

# STUDIES IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

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“Kings is . . . more than an account of the political and social history of this period. It records Israel’s spiritual response to God who had taken her into covenant relationship with himself (2 Kings 17:7-23), and who had bestowed great privileges to her through the promise made to David (1 Kings 2:2-4). Accordingly, within its pages is found a detailed summary of the spiritual experiences of her people—particularly her kings, prophets, and priests, whose activities largely point to the need for the advent of the one who would combine the intended ideal of these three offices in himself.”

— Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” in *EBC*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 4:4.

## OLD TESTAMENT FLYOVER:

### Kings

#### I. Titles

- A. *Hebrew Title*: מלכים, “Kings”
- B. *Greek Title*: 3 & 4 Kingdoms
- C. *Vulgate Title*: 3 & 4 Kings
- D. As with Samuel, the differences between Hebrew and Greek traditions points to the disparate perspectives on the books.
  1. The Greek and Latin versions view the book as a continuation of the Samuel narrative. They are also broken up into two separate books.
  2. The Hebrew tradition views the narrative as a unified book that is distinct from, albeit coordinated with, the book of Samuel. In fact, the earliest Jewish traditions kept the entire Kings saga recorded on a single scroll.

#### II. Date of Events & Authorship

- A. Date of Events in Kings
  1. The book opens with the final days of David (970 B.C.)
  2. It closes with the release of Jehoiachin in Babylon (561 B.C.)
  3. The time span of the book covers over 400 years of history, over twice the amount of time as covered by Samuel. And it does so in fewer words than Samuel. Thus, while

the narrative speed slowed down from Judges to Samuel, it accelerates once again in Kings.

### B. Authorship of Kings

1. Jewish tradition holds to Jeremiah as the author, but the text itself remains anonymous, as was customary for ANE histories.
2. Nevertheless, “at least the majority of the book bears the impress of being the product of one author, who, as an eyewitness of the Jewish nation’s final demise, was concerned to show the divine reasons for that fall.”<sup>1</sup>
3. How could one man reliably record 400+ years of history? The historian mentions numerous sources from which he drew information:
  - a. Annals of Solomon (1 Kgs 11:41)
  - b. Annals of the Kings of Israel (mentioned 17x in 1 Kgs 14:29-2 Kgs 15:31)
  - c. Annals of the Kings of Judah (mentioned 15x in 1 Kgs 14:29-2 Kgs 25:4)
  - d. Other unnamed sources (i.e., Isaiah’s recorded prophecies, David’s court memoirs, etc.)

### III. Chronology

- A. Without a doubt, the greatest interpretive issue in the book of Kings involves how to understand the chronology of the divided monarchy.
- B. Extra-biblical data provides us with certain key anchor points that sets the chronological boundaries for the period of the divided monarchy:
  1. 931 B.C. – the division of the kingdom
  2. 722 B.C. – the deportation of northern Israel by Assyria
  3. 586 B.C. – the destruction of Jerusalem and deportation of Judah by Babylon
- C. From this data, we know that the northern kingdom lasted 209 years while the southern kingdom lasted 345 years.
- D. But the numbers provided in the text for each king’s reign aren’t consistent with these expected numbers:

LENGTH OF REIGNS IN KINGS

<b>Kings of Judah</b>	<b>Years</b>	<b>Kings of Israel</b>	<b>Years</b>
Reheoboam	17	Jeroboam	22
Abijah	3	Nadab	2
Asa	41	Baasha	24

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<sup>1</sup> Richard D. Patterson and Hermann J. Austel, “1, 2 Kings,” in *EBC*, 12 vols., ed. Frank E. Gæbelein (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988), 4:6.

