

1 KINGS OVERVIEW –

I want to start this morning with a Bible Study Tip – important that you spend some time during the week reviewing the past message. I should have been emphasizing this more. We are covering so much ground in this class each week so quickly – you need time to slow down and interact with the message. I have posted my notes on my website – bibleoutlines.com – Go to the OT; click on the book we just studied – say 2 Samuel from last week – then you see a bunch of buttons giving you access to various types of content – I want to explain these again to you.

Today we move into our study of the book of **1 Kings**. When it was written – maybe by the prophet Jeremiah or one of his contemporaries – it was combined as one book with 2 Kings. But just as 1&2 Samuel focused on the 3 key figures of Samuel, Saul and David, the various kings of the nation will be the subject matter of 1&2 Kings. This selective historical account will cover the rest of Israel's history from the reign of Solomon with his rise and fall to the division of the kingdom into Israel and Judah and then all the way until the Assyrian Captivity of the northern kingdom and the Babylonian Captivity of the southern kingdom. 1&2 Chronicles do not move the story forward – they just provide a review of the same timeframe from the perspective of the priests. The rest of the OT books – the books of poetry and the prophetic books, will fit within this overall chronological timeframe. So it is very important to get a good grasp of the events recorded in 1&2 Kings.

**Big Idea: EVEN THE MOST GLORIOUS KINGDOM RAPIDLY DECLINES
DUE TO IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE**

For a brief moment it seemed that Israel had reached the pinnacle of its destiny. But beneath the surface, cracks were already forming:

- The cracks of human ambition and power struggles
- The cracks of divided loyalty and apostasy
- The cracks of disobedience and idolatry

Key Verse: 1 Kings 11:11

“So the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.’”

Summary:

As King David approaches death, he anoints his son, Solomon, to reign as king – cutting off a potential coup attempt by Adonijah. Solomon starts off well, humbly asking the Lord for the ability to guide God's people wisely. His reign achieves unprecedented heights of wealth and reputation among the nations as Israel's borders and trade and political influence expand. But as Solomon accumulates 700 foreign wives and 300 concubines through political and trade alliances, his heart is turned away from the Lord as God had warned.

Somehow, despite his immense privileges and blessings, his allegiance becomes divided and he ends up promoting the worship of foreign gods. Because of this, after his death the Lord tore the

kingdom out of his son's hand and the people of Israel divide into two nations, the northern 10 tribes = the kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah. The tribe of Benjamin is a buffer zone in the middle that ends up in the camp of the southern kingdom. But in the midst of this chaos, the Lord remains faithful to His covenant promises to David.

The remainder of 1 Kings records various rulers in both Israel and Judah. The reign of David, *the man after God's own heart*, becomes the standard for theological evaluation. But as we move through the end of the monarchy in 2 Kings, we find that all of the kings of Israel prove unfaithful and only a handful of the kings of Judah are praiseworthy.

In this period we see the rise of the prophet class led by Elijah and followed by Elisha in 2 Kings. The confrontations with wicked King Ahab over Baal worship are epic. But despite the miraculous success granted by the Lord, God's prophetic warnings go unheeded and the nation quickly declines and heads toward the judgment of captivity – the northern kingdom conquered by Assyria in 732 B.C. and the southern kingdom eventually by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

Structure of the Book:

I. (1-11) THE FORTY YEAR REIGN OF KING SOLOMON – RISE, GLORY AND DECLINE

II. (12-22) THE FIRST EIGHTY YEARS OF THE DIVIDED TWO KINGDOMS – CONFRONTATION OVER IDOLATRY

(especially looking at the epic confrontation between the prophet Elijah and King Ahab)

I. (1-11) THE FORTY YEAR REIGN OF KING SOLOMON – RISE, GLORY AND DECLINE

- (1:1 – 2:46) SOLOMON'S RISE

(1:1-53) Saving the Throne for Solomon --

The Messianic Promise of a Davidic Kingdom survives a bumpy transition as Solomon succeeds David on the throne

