

The Single Judaic Kingdom (2 Kings 18:13-25:30)

Introduction

The single Judaic kingdom refers to the period from 722-586, from Hezekiah to Zedekiah, after the northern kingdom had been demolished by the Assyrians and up to the time of Babylonian captivity.

1A. Outline (by main characters)

- 1B. Hezekiah 2 Kgs. 18:13-20:20
 - Interaction with Assyria 18:13-19:37
 - Extension of the king's life 20:1-11
 - Communication with Babylon 20:12-20
- 2B. Manasseh and great evil 21
- 3B. Josiah, an especially good king 22-23
 - Covenant Renewal 22-23:25
 - Egyptian Oppression 23:26-37
- 4B. Nebuchadnezzar 24-25

2A. Highlights

- 1B. The extension of Hezekiah's life (20:1-11)
 - What is the reason Hezekiah is healed? It is "for my sake and for the sake of my servant David" (v. 6); again, the covenant principle is reiterated.

What happened?

What is involved in the sign of the shadow? On the surface, it appears to be a reversal of solar time. As the day progresses and the sun casts a shadow over the staircase. In the passing of time, the shadow will move down the steps. For it to move up the steps, the movement relationship between the sun and the earth would have to be reversed. Either the earth's rotation on a line from the sun stops and reverses, or the position of the sun relative to the earth had to be altered (in effect, some massive shift in the solar system would have taken place).

Or, the relation of the sun's rays to the blocking object that results in the shadow on the stairs is altered by God so that the rays penetrate the object leaving no shadow, or the light is caused to travel around the blocking object. Some miracle is evident that altered the law structure of the created order.

Why this sign?

The Lord chose to give this particular sign to confirm his promise. This shows that He is Lord of heaven and earth, the Creator of Genesis 1-2, who formed man's body from the dust of the ground. Thus he that formed the eye, can he not see; he that formed the body, can he not heal? This tells us that the restoration promised from the effects of the fall with damage and death to the body includes the saving of the whole man, body and soul as part of God's restoration of all the effects of sin on the entire creation.

- 2B. The good king Josiah
 - Summary (22:2).
 - Repairing the temple (22:3-6).
 - Finding the book of the law (22:8)
 - His response (22:11-13)
 - The Lord's promise to Josiah (22:16-20)
 - Covenant renewal (23:1-3)
 - Cleansing the land of false worship (23:4; 14-15)
 - Passover celebration (23:21-23)
 - Judgment will still fall (23:25-27)
 - Josiah is killed (23:29-30)

Josiah was the last good king of Judah. He renewed covenant to God, smashed the shrines of idol worship in the land (2Ki 23:14-15) and is highly honored but the sins of Judah embodied in the evil of the former king Manasseh would yield a bitter fruit (2Ki 23:25-26).

Josiah died in battle near Megiddo against Egypt in 609 when the Egyptian army moved North toward Haran to assist the failing Assyrians. The Egyptian siege of Haran failed and the Euphrates River became the boundary between Babylon and Egypt (2Ki 23:29).

Egypt then dominated Palestine, deposed Jehoahaz after three months of rule, and made Judah a vassal state, and appointed Jehoiakim king in Jerusalem (2Ki 23:31-35).

- 3B. Nebuchadnezzar

At Carchemish on the Euphrates West of Haran, the Babylonians gave a major defeat to Egypt (605) and pushed the Egyptian army out of Palestine (from the Euphrates to the Brook of Egypt and Jehoiakim became a vassal king to the famous Nebuchadnezzar (2Ki 24:1a, 7)).

Daniel was taken at this time to Babylon.

Jehoiakim rebelled against Babylon after three years. For his eleven years of rule (2Ki 23:36), three involved vassalage to Egypt, three to Babylon, and five remaining years of turmoil from various raiders (2Ki 24: 2). He is noted for his conflicts with Jeremiah (IOT 305).

When Jehoiakim died in 597 and was succeeded by his son Jehoiachin, Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem and Jehoiachin surrendered and was taken to Babylon (2Ki 24:12, 15) for 37 years of imprisonment.

Nebuchadnezzar made Jehoiachin's uncle king of Judah calling him Zedekiah (24:17). Zedekiah also rebelled against the king of Babylon. So in his ninth to eleventh years Jerusalem was under siege by Nebuchadnezzar. In 586, Zedekiah was captured, his sons were killed before his eyes, he was blinded and shackled for Babylon. The temple was destroyed along with the city walls as the people were taken into exile (2Ki 25:9-11) by the hand of God being "thrust from his presence" (2Ki 24:20).

