramps. It is pretty amazing to me that the cure for the problem was for Elisha to add “some flour” to the same pot and then “serve it to the people.” Imagine the faith that it took to eat once again from the same pot that had made them sick!

**Prayer Emphasis: Obey** God’s commands even if you do not always fully understand them. **Trust** God to have the right answers for whatever problems you might encounter in your spiritual walk.

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| **Day 7: 2 Kings 5:1-14** |

*“****Now Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was also a mighty man of valor,*** but ***a leper****.” (2 Kings 5:1)*

Our focus verse tells us that Naaman was the “commander of the army of the king of Syria,” “a great and honorable man in the eyes of his master,” and that, by him, “the LORD had given victory to Syria.” Then, it is almost as if an asterisk is placed beside his name because those favorable remarks are followed by the statement, “but (he was) a leper.” One would think that a man like Naaman had the wherewithal to afford the care of physicians and to purchase every known remedy available in his day. But God had a plan to use “a young girl from the land of Israel” who had been taken captive and was now a servant to Naaman’s wife (v. 2) to turn Naaman’s *test* into a *testimony* of God’s power and glory. The young woman told Naaman’s wife of a prophet who was in Samaria that could heal her husband. Naaman’s wife then told her husband, Naaman - Naaman then told the king of Syria - and the next thing you know, the king of Syria was sending Naaman with a very generous offering and a letter to the king of Israel asking that his servant might be healed of his leprosy (vs. 3-6). The king of Israel was beside himself at the thought that he would be expected to heal a leper! But “Elisha the man of God heard” (v. 8) what was going on and requested that Naaman be sent to visit him at his home - and you know the rest of the story! Naaman was ultimately healed of his leprosy!

**Prayer Emphasis: Notice** that this story is all about people *hearing* and then *telling* someone else what they had heard. **Tell** someone about some way that God has blessed you today!

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| **Day 8: 2 Kings 5:15-27** |

*“****And he returned to the man of God, he and all his aides, and came and stood before him; and he said, ‘Indeed, now I know that*** there is ***no God in all the earth, except in Israel; now therefore, please take a gift from your servant.’”*** *(2 Kings 5:15)*

Yesterday’s Scripture revealed Naaman’s opinion of what should have happened when he arrived at Elisha’s house. He had envisioned that the prophet would “come out to (him), and stand and call on the name of the LORD his God, and wave his hand over the place, and heal the leprosy” (5:11). And then, after receiving other instructions from Elisha, he had gone “away in a rage” (v. 12). But now that Naaman had been healed by the power of God, we find him gladly coming to Elisha, proclaiming that “there is no God in all the earth, except in Israel.” He also brought “a gift” for Elisha and “urged him to take it.” However, Elisha “refused” Naaman’s gift. We considered the importance of what some “heard” yesterday. Today we see the danger of what might be “heard” when we listen to the conversations of others. “Gehazi, the servant of Elisha” (v. 20) apparently overheard the conversation between Naaman and Elisha about rewards and then “pursued Naaman” (v. 21) when he left to return to his homeland. When Gehazi caught up to Naaman, he lied to him and told him that Elisha had sent him to request some money and clothing for two visiting prophets. When Gehazi got home he took the ill-gotten gifts and “stored (hid) them away in the house” (v. 24). In their next meeting, Elisha asked, “Where did you go, Gehazi?” Once again, Gehazi lied when he responded, “Your servant did not go anywhere.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Recognize** the uselessness of ill-gotten gain. **Notice** that Gehazi had to hide his booty from everyone leaving it to be of no real value to him. **Refuse** to be greedy or to place your confidence in the material things of this world.

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| **Day 9: 2 Kings 6:1-16** |

*“****And when the servant of the man of God arose early…there was an army, surrounding the city with horses and chariots. And his servant said to him, ‘Alas, my master! What shall we do?’ So he answered, ‘Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them.’”*** *(2 Kings 6:15-16))*

In a time when “the king of Syria was making war against Israel” (6:1), the king of Syria became suspicious that there was a traitor in his midst because the armies of Israel never fell into any of his traps. The Syrian army would “camp…in such and such a place,” and Elisha would warn the king of Israel of their whereabouts. We are told that this happened “not just once or twice” (v. 10). This “greatly troubled” the king of Syria, and he refused to write it off to coincidence. Verse 11 tells us that “He called his servants” and asked them who among them was “for the king of Israel?’” The servants told him that it was “Elisha, the prophet” who was revealing the battle plans of the Syrians to the Israelites. So, the king of Syria “sent horses and chariots and a great army” to where Elisha was and “surrounded the city” (v. 14). When Elisha’s fearful servant asked the prophet, “What shall we do?” the prophet responded, “Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them” (v. 16). In my opinion, the word that is translated “more” there is used in two ways. First, it is used in a *quantitative* sense, simply meaning that there are more with them than there was with their enemies. But I also think that this word is often used in a *qualitative* sense. In other words, it might be that Elisha was saying that the army that stood with them was not only *bigger* but also *better* than the army that stood against them!

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that God is *powerful* enough that He *can* do whatever is best for us. At the same time **believe** that God is *loving* enough that He *will* do that which is best for us!

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| **Day 10: 2 Kings 6:17-33** |

*“****And Elisha prayed, and said, ‘LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see.’ Then the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw. And behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.” (2 Kings 6:17)***

There is a very powerful lesson to be learned from the story that is recorded here in the sixth chapter of the Book of 2 Kings! Here is that powerful lesson summed up in one sentence: “God does not always change our situation, but He is always willing to change the way we see it!” Elisha did not pray that God would change his servant’s situation – but he did pray that God would “open” his eyes and allow the servant to see the situation from a more spiritual perspective. I think that it is important to note that Elisha did not try to *explain* the situation to his servant but that he simply asked God to *expose* it to him so “that he may see.” We would do well to realize that there are some things that those we desire to disciple must see for themselves. All the explaining in the world could not have put into words what God had done to protect His people. In other words, we simply cannot *say* enough about God for people to see what God is doing, but we might *pray* enough that God would open their eyes to His great plan of provision and protection. Notice that Elisha prayed that his servant’s eyes would be “opened,” but then he prayed again and the eyes of the enemy soldiers were closed. We are told that God “struck them with blindness according to the word of Elisha” (v. 18). But instead of killing the Syrian army while they were blinded, Elisha led them into the city where the people “prepared a great feast for them” and then “sent them away…to their master” (v. 23).

**Prayer Emphasis:** If you cannot see the law of love and the “Golden Rule” in the way that the Israelites were told to treat their enemy in this story, then we need to ask God to *open our eyes* today.

