

JUDGMENT DAY

God was patient with both Israel and Judah, but God's patience has its limits. Eventually sin must be judged. Judgment day occurs for all men!

For Israel it came at the hands of the Assyrian empire. In 722 BC the capital city of Samaria was sacked, and the northern 10 tribes were scattered.

For Judah, God's instrument of judgment was the Babylonians. Judah first felt their fury in 605 BC. The Babylonians took the Jews back to Babylon as captives. They were

deported in three waves : 605, 597, and 586 BC. The final blow took place when Jerusalem was sacked, and the temple destroyed, in August of 586.

In 2 Kings 12-25, we follow both kingdoms through their final throes. We pick up the history around 800 BC, and the reign of Jehoash in Judah, and Jehoahaz in Israel. The chapters cover Israel's last century, and the final 220 years of Judah's history.

Devotion Box - The Jehoash Rash

2 Kings 12:2 says of Jehoash, "(He) did what was right in the sight of the LORD all the days in which Jehoiada the priest instructed him." Here's the sad summary of Jehoash's life – *he followed the Lord, only as long as he followed Jehoiada.*

This is true of many believers – *they'll walk in the Spirit as long as they're in the shadow of a man.* A godly influence is good, but at some point it needs to become a personal resolve. Too many Christians are like chameleons. Their body pigment changes to the color of their surroundings.

You can call it "*the Jehoash rash*".

I hope you're developing the strength to go it alone. You can ride the coat-tails of a friend's faith for only so long. The day will come when their influence will no longer be there to prop you up! You'll have to be strong enough to stand yourself. Don't get *the Jehoash rash*.

Devotion Box - Low Down High Places

2 Kings 12:3 tells us, "But the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burned incense on the high places."

Jehoash failed to centralize worship in Judah. God wanted all Israel to worship at the temple in Jerusalem. This was God's way of maintaining orthodoxy. If people were allowed to build their own high place, or altar, and worship individually, deviations would creep in. Idolatry would find a foothold. Convenience, not Scripture, would become the standard. In the end, it was the failure to destroy the high places that did in Judah.

I think we too, can be guilty of building a high place. A high place today is an area in our lives where we try to strike a compromise between our convenience, and the demands of discipleship.

Maybe it's music. We insist on listening to secular stuff, when God is calling us to lay it down. Maybe it's finances. God wants us to give, but we keep holding back. Maybe it's relationships. God wants us to adopt a Christian perspective to our dating, but we keep doing things our way. Guys, destroy the high places. If you tolerate them, eventually they'll lead to your downfall.

" GOD IS NO FOOL "

Our study of the kings of Israel and Judah can be summed up with a poem. It's by Lois Cheney, and it's entitled, "*God is no fool*"...

"They say that God has infinite patience, and that is a great comfort.

They say God is always there, and that is a deep satisfaction.

They say that God will always take you back, and I get lazy in that certitude.

They say that God never gives up, and I count on that.

They say you can go away for years and years, and He'll be there, waiting, when you

come back. They say you can make mistake after mistake, and God will always forgive and forget.

They say lots of things, these people who never read the Old Testament.

There comes a time, a definite, for sure time, when God turns around.

I don't believe God shed His skin when Christ brought the New Testament. Christ showed us a new side of God, and it is truly wonderful. But He didn't change God. God remains forever and ever, and that God is no fool."

Bible Scan - 2 Kings 12-25

THE HEALER GETS SICK

At the end of chapter 13 Elisha contracts a fatal illness. We're not told how old he was, but one commentator suggests 120 years old. Elisha has been a fixture in Israel for a long time - a beacon of truth and righteousness in a rebellious land.

Joash, who was king at the time, pays the sick prophet a visit. Apparently he expected Elisha to depart this earth like Elijah - in a fiery chariot. He cries out in verse 14, "O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!"

But not this time. It's amazing; Elisha healed others, but when it came time for God to take him, his illness proved fatal. Not all God's servants will be healed. Some will die, like Elisha. Healing in this life is not always the will of God.

HOW BAD DO YOU WANT IT?

God uses Elisha on his deathbed to convey a prophecy. He tells Joash to grab the bow next to his bed. The old prophet wraps his hands around the king's hands, and they shoot an arrow out the window... *God will deliver Israel from the Syrians.*

Then Elisha tells Joash to take an arrow, and strike the ground. King Joash hits the ground 3 times, and stops. Elisha gets angry. He tells him in verse 19, "You should have struck five or six times; then you would have struck Syria till you had destroyed it! But now you will strike Syria only three times." Elisha could tell the king's lack of fervor in that moment was indicative of his overall lack of resolve.

