

# 2 KINGS Bible Reading Schedule

## 2 Weeks

### WEEK 1

The book of 2 Kings is filled with leaders who did not learn from the past. The spiritual failure of these kings brought doom upon themselves and their nation. However, throughout the book, there are sparkling examples of people who put God first and enjoyed God's covenant promises. Reading their stories inspires us to avoid sinful mistakes and to enjoy the blessings that God promises to those who love and serve him.

#### DAY 1 – 2 Kings 1 & 2

We are saying goodbye to Elijah. What a departure from this life to God's eternal kingdom. Everyone knows the story of Elijah and the fiery chariot. But first, in Chapter 1, we read about Israel's King wanting to capture Elijah. I think there is an interesting lesson in this chapter. The first two captains are going to take Elijah by force. But the third captain pleaded, "O man of God, please spare my life and the lives of these, your fifty servants." V13 He pleaded for mercy. What if the previous captains would have responded to Elijah in this way? Wouldn't we expect the same outcome with Elijah joining them?! Oftentimes, people interpret the actions of God or his prophets as being harsh. But most of the time people don't plead for mercy. Whenever someone, or a whole nation, pleads with God for mercy, he gives it. Rahab in Joshua 2, the Gibeonites in Joshua 9... there are many examples but you get what I am proposing. It is still true today. Most people, who live in unbelief, do not repent. But if anyone repents, God will show mercy. I am also appreciating the transfer of calling from Elijah to Elisha as a good example of passing on the mantel in a positive way. Moses and Joshua also portray this kind of continuity. Of course, I am drawn to that topic because Tyler and I spent 4 intentional years preparing our church and each other for a positive transition. Also, Elisha's prayer is a good one, in my thinking (verse 9). He wants God's work through him to be even more fruitful than his mentor Elijah. I also can relate. How have you appreciated the ministry of Elijah? Elijah represents the best of being a prophet but he also revealed that he was very much a human being. What story of Elijah are you remembering? Why?

#### DAY 2 – 2 Kings 3 & 4

In 1 Kings, we read that Jehoshaphat had died but the story rewinds so we can read about Ahab's son, Joram. The chapter begins by telling us that this is the 18<sup>th</sup> year of Jehoshaphat's reign. I am especially interested in Jehoshaphat. He seems very willing to help even though we know that Joram did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Plus, 2 Chronicles 18:1 & 21:6 tells us that Jehoshaphat allowed his son to marry Ahab's daughter. The entanglement of Jehoshaphat with the disobedient leaders of Israel must be characterized as a weakness. I want you to pay close attention to Jehoshaphat because he is a godly leader but made himself vulnerable to the work of the devil. Chapter 4 highlights the exploits of Elisha which were amazing; he had the kind of connection with God that enabled him to believe the Lord for such powerful miracles. This chapter is also very practical as God uses Elisha to meet the needs of people. It begins with

oil; then, he promises a child to a barren woman and brings the boy back to life when he dies; and, he provides food for people in need. This is an outline for chapter 4. Isn't it great to know that God cares about our financial needs, our family dynamics, and our momentary troubles? Elisha reveals God's heart. I was doing some reading on the importance of hospitality and the story of the woman from Shunem was the example as she and her husband made a special effort to bless Elisha with hospitality. She also reflected a posture of humility. What practical needs are you dealing with? How might you apply what we have read in this chapter? We get to read about Elisha for two more days. I especially appreciate the event highlighted in Chapter 6. You will too!

