

CLINGING TO THE LORD

PREACHING THROUGH THE BIBLE: II KINGS II Kings 18:1-6

I. INTRODUCTION

A. TITLE

1. FIRST AND SECOND KINGS WERE ONE BOOK IN HEBREW BIBLE

- Hebrew title was *Melechim* = ‘Kings’

2. SEPTUAGINT

- a. Divided Hebrew books of *Samuel* and *Kings* into four books
- b. Grouped them under the category of ‘Kingdom’ books

- *First Kingdom* = I Samuel
- *Second Kingdom* = II Samuel
- *Third Kingdom* = I Kings
- *Fourth Kingdom* = II Kings

3. LATIN BIBLE

- a. Followed Septuagint division
- b. Renamed books

- *First Book of Kings* = I Samuel
- *Second Book of Kings* = II Samuel
- *Third Book of Kings* = I Kings
- *Fourth Book of Kings* = II Kings

B. SCOPE AND BACKGROUND

1. PERIOD COVERED

- a. About 290 years—(851-560)
- b. Beginning—about 851
 - During reigns of Ahaziah (North) and Jehoshaphat (South)
 - 80 years after division of kingdom between Rehoboam and Jeroboam (931)
- c. Ending—after 560

Jehoiachin’s release—in the 37th year of his exile (began about 597)

2. HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

a. **Historical** Framework

- 1. United Kingdom—1051-931—three kings

- Saul (1051-1011)—covered by I Samuel 9-31
- David (1011-971)—covered by II Samuel
- Solomon (971-931)—covered by I Kings 1-11

2. Divided Kingdom History

a. I Kings 12-22 (931-850)

1. History of Israel to 9th King—Ahaziah
2. History of Judah to 4th king—Jehoshaphat

b. II Kings 1-17

1. History of Israel's last 12 kings—to defeat and diaspora of Israel—in 722
2. History of Judah's next 9 kings—through Ahaz (732-751)

c. II Kings 18-25

1. History of Judah's last 8 kings
2. Starts with beginning of Hezekiah's reign ((715-687)
3. Ends with Jehoiachin's release—560 BC
 - ✓ 37 years after his deportation
 - ✓ 27 years after beginning of Babylonian Captivity

b. **Political** Background

1. Moab—was subject to Israel at beginning of II Kings—but re-gained its independence
2. Edom—was subject to Judah but rebelled; Judah never was able to subdue it all
3. Ammon—was briefly subject to Judah (under Jehoshaphat), but later under Assyria
4. Aram [Syria]—constantly engaged with Israel—sometimes as enemy—sometimes ally
 - Arameans besieged Samaria (unsuccessfully)—**II Kings 6-7**
5. Philistines—still presented threat in west—defeated by Hezekiah [**II Kgs 18**]
6. Phoenicians—influenced Israel through Jezebel
 - Daughter of Ithobaal, King of Tyre
 - Married to Ahab—son of King Omri
 - She introduced Baal and Asherah worship to Israel
7. Assyria and Egypt vied for control of the region

- Assyrian dominated—eventually conquered Egypt in 671 BC
- 8. Assyrian King Shalmaneser conquered Israel (Samaria) in 722
 - Deported 27,000 leaders
 - Many worked as slaves to help build Nineveh into the world's largest city
- 9. Assyrian King Sennacherib attacked Judah and besieged Jerusalem—II Kings 18-19
 - In retaliation for Hezekiah's refusal to pay tribute
- 10. Babylonian-Chaldean alliance defeated Assyria in 612

C. COMPOSITION

1. AUTHORSHIP

- a. Talmudic tradition says—**Jeremiah**
- b. Evidence for Jeremiah—or a prophet/historian contemporary with him
 - 1. **Style** is prophetic—similar to Jeremiah
 - 2. Message condemns idolatry and immorality—like a prophetic book
 - 3. Jeremiah's ministry not mentioned in reigns of Josiah and successors
- c. Last two chapters (24-25)—not by Jeremiah
 - 1. But by an observer in Babylon recording events at beginning of captivity
 - 2. Jeremiah fled to Egypt—*not* Babylonia—see [Jer 43:1-8](#)
 - 3. Note—Jeremiah covers beginning of Babylonian Captivity too
 - a. [Jer 52](#)—is almost same as [II Kgs 24:18-25:30](#)
 - b. Probably [Jer 52](#) was added to [Jeremiah](#) by a later editor

