



# The Bible Challenge

A daily guide to reading the Bible in a year

## 1 & 2 Kings

*1 Kings 12 - 22*

### The Big Picture of 1 & 2 Kings

The Book of Kings reached its final form sometime after the exile into Babylon. The Israelite in bondage under the Babylonians would certainly struggle over their suffering outside of the land, even puzzling over the "why?" questions. Why did God allow Israel to fall to their enemies? Where is YHWH? Why is the temple destroyed?

As Samuel had prophetically warned the people back in 1 Samuel 8 that kings would prove to be a curse rather than a blessing to the people of God. And yet, the glories and the failures of Israel's kings, point to the need for the King of Kings, Jesus.

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### Structure of 1 & 2 Kings

<b>A United Kingdom: Solomon</b>	1 Kings 1 - 11
<b>A Divided Kingdom</b>	1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 9
<b>The Fall of the Northern Kingdom: Israel</b>	2 Kings 10 - 17
<b>The Fall of the Southern Kingdom: Judea</b>	2 Kings 18 - 25

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1 & 2 Kings serves to explain how a united Israel under King David and Solomon could become internally divided by her own people and utterly decimated by her external foes. As YHWH had warned through Moses and the prophets, his blessing was contingent on covenant faithfulness on the part of the King and people of Israel.

### A Divided Kingdom (1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 9)

As we continue this study, we will see how the sins of Solomon during the united kingdom time will led to the division of Israel into two kingdoms. Under the reign of Solomon's foolish successor, Rehoboam, a united Israel divided into a northern and southern kingdom. (12:16-24) By rejecting the wisdom of his elders, the fool secured the tearing apart of Israel as prophesied to Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah. (1 Kings 11:30-34)



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## The Kingdom of Israel and the Kingdom of Judah

The Northern 10 tribes would first be ruled by Jeroboam and they would be called Israel. The Southern tribe of Judah would be first ruled by Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

*So Israel has been in rebellion against the House of David to this day... There was none that followed the House of David but the tribe of Judah only.*

--1 Kings 12:19-20



Map showing the Kingdoms of Israel (blue) and Judah (orange), ancient Southern Levant borders and ancient cities. The map shows the region in the 9th century BCE.<sup>29</sup>

<sup>29</sup>

[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kingdoms\\_of\\_Israel\\_and\\_Judah\\_map\\_830.svg](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Kingdoms_of_Israel_and_Judah_map_830.svg)



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*The Lord said to Jeroboam: "And I will take you, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. <sup>38</sup> And if you will listen to all that I command you, and will walk in my ways, and do what is right in my eyes by keeping my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did, I will be with you and will build you a sure house, as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the offspring of David because of this, but not forever." --1 Kings 11:38-*

## **Jeroboam: a king NOT like David (12:25-14:20)**

David is the plumb for the Southern Kingdom of Judah, all of the southern kings that follow in his line are measured in comparison to David. They are also shown mercy because of his commitment to "walk in the ways of the Lord". For the Northern Kingdom of Israel, Jeroboam will become the standard of measure and comparison--of the walking in the way of evil. The LORD will say of him that he is "not like my servant David". (14:8)

Jeroboam's primary sin is Idolatry. His commitment to keep Israel separate from Judah, divides his loyalty to the Temple and right worship of YHWH. He sets up two altars with golden-calves (12:28) for the Northern tribes worship needs. "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt." (12:28) He appointed his own priests, appointed sacrifices and set apart his own feast days.

The writer of Kings describes how "this thing became sin" (12: 30) and that the idolatrous practices were something "he had devised from his own heart." (12:33)

## **The Prophet: The Man of God**

The interactions between the kings and prophets moves to front and center. The strength of a King's rule would be determined by his responsiveness to YHWH's servants, the prophets. A prophet from Judah, a man of God, confronts Jeroboam's idolatry with a prophecy of destruction against his altars.

*And the man cried against the altar by the word of the LORD and said, "O altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name, and he shall sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who make offerings on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.'" (13:2)*

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The prophetic messengers were given authority to speak the word of God, and the power to humble a king. As Jeroboam stretched out his hand against the man of God, it dried up and froze in place. With humility toward YHWH's prophet, came restoration. The prophet himself must also obey to the word of YHWH. (13:11-26)



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## A Snapshot of the Kings (14:21-16:34)

Chapters 14-16 serve as a type of fast forward snapshot of the reigns of multiple kings of Israel and Judah. We see continuing decline on the part of the Kings of Israel and a mixed view of the Kings of Judah.

All in all there were 20 kings that reigned over Israel between Jeroboam and the fall of the Northern Kingdom in 722--all of them were bad. There were also 20 kings that reigned over the Southern Kingdom 12 of them were bad, 4 of them were good and 4 were a mixed bag.

In this section we also see the purchase and fortification of the city Samaria (16:24) This will become the capital city of Israel and the center of idolatry! (16:32)

What determines whether a king is good or bad is whether they "walked in the way of " David (see 15:3, 11) or "walked in the way of" the Anti-David, Jeroboam. (see 15:34; 16:7, 19, 26, 31). In fact, many of the Kings of Israel surpassed the sin of their fathers! (16:31, 33) No one will provoke the LORD to anger more than King Ahab!

## The Prophet Elijah (17:1 - 19:21)

At this point in the narrative the attention turn to the hope of Israel and Judah--the ministry of the prophet. As the monarchy falters, particularly in Israel. God has not wholly abandoned Israel. The Lord raised up a great prophet in Elijah the Tishbe to confront the corrupt Ahab.

The LORD caused a great drought to fall upon the Land. The drought would first teach Elijah to trust the word, power and provision of YHWH as he received ministry from and gave ministry to a poor widow of Zarephath. (17:8-24). She says to Elijah: "the Word of the LORD in your mouth is truth. " (17:24) The Elijah story culminates in a dramatic showdown between the 450 prophets of Baal and 1 prophet of YHWH. Elijah challenged:

***"How long will you go limping between two opinions? If the LORD is God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him!" (18:21)***

*As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.*

*--1 Kings 17:1*



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## The Prophets of Baal are Defeated (18:20-40)

Elijah sets up a test of the reality of YHWH vs. Baal. The prophets of Baal are challenged to battle of offerings. Two bulls for sacrifice as a burnt offering. Whichever prophet could call down the fire of heaven would prevail.

*Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. <sup>39</sup> And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, he is God; the LORD, he is God." --1 Kings 18:38-39*

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Elijah puts all 450 of the prophets of Baal to the sword. Despite this display of YHWH's power through the prophetic word. Ahab persists in his rebellion. Elijah despaired of his very life. In a divine manifestation through "the sound of a low whisper" (19:12), YHWH reveals that Elijah is not alone, YHWH always preserves a remnant:

*Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.--1 Kings 19:18*

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With 7,000 Israelites and the prophets word, Ahab will lead the army of Israel to victory over an invasion by the Syrians and their king Ben-hadad.

Ultimately, Ahab will be defeated because of his own sin in failing to utterly destroy Ben-hadad (20:42) and for seeking the inheritance of an Israelite, Naboth (21:1-24). The sin of his evil wife Jezebel in murdering the man will be their undoing. (19:1-22:40).

The last chapter of Kings provides a measure of hope as Israel and Judah align against Syria. However, the faithlessness of Judah's king, Jehoshaphat toward the prophet, Micaiah, will prove to undo him as well. (1 Kings 22:17)