Jehoshaphat	25	Elah	2
Jehoram	8	Zimri	7 Days
Ahaziah	1	Omri	12
[Athaliah]	7	Ahab	22
Joash (Jehoash)	40	Ahaziah	2
Amaziah	29	Jehoram (Joram)	12
Azariah (Uzziah)	52	Jehu	28
Jotham	16	Jehoahaz	17
Ahaz	16	Jehoash (Joash)	16
Hezekiah	29	Jeroboam II	41
Manasseh	55	Zechariah	.5
Amon	2	Shallum	1 Month
Josiah	31	Menahem	10
Jehoahaz	.25	Pekahiah	2
Jehoiakim	11	Pekah	20
Jehoiachin	.25	Hoshea	9
Zedekiah	11		
<b>Total:</b>	<b>394.5</b>	<b>Total:</b>	<b>241.5</b>
<b>Expected:</b>	<b>345</b>	<b>Expected:</b>	<b>209</b>
<b>Difference:</b>	<b>49.5</b>	<b>Difference:</b>	<b>32.5</b>

E. These inconsistencies have provided the evidence some scholars have been looking for to demonstrate the historical inaccuracies of the Bible.

F. Three different ‘schools’ have developed to deal with this chronological issue:

1. **Restoration School:** “The Restoration school is characterized by the belief that the main problem is one of bad transmission of the Hebrew text. This school is convinced that in the course of copying and recopying the text many numbers have been accidentally altered, or scribes have altered figures which they thought were transmission errors. By a careful study of the variants in the Hebrew versions (MT, Qumran and those behind the LXX and Josephus) these scholars are able to repair the text.”<sup>2</sup>
2. **Reconstruction School:** The Reconstruction School “takes the view that the Hebrew text has been so extensively corrupted in transmission, or, if accurately transmitted,

<sup>2</sup> Leslie McFall, “Has the Chronology of the Hebrew Kings Been Finally Settled,” *Themelios* 17, no. 1 (Oct 1991): 6.

- the original was factually incorrect, that the only solution is to make a fresh start and reconstruct the text and its chronology.”<sup>3</sup>
3. **Harmonist School:** “Harmonists proceed on the assumption that every Hebrew figure is factually correct and accurately transmitted. This school seeks to harmonize the Hebrew chronology internally (between Kings and Chronicles) and externally (with well established absolute dates in Near Eastern chronology) without altering the text one iota.”<sup>4</sup>
  4. In 1965, Edwin R. Thiele published a book entitled *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, a monumental work that turned the tide in the study of the chronology of kings and provided keys to understanding the apparent inconsistencies.
    - a. How did he do it? By investigating the various cultural practices of the scribes during that era and how they recorded history, counted time, and understood king-ly reigns, he developed a methodology for approaching the numbers found in Kings and Chronicles.
    - b. His methodology was guided by six principles:
      - 1) *What type of system did the scribe use for counting the length of a king’s reign?*
        - a) **Accession year system:** In Judah, the king began to count the length of his reign beginning with the first *full* year of his reign. He disregarded his accession year.
        - b) **Non-accession year system:** In Israel, the king counted the year he came to the throne as his first year of reign, even if his accession year was only a few months.
      - 2) *What type of calendar was used by the scribe when considering the length of a king’s reign?*
        - a) **Judah:** the religious calendar began in the month of Nisan (spring), but the civil calendar began with the month of Tishra (fall).
        - b) **Israel:** the religious and civil calendars both started in Nisan (spring)
      - 3) *How did the scribe reckon the reign of a foreign king?*
        - a) Often, a scribe would use his system of counting to reckon the reign of another state, even if that state used a different system.
        - b) Thus, it could be that while Judah might reckoned the current year as Jehoshaphat’s 10<sup>th</sup> year, it would be reckoned as his 11<sup>th</sup> year in Israel.
      - 4) *How did the scribe account for coregencies or interregna?*