"So Judah went into captivity, away from her land" (2 Kgs. 25:21).

Nebuchadnezzar appointed Gedaliah as a puppet ruler who was later assassinated. Because of this assassination many people fled to Egypt taking Jeremiah along with them.

Summary

Judah 3 years under Egypt (roughly 609/608-605, 23:31-35)

Judah a 3 year vassal state to Babylon (24:1; roughly 605-602)

Judah independent for 5 years (601-597; 24:1, Jehoiakim rebelled for the last 5 years of his reign, which was 11 total, 23:36. His son, Jehoiachin inherited Babylon's wrath and after 3 months was exiled to prison in Babylon; 24:10-12. Then Zedekiah was made king by Nebuchadnezzar, 24:17).

Vassal again to Babylon until Zedekiah's 9th year (597-588).

Jerusalem under siege for 3 years (588-586) 25:1, 6-7.

Thus the Babylonian captivity begins in 605 and has phases with rebellion in Judah until the out and out destruction of Jerusalem in 586. Daniel was taken in 605, other exiles in 597 (24:14) and 586 (25:1ff).

Jehoiachin had reigned in Judah for three months when he was exiled to Babylon. He was imprisoned for 37 years when he was released by the king at that time, Evil-Merodach, and given royal privileges (25:22-30). This is a hint that the last chapter of the exile has begun.

4A. Theme (of the Judaic Kingdom, 2 Kgs 18-25)

The evil under Manasseh outweighs the good under Hezekiah and Josiah bringing exile under Nebuchadnezzar yet a glimmer of hope shines in the release of Jehoiachin.

5A. The message for those in exile

What message was needed by Israel in exile? Would it not center in the promises of God, especially his promise of a land, a place of worship (Zion), and an enduring Davidic dynasty? The angle of concern could tilt in the direction of questioning the faithfulness of God because of the captivity of Judah.

Dillard and Longman state that "The writer of Kings sets out to explain the Exile and the destruction of Judah in a way that would rescue the faith of the people" (161) in which it is thought that God failed to keep His word or He is shown to be weak.

How does the book rescue faith?

1) There is no failure on God's part. Instead God has confirmed "his holiness by judging the nation for its transgressions" (161).

The sins of the nation are documented against the backdrop of the requirements of God's law. The law of God is again elevated.

The key is that both kingdoms failed to worship exclusively at the temple in Jerusalem as God required (Deut. 12:1-14). See the tables in IOT 162-163 for violations of both North and South. The kings by and large failed to walk in the ways of the Lord.

Prophetic Forewarning: The prophets testified against a disobedient kingship and people. Thus Judah's destruction was forewarned by the prophets (2 Kings 24:2) as we have seen in Amos, Isaiah, Hosea and Micah who all documented the sins of the people both north and south and prophesied coming judgment.

The curses of a broken relationship with God came upon the disobedient nation as Moses had foretold (Deut. 28).

2) The Exile did not show a lack in God's power. Instead, the opposite was shown: the Exile "was proof that he was ruling over history and the the armies of Babylon were simply doing his bidding" (IOT 161). So, 2 Kings 21:12-15.

3) Muted Hope

Thus, the book ends with "muted hope" (2 Kings 25:27-30, IOT 165). Jehoiachin continues the Davidic dynasty; his treatment signals a subtle kindness from God in captivity.

Also, the reason for the captivity and its dynamic as a manifestation of the power and holiness of God reveal the God of the covenant as able to bring his purposes to pass in history through very unexpected ways and means.

Again, though disobedience brings judgment consequences, we note that God is keeping his word in these very curses. This informs us that he will do all that he plans regarding his fallen image bearers on the earth. For Moses also spoke of a return (Deut. 30:1-4 via repentance, v. 2 which is via God's work in their hearts v.5).

6A. Message for us

1B. Challenge: acknowledge the sovereignty of God

We must acknowledge the sovereignty of God. Note God's free purposes with long life given to *wicked* Manasseh and short life given to *good* Josiah (LaSor 285). Young Josiah and old Manasseh testify to our inability to grasp the ways of God. He does what is right; he is good, yet the wicked often prosper. We can't explain. We must acknowledge it and submit ourselves to our Father knowing his love and wisdom and the freedom of His purposes that He is accomplishing in history.

2B. Take comfort in the Almighty Father

The lord of heaven and earth, of the dust and the human body, will bring us on finally to the end of history and to the realization of His glorious purpose. See the lilies, you will be clothed in more splendor than any King of Judah!