



The Historical Books of the Old Testament

Lesson 5

Lesson 5 Commentary

The Kingdom of Israel – Part 2

Lesson 6 Questions

The Kingdom of Israel – Part 3

Introduction

When we left off last session, the twelve tribes were united under King David's rule and all seemed well. Israel was at peace from all their neighbors. God made a covenant with David promising that his kingdom would last forever, and his son would be the "son of God." What could go wrong? David sins. He "takes" Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah the Hittite, and then has Uriah killed on the battlefield. God punishes him for his disobedience:

Thus, says the LORD God of Israel: I anointed you king over Israel. I delivered you from the hand of Saul. I gave you your lord's house and your lord's wives for your own. I gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were not enough, I could count up for you still more. Why have you despised the LORD and done what is evil in his sight? You have cut down Uriah the Hittite with the sword; his wife you took as your own, and him you killed with the sword of the Ammonites. Now, therefore, *the sword shall never depart from your house*, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife. Thus, says the LORD: *I will bring evil upon you out of your own house. I will take your wives before your very eyes and will give them to your neighbor: he shall lie with your wives in broad daylight. You have acted in secret, but I will do this in the presence of all Israel, in the presence of the sun itself.*" Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." Nathan answered David: "For his part, the LORD has removed your sin. You shall not die, but since you have utterly spurned the LORD by this deed, *the child born to you will surely die.*"¹

¹ 2 Sam 12:7–14.

David said he was sorry. Was that not enough? No, David had to do penance! “Notice how the punishment of David fits the crime. By means of his sins, David chose violence (the sword) and adultery, therefore his once-blessed “house” will now be plagued by precisely those two sins: violence and sexual transgressions.”² If you read 2 Samuel 14 - 20, you see all that happens as a result of this sin. But eventually David’s reign returns to rest.

Now we turn to the books of Kings. First, these books will take us past the reign of David to his son, Solomon. Second, it will take us from the reign of Solomon to the destruction of ten of the tribes and the exile of two. The structure of the books of Kings has the following chiastic structure:

A. One Kingdom under the Son of David: Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)

B. Two Kingdoms, Israel and Judah (1 Kings 12—2 Kings 17)

A’. One Kingdom under the Son of David: Judah Alone (2 Kings 18-25)³

In addition, the middle section (B), has its own chiastic substructure:

A. The Divided Monarchy before the Great Prophets (1 Kings 12-16)

B. The Divided Monarchy during Elijah’s Ministry (1 Kings 17—2 Kings 1)

C. The Transition from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2)

B’. The Divided Monarchy during Elisha’s Ministry (2 Kings 3-13)

A’. The Divided Monarchy after the Great Prophets (2 Kings 14-17)⁴

1 Kings

1 Kings opens with David growing old and a new king must be anointed. There is a battle of sorts between Adonijah, David’s eldest son, and Solomon. Through the support of Zadok, the priest, and Nathan, the prophet, Solomon prevails. David dies after this event. Soon after David’s death, an interesting series of events take place. Adonijah requests that Bathsheba ask Solomon to allow Adonijah to marry Abishag the Shunamite. Later, I will discuss the political reasons why Adonijah wanted this, but Bathsheba goes to Solomon to make the request. “Then

² John Bergsma and Brant Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament* (Ignatius Press, 2018), Kindle Edition, Chapter 14, Location 7873-7885.

³ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8239-8245.

⁴ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8245-8251.

Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, and the king stood up to meet her and paid her homage. Then he sat down upon his throne, and a throne was provided for the king's mother, who sat at his right.”⁵ “Sitting at his right” is a position of honor. What role did Bathsheba play in Solomon's court? Let's explore this. Solomon had a thousand wives, between princesses and concubines.⁶ Which one was the queen? Interestingly, it was not one of his wives at all. The concept that the wife of the king is the queen is a more modern development. The queen was the mother of the king and the position was called the Queen Mother.” Dr. Scott Hahn paints a clear picture of this custom.

