

6. The Rise and Fall of Israel: The Tragic Consequences of Covenant Disobedience

In this section we will examine the tragedy of Israel, the Northern Kingdom. After the death of Solomon, ten tribes broke away from the Kingdom of David to establish the nation of Israel around the capital of Samaria. Their poor stewardship over the promises of God's Covenant and their determination to establish a nation on their own terms resulted in judgment and destruction.

6.1 Read 1 Kings 12 and 16-19. Here begins the tragic story of the falling away of Israel.

6.11 Summarize the content of these chapters. What do we learn about God's Covenant with His people?

6.12 In what ways does Jereboam lead the people into a mockery of their Covenant relationship with the LORD?

6.13 How did Jereboam's actions affect subsequent kings of Israel?

6.14 How does the appearance of Elijah - whose name means, "My God is Jah(veh)" - show us the Covenant faithfulness of God? How would his ministry have reminded the people of the God Who led Israel through the wilderness and into the settling of the land?

6.15 What seemsto have been the purpose of God's "showdown" with the prophets of baal? What do we learn about His glory from this episode?

6.2 Read 2 Kings 1, 2, 5, and 7. Here we are introduced to Elisha, the successor of Elijah.

6.21 Summarize the content of these chapters. What do they suggest about the unifying threads of revelation?

6.22 How is the Covenant faithfulness of God evident to Israel, even in the face of their sin?

6.23 Elisha's name means, "God saves." Compare him and his ministry with that of Elijah. Together, how would they have given the nation a good reminder of the God of the Covenant? What do their ministries, taken together, suggest about the work of the prophet in Israel?

6.24 How can Elisha's ministry to Naaman be seen to be consistent both with what seems to have been his unique calling (remember what his name means, as opposed to Elijah) and the Covenant promise of God?

6.25 How might Elisha's ministry have served both to encourage and to warn the faithless nation of Israel?

6.3 Read the Books of Jonah, Nahum, and Obadiah. The office of the prophet becomes extremely important during this period. Jonah and Nahum occur at opposite ends of the period we are considering (see 2 Kings 14.25).

6.31 Summarize the messages of these prophets. Which aspects of the unifying threads of revelation or the Covenant of God seem to be in view?

6.32 What is the primary message that God wants to get across *to* Jonah? *Through* Jonah (study the responses of the Ninevites)?

6.33 How does the story of Jonah relate to the Covenant with Abraham?

6.34 What do we learn from Nahum about the Covenant faithfulness of God? To what is He being faithful?

6.35 What does Obadiah add to this (see especially vv. 10-16)?

6.4 Read 2 Kings 10, 13, 16, and 17. The tragic story comes to an end.

6.41 Summarize the events of these chapters. What can we learn from them about God's Covenant or the unifying threads of revelation?

6.42 Jehu came very close to serving according to the heart of God. How did he fall short? Does this suggest anything about his real motivations?

6.43 How would you describe the impact of Israel's sin on the events in Judah?

6.44 What is the most consistently used phrase to describe the kings of Israel? Why do you suppose this is significant?

6.45 What did the fall of Israel signify? Of what might it have been a portent (see John 1.11 and Acts 13.44-48)?

6.5 Read Hosea 1, 2, 8, 12, and 14. Hosea's ministry occurred in Israel near the end of her days.

6.51 Summarize the basic message of the prophet. What aspects of God's Covenant with Israel does this bring to mind?

6.52 For what does God warn and ultimately condemn Israel (8.1)?

6.53 How did this condition reveal itself in the daily life of the nation (see chapter 4)?

6.54 In spite of their rebellion, how can you see the heart of God longing for His people?

6.55 What do we learn from Hosea about God's plan for the Gentiles?

6.6 Read Amos 1, 2, 5, 8, and 9. Amos also prophesied in Israel toward the end of the period we have been studying.

6.61 Summarize Amos' message to the nations. What do we learn from this about God's Covenant?

6.62 What does Amos' prophecy suggest about the scope of God's Covenant?

6.63 How can God hold the Gentiles accountable for their actions (recall Genesis 12.1-3, and see Amos 1.3, 1.13, etc.)?

6.64 What does God hold out as the only hope for Israel (especially chapter 5)?

6.65 How is this consistent with what we know about the unifying threads of revelation and the Covenant of God?

6.7 Read the book of Micah. Micah holds out the light of hope to God's rebellious people.

6.71 Summarize the message of this prophet. What aspects of God's Covenant seem to be in focus?

6.72 How does Micah's word to Israel serve to warn Judah (1.1-12)?

6.73 For what are the kings of Israel condemned (3.1-4)? And the prophets (3.5-7)?

6.74 What hope is held out to the people of God? According to Hebrews 12.22-29, who should be able to lay claim to this hope today?

6.75 When are the last days, and what is the significance of Micah 4.1-5 for the Church and the nations (see Acts 2.14-17)?

Final exercise: The Rise and Fall of Israel

In what sense does this section show us both the hopeful and the threatening side of the glory of God? What were the primary obstacles keeping Israel from returning to the LORD? What was the role of the prophets during this period? How would you describe the hearts of the people of Israel in this period?