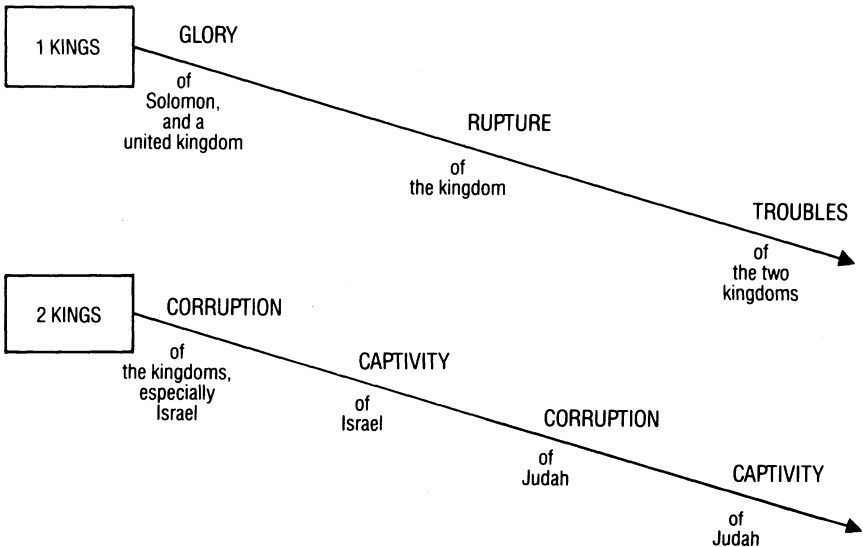

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Lesson 1

General Introduction and Survey

The book of 2 Kings continues the narrative of the history of Israel and Judah where 1 Kings left it.¹ The narratives of both books proceed in a downward trend.



For maximum profit from your study of 2 Kings, you should first study 1 Kings. Since most of the introductory and background

1. In the original Hebrew Bible, 1 and 2 Kings were one book. When the Septuagint translators translated this one book into Greek, they made two books out of it. The reason was that of convenience of handling, since the Greek translation requires about one-third more space than the Hebrew text. This twofold division first appeared in modern Hebrew Bibles with the printed edition of Daniel Bomberg in 1517.

2 KINGS KINGDOMS TAKEN CAPTIVE

	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9-10	11		
LESSON NUMBERS KEY WORDS AND PHRASES: "men of God" "Word of the Lord" "in the sight of the Lord" "howbeit", "but" KEY VERSES: 17:18-19 23:27	THE CLOSING YEARS OF JUDAH										
	MAINLY ABOUT ELISHA			MAINLY ABOUT THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH							
	1 (1 Kings)—ELIAH 2 3 4:1 5 6-8 7 8:16 9:11 10 11 12 13:10 14 15:1 15:32 17 ISRAEL CAPTIVE 18:1 21:1 22:1 23:31 JUDAH CAPTIVE 25:27 EPILOGUE										
	DIVIDED KINGDOM					SURVIVING KINGDOM					
KINGS OF ISRAEL	AHAZIAH AND JORAM					JEHU TO HOSHEA					
KINGS OF JUDAH	JEHORAM TO AHAZ					HEZEKIAH TO ZEDEKIAH					
B.C.	ABOUT 130 YEARS					ABOUT 135 YEARS					
	CAPTIVITY TO ASSYRIA					CAPTIVITY TO BABYLON					

material is common to both books, a discussion of these subjects is not given here. Refer to the study manual on 1 Kings for this.

Following the same procedure of the manual of 1 Kings and 1 Chronicles, the present study stays mainly with the narrative of 2 Kings, with supplementary reference to the parallel and unique passages of 2 Chronicles as they have important bearing on the text being studied. (As pointed out in the manual on 1 Kings, the books of 1 and 2 Chronicles record almost exclusively that which has reference to the Davidic line and the southern kingdom of Judah.)

