

THE
DISCIPLESHIP
PLACE

Telling the Old Testament
Story of God



SESSION 8

Divided Monarchy and Eighth Century BC Prophets

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Divided Monarchy and Eighth Century BC Prophets

SESSION OVERVIEW

Period of the Divided Monarchy

Eighth Century BC Prophets

Application

Exam

Discussion Guide for Mentor and Participant

LEARNER OBJECTIVES

At the end of this session, you should:

- understand the pattern of judgment for and against the kings of the divided monarchy, within 1 and 2 Kings.
- recognize the way in which Samuel and kings reflect the themes of Deuteronomy.
- identify the characteristics and qualities that characterize a prophet of God.
- describe the major themes reflected in the eighth century (700s) BC prophets.

INTRODUCTION

In this session, we will briefly examine the series of kings following the division of Israel into North (Israel) and South (Judah) kingdoms. In addition to this focus on the divided monarchy, we will give attention to the eighth-century prophets.

PERIOD OF THE DIVIDED MONARCHY



NOTES

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, promises to be a harsher ruler than Solomon was (1 Kings 12:13-14). As a result, the Northern tribes forsake Rehoboam and choose Jeroboam as their King (1 Kings 12:16, 20). So Rehoboam rules Judah (including Benjamin); while Jeroboam rules the other tribes in the North (Israel).

Thus, the kingdom is divided: the Southern Kingdom is known as Judah, while the Northern kingdom retains the title, Israel. The kings in the Southern kingdom of Judah are judged according to the standard of the great King David. Some of the kings of Judah are judged as good, like David (e.g., 1 Kings 15:9-13); while others are judged to be evil, unlike David (e.g., 1 Kings 15:1-3).

According to 1 and 2 Kings, each successive king of Judah and Israel is judged according to the standard of a previous king. For Israel in the North, Jeroboam is described as a sinful king who led the nation in evil ways. Each successive king in the North is judged according to the standard of Jeroboam and is described as likewise being evil (1 Kings 15:25-26, 33-34; 16:23-26, 29-33).

The theology reflected in Kings follows the themes from Deuteronomy. Kings are judged by their faithfulness to God and whether or not they tore down improper places of worship in contrast to the proper central place of worship at the Temple in Jerusalem. In Deuteronomy is a theme of securing prosperity for the land through obedience to God. In Kings, the loss of the land at the end of 2 Kings is explained as the result of disobedience to the covenant and turning away from God.

EIGHTH CENTURY BC PROPHETS

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CHARACTERISTIC MARKS OF A PROPHET OF GOD

One of the marks of a prophet of God is access to the divine counsel. This is illustrated in the account of the prophet Micaiah (1 Kings 22:19-23). Micaiah is described as envisioning the Lord in counsel with the host of heaven. The key to this characteristic of a prophet is simply that the prophet of God speaks truth directly from the Lord. This is in contrast to those who may be considered the king's prophets who merely repeat whatever the king wants to hear (1 Kings 22:13).

The most important mark of a prophet of God is not the ability to foretell the future. Rather, the most important characteristic of a prophet of God is the prophet's position as a spokesperson for God. That is, the prophet is one who speaks the word of the Lord. The prophet says what God tells the prophet to say; the prophet speaks for God to the people.

MAJOR THEMES OF THE EIGHTH-CENTURY BC PROPHETS

The eighth-century prophets include Amos, Hosea, Micah, and Isaiah. The following list constitutes major themes reflected in the eighth-century prophets:

Condemnation of empty ritual/vain worship (hypocrisy). The eighth-century prophets confronted the hypocrisy of going through the motions of religious rituals, without a sincere heart for obedience to God. This concern was combined with a call to justice, right living, and walking with God (Isa. 1:10-15; 1 Sam. 15:22; Hos. 6:6; Amos 5:21-24; Mic. 6:6-8).

Condemnation of injustice/oppression. The eighth-century prophets confronted injustice and oppression, along with a call for ministering to the needs of the poor and oppressed (Amos 2:6-8, 4:1, 8:5-6; Isa. 3:15; James 1:27).

Oracles of God's wrath and punishment against evil and injustice. The prophets proclaimed God's displeasure with idolatry and unfaithfulness to the covenant (Amos 3:11-15; Hos. 5:8-14).

God's mercy and passion for Israel to return to God and repent. God's purpose in His wrath is not destruction but rather is to bring about repentance and a turning back to God (Amos 5:4-7; Hos. 11:8-11; Isa. 1:16-19).


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Hope of restoration and the promise of saving a remnant. God's promise to preserve a remnant that sustains God's promise in relation to the Davidic covenant (i.e., always have a descendant of David on the throne of Israel). This theme reflects God's ultimate desire of restoration and renewal for His people (Amos 9:11-15; Hos. 14:4-9; Isa. 12; Mic. 4:1-5).

