

A STUDY OF 1 & 2 KINGS

COVENANT on the Ground

WITH DR. JOHN N. OSWALT

VOLUME 3: DEATH OF ELISHA TO END

STUDENT
WORKBOOK



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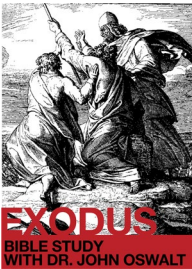
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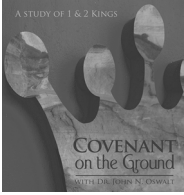


Isaiah



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COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

2 KINGS 13:10–14:29

Jehoash, Amaziah, and Jeroboam II

Background: The period covered by these three kings is about 45 years (798–753 BC). It was a time of Assyrian weakness. It corresponds very well with the period of Jonah's ministry. Just before the period began, the Assyrians had punished a revolt in Syria that meant the Syrians were no longer the threat to Israel and Judah they had been. This fact coupled with the ensuing inactivity of Assyria meant that both countries experienced a period of unusual power and prosperity. They momentarily were able to recover a good deal of the land lost in the previous century.

- It is virtually certain that Amaziah only ruled by himself for about five years (796–791). He was captured by Jehoash at that time (2 Kgs 14:12) and may have remained in captivity for some years, perhaps even until Jehoash's death in 781 (notice the repeated death notice for Jehoash in 2 Kgs 14:15–16). His 16-year-old son, Azariah/Uzziah, was named king in his place (2 Kgs 14:21). Amaziah lived until 767, when he was assassinated. It is unclear how much influence he retained during his son's co-regency.
- Although it is less certain than with Amaziah and Azariah, it is very likely that there was a co-regency between Jehoash and his son Jeroboam of about ten years. The numbers don't work out otherwise.

Jehoash of Israel (2 Kings 13:10–25)

1. On the war with Amaziah (v. 12), see below on chapter 14.
2. It is somewhat unusual that the final encounter between Jehoash and Elisha is recounted after the Jehoash's death announcement in verses 12–13. Why do you think this might be the case?
3. Compare verse 14 with 2 Kings 2:12. What do you think this indicates about Jehoash and his attitude toward the man of God?

4. Why is Elisha predicting favorable things for a man who “did evil in the eyes of Yahweh?” What does this say about Yahweh?

5. What is the point of the incident with the arrows (vv. 18–19)? Is there a principle here?

6. What does the last incident (vv. 20–21) tell us about the nature of the Elijah/Elisha ministry?

7. On verses 22–25, see the background above. Also compare with 13:5.

8. What is the sense of verse 23?

Amaziah (2 Kings 14:1–22)

1. In comparison with 2 Kings 14:3, see 2 Chron 25:2. How is it possible to do right, but not with a whole (“perfect”) heart?

2. How do you explain Exodus 34:7 in the light of verses 5–6 here?

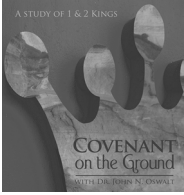
3. Why did Amaziah challenge Jehoash to battle? What lesson should we learn?

4. Why did God allow Judah to be defeated?

5. Notice that Amaziah suffered the same fate—assassination—that his father Joash had suffered. Suggest some possible reasons why this may have happened to Amaziah.

Jeroboam II

1. Notice that a forty-one-year reign only merits seven verses. Why? What makes a life significant?
2. Verse 25 records a very significant accomplishment. How did it come about according to the latter half of that verse and verses 26–27? How should we view our accomplishments?
3. What things can you say about Yahweh from verses 25b, 26, and 27? Remember, Israel is now only about 40 years from the exile.
4. To understand the attitudes of this period, look at Amos 5:18–6:8. What lessons should we draw?



COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

2 KINGS 15–16

Israel: The Beginning of the End

Background: It may be that Uzziah was the Judean king's personal name (see 2 Kgs 15:13), while Azariah was his throne-name.

