

Mystery of The Ages

PART 9 - THE DAYS OF THE KINGS

INTRODUCTION: The craving of the Jews for a visible, literal head was a revolt against divine sovereignty. Enamored of the pomp and glory of surrounding kings and nations, Israel wanted royalty of its own. God, however, never intended His people to be the subjects of an earthly ruler, but "a kingdom of priests" and "a holy nation" with Himself as their King (Ex. 19:6; I Pet. 2:9). Thus the nation's rejection of Jehovah as their King evidenced a total absence of confidence in God. Was not His presence in their midst a sufficient guarantee that their safety and provision would be amply secured?

But the demand of the people, "Make us a king to judge us like all the nations" (I Sam. 8), was a distinct and positive rejection of God and His reign, and a step fraught with serious consequences for them. In His grace and mercy, God turned their sin into an occasion to further His purpose in royalty to be realized in Christ - God's ultimate resource in blessings for all men and creation - "Thus the reign of Saul was no part of Jehovah's purpose, although an integral part of His plan."

It was God's purpose to give His people a visible kingdom as predicted by Moses (Deut. 17:14,15). When Israel requested a king, Samuel alluded to Moses' direction (I Sam. 10:24).

God's explicit promise was ever before the people, "Kings...shall be of Sarah" (Gen. 17:16). Other allusions to kings can be found in (Gen. 36:31; Num. 24:17; Deut. 28:36).

It was not the nation's desire for a king, but the spirit of their request that was wrong. Samuel, God's appointed leader, was set aside under the pretext, "thou art old," after having directed the affairs of the people for 35 years. Such rejection coupled with impatience added to the sin of their request. They lost sight of the fact that God was their King, so in anger He gave them one after their own heart (Hos. 13:10,11). Voltaire once said, "Heaven often gives kings in its vengeance".

I. THE PEOPLE'S CHOICE (I Sam. 9; 11:13-21; 2 Sam. 1; 21:1:1-9)

Saul, the son of Kish, represented the insignificant tribe of Benjamin, as did his name sake of the New Testament (Acts 7:58; Phil. 3:5). Thus, Saul is the most distinguished name in the genealogies of the tribe of Benjamin. The Old Testament Saul became a king after man's heart, as David became a king after God's heart (I Sam. 13:14; Acts 13:22), and his history is typical of the sin and

rejection of the Jews, and of God raising up sons unto Abraham from among the Gentiles (Matt. 3:8-10).

Saul's life was characterized by self-pride (I Chronicles 10:13), self-will (I Chron. 10:13; Prov. 10:8, 13:1) and self-aid (I Chron. 10:13).

II. ISH-BOSHETH (I Chron. 8:33, 9:39; 2 Sam. 2:8-12; 3:7-15; 4)

Although a usurper, Ish-bosheth nevertheless reigned over Israel for two years, and therefore deserves a place in our study of Bible royalty. His name, occurring some 13 times in (2 Sam.) was originally Esh-baal (I Chron. 8:33; 9:39), in contempt of Baal, from some connection of the family with whom he had been named. He was the youngest of Saul's four sons.

III. DAVID – a type of Christ (I Sam. 16-31; 2 Sam. 1-25; I Kings 1-11; I Chron. 2,3,10-29)

The book of Ruth contains the origin of David's family and his descent from Judah (4:18; with Gen. 38:29; Matt. 1:3-6; Lk. 1:32). His name occurs some 1120 times in scripture, and because he is the greatest personal type of Christ, his name is given to Him (Isa. 55:3; Jer.. 30:9; Eze. 34:23; Hos. 3:5). Under the title of David, the Messiah is spoken of as the person in whom all the promises made to David are fulfilled (Eze. 34:23; 37:24; I Kings 11:36).

David is the only king to be born in Bethlehem, the Saviour's birthplace.

David is called "the Lord's anointed" (2 Sam. 19:21; 23:1) and a threefold anointing to kingship was his:

1. By Samuel privately (I Sam. 16:13).
2. By his own tribe, Judah (2 Sam. 2:4).
3. By all of Israel (2 Sam. 5:2-3).

He was thirty years old when he began to reign and he reigned 40 years, over Judah for 7 years, over all Israel for 33 years. He had to wait for the fulfillment of God's promise to be king over all Israel for seven and one-half years. When ultimately all the tribes recognized David as their king they made a "league" with him and at Hebron he received his official coronation. God is not so slow in fulfilling His promises as men are apt to think.

