

July 26, 2009 by Steve Brandon



2 Kings - Twelve Stages in the Bible

1 Samuel

1. The Start of the Kingdom
2. The Promise of the Kingdom
3. The Fall of the Kingdom

We are currently in a study of the 12 stages in the Bible. My aim is to give you an overview of the whole story of the Bible. If you understand the whole, the parts will make better sense to you. The following, famous poem should help to illustrate what I mean.

Blind Men and the Elephant

It was six men of Indostan
To learning much inclined,
Who went to see the Elephant
(Though all of them were blind),
That each by observation
Might satisfy his mind.

The *First* approach'd the Elephant,
And happening to fall
Against his broad and sturdy side,
At once began to bawl:
"God bless me! but the Elephant
Is very like a wall!"

The *Second*, feeling of the tusk,
Cried, -"Ho! what have we here
So very round and smooth and sharp?
To me 'tis mighty clear
This wonder of an Elephant
Is very like a spear!"

The *Third* approached the animal,
And happening to take
The squirming trunk within his hands,
Thus boldly up and spake:
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a snake!"

The *Fourth* reached out his eager hand,
And felt about the knee.
"What most this wondrous beast is like
Is mighty plain," quoth he,
"'Tis clear enough the Elephant
Is very like a tree!"

The *Fifth*, who chanced to touch the ear,
Said: "E'en the blindest man
Can tell what this resembles most;
Deny the fact who can,
This marvel of an Elephant
Is very like a fan!"

The *Sixth* no sooner had begun
About the beast to grope,
Then, seizing on the swinging tail
That fell within his scope,
"I see," quoth he, "the Elephant
Is very like a rope!"

And so these men of Indostan
Disputed loud and long,
Each in his own opinion
Exceeding stiff and strong,
Though each was partly in the right,
And all were in the wrong!

MORAL.

So oft in theologic wars,
The disputants, I ween,
Rail on in utter ignorance
Of what each other mean,
And prate about an Elephant
Not one of them has seen! [\[1\]](#)

This story of the blind men and the elephant is an illustration of my purpose in preaching an overview series of the Bible. I want to help you to see the big picture, so that you will not be distracted by the parts. We have taken a stage of history each week. We have already looked at Creation, Patriarchs, Exodus, Conquest, and Judges. This morning, we come to our sixth stage, Kingdom. [\[2\]](#)

The challenge before us this morning is particularly great. In this overview series, we have sought to overview entire sections of the Bible. In some cases, we have looked at entire books of the Bible. But, today, I'm seeking to tackle four books of the Bible: 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings. These four books tell the story of the kingdom of Israel from its inception until its demise. My first point this morning is ...

1. The Start of the Kingdom

Let's begin by looking at exactly how the kingdom of Israel began. The story of the kings begin in 1 Samuel 8. This is also where the judges leaves off. In fact, there is a bit of a transition between the two. The last of the judges bring in the first of the kings. There was no gap in leadership here. The stage of the judges flows into the stage of the kings. And it all starts with Samuel.

Samuel was a judge in Israel. "[He] judged Israel all the days of his life" (1 Samuel 7:15). At the beginning of 1 Samuel 8, we find Samuel at the end of his life.

1 Samuel 8:1-2

And it came about when Samuel was old that he appointed his sons judges over Israel. Now the name of his firstborn was Joel, and the name of his second, Abijah; they were judging in Beersheba.

It only makes sense that Samuel would want his sons to be judges. He knew of the ups and downs of Israel's history. When they didn't have a judge, things went poorly for them. But, then, when they had a judge, things went well for them. And so, Samuel appointed his sons at the next judges. But, verse 3 describes the difficulty, ...

1 Samuel 8:3

His sons, however, did not walk in his ways, but turned aside after dishonest gain and took bribes and perverted justice.

The Proverbs identify the difficulty in this situation, "When the righteous increase, the people rejoice, but when a wicked man rules, people groan" (Prov. 29:2). And indeed, the people groaned.

1 Samuel 8:4-5

Then all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah; and they said to him, "Behold, you have grown old, and your sons do not walk in your ways. Now appoint a king for us to judge us like all the nations."

And right here is where the history of Israel enters a new stage. They transition from the stage of the judges into the stage of the kings. The elders of Israel believed that this would be a help to them. They observed the other nations and reasoned, "All of the other nations around us have a king. Things are going well for them. But, we don't have a king. And things are going poorly for us. I think that we need a king!" Think about what they were doing. They were looking to the world for leadership regarding what their country. Too often, this is the way that Christians and Christian churches take their lead.

How often does the world's ways creep into the church? All the time! Pastors focus their efforts on secular leadership models that they read in books. They lead the church in following the world's definition of success: bigger profits, bigger market share, and the result is that the church goes astray.

It's never right to look at the way that the world is doing things and think that this is best for us. God's ways are always best for us. And Samuel knew this. When he heard what the elders of Israel said, his heart was broken.

1 Samuel 8:6-9

But the thing was displeasing in the sight of Samuel when they said, "Give us a king to judge us." And Samuel prayed to

the LORD. The LORD said to Samuel, "Listen to the voice of the people in regard to all that they say to you, for they have not rejected you, but they have rejected Me from being king over them. Like all the deeds which they have done since the day that I brought them up from Egypt even to this day--in that they have forsaken Me and served other gods--so they are doing to you also. Now then, listen to their voice; however, you shall solemnly warn them and tell them of the procedure of the king who will reign over them."

God knew what was going on. He knew that they were rejecting Him. He was their king, but they wanted a human king that they could see and touch.

Now, this wasn't the first time that Israel had rejected God as their king. In the days of Gideon, Israel was victorious over Zebah and Zalmunna, kings in Midian (Judges 8:5). When they saw the leadership that Gideon provided in this victory, "The men of Israel said to Gideon, 'Rule over us, both you and your son, also your son's son, for you have delivered us from the hand of Midian.' But Gideon said to them, 'I will not rule over you, nor shall my son rule over you; the LORD shall rule over you'" (Judges 8:22-23). This was good enough for Israel in Gideon's days, mostly because Gideon was still around to lead the people, only as a judge and not as a king. But, in the days of Samuel, it wasn't enough. They demanded a king. Perhaps this had to do with Samuel's age. He was soon to die, and wouldn't be around to lead the people.

Samuel tried to persuade them away from their decision, by telling them of "the procedure of the king" (1 Samuel 8:9). The story continues, ...

1 Samuel 8:10-18

So Samuel spoke all the words of the LORD to the people who had asked of him a king. He said, "This will be the procedure of the king who will reign over you: he will take your sons and place them for himself in his chariots and among his horsemen and they will run before his chariots. He will appoint for himself commanders of thousands and of fifties, and some to do his plowing and to reap his harvest and to make his weapons of war and equipment for his chariots. He will also take your daughters for perfumers and cooks and bakers. He will take the best of your fields and your vineyards and your olive groves and give them to his servants. He will take a tenth of your seed and of your vineyards and give to his officers and to his servants. He will also take your male servants and your female servants and your best young men and your donkeys and use them for his work. He will take a tenth of your flocks, and you yourselves will become his servants. Then you will cry out in that day because of your king whom you have chosen for yourselves, but the LORD will not answer you in that day."

It's a pretty dismal picture that Samuel paints. The king will demand your sons to fight for him in war. He will take your daughters to serve him in the castle. He will tax the produce of your field. He will take your servants from you to serve him. Things will be so bad that you will cry out to the LORD for help. But, he will be silent in those days.

At the hearing of these words, Israel should have repented. They should have said, "You are right Samuel, it is a bad idea that we appoint a king. We already have a king." However, despite the pleadings of Samuel, the people still insisted on having a king.

1 Samuel 8:19-20

Nevertheless, the people refused to listen to the voice of Samuel, and they said, "No, but there shall be a king over us, that we also may be like all the nations, that our king may judge us and go out before us and fight our battles."

And so begins the kingdom stage in Israel.

We start with Saul. He was the first king of Israel. They wanted a king? They got a king. Saul was "a choice and handsome man, and there was not a more handsome person than he among the sons of Israel; from his shoulders and up he was taller than any of the people" (1 Samuel 9:2). In other words, Paul was tall, dark and handsome. He was a hunk. He was a man that people could easily follow. But, Israel didn't need an earthly king. They needed a heavenly king! And even when Samuel confronted them on this fact, it made little difference.

