

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

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SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON ONE:

The Kingdom Is Divided

LESSON TEXT:

1 Kings 12-13

SOLOMON'S PRIDE

The story of Jeroboam, Rehoboam, and the division of the united kingdom presents us with some interesting philosophical questions. Who was to blame for the breakup of Israel? Was it Solomon, whose idolatry led to God proclaiming through His prophet that the kingdom would be taken away from his son? Or was it Rehoboam, whose arrogance led him to speak harshly to a people whom he needed to conciliate?

Although Rehoboam certainly bears his share of the responsibility, it all begins with Solomon. Above all else, his willingness to be led away from the Lord by his foreign wives reflects his pride. During his day, his kingdom was so wealthy and powerful that he forgot that he depended on God. In reality, even so impressive an edifice as Solomon's empire could be toppled by a word from the Almighty.

Sadly, Solomon's pride has its echo in Rehoboam's fateful decision to be harsh. Even though we often think of Rehoboam as a teenager, he was 41 when he began to reign, certainly old enough to know better. What makes him seem so immature is his sense of entitlement. He never seems to have recognized that four-fifths of his kingdom was genuinely at stake. Before it happened, Israel's rebellion never crossed his mind. Just as Solomon felt entitled to do as he wished religiously, Rehoboam felt entitled to do as he wished politically, and he learned his arrogance from his father's example.

So it was that even though Rehoboam chose freely, God knew and correctly predicted what he would choose. Solomon's own sin set up Rehoboam's folly. The son of Israel's greatest king learned all too well that when it came to royalty, nobody had the right to say no.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON THIRTEEN

6. Lesson 6

7. Lesson 7

8. Lesson 8

9. Lesson 9

10. Lesson 10

11. Lesson 11

12. Lesson 12

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LESSON THIRTEEN:

Review

For each of the lessons listed below, describe its main events and relevance to us today.

1. Lesson 1

2. Lesson 2

3. Lesson 3

4. Lesson 4

5. Lesson 5

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ONE

1. What situation does 1 Kings 12:1-2 describe? According to 12:3-4, what do the people want? In 12:5, what comes of this? What does this teach us about the reign of Solomon?
2. In 12:6, what does Rehoboam do? According to 12:7, what answer does he get? According to 12:8, what does he do about this? In 12:9-11, what do these new advisors say? What does this exchange reveal?
3. In 12:12, what do the people do? In 12:13-14, what does Rehoboam tell them? How does 12:15 explain this? Does this mean that God deprived Rehoboam or the Israelites of free will? If not, what does it mean?
4. In 12:16-17, what results from Rehoboam's words? According to 12:18, how does Rehoboam deal with this? What happens? What overall result does 12:19-20 describe? What does this teach us?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ONE

5. In 12:21, what does Rehoboam do? According to 12:22-24, what does this provoke? What do the people do about this? How can we profit from their example?

6. In 12:25-27, what problem does Jeroboam identify? According to 12:28-33, how does he "solve" it? Was this "solution" truly necessary? What problems does it create? How can we learn from Jeroboam's decision?

7. Whom do we meet in 13:1? In 13:2-3, what does he do? According to 13:4, how does Jeroboam react to this? In 13:4-5, what does this accomplish? What does this encounter show?

8. In 13:6, what does Jeroboam do? What happens in consequence? In 13:7, what does he say? In 13:8-10, how does the man of God reply to him? What does this reveal about the man of God?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWELVE

9. Who shows up at Jerusalem in 25:8? In 25:9-10, what does he do? What happens in 25:11-12? What happens in 25:13-17? Why is this important?

10. What does Nebuzaradan do in 25:18-19? In 25:20, where does he bring them? In 25:21, what happens as a result? Why is this significant?

11. In 25:22, what does Nebuchadnezzar do? In 25:23-24, what does Gedaliah do? In 25:25, what happens to Gedaliah? In 25:26, what do the people do about this? What is the overall result?

12. In 25:27, what happens to Jehoiachin? In 25:28-30, what result does this have? Why is this story included in Scripture?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWELVE

5. What happens in 24:11? In 24:12, what does Jehoiachin do about this? According to 24:12-16, what does Nebuchadnezzar take this opportunity to do? What does this show?

6. What does Nebuchadnezzar do in 24:17? In 24:19, how is Zedekiah described? In 24:20, what result does this have? How does Zedekiah participate in his own end? What impression does this leave?

7. What does Nebuchadnezzar do in 25:1? According to 25:2, how long does this siege last? In 25:3, what result does this have? What does this show about the Babylonians?

8. What happens in 25:4? What do Zedekiah and his men of war do about this? In 25:5, what result does this have? What happens in 25:6-7? What do we think about the legacy of Zedekiah?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ONE

9. In 13:11, whom do we meet? What does he do in 13:12-15? In 13:16-17, what answer does he get? According to 13:18, how does he react to this? In 13:19, what response does this generate? What lessons are in this for us?

10. In 13:20, what happens? In 13:21-22, what does the old prophet say? In 23-25, what comes of this? Does this seem fair? Why or why not? What does it teach us?

11. In 13:26, what does the old prophet say about this incident? In 13:27-30, what does he do? In 13:31-32, what does he add? Why is this story recorded for us?

12. According to 13:33, what does Jeroboam not do? What does he do? According to 13:34, what result does this have? What does this reveal about God?

