

## “1<sup>st</sup> Kings 11 – 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25” (Route 66)

For this study, we begin in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 11... The LAST TIME we were ‘officially’ in this series, we had looked at the writings of King Solomon, David’s son—the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, AND... the Song of Solomon.

We did cheat a LITTLE BIT over the summer, and insert the Book of Jonah... Just, sort of as a “one-off” study... mainly because Jonah is very “self contained,” PLUS it is COMMONLY BELIEVED that Jonah is one of the EARLIEST PROPHETS in the Old Testament...

But, with this study, we resume the ‘main narrative’ of the HISTORY OF ISRAEL... and we will cover the REST of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings, and ALL of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings...

These are events that USHER-IN the **TIME OF THE PROPHETS**... (which will be the next MAJOR SECTION of scripture we will look at)...

These events ALSO set-us-up for the **WRITINGS of the EXILE**—Books like ESTHER, and EZEKIEL, and DANIEL.. AND the writings once the Jews RETURN TO ISREAL AFTER the Babylonian exile... like Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, Zechariah...

Now—even though 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings are TWO BOOKS in our Bibles... they ORIGINALLY APPEARED as ONE BOOK in the Hebrew Bible, the Tanak...

They’re basically a SEQUEL to 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel—which were originally called ‘1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kingdoms.’ – So, these books were called ‘3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Kingdoms.’

But, with the VULGATE—the Latin Translation of the Bible—these two Books became known as ‘KINGS.’

They cover a period of about 429 years, from 1015 BC to 586 BC (roughly)... And—on that note—I want to POINT OUT something THIS author OBSERVES that I think is IMPORTANT to keep in mind ANY time we study the Bible... He says:

*“First and second kings are NOT as detailed a history as one might expect... 400 years, but only 47 Chapters? Instead, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings present a **selective** history—one with a theological purpose. The author emphasizes the people and events that are morally and religiously significant. [They] present... God’s providential working in-and-through the lives of His people for His redemptive purposes. **They... are not to be viewed simply as history... but as THEOLOGY and LESSONS from history.**”*

This is SO IMPORTANT to keep in mind when we study the Bible... The Bible is NOT—nor does it ever INTEND to—present a **COMPLETE** TELLING of ALL of MAN’S HISTORY...

The Bible is tracing ONE STORY... of the PROMISES and PLANS of God’s REDEMPTION... DOWN through the ages—TO and THROUGH His people—until Christ is born... and until He returns... It is **SALVATION** HISTORY... not **WORLD** HISTORY...

Another author writes: *“Kings presents a difficult period in the history of God’s people, a time of great change and upheaval—struggle from within and pressure from without. The result is a dark moment in the history of Israel; the collapse and eventual captivity of both nations.”* –

**SPOILER ALERT!**

Now, there’s LOTS of suggestions as to who WROTE these books... Some have said Ezra... others have said Isaiah... the most PROMINENT SUGGESTION is Jeremiah... There is INTERNAL EVIDENCE that the author WITNESSED the downfall of Jerusalem...

And these books are written—LARGELY—to chronicle, or COMMENT on, **WHY** the Lord ALLOWS His people to go into captivity...

The Talmud ascribes these books to Jeremiah, AND 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapter 24 and 25 actually **APPEAR** in Jeremiah Chapters 39—42... So, MOST LIKELY, Jeremiah is the author...

Let’s BACK-UP and get something of a RUNNING START... 1<sup>st</sup> Kings begins GREAT... Solomon—the son of David—was the WEALTHIEST and WISEST King who ever lived...

1<sup>st</sup> Kings 4:29 says: **“God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding...”** – His **“wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt.”**

Verse 11 says: **“He was wiser than all men...”** Verse 24 says: **“All the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart.”**

Now—as for his WEALTH—1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 10 says: **“The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold...”** – That’s about **TWO BILLION DOLLARS** per year by today’s standards!

