

2nd Kings Chapters 24-25 – John Karmelich

1. Welcome to my final lesson on 1st and 2nd Kings. In this lesson we are going to read about the end of self-rule by the Israelites for what turns to be the next 2,500 years. No the lesson doesn't cover that much history. It just covers about a thirty-year period of time when a final group of kings reigns over what was called "The Kingdom of Judah" and the destruction of that land.
 - a) One of my favorite things to point out about world history, is that in the history, there has never been a country that was conquered, scattered and then became a country again. The exception is Israel. They did it here after being in captivity for exactly 70 years and they became an independent country again in 1948. To explain this concept another way, if you want proof of God's existence, study the history of Israel.
 - b) That idea leads us back to this lesson. This lesson takes place around 600 BC. As a time reference, the first king of Israel (David) was around 1,000 BC. David's descendants did rule from Jerusalem for about 400 years. Here in this chapter, we read about the end of that dynasty. In fact this chapter will state in detail why this kingdom had to come to an end here and now. What is more important is it shows what I believe is a pattern for our own world about how and why it will come to an end one day.
2. That leads to my lesson title, "Understanding the permanency and necessity of God's judgment over our world." As I stated in the last lesson, since we accept that our world had a beginning, then it has to have an ending one-day as well. Much of the book of Revelation explains about the ending of our world, as we know it. I'm convinced these last two chapters here in 2nd Kings has patterns about why this inevitable judgment on Israel was necessary and what we can be done in the future to escape that judgment. Bottom line: Judgment came upon that nation. Judgment is going to come upon you and me one day and we need to know what to do about that judgment.
 - a) Think about life this way: We know that one day life as we know it on earth will come to an end as God is going to judge this world. That alone should give us proper motivation to use our time to make a difference for God in this world. If you have given your life to serving Jesus, I can't imagine using one's time for anything other than using it in order to make a difference for Him in this world and effectively help people before that judgment does come.
 - b) While the last lesson focused on a good king who tried to save as many as he could before that judgment came on that kingdom, this lesson focuses on a "revolving door" of a series of bad kings who ignored God's prophets and lead the Israelites away from God's desire for their lives and yes, led them into captivity and lead to the destruction of the land of Israel away from Jewish rule.
3. That leads me to give a quick summary of these two chapters. The first thing to note is that there are a lot of names to keep straight. We'll read of three Israelite kings who ruled there at this time. We're also going to read of the Babylonians and the Egyptians as they fight each other for control over this region back then. Babylon is located in what is today, Iraq. The now dying power in that region, the Assyrians are located a few hundred miles to the north. My point is that wars for control of the Middle East is nothing new. Israel was and is a small nation that's located between Babylon and Egypt. Around that time, a famous battle took place between the Babylonians and Egypt. In that battle, Egypt lost badly and never again was a dominant player in that region.
 - a) I'm stating all of this as a warning as not only are there a lot of Israelite kings' names to keep straight, but these other empires are also prominent in this text. It is confusing to keep all the names straight in these chapters and I'll do my best to help you understand who is who and why they are mentioned at every point in the story.
 - b) Here is the key thing to keep in mind: The Israelite nation is going to end because they ignored God. The rest as they say is the details. Speaking of which, time to get started.
 - c) Oh and since this is the last lesson, my biography of sources are at the end of the lesson.

4. Chapter 24, Verse 1: During Jehoiakim's reign, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded the land, and Jehoiakim became his vassal for three years. But then he changed his mind and rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar. ² The LORD sent Babylonian, Aramean, Moabite and Ammonite raiders against him. He sent them to destroy Judah, in accordance with the word of the LORD proclaimed by his servants the prophets.
- a) I warned you that these chapters is full of strange names of people and nation groups and we get a bunch of them mentioned here in the first two verses.
 - b) Let me try to make this easy for us:
 - i) The current king of the moment is the son of the good king named Jehoiakim. The son is called a bad king in the last chapter and we'll find out why, soon enough.
 - ii) If the name Nebuchadnezzar sounds familiar, it is because he is prominent as the leader over the Babylonian empire in the book of Daniel. I'm even convinced that he becomes saved in the book of Daniel. This chapter focuses on Nebuchadnezzar as he conquers the Israelite kingdom. He ruled over Israel at first, for three years.
 - iii) Speaking of unnamed famous bible prophets like Daniel, also at this time Jeremiah did live and he warned the current king (Jehoiakim) that God's judgment is "here and now" and he and the Israelites should surrender to the Babylonians. A reason that this Israelite king was called wicked in the last chapter is basically because he refused to listen to God's prophets telling him to surrender to the Babylonians.
 - iv) That's why we read in verse two of the Babylonians along with some other nations that were in effect subservient to that Empire conquering Israel at this time.
 - v) Verse 2 ends with a commentary that God had sent these nations to destroy the Israelite kingdom as announced by God's prophets. We do know Jeremiah lived at this time and he was one of the prophets as stated in the end of Verse 2.
 - c) Ok John, we get the idea the Israelites are in big trouble. We get it that they eventually did become a nation again after being in captivity and again in modern history. We also get it that the world we live in will end one day. However, we all have work to do, or say kids to raise or have other issues to deal with. Why should we study all this ancient history if we have our own issues to deal with? Great question.
 - i) First I can say that it's in the bible for a reason and God wants to teach us things about our own lives based on studying patterns of biblical characters.
 - ii) Next, it is a reminder to us that there is a price to be paid to turn from what God desires of us in our lives. It is also a vivid reminder of how precious our time is in this world and how we can make the best use of that time. Of course we all have issues we have to deal with in life. However, as we deal with those issues, having the big picture in mind of the ultimate end of our world gives us perspective about how we use our time and ultimately what's the purpose of living: To use our time and our lives to make a difference for God before our time is up and our world's time is up. With that scary thought stated, back the dying Israelite kingdom.
5. Verse 3: Surely these things happened to Judah according to the LORD's command, in order to remove them from his presence because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, ⁴ including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD was not willing to forgive.
- a) The text is reminding us that before any of the current kings were in power, and before the good king of the last lesson took over, the grandfather of the current king was named Manasseh and he was a really bad egg. In fact he was so bad, that is when God made the declaration of "I've had enough. The people will never listen. In other words, the sins are so bad, the kindness thing I can do is bring this nation to an end as they are beyond help."
 - b) How Manasseh "shed the blood of innocent people" is not stated. Most likely it involved the sacrifice of people to false gods and likely killing of innocent people in order for him to have more power. Bottom line, it's judgment time.

