

Epic: Divided Kingdom to Surviving Kingdom

1 Kings 12; We're in the middle of a series called Epic, discovering God's work of redemption from creation to eternity
And it's intended to not only refresh your *memory* about all that's happened in God's work of redemption, but your *love* for the One who did it (**Review**)

And thus far we've covered 8 time periods; Starting with . . .

Creation; Then the **Fall** – referring to the fall of man into sin . . .

Followed by Noah and the **Flood** – the deluge that shaped the world as we know it

Then came the **Patriarchs (2166-1876BC)** – Abraham, Isaac, & Jacob; With whom he made a covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant, that still applies to us

Then the **Egyptian Sojourn (1876-1446BC)** – when the Israelites were in slavery . . .

Followed by the **Desert Wandering (1446-1404BC)** – when God brought his people out of Egypt and led them through the desert for 40 years . . .

Leading to the time of **Conquest & Judges (1404-1050BC)** – when the Israelites entered the Promised Land . . .

And 350 years later, the **United Kingdom (1050-931BC)** – where David and Solomon ruled in the glory days of Israel

That's the Epic so far; Which calls us to everything from praise and worship in light of God's *creation*, to reverence and awe in light of his *presence*; And brings us to the . . .

Divided Kingdom

The United Kingdom lasted for 119 years; But with Solomon's death in 931BC, the nation split – largely as a result of the arrogance/foolishness of Solomon's son, Rehoboam
(**Time Period – 931-722BC**)

Key People – Rehoboam, Elijah, Elisha, Jonah

Key Places – Samaria, Jerusalem

Main Events – Kingdom Split, Jonah's Run

And with that split, the 10 northern tribes were referred to as Israel, (**Map**), and the 2 southern tribes, based in Jerusalem, were called Judah; 1 Kings 12:16-20

[16] *And when all Israel saw that the king [Rehoboam] did not listen to them, the people answered the king, "What portion do we have in David [referring to God's promise of a dynasty in the Davidic Covenant]? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse [we're just the doormat in this kingdom]. To your tents, O Israel! [Forget about Judah, the southern tribes] Look now to your own house, David [you're on your own]."* So Israel went to their tents.

[17] *But Rehoboam reigned over the people of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah [the southern tribes]. [18] Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was taskmaster over the forced labor [he sent him to the northern tribes to get more slaves], and all Israel stoned him to death with stones. And King Rehoboam hurried to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem. [19] So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David [the southern tribes] to this day.*

[20] *And when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned [he was a leader and former servant of Solomon who had fled the country], they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel [the northern tribes]. There was none that followed the house of David but the tribe of Judah only [which includes Benjamin].*

They were a divided kingdom; Resulting in a dual line of kings, who for the most part were the very antithesis of David and Solomon*****

And pretty soon, dysfunction begat more dysfunction, and sin, more sin; First in the northern tribes, and then in Judah

➤ And it was during this time, ~860 BC, that God began to raise up a series of prophets in the north, starting with Elijah

The same Elijah who confronted and defeated the prophets of Baal on Mt Carmel, by calling down fire from heaven and consuming the altar

And he was followed by Elisha, who also did several miracles

But most importantly, both were faithful to *declare the word of the Lord* despite opposition, and resistance, and unbelief that was so prevalent around them

Meanwhile, Obadiah and Joel did the same in the south, in Judah

Followed by Jonah ~775BC, who didn't want to declare anything to anybody; And understandably so; B/c nobody wanted to hear it

And on *his* heels were prophets like Amos and Hosea in the north, and Micah and Isaiah in the south

➤ All of whom had one main message – God's not happy with you and he's going to punish you unless you turn

And to understand just how bad it was, especially by the *end* of this time period, turn to 2 Kings 17:9-18

[9] *And the people of Israel did secretly against the LORD their God things that were not right. They built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. [10] They set up for themselves pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, [11] and there they made offerings on all the high places, as the nations did whom the LORD carried away before them. And they did wicked things, provoking the LORD to anger, [12] and they served idols, of which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this." [13] Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets [IOW repent]."*

[14] *But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the LORD their God. [15] They despised his statutes and his covenant that he made with their fathers and the warnings that he gave them. They went after false idols and became false, and they followed the nations that were around them, concerning whom the LORD had commanded them that they should not do like them. [16] And they abandoned all the commandments of the LORD their God, and made for themselves metal images of two calves; and they made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. [17] And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking him to anger. [18] Therefore the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.*

God used the Assyrians to *besiege* the northern tribes, overthrow them, and carry them off; IOW he punished them

And that's one of the purposes of this period . . .

