

# 1 KINGS

## INTRODUCTION

1 Kings really begins with chapter 3 because chapter 1 and 2 should be numbered chapter 25 and 26 of 2 Samuel.

1 Kings was written in about 550 B.C. 1 Kings tells of the kings of Israel and Judah from Solomon to the Babylonian exile. Jewish tradition assigns the authorship to Jeremiah the prophet.

1 and 2 Kings covers about 400 years.

Note: The chief god of the Ammonites was Moloch. It was constructed of brass with a calf's head. Moloch was honored by the sacrificial burning of children. The theory was that a man should offer to his deity what was nearest and dearest to him. The image of metal was made glowing hot by a fire kindled within it. The children were laid in its arms, rolled from there into the fiery lap below. It is not certain whether the children were first slain or whether the children were placed alive in the glowing image. Ezekiel 16:21 suggests the former.

Palestinian excavations have uncovered evidences of infant skeletons in burial places around heathen shrines.

## Chapter 1

Monarchy was new to Israel and the passing of power from one king to the next had only been experienced one time. The people expected David to name his successor, but he had only privately tapped Solomon to succeed him. This left the door open for Adonijah, David's oldest son, to make a bid for the throne.

Chapter 1 and 2 relate how the efforts of Adonijah were foiled and how Solomon was anointed as the third king of the United Kingdom.

## Verses 1-4

1 Kings opens with a sad scene. In the books of Samuel David is a mighty hero, but in 1 Kings he is an old man unable to maintain normal body temperatures, even under a pile of blankets. It was suggested that a young virgin be secured as a companion for David, one whose body would provide warmth to the ailing monarch. Abishag was appointed to minister unto the physical needs of David.

## **Verses 5-10**

In these verses, we see Adonijah's plan to become king. He prepared a chariot and fifty men to run before him to announce his coming. In verse 6, we learn that Adonijah is a "spoiled brat." David was a failure as a father and the young prince thought of himself as his father's favorite and heir to the throne.

A great feast was prepared as the occasion at which Adonijah would have himself proclaimed king. It appears Adonijah did not invite Solomon because he knew he was David's choice as successor. 1 Chronicles 22:9-10

## **Verses 11-14**

Nathan, the prophet learns of Adonijah's plan and so he takes quick action to thwart the conspiracy. Nathan informs Bethsheba of Adonijah's plan and asked her to approach David and remind him of his oath that her son would succeed him.

## **Verses 15-21**

Bethsheba approach's David and says in effect Adonijah plans to become king, but it is you who must make the decision as to your successors.

## **Verses 22-27**

Nathan, the prophet, enters and is announced to King David, where he makes a powerful speech concerning Adonijah's actions.

## **Verses 28-37**

David takes immediate action. Solomon, riding on David's mule was taken down to Gihon for the public anointing. Zadok, the high priest, and Nathan anointed Solomon as king.

## **Verses 38-53**

When the guests of Adonjah heard that Solomon had been anointed king, they departed in fear knowing the penalty for sitting at Adonijah's table. Adonijah being afraid went to the sanctuary and refused to leave until Solomon swore that he would not execute him.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Verses 1-4**

David's death was nearing and it was time to give his final instructions to Solomon. His best advice to Solomon is found in verse 2.

As long as there was a throne, a descendent of David would occupy the throne. Jesus Christ sits upon the throne of the Lord ruling over the Israel of God which is His church.

### **Verses 5-11**

There were some obligations which David had neglected to fulfill that Solomon must carry out. Joab must not be allowed to die a natural death. He must pay for his crimes with his life.

Barzillai's family, who had befriended David, was to be included among those eating at the king's table. Solomon was to execute Shimei for his crime of blasphemy against God's anointed.

Following these instructions to Solomon, David died.

### **Verses 12-35**

After David's death, Adonijah makes another bid for his father's throne, by requesting the hand of Abishag. Bethsheba was taken in by Adonijah's self-pity and his flattery and acted as Adonijah's agent before King Solomon.

Solomon exploded with anger when he learned of Adonijah's request. Solomon saw in Adonijah's request an attempt to usurp the throne. Taking possession of a wife or harem of a deceased king was equivalent to establishment of claim to the throne.

