

November 12 – 2 Kings 22-25

Reform under Josiah and Fall of Southern Kingdom

Large Group Teaching Review

Hope returns to the story of Judah under the righteous leadership of Josiah, who leads the nation toward renewal and reform. But his efforts are not enough to avert disaster. Following the reigns of a few more unrighteous kings, the Babylonians lay siege to Jerusalem, destroy its temple, and deport the surviving residents. The story of 1–2 Kings thus comes to a tragic end, with only a glimmer of hope remaining in the survival of Jehoiachin, who was of the Davidic line (2 Kings 25:27–30).

God brings judgment to his people for their sin and idolatry while sustaining hope for their future through the survival of the Davidic line.

In 2 Kings 23, a number of Josiah's reforms are listed. First, in verses 1–3, Josiah calls together the elders of God's people at the temple to respond to God's Word in a covenant renewal ceremony. Then, in verses 4–20, he leads the nation in an extensive purging of various idolatrous institutions that had been established during Manasseh's reign. Third, in verses 21–23, he leads the nation in celebrating the Passover meal for the first time since the book of Judges. Finally, in a summary of his accomplishments in verses 24–25, we learn that he put away mediums and necromancers and other forms of idolatry sometimes associated with divination. What strikes you as the greatest of Josiah's accomplishments in this chapter? Why?

Despite all of Josiah's reforms, God declares that exile is still ordained for Judah (23:26–27). According to these verses, why are Josiah's reforms insufficient to avert this disaster?

Gospel Glimpses

THE DAVIDIC LINE ENDURES. The books of 1–2 Kings end by describing the fate of the Judean king Jehoiachin, as Evil-Merodach of Babylonia (the son of Nebuchadnezzar) releases him from prison, speaks kindly to him, gives him a seat above the other kings in Babylon, and provides for his needs. This highlights God's faithfulness to the promise of the Davidic covenant of an everlasting kingdom for the line of David (2 Sam. 7:16). Throughout 1–2 Kings, the Davidic covenant is portrayed both as a conditional promise established through the obedience of various Davidic kings (e.g., 1 Kings 9:4–5) and as an unconditional promise that God will guarantee. Unlike that of Israel, the monarchy of Judah is unshakable; Jerusalem will always have a "lamp" before God (1 Kings 11:36; 2 Kings 8:19). The concluding postscript of 2 Kings regarding Jehoiachin's fate makes clear, however, that the unconditional aspect of the promise triumphs in the end; not even exile and temple destruction can extinguish the hope for a coming Davidic ruler. In the post-exilic portion of the Old Testament, the divine appointment of Jehoiachin's great-grandson Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:23; compare Jer. 22:24–27) marks the re-establishment of the house of David; in the New

Testament, Jesus Christ is installed on the Davidic throne upon his resurrection and ascension (Rom. 1:1–4).

Theological Soundings

DIVINE WRATH. The climax of 1–2 Kings is the judgment of exile, and much of 2 Kings 22–25 addresses God’s commitment to bring about this judgment, as promised in 21:10–15 in response to Manasseh’s idolatry, despite the reforming efforts of Josiah (e.g., 22:14–20; 23:26–27; 24:2–4, 20). The basis for God’s judgment in several of these texts is his wrath, which has been “kindled” (22:17) against Judah and is “burning” (23:26) until it is quenched. While the doctrine of divine wrath is certainly a difficult one for many people to contemplate, it is presented in the Bible as the just and necessary response to evil and as one aspect of God’s righteous character (see Nah. 1:2).

Small Groups

Opening Announcements

1. Get-to-know-you question: If you had a time machine, would you go to the past or the future?
2. Nov 12: Winter Retreat apps DUE
3. Skating/Christmas Party: Dec 17th Save the Date

Prayer

We have come to the last chapters of our study. Spend some time thanking God for His faithfulness, mercy, grace and patience, especially in light of wickedness. Then, spend time taking prayer requests.

Study Questions

Reforms under Josiah (22:1–23:30)

How is the Book of the Law discovered during Josiah’s reign? Why does its discovery provoke the reaction that it does from Josiah?

What does the Lord’s response to Josiah in 22:14–20 reveal about Josiah’s character? How do God’s mercy and judgment relate to each other in this passage?

The Final Kings of Judah (23:31–24:20)

The reigns of Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Jehoiachin occur amid a power struggle between Egypt and Babylonia. Jehoahaz is taken captive by Pharaoh Neco of Egypt (23:31–35), and his brother and successor, Jehoiakim, becomes the servant of Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon (23:36–24:7). Jehoiakim's revolt causes the first siege of Jerusalem, resulting in a deportation in 597 BC. A decade later, King Zedekiah's revolt causes a second siege of Jerusalem and its final destruction (24:18–20; 25:1–22). As you read through the account of these events in 2 Kings, what theological interpretation do you find offered? Consider especially, for instance, 2 Kings 24:2–4, 20.

Judah Is Exiled (ch. 25)

Second Kings 25:1–7 recounts Babylon's final siege of Jerusalem, resulting ultimately in the slaughtering of Zedekiah's children before he is blinded and deported to Babylon. A few weeks later, in 25:8–17, the Babylonian army razes the city of Jerusalem, burning all of its important buildings and breaking down the city wall. Even the temple is destroyed and its valuable metal taken. Finally, in 25:18–21, a number of the leaders among God's people are taken back to Babylon and executed. This section ends with the summary statement, "So Judah was taken into exile out of its land" (25:21). What emotions does the narrative recounted in this section prompt in you as you read it? How would you have felt if you had lived through this horrific time?

Since God had promised that his presence would reside in the temple, what message is sent when the temple is destroyed? How is this event interpreted through earlier predictions in 2 Kings (e.g., 23:27; 24:20)?

Whole-Bible Connections

GOD'S REFORMING WORD. In 2 Kings 22 the Book of the Law is discovered, leading Josiah to tear his clothes in mourning (22:11) and to inquire of the Lord (22:12–13). In chapter 23, Josiah reads from the Book of the Law in order to initiate a covenant renewal ceremony (23:1–3), which leads to the purging of idolatry (23:4–20) and the restoration of the Passover meal (23:21–23). Here, as throughout Scripture, God's Word is the initiating spark that leads to renewal and reformation among God's people. Throughout the Bible, it is God's Word to his people that initiates relationship with them and establishes their spiritual well-being—from God's speech to Adam in the garden of Eden (Gen. 2:16–17), to his various covenants with Noah (Gen. 6:13–22), Abraham (Gen. 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–27), Moses (Exodus 19–23), and David (2 Samuel 7), and to the restoration and covenant renewal of the prophets and postexilic leaders (Neh. 8:1–8; Isaiah 40). In the New Testament, God's kingdom is advanced as the Word of God is proclaimed (e.g., Acts 6:7, "The word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem"). The gospel message is often labeled "the word of the gospel" (Acts 15:7), "the word of his grace" (Acts 14:3), "the word of the cross" (1 Cor. 1:18), "the word of life" (Phil. 2:16), or "the word of truth" (James 1:18, 21).

Application

1. Read 2 Kings 25:7. This is one of the saddest verses in all of scripture and the low point of Israel's history. After going through 1-2 Kings, what do you learn from this low point? How does it affect you?
2. 2 Kings ends by jumping 26 years into captivity (the nation was finally exiled in the 11th year of Zedekiah's reign, so 37-11=26). Here we see Jehoiachin released from prison and given a place of honor in Babylon. What hope does that give you?