

The CHRONICLES of the KINGS

The last Kings of Judah

2 Chronicles 36:15-16

August 08, 2026

We concluded last week with the reign of Hezekiah. In year 14 an illness nearly killed him, but he was healed and granted 15 more years on the throne.

We now turn our attention to the final 7 kings of Judah, beginning with Hezekiah's son, Manasseh.

Manasseh - 2 Kings 21:1-18 and 2 Chronicles 33:1-20

Manasseh was 12 years old when he became king. His reign 55 years and by all accounts was the worst king Judah ever had:

- He rebuilt the high places that his father had destroyed.
- He erected altars to Baal and made Asherah poles.
- He built altars to the starry hosts and bowed down and worshipped them.
- He built altars to the starry hosts in both courts of the Temple and took the Asherah pole he had made and put it in the Temple.
- He sacrificed his own sons in the fire.
- He practiced sorcery, divination and witchcraft and he consulted mediums and spiritists
- He shed innocent blood and filled Jerusalem with blood from one end to the other.

Yahweh sent a prophet to Manasseh with a list of divine judgments, but Manasseh and the people paid no attention.

Ellen White (PK382.3) - Faithfully the prophets continued their warnings and their exhortations; fearlessly they spoke to Manasseh and to his people; but the messages were scorned; backsliding Judah would not heed. As an earnest of what would befall the people should they continue impenitent, the Lord permitted their king to be captured by a band of Assyrian soldiers, who "bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon," their temporary capital. This affliction brought the king to his senses....

2 Chronicles 33:12-13 - *In his distress he sought the favor of Yahweh his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers. And when he prayed to him, Yahweh was moved by his entreaty and listened to his plea; so he brought him back to Jerusalem and to his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh is God.*

.... But this repentance, remarkable though it was, came too late to save the kingdom from the corrupting influence of years of idolatrous practices. Many had stumbled and fallen, never again to rise. Manasseh would spend the rest of his life trying to undo everything he had done in leading the people away from God. Eventually he died and his son, Amon, became king.

Amon – 2 Kings 21:19-26 and 2 Chronicles 33:21-25

Amon was 22 years old when he became king and he reigned for 2 years. He did Evil.

He worshipped the idols of his father, but, unlike his father, he refused to humble himself before God.

His officials conspired against him and assassinated him in his palace.

The people killed the killers and made Amon's son, Josiah, king.

Josiah – 2 Kings 22:1-23:30 and 2 Chronicles 34:1-35:27

Josiah was 8 years old when he became king and he reigned for 31 years. He did right.

Year 8 - He began to seek the God of his father David.

Year 12 - He began to purge Judah and Jerusalem of high places, Asherah poles, carved idols and cast images....

Year 18 was a very busy year for Josiah. Like Joash had done so many years before, Josiah instructed Hilkiah, the high priest, to collect money for the restoration of the Temple.

Hilkiah reported to Shaphan, the king's official, that he had found *The Book of the Law* in the Temple. Shaphan read the book and went to Josiah.... *"Your officials are preparing for the restoration of the Temple. Also, Hilkiah has given me a book."*

When Josiah heard the words, he tore his robes in distress and mourning and ordered Hilkiah and some officials to seek God, so the men went to Huldah, the Prophetess.

She said to them, *"This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: Tell the man who sent you to me 'I am going to bring disaster on this place and its people, according to everything written in the book the king of Judah has read. Because they have forsaken me and burned incense to other gods and provoked me to anger by all the idols their hands have made, my anger will burn against this place and will not be quenched.... However, because your heart was responsive and you humbled yourself before Yahweh.... and because you tore your robes and wept in my presence, I have heard you, declares Yahweh. Therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you will be buried in peace. Your eyes will not see all the disaster I am going to bring on this place.'"*

After this, Josiah called the people – from the least to the greatest – to the Temple. He read The Book of the Covenant to the people, then renewed the Covenant promising to follow Yahweh and keep his commands, regulations and decrees with all his heart and all his soul. The people did the same.

