

## BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR FEBRUARY 6

### 2 KINGS 9–10

#### THE BACKGROUND

During this study of 1 and 2 Kings, we've learned how Solomon failed to follow the Lord wholeheartedly and encouraged the worship of false gods. When Solomon died, his kingdom split into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. The Northern Kingdom of Israel only lasted around two hundred years. The Southern Kingdom of Judah endured approximately one hundred forty years longer than the Northern Kingdom. Although the Northern Kingdom tended to be the stronger of the two kingdoms, it suffered from more intense involvement with false religion, particularly Baalism [BAY uhl izum].

Whereas Judah enjoyed a measure of stability with the passing of the reign from one descendant of David to another, Israel was plagued by political intrigue and multiple coups d'état. This week's lesson centers on one of the major coups of Israel's history when Jehu [JEE hyoo], a commander in King Joram's army, killed the king, and took the throne around the middle of the ninth century B.C. The inspired writer of the historical narrative in 2 Kings 9–10, recorded the coup as part of God's judgment on the house of Ahab. However, the writer also indicated Jehu didn't follow the law of the Lord with all his heart (2 Kings 10:31). Jehu had an unbridled passion that produced both positive and negative results.

#### 1. CHOOSE A SIDE (2 KINGS 9:16, 21B-22)

**Verse 16:** *Jehu got into his chariot and went to Jezreel since Joram was laid up there and Ahaziah king of Judah had gone down to visit Joram.*

King Ahaziah of Judah had traveled approximately 40 miles from Ramoth-gilead to visit wounded King Joram in Jezreel. Little did Ahaziah know that his visit would result in his death. His alliance with Joram on the battlefield and his subsequent visit to the wounded king in Jezreel indicated a close relationship between the two kings.

The brief description of Jehu's approach to Jezreel with an unspecified number of troops heightened the anxiety Joram was feeling. Already wounded in battle, Joram was vulnerable to attack. When the watchman on the tower of Jezreel reported the advance of troops toward the city, Joram dispatched a messenger to see if the troops were

coming in peace. When the messenger reached Jehu, Jehu answered the question with a question, "What do you have to do with peace?" (2 Kings 9:18). The intent of the question was likely to warn the messenger to side with Jehu or suffer the consequences.

The messenger fell in with Jehu and his troops. When the first messenger didn't return, Joram sent a second messenger with the same query and with the same result. By the time the second messenger fell in with Jehu's ranks, the advancing army was close enough for the watchman to discern their leader was Jehu. Humorously, he identified Jehu because "he drives like a madman" (9:20). Joram decided to ride out and meet him; after all, Jehu was one of his commanders. Perhaps Joram thought he brought urgent news about the war against Hazael.

**Verses 21b-22:** *Then Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah set out, each in his own chariot, and met Jehu at the plot of land of Naboth the Jezreelite. When Joram saw Jehu he asked, "Do you come in peace, Jehu?" He answered, "What peace can there be as long as there is so much prostitution and witchcraft from your mother Jezebel?"*

King Ahaziah of Judah mounted his chariot and accompanied Joram out to meet Jehu. As divine providence would have it, they met Jehu at the plot of land of Naboth [NAY bahth] the Jezreelite, located next to Ahab's palace in the city of Jezreel (1 Kings 21:1).

On the very plot of land Jezebel had obtained by having Naboth falsely accused and put to death, three kings met: Joram, the king of Israel; Ahaziah, the king of Judah; and Jehu, the anointed king of Israel whom God would use to bring judgment on the house of Ahab. When Ahab first took possession of Naboth's vineyard following Naboth's unwarranted execution, God had sent Elijah to confront Ahab with his sin and to predict the eradication of his family (1 Kings 21:17-24). God had postponed judgment because of Ahab's repentance. However, Joram did evil in the Lord's sight (2 Kings 3:1-3). When Jehu appeared in Jezreel to exact vengeance, Joram was quite deserving of his punishment.

As Joram approached Jehu, Joram inquired whether Jehu came in peace (9:22). Jehu responded by referring to the rampant prostitution and witchcraft encouraged by the king's mother, Jezebel. The prostitution referred to the fertility cult characteristic of Baal worship. The term witchcraft referred to the open sorcery encouraged during Joram's reign. The Hebrew text literally reads "her sorceries," with reference

to Jezebel. The bluntness of Jehu's response revealed a measure of his passion to carry out his divine commission to destroy the house and lineage of Ahab.

Once Joram discerned Jehu's intent, he shouted to Ahaziah to flee. Joram couldn't escape Jehu's arrow. Israel's evil king was dead. Ahaziah managed to flee south about 8 miles before being wounded near a town called Ibleam. He fled to the stronghold of Megiddo where he died of his wounds. His servants took his body back to Jerusalem for burial. With both evil kings killed, Jehu turned his attention to Jezebel who was living in Jezreel. He had servants throw her out of the window to her death. Jehu showed utter contempt for Jezebel by going in to eat and drink before giving the orders for her body to be buried. When the servants went to bury her, the dogs had eaten all but her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands (9:35).

#### 2. A FRIEND IN THE DESERT (2 KINGS 10:15-17)

**Verse 15:** *When he left there, he found Jehonadab son of Rechab coming to meet him. He greeted him and then asked, "Is your heart one with mine?" "It is," Jehonadab replied. Jehu said, "If it is, give me your hand." So he gave him his hand, and Jehu pulled him up into the chariot with him.*

As he continued toward Samaria, Jehu encountered Jehonadab [jih HAHN uh dab], the son of Rechab [REE kab]. Jehonadab, also known as Jonadab, taught his family to lead an austere life of dwelling in tents, abstaining from wine, and avoiding the corrupting influences of Canaanite religion. According to the Law, Nazirites were to abstain from wine (Num. 6:1-4). Nazirites were individuals who vowed special commitment to the Lord. Did the Rechabites adhere to the Nazirite laws? We don't know. However, Jehonadab's descendants were so faithful to his teachings that the Lord instructed Jeremiah to use them as an example. Jeremiah contrasted the Rechabites' faithfulness to the Israelites' unfaithfulness (Jer. 35:1-19). Jehonadab likely shared Jehu's zeal for the Lord in removing all vestiges of Baal worship in Israel. Having Jehonadab ride alongside him, Jehu had an ally and supporter of his religious reforms.