- Azariah had been on the throne as co-regent with his father Amaziah since 791 BC, but his sole reign did not begin until 767 BC. Fourteen years later (753 BC), Jeroboam II of Israel died and was succeeded by his son Zechariah, who only reigned six months before being assassinated by Shallum. A month later Shallum was in turn assassinated by Menahem, who then managed to reign for ten years (until 742 BC).
- Almost certainly during the Zechariah/Shallum/Menahem bloodbath, Pekah (2 Kgs 15:27ff.) took control of whatever was left of the Transjordanian territory of Israel (see the reference to Gilead in 2 Kgs 15:25), perhaps with Menahem's approval. But it is clear, based on the fact that the years of his reign are calculated from the beginning of Menahem's reign, that he set himself up as "king" there. He ruled as a rival to Menahem and after Menahem's death, he killed Menahem's son Pekahiah and took control of the entire kingdom. His total reign was twenty years, but his reign as sole king was ten (until 731 BC).
- So, while Azariah/Uzziah was king of Judah, there were no fewer than six kings of Israel. This is somewhat analogous to the long reign of Asa during the upheavals that marked the beginning of the Israelite kingdom. This stability must have contributed to Judah's survival when Israel was destroyed in July of 721 BC.
- Tiglath-Pilezer III (Pul) came to the throne of Assyria in 745 BC and inaugurated a new period of aggressiveness that was to last for one hundred years. 2 Kings 15:29 tells us that by the time of Pekah's death in 732 (and perhaps precipitating his assassination), the Assyrians had taken all the Israelite territory north of the Jezreel Valley and east of the Jordan. In addition, although the Bible does not mention it, they destroyed Damascus that same year.
- Jotham, Azariah/Uzziah's son, was coregent with his father from 750 BC until his father's death in 739 BC. He only ruled alone until 734 BC when his son Ahaz was made co-regent with him! Probably all these co-regencies reflect the swirling pro- and anti-Assyrian politics of small countries trying to figure out how to deal with the terrible danger Assyria posed.
- About 734 BC, when the Assyrian threat was growing by leaps and bounds, Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria decided that they needed to form a coalition against Assyria and demanded that Judah join them. Ahaz may have been forced upon Jotham because of this. When Judah declined, the two mounted an attack on Judah (v. 37).

Azariah/Uzziah and his Contemporaries (2 Kings 15:1–22)

1. Azariah had been co-regent with his father, Amaziah, for 24 years. Some of that time Amaziah was in captivity in Israel, but we do not know how long. He was assassinated in

Judah. Compare what is said in verse 3 (cf. 2 Kgs 14:3) with what is said of Hezekiah in 2 Kings 18:3. What are your reflections?

2. 2 Chronicles 26 tells us a good deal more about Azariah/Uzziah, both about this strength and that he was stricken with leprosy because he attempted to burn incense in the temple (playing the part of a priest). Why do you think Kings does not mention either of these matters?
3. From Jeroboam's death in 753 BC until the accession of Tiglath-Pileser III to the Assyrian throne in 745 BC, Assyria did not constitute much of an immediate threat to Israel. So how do we explain the bloodletting?
4. Notice verse 12. What is the importance of a statement like this for the veracity (or the claim to veracity) of the Bible?
5. Why did Menahem give Pul a large sum of money? What does this tell us about the political (and spiritual) condition in Israel? When we are insecure, what are we tempted to do?

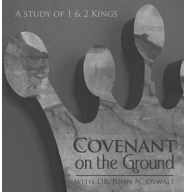
Jotham and His Contemporaries (2 Kings 15:23–38)

1. Look first at verses 32–38 concerning Jotham. What sort of a man was he according to the text? Again, notice who he is compared to. What should the standard of comparison be?
2. Why say Yahweh sent Pekah and Rezin (v. 37)? Is this any way to treat a man who “does what is right in the eyes Yahweh” (v. 34)?

3. What lessons should we learn from Israel's instability? How do we find personal and institutional security?

Ahaz, King of Judah (2 Kings 16:1–19)

1. Compare Ahaz's behavior (vv. 2–4) to that of someone like Asa (1 Kgs 15:3–5). What explanations can you think of for this behavior? How does this relate to today?
2. What was Ahaz's response to the threat of Israel and Syria (vv. 7–8)? Why did he not do what Isaiah called for (Isa 7:2–5)? Why is that difficult? What analogies might apply to us today?
3. What might explain Ahaz's behavior after his visit to Damascus (vv. 10–18)? Compare this to Jeroboam I's behavior in 1 Kings 12:31–33. What is the problem, and why is it a problem?
4. Why do you think the author/editor gives this much space to Ahaz's activities in regard to the temple and its appliances? Think about 1 Kings 5–8 and 2 Kings 12:4–16. What are your reflections on these facts? What do they have to do with the overall theme of the book of Kings?



COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

2 KINGS 17

The End for Israel

Background: When the Assyrian royal annals were first discovered in the nineteenth century, it appeared that the Bible was wrong. The Bible seemed to say that Shalmanezar captured Samaria (2 Kgs 17:3–6). But in his annals, Shalmanezar’s successor, Sargon, claimed to have accomplished this feat. Further study has tended to confirm the bare Biblical statement. It is now widely accepted that the city did fall during Shalmanezar’s reign but that he died before he could complete the destruction of the city and the exile of its inhabitants. Sargon thus completed what Shalmanezar had begun. This is another example of the fact that when all the facts are known, the Bible is very accurate.

- It is not clear whether Hoshea was captured before or after the siege began. An argument can be made both ways.
- The people of Samaria were exiled to at least three different locations in what is today northern Iraq and possibly northeastern Iran (“cities of the Medes”).
- As was typical of Assyrian practice, settlers were brought in from various locations in the empire to replace the exiled Israelites.

The Fall of Samaria (2 Kings 17:1–6)

1. How do you imagine Hoshea’s behavior was different from his predecessors (2 Kgs 17:2)? Notice that it is not said he walked in the sins of Jeroboam (as is said of every other northern king except Shallum, who only reigned one month!).
2. By this time, Israel was reduced to Samaria and the surrounding environs. What induced Hoshea to revolt? How does this relate to our behavior and to human nature in general?
3. Our own country was born in revolution, yet Jesus clearly spoke against revolt (Matt 5:39, etc. See also Jer 27:6–11.). How do we relate civil behavior and Christian behavior?

4. Look up Isaiah 28:1–13. What is his perception of the attitudes and understandings of the leaders of Israel (Ephraim) at this time? What is the relationship between physical drunkenness and spiritual drunkenness?

The Reasons for Israel's Fall (2 Kings 17:7–23)

1. List of the reasons given for why Israel fell. What is the most frequently repeated sin? What is the importance of this?
2. What had God done for them (see 2 Kgs 17:7, 8, 11)? Why make these points?
3. Once the Torah was broken (v. 13), did Yahweh simply abandon them, or did he do something else? Why did he do this?
4. Notice verse 15 says, “they followed the nations around them,” then verses 16 and 17 describe what the nations did. Why did the nations do these things? Why are they wrong?
5. Why end this summary with verses 21–23? It seems that it might have been used to begin it, but it does not. Why not?

The Results of Israel's Fall (2 Kings 17:24–41)

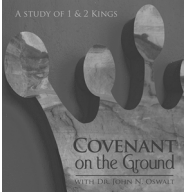
1. Why would the newcomers possibly not have “feared Yahweh” (v. 25)? Why did it matter whether they did or not?

2. Look up verse 26 in as many different versions as you can. Notice the different renderings of the word ESV translates as “law.” This is not *torah*, the usual Hebrew word translated “law,” (17:13) but *mishpat*, often translated “judgment” or “justice.” Here “pattern” or even “preference” would be an appropriate rendering. What does this say about the pagan understanding of deity, as opposed to the Biblical understanding?

3. What do you think a former Israelite priest from Samaria taught the new pagan residents about Yahweh (2 Kgs 17:27–28)?

4. In the context of verses 28–33, what can “feared Yahweh” (2 Kgs 17:33, 41) possibly mean? Look at verse 34! Did they or didn’t they?!

5. Verses 35–39 contain one of the best brief summaries of the covenant to be found in the Old Testament. In this light, what does it mean to truly fear Yahweh? How does this translate into your life and mine as Christians?



COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

2 KINGS 18–19

Hezekiah—Man of Trust

Background: There is some disagreement about Hezekiah's dates because the Bible seems to change its pattern for him. It is quite clear that he came to the throne in 728/27, which was the third year of Hoshea, king of Israel (18:1). But it also seems clear that Ahaz, his predecessor, was on the throne until 716/15. Normally, the total years of a king's reign when he has been a co-regent are counted from when he begins the co-regency. That appears to be the case in the chronological statements in 2 Kings 18:9–10. But 2 Kings 18:13 says that Sennacherib came against Judah in Hezekiah's fourteenth year, which, if his reign is counted as beginning in 728/27, would have been in 714/13. But we know from Assyrian and other records that the Assyrian attack actually began in 702/01. So, in this case the writer is not counting from the absolute beginning of Hezekiah's reign, but from the beginning of his sole reign.

