



Power of the Prophets: from Moses to Jesus

Week 3

Elijah and the Age of Kings

1



The Reign of King David (2 Samuel)

- ❖ "David became greater and greater, for the Lord, the God of hosts, was with him (2 Sam 5:10)
 - David is a man of piety and prayer . . . a warrior and leader
 - David first becomes king of the tribe of Judah, than of all Israel. He conquers Jerusalem and makes it his capital.
- ❖ 2 Samuel 7 is one of the most theologically important chapters in all the Old Testament. The prophet Nathan brings the word of the Lord to David.
 - The kingdom is secure. David has built his palace. Now he wishes to build the temple. Instead God will build a house (dynasty) for David. Someone from David's house will forever sit on Israel's throne. It will be David's son, Solomon, who will build the temple.
- ❖ Nathan, as God's prophet, will confront David over his adultery with Bathsheba (2 Sam 12). He would also ensure Solomon's succession after David's death (1 Kings 1).

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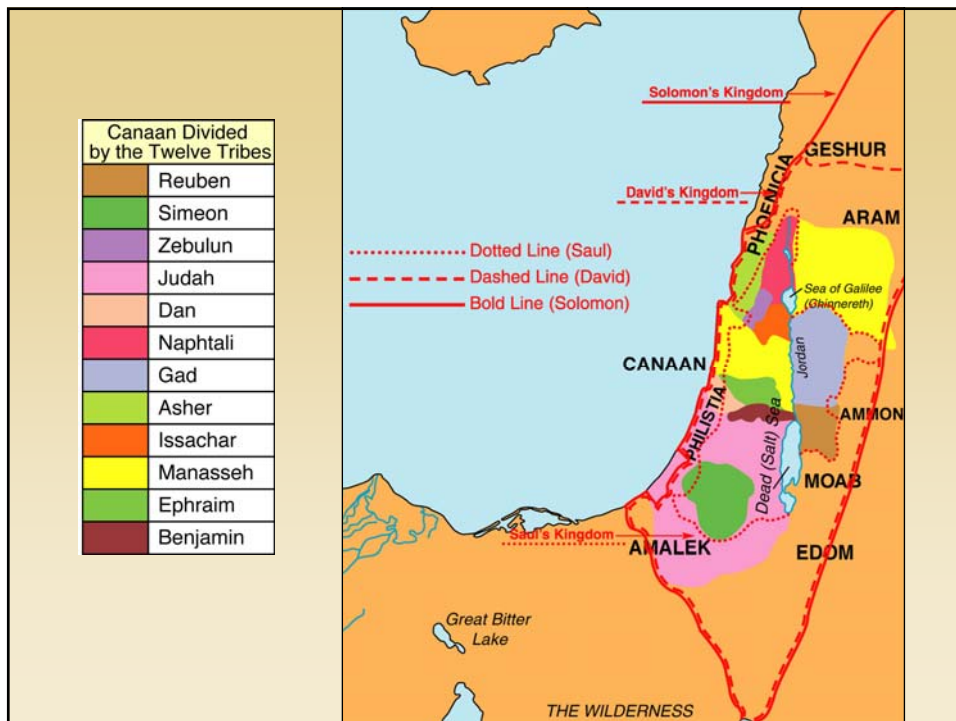


The Reign of Solomon

- ❖ David is old and impotent – in all meanings. Palace intrigue swirls around David’s last days.
 - Adonijah is David’s fourth son and the oldest living. He attempts a coup but is thwarted by Bathsheba and Nathan who “remind” David of a commitment we never heard of! David uses the priests to ensure that Solomon succeeds him.
- ❖ Solomon consolidates his power and prays for wisdom.
- ❖ Though Solomon takes Israel to its zenith in earthly wealth and power, though he builds God’s temple – he sows the seeds of Israel’s decline.
 - See 1 Kings 11 for the story of Solomon’s unfaithfulness.
- ❖ Solomon reigned 40 years (another 40!) and was succeeded by his son Rehoboam.

