

Synthetic Bible Studies

Containing an outline study of every book of the Bible
with suggestions for Sermons, Addresses and
Bible Expositions

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LESSON FIFTEEN

II KINGS

I would recommend in this case as in that of the book just studied that you make a careful diagram of the kings of both kingdoms. Leaving you to fill in the period of each reign, and such catch-words as may seem useful to recall the predominating characteristics, I will place the names of the kings before you in parallel columns, and as nearly as possible in chronological order.

They run thus:

Kings of Judah

Ahaziah
Athaliah
Joash
Amaziah
Azariah, (or Uzziah)

Kings of Israel

Jehoram
Jehu

Jehoahaz
Joash
Jeroboam II
Zechariah
Shallum
Menahem
Pekahiah

Jotham
Ahaz
Hezekiah
Manasseh
Amon
Josiah
Jehoahaz
Jehoiakim
Jehoiachin
Zedekiah

Pekah
Hoshea

An examination of the above will reveal one or two things to be especially noted.

In the first place, your reading of the details has shown that while many changes of dynasty have occurred in the kingdom of Israel absolutely none have taken place in Judah. While the history of the first-named presents a constant succession of usurpations, revolutions and the like, that of the second is comparatively peaceful, and the kingly line has been kept intact in the tribe of Judah and the family of David to the end.

Indeed, after the captivity also, as we shall see later on, the genealogical records were carefully examined and purged with the same intent.

The reason for this is very clear when we remember the early promises touching the coming of the Messiah in the line of Judah and David. It was vital to His identification and acceptance that the descent be demonstrated unmistakably.

Another fact to be noticed is the longer life granted to the kingdom of Judah before the period of captivity.

Examine the marginal chronology and satisfy yourselves as to the length of time that elapsed between the removal of Israel by Assyria, and that of Judah by Babylon. Locate each of these heathen nations on the map, and observe that the one conquered and succeeded the other in power between the two captivities.

The Kings of Israel

Of the kings of Israel there are three it might be well especially to notice:

- Jehu,
- Jeroboam II, and
- Menahem.

The first named was the executioner of divine punishment on the wicked house of Ahab and the Baal-worshippers, whose zeal for himself, however, exceeded that for GOD. This is evident from 10:29. Observe GOD's readiness to commend him for what had been done and reward him for it (v. 30) - a verse one can scarcely read without wishing in his heart that Jehu had gone further and gained more. Why should not his children have sat on the throne of Israel forever instead of the

fourth generation only? Would it not have been so, if Jehu had been out and out for GOD?

Teachers of classes have here an excellent opportunity to impress the lesson of what we all miss in the way of blessing through our own selfishness. Like many another great man before and after him, in Israel and out of it, Jehu put politics before GOD, and was the loser by it.

The reign of Jeroboam II is especially notable for its prosperity (14:23-29). He enjoyed the longest reign of any of the kings of the ten tribes; his arms were successful, his coasts enlarged, and he had the further encouragement of seeing prophecy fulfilled in his day, as a further evidence of the Lord's favor and willingness to bless.

It was a golden age for Israel but, as in the days of Egypt under the Ptolemies, Rome under Augustus, France under Louis XIV, and England under Elizabeth, it was an age of great profligacy, as we shall see in the study of Amos the prophet of the period, and was the time which marks the beginning of the rapid decline of the nation culminating in its captivity 60 or 70 years later.

Menahem's reign is of importance as that in which the great nation of western Asia; Assyria, first came against the land (15:19, 20). This nation was reaching out for world-dominion, the great rival of Egypt, eager to command the Mediterranean Sea. At this time she got her first "grip" on Israel, which she never slackened until the end. As she followed up her success in the case of Israel with attacks on Judah we shall have more to do with her at a later period.

The Samaritans

The captivity of Israel is another way of referring to the deportation of that people into foreign countries, which was part of the military and governmental policy of Assyria at that time, as well as her successor in power (Babylon). This was regarded as the easiest and cheapest way of controlling a subjugated people, since in a strange land and under new surroundings insurrections against authority could not be so successful.

Observe that the same treatment was meted out to other captives who were brought to fill up the vacated cities of Israel (17:6, 24). These people came to be known as the Samaritans.

Samaria was originally the name of the capital of Israel.

When, and by whom was it thus founded (I Kings 16:23, 24)?

But subsequently the name came to be taken by a large province of Israel of which it was the center. Read carefully in the present lesson (17:25-41) to obtain an idea of the religious history and character of these people, since it explains in part such later allusions as Ezra 4:1-6; John 4:9, etc.

