

A Survey of the Bible

“Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” Psalm 119:105

Lesson 5

The Kingdom of Israel In Decline

Solomon to the Destruction of Jerusalem

1 Kings 12-22; 2 Kings 1:1 - 25:21; 2 Chron. 10:1 - 36:20

The Divided Kingdom. Israel was a united kingdom under Saul, David, and Solomon. She enjoyed geographical expansion in the days of David and economic abundance with Solomon. This unity and prosperity did not last. Solomon's love of foreign women turned his heart from the Lord and divided the kingdom. Because of Solomon's sin God said, *“Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant”* (1 Kgs 11:11 NKJ). Solomon's servant Jeroboam was promised a kingdom of ten of the twelve tribes of Israel (1 Kgs 11:26-40).

Following Solomon's death his son Rehoboam reigned. Jeroboam and all Israel went to Rehoboam to request an ease of their tax burden. Rehoboam counseled with the elder men and then the younger. He followed the counsel of the younger and threatened to increase the burden of Israel rather than decrease it. From that time the kingdom divided.

Jeroboam became king of the northern ten tribes, Rehoboam was king of the southern two tribes. Rehoboam planned a military response to Jeroboam's separation but was prevented from doing so by God. The division of Israel was the fulfillment of God's promise to Jeroboam and the consequence of Solomon's sin (1 Kgs 12:21-24). Remember, sin has consequences.

With this division the northern ten tribes was called Israel and united under Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The southern two tribes united with Rehoboam as their king. This southern kingdom was called Judah. Even with this division, however, the prophetic writings use Israel when referring to either kingdom. The context determines which nation was addressed by the prophet.

Writing Prophets

Isaiah
Jeremiah
Hosea
Joel
Amos
Obadiah (?)
Jonah
Micah
Nahum (?)
Habakkuk
Zephaniah

Israel - the northern Kingdom.

Jeroboam received his kingdom from God. Oddly, he did not respond favorably to God. In order to insure that his kingdom would not return to Rehoboam he made the separation complete in several ways. In so doing he also violated the law of God. He set up an golden image in Bethel and Dan and said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" (1 Kgs 12:28 NKJ). He also appointed

priests of all tribes and set feast days of his own heart. Jeroboam set the kingdom of Israel on its path to judgment. Most of the kings who succeeded Jeroboam were "evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he had committed to make Israel sin" (1 Kgs 16:19 NKJ). Jeroboam's name became synonymous with evil.

God did not give up on Israel. He continued to urge them to return to him, to repent of their sins. He sent his prophets continually to the kings of Israel rebuking them and urging them to repent. The kings of Israel refused to hear the voice of the prophets. God even caused a famine during the days of Ahab. Elijah the prophet told King Ahab that there would be no rain except at his word. For more than three years Israel suffered a drought. Then Elijah approached Ahab and told him to have his prophets of Baal meet him on Mt. Carmel. [Baal was a pagan deity which was popular in Israel during Ahab's reign and after.

The worship of Baal was introduced and popularized by Ahab's queen, Jezebel. She was from Phoenicia and brought her religion to Israel.] Elijah challenged these prophets to prove the power of their

deity - which they could not. Later in the day Elijah prayed and God caused fire to come from heaven and consume the sacrifice which was prepared. Elijah then killed all the false prophets, prayed to God, and rain came to Israel (1 Kings 18). Still Ahab would not be moved. Jezebel, Ahab's wife threatened to kill Elijah so he fled south. In the desert God told him to select Elisha as his replacement. Elisha was selected and Elijah was later taken up into heaven in a fiery chariot (2 Kgs 2). Elisha continued Elijah's work of reproofing sin in Israel and urging repentance.

These two men are shining examples of what God's people are called upon to do: they were lights in the midst of darkness. It is possible to live righteous lives in an unrighteous nation!

Israel's spiritual condition did not improve. King after king continued on the path which Jeroboam started. Eventually God's patience came to an end. During the days of King Hoshea God delivered Israel into the hand of the Assyrian king. Israel went into captivity for their sin and ceased to exist as a sovereign nation.

Judah - the southern kingdom.

Solomon's son Rehoboam was the first king of Judah, the southern kingdom of the divided kingdom time period. This kingdom was bestowed upon him because of David's faithfulness to God and God's promise to David of having a descendent upon the throne (1 Kgs 11:34). *Righteousness is rewarded!*

Judah began the divided kingdom time period under godly leadership, especially as compared with Israel. Judah had the temple of Solomon within her borders. The religious statutes of the Lord were kept by Israel's king and the priests of God. In fact, many of the Levites left Israel and moved into Judah when Jeroboam introduced his religious innovations to Israel. Judah began on a bright path.

