

NOON BIBLE STUDY: 2 KINGS 24

2 KINGS 23:31-24:2 - JEHOAHAZ & JEHOIAKIM'S REIGN

JEHOAHAZ BECOMES KING AT 23, REIGNED FOR 3 MONTHS. HE DID EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD. HE GETS IMPRISONED BY THE KING OF EGYPT. HE WILL EVENTUALLY DIE IN EGYPT.

PHARAOH NECO THEN APPOINTS ELIAKIM, ANOTHER SON OF JOSIAH AS KING AND CHANGES HIS NAME TO "JEHOIAKIM". JEHOIAKIM IS A PUPPET RULER FOR PHARAOH, ENSURING THAT THE EGYPTIANS GET THE TAXES THEY HAVE REQUIRED OF JUDAH. HE WILL BEGIN HIS REIGN AT 25 YEARS OLD AND RULE FOR 11 YEARS IN JERUSALEM (THE FIRST 8 UNDER PHARAOH'S CONTROL, THE LAST 3 UNDER BABYLON'S.)

LET'S THINK ABOUT WHAT WE'RE READING HERE FOR A MOMENT. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT THE KING OF JUDAH, RULING ON DAVID'S THRONE IN JERUSALEM AS A PUPPET FOR EGYPT. TAKING MONEY FROM THE PEOPLE OF JUDAH AND GIVING IT TO PHARAOH. O HOW THE MIGHTY HAVE FALLEN!

MOSES CHARGED THE PEOPLE BEFORE THEY ENTERED THE PROMISED LAND THE FOLLOWING:

DEUTERONOMY 28:12-14 - "THE LORD WILL OPEN FOR YOU HIS GOOD STOREHOUSE, THE HEAVENS, TO GIVE RAIN TO YOUR LAND IN ITS SEASON AND TO BLESS ALL THE WORK OF YOUR HAND; AND YOU SHALL LEND TO MANY NATIONS, BUT YOU SHALL NOT BORROW. 13 "THE LORD WILL MAKE YOU THE HEAD AND NOT THE TAIL, AND YOU ONLY WILL BE ABOVE, AND YOU WILL NOT BE UNDERNEATH, IF YOU LISTEN TO THE COMMANDMENTS OF THE LORD YOUR GOD, WHICH I CHARGE YOU TODAY, TO OBSERVE THEM CAREFULLY, 14 AND DO NOT TURN ASIDE FROM ANY OF THE WORDS WHICH I COMMAND YOU TODAY, TO THE RIGHT OR TO THE LEFT, TO GO AFTER OTHER GODS TO SERVE THEM.

IF THE NATION WOULD HAVE JUST FOLLOWED THE COMMANDS OF THE LORD THEY WOULD BE BLESSED ABOVE ALL NATIONS - A LIGHT TO THE WORLD, A CITY SET UPON A HILL, A NATION OF PRIESTS. BUT THEY TURNED FROM THE LORD, TIME AND TIME AGAIN. AND NOW HERE THEY ARE, THE NATION THAT HAD BEEN FREED FROM SLAVERY IN EGYPT, WHO WALKED OUT OF EGYPT CARRYING ALL OF THE GOLD AND SILVER AND TREASURES (EXODUS 12:35-36), PAYING HIGH TAXES AND TRIBUTE TO PHARAOH, WITH THEIR OWN "KING" A PAWN IN EGYPT'S HAND. AND YET, AN EVEN WORSE STATE IS STILL TO COME...

AT THIS POINT IN HISTORY, ASSYRIA IS NO MORE. BABYLON HAS RISEN AND IS BEING RULED BY ITS GREATEST KING, NEBUCHADNEZZAR. THERE SEEMS TO BE A REGIONAL BATTLE BETWEEN EGYPT IN THE SOUTH WEST AND BABYLON IN THE NORTH/EAST. AND SMALL NATION BETWEEN THE TWO EMPIRES IS HELPLESS AND MUST DETERMINE WHO THEY WILL ALIGN WITH IF THEY WANT TO SURVIVE. AT FIRST JUDAH IS UNDER EGYPTIAN RULE, BUT NOW (V. 1), NEBUCHADNEZZAR/BABYLON HAS TAKEN OVER JUDAH. THIS ONLY LASTS FOR 3 YEARS WHEN THE FORMER VASSAL OF EGYPT (JEHOIAKIM) REBELS (V. 1). HIS REBELLION WAS NOT A SMART MOVE, AND BABYLON RESPONDS BY SENDING A MASSIVE FORCE TO ATTACK JERUSALEM.

