
VIDEO LECTURE MODULE: BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

LECTURE 18: KINGDOM

Lecture Presenter: Robert D. McCurley M.Div.



The John Knox Institute
of Higher Education

Entrusting our Reformed Inheritance to the Church Worldwide

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Rev. Robert McCurley is the minister of the Gospel at Greenville Presbyterian Church in Greenville, SC, a congregation of the Free Church of Scotland (Continuing). www.freechurchcontinuing.org

Module

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY

30 LECTURES

ROBERT D. McCURLEY M.Div.

21 CHAPTERS OLD TESTAMENT · 9 CHAPTERS NEW TESTAMENT

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2. Creation
3. Fall
4. Noah
5. Abraham
6. Patriarchs I
7. Patriarchs II
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- 18. Kingdom**
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Lecture 18

KINGDOM

Lecture Theme:

After the kingdom divides, both Israel and Judah turn away from God's covenant to idolatry, and God sets before them the path to blessings and curses. It is clear that God's great King has not yet come.

Text:

“For he is our peace, who hath made both one, and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us ... And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby” (Eph. 2:14, 16).

TRANSCRIPT LECTURE 18

Children love stories of powerful kings, beautiful castles, and vast kingdoms. We all find awe-inspiring the accounts of heroism and victories and defeats, and it is intriguing to trace the tangled path associated with the rise and fall of great kingdoms. But Christians know that the nations of this world are not the main focus of history. History is God's story, and He is placed at the center of His story, His kingdom, His church, His people. Everything in the world ultimately revolves around the unfolding of God's plan of redemption. Everything in history serves God's gospel purpose.

What is the cause behind the division of the kingdom of Israel into two parts? And what is the theological significance of this event? What role [do] David and Jeroboam play throughout this lengthy history? Will the division ever be healed? And if so, how? What was the number one sin that God most often confronted in the Old Testament? How did the theological themes derived from the period of the divided kingdom carry over into the New Testament? How does this period set our expectation of what will come with the arrival of Christ and the implications for the remainder of history? Are there any aids that may help us keep track of all of the details of this confusing portion of redemptive history? The scope of this lecture covers the period of redemptive history stretching from the division of the kingdom after Solomon until the time before Judah's Babylonian exile. We will consider points of theology gleaned from this history, which is God's works. In the next lecture, we will focus on God's Word spoken to His people through the prophets during the same period.

But let me begin by offering a few suggestions that will greatly help you in your study of this portion of the Bible and in your understanding of its theology. First of all, after the division of the land into the two kingdoms of southern Judah and northern Israel, there are two parallel lines. So, if you can find or create a timeline that charts both the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel, it will prove a great aid to your studies. But equally

important, you need to know which prophets God sent to Judah and the prophets He sent to Israel and when they prophesied to their respective nations. Add this information to your timeline as well. When you're reading the narratives within the historical books, like II Samuel, II Kings, II Chronicles, or even Ezra, Nehemiah, Esther, and so on, you should consult your timeline to see which prophets were prophesying at what times. Now, why is this important? Well, you've seen in this course, the importance of connecting the unfolding events of redemptive history, God's works, with God's Word. So, you should study what God was saying to either Judah or Israel through His prophets while studying the unfolding of the history of these two nations. That would combine God's revelation in history and His revelation in prophecy, thereby providing a full picture of God's message. This method will greatly enhance your understanding of the theology of the Bible.

Secondly, all of your studies of the details of the historical events within the first five books of Scripture, and especially your detailed knowledge of God's law, coupled with the theology you've gleaned from all of this will prove indispensable to your study and understanding of the prophets, in particular, because the prophets will make constant references to this material, which the Jews would've recognized, and so should you. The prophets pointed them to the past, and the future, and the implications of the present. We'll be considering the prophets in the next lecture.

