

OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

Lesson 44 – Part 2

The Divided Monarchy: Judah

Each Friday night I email these lessons out to a growing list of people. At this point almost 70 people get the lesson with my request that any helpful comments be sent in time for my Saturday edits. My deadline is 2 p.m. on Saturday to get this lesson to Linda Hudgins for her to have the class volunteers get it printed and ready to hand out each Sunday morning.

When I emailed out this week's lessons, one of the responses I got back challenged me to make sure we were not simply getting information and knowledge, but to make sure that these lessons have a chance to help the Spirit's ministry of transforming us into the likeness of Christ.

I explained that the Sundays at CFBC are set out where there is more than this class. We have times of prayer and praise in worship. We have a preacher who always seeks to edify and let the Spirit work through his sermons. Then we have this class, which is targeted to assist in digging deeper into Scripture so that we are well-equipped in handling God's word (2 Tim. 2:15).

Notwithstanding this purpose, my friend is right, that study as an end to itself is vanity. The end of all our study needs to be an appreciation of God and his work among us, better equipping us to hear and follow his call on our lives. That, of course, is one reason we have points for home in each lesson. This class is like Seminary in the sense that it takes on serious issues of Biblical scholarship; it is not satisfied with simply repeating the stories about the walls of Jericho coming down. This class is seeking to feed our hunger and thirst for more awareness of God's Holy Revelation. We believe that time spent in Scripture is time well spent.

But we always do so, with an eye toward the goal: to be more like Christ. So remembering our focus, let us begin this lesson where we left off last week. Let us dig into the Southern Kingdom of Judah, examining the issues from the eyes of the writer(s) of Kings.

BACKGROUND AND REVIEW

Last lesson we began our examination of the Southern Kingdom Judah during the time period covered in the books of 1 and 2 Kings. As part of that study, we considered several approaches to understanding the authorship of the books.

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Some scholars ascribe authorship to one or more “Deuteronomist Historians.” This label denotes the idea that the books of Deuteronomy as well as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Kings, and a few others (depending on which scholar you are reading) were all composed by one or more with an approach different from those who authored other books in the Old Testament. The “Deuteronomist Historian” is considered one who was advocating an agenda, as seen in the writings.

One of the most cited justifications for this view is the way that Deuteronomy 28-31 contains blessings for the Israelites when they follow the teachings of the law, while curses follow disobedience. The blessings include:

If you faithfully obey the voice of the LORD your God...The LORD will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you (Dt. 28:1,7).

The curses include:

But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes...The LORD will cause you to be defeated before your enemies (Dt. 28:15, 25).

These scholars then look to Kings and underline passages like 1 Kings 11:9ff where “the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the LORD” and “did not keep what the LORD had commanded. Therefore the LORD said... ‘Since you have not kept my covenant and my statutes that I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you.’” Similar passages permeate Kings as the blessings and curses of Deuteronomy are reiterated in practice, just as predicted.

The problem we cite with this view is its presumptiveness. It presumes that if one passage of the Bible is reflected in another, the same school of thought pushing the same agenda must have written them both. This presumption is rather narrow-minded and fails to consider some rather common sense points. First, it fails to recognize that a later writer (or group of writers) who had earlier manuscripts available would certainly write with those in mind. It is not necessary that the same mind or school of thought produce both. So, for example, when Paul wrote the Galatians that “God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap” (Gal. 6:7), Paul was echoing much the same idea as Deuteronomy 28:

If you faithfully obey...all these blessings shall come upon you...Blessed shall you be in the city...in the field...Blessed shall be the fruit of your womb...of your ground...of your cattle...Blessed shall you be when you come in...when you go out [etc.].

But if you will not obey...then all these curses shall come upon you...Cursed shall you be in the city...in the field...Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb...of your ground [etc.].

Are we to glean from this that Paul was the Deuteronomist Historian? Did Paul or the school of Paul write Deuteronomy? Of course not! Did Paul have before him (physically or mentally) Deuteronomy and its principles and precepts? Of course! Paul was well trained rabbinically and certainly was aware of the teachings of the Old Testament, including Deuteronomy. In other words, simply because Paul's writings reflect the principles and even some of the language of Deuteronomy, it does not mean that Paul was responsible *for* Deuteronomy. In the same way, it is too narrow to assume that simply because Kings reflects ideas and language of Deuteronomy, we must assume they were written by the same person(s).

