

1 Kings

Summary

1 Kings is a continuation of the book of 2 Samuel. It begins with the genealogy of the kings of Judah and the ten northern tribes that will take on the name Israel. This book takes place at the end of David's life when he is very old and near death. Bathsheba reminds David of his promise that their son Solomon would be king. Solomon is anointed by Nathan, the prophet, and Zadok, the priest. David charges Solomon to follow the Lord, to obey all of His laws and commands, and to never worship any other gods.

Initially, Solomon follows the instructions of his father. God appears to Solomon in a dream and promises to grant him one wish. Solomon humbly asks for wisdom. God is so pleased with this request that, in return, He promises to make him the wisest man on earth. In addition, He promises him wealth and honor. Solomon shows his wisdom by settling a dispute between two women who both claimed a child was theirs. Solomon told them to split the baby in half, knowing this would evoke a reaction from the real mother. He wisely gave the baby to the woman who was willing to give up the child rather than seeing the child killed. 2 Kings continues by recounting Solomon's great wealth. We also see how he showed wisdom by writing over 3000 proverbs and 1005 songs.

One of Solomon's most important contributions was building the temple to the Lord. This took him seven years and he used the finest materials (the estimated cost of the temple today would be \$2.5-5 billion). Upon completion, the "Ark of the Covenant" was placed in the temple. God promised that if the people kept His laws and commandments, worshipping only Him, He would live among them and never abandon them. God appeared to Solomon a second time and repeated the promise He had made with David. God promised to establish Solomon's throne forever if Solomon and His people faithfully observed all of His decrees and laws. If they turn away and worship other gods, God would cut off Israel, reject and destroy the temple, and Israel would become an object of ridicule.

Unfortunately, Solomon did not remain faithful to the decrees of God in his later years. Some of his 700 wives were foreigners, and they convinced him to worship their foreign gods. He

did evil in the eyes of the Lord (1 Kings 11:6). God was angry with Solomon, and as a result, He took most of the kingdom from Solomon and gave it to another. For the sake of David and Jerusalem, God would leave His lineage with the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. One of Solomon's subordinates, Jeroboam, rebelled against Solomon. He was told by the prophet Ahijah that he would rule over Israel. Solomon died, and the kingdom was divided between the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin (hereafter called Judah), and the ten northern tribes (hereafter called Israel). The succession of the kings of Israel and Judah are then recorded and identified by whether they did good or evil in the eyes of the Lord.

The final part of the book focuses on the prophet Elijah and his conflict with King Ahab, and his wife Jezebel. Elijah performed many miracles with God's help. Some examples of these miracles are bringing a three-year drought, fire down from heaven to burn a sacrifice, immediate rain, and parting the waters of the Jordan River. 1 Kings ends with Elijah anointing his successor, Elisha. The book also recounts the demise of Jezebel and sets up the transition to the book of 2 Kings.

Author

In the original Hebrew texts, 1 & 2 Samuel and 1 & 2 Kings were all one book, simply titled Kings. They were separated into four books, because of their length. No one knows for certain who wrote 1 & 2 Kings. Jewish tradition credits Jeremiah, but few scholars accept this as likely. Whoever the author was, it is clear that he was familiar with the book of Deuteronomy, as were many of Israel's prophets.

Date

Most scholars believe 1 & 2 Kings was written around 550 B.C., and cover a period of 130 years. The timeframe was likely from David's death, around 970 B.C. to the reign of Ahaziah in 840 B.C.

Primary Characters

Solomon (1 Kings 1-11)

The Kings of Judah and Israel (1 Kings 12-22)

The Prophet Elijah (1 Kings 17-21)

King Ahab and Jezebel (1 Kings 16-21)

Historical Moments

The Death of David and Anointing of Solomon as King (1 Kings 1)

Solomon Asks for Wisdom (1 Kings 3)

The Temple Is Completed and Dedicated (1 Kings 8)

God Announces the Kingdom Will Be Divided (1 Kings 11)

Elijah Confrontation with the Prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18)

Major Theological Themes

God Keeps His Promises - A Redeemer was to be provided through the lineage of David, which came in the form of Jesus Christ. Despite David's transgressions, God kept His promise. Though David did not get to see the results of the promise God made, it still came to pass according to God's Will.

Failure to Follow God's Commands Leads to Judgment - Judgment is the consequence of refusing to worship and follow Yahweh alone. God is loving and just; therefore, His mercy must be paired with His justice and holiness.

Lessons Learned from 1 Kings

God's Providence Works through Even the Worst Situations - Most of the kings of Israel and Judah were evil in the sight of the Lord. Judah had 8 good kings, but 12 kings were evil in the eyes of the Lord. All 19 of Israel's kings were evil in the sight of the Lord. In this book, we see God's grace and forgiveness when the people turn to Him. The command for God's people remains true for us; we shall have no other gods but the one true God. If we are obedient, He will bless us. If we are disobedient, we are subject to punishment, just as the Israelites received His punishment.

Wisdom and Knowledge Did Not Protect Solomon - Some may ask the question, "If Solomon was so wise, why did he fail so miserably?" One only needs to look at the sin nature described in the Bible to know that no amount of earthly wisdom, wealth, or power can protect someone from his sinful human nature. It is only through the sacrifice of Jesus Christ that we can be made whole.