

Session 5: Reign of Kings

1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings

Intro to the books of Samuel and Kings:

The two books of Samuel and the two books of kings are one unit of text. The progression of the lives of the kings and prophets found in these texts follow as one continuous unit throughout these four books. The two books of Chronicles, however, follow the same progression of kings but with its own twist. The two books of Maccabees are written about a completely different period of Israelite history. As we read through the books of Kings, read carefully and determine which king is from which city. A religious rebellion happened following the death of Solomon. This rebellion led to the erection of a second altar at Bethel and Dan. Thus, from that point to the exile, two kings reigned in Israel, one in the north and one in the south. The Books of Kings chronicle the kings of the northern kingdom alongside the kings of the southern kingdom, which makes reading these books far more complicated. Here are some helpful hints for determining which king ruled over which kingdom. The following terms are synonymous for the northern kingdom: Ephraim, Israel, and Samaria. The following names are used exclusively for the southern kingdom: Judah and Jerusalem. Normally the exact date of the ruling of a king is listed in conjunction with the year of the rule in the other kingdom. For example: “In the thirty-seventh year of Joash, king of Judah, Jehoash, son of Jehoahaz, began his sixteen-year reign over Israel in Samaria” (2 Kings 14:10). Careful attention to the territory of the king named will help avoid confusion. In the outline I will abbreviate the location of the reign in the following way: (N) northern kingdom, (S) southern kingdom.

Outline of the books:

1 Samuel

- I. Samuel the Prophet (1:1—7:17)
 - a. The story of Samuel’s parents and the birth of Samuel (1:1—2:11)
 - b. Samuel as apprentice to Eli the priest (2:12—3:18)
 - c. The Ark of the Covenant is lost and returned (5:6—6:9)
- II. Saul the first king (8:1—12:25)
 - a. Request for a king (8:1-5)
 - b. God grants the request for a king (8:6-9)
 - c. Problems with a king (8:10-18)
 - d. Saul is anointed king (9:14—10:8)
 - e. Warnings for the people (12:13-18)
- III. Saul turns wicked (13:1—31:13)
 - a. Saul turns from God’s laws (13:10-14; 14:27-30)
 - b. David anointed king (16:1-13)
 - c. David challenges Goliath (17:1-51)
 - d. David and Jonathan (18:1—21:1)
 - e. David eats the Holy Bread (22:2-8)
 - f. David spares Saul (24:1-23; 26:1-12)

- g. Death of Saul and his sons (31)

2 Samuel

- I. King David (1:1—24:25)
 - a. David made king (2:1-7)
 - b. Capture of Zion (5:6-12)
 - c. The Ark is brought to Jerusalem (6:1-23)
 - d. David asks to build God a house, God says no (7:18-29)
 - e. David and Bathsheba (11:1—12:25)
 - f. Absalom (13:23—19:1)
 - g. David's song and last words (22:2b—23:7)
 - h. David takes a census of the people (24:1-25)

1 Kings

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1—11:43)
 - a. Solomon proclaimed king (1:11-53)
 - b. David's last instructions to Solomon (2:1-10)
 - c. Peace in the kingdom (2:12-46)
 - d. Solomon's gift (3:1-28)
 - e. Building the Temple (6:1—8:66)
 - f. Sins of Solomon (11:1-43)
 - g. Death of Solomon (11:40-42)
- II. Reign of kings (12:1—16:34)
 - a. Succession of kings (12:1-25)
 - b. The divided kingdom (12:26-32)
 - c. Jeroboam (N) as king (12:26—14:31)
 - d. Rehoboam (S) as king (14:21-31)
 - e. Abijam (S) as king (15:1-8)
 - f. Asa (S) as king (15:9-24)
 - g. Nadab (N) as king (15:25-32)
 - h. Bassha (N) as king (15:33—16:14)
 - i. Zimri (N) as king (15:15-22)
 - j. Omri (N) as king (15:23-28)
 - k. Ahab (N)
- III. Elijah/Elisha cycle (17:1—22:54)
 - a. Elijah and the widow (17:7-24)
 - b. Elijah and the prophets of Baal (18:1-46)
 - c. Elijah's flight to Horeb (19:1-18)
 - d. Call of Elisha (19:19-21)
 - e. Ahab's victory (20)
 - f. Ahab seizes Naboth's vineyard (21)
 - g. Jehoshaphat (S) as king (22:41-51)
 - h. Ahaziah (N) as king (22:52-54)

