

SESSION 2: DIVISION, DEPORTATION, DECLINE

PREPARATION FOR THE SESSION

Read 1 Kings 12, 19; 2 Kings 14—17, 21—25; Isaiah 7; Ezekiel 1:1-3; Daniel 1:1-6; Jeremiah 1:1-3.

Summary of the Video: Module 3, Episode 2

After our overview of 1-2 Kings in the last session, we begin with a look at the books from three phases: division, deportation, decline. It's not a division that Scripture gives so much as a helpful way for us to see key themes and events in the texts. Each phase faces a specific outside threat (Aram/Syria, Assyria, Babylon), hear from specific godly prophets and see something key to their culture destroyed.

Be aware that you'll need to flip back and forth on the PowerPoint slides as Andrew Wilson discusses these three phases.

DIVISION, IDOLATRY AND CHALLENGE

As we go through the lists of kings, there are many details. Pay attention to the big picture along the way: idolatry is prevalent, God constantly sends prophets (who are mostly ignored), life spirals out of control. God's people face the constant temptation toward idolatry and collaboration with other nations.

Q&A: In the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, he says "Choose between two gods." Has there ever been a time in Israel in which they were completely secular or didn't care about God at all? There isn't nearly ever an instance in any culture of complete dismissal of God/gods. There were no true "atheists" in Israel. It was a question of whether or not you would give exclusive worship to Yahweh.

DEPORTATION, INJUSTICE AND RESCUE

In this section, "Assyria is out to get both Israel and Judah" (this material will help us in our understanding of Isaiah). Following the Assyrian invasion, the people of Israel (northern tribes only) are taken captive. The people of Judah (southern kingdoms) must decide whether they'll be loyal to Assyria or not. Although Assyria come to dominate the entire region, the Assyrian army fails to take Jerusalem.

Q&A: When you say that the "northern kingdom ceased to exist", what do you mean? The cohesive unity that regarded itself as a nation with a king standing in continuity with David and his ancestors ended. Jewish people still lived there. But they intermarried with non-Jewish people and became the Samaritans.

Would the people who can trace their lineage back to the ten tribes see themselves as recipients of the covenant of Abraham? Yes, they would.

Isaiah 37 says that 185,000 died immediately and it appears the Assyrians see it differently. Is that a difference we should be worried about? Will our sceptical friends use this against us?
No. In fact, the Assyrians saw the event and interpreted it in light of their gods, whereas the Bible interprets the same event and its details in light of the real God.

DECLINE, REFORM AND COLLAPSE

In this section it gets as bad as it can (Manasseh), then perks up a bit (Josiah), but then tanks again with Jehoiakim. While Josiah begins repairs on the temple and restores the book of the Law to Israel's worship, under Jehoiakim's reign the people of the southern kingdom are finally taken into captivity to Babylon (under Nebuchadnezzar).

THE APPROACHES OF KINGS AND CHRONICLES

Since Kings and Chronicles cover much of the same history, it's helpful see how the books differ.

Kings: northern kingdom, God controls history, little about the temple, no genealogies.

Chronicles: southern kingdom, priestly orientation, lots about the temple, lots of genealogies.

Q&A: What happened to the Ark of the Covenant? The assumption is that the Babylonians took it and trashed it (stripping it of valuable materials).

What's the deal with Elisha calling out the bears on the "youths"? Remember that it's not just little kids teasing an old man. These were young men who served in idol worship (in Bethel). They're mocking him about losing Elijah, the supposed source of Elisha's power and authority, and thus implying that Elisha is going to die soon too. They're testing to see whether Elisha has the same authority to bring God's judgment as Elijah had. The answer is yes: Elijah saw fire come down; Elisha sees bears come in to help.

Terms You'll Need to Know:

Roosevelt and Hitler—Hitler led Germany in World War II; Roosevelt led the American army against him.

Guinness adverts—commercials and advertisements for the Irish beer which feature Ahab from the epic novel *Moby Dick*.