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

- a) **Coregency:** when a king appointed his son to rule over the nation at the same time as he. The question is how the scribe accommodated for coregencies. Did he count the overlap as part of the son's reign or did he waited until the father's death before beginning to count the reign of the son?
  - b) **Interregna:** a period of time in which no one was ruling. There were no interregnas in Israel's history.
- 5) *Did a nation use a uniform system for counting the reign of a king?*
- a) Judah used the accession year system for counting the reigns of kings. However, from Jehoram to Joash, it adopted the non-accession year system of the northern kingdom until it reverted back to the accession year system during the reign of Amaziah.
  - b) The northern kingdom used the non-accession year system up until the reign of Jehoash, when it adopted the accession year system.
- 6) *Are there absolute reference points for anchoring the dates of OT events to other events in ANE history? By using the Assyrian eponym lists, we can identify key dates in Israel's history with known times in ANE history, such as the battle of Qarqar in 853 B.C.*
- c. "By ascertaining and applying the principles and procedures used by the Hebrew scribes in recording the lengths of reign and synchronisms given in the OT books of Kings and Chronicles for the kings of Israel and Judah, he was able to demonstrate the accuracy of these biblical data."<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. Major Themes

##### A. The Kings

##### 1. Solomon

- a. Solomon stands as a significant transitional figure between David and the kings of Israel and Judah.
- b. In the eyes of mainstream Bible students and Sunday School curriculum, Solomon is viewed positively and remembered most for his wisdom and his accomplishment in constructing the temple.
- c. But for the writer of Kings, Solomon's legacy is complex—his most significant achievement is destroyed after his death and his kingdom does not even survive one generation.

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<sup>5</sup> Kenneth A. Strand, "Thiele's Biblical Chronology as a Corrective for Extrabiblical Dates," *Andrews University Seminary Studies* 34, no. 2 (Autumn 1996): 295.

**d. The Requirements of Solomon**

- 1) Before David died, he gave his son Solomon a final charge and reminder that fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant was contingent on Solomon's obedience to the Mosaic Covenant:

As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, "I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. Keep the charge of Yahweh your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn, so that Yahweh may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel'" (1 Kgs 2:1-3).

- 2) At the completion of the temple construction, Yahweh repeated these same requirements:

Now the word of Yahweh came to Solomon saying, "Concerning this house which you are building, if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances and keep all My commandments by walking in them, then I will carry out My word with you which I spoke to David your father. I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel" (1 Kgs 6:11-13).

- 3) Even Solomon's closing benediction at the dedication of the temple reveals his understanding of his and Israel's responsibilities:

And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: "Blessed be Yahweh, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised; not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant. May Yahweh our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us, that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers. And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before Yahweh, be near to Yahweh our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day requires, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that Yahweh is God; there is no other. Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to Yahweh our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day" (1 Kgs 8:56-61).

- 4) Yahweh's promise and warning to Solomon clearly summarizes the king's requirements and ties the consequences of disobedience to the temple that Solomon had just erected:

Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of Yahweh, and the king's house, and all that Solomon desired to do, that Yahweh appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. Yahweh said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication, which you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually. As for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying 'You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.' But if you or your sons indeed turn away from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight. So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins, everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, 'Why has Yahweh done thus to this land and to this house?' And they will say, 'Because they forsook Yahweh their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore Yahweh has brought all this adversity on them'" (1 Kgs 9:4-9).

- 5) ***In summary:*** *The ultimate fulfillment of the covenant with David is contingent upon Solomon obeying the Mosaic stipulations. In order for Solomon to be the son who fulfills Yahweh's promises to David, Solomon must be obedient to Torah. If he is not, then Solomon's kingdom won't last, and another kingdom will arise which will be ruled by a future Davidic son. Out of 20 kings in Judah, only 8 receive a positive evaluation, indicating that ultimately both Solomon and his line failed. The only reason Yahweh showed restraint on Solomon and his descendants is because of His promise to David (1 Kgs 11:34).*

e. **The Potential of Solomon**

- 1) Solomon began as a good king with the potential to realize much of the promises of the Davidic Covenant.
  - a) Yahweh bestowed wisdom and riches on Solomon and his empire. The wealth that the nation enjoyed at that time was never matched in Israel's subsequent history, and his wisdom attracted the attention of the nations, who flocked to Jerusalem to observe his wisdom and bring him gifts.
  - b) Solomon gained a reputation for his impressive buildings, military fortifications. He constructed a system of protective fortresses across the nation and developed a unique architectural feature for his major fortresses called the "Solomonic gateways." (1 Kgs 9:10-25). He also heavily conscripted

soldiers and amassed a fleet of chariots (1 Kgs 4:26; 5:13-18; 9:15-22; 10:26-29; 12:4).

