

October 29 – 2 Kings 13-17

The Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom

Large Group Teaching Review

Second Kings 13–17 passes relatively quickly through the accessions of numerous kings of both Israel and Judah. The narrative begins by filling in the reigns of the two Israelite kings (Jehoahaz and Jehoash) who ruled during the reign of Jehoash in Judah; it is at this time that Elisha dies as well. Following this, the narrative switches back and forth between Israel and Judah, describing a period of civil war, numerous evil kings in Israel, and several good but ineffective kings in Judah. This period of history is marked by further decline into sin and idolatry among God's people, ending ultimately in the exile of Israel by the Assyrian army.

God brings judgment upon his people because they have sinned against him by continually pursuing idols.

The Exile of Israel (17:1–41)

In 2 Kings 17:7–23 we find a relatively rare and extended break in the narrative as the author pauses to interpret the exile of the northern kingdom that has just been described in 17:1–6. What was the fundamental reason for the exile, according to this passage?

Whole-Bible Connections

EXILE. In 2 Kings 17, the people of the northern kingdom of Israel are taken into exile and scattered throughout various parts of the Assyrian Empire. The ultimate sting of exile, however, was not mere physical relocation but banishment from the presence and favor of God. Expulsion from the land of Israel represented a spiritual judgment because God had promised that his people would dwell in this place (e.g., Gen. 17:8). The motif of expulsion or exile from God's presence is the original judgment of sin at the fall of Adam and Eve, who were driven out of the garden of Eden for their disobedience (Gen. 3:24). On the cross, Jesus experienced the ultimate banishment from God's presence and favor as he bore the curse of sin for his people (Matt. 27:46), so that they would be restored to the blessing of access to God's presence (Heb. 10:19–22). We remain exiles in this world until Christ returns (1 Pet. 2:11), at which time we will once again enjoy unhindered access to the presence of God (Rev. 21:3).

Small Groups

Opening Announcements

1. Get-to-know-you question: What's the weirdest food combination you actually enjoy?
2. Don't forget to fill out medical release forms if you haven't already for Winter Retreat, deadline coming up

Study Questions

Jehoahaz, Jehoash, and the Death of Elisha (ch. 13)

How would you characterize the spiritual state of Israel under the reign of Jehoahaz (13:1–9)? In what ways does this time in Israel's history reflect that of the book of Judges?

Why is Elisha angry with Jehoash for striking the ground only three times (13:14–19)? What do Jehoash's actions indicate about his attitude?

Amaziah, Jeroboam II, and Azariah (14:1–15:7)

Israel and Judah fall into conflict and civil war in chapter 14, as Amaziah of Judah confronts Jehoash of Israel and refuses to listen to his taunt (vv. 8–10). What does this conflict reveal about the spiritual state of God's people at this time? What is the result of this conflict (consider especially v. 14)?

What explanation is given for God's compassion toward Israel during the reign of Jeroboam II (14:26–27)? What biblical promise is being referenced here?

The Final Kings of Israel (15:8–31)

During the reigns of Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, and Pekah, Israel's history is marked by numerous conspiracies against the reigning king, as well as the diminishing status of the region, as the Assyrian empire annexes much of Israel's northern and eastern

territory (e.g., 15:29). What other indications of Israel's demise do you see in the text? What overall impression does this portion of 2 Kings give you?

Jotham and Ahaz (15:32–16:20)

The reign of Ahaz brings further spiritual corruption to Judah. He practices child sacrifice (16:3–4), accepts vassal status to Assyria (vv. 7–9), and introduces foreign worship into the temple in Jerusalem (vv. 10–18). What do you think motivated Ahaz to copy the altar he saw in Damascus (vv. 10–16)?

The Exile of Israel (17:1–41)

What is the spiritual result of the Assyrian resettlement of Samaria as it is described in 17:24–41? Consider verses 29–33 especially.

Gospel Glimpses

GOD'S COVENANT FAITHFULNESS. When Israel experiences oppression from Hazael of Syria, 2 Kings 13:23 notes, "The Lord was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them, nor has he cast them from his presence until now." This is one of only a few instances in 1–2 Kings in which God's covenant faithfulness to his people is described specifically in terms of his promises to the patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); more commonly, God's faithfulness is described in terms of the Davidic covenant and applied more directly to Judah (e.g., 1 Kings 8:22–26; 15:4–5; 2 Kings 8:19). Second Kings 13:23 indicates that God's commitment to his people, Israel and Judah alike, is ultimately deeper than the disruption of the exile. Since 1–2 Kings was written after the exile, the phrase "nor has he cast them from his presence until now" suggests that the exile is not the end of their story, for God has a deeper redemptive purpose stretching beyond the temporary chastisement of exile. The New Testament presents the coming of Christ as the ultimate fulfillment of God's covenant promises to the patriarchs (e.g., Luke 1:54–55, 73–74).

Application

1. The Northern Kingdom of Israel was exiled due to their persistent lack of faithfulness and unbelief. What are the consequences of persistent unbelief and unfaithfulness towards God? (ultimately separation from God in Hell). How should this reality affect how you live?
2. 1-2 Kings has been full of wicked Kings that choose sin and rebellion towards God, and it affects the whole nation. How does the reality that we live with a perfect King that loves us and is righteous affect you and your relationship with God?

Prayer

Read 1 Peter 1:9. Thank God for making us a part of His holy nation (Christians), having called us out of darkness and into light. Ask Him to help us be a group that proclaims His excellencies to the world around us.