

NOTES



Chapter XII

From Dynasty to Exile

UNDERSTANDING

(for your preparation as a leader)

Page 226 - 235

DISCUSSION

(to use with your group)

Page 236 - 246

UNDERSTANDING

WHAT DO I NEED TO KNOW ABOUT THIS PASSAGE?

“It was the best of times, it was the worst of times.” This opening line from Charles Dickens’ *A Tale of Two Cities* could certainly be used to describe the rise and fall of the Davidic monarchy. We can see this right from the dynasty’s beginnings. On one hand, the combined reigns of David and Solomon represent a high point in Israel’s history: Israel experiences prosperity, territorial expansion, and the conversion of many nations that turn to their king to hear the wisdom of God. But on the other hand, the cancerous effects of sin still lurk in the background of these men’s lives and end up undermining God’s covenantal kingdom.

Near the end of his life, David crowns Solomon as his successor in the dynastic kingdom. The covenantal protection God promised to David will pass on to Solomon and all his royal heirs. However, the kingdom he entrusts to Solomon has been wounded by David’s own sins. In 2 Samuel 11, David commits adultery with Bathsheba and orders the murder of her husband, Uriah. Though David sincerely repented (2 Sm 12:13; cf. Ps 51) and was indeed forgiven by the Lord, we will see how the effects of his sins will continue to haunt the dynasty in the next generation and all the way up to the coming of Christ.

Let’s look at how the short-lived glory of Israel is embodied in the life of David’s first heir, King Solomon.

Solomon Prefiguring Christ

Solomon starts off as a noble and faithful king who takes Israel to its highest point in its history. When God offers to bless him in any way he chooses, Solomon asks for something that wouldn’t simply serve himself but would help him rule the people well: He asks for the gift of wisdom. Solomon also carried out his father’s wishes to build the Lord’s house, spending seven years constructing the temple and then leading his people in worship at the ceremonial dedication of this new central sanctuary.

Solomon’s greatness is seen most vividly in his international influence, leading even some from the pagan nations to the wisdom of God. 1 Kings highlights how many gentile kings covenant themselves to Solomon’s kingdom because they want to learn from his divinely given wisdom: “And men came from all the peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom” (1 Kgs 4:34). For a brief period, we see in Solomon the fulfillment of what David had said about the dynasty, that it would be a vehicle for the *torah adam*, the law for all humanity (2 Sm 7:19).

In these ways, Solomon prefigures Jesus Christ. He is the son of David and king of Israel; he is known for his divine wisdom and for being the temple builder; and his kingdom has international influence. His life is a foreshadowing of Jesus, who is the ultimate son of David and the king who fulfills all the promises made to David’s dynasty. Like Solomon, Jesus is known for His great wisdom and is the one who builds the new temple in His body (Jn 2); and it is Christ’s kingdom that ultimately fulfills Israel’s worldwide mission, extending God’s reign over all the earth.

The Fall of Solomon

However, while Solomon takes Israel to its highest glory, he also drags the nation down to one of the lowest points in its history. How did such a good, wise, and successful king fall so quickly and so hard? In the shadow of Solomon's great triumphs lurk the secrets that lead to the unraveling of his kingdom.

The First Book of Kings shows how Solomon spent seven years building the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6:38). But in the very next verse, the narrative tells us Solomon spent thirteen years building his *own* palace, a building that was almost four times larger than the Lord's temple. While Solomon appeared to love and worship God, he began to use his wisdom and authority to serve his own selfish interests rather than God and the people.

The Scriptures provided the future kings of Israel clear guidance on how to use their authority and avoid certain traps that ensnared other worldly leaders. Deuteronomy 17 warns kings not to use their authority to serve themselves in three specific ways—by building up their military might, multiplying their wives, or increasing wealth for themselves.

Unlike David, Solomon gradually becomes openly defiant of God's word when he breaks all three of these stipulations. First, Solomon begins using his authority to gather 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen—a violation of the first command for the king (1 Kgs 10:26).

Second, Solomon uses his royal position to build up a large harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines, many of whom were pagans who seduced Solomon into idolatry. We are told that “his wives turned away his heart after their gods” (1 Kgs 10:4) and that Solomon built

temples to the pagan deities and “did what was evil in the sight of the Lord” (1 Kgs 11:4-8).

