

1 and 2 Kings

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Introduction to 1 and 2 Kings

Title

In the Hebrew Bible 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book called the “Book of Kings”. Around 250 BC they were divided into two books in the Septuagint’s “Books of the Kingdoms” (together with 1 and 2 Samuel).

Author

The author of 1 and 2 Kings is unknown. Isaiah and Jeremiah have been suggested as possible authors but it is more likely that the books were compiled by a number of authors. Different sources were used for the information in the books including *The book of the Acts of Solomon* (1 Kings 11:41); *The book of the history of the Kings of Israel* (1 Kings 14:19; 16:27; 22:39; 2 Kings 13:12; 14:28); *The book of the history of the kings of Judah* (1 Kings 15:23; 22:45; 2 Kings 20:20; 21:17); David’s court history (I Kings chapters 1 and 2); and Isaiah. 2 Kings 18:13 - 20:19 is a copy of Isaiah 36:1 - 39:8. Much of the material in 1 and 2 Kings is repeated in 1 and 2 Chronicles.

Date

The books of 1 and 2 Kings cover a period of about 400 years, continuing on from Joshua, Judges, and 1 and 2 Samuel. They describe the history of God’s people from about 960-560 BC and describe David’s death; Solomon’s reign and the building of the Temple; the division into the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah; the fall of Samaria and destruction of Jerusalem, and the Babylonian captivity. The books were probably compiled during the exile in Babylon, possibly around 560 to 539 BC.

Significant events

Significant events described in 1 and 2 Kings are:

- David’s death.
- The choice of Solomon as David’s successor.
- Solomon seeking for wisdom from the Lord.
- The building of the Temple.
- Solomon’s downfall and the splitting of his kingdom into two.
- Different approaches by kings from the northern and southern kingdoms and their effects on the people. Some kings followed the Lord and brought blessing to their people, but most *did evil in the sight of the Lord* and the people suffered.
- The rise of prophets like Elijah, Elisha, Isaiah and Jeremiah bringing God’s word to the nations and their kings.
- Details of the ministry of Elijah and Elisha.
- The fall of Samaria, the capital of Israel, and Jerusalem, the capital of Judah, and the desecration of the temple.
- God’s judgment on His people because of their sin, which resulted in their being taken into captivity in Babylon for a period of 70 years.

Purpose

The books of 1 and 2 Kings record the reigns of kings in Israel and Judah.

Typical information recorded for each king includes his name; his father's name; the year he became king; his age on becoming king; the length of his reign; where he lived; a judgment on the effectiveness of his reign; references to other kings at the time he reigned; how he died; where he was buried, and who succeeded him.

The books of 1 and 2 Kings show how God is actively involved in a nation's activities and that a nation whose king reigns with righteousness is blessed, while a nation with an evil king will suffer significant consequences.

Reading of these books can help us evaluate the effectiveness of the leaders of the countries we live in.

Righteousness exalts a nation, but sin condemns any people. Proverbs 13:34

Outline

The death of David. 1:1 – 2:12

Solomon's reign began with deception and intrigue! With David's three eldest sons dead Adonijah was the logical heir to the throne and he was strongly supported by Ahab, the commander of the army. The prophet Nathan and David's wife Bathsheba tricked David into choosing Solomon as his successor. David charged Solomon to *be strong, show yourself a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires: Walk in His ways, and keep His decrees and commandments, as written in the Law of Moses, so that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you go.* King David died after a reign of 40 years *and he was buried in the City of David.*

