



CHRISTIANITY WITHOUT THE RELIGION

BIBLE SURVEY

THE UN-DEVOTIONAL

2 KINGS

2 CHRONICLES 10-36

Week 2

DAY 8

The Royal Road to Ruin

2 Kings 15:8–16:4

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you lived through a period of political corruption, instability or turmoil that directly affected you or your family?

DIGGING
into the Word

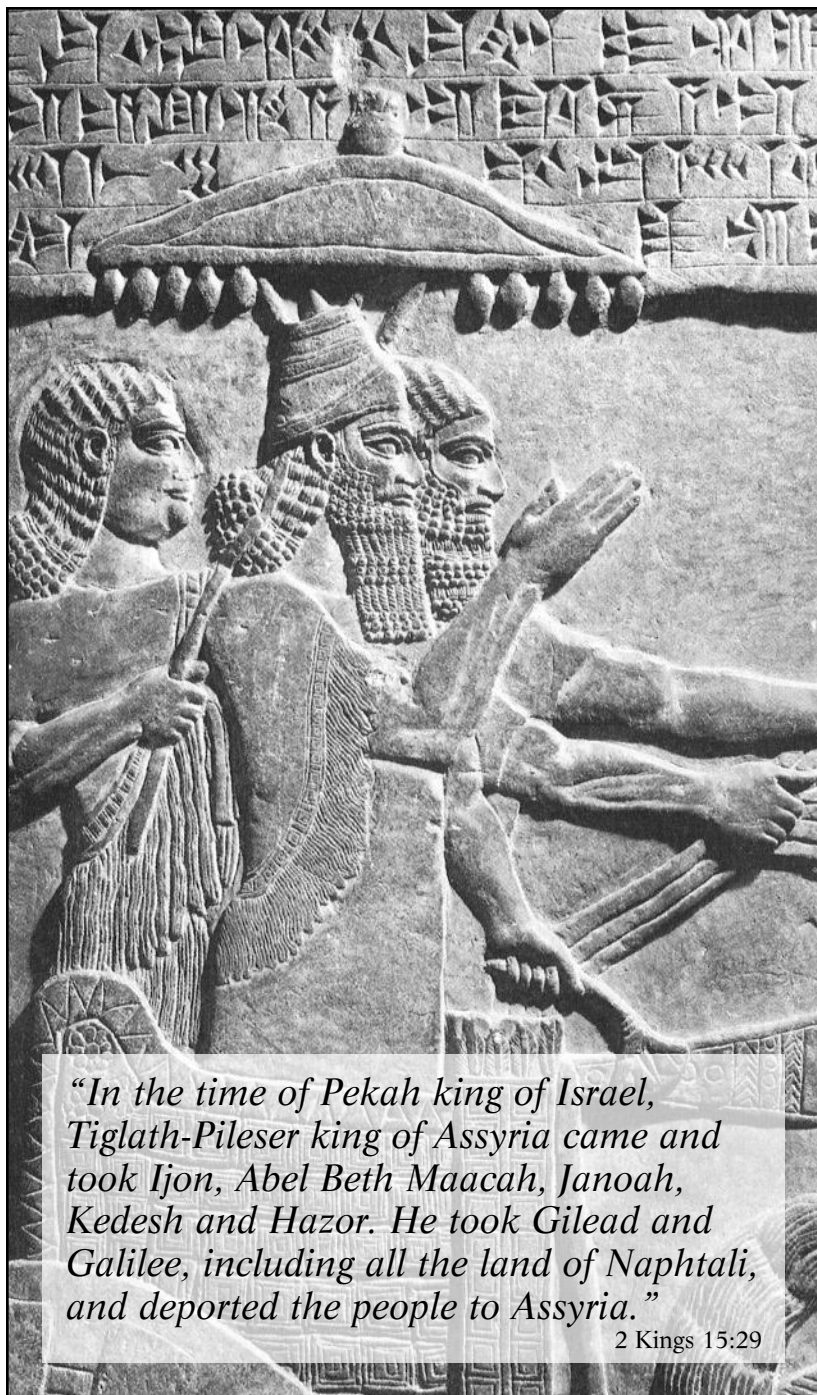
1. Azariah, king of Judah, was called *Uzziah* in other accounts. How did he end his reign (15:1-7)?
2. In Israel, who succeeded Jeroboam II? How long did he reign (vs. 8-9)? How long were the reigns of Shallum, Menahem, and Pekahiah (vs. 10-26)? Do these short reigns suggest political instability?
3. Who invaded Israel in the reign of Menahem (vs. 19-20)? Did they return in the reign of Pekah (vs. 27-29)?
4. Judah was relatively stable under kings Jotham and Ahaz. Were these kings faithful (15:32–16:3)? What abominable custom did Ahaz practice (16:3-4)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. During this time, the rulers of Israel and Judah were generally corrupt, yet to oppose them often meant death. Do you think early Christian instruction regarding submission to government authority (Ro 13:1-7; 1Pe 2:17) applies in today's democratic political systems? Why or why not?
2. Are there times when compliance with the government might clash with conscience (Ac 4:18-20)? What examples suggest that Christians can use legal remedies to protect themselves (Ac 16:35-40)?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Pul** who invaded Israel in Menahem's day was **Tiglath-Pileser III** of Assyria (745-727 B.C.). An inscription mentions that he received tribute from "Menahem of Samaria." This happened during Pul's first campaign into the Mediterranean areas in 743 B.C. The Assyrian Annals record another invasion in the time of Pekah, when many of the people of Gilead and Galilee were taken into captivity (2Ki 15:29). Tiglath-Pileser recorded: "Omri-land...all its inhabitants and their possessions I led to Assyria. They overthrew their king Pekah and I placed Hoshea as king over them" (James Pritchard, *The Ancient Near East: Volume 1*, pages 194-195.) This corroborates the biblical account.*



