

Ash Wednesday - King Jeroboam

Jeroboam, acting under God's direction, led a rebellion against the evil King Rehoboam. The outcome was that Israel was divided. Jeroboam became the first king over the larger portion, still called Israel, and Rehoboam remained king over the smaller portion, named Judah, after Rehoboam's tribe. Jeroboam will forever be remembered as the king "who caused Israel to sin." He became the prototype of an evil king; 15 later kings were described as being evil "like Jeroboam". Although God had promised Jeroboam a great and lasting dynasty, Jeroboam rejected God's promise, and in that way nullified it. In order to achieve political security, Jeroboam abolished national worship of the LORD, and replaced it with worship of golden calf idols. These idols, and the sins practiced in connection with their cult, brought God's wrath, ending Jeroboam's dynasty after only two generations. Jeroboam's legacy eventually caused the downfall of the kingdom of Israel as well.

Where to read Jeroboam's story: 1 Kings 11:25 - 14:20;

Cause for thought: How terrible it must be for your legacy to be one that forever has the word evil attached to it. What word do you imagine will be attached to the Legacy you leave behind?

Prayer

- Pray that good will always overcome evil in the world.
- Pray about a particular situation known to you where this needs to happen.
- Pray for that your legacy will be a worthy one

Quote

"Carve your name on hearts, not tombstones. A legacy is etched into the minds of others and the stories they share about you." ~ Shannon L. Alder

Thursday 15th February - King Nadab

Very little is known about the second king of the separate kingdom of Israel. He was the son of Jeroboam, the first king. He reigned about two years, carrying on the evil work begun by his father. He was murdered during a war with the Philistines by a man named Baasha, who then proclaimed himself king. Baasha also murdered all Nadab's relatives, who were naturally rivals for the throne, thereby fulfilling a prophecy against Jeroboam.

Where to read Nadab's story: 1 Kings 15:25-31

Cause for thought: Nature or nurture? Some learned people think that it is possible that evil is passed from one generation to another. Do you think this is true or is it more likely learned by following the example set by the parent?

Prayer:

- Pray for those children whose parents set them a bad example.
- Pray for parents who have difficulty discerning right from wrong.
- Pray for children who are victims of emotional abuse

Quote

“Children have never been very good at listening to their elders, but they have never failed to imitate them.”

— James Baldwin

Friday 30th March—King Zedekiah

King Zedekiah, the 20th and last sovereign of the separate kingdom of Judah, was placed on the throne by the conquering King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon. To show his command over Judah's king, Nebuchadnezzar changed the new king's name from Mattaniah to Zedekiah. The prophet Jeremiah, speaking on behalf of the LORD, repeatedly rebuked Zedekiah's ongoing preparations for rebellion and breaking free from Babylonian power, reminding him that the LORD had brought the Babylonian invasion because of the sins of the Israelites. In his ninth year as king, Zedekiah severed relations with Babylon. King Nebuchadnezzar was furious. He personally led his army in a siege against Jerusalem. The siege lasted three summers. At its end, when the food supply was exhausted, the cowardly Zedekiah gathered his army, opened the city gate, and made a night-time escape. Babylon's army made chase, and soon captured Zedekiah. Tried for treason, his sentence was cruel. Zedekiah's sons and best friends were killed, right before his eyes — and then his eyes were gouged out. He was taken to Babylon to die of old age in prison, thereby unwillingly fulfilling the prophecy that he would go to Babylon and die there, but never see it.

The kingdom of Judah was gone, never to return. The people, however, did return — that is, their descendants returned — 70 years later, as the prophet Jeremiah had said would happen.

Where to read Zedekiah's story: 2 Kings 24:17 - 25:21; 2 Chronicles 36:11-20

Cause for thought: The end of the southern kingdom never to return. We read this on Good Friday when our Lord was Crucified and buried and yet he did return. How do you respond to these to world changing events?

Prayer:

- Pray for a holy and blessed Easter
- Pray that the truth of Easter will touch the hearts people everywhere
- Pray for world peace

Quote

“Peace begins with a smile..”

— Mother Teresa

Thursday 29th March—King Jehoiachin

At 18 years of age, Jehoiachin was enthroned by Judah's conqueror du jour, Babylon. His father King Jehoiakim was judged rebellious, and Babylon's King Nebuchadnezzar probably hoped Jehoiachin would be more submissive.

He wasn't. In response, Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, and easily reconquered it. He deported everyone and everything of value — all the treasures from the palace and the temple, all the nobility and educated people, and the military. Only the poorest peasants were left. Nebuchadnezzar placed Jehoiachin's uncle, Zedekiah, as king over those few remaining, thereby fulfilling the prophecy¹ that no descendent of Jehoiachin would be king of Judah.

Jehoiachin was taken to Babylon and put in prison, where he spent 37 years. After that time, Babylon's new king released Jehoiachin from prison and gave him a job in government service until his death.

Where to read Jehoiachin's story: 2 Kings 24:8-17, 25:27-30; 2 Chronicles 36:9-10

Cause for thought: The final throws of the southern kingdom are instigated by Babylon's sacking of Jerusalem and the carrying off into exile of the population. Do you think this action was deserved or should God have stepped in?

Prayer

- Pray for those situation where God seems to be silent
- Pray for those countries being governed by dictators
- Pray for all people living in exile

Quote

"You're not to be so blind with patriotism that you can't face reality. Wrong is wrong, no matter who does it or says it."

— Malcolm X,

Friday 16th February King Baasha

Little is known about Baasha's background. He was of the tribe of Issachar, of humble origin, and was probably a military commander, since he was with King Nadab in war. While at war, Baasha murdered Nadab and proclaimed himself king. He also murdered all Nadab's relatives, whom he considered rivals to the throne, thereby fulfilling a prophecy against King Jeroboam, but also bringing upon himself a prophecy that his own family would be similarly exterminated. Baasha's 23-year reign was marked by ongoing war with neighboring Judah, and by a continuation of Jeroboam's golden calf cult.

Where to read Baasha's story: 1 Kings 15:16 - 16:13;

Cause for thought: Baasha's ambition drove him to murder his king and his fear drove him to murder all Nadab's relatives. When is ambition a good thing and when is it bad?

