

Story of the Old Testament

Lesson 7 - The Monarchy - The Divided Kingdom

We continue with the Story of the Old Testament in lesson seven. We are still in the period of the Monarchy, the period of the kings. This lesson will focus on the Divided Kingdom that follows the reign of King Saul, King David, and King Solomon.

This lesson begins on page 36 in your handout. When you look at this session, there's much detail. There are many kings. There is much history focused on this 350-year period of time until both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom go into exile. In this lesson, we will highlight the main themes and not get lost in the details related to each of the 39 kings.

We will discuss how the kingdoms were divided, the initial leaders of each of the kingdoms, and what led to their downfall. Beginning on page 36, there is an introduction. It gives you the time frame for this portion of the story of the Old Testament.

It runs from about 931 BC to 605 BC, which is about 325 years. 605 BC is when the southern kingdom started its exile into Babylon. The final destruction of Jerusalem took place in 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar and the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem, and the remainder of the southern kingdom of Judah went into exile in Babylon.

So, that total period actually spans from 931 BC to 586 BC, which is 345 years. The books of the Bible that cover this period are 1 Kings 12 through 2 Kings, as well as 2 Chronicles chapter 10 through chapter 36. Many prophets, were speaking and writing at this time, speaking about condemnation, judgment towards the northern and southern kingdoms, calling them to repent and return to God. There were prophets to the north and prophets to the south, and you can see in your handout that the primary prophets to the northern kingdom were Jonah, Amos and Hosea.

Primary prophets to the southern kingdom were Joel, Obadiah, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah. And then there were prophets that prophesied to other nations. Jonah went and prophesied to Nineveh, Obadiah prophesied to Edom, they were the descendants of Esau.. Nahum also prophesied the final judgment on Nineveh 100 years after Jonah.

We could learn something from each of the kings. The first king of the northern kingdom was Jeroboam. We'll talk briefly about him.

The first king of the southern kingdom was Solomon's son, Rehoboam. Elijah and Elisha were two key players. They prophesied during the reign of King Ahab was one of the most wicked kings in the northern kingdom and his wife Jezebel.

What you have in your appendix as well, beginning on page 55 through page 62, is a short summary of every book of the Old Testament. You have overview of each of the major and minor prophets, which is helpful. It gives you a summary of who prophesied to which nation, what their main themes were, who were the kings during the time when the prophets were prophesying.

We mentioned in the last lesson that because of the sin of Solomon, God planned to divide His kingdom. Solomon started well but he did not finish well. He was a king with half a heart towards God. He took on many wives and those wives led him astray and he began to worship other gods. God judged Solomon and the nation, and a division of the nation would come. In 1 Kings 11:28, we read that God raised up a king for the northern kingdom, and that king was Jeroboam. God said that he was going to tear the majority of the kingdom out of the hands of Judah, out of the line of David.

He would leave Judah and Benjamin as part of the southern kingdom, but ten tribes of Israel would go to the northern kingdom, and Jeroboam would be the ruler of that kingdom. If he would walk in obedience, God said he would provide a dynasty for that kingdom. If he had a heart after God, a heart like King David. We read though that from the very beginning, Jeroboam turned away from God and did what was evil. 1 Kings 11-13 provide the narrative for this spiritual rebellion.

Jeroboam does evil in the sight of the Lord, and he sets up two places of worship on the northern boundary, Dan, and the southern boundary, Samaria. He sets up golden calves, false places of worship. He sets up his own priesthood, maybe out of fear, because if the people of the northern kingdom would go where they were supposed to go to Jerusalem to worship the one true God, maybe the people would be drawn away, and it might weaken the northern kingdom.

Jeroboam set up these places of idolatry, places of false worship, and he turned the hearts of the people away from God, and this led to the downfall of King Jeroboam. At the bottom of page 36, you can see just the comparison between the first king of the northern kingdom, Jeroboam, and the first king of the southern kingdom, Rehoboam. Both Jeroboam and Rehoboam made the choice to turn away from God. They could have been great kings with God's help but instead, they trusted in their own abilities and selfish desires.