Third, Solomon used his royal position to increase his own wealth to excessive proportions. In addition to other revenues from foreigners, Solomon receives in one year 666 talents of gold—a number symbolizing the epitome of evil.¹ While Solomon prefigures Christ in his kingship, his wisdom, and his construction of the new temple, he also becomes an anti-Christ figure in his self-indulgence and rejection of the ways of the one, true God. Indeed, Solomon's three-fold temptation toward money, sex and power will remain formidable challenges to all who seek to overcome the world and follow the Lord.

As a result of Solomon's sinfulness, God curses the dynasty and announces that the kingdom will become divided. “I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. 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” (1 Kgs 11:11-12). This prophecy is carried out in the life of his heir, Rehoboam. The events that unfold in Rehoboam's reign fundamentally alter the rest of Israel's history. The united kingdom of the twelve tribes of Israel will be divided into two warring monarchies, with brothers battling brothers, until the two separate nations are brought to ruin.

Divided Kingdom

In a misguided effort to consolidate his power, the new king, Rehoboam, decides to raise the already oppressive taxes in the land (1 Kgs 12:1-16). This sparks the rebellion of the ten northern tribes under their self-appointed leader, Jeroboam, splitting the kingdom into two. In the north, the ten tribes gather to form a newly aligned

¹ When read in the context of all of Scripture, this figure points to the demonic beast in the Book of Revelation, whose number is 666. In fact, it is the only other passage in the Bible where this number is used.

kingdom around Jeroboam and arrogate to themselves the name "Israel." In the south, the remaining tribes of Judah and Benjamin, along with the priestly Levites, form the Kingdom of Judah.

Recognizing the distinction between these two separated kingdoms is a key to understand the rest of the Old Testament. From now on, whenever "Israel" is mentioned, it is often a reference to the ten northern tribes that are in rebellion with the Davidic dynasty. On the other hand, references to "Judah" call to mind those people in union with the divinely appointed royal sons of David.

The rebellion of the northern tribes is more than a political division. Their severance quickly turns into apostasy, as the ten northern tribes separate from the central sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem and establish their own cities of worship in Bethel and Dan. They also separate from the divinely appointed Levitical priesthood, as Jeroboam appoints his own "priests" to serve at these unsanctioned shrines (1 Kgs 13:31-34). Finally, Jeroboam, who spent his younger years in Egypt, imports idolatrous Egyptian practices into his realm as he leads his people to worship two golden calves, reminiscent of Israel's idolatry at Mount Sinai (1 Kgs 12:28).

The northern kingdom thus rebels not just against the Davidic kings but against God's covenantal plan for the Davidic dynasty, the Levitical priesthood, and the temple in Jerusalem. Meanwhile, the people there rebel against God Himself as they start worshiping false deities. Because of their unfaithfulness, the northern kingdom does not survive for long. It begins a quick downward spiral of civil strife, sin, and rebellion against God that culminates in the nation's destruction. In 722 B.C., the Assyrians invade the region and send many people from the northern tribes into exile while they resettle the land with five pagan nations (2 Kgs 17). The effect of this imposed assimilation

with the pagans will drive the northern tribes even further away from their Davidic king and their covenant with God.

Trouble in the South

In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, the kings are not that much better, as almost all of them either lead the people into idolatry or fail to curb the idolatrous practices of their wicked predecessors. Their continued failure to lead the people spiritually allows the kingdom to fall into covenant disobedience, triggering the curses of Deuteronomy 28. As Moses foretold in that passage, Israel's infidelity to God's covenant will lead them into exile: In 586 B.C., the Babylonians attack Jerusalem, burn the temple to the ground, and lead all but the poorest and weakest of the Jews into exile, forcing them to be slaves in Babylon.

Though suffering in a foreign land, Israel receives some consolation from the prophets who remind the people that God has not abandoned them and that, one day, God will rescue them from their enemies and provide a definitive restoration of the Davidic kingdom.

One such prophecy comes from a Jewish youth who grew up in the Babylonian exile: the prophet Daniel. The Babylonian king has a strange dream about a large statue with the head made of gold, its breasts and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. The king then saw a stone cut without human hands that struck the statue and destroyed it. But the stone became a great mountain and filled the entire earth (Dn 2:31-35).

