



# 2 KINGS DEVOTIONAL

By Pastor Phil Emerson

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

## OUR DISCIPLESHIP FLOW

At Emmanuel Church, we are passionate about living out the call to be disciples of Jesus Christ, and make it our goal to see His Kingdom come in our lives and the world in which we live. We recognise that in Biblical times, a disciple was someone who followed a teacher or rabbi, not simply to gain head knowledge to pass an examination, but to be fully immersed in the life of the rabbi, and *learn his ways*, so that they in turn could replicate this to the world around them. As Christians, we are now those who have been invited to 'follow' Jesus and all of His ways, and we therefore call ourselves His disciples.

*"This is how we know we are in him: Whoever claims to live in him must live as Jesus did." 1 John 2:5,6*

We therefore want to take seriously the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20 to make disciples and also commit to an ongoing journey of teaching and discipleship together.

We all have differing personalities and learning styles. At Emmanuel, we recognise this diversity within the church body and therefore desire to support and journey together as we relate with God and each other in some of the following environments:

- **Public (20+)**

In the Bible, we see Jesus seeking to make disciples as He engaged with larger numbers of people, e.g., His interaction with the crowds (Matthew 4:25; Luke 14:25), and the 72 (Luke 10:1-24).

At Emmanuel, we want to use each of our **larger gathered environments** as an opportunity to make disciples, e.g., **Sunday services, Friday Youth/Kids'** environments, **men's/women's** gatherings.

- **Social (10-15)**

Jesus demonstrated the necessity for **smaller accountable relationships** as an essential part of the life of a disciple. He did this by teaching and doing life with his twelve disciples (e.g., Matthew 10).

At Emmanuel, small accountable relationships are offered through:

**Lifegroup 12s**

These are **gatherings of 10-15 people** who meet bi-weekly in homes or around specific interests, e.g., crafts, football.

- **Personal (2-5)**

As well as having smaller accountable relationships amongst His twelve friends, Jesus also seemed to go to even deeper levels of trust with three in particular – Peter, James and John (Matthew 17; Mark 9). At Emmanuel, we seek to do this through:

**Lifegroup 3s**

These are smaller **gatherings of 2-5 people** who are committed to transparent and accountable relationships in order to grow together in following Jesus. The aim for these groups is that after 1-2 years, each person in the group would be able to lead a smaller number of people themselves and replicate the process... **disciples making disciples!**

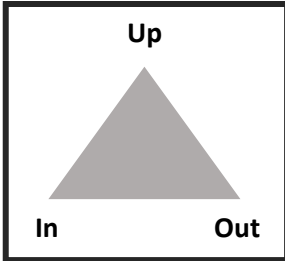
- **Intimate (1-1)**

Jesus regularly withdrew to spend time alone with the Father. This is the ultimate goal of discipleship, that each member of our church family would increasingly spend time alone with the Father and grow in devotion and desire to see the Kingdom come.



## A TOOL TO USE

As stated previously, 1 John 2:6 makes it clear that for those of us who call ourselves disciples of Jesus, our goal should be to daily *walk in the ways of Jesus*, our Rabbi. As we examine the New Testament we see that Jesus lived His life based on three relationships: **Up** – with His Father; **In** – with His chosen followers; **Out** – with the hurting world around Him. This is illustrated in the following triangle:



Jesus *taught* and *modelled* out to His disciples how to live into each of these areas in life.

### Up

Jesus frequently left the disciples to spend personal time with the Father (Mark 1:35; Luke 5:16). He taught them the significance of prayer, and how to pray and communicate with the Father (Luke 11:1-13). When comparisons with one another or insecurities presented themselves, He spoke into it in love and challenged them into a greater depth of living (Mark 9:33-37; Matthew 18:1-5).

### In

Jesus had significant relationships with others in which He intentionally invested (12s and 3s). When He went to engage with the Father He brought the three with Him (Matthew 17:1). He taught them and modelled out the significance of Sabbath and rhythms of rest (Mark 6:31). He demonstrated with His life the significance of generosity and sacrificial love for others (John 13:1-17).

### Out

Jesus personally lived a life that engaged with the crowds and the broken world around Him. He healed the sick (Matthew 8:1-4), fed the poor (Mark 6:30-44), and cast out demons (Matthew 8:28-34). But with the people who were closest to Him, He challenged them to do the same (Mark 6:37), and when they took risks themselves He critiqued and gave honest feedback to call out more for them (Luke 10:17-20).

As we spend time alone or together in this devotional, we want to help and encourage you to engage in each of these ways – UP, IN, and OUT.

# HOW TO USE THE BOOK

## First

If you haven't already done so, please take a second to fill in your name on the inside of the front cover. There'll be a lot of identical books floating around, and we don't want yours to get lost.

## Prepare

Get ready for each session by spending some time to invite the Holy Spirit to speak to you. The Bible is a written word (logos), which becomes a living word (rhema) as the Holy Spirit breathes upon it and speaks directly to our lives through it.

## Commit

Commit to the journey. Discipleship is not a commitment to a moment, but to a lifetime journey. As you personally commit to journeying with God daily, commit to others by sharing what you are learning (possibly in Lifegroup 12s or 3s), and in this way encouraging one another in what God is saying.

## Reflect & Respond

Each day, as you spend personal time with God, we encourage you to ask the following two questions:

- 1) What is God saying to me?
- 2) What am I going to do about it?

**This is how we become doers and not just hearers of what God is saying.**

## INTRODUCTION TO 2 KINGS

2 Kings is a history book containing many important lessons for us today. It continues the story of the nations of Israel and Judah, and describes how the kings of these nations refused to obey God's law. The kings and their people did not respect God; instead, they served evil gods. The behaviour of the people was very wicked. However, there were a few people who truly served God. God sent His prophets to warn the evil people. Sadly, the nations of Israel and Judah would not obey the words of the prophets and God allowed enemy nations to attack. These nations destroyed Israel and, as we will see later, Judah.

2 Kings begins with the end of the story of Elijah, the great prophet of God. He was followed by Elisha who himself became a great prophet. (Indeed, Elisha's work was even greater than Elijah's work.) We will meet horrible, evil Jezebel and her flaky husband, Ahab. We will read of evil Queen Athaliah who tried to kill the whole royal family. We will meet a little boy named Joash who was hidden and became a man of reform and good. We will be introduced to Josiah's granddad, good King Hezekiah, and his son (Josiah's dad), Manasseh, who was marked as the evilest of all the kings.

