

Bible Study Course

1 & 2 Kings

Introduction

We were reminded in our introduction to 1 & 2 Samuel that in the LXX and in the Latin Vulgate these four books were bound together into one work, and called “The Four Books of the Kingdom” (LXX); or “The Four Books of the Kings” (Vulgate). In the Hebrew arrangement 1 & 2 Kings form one book, as do 1 & 2 Samuel; both being found in the division entitled “The Prophets.”

We must note therefore that 1 & 2 Kings is but the continuation of the history of the kingdom. In every way it is linked with 1 & 2 Samuel. In 1 Samuel, the book begins with the man who is to bring in the kingdom; 2 Samuel ends with the kingdom established. 1 Kings opens with the point of Israel’s greatest wealth, glory and prosperity; 2 Kings ends with humiliation, disintegration and exile of the people of God. In 1 & 2 Samuel, all has been a slow, contested climb up; in 1 & 2 Kings, all is a steady decline and departure.

These four books, 1 & 2 Samuel, and 1 & 2 Kings, are all written from a certain standpoint. Hence their essential difference from 1 & 2 Chronicles. They are written from the standpoint of the Throne and the Kingdom, and God’s promises concerning them. The House of God and the worship of God are not so much in view, as our being brought into the Kingdom and to the Throne.

The parallel passage in Chronicles to 1 & 2 Kings is 2 Chronicles 1:1 – 36:21.

Authorship and Date

The author of 1 & 2 Kings is unknown, but it seems obvious that it was the compilation of many ancient documents. 1 Kings 11:41; 14:19, 29; cf 2 Chron 9:29; 12:15; 13:22; 26:22. The fact that 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings are included in the Hebrew Canon in “The Prophets,” would suggest that the prophets kept record themselves, which later were brought together with extracts from the Royal Annals. In all probability 1 & 2 Kings evolved in a series of stages. The reign of Hezekiah, when there was so much literal activity, and when refugees from Samaria at the fall of Israel would have brought records with them to Judah, would have been one such stage. The reign of Josiah, would have been another. During the early period of the exile it would have been brought to its final form.

The unity of treatment strongly suggests one editor or compiler, and Jewish tradition ascribes it to Jeremiah. It is interesting to note that some words occur in 1 & 2 Kings which only occur elsewhere in the book of Jeremiah. It is also interesting and instructive to note that the absence of any mention of Jeremiah in 2 Kings, especially when one remembers that he was so prominent during the reign of those last five kings. If he were the editor and compiler of 1 & 2 Kings, then perhaps we have found the explanation. It is certainly possible that Jeremiah edited the two books, and added his own contribution as well.

2 Kings ends with the deportation of Judah to Babylon and the captivity. There is no mention of the return. Thus it could not have been compiled in its present form before 586BC, or after 536BC. Note 2 Kings 25:27-30. The 37th year of King Jehoiachin’s captivity was approximately 560BC. 1 & 2 Kings therefore covers a period between approximately 380 - 420 years.

Especial Note

1. The international background to this period
The history of the kings of Israel and Judah and the ministries of the great prophets during this period are shown on chart (on page 11A) and should be studied carefully.
2. During the reign of David, all the surrounding nations were subjugated and the empires centered on the Euphrates and the Nile presented no serious threat to the kingdom which he had established. Solomon and his descendents, however, increasingly lost this ascendancy, beginning with the division of the nation into two, until eventually, first Israel, and then, Judah were themselves invaded and exiled.

We have to remember that during this period there were only two super powers. On the one hand there was Assyria or Babylon, and on the other Egypt. Throughout the period of 1 & 2 Kings these two super powers were in virtually continual confrontation. Politically and economically they were giants in their day and were both interested in creating larger empires with even wider spheres of influence. These empires consisted of territories acquired by military occupation, or satellite states which had been forced into subjection to one or the other. For this reason we see the smaller nations of the area banding together periodically, in military pacts in order to remain independent. Israel became involuntarily the buffer state between the two powers. Due to the strategic nature of Israel's territory, commanding the major highways and trade routes from east to west, and north to south, and vice versa, she was vital to the interest of both powers. Thus she was subjected to continual pressure and harassment which led to much compromise and breakdown. (E.g. Solomon's marriages; various alliances and pacts, etc.) It was this that the prophets denounced with such vehemence.

The following gives some idea of the state of the surrounding nations throughout the period of the Kings of Israel and Judah. It would be helpful to study a biblical map of this period.

Egypt

Egypt had from very early times existed as a commercial, cultural and military power with great influence situated on the Nile, and lying to the south of the Promised Land. She emerged as a kingdom some time around 2850BC with the founding of a literate pharonic monarchy and between that time and about 1085BC had known twenty dynasties. (In ancient history Egypt had known a total of thirty one dynasties ending in 332BC with the arrival of Alexander the Great, and the Ptolemies.) This phase prior to 1085BC was the time of Egypt's greatest power and influence. We ought to note that even before the emergence of the first dynasty, Egypt had contact with Mesopotamia, and Egyptian culture of this period was strongly influenced by Mesopotamian thought.