BOOK OF AMOS

Amos was active in the time of Jeroboam II (786-746 BC). Amos was a Judean (1:1) who prophesied in the Northern Kingdom. Amos 1:1 and 7:14 identify Amos as a herdsman, dresser of sycamores, and a sheep breeder.

Amos 1:3-2:16 contains a series of divine judgments proclaimed against neighboring states and then upon Israel itself. This reflects a pattern that draws in the listeners and then suddenly turns on them with conviction. In Amos, listeners from Israel become proud as their enemies are denounced. Then, suddenly the conviction is aimed toward Israel itself. Jesus uses a similar technique in the parable of the Good Samaritan. Listeners join in the condemnation of the haughty priest and Levite who neglect their people. But listeners are convicted when their enemy, the Samaritan, turns out to be the hero. This has the convicting effect of placing the listeners in the place of the haughty priest and Levite.

BOOK OF HOSEA

The book contains little direct information about the prophet himself. No indication is given of his home, his occupation, or the circumstances of his prophetic call. Only his father's name is given in the text (Beeri).

It seems certain, however, that he came from the Northern Kingdom of Israel and carried out his mission there. His sayings are mostly directed to Ephraim. The book reflects the events and conditions in Israel during the years 750-722, from the prosperous and peaceful years of Jeroboam II until the end of the Northern Kingdom.

Hosea's proclamation is modeled after the Exodus from Egypt, wilderness wanderings, and settlement in Palestine. Hosea implies this experience was to be repeated in a sense. The impending exile would be similar to a return to Egyptian captivity. The eventual restoration and renewal would be similar to a second exodus and settlement (8:13, 9:3).


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Hosea's marriage and family become important metaphors for Israel. The names of Hosea's children become metaphors of the relationship between God and the people of Israel (1:2-9). Likewise, Hosea's prostitute wife becomes the image of Israel's unfaithfulness to God (2:2-13). In each case, the metaphors turn to hope and restoration. The children regain the promises of God and are again called children of God (1:10-11, 2:22-23). The unfaithful wife is betrothed again in faithfulness (2:14-20).

BOOK OF MICAH

Micah served as a prophet in the South. Micah began his prophetic ministry before the fall of Samaria (in the North) and continued after that fall.

- 1-3: Judgments against Judah and Samaria
- 4-5: Oracles of salvation for Zion and Israel
- 6-7: Oracles of judgment and promise addressed to Israel

BOOK OF ISAIAH

The Book of Isaiah can be organized according to the following divisions based on the setting implied and the audience whose needs God seeks to address.

Isaiah 1-39: the life of Isaiah the prophet, active in Jerusalem, before the Babylonian exile. His ministry can be dated around 740-700 BC, during the fall of Israel.

Isaiah 40-55: the prophetic message carried on in the name of Isaiah during the exile with a setting in Babylon. This section is often referred to as Deutero (second)-Isaiah.

Isaiah 56-66: set in Palestine, after Cyrus of Persia conquered the Babylonian Empire and arranged for the exiles to return to Palestine and restore Jerusalem and the Temple. This section is often called Trito (third)-Isaiah.

These divisions are based on the evidence from the text that suggests God addresses three unique periods of Israel's history through Isaiah. This does not deny God's ability to foretell the future through the prophet, though most biblical scholars believe Isaiah was written by at least two authors in at least two different time periods.

The first section of Isaiah prophesies the fall of Israel and its restoration. Both of these events are reflected in the second and third divisions of Isaiah. Isaiah also contains significant prophecies of the coming Messiah.


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Isaiah of Jerusalem: Isaiah 1-39

Isaiah was active in Jerusalem during the latter half of the eighth century. Isaiah 1:1 claims his ministry took place during the reigns of kings Uzziah (783-742 BC), Jotham (742-735 BC), Ahaz (735-715 BC), and Hezekiah (715-687 BC). The reigns of these kings are discussed in the 2 Kings 14:17-20:21 and 2 Chron. 26:1- 32:33.

Isaiah's commission from the Lord appears in Isaiah 6:8-13. His mission appears to be the announcement of the destruction of Israel and Judah. The reason for this judgment was the gross disregard of the laws of God by the people in these kingdoms.

A major part of the sin of the people was the oppression and neglect of the poor and needy. Considering the irony of God's word to Isaiah (Isa. 6:9-10) it appears God had already given the nations of Israel and Judah years of opportunity for repentance. Now is the time for judgment.

It appears Isaiah's commission is not so much a call to repentance as it is a warning and explanation of the coming destruction. Thus, it cannot be said that God did not warn the people ahead of time. Nevertheless, for those who do seek to repent, Isaiah's commission ends with a promise of hope for a remnant of the faithful (6:13).

The period of Uzziah, king of Judah, and Jeroboam II, king of Israel, was a prosperous time. Both of these kings had long reigns. The two nations expanded to the combined size of nearly that of Solomon's kingdom. This was a period of peace with flourishing trade and commerce. Wealth poured into the nations and the population grew. With such prosperity came moral decay and injustice.