Solomon gave Benaiah, captain of the king's bodyguard, an execution order against Adonijah and it was immediately carried out. Solomon then expels Abiathar from the priesthood and executes Joab still clutching to the horn of the altar.

### **Verses 36-46**

Shimei was summoned to the palace and ordered to build a home in Jerusalem and remain in the capital. If he left the city for any reason, he would be executed for his past crime against the crown. Three years later Shimei set out for Gath to return two runaway slaves and was executed for violating the king's order.

## **Chapter 3**

In this chapter we learn of Solomon's marriage to Pharaoh's daughter. This was strictly political. Solomon needed Egypt's trade concessions to make his claim to the throne secure.

### **Verses 1-3**

Solomon sincerely tried to keep the laws of God but he has one blemish in that he worshiped God in the high places. Such worship was not sinful, but was less than ideal. The temple had not yet been built.

### **Verses 4-28**

God granted Solomon a supernatural endowment of wisdom in answer to his prayer.

### **Verse 7**

Solomon must have only been in his teens when his father died and he was anointed king. Rabbinic tradition has Solomon ascending the throne at age 12, Josephus says he was fourteen. Modern commentators estimate that he was seventeen or eighteen. Solomon already had one son when he became king. 1 Kings 14:21. Pharaoh's daughter was not his first wife.

In verse 16, we see Solomon's wisdom quickly demonstrated as two harlots present their case before him. Babies were born to the harlots just days apart. During the night one rolled over on her child smothering it. She changed her baby with the live baby and when that mother awoke she discovered the dead child was not her baby. Both harlots claimed the living child and so Solomon must decide whose baby it was that was alive. Solomon ordered that a sword be brought to him and that the child be divided in half and given to each harlot.

The real mother was emotionally stirred and cried out for the king to give it to her rival so that the child might live. The other harlot was willing to allow the child to be divided. To Solomon, it was apparent as to who the real mother was and so ordered that the child be given to its real mother.

The people of Israel were impressed with Solomon's wisdom.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Verses 1-6**

Again, we see Solomon displayed in his selecting of faithful and efficient servants.

### **Verses 7-20**

Solomon originated the first system of taxation when he divided his realm into twelve tax districts over which he set a governor. Each governor was responsible to provide the produce and meat necessary to sustain the king's household during the month assigned to him.

## **Verses 21-28**

These verses show the extent and power of Solomon's kingdom.

## **Verses 29-34**

In these verses we learn the magnitude of Solomon's wisdom: verse 29, "like the sand on the seashore;" verse 30, "surpassed the wisdom of the son of the east" (Edomites); and also of "Egypt" famous for their knowledge of geometry, arithmetic, astrology, and medicine. Solomon was also wiser than the men of his nation.

Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, one thousand and five songs of which only three survived, Song of Songs and two psalms. (72 and 127)

## **Chapter 5**

Solomon's building of the temple was his greatest achievement. Chapter 5 tells of the preparations to build the temple built on Mount Moriah. David had collected the materials including the highly valued Lebanon cedars.

Solomon's temple was built with forced labor while Moses' tabernacle was built with free will offerings and volunteer labor.

## **Chapter 6**

This chapter presents a word picture of Solomon's temple. The temple was approximately ninety feet long, thirty feet wide, and forty-five feet high. The temple was never meant for the congregation of worshipers but only for the presence of God and the priests who ministered to the people.

The congregation never met within this building; rather they offered their worship towards it. Worshipers congregated in the great courtyard which surrounded the temple. The temple was seven and one-half years in the building.

## **Chapter 7**

This chapter tells of the construction of the palace complex, Solomon's house. It took thirteen years to build his house. Solomon's house is not his private residence, but a complex of buildings.

Verses 13 through 51 tell of the bronze metalwork of the temple construction. "The Sea" was bronze water basin resting on twelve oxen representing the twelve tribes of Israel as a priestly nation.

## **Chapter 8**

This chapter reveals the dedication of the temple. For centuries God had been worshiped at a portable shrine, a tent which had become tattered and torn.

First, they transported the ark from Zion to the temple. For nearly forty years the ark had been kept in a special tent erected for it on Mount Zion by David. Verse 9 says the ark contained only two tablets of stone. The manna and Aaron's rod were probably removed by the Philistines.