Prayer:

- Pray for those whose ambition drive them to commit crimes
- Pray for all victims of crime
- Pray for those who act out of fear

Quote

Great ambition is the passion of a great character. Those endowed with it may perform very good or very bad acts. All depends on the principles which direct them.

Napolean

Saturday 17th February - King Elah

The Bible provides only the briefest sketch of Elah's life and career. He was the son and successor of King Baasha and the fourth king of the separate kingdom of Israel. His reign is characterized as evil. After only about a year in office, he was murdered by the captain of his army, Zimri, who succeeded him as king. Zimri murdered Elah's entire family, thereby fulfilling a prophecy against Baasha.

Where to read Elah's story: 1 Kings 16:6-14

Cause for thought: The sins of the fathers are often visited on their children, as we work our way through the kings of Israel and Judah we will see this to be true time after time. Can you give an example of this from your own experience?

Prayer:

- Pray for children who suffer as a result of a bad decision made by their parents.
- Pray for the relatives of murder victims
- Pray for those who commit murder

Quote

"The most loving parents and relatives commit murder with smiles on their faces. They force us to destroy the person we really are: a subtle kind of murder."

— **Jim Morrison**

Wednesday 28th March—King

King Jehoiakim, 18th sovereign of the separate kingdom of Judah, enjoys the dubious distinction of being the first sovereign of Israelites placed on the throne by a foreign power. When Judah was conquered and King Josiah killed in battle by Egypt, Josiah's son, Jehoiakim's younger brother Jehoahaz, took Josiah's office as king. However, the Egyptian king found Jehoahaz rebellious, refusing to pay the tribute he imposed. So he dethroned him, placing Jehoiakim in power, and giving him that name in place of his original name, Eliakim, as a symbol of Egypt's power over the king of Judah. Jehoiakim paid the tribute, initiating a new tax to fund it. Jehoiakim was selfish and fully committed to his sin. In spite of the heavy tax burden, Jehoiakim added to the people's burden by building lavish palaces with forced labor. He avidly practiced idol worship and the sins associated with it, including human sacrifice. God sent the prophets Urijah and Jeremiah to expose Jehoiakim's sins and call him to stop. Jehoiakim went to great lengths to kill Urijah. Jeremiah he persecuted. Jehoiakim's 18-year-old son Jehoiachin became king in his place. But in light of Jehoiakim's rebellion, God had prophesied that his descendents would not reign. Accordingly, Jehoiachin ruled only momentarily, and his royal line came to an end.

Where to read Jehoiakim's story: 2 Kings 23:36 - 24:6; 2 Chronicles 36:5-8

Cause for thought: Urijah and Jeremiah bravely prophesied against King Jehoiakim and were persecuted for it. What governments or structures do you feel called to prophesy against?

Prayer:

- Pray for those who dare to speak out against corrupt governments
- Pray for those countries torn by civil unrest
- Pray for the work of international aid organizations such as Christian Aid

Quote

"The first duty of a man is to think for himself"

— *José Martí*

Tuesday 27th March—King Jehoahaz

Little is known of Jehoahaz. The son of King Josiah, Jehoahaz came to power when his father was killed in an invasion by Egypt. Jehoahaz was enthroned in preference to his older brother, Jehoiakim, possibly because the nobility considered Jehoiakim too submissive — the Jews of this day were fiercely independent, and resented Egypt's interference. Upon their victory, Egypt imposed a tribute on Judah, which Jehoahaz apparently refused to pay. After three months, the Egyptian king dethroned Jehoahaz and took him captive to Egypt, placing Jehoiakim on the throne.

Where to read Jehoahaz's story: 2 Kings 23:31-35; 2 Chronicles 36:1-4

Cause for thought: Jehoahaz became to all intents and purposes a political prisoner and was replaced by his brother. Who are the political prisoners in this day and age?

Prayer:

- Pray for all political prisoners across the world
- Pray for the work of Amnesty International
- Pray for those imprisoned for their faith

Quote

"There comes a time when one must take a position that is neither safe, nor politic, nor popular, but he must take it because

conscience tells him it is right."

— Martin Luther King Jr.

Monday 19th February King Zimri

Nothing is known of Zimri's origin. He served in King Elah's mechanized military, being captain over half of the army's chariots. When Elah had been in office for about a year, Zimri murdered him to make himself king. Zimri's only official act as king was to murder every male relative of Elah, as a prophet had foretold.

Zimri's conspiracy failed, however. Omri, the captain of Elah's army, acted promptly to obtain public support for action against Zimri. He immediately assembled a nationwide army and besieged Zimri's hideout at Tirzah, the capital. When Zimri realized his situation was hopeless, he set his palace afire and died in the flames, one of only 5 suicides recorded in the Bible. He had reigned only 7 days.

Where to read Zimri's story: 1 Kings 16:9-20

Cause for thought: "He who lives by the sword shall die by the sword" is there any truer statement than that?

Prayer:

- Pray for all victims of violence and their relatives
- Pray for those who get drawn into the evil plots of others
- Pray for all those who feel that suicide is the only answer

Quote

"There comes a time when you look into the mirror and you realize that what you see is all that you will ever be. And then you accept it. Or you kill yourself. Or you stop looking in mirrors."

— Tennessee Williams

Tuesday 20th February King Omri

Omri's rise to power was full of turbulence. He had been an army captain under King Elah. When Elah was murdered by Zimri, another of Elah's military leaders, Omri took decisive action to foil Zimri's conspiracy. After only 7 days, Zimri's cause was so hopeless that he took his own life. At that point, yet another military figure, Tibni, having the support of half the population, tried to make himself king, launching a civil war that apparently lasted 4 years.¹ But he was defeated and killed by Omri, who then became king.

Omri's outstanding achievement was the founding of Samaria, Israel's long-time capital. Omri recognized the need for a new and well-fortified capital city. The weakness of the previous capital, Tirzah, became obvious from the ease with which Omri had defeated Zimri, who made his last stand there. Omri's 12-year reign is characterized in scripture as a continuation of King Jeroboam's evil.

Where to read Omri's story: 1 Kings 16:16-28

Cause for thought: Even though King Omri did some good things he is still categorized as evil because he didn't do the one thing that mattered, remain faithful to the Lord. How can we be sure we are doing the things that matter?

