

Promised Land 2 Study and Discussion Questions

Lesson Ten: The Sealing of Judah's Destiny Despite Recovery Efforts –

2 Kings 15-23, 2 Chronicles 26-35, Isaiah, Nahum, Zephaniah

Glance at 2 Kings 15:1-7, 32-38 and chapter 16 to recall the kings of Judah last recorded in your chart of kings. Continue the list as you complete this lesson.

Kings Uzziah, Jotham, and Ahaz of Judah: Read 2 Chronicles 26-28 with Isaiah 6:1 and Isaiah 7 (recall from Lesson 8 that Isaiah began ministering during the reign of Uzziah, also known as Azariah).

- 1) Uzziah was a great leader.
 - a) What were some of his accomplishments? **Uzziah led successful campaigns against the Philistines and the Arabs, received tribute from the Ammonites, rebuilt Elath, built towers in Jerusalem and fortified the city, built towers in the desert, had much livestock and agricultural success (“he loved the soil” [2 Chronicles 26:10]), had a well-trained and well-equipped army, and made machines for military defense.**
 - b) What was his downfall and what action did it lead him to take (reread 2 Chronicles 26:16 with Numbers 16:40)? **2 Chronicles 26:16 says, “...after he became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.” Only priests were allowed to minister in the Temple, yet Uzziah presumptuously took on the priestly responsibility and offered incense on the Altar of Incense.**
 - c) What kinds of things are you currently tempted to presume you could do your own way, forgetting to rely on the Lord and His word? **Personal sharing**
- 2) Compare 2 Kings 16:5-9, 2 Chronicles 28:5-8, 16-22 and Isaiah 7:1-13.
 - a) What crisis did Ahaz (son of Jotham and grandson of Uzziah) face? **While the Assyrian Empire was a mounting threat to Israel, Judah and all surrounding nations, Ahaz faced a more immediate threat from bordering nations: the Philistines were raiding him from the southwest (2 Chronicles 28:18), the Edomites were attacking him from the southeast, and an especially dangerous alliance between Rezin, king of Aram, and Pekah, king of Israel, had formed and was attacking him from the north.**
 - b) Choose some of Isaiah's words in Isaiah 7:4-9 to summarize his message to Ahaz. **“Be careful, keep calm, and don't be afraid. Don't lose heart because of these two...It will not happen...If you don't stand firm in your faith you will not stand at all.”**
 - c) In whom did Ahaz put his faith? **Ahaz ignored the word of the Lord given him through Isaiah. Furthermore, he showed contempt by refusing to ask for the sign the Lord offered him (Isaiah 7:12). Instead, he trusted Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria to protect him from Aram. According to 2 Chronicles 28:20-21, the king of Assyria gave him more trouble than help (2 Kings 16:10-18 tells how Ahaz expressed reverence for the king of Assyria rather than the Lord).**
- 3) According to 2 Chronicles 28:20-21, Ahaz's solution only exacerbated his trouble.
 - a) Read 2 Kings 18:17, 28-29. How loyal was the “help” Ahaz enlisted for Judah in the long-term? **Ahaz enlisted the help of Tiglath-Pileser of Assyria, but Assyria later attacked Ahaz's son, Hezekiah. Ahaz sought a near-term solution to be free from trouble with his neighbor without considering the trouble that could eventually result.**
 - b) List any decisions you are currently facing that have both near-term and long-term consequences. **Personal sharing**
 - c) What near-term solutions are likely to eventually cause you grief and how could you apply Isaiah's advice (found in Isaiah 7:4-9 and 8:17)? **Personal sharing**

King **Hezekiah** of Judah: After reading the questions below, skim 2 Kings 18-20 with 2 Chronicles 29-32 and Isaiah 36-39 (there is much overlap between the books).

