

Week 10, 2 Kings 22-25

This week, we'll wrap up the teaching of Kings. This high-speed run through these two books has continued to fascinate me as we watch the nature of people and the nature of our faithful God as they decline into chaos.

Last week, we read about the fall of Israel. Their captivity and Judah's response as Hezekiah negotiated with Sennacherib and then Babylon.

We were reminded why God allowed for Israel's collapse. How they wandered and forgot the Lord's commands, despite his warnings and words from the prophets. How they worshipped and devoted their lives to other gods instead of the true God. How they traded the covenant promise for a bowl of worldly stew, and they paid for it. How a holy God doesn't allow sin to be associated with his name and his judgment and wrath is just and necessary.

This week, 2 Kings 22 opens with this, verses 1-3 ± **22:1** Josiah was eight years old when he began to reign, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah of Bozkath. **2** And he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left.

Here we see a child king again. We've seen good child kings and wicked ones. Josiah sets out to rebuild the temple once again. It's been about 100 years between Hezekiah's reign and Josiah's reign. The temple has fallen into ruin again and Josiah sets out to rebuild it with the help of Hilkiah the high priest.

And then we see in verse 8 that while they're repairing this run-down, dilapidated temple, they find something.

And Hilkiah the high priest said to Shaphan the secretary, "I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD." And Hilkiah gave the book to Shaphan, and he read it.

Scholars say it's most likely that this was a copy of Deuteronomy that they found in the temple. And it's not just that they had it on a shelf and never picked it up and read it. This was the book of the law that they lost.

And maybe you'd think, 100 years, things get lost. I lose my coffee cup every single day and find it around 1pm, cold and sad. Important things get lost all the time.

It's been 100 years and it's clear, this culture isn't referring to Deuteronomy for what God says. I forget to read my Bible

sometimes. There are days I wake up and just get into the grind so quickly that I forget to sit and read and listen.

But 100 years? Can we forget about something important for that long?

It's been 1,213 years since the Book of Kells was created and we have managed to not lose that. 1,315 years since St. Cuthbert's Gospel was hidden by the priest off of Lindisfarne. 2,673 years since the Etruscan Gold Book was created in Eastern Europe.

In order for something as essential and important as the book of the law to be not only lost but forgotten about, it have to have such little value to them that it could be forgotten. It's not as though it was lost and each king and high priest was searching for it week after week. It was in the temple, and no one looked for it there. I know this is conjecture so don't take this as God's word, but I imagine this scroll being dusty, under some toppled curtains and maybe a few bronze candle stands, the scroll cracked at the edges, hidden in some dark corner.

One scholar said — "The book had been lost before it was found. For how long we do not know, but the fact that it had been so carelessly kept is eloquent of the indifference of priests and kings, its appointed guardians. Lawbreakers have a direct interest in getting

rid of law books, just as shopkeepers who use short yardsticks and light weights are not anxious the standards should be easily accessible. If we do not make God's law our guide, we shall wish to put it out of sight, that it may not be our accuser. What more sad or certain sign of evil can there be than that we had rather not 'hear what God the Lord will speak'?"

So they find the book and bring it before the king to read to him.

Verse 11 —

11 When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes. 12 And the king commanded Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam the son of Shaphan, and Achbor the son of Micaiah, and Shaphan the secretary, and Asaiah the king's servant, saying, 13 "Go, inquire of the LORD for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the LORD that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us."

Can you imagine being a king, thinking you're leading your people correctly as God commanded, and someone is like — Hey, no big deal, but we found this book. Can we read it to you?

They read it and it basically describes your society and says "If you

do these things, you'll be cursed." What an absolute terrifying revelation.

And honestly, I think this is what happens in our hearts when we see Jesus and the good news of the Gospel for the first time. What was just forgotten and unnecessary to us suddenly becomes a wake up call. We realize we're in imminent danger. King Josiah tears his robes, which is an act of repentance, and tells these 5 men, Hilkiah, Ahikam, Achbor, Shaphan, and Asaiah to inquire of the Lord and find someone to interpret these words for him. He knows they're in trouble. He says "our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book." Remember what we read last week, about why God's anger was provoked toward ISrael — they forgot. And what do we see now in Judah? They've forgotten. Completely and utterly forgotten. Not just in their heads but in deeds. The book of the law has become a forgotten dust-collector in an abandoned temple. WHat a change from the days of David! Of Solomon! They are not only far in years but also in heart.