**Verse 16:** *Then he said, "Come with me and see my zeal for the LORD!" So he let him ride with him in his chariot.*

Jehonadab pledged loyalty to Jehu, who then helped him into his chariot. Jehu invited Jehonadab to witness his zeal for the LORD. The word zeal means "passion," "fervor," "enthusiasm," and "devotion to a cause." The trouble with

this type of passion is the ease with which a person can lose sight of appropriate actions and began to act in such a way as to demonstrate unbridled passion. Preservation of one's reputation for being passionate toward a cause replaces devotion to the cause. Was Jehu "driving furiously" into unbridled passion? The rather public invitation for Jehonadab to see his zeal for the LORD might be another red flag.

**Verse 17:** *When Jehu came to Samaria, he struck down all who remained from the house of Ahab in Samaria until he had annihilated his house, according to the word of the LORD spoken to Elijah.*

Jehu completed the task of eradicating any remnant of Ahab's house once he arrived in Samaria. The destruction of Ahab's house was in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken to Elijah (1 Kings 21:20-26). As the new king, Jehu had the support of the troops; but he couldn't afford to allow anyone with a legitimate claim to the throne survive. Further, he had to eliminate anyone who might oppose him by showing loyalty to Joram's descendants. By killing the priests (2 Kings 10:11), Jehu eliminated a source of false worship. He also reduced the chances of a counter revolt from those who would use religion to excite and unify the people against him. By ascribing Jehu's actions in this matter to the word of the LORD, the inspired historian sought to teach a later generation of Israelites how seriously the Lord regards their faithfulness to His covenant and how severe His judgment is when they deliberately disobeyed Him.

### 3. SITUATIONAL ETHICS (2 KINGS 10:18-19)

**Verse 18:** *Then Jehu brought all the people together and said to them, "Ahab served Baal a little, but Jehu will serve him a lot.*

When Jehu assumed the reins of power in Samaria, he had the benefit of being an unknown entity. Therefore, when he stated he would serve Baal a lot more than Ahab's family had done, the people had no reason to doubt him. Jehu's passion for the Lord was on the right track when he shifted the focus from exacting judgment on Ahab's family to the removal of Baalism from Israel. His initial statement of support and devotion to Baal, while deceptive on his part, was sufficient to convince an uninformed populace that those were his true intentions.

**Verse 19:** *Now, therefore, summon to me all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. None must be missing, for I have a great sacrifice for Baal. Whoever is*

*missing will not live." However, Jehu was acting deceptively in order to destroy the servants of Baal.*

Jehu's first step was to convene all the prophets of Baal, all his servants, and all his priests. The threefold use of the term "all" underscored the comprehensive scope of Jehu's plan. What could entice all of the adherents of Baalism to come to Jehu? The king proclaimed a great sacrifice for Baal. From the vantage point of those who were devoted to Baal, the change of kings by coup d'état no doubt caused severe anxiety regarding their future. A summons to a national worship service to honor Baal would've been welcomed news. The threat, whoever is missing will not live, served as a psychological reinforcement of Jehu's feigned seriousness about honoring Baal.

At this point the reader is informed that Jehu's declared loyalty to Baal together with the great sacrifice was bogus. Jehu was acting deceptively with the intent of destroying the Baal worshipers. Jehu proclaimed unbridled support of Baal in order to lure the true supporters of Baalism into his trap. His passion was focused on removing the sinful worship that had flourished under Ahab and Jezebel and had continued to thrive. Baalism had to be removed if Jehu was to lead Israel back to a proper covenant relationship with the Lord.

We might ask, do right ends justify wrong means? If we think our goals are noble, are we allowed to achieve those goals no matter what it takes? The biblical text doesn't address the morality of Jehu's deception. However, the New Testament clearly condemns even noble actions that are done out of wrong motives. The example of Ananias and Sapphira is a case in point (see Acts 5:1-11). Observe, however, in this example that it's the Lord, not His people, who carry out the judgment.

Jehu carried out his plan to completion. When the prophets, servants, and priests of Baal assembled, Jehu made sure no servants of the Lord were among them. He made his great sacrifice and then gave the command for all Baal's followers to be killed. Jehu's 80 guards obeyed his command, killed the Baal worshipers, destroyed Baal's altar and pillars, and then tore down his temple. As an act of utter contempt against Baalism, the site of the destroyed temple of Baal was converted into a latrine.

The writer of 2 Kings moved from the eradication of Baalism to a summary of Jehu's reign (10:28-36). Though Jehu reigned 28 years, we know little of what else he did. The historian focused almost exclusively on the elimination

of Ahab's family from the throne and the eradication of Baalism from Israel.

### 4. THE RESULTS OF STRONG PASSION AND WEAK CHARACTER (2 KINGS 10:30-32)

**Verse 30:** *Nevertheless, the LORD said to Jehu, "Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in My sight and have done to the house of Ahab all that was in My heart, four generations of your sons will sit on the throne of Israel."*

As a result of Jehu's faithful execution of God's judgment against the wicked rule of the house of Ahab, God promised his dynasty would last through four generations of his sons. As a result Jehu and his descendants held the throne for approximately a century.

**Verse 31:** *Yet, Jehu was not careful to follow with all his heart the law of the LORD God of Israel. He did not turn from the sins that Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.*

Was Jehu's zeal always in line with the accomplishment of God's will? In the matter of bringing judgment on the house of Ahab, the answer is yes. Unfortunately, Jehu didn't exercise the same passion for accomplishing all the Lord desired. Like so many kings before him, he wasn't careful to follow with all his heart the Lord's law. Jehu had been quite passionate in establishing his reign by eliminating every trace of Ahab's family. He had exercised great zeal in dismantling the cult of Baalism in Israel. However, his passion fell short when he failed to remove the sins that Jeroboam [JER uh BOH uhm] had caused Israel to commit. Since the earliest days of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam had established religious shrines at Dan and Bethel as rival worship centers to Jerusalem. He selected non-Levitical priests and set up golden calves at his worship centers. He also created alternate feast days for his people to celebrate (see 1 Kings 12:26-33). Therefore, Jeroboam was guilty of replacing the God-given religious structure with his own man-devised religious system. Jehu supported the continuance of these sins of Jeroboam. Removing Baalism was a good step toward restoring the covenant community, but continuing the sins of Jeroboam resulted in the negative consequences that sin brings to the Lord's people.