Solomon's throne established. 2:13 – 4:34

Solomon's rule was *firmly established* by

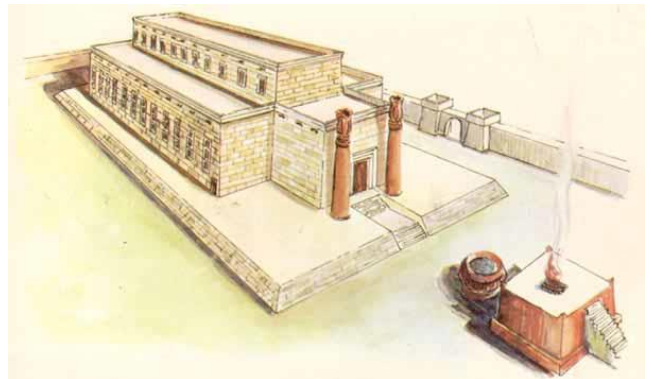
- eliminating his enemies Adonijah, Ahab and Shimei.
- making an alliance with Egypt by marrying the daughter of the Pharaoh.
- asking God for wisdom so he could govern God's people well. This request pleased the Lord so He gave Solomon *a wise and discerning heart* and much *riches and honour*. Solomon's *wisdom from God* was demonstrated immediately when two prostitutes had a dispute about a child.
- Appointing officials and governors throughout the land.
- Ensuring that *nothing was lacking* for his people in Israel (to the north) and Judah (to the south) while himself enjoying great prosperity.

God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore so that his *fame spread to all the surrounding nations.*

Solomon also spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five.

The building of Solomon's temple. 5:1 – 9:9

Solomon built the temple in fulfillment of God's promise to his father David (5:3-5). He got timber from Hiram, king of Tyre (5:7-12); labourers from Israel, and used many thousands of craftsmen for the construction. (5:13-18). The temple was built in accordance with God's specifications and took seven years to build. (6:1-38). Solomon also built a palace, which took another thirteen years to build. (7:1-12). The temple was furnished with materials made by the skilled craftsman Hiram (7:1-51) and then the Ark of the Covenant was placed in the inner sanctuary - the Most Holy Place, and *the glory of the Lord filled the temple.*(8:1-11). Solomon prayed a prayer of dedication (8:12-61) and reminded the people that they were to *remain fully committed to the Lord* and *to live by His decrees and obey His commands*. The temple was then dedicated to the Lord and all the people rejoiced because of the good things the Lord had done. (8:62-66). God then reminded Solomon to keep His commandments as David had done and *walk in integrity and uprightness.* (9:1-9).



Activities during Solomon's reign. 9:10 – 11:43

These chapters record some of the main activities that took place during Solomon's reign:

- Hiram wasn't too pleased with the reward Solomon gave him for his help in building the temple.
- Solomon chose not to make slaves of the Israelites used in building the temple but gave them jobs in his organization. People from other nations were used as slaves.
- Solomon used the temple to sacrifice to the Lord three times each year.
- Solomon built ships to gather gold and other cargoes including musical instruments. Hiram's men served alongside Solomon's men in these ships.
- The Queen of Sheba *heard about the fame of Solomon* and visited him with many questions. She was overwhelmed by his wealth, and by the ease with which he answered all of the questions. She praised God that He had placed Solomon on the throne and made him king. She gave Solomon many gifts including exotic spices.
- Solomon became extremely wealthy and was *greater in riches and wisdom than all of the other kings of the earth*.
- Solomon's wisdom didn't keep him from being seduced away from the Lord, especially by his love for *foreign women*. He had *seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him astray* so that he followed pagan gods and was *not fully devoted to the Lord as the heart of David his father had been*. God became angry with Solomon for his failure to obey the Lord's commands and determined to take away the northern tribes from his rule.
- *The Lord raised up against Solomon* adversaries in Hadad, Eliada, Rezon and Jeroboam.
- Jeroboam was one of Solomon's officials and *a man of standing*. Ahijah the prophet told him that the Lord was going to *tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand* and give him ten tribes. God would bless Jeroboam if He kept God's statutes and commandments and would build an enduring dynasty through him. *Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam but he fled to Egypt and stayed there until Solomon's death*.
- *Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years*.
- When Solomon died *Rehoboam his son succeeded him as king*.

Solomon's reign was characterised by great highs and lows. He had great wisdom and enormous wealth but this didn't prevent him turning away from the Lord and suffering God's judgment. We can all learn much from Solomon's wisdom (as in the Book of Proverbs) but also from his downfall. Obedience to the Lord and a strong commitment to maintaining God's standards of righteousness will stand us in good stead as we seek to live out our Christian lives. Solomon expounded these things in many of his proverbs, but in the end didn't live by them – and suffered the consequences.

Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall. Proverbs 16:18

Righteousness exalts a nation but sin is a reproach to any people. Proverbs 14:34.

Division into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. 12:1-33.

