

# 1 & 2 KINGS

## STUDY GUIDE

### AUTHOR & DATE

The text does not reveal who authored the book, though Jewish tradition and many scholars attribute the book to **Jeremiah**. The main reason for Jeremiah as a potential author is that both Jeremiah and 2 Kings record the fall of Jerusalem, something Jeremiah witnessed firsthand. Secondly, there are striking similarities between 2 Kings ch. 25 and Jeremiah ch. 39-42, 52. It is also possible that an unknown prophet, working at the same time as Jeremiah, compiled what we now have in 1 & 2 Kings. Whomever wrote the material, they did reference additional sources used to complete their account, namely “the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (1 Kgs 14:19) and “the chronicles of the kings of Judah” (1 Kgs 14:29), most likely official court documents and sources within the historical archives of both kingdoms.

Based on information within 1 & 2 Kings, we can more easily determine the timeframe of when it was written. Here are a few things to consider:

- 1 & 2 Kings were originally written as one complete book; therefore, the date of writing will be for both books.
- Kings covers in chronological fashion about 400 years of history for Israel & Judah
- Key events featured in Kings
  - 971 B.C. – Israel United under Solomon (1 Kgs 4)
  - 931 B.C. – Israel divided (1 Kgs 12)
  - 722 B.C. – Fall of Israel (2 Kgs 17)
  - 587/586 B.C. – Fall of Jerusalem (2 Kgs 25)
  - 560 B.C. – Jehoiachin (Judah) released from Babylonian imprisonment (2 Kgs 25:27)

Because Kings does not mention Babylon’s fall to Persian in 538 B.C., we can confidently conclude the book was written somewhere between **560-538 B.C.**

### BASIC INFORMATION

1 & 2 Kings begins where 1 & 2 Samuel ends. Though divided in our Bibles, the 1 & 2 Kings were originally one record of both Israel’s and Judah’s history, 1 Kings covering about 120 years and 2 Kings about 300 years. More chronological in nature, Kings is still a theological work and the way kings are featured within the work speaks volumes. Some have only brief mentions, while others have entire chapters drawing attention to their righteousness or unreserved sinful rebellion. The main purposes for 1 & 2 Kings was to remind Israel & Judah of their history, demonstrate the blessings of obedience, explain their eventual exile from the Promised Land, and encourage them to turn back to the Lord – the One who keeps His covenant and works on behalf of those who honor their covenant with Him.

## LITERARY STRUCTURE

### **1 Kings – Division of the Kingdom**

Part One: The Kingdom United Under Solomon (1:1-11:43)

Part Two: The Divided Kingdom (12:1-22:53)

### **2 Kings – Collapse of the Kingdom**

Further Decline of the Divided Kingdom & Fall of Israel (1:1-17:43)

Judah's Survival & Eventual Fall (18:1-25:30)

#### SOLOMON'S KINGDOM (UNITED)



#### THE DIVIDED KINGDOM



#### HINTS FOR READING 1 & 2 KINGS

- The text alternates between kings of the two kingdoms. I recommend distinctively marking kings' names in a way that ties them to their kingdom. (Example: all Israel kings in orange; all Judah kings in blue)
  - Israel = North
  - Judah = South
- Focus on the bigger lessons to be learned from the stories and individual lives.
- Pay attention to how individuals are portrayed. Are they examples of righteousness or rebellion?

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### OBSERVATION WORDS

- God, Jesus, Holy Spirit
- Solomon
- Israel's kings (north)
- Judah's kings (south)
- Elijah
- Elisha
- Did evil in the eyes of the Lord
- Did what was right
- For David's sake/ for the sake of David
- The word of the Lord

### SUMMARY QUESTIONS

- What did the Lord teach YOU through what you read?
  
- Where/how is **Jesus** & the **Holy Spirit** represented in the books?
  
- What do you learn about the **character of God** through these books?
  
- What practical and spiritual lessons do you learn from (find several):
  - Solomon
  
  - Jeroboam
  
  - Ahab & Jezebel
  
  - Naaman
  
  - Hezekiah

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- Another individual of your choosing (*must be different from who is featured in one of your key story selections below*)
  
- In 1 Kings ch. 13, there is an interesting account about two prophets. What do you learn from this story?
  
- In 2 Kings ch. 22-23, Josiah institutes numerous reforms. What did he accomplish and how long was the result (especially following his death)? What does this teach us about legislation and morality?
  
- Prophets are quite active throughout Kings. What do you learn from the prophets? What is often at the core of their messages? What does this teach us about the prophetic gifting, role, and purpose? In what ways are you being led into the prophetic (from the standpoint of being a mouthpiece for God)?
  
- In what ways are the ministries of Elijah and Elisha similar? How are they different?

**KEY STORY** – Pick an event/story from each book and explain why you chose that story and what you learned from it. *Your selections CANNOT BE the same as the person you chose in the summary question above.*

- 1 Kings

- 2 Kings

**KEY WORD** – How would you summarize what you've read into one word or very short phrase? Why did you choose that?

- 1 Kings
  
- 2 Kings

**KEY VERSE(S) & CHAPTER** – Like key words, key verse & chapter reflect something that stood out to you from the book. It may be a means of summarizing the book, or it may be something that the Lord taught you through that verse & chapter. So, what are they for you and why?

- 1 Kings
  
- 2 Kings