

The Gospel of the Kingdom

Week 5 - Day 2: King after King after King

“The Greatest trick the Devil ever pulled was convincing the world he didn’t exist.” -The Usual Suspects

One of the most memorable experiences I had as a baseball player were the conversations I had with my teammates off of the field. Every now and then, we would engage in serious talks about the biggest issues in our society! One night, one of my teammates threw out a question we would spend the rest of the game debating, “What are your thoughts about Christianity?” I responded in excitement, but also in reservation fearing that I would misrepresent the message of Jesus.

Over the course of the night, I noticed most of my non-believing friends had a hard time recognizing any “sin” in their life. Thus, they felt as though they did not need a “savior.”

Recognizing our own sin continues to be a huge leap for humanity. God’s word, however, continues to point us to humanity’s sinful nature.

The kingdom story picks up right after the great king Solomon falls prey to his own sinful ways. As a result, God decides to tear the kingdom away from the hands of Solomon and splits the kingdom territory between Jeroboam (Israel) and Rehoboam, Solomon’s son (Judah). God’s kingdom people are divided and ruled by countless kings who would drag them further away from God’s command. All 20 of the northern kings of Israel stray away from the good rule of God and choose their own methods of worship:

2 Kings 17:7-8 And this occurred because the people of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt, and had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the Lord drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced...

2 Kings 17:13-14 Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah by every prophet and every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep my commandments and my statutes, in accordance with all the Law that I commanded your fathers, and that I sent to you by my servants the prophets.” But they would not listen, but were stubborn, as their fathers had been, who did not believe in the Lord their God....

2 Kings 17:17-18 And they burned their sons and their daughters as offerings and used divination and omens and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, provoking him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them out of his sight. None was left but the tribe of Judah only.

As a result, God gives over the northern kingdom to exile in Assyria. Our search for the promised Messiah, however, continues through the southern Kingdom of Judah. David's descendants ruling the Southern kingdom only boasted 8 out of their 20 kings who were considered to be good in the eyes of the Bible.

Could any of these 8 be the Messiah?

The book of Kings ends by highlighting 3 of David's descendants in Judah. First, Hezekiah shows promise by remaining faithful to God under siege and praying for healing. However, he eventually leads a convoy of Babylonians to see all that is in his house, foreshadowing what is to come. After Hezekiah, Manasseh brings the kingdom to the pinnacle of wickedness:

1 Kings 21:11-12 Because Manasseh king of Judah has committed these abominations and has done things more evil than all that the Amorites did, who were before him, and has made Judah also to sin with his idols, therefore thus says the Lord, the God of Israel: Behold, I am bringing upon Jerusalem and Judah such disaster that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle.

God decides He is going to bring the same fate to Judah as he did to Israel: exile out of the land into Babylon. Before He does that, the author highlights Josiah. As Josiah's priest Hilkiah cleans out God's temple from a long history of abuse and neglect, he comes across the buried book of the laws of Moses. Josiah's reaction...

2 Kings 22:13 Go, inquire of the Lord for me, and for the people, and for all Judah, concerning the words of this book that has been found. For great is the wrath of the Lord that is kindled against us, because our fathers have not obeyed the words of this book, to do according to all that is written concerning us.

None of these kings were the royal seed of David we had hoped for. In fact, these people were all under the power of the kingdom of sin and destined to rebel, literally burying the commandments of God.

However, in the midst of human rebellion, God continues to reveal His mercy. The book of Kings EXPLODES with the presence of prophets! It's as if God's voice continues to get louder and louder as His people drift further and further away. The most famous prophets in the book of kings, Elijah and Elisha, stood face to face with wickedness and are known for bringing about some of the most memorable acts of God!

1 Kings 18:38-39 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. And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The Lord, he is God; the Lord, he is God."

2 Kings 2:9 When they had crossed, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you, before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please let there be a double portion of your spirit on me.”

Like a Father pursuing His lost son, the God of Israel uses His voice of truth to confront wickedness. When that does not work, He uses exile from the land as punishment meant to correct the ways of His beloved people.

Do you see sin as a big issue in your life? God gives us these Old Testament stories to come face to face with our LONG history of rebellion! Even with my friends who could not see it in themselves, they could not deny the fact that something is not right in our world. This is a great starting point for the gospel message because we as Christians have hope! There is hope that no matter how bad it gets, God still reigns and will continue to pursue His people and His kingdom purposes through the promised Messiah!

Need proof?

While Israel was down-and-out and all hope seemed to be lost in the Babylonian exile, the last passage in the book of Kings shares how God is working to preserve the line of David through Jehoiachin.

2 Kings 25:27-30 And in the thirty-seventh year of the exile of Jehoiachin king of Judah, in the twelfth month, on the twenty-seventh day of the month, Evil-merodach king of Babylon, in the year that he began to reign, graciously freed Jehoiachin king of Judah from prison. And he spoke kindly to him and gave him a seat above the seats of the kings who were with him in Babylon. So Jehoiachin put off his prison garments. And every day of his life he dined regularly at the king’s table, and for his allowance, a regular allowance was given him by the king, according to his daily needs, as long as he lived.

...even in exile the search continues and there is still hope that the promised Messiah from the line of David would come!

-AJ Vanegas

Share the Gospel: Who is this royal descendant of David who will take the everlasting throne over God’s people and faithfully keep God’s commands? Will Israel ever find a human king like this?

Personal Observations, Reflections, and Prayers:

