

The Story (13) – Kings (Part 2)

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I. Introduction and Background

A. As we saw last week, the united kingdom of Israel, the nation that Saul, David, and Solomon had served as kings, split into two nations after Solomon's death in 931 B.C. The northern nation was known generally as Israel, and the southern nation was known generally as Judah.

B. Each kingdom had many kings who ruled one after the other. All the kings of Judah, with the exception of the usurper Athaliah, were descendants of David, whereas the kings of Israel came from a number of different families. Some of the kings of Judah were righteous, but all of the kings of Israel were unfaithful to God, some more than others.

C. The northern kingdom continued until it was conquered by the Assyrians, the final blow coming with the fall of Samaria, Israel's capital, in 722/721 B.C. The southern kingdom of Judah was conquered by the Babylonians, the final blow coming with the fall of Jerusalem in 587/586 B.C. The Jews were allowed to return to Judah soon after the Persian Cyrus defeated the Babylonians in 539 B.C. We will have more to say about this in later classes.

D. Last week, I finished saying a bit about Ahab's son Joram/Jehoram, who served as king of Israel from 852-841. Let's pick back up with the Jehoram/Joram who reigned in Judah from 848-841.

E. My plan is to say something about as many of the kings as I am able. Next week the schedule calls for doing the prophets – quite a task for 45 minutes. The following week, July 20, Tony Johnson will teach on the fall of Samaria, and on July 27, Lord willing, I will teach on the fall of Jerusalem. I am hoping that during those classes we can say a word on some or all of the kings I was not able to address.

II. Jehoram – **Judah** (848-841)

A. Jehoshaphat's son Jehoram became king of Judah in 848. His wife was Athaliah, the daughter of the wicked Ahab king of Israel and Jezebel. When he became king he slaughtered his six brothers to eliminate them as competition. He was a bad king, one who walked in the ways of the kings of Israel, but because of the covenant he had made with David, the Lord was unwilling to destroy David's house.

B. Edom and the city of Libnah revolted against him. Jehoram received a letter from the prophet Elijah, who may have been taken up to heaven before it was delivered, telling him of coming hardship because of his unfaithfulness. This was fulfilled when the Philistines and Arabians invaded Judah, took the king's possessions and wives, and killed all but his youngest

son Ahaziah/Jehoahaz (2 Chron. 21:17) and when Jehoram died in 841 of a gruesome intestinal disease.

III. Ahaziah – **Judah** (841)

A. Under the counseling of his mother Athaliah, Ahaziah walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. Athaliah and her people in Israel had persuaded Ahaziah to join with Joram/Jehoram king of Israel in attempting to recover Ramoth-gilead from the Syrians, just like Joram's father Ahab had attempted. Joram, Ahaziah's uncle, was wounded in that battle, and Ahaziah visited him while he was convalescing in Jezreel from his injuries.

B. In the meantime, the prophet Elisha anointed Jehu, a commander of the army of Israel, as king over Israel. And in keeping with Elijah's earlier prophecy against Ahab, ordered him to kill Jezebel and all the male descendants of Ahab, as had been done to the house of Jeroboam and the house of Baasha. Jehu went to Jezreel. He killed the fleeing Joram and threw his body in Naboth's field.

C. He also killed Ahaziah king of Judah who was visiting Joram. Putting some things together, it seems that Ahaziah managed to flee to Samaria but was soon apprehended and brought to Jehu, who was then apparently near Ibleam, ten miles south of Jezreel. Ahaziah managed to break away, but this time was mortally wounded and died at Megiddo (see Merrill, Kingdom of Priests, 355). Ahaziah's downfall had been ordained by God (2 Chron. 22:7).

D. At some point during these events, Jehu had Jezebel's servants throw her out the window in Jezreel, where her body was trampled by horses and eaten by dogs as prophesied. He then had the inhabitants of Samaria kill Ahab's seventy sons and deliver their heads to him in Jezreel, where he then killed the other court officials of Ahab's administration. All of this fulfilled what Elijah had prophesied to the wicked Ahab in 1 Kings 21. Jehu even killed 42 of Ahaziah's relatives that he met on the way to Samaria, and then in Samaria finished off Ahab's house.

E. So in 841, Jehoram king of Judah died of a disease. That same year, Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah, the son of Jehoram king of Judah, were killed by Jehu.

IV. Athaliah – **Judah** (841-835)

A. Immediately after Jehu killed Ahaziah king of Judah, Ahaziah's mother, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, took the throne by force. She killed her own grandchildren to remove them as a threat to her rule, just like her husband Jehoram had done to solidify his rule of Judah, no doubt with her encouragement.

