

# MURDER, IDOLATRY, & PROSTITUTION

For fun and profit

1&2 KINGS BIBLE STUDY

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## **Introduction**

Reading the Old Testament is always a hard thing for modern Christians. We either let it pretend to be history and, therefore, keep it at arm's length, never allowing it to change our lives. Or we discount its importance and, similarly, remove any sense in which it might be able to speak.

As such, this Bible Study was created to help people who know the Bible, including the Old Testament, fairly well to begin with, but who needed a small push to let all scripture become personal. Being a Christian Bible Study, it is meant to begin to consider how God uses the Old Testament to teach us about Jesus and vice versa. Augustine believed that if we read scripture and do not find ourselves called to love God and love neighbor more, then we are reading it wrong. As you read Kings and these reflection and discussion questions, I encourage you to look for ways that knowing the story of Christ Jesus forces us to reimagine the Old Testament as Christian scripture and how we can use them in our church and in our lives.

As you gather to study 1 and 2 Kings, read the the chapter of scripture and then ask the provided questions to the group. Each question should lead toward story and/or more questions concerning living life in Christ that is illuminated by 1 and 2 Kings.

- Rev. Matthew Hambrick, November 30, 2017

# David -> Adonijah -> Solomon

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## Introduction

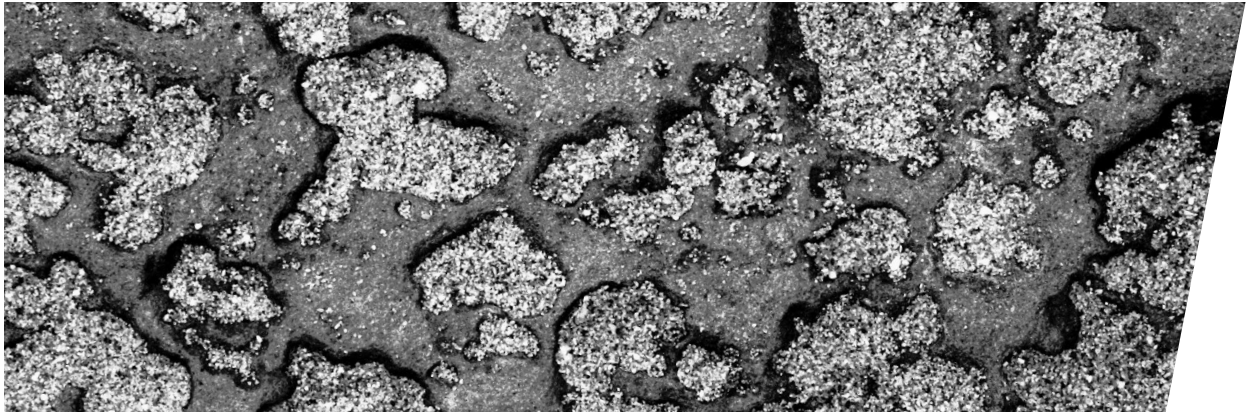
Kings begins with David becoming frail and about to die. Adonijah, David's fourth but eldest living son, conspires to become the heir to the throne even before David dies. Things end up not going the way he planned them.

## Questions

1. The Gospel of Matthew uses the genealogy of Jesus to show that he is a 'son' of Solomon and David. Why do you think it is so important to Matthew?
2. Adonijah thought that he should be king even though David did not and he sought to make it happen anyway. Have you ever seen someone who was trying to wrongfully gain power at work or at church?
3. Solomon let Adonijah off the hook even after he had been power hungry. Have you ever had to forgive someone who had really stepped on your toes?
4. Bathsheba, Nathan, and Zadok all looked out for Solomon. Who have been your biggest supporters in your growing up as a leader?

# Letting Bygones Be Bygones?

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## Introduction

David's time has come and he urges his son Solomon to make sure the people continue following God in faith and in action. He also gave advice for leading. The section following David's death is all about Solomon getting his house in order so that he can go forth and lead.

## Questions

1. David gives Solomon a lot of advice for leading and living. What is the best advice you have ever received?
2. David led a united kingdom for forty years. Who have you considered to be a good leader that you have seen in your life, whether it was at work, at school, or at church?
3. Bathsheba tried to help Adonijah, but it did not work. Who have you known who was good at bringing people together when they fight?
4. There are many people who have wanted Solomon to fail so that they could have what is his. How have you dealt with people who have wanted you to fail?
5. Solomon was able to reunify the kingdom that was divided at David's death. When have you been able to be a peacemaker?

# Wisdom Over Wealth

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## Introduction

God's blessings often come with hardship and difficulty. Mary, Jesus' mother, was greeted with, "Greetings, favored one." Sometimes God's favor comes with responsibility. Solomon asks for wisdom and is granted more than he could have ever imagined.

## Questions

1. By marrying Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon invited outside influences into his home. How do you protect yourself from being influenced away from God?
2. Solomon asks for the ability to know the difference between good and evil. How can we know what is right and wrong in our lives?
3. All of this happened in a dream. Have you ever had a dream that you felt like God spoke to you?
4. The mothers who were fighting over the infant had a difficult problem to be solved. What do you think the biggest problem facing the Church?

# United and Prosperous

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## Introduction

Solomon ran all of Israel with courage and wisdom. It took a lot of resources and labor to make it all run smoothly.