God's Purpose – To punish those in disobedience

To punish those in sin; We've seen it before and we'll see it again

God punishes those in disobedience; Especially those who don't acknowledge their sin and turn to Jesus as Lord of their lives; He punishes them

The ultimate of which is hell; That's the *epitome* of God's punishment

And thank God that as believers we're no longer subject to that; We're no longer *under* that condemnation Rom 8:1 says

There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus

➤ But he does still *discipline* us for our sin from time to time; That's **Heb 12:6**

For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.

Not out of wrath, but love; His loving desire to see us conformed more and more to the image of Christ*****

But if you *don't* know him, it's worse – it's punishment; And it's only a matter of time

Which leads to the 2nd purpose of this time period, which was . . .

God's Purpose – To expose their need for a Savior

A deliverer, a messiah; One anointed by God to rule like David and lead like Moses

One who would fulfill all the longings of their heart and reign over all the earth

One who could forgive their sin and count them righteous

God exposed their need for someone like that

And did so – by pointing out their sin, and warning of judgment

And still does; **Rom 3:23-25a** says . . .

[23] For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, [24] and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus

We've all sinned, we all fall short of God's standard of righteousness, we're all exposed, and we all need a Savior to fix it

And Jesus is the one; He's the gift of God's grace

He's the one *through* whom we can be rescued from the grip of sin

He's the one *through* whom we can be granted the righteousness of God

He's the one *through* whom we can be made acceptable in God's sight

That's *the redemption that is in Christ Jesus*

We need a Savior now just like they needed one then*****

Otherwise the wrath of God awaits

Which means, we need to wake up; That's . . .

Our Response – Wake up!

As in break out of your slumber; Get out of your rut

If you've never admitted your sin and need for a Savior, it's time to wake up

B/c the only thing that remains if you *go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth* . . .

Is a fearful expectation of judgment, and a fury of fire the Bible says (Heb 10:26-27)

Wake up, and enter into his *grace* instead of his wrath

And if you already have, if you're *already* a child of God, but you well know that you're sinking deeper and deeper into the slumber of sin – the same is true for you

Wake up; And avoid the heartache of discipline that will come if you don't

Wake up, and once again walk in the *light*, like the Apostle Paul says in Eph 5

Trying to *discern what is pleasing to the Lord*; And taking *no part in the unfruitful works of darkness* (Eph 5:8b-11)

Or as he says it in **Eph 5:14** – *Awake, O sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you*. Not discipline you, but shine on you; Show you favor

So whether you're sleeping or sleep-walking, still dead in your trespasses or just acting like it – the message and response is the same; Wake up*****

Unfortunately, the Israelites didn't; And it led to even more hardship in the . . .

Surviving Kingdom

That's the next time period here; And to see it, turn with me to Jer 3:6-10

Time Period – 722-586BC

Key People – Isaiah, Jeremiah

Key Places – Assyria, Samaria, Judah

Main Events – Assyrian Overthrow, Babylonian Conquest, Promise of a New Covenant

And after the Assyrian Overthrow in 722BC, you would have thought that *Israel's* fate in the north would have been reason enough for Judah, the surviving kingdom . . .