We can learn from the book of 2 Kings that we must serve God only. We must not serve false gods. We must listen to God's words always.

This is a great history book, so, let's get going. Get the sleeves rolled up, grab your Bible, journal, pen, and a cuppa. Enjoy!

Love and prayers,  
Phil

**Live**

Because 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book, this book is really a continuation of the same story. The reign of Ahab was a spiritual disaster for the northern kingdom but it was a time of political security and economic prosperity. After Ahab's death, the kingdom of Moab found an opportunity to remove their nation from the domination of Israel. Moab had been under Israelite rule since the days of David (as we read in 2 Samuel 8:2,12). This rebellion of Moab in the days of Ahaziah signifies the decline of Israel's power and the judgment of God. The saddest thing about this passage is that the people and leaders of Israel had gone after pagan gods for so long that they could not distinguish between imaginary, impotent gods of the pagan world and Yahweh, the LORD God of Israel. They thought that Yahweh was just as powerless as their own useless gods. Oh, how we can allow the world to dilute our faith in Christ! If this goes unchecked, the result is that we grieve and then completely quench the Spirit and become inactive.

It's interesting to see the reaction of Elijah to the third group that came to look for him. He must have detected sincerity in this captain's heart as he was allowed to live and the Lord spoke to Elijah. These days of the kings and prophets were definitely rare times. I, for one, am very thankful to live in the day of God's grace under the New Covenant with Jesus as my Lord and Saviour. Let's be thankful for the Lord Jesus. He is our righteousness, holiness, and redemption. We can trust Him as our substitute, and we can own Him as our example. Jesus fulfilled the demands of the law for us, and now He is fulfilling the beauty of the law in us. His death for us is our guarantee of redemption, and His life in us is our hope of glory. Nothing can separate us from the love of God, and nothing can separate us from the God of love.

**Pray**

Father, may I allow nothing to dilute my love and faith in You. I can live without most things and most people, but I can't live without You. You are my Author and my Finisher, my First and my Last. I love You and I rest in You today. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

## 2 Kings 2

### Live

I love this story of Elisha's determination to see Elijah taken up to heaven. Elijah continued to test the devotion of Elisha, and Elisha continued to stay with his mentor until his anticipated, unusual departure. When it happened, it was the end of a remarkable ministry, one similar in many ways to the ministry of Moses. Both Moses and Elijah stood alone for righteousness, were associated with fire upon mountains, met God on Sinai, were chased out of their countries by pagan rulers, knew God's miraculous provision of food and water, wandered in the desert for a period measured by forty, fasted forty days, were powerful examples of prayer, parted waters, had close associates who succeeded them, had successors who also parted waters, and had mysterious deaths. Any wonder these two boys are my heroes!

I confess my fascination of Old Testament heroes, especially Moses and Elijah. They were relentless in their stance for God and their example leaves me in awe of them. And yet, they were just as human as I am and had their faults, failings, and weaknesses. It is God's love for us humans that amazes me so much. I love this passage in 1 John 3:1-3, *"See what great love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know Him. Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure."* These familiar verses expose my unbelief and fuel my hope every time I read them. Let's praise our Heavenly Father for not only loving Moses and Elijah, but for lavishing His love upon us as well – His super-abundant, immeasurable, irrevocable, boundless love. Pretty cool, I think!

### Pray

Father, people's opinions about me can change in a split second and that doesn't worry me much anymore. What fills me with delight is that Your love for me is steadfast, impassioned, joyful, and eternal. That's why I love You so much. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

Joram came from a family that was beyond dysfunctional. We read that he clung to the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. The sins of Israel's kings are often measured up against the sins of Jeroboam because he was the first king and paved a way for evil by leading the nation into idol worship and away from the true and living God, Yahweh. Joram's father, Ahab, was one of the worst kings the northern kingdom of Israel ever knew and his mother, Jezebel, was certainly the worst queen. Joram was better than his father and mother (which wouldn't have been hard) but he was still a wicked man. He was the ninth consecutive bad king over the northern kingdom which never had a godly king.

Jehoshaphat was a good king over the southern kingdom, following in the godly footsteps of his father, Asa. Asa fought against Israel while Jehoshaphat made peace with the northern kingdom. Though greater Israel was long since separated by a civil war, the two nations (Judah and Israel) were now willing to come together to fight a common foe. Both Jehoram and Jehoshaphat believed there was a spiritual, divine element to their current crisis. Both Israel and Judah were in possession of land that neighbouring nations wanted. Jehoram believed that God was to be avoided because of the crisis, while Jehoshaphat believed that God should be *sought* because of the crisis. Interesting to think about where a crisis in life diverts us.

Today, we are challenged about the things we run to when we are under pressure. Jehoram ran away from God to everything else while Jehoshaphat ran towards God. I find verse 11 really sad. The king asked if there was no prophet in the land to enquire of the Lord through. Just a few generations earlier, it would have been unheard of to rule without the assistance of an in-house, on-call, 24-7 prophet. Now none could be found!

### Pray

Father, Your banner over me is love, and Your desire for me is constant. I have become Your inheritance, Your beloved treasure and child. And I have been made co-heir with Jesus in the new heaven and new earth. Who can measure such a spectacular standing in grace? In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

In this amazing chapter, we have the story of miraculous provision for a widow and a son for a barren woman. I love what Spurgeon's notes say about the widow. "*She did what she was commanded to do: she did it in faith; and the result answered the end. God takes care to deliver his servants in ways that exercise their faith. He would not have them be little in faith, for faith is the wealth of the heavenly life.*" I love that. In this story, the woman kept going until there wasn't another pot to be found. The moment she dried up her resources, the oil stopped flowing. I think the lesson to us today is, never stop short; keep on until you have resourced every pot!

