

1. We are now in 2 Kings 21 and 22 and 2 Chronicles 33, reading about the last years of the Southern Kingdom of Judah. King Hezekiah was one of the best kings Judah had, but he did not finish as well as he might have. His son Manasseh was one of the worst kings Judah had. He rebuilt all the pagan high places his father had torn down. He worshipped demons and even placed an idol in the temple. Scripture says that Manasseh had a worse effect on Judah than all the nations God had driven out before them when they entered Canaan. He reigned for 55 years.
2. Verse 16 tells us that Manasseh filled Jerusalem with innocent blood. An old Jewish legend says that it was during the reign of Manasseh that the prophet Isaiah was martyred. According to this legend the king had Isaiah placed inside a hollow tree trunk and then had the tree sawed in half!
3. 2 Kings 21:12-14 pronounces God's final judgment upon the Southern Kingdom of Judah. Judah failed to learn from the example of the Northern Kingdom. There are two ways we can learn the lessons that God wants to teach us: by the experience of others or the more difficult way by our own personal experience. The people should have realized the need to repent or God would judge them.
4. When we read a historical section of the Bible, we ought to ask ourselves the question: "What lesson is there here for me to learn?" And the second question we need to ask ourselves is, "How will I apply that lesson today?" This is how we move to mediating on God's Word.
5. We need to also read the biographies of the men and women God has used down through the ages to change the world. We can learn from their experiences too, so that we might not have to learn as much from our own painful experiences.
6. Chapter 21 mentions the name of Manasseh's mother, Hephzibah. Isaiah also mentions her in Isaiah 62. This just shows how contemporary Isaiah's preaching was.
7. In 2 Chronicles as well as in Kings, we learn that Manasseh was taken away in exile to Babylon. God warned Judah and the kings that this would happen. The surprising thing is that in the Chronicles account we are told that Manasseh, the most evil King of Judah, repented. Scripture does not tell us if this resulted in permanent changes in Manasseh's life. There is hope. God convicted and brought to repentance to the worst king of Judah. Never stop praying, God can get through to anyone.
8. Amon, Manasseh's son, reigned only two years before he was assassinated. Manasseh began ruling as a co-regent with his father Hezekiah. Then he ruled alone until his death, when Amon ascended the throne. Then Josiah became king. Micah, a prophet we have not read yet, was a probably a contemporary of Isaiah during the reign of Ahaz and Hezekiah. Nahum prophesied at the end of Manasseh's reign and probably prophesied during Josiah's reign as well. We will give them attention later.
9. 2 Kings 22 introduces us to one of the greatest kings that Judah had, Josiah. It is said that "He walked in all the ways of his father David." He became king at the age of 8 and at 16 he began to seek the guidance of God. At 20 he began the religious reforms to rid the land of idolatry. When he was 26 he began the work of repairing and cleaning the temple. The Scriptures were not books but scrolls that were copied by hand and rolled up and stored in pottery containers. During the reign of Manasseh, the scrolls were not used and one of them was lost. No one missed it, not even the priests.
10. When the scroll was discovered, advice was sought from Huldah the prophetess. What is interesting is that advice was sought from Huldah even though there was no lack of male prophets at that time. Jeremiah and Habakkuk were both prophesying at this time. It shows us that God is not adverse to gifting and using women in some significant ministries.

