

Psalm 104, II Kings 12-17 (#81) Revised 2023

Psalm 104 — God's greatness is celebrated in this psalm recounting the many wondrous things that He has done. *Imagine you were writing this psalm, how is He "very great" to you?*

II Kings 12— Joash became king, and reigned for 40 years, and did what was right in the sight of the Lord all the days of Jehoiada, the high priest, who instructed him. At the insistence of King Joash and the generosity of God's people, the great temple built by Solomon was repaired and restored. Sadly, upon the death of Jehoiada, King Joash listened to his officials and returned to the worship of idolatry. Then he ordered the death of Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada (see II Chronicles 24:17-25). Because of this evil, Hazael, king of Aram, came against Judah, and then Joash was assassinated. *What lesson is taught in verse 2? See also Proverbs 1:8, 12:15, 19:20. Are you accountable to a more mature Christian?*

II Kings 13— In 814 B.C. Jehoahaz, son of Jehu, became king and not only followed the sins of Jeroboam but also led Israel to worship the Asherah pole which was the Canaanite fertility goddess. Although at one time Jehoahaz sought the Lord's favor, and God heard him, yet because of his sin, the king of Aram continued to reduce the size of Israel's army until it numbered only 10,000 soldiers (vv. 1-9). In 798 B.C. Jehoash became king of Israel and continued to do evil as did all his predecessors. As Elisha was dying, King Jehoash went to see him and wept over him. Elisha revealed that Jehoash would have three victories over Aram, yet he could have had more had he struck the ground with his arrows more than three times when he was commanded to strike the ground by Elisha. One time when the body of a dead man touched the bones of Elisha, the man revived and stood up (vv. 10-21). After the death of Hazael, king of Aram, in fulfillment of the prophecy of Elisha, Jehoash defeated Ben-hadad three times and recovered some of the cities that had been lost (vv. 22-25). *Elisha becomes sick with an illness and dies. How would you answer those who say it is always the will of God to heal His children? See I Timothy 5:23, II Timothy 4:20, II Corinthians 12:7-9, and Galatians 4:13-15.*

II Kings 14— Amaziah became king of Judah and did what was right in the eyes of the Lord but not completely because he didn't take away the high places. After a victory over Edom in the Valley of Salt, Amaziah became overconfident and tried to pick a fight with King Jehoash of Israel but was soundly defeated by him. Jehoash not only captured Amaziah, but broke down part of the wall of Jerusalem and took gold and silver from the Lord's temple and the king's palace. Amaziah is assassinated and his son Azariah (also known as Uzziah) takes his place (vv. 1-22). In 793 B.C. Jeroboam, son of Jehoash, became king and gave Israel the greatest period of stability and territorial growth in the history of the Northern Kingdom. During his reign, Hosea and Amos were prophets who preached against materialism, self-centeredness, and oppression of the poor. Jonah was also a prophet at this time and foretold of the great land expansion of Israel and also reluctantly went to Nineveh to warn the Assyrians of God's judgment (vv. 23-29). *In this chapter, Amaziah became overconfident due to his victory over the Edomites and was soundly defeated by King Jehoash of Israel. Paul says that Christians should not think of themselves more highly than they ought to think but to think with sober judgment. How can we have an honest and accurate evaluation of ourselves? See Romans 12:3-8 and I Corinthians 4:7.*

II Kings 15— At 16 years of age Azariah (also called Uzziah), in 792 B.C., became king of Judah and did right in the sight of the Lord, but he didn't remove the high places. Towards the end of his reign, he tried to offer incense in the temple which only a priest could do, was struck with leprosy, and ended his days quarantined in a separate house, and his son Jotham took his place (vv. 1-6 and II Chronicles 26:16-21). About the year 753 B.C., King Jeroboam II died, and his son Zechariah became king and fulfilled the promise of the Lord that four generations of Jehu's sons would sit on the throne of Israel. In the last 31 years of the history of the Northern Kingdom, until the time that Assyria would carry them off into captivity, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea become kings through assassinations, conspiracies, and power grabs (vv. 7-31). At the age of 25 in 750 B.C., Jotham becomes king of Judah in place of Azariah (Uzziah) and does what is right in the eyes of the Lord but not perfectly (vv. 32-38). *The assessment of both Azariah (Uzziah) and Jotham was that they did what was right in the Lord's sight but did not remove the high places. What were the high places, and why did they need to be removed?*