The united kingdom fell apart after the death of Solomon.

- Jeroboam was the first king of the Northern Kingdom (Israel). It lasted for about 200 years and was ruled from Samaria by 20 kings from nine different dynasties. These kings consistently rejected the Lord and did evil in His sight.
- Rehoboam was the first king of the Southern Kingdom (Judah). It lasted about 350 years and was ruled from Jerusalem by 19 kings, all descendants of King David, except for a brief reign by Athaliah. Many of these kings did evil in the sight of the Lord but a few brought the people back to the Lord (especially Hezekiah and Josiah).
- There was much ill feeling and occasional warfare between tribes in the two kingdoms. This started even in David's time and the division of tribes in the northern and southern kingdoms was pretty predictable.
- The immediate cause of the split into two kingdoms was the unwise way that Rehoboam dealt with representatives of the northern tribes while negotiating for the kingship. Jeroboam, a hero of an earlier rebellion against Solomon was appointed king of the northern tribes and immediately erected shrines at Bethel and Dan with golden calves



as gods. These pagan altars later became a symbol of how far the people had fallen away from the Lord.

- There was ongoing warfare between Israel and Judah, particularly over land from the tribe of Benjamin that was claimed by both sides. There were also sporadic invasions from the Arameans in the north and the Egyptians in the south.

Kings of Israel and Judah. 13:1-16:34.

This section describes the following kings of Israel and Judah. Unfortunately most of them led their people away from the Lord.

- Jeroboam, king of Israel. 13:1-14:19
- Rehoboam, king of Judah. 14:21-31
- Abijah, king of Judah. 15:1-8
- Asa; king of Judah. 15:9-24.
- Nadab, king of Israel. 15:25-32
- Baasha, king of Israel. 15:33-16:7
- Elah, king of Israel. 16:8-14
- Zimri, king of Israel. 16:15-20
- Omri, king of Israel. 16:21-27
- Ahab, king of Israel. 16:29-34

This section gives an account of the early ways by which God sought to speak to evil kings through prophets. These prophets included Shemaiah (chapter 12), the *man of God* (chapter 13), and Ahijah (chapter 14). It is followed by the much more significant work of the national prophets Elijah and Elisha.

See the table on page 9-12 for more details about each of these kings.

The ministry of the prophet Elijah. 1 Kings 17:1- 2 Kings 2:12.

Elijah's name means "Yahweh is God". We don't know much about Elijah's as a person, except that he came from Tishbe in Gilead on the east bank of the Jordan. Elijah prophesied during the reigns of Ahab and Ahaziah, kings of Israel. This was a very important time in Israel's history because the previous king, Omri, had made an alliance with the Phoenicians, sealed by marrying Jezebel the daughter of the king of Tyre. This introduced a whole new level of idolatry into Israel and soon almost all of the nation was worshiping the false god, Baal. Elijah's call from God was to proclaim that the nation and its leaders needed to come back to the Lord.

This took place through:

- **Drought on the land.** Elijah told Ahab that there would be *neither dew nor rain in the next few years, except at my word*. During the drought Elijah was initially fed by ravens, and then stayed with a widow at Zarephath. There he miraculously provided food for the widow and raised her son from the dead. In the third year of the drought God told Elijah to tell Ahab that rain was coming soon. He asked Obadiah, the king's officer to arrange a meeting with Ahab, but initially Obadiah refused because Jezebel was *killing off the Lord's prophets*. Ahab had been looking for Elijah to try to force him to end the drought. Obadiah was a *devout believer in the Lord* and thought Elijah would just run away and this would make Ahab even more angry. Finally Obadiah arranged a meeting.
- **Clash of the prophets on Mt Carmel.** At the meeting Elijah told Ahab he was not there to *make trouble for Israel*; rather he challenged Ahab to follow the Lord. *How long will you waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; if Baal is God, follow him*. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal and Asherah to a public demonstration of power. The winner would show all of Israel who was the true God. 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah tried to call down fire on a sacrificial bull but couldn't. Elijah mocked them by saying that their gods might be away or asleep! When it was Elijah's turn he poured water on the sacrifice, then called on the Lord to answer him so *these people will know that You, O Lord, are God and that You are turning their hearts back again*. God answered with fire that consumed the sacrifice and the people recognized *The Lord – He is God*. Elijah ordered that the false prophets be killed and then fervently prayed for rain. God answered and the drought was over. Ahab went back to Jezreel in his chariot but Elijah outran him on foot. When Jezebel heard her prophets had been killed she vowed to kill Elijah so he ran away to Beersheba.