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LESSON TWO:

Ahab and the
Drought

LESSON TEXT:

1 Kings 16:29-
18:46

ELIJAH'S PRAYERS

The story of Ahab and his descendants, which makes up the longest single narrative in 1 and 2 Kings, chronicles a dark time for God's people in the kingdom of Israel. Ahab himself comes across as a weak, petulant man, but his wife Jezebel was anything but. With a zeal and determination all too rarely displayed by the Lord's people, she powerfully promoted the worship of her hometown god of Baal in Israel.

Although there are still Israelites who follow the God of their fathers, the only one who is willing to stand powerfully against Jezebel is the prophet Elijah. Through his prayers, he plunges Israel into a devastating drought. Because this drought devastates Ahab's political position, the Israelite king is forced to agree to the famous showdown at Mt. Carmel, in which Elijah has everything to gain and very little to lose. Elijah, of course, triumphs over the massed prophets of Baal, and he punctuates his victory by praying for rain to return.

There are many lessons we can learn from Elijah here, but one of the most important is the impact that a single godly man or woman can have, provided they are dedicated to the Lord. It's true that none of us are very likely to call down fire from heaven to settle a religious dispute, but the same weapon of prayer that Elijah wielded so powerfully is still at our disposal today. When we imitate Elijah's example and pray for the things that God has promised, the results can be beyond what we might ever have dreamed.

Sometimes, our spiritual situation looks bleak. For God's people, that's going to be true sometimes. Satan often looks like he's winning. Elijah reminds us that the reality is powerfully different.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWELVE

1. According to 1 Kings 23:31, who's the new king? In 23:32, how does he behave? In 23:33, what result does this have? What else does Neco do? What does this show about the prosperity of Judah at this time?
2. In 23:34, what does Neco do? According to 23:35, how does Jehoiakim deal with Neco? According to 23:37, how does he deal with God? What do we suspect is going to happen next?
3. What happens in 24:1? What does Jehoiakim do about this? In 24:2, what does God do? How does 24:3-4 explain God's conduct? What does this show about God's attitude at this time?
4. In 24:6, who's the new king? According to 24:7, what doesn't happen anymore? Why is this significant? According to 24:9, what's Jehoiachin like? In 24:10, what consequently happens? At this point, should this be a surprise to anyone?

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LESSON TWELVE:

The Fall of Judah

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 23:31-25:30

ISRAEL REDUX

Starting in about 750 BC, the nation of Israel, which had forsaken God, became a pawn in the power struggles of the ancient Middle East. After too much flip-flopping between Assyria and Egypt, the Assyrians got sick of the double dealing, sacked Samaria, and carried the Israelite nation off into captivity.

This was tragic, but what was even more tragic was how little Judah learned from the example of Israel. Starting in about 620 BC, exactly the same thing happened to the southern kingdom too. They forsook the Lord, vacillated between Assyria's successor Babylon and Egypt in a short-sighted bid for political independence, angered the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar, and got obliterated for their failure to cooperate. Despite the object lesson provided by their northern kinsmen, they made the same mistakes and met the same fate.

God's word contains many things, but one of the most meaningful of those things is a whole set of object lessons for us. Today, we are the people of the Lord, just as the ancient Israelites were 3000 years ago. We have the same kind of covenant relationship with God that they did, and we are responsible for remaining faithful to Him.

Because of the example of Israel, Judah, and so many others, we know exactly what will happen if we forsake the Lord. He will forsake us and deliver us into the hands of the devil, who is not a kind master. We may not be carried into captivity by a vicious invading horde, but we will certainly be destroyed. Sadly, God's people have often shown the same ability to ignore this lesson that Judah did. God has given us all the information we need. It's up to us to listen.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWO

1. Who makes his appearance in 1 Kings 16:29? In 16:30, how is he described? According to 16:31-33, what does he do? Why is this significant to the story of the kings?
2. Whom do we meet in 17:1? What does he say? Did he come up with this, or did God? Consider Deuteronomy 28:23-24 in your answer. What does this teach us about prayer?
3. In 1 Kings 17:2-4, what does God command? Why do you think He commands this? In 17:5, what does Elijah do? In 17:6-7, what happens? What does this show about both the kindness and the severity of God?
4. What does God command in 17:8-9? In 17:10-12, what problem emerges? In 17:13-14, what does Elijah promise? According to 17:15-16, what results from this? What does this teach us about the results of obedience?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWO

5. What happens in 17:17? In 17:18, what does the widow do about it? According to 17:19-21, how does Elijah react? In 17:22-23, what happens? In 17:24, what is the ultimate result? What does this episode reveal about God?

6. When does 18:1 take place? What does God command then? In 18:2, what comes of this? Whom do we meet in 18:3-4? What is he like? What are he and Ahab doing in 18:5-6? What does this show?

7. Describe the conversation recorded in 18:7-8. In 18:9-14, how does Obadiah react? In 18:15, how does Elijah reply? In 18:16, what is the result? What can we learn from this story about the times when we fear to obey God?

8. In 18:17-18, what do Ahab and Elijah have to say to one another? In 18:19, what suggestion does Elijah make? In 18:20-24, what does he propose? What kind of response does he get? What's going on here?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ELEVEN

9. What is Josiah doing in 23:15-16? In 23:17, what does he learn? Why is this significant? In 23:18, what does he do?

10. What idolatry does Josiah attack in 23:19-20? What is geographically different about this? What does this tell us about Josiah?