(IT WAS AT THIS TIME THAT DANIEL, HIS 3 FRIENDS AND OTHER LEADING MEN OF JUDAH ARE TAKEN CAPTIVE TO BABYLON TO SERVE IN NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S COURT.)

2 KINGS 24:3-4 - BABYLON'S ATTACK: THIS WAS THE LORD'S DOING

THE WRITER OF 2 KINGS CLEARLY TELLS US WHY THESE THINGS ARE COMING UPON JUDAH. IT'S TIME FOR THE JUDGMENT OF GOD UPON THE NATION. (MORE ON THIS LATER...)

2 KINGS 24:5-9 - JEHOIAKIM DIES. JEHOIACHIN RULES

JEHOIACHIN BECOMES KING AT 18 YEARS OLD AND REIGNS FOR 3 MONTHS. HE CONTINUES TO DO EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD.

2 KINGS 24:10-17 - NEBUCHADNEZZAR'S SIEGE OF JERUSALEM

NEBUCHADNEZZAR BESIEGED JERUSALEM AND IT DIDN'T TAKE LONG FOR JEHOIACHIN TO SURRENDER. NEBUCHADNEZZAR THEN PROCEEDS TO EXILE TO BABYLON "ALL THE CAPTAINS, MIGHTY MEN OF VALOR, CRAFTSMEN AND SMITHS" AS WELL AS 10,000 CAPTIVES. ALONG WITH THE HUMAN CAPTIVES, THE BABYLONIANS TAKE ALL OF THE TREASURES OF THE KING AND THE TEMPLE. THIS IS THE SECOND OF 3 STAGES OF THE BABYLONIAN ATTACK.

(IT IS DURING THIS TIME THAT THE PROPHET EZEKIEL IS TAKEN AS ONE OF THE CAPTIVES TO BABYLON. AS ONE READS THE BOOK OF EZEKIEL, YOU CAN LEARN OF GOD'S MESSAGE TO THE CAPTIVES IN BABYLON AS WELL AS HIS PROPHETIC VISION OF THE FUTURE.)

NEBUCHADNEZZAR LEAVES JEHOIACHIN'S UNCLE (MATTANIAH) TO BE "KING" OVER THE REMAINING PEOPLE OF THE LAND AND CHANGES HIS NAME OF ZEDEKIAH. ZEDEKIAH WILL REMAIN KING FOR 11 YEARS AS A WAY FOR BABYLON TO COLLECT MONEY AND RESOURCES FROM THE REMAINING PEOPLE IN THE LAND. EVENTUALLY ZEDEKIAH TOO WILL REBEL, BECAUSE IT SEEMS, THAT'S WHAT ALL THE COOL KIDS ARE DOING...YIKES!

2 KINGS 24:18-20 - ZEDEKIAH'S REIGN, REBELLION

ZEDEKIAH IS 21 YEARS OLD WHEN HE BECOMES KING AND HE REIGNS FOR 11 YEARS. HE DOES EVIL IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD AND WILL REBEL AGAINST NEBUCHADNEZZAR (IN THE 9TH YEAR OF HIS REIGN) ZEDEKIAH IS JOSIAH'S BROTHER AND A FAR CRY FROM THE MAN HIS BROTHER WAS.

AS WE END CHAPTER 24 THE NARRATOR REMINDS US (AGAIN) OF THE "WHY" FOR ALL OF THESE EVENTS.

2 KINGS 24:20A (NLT) - THESE THINGS HAPPENED BECAUSE OF THE LORD'S ANGER AGAINST THE PEOPLE OF JERUSALEM AND JUDAH, UNTIL HE FINALLY BANISHED THEM FROM HIS PRESENCE AND SENT THEM INTO EXILE...

