

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 17

Narrator: Isaiah, Jeremiah

Primary Scriptures: 2 Kings 24-25, *Jeremiah, Lamentations, Habakkuk*

Story Summary: Events leading to the end of the Southern Kingdom

Location: Judah

Time: 610-586 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: 2 Kings 24:20; Jeremiah 1:5; Habakkuk 2:4; 3:17-18

The last four kings of the Southern Kingdom were Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. All four kings were evil in the sight of the Lord because of their idol worship. All four had devastating problems with the Egyptian, Assyrian, or Babylonian empires.

The last king, Zedekiah, rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. After a horrible famine caused by a siege, Zedekiah tried to escape. He was captured and taken to the Babylonian king. As punishment, Zedekiah's sons were killed in front of him. That was the last sight he saw. They blinded him, bound him with bronze chains and took him to Babylon.

The Babylonians burned every building and house in Jerusalem, including the Temple, and broke down the city walls. They took all the treasures and important people into exile in Babylon, and left poor people behind to keep the land productive. This was the final end to the Southern Kingdom.

A little less than five centuries from King Saul to King Zedekiah. The people wanted a king just like the countries around them, and they got kings just like the countries around them: kings who disobeyed God, and led the people into further disobedience. God was patient, but he finally had enough.

Throughout the time of the kings, God sent many prophets to warn and to guide both the kings and the people. Almost every time, the prophets were ignored. The people did not want to hear the truth, and they did not want to change their ways.

What are some of the things that modern people can learn from the writings of the prophets? Certainly, we can learn about many characteristics of God, such as his desire to be loved and obeyed, his righteousness, and his mercy and judgments.

We can learn how to be obedient to God even when the society around you is corrupt and evil. We can learn to listen to wise people who follow God.

Another important thing we can learn from the prophets is that many of them prophesied about the coming Messiah, Jesus. A review of the Gospels and Paul's writings show that they often proved to their audiences that Jesus is the Savior by using the prophecies in the Old Testament.

Yes, the books of the prophets are often long and complex, but they are profitable to read for people of all generations.

Discussion Questions:

1. Discuss different types of prophecies.
2. Did the prophets know that they were sometimes prophesying about Jesus?
3. 2 Kings 24:1-4 discusses the beginning of the end for the Southern Kingdom. Why did God choose to end the existence of the Southern Kingdom in the way he did?
4. What is the significance of 2 Kings 24:7?
5. According to 2 Kings 24:10-17, how complete was the first victory of Nebuchadnezzar over the Southern Kingdom? What was left?
6. 2 Kings 25:8-11 describes the complete destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. Why did God allow the Babylonians to destroy the city so completely?
7. 2 Kings 25:12 describes the fact that the Babylonians did not deport the poor people. Do you think that was part of God's provision for the exiles when they were to return many decades later?

1. Some prophecies are meant to speak truth about an important matter. Other prophecies are meant to foretell the future. Some do both. 2. No, they did not. 3. Manasseh was the last straw for the Lord. The people of Judah had continually fallen into idol worship, and had abandoned the Lord. He used the surrounding peoples to do the job as a sign that his people had abandoned him, so he had abandoned them to the destruction of very weak enemies. 4. Israel was in the sights of competing empires, and the Babylonians were stronger than the Egyptians at this point in time. 6. The people had abandoned God so completely that he no longer valued the city or the Temple that had been built to him. In fact, he probably wanted them destroyed so nobody would think that he was associated with the Jews any longer.

Application Questions:

1. According to 2 Kings 24:8, did the people of the Southern Kingdom try to turn back to God when it was almost their very last chance? Do you ever refuse to turn to God, even when you know you should? What does it take for you to do so?
2. According to 2 Kings 24:20, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon. He was obviously a very weak king. What could have possessed him to do something so foolish? Have you ever miscalculated the outcomes of your choices?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. According to 2 Kings 24:20, why did all the unpleasant things happen to the Southern Kingdom? What does it mean when God thrusts someone from his presence? Does God do that to people today?
2. 2 Kings 25:8-12 describes the complete abandonment of the Southern Kingdom by God. Do you think Christians can behave in such a way that God would choose to abandon them? Why or why not?