Watch Video

Watch Module 3, Episode 2 (1hr 20 minutes).

An Overview of the Divided Kingdom Period

	Division, Idolatry and Challenge	Deportation, Injustice and Rescue	Decline, Reform and Collapse
Dates	931 – 791	791 – 687	687 – 586
Key Threat	Aram / Syria	Assyria	Babylon (Egypt also significant)
Historical Passages	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 13 2 Chronicles 10-25	2 Kings 14-20 2 Chronicles 26-32	2 Kings 21-25 2 Chronicles 33-36
Prophets	Elijah (Israel), Micaiah (Israel), Elisha (Israel)	Isaiah (Judah), Hosea (Israel), Amos (Israel), Jonah (Assyria), Micah (Judah), Nahum (Assyria), Huldah (Judah)	Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Lamentations, Habakkuk, Zephaniah
Centrepiece	Destruction of the house of Baal Fall of the Omride dynasty → Davidic revival under Joash	Destruction of Bethel Fall of the northern kingdom → Davidic revival under Hezekiah	Destruction of Jerusalem temple Fall of the southern kingdom → Davidic revival under Jehoiachin
Other Key Events	The drought in Israel (1 Ki 17) Elijah on Mt Carmel (1 Ki 18) Israel defeats Syria (1 Ki 20) Naboth's vineyard (1 Ki 21) Elijah taken up (2 Ki 2) Miracles by Elisha (2 Ki 4) Naaman healed (2 Ki 5) Siege of Samaria (2 Ki 6-7) Jehoash's repairs (2 Ki 12)	Syria & Israel attack Judah, and Ahaz bribes Assyria (2 Ki 16; Isa 7-12) Israel deported (2 Ki 17) Samaria resettled (2 Ki 17) Assyria attacks Jerusalem & loses (2 Ki 18-19; Isa 36-37) The rise of Babylon (2 Ki 20; Isa 38-39)	Manasseh's evil (2 Ki 21) Josiah's reforms (2 Ki 22-23) Babylon captures Jerusalem & deports Jehoiachin, Daniel, Ezekiel etc (2 Ki 24; 2 Chr 36) The glory of Yahweh leaves the temple (Ezek 1, 10) Jerusalem falls to Babylon (2 Ki 25; 2 Chr 36; Jer 52)

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Division, Idolatry and Challenge

- **DRAMATISE** the events of this period based on the text of 1&2 Kings, in the following sections
- Act I: The division of the kingdom and the establishing of false worship at Samaria (1 Kings 12)
 - Characters: Rehoboam, Jeroboam, Israelites, Judeans
- Act II: The idolatry and violence of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 15-16). See the **TABLE** on the next page
 - Characters: Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Tibni, Israelites
- *Act III: Elijah and Ahab (1 Kings 17-22)
 - Characters: Elijah, Ahab, Jezebel, prophets of Baal, Ben-hadad, Naboth, Jehoshaphat, Micaiah, the "certain man" (22:34)
- *Act IV: Elisha and Jehoram (2 Kings 2-8)
 - Characters: Elijah, Elisha, boys, bears, the widow, the Shunammite, her son, Gehazi, Naaman, Jehoram, King of Syria, lepers, Israelites, the captain
- *Act V: Jehu and Jehoash (2 Kings 9-12)
 - Characters: Elisha, Jehu, Jehoram, Ahab's sons, Queen Athaliah, Jehoida, Jehoash

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Kings of Israel from Division to Jehu (mostly summarised in 1 Kings 15-16)