A more troubling idea behind the "Deuteronomist Historian" perspective is its denigration of the premise that Scripture is Holy, in the sense that Scripture is God's revelation to man, not simply astute musings of man about God. The idea that history is reconstructed from the facts of occurrence and placed into an agenda-driven framework of man's devising deflates any confidence in the modern reader as far as trusting in the words as something divine.

Our understanding of the authorship is that we have termed a "Prophet Historian." We choose this phrase with the idea that Kings contains the prophetic portrait or explanation of certain hand-picked historical events and runs those together with a commentary on them in an effort to convey the prophetic word or understanding of the history. As a prophet, the Prophet Historian was writing as "moved by the Spirit," and his story conveys the message of God for his people. The written record shows such a Prophet had access to the ideas of Deuteronomy, and likely the words as well. His usage and reliance upon Deuteronomy in writing and understanding both the events of history and its significance is what one would expect.

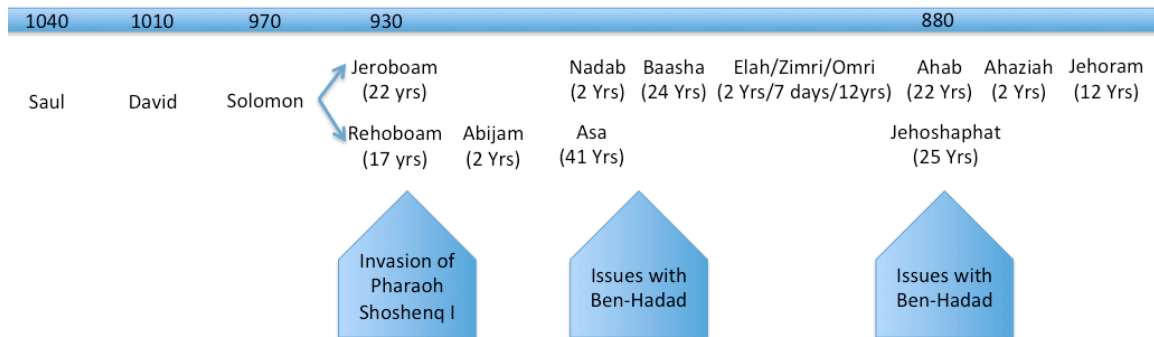
In this sense, although we cannot with certainty identify which prophet(s) are responsible, it makes sense that we would read a later history with confidence that we are reading the word of God for man, rather than simply man's conjecturing. This is why we can rightly call Scripture "Holy."

In identifying the Prophet Historian, we then noted that his writing was not simply a diary or verbal photograph of history. We used V. Philips Long idea of the Bible presenting history as a "portrait" rather than simply a photograph.¹ As such, we

¹ Long, V. Philips, *The Art of Biblical History*, (Zondervan 1994), at 105-107 writes,

tried to find not simply the historical events, but also the reasons the Prophet Historian choose those certain events to include and what the “message” is beyond simply the history. What makes the writing a portrait with inspired and artistic interpretation, as opposed to a diary of events?

We did not make it fully through last week’s lesson and so resume our study with Jehoshaphat. As we process through this history, having already covered the Northern Kingdom of Israel for this time stretch, it might be useful as a point of reference to begin keeping a timeline of sorts. We have seen the following:



The dates are approximations. As we noted also in last week’s lessons, any attempt to put the dates into modern western chronology necessarily requires a bit of interpretation to allot for different methods of ancient accounting of dates as well as determining potential periods of co-regencies where Father and son would both reign.² The chart sets out the United Monarchy under Saul, David and Solomon. It then divides into the Northern Kingdom on the top row (Jeroboam, etc.) and Judah (the Southern Kingdom) on the bottom row (Rehoboam, etc.). The reigns of the kings are set out in parentheses. In the pentagonal inserts, we see non-Israelite inclusions in the story of Kings.

Our last lesson stopped in class with the reign of Asa. We pull from last week’s written lesson the section on Jehoshaphat and add it here with minor changes for this week’s class.