IV. SOLOMON (2 Sam. 12:24,25; I Kings 1-11; I Chron. 22-23:1; 28-29; 2 Chron. 1-9)

Solomon - a type of the Millennial kingdom. Solomon, "the king and the king's son" (Ps. 72:1), was David's second child by Bathsheba. He was one upon whom God bestowed such royal majesty as had not been on any king before or after him in Israel (I Chron. 29:20-25). When he succeeded his father he was "young and tender," perhaps about 20 years of age, and reigned for 40 years.

Dr. Wm. Graham Scroggie speaks of Solomon as "a strange character that may be regarded in a threefold way, personally, officially and typically. Viewed personally, he was characterized by wisdom and wickedness: greatly gifted intellectually, he was very weak ethically. His mind and his morals were not on the same level. Viewed officially, his great work was twofold: the material development of the kingdom, and the erection of the Temple. Viewed typically, it is not difficult to see an anticipation of Christ's Millennial Kingdom, when, after the extirpation of all His foes, there will be peace".

V. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (975-586 B.C.)

With the death of King Solomon the kingdom of Israel was torn in two parts, and the division was principally due to the idolatrous disloyalty of the nation. For this sin both sections of the kingdom were plagued and ultimately swept into captivity, Israel to Assyria in 721 B.C. and Judah to Babylon in 586 B.C. So long as the strong, autocratic and wise Solomon and his advisors were at the helm, various rebellious tendencies dared not assert themselves, but after the king's decease, catastrophe came.

The division of the kingdom into two unequal parts also had its rise in Solomon's adultery and idolatry. Because of his departure from the worship of the true God, the judgment went forth: "I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant... Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen." (I Kings 11:11-13) Thus, the division was appointed by God as chastisement upon the house of David for the idolatries imported by Solomon's wives and for the way such a contagion had spread to the whole mass of people.

When the kingdom was rent in twain the tribes of Judah and Benjamin formed the kingdom of Judah under Rehoboam and his successors. The Ten Tribes became the Kingdom of Israel under Jeroboam, the son of Nebat. His successors were predicted by the Prophet Ahijah (I Kings 12:15. See I Kings 12; I Kings 18; 2 Chron. 10-28). The history of the thirty-nine kings is so given as to show mankind the certainty of the fulfillment of God's promises and threatenings, and especially that righteousness exalts a nation, and sin ruins it (Lev. 26:31 with 2 Kings 25:9).

A glance at the separated kingdom shows how the two kingdoms differed materially. The Northern Kingdom, with its Ten Tribes, was more powerful than the Southern Kingdom. The latter, however, was more firm spiritually than the former. The dynasties of the north were only of short duration, being plagued by revolutionary forces. On the other hand, the small and often over-powered kingdom of Judah faithfully adhered to the royal line of David, and, although characterized by dangerous crises and several unworthy rulers, had a spiritual bond which kept the people united. Isaiah's forceful ministry can be studied in this light.

VI. THE KINGDOM OF JUDAH (975-586 B.C.)

The Kingdom of Judah continued for almost 400 years under 20 kings from Rehoboam to Zedekiah, many of whom were pious. For comparison and contrasts between the two kingdoms and their kings, the reader is referred to our introductory and concluding remarks under The Kingdom of Israel. Jerusalem was the center of the Southern Kingdom and was destroyed by the Chaldees under Nebuchadnezzar when the bulk of the people were taken into captivity.

Prophets associated with the long period of this kingdom were Isaiah, Jeremiah, Joel, Zephaniah, Micah, Nahum and Habakkuk. The prophecies of these men of God, which were literally fulfilled, form a pledge to us that those further prophecies referring to the dead, small and great, standing before God, and being judged, every man according to his works, will be realized (2 Pet. 3:11-14; Rev. 20:12).

- A. Rehoboam - (I Kings 12:20-24; 14:21-31; 2 Chron. 11-12)
- B. Abijah - (I Kings 15; 2 Chron. 13)
- C. Asa - (I Kings 15:9-15; 2 Chron. 14-16)
- D. Jehoshaphat - (I Kings 22:2-33; 41-50; 2 Chron. 17-21:3)
- E. Jehoram - (2 Kings 8:16-24; 2 Chron. 21)
- F. Ahaziah - (2 Kings 8:25-29; 2 Chron. 22:1-9)
- G. Jehoash - (2 Kings 11,12; 2 Chron. 22:10; 24:27)
- H. Amaziah - (2 Kings 14; 2 Chron. 25)
- I. Uzziah - (2 Kings 15; 2 Chron. 26; Isa. 6)
- J. Jotham - (2 Kings 15:32-38; 2 Chron. 27)
- K. Ahaz - (2 Kings 16; 2 Chron. 28; Isa. 7-12)
- L. Hezekiah - (2 Kings 18-20; 2 Chron. 29-31; Isa. 26-39)
- M. Manasseh - (2 Kings 21: 1-9; 2 Chron. 33:1-9)
- N. Amon - (2 Kings 21:18-26; 2 Chron. 33:21-25)
- O. Josiah - (2 Kings 22-23:30; 2 Chron. 34,35)
- P. Jehoahaz - (2 Kings 23; 2 Chron. 36)