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| **Day 11: 2 Kings 7:1-20** |

*“For the LORD had caused the army of the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses – the noise of a great army; so that they said one to another. ‘Look, the king of Israel has hired against us the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Egyptians to attack us!’” (2 Kings 7:6)*

Today’s Scripture reading is from one of my favorite chapters in the Bible, and it contains one of my favorite stories in the Bible. While the powerful and dreaded Syrian army laid siege to Samaria, “there were four leprous men at the entrance of the gate” to the city (v. 3). These poor, pitiful men could not seek refuge within the city because of their leprosy. They could not flee from the city because the city was surrounded by the Syrian army. Finally, they decided to “surrender to the army of the Syrians” saying to themselves, “If they keep us alive, we shall live; and if they kill us, we shall only die” (v. 4). My eyes always rest for a moment on the words “we shall only die” when I read this story. Although we are not told just how “leprous” these men were, we know that their disease was at the stage where they were put out of the city and left to die from their horrible disease. But look what God did when these four men came to a point of decision and then acted on it! As they walked towards the “army of the Syrians” God caused “the Syrians to hear the noise of chariots and the noise of horses – the noise of a *great army*” (v. 6). Four “leprous men” (v. 3) were used by God to set the entire army of the Syrians to flight leaving behind “their tents, their horses, and their donkeys” as they ran for their lives (v. 7)!

**Prayer Emphasis: Make** the decision to lay it all on the line for Jesus! **Trust** God to use you to do great and mighty things for the good of His Kingdom. **Realize** that there is no person – especially a Christian person – that God cannot use in a great and mighty way.

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| **Day 12: 2 Kings 8:1-15** |

*“Then the king talked with Gehazi, the servant of the man of God, saying, ‘Tell me, please, all the great things Elisha has done.’ Now it happened, as he was telling the king how he had restored the dead to life, that there was the woman whose son he had restored to life…And Gehazi said, ‘My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life.’” (2 Kings 8:4-5)*

Although we have read before of the weaknesses of Gehazi, we now see God using this same man in a sort of “show and tell” time to bring a king to his senses. But, at least in this situation, we might better refer to this moment as a “tell and show” time. As Gehazi “was telling the king how he (Elisha) had restored the dead to life,” “the woman whose son he had restored to life” came before the king “appealing to the king for her house and for her land.” God’s timing is impeccable! For this woman and her son to decide to return to see the king and request the restoration of their inheritance at that particular time had to have been orchestrated by God! Gehazi ceased the moment that God has so carefully orchestrated and said to the king, “This is the woman, and this is her son whom Elisha restored to life” (v. 5). You might say that God provided Gehazi with some “living proof” that all that the king had heard about Elisha was more than just a bunch of amazing stories. God still desires that those who have benefited from His amazing grace and mercy stand as personal witnesses to all that He can do. However difficult it might be for people to fully grasp the power, might, and majesty of God, it must be even more difficult to ignore the evidence thereof when He so plainly exposes it to them!

**Prayer Emphasis: Seek** to live your life in such a way that it becomes “living proof” of what God can and will do for His people. **Claim** God’s promises (just as this poor woman did on this day) and you will see God use your own personal boldness and witness to accomplish great things for Him.

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| ***Day 13: 2 Kings 8:16-29*** |

*“Now in the fifth year of Joram the son of Ahab, king of Israel…Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat began to reign as king of Judah…And he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, for the daughter of Ahab was his wife; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.” (2 Kings 8:16-18).*

Today’s Scripture contains some “living proof” that it is always best to carefully involve God in all our decisions in life. We read where “Jehoshaphat…walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done” (v. 16 & 18). When we recall the fact that “Ahab…did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him” and that he “did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (1 Kings 16:30 & 33), we get a pretty good idea of what it means when we read that statement about Jehoshaphat. However, there is a great truth to be found when we read the remaining words of verse 18: “For the daughter of Ahab was his wife.” If the wife of Jehoshaphat was the daughter of Ahab, then she was also the daughter of Jezebel. And just as Jezebel influenced Ahab to sin against God, His laws, and His people, her daughter was now going to influence the life and works of her own husband for evil. It is God’s will that Christians marry Christians – and not just Christians – but committed Christians! Of all the “yokes” that are mentioned in the Bible, perhaps none can so affect our lives as our matrimonial yoke. Every Christian should approach marriage carefully and prayerfully realizing that no person may ever have more influence on our Christian walk than the person to whom we are married.

**Prayer Emphasis:** If you are *not* married, **pray** for God to lead you to the right person who will strengthen and assist you in your personal walk with God. If you *are* married, **pray** for your spouse daily and ask God to use your marriage covenant as a witness to the world around you.

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| **Day 14: 2 Kings 9:1-16** |

*“And Elisha the prophet called one of the sons of the prophets, and said to him, ‘Get yourself ready, and take this flask of oil in your hand, and go to Ramoth Gilead. When you arrive at that place, look there for Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi, and go in and make him rise from among his associates, and take him to an inner room.’” (2 Kings 9:1-2).*

Could you help but notice how specific Elisha was to his associate prophet when he sent him to perform the important task of anointing Jehu to be the king of Israel? First, the older prophet told his associate to get himself “ready” (v. 1). There was to be an emphasis on personal preparedness for the one who was to be sent on such an important mission. Second, Elisha was very specific as to which “Jehu” was to be anointed. Elisha goes to great lengths to instruct his assistant to anoint only “Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat, the son of Nimshi” (v. 2). In these days of our “this will do” and “that’s close or good enough” mentality, we would do well to remember that not “just any old Jehu will do!” The assistant was to “check” and then “double check” that he was speaking to and anointing the right “Jehu” by tracing his lineage back two generations! Third, the assistant was to get Jehu to a place where he could speak to him personally and privately (v. 2). Then, and only then, was the assistant prophet to “then take the flask of oil, and pour it on his head, and say, ‘Thus says the LORD: I have anointed you king over Israel’” (v. 3). The assistant prophet’s actions must have been considered quite “fanatical” by Jehu’s friends because they referred to him as a “madman” (v. 11).

**Prayer Emphasis:** As you seek to serve the Lord, **remember** always that it is only God’s opinion that really matters. **Be** very Scriptural and intentional in your actions and always **seek** to serve God in the way that He has commanded.