Survey of 2 Kings

The starting place for your study of 2 Kings is a sweeping view of the book as a whole. To accomplish this, scan the entire book in one sitting, if possible, not tarrying over any details. Record a title for each chapter on the accompanying chart. (Note: In some instances one title is to be given for a group of chapters or for part of a chapter.)

What are your first impressions after making this survey? Did you catch any important key words or phrases? If not, be on the lookout for these as you proceed from lesson to lesson, when such words and phrases will stand out more clearly. The identification of key words and phrases in a book is often the best clue to the theme of the book.

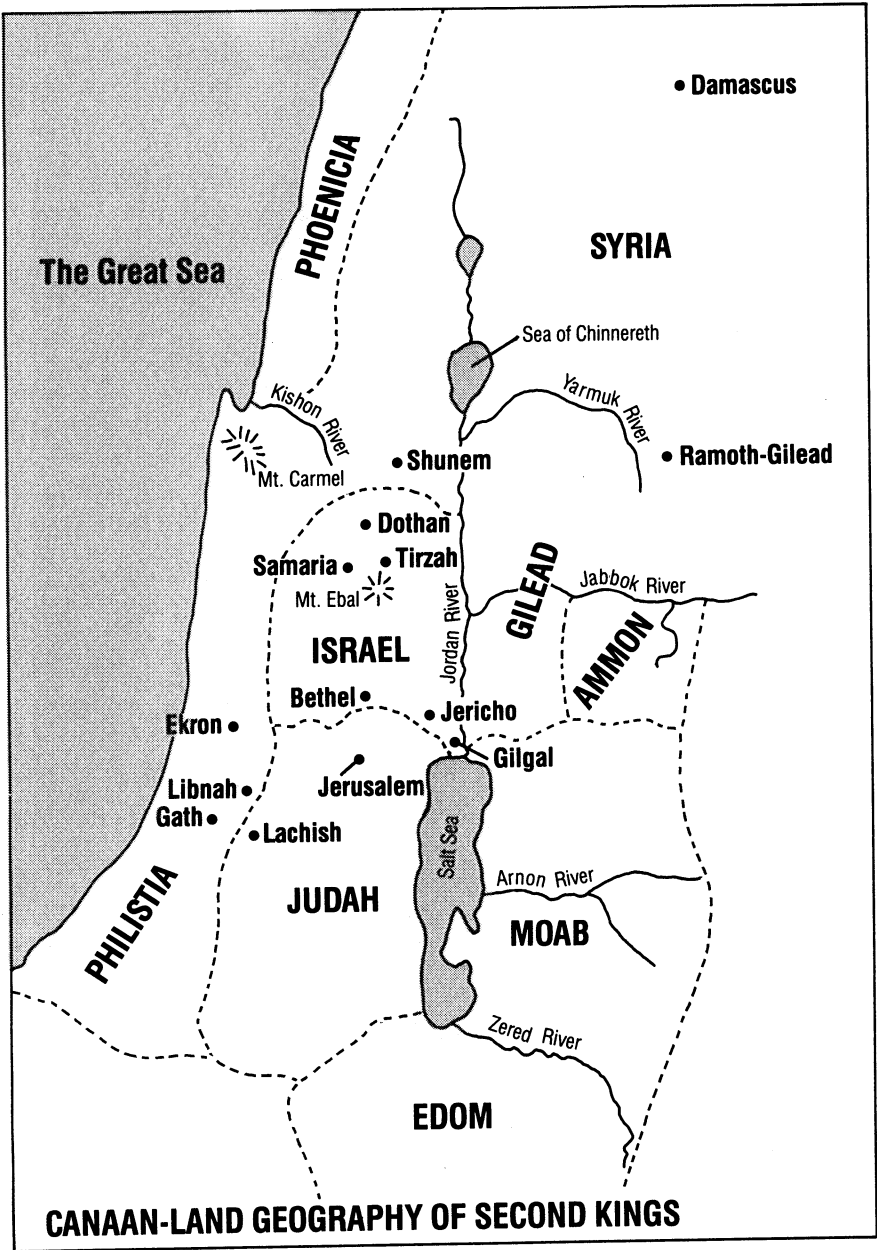
Did you notice any turning point in the book? Any climax? Compare the beginning and ending of the book.

