

## INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY OF

# 1 and 2 Kings

**What:** 12th and 13th Old Testament books, between Samuel and Chronicles, reporting Hebrew history from the death of King David (1000 B.C.) until Israel's fall to Assyria (722 B.C.) and Judah's captivity in Babylon (587 B.C.). Several kings and two prophets receive special emphasis.

**Key to chronology:** 480 years elapsed from Exodus until Solomon (I-6:1). This helps date the times of Moses, Joshua, and Judges.

**Kings of united Israel:** Saul, David\*, Solomon

**All his glory:** Solomon distinguished himself by great wisdom and knowledge of broad topics; by the peace and prosperity of his reign; by public construction projects, especially the temple; and by a weakness for foreign women — his greatest folly (I-4:20-34; chs. 5—7; 9:10-28; 10:10-29; 11:1-20).

**Temple:** Israel's monarchy reached its zenith with the building of Solomon's temple. Lavishly prepared by 100,000 craftsmen working 7 years, the ornate structure was more nearly chapel than cathedral (90' long; 30' wide; 45' high). Much of the temple's interior and its furniture were overlaid with gold. The dedication (I-ch. 8) features Solomon's lengthy prayer; 400 years later, the same temple lay in charred ruins (II-25:9).

**Division and idolatry:** Owing to the compromise of Solomon, the obstinacy of Rehoboam, and jealousy against Judah, ten tribes detached from David's house, making Jeroboam their king (I- chs. 11, 12). Jeroboam quickly established idolatry in Israel, polluting the true worship of

Yahweh (I-12:26-33). Soon other gods like Baal were being honored at many high places throughout Israel and Judah.

**Kings of divided (northern) Israel:**

Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, Ahab, Ahaziah, Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, Joash, Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah, Pekah, Hoshea

**Kings of Judah:** Rehoboam, Abijah, Asa\*, Jehoshaphat\*, Joram, Ahaziah, (Athaliah), Jehoash\*, Amaziah\*, Uzziah\*, Jotham\*, Ahaz, Hezekiah\*, Manasseh, Amon, Josiah\*, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, Zedekiah

\***Good kings**, based not on political or military influence, but on faithfulness to the covenant with God. Only rulers who advanced causes of righteousness among the people are reported as godly. Regarding all others in Judah and every king of (northern) Israel, it is said, "He did that which was evil in the sight of the Lord."

**Royal pairs**

**David and Solomon:** Father and son monarchs during the height of the Hebrew kingdom. David the warrior defeated Israel's enemies and brought security; Solomon the builder ruled in a time of unmatched prosperity.

**Jachin and Boaz:** names given to the massive bronze pillars on either side of the main door to Solomon's temple (I-7:15-21); later broken in pieces and carried to Babylon (II-25:13-17).

**Hiram of Tyre, Queen of Sheba:** King Solomon's royal neighbors; Hiram provided materials (like cedars from Lebanon) for Israel's construction projects. After a royal visit to verify Solomon's wealth and wisdom, the Queen said, "The half was not told me" (I-10:6-9).

**Rehoboam and Jeroboam:** warring non-brothers who divided the tribes of Israel between them after Solomon's death (I-11:26—12:19)

**Israel and Judah:** After the kingdom divided, the northern ten tribes, called House of Israel or Ephraim or Samaria (capital), had 19 kings in 9 dynasties, lasting 200 years. The southern portion, called House of David, consisted of one tribe, Judah, and little Benjamin, with Jerusalem as its capital. Its 20 kings were in one dynasty (David's), standing 335 years.

**Ahab and Jezebel:** one of Israel's worst kings and his wicked wife (I-16:28—22:40). Although Ahab once humbled himself before God (I-21:27-29), he and all his family died in disgrace.

**Elijah and Elisha:** non-writing prophets who labored to reverse spiritual decline during and after Ahab and Jezebel's time. Their era is marked by many signs and wonders that God worked through them (I-ch. 17—II-ch. 13).

