

Kings and Prophets 12-11-16a

This is Friday, the 16th of November, 2012. We begin a new study tonight. We'll begin it in 1 Kings 1. We'll take a moment to dedicate our time to the Lord and ask his blessing upon it, and then we'll begin.

Father, it is such a wonderful truth that gives us comfort and encouragement when we realize that we are not trapped in this life or in this time or in the circumstances that are around us. We have been delivered by your grace out of darkness and into light, out of things which are temporary and ephemeral and mundane into those which are eternal and partake of light and your righteousness. We thank you for the Lord Jesus Christ, for our relationship to you through him.

We thank you for his ministries on our behalf of intercession and of continuing to provide us encouragement through his example and through his teaching. We thank you for the pictures that we find of him in the Old Testament and the benefits that we gain from having the revelation of both the Old Covenant and the New to guide us and shed light on our path. We thank you for the sections of history that we will be studying in these next weeks, and we ask your blessing on us.

May we not only have a historical and geographical and biblical understanding, but we pray that each of us will see the pertinence and the meaning and the application in our lives as we seek to walk before you on the path that leads to the narrow gate of life. We pray that as a result of our study, we will be more thoroughly equipped for every good work. We pray it in Jesus' name, amen.

As we turn now to our study in the Old Testament, I'm glad to be back in the Old Testament after something of a hiatus. The Hebrew language is such a beautiful thing. The Christology that we have in the Old Testament far surpasses anything that's in the New Testament.

I love the New Testament. I love the apostle Paul and Peter and John and the gospels and the book of Acts and Revelation and all of the wonderful books there, but there is nothing that reveals the Lord Jesus Christ so fully and in such detail as God's pictures that are given to us in the Old Testament. We have studied completely several of the larger Old Testament books, such as the 50 chapters of Genesis, the 66 chapters of Isaiah, the book of Job, book of Ezekiel.

We've done Exodus, among others. We've done 1st and 2nd Samuel. I've actually done that twice because I liked it so much, but we address ourselves now to a section of the word of God that does not often get a great deal of attention.

It is seldom the study of choice if you're doing books and especially if you are doing expository preaching and teaching, it is much more the episodes or isolated passages that emerge from these books of history. But there is a wonderful synthesis which continues the story that was begun in, well, actually the beginning of course is Genesis, but that historical story extends to

and through the deliverance from Egypt, wandering in the wilderness, entering the land under Joshua, the period of the judges. And then in 1st and 2nd Samuel, the end of the judges, the kingship of Saul, followed by the time of King David, which is given in great detail and is a favorite of almost anyone to look at the portions of 1st and 2nd Samuel that deal with David.

We have done those studies. We've done the book of judges and the books of Samuel. And we extended our 2nd Samuel study actually slightly to cover the death of King David.

And that brings us with something of an intermission now to the further history of Israel, which is going to pick up with the kingship of Solomon or Shlomo, which is his actual name. You don't really get the good biblical names in our twisted English versions. People in Israel now, you'll find this name in use, but here in America, people don't say Shlomo unless they're misspeaking and trying to talk about something else.

Like, that was a great play. I'd like to see it in Shlomo, you know, and have me another beer while you're at it. But the story of the United Monarchy is going to end with Solomon.

And this account is woven through several books. And in a way, it reminds me of the New Testament account of the Lord Jesus. You have the four gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, the three synoptics in John.

Why? It is such a compelling, such a central, such an important time in God's plan, the incarnation of the Lord Jesus, that it takes multiple camera angles to capture it sufficiently. Well, I would suggest, I would submit that when you find another section of the history of God's unfolding plan, given from multiple perspectives and multiple books, that it is similarly important. We love to look at Noah and the ark, Moses and the bulrushes, Moses on Mount Sinai, Moses in the Red Sea, Manna falling from heaven, Joshua conquering the Canaanites.

But I think this section tends to get secondary attention at best. And yet, we have in the English Bible, first and second Kings, first and second Chronicles, along with the prophetic books. And this takes us, the books of the Kings, and this account will take us all the way from, while David is still alive, the transition to Solomon, all of the way to near the end of the captivity, the Babylonian captivity, which is a span of over 500 years.

It's a big chunk. And a lot happens. And some of it, we have just a single narrative account.

Others, we have two or even three. And so we will be watching for the times where these books overlap and give us information. We did this when we were in Samuel and looking at Chronicles.

