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2 KINGS 23:36-25:30

Today we come to the end of our study in the book of **2 Kings**. It has been a long history of the people of Israel and Judah...and it has covered a span of 334 years.

We've met good men like Elijah and Elisha. We've seen God reach down and give Judah good kings like Joash and Hezekiah and Josiah. We've also met evil kings in both Israel and Judah like Ahaz and Amon.

We've seen how God sent His prophets to the kings and how the kings and the priests and the people refused to listen to God's message to repent and return to Him.

And today we're going to see how God brought judgment on these people.

2 Kings 24:1-7...

Kingdoms come and kingdoms go. Kings come and kings go. We've seen that all through **2 Kings**. And we've seen that in our lifetime, as well. Remember Hitler? Remember Mussolini? Remember Stalin? Remember when Russia was such a power? Remember when Hussein ruled with an iron fist?

Why do earthly kingdoms come and go? There are several reasons for this.

One reason is that they are built upon **the most ungodly of men**.

Sometimes these men are called **Pharaoh**. Sometimes they are called **king**. Sometimes they are called **Caesar**. Sometimes they are called **"Führer."** Sometimes they are called **Czar**. Sometimes they are even called by **religious titles**. But, many are evil, power-hungry people...

And the second reason earthly kingdoms come and go is because they are built upon **ungodly ambition**. Just think of the kings who have fallen in our lifetime, and I believe you would agree.

Most want to rule the **world**. They want to be king of the world, not just one nation.

And another reason earthly kingdoms come and go is simply because they are **earthly kingdoms**. There's nothing in this world that is permanent.

But, no matter what the kings down through the ages have called themselves, and no matter how evil their ambition is, God tells us in His Word that it is He who puts kings in their place of power and it is He who removes them. God's Word tells us that God holds the hearts of kings in His hands and He turns them in the direction He wants them to go.

And that's hard for us to understand, isn't it? I mean, when we look at the evil kings of Judah and Israel, and when we look at all the evil leaders of the nations in history, we can't help but wonder why God has allowed them to be in power at all.

But, we need to understand that God has a purpose to accomplish and He sometimes uses evil men to do this. And I learned a long time ago that just because I don't understand something doesn't mean it isn't so and even if I don't believe something doesn't mean it isn't truth. And God doesn't have to check out with me the way He goes chooses to accomplish His purposes!

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Jehoiakim has become king of Judah and **verse 1** tells us that the king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzar came up and made Jehoiakim his servant. Well, after three years, Jehoiakim rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and **verse 2** tells us that God sent against him bands of **Chaldeans** and bands of **Syrians** and bands of **Moabites** and bands of **Ammonites**.

Do you see what God was doing? He was accomplishing His purpose. He was fulfilling His word as it had been spoken to all His prophets.

Well, Jehoiakim died and Jehoiachin became king. And **verses 8-17** tell us he reigned only three months, but during those three months some very important things happened to Judah.

This passage tells us that Jehoiachin was an evil king.

It also tells us that it was during **his** reign that Jerusalem came under seige by the servants of Nebuchadnezzar.

It also tells us that Nebuchadnezzar himself came to Jerusalem and took Jehoiachin captive.

But it also tells us that Nebuchadnezzar came in and carried out all the **treasures of the house of the Lord...and all the treasures of the king's house**.

...and all the **captains** and all the **mighty men of valor**, and all the **craftsmen** and all the **smiths**...the **goldsmiths** and the **silversmiths**...all the **artisans**.

Nebuchadnezzar left none but the poorest of the poor...those without **promise** or **skills** or **education**.

And he took the king and the king's wives and the king's officials and all the leading men of Judah and he led them into captivity. King Jehoiachin was a prisoner in Babylon...remember that because we're going to come back to that before we're done today.

This is virtually the end of Judah. There's one more king...Let's look at

Verses 18-20...

Mattaniah, who became Zedekiah, was a puppet king. He couldn't even have the name his mother and father had given him. He had to take on the name Nebuchadnezzar chose for him...

He rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar and at first glance we might say, "Good for him." But, this was not what God told him to do. If we had the time to go to the book of **2 Chronicles**, we would see that God told him **not** to do this. Why? **Because there comes a time when God's wrath will come in full force and there's not one thing that can be done about it!**

Listen, it wasn't the might and power of **Nebuchadnezzar** that came against Judah! It was the might and power and holiness of **God** that came against Judah. Look again at

Verse 20... "For through the anger of the LORD this came about in Jerusalem and Judah until **He cast them out from His presence...**"

You know, there's something really, really sad about that...

Think of all the **statutes** and **ordinances** and **commandments** God had given these people. Think of all the **worship** that had been offered to God...all the **sacrifices**, all the **blood of lambs** and **turtle doves** and **pigeons** that had been shed, all the **songs** that had been sung...all the **prayers** that had been offered, all the

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sermons given and the end of all this is

"And God cast them out of His presence."

And **chapter 25** tells us the details of this horrible event...

2 Kings 25:1-7...

Now, Nebuchadnezzar actually came against Jerusalem **three times**.

In **605 B.C.** he came the first time and in that attack, he carried out the **choicest of the young men**. Included in that number were Daniel and Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego.

In **597 B.C.** he carried away **all the young people and all the people who had any promise** at all. **Ezekiel the prophet** was carried away in that second attack.

Then, in **587 B.C.**, he came again for **the final conquest** of Judah.

After this, Judah would lay in the dust and never again have the glory and honor and grandeur it once had and won't ever have again until Jesus comes again!

Well, the first thing we see in this passage is that he encircles the city and really chokes the city. And as a result of this, the people of the city are starved. Desperate times call for desperate measures and it was then that folks tried to escape, among them the puppet king, Zedekiah.

And he was captured and he was brought before great king Nebuchadnezzar in Babylon. And the king ordered the execution of all of the sons of Zedekiah.

We don't know how many sons he had. But, we know that Zedekiah wasn't more than 32 years old...so his sons were little boys. And here is this fallen king, and he must stand there and watch all of his little boys be put to death!

And the Bible says the eyes of Zedekiah were put out. Just think...the last thing he saw was the horrible sight of his little boys being put to death! What a picture to have to carry with you to your grave!

Look at what else Nebuchadnezzar does...

He not only laid siege to and starved the city and captured those who attempted to escape the city, but he **burned the temple down, burned the king's house and he burned all the houses of Jerusalem.**

He also destroyed even **the walls of Jerusalem**. He also took all the **rest of the people into captivity.**

And **verses 13-17** tell us that every particle of wealth that was found in the city, especially in the temple area, was carried to Babylon. Every piece of gold, every piece of silver, every vessel, every pot, every shovel, every snuffer, every spoon, every firepan, every basin...everything was taken away.

Remember in the book of **Daniel** when Belshazzar was having a drunken dinner party and God's finger came and wrote on the wall and said, "You have been weighed in the balance and found wanting"? Remember that chapter tells us the folks at that drunken dinner party were drinking from the vessels taken from the Lord's house? **Well, this is when they were taken!**

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They also took the pillars and the capitals and the stands which Solomon had made or the temple... **They took it all!**

Nebuchadnezzar also killed all the chief priests and the other priests and the doorkeepers and the other officials of the temple. Now, **2 Chronicles 36** tells us that these were ungodly men who had perverted the house of God! This is not the wrath of Nebuchadnezzar falling...**this is the wrath of God falling on Judah!**

Ezekiel 8 tells us that the temple had been filled with images of every creeping thing and images of beasts and images of every detestable thing...**Ezekiel** tells us the people had turned the temple of God into a temple of idolatry. **This had become an abomination to God!** God's Word tells us God will not share His glory with another and **Ezekiel** tells us that the glory of Jehovah couldn't stay in that defiled temple and His glory left the temple that it had once filled!

That's why God was casting His people out of His presence!

Verses 27-30...

This looks good. I mean, Jeohoiachin was being treated well. But, he was actually a king on welfare. He was actually a man at the mercy of the enemy. **And I believe God is telling you and me today that this is what life is like without Him.**

The enemy has a way of making things look attractive. But, the bottom line is this...when we're in the grasp of the enemy, we're nothing but his servant.

Well, the glory of Israel was gone. And the glory of Judah was gone.