King	Dates Ruled	Yrs	Possible Co-Reigns	References	Notes
Jeroboam I	931-911	21		1 Kgs 11:26-40	Kingdom divides
Nadab	911-910	1		1 Kgs 15:25-32	Killed by Baasha
Baasha	910-887	23		1 Kgs 15:27-16:7	
Elah	887-886	1		1 Kgs 16:8-14	Killed by Zimri
Zimri	886	7 days		1 Kgs 16:9-20	Killed himself by fire in the king's house
Omri	886-875	11	Tibni reigns after Zimri for 5 years as a rival	1 Kgs 16:16-17, 21-28	Establishes Samaria as his capital
Ahab	875-853	21		1 Kgs 16:29-17:1; 18:1-19:3; 20:1-22:40	Confrontations with Elijah; married to Jezebel
Ahaziah	852-852	1		1 Kgs 22:51-53; 2 Kgs 1:1-18	
Joram/Jehoram	852-841	11		2 Kgs 3:1-27; 6:8-7:20; 9:14-26	Killed by Jehu in 841
Jehu	841-814	27		2 Kgs 9:1-10:36	

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Kings and Queens of Judah from Division to Isaiah

King	Dates Ruled	Yrs	Possible Co-Reigns	References	Notes
Rehoboam	931-915	17		1 Kgs 12:1-24; 14:21-31	Kingdom divides
Abijah/Abijam	915-912	3		1 Kgs 15:1-8	
Asa	912-871	41		1 Kgs 15:9-24	Buys Ben-Hadad's support vs Baasha
Jehoshaphat	871-849	25	w/Asa from 873	1 Kgs 22:41-50	Told much more fully in 2 Chronicles 17-21
Jehoram/Joram	849-842	7/8	w/Jehoshaphat from 853	2 Kgs 8:16-24	Married Athaliah, Ahab's daughter
Ahaziah	842-841	1		2 Kgs 8:25-29; 9:21-28	Killed by Jehu, king of Israel
Athaliah (Queen)	841-835	6		2 Kgs 11:1-20	Killed by Jehoida the priest
Joash/Jehoash	835-796	39		2 Kgs 12:1-21	Hidden & protected from Queen Athaliah
Amaziah	796-767	29		2 Kgs 14:1-22	

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Deportation, Injustice and Rescue

- 823-745 BC: the Assyrian empire, which had conquered a substantial portion of west Asia, slows in its expansion, and a succession of weak and ineffective rulers proves unable to hold the empire together
 - The nearby nations, especially those further away from Assyria, benefit greatly, and in fact during this period Israel and Judah are as prosperous as they have been at any time since Solomon
 - Israel, under **Jeroboam II** (2 Kings 14:23-29) and Judah, under Azariah/**Uzziah** (2 Kings 15:1-7; 2 Chronicles 26:1-23), are therefore both rich and complacent at the time Isaiah started prophesying
 - The result is significant social injustice in Judah (Isaiah 5:8-10; 1:21-23) and Israel (Hosea, Amos)
- 745-735 BC: the complacency stops fairly rapidly on the accession of the new Assyrian king, Pul/**Tiglath-pileser III**
 - He establishes authority rapidly over the previously Assyrian territories, and starts expanding elsewhere
 - Menahem king of Israel has to give him tribute almost immediately (2 Kings 15:19-20), but this does not keep the Assyrians away for long; they return before 731, overcoming and deporting the whole region of Galilee north of the Jezreel valley (2 Kings 15:29)
 - 735-727 BC: the dilemma facing Judah is whether to make alliances with or against Assyria. Learning from Israel's experience, and always having been somewhat in Israel's shadow since the division of the kingdom, Judah under **Ahaz** in 735 BC starts allying with Assyria
- The response from the neighbours was quick – neither Israel nor Syria/Damascus is keen, and the result is an immediate attack on Judah from Rezin (king of Damascus) and Pekah (king of Israel), as described in 2 Kings 16:5; 2 Chronicles 28:5-15

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Deportation, Injustice and Rescue (cont.)