ACTUALLY, VERSE 20 SERVES AS A BRIDGE BETWEEN CHAPTERS 24 AND 25, THE LAST CHAPTER OF 2 KINGS. THE READER SHOULD UNDERSTAND, AND MAKE NO MISTAKE ABOUT IT, THAT EVERYTHING THAT HAPPENED (SO FAR) IN CHAPTER 24 WAS BECAUSE JUDAH TURNED FROM THE LORD AND EVERYTHING (WE ARE ABOUT TO READ) IN CHAPTER 25 IS HIS WILL/DOING AS WELL. IT'S AS IF THE NARRATOR (AND ULTIMATELY THE LORD) WANTS THE READER TO KNOW FOR SURE THE "WHY" TO ALL OF THIS JUDGMENT.

AND IF FOR SOME REASON SOMEONE IS JUST PICKING UP THE STORY IN CHAPTER 24-25 AND WONDERS WHY THE SO-CALLED "CHOSEN PEOPLE" ARE BEING DEFEATED AND EXILED - WE HAVE A REPETITION OF THE REASON TWICE IN ONE CHAPTER. (24:3-4 & 20). THE ANCIENT SCRIBES DIDN'T HAVE BOLD OR HIGHLIGHTERS, SO THE WAY THEY WOULD EMPHASIS AN IMPORTANT POINT IS THROUGH REPETITION. AND SO WE MUST RECOGNIZE THAT THIS INFORMATION, THAT THIS IS ALL GOD'S ANGER/WRATH UPON HIS OWN PEOPLE BECAUSE OF THEIR FLAT OUT AND CONTINUAL REJECTION OF HIM AND HIS WAYS IS THE REASON WHY THEY FIND THEMSELVES IN THIS SITUATION.

I HOPE THAT WE ARRIVE AT THE START OF CHAPTER 24 WITH A TRUE AWARENESS OF WHAT IS HAPPENING HERE. I HOPE WE AREN'T READING OVER THESE PASSAGES AS A BORING LISTING OF NAMES, DATES AND PLACES. I HOPE FOR THOSE WHO HAVE BEEN ON THIS JOURNEY SINCE EVEN AS EARLY AS 1 KINGS RECOGNIZE THE DEVASTATING MOMENT WE ARE READING. IN FACT, THERE IS MUCH MORE TO THIS PARTICULAR STORY THAN JUST WHAT WE READ IN 2 KINGS 24. SO MUCH OF JEREMIAH'S BOOK SPEAKS OF THIS MOMENT, AS DOES CHRONICLES. RIVALED ONLY PERHAPS BY CHAPTER 25, THIS IS A MOMENT OF GREAT SADNESS IN BIBLICAL HISTORY.

YAHWEH IS BRINGING JUDGMENT ON HIS OWN PEOPLE AND UPON THE PROMISED LAND.

READ THAT AGAIN. *YAHWEH IS BRINGING JUDGMENT ON HIS OWN PEOPLE AND UPON THE PROMISED LAND.*

AS A PASTOR, IT IS SO TEMPTING TO BRING UP SOME PROMISE ABOUT FUTURE RESTORATION OR REMIND US IN THE SHADOW OF THESE LOUSY KINGS THAT THERE REMAINS A PROMISE OF THE GREAT AND COMING KING, BUT I AM RESISTING THAT TEMPTATION (FOR THIS WEEK) AND INSTEAD ENCOURAGING US TO DWELL ON THIS SORROW AND SADNESS AND JUDGMENT RATHER THAN QUICKLY JUMPING TO SOMETHING THAT WILL TAKE THE EDGE OFF A BIT.

THE GOD WHO CALLED FOR A FLOOD OF THE EARTH IS CALLING FOR THE BABYLONIAN'S TO FLOOD JUDAH AND JERUSALEM. THE GOD WHO TORE DOWN THE TOWER OF BABEL IS TEARING DOWN THE FOOLISH KINGS OF JUDAH. THE GOD WHO BROUGHT JUDGMENT TO EGYPT IS NOW USING BABYLON TO BRING JUDGMENT ON THE CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM. THOSE ARE THE FACTS. AND SO ARE THE FOLLOWING 3 TRUTHS ABOUT THIS JUDGMENT:

1 - THIS JUDGMENT IS NOT A SURPRISE. THIS WAS THE PROMISED CONSEQUENCE OF REJECTION OF GOD AND HIS WAYS, DATING BACK FROM BEFORE THE NATION EVEN STEPPED OVER THE JORDAN RIVER.

