

Two Kingdoms

We now begin the third section of the story, and the third hundred pages of this book: the decline and eventual downfall of the two kingdoms.

It began with Solomon, whose successor Rehoboam antagonized the north, leading to the separation of north and south. The north, where Solomon had ruled, fell to Syria in 0741; Judah, in the south, to Babylon in 0597.

Let's be fair. However sincere his piety, or what he might do against the Philistines, no King in Judah or Israel had a chance against the great powers. The Bible does not see it that way; it searches for theological shortcomings. Here is that theological analysis of what happened, and why.

(51) The Book of Kings. Its story of deserved and inevitable doom allows readers two briefly hopeful moments along the way.

(52) Jezebel's Wedding. We are on hand for this felicitous state occasion, and appreciate every moment, as bride and groom are praised in turn.

(53) Elijah. For lack of any other, this local seer is brought from far-off Tishbe to oppose the worship of Jezebel's gods, the Baals.

(54) Elisha. He mostly ignores the Baals (that was Elijah's issue), and concerns himself more with Israel's external enemies.

(55) The Battle with Moab. We have earlier had the Balaam's-eye view; here is that battle again, as seen by the principals: the two kings themselves.

(56) Hezekiah's Defense. Holding out against Assyria qualifies him as one of the two kings of which the Book of Kings approves.

(57) Josiah's Venture. His role in the centralization of Yahweh worship is exaggerated, but his single military exploit won him the approval of Kings.

The Exile brought loss of national identity and deep personal pessimism. Then Persia conquered Babylon, and let Exiles return. The Temple was rebuilt. In the next section, we will look at some of the highs and lows of that period.