- Much of 2 Kings 18:17–20:21 is also found in Isaiah 36–39. Many scholars believe Isaiah has copied from Kings. I am confident that the dependence is in the other direction. One simple piece of evidence: the only occurrence of “The Holy One of Israel” in the books of Kings is here (19:22), whereas it occurs 25 times in Isaiah.
- The defeat and exile of the northern tribes cannot help but have been a terrible shock to Judah. Israel had been so rich and powerful. If it had gone down before the Assyrian hammer blows, how could Judah possibly hope to stand? They would certainly fall next, and in very short order.
- There is reason to believe that Hezekiah had attempted to force the Philistines into a coalition against Assyria with him and some of the other nations, and when they had refused, he conquered the Philistine territory (2 Kgs 18:8)
- The sign given in 2 Kings 19:29 is typical of biblical signs: it is a prediction. When you act in faith, only then will you receive the sign. And when the sign occurs, then your faith will be strengthened for the next challenge. God is not interested in a static faith.
- While there is no report in the Assyrian records of the sudden death of an entire army (why would we expect one?!), it is remarkable that the report of this campaign ends with the statement that “I shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage” and that Hezekiah gave Sennacherib a great deal of money. But that is not the normal way the Assyrians treated a rebel king. They captured his city and tortured him to death. Why not this one?

Hezekiah and the Assyrian Threat (2 Kings 18:1–37)

1. Notice what is said about Hezekiah. We have returned to the standard of David, for devotion to God with an undivided heart. What actions did he take that indicated this? Note especially verse 4 and compare to every other Judean king.

2. What is Hezekiah especially noted for (v. 5)? A similar thing is said of Josiah (2 Kgs 23:25). What is the difference between the two statements? We will see the evidence for the statement about Hezekiah in the following verses.
3. The arrival of the Assyrian general outside of Jerusalem was a clear indication that Sennacherib, although he had taken Hezekiah's money, was not going to withdraw (2 Kgs 14–16).
4. What are the points the Assyrian makes? How are the points arranged? What is he saying they should not do? Why not? What is his mistake?

The Continued Threat and Hezekiah's Response (2 Kings 19:1–19)

1. What does Hezekiah mean by his cry in 2 Kgs 19:3. What is the disgrace he is talking about? See Psalm 25:2. Why is that a cause for shame?
2. What is Hezekiah's primary concern as expressed in 2 Kgs 19:4? What does that tell us about Hezekiah and his faith?
3. In view of the promise from God in verses 6 and 7, how do you think Hezekiah and his people reacted to the events reported in verses 8 and 9? Then what would have been the impact of Sennacherib's letter (vv. 10–13)?
4. Here the Assyrian gets right to the point. Who has done what to whom, and what conclusion should the Judeans draw? What's wrong with the reasoning?

5. Verses 15–19 contain one of the great prayers of the Bible.
 - a. How is God described (v. 15) and what is the significance of each of the points?
 - b. What is the significance of what is said about God in verse 16? Look up Psalms 42:2; 84:2, and 135:15–18.
 - c. How does that relate to what is said in verses 18–19?
 - d. Finally, why does Hezekiah want to be delivered? What do you think you would have said in those circumstances?

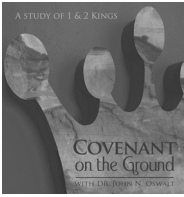
Sennacherib's Fall (2 Kings 19:20–37)

1. Why is Jerusalem described as “virgin daughter” and “daughter” in this context? What had Sennacherib planned to do to the city?
2. Verses 23–24 show an awareness of the boastful records of the Assyrian monarchs. What are they claiming? What is the problem with believing your own “press reports”?
3. According to verses 25–27, what is the problem with the Assyrian boasts?

4. Verses 30–31 turn the physical language of the sign into an important theme of the Bible. What is that theme, and what is its significance for the church in every age? Look up Matthew 7:14.

