

## 2 Kings: Leadership: In The Hands of Jesus

*What to Look for in a Leader — and the King Who Finally Got It Right*

2 Kings 6 | 2 Kings 22 | 2 Kings 25 | 1 Thessalonians 2

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### THIS WEEK'S BIG IDEA

***The leader worth following is the leader who talks to God and God talks back. The King who finally got it perfectly — is Jesus.***

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We are wired to follow. It is built into us — this instinct to find someone trustworthy and hitch our lives to theirs. A parent. A mentor. A pastor. A spouse. And most of the time, we don't think too carefully about it until something goes wrong. Until we realize, somewhere in the middle of the journey, that the person we've been following doesn't actually know where they're going.

Second Kings is, among other things, a long meditation on that feeling. Thirty-nine kings lead Israel and Judah across 450 years. Thirty-one of them are described as absolutely evil. Eight are passable. Only two — Josiah and Hezekiah — receive unqualified praise. Two out of thirty-nine.

The book invites you to ask: what did those two have that the others didn't? And once you see it, it quietly reframes the way you think about every leader in your life — including yourself.

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### The True King

There is a moment in 2 Kings 6 that is easy to read past if you're not paying attention. The king of Syria has been at war with Israel, and every time he lays out a battle plan, Israel already knows it. He assumes a traitor. One of his servants corrects him — it isn't a traitor, it's a prophet named Elisha, who somehow has access to whatever Syria is planning behind closed doors.

So the king sends an army to capture Elisha at Dothan. Surrounds the city overnight. And when Elisha's servant wakes up the next morning and steps outside, he sees soldiers as far as he can see. He's terrified. Elisha is calm.

**2 Kings 6:16–17** *"Do not be afraid, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, please open his eyes that he may see." So the LORD opened the eyes of the young man, and he saw, and behold, the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire all around Elisha.*

There has been a heavenly army surrounding Elisha the whole time. He knew it. The servant just couldn't see it yet. And what follows is one of the stranger scenes in all of Kings — Elisha

leads the blinded Syrian army straight into Samaria, opens their eyes in the middle of the enemy's camp, and then turns to the king of Israel for direction.

Except it goes the other direction. The king of Israel turns to Elisha and calls him "my father." He asks the prophet what to do. The king — the one with the throne, the title, the army — defers entirely to the man of God.

It is meant to be uncomfortable. Because the access Elisha has to God, the authority he carries in the room — that was supposed to belong to the king. That was always the king's job. To be the one talking to God and hearing back. To be the one the heavenly army answered to. But that responsibility had been quietly set aside, and so a prophet had to step in and be the king that the king refused to be.

When you are trying to discern who is worth following — in any area of your life — the deepest question isn't about gifting or vision or even character, as important as those are. It's whether they are genuinely in communion with God. Whether God is actually speaking to them and they are listening. Everything else a leader brings to the table is secondary to that.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. The king of Israel had every outward qualification — the throne, the army, the title — but he had abdicated the one thing that actually mattered. Think about the spiritual leaders who have most shaped your life. What made you trust them? Was any part of it connected to a sense that God was genuinely at work in them? (Proverbs 29:2)
2. The king's abdication didn't happen all at once — it was a slow drift away from communion with God until a prophet had to do his job for him. Where in your own life, or in the lives of leaders you've followed, have you seen that kind of gradual drift? What did it cost the people around them? (Proverbs 11:14)

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## The Lost Book

Josiah becomes king of Judah and decides to restore the temple — it's been neglected, filled with the debris of years of false worship. He wants to clean it out and redirect the nation back to God. A good instinct. A good first step.

And while they're working, the high priest finds something.

| **2 Kings 22:8** *"I have found the Book of the Law in the house of the LORD."*

The word "found" carries the whole weight of the passage. It means it was lost. The Torah — the very foundation of Israel's covenant with God — had been sitting in a storeroom for approximately 290 years. Fifteen kings had come and gone without it. They had led God's people, made decisions, gone to war, built alliances, and governed a nation without ever consulting the one document that told them how any of that was supposed to work.