- c) Here's a question to ponder, if Manasseh was so bad, why wait until a few generations later to bring Israel to an end? Part of it is to show those Israelites what happens when we do turn from God collectively and the long term consequences of turning from Him. The other reason is to show that the tireless efforts of a good king (the grandson of Manasseh) are not enough to change the hearts of people back to God and that's why the judgment on this nation is necessary when it happened. Remember that at this time both Jeremiah and Ezekiel were around telling the Israelites to accept this, as it is God's will and God still has a plan for them just as He still has a plan for our lives. Want proof that God still has a plan for your life and my life? Try submitting today to whatever He wants you to do for Him and watch the results play out.
 - d) Meanwhile, it's time to bring the current king's reign to an end and bring on the next bad king who of course will ignore God and rebel against the Babylonian rule.
6. Verse 5: As for the other events of Jehoiakim's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? ⁶ Jehoiakim rested with his fathers. And Jehoiachin his son succeeded him as king.
- a) One thing I noticed about the last two chapters of this book is that there is not a lot of commentary by the author like there was in the previous few chapters. Here, it is more like, "here are the facts, deal with it and accept it as it is". For example, we don't know how this current king died. It just states that he did. It also states that the dying king's son had a very similar name to the father. There is a "c" instead of a "k" in the name. The simple point here is one king died young and the next bad king is taking over.
7. Verse 7: The king of Egypt did not march out from his own country again, because the king of Babylon had taken all his territory, from the Wadi of Egypt to the Euphrates River.
- a) A little background here might be helpful. There was a great war around this time era between the Babylonians and the Egyptians. It was hinted at in the last chapter as that's when the good king lost his life. To keep it simple, the Babylonians won big, and at this time the Egyptians were not a significant force. The Babylonians didn't end Egypt from being a country, but the Egyptians didn't conquer anyone again after this time period.
 - i) Remember that Egypt was a dominant player in that region for millennia. At this time they were a lower self-ruling power. However, the final blow against the Egyptians being an independent state won't come until the Romans centuries later.
 - b) The reason this verse is mentioned here is to show that if the Israelites were looking to the Egyptians for help against the Babylonians, the point is being made that the Babylonians are now ruling over much of the world around Israel and in effect there is nowhere for the Israelites to go hide from the inevitability coming up of the Babylonians conquering them.
 - c) This is a good time for the quick reminder of why we are reading all of this. It is not to be an expert in ancient history. It is to learn patterns of how God's judgment comes upon a nation who turn from Him. In other words, if we as a nation or we as a collective body of believers turn from God, there is a strong price to be paid for that disobedience. With that said, it's time to move on to the next bad king of Israel.
8. Verse 8: Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem three months. His mother's name was Nehushta daughter of Elnathan; she was from Jerusalem. ⁹He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his father had done.
- a) The simple statement of fact here is that the next Israelite king was also considered to be evil as far as God was concerned. Like all the previous kings, his mother is listed here as well as the king's age when he got started. At the age of 18, this king is still going to be naïve about how the world works. This king is also stuck with the fact that during the last three years of his father's reign, the Israelites were essentially servants to Babylon.
 - b) To say it another way, even though these Israelites were still a separate kingdom, for all intents and purposes, the end was here and this king had to rule under that issue. Still this king turned against God's desire to be subservient and he rebelled against God.