“In the time of Pekah king of Israel, Tiglath-Pileser king of Assyria came and took Ijon, Abel Beth Maacah, Janoah, Kedesh and Hazor. He took Gilead and Galilee, including all the land of Naphtali, and deported the people to Assyria.”

2 Kings 15:29

DAY 9

War Among the Ruins

2 Kings 16:5–17:23

OPENING
up to the Word

Do you know people who seem to be “getting away with things”? How does that make you feel?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What ploy did King Ahaz of Judah use to counteract invasions from Israel and Syria (Aram) (16:5-9)? What did he do next (vs. 10-20)?
2. What foolish actions of King Hoshea led to Israel’s downfall (17:1-6)?
3. Verses 7-17 list Israel’s sins. Verse 17 concludes with perhaps the most depraved consequence of idolatry. What was it?
4. Only the House of Judah was left. Did they serve God (vs. 18-20)?
5. Who is blamed for starting Israel on the road to sin (vs. 21-23)?

LIVING
out the Word

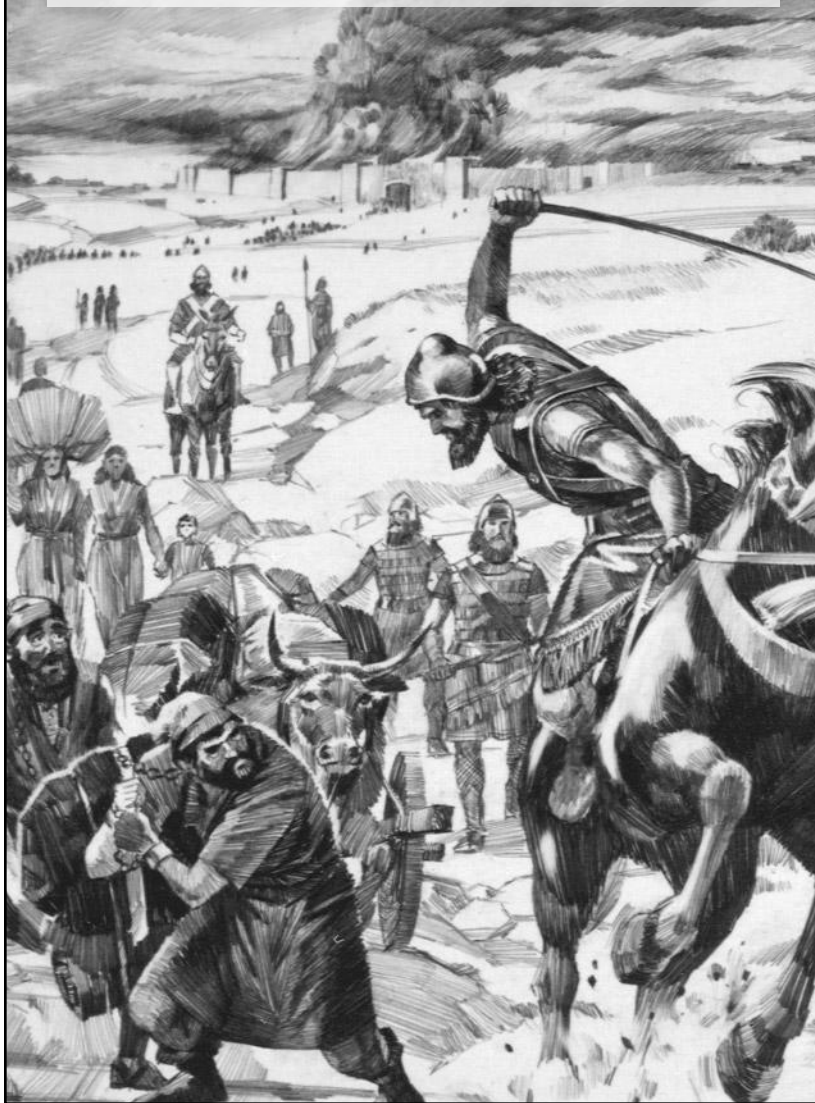
1. An adage states, “The only thing we learn from history is that we never learn!” Based on the story of 2 Kings, is that judgment too harsh?
2. How often do you pray for your nation and its leaders? (1Ti 2:1-4)?
3. In what ways can we be guilty of idolatry today?