During the period of the kings of Israel and Judah however, she appears throughout as a super power, in slow decline. In 605BC, at the end of the reign of Josiah, she suffered a crushing defeat at Carchemish by the Babylonian forces under Nebuchadnezzar, and in 569BC she was invaded by him, and brought into subjection.

Edom

Edom was at first tributary to Judah but was continually in revolt.

Moab

Moab was tributary to Israel first of all, and later to Assyria.

Ammon

Ammon appears throughout the period as an independent kingdom.

Philistia

Philistia for a time was used by Egypt to garrison the coastal plain, but was successfully invaded by both Uzziah and Hezekiah, and eventually overrun by Assyria in 701BC.

Syria

Syria, one of the more powerful smaller states, maintained a consistently hostile attitude towards the Northern Kingdom, Israel, being repeatedly at war with her, until the reign of Pekah of Israel, when Rezin, King of Syria, united with Pekah in an unsuccessful attack upon Jerusalem. This proved to be the undoing of Syria, because Ahaz appealed to Assyria for help, and in 734BC Syria was overrun by Assyria under Tiglath-Pileser.

Assyria

Assyria was situated on the area of the upper reaches of the Tigris to the north of Babylonia, and to the north east of the Promised Land. Her origins, although in dispute are in some way bound up with immigrants from Babylonia (see Gen 10:11-12), from the period 2900BC until the time of the kings of Israel and Judah her fortunes carried somewhat. She was always a nation of considerable influence and

power, suffering occasional set-backs, and for certain periods acquiring great status. At such times her dominance over surrounding areas extended as far to the west as Carchemish, and as far south as Babylonia. As a nation she was always warlike and was infamous for her extreme cruelty. This was part of her policy, and by it she deliberately struck terror into the smaller nations. She was a constant menace during most of the period of the Kings of Israel and Judah, except for one brief period of weakness from 783 – 745BC. Under Tiglath-Pileser III she acquired the status of a “super” power, and in 721BC under Sargon, carried Israel into captivity. Judah was forced into being an Assyrian vassal state from 732BC onwards. Assyria, however, was unable to keep her empire, and she too fell to the Babylonians in 611BC, under Nebuchadnezzar.

Babylon

Originally called Shinar in Gen 10:10, and later the land of the Chaldeans, she covered an area based on the River Euphrates, and lay to the south of Assyria. Her history goes back into antiquity, dating from as early as Nimrod. Kingship was established first in Babylonia around 2800BC and until 1174BC she knew successive dynasties. Babylon was often, in her history, attacked from the north and was frequently engaged in struggles for independence. Her fortunes varied and just before her period of greatest power, she was in fact subject to Assyrian domination. This was from 745 – 626BC. When her northern oppressors declined and fell she stepped into the position vacated by them, but her period of dominance was brief, stretching from 608 – 562BC. It was during the reign in the year 586BC that Jerusalem was sacked, and Judah carried into exile.

Note:

Throughout their history, the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylon varied in their power and influence over each other. When Assyria was in the ascendancy she annexed Babylonia, and when Babylon gained the upper hand, the reverse was true. We can thus see that the small kingdoms of Judah and Israel were continually menaced by empires centered in the same basic area. The empires of Assyria or Babylon at their peak covered wide areas occupied today by modern Iraq, north East Turkey, Syria, Jordan and west Iran.

Key to the Book

The key to these two books is the same as 1 & 2 Samuel – “The King, the Kingdom and Kingship.” 1 & 2 Kings bears the same relationship to 1 & 2 Samuel as the book of Judges bears to Joshua. Lessons are emphasized and re-emphasised, and principles already seen are vividly illustrated.

The judgments of God are seen very clearly in 1 & 2 Kings, and the division of the nation into Judah and Israel, as well as the deportation of firstly, Israel, and secondly Judah, is seen to be due to idolatry, and departure from the Lord. We find, as in Judges and 1 & 2 Samuel, that this entire breakdown is traced to simple beginnings. See Deut. 17:14-20; 1 Kings 2:1-4; 6:11; 9:4-9. In 1 & 2 Kings our attention is drawn continually towards two main lines of satanic attack upon the establishment of the Kingdom. One is external. It is all to do with the surrounding nations, and particularly the super powers of the day. The line of attack was by sheer military or economic pressure to force Israel into alliances, and this to compromise her. The other line of attack is internal. It is all to do with the “high places” (mentioned 40 times at least in two books.) All this is most instructive, for these are two main lines of satanic attack upon the church of God.

We also see the vital function of the Word of God, in correcting, counteracting and strengthening. In the whole conflict over kingship and the kingdom, we see in these books the vital and indispensable function of the Word of God correcting error, counteracting evil and compromise, exposing and destroying satanic devices and lies, building up and strengthening the people of God. The prophets called and anointed by God, dogmatically and forcefully declared the mind of God to both ruler and ruled.

We ought to remember continually that this is not a normal history. All is governed by the aim of the unfolding revelation. This aim is Kingship as related to the Lord and to His purpose. Thus some kings, great by human standards (attested to by archeological research), are passed over in virtual silence e.g.

Omri, Uzziah, Jeroboam II, whilst others, in some cases insignificant by the same standards, are dealt with at great length particularly when their reign occurs at times of spiritual crisis, e.g. Ahab, Hezekiah.