9. Verse 10: At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it,¹¹ and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it.¹² Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him. In the eighth year of the reign of the king of Babylon, he took Jehoiachin prisoner.¹³ As the LORD had declared, Nebuchadnezzar removed all the treasures from the temple of the LORD and from the royal palace, and took away all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the temple of the LORD.¹⁴ He carried into exile all Jerusalem: all the officers and fighting men, and all the craftsmen and artisans--a total of ten thousand. Only the poorest people of the land were left.
- a) Time for another quick history lesson. The actual destruction of Jerusalem and the final kingdom of independent Israelites happened in three stages. We are reading here about the first of those three stages. This is when the prophet Daniel was taken to Babylon as well as probably Ezekiel. Nebuchadnezzar himself led this campaign against the country and as a reward took anything and anyone of value out of Israel back to Babylon. So why did he conquer this place? Short version is "because he could" and it stood in the way of the bigger prize of taking on Egypt down the road.
 - b) Let me also describe a siege. It's not pretty. The short version is that it's a way of starving out residents of a walled city. Then the attacking army builds ramps so that they could go over a city wall and attack the weak residents. Let's just say that one city at a time, all of what we know as the Southern Kingdom of Judah was being destroyed. The survivors of these attacks were being taken hundreds of miles away back to Babylon.
 - c) Let me describe a key difference between the Babylonians and the Assyrians. When the Assyrians conquered an area, they would scatter the survivors so they couldn't unite and plan a rebellion. When the Babylonians conquered, they kept those groups together. The idea of the Babylonians was to encourage the survivors to help their growth. That's why the best and brightest of the Israelites were brought to Babylon for "re-training". If you study the book of Daniel, that's why he and his three buddies were brought there.
 - d) You may also notice in the text that there is no mention of the Ark of the Covenant taken as a prize. That goes back to my theory as stated in the last lesson that during the times of Manasseh, priests took the ark and hid it in Egypt. I don't know that for sure, but it does make sense that since the ark isn't mentioned in these final two chapters, it was not there.
 - e) Bottom line, Nebuchadnezzar won big. Anything and anyone of value was taken away from Israel hundreds of miles north to "Iraq".
10. Verse 15: Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin captive to Babylon. He also took from Jerusalem to Babylon the king's mother, his wives, his officials and the leading men of the land.¹⁶ The king of Babylon also deported to Babylon the entire force of seven thousand fighting men, strong and fit for war, and a thousand craftsmen and artisans.¹⁷ He made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place and changed his name to Zedekiah.
- a) If you have been with me through the last few lessons, the writer of "Kings" who based on Jewish tradition was Jeremiah, the last few chapters were full of commentary about what was happening in those chapters. Here in Chapter 24 and also in Chapter 25, we get very little commentary about what happened. It is just the statement of facts. If one wants to read commentary on these times, the books of Jeremiah, Lamentations and Ezekiel give a lot of commentary on why all of this occurred. It's as if the author is saying to us, "Here are the facts of how this powerful kingdom 400 years ago came to an end, as they made the decision to turn from God and here is how they suffered for that decision.
 - b) Speaking of just the facts, we get the list of how many people were dragged to Babylon. We also get a brief comment of how the current king's uncle (a son of the good king) as the next king in the "revolving door" of the final kings of Israel. The text says that the next king's name was changed to Zedekiah. The name change is a reminder of who was really in control of the land of Israel at that time, the Babylonians.