300 years before, as Jeroboam was worshiping at the altar to his calf idol, Yahweh had declared, *"O altar, altar! This is what Yahweh says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who now make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.'"* – 1 Kings 13:1-2

And now Josiah's great purge began:

- The articles made for Baal, Asherah and all the starry hosts were taken out of the Temple and burned in the Kidron Valley.
- All the priests, dedicated to idol worship, were killed.
- The quarters of the male shrine prostitutes – which were in the Temple of Yahweh – as well as the place the women did weaving for Asherah were torn down.
- He went through Judah destroying the high places and the shrines.
- He desecrated the worship place in the Hinnom Valley so that no one could sacrifice their children to Molech.
- He removed from the Temple entrance the horses that the kings of Judah had dedicated to the sun and burned their chariots.
- He pulled down the altars on the roof near the upper room of Ahaz, and the altars Manasseh had built in the two courts of the Temple – smashed them to pieces and threw the rubble into the Kidron Valley.
- He desecrated the high places that Solomon had built for Ashtoreth the vile goddess of the Sidonians, for Chemosh the vile god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the people of Ammon.
- He got rid of the mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols and all the other detestable things in Judah and Jerusalem.

Then he went to Bethel

- He demolished the high place set-up made by Jeroboam. He cut down the Asherah Pole, burned it and ground the whole mess to powder. Then he had bones burned on the altar to defile it....
- He continued his purge throughout Israel – slaughtering all the pagan priests on the altars and burning human bones on them.

Then he went back to Jerusalem.

Passover was celebrated. *"Not since the days of the judges who led Israel, nor throughout the days of the kings of Israel and the kings of Judah, had any such Passover been observed."*

13 years later, Neco, Pharaoh of Egypt was on his way to Carchemish on the Euphrates to help the King Assyria. Josiah marched out to meet him. Neco sent a message, "What quarrel is there between you and me, O king of Judah? It is not you I am attacking at this time, but the house with which I am at war. God has told me to hurry; so stop opposing God, who is with me, or he will destroy you." However, Josiah did not heed the warning. He disguised himself and went to fight Neco on the plain of Megiddo. Archers shot Josiah and he died. His body was taken back to Jerusalem and buried.

The people took Jehoahaz (also called Shallum), Josiah's 4th son, and anointed him king.

The remaining 4 kings of Judah are all declared "evil doers" beginning with Jehoahaz.

Jehoahaz – 2 Kings 23:31-34 and 2 Chronicles 36:1-4

Jehoahaz was 23 years old when he became king and he reigned for 3 months.

Neco:

- Captured Jehoahaz, put him in chains and carried him off to Egypt – where he died.
- Demanded tribute from Judah of 100 talents of silver and 1 talent of gold.
- Took Jehoahaz's brother, Eliakim, changed his name to Jehoiakim and made him king of Judah.

Jehoiakim – 2 Kings 23:35-24:7 and 2 Chronicles 36:5-8

Jehoiakim was 25 years old when he became king and reigned 11 years.

He paid the silver and gold Neco demanded by taxing the people.

However, a new superpower was emerging – the Babylonians. Jehoiakim had been a vassal king under Babylonian rule for 3 years. In the meantime, Nabopolassar, who had been a part of the coalition that destroyed Assyria, died and in 605 BC, his son, Nebuchadnezzar, became king of Babylon.

Egypt was no longer the power she once was and Babylon assumed control of all her territory – from the eastern border of Egypt to the Euphrates River (see 2 Kings 24:7) – a territory once controlled by Solomon (see 1 Kings 4:21).

Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon.

605 BC - Siege 1

Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem. In the fall of 605, the city was spared destruction, but many people (including Daniel and his friends – Daniel 1:1-3) were deported to Babylon.

Jehoiakim died during the siege and his son, Jehoiachin (also called Jeconiah) became king.

Jehoiachin – 2 Kings 24:8-17 and 2 Chronicles 36:9-10

Jehoiachin was 18 years old when he became king and reigned for 3 months and 10 days – he is considered to be the last legitimate king of Judah.

597 BC – Siege 2

Jehoiachin rebelled against Babylon and aligned himself with Egypt.

In the 8th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign, he and his army laid siege to Jerusalem – it was a short siege.

On March 16 of that year (according to the Nebuchadnezzar Chronicle) **the city surrendered.**

- Jehoiachin, his mother, his attendants, his nobles and officials all surrendered and were deported to Babylon. An additional 7,000 soldiers and 1,000 craftsmen and artisans were deported – 10,000 in total (including Ezekiel) – only the poorest people were left.
- All the treasures from the temple and from the royal palace were taken to Babylon.
- Nebuchadnezzar took Jehoiachin's uncle, Mattaniah, changed his name to Zedekiah and made him king.

Zedekiah – 2 Kings 24:18-25:22; 2 Chronicles 36:11-19 and Jeremiah 39:1-8

Zedekiah was 21 years old when he became king and reigned for 11 years – he was Judah's last king.

Zedekiah initially cooperated, but eventually rebelled – against the advice of Jeremiah.

