

BGM BIBLE COLLEGE

Old Testament Survey

Lecture 12

1 & 2 Kings

Historical Background

The Books of the Kings record that period in Israel's history when the nation lost its national identity. These are covenantal histories, beginning with the death of King David and the reign of Solomon, and concluding with the downfall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

According to Kenneth Malmin, **1 Kings** is called "*The Book of the Kingdom*" or "*The Book of Corruption/Disruption*," while **2 Kings** is referred to as "*The Book of Dispersion*."

The narrative opens with Solomon and the building of the Temple, then moves through the account of the divided monarchy. It sets forth the captivity of Israel and Judah, and the destruction of the Temple. Israel is carried away into Assyrian exile, while Judah goes into Babylonian captivity.

The Author

The author of these two books is not explicitly mentioned. However, Jewish tradition ascribes them to the prophet **Jeremiah**.

Date of Writing

These two books were written sometime between **560 B.C. and 540 B.C.**

Purpose and Message

The purpose of the Books of Kings is to set in writing the history of the monarchy which began in the Books of Samuel, and to bring it to its full conclusion.

The record reveals both the united and the divided kingdoms of Israel, showing their continual unfaithfulness to the covenant of the LORD. These events prove that God is righteous in judging His people, for they did not honour His covenant.

The central message is clear: **the hand of the LORD was upon the monarchy of Israel**. God Himself is not a covenant-breaker, yet if man turns away from the covenant, judgment surely follows.

Outline of 1 Kings

1. **The United Kingdom** (Chapters 1–11)
2. **The Divided Kingdom** (Chapters 12–22)

Outline of the Book of 2 Kings

- **History of Israel** (Chs. 1–10)
- **History of Israel and Judah** (Chs. 11–17)
- **History of Judah** (Chs. 18–25)

Solomon's Kingdom

In many respects the reign of Solomon brought prosperity to Israel. His rule was essentially a time of peace, in which Solomon devoted all his strength to secure for Israel an honourable place among the nations of the world. During his reign, no world power disturbed him. Through commercial treaties and military alliances he gained supremacy over surrounding nations, so that the weaker peoples did not dare rise against him. This was the golden age of Israel, for the achievements of this period are unparalleled in her history.

1. In Solomon's days, trade flourished, and the nation became exceedingly wealthy.
2. He built store cities for provision and supplies.
3. Solomon possessed a strong naval force, chariots, and horses.
4. His fame spread far and wide.
5. He reigned forty years over Israel.

Solomon's Family Life

The wisdom, wealth, and fame of Solomon were exceedingly great. He commanded a powerful army, and commerce prospered under him. His political relations were strong. He erected beautiful structures such as the royal palace and the Temple of the LORD. Yet his family life became the cause of his downfall.

1. Solomon had taken Pharaoh's daughter to wife.
2. In his harem were a thousand women, wives and concubines.
3. He married Moabite, Ammonite, and other foreign women. For their sake he participated in the worship of Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Molech, the god of the Ammonites.
4. In later centuries Solomon stood forth as a dreadful warning concerning the disastrous effects of intermarriage with the heathen.

Solomon's Thinking and Reflection

In the latter years of his life Solomon turned to the worship of strange gods. When Solomon forgot the LORD his God, his heart was no longer wise. The scholars declare that Solomon must have felt a void within, a deep unhappiness; for he wrote one of the most melancholy books of Scripture, namely **Ecclesiastes**.

This book teaches us what the thoughts and feelings were of Solomon when he sought to live life apart from God. Instead of seeking answers from the Word of God, he tried to express his reflections and observations in wisdom, **Ecclesiastes (1:12–18)**. We perceive that he was

very sorrowful, for he says that with much knowledge came grief, and with wisdom came sorrow. He concluded that “all is vanity,” **Ecclesiastes (12:8)**.

The purpose of Ecclesiastes is to teach that even the wealthiest man, the wisest of men, the most successful of men—if he seeks joy and purpose apart from God—shall never obtain it. If Solomon had only remained steadfast in the worship of the LORD his God, loving Him alone, his life would not have been filled with sadness and emptiness.

