

## II KINGS

Here are some exciting scenes from II Kings:

- The prophet Elijah is carried off to heaven in a fiery chariot. His successor Elisha watches.
- A dead man is revived when his body touches the bones of the prophet Elisha.
- Queen Athaliah, the only queen to rule over Judah or Israel, achieves the throne when her son dies – and she kills off all remaining male heirs. One infant grandson, Joash, is hidden until he is old enough to be crowned king.
- King Tiglath-Pileser III of Assyria conquers Israel in 721 BC and the ten northern tribes are scattered throughout the Middle East, thereafter to be known as the lost tribes.
- Isaiah advises Hezekiah and destruction of Jerusalem by Assyria is avoided – for his reign.
- King Manasseh, the worst king of Judah, introduces the abominations of the surrounding nations, including sacrifice of his own son. II Chronicles 33 provides more details of his sins and also his repentance.
- The Passover is celebrated in Jerusalem for the first time when King Josiah leads reforms.
- King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon conquers Jerusalem in 587 BC. All but the poorest, who were left to farm, were marched to Babylon.

II Kings is very fast paced. In only 25 chapters, the author of Kings covers more than 250 years, 30 kings (including one queen) in two kingdoms, powerful prophets like Elisha and Isaiah, two exiles and the repeated sins of people and leaders.

So many characters, especially kings, appear on these pages that I have found a character list is helpful. The list of kings on the next page comes from the Crossways material by Harry Wendt.

However, the author of I and II Kings is most concerned that we get the overall plot and moral; God is patient, but will not tolerate worship of any other gods. Kings was written so that future believers will not make the same mistakes. If you lose track of characters but catch the pattern of what is approved and what is not, you have successfully read II Kings.

I and II Kings pick up the story of God's people after King David died. God had promised King David that a descendant of his would always sit on the throne. In I Kings, David is succeeded by his son, wise King Solomon, who brings prosperity and builds the temple in Jerusalem. But when his son, King Rehoboam, treats the northern tribes harshly, they break away under the leadership of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. That northern kingdom retained the name Israel. Baal worship is introduced. None of the northern kings are approved in II Kings. Even the best kings reject Jerusalem as the center for worship. The southern kingdom, now called Judah, retained Jerusalem as capital and the center for worship. I Kings ends as the prophet Elijah ends his career. II Kings begins with the passing of his mantle to Elisha.

Throughout I and II Kings, the author shows how God kept his promises while leaders and people were sometimes faithful and, far too often, unfaithful. Watch for summary statements about each king, such as:

- Walked in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat.
- Did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.
- Did what was right in the sight of the Lord.

When the accumulated sins grew too great, God fulfilled his warnings and sent his people in exile.

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Kings teaches us about God's patience and judgment.

As you read, fill in the answers:

God is so patient that .....

God is so angry that .....