The story of the barren woman receiving a promise she didn't ask for and then pursuing it when it was robbed is incredible. I believe we need this faith in our spirits today. If you track through the story and look at her tenacity and faith, it will astound you. Her promise had died to all but her. She was not prepared to let it go and pursued unashamedly the man of God to deliver on his promise. One interesting little section is in verse 29 where Elisha sends his servant to lay the staff on the boy. Perhaps he had done this before and it had worked, but now a new method is required; it would be one of intimacy where the prophet lies on top of the boy, mouth to mouth, eyes to eyes, hands to hands. Miraculously, the boy's life returns.

Such lessons in faith make me a little ashamed and even embarrassed before God. These two ladies show us the utter importance of believing against all odds. May God grant us grace to grow a deeper and richer experience of belonging to Him, for He is the ultimate Friend, the One we always wanted—the One with whom we will enjoy perfect intimacy, bliss, and joy forever. May this good news be more than our theology; may it be our song, passion, and delight.

**Pray**

Father, when I get disconnected from Your pursuit and Your love of me, I grow vulnerable. Temptation looms, discontent festers. Roaming hearts become foolish hearts. Keep my faith strong and my eyes on You, my Saviour and my Lord. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Naaman was the military commander of a persistent enemy to both Israel and Judah. As recently as the days of Ahab and Jehoshaphat, Syria had fought against Israel and won (see 1 Kings 22:35-36). Naaman's position and success made him a great man. He was a mighty man of valour.

The young girl illustrates the mysterious way God works. She was probably raised in a godly home but taken from her family at a young age, an irreplaceable loss for her parents. And yet, she was greatly used in a simple way. I love verse 3 where she says, *"If only my master were with the prophet who is in Samaria, he would cure him of his leprosy!"* This young girl was an outstanding example of a faithful witness in her current circumstance. She *cared* enough to speak up, and she had *faith* enough to believe that Elisha would heal Naaman of his leprosy. Here is a massive challenge to us all today – care enough to speak and have enough faith to believe.

While Naaman's leprosy was an external disease, he had a much more poisonous disease that lurked inside him, one that lurks in every one of us as well. It's the disease of pride. Elisha knew how to hammer that out of him and eventually Naaman relinquished his inner folly and the outer skin became as white as snow. God always works from the inside out!

The challenge today is that I become more aggressive in my love for the lost, broken and sick, and that I become bolder in my faith. Maybe today we need to pray for friends who feel helplessly and frustratingly distant from Jesus, those who affirm the gospel with their lips but whose hearts are disconnected from the wonders of His love. Whatever the cause of the weariness and weakness, may He renew, restore, and refresh. And for our own hearts, may the disease of pride be gone forever.

**Pray**

Father, You know where I struggle the most and trust You the least. You know my most difficult relationships, persistent fears, and nagging weaknesses. Grant me the mercy and grace I need today for healing and freedom. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

### Live

I love this story so much, even more as I've got older. I read and see how Elisha leads and releases the younger generation. They come to him looking to expand because the place where they were had become too small. Obviously, there had been substantial growth. When Elisha gives his permission, they ask if he would consider going with them. He agrees. How cool is that. He frees them to go, but the ties are so strong they want him to go too. It's good he did because when they arrive at their new site, trouble comes and the old guy knew what to do. Experience is a great thing that can't be bought, just earned and developed.

There was no trickery in the way Elisha put the stick in the water; it was simply an expression of his faith that God honoured. Spurgeon's notes suggest: *"God can do all things, he can make iron swim – we cannot – and yet you see the prophet did it, and he did it by the use of a stick. He cut down a stick. Was there any connection between the stick and the iron? I can't see any, and yet God does use means, and he would have us use means."*

Verse 7 says *"lift it out"*. God could have arranged a way for the axe head to appear in the man's hand without any effort on his part. But this miracle worked in a familiar way – God did the part only He could do, but He left to man the part he could do. It always excites me that God allows us to participate in His great plans. We know God is merciful and we've been taught that He provides grace and mercy in spite of our behaviour and in spite of our sins. God comes to those who call upon Him and we need Him now more than ever. All of our stuff is known to Him who created all things by the word of His power. Nothing is hidden from Him.

### Pray

Father, at times, I sin knowing it's a sin. I can say "I'm just human" but that's no excuse. Thank You that in spite of all this, You use and allow me to participate with You in the redemptive planning of the kingdom. I love this. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Even though the king of Israel blamed the Lord for the calamity that came upon Israel and Samaria, God still had a word for the king and the nation, and it was a good word, *“Tomorrow about this time...”*. God’s promise through Elisha was that in twenty-four hours, the economic situation in Samaria would be completely reversed. Instead of scarcity, there would be such abundance that food prices in the city would radically drop. The officer doubted the prophecy. His doubt was based on several faulty premises.

First, the officer of the king doubted the *power* of God. His understanding was temporal; the city was closed in on all sides; the only way in was the sky (and helicopters were still much in the future!) Because of that, he then doubted the *creativity* of God. He had no idea how God could bring provision in a completely unexpected way. (Before we point the accusing finger, we should ponder our own lack of belief. While we may not be surrounded by a physical army, we are assailed by many pressures and trials.) The officer also doubted the *messenger* of God. Though, admittedly, the promise was hard to believe, he could have, and should have, believed it because it came from a man with an established track record of reliability.

I love verse 9 where four lepers are heard saying to each other, *“What we’re doing is not right. This is a day of good news and we are keeping it to ourselves.”* Isn’t it true that we have so much in Christ, we dare not keep it to ourselves? There is so much in this passage today that reminds us of all that we have in Christ. Our cup is full and running over for others, so may God give us the boldness and courage to spread His name. I know that we are imperfect people living in imperfect times. We need God’s grace in a mighty way, especially when it comes to evangelism. May we be protected from the things that pull us away from Him and live as God would desire us to live. May His desire be our desire.

**Pray**

Father, my cry and prayer to You today is that every mountain of doubt and fear that holds me back from trusting in the power, creativity, and message of the kingdom be torn down. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Read

# 2 Kings 8

## Live

I love this story of the Shunammite woman whom we met in chapter 4. Seven years she had been absent from the land of Jehovah. During that period, she lived in Philistine surroundings. Her spirit must often have been grieved at the idolatrous sights she would have witnessed. The Shunammite came back to her home to find that, in her long absence, her house and lands had been taken from her. So, she goes to the king to appeal. We know from chapter 4 that she was far from shy! Just as the Shunammite approached with her request, the king and Gehazi (Elisha's servant) were talking of the wonderful works of the prophet. Gehazi was relating to the king how Elisha restored the dead son of the Shunammite to life. How weird, you may think, that this should be the subject of conversation at that very moment! Of course, it was God who ordered that this should come about.

