

MAY 2026 | DAY 3

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

With Fellowship of the Rockies

SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 19
2 Samuel 20
2 Samuel 21
Psalms 92

The final chapters of 2 Samuel echo its beginning. David's rival for the crown is slain in battle. The king is weeping as he assumes Israel's throne. This time, after years of suffering, David is a shell of his former self.

Consumed by despair over Absalom's death, David fails to see his soldiers recoil from his wailing. Joab tries to wake David to reality, but grief and regret cloud his judgment until carelessness sets in.

He demotes Joab and subjects the army's new commander to Joab's wrath. Mephibosheth shows integrity and unswerving loyalty; David responds by letting Mephibosheth's dishonest servant steal half his estate. David baits the people of Judah into being the first to reinstall him as king, driving a wedge between the tribes.

Due to David's negligence, chaos and violence ravage the nation for several more chapters. The conflict ends when a quick-thinking woman cuts off the revolt at its head, both literally and figuratively.

As you'll see in the readings today and tomorrow, the stories in 2 Samuel's epilogue have been arranged in symmetrical pairs that compare and contrast David and Saul's reigns. The outer pair of stories compares the failures of Saul (2 Sam. 21a) and David (2 Sam. 24), as well as the harm they cause through misguided decision-making.

The inner pair of stories (2 Sam. 21b and 23b) shows David and his band of mighty men fighting the Philistines. But when Goliath's sons show up to fight, David can no longer stand up to giants. The valiant young shepherd boy has faded to a frail figurehead. David came in with a bang. Will he go out with a whimper?

MAY 2026 | DAY 4

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SCRIPTURE

2 Samuel 22
2 Samuel 23
2 Samuel 24
Psalms 93

You finished the two-part book of Samuel. Congratulations! These narratives complete the symmetrical epilogue you started reading yesterday. Once again, we have a story about David and his mighty men going to war against the Philistines. And once again, we find a weak and feeble king sheltered from the front lines while his men take on fierce enemy warriors.

Yesterday's reading also featured a story about the destructive consequences of Saul's failure, and today we saw a parallel story about one of David's deadly failures.

While taking a military census, David tallies up his own strength instead of trusting in Yahweh. As soon as the prophet Gad confronts David about his wrongdoing, he humbly repents. David describes his sin with the Hebrew word *me'od*, meaning "very" or "much." But as you'll see in the video, *me'od* also appears in the Shema prayer (Deut. 6:4-9) as a noun. Humans are supposed to love God with all their everything—their *me'od*. But David fails to do this, resulting in devastating consequences for the whole nation.

Though David's failure is great, the story implies (consistently) that God's mercy is greater. The center of the book's epilogue contains David's songs of praise, a beautiful parallel to Hannah's song at the beginning of 1 Samuel. Despite his own weakness and failure, David remains confident in Yahweh's grace and willingness to keep covenant promises. The future hope woven into these final poems reaches far beyond David himself, looking to the future messiah who would bring God's Kingdom and blessing to all nations.

MAY 2026 | DAY 5

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 1
1 Kings 2
1 Kings 3
Psalms 94

The book of Kings opens with David on his deathbed, offering final words of advice to his son, Solomon. At first, David's speech sounds similar to the final words of Moses, Joshua, and Samuel: Stay faithful to Yahweh and to his torah.

Then David spends his final, final breaths urging Solomon to murder all his enemies. What? The famous king's reign proves to be a mix of wisdom and violence-fueled folly right up to the end. After this strange, ominous speech, David dies.

Soon after David's death, violence tears through his family again. What happens echoes David's story—a beautiful woman taken to lie with the king, a handsome prince who wants the throne, and priests and soldiers waiting in the wings.

Adonijah grasps for power by plotting to marry his father's concubine. When King Solomon learns about his half-brother's scheme, he sends his hitman, Benaiah, to bring Adonijah's insurrection to a bloody end. Then, Solomon marries Pharaoh's daughter, forming an alliance with Israel's ancient enemy to shore up his own power. The king's first steps are carrying him down a foolish path.

When Yahweh appears to Solomon in a dream, Solomon asks for wisdom to govern Israel well. Is the new king getting on the right track? Watch the video to preview the reign of Solomon and his successors in the book of Kings.

MAY 2026 | DAY 6

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 4
1 Kings 5
1 Kings 6
1 Kings 7
Psalms 95

Under Solomon's rule, the land of Israel flowers into the Edenic country that Yahweh promised. Herds of plump cattle graze on lush, green hills. Ripe figs and grapes hang in fragrant clusters. Fields rustle golden in the summer breeze. Stalks of wheat and barley bow their heads with grain. The people of Israel are fruitful and multiplying. Hopefully, they soon outnumber the sand on the seashore, too many to count, just as Yahweh promised Abraham about his descendants (see Gen. 12:2-3).

