

FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

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INTRODUCTION TO FIRST AND SECOND KINGS

1. TITLE

The books of First and Second Kings continue the story of the nation of Israel. In the Hebrew Bible, they are the final components of the “Former Prophets” – Joshua, Judges, 1 and 2 Samuel, and 1 and 2 Kings – that collectively tell Israel’s story from the end of the wilderness wanderings to the Babylonian exile.¹

First Kings simply picks up the story where 2 Samuel finishes, and many of the same characters from the latter part of Samuel appear in the opening chapters of Kings – David, Bathsheba, Nathan, Joab, Benaiah, and Solomon.²

That is why the Greek Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament) combined the books of Samuel and Kings into a four-part history called 1, 2, 3 and 4 Kingdoms. The title was shortened to Kings later, and then the first two books were re-named after one of their key characters, Samuel.

Originally, however, the book of Kings told the story of Israel from the reign of King Solomon to the Babylonian exile as one continuous history. The book was eventually divided into two for the practical reason that it is so long it was difficult to fit onto a single scroll. In fact, based on a word count in the original Hebrew language, the book of Kings is the longest book in the Bible (longer than Psalms, Genesis, or Jeremiah).³

However, the division into two separate books is not helpful for us in reading it as a continual story, and so in this lecture series I will be primarily referring to these works in the singular, as the book of Kings.

¹ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings*, The New American Commentary (NAC), Volume 8, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing House, 1995), 15.

² Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings*, Apollos Old Testament Commentary, Volume 9, ed. by David Baker and Gordon Wenham, (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2014), 27.

³ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings*, The Story of God Bible Commentary (SOGBC), ed. by Tremper Longman and Scot McKnight, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2021), 2.

2. AUTHORSHIP AND DATE

Like most of the Old Testament, the book of Kings is anonymous.

“No author is ever mentioned in the text itself. There is not even a major character in the story that stands out as a possible composer of the books.”⁴

Jewish tradition held the author to be Jeremiah, the well-known writing prophet who was prominent in the court of the righteous King Josiah and his less auspicious successors.⁵ The advantage of this idea is that Jeremiah was present at the fall of Jerusalem in 586 BC when the book draws to a close. However, apart from the obvious link between Jeremiah 52 and 2 Kings 24:18ff., there are significant stylistic differences between the rest of the books of Jeremiah and Lamentations, and the book of Kings.⁶ In addition, based on the epilogue (2 Kings 25:27-30) it seems to have been written during the exile.

Other prominent names put forward include the prophet Ezekiel, part of the exiled community in Babylon (Ezek. 1:1), and the priest Ezra, the author of the Ezra-Nehemiah narrative.⁷ However, there is no clear evidence for either of them, and ultimately, we simply do not know who the final author was.

What is clear, is that whoever the author was, they used written historical sources for some of their information. Three specific sources are cited:⁸

a) *The Book of the Annals of Solomon* (1 Kings 11:41). These are probably the official records of Solomon’s reign, and are cited once at his death.

b) *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Israel* (eg. 1 Kings 14:19; 15:31; 16:5; etc.). These records are referred to 18 times through the book and seem to have been the official written records of the northern kings.

c) *The Book of the Annals of the Kings of Judah* (eg. 1 Kings 14:29; 15:7; 15:23; etc.). Likewise, these annals were the official records of the southern kings and are mentioned a total of 15 times.

⁴ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 29.

⁵ Robert Hubbard, “Introduction to 1 Kings,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, ed. by D. A. Carson, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2015), 591.

⁶ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 5.

⁷ Thomas Constable, *Notes on 1 Kings*, 2022 Edition (digital), Plano Bible Chapel, https://www.planobiblechapel.org/tcon/notes/html/ot/1kings/1kings.htm#_ftnref2.

⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 30-31.

3. GENRE

“The word *genre* is a French word meaning “form” or “kind.” When applied to biblical interpretation, the expression *literary genre* simply refers to the different categories or *types* of literature found in the Bible. In the Old Testament, you will encounter narrative, law, poetry, prophecy, and wisdom. The New Testament forms include gospel, history, letter and apocalyptic literature... Each literary genre in the Bible comes with its own set of built-in rules for interpretation.”⁹

So what type of literature is Kings? It can be categorised as both narrative and history. In fact, at Winter Bible School in 2021, Geoff Smith described the book of Samuel as “history in the form of a story for the purpose of instruction.”¹⁰

That is a helpful way of looking at both Samuel and Kings, as it reminds us that these narratives are: a). historically accurate; b). literary masterpieces; and c). theologically and practically important. In other words, the book of Kings is ***accurately written, beautifully constructed, and personally challenging.***

A). History

The book of Kings is clearly presenting the history of the kings who ruled over the united kingdom of Israel (Solomon), and then the divided kingdoms of Israel and Judah until their conquests by the Assyrian and Babylonian empires.

“1 – 2 Kings is a historical book that intends to recount accurately the people and events from a specific time and place in the past. 1 – 2 Kings frequently reports important royal accomplishments and failures; international alliances; royal staff appointments; the construction of palaces, temples, and fortresses; military victories and defeats; peaceful and violent successions, etc.”¹¹

⁹ Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays, *Grasping God’s Word*, 2nd edition, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2005), 120-121.

¹⁰ Geoff Smith, “The Books of First & Second Samuel,” Winter Bible School 2021, 6.

John Olley in his commentary on Kings in “The Bible Speaks Today” commentary series, agrees. He talks about reading the book of Kings today as history, as story, and seeing how God participates in what is happening. See John Olley, *The Message of Kings*, The Bible Speaks Today series (BST), ed. by Alec Motyer, (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity Press, 2011), 21-27.

¹¹ Robert Hubbard, “Introduction to 1 Kings,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 593.

It needs to be noted, however, that Kings, like the other historical books of the Old Testament, is *theological history*. In other words, it is not simply a boring reciting of historical facts and figures, but a very deliberate and prophetic assessment of the reigns of the kings.

“The writer of Kings must be very selective, which implies that what he does include must be of vital importance. It also means the writer has no intention of providing us with an exhaustive history but with a prophecy – a God-authorized version of how we should view that history.”¹²

B). Story

While being a historically accurate record of the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah, the book of Kings is also a well-written work of literature. It is primarily written as a story or narrative, meaning that it has important literary features such as a plot or storyline, characters, settings, and points of view.

“The writer responsible for the present form of Kings is like a movie or documentary producer who carefully selects not only the events but also the angle of view and pace of the narrative.”¹³

“First and Second Kings display all the characteristics found in quality narrative literature. They present engaging, compelling characters. They develop an interesting story from start to finish... Dialogue and editorial comments are interspersed... [They] read like much modern writing.”¹⁴

C). Instruction

The apostle Paul reminds us in 1 Corinthians 10 that the narratives of the Old Testament are meant to instruct and warn us in our walk with God.

“Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did... These things happened to them as examples and were written down as warnings for us, on whom the culmination of the ages has come. So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall!” (1 Corinthians 10:6, 11-12).

¹² Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly: An Exposition of the Book of First Kings*, (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2002), 9-10.

¹³ John Olley, *The Message of Kings* (BST), 22.

¹⁴ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 55.

4. CHRONOLOGY

One of the most difficult aspects of studying the book of Kings is attempting to make sense of the dates of each king's reign. Each of the kings have summaries at the beginning and end of their reigns, giving details such as the length of their reign, the age they became king, and who was on the throne in the other nation when they came to power.

The difficulty is that sometimes at first glance this information doesn't make sense to the readers of Kings. For example, we are given the following information about Abijah, the second king of Judah in the south:

“In the *eighteenth* year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem for three years” (1 Kings 15:1-2).

By normal calculations, that would mean the next king comes to the throne in the 21st year of Jeroboam. But here's what we read about his successor, Asa:

“In the *twentieth* year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem for forty-one years” (1 Kings 15:9-10).

How do we account for what looks to modern readers like a simple mathematical mistake in the story? Following the break-through work of a scholar named Edwin Thiele,¹⁵ scholars have now identified three key insights that help explain some of the difficulties around the chronology of Kings:¹⁶

A). First year calculations. Kings in the southern kingdom of Judah generally counted the first year of a reign from when the king came to the throne, even if there was only half the year left. In the northern kingdom of Israel, however, they only began counting from the first full year of a king's reign.¹⁷ “Thus, a year's difference could exist even when two kings began to rule on the same day.”¹⁸

¹⁵ Edwin Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1983).