- c) He was also a prolific writer, composing 3,000 proverbs, 1,005 songs, and at least two other wisdom books (Ecclesiastes, Song of Songs).
- 2) It is also clear that Solomon considered himself to be the fulfillment of the seed promise of the Davidic Covenant:

“Behold, I intend to build a house for the name of Yahweh my God, as Yahweh spoke to David my father, saying, ‘Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name’” (1 Kgs 5:5).

Then Solomon said, “Yahweh has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. I have surely built You a lofty house, a place for Your dwelling forever.” Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. He said, “Blessed be Yahweh, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hand, saying, ‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel from Egypt, I did not choose a city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house that My name might be there, but I chose David to be over My people Israel.’ Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. But Yahweh said to my father David, ‘Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who will be born to you, he will build the house for My name.’ Now Yahweh has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as Yahweh promised, and have built the house for the name of Yahweh, the God of Israel. There I have set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of Yahweh, which He made with our fathers when He brought them from the land of Egypt” (1 Kgs 8:12-21).

- 3) Thus, in Solomon’s understanding, by building the temple, he was indeed fulfilling the seed promise to David.
- 4) But the author of Kings already established in the narrative that if Solomon were to fulfill the seed promise, he needed to be obedient. Since he ultimately failed to remain obedient, his kingdom was not established forever and he therefore was *not* the promised seed of the Davidic Covenant.
- 5) All throughout Kings, the narrator emphasizes the overall failure of David’s line to obey, leaving the Davidic Covenant promises open.
- 6) Since Kings is the culmination of the Former Prophets, it leads the reader straight into the Latter Prophets, where Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Twelve will talk about a future individual coming—Yahweh’s anointed (i.e., Messiah)—who will fulfill the promises of the Davidic Covenant and reign on David’s throne over Israel forever.

- 7) Thus, while 1 Samuel 7 in isolation suggests the potential for Solomon or another descendant to fulfill the covenant promises, the narrative of Kings makes the promised Messiah of the Latter Prophets the only legitimate fulfillment of the promise, because all of David's descendants failed the requirement of obedience laid out in the Davidic Covenant.

f. **The Failure of Solomon**

- 1) Ultimately, all of Solomon's accomplishments became the springboard for his decline. As his pride grew, he became careless in living according to the standards laid down by Yahweh for Israel's king (cf. Deut 17).

a) **Foreign Marriages** (1 Kgs 11:1-3): Solomon used foreign marriages to form political alliances with other nations. He eventually accumulated 700 wives as well as 300 concubines. This multiplication of wives was disobedience to the command in Deuteronomy 17 and demonstrated Solomon's pride and lack of dependence on Yahweh.

b) **Idolatry** (1 Kgs 11:4-13): the introduction of foreign wives opened wide the door for foreign religions. Evidently, Solomon needed to construct religious temples to satisfy his more politically important wives (11:5-8). Eventually, the introduction of pagan religion "turned his heart away after other gods" (11:4), diminishing the importance of the Jerusalem temple and drawing other Israelites from Yahweh worship.

c) **Revolts** (1 Kgs 11:14-40): Several revolts were staged successfully against Solomon, the last involving the revolt of Jeroboam which set the stage for the collapse of the united kingdom under Solomon's son, Rehoboam.

- g. Ultimately, the narrator of Kings does not make a final evaluation of Solomon as he does with all the subsequent kings. While Solomon certainly authored several portions of Scripture, this by itself does not constitute a positive evaluation, since God even allowed to pagan prophet Balaam to speak for him. Thus, the record of Solomon remains somewhat inconclusive, though there is no doubt that the narrator casts a negative light on his reign.