- Meeting with the Lord.** Elijah left his servant in Beersheba, and went into the desert and sat under a broom tree. He told the Lord he had had enough and prayed that the Lord would take his life. God sent angels to minister to him and he was given strength to travel on to Mount Horeb, where he sheltered in a cave. God asked what he was doing and Elijah explained that he was now the only prophet of God left in Israel, and that Jezebel was trying to kill him. God made a great wind, an earthquake, and a fire to show Elijah that He was all powerful. and spoke to him in a *gentle whisper*, a still s mall voice. God told him to go back because he going to use Hazael, king of Syria and Jehu, who was going to be the king of Israel to deal with Ahab. God told Elijah to anoint both of them as kings. God also told Elijah that he was not the only faithful person in Israel. Seven thousand other Israelites *had not bowed down to Baal*. Elijah was also to anoint Elisha as his successor so he went and found Elisha, who followed him *and became his attendant* – a time of preparation for Elisha’s future ministry.



- Confronting kings.** Benhadad, king of Aram besieged Samaria but was repelled by King Ahab because Ahab had been told how to prepare for the invasion by a prophet from the Lord. God wanted Ahab to repent but he wouldn’t change his evil ways. Ahab conspired to take Naboth’s property including his vineyard, even though he knew there were strict laws in Israel concerning ownership of land. His wife Jezebel organized to have Naboth executed on a false charge so Ahab was able to take over the vineyard. Elijah confronted him, calling him a murderer and a robber. *There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord, urged on by Jezebel, his wife.* Elijah prophesied that God’s judgment on Ahab would mean disaster for him, the end of his kingdom and Jezebel being eaten by dogs. Ahab repented and the judgment on him was delayed for a while.



For a short time there was no war between Israel and Judah but Ahab rejected the word of the Lord through Micaiah and God’s judgment finally came on him and he was killed in a battle at Ramoth Gilead. Dogs licked up Ahab’s blood, just as Elijah had predicted (1 Kings 21:19). Ahab’s son, Ahaziah, became the next king but he injured himself and sent messengers to call on Baal-zebub, a false god in Ekron, to see if he would recover. The Lord told Elijah about this and he confronted the messengers and told them that the king would die because he had ignored the God of Israel. Ahaziah was very angry at this, and sent a captain and 50 soldiers to arrest Elijah. Elijah called down fire from heaven that consumed the captain and all of the soldiers. Ahaziah sent another group like this but they were also burnt to death. The captain of a third group begged Elijah to spare his life and the lives of his soldiers so Elijah went with the captain and spoke to the king personally. Elijah told Ahaziah he would die from his injury because he had asked for help from pagan gods rather than from the true God. Ahaziah died *according to the word of the Lord that Elijah had spoken*. He didn’t have a son so he was succeeded by Joram.

As Elijah’s ministry came to a close, Elisha wouldn’t leave him. He knew that the Lord was going to take Elijah up to heaven. They visited prophets in Bethel and Jericho and miraculously crossed the Jordan River when Elijah parted the waters. Elisha asked Elijah if he could *inherit a double portion* of his spirit and Elijah said this would be granted if he was there when Elijah went tom heaven. *As they were walking along and talking together, suddenly a chariot of fire appeared and separated the two of them, and Elijah went up to heaven in a whirlwind.* Elisha saw this and inherited the double portion. Other prophets tried to find Elijah but couldn’t and they recognized that the spirit of Elijah is resting on Elisha. God had taken His faithful prophet home. Elijah is thought to be the only person in the Bible besides Enoch who did not experience death

Many believe that the two witnesses who die and who are raised from the dead in Revelation 11:3-12 will be Enoch and Elijah. People can only die once (Hebrews 9:27) so the two witnesses will have to be people who have never died previously. Only Enoch and Elijah have never died.