¹⁶ See the extensive discussion by Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel: From the Bronze Age Through the Jewish Wars*, (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing House, 1998), 292-300. Also David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 31-32; and Robert Hubbard, “Introduction to 1 Kings,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 594.

¹⁷ Robert Hubbard, “Introduction to 1 Kings,” in *NIV Zondervan Study Bible*, 594.

¹⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 55.

B). Calendar system. To confuse things further, Israel and Judah began a New Year at different times. Generally, the northern kingdom began a new year in the month of Nisan in the spring (March-April), but Judah in the south marked a new year in the month Tishri in autumn (Sept-Oct).¹⁹

C). Co-regencies. Finally, while it is not always readily apparent, several co-regencies took place, particularly in Judah. This is where a son was crowned king while the father was still alive, and they reigned jointly until the father’s death.²⁰

What all of these challenges mean is that there are often some variations between scholars as to the exact dates of when certain kings reigned. This does not undermine the historical reliability of the book of Kings; it simply shows that there are difficulties related to the three issues outlined above.

5. STRUCTURE

Most scholars agree that the book of Kings divides into three major sections, as indicated by the following chart.

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM: THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

1 Kings 1 – 22		2 Kings 1 - 25		
The United Kingdom	The Divided Kingdom		The Solitary Kingdom	
1 Kings 1 – 11	1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17		2 Kings 18 – 25	
The Reign of Solomon	The Partition of Israel		The Road to Exile	
971 BC	931 BC	931 BC	722 BC	722 BC 586 BC



¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 296-298.

A). The United Kingdom

The first quarter of the book is devoted to the reign of the last king of the united kingdom of Israel, Solomon. This shows the importance of Solomon to the narrative, as the son and successor of King David. As we will see, Solomon's reign promised so much, but sadly ended in idolatry and sin, which resulted in the judgment of Yahweh and the division of the kingdom.

B). The Divided Kingdom

Approximately half the book tells the story of the two kingdoms of Israel and Judah, covering a period of around 200 years until the fall of the northern kingdom. The events surrounding the division of the nation into two parts is told, and then the narrative settles into a pattern of moving back and forth between north and south as each new king came to the throne.

In the middle portion of the book, the pace of the narrative slows significantly as it focuses on one particular dynasty in the north, the house of Omri, and in particular his wicked son King Ahab. Ahab's struggle with the prophet Elijah, and his successors ongoing battles with Elijah's successor Elisha, become the key focus in the heart of the book.

After the end of the house of Ahab and the death of Elisha, the normal pattern resumes of moving between north and south, until the northern kingdom of Israel is defeated and taken into captivity by the Assyrian empire in 722 BC.

C). The Solitary Kingdom

The final eight chapters of the story cover the last 150 years of the southern kingdom of Judah, as its fortunes fluctuate under some of its best and worst kings. The narrative ends with Judah also being conquered and taken into captivity, this time by the mighty Babylonian empire in 586 BC.

More details on how the structure can be further analysed will be shared during the lectures.

6. THEMES

“These books were written at a moment of great crisis and confusion for the Jewish nation, and they were written to reveal to them the story behind the story... [The exile] had brought into question all that they believed about their God. Where had He been when they needed Him most? Why had He failed to rescue them from their enemies? Why had Israel’s God abandoned Israel in its darkest hour?”²¹

Six key themes can be discovered through the book of Kings, as it seeks to answer these questions that the original readers may have had:

A). Failure

Ultimately, the story of Kings is a story of failure. The failure of the nation of Israel to follow Yahweh wholeheartedly. Their failure to obey the Law. Their failure to worship Yahweh alone. And the failure of their kings to consistently lead them in covenant faithfulness.

“The book of Kings tells the story of many failures: how Solomon’s sin led to the division of the monarchy; how Jeroboam’s sin plagued the Northern Kingdom for centuries; and how persistent apostasy resulted in exile for both the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. Why would anyone want to read such a depressing story? ... Because one can learn a lot from failure.”²²

B). Idolatry

At the heart of the Jewish people’s failure was their struggle with idolatry. The lure of the false gods of the Canaanites had been a constant temptation during the time of the Judges (eg. Judges 2:11-13, 17; 3:8; 6:25-26; 8:33; etc.). But during the reigns of Saul and particularly David, that struggle seemed to have lessened as the worship of Yahweh as the one true God triumphed.

However, with Solomon’s slide into idolatry at the end of his life (see 1 Kings 11), and Jeroboam’s decision to begin the northern kingdom with a return to the worship of golden bulls (1 Kings 12), the struggle with idolatry began again. This would ultimately climax under the leadership of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel in the northern kingdom of Israel.

²¹ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, (Oxford, UK: Monarch Books, 2019), 12.

²² David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 1.

C). Judgment

“The book of Deuteronomy undergirds the theology in 1-2 Kings.”²³

This is particularly true of the covenant blessings and curses in Deuteronomy 28-30. Moses had made it clear for future generations of Israelites that there would be severe and increasing consequences if they failed to obey Yahweh and turned to other gods. Ultimately, if Israel continued to reject the kingship of Yahweh over them, He would exile them from the land and disperse them among the nations (Deut. 28:36ff.).

In a sense, then, the judgment that falls on both the northern and southern kingdoms in Kings is inevitable when they fail to repent. This comes through particularly strongly in 2 Kings 17, when the author provides a long and thorough explanation as to why the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered and taken into captivity by the Assyrian empire.

D). Prophecy

The book of Kings sees the rise of the prophets to a significant role in the nation of Israel. There had been prophets through different times in Israel’s history, such as Moses, Deborah, Samuel and Nathan. However, in the period of the kings there seems to be an almost endless supply of prophets who were delivering the word of Yahweh, challenging the behaviour of different kings, and calling the people back to covenant faithfulness.

In the early part of Kings, prophets such as Nathan, Ahijah, Shemaiah and Jehu deliver the word of Yahweh. Later in the story prophets such as Isaiah, Huldah, Jeremiah and a number of unnamed prophets also ministered. But it is the ministries of Elijah and Elisha who dominate the story in the middle portion of Kings, as they challenge Ahab and Jezebel and their descendants about their rejection of Yahweh and the breaking of the Law.

E). Sovereignty

While a key focus of Kings is obviously the rulers of Israel and Judah, the most important character in the story is Yahweh, the God of Israel.²⁴ Israel is a

²³ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 55.

²⁴ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 32.

theocracy ruled by Yahweh, even when human kings are on the throne. And Yahweh is ultimately the One in control of the story, despite human sin.

“God’s absolute rule of all creation undergirds every theological emphasis in 1-2 Kings. Israel lived in a covenant relationship because a sovereign God chose it... Further, God rules all nations, not just Israel, and directs all human affairs. Even great nations, such as Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon, do not determine their own destinies. God sends them to so His will. They punish Israel only because the Lord wants them to do so.”²⁵

F). Faithfulness

Finally, the covenant faithfulness of God shines through the story of Kings. Against the dark backdrop of human and particularly royal unfaithfulness, the goodness and faithfulness of Yahweh stand out.

Even though the nation of Israel has thoroughly displeased their God, He never revokes the covenant that he made with Abraham (Gen. 15).

Even though the people disobey His law and are banished from the land as Deuteronomy 28-29 made clear, the promise of Deuteronomy 30 still stands, holding out the hope of a return to the land if they return to Yahweh.

And the great covenant that Yahweh made with David in 2 Samuel 7 permeates the book of Kings. Even though Solomon descends into idolatry and Yahweh rips most of the tribes from his hand, the tribe of Judah remains under the rule of the house of David (1 Kings 11:32, 34-36). When the daughter of Ahab, Athaliah, attempts to wipe out the house of David, Yahweh preserves a descendant to continue David’s lineage (2 Kings 11:1-3). And even when the southern kingdom is taken into captivity and the Davidic line is removed from the throne, his descendants are still protected (2 Kings 25:27-30).