2. DATE OF WRITING

- a. Chapters 1-23
 - 1. Written probably *before* Babylonian Captivity—before 586/7 BC
 - 2. Evidence—“*to this day*” passages
 - a. From I Kings
 - 1. Ark of the Covenant still visible in the Temple—[I Kgs 8:8](#)
 - 2. The subjugation of Canaanites under Solomon continued—[I Kgs 9:21](#)
 - 3. Israel was still in rebellion against Judah—[I Kgs 12:19](#)

b. From II Kings

II Kgs 17:34, 41—author says surrounding nations continue to practice idolatry—just as they did when Israel apostasized and fell—speaking probably as an observer from Judah, while Judah was still intact

b. Chapters 24-25

1. Written sometime after 560 BC

2. Record following events

➤ Jehoiachin's fall and deportation—597

➤ Beginning of Babylonian captivity—11 years later—587/6

➤ Jehoiachin's release—37th year of his reign—560 BC

D. PROPHETS OF II KINGS—[IN LIKELY CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER]

1. PROPHETS TO ISRAEL

a. 9th century—Elisha

b. 8th century

- Elisha
- Amos
- Jonah
- Hosea

2. PROPHETS TO JUDAH

a. 8th century

- Joel
- Isaiah
- Micah

b. 7th century

- Zephaniah
- Jeremiah
- Nahum

c. 6th century

- Habakkuk
- Ezekiel
- Obadiah

E. KINGS—OF SECOND KINGS

1. Kingdom of Judah (south)—**17 kings in II Kings** [20 altogether in I/II Kings]

○ Jehoshaphat

869-848

○ Jehoram

848-841

[co-regent with Jehoshaphat—853-848]

| | | |
|------------------|---------|-----------------------------------|
| ○ Ahaziah | 841 | |
| ○ Queen Athaliah | 841-835 | [Ahaziah's mother] |
| ○ Joash | 835-796 | |
| ○ Amaziah | 796-767 | |
| ○ Uzziah/Azariah | 767-740 | [co-regent with Amaziah—792-767] |
| ○ Jotham | 740-731 | [co-regent with Uzziah—750-740] |
| ○ Ahaz | 731-715 | [co-regent with Jotham—735-731] |
| ○ Hezekiah | 715-687 | |
| ○ Manasseh | 687-642 | [co-regent with Hezekiah—697-687] |
| ○ Amon | 642-640 | |
| ○ Josiah | 640-609 | |
| ○ Jehoahaz | 609 | |
| ○ Jehoiakim | 609-598 | |
| ○ Jehoiachin | 598-597 | |
| ○ Zedekiah | 597-587 | [appointed by Babylon] |

2. Kingdom of Israel (north)—**12 kings in II Kings** [20 altogether in I/II Kings]

| | | |
|---------------|---------|--------------------------------------|
| ○ Ahaziah | 853-852 | [Ahab's eldest son] |
| ○ Joram | 852-841 | [Ahab's second son] |
| ○ Jehu | 841-814 | [Usurper] |
| ○ Jehoahaz | 814-798 | |
| ○ Jehoash | 798-782 | [co-regent with Jeroboam II—793-782] |
| ○ Jeroboam II | 793-753 | |
| ○ Zechariah | 753-752 | |
| ○ Shallum | 752 | [Usurper] |
| ○ Menahem | 752-742 | [Usurper] |
| ○ Pekahiah | 742-740 | |
| ○ Pekah | 740-732 | [Usurper] |
| ○ Hoshea | 732-722 | [Usurper] |

3. ALL KINGS OF ISRAEL WERE 'BAD'—ALLOWED/PROMOTED IDOLATRY

4. SITUATION IN JUDAH

a. Eight Judean kings were 'good'—7 of them in II Kings

| | |
|---------------|-------------------------------------|
| ▪ Asa | I Kgs 15:9ff—found only in I Kings |
| ▪ Jehoshaphat | I Kgs 22:43—found in I and II Kings |
| ▪ Joash | II Kgs 12:2 |
| ▪ Amaziah | II Kgs 14:3 |
| ▪ Uzziah | II Kgs 15:3 |
| ▪ Hezekiah | II Kgs 15:34 |
| ▪ Hezekiah | II Kgs 18:3 |
| ▪ Josiah | II Kgs 22:2 |

b. Total 'good' and 'bad' years—[during divided kingdom years 931-587—344 years]