The reign of King David is winding down. He is on his deathbed (although he will continue to live for a number of years). His physical strength has dissipated and his active involvement in governing affairs has dwindled. It can be questioned how much he was aware of what was taking place in the kingdom. Despite the Lord's clear choice of Solomon as his successor, King David had not taken any public steps to navigate an **orderly transition of power**. There must have been much intrigue in royal circles regarding what would take place upon the king's death. Driven by selfish ambition as well as by a sense of entitlement as the oldest surviving child of King David, Adonijah seeks to step into this power vacuum and claim the throne for himself.

1:5 “Now Adonijah the son of Haggith [one of David's wives or concubines] *exalted himself, saying, ‘I will be king.’*”

Amnon and Absalom had been killed earlier. We don't hear anything of Chileab. It would have been natural for Adonijah to put himself forward – especially when he had the support of the military commander Joab and the high priest Abiathar.

Father's Day Message:

“And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, ‘Why have you done so?’”

Taking the easy way out and avoiding the messiness of confrontation and discipline might seem attractive in the short term, but it always has negative long term consequences.

This was a critical juncture in Israel's history. At stake was the Messianic promise of the Davidic line through Solomon. The Lord used His servant Nathan to step into the gap and set in motion the necessary corrective action to thwart the political takeover and protect the throne for Solomon.

God always sovereignly accomplishes His kingdom agenda.

This should encourage us today. Even if we live in the midst of a wicked and corrupt culture; even if our days seem more dominated by darkness than light; God is still at work and accomplishing His purposes.

(2:1-12) Passing the torch of leadership securely –

Leadership transitions must deal decisively with issues impacting the peace and security of God's people

(2:1-4) David's Charge to Solomon --

“As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying, ² ‘I am going the way of all the earth. Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man. ³ And keep the charge of the LORD 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, ⁴ so that the LORD 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.’”

(2:10-12)

“Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. ¹¹ And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem. ¹² And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.”

(2:13-46) Secure establishment of Solomon's kingdom –

Solomon securely establishes his kingdom by decisively dealing with arrogant enemies

First order of business for the new king was to settle some old scores to secure the kingdom –

- Execution of Adonijah
- Execution of Joab

- Shows kindness to those who had been loyal to David (:7)
 - Deals with Shimei who had cursed David
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B. (3:1 – 4:34) SOLOMON’S WISDOM AND REIGN

(3:1-28) The Priority of Wisdom (Discernment) = Foundational for Governing God’s People in Security and Righteousness

The ability to make righteous judgments in complex situations is a gift from God. It is to Solomon’s credit that he valued this gift over any type of personal exaltation or prosperity. He humbly confesses his inadequacy to effectively govern God’s elect people apart from this gift. He praises God for His faithfulness to his father David. He demonstrates a love for the Lord that will be compromised later in life as his wives and possessions corrupt his heart. But at the outset of his reign he seems positioned for governmental success and divine blessing. The proof of his wisdom comes by way of his bold solution to the famous dispute between the two harlots over the dead baby.

(:1) Consolidating the Kingdom via Political Alliances

“Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.”

Similar political and trade alliances led to the accumulation of so many wives and concubines. But at least at this point Solomon still remains focused on his main mission.

(:2) Cultural Compromises

“The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.”

(:3) Commitment to the Lord

“Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”

What a beautiful characterization of a godly man: Solomon loved the Lord and Obeyed the Lord.

“*except*” – this caveat word gives a glimpse into seeds of a **divided heart** which will lead to national division and destruction

2 basic problems with high places:

- o Detracted from the focus on the central sanctuary
- o Degenerated into the syncretistic practices of the Canaanites

(:5) Choice afforded to Solomon by way of a blank check

“In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, ‘Ask what you wish me to give you.’”

(:6) Continuity with the promises of the Davidic Covenant

“Then Solomon said, ‘Thou hast shown great lovingkindness to Thy servant David my father, according as he walked before Thee in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward Thee; and Thou hast reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.’”