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| **Day 15: 2 Kings 9:17-37** |

*“Now it happened, when Joram saw Jehu, that he said, ‘Is it peace, Jehu?’ So he answered, ‘What peace, as long as the harlotries of your mother Jezebel and her witchcraft are so many?’” (2 Kings 9:22)*

We would do well to spend some time getting to know something about this man named “Jehu.” Earlier in the Bible, we read where Elijah was once instructed to “anoint Jehu the son (grandson) of Nimshi as king over Israel” (1 Kings 19:16). Why Elijah did not follow through on that commandment is never explained to us. But, even though God’s will is often “put off” by even the greatest of His servants, it can never be “put away” entirely! During the reigns of Ahaziah and Jehoram, Jehu rose to a position of great importance among God’s people. It was while Jehu was serving as a leader in the army of Jehoram that Elisha had sent the assistant prophet that we read about yesterday to anoint Jehu as king. Even though Jehu’s term as king seems to have been for some reason delayed in coming, the new king began immediately to take actions to make the kingdom more secure. From what we read in 2 Kings 9:20, we see that Jehu not only took his job seriously, but that he also went about doing it “furiously.” When Jehoram and Ahaziah “went out to meet Jehu” to see if he was coming in peace (vs. 21-22), Jehu announced that there could never be peace “as long as the harlotries of…Jezebel and her witchcraft” remained prevalent among God’s people. Ultimately Jehoram, Ahaziah, and even the evil Jezebel died at hands of Jehu’s armies.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that it is never too late to do begin doing God’s *will* God’s *way*! **Remember** that God is the “God of the second chance.” **Discover** God’s plan for you own life – and when you find it – go about performing it “furiously.”

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| **Day 16: 2 Kings 10:1-17** |

*“Now Ahab had seventy sons in Samaria. And Jehu wrote and sent letters to Samaria, to the rulers of Jezreel, to the elders, and to those who reared Ahab's sons, saying: ‘Now as soon as this letter comes to you, since your master's sons are with you, and you have chariots and horses, a fortified city also, and weapons, choose the best qualified of your master's sons, set him on his father's throne, and fight for your master's house.’” (2 Kings 10:1-3)*

The “Ahab” mentioned in verse 1 is the same evil Ahab that we read about in 1 Kings 16-22. Even though Ahab had been dead for years, his evil influence lived long after his death. The closing verses of 1 Kings tell us that “Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria…He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father…who made Israel sin” (1 Kings 22:51-52). On Day 13, we read about “Jehoram the son of Jehoshaphat” who “began to reign as king of Judah” and how “he walked in the way of the kings of Israel, just as the house of Ahab had done, *for the daughter of Ahab was his wife*; and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.” (2 Kings 8:16-18). With what the Bible has to say about just these two children of Ahab and Jezebel, it is no wonder that it alarmed Jehu that there were at least “seventy sons” of Ahab remaining “in Samaria.” It is probable that this large number of descendants included sons and grandsons who had taken refuge in Samaria after Jehu became king. Jehu “sent letters to Samaria” urging the remaining descendants of Ahab’s line to take action if they intended to “fight for (their) master’s house” (v. 3). I say that Jehu “urged” them because his letter asks them to take action “as soon as this letter comes to you” (v. 2). Jehu wanted them to know that the only way for any of them to have the throne was to come and take it!

**Prayer Emphasis: Recognize** that God’s Kingdom has enemies. **Make** your decision to be a follower of Jesus Christ public. Diplomatically let people know where you stand – then by all means - stand!

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| **Day 17: 2 Kings 10:18-36** |

*“Then Jehu gathered all the people together, and said to them, ‘Ahab served Baal a little, Jehu will serve him much. Now therefore, call to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. Let no one be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is missing shall not live.’ But Jehu acted deceptively, with the intent of destroying the worshipers of Baal.” (2 Kings 10:18-19)*

The actions of Jehu that are described in these closing verses of chapter 10 might be considered as a final “slap in the face” of any would-be-king descendants of King Ahab. Jehu “gathered all the people together” and told them “Ahab served Baal a little” but that he (Jehu) would serve Baal “much.” In other words, he was saying, “You ain’t seen nothing yet!” He demanded that “all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests” be gathered to the temple for a time of sacrificing to their false god. He insisted that “no one be missing” and that any Baal worshipers that did not attend would “not live” (v. 19). As you might imagine, we are told that “all the worshipers of Baal came, so that there was not a man left who did not come…and the temple of Baal was full from one end to the other” (v. 21). Jehu then encouraged the Baal worshipers to clear the temple of any followers of the true God by commanding them to “search and see that no servants of the LORD are here with you” (v. 23). Then Jehu had his men come in and kill the Baal worshipers and destroy their temple (vs. 24-27). Since this temple and altar of Baal had been built by none other than King Ahab himself (1 Kings 16:32), Jehu’s actions all but said to Ahab’s descendants, “All that your father was and stood for is now destroyed and gone!”

**Prayer Emphasis: Admire** Jehu’s zeal but **admit** to his human frailties. **Realize** that there were probably some very selfish motives behind Jehu’s actions. **Avoid** doing things in the name of God that are truly for your own benefit or to accommodate your own personal preferences.

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| **Day 18: 2 Kings 11:1-21** |

*“When Athaliah the mother of Ahaziah saw that her son was dead, she arose and destroyed all the royal heirs. But Jehosheba, the daughter of King Joram, sister of Ahaziah, took Joash the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's sons who were being murdered; and they hid him and his nurse in the bedroom, from Athaliah, so that he was not killed.”**(2 Kings 11:1-2)*

Two women are mentioned in today’s focus verses – Athaliah and Jehosheba – and they could not possibly have been more different one from the other. Athaliah was the only woman who ever reigned in either of the two kingdoms – Israel or Judah. In 2 Chronicles 24:7, she is succinctly described as “that wicked woman.” Today’s Scripture reading provides us with a good example of the kind of wickedness that lived within this woman. Athaliah was the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel and was (like her mother before her) committed to the worship of Baal. Athaliah was so intent on being queen that she was willing to have her own grandchildren killed after their father, Ahaziah, died. Her lust for power and control far outweighed her love for or loyalty to God or family. At the same time, our prescribed verses will also introduce us to another, more godly woman by the name of Jehosheba. Jehosheba was the aunt of young Joram – the son of Ahaziah and an heir to the throne of his father, Ahaziah. Jehosheba’s mission was to ensure that the lineage did not deviate from that of David. That is why she “took Joash, the son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king’s sons who were being murdered” (v. 2). This godly woman managed to keep young Joash hidden for over six years before it was revealed that an heir to King Ahaziah – and David – remained alive.

**Prayer Emphasis: Refuse** to overlook anyone who is filling a role in God’s Kingdom work. **Recognize** the “Jehoshebas” among us and **thank** them for their committed work – especially with our children.