Guys, this is our problem with sin. We strike at it a couple of times, then quit. We get it on the ropes, then let it go. We need the killer instinct. If Joash had been truly desperate for victory he would've smacked the arrow until it broke.

It reminds me of the Viking captain, Harriman O'Neil, who had his eyes set on Northern Ireland. A rival captain had the same ambition. The 2 men agreed... the first man to touch the Irish shore would be entitled to press on and conquer.

Both ships were neck to neck, until the very end when the other ship caught a gust of wind, and sailed ahead of O'Neil. When he saw the rival captain boarding his rowboat... O'Neil whipped out his knife, chopped off his hand, and threw it from the deck of the ship to the shore. His hand was first to touch Irish soil.

Guys, that's *"really wanting it."* How bad do you want victory over your sin? Jesus said in Matthew 5:30, "If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off..." In a sense, He was speaking figuratively, but in another sense He wasn't. Yes, if sin is in your heart, then chopping off a hand does no good - but in another sense the passion, the desperation it takes to chop off a hand, is the resolve needed to win a victory.

Devotion Box - Hezekiah's Prayer

You've got to love how Hezekiah responds to the Assyrian's intimidating letter... We learn a lot about prayer by studying Hezekiah's approach. He does 5 things...

First, he takes it to the Lord. Verse 14 says as soon as he reads the letter he takes it immediately to the house of the Lord. He doesn't first discuss it with his counselors, or advisors, or even his wife. He takes it straight to the Lord.

Second, verse 14, he spreads it out before the Lord. He just lays out the situation. This was not for the Lord's benefit. Trust me, the Lord understands our problems - but it helps our faith to take all the details, and give'em to the Lord.

Third, Hezekiah focuses on the God to whom He prays. Look at verse 15, "You are God, You alone, of all the kingdoms of the earth. You have made heaven and earth." This is vital. Often, our problems cloud our perspective. We get so focused on the *severity of our problem* we forget the *superiority of our God.*

Fourth, he sees the situation from God's point of view. This is not a battle between the king of Assyria and Hezekiah, or even Assyria and Judah - this is battle between Assyria and God. In verse 16, Hezekiah reminds God that Sennacherib, king of Assyria, has blasphemed the living God.

Fifth, Hezekiah prays with God's glory in mind. In verse 19 the king says, "Now therefore, O LORD our God, I pray, save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God, You alone."

Devotion Box - It's Just A Thing!

According to 2 Kings 18:4, Hezekiah "broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden image and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it *Nehushtan.*" The word "*Nehushtan*" means "*a thing of bronze*".

Amazingly, the Hebrews made an idol out of an instrument of God's grace. When Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness, God sent serpents into the camp. Moses made the bronze serpent as a means of healing. Every one who was bitten was told to look on the bronze serpent and be healed. Bronze was a symbol of judgment. The serpent, a symbol of sin. So the bronze serpent was a symbol of sin's judgment. In John 3:14, Jesus Himself said it spoke of Him.

It seems to me whenever people lose the personal awareness of God's presence, they substitute a reminder of what they once possessed. They get attached to a relic, or get religiously serious about some ritual or observance.

They try to fill the void with religion, rather than the reality. Guys, the things of God are a sorry substitute for God Himself. They're a "*Nehushtan*" - *just a thing!*

The way back to God is the simplest route, but probably the hardest... it's confession and true repentance. Admit your sin, express to God your willingness to change, ask for His forgiveness, then depend upon His power in your life.

THE KINGS IN 2 KINGS 12-25

KINGS OF ISRAEL

Jehoahaz	814-798	16 years
Jehoash	798-782	16 years
Jeroboam II	793-753	40 years
Zechariah	753-752	6 months
Shallum	752	1 month
Menahem	752-742	10 years
Pekahiah	742-740	2 years
Pekah	752-732	20 years
Hoshea	732-723	9 years

KINGS OF JUDAH

*Joash	835-796	40 years
*Amaziah	796-767	29 years
*Azariah	792-740	52 years
*Jotham	750-732	18 years
Ahaz	735-716	19 years
*Hezekiah	716-687	29 years
Manasseh	697-643	55 years
Amon	643-641	2 years
*Josiah	641-609	31 years
Jehoahaz	609	3 months
Jehoiakim	609-598	11 years
Jehoiachin	598-597	3 months
Zedekiah	597-586	11 years
* good king		

COMBAT ANGEL

The showdown between the God of Judah and the Assyrians occurs at night, outside Jerusalem's gates.