Now study the accompanying chart more carefully, noting the following observations:

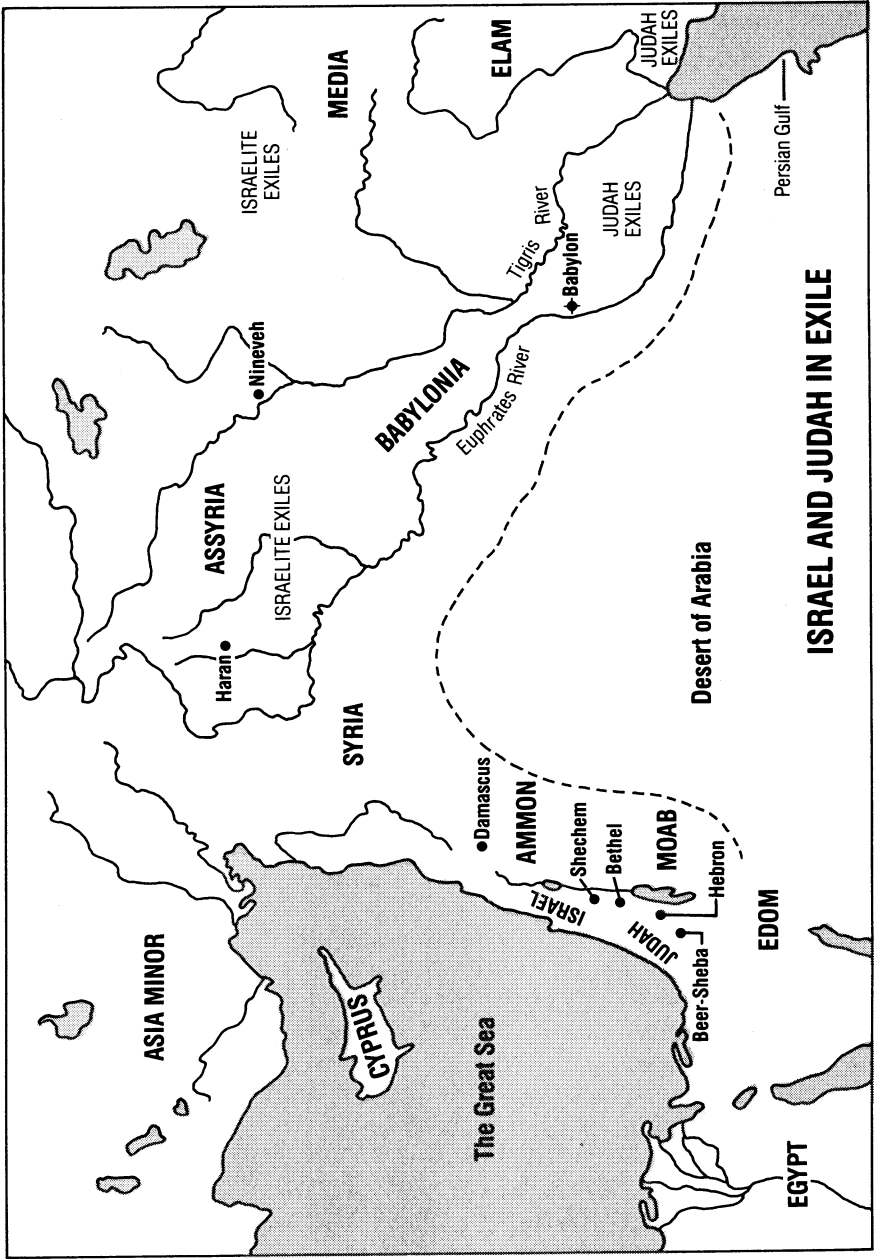
1. The two main divisions of the book are marked by a heavy line between chapters 17 and 18, the first division being *The Divided Kingdom*, chapters 1-17, and the second division being *The Surviving Kingdom*, chapters 18-25.