So they men go straight to Huldah. Huldah is the wife of Shallum, the keeper of the king's wardrobe. Verse 14 —

So Hilkiah the priest, and Ahikam, and Achbor, and Shaphan, and Asaiah went to Huldah the prophetess, the wife of Shallum the son of Tikvah, son of Harhas, keeper of the wardrobe (now she lived in

Jerusalem in the Second Quarter), and they talked with her. **15** And she said to them, “Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Tell the man who sent you to me, **16** Thus says the LORD, Behold, I will bring disaster upon this place and upon its inhabitants, all the words of the book that the king of Judah has read. **17** Because they have forsaken me and have made offerings to other gods, that they might provoke me to anger with all the work of their hands, therefore my wrath will be kindled against this place, and it will not be quenched. **18** But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the LORD, thus shall you say to him, Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: Regarding the words that you have heard, **19** because your heart was penitent, and you humbled yourself before the LORD, when you heard how I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they should become a desolation and a curse, and you have torn your clothes and wept before me, I also have heard you, declares the LORD. **20** Therefore, behold, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace, and your eyes shall not see all the disaster that I will bring upon this place.’” And they brought back word to the king.

Now, side note, I’m really tired of the argument that God only uses women when men abdicate their roles. That isn’t true. And it isn’t true here. These men sought a woman when there were certainly other men prophets they could’ve sought out. Jeremiah, Habbakuk, Zephaniah — all prophets who God was using at this time. And you

know who else God was using? Huldah. This faithful woman who was ready and faithful to be used by the Lord when the time came. they went to Huldah. For her wisdom, interpretation, and prophetic insight. She is well-known and obviously, highly respected.

And Huldah delivers a word that's not good. She says, the Lord says disaster is coming. But the word for JOsiah is that because he was repentant, the Lord won't do it in his day. The verdict is this: Judgment is coming. The book of the law is true. Just because it was forgotten doesn't make it null and void. God's words do not fail even when our memories do.

Chapter 23:1

23:1 Then the king sent, and all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem were gathered to him. **2** And the king went up to the house of the LORD, and with him all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem and the priests and the prophets, all the people, both small and great. And he read in their hearing all the words of the Book of the Covenant that had been found in the house of the LORD. **3** And the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant before the LORD, to walk after the LORD and to keep his commandments and his testimonies and his statutes with all his heart and all his soul, to perform the words of this covenant that were written in this book. And all the people joined in the covenant.

This isn't the first time this has happened. Remember Exodus 19:7-8 — 7 So Moses came and called the elders of the people and set before them all these words that the LORD had commanded him. 8 All the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do."

But they don't. And if I'm being honest with you, this is me. And if you're being honest with yourself, this is you. We say "Yeah Lord. We're in. We'll do all that." And then flash forward to next week when we've forgotten to read our bible for the 2nd week in a row. This is Peter who says "Lord, I'll never deny you!" and less than 24 hours later says "I don't even know that dude." We are fickle. We are not loyal to our God.

Which is why he sent Jesus. Which is why when the Abrahamic covenant was made, God said, you know what? You won't hold up your end of this deal so I'll do it for you. I'll pass through the blood on your behalf. So when you don't hold it up, when you forget the covenant, when you walk away, I'll be torn in two and not you. And that's exactly what Jesus did.

I want you to hear in these next verses, it's a good chunk of text, what was going on in Judah. And this isn't just recent. Some of these things will go back to Jeroboam. It shows you how their

repentance and reformations never made it to their hearts. They were obstinate and stubborn people.

Verse 4, chapter 23

4 And the king commanded Hilkiah the high priest and the priests of the second order and the keepers of the threshold to bring out of the temple of the LORD all the vessels made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven. He burned them outside Jerusalem in the fields of the Kidron and carried their ashes to Bethel.