2 Kings 19:35 tells us, "It came to pass on a certain night that the angel of the LORD went out, and killed in the camp of the Assyrians one hundred and eighty-five thousand..."

One combat angel takes out an army of 185,000 troops in a single night. The size of the Assyrians' army was roughly the population of Columbus, GA.

Not only does the Bible record the slaughter, its mention also appears in secular history.

The next day, Sennacherib tucks tail and runs home to Nineveh. There, he's later assassinated while worshipping his idols. After what he'd seen, he should've been worshipping the God of Judah.

THE FALL OF ISRAEL

The fall of Israel, and her capital, Samaria, is described in chapter 17.

Shalmaneser is now king of Assyria. When he uncovers a conspiracy by the Israeli king, Hoshea, he has him imprisoned, and unleashes his fury on Samaria. Halley's Bible Handbook comments on the Assyrian army...

"The Assyrians were great warriors. Most nations then were robber nations. The Assyrians seem to have been about the worst of them all. They built their state on the loot of other peoples. They practiced cruelty. They skinned their prisoners alive, or cut off their hands, feet, noses, ears, or put out their eyes, or pulled out their tongues, and made mounds of human skulls, all to inspire terror."

These vicious people besieged Samaria for 3 years, sucking the life out of her, until the city was destroyed. Chapter 17 makes it clear that the fall of the northern kingdom was not the result of Assyria's might, or Israel's military weakness. In fact, in Isaiah 10:5 God refers to the Assyrians as, "the rod of My anger and the staff in whose hand is My indignation." They were His instrument of judgment.

Samaria fell, and Israel was scattered because of their persistent sin. They worshipped the golden calves of Jeroboam for their entire history. They sunk to Baal worship at times, and other forms of idolatry. And though God was faithful to warn them through His prophets, they stubbornly rejected their message.

Israel fell to the Assyrians for one reason - it was the judgment of God.

THE FALL OF JUDAH

The Babylonians defeat the Assyrians at the battle of Charchemesh in 605 BC. Fresh off the heels of victory they want to flex their muscle so their army moves south, against the nation of Judah. In 2 Kings 24, King Jehoiakim surrenders, and pays tribute.

Understand, the Babylonians had a different policy toward conquered people than did the Assyrians. The Assyrians scattered - the Babylonians captured. Babylon marched it's defeated foes back to Babylon where they lived in exile.

At this time, Daniel and his 3 Hebrew friends, are taken to Babylon.

Warren Wiersbe writes, "If the Jews wanted to live *like* the idolaters, let them live *with* the idolaters." Judah remains in exile in Babylon for 70 years before God allows them to return to the land. It takes a captivity to cure them of idolatry.

When Jehoiakim dies, his son, Jehoiachin takes his place. Jeremiah calls him "*Coniah*". He was an evil man. "*Coniah the Barbarian*" might be a more apt name.

Jehoiachin rules just 3 months, before the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar, takes him prisoner. This is the deportation of 597 BC. Nebuchadnezzar plundered many of the temple treasures Hezekiah had shown the Babylonian spies, and he took captive to Babylon 10,000 captives, including King Jehoiachin, and the prophet *Ezekiel*.

In Jehoiachin's place, Nebuchadnezzar makes his uncle, Mattaniah, king. He also changes his name to *Zedekiah*. This was also an evil king. It was under his administration that Jeremiah was flogged, and thrown in the stocks.

Its when Zedekiah rebels against the Babylonians that Nebuchadnezzar says enough is enough. He launches his third and final assault on Jerusalem.

Chapter 25 describes the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC.

The siege began on the 10th day of the 10th month. The walls were breached a year-and-a-half later on the 9th day of the 4th month. A Babylonian general, named *Nebuzaradan* entered Jerusalem on the 7th day of the 5th month to dismantle the city. Jewish tradition tells us the temple was destroyed on the 9th day of the 5th month.

According to Ezekiel 24, among the exiles in Babylon, Ezekiel's wife died the same day Jerusalem fell. It was God's way of illustrating the death of his bride.