II Kings 16— In 735 B.C. Ahaz, the son of Jotham, became king and did great evil including; sacrificing his son on the altar of a pagan god, following the most detestable practices of the Canaanites, and satisfying the king of Assyria by building a new altar in the temple area. God comes in swift judgment, and Judah is defeated on every side, and the people of Judah are taken captive by Israel (II Chronicles 28). Instead of

trusting and obeying the Lord (Isaiah 7:1-17), Ahaz seeks the help of Assyria to defend Judah against Aram and Israel. He takes silver and gold from the temple and the treasuries of the palace and sends it to Assyria. Becoming a vassal of Assyria, he does whatever is necessary to please the king of Assyria even to the point of forcing Uriah the priest to change the features of the temple. *The High Priest Uriah supported the king in changing the features of the temple including the altar, and did not oppose the king for his idolatry. Where are Christians tempted to compromise their beliefs and values today? Where are you most tempted?*

II Kings 17— The final king of Israel was Hoshea who did evil in the Lord's sight but not like the kings who preceded him. He became a vassal of Assyria and paid tribute money, but Hoshea had a conspiracy with the king of Egypt against Assyria. Because of this, Israel was taken into captivity to Assyria, never again to become a nation (vv. 1-6). The next seventeen verses describe in detail why Israel was exiled including various types of idolatry, blatant disobedience to the Lord's commands, and the practicing of evil in every form imaginable (vv. 7-23). The Israelites were deported to the Assyrian empire, and many foreigners were sent to Israel to repopulate the land. Since the people who were sent to settle in Samaria and the cities of Israel did not fear the Lord, God sent lions among them. Upon hearing what was happening, the king of Assyria sent a priest back to Israel to teach these foreigners the requirements of Yahweh. Although the people feared the Lord, they also worshiped their own gods according to the customs of the nations from which they had come. The mixture of worshiping the Lord and idols continued on from generation to generation (vv. 24-41). *In four or five sentences give a synopsis of why Israel fell and was taken into captivity by Assyria. See verses 7-20.*

Sources for summary and questions: 1. Serendipity Bible for Groups, c. 1988 Littleton, CO. 2. MacArthur Study Bible ESV, c. 1997 Thomas Nelson, Inc. 3. Life Application Bible HCSB, c. 1988 Tyndale House Publishers, Inc. 4. The Complete Bible Companion, c. 2014 Barbour Publishing, Inc., Uhrichsville, OH. 5. ESV Study Bible, c. 2008 Crossway Bibles, Wheaton, IL. 6. The World Bible Handbook, Lawrence Richards, Word Inc., Waco, TX. 7. The Quest Study Bible NIV, c. 1994 Zondervan Publishing & Christianity Today, Grand Rapids, MI & Wheaton, IL. 8. The Transformation Study Bible, c. 2009 David C. Cook. 9. Halley's Bible Handbook, c. 2000 Zondervan Publishing, Grand Rapids, MI. 10. 500 Answers from the Bible, c. 2006 Barbour Publishing, Uhrichsville, OH. 11. Understanding the Bible, c. 2000 Holman Publishers, Nashville, TN. 12. Homan Bible Handbook, c. 1992 Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville, TN. 13. Moody Bible Commentary, c. 2014 Moody Publishers, Chicago, IL.

Psalm 105, II Kings 18-23 (#82) Revised 2023

Psalm 105 — The psalmist recounts Israel's miraculous deliverance from famine, slavery, and their conquest of Canaan, giving glory to God for all that he has done. *Why did God do this for the Israelites?*

