

## OLD TESTAMENT SURVEY

### 1 & 2 Kings

#### Introduction

- 1 & 2 Kings were originally a single book in the Hebrew canon (known as Kings)
  - separated into 2 books (with slightly different division point than English Bible) in the Septuagint
- In the Hebrew canon, is the last book of the "Former Prophets"
  - Hebrew Bible divided into the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings
  - the Prophets further subdivided into
    - the Former Prophets - Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings
    - the Latter Prophets - Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, the Twelve
- Covers a ~400-year period of Israelite history from ~971 to ~560 B.C.
  - from King Solomon's reign through the fall & exile of Judah to Babylon
- Though historical, was likely written to explain the fall and exile of Israel & Judah, in relation to God's covenants with Israel
  - Speaks to God's sovereignty and His faithfulness to His Covenant people through the history of Israel, in face of the hard reality of the Exile
  - not so much interested in the political/worldly exploits of the kings, as in the spiritual impact they had on the nation
    - e.g. Omri - arguably one of Israel's greatest kings from the perspective of earthly power and respect from other nations; but his reign is described in only 6 verses (1 Kings 16:23-28)
- Authorship is uncertain
  - a Jewish tradition attributes authorship to Jeremiah - considered unlikely by most scholars today
  - likely written by one or more writers in period of Judah's exile to Babylon (~560-540 B.C.)
    - makes mention of Jehoiachin's release from prison by Evil-Merodach, king of Babylon (~562-561 B.C.)
    - does not mention King Cyrus' decree for the Temple to be rebuilt (1 Chronicles 36:22-23; Ezra 1:1-4; ~538 B.C.)
  - content may have been based in part on other contemporary sources mentioned in the book (e.g. annals of the kings of Israel/Judah)

#### Overview

- Summary
  - 1 Kings 1-11 - Rise & Rule of King Solomon (971-931 B.C.)
  - 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17 - Divided Kingdom (931-722 B.C.)
    - 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13 - the ministries of Elijah and Elisha (~860s to ~780s B.C.)
  - 2 Kings 18-25 - last days of the kingdom of Judah (~729-561 B.C.)
- 1 Kings 1-11 - Rise & Rule of King Solomon
  - 1-2 - Solomon chosen by David to succeed him as king; anointed king, overcoming opposition from Adonijah (his older half-brother)
  - 3-4, 9-10 - Solomon's wisdom and greatness
    - Israel tremendously prosperous during his reign
    - Borders expanded to include all the land promised to Abraham
    - Other nations sought out Solomon
  - 5-8 - the building and dedication of the Temple, including Solomon's prayer of dedication

- a permanent 'dwelling place' for God, in contrast to the Tabernacle
    - Solomon's prayer of dedication - a call for God to keep His covenant and to continue to show His steadfast love towards Israel and towards the house of David
    - asking the LORD to forgive His people when they repent and turn to Him
  - 11 - Solomon's decline
    - 700 wives & 300 concubines - led his heart astray, after other gods
      - as a result, led Israel into worshiping the gods of the surrounding nations
    - prophet Ahijah foretells division of kingdom, with 10 tribes to be ruled by Jeroboam, one of Solomon's servants (11:29-40)
      - "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" (1 Kings 11:34)
- 1 Kings 12 to 2 Kings 17 - Divided Kingdom
  - 1 Kings 12 - Israel divided into 2 kingdoms after Solomon's death
    - immediate cause due to Rehoboam's refusal to heed the people's demands to lighten the forced labor that Solomon had imposed (chapter 12)
      - "My little finger is thicker than my father's thighs (!)" (12:10)
    - but underlying cause - Solomon's unfaithfulness in worshiping other gods (chapter 11)
  - Southern kingdom (Judah)
    - 2 tribes (Judah & Benjamin)
    - ruled by the House of David - 19 kings over ~345 years (930-586 B.C.), starting with Rehoboam
    - David was the standard by which subsequent kings of Judah were measured
      - some kings "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as [their] father David did [or 'yet not like David his father']"
      - others "did not do what was right in the eyes of the Lord his God, as his father David had done" (e.g. 2 Kings 16:2)
  - Northern Kingdom (Israel)
    - 10 tribes
    - in total, ruled by 20 kings, representing 9 different dynasties, over ~210 years
      - all did evil in God's eyes
      - longest dynasty (Jehu's) lasted ~100 years
  - 1 Kings 12-14: Israel's 1st king - Jeroboam
    - formerly in charge of Solomon's labor force
    - led rebellion against Rehoboam following Solomon's death
    - reigned 22 years
    - led Israel into idolatry
    - set up golden calves and associated religious festivals at Dan & Bethel (at northern & southern ends of the nation) (12:25-33)
      - aimed at preventing Israelites from returning to Jerusalem (in Judah) to worship, lest they also return to Rehoboam
    - became the standard of evil to which all the kings of Israel following him were compared
      - recurring description: "He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD and followed the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, which he made Israel to sin..." (e.g. 2 Kings 13:2)

