

Paradise to Promised Land

A Bible study about the history of the Old Testament

Late Monarchy – Unfamiliar Territory

The stories of the later Hebrew kings are not well known in Christianity or elsewhere. It is likely that if you are unsure about a part of Hebrew history, it is this part. Still, these stories tell a cautionary tale of the behavior of Israel and Judah and their kings.

- What “cautionary tales” from history or fiction do we tell today?

Kings and Prophets – An Overview

The table below shows an overview of the kings of both Judah and Israel and the prophets associated with those kings.

CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF THE KINGS OF THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

JUDAH					ISRAEL				
King	Reign	Character	Prophet		King	Reign	Character	Prophet	
1. Rehoboam	931-913 BC	(17 yrs.)	Bad	Shemaiah	1. Jeroboam I	931-910 BC	(22 yrs.)	Bad	Ahijah
2. Abijam	913-911	(3 yrs.)	Bad		2. Nadab	910-909	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
3. Asa	911-870	(41 yrs.)	Good		3. Baasha	909-886	(24 yrs.)	Bad	
4. Jehoshaphat	870-848*	(25 yrs.)	Good	Obadiah	4. Elah	886-885	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
5. Jehoram	848-841*	(8 yrs.)	Bad		5. Zimri	885	(7 days)	Bad	
6. Ahaziah	841	(1 yr.)	Bad		6. Omri	885-874	(12 yrs.)	Bad	{ Elijah Micaiah
7. Athaliah	841-835	(6 yrs.)	Bad		7. Ahab	874-853	(22 yrs.)	Bad	
8. Joash	835-796	(40 yrs.)	Good	Joel	8. Ahaziah	853-852	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
9. Amaziah	796-767	(29 yrs.)	Good		9. Joram	852-841	(12 yrs.)	Bad	Elisha
10. Azariah (or Uzziah)	767-740*	(52 yrs.)	Good	Isaiah	10. Jehu	841-814	(28 yrs.)	Bad	
					11. Jehoahaz	814-798	(17 yrs.)	Bad	
11. Jotham	740-732*	(16 yrs.)	Good	Micah	12. Jehoash	798-782*	(16 yrs.)	Bad	{ Jonah Amos Hosea
12. Ahaz	732-716*	(16 yrs.)	Bad		13. Jeroboam II	782-753*	(41 yrs.)	Bad	
13. Hezekiah	716-687*	(29 yrs.)	Good		14. Zechariah	753-752	(6 mo.)	Bad	
14. Manasseh	687-642*	(55 yrs.)	Bad	{ Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah Jeremiah	15. Shallum	752	(1 mo.)	Bad	
15. Amon	642-640	(2 yrs.)	Bad		16. Menahem	752-742*	(10 yrs.)	Bad	
16. Josiah	640-608	(31 yrs.)	Good		17. Pekahiah	742-740	(2 yrs.)	Bad	
17. Jehoahaz	608	(3 mo.)	Bad		18. Pekah	740-732*	(20 yrs.)	Bad	
18. Jehoiakim	608-597	(11 yrs.)	Bad		19. Hoshea	732-722	(9 yrs.)	Bad	
19. Jehoiachin	597	(3 mo.)	Bad		<i>(Capture of Samaria and captivity of Israel)</i>				
20. Zedekiah	597-586	(11 yrs.)	Bad						

(Destruction of Jerusalem and captivity of Judah)

*Co-regency

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- Without getting into the individual stories of the kings, what questions or observations do you come away from this table with?

2nd Kings: Major Aspects of the Text

2nd Kings is obviously an extension of 1st Kings, telling the continued story of the Hebrew monarchies inability to live up to the example of David and to fulfill the prophecy that another David-like king would rule over Israel.

- **Scorecard** – Both 1st and 2nd Kings essentially use a unified “scorecard” to establish if a king of Israel or Judah is bad. According to this score card, no Northern Kingdom king receives a positive rating and 8 of 20 Southern kingdom kings are called “good”. This scorecard has 3 aspects to it:
 - **Personal Faith of the King** – Did the king have a personal relationship with God?
 - **Religious Reform** – Did the king promote the worship of idols or did the king banish idols from the land?
 - **Covenant Faithfulness** – Did the king live up to the Mosaic covenant and the rules of the Torah, or did the king rule in a morally and ethically ambiguous fashion?
- **Prophets** – With the wholesale failings of the Hebrew kings, 2nd Kings continues telling the story of the prophets. The prophets were reform agents in both Israel and Judah, often proving the wickedness of a king by eliminating the possibility that the kings were simply acting out of ignorance.
- **Exile** – Beginning in chapter 17, the mood of the book shifts to telling the story of God’s judgment upon both Israel and Judah. Israel is taken away into exile by the nation of Assyria by the end of 2 Kings 17 and foretells what will happen by the end of the book where Judah will also be taken into exile, this time by the nation of Babylon. At the end of the book, there is a glimmer of hope presented in the person of Jehoiachin of the line of David.

It is important to remember that the books of Samuel and Kings are linked together by a singular author (or at least time period). The story is overall a story of what we could call the Hebrew experiment with monarchy, an experiment that seems to fail except for one major bright point and several minor bright points.

- **Read 2 Kings 17:7-20**
- **What does this passage tell us about the Hebrew monarchy?**

Chronicles: Major Aspects of the Text

As we have mentioned before, Chronicles was written chronologically well after Samuel and Kings (some scholars think even hundreds of years after the return from the exile). It was likely written as a summary of the Old Testament and even appeared in most Hebrew Bible collections at the end of the collection.

- **Genealogies** – Chronicles begins with a genealogy tracing Hebrew history, beginning with the first man, Adam. The genealogies pay special attention to two “poles” – one being the line of Judah (and David) the other being the line of Aaron (Levi) and the history of the priesthood.
- **Stories of a Messiah and a Temple** – Mirroring the two poles of the genealogies, Chronicles first spends time telling the story of David as a key for the hope of a Messianic King who would come from David. Notably, these stories of David leave out several negative aspects of David’s story from Samuel. Chronicles also includes new stories about David receiving instructions and plans to build a new temple, another hope for the people after the Exile.
- **The Moral of the Stories of Judah**- Chronicles leaves out the stories of the Northern Kingdom, Israel, choosing instead to focus on the stories of Southern Kingdom (Judah) kings. These stories all seem to have a “moral” or end result that the author is attempting to be clear about – if a king follows God, they are blessed; if a king does not, that king is cursed and the nation along with it.

The Chronicles were written as something of a didactic history, a history told to teach a lesson rather than simply record events. The lesson is simple: God had established his people to worship Him, and that God would send a new Messianic ruler who would reestablish faithful worship.

- **Read 2 Chronicles 36:22-23**
- **This is the ending of Chronicles, showing a powerful king (Cyrus) who claims to have authority from God telling the people to do something. Why do you think the Chronicler uses this as the ending to the book?**