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Kingdoms in Decline: Historical Framework and Doctrinal Summary

This summary is meant to be a helpful memory jogger for review as well as key points for training of families in the historical framework methodology of God's word. Refer to Lessons #88-93 in the Biblical Framework series for detailed analysis.

Scriptural Texts

2 Kings 17-25; Major and Minor Prophets

Historical Event of the Kingdoms in Decline

After the division of the kingdom the kings of the north and south lead the nation into continued spiritual decline. None of them led the nation to any lasting repentance from idolatry and back to YHWH. The result was that God began to discipline them more and more severely through this period. The prophets arose to give divine analysis of what was happening to the nation. They reminded the nation that God had elected them through the Abrahamic Covenant and promised to give them a land, seed and worldwide blessing. However, God also gave them the Mosaic Covenant which promised blessing only for obedience and cursing for disobedience. This seeming contradiction would have to somehow be resolved. How could God promise future everlasting blessing in the kingdom when Israel continually failed to obey Him? The answer given to the prophets was that God was so committed to His elective promises that He would provide the righteousness necessary. Such righteousness could be achieved by the nation only by looking outside of themselves to God. Only God could provide the righteousness necessary. How He would provide it they did not know, but they had enough data about Him to trust that He would provide it (Hab 2:4). Those who trusted in Him became part of the faithful remnant.

Doctrine of Sanctification

This section of Scripture expands our understanding of the five aspects of sanctification (see *Conquest and Settlement: Historical Framework and Doctrinal Summary*); the phases, aim, dimensions, means and enemies.

Phases. There are three phases of sanctification; positional, experiential and ultimate. Positional sanctification is what God did for the nation Israel. He elected the nation through justification by faith and outlined His promises of a land, seed and worldwide blessing in the Abrahamic Covenant. Experiential sanctification is what God wanted the nation to do. He outlined a detailed will of what He wanted them to do in the Mosaic Covenant in order to enjoy blessing continually. In the Kingdoms in Decline God reveals the third phase; ultimate or final sanctification. Somehow God will bring about the personal obedience necessary in the hearts of the nation Israel such that the blessings of the Kingdom will be enjoyed forever according to the original election promises. In this phase the nations experience will conform to its position. This will come about through the new heart promised in the new covenant.

Aim. The aim of God has always been loyalty to God. When the nation refused to learn loyalty to Him and built up prolonged rebellion against Him the prophets of this period revealed the promise of a new covenant. This opened up a powerful source of energy for learning loyalty to God. God would provide them with a new heart which would give them a basis of gratitude upon which to learn loyalty to Him. Without it they could never meet God's righteous demands.

Dimensions. There are two dimensions. The existential present and the long term growth. David taught us that we are either in or out of fellowship and he shows us that confession is the way to be quickly restored to fellowship with God. Saul and the kings that follow David show us what prolonged walking in the flesh does, it damages the soul. This damage makes it difficult if not impossible to confess sin and be restored to fellowship. The nation prolonged its sin and refused to confess it resulting in a spiritual retrogression.

Means. The means are two: Law and Grace. The prophets continually critiqued the nation for their violation of the Law given at Mt Sinai. However, again and again the prophets went behind the Law to the necessity of Grace in the Abrahamic Covenant. They would have to trust that somehow God Himself would provide the enablement to obey the Law He had given.

Enemies. The enemies are three: the world, the flesh and the devil. These all operate under the sovereignty of God and to overcome them we must use the indirect assault of learning loyalty to God through His word rather than directly attacking them. The prophets revealed that these enemies could also be used by God to discipline us; that they were so under God's sovereignty that He is able to use them to bring about our sanctification.

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