



“Reading the Bible Together”

Issue 10.

Book of 2 Samuel (cont’d) and 1Kings:

God works in and through both monarchy and history.

November 2009.

Introduction:

Last month we walked with the rise and near fall of King David – “a man after God’s own heart” as he was described.

This month we see the story of Israel move on. David hands the monarchy over to Solomon, who builds the Temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, and the Ark of the Covenant resides there as the meeting place of God and His people. We then see Solomon’s successors rise and fall. We see the land of Israel split in two. The Northern Kingdom, confusingly retaining the name “Israel,” and the southern kingdom (including Jerusalem), being known as “Judah.”

Towards the end of 1 Kings we see the rise of another of the Old Testament’s great characters – Elijah the Prophet. But more about that in a little while.

What’s happening this month in a little more detail:

The key theme running through the Books of Kings and the Books of Chronicles is the link between the obedience of the King and the well-being of the nation. When the King is faithful and obedient to both God and his subjects then Israel fares well, when the King is unfaithful and disobedient then Israel suffers, often at the hand of invading armies.

At the heart of this is the belief of the authors of Scripture that God is sovereign, sovereign not just of an individual’s heart or mind but also of the world, of history, and of society and morality too. This, of course, challenges our modern, liberal, egocentric age to its core. People in our culture have spent decades fighting to do what they want, when they want, how they want, with no moral conscience and no need for accountability – unless, of course, it is you who owe me something. Please don’t tell me there is a God to whom we are all accountable whether we like it or not.

And we do the same with truth. I don’t like the truth as you understand it, so I’ll make up my own truth. Indeed we can have as many versions of the truth as there are individuals as long as each person keeps their truth to themselves. Don’t, whatever you do, claim there to be a single and all encompassing truth for that means I have to question and conceive there is more to this world than simply fulfilling my own desire and having my way. The truth, even a truth in love, may floor my best efforts at the last hurdle.

Yep, the Jewish Scriptures sure do challenge our modern selfish and egotistical age. We only need to look at the rantings of Mr Richard Dawkins for that – for his argument is not about science vs religion, particularly Christian religion. These are but the language he feels he stands the best chance of asserting his underlying claim that really is about taking charge and about being in control. He is but the public voice of that which lies within each and every human heart since Adam and Eve, that like the unfaithful kings of the books we will be looking at over the coming months, we like them would like not only to be king but to be God – answerable to no one and in charge of our own prosperity and future. We want to do it OUR way. This is the way of power and leads to death, either death in this life in terms of failure, anger, and eternal frustration, or, in the life to come, existential loneliness and alienation from God, not because God does not care but because, like the eternal belligerent child, I do not want God to care because I do not want God to be love.

By contrast notice how the faithful kings both care not just for God, and so bend the knee, but how they also care for the people and so, to coin a phrase, see the world not through their eyes but God's. They reveal that, no matter how great your status in life, priest, king, Prime Minister or President, we all will only find true happiness as one under and in relationship, not over and above it.

God will be God, whether we, the Church, Richard Dawkins, or whoever, like it or not. The true beauty and amazing thing about what makes Him the one, and not me, is that, in His infinite power and authority gives each of us the freedom to choose. That's what truly makes Him God.

And sometimes we make good choices, and sometimes we don't. As we journey through these books together look for the way in which power is either grasped or given away and perhaps as well reflect on the way the greatest of Kings used His power, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords, who first went not up to glory but first to the Cross of Shame, who in the words of St Francis of Assisi, "was most willing to die for love of our love." Will we be willing to die to ourselves for love of His?

Bible Together Meetings: November meetings will be:

Wednesday 4th November 9.00am – 10.00am

Wednesday 18th November 8.00pm – 9.15pm, both in the Chancel.

Scheme of Reading for November:

<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>	<u>Date:</u>	<u>Reference:</u>
Sun 1 st Nov	-----	Thurs 19 th Nov	1Kings 3:1 – 3:28
Mon 2 nd Nov	2Sam 15:1 – 15:37	Fri 20 th Nov	1Kings 4:1 – 4:34
Tues 3 rd Nov	2Sam 16:1 – 16:14	Sat 21 st Nov	1Kings 5:1 – 5:18
Wed 4th Nov	2Sam 16:15 – 17:29	Sun 22 nd Nov	-----
(Bible Together Meeting today @ 9.00am)		Mon 23 rd Nov	1Kings 6:1 – 6:38
Thurs 5 th Nov	2Sam 18:1 – 18:18	Tues 24 th Nov	1Kings 7:1 – 7:51
Fri 6 th Nov	2Sam 18:19 – 19:8a	Wed 25 th Nov	1Kings 8:1 – 8:36
Sat 7 th Nov	2Sam 19:8b – 19:43	Thurs 26 th Nov	1Kings 8:37 – 8:66
Sun 8 th Nov	-----	Fri 26 th Nov	1Kings 9:1 – 9:28
Mon 9 th Nov	2Sam 20:1 – 20:26	Sat 28 th Nov	1Kings 10:1 – 10:29
Tues 10 th Nov	2Sam 21:1 – 21:22	Sun 29 th Nov	-----
Wed 11 th Nov	2Sam 22:1 – 22:30	Mon 30 th Nov	1Kings 11:1 – 11:43
Thurs 12 th Nov	2Sam 22:31 – 23:7	Tues 1 st Dec	1Kings 12:1 – 12:33
Fri 13 th Nov	2Sam 23:8 – 23:39	Wed 2 nd Dec	1Kings 13:1 – 13:34
Sat 14 th Nov	2Sam 24:1 – 24:25	Thurs 3 rd Dec	1Kings 14:1 – 14:31
Sun 15 th Nov	-----	Fri 4 th Dec	1Kings 15:1 – 15:32
Mon 16 th Nov	1Kings 1:1 – 1:27	Sat 5 th Dec	1Kings 15:33 – 16:34
Tues 17 th Nov	1Kings 1:28 – 1:53	Sun 6 th Dec	-----
Wed 18th Nov	1Kings 2:1 – 2:46	Mon 7 th Dec	1Kings 17:1 – 17:24
(Bible Together Meeting today @ 8.00pm)		Tues 8 th Dec	1Kings 18:1 – 18:46