Prayer:

- Pray for innovative world leaders
- Pray for builders and architects
- Pray for those who miss what is truly important

Quote

"Leadership is not about titles, positions or flowcharts. It is about one life influencing another."

— John C. Maxwell

Monday 26th March—King Josiah

King Josiah was Judah's last gasp — the last good thing that happened to the Israelites before their kingdom was destroyed. Josiah became king as a child of only eight, and soon took an interest in the LORD, contrary to his father King Amon. Early in life he instituted reforms and took steps against idol worship. At 25 years of age, Josiah decided to rebuild the LORD's temple. As the workers were cleaning, they found an obscure book that no one had ever heard of — the Bible, forgotten by previous generations. Immediately, Josiah set upon a sweeping program to eliminate pagan worship and renew the ancient covenant of the LORD. He toured the land, destroying pagan shrines, and celebrated the Passover for the first time in decades. The revival was wonderful. But as soon as Josiah died, the people returned to their evil ways, and before his sons reached middle age, the LORD's judgment for centuries of evil practices came, and Judah was no more.

Where to read Josiah's story: 2 Kings 22:1 - 23:30; 2 Chronicles 34:1 - 35:27

Cause for thought: Josiah rediscovered the Hebrew Bible and immediately put into place sweeping measures to rid the land of pagan worship and reinstate the true worship of the Lord. How often do you take time to rediscover what the Bible has to say?

Prayer:

- Pray that more people will discover the Bible and follow its teaching
- Pray that God will open our hearts and minds to understand what the bible has to say to us
- Pray for young children who have huge responsibility thrust upon them

Quote

"Within the covers of the Bible are the answers for all the problems men face."
Ronald Reagan

Saturday 24th March—King Amon

The Bible gives only a brief sketch of King Amon, 15th of the 20 sovereigns of the separate kingdom of Judah. Like his father King Manasseh, he sponsored idol worship and its associated evils. Unlike Manasseh, he never repented of his evil.

After two years in office, some of his officials assassinated him. The murderers were brought to justice and sentenced to death, and Amon's son, 8-year-old Josiah, was made king.

Where to read Amon's story: 2 Kings 21:19-26; 2 Chronicles 33:21-24

Cause for thought: King Amon's refusal to repent led to his downfall after only two years. Our failure to repent can likewise lead to our downfall. What might it be that you need to repent of?

Prayer:

- Pray for discernment in identifying the things we need to repent of.
- Pray for those who refuse to repent
- Pray for all those who have repented and are still finding it difficult

Quote

"The heavens will not be filled with those who never made mistakes but with those who recognized that they were off course and who corrected their ways to get back in the light of gospel truth."

Dieter F. Uchtdorf

Wednesday 21st February King Ahab

Ahab is perhaps the most famous of the kings of the separate kingdom of Israel. The son and successor of the evil King Omri, Ahab became a pioneer and champion of evil. Not content with Jeroboam's golden calf cult, Ahab sponsored Baal and Asherah worship, introduced by his evil wife, Jezebel. Rituals of the Baal and Asherah cults involved detestable practices, including prostitution, and human sacrifice of children. Ahab's evil was contested by the prophet Elijah in a struggle that lasted all through Ahab's career, and Elijah's biography is intermingled with Ahab's. Through Elijah's work, God repeatedly displayed his power, graciously giving Ahab many opportunities to change his ways. Though Ahab did eventually repent, it was too little too late to make any lasting change in his kingdom. In the third war with Syria, Ahab was ignominiously killed.

Where to read Ahab's story: 1 Kings 16:28 - 22:40

Cause for thought: Ahab eventually changed his ways but it was far too late to undo all the harm he had already done. Previously God had given him many chances but they had all been spurned, nevertheless God was still willing to forgive him. How many chances have we let slip by?

Prayer:

- Pray for those who, like Elijah, are willing to speak out against injustice.
- Pray for missed opportunities
- Pray for those caught up in evil practices

Quote

"Most people miss Opportunity because it is dressed in overalls and looks like work." Thomas A. Edison

Thursday 22nd February King Ahaziah

Israel's King Ahaziah was the heir of the wicked King Ahab, and he continued his father's evil legacy. The Bible's account of his brief reign relates only two incidents. Judah's King Jehoshaphat, who had achieved good relations with Ahab, attempted a joint merchant shipping venture with his son Ahaziah. However, because of Ahaziah's wickedness, the LORD caused the venture to fail due to shipwreck. Later, as Ahaziah was in his palace anticipating war with Moab, he suffered a fall and was mortally wounded. He sent servants to distant Ekron to ask advice of their idol god, Baalzebub. But the prophet Elijah stopped the messengers en route and returned them to their king with the message: "Are you consulting a foreign idol because there is no God in Israel? For this offence, you will not recover, but die!" When Ahaziah heard this message, he sent an officer with 50 men to arrest Elijah. But Elijah refused to be arrested, instead calling fire from heaven to consume the officer and men. The king sent a second 50 men, with the same result. Ahaziah sent a third party of 50 men. The officer of this group, knowing the fate of the first two groups, didn't try to arrest Elijah. Instead, he humbly and respectfully requested Elijah to accompany him. At the LORD's prompting, Elijah went, met the king, and delivered the same message he had given before: the king would die.

Where to read Ahaziah's story: 1 Kings 22:48-53; 2 Kings 1; 2 Chronicles 20:35-37

Cause for thought: The officer of the third party of 50 men demonstrated initiative in his approach to Elijah and in doing so saved the lives of his men. Can you think of an occasion when you or someone you know used initiative to change the course of events?

Prayer:

- Pray for those who use their initiative rather than blindly following orders.
- Pray for the courage to always do what is right.
- Pray for the courage to tell the truth

Quote:

"If you tell the truth, you don't have to remember anything."
— Mark Twain

Friday 23rd March—King Manasseh

King Manasseh came to the throne at only 12 years of age, when his father, the good King Hezekiah, died. Manasseh made it his mission to undo the good reforms instituted by his father, and to do a great deal of evil. Hezekiah had destroyed shrines of pagan worship throughout the land; Manasseh rebuilt them, adding also shrines to Baal and Asherah. He desecrated the LORD's temple by putting altars for idol worship in it. He sacrificed his own sons, burning them to death in worship of the idol Molech. Manasseh murdered so many people that the historian wrote that he "filled Jerusalem from one end to the other" with innocent blood. Late in Manasseh's 55-year reign, Assyria attacked Jerusalem, captured Manasseh, and placed him in a prison 1,000 miles away. Humiliated and powerless, he sat in his cell and remembered his father's days. He began to pray, confessing his sin and asking the LORD's help. The LORD heard Manasseh's prayer, freed him, and returned him to his throne in Jerusalem. The no doubt fascinating details of how this happened are not given. Back in power, Manasseh was a new man. He destroyed all the idol shrines he had built, removed his desecrations from the LORD's temple, and restored the temple worship. Unfortunately, Manasseh's conversion came too late to have any lasting impact on his kingdom. When Judah fell, the LORD blamed it on the sins of Manasseh.