(:9) Consciousness of his need for divine guidance to rule well

“So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?”

(:16-22) Case of the 2 mothers fighting over one son – Demonstration of Solomon’s gift of Wisdom

(:28) Conclusion

“When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.”

(4:1-34) Orderly Administration of the Kingdom

(:1-19) Main Officials and Deputies of Solomon’s Kingdom

(:20-28) Manifest Prosperity and Security

(:21) Expanded and Secure Borders

“Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.”

(:24-25) Enjoyment of Peace and Security

For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River; and he had peace on all sides around about him. So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.”

C. (5:1 – 9:9) SOLOMON’S BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AND PALACE

(5:1-18) Preparations for Temple Construction

The details for procuring the necessary lumber, transporting it by sea, providing the costly stones for the foundation, and conscripting and deploying the necessary workforce are all spelled out

here. Solomon excels in the planning and preparation for this massive project as well as in the delegation of oversight and labor responsibilities. But it is the divine promise that undergirds the successful undertaking of this highly Messianic task.

(:5) Intentions of Solomon in Line with Divine Prophecy

“And behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD 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.’”

(:7) Recognition of Solomon’s Gift of Wisdom from the Lord

“And it came about when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said, ‘Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son over this great people.’”

(6:1 – 7:51) Details of the Temple Construction

How casual are we in our approach to the Lord? A study of the construction of Solomon’s Temple should elevate our sense of privilege of the access we have to the glorious majestic presence of the God the Universe. We need to recapture a sense of the glory of the Lord; of His beauty; of His holiness; of His purity; of how precious He should be to His redeemed who can only enter His presence by the blood of His Son.

(6:12-13) Covenant Reminder

“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. And I will dwell among the sons of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel.”

Dale Ralph Davis: Above all, I suggest that the splendor of the temple is meant to reflect the splendor of Israel’s God, that the temple’s **gold** points to Yahweh’s **glory**. It was a world in which kings built or refurbished lavish temples as appropriate tributes to their gods and goddesses. In such a world why should Yahweh look like a discount store deity with a government loan house? If there is an indulgence that is sinful (cf. **Luke 12:17–21**), there is an extravagance that is godly (cf. **Mark 14:3–9**). And perhaps the message of temple gold is that nothing cheap should be offered to Yahweh but only what is a tribute commensurate with his splendor, whether, for example, in formal worship, biblical scholarship, or quality of daily work.

(8:1-66) Dedication of the Temple

SHEKINAH GLORY FILLS SOLOMON’S TEMPLE AS THE ARK OF THE COVENANT FINDS ITS HOME FOR THE JOYFUL MANIFESTATION OF THE PRESENCE AND BLESSING OF GOD ON HIS COVENANT PEOPLE

(:6) Most Holy Place Provides the Home for the Ark of the Covenant

“Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim.”

(:10-13) Significance of the Ark in the Temple

“And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, ¹¹ so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD. ¹² Then Solomon said, ‘The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud. ¹³ “I have surely built Thee a lofty house, A place for Thy dwelling forever.””

(:22-53) Solomon’s Prayer of Dedication

(:27-30) Paradox of the Transcendence of God v. the Immanence of God

1. (:27) Transcendence of God = Can’t be Contained in This Temple

“But will God indeed dwell on the earth?

*Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee,
how much less this house which I have built!”*

2. (:28-30) Immanence of God = Responsive to His People

“Yet have regard to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee today; 29 that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which Thou hast said, ‘My name shall be there,’ to listen to the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place. 30 And listen to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place; hear and forgive.”

(9:1-9) Covenant Reminders of Blessings and Cursings

D. (:9:10 – 10:29) SOLOMON’S GLORY BUT SIGNS OF SLIPPAGE

(9:10-28) Troubling Signs of Slippage despite outward kingdom prosperity
Political and trade alliances multiplied

(10:1-29) Testimony to Solomon’s Wisdom and Wealth

(:6-9) The Testimony of the Queen of Sheba Regarding Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom Connected to Divine Blessing

1. (:6-7) Verifying Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom

a. (:6) Extraordinary Reputation

“Then she said to the king, ‘It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. ”

b. (:7) Eye-Witness Verification

“Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.”