11. Verse 18: Zedekiah was twenty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem eleven years. His mother's name was Hamutal daughter of Jeremiah; she was from Libnah.¹⁹ He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as Jehoiakim had done.²⁰ It was because of the LORD's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence. Now Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.
- a) Bottom line, another evil king, more rebellion against God. Now for more details: I'm pretty positive that this secession of kings weren't crazy about the fact they had to be part of the Babylonian Empire and they did what they could to rebel against that empire. We get the usual listing of the king's mother as if to say who was responsible for raising him. The text has also been indicating that despite dealing with being conquered, the kings still had children and life went on.
 - b) The text actually makes a comment in Verse 20 as opposed to just stating the facts. The comment is nothing new. It is that because all of these kings had rebelled against God's will for them, that is why the kingdom is coming to an end. One has to remember that at that time there were prominent prophets warning the kings and the Israelites about what it was that God wanted, submission to Him and even accepting the Babylonian rule. The fact that the Israelites rebelled against that is the basis of the commentary.
 - c) OK, John, remind me again why I should keep reading about all of this ancient history? It is to show that God gets involved in our world and if we fail to be a witness for Him there is a price to be paid. The issue is not salvation, the issue is being a witness for God. If we are called to serve Jesus, then God holds us accountable for that witness to Him. In effect, His name is on the line. OK then, why can't I just believe Jesus died for my sins and then not use my life to be a witness for Him? Because then one is ignoring what Jesus called us to do as a servant of Him with our lives. To keep it simple, if we are going to trust that Jesus paid the price for our sins, He now requires that we be a witness for Him. If we fail to do that, we can collectively suffer a similar fate to what the Israelites suffered here.
 - d) With that tough point staring us in the face, it's time to get back to this judgment text:
12. Verse 25, Verse 1: So in the ninth year of Zedekiah's reign, on the tenth day of the tenth month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon marched against Jerusalem with his whole army. He encamped outside the city and built siege works all around it.² The city was kept under siege until the eleventh year of King Zedekiah.³ By the ninth day of the fourth month the famine in the city had become so severe that there was no food for the people to eat.⁴ Then the city wall was broken through, and the whole army fled at night through the gate between the two walls near the king's garden, though the Babylonians were surrounding the city.
- a) You may recall how I said that the end of Israel came in three stages. Here we are reading of the second stage of the end of that kingdom. So why was there a second attack by the leader of the Babylonian empire here? The short version is that the Israelites continued to rebel against them. It may help to keep in mind that the land of Israel is a "land bridge" between three continents. Whoever controls that land also controls the main highway to bring an army from Europe or Asia to Africa and the other direction. To say it another way, in order for the Babylonians to take on the Egyptians, they needed to control the pathway leading to Egypt, and that is through Israel.
 - b) Given all of that, we read here of another siege against Jerusalem. Yes many people did starve to death here and God wasn't helping the Israelites as judgment had already been pronounced by God against these people. Imagine being in big trouble, praying about a situation and not getting any help from God. That's what is happening here.
 - c) Here we read of the Israelite army within Jerusalem decided to try to make an escape out of that city. A hole was made through the city wall and the army fled through that hole. It was then that the army was captured by the Babylonian army who was surrounding the city at that time. Bottom line: No help from God, and the Israelites were losing badly. It shows what can happen when God decides to turn from us after we turn from Him.

13. Verse 4: They fled toward the Arabah, ⁵ but the Babylonian army pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho. All his soldiers were separated from him and scattered, ⁶ and he was captured. He was taken to the king of Babylon at Riblah, where sentence was pronounced on him. ⁷ They killed the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes. Then they put out his eyes, bound him with bronze shackles and took him to Babylon.
- a) With all of these statements of facts in these two final chapters the focus again is on the current king of the Israelites to show his end.
 - b) For those who like bible prophecy, there is an interesting "double statement" made by the prophets Jeremiah and Ezekiel that both came true.
 - i) Jeremiah predicted that this king would die in Babylon. (See Jeremiah 32:4).
 - ii) Ezekiel predicted that this king would not see Babylon (See Ezekiel 12:13).
 - iii) Let's assume that the Israelites were aware of both predictions. Wouldn't they have doubts about these two prophets if they contradicted each other? What is interesting is that if one reads the "fine print", both predictions came true:
 - iv) The sons of this king were killed right in front of him and then the king's eyes were somehow put out. Imagine if the last thing one saw was the death of one's children. It showed the power of the Babylonian king over who he conquered.
 - v) At that point after this was done, then the king was taken captive to Babylon. The point is both prophets' predictions came literally true.
 - vi) The point for us is that when we read and study bible prophecy, we should read it as becoming literally true, not being something symbolic. Many predictions in the bible have already been fulfilled like this pair. Many more describe the end of our world as we know it. My point is if these predictions are literal, I take the end time predictions equally as literal.
 - c) Coming back to the text, the lesson here is that God is not to be messed with. The king is punished in a very painful way by having to watch his sons killed in front of him. Then he was lead blind hundreds of miles away to Babylon. In short, don't mess with God. We can suffer in ways that are pretty horrible just to think about them.
14. Verse 8: On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. ⁹ He set fire to the temple of the LORD, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down. ¹⁰ The whole Babylonian army, under the commander of the imperial guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. ¹¹ Nebuzaradan the commander of the guard carried into exile the people who remained in the city, along with the rest of the populace and those who had gone over to the king of Babylon. ¹² But the commander left behind some of the poorest people of the land to work the vineyards and fields.
- a) Remember how I said Israel as a nation was destroyed in three stages, here we read about the third and final stage and the complete destruction of Israel as a nation. Those Israelites who still lived here and lived through this final siege were now all taken to Babylon. For millennia, there were thriving Jewish communities in both Iran and Iraq. They lived in those places because of the Assyrian conquering of the Northern Kingdom and here as we read of the Babylonians conquering the Southern Kingdom. Also remember that as the Babylonians conquered the Assyrians, they also inherited whoever lived in that empire.
 - b) To give a modern example of how this conquering still affects us today, among the jobs I had to do as a real estate appraiser, was value a retirement home for Jewish people who came from a Persian (Iran) backgrounds. Yes many of them came to America. My point is that the results of that conquering are still noticeable to this day.
 - c) Coming back to the text, the commander of the army burned down all of the important buildings and tore down the walls around Jerusalem. The only people left were the poor who were left to work the fields. There was no more walled city for protection. It shows the completeness of God's judgment when one does turn from Him.