Elijah's significance

God sent Elijah at a time when worship of Baal was increasing, promoted by Jezebel and supported by evil kings. Elijah's prophecies focused on God as the one true God and of the need to stop worship of Baal or Israel would experience God's judgment. This prepared the way for many other significant Old Testament prophets including Elisha, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Zephaniah, Haggai and Zechariah

Miracles were a significant part of Elijah's ministry. These miracles proved he was a prophet and reinforced that his message came from God. The main miracles carried out by Elijah were:

- stopping rain for 3½ years (1 Kings 17:1)
- being fed by ravens (1 Kings 17:4)
- providing an endless supply of food and oil (1 Kings 17:14)
- raising the widow's son from the dead (1 Kings 17:22)
- calling down fire from heaven to burn up the wet sacrifices on Mt Carmel (1 Kings 18:38)
- causing it to rain (1 Kings 18:45)
- prophesying that Ahab's sons would all be destroyed (1 Kings 21:22); Jezebel would be eaten by dogs (1 Kings 21:23); Ahaziah would die of his illness (2 Kings 1:4). All were fulfilled.
- calling down fire from heaven on two groups of soldiers (2 Kings 2:10 and 12)
- parting the Jordan River (2 Kings 2:8)
- being caught up to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:11)

Elijah is mentioned a number of times in the New Testament:

- He is referred to Luke 1:17, Matthew 11:14 and Matthew 17:10-13 in relation to Malachi's prophecy that he would be a forerunner of the *great and dreadful day of the Lord*. Malachi 4:5-6. This was fulfilled through the life of John the Baptist who *in the spirit and power of Elijah would turn the hearts of the fathers to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous - to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*. Luke 1:17.
- Jesus talked about Elijah's journey to Sidon in Luke 4:25-26), and Paul described his experience at Mount Horeb in Romans 11:2.
- James uses Elijah as an example of a righteous man and a man of prayer in James 5:17.
- Elijah appeared during the transfiguration of Jesus and, with Moses, discussed Jesus' approaching death. Matthew 17:1-13, Luke 9:28-36.
- Some believe that Elijah will return as one of the two witnesses of the end times. Revelation 11:3-12.

The ministry of the prophet Elisha. 2 Kings 2:13 - 8:15.

Elisha, the son of Shaphat, came from Abel Meholah, on the west of the river Jordan. God had told Elijah that Elisha was to be his successor so he symbolically placed his cloak around him. Elisha then had to choose whether to leave his family and agricultural work immediately and did so, after a farewell family feast. 1 Kings 19:19-21.

Just before Elijah was taken up to heaven, he tried to persuade Elisha to stay behind at Gilgal and Bethel with the other prophets. After a miraculous crossing of the Jordan Elijah asked his successor what he could do for him, and Elisha asked to *inherit a double portion of your spirit*. This would be granted if Elisha was present to see Elijah *taken up into heaven in a whirlwind*. Elisha saw it happen and from that time on operated with great power, serving as a prophet in Israel for about 50 years. He continued Elijah's work in prophesying against the idolatry that had been promoted through King Ahab and his wife, Jezebel, but in a quieter and less confrontational way.



Elisha's prophetic ministry included:

- Convincing the other prophets that Elijah had gone to heaven and gaining their respect
- Miraculously purifying Jericho's water supply. It has *remained wholesome to this day*.
- Calling down a curse on youths who were mocking his baldness. *Two bears came out of the woods and mauled forty two of the youths*.
- Providing water for the armies of King Jehoram, King Jehoshaphat and the King of Edom as they fought against Mesha, king of Moab. The allied forces were deep in Edomite territory but provision of water was an *easy thing* for the Lord to do, and the Moabite army was defeated as well.
- Providing an income source for a poor widow. Elisha told her to borrow empty jars from her neighbors and fill them with her oil. Miraculously, the oil kept flowing until all of the jars were full. The widow was able to sell the oil, pay her debts, and care for her family.
- Predicting that a childless Shunammite woman would have a son. When the baby died suddenly the mother sought out Elisha who sent his servant Gehazi to try to raise him from death. This didn't work so Elisha came and healed the child and presented him to his parents.
- Cleansing a pot of stew from poisonous gourds.
- Feeding 100 people from a few loaves of bread and some corn. As with Jesus' feeding the five thousand *they ate and had some left over according to the word of the Lord*.
- Healing Naaman, an Aramean commander of leprosy. Naaman's servant was sent to Elisha and came back with instructions for how he could be healed. Naaman had to dip in the Jordan River seven times. At first he was reluctant but finally obeyed and was immediately cured. As a result Naaman turned to the Lord recognizing that *there is no God in all the world except in Israel*.
- Seeing his servant Gehazi contract leprosy because he accepted gifts from Naaman.
- Rescuing an iron axe head from a river by making it float.
- Warning the king of Israel about impending attacks by the Arameans. When the Arameans surrounded him Elisha was unafraid because *those who are with us are more than those who are with them*. The Arameans were struck with blindness and were led away to Samaria, but were not killed. This led to ceasing of war between the Israelites and the Arameans for a while.
- Stopping a famine in Samaria caused by a siege led by Ben-hadad, king of Aram. The famine was so bad that the king threatened to execute Elisha but he promised there would be plenty of food next day. The Arameans fled from their camp for no apparent reason and the people were able to get plenty of food from what the Arameans left behind. An officer at the gate didn't believe this could happen *even if the Lord should open the floodgates of heaven*. He was trampled underfoot in the rush for food.
- Helping the Shunammite woman whose son he had healed get her house and property back after seven years in exile.
- Informing Hazael, the servant of Ben-hadad that his sick master would recover. Hazael told the king this but promptly murdered him and became yet another evil king.
- Sending a prophet to Ramoth-gilead to anoint Jehu, son of Jehoshaphat, as king of Israel, so he could *destroy the house of Ahab* and so God could *avenge the blood of My servants the prophets and the blood of all the Lord's servants shed by Jezebel*. Jehu killed Joram and Ahaziah in a battle and had Jezebel thrown down from the city walls where she was eaten by dogs in fulfillment of the prophecy given in 1 Kings 21:23. Jehu then killed the rest of Ahab's family and all of the ministers of Baal. He also tore down the temple of Baal and destroyed Baal worship in Israel.
- Being visited by Jehoash the king of Israel as he was dying. Elisha helped the king shoot an arrow out of the window, symbolically showing how he would defeat the Arameans. Elisha then told the king to strike the ground with the arrows and he only did it three times. Elisha was angry with him as he could have done it five or six times. This meant the king would only defeat the Arameans three times, not completely.



- *Elisha died and was buried.* Later, some Israelites were burying a man in the same tomb as Elisha when they saw some Moabite raiders. They threw the body into the tomb and the man came to life and stood on his feet.
- Elisha is only mentioned once in the New Testament. In Luke 4:27 Jesus describes his role in the cleansing of Naaman from leprosy. This was to show how God's mercy was not restricted to the Israelites – it extended also to people like Naaman, an Assyrian.

Kings of Israel and Judah. 2 Kings 8:15 – 25:30.

This section describes the following kings of Israel and Judah. As with the earlier kings, most of them led their people away from the Lord. This resulted in Israel being taken into captivity by the Assyrians, and Judah into captivity by the Babylonians.

See the table on pages 9-12 for more details about each of these kings.

- Jehoram, king of Judah. 8:16-24
- Ahaziah, king of Judah. 8:25-29
- Jehu, king of Israel. 9:1-10:36
- Jehoahaz, king of Israel. 13:1-9
- Jehoash, king of Israel. 13:10-25
- Amaziah, king of Judah. 14:1-22
- Jeroboam II, king of Israel. 14:23-29
- Ahaziah, king of Judah. 15:1-6
- Zechariah, king of Israel. 15:8-12
- Shallum, king of Israel. 15:13-16
- Menahem, king of Israel. 15:17-22
- Pekahiah, king of Israel. 15:23-26
- Pekah, king of Israel. 15:27-31
- Jotham, king of Judah. 15:32-38
- Ahaz, king of Judah. 16:1-20
- Hoshea, king of Israel. 17:1-41. He was defeated by Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, and Israel was taken into captivity.
- Hezekiah, king of Judah. 18:1-20:21
- Manasseh, king of Judah. 21:1-18
- Amon, king of Judah. 21:19-26
- Josiah, king of Judah. 22:1-23:30
- Jehoahaz, king of Judah. 23:31-35
- Jehoiakim, king of Judah. 23:36-24:6
- Jehoiachin, king of Judah. 24:8-17; 25:27-30
- Zedekiah, king of Judah 24:18-25:26. He was defeated by Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, and Judah was taken into captivity.