588-586 BC - Siege 3 - lasted 24-30 months

In the 9th year of Zedekiah's reign, the Babylonians laid siege to Jerusalem. This 3rd siege is interesting because it is broken into 2 parts – interrupted by the futile intervention of Egypt.

Jeremiah 37:5-8 - Pharaoh's army had marched out of Egypt, and when the Babylonians who were besieging Jerusalem heard the report about them, they withdrew from Jerusalem. Then the word of Yahweh came to Jeremiah the prophet: "This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: Tell the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of me, 'Pharaoh's army, which has marched out to support you, will go back to its own land, to Egypt. Then the Babylonians will return and attack this city; they will capture it and burn it down.'

After the Babylonians resumed the siege, it took another 18-months before Jerusalem fell.

By the 4th month of year 11, the famine in the city was severe.

When the wall was finally breached, the entire army (including the king) left through a gate near the king's garden and fled toward the Arabah. The Babylonians caught them on the plains of Jericho. Zedekiah was captured and taken to Nebuchadnezzar, who pronounced sentence against him. Zedekiah's sons and officials, were killed in front of him and then his eyes were gouged out. He was bound and taken to Babylon.

According to the book of Jeremiah, Zedekiah consulted the prophet on several occasions and was always instructed to surrender. During the siege, Jeremiah declared that if Jerusalem did not surrender, Zedekiah would be captured and deported to Babylon, *"If you fight against the Babylonians, you will not succeed."* – Jeremiah 32:1-5

Ezekiel had made an almost identical prophecy (12:11-13), which differed in only 1 respect – *"he will not see Babylon."*

Both men had declared that Zedekiah would be taken to Babylon and would die there, but Zedekiah clung to the apparent contradiction of *"you will go to Babylon"* and *"he will not see Babylon"* as evidence that neither man was telling the truth. It did not occur to him that both men could be right.

After Zedekiah was taken to Babylon, Nebuzaradan commander of the imperial guard, returned to Jerusalem.

- The bronze pillars in the Temple were broken, then the bronze from the pillars, the movable stands, the bronze Sea, the bronze pots, shovels, wick trimmers, dishes and all the articles used in the temple service were taken to Babylon. The censers and sprinkling bowls – all that were made of pure gold or silver were also taken to Babylon.
- The entire city, including the Temple, was set on fire – *"every important building he burned down."*
- The chief priest, the next priest in command, 3 doorkeepers, an officer, 5 royal advisers, a secretary and 60 of his men were all taken to Nebuchadnezzar and executed.
- The walls of the city were destroyed. The remaining people in Jerusalem, along with those that remained in Judah, were deported to Babylon – only the poorest people were left to work the vineyards and fields.

"So Judah went into captivity, away from her land." – **she had outlasted Israel by just 136 years.**

2nd Chronicles 36:15-16 - *Yahweh, the God of their fathers, sent word to them through his messengers again and again, because he had pity on his people and on his dwelling place. But they mocked God's messengers, despised his words and scoffed at his prophets until the wrath of Yahweh was aroused against his people and there was no remedy.*

Epilogue – 2 Kings 25:23-30 and 2 Chronicles 36:20-23 (see also Isaiah 44:24-28; 45:13; Jeremiah 29:10-14)

- Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah governor, but not long after, Ishmael an army officer, assassinated Gedaliah and all those who were with him, then escaped to Egypt.
- In the 37th year of the exile, Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon, released Jehoiachin from prison. Jehoiachin was treated kindly, given a seat of honor and a regular allowance. He ate regularly at the king's table for the rest of his life.
- In fulfillment of the prophecies spoken through Isaiah and Jeremiah: In the first year of his reign, Cyrus king of Persia, made a proclamation and to put it in writing: *"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'Yahweh, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth and he has appointed me to build a temple for him at Jerusalem in Judah. Anyone of his people among you – may Yahweh his God be with him, and let him go up.'"*

At the core of all Israel's sin was the sin of presumption. Presumption led them to believe that regardless of what they did, God's love would not allow them to suffer the consequences of their choices. They demonstrated this belief over and over again, from the moment they stepped out of Egypt to the moment they were taken to Babylon.

Ellen White (DA 126.2) *Often when Satan has failed of exciting distrust, he succeeds in leading us to presumption. If he can cause us to place ourselves unnecessarily in the way of temptation, he knows that the victory is his. God will preserve all who walk in the path of obedience; but to depart from it is to venture on Satan's ground. There we are sure to fall...*

Until Next Time.....