“Despite the kings’ sinfulness, the promise of an eternal Davidic kingdom is never revoked. Land and temple are lost, the monarchy grinds to an ignominious halt, yet the promise remains... [This] reflects the never-ending nature of the Davidic Covenant.”²⁶

²⁵ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 81.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

7. BIG IDEA

The key message of the book of Kings is therefore this:

**The Davidic line failed
because of human frailty and wickedness
but the Davidic Covenant stands secure
because of divine faithfulness and love.**

The book of Kings shows us the failure of every human king within Israel to follow Yahweh wholeheartedly, to follow His law fully, and to lead His people to covenant faithfulness.

“Here is the paradox of the kings, and indeed the Old Testament: this sinful family line, this sinful nation, will never have the love of God taken away, and God will establish a kingdom forever through the faulty lineage of David... These are the twin themes of the rest of the Old Testament: the *failure* of even the best of God’s people, and the *patient love* of God Himself.”²⁷

But the failure of the kings makes us lift our eyes to look forward to the coming of the one true King.

“For to us a child is born,
to us a son is given,
and the government will be on his shoulders.
And he will be called
Wonderful Counsellor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.
Of the greatness of his government and peace
there will be no end.
He will reign on David’s throne
and over his kingdom,
establishing and upholding it
with justice and righteousness
from that time on and for ever” (Isaiah 9:6-7).

²⁷ John Dickson, *A Doubter’s Guide to the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2014), 113.

THE UNITED KINGDOM: THE REIGN OF SOLOMON (1 KINGS 1-11)

The story of King Solomon’s forty-year reign over Israel is told in the first eleven chapters of Kings. His reign is significant – it only accounts for 10% of the timeframe covered in Kings but is allocated approx. 25% of the storyline. This tells us that what happens in Solomon’s story is incredibly important for where the rest of the narrative goes.

This is because the pinnacle of 1 and 2 Samuel is the Davidic Covenant – the unconditional promise that Yahweh made to David to establish his kingdom and throne forever (see 2 Samuel 7:8-16). A key aspect of that promise was that David’s son would sit on that throne, and he would be the one to build a permanent house or temple for Yahweh (vv.12-13). However, Yahweh also warned that he would do wrong and need divine punishment, and yet the promise of an eternal throne and kingdom would never cease (vv.14-16).

Because Solomon plays such a key role in certain aspects of God’s covenant with David, he therefore takes up a large part of the storyline of Kings.

Solomon’s saga divides into four key sections as follows:

1. THE UNITED KINGDOM: THE REIGN OF SOLOMON

The United Kingdom			
1 Kings 1 – 11			
The Reign of Solomon			
The Consolidation of Solomon’s Reign	The Foundation of Solomon’s Reign	The Highpoint of Solomon’s Reign	The Demise of Solomon’s Reign
<i>His ascension to the throne</i>	<i>The divine gift of wisdom</i>	<i>The building of the temple</i>	<i>The failure of the king</i>
1 Kings 1-2	1 Kings 3-4	1 Kings 5-8	1 Kings 9-11

1. THE CONSOLIDATION OF SOLOMON'S REIGN: *HIS ASCENSION TO THE THRONE (1 KINGS 1-2)*

A). Prologue: The Kingdom Endangered as David Declines (1:1-4)

“If you have read 1 and 2 Samuel, then you will see a lot of continuity as the plot resumes: Bathsheba is still David’s favourite wife; Joab is still the commander of the army; Benaiah is still the captain of his bodyguard; Nathan is still his prophet; and Zadok and Abiathar are still serving as his two priests...

But what really strikes us here is the *discontinuity*. Whereas 1 and 2 Samuel celebrate the strength of King David, the giant-killer who conquered Israel’s hostile neighbours, the writer of 1 Kings goes out of his way to emphasise King David’s weakness.”²⁸

B). Succession: The Enthronement of Solomon as King (1:5-53)

1). Adonijah’s Attempt to Seize the Throne (1:5-10)

Adonijah was probably the oldest surviving son of David,²⁹ and therefore in many minds, including his own, the natural crown prince and heir.

“These verses portray Adonijah as an aggressive, self-possessed person. He ‘put himself forward’ would be more literally, he was ‘lifting himself up,’ by emphatically stating, ‘I will be king.’ By declaring such intentions he breaks with the Israelite tradition of God choosing the king, then confirming the choice through a prophet’s ministry.”³⁰

There are many similarities between Absalom’s earlier attempt to seize the throne from David, and Adonijah’s attempt at the end of David’s reign:

²⁸ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 16-17.

²⁹ Adonijah was David’s fourth son (2 Samuel 3:2-5 and 1 Chronicles 3:1-4). Since Amnon and Absalom were now dead, Adonijah was the heir apparent, as most scholars presume Kileab/Daniel (the second-born son) had also passed away. See R. D. Patterson and Hermann Austel, “1 & 2 Kings” in *The Expositors Bible Commentary* (EBC) Vol.4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1988), 29.

³⁰ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 88.

Absalom's Attempted Coup (2 Sam 15)	Adonijah's Attempted Coup (1 Kings 1)
Chariots, horses and 50 men are used to project an image of power (15:1) Conspires with key staff from David's cabinet (15:12) Sacrifices are offered as cover (15:12)	Chariots, horses and 50 men are used to project an image of power (1:5) Conspires with key staff from David's cabinet (1:7) Sacrifices are offered as cover (1:9)

2). Nathan and Bathsheba Report the Attempt to David (1:11-27)

- a). Nathan speaks to Bathsheba and advises her (vv.11-14)
- b). Bathsheba speaks to David and warns him (vv.15-21)
- c). Nathan speaks to David and questions him (vv.22-27)

3). Solomon is Anointed King on David's Orders (1:28-40)

- a). David reiterates the promise he made to Bathsheba (vv.28-31)
- b). David commands Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah, the captain of the guard, to crown Solomon (vv.32-37)
- c). Solomon is crowned and acclaimed by the people (vv.38-40)

Adonijah's plan went against the promise of Yahweh (1 Chron. 22:8-10) and David's own promise to Bathsheba (1 Kings 1:13,17,30).

4). Adonijah's Attempted Coup Fails (1:41-53)

- a). Adonijah and his guests hear of Solomon's coronation (vv.41-48)
- b). Adonijah flees to the tabernacle and his life is spared (vv.49-53)

"Until he makes his conditional pronouncement of grace for Adonijah, Solomon is completely passive in the previous fifty-one verses... Solomon's passivity stands out in stark contrast to Adonijah's initiative taking. Nathan, Bathsheba, David, Zadok, Benaiah, and others all take steps to ensure Solomon's successful accession to the throne, while he does nothing except go along for the ride, literally on a mule... However, after the death of David in the next chapter, Solomon's passivity ends."³¹

³¹ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 51.

C). Security: The Consolidation of Solomon as King (2:1-46a)

1). *David's Final Charge to Solomon Before He Dies (2:1-12)*

- a). Prologue: Introduction to David's final words (v.1)
 - b). David's Spiritual Charge: Obey Yahweh's Law (vv.2-4)
 - c). David's Political Charge: Deal with David's enemies (vv.5-9)
- d). Epilogue: David's death and eulogy (vv.10-12)

2). *Solomon's Initial Fulfillment of David's Charge (2:13-46a)*

- a). Adonijah's request and execution (vv.13-25)
 - i. Adonijah's request to Bathsheba to marry Abishag (vv.13-18)
 - ii. Bathsheba's request to Solomon on Adonijah's behalf (vv.19-22)
 - iii. Solomon's response and Adonijah's execution (vv.23-25)
- b). Adonijah's key allies' removal (vv.26-35)
- c). Shimei's disobedience and execution (vv.36-46a)

"It is most likely that Bathsheba as queen mother shrewdly works to eliminate the rival son. She omits all Adonijah's attempted justifications from the request, stripping it of any neutrality. She also adds that Adonijah is Solomon's brother – as ... a claimant to the throne, the request is not 'small' as Bathsheba suggests."³²

D). Epilogue: The Kingdom Secure as Solomon is Established (2:46b)

How do we respond to the events in 1 Kings 2? Two alternative responses:

Viewpoint #1: "[Solomon] is a man of ruthless action, pursuing power by all means at his disposal. What we have here, in fact, is a fairly sordid story of power-politics thinly disguised as a morality tale."³³

Viewpoint #2: "After the executions ... the narrator concludes, 'The kingdom was now established in Solomon's hands' (v.46). These statements reflect the theological drive of the narrative: if the kingdom is to be secure, the threats against it must be neutralised."³⁴

³² Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 76.