**Verse 32:** *In those days the LORD began to reduce the size of Israel. Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout their territory:*

As a result of Jehu's failure to fully restore Israel to the observance of the Law of Moses, the LORD began to reduce

the size of Israel and to make the nation increasingly vulnerable to its enemies. Elisha correctly had foreseen the havoc Hazael, king of Aram, would wreak on Israel (2 Kings 8:7-15). During Jehu's reign, Hazael defeated the Israelites throughout their territory. No one was safe at any place in Israel, a commentary on life outside of God's protection. Because Jehu was selective in his passion, eradicating Baalism but allowing Jeroboam's idolatry, the Lord condemned his purge and reforms through the prophet Hosea by vowing vengeance on his dynasty (Hos. 1:4-5). Within 30 years of the assassination of Jehu's final descendant on the throne (see 2 Kings 15:8-12), Israel was a nation no more. The climatic fall of Samaria and cessation of the kingdom came in 722 B.C.

## BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR FEBRUARY 13

### 2 KINGS 11–17

#### THE BACKGROUND

The background passage for this week's lesson shifts the focus more upon the kings who led Israel during the final approximately 90 to 100 years of the Northern Kingdom's existence. During this time period, nine different kings ruled Israel. This week's background passage also covers the one queen and five kings who ruled Judah during a somewhat longer corresponding time period.

With regard to the spiritual condition of these rulers, all of Israel's kings plus Judah's Queen Athaliah and King Ahaz didn't reign in ways that were pleasing to the Lord. Four of Judah's kings who reigned during this period did what was right in the Lord's sight. This fact was probably a major reason the nation of Judah continued to exist so long after the demise of Israel.

Another feature of this section of the historical narrative is the way the inspired writer highlighted the crucial role played by the godly priest Jehoiada (2 Kings 12:2). As priest, Jehoiada took seriously his charge to instruct the seven-year-old King Joash in the way of the Lord. As long as Jehoiada instructed him, the young king did what was right in the Lord's sight.

#### 1. SELECTIVE MEMORY (2 KINGS 17:5-9)

**Verse 5:** *Then the king of Assyria invaded the whole land, marched up to Samaria, and besieged it for three years.*

Assyria besieged Israel's capital, Samaria. This city had been Israel's capital for over a century and a half, since the time of King Omri. Located on top of a small mountain and surrounded by other mountains, Samaria was difficult to assault and overthrow. Inhabitants stockpiled food and water, enabling them to withstand prolonged sieges by the enemy. The king of Assyria, Shalmaneser V, who ruled from 727-722 B.C., began his siege of Samaria in 725 B.C.

**Verse 6:** *In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria. He deported the Israelites to Assyria and settled them in Halah and by the Habor, Gozan's river, and in the cities of the Medes.*

After three years of holding out, Samaria finally capitulated in the ninth year of Hoshea, 722 B.C. Sargon II, brother and successor of Shalmaneser V, took credit for the victory.

Sargon II finished the destruction of Samaria that Shalmaneser V had begun. The inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom were deported to various parts of the Assyrian Empire. The Assyrians often relocated people, especially the leaders and the wealthy, in an effort to govern the conquered territories more easily and to hinder further uprisings. The poorer people were left to work the land and to live out their lives.

The Assyrians also settled people from other regions in the Northern Kingdom. Thus the Israelites intermarried with the inhabitants of other lands. Over time the designation Samaria came to be applied not only to the city but also to the region around it and eventually to the entire Northern Kingdom. Scholars point to this intermarriage as the origin of the Samaritan people, so despised by later Jews.

**Verse 7:** *This disaster happened because the people of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God who had brought them out of the land of Egypt from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt and because they had worshiped other gods.*

Knowing the historical factuality of an event doesn't tell the whole story. That Israel fell is historical fact; why the nation fell needed explanation. The political chaos, multiple assassinations, turmoil with neighboring nations, and capture by the Assyrians, were all part of the disintegration and destruction of a people who had sinned against the LORD their God. The Hebrew term translated "sinned" means "missed the mark." The people had missed God's way for their lives and had pursued their own evil inclinations to their final disastrous conclusion. The God they rejected had brought their ancestors out of the land of Egypt and from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt. Had the people been faithful to the Lord, He could've delivered them from the Assyrian king's power just as He had delivered their ancestors from the power of Pharaoh.

As if they hadn't done enough to elicit a judgment response from God, the people also worshiped other gods. The people had worshiped the gods of the Edomites, Moabites, and Ammonites, to the point of sacrificing their children to false gods. Ahab and Jezebel had promoted the worship of Baal and Asherah, gods of the Canaanites. Queen Athaliah continued the worship of Baal in Judah for six years after Jehu's purge of that religion in Israel.

**Verse 8:** *They had lived according to the customs of the nations that the LORD had dispossessed before the Israelites and the customs the kings of Israel had introduced.*

The sinfulness of the people didn't end with their rejection

of the Lord and worshiping other gods. They also sinned by living according to the customs of the nations in the land. The Lord had used the Israelites to judge those nations because of their sins. He had dispossessed those nations before the Israelites. Centuries earlier when the people had clamored for a king, they wanted to be like the other nations. God granted their request. They had a king like the other nations; they also came to ruin like the other nations. When God dispossessed those nations before the Israelites, He provided them a firsthand look at the end of nations who stand against Him. The lesson was apparently lost on the people whose spiritual senses were dulled by years of sinful living.

Moreover, the people were guilty of living according to the customs the kings of Israel had introduced, a reference to the false religious cult established by Jeroboam I in 930 B.C. when the nation of Israel divided into two separate kingdoms. That false worship had continued to the very end of the kingdom in 722 B.C. The idea one could be right with God while maintaining a substitute religious system involving non-Levitical priests, alternate festivals, and worship of golden calves at Dan and Bethel, was perpetuated by Jeroboam and all the kings of Israel. The sins of Jeroboam were practiced by all Israel's kings. God's judgment for their sins was the death of the kingdom.

**Verse 9a:** *The Israelites secretly did what was not right against the LORD their God.*

The people were as culpable as the kings. They secretly did wrong against the LORD their God. The Hebrew verb translated "secretly did" appears only here in the Old Testament. It conveys the idea of acting hypocritically. They said one thing and did another. Their false words no doubt included referring to the Lord as their God while living in violation of His covenant. These false words also included any rants against the Lord during hard times brought on by their own folly.