Lastly, some familiarity with the geography of Judah and Israel will also prove helpful. If you have access to Bible maps that would aid you. This serves our purpose, not only in following the story line, but also because of the theological significance attributed to what took place in various locations. I strongly encourage you to use these suggestions in your ongoing study of the Old Testament.

Secondly, let's turn our attention to what we see in this period of history. God revealed that kings were to represent the Lord Himself to His people and, therefore, to have God's heart. David provided the model of a king who reigned under the Lord, pursuing God's interests and His glory, and ruling by His law. We read in I Samuel 16:7, "the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart." God says David was one "who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes," I Kings 14:8. Remember those last words, "right in my eyes." David became the standard of a godly king, but there also arose another king, one who became the standard of an ungodly king, namely, Jeroboam. You will notice the contrast between David and Jeroboam repeated over and over throughout the history of Israel.

So, for example, notice the description of godly king Hezekiah in II Kings 18:3. It says, "And he did that which was right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that David his father did." In contrast, when the Bible describes the ungodly kings, you see the following words repeated over and over and over—I'll take one example from Jehoahaz in II Kings 13:2 where it says, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which made Israel to sin. He departed not therefrom." With all of the ungodly kings, you'll see this comparison, "following the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat which made Israel to sin." The brief references to David, because there are few godly kings, and the frequent references to Jeroboam are obvious when you're reading this portion of Scripture, but in all these cases it speaks of what was right or evil in the sight of the Lord, in His eyes. Clearly, what God sees is what matters most. The godly and the ungodly kings were distinguished by whether they had God, His cause, His glory, His law, His covenant at the center of their pursuits. Were they men after God's heart, or were they men opposed to God?

The story of Israel after Solomon is largely an account of covenant-breaking and rebellion. It begins with the catastrophic tearing of the nation into two parts. This division between the two nations, the two tribes in the south and the 10 tribes in the north, broadened irreparable rupture in the theocracy of Israel. The promised land was shattered. Rehoboam, Solomon's son, became king in the south. Jeroboam became the first king in the north. All of this began with Solomon's own apostasy in I Kings 11. Then his son Rehoboam drove the wedge even deeper with his folly and harshness, as you see in I Kings 12. Jeroboam with the 10 northern tribes rebelled and formed a separate nation. We read in I Kings 12:16 these ominous words, "the people answered the king," that is Rehoboam, "saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents." Do you appreciate what's happening here? They cut themselves off from Jerusalem, from the temple, and the sacrifices, and the priesthood. That is to say, they cut themselves off from God and His covenant.

Notice the inescapable implications of this action. Northern Israel withdrew and threw off the Davidic Covenant, and then they rebelled against the prescriptions of the Mosaic Covenant and what followed later in that same chapter, 1 Kings 12. This was the beginning of a steep spiritual decline leading to Israel's removal into exile by Assyria. Not one of the kings of northern Israel was a faithful servant of Jehovah. Jehu came the closest, but he was still an idolater. In II Kings 17, we see that Israel was carried into captivity because they persisted in idolatry. Now, the word *Jews* is designated for the southern kingdom of Judah. Eventually, the Jews, that is the South, would consider Israel in the North to be Gentile mongrels, a mix of Gentile and Jewish blood. In Jesus's day we see the disdain that the Jews had for those in the north. In John 4:9, we read, "for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans." Southern Judah failed to learn from God's dealings with northern Israel. Instead, they followed in their footsteps of spiritual apostasy and repeated the consequences, similar to what Israel experienced when Judah was taken into Babylonian exile. But we will be covering Judah's exile and restoration in future lectures.

Eight kings of Judah were considered faithful to some degree, walking in various degrees in the ways of David. Eleven kings of Judah were entirely unfaithful. The desecration of God's temple reached its height under the reign of Manasseh. In II Kings 21:2 we read, "And he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD, after the abominations of the heathen, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel." He committed gross idolatry and dedicated the covenant seed, children, to false gods sacrificing them in fire. He did repent in the last two years of his life, but it was not enough to curtail the evil influences on his son [who] was enthroned after him.

