

2 Kings

Where We Are in the Narrative, Historically Speaking	The Kingdom split in 1 Kgs 12 with Israel (Jeroboam) in the North and Judah (Rehoboam) in the South. 1 Kgs ends with Ahab's at Ramoth Gilead and Ahaziah taking his place as the king of the north (Israel). On the other hand, Jehoshaphat reigns in Judah. When 2 Kings opens, both kingdoms are still standing (proverbially speaking). Consequently, the book will navigate us through the fall of the Northern Kingdom of Israel by the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC and the fall of the Southern Kingdom of Judah by the Babylonians in 538 BC.
Where We Are in the Narrative, Practically Speaking	Deuteronomy – “Go and enter the land,” said Moses. Joshua – This land is your land. This land is my land. Judges – Not all is well in the land. Ruth – A time for kings is coming to the land. 1 Samuel – The time for kings is upon us with Saul. 2 Samuel – But the greatest king is David. 1 Kings – Solomon gave us hope. But after his death, our kingdom was torn apart. 2 Kings – I told you, Israel and Judah, the land isn't yours. It's mine. You are gone.
A Most Unique Book	2 Kings is, perhaps, the most interesting book in the OT because it features many unique events and people. (1) Two people are raised from the dead: (a) The Widow of Zarephath's son (4:32-37); and (a) the fella that was thrown in the tomb with Elisha by a band of raiders from Moab (13:20-21). (2) The Prophet Elijah leaves us without dying, being taken up to heaven in a chariot instead (2:1-18). (3) The waters of the Jordan River rolled back twice, the first from Elijah (2:8) and the second from Elisha (2:14). (4) Elisha performs double the miracles as Elijah (16 to 8). (5) God miraculously saves Hezekiah and Judah from the Assyrians. And (6) two kingdoms are banished from the Promised Land. That's a lot.
The Time Period Helps With Other Books in the Bible	During the time period of 2 Kings, we see the emergence of the first writing prophets of the Promised Land. Amos and Hosea prophesied to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, while Isaiah, Joel, Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, and Jeremiah prophesied to Judah. All of them – in various ways – did this against the backdrop of impending judgment by God that came in the form of the Assyrians and the Babylonians.
The Picture Isn't Pleasant	No king in Israel is described as having done right in the eyes of the Lord. And even though some of Judah's kings were righteous in periods of their lives (Joash; Azariah; Uzziah) and/or all of it (Hezekiah; Josiah), their efforts were not enough to curb God's eventual judgment on the nation in fulfillment of the curses that Moses spoke of in Deuteronomy 28.
The Main Idea	In 2 Kings, <u>world affairs</u> play a major role in shaping the destinies of Israel and Judah. The book connects Israel's national destruction to their apostasy, led by their wicked kings. The same is also true, though to a slightly lesser degree, for Judah. The difference was God, in fulfillment of His promise to David, would save a remnant from among the people of Judah. In so doing, the royal line would stay intact so that one day His people would return to their land to await their Redeemer.
Outline	2 Kings is filled with voluminous amounts of historical material that can overwhelm you into forgetting the central reason for why the book is in the Bible. It answers the question: “why did Israel and Judah get removed from the Promised Land?” As a result, the best way to read the book is to look at that question through the lens of both kingdoms.

Some Reasons for the Northern Kingdom's Expulsion from the Land (Israel)

1. Other (g)ods even after witnessing Elijah's great miracles. (1:1-4)

After Ahab's death, Moab rebelled against Israel. ² Now Ahaziah had fallen through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria and injured himself. So he sent messengers, saying to them, “Go and consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, to see if I will recover from this injury.” ³ But the angel of the Lord said to Elijah the Tishbite, “Go up and meet the messengers of the king of Samaria and ask them, ‘Is it because there is no God in Israel that you are going off to consult Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?’” ⁴ Therefore this is what the Lord says: “You will not leave the bed you are lying on. You will certainly die!” So Elijah went.

2. Other “g”ods and idols in spite of the miracles of Elijah and Elisha. (2:5-13)

⁵ The company of the prophets at Jericho went up to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that the Lord is going to take your master from you today?” “Yes, I know,” he replied, “so be quiet.” ⁶ Then Elijah said to him, “Stay here; the Lord has sent me to the Jordan.” And he replied, “As surely as the Lord lives and as you live, I will not leave you.” So the two of them walked on. ⁷ Fifty men from the company of the prophets went and stood at a distance, facing the place where Elijah and Elisha had stopped at the Jordan. ⁸ Elijah took his cloak, rolled it up and struck the water with it. The water divided to the right and to the left, and the two of them crossed over on dry ground. ⁹ When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me, what can I do for you before I am taken from you?” “Let me inherit a double portion of your

spirit,” Elisha replied. ¹⁰ “You have asked a difficult thing,” Elijah said, “yet if you see me when I am taken from you, it will be yours—otherwise, it will not.” ¹¹ As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind. ¹² Elisha saw this and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!” And Elisha saw him no more. Then he took hold of his garment and tore it in two. ¹³ Elisha then picked up Elijah’s cloak that had fallen from him and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

Elijah’s Miracles

1. Shut up the heavens causing a drought
2. Multiplied flour and oil for a Gentile widow
3. Raised the widow’s son from the dead
4. Defeated the prophets of Baal with fire from heaven
5. Brought rain to end the drought
6. Destroyed 51 soldiers with fire and lightning
7. Destroyed 51 more with fire and lightning
8. Parted the waters of the Jordan River