2. The Kings of Israel

- a. The narrator of Kings devotes more narrative material to the northern kingdom than he does the southern kingdom.
- b. In total, 20 kings reigned over northern Israel from 931-722 B.C., constituting 9 different dynasties (i.e., families). Seven of these kings died of assassination, 1 by suicide, and 1 stricken of God, and not one northern king received a positive evaluation by the author of Kings.
- c. But of all the kings, three particular kings receive detailed attention by the narrator.

**1) Jeroboam I**

- a) Jeroboam was a mighty warrior who was originally appointed by Solomon to oversee the forced labor camps for the house of Joseph.
- b) In response to Solomon's apostasy, Yahweh sent the prophet Ahijah to tell Jeroboam that he would be the leader of the ten northern tribes. When Solomon caught wind of this, he tried to assassinate Jeroboam, but he escaped and fled in exile to Egypt.
- c) Following Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam foolishly chose to raise the national taxes to demonstrate his authority over the kingdom. This stirred the already smoldering resentment of the northern tribes over the prestige and attention of the southern tribes.
- d) Jeroboam returned from Egypt and led the northern tribes in revolt against Rehoboam, effectively dividing the monarchy into two kingdoms, with Rehoboam reigning over the southern kingdom (called Judah) and Jeroboam reigning over the northern Kingdom (called Israel, or sometimes Ephraim).
- e) Ultimately, he established alternative cultic centers in Israel, syncretizing Yahweh and Baal worship (see 4. The Kings of Comparison).

**2) Ahab**

- a) Though Jeroboam provided the evaluative measurement for evil, Ahab proves to be the worst of the northern kings—more so even than Jeroboam.
- b) Ahab took over kingship from his father Omri and ruled over a nation that enjoyed over 20 years of prosperity and influence, though it had come at the price of "moral and spiritual decadence."<sup>6</sup>
- c) Marrying Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal king of Sidon, Ahab established Baal worship as the official religion of northern Israel. "For the first time, the cult of Yahweh was officially replaced by paganism and not allowed to coexist with it."<sup>7</sup>
- d) This action gave rise to the battles between Baal and its state supported prophets, and Yahweh and his prophets, Elijah and Elisha.
- e) It was Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah, who married Jehoshaphat's son, Jehoram and accomplished a 7-year coup of Judah's throne before she herself was assassinated.

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<sup>6</sup> Eugene H. Merrill, *Kingdom of Priests: A History of Old Testament Israel*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2008), 361.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

- f) Ahab was eventually killed in 853 B.C. in a battle with Benhadad and the Arameans at Ramoth-Gilead, when a stray arrow by chance struck Ahab in the one weak point of his armor.

### 3) Jehu

- a) Jehu had originally been anointed by a young prophet from Elisha as the individual who would destroy the Omride dynasty and bring the state-sponsored Baal worship to an end.
- b) All this Jehu accomplished, assassinating both Joram king of Israel and Ahaziah king of Judah, Joram's own nephew, thus purging both the northern and southern kingdoms of spiritual apostate leaders. He also exterminated the Baal worshippers in Israel and turned the Baal temple into a public latrine.
- c) Yet because Jehu was motivated by personal pride rather than Yahweh's glory, God held Jehu responsible for the blood he had shed.

### 3. The Kings of Judah

- a. In total, 19 kings and 1 queen ruled over Judah from 931-586 B.C., consisting of 2 dynasties (i.e., families). Five of these kings were assassinated, 2 were stricken by God, and 3 were exiled to foreign lands. Of all the kings over Judah, only 8 received a positive evaluation by the writer of Kings.
- b. In particular, 2 of Judah's kings receive detailed narratives.