1. Because King Josiah was righteous and committed to the law of God, there was a brief period of peace and blessing in Judah.
2. The line of kings for the Kingdom of Judah is Hezekiah, a good king, next Manasseh, the worst king, followed by Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah. It is during the last years that the Jeremiah prophesied.
3. To review, Saul, David and Solomon were the first kings. In 931 B.C. the kingdom was divided. In the Northern Kingdom there were nine dynasties and 19 kings. The Northern Kingdom ended in the Assyrian exile in 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom of Judah begins with Rehoboam, and had one dynasty and 21 rulers. It ended when Zedekiah was carried off to Babylon in 586 B.C. Kings of the Northern Kingdom to remember are: Jeroboam I and his golden calves, and Ahab, a prominent and evil king, who fought Elijah and loved Jezebel. Jeroboam II reigned for forty years and was one of the least evil of the kings. Hoshea was the last king of Israel in Samaria.
4. In the Southern Kingdom, the most important kings to remember are Rehoboam, whose pride split the kingdom in two. Then there was Asa, who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. Next was Joash, the boy king who rebuilt the temple. Uzziah was a good king who finished on a bad note. Hezekiah was the confidant of Isaiah the prophet and trusted God. Josiah, his great grandson, restored the temple and discovered the forgotten Book of the Law. Finally, there was Zedekiah who was king when Jerusalem collapsed in 586 B.C. There were 19 kings in the north but only four to remember and 21 rulers in the south but only seven to remember.
5. Things had become very bad in Jerusalem with regard to worship of the Lord. The temple was in such disrepair and neglect that they had lost the Book of the Law. There is some debate as to whether what was discovered was the whole Torah, Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, or just the Book of Deuteronomy.
6. What was found in the Temple was incredible: articles dedicated to the worship of Baal, Asherah, astrological and demonic forces. There were male shrine prostitutes and shrines dedicated to child sacrifice, to sun worship, mediums and spirits. Not only was the Book of the Law lost, but its contents were completely forgotten.
7. Josiah's reforms included celebrating the Passover in a way in which it had not been observed since the days of Samuel the judge. Josiah provided 30,000 sheep and goats and 3,000 cattle of his own for the Passover.
8. The balance of power was switching from Assyria to Babylon and Pharaoh Neco was causing problems from Egypt. Later, the prophet Jeremiah was exiled in Egypt.
9. Verse 25 tells us "Neither before nor after Josiah was there a king like him who turned to the Lord as he did – with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength."
10. Nebuchadnezzar reigned in Babylon from 605 to 562 B.C. Jehoiakim thought an alliance with Egypt would save Judah. Jeremiah, speaking for God, told him differently.
11. Nebuchadnezzar deposed Jehoiachin and installed Zedekiah as a puppet ruler. When Zedekiah rebelled, Nebuchadnezzar returned and laid siege to Jerusalem, finally burning it to the ground and deporting almost all of the people to Babylon. This was the end of Judah for seven decades. There were no more kings in the house of David until the Messiah.

1. Micah prophesied during the reigns of Jothan, Ahaz and Hezekiah. We know little about him. He was a contemporary of Isaiah. He lived just a little south of Jerusalem on a major trade route to Egypt. The Book of Micah is much shorter than Isaiah, but he sounds a lot like Isaiah because he lived and worked with him.

2. Isaiah and Micah prophesied judgment on the Northern Kingdom. God is punishing Samaria for its sins, but He is also punishing Samaria so Judah will realize she is doing the exact same thing and will not escape punishment.

3. The people of Micah's day believed anyone who told them what they wanted to hear, much like people today.

4. The Old and New Testaments both tell us that rewards will be experienced by those who keep faith with God's covenant. The faithful will be re-gathered when the discipline is over. The unfaithful will be judged.

5. The Book of Revelation has a recurring phrase: "To him that overcomes I will give..." This is not to promote a "works" salvation. It is not enough to carry the name of God, but it is necessary to be a covenant keeper. Failure to keep the covenant brings judgment.

6. Micah prophesied the fall of Samaria, the fall of Judah, and the fall of Jerusalem. Although it is Assyria that is causing problems, Micah says to Judah, they will be exiled to Babylon, because God revealed this to him.

7. Micah says he is willing to make a public spectacle of himself to get the people to listen to what is going to happen.

8. Micah uses a play on words to get the people's attention about what is going to happen in the cities of Judah.

9. In chapter 4 Micah is looking forward to the millennium when Christ will rule the world in peace and security. That's the long term hope, but the short term future for Judah is the pains of childbirth in Babylon.

