

## THE LIFE AND TIMES OF THE KINGS

Our daily Bible reading text of 2 Chronicles 13-27 is filled with fascinating stories of the life and times of some of the kings of Judah and Israel (also shared with added detail in 1 Kings 15-2 Kings 15). Often these accounts of their reigns include palace intrigue, political maneuvering, wars, murder and incredible violence, as well as disregard for God and his prophets. Occasionally—in Judah—a king did embrace God leading to a time of peace and prosperity for his nation. Overall the stories are not very flattering. All serve as living illustrations as to why God never wanted a king for Israel from the start (see 1 Samuel 8). Kings act like kings even when God is supposed to be their king. Power corrupts. It is all clearly present in our texts. Here are the kings remembered in our reading:

- **Abijah**—King of Judah. He waged war against the first king of divided Israel, Jeroboam, who caused the split of the nations. He tried to expose the fraudulent foundation upon which Jeroboam had used to separate God’s people. He was successful in defeating Jeroboam and regaining some territory for Judah, but the two-nation division continued.
- **Asa**—King of Judah. He “did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.” He was one of the few kings (even among those who honored God) who actually completely removed the centers of idol worship throughout Judah (another who did this was Josiah). Incredibly most kings—even the more righteous ones—allowed these worship centers to remain (Asherah “poles” and other alters often located on elevated land and in forested areas—called “high places” and “groves” in translations). He led Judah in a great revival--even removing his own grandmother as queen mother due to her making a “repulsive Asherah pole.” For thirty years he led Judah in a reign of peace as his “heart was fully committed to the Lord all of his life.” Only an incident toward the end of his reign in which he relied on a political alliance instead of God and the subsequent encounter with one of God’s prophets marred his tenure.
- **Jehoshaphat**—King of Judah. He was another king who followed in the ways of his “father” David to honor God during his eventful reign. As a result God blessed him and Judah. He was a contemporary of Ahab, the evil king of Israel (much more about him in the Kings historical narrative) and their families were connected through marriage. This led to an interesting encounter with the prophet Micaiah whose prophecy Ahab did not favor. Micaiah correctly foretold of Ahab’s death, but Jehoshaphat’s alliance with Ahab left a stain on his reputation. Nevertheless his reign led to “the fear of God” coming “upon all the kingdoms of the countries when they heard about how the Lord had fought against the enemies of Israel.”
- **Jehoram**—king of Judah. His first act of king was to kill his brothers and others in order to rid himself of any competition for the throne. That alone speaks to where his allegiance lay—definitely not with God. Sections of Judah rebelled as a result and the prophet Elijah responded to Jehoram’s violence. God brought an end to Jehoram’s reign after eight years by afflicting him with an incurable disease.
- **Ahaziah**—king of Judah. He was Jehoram’s youngest son. He reigned only one year. He followed the Ahab pattern of leadership and it ended badly for him. He was caught up in Israel’s King Jehu’s purge of all things Ahab and killed.

- **Athaliah**—queen of Judah. She was Ahaziah’s mother who seized power after her son was killed by murdering “the whole royal family of the house of Judah.” Her story is interconnected with the next king of Judah.
- **Joash**—king of Judah. As Athaliah raged, her grandson, Joash was whisked away into hiding by his aunt, Jehosheba. Her husband just happened to be a priest, Jehoiada. He became a mentor for Joash and devised a plot to kill Athaliah in order to remove her from power and put Joash on the throne. After the success of this plan, they rid Judah of the temple and prophets of Baal. Joash was only seven years old when he began his reign and it went well until his mentor, Jehoiada died. The temple was repaired and other reforms instituted. But after Jehoiada’s death Joash turned away from God, turned to idolatry and had Jehoiada’s priest son stoned to death. As a result God allowed the relatively small Aramean army to overthrow and plunder Judah and Jerusalem. Joash laying wounded in his bed from the battle was killed by his own officials.
- **Amaziah**—king of Judah. He is described as doing “what was right in the eyes of the Lord, but not wholeheartedly.” Consequently he had a mixed reign. Soon after he became king he murdered all who had conspired to kill his father, Joash. He did listen to God’s prophets, but then later bowed to idols and ignored the word from the Lord. This action led to his downfall as God delivered him into the hands of Israel’s King Jehoash. He lived in exile after that until it all caught up with him—being killed in Lachish by men sent from Jerusalem for that purpose.
- **Uzziah**—king of Judah (also known as Azariah). He was a good king for most of his life. He was successful in leading Judah against her enemies in battle and in fortifying remote parts of his country against enemy envisions. “But after Uzziah became powerful, his pride led to his downfall.” Specifically, he took it upon himself to do temple sacraments only priests were authorized to do. As a result he was struck with leprosy—living the rest of his life in isolation as his son governed.
- **Jotham**—king of Judah and Uzziah’s son. He learned lessons from his father. He served well, honoring God. Never did he enter the temple in an attempt to do the priest’s job. However like other kings before him—he did not remove the “high places.” Even so he “grew powerful because he walked steadfastly before the Lord his God” in his sixteen year reign.

### Takeaways

Lessons for our life and times:

- Power and pride can lead to downfall and destruction (Proverbs 16:18)
- Lingering sin can have a devastating corruptive influence (1 Corinthians 15:33). We need to remove our own “high places.”
- God will hold us accountable for our actions (2 Corinthians 5:10). We reap what we sow.
- It is best to listen to and to heed the word of the Lord (Luke 11:28)
- No one is bigger than God (Jeremiah 10:6)
- God will always bless faithfulness (Psalm 1:1-6)