WINDOW
on the Word

***Idolatry** is the cardinal sin of the Old Testament. To the ancients—and in some religions today—invisible forces control rainfall, wind, floods, diseases and crop failures. Gods and goddesses, it was taught, could manipulate these forces for good if the deities were appeased. Ceremonies in honor of Baal included priestly dramas where male and female actors had public sexual intercourse to dramatize the marriage of Baal and Mother Earth. As Cornfeld and Freeman write in *Archaeology of the Bible: Book by Book*, “The use of wine and beer often turned the proceedings into bacchanalian festivals.” The prophets blazed against this sacred prostitution. These ceremonies could become worse in time of famine or crop failure. At such times it was believed that Baal had to be appeased by child sacrifice.*

“The king of Assyria invaded the entire land, marched against Samaria and laid siege to it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria.”

2 Kings 17:5-6



Artwork by Ken Tunell

DAY 10

Race and Grace

2 Kings 17:24-41

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you or a friend ever been involved with painful religious turmoil?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the Assyrian policy in dealing with uprooted people (17:24)?
2. What led to the reintroduction of Israel's pagan priesthood into the area of Samaria (vs. 25-28)?
3. Were there still Israelites left in the land after the Assyrian captivity of Samaria (2Ch 30:5-11)? Hezekiah later invited these surviving Israelites to worship in Jerusalem. These survivors were called "the people of Samaria" (2Ki 17:29).

LIVING
out the Word

1. How important have issues of race or ethnicity been in your family, community or church?
2. What one scriptural principle counteracts notions of racial hatred and/or superiority (Ac 10: 34-35)?

WINDOW
on the Word

There was **intermarriage in Samaria** between Israelites and deportees from Babylon, which compounded the hostility between the "mixed race" Samaritans and the Jews. However, the **Samaritans of New Testament times** were not exactly the same as the Samaritans of the Old Testament. By the time of Jesus, Samaritans worshiped only one God, practiced circumcision and possessed their own version of the Pentateuch. These Samaritans may have descended from religious reformers who wished to separate from what they considered a corrupt priesthood in Jerusalem. Sometime after the late 300s B.C. these Samaritans **built their own temple** on Mount Gerizim and resettled Shechem, near Samaria. Shechem is near Sychar, where Jesus met the **Samaritan woman at the well** (Jn 4:4-26). These religious "Samaritans" claimed descent from Jacob (Jn 4:12), adhered to the Law of Moses and kept some of the Jewish festivals.

"It was reported to the king of Assyria: 'The people you deported and resettled in the towns of Samaria do not know what the god of that country requires. He has sent lions among them, which are killing them off...'"

