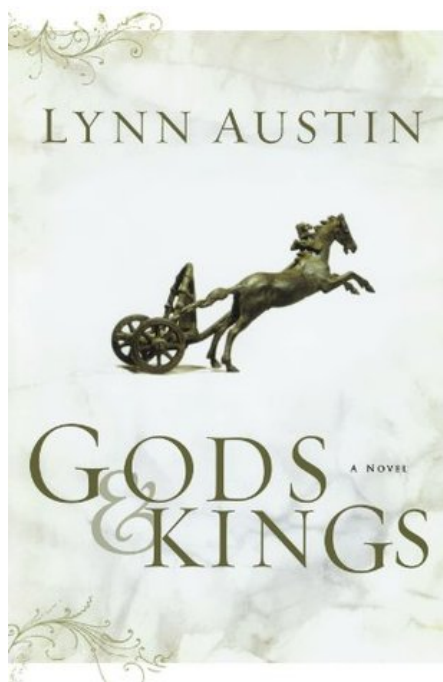




Gods and Kings

Lynn Austin

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Though born the second son of King Ahaz, Hezekiah is not protected from his father's perverted attempts to gain the favor of the idol Molech. Terrified and powerless at the foot of Molech's altar, Hezekiah encounters for the first time the one true God of his royal ancestry, Yahweh.

But his journey to the Holy One is riddled by influence from an assortment of men: Zechariah, a grandfather of noble standing who has fallen into drunkenness; Uriah, the High Priest whose lust for power forces him to gamble the faith he proclaims; and Shebna, the Egyptian intellectual who guides Hezekiah's instruction.

For the two women who love Hezekiah, the meaning of love--and its sacrificial essence--will direct the course of their lives and help shape the young prince's future.

Gods and Kings Details

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Author : Lynn Austin

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From Reader Review Gods and Kings for online ebook

Margaret Metz says

Lynn Austin has become one of my favorite authors of historical fiction and this title didn't let me down. One of the best things about good Biblical fiction is that the stories and people come alive for you - and become ... more personal and easy to relate to.

Every character in Gods & Kings felt real to me. Whether I was weeping with Abijah over her lost child, cringing with young Hezekiah as he was drug to the sacrifices to Molech, feeling the loss and anger of Zechariah as he saw the temple defaced and robbed the first time ... they all had more than one dimension and changed and grew as the story evolved. There is a lot of action and tension even though we know story.

The only problem was that the book ended just as Hezekiah is coming into his own and you feel like the story should keep going. Lucky for us - this is just the first book in the series. :o)

Catherine McNiel says

I read this book because I was offered a free copy and because a friend recommended it to me.

On the plus side, I agree with my friend that the author writes with more complexity than the marketing for her books would lead one to believe (if such a thing can be determined from reading one book). And I found the plot to be compelling enough that I was eager to get back to the book when I had to put it down.

However, the dialogue was wooden and the characters were two dimensional at best. But my main dislike went much deeper.

From the first page to the last Austin writes a story about characters that lived in an actual and historical ancient culture. However, she appears to know almost nothing about how this culture viewed the world, themselves, society, and faith. The things she had her characters say, think and do were so entirely the sorts of things people in her own modern day, western, individualized culture would say, think, and do. At times this was merely distracting, but frequently it made the book read like a parody.

A few examples:

When reflecting on her arranged marriage, a woman reflects that she did not pursue her own desires and dreams but allowed herself to be led by her father's wishes. She reflects that this needs to change. She is asked by a man, regarding her upcoming arranged marriage, if she "ever wanted something enough to fight for it" and the implication is strongly that she has a sad, sorry, weakness she must overcome in this area. And it is stated at one point that it is royalty and a few other segments of society that have their roles cut out for them regardless of their own choosing.

Where can I even begin?!? In a society such as this one (and all non-Western, non-modern, non-individualist societies) EVERYONE (not just women, not just people of a certain societal level) follows the path that their place in society by birth dictates to them. To do otherwise is nearly beyond imagining, holds no positive or healthy associations, and is very literally the very definition of sin. To do so would bring trouble and ruin to the entire society. I could go on and on but instead I'll continue.

The description of religion and the role it plays in a person and in society!!!! In both big (the King says "religion belongs in the temple, not in the streets and certainly not in the government") and smaller ways (people talking about if they believe in God, or their "faith" or wondering if God really exists and how we can know when we don't see him, and talking about their faith become an "empty ritual" and dozens of other examples found on every page of dialogue) Austin again makes a parody of the book by entirely not understanding the ancient view of the sacred and inserting our own modern, western view. There was NO sacred/secular distinction during this time and in this sort of society. This was NOT how God/religion was viewed or spoken of or thought of nor was this the purpose of it. Not at all.

Here are a few other ridiculous quotes:

"yet he hesitated, his rational mind refusing to believe in a supernatural answer."

