

2 KINGS 17–25

Introduction

The following “Witnessing Christ from the Old Testament” study covers **2 Kings 17–25**.

[You can find the LDS outline of study and resources here.](#)

LDS Study Focus

LDS study material will focus on:

Despite the prophet Elisha’s impressive ministry, the spirituality of the Northern Kingdom of Israel kept declining. Wicked kings promoted idolatry, and war and apostasy abounded. Finally the Assyrian Empire conquered and scattered the ten tribes of Israel.

Meanwhile, the Southern Kingdom of Judah wasn’t doing much better; idolatry was also widespread there. But amid all this spiritual decay, the scriptural accounts mention two righteous kings who, for a time, turned their people back to the Lord. One was Hezekiah. During his reign, the Assyrians, fresh from their victory in the north, conquered much of the south. But Hezekiah and his people showed faith in the Lord, who delivered Jerusalem in a miraculous way. Later, after another period of apostasy, Josiah began to reign. Inspired in part by a rediscovery of the book of the law, Josiah brought reforms that revived the religious life of many of his people.

What do we learn from these two bright spots in the otherwise dark years of Judah’s history? Among other things, you might ponder the power of faith and of the word of God in your life. Like Israel and Judah, we all make both good and bad choices. And when we sense that reforms are needed in our lives, perhaps the examples of Hezekiah and Josiah can inspire us to “trust in the Lord our God” ([2 Kings 18:22](#)).

Biblical Focus

Although God repeatedly called Israel to repentance, they continued to worship idols and carry out the practices of the surrounding heathen nations. After generations of rejecting God, God finally rejected them. In 722 BC, Israel was taken captive by Assyria. The Assyrians deported the residents to the surrounding nations. Over time, they intermarried with the gentiles and ceased to exist as a nation.

But the Lord dealt differently with Judah. God promised to send the Messiah through the seed of Abraham and the line of David. Although the tribe of Judah was saturated with unfaithfulness and idolatry, God would preserve a remnant. The Babylonian captivity began in 586 BC and lasted 70 years.

2 KINGS 18–19

Hezekiah and the Assyrian Attack

The previous king, Ahaz, rebelled against the Lord by filling the land with altars for idols. They were built on every street corner in Jerusalem and all over Judah. In addition, he stripped the Lord's temple of its furnishings and adopted heathen worship practices, including child sacrifice.

Ahaz's son, Hezekiah, was a light of faith after a generation of darkness. He destroyed the idols, the altars, and the high places. He restored the Lord's temple and reinstated proper worship practices. 2 Chronicles 29–31 details the revival during his reign.

After destroying the Northern Kingdom, the Assyrian King Sennacherib set his sights on Judah and Jerusalem. Sennacherib's commander asks a great question in verse 20, *"On whom are you depending?"*

The commander attempted to destroy Judah's confidence by mocking the warriors and listing all of the gods of the land. So far, no other army or god was able to stand against Sennacherib. He conquered the Northern Kingdom and captured the fortified cities of Judah. Why should Jerusalem be any different? Did Jerusalem have reason to hope their God was more powerful than the other gods Sennacherib had already defeated?

When faced with trials, how do we answer the question, *"On whom or what are you depending?"* I wish my answer was always "Jesus, only Jesus," but my honest answer would probably sound more like "my mind, my abilities, my money, my friends, my government, and Jesus if I happen to need him."

Occasionally, God allows us to lose what we depend on to remind us that we only need to rely on him.

Hezekiah had nothing left to depend on but the Lord. So, he sought the Lord in the temple. He clung to the hope that his God was more potent than the Assyrians and their gods. Hezekiah did not worship a man-made god but rather the God who created all things.

In response to Sennacherib's egotistical mockery, the Lord of Creation reminded him of reality. Sennacherib and Assyria had been tools of God's judgment on the unbelieving nations (2 Kings 19:25). It was part of God's plan that Sennacherib would delegitimize the idols of the land and punish the people for their faithlessness. It was time for Sennacherib to be judged for his unbelief and rage against the true God in a manner similar to the first Passover in Egypt.

Softly, the Lord turned to Hezekiah and promised years of rest and the survival of a remnant. God would uphold the promises he made to Abraham and David generations ago.

Conversation Starter:

- **Name a time you lost something you depended on? What did you go through? How did it affect your faith?**
- **What can we learn about prayer from Hezekiah?**
- **Why do you think the Lord chose to defeat the Assyrians by himself instead of enabling the people to do it? The Angel of the Lord is another name for the pre-incarnate Christ, Jesus. What enemy did Jesus defeat by himself?**

Sharing Personally:

*As the commander of the Assyrian army prepared to overtake Jerusalem in 2 Kings 18–19, intending to mock God, he asked, “**On whom are you depending?**”*

He knew that Jerusalem had no strength of its own on which to depend. Their trust in God was their only hope. No other god had been able to stop him so far. So why should Jerusalem’s God be any different?

*Doesn’t the enemy mock us with the same question, especially regarding our eternal life with God? “**On whom are you depending?**” Satan knows that we cannot save ourselves, and its best hope is to annihilate our trust in God.*

Jerusalem’s trust in God was not misplaced. In a single night, the Angel of the Lord defeated the Assyrian army with no help from Jerusalem. The victory was God’s alone.

So is our salvation. On a single day, Good Friday, Jesus alone defeated sin’s power over us. Truly we have a God on whom we can depend.

2 KINGS 20

Hezekiah's Sickness

Hezekiah had been king for about fourteen years and was around thirty-nine years old. He had already stared death in the face when Sennacherib threatened Jerusalem and had witnessed God's might when he destroyed the Assyrian army.