II Kings 18— Now II Kings records the history of the two best and most godly kings in Judah after David. These two kings are Hezekiah (chapters 18-20) and Josiah (chapters 22-23), who each follow the two most evil kings of Judah, Ahaz and Manasseh. Although he had not acted perfectly, Hezekiah trusted the Lord and tore down the high places and all the idols of Judah like no king has done since the time of Solomon, who had originally initiated the worship of false gods to please his wives. Because of his obedience and faithfulness, the Lord was with Hezekiah (715 B.C. to 686 B.C.), and he rebelled against Assyria and defeated the Philistines, their ancient enemy. Hezekiah was co-regent with his father Ahaz when he saw the deportation of the Israelites (722 B.C.) which must have motivated him to execute the reforms in Judah and seek the Lord (vv. 1-12). Although Hezekiah tried to appease the king of Assyria (Sennacherib) by sending him silver and gold, in 701 B.C. Sennacherib captured the fortified cities of Judah including Lachish and headed toward Jerusalem with his army of 185,000 soldiers to take it also. The Assyrian field commander, Rabshakeh, met with King Hezekiah's representatives outside the gate of Jerusalem. The message that Rabshakeh gave to Hezekiah is one of the most insolent and blasphemous recorded in the Holy Scriptures. First, Judah is rightly rebuked because of their trust in Egypt who is described as a splintered reed of a staff. Secondly, he wrongly accuses Hezekiah of offending Yahweh for tearing down the high places and the altars. God commanded Israel through Moses to centralize all worship in the temple in Jerusalem (vv. 13-37). *What was the reason that God allowed Assyria to deport the Israelites and take them into captivity? See verses 11-12. How does this apply to your life as a Christian? See Colossians 3:25 and I Corinthians 11:29-32.*

II Kings 19— Upon hearing the arrogant words from Sennacherib's field commander, King Hezekiah tore his clothes in mourning and sent Eliakim and others to Isaiah to ask for his intercession and seek an answer from the Lord. The Lord responds to Hezekiah's plea by assuring him that He has heard the blasphemy of the king of Assyria and will act on their behalf. Therefore, he and his people should not be afraid of the army of Assyria. When the king of Assyria put greater pressure on Judah to surrender,

Hezekiah took the letter he received, spread it before the Lord, and fervently sought for deliverance. In his prayer he recognized the Lord as the sovereign ruler of the universe who alone deserved the honor and glory (vv. 1-19). In response to his prayer, the Lord speaks directly to Sennacherib's pride and arrogance by declaring his defeat and ultimate death (vv. 20-28). To Hezekiah, the Lord guarantees protection and deliverance for Jerusalem in order to bring glory to Himself and because of His servant David. That night the angel of the Lord came into the camp of Assyria and struck down 185,000 soldiers. So, Sennacherib broke camp and returned to Nineveh being stunned by the turn of events. Sometime later he was killed by two of his sons, and another son Esar-haddon took his place as king (vv. 29-37). *If God did not come through for Hezekiah and Judah, they would have been destroyed and deported to Assyria like Israel of the Northern Kingdom. Why did God protect Judah and not Israel? What other instances in the Bible do we see God coming through for a person or Israel where if He hadn't, they would have been killed or destroyed? Can you give a personal illustration of God coming through for you in a difficult or impossible situation?*

II Kings 20— This chapter takes place more than a year before the invasion of Assyria (chapter 18 and 19). Hezekiah is informed by the prophet Isaiah that he has an illness that will end in death and therefore must put his house in order. Upon hearing the news of his death, Hezekiah cried out to the Lord in prayer with bitter weeping reminding the Lord how he had faithfully and wholeheartedly served Him. God quickly answers his prayer, extends his life 15 more years, and gives him a sign by having the sundial go back 10 steps. Hezekiah succumbs to pride and shows to the envoys of Babylon all of the riches of Judah. Isaiah rebukes the king by prophesying that in the future the armies of this far away country would take all the people and their riches, including Hezekiah's royal descendants, to Babylon. *When Hezekiah was told that Judah and his future descendants would be taken off to Babylon, he said, "The Word of the Lord that you have spoken is good," for he thought: Why not, if there will be peace and security during my lifetime (v. 19, CSB)?" What is your reaction to Hezekiah's words? Should Hezekiah have more concern for future generations that came after him? How does the way you live your life affect your future generations?*

II Kings 21— Now we come to the darkest, most evil days of Judah when Manasseh, the son of Hezekiah, becomes king and does more evil than any king before him. During his 55-year reign (697-642 B.C.), Manasseh committed every pagan atrocity imaginable including setting up the image of Asherah in the temple, offering his son as a sacrifice to the pagan god Molech, building altars to the heavenly hosts in the courtyards of the temple, and the shedding of much innocent blood (including probably that of Isaiah, Hebrews 11:37b). It was because of the evil he had done as king that caused Judah to go into captivity (23:26, 24:3). The king of Assyria shackled Manasseh and took him off to Babylon, and “in his distress he sought the favor of the Lord his God and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers (II Chronicles 33:12, NIV).” The Lord brought him back to Jerusalem where he tried to undo some of the evil he had done (II Chronicles 33:10-17). Amon, Manasseh’s son, become king and continues the evil of his father. After two years he is assassinated and his son Josiah becomes king at the age of eight. *One of the most remarkable attributes of God is His mercy upon undeserving people (which is all of us). Manasseh, the wickedest king of Judah, humbles himself and repents, and God restores him (II Chronicles 33:10-17). What other illustrations like this are we given in the Bible? See I Kings 21:20-29, Jonah 3-4, and Acts 9:1-8.*