- 4) In 2 Kings 18:3-7 and 2 Chronicles 29-31, Hezekiah modeled tremendous spiritual leadership.
 - a) According to 2 Chronicles 29, what did Hezekiah do to demonstrate his top priority? **In the first month of the first year of his reign, Hezekiah opened the doors of the Temple and ordered that it be purified from all the defilement that had occurred during his father's rule. He had it cleaned and purified and commanded the priests to offer burnt and sin offerings for all Israel (29:24). Purifying the Temple and offering sacrifices for sin were the first, necessary steps in returning to God. God would not have been pleased with other good works, if they had not first dealt with their sin.**
 - b) Can you think of reasons why the Passover celebration that was initiated by Hezekiah would have brought such great joy in Jerusalem (see 2 Chronicles 30:21, 23, 26 and Exodus 12:24-28, 13:10)? **Although the Mosaic Law commanded regular Passover, there is no evidence that it had been celebrated at large since the days of Solomon. The people's hearts were right before the Lord (30:18-19), they were acting in obedience, and they were celebrating God's works on their behalf – a formula for joy and spiritual health.**
 - c) List ways Hezekiah's spiritual leadership influenced others, according to 2 Chronicles 29-31, and record anything these events reveal about the nature of spiritual revival. **Some of the people responded to Hezekiah's spiritual leadership initiative with scorn but others with resolve (30:10-12). Many participated in purification and sacrifices for sin, worshipped the Lord (29:29), and voluntarily brought Him offerings (29:31). Additionally, the priests' hearts changed toward their work (29:34-35). Those who responded to Hezekiah's invitation to the Passover experienced tremendous joy in celebration, singing, and prolonged feasting (30:21, 23, 26). Afterward, they destroyed the places of idol worship (31:1) and gave generously to God's work. Spiritual revival can start with one person (as it did with Hezekiah). It spreads through conviction of sin and sincere repentance (a work of God's Spirit), and is followed by obedience to God's commands (the Israelites obeyed the Passover regulations and destroyed false worship). The result will be great joy, unity among believers, and generosity toward God.**
- 5) Regarding Sennacherib's invasion of Judah and his threat to Hezekiah and Jerusalem:
 - a) What was the prophet Isaiah's involvement, according to 2 Kings 19:1-7 and 2 Chronicles 32:20? **Isaiah, son of Amoz, was Hezekiah's "prayer partner" and prophetic voice of encouragement.**
 - b) What practical steps did Hezekiah take when threatened, according to 2 Chronicles 32:3-8? **Hezekiah consulted with his officials and military staff about rerouting the water supply to keep it within the city. After accomplishing that task, they repaired the broken parts of the city walls, built towers on the wall and a second wall around the city, reinforced the city's supporting terraces, and made large numbers of weapons and shields.**
 - c) According to Isaiah 37:26, from where did the Assyrian king's success come? **The Lord**
 - d) What example does Hezekiah give in his prayer in Isaiah 37:14-20 that you need to begin using or emphasizing in your prayer life? **Hezekiah first acknowledged God's power and omniscience. He then appealed to God's reputation and sovereign control. Finally, he asked for deliverance for the purpose of God's glory. Hezekiah's prayer is one prayed from a proper perspective and for God's glory.**
- 6) Compare 2 Kings 20:12-21 with 2 Kings 25:1, 11, 13-15. What seemingly innocent action of Hezekiah's played a part in an event of great significance many years later? **Hezekiah showed all his wealth to the Babylonian envoys. Later, the Babylonians invaded Judah, destroyed Jerusalem, exiled its people, and carried off all the treasures they had seen.**

Kings Manasseh and Amon of Judah: Read 2 Kings 21, scanning its parallel in 2 Chronicles 33 for any additional information.

