



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 KINGS

2 CHRONICLES 10-36

Week 1

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Before You Begin Your Journey...

We have come to the final chapter in the story of ancient Israel. The axe was about to fall. She would later be restored, but not with the same degree of autonomy she enjoyed under the monarchies of Judah and Israel. By some estimates, there were eight centuries from the time of the Exodus to the fall of Judah. Although different systems of government were tried, the results were always the same.

Repeatedly, Israel forgot about God and pursued false gods. Repeatedly, God offered Israel mercy and reconciliation through his prophets. Repeatedly, he warned Israel of the terrible outcome of her infidelity. Finally, the climactic end came.

The events leading up to God's judgment on Judah and Israel make for a story more riveting than any modern fiction—and this story is true. There is exciting drama in the clash between kings and prophets. We meet some of God's greatest servants. We are armchair witnesses to Elijah's dramatic farewell and we walk beside Elisha on his mission of grace and healing.

We are touched by the faith of a little maid who encourages her gentile master to trust the God of Israel, and there is wry humor in a Syrian king's fumbling attempts to outwit a nation who has the prophet Elisha as a not-so-secret weapon.

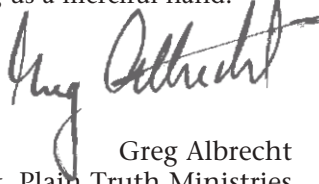
We read about invisible spirit forces deployed in invincible might to aid Elisha and we have a ring-side seat as Hezekiah of Judah defies the brutal superpower of his day.

It is this tension between dark politics and divine deliverance, bloody massacres and innocent trust, steady moral slide and inspiring deeds of faith that is part of the appeal of 2 Kings and the latter part of 2 Chronicles.

In a time of high anxiety, when there did not seem to be much faith or hope or knowledge of God in the land, we see the true God at work for those who will trust in him. And we see that he does not abandon his people—he is simply correcting them.

That lesson is a powerful one to carry with us into our New Testament-based, Christ-centered faith.

May this account strengthen your faith, as you learn that although God may chastise us, he never abandons us. As he did for Israel, he is always extending us a merciful hand.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Greg Albrecht". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

Greg Albrecht
President, Plain Truth Ministries

How to Use the CWR Bible Survey...

1—Read and study at your own pace. This is a devotional. It is designed to help you consider and ponder the great truths of God's written revelation. It is designed to help you worship and come to know God. We plan to cover the entire Bible in 43 volumes, and while that sounds like a long time, don't be in a hurry. Take your time! Even though each volume is divided into bite-size daily lessons, you may want to take two days on each "daily" lesson.

2—We suggest you set aside a special time for the *CWR Bible Survey* every day. We recommend allowing 30-45 minutes, but even if you can only spare 15 minutes, try to make it part of your regular schedule. You will find that the *CWR Bible Survey* will be an invaluable resource for facing your daily challenges .

3—You will need a good Bible. This might be an excellent time for you to consider purchasing a study Bible. Plain Truth Ministries has reviewed many of the study Bibles that are available, and in cooperation with Thomas Nelson and Zondervan, we are pleased to be able to offer two superb study Bibles that will be an excellent resource and help to you. Please see the back pages of this book for more details.

4—Always read the assigned passage of the daily lesson in your Bible first. Each daily lesson builds upon the portion of the Bible being covered that day. You may want to begin by praying about what God has in store for you as you read, and then look at the questions and background information.

5—Consider the format of each daily lesson. Almost every daily lesson will include:

- **Opening Up to the Word** —a section designed to help you open your mind to the teaching God has inspired.
- **Digging Into the Word**—this section will encourage you to get your nose into the Bible and think deeply about what it says.
- **Living Out the Word**—here you will be challenged to consider the practical implications for your life. How does this passage help you live?

• **Window On the Word**—will offer key insights to help you more clearly understand the daily Bible passage.

6—After you finish the daily lesson, take some quiet time. You may simply think, look out the window, take a walk, or even get down on your knees. But use this time to let this daily lesson sink in. Ask God to show you what he wants you to understand from your reading and study.

7—Consider the *CWR Bible Survey* for small groups in which you may be involved. Tell your friends about it. If you are involved in a small group that meets for prayer and Bible study, introduce your group to it. Many are seeking an easy-to-read guide to help them understand the Bible and to help them know God. *The CWR Bible Survey* can do that!