Divine revelation should be located in both historical events and the interpretative word that mediates these events to us... [Do not] discount the significance of a portrait simply because it is an artistic interpretation.

² Two resources for those wanting to further explore the numbers and chronologies of the classic by Thiele and Kitchen’s more recent work. Thiele, Edwin R., *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, (Kregel 1994); Kitchen, K. A., *On the Reliability of the Old Testament*, (Eerdmans 2003).

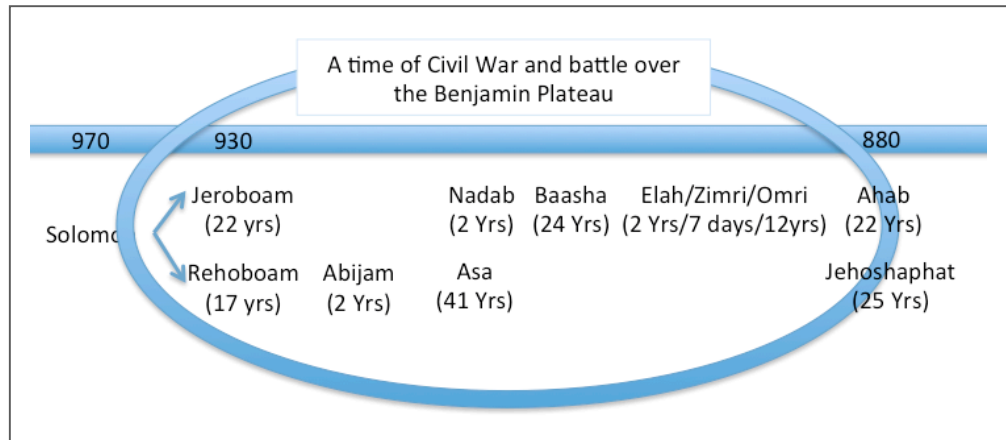
JEHOSHAPHAT

Upon King Asa’s death, his son Jehoshaphat began to reign. In American culture, there is a residual phrase, a number of people associate Jehoshaphat with the phrase, “great jumpin’ Jehoshaphat!” We start noting that the phrase is not found in the Bible!³ Jehoshaphat is not known for his leaping or dancing ability. His Biblical fame comes from his behavior and his heart for God. Like his father Asa, Jehoshaphat is remembered in Scripture for his walk with the Lord.

He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord (1 Ki. 22:43).

While Scripture notes that Jehoshaphat did “right,” it certainly does not mean that all his decisions were good ones! For example, during the reign of Jehoshaphat, peace was finally struck with King Ahab and the Northern Kingdom, but apparently at some cost! A

civil war had raged with the battle concentrated over the Benjamin Plateau north of Jerusalem since the end of Solomon’s reign.



As a part of this peace, Jehoshaphat married his son Jehoram to Athaliah, daughter of the Northern Kingdom’s King Ahab (2 Ki. 8:18). The Chronicler used the term

³ We should note that some do theorize that the expression got its genesis from Joel 3:11-12 which in the King James reads:

Assemble yourselves, and come, all ye heathen, and gather yourselves together round about: thither cause thy mighty ones to come down, O LORD. Let the heathen be wakened, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat: for there will I sit to judge all the heathen round about.

While that passage does not mention, “jumpin’,” it does speak of the heathen (and arguably the dead) being awakened. The oldest references to the American expression of “jumpin’ Jehoshaphat” date from the 1800’s and originally referred to the ghost of Jehoshaphat. See, e.g., St. John, Percy Bolingbroke, *Paul Peabody, Or, The Apprentice of the World*, (Maxwell & Co. 1865) at 355, “‘Look!’ said Ogilvy suddenly; ‘I see a form; by the shaking jumping ghost of Jehosaphat, it’s an Injun!’”

“a marriage alliance” (2 Chron. 18:1). Jehoshaphat was later convinced to join forces with the wicked Ahab in a fight against the King Ben Hadad of Syria, Israel’s regular opponent to the Northeast who continued to fight over key valuable property that governed roadways as well as productive land. The battle was a huge loss and blow to the Israelite coalition. It was during a battle at Ramoth-gilead, that Jehoshaphat escaped with his life while Ahab was shot with a bow, dying from blood loss in his chariot.

