

Synthetic Bible Studies

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

By

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LESSON FOURTEEN

I KINGS

In studying Kings it is recommended that after the first general reading of the book, you make a rough diagram of the rulers of the two kingdoms after the time of Solomon. Beginning with him as practically the last king of the united tribes, place in parallel columns under his name, and facing one another chronologically, the names of his successors in Judah and Israel, somewhat like this:

Solomon

Rehoboam, 17 years	Jeroboam, 22 years
Abijam, 3 years	
Asa, 41 years	Nadab, 2 years
Baasha, 24 years	
Elah, 2 years	
Zimri, 7 days	
Omri, 12 years	
Jehoshaphat, 25 years	Ahab, 22 years
Jehoram, 8 years	Ahaziah, 2 years

The figures in the above diagram indicate the period of each reign. It would be well if, in addition, you were to write the names of the corresponding prophets. For example, the prophet of

Jeroboam's time was Ahijah. He was followed by Jehu in Baasha's reign, and he by Elijah in Ahab's time. This is not to say that there were no other prophets than they, but that they were the ones chiefly mentioned.

It will be noticed that scarcely any mention is made of prophets in Judah, but this is not to say that there were none. As a matter of fact, there were many, as the books of Chronicles, and the books of the prophets themselves indicate. The fact, however, that GOD did not forget Israel in this matter, notwithstanding their great unfaithfulness, and notwithstanding that He did not have the same covenant obligation to them as to Judah, is an impressive demonstration of His character of goodness and long-suffering patience.

To get the line of the prophets in mind as well as that of the kings, will be a practical help to us by and by, in conceiving the place of the different prophets whose books we are soon to study.

Besides writing the names of the prophets on your diagram, write also some catchword or phrase that will stamp the history of each king on your mind, and help to bring before you the prevailing characteristics or predominating feature of his period. In this connection it might be further observed that a table or diagram of these kings is doubtless to be found somewhere in the back of your Bible; but you are urged not to examine it till after you have completed your own. This is in accordance with the fourth rule laid down at the very beginning of our work, viz: to read independently. It is hoped you examine these rules once in a while, or more properly, examine yourselves to see if you are faithfully complying with them. Much of your interest and success depends on it.

After this general introduction to our book, let us spend a little time together in considering some of the more important characters or events brought before us by the HOLY SPIRIT in its pages.

Solomon, Chapters 1-11

Of which wife of David was Solomon the offspring?

Considering the large place he occupies in history, GOD's peculiar favor toward him, and his typical relation to CHRIST (Psalm 72), does it not seem remarkable that he should have been born of that union? But look back again at II Samuel 12:25, and the note upon it in the last lesson, and see the reconciled relation in which David was now living with GOD. Oh, He is a GOD of mercy and grace! Read Psalm 103 again, and consider whether David had not just cause to write it.

- was Solomon crowned before or after the death of David, and what circumstance necessitated it?
- how does this further illustrate the sorrowful character of the latter half of David's life?
- how many visions of Himself does GOD vouchsafe to Solomon?
- how does this fact add to Solomon's later culpability (11:9)?

Note in this verse a striking text for a discourse on "*Responsibility Proportioned to Privilege.*"

- what do you understand to be the character of that "wisdom" for which Solomon asked (chap.

3)?

- Judging by his career was it what we know as spiritual wisdom, or that which he required for the conduct and administration of the earthly kingdom only?
- what does this teach young people as to the way in which they should improve their great opportunity to make their requests known unto GOD (Philippians 4:6, 7)?
- what particular illustrations can you mention of Solomon's great wisdom and prosperity (chap. 4)?
- how does 4:32 prepare us to accept the hypothesis that he wrote Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and the Song of Solomon?
- How long was he in building the Temple? His own house?
- what chapter contains his wonderful prayer?
- how does JESUS utilize the visit of the queen of Sheba (see marginal reference)?
- what was the nature of Solomon's guilt?
- what previous folly led him into it?
- what earthly judgments made his life unhappy toward the last?
- who predicted the division of the kingdom after his death?

The Division of the Kingdom, Chapters 12-14

- what do you recall in Solomon's reign that added to the taxation of the people?
- wherein did his successor exhibit foolishness?
- while Rehoboam and his counsellors acted with perfect freedom, what shows GOD's hand to have been in the whole matter (12:22-24)?
- what event does this recall in I Samuel? Compare also Acts 2:23.
- does this diminish the culpability of the wrongdoing in any case?
- what comfort, nevertheless, may GOD's people draw from it (Romans 8:28)?
- what was Jeroboam's motive in setting up the golden calves, religious or political?
- wherein did he show an utter lack of faith (11:37, 38)?
- did he intend to throw off the worship of the Lord altogether, or was it his thought still to have Him worshiped through a different medium?
- which of the first two commandments, therefore, did he break?
- but did not the violation of the second involve that of the first?

Compare the marginal reference to 13:2, and observe the literal fulfilment of that prediction. Such solemn facts are good to store away for illustrative purposes in your teaching and preaching, and have more power usually than others gathered outside of the Bible.

