1 & 2 KINGS STUDY

**Introduction**

`For David had done what was right in the eyes of the Lord and had not failed to keep

any of the Lord’s commands all the days of his life’ (1 Kings 15:5)

**I. Title**

1 and 2 Kings (like 1&2 Samuel and 1&2 Chronicles) are actually one literary

work, called in the Hebrew tradition simply “Kings”. Around the third century the work

was divided into two books and was introduced by the translators of the Septuagint (the

pre-Christian Greek translation of the OT), and was subsequently followed in the Latin

Vulgate (c.a.d. 400) and most modern versions. Therefore, the two books should be read

as one.

**II. Author and Dates**

The author of Kings is unknown. According to the Talmud, Jeremiah or one of his

disciples authored 1 and 2 Kings, but we cannot be certain of this. It was written between

561 and 537 B.C. after Jehoiachin was freed (561 B.C., 2 Kings 25:27-30), and before the

first return from exile (537 B.C.).

**III. Notes**

**1. There are two different views of Israel’s history**: The Deuteronomistic History

and the Chronicler’s History. The Deuteronomistic History includes 6 books

beginning with Joshua and including Judges, 1&2 Samuel, and 1&2 Kings. The

reason why is it called “Deuteronomistic History” is that the writers saw Israel’s

history with the view of Deuteronomy. This means that when they obeyed, God

blessed them, but when they disobeyed, they would perish. In other words, when

they disobeyed God (sin), God punished them (punishment), but when they

realized their sin and repented (repentance), God relented his anger and saved

them (salvation). This 4 step cycle (sin-punishment-repentance-salvation) is the

basic structure needed to understand the Deuteronomistic history.

The Chronicler’s history contains 4 books, 1&2 Chronicles, Ezra, and

Nehemiah. The Babylonian Empire which invaded Judah and took her people

captive was destroyed by the Persian Empire in 539 B.C., and from then on Persia

ruled the Near East. The Persian Emperor, Cyrus, who brought down Babylon

was an “enlightened” conqueror and issued a proclamation to let the exiles from

Judah go back to their homeland. This was the “Edict of Cyrus”. The Chronicler’s

history relates about 200 years of Israel’s history from the return of the exiles to

the time during the Persian empire (539-333 B.C.).

**2. The book of Kings deals with the history of Israel, a theocracy – God’s**

**chosen nation.** It begins with Solomon’s ascension to the throne (971 B.C.) and

ends with the destruction of Jerusalem, the exile of the Israelites into Babylon, the

fall of the Judean monarchy, and Jehoiachin’s release from imprisonment in

Babylon (561 B.C.).

**3. The book of Kings forms the background for 17 other books of the Bible**: The

books of the Prophets. Many famous prophets such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Hosea,

and Amos preached during the time of Kings.

**4. The book of Kings can be divided into three periods**

a. **The first period is Solomon’s reign (970-931 B.C**.). This era was the

climax of wealth, prosperity, and glory throughout Israel’s history (4:20;

10:27), but it ends with the nation’s rapid decline in power as Solomon

became disobedient to God. Of all of Solomon’s accomplishments, there is

one that stands out above the others. He built the temple of God, the finest

building in the world of that day. Almost 200,000 workers labored for

seven years to complete it. Despite the successes of Solomon’s reign,

however, later in his life the king had dramatic downturn. His fall

eventually brought the kingdom crashing down around him, and the

second half of 1 Kings describes the grim process of dismemberment.

King Solomon brought peace and prosperity to the nation, but he also

sowed the seed of calamities that followed. Solomon started out with

every advantage of wealth, power, and wisdom. But 1 Kings gives this

tragic conclusion: “Solomon did evil in the eyes of the Lord; he did not

follow the Lord completely, as David his father had done.” (11:6)

b. **The second period (931-722 B.C.)** begins with the splitting off of

Southern Israel and ends with Northern Israel’s ruin by Assyria and their

subsequent exile and captivity.

c. **The third period (722-560 B.C.)** includes the destruction of Judea by the

Babylonians in 586 B.C. and Jehoiachin’s imprisonment and release in

Babylon.

**5. Chapter 12 marks the beginning of a civil war that ruptured Israel into two**

**nations**: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. The rest of 1 and 2 Kings

describes, ruler by ruler, the reigns of 20 kings in the north and 19 kings and 1

queen in the south.

• **See chart of Israel’s history**

**6. Kings is not simply a book of Israel’s history but was written to give a proper**

**spiritual value system:** If they loved God and obeyed His Word, they would

thrive; if the disobeyed they would come to ruin. Kings shows that Israel’s rise or

fall, and even survival, was not dependent on economic, military, or other external

conditions, but instead was dependent on their attitude toward the covenant with

the Sovereign ruler of all history. Thus the phrases, “Did what was right in the

eyes of the LORD” (1 Ki 15:5, 11, 22:43; 2 Ki 10:30, 12:2, 15:3,34, 16:2, 18:3,

20:3, 22:2) and “Did evil in the eyes of the LORD” (1 Ki 11:6, 14:22, 15:26,34,

16:19,25,30, 21:25, 22:52, 2 Ki 3:2, 8:18,27, 13:2,11, 17:2,17, 21:2,6,15,16,20,

23:32,37, 24:9,19) are repeated. The achievements of the king are reported, above

all, based on his fidelity or lack of fidelity to the LORD. The faithful prosper; the

unfaithful pay for their defections, since this is basically a narrative of sin and

retribution.

**7. There is a sharp contrast between the `ways of David’** (1 Ki 11:6, 15:3-5,11, 2

Ki 16:2, 18:3,19, 22:2) **and the `ways of Jeroboam’** (1 Ki 13:34, 15:26,34,

16:19,26, 16:31, 22:52, 2 Ki 3:3, 13:2,11). This teaches the importance of one

man’s influence on the next generation whether it is good or bad. There is no

middle ground.

**8. The Prophets played an important role guiding the nation.** In 1 Kings, Elijah

was instrumental in fighting idol worship (1 Ki ch. 17,18), and then in 2 Kings

Elisha was a shepherd for the people and counselor for the kings, giving spiritual

insight and direction (2 Ki 5:8, 6:8-10, 7:17-20, 13:14-21).

**III. Contents**

1 Kings

1. Solomon’s reign (1:1-11:43)

2. Rehoboam and Jeroboam (12:1-14:31)

3. Various Kings of Israel and Judah (15:1-16:34)

4. Elijah and Ahab (17:1-19:21)

5. Ahab and Jezebel’s reign (20:1-22:53)

2 Kings

1. Elijah and Elisha (1:1-8:15)

2. More Kings of Israel and Judah (8:16-17:6)

3. Israel’s exile to Assyria (17:7-41)

4. Judah’s freedom from Assyrian rule (18:1-23:37)

5. Judah’s exile into Babylon (24:1-25:30)

**IV. Goal of Kings Study**

From today we begin King’s bible study, which teaches us to have a godly value system.

We live in what many have called postmodern times. Many claim that there is no

absolute truth; everything is relative and there is no right or wrong. Each person wants to

live according to his own moral and spiritual standard. However, God made the world

with a clear spiritual value system, and with absolute good and right. We can learn what

this is from the study of Kings. Also, we need a sense of history. Kings study will teach

us this as well. So let’s thank God for this opportunity to study Kings.