

The decline and fall and return



High point / turning point – 1 Kings 10 – God’s people in God’s place, blessed and blessing the nations

Division under Rehoboam:

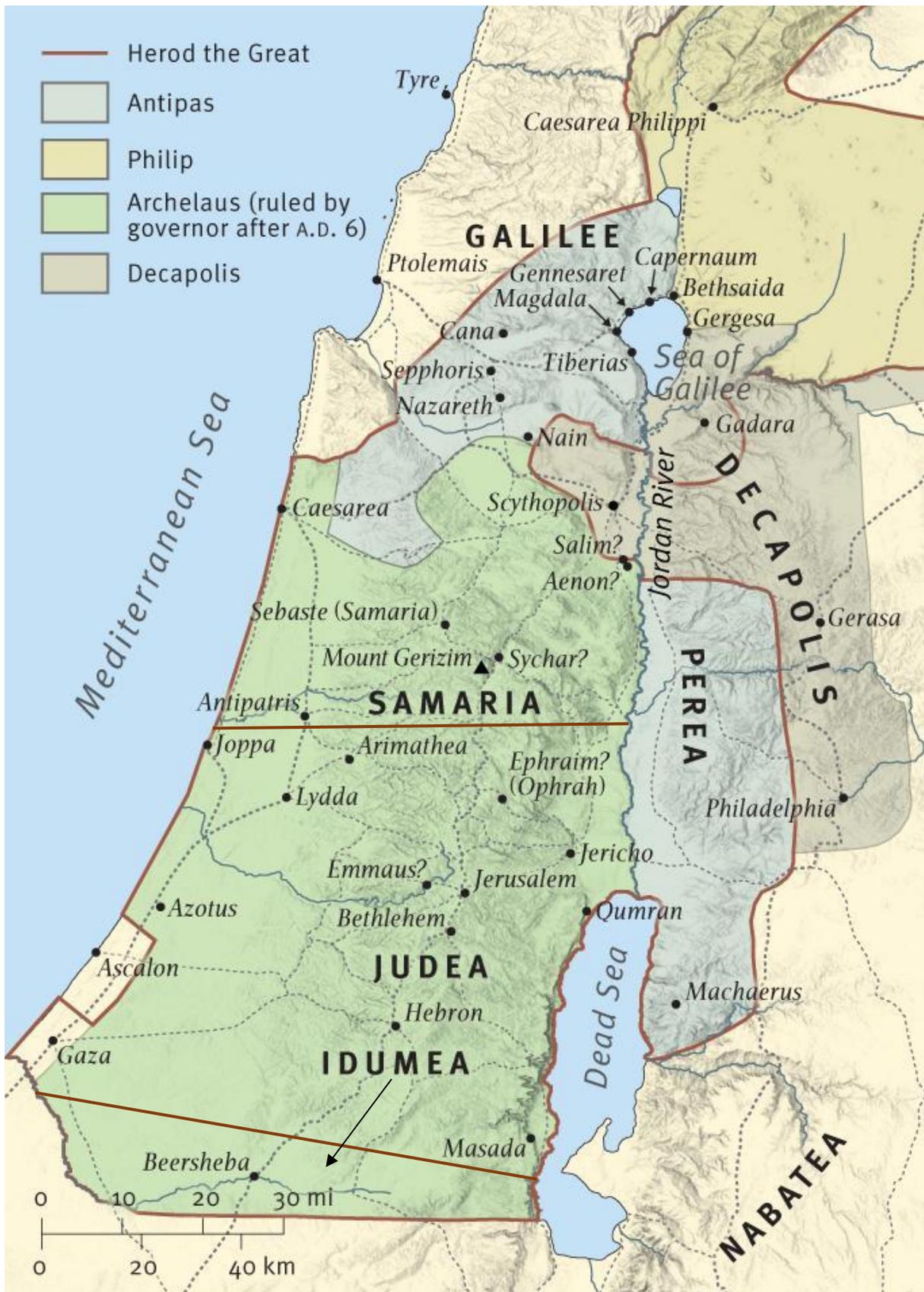
- decides to go with Big Man leadership rather than servant leadership – 1 Kings 14:1-15
- Northern Kingdom = Ephraim = Israel = Samaria
- Southern Kingdom = Judah (includes Judah, Benjamin, most Levites, a few faithful from the other 10 tribes)
- Jeroboam first king of northern kingdom leads them into sin (1 Kings 14:25-33) in a way they never recover from – like an original sin (cf. 2 Kings 17:21-23)

Northern Kingdom – mostly terrible kings, coups and assassinations, no royal line continues more than 4 generations – destroyed and deported by Assyrians in 722 BC

- the reason they were destroyed – 2 Kings 17 – idolatry
- Assyrians repopulate Samaria → Samaritans – mixed ethnically and religiously, corrupted, despised by Jews from south who would normally avoid travelling through Samaritan territory (John 4)
- Galilee is more Jewish than Samaria but still seen as quite different from Judah – “Galilee of the Gentiles” - <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/7-differences-between-galilee-and-judea-in-the-time-of-jesus/>
- It is significant that Jesus comes to sit on the throne of David (not Rehoboam) over a united kingdom, south and north together again - <http://www.patheos.com/blogs/markshea/2014/01/land-of-zebulun-land-of-naphtali-galilee-of-the-gentiles.html>