1 Samuel 10:17-19

Thereafter Samuel called the people together to the LORD at Mizpah; and he said to the sons of Israel, "Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I brought Israel up from Egypt, and I delivered you from the hand of the Egyptians and from the power of all the kingdoms that were oppressing you.' But you have today rejected your God, who delivers you from all your calamities and your distresses; yet you have said, 'No, but set a king over us!' Now therefore, present yourselves before the LORD by your tribes and by your clans."

It was very clear what the people were doing. They were rejecting the king they needed for a king they wanted. Such is the travail of the human heart. Too often, we reject what we need in order to obtain what we want.

Is this not the problem that many have with debt? We all need fiscal responsibility, to spend less than we earn. But, we want the toys. And so, we have sacrificed what we need in order to obtain what we want. It happens on the individual level. And, it is happening on the national level as well.

Israel didn't need an earthly king. They needed a heavenly king! They didn't need a human king. They needed a divine king! But, they wanted a king that they could see and follow. Well, the time came for Israel to choose a leader. God chose him and Israel affirmed him.

1 Samuel 10:20-24

Thus Samuel brought all the tribes of Israel near, and the tribe of Benjamin was taken by lot. Then he brought the tribe of Benjamin near by its families, and the Matrite family was taken. And Saul the son of Kish was taken; but when they looked for him, he could not be found. Therefore they inquired further of the LORD, "Has the man come here yet?" So the LORD said, "Behold, he is hiding himself by the baggage." So they ran and took him from there, and when he stood among the people, he was taller than any of the people from his shoulders upward. Samuel said to all the people, "Do you see him whom the LORD has chosen? Surely there is no one like him among all the people." So all the people shouted and said, "Long live the king!"

Saul was God's choice for a king (1 Samuel 9:17-18; 10:20-21). He directed the lot to land upon Saul. Saul was the people's choice for a king (1 Samuel 10:24). They affirmed the choice! "Long live the king!" Saul installed as a king in chapter 12.

1 Samuel 12:6-13

Then Samuel said to the people, "It is the LORD who appointed Moses and Aaron and who brought your fathers up from the land of Egypt. So now, take your stand, that I may plead with you before the LORD concerning all the righteous acts of the LORD which He did for you and your fathers. When Jacob went into Egypt and your fathers cried out to the LORD, then the LORD sent Moses and Aaron who brought your fathers out of Egypt and settled them in this place. But they forgot the LORD their God, so He sold them into the hand of Sisera, captain of the army of Hazor, and into the hand of the Philistines and into the hand of the king of Moab, and they fought against them. They cried out to the LORD and said, 'We have sinned because we have forsaken the LORD and have served the Baals and the Ashtaroth; but now deliver us from the hands of our enemies, and we will serve You.' Then the LORD sent Jerubbaal (and Bedan and Jephthah and Samuel, and delivered you from the hands of your enemies all around, so that you lived in security. When you saw that Nahash the king of the sons of Ammon came against you, you said to me, 'No, but a king shall reign over us,' although the LORD your God was your king. Now therefore, here is the king whom you have chosen, whom you have asked for, and behold, the LORD has set a king over you."

Here was a great day for the nation of Israel. They were getting a king! It was inauguration day! Samuel, the one presiding over the installation of Saul, began to rehearse with Israel how the LORD was the one who rescued them from their distress, time after time after time. He rescued them from Egypt (verse 8). He rescued them from Sisera (verse 9). He rescued them from the Philistines (verse 9). He rescued them from the Moabites (verse 9). He had rescued them from the hands of all of their enemies (verse 11). And then, Samuel proceeds to them the people of Israel they were rejecting the one who had led them in victory for years. Instead, they were choosing Saul to be their king!

You need to catch the significance of Samuel's words. God was their great hero, who had delivered them over and over and over again. You could always depend upon Him in the clutch. But, on this day, they were forsaking their hero. This is like the Bulls giving up on Jordan. This is like the 49ers giving up on Montana. Or, perhaps better yet, this is like England giving up on Churchill. This is like France giving up on Napoleon. But, give up they did. And they got their king.

I have spent much time here in 1 Samuel, because the manner in which Saul was installed as king really sets up the rest of the kings. Some of them are good. And some of them are bad. But, they all fail in being the true king that they need. This was Samuel's constant warning to them. And, we shall see, it came true.