- 225 'good' years—[8 good kings]
- 119 'bad' years—[12 bad kings]

c. Two Great Reforming Kings [almost 60 years]—and prophets

1. Hezekiah (715-687)—28 years

➤ Prophets—Isaiah and Micah

2. Josiah (640-609)—31 years

➤ Prophets—Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, and Habakkuk

F. PURPOSE

1. COVERS HISTORY OF ALL ISRAEL—NORTH AND SOUTH

- a. Dating of each reign is in relation to dating of reign in the other kingdom
- b. Tracks events in each kingdom alongside those in the other one

2. GIVES PROPHETIC EVALUATION OF POLITICAL AND MORAL SITUATION

- Shows correlation between moral/spiritual behavior—and political/economic effects

3. CONTRASTED WITH I/II CHRONICLES

- a. Focus on Davidic dynasty
 - Northern kingdom (Israel)—mentioned mainly when it interacted with Judah
- b. Give priestly perspective on religious events and spiritual significance
 - Focus more on Temple and efforts to reform religious situation

G. MESSAGES AND THEMES

1. KEY MESSAGE

❖ Welfare of both kingdoms depended on keeping covenant with Jehovah

2. NEED FOR DEPENDENCE ON GOD

- Human rule cannot succeed without dependence on God's help

3. RULERS ARE HELD ACCOUNTABLE FOR LEADERSHIP

- a. Israel lasted only another 128 years—all its kings were idolatrous
- b. Judah lasted longer—263 years—led by 8 good kings
- c. But both kingdoms fell—partly because kings encouraged or tolerated idolatry

4. EVERYDAY PEOPLE ARE STILL HELD ACCOUNTABLE—WITHOUT EXCUSE

- a. People engaged in local cultic idolatry in countryside—apart from state sponsored idols
- b. This occurred also in Judah
 - 1. Pagan altars in the 'high places' continued even under 6 of the 8 good kings
 - 2. They were removed under only 2 reforming kings—Hezekiah and Josiah

3. Due to persistent countryside folk idolatry—that was hard to eradicate
5. CONTINUED PROPHETIC CALL FOR REFORM
 - a. Elijah’s legacy continued—through Elisha—[II Kings 4-8, 13](#)
 - b. Perpetuated by 3 northern and 9 southern prophets—focused on three themes
 1. Religious reform—return to pure worship of Jehovah—and reject idolatry
 2. Moral reform—follow God’s commandments/ordinances
 3. Social reform—religious-political leaders should take care of their people
 6. GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISE OF JUDGMENT WHILE OFFERING HOPE
 - a. Both kingdoms were defeated and destroyed—in punishment for idolatry
 - b. But God offered hope to a remnant in Babylon—with Jehoiachin’s release
 7. GOD’S SOVEREIGNTY OVER ALL HISTORY—ACCOMPLISHES HIS PURPOSES
 - a. He uses pagan nations to bring judgment/correction to his people
 - b. He uses pagan nations to bring judgment on other ones—Babylon defeating Assyria

II. BIBLICAL TEXT

II Kings 18:1-6—*1 Now it came about in the third year of Hoshea, the son of Elah king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz king of Judah became king. 2 He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem; and his mother’s name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. 3 He did right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. 4 He removed the high places and broke down the sacred pillars and cut down the Asherah. He also broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made, for until those days the sons of Israel burned incense to it; and it was called Nehushtan. 5 He trusted in the Lord, the God of Israel; so that after him there was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor among those who were before him. 6 For he clung to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses.*

III. EXPOSITION

A. ‘CLINGING’ TO THE LORD—BEYOND MERE ‘RIGHTNESS’

1. EIGHT JUDEAN KINGS “DID RIGHT IN THE SIGHT OF THE LORD”
 - a. Five of them did not bring about reform—they just ‘held the fort’
 - b. Three of them brought about true reform—through **true devotion** to God
2. HEZEKIAH SHOWS—HOW TRUE DEVOTION MAKES THE DIFFERENCE

