

OUTLINE STUDIES IN THE BOOKS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

by

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CHAPTER THIRTEEN

FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

The design of these books is to trace the history of the Hebrew kingdom through its most prosperous period to its decline and fall. They record Israel's glory while monarch and people serve the Lord; their shame and misery when they turn away from Him.

The momentous lesson the books teach is obedience and blessing, apostasy and ruin.

Key word, *Royalty*; key verse, I Kings 2:12; 11:13.

Division—First Kings—

Part I, David's death and Solomon's glorious reign, 1-11.

Part II, revolt of Jeroboam, and establishment of the two kingdoms, 12-22.

Second Kings—

Part I, history of the two kingdoms to the captivity of Israel (northern kingdom), 1-17.

Part II, decline and captivity of Judah, 18-25.

1. *Solomon's reign*, I Kings 1-11. His name was given him by his mother, but the Lord through the prophet Nathan, called him Jedidiah, i. e., "*Beloved of the Lord*," perhaps as an assurance to David that his sin was forgiven, II Samuel 12:24, 25. The name Solomon, which signifies "*the Peaceful*," received the divine sanction, I Chronicles 22:9.

(1) His wisdom. I Kings 3:5-14. In answer to his prayer, God gave him a singularly comprehensive mind, power of observation and reflection, and a strong grasp on the great problems of human life. He was a botanist, zoologist, architect, poet, and moral philosopher; in short, he was the first man for intellect of his day, and indeed of any time, I Kings 4 129-34.

(2) Extent of his empire, I Kings 4:21. By "**the river**" is meant the Euphrates, cf. Genesis 15:18; Joshua 1:4.

(3) Promotion of commerce. By alliances with trading peoples contiguous to Israel he furthered commerce to such an extent that the ships of Solomon and Hiram ran on the Red sea, it is thought, as far as the Indian ocean, and on the west by the Mediterranean to Tarshish, perhaps on the coast of Spain, II Chronicles 9:10, 21, and brought from thence gold, silver, ivory, sandalwood, and new forms of animal life, “apes and peacocks.”

(4) His magnificence. It appears in his gorgeous throne of ivory with its twelve massive lions, II Chronicles 9:18, 19;

- In the sumptuous provision for his table, I Kings 4:22, 23;
- In the plentifulness of the precious metals, II Chronicles 9:27; I Kings 10:27;
- In the presence of horses and chariots in Jerusalem, for the first time, I Kings 10:26-29; II Chronicles 1:16.

(5) The temple, I King 6-8. This was Solomon’s greatest work. In form the temple was an exact reproduction of the Tabernacle of the wilderness, only double in size. The temple, in reality, was the sacred Tent in marble and gold. The site was Mt. Moriah, memorable as the place where Abraham’s faith had been tried, and where David offered and the plague was staid, I Chronicles 21:28.

The amount of labor, wealth, and skill, expended on this magnificent sanctuary almost passes belief, I Chronicles 21:14-16; I Kings 7:13-18, etc. Never, perhaps, has the world seen a costlier structure, or one more dazzlingly beautiful. The second temple was far from being its equal, Ezra 3:12. It stood with its facade to the east. From the foundation to the roof, the front was clothed over with solid plates of gold. When the morning sun arose, the gold and marble sent back his rays with an added glory so great that a gazer standing on the Mount of Olives opposite, had to shade his eyes when looking to the temple mount. The prayer of dedication, I Kings 8, and God’s acceptance of the house, II Chronicles 7:1-4, afford precious instruction.

(6) Solomon’s fall, I Kings 11—through the fatal institution of polygamy he was corrupted and his court demoralized. Heathen rites were introduced; idolatrous altars arose hard by the Temple of the Lord, vs. 6-8.

The great prince sank lower and lower, seduced by the multitude of his wives and mistresses; and he disappears from the history under the deepest cloud—though the book of Ecclesiastes gives some evidence of his repentance. “**Behold a greater than Solomon is here,**” failure in David, failure in Solomon, failure everywhere; save in Him who is the Witness faithful and true, Jesus Christ. What a creature man is! How vain, unstable, puerile, fallible, worthless; but “**Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, and today, and forever,**” Hebrews 13:8.

2. *Revolt of the Ten Tribes*, I Kings 12.

Rehoboam, Solomon’s son and successor, appears to have been a vain, supercilious young man, one of “**foolish sons**” of whom his father so often speaks. Notwithstanding the hundreds of wives Solomon had, this is the only son we read of, and he none of the wisest.

Probably his father had him in mind when he wrote the bitter words of Ecclesiastes 2:18, 19. Rehoboam's obstinacy and pride alienated his people; and ten tribes seceded from the house of David, and formed a separate kingdom with Jeroboam at its head. It was only because of the Lord's love for David that his throne remained for him in Jerusalem, I Kings 11. Four times in that chapter occur the words, "**David my servant's sake**;" God would prove faithful to His covenant, though David's son would not.

3. *Jeroboam's sin*, I Kings 7:26-30.

Political motives led to its commission. To make the division complete and perpetuate his dynasty, he founded two sanctuaries, one at Dan, the other at Bethel; he placed in them beast-idols, the calves of Egypt, and with the old cry of the wilderness, Exodus 32:4, saluted them, "**Behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of Egypt.**" This distinctively was Jeroboam's sin. And from that time forward he is described as "**Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin.**" To him directly the northern kingdom owed its ruin; to him indirectly Judah likewise her fall.

4. *The Prophets*, I Kings 13, 17, 20, etc.