• **Abbreviations Used in the *CWR Bible Survey***—

Genesis	Ge	Nahum	Na
Exodus	Ex	Habakkuk	Hab
Leviticus	Lev	Zephaniah	Zep
Numbers	Nu	Haggai	Hag
Deuteronomy	Dt	Zechariah	Zec
Joshua	Jos	Malachi	Mal
Judges	Jdg	Matthew	Mt
Ruth	Ru	Mark	Mk
1 Samuel	1Sa	Luke	Lk
2 Samuel	2Sa	John	Jn
1 Kings	1Ki	Acts	Ac
2 Kings	2Ki	Romans	Ro
1 Chronicles	1Ch	1 Corinthians	1Co
2 Chronicles	2Ch	2 Corinthians	2Co
Ezra	Ezr	Galatians	Gal
Nehemiah	Ne	Ephesians	Eph
Esther	Est	Philippians	Php
Job	Job	Colossians	Col
Psalms	Ps	1 Thessalonians	1Th
Proverbs	Pr	2 Thessalonians	2Th
Ecclesiastes	Ecc	1 Timothy	1Ti
Song of Songs	SS	2 Timothy	2Ti
Isaiah	Isa	Titus	Tit
Jeremiah	Jer	Philemon	Phm
Lamentations	La	Hebrews	Heb
Ezekiel	Eze	James	Jas
Daniel	Da	1 Peter	1Pe
Hosea	Hos	2 Peter	2Pe
Joel	Joel	1 John	1Jn
Amos	Am	2 John	2Jn
Obadiah	Ob	3 John	3Jn
Jonah	Jnh	Jude	Jude
Micah	Mic	Revelation	Rev

2 KINGS

2 CHRONICLES 10-36

The Decline
and Fall of
Israel and Judah

Introduction to 2 Kings

Authorship: While Jewish tradition names Jeremiah, or someone well acquainted with him, as the author, today's scholars feel that a number of inspired editors and compilers had a hand in writing 1 and 2 Kings. Because Isaiah 36-39 follows 2 Kings 18-20 almost word-for-word, some commentators suggest that Isaiah was involved in the text.

Date: The latest event alluded to in 2 Kings is the parole granted King Jehoiachin from his prison in Babylon. This event, which took place around 561 B.C., indicates that 2 Kings was completed around that time—or just after the Babylonian captivity of Judah (c. 587-538 B.C.).

Setting and purpose: Second Kings is the final book in a narrative history of Israel that begins with Joshua. This overview of Israel's history was placed in the "Prophets" section of the traditional three-fold division of the Hebrew canon emphasizing the fact that God controls the overall course of history.

Second Kings has been called the most political book in the Bible. The Israelites had been divided into two warring nations: the House of Judah in the south and the House of Israel to the north. In 2 Kings, strong foreign powers intervene and harass Israel and Judah. The Promised Land becomes a political football as first Syria, then Assyria and then Babylon sweep down on the divided descendants of Jacob. Descendants of Israel, and then those of Judah, are taken into exile as punishment for their sins. Second Kings tells us why God allowed this punishment on his chosen people.

Second Kings drives home the terrible results of stubbornness and refusal to heed the counsel of God. In both Israel and Judah, lust for material success was matched by short-sighted idolatry. Materialism blinded Israel and Judah to God, David's Rock and Solomon's Counselor. The god Baal was celebrated with drunkenness, debauchery and the enticements of temple prostitutes. As Israel's national power declined, many in the land tried to "hedge their bets" by appeasing the gods of stronger nations—a form of "spiritual life insurance."