15. Verse 13: The Babylonians broke up the bronze pillars, the movable stands and the bronze Sea that were at the temple of the LORD and they carried the bronze to Babylon. ¹⁴ They also took away the pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the bronze articles used in the temple service. ¹⁵ The commander of the imperial guard took away the censers and sprinkling bowls--all that were made of pure gold or silver.
- a) Again there is little commentary here by the author about the damage done, as the text is just stating the facts. However, the facts are designed to make the reader put the history of Israel as a kingdom in perspective. The last time the bible describes all of the items that were used in the temple was about 400 years earlier when Israel was at the peak of power under King Solomon. In effect, the text is reminding us how the nation of Israel had gone from being a great power with no enemies to now being a conquered nation. Now all the items associated with the worship of God are being taken away.
 - i) Yes there are passages in Deuteronomy that predicted it. What is plainer to see is that God held the Israelites accountable to bear His name and because they were turning from Him as a nation, this destruction was inevitable.
 - ii) I was trying to think of any buildings in the world that have stood for 400 years and are still standing today. The palaces in England and France are not that old. There are ancient temples in Greece and Turkey, that are tourist attractions but are not active buildings. My point is having any temple stand for 400 years is an amazing bit of history to consider. The fact that it was rebuilt about 70 years later when the Israelites returned to land is another interesting bit of history to ponder.
 - b) Before I move on, I'm dying to share a bit of trivia about the return of the Israelites to this land after the Babylonian captivity and this is as good a place as any to share it.
 - i) It is a famous bit of history that the Israelites were in captivity to Babylon for an exact period of 70 years. The short version is after that 70 year period of time, the Babylonian Empire was conquered by the Persian Empire. (Think of it as "Iran" defeating "Iraq" in another ancient war.) Then the Persian Emperor let the Jewish people return home. My question is, since the conquering was in three stages over a number of years, when did the 70 year period begin and end?
 - ii) The answer is interesting: If you use the first siege to mark the 70 year period, that begins an exact period of seventy years to when one leader in Persia commanded that Jewish people are allowed to return to that land. The book of Ezra focuses on that event. If you use the third siege to mark the 70 year period, it corresponds to a second key date in Persian history as in that second date, an order was given to Nehemiah to go rebuild the walls of Jerusalem. Either way it fits a prediction that was given by Jeremiah (25:11) that the Israelites would be in captivity for exactly a 70-year period of time.
 - iii) Why 70 years of captivity? The end of 2nd Chronicles (36:21) tells us that: God commanded the Israelites back in Leviticus 25:4 that every 7th year, the Israelites were not to farm the land and let it grow food all by itself and God would provide food for them during that year of leaving the land alone. For exactly 490 years of time when the Israelites lived in that land, they ignored that law. Now God is in effect saying, "you people owe me 70 years", and thus the captivity begins.
 - iv) OK, John, this is all interesting ancient trivia. We get the idea that God says what He means and means what He says. The point for you and me is not to learn all of this ancient bible cross reference prophesy, but to understand that when God tells us that He desires we use our lives to be a living witness for Him, we should take it seriously and yes we too can suffer horrible consequences if we fail to use our lives to be that witness for Him. To sum it up, we are saved by faith alone, but if we have that faith, we should use it for His glory. That's the point here. With that said, it's time to get back to the destruction of Jerusalem.