Now, we read of the healing of this division of the nation in the prophecy of Ezekiel, who prophesied around the time of Judah's exile. In Ezekiel 37:16–17, you see the description of how God promises that the two sticks of Israel and Judah will become one, but the division would only be removed in the new covenant when the gospel would be taken from Jerusalem to Judea to Samaria and to the uttermost parts of the earth as you see in Acts 1:8. Paul speaks of this gospel healing between the two tribes and more generally between the Jews and the Gentiles in Ephesians 2 verse 14 and following. It says, "For he," that is Christ, "is our peace, who hath made both one," that is Jews and Gentiles one, "and hath broken down the middle wall of partition between us." It goes on, "and that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby."

Secondly, that brings us to consideration of some of the theological themes during this period. First of all, remember at the heart of the promise to David were three things: a mediator from the seed of David, secondly the covenant of grace which was establishing the bond with God, and a kingdom representing God's throne and reign. The history after the division of the kingdom largely represents Israel's attempt to jettison all three of these, but one primary sin took center stage. So, let me ask you a question. What was the number one sin that God most often confronted in the Old Testament? What would you say in answer to that question? Well, the answer is idolatry. It is clearly and unequivocally idolatry. God's people failed to remain separate from the godless world around them. Instead, they mimicked their evil ways. There are many themes we could highlight during the period of the divided kingdom, but the most dominant one pertains to idolatry, so we'll spend some time exploring God's revelation on this point of theology.

Idolatry originates in the heart and in the mind, not what is in the hand. What's in the hand is the byproduct. An idol is whatever we love, esteem, follow, or prioritize above God Himself. An idol can refer to any god or anything besides the true God, or to an image of the true God in a departure from the purity of His appointed form of worship. We already noted the initial spiritual departure through Solomon's idolatry. That brings us to Jeroboam the first king of the separated northern kingdom of Israel.

In I Kings 12, we read that he established, in rebellion against God's law, a separate form of worship in the north with a separate priesthood, high places, counterpart cities to Jerusalem, and distinct holy days. At the center of this were idols. We read in I Kings 12:28, "Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt." Now, all of this should sound familiar to you. It is a repeat of an incident we read back in Exodus 32 when in the absence of Moses, Aaron made a golden calf.

Now, if you go back to the law, you remember that the second commandment prohibits all forms of idolatry and that God's biblical law of worship requires His people only to worship Him as He has commanded without addition or subtraction. And you should remember the words of Deuteronomy 4:15–16. God says, "Take ye therefore good heed unto yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that the LORD spake unto you

in Horeb out of the midst of the fire: lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, in the similitude of any figure.” God prohibited images that would be made of Him.

Notice that in both Exodus 32:4, the earlier account the days of Moses, and in I Kings 12:28, in the days of Jeroboam, the golden calves are described as images of Jehovah, the God Who brought them up out of the land of Egypt. Now, all images of God are prohibited, and all forms of other gods are condemned. This is a clear violation of God’s law. The sin of idolatry continues to persist through the remainder of the kings, waxing worse and worse at times, which provokes God’s wrath and beckons His chastening. Isaiah 42:8 reads, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images.”

Now, let me point out one important consequence of idolatry. What could that be? Well, it is this: we resemble what we worship. When men worship idols, they become like what they worship. This is a very significant theological point in the Old Testament, in the Bible as a whole. So, in Psalm 115:4–7 we read a description of idols; it says they have eyes and they [see] not, ears but they hear not, and so on. But I want you to notice verse 8, which reads, “They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.” This is a principle we can trace all the way through the Bible. We become like what we worship, but there is more. That resemblance will ruin us, in the case of idolatry, or alternatively restore us, in the case of worshiping God. In the case of idolatry, we will suffer God’s punishment along with His punishment of the idols that we worship and resemble. God’s holy jealousy does not tolerate idols. If we make them, He will break them. In all of this, Israel turned away from God’s covenant. They became covenant breakers subjected to the covenant curses. This becomes clear if you study the history of the kings and compare what you read to God’s warnings found in Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. You can actually trace the details point by point. God always fulfills His promises: both the blessings and the curses. God’s people were exiled because God was faithful to His covenant. He brought the promised curse.