Israel's monarchy arose in very specific historic circumstances in a particular geographic region. In the ancient Near East, most nations were monarchies ruled by a king. In addition, most cultures practiced polygamy; so, a given king often had several wives. This posed problems. First, whom should the people honor as queen? But more important, whose son should receive the right of succession to the throne? In most Near Eastern cultures, these twin problems were resolved by a single custom. The woman ordinarily honored as queen was not the wife of the king, but the mother of the king. There was an element of justice to the practice, since it was often the persuasive (or seductive) power of the mother that won the throne for her son. The custom also served as a stabilizing factor in national cultures. As wife of the former king and mother to the present king, the queen mother embodied the continuity of dynastic succession.⁷

The Queen Mother is referenced as a formal office in 1 Kgs 15:13: “He also removed his mother Maacah from being queen mother, because she had made an abominable image for Asherah; Asa cut down her image and burned it at the Wadi Kidron.”⁸ Edward Sri also sees this.

By examining various Old Testament passages involving the mother of the Davidic king, we can see that the queen mother held an official position in the royal court of Judah. Her power in the kingdom was not based simply on a mother's influence over a son; the queen mother actually “held a significant official political position superseded only by that of the king himself.” The importance of her office can be seen in a number of Old Testament texts. First, the narrative of 1 and 2 Kings views the king's mother as having such an

⁵ 1 Kgs 2:19.

⁶ 1 Kgs 11:3.

⁷ Scott Hahn, *Hail, Holy Queen: The Mother of God in the Word of God*, 1st ed. (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Image Books; Doubleday, 2001), 78–79.

⁸ 1 Kgs 15:13.

important role that it mentions her name while introducing almost every new monarch in Judah (all except three).⁹

Why am I spending this much time on the Queen Mother? It is because the role of Queen Mother prefigures Mary, the mother of Christ. Turning to Revelation we read the following:

A great sign appeared in the sky, a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on *her head a crown of twelve stars*. She was with child and wailed aloud in pain as she labored to give birth. Then another sign appeared in the sky; it was a huge red dragon, with seven heads and ten horns, and on its heads were seven diadems. Its tail swept away a third of the stars in the sky and hurled them down to the earth. Then the dragon stood before the woman about to give birth, to devour her child when she gave birth. *She gave birth to a son, a male child, destined to rule all the nations* with an iron rod. Her child was caught up to God and his throne.¹⁰

Early Christian writers such as Origen also acknowledged Mary's royal position. "It was Origen who made a significant "first step forward" along these lines... Origen viewed Elizabeth's greeting Mary with the words "mother of my Lord" as honoring her with a royal dignity."^{11 12}

One more point of interest related to Adonijah concerns why he requests to marry Abishag the Shunamite. Solomon cannot say "no" to his mother,¹³ but he knows that Adonijah's request is a power play in order to gain legitimacy as a rightful future usurper as Abishag was a consort to King David. Solomon chooses the most obvious third alternative which is to kill Adonijah¹⁴ and thereby render his mother's request impossible to fulfill. It's worth noting that this original context is an important contrast with Mary as well as a parallel: Bathsheba makes a foolish and naïve request that would have undermined her son's position as rightful king if he had granted it. Mary, on the other hand, makes a request at the wedding at Cana, subtly revealing her son as the rightful king.

The apex of the glory of Solomon's reign comes with the building of the Temple. The building of the Temple was not just an Israelite endeavor. "Solomon solicits the Gentiles to aid him in building the sanctuary by forming a trade alliance with King Hiram of Tyre."¹⁵ The

⁹ Edward Sri, *Queen Mother: A Biblical Theology of Mary's Queenship*, ed. Scott Hahn (Steubenville, OH: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2005), 48–49.

¹⁰ Rev 12:1–5.

¹¹ Sri, *Queen Mother*, 7.