What was true of Israel is also true for us as well. No human king is what we need. Many are hailing president Obama as the Savior of our society. But, he's not going to save our society. Reagan and Bush and Clinton never saved our society. We need to God to rule over us if we will ever have a perfect society.

Well, let's look at our first king, Saul. Saul's reign in Israel was not good. It lasted a bit over 40 years (1 Samuel 13:1). It was filled with defeat. The Philistines were often ruling and reigning over Israel during these days. The reign of Saul was filled with sin. Saul defiled the altar (1 Samuel 13). Saul disobeyed the LORD by not destroying the Amalekites as God had instructed him to do (1 Samuel 15). His reign was filled with jealousy (1 Samuel 18:7). And through it all, Saul went mad. He was obsessed with assassinating his successor, David. Saul was a crazy man, .and a crazy man can't run a country. It just doesn't work. And so, Israel got their king. But, their king was not a good king. You can almost hear God in heaven saying, "I told you so. I told you that you should have kept me as king."

Anyway, the next king in Israel was king David. He also reigned in Israel for about 40 years (1 Kings 2:11). Now, David was a great king. He was a man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 13:14). During his days, Israel knew success and victory. It was through David's reign that Israel obtained peace and safety all around, from Dan (in the north) to Beersheba (in the south). All other kings were compared to David. When the people of Israel talked about "the good old days," they were talking about the days during the reign of king David.

David was a man of faith. He wrote many of the Psalms. He was a man of courage (to fight against Goliath). He was a humble man (2 Samuel 7:18ff; 1 Chron. 29:14). He won victories for Israel. The song among the women were, "Saul has slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands" (1 Samuel 18:7). He was a man of principle (refusing to retaliate against Saul, the king). His heart was "wholly devoted to the LORD his God" (1 Kings 15:3). And things went well in David's reign. It was through David that Israel was able to obtain peace on all sides.

But, the most significant thing about David was the promise that God made to him. This comes in my second point, ...

2. The Promise of the Kingdom

The promise of the kingdom comes in 2 Samuel 7. Now, when you hear this chapter mentioned, do you have an idea of what takes place in

this chapter? If you don't know, I would encourage you to engrain this chapter into your mind. This chapter contains the promise made to David. It is the covenant to David. It is often called, "The Davidic Covenant." This chapter is as significant as Genesis 12, when God made the promise to Abraham. The promise to Abraham was made in 2000 B. C. The promise to David was made in 1000 B. C.

In the beginning of the chapter, David expressed his wish to build a temple for the LORD. He had noticed that he dwelt in a permanent house made of cedar. But, the articles of worship still dwelt in a tent (i.e. the tabernacle), which was only a temporary dwelling. So, David expressed his desire to build a permanent dwelling place for the worship of the LORD. He spoke with Nathan about his intentions. Initially, he was agreeable. However, the LORD said (through Nathan), "Are you the one who should build for Me a house to dwell in?" (2 Samuel 7:5). Then, the LORD told Nathan to tell to Davie, ...

2 Samuel 7:8-18

Now therefore, thus you shall say to My servant David, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts, "I took you from the pasture, from following the sheep, to be ruler over My people Israel. I have been with you wherever you have gone and have cut off all your enemies from before you; and I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth. I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you. When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you. Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.'" In accordance with all these words and all this vision, so Nathan spoke to David.

This is the Davidic covenant. God begins with a short review of David and his life. As a young man, he was a shepherd in the field (verse 8). He kept watch over the flocks by night. God took him from the pasture and placed him in the palace upon the throne (verse 9). He became the king and ruler of Israel, shepherding people rather than animals.

That's all well and good. Nothing special there. However, at the end of verse 9, God transitions to the future. The promise comes, "I will make you a great name, like the names of the great men who are on the earth" (verse 9). Proverbs 22:1 says that "a good name is to be more desired than great wealth." Well, here in verse 9, God isn't promising David a "good" name. Rather, He's promising him a "great" name.

This is the same promise that God made with Abraham (Genesis 12:2). God had promised to make his name great. This has to do with reputation. It has to do with prosperity. It has to do with blessing. God promises that the name of David will ring down through history. The next promise comes in verse 10, ...

2 Samuel 7:10-11

I will also appoint a place for My people Israel and will plant them, that they may live in their own place and not be disturbed again, nor will the wicked afflict them any more as formerly, even from the day that I commanded judges to be over My people Israel; and I will give you rest from all your enemies. The LORD also declares to you that the LORD will make a house for you."

