

#10. THE BOOKS OF KINGS

1. **Kings is the story of Israel's entire monarchy, from Saul to Zedekiah.** In our English Bible, it is divided into two books, First and Second Kings. The account was considered one book in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts, but was divided into two books when the translation of the book into Greek occurred. This was done in order to facilitate the copying of the stories onto smaller scrolls. The Latin Vulgate referred to First and Second Samuel as *First* and *Second Kings*, and therefore referred to the books we call *First* and *Second Kings* by the titles *Third* and *Fourth Kings*.

2. **The author is unknown.** Jewish tradition credits Jeremiah, but this is unlikely since the record of Kings ends in Babylon in 561BC, and Jeremiah went to Egypt during the Exile, not Babylon. Also, by that time Jeremiah would have been nearly 90 years old. The author's identity is unknown, and was probably an unknown prophet or priest who went into captivity in Babylon.

3. **The Date:** It is possible that Kings was written anytime between 561BC (the date of the final event in Kings) and 538BC (the beginning of the end of captivity). Since there was no mention of the Return in Kings, we are fairly certain it was written before 538BC.

4. **Key Chapters**
 - 1 Kings
 - Chapters 1:1-11:43 is the story of Solomon, the son of David, and the last king to preside over the United Kingdom of Israel.

 - Chapters 12:1-22:53 is the story of civil war, the early kingships of divided Israel and Judah, and the ministry of Elijah.

 - 2 Kings
 - Chapters 1:1-17:41 is the story of the transition from Elijah's ministry to the amazing days of Elisha.

 - Chapters 18:1-25:30 is the record of the Kings of Judah and the exile of the Southern Kingdom into Babylon.

5. Key Verses

- **1 Kings 9:1-5 NASB** “Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of the Lord, and the king’s house, and all that Solomon desired to do, ²that the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. ³The Lord said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. ⁴As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you *and* will keep My statutes and My ordinances, ⁵then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”
- **1 Kings 8:22-53** is the dedicatory prayer for the Temple by Solomon.
- **1 Kings 11:1-6 NASB** “Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ²from the nations concerning which the Lord had said to the sons of Israel, “You shall not associate with them, nor shall they associate with you, *for* they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.” Solomon held fast to these in love. ³He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father *had been*. ⁵For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites. ⁶Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not follow the Lord fully, as David his father *had done*.”
- **2 Kings 2:9, 10 NASB** When they had crossed over, Elijah said to Elisha, “Ask what I shall do for you before I am taken from you.” And Elisha said, “Please, let a double portion of your spirit be upon me.” ¹⁰He said, “You have asked a hard thing. *Nevertheless*, if you see me when I am taken from you, it shall be so for you; but if not, it shall not be *so*.”
- **2 Kings 17:12-14 NASB** “They served idols, concerning which the Lord had said to them, “You shall not do this thing.” ¹³Yet the Lord warned Israel and Judah through all His prophets *and* every seer, saying, “Turn from your evil ways and keep My commandments, My statutes according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you through My servants the prophets.” ¹⁴However, they did not listen, but stiffened their neck like their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God.

6. Key People

- **David** - Israel's second King

- **Solomon** - son of David; third King of Israel
- **Rehoboam** - son of Solomon; initially the fourth King of Israel, but became the first King of Judah after ten tribes rebelled and formed the northern kingdom of Israel.
- **Jeroboam** - the first King of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). He rebelled against Rehoboam after the death of Solomon.
- **Elijah** - a great prophet known for his miracles, opposition to Ahab's evil reign, and challenger of Baal at Mount Carmel.
- **Elisha** - disciple and successor of Elijah, known for his *double anointing* miracles.
- **Ahab** - seventh king of the Northern Kingdom; son of Omri, and husband of Jezebel.
- **Jezebel** - the wife of Ahab. Jezebel incited Ahab to abandon the worship of Yahweh and encourage worship of Baal and Asherah instead.
- **The Shunamite Woman** - a wealthy and respected woman whose family showed kindness to Elisha and was blessed by God in special ways.
- **Naaman** - a general of Syria who was healed of leprosy by God through the ministry of Elisha.
- **Jehu** - the tenth king of Israel who exterminated the House of Omri.
- **Joash** - King of Judah who was the sole survivor of a massacre against the Royal family. He was good for much of his rule, but eventually turned to evil.
- **Hezekiah** - the thirteenth King of Judah; known as one of the great kings in the line of David.
- **Sennacherib** - a king of Assyria who waged war against Judah.
- **Isaiah** - arguably the greatest prophet of Israel. He is credited with establishing the *Remnant* concept in Judah.