Deuteronomy 17 is specific about what was required: the king was to write out a personal copy of the law by hand on the day he took the throne, and then read it every day of his life. The purpose wasn't ceremony. It was formation. So that his heart wouldn't drift. So that he wouldn't start thinking of himself as above the people he was called to serve. So that he would know, from the inside out, what God actually required of him.

For 290 years, not one of them did it. They just did what seemed right. What the surrounding nations were doing. What came naturally. And Josiah, hearing the Word read aloud for the first time, tears his clothes — because he understands in that moment what three centuries of that kind of leadership had produced.

The grief of that moment is worth sitting with. Not just the personal conviction — the weight of what was lost while the book sat in a storeroom. Marriages that drifted. Families that fractured. Communities that bowed to the wrong gods. All of it tracing back to leaders who had the operating manual and never opened it.

### DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

3. For nearly three centuries, Israel's kings led without the one document that told them how. Think about leaders you've watched fail — in the church, in your family, in public life. Looking back, how much of that failure traced to a slow disconnection from Scripture? What did that drift look like before the consequences became visible? (Deuteronomy 17:18–20)
4. Josiah's grief wasn't only personal — it was the grief of someone calculating what his predecessors' negligence had cost an entire people. Is there an area of your own leadership — as a parent, a spouse, a manager — where you've been improvising rather than going to the Word? What has that cost the people in your care? (Joshua 1:8)

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## The Favored Pet — and the Better King

The final image of Second Kings is quiet and sad. Judah has fallen. The nation is in exile. Jehoiachin — the last Davidic king, a prisoner in Babylon — is released from his cell by the new king, Evil-merodach. He's given fresh clothes, a seat at the royal table, a daily allowance. Kindness, on the surface.

**2 Kings 25:28–29** *He spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king's table.*

But the writer wants you to feel the wrongness underneath it. When a conquering king gathers all the other defeated kings around his table and provides for them — that is not generosity. That is a display. They are trophies. Jehoiachin is the most honored one, which only sharpens the humiliation. He is a favored captive, fed and clothed at a pagan king's pleasure.

A Davidic king was supposed to be hosting that table. That was the promise. And the distance between the promise and this final image is the accumulated cost of thirty-seven kings who never got it — who never talked to God, never read the Word, never understood what they had been given or what it required of them.

The people sitting in exile did not get there on their own. Their shepherds led them there.

And yet — the line still lives. The king is still breathing. And the writer leaves you with that open question hanging over the last verse: is there still hope?

There is. But it doesn't come from within the story of Israel's kings. It comes from somewhere else entirely.

**John 1:1** *"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God."*

Four hundred and fifty years after Jehoiachin dines at Babylon's table, a descendant of David is born. At twelve, he is in the temple, and the teachers of the law are astonished by his understanding. At thirty, he begins his ministry. He does not merely know the Word — he is the Word, in flesh. The communion with God that every king abdicated, Jesus never once set aside. The humility that Deuteronomy 17 required of every king — he embodied it to the point of dying for the people he came to lead.

He is not a better version of Jehoram. He is the answer to all thirty-seven. The one King who got it, completely, for us. He doesn't sit at another king's table. He prepares a table — and he invites us to it.

#### **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS**

- 5.** The people of Judah ended up in exile at Babylon's table because their shepherds failed them. Where have you experienced the personal cost of being under leadership that didn't get it — in a church, a family, a workplace? What did it take to trust again afterward? (Ezekiel 34:5–6)
- 6.** Jesus is the King who finally got it — who communed with the Father without ceasing and was the Word incarnate. What does it mean to you right now that your ultimate King will never lose the book, never stop praying, never drift? How does that change the way you lead the people in your care? (Hebrews 4:14–16)