We shall find in our study of 2 Kings that up to the end of chapter 17 the two kingdoms, Israel and Judah, are both under consideration as they have been since 1 Kings 12. (See chart on p. 112)

In 2 Kings 17, however, the kingdom of Israel ceased to exist. Because of idolatry the people were taken out of their land into captivity by the Assyrians. And from 2 Kings 18 to the end of the book we have the record of the closing years of the kingdom of Judah.



CANAAN-LAND GEOGRAPHY OF SECOND KINGS



ISRAEL AND JUDAH IN EXILE

2. The book of 2 Kings covers a period of about 265 years. The first division, chapters 1-17, covers about 130 years, whereas the second division, chapters 18-25, covers about 135 years.

3. Observe which chapters record the two critical events of the judgments of Israel and Judah.

4. Note which chapters are devoted to the ministry of Elisha. Observe also that the last of Elijah's ministry is the subject of the opening chapter of the book.

5. The large proportion of space devoted to the ministries of Elijah and Elisha suggests the importance of these men during this era of God's people. The time period covered by 2 Kings has been called the great prophet period. Refer to the *Chart of Kings and Prophets* (pp. 110-11) and identify the various prophets who served between 850 B.C. and 586 B.C.

6. Note from the survey chart the arrangement of 2 Kings's record of the reign of the kings of Israel and Judah.

7. Some key verses and words suggested for this book are shown on the chart. Be on the lookout for others as you proceed with your personal study.

8. The title given to 2 Kings is Kingdoms Taken Captive. The title given to 1 Kings was A Kingdom Divided Against Itself.

9. Since 2 Kings completes the narrative begun in 1 Kings, it will be of interest to compare the beginning of 1 Kings with the end of 2 Kings. Refer to the chart of 1 Kings shown in the study manual for that book, and notice especially such contrasts as:

(a) 1 Kings begins with a kingdom established in glory; 2 Kings ends with a kingdom dissolved in shame.

(b) 1 Kings begins with bright prospects for obedience; 2 Kings ends with tragic judgments for disobedience.

(c) 1 Kings begins with the dazzling splendor of the Temple; 2 Kings ends with the smoke and flames of the Temple in ruins.

10. In your study thus far you have seen some of the prominent points of the book of 2 Kings. Write out a list of some important spiritual lessons that are taught by these.

Prepare to Analyze

Your survey study has been of a cursory nature, since you were not looking primarily for a host of details. Now as you begin to analyze each of the smaller parts of the book, your study procedure will be more exact and comprehensive. But, as you analyze, be sure to keep in the back of your mind the broad movements of 2 Kings. This will help you to analyze more accurately and fully, and it will also prevent your becoming bogged down in the many details of the book.

Remember also the ultimate purpose in studying much of Old Testament history. It is to find the timeless universal *principle* behind the local temporal *detail* of that day so that you may apply the spiritual truths to your own life. Recall 1 Corinthians 10:11, which can be applied to such Bible history: “All these things happened to them as examples, as object lessons to us, to warn us against doing the same things; they were written down so that we could read about them and learn from them in these last days as the world nears its end” (*The Living Bible [TLB]*).

What tools are you using for study? You should have at least the following:

1. A good Bible (large print; wide margins; paper conducive to marking)
2. Pens and pencils (various colors)
3. Paper for recording your observations

You will also value the outside help of a good Bible dictionary and a commentary. (*The New Unger's Bible Dictionary* and *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* are recommended.) Use the commentary for two kinds of help: (1) for explanation of difficult portions of the text during the course of your study; and (2) as a supplement to your own observations after you have completed your independent study.

As you study 2 Kings, put a determined will behind the eye. The Bible—every part of it—is the Book of God. Desire to know what it says and to obey its commands.