#### DAY 3 – 2 Kings 5 & 6

I thought of a New Testament verse after reading chapter 5: "Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you? Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin (repentance)." (Romans 2:4) Naaman is the main character of this chapter and he had a huge need. The story leads to Elisha and his instructions for healing. Naaman finally obeys and is healed. He is full of gratitude and pledges his allegiance to Elisha's God. "I will never again offer burnt offerings or sacrifices to any other god except the Lord." (5:17) God's kindness leads to Naaman's repentance, as it should be. But, as it is with many stories in the Bible, the temptation for more overtakes Gehazi, the servant of Elijah. His greed for temporary riches will end our connection to this once faithful servant of Elisha who is afflicted with leprosy. In chapter 6 we read about a young servant who most likely took Gehazi's place. I also thought of a New Testament verse after reading chapter 6: "If God is for us, who can ever be against us." (Romans 8:31) Verse 37 says, "We are more than conquerors..." This chapter highlights the evidence of warring angels who are assigned to protect Elisha. "Don't be afraid!" Elisha told him. "For there are more on our side than on theirs." (6:16) "But you belong to God, my dear children. You have already won a victory over those people because the Spirit who lives in you is greater than the spirit who lives in the world." (1 John 4:4) This is another NT Scripture that reminds me of the event in 2 Kings 6. The heavenly hosts are unseen but very real. The Lord gives charge to his angels to protect you in all your ways. Every day the Lord is watching over you. Be at peace! How do these two inspiring chapters speak to you?

#### DAY 4 – 2 Kings 7 & 8

Chapter 7 is a very significant Scripture for me because it was the text for one of my first sermons which was over 40 years ago. Since that time, I have preached from 2 Kings 7 several times with the same emphasis. I wonder if you can guess the theme for a sermon from this chapter. PAUSE, giving you time to think. You might not think of evangelism as the theme but watch how clearly this connects. Four guys with leprosy are confined to the exterior of the city. Everyone is facing a life-or-death crisis as the Aramean army surrounds Samaria and people are starving. The men decide to give themselves up to the Aramean soldiers. Maybe the enemy will give them something to eat. They make their way to the Aramean camp and no one is there. They have abundance at their fingertips. But the turning point is found in verse 9, "Finally, they said to each other, 'This is not right. This is a day of good news, and we aren't sharing it with anyone. If we wait until morning, some calamity will certainly fall upon us. Come on, let's go back and tell the people at the palace.'" As we used to say in seminary, "That will preach!" There is a clear application to our own lives and faith. We have received the good news of the Gospel

which is totally undeserved. God has showered his love and salvation on us. Can we keep it to ourselves? No, that would be such a selfish sin. Even in the story, the guys with leprosy are not believed at first. But that is not the issue. We are called to share what God has so graciously given us. That is the point of the story and the challenge for us who have been given so much. How might you share the love and good news of Jesus Christ with those around you?

#### DAY 5 – 2 Kings 9 & 10

I am quite sure that this was one of the more difficult readings, right? It records so much bloodshed and revenge. And like you, I have a hard time reading it but there's something to think about. Much of these two chapters represent the wrath of God which is a real thing. The crazy amount of evil woven into this story for several generations could not be tolerated any longer. Jehu would be God's instrument to release God's wrath on the wickedness of Ahab, his wife, and his ungodly family who turned a blind eye to all the evil and corruption that transpired day after day. The wicked arrogance of Jezebel finally comes to an end. She was most certainly possessed by the devil. When something or someone is especially depraved the only solution to severance. There will come a day when the removal of evil will be complete. The Bible refers to this as The Day of the Lord. For example, "The day of the Lord is coming—the terrible day of his fury and fierce anger." (Isaiah 13:9) There are references to the day of the Lord in every section of Scripture. On that day the Lord God will manifest his awe-inspiring lordship over creation. When God comes in glory, humans will experience terror because all human endeavors will be brought down. It is a time of retribution when God judges his enemies in wrath and fury. The ungodly receive the punishment they deserve, while the righteous enter into their full salvation. These encounters will happen throughout history when God has had enough... like the flood. But one day everything will be brought under the submission of God and the world and its people will be judged. If we think this is negotiable, we are being naïve even as we read firsthand the justice of God in these two chapters. How do you respond to this kind of punishment? What might the Lord be saying to you?