Another item of interest in this connection is the further fact that the cities of Israel thus occupied by another people could not have been re-occupied by Israel if they had as a nation returned to their land. Not so in the case of Judah, however. No mention is made that the Babylonian government filled up their cities with other people. Hence, after a time, it was

possible for Judah to return as it was not for Israel. In all this how plainly is seen the hand of GOD!

The prophets Isaiah and Jeremiah had distinctly prophesied the national restoration of Judah, giving the very time and other detailed circumstances of the event (Isaiah 44:28; Jeremiah 29:10), but no such prediction had gone forth distinctively for Israel (the ten tribes as such).

The Kings of Judah

Which would you single out as the particularly good or wicked kings in this list?

Of the first-named, the story of Joash is interesting because of the conspiracy against him at his birth (chap. 11).

- what do you know of the history of Athaliah, the wicked grandmother of this king?
- of what stock did she come?
- how long did she unlawfully reign over Judah?
- to what two persons did Joash owe his accession to the throne?
- how old was he at this time?
- what great religious event characterized his reign?

What would you say of Ahaz, was he good or wicked?

- what two people besieged Judah in his time (16:5)?
- to what great nation did he turn for aid?

Please remember this incident, as it will throw much light on Isaiah 7-9.

It was as unfortunate in the end for Judah herself, as it now was for her enemies that she thus entered into confederacy with that heathen people. Assyria thus obtained a hold upon her which threatened her life. In whose reign, and by what miracle was Judah subsequently delivered from her power (chap. 19)?

Speaking of Hezekiah, what great prophet comes into view in this day? Wherein does he fail to honor GOD, and what prediction grows out of the event (chap. 20)? Note, that Babylon was a comparatively insignificant power at this time, which made the prediction all the more remarkable.

What later king compares favorably with Hezekiah?

- what notable discovery helped forward the revival in his reign?
- what irrevocable purpose of GOD is made known to the nation at this time (22:16, 17)?
- by what king was Josiah slain (23:29, 30)?

This brings us to a historical event of much importance. Egypt which comes prominently into view here, after so long an interval, is contending with Assyria for the world-dominion. Judah lies between the combatants geographically, and is, in a sense, their battleground. This seems to

account. in part. for the conflict recorded in this chapter, which in its consequences brings Judah for a while under the sway of Egypt.

- whom does Pharaoh now put on the throne (23:31, 33)?
- to what nation, however, does he afterward become a vassal (24:1)?

Observe his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, resulting as we see from Daniel 1 in a preliminary captivity of the people.

Notice a second captivity in the following reign, at which time, doubtless, another great prophet was removed, see Ezekiel 1. Zedekiah, however, who is now placed in authority by Nebuchadnezzar, manifests the same spirit of insubordination both to the will of Nebuchadnezzar and the will of GOD, and brings upon his nation what had been foretold by all the prophets from Moses to Jeremiah.

The Prophets of the Period

I would like the class to give some attention at this point to the succession of the prophets.

Who was the last great prophet in Israel we have studied, and who was his immediate successor?

Following Elisha comes the list of those whose deeds and discourses have been recorded and transmitted to us in books separate from the record of the kings.

- The earliest of these seems to be Jonah. See II Kings 14:25.
- He was followed by Amos, who perhaps was contemporaneous with him for a time (Amos 1:1).
- The successor of Amos was Hosea who may also have been partially contemporaneous with him (Hosea 1:1).
- The last named continued from the time of Jeroboam II to the captivity, a period of between 60 and 70 years, the longest in the annals of the prophets.

To return to Judah, the first named of the prophets whose separate book has been handed down to us is possibly Joel, and then Isaiah, who entered on his office in the reign of Azariah or Uzziah, and was contemporaneous therefore with Hosea in Israel (Isaiah 1:1). He was followed by Jeremiah, who began to prophesy in the reign of Josiah and continued to the captivity of Judah (Jeremiah 1:1-3). These last two prophets were doubtless of great aid to Hezekiah and Josiah in the carrying out of their plans of political and moral reform. The great mission of Jeremiah, especially in the latter part of his ministry, was to instruct and exhort Judah to submit to the Babylonian yoke as conforming to the will of GOD. The explanation of this comes out clearly in Daniel. The people and their rulers were unwilling to comply, however, and the hatred which, in consequence, was entertained for Jeremiah caused him the great suffering which makes his life story so full of touching interest.

It was the unwillingness of the nation to yield compliance, however, that brought upon them all their distress at the hands of Babylon.

A diagram of the prophets of II Kings might be arranged thus:

Kingdom of Judah

Joel
Isaiah
Jeremiah

Kingdom of Israel

Elisha
Jonah
Amos
Hosea

~ end of Lesson 15 ~