To change her ways and return to the Lord; But it wasn't

Jer 3:6-10 – *The LORD said to me in the days of King Josiah [~625BC]: “Have you seen what she did, that faithless one, Israel [the northern tribes], how she went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and there played the whore [forsaking Yahweh that is, and worshipping idols]? [7] And I thought, ‘After she has done all this she will return to me,’ but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. [8] She saw that for all the adulteries of that faithless one, Israel, I had sent her away with a decree of divorce [that's the Assyrian Overthrow a hundred years earlier]. Yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear, but she too went and played the whore. [9] Because she [northern Israel] took her whoredom lightly, she polluted the land, committing adultery with stone and tree [idols]. [10] Yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah did not return to me with her whole heart, but in pretense, declares the LORD.”*

One of God's purposes here was . . .

God's Purpose – To expose their pretense

Their sham; Their deception; That they supposedly loved the Lord their God with all their heart, soul, mind, and strength – but really didn't

And God knew; And *exposed* it; And he's still doing so

Heb 4 (**v13**) says that the word of God discerns the thoughts/intentions of the heart . . .

[13] And no creature is hidden from his sight, but all are naked and exposed to the eyes of him to whom we must give account.

You can run from God, but you can't hide; You can *act* like you love him, but he'll know Better to bare your soul like the tax collector in Luke 18, and say – ‘*God, be merciful to me, a sinner!*’ This man went down to his house justified, Jesus said (Lk 18:13-14)***

Fake it no longer if that's you – God knows; And it's only a matter of time before you'll be exposed; That's the first purpose of this time period

2nd, was . . .

God's Purposes: To reveal a new way of getting right with him

Right smack dab in the middle of this turbulent time, God rolled out one of the most significant promises and covenants in the entire Bible – the *New Covenant*

Thus far, the people's relationship with God was based on obedience to the *Mosaic Covenant* – the *written* Law; First given to Moses on Mt Sinai

But in Jer 31, we see something completely different; Jer 31:31-34

➤ Instead of a temporary covenant of *works*, requiring *repetitive* sacrifices for the forgiveness of sin . . .

We see a *permanent* covenant of grace, where our sins are forgiven once and for all
Instead of an outward covenant written on stone *tablets*, we see an *inward* covenant written on our hearts

Instead of a covenant based on duty, we see a *promise* based on *love*

[31] “Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, [32] not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. [33] For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD [the days where God begins to do a new thing]: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. [34] And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD.

No longer would God's people consist of both believers *and* unbelievers just b/c of their ethnicity; A situation where they would exhort one another to . . .

Know the LORD, b/c many of them didn't; That would no longer be the case

B/c under the *New Covenant*, every single *one* of God's people would know him

It's called the church; Comprised *only* of those who know the Lord

[34b] For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” God says

It was a new, and *better* way of getting right with him, but wouldn't be realized for another 600+ years, when Jesus came

➤ And here's the deal, it's the same covenant on which *our* salvation is based, b/c Heb 8 quotes this passage *verbatim* (Heb 8:8-12), and then says in chapter 9 . . .

That Jesus is the mediator of this new covenant [he's the one who makes it happen], so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance (Heb 9:15)

Including the righteousness of God, his presence within us, and life forever

This passage is for us

Our Response – Repentance

That's how we *access* this New Covenant and the life it offers

That's how we *get* the law of God written on our hearts, so that we *want* to do the things he wants; That's how we become one of God's own

That's how we respond to the prophet's message of old, *today*; Repent

Like Jesus said in **Mark 1:15** – “*The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.*”

And people are doing so all over the world, one life at a time

People are opening the door of their hearts, as Jesus stands at the door and knocks

Do you feel it (knocking)? And more importantly, do you believe it? (**Summary**)

Do you *believe* that Jesus wants to enter your life and save you?

Do you *believe* that he wants a relationship with you?

Do you *believe* that he loves you?

Do you *believe* that he can forgive you?

Do you *believe* that he paid the penalty for your sins?

If so, repent – confess your sins, and turn from them; Profess your belief in Jesus, and receive him

And if you already have, but you're guilty of pretense, or need to wake up out of a sinful slumber, do the same – repent, and get *right* with God

Pray – I believe; I repent; I receive; Show of hands

Refresh us with your presence; Renew us by your Spirit; Fill us with your hope

We give now, with a heart full of love