

"WALK THRU THE BIBLE: I KINGS."

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First Christian Reformed Church, Lynden, WA

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Text for Sermon: I Kings 2:1-3; 8:56; 12:20-34

I and II Kings.

In the original Hebrew Bible I and II Kings were one book. The Hebrews didn't write down their vowels, so when the Hebrew Old Testament was translated into Greek, the scrolls were packed with vowels and were a lot bigger and had to be divided. In the Greek Septuagint they are called Third and Fourth Book of Kingdoms.

Ancient Jews believed Jeremiah was the author. More recently it is believed to be written by a contemporary of Jeremiah.

Remember the reign of King Saul was covered in I Samuel and the reign of King David was covered in II Samuel. The books of I and II Kings cover all the remaining kings of Israel and Judah beginning with Solomon.

If we don't know I and II Kings we don't know the historical context for over half the OT. Three poetical books (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon) and almost all the prophetic books (except Obadiah, Jonah, and Nahum) are written during the time of the kings

Almost all the prophets are speaking directly to Israel and Judah in this time period. 20 of 39 OT books find their genesis in either 1 or 2 Kings.

I and II Kings will take us all the way from the death of King David to the fall of both Israel and Judah into Babylonian captivity, from Israel's golden age to her Gentile destruction. Israel is conquered by Assyria and Judah is conquered by Babylon.

If we take the landing of the Mayflower at Plymouth Rock in 1620, that is the amount of time our history covers as a nation; and how far are we from our destruction? Think for a moment how volumes it would take to capture our history as a nation from 1620 to 2020.

Since the two Kings cover the 400 years, about 50,000 words, the writer must be very selective in what he includes, so we can conclude that what is included is very important. We need to pay attention and ask why did God put this in here.

These books are historical narratives. But it is important to remember this is not just history, but prophetic history, it focuses on the words and actions of the prophets of God. At least ten prophets or prophetesses are active in the progress of this history.

The writer was most interested in theology, pastoral theology. Kings are not political history, it is pastoral history, spiritual history, the events chosen to be included are selected because of their spiritual significance. This is history with a message.

Theology is no help if it isn't pastoral. My best seminary professors were always those who were also pastors, with a pastor's heart for teaching people the difference between right and wrong, sin and righteousness and holiness.

They say people who don't know history are doomed to repeat it. But people who just read history for history's sake are doomed to miss the spiritual lessons God is teaching through the events.

This is not an exhaustive history, but a God-edited, God-authorized version of how He wants us to view His redemptive purposes and work in history.

It is explanation and encouragement.

What is God's purpose behind these two books? Kings was written during the exile for an exiled community of believers who needed to be reminded of the chronology of Israel's monarchy.

It is an ***explanation*** of the devastating experience of the exile and deportation of Israel by the Assyrians and of Judah by the Babylonians.

All the kings of the north are condemned because they followed in the sins of their first king Jeroboam the son of Nebat who made Israel to sin.

All the kings of the south are judged according to their faithfulness and obedience or lack thereof to the promises made to David (II Samuel 7:12-16), particularly emphasizing those who were true to the Davidic standard.

The author makes clear that the exile was a righteous and justified divine chastisement and judgment. It gives ample evidence and praise of the justice of God's judgment.

The ***encouragement*** to the exiles was that as terrible as the judgment of God was, God preserves the royal line of David and keeps for Himself a remnant. They are not utterly rejected and cast off. There is hope because of God's covenant commitment to David. Israel still has a future.

I Kings

We come to yet another book of Biblical history filled with the names of great heroes of Israel and of our faith, and with great villains.

I Kings is the story of God's Israel who never stops sinning and committing idolatry. I Kings is the story of Israel's God who never fails to love His people even when they chose folly and idolatry.

I Kings takes us on the road from wisdom to folly, a road most of us have been on at one time or another. This is the account of how Israel starts well and then ends up overturned in the ditch.

I Kings is a story of profound sadness and the stupidity of sin, a lesson we never seem to outgrow learning.