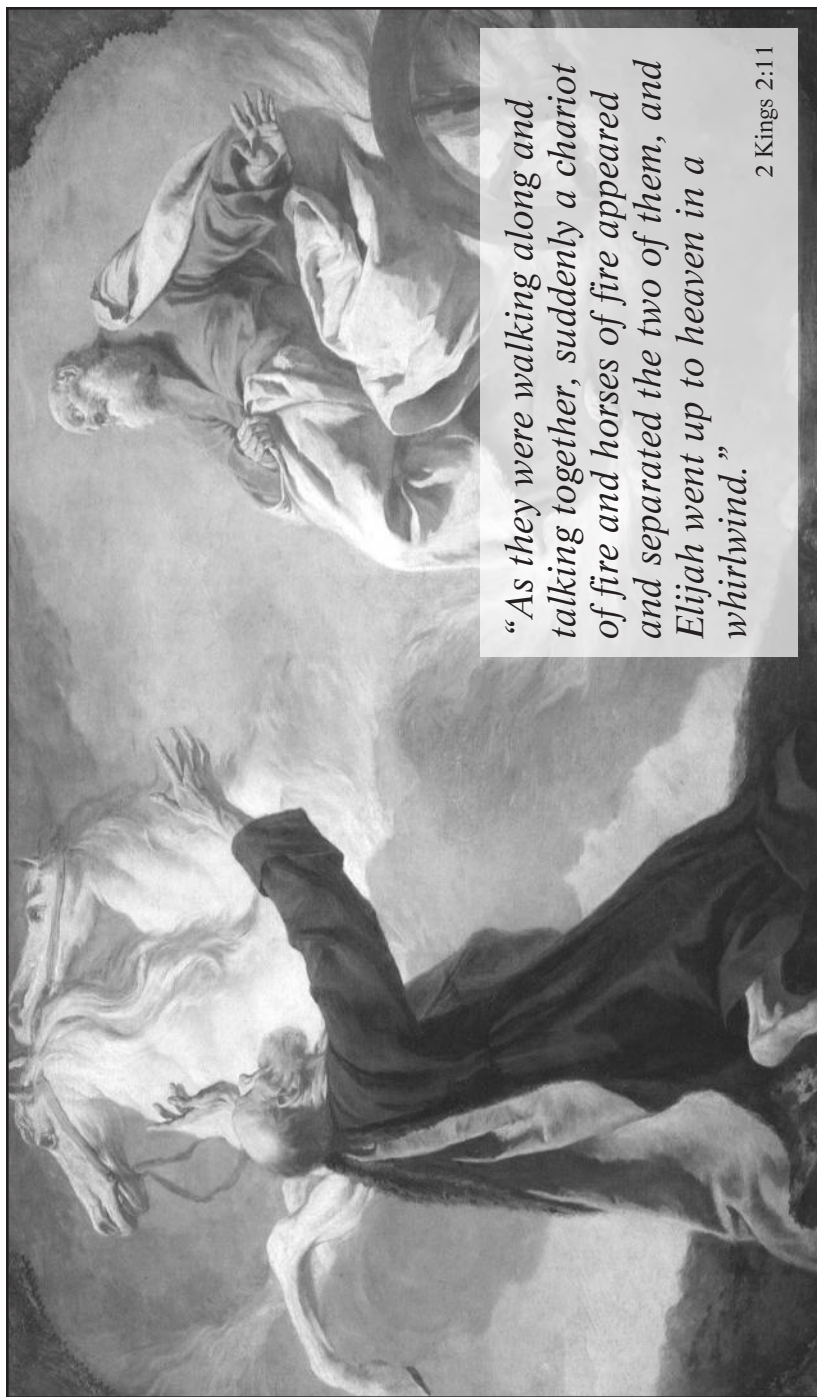
But the premiums were far too high, as prophets such as Elisha, Isaiah and others labored to explain. What some refer to as the summary theme statement of 2 Kings says it well:

“All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of Egypt...At every high place they burned incense, as the nations whom the Lord had driven out before them had done. They did wicked things that provoked the Lord to anger. They worshiped idols, though the Lord had said, ‘You shall not do this.’ The Lord warned Israel and Judah through all his prophets and seers...But they would not listen, and were as stiff-necked as their fathers, who did not trust in the Lord their God” (2Ki 17: 7, 11-14).

Distinctive features: Old Testament theologian John Goldingay has summarized: “The function of Kings’ review of the history which led up to the Exile is to explain why the Exile came about and to express an admission that there was ample cause for God to judge Israel...Although judgment has come in accordance with the sanctions of the covenant, the same covenant allows for the possibility of repentance and restoration after judgement (see 1 Ki 8:46-53; Dt 30). Although the prophetic words which Israel ignored form a further reason for her punishment, the fact that those prophetic words of judgment have come true may encourage the hope that the prophetic promises of restoration may come true, too” (*The New Bible Dictionary*, page 654).

Reading outline:

Day	Text	Theme
1	2 Kings 1–2	Elijah and Elisha
2-3	2 Kings 3:1–9:13	Elisha’s Ministry
4-5	2 Kings 9:14–11:21	From Jehu to Joash
6-10	2 Kings 12–17	Up to the Fall of Israel
11-12	2 Kings 18–21	Good King Hezekiah
13-15	2 Kings 22–25	The Last Days of Judah



“As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire and horses of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.”

2 Kings 2:11

Prophet of Fire, Prophet of Healing

DAY 1

2 Kings 1:1–2:25

Have you ever had to say goodbye to a beloved teacher, pastor or mentor?

1. Why do you think King Ahaziah sought Baal-Zebub instead of God? How did Elijah react (1:1-18)?
2. Was Elijah “testing” Elisha (2:1-10)? Do you think Elisha’s request (v. 9) was granted because of his response to Elijah’s “test”?
3. Why do you think Elisha said what he did as Elijah departed (vs. 11-12)?
4. What miracles confirmed his prophetic office (vs. 13-22)?

1. Elisha is a good example of steadfast loyalty to a superior. Consider Elisha’s recurring promise to Elijah: “As surely as the LORD lives and as you live, I will not leave you” (2:2, 4, 6). When do you feel loyalty is a virtue and when might it become “blind loyalty”?
2. The “company of the prophets” (2:5, 7, 15) were apparently an organized religious group or guild—yet they seem to be somewhat fickle about their faith and insights.

