

The Half Hour That Changes the World

II Kings

Book 12

Basic Questions behind the book:

Is it ever too late to fix a broken relationship or to change destructive behaviour?

Summary of book:

II Kings picks up the story where it left off at the end of I Kings. In fact, in the Hebrew Bible (the forerunner of our Old Testament) there is only one book of Kings and not the two volumes we have. In 25 chapters we cover 250 years of history. We are told of the fall of Samaria, and thus the Northern Kingdom of Israel, which we know from external historical evidence to have happened in 722 BC. It fell to the Assyrian Empire. The book ends with the subsequent fall of Jerusalem and thus the southern kingdom of Judah, finally in 587 BC (although there were previous deportations before that from 607 BC onwards). Judah fell to the Babylonians, who replaced the Assyrians as the dominant world power of the day, only to be replaced themselves by the Medes and Persians later in the century. In some senses II Kings is like a sit-com wherein the scene changes from the north to the south regularly as we follow their unfolding drama. Israel had 19 kings, all them according to Kings, considered bad kings. Judah had 20 Kings, and only 8 of them are considered good. Hezekiah comes out quite well, but the best king of all is Josiah. He finds the book of the law in the temple, possibly the book of Deuteronomy, and is converted by it. This leads to a national revival and a lot of the mess they were in gets sorted out. However, it took them two centuries to get in the mess, and all the damage couldn't be completely fixed. Josiah's reforms might have bought them a few extra years before they succumbed to Babylon, but it was a case of too little, too late.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To demonstrate the fate that awaits all who refuse to make God their true leader.

Author: Unknown. However, it is worth noting that the same basic theology and approach to the history of Israel is present in Deuteronomy, then in Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings. This has led Biblical scholars to theorize that there was a group of compilers from the prophetic movement at the time, who wove together different available written and oral sources to create these books. Scholars speak about Deuteronomistic Historians.

Recipients: To the people of Israel & Judah, probably written around the time of the exile, seeking to answer the question: how did it come to this?

Setting: The once great nation of Israel turned into a land divided, not only physically, but also spiritually.

Other useful aspects:

What is God's judgement like? Some think it is something that happens to you at the end of life at THE JUDGEMENT. However, as we find elsewhere in Scripture, the judgement of God is also a present reality. II Kings makes the point over and over again: If you walk in obedience to the will of God, you will be on an upward spiral. If you disobey, do your own thing, God will let you. By doing so, he allows us to live with the consequences that are, more often than not, disastrous to us and those around us. It isn't worth it, is it?

"It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end he thrust them from his presence." (24:20)