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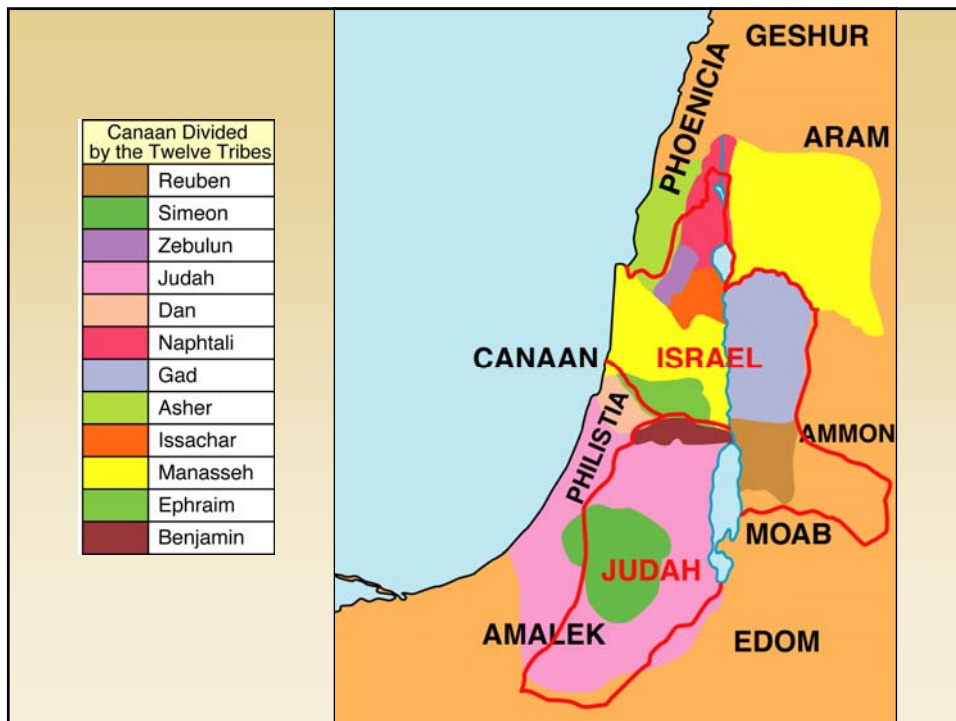


The Kingdom Divides in Two!!

- ❖ Rehoboam is a fool. In an attempt to be “tough” he alienates the northern tribes. They separate themselves from the tribe of Judah – giving us two kingdoms of God’s people!
 - The northern kingdom of Israel – Jeroboam is 1st king
 - The southern kingdom of Judah – Rehoboam is 1st king
- ❖ The book of Kings will tell the story of both kingdoms in parallel.
 - The kings are largely failures – most do what is evil in God’s sight.
 - See the story of the “man of God” in 1 Kings 13; like so many of these ancient stories – this is a story about obedience.

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Ahab & Jezebel

- ❖ Ahab takes the throne of Israel (the northern kingdom) in 869BC and reigns for 19 years.
 - Ahab did "evil in the sight of the lord more than all who came before him" (1 Kings 16:30).
 - This is not a reference to Ahab's earthly power or wealth. He took the people away from God! Jezebel is a devotee of the Canaanite god, Baal. Ahab built an altar and temple to Baal.
- ❖ Elijah makes an abrupt appearance from somewhere in Gilead (east of the Jordan) (1 Kings 17).
 - He warns Ahab of a coming drought and then hides in the dry area east of the Jordan – into the heart of Baal's territory. There, ravens (unclean birds) feed him.
 - Baal is the bringer of rain – the drought is a sign that Baal is dead (or a fiction!).



Elijah arrives! (1 Kings 17)

- ❖ Elijah meets a widow (who is from the same place as Jezebel!), who with God's miraculous help is able to feed Elijah. Later, when the woman's son dies, Elijah brings him back to life.
 - From the drought to the ravens to the widow's food to the boy – it is Yahweh who is the Lord of Life, not Baal.
 - We begin to see here the parallels between Jesus and Elijah, but Jesus is greater
 - Elijah asks God to raise the boy. Jesus himself commands a young boy to rise from the dead (Luke 7:11-17)
 - Note – this is resuscitation; not resurrection! The boy returns to life from "life after death" but he will go on to die again.
- ❖ God sends Elijah to Ahab. On the way, Elijah meets Obadiah, who has saved 100 of the Lord's prophets from Jezebel.
 - This is not Obadiah the prophet.



Elijah Issues a Challenge! (1 Kings 18)

- ❖ Elijah tells Ahab to assemble 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah at Mt. Carmel.
- ❖ Each "side" is to build a bonfire, put a bull on it, and then have it set on fire by their god.
 - The prophets attempt this for hours but fail, utterly.
 - Elijah erects an altar, sets the bull on the wood, drenches the whole thing in water, and then calls on Yahweh to set it on fire. The Lord does just that!
- ❖ The people fell on their faces before the power of Yahweh and the prophets of Baal are all killed.
- ❖ And it rains, ending the drought. It is Yahweh who gives life.

All people must choose. Will it be Yahweh or not? "I have no choice" or "I'll choose later" are not options – they are denials of the one true God!