Verse 15 says, this was **“BESIDES [what came] from traveling merchants, from... traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and... the governors of the country.”** – Verse 23 says: **“Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in [both] riches and wisdom.”**

This—OBVIOUSLY—led to a very PROSPEROUS TIME in Israel... Chapter 4, Verse 20, says: **“Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing.”** – Verse 24 says... Solomon: **“had peace on every side all around him. And Judah and Israel dwelt safely... all the days of Solomon.”**

We should **ALSO** not forget... that God used SOLOMON to **BUILD THE JEWISH TEMPLE**, which is considered to be *“one of the most magnificent structures of the ancient world...”*

MODERN ESTIMATES of its construction costs range from 300-500 **BILLION** dollars! – And the Temple becomes a SIGNIFICANT PART of the Biblical **Backdrop** from here on out...

**“But,”** Chapter 11 begins, **“BUT... Solomon loved many foreign women...”** — Now, the STANDARD PASTOR JOKE is to call this Chapter **“Solomon’s Big But.”** – Right???

But the QUESTION is... **WHY???** – “*WHY is this such a BIG deal?*” – Well, ALL THE WAY BACK in Deuteronomy Chapter 7... God had told Moses... (when He delivered the DESCENDANTS OF ABRAHAM OUT of their 400-year period of BONDAGE in Egypt...

When He brought them INTO the LAND He had promised to give Abraham... in Genesis Chapter FIFTEEN, the “Abrahamic Covenant”... God said:

**“When the LORD your God... casts out many nations before you, the Hittites... the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites...”**

God says: **“You shall make no... marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.”** – And, here’s WHY... God says: **“They will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other gods...”** – And **“SO** the anger of the LORD will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly.”

This becomes RELEVANT as we go through out study this morning... But, I just want to say...

A lot of times, God is given a BAD RAP... Critics will look at the Bible and say: “*If God is so loving, how could He allow that to happen to THOSE people??? Isn’t God just racially biased?*”

Well, check it out... Here, God promises to judge **HIS OWN PEOPLE** if they are disobedient... So, this is so important to keep in mind... **“God shows no partiality”** (Acts 10:34)...

BUT... we come to Solomon... Who—up to THIS point—has been the WISEST KING... the WEALTHIEST KING who ever lived... the one GOD USES to build the TEMPLE...

**“BUT,”** Chapter 11 says... **“Solomon loved many foreign women...”**—LISTEN: **“women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites—”** – Verse 2: **“from the nations... whom the LORD... said... “You shall not intermarry with them... [for] they will turn... your hearts after their gods.”** – “Solomon,” we read, **“clung to these in love...”**

**“[So it was],”** Verse 4, **“when Solomon was old, that his wives TURNED HIS HEART after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God...”** – IN OTHER WORDS: EXACTLY what God SAID would happen HAPPENED!

We read: **“Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians... Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites.”** – **“Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab... and for Molech... And he did likewise for all his foreign wives...”**

Verse 9 says: **“the LORD became angry, because [Solomon’s] heart [was] turned from the LORD God of Israel...”** – And, this BRINGS US to one of the most IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENTS in the Book of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings... Verse 11 says:

**“The LORD [said] to Solomon, “Because you have done this, and... not kept My covenant and My statutes... I will... tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant.”** **“However”**—Verse 13... NOTE this... God says: **“I will not tear away the whole kingdom [from you]; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.”**

A FEW MORE DETAILS... TOWARDS THE END of the Chapter... We read about a guy named Jeroboam... Who—Verse 26 says—“**rebels against**” [Solomon]...

In Verse 29, we read: “**It happened... when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah... met him on the way; and... Ahijah took hold of [his] garment... and tore it into twelve pieces.**” – “**And he said to Jeroboam,**” Verse 31...

“**Behold,**” God says He’s going to “**tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you...**” – But, God says, in Verse 32: “[Solomon] shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem...”

“**BECAUSE,**” God says, in Verse 33... “**they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth... [and] Chemosh... [and] Milcom... and has not walked in My ways to do what is right in My eyes and keep My statutes and My judgments, as did his father David.**”

And THIS is where... the once UNIFIED, PROSPEROUS, BUSTLING, RICH Kingdom of Israel... becomes DIVIDED into **TWO** KINGDOMS...

