

THE GOSPEL PROJECT

UNIT 15

DECLINE



2 KINGS; 2 CHRONICLES; PROPHETS



MEMORY VERSES

“Who is a God like you, forgiving iniquity
and passing over rebellion for the remnant of
his inheritance? He does not hold on to his anger
forever because he delights in faithful love.

He will again have compassion on us;
he will vanquish our iniquities.

• You will cast all our sins into
the depths of the sea.”

• –Micah 7:18-19



GOD'S PEOPLE WORSHIPED

CORE PASSAGE: 2 KINGS 18:1-6; 22:1-2; 23:1-3

CONTEXT

Throughout most of the history of the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah, God's people did not follow His ways. Often they chose to worship the idols of the nations around them. In His mercy, the Lord sent prophets to call His people to repentance, but God's message often fell on deaf ears. As a result, God sent the Assyrians to attack, conquer, and exile the Israelites in the Northern Kingdom. The Assyrians also threatened the Southern Kingdom of Judah, but the Lord rescued them through a much-needed God-fearing leader. In the declining years of Judah, the Lord gave them two faithful kings who worshiped the Lord alone.

KEY CONCEPT

Worship of God includes following Him and His Word.

As you examine 2 Kings 18:1-6; 22:1-2; 23:1-3:

- Recognize that both Hezekiah and Josiah relied on God's Word to lead the people of Judah.
- Consider how the Word of God convicts us of our sin and leads us to humble ourselves before the Lord.



TIMELINE

Assyria Besieges and Conquers Israel, Deporting the People (2 Kings 17)

Manasseh and Amon, Two Evil Kings of Judah,
Turn Back to Idols with Excessive Wickedness (2 Kings 21)

SESSION STUDY: Assyria Threatens Judah,
but Hezekiah Relies on the Lord (2 Kings 18–20)

SESSION STUDY: Josiah Repairs the Temple, Finds the Law,
and Restores the Worship of the Lord (2 Kings 22–23)

Judah's Remaining Kings Return to What Is Evil in the Lord's Sight (2 Kings 23–24)

Daily Readings

☐ **Day 1:** 2 Kings 18:1–20:21

☐ **Day 2:** Isaiah 36:1–39:8

☐ **Day 3:** 2 Chronicles 29:1–32:33

☐ **Day 4:** 2 Kings 21:1–23:30

☐ **Day 5:** 2 Chronicles 33:1–35:27

☐ **Day 6:** Psalm 19



Scan this QR code
to access this session's
Scripture passages.

PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 18:1-6

WORSHIPING GOD INCLUDES REMOVING OTHER THINGS WE ARE TEMPTED TO WORSHIP.

Highlight the descriptions of Hezekiah as a king of Judah, and underline the specific actions of Hezekiah recorded in the passage.

1 In the third year of Israel's King Hoshea son of Elah, Hezekiah son of Ahaz became king of Judah. **2** He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi daughter of Zechariah. **3** He did what was right in the LORD's sight just as his ancestor David had done. **4** He removed the high places, shattered the sacred pillars, and cut down the Asherah poles. He broke into pieces the bronze snake that Moses made, for until then the Israelites were burning incense to it. It was called Nehushtan. **5** Hezekiah relied on the LORD God of Israel; not one of the kings of Judah was like him, either before him or after him. **6** He remained faithful to the LORD and did not turn from following him but kept the commands the LORD had commanded Moses.

GOSPEL CONNECTION

God's Word teaches us all we need to know and obey the Lord. Scripture compels us to stay faithful to God because God has always been faithful to us through His covenant, especially the new covenant through Jesus Christ. Jesus's death and resurrection is our salvation.

So often Israel and Judah found themselves in a spiral of sin, disobedience, and idolatry, a spiral we ourselves likely are familiar with. We may be believers in Christ, but we are not yet perfect beings, so we still struggle with sin. Yet all throughout the Bible books detailing Israel's and Judah's kings, we see that God is the One upholding His promises. God is the One who keeps the covenant to bring the people back to Himself.

King Hezekiah was a gracious gift from God in the midst of some turbulent years. Many of the kings before him did well but tolerated a form of unsanctioned worship, but his father worshiped idols and led the people of Judah to do the same. Hezekiah, however, walked in remarkable obedience to the Lord, just as David had done. This involved destroying idols (v. 4). He did not simply provide lip-service and tell the people to stay away from idols. Rather, he removed them entirely, even destroying the bronze snake that Moses raised in the wilderness because the people worshiped it (Numbers 21:9).

What idols do you need to remove from your own life so that you may walk with the Lord more faithfully?

Hezekiah eliminated idols in Judah because he trusted God alone (2 Kings 18:5). His reliance on the Lord was so remarkable that no other king of Judah could compare to Hezekiah. Relying on the Lord was a key factor missing from the evil kings—they relied on alliances with pagan nations and their worship of false gods. Hezekiah's trust in God led God to bless Judah during Hezekiah's reign, particularly through Hezekiah's faith-filled obedience.