As Gehazi was speaking, the Shunammite and her son stood before them and cried to the king. No doubt in great surprise, Gehazi said, *"My lord, O king, this is the woman, and this is her son, whom Elisha restored to life."* I imagine the king would have been pretty startled. The woman was asked to state her plea and her request was granted at once. Not only were her house and land restored to her, but recompense was made for all the fruits of the field since the day she left it. She received back in abundance all she possessed. She got not only justice, but also generosity. How good it is to be a friend of God! Romans 8:31 reminds us that, *"If God be for us, who can be against us?"*

I find this chapter both interesting and disturbing. When Elisha speaks to Hazael in verses 7-15, he sees right into his heart and sees the wicked intent. Wow. Summing this chapter up, I would say, guard your heart today; the devil is out to steal, kill, and destroy.

## Pray

Father, I readily lift my hands to praise and worship You in corporate worship, yet You prefer those same hands to be extended to the hungry and thirsty, strangers and unclothed, sick and imprisoned. What more could I possibly want to do with the rest of my life than to love You as You love to be loved? In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

In this chapter, we see the judgment of God coming to land on several shady individuals, none shadier than Jezebel. Please don't be allured by the whistles and charms of her world. To understand this story, you need to know the story of King Ahab. This king was the most wicked of the kings of Israel. He married the foreigner Jezebel who brought with her the idolatry of Baal, along with all of its perversions. She basically evangelised for Baal and persecuted the prophets of Yahweh.

One particular episode is very important for the text at hand – the story of Naboth's vineyard in 1 Kings 21. Ahab and Jezebel murdered Naboth, a righteous Israelite. Ahab wanted Naboth's vineyard, but Naboth refused to sell or trade it because he knew that the land was not his to sale; to do so would be unrighteous. His land was God's and he was a steward of it. Ahab pouted like a spoiled kid while Jezebel decided to take matters into her own hands. She wrote letters to the men of Naboth's city instructing the leaders to stone Naboth. They obeyed. Jezebel and Ahab enjoyed their new garden for a while, but then God sent His prophet Elijah to confront Ahab. In His confrontation, we see God was on the side of the oppressed. He was aware of the situation, and He would act on Naboth's behalf. Elijah promised Ahab that in *"the place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick your own blood"* (21:19). This was fulfilled in 22:38 but that was not the end. Elijah also promised that disaster would fall upon Ahab's house, and upon Jezebel. The dogs would eat Jezebel within the walls of Jezreel (21:23).

Over twelve years have passed. Ahab is gone, but the house of Ahab still reigns. That comes to an end in 2 Kings 9-10. God raised up a new king, Jehu, as His instrument of judgment. God appoints Jehu to clean Ahab's house.

**Pray**

Father, You didn't just dribble a little Holy Spirit on me; You poured Him out on me liberally, through Jesus, copious amounts of Him. Now, by Your grace, I have been justified freely and fully. The saints in heaven may be more joyful than me, but they aren't more justified. I praise the glory of Your name and stand redeemed. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Today we see it is Jehu who ‘cleans house’. The house or dynasty of Omri and his son Ahab needed to be purged from Israel. Jehu is certainly the man for the job. This dynasty of Omri had been a leavening agent in the northern kingdom of Israel for too long and the time has finally come to clean it up, or *out* is maybe a better word. In this regard, Jehu will do a thorough job, with only one exception, which is pretty serious. Jehu does not rid the nation of all false worship. Nevertheless, Jehu’s rise to power is a day of reckoning for those who have played a part in promoting evil in the land of Israel. Verse 7 confirms Elijah’s prophecy in 1 Kings 21 that not one of Ahab’s male descendants would survive.

Clearly, there was much good in the reign of Jehu to commend him for. He was committed to fulfilling God’s judgment against the house of Ahab and driving the worship of Baal out of Israel. For this, he would be rewarded with a dynasty that would last four generations. I find verse 31 really sad, though: *“But Jehu took no heed to walk in the law of the LORD God of Israel with all his heart; for he did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, who had made Israel sin.”* I see this so much today, people who are so strong against evil but not ambitious towards good. It is easier to be vehement against the abominations of others than to deal with and judge your own stuff. Jehu was a good man who allowed pride and ambition to steal his heart. Oh, how we must keep tabs on the heart! There are some aspects of this life of grace for which we seem to need constant refreshment courses. Contentment is one of them. Let’s pray for the grace of contentment. Whether we have a little or a lot, let’s keep our eyes fixed on Jesus.

**Pray**

Father, by Your Holy Spirit, convict me when I default to murmuring and complaining. Heal me of too easily forgetting every good thing I have in Christ. Open the eyes of my heart as I go through this day. Let me see a little more of Jesus; actually, a lot more. That’s all I need. That’s all I really need. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Some wicked rulers have been on the scene in our readings recently but none more so than this queen mother, Athaliah. No character in history, sacred or secular, stands out blacker or more hideous than this daughter-in-law of the godly Jehoshaphat. I love the fact that, in the middle of one of Israel's darkest hours, there is an important *"but"*! *"But Jehosheba..."*. This little-known woman had an important place in God's plan of the ages. Through her courage and ingenuity, she preserved the royal line of David through which the Messiah would come. Evil people like Athaliah will begin their work, but God can always raise up a Jehosheba. She hid the true heir to the throne for six years.

This was not the only time in the history of redemption when the prospects of the people of God hung by the thread of an infant boy whose life was sought by cruel rulers. Moses was supposed to be killed upon his birth. Like Joash, he also was hidden after he was born. And then, the Egyptians allowed Moses to grow up in their midst, unrecognised for who and what he was to become. Another example, still more important, is the Lord Jesus. He was spirited away from Bethlehem to Egypt for a time, His death sought by a cruel ruler. And then He grew up unrecognised in Nazareth of Galilee, right under the noses of other so-called 'kings' of the Jews. Those babies were saved from death by the bravery and determination of some faithful people, just as Joash was saved by Jehosheba and Jehoiada and a cast of minor characters.