I Kings 1-11, Solomon.

I Kings 12-22, Elijah.

The first eleven chapters of I Kings highlight the wisdom of Solomon. It is some most glorious reading. It soars to the heights. Wisdom is royal virtue at its very best. It is the power of Solomon's Proverbs.

King David hands the baton of a rich, powerful, extensive nation to his son Solomon.

I Kings 3:11-14 God said to him, "Because you have asked this, and have not asked for yourself long life or riches or the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern what is right, 12 behold, I now do according to your word. Behold, I give you a wise and discerning mind, so that none like you has been before you and none like you shall arise after you. 13 I give you also what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that no other king shall compare with you, all your days. 14 And if you will walk in my ways, keeping my statutes and my commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days."

Solomon is summed up in

I Kings 10:21-24 All King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None were of silver; silver was not considered as anything in the days of Solomon. ... 23 Thus King Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. 24 And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind.

So what happened?

I Kings 11:4, 9-13 For when Solomon was old his wives turned away his heart after other gods, and *his heart was not wholly true to the Lord* his God, as was the heart of David his father.

9 And the Lord was angry with Solomon, *because his heart had turned away from the Lord*, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods. But he did not keep what the Lord commanded. 11 Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, “Since this has been your practice and you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant. 12 Yet for the sake of David your father I will not do it in your days, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. 13 However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son, for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem that I have chosen.”

Solomon’s heart turned away from the Lord. Our religion is not about what we know, about brains, intelligence, knowledge, or even wisdom and wealth. Our religion is about our hearts and our relationship with the Lord. It is about the orientation of our heart. Do you love the Lord with all your heart?

Do you want to know one of the saddest verses in all the Bible?

I Kings 3:1 Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of David his father.

Guard your heart, guard your affections. We can be rich and relationally bankrupt before God. We can be wise and foolish before God. God’s blessings and benefits can turn us against God.

Wisdom didn’t save Solomon from falling into grievous idolatry. The words wise or wisdom occur 21 times in I Kings 1-11, but after Solomon, they disappear and never occur again for the rest of both books of Kings.

Israel’s hope, and ours, for deliverance, restoration, blessing and life don’t lie in human wisdom no matter how great it is. Wisdom is important and a blessing, but by itself it doesn’t secure health and salvation for Israel. Once Israel sins wisdom won’t save her.

I Corinthians 10:14 Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry.

I John 5:21 Little children, keep yourselves from idols.

God is a jealous God. God is not mocked, He is a consuming fire, He doesn’t stutter or compromise. He is true to His word. He is holy, righteous.

Galatians 6:7-8 Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap. 8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

I Kings 8

The temple is completed and now the ark of the covenant is brought in, Solomon offers his great prayer of blessing and dedication. The great cloud of the glory of the Lord fills the temple. God is in their midst.

1 Kings 8:56 Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant.

I Kings 8:60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other.

But after I Kings 9 the temple fades from view, with only occasional references, many of them negative as the temple is misused, abused and desecrated, until in the final chapter of II Kings Nebuchadnezzar destroys the house of God.

Wisdom cannot save Israel from division and destruction. All that made Israel Israel, the kings and priests, the temple and the sacrifices, cannot save Israel from death. Our salvation is not in external things, rituals and sacrifices.

I Kings 12-22, Elijah.

I Kings 12

As judgment on Solomon for his apostasy, God tears his kingdom in two. Solomon's son Rehoboam is utterly foolish and didn't listen to the people so they turned to Jeroboam. The divided monarchy, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin followed Rehoboam and the other ten tribes of the north followed Jeroboam.

Jeroboam fears he will lose his people's allegiance if they continue to worship at the temple in Jerusalem, so he sets up pagan worship sites in the north and leads Israel into idolatry. This action becomes known as "the sin of Jeroboam" in the rest of the acts of the kings of the north.

Solomon's sins of foolishness and idolatry are visited upon the next generations and so starts the roller coaster ride of faithfulness and faithlessness.