Where to read Manasseh's story: 2 Kings 21:1-17;

Cause for thought: Manasseh spent a lifetime dedicated to evil, including many murders, and even the human sacrifice of his own sons. Then when he repented, the LORD forgave him. Do you think it's possible for God to forgive someone who has committed extreme evil?

Prayer:

- Pray that God will forgive us our sins
- Pray that we are able to forgive as we have been forgiven
- Pray those who think they are beyond forgiveness

Quote

The weak can never forgive. Forgiveness is the attribute of the strong.

Mahatma Gandhi

Thursday 22nd March—King Hezekiah

Hezekiah's great grandfather King Uzziah and grandfather King Jotham were godly and wise men who had increased Judah's prosperity and influence to levels unknown since the days of David and Solomon. Then Hezekiah's father, King Ahaz, through evil practices and poor leadership, lost all the two previous generations had gained, and lost national sovereignty as well, leaving Judah a vassal of Assyria. King Hezekiah came to the throne in the wake of his father's disasters, and with the memory the glory days of his grandfather King Jotham, who still reigned when Hezekiah was a child. Rightly concluding that these hardships had come upon Judah because they had abandoned the LORD, Hezekiah instituted the most sweeping religious reforms of all the kings before or after him. As a result, during his 29-year reign he was successful in everything he did — no small accomplishment, given the very difficult times during which he reigned. He ultimately achieved this with the help of the LORD. While this crisis was still fresh and his newly won independence still fragile, Hezekiah became deathly ill. No doubt worried how the nation would fare after his death, he prayed for healing, and God granted him another 15 years of life.

Where to read Hezekiah's story: 2 Kings 18 - 20; Isaiah 36 - 39

Cause for thought: Hezekiah was generally a good King who became ill and prayed for healing which God granted extending his life by another fifteen years. Why is it that when we pray for healing some of our prayers seem to be answered but others don't?

Prayer:

- Pray for the healing of the nations
- Pray that those known to you who are in need of a special prayer will be healed.
- Pray for the healing of broken relationships

Quote

*"God hears and answers every prayer in His sacred time."
— Lailah Gifty Akita,*

Friday 23rd February King Jehoram

The Bible account characterizes Jehoram as evil, and in his 12-year reign we see a back-and-forth wavering. At times he was friendly with the LORD's prophet Elisha, at times he persecuted him. Sometimes he was faithful to the LORD, other times he blamed the LORD for problems caused by his own sins. He took steps against the cult of Baal worship introduced by his father, King Ahab, but he observed the cult of golden calf idols introduced by King Jeroboam. Time after time God displayed his power by rescuing Jehoram — in a supply crisis at war, in preventing enemy raids on Israel's territory, in miraculously breaking a powerful siege, in many great miracles worked by the prophet Elisha — and yet, in spite of all this evidence, Jehoram never fully trusted the LORD. In fact, because of Jehoram's sin, his time as king was plagued with multiple multi-year famines. These were wake-up calls from God, to which Jehoram never responded. Because of Jehoram's commitment to evil, the LORD instructed one of Jehoram's commanders, Jehu, to kill Jehoram and assume his throne.

Where to read Jehoram's story: 2 Kings 3, 8:28-29, 9:14-24;

Cause for thought: Jehoram wavered between doing right and doing wrong never fully trusting the Lord. God used his prophet Elisha to try and steer Jehoram onto the right path but he refused to listen. Consider who has God sent to guide you in the past?

Prayer:

- Pray for discernment in hearing God's voice
- Pray for those who find difficulty in making up their minds
- Pray that we might remain faithful to the Lord

Quote

*"Hide yourself in God, so when a man wants to find you he will have to go there first."
— Shannon L. Alder*

Saturday 24th February - King Jehu

King Jehu, the tenth king of the separate kingdom of Israel, was raised to power by God's action, for the specific purpose of exterminating evil King Ahab's heirs, as Elijah had prophesied following the scandal of Naboth's vineyard. In this he took strong and decisive action, even going beyond God's requirement by also eliminating Ahab's chief legacy, the cult of Baal worship. For this obedience, Jehu was rewarded with the longest dynasty in Israel's history — 5 generations long. Jehu enjoys the distinction of being the only king of Israel to receive a generally positive evaluation in God's judgment. After Israel and Judah separated, every king of Israel except Jehu was committed to evil. By contrast, Judah had six kings who were wholeheartedly committed to the LORD, and two others who, like Jehu, did right some of the time and evil at other times.

Where to read Jehu's story: 2 Kings 9 - 10

Cause for thought: At last a good king of Israel, Jehu did the will of God by eliminating some of the evil done by Ahab and Jezabel and their offspring. Is it possible that God sometimes calls us to correct the wrongs of others?

Prayers:

- Pray for those called to correct the wrong of others
- Pray for law enforcement officers
- Pray for the Judicial system in this country.

Quote

"To admonish is better than to reproach for admonition is mild and friendly, but reproach is harsh and insulting; and admonition corrects those who are doing wrong, but reproach only convicts them." Epictetus

Wednesday 21st March—King Ahaz

King Ahaz devoted himself to pagan worship and its associated evil, touring the nation building shrines, and seeking the aid of every powerless religion he knew of. He even sacrificed his own sons, burning them alive in a ritual to the idol Molech. As a result of his infidelity, the LORD opposed Ahaz' administration, and during his 16-year reign Judah lost the empire built by his grandfather King Uzziah and his father King Jotham, suffered constant military raids by neighbours, and even lost national sovereignty, becoming a vassal to Assyria. After this incident, Ahaz visited defeated Damascus. Still refusing to turn to the LORD, he imported the idols of Damascus into Judah, building an imposing altar near the LORD's temple, after the pattern of the altar in Damascus. He even closed the LORD's temple, which was not opened again until Ahaz died. In recognition of Ahaz' terrible leadership and its great cost to the nation, Ahaz was buried in a commoner's grave rather than the royal cemetery.