¹² Luke 1:43.

¹³ 1 Kgs 2:20.

¹⁴ 1 Kgs 2:24–25.

¹⁵ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8372.

similarities and the differences between the Tabernacle in Exodus and the Temple built by Solomon are striking:

<i>The Tabernacle of Moses</i>	<i>The Temple of Solomon</i>
1. Tripartite structure: a. Outer court b. Holy place c. Holy of Holies	1. Tripartite structure: a. Vestibule b. Nave c. Inner sanctuary
2. Tent, made of goat's hair	2. Temple, overlaid in pure gold
3. Two small gold cherubim placed atop the ark	3. Two giant gold cherubim (ca. 20 feet!) placed in the inner sanctuary
4. Small golden menorah; placed in Holy Place	4. Ten giant gold menorahs; placed in nave
5. Small bronze laver of water; placed in outer court	5. Ten bronze lavers of water; placed in vestibule ¹⁶

After being considered the wisest man in the world and the “son of God,” Solomon starts a downward moral spiral primarily through worshipping the gods of his foreign wives. Just as David sins and is punished, so goes Solomon. “God responds by declaring that most of the kingdom will be torn from Solomon and that political enemies will rise up from within and without the empire to trouble him (1 Kings 11:9-43). Thus, ends the richest, most glorious, and wisest king Israel ever possessed, and thus ends the period of the united monarchy.” ¹⁷

Solomon is succeeded by his son, Rehoboam. The ten northern tribes come to Rehoboam pleading with him to reduce the taxes and forced labor that Solomon had levied on them to build the Temple. Rehoboam listens to his young friends as opposed to the wise elders and refuses. The ten northern tribes split from the two southern tribes, selecting Jeroboam as king. The northern tribes keep the name of Israel and the southern tribes no go by the name of Judah. This causes the northern kingdom of Israel to have a problem. Where will they worship? Jerusalem is in the southern kingdom of Judah. Jeroboam makes the same fatal mistake that the combined tribes made repeatedly, idolatry. He erects two golden calves, one in Dan (northern border of Israel) and one in Bethel (southern border of Israel). From this point on, there is a succession of kings in Judah (the house of David) and kings in Israel. All the northern kings are “evil” in the sight of God because of the sin of Jeroboam. The sixth king of Israel was named Omri. He was

¹⁶ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8372-8394.

¹⁷ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8427.

a general with a great deal of influence in the ancient world. His line would rule the northern kingdom for approximately 75 years. Extrabiblical evidence has been found referring to the house of Omri. It was during the rule of Omri's son, Ahab that we are introduced to Elijah, arguably the greatest of the prophets.

Elijah did many things during his lifetime and, in many ways, mirrored Moses's life. One of his greatest feats was to challenge the prophets of Baal and Asherah (gods worshipped in the northern kingdom) to a "sacrifice duel." The prophets of Baal and Asherah take a bull and call upon their gods from morning to noon to no avail. Elijah taunts them, even suggesting Baal and Asherah were off using the bathroom. Then Elijah builds an altar of twelve stones representing the twelve sons of Jacob. He laid the sacrificial bull on the altar and had the people douse it with three large jars of water. He calls upon God once! "The LORD's fire came down and devoured the burnt offering, wood, stones, and dust, and lapped up the water in the trench."¹⁸ With this, the people seized the prophets of Baal (and probably Asherah) and they were slaughtered. One more interesting point about Elijah is his outcome. Unlike others, he does not die. Instead he is taken into Heaven on a fiery chariot.