³³ Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, New International Bible Commentary (NIBC), (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), 40.

³⁴ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 30.

2. THE FOUNDATION OF SOLOMON'S REIGN: *THE DIVINE GIFT OF WISDOM (1 KINGS 3-4)*

“After the rather brutal events in 1 Kings 1-2, readers may wonder whether the Lord approves of Solomon’s rise to power. Other than Nathan’s support, Solomon has yet to receive any direct divine affirmation. Chapters 3-4 help alleviate this legitimate concern. In 3:1-15 the king has the first of two direct encounters with God. Both visions stress God’s covenant with David and God’s desire to bless Solomon if he will follow David’s example of serving only the Lord.”³⁵

A). The Human Need for Wisdom (3:1-3)

These introductory verses to chapter 3 are debated as to whether they should be read as positive³⁶ or negative.³⁷ My view is they are negative and show Solomon’s need for the divine gift Yahweh is about to offer.

1). The Unwise Marital Alliance with Egypt (v.1)

Political alliances through marriage were common in the ancient world, but unnecessary for Yahweh’s ruler. Kings of Israel were meant to trust in Yahweh for protection, rather than alliances with foreign nations.

2). The Unwise Worship at the High Places (vv.2-3)

“The book of Kings refers over forty times to ‘high places,’ which were places of worship located usually on hills... While some of these locations were associated with Yahweh worship, they were frequently associated with worship of foreign gods, which is why Kings viewed them so negatively.”³⁸

³⁵ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 108.

³⁶ For example, R. D. Patterson and Hermann Austel, “1 & 2 Kings” (EBC), 42; also Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 34.

³⁷ For example, Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), Reformed Expository Commentary (REC), ed. by Richard Phillips and Philip Ryken, (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 2011), 73-74; also Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, (NIBC), 44.

³⁸ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 72.

B). The Divine Gift of Wisdom (3:4-15)

There seems to be a chiasmic structure to this part of the narrative, that therefore puts the spotlight on Solomon's humble request for wisdom:

- 1). The **Context** of God's Gift – Extravagant Worship (v.4)
- 2). The **Offer** of God's Gift – Incredible Grace (v.5)
- 3). The **Request** of God's Gift – Insightful Humility (v.6-9)
- 4). The **Granting** of God's Gift – Overflowing Generosity (v.10-14)
- 5). **Thankfulness** for God's Gift – Continued Worship (v.15)

1). The Context of God's Gift – Extravagant Worship (v.4)

According to 2 Chron. 1:2-6, the ark of the covenant had been moved to Jerusalem by King David, but the tabernacle remained in Gibeon, 7km north-west of Jerusalem within the tribal lands of Benjamin.

2). The Offer of God's Gift – Incredible Grace (v.5)

"God did not place any conditions on the king's request, but simply invited him to ask whatever he wished. This extraordinary and unprecedented invitation was also a serious test, because the way Solomon responded would reveal the godliness (or ungodliness) of his character."³⁹

3). The Request of God's Gift – Insightful Humility (v.6-9)

Solomon's response to Yahweh's generous offer has three parts: he makes his request for the **future** based on both the reality he faced in the **present**, but also the faithfulness of Yahweh in the **past**.⁴⁰

a). Yahweh's kindness in the past (v.6). Twice in v.6 Solomon emphasises the "great kindness (*chesed*)" of Yahweh to David by allowing his son (Solomon) to take the throne. In the context of Solomon's story, this double-reference to Yahweh's 'loyal love' is undoubtedly pointing to His covenant with David.

³⁹ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 77.

⁴⁰ Adapted from David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 73.

b). Solomon's reality in the present (vv.7-8). In these verses, Solomon contrasts the greatness of the nation that Yahweh has entrusted to him with his youthfulness and inexperience. If verse 6 looked back to the Davidic Covenant, verse 8 is certainly a pointer back to the Abrahamic Covenant (see esp. Gen. 16:10; 22:17; 26:4).

Solomon's comment that he was "only a little child" should not be read too literally. Solomon reigned for 40 years (1 Kings 11:42), but his son Rehoboam was 41 when he became king (14:21), meaning he was married with a 1-year old child when he was crowned. Instead, as indicated, Solomon was emphasising his lack of experience as king.

c). Solomon's request for the future (v.9). Solomon now makes his humble request. He asks for "a discerning heart" – the gift of wisdom.

"The kind of wisdom Solomon specifically had in mind was practical wisdom for government... He did not make this request for his own sake, but for the good of his people and the glory of God. He did not ask to be wise so that he could become famous; he asked so that the people of God would be wisely governed."⁴¹

4). The Granting of God's Gift – Overflowing Generosity (v.10-14)

"Solomon bypassed the kind of request that most men would commonly make – prosperity, a long life, victory over enemies, etc. He sought the more essential thing, and because of this God promised him the wisdom that he sought in such measure that he would stand alone among men (vv.10-12). In addition, God granted him what he had not requested – wealth and honour unequalled in his lifetime (v.13)."⁴²

5). Thankfulness for God's Gift – Continued Worship (v.15)

When Solomon woke, he realised that he had had a dream, but believed that it had been from Yahweh. Therefore his response on returning to Jerusalem was to bring more thanks offerings to Yahweh in front of the ark, and to celebrate with the royal court. In short, Solomon believed the promise of Yahweh.

⁴¹ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 79.

⁴² R. D. Patterson and Hermann Austel, "1 & 2 Kings" (EBC), 46.

C). The Clear Evidence of Wisdom (3:16 – 4:34)

1). *Wisdom in the Legal Sphere – Executing Justice (3:16-28)*

The well-known story of Solomon’s adjudication between two prostitutes who both claimed to be the mother of a baby is obviously included to immediately highlight Solomon’s wisdom in ruling his nation. But this is simply the first of four indications of his wisdom.

2). *Wisdom in the Political Sphere – Organising Government (4:1-19)*

Solomon is shown as the wise king who takes the small and informal governing structures of Saul and David, and enlarges them, dividing Israel into twelve districts for administrative and taxation purposes.

3). *Wisdom in the National Sphere – Providing Stability (4:20-28)*

“The reign of Solomon almost presents paradise in its blessing for the nation. What Israel needed was a king to rule with wisdom and justice and in the fear of Yahweh... Life was practically idyllic, so that Israel was close to experiencing a new Eden. The rule that God intended human beings to exercise over the world was virtually becoming a reality through a son of David, Solomon... It seemed that universal blessing was just around the corner.”⁴³

4). *Wisdom in the Personal Sphere – Acquiring Knowledge (4:29-34)*

Solomon’s wisdom was not just shown legally, politically and nationally on behalf of Israel, but in his personal knowledge and understanding of life.

BUT... “The record of Solomon’s great reign is not free of trouble, however. The mention of the forced labour (v.6), the administrative network that will take from the people as per Samuel’s prediction (1 Sam. 8:11-18), and the horses and wealth that contravene the law of the king (Deut. 17:16-17) alert the reader that not all is well in Camelot.”⁴⁴

⁴³ Thomas Schreiner, *The King in His Beauty: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2013), 168-169, 174.

⁴⁴ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 99.

3. THE HIGHPOINT OF SOLOMON’S REIGN: *THE BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE (1 KINGS 5-8)*

“Pride of place is given to Solomon’s construction of the temple, for it extends from chapter 5 to chapter 8... The site for the temple had already been purchased by David from Araunah, his threshing floor on Mt. Zion. David had prepared the site, gathered the building materials, including the precious metals and stones, and had already gotten an agreement from Hiram, king of Tyre, that he would supply the cedar timber as well as the workers needed to erect the temple.”⁴⁵

A). Preparation for Building the Temple (5)

“Building preparations precede the culminating event of Solomon’s reign – the temple project. The importance of the temple is signalled in that it is the structural centre of Solomon’s narrative.”⁴⁶

1). *Organising the Building Materials (5:1-12)*

- a). Hiram sends envoys to Solomon (v.1) – *summary*
- b). Solomon sends a letter back with order for cedar (vv.2-6)
- c). Hiram praises Yahweh for Solomon’s wisdom (v.7) – *summary*
- d). Hiram sends a letter to Solomon clarifying delivery (vv.8-9)
- e). Summary of supply and payment (vv.10-11) – *summary*
- f). Conclusion: Yahweh gave Solomon wisdom (v.12)

2). *Organising the Manpower (5:13-18)*

- a). 30,000 men are conscripted to work in Lebanon assisting with timber (vv.13-14)
- b). 70,000 carriers and 80,000 stonecutters work in the hill country, sourcing and delivering foundation stones (vv.15-17)
- c). Skilled craftsmen from Israel, Tyre and Byblos prepare the materials for construction (v.18)

⁴⁵ Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 275-276.

