

Paradise to Promised Land

A Bible study about the history of the Old Testament

Middle Monarchy (Late Monarchy, Pt. 1)

The stories of Israel's kings often make us gloss over due to their number and relative minor place in the story of Scripture overall. However, the stories of Solomon and David and Saul, are stories that we all know and remember. This is somewhat like our own experience with American presidents.

- **Which presidents of the United States of America are looked over (that you know of) and what did they do?**

1 Kings: Major Aspects of the Text

1st Kings takes the story of the monarchy from a united kingdom under Solomon to a splitting of the northern and southern kingdoms, leaving an animosity between the tribes of Israel and the clear impression that God has now refused to work through the Hebrew monarchies.

- **The Story of Solomon** – 1st Kings begins with the story of the end of David's life and the beginning of Solomon's reign. This begins with David getting sick, which leaves open a small power vacuum that Adonijah attempts to take advantage of, but David promises the kingdom to Solomon. The story of Solomon resembles that of King Saul. Solomon becomes a powerful and popular king, only to allow his pride and associations to drive him to idolatry. Solomon's empire is finally put to an end by Rehoboam, technically the last king of the united Israelite empire.
- **The Split of the Empire** – The Next Section of 1st Kings chronicles the splitting of the Israelite empire. From the split, we get the stories of 6 Israelite (Northern Kingdom) kings, and 3 Judahite kings.
- **Elijah and Ahab** – As we learn about the last mentioned Israelite king, Ahab, we see a new kind of character introduced – a prophet named Elijah. Elijah's ministry and presence in Israel goes to show that Israel's kings have wandered so far away from God that God is now refusing to work through the kings. As we will see, there are other prophets before Elijah, but Kings uses Elijah specifically to show the corruption present in the kings.
- **Elisha and More Kings** – Eventually Ahab dies and Elijah chooses his successor, a young man named Elisha. Elisha's story will continue in greater detail in 2nd Kings, but before we get there, we learn about two more kings: a Judahite king named Jehosaphat and an Israelite king named Ahaziel.

The shift of the story from Kings to prophets is an important shift. The book of 1st Kings reveals the ways in which the Hebrew kings have walked away from Him and need to return.

- **Read 1 Kings 2:1-4**
- **What do David's words to Solomon tell us about how a Hebrew king should behave?**

Psalms: Major Aspects of the Text

The Psalms are an interesting set of poetical works that stretch from the time of Moses (Psalm 90) to the time after the Exile. David wrote 73 to 75 of the Psalms (2 are only attributed to David by the New Testament). 45 are anonymous. 2 were written by Solomon. 12 were written by Asaph (a worship leader). 11 were written by the Sons of Korah, two Ezraite disciples (Heman and Ethan), and as said before, Moses.

The Psalms are divided into 5 (or more) categories: Lament/Imprecatory, Thanksgiving, Pilgrimage, Royal/Enthronement, and Wisdom.

- **Read Psalm 142**
- **This Psalm is attributed to David around the occasion of his being in the cave with Saul. How does this Psalm give us a different view than just reading that story?**

Proverbs: Major Aspects of the Text

Contrary to popular opinion, all of Proverbs was not written by Solomon. It does appear that a majority of the text comes from Solomon but there are several places in which it appears that Solomon functioned more as an editor bringing together the wise sayings of his day than writing them all himself. At the very least, the last two chapters feature guest writers who appear to be from around the time of Solomon – perhaps ally kings to Solomon.

- **Read Proverbs 1:1-7**
- **Knowing what we do about how Solomon's life ended, how does this passage strike you?**

Ecclesiastes: Major Aspects of the Text

The book of Ecclesiastes begins with the notation that they are “the words of Quohelath (meaning “preacher”), a son of David, king in Jerusalem.” Tradition holds that “Quohelath” is Solomon, but there have been longstanding objections to this identification. Whoever the author was, the text itself is a masterpiece of Jewish wisdom literature. Ecclesiastes delves into the deep (and often problematic) questions of life from a place that is unafraid to ask them, presumably because of an assurance in God.

- **Read Ecclesiastes 1:12-14**
- **Why do you think a King of Jerusalem would write this?**

Song of Songs: Major Aspects of the Text

If there has ever been a book of the Bible that has made people blush, it is Song of Solomon (a.k.a. Song of Songs). Many scholars have dated this book much later than Solomon (as late as the time of the Exile), but traditionally it is held to have been written by Solomon (about Solomon). The book is a poem celebrating erotic love between a man and (soon to be) wife. While its place in the canon of Scripture has been argued time and again, both Jewish and Christian advocates for its inclusion see it as a metaphor of the relationship between God and his people.

- **Read Song of Songs 3:6-11**
- **What is the figure of Solomon doing here?**

2 Chronicles: Major Aspects of the Text

Much like 1st Chronicles and Samuel, 2nd Chronicles goes over the events of 1st and 2nd Kings in a synoptic (viewing the same events) fashion, but from a later point of view.

- **We will look more in depth at 2 Chronicles next session.**