

# ABIDE

## DISCOVERING YOUR OLD TESTAMENT



### THE KING PARADE

#### 1 & 2 KINGS

In approaching these two books, you are really going to have to pay very close attention to whom the author is writing about in certain chapters. In the beginning of our journey, a snapshot was given of Israel's history and there was a brief mention of the split of the kingdom. Well, this is where that happens. And once again, this is what makes this section so challenging. In these two books, you are covering a period of 400 years of history in a very condensed form, and having to toggle between two different nations.

However, in searching for the simplest way to introduce these two books, it would be that 1 Kings provides the reader with details about how the kingdoms become divided, and 2 kings gives details about how both kingdoms become destroyed.

#### *How to Think About 1 & 2 Kings*

The best way to approach the books of 1 and 2 Kings, is to follow the major events that led to the split and captivity of the nation of Israel. Doing this will allow you to navigate through these books with far greater ease.

**Disruption (1 Kings 1-11):** You first hear the rumblings of disruption within the reign of Solomon. However, you wouldn't know that right away by reading the beginning of Solomon's life— Solomon actually begins with a very promising rule. In 1 Kings 3, you see God actually approached Solomon for the first of two times, and asked Solomon to express what he wanted from God. This is when you learn something extremely valuable about God— He loves when you ask for wisdom. And the reason we know that is because when God asked Solomon to tell Him what he wanted, Solomon told God that he wanted a way to judge and discern so that he could be an effective ruler. This delighted God immensely and 1 Kings 2:12 says, "Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee."

This led to Solomon to be able to accomplish great things during his reign. With this God-given wisdom, God's temple was built, great feats of architecture were accomplished, great prosperity was experienced, and great amounts of land were acquired.

However, in Solomon's wisdom, for political reasons, he took to himself several pagan wives who began to lead his heart astray and caused him to get into idol worship.

Furthermore, because of all of his projects, it placed an undue stress on all of his people as he began treating people more like slaves than subjects.

**Eruption (1 Kings 12):** Once Solomon passes away, we begin reading about his son, Rehoboam. And like his father before him, he starts out quite promising. He convenes a meeting of the older counselors and asks for guidelines of success. And when he did this, it actually sounds like a very wise and reasonable thing to do. In fact, as you continue reading in this chapter, the advice Rehoboam gets is very good information. These older men bring up the fact that his father was actually resented a bit for the way he treated the people in getting all of his building projects done. They told him that if he would just make their burden lighter, all the people would serve him with no problem.

However, Rehoboam calls a second meeting with several young men. Now, this may sound reasonable at first, but what was really happening is that he really didn't like the advice that he received. If you are looking for specific advice, and keep looking hard enough, you'll eventually find someone who agrees with you. And this is exactly what Rehoboam did. These young men told him to make the burden even greater and by the time you reach 1 Kings 12:11 you read these words, "And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions."

This response led to a set policy, and the set policy led to a complete civil disruption. The 10 tribes to the north remained loyal to Rehoboam and were called Israel, and the remaining two tribes to the south (Judah and Benjamin), were ruled by Rehoboam's brother Jeroboam, and were called Judah. Judah was noted to have remained loyal to the Davidic line of rule; although as we will see in a moment, neither kingdom ultimately remained faithful to God.

**Corruption (1 Kings 12:25- 22:53):** The introduction of idol worship really becomes prominent in these chapters—especially for the northern kingdom, Israel. Israel has wicked king after wicked king that occupies the throne, sending the people further and further down the road to absolute moral depravity and chaos.

The southern Kingdom, Judah, fared a little better and every once in a while you will read of a good king, but mostly, a wicked king occupied the throne, leading the people into idolatry.

It is in this section that you see the great opposition of God's prophet, Elijah against the worshippers of Baal (1 Kings 17:1-22:53).

**Destruction (2 Kings 1:1-25:21):** In the opening pages of 2 Kings, what you are reading is a continuation of a battle for the soul of God's people. There is drama between the northern and southern kingdoms, and drama between God's prophets, as they continue to push for righteousness, and God's people, as they continue to push for Baal.

The first 13 chapters are riddled with pagan strife and struggle as God continues to show mercy to both of these kingdoms but eventually, both of them fall.

Israel to the north went through 19 kings, over a period of about 250 years before God finally gave them over to the Assyrians in 721 B.C., and Judah went through 20 kings, over a period of 350 years, before God gave them over to the Babylonians in 587 B.C.