One reason Athaliah was able to reign for six years was that no one knew any alternative. Many people live under the reign of Satan because they don't know there is a legitimate King ready to take reign in their life. Give thanks today for the greatest alternative ever. Thank God for destroying the devil's work by Jesus' work on the cross. Through His shame He shamed evil, and by His defeat He defeated darkness. Terror is now terrified of Him.

**Pray**

Father, as full as the world is with evil, it will be filled thousands of times over with beauty and You. Lord Jesus, I praise, bless, and adore You for so great a salvation and so trustworthy a hope. In Your strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Joash (also known as Jehoash) fell short of full commitment and complete godliness, but he did advance the cause of God in the kingdom of Judah. This was a long and mostly blessed reign. Joash became king when he was seven years old. It is an amazing story of how God literally brought back the line of David from the ashes after Athaliah attempted to slaughter his descendants.

Joash ruled for forty years because he did right in the eyes of the Lord. His father ruled only one year because he did evil in the eyes of the Lord. His grandfather ruled only eight years because he also did evil in the eyes of the Lord. How was this pattern broken? Remember, when he was only a year old, Joash was hidden because Athaliah killed all his brothers. His father and grandfather had also died. Joash was raised up in the temple by Jehoiada the priest, away from the influence of his wicked ancestors.

Notice in verse 2 that Joash did right all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him. Jehoiada was a good spiritual mentor and all was good until this godly adviser died; then Joash turned to idolatry. Instead of trusting God, Joash traded prior blessing, the sacred treasures of the temple, to protect his kingdom against the attacking Syrians. He was in a difficult place, wounded, with an attacking army bearing down on Jerusalem. He found it hard to trust God in this difficult place because he stopped trusting in easier circumstances long before. These words from Adam Clarke's commentary scare me a little, *"O how few of the few who begin to live to God continue unto the end!"*

May God help us all to live and breathe Him until our final breath. We see the life of a good king unravel as he steps away from the things of God. He was assassinated by his own team of men. When we read 2 Chronicles 24, we see it was Joash who had the prophet Zechariah stoned to death. It's unbelievable how far from God he wandered. A stark warning to all!

**Pray**

Father, You have given me the righteousness of Christ. Your law condemned me, but Your gospel has redeemed me. While I was still a sinner, You gave Jesus for me. How can I not follow You with my all? In Jesus' name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Seventeen years. That is a long time in which to do bad stuff. Seventeen years of reigning over a people, influencing them for evil, turning them aside from God, and doing his utmost to erase the name of Jehovah from the hearts of the people. What a sad thing this is, when those who are planted to reign righteously are used as workers of darkness and despair. It was many years since Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, had set up the calves at Bethel and Dan, yet here is another king, Jehoahaz, walking in his footsteps. If you leave a bad example behind, you cannot tell how your children and your grandchildren to distant generations may follow your evil footsteps.

Notice, at the end of the second verse, it is said of Jehoahaz, *“he did not turn away”*. He was warned, he was chastened, but *“he did not turn away”*. If men hold on to sin, how much more ought the people of God hold on to righteousness! If all other people should turn aside, yet let it be said of you, *“he/she did not turn away”*. But, if you are on the wrong road, may the Lord cause you to turn from it and turn to Him at once!

I love the fact that God listened to the prayer of an ungodly man because He saw something bigger. Jehoahaz was an ungodly man and this prayer did not mark a lasting or real revival in his life, yet God listened to his prayer because of His great mercy and because of His care for Israel. In verse 5, we see that God sent an unnamed deliverer. While we aren't told their name, they are well known in heaven. One does not need a great name to do a great work for the Lord.

It has been forty-three years since we last saw Elisha in Scripture. Here we read how he fell sick with an illness that would take him home; however, even in his final moments, he is prophesying to a half-hearted king.

**Pray**

Father, my name is in the Lamb's book of life and that's all that really matters. Even as I rest in Your finished work, I rejoice in Your present reign. As I am loved, so let me love; as I have been served, so let me serve; as I am encouraged, so let me encourage others. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Verse 3 tells you what you need to know about Amaziah: *“He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, but not as his father David had done. In everything he followed the example of his father Joash.”* Amaziah faithfully continued his father’s policies. Yet some of those policies allowed compromises, such as continued sacrifices and incense offerings on the high places. Compared with David, the greatest human king to reign over the people of God, Amaziah did not match up. David was the rule against which all other earthly kings stood. Alas, we find no one able to measure up to such a high standard.

Amaziah was a good king. He worshipped the true God and showed mercy to the children of those who had conspired against him. He set a good moral example, but foolishly led his troops into a shameful defeat and was finally executed by a group of rebels. In 2 Kings 14:3 we are told why Amaziah did not experience the full blessing of the Lord. It confirms our earlier remarks, *“And he did that which was right in the sight of the Lord, yet not like David.”* He followed the example of his father and failed to put a stop to the pagan worship conducted on hills throughout the land. He should have patterned himself after his forefather David. He simply didn’t aim high enough.

We read of yet another failure in the story of the kings when this king, Amaziah, is assassinated by conspirators. One can only be anointed and blessed when they follow in the steps of the real king, King Jesus. I’m alarmed by how many of these kings failed to realise that their only hope was in God. Oh, to be a David whose heart was after God all his life. May God saturate and empower us with the Holy Spirit. It’s all about Jesus. It’s all about His finished work, not our constant failings and vain promises of doing better. May we never drop our morals or standards as these kings did.

**Pray**

Father, I thank You that the law has been fulfilled and judgment is complete, the price has been paid in full and my life is bound up in Your righteousness. Free me from my idols. Reveal their emptiness and silliness in comparison with Your beauty and bounty. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Reading this book, I am longing for a good king to come along. Azariah seems to be that man, but some of the Bible versions use the word “*except*”. It seems all the kings fell short of something when it came to matching up to King David. Azariah violated what had become a general principle in God’s dealing with Israel, that no king should also be a priest. The offices of prophet, priest, and king should not be combined in one man until the Messiah, who fulfilled all three offices.