- Judah calls to Tiglath-pileser for help (2 Kings 16:7-9), and this marks the first main phase of Isaiah's ministry
 - Judah should not care about Assyria, but seek God for deliverance (Isaiah 7-8)
 - Ahaz ignores him, and to get Tiglath-pileser to destroy Damascus and overthrow Pekah in 732, Ahaz enters into a treaty which binds him to recognise Assyrian gods (2 Kings 16:10-16; 2 Chronicles 28:20-21) and results in him giving away the temple silver and gold (2 Kings 16:8-9)
- 727-706 BC: Tiglath-pileser dies in 727, and is succeeded by **Shalmaneser V** (727-722)
 - As Isaiah has prophesied (7:7-9), Damascus has already fallen (732), and she is now followed by Samaria, deported and resettled in 722
 - Judah now finds herself both in *de facto* subjection to Assyria, and pressured by Egypt to revolt against them
- In 722/1, Shalmaneser is followed by **Sargon**, who achieves a greater position of world dominance than anyone before him has known (cf. Isaiah 14)
 - Judah's response, under **Hezekiah**, is to become anti-Assyrian and pro-Egyptian, which meets with even more resistance from Isaiah (Isaiah 29-31)
- 706-701 BC: Sargon dies on the battlefield in 706 and is succeeded by **Sennacherib**
 - It was typical for subjugated powers to rebel against imperial rulers when the sovereigns died
 - In this instance Judah is encouraged to rebel not just by Egypt, but also by the Babylonian ambassadors sent by **Merodach-Baladan** (Isaiah 39:1-2). Note that Isaiah 38-39 and 2 Kings 20 historically occur before Isaiah 36-37 and 2 Kings 18-19 (cf. 20:6)
 - Hezekiah signs an agreement with Egypt in rebellion against Sennacherib (Isaiah 28:14-15)

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The Assyrians Attack Jerusalem



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Deportation, Injustice and Rescue (cont.)

- At the same time, Hezekiah foolishly takes the Babylonian ambassadors into his confidence (39:2-8), and shows them all his possessions (2 Kings 20:12-21)
 - Isaiah therefore prophesies that Babylon will eventually deport all of Judah. This explains the Babylonian focus of Isaiah 40-55
 - Hezekiah's reaction – 'The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good.' For he thought, 'There will be peace and security in my days' (39:8) – is horribly shortsighted, and Isaiah's prophecy is eventually fulfilled in 586
- Sennacherib advances down the Mediterranean, laying waste to Tyre so that it will never again reach its previous position (Isaiah 23), and then comes inland, routing the fortresses of Judah (2 Kings 18:13), such as Lachish (Isaiah 36:2)
 - On Hezekiah's request for terms, he sent a messenger – the **Rabshakeh**, or field commander – to Hezekiah, to demand surrender (Isaiah 36)
 - Hezekiah despairs, but is encouraged by Isaiah to call out to Yahweh, and goes to the temple, spreads out the letter before God, and prays for deliverance
 - The army of 185,000 is decimated overnight, and Sennacherib returns to Assyria, never to fight Judah again
 - **DRAMATISE**

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Kings of Israel from Jehoahaz to Exile (mostly summarised in 2 Kings 13-15)

King	Dates Ruled	Yrs	Possible Co-Reigns	References	Notes
Jehoahaz	814-798	16		2 Kgs 13:1-9	
Joash/Jehoash	798-782	15		2 Kgs 13:10-25; 14:8-16	
Jeroboam II	782-753	41	w/Joash from 793	2 Kgs 14:23-29	Hosea and Amos prophesy to Israel; Jonah preaches to Nineveh
Zechariah	753-752	6 mth		2 Kgs 15:8-12	Killed by Shallum
Shallum	752	1 mth		2 Kgs 15:10, 13-16	Killed by Menahem
Menahem	752-742	10		2 Kgs 15:14-22	
Pekahiah	742-740	2		2 Kgs 15:23-26	Killed by Pekah
Pekah	740-732	20	20 years counted from 752 to include rivals	2 Kgs 15:25, 27-31	Killed by Hoshea
Hoshea	732-722	9		2 Kgs 15:30; 17:1-6	Samaria and Israel fall to Assyria, 722

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Decline, Reform and Collapse

