

Read the Bible in a Year

Week 24 – November 14th, 2021

Read on Your Own this Week:

Psalm 70-72

Proverbs 5-8

Readings in Class:

1 Kings 1-18

Introduction to 1 Kings

1 Kings picks up on the events immediately following the book of Samuel. Just like with Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book, but split up during a later translation. The events span from around 970BC to 587BC, from Solomon succeeding his father David to the beginning of the Exile.

The first half of 1 Kings largely deals with Solomon. Solomon started out well but just as with David, women were his downfall. He was eventually led astray by his many wives. Solomon is known for the three w's: wisdom, wealth, and wives. He is also known for having built the first temple, and is most likely the author of Song of Songs, Proverbs, and Ecclesiastes. The second half of the book we see how Israel and Judah split into two kingdoms. We also see the ministry of Elijah the prophet and, just as in the time of the Judges, the downward spiral of the people of Israel.

A Brief Overview of 1 Kings

1. King Solomon (1-12)
 - a. Solomon established as King (1-2)
 - b. How Solomon will rule (3-4)
 - c. Solomon's temple (5-6)
 - d. Solomon Builds and other accomplishments (7-10)
 - e. Solomon's downfall (11)
2. Rehoboam's succession to the Throne (12:1-24)
3. The Kingdom divides (12-14)
4. Various Kings and Elijah's Ministry (15-22)

Solomon: The Wise Guy

The first two chapters of 1 Kings detail how Solomon ascended to the throne despite his half brother making more than one attempt to steal it from him. Chapter three then picks up with a well known account of Solomon asking for wisdom. This request pleases God and because of it, God also promises Solomon riches and honor. And Solomon does become well known for his wisdom. We see in Chapter 10 that the Queen of Sheba visit him just to check out the rumors of his wealth and wisdom. It is also believed that Solomon wrote most of the book of Proverbs, which has a lot to say about wisdom. Solomon's life shows, though, that no matter how wise a person is, if they forsake the source of that wisdom (and wisdom personified – Jesus), they will fail.

2 Samuel 7 Fulfilled (Partially)

In 2 Samuel 7 we read about how David wanted to build God a home, but instead God tells him that one of his offspring will build God a house. This prophecy is partially fulfilled when Solomon builds the Temple. This temple mimics the dimensions and set-up of the Tabernacle. The Ark, which has been moving around since coming into the Promised Land, is brought into the complete Temple and the Glory of God fills it, just as with the Tabernacle. Solomon prays a beautiful prayer at the dedication, telling of God's promises, asking God to be present at the Temple, and for forgiveness and mercy for when the people fail. He even mentions foreigners praying to God and for God to hear the people even if they are captured and exiled due to their sin (which happens at the end of 2 Kings). Solomon's temple is destroyed when Judah goes into exile.

A Kingdom Divides

Despite Solomon's wisdom, he begins to fall away from the LORD. This is because of his many wives who worshipped other gods. His actions are actually warned against in Deuteronomy 17:14-20, where the LORD tells the people that a king should not acquire many wives, wealth, or horses, all of which Solomon did. Because Solomon was led astray, the LORD tells him that the kingdom will be taken away from Solomon's sons, except for one tribe for the sake of David. This is fulfilled in chapter 12 when Rehoboam takes the bad advice of his friends, which causes Israel to rebel against him. The Northern Kingdom sets up Jeroboam as king. Despite the fact that the LORD has made Jeroboam king of Israel, Jeroboam quickly sins by setting up two golden calves for the northern kingdom to worship, instead of going to Jerusalem in the Southern Kingdom (Judah).

No King like King David

The rest of 1 Kings and 2 Kings sets up a pattern of going back and forth between the kings of Judah and the Kings of Israel and whether they did good or evil in the eyes of the LORD. While there are a few good kings, most of them continued to allow the worship of other gods. Most of the kings of Israel "walked in the ways of Jeroboam" leading the people to continue to worship worthless idols. The kings of Judah, while often better than those of Israel, often still let the people continue to worship incorrectly. When there is a good king and the people turn from their idols, it often doesn't last past that king's reign. Through it all, however, we continue to see God's mercy and patience.

Elijah the Prophet

A major part of Kings focuses on the prophets, especially Elijah. Elijah appears in the Gospels on the mountain of Transfiguration. Here in Kings we get the story of his ministry. The prophets are often at odds with the kings, since the prophets are usually speaking against them. We see how God provides for Elijah during a long drought through a foreign widow. Elijah even raises the widow's son from the dead after praying to the LORD, which causes an expression of faith from the widow. Another interesting and somewhat funny story is Elijah vs the prophets of Baal. During this event he shows the power of God over all other gods and idols.

During this time there are also many false prophets who were told the kings "what their itching ears want to hear" (2 Timothy 4:3).