## Questions

1. Solomon had to trust a lot of people to help run his kingdom. Who do you trust to help you?
2. Solomon's kingdom, a united Judah and Israel, expanded greatly over Solomon's rule. When do numbers and expansion not equal success?
3. Solomon shared his wisdom by writing many proverbs and songs to teach the people. If you had to share what you had learned about God and faith, how would you do it?
4. If you had to explain to someone who did not know the story what made Solomon wise, what would you say?



# Intense Negotiations

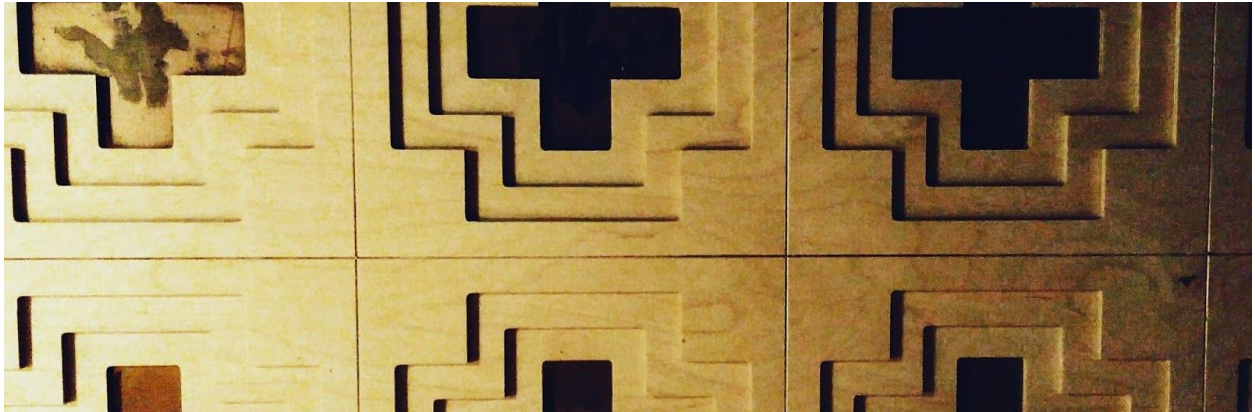
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## Questions

1. Solomon relied even on non-Israelite people to achieve the projects he wished to complete. How does the Church rely upon non-Christians for our success?
2. Other people saw Solomon's wisdom. In the Church, we think it is important to name it when we see people who we believe are called to ministry. Have you ever told someone that you saw God working in them?
3. Solomon believed that a Temple was necessary for worshipping God. Do you believe that we need a church building to worship God?
4. Hiram was friends with Solomon's father, David. Did your parents' friends ever help you out as you grew up?

# Temple Building



## Questions

1. What did you notice first in this story?
2. Only the best materials and building techniques were used by Solomon in the building of the Temple. What do you think that means about houses of worship?
3. Solomon required that no rough edge or stone was visible from the inside of the Temple. Does that tell us anything about how Solomon felt about God?
4. Solomon took his time, several years, to create a space for worship. What can we learn as we “rebuild” our temple together?
5. When ancient Israelites were asked for a sign of what God has done in their midst - a question much like, “Where have you seen God at work in your community?” - they would have pointed to the Ark of the Covenant. What are the signs that you have in your life? What would you point to?
6. This week in worship, we read the Parable of the Sower. What are ways that God’s word (seeds) was active in the inspiration of Temple?



# God Lives There



## Introduction

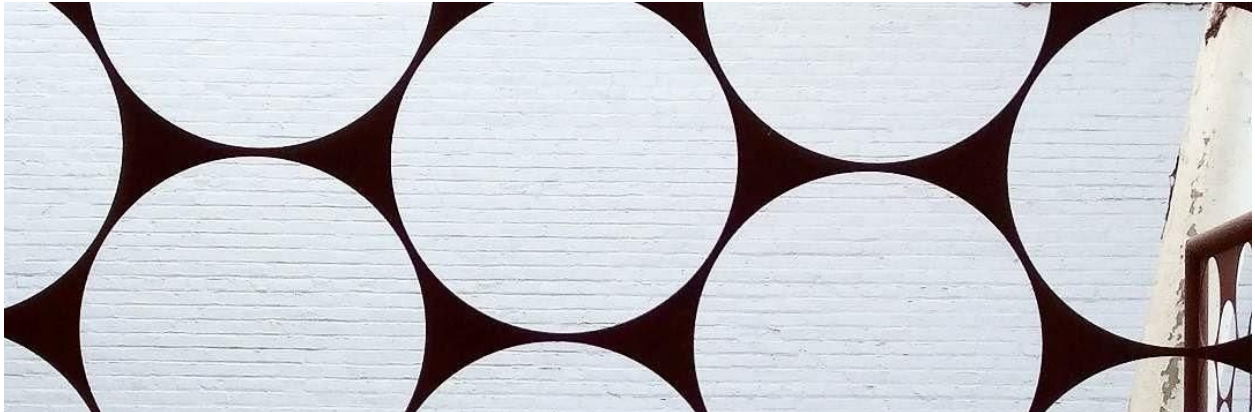
It is tempting to read what we already believe back into the scripture. We call this eisegesis (ἐξηγεῖσθαι; into) as opposed to exegesis (ἐξηγησις; lead out). This distinction is important because we want the scripture to “lead out” into our lives and for us not to read “into” the scripture our own thoughts. That said, Jesus is the lens through which we read the Bible. Let 1 Kings live as scripture, but listen for how what we have read in the Gospels challenges the writers of Samuel/Kings understanding of God.