#### 1) Hezekiah

- a) Hezekiah was one of a few good kings who reigned over Judah during the divided monarchy.
- b) He was responsible for reforming Israel's religious life. He removed the pagan centers of worship (e.g., high places) and repaired the dilapidated temple structure. He removed the bronze serpent of Moses that had been erected as an object of worship, and re-instituted observance of the Passover.
- c) Hezekiah's trust in Yahweh was severely tested throughout his reign. He rebelled from Assyria when Sennacherib assumed the throne of Assyria, and in 701 B.C. Assyria began subduing Phoenicia, Philistia, and Lachish. Terrified by the invading enemy, Hezekiah sent tribute to Sennacherib, effectively admitting defeat.
- d) Hezekiah enjoyed a short time of reprieve when Sennacherib left to engage the Egyptian army, and it was during this time that Hezekiah pleaded for divine assistance. When Sennacherib returned to complete his conquest, he lost 185,000 men who were killed by the angel of Yahweh.
- e) Just before or after Sennacherib's invasion, Hezekiah fell prey to a mortal illness, and it was only because of his desperate prayer that Yahweh granted him 15 more years of life.

- f) Following his recovery, Hezekiah entertained emissaries from Merodach-baladan, king of Babylon, who had most likely come to congratulate their common ally against Assyria for his recovery.
- g) During their visit, Hezekiah revealed to them the wealth and treasures of the temple. The prophet Isaiah rebuked Hezekiah and informed him that it would be the Babylonians that would one day loot the temple.

## 2) Josiah

- a) Josiah ruled during a time of Assyrian decline, allowing him to operate much further north than his predecessors.
- b) He came to the throne at the age of 8, though he most likely did not directly rule during his earlier years.
- c) At age 16, he began seeking Yahweh, quite a contrast considering the godlessness of his father.
- d) He instituted a massive reform of Judah's religious life, beginning with the removal of the pagan cultic objects and worship centers.
- e) At age 26, an even greater reformation began when the book of the law was found in the temple. Seeing the amount of apostasy in the land, he ordered the destruction of all pagan sites in the kingdom and reinstated a careful observance of the Passover not seen in the nation since the time of Samuel.
- f) Unfortunately, the sins of Manasseh had become so ingrained in the nation that the reform did not last long.
- g) Josiah died at age 39 while at battle against Necho, Pharaoh of Egypt.

## 4. The Kings of Comparison

- a. Two kings stand out among the many mentioned through the book as the standard by which the author evaluates every subsequent king.
- b. In Judah, the author uses David as the standard to evaluate all of the kings. Even Solomon was called to walk in David's ways. This is appropriate, being that with the exception of a brief incursion of northern "blood" into Judah's throne, the south maintained only one dynasty—the dynasty of David.
- c. In Israel, the author uses Jeroboam I as the standard to evaluate all the kings. Even though other kings such as Ahab did worse, Jeroboam is always the king of comparison for the purposes of establishing the evilness of the northern kings.
  - 1) The reason for this is because it was Jeroboam who introduced idolatrous worship into Israel.
  - 2) When Jeroboam first became king over the northern tribes, he knew that the loyalties of the people would soon be swayed back towards Judah if they made yearly trips down to worship in Jerusalem.

- 3) In order to break the religious solidarity with Judah, Jeroboam had to prevent people from travelling south.
- 4) To do this, he established Dan in the north and Bethel in the south as worship centers, and erected golden calves in both locations as syncretistic religious symbols that elided Yahweh and Baal worship together.
- 5) Jeroboam also appointed non-Levite men as priests, installed himself as high priest over this new cult, and officiated sacrifices at the Bethel altar. He also set a new date for the Feast of Tabernacles.
- 6) Thus, it was Jeroboam who paved the way for Baalism to eventually become the official religion of northern Israel under Ahab.
- 7) Yahweh sent an unnamed prophet to Jeroboam who proclaimed that the altar and the priests would eventually be destroyed by a Davidic king named Josiah (1 Kgs 13:1ff). This prophesy took place in amazing detail in 2 Kgs 23:15.