The cloud, the acknowledged symbol of God's presence, appears at the temple's dedication indicating that God now accepts the temple as His dwelling place.

The dedication ceremonies were followed by a great sacrifice. The peace offering consisted of twenty-two thousand oxen and a hundred thousand sheep. These sacrifices also provided meat for the attendees at this prolonged Feast of Tabernacles.

Over the fourteen days, 1565 oxen and 8572 sheep would have been offered each day.

## **Chapter 9**

In this chapter God appears to Solomon in answer to his dedication prayer. It is about thirteen years later. Solomon is at the height of his prosperity and his heart is puffed up with pride. His love for God is waning and he is heading into idolatry.

God reminds Solomon that if he is to enjoy God's Divine favor he must continue to walk in the ways of his father, David. If Solomon did not walk in the ways of his father, Israel would become an example and admonition to others, a figure of disaster which will befall an unfaithful people.

## **Chapter 10**

The Queen of Sheba came to inspect the marvels of Solomon's city and court while on a trade mission. This was a trip of about fifteen hundred miles. Some say the Queen of Sheba became a convert to the religion of Israel based on Matthew 12:42. But notice the wording here in verse 9.

The rest of the chapter describes Solomon's revenues, his throne, and some particulars of his wealth and magnificence. From this chapter onward we can see Solomon's steady decline.

## **Chapter 11**

A long period of peace always proves a serious time of testing for a nation. Because of polygamy, idolatry, excessive taxation, and neglect of the prophetic order, the kingdom of Solomon gradually deteriorated.

Chapter 11 focuses on the royal transgressions and subsequent troubles which befall the nation. It was pride that drove Solomon to violate God's command against the multiplication of wives. He had to excel the other kings not only in glory, wisdom, and power, in armies, chariots, horses, and wives.

His wives turned Solomon's heart away from God and toward pagan deities. Because of Solomon's failure to serve God, God said He would remove Solomon's kingdom from him. Jeroboam rebelled against Solomon and was instrumental in leading ten of the twelve tribes in rebellion.

Solomon reigned forty years and died. His son Rehoboam succeeded him as king.

## **Chapter 12**

Rehoboam was about forty-one years old at his ascension. The Northern tribes were disgruntled because of Solomon's high-handed tactics and rigorous taxation policies. They ask Rehoboam for relief.

Refusing the council of older men, Rehoboam accepted the young men's advice for a "get tough" policy. This caused a division among the tribes and the Northern Kingdom Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam realized that the Northern tribes would continue to travel to Jerusalem; he set up golden calves at Dan and Bethel for them to worship. Jeroboam schemed to promote his cause rather than the cause of God.

Why the calf figure was chosen is uncertain. Some believe the calf symbol was borrowed from Egyptian religion. The calf or bull was a symbol of fertility in nature and of physical strength. Others link the Sinai calf with the cult of the moon god Sin. The shape of the horns symbolized the crescent of the moon. In Canaan the calf was the animal of Baal, god of storm, fertility, and vegetation.

## **Chapter 13**

God sent a prophet to Jeroboam to tell him that a man by the name of Josiah would bring God's wrath upon Bethel and its alters. Three hundred years later it happened. When Jeroboam tried to seize the prophet, God dried up his hand, that is, it was

paralyzed so he could no longer control it. Jeroboam asked the prophet to entreat God that he his hand might be restored.

God had instructed the young prophet not to have fellowship with the apostates and not to return by the way which he had come.

An old prophet caught up with the young prophet and invited him to return to Bethel with him. He fabricated a story about an angelic visitation and the young prophet returned with the old prophet. The punishment of disobedience is severe. As the young prophet left and headed for Judah, a lion pounced upon the man of God and killed him.

## **Chapter 14**

Jeroboam's son became ill and suspecting it might be punitive, he asked Ahijah's help. Realizing that his religious activities would only bring censure and rebuke, he sent his wife to Ahijah. Even though she disguised herself God told Ahijah who was coming and why.