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| **Day 19: 2 Kings 12:1-21** |

*In the seventh year of Jehu, Jehoash became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty years. His mother’s name was Zibiah; she was from Beersheba. Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the years Jehoida the priest instructed him.”* ×

### References for 2 Kings 12:1

* [Cross References](http://www.biblestudytools.com/2-kings/12.html#crossreference-1)
* [Footnotes](http://www.biblestudytools.com/2-kings/12.html#footnote-1)

*(2 Kings 12:1-2)*

Jehoash (sometimes called Joash) proved to be worth every bit of the effort that Jehosheba and Jehoida made to ensure that he lived and eventually ruled in Judah. The fact that the closing verse of 2 Kings 11 reports that “Jehoash was seven years old when he began to reign” helps us to understand that he was just an infant when the events that we discussed yesterday took place. In a sense, I guess that we could refer to his aunt Jehosheba as one of the most successful nursery workers that ever lived! God had a plan for this young man’s life, and He used a godly woman and a priest to see to it that Johoash was ready to do all the things that God had planned for him. Going back to Jehoshaphat, it had been fifteen years since Judah had lived under a king that sought to do the will of God in his life. It is important to note the role that Jehoida, the priest, played in this young man’s life. It was under this godly man’s tutorage that “Jehoash did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (v. 2). Today’s Scripture reading leads us to better appreciate the work of nursery workers and teachers of children. Our church provides nursery care for many children during our worship services as well as teaching time for our children on Sunday mornings and on Wednesday nights. We are so blessed to have many “Jehoshebas” and “Jehoiadas” in our midst.

**Prayer Emphasis: Enroll** your little ones in Sunday School beginning with their nursery years. **Keep** them under the teaching of God’s Word by faithfully bringing them to Sunday School, church services, and our Wednesday night children’s programs. **Send** or **say** a “Thank You”to a children’s worker today!

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| **Day 20: 2 Kings 13:1-25** |

*“Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die. Then Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face, and said, ‘O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!’” (2 Kings 13:14)*

There is an important truth found in this brief accounting of the reign of Jehoash (also called “Joash”). Even though we read where “Jehoash…became king over Israel in Samaria, and reigned sixteen years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,” we still see him showing great respect for the prophet Elisha. After “Elisha had become sick with the illness of which he would die,” the king paid a visit to the prophet, and in doing so, paid a great compliment to him at the same time. Usually, when a king wanted to see someone, he summoned *them* to come to *him*. However, we read in verse 14 that “Joash the king of Israel came down to him, and wept over his face.” This reaction to the death of a prophet may seem strange coming from a king who “did evil in the sight of the LORD,” but what the king was doing here was more about Elisha than it was his own righteousness. When the king reached the prophet’s sickbed, he said, “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!” You might recall that these were the very words that Elisha had spoken to Elijah as he witnessed Elijah’s departure from this world in “a chariot of fire” with “horses of fire” (2 Kings 2:11-12). God used an evil-minded king to bring affirmation to Elisha as he was preparing to leave this world. Through the words of Joash, Elisha was made to understand that he had served his own generation in the same way that Elijah had served his.

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that your witness and testimony will not be without some benefit to this world. **Seek** to live the kind of life and to have the kind of ministry that will be respected even by those who choose not to become followers of the Lord.

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| **Day 21: 2 Kings 14:1-15** |

*“In the second year of Joash…king of Israel, Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, became king…And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, yet not like his father David; he did everything as his father Joash had done.” (2 Kings 14:1 & 3)*

Amaziah was a good king that was the son of a good king. Between this father and son, Judah enjoyed almost seventy years of leadership that sought to please God. However, the Holy Spirit is quick to point out to us that this good king was “not like his father David.” Or, in other words, he did not fully measure up to the man who was said to be “after God’s own heart.” We must also read 2 Chronicles 25 if we are to fully understand the story of Amaziah. There is at least one strong indication in today’s verses that Amaziah was a man with a knowledge of and a respect for the Word of God. We are told that “as soon as the kingdom was established in his hand, that he executed his servants who had murdered his father” (v. 5). However, we are also told that “the children of the murderers he did not execute, according to what is written in the Book of the Law of Moses, in which the LORD commanded, saying, ‘Fathers shall not be put to death for their children, nor shall children be put to death for their fathers’” (v. 6). It was this obvious awareness of what was written in God’s Law that helped Amaziah do “what was right in the sight of the LORD.”

**Prayer Emphasis: Be** faithful to your Bible reading, prayer, and devotional time. **Seek** to make practical applications of the truths that you are learning in your personal life. **Ask** yourself if you are consistently doing that which is “right in the sight of the LORD.”

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| **Day 22: 2 Kings 14:16-29** |

*“****In the fifteenth year of Amaziah the son of Joash, king of Judah, Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel, became king in Samaria,*** and reigned ***forty-one years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.” (2 Kings 14:23-24)***

After the division of the kingdom, Israel’s first and thirteenth kings were named Jeroboam. Verse 24 informs us that the second Jeroboam was not different than the first because “he did not depart from all the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat (the first King Jeroboam). Although it might have been considered an honor for this Jeroboam to be named after the first king of the ten northern tribes called Israel, there certainly was no honor to be found in his repeating the spiritual mistakes that the first Jeroboam made. Verse 25 refers to “the word of the LORD God of Israel, which He had spoken through His servant Jonah…the prophet.” We are pretty certain that this “Jonah” was the same prophet that was such a reluctant missionary to the Ninevites. We know that Amos and Hosea also prophesied during much of the time that this man was king. It was during the reign of this king that Amos declared, “For three transgressions of Israel, and for four, I will not turn away from its punishment, because they sell the righteous for silver, and the poor for a pair of sandals” (Amos 2:6). You can read the remainder of Amos 2 if you want to see just how evil Israel had become under this king. I find it interesting that this man reigned over Israel for forty-one years and yet the only two notable feats that are mentioned in this Book of Kings are the fact that “he restored the territory of Israel from the entrance of Hamath to the Sea of Arabah” and that “he recaptured for Israel, from Damascus and Hamath, what had belonged to Judah” (vs.25 & 28).

**Prayer Emphasis: Seek** to be the kind of Christian that refuses to be bound to the sins of the past. **Strive** to be fully committed to the “thus says the LORD” that you hear from the pulpits of godly pastors of your day.

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| **Day 23: 2 Kings 15:1-16** |

*“In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Azariah the son of Amaziah, king of Judah, became king. He was sixteen years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-two years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jecholiah of Jerusalem. And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father Amaziah had done.” (2 Kings 15:1-3)*

For the record, I must say that Azariah is also called “Uzziah” in the thirteenth verse of this same chapter and then by that name again in several places in 2 Chronicles and Isaiah. His reign of 52 years was the second longest of all the kings of either Israel or Judah. Only Manasseh served longer at 55 years. You can read 2 Chronicles 26 to see a long list of great accomplishments that are assigned to this godly king as well as other historical facts about his life. However, verse 4 of today’s Scripture indicates that Azariah was far from perfect. In fact, by using the word “except” in the beginning of that verse, it is as if the Holy Spirit is placing as asterisk besides this king’s name. In that verse we are told that “the high places were not removed” and “the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.” If you recall, the same thing was said about Jehoash (12:3) and Amaziah (14:4). Such “high places” are mentioned 117 times in the Old Testament. These “high places” were open air altars on mountains and hilltops that served as centers for Canaanite idol worship. Before they entered Canaan, God had commanded that His people “demolish all (the) high places” of those that dwelled there before them (Numbers 33:52).