*Geography sheds light on the action in these chapters. **Bethel** had been a center of idolatry since evil King Jeroboam’s day (1Ki 12:31-33). **Gilgal** was near the Jordan and the spot where Joshua had Israel circumcised as an act of ritual dedication (Jos 5). **Jericho** was the first city the Israelites conquered in the Promised Land (Jos 6). The fact that Elisha revokes Joshua’s curse on the spring at Jericho accredits him as an unusually powerful servant of God and sets the tone for his healing ministry. But he is not to be tampered with. The youths from Bethel mock him as Elijah’s successor and urge him to make the same speedy getaway—“Get lost, you bald weirdo!” might be the epithet today. Elisha quickly reasserts the power and authority of his master against these mockers.*

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

2 Kings 3:1–6:7

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you ever witnessed a miracle? Do miracles strengthen faith?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Who was Mesha? Why were three nations allied against him? How did Elisha work a great victory for the allies (3:1-27)?
2. In Chapter 4, Elisha worked four miracles for people in humble or extreme circumstances. What indications are given that these were hard times economically (4:1-44)?
3. Who was Naaman? Why did Elisha test him (5:1-19)? Describe the tragedy of Gehazi (vs. 20-27).
4. What were Elisha's associates called? Why was the axe head of such concern? What two titles are used to refer to Elisha in this passage (6:1-7)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. The great English hymn writer John Newton, author of "Amazing Grace," once wrote:

*Not one concern of ours is small
If we belong to Him,
To teach us this, the Lord of all
Once made the iron to swim.*

Has God "made the iron to swim" in your life?

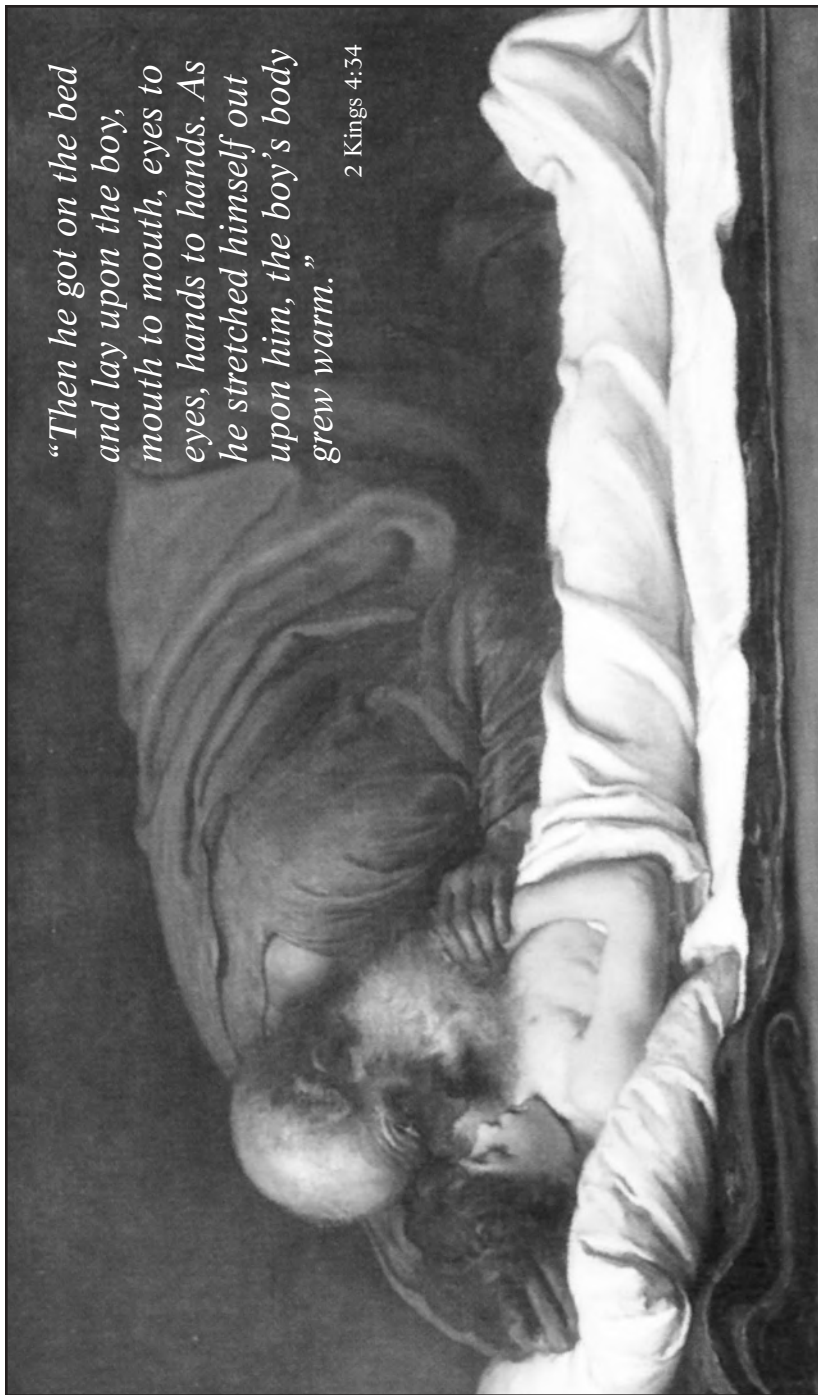
2. Elisha is mentioned only once outside 2 Kings and that is by Jesus (Lk 4:27). Can you think of parallels between Elisha's ministry and that of Jesus?