This chapter has a list of kings, most of whom were evil or fell short. Azariah’s other name was Uzziah and there is some interesting material about Uzziah’s reign in 2 Chronicles 26, including the fact that he was a man who “*loved the soil*”. We can imagine him puttering about the palace gardens, asking questions about his farms and flocks and herds. He was also a successful warrior against the Philistines and Arabs, and the nation prospered during his long reign. It was near the end of Uzziah’s reign that Isaiah began his prophetic ministry. We learn in Chronicles that Uzziah’s leprosy was God’s judgment for the king’s unlawful usurping of the priestly role of burning incense in the temple. There we read that his early successes in war and as a builder had made him proud. In other words, the son had learned nothing from the father, Amaziah, who had also grown proud and been punished.

Again and again in these summaries of the reign of Israel’s kings, we hear that a king “*did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin.*” We should shudder at the lasting effect of one man’s disobedience. Generations, virtually without thought, followed Jeroboam in the course he set. What was so natural for them because Jeroboam had made it normal in Israel was to lead to their ruin and destruction.

**Pray**

Father, I bring myself to the throne of grace today, praying for the refreshing relationship I have in You. For the glory of Your name, I will resist the devil like I would resist an intruder trying to break into my home, for that is who he is, the thief who comes to steal, kill, and destroy. Make me more alive to Your love for me. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Ahaz not only rejected the godly heritage of David, he also embraced the ungodly ways of the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel. The southern kingdom of Judah had a mixture of godly and ungodly kings. Only eight out of nineteen kings would be good in some way. While this figure is relatively small, it is a long shot better than the northern kingdom of Judah which had *only* ungodly kings. Ahaz followed their pattern.

*“He did not do what was right in the sight of the LORD.”* This briefly describes the reign of perhaps the worst king of Judah. The key was that Ahaz had no relationship with God whatsoever. He was interested in spiritual things and would even make great spiritual sacrifices, such as sacrificing his own sons to Molech, yet he destroyed the link that his father Jotham had made between the palace and the temple, an illustration of his destroyed relationship with God. He put his trust in himself and in man instead of in the living God who reigns from heaven. Therefore, his reign was a disaster, probably the worst among the kings of Judah. He had much that men admire and magnify today, but all of this without godliness is of absolutely no worth.

Prior kings turned a blind eye to the old Canaanite worship still going on in the high places, but Ahaz was the first king of Judah to actually engage in it himself. There was nothing innocent about that worship in the high places. From verse 17, we read of Ahaz abusing the temple, not the building itself but some of the furniture. He defaced the bases on which the lavers were set and took down the molten sea. The priests used these for washing; therefore, he seems to have had a particular spite against them. It is one of the greatest assaults that can be done to religion, to obstruct the purifying of the priests, the Lord’s ministers. Ahaz died at just thirty-six, leaving his kingdom to a better man, Hezekiah, his son who proved as much a friend to the temple as his dad had been an enemy to it.

**Pray**

Father, may my heart be undivided in its love for You and may my love be made complete in You. I love You and I want to serve no other. That’s my prayer today, Father. You alone, You always. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This is a sort of weird chapter. Hoshea was an evil man, but by no means the worst of the kings of Israel. Sadly, his bloody overthrow of the preceding king and violent rise to power did not make him unusually evil among the kings of Israel. I love how John Trapp, an English Bible commentator born in 1601 puts it: *"It is not the last sand that exhausteth the hour-glass, nor the last stroke of the axe that felleth the tree; so here."*

Two hundred years and nineteen kings after the time of Solomon (the last king over a united Israel), the northern kingdom of Israel fell – not because the God of Israel was unable to help them, but because they had so forsaken that God and ignored His correction that He finally stopped protecting them and let them degrade according to their desire. One cannot play fast and loose with God. He will not be mocked. If there is stuff in our lives that we need to deal with, we should deal with it urgently.

My cry today to God is that He would turn up the volume of the Spirit's voice, because so many other voices are jockeying for our attention. There's the voice of Satan, who still tries to condemn us for sins God has already forgiven. There's the voice of our vain regrets, haunting us about our past failures and hounding us over missed opportunities. There's the voice of our fears, pestering us about our insecurities and inadequacies. But then, there's God's blessed voice saying by the Spirit, "I have loved You with an everlasting love and with cords of kindness I have bound You to My heart. I have given Jesus as Your righteousness and have sealed You with My Spirit. Nothing will separate you from My love, nothing. Don't be afraid to suffer, for I am with you and I am for you. I won't give you more than you can endure, but I will give you more of My grace. Your past is forgiven; your present is in My hands; and your future is beyond all you could ask or imagine. Trust Me."

**Pray**

Father, I'm melted and undone by Your presence. I am totally blown away by Your unchanging 'agape' love for me. Nothing I do makes You love me any less and its impossible for You to love me any more. Thank You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

Hezekiah came to the throne of Judah at the end of the Kingdom of Israel. Three years after the start of his reign, the Assyrian armies laid siege to Samaria, and three years after that, the northern kingdom was conquered. The sad fate of the northern kingdom was a valuable lesson to Hezekiah. He saw first-hand what happened when the people of God rejected their God.

Hezekiah was one of Judah's most zealous reformers, even prohibiting worship on the high places. These were popular altars for sacrifice, set up as the worshipper desired, not according to God's direction. God was never happy about this practice, but none of the other good kings found the courage to forbid it. Hezekiah did. In short, Hezekiah destroyed that which was clearly evil, perversely profane, even diabolical. Hezekiah realised that the people he was leading had lost track of the living God. They had lost sight of reality and so he committed himself to do something about it. There was really only one thing Hezekiah could do, get rid of it! *"He broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan."* The word "Nehushtan" literally means "just brass". The people had been treating it more than just brass, they had been worshipping it, but Hezekiah now destroyed it in their sight and declared, "It's just brass!" He needed to take radical action to destroy a once-good thing that had become a stumbling block. Anything that is coming between your soul and God needs to be broken in pieces.

It is remarkable that such a man as Hezekiah could be the son of Ahaz. Yet, remember that all his life he was under the influence of Isaiah. Have you a godly influence in your life? For me, there is a multitude of people whom God placed in my life to cheer me on from the balconies. These pages couldn't contain them all, those who, at different stages, believed in me when I didn't believe in myself, let alone in God.