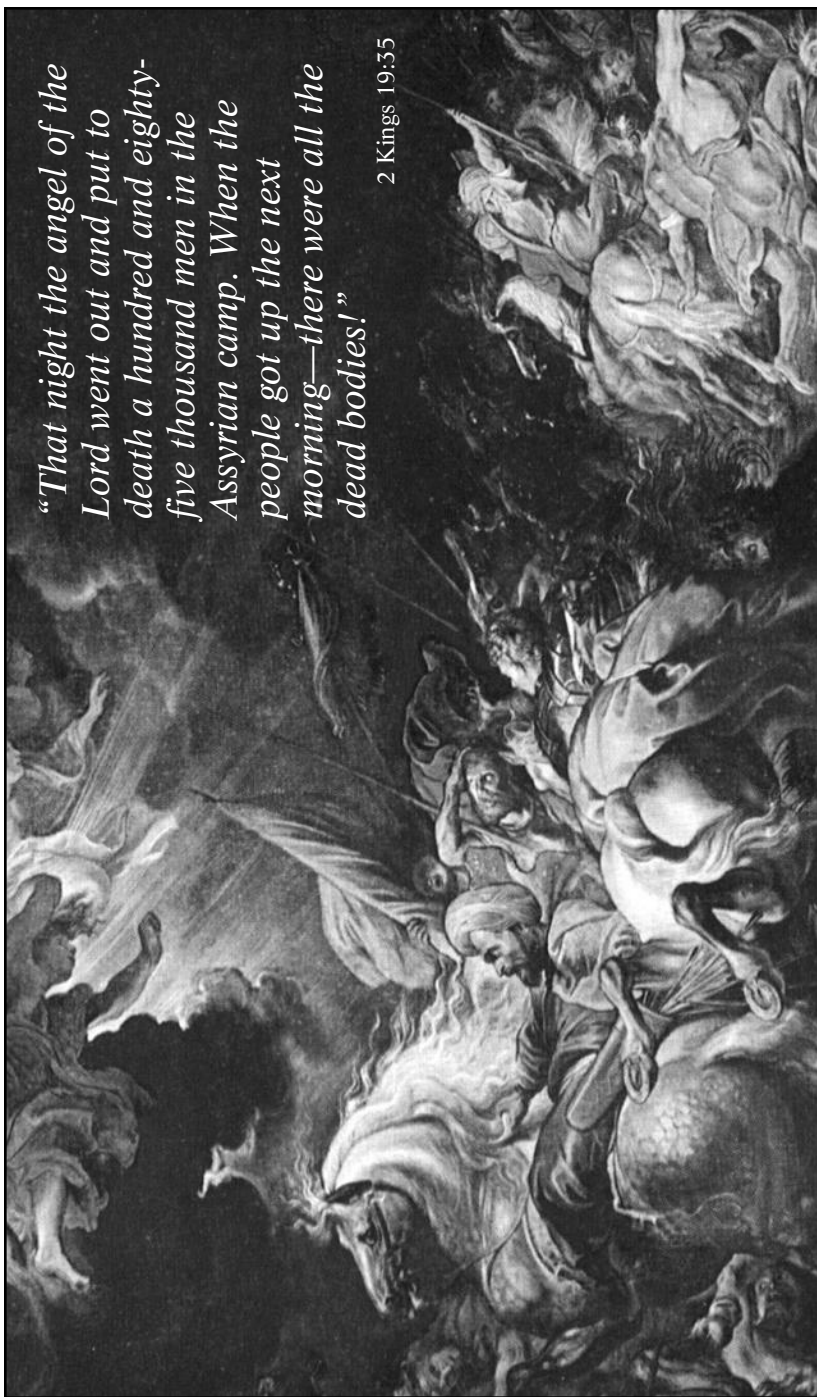
2 Kings 17:26



Artwork by Gustav Doré

*“That night the angel of the
Lord went out and put to
death a hundred and eighty-
five thousand men in the
Assyrian camp. When the
people got up the next
morning—there were all the
dead bodies!”*

2 Kings 19:35



Artwork by Peter Paul Rubens

Judah Survives!

2 Kings 18:1–19:37

Can you think of an astonishing answer to prayer that you have experienced or heard about recently?