Where to read Ahaz's story: 2 Kings 16; 2 Chronicles 28; Isaiah 7:1 - 8:4

Cause for thought: Ahaz led his country to national disaster and the loss of sovereignty becoming no more than a vassal of Assyria. Have you ever felt that you were being controlled by outside forces good or bad?

Prayer:

- Pray for an end to child abuse throughout the world
- Pray for the work of the NSPCC and Child Line
- Pray for the survivors of child abuse

Quote

"You must learn to let go. Release the stress. You were never in control anyway."

Steve Maraboli,

Tuesday 20th March - King Jotham

King Jotham ascended to become Judah's eleventh ruler while his father, King Uzziah, still lived, this unusual arrangement being necessary because of Uzziah's medical retirement. Jotham apparently reigned for 13 years while his father lived, then three more years after his death.

Jotham lived a life of steady integrity and success. His activities include rebuilding portions of the temple and the city wall of Jerusalem, building towns and military posts throughout the land as Uzziah had, and suppressing a rebellion by the Ammonites upon his father's death.

Where to read Jotham's story: 2 Kings 15:32-38

Cause for thought: Uzziah must have been very proud of his son Jotham as he appears to have been a chip off the old block as it were. Think of the things you are proud of your children or relatives for.

Prayer:

- Pray for children everywhere that they are valued and know that someone somewhere is proud of them.
- Pray for people of integrity to be raised up as leaders in the world
- Pray for those who work to restore communities destroyed by war or natural disasters

Quote

Build me a son, O Lord, who will be strong enough to know when he is weak, and brave enough to face himself when he is afraid, one who will be proud and unbending in honest defeat, and humble and gentle in victory.

Douglas MacArthur

Monday 26th February - King Jehoahaz

Jehoahaz succeeded his father Jehu as king of Israel. During his 14-year reign, the consequences of the 9 evil kings who preceded Jehu began to be severe. Military raids by the neighboring Syrians brought such devastation that Jehoahaz despaired of Israel's survival.

Although the reign of Jehoahaz is recorded as generally evil, it is to his credit that at this point he remembered his father's legacy and turned to the LORD for help. The LORD answered his mayday by sending an unnamed rescuer who stopped Syria's advances, and so Israel, though left powerless and insecure, was not exterminated.

Where to read Jehoahaz's story: 2 Kings 13:1-9

Cause for thought: Many people today only call out to the Lord as a last resort just as Jehoahaz did and though the Lord answered his cry for help he could have saved himself much travail had he remembered his fathers legacy sooner. How much suffering might we have saved ourselves in the past by taking our needs to the Lord sooner?

Prayer:

- Pray for the prayer life of our churches
- Pray for answers to our prayers
- Pray for the wisdom to pray for the right things

Quote

"Prayer is not asking. Prayer is putting oneself in the hands of God, at His disposition, and listening to His voice in the depth of our hearts."

— Mother Teresa

Tuesday 27th February—King Joash

Joash was the grandson of Israel's King Jehu, and succeeded his father King Jehoahaz as king. He reigned 16 years, and continued the evil legacy of King Jeroboam's golden calf cult. His reign was marked by continued vulnerability to raids by the armies of Syria and Moab.

In spite of his commitment to paganism, he had an affinity for the LORD's prophet Elisha, whom he visited on the latter's deathbed. While Joash grieved over his nation's coming loss — for Elisha had aided his nation with powerful miracles of God — Elisha made himself busy prophesying military victories for Israel, over the invading Syrian army.

To prepare for these victories, Elisha invited King Joash to participate with him in a ritual to demonstrate faith in God — faith, after all, was the vehicle through which God would provide the prophesied victories. The king took up his bow and arrows, and the prophet carefully showed him how he was to hold the bow for this ritual. He told the king to shoot an arrow out the window, in the direction of Syria (east). When he did, the prophet announced that because of his obedience, God would give him victory in the coming battle at the border town of Aphek.

Where to read Joash's story: 2 Kings 13:9 - 14:16;

Cause for thought: Because of Joash's continued faith in the golden calf cult Israel was vulnerable to raids by their enemies. Likewise our chasing after false God's leave us vulnerable to attack. What are the false gods we might chase after today?

Prayer:

- Pray for all those who chase after false gods.
- Pray for the courage to deny ourselves and follow Christ
- Pray for those people of faith who have walked alongside us

Quote

"A god is anything that lives outside of God." Anthony Liccione

Monday 19th March - King

Uzziah became king at 16 when his father, King Amaziah, was assassinated following a military disaster. Uzziah was faithful to the LORD for a long time, and during that time he and his nation prospered. Rising to power after a long period of decline, he had a series of military successes against the Philistines, the Gurbal, the Mehunims, and the Ammonites. He fortified Jerusalem, whose walls had been broken down just before he took office, and he built military outposts throughout the land as well. Unfortunately, later in his 52-year reign Uzziah presumed to alter the worship of the LORD, placing himself in the spotlight by entering the temple and burning incense, a duty reserved by the LORD for the priests only. When the priest's confronted him about this he raged at them, the LORD, however, showed his support for the priests by afflicting Uzziah with leprosy, which became immediately visible on his forehead. Uzziah, in a panic, rushed away. Uzziah never recovered from leprosy. For the rest of his life he lived in seclusion, and his son Jotham acted as king during his absence.

Where to read Uzziah's story: 2 Kings 15:1-7;

Cause for thought: The story of King Uzziah's reign reminds us of the dangers of self promotion when it comes to serving God. Everything that Jesus did pointed to God the Father and not to himself. Have you ever been tempted to take a position above your station?

Prayer:

- Pray for those church leaders who seek glory for themselves
- Pray that everything we do as a church we do for the glory of God
- Pray for all sufferers of leprosy.

Saturday 17th March—King Amaziah

When Amaziah was 25 years old, his father King Joash, having committed a repulsive crime, was assassinated, and so Amaziah became king. Like his father, he was faithful to the LORD at first, and later turned to a life of sin.

