

## OVERVIEW OF THE BIBLE

January 3, 2018

### 1 Kings

#### *A Sense of Tradition*

The most distinctive feature of the Jewish people is their sense of tradition. Judaism is the religion of a people who have a unique memory that formed them as a people. Even today, whenever they celebrate festivals this memory is kept alive.

Christians also have a similar sense of tradition. Our remembrances focus on the coming of Christ as the Messiah. Our festivals take us through his life, death, and resurrection. For us, the death and resurrection of Jesus is the climax of the historical drama.

#### *The Conflict in the Middle East*

Towards the end of the 1800s questions arose as to how the Jewish people could overcome increased persecution and anti-Semitism in Europe. The biblical *Promised Land* led to a political movement (Zionism) that established a Jewish homeland in Palestine.

From 1920 to 1947: Palestine included all of Israel and the occupied territories of Gaza and the West Bank. The increasing number of Jewish people immigrating to the Holy Land increased tensions in the region.

After World War II: The newly formed United Nations recommended the partition of Palestine into two states. The minority Jewish people received the majority of the land. The State of Israel was proclaimed in 1948 but the Arab states rejected the partition of Palestine and the existence of Israel.

In 1978: The Camp David accords were signed between Israel, Egypt, and the United States, and Israel returned Sinai back to Egypt in return for peace between them. To many in the Arab world, Egypt sold out to US pressure. To the US and Israel, this was a great accomplishment.

In the late 1980s: The Palestinians had an uprising. Thousands were killed by the Israeli military. Many suicide activists killed Israeli soldiers and caused other damage. Many innocent civilians were killed on both sides.

In 1993: Israel recognized the PLO and gave them limited autonomy in return for peace.

In 1994: Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip and Jericho. It ended 27 years of occupation.

In 1995: The Israeli prime minister was assassinated by a Jewish extremist.

In 1996: Israel forces bombed Lebanon for 17 days.

In 1997: There was some Israeli withdrawal from the West Bank but Israel suspended it in 1999.

A Social Message on ... *The Israeli / Palestinian Conflict*

April 16, 1989

### *The Bible*

For the Jewish community there is only one Testament (Covenant) called the Hebrew Bible. The Jewish people refer to it as *Tanak*.

It is an acronym made from the first consonants of the three major divisions of the Bible:

Torah (the Law) (the basic story of the people that includes the laws to live by)

Nebi'im (the Prophets) (a critical commentary on the life of the people)

Kethubim (the Writings) (collection about worship and festivals and wisdom reflections)

The Old Testament of the Christian Bible is fundamentally the same as the Hebrew Bible.

The Bible we read has a different order after the first five books of the Torah.

The early Christian church was Greek-speaking and read the scriptures in Greek.

This translation (the Septuagint) began in Alexandria, Egypt, in the third century BCE.

The prophetic writings were placed last and included works not found in the Hebrew Bible.

At the time of the Reformation, Protestants restricted the canon of the Old Testament to the number of books in the Hebrew Bible. The extra books (found in the Septuagint) have been placed in a separate section of the Bible known as the *Apocrypha* (hidden or secret writings).

The Roman Catholic canon is seven books longer.

Tobit / Judith / Wisdom of Solomon / Ecclesiasticus / Baruch / 1-2 Maccabees

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### *The Story of the Bible*

**Genesis 12-50** – Shortly after the turn of the second millennium BCE, Abraham migrated from Mesopotamia into the land of Canaan, otherwise known as Palestine. The ancestors of Israel moved about in the hill country of Canaan with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob succeeding one another. Eventually (during a time of famine) the family of Jacob migrated to Egypt.

**Exodus-Deuteronomy** – Initially the people enjoyed favor in Egypt but then the descendants of Jacob were subjected to forced labor by Pharaoh because they became so numerous. Under the leadership of Moses (about 1300 BCE) they escaped into the desert of the Sinai Peninsula. Unable to enter Canaan from the south, they spent a long time (forty years) in the wilderness and eventually made a roundabout journey through the Transjordan.

**Joshua, Judges** – Under the leadership of Joshua, the Israelites crossed the Jordan and in a quick military campaign overran the native population and claimed the land as their own. During this time (the period of the Judges) they waged ceaseless wars of defense to maintain their hold on the Promised Land.

**1-2 Samuel, 1-2 Kings, 1-2 Chronicles** – In time, enemy pressure became so intense that a monarchy was established. Under King David and King Solomon (1000-922 BCE), Canaan became an Israelite empire which had a prominent place in the circle of nations.

However, shortly after the death of Solomon the United Kingdom split into two kingdoms, the north and south Israel (Ephraim and Israel). These kingdoms (by virtue of their strategic location between Mesopotamia and Egypt) were drawn into a power struggle. The Northern Kingdom fell under the attack of the Assyrians (721 BCE) and the Southern Kingdom fell victim to the

Babylonians (who gained control from Assyria). Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians in the year 587 BCE and many of the people were carried away into captivity.

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### *Sacred History*

The history of Israel is a minor part of the larger history of the Near East.

But the Old Testament is not simply a book of secular history.

It is a sacred history because these experiences are interpreted by faith.

From the standpoint of Israel, this is not a recounting of wars and population resettlements.

These stories are shared to disclose God's activities in these events.

They also demonstrate God working out his purpose to save his people.

The Old Testament bears witness to how the people encountered God.

It represents the story of how God participated in the history of a particular people.