## Questions

1. God promised to always remain in the Temple (9:3). Where is God now? With the Temple gone, does that change God’s promise? What does it mean for our lives and the place we live?
2. Solomon seems not to treat his agreement with Hiram as being very important (9:13). Do wise and faithful people live up to their obligations?
3. 1 Kings calls the twenty cities of Galilee “good for nothing” (9:13). Nathanael, in the Gospel of John, asks whether anything good can come from Nazareth (1:46), one of these cities. What does this say about Jesus? What do we think it his first followers would have thought about Jesus being from Nazareth? What does it say about us and who we believe God can bless?
4. Knowing that Solomon enslaved many people (9:21), how are he and the Israelites any better than Pharaoh and the Egyptians who kept them in slavery?

5. Reading 10:3, the sign of wisdom for Solomon is the ability to answer any question. Do we still believe that is true? What does that say about the mystery of God? Where does faith fit in?
6. As Solomon received gifts (10:11-12), he gave a portion of the bounty to the Temple. What can we learn for our own spirit of generosity?
7. Solomon was unfaithful to God with his love life (11:4). What are ways that we are unfaithful to God? How does that unfaithfulness lead us astray?
8. We learn from the stories of Samuel that David was not completely faithful to God. Why would those writing Kings say that he was completely faithful (11:6)?
9. What are some false gods (11:13) that are currently dividing the Church (both local and global)?
10. What does Jesus' life teach us about God that challenges the idea that God would "raise up an adversary" against us (11:23)?

# God Lives There



## Introduction

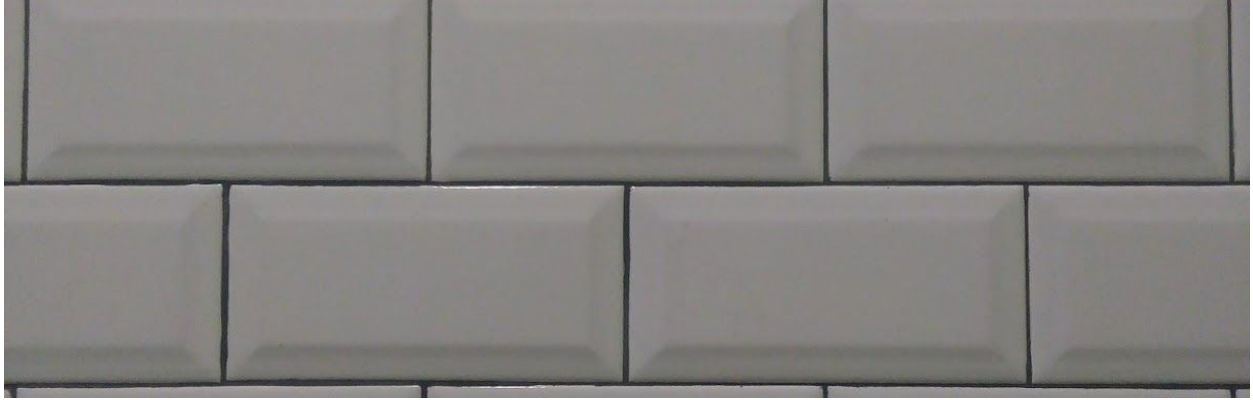
This passage is a hard one to read. It is full of infighting, war, and the dissolution of a unified Israel. As you read, look for what the author of Kings is teaching us for how to get along better as those who live in the kingdom of God.

## Questions

1. Jeroboam was very critical of the opulent lifestyle of Solomon (chapter 11). He tried to divide Israel into southern and northern kingdoms, with him as the king of the northern tribes. Are there ever times that it is permissible for God's people to be divided?
2. Have you ever struggled to act with compassion when you were in power?
3. Rehoboam wanted to fight the people of the northern kingdom, but God said no (12:21-24). When have you needed to keep quiet in the midst of a quarrel in order to find a deeper peace?
4. There is a sense in which these passages outline a civil war of sorts in the biblical world with the north seceding from the south. Do you see any way that this could have been avoided?
5. The Levites were the only tribe to be allowed to priests. We still uphold that only members of the "priesthood" can perform certain religious duties (baptism and communion). Looking at the story, can you see any reasons that this might be?
6. Chapter 14 ends in a very depressing fashion. If you had to explain to a child who was alive at that time where they might find hope for the future, what would you say to them?

# 1 Kings 15-17

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## Introduction

This section of 1 Kings is a long story about the many kings of the Northern Kingdom. We will hear about their unfaithfulness to God and their murders of each other. As you read, put on your Jesus glasses. Read the story as it is, but as we consider why it is scripture for us, as Christians, question what Jesus has to teach us about these men, the prophets, and one faithful widow.