- 7) What do the passages above record about the evil Manasseh committed and the Lord's response?
According to 2 Kings 21, Manasseh followed the detestable practices of the nations the Lord had driven out of the land by rebuilding the high places his father had torn down, erecting altars to Baal, making an Asherah pole and placing it in the Lord's temple, building his own altars to put in the Temple, worshipping starry hosts, practicing sorcery, sacrificing his own son in the fire, shedding vast amounts of innocent blood, and leading his people astray. During his reign, Israel's evil was so great that the Lord decreed disaster on Jerusalem and Judah – a judgment that would be so terrifying that just hearing about it would make people's ears tingle (2 Kings 21:10-15).
- 8) Compare the length of Manasseh's reign to that of the other kings of Judah by referring to the chart you are maintaining. What evidence do you find in 2 Kings 21, 23:25-26, 24:2-4, and 2 Chronicles 33 that the length of Manasseh's reign and the degree to which he influenced the culture were related (see also 2 Kings 24:3-4)? According to 2 Kings 21:9, during Manasseh's reign, the people no longer listened to the Law of the Lord and were led into evil greater than that of the nations they had displaced. 2 Chronicles 33:10 says the Lord spoke to Manasseh, and also to his people, but they paid no attention. During Manasseh's long, evil, and profoundly influential reign, events were set in motion that changed the nation's history. It wasn't until later that judgment fell, but the text traces it to the sins of Manasseh and all the innocent blood he shed "which the Lord was not willing to forgive" (2 Kings 23:26, 24:3-4).
- 9) *Specifically*, what can you personally do to influence your culture away from evil and toward the Lord?
Personal sharing

King Josiah of Judah: Read 2 Kings 22:1-3:30, scanning the parallel in 2 Chronicles 34-35 for additional information.

- 10) What event caused the spiritually sensitive Josiah to turn to God with all his heart? Josiah turned to the Lord after hearing the Book of the Covenant read to him. 2 Chronicles 34 indicates that Josiah began to seek the Lord when he was young, and by age 20, he was ridding the land of false gods. However, it was not until the 18th year of his reign (at age 26), when he sent men to clean God's house, that the Book of the Covenant was discovered and first read to him.
- 11) Read 2 Timothy 3:16 and Hebrews 4:12. What testimony can you give about how the discipline of reading God's living and active word has influenced your life over the past weeks? Personal sharing
- 12) Josiah was zealous for the Lord at a time when the tide of his culture had long been moving away from the Lord. Read 2 Kings 23:16-18 with 1 Kings 13:1-2, noting that God knew Josiah by name long before his birth. God also knew your name and the details of your life long before your birth. How does this knowledge comfort you regarding a specific event, work, or circumstance in your life? Personal sharing

Read the following questions and then search through Nahum and Zephaniah for the needed information.

- 13) The Assyrian Empire existed for several centuries. Nahum prophesied against Nineveh many years after Jonah had preached there, and presumably, not too long before its fall (probably sometime between the latter years of Manasseh's reign and the beginning of Josiah's reform). Skim the book, if time allows, or at least read Nahum 1:1-3, 7-8, 14; 2:1, 13; 3:7, 13, 18-19. From this reading and from your study in previous lessons, how was Assyria both God's instrument and God's enemy? God used Assyria as his instrument of judgment on Israel for breaking their covenant with Him. However, because Assyria was a wicked nation (brutally savage in its worship and warfare), God ultimately judged Assyria with complete destruction.

- 14) Zephaniah prophesied during Josiah's reign (1:1), proclaiming the day of the Lord's judgment against Judah. In the following verses, what warning or consolation is given that applies to people of all time?
- Zephaniah 1:12 **A warning that complacent people who do not think judgment will ever come are going to be surprised**
 - Zephaniah 2:1-3 **Zephaniah warned that corporate seeking of the Lord, humility, and changes of behavior are needed to avert corporate judgment.**
 - Zephaniah 3:5 **The Lord's judgment is based on complete knowledge (righteousness). Although it may appear to us that wickedness is not being judged, we can take comfort in knowing that God dispenses justice daily.**
 - Zephaniah 3:12-13, 17 **An assurance that the innocent (those who are meek, humble, and trust the Lord) will not ultimately be destroyed but delighted in and comforted by the Lord**
- 15) While Judah and its capital, Jerusalem, were on the verge of facing God's judgment, God was already promising to restore a remnant and offer salvation to people of all nations (Zephaniah 3:9, 12). What do you learn about God from Zephaniah 3:9-20? **Our God is a God of hope (Romans 15:13). Personal sharing**