OK, so the vessels for Baal and Asherah and the other gods were still in the temple.

5 And he deposed the priests whom the kings of Judah had ordained to make offerings in the high places at the cities of Judah and around Jerusalem; those also who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and the moon and the constellations and all the host of the heavens.

He fires the priests who were supposed to be making sacrifices to GOD, but were sacrificing to baal, the sun, the moon, constellations, and the false gods.

6 And he brought out the Asherah from the house of the LORD, outside Jerusalem, to the brook Kidron, and burned it at the brook Kidron and beat it to dust and cast the dust of it upon the graves of the common people.

He brings out the profane images of the Asherah from the temple and burns them, spreading them on the gravesites of those who had disobeyed the Lord.

7 And he broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes who were in the house of the LORD, where the women wove hangings for the Asherah.

He destroys the houses of the male cult prostitutes who had served in the temple and where women had made art to celebrate these sexual acts.

8 And he brought all the priests out of the cities of Judah, and defiled the high places where the priests had made offerings, from Geba to Beersheba. And he broke down the high places of the gates that were at the entrance of the gate of Joshua the governor of the city, which were on one's left at the gate of the city.

He destroys every place where false worship was happening.

9 However, the priests of the high places did not come up to the altar of the LORD in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brothers. 10 And he defiled Topheth, which is in the Valley of the Son of Hinnom, that no one might burn his son or his daughter as an offering to Molech.

Good news — he takes down the altar where people were sacrificing their children.

11 And he removed the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun, at the entrance to the house of the LORD, by the chamber of Nathan-melech the chamberlain, which was in the precincts. And he burned the chariots of the sun with fire.

He removes the horses that the kings had dedicated to the sun and burns the chariots that were also dedicated to the sun god.

12 And the altars on the roof of the upper chamber of Ahaz, which the kings of Judah had made, and the altars that Manasseh had made in the two courts of the house of the LORD, he pulled down and broke in pieces and cast the dust of them into the brook Kidron.

He removes the altars of the kings which were in several different places — the palace and in the house of the Lord.

13 And the king defiled the high places that were east of Jerusalem, to the south of the mount of corruption, which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. **14** And he broke in pieces the pillars and cut down the Asherim and filled their places with the bones of men.

He goes around the city and destroys places of worship, places that were used since SOLOMON's days. Where they worshipped the Ashtoreth, a god of the Sidonians, which is where Jezebel was from.

15 Moreover, the altar at Bethel, the high place erected by Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin, that altar with the high place he pulled down and burned, reducing it to dust. He also burned the Asherah.

Did you catch that? Remember how week after week we've read how each followed in the sins of Jeroboam who built the altars at Bethel? Well, here we are hundreds of years later and what does JOSIAH have to destroy? The altar at Bethel, the place where Jeroboam caused ISRAEL to sin, Josiah tears it down and burns it, reducing it to dust, ultimately fulfilling the word of the Lord which was spoken by the prophet. After all these years of repentance and kings turning back to God, they never actually destroyed this altar? Isn't that absurd?

How often we are quick to say sorry for our sin but we don't want to remove the very things that are causing us to sin. We don't want to take down the altars. We'll acknowledge that we're sinners, we'll even go as far to say that we're wrong and the things we're doing are wrong, but destroying it? Tearing it down? BURNING it to dust? That's a little extreme.

Cutting off that relationship? Getting rid of your smartphone? Changing your place of work? Changing your personal habits? Come on Andrea, let's not get carried away. Let's not get extreme. We're sorry, but we don't need to get crazy.

No, that altar is still standing. Burn it down.

16 And as Josiah turned, he saw the tombs there on the mount. And he sent and took the bones out of the tombs and burned them on the altar and defiled it, according to the word of the LORD that the man of God proclaimed, who had predicted these things. **17** Then he said, "What is that monument that I see?" And the men of the city told him, "It is the tomb of the man of God who came from Judah and predicted these things that you have done against the altar at Bethel." **18** And he said, "Let him be; let no man move his bones." So they let his bones alone, with the bones of the prophet who came out of Samaria. **19** And Josiah removed all the shrines also of the

high places that were in the cities of Samaria, which kings of Israel had made, provoking the LORD to anger. He did to them according to all that he had done at Bethel. **20** And he sacrificed all the priests of the high places who were there, on the altars, and burned human bones on them. Then he returned to Jerusalem.