**Prayer Emphasis: Ask** yourself: “Do I have any ‘high places’ in my own life?” In other words, are there any areas in your life where you have chosen to not be fully obedient to God? **Let go** of any and all things that are hindering you from being a fully committed follower of Jesus Christ.

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| **Day 24: 2 Kings 15:17-38** |

*“****In the thirty-ninth year of Azariah king of Judah, Menahem the son of Gadi became king over Israel,*** andreigned ***ten years in Samaria. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD; he did not depart all his days from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin.” (2 Kings 15:17-18)***

As I have mentioned before, after Solomon’s reign, and the division of the kingdom, there were twenty different people who ruled over Judah and nineteen that ruled over Israel. Today's Scripture provides a great example of how condensed the historical record in Kings is - you can count the names of seven kings in just today’s verses. However, there is a very important phrase that is found three times in today’s Scripture and several other times in the Bible. That phrase is: “the sins of Jeroboam.” Jeroboam was the first king of divided Israel. The prophet Ahijah confronted this man and said, “You have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast me behind your back” (1 Kings 14:9). So, you might say, the sin of Jeroboam was idolatry. However, I beg you to look again at the phrase. It does not mention the sin (singular) of Jeroboam but the sins (plural) of Jeroboam. Jeroboam not only led Israel to worship idols, but at the same time, he led them to “cast (God) behind their backs” and to forget all that God had done for them. The sins of Jeroboam haunted the later kings of Israel, all of whom practiced idolatry. This sad list included King Zimri ([1 Kings 16:19](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%2016.19)), King Omri ([1 Kings 16:26](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/1%20Kings%2016.26)), King Amaziah ([2 Kings 14:24](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Kings%2014.24)), as well as Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah, who are all mentioned in today’s reading.

**Prayer Emphasis: Refuse** to repeat the sins of those before us. **Realize** that to allow anything to take God’s rightful place in your life means that you are forgetting God and putting Him “behind your back.” **Recount** the many things that God has done for you and share some of them with someone today.

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| **Day 25: 2 Kings 16:1-20** |

***“In the seventeenth year of Pekah…Ahaz the son of Jotham, king of Judah, began to reign. Ahaz*** was ***twenty years old when he became king, and he reigned sixteen years in Jerusalem; and he did not do*** what was ***right in the sight of the LORD his God, as his father David*** had done.” (2 Kings 16:1-2)

There is an interesting lesson to be learned from the brief statement regarding Ahaz and his testimony that is made in today’s focus verses. We have read the epithet of several kings that said something like, “and he did evil in the sight of the LORD.” In the case of Ahaz, it does not state that he “did evil in the sight of the LORD.” Rather than to say what this king did do, the Holy Spirit chose to focus on what he did not do by stating that “he did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD his God.” We have often been reminded of that powerful verse and statement in the Book of James that says, “To him who knows to do good and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:17). I have often said that the true nature of sin is not just found in the bad things that we do but often in the good things that we leave undone! Beginning at verse 3, we see him participating in pagan practices and involving his own family in pagan worship. Verses 7-9 tell how he took the “silver and gold” from the “house of the LORD” and “sent it as a present to the king of Assyria” asking him to save him from his enemies. For the most part, the remainder of this entire chapter deals with the many changes that Ahaz brought to the worship places and practices of Israel in order to compromise with the pagan nations around him.

**Prayer Emphasis: Choose** to focus on doing the good and right things and, thereby, you will best avoid doing the wrong things! **Realize** that the absence of sinful activities does not necessarily mean that we are actively doing God’s will in our lives.

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| **Day 26: 2 Kings 17:1-23** |

*“****In the twelfth year of Ahaz king of Judah, Hoshea the son of Elah became king of Israel in Samaria,*** andhe reigned ***nine years. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, but not as the kings of Israel who were before him.*” *(2 Kings 17:1-2)***

We first read about Hoshea back in 2 Kings 15:30 where we were told that “Hoshea the son of Elah led a conspiracy against Pekah…and struck and killed him; so he reigned in his place in the twentieth year of Jotham the son of Uzziah.” Even though we are told that this king “did evil in the sight of the LORD,” the Holy Spirit seems to grant him some grace and kindness by adding, “But not as the kings of Israel who were before him.” So, although this man was bad, he was not as bad as some of the others that had been king before him. One would suppose that this could be considered as one of those “left-handed compliments” that we often read or hear about. Hoshea might have found some comfort that he was a little “better” than some of the other kings before him, but at best, we can only say that he was one of the better “bad” kings! One thing is for sure for all of us: We cannot live our lives or justify our actions by comparing ourselves to others. Paul clearly taught that “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). This concluding statement came after several verses that followed the words “As it is written” (Romans 3:10). God’s Word teaches us that we have but one standard against which we are going to be measured, and that standard is “the glory of God.” We may fare well when we compare ourselves to other men, but none of us fare well when we compare ourselves to the One who lived a holy and sinless life before us so that He could pay the price for our sins by dying on the cross.

**Prayer Emphasis: Refuse** to justify your lifestyle or actions by comparing yourself to others. **Seek** to live with an “As it is written” attitude and allow the Scriptures to be your personal guide to holy living. Remember to look “unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith” (Hebrews 12:2).

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| **Day 27: 2 Kings 17:24-41** |

*“So these nations feared the LORD, yet served their carved images; also their children and their children’s children have continued doing as their fathers did, even to this day.” (2 Kings 17:41)*

Today’s Scripture reveals another story of a generation of people who thought that they could serve the true God *and* the false gods of this world at the same time. Not much good ever comes from the Christian life that seeks to serve on a “God *and*” basis! This practice is often referred to as “syncretism,” which is just a fancy word that defines “the combination of different forms of belief or practice” (Webster’s). From a Biblical perspective, syncretism can best be defined as the blending together of the worship of the One Almighty God and the worship of false, pagan gods. Yesterday’s Scripture reading clearly told us that when God’s people refused to worship Him as He commanded, God allowed “the king of Assyria” to come against “Samaria and besiege it for three years” (17:5). Ultimately, “the LORD removed Israel out of His sight” and “Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria” (17:23). Strangely enough, “the king of Assyria commanded” that a priest of Israel be brought back from Assyrian bondage to “teach…the rituals of God in the land” (v. 26). So, “one of the priests whom they had carried away from Samaria came and…taught them how they should fear the LORD” (v. 28). The sad result was that the people “feared the LORD, yet served their own gods” (v. 33). This last verse, plus our focus verse, tells us that the people had some respect for God but not enough to serve Him only. They became a nation of “God and” worshipers. The saddest thing about their poor decision was that it greatly affected the spiritual lives of “their children and their children’s children” (v. 41).