Ahijah's pronounced judgment against Jeroboam was that every male of his house would be cut off. The corpses of these princes would be left unburied. Their bodies would be eaten by wild dogs and birds of prey. This was a dishonor in the eastern mind to be left unburied. Jeremiah 22:19 36:30 (donkey burial)

To prove that what Ahijah had predicted would come to pass, the queen was informed that when she arrived back at the palace, her sons would die. Jeroboam died after reigning twenty-two years and was replaced by his son Nadab.

Rehoboam reigned for seventeen years in Jerusalem. During this time there was extensive religious deterioration and apostasy. Male cult prostitutes sprang up around the land. Whether these were homosexual or heterosexual prostitutes is uncertain.

God sent Pharaoh Shishak to invade Judah. Rehoboam and the nation repented and begged God for mercy. God heard their prayers and spared Jerusalem. Rehoboam died and was buried in the city of David.

## **Chapter 15**

Abijam succeeded Rehoboam as king. He died three years later leaving behind thirty children. During Abijam's reign hostilities erupted with the Northern kingdom. Several Northern cities were annexed by Judah and Jeroboam did not recover its strength. Abijam married fourteen wives and begat thirty-eight sons and daughters. Asa, his son, succeeded him as king.



Asa tried to bring the nation back to God but was not successful. He removed the cult prostitutes and wooden idols. Baasha, king of Israel, attacked Judah and set up a fortress at Ramah.

Asa was concerned and asked Benhadad to attack Israel from the north. This Aramean invasion causes Baasha to retreat to Israel.

Nadab was executed by Baasha after two years on the throne. After killing Nadab, Baasha launched a bloody purge that utterly wiped out the house of Jeroboam. Baasha became king.

## **Chapter 16**

After Baasha's death, his son Elah tried to succeed his father on the throne. After two years on the throne Zimri, the commander of half of Israel's chariot force, conspired against him.

Elah seems to have been a dissolute and drunken incompetent. While in one of his drunken orgies, Zimri assassinated his king and ordered the death of all males relatives of Baasha.

Zimri held the kingship one week. Zimri's troops declared their general to be king. Omri immediately returned to Tirzah the capital. As he approached Zimri committed suicide by burning the palace.

Tibni would not permit Omri's claim to the throne without a fierce civil war. Omri was able to subdue the forces of Tibni and slay the rival.

Omri built a new capital called Samaria, rather than rebuild the old one at Tirzah. After Omri's death, his son, Ahab, becomes king.

Ahab married Jezebel, the daughter of Ethbaal, who ruled over Sidon. From the religious standpoint their marriage was disastrous. Ahab erected a temple, altar, and image of Baal in Samaria.

Hiel undertook what no one had dared to do for five centuries, to rebuild the walls of Jericho. Joshua had warned that anyone who undertook to rebuild the wall would suffer the death of his sons. Hiel's sons died.

## **Chapter 17**

Elijah pronounced a judgment upon Israel that neither dew nor rain would fall upon Israel for three years (an indefinite period). The Baal gods were to be proven impotent

by this drought. After announcing the drought Elijah hid himself at the brook Cherith to escape royal punishment. The ravens brought food to Elijah for months until the brook dried up causing him to travel to Zarephath.

There God arranged for a destitute widow to care for His profit. All she had was a small cake and a little oil which she was preparing for herself and her son's last meal.

Elijah promised her that if she would feed him first her jar of meal and flask of oil would be miraculously preserved until the rains returned to the land. Later the woman's son dies and Elijah prayed to God for his recovery and God revived the lad.

## **Chapter 18**

God directed Elijah to return to his native land where he met Obadiah and instructed him to tell the king of Elijah's return. Ahab did not meet the prophet with a humble and contrite heart, but with sarcasm and belligerence.

Elijah then challenges the king to gather his four hundred fifty prophets of Baal and four hundred prophets of Asherah on Mount Carmel to determine the real God. Elijah asks the Baal prophets to call upon their gods. He even taunts them when there is no response.

Two bulls were sacrificed and placed upon the altar, but no fire was to be set to the wood. Since Baal was supposed to be the god of storm and lightning they were to call upon Baal to light the wood.

When there was no response from the Baal, Elijah repaired the altar which showed him as the restorer of the law and the true religion. Water was then poured into the trench Elijah had made round the altar and on the sacrificial animals. Elijah called upon God to send fire to consume the sacrificial animals and God answered his prayer.