1. What made Hezekiah an outstanding king (18:1-8)?
 2. What were Hezekiah's initial reactions to the Assyrian threat (vs. 9-16)?
 3. What arguments did the Assyrian field commander use to try to weaken Judah's faith (vs. 17-37)?
 4. How did Hezekiah react? What was Isaiah's advice (19:1-7)? How did the Assyrians respond to Hezekiah's show of strength (vs. 8-13)?
 5. Did God answer Hezekiah's fervent prayer? Through whom (vs. 14-28)?
 6. What sign of deliverance was given to the young king (vs. 29-34)? Did God keep his promise (vs. 35-37)?
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1. "We live by faith, not by sight" (2Co 5:7). Do you think this is a good commentary on these chapters?
 2. Does Hezekiah's example inspire you? In what ways?
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While generally, **no Assyrian king would have ever recorded a defeat or a rebuff**, an interesting archaeological discovery known as the **Taylor Prism** makes a peculiar statement about Hezekiah during the Assyrian campaign of 701 B.C. Sennacherib boasts: "Hezekiah himself I made a prisoner in Jerusalem, his royal residence, like a bird in a cage." This indirect evidence agrees with the 2 Kings account—the boastful Sennacherib never claims that Jerusalem and Hezekiah were conquered!

DAY 11

OPENING

up to the Word

DIGGING

into the Word

LIVING

out the Word

WINDOW

on the Word

From the Best to the Worst

2 Kings 20:1–21:26

OPENING
up to the Word

Have you experienced a job or family situation where things changed rapidly from good to bad?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. Hezekiah fell sick. What happened next (20:1-11)? While chapter 20 seems to be out of chronological sequence, it helps underscore that God was the real Savior of Israel.
2. Even though the Bible calls him righteous, King Hezekiah seems to court the Babylonian envoys (vs. 12-13). Babylon was rebelling against Assyria at this time. Isaiah was not amused by the king's dabbling in power politics (vs. 14-18). How did Hezekiah react (vs. 19-21)?
3. Who succeeded Hezekiah? How did the inspired writer evaluate the new king (21:1-9)? What stern warning was Manasseh given (vs. 10-15)? Did he heed it (vs. 16-18)?
4. Manasseh's son Amon started out by following the evil example of his father (vs. 19-22). What happened to him (vs. 23-26)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. "Where there are mountains there are also valleys," goes an old saying. Have you known people—like Hezekiah—who have great weaknesses as well as great strengths?
2. "Like father, like son" is another wise adage. How does this chapter both confirm and contradict that saying?

WINDOW
on the Word

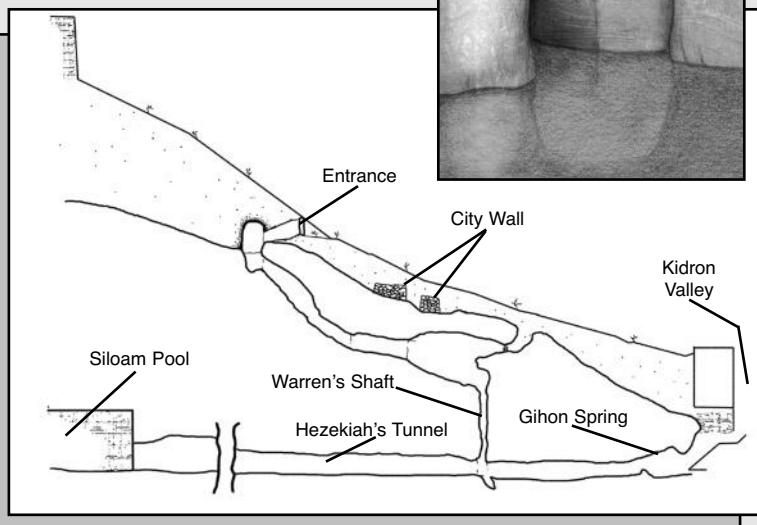
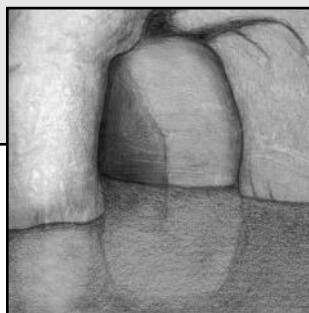
*Hezekiah's memory is immortalized in present-day Jerusalem by the famous site known as **Hezekiah's Tunnel**. This almost 600 meter long tunnel was cut through solid rock underneath the City of David. It provided the royal citadel with an internal water supply in case of a siege. **Merodach-Baladan** was an Assyrian vassal king in Babylon and a thorn in the side of the Assyrians. He first ruled Babylon from 721-709 B.C. His second reign from 703-702 B.C. may have been when he sent envoys to Hezekiah in an attempt to find allies for his rebellion against Assyria.*

Hezekiah's Tunnel

Cities in ancient Israel were often built on hilltops and fortified by walls. However, the water supply for these cities was usually located on lower ground. This meant that they were vulnerable to losing their water supply in times of siege. King Hezekiah overcame this problem when, threatened by a siege from Sennacherib, he diverted Jerusalem's main water supply. "...they blocked all the springs and the stream that flowed through the land. 'Why should the kings of Assyria come and find plenty of water?' they said" (2 Ch 32:4).