Daniel was given insight from God to interpret the dream. He explains that the four parts of the statue represent a series of four pagan kingdoms that will dominate the region and oppress the Jews. The

first part, the head of gold, represents the current world power, Babylon (Dn 2:38). The next three parts of the statue represent three future kingdoms that rule the region over the next several centuries: the Persian kingdom that ruled from 539 to 331 B.C.; the Greeks, who ruled over the land from 331 to 63 B.C.; and the Roman empire, who rule the Jews from 63 B.C. to the time of Christ.

At the climax of Daniel's interpretation, he announces that, in the days of that fourth and most fierce kingdom (which is later shown to be Rome), God himself will establish His own kingdom, which will never end. The rock that smashes the statue and becomes a great world-filling mountain represents the worldwide kingdom God will establish in those days, while the destruction of the statue symbolizes God's judgment upon those pagan oppressors. "And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed.... It shall break to pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" (Dn 2:44).

For Daniel and the Jews in exile, this prophecy would inspire great hope. Even though they are suffering as slaves in Babylon, God has not forgotten His promise about the Davidic kingdom. A new king will come who will establish it forever.

Seventy Weeks of Years

The Book of Daniel not only provides a road-map for the rest of Israel's history up to the time of Christ. It also offers a time-table.

The Jews spend about seventy years in Babylon. Near the end of that exile, the angel Gabriel announces to Daniel that, while the Jews will soon return to Jerusalem, the full restoration of the kingdom will come much further in the future. Gabriel announces that this process

will take "seventy weeks of years" (Dn 9:24). Following seventy years of exile, there will be seven times seventy years—"seventy weeks of years"—before the restoration will occur and a new anointed king will come.

In other words, after having waited seventy years in Babylon, God's people are told that they will now have to wait seven times this long—some 490 years—before the full restoration of Israel and the coming of the great messiah. At the end of this period, sin will be atoned for, all prophecy will be fulfilled, and everlasting righteousness will be established (Dn 9:24). An anointed one (a king) will be set apart and will establish a worldwide covenant with the many nations (see Dn 9:26-27).

This may help explain why, some 490 years later—precisely when the Jews are suffering under the oppression of the fourth pagan nation, the Romans—many in Israel are longing for the coming of the messiah and of God's kingdom. It also sheds light on why many Jews responded so enthusiastically to John the Baptist's message: "Repent, the *kingdom* of heaven is at hand!" (Mt 3:2 emphasis added).

DISCUSSION

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR YOUR BIBLE STUDY

1 Kings 3:4-15, 6:38, 7:1, 10:14, 10:26, 11:1-8, 12:1-16,
Deuteronomy 17:14-20

Please read aloud: This week, we pick up the story of the kingdom in the life of David's son, Solomon.

Near the end of his life, David crowns Solomon as his successor in the dynastic kingdom. The covenantal protection God promised to David will pass on to Solomon and all his royal heirs. However, the kingdom he entrusts to Solomon has been wounded by David's own sins. In 2 Samuel 11, David commits adultery with Bathsheba and orders the murder of her husband, Uriah. Though David sincerely repented (2 Sm 12:13; cf. Ps 51) and was indeed forgiven by the Lord, we will see how the effects of his sins will continue to haunt the dynasty in the next generation and all the way up to the coming of Christ.

Let's look at how the short-lived glory of Israel is embodied in the life of David's first heir, King Solomon.

Read 1 Kings 3:4-15.

1. What does Solomon ask of the Lord, and how does the Lord respond? What does this reveal about the kind of king Solomon will be?

Answer: Solomon starts off as a noble and faithful king who takes Israel to its highest point in its history. When God offers to bless him in any way he chooses, Solomon asks for something that wouldn't simply serve himself but would help him rule the people well: He asks for the gift of wisdom.

Please read aloud: Not only did Solomon ask for wisdom, he also carried out his father's wishes to build the Lord's house, spending seven years constructing the temple and then leading his people in worship at the ceremonial dedication of this new central sanctuary.

Solomon's greatness is also seen vividly in his international influence, leading even some from the pagan nations to the wisdom of God. 1 Kings highlights how many gentile kings covenant themselves to Solomon's kingdom because they want to learn from his divinely given wisdom: "And men came from all the peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and from all the kings of the earth, who had heard of his wisdom" (1 Kgs 4:34).

2. How does Solomon's wisdom and influence on the "nations" fulfill what God had promised to David in the previous chapter of this study?

Answer: For a brief period, we see in Solomon the fulfillment of what David had said about the dynasty, that it would be a vehicle for the torah adam, the law for all humanity (2 Sm 7:19).