II Kings 22— Now comes the amazing reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). The writer of II Kings says about Josiah, “Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart and with all his soul, and with all his might according to the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him (23:25, ESV).” Because of the waning influence of Assyria, Josiah was able to annex a portion of the land of Israel (Northern Kingdom) to Judah, including Manasseh and Ephraim, and abolish pagan worship throughout Judah and Israel. He initiated repairs to the temple that had been in great disrepair due to the evil reigns of King Manasseh and Amon. While renovating the temple, the book of the law was found by Hilkiyah, the high priest, who gave it to Shaphan, the court secretary, who read it to the king. Upon hearing the book of the law, King Josiah tore his clothes and wept knowing that God’s great wrath was imminent because of Judah’s evil. The king asked Hilkiyah and other servants to inquire of the Lord. They went to Huldah the prophetess to find out what Yahweh would say to them. The Lord said that indeed His wrath was kindled against Judah, but that since his heart was tender and humble, the disaster that would surely come would take place after his death. *Hilkiyah, the priest, with other servants of King Josiah inquired of the Lord’s direction through the prophetess Huldah. Name other women in the Bible who God used as a judge, prophetess, leader, or teacher.*

II Kings 23— Josiah commanded all the elders and people of Judah to call a holy convocation in Jerusalem in order to hear the book of law and then make a covenant in the presence of the Lord to obey His commands and decrees (vv. 1-3). Josiah did a complete house cleaning of all the false worship by removing every idol from the Temple, from Jerusalem, from every high place, from every valley, including tearing down the altar at Bethel and the high place of Jeroboam as the man of God had prophesied 300 years earlier (I Kings 13:1-2). In the eighteenth year of the reign of Josiah, Judah celebrated the Passover as it hadn't been observed since the days of the judges (vv. 4-23). The national revival came to a halt when King Josiah was killed by Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo (609 B.C.). Neco deposed Jehoahaz, son of Josiah, only three months after his reign began and put his brother Jehoiakim (also called Eliakim) as king in his place (vv. 28-37). *Verse 25 speaks of the total commitment of King Josiah. This verse reminds us of the Great Commandment in Matthew 22:37-38 and Deuteronomy 6:5. Who were other people in the Bible that were totally committed to the Lord throughout their lives? What steps do we need to take to be totally committed to Christ? Does God bring to your mind any area in your life that is not totally yielded to Christ?*

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Psalm 106, II Kings 24-25, Ezra 1-4 (#83) Revised 2023

Psalm 106— This is a psalm contrasting God’s faithful providence and Israel’s waywardness. *Consider the sins of the Israelites and God’s responses (hint: look for “they” and “he”). How does God deal with their sinfulness?*

II Kings 24— In 605 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon defeated the combined armies of Egypt and Assyria at Carchemish in northern Syria causing Judah to switch its allegiance from Egypt to Babylon which had been prophesied by Isaiah about a hundred years earlier (II Kings 20: 16-18). King Jehoiakim reigned for three years and attempted rebellion against Babylon. In 598 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar laid siege, and captured Jerusalem, and replaced King Jehoiakim with King Jehoiachin. After reigning only three months, King Jehoiachin and all his royal family were deported to Babylon including the gold articles from the temple and the palace. Jehoiachin was replaced by his uncle Mattaniah whose name was changed to Zedekiah. Zedekiah reigned eleven years and did what was evil in the Lord’s sight. He rebelled against the king of Babylon which sealed his doom. *Verses 3-4 says, “Surely these things happened (destruction of Jerusalem) ... because of the sins of Manasseh and all he had done, including the shedding of innocent blood. For he had filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the Lord was not willing to forgive (NIV).” What will be the necessary outcome in our world because of the millions of innocent lives that have been killed in wars, by evil rulers, on the streets, and in the womb during the last 100 years? See Revelation 9:20-21, 16:5-7, and 18:24.*

