

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY – CHRISTIANITY 101
TUESDAY, May 6, 2025

Stan Campbell, *Bible to Go: Genesis to Revelation in One Hour*, (New York: Faith Words, 2006)

Divided and Conquered: The Fall of the Nation and the Rise of the Prophets

Well, we've hit the high point of the Old Testament, and it's pretty much downhill from here. Now we begin a long, extended spiritual slide with tragic (though not unforeseen) results.

A Kingdom Divided Against Itself (I Kings chapters 12 through 2 Kings 25)

After Solomon sets aside all his wisdom to forsake God in favor of his many wives, it doesn't take long for the kingdom to begin to crumble. One of Solomon's officers, Jeroboam, rebels and soon become king of the ten-plus tribes that make up the northern kingdom (Israel) – I Kings 12:20. But because of David's previous faithfulness, God ensures that a portion of the nation remains in the family. Solomon's son Rehoboam becomes king of the tribe of Judah and a portion of the territory of Benjamin (known collectively as Judah) – I Kings 12:21-23. From this point on, the kingdom is divided, with each part having a succession of about twenty kings over the next 200 to 350 years.

After Saul, David, and Solomon, the kings of Israel and Judah are for the most part inefficient and inconsequential (worthless) - All that is recorded for many of them is "He did evil in the eyes of the LORD" (1 Kings 15:26; 2 Kings 22:52). In fact, as soon as the kingdom splits and Jeroboam sees the allure of the temple in Judah, he sets up a couple of golden calves in the northern kingdom to keep the people from feeling the need to go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices (I Kings 12:29-31). The God-given Mosaic Law is quickly forgotten.

And Judah does little better than Israel at maintaining a shred of spiritual integrity. Both kingdoms grow weak and vulnerable. The northern tribes are conquered and exiled to Assyria in 722BC (2 Kings 17:5-6). The people of Judah hold out almost another century and a half before falling and being carried off to Babylon in 586 BC (2 Kings 25). But the sieges are awful, with priest slaughtered and starving mothers reduced to cannibalism of their own children – Lamentations 2:20, 4:9-10.

Ahab and Jezebel (I Kings 16:29-22:40; 2 Kings 9:30-37)

Sadly, it is the evil kings who are remembered more than the decent ones from this period of biblical history. Not too many people recall Jehoshaphat (I Kings 22:41-50). Jotham (2 Kings 15:32-

UNION BAPTIST CHURCH
BIBLE STUDY – CHRISTIANITY 101

TUESDAY, May 6, 2025

Stan Campbell, *Bible to Go: Genesis to Revelation in One Hour*, (New York: Faith Words, 2006)

38), or Josiah (2 Kings 22:1-23:30), who went against the tide of the time and were relatively righteous and faithful.

Instead, we hear more about Ahab and Jezebel: “*There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel his wife*” – I Kings 21:15. They worship Baal and Asherah rather than God (1 Kings 14:23). They make life very difficult for the prophet Elijah. And when a simple man name Naboth refuses to sell them a vineyard they want, they frame him and have him stoned to death for a false charge (I Kings 21). Elijah prophesied that for murdering an innocent man, both Ahab and Jezebel will be devoured by dogs, and his prophecies come to pass (I Kings 22:37-53; 2 Kings 9:30-34).

Elijah and Elisha (I Kings 17 through 2 Kings 13:21)

When the kings of Israel and Judah stop providing spiritual leadership for the nations, God sends prophets to proclaim His truth to the people. Elijah and Elisha are bright spots in the spiritual darkness of the series of evil kings. Not only does God provide for them in unusual ways – such as being fed by ravens (I Kings 17:1-6), but they also receive power to perform all kinds of miracles: making lost ax heads float (2 Kings 6:1-7), calling fire from heaven (I Kings 18), healing leprosy (2 Kings 5), and even bringing back people from the dead (I Kings 17:17-24). At the end of his years of faithful service, Elijah is taken to heaven in a chariot of fire (2 Kings 2:1-18).

Numerous prophets are mentioned by name in the Bible, Elijah and Elisha being two of the more prominent ones. Others wrote books to record the events and messages of their ministries. The writers of the longer books are known as the Major Prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel). Those with shorter writings are called Minor Prophets.

Next Week’s Focus: Next Week’s Focus:

- | | |
|------------|-----------|
| - Isaiah | - Ezekiel |
| - Jeremiah | - Daniel |