Hezekiah's miners, digging from opposite ends, carved a tunnel through a third of a mile of bedrock. This carried water from the Gihon Spring outside the city walls to the Pool of Siloam inside the walls.

An ancient plaque found near the pool described the project: *"Behold the tunnel. This is the story of its cutting. While the miners swung their picks, one towards the other, and when there remained only three cubits to cut, the voice of one calling his fellow was heard—for there was a resonance in the rock coming from both north and south. . . . and the water flowed from the spring towards the pool, 1,200 cubits. The height of the rock above the head of the miners was 100 cubits."*



Last Gasp of Glory

2 Kings 22:1–23:30

OPENING
up to the Word

How important do you think rulers and leaders are to a nation's character?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was young King Josiah's first important act (22:1-7)?

2. What was discovered while the priests were repairing the Temple (vs. 8-10)? How did Josiah react (vs. 11-13)? How did the prophetess Huldah interpret the prophecy (vs. 14-20)?

3. Did Josiah turn more fervently to God (23:1-3)? How extensive were Josiah's reforms (vs. 4-16), and how did he show respect to the nation's religious heritage (vs. 17-25)?

4. Josiah made a valiant attempt to rescue the nation from the accumulated penalties of idolatry. Were the people able to fully repent and escape punishment—or were they too deeply steeped in their pagan ways (vs. 26-27)?

5. How did Josiah die (vs. 28-30)?

LIVING
out the Word

1. Josiah's life story can be seen as a good illustration of the gospel of Jesus Christ—that we are saved by grace and not works (Eph 2:8). Do you think Josiah's defiance of the Egyptians is a lesson in not getting carried away with your own abilities?

2. "A man's got to know his limitations," says a famous movie character. Might this be a lesson applicable to Josiah's death?

WINDOW
on the Word

Pharaoh Necho was the son of the founder of the Egyptian 26th Dynasty. In 609 B.C. he tried to come to the assistance of the last Assyrian king against a rebellion sparked by the rising power of Babylon. Necho deposed Josiah's son and appointed Jehoikim as his puppet. But at the battle of Carchemish in 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon sent the Egyptian army scurrying back to the Nile. Judah then slipped under Babylonian control.

“Then Shaphan the secretary informed the king, ‘Hilkiah the priest has given me a book.’ And Shaphan read from it in the presence of the king. When the king heard the words of the Book of the Law, he tore his robes.”

2 Kings 22:10-11



The Last Days of Judah

2 Kings 23:31–25:7

OPENING
up to the Word

Political events can depress us with their seemingly hopeless and cyclical nature. Which nations are in danger of chaos as you read these words?

DIGGING
into the Word

1. What was the ultimate fate of Josiah's son, Jehoahaz (23:31-35)?
2. Who succeeded him? What important political and military events happened under Jehoikim (23:36–24:1-5)? How did God warn Jehoikim (24:2)? One noteworthy prophet was Jeremiah (Jer 1:1-3), who may have edited the last part of 2 Kings.
3. Who followed Jehoikim? Could he count on Egyptian help (vs. 6-7)? Who supervised the capture of Jerusalem and the deportation of the royal family to Babylon (vs. 8-17)? This was in 598-597 B.C.
4. Nebuchadnezzar returned to surround Jerusalem. What event brought him back (24:18–25:7)? What was Zedekiah's fate? How many kings had been deported to Babylon by now?

LIVING
out the Word

1. How are Christians counseled to react in times of trial or hard testing (2Co 1:9-10)? How do you react?
2. Judah's kings refused to seek God and instead relied on power and politics. What does this say about their spiritual condition? Their concept of God?

WINDOW
on the Word

*The **Babylonian captivity of the Jews** was a decisive event in Jewish history, one that greatly affected their theology and culture. In large measure, the books of the Kings were written to show that God was justified in punishing Judah, even though they had the Temple and the throne of David. God does not play favorites. **Righteousness** is always God's standard in judging nations and people—then and now (Pr 14:34).*