II Kings 25— *The era of the rule of kings from Saul to Zedekiah came to an end with misery and defeat because of the continued disregard for God and His laws. Zedekiah (597-586 B.C.) is placed in power by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon but finally rebels against him (588 B.C.), thinking that Egypt would come to their rescue. After two years of laying siege (586 B.C.), the city of Jerusalem was broken into, and the king and his warriors fled the city. The king was then captured and brought to Riblah to be sentenced by Nebuchadnezzar. After seeing his sons slaughtered, Zedekiah’s eyes were put out, and he was carried bound in chains to Babylon (vv. 1-7). The Lord’s temple, the king’s palace, the walls of the*

city, and all the houses in Jerusalem were destroyed by the Babylonians, and the poorest of the land were left to take care of the vines and the farm land. Many of the rulers of the Jews were killed by the invaders, the temple furniture and utensils were confiscated by them, and the king left Gedaliah to be governor (vv. 8-22). Ishmael of the royal family killed Gedaliah as well as those who were left to rule with him. The leaders who remained took Jeremiah and all of the people who were left in the land and went to Egypt for protection against Babylon (vv. 23-26). Meanwhile in Babylon in about 560 B.C., King Jehoiachin of David's line was released from prison and dined regularly in the presence of the king of Babylon for the rest of his life (vv. 27-29). *What book in the Bible records a prophet's sorrow at seeing Jerusalem destroyed, and who wrote the book?*

Ezra— The book of Ezra was written about 450 B.C. and is a history of Israel from the time King Cyrus gave the Jews the authorization to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple to the return of Ezra to Jerusalem in order to teach the people God's Word, to bring their lives in line with His teachings, and to encourage them to be faithful to their faithful God. The first six chapters speak of the return of the exiles from Babylon in 538 B.C. and of the rebuilding of the temple. Chapters 7 to 10 describe the return of the second group of exiles from Babylon led by Ezra in 458 B.C. and the challenges of mixed marriages which would cause a departure toward heathen practices and idolatry. This book shows the power of God as He works in the hearts of King Cyrus, King Darius, and King Artaxerxes on behalf of His people to fulfill His purposes and promises.

Ezra 1— In 538 B.C. the Lord puts in the heart of King Cyrus of Persia to allow the Jews to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple of the Lord. The Lord also motivated the people of Judah and Benjamin along with the priests and Levites to return to Jerusalem bringing with them all the articles that Nebuchadnezzar had taken from the temple in 586 B.C.

Ezra 2— In honor of all those who in faith returned to their land, the name of each family leader is recorded including the number of the family members that travelled with them. Genealogical records were carefully maintained by the members of each family proving their lineage. The registry of those who returned includes the various families of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin (vv. 3-35), the priests and temple personnel including Solomon's servants (vv. 36-58), and those with questionable credentials (vv. 59-63). A total number of 42,360 returned from Babylon and began to settle in their towns of origin. *After reading verse 1, Jeremiah 25:11-14, 29:1-11, and Isaiah 44:28, describe the character and attributes of God seen in these passages. How does this apply to our lives?*

Ezra 3— On the seventh month after their return from Babylon, the people erected an altar of worship to offer sacrifices during the celebration of the Festival of the Tabernacles (Booths). In the second month of the second year, they began to build the temple starting with the laying of the foundation. Upon completing the foundation, there was great celebration and praise to the Lord for His goodness and faithful love. *As they celebrated the building of the foundation of the temple, there was both joy and sorrow. Explain the reactions of two different groups, and why they reacted the way they did. See verses 12-13. How should Christians handle both the successes and failures of their lives? See Philippians 3:12-14.*

Ezra 4— Great obstacles confront the leaders of Judah and Benjamin when their enemies from Samaria interfere, threaten, and discourage the people to keep them from building the temple. The work of building the temple was stopped for 16 years due to the effectiveness of the opposition. Verses 6 to 23 fit better between chapters 6 and 7 since the reign of King Artaxerxes was from 464 to 424 B.C. *Describe the tactics used by the Samaritan opposition to discourage and try to stop the Jews from rebuilding the temple. See verses 1 to 6. Should we as Christians expect opposition in our service to the Lord? See I Timothy 3:12.*

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