Amaziah's first act as king was to punish by death those who had murdered his father. In this, he deviated from the custom of also executing the criminals' heirs, instead executing only the conspirators themselves, acting according to the Bible's prohibition. Later Amaziah turned away from the Lord and went into battle against Israel without God's support and was soundly defeated. At this horrible loss, Amaziah's people were so enraged that a group conspired to kill him. He fled to Lachish, near the Philistine border, but was killed there by the conspirators.

Where to read Amaziah's story: 2 Kings 14:1-21;

Cause for thought: Amaziah proved to be merciful at first but like his father before him eventually turned away from God with disastrous results. Which goes to show it's not so much how you start as how you finish that matters. What steps are you taking to make sure you remain true to your faith?

Prayer:

- Pray for those refugees who have fled their home countries in fear for their lives
- Pray for the strength and courage to remain true to the faith
- Pray that we shall be merciful

Wednesday 28th February - King Jeroboam II

Jeroboam II, son and successor of King Joash of Israel, reigned 41 years, and continued the evil legacy of his namesake, the first King Jeroboam. Because of his commitment to evil, the prophet Amos prophesied that the LORD would punish Jeroboam, bringing "the sword" against his regime.¹ This was fulfilled when, just after Jeroboam's death, his son King Zachariah was murdered and his throne usurped.

During Jeroboam's time encroachments suffered in recent decades became so severe that Israel's continued existence was in doubt. The LORD, however, not yet willing to completely give up on Israel, helped Jeroboam. At the prompting of the LORD's famous prophet Jonah, he organized military exploits that restored much lost territory to Israel.

Where to read Jeroboam II's story: 2 Kings 14:23-29

Cause for thought: God sent the prophets Amos and Jonah to warn and advise King Jeroboam II which enabled him to reign some 41 years despite his evil ways. What words of warning and guidance might God want his prophet to give the world today?

Prayer:

- Pray for those countries troubled by war and insurrection
- Pray for those who are called to advise governments
- Pray that world leaders will promote peace

Quote

Every single human being should be the fulfilment of a prophecy: for every human being should be the realisation of some ideal, either in the mind of God or in the mind of man."

— Oscar Wilde

Thursday 1st March - King Zachariah

The Bible provides only the briefest sketch of the career of Zachariah, 14th king of the separate kingdom of Israel. He was the son and successor of Jeroboam II, and the fifth and last king from the family of King Jehu, fulfilling God's promise to Jehu. He had reigned for only six months when one Shallum murdered him in public and succeeded him as king. Zachariah continued the sins of the first Jeroboam.

Where to read Zachariah's story: 2 Kings 15:8-12

Cause for thought: The instability that now comes over Israel with Kings reigning for only a short time before being assassinated is due to the lack of moral guidance. Despite the efforts of God's prophets the Kings continued the evil started by Jeroboam. Where do people today get their moral guidance?

Prayer:

- Pray that today's children will get good moral guidance
- Pray for a world where some people feel able to commit crime in full public view
- Pray that God will raise up moral leaders in today's society.

Quote

"The assumption that animals are without rights and the illusion that our treatment of them has no moral significance is a positively outrageous example of Western crudity and barbarity. Universal compassion is the only guarantee of morality."
— Arthur Schopenhauer,

Friday 16th March—King Joash

Joash arose as a bright star in a dark time. For 15 years Judah had been ruled by Jehoram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, a family infamous for their brutality. As a baby, Joash was rescued from murder by his aunt Jehosheba, and was raised by her and her husband, the priest Jehoiada. These two were a beacon for God in an otherwise cruel and vice-ridden age.

At the age of seven Joash, who was of the kingly line of David, became king of Judah. Mentored by godly Jehoiada, he eliminated many of the evils instituted by his forebears. Most notably, he supervised the reconstruction of Solomon's temple, now deteriorating with age. Even so, when Jehoiada died, Joash fell victim to political pressures and abandoned the LORD, letting his newly refurbished temple fall again into disrepair, and entering into cult worship and the sins associated with it.

Where to read Joash's story: 2 Kings 11 - 12;

Cause for thought. Jehoiada, a godly priest and teacher of the faith, who did all he could to keep Joash on the straight and narrow but when he died Joash fell back into sinful ways. Who was the most influential person in your early years of faith?

Prayer:

- Pray for all teachers of the faith
- Pray for the clergy and Readers in our two parishes
- Pray for those who have been your spiritual guides

Quote

Spiritual leaders, priests and prophets are lamps burning in the dark, seeking meaning for humanity."
— Bangambiki Habyarimana,

Thursday 15th March— Queen Athaliah

Athaliah was the daughter of Israel's King Ahab, was married to Judah's King Jehoram, and was the mother of Jehoram's successor, King Ahaziah. Jehoram died prematurely by disease, and Ahaziah was killed only a year later.

When this happened Athaliah, well schooled in evil, decided not to allow her baby grandson to become king, but to assume the throne herself. To this end, she murdered every heir who might be a rival to the throne, and declared herself queen. However, her daughter Jehosheba managed to rescue Ahaziah's baby son Joash, and with the aid of her husband, the faithful priest Jehoiada, kept him hidden for six years.

Where to read Athaliah's story: 2 Kings 11;

Cause for thought: Athaliah was the only female ruler of either kingdom and in her wickedness tried to kill all possible heirs to the throne but was foiled by her daughter who saved Ahaziah's son Joash who would become king. Have you ever been saved or saved someone from harm?

Prayer:

- Pray for equality between all people
- Pray for our Queen and her family
- Pray for all those who risk their lives for others

Quote

"You're never perfectly safe. No human being on Earth ever is or ever was. To live is to risk your life, your heart, everything."

— Rick Yancey,

Friday 2nd March - King Shallum

Shallum's origin is unknown. He ascended to the throne by assassinating King Zachariah, a deed he committed in full public view. After reigning only one month, he was similarly assassinated by Menahem, who succeeded him.

Where to read Shallum's story: 2 Kings 15:10-15

Cause for thought: King Shallum reigned for just one month before he too was assassinated. During that month he no doubt lived in fear of his inevitable comeuppance. What is it that we live in fear of?