Jeroboam led his nation in idolatry, and Uzziah allowed worship at the high places (associated with idolatry). In addition, wide class distinctions emerged between the rich and poor and injustice abounded. Small farmers were at the mercy of moneylenders. During difficult times (crop failure or drought), when farmers could not pay for the land, they might lose their land or even be forced into slavery.

Also, during this period, the prophecies of Isaiah accuse the wealthy of cheating in the marketplace through the use of false weights and measures. The result of such moral decay was often hardest on the poor, including the widow and the orphan.

Isaiah's preaching announced God's judgment against such oppression and idolatry. Following the period of Uzziah and Jeroboam II, Assyria became a growing threat. Military instability and national insecurity became signs of the coming destruction.

APPLICATION



NOTES

1. Look at the learner objectives for this session. Can you:
 - Understand the pattern of judgment for and against the various kings of the divided monarchy, within 1 and 2 Kings?
 - How do Samuel and Kings reflect the themes of Deuteronomy?
 - Identify the characteristics of a prophet of God?
 - Describe the major themes reflected in the eighth-century prophets?
2. Read 2 Kings 24-25. Summarize the downfall of Judah (the Southern Kingdom). Note the number of attacks and the number of deportations described in this account. Describe those taken into exile and those left behind. Though the destruction of Judah and the initial period of exile were brutal, note the change of conditions reflected at the end of this passage.
3. Compare and contrast the following prophetic accounts: Isa. 42:9-13, 43:14-21, 48:6-7; Jer. 31:31-40; Ezek. 36:22-37:14. These accounts all speak of God's promise of restoration from exile. Identify and describe the significance of the different metaphors, key phrases, and images each prophet uses to communicate God's message of restoration.
4. Journal your reflections and insights from this session and from your reading and study. Include a discussion on: Have you encountered forms of idolatry in your culture? How do these false gods hold their followers? Compare God's response to Baal worship in the Old Testament with how He would have us respond to idolatry today.

EXAM



NOTES

1. One of the reasons the nation of Israel divided into Northern and Southern kingdoms is because _____.
 - A. The Jordan River is a natural divider
 - B. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, promises to be a harsher ruler than Solomon
 - C. Communication across such a large area made it impossible to function as one nation
 - D. All of the above
2. In the divided kingdom, the Southern Kingdom is known as Judah, while the Northern kingdom retains the title Israel.
 - A. True
 - B. False
3. The kings in the north are judged by the standard of _____.
 - A. David
 - B. Solomon
 - C. Jeroboam
 - D. Saul
4. The kings in the south are judged by the standard of _____.
 - A. David
 - B. Solomon
 - C. Jeroboam
 - D. Saul
5. The most important mark of a prophet of God _____.
 - A. the prophet's ability to foretell the future
 - B. the prophet's ability to work miracles
 - C. the prophet's position as a spokesperson for God
 - D. the prophet's relationship with the reigning king
6. Which of the following is NOT a theme of the eighth century prophets?
 - A. Condemnation of empty ritual/vain worship (hypocrisy)
 - B. Condemnation of injustice/oppression
 - C. God's mercy and passion for Israel to return to God and repent
 - D. Condemnation of Israel's people for failure to follow laws of sacrifice

 **NOTES**

7. Amos used a series of divine judgments proclaimed against neighboring states and then turned the judgment upon Israel itself similar to how Jesus used the story of the Good Samaritan to condemn the haughty priests and Levites.
 - A. True
 - B. False

8. The Book of Hosea contains a wealth of information about Hosea himself.
 - A. True
 - B. False

9. Hosea's prostitute wife becomes the image of _____.
 - A. Israel's wanderings in the desert
 - B. Israel's need to return to righteousness in business dealings
 - C. Israel's unfaithfulness to God
 - D. Israel's faithfulness to God

10. According to Isaiah, a major part of the sin of God's people was the oppression and neglect of the poor and needy.
 - A. True
 - B. False

11. It appears Isaiah's commission is not so much a call to repentance as it is _____.
 - A. A call to preach God's Word to the nations
 - B. A warning against improper worship procedures
 - C. A complaint against Israel's ungodly neighbors
 - D. A warning and explanation of the coming destruction

12. In Isaiah's time, Israel was wealthy and dishonesty and immorality abounded.
 - A. True
 - B. False

DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR MENTOR AND PARTICIPANT

**NOTES**

Be prepared to discuss the following with your mentor.

1. Read Isaiah 6:8-13. Discuss Isaiah's commission. Consider the following:
 - Does it appear God is no longer giving the people opportunity to hear and repent?
 - Is the commission intended as a prescription of what Isaiah is to bring about or a description of what has already occurred in the hearts of the people?
 - How does verse 13 reflect hope and restoration?
2. In what ways do Samuel and the kings reflect the themes of Deuteronomy?
3. How were the kings of the divided monarchy judged? Which were found to be righteous? Which were not?
4. What are the main characteristics of the prophets of God? What are their main duties?
5. What are the major themes reflected in the eighth century prophets?