3. Solomon is a king who governs with wisdom, builds the temple, and has international influence. How do these aspects of Solomon's life prefigure Jesus Christ?

Answer: Solomon's life is a foreshadowing of Jesus, who is the ultimate son of David and the king who fulfills all the promises made to David's dynasty. Like Solomon, Jesus is known for His great wisdom and is the one who builds the new temple in His body (Jn 2); and it is Christ's

kingdom that ultimately fulfills Israel's worldwide mission, extending God's reign over all the earth.

Please read aloud: While Solomon takes Israel to its highest glory, he also drags the nation down to one of the lowest points in its history. How did such a good, wise, and successful king fall so quickly and so hard? In the shadow of Solomon's great triumphs lurk the secrets that lead to the unraveling of his kingdom.

Read 1 Kings 6:38 and 1 Kings 7:1.

4. What do these two simple verses reveal about Solomon?

Answer: The First Book of Kings shows how Solomon spent seven years building the temple in Jerusalem (1 Kgs 6:38). But in the very next verse, the narrative tells us Solomon spent thirteen years building his own palace, a building that was almost four times larger than the Lord's temple. While Solomon appeared to love and worship God, he began to use his wisdom and authority to serve his own selfish interests rather than God and the people.

Please read aloud: The Scriptures provided the future kings of Israel clear guidance on how to use their authority and avoid certain traps that ensnared other worldly leaders. Let's read these laws from the book of Deuteronomy:

Read Deuteronomy 17:14-20.

5. What does this section of the law state that kings specifically should not do?

Answer: Deuteronomy 17 warns kings not to use their authority to serve themselves in three specific ways—by building up their military might, multiplying their wives, or increasing wealth for themselves.

Please read aloud: Now let's read about what Solomon does:

Read 1 Kings 10:14, 1 Kings 10:26, and 1 Kings 11:1-8.

6. How well does Solomon obey (or disobey) the laws for the king given in Deuteronomy?

Answer: Unlike David, Solomon gradually becomes openly defiant of God's word when he breaks all three of these stipulations. First, Solomon begins using his authority to gather 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen—a violation of the first command for the king (1 Kgs 10:26).

Second, Solomon uses his royal position to build up a large harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines, many of whom were pagans who seduced Solomon into idolatry. We are told that "his wives turned away his heart after their gods" (1 Kgs 10:4) and that Solomon built temples to the pagan deities and "did what was evil in the sight of the Lord" (1 Kgs 11:4-8).

Third, Solomon used his royal position to increase his own wealth to excessive proportions. In addition to other revenues from foreigners, Solomon receives in one year 666 talents of gold—a number symbolizing the epitome of evil.¹

Please read aloud: While Solomon prefigures Christ in his kingship, his wisdom, and his construction of the new temple, he also becomes an anti-Christ figure in his self-indulgence and rejection of the ways of the one, true God. Indeed, Solomon's three-fold temptation toward money, sex and power will remain formidable challenges to all who seek to overcome the world and follow the Lord.

¹ When read in the context of all of Scripture, this figure points to the demonic beast in the Book of Revelation, whose number is 666. In fact, it is the only other passage in the Bible where this number is used.

7. How do the temptations of money, sex and power continue to lead others astray today? Have you experienced this in your own life or observed it in lives of others?

Allow the group to discuss.

Please read aloud: As a result of Solomon's sinfulness, God curses the dynasty and announces that the kingdom will become divided. "I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant. 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" (1 Kgs 11:11-12). This prophecy is carried out in the life of his heir, Rehoboam. Let's read about what Rehoboam does when he comes to power:

Read 1 Kings 12:1-16.

8. What advice do the elders and the young men each give to Rehoboam? What does Rehoboam do? And what does this reveal about Rehoboam's character?

Answer: The elders recommend lessening the burden of the people, so as to win them over. However, the young men recommend increasing the people's burden. In a misguided effort to consolidate his power, the new king, Rehoboam, decides to raise the already oppressive taxes in the land. Here we can see Rehoboam being foolish with his office, which will ultimately lead to problems for God's people.

Please read aloud: Rehoboam's action sparks the rebellion of the ten northern tribes, splitting the kingdom into two: "Israel" in the north and "Judah" in the south. The severance of the northern tribes quickly turns into apostasy, as they separate from the central sanctuary of the temple in Jerusalem and establish their own cities of worship in Bethel and Dan, appoint their own "priests," and worship two golden calves, reminiscent of Israel's idolatry at Mount Sinai (1 Kgs 12:28).