⁴⁶ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 108-109.

B). The Construction of the Temple (6)

The narrative of the actual construction of the temple is built around a chiasmic structure that highlights the word of encouragement and exhortation from Yahweh to Solomon as the temple is going up.

- 1). Chronological **Introduction** (6:1)
- 2). The Construction of the **Exterior** (6:2-10)
 - 3). **Yahweh's Word of Encouragement** to Solomon (6:11-13)
- 4). The Construction of the **Interior** (6:14-36)
- 5). Chronological **Conclusion** (6:37-38)

- 1). Chronological Introduction (6:1)**
- 5). Chronological Conclusion (6:37-38)**

The narrative detailing the temple's construction gives key chronological markers for the beginning and end of the project.

The foundation was laid in the second month of Solomon's fourth year (6:1,37), and the temple was completed in the eighth month of Solomon's eleventh year (6:38). Therefore, construction took seven and a half years (rounded to seven years in v.38).

The laying of the foundation in Solomon's fourth year is also recorded as the 480th year since the Exodus from Egypt took place.⁴⁷

- 2). The Construction of the Exterior (6:2-10)**
- 4). The Construction of the Interior (6:14-36)**

a). Dimensions. The main focus on the exterior of the temple (vv.2-10) are the dimensions of the building – 60 cubits long, 20 cubits wide and 30 cubits high. Although a cubit could vary in length, this would give a structure of about 30m long x 10m wide x 15m high.⁴⁸ In addition, a porch was added to the front by an additional 10 cubits (5m).

⁴⁷ Whether this date should be understood literally or symbolically is debated by scholars. However, in light of the specific and precise use of chronology here, I prefer the more literal reading of 480 years, which therefore dates the Exodus to 1446 BC. See Kaiser's outstanding discussion of this debate in chapter 7 of his *A History of Israel* (Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 104-109).

⁴⁸ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 119.

“Yahweh’s design of the tabernacle appeared to inspire Solomon’s plans since the general floorplan was similar, although the dimensions of Solomon’s temple here are about twice the size of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:15-25).”⁴⁹

b). Materials. The main building materials on the exterior of the building were dressed stone that were chiselled offsite (v.7) and cedar beams and planks for the roof and side rooms (vv.8-10). Inside the temple, the walls were lined with carved cedar boards (v.15,18) and the floor with juniper planks (v.15). This interior was then overlaid with gold (vv.20-22), in both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies.

c). Cherubim. Within the Holy of Holies were two carved cherubim, each one 10 cubits (5m) high and wide (vv.23-27). These were also covered in gold and represented the angelic beings who guarded Eden and the glorious presence of God (see Gen. 3:24; also Ezek. 28:13-14).

“The splendour of the temple is meant to reflect the splendour of Israel’s God ... 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 [state] house?”⁵⁰

3). Yahweh’s Word of Encouragement to Solomon (6:11-13)

The call to Solomon to faithfully obey God’s Word is woven into the narrative at key points, giving us “a lens through which to look at the whole narrative.”⁵¹ Would Solomon live faithfully with Yahweh?

- It was in David’s final charge to Solomon (1 Kings 2:1-4)
- It was in Yahweh’s reminder when He gave Solomon wisdom (3:14)
- Now it is given again as the temple is being constructed (6:11-13)
- It will be repeated when the temple is complete (9:4-9)

⁴⁹ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 101.

⁵⁰ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 64.

⁵¹ John Olley, *The Message of Kings* (BST), 51.

C). The Furnishing of the Temple (7)

Having described the construction of the temple itself, attention now turns to its furnishing, with the focus on the key director of that work, Hiram. The son of an Israelite mother and a father from Tyre (vv.13-14), Hiram is described in similar language to Bezalel, who directed the construction and furnishing of the tabernacle (Ex. 31:1-6; 35:30 – 36:5).⁵²

1). *The Work of Hiram in Furnishing the Temple (7:13-47)*

- a). **Introduction:** Hiram leads the furnishing of the temple (v.13-14)
- b). Hiram makes the **bronze pillars** at the front of the temple (v.15-22)
- c). Hiram makes the **great bronze “Sea”** which held water for the priests to bathe and cleanse themselves (v.23-26; see 2 Chr. 4:6)
- d). Hiram makes **ten bronze “stands”** with wheels to hold water for rinsing the burnt offerings (v.27-37; see 2 Chr. 4:6)
- e). Hiram makes the **bronze basins** and other tools (v.38-40)
- f). **Conclusion:** the total list of Hiram’s workmanship (v.41-47)

2). *The Additional Work Solomon Orders to Furnish the Temple (7:48-51)*

While the emphasis of the text is on the bronze works that Hiram completed for the temple, Solomon also ordered the crafting of other utensils and tools from gold (v.48-50). These were added to the items that King David had already commissioned and accumulated (v.51), so that everything was ready for the consecration of the new temple.

D). The Dedication of the Temple (8)

This chapter is the pinnacle of this section, and therefore the peak of Solomon’s reign. The new temple is dedicated to Yahweh, who’s glory fills the temple just as it did the newly constructed tabernacle at Mt Sinai centuries before (compare Ex. 40:34-35 and 1 Kings 8:10-11).

The dedication of the temple takes place almost a year after its completion. It was finished in the 8th month of Solomon’s 11th year (6:38) but was dedicated in the 7th month (8:2). It seems they waited almost a year until the entire nation gathered for the Feast of Tabernacles.

⁵² Paul House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC), 134.

- 1). **Narrative: Bringing the Ark** to the Temple (8:1-13)
- 2). **Solomon's Blessing** of the People (8:14-21)
- 3). Solomon's **Prayer of Dedication to Yahweh** (8:22-53)
- 4). **Solomon's Second Blessing** of the People (8:54-61)
- 5). **Narrative: Offerings and Sacrifices** at the Temple (8:62-66)

Solomon's prayer to Yahweh stands at the centre of the chapter, the high point of the book, as it extols the incomparability of Yahweh (vv.23-27).

"Solomon knew the One to whom his words were directed. He knew Him to be utterly incomparable in the way He has proven Himself absolutely faithful... It is not just God's goodness, wisdom, and power that make Him incomparable. It is God's faithfulness. Solomon knew that God had done what He had said he would do. That is God's faithfulness, and in this He is utterly without peer."⁵³

Solomon then asks Yahweh that His eyes would always be open this temple as the place where His people could cry out in prayer to Him. He lists 7 scenarios based on the warnings of Deuteronomy 28, and each scenario is played out later in the book of Kings (see references below):

- a). A dispute between neighbours** (vv.31-32; 1 Kings 21:1-19)
- b). A defeat by an enemy** (vv.33-34; 1 Kings 11:23-25; 14:25-28)
- c). A drought in the land** (vv.35-36; 1 Kings 17:1)
- d). Disasters on the people – famine, pestilence, defeat, plague**
(vv.37-40; 1 Kings 18:2; 2 Kings 4:38; 6:24-29)
- e). A prayer of a foreigner** (vv.41-43; 2 Kings 5:1-18)
- f). A prayer for a battle** (vv.44-45; 2 Kings 18:17 – 19:37)
- g). A prayer even in captivity for sin** (vv.46-51; 2 Kings 17:1-23;
2 Kings 24:13-16; 25:8-21)

"[Solomon's] prayer looks for removal of the curses with repentance (Lev. 26:40-45). In other words, Solomon holds out hope that of restoration beyond failure; grace will have the last word in shaping Israel's history."⁵⁴

⁵³ John Woodhouse, *1 Kings: Power, Politics, and the Hope of the World*, Preaching the Word (PTW) series, ed. R. Kent Hughes (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2018), 247.