The numbering of the people by David is a good example of where you get a nice stereo picture. But let me give just a very quick overview here. Almost any study Bible will have an introduction to the book and we'll point out some of the basic facts.

We'll just review them quickly. First of all, in the Hebrew Bible, the books of Samuel, Kings, and

Chronicles are single books. They're divided allegedly because of their size, I guess, into two in our Bible.

This goes back. There's history going back to the early centuries of the church and dividing these. But in Hebrew, you have the book of Samuel, the book of Kings, and the book of the Chronicles, the Kings of Judah.

So we're taking three books and splitting them into six. And for the first, let's just start at 1000 BC for convenience. This is around the time of the kingship of David.

And we're going to have history of the united and subsequently the divided kingdom going for about 120 years, 120, 130, 150, give or take. But we're going to get all the way down into the early to mid 800s with just the kings. David, Solomon, then the kingdom is torn.

You have Jeroboam, Rehoboam, and we have the Northern and Southern kingdom accounts picking up from there. Interestingly, there are no prophetic ministries other than momentary words of wisdom. You've got the prophet Samuel, you have Nathan the prophet showing up at a few pertinent points, but we really do not have a full orb'd prophet in Israel until Elijah.

And this is going to be down in the 800s. And there's a span of roughly 120 years where you do not have a national prophet. Samuel was sort of a combination prophet, priest, judge.

He was kind of a man of many hats, but once you have King Saul and the death of King Saul and David comes in, Nathan the prophet is really a court prophet. His ministry is primarily in the palace to the king. And with a few isolated exceptions, you don't really have a prophetic ministry burgeoning or blossoming or becoming notable until Elijah, which is going to be way down in the days of Joram and Jehoram quite a ways down the pike.

So it's interesting. It is as though, and this is just a overview suggestion, but we've seen as we look at the broad sweep of God's plan in history, that different circumstances are arranged by God, perfect people, perfect environment, fallen people briefly in the perfect environment and then expelled. You've got fallen people in a fallen environment.

In the millennial kingdom, we'll have fallen people in a largely perfected environment. And then finally in the kingdom of the father, we'll be back to perfect people in a perfect environment. And within that broad outline, we have different conditions.

You have a patriarchal organization and government for a time. This grows into a system of city states, which eventually grows into a system of national empires. And then God brings forth his people to be sort of a Johnny-come-lately nation.

And they start very small. And yet by the time that our study begins, Solomon is the dominant king and Israel is the dominant empire for its surrounding neighbors of Moab and Edom and Philistines. So you have Egypt on one side, the surrounding neighbors, the Hittites.

You basically have four large immediate neighbors there. Then you've got a few more distant ones. But they've been subjugated.

David is the man of war. David is the man of blood. David achieves the peace through conquest and through the efforts of his army and his mighty men.

He slays the champions of the Philistines. Moab and Edom are subdued. Egypt is out of the picture.

The Hittites are either quiescent or allied with Israel. And this introduces a time of peace and a different agenda, a different goal is brought forth, which is the building of the house of God. God doesn't want his house built during the time of war by the king who has shed so much blood.

He wants the house of peace in the city of peace, Jerusalem, Shalom, built by the king who will preside over that peace. The peace is built on the foundation of warfare, conquest, and victory, but it is a house of peace with God in a time of peace for man, for Israel, certainly. So, but this does not last.

And as the kingdom divides and fragments as squabbling and strife ensue, as the purpose for the house of God begins to diminish in the minds of the Israelites, remember how willing they were to offer and to work and to participate and to do the sacrifices and kind of reminds you of Israel at Sinai, all that the Lord has said we will do. We are the people of the covenant and this is great. Well, the shine kind of wears off.

And over time, old ways start to be reintroduced, old gods, old high places, old compromises. And Solomon, oddly enough, as wise as he was and as great as he was, is an agent of introducing much of this and practices it and builds temples of worship for his various wives and concubines and is himself a reflection of the heart of the people. And the kingdom, once it goes to the third generation, more of which we will have to say later, but there's a lot in the number three to be learned and observed or observed and learned.

And David is the first king in the dynasty. Solomon is the second. And by the time you get to his third, problems ensue.

Can't make it three generations. These two kings that the Lord love, but number three, not so much. And this ends up with the kingdom being divided.

And from then on, we have the Northern and Southern kingdoms, as you know. We're going to eventually encounter the prophets, beginning with Elijah and Elisha, oddly enough, in the Northern kingdom. We'll start with Habakkuk and move through what are traditionally known as the minor prophets.

