

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 20

1 and 2 Kings (Part 1)

Having completed a survey of the Books of the Law, followed by a look at Israel's first three kings (Saul, David and Solomon), and then the Books of Wisdom, we now turn our attention back to the kings and to the books of 1 and 2 Kings.



Originally written as a single book using various sources of historical records for reference, the authorship of this writing is generally not known. We do know that it covers the period beginning with Solomon's reign and ends with the last king of divided Israel, Jehoiachin, and his imprisonment in Babylon. This places the chronology approximately between 971 BC and 550 BC.

Accurate dating of the reigns of all of the kings is difficult, as various calculations were used for dating each king's reign; and it is also thought that the Northern and Southern Kingdoms used slightly different calendars – caused by their establishment of the beginning the New Year at different times. Also, the rulers themselves had different methods for calculating the length of their reign, with some logging the beginning of their reign from their coronation, while others starting counting only after the first year of their reign.

In general, 1 and 2 Kings illustrate the negative causation that each king had on the spiritual decline of Israel and Judah following the end of David's reign. The amount of attention paid within the books (i.e., length of scripture allocated) to specific kings relates directly to the effect that they had on this spiritual decline, and not to their length of years as king; thus, each king was evaluated on the basis of their fidelity to God.

In looking at the history of the kings of both Israel and Judah, two things are striking: first, we will see that not one of the kings of Israel (the Northern Tribe) followed David and did what God approved; and second, only two of the kings of the nation of Judah (the Southern Tribe) followed after David and did what God approved.

So we see that over a period of approximately 425 years, only two kings sought to follow God. All of the rest led God's chosen people to follow after idols and every detestable thing that God had warned them against. Even though God repeatedly warned them and taught them about what was right and what was wrong through His prophets, God's chosen people -- the people he had himself created beginning with Abraham -- turned their backs completely on God.

What is even more remarkable about the books of 1 and 2 Kings is that, in spite of the rebellion and in spite of the sin of the Kings, God upheld His promise to David (found in 2 Samuel 7:16) and preserved his kingdom.

Let's begin a quick study of these two remarkable books. Read 1 Kings and 2 Kings and consider the following questions:

1. Of all the kings mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings, who were the only two kings that were approved in God's eyes by how they led as kings? Who were they, and what did they do? (2 Kings 18:1-8; 22:1-2; 23:24-25)

2. The prophet, a position used by God throughout 1 and 2 Kings had two distinct functions: (1) they spoke of future events, and (2) they anointed God's choice as King over the land. To be king, you had to meet one of two central criteria: (1) you had to either be born of the seed of David, or (2) you must be anointed by a prophet. Since we know that none of the kings of the Northern Kingdom were from the seed of David - you will recall that his seed ruled the Southern Kingdom - we would expect that the twenty kings of the North would have all been anointed by a prophet as required. However, only two were. Who were they?
3. How do the requirements about being king mentioned above relate to Christ?
4. What happened at Shechem between Rehoboam (the son of Solomon), and the elders of Israel.
5. Describe the religious system that Jeroboam creates. (1 Kings 12:25-33)
6. Describe the prophecy given to the wife of Jeroboam, and when this prophecy gets fulfilled?
7. Meanwhile, down in the Southern Kingdom what is the religious situation like under Rehoboam, and what does Shishak, King of Egypt do?
8. And lastly, a bonus question. What is the Rosetta Stone, and why is it important to our studies?

And so we begin our look at the kings who will lead God's people over the next 425 years, the dramatic effect that these kings will have on the people they lead, and the relationship that they have with God. Held accountable for the actions of their kings, God's chosen people will be taken into captivity, first by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and then the Babylonians in 585 BC.

There are many lessons that we can learn as we study the kings. In this lesson, consider that, at the end of the day, God held each person responsible for their behavior, not just the kings themselves, but the people the people who followed them as well. It is not a valid excuse to say that someone else led you to act or behave in ways that run counter to God. Just as with the story of Adam and Eve, we are all individually responsible for our actions. It is no one else's fault but our own when we sin against God.

Let's commit to making a special effort this week to watch what enters our hearts and motivates our actions. May all that we say and do glorify God and not ourselves.

Thanks for studying with us, and have a great week everyone.

In Christ,

Wes