When we seek to understand the meaning of our lives we do not begin with our birth story.

We view our lives in light of later experiences that are deeply impressed on our memory.

The watershed for Israel was the Exodus from Egypt.

The Exodus story forms the basic form of deliverance to which all others are patterned.

It gives the clue to who God is and how God acts to deliver the downtrodden and oppressed.

It provides the model for how the people of God should seek justice in society.

The message of the prophets point to this event as well.

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God is the creator of the universe who created humans in his likeness.

God made us stewards of his creation.

God demands obedience but still provides for his people in the midst of punishment.

God is holy and God demands holiness. God is faithful but God also demands faithfulness.

God calls us into a covenant relationship and made a promise for our redemption.

God speaks through different people for different purposes (and all are flawed).

## **1 KINGS**

First and Second Samuel described the rise and establishment of the monarchy in Israel.

Under the rule of King David:

they were victorious over their enemies

their boundaries were expanded

Israel transformed from a cluster of tribes to a dominant power in Western Asia

Israel remained true to God (there was no idolatry)

First and Second Kings were originally one book (as were 1-2 Samuel / 1-2 Chronicles).

The account of the kings starts with the death of David and ends with the people in exile.

In these two books the author explains to the people in exile who are distressed ...

the reason they are in captivity.

1 Kings 1 – Adonijah attempts to take the throne from his father, David.  
David makes Solomon king over all Israel (and Solomon is God's choice).

### *The Plan – 1 Kings 2:2b-4*

God's original plan was to bring prosperity to Israel and fulfill his promise.  
The well-being of Israel and their kings was directly dependent upon their continued obedience.  
The future of Israel was placed in their own hands (in the choices they made in life).

From the author's perspective, the people in exile were facing the consequences of their defiance of God. The people of Israel had only themselves to blame.

Solomon received wisdom and great wealth and was renowned.  
God was faithful to his promise to bring prosperity to those who were obedient.  
Everything began to change in Chapter 11.

### *The Problem – 1 Kings 11:1-4*

In 1 Kings 3:1 Solomon made an alliance with the king of Egypt.  
He married his daughter and disregarded the prohibition to marry women from foreign lands.  
In 1 Kings 4 Solomon set up tax districts that did not correspond to the twelve tribes.  
This later caused conflict between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms following his death.  
In 1 Kings 5 he drafted laborers from all over Israel which caused resentment towards him.  
In 1 Kings 10 Solomon accumulated wealth in ways that were counter to what God offered.  
But his greatest evil was idolatry.

He allowed his wives to worship the gods from their native countries.

He built altars for them.

Solomon had everything but he exchanged God for the pleasures of sin.

And he suffered the consequences.

### *The Price – 1 Kings 11:11-23*

The price to be paid was a divided kingdom and the eventual loss of territory acquired by David.  
The author continued to point out that the events that followed were a direct result of sin.

We read in Chapters 11-12 of the division of Israel:

Israel (ten northern tribes) and Judah (two southern tribes)

God promised Jeroboam the Northern Kingdom and he would bless him if he was obedient.

But he set up 2 golden calves so the Israelites did not have to travel to Jerusalem to worship.

He appointed priests from people who were not Levites.

Consequences: His son died and Israel's later exile was prophesied.

Rehoboam (the son of Solomon) became the king of Judah.

Unlike his father he lacked wisdom and refused to listen to the complaints of the people.

The remaining chapters of 1 Kings are accounts of the kings who rule over Israel and Judah.  
They are not measured by their accomplishments but by their obedience to the laws of God.  
It is noteworthy that no king in Israel (the ten northern tribes) is described as obedient.  
As a result they experience political chaos, instability, and violence.

In a period of 210 years –

20 rulers from 9 different empires

From the division of the kingdom (930 BCE) until the fall of Samaria (722-721 BCE)

The Southern Kingdom also has 20 rulers and all but one (Athaliah) is a descendant of David. Their rule extends over a period of 345 years until the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BCE.

There are some good kings in Judah:

Asa (1 Kings 15:11 and 14)

Jehoshaphat (1 Kings 22)

Hezekiah and Josiah (2 Kings)

### **The Promise**

There is a message of hope for the people in exile.

Through the ministry of Elijah (Chapters 17-19) God proves that he is a mighty God.

God preserves a remnant of the faithful.

In 1 Kings 8 (most poignant chapter offering hope):

God is faithful to his promises (1 Kings 8:23-24)

God is not limited to the worldly (1 Kings 8:27)

God is merciful and forgiving (1 Kings 8:31-35) (1 Kings 8:56-61)

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### **Sunday Lessons in 2018**

August 12, 2018

1 Kings 19:4-8

1 Kings 18 describes the contest between Elijah and the prophets of Baal.

The contest proves that the Lord is God.

Afterward Elijah orders the killing of the Baal prophets.

In anger, Queen Jezebel threatens to kill Elijah.

This reading finds Elijah fleeing, fatigued, and in utter despair.

November 11, 2018

1 Kings 17:8-16

God sends a drought on Israel because of the sins of King Ahab.

In this lesson God saves Elijah and also looks with favor on the widow of Zarephath.

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### **Lectionary Bible Study (Starting Tonight)**

January 3-31 from 7:15 pm to 8:30 pm

### **Assignment for Wednesday, January 10, 2018**

Read 1 and 2 Kings (or the portions outlined on Pages 56 and 62)

Complete the Questions for 1 Kings (Pages 59-62)