11. In 23:21-23, what does Josiah re-institute? In 23:24, what does he abolish? In 23:25, how is he described? What can we learn from him?

12. According to 23:26, what effect do Josiah's reforms have on God? How does 23:26-27 explain this? According to 23:29-30, what happens to Josiah? What does his legacy teach us?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ELEVEN

5. By contrast, what does Huldah say about Josiah in 22:18-19? What promise appears in 22:20? What does this imply about the success of Josiah's reforms?

6. What does Josiah do in 23:1-2? In 23:3, what else does he do? What does this reveal about him?

7. What practices is Josiah targeting in 23:4-7? What specifically does he do about them? In 23:8-9, what is his target? What actions does he take this time? With what impression does this leave us?

8. In 23:10, 13-14, what form of idolatry is on the chopping block? What specifically does Josiah do? In 23:11-12, what practice does he oppose? How does he do this? What does this reveal about the worship of Judah at this point?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TWO

9. What does Elijah say in 18:25? In 18:26, what results from this? In 18:27, how does Elijah address the situation? In 18:28, what continues? How does 18:29 describe the outcome?

10. What does Elijah do in 18:30-33? In 18:33-35, what unusual commands does he give? Why does he do this? Why is it significant?

11. What does Elijah do in 18:36-37? In 18:38, what is the result? According to 18:39, how do the people take this? In 18:40, what happens to the prophets of Baal? What's the lesson here for us?

12. What does Elijah say in 18:41? In 18:42-43, what does he do? According to 18:44-45, what happens next? Why is this happening now? In 18:46, how does Elijah conclude his day? How would you describe the day's events?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON THREE:

The War with Ben-Hadad

LESSON TEXT:

1 Kings 19-20

ELIJAH'S DESPAIR

In this context, we see one of the most spectacular meltdowns of a hero of faith that appears anywhere in the Bible. Elijah has quite literally just had a mountaintop experience. He has embarrassed and destroyed 850 priests of various false gods, he has led the entire nation of Israel to verbally acknowledge that the Lord is God, and through his prayers, rain has returned to the land.

However, Jezebel, like many renowned fighters through the ages, doesn't know when she's beaten. Elijah has killed her pet prophets and shown up her gods? Fine. She's going to kill Elijah. The victorious prophet finds himself fleeing for his life, and nothing about the religious situation of Israel appears to have changed. Elijah quite obviously expected to be the one who would turn Israel back to the Lord after generations of apostasy. In reality, he discovers that he is no more capable than his fathers. He begs for God to kill him.

God, who can be so harsh in His dealings with His enemies, here shows extreme gentleness in the way He handles Elijah. He shows His disconsolate prophet that Jezebel's defiance cannot defeat His plan. The wicked will still be punished, and the righteous rewarded. The time will soon come when Elijah will enjoy the reward for his labors, but in the meantime, God still has work for him to do.

Sometimes, we find ourselves as deep in despair as Elijah was. We may feel like we've given our all to the Lord's work, but no one seems to notice or care. In times like that, God's words to him are just as heartening to us. Even today, it is still true that no matter how many people reject Him, God is going to win, and we too will inevitably be victorious so long as we keep our trust in Him.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON ELEVEN

1. In 2 Kings 22:1, who ascends the throne of Judah? How does 22:2 describe him? In 22:3-7, what's the first thing he does? What can we learn from him here?
2. What happens in 22:8? In 22:9-10, how is this presented to Josiah? Which book of the Bible does this probably refer to? Why is this important?
3. How does Josiah react to this in 22:11? In 22:12-13, what does he do? Why is his reaction a useful example for us?
4. In 22:14, what do Josiah's servants do? In 22:15-16, what does Huldah reveal? In 22:17, how does she explain this? What does this show about the moral state of Judah at this point?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON ELEVEN:

Josiah

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 22:1-23:30

JOSIAH'S LEGACY

The story of Josiah is one of the more bittersweet narratives in 1 and 2 Kings. Here, we encounter the last truly godly king, a man who was righteous from his earliest days on the throne until the very end of his life. During his reign, he ceaselessly reformed the religious establishment of Judah. The author of the books of Kings has nothing negative to say about him.

However, despite his godliness and zeal, Josiah could not halt the spiritual decline of his nation. Indeed, ever since the reign of his grandfather Manasseh, the doom of Judah had been inevitable. God's people were too far gone in evil for anyone, even a righteous king, to lead them back to repentance. As soon as Josiah perished, so too did his reforms. Without exception, all of his successors were wicked, and their wickedness and incompetence soon led to their destruction. Judah was destroyed just as God had predicted.

However, this should not lead us to conclude that Josiah's reign was a failure. For one thing, his righteousness won God's blessing on him personally. Because Josiah did serve the Lord, even though the fall of Judah wasn't averted, it was at least postponed.