- how does the beguilement of the man of GOD (chapter 13) illustrate or intensify the warning of Matthew 24:24?
- does Jeroboam profit by the advice received (vv. 33, 34)?
- what punishment followed (compare 14:14-16, with 15:25-30)?

Notice the prophecy of the captivity of Israel (14:15) 300 years before the event.

The Wickedness of Ahab, Chapters 16-22

The next matter of supreme importance to be noticed is that indicated at the head of this

paragraph or section. We have seen Jeroboam's house cut off in the death of Nadab by the usurper Baasha. Although a usurper in one sense, yet was he the executioner of GOD in another (16:1-4). But he learned nothing from the history of his predecessors, nor did any of the kings that followed him. Their continuance in evil, notwithstanding the object lessons before their eyes is a moving demonstration that **"it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps"** (Jeremiah 10:23), and that **"except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God."**

It is not evidence or education that men want, but life from above (John 5:40). Hence Baasha's line is cut off in Elah who reigns but 2 years, and at length, after the brief interregnum of the traitor and suicide Zimri, the house of Ahab comes into power in the person of his father Omri.

The Nature of His Sin

Read carefully 16:30-33, and observe the feature in which Ahab's evil exceeded that of Jeroboam.

The last named broke the second commandment. and the first only indirectly, but Ahab broke the first of set purpose. It was his determination, under the domination of his wicked wife, to dethrone the Lord in Israel altogether. Even His name was not to be mentioned.

Baal, Bel, or Belus, as we may learn from a Bible dictionary, means *lord*, or *master*, the three names being merely as many forms of the one name of the supreme male divinity of the Phoenicians and Canaanites, as *Ashtoreth* was that of their supreme female divinity. The common opinion is that they represent the sun and moon, though some say Jupiter and Venus. The licentiousness demanded by their worship gave it attractiveness to poor lost and ignorant people.

The word *Baal* is sometimes used in its plural form, *Baalim*, which indicates the idol to have been worshiped under different modifications.

- *Baal-Berith* means *covenant lord* (Judges 8:33).
- *Baal-Peor*, the *lord of the opening* (Numbers 25:3, etc).
- *Baal-Zebub*, the *lord of the fly* (II Kings 1:2, etc).

Human victims were sometimes offered to Baal (Jeremiah 19:5), and elevated places selected for the worship. An acquaintance with these few facts may illuminate the pages of Ahab's history, justifying GOD's dealings with him and the nation at this time, and explain some of the otherwise difficult features in Elijah's ministry.

Be careful to identify Syria on the map. This nation with which Israel is in conflict so much just now, becomes her wicked ally later on, and plays an important part in bringing about her captivity for that very reason. Moreover, we need to clearly identify her from Assyria, a greater nation on the east which became in time not only her mistress but that of Israel too. Do not miss these geographical and historical data if you wish to steer a clear course when we come into the study of the prophets.

The Story of Elijah

The wonderful record of Elijah will make a grand subject for a Bible reading or address. Eliminate the facts, and make them stand out by themselves. A single catchword here and there ought to bring the details to mind with sufficient clearness if you have read the book properly. For example: Cherith; Zarephath; Obadiah; Mt. Carmel; Horeb; Elisha; chariot of fire.

You observe I have gone into the second book of Kings for some of the facts in order to group the events of his whole life together.

These few words carried in your mind, or on a card in your pocket, to refresh your memory occasionally during the day, are enough to start you off on a train of thought of great value in preaching or leading a religious meeting.

They may be dwelt on from two points of view,

- (1) what they teach of the character of Elijah, or
- (2) what they reveal of the character and power of GOD.

Each fact suggests a separate idea or more, and all taken together will supply a rich feast.

All of us cannot be eloquent orators in the pulpit or elsewhere, but we can thus learn to bring things new and old out of the storehouse (Matthew 13:52), and be useful ministers of GOD saving and building up souls in the truth. *Elijah the Tishbite*, by F. W. Krummacher, is an old book as they are counted nowadays, but will never be surpassed either for exegetical or devotional purposes. It is to be obtained only in second-hand stores, but will prove a valuable aid. F. B. Meyer's work on the same prophet is of a somewhat similar character, and as more recent, can be purchased at any bookstore, and is inexpensive.

Jehoshaphat the Worldling

This general view of I Kings should not conclude without some reference to this king of Judah, who from primitive times has been seized upon by teachers and preachers as an Old Testament type of the Christian worldling. A good king you found him to be, and yet the friendship and flattery of Ahab were too much for him. Study chapter 22 in connection with the record found in II Chronicles. See the king's thoughtlessness (v. 4), his compunctions of conscience nevertheless (vv. 5-8), his narrow escape (vv. 30-32), etc. A good text might be found in verse 44. There is a sense in which he should not have made peace with Israel, as there is also one in which Christians should not make peace with the world (Genesis 3:15; John 15:19; II Corinthians 6:14-18; Galatians 4:28, 29).

Observe the literal fulfilment of prophecy in the death of Ahab, as mentioned in this chapter, verses 37, 38.

~ end of Lesson 14 ~
