

# Lesson 5

Last week we began looking at verse 1, and we started by looking at the four southern kings mentioned in verse 1: Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah. As we saw, three of those kings did what was right, but one of them, King Ahaz, was evil. When we ended, we were looking at some things that King Hezekiah did to undo the damage that had been done by his father, King Ahaz. The first thing Hezekiah did was that he removed the high places, and the second thing he did was that he restored and cleansed the temple.

The third thing that King Hezekiah did to undo the damage done by Ahaz was that Hezekiah rebelled against Assyria.

**2 Kings 18:7** – And the LORD was with him; wherever he went out, he prospered. He rebelled against the king of Assyria and would not serve him.

And, as a result, the Assyrian king Sennacherib attacked Judah in the 14<sup>th</sup> year of Hezekiah's reign.

**2 Kings 18:13** – In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and took them.

And, as he had done with Ahaz, the prophet Isaiah came to deliver God's word to Hezekiah. But, unlike Ahaz, Hezekiah listened to that word, and Hezekiah prayed to God for deliverance.

**2 Kings 19:19** – So now, O LORD our God, save us, please, from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that you, O LORD, are God alone.

And, as a result, one of the most amazing things, not just in the Bible, but in all recorded history, happened.

**2 Kings 19:35–36** – And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh.

God did not allow Assyria to do to Judah what Assyria had done to Israel.

After these things, God told Hezekiah that he was about to die.

**2 Kings 20:1** – In those days Hezekiah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him and said to him, “Thus says the LORD, ‘Set your house in order, for you shall die; you shall not recover.’”

But once again Hezekiah prayed, and once again God answered that prayer.

**2 Kings 20:5–6** – Thus says the LORD, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer; I have seen your tears. Behold, I will heal you. On the third day you shall go up to the house of the LORD, and I will add fifteen years to your life.

And, as a sign to Hezekiah, God did something that is also one of the most amazing things, not

just in the Bible, but in all recorded history!  
God turned back the sun!

**2 Kings 20:11** – And Isaiah the prophet called to the LORD, and he brought the shadow back ten steps, by which it had gone down on the steps of Ahaz.

But, as with his great grandfather Uzziah, Hezekiah's reign did not end on a high note.

In 2 Kings 20, Hezekiah gave a guided tour of his treasury to envoys from Babylon, who apparently took very good notes! And when Isaiah told Hezekiah how foolish he had been, but that the results of his foolishness would not be seen until long after his death, Hezekiah gave us one of the greatest demonstrations ever of a true politician!

**2 Kings 20:19** – Then Hezekiah said to Isaiah, "The word of the LORD that you have spoken is good." For he thought, "Why not, if there will be peace and security in my days?"

Who cares if I have brought ruin to my country as long as it doesn't happen while I'm around!

And so that is a short description of the four southern kings named in Hosea 1:1.

Let's look next at both the one northern king who is named in verse 1 (Jeroboam II) and also at the six northern kings who followed Jeroboam but who (for some reason that we will look for later) are not named in verse 1.

## Jeroboam II

Jeroboam II is the only northern king named in Hosea 1:1

The reign of Jeroboam II is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 14:23.

If Hosea began to preach during the reigns of Jeroboam in the north and Uzziah in the south and if Hosea was still preaching during the reign of Hezekiah, then Hosea most likely began to preach around 760 BC.

Jeroboam II reigned 41 years, and the year 760 was the 33<sup>rd</sup> year of his reign. What that means is that Jeroboam had already been on the throne for over three decades before Hosea married Gomer and began to preach.

What were things like in Israel in 760 BC? The short answer is that everything looked good, but it was all just about to fall apart. The people were enjoying and had been enjoying a time of great political stability and economic prosperity, but that was all about to change.

At this time, Assyria had an alliance with Israel that dated back to King Jehu and King Joash. We earlier saw evidence of that alliance when we looked at the famous Black Obelisk of Shalmaneser III, which is shown on the handout for Lesson 2.

And so Assyria at this time was **not** pushing westward **into Israel**. But Assyria was pushing westward **into Syria**, which for a short time took

two enemies off of Israel's plate – both Assyria and Syria.

Assyria's invasion of Syria explains why there was at this time a lull in the wars between Israel and Syria. It was this strange political situation that provided both Israel and Judah (and especially Israel) an unusual period of peace, prosperity, and stability.