Prayer:

- Pray for all people living in fear of their own creation
- Pray for those who live in fear of others
- Pray for those called to bring comfort to the fearful

Quote

"Tell your heart that the fear of suffering is worse than the suffering itself. And that no heart has ever suffered when it goes in search of its dreams, because every second of the search is a second's encounter with God and with eternity."

— Paulo Coelho

Saturday 3rd March - King Menahem

Nothing is known of Menahem's origins. Just a month after Shallum brazenly assassinated King Zachariah, Menahem did the same to Shallum, taking the throne himself. He proceeded to reign ten years, all the while sponsoring the sinful cult founded by King Jeroboam.

Only two incidents are recorded of Menahem's reign. He mounted an attack against Tiphshah, a town at the extreme eastern limits of ancient King Solomon's empire, which must have been far beyond Israel's realm by Menahem's time. The city refused to surrender to him, and so once he penetrated it, he avenged himself by destroying the city and massacring its population, including even its pregnant women. Another time Assyria invaded Israel. Menahem secured peace with a large payoff to Assyria's king, which he raised via a special tax.

Where to read Menahem's story: 2 Kings 15:14-22

Cause for thought: Menahem's reign was marked by a total lack of mercy demonstrated by his total destruction of Tiphshah. Can you think of a situation when you have been merciful?

Prayer:

- Pray for the European migrants that they receive mercy
- Pray for the Myanmar refugees that they might receive mercy
- Pray for the homeless of this country might receive mercy

Quote

"I have always found that mercy bears richer fruits than strict justice." Abraham Lincoln

Wednesday 14th March = King Ahaziah

King Ahaziah's story is filled with tragedy and wickedness. The son of a brutal couple, King Jehoram and Queen Athaliah, and grandson of Israel's idol-addicted King Ahab, Ahaziah followed the evil path of his forbears during his one year as Judah's king. He ascended to the throne upon the death by disease of his father Jehoram. The youngest son, only 22, he was chosen by default, all his brothers and his father's cabinet having been kidnapped and killed by an invading army, and his uncles having been slain by his father as rivals to the throne. His own family and friends thus absent, he turned to his mother's family for friendship and counsel. Ahaziah was the nephew, through his mother, of Israel's evil King Jehoram (brother-in-law of the other King Jehoram, Ahaziah's father), and the two became close confidants.

Where to read Ahaziah's story: 2 Kings 8:24 - 9:29.

Cause for thought: As a young man King Ahaziah came under the influence of evil people which just goes to show you have to be careful who you go to for advice and guidance. Who are the ones you would turn to for advice and guidance in difficult times?

Prayer:

- Pray for all those who give wise counsel others
- Pray for those who fall foul of bad influences
- Pray that you will receive good advice when needed

Quote

"Adapt what is useful, reject what is useless, and add what is specifically your own."

— Bruce Lee

Tuesday 13th March—King Jehoram

King Jehoram, son and successor of the godly King Jehoshaphat, must be remembered as one of the most decidedly wicked kings in Judah's history. Before becoming king, he was married to Athaliah, daughter of Israel's King Ahab. She was an evil woman who influenced Jehoram to reject the LORD and practice evil. Early in his reign Jehoram murdered his six brothers and some others he considered rivals. Later when Jehoram's son and successor died, his widow Athaliah committed the same crime, murdering all Jehoram's heirs to make herself sovereign.

During Jehoram's eight years as king, he abandoned the LORD and ruled sinfully, as Ahab and the other kings of Israel had done, and sponsored false religions as they had.

Where to read Jehoram's story: 2 Kings 8:16-24;

Cause for thought: The marriage of Jehoram and Athaliah was in truth a coming together of two inherently wicked people. Like biblical Fred and Rose West's they appear to have no scruples what so ever. Who would you class as the most wicked person you have known or heard of?

Prayer:

- Pray for all who have come under the spell of wicked people
- Pray for all victims of murder and their families
- Pray for all perpetrators of violence

Quote

“Wickedness was like food: once you got started it was hard to stop; the gut expanded to take in more and more.”

— John Updike,

Monday 5th March - King Pekahiah

Pekahiah succeeded his father King Menahem to become the 17th king of the separate kingdom of Israel. His 2-year reign was featureless, except to note that he continued King Jeroboam's golden calf cult. Pekahiah had no doubt followed his father's lead in maintaining his throne by buying the support of Assyria. One of his army officers, an ambitious man named Pekah, thought his people should fight for freedom from Assyria. Pekah conspired against Pekahiah, assassinated him, and succeeded him as king. (His efforts to declare independence from Assyria failed.)

Where to read Pekahiah's story: 2 Kings 15:22-26

Cause for thought: Pekahiah, like his father before him tried to maintain his throne by buying the support of the Assyrians. It wasn't the threat from outside Israel's borders, however, that would bring about his demise but one from within his own army. Where might the threats to your security come from?

Prayer:

- Pray for those who think they can pay their way to success
- Pray for those who seek security in money and wealth.
- Pray for those who lack a sense of security

Quote

“They who can give up essential liberty to obtain a little temporary safety deserve neither liberty nor safety.”

— Benjamin Franklin,

Tuesday 6th March—King Pekah

Pekah secured the throne of Israel by murdering his predecessor, King Pekahiah. He reigned 20 years, all the time sponsoring the golden calf cult, which the LORD despised.

Pekah joined forces with Syria in an assault on Jerusalem, where Ahaz was king. The people of Judah were terrified of this confederacy, but the LORD sent word through the prophet Isaiah that it would fail, which it did.

Later Assyria marched on Israel, probably because Pekah declared Israel's independence and refused to pay the tribute the previous two kings had paid. Assyria took much of Pekah's territory and deported many of his people. At this failure, a man named Hoshea assassinated Pekah and assumed the throne himself.

Where to read Pekah's story: 2 Kings 15:25-38, 16:5; 2 Chronicles 28:6; Isaiah 7:1-9

Cause for thought: Many of Pekah's people were carried off into exile a precursor to what was to come. This greed for land has been the cause of wars throughout the history of humankind. Greed of any kind can only lead to failure. During Lent we need to reflect on what it is that we might be greedy for.

Prayer:

- Pray for those whose motivation is greed for more
- Pray for those whose lives have been ruined by greed
- Pray for those whose greed has led them to do evil.

Quote

"He who is not contented with what he has, would not be contented with what he would like to have."