Even beyond that, though, Josiah's reforms had one enduring impact. During his reign, the lost book of the Lord, most likely the book of Deuteronomy, was rediscovered. Deuteronomy had a huge impact on the way later writers, like Jeremiah and the author of 1 and 2 Kings, understood and explained the fate of their nation. This lesson was understood so well that the Jews never again turned to idolatry. Even though Josiah's efforts appeared to have failed in the short term, they laid the foundation for enduring success.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON THREE

1. What happens in 1 Kings 19:1-2? In 19:3-4, how does Elijah react to this? Why does he say this? In 19:5-8, what does God do for him?
2. Describe the conversation of 19:9-10. In 19:11, what does God instruct Elijah to do? In 19:11-13, what takes place? Why does God reveal Himself in this way?
3. What do God and Elijah say to each other in 19:13-14? What does God command Elijah to do in 19:15-16? In 19:17-18, how does God explain His purpose? What does this show us today?
4. What does Elijah do in 19:19? In 19:20, what does Elisha say to him? How does Elijah take this? According to 19:21, what does Elisha do about it? What does this teach us about following God?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON THREE

5. Whom do we meet in 20:1? What does he do? In 20:2-3, what does he say? What reply does he get in 20:4? According to 20:5-6, how does he respond? What do you think of him so far?

6. According to 20:7-9, how do Ahab and the people take this provocation? In 20:10, what does Ben-Hadad say? In 20:11, how does Ahab answer him? In 20:12, what result does this have? What do you think of this situation?

7. In 20:13-14, what does the prophet say? In 20:15, what does Ahab do about it? By contrast, what battle plan does Ben-Hadad come up with in 20:16-18? Why? According to 20:19-21, what happens? What does this show about the relationship between God and Ahab?

8. In 20:22, what does the prophet advise? Why? What new theory do the Syrians come up with in 20:23? According to 20:24-25, how are they going to carry this out? What problem do the Syrians have?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TEN

9. In 20:8, what does Hezekiah ask for? Why might he want this? In 20:9-10, what do Hezekiah and Isaiah eventually settle on? In 20:11, what happens? What does this show?

10. What happens in 20:12? In 20:13, what does Hezekiah do about this? What conversation takes place between Hezekiah and Isaiah in 20:14-15? What does this show about Hezekiah?

11. In 20:16-18, what does Isaiah reveal? In 20:19, what does Hezekiah say about this? Why? What else does this show us about Hezekiah? Why is this important?

12. What else does Hezekiah do in 20:20? What does 20:21 say about him? What do we think of the legacy of Hezekiah?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TEN

5. What answer does Hezekiah get in 19:20? What description does God apply to the king of Assyria in 19:22-24? According to 19:25-26, who is actually responsible for the king of Assyria's success? In 19:27-28, what does He promise the king of Assyria? In 19:29-31, what does He promise Judah? What should we take from this?
6. What does God promise in 19:32-34? In 19:35-36, how is this fulfilled in the near term? In 19:37, how is it fulfilled in the long term? Why is this story meaningful to us?
7. What happens in 20:1? What does Isaiah say about this? In 20:2-3, how does Hezekiah react? What does this reveal about Hezekiah's character?
8. What happens in 20:4? How does 20:5 explain God's motivation? What does God reveal in 20:5-6? In 20:7, what instruction does Isaiah repeat? What does this show us about God?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON THREE

9. What situation does 20:26-27 describe? What promise does a man of God make in 20:28? In 20:29-30, what is the outcome of this? What does this show?
10. What does Ben-Hadad do in 20:30? In 20:31-32, what do he and his remaining servants do? How does Ahab take this? In 20:33-34, what do Ahab and Ben-Hadad do? What does this show about Ahab?
11. In 20:35, what does a son of the prophets do? What answer does he get? In 20:36, what result does this have? What happens in 20:37-38? What are we to make of these events?
12. In 20:39-40, what does the son of the prophets do? What does the king say? What point does the son of the prophets use this to make in 20:41-42? In 20:43, how does Ahab take this? What does this reveal about Ahab?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON FOUR:

Naboth's Vineyard

LESSON TEXT:

1 Kings 21-22

AHAB'S LEGACY

Ahab is one of the most complex characters in the Bible. He's not a straightforward villain like his wife or other kings too numerous to mention. There is good in Ahab, in his willingness to repent when God's prophets promise disaster, in his willingness to continue a sometimes-contentious dialogue with them.

However, Ahab never became one of the heroes of the Bible, and his life ultimately was not pleasing to God. His downfall was the result of his deficiencies of character. For all of his royal trappings, Ahab never really grew up. He let his wife trample the worship of God, he pouted when events didn't go his way, and he stood by and watched while she murdered an innocent man on his behalf. Perhaps most tellingly, any time a prophet of God warned him about his sin, he took it personally. Those prophets weren't warning Ahab because they had a word from God, who genuinely wanted him to repent. Instead, thought the king, the prophets spoke according to their own inclinations, because they hated poor Ahab and had it in for him. Ahab was destroyed not because of his firm allegiance to the forces of evil, but because he was too weak and self-pitying to obey.

Ahab's problems are strikingly modern ones. We live in a society that is so wealthy that we can indulge our whims like the kings of the ancient world indulged theirs, and this ease of life creates similarly self-indulgent people. When the gospel is preached to people like this, it has the same impact on them that the prophets' words had on Ahab. It's not gospel truth, hard to hear but necessary. It's a personal attack because the preacher or the whoever doesn't like them. This delusion is subtle but disastrous. If we respond to God's words like Ahab did, we will be certain to share his fate as well.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON TEN