Early in his rule, Jeroboam II, king of Israel, had recovered the territories east of the Jordan, had extended the northern border to Lebo-hamath, and had enlarged the southern border all the way to the Dead Sea.

We usually think of Judah as having the upper hand in the relation with Israel, but that was not the case at this time. Judah had been a vassal state of Israel ever since king Amaziah's failed campaign against Jehoash in 2 Kings 14, and so Judah was at this time paying a yearly tribute to Israel.

The greatly enlarged extent of the northern kingdom coupled with the territory of the southern kingdom of Judah rivaled the golden age of the united kingdom of David and Solomon, which caused this period to become known as the silver age of Israelite history. During this period, Israel enjoyed material power, economic prosperity, and territorial expansion. And, as a result, the nation felt secure of their future.

The nation of Israel had all the signs that it believed were pointing to God's unlimited favor, and the future appeared to hold limitless

possibilities. God's protection was assumed to be unconditional, and so the nation felt certain of its future.

And how were the people living during this "silver age" of peace and economic prosperity? Another prophet, Amos, answers that question. In short, a two-class system had developed in which the lower class suffered oppression and poverty while the upper class enjoyed power and excess.

But the so-called silver age was about to come to a swift end with the death of Jeroboam in 753 BC. In fact, Israel quickly went from a period of stability to a period of near anarchy. As we will soon see, almost every king of Israel after Jeroboam died by assassination at the hands of his successor.

And as Israel became weaker, Assyria became stronger under Tiglath-pileser III (745-727 BC) and his successors Shalmaneser V (727-722 BC) and Sargon II (722-705 BC).

It is important for us to note that this period of prosperity had been a gift from God to his people in the northern kingdom.

**2 Kings 14:26-27** – For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel. But the LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash.

Israel's **first** king had been Jeroboam I. Perhaps the people could start over with Jeroboam II and do what is right rather than what is evil.

But how did the people respond to that gift from God? With gratitude? Did they repent and turn back to God? No, they did not. And let's keep that in mind when we later circle back to the question of why Jeroboam is the only northern king mentioned in verse 1.

But before we do that, let's look at the six northern kings who followed Jeroboam. These six kings are not named in verse 1 – and they are certainly conspicuous by their absence!

## Zechariah

Jeroboam II was succeeded by his son Zechariah (753 BC).

The reign of Zechariah is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 15:8, but if you blink you will miss it! His reign ends only two verses later!

After reigning six months, Zechariah was struck down and killed by Shallum, the next king.

We need to pause here and note something very important about the death of Zechariah. His death ended the dynasty of Jehu, which had begun when Jehu killed both the king of the north and the king of the south in 841 BC.

Jehu's dynasty included four kings after him: Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II, and Zechariah.

But with the death of Zechariah that dynasty came to end as Shallum, who was not a descendent of Jehu, came to the throne.

God had earlier promised Jehu four of his generations would reign after him.

**2 Kings 10:30** – And the LORD said to Jehu, “Because you have done well in carrying out what is right in my eyes, and have done to the house of Ahab according to all that was in my heart, your sons of the fourth generation shall sit on the throne of Israel.”

And that promise was fulfilled with the reign of King Zechariah, the great great grandson of King Jehu. But there was not a fifth generation, and the promised fourth generation reigned for only six months.

Why is this history of Jehu’s dynasty so important? It is important because of a verse in chapter 1 that we will get to soon.

**Hosea 1:4** – And the LORD said to him, “Call his name Jezreel, for in just a little while I will punish the house of Jehu for the blood of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.”

We will have some big questions to consider when we get to that verse!

## Shallum

The reign of Shallum is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 15:10.



As we said, Shallum assassinated Zechariah and then took the throne of Israel for himself. And Shallum reigned for all of one month before he, too, was assassinated!

**2 Kings 15:14** – Then Menahem the son of Gadi came up from Tirzah and came to Samaria, and he struck down Shallum the son of Jabesh in Samaria and put him to death and reigned in his place.

## Menahem

The reign of Menahem is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 15:17, and we are told that he reigned for 10 years.

As we discussed at length in Lesson 2, the most likely explanation for the chronological difficulties involving Pekah is that Pekah began to reign at the same time as Menahem, with Pekah leading an anti-Assyrian faction and Menahem leading a pro-Assyrian faction.

We should keep in mind something here. Jeroboam II had reigned for 41 years, and he had died within the past year. And now, very soon after his death, we have already had four more kings, two assassinations, and a civil war! If we include Jeroboam himself, then the people had five kings within about a year's time!

