



Wednesday Bible Education
Biblical Theology
Lesson 12: 1 Kings

REVIEW

Questions from last week's lesson:

1. What is in the book of 2 Samuel?
2. How does 2 Samuel help us today?

Answers:

1. 2 Samuel tells of David reigning as king. The book has the well known sin David committed with Bathsheba, followed by the murder of Uriah and Nathan's confrontation with David by telling a parable about the rich man stealing the poor man's lamb. The book also recounts numerous terrible consequences of David's sin. 2 Samuel also records the Davidic covenant, which is a major turning point in redemptive history.

Book Summary: 2 Samuel reveals the sovereignty of God in keeping his promises despite the failings of men and the fact that God's eternal purposes are not dependent upon men to succeed or fail.

2. Understanding 2 Samuel helps us see David's life as applicable to the life of a believer. 2 Samuel looks at David's life honestly. His salvation is not questioned, but his sins are exposed. He is blessed over and over by God, but his sin also shows him falling short of the righteousness of the true King. David shows us receiving rebuke and correction, confession of sin, repentance and responsibility, and also forgiveness and restoration.

Understanding the Davidic covenant help us understand something of the coming of the Messiah. We look for his second coming today just as they were looking for his first coming. Later writers interpreted the Davidic covenant to include blessings to Gentiles, as it is connected with the Abrahamic covenant, i.e., Amos 9:11-12.

INTRODUCTION

What is in the book of 1 Kings? 1 Kings records the death of David and Solomon's subsequent reign. The book recounts the building of the temple and the dividing of the kingdom after Solomon's death. The book also covers the prophetic minis-

try of Elijah, with such incidents as the contest with the prophets of Baal.

Summary Statement: 1 Kings shows the curse of sin is death, so all who have sinned will die and the only hope is in God who raises the dead.

This lesson covers the book of 1 Kings. We will look at the structure and content of the book, along with major themes and practical applications to modern readers. We will consider what 1 Kings reveals about Christ and his kingdom as it fits into the Bible's main story.

OBSERVATION

1 Kings is the sixth book of history and continues from the end of 2 Samuel. 1 Kings is historical narrative and is similar to Judges in that it starts with a wise king on the throne but declines steadily to the end.

The book covers the first part of Israel's history after the death of David. The kingdom was united and the reign of Solomon lasted about 40 years (970-931 BC). After Solomon, the kingdom was divided. The northern kingdom of Israel consisted of the ten tribes. Its capital was Samaria and Jeroboam I was the first king. The book covers from the beginning of Jeroboam's reign (930 BC) to the beginning of Ahaziah's reign (853-852 BC), which is almost 80 years.

The southern kingdom of Judah consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and some of the Levites. The capital was Jerusalem and Rehoboam, Solomon's son, was the first king. The book covers the reign of Rehoboam (930-913 BC) to part of Jehoshaphat's reign, about 853 BC.

1 and 2 Kings were sometimes referred to as the former prophets and the book recounts the prophets as much as it does the kings. The book mentions numerous prophets, such as Nathan (1), Ahijah (11), Shemaiah (12), unnamed prophet (13), Jehu (16), Elijah (17-19), Elisha (19), Micaiah (22), and false prophets (22).

The book divides into three parts. The beginning covers the death of David and focuses on Solomon. The middle traces the reigns of several kings. The last part focuses on Elijah and Ahab in the northern kingdom of Israel.

A brief outline of 1 Kings:

1. Chapters 1-11 The united kingdom and Solomon's reign
2. Chapters 12-14 The divided kingdom
3. Chapters 15-16 The decline of the northern kingdom

4. Chapters 17-22 Elijah and Ahab

INTERPRETATION

1 Kings is rich with theological meaning. It is not a mere historical record of the kingdom of Israel. The book recounts the kings of Israel and Judah with typical conventions.

1. A king is named and his relation to the preceding king is given.
2. The beginning of his reign is established in relation to his contemporary in the other kingdom, whether northern or southern.
3. For the kings of Judah, the king's age at the beginning of his reign is given.
4. The length of the reign is given.
5. The place of the reign is given.
6. For the kings of Judah, the king's mother is named.
7. A spiritual evaluation of the king's reign is also recorded.

The prophets are key figures in the book and function as mouthpieces for God to speak to the kings (Deuteronomy 18:15-18). The rise or fall of the king's dynasty is determined by how the king responds to the prophetic word. The book includes some notable fulfillments of prophecy (13:2-3; 14:18; 15:29; 16:12, 34; 22:15-28, 38).

The reign of Solomon means that Israel starts with wisdom, but soon departs from it. Solomon goes after other gods (11). Rehoboam departs from the wisdom of his father to go after folly and ends up dividing the kingdom in two (12). Proverbs makes clear that a kingdom must have a righteous and wise king in order to be established (Proverbs 16:12; 25:5; 29:14). 1 Kings portrays the failure of both kingdoms to have that righteous and wise king who was David's son to sit on the throne. They came the closest with Solomon. They had people (4:20), land (4:21), and blessing to the nations (4:24-25). But, the book makes clear Solomon was the son of David whose kingdom and thrones would be established forever, because he also had disobedience (11). Solomon's failures are one reason Jesus identified as greater than Solomon (Matthew 12:42).

Clearly, the answer is not within Israel and 1 Kings contributes to the expectation of the Messiah and his kingdom with expectation of One who would unite Israel and Judah and establish the throne in Jerusalem. Elijah was one of the greatest prophets, but even he could not bring about the repentance and restoration of Israel. God's purpose of grace in the restoration of Israel is not lost however. Elijah thought he was the only one left and wanted God to take his life and be done with Israel, but God told him that was not so (19:14, 18). Paul also refers to this as a bright future hope still today (Romans 11:5).

APPLICATION

How does 1 Kings help us as modern readers? Understanding 1 Kings should help us consider how we respond to God's word. Are we like the kings and people who refuse the word given to us? Are we like Israel and Judah, wanting to live like the nations of the world rather than the people of God?

Understanding 1 Kings should help us understand the larger purposes of God, which he will fulfill. American Christianity is self-centered and thinks that God exists to fulfill our hopes and dreams of a best life now, or to bail us out of trouble and make America great. We have no thought of the glory of God's name in the world and the fulfillment of his purposes for his own name's sake. Jesus taught disciples to seek his kingdom and righteousness first (Matthew 6:9-13, 31-34). We see God at work in 1 Kings, even despite Israel's disobedience, to make himself known and fulfill his purpose (20:23, 28). We are so used to prosperity thinking and preaching that we don't recognize it, except in its most obvious forms.

Understanding 1 Kings should help us get past the idea that human government can or will save us. Human government is necessary and ordained of God. It brings certain benefits and some are better than others. However, human governments are fundamentally flawed because of the fallenness of the humans in them. Our hope should be the coming of the wise and righteous King, Jesus Christ.

CONCLUSION

1 Kings shows the failure of David's first son on the throne after him. The kings coming after are mostly worse. We see failure after failure to establish the kingdom in wisdom and righteousness, but God is still at work to fulfill his purposes and his covenants. The book points Israel and Judah, as well as the other nations, to look for the greater Solomon.

ABOUT THIS STUDY

This series is a study in biblical theology going book by book through the entire Bible. Each lesson typically covers one book of the Bible, though occasionally covers more than one book when the books are short. This PDF is provided for personal study, small group study, or use in a church class. Unless otherwise noted, all lessons have been prepared by Jeff Short, the pastor of Harmony Baptist Church.

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