B. Ahaziah's infant son, Joash/Jehoash, escaped Athaliah's slaughter because Johosheba, Ahaziah's half-sister, secretly removed Joash from the group of the king's sons that Athaliah was having killed. She thought she got them all, but she was wrong.

C. When Joash was seven, Jehoiada the priest, under the protection of armed guards, brought him out of the temple where he had been hiding for six years. He had Joash proclaimed and anointed king of Judah, and thus a rightful ruler, a descendant of David, returned to the throne of Judah. Athaliah cried "Treason," but she was put to death.

V. Jehu – **Israel** (841-814)

A. Jehu attacked Baal worship in Israel, but he continued in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, the worship of the golden calves. Because Jehu had fully carried out God's intention regarding to eliminate the house of Ahab, God promised that his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel until the fourth generation.

B. During Jehu's reign, the Lord began to cut off parts of Israel. Hazael king of Syria took from them the territory east of the Jordan. Interestingly, the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, which commemorates military campaigns during the reign of that Assyrian king, says that in the campaign in 841 B.C. Shalmaneser besieged Damascus, which was governed by Hazael, and received tribute from Jehu. Panels depict Israelites carrying various items of tribute and one shows Jehu, or more probably his ambassador, bowing before Shalmaneser.

VI. Jehoahaz – **Israel** (814-798)

A. Jehu's son Jehoahaz did not depart from the sins of Jeroboam, and the Lord was angry with Israel. They continued to be subject to Syrian domination and harassment during Jehoahaz's reign. Their army was decimated.

B. At one point, Jehoahaz sought the Lord's favor, and the Lord gave Israel relief from Syrian oppression by providing a "deliverer" or "savior." This almost certainly was the Assyrian king Adad-nirari III (810-783) who subjugated Hazael around 805 B.C. That blow to Syria gave Israel some relief and time to rebuild (even though they were forced to pay tribute to Assyria).

VII. Jehoash/Joash – **Israel** (798-782)

A. Jehoahaz's son Jehoash/Joash walked in the sins of Jeroboam. Nevertheless, he visited Elisha near the end of Elisha's life, and Elisha predicted he would be victorious over Syria three times. (The only reason it was not more was because Jehoash only struck the ground three times with the arrows that represented his victory.) Three times Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad the son and successor of Hazael and recovered cities of Israel.

B. Jehoash also defeated Judah when Amaziah king of Judah insisted on doing battle with him. I will say more about that when I talk about Amaziah.

VIII. Joash/Jehoash – **Judah** (835-796)

A. Joash came to the throne of Judah at the age of seven, following the six-year reign of the wicked usurper, Queen Athaliah. Under the direction and influence of Jehoiada the priest, the people tore down the temple of Baal, destroyed the altars and idols of Baal, and killed Mattan the

priest of Baal. He also commanded that the temple be repaired and raised the money to carry out that command.

B. When Jehoiada, Joash's spiritual mentor, died at the age of 130, Joash went off the rails. The nobles swayed him to accept idol worship. When Zechariah the son of Jehoida the priest rebuked the people by the Spirit of God, telling them that God had forsaken them, Joash agreed to have him stoned to death. As the prophet was dying, he said, "May the Lord see and avenge!"

C. Because Judah had forsaken God, the Syrian king Hazael came against Jerusalem with relatively few men and executed God's judgment against Joash. They killed the nobles and severely wounded Joash before Joash paid him to leave by giving him the treasures of the temple and the palace. Joash was then assassinated by conspirators and then refused burial in the tombs of the kings, an honor that had been bestowed on Jehoiada.

IX. Amaziah – **Judah** (796-767)

A. The dating of the various reigns is not always clear. This chart, taken from Arnold & Beyer's *Encountering the Old Testament*, follows the influential analysis of Edwin Thiele, and comports with the dates given in Eugene Merrill's *Kingdom of Priests* and Walter Kaiser's *History of Israel*. In this analysis, the last 24 years of Amaziah's 29-year reign was a coregency with his son Uzziah/Azariah.

B. When Amaziah came to power, he killed those who had assassinated his father. He did not, however, kill their children as most ancient kings would have done to prevent further retaliation.

C. Amaziah brought Edom back into subjection, and returned with their gods and began worshiping them. When a prophet rebuked him, he threatened the prophet with death, and so God determined to destroy him. This played out in that Amaziah, feeling his oats from defeating Edom, picked a fight with Jehoash king of Israel.