Rehoboam, was Solomon's son, and he had the opportunity to start off well. He could have been less harsh on the people, but he did not listen to the advice of the elders to be more gentle with people. They told him that if he led with a heart like David, the people would follow him, and the kingdom would prosper. But he listened instead to the advice of his peers, and they told him to be a firm and harsh ruler. That was the beginning of the end of the Southern kingdom. Rehoboam led the people into idolatry.

There were a series of some good kings of Judah, but of the 20 kings of the southern kingdom, there were only eight that did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. In the northern kingdom, there were 19 kings during this period of time, and all of them did evil in the eyes of the Lord. Here is a summary of the period of the Divided Kingdom.

The northern kingdom was called Israel. Jeroboam was the first king. There were 10 tribes. The northern kingdom lasted for 209 years before it went into exile in Assyria, because of the sins of Jeroboam and the idolatry of people, the spiritual adultery that the people put into practice against the one true God. Their exile took place in 722 BC.

The southern kingdom was known as Judah. Rehoboam was the first king. It was made up of two tribes, Judah and Benjamin. That kingdom lasted for 345 years before Babylon conquered the southern kingdom, Beginning in 605 BC and continuing until 586 BC, the southern kingdom began a 70 year exile prophesied by the prophet Jeremiah. We are on page 37.

Please turn to page 53, appendix 6. You will see a listing of all the kings of Israel and the prophets.

At the very top, you have the United Kingdom. There was King Saul, King David, and King Solomon. Because of the sin of Solomon, the kingdom divided between the north and the south.

The north was known as Israel. The southern kingdom was known as Judah. As you look down the middle-left column, you see a list of the 19 kings of Israel, the northern kingdom.

Jeroboam was the first king. The number in parentheses is the number of years that the king reigned. So, Jeroboam reigned for 22 years.

Then there's a word either evil or good. Based on what the Word of God says, they did evil or they did good in the eyes of the Lord. And if you through the list, all of the 19 kings, from Jeroboam to Nadab, to Basha, to Elah, to Tibni, to Omri, to Ahab, and so forth, all the way to Hoshea, all 19 kings did evil. There were no good kings in the northern kingdom.

In the far left column, you can see who the prophets were, who were prophesying during that time. You can see Elijah and Elisha, during the time of Ahab and Ahaziah, Joram and Jehu. A little further down, you can see Jonah and Amos and Hosea, when they prophesied, and who were the kings during that time.

As I mentioned, the last king of the northern kingdom was Hoshea. The kingdom went into captivity, in Assyria in 722 BC. The northern kingdom of Israel was finished at that point. Look over to the other side, you can see the list of the 20 kings of the southern kingdom beginning with Rehoboam. He reigned for 17 years. He did evil in the eyes of the Lord. He did not follow the ways of his father David. And there are 20 kings altogether.

There were eight kings that did good. These are shaded on the page. God is a faithful God. There was always a remnant. God was always working to complete His promise of building His kingdom. And eventually, there would be a king who would reign on the throne of David, coming out of the tribe of Judah, forever and ever based on his covenant promise in 2 Samuel 7:12-16.

Here is a red thread that points to Jesus, the King of kings and the Lord of lords. So, even in the turning away, the turning towards idolatry, the turning towards spiritual adultery, God would raise up kings who would bring revival and turn people's hearts towards the Lord. And some of the good kings were Asa, Jehoshaphat, Joash, Amaziah, Uzziah, Jotham, Hezekiah, and then King Josiah.

On the far right, you can see who the prophets were that were prophesying primarily to the southern kingdom. Prophets like Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel begins to prophesy towards the end of the southern kingdom as they go into exile in Babylon.

Ezekiel is also a prophet that continues on during the exile in Babylon.

When Judah returns, which we'll see in lesson nine, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi prophesied during the restoration period. This is a helpful one-page summary of the Divided Kingdom to understand the different kings and prophets. Let's return to page 37.

As stated, there were 19 wicked and ungodly kings that reigned in Israel, the northern kingdom, for 209 years. King Amri introduced Baal worship. He was the father of Ahab, who was the most wicked king of Israel.

We can read about him in 1 Kings 16:30-31. Because of this spiritual adultery, God sent his prophets. He sent Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea to the northern kingdom to call them to judgment and call them to repentance.

