

## JOASH---HOSHEA---HEZEKIAH---NEBUCHADNEZZAR

(II Kings 11—25)

II Kings 11 records the actions by the priest Jehoiada as he carefully arranged forces to capture and execute the wicked Queen Athaliah and install as king the seven-year-old Joash. Joash proved to be one of the really good kings.

Later lessons will deal with the role of the prophets, a large portion of whom lived and worked in the Divided Kingdom period. The prophets worked tirelessly to warn the people to serve God and not idols. Repeated warnings were given that God would send great punishment if people did not repent. God's patience is shown in the lengthy period of time he waited for the people to change.

King Hoshea is significant in the fact that he was the last King of Israel. Chapter 17 records the attack by the Assyrian King Shalmaneser, occupying the entire land and deporting masses of Israelites to Assyria. In turn, a number of people from other countries were brought in to occupy Samaria. Thus the Northern Kingdom came to an end.

Chapter 18 tells of King Hezekiah, perhaps the best of the kings of Judah. (It was during his sixth year that the Northern kingdom fell.) There is the dramatic story of the threat from the Assyrian army under Sennacherib and how God responded to Hezekiah's prayer---with the angel of the Lord killing 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night!

Chapter 20 relates the touching account of Hezekiah's prayer after being notified by the prophet Isaiah that he would soon die of his serious illness. But Hezekiah pleaded with tears to the Lord. His prayer was heard, and Isaiah was sent back to tell him that 15 years would be added to his life.

A series of kings after Hezekiah were all bad, leading to the same fate for Judah which had befallen Israel---captivity. Chapter 24 records the invasion by the Babylonian King Nebuchadnezzar, who began taking various high officials into Babylonian captivity. For a while Nebuchadnezzar installed kings who were to be subservient to him, but because of their rebelliousness he brought in forces and destroyed the city, the walls, and the temple. The city was in ruins. Masses of people were forced to make the long (hundreds of miles) trip to Babylon.

This brings to an end the Divided Kingdom Period. Before going to the next period (Captivity—or Exile), the prophets will be discussed.