The people fell on their faces and shouted, "The Lord, He is God." Elijah ordered that the Baal prophets be slain. Since the people had repented and the wicked Baal prophets were cut off from the land, the drought could be removed. Elijah's servant went up on the mountain seven times to check out the rain clouds and as God had promised He sent rain upon the drought stricken Israel.

## **Chapter 19**

Learning of the defeat of her god and the death of her prophets, Jezebel vowed she would see Elijah dead. Sudden panic seized Elijah and he momentarily lost his faith in God and fled to the land of Midian where he had an encounter with God.

Elijah sat down under a tree and prayed that he might die but God had an angel awaken him and instructed him to eat.

Later he took up refuge in a cave but God ordered him to the entrance of the cave where God caused a wind to blow which ripped rocks loose from the mountain. But God was not in the wind. Then there was an earthquake and fire but God was not in the fire. Then came the still small voice (lit, a sound of gentle silence) and Elijah knew he was in the presence of God.

God showed Elijah that while the spectacular and dramatic have their place in God's order of things, most often the Divine program is carried out through the still small voice which speaks to the hearts of men. Elijah repented and God gave him three actions to carry out.

1. He was to anoint Hazael king of Aram.
2. He was to anoint Jehu king of Israel.
3. He was to anoint Elisha as his successor.

## **Chapter 20**

Benhadad overcame Samaria taking all Ahab's valuables including his harem and the best of the children. But Ahab refused to allow Benhadad to pillage his palaces and war broke out.

God through one of His prophets sent a message to Ahab that Benhadad would be delivered into Ahab's hand that day. Shortly after the victory the unnamed prophet came to Ahab but this time he brought a warning. Benhadad would return in the spring of the following year. Ahab was to strengthen his army and fortify his capital.

In the spring Benhadad went up to the Israelite fortress of Aphek. God again defeated Benhadad and his advisors suggested he surrender to Ahab because the king of Israel had a reputation for showing mercy to his enemies.

Ahab was lenient to Benhadad and together they formed a coalition which successfully defeated their enemies the Assyrians. God was displeased with Ahab because he had allowed one to escape whom God had ordered destroyed.

A prophet sent by God to Ahab, pretended to be a wounded soldier who had let a prisoner escape. Ahab declared that the soldier was just in his actions, the prophet ripped off his bandages and immediately Ahab knew he was one of God's prophets.

The prophet reminded him that God had ordered Benhadad destroyed but Ahab had released him, so Ahab would forfeit his life for that of Benhadad whom he allowed to escape.

## **Chapter 21**

This chapter deals with an internal breakdown of Israel. Ahab's kingdom had let law and order and the worship of pagan gods destroy the social order. The king was no longer under the Law, but superior to it.

Ahab wanted a parcel of land owned by Naboth to be sold to him. Naboth refused and per the Law of Moses this caused Ahab to grieve. Jezebel urged her husband to leave the matter in her hands. She devised a plan to get Naboth's land. She had Naboth stoned to death and his property given to Ahab.

God did not let the murder of Naboth go unpunished. Elijah was sent to Ahab with words of doom. Dogs would lick his blood and Ahab's house was to be exterminated. Even the dogs would eat Jezebel.

## **Chapter 22**

During the two years of peace Assyria gained power pushing westward through Syria. Ahab realized that he did not have the power to defeat Benhadad. So he tried to form a coalition with King Jehoshaphat but the king insisted they ask the will of God.

The prophet Micaiah was consulted by Jehoshaphat. Ahab hated the prophet because he consistently prophesied evil concerning the king. When Micaiah came before the king he told of a vision of Israel scattered upon the hills with no shepherd. This prophesied Ahab's death and the army returning to their homes.

Based on the prophecy Ahab dressed like a lesser officer to escape all danger. Benhadad's troops singled out the head of Judah as one to destroy but they realized that the leader was not the king of Israel. God intervened and an Aramean soldier's arrow found its mark in the breast of Ahab.

Ahab's soldiers propped him up in the chariot lest the troops become discouraged. That evening the Israelites realized their leader was dead and they returned home.

At the city pool, they washed the chariot of king Ahab and packs of dogs licked up his blood.

Micaiah's prophesy was fulfilled that day.