Yet the kings, and the people, and the false priesthood did not respond to the message of the prophets. Thus, the northern kingdom was defeated by Assyria in 722 B.C.

Let's read beginning in 2 Kings 17:7 for an explanation of the fall of the northern kingdom.

"And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods, and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and the customs of the kings of Israel had practiced. And the people of Israel did secretly against the Lord their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city.

They set up for themselves pillars and ashram on every high hill, and under every green tree. There they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the Lord carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the Lord to anger.

And they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, You shall not do this. Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes in accordance with all the law that I commanded your fathers and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets."

And in verse 14,

"But they would not listen, but were stubborn as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God. They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with them and their fathers and the warnings he gave them. They went off after false idols and became false. And they followed the nations that were around them concerning whom the Lord had commanded them that they should not do like them. And they abandoned all the commandments of the Lord their God and made for themselves metal images of two calves. And they made an Asherah and worshiped all the hosts of heaven and served Baal. And they

burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. Therefore, the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left, but the tribe of Judah only. And said, Judah also did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the customs that Israel had introduced.

And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel and afflicted them and gave them into the hand of plunderers until he had cast them out of his sight. When he had torn Israel from the house of David, they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king and Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord and made them commit great sin. The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them until the Lord removed Israel out of his sight as he had spoken by all his servants to prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day.”

That is the tragic summary of two hundred years of history of the northern kingdom.

The kingdom fell from within. It was due to spiritual adultery. It was about turning away from God; not following his commands. It was breaking covenant with the God who loved them. And God brought judgment. As he had said, he's a holy God and he was going to judge sin.

Yet we see as this story continues, God is a faithful God. He's a promise keeping God. And we'll see that in the future lessons, he will not leave his people in exile.

He will always have a faithful remnant and he will bring his people back into the land that was promised to Abraham. God will ultimately have his people in his land and they will be waiting for the promised king that will reign on David's throne forever. This will be fulfilled at the second coming of the Lord Jesus.

Here is a short summary of the Southern kingdom, known as Judah. The tribes that made up the southern kingdom were Benjamin and Judah. Judah became the primary tribe of the southern kingdom.

Judah's history was a cycle of spiritual decline and revivals. There were a few evil kings, followed by a good king who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord and followed the ways of their father, David. God would bring about a revival in response to godly leadership and repentance.

Due to these mini-revivals, God delayed sending the Judah into exile for another 150 years after the northern kingdom had fallen.

There were 20 kings who reigned during the southern kingdom. Eight of them were godly, 12 were evil.

God sent many prophets to continue to call His people to judgment, to call them to repentance, to call them to walk in step with the one true God. Each of you probably have a favorite king. There are things we can learn from the good kings as well as the evil kings.

King Hezekiah was listed as maybe one of the greatest kings of the southern kingdom. Manasseh was one of the most evil kings of the southern kingdom. Yet even in his evilness and the idolatry that he brought about and the harm that he brought to the southern kingdom, there was a time at the end of his life, he repented and turned back to God.

And God even brought a mini revival in his time. Towards the end of the kingdom, King Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon. Zedekiah also rebelled against Babylon. He was the last king of the southern kingdom. And then Judah was taken into captivity.

The exile started in 605 BC and a wave of the people of Judah went into captivity in Babylon in 605 BC with Daniel.

In 597 BC, 10,000 more people were taken to Babylon. Ezekiel was in this second group.

And then in 586 BC, when Zedekiah rebelled against King Nebuchadnezzar the final time leading to the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. 25,000 people were taken from Judah into exile in Babylon in this final group.

Jeremiah prophesied that this exile would last 70 years and the God's people would return to God's land. God's hand would move the heart of King Cyrus of Persia to release his people to return to the land that God had promised to Abraham hundreds of years earlier.

1 and 2 Kings tells the story of the Divided Kingdom.

1 and 2 Chronicles, summarizes much of this content with a focus on the spiritual life of Judah and its kings. These two books provide supportive information to reinforce the OT storyline. Many believe that Ezra wrote first and second chronicles, and it was written primarily for those that were in exile to remind them of God's faithfulness. To remind them of God's promises and restore hope that God was not finished with them.

Chronicles elevates the spiritual viewpoint of Israel's history.

