

Session #6

The Davidic Successors and the Fall of the Kingdom

1 Kings 5, 11-12, 17, 21

2 Kings 21-23, 35

Ezra 3, 7

Nehemiah 2-3

1 Maccabees 1-4, 2 Maccabees 12:38-:46

The Division Into Two Kingdoms

We left off talking about David's son Solomon. Solomon succeeded his father as king and built the Jerusalem temple. He ruled well for a period of time, but in his later years he fell into grave sin. In today's lesson plan we are going to cover what happened to the Jewish people between the death of Solomon and the birth of Jesus Christ.

The next King of Israel after Solomon was his son Rehoboam. He was king from about 932 BC to 915 BC. Rehoboam made the decision to be greedy and to abuse his power. (1 Kings 12:6-:11) This did not go well for him. Most of the people of Israel decided to revolt against his rule. (1 Kings 12:16-:19). They chose a man named Jeroboam to be their king. (1 Kings 12:20) He ruled as king of Israel from about 931 BC to 910 BC. Of the twelve tribes that had made up the nation of Israel only two, the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, stayed loyal to Rehoboam. (1 Kings 12:21-:24)

From this point on the people of God were divided into two kingdoms. Israel in the north, and Judah in the south. Judah, because it was ruled by the descendents of David, receives the greatest amount of attention in the bible from this point on.

The kings of both kingdoms sinned greatly and frequently. Jeroboam fell into idolatry. (1 Kings 12:25-:33) Ahab, King of Israel from about 874 to 853 BC, arranged for the murder of one of his subjects so that he could steal his land. (1 Kings 21:1-29)

The Northern Kingdom Falls

In 722 or 721 BC the Assyrian Empire attacked the northern kingdom of Israel. The capital of Samaria was taken and many of the people were taken into captivity. (2 Kings 17:5-:23) So after a little bit more than two centuries of living with the reality of a political division among the people of God the Kingdom of Judah was now left alone. After the 720s only two of the original twelve tribes of Israel remained free.

The Fate of the Southern Kingdom

Mannaseh was one of the worst of the kings of Judah. Reigning from 687 or 686 BC to 643 or 642 BC he undid the religious reforms of his father King Hezekiah. He brought

back the pagan practices that had been embraced by some of the kings who had come before him. (2 Kings 21:1-7)

Josiah was king of Judah from 641 BC to 609 BC. After David he might have been the greatest of the Kings of the Jewish people. In some ways we could say he was even greater than David because he did not have any great fall into sin as David did when he impregnated Bathsheba and murdered Uriah. He restored the proper worship of God and led his people back to the Lord. (2 Kings 22:1-23:30) Unfortunately rulers like Josiah were very rare.

2 Kings 23:36-:37, which is all the bible tells us about the reign of Jehoiakim as king of Judah, sums up the character of most of Judah's rulers during the time following the fall of Israel. We are told that "he did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his fathers had done." (23:37)

In 587 or 586 BC, just under 350 years after the death of Solomon, the Babylonian empire conquered Judah's capital of Jerusalem. (2 Kings 25:8-:12) The political and military defeat of the Jewish people was now complete and absolute.

Exile and Restoration

After the Babylonians conquered Israel they were eventually conquered by the Persians under the rule of Cyrus the Great. Cyrus decided to allow of the some Jewish people to return to their land. In the mid 6th century BC, around 536 BC, some of the Jewish people were able to return to the Promised Land. They people were able to rebuild the temple, which had been destroyed when the city was conquered. There was sadness among some of the people because the rebuilt temple was not as impressive as the old structure. (Ezra 3:10-:13)

In the 5th century BC (approximately 458 BC) a Jewish man named Ezra was designated by the Babylonians to return to Jerusalem and be the leader of his people. (Ezra 7) Later, under the leadership of a man named Nehemiah, the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt. (Nehemiah 2-3) This provided the Israelites with greater protection and stability.

Maccabean Revolt

Approximately a century after this, in 332 BC, the Macedonian ruler Alexander the Great conquered the area. The Persians had been benevolent rulers who allowed the Jewish people a considerable degree of freedom. Alexander the Great himself appears to have followed a similar pattern. Some of his successors did not.

In the year 169 BC Judaism was outlawed by king Antiochus IV. In 166 BC the Jewish people rose up in revolt. 1 and 2 Maccabees tell the story of this mostly successful revolution. Somewhat unexpectedly, the Jewish people were strong enough to throw off their rulers and live relatively independently for about a century.