We've seen the kings of Israel and Judah. Some were good...most were bad. Many failed! But I believe that ultimately as we come to the end of **2 Kings** we would conclude that Israel needed a greater King than the ones they had...they needed and need today the greater Son of David...someone who will fulfill all the promises and prophecies of God!

And we know that will be done one day, when the King of kings and Lord of lords comes to rule and reign!

In the time we have left, I want us to think of some lessons we can take from the book of **2 Kings...** This has been a hard book, both to study and to teach. But, God has something good for us in it, or He wouldn't have given it to us.

We were eating lunch with the kids last Sunday and as always, we were discussing the lesson from our daughter-in-law's class last Sunday and she said something that was very well put... **She said that 2 Kings is like spinach...sometimes hard for us to eat, but it's good for us!**

And I believe it's good for us because it teaches us some profound lessons.

I believe it teaches us about...

1) The Holiness of God

God will not allow His people to sin and sin and sin without doing something about it. God's holiness demands that His people live before Him in purity and righteousness.

God had given the people of Israel every opportunity to know His expectations for their lives. He had given them the **law**. He had given them **priests**. He had given them **prophets**.

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He had called them to be His own special and peculiar people...not because of who **they** were, but because of who **He** is. His earnest desire was for them to be a light to the nations around them...and to teach the nations around them to put away their idols and follow after the Holy God of Israel.

But, we know they didn't do this. Instead, they looked around them and said, "Oh, all the other nations have a king...and we want one too. We want a king we can see and feel and touch...not a King who lives off up there in heaven somewhere."

And don't we do the same thing? God has made it very clear in His Word how He wants you and me to conduct ourselves as His children...but don't we so often look at the world around us and long to be just like it?

Well, I want to tell you...God's holiness hasn't changed and He will hold you and me accountable for failing to be the salt and light that He has called us to be.

Another thing this book has taught us is about

2) The Love of God...

Again, God didn't call the Jewish people to be His own people because they were bigger or better or smarter. He called them to be His people because He loved them. Now, I believe the Jewish people **are** smarter than most people...but they're smart because they have been made smart by God!

He gave them everything they needed!
They had it all! They had more than anyone else...

God's Word says, "I set you high above all nations which I have made... for praise, fame and honor...I have consecrated you for myself." Paraphrased from **Deuteronomy 26:19**

And He did this because He loved them!

And I want to tell you this...He so loved you and me that He gave His only Son that we should not perish but have everlasting life! **He loves us!** What an incredible truth that is!

And because He loved Israel He could not let them continue in sin. And because He loves us He won't let us continue in sin, as well.

Another thing this teaches us is about

3) The Longsuffering of God

God gave them hundreds of years to repent. He judged Israel in 721 B.C. And He gave Judah 200 more years than that to repent. Why? Because as we saw last week, God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked...but He longs for all His children to repent and return to Him, so that they may live!

And you may think God is looking the other way when America sins. But, He isn't! We may think God is looking the other way when we see His children sin today. But, He isn't! One day, we will all stand before the judgment seat of Christ, Revelation says, to be judged according to our deeds.

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Believers won't be judged as to whether they're lost or saved, but they will be judged as to what kind of deeds they have done after salvation. Paul tells us we are saved unto good works that God has ordained beforehand that we should walk in.

4) The Grace of God

We could use example after example of God's grace from this book, but I want to use the example of **King Nebuchadnezzar**.

Remember when we talked a few moments ago about how cruel and wicked Nebuchadnezzar was? Would you believe that you and I will see old Nebuchadnezzar when we get to heaven? Well, we will!

The book of **Daniel** tells us how God saved him. It tells us how Nebuchadnezzar had become so arrogant before God...how he was so filled with pride that he even demanded folks **worship** him...and one day God said, **"I've had enough!"**

And for seven years Nebuchadnezzar, this famous, arrogant, prideful and wicked king of Babylon was made to live like the beasts of the field and he ate grass and he slept with animals and the Bible said his mind was taken away from him and he was given the mind of an animal!

But, guess what...the Bible also said that at the end of that period Nebuchadnezzar raised his eyes toward heaven and his reason returned to him and he blessed the Most High and praised and honored Him who lives forever...

"For His dominion is an everlasting dominion, and His kingdom endures from generation to generation. And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing.