#### DAY 6 – 2 Kings 11 & 12

In spite of so much bloodshed, I see the hand of God working through the courage of Jehosheba (11:2) to rescue Joash. She acted on faith, trusting God to take care of her and the infant son of the King. Young Joash's unlikely survival was not only God's will but was also a manifestation of God's ongoing care of his chosen people. So many dark and devilish things are happening that it is easy to think that the situation is hopeless. But God gives Jehoiada, the priest faith and courage to protect Joash and oppose the wicked mother (Athaliah) of King Ahaziah (who is dead) from discovering the young child otherwise he would have been killed along with the rest of the family. Jehoiada longed to restore Judah to a right relationship with God. Under his direction, the people and King Joash, a mere boy, agreed to worship God, follow God's commands, and destroy the altars to the false gods. Through one man's determination and faith, the direction of a nation is moved toward God when everyone and everything else seemingly was moving away from God. The people agreed to a covenant that would put God first and everyone would be accountable for the spiritual recovery of Judah. In the darkness of these days, something hopeful and God-honoring wins out. Courage to change our situation and personal accountability to others are necessary steps for godly restoration and spiritual renewal. Jehoiada gives us a godly example to follow.

How might God be moving you to stand up to Him and what is right, when others so easily ignore God's principles and purposes?

## WEEK 2

I realize that these readings are challenging with all the bloodshed and assassinations. But like most weeks there are glimpses of hope and genuine faith. Hezekiah and Josiah will help us wrap up the week giving us some good examples to follow. In the meantime, Israel will be carted off into exile by the Assyrians in 722 BC. This is the story in chapter 17.

### DAY 1 – 2 Kings 13 & 14

We have appreciated Elisha for his faith and courage. His final prophecy is recorded which seems anticlimactic to me. He has been used by God in so many profound ways that this final message doesn't match his many accomplishments. But the story suggests he was quite weak. 2 Kings 6 stands out to me as he unveils the invisible for his young servant to see. The army of God becomes visible and with it fear fades and victory is certain. Might I always know this to be true. The most disappointing aspect of the reading is the animosity of Judah's King against Israel's King. Amaziah of Judah challenges Jehoash to a battle. This is like two brothers fighting wanting to kill each other. It happens but it is always disappointing and dark. Maybe Amaziah had become proud because of his victory over Edom. This is a real setback for the people of Judah. They would be overwhelmingly defeated. Amaziah's pride would stir up his enemies who would assassinate him (14:19). I might be able to understand the tension between warring nations as Judah and Israel need to protect themselves from their enemies but the reason for war from Amaziah is unjustified and would be punished by God. It is also surprising because Judah seemed to remain more loyal to God than the nation of Israel. It is the opposite here. In Romans 12, the Apostle Paul quotes Deuteronomy 32:35 about leaving revenge to God. "I will take revenge; I will pay them back." How could Amaziah expect to succeed when he was dishonoring the Word of God? We need to realize the same thing. If we expect success when we ignore or disobey God's Word, we are being foolish. The posture of revenge is very strong in these chapters but they never end well. Ultimately, God's people will be severely disciplined. In what ways do you need to let God avenge a wrong? Why is retaliation such a foolish choice?

### DAY 2 – 2 Kings 15 & 16

I am sure you have heard the definition of insanity: "Doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." This quote is attributed to Albert Einstein. In my thinking, this matches the reading for today. It is not an inspiring reading. Only one King is said to have pleased the Lord, "He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight..." (15:3). Otherwise, it is one king after another doing the same thing and of course, the results were the same. Clearly, the Lord causes real and lasting changes in our lives when we trust in him. 2 Corinthians 5:17 tells us we are new creations when we receive Christ into our lives. "This means that anyone who belongs to Christ has become a new person. The old life is gone; a new life has begun." God's work in our lives means spiritual change that transforms us from the inside out. When we slip back into old patterns of living, we grieve God and we confuse an onlooking world that often points a finger at our hypocrisy. After the Apostle Paul spends three chapters in Ephesians on the spiritual change that God has caused in us, he writes, "Therefore, I, a prisoner for serving Christ, beg you to lead a life worthy of your calling... humble and gentle, patient with each other." (Ephesians 4:1-2) The sadness of our reading today is that these kings, as well as the people, believed in God but his