Outline of the Book

The High Places

It would seem after careful reading, that a remarkable stress is placed upon each king's attitude to "high places". The Lord has put His finger upon this matter as the focal point of disintegration, decline and disobedience. What is, therefore, the significance of these "high places"?

In the OT, the name, Baal, is used for the whole collection of Canaanite deities (male), as the name, Ashtoreth, for the female. The Hebrew word ba'al means "master", "possessor" or "husband", and so the use of Baal in Hebrew did not at first appear to be so terribly reprehensible. The symbol of the Baalim (pl.) was a stone pillar as of the Ashtaroah, a wooden image or tree (Asherah, pl. Asherim, grove or groves.) The mystery of fertility in man, beast and soil was symbolised in divine marriage between El and Ashtoreth. It was believed that by acting certain things out, man could keep the cycle of life turning. It was thus a cult of sensuality, regarded as the worship of God. Priests and priestesses were nothing more than religious prostitutes, and payments made to them for their "services" were considered as "offerings to God." Human sacrifice, often child sacrifice, took place. The high places were thus the centers of this fertility cult. They were scenes of unbelievable depravity and evil in the guise of worship.

Even more terrible was the way in which the name of Jehovah was brought into this. He was given a wife, and priests and priestesses were dedicated as "sacred to Jehovah," as were certain of the high places. Jehovah was just looked upon as one of many deities, Israel's particular one, and all these abominations were practiced in His name. It was this that outraged the prophets more than anything else, and led to the severest denunciations.

We need also to note that any alliance on the part of Israel with heathen nations involved the recognition of their gods. It was looked upon as an alliance between Jehovah, Israel's God and their gods. These alliances were, therefore, responsible for the introduction of heathen cultic practices into the worship of the Lord.

I. The United Kingdom 1 Kings 1 - 11

Note:

1. We have now reached the climax of sacred history in the OT. Solomon's reign is the crown.
2. We have also come to the heart of biblical revelation in the reign of Solomon
3. After Solomon, the prophetic burden is always a question of the expansion of, the return to, or the recovery of what has been revealed.
4. The unity of God's people is a truly spiritual matter. We see this illustrated in the very short period of the United Kingdom. It was "flesh" which divided it.
 - a) Solomon's accession to the throne 1 Kings 1:1 - 2:12
 - i. Adonijah's conspiracy - Abishag, Joab, Abiathar. 1:1-10
 - ii. The undoing of the conspiracy - Nathan, Bathsheba, Zadok, Benaiah 1:11- 37
 - iii. Solomon made King. David's last charge 1:38 - 2:12
 - b) Solomon's consolidation of the throne 1 Kings 2:13-46
 - i. Firm dealing with faction
 - ii. Patience
 - iii. The destruction of faction and disloyalty - Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, Shimei.
 - c) Solomon's devotion to the Lord and his weakness 1 Kings 3:1-15
 - i. The alliance with Egypt - marriage to pharaoh's daughter; his compromise over the high places, and involvement with them himself. Yet Solomon loved the Lord, built the House of God, and the walls of Jerusalem 3:1-3
 - ii. His request of God; God's answer; Solomon's reaction 3:4-15

- d) The greatness of Solomon – His wisdom, wealth and glory 1 Kings 3:16 – 4:24
 - i. What is wisdom? It is much more than knowledge. Theory illustrates Solomon's wisdom and indeed what wisdom is 3:16-28
 - ii. The description of his power, his glory, his wealth and his wisdom 4:1-34
- e) Solomon and the House of God 1 Kings 5:1 – 9:9
 - i. This is the heart and meaning of Solomon's reign.
 - ii. Here in 1 & 2 Kings, the House of God is viewed from the Throne and the Kingdom. See Ezek 43:7; Rev 22:1
 - iii. Purpose of heart needed 5:1-6 esp. v5
 - iv. Preparation 5:7-18. The materials provided; the need of responsibility; hewers of wood, bearers of burden; the various offices required.
 - v. The long hidden history behind the building of the temple. 6:1 (480 = 12 x 40) 12 generations
 - vi. The building of the temple 6:2 – 7:51
 - a) The House itself. Twice the size of the Tabernacle = pure gold over wood = 7 years in building
 - b) Furniture and vessels etc.
 - vii. The dedication of the House.
 - Note:
 - a. At the Feast of Tabernacles 8:2
 - b. The ark brought in and the glory of the Lord filling the House 8:1-11
 - c. The address of Solomon 8:12-21
 - d. The prayer and blessing of Solomon 8:22-61
 - e. The sacrifice 8:62-66
- f) Solomon's increasing wisdom, wealth and glory 9:1 – 10:29
 - i. The Lord appears to Solomon a second time. 9:1 – 9. He renews the covenant made with David. Note the promise and solemn warning
 - ii. Here now we reach the climax. Israel has reached her greatest point of material wealth and outward glory. The Queen of Sheba's visit aptly illustrates all this 9:11 – 10:29 note esp. vv 10:23 – 25, 27.
- g) Solomon's defection and God's judgement 11:1 – 43
 - i. Solomon's many wives and concubines. They represent political alliances 11:1-3
 - ii. His heart turned away from the Lord. The positive evil in the building of shrines in high places 11:4-8
 - iii. The Lord's anger and judgement 11:9-40 Note Ahijah's prophecy vv 30-39. A reiteration of what the Lord has said directly to Solomon in vv 11-13
 - iv. The death of Solomon 11:41-43 with Solomon we have come into the holy of holies purpose of God. From now on it is a story of decline and disintegration. Notwithstanding, it is not a story of unceasing gloom. It is also the continual revelation that, above all, the throne of God is secure, and His grace reigns triumphant.