The 10 nations taken into captivity in Assyria gradually petered out and lost their identity. They became known as the "lost tribes of Israel".

1 and 2 Kings finishes with Judah being taken into captivity in Babylon. This captivity lasted for a period of 70 years as predicted by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 25:11, 29:10) The captivity ended in 538 BC after the fall of Babylon to the Persian king Cyrus the Great, Cyrus gave the Jews permission to return to their land so they could rebuild the temple. See the books of Ezra and Nehemiah.

Kings of Israel and Judah

First three Kings

King	Reign BC. (approximate)	Qualities
Saul	1050-1010	Tall, handsome, insecure, unstable
David	1010-970	A man after God's heart, sensitive, anointed, fallible
Solomon	970-930	Wise, wealthy, easily led astray

The division into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel and Judah took place in 930BC.

Kings of the Northern Kingdom: Israel (Ten Tribes)

King	Reign BC. (approximate)		Key activities	Prophets
1. Jeroboam I	931-910	22 years	Rebelled against Solomon; first king of Israel; angered the Lord.	Abijah
2. Nadab	910-909	2 years	Did evil like his father; killed all of his father's family.	
3. Baasha	909-886	24 years	Did evil like Jeroboam.	Jehu
4. Elah	886-885	2 years	Did evil; killed while drunk; killed all of his father's family.	
5. Zimri	885	7 days	Did evil; murdered by Omri.	
6. Omri	885-874*	12 years	Did evil. Defeated Tibni's group; sinned more than previous kings.	Elijah, Micaiah
7. Ahab	874-853	22 years	More evil than previous kings. Set up altar for Baal in the temple.	
8. Ahaziah	853-852	2 years	Did evil, followed Baal; provoked the Lord.	
9. Joram	852-841	12 years	Did evil; allied with King Ahaziah; wounded in battle; killed by Jehu.	Elisha
10. Jehu	841-814	28 years	Anointed as king by Elisha. Destroyed family of Ahab and Jezebel. Destroyed the ministers of Baal. Overpowered by Hazael so that the kingdom of Israel was much reduced.	
11. Jehoahaz	814-798	17 years	Did evil, but repented and sought the Lord.	Jonah, Amos, Hosea

12. Jehoash	798-782	16 years	Did evil; continued in sins of Jeroboam. Was with Elisha when he died.	
13. Jeroboam II	782-753*	41 years	Did evil; used by the Lord to save Israel; recovered Damascus.	
14. Zechariah	753-752	6 months	Did evil; assassinated.	
15. Shallum	752	1 month	Did evil; assassinated.	
16. Menahem	752-742	10 years	Did evil; extracted money from the people to pay for an alliance with Assyria.	
17. Pekahiah	742-740	2 years	Did evil; assassinated by Pekah, one of his officers.	
18. Pekah	740-732*	20 years	Did evil; assassinated. Much of the nation was taken into captivity by the Assyrians.	
19. Hoshea	732-712	9 years	Did evil. Was invaded by Shalmaneser king of Assyria. After a siege of three years Samaria fell and the Israelites were taken into captivity in Assyria.	

* two kings reigning at the same time

Samaria fell in 722BC. and Israel was taken into captivity by Assyria

All this took place because the Israelites had sinned against the Lord their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt. They worshipped other gods and followed the practices of the nations the Lord had driven out before them, as well as the practices the kings of Israel had introduced....

The Lord was very angry with Israel and removed them from His presence. Only the tribe of Judah was left, and even Judah did not keep the commands of the Lord their God.....

Therefore the Lord their God rejected all of the people of Israel; He afflicted them and gave them into the hands of plunderers; until He thrust them from His presence.....

So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria.