For the inspired historian analyzing the records of the kings and writing this account, the Northern Kingdom of Israel collapsed as a consequence of the Israelites' persistent sinfulness and hypocrisy.

#### 2. THE REBEL ROAD (2 KINGS 17:13-15)

**Verse 13:** *Still, the LORD warned Israel and Judah through every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments and statutes according to all the law I commanded your ancestors and sent to you*

*through My servants the prophets.”*

The writer catalogued some additional sinful actions of the people (17:9b-12). Though they were told, “You must not do this” (17:12), they persisted in their rebellion. The Lord patiently warned Israel and Judah. The Hebrew word rendered “warned” means “testified.” Using the analogy of a legal setting, Israel and Judah had sinned and all the evidence pointed to their guilt. The Lord warned or testified to His wayward people that the evidence was against acquittal. His warnings came through every prophet and seer. A prophet was empowered by God to proclaim His ways and to call people to repent when they strayed from those ways. What was a seer? According to 1 Samuel 9:9, “seer” was an earlier name for a prophet. The term “seer” was applied to those whom God gave a vision about the spiritual status of His people.

The message of the prophets was straightforward. First, the people were to turn from their evil ways. What does it mean to turn? The Hebrew word meant to change one’s direction whether physically, mentally, or spiritually. Since God testified their ways were evil, they needed to turn from what they were doing and turn back toward Him. Second, they were to keep God’s commandments and statutes according to the law He had commanded their ancestors. Here, the Lord was commending His people to the covenant legislation first delivered to the nation through Moses and renewed through Joshua and several good kings. Finally, they were to recognize God’s law through the words of His servants the prophets. The Lord made an emphatic point by referring to the prophets as His servants. He acknowledged the authenticity of the prophets while tacitly condemning the syncretistic ways of the priests and kings who had led His people astray.

**Verse 14:** *But they would not listen. Instead, they became obstinate like their ancestors who did not believe the LORD their God.*

Some people refuse to accept the truth even when the evidence overwhelmingly supports the case against them. So Israel refused to listen. The people became obstinate, meaning they “stiffened their necks.” Just as a horse must turn its neck to obey the tugging of the reins, so God sought to redirect His people by getting them to turn. Instead of yielding to His guidance, they stiffened their necks and continued in the wrong direction. Like their ancestors, they didn’t believe the Lord. The term “believe” meant “to confirm something.”

We get our word “amen” from this Hebrew term. In essence, the people failed to amen God when He spoke words of life to them.

**Verse 15:** *They rejected His statutes and His covenant He had made with their ancestors and the warnings He had given them. They pursued worthless idols and became worthless themselves, following the surrounding nations the LORD had commanded them not to imitate.*

Failure to repent is never a spiritually neutral decision. When people refuse to repent, their apostasy becomes harder and deeper. By refusing to repent, the people of Israel not only lived in continued rejection of God’s statutes and covenant, they also rejected His warnings for them to repent. Further, they chased worthless idols, a phrase literally referring to a vapor or something fleeting. Like the gods they pursued, the people became worthless themselves. The LORD had commanded them not to behave like the nations surrounding them; they ignored God, putting themselves in the same status as the heathen nations who rebelled against the Lord.

### **3. GOD IS A GENTLEMAN (2 KINGS 17:18-20)**

**Verse 18:** *Therefore, the LORD was very angry with Israel, and He removed them from His presence. Only the tribe of Judah remained.*

The inspired historian cataloged additional sins characterizing Israel’s history, including the golden calves, the Asherah pole, Baal worship, child sacrifice, and divination (2 Kings 17:16-17). Therefore, the Lord was angry with Israel, and He removed the people from His presence. The term therefore connected what God did with what Israel had done. The Lord never acted unpredictably or inconsistently with His people. His judgments were righteous and true. The people were forewarned but refused to repent. God became angry as a result of their sins. The idea that God was angry might not be easy for us to understand, especially if we have a lopsided view of His love. We shouldn’t equate God’s type of anger with our shortsighted, selfish outbursts when something doesn’t go our way. Instead, God’s anger represents the revulsion of His holiness to our sinfulness. God seeks to make us holy so we can enjoy His presence. The phrase translated “from His presence” is more literally “from His face.”

**Verse 19:** *Even Judah did not keep the commandments of the LORD their God but lived according to the customs Israel*

*had introduced.*

Judah had the advantage of several good kings whose actions at least delayed judgment. Once Israel was taken into exile, only Judah remained (17:18b). However, Judah was no paradigm of virtue either. The Southern Kingdom chose to live according to the customs Israel had introduced, referring to the sins of Jeroboam I (17:8). This reminder of Judah’s culpability foreshadows the closing chapters of 2 Kings where Judah sinks into irreversible decline after the death of good King Josiah.

**Verse 20:** *So the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and handed them over to plunderers until He had banished them from His presence.*

Beginning with this verse, the historian summarized God’s judgment of Israel and its results (17:20-41). Using the same verb “employed” to describe the people’s actions toward God (see 17:15), the inspired writer wrote, “the LORD rejected all the descendants of Israel.” His rejection resulted in their affliction, their being plundered, and their ultimate banishment from His presence. No one could say Israel ceased to exist because Assyria had the more dominant army. The historian wanted people to know, Israel ceased to exist because the people refused to repent of their sins even when explicitly warned by God to do so. They had become, to borrow the title of a classic sermon by Jonathan Edwards, “Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God.” God’s anger was His righteous response to the obstinacy of His people and their steadfast refusal to repent.

## BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR FEBRUARY 20

### 2 KINGS 18–20

#### THE BACKGROUND

The background passage of this week's lesson focuses exclusively on the 29-year reign of King Hezekiah [HEZ ih kigh uh] of Judah. Hezekiah became king over Judah around 715 B.C. Judah was the only kingdom remaining from the glory days of David and Solomon. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had fallen to Assyria [uh SIHR ih uh] seven years earlier in 722 B.C. The Assyrians began at that time to resettle captured peoples from other parts of their empire into the region. Assyria's military juggernaut exerted both political and religious pressures on the small kingdoms making up the ancient Near East. Those kingdoms were forced to pay tribute money in the form of gold and silver on a regular basis. When they refused, the Assyrians would apply military pressure.