⁵⁴ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology: An Exegetical, Canonical, and Thematic Approach* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2007), 710.

“The temple is the highpoint of Solomon’s career, fulfilling the promises given in 2 Samuel 7 and standing as a visible reminder of Yahweh’s commitment to the Davidic dynasty. As such, it glorifies Solomon as the one anointed to build Yahweh’s house... The greater glory, however, goes to Yahweh. He gave David the promise of a ‘house’, that is, both a temple and dynasty, and he provided the requisite wisdom for the project.”⁵⁵

X). The Construction of Solomon’s Palace (7:1-12)

BUT ... once again there is a stark reminder even at the highpoint of Solomon’s reign that not all is well. Sandwiched right in the middle of the entire narrative of 1 Kings 5-8 and its description of Yahweh’s temple, is the story of the construction of Solomon’s palace.

A). Preparation for Building the Temple (5)

B). The Construction of the Temple (6)



X). The Construction of Solomon’s Palace (7:1-12)

C). The Furnishing of the Temple (7:13-51)

D). The Dedication of the Temple (8)

The irony is that 1 Kings 9:10 says that Solomon took 20 years to build the temple of Yahweh and his palace. Since the temple took 7 years to build (6:38) and the palace 13 years (7:1), this means that the construction of the palace did not begin until the temple was completed and had been dedicated. And yet the narrator inserts the construction of the palace into the middle of the temple narrative to draw the contrast between the time and expense spent on the two projects.

“The palace takes nearly twice as long to finish. Presumably it is also larger and more costly... The close proximity of 6:37-38 and 7:1 make the contrast quite obvious, even startling. The author again leaves doubt about the king in the readers mind, much as was done in the slave labour and taxation passages.”⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 116.

⁵⁶ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 130.

4. THE DEMISE OF SOLOMON'S REIGN: *THE FAILURE OF THE KING (1 KINGS 9-11)*

1 Kings 9-11 cover the final sixteen years of Solomon's reign. According to 1 Kings 9:10, the building of the temple and Solomon's palace structures took 20 years in total, and four years had already passed before building began (6:1). Since Solomon ruled for a total of 40 years (11:42), these last chapters cover the final 16 years.

A). Solomon's Apparent Success in the Later Years (9-10)

1). *Yahweh's Warning to Solomon (9:1-9)*

This is the fourth time that Yahweh reminds Solomon of the importance of covenant faithfulness and obedience to the word of Yahweh:

- David's charge to Solomon to ***obey the Law*** (2:1-4)
- Yahweh's reminder to Solomon to ***walk in obedience*** (3:14)
- Yahweh's call to Solomon to ***keep His commands*** (6:11-13)
- Now Yahweh's warning to Solomon to ***walk faithfully*** (9:3-9)

However, unlike the previous reminders to walk faithfully with Yahweh, this final message is more negative, with grave warnings for disobedience.

- a). ***Introduction*** – Yahweh appears a second time (v.1-2)
- b). ***Promise*** – “I have heard your prayer for the temple” (v.3)
- c). ***Scenario 1*** – “if you walk faithfully with integrity ...” (v.4-5)
- d). ***Scenario 2*** – “if you turn away from me ...” (v.6-9)

“While the message begins positively, the overall emphasis is rather negative, since each section is not only less optimistic than the previous one but also longer (1 verse, 2 verses, 4 verses), ending with a dark description of divine abandonment and temple destruction.”⁵⁷

The rest of chapters 9-10 outline Solomon's accomplishments, fame, and great wealth. But this warning at the beginning of the chapter calls us to read about his “success” with caution.

2). *Solomon's Accomplishments (9:10-28)*

⁵⁷ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 132.

- a). **Success in Diplomacy:** His ongoing partnership with Hiram (v.10-14)
- b). **Success in Construction:** His massive building projects (v.15-19)
- c). **Success in Labour Relations:** His use of conscripted labour (v.20-24)
- d). **Success in Religious Worship:** His yearly sacrifices (v.25)
- e). **Success in Trade:** His naval accomplishments (v.26-28)

3). **Solomon's Fame (10:1-13)**

- a). Introduction – the **arrival** of the Queen of Sheba (v.1)
- b). **What she saw** – when she heard Solomon's wisdom and saw its benefits, she was "overwhelmed" (lit. "breathless") (v.2-5)
- c). **What she said** – she publicly praises Solomon for his wisdom, but fittingly also praises Yahweh and His unfailing love (v.6-9)
- d). **What she did** – she gave gifts of gold, spices and stones, perhaps to seal a trade deal with Solomon (v.10-12)
- e). Conclusion – the Queen **departed** with gifts from Solomon (v.13)

"Between the confession of Solomon's greatness and the offering of the gifts, the queen makes an important statement about the Lord. She claims that God deserves praise for choosing him to rule Israel... These comments are similar to those Hiram makes in 1 Kings 5:7. Both non-Jewish monarchs recognise God's primacy in Israel's history. Quite ironically, Solomon and future kings of Israel choose to ignore what even non-covenant rulers seem to know is true: God rules Israel, and God blesses obedient kings."⁵⁸

4). **Solomon's Wealth (10:14-29)**

- a). Solomon's annual tax revenues (v.14-15)
- b). Solomon's golden shields (v.16-17)
- c). Solomon's magnificent ivory throne (v.18-20)
- d). Solomon's golden drinking goblets (v.21-22)
- e). Solomon's worldwide fame and gifts from emissaries (v.23-25)
- f). Solomon's horses and chariots (v.26-29)

Like 1 Kings 3-4, this section from later in Solomon's reign is meant to give a snapshot of his great success as an ancient monarch.

Once again, however, there are hints that Solomon is compromising:

⁵⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 162.

“What is particularly striking about 1 Kings 9:10 – 10:29 when compared with 1 Kings 4-5 is the manner in which the authors go out of their way in 4-5 to emphasise that the prosperity of the king was shared with his subjects (cf. 4:20, 25). This is a theme that is noticeable for its absence in 9:10 – 10:29, where all the emphasis lies upon the luxury of the royal court. God may well have given Solomon riches, but has he used them wisely (cf. Luke 12:13-34)?”⁵⁹

B). Solomon’s Abject Failure in the Later Years (11)

As the last chapter of Solomon’s story dawns, we are meant to understand that Solomon is now reaping the consequences of the decisions and choices he had been making. Reading Solomon’s story in light of Yahweh’s commands to the future kings of Israel in Deuteronomy 17 is sobering:

Deut. 17:16-17	1 Kings 10-11
<p>“Must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself”</p> <p>“He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray”</p> <p>“He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold”</p>	<p>“Solomon accumulated chariots and horses” (10:26)</p> <p>“He loved many foreign women ... and his wives led him astray” (11:1,3)</p> <p>“All his goblets [and] household articles were pure gold” (10:21)</p>

Not only were the kings specifically commanded, negatively, to not accumulate horses, wives and wealth like other foreign kings; positively, they were to write out a personal copy of the Law, read it every day, and obey it (Deut. 17:18-20).

As noted earlier, this obedience to the Law is what Solomon had been repeatedly called to and reminded of through his life (2:1-4, 3:14, 6:11-13, and 9:3-9) and he failed to obey.

⁵⁹ Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, (NIBC), 85; see also Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 159.