- Hezekiah's son, **Manasseh**, is the most evil of all the kings of Judah
 - He builds altars to Baal, puts an Asherah pole and altars to the stars in the temple courts, burns his son as a sacrificial offering, and uses mediums and necromancers (2 Kings 21:1-9)
 - The result is that God promises to destroy Jerusalem, and "wipe it as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down" (2 Kings 21:10-15). This is the moment when judgment is decided (cf. Jer 15:4)
 - Amon, his son, continues in the same vein, and is assassinated (2 Kings 21:19-26)
- **Josiah**, Amon's son, is very different, and presides over something of a national revival (2 Kings 22-23)
 - First, he inaugurates repairs of the temple (22:3-7)
 - As a result, second, the book of the law is discovered and read to the king, who tears his clothes in repentance (22:8-11). This is probably the book of Deuteronomy
 - Third, they then enquire of Yahweh by going to Huldah the prophetess, who prophesies judgment on the nation but peace to Josiah (22:12-20)
 - Fourth, he reinstates the covenant, and the people join in, destroying idol-worship, defiling the Valley of Hinnom (Ge-hinnom, or in Greek Gehenna), and restoring the Passover (23:1-25)
 - However, Yahweh promises that in his wrath he will still exile Judah (23:26-27)
- After Josiah is killed in battle, Jehoahaz his son becomes king briefly and is deposed by **Pharaoh Neco** of Egypt, in favour of **Jehoiakim** (2 Kings 23:31-37)
 - **Nebuchadnezzar** takes Jehoiakim to Babylon in chains, along with some of the temple vessels (2 Chr 36:5-8), before reinstating him as a puppet ruler (2 Kings 24:1)
 - Then Jehoiakim rebels, and Nebuchadnezzar attacks Jerusalem (2 Kings 24:1-7)

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Decline, Reform and Collapse

- Jehoiakim dies before the Babylonians attack, and his eighteen year old son **Jehoiachin** (also called Jeconiah, or Coniah) is king when they beseige the city in 597
 - Jehoiachin gives himself up, and Nebuchadnezzar takes him into exile along with 10,000 officials and leaders of the people (2 Kings 24:10-17). This includes Ezekiel, Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah
 - The story of Ezekiel begins five years later, and he sees the glory of Yahweh leaving the temple (Ezekiel 1, 10), prior to the siege and destruction of the city (prophesied symbolically in Ezekiel 4-5)
- The Babylonians install Jehoiachin's uncle **Zedekiah** as a puppet king
 - He rules badly for nine years, and then rebels, prompting Nebuchadnezzar to beseige Jerusalem in 588
 - Most of the story of Jeremiah takes place during this period, as Jeremiah prophesies to the nation that they are going to be exiled shortly, and nobody wants to hear it
- Finally, after a two year siege which has catastrophic consequences for the nation – just as Moses had said would happen in Leviticus and Deuteronomy if they failed to keep the law – Jerusalem falls to Babylon (2 Kings 25; 2 Chronicles 36; Jeremiah 52)
 - The city is burned and laid waste (see the poetic description in Lamentations)
 - The temple is destroyed (as Ezekiel had seen from his visions in exile)
 - The seventy years begins (as we will pick up subsequently in Daniel)
- Jehoiachin is finally released from prison in 561 by Evil-merodach, the king of Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30)

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Kings and Queens of Judah from Isaiah to Exile

King	Dates Ruled	Yrs	Possible Co-Reigns	References	Notes
Uzziah/Azariah	767-740	52	w/Amaziah from 791	2 Ki 15:1-7	Isaiah's ministry begins
Jotham	750-735/730	16/20	Uzziah is alive in 750 but inactive in rule (cf. 15:5)	2 Ki 15:32-38	Micah's ministry begins
Ahaz	735/730-715	20/16		2 Ki 16:1-20	Receives prophecy about Immanuel
Hezekiah	715-687	29	w/Ahaz from 728		2 Ki 18:1-20:21
Manasseh	687-642	55	w/Hezekiah from 697	2 Ki 21:1-18	Most evil of Judah's kings
Amon	642-640	2		2 Ki 21:19-26	
Josiah	640-609	31		2 Ki 22:1-23:30	Reformed Judah; killed by Pharaoh Neco
Jehoahaz	609	3 mth		2 Ki 23:31-34	Taken captive by Pharaoh Neco
Eliakim/Jehoiakim	609-598	11		2 Ki 23:35-24:7	Installed by Pharaoh Neco
Jehoiachin/Jeconiah/Coniah	598-597	3 mth		2 Ki 24:8-17; 25:27-30	Exiled in 597; released by Evil-merodach 562
Zedekiah	597-586	11		2 Ki 24:18-20	Jerusalem falls 586