#### B. The Prophets

1. Though the book of Kings is about the kings of Israel, it emphasizes even more than the kings the ministry that Yahweh's prophets had to Israel.
2. Though their influence grew slowly and quietly through the book, their ministry becomes quite prominent as the story progresses.
3. With the exception of Joel, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, all of the writing prophets ministered during the period of the divided monarchy.
  - a. **8<sup>th</sup> century prophets:** Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, Micah, and Jonah
  - b. **7<sup>th</sup> century prophets:** Nahum, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk
4. The role of the prophets was to speak for Yahweh. They were men of God, who spoke the word of God to the people of God.
5. Ultimately, their message was the same. They were continually calling Israel's people and kings back to covenant fidelity, rebuking them for covenant treachery, encouraging them with divine fidelity, and warning them of divine judgment.
6. While 9 prophets are mentioned by name in Kings, two of them—Elijah and Elisha—receive extensive coverage by the narrator, to the effect that the material devoted to their ministry is longer than what is devoted to any of the kings.
7. These two prophets engaged in a battle to demonstrate the superiority of Yahweh over Baal, who had been made the official religion of Israel by Ahab.
8. They performed miracles and spoke Yahweh's words to Ahab and the people. But all of this was to demonstrate the profound superiority of Yahweh over Baal.

**BAAL VERSUS YAHWEH<sup>8</sup>**

Baal, as storm-god, controls the rains	Elijah commands drought (1 Kgs 17:1)
Baal ensures agricultural fertility and bountiful harvests	Israel experiences famine and drought, yet Elijah and Elisha provide grain and oil miraculously (2 Kgs 4:1-7, 42-44)
Baal controls lightning and fire	Elijah commands fire from heaven in the name of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18:38, 2 Kgs 1:10-12; 2:11)
Baal controls life and death	Elijah and Elisha heal and raise the dead in the name of Yahweh (1 Kgs 17:7-24; 2 Kgs 4:8-37; 5:1-20)

**C. The Temple**

1. At the heart of the eleven chapters devoted to the reign of Solomon lies the temple for which Solomon is most remembered.
2. The site of the temple had been secured by David in 2 Samuel 24:18-25 when he purchased a threshing floor on Mt. Moriah.
3. Though he was not allowed to build the temple, he did a great amount of preparatory logistical work, undoubtedly allowing for Solomon to complete the temple's construction in a mere 7 years (it took him 13 years to build his palace).



4. The start of the temple's foundation is notable in that it occurred exactly 480 years after Israel left Egypt (1 Kgs 6:4), providing a significant chronological reference point for reconstructing the history of Israel, and especially for dating the Exodus and the conquest.

5. At its completion, the temple was roughly twice the

<sup>8</sup> L. Bronner, *The Stories of Elijah and Elisha* (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 50-85.

size of the original tabernacle and patterned after the tabernacle complex.

6. The temple serves as a key theological center in the Kings narrative. When Solomon moved the Ark of the Covenant into the temple and consecrated the temple with burnt offerings, the text notes that the glory of Yahweh took residence in the temple in the same manner it had at the consecration of the tabernacle at the conclusion of Exodus.
7. More significantly, it was Hezekiah's ostentatious display of the temple treasures that finally sealed the fate of the southern kingdom. A few centuries later, Babylon came and destroyed the temple and looted it of all its treasures.

#### D. The Sovereignty of Yahweh

1. One of the key theological assertions of Kings is its emphasis on the fulfillment of Yahweh's word as revealed through the prophets.
2. The significance of this cannot be overstated. While the kings are generally unfaithful in the book, the prophets are faithful and their words are always fulfilled.
3. While the book of Samuel features numerous prophecies that remain future in nature (i.e., the Davidic Covenant), the prophecies in Kings all come to pass in the same book.

