

Episode: Kings and Prophets Series No. 1

Narrator: Apostle Paul and Ezra

Primary Scriptures: Isaiah 7, 53; Colossians 1: 25-27

Story Summary: Overview of the last seven chapters of *Hebrews*.

Location: Kingdom of Israel

Time: Circa 1050 BC - 430 BC

Suggested Memory Scriptures: Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:6, 53:12; Colossians 1:25-27

The Old Testament books from *Ruth* to *Malachi* comprise about half the pages of the Bible, yet they cover only the six-century period of the kings of Israel to the return from exile in Babylon, about 1050 BC to 430 BC.

The overall history of this period is fairly easy to understand. The Israelites choose to be ruled by an earthly king instead of by God. The kings lead the Israelites to regional political power under King David, and then into a decline so severe that the nation is subjugated and taken into exile. The kings lead the people from worshiping only God to worshiping idols and the gods of the area people. Their unfaithfulness to God causes him to punish them in hopes they will decide to fulfill their covenant with him.

At the beginning of this period, the Israelites occupy and control a portion of land where we find modern-day Israel and Palestine. Under King David, the Israelites conquer and control the entire region. By the end of the period, a small number of Israelites, under the rule of the Babylonians, occupy only Jerusalem and the surrounding area.

Reading this portion of the Bible is very challenging for modern readers. The books are not in chronological order, the names of the countries and people groups are unfamiliar and numerous, and in portions of the narratives it is can be difficult to determine who is even speaking. Reading these books is made even more challenging because it is not always immediately obvious how the books are relevant to today's Christians.

One resource that many people have found helpful for study is a good chronological Bible with commentary before each section. This is a Bible where the editors have "cut and pasted" the books and chapters to place them in approximate chronological order. With this type of resource, a reader can quickly get a good understanding of this portion of the Bible, and will likely find that there are many things that not only are relevant to modern Christians, but will gain a richer context of portions of the New Testament.

One reason these books are crucial to modern Christians are their prophecies concerning Jesus. His fulfillment of these prophecies is a major reason Christians of all time periods believe in him as the Messiah.

Discussion Questions:

1. Briefly describe the mystery story that runs through the Old Testament.
2. Name some reasons it is hard for modern readers to understand many of the books from *Ruth* to *Malachi*.
3. What is the main behavioral trait of the Israelites that gets them in trouble in these books of the Bible?
4. What are the two main purposes of prophets?
5. Based on what you know now, which are the three kings in the Bible that you think are the best? Why do you have that opinion, and are you willing to change your opinion if you learn new facts about them?

1. There are many hints in the Old Testament that there will be Messiah that comes to save and restore Israel. None of the prophets could have possibly known that the Messiah would be the Son of God who would come to save all the nations, not just Israel. 2. Many of the books, and much of their content, is not in chronological order. Many of the country names are not familiar, and the enemies of Israel change over time. The names of Israel, Judah, the Northern Kingdom, Southern Kingdom, Samaria and other names are confusing. 3. The desire to worship other gods instead of the One True God. 4. To tell the truth, and to prophesy about future events.

Application Questions:

1. Some verses are specifically written for the nation of Israel or to a specific person. What do you think about applying those verses to your own life? An example is Jeremiah 29:11.
2. Since the Northern Kingdom ceased to exist, is there any reason to learn about it and read the prophets that were concerned with the Northern Kingdom? Why or why not?
3. Do you think you know more stories from the Old Testament or the New Testament? Does it make a difference for your faith?

Application Questions for Teens:

1. Why would it be worth your effort to learn about the kings and prophets in the Old Testament?
2. Do you think that any of the Old Testament prophecies are about Jesus? If the New Testament writers had not explained that to be the case, would you have figured it out on your own? Did the Jews in the time of Jesus think the prophecies were about him?
3. Do you believe that God is still speaking through prophets today? Why or why not? If most of the Old Testament prophecies were about Jesus, what would modern-day prophecies be about? How can you know if someone today who claims to be a prophet is actually God-inspired?