1. In 2 Kings 19:1, what's the first thing that Hezekiah does when he learns of the Rabshakeh's words? In 19:2-4, what's the second thing he does? What should we learn from him?
2. In 19:6, what does God have to say about this? Why? In 19:7, what does He promise? What does this reveal about God?
3. In 19:8-9, what is the king of Assyria's situation? In 19:10-14, what does he do about it? What is he probably hoping to accomplish? What do you think of his strategy?
4. In 19:14, what does Hezekiah do with the letter from the king? In 19:15-16, how does he address the Lord? In 19:17-18, how does he distinguish between his situation and the situation of other enemies of Assyria? In 19:19, what does he ask for? How can we take him for our example today?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON TEN:

Hezekiah

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 19-20

HEZEKIAH'S SUCCESS

If we were to design the perfect Biblical hero, he probably wouldn't look like Hezekiah. There are several ways in which he does not impress us. When the Assyrians invaded, his first response was not to seek the Lord's help, but to try to buy the invaders off. When emissaries from the king of Babylon arrived, he foolishly showed them all of his treasures. Perhaps worst of all, Hezekiah was the father of Manasseh, his successor as king of Judah, the king who put the final nail in Judah's coffin. It is true that Hezekiah died when Manasseh was 12. Perhaps Hezekiah tried to use those 12 years to train his son. However, there's little evidence of that in what Manasseh actually did.

All that aside, though, despite Hezekiah's mistakes and failures, he got one thing right, and it was the important thing. He served the Lord faithfully and trusted in him. That was enough to rescue him from the Assyrian hordes, it was enough to save him from an illness that otherwise would have been fatal, and it was enough to give him an enduring name as a faithful servant of God.

Today, we need to evaluate our lives in the same light. None of us are perfect people. Like Hezekiah, our pasts may well be littered with mistakes and failures. However, in the final analysis, those things don't matter. What matters is whether we turn to the Lord like he did. Perhaps when we are gone, others will consider our legacy and mourn all of the things we should have done and didn't. The only essential thing, though, is obedience to God. If we do that, regardless of what else happens, it will ensure that our lives are successful after everything else we have done has faded into insignificance. Like Hezekiah, we may be flawed, but we can be faithful too.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FOUR

1. What property arrangement does 1 Kings 21:1 describe? In 21:2, what does Ahab want? In 21:3, what answer does he get? According to 21:4, how does he take this? How does this give us more insight into the character of Ahab?
2. What conversation takes place between Ahab and Jezebel in 21:5-7? According to 21:8-10, what plan does Jezebel develop? In 21:11-14, what are the results of her plan? What happens in 21:15? What does this show about Jezebel?
3. In 21:17-19, what does God tell Elijah to say to Ahab? According to 21:20, how does Ahab greet Elijah? What problem does this reveal in him? How can we avoid this problem today?
4. In 21:20-24, what does Elijah prophesy about Ahab? How is this explained in 21:25-26? In 21:27, how does Ahab take this? What is God's response to Ahab in 21:28-29? What does this show about Ahab? What does it show about God?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FOUR

5. What's the situation in 22:1? According to 22:2-4, what do Ahab and Jehoshaphat decide to do about this? In 22:5, what does Jehoshaphat want to do first? In 22:6, what does Ahab do? What happens? What principle does this illustrate?

6. In 22:7, what else does Jehoshaphat want? What answer does he get in 22:8? What results from this in 22:9? According to 22:10-12, what's the setting like for Micaiah's prophecy? What pressures would this have put on him? What does this teach us?

7. In 22:13, what does the messenger say to Micaiah? How does Micaiah answer in 22:14? What does this tell us about him?

8. In 22:15, what does Ahab do? How does Micaiah answer him? According to 22:16, how does Ahab take this? In 22:17, how does Micaiah answer him this time? According to 22:18, what reaction does this provoke from Ahab? What are we to make of this exchange?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON NINE

9. Who is speaking in 18:19? In 18:20-24, what problems with Judah's position does he point out? What claim does he make in 18:25? What do we think of his words here?

10. What request do the leaders of Judah make in 18:26? In 18:27, how does the Rabshakeh answer them? What does this show about the frame of mind of both sides?

11. In 18:28-29, what does the Rabshakeh warn the people of Judah against? In 18:31-32, what bargain does he offer? What boast does he make in 18:32-35? At this point, what can we safely predict is going to happen?

12. What reply does the Rabshakeh get in 18:36? What do the leaders of Judah do in 18:37? What does this reveal about their thoughts? In what way are these thoughts justified? In what way are they not justified?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON NINE

5. According to 17:29, what are these people still doing? How does 17:33 describe them? Can we make the same mistake today? If so, how? What group do these people eventually become?

6. In 18:1-2, who begins to reign? According to 18:3, what is he like? What does he specifically do in 18:4? What is the significance of these actions?

7. How does 18:5 generally describe Hezekiah? How does 18:6 explain this description? In 18:7-8, what results does this have? What does this show?

8. What happens in 18:13? In 18:14-16, what does Hezekiah do about this? According to 18:17-18, does this work? What lesson should we learn from this?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FOUR

9. In 22:19-22, what events does Micaiah relate? How does he explain the other prophets in 22:23? How do we square this story with the truthful nature of God? Job 1:6, Romans 1:28, and 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12 may be useful in answering this question.

10. According to 1 Kings 22:24, what does Zedekiah do when Micaiah finishes prophesying? What does Micaiah say in 22:25? What exchange takes place between Micaiah and Ahab in 22:26-28? What will happen to Micaiah if Ahab does return safely? What does this show about Micaiah's faith?

11. What plan do Ahab and Jehoshaphat devise in 22:29-30? In 22:31-33, what result does this have? What does this teach us about attempts to circumvent God's will?