Although the Lord had delivered Hezekiah from Sennacherib, he faced a new enemy, death. Still, in the prime of his life, Hezekiah was not ready to leave earth but desired to have more time to praise the Lord and teach his children of the Lord's faithfulness (Isaiah 38:19).

Hezekiah's prayer was not a request based on his own goodness but on his relationship with God. Because of faith, Hezekiah was devoted to the Lord, and because of faith, he was "good" in the Lord's eyes. However, the chapters after this show that Hezekiah was a sinful king who needed rescue from his own evil heart.

God quickly and enthusiastically answered Hezekiah's prayer as if he couldn't wait to show his child love. He would heal him and give him fifteen more years on earth. There were no conditions and no strings attached, just life. But the healing was not instant as many other biblical miracles were. Hezekiah had to wait three days for his figurative resurrection.

God gave Hezekiah a sign to reassure him. The shadows moved in the wrong direction reminding Hezekiah of God's subtle power over all creation. All things are under his control.

The following chapters include Hezekiah's failings and transgressions. Although the Lord gave him 15 more years, it was a life still infected by sin. Hezekiah still needed God to rescue him from one more enemy. The readers of 2 Kings are left looking forward to a greater and more complete salvation.

Conversation Starters:

- **What would you pray if you knew you were about to die?**
- **Read [Isaiah 38:17](#). How did Hezekiah view his suffering?**
- **Why do you think God made Hezekiah wait three days? (Of what other resurrection does this remind you?)**

Sharing Personally:

In 2 Kings 20, when Hezekiah was terminally ill in bed, he prayed to God and asked for more time. Finally, he was healed after three days and given a figurative resurrection. I haven't prayed for rescue from a terminal illness, but I know many who have. Some have been healed temporarily, but all of them will eventually die just like Hezekiah did after fifteen more years.

We need to be rescued from far more than physical illnesses. We need to be rescued from the effects of sin. Because Jesus died and, after three days, was resurrected, those who trust in him will not only be rescued from earthly illnesses but also be given eternal life with God.

2 KINGS 21-23

King Josiah

After only a generation, the people lost the scriptures. It must have been a terrifying discovery to realize how far Judah had strayed from the Lord. It is exhausting to read the long list of idols they removed. Idolatry had thoroughly saturated the land. Even the Lord's temple was filled with false gods, their altars and shrines used for prostitution.

The Christian's heart breaks as they see the extent to which the Mormon church has defiled the Lord's temple in modern ways. Just as the word of the Lord had the power to change hearts in Josiah's day, so too it has the power to change the hearts of your Mormon loved ones. Keep reading and studying the Bible with them and trust the Holy Spirit to work through it.

What intense joy Josiah's people must have experienced as they celebrated their first Passover. Pray that new believing friends might experience this same joy for future celebrations.

Josiah did a lot to undo idolatry, but "Nevertheless, the Lord did not turn away from the heat of his fierce anger, which burned against Judah because of all that Manasseh had done to deserve his wrath" (2 Kings 23:26).

Even though God has forgiven our sins and we will not experience eternal judgment and punishment, there are still consequences for sin. Therefore, the people still needed to be reminded of their sinfulness and need for a Savior. Unfortunately, the revival and Judah's recommitment to the Lord only lasted one generation. After that, Judah was deported, and the temple was destroyed.

Conversation Starters:

- **Think back to the last time you rejoiced at hearing God's Word or participating in worship? What happened?**
- **If God had forgiven the people, why were they still taken away into exile?**

2 Kings 24–25

Piece by piece, the house of God ceased to exist. Such a description causes the reader to feel the devastating loss and remember its intentional construction. The place where God dwelled, “Eden on earth,” was de-created and consumed by fire, sending our thoughts forward to Judgment Day, when those who reject the Lord will be eternally separated from him and experience the fire of his wrath.

Israel failed to keep her side of the covenant. Again and again, they rejected God and chose idolatry. Even God’s chosen people could not fulfill what was required. The old covenant was not possible for humans to keep. Thus, God removed his presence.

A new covenant was required.

Over the next several months, the readings continue to reference covenants and promises God made to his people. So, take some time to review what covenants were and weren’t all about.

Covenants

A covenant is an agreement between two parties. God made a bilateral covenant with his Old Testament people at Mount Sinai. God promised Israel would be his treasured possession if they obeyed his commandments (Exodus 19–24). It was a conditional, bilateral covenant. Unfortunately, Israel could not keep their side of this agreement.

So, God promised a new covenant: “Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, That I will make a new covenant....They shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sin no more” (Jeremiah 31:31,33–34). This covenant has no *ifs* because it is a unilateral agreement, dependent on God alone. Jesus is the way God accomplished this new covenant.

Jesus fulfilled the old covenant by obeying the commandments perfectly as our substitute and giving us credit. As a result, this first covenant was made obsolete (Hebrews 8:13). In its place, Jesus instituted the new covenant “in his blood” (Luke 22:20) through which we have forgiveness (Colossians 1:14). Since this covenant’s promises depend entirely on Jesus, we can now confidently approach God.

We will dive more into the spiritual significance of God’s covenants and the exiles as we study the books of the prophets.

Additional Resources:

To dive even deeper into God’s covenants with his people, check out [A Humanitarian by Making a Wonderful Covenant](#), from the study of *God—The Ultimate Humanitarian* on BeYePerfect.org or [chapter 4 of the book by the same name, available in our online store.](#)

Conversation Starters:

- **What sins does 2 Kings emphasize as destructive to Israel/Judah’s relationship with God?**
- **What was the Old Covenant (Exodus 19–24)? How had Israel failed to keep it?**
- **Can we keep the Old Covenant? How have you failed?**

- **What is the New Covenant (Jeremiah 31:31,33–34)? How is it different and better than the Old?**