2 Kings

- I. The Elijah/Elisha cycle continues (1:1—8:15)
 - a. Ahaziah son of Ahab (N) consults a foreign oracle Baalzebub (1:1-8)
 - b. Elisha succeeds Elijah (2:1-18)
 - c. Acts of Elisha (2:19-25; 4:1-6:7)
 - i. Elisha cures Naaman (5)
- II. Reign of Kings part II (8:16—17:41)
 - a. Jehoram (S) as king (8:16-24)
 - b. Ahaziah son of Joram (S) as king (8:25-29)
 - c. Jehu
 - i. Elisha anoints Jehu as king (9:1-15)
 - ii. Jehu murders Joram (9:15b-26)
 - d. Death of Jezebel wife of Ahaz (9:30-37)
 - e. Joash (S) as king (12:1-22)
 - f. Jehoahaz (N) as king (13:1-9)
 - g. Joash son of Jehoahaz (N) as king (13:10-25)
 - h. Amaziah (S) as king (14:1-22)
 - i. Jeroboam (N) as king (14:23-29)
 - j. Azariah (S) as king (15:1-7)
 - k. Zechariah (N) as king (15:8-12)
 - l. Shallum (N) as king (15:13-16)
 - m. Menahem (N) as king (15:17-22)
 - n. Pekahiah (N) as king (15:23-26)
 - o. Pekah (N) as king (15:27-31)
 - p. Jotham (S) as king (15:32-38)
 - q. Ahaz (S) as king (16)
 - r. Hoshea (N) as king (17)
 - i. The first exile (17:6)
 - ii. End of the divided kingdom
- III. Judah after the first exile (18:1— 25:30)
 - a. Hezekiah (S) as king (18:1—20:21)
 - i. Invasion by the Assyrians (18:13-37)
 - ii. Hezekiah and Isaiah (19:1-19)
 - b. Menassah (S) as king (21:1-18)
 - c. Amon (S) as king (21:19-26)
 - d. Josiah (S) as king (22:1—23:30)
 - i. Book of Deuteronomy found in the temple (22:8—23:7)
 - ii. Reform of Josiah (23:8-24)
 - e. Jehoahaz (S) as king (23:31-35)
 - f. Jehoiakim (S) as king (23:36—24:7)
 - g. Jehoiakin (S) as king (24:8-17)
 - h. Zedekiah (S) as king (24:18—25:21)
 - i. Babylon advanced (25:1)

- ii. Jerusalem destroyed (25:2-20)
 - 1. Judah's officials are sent into exile (25:18-20)
- iii. Nebuchadnezzar appoints a governor over Judah (25:22-26)
- iv. Being of the exilic period

Main themes:

Kingship:

The topic of kingship is quite an obvious topic for books named "kings." Nevertheless, the topic of the kings of Israel is rather complicated. First Samuel begins with the prophet Samuel. This prophet acts as the king for the people. He intercedes on behalf of the people to God and delivers the messages from God to the people of what they must do. This system is not sufficient for the people of Israel; they want to be like the other nations and have a king. After much debate, God agrees to their request and grants them a king. A king, however, comes at a great cost (see 1 Samuel 8:10-18). A king has the power to demand taxes, wage war, and control the people. The king, also, becomes a representation of God on earth. The king can offer sacrifices in the temple, when the priests agree to it, he is paraded in festivals. He becomes a god. Thus, in Israel demanding a king, they are saying to God "you are not enough for us, we need something more." The request for a king came at a loss of their faith.

The kings also played important roles in Israelite society and in the context of their religion. As I mentioned before, kings are seen as gods and paraded with the same honor, pomp and circumstance as the Ark of the Covenant. The religious beliefs of the kings, and more importantly that of the queen, dictate the religious beliefs of the society. Thus when Ahaz married Jezebel, who came from the Canaanites, the religion changed from the worship of God to the worship of Baal. Josiah, on the other hand, was a great reformer who transformed the society back into proper worship of God. Nevertheless, the sins of the kings become the sins of the people. The last important role of kings was to negotiate political alliances with other nations. God forbade any of the kings to make alliances with other nation since doing so would introduce foreign religious practices. Yet, most of the evil kings of the Old Testament made alliances with other nations either through marriage or through military pacts, thus incurring the wrath of God.