After Jehoshaphat returned home, Jehu, the son of Hanani the seer, chided him:

Should you help the wicked and love those who hate the Lord? Because of this, wrath has gone out against you from the Lord. Nevertheless, some good is found in you, for you destroyed the Asherahs out of the land, and have set your heart to seek God (2 Chron 19:2-3).

It is helpful to add to this prophetic denouncement some details provided by the Prophet Historian in Kings. Before Jehoshaphat went into battle with Ahab, Jehoshaphat

insisted that a prophet of Yahweh (as opposed to Ahab’s prophets of Baal) be consulted. After a great effort to locate a prophet of Yahweh available to Ahab, the prophet declared that the battle would be a disaster. In the face of that prophetic word, Jehoshaphat went with his son’s father-in-law Ahab and fought anyway. As prophesied, it was disastrous.



Some cynics question the history of Kings because of the reoccurrence of Ben-Hadad as a ruler of Damascus (1 Ki. 15:18, 20; 20:1ff; 2 Ki. 6:24, etc.). It seems he lived for quite a long time (100 years? Not likely!), or that there was confusion over the proper names of the kings reigning in Damascus. The cynics need not sound an alarm on this point! Ben-Hadad means “son of Hadad,” Hadad being the patron God of Damascus. At left is pictured the stone carving of Baal Hadad (“Lord Hadad”) discovered at Ugarit and dated from c. 15th-13th century BC.

It is quite sensible that multiple kings of Damascus might claim that title or name, or that in the least it might be ascribed to them by outsiders! The title would likely take many permutations, i.e., “Hadad-ezer” (Hadad is helper), etc. We know from Assyrian records that a century later at least one king of Damascus was being called “Hadad-idri,” an Assyrian equivalent of the Hebrew “Hadad-ezer.” Some suggest that Ben-Hadad was a dynastic name, each ruler under the god Hadad bearing the title of his son, hence “Ben [son of] Hadad.” See, Boardman, John, Ed., *The Cambridge Ancient History*, (Cambridge 1982), Vol. III, Part 1, at 476.

Interestingly, Jehoshaphat was again approached for assistance by another king from the North, Jehoram, the son of Ahab. As before, Jehoshaphat insisted on a prophetic word from Yahweh before he would fight. This time, the word was different. The

prophet was Elisha, and while he had nothing good to say, and no reason to offer a whisper to Jehoram, he offered his prophetic word for the sake of Jehoshaphat:

And Elisha said, ‘As the Lord of Hosts lives, before whom I stand, were it not that I have regard for Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, I would neither look at you nor see you!’ (2 Kings 3:14).

The prophetic word returns positively (“The Lord will also give the Moabites into your hand” 2 Kings 3:18), and Jehoshaphat goes to battle with Jehoram against Moab. Again, the prophetic word was correct.⁴

The Chronicler in greater detail provides some of the deeds of Jehoshaphat that evidenced his “heart to seek God”. When the armies of three nearby nations (the Moabites, Ammonites, and some of the Meunites) threatened Judah, Jehoshaphat, and the people were truly afraid. Jehoshaphat declared a fast for the country and “set his face to seek the Lord” (2 Chron 21:3). Then he assembled people from all over Judah for joint prayer and petitioning. With Jehoshaphat leading the prayer he proclaimed,

O our God, will you not execute judgment on them [the invaders]? For we are powerless against this great horde that is coming against us. We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you." (2 Chron. 20:12).

The scene is dramatic. He prayed while all the people were standing before him at the temple, “with their little ones, their wives, and their children” (2 Chron. 20:13). The Spirit of the Lord then descended upon a prophet who declared,

Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed at this great horde, for the battle is not yours but God’s (2 Chron. 20:15).

Jehoshaphat’s response was solemn:

Then Jehoshaphat bowed his head with his face to the ground, and all Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem fell down before the Lord, worshipping the Lord (2 Chron 20:18).

