

Place: Lurgan Baptist 28:1:2014

A JOURNEY THROUGH THE BIBLE

Reading: 1 Kings 11:1-13

12. THE BOOK OF 1 KINGS

Steve Wagers tells of a popular secular magazine in the 1990's which did an article on the subject of success. The article, "*The Best of the New Generation*," dealt with successful people under the age of 40 who were being used to impact and change America. They were recognized for things like taking risks, having initiative or being creative and persistent. Nothing was mentioned about morals, integrity, Biblical values or character. It revealed that success in our society doesn't involve the condition of the heart. I heard about a little boy who came running into the living room carrying a dead mouse by the tail. His mother was sitting, talking to her pastor, when the boy ran in. The little boy said, "*Mama, look at this dead mouse. I beat him in the head with a hammer, then I ran over him with my tricycle, then I stomped on him with both feet; then, I picked him up and threw him against the wall.*" About that time, the little boy looked up and saw the pastor, then he said, "*Then, the good Lord called him home.*"

1-2 Kings is a stark reminder that it's possible to do a right thing in the wrong way, but it's impossible to do a wrong thing in the right way. Right is right, wrong is

wrong, because God is God. And while character may not matter to society, it does matter to the supreme, sovereign Lord. Now the first book of Kings may be described as "*The rise and fall of the nation of Israel.*" The two books of Kings like the books of Samuel were originally one book. Together they cover a period of Israel's history from the accession of King Solomon in 970 B.C. to the final exile of the people of Judah to the land of Babylon in 586 B.C. Now as we come to 1 Kings there are a few things that I want to say by way of introduction. Firstly there is,

1. A Difficulty we need to Identify:

And the difficulty stems from the arrangement of the Old Testament books. You see, the way our Old Testament books are arranged is not chronological, and that largely accounts for the difficulty here. If for example we were to read the Bible straight through, we would,

Come to the history of Esther before that of Job, and yet Job lived more than 1,000 years before Esther.

Come to the end of Judah's captivity in Daniel, and yet in the next book in our Bible, Hosea, neither Israel nor Judah have been carried into captivity by anyone yet. So do you see the difficulty? You see, if we do not understand the arrangement of the Old Testament books, we will inevitably end up with a confused and hazy view of Old Testament history. 1.

2. A Division we need to Specify:

You see, the book of 2 Samuel and the early part of 1 Kings describe the powerful position of Israel on the world stage but most of the book of Kings is concerned with the nation's downfall. Under David and Solomon the nation was eventually united and the empire stretched from Egypt to the Euphrates. But from Solomon's time onwards they headed downhill, through civil war and a divided kingdom to exile in a foreign land. So after the death of Solomon the nation was divided in two. The two parts were.

(a) The Northern Kingdom:

With its headquarters first at Shechem then at Samaria. This northern kingdom was composed of 10 of the 12 tribes. These 10 tribes were eventually taken away into captivity by Assyria. They never returned. (a)

(b) The Southern Kingdom:

With its headquarters at Jerusalem composed of two of the twelve tribes which were Judah and "little Benjamin." (12:21) These two tribes were taken away captive by Babylon and ultimately returned to Jerusalem. The Northern Kingdom was known by the name " Israel," the Southern Kingdom was known by the name " Judah," it being the largest tribe of the two. 1, 2,

3. Details we need to Clarify:

If a number of facts are kept in mind, then the accounts of the Divided Kingdom as given in Kings and Chronicles will become plain.

1. The histories of the two kingdoms are given parallel with one another from 1 Kings Chapter 12 to 2 Kings Chapter 17, when Israel is taken captive.

2. The history of Judah alone is continued from 2 Kings Chapter 18 to Chapter 25.

3. The history of Israel that is the ten tribes is not given at all in the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles.

4. The great period from the death of Solomon to the captivity of Judah is recorded for us from three distinct points of view.

(a) The Royal point of view in the books of Kings:

(b) The Priestly point of view in the books of Chronicles:

(c) The Prophetic point of view in the books of the Prophets:

Now if these facts are remembered, and we read the books of Kings and Chronicles in the light of them, the Old Testament will become a new book to us. Now 1 Kings falls into 2 main sections.