These words talk about security and longevity. David was desiring to build a house for the LORD. David had set his heart upon entering a building program to obtain a permanent structure in which the LORD may dwell. And God said, "I'm going to make you secure. You are going to have a place. I'm going to plant my people securely in the land. I will give you a time of rest, a time of peace." God here is promising a peace that will come upon Israel. And then God said, "I will make a house for you" (verse 11). This is the very thing that David was seeking to do for God, build Him a house (verses 4-7). But, God turns the tables and said, "I will make a house for you."

What does this mean? God will build David a house? It certainly doesn't mean that God will build him a physical house. David already has a house (verse 2). The promise is bigger than that. It has reference to David's dynasty. This is clear when you look down in verse 16, "Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever." When God refers to building a "house" for David, He has in mind David's dynasty. God will build David's kingdom. This is clear in the next few verses, ...

2 Samuel 7:12-13

When your days are complete and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your descendant after you, who will come forth from you, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever.

Verse 12 is talking about the death of David. God is going to raise up one of his descendants. God will establish his kingdom. He is going to build a house. And God will establish his throne forever. From history, we know that this turned out to be Solomon. There was enough peace during his days, and Israel had enough resources to build a temple. From everything that we know, this temple was a magnificent structure. The promise of verse 13 came to pass. But, the promise was bigger than a promise to build a building. The promise is that God would establish the throne of his kingdom forever (verse 13). In other words, the throne of David will endure forever! Verses 14 and 15 then speaks about Solomon.

2 Samuel 7:14-15

I will be a father to him and he will be a son to Me; when he commits iniquity, I will correct him with the rod of men and the

strokes of the sons of men, but My lovingkindness shall not depart from him, as I took it away from Saul, whom I removed from before you.

God was here anticipating the sin of Solomon. God would discipline him. And yet, his sin would not cause God to desert him. God will be faithful to David and to Solomon and to his descendants. This is the point of verse 16, ...

2 Samuel 7:16

Your house and your kingdom shall endure before Me forever; your throne shall be established forever.

There are only two ways that verse 16 could ever be fulfilled. One way is for God to continue forever to provide a descendant to sit upon the throne. Solomon sits on the throne. And then Solomon's son, Rehoboam sits on the throne. And then Rehoboam's son, Abijah sits on the throne. And then Abijah's son, Asa sits on the throne. And then Asa's son, Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Ahaziah, Joash, Amaziah, Azariah, Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah, and on and on and on forever. That's one way for David's throne to be established forever.

The other way for David's throne to be established forever is that you have a king from the line of David, who reigns forever. And this is how God has fulfilled His promise to David. One of His descendants, Jesus, has taken the throne. And His throne is a forever throne. Obviously, the first way for this to take place hasn't happened. There are no kings today in Israel. But, the second way has taken place. Jesus is the great fulfillment of this passage.

Jesus is the king who lives forever. He is the king who reigns forever. Multiple times in the Bible, we have read of how Jesus has conquered death (no longer to die again), and is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God (Heb. 1:3; 8:1; 10:12; 12:2). Though He rules now from His throne, His rule is not what it will someday be. Today is a day of waiting. He is waiting until all of His enemies are made a footstool for His feet (Heb. 10:13). And in that day, He will reign and rule over all people! He is the King of kings. He is the Lord of lords. His throne will be established forever!

Israel knew that this king would come. Throughout the history of Israel, they were always looking for the One who would come and sit upon the throne. With each king that would arise, the question would be, "Is he the one?" When another king ascended the throne, the question would come, "Is he the one?" Isaiah has promised the day when such a king would be born to them, ...

Isaiah 9:6-7

For a child will be born to us,
a son will be given to us;
And the government will rest on His shoulders;
And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.
There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace,
On the throne of David and over his kingdom,
To establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness
From then on and forevermore.
The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

Israel was anticipating this king who would come. It was Jesus. Our mighty God and eternal father became a man to dwell among us. He was born the son of David. He will sit upon the throne of David! Of his kingdom, there will be no end! During His days upon earth, He humbled Himself to the point of death, thereby purchasing our redemption. And because of His humiliation, ...