The next day, the men assembled for battle. Jehoshaphat in faith declared,

⁴ We note here an apparent inconsistency of the premise of the Deuteronomist Historian theorists. Here is an evil King of Israel enlisting the help of Jehoshaphat for his battle. If an agenda-driven Deuteronomist without historical regard reconstructed this history, the history would logically be written differently. The battle win would belong to good king Jehoshaphat and any role of Jehoram would be minimized or edited out. The Prophet Historian, however, writes the history as it occurred, emphasizing the role of the prophetic word coming true.

Believe in the LORD your God, and you will be established; believe his prophets, and you will succeed (2 Chron. 20:20).

Then, after taking counsel, Jehoshaphat appointed singers to go before the army praising God. “And when they began to sing and praise, the Lord set an ambush against the [invading army] and they were routed. The invaders turned against each other and self-destructed without Judah having to fight! The Judahites returned home with great rejoicing!

We are also told that Jehoshaphat tried to make ships that would traverse the sea to Ophir to retrieve gold. Those ships were constructed in a joint scheme with Ahaziah, the king who had succeeded Ahab to the Northern Kingdom throne. The construction took place at Ezion-Geber, a town on the Red Sea at the Gulf of Aqaba. Again, this effort at cooperating with the wicked did not fare well. Because of the joint collaboration, the Lord saw that the ships were destroyed before they ever left the port (2 Chron. 20:37).

One final blow to Jehoshaphat’s efforts came after his death. His successor to the throne, his son Jehoram⁵, was the husband to Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter (the “marriage alliance”). Of course, the Prophet Historian has already revealed the troubles that Jehoshaphat walked into as he lived in relationship to Ahab. Marrying off his son into a relationship with a Baal/Asherah worshipping daughter of Ahab and Jezebel is an awful price to pay for peace! Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram was an awful king. He lost territories, he lost his family (all his sons except the youngest were killed by invaders), he set up worship sites in the high places, and “led the inhabitants of Jerusalem into whoredom” (2 Chron. 21:11). In contrast to his father who sent priests and officials throughout the land teaching the Law to the many villages and towns, Jehoram “made Judah go astray” (2 Chron. 17:7-9; 21:11). Jehoram died after eight years and his tombstone might as well read what the Chronicler wrote:

He departed with no one’s regret (2 Chron. 21:20).

He was not buried with the others in the tombs of the king!

AHAZIAH AND ATHALIAH

Ahaziah was 22 when he began his reign as king of Judah. His reign was as wicked as his father’s as he followed the counsel of his mother, the daughter of the wicked Northern King Ahab. Ahaziah joined forces with his cousin, King Jehoram in the north to battle Hazael, king of Syria. Jehoram was wounded in the

⁵ Jehoram is also called simply “Joram.”

battle and recovering in Jezreel when Ahaziah went to pay his cousin a visit. It was while there that the Israelite general Jehu mounted his 841 BC coup d'état against Jehoram, and killed both Jehoram and Ahaziah.⁶

We have previously mentioned the Tel Dan Stele when writing about the house of David. It is here that the stele places itself in history. The stele was discovered in excavations at the ruins of Tel Dan in 1993 (with additional fragments found in 1994). Scholarly opinions on the stele vary in a number of details, but the consensus opinions have large acceptance, and we will consider those in this discussion, but first we need to put the stele into its biblical context.

The author of the stele is likely Hazael, king of Damascus. Hazael was made king after his assassination of Ben-Hadad.⁷ (This came after Hazael had met Elisha in Damascus and learned that Ben-Hadad was going to recover from his illness.) Elisha secretly anointed Hazael king of Syria, and then subsequently secretly anointed Jehu king of Israel. The instruction to perform these anointings actually went to Elisha's predecessor, Elijah,



And the LORD said to him [Elijah],
‘Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus. And when you arrive, you shall anoint Hazael to be king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint to be king over Israel, and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah you shall anoint to be prophet in your place. And the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael shall Jehu put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha put to death (1 Kings 19:15-18).

Bill Schniedewind, U.C.L.A.’s head of Near Eastern Languages (and class reader!) suggests the proximity of the anointing instructions to Elijah indicates a collusion between Hazael and Jehu.⁸

⁶ We have covered this battle in greater detail in the lesson on the Northern Kingdom # 35 downloadable in the Old Testament Survey section at www.Biblical-literacy.com.