One of the great ironies of history, is that when the Romans invade Jerusalem in 70 AD, they destroy the temple on the very same day as the Babylonians.

As you can imagine, the 9th day of the 5th month, or *Tisha 'B Av*, as the Jews call it, has become an infamous day on the Hebrew calendar. For the first 9 days of the Av the Jews neither eat meat nor bathe. They mourn the tragic event that helped shape so much of their history. Then on *Tisha 'B Av* they read Jeremiah's book of Lamentation and weep over their loss. It's a day of mourning.

If you have questions on tonight's study, email Pastor Sandy: sandyadams@calvarychapel.org

Calvary Chapel Announcements - May 7, 2000

5/09 Tues—Ladies Morning Bible Study 10 AM & Ladies Evening Bible Study 7 PM

5/10 Wed— Café Calvary: Bible study by Pastor Randy; featuring the music of Jonathan and Tedi Moore

Upcoming Sunday Events:

5/14 Sun—Adult Spring Party

5/28 Sun—Annual Spring Wing Fling

Upcoming June Events:

6/2 Fri—Three Last Words Concert

6/5 Mon -6/9 Fri—Pre-school VBS

6/19 Mon- 6/23 Fri—Junior High Retreat at St. Simon's Island

Devotion Box - Can You Change God's Mind?

"because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord... I also have heard you..." - 2 Kings 22:19

Bible Scan Memory Verse

In chapter 20 Hezekiah gets seriously sick. Isaiah tells him in verse 1, "Thus says the LORD: 'Set your house in order, for you shall die, and not live.'" That's not an encouraging prognosis, and it's coming from the Great Physician...

Hezekiah though, has seen the power of prayer, *so he prays*. Apparently, God changes His mind. He decides to heal Hezekiah. He turns Isaiah around, and sends him back with the news. In fact, God promises Hezekiah another 15 years.

Now, here's the question... is it really possible to change God's mind? And I believe the answer is, *yes and no*.

God has some plans that are unalterable. They're set in stone. He has other plans that He leaves subject to our input.

As the head of my house this is how I operate. Sometimes I make decisions that aren't going to change no matter how much pleading takes place. My decision is a done deal. Whereas, on other decisions I'm open. I'm looking for input. And you never know which decision is which until you ask.

This is why God tells us to pray. Often He wants our input. God wants us to feel a part of His family, and He knows we will if He gives us a say in certain decisions.

Now having said that, is it wise to want to change God's mind once He's spoken?

Hezekiah was given 15 more years, but it was during those years that Manasseh was born. And Manasseh became the vilest king in Judah's history. According to Jeremiah 15:4 the Babylonian captivity was because of Manasseh.

Also during these 15 years he makes another big-time blunder. He shows spies from Babylon the treasures of Judah. It's one of the reasons they return later to invade.

His last 15 years were marked with tragedy.

Perhaps it would've been better for Hezekiah to have submitted to God's original verdict, and been content to die? God loves us, and His ways are best. We need to trust Him.

Devotion Box - Josiah's Rediscovery Of God's Word

An event takes place in Josiah's 18th year as king that shapes his life forever.

While repairs are being made to the temple an important discovery occurs. Tucked away in a corner of the temple, Hilkiah the high priest finds a copy of the Law. During the reigns of Manasseh and Amon, the Law had been neglected. Not even the priests had a copy they could read and study.

The rest of chapters 22-23 shows us that Josiah read the Scriptures, and the rest of His life and reign were spent living out the words that God had carefully written down.

Can you think of a better way to spend the rest of your life - living out what God has written down? Have you discovered life-changing power of the Word of God?

THE MESS OF MANASSEH

In chapter 21 Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, succeeds his father. And tragically, he reigns longer than any other Judean king, 55 years. It was the darkest period in the history of the southern kingdom. Manasseh *made-a-mess-a* Judah.

Here's his litany of sins: he rebuilt the high places, instituted Baal worship (even brought it into the temple), he was into astrology, he made child sacrifice, used witchcraft, practiced fortune-telling, consulted mediums, filled the streets of Jerusalem with innocent blood, and stocked God's holy temple with idols.

Tradition says Manasseh had the prophet Isaiah sawn in two.

Manasseh was more wicked than the Amorites - they were the pagan people God used the children of Israel to drive out when He first brought them to Canaan. In 2 Kings 21:13 the prophet pronounces God's judgment, "I will wipe Jerusalem as one wipes a dish, wiping it and turning it upside down."