It was written during the exile to provide hope for those in Babylon. The books highlighted the goodness, the royal line of David from the tribe of Judah, because that is from where the promised Messiah will come.

God is reminding His people that He is building His kingdom. He's a faithful God, and He's a promise-keeping God. He will finish what he started.

These books were written to show that God is faithful to his covenant promises, first to Abraham and then also to David. The law, the priesthood, and the temple, the ministry of true worship of the one true God, the living God were reinforced in Chronicles. These books taught the people as us that we must learn from history.

The people, when they returned to land, could learn from all of Scripture that was given to teach us, to encourage us, that we could learn to walk in the ways that would be honoring the Lord God. At the bottom of page 37, there is a chart that compares the books of Samuel and Kings with first and second Chronicles. Chronicles is much more positive.

It focuses more on the history and the spiritual journey of the southern kingdom, the kingdom of Judah and of Benjamin.

On page 38, you have a helpful summary of the key themes.

They came from the royal line of David, and God wasn't finished with them. God still had an unconditional, eternal promise that he made to David that on his throne would rule a king who would reign forever and ever. God was reminding them that he was not finished with them.

All the genealogies point out that the promises to David had their source in the promise to Abraham. These pointed all the way back, not just to the promise of David, but the covenant promise with Abraham that were made in Genesis chapter 12, 15 and 17 that were repeated to Isaac and to Jacob as well. That Abraham would be the father of a great nation. And as he would walk with God, all the nations of the earth would be blessed through him.

The main theme through Chronicles is God's faithfulness to his covenant promise. Chronicles emphasizes the law, the priesthood, and the temple. And although Solomon's temple was destroyed by the Babylonians, when the people of God are brought back into the land under Zerubbabel and Ezra and Nehemiah, a new temple will be built.

There would be a restored temple during the time of Herod. There will even be a temple during the Tribulation and a restored temple during the millennial kingdom as well, where the glory of God will truly reign because Jesus will be at the center of it.

Jesus is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords, and he will reign on David's throne forever and ever. Chronicles also teaches that the past is full of lessons for the present. There was apostasy, a denial of God, idolatry, intermarriage with Gentiles, all things that God said His people should avoid.

There was a lack of unity, and all these things led to God's judgment. We look ahead then to the New Testament, as followers of Jesus, we have the Holy Spirit of God living within us, and we have the power of God to walk in obedience, to demonstrate that we have been saved by grace through faith in the finished work of Christ, and that the evidence of that saving faith is a life of obedience, a life of love, a life of submission, walking in step with the Spirit of God.

We can learn from the past and we can trust God and the indwelling Holy Spirit to provide the power and strength to walk in a manner worthy of the calling that we've received.

There are lessons about leadership. We can learn from all these different kings, most of whom did evil in the eyes of the Lord.

Some did what was right. They followed the ways of King David. It is impossible to lead others without depending on the Lord, without living a life of faith yourself. Any nation or church will not rise above the level of leadership that is provided.

Second, leaders must guard their hearts and remain faithful to the Lord. As leaders go, so go the people. There's a responsibility God places on leaders to live a holy life, to be set apart, not to be perfect. When there is sin, leaders are to confess sin and get back in step walking with the Lord.

Proverbs 14: 34, it says, "Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin is a disgrace to any people."

This is the theme of the period of the divided kingdom.

There were times when a few people had a heart like David's, and they desired to worship God and walk in step with Him and obey Him and honor and worship Him. Yet sin dominated the northern and southern kingdom. It led to judgment. It led to separation.

God is a faithful God. Even in exile, God is with His people, and He's going to bring His people back into the land.

We'll read about the time of the exile in lesson eight.

Then in lesson nine, we'll talk about the return of the people into the land, which we'll call the restoration. I think that gives you a good summary of the divided kingdom, the north and the south.

Again, you can refer to that appendix six on page 53. It gives you a list of all the kings of the north and the south. Then the summary books, the summary of every book of the Old Testament beginning on page 55 through 62, will give you an overview of 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles, and all the writings of the 17 different prophets, the five major prophets and the 12 minor prophets.

This brings lesson seven to a close. We will continue with lesson eight, talking about the time of the exile, the time of captivity.

God bless you.