**TEN TRIBES to the NORTH**—known as **ISRAEL**... (EVENTUALLY known as SAMARIA)... And **TWO TRIBES to the SOUTH**—known as **JUDAH**...

And, it’s REALLY sort of a FIRST WAVE of judgment that God sends upon Israel... and this ALL HAPPENS by the END of Chapter 11... It’s fairly NEAT and LINEAR and easy to follow.

But—from Chapter 12 forward—the REST of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings and ALL of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings become ABOUT the various KINGS who ruled in the NORTH or to the SOUTH after Solomon passes from the scene... and, it **DOES** become somewhat DIFFICULT to follow...

Because the NARRATOR SWITCHES BACK-AND-FORTH between these two kingdoms... as he TRACES their history SIMULTANEOUSLY...

So, I call this study “**The Good, the Bad, & the Ugly.**” – Because SOME of the kings who reign in this period are GOOD... Like Jehoshaphat, or Hezekiah, or Josiah (who brings REVIVAL).

In fact, **8** of the 20 KINGS in the SOUTHERN KINGDOM could be considered GOOD...

Now—by comparison—**NONE** of the KINGS to the North could be considered good... It’s like the old NURSERY RHYME—from Henry Wadsworth Longfellow:

*“There once was a girl... who had a little curl... right in the middle of her forehead... and when she was good she was very, very good... but when she was bad, she was horrid.”*

When the kings who ruled in Judah or Israel were BAD—they were **TERRIBLE**—like AHAB or MANASSEH... The guys at the Bible Project write:

*“Each [kingdom] had about 20 kings, and as the author introduces each one, he evaluates their reign by a few criteria. Did they worship the God of Israel... or did they promote the worship of*

*other gods? Did they deal with idolatry among the people? **And**... did they remain faithful to the covenant like David, or did they become corrupt and unjust?"*

Dr. Graham Scroggie ALSO points out: *"In the southern kingdom [of Judah], there was but one dynasty, the Davidic... But in the northern kingdom, there were NINE dynasties. The northern kingdom DID NOT ADVANCE the messianic purpose, but the southern kingdom did. [In the south] Davidic succession was maintained, and—by the prophets—a true witness was kept alive."*

So, here's a CHART of when ALL of the various kings REIGNED... Whether they were considered GOOD or BAD...

And, one of the **MAIN THINGS** that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings DO is USHER-IN the TIME OF THE PROPHETS—which becomes our **NEXT** OVERALL SECTION of SCRIPTURE to study...

This author writes: *"One of the strategic purposes of Kings is to introduce the role of the prophets... They speak on behalf of God, and serve as "covenant watchdogs," calling-out idolatry and injustice among the kings and the people. They remind Israel... to be a light to the nations by obeying [God's] commands, and challenge Israel to repent and follow God."*

The prophets who minister primarily **IN THE SOUTH**—in **Judah**—are: Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Joel, Nahum, Habakkuk, Obadiah, and Zephaniah...

To the **NORTH** (in **Samaria**), we have the prophets of Hosea and Amos (and we should probably include JONAH... even though he was sent to NINEVEH)...

Also in the North, we have the prophets **Eli-JAH** and **Elisha**—who could ARGUABLY **BE** considered two of the GREATEST Old Testament PROPHETS... even though NEITHER of them has a BOOK named after them...

Now, in SOME WAYS, we could say that 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings FUNCTION **LIKE** a Book of Elijah and Elisha would... they have about TWENTY CHAPTERS devoted to their ministries... marked LARGELY by the MIRACULOUS...

And, there's **OTHER** PROPHETS NAMED in these books who HAVE NO WRITINGS devoted to them... Ahijah, Iddo, Jehu, Hanani, Jahaziel... and a few others...

Now—IF you remember from our study of the Book of Judges—**THAT** BOOK is very CYCLICAL... And, the **PATTERN** to Judges is this:

The people would SIN... God RAISES UP an OPPRESSOR... The people CRY OUT FOR DELIVERANCE... God sends a CHAMPION (a JUDGE)... the people enjoy a period of PEACE... and then, the cycle starts OVER AGAIN...