**Isaiah and Jeremiah:** writing prophets who warned about calamities to come on Judah by the hand of Babylon. They also foresaw a marvelous era of restoration and blessing for God's chosen people. Much of 2 Kings 18—20 is duplicated in Isaiah 36—39, and 2 Kings 24—25 closely corresponds with Jeremiah 22—41, 52.

**Hezekiah and Josiah:** godly kings who led revivals of true religion and an attack on idol worship. Hezekiah, Judah's greatest king, worked with Isaiah for reform (II-18:1—20:21), and Jerusalem was delivered from Assyria. Josiah's reforms (II-22:1—23:30) and Jeremiah's preaching were insufficient to avert impending disaster from Babylon.

**Syria and Edom:** Israel's near neighbors, and often her enemies

**Assyria and Babylon:** Major world powers to the north, they (with Egypt) exerted great influence over Palestine, finally bringing down Israel and Judah.

**Miracles:** God performed signs and wonders through Elijah and Elisha: stopped the rain, sent down fire, multiplied food and oil, revived the dead, transported the prophets, divided and healed waters, purified the stew, cleansed the leper, revealed truth by vision, floated an ax head, blinded some eyes, and opened others, etc. This is one of three times in Bible history when many miracles are reported; the others are during Moses' era and in the time of Christ and His apostles.

**1 and 2 Kings in a sentence:**

Summarizing 400 years of Israel's history, these books picture the glory of Solomon and his temple, the division of his kingdom, and the evil that often prevailed — despite the efforts of a few godly kings and prophets — until both Israel and Judah were overthrown and captured.

## Kings and Prophets

Although the Kings are separated in Scripture from the writing prophets, they cover the same period in Israel's history. Please note:

Century before Christ	Prominent Kings	God's Servants the Prophets
Tenth	Solomon, Rehoboam, Jeroboam	Nathan, Ahijah, Shemaiah
Ninth	Ahab, Asa, Jehoshaphat	Elijah, Elisha
Eighth	Uzziah, Jeroboam, Hezekiah	Isaiah, Amos, Hosea, Micah
Seventh	Manasseh, Josiah	Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Habakkuk
Sixth	Judah's final kings	Ezekiel, Daniel

**2 Kings 17:** This one chapter captures the essence of the sad story of the kings. Beginning with the report of the House of Israel's departure into Assyria (1-6), the writer pens these melancholy words: "For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the LORD their God . . ." (7a). What were these sins?

- borrowing evil customs from other nations (8)
  - building places and items of false worship (9-12)
  - doing wicked things not right with God (9a, 11b)
  - refusing to hear, believe, and obey God (14, 15a)
  - idolatry (15b, 16)
  - evil practices, child sacrifice, witchcraft, fortune-telling, etc. (17)
  - walking in the sins of their wicked rulers (22, 8b)
  - multiplying gods of their own choice (29-31)
  - syncretism — mixing false worship with true (32-33, 41)
  - refusing to fear the LORD alone (34-41)
  - willingness to bow to idols (35b)
- This classic passage describes the only reason God turns away from the people He once chose: when they turn willfully and continually away from Him. This is the sin of apostasy, or the rejection of God. The first two commandments of the Decalogue address it directly.

**Mercies of David:** God's covenant promise to King David sounds like forever and regardless: "When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you who will come from your body, and I will establish His kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of His kingdom forever. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him . . . but my mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul. Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:12-16).

In Kings, this gracious promise is regularly in view (I-9:4-7), although its fulfillment is clouded by the sins of David's seed (I-11:9-13, 31-39). Despite the threefold *forever* in 2 Samuel 7, the repeated use of the word *if* there and in Kings suggests an element of contingency in the promise. Later developments show that the punishment of both Israel and Judah was complete (I-17:18-20; 21:12-15; 23:27; 24:20). Still, God finds a way to keep His promise to David regardless (I-11:13, 39). The fulfillment of this unconditional pledge is in the future returns of Judah to the land and in the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ to redeem His people (Isa. 55:esp. v. 3; Luke 1:26-33, 68, 69).