

The Greatness of the Kingdom - Judges to Old Testament Prophets

I. From Saul to Solomon: Leader-Judges gives way to kings

a. Judges were individually chosen by God (Jud 2:16) "The LORD raised up judges." (cf. Deut 31:14; Josh 1:5)- God appoints and empowers (Jud 2:18; 1 Sam 3:19-4:1)-Specially embued with the Spirit (Jud 3:10 [Othniel]; Deut 34:9 [Joshua]; Jud 6:34 [Gideon]; Jud 11:29 [Jephthah]; Jud 13:25, 15:14 [Samson]. The Judges did not always exhibit high moral character; God was with them in their judging. They had no dynastic rights, (Judges 9:56) and the point was to give relief to the nation. Conditions were not ideal (Jud 21:25) and there are a series of oppressions and reliefs.

b. The Monarchy (a continuation of the Kindgom started under Moses)

1) Cause was the rejection of God's rule over the people (1 Sam 8:7), but the monarchy is foreseen in the plan of God (Gen 17:6, "Kings shall come out of thee"). cf. Gen 35:11; Deut 17:14-20. The king must be an Israelite, not a stranger or proselyte. He must be chosen by God (Deut 17:15), and ratified by the people. Commands to the king: 1) not to multiply horses (i.e., no offensive capability): Deut 17:16. Jehovah is to provide defense. Second, the king is not to multiply wives to himself (Deut 17:17) so that his heart not turn away. Third, he is not to multiply silver and gold to himself (Deut 17:17), so that he not become blinded by avarice. Fourthly, he is to be a student of the Word (Deut 17:18-20).

2) Events leading to The Monarchy: Lack of unity, Recurring defeats by outside foes, moral corruption of Eli's sons (1 Sam 2:22-25), disappointment in Samuel's sons (1 Sam 8:1-3), and the readiness of Israel for a family with dynastic rights (Jud 8:22-23). The elders ask Samuel for a king (1 Sam 8:4-5). Samuel anoints Saul (1 Sam 10:1), confirmed by casting lots (17-21) and ratification by the people (v. 24). The rule remains: Both Israel and the king must obey the Lord, for if not, they will be consumed (v. 25). NOTE: God does not give the people exactly what they ask for. They are not given the right to set up a king of their own choosing, and their kind is not to be "like the other nations" (1 Sam 8:5). They go from a simple administration uncomplicated in function and cost, to a bloated government later to be unconnected to Biblical moral principles, adding to the burdens on the people and restrictions of their liberties. Saul is anointed, then rejected (1 Sam 15:17, 26), then David is anointed (1 Sam 16:1, 13). Solomon is chosen from David's many sons (1 Chron 28:5). Solomon is the last king directly chosen by God, and thus the last of the united kingdom of Israel.

3) Successes of the Monarchy: Military achievements of David, peaceful work of Solomon. (2 Sam 5:17-25; 8:1). Jerusalem captured and made capital (2 Sam 5:6-10). Moab, Ammon and Edom reduced to tributaries. Other kings sue for peace (2 Sam 8:2-15). Taxes imposed, and strong points fortified under Solomon (1 Ki 9:15-19). Army and Navy built (1 Ki 9:22-26). Alliances and diplomacy (1 Ki 9:16; 11:1). Expanded foreign trade and artisanship (1 Ki 5:1-18; 9:26-28; 10:22). Wealth of the nation increased (1 Ki 10:2, 14, 27). Solomon's wisdom sought (1 Ki 10:23-24). Solomon's only injunction: keep the Law (1 Ki 2:2-3), and God confirms his presence at the Temple (1 Chron 7:1).

II. The Decline of the Monarchy: 1. Personal failures of Solomon (2 Sam 7:14). Multiplied military (1 Ki 10:26, 28); foreign wives (1 Ki 11:1, 3-4); avarice (1 Ki 10:21, 27) and his heart turns away from God (1 Ki 11:4). Forced labor of Israelites for one month out of three (1 Ki 5:13-14). Taxes (2 Sam 8:1-11). Sale or mortgage of land to Hiram (1 Ki 9:10-14). Rehoboam refuses to lighten the load (1 Ki 12:4ff). Result: The 10 tribes leave (1 Ki 11:29-43) under Jereboam (1 Ki 12:16-20). The prophet Shemiah sent by God to Rehoboam to say "Thus says the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house, for this thing is from me." (1 Ki 12:22-25). Nevertheless, there is war continuously (1 Ki 14:30). Divided kingdom, but preserved (1 Ki 11:11-13). For the most remarkable statement in politics or theology, see 1 Sam 8:7-20: the high cost of being governed by men. To wit: Government bureaucracy, job-making, labor scarcity, Government for it's own sake, burdensome taxation, property confiscation, political corruption, totalitarian control, and intolerable oppression. The problem is not the monarchy; it is that Israel desired a king "like all the nations" (1 Sam 8:20). God set Israel up to be different from the nations around it.

III. Role of the prophets during the Monarchy: Neh 9:30 "Yet many years did thou bear with them, and testified against them by thy Spirit through the prophets." After Solomon, the kings take their throne by force or by inheritance. Finally, foreign powers decide who is to sit on the throne (1 Ki 23:34; 24:17). Rule degenerates, and prophets speak for God. The office of the prophet is for 5 reasons:

- a. The prophets probed the sickness of the Kingdom (Isa 1:3-6; 5:20 moral; Social/economic (Amos 8:4-6); degeneration (Isa 1:23); evil in spiritual leaders (Isa 28:7)
- b. The prophets called the nation back to it's original Constitution and Laws (Isa 6:16; Mal 4:4)
- c. The prophets warned of Divine judgment (Amos 3:2; 5:21-24)
- d. The prophets reassert the covenant as inviolable (Mal 3:6; Jer 33:17, 20-21)
- e. The prophets promise a future, better kingdom (Isa 21:11-12; Zech 14:7, 9)

NEXT: Prophecy, it's Nature and Interpretation (April, after Easter).