- Ahab "did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him. And as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, he... served Baal and worshiped him."
  - set in process the sins that would seal Israel's fate
    - the prophet Ahijah's prophecy against Jeroboam: "Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam today... and root up Israel out of this good land that He gave to their fathers and scatter them beyond the Euphrates, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he sinned and made Israel to sin." (1 Kings 14:14-16)
- 1 Kings 14-16 - succession of kings of Judah & Israel
  - Judah:
    - Rehoboam (14:21-31) - 17 years; "did evil in the eyes of the LORD"
    - Abijah (15:1-8) - 3 years; "committed all the sins his father had done before him"
    - Asa (15:9-24) - 41 years; "did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done"
  - Israel:
    - Dynasty of Jeroboam:
      - Nadab (15:25-32) - 2 years; "did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of his father"; assassinated by Nadab (15:27-30)
    - Dynasty of Baasha:
      - Baasha (15:33-16:7) - 24 years; "did evil in the eyes of the LORD, walking in the ways of Jeroboam..."
      - Elah (16:8-14) - 2 years; assassinated by Zimri
    - Zimri (16:15-20) - 7 days; died when besieged by Omri
    - Tibni (16:21-22) - supported by part of Israel, but lost out to Omri, and died
    - Dynasty of Omri
      - Omri (16:23-28) - 12 years; "walked in all the ways of Jeroboam"
      - Ahab (16:29-34) - 22 years - perhaps the most evil king in history of the Northern kingdom
- 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13 - the ministries of Elijah and Elisha
  - Elijah & Elisha - 2 of many prophets in the times of the Kings
  - role of prophets in Kings (and the OT)
    - mouthpieces for God, to remind the kings and the people of God's commands
      - keeping the kings in check, in accordance with the Word of the LORD
    - in some cases, foretelling what the LORD would do in the future, generally in relation to coming judgments
  - Elijah (1 Kings 17-2 Kings 2)
    - prophet to the Northern kingdom during the reigns of Ahab and his sons Ahaziah and Joram (or Jehoram); Jehoshaphat was king in Judah
    - 1 Kings 17-18 - drought in Israel, leading up to confrontation with prophets of Baal & Asherah on Mount Carmel
    - 1 Kings 19 - Elijah flees to Mount Horeb (Sinai) after being threatened by Ahab's wife Jezebel; God speaks to him there; Elisha called as Elijah's successor
    - 1 Kings 20-22 - Ahab's failures and sins, culminating in his death
    - 1 Kings 22:41-50 - King Jehoshaphat of Judah - good king overall, but interacted and intermarried with Ahab's family
    - 1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:18 - King Ahaziah of Israel
    - 1 Kings 2 - Elijah taken into heaven; succeeded by Elisha, who received a 'double portion' of Elijah's spirit



- one of the most evil kings of Judah - "He did what was evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the despicable practices of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel." (21:2ff)
  - sealed Judah's fate, as God promised to bring disaster on Jerusalem and Judah for his sins and the sins he led Judah to commit (21:11-15)
- Amon (21:19-26)
  - "He abandoned the LORD, the God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the LORD" (21:22)
- Josiah (22:1-23:30) - became king at age 8, after Amon was assassinated
  - "He did what was right in the eyes of the LORD and walked in all the way of David his father, and he did not turn aside to the right or to the left" (22:2)
  - repaired the Temple (which had fallen into disrepair under Manasseh & Amon) (22:1-20)
    - found the Book of the Law (possibly Deuteronomy) in the process
    - tore clothes when this Book was read to him and he realized the trouble Judah was in because of their sins
    - implemented spiritual reforms and restored observance of the Passover (23:1-27)
  - "Before him there was no king like him, who turned to the LORD with all his heart and with all his soul and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses, nor did any like him arise after him." (23:25)
- Jehoahaz (23:31-35) - reigned only 3 months, but did evil
  - deposed and carried into exile by King Neco of Egypt
- Jehoiakim (23:36-24:7) - did what was evil in the sight of the LORD
  - half-brother of Jehoahaz; set up as king by King Neco
- Jehoiachin (24:8-17) - reigned only 3 months, but did evil
  - reign ended when Nebuchadnezzar besieged and took Jerusalem
  - Jehoiachin and 1000s of others (including Daniel) brought into exile, to Babylon
- Zedekiah (24:18-20) - uncle of Jehoiachin; made king by Nebuchadnezzar
  - rebelled against Babylon, resulting in the fall of Jerusalem
- Fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the Temple (25:1-21), 586 B.C.
  - Judah taken into exile in Babylon
  - "Surely this came upon Judah at the command of the LORD, to remove them out of His sight, for the sins of Manasseh, according to all that he had done, and also for the innocent blood that he had shed... and the LORD would not pardon." (24:3-4)
- Gedaliah appointed governor over those remaining in the land, but is assassinated (25:22-26)
- Jehoiachin is released from prison in the 37th year of his exile (~561 B.C.)
  - shown special favor by Evil-merodach, king of Babylon
  - thus 2 Kings ends with a ray of hope for the future, through a descendant of David