Solomon is the new Adam in this garden land. He carries out humanity's original call to rule creation according to Yahweh's instruction and wisdom. Kings and queens flock to Jerusalem to hear Solomon's world-famous insights. Solomon uses his vast wealth to upgrade Yahweh's tabernacle into a magnificent temple.

The temple's design points to Eden, as the tabernacle had done previously. Walls engraved with flowers and trees, surfaces covered with gleaming gold, and the cherubim guarding Yahweh's sacred space all evoke the glorious Heaven-on-Earth garden where God dwells with humanity. The Israelites believe the temple is a permanent house for Yahweh to reside, in the middle of a fruitful garden land.

This wise king's reign spreads peace and blessing generously to all nations. We cannot avoid wondering: Is this the restoration of Eden and the ruler we've been waiting for?

MAY 2026 | DAY 7

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 8
1 Kings 9
1 Kings 10
Psalms 96

Yesterday, we saw Israel bloom into a new Eden under Solomon's wise rule. Splendor, abundance, peace, and blessing flow outward from Jerusalem toward the ends of the earth. But at this point, the temple at the heart of this garden land has been lying dormant, emptiness echoing down its golden halls.

In today's reading, the final feature of Eden life falls into place: God's loving, life-giving presence takes up residence in the temple.

With the magnificent Eden mansion finished and furnished, Solomon invites Yahweh to move in. The king has the ark of the covenant brought into the temple with an extravagant series of sacrifices (and no fatal oxcart mishaps this time). As soon as the priests set down the ark in the temple sanctuary, Yahweh's glory fills his new house in a thick cloud. The overwhelming intensity of Yahweh's holy presence forces the temple priests to step outside—not because Yahweh's holiness is bad, as the video explains, but because it's so good.

Solomon sits on the throne of an Edenic kingdom, Yahweh's holiness radiating life just across the street. Now, just like the first humans in the garden, Solomon faces a test: Will he rule by Yahweh's wisdom and receive life on God's terms, or will he choose what looks good in his own eyes and try to take life on his own terms?

MAY 2026 | DAY 8

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 11
1 Kings 12
1 Kings 13
Psalms 97

Solomon built Israel into a dazzling kingdom. But beneath the veneer of gold and ivory, cracks of disloyalty to Yahweh splinter through the foundation of Solomon's rule.

Israel's kings are supposed to trust Yahweh for blessing and security. So why has Solomon been stockpiling Egyptian chariots, using forced labor for his ritzy building projects, and accumulating wives like political poker chips?

Sure enough, all the wealth, women, and warhorses draw Solomon's heart away from Yahweh. In today's reading, the king's folly reaches a breaking point, and the whole glittering facade crumbles. What started out as a new Eden gives way to a new Egypt, whips and all.

So Yahweh raises up a new king. He sends the prophet Ahijah to rip a cloak into 12 pieces, each representing a tribe of Israel. He gives 10 pieces to Jeroboam, one of Solomon's regional officials, as a prophetic sign that 10 of Israel's tribes will come under Jeroboam's rule. Solomon will be left with only Judah. It's barely been two generations, and already the kingdom of Israel is tearing at the seams.

After Solomon dies, Rehoboam inherits his father's throne, but not his father's wisdom. Drunk on his own power and ravenous for more wealth, he spurns the advice of Israel's elders and tries to implement a forced labor policy on the northern tribes. Just as Ahijah prophesied, the northern tribes break away from Rehoboam and make Jeroboam king instead. Can this fracture be fixed?

MAY 2026 | DAY 9

ONE STORY THAT LEADS TO JESUS

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SCRIPTURE

1 Kings 14

1 Kings 15

1 Kings 16

Psalms 98

Israel enjoyed Edenic peace and abundance when Solomon ruled by Yahweh's wisdom. As his successors turn to idols for blessings (trying to take life on their own terms), Solomon's achievements unravel.

The border security Israel enjoyed one generation prior turns into a constant threat of foreign invasions. When the Egyptian army marches into Jerusalem, Rehoboam's carved wooden poles can't stop Pharaoh's soldiers. They plunder the temple and the palace, carting away all of Solomon's gold.

Peace that once reigned among the 12 tribes devolves into incessant warfare between the northern and southern kingdoms. The garden land we saw a few chapters ago is virtually unrecognizable, almost like the pre-creation state described in Genesis 1:2, when everything was lifeless and chaotic.

Today's reading introduces the criteria by which each king will be evaluated. Did they worship the God of Israel alone, or did they promote the worship of other gods? Did they deal with idolatry among the people or ignore it? Finally, did they remain faithful to the covenant, or did they become corrupt and unjust?

Unfortunately, few kings pass the test. Out of the long list of rulers in today's reading, only Asa, king of Judah, purges the land of idol statues and follows Yahweh with all his heart. The rest turn their hearts after other gods, leading the whole nation into idolatry and injustice.

The divided kingdom spirals out of control. Can anyone get these wayward kings back on track?