

Introduction to 1 & 2 Kings

Author and Date

The author or authors of these two books are unknown. As the titles of the books indicate, 1–2 Kings describe the period of the monarchy in ancient Israel (971–586B.C.), concentrating on the kings who ruled after David.

The Theological Message of 1 & 2 Kings

Ever since creation, God's word has shaped human history (Gen. 1:3). What God commands to happen does happen. What God promises comes to pass. When God, a just and gracious Lawgiver, warns, he ought to be heeded. Perhaps no biblical books prove these points more than 1–2 Kings, where God's word determines what will happen to Israel and to all other nations. In these books about kings and prophets, he is the great King over them all.

God's covenant words of promise to David (2 Samuel 7) prove true in 1 Kings 1–11. Solomon succeeds David, and the royal line to the Savior begins (1:1–2:12). God promises Solomon wisdom and the opportunity to build the temple in Jerusalem, and God keeps his word (chs. 3–7). God promises Solomon riches and honor, and the Lord delivers on his promise (chs. 9–10).

God's covenant warnings against sin given through Moses (Leviticus 26; Deuteronomy 27–28), the greatest prophet to date (Deuteronomy 34), and through other great prophets also prove true. When Solomon worships idols, God uses Ahijah to announce he will tear the kingdom into two, and he does so (1 Kings 11). When Jeroboam, northern Israel's first king, mixes true and false worship (12:25–33), God sends Ahijah again, this time to declare that Jeroboam's lineage would not continue (14:1–18). When Israel forsakes the Lord, who demands exclusive worship, and worships Baal, the Canaanite god of sex, wealth, and power, God dispatches Elijah and Elisha to combat this latest outbreak of idolatry (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 13). Through miracles and messages these magnificent prophets prove again and again that God alone is the only true God, the Creator and Ruler of nature and history. The people's rebellion simply leads to God's next disciplinary action.

Of course, Moses' sternest warnings were of loss of land, of exile (Lev. 26:14–39; Deut. 28:15–68). The people stood to lose God's gift of good land, and lose it they did. When further warnings became futile, God sent Assyria to conquer northern Israel (2 Kings 17) and Babylon to conquer Judah (24:1–25:26). These nations dominated the world scene for two centuries, forming massive empires. But they did so only because God gave them this power, because God's word ordered them into action (17:7–23).

However, Moses did more than merely warn about exile. He also proclaimed forgiveness and restoration in response to repentance (Deut. 30:1–10). Hope remained that God's words of renewal

would prove the final word. After all, he made promises to Noah, Abraham, Moses, and David that could not be broken. Therefore, 1–2 Kings ends with David's heir alive in exile (2 Kings 25:27–30). Since God's word rules history, it is impossible for Israel's history to end there. A new day must come, and it will.

1 Kings Outline

- The Reign of King Solomon (1:1-11:43)
- The Kingdom Is Divided (12:1-14:31)
- Abijam and Asa (15:1-24)
- From Nadab to Ahab (15:25-16:34)
- Elijah and Ahab (17:1-22:40)
- Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah (22:41-53)

2 Kings Outline

- The Death of Ahaziah (1:1-18)
- Elisha and Israel (2:1-10:36)
- Joash (11:1-12:21)
- Jehoahaz and Jehoash (13:1-25)
- Amaziah, Jeroboam II, and Azariah (14:1-15:7)
- Israel's Last Days (15:8-31)
- Jotham and Ahaz (15:32-16:20)
- The End of Israel (17:1-41)
- Hezekiah (18:1-20:21)
- Manasseh and Amon (21:1-26)
- Josiah (22:1-23:30)
- The End of Judah (23:31-25:30)