I really personally am not fond of that term. I would, if I was, you know, if they'd come to me and said, Sam, set up the Bible. You know, you get to name the sections.

I would have called them the shorter prophets. And actually, even that is misleading. It's not like they were of diminished stature, but their books, their messages are shorter, but they're really not minor.

No part of the word of God is minor and other parts are major. It's all the word of God. Man should not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouths of the major prophets.

It is not what it says. It's every word. And so we're going to have the opportunity to look at the minor prophets in their context of the situation in either the Northern or the Southern kingdom where they were called to deliver that message.

And the message makes a lot more sense in its historical context than it does by simply visiting those short books to cherry pick them for a few pungent quotes. So we have something of an ambitious undertaking. And because of that, we are not going to do a great deal of verse by verse exegesis.

We are going to survey larger pieces of information and we're going to look at the salient, what I consider to be salient points that are in it. All of the points are salient, but we can only pick a few. The youngest of us would be old and I would be long dead if we were to do it the way we often do, verse by verse and word by word.

As is my favorite technique. So instead we will have to skip a lot of things and try to focus on the broad brush. And the good thing about the books of history is that's really what they are designed for anyway.

They are not epistles, they are not didactic, they are not organized for depth, they are organized for sequence. My brother Matt sent me a really beautiful, high definition photograph earlier this week. It's a still picture and it's just a big eyeball, but you can see eyelashes, you can see little facets in the skin and it's just incredible.

I mean, you can just sit there and it's like one eye staring or two eyes staring at one, I guess. I guess I could shut one and it would be eye to eye. But this is a thing that you can do with a verse of didactic material, teaching material, something that's in the law, the prophets or the New Testament epistles.

It is there and the more you study it, the more it seems to emerge, the more fine detail can come out and then you can look at it the next day and you see a whole fresh set of things that you didn't notice the first time. And that's great for some purposes. But I have noticed in working with video that there are times when a still frame looks blurry and indistinct and you can't really tell what's going on.

But if it is one of a rapid sequence at 30 frames per second, you can easily see what's going on because it is a sequence, it is a movie, it is the messages in the motion and in the activity and in the sequential thing that you view at a fairly rapid pace. This is really, my feeling is this is the

way we need to approach these books is to let them play for us at a reasonable speed so that we can see the movement and see the important things rather than freeze framing it and trying to digest every pixel. So with that in mind, we're gonna go ahead and begin, but you'll have to in some sense sort of strap in because we're going to look at chunks of narrative and then stop and just make a few quick observations which we will then interpret and seek to apply.

And I think once you sort of adjust to the shift in gears, it will be something that will be helpful for all of us. So I am also going to rely on something that is helpful to me. You don't necessarily need one of these unless you want it, but I have, I had, I have a book here and I used this when we did First and Second Samuel.

I like this. It's like the, some of you have seen my blue book that's a harmony of the gospels where it puts them side by side and you can kind of compare what's in one and what's in the other. This is the same sort of thing for Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

And so without having to try to read the notes and flip around and say, oh, well, this Chronicles page, but it's all here. So this is my cheat book. This is how I will know where we are and what things pertain.

If you wanna know what it is, it's called a Synoptic Harmony of Samuel, Kings and Chronicles with related passages from Psalms, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Israel. But it's edited by James D. Newsome. I've had this thing a long time.

It's published by Baker. Newsome is N-E-W-S-O-M-E, James D. Newsome Jr. Published by Baker in 86. A Synoptic Harmony, Samuel, Kings and Chronicles.

So if you can pick one of these up cheap and want to, it's great, but you won't need it. One of the things that we are also gonna rely on because we are doing this sort of surfing approach is we will have a number of graphical aids. I will be providing handouts and putting copies of the handouts in a folder on the website, charts to show, you know, here's the sequence of Kings in Judah and here's where the writing prophets fit.

Here are the sequence of Kings and here's where they fit, what? Oh, I thought you had to look on your face that you have just before you say, I've already got that or we've already done that. So I just want to be sure I wasn't, no, okay, good. Anyway, I've got, and I have some things, for example, this is something I got long time ago.

When I first got out of the Marine Corps and started seminary, there was a fresh book out, biblical charts and chronology things. And I'll make you some copies of this, but this is the sort of thing I'm talking about. That's the judges actually.

Here's the Kings of the divided monarchy. So you've got Judah on one side, you've got Israel on the other. Here's Rehoboam, Asa, Jehoshaphat with Abijam stuck in there.