influence didn't penetrate their hearts. You know the same can happen still today. Think about these verses from God's Word, "Since you have heard about Jesus and have learned the truth that comes from him, throw off your old sinful nature and your former way of life, which is corrupted by lust and deception. Instead, let the Spirit renew your thoughts and attitudes. Put on the new nature, created to be like God—truly righteous and holy." (Ephesians 4:21-24) I encourage you to spend some time in prayer with this challenge in mind.

#### DAY 3 – 2 Kings 17 & 18

Why does the outcome of chapter 17 differ from 18? The chapter explains that the disobedience of the people in Israel and their kings had reached a tipping point. But Hezekiah goes in the opposite direction of Israel's kings which is obviously pleasing to God. He did more than any other king before him in cleansing the land of its pagan idols and even demolished the bronze serpent from Moses' day because the people had been sacrificing to it. The threats of Sennacherib of Assyria would cause fear in almost anyone because of the size of his army and the things he had previously done to Israel and other nations. But we don't know what will happen next yet (chapter 19) but I am confident that the Lord will protect Hezekiah and the people of Judah. Why? Because he was determined to honor God above all gods. The contrast of chapters 17 & 18 reminds me of the words of Isaiah who wrote his prophecies at about the same time. In Isaiah 66:2-4 we read, "My hands have made both heaven and earth; they and everything in them are mine. I, the Lord, have spoken! I will bless those who have humble and contrite hearts, who tremble at my word. But those who choose their own ways—delighting in their detestable sins—will not have their offerings accepted. When such people sacrifice a bull, it is no more acceptable than a human sacrifice. When they sacrifice a lamb, it's as though they had sacrificed a dog! When they bring an offering of grain, they might as well offer the blood of a pig. When they burn frankincense, it's as if they had blessed an idol. I will send them great trouble—all the things they feared. For when I called, they did not answer. When I spoke, they did not listen. They deliberately sinned before my very eyes and chose to do what they know I despise." When we do the same and ignore our sin, it's as if our prayers never leave the room. If I harbor sin, God will not hear. In fact, God will discipline us because he loves us. May our sincere prayer be, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. Point out anything in me that offends you, and lead me along the path of everlasting life." (Psalm 139:23-24) Amen!

#### DAY 4 – 2 Kings 19 & 20

These two chapters are especially interesting and hopeful. Even 185,000 soldiers cannot upset the plans of God. Hezekiah cried out to the Lord and he heard his prayer. We also meet Isaiah who is thought of as the greatest prophet of the Old Testament. If Isaiah spoke a word from the Lord, you could know that it will be as he has said. Hezekiah responds in humility and dependence on God. I especially appreciate Hezekiah's prayer in 19:15-19. I have studied many of the prayers of the Bible to learn about how people pursued God in prayer during the history of the Bible. This is a marvelous example of a prayer that honors God and moves the heart of God as well. We read the outcome of Hezekiah's prayer in 19:35-37. I have mixed emotions about Hezekiah's next prayer found in chapter 20. It seems like God's purposes for Hezekiah have been completed. He could have accepted that fact but instead, he prayed to live longer. You know the prayer, "Not my will, but Your will be done." We would probably pray the same prayer if we

faced what Hezekiah was facing. But after Hezekiah is healed by the power and grace of God, he proudly shows the leaders from Babylon the extent of his riches and the beauty of the palace. (20:12-13) This reminds me of David counting the people to see how big his kingdom had become in 2 Samuel 24. Hezekiah's tour of all his treasures displeased the Lord like David's census grieved God. He also had another son during the 15 extra years that God gave Hezekiah. His son's name was Manasseh. We will read about him tomorrow. But know this, Hezekiah's pride and the birth of his son happened after he was healed of his deadly illness. Plus, Hezekiah's response at the close of chapter 20 is shocking to me. Isaiah predicts all his treasures will be carried off to Babylon. Here's Hezekiah's response, "This message you have given me from the Lord is good." (20:19) For the king (Hezekiah) was thinking, "At least there will be peace and security during my lifetime." To me, that seems so selfish. What do you think? To me, it would have been better if Hezekiah had died instead of God healing him. Does that make sense? How do you respond to these compelling verses on the life of Hezekiah?