WINDOW
on the Word

Consider these **distinctions between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha**. The fiery Elijah was noted for dramatic public acts. Elisha did many private miracles. Elijah emphasized a return to God's law; his name meant "The Lord is God." Elisha stressed God's grace and tenderness through private healings and kindly actions; his name meant "The Lord is Salvation." Elisha worked at least 18 miracles, including one attributed to him after his death (2Ki 13:20-21). As he journeyed up and down the land, the God-fearing remnant in Israel knew that God had not forsaken them.

*“Then he got on the bed
and lay upon the boy,
mouth to mouth, eyes to
eyes, hands to hands. As
he stretched himself out
upon him, the boy’s body
grew warm.”*

2 Kings 4:34



MIRACLES AND THE MISSION OF ELISHA

The ministries of Elijah and Elisha occurred in an era when the knowledge of God was in danger of dying out in Israel. With people cut off from Solomon's Temple and the Levitical priesthood in Jerusalem, God worked unusual signs and wonders to confirm the often-lonely ministries of his prophets in northern Israel.

Second Kings 4 records four miracles worked through Elisha. All together, he worked at least 18. Commentator Irving Jensen shows what was at stake in these demonstrations of God's power:

"Each one is calculated to testify anew to the presence of God in Israel, and his willingness to do for the whole nation what was done for the individuals who benefited by the miracles. If only the nation would turn to him in faith as these individuals turned to Elisha, his representative" (*II Kings With Chronicles: A Self-Study Guide*, page 20).

The miracles begin with Elisha striking and opening the Jordan River with Elijah's cloak. This not only reminded observers of the victorious deeds of Joshua when the river parted to allow Israel a way to cross (Jos 3:14-17), but it also put a seal on the prophet's calling (2Ki 2:13-14). Elisha's reversal of Joshua's curse at the spring at Jericho reconfirms his divine ordination (vs. 19-22).

Elisha's supernatural relief of three armies ready to perish in the Desert of Edom showed the supremacy of God's prophets over the kings of the nations (3:4-23). Such demonstrations underscored that no Israelite king need fight while Elisha was on



Elisha provides enough oil for a widow, so that she could pay her creditors and not have her two boys taken away.
(2 Kings 4:1-7)

the scene. Meanwhile, the miraculous supply of oil for the indebted widow and the raising of the Shunamite's son showed God's inclusive love, providing for both the poor and the well-to-do (4:1-37). The cleansing of the poisoned pot of stew and the feeding of 100 people with just two loaves of barley bread point prophetically to the miracles of Jesus (4:38-44).

Elisha's miracles reminded the people that Israel's God was close at hand and not far off. God used trials and difficulties facing the nation to correct his people through Elisha his prophet. Elisha warns against Syrian (Aramean) incursions (6:8-12). He blinds a Syrian army (vs. 18-23). His word is powerful enough to end famine in Samaria (6:24-7:20). He is "the chariot of Israel" personified, as even the king admits (13:14). His reputation helps restore personal property (8:3-6). He has an unfailing gift of prophecy (vs. 7-15).

Elisha's ministry ended with a sign and a wonder to steady a wavering king (13:14-19), and even in death God worked through his bones (vs. 20-21). He was no mere priest or Temple functionary but a tower of strength whose memory inspired Israel for generations to come.

Commentator Arthur Pink eloquently summarized Elisha's miracle-working ministry of grace: "The work of Elijah was chiefly a protest against evil, while the work of Elisha was an almost continuous testimony to the readiness of God to relieve the distressed and respond to the call that came from a contrite and believing heart" (*Gleanings from Elisha: His Life and Miracles*, page 11).