#### THE PROPHETIC WORD IN KINGS

THE PROPHET	PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
Ahijah	I, 11: 29-39	I, 12:20
Shemaiah	I, 12:22-24a	I, 12:24b
A Man of God from Judah	I, 13:2-3	II, 23:15-16
A Man of God from Judah	I, 13:3	I, 13:5
A Man of God from Judah	I, 13:9, 16-17	I, 13:20-26
Ahijah	I, 14:6-11	I, 15:29
Ahijah	I, 14:12	I, 14:17-18
Jehu	I, 16:1-4, 7	I, 16:12-13
Elijah	I, 17:1	I, 18:1-2
A Prophet	I, 20:13	I, 20:20
A Prophet	I, 20:22	I, 20:26
A Man of God	I, 20:28	I, 20:29-30
A Man of the Sons of the Prophets	I, 20:35-36a	I, 20:36b
A Man of the Sons of the Prophets	I, 20:42	I, 22:38
Elijah	I, 21:23	II, 9:30-37; 10:10
Micaiah	I, 22:19-23	I, 22:40
Elisha	II, 3:16-19	II, 3:20-25
Elisha	II, 9:10	II, 9:30-37; 10:10
Elisha	II, 13:19	II, 13:25
Isaiah	II, 19:6-7	II, 19:35-37
Huldah	II, 22:15-20	II, 23:29-30

## V. Purpose

- A. *The human monarchy, including the Davidic house, failed to follow Yahweh with the result that Israel and Judah were taken from the land in fulfillment of the prophetic word.*

## VI. The Literary Structure

- A. The macro-structure of the book of Kings can be divided into four major sections.
- B. Within this macro-structure, there is a purposeful plan in how the writer organizes his narrative during the divided kingdom. The writer always fills in the gaps chronologically, moving back and forth between the two kingdoms.

### THE STRUCTURE OF KINGS

UNITED KINGDOM	DIVIDED KINGDOM	SURVIVING KINGDOM	EPILOGUE
Solomon, Temple Built	Israel and Judah [Elijah, Elisha]	Judah/ Temple Destroyed	Continuation of the House of David
I, 1:1 - 11:43	12:1 - II, 17:41	18:1 - 25:21	25:22 - 25:30
27%	57%	15%	1%

- C. Within the first major section of the book, there is a definite progression of events that serve to narrate the rise and fall of the Solomonic kingdom.
- D. Solomon's wisdom, in the beginning of his reign, is perverted later and becomes a way of honoring himself rather than Yahweh. He originally asked for wisdom in order to rule wisely, yet he eventually used it to feed his own ego.
- E. This section seems to be chiastically organized and centered on the building and dedication of the temple.

### 1 KINGS 1:1-11:43

The Rise of Solomon	Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth	Building Procedures	The Building and Dedication of the Temple	Building Procedures	Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth	The Decline of Solomon
I,1:1-2:46	3:1 - 4:34	5:1 - 5:18	6:1 - 9:9	9:10 - 9:28	10:1 - 10:29	11:1-11:43
A	B	C	D	C'	B'	A'

- F. The center of the book of Kings is the battle between Yahweh and Baal, which stretches from Jeroboam all the way until the death of Athaliah in the southern kingdom.
- G. This section, too, appears to be arranged chiastically and centered on the Elijah/Elisha narratives.

**1 KINGS 12:1-2 KINGS 17:41**

The Rise of Idolatry in Israel and Judah	Kings of Judah and Israel	Baal Worship and Elijah and Elisha	Kings of Judah and Israel	Idolatry in Judah and the Exile of Israel
I, 12:1 - 14:31	15:1 - 16:22	16:23 - II, 13:25	14:1 - 15:38	16:1 - 17:41
A	B	C	B'	A'
21 Years	28 Years	90 Years	62 Years	13 Years

**VII. Suggested Resources**

Davis, Dale Ralph. *1 Kings: The Wisdom and the Folly*. Focus on the Bible. Geanies House, Great Britain, 2002.

———. *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*. Focus on the Bible. Geanies House, Great Britain, 2005.

House, Paul R. *1, Kings*. New American Commentary. Grand Rapids: Broadman & Holman, 1995.

Patterson, Richard D., and Hermann J. Austel. "1, 2 Kings." In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*. 12 volumes. Edited by Frank E. Gæbelein, 4:1-300. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1988.