Southern Kingdom – mixture of good kings and bad kings, royal line of David continues (2 Sam. 7), should be warned by what happens to Samaria in 722 BC but they are not warned (Ezek. 16) – destroyed and deported by Babylonians in 586 BC (2 Kings 25)

- temple destroyed (reverse of 1 Kings 7)
- people taken into captivity in stages
- all the promises in tatters – people, land, blessing, king – great darkness, disgrace (with a ray of hope v27-30)



Return from Exile – 2 Chron. 36:22-23; Ezra; Nehemiah (Haggai; Zechariah; Malachi)

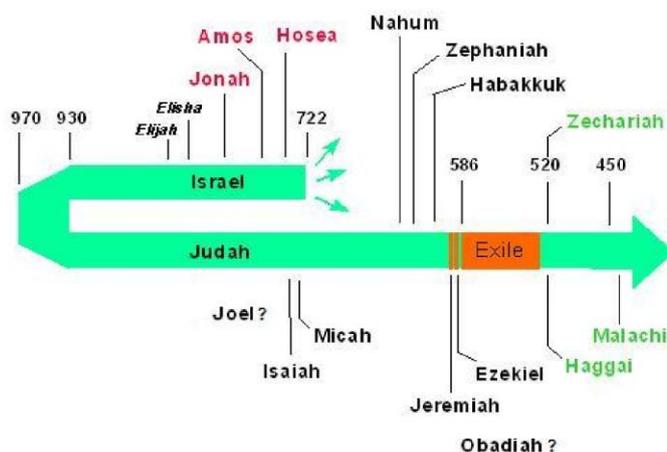
They return in stages – Nehemiah 1

Great to be back but...

- the number who return is tiny (Ezra 2) – perhaps 1% of peak population in the land¹ - so small they have trouble populating Jerusalem as a viable city (Neh. 7:4)
- the Second Temple is pitiful compared to Solomon’s – the old men cry (Ezra 3:11-13)
- at the dedication they sacrifice only 0.5% of the number of animals they sacrificed at the dedication of Solomon’s temple
- most significantly there is no return of the glory of the Lord – compare Exodus 40:34-35; 1 Kings 8:10-11; Ezekiel 43:1-5
- this is not the return and restoration the prophets told of (e.g. Isaiah 54:11-15; 65:17-25)
- they are out of Babylon but they are still slaves (Nehemiah 9:36)
- we need the real return, the real second Exodus the prophets told of (Isaiah 43:19; Jer. 16:14-15 cf. Luke 9:31 – exodus)

4 themes through the times of Kings and Chronicles

1. The days of decline, destruction and return are the days of the prophets. There are the famous writing prophets (see below) but also many other prophets pop up throughout this period to speak from God to the king and people. The Lord is again and again graciously calling his people back to himself (2 Kings 17:13). Being aware of this context for the prophets really helps when it comes to interpreting them (e.g. Jer. 21:10; 29:10-11).



Adapted from a figure by Bob Deffinbaugh, Community Bible Chapel, Richardson, TX

2. The significance of the remnant. At the time of Elijah and Elisha we find that most of Israel has turned away from Yahweh but there is still a remnant of 7000 who have not bowed the knee to Baal. Prophets like Isaiah often talk of the remnant and it seems that the promises of blessing which had once seemed to be for the whole people of Israel are now really just for a small band of survivors. ‘Not all of Israel is Israel’.
3. Worship is the big issue throughout Kings, Chronicles and into the post-Exilic period. Who will you worship, Baal or Yahweh (1 Kings 18:21)? 2000 years later the Reformers like Calvin

¹ Estimate by Mike Forward.

and Knox looked to these books of the OT as their inspiration. For them the Reformation was a reformation of worship much like the reforms under good kings like Josiah (2 Kings 22) – the rediscovery of the Word of God and the smashing of idols, so that simplicity and purity of worship could be restored.

4. The other big theme in these books is the fulfilment of the Word of God and especially the working out of Deuteronomy 28. The books of Kings is often called ‘Deuteronomic history’ because it is tracking how everything God had said would happen when the people walked away from him did in fact happen, in all its gruesome detail (e.g. Deut. 28:53-57 cf. 2 Kings 6:26-30).

The time between the OT and the NT

- No kings – under the power of the Persians then the Greeks then the Romans
- The rise of the synagogue system and the Pharisees and Law-focused religion
- 400 years with no new word from God – Amos 8:11
- But that didn’t mean the Jews stopped writing – Intertestamental literature / apocryphal writings / Pseudepigrapha – often written in the voice of someone from long ago; often ‘filling in’ the gaps; focusing on the secret things (cf. Deut. 29:29) – being read in the first century and leading to confusion and controversy and distraction from the gospel (1 Tim. 1:4; 4:7; 6:4; 2 Tim. 2:16, 23; 4:4)
 - Books of Baruch
 - Books of Enoch
 - Book of Noah
 - Book of the Giants (cf. Gen. 6:1-4)
 - Book of Eldad and Medad (cf. Num. 11:26-17)
 - Additions to Ezra
 - Additions to Daniel
 - Additions to Psalms
- The time between the testaments is a time of great darkness and disgrace – Isaiah 9 – waiting for the light to shine...

More resources on First Temple and Second Temple period:

- <https://iserveafrica.files.wordpress.com/2015/11/biblical-theology-2nd-year-curriculum-7-8.pdf>