What Weakened the Glory of the Kingdom?

What happened in the lives of David and Solomon that dimmed the glory of the kingdom?

1. David

1. **David** took unto himself the wife of another, Bathsheba.
2. David conspired to slay Uriah the Hittite.
3. David numbered Israel (being provoked by Satan), **1 Chronicles 21:1**.

2. Solomon

1. **Solomon** transgressed the law of kingship: multiplying gold, silver, horses, and wives.
2. He turned his heart toward strange gods.
3. He walked not according to the charge of David his father, **1 Chronicles 28:9**.

Why Was the Kingdom Divided?

1. Because Solomon went after foreign gods.
2. Because Rehoboam did not hearken unto the Israelites.
3. Because Jeroboam fell into idolatry.

Themes

(a) The Life of Solomon

The reign of King Solomon is known in Hebrew history as the Golden Age. As king, Solomon was beloved of God, and the Lord had endowed him with the gift of wisdom. During his reign, Israel enjoyed peace, prosperity, wealth, and glory. Because of his wisdom, Solomon gained great fame, and he was filled with knowledge and understanding.

Yet, towards the end of his reign, his decline became evident. His wives turned his heart after foreign gods. Yielding to sensuality and materialism, he fell into the very sin against which he had warned in Proverbs chapter 5. The writer of Kings holds Solomon’s sin as the cause of the division of the kingdom (**1 Kings 11:33**).

The downfall of Solomon’s kingdom manifested in three ways:

- **Spiritual Decline**
- **Political Decline**

- **Economic Decline**

(b) Classical and Non-Classical Prophecy

With the development of the Hebrew monarchy, we also find the rise of both **classical** and **non-classical** prophetic movements.

- **Classical Prophetic Material** refers to those writings preserved in written form, such as Hosea, Amos, and Isaiah.
- **Non-Classical Prophetic Material** refers to narratives about prophets such as Elijah and Elisha, wherein miraculous accounts are preserved. These stories highlight the power of God manifested through the prophet's ministry.

In non-classical prophecy, miracles are central, demonstrating God's power in the prophet's life. In classical prophecy, however, miracles are not of primary importance. Instead, the message is directed to the people, particularly kings and religious leaders, calling them to repentance and covenantal faithfulness.

(c) Royal Dynastic Succession and Charismatic Leadership

In Judah, the monarchy followed the principle of **dynastic succession**, where kingship remained within one royal household. If the king died, his eldest son would ascend the throne. Often, the reigning king appointed his successor during his lifetime, to avoid dispute after his death.

By contrast, in the northern kingdom of Israel, leadership was **charismatic**. Kingship did not remain within one family. Rather, God chose leaders from various tribes to provide both political and religious guidance. These leaders were empowered by God to reign, thus forming a system of charismatic leadership, resembling the time of the Judges. Unlike Judah's dynastic succession, Israel's leadership was conditional, dependent upon obedience to God.

(d) The Calf-Worship

When the kingdom divided, Rehoboam refused to listen to the people's plea and, following the counsel of his young companions, made the burden upon the Israelites heavier. As a result, the ten tribes separated from Judah and called Jeroboam out of Egypt to be their king.

Fearing that the Israelites might go up to Jerusalem to sacrifice and turn back to Rehoboam, Jeroboam made two golden calves and said unto the people: ***"Behold thy gods, O Israel; worship them."***

This abomination provoked the Lord's anger. Consequently, judgment fell upon the northern kingdom, and they were carried away captive into Assyria, leading to their destruction.

How Do We See Christ in the Books of Kings?

We behold Him as the **True King**, the One greater than Solomon, in whom wisdom and righteousness dwell, and whose throne is everlasting.

What Lessons Do the Books of Kings Teach Us?

1. In loyalty unto God lies our victory.
2. We must pass down the faith to our generations.
3. When all seems lost, God raises up a way of hope.

