



The Bible's Big Story

1 & 2 Kings

Originally a single book, Kings was divided for convenience due to its size, and together with Samuel forms a continuous narrative of Israel's monarchy from Saul to Zedekiah — spanning roughly 410 years (ca. 970–586 BC).

Introductory Information

Title: In the earliest Jewish tradition, the book is called Kings, since the major figures throughout the book are the rulers of the northern and southern kingdoms.

Authorship: Authorship is anonymous, though Jewish tradition attributes it to the prophet Jeremiah. This attribution is plausible given his historical vantage point and proximity to the events described. However, since Jeremiah's death would have occurred before the final events recorded in the book, it is unlikely he authored the entire work. If he is indeed the author, then others must have also contributed to the text.

Date: Pre-586 to Pre-538 BC. This dating is tentative, based on phrases like “to this day” that suggest portions were written before the temple’s destruction in 586 BC, and the absence of any reference to the first exiles’ return about 539 BC.

Theme & Purpose: Kings chronicles the monarchies of Israel and Judah from their peak under Solomon to their destruction and exile. Theologically, Kings illustrates the blessings-and-curses pattern from Deuteronomy. Covenant faithfulness leads to blessing; idolatry and rebellion lead to judgment. The standard against which all kings are measured is their devotion to Yahweh and his covenant.

Theme Summary: *The Old Covenant nation of Israel rises to the peak of its wealth and wisdom under King Solomon, yet covenant unfaithfulness leads to the fracturing of the kingdom and the rise of prophets who confront the people’s sin and call them back to God. Eventually, Israel’s persistent idolatry and rebellion lead to covenant judgment and exile.*

Redemption Revealed in Kings

Solomon and the Temple he constructed anticipate the person and work of Christ.

Solomon was David’s son, endowed with surpassing wisdom, who built a house for the presence of God and ruled in a time of peace and prosperity. Yet Jesus declared himself “greater than Solomon” (Matt. 12:42) and “greater than the temple” (Matt. 12:6). He is the eternal Son of David in whom all wisdom dwells, whose

reign brings not only temporal peace but everlasting blessing. Solomon’s dedication prayer recognized that the temple pointed beyond itself to the reality of God dwelling among his people. That reality was fulfilled in the incarnation, and expanded further as Christ, through his atoning work, builds a temple not made with hands: the church, men and women from every nation indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

The brief reforms under the best of kings reveal that political renewal cannot change the heart.

The good kings of Kings—Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, Josiah—each brought genuine and significant reform. Yet in every case, the revival was short-lived and did not outlast its champion. This pattern teaches an important theological principle: the decisive difference between obedience and rebellion is not who sits on the throne of a nation, but who rules the hearts of its people. No human king, however righteous, can produce inward transformation. Israel’s deepest need—and ours—is the heart-renewal promised in Jeremiah 31 and Ezekiel 36, which can only come through the Spirit of God. This truth has direct application today: while Christians are right to support just and righteous leaders, political action alone cannot redeem a people whose hearts remain unchanged.

The ministry of the prophets displays God’s grace toward sinners and points to Messianic hope.

Throughout the repeated cycles of rebellion and covenant violation, God delayed the full execution of judgment and instead sent prophets, both to warn, to call the people back, and to perform miraculous signs of deliverance and healing. Even when Israel’s suffering was the direct result of God’s just judgment on their sin, God still sent Elijah and Elisha to provide, protect, and raise the dead. In this way, the prophets are themselves expressions of God’s redemptive purposes, and their ministries foreshadow the Messiah who will deliver his people from the curse of sin, bring good news to the poor, proclaim liberty to captives, and comfort all who mourn.

Structure of 1 & 2 Kings