16. Verse 16: The bronze from the two pillars, the Sea and the movable stands, which Solomon had made for the temple of the LORD, was more than could be weighed. ¹⁷ Each pillar was twenty-seven feet high. The bronze capital on top of one pillar was four and a half feet high and was decorated with a network and pomegranates of bronze all around. The other pillar, with its network, was similar.
- a) Way back when Solomon was king of a united kingdom, he had built two giant pillars that didn't hold up anything. They were just decorations in front of the temple. In fact when the temple was dedicated, Solomon stood at those pillars to speak to the crowd.
 - b) The point here is the writer of Kings is in his own subtle way commenting on how much the kingdom has gone from a great power to being completely destroyed by showing us how complete was the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple. A famous old expression about armies is that their purpose is to kill people and break things. Here we are reading of the Babylonian army completely destroying God's temple.
 - i) As a side note, didn't the Babylonians suffer themselves for destroying the temple dedicated to God? Yes, in that this empire was conquered after 70 years. To state a lot of bible prophesy in a single thought, because the Babylonians reveled in the destruction of God's temple, they got theirs a relatively short time later.
 - ii) Here in these verses we are just getting the statement of facts about what they did.
17. Verse 18: The commander of the guard took as prisoners Seraiah the chief priest, Zephaniah the priest next in rank and the three doorkeepers. ¹⁹ Of those still in the city, he took the officer in charge of the fighting men and five royal advisers. He also took the secretary who was chief officer in charge of conscripting the people of the land and sixty of his men who were found in the city. ²⁰ Nebuzaradan the commander took them all and brought them to the king of Babylon at Riblah. ²¹ There at Riblah, in the land of Hamath, the king had them executed. So Judah went into captivity, away from her land.
- a) Remember how I said that the purpose of an army is to kill people and break things? In the last set of verses we read how they broke up the temple and took anything of value back to Babylon (an ancient city that was partially rebuilt under Saddam Hussein before he was killed). Here in these verses we read of that same army taking whatever leaders still existed in Israel and taking them by foot hundreds of miles away back to Babylon to be sentenced to die. OK, technically the king of Babylon was at a place called Riblah at that moment in time. There, the king pronounced the sentence of treason against these men and had them executed.
 - b) One has to understand why this text was here and why this third siege of Jerusalem was carried out in the first place. Even after the second siege and Jeremiah's warning to the Israelites to serve the Babylonians, those remaining there still tried to rebel against that empire and sought help from Egypt. That's why this third and final siege took place as if the Babylonian Emperor was thinking, "I've had enough of the rebellion of these people, it is time to destroy that place completely." Kind of like God's way of saying to the same group of Israelites, "I've had enough of your rebellion against me. You as a nation have acted no better then the residents of this land who lived there before you. I (God) at one point in history judged the ancient residents of My Land by having the Israelites invade there and conquer them. Now I (God) am judging you for the same crime of murdering innocent people and failing to be a good witness for Me as I've called you to do."
 - c) Let me simplify and modernize us this for us: If we fail to be a good witness for God, as both individuals or say as a church or a larger group dedicated to serving God, He can and will take away our witness for Him. Think in just the last generation of well known pastors who have lost their ministry because they were caught say, in adultery. My point is just as God has called each of us to serve Him in different ways, so God can take away whatever blessings He has bestowed upon is if we fail to continue to be that witness for Him with our lives. With that scary thought stated, time to get back to this destruction.

18. Verse 22: Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon appointed Gedaliah son of Ahikam, the son of Shaphan, to be over the people he had left behind in Judah. ²³ When all the army officers and their men heard that the king of Babylon had appointed Gedaliah as governor, they came to Gedaliah at Mizpah--Ishmael son of Nethaniah, Johanan son of Kareah, Seraiah son of Tanhumeth the Netophathite, Jaazaniah the son of the Maacathite, and their men. ²⁴ Gedaliah took an oath to reassure them and their men. "Do not be afraid of the Babylonian officials," he said. "Settle down in the land and serve the king of Babylon, and it will go well with you."
- a) In effect, we are now done with descendants of David ruling over Jerusalem. At this time the Babylonian Emperor appoints a man named Gedaliah to be in charge of whoever was still living in the land of Israel which is the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Gedaliah is also mentioned in the book of Jeremiah and apparently he was a friend of Jeremiah's. Even if you didn't know that, Gedaliah was preaching the same type message that was preached through much of the book of Jeremiah, which can be summarized as, "Go surrender to the Babylonians, be a witness to them, settle down in that land and God will watch over you while you are living there". (Read Jeremiah Chapter 40 for a discussion of Gedaliah.)
 - b) Remember that this Gedaliah guy was appointed the leader of whoever was left to still live in Israel, so naturally he would be pro-Babylonian. The point here idea is that even though David's dynasty is no longer in charge, a witness for God is there encouraging the residents to seek God. The point for you and me is God always has His witnesses around all through history to encourage those who should know better to turn to Him. While all of this destruction and death was occurring all around them, major prophets like Jeremiah and Ezekiel were encouraging the Israelites to turn to God.
 - i) One of the things that sort of frightens me about the current generation we live in, is the lack of any possible excuse we could have to turn from God. Our generation has more access to information than any generation in history. I can't see anyone living today who has access to the internet saying they never had an opportunity to learn about God when so much information is available at our fingertips. Just as there were witnesses for God during this tough period back then, there are lots of witnesses for God today as one with access to information can easily find.
 - ii) With that statement of guilt hanging over our heads, let's get back to the text.
 - c) The text also lists a bunch of men who one can logically assume are the leaders among all Jewish people those still left in Israel at this time. The reason those names are given is in effect stated in the next verse. Speaking of which:
19. Verse 25: In the seventh month, however, Ishmael son of Nethaniah, the son of Elishama, who was of royal blood, came with ten men and assassinated Gedaliah and also the men of Judah and the Babylonians who were with him at Mizpah. ²⁶ At this, all the people from the least to the greatest, together with the army officers, fled to Egypt for fear of the Babylonians.
- a) The simple point here is that despite all of the warnings of the prophets and despite the warnings by the man appointed by the Babylonians, to be the leader, it is still in the hearts of people to rebel against God's will for their lives. One of the men listed in Verse 23 and again here in Verse 25 assassinated Gedaliah with the intent of wanting to strike a blow against the powers that be. In a strange way, it reminds me a little of the man who shot and killed Abraham Lincoln thinking that his rebellion would encourage the South to rise up and fight more against the American Union. My point is rebellion is in our hearts and despite all the destruction that has occurred all around us our natural human reaction is to want to rebel against God's will for our lives.
 - b) Coming back to the verse, the desire of God was for his people to surrender to Babylon as God still has a plan. However, a man named Ishmael, who the text says was related to the royal family plotted and killed who was appointed to be the leader. The men involved in that conspiracy then fled to Egypt in fear of their lives. We don't know the outcome of the life of these men, but I suspect it ended badly for them for going against God's will.