Again in contrast to Israel, the kings of Judah were

Kings of Israel	
Jeroboam	22 years
Nadab	2 years
Baasha	24 years
Elah	2 years
Zimri	7 days
Omri	12 years
Ahab	22 years
Ahaziah	2 years
Jehoram	12 years
Jehu	28 years
Jehoahaz	17 years
Jehoash	16 years
Jeroboam (II)	41 years
Zachariah	6 months
Shallum	1 month
Menahem	10 years
Pekahiah	2 years
Pekah	20 years
Hoshea	9 years
Samaria Fell 722 B.C.	

described in glowing terms. Many reigned as Asa did, who "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David (1 Kgs 15:11 NKJ). This description was not applied to some of the kings of Judah. Those who were not praised were those who were affected directly by the kings of Israel. Judah also had her dark days.

Although Jehoshaphat was a good and righteous king, he did not tear down the 'high places' of pagan worship and he "made peace with the king of Israel" (1 Kgs 22:44 NKJ). A bond was made which led to further compromises. He became closer with Ahaziah who "walked in the way of the house of Ahab, and did evil in the sight of the LORD, like the house of Ahab, for he was the son-in-law of the house of Ahab" (2 Kgs 8:27 NKJ). This connection and the sin which accompanied it only lasted for a time but its influence continued with the population of Judah.

After King Ahaziah's death his mother Athaliah reigned as queen for a short time. She had all his sons, her grandsons, killed to insure her position. However, one grandson was hidden and brought up with the help of the high priest Jehoiada. As Athaliah reigned and brought great distress upon the nation Jehoiada prepared to present the true successor to Judah. Finally, Joash [or Jehoash] was presented to the people and began his reign. As long as Jehoiada instructed him he did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

King Ahaz, however, disrupted the succession of good kings. He was of the royal seed but was not inclined toward God. Despite the goodness of his ancestors Ahaz made his own

Kings of Judah	
Rehoboam	17 years
Abijah	3 years
Asa	41 years
Jehoshaphat	25 years
Jehoram	8 years
Ahaziah	1 year
Athaliah	6 years
Joash (Jehoash)	40 years
Amaziah	29 years
Uzziah (Azariah) ...	52 years
Jotham	15 years
Ahaz	16 years
Hezekiah	29 years
Samaria Fell 722 B.C.	
6 th year of Hezekiah's reign	
{Hezekiah}	
Manasseh	55 years
Amon	2 years
Josiah	31 years
Jehoahaz	3 months
Eliakim (Jehoiakim) .	11 years
Jehoiachin	3 months
Mattaniah (Zedekiah)	11 years
Jerusalem Fell 586 B.C.	

religious reforms and followed after the ways of the nations which God had driven out of Palestine. Fortunately for Judah, Hezekiah succeeded his father Ahaz and sought to walk in the path of righteousness. Hezekiah was one of the outstanding kings of Judah. It was during his reign that Israel was taken captive by the Assyrians. He was the last king of the divided kingdom and the first of the Judah Alone period.

Judah Alone.

When Samaria was defeated by the Assyrians and the inhabitants displaced to other locations Judah became the lone representative of God’s people in Palestine. Judah was the remnant of the great kingdom David and Solomon built more than two centuries earlier. While one would think that Judah would consider Samaria’s circumstances and make corrections in her own situation that was not the case.

The first king of this period, Hezekiah, walked in the ways of David. “He trusted in the LORD God of Israel, so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor who were before him. For he held fast to the LORD; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the LORD had commanded Moses” (2 Kgs 18:5-6 NKJ). Hezekiah reformed Judah. He set an example which even modern man should consider and imitate. But, when Hezekiah died his son Mannaseh began an evil reign. Hezekiah’s reforms were lost.

Mannaseh’s reign appears to have been as evil as Hezekiah’s was righteous. “Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel” (2 Kgs 21:9 NKJ). Because of his evil God determined to send an evil upon Judah which would cause both ears of those who heard it to tingle (2 Kgs 21:12). Mannaseh’s son Ammon succeeded him on the throne and continued in the sins of Mannaseh.