2. (:8-9) Attributing it All to Divine Blessing
 - a. (:8) The Impact of Divine Blessing

“How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.”
 - b. (:9a) The Source of Divine Blessing

“Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever,”
 - c. (:9b) The Motivation of Divine Blessing

“therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.”
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Despite Solomon’s splendor – Christ would say *“A greater than Solomon is here”*

Matt. 12:42 *“The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”*

Portrayal of Christ – typology of Solomon

- His fabled wisdom – Christ became for us wisdom from God **1 Cor. 1:30**
 - His fame and glory and wealth and honor foreshadows Christ in his coming Kingdom
 - His rulership brings knowledge, peace, worship until its demise
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E. (11:1-43) SOLOMON’S FALL – DISOBEDIENCE AND IDOLATRY CAUSE THE DOWNFALL OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM REQUIRING DIVINE DISCIPLINE

We have already witnessed the glory of Solomon’s great reign. But despite the riches of God’s blessing in terms of both wisdom and wealth, we have also seen the seeds of kingdom disintegration. Solomon’s decline did not happen all at once. It was a slow process of his heart turning away from undivided loyalty to the God of the Covenant. Now in **Chapter 11**, the fatal flaw for Solomon will be magnified. His demise will lead to the dividing of the kingdom. God’s discipline is dramatic and severe. We must analyze the reasons for Solomon’s fall and guard our hearts against the sins of compromise and idolatry.

(:1-13) Marriage Compromise leading to Idolatry

(:1-4) Fatal Flaw

“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women, ² from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, ‘You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.’ Solomon held fast to these in love. ³ And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned his heart away. ⁴ For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and

*his heart was **not wholly devoted to the LORD** his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”*

(:14-40) Divine Discipline – 3 Adversaries to Solomon Raised Up

- **(:14-22)** Hadad the Edomite
- **(:23-25)** Rezon Son of Eliada
- **(:26-40)** Jeroboam Son of Nebat – the prophet Ahijah comes to him and presents a picture object lesson of a new cloak – “*Take for yourself 10 pieces*” **(:31)**

(:41-43) End of Solomon’s Reign

“Now the rest of the acts of Solomon and whatever he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? ⁴² Thus the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. ⁴³ And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David, and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.”

II. (12-22) THE FIRST EIGHTY YEARS OF THE DIVIDED TWO KINGDOMS – CONFRONTATION OVER IDOLATRY

A. (12:1-33) DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM — RASH ARROGANCE AND RELIGIOUS EXPEDIENCY SPLINTER GOD’S PEOPLE AND PROVIDE A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY

Chapter 12 marks the watershed mark in the Book of Kings. The reign of Solomon has ended with serious spiritual slippage from the high water mark of its glorious prosperity and blessing. The seeds of compromise and idolatry will now quickly lead to the disintegration of the kingdom as the leadership vacuum resulting from Solomon’s death is contested. The rash arrogance of Rehoboam and the religious expediency of Jeroboam lead to a divided kingdom devoid of God’s covenant blessing. The narrative now switches to a two track format with occasional reform in the Southern Kingdom but persistent wickedness in the Northern Kingdom.

There were several reasons for the division of the kingdom. The primary one was Solomon's divided heart. However, tribal factions and Solomon's oppressive exploitation of the people were contributing causes. However, through it all God remained faithful in carrying out His kingdom agenda.

(:1-24) Rehoboam’s rash arrogance alienates Israel unnecessarily and splinters God’s people
Issue: People were complaining about the difficulty of their labors in service to the king in his magnificent building projects.

