

ACT 1: REDEMPTION PREPARED: ISRAEL**Scene 3: The Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel
The Southern Kingdom: Judah (2) (2 Kings 18–25; 2 Chron. 29–36)**

Memory Verse: *“This is the one I esteem: he who is humble and contrite in spirit, and trembles at my word (Isa. 66:2b NIV).*

Background Helps:

The last eight chapters in both 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles are devoted to the final days of the southern kingdom of Judah. By this point in the narrative, the northern kingdom of Israel has been carried away into Assyrian exile.

In our daily readings we will cover most of Judah’s kings who reigned during this period: Hezekiah (very good), Manasseh (very bad), Josiah (very good), and Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah (all bad). Manasseh was so evil that the LORD determined as a result of his reign to bring an end (at least for seventy years) to the kingdom of Judah (see 2 Kings 21:10-16; 23:26-27; Jer. 15:4).

Lesson Helps:



Either the reign of King Hezekiah or King Josiah would provide wonderful material for a Sunday school lesson. This week’s memory verse (Isa. 66:2b) relates well to Josiah’s response to the discovery of the Book of the Law in the temple in 2 Kings 22 (see especially vv. 11, 19). If you choose to focus on one of these two kings, be sure to write out your lesson aim: My students will learn about _____, so that they will _____.

However, it might be a better approach in our Progress of Redemption study if you consider the following lesson plan:

1. Give a brief overview of the final 135 years of the southern kingdom of Judah, including the ups (Hezekiah and Josiah) and the downs (all the others kings!).
2. Focus some attention on the wicked reign of Manasseh, showing how his evil actions made the fall of Jerusalem and Judah inevitable (see earlier under “Background Helps”).
3. Trace the events leading to the fall of Jerusalem and the Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 25 and 2 Chron. 36).
4. Climax your lesson with two events: (1) The hopeful release of King Jehoiachin from his imprisonment while still in Babylonian exile (2 Kings 25:27-30). Recall that Jehoiachin (sometimes spelled Jeconiah) was in the royal line of King David and of the Messiah, Jesus (Matt. 1:11). God is keeping his promise to David! (2) The decree of Cyrus, king of Persia, to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem and return the Jewish exiles back to the Holy Land (2 Chron. 36:22-23). The prophet Jeremiah predicted this return would happen after seventy years of captivity (Jer. 29:11-14). God is not finished with his people yet!

A possible aim for this lesson: My students will learn about the final years of the southern kingdom of Judah, so that they will not lose hope even in the worst of circumstances.

Assignment:

-  Read about Act I: Redemption Prepared: Israel. Scene 3: Rise and Fall of the Kingdom of Israel: **Prophets of the Babylonian Period (Zephaniah, Habakkuk, Jeremiah, [Lamentations], Nahum, Ezekiel, Obadiah).**
-  Memorize: Jeremiah 29:11.