20. Verse 27: In the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the year Evil-Merodach became king of Babylon, he released Jehoiachin from prison on the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month.²⁸ He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat of honor higher than those of the other kings who were with him in Babylon.²⁹ So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table.³⁰ Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.
- a) The book of kings ends with an epilogue about the last of the kings of Israel, and the last of David's descendants who was still alive. The short version is that he was released from prison in Babylon and got to eat with the Babylonian emperor the rest of his life.
 - b) A few facts from outside of history would be helpful here. The Babylonian emperor was the son of the emperor very prominent in the book of Daniel named Nebuchadnezzar. If you've ever read the book of Daniel, he was appointed to work closely with that emperor. I even suspect from studying that book that Nebuchadnezzar became a believer in God. Now that his son was in charge, this man named Evil-Merodach, I suspect but can't prove that because "dad" believed in the Jewish God, that influenced his son, who in turn got the last of the Jewish kings out of prison and had him live and dine with the current emperor.
 - c) Before I leave this text, let me comment on the name "Evil-Merodach". That name doesn't mean this emperor was evil. The origin of that word is different in Babylonian than it is in English. Just think of it as a coincidence that he had that name, and nothing more.
21. Time to step back and consider some of the big picture ideas of "Kings". As I stated when I began to teach these books, they were originally one book and are separated into 1st and 2nd Kings only because they were too big to fit as a single scroll. One of the main things it teaches is to show the reader how Israel could go from being a powerful and mighty nation that has conquered all of the enemies it had around them to being a conquered nation themselves and now in captivity.
- a) The truth is that the Babylonians were allowed to conquer the Israelites only because they collectively refused to turn and obey God. If you have any doubts about that, remember back a few lessons ago when God single handedly wiped out a large Assyrian army that was surrounding Jerusalem before the last series of bad kings (and one good king) came on the scene over the last half dozen chapters or so. (See 2nd Kings 19:35.)
 - b) The point to learn for you and me is that there is a large price to be paid for failing to be a witness for God when we have been called to do so. In effect if we believe that Jesus is the Lord (in charge) of our lives, then God expects us to use our lives to make a difference for Him with our lives. Failure to be a good witness for Him is what can cause the downfall of our nation, our local church or whatever blessing God has bestowed upon us to be used to be witness for Him. To preach it another way, God has given each of us unique talents and put each of us in unique situations that can be used for His glory. So how do I use my life to make a difference for God? Start by making a difference wherever we are. If you have taken the time to read these lessons then you have taken the time to learn more about God and more about how one can use their lives for His glory. Pray about how we can use our lives for His glory. As I also love to state, I believe God can't resist a prayer of us turning our lives over to Him. He loves to work through us to make a difference for Him. If we're willing to make that commitment, He will work through us for His glory.
22. Before I wrap up "Kings", I thought it would be a good idea to briefly explain how "Kings" did end with Jesus being the eternal king. If God promised David that a Messiah would be a direct descendant of his, how did that occur with this dynasty being over? First, God never told David that all his descendants would be kings until "The" king came on the scene. God just promised to David that he would have a long line of kings and "the" king would be of that line.
- a) With that said, know that Jeremiah put a curse on the last king Jehoiachin (who also had the nickname Coniah. Jeremiah said that no descendant of this king would prosper. (See Jeremiah 22:30.) So if Jesus is a descendant of that king, how did Jesus get around that curse? Great story, and let me share it quickly.