1. The United Kingdom Ch's 1-11

2. The Divided Kingdom: Ch's 12-22

However, I want to look at this book slightly different from that and notice,

(1) AN ERA OF ROYAL HISTORY: Ch's 1-11

For these chapters tell the story of the united people of God before the division under Rehoboam of Judah and Jeroboam of Israel. Here there is brought before Israel,

(a) David: Their Finest King:

The book of Kings opens with King David and ends with the King of Babylon. It opens with the building of the Temple and ends with the burning of the Temple. It opens with David's 1st successor to the throne, Solomon, and, ends with his last successor to the throne, Jehoiachin. Before that happens, however, an important transition takes place that should have prepared the nation for future days of greatness. It was a transition of a godly king, David, to a great king, Solomon. For 1 Kings opens as David lay on his deathbed. *"Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes but he gat no heat."* (1:1) Can you not identify with him? I mean as you get older you get colder. King David is old and Adonijah assumes that he will be King. But the Lord has revealed that Solomon is His choice. (1 Chron 28:5)

You see, *"it was his from the Lord."* (2:15) So Solomon was crowned King before David died. (1:39) Indeed David charges him in (2:1-4) I can't help but believe that part of David's charge was a reference to David's past mistakes.

It's as if David is saying to his son, *"Son, don't make the mistake that I made by failing to always follow God. It was when I had a lapse in my walk that I made the biggest mistake of my life. Don't you do the same. If you follow God, you will succeed and prosper. Take it from me, the voice of experience."* Isn't it interesting that David emphasized the spiritual before the political? (1 Chron 22-29) I wonder, what way your kids will remember you? Will they remember you for your political passion or your spiritual power? Will they remember you as someone who would die for their country but would not live for their Christ? Will they look back and see someone who would rather follow a banner instead of follow their Bible? So passes from the scene David their Finest King and

(b) Solomon: Their Famous King:

Steps onto the stage of public history. Now Solomon was very young when he came to the throne. His word is that he was *"but a little child."* (3:7) Eusebius says he was twelve. Josephus says he was fifteen. We may safely say that he was not more than twenty. *"Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly."* (2:12) The early years of Solomon's reign have been described as *"The Golden Age of Israel."* Solomon's reign began in a blaze of glory. Some of the greatest years of Israel's existence were during the reign of King Solomon. I mean think of,

1. His Wisdom:

“ And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea shore. And Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.” (4:29-34) When the Lord gave Solomon the privilege of asking for anything he wanted, he asked for wisdom and an understanding heart. (3:9) And God answered his prayer. My isn’t it wonderful that we have access to the throne of Him who is “ *greater than Solomon,*” (Matt 12:42) and who promises to give “ *wisdom,*” and meet every need. Do you see here that God equips us for our calling ? God made Solomon king and God supplied all that he needed to serve acceptably.

2. His Wealth:

“And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen.” (4:26) The Queen of Sheba testified, “ *I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard.*” (10:7) The immensity of Solomon’s wealth is beyond description. But we’ll give it a try anyhow. Look at (10:14) Do you know what is worth ? \$ 304 million. Do you think you could manage on that ? But that’s only the gold. The silver was so abundant that it was not even counted. (10:21) So we could safely round up \$304 million to about \$500 million a year. About 250 million pounds per year. Solomon was the Bill

Gates of his day. If ever there was a subject Solomon knew, it was money. He secured it, saved it, spent it, studied it, and shared it. It is possible for a person to enjoy material prosperity and still be spiritual, as in the case of Abraham but most people cannot handle such wealth. How true is the saying, “ *it takes a steady hand to carry a full cup.*” Has God endowed you with wealth ? Well, do you realise that you are only a steward of God’s money ? My do you see the house you have ? Do you see the job you do ? Do you see the money you make ? Do you see the kids you enjoy ? Do you see the spiritual gift you exercise ? Where does it all come from ? The Lord. For David when speaking of preparing for the temple says, “ *For all things come of thee and of thine own have we given thee.*” (29:14)

3. His Work:

One of Solomon’s greatest claims to fame, and greatest works was the building of the Temple. Solomon finished the task that his father was not given permission to build. It’s interesting that the New Testament does not give us as much instruction as to the meaning of the temple as it does the tabernacle. Some see the tabernacle as picture of Christ in His humility on the earth and the temple as a type of His present ministry in glory. It’s too bad that the Jews trusted the presence of their temple instead of the promises of their Lord for in less than 500 years, this temple was destroyed as the Jews went into captivity for their sins. Now can see you something of the greatness of Solomon ? Can you see,