"Can you prove any of this? I can't rest the fate of my nation on a superstition. I have to believe in things that can be proved in a tangible way." (A distinction of the modern/western worldview, not the ancient worldview)

"I don't have the proof you are asking for. I believe it by faith." (NOT the ancient definition of faith!!!!)

Again, I could go on and on and on. Yes, this how we think in this hemisphere at this time. I wonder if Austin was truly unaware of the cultural lenses she wrote with (and did not write with) or if she was aware but was speaking to her readers by using the thoughts and definitions that they would have. Either way, I'm dissatisfied.

MAP says

Oh my goodness, I don't even know where to begin...

Ok, so I don't tend to like reading novels about the New Testament because it can easily veer into a twee land of sticky sweetness and light and ugh shake it off shake it off. The OLD Testament however, is full of politics and war and SEX and death it's like a George RR Martin novel YAY!

Haha, except for when it's in the hands of a Christian fiction writer.

So the book is the first of a series following the Judean king Hezekiah, and it's more hamfisted, Christian-stuffed, and anvilicious than I ever could have imagined.

(view spoiler)

TL;DR Review: If you want to write a novel based on the FREAKING BIBLE, and you don't think it's "Christian-y" enough, so you feel the need to add in extra stuff to spruce it up, YOU'RE DOING IT WRONG.

(I am sucking it up and giving it two stars because there were about 100 pages in the second half that actually had me interested, but then it RUINED IT ALL.)

Leann says

This book is more of a 2.5 star book for me because there were parts I liked and parts I really didn't.

The first three books of the series Chronicles of the Kings tells the story of Hezekiah, a king of Judah, who's story is found in 2 Kings, 2 Chronicles, and Isaiah.

The only thing I could remember about Hezekiah before reading this book was that he was a decent king who was granted 15 more years to live by God after he asked not to die, and that in that time period he gave birth to an heir who turned out to not be a good guy at all, so the point being, maybe it's good when God doesn't answer our prayers the way we want.

So, one good part of this book for me was learning more about him (even if it was fictionalized), and learning who in the Bible were contemporaries with whom. Micah, Isaiah, and Hezekiah were all alive and kicking at the same time period, and I guess I either never knew that or forgot it.

The bad part was that, even though Ms. Austin has a degree in Biblical Backgrounds and Archeology, there was really very little historical details found in this book, at least not to the level of other historical novels I've read.

Also, there were many, many times when I felt like today's culture was being superimposed on characters. For example, one character who was the daughter of a high priest attends a sacrifice in the temple, which was a DAILY occurrence in those days, and her stomach is turned when the animal's throat is cut. Um, no. If you watched that every day growing up, it would not turn your stomach, I don't care how long it's been since you've attended a sacrifice. And some of their views on God and religion in general seemed much more Christian-y than Judaistic.

And then there were the preachy Christian sections. Having JUST listened to a message by Robert Jeffress where he taught against one of the tenets of the emergent church-- going and joining sinners in their activities as a method of winning souls -- it seemed like this entire novel was basically the same message. I kept thinking, "SOMEone doesn't like the emergent church." I doubt that's what she was thinking when she wrote the book, but that's what I kept feeling everytime something was written about justifying compromises of your beliefs by saying you're just going to join them for a while, then you'll win them over at some point.

And now, back to the good part. Austin is a good writer. I may disagree with parts of the story, but she's a very good storyteller. In fact, she started a romance toward the end of this novel, and did it so well that I went and bought the next book. And I'm glad I did. I liked it, so see my review of Song of Redemption to see how much.

Mandi says

I am now on the third book of this series and am really enjoying the whole series! Though these are centered around the life of King Hezekiah, I am learning so much about the history of this time period that I have a whole new perspective on other stories from the Old Testament. I now completely understand Jonah and why

he ran away when God told him to go to Nineveh. Those Assyrians were so incredibly brutal, heartless and had no mercy for anyone, not even babies! Anyways, this is a really fantastic look at, not only the reign of Hezekiah (mostly in the 2nd and 3rd books), but also his idol-worshipping father Ahab (in the first book).

GenieD says

Just finished Gods and Kings, Christian fiction based on the book of Chronicles about King Hezekiah. I liked her message, but it was written more "modern" than I liked. Her characters were missing too much of the ancient philosophies and customary attitudes of the time.

Jon says

2.5 stars (maybe)

Dialog (including internal) way too modern voiced and jarring to the ancient setting. While reading, I did not envision an ancient setting such as Jerusalem at the time of the Assyrian Empire should have evoked in my mind. I also felt the portrayal of everyday life and the traditional major life events and ceremonies were poorly researched and related. Too much cardboard melodrama and predictable snapshot scenes. I'm thankful this novel was so short. I will not continue reading this series.

Sarahanne says

There was much about this book that I needed to just read past. I tried to imagine that this was a story pulled from an ancient text that WASN'T a text I've read and studied and that WASN'T a thread in the dominant religion in our current society. Both of those were tricky to pretend away and, at moments, I wanted to set the book aside for theological or social reasons.