— Socrates

Monday 12th March - King Jehoshaphat

The story of King Jehoshaphat's 25-year reign simply glows with his devotion to the LORD. He never once fell into the pagan religion or practices that plagued neighboring Israel, and many of Judah's kings as well. Much of his story is a record of his religious reforms.

Jehoshaphat's most shining moment came when his nation was under attack by an alliance of three vast armies. Recognizing his totally helpless position, the king hosted a nationwide day of prayer. When the LORD, answering the prayers, told Jehoshaphat he would defeat this enemy without fighting, he trusted the LORD so completely that he dispatched an army — not of soldiers, but of singers, singing praise to God. When this army came upon the invaders, they discovered them completely destroyed by internal fighting.

Where to read Jehoshaphat's story: 1 Kings 22:1-50; 2 Kings 3;

Cause for thought: Jehoshaphat trusted completely in God's answer to his prayers and was proved right in doing so. Do you always trust that God will answer your prayers or do you sometimes harbour seeds of doubt?

Prayer:

- Pray that God will give you faith like that of Jehoshaphat
- Pray for all reformers of the faith past and present
- Pray for singers who use their God given gift to praise God

Quote

*"...You say to God, "I have never seen you provide for me."
God says to you, "You have never trusted Me."*

— Corallie Buchanan

Saturday 10th March—King Asa

King Asa was the third king of Judah, and the first one characterized in the Bible as a man of integrity. His 41-year reign was marked by revival in the worship of the LORD, and removal of paganism and its associated evils; by safety and reduced crime; and by military peace, interrupted by only two brief incidents. As a measure of the stability that existed in Judah during Asa's time: his reign spanned the reigns of seven kings of Israel! Unfortunately, late in life his faith wavered, and at two points of crisis, he ignored God and turned to secular sources of help. Nevertheless, God's overwhelming verdict is that "Asa did that which was good and right in the eyes of the LORD his God."

Where to read Asa's story: 1 Kings 15:10-24.

Cause for thought: King Asa did right by the Lord apart from two lapses when he put his trust in secular sources for help for which God forgave him. I often think that God doesn't expect us to be perfect but he does expect us to try. When have you felt tempted to turn to sources other than God for help?

Prayer:

- Pray that God will forgive you for when you have put your trust in the things of this world rather than in God.
- Pray for help in trying to maintain God's high standards
- Pray for those fail

Quote

*"With the help of God, we shall triumph in any trouble."
— Lailah Gifty Akita*

Wednesday 7th March— King Hoshea

Hoshea, the 19th and last king of the separate kingdom of Israel, murdered his predecessor and seized the throne in the wake of military failures against the invading Assyrian army. His 9-year reign is characterized as evil. The only significant event of his reign — but a supremely significant one — was the destruction of the kingdom. Hoshea rebelled against the Assyrians, to whom he was obligated to pay certain taxes. Upon his default, Assyria laid siege to the capital, Samaria. The siege lasted three summers. At its end, Samaria fell, the population was deported to Assyria, and foreign peoples were resettled into Samaria. The kingdom of Israel had come to its end.

Where to read Hoshea's story: 2 Kings 17:1-6, 18:9-12

Cause for thought: Jesus tells us that the first shall be last, In Hoshea's case he was both first and last. He was the last king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and as such the first king to lose the kingdom. Can you think of a time when you were either first or last?

Prayer:

- Pray for the pioneers of this world those who are called to go first
- Pray for those that always seem to find themselves at the back of the queue.
- Pray for those suffering for lack of food and clean water because of war.

Quote

*"God Hold us to that which drew us first, when the Cross was the attraction, and we wanted nothing else."
— Amy Carmichael,*

Thursday 8th March - King Rehoboam

King Rehoboam's legacy is one of loss — loss of half the kingdom, loss of integrity, loss of national sovereignty.

Loss of half the kingdom — During Rehoboam's first week in office, his grandiose ideas and failure to read the political climate resulted in a rebellion, in which 10 of Israel's 12 tribes seceded, forming the nation known from then on as Israel. Rehoboam's two tribes assumed the name of Rehoboam's tribe, Judah.

Loss of integrity — Rehoboam, like his father King Solomon, abandoned the LORD and sponsored idol cults and the sins associated with them.

Loss of national sovereignty — As punishment, the LORD declared that he would not aid them against the invasion being planned by Shishak, king of Egypt. However, king and people repented, and so God stopped Egypt from destroying Judah. However, Judah became a vassal nation under Egypt's supervision.

Where to read Rehoboam's story: 1 Kings 12:1-24, 14:21-31;

Cause for thought: Within a week of coming to the throne Rehoboam lost half his kingdom but his greatest loss was that of his integrity. How do you guard your integrity?

Prayer:

- Pray for those who suffer a loss of integrity through making a wrong decision
- Pray for those who sacrifice their integrity for personal gain
- Pray for those whose loss of integrity has led to homelessness.

Quote

"If it is not right do not do it; if it is not true do not say it."

— Marcus Aurelius

Friday 9th March—King Abijam

Abijam succeeded his father King Rehoboam, becoming the second king of Judah. His reign was a continuation of his father's regime, characterized by continuing wars with King Jeroboam of Israel, and by abandonment of the LORD. Though his three years as king are declared to be evil, the only incident recorded does show some limited faith and success.

War broke out yet again between Judah and Israel. As the armies faced each other, King Abijam addressed a sermon to the enemy army. He recounted how Israel had abandoned the LORD in favor of Jeroboam's religion of golden calf idols, whereas Judah continued to faithfully obey the LORD. Reminding them that God had by a solemn covenant given the throne to David, and thereby to David's heir Abijam, he invited them to reject Jeroboam and his cult and return to the LORD and re-join Judah, predicting that the LORD would fight on behalf of his faithful people.

Where to read Abijam's story: 1 Kings 15:1-8;

Cause for thought: King Abijam gave a tremendous sermon to the armies of Israel inviting them to change their ways and turn to the Lord. They didn't and with God's help Judah inflicted 500,000 casualties on the Israelites. Have you ever ignored a warning and later wished you hadn't?

Prayer:

- Pray for all preachers of the Gospel
- Pray for those who hear the gospel and ignore it
- Pray for an end to war

Quote

"It is what you don't expect... that most needs looking for."

— Neal Stephenson,