4. His Worship:

For at the dedication of the temple King Solomon led the congregation in prayer and worship. And what a prayer it was, for here Solomon acknowledged,

The Uniqueness of God: “ Lord God of Israel there is no God like thee,” (8:23)

The Faithfulness of God: “ Who hast kept with thy servant David my father, that thou promisedst him,” (8:24)

The Greatness of God: “ behold the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee.” (8:27)

Do you ever hear anyone praying like that now ? Prayers in a Christian assembly are often nothing more than coming to the Lord with a “ *shopping list*,” mentality making one request after another without ever pausing to address the Lord in worship, praise and blessing. Do you recall the pattern the Lord Jesus gives us ? “ *After this manner therefore pray ye, our Father which art in heaven Hallowed be thy name.*” (Matt 6:9) You see, true prayer begins by giving God His proper place. How do you approach God in prayer ?

Dr. J. K. McClure tells about going to Lincoln Park in Chicago. And as he sat there on a park bench he saw a splendid gentleman approach the statue of Abraham Lincoln. For a moment this man stood gazing into that rugged face so full of strength and tenderness, so marked with the deep lines of care. Then he reached up and removed his hat and allowed his white hair to be blown in the wind as he respectfully stood before the statue of this

courageous statesman, Meanwhile, there was another man sitting at the base of this same statute, writing obscene verses and staining it with tobacco juice. *You see, the difference between these two men was great and this story illustrates how different people approach God.* Some approach Him with reverence and respect. Others have no apparent regard for God at all. How do you approach God ? Like Solomon do you recollect Who it is you are addressing ? My when we think of Solomon we also think of,

5. His Words:

“ *And he spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five.*” (4:32) According to Jewish tradition, Solomon wrote the *Song of Solomon* in his early years, expressing a young man’s love. He wrote the book of *Proverbs* during his middle age years revealing a mature wisdom. But he wrote the book of *Ecclesiastes* in his declining, latter years disclosing an old man’s sorrow. Here is the record of Solomon’s regret for his grave moral lapses (1 Kings 11:1) You see, while the Song of Solomon is a book of **sweet romance**, and Proverbs is a book of **sacred regulations**, Ecclesiastes is a book of **sad retrospect**. Here is an old man who has come to the end of life having lived a wasted life and he preaches a sermon. Yet His wisdom, wealth, work and words define one of the greatest reigns of Israel’s history. Those were years of greatness. But do you recall the words of the Lord Jesus ? “ *A greater than Solomon is here.*” (Matt. 12: 42)

The Lord Jesus is Greater than Solomon in Wisdom:

Solomon may have been wise but Christ created everything Solomon knew about.

The Lord Jesus is Greater than Solomon in Wealth:

For He, can meet every need, physical, spiritual and material.

The Lord Jesus is Greater than Solomon in Work:

Solomon built houses of wood and stone but Christ is building a household of faith.

The Lord Jesus is Greater than Solomon in Worship:

Solomon may have known how to go to the temple to make a sacrifice, but Christ knows how to take lost sinners and redeem them by the blood of His sacrifice.

The Lord Jesus is Greater than Solomon in Words:

Solomon spoke thousands of proverbs, but “ *Never man spake like this man.* ” (Jn 7:46) My there’s no-one like Christ. “ *Behold a greater than Solomon is here,* ” Solomon’s reign began in a blaze of glory, but it ended with a burden of grief. Its interesting that in

2 Samuel Ch 11: we have David’s sinful decision

1 Kings Ch 11: we have Solomon’s spiritual decline for do you see,

6. His Weakness:

Look at (11:1-3) A thousand women. One old boy read that and said “ *My soul in the morning. I can’t keep one*

female happy, much less a thousand. ” Can you imagine how it was when all the mother in laws came round to the palace at the weekend ? My the same writer who earlier rejoiced that “ *Solomon loved the Lord,* ” (3:3) now says “ *Solomon loved many strange or foreign women.* ” (11:1) Like so many people he had wisdom for everybody else but not much for himself. His weakness was women. This was not just for sensual pleasure but also for political power, in other words he married these women to strengthen his kingdom. This was in direct violation of the law of God which said, “ *Neither shalt thou make marriages with them,* ” (Deut 7:3) and “ *neither shall he (the king) multiply wives to himself.* ” (17:17)