- **Manasseh** - wicked king of Judah; son of Hezekiah. Though he led Israel into great wickedness, he turned to The Lord in his later days.
- **Josiah** - along with David and Hezekiah, he is listed as one of the three greatest kings of Israel.
- **Jehoiakim** - King of Judah; son of Josiah
- **Zedekiah** - the last king of Judah
- **Nebuchadnezzar** - King of Babylon; conqueror of Judah and Jerusalem.

7. Key Places

- **Shechem** - the meeting place of the new king Rehoboam and Israel
- **Israel** - the ten northern tribes rebelled against the House of David and retained the name Israel.
- **Judah** - the tribes of Judah and part of Benjamin remained loyal to the House of David. They were known as the nation of Judah.
- **Jerusalem** - the capital city of Judah; the focal point in Jewish worship
- **Samaria** - the capital city of Israel, built by Omri
- **Dan and Bethel** - Jeroboam established idolatrous worship centers in these two cities in an attempt to keep people from going to Jerusalem to worship.
- **Mount Carmel** - scene of the confrontation between Elijah and the prophets of Baal and the Grove.
- **Shunem** - hometown of an unnamed family who showed unusual kindness toward the prophet Elisha.
- **Damascus** - the capital of Syria

8. Key Themes

- ***The Temple*** - Solomon's Temple was a beautiful, majestic center for the worship of Jehovah. It solidified Jerusalem as the true center of Jewish culture and religion.
- ***The division of Israel*** - only after the exile would Israel recover from her civil war in the days of Rehoboam (931BC). The northern kingdom would continue in apostasy, and would be carried away to Assyria in 722BC. Judah would have periods of revival that ensured her independence until 586BC. Messianic prophecies speak of the days of complete restoration that are still before us.
- ***Kings, Priests, and Prophets*** - Israel is no longer a collection of groups led by Judges, but now a strong nation ruled by a king and spiritually led by prophets and shepherded by Priests. The fullest expression of Prophet, Priest, and King is Messiah.
- ***Sin and Righteousness*** - Israel's fortunes were directly tied to her obedience to the commands of Jehovah. In the Books of the Kings we learn that righteousness exalts a nation, while sin brings shame and dysfunction.

9. The Contents of Kings

- The Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 1:1-11:43)
 - The Rise of Solomon (1:1-2:46)
 - Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth (3:1-4:34)
 - Plans for the Building of The Temple (5:1-18)
 - The Building of The Temple and Solomon's House (6:1-9:9)
 - Additional Building Projects of Solomon (9:10-28)
 - A Summary of Solomon's Accomplishments (10:1-29)
 - The Decline of Solomon (11:1-43)
- The Kingdom of Israel Divided (1 Kings 12:1 - 2 Kings 17:41)
 - The Rise of Idolatry: Rehoboam of Judah; Jeroboam of Israel - (1 Kings 12:1-14:31)
 - Kings of Judah and Israel - (1 Kings 15:1-16:22)
 - The Dynasty of Omri and the introduction of Baalism into Israel and Judah (1 Kings 16:23-2Kings 13:25)

- Baal Worship Introduced (1 Kings 16:23-34)
- The Ministry of Elijah Against Baal (1 Kings 17:1-2 Kings 1:18)
- The Ministry of Elisha (2 Kings 2:1-9:13)
- The Defeat of Baal Worship in Israel (2 Kings 9:14-10:36)
- The Defeat of Baal Worship in Judah (2 Kings 11:1-12:21)
- The Death of Elisha (2 Kings 13:1-25)
- Kings of Judah and Israel (2 Kings 14:1-15:38)
- The Defeat and Exile of Israel by Assyria (2 Kings 16:1-17:41)
- The Kings of Judah (2 Kings 18:1-25:21)
 - Hezekiah's Righteous Reign (18:1-20:21)
 - The Wicked Reign of Manasseh and Amon (21:1-26)
 - Josiah's Righteous Reign (22:1-23:30)
 - The Defeat and Exile of Judah in Babylon (22:31-23:30)
- Summary of Rebellion; The Faithfulness of God (2 Kings 25:22-30)

Worth noting

- In Kings, we have the history of Israel between 970BC and 586BC.
- In this account we see not only the history of Israel, but also are introduced to the concept that God establishes nations. He raises them up, then casts them down according to His wisdom and sovereignty.

When reading Kings

- Remember an important idea is the power of faithfulness, particularly on the part of the King.
- Douglas Stuart and Gordon Fee describe a common formula in the record of the Kings (*How to Read the Bible Book by Book*; Zondervan Publishers; Grand Rapids, Michigan, 2002; page 93)

1. The date his reign began
2. How long he reigned and in which kingdom
3. The name of his mother (for Kings of Judah)
4. His religious policy
5. the source of further information
6. information about his death, burial and successor