## Questions

1. David had Samuel and Nathan as prophets to guide him. Though Rehoboam had Ahijah, it seems like he often lacked good counsel or didn't listen when he could have. Who were your best advisors when you were younger and what did you learn from them?
2. God keeps giving the leaders of the tribe of Judah second chances (and third chances, and fourth chances, etc.). When have you felt like God has given you extra chances (15:4)?
3. What do you think made the writer of Kings consider Asa to be faithful like his 'father' David (15:9-24)?
4. It seems like the purpose of this passage is to show the consequences of unfaithfulness to God (16:1-14). However, we know from our experience of Christ that God is ever-forgiving. How do we make sense of the Old Testament being so theologically different from the New Testament?
5. See Figure A. All of the kings of Israel reigned during the time of King Asa (the faithful king of Judah). What do we think the writer of kings is hoping to tell us

by showing the many kings of the Northern Kingdom when compared to the one king in Judah?

6. Out of an evil time, a prophet of the Lord arose: Elijah (17:1). Does this mean that God causes evil things to happen in order to restore them? What has brought you comfort in your own life as you have dealt with awful situations?
7. What can we learn from Elijah being fed by the ravens (17:4)?
8. How do you feel as you read that the widow sacrificed her last meal for Elijah's benefit (17:8-16)?
9. What do you believe about what God is doing when bad things happen (17:17)? Is it mysterious? Does everything happen for a reason? Has it just not been revealed to us yet? Is it caused by evil-intentions of people to whom God has given free will?
10. When good things happen (17:23-24) what do you tend to do?
11. Reading this chapter (17), what disturbs you? What gives you comfort? Why do we think it is scripture?

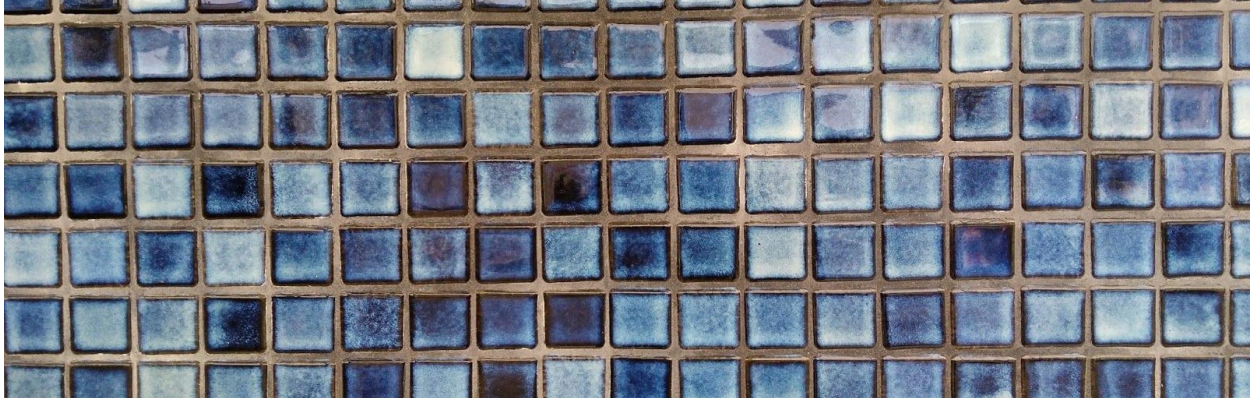
**Figure A:**

<b>Judah's Kings</b>	<b>Israel's Kings</b>
David	Jeroboam
Solomon	Nadab
Rehoboam	<u>Baasha</u>
Abijam	Elah
<b>Asa</b>	<u>Zimri</u> (7 days)
Jehoshaphat	<u>Omri</u>
	<u>Omri   Tibni</u>
	<u>Omri</u>
	Ahab

\_\_\_\_\_ = Change in Family

# 1 Kings 18-20

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## Introduction

This section concerns the re-emergence of Elijah from hiding and his face-to-face confrontation with Ahab, which results in a contest on Mt. Carmel (18) in which God, through Elijah is victorious, but is followed by Elijah running for his life (19), and continuing on into a war between Ahab's Israel and Aram (Syria) (20).

## Questions

1. Why did God choose Elijah (ch.17-18)?
2. Why do you think Obadiah who was faithful to God disobeyed and subverted the will of King Ahab (18:3-4)? When do you struggle to remain faithful to God?
3. What made Elijah bold? (18:8-16)? When have you been bold in the face of fear?
4. The people witnessed a miracle in the consumption of the sacrifice by heavenly fire (18:36-39); how did Elijah know that God would light the fire? When have you witnessed a miracle?
5. Elijah is exhausted by his encounters with Ahab and Jezebel and wishes to be taken by God (19:3-5). What causes a person burn out in their faith in God?
6. God sent an angel to feed Elijah (19:6-9). Have you ever had God send you what you needed at just the right time?
7. Elijah mentored Elisha (19:15-21). Have you ever had a close mentor or have you ever closely mentored another person in the faith?
8. Chapter 20 outlines the battle and negotiations between Israel and Aram. Aram came to take what was not theirs and the situation seemed desperate. Have you ever felt like you had run out of options?



# 1 Kings 20-22

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## Introduction

**20** - Ahab, who remains unfaithful to God, begins a war with Aram (Syria). Though he was present in the prior chapter and will be present again in the next one, Elijah is missing from this chapter. God, likewise appears to be missing in chapter 20. The chapter ends when Ahab defeats Aram.