Well, fourthly, let’s think of how this carries forward into the New Testament, connecting it to the developments in the New Testament. John Calvin warned that the human heart is a perpetual factory of idols. The lesson about idolatry continues to the contemporary Christian. We read of the incident of Exodus 32 that we were talking about earlier. We read about that in the New Testament in I Corinthians 10:6–7. It says, “Now these things were our examples, to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they also lusted. Neither be ye idolaters, as were some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” That warning echoes through the whole New Testament. For example, Paul writes in II Corinthians 6:16–17, notice that he’s employing the language of the covenant, “And what agreement hath the temple of God with idols? for ye are the temple of the living God; as God hath said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you.” John concludes his first epistle, I John 5:21, with this exhortation, “Little children keep yourselves from idols.” So, the warning about idolatry is as relevant today as it has ever been. It still is an expression of God’s holy jealousy and of the holy standards of His law, but the gospel does more than deliver us from idolatry.

Those who worship the true God in spirit and in truth are transformed into His likeness. We become like what we worship. God made man after His own image in the garden. That, of course, was damaged after the fall, but God remains the only lawful focus of our worship, and those who come to Him by faith in the gospel and worship Him as He has appointed in His Word experience the restoration of His likeness through the ministry of the Spirit. In II Corinthians 3:18 we read about this, “But we all, with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the LORD.” Romans 8:29 teaches us that God predestines His people to be conformed to the image of His Son, so there’s the warning about not making any images, any images of God or any other idols, but there is also the promised blessing of worshiping God and being made into His likeness.

Next, in the Old Testament period of the divided kingdom, we read of one king after another after another after another, and each time we are forced to conclude he’s not the one, he is not the great King that is promised. Another and a greater is still coming. In other words, we are left waiting and looking until at last Christ appears in the pages in the New Testament as the true and ultimate Heir to David’s throne. Christ is the only King Who is truly after God’s own heart because He is the divine Messiah. He would succeed in bringing about God’s

dominion where Adam originally failed and all the kings of Israel failed. We see this in the description of the ascension of Christ foretold in Daniel 7:13–14, “I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” Jesus applies this text to Himself in the Gospels. Earlier, in Daniel 2, God describes the kingdom of Christ in a dream to Nebuchadnezzar. We read in chapter 2 verse 44, “And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.” These texts in Daniel 2 and Daniel 7 stand behind Christ’s great commission wherein He calls us to take the gospel to the ends of the earth and to disciple the nations at the very end of Matthew 28.

You see, the Old Testament history supplies the background for the theme of the kingdom in the New Testament. Christ’s kingdom excels all others because Christ the King excels all others. He is the King of kings. His kingdom will extend throughout the whole earth. We read in Revelation 11:15, “The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign forever and ever.” You also read of the ultimate success of the gospel among the nations and the description of heaven in Revelation 21:24, “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honor into it.” Here is a beautiful picture. Here is the great King, the promised One [Whom] we are left waiting for all through our reading of the Old Testament. And what kingdom is like His? There is no other. So, Solomon’s original prayer remains the heart cry of every true Christian today. In I Kings 8:60 it says, “That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else.” In Psalm 67 remains our constant song, for we are asking the Lord to take the glorious gospel of His grace to all of the nations and to make them glad in the Lord Jesus Christ.

In conclusion, after the kingdom divides, both Israel and Judah turn away from God’s covenant to idolatry, as we have seen, and God sets before them the path, the blessings and curses. It is clear in the Old Testament that God’s great King had not yet come. In this lecture we have focused on the history and its theology. In the next lecture, we will take up the prophetic message, God’s Word to His people during this same period.