Q. Jehoiakim - (2 Kings 23:35-24:7; 2 Chron. 36:5-8; Jer. 22:18-21; 25)

R. Jehoiachin - (2 Kings 24:8-16; 2 Chron. 36:9,10; Jer. 22:24-30; Est. 2:6)

S. Zedekiah - (2 Kings 24,25; Jer. 52:9-11)

Summarizing the period covered by the kings of Judah we note these facts:

About half of the Judean sovereigns were good; hence the long continuance of the kingdom over that of Israel.

It is also worthy of careful observation that according to the personal piety and faithfulness of the monarch, Judah was blessed, and the country enjoyed peace and prosperity.

The longest reign was that of Manasseh, 65 years, while the shortest was that of Jehoahaz which lasted only 3 months.

The books of 1-2 Chronicles detail the doings of the kings of Judah.

Judah was carried to Babylon some 468 years after David began to reign over it, 388 years after the falling off of the Ten Tribes, and 134 years after the destruction of the kingdom of Israel. As with individuals so with nations, iniquity is their ruin (Ps. 9:17).

The preservation and continued preeminence of Judah and of the Davidic line remarkably shows the finger of providence preparing for the coming of the Messiah, as foretold by prophecy (Gen. 49:10; Isa. 11:10). The preservation of the House of David is also remarkable when we remember the great wickedness of many of the family - Jehoram, Ahaziah, Ahaz and Amon.

VII. THE NORTHERN KINGDOM (975-721 B.C.)

The Kingdom of Israel, consisting of the Ten Tribes who revolted over Rehoboam's despotism, existed for nearly 260 years under 19 kings, Jeroboam to Hoshea, all of whom were idolaters. The kingdom was ultimately overthrown by the Assyrians under Shalmaneser and terminated with the Babylonian exile. The term "Israel" is sometimes used of the Jews as a whole, but in the records of the kings it is usually confined to the Ten Tribes.

The capital of the Northern Kingdom was first at Shechem, then at Samaria.

Summarizing the histories of both the Southern and Northern Kingdoms, Dr. W. Graham Scroggie notes these facts:

1. In the Southern Kingdom there was but one dynasty, the Davidic, but in the Northern Kingdom there were nine dynasties. In the South were nineteen kings and one queen; in the North were nineteen kings. In the South some

of the rulers were good, some unstable and some bad; but in the North, all were bad.

2. In the South were three religious revivals during the reigns of Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah and Josiah, but in the North there were no revivals.
3. The tribes in the South were taken into Babylonian captivity by Nebuchadnezzar; the tribes in the North were taken into Assyrian captivity by Shalmaneser.
4. •The foreign powers that come into touch with the South or the North in this period were Assyria, Egypt, Babylon, and Syria. The prophets to Israel were Jonah, Amos, Hosea and Micah.

A. Jeroboam I - (I Ki. 11:26-40; 12-14; 20; 2 Chron. 10-11:16; 12:15; 13:3-20)

B. Nadab - (I Kings 14:20; 15:25-31)

C. Baasha - (I Kings 15:27; 16:7)

D. Elah - (I Kings 16:5-14)

E. Zimri - (I Kings 16:9-10)

F. Omri - (I Kings 16:16-28; Mic. 6:16)

G. Ahab - (I Kings 16:29; 22:40; 2 Chron. 18)

H. Ahaziah - (I Kings 22:51; 2 Kings 1:18)

I. Joram - (2 Kings 1:17; 6; 9)

J. Jehu - (2 Kings 9-10:36; Hos. 1:4)

K. Jehoahaz - (2 Kings 13)

L. Jehoash - (2 Kings 13:10-25)

M. Jeroboam II - (2 Ki. 14:23-29; Amos)

N. Zachariah - (2 Kings 14:29; 15:8-12)

O. Shallum - (2 Kings 15:13-15)

P. Menahem - (2 Kings 15:16-22)

Q. Pekahiah - (2 Kings 15:23-26)

R. Pekah - (2 Kings 15:25,27-38)

S. Hoshea - (2 Kings 15:30;17)

CONCLUSION: The majority of the Bible is given over to the subject of the kings and kingdoms. To observe the degeneration of the kingdoms, even the one with the correct lineage, is to be reminded that there is only one who is eminently qualified to be the King - and that is the LORD JESUS CHRIST (Phil. 2:9-11; Rev. 19:16).