*Naaman,
commander of the
army of Aram, is
healed from his
leprosy after dipping
himself in the
Jordan River seven
times.*

(2 Kings 5:1-14)



DAY 3

Prophets and Politics

2 Kings 6:8–9:13

OPENING
up to the Word

How involved in politics do you feel churches and ministries should be?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did Elisha encourage his wavering servant (6:1-23)?
2. Who was Ben-Hadad? What crisis did he cause in Samaria? Who was “blamed” for the crisis (vs. 24-31)?
3. How did Elisha tie his prediction of famine relief to the punishment of an arrogant royal official (6:32–7:20)? How did Elisha’s reputation help the Shunamite woman (8:1-6)?
4. How did Elisha become involved with Syrian matters (vs. 7-15)? How did Jehoram of Judah blunder badly? Was he punished (vs. 16-24)?
5. Ahaziah succeeded Jehoram of Judah. Ahaziah allied himself to King Joram of Israel because they were related by marriage. But did this political move help either of them (vs. 25-29)?
6. Whom did Elisha anoint as the avenger for the sins of Ahab and Jezebel (9:1-13)?

LIVING
out the Word

Hazael refused to accept Elisha’s description of his character. Is there a lesson here about our own blind spots? Has anyone alerted you to a particular flaw you were not able to spot?

WINDOW
on the Word

*We meet 39 rulers of Israel and Judah in 1 and 2 Kings. This can get complicated. Joram, son of Ahab, ruled Israel at the same time Jehoram reigned in Judah. Sometimes Joram’s name is spelled Jehoram as well. His sister, Athaliah, married another Jehoram, king of Judah. These difficulties are an earmark of biblical authenticity. If the writer were simply inventing a history, he would not present names and events capable of being confused. A true witness is faithful to the facts, however complex, without attempting to “straighten them out.” Also note the reappearance of Gehazi in this section (2Ki 8:1-6). We last met him in 2 Kings 5:20-27 where he was banished from Elisha’s presence. This shows that parts of 2 Kings are **not in exact historical sequence**. Hebrew narrative sometimes incorporates this “flashback” technique to shed light on an incident.*

“Then he asked her, ‘What’s the matter?’ She answered, ‘This woman said to me, “Give up your son so we may eat him today, and tomorrow we’ll eat my son....”’ When the king heard the woman’s words, he tore his robes.”

2 Kings 6:28, 30



Artwork by Gustav Doré

Jehu Versus Jezebel

2 Kings 9:14–10:36

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you seen movies or television shows where the villain wants to “go out in style”?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Elijah had originally been assigned to anoint Hazael, king of Syria, and Jehu, king of Israel (1Ki 19:15-17). That the task fell to Elisha showed that God’s power rested on him. What was Jehu’s mission (2Ki 9:6-10)?

2. What was the military significance of the three cities mentioned in 9:14-29? What event did Jehu relate to Bidkar to incite him against the king of Judah (vs. 25-26)?

3. Do you think Jezebel knew of her prophesied fate? Was she afraid? Jezebel was determined to go out in style, but her doom was certain. How did she meet her grisly end (vs. 30-37)?

