

Life without God

"22 And the people of Israel persisted in all the evil ways of Jeroboam. They did not turn from these sins 23 until the Lord finally swept them away from his presence, just as all his prophets had warned. So Israel was exiled from their land to Assyria, where they remain to this day." 2 Kings 17:22-23 NLT



- To what degree would you say that you involve God in your life—at all, all through the day, only when I am in trouble?
- Do you wish you could be closer to God and be more devoted to him?

The book of 2 Kings is a story about the consequences of living without God, that is, living as if He does not exist or as if He does not have a place in one's life, home, business, decisions, plans, etc. It teaches us the important life lesson that we were created by God to be in relationship with Him and that a life that excludes God leads to problems, pain, and possible ruin. **Israel** lived independent of God & eventually fell to the **Assyrians** as their captives (2 Kings 17). **Judah** had periods when they were devoted to God and prospered, but eventually they also excluded God from their lives. They fell to the **Babylonians** and were made to be slaves (2 Kings 25). **We were not created to live independent of God. We experience the best of life when God is in the center of our lives. Do you live as if God does not exist OR is He a vital part of every dimension of your life? Is God in the center of your life?**

Central Lesson

We were not created to live independent of God. Life is at its best when God is in the **CENTER of our lives.**

Key Verses: 2 Kings 17:22-23 and 23:26-27. These verses **SUMMARIZE** the book of 2 Kings.

1. **Israel** (the Northern kingdom) refused to turn from their persistent sin even after God repeatedly warned them of His punishment through the prophets. God eventually removed His blessing & protection from Israel. God allowed the Assyrians to conquer Israel and take them into slavery (2 Kings 17:22-23).
2. Approximately 140 years later, God punished **Judah** (the Southern kingdom) because of their persistent wickedness. God eventually removed His blessing & protection from Judah and allowed the Babylonians to destroy Jerusalem and take Judah into slavery (2 Kings 23:26-27).

Key Chapters: 2 Kings 17 and 21 (Also chapter 24).

- **Chapter 17** indicates the reason for Israel's fall and captivity to Assyria (Read 17:7-18).
- **Chapter 21** (also 24) indicates the reason for Judah's Babylonian captivity (Read 21:1-16 and compare 24:1-4). Manasseh's wickedness was so depraved (cf. Ch. 21) that God could not forget it and judged Judah even generations later (cf. 24:3-4) even though Judah had experienced revival under king Josiah, the second king after Manasseh (cf. 22:1-2, 13-20; 23:21-25).

Scope: 2 Kings covers **250** years of Israel's history and **390** years of Judah's history.

Author: The author of 1 and 2 Kings is uncertain, but it is believed to be the prophet **Jeremiah**. Jewish tradition recorded in the Talmud indicated **Jeremiah** as the author. The style of the book is that of a prophet. It stresses the idolatry and immorality of Israel and the subsequent judgment of God. Also, it is similar in style to the book of Jeremiah (cf. 2 Kings 24:18-25:30 is the same as Jeremiah 52).

Major Lessons & Applications:

1. **Sin always has **PAINFUL** consequences.** It may start off feeling good and being fun, but eventually it leads to problems and pain. The New Testament tells us, *"7 Don't be misled—you cannot mock the justice of God. You will always harvest what you plant. 8 Those who live only to satisfy their own sinful nature will harvest decay and death from that sinful nature. But those who live to please the Spirit will harvest everlasting life from the Spirit."* Galatians 6:7-8 NLT. The history of both Israel & Judah demonstrates the heartache & damaging consequences of sin.

The Life Application Bible points out: "Although Israel had the witness and power of Elisha, the nation turned from God and was exiled to Assyria.... There has been no return from this captivity—it was permanent. Such is the end of all who shut God out of their lives." (p. 603).

Bible Teacher, Henrietta Mears, adds: "There is a great difference between the fall of Israel and Judah. Israel was scattered throughout the nations for an indefinite period, but God specified the length of Judah's captivity to seventy years. Judah was to return to Jerusalem which she did later. The Messiah was to come out of Judah and God was preparing the way for Him to come to Palestine and not to Babylon or Assyria." *What the Bible Is All About*, (p.140).

2. **We must not **FOLLOW** the sinful lifestyles of the world around us.** The New Testament warns us against being conformed to the pattern of this world (cf. Romans 12:2). Both Israel & Judah followed the sinful lifestyles & practices of the pagan nations around them (cf. 2 Kings 16:3; 17:8, 11, 15, 33; 21:2).
3. **God's patience & warnings have **LIMITS**.** God sent His prophets to warn Israel & Judah of their sin & denial of Him (2 Kings 17:13-14, 22-23; 21:10-12; 24:2-4). He repeatedly called them back to Himself. God was patient, but they harden their hearts and pushed God out of their lives. God's patience finally came to an end and He judged them for their sin. God repeatedly warns people today. But if they turn a deaf ear, God's patience comes to an end and He acts to punish. *Has God been speaking to you about your relationship to Him?*

Central Lesson

We were not created to live independent of God. Life is at its best when God is in the center of our lives.

► Accept Christ as your Savior. ► As a Christian, dedicate your life to Christ. ► Invite someone to next Sunday's study. ► Attend a small group. ► Read the Bible this week & journal meaningful verses. ► Pray for friends that need Jesus.