### **Major Themes and Concepts in Kings**

- God
  - His sovereignty over the nations and over history
    - His control over the events of history, even the kings & armies of other nations
    - also demonstrated in His prophets
      - their power over kings and even the forces of nature
      - the fulfillment of prophecies made by His prophets
  - His holiness, righteousness, justice
    - His righteous judgments on Israel & Judah for their sins
  - His love, forbearance, and mercy towards His people
    - e.g. saving them in spite of themselves - "For the LORD saw that the affliction of Israel was very bitter, for there was none left, bond or free, and there was none to help Israel. But the

LORD had not said that he would blot out the name of Israel from under heaven, so he saved them by the hand of Jeroboam the son of Joash." (2 Kings 14:26-27)

- His faithfulness to His Word and to His promises
    - faithfulness to keep His covenants with Abraham & David, even though Israel repeatedly violated the covenant made at Mount Sinai
      - "But the LORD was gracious to them and had compassion on them, and he turned toward them, because of his covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not destroy them" (2 Kings 13:23)
      - "Nevertheless, for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, setting up his son after him, and establishing Jerusalem" (1 Kings 15:4)
      - "Yet the Lord was not willing to destroy Judah, for the sake of David his servant, since he promised to give a lamp to him and to his sons forever." (2 Kings 8:19)
    - faithfulness to judge, in accordance to the warnings He gave in the Law (e.g. Lev. 26; Deut. 28) and through the prophets
      - "And if you forget the LORD your God and go after other gods and serve them and worship them, I solemnly warn you today that you shall surely perish. Like the nations that the LORD makes to perish before you, so shall you perish..." (Deut. 8:19-20)
      - "But if you will not obey the voice of the LORD your God or be careful to do all His commandments and His statutes... then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you." (Deuteronomy 28:15)
  - His faithfulness to preserve a faithful remnant
  - many of these themes will recur throughout the Latter Prophets
- the people of God
    - the priority of worshiping and obeying God
      - worshiping as He has commanded
        - not with images or false representations of God - the golden calves of Jeroboam
        - a central place of worship at the Temple - continual mention of "high places" not being removed - corrupted and/or idol worship at the high places
    - the consequences of sin, both personal and corporate
      - the disastrous consequences of idolatry
      - the curses/punishments threatened in Lev. 26, Deut. 28, play out among the people of Israel & Judah, up to and including exile
      - if they become like the people of the land, God would judge them like he did the Canaanites, and put them out of the land
    - preservation of a faithful remnant
  - the need for and impact of leadership among God's people
    - kings - significant impact in leading people towards or away from God
      - as leaders of the nations, their obedience or sins had dramatic consequences not only on themselves, but on the nation as a whole
      - impacts may last for generations to come
    - prophets
      - true prophets calling on kings and people to repentance
      - false prophets - either prophets of false gods, or those prophesying falsely in the name of the true God - affirming people in their sins, resulting in judgment
    - priests
      - could be a force for good - e.g. Zadok helping Solomon rise to the throne (1 Kings 1); Jehoiada raising King Joash and standing against Athaliah (2 Kings 11)

- could be a force for evil, leading people astray e.g. Uriah, who helped King Ahaz set up a pagan altar in the Temple (2 Kings 16:15-16)

### **Glimpses of Christ in Kings**

- Elijah
  - epitome of the prophets; yet, points to one who would come, who would be greater than himself
    - Malachi - 4:5 - God would send Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great Day of the Lord
    - fulfilled in the coming of John the Baptist (Luke 1:17; Matthew 11:14; Mark 9:11-13), who would go before Christ
- the need for a greater Son of David through whom God's covenant with David (and Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob) would be fulfilled
  - even the best kings of Judah all had their flaws
    - one of the 'best' kings, Josiah, was unable to save Judah from destruction in spite of his righteous deeds
  - the earthly line of kings failed and came to an end
    - yet God had promised David "Your house and your kingdom shall be made sure forever before me. Your throne shall be established forever." (2 Samuel 7:16)
  - God's covenant with David fulfilled ultimately in Jesus Christ, the Son of David; the true Prophet, the great High Priest, the King of Kings

### **References & Resources**

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