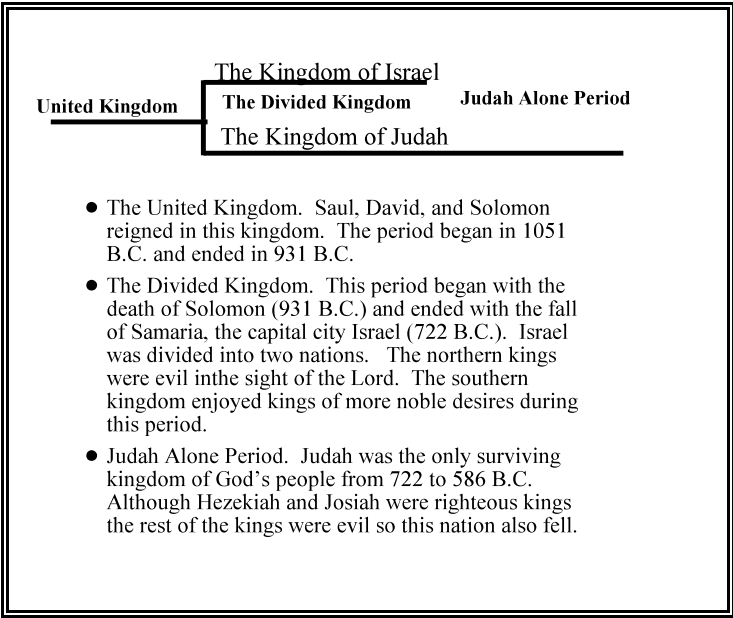
The next king of Judah, Josiah, was another bright

spot in the history of Judah. At eight years old Josiah succeeded his father and ruled Judah. He was a king who did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. He sought the Lord and humbled himself in the sight of the Lord. Because of his faithfulness Josiah was told by the Lord, through the prophetess Huldah, that he would be gathered to his grave in peace and would not see the evil God determined to bring upon Judah. Josiah responded with vigor. He purified the land of the idolatrous practices, gave an example of godliness, directed the hearts of the people to the Lord, and caused one of the greatest restorations of God’s people in the sacred record. In God’s relationship with Josiah we are reminded that God rewards the faithful and condemns the wicked. God has not changed (Consider John 5:27,28)!

Judah’s days were numbered! It would not be long till God executed his judgment on Judah. The kings who followed Josiah did not lead the nation in

repentance but led them on the path to judgment and captivity. In a short time Babylon came to Judah under Nebachudnezzar’s leadership and defeated Judah. He came against the city three times, each time taking additional plunder and captives. Finally, in 586 B.C. Nebachudnezzar caused Jerusalem to be destroyed completely and the majority of the inhabitants of Judah to be taken captive.

God disciplined his children. From the day he led them from Egypt he encouraged them to be faithful to him. He was patient, loving, kind, and benevolent. But, finally they had come to the point where God had to discipline them. Hope was not gone though. All the prophets who spoke of God’s chastening also spoke of his plan to return them to their land. In addition to this hope of restoration was the ever brightening hope of the coming Messiah. God was not finished with Israel, the Messiah had not yet come!



God is Faithful

Throughout these lessons a constant lesson for man to learn is that God is faithful to his word. When God speaks man needs to listen. When God makes a promise he will not fail. This goes for the good and the bad.

Consider some promises to bless man. God promised Abraham that he would make of him a great nation. He did that. He promised Abraham that he would give them the land which Abraham looked upon. He did that. He promised Abraham that he would bless all the world through Abraham's seed. Although our lessons have not gotten that far, he also did that through Jesus his son.

Now consider some promises God made which brought difficulties on man. God 'promised' that if the Israelites did not walk in his ways that he would send them into captivity. He did that. God told the Israelites that because they were not faithful that they would die in the wilderness. They all died in the wilderness, except Joshua and Caleb as God said. God told Jeroboam that Josiah would sacrifice the priests who burned incense on the altar where Jeroboam stood (1 Kgs 13:2). Generations later Josiah did as God spoke through the prophet (2 Kgs 23:15-18).

These are valuable lessons for each person to learn and apply. Whatever God promises he will fulfill. Consider the following.

Matt. 7:21 Who will enter the kingdom of heaven?

Mark 16:16 Who will be saved?

Acts 2:38 What must one do to receive the forgiveness (remission) of sins? [two actions]

Rev. 2:10 Who will receive the crown of life?

Are you taking the promises of God seriously?

For Further Study

William Day Crockett, *A Harmony of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 1985).

William Smith, *Old Testament History: From Creation to the Return of the Jews from Captivity*, Rev. by Wilbur Fields (Joplin, MO: College Press, 1970).

Study Aids in Chinese and Spanish are available at www.tftw.org.

A Survey of the Bible is written by Greg Weston.

For Review:

1. Name the three kings of the United Kingdom time period.
2. What was the cause of the division of the kingdom?
3. What was the character of the kings of Israel, the northern kingdom?
4. Which king's mother succeeded him on the throne?
5. Which two kings of the Judah Alone period were righteous?

Note two facts of the following people. Some are not mentioned in the lesson, you will need to read the Bible and find those facts.

Ahaz

Elijah.

Isaiah.

Elisha.

Nathan.

Jehu

In your lesson write the scripture where each king's reign begins and note his character using one word.

Read Isaiah 1.

When did Isaiah prophesy?

What was the spiritual condition of Israel when Isaiah was prophesying?