12. What happens in 22:34? In 22:34-37, what results from this? What event does 22:38 describe? Why is this significant? What can we learn from the life of Ahab?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON FIVE:

Elisha, Part 1

LESSON TEXTS:

2 Kings 2, 5

TRANSITIONS

Elijah's tenure as prophet was notable for many things: his spirited resistance to the evil promoted by Jezebel, his outspokenness in times of conflict, and even his ability to call fire down from heaven on altars and soldiers alike. However, one of the most significant things that Elijah did was to prepare his successor to follow in his footsteps.

To be sure, this wasn't Elijah's idea. God told him to anoint Elisha as the prophet who would come after him. However, it is striking that this is one of the few places in Scripture where we see anyone making a big deal about preparing another to step into his shoes. Moses and Joshua, David and Solomon, and Jesus and His apostles are the only other prominent examples we have of this kind of behavior.

What's interesting, though, is that only in the cases where a man took such care to shape his successor did that succession produce useful results. Elisha, Joshua, Solomon, and the apostles of our Lord all did an excellent job of promoting God's purposes, but they were also all men who were set up to succeed.

By contrast, the heroes of Scripture who didn't work to mentor others usually didn't have successors who sustained their momentum. Hezekiah, Josiah, and all the judges led revivals that died just about as soon as they did. The future is hard on those who don't prepare.

The lesson for us in this is plain. It's not enough for us to work for the Lord, or even to succeed in the work of the Lord. Instead, we must also look to prepare and train those who will assume our roles after we aren't around anymore. That's what the kingdom needs.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON NINE

1. Whom do we meet in 2 Kings 17:1? According to 17:2, what's he like? What sequence of events does 17:3-6 describe? What's the importance of this?
2. What basic explanation of the fall of Israel does 17:7 give? What specifics does 17:7-12 enumerate? What picture does this paint for us?
3. According to 17:13, how does God react to this provocation? According to 17:14, how do the people of Israel take this? In 17:15-17, what specifics are spelled out? According to 17:18, what result does this have? What should we learn from this?
4. What happens in 17:24? According to 17:25, what are these people like? What problem emerges? In 17:26-28, what does the king of Assyria do about this? What's the problem here?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON NINE:

The Assyrian
Invasion

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 17-18

CONSEQUENCES

As a rule, human beings have trouble seeing the world the way that it actually is. We carry many illusions with us, and one of the most pervasive of those illusions is the illusion of control. We like to believe that we are the captains of our own fate, and we prefer to continue believing it until some life-event juggernaut comes along and hammers us into the ground. Then, we know better.

Among the countless men and women who have had their illusions of control brutally shattered, we must number Hoshea king of Israel. He thought he could do like many of his predecessors had done: play Assyria off against Egypt and maintain some measure of independence. He thought wrong. The Assyrian king sent a massive army against his country that rolled over it like a flood. Hoshea was carried off to prison; the whole Israelite nation was exiled.

After the Assyrians finish off the Israelites, they move on to the kingdom of Judah. All of Judah's fortified cities are speedily taken until only Jerusalem is left. The remnant of Jewish officials knows the Assyrians are coming for them next, and there's nothing they can do about it either.

In times like these, when we are faced with a foe beyond our power to combat, the only possible helper is God. Hoshea's real problem wasn't the Assyrians. It was that he had to face the Assyrians without the Lord. He wasn't as wicked as many of his predecessors had been, but he wasn't righteous enough to gain the Lord's favor either. As a result, he was remorselessly crushed. Only Hezekiah, who was a righteous king, had reason to face a hopeless situation with hope. We are all well served to seek the Lord now so we have Him then.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FIVE

1. What situation does 2 Kings 2:1 describe? What exchange occurs in 2:2 and is repeated in 2:4 and 2:6? What further exchange takes place in 2:3 and is repeated in 2:5? Why is all this taking place?
2. What happens in 2:7-8? What does Elijah ask in 2:9? How does Elisha answer him? What does Elijah say about this in 2:10? Why is this discussion significant?
3. What happens in 2:11-12? In 2:13, what does Elisha do? What happens in 2:14? In 2:15, how do the sons of the prophets take this? Why are these events important?
4. What do the sons of the prophets want to do in 2:16? What does Elisha say about this? In 2:17, what does happen? According to 2:18, what comes of this? What does this show about the end of Elijah?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FIVE

5. What problem do the sons of the prophets bring to Elisha in 2:19? In 2:20-22, how does Elisha resolve this? What other problem appears in 2:23? How is this resolved in 2:24-25? What do these things show about Elisha as a prophet?
6. Whom do we meet in 5:1? What is he like? What unlikely solution to his problems emerges in 5:2-5? What do his actions here say about his desperation?
7. What does Naaman do in 5:6? In 5:7, how does the king of Israel take this? What does Elisha say about the situation in 5:8? Why? What should we learn from this?
8. What does Naaman do in 5:9? In 5:10, how does Elisha deal with him? According to 5:11-12, how does Naaman react to this? What problem does this illustrate? Can we encounter the same problem today? If so, where?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON EIGHT

9. What happens in 24:15-16? In 24:17-18, what result does this have? According to 24:19, how does God handle the situation? Does this work? Can we see similar problems today? How can we avoid them?
10. What does God do in 24:20? According to 24:21, what result does this have? According to 24:22, what does this show about Joash? What does Zechariah exclaim as he is dying? What should we learn from this?
11. What happens in 24:23? How does 24:24 explain it? What lesson does this contain for us?
12. In the beginning of 24:25, what is Joash's status? What happens to him? Where is he buried? How does this compare with the fate of Jehoiada? What does this show?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON EIGHT

5. In 11:17, what does Jehoiada do? In 11:18-19, what result does this have? According to 11:20, what is the status of Judah? What does this show about Jehoiada?