Here's Jehoram and Ahaziah. And then you'll notice as you come down in Judah, vertically,

here's Obadiah and Joel. Those are your first writing prophets in Judah.

And you've got a timeline right down the middle. And you can see that that's right around 850, 860 BC. Remember we said there's 120 to 150 years of history before you start getting your big time prophets showing up.

Here's the Northern kingdom. There's Jeroboam and Nadab is a little thin slice there. Then Baasha and Elah and Zimri and Omri and Ahab.

And you know what happens with Ahab. That's where you get Elijah and then you have Elisha. So it's a nice little graphical summary.

You can kind of see where you are. And as we go through, we'll be able to say, oh yes, here's where we've been. Here's where we're going.

Because trust me, I had to memorize the sequence of all of the Kings in Judah and in Israel when I was in seminary. And as soon as I heard the door shutting behind me, it all left my mind. It's just very difficult to remember all that stuff.

It's really more fruitful to memorize the presidents of the United States than to try to memorize those Kings. Other people that have tried it will agree. You're welcome to.

It's great if you can. I'm just not a brute force memorizing kind of guy. So this is what I like.

I flip to it, I look at it, and I can see what I can't remember. So we've got that. And there's some other helpful things.

I've got a summary of military conflicts that take place. Who went to war with whom? Why and for what? How long? Who died? What was the result? And so on. So as we get to them, these things will be coming.

So faint not at the enormity of the task. Journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step. And we're going to begin here shortly.

But this is our, you know, I always get one class of introduction before we just start trudging on through. The last thing I want to mention by way of introduction is that there is pertinence and application for us in this. We will see when we come back from the break, an example of this, as we begin, we're going to begin with David passing the commission on to his son Solomon for the building of the temple and his charge, his exhortation, both to Solomon and to the people.

And then what the word of God has to say in Kings and Chronicles about that and looking at it in broad strokes, there is a real illustration. There is a real biblical principle in that for us. When we get to Adonijah and his belief that he should be the next king, because he's the old, he's older than Solomon.

He's got Joab or he's got some generals who doesn't have Joab, unfortunately, but he probably

wishes he did. But he's not going to have anybody for very long. But there is a great lesson in that that goes beyond the immediate observations.

Why not Adonijah? Why was it Solomon and not Adonijah? What should Adonijah have known that could have prevented his egregious mistake, which is only going to compound later on. But these are the kinds of things that we can see when we step back and see the shape of the forest. We see the topographical map of the region rather than looking at the pebbles in the roadway.

So this will be our goal. It's going to be my goal to move quickly and in large chunks. If you see something that looks like it's important and maybe we ought to try to make it a part of the synthesis, just let me know.

It is inevitable that we will have to skip a lot of interesting things, but that's what we're going for. We're going for the moving picture. The history as the people of Israel would have learned from it as they reviewed it, as they heard it told in their campfires when they didn't have access to scrolls.

But someone would say, ah, yes, let me tell you about the days of Ahab. Let me tell you about the days of the prophet Elisha. Let me tell you what led to our captivity as they would weep by the river Kebar.

They didn't exegete, they didn't posthole or do categorical three-page studies or word synthesis studies across the Old Testament. They thought about their history. They realized the way that God had worked and learned from it in meaningful ways.

And we hope to do the same. The other thing that this will do is really give us a great frame of reference for those wonderful quotations that are often made of the Old Testament. The just shall live by his faith.

The new covenant that God makes with Israel and with Judah. The little nuggets that are extracted from the minor prophets and made into memory verse cards. We'll know why they say what they say.

And it will also inform us greatly and we'll have the same advantage that the Old Testament Israelites and later the Jews had when you see the Old Testament quoted in the new. Because we'll know exactly what is being inferred or what is being called forward from memory for them. It's opaque to us.

You make a reference to Hosea or Joel as Peter does in Acts. Well, what's the context? What was the context of Joel's prophecy? We say, oh, he's just talking about the end times. No, he's not.

He is preaching into the situation of his day. And understanding that greatly illuminates the book of Acts. So I think it's gonna be an exciting and a helpful study.

And I think at the same time, every class will also bring us that interpretation and application that will make us good stewards of the truth of God and enable us to lay hold of righteousness by faith, to lead more fruitful and consistent lives in the time that remains to us and really be masters of the entire Bible, not just our favorite bits. So we'll pause here and take our break. And when we come back, we will begin this large and yet I think not overly lengthy study.

Let's pause and take a break.