The chronology of Hezekiah's reign has puzzled scholars. For instance, in 2 Kings 18:9, Hezekiah is recorded to be in his fourth year as king while Israel's last king, Hoshea, is still in power, around 725 B.C. Yet, in 2 Kings 18:13, we read Sennacherib began attacking Judah's cities in Hezekiah's 14th year. Sennacherib's invasion is reliably dated to 701 B.C., meaning Hezekiah didn't become king until about 715 B.C. Many scholars point to the practice of coregency, where a son reigns with his father for a period of time as a solution. The inspired writer's purpose wasn't to explain the chronology to our complete satisfaction. Rather, he sought to demonstrate Assyria's considerable presence in the promised land over a sustained period of time. The Assyrians had destroyed Israel, but the event was marked as divine judgment against Israel's incessant sin (2 Kings 18:12).

#### 1. DO YOU REALLY BELIEVE? (2 KINGS 18:28-32)

**Verse 28:** *The Rabshakeh stood and called out loudly in Hebrew. Then he spoke: "Hear the word of the great king, the king of Assyria."*

Not content with speaking with Hezekiah's officials alone, the Rabshakeh called out loudly in Hebrew, the language of the people. His intent was to convince Hezekiah's warriors to surrender without a fight. A king without an army isn't king. The Rabshakeh began his address by referring to Sennacherib as the great king. The statement was demonstrably

true; Sennacherib had defeated those who opposed him. In terms of the territory he controlled and the size of his army, he was the great king.

**Verse 29:** *This is what the king says: "Don't let Hezekiah deceive you; he can't deliver you from my hand."*

The Rabshakeh's propaganda was directed to the people of Jerusalem. If he could create unrest and apprehension among the citizenry, the Rabshakeh knew Hezekiah would have to surrender the city. In the face of the overwhelming odds against them, any words of encouragement from Hezekiah would seem empty to the people. Without the people's support, Hezekiah couldn't hope to outlast the Assyrian siege. The command, "Don't let Hezekiah deceive you," carried the full force of the Assyrian king's undaunted success on the battlefield and of his army's menacing presence surrounding Jerusalem. The Rabshakeh declared, "Hezekiah can't deliver you from my hand"; his words seemed to be true to the people who heard them. Gripped by fear and apprehension of inevitable defeat and possible death, the people no doubt began to cave under the pressure of the propaganda.

**Verse 30:** *Don't let Hezekiah persuade you to trust in the LORD by saying: Certainly the LORD will deliver us! This city will not be handed over to the king of Assyria.'*

The Rabshakeh's propaganda was specifically directed against any claim Hezekiah was making about the Lord's delivering the people. The Assyrian representative commanded the people not to let Hezekiah persuade them to trust in the LORD. The Hebrew verb translated "trust" is the same word used in Proverbs 3:5 when Solomon issued the command to trust in the Lord with all one's heart. Thus Hezekiah was calling his people to put trust in the same Lord who had blessed David and Solomon. The Hebrew word rendered "safety" or "security" derives from this verb. To trust in the Lord is to find safety in His presence, a sense of security derived only from faith.

**Verse 31:** *"Don't listen to Hezekiah, for this is what the king of Assyria says: 'Make peace with me and surrender to me. Then every one of you may eat from his own vine and his own fig tree, and every one may drink water from his own cistern'"*

The Rabshakeh gave the people a more viable option from his perspective. Rather than listen to what he viewed as the ill-fated words of Hezekiah, the people should accept the generous offer of the obviously predominate king, Sennacherib. The great king promised what every beleaguered

soul trapped behind the walls of a besieged city would want: peace and freedom. The one condition was that the residents had to make peace with the Assyrians and surrender. In return, each man would eat from his own vine and fig tree, a phrase reminiscent of the peace and prosperity of Solomon's reign (1 Kings 4:25). The promise each man could drink water from his own cistern meant a return to normal activities and residing on one's own property at least for a while.

**Verse 32:** *until I come and take you away to a land like your own land—a land of grain and new wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of olive trees and honey—so that you may live and not die. But don't listen to Hezekiah when he misleads you, saying: The LORD will deliver us.*

The idyllic scene painted by the Rabshakeh carried a big price. The people's peace and freedom wouldn't last. The great king would come and take them away to "a land like your own land," a deceptively positive way of referring to exile. The land to which the people would be taken would have grain and new wine, bread and vineyards, and olive trees and honey. All these things must've appealed strongly to people living on rationed supplies under siege conditions. The Rabshakeh's statement "so that you may live and not die" could refer to the immediate choice facing them whether to surrender to Sennacherib or follow Hezekiah in trusting in the Lord. His statement could also be an extension of his glowing description of "the land like your own land." Ironically, this description was of a place where the people, the language, the land, and the customs were completely foreign.

Then the Rabshakeh again disparaged the people from trusting in their king. They shouldn't listen to Hezekiah because he "misleads" them. The term "misleads" also means "to allure" or "to lead astray," the very purpose of the Rabshakeh's propaganda, deceptively projected back on Hezekiah. Thus, even the terminology was meant to discredit Hezekiah's claim, "The LORD will deliver us." In spite of the Rabshakeh's powerful propaganda, Hezekiah knew the Lord would deliver Jerusalem. Though the gods of other nations hadn't been able to deliver those nations from the great king's onslaught, Hezekiah persevered in trusting the Lord (2 Kings 18:33-37).

#### 2. BROTHERS OR FOOLS? (2 KINGS 19:5-7)

**Verse 5:** *So the servants of King Hezekiah went to Isaiah,*

Isaiah grasped the enormity of the situation. He also gained a measure of Hezekiah's dependence on the Lord

from the entrance of Eliakim and Shebna, important servants of King Hezekiah, and the elders of the priests. The enormity of the crisis was surpassed only by the enormity of Hezekiah's faith. He believed the Lord could and would deliver Jerusalem, so he enlisted Isaiah to pray to that end.