**Prayer Emphasis: Think** about the generations that will follow you and make spiritual choices today that will affect their tomorrow! **Refuse** to serve God on a “God *and*” basis!

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| **Day 28: 2 Kings 18:1-16** |

*“Now it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign…And he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.” (2 Kings 18:1 & 3)*

Hezekiah was, by far, one of the better kings to serve after the division of the kingdom. He reigned as king over the Southern two tribes called Judah “and did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (v. 3). Although that phrase was used to describe the lives of a few other kings, this time the phrase “according to all that his father David had done” is added to it. To me, this simply means that Hezekiah became “a man after God’s own heart” just as David had been. As we read about Hezekiah, we will learn that he, like David, was far from perfect. Yet he was greatly used by God to help the people of Judah in many ways. As such, there is more written about Hezekiah than any of the other kings that served after Solomon. His story is told in [2 Kings 16:20-20:21](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Kings%2016.20%E2%80%9420.21),[2 Chronicles 28:27-32:33](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/2%20Chron%2028.27%E2%80%9432.33), and [Isaiah 36:1-39:8](http://biblia.com/bible/esv/Isa%2036.1%E2%80%9439.8). He is also mentioned in Proverbs, Hosea, Micah, and several times in Jeremiah. 2 Chronicles 31:20 states that this king “did what was good and right and true before the LORD his God.” Under this good man’s rule, the people removed the idols from the temple and had them destroyed (v. 4); the temple was reopened and the priesthood was reinstated (2 Chronicles 29:5); and the Passover was resumed as a national holiday (2 Chronicles 30:1). What was the key to all this spiritual revival and success? I believe that the answer to that question is best found in verse 7 of our text: “The LORD was with him!”

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that the greatest thing that anyone could ever notice or say about you is that “The LORD was with him.” **Realize** that the power to accomplish great things for God and His glory can only be found in His presence.

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| **Day 29: 2 Kings 18:17-37** |

*“Thus says the king (of Assyria): ‘Do not let Hezekiah deceive you, for he shall not be able to deliver you from his hand; nor let Hezekiah make you trust in the LORD, saying, The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria.’” (2 Kings 18:29-30)*

The Scriptures often remind us that living in God’s presence and power does not mean that our lives will be problem free. Even though Hezekiah “did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (v. 3) in many ways, he still met with some difficult circumstances and had some not-so-glorious moments in his life. Today we read where “the king of Syria sent…a great army against Jerusalem” (v. 17). The Syrian representatives that marched into Jerusalem were met by several representatives of King Hezekiah (v. 18). These men were sent back to their king with a question: “What confidence is this in which you trust?” (v.19). The Syrian commander reemphasized his point by again asking, “In whom do you trust…?” (v.20). Isaiah served as God’s prophet during the times of Hezekiah. When we compare his writing to those about Hezekiah, we can see that Hezekiah had entered into some kind of treaty with the Egyptians that provided for protection against an enemy invasion (Isaiah 19:11-17; 20:1-6; 30:1-7). Later in Isaiah’s prophecy, God spoke through him to say, “My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth…and on My arms they will trust” (Isaiah 51:5). Obviously, the king of Syria was not at all afraid of the Egyptians. He mocked Hezekiah for placing his faith in them. From all of this, Hezekiah and the people of God would learn a very hard lesson that God has been careful to teach us as well by saying, “Cursed is the man who trusts in man and makes flesh his strength, whose heart departs from the LORD” (Jeremiah 17:9).

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** that God is the source of blessings and your own Great Protector. **Trust** in God, and your faith in Him, to protect you “against the fiery darts of the wicked one” (Ephesians 6:16).

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| **Day 30: 2 Kings 19:1-19** |

*“And so it was, when King Hezekiah heard it, that he tore his clothes, covered himself with sackcloth, and went into the house of the LORD.” (2 Kings 19:1)*

The “it” that Hezekiah heard was the message from the king of Assyria that was delivered to the people of Israel during the great siege that we read about yesterday. In that message, Rabshakeh had urged the people to “not let Hezekiah deceive you” and to not believe him when he said, “The LORD will surely deliver us; this city shall not be given into the hand of the king of Assyria” 18:29-30. We are told that when Hezekiah heard what was being said to his people, “he tore his clothes” and “covered himself with sackcloth and went into the house of the LORD.” When heartbreaking news was received, people in Bible times would often grasp the collar of their garment with both hands and tear the garment down towards their heart. It was an outward sign that their heart was breaking within. They would also wear “sackcloth” (a very rough material much like burlap today) to signify that they were very uncomfortable and suffering in their current situation. Hezekiah knew that the situation that he and his people faced was both desperate and dangerous and that it was not to be taken lightly. However, all the outward symbolism of the ripping of his garments and the putting on of sackcloth would have been absolutely meaningless had he not gone “into the house of the LORD” to pray and seek God’s guidance and protection.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that it is not enough to simply be saddened by the situation in which Christians and the church find themselves today. **Allow** these current circumstances to drive us to seek after God and His blessings. **Commit** yourself to being a faithful, praying Christian!

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| **Day 31: 2 Kings 19:20-37** |

*“Then Isaiah the son of Amoz sent to Hezekiah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: Because you have prayed to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria, I have heard.’” (2 Kings 19:20)*

The “Isaiah” that is mentioned in today’s Scripture is none other than the great prophet for whom our Book of Isaiah is named. Much of what we have read today is a word-for-word account of the message that God sent to Hezekiah and the people through that great prophet. However, our devotional will focus on two phrases that are found in our focus verse. The phrases are powerful when considered individually: *“Because you have prayed”* and *“I have heard.”* They are also powerful when they are considered together: *“Because you have prayed, I have heard!”* The wonderful things that God did to protect Jerusalem from being conquered happened at least partly because Hezekiah prayed! We are wrong to ever think that prayer does not matter or that it does not change our circumstances or situations. And even when it does *not* change our circumstances or situations, it often changes *us* to the point that we can endure our trying times and bring glory to God while doing so. Today is not the last time that we will see Hezekiah being assured by God that his prayer had been heard. Tomorrow we will read where God again said to this godly king, “I have heard your prayer” (2 Kings 20:5). I would be remiss to not mention that God specifically said, “Because you have prayed *to Me against Sennacherib king of Assyria*, I have heard.” Hezekiah’s prayer was clearly direct and definitely addressed a specific situation in his life.

**Prayer Emphasis: Read** and **memorize** the words of Jeremiah 33:3: “Call to Me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know.” **Believe** that God is “able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think” (Ephesians 3:20).