II. The Divided Kingdom 1 Kings 12:1 – 2 Kings 17:41

Note:

1. The two kingdoms are quite distinct; the Northern Kingdom, Israel = 10 tribes, the capital – Shechem, later Samaria. The founding of virtually a new religion, etc. The Southern kingdom, Judah = strictly Judah and Benjamin. Also however, included Levi and Simeon. The capital Jerusalem.
2. 1 & 2 Kings deals more with Israel than with Judah. Israel's kings are always dealt with first before Judah's. In 1 & 2 Chronicles the order is reversed. Israel is not given any prominence at all. Why? See summary & review of Israel's history p. 13, 5

3. Israel consists of 9 dynasties with 19 kings. Judah consists of 1 dynasty only, with 19 kings and 1 Queen. All the kings of the North are bad; the kings of the South are mixed – some good, some bad.
4. We find now prophetic ministry coming into its full right, and, in the end, superseding both king and priest in importance.
 - a) The division of Israel and Judah 1 Kings 12:1-25
Humanly speaking, this division was due to the foolishness and immaturity of Rehoboam, Solomon's son, as also to the natural strength and will of Jeroboam. Behind this, however, was the judgement of God. Division is always a work of the flesh (Gal 5:20)
 - b) Jeroboam of Israel 12:25 – 14:20
 - i. Jeroboam's reign is given some length because it is fatally basic to the whole history of the Northern Kingdom.
 - ii. The capital – Shechem, Penuel, Tirzah.
 - iii. Religious policy
 - a. A new conception; the golden bulls – the symbol of Jehovah's presence. In fact, they were taken over from Canaanite religion 12:25-33
 - b. Houses of high place and a new priesthood 12:31
 - c. New festival(s) – New Year – taken from Canaanite religion 12:32
 - iv. The Lord's warning 13:1 – 34 the right and the wrong ground; the Lord's people are on both. The prophet not to become involved, etc. although holding to the unity of the people of God in both parties.
 - v. The Lord's judgement on Jeroboam's house 14:1 – 20.
 - c) Rehoboam to Asa of Judah 14:21 – 15:24
 - i. Rehoboam: His mother was Ammonitess, 14:21. The high places built, Judah backslides further, 14:22-24. The House of God spoiled by Egypt. 14:25-31
 - ii. Abijam: Bad: his heart was not perfect 15:1-8
 - iii. Asa: period of reformation: good king:
 - a. Period of reformation: good king: 15:9-24 put away idols, false priests etc.; deposed the Queen Mother vv 9-15
 - b. Alliance with Syria: he took God's gold and silver and gave it to Syria: diseased in the feet vv 16 – 24
 - d) Nadab to Omri of Israel 1 Kings 15:25 – 16:28
 - i. Nadab: 15:25-31 Evil: his assassination by Baasha; whole of house of Jeroboam murdered
 - ii. Baasha: 15:32 – 16:7 Evil: Jehu and the Lord's Word.
 - iii. Elah: 16:8-14 Evil: assassinated by Zimri, an army man; house of Baasha murdered.
 - iv. Zimri: 16:15-20 cp vv 9-14. Evil: reigned only 7 days: civil war: commits suicide.
 - v. Omri: 16:21-28 Evil: an army man: civil war: the greatest king of the N. Kingdom so far, and one of the greatest politically in the history of the N. Kingdom. He was also the most evil so far recorded. Note how he is dismissed in eight verses! - He built Samaria as the capital of N. Kingdom.
 - e) Ahab of Israel 1 Kings 16:29 – 22:40
 - i. Ahab's reign is given at length, because it marks the point of crisis in Israel's history.
 - ii. He was more evil than Omri: Jezebel, his wife. The worship of Baal: he built a house and an altar to Baal: he set up Ashterah. Jericho was rebuilt. Jezebel slaughtered the prophets of the Lord.
 - iii. Elijah's mission 17:1-24
 - a. His name means, "My God is the Lord." In this we have the key to his mission. It was to assert and declare the sovereignty of the Lord,

