

NAME

The Book of Kings. The Hebrew title comes from the first words: **וְהַמֶּלֶךְ** (“wehammelek”) “*and the king...*”

In the Hebrew Bible 1 & 2 Kings are treated as one book (see introduction to 1 & 2 Samuel). They were later divided by the translators for the purpose of handling and reading.

The LXX and subsequently the Vulgate give these books the titles 3 & 4 Kings respectively.

The name “Kings” was given because the book contains the history of Israel during the time she was governed by kings.

AUTHOR

The author is anonymous and cannot be known with certainty. Jewish tradition attributes authorship to Jeremiah. There are portions of Kings and the prophecy of Jeremiah which are nearly identical. However there is no way to be certain. The author was probably a prophet and a contemporary of Jeremiah. Thus Jeremiah could have written most of it before the captivity and the last chapter in Babylon (if he went there, which tradition avers, after Nebuchadnezzar conquered Egypt in 568 B.C.).

Various sources were used by the author: 1) The book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41); 2) The books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (stated 17 times); 3) The books of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah; 4) The book of Nathan the Prophet (1 Chronicles 29:29; 2 Chronicles 9:29); 5) The book of Jasher (2 Samuel 1:18; 6) various priest, scribes, and recorders (2 Kings 18:18); and 7) Jeremiah (c.f. 2 Kings 25 and Jeremiah 39,52).

DATE

Probably written in Babylon during the early part of the captivity (c. 585-60 B.C.).

1 Kings covers a period of about 118 years from 1050 to 897 B.C. and gives the history of the passing of David, the reign of Solomon, the division of the Kingdom, and the ministry of Elijah.

2 Kings covers a period of about 308 years from 896 to 588 B.C. and gives the history of the ministry of Elisha, the corruption of the entire nation, the reigns of the good kings Hezekiah and Josiah, and the partial and finally complete captivity of the entire kingdom.

Together they cover a period of about 350 to 450 years. Inclusive dates are the death of David (970 B.C.) and the captivity and release of Jehoiachin in Babylon (562 B.C.).

Important Dates:

Solomon’s Temple begun	966 B.C.
Kingdom Divided	931 B.C.
Captivity of Israel (northern kingdom)	722 B.C.
Babylonian Captivity First Deportation (southern kingdom)	605 B.C.
Babylonian Captivity Second Deportation (southern kingdom)	597 B.C.
Captivity of Judah - Third Deportation (southern kingdom)	586 B.C.

THEME

See maps: The United Kingdom of Israel Expands (Halley page 221) and The Two Kingdoms 930-722 B.C. (Halley page 224);

Mitchell:

Together 1 & 2 Kings catalogue the history of the undivided kingdom from David's death through Solomon's and Rehoboam's reigns and the divided kingdom, till the fall of the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in 722 B.C., and the captivity of the Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. Hence, the combined books of Kings narrate the height, division, decline, and fall of the Hebrew nation.

Both glory and tragedy stretch before us in the books of Kings. They begin with the death of David and end with the captivity of Judah. They record not only the building of the Temple, but also the burning of that glamorous structure.

Comparison of 1 and 2 Kings

<u>1 Kings</u>	<u>2 Kings</u>
Begins with David	Ends with the king of Babylon
Opens with Solomon's glory	Closes with Jehochin's shame
Begins with the blessings of obedience	Ends with the curse of disobedience
Opens with the building of the Temple	Closes with the burning of the Temple
Traces the progress of apostasy	Describes the consequences of apostasy
Records how the kings failed to rule	Consequences of that failure
Elijah is prominent	Elisha is prominent
Depicts the long suffering of God	Displays the sure punishment of God

Setting:

(From WCBS notes)

Political Setting of Israel and Judah: The period extends from the time of Israel's widest political influence to its fall into political ignominy. Solomon's domestic policy was one of despotism and heavy oppression by taxation. His foreign policy was one of diplomacy rather than military might, achieving his ends by peaceful negotiation.

Political Setting Surrounding Israel and Judah: This period of Israel paralleled the growth of the second Assyrian Empire (c. 1000-612 B.C.). The Babylonian Empire commenced with the alliance of the Medes and Babylonians (c. 626 B.C.). Egypt's power was not great during most of this period. Only sporadic raids were attempted against Israel. Syria was dominated by Israel at the beginning of the period, but she revolted and became a source of oppression to both kingdoms subsequently.