**21** - The last chapter was all about Ahab and his dealings with a foreign king, this chapter is about the struggle at home. It is also when Ahab's death is foreshadowed. The first half of the chapter tells the facts of the story. The second half allows the prophet to speak to the situation.

**22** - Chapter 22 is the lead up to the fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy: The king is dead. Again we have the number three represented here. There were three years of peace, followed by turmoil.

## Questions

1. Chapter 20 outlines the battle and negotiations between Israel and Aram. Aram came to take what was not theirs and the situation seemed desperate. Have you ever felt like you had run out of options?
2. Why would Ahab give up quickly at first and then choose to fight shortly thereafter (20:4; 20:8)? Have you ever felt like it was a good decision not to stand up for yourself?
3. Ahab said something very wise to Ben-Hadad, "it's easier to start a fight than end one" (20:11). Has this been your experience?
4. Ben-Hadad assumes that his advisers are right in saying that God (Yahweh) is the God of the hills and this ends up being his downfall (20:23). When has bad information caused you to make a bad decision?
5. God still tries to show Ahab his power and his presence even though he has been so unfaithful (20:28). Why do you think God gives so many chances to us and to ancient kings alike?

6. Ahab sulked at being rejected by Naboth (21:3-4). How do you react when you don't get what you want?
7. Jezebel and Ahab conspired to take what wasn't theirs (21:6-15). Is it ever tempting to maneuver around the rules to get what you want?
8. When these two did what was wrong in God's sight, God sent Elijah to tell them that they had done wrong (21:17-). How do you respond when someone confronts you?
9. Because of Ahab's repentance, he got another second chance (21:27-29). Do you remember when you repented and believed the gospel? What was it like to have to admit how wrong you had been?y go
10. Jehoshaphat was like his father, obedient to God (22:41-44). Has that been your experience with the children of parents who are faithful to God?

## 2 Kings 1-2

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### Introduction

**1** - We ended 1 Kings with the reign of Ahaziah. In this chapter we will continue to read his story. This chapter continues the theme that the people of the both kingdoms cannot seem to get even the 1st commandment right: Thou shalt have no other gods.

**2** - This chapter is the end of Elijah's ministry and the beginning of his successor Elisha's. We haven't heard from Elisha in a while, but we have already been able to see his call and his faithfulness to God as a prophet in 1 Kings 19.

### Questions

1. Baal-zebub is an oracle of the god Baal and this name literally means "Baal, the pest" (1:2). The city in which he resided was Ekron, a city twenty-two miles away from Jerusalem. Ahaziah is going well out of his way not to worship God. Has there ever been a time that you ran away from what God wanted in your life?
2. Elijah always shows up when unfaithful kings don't want him to (1:8). Have you ever had someone in your life who held you accountable no matter what?
3. In the leadership that you have here at church, who did you take over for? What did you learn from them before they handed it over to you?
4. Why was Elisha so committed to seeing Elijah taken with his own eyes (2:6-10)?
5. Why would God would save Elijah from death (2:11-14)?
6. Elisha healed the water that was once poison (2:21-22). Has there ever been something in your life that used to cause you grief but that God delivered you from or healed your relationship to it?
7. Was Elisha just thin-skinned when he sent the bears to kill the 42 children who made fun of him or can we learn something else from this part of the story (2:23-24)?

## 2 Kings 3-4

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### Introduction

Elisha is more involved in the wars of both the Northern and Southern kingdoms than other prophets have been. He has had visions of a doomsday in which God judgement has been released upon the people. In this section, we find both North and South teaming up with Edom against the Moabites. All the while, Elisha performs miracles for the sake of the poor. Elisha performs a second miracle in which the Shunammite woman is able to conceive. Shunam is in the north, near Nazareth. The first miracle was for a widow of one from the (faithful) guild of prophets, probably from Gilgal in the south. This is probably a sign that writer of Kings believes that God loves both the Northern and Southern kingdoms. We see that, in some ways, God always responds in our time of need, whether we deserve it or not.

### Questions

1. Why do we think God chose Elisha (ch.1-2)? How do you think that relates to his being Elijah's disciple?
2. Other than idolatry, what are things that the author of Kings thinks that the rulers do wrong to people of other kingdoms (3)?
3. Even though both the Northern Kingdom and Southern Kingdom are children of Abraham, though they come together in this passage, they constantly fight against each other in other passages. Does that remind you at all of the modern Christian Church (3)?
4. Did you fight with your siblings growing up? Have you been able to get over as you have gotten older?

5. Sometimes Kings sounds like God hates Moabites, but Ruth, a Moabite, is King David's great-grandmother. What does this say about who God loves?
6. In the middle of a horrific scene of violence and ugliness (3:26-27), Elisha performs a life-giving miracle for someone in need (4:1-7). Have you ever seen someone who was in the middle of a horrible situation in their life who was still able to reach out and help someone in need?
7. We see Elisha perform miracles for both Southern and Northern people (4). They do not like each other and often fight. Has something good ever happened for someone you considered to be an enemy? How did it feel to see it happen?
8. Read Matthew 8:5-13. Do you see any similarities between this story and the one involving Elisha and the Shunammite woman's son (4)?
9. Elisha miraculously feeds the prophets poison food in Gilgal (4:38-41) and they live. Have you ever been given just what you needed at the right time?
10. Elisha then feeds 100 men in Baal-Shalishah, a part or outlier of the Northern Kingdom. Read Matthew 14:13-21. What do you think we learn about Jesus by knowing both stories?