Elijah on the run

- ❖ Jezebel sets out to kill Elijah. Elijah seems ready to throw in the towel. But he is visited by an angel and given food and water, such that he can spend 40 days and nights traveling to Mt. Horeb (another name for Mt. Sinai).
- ❖ There, he encounters God. God is not in the storm, or the earthquake, or in the fire – but in the "sound of sheer silence." (KJV – 'still, small voice').
 - This contrasts starkly with God's manifestation of power on Mt. Carmel.
- ❖ Elijah is to anoint a couple of kings, but more importantly, he is to anoint Elisha as his own successor.
 - Note the reference to the 7,000 -- a remnant -- in 19:18. This is a very important idea. No matter how bad things get, there will always be at least a remnant of God's people who will be true to Yahweh. You can even think of Jesus as a remnant of one.



Elisha's call and Ahab's sin

- ❖ Elisha is evidently wealthy, but leaves it all behind to follow after Elijah.
 - Even here, we can see the cost of discipleship.
- ❖ Chapter 21 – Ahab takes the vineyard owned by Naboth
 - Ahab wants it, but Naboth won't give it up. This is a story built around the 10th commandment.
 - Jezebel cooks up – and carries out – a plot against Naboth
 - Elijah pronounces an 'oracle of doom' against Ahab.
 - Ahab repents and God withholds his judgment
- ❖ Chapter 22 – the prophet Micaiah stands strong as the lone voice telling the kings of Israel (Ahab) and Judah (Jehoshaphat)



Elijah departs

- ❖ Ahab dies and is succeeded by Ahaziah, who turns to Baal-Zebub (yes, Beelzebub! – it means “Baal – the pest”, a distortion of Baal-Zebul)
 - Ahaziah challenges Elijah but meets his doom!
- ❖ 2 Kings 2 – Elisha succeeds Elijah
 - Elisha insists upon following Elijah on his final journey
 - Note that Elijah parts the waters of the Jordan using his mantle (a wrap-around garment). The parallels to Moses are intentional.
 - Elijah ascends to heaven (God's place) in a chariot of fire lifted upon a whirlwind.
 - Elisha picks up Elijah's mantle and parts the waters himself. The “mantle of leadership” has literally fallen on Elisha.



Stories from Elisha's ministry

- ❖ 4:1-7 – the miracle of abundant oil
- ❖ 4:8-17 – the gift of a son
- ❖ 4:18-37 – Elisha prays to God, who restores the life of a child
- ❖ 4:38-41 – Elisha detoxifies a poisonous pot!
- ❖ 4:42-44 – Elisha feeds a multitude

These are stories about Elisha's ministry of life. Through Elisha, God brings, restores, and sustains life.

- ❖ Jezebel dies in 2 Kings 9
- ❖ Elisha dies in 2 Kings 13 (about 800BC)
 - A corpse comes back to life when it comes in contact with Elisha's skeleton – his ministry goes on even after death.

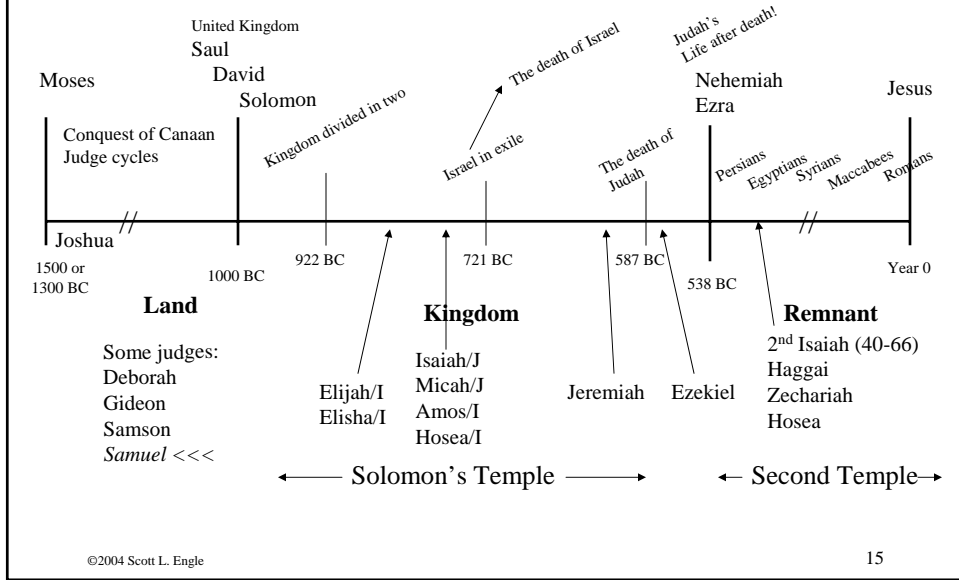


Next week

- ❖ Pressures mount on the kingdom of Israel
 - Death looms ahead! The litany of "bad kings" continues.
- ❖ We meet Amos, the first of the "writing prophets." Amos was a prophet to Israel and worked around 750BC.
- ❖ We'll also meet Hosea (Israel?), Micah (prophet to Judah) and Isaiah (Judah)



Old Testament Timeline



Simplified Old Testament Timeline