Religious Setting: The period began with the inauguration of the Solomonic temple era, which temple was constructed at a value of c. \$600,000,000. Idolatry was often prevalent during this era. Solomon introduced it through his heathen wives. Jeroboam I instituted the worship of the two golden calves in for the Northern Kingdom. Ahab and Jezebel introduced Baal worship again to Israel and their son-in-law brought it into Judah. Although Jehu destroyed Baal worship in Israel, idolatry continued to be practiced throughout the period until captivity. Judah had 19 kings, 8 of which were righteous. Israel had 19 also, all of which were evil.

Purpose and Theme of the Books of Kings (WBCS Notes)

The purpose of these books is to continue the history of the kingdom that was instituted by Samuel, from the coronation of Solomon to the captivity in Babylon and to show the cause of the decline from glory under Solomon to its decay in captivity.

The theme and key message is the inseparable connection between obedience and blessing, and of disobedience and cursing. The nation is seen as passing from affluence and influence to poverty and paralysis because of their disobedience to God's law, or, differently stated, failure to adhere to the covenant (Deuteronomy 28-30).

The viewpoint is that of the prophets (in contrast to the priestly viewpoint of Chronicles).

Kings of Assyria

Assur-nasipal II	883-859 B.C.
Shalmaneser III	858-824 B.C.
Shamshi-Adad V	823-811 B.C.
Adad-nirari III	810-783 B.C.
Shalmaneser IV	782-773 B.C.
Assur-dan	772-755 B.C.
Assur-nirari V	754-745 B.C.
Tiglath-Pileser III	745-727 B.C.
Shalmaneser V	727-722 B.C.
Sargon II	722-705 B.C.
Sennacherib	705-681 B.C.
Esarhaddon	681-699 B.C.
Ashurbanipal	668-627 B.C.

Kings of Babylon

Nabopolassar	626-605 B.C.
Nebuchadnezzar II	605-562 B.C.
Evil-Merodach	562-560 B.C.
Neriglissar	560-556 B.C.
NLabasi-Marduk	556 B.C.
Nabonidus	555-539 B.C.

Belshazzar reigned as vice-regent

1 KINGS:

Type of Literature: History & Government

Halley (page 43): Division of the Kingdom

Mitchell: The Disruption of the Kingdom, Through Disbelief and Disobedience

The book records the tragic account of how the once noble Hebrew Kingdom was divided into two kingdoms.

Key Word (Nelson's): Division of the Kingdom - The theme of 1 Kings centers on the fact that the welfare of Israel and Judah depends upon the faithfulness of the people and their king to the covenant. The two books of Kings trace the monarchy from the point of its greatest prosperity under

Solomon to its demise and destruction in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Observance of God's law produces blessing, but apostasy is rewarded by judgment.

Key Words (Kartozian): Obedience - Magnificence / Disobedience - darkness

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"And as for you, if you will walk before Me, as David your father walked, with integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you, and keeping My statutes and My rules, then I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel'" (1 Kings 9:4,5).

"Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, 'Since this has been your practice and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes that I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and will give it to your servant.'" (1 Kings 11:11).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 12 - The critical turning point in 1 Kings occurs in chapter 12, when the united Kingdom becomes the divided kingdom upon the death of Solomon.

Outline:

I. The United Kingdom 1-11

- Passing of David
- Prosperity of Solomon / Achievements: organization, temple built, foreign fame.
- Passing of Solomon - Solomon's unfaithfulness, Solomon's adversaries and impending division

II. The Divided Kingdom 12-22

1. The Disruption 12-14

- a. Political division 12:1-25
Rehoboam's folly - ends up with Judah (2 southern tribes) / Jeroboam ends up with Israel (10 northern tribes)
- b. Religious division 12:26-14:31
Judah: Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem / Israel: 2 Golden calves (Dan & Bethel) and temples in the high places

2. The Corruption 15-22

- a. Corruption promoted by royalty 15,16
A process of deterioration begins in both the Northern and Southern Kingdoms, fostered by a series of evil rulers. In the north (Israel) the rulers are all bad and therefore the deterioration is rapid and general. In the south (Judah) most of the kings are evil, but there are occasional bright spots of righteous leadership often leading to revivals. Therefore, the deterioration in the south is much less rapid than in the north. Inadequate leadership leads to spiritual decline.
- b. Corruption protested by the prophets 17-22
Note that the corruption comes in spite of God's warning through His prophets