Judges 2:19 sums-it-up this way... It says: **"It came to pass, when the judge was dead, that [the people] reverted and behaved more corruptly than their fathers..."** – The phrase **"THEN the children of Israel did evil in the sight of the LORD"** appears THROUGHOUT the Book...

Well, in 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings... speaking **ABOUT** the various Kings... the phrase “**he did evil in the sight of the LORD,**” or “**he did what was right in the sight of the LORD**” ... those phrases appear THIRTY-SIX times throughout these chapters...

So, there would be a period where a king didn’t adhere to the ways of the Lord, which becomes a time of UNREST and IDOLATRY and REBELLION...

OR... when a king did what was good and right in the sight of the Lord, there follows a time of PEACE and REST and REVIVAL...

The Books divide—very NEATLY—into THREE MAIN SECTIONS... There is the “**Unified Kingdom**” under Solomon—in Chapters 1 through 11 of 1<sup>st</sup> Kings...

Then, there is the “**Divided Kingdom**”—in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings 12 through 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapter 18...

And then, the CLOSING CHAPTERS of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings—Chapters 18—25—focus on the “**Surviving Kingdom**” of Judah in the south...

Pushing-in even FURTHER, Dr. Graham Scroggie says: “*There can be THREE PERIODS distinguished by looking at the relationship of the TWO KINGDOMS to each other:*

*From Rehoboam to Asa in the south, and Jeroboam to Omri in the north—a period of 57 years... During this time, they were ANTAGONISTIC to each other (1 Kings 12:1–16:28).*

*Then, through the marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son in the south with Ahab’s daughter in the north, the kingdoms become ALLIED with each other for 79 years... (1 Kings 16:29–2 Kings 13:9)...*

*Then, finally, from Amaziah to Hezekiah in the south, and Joash to Hoshea in the north, they again become ANTAGONISTIC to each other, for a period of 118 years (2 Kings 13:10–18:12).”*

Now, **WHY** are these kingdoms ANTAGONISTIC to each other? – Here’s what happens...

In the NORTH, King Jeroboam becomes AFRAID that ALL HIS PEOPLE are going to travel SOUTH to JERUSALEM—(where the TEMPLE is) to worship... So, what does he do?

Well, he builds a NEW TEMPLE in the North... 1<sup>st</sup> Kings Chapter 12 says: “**Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘The kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go... to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to... Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam...’**”

David Guzik writes: “*Jeroboam feared the political implications of yearly trips down to the capital city of the southern kingdom of Judah.*”

“**Therefore,**” we read in Verse 28, “**the king... made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go... to Jerusalem. Here are your gods... which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’**” – That sounds familiar! – “**He set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.**”

And so, what BEGINS as a POLITICAL FEAR (on behalf of Jeroboam) eventually leads the ENTIRE NORTHERN KINGDOM into IDOLATRY...

This is WHY, by the way, in John Chapter 4—when Jesus is talking with the SAMARITAN WOMAN—she says: **“Our fathers worshiped on this mountain... and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship.”** – She’s talking about THIS VERY THING in 1<sup>st</sup> Kings...

This **DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM** is a **HUGELY IMPORTANT DEVELOPMENT** in the History of Israel... And—as I said—it’s really sort of the ‘FIRST WAVE OF JUDGMENT’ that God sends on Israel.

THE SECOND... happens in 2<sup>nd</sup> KINGS CHAPTER 17... If you want to look there with me... This is A SECOND WAVE of JUDGMENT that comes upon the people... And, it’s **IN** the form of the invading Assyrian army...

This is about 220 years AFTER the KINGDOM becomes **DIVIDED**... It’s a very TRAGIC CHAPTER...