- Jehovah, over Israel and the nations. His mission – recovery of the Lord’s Name.
- b. 3 years’ drought – Baal, the nature God.
 - c. Hunted: kept by God at Cherith (from root meaning “cutting down”, or “cutting back”) and Zarephath (from root meaning “place of refining or smelting”)
 - d. God’s challenge through Elijah 18:1-46
 - i. The courage of Elijah in the challenge.
 - ii. The text (note Mt. Carmel)
 - iii. The prophets of Baal and their energy.
 - iv. The evening oblation: at the temple in Jerusalem. He repaired altar in the Name of the Lord – Twelve stones representing the whole nation, south and north, he refused to recognize division.
 - v. Dared to make it hard. Poured cold water over everything!
 - vi. The fire of God represents the manifestation of God by the Spirit. Acts 2:3-4
 - vii. The people’s reaction. The execution of the false prophets; revival.
 - viii. The 3 years of drought ends. Note Elijah’s faith and prayer. See James 5:17-18
 - iv. Elijah in God’s school 1 Kings 19:1-21
 - a. Jezebel’s fury: Elijah’s fear.
 - b. His despair and failure, and God’s provision and care
 - c. God’s appearance to Elijah.
 - d. The way God works – the still small voice – more important than earthquake, wind and fire.
 - e. Elisha anointed,
 - v. The Lord in grace and for His name’s sake delivering Israel 1 Kings 20:1-43. Ahab so evil, yet the Lord because of his Name and their being His people, delivers them.
 - vi. The murder of Naboth and the Lord’s Word to Ahab. 1 Kings 21:1 – 22:40. Ahab to die. The falsehood over Naboth: Elijah’s visit: Ahab’s repentance. The false prophets and Micaiah. Ahab’s death; slain in battle.
 - f) Jehoshaphat of Judah 1 Kings 22:41-50

Good: he walked in the Lord’s ways: carried on the reformation of Asa. He left the high places, though he removed many (2 Chronicles 17:6) He was wrongly involved with Israel (Ahab and Syria: his navy and Israel: his son married to Ahab’s and Jezebel’s daughter, Athaliah.)
 - g) Ahaziah of Israel 1 Kings 22:51 – 2 Kings 1:18

He was more evil than ever. His accident, Elijah’s word: his death.
 - h) Jehoram of Israel 2 Kings 2:1 – 9:26
 - i. The translation of Elijah. 2:1-25 Elijah went as he came. Elisha succeeds.
 - ii. Elisha’s mission 2:12 – 13:21
 - a. His name means, “My God is Saviour or Salvation.” His mission – the building up of a remnant against the future.
 - b. His first public acts – the healing of the waters, the judgement on the boys.
 - c. The key to all Elisha’s miracles – resurrection. 3 – 6: woman and oil, woman and son, poison in food, feeding of 100 with 20 loaves, Naaman’s axe head, Dothan and the heavenly host – the blindness of the Syrians: (Note the miracle even after his death 13:20)
 - d. It is interesting to note that we have eight miracles recorded which Elijah performed and sixteen recorded which Elisha performed – a double portion of Elijah’s spirit. (See 2:9.) Note also the amazing similarity between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Some have

drawn a parallel from this of the ministry of the Lord Jesus in the Gospels and the ministry of the church in Acts (See Jn. 14:12.)

- i) Jehoram to Ahaziah of Judah 2 Kings 8:16 – 9:29
 - i. Jehoram 8:16-24 Evil: he was married to Ahab's daughter, Athaliah. Edom revolts. Jehoram murdered all his brothers 2 Chron 21:4
 - ii. Ahaziah 8:25 – 9:29 Evil: Athaliah's influence: he was murdered.Note: -
The reigns of Israel and Judah are deliberately intertwined.
- j) Jehu of Israel 2 Kings 9:1 – 10:36
Evil: He wiped out the whole house of Ahab, Jezebel and all their supporters: the massacre of the Baal worshippers (nature zeal). The beginning of the end of Israel. 10:32-33. 2 ½ tribes captured (their territory only.)
- k) Athaliah of Judah 2 Kings 11:1-20
Intensely evil: she murdered the whole royal house: Joash remarkably preserved by the Lord. Athaliah executed.
- l) Joash of Judah 2 Kings 11:21 – 12:21
Good: the temple repaired but the high places remained. The temple despoiled later by the Syrians. Joash murdered the high priest. See 2 Chron 24:20-22 cp Matt 23:35. He was assassinated (some believe that the prophet Joel ministered at this time.)
- m) Jehoahaz to Jehoash of Israel 2 Kings 13:1-25
 - i. Jehoahaz 13:1-9 Evil: Israel was in a miserable condition. The Lord's grace.
 - ii. Jehoash 13:10-25 Evil: Elisha dies. God's continued grace. The recovery of lost territory.
- n) Amaziah of Judah 2 Kings 14:1-22
Good: the high places left. A foolish antagonism toward Israel: Judah defeated and spoilt. He was assassinated.
- o) Jeroboam 22 of Israel 2 Kings 14:23-29
Evil: the greatest king politically since Solomon. (Note only 7 verses are given to him!) God gives Israel her last chance: she recovers all lost territory. Great prosperity, but it only brings out corruption. Amos, Jonah, Hosea minister in this period. It marked the beginning of prophetic literature.
- p) Azariah (Uzziah) of Judah 2 Kings 15:1-7
Good: politically Judah's greatest king since Solomon. Judah was very prosperous and secure. He was guilty of presumption; smitten with leprosy. Isaiah and Micah began to minister at the end of his reign.
- q) Zechariah to Pekah of Israel 2 Kings 15:8-31
All these five kings were evil; four times the dynasty changes; Zechariah, Shallum, Pekahiah, and Pekah were all murdered. It is in this period that the power of Assyria suddenly revived. Pul, an Assyrian general seizes the throne, and takes the name of Tiglath-Pileser III. In Menahem's reign, Israel becomes a vassal state to Assyria. He not only had to pay a tribute, but a fine of 50 shekels per person (the price of an ass!). In Pekah's reign, Galilee and Naphtali are lost, and the 2 ½ Transjordanic tribes deported. Hosea and Micah ministered during this troubled period.
- r) Jotham to Ahaz of Judah 2 Kings 15:31 – 16:20
 - i. Jotham 15:32-38 Good: the temple repaired but the high places left. Isaiah and Micah ministered.
 - ii. Ahaz 16:1-20. More evil than any king of Judah so far. He gave his son as a burnt offering etc. He deliberately made Judah a vassal to Assyria and spoilt God's house. He made terrible changes in the house of God. Isaiah and Micah ministered.
- s) Hoshea of Israel 2 Kings 17:1-6
Evil: though not so positively as some of his predecessors. He conspired with Egypt against Assyria. The siege of Samaria: the fall of Israel and the