My a person who does not believe whether he be a religionist, a moralist, or an atheist has no part with the child of God. Such a person is governed by different principles, passions and practices. This rules forever the unequal yoke in marriage, in business, or in any other life binding contract. God’s Word is clear, “ *Be ye not unequally yoked together with unbelievers.* ” (2 Cor 6:14) Are you embarking on a path forbidden by the Lord ? There was something else about Solomon,

7. His Worldliness:

Look at (11:4) You see, the Lord wanted “ *integrity of heart,* ” (9:4) which means a united heart, single to the glory of God. But Solomon had a divided heart, for he loved the world as he tried to serve the Lord. What a tragedy that the man who built the temple to the only true

and living God should begin to worship at heathen altars. The wisest of all men had become the greatest of all fools. God was angry and the kingdom was going to be rent from Solomon's family except for Judah. Thus (Ch 11) closes with the death of Solomon and that ends the first part of this book. (1)

(2) AN ERA OF NATIONAL TRAGEDY Ch's 12-22

For these chapters record “ *the beginning of the end.*” With the death of Solomon the nation's glory begins to fade. So the writer probably Jeremiah presents us with

(a) A DIVIDED NATION:

Solomon reigned for 40 years. (11:42) Upon his death, civil unrest began to rise within the nation. Rehoboam, his son, threatened to levy heavier burdens upon the people. Had Rehoboam, listened to the wisdom of the old leaders, he would have won the hearts of the people, but he was unwilling to be a servant to the people. My the way to be a ruler is to be a servant. (Mk 10:42-45) . Rehoboam was a fool, and because of his foolish decisions, the once united kingdom was rent in two. Look at (12:16-19) So what have we now ?

1. The Northern Kingdom: the 10 tribes of Israel with its capital in Samaria.

2. The Southern Kingdom: the tribes of Judah and Benjamin with their capital in Jerusalem.

Now the Northern Kingdom of Israel had 19 kings and they were all bad. The Southern Kingdom had 19 kings and 1 Queen, some were good but most were bad. Its interesting to see how the writer covers the events in the kingdoms of Judah and Israel simultaneously. I mean it can be very confusing for one moment you could be reading about the king of Judah and the next moment you are reading about a king of Israel. And so these years of war and peace are marked by all the ups and downs to be expected when a wise king is followed by a weak king or by a wicked king or by a wishful king. Round and round the cycle goes, triumph and tragedy, victory and defeat, revival and relapse, glory and shame.

You see the nation divided because of sin. Sin had taken what God had united it and blessed and divided it and cursed it. God created order, unity, and peace but man created disorder, disunity and disturbance. (a)

(b) A DEFILED NATION:

At least Israel the Northern Kingdom was. For do you recall that Jeroboam instituted,

1. A New Object of Worship:

Afraid that the people of his kingdom would go up to Jerusalem for the annual feasts, he repeated Aaron's sin (Ex 32:1) and made calves of gold and proclaimed “ *Behold thy gods O Israel.*” (12:28)

2. A New Centre of Worship:

For these golden calves were placed in Bethel and Dan (12:29) but Jerusalem was the place where God had chosen to place His name. (Deut 12:21 11:13)

3. A New Order of Worship:

For Jeroboam, took those who were not of the tribe of Levi and placed them into the office of the priesthood. (12:31) My 21 times during this period we read concerning the northern kings, “ *For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger with their vanities.* ” (16:26) Jeroboam’s name became a synonym for all that is evil. He and they set God aside and God set them aside. Indeed this book presents us with not only (a) (b) but,

(c) A DOOMED NATION:

The Word of God says, “ *Righteousness exalteth a nation but sin is a reproach to any people.* ” (Prov 14:34) Now remember in the North all the kings were bad, in the South some were good but most were bad. When godly kings were ruling God blessed His people, when ungodly men reigned God sent judgment and defeat. Ultimately, both kingdoms were carried into captivity because of their sin.

In 722 B.C. Assyria came and captured Samaria and took the Northern Kingdom into captivity.