## 2 Kings 5

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### Introduction

Chapter 5 is an amazing story of humility, grace, and healing. The story begins with Naaman who was a big deal in his job for the king of Syria, but he was a leper. His servant girl spoke of a prophet who could heal him and Naaman dropped everything and went to see the prophet with a lot of cash and a letter of commendation from the king of Syria to the king of Israel. The King of Israel exclaimed that he had no power to heal and is worried that this is just a ploy to start a war. Elisha heard how upset the king was and sent a letter to the King of Israel in order to tell him to send Naaman his way. Naaman went to Elisha with all of his gifts. Elisha sent a messenger outside to tell Naaman to wash himself in the Jordan river seven times. Naaman felt slighted and became very angry. His servants talk him down and into the Jordan in whose waters he was cleansed. Naaman tries to give the money. Naaman then asks for a gift of soil from Israel to take home. Elisha made a counteroffer Naaman to simply leave in peace. Elisha's servant got sneaky and decided that he should be able to get the gift that Elisha turned down. He went to Naaman claiming that Elisha had changed his mind about the gift. He took silver from Naaman. When he returned, Elisha cursed him and the servant was stricken with the leprosy of which Naaman had been healed.



## Questions

1. The last time we saw the Arameans, it was when the King of Israel slaughtered them in battle (1 Kings 20-22). This time we see a key commander of the King of Syria (Aram) being healed by Elisha (5). What do you think this means for the relationship between Israel/Judah and Syria?
2. Have you ever offered hospitality to someone you considered an enemy?
3. Naaman listened to an Israelite slave girl (5:2-5). What have you noticed about the way women have been treated in the story of 1 & 2 Kings so far? Is this different or more of the same?
4. Naaman came to Elisha as if he was a strong and important man, but Elisha treated him as unimportant (5:10). What do you think Elisha was trying to accomplish by treating him this way?
5. Why do you think the servant received leprosy? Was it fair? Does it sound like what you know about God?

## 2 Kings 6-7

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### Questions

1. Elisha throws down a stick to perform a miracle. Does this remind you of any other stories in the Old Testament (6)? [Hint: Exodus 4].
2. Often God uses ordinary objects as a means of grace. What are some ordinary things that God uses to perform extraordinary acts of grace? [Hint: Luke 3 & 22].
3. Elisha's servant received a vision of the presence of God that he saw as chariots and horses of fire. When you envision the presence of God, what do you see?
4. Is there one person of the Trinity (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) that you find yourself particularly drawn to in your prayer time?
5. Instead of being an agent of death for the King of Syria's army, Elisha offered hospitality. This is one of the first times that we have seen mercy in Kings. What do you think this means for things to come? Do you struggle to offer mercy for people who are unkind to you?
6. 6:28-29 is very disturbing. What do you think the Christian response should be when we see parts of the world that are desperately hungry like this?
7. The King of Israel takes no responsibility for his actions after he hears the gruesome tale and blames Elisha instead. When have you had trouble taking responsibility for your actions?
8. In chapter 7, God solves an economic crisis and Elisha gets to prophesy its coming. Do you ever have a hard time believing that God is going to work something out?
9. Lepers decide that it is not a good plan to stay attached to Israel and venture out to the Syrian camp. A miracle comes from their desertion and Elisha's words come true. Have you ever seen something really good happen because of a bad situation?
10. What has been the most surprising thing that you have learned from reading Kings so far?

## 2 Kings 8-10

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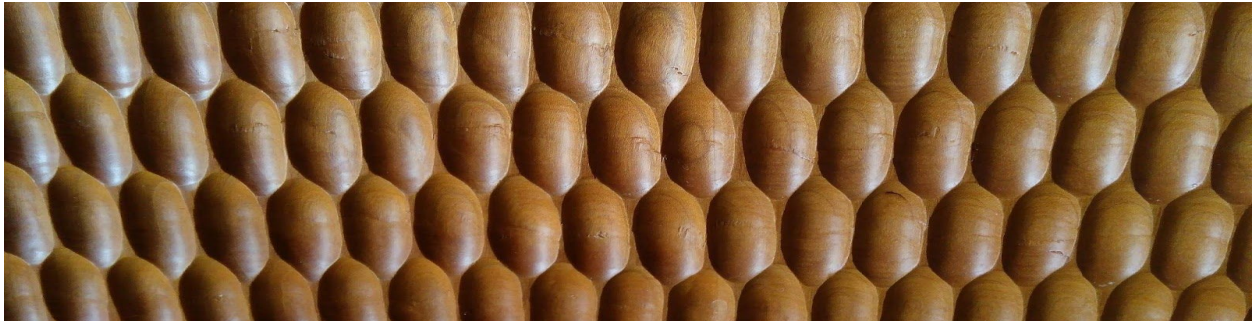