4. What bloody tactic did Jehu use against Ahab’s children? How many of Ahaziah’s relatives did he massacre (10:1-14)?

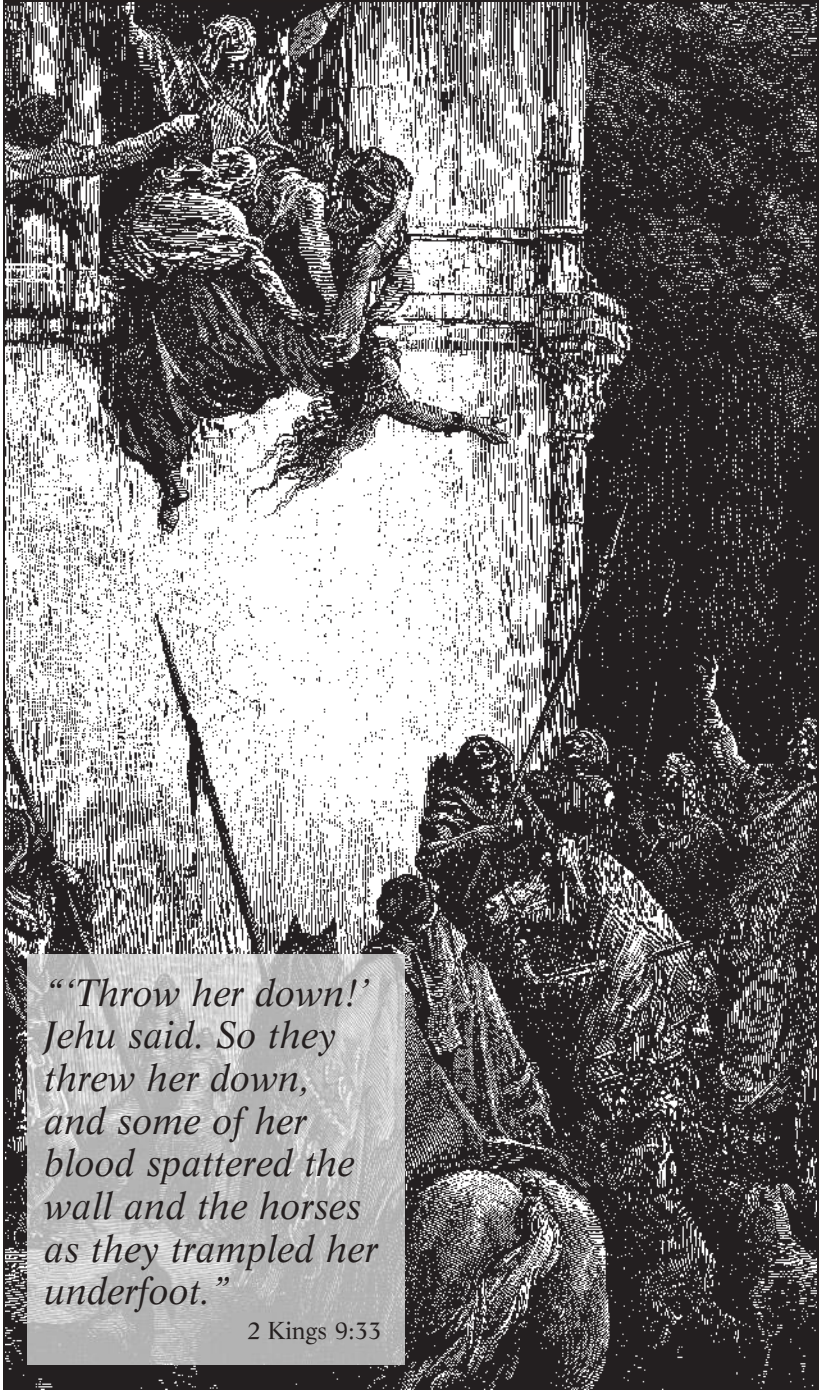
LIVING
out the Word

1. Considering the mission given to him by the prophet (9:6-10), do you feel Jehu was justified in engineering this massacre (10:1-14)? Do you feel there was another way for him to have accomplished this mission?

2. What did Jesus say about right and wrong motives within religion and its rituals and legalisms (Mt 23:25-28)?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Violence and hate-filled intrigues result in **bloody atrocities** that never seem to go “out of style.” Jehu certainly seems to have been a bloodthirsty character quite willing to carry out any decree that would help his own cause. History can be its own best commentary. Jehu turned out to be the only Israelite monarch whose portrait has survived, and quite ignominiously. A carving on the Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III shows Jehu bowing before the great Assyrian king.*



*“‘Throw her down!’
Jehu said. So they
threw her down,
and some of her
blood spattered the
wall and the horses
as they trampled her
underfoot.”*

2 Kings 9:33

God Saved the King

2 Kings 11:1-21

OPENING
up to the Word

Why do you think people are still fascinated with the activities of royalty and political celebrities? Do they fascinate you?

DIGGING
into the Word

- 1.** Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, had married Jehoram, eldest son of King Jehoshaphat of Judah. She became queen with the ascension of Jehoram, and queen mother with the ascension of her son Ahaziah. Why was Athaliah a major threat to David's descendants? What was her gruesome agenda (vs. 1-3)?
- 2.** What prevented Athaliah from being completely successful (1Ki 15:1-5)?
- 3.** What steps did Jehosheba (daughter of Jehoram) take to preserve the royal line (2Ki 11:2-3)?
- 4.** Who was Jehoiada? How did he foil Athaliah (2Ki 11:4-12)?
- 5.** Athaliah was Judah's only queen to occupy the throne. How did she meet her end (vs. 13-16)?
- 6.** How did Jehoiada restore the Davidic monarchy (vs. 17-21)?

LIVING
out the Word

- 1.** "I'm standing on the promises of God" is a much-loved hymn. God's promises appear over and over again as a thread that connects the past to the the future. Have you experienced any of God's promises? Has God intervened for you?

WINDOW
on the Word

Once again **political marriages** got Judah in trouble. Both David and Solomon married for political reasons and the results were questionable. The Law had warned Israel's kings against this very thing (Dt 17:14-17). Jehoram's foolish marriage to Athaliah seemed to jeopardize the royal line of David. But God's plans cannot be thwarted. From this line descended Jesus the Christ, son of David and Savior of the world (Ac 13:22-23).

The Death of Elisha

DAY 6

2 Kings 12:1–13:19

An old proverb says “Tell me your friends and I’ll tell you who you are.” Do you think this is always true? What might someone conclude about you, based on your friends?

1. Was Joash a good or a bad king? What important qualifier is given as key to the new king’s character (12:1-3)?
2. What project did Joash undertake (vs. 4-6)? What indications are there that both money and zeal were in scarce supply to support this endeavor (vs. 7-16)? What events short-circuited the project (vs. 17-18)?
3. Frustration in Judah kept pace with military disaster in Israel. How did God punish Israel for her idolatry (13:1-9)? Did King Jehoahaz have any sense of God’s presence?
4. Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, showed some respect for God by honoring Elisha. How did he greet the dying Elisha (vs. 14-17)? Why was Elisha angry with him (vs. 18)?

