

Frequently Asked Questions About the Old Testament

SESSION 19 – 2 KINGS 14–25

What was the correct age for Jehoiachin when he came to the throne, eight or eighteen?

2 Kings 24:8 tells us that Jehoiachin “was eighteen years old when he became king.” But the parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 36:9 states that he was “eight” years old when he began to reign. Obviously there has been a textual error committed by the copyist either in 2 Kings or in 2 Chronicles. This type of error occurs now and then because of blurring or surface damage in the earlier manuscript from which the copy is made. The probabilities are that 2 Chronicles 36:9 is incorrect, both because the age eight is unusually young to assume governmental leadership—though Joash ben Ahaziah was only seven when he began to reign (2 Kings 11:21) and Josiah was only eight (2 Kings 22:1)—and because the Chaldeans treated him as a responsible adult and condemned him to permanent imprisonment in Babylon after he surrendered to them in 597 B.C. Moreover, it is far less likely that the copyist would have mistakenly seen an extra ten stroke that was not present in his original than that he would have failed to observe one that had been smudged out.

–Dictionary of Bible Difficulties

Why sacrifice the heir to the throne (16:3)?

From ancient times those who have tried to manipulate the spirit world have considered human sacrifice the most dreadful and most powerful of all sacrifices. If a god would give assistance for payment of a goat or bull, it was reasoned, a human life would buy a much stronger favor. In a time of national and personal crisis, Ahaz tried to buy the help of the nature gods of Canaan with the life of his son.

–The Quest Study Bible

How did the Israelites sin secretly (17:9)?

This probably was a reference to the pointless deception pursued through their idolatry. They continued to worship God as if he didn't know they were also worshipping idols. The Bible describes people who think they can sin in secret (Psalms 73:11; 94:7; Isaiah 5:18–21). They almost seem to be challenging God to discover their sin, but their sinful lives are as futile as the idea that God can't see them.

–The Quest Study Bible

(It should be noted that this passage [17:7–23] provides) a theological explanation for the downfall of the northern kingdom. Israel had repeatedly spurned the Lord's gracious acts, had refused to heed the prophets' warnings of impending judgment (vv. 13–14, 23) and had failed to keep her covenant obligations (v. 15). The result was the implementation of the covenant curse precisely as it had been presented to the Israelites by Moses before they entered into Canaan (Deuteronomy 28:49–68; 32:1–47).

–NIV Bible Study Notes

What was the difference between a prophet and a seer (17:13)?

It seems there wasn't much difference. In earlier times, prophets were called seers (1 Samuel 9:9). It may be that as Israel developed from a tribal confederation to a kingdom and as people turned from God, the prophetic ministry and its name changed. Or perhaps the language just changed.

–The Quest Study Bible

What was wrong with these practices (17:17)?

Divination means witchcraft, and sorcery is consulting evil spirits. Forms of witchcraft, fortune-telling, and black magic were forbidden by God (Deuteronomy 18:9–14). They were wrong because they sought power and guidance totally apart from God, his law, and his Word. Isaiah echoed this law and prophesied of the complete destruction these occult practices would bring to those who participated in them (Isaiah 8:19–22).

–NIV Application Bible

Were the “people of Samaria” related to the Samaritans of the New Testament (17:29)?

Yes. The people of Samaria represented the mixed population of the former territory of the northern kingdom. In accordance with the deportation system used so fully by Tiglath-Pileser III and followed by his successors, a vast transplantation of peoples occurred. Israelites were sent to Mesopotamia and even beyond; Babylonians and Arameans were transferred to Israel. These people of mixed ancestry eventually came to be known as Samaritans. In later times the Samaritans rejected the idolatry of their polytheistic origins and followed the teachings of Moses, including monotheism. In New Testament times Jesus testified to a Samaritan woman (John 4:4–26), and many Samaritans were converted under the ministry of Philip (Acts 8:4–25).

–NIV Bible Study Notes and NIV Bible Commentary

How could something good be used for evil (18:4)?

Sin often can be seen as a distortion or a perversion of something good: Eating is good, but gluttony is sin; God created sex, but adultery is sin; it's good to talk, but gossip destroys. In this case, “Nehushtan” illustrates the tendency humans have to worship things God gives rather than to worship him alone. Over time, the people probably had begun to think of the bronze snake as something that could help them as it had in the past. Gradually, it acquired the status of an idol with supernatural powers.

–The Quest Study Bible

Did Sennacherib really believe he was doing God's bidding (18:25)?

No, not in the sense of being a submissive follower. Sennacherib earlier taunted Judah that they shouldn't trust in the deliverance of their God (18:22) and later made it clear he thought his power greater than God's (vv. 30, 32–35). His claim to be doing God's work was propaganda, meant to demoralize them. The irony here is that—unknown to Sennacherib—God *had* in fact decreed Israel's military defeat at Sennacherib's hand as punishment for sin (v. 12), though the city of Jerusalem was spared by miraculous intervention (19:32–36).

–Judson Poling

Why wasn't Hezekiah, a godly king, prepared to face death (20:2–3)?

In accordance with God's own promises, Hezekiah had a right to expect a longer life (cf. Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 5:29; 30:16). But Hezekiah's concerns were deeper than any personal desire for added years. What would become of that nation? His reforms were barely yet in progress. What would become of Judah? There was so much more to be done. Deeper still, he would die without a male heir, for no son had yet been born to him. What, then, would become of the house of David? The program and person of God were at stake, and Hezekiah believed that somehow he was vitally involved in them. How could it end like this?

–NIV Bible Commentary

Did Hezekiah's prayer change God's mind (20:5–6)?

It would appear so. God is the one who sovereignly ordains all that comes to pass (Psalm 139:16; Ephesians 1:11). Hezekiah's petition and God's response demonstrate that (1) divine sovereignty does not make prayer inappropriate but, on the contrary, it establishes it, and (2) both prayer and the divine response to prayer are to be included in one's conception of God's sovereign plan (see 1 Kings 21:29; Ezekiel 33 3–16).

–NIV Bible Study Notes

How could the priests have lost the Book of the Law (22:8)?

Reverence for God's Word goes hand in hand with reverence for God. The reign of Manasseh, lasting 55 years, erased knowledge of God's law from the minds of all but the oldest priests. Since God seemed unnecessary to the people, his law became irrelevant. Manasseh's fanatical dedication to idolatry exerted a powerful and negative influence on the people. With so many false gods, they had no interest in God's book.

–The Quest Study Bible

What good did Josiah's revival do (23:24–26)?

Sadly, Josiah's reforms were superficial. Although there were significant changes made "on the surface of life" during Josiah's reign (changes in the Temple, religious form and structure, etc.), the change did not occur in the hearts of the people. Thus, once Josiah died, it was not long

before the nation went back to life as usual. All believers must be careful to focus on the condition of their hearts before God, not just on the “forms” of religion.

-Don Porter