**Verse 6:** *who said to them, "Tell your master this, 'The LORD says: Don't be afraid because of the words you have heard, that the king of Assyria's attendants have blasphemed Me with.*

Isaiah had an answer for Hezekiah directly from the Lord. Hezekiah was not to be afraid of the words Sennacherib's servants had uttered. The Lord took the Rabshakeh's words personally and regarded them as blasphemy. By saying the Assyrian king's attendants had blasphemed Him, the Lord was taking issue with the false claim He had sent Sennacherib against Jerusalem (18:25) and with Sennacherib's arrogance in saying the Lord couldn't deliver Jerusalem (18:33-35). To the anxious men of Judah, the situation might've looked hopeless. They were surrounded by a vast army led by a king whom no one else had been able to defeat. They hoped Hezekiah was right in saying, "The Lord will deliver us." God impressed Isaiah to tell Hezekiah the situation wasn't hopeless; the siege would end shortly with the utter humiliation of the seemingly invincible foe. The battle wasn't between the superior army of Sennacherib and the pitiable army of Hezekiah; rather the fight was between an arrogant mortal and the omnipotent Lord. From God's perspective, this situation was no contest.

**Verse 7:** *I am about to put a spirit in him, and he will hear a rumor and return to his own land where I will cause him to fall by the sword.' "*

The Bible depicts the Lord as being highly involved in the affairs of people, interacting with them during good and bad times. This theology contrasts deeply with those who hold to a view whereby God maintains a distance from the everyday events of human history. In our present context, God is so involved in the crisis facing His godly king that He promised to put a spirit in King Sennacherib. The effect of this spirit would be the total erosion of Sennacherib's confidence. He would react to a rumor, return to Assyria, and leave his troops to die at the Lord's hands. The word translated "rumor" also means "report." Sennacherib did return to Assyria ostensibly to protect his interests there. The other part of Isaiah's prophecy moved beyond the withdrawal of Sennacherib from Jerusalem. Isaiah also prophesied the death of

Sennacherib in his own land. Isaiah's prophecies came true!

Renewed calls for surrender by the Rabshakeh focused on the failure of other gods to deliver their people from the Assyrian onslaught. He sent a letter to Hezekiah containing calls for surrender and additional propaganda (19:8-13). Hezekiah took the letter to the temple and spread it before the Lord (19:14).

### 3. A PRAYER WITH TEETH (2 KINGS 19:15-19)

**Verse 15:** *Then Hezekiah prayed before the LORD: "LORD God of Israel who is enthroned above the cherubim, You are God—You alone—of all the kingdoms of the earth. You made the heavens and the earth.*

Empowered by Isaiah's reassurances and faith in the Lord, Hezekiah knew the contest was between the Lord and Sennacherib. Hezekiah began by appealing to the Lord as the Sovereign of all the kingdoms of the earth, including Assyria. The statement that the Lord "is enthroned above the cherubim [CHEHR uh bim]" had tangible expression in the temple where the golden cherubim stood with outstretched wings over the ark of the Lord. Their wings and the mercy seat formed the symbolic throne of God on earth, thus emphasizing the reality that God is on His throne in heaven ruling over all of creation. The Lord alone had made the heavens and the earth. In His unique status as Creator of all things, God alone was worthy of trust. The use of language reminiscent of Genesis 1:1 brings into sharp focus the awesome power with which Sennacherib would have to deal. Sennacherib's foe wasn't Judah, but rather the Lord. God had ample power to defeat Assyria because He had made the heavens and the earth.

**Verse 16:** *Listen closely, LORD, and hear; open Your eyes, LORD, and see; hear the words that Sennacherib has sent to mock the living God.*

Hezekiah prayed for God to listen, to hear, to open His eyes, and to see. Only a living God could do these things; idols were made of inanimate materials. In times of crisis, they were of no help. Consequently, the Assyrians had destroyed the nations before them. Sennacherib failed to realize his current foe was an all-powerful God who would protect His people. Moreover, Hezekiah's words reflect his understanding of the situation and his unshakable faith in the Lord.

**Verse 17:** *LORD, it is true that the kings of Assyria have devastated the nations and their lands.*

Hezekiah honestly admitted the success of the kings of Assyria on the battlefield. They had devastated nations and lands. By referring to the kings of Assyria, Hezekiah no doubt was alluding not only to Sennacherib but to Tiglath-pileser III, Shalmaneser V, and Sargon II, who along with Sennacherib had exerted irresistible force over the land from 745 B.C. to 701 B.C. Yet, over four decades of Assyrian dominance didn't distract Hezekiah from believing the Lord would deliver Jerusalem from the present crisis.

**Verse 18:** *They have thrown their gods into the fire, for they were not gods but made by human hands—wood and stone. So they have destroyed them.*

As part of their reign of terror over smaller kingdoms, Assyria destroyed the gods of the people they encountered by throwing them into the fire. To rely on a god only to see its image smoldering in the flames must've been devastating to the psyche of conquered peoples' effective propaganda. Once again, Hezekiah correctly grasped the reality of the situation. He acknowledged the failure of other gods to deliver their people, but he rightly understood the issue wasn't that Assyria was undefeatable, but rather the gods of the vanquished nations weren't gods. Rather, they were made by human hands out of wood and stone. Just as gods of wood and stone were destroyed, even so the nations who depended on them were destroyed as well.

**Verse 19:** *Now, LORD our God, please save us from his hand so that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the LORD God—You alone."*

Hezekiah concluded his prayer with a concise appeal for the Lord to save His people from the Assyrians. The immediate effect would be life and freedom for Jerusalem's beleaguered people. Hezekiah prayed for a more ultimate effect. He wanted all the kingdoms of the earth to know that the LORD alone was God. Sennacherib's defeat would demonstrate God's superiority.

Hezekiah earnestly prayed that the Lord would save Jerusalem and its people from destruction by the Assyrian army. The remainder of 2 Kings 19:20-37 relates the Lord's response to Hezekiah's prayer. God acknowledged Sennacherib's arrogance and promised his defeat. The Lord miraculously delivered Jerusalem from the Assyrian siege. In the end, Sennacherib died at the hands of his own sons in the temple of his god.

## BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR FEBRUARY 27

### 2 KINGS 23:31–25:30

#### THE BACKGROUND

Josiah was the last good king of Judah. He initiated a period of reform in Judah that lasted only temporarily. When Pharaoh Neco killed Josiah at Megiddo, Josiah was approximately 39 years old (see 2 Kings 22:1). As we conclude our study of 1 and 2 Kings, we focus on 2 Kings 23:31–25:30. These materials cover the last 23 years of Judah's existence as a kingdom, the fall of Jerusalem and its aftermath, and the ultimate release of Jehoiachin [jih HOY uh kin] from prison in Babylon.