5. Verses 32–34 depict a classic promise and fulfillment in the biblical mode. What are your reflections?

6. Compare 2 Kings 19:14–19 and 19:37. What is the point?



COVENANT on the Ground

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2 KINGS 20–21

The Beginning of the End for Judah

Background: In Isaiah, from which 2 Kings 18:17–20:19 is copied, the account of Hezekiah’s illness and the consequent visit of the Babylonian envoys serves the purpose of demonstrating that although Hezekiah proved that God is indeed trustworthy, Hezekiah is *not* the promised Messiah. This purpose explains why this illness material is placed after the Assyrian defeat material when the illness probably occurred about 710 BC or earlier (whereas Sennacherib’s attack occurred in 701 BC). (Note the promise in 20:6 “I will deliver you and this city.) But Isaiah put this account here to make his point and in preparation for the revelation of the true Messiah that follows in chapter 40ff.

- “Wholehearted devotion” (2 Kgs 20:3) in the NIV is a translation of the Hebrew “a whole heart,” which conveys the idea of absolute commitment—an undivided heart.
- Notice that the prediction of the Babylonian exile (2 Kgs 20:17–18) was quite “off the charts” at this time. Assyria was the world empire and Babylon was only a rebellious Assyrian vassal. [Marduk-baladan (2 Kgs 20:12) led several failed revolts.]
- There are two possible explanations for Manasseh’s young age (2 Kgs 12, 21:1) at his accession: 1) the pro-Assyrian party forced a co-regency on Hezekiah, or 2) when Hezekiah died (at age 58 [or 46, see the date discussion in the previous lesson]), the pro-Assyrians chose his young son over older brothers because they could manipulate him.

Hezekiah’s Illness (2 Kgs 20:1–11)

1. What are some possible reasons why Yahweh may have given Hezekiah such a blunt message as what appears in verse 1?
2. What are the three things that Hezekiah says about himself? Look at such passages as 1 Kings 15:11 and 14, or 22:2. In what ways is this an appropriate description of the ideal [Christian] life?
3. What are some possible reasons why Yahweh changed his mind (when he does not always do such a thing in response to fervent prayer)? [If the material is out of chronological order, think what lay ahead for Judah.]

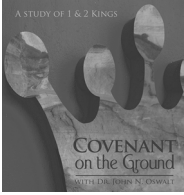
4. Interestingly, in Isaiah, Hezekiah's request for a sign does not appear. God simply volunteers to give one. Why do you think the writer of Kings has expanded the story? Or why did Isaiah condense it?
5. What is the nature of the miracle and what is its significance?

Hezekiah's Tragic End (2 Kgs 20:12)

1. Why did the Babylonian envoys come? What should Hezekiah have done (see Isa 2:2–5)?
2. What did Hezekiah do? Why do you think he did that? When and why are we tempted to do similar things?
3. Why do you think Isaiah asked what the Babylonians saw? What is the tone of Hezekiah's response? Why is that, do you think?
4. The exile seems like a severe punishment for a little showing off on Hezekiah's part. If it isn't directly connected, then what is it doing here, and what is its relationship to what Hezekiah did? How might Hezekiah's behavior be related to what Judah was to do during the next 140 years?
5. What is the problem with Hezekiah's response (v. 19)? When are we tempted to respond in similar ways?

Manasseh and Amon: The Die Is Formed (2 Kgs 21:1–26)

1. In royal courts, it was not uncommon for kings to have little to do with the rearing of their children, especially any but the crown prince. That may have been the case with Manasseh, especially if he was not the crown prince (see the Background above). But what could the attitude betrayed in 2 Kings 20:19 have had to do with Manasseh's terrible behavior?
2. Compare what is said of Manasseh in verses 2–6 with what was said of his grandfather Ahaz in 2 Kings 16:2–4. There are perhaps only 20 years between Ahaz's death and Manasseh's coronation. What does this possibly say about Judean culture during Hezekiah's "revival"? Notice verse 9.
3. Why do you think Yahweh's patience was exhausted by Manasseh's (and the people's) behavior? Notice verses 2 and 9. What is the possible reasoning occasioned in this repetition? What is the contrast with verse 8?
4. What is the significance of the repeated comments in verses 3 and 13?
5. What does verse 15 tell us about the patience of God? What is he referring to in the beginning?
6. 2 Chronicles tells us that Manasseh repented in the end. Why is that reported there and not here? In that regard, notice what is said about Amon (vv. 20, 21).
7. Why did the people kill Amon's assassins and put the child Josiah on the throne? What shall we say about Judean people's religion at this time?