D. Jehoash defeated and captured Amaziah at Beth-shemesh, brought him to Jerusalem, tore down sections of the city wall, plundered the temple and palace, took hostages, and returned to Samaria. Presumably Amaziah was included among the prisoners, which may explain why the people made his son Uzziah/Azariah coregent. The statement that Amaziah outlived his captor Jehoash by fifteen years may indicate he returned to Jerusalem upon Jehoash's death. In 767 B.C. he fled to Lachish because people conspired to assassinate him, but they tracked him there and killed him.

X. Jeroboam II – **Israel** (793-753)

A. Jehu's great grandson Jeroboam II followed his father Jehoash/Joash to the throne of Israel. He walked in the ways of Jeroboam son of Nebat, but God in his mercy still used Jeroboam II to restore Israel's boundaries as had been prophesied by Jonah in 2 Kings 14:25. He was the greatest of northern kings in terms of bringing Israel to prominence and prosperity. His

death in 753 B.C. was the beginning of the end for Israel; it would be finally and completely vanquished by the resurgent Assyrians in 722/721.

B. As Israel (and Judah under Uzziah) grew more economically and militarily powerful, moral decay was eating at their insides. The people became increasingly indifferent to their covenant responsibilities. Although they clung to certain rituals or forms of religion, they engaged in idol worship and ignored their duties to their fellow man. God sent the prophet Amos to rebuke Israel during the time of Jeroboam II, but they would not repent.

XI. Uzziah/Azariah – **Judah** (792-740)

A. Uzziah reigned for 52 years, but he appears to have shared the first 24 years of his reign as a coregent with his father Amaziah and the last eleven years of his reign as a coregent with this son Jotham. Like other Judean kings, he began well but did not finish his life with the same degree of faithfulness.

B. Uzziah had military victories against the Philistines, the Arabians, and the Ammonites, and Judah prospered under his rule. He had numerous building projects and made various machines for warfare.

C. The last eleven years or so of his reign was shared with his son Jotham, no doubt because of the leprosy with which the Lord struck Uzziah when he attempted to offer incense in the temple and reacted angrily to the rebuke of the priests. The isolation that accompanied leprosy would have made solitary rule impractical.

XII. Zechariah – **Israel** (753) – Jeroboam II's son Zechariah was the fifth and final king of the Jehu Dynasty. He continued in the worship of the golden calves and was assassinated in Ibleam by his successor Shallum after ruling for only six months.

XII. Shallum and Menahem – **Israel** (752; 752-742)

A. Shallum reigned only one month before he was killed in Samaria by his successor Menahem. Menahem proceeded to sack the town of Tiphshah because they had refused to allow him entry, and in the process he ripped open all the pregnant women.

B. Menahem also walked in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat. The Assyrian king Tiglath-pileser came against Israel during Menahem's reign, and Menahem taxed the people to provide tribute for him, which for the time being kept him from destroying the nation. Tiglath-pileser wrote about Menahem in his inscriptions: "As for Menahem, I overwhelmed him like a snowstorm and he . . . fled like a bird, alone and bowed at my feet."

XIII. Pekahiah – **Israel** (742-740) – Menahem's son Pekahiah walked in the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat. He reigned only two years before being assassinated by Pekah, who is variously described in 2 Kings 15:25 as his captain, officer, and adjutant.

XIII. Pekah and Hoshea – **Israel** (752-732; 732-722)

A. The chronology of Pekah's reign is notoriously difficult to reconstruct. It may well be, as many have concluded, that Pekah had such authority in the eastern regions of Israel (note he comes with fifty men of Gilead) that he was something of a rival ruler from the time of Menahem's reign. When he killed Pekahiah and assumed sole reign of the nation from Samaria (instead of the eastern region) his entire time of power was counted in his reign. That is why 2 Kings 15:27 says he reigned twenty years.

B. Late in Pekah's reign, he and Rezin king of Syria sought to assert their independence from Assyria. They waged war against Ahaz king of Judah when he would not join them and inflicted heavy losses on Judah. Ahaz appealed to Tiglath-pileser for help, who then attacked both Syria and Israel. He captured cities in Israel and took people captive to Assyria.

C. Hoshea assassinated Pekah in 732 and assumed the throne. He was the last king of Israel. According to the Assyrian annals, Tiglath-pileser was engineering this change. He writes, the people "overthrew their king Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them." Of course, Israel had been much reduced by both Syria and Assyria by the time Hoshea came to the throne. He paid tribute to Tiglath-pileser's successor, Shalmaneser V, but eventually decided to stop doing so. He appealed to the leader of Egypt for help, which ultimately brought the invasion that destroyed Samaria and ended Israel's existence as a nation.

In three weeks when, Lord willing, I teach on the fall of Jerusalem, I will try to touch on some of the remaining kings of Judah.