Prophecy implies failure, "*a light that shineth in a dark place.*" As the transgressions of Israel and Judah increased, God's testimony by the mouth of His prophets became more and more energetic and intense. Great prophets succeed each other rapidly; sometimes they appear singly, sometimes in groups; sometimes many of them are in action together. Their solemn voices in warning are heard all over the two kingdoms, and swell and deepen as apostasy grows apace, and the catastrophe approaches.

Elijah, Elisha, Hosea, Amos, Isaiah, Jeremiah—what great names are associated with Israel's and Judah's decline and fall!—the greatest the world has ever known. Prophet after prophet, prophets side by side with prophets, mingling their stern and awful voices, lifting them up, making their appeals and their warnings and their threats, in the name of the Lord, mightier and still more passionate; and yet even they, sanctioning their messages by judicial signs and wonders, are powerless to arrest the apostasy, and the end comes at last in fire and sword, tears and blood. And poor Israel's sun goes down into a dismal night that still lasts!

5. *Elijah*.

Of the large number of God's witnesses during this period, to this prophet alone must a few words be devoted. Elijah's miracles, like those of Moses, are judicial. He shuts heaven over the rebellious people, I Kings 17:1; James 5:17, proves at Carmel that the Lord alone is God, and the people execute judgment on the priests of Baal, I Kings 18, brings down fire upon the captains sent to arrest him, II Kings 1. The Two Witnesses of Revelation 11 will exercise the like power in working similar signs for the same space of time, three years and a half. His miracles were signs to Israel; theirs will be signs to the world. So, too, his last journeys when he was about to be taken away, were signs. Four places he visited in his last tours just before his rapture:

(1) *Gilgal*, II Kings 2:1—the starting point.

It was the spot where God “**rolled away the reproach of Egypt from Israel**,” when Joshua had circumcised the people, Joshua 5:9. But this spot was for the sin of Saul which cost him his throne, I Samuel 15. Transgression was multiplied at Gilgal, Hosea 9:15; Amos 4:4. The point of departure in a double sense! Elijah cannot stay at Gilgal because of sin.

(2) *Bethel*, II Kings 2:2.

A place of extraordinary visions and promises, Genesis 28; 31:13, etc. But at Bethel, Jeroboam had set up the golden calf, and there Israel had worshipped and sinned, Hosea 10:15; Amos 4:4. The prophet cannot remain at Bethel; sin meets him there.

(3) *Jericho*, II Kings 11:4.

Formerly the power of the enemy barred Israel’s way at this point. God smote the place, and pronounced a curse against it. Man rebuilt it notwithstanding the curse, I Kings 16: 34. The prophet cannot remain here, for sin again confronts him. Elijah passes the Jordan, and out beyond the territory of Israel and into the world of the Gentiles. How deep the lesson if the people had eyes to see, minds to understand. What was all this but a symbolical representation of the Lord’s departure from Israel, the prophetic light going out, the candlestick being removed? But Israel would not see nor heed.

6. *Captivity of Israel*, II Kings 17.

“The course of iniquity had been run. The stream grew darker in its downward flow. Every commandment of God was broken. People and king vied in debauchery.” Is it any surprise God should name them *Loruhamah*, *no-mercy*, and *Loammi*, *not my people*? Hosea 1. The last king of Israel was Hoshea, a better man than most of his predecessors, II Kings 17:1, 2. Nevertheless, the catastrophe came in his day. A more devout ruler could not have averted it. Louis XVI was one of the best of French kings, yet under him burst forth the revolution which consumed him and his queen. Seeds which ripen into a harvest of judgment are sown long before the reaping-time.

7. *Captivity of Judah*, II Kings 24, 25.

Many faithful kings Judah had who ruled in the fear of God, and who earnestly sought the reformation of the land, as Joash, Hezekiah, Josiah; but more were disloyal who walked in the ways of the kings of Israel. A fatal mistake was the introduction of the idolatrous house of Ahab into the line of David, by the marriage of Jehoram with Athaliah, II Chronicles 21: 6, one of the wickedest of princesses, a true daughter of the hateful Jezebel.

The last kings of Judah, Manasseh, Jehoiakim, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah, were about as bad as they well could be. It was then that Babylon appeared in the field and Judah went into a captivity of seventy years; Babylon, the inventress of idolatry, became the instrument of executing judgment on idolatrous Judah.

Three times the army of Nebuchadnezzar invaded Judah.

First, when Jehoiakim reigned, the king who ruthlessly cut with his penknife the scroll of Jeremiah and cast the pieces into the brazier of coals whereat he warmed himself, Jeremiah 36:23. Jehoiakim surrendered to the Chaldeans, and some of the principal men went into captivity, among whom were Daniel and his friends, Daniel 1:1, 6.

The second invasion was under Jehoiakim, when a much larger deportation of Jews to Babylon took place.

The third, at the rebellion of Zedekiah, when the city was destroyed, and untold suffering endured. It was during these stirring times that the powerful ministry of Jeremiah was exercised.

8. *Gentile supremacy.*

With the fall of Israel and Judah, the world's power passed into the hands of the Gentiles. Babylon was summoned to the place of imperial power, of world empire, Jeremiah 27:5-7; Daniel 2:37, 38. "**Thou art this head of gold.**" "**The times of the Gentiles**" then began, and they run on still. Israel has never been reset in the place of independence and of distinct nationality from that day to this.

What then? Is this all? Is there nothing more for this poor, dismembered, dispersed people of Israel? Surely. God who cannot lie has declared they shall yet be Ammi, *my people*. And their restoration and conversion will be blessing for the whole world, as their casting away has been blessing to the Gentiles, Romans 11.

~ end of chapter 13 ~

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