2 Kings 17:7-23

Kings of the Southern Kingdom: Judah (including Benjamin)

King	Reign BC. (approximate)		Qualities	Prophets
1. Rehoboam	931-913	17 years	Did evil in the sight of the Lord; stirred up God's anger	Shemaiah
2. Abijah	913-911	3 years	Sinned like his father. Not fully devoted to the Lord.	
3. Asa	911-870	41 years	Did right. Fully committed to the Lord all his life.	
4. Jehoshaphat	870-848*	25 years	Did right but didn't remove high places.	
5. Jehoram	848-841*	8 years	Did evil; walked in the way of the kings of Israel, even marrying a daughter of Ahab. Tried to put down a rebellion by the king of Edom, but it resulted in on-going bad relationships.	
6. Ahaziah	841	1 year	Did evil; walked in the ways of Ahab. Consulted Baal-Zebub rather than the Lord when wounded which incurred God's judgment.	
7. Athaliah	841-835	6 years	Mother of Ahaziah. Tried to destroy the royal family after Ahaziah died but Joash was kept hidden in the temple to escape her murdering.	
8. Joash	835-796	40 years	Crowned king by Jehoiada at age 7 before Athaliah was seized and killed. Did right by following the priests especially Jehoiada who made a covenant that the people would be the Lord's. Ensured that money given to the temple was used honestly. Repaired the temple but then gave all the sacred objects to the king of Aram.	Joel
9. Amaziah	796-767	29 years	Did right but still didn't remove the high places. Tried to consult with Jehoash, king of Israel but was attacked and captured. Fled to Lachish where he was killed.	
10. Uzziah (Azariah)	767-740*	52 years	Did right. Had leprosy and delegated to son Jotham.	Isaiah Micah
11. Jotham	740-732*	16 years	Did right but still didn't remove the high places	
12. Ahaz	732-716	16 years	Did evil; walked in the way of the kings of Israel. Allied with the Assyrians. Desecrated the temple.	

13. Hezekiah	716-687	29 years	Did right, like David. Trusted in the Lord and so was <i>successful in whatever he undertook</i> . Refused to give in to the threats of the Assyrians and sought God's deliverance from them. Received Isaiah's prophecy that the Assyrian king Sennacherib would fall and that a remnant from Jerusalem would be saved. This was confirmed when the Lord made the sun go backwards. Received envoys from Babylon and saw peace in his lifetime but knew that Judah would be overtaken by the Babylonians.	
14. Manasseh	687-642*	55 years	Did evil; followed the detestable practices of other nations.	Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah
15. Amon	642-640	2 years	Did evil; forsook the Lord for idols.	
16. Josiah	640-608	31 years	Did right; renewed the covenant with the Lord	
17. Jehoahaz	608	3 months	Did evil; taken into captivity in Egypt by Pharaoh Neco.	
18. Jehoiakim	608-597	11 years	Did evil; invaded by Nebuchadnezzar. Died in Jerusalem.	Daniel Ezekiel Jeremiah
19. Jehoiachin	597	3 months	Did evil; taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.	
20. Zedekiah	597-586	11 years	Did evil; taken captive to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.	

Jerusalem was destroyed in 586 BC, and then people of Judah taken into captivity in Babylon.

It was because of the Lord's anger that all this happened to Jerusalem and Judah, and in the end He thrust them from His presence. 2 Kings 24:20.

Discussion questions

Draw up a timeline showing the main events that are described in 1 and 2 Kings.

What was the significance of this period of history:

- for the nations of Israel and Judah?
- for God and His dealings with the people of Israel and Judah?
- for who would occupy the land?

What was the role of prophets in the period of history described in 1 and 2 Kings? Identify the main prophets during this period and summarise the key messages that they brought from God to the people of Israel and Judah. Do we have prophets like this today? How does God speak to national leaders today? What are the implications of this for Christian leaders, churches and individual Christians?

Compare the ministries of Elijah and Elisha. Why did Elijah confer a double portion of his spirit on Elisha? What difference did this make? What can we learn from each of these prophets about effective ministry to kings and other national leaders?

Most of the kings in both Israel and Judah “did evil in the sight of the Lord”. What was the effect of this on the nations they led? What was the result of this for the people in these nations? What was God’s response?

Why did both of the nations of Israel and Judah fall to foreign powers resulting in their people being taken into captivity? What lessons can nations today learn from this?

What have you learned from your study of 1 and 2 Kings? How will you apply this in your life?