But He does according to His will in the host of the heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; and no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, "What has Thou done?"

And I want to tell you...if God can save an evil king like King Manasseh whom we saw last week, and if God can save an evil king like King Nebuchadnezzar whom we see this week...**then God's grace is indeed sufficient to save anybody!** Don't ever doubt that!

And don't ever give up praying for even the hardest unbeliever!

His grace is **amazing!** His grace is **sufficient!** His grace is **amazingly sufficient!**

Not only do we see the holiness of God, and the love of God, and the longsuffering of God and the grace of God, but we also see

5) The Wrath of God

God doesn't resort to wrath first...I mean, that's not the **first thing** God does...it's the **last thing**. God puts His holiness and His righteousness and His love and His patience and His grace into action long before He puts His wrath into action!

But, one day every man born of woman will experience this wrath apart from a saving knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. But, He is not willing for any man to perish. He is willing for **all men** to come to repentance. Praise God that not only do we see the wrath of God but we also see...

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6) The Mercy of God

2 Chronicles 36:23...

"Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the god of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to build Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may the LORD his God be with him, and let him go up!'"

The mercy of God...**what is mercy?** Well, we've said it before...

God's grace is God's giving to us what we **don't** deserve.

God's judgment is God's giving to us what we **do** deserve.

God's mercy is God's **not** giving to us what we do deserve.

And I want to tell you...God's people didn't deserve to go back to the land. God's people didn't deserve to have their walls built back and their temple built back. They deserved to be kept away from the land. But, aren't you glad that our God is in the business of withholding from us what we **do** deserve?

And He will move heaven and earth to do it! He used Cyrus, king of Persia.

We said earlier that kingdoms come and kingdoms go and kings come and kings go...and in 539 B.C., the Medo-Persian empire defeated the Babylonians and King Cyrus eventually came to power. And God used this pagan king to do His will and to remove His children from what they **did** deserve, which was captivity in a foreign land and to allow them to go back into the land of Promise.

Don't you know this made the people happy? I believe **Psalms 137** expresses the sadness the people felt when they were in captivity...

*"By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down and wept,
when we remembered Zion. Upon the willows in the
midst of it we hung our harps. For there our captors
demanded of us songs, and our tormentors mirth, saying,
'Sing us one of the songs of Zion.'*

*How can we sing the LORD's song in a foreign land?
If I forget you, O Jerusalem, may my right hand forget
her skill. May my tongue cleave to the roof of my
mouth, if I do not remember you, if I do not exalt
Jerusalem above my chief joy."*

But, just as they had not forgotten God, He certainly had not forgotten them! In fact, He said that He would not forget the offspring of Israel as long as the sun gives light by day and the moon and the stars give light by night...

*"Thus says the LORD, 'If the heavens above can be measured,
and the foundations of the earth searched out below, then I will
also cast off all the offspring of Israel for all that they have
done,' declares the LORD."*

Why? Didn't Israel deserve to be taken out of the land forever? Yes! But, God is in the business of mercy...and **God is in the business of keeping covenant!**

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God keeps His promises! He promised Abraham's seed that they would always have this land. He promised Moses they could live on that land as long as they obeyed.

After being taken from the land by Nebuchadnezzar, they were allowed back in the land by Cyrus and they stayed there until 70 A.D. when the Romans kicked them out of the land again.

And from 70 A.D. until May 14, 1948, they were **off** that land...for 2,000 years, they were out of that land. **But now they're back. To stay?** I hope so. Theologians differ on this, and only God knows.

But, we **know** this...one day after the Tribulation...after the time of Jacob's Trouble, all the Jews who are alive will be saved!

God will bring **all** Israel back into the land. And in that day, they will look upon Him whom they pierced and He will rule over them in righteousness and in judgment!

And one day, all that He has promised to you and me will come to pass.

Thank God for the mercy He so generously gives to each one of us. His mercies are indeed new every morning!

He has made a covenant with you and me...the New Covenant...sealed with the blood of His dear Son! And because of that blood bought covenant, His mercy will keep us from what we deserve, and His grace will give us what we don't deserve. We'll be kept out of hell and we'll go to live with Him in heaven! Praise His holy name!

Well, that's our spinach! We needed that for us to grow!