1). *Yahweh's Anger at Solomon's Idolatry (11:1-13)*

- a). ***Solomon's polygamy*** with many foreign wives (v.1-3)
- b). ***Solomon's idolatry*** because of his foreign wives (v.4-8)

“The mountain east of Jerusalem (11:7) is the Mount of Olives, which stands directly opposite the Temple Mount. Thus Solomon practiced the grotesque and damnable rites of pagan worship within plain sight of God’s holy temple.”⁶⁰

- c). ***Yahweh's anger and judgment*** of Solomon’s sin (v.9-13)

“Yahweh is often described as being ‘slow to anger’ (Ex. 34:6; Ps. 86:15), but Solomon’s apostasy provokes His anger here (1 Kings 11:9). While Solomon’s divine condemnation was delayed until 1 Kings 11, we have repeatedly seen problems with his extravagant acquisition of horses, gold, silver, and now wives, which were clearly forbidden by Deuteronomy’s law of the king. In the midst of his excessive behaviour, Yahweh had been silent until now... Yahweh gets angry, but He gets there slowly.”⁶¹

2). *Yahweh's Establishment of Solomon's Enemies (11:14-25)*

As part of His judgment, Yahweh shatters Israel’s ‘peace’ (the meaning of Solomon’s name) by raising up two external enemies:

- a). ***Hadab the Edomite*** returned from Egypt (v.14-22)
- b). ***Rezon the Aramean*** took control of Damascus (v.23-25)

3). *Yahweh's Endorsement of Solomon's Adversary (11:26-40)*

Even more serious, however, Yahweh raised up an internal adversary for Solomon, in a young leader from the northern tribe of Ephraim named Jeroboam. While the stories have obvious differences, there are remarkable similarities between the rejection of Saul in 1 Samuel 15 and the judgment of Solomon in 1 Kings 11.⁶²

⁶⁰ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 293.

⁶¹ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 154.

⁶² See Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 173; also John Olley, *The Message of Kings* (BST), 124.

1 Samuel 15	1 Kings 11
<p>Saul had disobeyed Yahweh's command (v.26)</p> <p>The kingdom would be 'torn' from Saul (v.26)</p> <p>The prophet Samuel's robe was symbolically torn (v.27)</p> <p>The kingdom would be given by Yahweh to his "neighbour" (v.28)</p> <p>Saul then hunted his replacement David (1 Samuel 18-31)</p>	<p>Solomon had disobeyed Yahweh's command (vv.2-8,33)</p> <p>The kingdom would be 'torn' from Solomon (vv.11,31)</p> <p>The prophet Ahijah's robe was symbolically torn (v.30)</p> <p>The kingdom would be given by Yahweh to his "subordinate" (vv.11,31,35)</p> <p>Solomon hunted his replacement Jeroboam (v.40)</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Solomon begins his reign looking like another David, but he ends his reign looking like another Saul</p>	

“Only one thing keeps Solomon on the throne at all, and that is the promise the Lord made to David in 2 Sam 7:1-17. For David’s sake the Lord allows Solomon to remain in power. Further, for David’s sake his descendants will continue to rule a fragment of the covenant nation. Despite these concessions to David’s memory, however, the punishment is clear, irrevocable, and stunning.”⁶³

“The disciplinary action tendered in these passages does not, however, negate the unconditional covenant Yahweh initially granted David. Though its monarchic representatives may be disciplined and even removed from the throne, Yahweh’s commitment to an eternal rule of David does not waiver.”⁶⁴

4). *The Death of Solomon (11:41-43)*

The death of Solomon is recorded in a format that will also be used for other kings in the rest of the story. Sadly, the kings to follow will also follow Solomon’s disastrous example of idolatry.

⁶³ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 168.

⁶⁴ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 175.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: **THE PARTITION OF ISRAEL** **(1 KINGS 12 – 16)**

The vast middle portion of the book of Kings – over half of the chapters – is devoted to the story of the divided kingdom. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel splits into two rival kingdoms – the kingdom of Israel in the north, and the kingdom of Judah in the south.

This middle portion of the book moves back and forth between these two kingdoms, and the various kings that lead them, until the northern kingdom of Israel is conquered and swept away into captivity by the mighty Assyrian empire in 722 BC.

Dr. Bruce Waltke suggests a chiasmic structure to Kings that centres on the northern dynasty of Omri in the middle portion of the book.⁶⁶

- A Solomon and the united kingdom (1 Kings 1-11)
- B Separation of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12)
- C Kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 13-16)
- X The Omrid dynasty (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 11)
- C' Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 12-16)
- B' Fall of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 17)
- A' Kingdom of Judah alone (2 Kings 18-25)

In the middle section of the book, the action slows down as the focus turns to the dynasty of King Omri in the north, particularly Omri's son, the wicked King Ahab and his wife, Queen Jezebel. They lead the northern kingdom to new depths of idolatry, and Yahweh responds by raising up two of the greatest prophets in the history of Israel – Elijah and his successor, Elisha.

⁶⁶ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 704.

This, then is how the middle portion of Kings is divided:

2. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE PARTITION OF ISRAEL

The Divided Kingdom					
1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17					
The Partition of Israel					
Separation of the Northern Kingdom	The early kings of North and South	Elijah and the sin of the House of Ahab	Elisha and the fall of the House of Ahab	The later kings of North and South	Fall of the Northern Kingdom
1 Kings 12	1 Kings 12-16	1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 2	2 Kings 2-11	2 Kings 12-16	2 Kings 17

convinced
2022



In this session, we will concentrate on the first two sections, on the division of the kingdom in 1 Kings 12, and then the early kings of North and South in chapters 12-16. We also make some preliminary observations about the divided monarchy and its various rulers.

In the next session, we will then zero in on the middle portion of the book, and the ministries of Elijah and Elisha in their conflict with the house of Ahab, before briefly examining the later kings of both kingdoms before the fall of the North in 722 BC.

1. THE SEPARATION OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM (1 KINGS 12:1-24)

The middle portion of Kings begins with an explanation of how the nation that had been united under the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon, now came to divided into rival kingdoms. The story is written in such a way that we can see how both human foolishness and divine judgment worked together.

A). A Foolish King: Rehoboam goes to Shechem (12:1-15)

- 1). **Introduction** – “All Israel” assembled at Shechem to see Rehoboam (v.1)
- 2). **Audience #1** – Jeroboam requests a lightening of the load (vv.2-4)
- 3). **Consultation #1** – Rehoboam consults with the elders (vv.6-7)
- 4). **Consultation #2** – Rehoboam consults with his peers (vv.8-11)
- 5). **Audience #2** – Rehoboam refuses to lighten the load (vv.12-14)
- 6). **Comment #1** – The narrator claims this was “from Yahweh” (v.15)

Jeroboam had been in exile in Egypt in the final years of Solomon’s reign, but he returns to lead the northern tribe’s delegation to the new king. Obviously, he was much less afraid of Rehoboam than Solomon.

King Rehoboam was the primary audience of one of the most practical books of the Bible, the book of Proverbs. Solomon had written it for his son, to guide his life and to pass on the wisdom Yahweh had gifted him.

“My son, do not forget my teaching,
but keep my commands in your heart,
for they will prolong your life many years
and bring you peace and prosperity.” (Proverbs 3:1-2)

Initially, as he consulted with his advisors, it seemed Rehoboam had listened to his father’s advice (Prov. 12:15; 13:10). However, it becomes apparent that he has not listened to wisdom, as he spurns the wise advice of the elders for his friends’ crass foolishness (Prov. 11:2; 16:18) and responds “harshly” (v.13) to his fellow Israelites.

“A gentle answer turns away wrath,
but a harsh word stirs up anger.” (Proverbs 15:1)

Before informing us of the consequences of Rehoboam’s foolish response, however, the narrator reminds us that what will result is not simply due to human foolishness on the part of Rehoboam. These results are coming about in fulfilment of the word of Yahweh (v.15) and in judgment for the sin of Solomon (1 Kings 11:31,35).

B). A Divided Kingdom: Rehoboam flees from Shechem (12:16-24)

- 1). **Result #1** – “All Israel” reject Rehoboam, apart from Judah (vv.16-17)
- 2). **Response #1** – Rehoboam sends Adoniram, who is stoned (vv.18-19)
- 3). **Result #2** – “All Israel” crown Jeroboam, apart from Judah (v.20)
- 4). **Response #2** – Rehoboam sends for his army (v.21)
- 5). **Comment #2** – Yahweh claims this was “my doing” (vv.22-24)

Up until this point in the story, “all Israel” had literally meant “all” of Israel. From now on, however, it will mean all the northern tribes excluding Judah.