2 Kings

Elijah is succeeded by Elisha who not only matches Elijah's miracles, but exceeds them. "In the wake of receiving this gift, Elisha performs some thirteen recorded (and often unprecedented) miracles:

The Miracles of Elisha (2 Kings 2-13)

1. Parts the Jordan River with Elijah's cloak (2:13-14)
2. Transforms bitter water into fresh by casting salt into it (2:19-22)
3. Fills a wadi in Edom with water to overthrow enemy kings (3:16-18)
4. Provides an unending supply of oil for a poor widow to save her children from being sold into slavery (4:1-7)
5. Prophesies the birth of a son to a barren woman (4:15-17)
6. Raises the son of the woman from the dead (4:18-37)
7. Transforms poisonous pottage into edible stew by casting meal into it (4:38-41)
8. Multiplies bread for hundreds of people (4:42-44)
9. Cleanses Naaman the leper in the waters of the Jordan (5:1-27)
10. Makes an iron axe head float (6:1-7)
11. Blinds the Syrian army and opens the servants' eyes to the heavenly horses and chariots of fire defending Elisha (6:8-23)

¹⁸ 1 Kgs 18:38.

12. Brings an end to famine (7:1, 16)

13. Raises a Moabite from the dead through the power of his bones (13:20-21)”¹⁹

Note how many of these resemble the miracles of Christ. The relationship of Elijah to Elisha is also a prefiguring of the relationship of John the Baptist to Jesus. The works of the second (Elisha and Jesus) far exceed the works of the first (Elijah and John the Baptist).

The northern tribes are ruled by one evil king after another until their final demise in 722 B.C. The “exile” of the northern tribes was different from the exile of the southern tribes as we will discuss next. The northern tribes were lost forever. The Assyrians took most of the northern tribes and relocated them to different parts of the Assyrian kingdoms. They then took non-Israelites from the Assyrian kingdoms and relocated them to the northern kingdoms. The remaining Israelites in the northern kingdom intermarried, losing their identity of Israelites forever, becoming what would be known in the New Testament as the Samaritans. The Jews of the southern kingdom of Judah considered the Samaritans to be unclean.

What about the southern kingdom of Judah? They fared better, but not much better. There were some good kings of Judah (Hezekiah, Josiah, etc.) and some with “mixed” reviews. But there were some very evil kings also! One of the vilest was Manasseh. “He sacrificed his own son to pagan idols, and he was addicted to every kind of superstition (2 Kgs 21:1–9; 2 Chr 33:1–10).”²⁰ It was the sins of Manasseh that caused the exile of the southern Kingdom. “This befell Judah because the LORD had stated that he would put them out of his sight *for the sins Manasseh had committed in all that he did, and especially because of the innocent blood he shed; he filled Jerusalem with innocent blood, and the LORD would not forgive.*”²¹ What is the “this” referred to in the cited verse? It is the Babylonian exile by King Nebuchadnezzar! In 586 B.C. destroys Jerusalem, razing Solomon’s Temple and leading most of the Jews of the kingdom of Judah to Babylon where they would stay until the days of Ezra and Nehemiah.

¹⁹ Bergsma and Pitre, *A Catholic Introduction to the Bible: The Old Testament*, Kindle Edition, Chapter 15, Location 8595-8602.

²⁰ Scott Hahn, ed., *Catholic Bible Dictionary* (New York; London; Toronto; Sydney; Auckland: Doubleday, 2009), 571.

²¹ 2 Kgs 24:3–4, emphasis added.

QUESTIONS FOR LESSON 6

The Kingdom of Israel – Part 3

Day 1 – Scan the lecture notes. Write down one or two points that you consider most interesting.

Day 2 – Read “The Books of the Chronicler,” attached. Write down one or two points that you consider most interesting.

Day 3 – Read Chapters 1 and 9 of 1 Chronicles. Scan Chapters 2 through 8. Write down a few things that jump out at you. Can you conclude anything about the inspired author? (Hint: What was the beginning of salvation history? What was the timing of the writing? Who are citizens of the kingdom of Judah? Are there any key messages? Who is the audience?)

Day 4 – Read the handout entitled, “PARALLELS OF 1-2 CHRONICALS TO SAMUEL-KINGS IN TERMS OF WHO IS THE MAJOR ACTOR,” attached and compare it to the handout from last week entitled, ““THE KINGS OF ISRAEL AND JUDAH,” Write down one or two things that jump out at you.