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The Approaches of Kings and Chronicles

- Even a brief reading of 1&2 Kings and 1&2 Chronicles shows some obvious differences between them
 - Broadly speaking, 1 Chronicles covers the same ground as 1&2 Samuel, and 2 Chronicles as 1&2 Kings
 - Whereas Kings talks in great detail about the events going on in the northern kingdom, in some places emphasising this far more than the south, Chronicles is almost entirely preoccupied with Judah
 - Chronicles begins with a lengthy genealogy, taking Israel's royal line right back to Adam, which has no parallel elsewhere in the Jewish scriptures
- Underneath these obvious variations lie some important theological differences in approach
 - The books of Kings are Deuteronomic in perspective: God controls history, he is responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem, and there remains hope for God's people if they humble themselves and repent
 - Covenantally, they are shaped strongly by the Mosaic covenant
 - The books of Chronicles are more priestly in perspective: they focus much more on the temple, and (in connection with that) the monarchy, with a strong emphasis on the Davidic covenant
 - So, while Kings has only a passing interest in temple worship (except as a contrast of faithfulness with those sacrificing to idols), Chronicles is very concerned with it (see 1 Chr 21 – 2 Chr 7)
 - Similarly, Jehoshaphat gets only ten verses in 1 Kings 22, but because he appointed Levites and priests to judge the nation and won a battle by singing, the Chronicler gives him four chapters (2 Chr 17-20)
- There are also a few tensions between the books that need to be acknowledged and considered carefully
 - Some are based on copyist errors (e.g. compare the Hebrew of 2 Chr 36:9 and 2 Ki 24:8)
 - One, famously, is theological (who incited David to take the census in 2 Sam 24:1 and 1 Chr 21:1? Reading Job, and the story of Judas, would lead us to conclude that the answer is "both")

GROUP MEETING:

Discussion Questions

Before getting into these specific questions, spend a few minutes discussing what struck you or stuck with you from the video. What were some of the main points? Did any of Andrew's comments or questions open up the Bible in a profound way to you? Also, ask if anything was confusing or needs clarification.

1. What did you identify as main themes in your reading of Kings?

2. Idolatry is boring, repetitive and pointless. In what ways does this manifest itself in your culture? (Identify an idol in your culture and discuss how it proves to be boring, repetitive and/or pointless.)

3. How does the historical context of Isaiah (and his celebration of God's majesty) enrich our worship today? For example, when we sing songs inspired by Isaiah's words, how does knowing a little of what was happening affect the how we view God?

4. Explain Andrew Wilson's response to the story of Elisha and the bears mauling the youth. How does this specific example help us think through problematic passage in general? How can this help us as we defend Scripture with skeptics?

5. Kings and the prophets of that day opposed a strong pull toward other gods. Read Isaiah 45:14-25. Talk about how its description of God would strengthen God's people to resist idolatry then and now.

Meditation on Scripture

1 Kings 18:21, 36-37

2 Kings 2:9-12

2 Kings 23:2-3

Putting This Session into Practice

Many people in our churches and communities suffer from idolatry. It is a repetitive chain confining them. It may be alcohol, gambling, porn, shopping, eating, video games, social media, TV, adrenaline, money, pleasure, or a number of other things. But God is greater! Let's pray this week that God would break idolatry in our lives, in the people of our church and in our community. Identify the specific idols and pray for them to be overcome by the Almighty Lord.