Two contrasting types of counsel:

- **The more mature elders: (:6b-7)**
“‘How do you counsel me to answer this people?’ ⁷ Then they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to this people today, will serve them, grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’”

- **The rash counsel of his young peers** – (:9-11) – “If you thought your service was tough before, wait until you see how hard I will drive you”
“Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke.”

(:25-33) Jeroboam’s religious expediency substitutes human invention for divine design and provides a false sense of security

Jeroboam had a problem: What is the northern kingdom going to do about worship?

- (:25-27) Worship Centers – Substitute Geography to Replace Jerusalem
- (:28-30) Worship Symbols – Substitute Golden Calves to Replace the Cherubim above the ark of the covenant for symbolizing strength, power and majesty
- (:31-33) Worship Institutions – Substitute Grandiose Religious Trappings to replace the sacrificial altar, the priests and the mandatory feasts

Kings of Israel (North)	Kings of Judah (South)
Jeroboam I: Led secession of Israel	Rehoboam: Son of Solomon; first king
Nadab: Son of Jeroboam I	Abijah (Abijam; Abia): Son of Rehoboam
Baasha: Overthrew Nadab	Asa: Probably son of Abijah
Elah: Son of Baasha	Jehoshaphat: Son of Asa
Zimri: Overthrew Elah	Jehoram (Joram): Son of Jehoshaphat; husband of Athaliah
Omri: Overthrew Zimri	Ahaziah: Son of Jehoram and Athaliah
Ahab: Son of Omri; husband of Jezebel	Athaliah: Daughter of King Ahab of Israel and Jezebel; wife of Jehoram; only queen to rule over Judah
Ahaziah: Son of Ahab	Joash (Jehoash): Son of Ahaziah
Jehoram (Joram): Son of Ahab	Amaziah: Son of Joash
Jehu: Overthrew Jehoram	Uzziah (Azariah): Son of Amaziah
Jehoahaz (Joahaz): Son of Jehu	Jotham: Regent, later King; son of Uzziah
Jehoash (Joash): Son of Jehoahaz	Ahaz: Son of Jotham
Jeroboam II: Son of Jehoash	Hezekiah: Son of Ahaz; husband of Hephzi-Bah
Zechariah: Son of Jeroboam II	Manasseh: Son of Hezekiah and Hephzi-Bah
Shallum: Overthrew Zechariah	Amon: Son of Manasseh
Menahem: Overthrew Shallum	Josiah (Josias): Son of Amon
Pekahiah: Son of Menahem	Jehoahaz (Joahaz): Son of Josiah
Pekah: Overthrew Pekahiah	Jehoiakim: Son of Josiah
Hoshea: Overthrew Pekah; kingdom overthrown by Assyrians under Sargon II	Jehoiachin: Son of Jehoiakim
Good Bad Mixture of good & bad	Zedekiah: Son of Josiah; kingdom overthrown by Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar

B. (13:1-34) THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORD OF GOD — NOTHING TRUMPS THE WORD OF GOD

(:1-10) The Word of God reigns supreme over the resistance offered by human authority and power – Interaction between Jeroboam and the man of God

(:11-32) The Word of God reigns supreme over the deception caused by counterfeit authority and power – Interaction between the old prophet and the man of God

(:33-34) No Repentance for Jeroboam – Rejection of the Supreme Word of God

“After this event Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places. ³⁴ And this event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.”

C. (14:1-31) THE END OF JEROBOAM AND OF REHOBOAM

(:1-20) Judgment on Jeroboam’s Legacy

The serious illness of his son (and potential heir to the throne in Israel) drove Jeroboam to seek assistance from God through the prophet Ahijah. Instead of any type of positive message, Jeroboam’s wife (with her deception exposed) received a wide-ranging proclamation of deserved condemnation and judgment. The death of their son served as the sign that God will fulfil the remainder of His promised judgments to wipe out the line of Jeroboam. Still there is no evidence of any remorse or repentance on the part of Jeroboam. He becomes the pattern for the wickedness of the kings of the N. Kingdom.

