

# Study 3 - The Shadow Fades

## 1 Kings 10-16

Please read 1 Kings 10 to 16 before your growth group meets.

### What Goes Up Must come Down

They say you should be nice to the people you meet on the way up – because you'll meet them again on the way down! It's all because we're convinced that whatever goes up has to come down again. Maybe, though, the old saying is not necessarily true. Solomon and his descendants didn't have to ignore God and serve idols... the Kingdom didn't have to be brought to the point of ruin. Sadly, though, that's the way it goes. . All the excitement and wonder and enthusiasm of the previous chapters is going to be swept away in a flood of misery and tears and frustration.

To understand where Solomon went wrong we need to recall **Deuteronomy 17:14-17** where God lists three things an Israel's king should not do. He shouldn't acquire horses for himself, take many wives or accumulate silver and gold. The question is, "Is Solomon going to be a King after God's own heart... or not?"

### 1 Kings 10 - Looking Good

a) If you weren't aware of what God had said Kings should NOT DO in Deuteronomy 17, what impact would you get from reading 1 Kings 10?

b) How does the problem become explicit in 1 Kings 11? What is the issue where Solomon finally blows it?

c) What is God's verdict in 1 Kings 11:9-13?

How could such a wise King become such a fool? The answer on one level lies in the seductiveness of wealth and women. On another level, it's a failure to trust in the promises of God, and seek security in foreign alliances rather than God's faithfulness. Either way, the words of verses 9 to 13 become like the "table of contents" for the rest of the story... Because of Solomon's rebellion God promises to tear the kingdom away from his family. That's precisely what happens over the next six chapters. Israel splits into two parts - to be known as "Israel" and "Judah." The rest of 1 Kings will show us the sorts of mess that these two little squabbling semi-nations get themselves into.

### 1 Kings 11 - Conflict and Decline

d) Immediately, Solomon is surrounded by enemies. Name three of them who are mentioned in chapter 11.

e) One of these adversaries is actually appointed by God. Who, and how?

### Solomon's End

Solomon dies, leaving the kingdom in the hands of his son Rehoboam. But we already know that Rehoboam will only rule over a fraction of the Kingdom that his father established.

### 1 Kings 12 – Time to Split

a) How does Rehoboam's foolishness play into the hands of Jeroboam?

b) 'Israel' was made up of 12 tribes. Now there's a 10-2 split.

Which are the two tribes, what's their key city, and what do they call themselves?

What name is taken by the other ten tribes, and where are they based?

c) In verses 25-33, Jeroboam gives some clear indication of the kind of Kingdom he's running. What terrible reminder is there of an episode from Israel's past? (See Exodus 32)

### **1 Kings 13 – God Still Rules!**

You might get the impression that Kings ruled Israel and Judah. But in spite of appearances, we are often reminded that there's another, more powerful, force at work. Ultimately, God is in control – and he exercises his authority through the words of PROPHETS. Did you notice how Jeroboam was appointed and commissioned by a prophet? So were David and Solomon. From this point on, the prophets are more and more opposed to the Kings of Israel and Judah. One unfortunate prophet, however, has to learn that God's word is not to be taken lightly...

a) What message does the 'man of God' have for Jeroboam, and why?

b) What message does God have for the 'man of God', and why?

c) Verse 26 summarises the impact this event was meant to have on the community. How does it affect Jeroboam? (v33-34)

d) As a consequence, what does the future hold for Jeroboam's family?

### **1 Kings 14-15 - Both Bad to the Bone**

a) Jeroboam's sin is going to bring consequences for all the 10 tribes of Israel. What does their future hold, according to 1 Ki 14:15-16?

b) Meanwhile, back in Judah, Rehoboam rules the remnants of his father's kingdom from the throne of David in Jerusalem. How is the state of Judah summarised in verses 22-24?

c) How does the incident reported in verses 25-28 sum up the situation?

### **1 Kings 15-16- Abijah and Asa in Judah, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri and Omri in Israel**

The reigns of each of these kings is summarised in a sentence or two. In spite of some high points, things lurch from crisis to crisis.

a) How does verse 32 summarise the situation between Israel and Judah?

b) By the time you get to 1 Kings 16:9, and 21, what's the situation WITHIN Israel?

How much lower can things go? The once united and glorious kingdom has become a shambles. Israel and Judah are constantly at war with one another, and even the ten-tribe coalition of Israel is torn apart by internal wrangling.

### **Meet Ahab... worst of the worst**

c) If you're wondering how low things can go, meet Ahab. How is his career summarised in 1 Ki 16:29-34?

We'll see more of Ahab's rule in the next study... as he comes face to face with God's mega-prophet, Elijah. For now, let's ponder on a few key things we've learned...

### **A few Simple Lessons...**

a) **God's Word is absolute.**

God doesn't make idle threats. Back in Deuteronomy God said some things which Solomon didn't do and so God punished the most powerful man in the world. It doesn't matter who you are, God is not someone to treat lightly. His word shapes the destiny of his people whether they like it or not.

\* Are you sometimes tempted to take God's word too lightly?

b) **The Quest for a Righteous King.**

As individuals, Israel's kings are a bitter disappointment. Worse than that, they have a responsibility for the people they lead – and they've failed!

God appointed David and his descendants to be "rulers after his own heart." In 1 Kings 9, there was a great summary of one of the key roles of the King "Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD's eternal love for Israel, he has made you king, **to maintain justice and righteousness.**"

Take a look at 1 Kings 16:2, 13, 19, 26. What is the common theme here?

A few years later, the Prophet Isaiah looks forward to a future King in David's line who will "do what a King is meant to do." Read Isaiah 9:7...

Ultimately, every King of Israel failed to establish and uphold the Kingdom with justice and righteousness. So what hope is there for a King like that?

Read 1 Corinthians 1:30. What two qualities of the Ideal King do we find in Jesus?

### **Finding the King of Hearts**

Solomon and the Kings of Israel were always only ever a shadow of things to come (Heb 8:3-6, 10:1). When the Solomon bubble bursts it drives us to the point of asking, "Surely God must have some thing more in store for humanity than a fractured little middle eastern country. Surely there's something better to come." Yes there is. Jesus Christ. The term "Christ" means "anointed King;" the long awaited ruler of Israel who will be at the center of God's kingdom, the wise and righteous King who actually leads his people into righteousness, rather than to destruction. In his famous 'sermon on the Mount', Jesus says, "Come to me, all who are hungry and thirsty for righteousness... for they will be filled."

Is the fact that you're following Jesus genuinely leading you towards **righteousness** in practical ways? If not, why not?