deportation of the nation to Assyria. Samaria settled with foreigners – “the Samaritans.”

- t) Summary and review of Israel’s history 2 Kings 17:7-41
1. In 250 years we find 19 kings – all evil; 9 changes of dynasty; only 7 of the 19 died naturally; 12 of the 19 reigned for less than 12 years. All this adds up to instability. If we start on the wrong ground (e.g. division, faction or divisiveness), we shall be divided and further divided ourselves. Division, instability and insecurity are always the result. Note that the Lord made all provision for stability, security and increase. Idolatry, looseness, compromise, wrong foundations, insignificant at the beginning were the means Satan used to destroy Israel.
 2. When Judah falls, there is the certain hope of a returning remnant. With the N. Kingdom, she falls never to return. The Samaritans are all that remain of the N. Kingdom. A terrible mixture and caricature. The Transjordanic tribes are then the first to compromise, and then to disintegrate and to vanish.
 3. Nevertheless, in the whole history of Israel God’s faithfulness, grace and love, are wonderfully expressed. They are expressed in a threefold way.
 - i. His Word
The Prophets
 - ii. His deliverances
Ahab: Jehoahaz, Jehoash, Jeroboam II etc.
 - iii. His longsuffering and faithfulness
Ahab: Jeroboam I, Jehu etc.
The prophets represent the Throne of God secure and triumphant over and against the unhappy conditions of defeat, departure and division.
 4. The books of 1 & 2 Kings reveal the absolute necessity of distinguishing, in days of decline and apostasy, the means of maintaining the unity of God’s people, and yet not becoming involved in the departures, compromise or error.
Note:
 - i. The old prophet 1 Kings 13
 - ii. Elijah 1 Kings 18
 - iii. Jehoshaphat 1 Kings 22
 - iv. Ahaziah 2 Kings 9
 - v. Amaziah 2 Kings 14
 5. Why does 1 & 2 Chronicles ignore Israel except when it directly touches Judah? Why does 1 & 2 Kings put Israel always first, and at greater length?
 - i. 1 & 2 Chronicles deal with the House of God, the mystery, and the people who will bring the Christ in. Thus only Judah is fully recorded.
 - ii. 1 & 2 Kings deal with the Throne and the Kingship of God’s Christ. Thus all God’s people, even though compromised, in error, or on the wrong basis, are included.

III. The Single kingdom of Judah 2 Kings 18:1- 25:30

We come now to the last phase of the monarchy – the period of the Single Kingdom of Judah. It covers 136 years. Out of the eight kings, there are only two who were good. In these two good kings centered the two greatest reformations in Judah’s history. Both, however, were followed by rapid decline and disintegration, the latter ending in exile and captivity.

We need to note the real condition of the people. Both reformations, whilst genuine, did not deeply and radically affect all the people. (It was more the few acting like salt in the general corruption.) This is the reason for the ease with which the people swung back to their evil ways. The fact that it took 16 days to clear the temple of rubbish etc. (no small amount of rubbish to have collected,) and the opening of the doors of the temple in Hezekiah’s time, (the doors were permanently closed) and the finding of the Book of the Law in Josiah’s time, (as if some new discovery had been made) bears eloquent testimony to the darkened condition of the people and of national life.

a) Hezekiah 2 Kings 18:1 – 20:21

- i. The greatest reformation since David's days 2 Kings 18:1-12. Hezekiah went further in reformation than any other king since David. The high places, the pillars, the Asherah, even the brazen serpent, were destroyed and desecrated. 2 Chron 29:3 – 31:21, gives us a much fuller picture. On the positive side, Hezekiah wholly followed the Lord, and was obedient to His Word.