3 threats: death of his son; destruction of his dynasty; removal from the land

(:21-31) Downward spiral of Judah under Rehoboam

It is amazing to witness how quickly Judah spirals down into such a pitiful condition. Despite maintaining the focal point of the prescribed worship system revolving around Solomon’s Temple in Jerusalem, the people adopt the pagan practices of their surrounding neighbors. God’s blessing of material prosperity as symbolized in the plentitude of gold is now plundered by the enemy to the south that represents the ungodly world system that is opposed to the God of Israel. So we see Judah surrendering her wealth to Shishak from Egypt. Ended up substituting bronze shields for the gold shields that were carried off.

Peter Pett: Shishak must have chuckled with delight when he saw his protégé Jeroboam made king of Israel, and then the two countries battling with each other. He had bided his time, waiting for them to weaken each other, and now he was ready to strike. He came with massive forces and his aim was twofold, firstly to secure the trade routes for Egypt, and secondly in order to obtain booty. He would die a year later.

D. (15:1 – 16:34) KINGS LEADING UP TO AHAB

Cover several decades in just 2 chapters; see northern kingdom of Israel in quick decline
Spiritual decline leads to decline in other areas

Ungodliness affects more than just religion; it affects your whole life and all the different spheres in which you interact; personal morality matters

Pattern of Introducing each king:

- 1) his name and relation to his predecessor;
- 2) his date of accession in relationship to the year of the contemporary ruler in the other kingdom;
- 3) his age on coming to the throne (for kings of Judah only);
- 4) his length of reign;
- 5) his place of reign;
- 6) his mother's name (for Judah only); and
- 7) spiritual appraisal of his reign.

We are now immersed into the **evaluations** of the various kings who governed over the southern and northern kingdoms. God constantly monitors our degree of faithfulness and obedience. We know that the Lord's evaluation of Israel will be that they continually practiced wickedness and idolatry. Down south in Judah there will be occasional kings who demonstrated some measure of spiritual reform and faithfulness to the Lord. Asa is the first of those. But even Asa fell away in his later years. We see the impact of the previous generation on their children as well as the personal responsibility of each king to choose for himself to obey the covenant requirements. It is so important not just to start with fervor and commitment, but to persevere in faith and obedience and end well.

E. (17:1 – 19:18) ELIJAH'S CONFRONTATION WITH AHAB OVER IDOLATRY

(17:1-24) Elijah's Grand Entrance

Israel's apostate condition had blossomed into full foliage with the widespread adoption of Baal worship. Pagan practices were overtaking the land at a rapid pace. King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel were a blight on the nation. But God would not remain silent. The sudden intervention of Elijah highlights the importance of his judgmental message of coming drought by the Word of the Lord. The gauntlet has been thrown down and it will soon be evident to all that the fertility god of Baal stands impotent before the true sovereign of the universe. God alone can be trusted for all of our needs.

God sends a severe drought on the land – quite a blow to Baal worshipers – showing the impotence of their fertility god. Now Elijah and his God are going to control the weather for the next 3 years.

(17:1) "Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.'"

Series of miracles:

Sustained by the brook Cherith and bread and meat brought to him by ravens
Then sustained by the widow at Zarephath – replenishing of the bowl of flour and jar of oil

The resurrection miracle of the raising up of the widow's son

(18:1-46) Showdown on Mount Carmel – Only the real God is a Consuming Fire – Fear and Serve Him!

Elijah challenged the people to declare their loyalty to the one true God. He spelled out the terms of the contest in such a way that it was clear he did not mind giving every advantage to the camp of Baal worshipers. But the futility of idol worship is captured in this dramatic scene on Mount Carmel and the false prophets are summarily executed. There can be no denying the impotence of Baal and the sovereign power of the Lord. When God relents from His discipline and sends the much-needed rain, there is cause for celebration.

(:21) Challenge = Who is the Real God and Whom Will You Follow?