#### DAY 5 – 2 Kings 21 & 22

The first line of chapter 21 is the most revealing to me. "Manasseh was twelve years old." That means that he was born after the Lord healed his father, Hezekiah. Everything could have been avoided if Hezekiah would have accepted God's plan to take him home to heaven because he had obviously completed his purpose in life. But Manasseh is born and he is clearly the most wicked of all Judah's kings. Beyond his loathsome spiritual sins, Manasseh was guilty of murder. Jewish tradition holds that Isaiah was one of the many prophets that Manasseh put to death. I have thought highly of Hezekiah previously. But to raise such a rebellious son is very disappointing. Hezekiah died when Manasseh was 12 so that didn't give him as much time to shape the life of his son. But the direction of Manasseh is so dark and so ungodly. Something had to be missing in Hezekiah's parenting. After Hezekiah is healed, he seems like a different man, and not for the better. I think that is partly revealed through his son. But by chapter 22, we read about Hezekiah's great-grandson becoming the king. There is a sense that Manasseh was the worst but Josiah might be thought of as the best. In my opinion, the most noteworthy aspect of Josiah is his responsiveness to God's Word and His decrees. "When the king heard what was written in the Book of the Law, he tore his clothes in despair." (22:11) Why? Because neither he nor the people were following the words of God. This reality breaks the heart of Josiah. We will read in more detail about the reforms and direction Josiah gives to the people of Judah tomorrow. But the beauty of this chapter is witnessing a man who would humble himself before God because he had not obeyed the commands of the Lord. How sensitive is your heart to the truth of God's Word? How quickly would any of us repent if we knew what we were doing was disappointing to God? Sometimes it seems to me that we take the Word of God for granted and believe God will be gracious no matter what. I encourage us to follow Josiah's example.

#### DAY 6 – 2 Kings 23 thru 25

How is this for a commendation? "Never before had there been a king like Josiah, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and soul and strength. Obeying all the laws of Moses. And there has never been a king like him since." (23:25) This also includes the launch of the Passover which is equally significant in the history of the Jews. Passover is the most important celebration for Jews still today. However, the wickedness of God's people left an indelible stain on the land of Judah. God would punish his people

through the invasion and exile orchestrated by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. I am sure that is a name you recognize from the Book of Daniel. These three chapters end with Judah under Babylonian captivity while Israel had been exiled for over 100 years already. It is a rough way to wrap up our reading in the Old Testament but it reflects how sin can be especially destructive leading to isolation and God's judgment. During this time Jeremiah is the main prophet as he prophesied from 627 BC to 580 BC. The people of Judah were led away in 586 BC. Jeremiah is known as the weeping prophet and now you realize why he was weeping over the situation that devastated God's people and why it took place. The Book of Lamentations specifically records the lament of Jeremiah seeing Jerusalem destroyed. Everything seemed hopeless but God used Ezekiel and Daniel to keep his spiritual kingdom alive in the hearts of many of the exiles as both Ezekiel and Daniel lived in exile until they died. Ezekiel pointed to better days ahead breathing hope into the people. "For I will gather you up from the nations and bring you home again to your land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. Your filth will be washed away, and you will no longer worship idols. And I will give you a new heart, and I will put a new spirit in you. I will take away your stony, stubborn heart and give you a tender, responsive heart." (EK 36:24-26) This is the promise of a new covenant that the Messiah would establish through his ministry and sacrifice. We are never without hope. Why do you have hope?