- a. Hezekiah's did two things differently
 - He 'clung' to the Lord—v 6
 - He 'trusted' in the Lord—v 5
- b. The difference between 'doing right in the Lord's sight'—and 'clinging to the Lord'
 1. Doing right—in the Lord's sight
 - Keeping on the straight and narrow
 - Pleasing God—through obedience
 - Being righteous—morally good and accountable to God
 2. Clinging—to the Lord
 - a. To follow **closely**—**stick to** [like glue]
 - b. Two applications—direction and intensity/consistency
 1. Direction—not to depart from following
 - ✓ **No inclination to turn** aside—not even a sideways glance!
 2. Intensity/consistency—beyond obedience
 - ✓ **To guard**—protect—God's commandments/ordinances
- c. Evidence—that Hezekiah 'clung' to the Lord
 1. He went *beyond* just turning away from idolatry
 2. He *purged* all idolatry—even tore down all the '*high places*' devoted to Baal
 3. He returned right worship to a cleansed temple and urged complete devotion to God
- d. Hezekiah 'trusted in the Lord'
 1. This kind of 'trust' means
 - Throw all your cares on God
 - Put full confidence in God
 - Be secure in God
 - Fear nothing
 2. Evidence—of Hezekiah's trust in God
 - Fearlessly drove out the Philistines
 - Defied Sennacherib's demand for tribute
 - Tried to reclaim Israel from Assyria

3. CONTRAST—KINGS WHO ‘DID RIGHT’—AND TRULY DEVOTED KINGS TRULY

a. Five kings ‘did right’

1. Four of them followed the ways of **their fathers**—but no more

- a. Joash—did not follow the way of his father Ahaziah—who was an idolater
- b. Instead—he was mentored by his uncle—the reforming priest Jehoiada

2. They did not get rid of the altars in ‘high places’—and folk idolatry continued

b. Three kings implemented reform—**Asa—Hezekiah—Josiah**

1. They followed the way of **their father David** [explicitly stated in texts]

- So—they sought after God’s heart—and wanted to please Him totally’
- Whole-heartedly committed to returning Judah to true worship of Jehovah

2. They removed the altars in ‘high places’

a. Asa

- ✓ **II Kgs 9**—says they were not removed
- ✓ **II Chr 14**—says Asa removed them
- ✓ So—he removed them—but apparently they were rebuilt

b. Hezekiah—evidence above—**v4**

c. Josiah—stated in **Chr 23**

3. Their reforms were thorough-going

a. Asa—**I Kgs 15**

b. Hezekiah—**II Chr 29-31**

c. Josiah—**II Kgs 23**

B. THE IMPORTANCE OF GOOD ROLE-MODELS

1. ALL OF ISRAEL’S KINGS HAD BAD ROLE MODELS—AND WERE ‘BAD’ KINGS

2. ALL THE ‘GOOD’ JUDEAN KINGS HAD GOOD ROLE MODELS

a. **Three** great reforming kings—Asa—Hezekiah—Josiah

1. Did not have good parental role models—they were idolaters

2. So they looked to their ‘father David’ as their role model

b. **Four** of the others had good parental role models

1. Jehoshaphat—followed his father Asa
 2. Three descended from another ‘good’ king—**Joash** [Jehoash]
- c. Pivotal roles of Joash and Jehoiada
1. **Joash**—did not have good parental role models
 - a. Father—Ahaziah—was an idolater—who died early
 - b. Grandmother—Athaliah
 - ✓ Jezebel’s daughter—devoted to Baal!
 - ✓ Married to Jehoram—father of Ahaziah
 - ✓ Murdered grandson Joash’s family—and took control as queen
 2. **Jehoiada**—his pivotal role
 - Joash’s uncle—a priest—married Joash’s sister Jehosheba
 - Rescued Joash and hid him for six years in Temple
 - Staged coup—dethroned and killed Athaliah (idolatrous queen mother)
 - Led reaction that renounced Baal worship—and destroyed temple of Baal
 - Advised Joash in reforms
 - Renewed covenant of king/people with the Lord—II Chr 23:16
 3. **Joash**—his pivotal role
 - a. Fathered three generations of ‘good’ kings
 - ✓ Amaziah
 - ✓ Uzziah
 - ✓ Jotham
 - b. This ‘good’ period lasted over a century (104 years)

C. PAST RIGHTEOUSNESS DOES NOT GUARANTEE FUTURE OBEDIENCE

1. EACH GENERATION IS RESPONSIBLE FOR ITSELF BEFORE GOD
2. EVEN REFORMERS COULD NOT GUARANTEE THEIR CHILDREN’S FUTURE
 - a. **Asa**
 - Even before his reign was finished—the high altars returned [apparently]
 - b. **Hezekiah**
 1. During the next two generations—Judah backslid completely
 2. Evidence—gross immorality current when Josiah became king

- High altars returned—with incense to Baal—**II Kgs 23:5**
- Male cult prostitution—**II Kgs 23:7**—in the temple!
- Child sacrifice to Molech—**II Kgs 23:10**
- Horse sacrifice to sun god—**II Kgs 23:11**
- Asherah idols/poles—and weavings in Temple—**II Kgs 23: 6,7,13-14**

c. **Josiah**

- None of his descendants were faithful kings—led to Judah’s final destruction

3. “WE ARE ALWAYS ONLY ONE GENERATION AWAY FROM PAGANISM”

❖ **Asa-Jehoshaphat—62 good years**

- **Gave way to—Jehoram-Ahaziah—13 bad years**

❖ **Joash-Amaziah-Uzziah-Jotham—104 good years**

- **Gave way to—Ahaz—16 bad years**

❖ **Hezekiah—28 good years**

- **Gave way to—Manasseh-Amon—47 bad years**

❖ **Josiah—31 good years**

- **Gave way to—Jehoahaz-Jehoiakim-Jehoiachin-Zedekiah—22 bad years**
- **Ended with final destruction of Judah**

D. THE DANGER OF POLITICS CONTROLLING RELIGION

1. JEREBOAM’S FATEFUL DECISION—TO IMPLEMENT IDOLATRY

2. JEZEBEL’S INFLUENCE

- a. Baal introduced into Israel
- b. Almost infected Judah—through her daughter Athaliah

3. NUMEROUS POOR POLITICAL DECISIONS—HARMED BOTH JUDAH AND ISRAEL

- Lack of wisdom—not following advice of God’s prophets
- Not depending on God’s providence—but alien/pagan governments—for protection

4. LACK OF ZEAL TO PURGE ‘HIGH PLACES’ COMPLETELY

- Possibly an accommodation to alien rulers—related to royal family
- Possibly a political expedient—placating common people influenced by folk religion

5. TRIED TO IMPRESS FOREIGN KINGS—ASSUME GREAT PLACE ON WORLD STAGE

- **EX**—Hezekiah's foolish attempt to impress Babylonian king with wealth—**II Kgs 20**

E. GOD NEVER GAVE UP ON JUDAH

1. GOD CONTINUED TO ENCOURAGE JUDAH IN CAPTIVITY

- a. God used Nebuchadnezzar II to install a friendly successor to Jehoiachin
 - 1. Zedekiah
 - The king's uncle
 - Josiah's son—hopefully inclined to reform [though he did not do so!]
 - 2. God provided Jeremiah—to advise Zedekiah—[though he did not listen!]
- b. God obtained Jehoiachin's release—in his 37th year of captivity
 - 1. Offered hope to the 'remnant' of Judah
 - 2. Anticipated—return from captivity—in the next generation

2. GOD KEPT HIS 'ETERNAL COVENANT' PROMISE TO DAVID

- a. Israel—ruled by 9 different warring dynasties—was permanently destroyed
- b. Judah
 - 1. Ruled by one continuous dynasty—from the House of David
 - 2. Remnant eventually returned to Judah
 - Began in 538 [520?] BC—with decree by Cyrus of Persia [a pagan king!]
 - 3. Davidic lineage continued
 - a. Zerubbabel—was Jehoiachin's grandson—**I Chr 3:17-19**
 - ✓ Led return from exile and rebuilt the Temple
 - b. Christ descended from Jehoiachin through Zerubbabel—**Mt 1:12**