1. It has been said that the Bible is not a “sentimental” book—it does not focus on or elicit emotion for its own sake. Is this illustrated in the account of the death of Elisha?
2. Do you think it is good to be openly emotional at funerals or should everyone be calmly stoical?
3. Is it good to contemplate your own death? Have you spent time preparing for such an eventuality?

The **deliverer for Israel** mentioned in 2 Kings 13:5 was the Assyrian King Adad-nirari III. The Rimah Stele records that he received the tribute of “the land of Damascus” (Aram or Syria) as well as the tribute of “Joash of Samaria” (King Jehoash) whose reign began around 798 B.C. Assyrian pressure on Damascus afforded at least some relief from Syrian raids into Israel. Jehoash’s greeting to Elisha “**My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Israel!**” is usually seen as referring to Elisha’s value to the nation as a miracle worker against enemies. Note that Solomon’s and Ahab’s once-mighty forces are reduced to a mere ten chariots (2Ki 13:7).

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

Days of Grace

2 Kings 13:20–15:7

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you recently experienced relief from some severe trial or worry? Did you see God's hand in the deliverance?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. How did God uphold the reputation and faith of his servant Elisha even after his death (13:20-21)?
2. Moabites and Syrians could invade Israel almost at will. How did God show King Jehoash he was still faithful to his covenant promises (vs. 22-25)?
3. What kind of person do you think Amaziah was, based on the events recorded in 14:1-12? What penalties fell on him and his people (vs. 13-20)?
4. Who was really behind Israel's national revival under Jeroboam II (vs. 26-29)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Amaziah's arrogance eventually cost him his kingdom. How can you guard against pride in your life?
2. Has anyone ever accused you of being reckless? Is it true?
3. God's promises are good even to wicked kings. How good is your word? Has anyone had cause to doubt it?

WINDOW
on the Word

*Israel's last gasp of power and influence came under **Jeroboam II** (around 782-753 B.C.). His recovery of Israelite territory "from Lebo-Hamath to the Sea of the Arabah" was an impressive feat. Hamath had marked the northern extent of Solomon's kingdom (1Ki 8:65). "Lebo-Hamath" refers generally to the Beqa'a Valley, a strategic corridor between the Lebanon and the Anti-Lebanon mountain range. The southern approach to this strategic pass is near the city of Dan. The Sea of the Arabah is the Dead Sea. Jeroboam II's restoration of national prosperity led to conflicts with the outspoken prophets Hosea and Amos over such issues as immorality, covetousness and cruel social divisions (Hos 1:1; 4:1-15; Am 1:1; 8:1-7). Their threats of Israel's collapse and captivity would soon be fulfilled.*

HISTORY AND THE ANCIENT HISTORIANS

History is a science in the sense that it is the search for ordered evidence. But it is also an art. A challenge facing most historians is the absence of direct access to the events under discussion. This is especially true in written sources such as 2 Kings, featuring abundant miracle stories and divine interventions. In recent centuries the Bible has been attacked as a collection of folk legends, unreliable or highly exaggerated anecdotes or perhaps well-meaning, pious fiction.

New evidence, however, continuously comes to light that affects historical judgments. And even eyewitnesses disagree among themselves, as evidenced in court cases almost every day. The questions that come into play are: How good are the historian's sources? How close is the time of the production of the document—2 Kings, for example—to the events it claims to record?

By these standards, 2 Kings is reliable historical testimony. Other documents are quoted as evidence (2Ki 15:6, 31). There is a sense of "being there" created by 2 Kings' use of phrases such as "they are there still" and "to this day" (2Ki 17:23, 40). The readers are given corroborating evidence (although some of this was added long after the original events described in the text).

Groups such as Hittites, Assyrians, Egyptians and Babylonians can be located in history. Figures such as Shishak, Omri and Sennacherib are known from national annals. The Bible's geographical locations can be checked with specific locales still there today—Jerusalem, Megiddo, Samaria, Hezekiah's Tunnel, the City of David.

The writers of Kings and Chronicles cannot be summarily dismissed just because they accept the miraculous or believe in divine intervention. Every historian has a distinct point of view. The crucial question again is: How do biblical historians stack up against the accepted principles of historical writing in general?

To this we can answer: The overall theological argument of 2 Kings—the explanation as to why God was justified in sending Israel and Judah into exile—is presented in a historical record that reveals the writers to be "purposeful and responsible men" (R.K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, page 309). Their argument, biased as it may seem to some, still fits well within the broad category of what we know of as history.