2 - THIS JUDGMENT IS NOT HASTY. GOD HAD BEEN CALLING TO HIS PEOPLE FOR GENERATIONS THROUGH HIS WORD AND THROUGH HIS PROPHETS - OFFERING FORGIVENESS, PLEDGING HIS LOVE, CALLING THEM BACK.

3 - THIS JUDGMENT IS NOT DUE TO A FLAW IN GOD. THE REPETITION OF THIS ALL BEING GOD'S DOING IS SO THAT NO ONE MISTAKES THAT ALL OF THIS CALAMITY COMES TO JUDAH BECAUSE THEIR GOD COULDN'T SAVE. THAT MIGHT HAVE BEEN TRUE FOR THE OTHER NATIONS BUT NOT OF YAHWEH.

AND SO IT IS GOOD FOR US TO CONSIDER THESE THINGS AND LOOK AT OUR OWN MOMENT AND RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD. AS CHRISTIANS, WE ARE NOT UNDER THE OLD COVENANT, WHOSE CONSEQUENCES ARE BEING ENACTED UPON JUDAH HERE, WE ARE UNDER THE NEW COVENANT. BUT WE HAVE NEED TO FEAR AND BE VIGILANT IN OUR DAY TOO. THE COMING AND WORK AND GRACE OF JESUS DOES NOT FUEL A CASUAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS FAITHFULNESS TO OUR COVENANT - IT SHOULD INSPIRE EVEN GREATER FIDELITY ON OUR PART.

WE WILL FINISH WITH THE WARNING HEBREWS GIVES TO THE NEW COVENANT PEOPLE OF GOD. IT IS TREMENDOUSLY TIMELY AS WE FINISH 2 KINGS 24.

HEBREWS 10:23-29 -LET US HOLD FAST THE CONFESSION OF OUR HOPE WITHOUT WAVERING, FOR HE WHO PROMISED IS FAITHFUL; 24 AND LET US CONSIDER HOW TO STIMULATE ONE ANOTHER TO LOVE AND GOOD DEEDS, 25 NOT FORSAKING OUR OWN ASSEMBLING TOGETHER, AS IS THE HABIT OF SOME, BUT ENCOURAGING ONE ANOTHER; AND ALL THE MORE AS YOU SEE THE DAY DRAWING NEAR. 26 FOR IF WE GO ON SINNING WILLFULLY AFTER RECEIVING THE KNOWLEDGE OF THE TRUTH, THERE NO LONGER REMAINS A SACRIFICE FOR SINS, 27 BUT A TERRIFYING EXPECTATION OF JUDGMENT AND THE FURY OF A FIRE WHICH WILL CONSUME THE ADVERSARIES. 28 ANYONE WHO HAS SET ASIDE THE LAW OF MOSES DIES WITHOUT MERCY ON THE TESTIMONY OF TWO OR THREE WITNESSES. 29 HOW MUCH SEVERER PUNISHMENT DO YOU THINK HE WILL DESERVE WHO HAS TRAMPLED UNDER FOOT THE SON OF GOD, AND HAS REGARDED AS UNCLEAN THE BLOOD OF THE COVENANT BY WHICH HE WAS SANCTIFIED, AND HAS INSULTED THE SPIRIT OF GRACE?

HEBREWS 10:36-39 - FOR YOU HAVE NEED OF ENDURANCE, SO THAT WHEN YOU HAVE DONE THE WILL OF GOD, YOU MAY RECEIVE WHAT WAS PROMISED. 37 FOR YET IN A VERY LITTLE WHILE, HE WHO IS COMING WILL COME, AND WILL NOT DELAY. 38 BUT MY RIGHTEOUS ONE SHALL LIVE BY FAITH; AND IF HE SHRINKS BACK, MY SOUL HAS NO PLEASURE IN HIM. 39 BUT WE ARE NOT OF THOSE WHO SHRINK BACK TO DESTRUCTION, BUT OF THOSE WHO HAVE FAITH TO THE PRESERVING OF THE SOUL.

LET IT BE SO OF US.