Elisha’s Miracles

1. Parts the Jordan River
2. Purifies water source for Jericho
3. Protection by two she-bears
4. Provision of water for army of Israel
5. Continuous oil in lamp for widow
6. Shunammite woman to have a child
7. Resurrection of the son of the Shunammite woman.
8. Purified poison soup
9. Multiplication of loaves
10. Healing of Naaman, the leper
11. Gehazi cursed with leprosy
12. Miracle of the axe
13. Struck Arameans blind
14. Prophesying relief and famine
15. Prophesying death of Ben-Hadad and rise of Hazael
16. Prophesying Israel’s defeat of Damascus

3. Unlike their Syrian neighbors, Israel didn’t take the miraculous nature of God seriously. (5:13-14; 25-27)

¹³ Naaman’s servants went to him and said, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do some great thing, would you not have done it? How much more, then, when he tells you, ‘Wash and be cleansed!’” ¹⁴ So he went down and dipped himself in the Jordan seven times, as the man of God had told him, and his flesh was restored and became clean like that of a young boy. . . ²⁵ When he went in and stood before his master, Elisha asked him, “Where have you been, Gehazi?” “Your servant didn’t go anywhere,” Gehazi answered. ²⁶ But Elisha said to him, “Was not my spirit with you when the man got down from his chariot to meet you? Is this the time to take money or to accept clothes—or olive groves and vineyards, or flocks and herds, or male and female slaves? ²⁷ Naaman’s leprosy will cling to you and to your descendants forever.” Then Gehazi went from Elisha’s presence and his skin was leprous—it had become as white as snow.

4. Appeasement of Assyria. When they no longer wanted to be vassals, it was too late (17:3-6)

³ Shalmaneser king of Assyria came up to attack Hoshea, who had been Shalmaneser’s vassal and had paid him tribute. ⁴ But the king of Assyria discovered that Hoshea was a traitor, for he had sent envoys to So^[a] king of Egypt, and he no longer paid tribute to the king of Assyria, as he had done year by year. Therefore Shalmaneser seized him and put him in prison. ⁵ The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. ⁶ In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria.

5. National Apostasy for long period of time, thereby rejecting the prophetic word of Elijah, Elisha, Amos and Hosea (17:7-11)

⁷ All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt from under the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. They worshiped other gods ⁸ and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices that the kings of Israel had introduced. ⁹ The Israelites secretly did things against the Lord their God that were not right. From watchtower to fortified city they built themselves high places in all their towns. ¹⁰ They set up sacred stones and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. ¹¹ At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them had done.

Some Reasons for the Southern Kingdom’s Expulsion from the Land (Judah)

1. Some kings, though righteous at the beginning, didn’t demonstrate righteousness by removing high places. (12:2; 15:4)

² Joash did what was right in the eyes of the Lord all the years Jehoiada the priest instructed him. ³ The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. . . ³ He (Azariah/aka Uzziah) did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, just as his father Amaziah had done. ⁴ The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.

2. Revivals didn't lead to lasting change enough to thwart the judgment of God.

There are two "revivals" that occur in Judah in second kings. The first comes through the great king Hezekiah (2Kgs 18-20). They Assyrians were unable to conquer them because Hezekiah cried out to the Lord and sought godly council (Isaiah the prophet). The second came when Josiah found the book of the law in the temple and instituted reforms accordingly (removal of high places, etc). But in the face of national threat from the empire of Babylon, they went back to their ways of making appeasements, etc instead of trusting the Lord.

3. As far as the major prophets, Ahaz doesn't trust Isaiah's words in the face of a threat. And the people completely reject Jeremiah. (Isaiah 7:10-14)

¹⁰ Again the Lord spoke to Ahaz, ¹¹ "Ask the Lord your God for a sign, whether in the deepest depths or in the highest heights. ¹² But Ahaz said, "I will not ask; I will not put the Lord to the test." ¹³ Then Isaiah said, "Hear now, you house of David! Is it not enough to try the patience of humans? Will you try the patience of my God also?¹⁴ Therefore the Lord himself will give you^[e] a sign: The virgin^[d] will conceive and give birth to a son, and^[e] will call him Immanuel.

4. The most wicked king came from the line of the promise to Judah, not Israel. Manasseh was the essence of evil.

- He had a righteous father (Hezekiah), however:
 - ² He did evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before the Israelites. ³ He rebuilt the high places his father Hezekiah had destroyed; he also erected altars to Baal and made an Asherah pole, as Ahab king of Israel had done. He bowed down to all the starry hosts and worshiped them. (21:2-3)
- He killed the prophets God sent to him.
- He shed innocent blood, including child sacrifices.

5. The final kings, unlike Hezekiah against the Assyrians, abscond their role as the people of the promise. (24:10-12)

¹⁰ At that time the officers of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon advanced on Jerusalem and laid siege to it, ¹¹ and Nebuchadnezzar himself came up to the city while his officers were besieging it. ¹² Jehoiachin king of Judah, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and his officials all surrendered to him.

6. But hope for Judah comes at the end of the book, seen through the lens of Jehoiachin's imprisonment in Babylon (25:29-30)

²⁹ So Jehoiachin put aside his prison clothes and for the rest of his life ate regularly at the king's table. ³⁰ Day by day the king gave Jehoiachin a regular allowance as long as he lived.