The final four kings of Judah did what was evil in the Lord's sight. Three of the kings were sons of Josiah: Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, and Zedekiah [ZED uh KIGH uh]; the remaining king was Josiah's grandson, Jehoiachin. Unfortunately for Judah, none of Josiah's successors followed his godly example. Their refusal to guide the people toward the Lord meant the judgment against Judah would no longer be postponed as it had been during Josiah's godly reign.

An interesting pattern is revealed in the final years of the kingdom of Judah. Jehoahaz reigned three months before being exiled to Egypt. Jehoiakim reigned 11 years, then died. His son, Jehoiachin, reigned three months before being exiled to Babylon. Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, reigned 11 years before being blinded and exiled to Babylon. More important than the alternating pattern of 3 months and 11 years is the historical fact that under the Lord's sovereign control, outside nations determined Judah's destiny. Jehoahaz was deported to Egypt because the Egyptians had temporary control of the land in 609 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar [NEB yoo kad NEZ uhr] changed all that in 605 B.C. when he extended Babylonian control over the promised land.

The Babylonians conducted three major deportations of Jews to Babylon. The first deportation came in 605 B.C. Notable people like Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael, and Azariah (the latter three better known as Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego respectively) were taken into exile at this time. The second deportation came in 597 B.C. This deportation resulted in King Jehoiachin and the prophet Ezekiel being taken to Babylon. The third deportation occurred in 587 B.C. when the Babylonians

divested Judah of the remaining leaders and wealthy individuals among their ranks. The kingdom of Judah was no more.

#### 1. GOODBYE TO THE GOLD (2 KINGS 24:12-13)

After Jehoiakim's death, his son Jehoiachin became king at 18 years of age. Unfortunately, his father's rebellion had resulted in a Babylonian siege of Jerusalem. Jehoiachin's reign as king over Judah in Jerusalem lasted three short months, yet he managed to do evil in the Lord's sight (2 Kings 24:8-9). The Babylonians surrounded Jerusalem and besieged the city's inhabitants. Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem personally to oversee the operation.

**Verse 12:** *Jehoiachin king of Judah, along with his mother, his servants, his commanders, and his officials, surrendered to the king of Babylon. So the king of Babylon took him captive in the eighth year of his reign.*

Young Jehoiachin had no choice and little chance of holding out against the greater forces of Babylon. However, during this period of time, some people did believe the Lord would defend the city just as He had done more than a century earlier when Hezekiah was king and the Assyrians surrounded Jerusalem. This belief in the inviolability, or security, of Jerusalem was ill-advised. God had delivered Jerusalem from Sennacherib because Hezekiah offered up prayers of faith. His righteous life also played an important role in the Lord's decision to preserve the nation of Judah at that time. With the exception of Josiah, all of Hezekiah's successors, most notably his son Manasseh, did evil in the Lord's sight. Jerusalem wouldn't survive because faith had long since vanished from the nation's leaders.

Jehoiachin surrendered to the king of Babylon. He and his mother, along with his servants, commanders, and officials were taken into exile. The year was 597 B.C. By taking the leaders away, Nebuchadnezzar crippled Judah's chances of mounting any kind of rebellion. The deportation of the king and leaders of the people created great emotional and spiritual stress as the people witnessed the great treasures of the temple and palace taken away.

**Verse 13:** *He also carried off from there all the treasures of the LORD's temple and the treasures of the king's palace, and he cut into pieces all the gold articles that Solomon king of Israel had made for the LORD's sanctuary, just as God had predicted.*

Nebuchadnezzar wasn't content with removing the lead-

ership. He helped himself to all the treasures of the palace and the temple just as Isaiah had prophesied in 701 B.C. (2 Kings 20:16-18). Nebuchadnezzar cut into pieces all the gold articles that Solomon, king of Israel, had made. The steady decline of the people of God that had begun when Solomon allowed his foreign wives to turn his heart from the Lord approached its full expression in Jerusalem's siege and subsequent pillaging at the hands of the Babylonians.

The reminder that these events happened just as God had predicted was meant to teach God's people He was in control even in the dark times of foreign oppression and to remind them His word was truth. Nebuchadnezzar's deportation of 10,000 captives included all the skilled craftsmen and metalsmiths. Only the poor people of the land were left. Since King Jehoiachin was taken into exile, Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's Uncle Mattaniah on the throne, changing his name to Zedekiah (2 Kings 24:14-17).

#### 2. GOODBYE TO GOD (2 KINGS 24:19-20)

Zedekiah was 21 when he became king; he reigned 11 years (597-587 B.C. and would have the dubious honor of being Judah's last king (2 Kings 24:18).

**Verse 19:** *Zedekiah did what was evil in the LORD's sight just as Jehoiakim had done.*

The forces of spiritual decay set in motion when Solomon turned from the Lord and magnified by Manasseh's atrocities continued in Zedekiah's reign because he chose to do evil in the LORD's sight. Thus the period from Josiah's death in 609 B.C. to the destruction of Jerusalem in 587 B.C. was marked by evil leadership.

**Verse 20:** *Because of the LORD's anger, it came to the point in Jerusalem and Judah that He finally banished them from His presence. Then, Zedekiah rebelled against the king of Babylon.*

The LORD's anger referred to His righteous indignation or justifiable wrath. From the beginning of the constitution of Israel as the covenant people, God told Moses and the people they would be His "own possession" if they'd obey His voice and keep His covenant (Ex. 19:5). Their persistent failure to follow His guidance ultimately resulted in their downfall. Sadly, Zedekiah probably didn't even notice anything different when the Lord banished His people. We read that the king of Judah rebelled against the king of Babylon.

Judah was finished; God was not. He would use the Babylonians to discipline His people. Divine discipline always

carried the promise of future hope (Deut. 30:1-3). God's people can cling to hope even when facing divine chastisement for sin. Keeping hope alive during difficult times is a matter of trusting God's grace rather than focusing on our past failures. God holds forth a better future to His people even as they go through His discipline for their sins (Jer. 46:27-28).

Zedekiah's rebellion set in motion the final actions that spelled Jerusalem's doom and Judah's demise. After a lengthy siege of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar, food stores in the city began to run out. Famine produced panic. The Babylonians, also referred to as the Chaldeans, broke into the city; Judah's warriors fled along with King Zedekiah. The king was captured and had to watch his sons be killed before he was blinded and taken in chains to Babylon (2 Kings 25:1-7).