Philippians 2:9-11

God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee will bow, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

The question comes to you. What king are you serving? Are you serving the king of your wants? Are the things of this life more dominant in your life than King Jesus? Or, have you bowed the knee to King Jesus? Have you submitted yourself to His rule? Have you found your refuge in His cross? Or, will He come and destroy you someday, when He fully established His reign over all?

The covenant that God made to David was that one of his sons would sit on the throne. David wasn't to be that man. As good as David was, he was far from perfect. He committed adultery with Bathsheba while in office. Shortly thereafter, he had Uriah, Bathsheba's husband put to death on the battlefield. Then, he kept silent about his sin for about a year (Ps. 32; 2 Samuel 12).

Such actions destroyed his reign. As a result, he had family problems. His son Absalom, usurped the throne and defiled his wives (2 Samuel 16:21-22). Another son, Adonijah, conspired to take the throne after David's death. David died a defeated man, with his family feuding with each other. David **wasn't the king that Israel was looking for**. With each coming king, it was evident that he wasn't the king they needed either. This is the story of the rest of the kingdom of Israel. They never quite found their king (until Jesus arrived).

We have seen (1) The Start of the Kingdom; and (2) The Promise of the Kingdom. Now, let's close quickly by looking at ...

3. The Fall of the Kingdom

After David, Solomon became king! There were high hopes for Solomon. He was the wisest man in the land. If anyone could rule the nation, it would be Solomon! He spoke 3,000 proverbs (1 Kings 4:32). He wrote over a thousand songs (1 Kings 4:32). He had the wisdom to discourse on all topics. He spoke of trees. He spoke of spices. He spoke of birds and creeping things and fish (1 Kings 4:33). So great was his wisdom that "Men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom."

And it's not merely that Solomon had earthly wisdom. No. His wisdom was God-given. The Lord visited him one night and said to him, "As what you wish Me to give you" (1 Kings 3:5). And Solomon asked for an "understanding heart ... to discern between good and evil" (1 Kings 3:9). Listen to what the LORD said to Solomon, ...

1 Kings 3:11-14

Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, behold, I have done according to your words Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days. If you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.

God gave to Solomon a wisdom that surpassed anyone of his day. In fact, God gave to Solomon more wisdom than anyone would ever have. **If anyone could rule a nation, it would be Solomon, wouldn't it?**

On top of the wisdom that Solomon received, God also gave Solomon "riches and honor" beyond any of his contemporaries. Perhaps you remember the story in 1 Kings 10 of the Queen of Sheba, who had heard of the wisdom of Solomon and came on a trip to see it for herself. She saw the great temple that Solomon built. She saw the great palace that Solomon built. She noticed that all of Solomon's vessels in his home were of gold, not silver, because silver "was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon" (1 Kings 10:21). At the end of her trip, she said to Solomon, ...

1 Kings 10:6-8

It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard. How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.

In other words, she was blown away by the wisdom of Solomon. **If anyone could rule a nation, it would be Solomon.**

And yet, at the end of his life, Solomon was found wanting. He found no satisfaction in his success. His riches didn't satisfy him. His wisdom didn't satisfy him. His military power, as great as it was, didn't satisfy him. So, he indulged in earthly pleasures. He tells of his experience in Ecclesiastes. Solomon writes, ...

Ecclesiastes 1:16-2:1

I said to myself, "Behold, I have magnified and increased wisdom more than all who were over Jerusalem before me; and my mind has observed a wealth of wisdom and knowledge." And I set my mind to know wisdom and to know madness and folly; I realized that this also is striving after wind. Because in much wisdom there is much grief, and increasing knowledge results in increasing pain. I said to myself, "Come now, I will test you with pleasure. So enjoy yourself."

Being the richest man in the world, he indulged himself. He built houses and vineyards and gardens and parks (Ecc. 2:4-5). To make them nicer, he planted fruit trees and made ponds in them (Ecc. 2:5-6). He bought slaves, who would do his bidding (Ecc. 2:7). He owned much livestock (Ecc. 2:7). He hired singers to provide for him music upon demand (Ecc. 2:8). He also had many concubines to satisfy his sexual lusts (Ecc. 2:8). He ended up with 700 wives and 300 concubines (1 Kings 11:3). Eventually, this led him into idolatry (1 Kings 11:4-5). "Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammorites" (1 Kings 11:5).

Solomon did not finish well. This certainly didn't please the LORD. We read, ...