6. In 2 Chronicles 24:1-3, how is Joash described? Why does he behave this way? What future problems does this imply?

7. What does Joash do in 24:4-5? What problems arise? In 24:6, how does Joash address them? What explanation for all this is given in 24:7? What does this reveal about the state of the religious establishment of Judah?

8. In 24:8-11, what financial arrangements are made? According to 24:12-13, what is done with the money? In 24:14, what further arrangements are made? What does this reveal about the importance of leadership?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON FIVE

9. What does one of Naaman's servants say in 5:13? In consequence, what does Naaman do in 5:14? What result does this have? What does Naaman say about this in 5:15? What should this teach us?

10. What does Naaman want to do in 5:15? In 5:16, what does Elisha say about this? In 5:17-19, how is this eventually resolved? What does this tell us about genuine miracle-workers?

11. What does Elisha's servant Gehazi decide to do in 5:20? In 5:21-24, what result does this have? Why is Gehazi doing this?

12. What does Elisha ask Gehazi in 5:25? What does Gehazi tell him? What does Elisha reveal in 5:26? In 5:27, what comes from this? What should this story teach us?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON SIX:

Elisha, Part 2

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 6-7

OUTNUMBERED

Elisha's servant in 2 Kings 6 might well have concluded that some mornings, it's just not worth getting out of bed. He's with his master in the insignificant town of Dothan, and he arises to find that a whole Syrian army has surrounded the village, most likely with the goal of killing Elisha (and his servant too!). Naturally, the servant becomes concerned about this and runs to tell Elisha.

The prophet, by contrast, doesn't seem particularly worried. He informs his servant, contrary to the servant's own observation, that they have the bad guys outnumbered, and then he proves his point by revealing to his eyes the fiery host of the Lord on the mountain. Those who were for "us" really were more than those for "them".

Today, we often face the same challenge. Few, if any Christians live in communities where most people are faithful children of God. Instead, we face a world that seems increasingly hostile to our faith. Growing numbers of people proclaim that they have no interest in God at all, music, television and movies are filled with every variety of ungodly filth, evil practices of every kind are tolerated and even embraced, and when the righteous speak about what they believe, they are condemned as intolerant bigots. It seems that the devil once again has God's people outnumbered.

However, once again the reality is very different from the perception. The devil's servants today, just like the devil's servants 2800 years ago, have no power to harm us. God won't let them. We are only in danger if we allow them to overawe us so that we forsake the protection He provides. Once again, those who are for us are more than those who are for them. God will take care of us.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON EIGHT

1. In 2 Kings 11:1, whom do we meet? Whose mother is she? Whose daughter is she? 2 Chronicles 21:5-6 may help. What does she try to do? According to 2 Kings 11:2-3, what happens to defeat her plan? Why is this significant for the story of the Bible as a whole?
2. Whom do we encounter in 11:4? What does he do? In 1:5-8, what instructions does he give? In 11:9-11, how are these carried out? In 11:12, what happens? What's going on here?
3. What does Athaliah do in 11:13? In 11:14, what does she see? What does she exclaim? What is ironic about this?
4. What does Jehoiada command in 11:15? Why? In 11:16, what result does this have? What do we think of Athaliah's legacy?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON EIGHT:

Joash

LESSON TEXTS:

2 Kings 11

2 Chronicles 24

JEHOIADA'S FAILURE

The high priest Jehoiada is one of the most noteworthy descendants of Aaron during the entire time of the kings. He willingly risked his own neck to care for the young and defenseless Joash, he put together the counter-revolution against the wicked usurper Athaliah, and he guided Joash to serve the Lord as king for as long as he remained alive. Jehoiada lived such an honorable and useful life that he was granted the rare

honor of being buried with the kings, the only high priest to receive that accolade.

However, as was the case with so many Bible heroes, the effect of Jehoiada's life didn't continue after his passing. Even though Jehoiada was able to give Joash wise counsel while he was still alive, he never succeeded in instilling in him the faith that would survive Jehoiada's own death. Once Jehoiada was gone, Joash returned to the wicked ways of too many of his fathers, killing Jehoiada's own son in the process.

This highlights a danger for parents and for anyone who is concerned about the spiritual welfare of young people. It's easy for us to fall into the trap of making children "do the right thing." As long as they're up, scrubbed, and off to Bible class (because we made them go), as long as they aren't hanging around with the wrong crowd (because we won't let them), we're succeeding as parents.