⁷ We note that even Hazael’s son eventually took the name/title “Ben-Hadad” (2 Kings 13:3)!

⁸ Schniedewind, William M., “Tel Dan Stela: New Light on Aramaic and Jehu’s Revolt”, *Bulletin of the American Schools of Oriental Research*, (1996), at 83. We should add that even as Schniedewind uses the accepted language of a Deuteronomistic Historian as author for the Kings’ accounts, he notes that this passage does not make sense for such a reconstruction. A core to the

The stele is a piece of military propaganda bragging about Hazael's defeat of Israel's King Jehoram and Judah's King Ahaziah.

We do not have all the words of the stele because it was broken into three pieces and some of the words are missing. A reconstruction and translation of the text by Schniedewind follows:

<i>Transcription</i>	<i>Translation</i>
[?] מַרְעַן [.] וְגִזְרֵי . [] 1	1. [. . .] MR ^c [. . .] and cut/made (a treaty) ? [. . .]
[אֵל־אֲבִי יִסְקָן .] עֲלֵה־בָהּ [תְּלַחֲמָהּ .] בְּאֵבֶן [] 2	2. [𐤀𐤋𐤁𐤏] -el my father, went up [against him when]
וְשָׁכַב אֲבִי יִהֲכֵ אֵל [.] אֲבָהוּן [וְיַעֲלֵ מַלְכֵי] שׁ 3	he was fighting at A[bel ?]
וְאֵל קִדְמָ בְּאֲרַק אֲבִי [וְיִהְיֶה מַלְכֵּה הַדָּד [.] אֵינִי] . 4	3. and my father lay down; he went to [his ancestors.] Now the king of Israel entered
[אֲנִי וְיִהֲכֵ הַדָּד קִדְמֵי [וְאֲפִקְ מִן .] שְׁבַע־תָּ .] --- 5	5. formerly in the land in my father's land; [but] Hadad made me myself king.
יִמְלִכֵּנִי וְאֲקַתְּלֵמֵן [כִּן .] שָׁבַע־עֲנָ אֲסָרִי אֵן [לְפִי־רָ] 6	6. and Hadad went in front of me; [and] I departed from [the] seven [. . .]
כָּבֹד אֲלֵפִי פָרַשׁ [וְקַתְּלַחֲ אֵינִי] רַמְכָּר [אֵן חָאֲבָ .] 7	7. of my kingdom; and I slew seven [nty ki]ngs, who harnessed thou[sands of cha]/riots
מַלְכֵּי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְקַתְּלַחֲ [תָּ .] אֵינִי אַחֲזֵי [יְהוּ .] בְּרֵן [יוֹרָם מֶלֶךְ] 8	8. king of Israel, and [I] killed [Ahazi]yahu, son of
כִּבְיַתְּדוֹד וְאֲשַׁמְ [אֲרַקְהֵם ?] . . . [קָרָה] 9	9. of the House of David; and I set [their towns into ruins ? . . . the ci]/ties
[יַתְּ אֲרַקְהֵם לְשָׁנְמָהּ .] ? . . . [] 10	10. of their land into de[solation ? . . .]
אַחֲרָנִי לְהַפֵּן [כָּכָל עָרֵי הֵם ?] . . . [וְיִהְיֶה אֲמָ] 11	11. . . . other and to over[turn all their cities ? . . . and Jchu]
[לְכָל עַלְיִשְׂרָאֵל . . .] 12	12. [ru]/led over Is[rael . . .]
[מִצָּרָה עָלָן . . .] 13	13. siege upon [. . .]