In these books you've got front row seats watching a parade of kings into their royal throne rooms and you get to watch what ultimately led to the complete destruction of the entire nation and the complete captivity of all of God's people because of their rebellion.

### *What to Look for in 1 & 2 Kings*

There are several powerful narratives that take place in these books; and just like 1 and 2 Samuel, it makes this section a very interesting read.

**Typology:** There is typology all over 1 & 2 Kings and the reason for this is because every time you read of an evil king, you're reading about a type of the Antichrist. In these instances you see absolutely no blessing. Instead, the reigns of these wicked

kings were marked with enemies, famine, drought, stress, and oppression. This is unfortunately what the northern kingdom experienced. They had nothing but wicked kings.

On the other hand, there was Judah. Judah had a few good kings which included David, Solomon, Hezekiah, Joash, and Jehoshaphat. The good kings that you read of were always types of Christ. And under their rule, you always see that enemies were defeated, agriculture flourished, plentiful amounts of rain at the right season, and all around prosperity. These rulers were a picture of the perfect rule that Christ will bring about at His return.

**Prophets:** It is in the book of Kings where you begin to see the prophets take a more prominent role. The two prominent prophets you will run into in Kings are the prophets Elijah and Elisha. God uses each of these men in a powerful way to speak to God's people; but what you find is that they each had separate roles. For instance, if you study the life of Elijah, you will notice that he had the task of acting as a hammer on behalf of God's law. He used God's law to speak against immorality and paganism and combated both of these things at the highest levels of government. In a study of Elisha, you will find that his ministry was one of grace. It was his job to tell people of God's glory and call people back to experience God's greatness and forgiveness.

**Prayer:** It is easy to get caught up in the misery and brokenness of many of these kings. And because much of Kings is placed in a narrative format, it is easy to identify the various events happening during any given section. However, what will really bless you is to look for the various reasons God's kings came to Him in supplication.

Solomon used this word 'supplication' several times in his dedication of the temple. You find this word often when reading of impending trouble in different situations, or simply in times when a person needed God's favor or mercy.

It is in these prayers where we can not only gain a little more insight as to the thoughts and attitudes of those offering the prayers, but also to help to see how they approached God and finding out what they knew to be true about God. Knowing these things can significantly enhance your personal prayer life.

### *What to Gain from 1 & 2 Kings*

If you take the whole of these two books, you'll see the kingdom rise a bit under the rule of Solomon, and then take a sharp turn downward before the split and certainly after. But as we watch this development, there are definitely a few valuable lessons we can take away from this parade of kings:

**Great Wisdom is Still No Match for Compromise:** Once we begin to watch Solomon's decline near the middle of 1 Kings, we find that this occurs because he was compromising key values in order to gain a political and economic legacy. He compromised the integrity of his people by treating them like slaves, and he compromised his relationship with God by creating alliances with pagan cultures through marriage. And even with all of his wisdom, he still lost respect from his people, and he still found himself engaging in paganism through those political alliances. Even as great as God allowed him to be, he was still no match for these compromises. It doesn't matter how wise you are. If you compromise truth, you will fall.

**Great Prosperity is Still No Match for God Judgment:** There were several occasions where God's people were in a tremendous position financially. More than this, they were in a tremendous position spiritually. But all of their prosperity could not save them once God's judgment came into the picture. And the same is still true for us. Prosperity is deceptive in that it makes us feel powerful, accomplished, and valuable. It makes a person or a people feel superior and self-sufficient. But once God's judgment comes to rectify the situation, all of the prosperity in the world can't stop God from doing what he will to any person or any people.

**Great Sin is Still No Match for God's Promises:** Israel experienced a tremendous amount of failure. This despite the fact that God had showed a great amount of patience and had given a great amount of warning by way of His prophets. But they

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still fell and were still carried away. But God never forgot His promise. He still was going to use these people and He still would bring about salvation through these people though they were worthy of abandonment and death because of their sin.

In this study we have highlighted many times the importance of God's promises throughout Scripture. No doubt, this subject will be brought to light many more times before this study is complete. But the reason it is continually mentioned is because God's promises are the basis of our entire hope. Our very salvation rests on God's promises. Our sin is great. There is no way to repay it. There is no way to dismiss it on our own. It is inseparably bound to us. But God gave us hope in Christ. And it is that very promise that we cling to... we know that great sin is still no match for God's promise of eternal salvation.



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