Day 5 – Read 1 Chronicles 22:6-10 and 2 Samuel 7:8–16. What do we learn about why Solomon was chosen to build the Temple of God?

Day 6 – Read 2 Kings 21, 2 Kings 24:3-4, and 2 Chronicles 33. What are the major differences between what we know about Manasseh and what does this indicate about the message of the author of the books of the Chronicler?

THE BOOKS OF THE CHRONICLER

THE FIRST BOOK OF CHRONICLES

The Greek title, *paraleipomena*, means “things omitted,” or “passed over” (i.e., in the accounts found in Samuel and Kings). The Books of Chronicles, however, are much more than a supplement to Samuel and Kings; a comparison of the two histories discloses striking differences of scope and purpose. The Books of Chronicles record in some detail the lengthy span (some five hundred fifty years) from the death of King Saul to the return from the exile. Unlike today’s history writing, wherein factual accuracy and impartiality of judgment are the norm, biblical history, with rare exceptions, was less concerned with reporting in precise detail all the facts of a situation than with drawing out the meaning of those facts. Biblical history was thus primarily interpretative, and its purpose was to disclose the action of the living God in human affairs. For this reason, we speak of it as “sacred history.”

These characteristics are apparent when we examine the primary objective of the Chronicler (the conventional designation for the anonymous author) in compiling his work. Given the situation which confronted the Jewish people at this time (the end of the fifth century B.C.), the Chronicler realized that Israel’s political greatness was a thing of the past. Yet, for the Chronicler, Israel’s past held the key to the people’s future. In particular, the Chronicler aimed to establish and defend the legitimate claims of the Davidic monarchy in Israel’s history, and to underscore the status of Jerusalem and its divinely established Temple worship as the center of religious life for the Jewish people. If Judaism was to survive and prosper, it would have to heed the lessons of the past and devoutly serve its God in the place where he had chosen to dwell, the Temple in Jerusalem. From the Chronicler’s point of view, the reigns of David and Solomon were the ideal to which all subsequent rule in Judah must aspire. The Chronicler was much more interested in David’s religious and cultic influence than in his political power, however. He saw David’s (and Solomon’s) primary importance as deriving rather from their roles in the establishment of Jerusalem and its Temple as the center of the true worship of the Lord. Furthermore, he presents David as the one who prescribed the Temple’s elaborate ritual (which, in point of fact, only gradually evolved in the Second Temple period) and who appointed the Levites to supervise the liturgical services there.

The Chronicler used a variety of sources in writing his history. Besides the canonical Books of Genesis, Exodus, Numbers, Joshua, and Ruth, and especially the Books of Samuel and Kings (specifically 1 Sam 31–2 Kgs 25), he cites the titles of many other works which have not come down to us, e.g., “The Books of the Kings of Israel,” or “The Books of the Kings of Israel and Judah,” and “The History of Gad the Seer.” In addition, the Chronicler’s work contains early preexilic material not found in the Books of Kings.

The principal divisions of 1 Chronicles are as follows:

- I. Genealogical Tables (1:1–9:34)
- II. The History of David (9:35–29:30)²²

²² *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Introduction to 1 Chronicles.

THE SECOND BOOK OF CHRONICLES

The Second Book of Chronicles takes up the history of the monarchy where the First Book leaves off. It begins with the account of the reign of Solomon (chaps. 1–9) from the special viewpoint of the Chronicler. The portrait of Solomon is an idealized one; he appears as second only to David. Solomon’s building of the Temple and the magnificence of his court are described in detail while the serious defects of his reign as cited in 1 Kings are simply not mentioned. This procedure is in keeping with the Chronicler’s purpose of stressing the supreme importance of the Temple and its worship. He wishes to impress on his readers the splendor of God’s dwelling and the magnificence of the liturgy of sacrifice, prayer, and praise offered there. Judah’s kings are judged by their attitude toward the Temple and its cult. To this ideal of one people, united in the worship of the one true God at the Temple of Jerusalem founded by David and Solomon, the restored community is to conform.