In 63 BC Jerusalem came up under Roman rule. This was the status of Israel at the time of the birth of Jesus.

Why Are Some of These Books Not Included in Every Bible?

In the third century BC a project was undertaken to translate the Jewish scriptures into Greek. This took place in Egypt, under the rule of King Ptolemy II Philadelphus, who wanted a copy of the law of his Jewish subjects. It was known as the Septuagint, a reference in Greek to the 70 scholars who translated the bible. This translation contained books that are not in Protestant bible; 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach, Wisdom, Baruch, Tobit, and Judith. Also included in the Septuagint were sections of the books of Daniel and Esther which are not included in the versions of these books contained in Protestant bibles.

These books are commonly referred to as deuterocanonical, or part of the second canon, because they were written in Greek and not Hebrew. The Septuagint was the Old Testament used by the first Christians, which is why the Catholic Church still accepts all of these books as genuine parts of the bible. In the 16th century Protestants rejected those books of the Old Testament which were not originally written in Hebrew. So they cut out 7 entire books of the Old Testament, and parts of 2 other books. The Protestant Reformers in the 16th century applied a false standard as to what was and wasn't scripture, rejecting everything in the Old Testament that was originally written in Greek.

Some people would argue that these books shouldn't be in the Old Testament because some of them aren't quoted in the New Testament. But neither are the books of Ecclesiastes, Esther, and Song of Songs. All Christians agree these books do belong in the Old Testament. Also the New Testament book of Jude does quote the Assumption of Moses. St. Paul quotes the pagan poets Menander, Aratus, and Epimenides. All Christians agree that these books don't belong in the bible. So the fact that a book is or isn't quoted in the New Testament isn't enough to determine whether it is or isn't scripture.¹ Also, it is worth noting that in all likelihood the books of 1 and 2 Maccabees, Sirach, and Wisdom are quoted in the New Testament.²

Some Protestants will also claim that the extra books weren't considered to be part of scripture until the 1500s when the Council of Trent, a meeting of the bishops of the Catholic Church that occurred largely as a reaction to the Protestant Reformation, said they were. This is a very misleading claim. The Council of Trent stated with a higher level of authority than had ever been used previously the full list of books that were contained in the bible. Trent was a universal council of the Church, not just a collection of local bishops. No such group had ever previously spoken on the list of the books that were to be in the bible. This was because there wasn't a need to. There had been such complete acceptance of all the books of the bible, including the deuterocanonical books, that the matter was considered to be closed. So Trent spoke more formally about these

¹ Shea, Mark., *By What Authority: An Evangelical Discovers Catholic Tradition*. (Huntington, IN: Our Sunday Visitor, Inc., 1996), 61-63.

² *Ibid*, 67-71.

books being included in the bible than had been done previously, but it did the same thing for all the books of the bible. So any argument against the canonicity of these books that refers to the Council of Trent would also be argument against any and all of the books that are included in the bible.

This article might prove helpful if you wish to learn more about the Septuagint, and why the books contained in this translation of the Old Testament are part of the Catholic bible.

<http://www.ewtn.com/library/ANSWERS/DEUTEROS.htm>

2 Maccabees and Purgatory

The Old Testament gives us an example of those who died united to God, but still attached to some sins, being prayed for. This means that a very important Catholic belief, the existence of Purgatory, is supported by a careful study of the Old Testament.

But under the tunic of each of the dead they found amulets sacred to the idols of Jamnia, which the law forbids the Jews to wear. So it was clear to all that this was why these men had been slain. They all therefore praised the ways of the Lord, the just judge who brings to light the things that are hidden. Turning to supplication, they prayed that the sinful deed might be fully blotted out. The noble Judas warned the soldiers to keep themselves free from sin, for they had seen with their own eyes what had happened because of the sin of those who had fallen. He then took up a collection among all his soldiers, amounting to two thousand silver drachmas, which he sent to Jerusalem to provide for an expiatory sacrifice. In doing this he acted in a very excellent and noble way, inasmuch as he had the resurrection of the dead in view; for if he were not expecting the fallen to rise again, it would have been useless and foolish to pray for them in death. But if he did this with a view to the splendid reward that awaits those who had gone to rest in godliness, it was a holy and pious thought. Thus he made atonement for the dead that they might be freed from this sin. (2 Maccabees 12:40-:46)

So no particularly name is given but this passage shows us there must be some sort of condition which exists after death where people can be aided by our prayers. This is Purgatory. It's best to not think of this as a place but as a process of purification where those who are imperfect, but united to God, are purified and made perfect so that they might spend eternity completely united to God.