I’m just going to read SEVERAL VERSES, starting in Verse 5 of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapter 17... It says: **“Now the king of Assyria... went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years... [and] the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria...”**

**“For so it was,”** Verse 7... **“that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt... and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the LORD had cast out from before [them]... Also,”** Verse 9, **“the children of Israel secretly did against the LORD their God things that were not right... they built for themselves high places in all their cities...”**

Verse 10: **“They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill... they burned incense on all the high places... they did wicked things to provoke the LORD to anger, for they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.”**

**“Yet the LORD testified against Israel and against Judah,”** Verse 13, **“by all of His prophets, every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers...”**

So—there it is—one of the MAIN PURPOSES of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings: The Lord TESTIFYING against His people THROUGH the prophets...

**“Nevertheless,”** Verse 14 says... **“they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God.”** – **“They rejected His statutes and His covenant,”** Verse 15, **“...they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them...”**

Verse 16, **“They left all the commandments of the LORD their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshiped all the host of heaven, and served Baal.”**

**“And,”** Verse 17, **“they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger.”** – **“Therefore,”** Verse 18, **“the LORD was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight... there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.”**

Okay, so what we’re READING about is ONLY the Tribes to the NORTH at this point... The end of Verse 23 says: **“Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.”** – David Guzik writes:

*“When [the] Assyrians... exiled a... community, they led captives away on journeys of hundreds of miles, with the captives naked and attached together with a system of strings and fishhooks... through their lower lips. God would make sure they were led in this humiliating manner through the broken walls of their conquered cities. It was not because... God... was unable to help them, but because they had so forsaken God and ignored His guidance... that He finally stopped actively protecting them and let them rot and degrade according to their [own] desires.”*

And, notice the VERY NEXT VERSE of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings Chapter 17... Verse 24 says: **“Then the king of Assyria brought people from Babylon, Cuthah, Ava, Hamath, and from Sepharvaim, and placed them in the cities of Samaria instead of the children of Israel; and they took possession of Samaria and dwelt in its cities.”**

So, not ONLY did the Assyrians take the Northern Tribes CAPTIVE... they THEN IMPORTED a bunch of FOREIGN SETTLERS into the Northern Territory...

And, this is where the IDEA—or the derogatory TERM—**“Samaritan”** came from... this is WHY the Jews held them in such CONTEMPT... Again, John Chapter 4 tells us that: **“Jews [had] no dealings with Samaritans.”** – WHY?

It was because the “full blooded” Jews who RETURNED to the Southern Kingdom after the exile (which we’ll read about in just a moment)... view the ‘Samaritans’ of the NORTHERN KINGDOM as RELIGIOUS and RACIAL and HALF-BREEDS...

One author writes: *“The full-blooded... mono-theistic Jews (of the Southern Kingdom) detested the mixed marriages and worship of their northern cousins... Walls of bitterness were erected on both sides and did nothing but harden for the next 550 years.”*

Now, AGAIN, notice—in Verse 18—it says: **“The LORD was very angry with Israel (the Northern Kingdom), and removed them from His sight... there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone.”**

So, JUDAH—the SOUTHERN KINGDOM—did NOT FALL to the Assyrians... About FIVE YEARS AFTER THIS—in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 18 and 19... The King of Assyria attacks the Southern Kingdom... and God REBUKES him...



In 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 19, we read: **“the LORD [says] concerning the king of Assyria: ‘He shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there... For I will defend this city,’ says the Lord, ‘to save it for My own sake and for My servant David’s sake.’”**

Once again, David Guzik writes: *“[Here] God still honors [the promise he made] to David in 2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel Chapter 7...” – “God defends Jerusalem, not for the city’s sake... He does it for His own sake and for the sake of [His promise to] David.”*

And we would THINK... that the people of JUDAH would LEARN A LESSON from WATCHING what happened to the 10 Tribes of Northern Kingdom... And yet...

About A HUNDRED YEARS LATER—in 586 BC—the Babylonians invade and conquer the SOUTHERN KINGDOM of Judah... We READ about it in 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings 25 AND 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles Chapter 36... THAT passage CONCLUDES by saying:

**“[The Lord] brought against [Judah] the king of the Chaldeans [or BABYLON]... they burned the house of God, broke down the wall of Jerusalem, burned all its palaces with fire, and destroyed all its precious possessions. And those who escaped from the sword he carried away to Babylon... to fulfill the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate, [the land] kept Sabbath to fulfill seventy years.”** – Now, what’s THAT all about???

