

September 2022

What's the Point....of 2 Kings? Mark Garner

Soon after 2 Kings opens, Elijah is taken to heaven, with Elisha then taking up Elijah's ministry. Yet Israel continues its descent further into idolatry, and in due course falls to Assyria. Meanwhile, in Judah there is an up-and-down cycle, yet Judah is eventually conquered by Babylon. While each of these stories has a sad conclusion, they also show us God's patience as he constantly gives them chance after chance to turn to him.

Overview Of 2 Kings

Elisha first appears in 1 Kings 19 when he becomes Elijah's assistant, and now God will continue using him as a voice of truth (2 Kings 1-8). Elijah is granted the blessing of being taken into heaven, and God grants Elisha a 'double portion' of the spirit he had given to Elijah. Even in a gloomy era, we continue seeing our Heavenly Father's compassion and faithfulness.

When a strong army from Aram (Syria) attacks, Israel (or Samaria) is desperate. Elisha prays for his terrified servant, "Open his eyes, Lord, so that he may see" (6:17), and when God opens the servant's eyes, he is comforted as he realizes God's strength and closeness. In the same way, Jesus calls us to let him open our eyes and look at things from God's viewpoint, rather than the world's.

Next come two kings who have inconsistent reigns: Jehu of Israel and Joash of Judah (2 Kings 9-12). Elisha sends a prophet to Jehu, who anoints him as king and gives him some grim instructions; Jehu then has Jezebel, Ahab's family, and the servants of Baal put to death; while Jehu also still worships the golden calves. In Judah, Joash carries out the kinds of reforms we saw with Asa. Yet, as we'll read in Chronicles, he later turns to idols and abandons the Lord, leading to a sad end.

In Israel's last years (2 Kings 13-17), God fulfills a promise to Jehu that four generations of his descendants would take the throne; yet afterwards, king after king of Israel is struck down. This ends when Israel is conquered by the Assyrians, and this is followed by the resettlement of northern Israel (Samaria), as the Assyrians deport many of the Israelites while also bringing in captives from other nations.

In Judah, there is good news and bad news (2 Kings 18-25). While several Judean monarchs are idolatrous, from time-to-time faithful kings (especially Hezekiah and Josiah) institute reforms and call the Judeans to return to God. Each of them provides comfort and encouragement for faithful believers in God, yet none of these reforms take lasting root, leading finally to Judah and Jerusalem also falling, this time to Babylon. In 2 Chronicles, we'll take a closer look at these events.

God Opens Our Eyes

God's desire to "open our eyes" is often echoed in Kings, as well as throughout the Scriptures. In Kings, we often see how God wants each of us to know him personally; he is always near, waiting for us to seek him. As we read in Ephesians 1:17-23, when we let God open the "eyes of our hearts", amongst other spiritual blessings we may understand better the hope God gives us, and to understand more closely the message of Jesus, who reconciles us with God and brings us new life.

September 2022

What's the Point....of 2 Kings? Caleb Dillinger

2 Kings picks up right where 1 Kings ends: with Elijah and Elisha and the denouncing of sinful kings of Israel. This time, the King of Israel dies according to the word of Elijah, and then Elijah is taken up to heaven in a chariot of fire - making Elijah one of the rare people who does not die. 2 Kings will continue with the story of Elisha and his miraculous works, as well as tell the story of Israel's and Judah's kings up until Judah's fall into captivity by the nation of Babylon.

So, what's the point of reading yet another history book? If you love history, well, you'll love this book! If you always thought history was boring, then throwing in a history book with hundreds of harder to pronounce names is not going to be appealing. But the Bible is much more than just a history book or textbook, and 2 Kings is no stranger to intriguing stories.

If you feel like corrupt politicians always get away with it, this historical book of the Bible will remind you that God does not forget the righteous, nor does he allow the wicked to continually prosper. The wicked may prosper for a time. But they will come to their own end.

If you have suffered the loss of someone you love and respect, following Elisha after he loses his mentor Elijah will help you realize godly people are allowed to feel pain and sorrow just like everyone else. Elisha even reflects humanity when he gets annoyed at some rude teenagers and calls upon some bears to attack them after they won't stop insulting his baldness!

Or if you wonder if God only cares about his people (then the Israelites, Christians today), 2 Kings 5 reveals just how much God is willing to bless anyone who believes. A military commander of Israel's enemy, Syria, is told to seek out Elisha the prophet for healing. He doesn't even get to talk with Elisha before receiving a message for him to go wash 7 times in the Jordan River. The man is insulted and in disbelief that his leprosy could be healed by washing in a dirty river. But he listens and is healed, and rejoices and you know? He *STILL* doesn't really understand God or doctrine or Scripture. Yet, that didn't stop God from healing someone who believed. That story actually continues, with a sad twist, where Elisha's servant wants paid by this rich commander and lies about Elisha wanting it. Turns out, being a servant of God doesn't protect you from punishment! The servant gets cursed with leprosy. Oh the irony.

Karama is not real. But if you want to read a story where an evil queen gets her just desserts, look no further than 2 Kings 9, where Queen Jezebel gets tossed out a window, and when they went to bury her, she had been so eaten up by wild dogs they couldn't find anything left.

Or what if I told you there's a story about God telling someone they will die from their illness, but they cried out to the Lord in bitterness and asked for more life and God relented and gave them 10 more years! That would be King Hezekiah in 2 Kings 20.

So what's the point of reading this thousands of years old historical document? You will see God at work in the lives of humanity, the same then as it is now, for our God is faithful.