The people have, within a very short time, gone from a time of extreme stability to a time of extreme instability. Just think what things would be like in our own country if we had five presidents within a single year!

And remember that the stability under Jeroboam II had been a gift from God. What can we say about the instability under Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, and Pekah? As we said before, God very often gives a nation the leaders that they deserve!

As for Menahem, his most noteworthy act was to send a thousand talents of silver to the Assyrian King Tiglath-pileser III (who is called Pul in the Bible) in return for Assyria's support for his claim to the throne (2 Kings 15:17–22). The upper left corner of today's handout shows extra-Biblical evidence of this tribute and shows the close ties between Menahem and Assyria.

You may have noticed that, unlike with the kings of Judah, we have not been pausing to note whether these kings of Israel did what was right in the eyes of God or did what was wrong. Why? Because they were all bad! Even Jeroboam II, whose long and stable reign had been a gift from God to the people, "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (2 Kings 14:24).

## **Pekahiah**

The reign of Pekahiah is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 15:23.

After the dynasty of Jehu came to an end with the death of Zechariah, the kingdom of Israel had only one more dynasty, if we can call it that. Pekahiah was the son of Menahem, but Pekahiah did not rule over the entire kingdom, but rather like

his father he reigned over only the part of Israel not controlled by the rival king Pekah.

And Pekah proved to be a problem for Pekahiah in another way as well – Pekah assassinated him in 2 Kings 15:25 after Pekahiah had reigned for only two years.

## Pekah

The reign of Pekah is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 15:27.

With the death of Pekahiah, Pekah found himself king of all Israel rather than just king of the anti-Assyrian faction that he had led for the past 12 years.

Unlike Menahem, Pekah was hostile to the Assyrian Empire. After Pekah seized power, he, along with Rezin of Syria, formed a coalition to resist the growing power of Assyria.

Jotham, King of Judah, refused to join their coalition, as did his son, Ahaz. (We looked at both of them last week.)

This refusal by Judah greatly worried Pekah and Rezin because it meant that they would have a hostile force on both sides – Judah on one side and Assyria on the other. And so they tried to replace King Ahaz with a puppet king, who was not of the line of King David.

**Isaiah 7:6** – “Let us go up against Judah and terrify it, and let us conquer it for ourselves,

and set up the son of Tabeel as king in the midst of it.”

And what did God have to say about that plan? We see it in the next verse.

**Isaiah 7:7** – Thus says the Lord GOD: “It shall not stand, and it shall not come to pass.”

But, as we saw last week, Ahaz did not trust in God to deliver him. Instead, Ahaz of Judah appealed to Tiglath-pileser of Assyria for aid, and the Assyrian king quickly overcame the coalition of Pekah of Israel and Rezin of Syria.

Yes, there were a lot of moving pieces at this time! And both we and Israel have only one more king to look at!

## Hoshea

The reign of Hoshea is described in the Bible beginning in 2 Kings 17:1.

After Pekah’s plans were defeated by Assyria, Hoshea sensed weakness and, after assassinating Pekah, Hoshea took the crown for himself.

Hoshea saved Samaria from destruction by a hasty submission to Assyria, but he also carried on secret negotiations with Egypt for support against Assyria.

When that treachery was discovered, Assyria, now under Shalmaneser V, invaded Israel and took Hoshea captive. Samaria held out for about two years, but eventually Assyria crushed Israel and leveled its capital city of Samaria, which fell

in 723 or 722 BC. Most of those left alive were exiled and scattered, never to return.

Hoshea, who reigned for nine years, was the last earthly king of Israel.

## So, back to our three questions about verse 1:

First, if Hosea's prophecies are directed primarily at the **northern** kingdom, then why are four of the five kings listed in verse 1 kings of the **southern** kingdom?

Second, if Hosea is both from the **north** and speaking to the **north**, then why do we find **any** southern kings named in verse 1?

Third, if Hosea lived to see Hezekiah (as verse 1 tells us), then that means Hosea not only saw the northern king, Jeroboam II (named in verse 1), but he also must have seen the six northern kings that followed: Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, and Hoshea. Why aren't they listed in verse 1? Why do we see only Jeroboam II from the list of northern kings?

I think we are now in a position to easily answer all three of those questions!

First, why do we see **any** southern kings in verse 1?

This question is the easiest of the three.

First, while Hosea's message is directed primarily to the north, he also has a message for

the south. And, unlike his message to the north, his message for the south is an optimistic message.