*“And Elijah came near to all the people and said,
‘How long will you hesitate between two opinions?
If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’”*

(19:1-18) Discouragement over Israel's persistent apostasy

Putting a different twist on this story – no so much a psychological portrait of terror and self-pity; instead we must view Elijah's emotions and actions from the perspective of his zeal for God:

Dale Ralph Davis: In the traditional Hebrew text the first word of verse 3 is a form of the verb *rā'āh* and may be rendered, ‘*And/then he saw,*’ or ‘*When he saw (that).*’ However, a few Hebrew manuscripts read a form of *yārē*, ‘*to fear, be afraid.*’ The LXX and derivative versions follow this latter reading. This reading (‘*Then he was afraid*’) seems to fit so naturally that most all modern English versions adopt it (e.g. niv, nasb, nrsv; the last does not even indicate ‘*he saw*’ as an alternative). These two verbs look very much alike, especially in the ‘imperfect’ verb form used here, and so can be easily confused. Which was likely original?

Elijah saw that in spite of the Carmel Apologetic **nothing was going to change in Israel**; Jezebel was still wearing not only the pantyhose but the pants in the kingdom and calling the shots.

It sounds like Elijah is **charging Israel with apostasy** rather than crying over a failed ministry. Indeed I think **verses 13–14** constitute a formal lawsuit against Israel. After the covenant Lord comes, he puts the formal question to the prosecutor (v. **13b**), who then levels the formal charges against the accused (v. **14**). In my view, **Elijah's mission at Horeb was to bring covenant accusation against Israel for breach of the covenant. . .**

Elijah was not terrified by Jezebel but broken by her **unrepentant paganism** and by her continuing power throughout the nation. Keep the redemptive-historical situation in mind, especially the significance of Horeb. Elijah was meeting God at Moses' Place;

Yahweh's own nudge had directed him there. And Elijah's mission there was to bring accusation against Israel for ongoing breach of covenant.

(19:18) *"Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him."*

The faithful Covenant-keeping God is not defeated. His kingdom agenda will prevail. He continues to perform His sovereign works as part of his overall redemptive program. He will fulfil His promises to Abraham and to David.

F. (20:1 – 22:40) AHAB'S REPEATED AND FATAL OPPOSITION TO GOD'S WORD

Period of cooperation between the 2 kingdoms – joined forces to fight several battles;
But the cooperation was based on shared apostasy --

G. (22:41-53) NEW RULERS — JEHOSEPHAT AND AHAZIAH — THE GOOD AND THE BAD – GOD'S PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO CONSISTENTLY FOLLOW HIS WAYS

THEOLOGICAL THEMES:

- 1) Disobedience to God's law and idolatry bring judgment
- 2) Allegiance to God and His covenant must be whole-hearted
- 3) Warnings from the prophets (God's messengers) must be taken seriously
- 4) Despite rebellion and apostasy, God remains faithful to His promises to King David – anticipating the Messiah-King

Big Idea: EVEN THE MOST GLORIOUS KINGDOM RAPIDLY DECLINES
DUE TO IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE

WHY STUDY THIS BOOK?

- To fill in the gaps of our knowledge regarding the history of Israel and Judah throughout the succession of the various kings as told through the lens of the prophets of God. This background informs our biblical theological perspective.
- To enjoy some of the epic stories surrounding Elijah and King Ahab. **Jason Seville:** "Through these men [Elijah and Elisha], God is verifying his message and showing his power in ways paralleled by very few parts of Scripture. It's only right to introduce your church to these men and their ministries who point us back to Moses and forward to the greater Prophet who accomplishes the greater resurrection."
- To understand the importance of obedience to the covenantal obligations and how disobedience, idolatry and spiritual compromise lead to kingdom decline.
- To see how seriously God treats sin.
- To elevate the Word of God so that we are willing to stand alone on biblical convictions.

- To highlight the impact of the parents (both positively and negatively) on the spiritual development of their children.
- To gain discernment regarding the insidious nature of false teaching and false counsel.