



# **The Historical Books**

## **Session 4 – 1 & 2 Kings**

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## So, What do you Think?

- Read the Books of 1 and 2 Kings
  - There are 47 chapters (at least it is fewer!)
  - Solomon begins with promise; why is the kingdom in trouble when he dies?
  - What is the theme of Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8?
  - How does the Queen of Sheba see Solomon (1 Kings 9)?
  - What does 1 Kings 13-19 say about God's Word?
  - Why doesn't King Ahab rely on Elijah and other prophets?
  - Elisha wants a double portion of the spirit of Elijah, did he become twice as good? Why?

## So What do you Think?

- Read the Books of 1 and 2 Kings
  - Why was Naaman the leper told to wash seven times?
  - King Hezekiah also displays promise at the start of his reign, what about the rest of his life?
  - Why did the kingdom collapse in spite of the reforms of King Josiah?

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Royalty fascinates people generally
- These two books provide a “double dose” because there are two kingdoms
- There are both Israel and Judah
- Despite having two kingdoms there is only one real king – the Lord God
- Ideally the rulers over the people were supposed to serve God’s interests
- Rather than “kings” they should be “servants”

## 1 & 2 Kings

- In reality, few of the kings served God
- Most of the time they pursued their own selfish interests – to the detriment of the people
- They ignored what God wanted for the people altogether – they were generally a prideful, self centered group of kings
- The 1<sup>st</sup> book of Kings begins on a hopeful theme

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Solomon succeeds David to the throne
- He is the son of David and Bathsheba
- He exhibits great wisdom
- At the outset of his reign, he has a dream and asks God to give him an “understanding heart”
- God was so pleased with the request, he gives Solomon even more
- The high point in Solomon’s reign is the construction of the Jerusalem temple

## 1 & 2 Kings

- But like those before him, Solomon forgot that a right relationship with God was the real source of his successes
- The one time “wise” king even resorted to building shrines to other gods – even within the Promised Land
- When Solomon dies, the kingdom is in disarray
- In fact, Solomon’s kingdom is split apart so we must keep in mind that there are two kingdoms

## 1 & 2 Kings

- The northern kingdom kept the name Israel and its capital was Samaria
- The southern kingdom was called Judah after its principal tribe and its capital was Jerusalem
- The northern kings were especially neglectful of God
- Each king seems to be worse than the one that he followed
- The worst of all was Ahab

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Think about how the Bible introduces him:

*Ahab son of Omri 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 son of Nebat, he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshiped him.*

- It is clear from Ahab's introduction that he was far from the kind of ruler that would lead people closer to God
- Jeroboam, the first northern king set a low standard for faithlessness for the kingdom

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Even with such a bad example, Ahab managed to be worse than Jeroboam
- Ahab caps it all off by choosing Jezebel for his wife – she was just as wicked
- So, it is no wonder that the northern kingdom, weakened by decades of idolatry, lousy kings and people that have lost their sense of God, the God that saved them; finally collapses in a heap

## 1 & 2 Kings

- The southern kingdom of Judah seems a lot better – but only by comparison
- In time, they too are drifting farther and farther away from God
- They seek security in earthly resources
- By the end of 2<sup>nd</sup> Kings, the Kingdom of Judah has also collapsed
- Many people, including a member of David's royal house are exiled to Babylon

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Two bright spots can be found among the gloomy carnage
- Those bright spots are the prophets Elijah and Elisha
- These prophet's careers span 1 Kings 17 to 2 Kings 13
- Both prophets do all they can to steer the kings and people back to and closer to God
- They had reasonable success with individuals

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Elijah and Elisha have much less success with the kingdom
- The individuals that responded, did so in such a positive way that they serve as models of faith for readers of all generations
- Among these spiritual giants are
  - Widow at Zarepath (1 Kings 17)
  - The woman of Shunem (2 Kings 4)
  - Naaman the general (2 Kings 5)

## 1 & 2 Kings

- 1 Kings has 22 chapters
  - 1 – 11 The rise and fall of Solomon
  - 12 – 16 The kings ignore God's prophets
  - 17 – 22 Ahab ignores the prophet Elijah
- 2 Kings has 25 chapters
  - 1 – 13 Kings ignore the prophet Elisha
  - 14 – 17 The northern kingdom collapses
  - 18 – 25 The southern kingdom collapses

## 1 & 2 Kings

- When does it take place
  - King David c. 1000 BC
  - Fall of Samaria c. 721 BC
  - Fall of Jerusalem c. 587 BC
- Actual royal archives survived from Biblical times
- They don't come from Israel but neighbors
- Assyrian and Babylonian texts mention biblical kings by name and record events over 400 years
- The books may come from 640-609 BC during King Josiah's time – final versions after the exile

## 1 & 2 Kings

### ■ Interesting points

- **Elijah** – Appears suddenly. He was sent by God to warn King Ahab about his evil ways. By his word rain stopped; by his word, it came back. He seems to prefer calling down fire from heaven to ignite an altar sacrifice or consume disbelievers. He also offered life and plenty to those who turn to God. Anoints successor.
- **Elisha** – Asked for and got double portion of spirit that God gave Elijah. When in anger he hurls a curse at jeering youngsters, two bears charge. He never again misuses the word of God. He fed the hungry, healed sick and raised dead. Even contact with his bones gives life.

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Interesting points
  - **Deliverance** – Some kings took no lesson from the history of their people. They oppressed others as Egypt once did. (2 Kings 3:4-27). Over 150 years ago archeologists found a large stone of black basalt commemorating Moab's rebellion against Israel.
  - **Survival** – The tunnel of Hezekiah (c. 700 BC) was a engineering feat. Excavators began at opposite ends – one at a spring the other at the city. The shaft was sixteen hundred feet long. Hezekiah couldn't put as much energy into faith in God!

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Interesting points
  - **Josiah** – His reign in the last part of the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC was a bright spot in Israel's history. When a copy of God's law (maybe Deuteronomy) was discovered in the temple, he initiated a series of reforms. He died at Megiddo defending against Egypt.
  - **A Great Woman** – An unnamed woman at Shunem is given this title in the Bible. In a world obsessed with things; she looks for more. She welcomes the Word of God into her home. Her trust in God opened the way to new life (2 Kings 4:8-37)

## 1 & 2 Kings

- Interesting points
  - **Bethel** – King Jeroboam built a shrine to Bethel to keep his subjects in the north from going to the temple in Jerusalem. A prophet warned him against doing this. In 1 Kings 13 even the road to Bethel was to be avoided. Jeroboam set the standard of faithlessness that his successors are measured.

## Lessons from 1 & 2 Kings

- The true character of leadership is measured in terms of genuine service to God
- The only limitations on what God can do for us are the ones that we present to God
- God's Word always is life giving

## For Next Week

- Read the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles
  - David directs Asaph to sing a hymn of thanksgiving when the ark is transferred to Jerusalem. It must have been popular because it is also in Psalms – which one?
  - What is your impression of David in 1 Chronicles 19-20?
  - How does 1 Chronicles 22-28 portray David as devoted to the Lord?
  - How is King Manasseh portrayed in 2 Kings 21:1-18? What about 2 Chronicles 33:1-20?

## For Next Week

- Read the Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles
  - What part of 2 Chronicles 36:14-23 make it fit with Jesus' talk with Nicodemus in John 3:14-21?
  - What difference do you see between the end of 2 Kings and the end of 2 Chronicles?