

Kings

Title:

Like the Books of Samuel, First and Second Kings were originally one book. For whatever reason, the book was divided into two parts by early translators, either in Babylon, when it was translated into Aramaic, or later by the Seventy when it was translated into the Greek (The *Septuagint*). The division between the two books really makes no sense since it is in the middle of a king's reign.

The original title in the Hebrew was *Kings*, taken from the subject matter presented in the book. The Greek and Latin titles were *Third and Fourth Kings*, while the Books of Samuel made up *First and Second Kings*.

Content:

First Kings picks up shortly before the point that Second Samuel ends. We see David in his last days, the anointing of Solomon as King of Israel (1:39), and the death of David (2:10ff). The following chapters chronicle the rule of King Solomon. Under Solomon's leadership Israel rises to the peak of her glory and Solomon becomes one of the greatest kings, in terms of earthly glory, the world has ever seen. However, Solomon's zeal for the LORD God wanes as the years pass, and he allows himself to be turned away from God by his pagan wives. "As a result, the king with the divided heart leaves behind a divided kingdom."

Chapter 11:41ff records the death of Solomon. Chapters 12 and following chronicle the division of this once great kingdom and traces the histories of two sets of kings and two nations, Israel to the North and Judah to the South. Both are made up of a disobedient people, for the most part reflecting the hearts of their rulers, who are largely indifferent to God's prophets and His Word.

Second Kings continues to trace this dark history, though things are somewhat brighter in Judah. While Israel endures nineteen

consecutive evil kings, an occasional godly king does emerge in Judah to reform the nation. Because of these godly kings, the LORD withholds punishment from Judah one-hundred-thirty-six years longer than He does for the Northern Kingdom. Israel is taken captive by the Assyrians in 722 B.C., and is never heard from again, while Judah is taken captive by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Second Kings ends during the captivity of Judah in Babylon.

Purpose:

The Book of Kings is, as noted, a record of a disobedient, idolatrous, ungodly people. The Assyrian destruction of Israel was partly to serve as a warning to the people of Judah. During this time God sends many of His prophets: Elijah, Elisha, Amos, and Hosea are in the Northern Kingdom, while in the Southern Kingdom Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Nahum, Zephaniah, Jeremiah, and Habakkuk are prophesying. In spite of occasional reform, which prolonged Judah's existence as a nation many years, the majority of the people continued in their rebellious ways and were finally carried off by the Babylonians.

The purpose of the Book of Kings is to show God's gracious hand in preserving His promise of a Savior, even as the Kingdom divides, the people disobey, and the LORD chastises. Unlike Israel, Judah does return again, preserved by the gracious hand of the LORD.

The Holy Writer:

Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah is the holy writer. Christians traditionally have supported this belief. The similarity of phrases and literary style of this and the other books of Jeremiah clearly show that they were written by one person. The majority of First and Second Kings was written prior to the captivity in 586 BC (cf. 1 Kings 8:8; 2 Kings 12:19; 17:34, 41). The last chapters of Second Kings were recorded during the Babylonian captivity, as the writer places himself in Babylon at the time of writing. It is likely then that these last two chapters were added by someone other than Jeremiah, for the prophet fled to Egypt (Jeremiah 43:1-8) during the

captivity, and was not in Babylon. These last two chapters, especially 25:27-30, seem to indicate that the writer lived in Babylon.

Working from Second Kings 25:27 scholars place the time of writing at about 570 BC.

Authenticity:

The authenticity of this book cannot be questioned. Its canonicity is supported by the Talmud and, more importantly, is firmly established in the New Testament. Compare the following: Matthew 12:42 (1 Kings 10); Luke 4:25ff (1 Kings 17; 2 Kings 5); Acts 7:47 (1 Kings 6); Romans 11:2ff (1 Kings 19:10, 14, 18); James 5:17f (1 Kings 17:1; 18:41-45).

Christ In Kings:

Aside from the fact that the books of the Kings shows us how the LORD preserves David's Promised Seed, we see Christ chiefly in Solomon during the early years of his reign. Solomon's wisdom directs us to Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:30). Solomon's glory as the King of Israel foreshadows the coming of the true King of Israel, who is indeed, "*greater than Solomon*" (*Matthew 12:42*).

Outline:

First Kings:

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

- I. The Establishment of Solomon as King (1:1 - 2:46)
- II. The Rise of Solomon as King (3:1 - 8:66)
- III. The Decline of Solomon as King (9:1 - 11:43)

Part Two: The Divided Kingdom

- I. The Division of the Kingdom (12:1 - 14:31)
- II. The Reigns of Two Kings in Judah (15:1 - 24)
- III. The Reigns of Five Kings in Israel (15:25 - 16:28)
- IV. The Reign of Ahab in Israel (16:29 - 22:40)
- V. The Reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah (22:41 - 50)
- VI. The Reign of Ahaziah in Israel (22:51 - 53)

Second Kings:

Part One: The Divided Kingdom

- I. The Reign of Ahaziah in Israel (1 Kings 22:51 - 2 Kings 1:18)
- II. The Reign of Jehoram in Israel (2:1 - 8:15)
- III. The Reign of Jehoram in Judah (8:16 - 24)
- IV. The Reign of Ahaziah in Judah (8:25 - 9:29)
- V. The Reign of Jehu in Israel (9:30 - 10:36)
- VI. The Reign of Queen Athaliah in Judah (11:1 - 16)
- VII. The Reign of Joash in Judah (11:17 - 12:21)
- VIII. The Reign of Jehoahaz in Israel (13:1 - 9)
- IX. The Reign of Jehoash in Israel (13:10 - 25)
- X. The Reign of Amaziah in Judah (14:1 - 22)
- XI. The Reign of Jeroboam II in Israel (14:23 - 29)
- XII. The Reign of Azariah in Judah (15:1 - 7)
- XIII. The Reign of Zechariah in Israel (15:8 - 12)
- XIV. The Reign of Shallum in Israel (15:13ff)
- XV. The Reign of Menahem in Israel (15:16 - 22)
- XVI. The Reign of Pekahiah in Israel (15:23ff)
- XVII. The Reign of Pekah in Israel (15:27 - 31)
- XVIII. The Reign of Jotham in Judah (15:32 - 38)
- XIX. The Reign of Ahaz in Judah (16:1 - 20)
- XX. The Reign of Hoshea in Israel (17: 1 - 41)

Part Two: The Surviving Kingdom of Judah (18:1 - 25:30)

- I. The Reign of Hezekiah in Judah (18:1 - 20:21)
- II. The Reign of Manasseh in Judah (21:1 - 18)
- III. The Reign of Amon in Judah (21:19 - 26)
- IV. The Reign of Josiah in Judah (22:1 - 23:30)
- V. The Reign of Jehoahaz in Judah (23:31 - 34)
- VI. The Reign of Jehoiakim in Judah (23:35 - 24:7)
- VII. The Reign of Jehoiachin in Judah (24:8 - 16)
- VIII. The Reign of Zedekiah in Judah (24:17 - 25:21)
- IX. The Governorship of Gedaliah (25:22 - 26)
- X. The Release of Jehoiachin in Babylon (25:27 - 20)