Well, this is interesting... In Leviticus Chapter 25, God established a SABBATH YEAR for the Israelites... Kinda like the SABBATH DAY... He said:

**‘When you come [into] the land that I am giving you, the land must be given a rest period, a sabbath to God. Six years you may plant your fields... and harvest your crops, but the seventh year is a sabbath... for the land... during which you may not plant your fields, nor prune your vineyards. Do not harvest crops... and do not gather the grapes on your unpruned vines, [because] it is a year of rest for the land.’**

So, the people were supposed to let the land lie FALLOW every seventh year... And, God TELLS them... if they DON’T observe the **“Sabbath for the land”**... He says:

**“I will scatter you among the nations... Your land will [be] desolate... your cities in ruins. Then, as long as the land is desolate and you are in your enemies’ land, the land will... rest and enjoy its sabbatical years... that you would not give it when you lived there.”**

And, I think a LOT of people DON’T KNOW THIS... the seventy years that the Lord ALLOWED the Children of Israel to be taken away captive into Babylon... is BECAUSE they DIDN’T OBEY the ‘SABBATH YEAR’ command...

One author writes: *“The people of [the Southern Kingdom] DENIED the land its Sabbaths over a period of... 490 years, meaning they ‘owed’ the land 70 Sabbaths... and so, to fulfill [these] seventy years... God took the years back during the Babylonian exile.”*

As we just read, Jeremiah PROPHECIES about this (this is one of the purposes of his writings)... And—in the LAST CHAPTER of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings—we read: **“Thus Judah [the Southern Kingdom] was carried away captive from its own land.”**

And so—BY THE END of 2<sup>nd</sup> KINGS... THIS is where we are in the Biblical narrative:

- The once prosperous Kingdom of Israel—under Solomon—becomes DIVIDED... into the NORTHERN KINGDOM of SAMARIA, and the SOUTHERN KINGDOM of JUDAH...
- God SENDS a SERIES OF PROPHETS to WARN the VARIOUS KINGS and the PEOPLE... to NOT turn to IDOLATRY, and to HONOR the COVENANT God made with them...
- The NORTHERN KINGDOM is eventually taken away captive by the ASSYRIANS...
- The SOUTHERN KINGDOM is now taken away into the BABYLONIAN CAPTIVITY...
- This becomes the time DURING which the Books of EZEKIEL and ESTHER and DANIEL are written...
- AFTER WHICH—when the people return—we have the Books of EZRA, NEHEMIAH, 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Chronicles, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi...

Because—if you DID NOT KNOW—Ezra Chapter 1 OPENS by telling us something amazing... A Persian King by the name of **CYRUS**—WHO, by the way is specifically mentioned by NAME by in the writings of Isaiah...

Cyrus does something amazing! – He gives permission to the people of **JUDAH**—the Southern Kingdom—to go BACK and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem... Ezra Chapter 1 opens:

**“In the first year of Cyrus king of Persia, that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be fulfilled, the LORD stirred up the spirit of Cyrus... so that he made a proclamation throughout all his kingdom... saying... “Who is among you of all His people? May his God be with him, and let him go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah, and build the house of the LORD God of Israel...which is in Jerusalem.”** – And that’s what those POST-EXILIC WRITINGS are all about...

But—before we GET there—we’re going to spend the next SEVERAL WEEKS looking at the various WRITINGS and MESSAGES of the PROPHETS that God sends to His people during this period of the Kings...

We’re gonna do our best to take them in CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER (we may have to shift SOME things around)... But, by the END of the year... We will have worked our way through the ENTIRE OLD TESTAMENT...

So, THAT is what is ahead on Route 66... So, I hope you’ll join us NEXT Sunday... And come out on WEDNESDAY MORNING for a DEEPER DISCUSSION of these things...