

1 KINGS

INTRODUCTION

1. AUTHOR – Unknown – Possibly a priest but more likely a prophet. It has traditionally been regarded as Jeremiah.
2. DATE WRITTEN – Again unknown. Though many of the accounts were written before the exile, it was probably compiled during or after the exile.
3. DATES COVERED – 1 & 2 Kings were originally written as one book. The history of 1 Kings is from the death of David to the death of King Ahab. This would cover approximately 974-850 BC.
4. NAME – The dominant theme of the books is the reign of the kings from David through to the exile.
5. KEY VERSES – 2:12, 11:11, 12:15, 17:1, 18:38-39.

OUTLINE

The two books of the Kings tell the story of the division of the kingdom that had been established as one under David and Solomon and the downfall and eventual captivity of each. The stories center around:

- The Northern Kingdom – Israel, Ten tribes, Capital is Samaria
- The Southern Kingdom – Judah, Two tribes, Capital is Jerusalem

1. THE REIGN OF SOLOMON. CH 1-11
 - A. The death of David. (Ch 1:1-2:10)
 - B. Solomon establishes his rule (Ch2), receives wisdom (Ch3-4), builds the temple (Ch5-8), and enjoys success (Ch9-10).
 - C. Solomon's downfall (Ch11) and loss of the kingdom (Ch11:11).
2. THE TWO KINGDOMS' FIRST EIGHTY (80) YEARS. CH 12-22
 - A. The kingdom splits under Rehoboam and Jeroboam (Ch12-14).
 - B. The kings of Judah, Abijah, and Asa and the kings of Israel, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, and Omri. (Ch15)
 - C. King Ahab of Israel, and the prophet Elijah (Ch16:29-22:53).

IMPORTANCE OF 1 KINGS

1. The books of the Kings are the historical context for the writings of the prophets just as the book of Acts is for the Epistles of the New Testament. That is why we will jump around in our reading so our reading of the history coincides with the reading of the prophet in that history.
2. Solomon, even as a child (3:7), knew his dependence on God to fulfill the task God had given him. God also gave him riches and fame. Compare 1 Kings 3:13 with Matthew 6:33.
3. The temple is built (Ch7), inhabited by God (8:10-11), and dedicated. Remember that in the NT, our bodies are God's temple. See 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19.
4. In spite of all God did for Solomon, he turned away from the Lord and lost most of his kingdom. We are warned not to turn away in Hebrews 2:1, 3:12-13.
5. Not every king acts the same as his father. God holds each generation responsible for its own actions.
6. The spiritual prominence of God's man in God's time begins with Elijah. God confirms the message of many of the prophets with miracles.
7. Even wicked King Ahab could repent and receive God's favor. See 21:28-29.
8. Don't miss the great story of the courageous prophet Micaiah in Chapter 22. His commitment to speak God's Word alone should inspire all of us.

FIRST KINGS

1 – This is the story of the transfer of the kingdom from David to Solomon. The way the kingdom was notified of such a transfer was by the leaders with the king being sent to make the announcement. Note how tenuous such a transition was and why they would especially be vulnerable to takeover from a foreign nation during this time. David's oldest living son, Adonijah claimed the throne but David overruled and placed Solomon on the throne. This was to fulfill the word of the Lord about Solomon. Instead the priest and prophet were sent to take Solomon on David's mule so all the people would know that this was David's choice.

2 – Abiathar was removed from being priest, V27 "thus fulfilling the word of the Lord that he had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." Some of David's enemies are put to death. One of those put to death was Joab, who had led David's army but had also killed two innocent men. V5 "...avenging in time of peace for blood that had been shed in war and putting the blood of war on the belt around his waist and on the sandals of his feet." Also the man who cursed David when Absalom took over is put to death.

3 – Solomon began his reign by seeking blessing from the Lord. The Lord blessed by granting him the request of wisdom more than any other before him. He demonstrated it by deciding a life and death situation over a baby. V14 "And if you walk in my ways keeping my statutes and my commandments as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days." V28 "And all Israel heard of the judgment that the king had rendered, and they stood in awe of the king because they perceived that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice."

4 – This chapter contains the height of the glory and power of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament. Solomon was the greatest and wisest ruler. Every person in the kingdom had more than enough for his satisfaction. There was a great army, and great daily provisions for Solomon and his court. The situation can be summed by V20. "Judah and Israel were as many as the sand by the sea. They ate and drank and were happy." V25 "And Judah and Israel lived in safety, from Dan even to Beersheba, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, all the days of Solomon." Not only was Israel in prosperity, but also all the other nations looked to Solomon for wisdom. V34 "And people of all nations came to hear the wisdom of Solomon and from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom." Jesus Christ is greater than Solomon. He is the Son of God, not only of David. He has greater wisdom and wealth. He never failed in obeying God's will as Solomon did. See Colossians 1:19 and 2:3, 9.

5 – The arrangements for the building of the temple are made. There is cooperation with Lebanon and its king Hiram for supplies and workers. It is interesting that this is like a picture of the church in that both Gentiles and Jews work together to accomplish God's work. V12 "And the Lord gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him. And there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty."