COVENANT on the Ground

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2 KINGS 22:1–23:30

Josiah: Judah's Last Hope

Background: Josiah came to the throne in 641 BC at the age of 8. By this time the last great king of Assyria, named Assurbanipal, had been on the throne for 28 years. He would remain king for another 12 years, until 629. But it is evident that things had begun to fall apart during that long reign, because it was only five years after his death that the first successful attacks against key Assyrian cities began to take place by an army of Babylonians and Medes. By 612 even Nineveh itself had fallen, and by 609 the once mighty Assyrian empire was fighting a last-ditch battle for life itself. This was what was taking place during Josiah's reign.

- In 609 the last remnants of the Assyrian army was attempting to make a last stand in the upper Euphrates Valley. It seems that the Egyptian pharaoh wanted to keep a weak Assyria alive as a buffer between Egypt and the all-conquering Babylonians, so he took his army north to assist the Assyrians. For unknown reasons Josiah attempted to stop the Egyptians. Perhaps his hatred for Assyria was such that he wanted them to have no help. Or perhaps he thought he saw a chance to inflict a defeat on the Egyptians and reduce their influence in the region. Whatever his motives, the Egyptians defeated him and he was killed in the battle. His death spelled a sudden end to his reforms.
- For nearly two centuries now many Old Testament scholars have argued that in fact the Torah book was not lost, but was actually written at this time and “planted” in the temple for Josiah's men to find. That is clearly not what the Bible says.
- For the incident referred to in 2 Kings 23:17, see 1 Kings 13:1–7. There are about 200 years between these two events. Either this is a great example of predictive prophecy, or someone who knew it wasn't tried to make it appear that way.

Finding the Torah (2 Kings 22:1–13)

1. What is said of Josiah in verse 2? How is this different from other kings of Judah, such as Hezekiah, or Asa?
2. Why did the temple need repair (2 Kgs 21:4–5)?
3. Note that what is said of the workmen was also said of those in Joash's day (2 Kgs 12:15). Why do you think a point of this is made and why does it matter?

4. Hilkiah knows it is the Book of the Torah, but Shaphan just calls it a book. Why do you think that might be?
5. How could the Torah have been lost? It is a bit like losing the U.S. Constitution. Think about the preceding reign.
6. Why does Josiah react so strongly (2 Kgs 22:11–13)? What implications does this have for us?

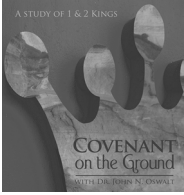
Huldah's Interpretation and Josiah's Response (2 Kings 22:14–23:3)

1. Josiah just said to inquire of the Lord. The men could have gone into the temple and used the Urim and Thummim (this is what those returned from exile did [Ezra 2:63]) if they just wanted to know whether the book was authentic. Why do you suppose they went instead to Huldah? What might this say to us about our reading of the Bible?
2. Why was Yahweh going to bring disaster on Judah and Jerusalem (2 Kgs 22:17)? Once again, what is so wrong about idol worship?
3. What was it about Josiah's response that meant he did not have to see this destruction? When did he begin reacting? What is the significance of that?
4. Who renewed the covenant (2 Kgs 23:3)? While the contemporary English versions have the people joining in renewing the covenant (NIV and NLT "pledged themselves"; ESV and NRSV "joined in"; NASB "entered into"), that is not at all clear from the Hebrew, which only says "they stood for the covenant" (cf. KJV).