Note:

- a. Much of this happened whilst the tragedy of collapse and fall of the N. Kingdom was being enacted. This would have had a salutary effect and influence upon Judah.
- b. The profound influence of Isaiah and Micah upon this period, particularly upon Hezekiah.
- c. Hezekiah came between the two very worst kings of Judah, Ahaz and Manasseh. This shows that godliness is not inherited, neither is wickedness. When did Hezekiah's heart attitude change? When was he freed from his father's evil influence and character? It would appear through obedience to the Word of the Lord. cf Jer 29:18-19; 2 Chron 29:36. Note "suddenly".
- d. Hezekiah's reign was a period of far reaching literary activity. (E.g. The Psalms and The Proverbs.)

ii. The Assyrian offensive against Judah 2 Kings 18: 13- 19:37

- a. Assyria imposed a fine and a tribute on Judah as a result of Hezekiah's rebellion. He had to buy Sennacherib off at a very great cost. Sennacherib treacherously changed his mind, having received the fine and tribute, and laid siege to Jerusalem. 18:17-18
- b. Sennacherib's great challenge 18:35

Note:

- i) The Tartan 18:17 – the Chief in Command
The Rabsaris – A high military officer
The Rabshakeh – Head of the Civil service
 - ii) Aramaic – the diplomatic language of the day. It was remarkable that Rabshakeh knew Hebrew.
 - iii) The challenge shows the satanic strategy to smash faith and confidence in the Lord and in divinely appointed leadership.
- c. Hezekiah and the people's reaction and their deliverance 18:36 – 19:8

Note:

- The silence of the people, their dependence on God, the House of God, the Word of God, the lessons in fellowship.
- d. Sennacherib's second challenge and God's answer 19:9-37
Sennacherib's letter; Hezekiah's reaction; the Word of God; the Lord's deliverance finally.

iii. Hezekiah's sickness and healing, and the result. 2 Kings 20:1-21

Note that these incidents are dated within the framework of the preceding history cf. 18:13; 20:6; 18:2. Hezekiah's sickness and recovery. The sign – Ahaz's dial (this consisted of steps with a pillar at the top – a Babylonian innovation.) Hezekiah's foolishness; His pride; the Word of the Lord; the loss of the treasures; his end.

b) Manasseh 2 Kings 21:1-18

The most evil of all Judah's kings. He systematically set out to undo all Hezekiah's work. In the 55 years of his reign, Judah became more evil than any Canaanite nation. He restored the high places, the altars to Baal and the Asherah. He encouraged child sacrifice and spiritism etc. He changed the house of God, building idol altars and housing religious prostitutes there, etc. He gave Jehovah a "wife". Manasseh instigated a terrible purge of all those who faithful. (Note the Talmud tradition – Isaiah martyred by being sawn in two

cp Heb 11:37.) His rejection of the Lord's Word. We have no record in Kings of the repentance as in 2 Chron 33:18-20.

c) Amon 2 Kings 21:19-26

The only king of Judah with the name of an Egyptian divinity. He followed wholeheartedly in his father's evil policy. Mercifully he reigned only two years.

d) Josiah 2 Kings 22:1 – 23:30

i. The second greatest reformation in Judah's history. Some think that it was the greatest.

Note:

- a. The Lord's nucleus: Josiah, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Hilkiyah, Shallum and Huldah, Shaphan, Ahikam, Achbor, Asaiah.
- b. Josiah freed himself entirely from the foreign yoke.
- c. The thoroughness of the reformation: the destruction of all Baal worship etc.; the execution and dispersion of Baal priests etc.; the banning of religious prostitution; the destruction of household idols etc.; the banning of spiritism. Why did he desecrate many of these places? To insure that they were used no further. Josiah went right back to the root of the trouble
 - To Solomon's high places
 - To Ahaz and Manasseh's altars
 - To Jeroboam's altar at Bethel. (young and old prophet)
- d. He includes Israel as well as Judah in the reformation, as did Hezekiah.

ii. Josiah's remarkable youthfulness. He was 16 years when he began to seek the Lord; 20 years when the reformation began; 26 years when the House of God was repaired, the Book of the Law was found, the Passover was kept; 39 years when he was killed on the battlefield.

Note:

- a. Kings dwells upon the 18th year of Josiah's reign (when he was 26 years of age.)
- b. The order of Kings as compared with Chronicles. The heart of the reformation – the House of God, its recovery etc. The discovery of the Book of the Law; the covenant; the purging of all idolatry. When the House of God is repaired and recovered, we discover the principles of God's life.

iii. This was the period of Zephaniah, Jeremiah and Nahum's ministry; possibly of Habakkuk as well.

Note:

Nahum and Zephaniah lived in Manasseh and Amon's reign, as well as Josiah's. Zephaniah was probably the one used to bring about the reformation. Jeremiah undoubtedly saw more deeply than others. He knew that the reformation did not go deep enough to halt the coming tragedy. It is probable that all four knew each other.

iv. The tragedy of Josiah's end

Pharaoh Necho, taking advantage of Assyria's weakness and internal disintegration, and Babylon's rise, marched northward to acquire as much territory as he could. Josiah, fearing the possible loss of his independence, marched out to intercept him wrongly, not trusting the Lord, and was slain in battle. Judah's last hope died with Josiah.

e) The last days of Judah. Jehoahaz – Zedekiah 2 Kings 23:31 – 25:30

This period covers 24 years – a period of chaotic confusion. All four kings were evil. Jehoahaz reigned 3 months, and Jehoiakim 11 years. He was followed by his son Jehoiachin, who reigned 3 months and was followed by Jehoiakim's brother, Zedekiah, who reigned 11 years. It was at this time that the Assyrian empire disintegrated, to give way to the Babylonians and the Medes.