The rest of I Kings and all of II Kings will follow a path of switchbacks as we zig zag back and forth between the kings of the north and the kings of the south, until in just 400 years we witness its final destruction.

I Kings 18

Of course we can't neglect the great show down of the gods at Mt. Carmel with Elijah.

I Kings 18:21, 24, 37-39 Elijah came near to all the people and said, "How long will you go limping between two different opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

24 You call upon the name of your god, and I will call upon the name of the Lord, and the God who answers by fire, he is God." And all the people answered, "It is well spoken."

37 Answer me, O Lord, answer me, *that this people may know that you, O Lord, are God*, and that you *have turned their hearts back*." 38 Then the fire of the Lord fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39 And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."

This is the true God who is a consuming fire, who is a jealous God, who desires our hearts, our love our loyalty.

I Kings 22

The last words.

I Kings 22:51-53 Ahaziah the son of Ahab began to reign over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned two years over Israel. 52 He did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel to sin. 53 He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done.

Jesus.

Kings have kingdoms. Kings is about kingdoms. In 1 and II Kings, the reign of every king after David raises the question: Is this the One? Is this the forever king promised in II Samuel 7? And one by one, we see that they're not even close.

Kings foreshadows Jesus the King of kings and Lord of lords; Jesus is the royal son of David. Jesus is the King to whom every knee will bow and every tongue confess,

whether in love and loyalty, or under judgment. Christ's kingdom is an everlasting kingdom. We are received into His kingdom through repentance and faith.

John the Baptist announced it and Jesus proclaimed it. Jesus is the turning point, the kingdom is at hand.

Mark 1:14-15 Jesus came into Galilee, proclaiming the gospel of God, 15 and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel."

Jesus said pray, "Thy kingdom come." Pray for God's rule and reign in our hearts and homes and church and community and nation and world, through repentance and faith.

We see the wrath of God against sin and disobedience. We see that as sinners we all justly merit and deserve judgment and punishment.

It is the pure mercy and grace of God that He chose to provide a way out of our seemingly impossible situation. Our faithlessness can only be addressed by another human being being completely faithful, and bear the divine judgment Himself. Jesus became human so He could bear our judgment.

In a sense Jesus became exiled, forsaken by the Father, in order to deliver us from exile and bring us back into a life-giving, life-sustaining relationship with the Father. Jesus paid the price of our turning way, so we could turn back to God.

The Temple in Jerusalem, where God's Spirit would dwell in the Holy of Holies, foreshadows believers in Christ in whom the Holy Spirit resides from the moment of our salvation. We are His people, the very temple of the living God. Second Corinthians 6:16 tells us, "What agreement is there between the temple of God and idols? For we are the temple of the living God. As God has said: 'I will live with them and walk among them, and I will be their God, and they will be my people.'"

And so we wait, reflecting on a faithful God, a faltering people, and a future hope.

Implications and application.

For the sake of His servant David, He kept His covenant commitment and promise to Israel. For the sake of His Son Jesus, He keeps His covenant commitment to us and does not treat us as our sins deserve.

Take responsibility for yourself and your soul and your family. Response, repent, turn to God, pray.

We can ask how could the people of God be so stupid, how could they ignore God's clear warnings, how could they go in the opposite direction from everything God said, did, and showed? How could they ignore such powerful words and displays of divine power and presence?

Yet here we are, we have God's Word in print, we know what God has said, we have countless sermons and teachings. We have the clear revelation of God concerning the path of truth and life. Why do we make the choices we make? Are we just plain stupid?

Hebrews 3:12-13 Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. 13 But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.

Notice we follow what we love, we give allegiance to what holds our affections. Notice as the leader goes so goes the nation. Notice that the nation that spurns God will spiral into the captivity of sin. Notice the ever-present idolatry and how it leads our hearts astray into wickedness.

Our only hope is in the seed of David, the true and better David, the Son of David, Jesus Christ.