As we read the translation, we note first that in verse 4, the Aramaic reads that “Hadad [the patron god of Damascus] made me myself king.” Schniedewind points out that the normal description of succession to the throne would say, “My father ruled...and I ruled after my father.” The Aramaic usage that places the god Hadad as the “king maker” “highlights the unusual succession of the usurper

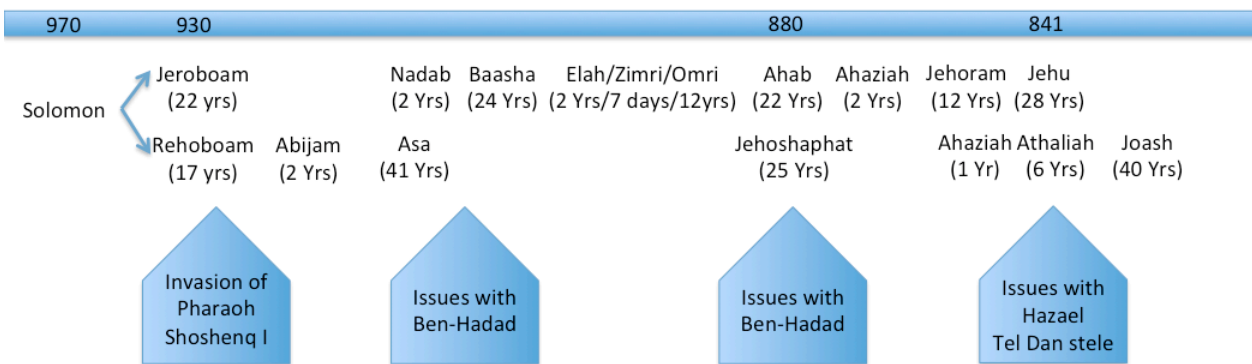
Deuteronomist Historian hypothesis is the recounting of events as fulfilling prophecies. Here Elijah was told to perform anointings that the text indicates were done by Elisha instead. From the perspective we present as a Prophet Historian writing, this makes perfect sense. Elijah was told to anoint three. He managed (for reasons not supplied) to anoint only one, his successor Elisha. He left the responsibility of anointing the other two (Hazael and Jehu) to Elisha to do in his stead. Elisha then did so. This is the history. There is no reason to change it. The history shows something contrary to the purposes of any Deuteronomistic Historian, but it is what it is because it is the way it happened!

Hazael.”⁹ In other words, “I did not get my throne through birthright, it came by the gods when I took the throne for myself!”

We also note that in verses 7-9, Hazael takes credit for the slaying of both Joram “son of Ahab, King of Israel” and Ahaziah “son of the House of David.” We had noted before that this is the first extra-Biblical reference to David.¹⁰ The significance of the stele goes far beyond that, however. This stele seems to confirm the idea that Jehu was working in alliance (if not cahoots!) with Hazael. Hazael claims credit for the slayings at the sword of Jehu!

After the death of Ahaziah, Athaliah, daughter of King Ahab who married into the royal house of Judah, slew her grandchildren so that she could reign over Judah as Queen. One grandchild, Joash, was hidden in the temple (a place apparently never frequented by the idolatrous queen!)

This allows us to add to our timeline:



JOASH

For six years Joash remained hidden away, protected from the evil queen by the priest Jehoiada. After six years, the young boy was brought out in a well-orchestrated event announcing him as king. Queen Athaliah shouted, “Treason!” to no avail and was put to death.

Joash’s reign got off to a great start. As a seven-year old, he received careful governance from the faithful priest Jehoiada. Jehoiada made a covenant between

⁹ *Ibid.*, at 78.

¹⁰ A discussion of the minority view of certain scholars that dismiss the identification of David, see Schniedewind, *Ibid.*, and Kitchen, at 452ff.

the LORD and the king and the people. The people then tore down the house of Baal, tore down the altars to Baal, killed the priests of Baal, and destroyed the images of Baal. The Prophet Historian credited his good governance to Jehoiada:

And Jehoash [an alternate spelling of Joash] did what was right in the eyes of the LORD all his days, because Jehoiada the priest instructed him (2 Kings 12:2).

Joash collected money and oversaw the repair work to the temple. He also had difficulty with Hazael and had to buy peace with him. (This fact's inclusion in Kings, without the Chronicle's accounting given later in this lesson, runs contrary to what one would expect from a Deuteronomist Historian who allegedly alters history to account for his viewpoint. It is, however, consistent with a Prophet Historian who relates historical data with a commentary or message behind it.)