Yes, both north and south together will experience a restoration of some sort (to be discussed later), but their **immediate** future is described differently. We can see this difference in the opening chapter.

**Hosea 1:4** – I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

**Hosea 1:7** – But I will have mercy on the house of Judah, and I will save them by the LORD their God.

So, one reason we see southern kings in verse 1 is that Hosea has a message for them. And the optimism in that message may have had something to do with the fact that three of those four southern kings did what was right in the eyes of God.

A second reason we see southern kings in verse 1 is that Hosea may have been living in the south when he wrote this book. If, as verse 1 suggests, Hosea lived to see the fall of the north and the southern king who followed the fall of the north, then that means Hosea likely took refuge in the south when the Assyrians invaded the north.

So, a second reason we see southern kings in verse 1 is that Hosea may have been living under one of those southern kings toward the end of his life.

Let's move onto the next question: yes, we can see why southern kings are mentioned in verse 1, **but why so many?** Why do we see four southern kings in verse 1?

I think we can find the answer to that question in chapter 3.

**Hosea 3:5** – Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek the LORD their God, **and David their king**, and they shall come in fear to the LORD and to his goodness in the latter days.

That verse points out a crucial difference between the kings of the south and the kings of the north – the kings of the south were all from the line of King David.

If you look back at the handout from Lesson 1 you will see a list of the 20 northern kings and the 20 southern kings. Next to many of the northern kings you will find an asterisk indicating a king that began a new dynasty. We see many such kings in the north because many of the northern kings took their position, not by being the son of the previous king, but by murdering the previous king.

There are no asterisks in the south! Each king in the south, whether good or evil, came to throne through a family relation with the previous king. They were all of the line of King David.

And that fact was crucial for God to fulfill his unconditional promises to King David.

**Psalm 89:35–36** – Once for all I have sworn by my holiness; I will not lie to David. His offspring

shall endure forever, his throne as long as the sun before me.

**Luke 1:31-33** – And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall call his name Jesus. He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end.

So, why do we have four southern kings in verse 1? It is not because their individual names were all that important. Instead, what was crucial was their line! Hosea is showing us that all during the time that he was preaching, the line of King David was continuing in the south. We have Uzziah, then his son Jotham, his grandson Ahaz, and his great grandson Hezekiah – all tracing their ancestry back to King David.

Yes, Hosea will have some tough things to say the southern kings.

**Hosea 5:10** – The princes of Judah have become like those who move the landmark; upon them I will pour out my wrath like water.

But, tough or not, and evil or not, those southern kings each occupied a crucial link in a chain reaching from David to Christ. And so we see all four of the overlapping southern kings in verse 1. There are no gaps in the southern kings listed in verse 1 – and that is the most important point about them.

And I think we will see that our answer to this second question helps us answer our third question: Why do we see only one northern king



(Jeroboam II) in verse 1? Why don't we see the six kings who followed Jeroboam II?

Unlike the southern kings, those northern kings are not from the line of King David. They were all illegitimate rulers. Each of them, going all the way back to the first Jeroboam, who was an usurper. And we can see that fact by going all the way back to the first book in the Bible.

**Genesis 49:10** – The scepter shall not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until tribute comes to him; and to him shall be the obedience of the peoples.

Just as priests came from the tribe of Levi, kings came from the tribe of Judah. (Yes, King Saul was from the tribe of Benjamin, but that is a discussion for another day! King David was from the tribe of Judah, as were all of his descendants.)

The only reason to name any northern king in verse 1 is to provide a timeframe for the reader – and Hosea does just that when he mentions Jeroboam II. There was no need for him to name the illegitimate cutthroat assassins who followed Jeroboam.

But we should note something important here – while Hosea does not **name** those six kings who followed Jeroboam, Hosea does **describe** them.

**Hosea 4:18** – Their rulers dearly love shame.

**Hosea 7:3** – By their evil they make the king glad, and the princes by their treachery.

**Hosea 7:5** – On the day of our king, the princes became sick with the heat of wine.

**Hosea 7:7** – All their kings have fallen, and none of them calls upon me.

**Hosea 8:4** – They made kings, but not through me.

**Hosea 8:10** – And the king and princes shall soon writhe because of the tribute.

So now we know why Hosea mentions **any** southern kings in verse 1, why he mentions **four** southern kings in verse 1, and why he mentions **only one** northern king in verse 1.