The northern kingdom thus rebels not just against the Davidic kings but against God's covenantal plan for the Davidic dynasty, the Levitical priesthood, and the temple in Jerusalem. Because of their unfaithfulness, the northern kingdom begins a quick downward spiral of civil strife, sin, and rebellion against God that culminates in the nation's destruction in 722 BC, when the Assyrians carry the northern tribes into exile.

In the Southern Kingdom of Judah, however, the kings are not that much better, as almost all of them either lead the people into idolatry or fail to curb the idolatrous practices of their wicked predecessors. As Moses foretold in Deuteronomy 28, Israel's infidelity to God's covenant will lead them into exile: In 586 B.C., the Babylonians attack Jerusalem, burn the temple to the ground, and lead all but the poorest and weakest of the Jews into exile, forcing them to be slaves in Babylon.

9. This is a low point of the history of Israel. Think back through salvation history. How did Israel get to this point?

Allow the group to discuss.

Please read aloud: Though suffering in a foreign land, Israel receives some consolation from the prophets who remind the people that God has not abandoned them and that, one day, God will rescue them from their enemies and provide a definitive restoration of the Davidic kingdom. Let's read one of these prophecies from the prophet Daniel, a Jewish youth who grew up in the Babylonian exile:

Read Daniel 2:25-45.

10. What happens in this passage? Can someone summarize it?

Answer: The Babylonian king has a strange dream about a large

statue with the head made of gold, its breasts and arms of silver, its belly and thighs of bronze, its legs of iron, and its feet partly of iron and partly of clay. The king then saw a stone cut without human hands that struck the statue and destroyed it. But the stone became a great mountain and filled the entire earth (Dn 2:31-35).

Daniel was given insight from God to interpret the dream. He explains that the four parts of the statue represent a series of four pagan kingdoms that will dominate the region and oppress the Jews.

At the climax of Daniel's interpretation, he announces that, in the days of that fourth and most fierce kingdom, God himself will establish His own kingdom, which will never end. The rock that smashes the statue and becomes a great world-filling mountain represents the worldwide kingdom God will establish in those days, while the destruction of the statue symbolizes God's judgment upon those pagan oppressors.

Please read aloud: This prophecy is fulfilled in history. The first part, the head of gold, represents the current world power, Babylon (Dn 2:38). The first three parts of the statue represent three future kingdoms that rule the region over the next several centuries: the Persian kingdom that ruled from 539 to 331 B.C.; the Greeks, who ruled over the land from 331 to 63 B.C.; and the Roman empire, who rule the Jews from 63 B.C. to the time of Christ. The stone represents the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the “stone which the builders rejected” (Mt 21:42, Acts 4:11).

For Daniel and the Jews in exile, this prophecy would inspire great hope. Even though they are suffering as slaves in Babylon, God has not forgotten His promise about the Davidic kingdom. A new king will come who will establish it forever.

The Book of Daniel not only provides a road-map for the rest of Israel's history up to the time of Christ. It also offers a time-table.

Read Daniel 9:24-27.

11. According to this prophecy, when will this new kingdom emerge?
Answer: The Jews spend about seventy years in Babylon. Near the end of that exile, an angel announces to Daniel that, while the Jews will soon return to Jerusalem, the full restoration of the kingdom will come much further in the future. He announces that this process will take “seventy weeks of years” (Dn 9:24). Following seventy years of exile, there will be seven times seventy years—“seventy weeks of years”—before the restoration will occur and a new anointed king will come.

In other words, after having waited seventy years in Babylon, God's people are told that they will now have to wait seven times this long—some 490 years—before the full restoration of Israel and the coming of the great messiah. At the end of this period, sin will be atoned for, all prophecy will be fulfilled, and everlasting righteousness will be established (Dn 9:24). An anointed one (a king) will be set apart and will establish a worldwide covenant with the many nations (see Dn 9:26-27).

Please read aloud: This prophecy may help explain why, some 490 years later—precisely when the Jews are suffering under the oppression of the fourth pagan nation, the Romans—many in Israel are longing for the coming of the messiah and of God's kingdom. It also sheds light on why many Jews responded so enthusiastically to John the Baptist's message: “Repent, the *kingdom* of heaven is at hand!” (Mt 3:2 emphasis added).