The Biblical notes that Hazael conquered both cities in Israel as well as Judah is also attested in the Tel Dan stele, which could read, "I set their towns into ruins...the cities of their land into desolation...to overturn all their cities." Joash stopped Hazael's incursion into Jerusalem by giving him the booty of the temple and king's house. Joash was killed through a conspiracy of his servants.

What happened to Joash? The Chronicler gives more insight. Joash maintained his good judgment while Jehoiada was alive. Finally, after 130 years on earth, a long and dedicated career to the LORD, Jehoiada died. He was buried in the kings' tomb because of his good service in Israel and toward God and the temple (2 Chron. 24:15-16). After Jehoiada died, Joash started listening to other leaders in Judah who were not faithful to God. They were allowed to worship various idols, in spite of prophetic words sent to warn them. Jehoiada's son Zechariah tried to warn them,

Thus says God, 'Why do you break the commandments of the LORD, so that you cannot prosper? Because you have forsaken the LORD, he has forsaken you.' (2 Chron. 24:20).

Because of this, probably deluding himself into thinking these words were treasonous, Joash commanded the stoning of Zechariah. The conspiracy to kill Joash was brought about after these evil deeds. First, Hazael came in and destroyed much of the land. Then, Joash gave away the kingdom's treasures to buy peace. Finally in the battling, Joash was severely wounded, and it was then that his servants finished him off, setting the stage for his son Amaziah to reign in his stead (2 Chron. 24:23-25).¹¹

¹¹ Someone might reasonably ask why Joash is credited in Kings with "doing right in the eyes of the LORD all his days" (2 Kings 12:2). We should note two things. First, "all" in the Hebrew sense does not always mean "every single one" (same with Greek!). It can mean "all" in a

POINTS FOR HOME

1. *“We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you”* (2 Chron. 20:12).

All of us have faced it: the situation that seems to have no good ending. These are those times when things are beyond our control, and do not seem to have a good ending in store. We can take encouragement from the approach of Jehoshaphat, the king with a heart for God. He knew at those times where to turn. His plea can and should be ours. “We do not know what to do, but our eyes are on you!” The response he got is the gravamen of our faith: “Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed...for the battle is not yours but God’s” (2 Chron. 20:15). Amen Lord!

2. *“Now Jehoshaphat had great riches and honor, and he made a marriage alliance with Ahab.”* (2 Chron. 18:1).

How terrible was that choice! What do you look for in the spouses of your children, your grandchildren, or even yourself? My constant prayer for my children is that they will have a spouse who brings out the best in them. First and foremost, I want them to find someone who brings out their best before God. This is my prayer and what I look for as I eyeball those young men courting my daughters, or the young women eyeing my son! On a more personal level, what kind of spouse am I? Am I one who brings out the best in my wonderful wife? Let us commit anew to our spouses (even if it is a future spouse) and to our prayers for spouses of those we love. “Lord, may you give me wisdom and the Spirit’s fruit to be a spouse that leads my wife to you, and may my children each find the right person who brings out the best in their growth and service to you and in this world!”

3. *“...because Jehoiada the priest instructed him”* (2 Kings. 12:2).

Is there any reason to read Scripture? Is there any reason to attend real teachings of Scripture? Is there any reason to have godly counselors and friends? Is there any reason to marry inside the faith? These stories and the Prophet Historian shout, “ABSOLUTELY!” If we fail to see how easy it is to stray from ungodly advice and friends, from ungodly spouses, and from lack of regular study in the ways of God, we are fooling ourselves. It is not that Joash was a religious slouch. There but for the grace of God go most of us!

series, or “all” for a period, or “all” in a group. This is the sense in which “all the country of Judea and all Jerusalem” went out to John to be baptized (Mk 1:5). The Prophet Historian demarks his “all” with the qualifying language, “because Jehoiada the priest instructed him.” In other words, as long as Joash was listening to Jehoiada, he was doing right!

So let's make a commitment in this point for home. Let us commit to regular study of the word, to fostering friends who hold us accountable to the Lord, and to daily personal prayer and time before the Lord.

WANT MORE?

Next week we continue our historical study of Israel, focusing on the Southern Kingdom of Judah. As we work our way toward the conquering of Israel, read up on Tiglath-pileser and Sennacherib! Email us your thoughts and questions at wantmore@Biblical-Literacy.com.