In 586 B.C. Babylon came and captured Jerusalem and took the Southern Kingdom into captivity.

The temple was destroyed, the city was burned, the Hebrew monarchy had come to an end, the period of the kings was over and “ *the times of the Gentiles,* ” had begun. And from that day to this day Jerusalem has almost been entirely under Gentile control, and will remain so until the Lord Jesus comes to rule and reign. (1) (2)

(3) AN ERA OF SPIRITUAL MINISTRY Ch’s 17-22

Now we need to remember that when we are considering the kings of Judah and Israel that the ministries of many of the prophets fall within this period. One such prophet was Elijah who ministered to the Northern Kingdom. Elijah appears on the stage of history during the reign of Israel’s most wicked king. His name was Ahab (16:30-33) and he hitched his wagon to a star and what a dreadful star it was. As if all his other sins were not bad enough, he crowned them all by marrying Jezebel. (Deut 7:1-3) She was a pagan princess, who introduced the filthy cult of Baal into Israel, and she became the real power behind the throne. It was at this time that Elijah appeared, God’s prophet to challenge the apostasy of the nation.

Now keep in mind that the prophet was not simply a “ *fore-teller,* ” he was also a “ *forth-teller,* ” who announced God’s judgment and exposed the sins of the people. Such a man was Elijah, “ *a man of like passions as we are,* ” (James 5:7) yet a man with great courage and faith. E. A. Johnston says, “ *But God has his ‘man of the hour,’ the prophet Elijah. Elijah was a bolt of fire God let loose upon wicked Ahab and idolatrous Israel.* ” It is a

principle with God that He never leaves Himself without a witness. Indeed the more degenerate the times, the more definite the testimony. Now we could divide Elijah's ministry into two chapters and those are suggested by two little phrases that are found in relation to him. First of all we see,

(a) Elijah's Private Ministry: "Hide thyself,"

Look at (17:3) You see, having delivered his message to apostate Ahab, Elijah whose name means "*Jehovah is my God*," now retires from public ministry for three years (Lk 4:25) and during this time the Lord trains him, refines him, provides for him and gets him ready for public service. "*Hide thyself*," "*But Lord, I'm a prophet. I'm a palace man, I'm out here in public proclaiming your Word. You seem to forget, Lord I'm called to preach.*" "*No, not this time Elijah, hide thyself.*" The Hebrew suggests the idea of concealment. For here in solitude Elijah could wait on God, be alone with God, and talk to God. My do you realise that ever before there can be a public ministry there has to be a private ministry ? Moses spent one third of his life at the backside of the desert, Paul spent three years in Arabia (Gal 1:17) the Lord Jesus spent 30 years in obscurity for 3 years of ministry.

John Welsh "*hid himself*," when he though the day ill spent if he did not spend 8-10 hours in close communion with the Lord. David Brainerd "*hid himself*," in the woods of North America. Christmas Evans "*hid himself*," in the long and lonely journeys amidst the hills of Wales. My do you realise that if you would do much for God

you must be much with God ? Do you know the value of the hidden life ? (a)

(b) Elijah's Public Ministry: "Show thyself,"

Look at (18:1) "*Hide thyself*," was now to give way to "*show thyself*," his private ministry was over, his public ministry was about to begin. Having been trained in private, the prophet can now be trusted in public. Do you recall what the apex of his ministry was ? I think we could say that it was Mount Carmel. It was a showdown of Ahab's god, Baal, and Elijah's God, Jehovah. What a challenge he laid before the nation. "*The God that answereth by fire let him be God.*" (18:24) Elijah prayed, and the rain stopped for 3 ½ years. He prayed again, and the "heaven gave rain." (James 5:18) He called down fire from heaven and then went to Heaven in a ball of fire.

My Elijah wasn't superhuman, but he obeyed, followed and served a God who is supernatural. Now listen, what we do with God in private is far more important than what He does for us in public. *Our hidden life prepares us for our public life.* Unless we are willing to go through the disciplines of the dry brook, the depleted barrel and the dead boy we will never know the victories of Carmel. Vance Havner says,

"Today, we do not need to ask, 'Where is the Lord God of Elijah ? But, what we need to ask is, 'Where are the Elijah's of the Lord God ?'"