### Questions

1. The Shunammite woman testified to what God did through Elisha and had her land restored to her (8:1-6). If you had to give an example of God's goodness, and the stakes were very high (like this), what story would you use?
2. The King of Syria sent a huge amount of gifts to Elisha for his help (8:7-10). When have you felt the most gratitude for something someone has done for you?
3. It says that Edom still revolts against Judah "to this day" (8:22). Do you think it means that this is something that is still happening or is this just a bit of history?
4. Elisha orders his helper to anoint a new king over Israel before the current one is done (9:1-13). When is it wise to disobey current leaders?
5. Jehu didn't want to news of his being anointed to spread (9:15). When have you seen something similar in the story of Jesus?
6. When have you wanted to keep good news a secret?
7. There is a very violent story about the fate of Jezebel (9:30-37). Often in our lives it looks like justice will not be served (at least the way we would like it to be). How do you make yourself feel better when you see evil people get away with their escape justice?
8. Jehu said exactly what he was going to do (10:1-5). Do you think it is important to let people know your plans? Do you tend to keep your ideas and intentions to yourself?
9. Jehu lied in order to set a trap for all who served Baal (10:18-28). When do you think it is right to stretch the truth? Is it ever right?
10. Israel had been required to grow in number as part of the Law. God began to shrink Israel as a sign of their unfaithfulness (10:32). What are some signs that you have had in your own life that you are not as close to God as you should be?
11. As we continue toward the end of Kings, have there been any lessons for how you can tell your story faith and what God has done in your life?

## 2 Kings 11-12

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### Questions

*Quick Reminder: Joash = King of Judah / Jehu = King of Israel (Northern) / Joash=Jehoash*

1. If you had to explain to a non-believer how Kings related to Jesus Christ and Christianity, what would you say?
2. In the midst of murder and death, it is hard to see God working in the story (11). What do you see in the story of Joash that tells you that God had a hand in protecting him?
3. Why do you think it is important to the author of 2 Kings 11 that Joash was raised for six years in the “house of the Lord”?
4. Do you think it was symbolic that they used David’s shields to protect Joash? What do you think might happen to him based on this piece of information?
5. When have you felt protected by God?
6. The Gospel writers use some of this imagery for how they talk about Jesus being placed on the throne at the right hand of God. How do you think that is similar or different from this story?
7. Joash ordered that the Temple be repaired with donation money (12). Why is it important for the place of worship to be in good shape and well-maintained?
8. We find that the priests do not make the required repairs. Why do you think it is so hard to keep up with necessary upkeep of a place of worship?
9. The finances of the Temple began to be overseen by the king’s people to actually perform the needed repairs. How would you feel if someone were sent in to oversee our financial situation in our church?
10. King Hazael of Syria threatens Judah and Joash paid him off so as to not be attacked. What are some ways that the Church seems to be postponing problems?
11. Joash seemed to be a mostly good and faithful king and, yet, we find him assassinated by his advisors. Why does his leadership so hard?

## 2 Kings 13-15

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### Questions

*Quick Reminder: Joash = King of Judah / Joash=Jehoash of Judah/ Jehoahaz, son of Jehu = King of Israel (Northern) /Jehoash of Israel is not Joash/Jehoash of Judah / This Jeroboam is not the same as the one who ruled with at the same time as Rehoboam- Argh! Confusing!*

1. In chapter 13, we find another evil king in Israel who is overthrown (for a time) by an even more evil king. How would you feel if you spent your whole life being ruled over by kings that are more awful and vindictive than the last?
2. The kings of Israel that we learn about in chapter 13 follow in their fathers' footsteps. Have you had to unlearn anything that you learned from your parents?
3. Elisha helped his people one last time before he died (13). Have you ever learned something important from a person who was dying?
4. Elisha seems to always know what will happen in the future (13). Do you think the ability to guess the future is an important attribute for pastors and prophets? Are there other gifts that you find more important?
5. It is important to the author of Kings that the righteous king, Amaziah's mother was from Jerusalem (14). Why do you think that might be? Do you think it matters where a person is from to be a good and faithful follower of Christ?
6. The battle of Israel and Judah, with Jehoash of Israel and Amaziah of Judah is very much a civil war for them (14). What can we learn about this war in 2 Kings from our knowledge of the history of our own country's civil war?
7. With Jeroboam becoming the king, the borders of Israel returned north and restored Judah to its former territory (14). What do you think our church's territory for ministry is? How far? Which ministries should we focus on?
8. The name Uzziah (15) means powerful. Do you have any guesses as to what he will do based only on his name?

9. We find that Uzziah, a semi-righteous king, had a mother from Jerusalem (15).  
What would you want people to talk about if they were giving you a compliment?
10. Zechariah only ruled for six months (15). Have you ever had a project that you were working on end too soon to be completed? In life or in the church?
11. The father of Jotham's mother was Zadok, a priestly name, but not the same Zadok as before (15). Why do you think the author is so obsessed with holy genealogies and plays on names? Do you know your own genealogy? Do you likewise find it fascinating?
12. Jotham built a gate to the Temple (15). Why do you think we, as humans, like to stand in between other people and God?