Because of his faith in the Lord, Hezekiah faithfully kept the Lord's commands (v. 6). He knew the law of the Lord, and he was blessed to receive the prophet Isaiah's counsel when the Assyrians—who had just exiled the Northern Kingdom of Israel—threatened the people of Judah (18:13–19:37). He understood that the people of Israel were exiled because they turned away from the Lord. Hezekiah's faithfulness as king blessed the people of Judah and delayed their own exile to Babylon by several decades.

Who has been a faithful, godly leader in your life, and how has their leadership blessed you and others?

PERSONAL PREPARATION

2 KINGS 22:1-2; 23:1-3

WORSHIPING GOD INCLUDES KNOWING HIS WORD THAT WE MAY FOLLOW IT.

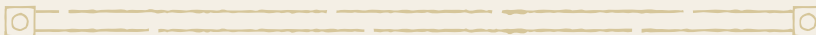
Circle each time the word “all” is used in the passage.

1 Josiah was eight years old when he became king, and he reigned thirty-one years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Jedidah the daughter of Adaiah; she was from Bozkath. **2** He did what was right in the LORD’s sight and walked in all the ways of his ancestor David; he did not turn to the right or the left.

1 So the king sent messengers, and they gathered all the elders of Judah and Jerusalem to him. **2** Then the king went to the LORD’s temple with all the men of Judah and all the inhabitants of Jerusalem, as well as the priests and the prophets—all the people from the youngest to the oldest. He read in their hearing all the words of the book of the covenant that had been found in the LORD’s temple. **3** Next, the king stood by the pillar and made a covenant in the LORD’s presence to follow the LORD and to keep his commands, his decrees, and his statutes with all his heart and with all his soul in order to carry out the words of this covenant that were written in this book; all the people agreed to the covenant.

THEOLOGY CONNECTION

AUTHORITY OF SCRIPTURE: Since the Bible is the inspired Word from God, God’s special revelation to humanity, the Bible is the ultimate standard of authority for the Christian. Because it is truthful in everything that it teaches, Scripture is humanity’s source for wisdom, instructing us on how to live life well to the glory of God. Submitting to the authority of Scripture means that we are to believe and obey God by believing and obeying His Word.



Hezekiah, a righteous king, was followed by his son, Manasseh, whose sins were abundant. Manasseh undid all the good of Hezekiah and even sacrificed his own son (21:1-16). The evil perpetrated during his rule was the tipping point that guaranteed God's judgment against Judah (23:26-27). Manasseh did exhibit repentance under God's punishment and made some significant reforms (2 Chronicles 33:10-16), but when his son, Amon, became king, all of those reforms were undone once again in favor of idol worship. Amon's assassination led to his son, Josiah, taking the throne at age 8 (2 Kings 21:19-24).

Josiah, like Hezekiah, was a faithful king of Judah. He repaired God's temple, and while doing so, the priest Hilkiah found "the book of the law." At the hearing of God's Word, Josiah tore his clothes in repentance (22:3-11). He could have walked in the wicked ways of his father and grandfather, disobeying God's Word or ignoring it altogether, but he took God's Word seriously.

What is the relationship between the Word of God and our obedience to and worship of the Lord?

When Josiah heard the words of the law, he understood immediately the judgment that rightly would come upon Judah because they had broken covenant with God (vv. 12-13). Moses had warned the Israelites of the curses that would befall the people of Israel when they turned away from the Lord (see Deuteronomy 27-29).

Even though Josiah was walking righteously and not directly responsible for the sins of his ancestors, he still accepted the wrath of God as an appropriate punishment for the sins of his people. But once more, God showed His grace in response to a king's humility (2 Kings 22:14-20). So Josiah took the Word of God and shared it with all the people of Judah, resulting in a renewed covenant by the whole nation to turn from their sin and follow the Lord alone—a pattern we see perfected in the rule of the Messiah-King, Jesus, with His church.

What areas of your life require a renewed commitment to the covenant God has created with us in Jesus?



WORSHIP: INSIDE AND OUT

Reflect on the worship displayed by Hezekiah and Josiah in the passages below.

INTERNAL WORSHIP

EXTERNAL WORSHIP

HEZEKIAH
(2 KINGS 18:1-6)

JOSIAH
(2 KINGS 22:1-2; 23:1-3)

Based on the examples of Hezekiah and Josiah, what should our internal and external worship of the Lord look like?

Key Concept: Worship of God includes following Him and His Word.



HEAD

How can the knowledge and study of God's Word inform your worship?

PRAYING SCRIPTURE

Pray through Psalm 19. In verses 1-6, consider how creation itself declares who God is. With verses 7-11, pray through the ways God's Word has blessed you. Finally, use verses 12-14 to repent of sin and commit yourself to obedience to the Lord.



HEART

Of what sins do you need to repent, and how will you combat the idolatry present in your life and seek the Lord first?

PRAYER REQUESTS AND PRAISES



HANDS

How can you model the beautiful gift of repentance and obedience to people in your life?