Then Josiah ends his move of restoration by burning the priests of the high places on the altars. Which sounds vicious. But this is judgment. Josiah knows what the alternative is and the book of the law has told him.

Verse 21 — **21** And the king commanded all the people, “Keep the Passover to the LORD your God, as it is written in this Book of the Covenant.” **22** For no such Passover had been kept since the days of the judges who judged Israel, or during all the days of the kings of Israel or of the kings of Judah. **23** But in the eighteenth year of King Josiah this Passover was kept to the LORD in Jerusalem.

And then this beautiful act — the Passover reinstated. Josiah knows, the people will forget and God gave us a way to not forget...each week, remember. This hasn't happened since the days of Judges. This entire time, the people haven't kept the Passover. But, in the 18th year of King Josiah, it happens.

Verse 25 —

25 Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him.

26 Still the LORD did not turn from the burning of his great wrath, by which his anger was kindled against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked him. 27 And the LORD said, “I will remove Judah also out of my sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there.”

So judgment is still coming for Judah. There are consequences to the lineage of sin and the ruts of wickedness they’ve worn into the earth.

After all this with Josiah, these reforms, the burning of idols, the repentance, the book of the law, the passover, Josiah dies 13 years later.

And verse 31 reads —

31 Jehoahaz was twenty-three years old when he began to reign, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Hamutal the daughter of Jeremiah of Libnah. 32 And he did what

was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his fathers had done.

A little bit of history for you — During Josiah's reign, the kingdom of Assyria was slowly falling away and Nineveh was conquered in 612 B.C. Egypt was an ally of Assyria and likely wanted to maintain peace in this Mesopotamian region. Babylon was growing in power so if Egypt could keep these smaller kingdoms, then they would be protect. Pharaoh Neco marched north from Egypt through the territory that would have been Judah. One scholar wrote "'A Hebrew letter written in his time has been found at 'Mesad Hashavyahu,' a fortress built on the coast between Jabneh and Ashdod. According to the letter, an Israelite governor resided at the fort; thus, Josiah ruled also over this area, expanding his kingdom at the expense of the Philistine cities"¹ During this march, the Pharaoh encounters Josiah and this occurs, 2 Chronicles 35:20-27

20 After all this, when Josiah had prepared the temple, Neco king of Egypt went up to fight at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to meet him. **21** But he sent envoys to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, king of Judah? I am not coming against you this day, but against the house with which I am at war. And God has commanded me to hurry. Cease opposing God, who is

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[http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/2-Kings/Judah's-coming-punishment%3B-Death-of-Josiah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoahaz-over-Judah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoiakim-over-Judah%3B-Message-concerning-Shallum-\(Jehoahaz\)-and-Jehoiakim/default.aspx](http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/2-Kings/Judah's-coming-punishment%3B-Death-of-Josiah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoahaz-over-Judah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoiakim-over-Judah%3B-Message-concerning-Shallum-(Jehoahaz)-and-Jehoiakim/default.aspx)

with me, lest he destroy you.” 22 Nevertheless, Josiah did not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to fight with him. He did not listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to fight in the plain of Megiddo. 23 And the archers shot King Josiah. And the king said to his servants, “Take me away, for I am badly wounded.” 24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in his second chariot and brought him to Jerusalem. And he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah. 25 Jeremiah also uttered a lament for Josiah; and all the singing men and singing women have spoken of Josiah in their laments to this day. They made these a rule in Israel; behold, they are written in the Laments. 26 Now the rest of the acts of Josiah, and his good deeds according to what is written in the Law of the LORD, 27 and his acts, first and last, behold, they are written in the Book of the Kings of Israel and Judah.