**Pray**

Father, thank You that You have always seen me for what I could become in You, rather than the broken sin-affected species of mankind. You adopted me into Your family, made me Your child. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

I love this chapter as we look at Hezekiah's prayers and Sennacherib's threats. It was a credible threat and King Hezekiah had every reason to be afraid. He is at a real crisis point. He's got two choices. We also have these two choices in difficult situations. You can either be driven *away* from God or be driven *to* Him. Hezekiah's initial reaction was good. He saw the situation for what it really was. Often, when we are in some kind of difficulty, we handle it poorly because we don't see the situation accurately. Jerusalem's situation was desperate, and Hezekiah knew it.

Hezekiah's second reaction was even better. He did not allow his mourning and grief to spin him into a rejection of the Lord's power and help. He knew this was a more necessary time than ever to seek the Lord. I love this. *"Hezekiah went up to the house of the LORD, and spread it before the LORD."* Hezekiah did exactly what any child of God should do with such a letter. He took it to the house of the Lord; actually, to the outer courts, not the holy place. And he spread it out before the Lord. In doing this, Hezekiah boldly and effectively fulfilled the later command of 1 Peter 5:7 *"casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you."*

God responds to this simple yet powerful prayer of King Hezekiah. We read in verse 35, *"And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when the people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies."* God had answered supernaturally, and all King Hezekiah had to do was allow God to bring the victory. He did not have to do anything except have complete trust and faith in God Almighty. In this way, all glory and praise went to the Lord.

## Pray

Father, when disappointment comes or when things don't go the way I expected or wanted, help me to always turn to You. I want to keep my eyes on the throne of all grace. Hezekiah is an incredible example of this; he got himself to the house of the Lord. Today, I want to be like the psalmist, saying, "I will lift my eyes unto the Lord, it is from HIM comes all my help." In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

This report of a sick king's prayer is also found in 2 Chronicles 32 and Isaiah 38. The fact that God records this story three times in three different books of the Bible says to me that He is calling special attention to it. The story contains some important lessons for you and me, lessons which, if taken to heart, will make a powerful difference in our lives.

We know from comparing 2 Kings 18:2 with 2 Kings 20:6 that Hezekiah was 39 years old when he learned he would soon die. From what we know of Hezekiah and Isaiah, there seemed to be a strong bond of respect and friendship between them. It must have been difficult for Isaiah to deliver the message that God had given him for Hezekiah, but, with typical frankness and clarity, he did it. I can well imagine, though, that there must have been a lump in his throat when he said it: *"This is what the Lord says, put your house in order, because you are going to die; you will not recover."*

I love Hezekiah's prayer. *"Then he turned his face toward the wall, and prayed to the LORD, saying, 'Remember now, O LORD, I pray, how I have walked before You in truth and with a loyal heart, and have done what was good in Your sight.' And Hezekiah wept bitterly."*

We come across similar pleas in the prayers of God's children of old. The Psalms abound with them. God is sovereign. And for reasons that are beyond us, He heals some; others He does not heal on this side of eternity. I find it interesting the treatment that was used for Hezekiah, *"prepare a poultice of figs"*. It seems to us a very strange type of treatment, but that's what Isaiah, apparently under the leadership of God, told them to use. It may be that figs have some limited medicinal properties which God miraculously multiplied many times over. Or they may not have any medicinal properties but were chosen that it might be evident to all that it was God who did the healing.

**Pray**

Father, I love this story of how You moved at the prayers of Hezekiah and extended years to his life, even confirming it with a supernatural sign. I love that I can stand redeemed in Christ today. In His strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

*“Manasseh was twelve years old when he became king.”* This means that he was born in the last fifteen years of Hezekiah’s life, the years Hezekiah prayed for. Those additional years brought Judah one of its worst kings. Trapp’s commentary puts it this way, *“A degenerate plant of so noble a vine.”* Manasseh was indeed a wicked king, but perhaps the greater sin was that of the people who accepted this seduction so willingly. 2 Chronicles 33:10 says, *“The LORD spoke to Manasseh and his people, but they would not listen.”* God spoke to both the people and the leader, but they rejected His word.

We see the tragic progression in Manasseh’s sin. First, idolatry is *tolerated*, then idolatry is *promoted*, which led to idolatry being *supported* and *funded*. The outcome was that true worship was undermined, followed by the worshippers of the true God being persecuted and murdered. With this hideous downward sinful spiral comes the judgment of God.

Manasseh’s fifty-five-year reign was the longest of any Old Testament king. Unlike his godly father, Hezekiah, he reproduced the wickedness of his grandfather, Ahaz. Manasseh was the worst of the Judean kings according to 2 Chronicles 33:1-9, killing a mass of innocent people, including the prophet Isaiah. Reading this chapter today and seeing the difference a generation can make ought to inspire us to be known as one who follows God with a whole heart; not half-heartedness but true love and diligence. So, let’s bless and adore God for the privilege of knowing Him as “Abba, Father”. Never forget that we were slaves to sin and selfishness when He saved us by His grace and adopted us as His beloved children. May our ears become freshly attuned to the Holy Spirit who is constantly telling us how much God loves us and delights in us. My prayer is that God would turn up the volume of the Spirit’s voice in me when Satan tries to condemn me for sins already forgiven.

## Pray

Father, there are vain regrets haunting me about past failures and hounding me about missed opportunities, pestering me about my insecurities and inadequacies. Abba Father, thank You for loving me – not as I will be or ought to be, but as I actually am. In Jesus’ strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

I remarked in yesterday's devotional how much difference a generation can make. Well, thankfully, we have a good turnaround today. In this chapter, the Word of God spreads. It had been forgotten, regarded as nothing more than an old, dusty book. Now it was found, read, and spread. Throughout the history of God's people, when the Word of God is recovered and spread, spiritual revival follows. It can begin as simply as it did in the days of Josiah, with one man finding and reading and believing and spreading the Book.

