

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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28 - Highlights from 2Kgs 16-21; 2Chr 26-33, "Israel Falls & Judah Remains"

Ahaz began to reign as king in Judah when he was twenty years old. He did not do what was pleasing to the Lord, but following the wicked example of the Kings of Israel and even sacrificed his son by fire to an idol (2Kgs 16; 2Chr 26)! During his reign, the Lord allowed Ahaz's enemies, King Rezin of Aram and King Pekah of Israel, to defeat him in battle (2 Chr 28). These enemies even planned to place their own ally on the throne of Judah and besieged the city of Jerusalem. But, in spite of the wickedness of Ahaz, the Lord sent a message through the prophet Isaiah telling Ahaz not to fear, for Jerusalem would not be overtaken and that within sixty-five years, Israel would be destroyed. Isaiah also told King Ahaz that a curse was upon Judah because of its sin, but that one day God's plan would be fulfilled; the sign of this would be that a virgin would give birth to a son who would be called "Immanuel," which means "God with us" (Isa. 7). Being given a glimpse of the coming Messiah, Jesus Christ, hundreds of years into the future, Isaiah would go on to prophesy that this special one to be born would also be called by the royal titles "Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace" (Isa. 9). In spite of Isaiah's prophecy, King Ahaz set up a pagan altar in the Temple and even destroyed the utensils that were used in the holy ceremonies in the worship of the Lord. He made pagan shrines all over Judah, arousing the Lord's anger (2 Chr 28). King Ahaz died when he was thirty-six years old and his son, Hezekiah, became king (2Kg 18).

In the north, Israel's series of wicked kings and the persistent idolatry of the people angered the Lord and led to their being conquered by the King of Assyria, who captured the city of Samaria and carried away many Israelites into exile. He then resettled foreigners in Samaria, who mixed their idolatrous ways with the worship of the Lord (2Kgs 17). Their offspring would eventually be known as "Samaritans."

After the fall of the kingdom of Israel, the kingdom of Judah remained in the south and Hezekiah was King (2Kgs 18). He pleased the Lord by doing what was right. He trusted in the Lord and destroyed the idols in the land. The Lord was with him and blessed him (2Chr 31). He reopened the doors of the Temple and summoned back the priests and Levites to restore the worship of the Lord (2Chr 29). Hezekiah brought in

the people from all over the land to a great Passover celebration in Jerusalem (2Chr 30). The Lord was pleased with King Hezekiah.

When the king of Assyria attacked the cities of Judah, Hezekiah was afraid and initially sought to appease him. Then the king of Assyria sent his forces against Jerusalem, with messages of warning not to resist him, striking fear into the heart of King Hezekiah, who went into the Temple to pray and also sent for a word from the Prophet Isaiah. Isaiah sent word back to King Hezekiah, saying "*Thus says the LORD: Do not be afraid because of the words that you have heard, with which the servants of the king of Assyria have reviled me. Behold, I will put a spirit in him, so that he shall hear a rumor and return to his own land, and I will make him fall by the sword in his own land*" (2Kgs 19:6-7 ESV). The Lord sent an angel to strike down the Assyrian army. Their dead bodies lay all around outside the walls of the Jerusalem (2Chr 32)! The king of Assyria had returned to his homeland and was killed by his own sons as he worshiped before his pagan idol. All this happened just as the Lord said it would, because the Lord was working his plan.

King Hezekiah became deathly ill and was about to die. With tears he prayed to the Lord. The Prophet Isaiah prescribed a treatment for the illness and gave Hezekiah a sign to prove that the Lord would answer his prayer for healing. The sign was that the shadow of a sundial would reverse... and it did! The king was healed and Isaiah told him that fifteen years would be added to his life (2Kgs 20). The Lord continued to bless Hezekiah's reign.

Ambassadors from Babylon visited Hezekiah, marveling at his success. The king proudly showed them all the wealth of Jerusalem. Isaiah then prophesied that all that the king had pridefully shown the Babylonian ambassadors would one day be carried off to Babylon and that even some of his own descendants would be servants in exile in Babylon. But, Isaiah told him that this would not happen during Hezekiah's reign.

When King Hezekiah died, his son Manasseh became king when he was only twelve years old. For fifty-five years he reigned. He reversed the reforms of his father, and began to worship idols, rebuilding the shrines Hezekiah had torn down (2Kgs 21; 2Chr 33). Manasseh even put pagan altars in the Temple of the Lord and sacrificed his sons by fire! He consulted mediums and psychics and practiced witchcraft. He also murdered many innocent people all over Jerusalem. The Lord sent prophets with a word of judgement against Manasseh and the people of Judah who had been led into such wickedness. The Lord caused the Assyrian army to capture Manasseh and bind him in chains. In his distress, he repented of his sin and humbled himself before the Lord and the Lord restored him to his place in Jerusalem. Manasseh sought to restore the people to the worship of the Lord and destroyed the pagan altars. But, the people continued in their idolatry in spite of the king's conversion. Manasseh died, and his son Amon became king.