Josiah dies young at 39. One scholar² wrote this — Consider what a righteous ruler Josiah was. And yet God allowed Him to be killed at the age of 39. In Isaiah 57:1, God said: "The righteous perishes, and no man takes it to heart; merciful men are taken away, while no one considers that the righteous is taken away from evil. He shall enter into peace; they shall rest in their beds, each one walking in his

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[http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/2-Kings/Judah's-coming-punishment%3B-Death-of-Josiah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoahaz-over-Judah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoiakim-over-Judah%3B-Message-concerning-Shallum-\(Jehoahaz\)-and-Jehoiakim/default.aspx](http://bible.ucg.org/bible-commentary/2-Kings/Judah's-coming-punishment%3B-Death-of-Josiah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoahaz-over-Judah%3B-Reign-of-Jehoiakim-over-Judah%3B-Message-concerning-Shallum-(Jehoahaz)-and-Jehoiakim/default.aspx)

uprightness." Perhaps this, more than anything, is why Josiah died when he did. It was time for Judah to be punished—and Josiah had to be taken out of the way first."

Jeremiah leads the nation in lament over the loss of Josiah and his son, Jehoahaz is placed as king. Again, the Pharaoh marches through Judah but this time takes the king as a prisoner. Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 22 of Jehoahaz, also known as Shallum,

10

Weep not for him who is dead,
nor grieve for him,
but weep bitterly for him who goes away,
for he shall return no more
to see his native land.

11 For thus says the LORD concerning Shallum the son of Josiah, king of Judah, who reigned instead of Josiah his father, and who went away from this place: "He shall return here no more, **12** but in the place where they have carried him captive, there shall he die, and he shall never see this land again."

The Pharaoh captures Jehoahaz and places Josiah's other son Eliakim renamed as Jehoiakim as king.

Jehoiakim becomes basically just a funnel of money for Egypt and Judah begins its downward slide toward its end.

Chapter 24:1 In his days, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up, and Jehoiakim became his servant for three years. Then he turned and rebelled against him. **2** And the LORD sent against him bands of the Chaldeans and bands of the Syrians and bands of the Moabites and bands of the Ammonites, and sent them against Judah to destroy it, according to the word of the LORD that he spoke by his servants the prophets.

Jehoiakim reigns for a few years and then the Lord's judgment begins on Judah, destroying it piece by piece.

Verse 8 Jehoiachin was eighteen years old when he became king, and he reigned three months in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Nehushta the daughter of Elnathan of Jerusalem. **9** And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father had done.

10 At that time the servants of Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came up to Jerusalem, and the city was besieged. ... The king of Babylon took him prisoner (Jehoiachin) in the eighth year of his reign **13** and carried off all the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and cut in pieces all the

vessels of gold in the temple of the LORD, which Solomon king of Israel had made, as the LORD had foretold. **14** He carried away all Jerusalem and all the officials and all the mighty men of valor, 10,000 captives, and all the craftsmen and the smiths. None remained, except the poorest people of the land. **15** And he carried away Jehoiachin to Babylon. The king's mother, the king's wives, his officials, and the chief men of the land he took into captivity from Jerusalem to Babylon. **16** And the king of Babylon brought captive to Babylon all the men of valor, 7,000, and the craftsmen and the metal workers, 1,000, all of them strong and fit for war. **17** And the king of Babylon made Mattaniah, Jehoiachin's uncle, king in his place, and changed his name to Zedekiah.

Zedekiah reigns for 11 years before Babylon completely captures the nation. You would think this impending doom would move him to repentance but verse 19-20 tells us – And he did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to all that Jehoiakim had done. **20** For because of the anger of the LORD it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that he cast them out from his presence.

It's time and chapter 25:1

And in the ninth year of his reign, in the tenth month, on the tenth day of the month, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came with all his army against Jerusalem and laid siege to it. And they built

siegeworks all around it. 2 So the city was besieged till the eleventh year of King Zedekiah. 3 On the ninth day of the fourth month the famine was so severe in the city that there was no food for the people of the land. 4 Then a breach was made in the city, and all the men of war fled by night by the way of the gate between the two walls, by the king's garden, and the Chaldeans were around the city. And they went in the direction of the Arabah. 5 But the army of the Chaldeans pursued the king and overtook him in the plains of Jericho, and all his army was scattered from him. 6 Then they captured the king and brought him up to the king of Babylon at Riblah, and they passed sentence on him. 7 They slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes, and put out the eyes of Zedekiah and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.