1 Kings 10:9-13

Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded. So the LORD said to Solomon, "Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

And this is exactly what happened after the days of Solomon. The kingdom was torn away. Solomon, the wisest and richest king, failed to rule the people well. The kingdom was torn away during the days of Rehoboam, Solomon's son.

Rehoboam's story is told in 1 Kings 12. When Solomon died, Rehoboam, his son, took over the reign of Israel. Rather than listening to the counsel of the older and wiser, Rehoboam listened to the counsel of the young men, who encouraged him to increase the labor of the people and make it hard for them. The result was a divided nation. Just as the United States was divided in the early 1800's over the issue of slavery, so also was the nation of Israel divided over the issue of Rehoboam. Those in the north realized that the king, who was stationed in the south, wasn't listening to them. So, they seceded from the union, just like they did in the days of the Civil War in our country. But, there was no war in this time. Rather, Jeroboam took over the reign in the north. And Rehoboam was the king in the south.

One nation had become two nations. Israel was the name of the nation in the north, comprised of 10 of the tribes of Israel. Judah was the name of the nation in the south, comprised of 2 of the tribes of Israel. Israel in the north. Judah in the south. With few exceptions, the kings that followed Solomon weren't good kings. In fact, all of the kings in the north were evil kings.

Jeroboam was an evil king.
Nadab was an evil king.
Baasha was an evil king.
Elah was an evil king.
Zimri was an evil king.
Tibni was an evil king.
Omri was an evil king.
Ahab was an evil king.
Ahaziah was an evil king.
Jehoram was an evil king.
Jehu was an evil king.
Jehoahaz was an evil king.
Jehoash was an evil king.
Jeroboam II was an evil king.
Zechariah was an evil king.
Shallum was an evil king.
Menahem was an evil king.
Pekahiah was an evil king.
Pekah was an evil king.
Hoshea was an evil king.

Twenty evil kings, one after another, can only spell disaster for the nation. As the king, so go the people. And in 722 B. C. the nation of Israel fell to the Assyrians. After conquering Israel, the king of Assyria brought men from many nations and had them live in the land of Israel (2 Kings 17:24ff). As a result, Israel ceased to be a kingdom.

Why did they fall? The testimony comes in 2 Kings 17,

2 Kings 17:7-18

Now this came about because the sons of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God, who had brought them up from the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and they had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD had driven out before the sons of Israel, and in the customs of the kings of Israel which they had introduced. The sons of Israel did things secretly which were not right against the LORD their God. Moreover, they built for themselves high places in all their towns, from watchtower to fortified city. They set for themselves sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every green tree, and there they burned incense on all the high places as the nations did which the LORD had carried away to exile before them; and they did evil things provoking the LORD. They served idols, concerning which the LORD had said to them, "You shall not do this thing." Yet the LORD warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets and every seer, saying, "Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets." However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the LORD their God. They rejected His statutes and His covenant which He made with their fathers and His warnings with which He warned them. And they followed vanity and became vain, and went after the nations which surrounded them, concerning which the LORD had commanded them not to do like them. They forsook all the commandments of the LORD their God and made for themselves molten images, even two calves, and made an Asherah and worshiped all the host of heaven and served Baal. Then they made their sons and their daughters pass through the fire, and practiced divination and enchantments, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him. So the LORD was very angry with Israel and removed them from His sight; none was left except the tribe of Judah.

Though the tribe of Judah remained in the south, their story is much the same. Less than a hundred and fifty years later, they were carried away into exile to Babylon. (Next week, we will look at the exile). Their kings weren't so good either. Oh, there were some, like Asa, who initiated reforms in his day or like Hezekiah, who brought reform to Judah or like Josiah, who reinstated the temple worship after many years of neglect. But, for the most part, they followed after their own sins and led Judah into the same.

The moral of the story of the kingdom stage is that your kings aren't good enough. You need a better king. This is the message of the Bible. Jesus Christ is the perfect king! He will rule and reign. So bow to the great king!

This sermon was delivered to Rock Valley Bible Church on July 26, 2009 by Steve Brandon.
For more information see www.rvbc.cc.

[1] Written by John Godfrey Saxe (1816-1887).

[2] These stages are from the book, *30 Days to Understanding the Bible*, by Max Anders. It's an excellent book to help you grasp the main storyline of the Bible.