Another example in history is the story of Peter Waldo and his followers, sometimes known as Waldenses. Waldo was a rich merchant who gave up his business to radically follow Jesus. He hired two priests to translate the New Testament into common language and using this, began to teach others. He taught in the streets or wherever he could find someone to listen. Many common people came to hear him and started to follow Jesus Christ. Waldo was rebuked by church officials for teaching the text of the New Testament in the common language. He ignored the rebuke and continued to teach, eventually sending his followers out two by two into villages and market places to explain the Scriptures. The Scriptures were memorised by the Waldenses. It was not unusual for their ministers to memorise the entire New Testament and large sections of the Old Testament.

The Word of God – when found, read, believed, and spread has this kind of transforming power. May it transform us all today as we thank God for His written Word. It is life to our souls and destiny to our futures. In it are the promises of steadfast love, daily mercies, and doing the impossible. We need all three. Because of God's love for us in Jesus, we have incomparable peace. Because of His daily mercies, we have the freedom to be vulnerable. Because nothing is impossible to our Saviour, we can rest in His finished work.

**Pray**

Father, churn up in me a fresh desire for Your Word to be a daily part of my life, that it will be like my natural food without which I get weak, grumpy, and tired. I can trust Your Word to speak into my hardest situations and most broken stories. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

## Live

Josiah believes the message that had come from Huldah, that this was truly the law of God. He wastes no time in gathering the elders from all over Judah so they could represent their group in hearing the law. Josiah had great respect for the Lord and for His temple. This law of God was to be read aloud for all the people to hear. The prophets, priests, and people must hear this Word. Josiah is saying, "This is the law of God, and will be the law of this land while I am king." There was no separation of classes that came to hear the law. All were represented in one way or another.

The king did not leave this matter for others to do; he did it himself too. I love this: *"The king stood by a pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to follow the LORD."* King Josiah stood before the people and publicly declared his commitment to obey the Word of God to the very best of his ability, *"with all his heart and all his soul. And all the people took a stand for the covenant."* There was no command from the king; this was the result of strong leadership. The fact that this happened among all the people means that this was a special work of the Holy Spirit.

We find in verse 26 that God had not forgotten the evil of Manasseh, so Josiah received his fatal wound on the battlefield and was carried back to Jerusalem to die. There was a great lamentation for this great king. Some would say the Lord possibly shortened his life so he would not see the destruction of Jerusalem and Judah. Jehoahaz, his son, would be an evil king. Jehoahaz means 'whom Jehovah holds fast'. This is what his father had wanted for him, but it is not what he was. Oh, the difference of a generation! Let's leave good legacies.

## Pray

Father, today I am praying for a fresh move of the Holy Spirit in my sphere of influence. As I lead the way and live for You and make a fresh covenant to follow and obey You with all my heart and soul, may the result be so powerfully effective that others get swept into the kingdom of Your love. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.



**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

I love history. And when I mix my love for history with my love for the Bible, it often helps in my studies. This specific attack is documented by the Babylonian Chronicles, a collection of tablets discovered as early as AD1887 and now held in the British Museum. In them, Nebuchadnezzar's 605BC presence in Judah is documented and clarified. When the Babylonian Chronicles were published in 1956, they gave us detailed political and military information about the first ten years of Nebuchadnezzar's reign.

This chapter is full of history. Nebuchadnezzar's army carried all of Jerusalem into captivity. Among these captives was the prophet Ezekiel, who compiled his book of prophecies whilst in Babylon. Verse 20 reads, "*He cast them out from His presence.*" God's patience and longsuffering had finally run its course and He allowed, even instigated, the conquering of the kingdom of Judah. How the mighty are fallen!

Jehoiachin reigned for only three months, yet long enough to show he was following in his father's sinful footsteps. His uncle was entrusted with the government. Zedekiah was the last of the kings of Judah. One would think that the judgments of God upon the three kings before him might have warned him! But no, he did that which was evil, just like them. When those entrusted with the counsels of a nation act unwisely and against the people's true interest, it does not please God. I find in the studies across the Scriptures that when people wilfully sin, God hides from them the true stuff of love, peace, and contentment. This is true in Jesus' parables as well. People's blindness in their own minds and the lusts of their own hearts brings a gradual approach of divine judgment. God always gives sinners space for repentance, but He is just and righteous and must judge sin, sooner or later.

**Pray**

Father, today I ask that You keep me from being proud or haughty. It's hard to believe how low Your chosen people could fall. It would seem that You tried so many times to get them to repent and return to You, and eventually You had to give them up. May my heart sing Your praise forever. May my soul never want another but You. In Jesus' strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

**Live**

In my studies of the Scripture, I oftentimes find a lump in my throat and an understanding of how God could be so hurt and righteously angry. I am well aware that I too can, and have, let Him down. I am amazed at His patience and belief in people in general, but more so His love and belief in me. Today we need reminded about our dependence on God as our King. Nothing and no one can sabotage His sovereignty, warp His will, or divert His decrees for His children and His world. When we cry out to Him, it's actually *God* at work in our heart, both to will and do the things that honour Him (Phil. 2:13).

This chapter records the tragic eleven-year reign of Zedekiah – his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian destruction of Jerusalem, and another deportation of the people. It seems ironic that here, at the very spot where Israel first set foot on the Promised Land, the last of the Davidic kings, Zedekiah, was captured and his monarchy shattered. Here, where Israel experienced her first victory as the walls of Jericho fell before unarmed men who trusted God, was the scene of her last defeat. How desperately sad and terrible when our greatest asset and strength become our greatest enemy and defeat. We have all seen it too often.

Zedekiah was, in all probability, seduced by the rampant paganism supported by the priesthood itself, a paganism which had thoroughly replaced the worship of Jehovah in the Temple of Solomon. The very priests were burning incense to beasts, worshipping the sun with their backs turned to the altar of Jehovah, and offering incense and sacrifices to the pagan gods of Assyria, Egypt, Syria, and Babylon. One could hardly believe it could have come this far from the worship of their one true God, the One who has loved and forgiven them time and time again. This book has such a sad end!

**Pray**

Father, I don't have to get Your attention, make a case, or convince You of *anything*. I don't have to ramp up my spirituality when I come before You. But, as a child with a loving Father, with real tears I come knowing that in Christ I am forgiven, redeemed, and liberated. Thank You for His strong name. Amen.

**REFLECT**

What is God saying to me?

**RESPOND**

What am I going to do about it?