This ends badly for Zedekiah and the nation of Judah. Verse 8-11

In the fifth month, on the seventh day of the month—that was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon—Nebuzaradan, the captain of the bodyguard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. 9 And he burned the house of the LORD and the king's house and all the houses of Jerusalem; every great house he burned down. 10 And all the army of the Chaldeans, who were with the captain of the guard, broke down the walls around Jerusalem. 11 And the rest of the people who were left in the city and the deserters who had deserted to the king of

Babylon, together with the rest of the multitude, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard carried into exile.

They loot the city and take everything of value that remains.

And 2 Kings ends with this...remember Jehoiachin who was taken as prisoner by Nebuchadnezzar?

And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. 28 And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. 29 So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table, 30 and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.

And it ends.

So what does that mean of Judah? What does this mean for Jehoiachin?

It seems that he ends up pretty well off. Here's the last king of Israel before Zedekiah and he ends up dining regularly at the king's table. It's a good gig right? For the king of Judah, who has just seen the destruction and fulfillment of God's judgment on his nation, you'd think he's pretty well off. What's the problem?

I want you to turn to Daniel chapter 1

In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. 2 And the Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, with some of the vessels of the house of God. And he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and placed the vessels in the treasury of his god. 3 Then the king commanded Ashpenaz, his chief eunuch, to bring some of the people of Israel, both of the royal family and of the nobility, 4 youths without blemish, of good appearance and skillful in all wisdom, endowed with knowledge, understanding learning, and competent to stand in the king's palace, and to teach them the literature and language of the Chaldeans. 5 The king assigned them a daily portion of the food that the king ate, and of the wine that he drank. They were to be educated for three years, and at the end of that time they were to stand before the king. 6 Among these were Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah of the tribe of Judah. 7 And the chief of the eunuchs gave them names: Daniel he called Belteshazzar, Hananiah

he called Shadrach, Mishael he called Meshach, and Azariah he called Abednego.

So this is picking up where 2 Kings left off. And we see that some of the best of the best of Judah have been handpicked to come to the palace. Among them is Daniel, yes the famous Daniel of the Lion's Den. And in verse 8 we read this:

But Daniel resolved that he would not defile himself with the king's food, or with the wine that he drank.

Oof. The king of Judah, of Daniel, sits at the table of Nebuchadnezzar, dining, enjoying the spoil of Babylon. And Daniel says "I won't defile myself with that." This is where the Kings have gone wrong. They would rather eat at the table of Babylon than be set apart for the Lord. They would rather blend in with the spoil of earth. They are not men of God's. And yet, there are men of God from Judah who make it into the palace. God's hand is always moving, always working, for his good. Daniel, who doesn't live as the last king of Judah did, will go on to speak the truth of God and interpret dreams and visions to the kings of Babylon.

So while the nation of Judah collapses, God sustains those who belong to him. And now in exile, his people read these words. OF how they wandered. Of how they didn't run from their idols and

altars. Of how they didn't burn the Asherah poles and altars at Bethel. How the prophets visited them and they hid their repentance or didn't respond at all. How they were fickle in change. How they sacrificed innocent blood to false gods. How they forgot the book of the law. How God's judgment came.

And now the people wait, watch, and pray the words of Isaiah 9 will be true someday for them —

The people who walked in darkness
have seen a great light;
those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness,
on them has light shone.

3

You have multiplied the nation;
you have increased its joy;
they rejoice before you
as with joy at the harvest,
as they are glad when they divide the spoil.

4

For the yoke of his burden,
and the staff for his shoulder,
the rod of his oppressor,
you have broken as on the day of Midian.

5

For every boot of the tramping warrior in battle tumult
and every garment rolled in blood
will be burned as fuel for the fire.

6

For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given;
and the government shall be upon his shoulder,
and his name shall be called
Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.

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Of the increase of his government and of peace
there will be no end,
on the throne of David and over his kingdom,
to establish it and to uphold it
with justice and with righteousness
from this time forth and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this.

Let's pray.