

Who was King Jehoahaz in the Bible?

There are three kings named Jehoahaz in the Bible. Two were kings of Judah, and one was king of Israel. The name Jehoahaz means “Yahweh is sustainer” or “whom Yahweh holds,” but, ironically, none of these kings trusted in the Lord or followed Him.

Jehoahaz (Ahaziah) son of Jehoram, king of Judah (841 BC). This Jehoahaz was the youngest son of Jehoram. He is called “Azariah” in the NIV, CEV, and NLT; but he is called “Jehoahaz” in the ESV, KJV, NKJV, and NASB. The difference is due to the fact that Ahaziah is a variant of Jehoahaz in Hebrew. The people made him king of Judah since all his older brothers had been killed (2 Chronicles 21:17; 22:1). Although he ruled in the southern kingdom, Jehoahaz (Ahaziah) was actually a grandson of Ahab and Jezebel of the northern kingdom, and he followed in the sins of Ahab (2 Chronicles 22:3-4). Upon the suggestion of his advisors, Jehoahaz helped his uncle, King Joram of Israel, fight against Hazael king of Aram (2 Chronicles 22:5-6). Joram was injured in the battle, and Jehoahaz went to visit him. During the visit, Jehu showed up on his mission to wipe out the entire house of Ahab. Jehu killed Joram, all of Jehoahaz’s relatives who were there, and, after a chase, Jehoahaz himself (2 Chronicles 22:7-9). So, Jehoahaz (Ahaziah) was buried after only one year on the throne of Judah.

Jehoahaz son of Jehu, king of Israel (814–798 BC). This Jehoahaz reigned for seventeen years over the northern kingdom Israel. “He did evil in the eyes of the LORD by following the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat, which he had caused Israel to commit” (2 Kings 13:2). About a century earlier, Jeroboam I had led the rebellion that split the kingdom into two. After the split, Jeroboam sought to keep the people in his northern kingdom from traveling to the southern kingdom to worship God in Jerusalem. So Jeroboam set up two golden calves in the north: one in Bethel, and one in Dan (1 Kings 11–12). In

this way, Jeroboam led the people into idol worship. Ruling about one hundred years later, Jehoahaz persisted in this sin of idolatry.

Interestingly, Jehoahaz's father, Jehu, had destroyed the worship of Baal in Israel. But he did not keep God's law with all his heart or turn away from the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings 10:28-31). Still, for destroying the house of Ahab, God promised Jehu that his sons would rule to the fourth generation. Jehoahaz was the second in that dynasty.

Because Jehoahaz worshipped idols and caused Israel to continue in the idolatry of Jeroboam, God began to reduce the size of Israel, allowing Hazael and Ben-Hadad of Aram to overpower them (2 Kings 13:3, 32). After experiencing Aramian oppression for a period of time, Jehoahaz finally relented and "sought the LORD's favor" (2 Kings 13:4). God graciously raised up a deliverer, who freed the Israelites from Aram, so that they were able to live in their own homes again (2 Kings 13:5). Many biblical commentators believe the deliverer was either Jehoahaz's son Jehoash or his grandson Jeroboam II (2 Kings 13:10, 22-23; 14:23, 26-27). The biblical historian cites God's grace: "Hazael king of Aram oppressed Israel throughout the reign of Jehoahaz. But the Lord was gracious to them and had compassion and showed concern for them because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. To this day he has been unwilling to destroy them or banish them from his presence" (2 Kings 13:22-23). Inexplicably, after God delivered him from the Aramians, Jehoahaz left standing the wooden Asherah pole in Samaria, the capital (2 Kings 13:6). Israel's army and chariots had been mostly destroyed by the end of Jehoahaz's reign (2 Kings 13:7), leaving the nation vulnerable to attack. Jehoahaz's son and grandson ruled after him, completing the dynasty of Jehu. Sadly, these kings followed in the same evil footsteps as Jehoahaz (2 Kings 13:10-11; 14:23-24). Even so, God continued to be faithful to His people (2 Kings 13:24-25; 14:26-27).

Jehoahaz son of Josiah, king of Judah (609 BC). Although he was the fourth son of Josiah, Jehoahaz was made king over Judah once his father died (2 Kings 23:31; 2 Chronicles 36:1). Also known as Shallum (1 Chronicles 3:15), Jehoahaz only reigned for three months in Jerusalem before being deposed by Pharaoh Necho. The pharaoh installed Jehoahaz's brother, Eliakim (aka Jehoiakim) as king and deported Jehoahaz in chains. Jehoahaz later died in Egypt (2 Kings 23:31-35). This third and final Jehoahaz also "did evil in the eyes of the LORD, just as his predecessors has done" (2 Kings 23:32).

The sins of the last Jehoahaz are especially tragic because his father, Josiah, had been an exceptionally good king. Josiah had found the Book of the Law, renewed the covenant, torn down the high places of idol worship, destroyed the priests of false gods, reinstated the Passover, and turned to the Lord "with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his strength, in accordance with all the Law of Moses" (2 Kings 23:25). But his son Jehoahaz did not follow in his steps.

Sadly, none of the Jehoahazes followed the Lord. Yet, as their name communicates, the Lord did not abandon His people.