- 1) The divine provision 17
The prediction of 3 years of drought
- 2) The decisive contest 18
This is a significant event in Scripture as it:
 - Demonstrates God's power
 - Demonstrates the need to choose sides
 - Is God's exclamation point regarding His attitude towards compromise & idolatry
- 3) The disturbing reaction 19:1-8
Elijah's cowardice - retreat in the jaws of victory
- 4) The direct successor (Elisha) 19:19-21
- 5) The derelict king (Ahab) 20-22

2 KINGS:

Type of Literature: History & Government

Halley (page 43): History of the Divided Kingdom

Mitchell: Sinning despite warning brings ruin without remedy

When great privilege is abused, the penalty is greatly increased. This is true individually as well as nationally. This second book of Kings is truly a tragic national record. God's chosen people become so steeped in idolatry and moral degradation that judgment finally falls. A gracious and loving God is forced to permit the Assyrians to wreak vengeance on the Northern Kingdom (Israel) in 722 B.C. Then after another 125 years of further warnings, God allows the Babylonians to drag Judah (the Southern Kingdom) from their own land into humiliating captivity (cf. Deuteronomy 28:15-32:36—these prophecies were fulfilled to the letter). With the close of the book we come to the end of one of the major divisions of Hebrew history: The Kingdom Era.

Key Word (Nelson's): Captivities of the Kingdom - 2 Kings records both the destruction

Key Words (Kartozian): Idolatry, rebellion, overthrow, captivity

Key Verses (Nelson's):

"The people of Israel walked in all the sins that Jeroboam did. They did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel from out of His sight, as He had spoken by all His servants the prophets. So Israel was exiled from their own land to Assyria until this day" (2 Kings 17:22,23).

"And the Lord said, 'I will remove Judah also out of My sight, as I have removed Israel, and I will cast off this city that I have chosen, Jerusalem, and the house of which I said, My name shall be there'" (2 Kings 23:27).

Key Chapter (Nelson's): 25 - The last chapter of 2 Kings records the utter destruction of the city of Jerusalem and its glorious temple. Hope is still alive, however, with the remnant in the Babylonian captivity as Evil-Merodach frees Jehoiachin from prison and treats him kindly.

Outline:

- I. The Corruption of the Divided Kingdom 1-16
- II. The Retribution for the Divided Kingdom 17-25
 1. The passing of Israel into captivity 17
The beginning of the Samaritans (17:24-41) - Brought men into marry Jewish remnants which resulted in: 1) Mongrel religion (pagan Judiasim); 2) Mongrel people (some Jewish blood)
 2. The passing of Judah into captivity 18-25
125 years later - they should have learned by what happened to Israel. Are we paying attention?

RECIPIENTS

God's people - specifically the Hebrews...and us.

CONTRIBUTION TO CANON

Mitchell:

Deeply imbedded in these books the careful student can discern great spiritual truths and prophetic foreshadowings. For example:

1. The splendor of Solomon's kingdom reminds us of the greater splendor of Christ's future kingdom.
2. The visit of the Queen of Sheba reminds one of sinners seeking a relationship with Christ
3. The sudden and dramatic translation of Elijah reminds us of the future rapture of the Church.

RESOURCES

Gromacki, Robert C. *New Testament Survey*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Baker Book House, 1978

Halley, Henry H. *Halley's Bible Handbook*, Grand Rapids, Michigan; Zondervan Publishing House

Horton, David, General Editor. *The Portable Seminary*, Grand Rapids, Michigan, Bethany House Publishers, 2006

Nelson's Quick Reference - Bible Maps And Charts, Nashville, Tennessee; Thomas Nelson, Inc., 1994

As general resources I've relied on my class notes from various professors at Biola University (especially those of Dr. Curtis Mitchell), Western Conservative Baptist Seminary (WCBS), and Talbot Seminary as well as notes shared with me by Annie Kartoizian.

Additional reference material has come from the study Bibles of the English Standard Version, New American Standard Version, and The New Living Translation.

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