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| **Day 32: 2 Kings 20:1-21** |

*“…Before Isaiah had gone out into the middle court…the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Return and tell Hezekiah the leader of My people…I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; surely I will heal you.’” (2 Kings 20:4-5)*

There is so much to be learned from the Bible by simply comparing Scripture to Scripture. If we see that Hezekiah “was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem” (18:2) and then note that God added “fifteen years” (20:6) to his life after he prayed the prayer mentioned in today’s focus verse, we can come to a clear understanding that Hezekiah was only thirty-nine years old when he became “sick and near death” (20:1). During that time of sickness, the *king* had reached out to the *King of kings* and “prayed to the LORD” (v. 2). In the next verse, we are told that while he prayed, he “wept bitterly” (v. 3). While we are not told how long the king was sick, we are told just how sick he was! He was “near death.” His death was apparently so imminent that God had said to him, “Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live” (v. 1). Isaiah 38 records “the writing of Hezekiah king of Judah, when he had been sick and recovered from his illness.” In that “writing” he said that he almost died “in the prime of (his) life” and that he would be “deprived of the remainder of (his) years” (Isaiah 38:9-10). However, the king was eventually healed after his attendants, at Isaiah’s command, took “a lump of figs…and laid it on the boil until he recovered” (2 Kings 20:7). At least two things should be noted from this story. The first is that even the best Christians get sick and eventually die. The second is that there is wisdom in seeking medical help in our time of sickness!

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that the same God that rules over the *supernatural* world is the same God that rules over the *medical* world! So, it is wise for a believer to say his prayers *and* take his pills!

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| **Day 33: 2 Kings 21:1-12** |

*“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king, and he reigned fifty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hephzibah. And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel.” (2 Kings 21:1-2)*

How sad and strange it is to remember that Hezekiah “did what was right in the sight of the LORD” (18:3) and now see that his son “did evil in the sight of the LORD” (21:2). If nothing else, I hope that the many godly parents who sigh, or have sighed, over a lifestyle chosen by their children will see that it can happen even in the best – and godliest – of families! How sad it is to note that Manasseh’s rule was the longest of record for all the kings of Judah, yet his story in the Bible is one of the shortest! (Did your mother ever say, “If you can’t say something good, then don’t say anything at all”? I am always reminded of that statement every time I read about this very evil king!) We are told that this young man immediately set out to undo much of the good that his father had done. “He rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshiped all the host of heaven and served them” (21:3). To add to that, he also “built altars” to false gods and placed them “in the house of the LORD” (v. 4). You can read the rest of the verses and clearly see that this young man was very intentional in his hatred of true religion and his promotion of false religion. To all of this evil God said, “Behold, I am bringing such calamity upon Jerusalem and Judah, that whoever hears of it, both his ears will tingle” (v. 12).

**Prayer Emphasis: Pray** daily for your children and all of the children in our church. **Realize** that it may be best to pray the *longest* and *hardest* while they are at their *youngest*! **Partner** with our children’s workers and volunteer to help in that ministry however, whenever, and wherever you can.

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| **Day 34: 2 Kings 21:13-26** |

*“Moreover Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another…” (2 Kings 21:16)*

To give you an idea of the kind of king that Manasseh was, the Bible allots eighteen verses to describe his fifty-five year reign, and nine (half) of them describe the judgment and punishment that God pronounced upon him! To give you a good idea of just how evil this man was, I remind you that yesterday’s reading told us that he “seduced” the people “to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before them” (v.9) and that he “acted more wickedly than all the Amorites who were before him” (v. 10). Notice the words “*more* evil” and “than *all* the Amorites” in those two verses! Now, in today’s reading, we also learn of his brutality – even towards the “innocent” (v. 16). During Manasseh’s reign, we see true religion *prohibited* and false religion *promoted*. The false religion is first *tolerated* and then eventually *promoted* by his evil government. We are not far from seeing this very thing happen in our nation today. While many of the people demand that Americans keep religion out of the government and any government funded organizations, they sit quietly by while government does all that it can to distract and prohibit our nation from honoring and serving God! And, like it or not, our laws have allowed for the shedding of “very much innocent blood” on a daily basis. You may not like what you are reading – and you may not consider it to be politically correct – but just because something is not politically correct does not mean that it is not biblically, ethically, and morally correct.

**Prayer Emphasis: Realize** that it only took one *Manasseh* to make a *mess of* all that his godly father had accomplished before him. **Pray** for our political leadership and **ask** God to touch their hearts and lead them to *protect* true religious freedoms and to *promote* true righteousness.

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| **Day 35: 2 Kings 22:1-20** |

*“Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem…and he did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and walked in all the ways of his father David; he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.” (2 Kings 22:1-2)*

“Josiah” means “Jehovah leads” and we can clearly see God leading in the life of this young king. By the grace of God, King Josiah broke the cycle of evil kings that was led by his father and his grandfather before him. There are three years in Josiah’s reign that stand out to us in the Scripture. We learn about the first of those three years in 2 Chronicles 34:3 where we are told that “in the eighth year of his reign, while he was still young, he began to seek the God of his father David.” This means that Josiah was sixteen years old when he began to seek God. The second important year is also marked in that same verse, for we are also told there that “in the twelfth year he began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of the high places, the wooden images, the carved images, and the molded images.” So, you might say that at the age of sixteen he began to seek God, and that by the age of twenty, he had already become a great warrior and servant of God and that he was giving the devil a fit! The third very important year that I want to mention today is “the eighteenth year of King Josiah” (v. 3). That was the year that one of his servants was given a copy of the Book of the Law by “Hilkiah the high priest” (v. 8). That servant read the Book of the Law to the king (v. 10). We are not told from whence the servant read, but we know that whatever was read to the king caused him to warn his people about “the wrath of the LORD” (v. 13).

**Prayer Emphasis:** Always **remember** that the *Word* of God will do the *work* of God and that God is always found by those who truly seek Him! **Read** God’s Word daily and **respond** to it accordingly.

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| **Day 36: 2 Kings 23:1-18** |

*“Now the king sent them to gather all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. The king went up to the house of the LORD with all the men of Judah, and with all the inhabitants of Jerusalem…and he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant which had been found in the house of the LORD.” (2 Kings 23:1-2)*

How well I remember that the first thing I wanted to do after I was saved was tell everyone that I knew about Him! After I had spoken to most everyone that I knew, I began to tell the story to most everyone that I met! Josiah obviously felt the same way! Notice that our focus verses say that Josiah met with “*all* the men of Judah” and “*all* the inhabitants of Jerusalem” as well as “*all* the people” (v. 2). Among those whom he gathered to read the Bible to were “the priests and the prophets and all the people, both small and great” (v. 2). Once King Josiah had gathered these people before him he “stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD and to keep His commandments and His testimonies and His statutes, with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of (that) covenant.” And then, after the king took his stand for God, “all the people took a stand for the covenant” (v. 3). Immediately after taking a stand *for* God, Josiah and the people took a stand *against* idolatry. He first cleaned out the temple by taking all the idolatrous items out of it and “burned them outside Jerusalem” (v. 4). You can take a second look at today’s verses and note some of the other actions that a right relationship with God and His Word led Josiah and the people to take.