Divided Kingdom:

The divided kingdom is a specific moment in Israelite history starting with the death of Solomon and ending with the exile of the northern tribes by the Assyrians. After the death of Solomon, Rehoboam succeeded him as king of all of Israel. Rehoboam was proclaimed king in Shechem, which is in northern Israel. Jeroboam, fearing the loss of power that comes with the king returning to Jerusalem, staged a military coup to kill Rehoboam. In the resulting war, the two kingdoms split. The southern kingdom remained united under the authority of the temple in Jerusalem and the Davidic dynasty. The northern kingdom constructed for itself two temples, one in Bethel and one in Dan marked by two golden calves. From this point onward, the northern kingdom will never be as united as the southern kingdom. Each of the tribes of the north will vie for power and kill one another in order for their tribe to be in power. However, this does mean

that the sins of one part of the kingdom are not necessarily the sins of the entire people. This division ends with the Assyrians conquering the northern tribes and sending them into exile.

Exile:

The way we normally picture exile is something similar to the concentration camps at Auschwitz. This could not be a more inaccurate image. Second Kings 18-20 explains that only the officials, priests, and aristocracy went into exile. The Assyrians and Babylonians had a reason for this tactic. If you exile only the hierarchy of the society, then the dumb peasants will listen to whomever you decide to send in as their ruler. Therefore, both the Babylonians and the Assyrians desired to control the land of Israel through their own rulers such as Nebuchadnezzar. For the peasants and the common folk, exile was similar to life with a king. They had a new ruler that made new demands but other than a new ruler, life went on as usual. For the nobles, life was much improved. They got a new house, didn't have to work, had food provided for them. Life was good for the nobles. What is the problem with this picture? All the people, those in exile and those left in Israel, were forced to worship the gods of the Assyrians or Babylonians. No longer could they worship God. Psalm 137 characterizes the plight of the people well. The book of Lamentations is another example of the difficulties the people faced in not being able to continue their normal ritual practices. These themes and a better picture of exile will emerge from the prophetic books. The two important points to note as of now are: the northern kingdom was conquered first in 721 by the Assyrians, and the southern kingdom was conquered last by the Babylonians in 538.

Prophets:

The prophetic tradition of the Israelites began long before the books of Samuel and Kings. Moses was the first official prophet, even though his role seems counter to our image of a prophet. When we normally think of a prophet we think of a person using divining tools to see into the future. The prophets of Israel are quite different from fortune tellers. Israelite prophets functioned as mouthpieces for God: they would tell the people what the will of God is and call out the iniquities and the sins of the people. From that basic definition, the roles of prophets become muddled very quickly. Prophets also advised kings, anointed kings, aided priests, formed guilds, advised people, healed the sick, and performed great deeds. The prophets fall into three general categories: professional prophets, guild prophets, and appointed prophets. Professional prophets were paid to advise the king on the will of God. Guild prophets are normally in a paternal lineage and thus learn the trade like carpentry for a carpenter. Appointed prophets are those whom God commissions for a specific purpose or call. I will expand more on each of these definitions as we enter the prophetic texts.

- 1 Samuel 2:1-10 – Hannah’s Prayer of Thanksgiving, precursor for Mary’s Prayer Luke 1
- 1 Samuel 3 – Call of Samuel the first prophet
- 1 Samuel 4:1-11 – Loss of the ark
- 1 Samuel 6:1-9 – Ark returned
- 1 Samuel 8 – establishment of the king
- 1 Samuel 16 – David anointed king
- 1 Samuel 21:2-8 – David and the holy bread
- 1 Samuel 31 – death of Saul
- 2 Samuel 7:18-29 – King David’s prayer
- 2 Samuel 11-12 – David’s sin
- 1 Kings 3 – Solomon as king
- 1 Kings 6-8 – building of the 1st Temple
- 1 Kings 12 – beginning of the divided kingdom
- (1 Kings 13 – the prophet from Judah, a text showing the challenges of prophesy)
- 1 Kings 18 – Elijah and the prophets of Baal
- 1 Kings 21 – Naboth’s Vineyard, the evil of king Ahab
- 1 Kings 22 – passage showing prophesy in an Israelite context
- 2 Kings 2:1-18 – death of Elijah, Elisha succeeds Elijah
- 2 Kings 4-5 – the deeds of Elisha
- 2 Kings 22:1-20 – The finding of the Book of Deuteronomy
- 2 Kings 25 – The end of the monarchy and beginning of the Exile.