If you set aside suspicions (founded or not) about the agenda behind this book, the story itself is interesting and well told. If you are looking for a scholarly text or a historical text, this might not be the book. But if you are looking for an interesting story then it's not bad.

There is still that awkward feeling, for me, that a casual reader might read this novel and use it as a historical reference - that now they know the REAL story of those ancient days - and that somehow I'm complicit in that by even reading the book. That odd feeling will probably keep me from hunting up the rest of the series. There are so many fabulous books to be read that don't leave an awkward feeling...

Karen says

I love this book. It is interesting because it tells the same story that is repeated in the scriptures - good king dies, bad king takes over, he is slothful, arrogant, brutal, evil, most of the kingdom is sinful and won't repent, prophets who call them to repentance are beaten, then one of his sons will take over and be a good king and get the nation back to worshipping God (Yahweh in this book) instead of pagan idols. I really like it because of the same lessons taught as the scriptures, but this fictional account takes you into the emotions of some of

the characters and I find it interesting to feel what it must have been like to live back then.
DONE - LOVED THE BOOK!! Exciting, battle between corrupt and good.

Ruth says

Hezekiah, prince of Judah, lives in a kingdom under siege from hostile forces within and without. His father, King Ahaz, has abandoned the worship of Yahweh and led his nation into idolatry. Gods & Kings chronicles Hezekiah's coming of age, detailing his turbulent childhood when he saw his father sacrifice his older brother Eliab to the pagan god Molech. Overwhelmed by fear, Hezekiah first encounters the life-changing touch of God through the love and teaching of his grandfather, Zechariah, a Levitical priest. These seeds of faith are all that Hezekiah has to guide him in a kingdom threatened by invasion and corrupted by idolatry. But surrounded by threats to his very existence, can he hope to survive and be given the chance to change the future of his country?

This is one of the best biblical fiction series out there, easily on par with Angela Hunt's Legacies of the Ancient River series. I don't feel that Austin's writing is as strong or her characters quite as well-developed as is evident in her later books (such as the Christy award-winning novels *Candle in the Darkness* and *Fire By Night*), but that's a very minor issue. Austin does an excellent job bringing the world of ancient Judah to life in all of its color, pageantry, danger, and intrigue. She breathes fresh life into the character of Hezekiah, creating a flesh-and-blood man whose struggles and weaknesses make his triumphs as one of Judah's greatest kings all the more inspiring. And the book lives up to perhaps the best measure of whether or not biblical fiction succeeds or fails - it inspires study of the actual biblical text.

When reading this book (incidentally this was my second time), I was struck by how timely the story felt. Hezekiah was one small drop in an overwhelming sea of danger and false gods, but God used his life to literally change the course of an entire nation and people. So read, study, and be inspired as Austin helps to bring to life the truth of 2 Chronicles 7:14 -- "if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and will heal their land."

Staci says

Gods and Kings is the first of a Biblical Fiction series. Its focus is King Hezekiah from the time he was a young boy to when his reign begins at age 25.

While I very much enjoyed all the history, I was not fully engaged in the story. Overall, it was a good novel and one I'd recommend to readers who enjoy Biblical Fiction. I do plan to continue reading the series.

Jerry says

A Quickie Review

Lynn Austin brings the old story from the books of Kings to life. With lots of emotion and plenty of historical detail, you've likely never seen Hezekiah and Ahaz portrayed like this before. Fans of Biblical historical fiction will definitely like this.

Score: 4/5

Jeanie says

I love historical fiction that can place you in the setting with the sights, sounds, and culture of that day. Now when I read of Hezekiah in the Old Testament, I will have a better appreciation than I did before because of this account. You can easily see how the Jews left God and why and how terrible Kings of that day were. They really set the tone for their kingdom. Even in our world today, we can learn from the past and put our trust in God.

Joyce says

Lynn Austin is my favorite author of historical Christian fiction. Biblical fiction is not my favorite genre. I highly recommend all of Austin's books because she really does the research, her writing is top-notch, and her books are all faith-centered and Biblical. If anyone can do justice to a work of biblical fiction, she does. I love knowing that the fictionalized story lines are firmly anchored in the truths of God's Word.

Reading about idol worship in a fictional setting makes it come to life, more than words on a page, and gives depth of meaning to the whole Bible. In fleshing out biblical characters the Bible comes to life. Most importantly the worship of Jehovah God.

This book is worth a re-read. Thank you, Lynn, and please keep writing!

Sheila says

I really enjoyed this biblical historical novel. The time period and events detailed in this book had only been names from the Old Testament to me, and I never really knew the story of their names. This book does an excellent job of bringing to life King Hezekiah, his father King Ahaz, his maternal grandfather Zechariah, and the Prophets Isaiah and Micah. These names from the Bible are now fully fleshed people to me, and I can now picture the time they lived in, the idol worshiping that occurred, the human sacrifices, and the desecration of the Temple during the time of Kind Ahaz.
