

I & II Kings



Lesson 7 – 2 Kings 8:1–12:21

Reforms in Israel and Judah

While chaos may seem the order of the day, God remains in control. We certainly witnessed that in our previous lesson. Recall the culture of death promoted by ancient Israel and her surrounding neighbors. Perhaps you recoiled at the words of 2 Kings 3:2: “Then he took his oldest son, who was to reign in his place, and offered him for a burnt offering on the wall.” When the battle was not going his way, the king of Moab offered his own son as a sacrifice to a god known as Chemosh. A culture of death soon finds itself desensitized to it.

Contrast this with what we learn in the next chapter: the death of the Shunammite’s son. She worshiped not the gods of death but the God of life. Taking a servant and a donkey, the Shunammite traveled the twenty miles to reach “the man of God at Mount Carmel” (2 Kings 4:25). By faith, she knew that the God who had given her son life could restore it again. Clinging to Elisha, she uttered, “As the LORD lives and as you yourself live, I will not leave you” (v. 30). Her supreme confidence rested in God, and she willingly took an oath binding her to Him. In love, God showed His mercy to the Shunammite by restoring her son to life.

For a time, two kings will temporarily halt the mounting pressures to follow other gods. Their reforms will only delay the inevitable march toward the removal of God’s blessings and a time of captivity.

The Shunammite’s Land Restored

Read 2 Kings 8:1–6. In Elijah’s day, God worked to bring Israel to repentance by bringing a drought lasting three and a half years. When this drought failed to bring about repentance, a drought twice as long occurred. Since this famine affected believers and unbelievers alike, God sent Elisha to the Shunammite and her family. Warned of the famine, the family journeyed to Philistia. Upon their return, they learned that their land now belonged to someone else. God’s timing is perfect. When the Shunammites took their appeal to the king, Elisha’s servant Gehazi was already there explaining all “the great things that Elisha has done” (v. 4). The Shunammite’s son provided living proof of Gehazi’s resurrection account (v. 5).

72. We can only imagine in what manner the Shunammite and her son witnessed to the king. Tell their story anew.
73. Read Romans 2:4. For what purpose does God offer His abundant kindness?

Apostasy Spreads to Judah

Read 2 Kings 8:7–29. Elisha carried out Elijah’s task of anointing Hazael king of Syria (1 Kings 19:15). By divine insight, Elisha saw the terrible hardships ahead for Israel due to this anointing. The next day Hazael assassinated Ben-hadad. Hurriedly, the writer takes us to Judah to record an event with profound ramifications: the beginning of King Jehoram’s reign.

74. Describe the author’s view of Jehoram’s reign and the reason behind it (2 Kings 8:18).
75. Jehoram is of the house of David. God reveals His faithfulness to David in verse 19. How so?

In its shortened form, Jehoram becomes Joram. Of interest is that Judah had a King Joram followed by Ahaziah, while the reverse occurred in Israel at nearly the same time.

76. Upon Jehoram’s death, Ahaziah ruled in Judah. His mother’s name was Athaliah. How does the author describe Ahaziah’s one-year reign (v. 27)?

Jehu Becomes King in Israel

Read 2 Kings 9:1–10:17. How Jehu, the commander of the Israelite army, came to power receives attention here. The anointing of Jehu at the Lord’s command through Elisha puts the plan into motion (9:1–13).

77. The lives of Joram, king of Israel, and his nephew Ahaziah, king of Judah, met an identical end. How did they die (9:24, 27)?
78. Consider the Lord’s judgment against Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 21:19, 23–24). How does God fulfill that judgment in the death of Jezebel (2 Kings 9:30–37)?
79. In your opinion, what allows us to conclude that Jehu went beyond God’s orders (10:1–17, noting especially verse 14)?

Reforms under Jehu and Joash

Read 2 Kings 10:18–12:21. God used Jehu’s administration to bring about needed religious reforms by removing the worship of Baal (10:18–27). Yet, despite the destruction of the Baals and the prophets who served them, Jehu did not complete the task of returning Israel to God. In fact, the author of Kings records that “Jehu was not careful to walk in the law of the LORD the God of Israel with all his heart” (2 Kings 10:31).

80. What did Jehu not do that hindered further religious reform (10:28–30)?

In Judah, Athaliah ruled for seven years upon the death of her son, King Ahaziah. Temple guards hid her only surviving grandson, Joash, who became king at age seven. Athaliah murdered all her other grandsons.

81. Joash led a reform movement within Judah, but he failed to complete the job. What did Joash leave undone (12:3, 17–18)?

God's Word for Today

Parents have a profound effect on the belief system of their children.

82. What insight on child rearing does Solomon offer in Proverbs 22:6?
83. "Like father, like son" is a saying with important implications. Why is it important in every age to raise children in the knowledge of John 14:6?

In Closing

- † Discuss the significance of knowing that "your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1 Peter 5:8).
- † Whether married or not, discuss ways to raise God-fearing children.
- † Read **2 Kings 13:1–16:20** to prepare for the next session.