## 2 Kings 16-17

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### Questions

1. Does the Church ever act (positively or negatively) like the the kings that we learn about in 1 & 2 Kings? In what ways?
2. We hear the story of Ahaz putting his son through fire and we now see it as barbaric and horrible (16). Do you think that there are things we do now that future generations will find similarly barbaric?
3. Ahaz reached out to the king of Assyria for help (16). Have you ever had to reach out to an enemy to solve a problem?
4. Ahaz was tempted away from true temple worship (16). Are you ever tempted away from real and true worship of God?
5. We keep hearing that the stories of the kings are held in the “Chronicles of the Kings of Judah” or the “Chronicles of the Kings of Israel” (16). Who knows your story? Who knows your story of faith?
6. Chapter 17 says that Hoshea was not as bad as the kings that came before him. Are there times that we settle for things that are bad because they are better than what came before? In life? In the Church?
7. We hear the story of Assyrian exile (17). What would it feel like to have to leave home and family because you were forced to leave?
8. The Israelites go from slavery in Egypt to being exiled from their homes (17). Why does the Church always have the same problems we have always had?
9. The Assyrians moved into the towns once inhabited by the Israelites (17). How do we feel when new people come to church and have different opinions from us?
10. Read Romans 7:15-20. The Israelites seem to be stuck in a cycle of worshiping God and worshiping idols. Is it hard for you to stay on track with God?

## 2 Kings 18-20

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### Questions

1. According to the chapter 18, Hezekiah was a good king. Why would 2 Kings consider Hezekiah good?
2. If you were going to describe a 'good' follower of Christ, what would you say about that person?
3. We hear about Israel (the Northern Kingdom) being taken into exile (18). What are some ways that a Christian might 'feel' exiled from God or the Church?
4. Rabshakeh gave a message of doom to Hezekiah's messengers (18), telling them that God will not save them from the armies. In what ways does our society tell us that God is not good and will not provide?
5. When Hezekiah was worried, he turned to mourning and prayer (19). What do you do when you don't know what to do?
6. We meet Isaiah in chapter 19 and he is one of the first to tell the story of the coming messiah. What hope do you find in the midst of struggle and doubt?
7. Hezekiah was at death's door, but God chose to heal him and give him fifteen more years of life (20). Sometimes righteous people have horrible things happen to them; what do we say when that happens? How do we make sense of it?
8. Isaiah uses the sundial to give Hezekiah a sign of God's faithfulness (20). Sometimes we look for signs of God while we are having a hard time in life, but we don't see any. What are things that you look for when you are hurting?
9. Judah and Israel are all going to end up in exile with everything they have built stolen and carried away (20) even though Hezekiah was faithful. What do we say about God when bad things happen even when we have done our best?
10. Hezekiah takes comfort in his not having to live to see the destruction (20). Many in our churches have the same perspective as they witness the decline of Christianity in America. What would be a better response from Hezekiah? From us?

## 2 Kings 21-23

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### Questions

1. **Chapter 21** outlines a return to idolatry for Judah. How do you feel when it seems like things are getting worse in your community? In the world?
2. It is clear in this chapter that God is displeased with what's happening in Judah, especially Jerusalem. How do you know when you are wrong in an argument?
3. Like most of Samuel and Kings, we find evil king after evil king. What makes a bad leader?
4. Amon's own servants revolted against him. Have you ever been a leader and realized that you were leading your group in the wrong direction?
5. In **chapter 22**, when King Josiah hears the Book of the Law, he is surprised to learn of the wrongdoings of his fathers. Have you ever been surprised to find out that you have been doing something wrong?
6. At this point in the story, what do you think is Judah and Israel's hope?
7. Later in the chapter, we meet a prophetess, named Huldah, who tells Josiah that he will die in peace, though Judah will not remain peaceful after. Who are some of the women in your life who have spoken important truths to you?
8. **Chapter 23** begins with King Josiah commanding that everyone follow the Law of God, even knowing that it would not keep Judah from harm. If you knew that being Christian would not make life easier, would you still do it?
9. As soon as Josiah was dead, the Pharaoh took control of the region and stole their gold. Who are some of the saints in our church whose presence is sorely missed?
10. Having reflected on a lot of negative Judah and Israel history, where do we see God's glory in Samuel and Kings? Is it easier to see God's goodness in the face of evil or when good things happen? Where do you look when things are hard?

## 2 Kings 24-25

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### Questions

1. In **chapter 24**, we are at the end of the story of Samuel and Kings. It does not seem like a happy ending. How does it feel to be Christian in a time of decline for the Church?
2. Jehoiakim served a non-Israelite king. In what ways does the Church serve something or someone other than Christ?
3. The Babylonian king took everything of value from Judah. What do you think is missing in the Church today?
4. Zedekiah, which means “my righteousness is YHWH” is the name given to the new king of Judah by the Babylonians. What are some ways that non-Christians are righteous, whether they know it or not?
5. Zedekiah rebelled against Babylon, but he was also considered an evil king. Have you ever been in the middle of an impossible situation? Has our church ever been stuck between a rock and a hard place?
6. In **chapter 25**, we learn that Babylon sieged Jerusalem for nearly two years until the city was out of food. Do you think that the Church has what it needs to survive in the modern age?
7. What ‘spiritual’ food do you think we are lacking?
8. With the Temple destroyed, God’s visible presence is missing in Jerusalem. Do you think it is important to have a building for worship in our community?
9. Our story when both Israel and Judah were defeated. How can we find hope for the people of both kingdoms? How can we find hope for ourselves as we end on this depressing note?