i. Jehoahaz 2 Kings 23:31-35

- He reigned 3 months. Evil: anti-Egyptian; deposed by pharaoh Necho: died on reaching Egypt. He was the first king of Judah to die in exile. Judah became vassal to Egypt.
- ii. Jehoiakim 2 Kings 23:36 – 24:7
 Jehoahaz's brother. He was installed by the pharaoh. Murdered the prophet Uriah (Jer 26:20-23); He burnt Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer 36:9-26). Judah became vassal to Babylon on Egypt's defeat. The first stage of the captivity, (The temple vessels taken: certain nobility deported – Daniel and the three, etc. Dan 1:1-6) Jehoiakim rebelled. Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and executed Jehoiakim.
 - iii. Jehoiachin 2 Kings 24:8-17
 Nebuchadnezzar again besieged Jerusalem: the second stage of the captivity. (He took the king, most of the nobility and the professional classes – including Ezekiel, Ezek 1:1-2 and Mordecai's ancestors. Esther 2:5.)
 - iv. Zedekiah 2 Kings 24:18 – 25:21
 Zedekiah was torn between Egypt and Babylon: Jeremiah counseled submission to Babylon, but the court prophets won. Jeremiah considered a traitor. Zedekiah rebelled against Nebuchadnezzar: the three-year siege of Jerusalem: Jerusalem finally taken. The final stage of captivity. Jerusalem and the House of God razed to the ground; the whole nation except for the very poor was deported. Zedekiah blinded, after seeing all his sons executed.
 - v. The end of Judah. 2 Kings 25:22-30
 A small, poor and demoralized handful from the poorest classes were left in the land. The exile took place in three stages, as did the return.

Message of the Book

With the two books of Kings, ends, as it were, one whole phase in the economy of God. All that has so painfully and slowly been gained in the two books of Samuel has now seemingly been lost. Yet above all, the Throne of God is secure and established. The earthly expression may have failed, may have become decadent, and may need to be purged and purified, but God is not thwarted – He moves on, step by step, unfolding and realizing His own eternal purpose. Furthermore, in the midst of so much failure, breakdown and division, there are those who not only remain faithful but manifest the character of true kingship. Whether negatively or positively, the principles of the kingdom are illustrated in these books. In reading and studying these two books the true function of the prophet becomes apparent. He is a man called by God and empowered by God to assert and declare the Truth of God is not just ideal or theory, but the determining factor in everything. To compromise the Truth of God, to contradict it or to disobey that Truth, once it has been revealed to us, is to bring upon ourselves corruption, bondage and death. To honour the Truth, to obey it, is to know God, and to experience His Salvation, His provision and His protection. To become servants of the Truth may bring us into much suffering, conflict and satanic antagonism, but the ultimate victory is the Lord's, because the battle is His.

Recommended books

<i>History of Israel and Judah from the Birth of Solomon to the Reign of Ahab</i>	<i>A. Edersheim</i>
<i>History of Israel and Judah from the Reign of Ahab to the Decline of the Two Kingdoms</i>	<i>A. Edersheim</i>
<i>History of Israel and Judah from the Decline of the Two Kingdoms to the Assyrian and Babylonian Captivity</i>	<i>A. Edersheim</i>

Halford House Tapes

BS 8	1 Kings
BS 9	1 Kings
BS 9A	1 Kings
BS 9B	1 Kings
BS 10	2 Kings
BS 11	2 Kings
BS 12	2 Kings

Bible Study Course
Books of the Bible: 1 & 2 Kings

Questions

1. What is the key to the two books of Kings?
2. Name four prophets of the Lord and three outstanding priests who appear in 1 & 2 Kings. What is the main function of the prophet in these two books in so far as the Throne is concerned?
3. The following men committed sins which later proved to be very harmful to the people of God. Describe briefly the sins which they committed.
 - a) Jeroboam I
 - b) Ahab
 - c) Manasseh
 - d) Solomon
 - e) Ahaz
4. Which three kings would you say were the greatest after the reign of Solomon? Briefly give your reasons.
5. Write a sentence or two on each of the following as they appear in 1 & 2 Kings.
 - a) Jezebel
 - b) Abishag
 - c) Athaliah
 - d) Queen of Sheba
 - e) The wealthy widow of Shunem
6. Read 2 Kings 17 and 18, and 2 Kings 21 and 23. For what reasons did God deliver Israel and Judah into the hands of their enemies?
7. 1 Kings 8:22-53 gives us Solomon's prayer for the dedication of the temple to the Lord. Briefly describe eight petitions which he asks of the Lord.
8. Briefly describe the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth. What was the importance of Jehu in this matter?
9. Can we say that God's eternal purpose was thwarted because His people on earth hopelessly failed to maintain the Kingdom which was established through David, a king after God's own heart?
10. Which king in the book of 1 & 2 Kings typifies most fully the Lord Jesus Christ, and which prophet typifies most fully John the Baptist? Give reasons for your answer.
11. Why was the area occupied by Israel and Judah so continually threatened by "super powers"?
12. What principles of revival or recovery do we learn from the reformations of Hezekiah and Judah?
13. What similarities can you find between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha?