

Norwood's Notes: Brief Summaries of Bible Stories

These "notes" are intended to provide a general overview of the basic stories of the Bible in the hope of building greater biblical knowledge and encouraging Bible reading and study. For more information, visit www.UjimaChurch.org

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27 - Highlights from 2Kgs 8-15; 2Chr 21-26, "Idolatry in Judah"

Even though Jehoshaphat of Judah had been a righteous king, his son, Jehoram - who succeeded him, was not. He walked in the wicked ways of the kings of the northern kingdom of Israel and married wicked King Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2Kgs 8). Jehoram was so evil, he killed his own brothers and was condemned by Elijah the prophet (2Chr 21). Having been raised by wicked and idolatrous parents, Jehoram and Athaliah's son, Ahaziah, became king after his father and did evil in the sight of the Lord, just like his parents had done.

The commander of the army of Israel, Jehu, had received word from Elisha the prophet that he was to become king of Israel and destroy the royal house of Ahab, fulfilling the word of the Lord. Jehu obeyed the word of the prophet when King Ahaziah was visiting Ahab's son, King Joram of Israel. Jehu killed them both and, at his command, those loyal to him threw Queen Jezebel out of a window to her death, where her body was trampled under the hooves of Jehu's horse (2Kgs 9). Jehu then tricked the idolatrous priests and worshipers of Baal, saying he was going to offer great sacrifices to this false god. When the idol worshipers gathered, Jehu ordered all of them killed and then had the temple of Baal destroyed and turned it into a public toilet (2Kgs 10). Yet, Jehu did not destroy the golden calves at Bethel, which had been set up by King Jeroboam I who had led Israel to sin by worshiping them.

Queen Athaliah learned that her son had been killed and she set out to destroy the royal family of Judah so that she could become the sole ruler. But, the dead king's sister, Jehosheba, escaped with the dead king's infant son, Joash, hiding him in the temple of the Lord from Queen Athaliah for six years (2Kgs 11 & 2Chr 22). Jehosheba was the wife of Jehoiada the priest. In the seventh year of Queen Athaliah, Jehoiada the priest summoned warriors and guards to the Temple of the Lord where he revealed to them that he and his wife had kept the king's son alive. The priest then anointed Joash as King and all the people clapped their hands and shouted, "Long live the King!" When the Queen heard the noise, she hurried to see what was happening and tore her close in despair shouting "Treason! Treason!" Then Jehoiada the priest ordered that she be killed, and they seized her and took her out of the temple and killed her (2Chr 23).

The Levites were once again in charge of the Temple of the Lord and followed all of the instructions given in the law of Moses. There was great rejoicing and peace because the wicked Queen was no more.

King Joash reigned in Jerusalem for 40 years and did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight because he followed Jehoiada the priest's instructions. Under his reign, the Temple of the Lord was repaired and the people were so overjoyed, that no accounting was required in regard to the workmen's wages, because they were all honest and faithful workers (2Kgs 12 & 2Chr 24). Yet, paganism had not been purged from the land and many of the people still offered sacrifices to idols.

Sadly, after Jehoiada the priest died, King Joash was influenced by wicked advisors and eventually abandoned the Temple of the Lord and returned to the worship of idols. The Lord sent prophets to the king, but neither he nor the people would listen. He even killed Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest! Eventually, King Joash's own officers plotted against him and assassinated him. And his son, Amaziah, became king.

King Amaziah pleased the Lord, but was not faithful like his ancestor King David. Amaziah still allowed the pagan shrines to be places of idolatrous worship. He avenged his father by killing those who had assassinated him. When he challenged King Jehoash of Israel in battle, the king of Israel defeated him and even marched on Jerusalem, demolishing 600 feet of the city wall in taking hostages with him back to the city of Samaria (2Kgs 14 & 2Chr 25). Like his father before him, King Amaziah was assassinated, and his 16-year-old son, Uzziah, became king.

King Uzziah reigned in Jerusalem for 52 years and followed after the example of his father, following the Lord. But, he did not bring great reform by destroying the pagan shrines where the people still participated in idolatrous worship. The Lord gave Uzziah (also called Azariah) great success and his fame spread far and wide (2Kgs 15 & 2Chr 26). But as he became more powerful, he also became very proud and sinned against the Lord by presuming to offer incense in the temple as though he was a priest, disregarding the rebuke of his advisors. For this, the Lord struck him with leprosy, which broke out suddenly on his forehead. The king remained a leper for the rest of his life, living in seclusion as his son, Jotham, governed the kingdom on his behalf. When King Uzziah died, Jotham followed his example. He reigned for sixteen years before he died. Then his son, Ahaz, became king.

During the days of Uzziah, king of Judah, the northern kingdom of Israel experienced a series of kings and coups as idolatry continued throughout the land.

...but, in spite of the wickedness and idolatry that ensnared both kings and people, the Lord was still working his plan...