**Prayer Emphasis: Remember** that what *we* do with the Bible determines what *God* can do with us! **Use** your Bible and you will soon find that God is using you! **Fill** your heart and mind with the Word of God and see if it doesn’t make a difference in every area of your life!

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| **Day 37: 2 Kings 23:19-37** |

*“Then the king commanded all the people, saying, ‘Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.’ Such a Passover surely had never been held since the days of the judges who judged Israel, nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah.” (2 Kings 23:21-22)*

I see something from these verses that I find to be most interesting. It might first appear that “a Passover…had never been held since the days of the judges…nor in all the days of the kings of Israel and Judah.” But a careful look at the Scripture teaches us that “*such* a Passover had never been held since the days of the judges…nor in all the days of the kings” (v.22). What does the Bible mean when it say “*such* a Passover”? I think that the answer is found in the words that God had laid on the king’s heart to say to the people when he commanded them to “Keep the Passover to the LORD…*as it is written in the Book* *of the* *Covenant*” (v. 21). Since the Passover was Israel’s oldest feast, and since it commemorated God’s great redemption of Israel from their bondage in Egypt, it is hardly likely that the people had done away with this special holiday altogether. And since 2 Chronicles 35:18 states that “there had been no Passover kept in Israel like that since the days of Samuel the prophet,” we know that what is happening now is that Josiah is demanding the people to observe the Passover Feast in full accordance to what was written in the Law of God. They were to now do it “as it is written.” If you want to know more about this special day in the lives of God’s king and His people, you can read 2 Chronicles 35:1-19 to get a more detailed description of the event.

**Prayer Emphasis: Focus** on doing God’s *work* in God’s *way*! **Make** “as it is written” a personal mantra in your own life. **Seek** to be truly scriptural in all that you say and do.

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| **Day 38: 2 Kings 24:1-20** |

*“In his days Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him.” (2 Kings 24:1)*

To understand the story of Jehoiakim, we will have to take a quick look back at some of the closing verses of chapter 23. There we are told that Jehoiakim was the second son of Josiah by Zebidah and he “was twenty-five years old when he became king” (2 Kings 23:36). His brother, Jehoahaz was king before him, but he only “reigned three months in Jerusalem” (23:31). “Pharaoh Necho put him (Jehoahaz) in prison” and eventually took him to “Egypt, and he died there” (23:33-34). The story goes on to say that “Pharaoh Necho made Eliakim the son of Josiah king…and changed his name to Jehoiakim” (23:34). So, as we enter 2 Kings 24, we now have a king who was “appointed” by an Egyptian Pharaoh who eventually became the “vassal” of “Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon…for three years” (24:1). During the eleven years of his reign, Jehoiakim came into contact with the prophets Daniel, Ezekiel, and Jeremiah. But there was another prophet associated with Jehoiakim’s story, and he is mentioned in Jeremiah 26 where we are told that “Jehoiakim the king…sought to put him to death” (Jeremiah 26:21). The Book of Jeremiah includes many mentions of this evil king, including a story where he was once confronted with a scroll of Jeremiah’s prophecy and he “cast it into the fire that was on the hearth, until all the scroll was consumed in the fire” (Jeremiah 36:23). God’s response to Jehoiakim’s evil deed was to say, “He shall have no one to sit on the throne of David and his dead body shall be cast out to the heat of the day and the frost of the night” (Jeremiah 36:30).

**Prayer Emphasis: Believe** that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be – the inspired, infallible Word of God! **Do** your part to make sure that the whole Word gets to the whole world!

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| **Day 39: 2 Kings 25:1-12** |

*“****Now it came to pass in the ninth year of his (Zedekiah’s) reign…***that ***Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it; and they built a siege wall against it all around. So the city was besieged until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.” (2 Kings 25:1-2)***

Our text reports that when “Nebuchadnezzar…and all his army came against Jerusalem and encamped against it…they built a siege wall against it all around” (25:1). A “siege wall” completely surrounded a city to keep anyone from entering or leaving. All trade to the city was completely cut off with the purpose being to eventually starve the city into surrender. Since no goods were brought into the city, and no waste could be transported out, the people within the city would soon begin to suffer from thirst, malnutrition, and diseases that were associated with their unsanitary conditions. It was during this siege that Jeremiah prophesied saying, “He who remains in this city (Jerusalem) shall die by the *sword*, by *famine*, and by *pestilence*” (Jer. 38:2). Verse 3 of our text reveals that after just over four months from the time that the siege began, “the famine had become so severe in the city that there was no food for the people.” When the city wall was eventually “broken through…all the men of war fled” (v. 4) and “the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king” (Zedekiah) and “overtook him” (v. 5). After the Chaldeans “pronounced judgment on him” (v. 6), “they killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes” and then “put out the eyes of Zedekiah, bound him…and took him to Babylon” (v. 7). This conquest and capture of Jerusalem by Babylon marks the time when God’s people were held in bondage for seventy years. Some of the people that lived through that time of captivity were Daniel, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel.

**Prayer Emphasis: Look** again at our focus verse and you will see that this siege lasted at least two years – “Now it came to pass in the *ninth* year…So the city was besieged until the *eleventh* year.” **Pray** for those who are in times of prolonged trial or sickness. **Express** love and support to them today.

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| **Day 40: 2 Kings 25:13-30** |

*“****So Jehoiachin 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 him by the king, a portion for each day, all the days of his life.*” *(2 Kings 25:29-30)***

Yesterday we saw the sad end of the last king of Judah, King Zedekiah. We were told how the Chaldeans killed his sons “before his eyes” and then “put out” his eyes (25:7). The last thing that Zedekiah saw was the murder of his children! Today we read about the fate of Jehoiachin. This is the king that reigned for only “three months” (24:8) before he was removed by the Babylonians and Zedekiah was installed in his place. I am certain that word came to him of the death of Zedekiah and he might have had his moments when he considered himself blessed and fortunate to simply be alive – even though it was in captivity! You might say, like prisons today, the Chaldeans sought to rehabilitate King Jehoiachin. Soon he was allowed to take off “his prison garments.” After that, he was given “a regular ration…by the king” of Babylon “all the days of his life.” How sad it is to see the last king of Judah that is mentioned in the Book of 1 Kings living under the total control of God’s enemy. It is even sadder to see Christians living under the power and influence of this world and looking to the world as their source for their daily needs.

**Prayer Emphasis: Shed** your own “prison garments!” **Be faithful** to your daily Bible reading and **pray** for our church and its ministries on a daily basis. **Encourage** others to be faithful to the Lord and His church every time that you have an opportunity to do so. **Contact us** at 850-562-8069 or [seminolebc@centurylink.net](mailto:seminolebc@centurylink.net) if we can pray for you or minister to you and your family in any way.