6 – Solomon built the temple and the sizes and dimensions are given. V2 "The house that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and thirty cubits high." Since a cubit is about one and one-half feet or eighteen inches, this makes the temple proper to measure about 90 feet by 30 feet by 45 feet high. There were some unusual practices in the building of this building. For example in V7, "When the house was built, it was with stone prepared at the quarry, so that neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron was heard in the temple while it was being built." What a great promise is in verses 11-13. "Now the word of the Lord came to Solomon, 'Concerning this house that you are building, if you will walk in my statutes and obey my rules and keep all my commandments and walk in them, then I will establish my word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will not forsake my people Israel.'" It is interesting that it took approximately seven years to build the temple.

7 – Solomon built a palace for himself that sounds larger and grander than the temple. All the details for the temple are also given. He hired another man named Hiram, V14 "a worker in bronze. And he was full of wisdom, understanding, and skill for making any work in bronze. He came to King Solomon and did all his work." Some of the work is to show that this is an extravagant place. There are carved figures, much gold, and bronze. Some of the furnishings were to fulfill the furniture that was in the tabernacle as God had commanded Moses. Some of it is to show beauty and symbolism. Finally, V51 "Solomon brought in the things that David his father had dedicated."

8 – Solomon dedicated the temple with a great prayer. It outlines the plans of God that when people obey and seek him, they are blessed but when they turn away they will suffer increasingly difficult disasters, all aimed at bringing them to the end of themselves and back to him. The prayer calls on God to be open to the cry from his people anywhere at any time. V59-60 "Let these words of mine, with which I have pleaded before the Lord, be near to the Lord our God day and night, and may he maintain the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel, as

each day requires, that all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God; there is no other." V23 "O God, God of Israel, there is no God like you, in heaven above or on earth beneath, keeping covenant and showing steadfast love to your servants who walk before you with all their heart." The main thought is that when people turn to the Lord in repentance and forgiveness that the Lord would hear from heaven his dwelling place and when he hears, forgive their sins. Note also the statement in V56. "Blessed be the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, according to all that he promised. Not one word has failed of all his good promise, which he spoke by Moses his servant."

9 – V3 "And the Lord said to him (Solomon), 'I have heard your prayer and your plea, which you have made before me. I have consecrated this house that you have built, by putting my name there forever. My eyes and my heart will be there for all time.'" It is clear that the promises to Solomon from God are conditional. V4-5 "If you will walk ... then I will establish..." V6-7 "But if you turn aside from following me...then I will cut off Israel..."

10 – This chapter records the highlight of Solomon's life and reign. V23-24 "Thus Solomon excelled all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And the whole earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put into his mind." This included the Queen of Sheba. Her comments were, V7 "Your wisdom and prosperity surpass the report that I heard." Jesus picked up on this and condemned his generation because one greater than Solomon was present among them and they still did not believe. It seems that the references to the Gentiles are intended to convey the blessing of God on his life because he sought the Lord and the wisdom of the Lord for his reign. It seems Solomon broke all the rules of Deuteronomy 17:16-20 in accumulating wives, chariots and horses. The danger is that it makes him feel like he is less dependent on the Lord. That is one of the great dangers of American society is that we are so relatively wealthy that it is easy to forget how dependent we are on God. We think we do not need him.

11 – This chapter records the lowlight of Solomon's life and reign. The distractions of foreign women draw Solomon away from the Lord. The Lord calls him back and when he refuses to return, we read V9, "And the Lord was very angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." V14 "And the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon ..." V23 "God also raised up as an adversary to him Rezon the son of Eliada..." and Jeroboam in V26. V34 "Nevertheless, I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of David my servant whom I chose, who kept my commandments and my statutes." The same offer is made to Jeroboam that if he obeys the Lord he can keep the kingdom he has just been given forever. He fails totally.

12 – This is the explanation of how Israel and Judah became two separate nations. The son of Solomon was not wise like his father. However, the reason given for the split is that it was from the Lord. V15 "So the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of affairs from the Lord, that he might fulfill his word, which the Lord spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat." God did this. God always keeps his word. That could clearly be recognized as one of the purposes of God, to show that he always keeps his word. Jeroboam became king of the northern tribes of Israel and to prevent the people from returning to Judah, built a competing religion and idols in the north. The other interesting thing about this chapter is that Jeroboam set up idols and altars with the announcement, V28 "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." Remember that Aaron did that when he fashioned the golden calf in Exodus 32:4.

13 – A prophet from God came to warn and pronounce judgment against Jeroboam for what he had done. Even as wicked as Jeroboam was as king, the Lord healed his shriveled hand. V32 "For the saying that he called out by the word of the Lord against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places that are in the cities of Samaria shall surely come to pass." The Lord keeps his word. This is also the story of the prophet with the word of the Lord who then did not obey the word of the Lord to him personally and died by the lion. The lesson out of this is that whenever God speaks a word to us, we need to obey it, even if someone else tells us that they have a word of God for us.