In treating the period of divided monarchy (chaps. 10–36), the Chronicler gives practically all his attention to the kingdom of Judah. His virtual omission of the northern Israelite kings is significant. In his view, the northern tribes of Israel were guilty of religious schism as long as they worshiped the Lord in a place other than the Temple of Jerusalem. The Chronicler makes no mention of the important sanctuaries of YHWH at Dan and Bethel—as though they had never existed. Nevertheless, he retains the ancient ideal of “all Israel” (a phrase occurring forty-one times in Chronicles) as the people of God. This unity, however, can exist only if the worship of “the whole congregation of Israel” takes place exclusively in the Jerusalem Temple. This requirement explains the Chronicler’s praise of Kings Hezekiah and Josiah for striving, after the fall of Samaria, to unite the remnants of the northern tribes of Israel with the kingdom of Judah. Nevertheless, after Josiah’s death, Judah quickly careens toward its demise at the hands of the Babylonians. That catastrophe is reversed by the edict of Cyrus allowing a return to Jerusalem and rebuilding of the Temple. Thus 2 Chronicles ends.

The Second Book of Chronicles can be divided into two major segments as follows:

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1:1–9:31)
- II. The Post-Solomonic Monarchy of Judah (10:1–36:23)²³

²³ *New American Bible*, Revised Edition. (Washington, DC: The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011), Introduction to 2 Chronicles.

PARALLELS OF 1-2 CHRONICALS TO SAMUEL-KINGS IN TERMS OF WHO IS THE MAJOR ACTOR

Chronicles	Major Figure/Event	Samuel-Kings
1 Chronicles 1–9		X
1 Chronicles 10	Saul	1 Samuel 31–2 Samuel 1
1 Chronicles 11–29	David	2 Samuel 2–1 Kings 2
2 Chronicles 1–9	Solomon	1 Kings 1–11
2 Chronicles 10–12	Rehoboam	1 Kings 11:43–14:31
2 Chronicles 13	Abijah	1 Kings 15:1–8
2 Chronicles 14–16	Asa	1 Kings 15:9–24
2 Chronicles 17–20	Jehoshaphat	1 Kings 22:41–50
2 Chronicles 21	Jehoram	2 Kings 8:16–24
2 Chron. 22:1–9	Azahiah	2 Kings 8:25–29
2 Chron. 22:10–23:21	Athaliah	2 Kings 11
2 Chronicles 24	Joash	2 Kings 12
2 Chronicles 25	Amaziah	2 Kings 14:1–22
2 Chronicles 26	Uzziah/Azariah	2 Kings 15:1–7
2 Chronicles 27	Jotham	2 Kings 15:32–38
2 Chronicles 28	Ahaz	2 Kings 16
2 Chronicles 29–32	Hezekiah	2 Kings 18–20
2 Chron. 33:1–20	Manasseh	2 Kings 21:1–18
2 Chron. 33:21–25	Amon	2 Kings 21:19–26

2 Chronicles 34–35	Josiah	2 Kings 22:1–23:30
2 Chron. 36:1–4	Jehoahaz	2 Kings 23:31–33
2 Chron. 36:5–8	2 Kings 23:34–24:7	2 Kings 23:34–24:7
2 Chron. 36:9–10	Jehoiakim	2 Kings 24:8–17
2 Chron. 36:11–21	Zedekiah	2 Kings 24:18–25:26
2 Chron. 36:22–23	Cyrus’s edict	X
X	Release of Jehoiachin	2 Kings 25:27–30 ²⁴

²⁴ Victor P. Hamilton, *Handbook on the Historical Books* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 480–481.