That kind of behavior control from on high is a start, but it's only a start. Sooner or later, just about every child will reach the point where his parents can't control him anymore. Our responsibility now has to be to train them to make the right decisions then.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SIX

1. What do we find the sons of the prophets doing in 2 Kings 6:1-4? In 6:5, what problem arises? According to 6:6-7, how does Elisha deal with the problem? Why do you think this story is included in the Bible?
2. In 6:8, what does the king of Syria do? According to 6:9, how does Elisha react? In 6:10, what result does this have? What does this tell us about the relationship between God and Israel?
3. In 6:11, what does the king of Syria demand? In 6:12, how does one of his servants answer him? According to 6:13-14, what does the king decide to do? What flaw in this plan should have occurred to him?
4. In 6:15, what does Elisha's servant do? In 6:16, what does Elisha say about this? In 6:17, how does Elisha explain his perspective? In 6:18-19, what happens? What lesson should God's people learn from this?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SIX

5. What happens in 6:20? In 6:21, what does the king of Israel ask? In 6:22, how does Elisha answer him? What does the king do in 6:23? Does this conflict with God's desire to see Ahab destroy Ben-Hadad? Why or why not?
6. What situation does 6:24-25 describe? What happens to the king of Israel in 6:26? In 6:27-29, what does he learn? What does this anecdote show us?
7. In 6:30, what does the king do when he hears this story? What does he vow in 6:31? What common mistake is he making?
8. In 6:32, what is Elisha doing? What does he say? What happens in 6:33? What's wrong with the messenger's attitude?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SEVEN

9. In 10:18-19, what does Jehu proclaim? In 10:20-22, what does he do? What precautions does he take in 10:23-24? What do we think of Jehu's cunning? What do we think of his character?
10. What does Jehu command in 10:24? In 10:25, how is this carried out? In 10:26-28, what else happens? What do we think of Jehu's purge?
11. According to 10:29, what does Jehu not do? Nonetheless, what does God say about him in 10:30? What does this teach us about God?
12. How is Jehu described in 10:31? In 10:32-33, what results from this? In 10:35, what happens to Jehu? What do we think of the life of Jehu?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SEVEN

5. What events are recorded in 9:27-29? How does this compare with 2 Chronicles 22:7-9? Can we reconcile these two accounts? If so, how? Why is this important?
6. According to 2 Kings 9:30-31, how does Jezebel react to these events? What does Jehu do in 9:32-33? In 9:34-35, what results from this? How does 9:36-37 explain this? What do we think of the life of Jezebel?
7. What does Jehu do in 10:1-3? In 10:4-5, how do the great men of Samaria react? What does Jehu command in 10:6? What do the Samaritans do about this in 10:7-8? In 10:9-11, how does Jehu react? What does this show us about Jehu?
8. Whom does Jehu meet in 10:12-13? In 10:14, what does he do? What happens in 10:15? What does Jehu say in 10:16? In 10:17, how does he express this? What should we learn from this?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SIX

9. What does Elisha declare in 7:1? In 7:2, what reaction does he get? In what way are the captain's words wise? In what way are they foolish?
10. Whom do we meet in 7:3? In 7:3-4, what do they decide to do? In 7:5-7, what do they find? In 7:8, what do they do? What does this teach us about God's ability to deliver?
11. In 7:9-10, what do the lepers do? In 7:11-12, how does the king react? In 7:13, what does one of his servants advise? In 7:14-15, what outcome does this have? What does this reveal about the king?
12. In 7:16, what do the people do? Why should this have been expected? In 7:17, what else happens? How does 7:18-20 explain this? What does this show about the dangers of faithlessness?

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED

LESSON SEVEN:

Jehu

LESSON TEXT:

2 Kings 9-10

JEZEBEL

The entrance of the brutal and thug-gish Jehu upon the political stage of Israel marks the end of the rule of the house of Omri and its most prominent in-law, Jezebel. The Israelite queen is one of the most despised women in the entire Bible, surpassing even such worthies as Delilah and Herodias. Indeed, the noun "jezebel" has even passed into English as a synonym for "prostitute", though the only textual evidence that

Jezebel was sexually immoral comes from the lips of Jehu, who was about as trustworthy as an urgent e-mail from a Nigerian prince.

Indeed, from a certain point of view, Jezebel's virtues are many and prominent. She was extremely religious, both advocating her faith tirelessly and generously supporting those who proclaimed it. When her husband proved too timid to do what she felt needed to be done, she stepped up and did it for him. After his passing, she continued to hold on to power as the matriarch of her family, ensuring several generations of peaceful succession in a time of turmoil. When her death came at the bloody hands of Jehu, she met it bravely and unflinchingly. In outline, her life was similar to that of many great Biblical heroes.

However, Jezebel had one problem. All of her energies were devoted to serving Baal, not God. Rather than helping her husband, she murdered for him, bringing the wrath of God down on her entire house. Her brave death only led to her eternal defeat.

We too could be Jezebels. We could spend our lives afire with zeal for exactly the wrong thing. It's not enough for us to want to serve God. We have to know what He wants if we want to please Him.

SO ISRAEL WAS EXILED: LESSON SEVEN

1. What instructions does Elisha give in 2 Kings 9:1-3? In 9:4-6, how are they carried out? What additional explanation do 9:7-10 give? What does this tell us about God?
2. In 9:11-12, what conversation occurs between Jehu and his fellows? In 9:13-14, what result does this have? What does 9:15 reveal about the current king of Israel? What solution does Jehu propose in 9:15-16? What do we think of the conspiracy so far?
3. What happens in 9:17? In 9:18-19, what result does this have? In 9:20, what does Joram learn? In 9:21, what does he do? What is ironic about this location?
4. What conversation takes place in 9:22? In 9:23, what does Joram do about this? In 9:24-26, what happens as a result? Why does it happen? What does this show about the word of the Lord?