5. What did the king commit himself to do? How does this relate to us?

Josiah's Reforms (2 Kings 23:4–30)

1. List in the order they appear what Josiah did as reported in verses 5–20. Notice who is acting and who is not. What is the picture of the temple that we get here? Compare this to the description in Ezekiel 8:3–16. Ezekiel is about 20 years after Josiah. How should we understand this? What does all this say about any repentance on the part of the people in Josiah's time?
2. What is the significance of what Josiah did as reported in verse 13? If it didn't prevent the coming exile what good was it? Verses 17–18 also play into this issue.
3. Why burn the bones of the dead on the altars?
4. Look at the Background above and explain how Josiah could do what he did in the territory of North Israel when it had been captured and resettled by the Assyrians.
5. How do you think verse 24 relates to the command to keep the Passover, or does it?
6. Why wouldn't God forgive them for Manasseh's sins (2 Kgs 23:26–27)? (Look at Question 1 in this section.) What would have had to happen for forgiveness to happen?



COVENANT on the Ground

A Study of 1 & 2 Kings with John Oswalt

2 KINGS 23:31–25:30

The End for Judah

Background: When Josiah was killed in 609 BC, the people bypassed Jehoiakim, the older brother, and placed Jehoahaz, the younger of the two, on the throne. Possibly this was because he shared the same hostility to Egypt that his father had. However, the Egyptians were not going to let that stand and took him off the throne after only three months and put Jehoiakim, who quickly swore allegiance to Egypt, on it.

- Jehoiakim's allegiance to Egypt lasted only until Nebuchadnezzar came through in 605 BC. Jehoiakim shrewdly decided that his future lay with the Babylonians. Nebuchadnezzar took hostages, among whom was Daniel and his three friends.
- But about 601 BC Nebuchadnezzar suffered a defeat on the borders of Egypt and withdrew to Babylon to regroup. Jehoiakim quickly repudiated his covenant with Nebuchadnezzar. However, Jehoiakim had been right in the first place: the future lay with Babylon. Babylon recovered from the setback, while Egypt was unable to capitalize on its success. The raiders mentioned in 2 Kings 24:2 were probably active while Babylon regrouped. Sometime in 600 BC or 599 BC, the Babylonian army returned to besiege Jerusalem. In 598 BC, Jehoiakim died under mysterious circumstances and his eighteen-year-old son became king and promptly surrendered. He and the rest of the royal family (along with Ezekiel) were taken into captivity.
- The Babylonians made Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, a third son of Josiah, king of Judah, (changing his name to Zedekiah) but the Bible never considers him legitimate. He ruled for eleven years but wavered in whichever direction the popular wind was blowing. In the end, he was persuaded to revolt against the Babylonians, and after a two-and-a-half-year siege, the city was captured and destroyed in 586 BC.
- Jeremiah's ministry began about 625 BC and continued until after the destruction of Jerusalem when he was carried off to Egypt against his will.

Jehoahaz and Jehoiakim (2 Kings 23:31 – 24:7)

1. Notice what is said of Jehoahaz' behavior (v. 32). What do you think is meant by "his fathers"?

2. Why do you suppose he did not follow in Josiah's footsteps?

3. Notice the same remarks about Jehoiakim. Now look at 2 Kings 24:3–4. What lessons should we draw from all this?
4. For a sense of Jehoiakim's cynical attitude, see Jeremiah 36:1–3, 21–25.

Jehoiachin and Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:8–25:7)

1. Compare the treatment of Jehoiachin (2 Kgs 24:12) with that of Zedekiah (2 Kgs 25:7). Why the difference? (See Ezek 17:11–16, also Jer 27:6–14)
2. Who was taken and who were left (2 Kgs 24:14, 25:12)? Why?
3. Why do you think Zedekiah modeled himself on Jehoiakim and not Josiah (2 Kgs 24:19)? What lesson is there for us?
4. Why did Zedekiah run away after the wall had been breached? Does this tell us anything about his character? Why did the army desert him (2 Kgs 25:5)?

The Destruction of the City: Despair and Hope (2 Kings 25:8–30)

1. Why did the Babylonians treat the city so severely? Remember the three-fold strategy of the Assyrians, followed by the Babylonians?

2. Compare 2 Kings 25:13–17 with 1 Kings 7:15–45. What similarities do you see? What is the point being made? See 1 Kings 9:6–9. Put 1 Kings 5–8 together with 2 Kings 25 and suggest a temple theology.

3. How is 2 Kings 25:18–21 a summation of the whole account?

4. How does what happened to Gedaliah (2 Kgs 25:22–26) encapsulate Judean attitudes at this time?

5. What is the significance of what is said about Jehoiakin, and what is the significance of it being the last thing in the book?



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