14 – The Lord judges wickedness. V14 "Moreover, the Lord will raise up for himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today." The Word of the Lord continues to dominate this time period. Here Jeroboam's son dies, as the Lord said. Also Rehoboam, living in Jerusalem, is attacked and much gold is carried away. The truth here is that God is more interested in preserving his people and calling them back to himself than he is in preserving the gold shields or even the temple, as it will turn out.

15 – Even though Judah also sinned, God preserved the line of David. The Lord keeps his word both for judgment and for blessing. He had promised a ruler on the throne of David forever and even though most of the tribes had

split, the nation remained so David's descendants remained on the throne. V4 "Nevertheless, for David's sake the Lord his God have him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him and establishing Jerusalem..."

16 – This is an account of a succession of kings of Israel who were wicked and disobedient to the word of the Lord. They murdered to get their position. They set up and worshiped idols and led the nation away from God in the same direction that Jeroboam had. Omri (v25) and Ahab (v30) sinned more than any before them. V33 "And Ahab made an Asherah. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."

It is the "word of the Lord" that controls, even dominates this section. The kings are mostly wicked doing sinful things contrary to the command of God and even dragging the people of their nations along with them in their sin. Yet God spoke his word through the prophets to the kings and to the people. For the most part, the kings ignored the word of the Lord, but God carried it out anyway. How could they do that when God had been so gracious and patient with them? They did it in the same way that we can today and that we do. Lord we ask not only that you forgive us but that you do more of your work in us that we obey your word more and more. Thank you for your grace that forgives and works through us in spite of our sin, even using our sin for your glory. You are so great!

17 – Elijah's ministry dominates this section. He is easy to like because Elijah is so human, like us. One time he takes on 850 false prophets and another time he is discouraged enough to want to die. Elijah stood up to the king and the entire nation, but when one wicked queen threatened his life, he ran away and wanted to die. He took on the dead boy and lived supplied by a raven and a widow, neither of which in the natural could be counted on to give up what they have to supply the needs of the prophet. Yet they did. Notice the times when the text talks about "the word of the Lord," and notice Elijah's response. Whatever the Lord tells him to do he does. This stands in contrast to the kings of Israel. The Lord also provides for him supernaturally through birds of prey and through a widow who has nothing. It is without question that the dominant theme of the chapter and the life of Elijah is "the word of the Lord." See V2, 8, 16, and 24.

18 – This is the confrontation between Elijah as the prophet of God and the hundreds of prophets of the false god, Baal. How did Elijah know to set this up? He did know it would rain because God had told him. Elijah sets up this contest based on V36, "I have done all these things at your word." Why do we not set up such a visible demonstration of the presence and power of God? Did God tell him to do it but it is not recorded? Is it that God speaks to tell us to do things like this but we do not hear or does God not speak like this any more? Note the prophet Obadiah. The Word describes him as "feared the Lord greatly," and "feared the Lord from my youth." He is a little known but faithful character in the Bible.

19 – Elijah took on hundreds of false prophets but the queen Jezebel scared him. When he ran and cried out to God, God met him with rest, food, more rest and food and then a vision of himself. Then he sent Elijah back to work giving him a companion who would succeed him. V18 "Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."

20 – The story is told of Ahab, often called the wickedest king in the history of Israel. God fought for Ahab, even though he was so wicked, for the sake of his name. V28 "And a man of God came near and said to the king of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord, 'Because the Syrians have said, 'The Lord is a god of the hills but he is not a god of the valleys,' therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand and you shall know that I am the Lord.'"" The key in this chapter is the Lord and his word even to Ahab. Here is another unnamed prophet who stands strongly for the Lord's Word. Evidently there were many more prophets than those named in the Scriptures. There was even a school of prophets.

21 – Naboth owned a vineyard that Ahab wanted. He lied, murdered and stole it from him. The word of God comments in V25, "There was none who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the Lord, whom Jezebel his wife incited." Yet when confronted by the word of the Lord he repented so that God said to Elijah in V29, "Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself before me, I will not bring the disaster in his days, but in his son's days." Again it is obvious that the dominant feature of this chapter is not the acts of wicked king Ahab, but the power of the word of the Lord. Note how many times it is given and it is always fulfilled. "Thus says the Lord..."

22 – The account of Ahab and Jehoshaphat in battle is told. Micaiah the prophet represents the word of the Lord. They ignored it and Ahab died in the battle just as God had said. Also there is a sum of the life of Jehoshaphat in V43. "He walked in all the way of Asa his father. He did not turn aside from it, doing what was right in the sight of the Lord." On the other hand, Ahaziah succeeded Ahab and was totally wicked as his father had been. V52-53 "He

did what was evil in the sight of the Lord and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who made Israel sin. He served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the Lord, the God of Israel, to anger in every way that his father had done." What a way to sum a person's life. Yet that is pretty accurate. It is only our relationship with God that matters in our lives. All our human relationships are based on that.