- b) If one reads the lineage of Mary as stated in the book of Luke, Mary was not a descendant of all those kings. She was a descendant of David, but Mary was then a descendant of one of David's other sons named Nathan. (See Luke 3:31). My point is Mary was not a direct descendant of Solomon and all the other kings. One of the reasons for the virgin birth was to get around the curse placed by Jeremiah on King Jehoiachin.
 - c) But John, David was told the Messiah would be a direct descendant of those kings. He was, through Mary's husband Joseph. He was a direct descendant of those kings and yes he had Jehoiachin as a direct ancestor. Again that is why the virgin birth was needed. So if Joseph was not the actual father of Jesus, how was Joseph his "legal" father? The answer leads back to the book of Numbers. To make it brief, God told Moses that if a man did not have any sons, the daughters were to marry men who were part of the same tribe, so that no tribe got more or less territory based on whom any one member of any of those tribes did marry. (See Numbers Chapter 27.)
 - i) My point is both Joseph and Mary were from the same Jewish tribe. When Joseph agreed to marry Mary, he then legally inherited whatever belonged to her, which included Jesus. The point is, Joseph became the legal father of Jesus even though he was not the biological father. That's why Jesus can claim he was the descendant of all these kings through a legal adoption process as laid out by Moses way back in Numbers Chapter 27 and as repeated in Chapter 36.
 - d) Therefore, even though the book of Kings ends with the negative fact of the Israelites now living in captivity in Babylon, there is still hope of the Messiah coming as the last of the kings was treated well and had descendants of his own that tie to Jesus. By the way, one of the proofs that the Gospels were written around the time of Jesus is that the Romans destroyed all of the family records in 70AD when they destroyed the temple. Therefore, no one today can also claim they are a descendant of King David as those records are now long gone. When Luke and Matthew were alive, they could have access to the records of those family histories and each record the genealogies as stated in those gospels.
 - e) Bottom line, I wanted to end Kings on a note of optimism, which is why I explained the rest of the genealogy of the kings up to the time of Jesus. With that said, it's time to end the lesson in prayer. Oh, and in case you want to read more about "kings", as I always do, I give my biography on the next page.
23. Let's pray: Father, we thank you for teaching us about the kings of Israel. These books are part of the bible to show us about Your unconditional promise made to David how he would have lots of descendants as kings and that "the" king would be also be descendant of his. Thank You for showing us the importance of being a good witness for You and realizing the consequences of not using our time to make a difference for You. Help all of us by the power of the Spirit, make a big difference in the world around us, as we use our time to make a difference for Your kingdom. We ask this in Jesus name, Amen.
- a) Thanks for reading and hope you enjoyed the study.

Supplement: Bibliography

"If I have seen further, it is because I have stood on the shoulders of giants." (Isaac Newton)

Without prayer and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, all these commentaries are useless. My prayer as I prepare these lessons was for God to show me the things He wanted me to learn, and second, the lessons He wanted me to pass on in my writings. I have quoted many sources throughout these lessons. If any of these writers appeal to you, I invite you to read or listen to them further via the places listed below. I have also quoted other sources not listed, and those names are usually listed in the lessons. These other authors were usually quoted from the materials listed below and taken from those sources.

First and foremost, the greatest commentary on the bible is the bible itself. Here are the bible versions I use in preparation of my lessons. I mostly quote The New International Version (NIV), Copyright 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society; The New King James Version (NKJV), Copyright © 1979, 1980, 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc.; The King James Version (KJV) (no copyright on that version); the English Standard Version. (ESV). The copyright information for the ESV is in point #5 below. The Living Bible (TLB) Copyright © 1971, 1986 by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., Wheaton, IL 60189; "The Message" copyright © 1993 by Eugene H. Peterson. All rights reserved. All the bible text used in these lessons (except the ESV) is taken from Parsons Software: Electronic Edition STEP Files Copyright © 1999, Parsons Technology, Inc., all rights reserved and from Zondervan Reference Software (32-bit edition) Version 2.6, Copyright © 1989-1998 The Zondervan Corporation. Also starting to use the Holman Christian Standard Bible online (<http://hcsb.org/>) as well as the Amplified Bible (Zondervan Corp.).

Here are the commentaries I have referenced over these lessons. The specific commentaries on 1st and 2nd Kings are listed first, and then the bible-wide commentaries. They are listed in alphabetical order by author. The reference to audio commentary means the information was gathered via the Internet in MP3® format, unless otherwise stated:

1. Commentary on 1st and 2nd Kings by Jon Courson. It is in book form from Harvest House Publishing. It is also available in MP3® format at <http://www.joncourson.com/>.
2. Commentary on 1st and 2nd Kings by Bob Davis. They are available for free in MP3® format at http://northcountrychapel.com/audio_studies/
3. Commentary on 1st and 2nd Kings by David Guzik. They are available for free in MP3® format and in written format http://www.enduringword.com/library_commentaries.htm
4. Commentary on 1st and 2nd Kings by Chuck Missler, available at K-House Ministries 1-800-KHOUSE1. The web address is <http://www.khouse.org>.
5. The English Standard Version Study Bible; Copyright (2005-2009) The Standard Bible Society. The version itself is copyrighted 2008 by Crossway Bibles, a publication of "Good News Publishers".
6. The Expositor's Bible Encyclopedia, Zondervan Publications, (via CD-ROM 1998 release). This is a multi-volume encyclopedia with notes on every bible verse. It is available through Zondervan. Paperback books are published on individual Bible books from this same source. The actual text that is copied and pasted is taken from this source. (The ISBN was listed in the paragraph above.)
7. The MacArthur Study Bible with commentary by John MacArthur Nelson Bibles (1997) ISBN: 0849912229.
8. I also refer sometimes to Greg Koukl's apologetic ministry, which is Stand to Reason at www.str.org.
9. I've also listened to a good number of sermons via "youtube" by John MacArthur and Ravi Zacharus on many topics that have aided me in preparation for these lessons.
10. My apology if I have quoted someone else and I have forgotten to include them here.