1. This section of Micah is prophetic. In verse one of chapter five, Micah prophesies the fate of King Zedekiah. The puppet King Zedekiah rebelled against the Nebuchadnezzar. Because of that the Babylonians took Jerusalem. King Zedekiah had to watch the execution of his children and then his eyes were put out. He was taken in chains to Babylon. Though this did not happen for many years Micah predicted it in chapter 5.

2. The next prophecy is the most exciting. It is the prophecy of the place of the Messiah's birth. There is no doubt that Jewish scholars understood what this meant because when the wisemen arrived centuries later seeking the King of the Jews, Herod's advisers were able to tell them the Messiah would be born in Bethlehem of Judea.

3. It is impossible to explain this passage in Micah unless you accept that an omniscient, omnipotent God revealed this to Micah. The doctrine of biblical inspiration is self-authenticating; fulfilled prophecy proves it.

4. One of the sins which caused God to judge Israel was the sin of greed and economic oppression. The prophetic books emphasize the importance of social justice and fair treatment of the poor. Throughout history society has targeted the poor for gain. God hates it and judged Israel for it.

5. Other sins which angered God were Judah's worship of idols and the false religions so prevalent in that day. Key verses are found in Micah 6. Micah tells us what is required of us, "To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God." Micah is not saying that we can earn our salvation by "good works." Salvation, even in the Old Testament, was by faith. But the Bible tells us that if we have received the grace of God in salvation we will show it in the way we live our lives to honor Him.

6. The three most significant passages seem to be the prophecies of chapter 5, the call to righteous living in chapter 6, and the final verses of chapter 7. Micah ends his book on with hope because Micah understands the character of God and the promises that God has made regarding the future. God does not change and His Word is eternal.

1. Nahum prophesied in Judah during the time of Jeremiah. He spoke to Judah about Assyria whose armies swept away the Northern Kingdom and shut up Hezekiah like a bird in a cage until God delivered them.
2. Nahum was the second prophet to write about the fate of Nineveh; Jonah was the first. Jonah lived a little more than a century before Nahum. When Jonah preached to Nineveh the people repented and the Bible says God relented.
3. Nahum came a century after Jonah. God had something to say to Nineveh, but he had Nahum speak his messages in Jerusalem instead of Nineveh. Why?
4. Nineveh had repented of its repentance. The people of Nineveh had become more violent, arrogant and more degraded than before. They were the most feared people in the world. Repenting of repentance is the most dangerous thing anyone can do because it mocks the grace of God and desensitizes our consciences. It becomes far less likely that we will ever again turn toward God. But this tells us why Nahum was not sent to Nineveh, but it does not tell us why God sent him to Jerusalem.
5. Nahum gives us three theological statements about God. God is holy, God is powerful and God is good. The existence of evil in the world often leads people to give up one of their beliefs about God. Some of God's people were on the verge of giving up belief in God's knowledge, His goodness, or His power. Nahum wants to assure the people on all these points.
6. If God is good and just and powerful why is He not acting? The problem of evil is partly because of God's long suffering mercy, He gives many opportunities to repent and change. God will finally act when His patience is exhausted. This is why Nahum spoke to Jerusalem, not Nineveh - to give them opportunity to repent.
7. An interesting thing found in today's reading was Nahum's familiarity with the Old Testament. He quotes Exodus 34:7, "The Lord will not leave the guilty unpunished." Nahum also uses words similar to Isaiah in chapter 52. There is a link between Nahum and the Old Testament Books which precede it and the New Testament books which follow it.
8. Nahum reminds the Assyrians what they have conquered including Babylon, Judah (with the exception of Jerusalem), down to the Egyptian city of Thebes.
9. If they could conquer Thebes, what could Jehovah do to them? Then Nahum tells them what God will do.
10. Their enemies formed a confederacy and worked their way up to Nineveh. At a critical moment the Tigris River rose to flood level and demolished the walls of the city. The city was destroyed. The day before the people of Nineveh enjoyed a victory and celebrated in an orgy that night. Their army was drunk and was defenseless as women when the soldiers came. The city was decimated. This has been historically confirmed. God said this would happen and it did.