Zedekiah's evil actions resulted in the Lord's decision to end the nation and send its people into captivity. When the Lord decides He must bring judgment on His people for their persistent disobedience, we can nevertheless keep alive our hope in God.

### 3. GOODBYE TO GROUND (2 KINGS 25:8-11)

**Verse 8:** *On the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guards, a servant of the king of Babylon, entered Jerusalem.*

The Babylonians officially conquered Jerusalem on the seventh day of the fifth month corresponding to late July or early August on our calendar. The nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar equates to 587 B.C. Nebuzaradan [NEB uh zahr-AY dan] commanded the invading forces.

**Verse 9:** *He burned the LORD's temple, the king's palace, and all the houses of Jerusalem; he burned down all the great houses.*

Nebuzaradan set the greater part of Jerusalem on fire. First, he torched the temple; the great house for the Lord that David had envisaged and Solomon had built was reduced to ashes. Second, he burned the king's palace. Just as the temple represented the center of the Jewish religious system, so the king's palace represented the center of political power and government. The destruction of these two major structures was meant to decapitate the nation of Judah and to send a signal to the surrounding vassal kingdoms of Babylon's intent to rule over them. By burning all the houses and all the great houses, Nebuzaradan made Jerusalem virtually uninhabitable.

**Verse 10:** *The whole Chaldean army with the commander of the guards tore down the walls surrounding Jerusalem.*

The Babylonians weren't content with burning the buildings and houses. They also tore down the walls surrounding Jerusalem. We can only imagine the intensity of the Babylonian or Chaldean [kal DEE uhn] army as they toppled Jerusalem's once seemingly impenetrable walls. Those walls had kept the Chaldean army out for a lengthy period of siege. So complete was the destruction, the walls wouldn't be rebuilt until the time of Nehemiah around 445 B.C.

**Verse 11:** *Nebuzaradan, the commander of the guards, deported the rest of the people who were left in the city, the deserters who had defected to the king of Babylon, and the rest of the population.*

Nebuzaradan deported the remaining people. The term "deported" literally means "to take into exile." At this time, three groups of people are cited as being deported. First, the rest of the people who were left in the city were led away to Babylon. Second, Zedekiah's soldiers who had defected to the king of Babylon were taken captive. This group probably included the men of war who escaped Jerusalem but were apprehended later near Jericho (2 Kings 25:4-5). Finally, the Babylonians also deported the rest of the population, referring to everyone left in Judah who was of any significance at all. Jerusalem was in ashes. The king, leaders, and notable people were taken away. Only "the poorest of the land" were left as vinedressers and farmers (25:12).

God's presence was associated with the temple; its destruction signified to the Israelites His departure. Special notice was given to the dismantling and removal of the temple artifacts (25:13-17). This notice served the historian's purpose of highlighting the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem as a divine act of judgment against God's wayward people. The breaking into pieces and carrying away of the bronze pillars, the water carts, and the bronze reservoir served as a visual demonstration of the spiritual statement, the Lord "banished them from His presence" (24:20). The huge bronze pillars and other implements provided the Babylonians with precious metals they could use back home. More significantly, the total pillaging of the temple represented the theological reversal of all the glorious accomplishments of David and Solomon.

Included in this theological reversal were the removal of the chief priest Seraiah, the priest Zephaniah, and the doorkeepers of the temple (25:18). The Lord's temple was no

more. Attendant to the theological reversal was the political dismantling that took place. Nebuzaradan took a court official, 5 royal aids, the secretary of the army commander, and 60 men found in Jerusalem. These unfortunate persons were taken to Nebuchadnezzar where they were executed. The final sentence in 2 Kings 25:21, "So Judah went into exile from its land," marks the ultimate curse for breaking the covenant (Deut. 4:25-26).

### 4. HELLO TO HOPE (2 KINGS 25:27-30)

Had the Book of 2 Kings ended with 25:26, the final note of the long history of the people of God would've been one of fear and despair. Fortunately for them and for us, the divinely inspired historian added one final paragraph ... a word of hope.

**Verse 27:** *On the twenty-seventh day of the twelfth month of the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Judah's King Jehoiachin, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year he became king, pardoned King Jehoiachin of Judah and released him from prison.*

King Jehoiachin had reigned only three months when Nebuchadnezzar took him into exile into Babylon in 597 B.C. Though imprisoned 37 years, he survived, outliving Nebuchadnezzar who died in 562 B.C. When Evil-merodach [EE vihl-mih ROH dak], Nebuchadnezzar's successor, became king, he pardoned King Jehoiachin and also released him from prison. (Note: Evil is part of the king's name and derives from a different Hebrew word than the one meaning "moral evil.") The word "pardoned" renders the literal Hebrew phrase "lifted up the head," in this context an idiom for restoring someone's dignity.

**Verse 28:** *He spoke kindly to him and set his throne over the thrones of the kings who were with him in Babylon.*

Jehoiachin's release brought several personal benefits to him. First, Evil-merodach spoke kindly to him, referring literally to speaking "good things." Second, the Babylonian king set his throne over the thrones of the kings who were with him in Babylon. The reference to other kings being in exile with Jehoiachin is in keeping with all we know of the Babylonian rulers' policy of deporting deposed kings away from their homelands to prevent further rebellion.

**Verse 29:** *So Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes, and he dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life.*

By recording that Jehoiachin changed his prison clothes,

the historian drew a graphic picture of his significantly improved circumstances. Jehoiachin was 18 when he became king and was taken into exile that same year. He was released 37 years later at the age of 55. We don't know how long he lived, but he dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life.

**Verse 30:** *As for his allowance, a regular allowance was given to him by the king, a portion for each day, for the rest of his life.*

In addition to the two personal benefits mentioned in verse 28, Jehoiachin received a personal allowance. The allowance isn't clarified, but the Hebrew term often referred to a food allowance. This allowance lasted for the rest of his life. As a direct descendant of David, Jehoiachin's release and "royal treatment" indicated the Lord hadn't forgotten His promises to David (2 Sam. 7). Though the destruction of the temple and of Jerusalem caused much suffering and despair, the release of King Jehoiachin marked the occurrence of hopeful changes to God's people.