The old tribal rivalries that plagued Israel in the past are back:

- The warfare between Gilead and Ephraim (Judg. 12)
- The civil war between Benjamin and the other tribes (Judg. 20)
- The conflict between Judah and the others after Saul’s death (2 Sam. 2-4)
- The rebellion against David under Absalom (2 Sam. 15-20)

In particular, the cry of the people against Rehoboam echoes what happened during the rebellion of Absalom:

2 Sam. 20:1-2	1 Kings 12:16-17
<p>Sheba son of Bikri ... sounded the trumpet and shouted ‘We have no share in David, no part in Jesse’s son! Every man to his tent, Israel!’</p> <p>So all the men of Israel deserted David to follow Sheba... But the men of Judah stayed by their king.</p>	<p>They answered the king: ‘What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse’s son? To your tents, Israel! Look after your own house, David!’</p> <p>So all the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them.</p>

So the rest of the tribes, apart from Judah and Benjamin (v.21), have rejected the kingship of Rehoboam. But before they can even decide their next move, Rehoboam foolishly inflames the situation even more by sending his father's despised taskmaster to get the people back to work.

“Rehoboam is unwilling to surrender his territory and workforce so easily. His intention in sending Adoniram is unclear, whether to negotiate or to bring fear. Either is possible given Adoniram's long-standing position (4:6; 5:14), but to the Israelites he is the hated taskmaster and is stoned to death, the standard capital punishment... Rehoboam made his escape while the stoning was occurring: had he underestimated the depth of opposition to royal policies?”⁶⁷

Having rejected Rehoboam and the house of David as their king, the rest of the tribes now turn to the dynamic leader who led their negotiations with the king, Jeroboam, in fulfillment with the words of Yahweh in 1 Kings 11:31-39.

Once again, Rehoboam responds foolishly and hot-headedly.

“Rehoboam could see that his kingship was failing, but he did not give up without a fight. Once diplomacy failed, he resorted to the use of military force. Maybe he could unite the divided house through bloody conquest... Not content to rule only one tribe, he wanted to rule them all. Thus the stage was set for all-out civil war.”⁶⁸

Before Rehoboam can make things even worse, Yahweh sends the prophet Shemaiah to calm the situation. Yahweh forbids Judah to go to war with their fellow Israelites, and explicitly claimed what the narrator had already made clear (v.15) – this was all His doing, in response to the idolatry of Solomon.

“The writer has informed us that the Lord's hand of judgment is behind this, but it is nevertheless tragic. One minute, a united Israel is conquering the world with its God-given wisdom. The next, it self-destructs as a result of its idolatry. Its slow descent into exile begins.”⁶⁹

⁶⁷ John Olley, *The Message of Kings* (BST), 133-134.

⁶⁸ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 340.

⁶⁹ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 64.

2. THE EARLY KINGS OF NORTH AND SOUTH (1 KINGS 12-16)

A). Overall Observations

1). Two Contrasting Kingdoms



Israel (North)	Judah (South)
10 tribes	2 tribes
Capitals: Shechem, Tirzah, Samaria	Capital: Jerusalem
19 different kings	19 different kings (+ 1 queen)
9 dynasties; 8 assassinations	1 single Davidic dynasty
0 kings who followed Yahweh	8 kings who followed Yahweh
Conquered by Assyria (722 BC)	Conquered by Babylon (586 BC)

2). Timeline of the Kings of Israel and Judah⁷⁰

Notes	Passages	King	King	Passages	Notes		
<i>First king of north</i>	1 Kings 12:25 – 14:20	Jeroboam 931-910 BC (22 years)	Rehoboam 931-913 BC (17 years)	1 Kings 12:1-14; 14:21-31	<i>Kingdom split</i>		
910-909 BC	15:25-31	Nadab† (2)	Abijah (3)	15:1-8	913-911 BC		
<i>Murdered Nadab and entire royal family.</i>	1 Kings 15:32 – 16:7	Baasha 909-886 BC (24 years)	Asa* 911-870 BC (41 years)	1 Kings 15:9-24	<i>Good king</i>		
<i>Established 2nd dynasty</i>	886-885 BC	Elah† (2)					
885 BC / 3 rd	16:15-20	Zimri†					
<i>Murdered Zimri.</i>	16:21-28	Omri 885-874 BC (12 years)				<i>Co-regency 873-870 BC</i>	
<i>4th dynasty</i>	1 Kings 16:29 – 22:40	Ahab 874-853 BC (22 years)	<i>Ruled with then succeeded Asa</i>				
<i>Married Jezebel of Tyre</i>		Jehosha-phat* 873-848 BC (25 years)		1 Kings 22:41-50	<i>Good king</i>		
<i>Prophet Elijah</i>	853-852 BC	Ahaziah (2)	Jehoram 848-841 (8)	2 Kings 8:16-24	<i>Allied with King Ahab</i>		
<i>Prophet Elisha</i>	2 Kings 3:1 – 8:15	Joram† 852-841 BC (12 years)				8:25 – 9:29	841 BC
		Ahaziah (1)					

† indicates the ruler was assassinated, which in the northern kingdom of Israel usually meant a new dynasty came to power and killed off the old royal family.

* indicates a good king who followed Yahweh (limited to 8 kings in Judah).

⁷⁰ Chart based on Albert Baylis, *From Creation to the Cross: Understanding the First Half of the Bible*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1996), 225-228. Dates taken from Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 298-299.

Notes	Passages	King	King	Passages	Notes
<i>Murdered Joram and Ahaziah of Judah</i> 5th dynasty	2 Kings 9:1 – 10:36	Jehu 841-814 BC (28 years)	Athaliah † 841-835 (6)	11:1-16	<i>Usurped throne</i>
<i>Evil king who cried out to Yahweh</i>	2 Kings 13:1-9	Jehoahaz 814-798 BC (17 years)	Joash* † 835-796 BC (40 years)	2 Kings 11:1 – 12:21	<i>Good king who turned to idolatry</i> <i>Eventually murdered</i>
<i>Defeated Aram 3x</i> <i>Co-regency 793-782 BC</i>	2 Kings 13:10-25	Jehoash 798-782 BC (16 years)	Amaziah* † 796-767 BC (29 years)	2 Kings 14:1-22	<i>Good king</i> <i>Co-regency with Uzziah 790-767 BC (24 years)</i> ⁷¹
<i>Most successful in the north</i> <i>Prophets Amos, Jonah</i>	2 Kings 14:23-29	Jeroboam II 793-753 BC (41 years)	Uzziah / Azariah* 790-739 BC (52 years)	2 Kings 15:1-24	<i>Good king</i> <i>Co-regency with Jotham 750-739 BC (12 years)</i>
753 BC	15:8-12	Zechariah †	Jotham*	15:32-38	750-735
6th dynasty	15:13-15	Shallum †	Ahaz 735-715 BC (4 years in his father's name + 16 years solo)	2 Kings 16:1-20	<i>Closed the temple for worship</i> <i>Prophets Isaiah, Micah</i>
7th dynasty		Menahem 752-742 (10 years)			
<i>Prop. Hosea</i>		Pekahiah †			
742-741 (2)	15:23-26	Pekah † 752-732 BC (20 years)			
8th dynasty; <i>Gilead then Israel</i> ⁷²	2 Kings 15:27-31	Hoshea 732-722 BC (9 years)			
9th dynasty; <i>Fall of Israel; exile</i>	2 Kings 17:1-41				

⁷¹ In the southern kingdom of Judah, the co-regencies of Amaziah and Uzziah/Azariah, and then Uzziah/Azariah with Jotham, together with the handover of power from Jotham to Ahaz, are the most difficult periods to get firm dates on. Scholars have been unable to fully reconcile all the dates for this time period. See Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 43, n.62.

⁷² It seems as though Pekah came to power at the same time as Menahem, since he ruled for 20 years (2 Kings 15:27). The most likely scenario is that Menahem ruled from Samaria, while Pekah was enthroned across the Jordan River in Gilead. See Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 361-363.

3). Regnal Formula for the Northern Kings of the North

The reigns of almost all the kings of Israel and Judah are introduced and concluded using what is called a “regnal formula.”⁷³

“They serve to give structure to a long narrative recording the reigns of forty rulers spanning over four hundred years. The regnal formulas are a source of basic information – not just for important rulers with long narratives (eg. Solomon, Jehu, Hezekiah, and Josiah) but also for minor rulers with short narratives (eg. Nadab, Amon, and Pekahiah).”⁷⁴

There is some variation between certain rulers, but generally, the formulas for the northern kings had the following elements:⁷⁵

#	Elements	Example – Baasha (1 Kings 15:33 – 16:6)
1	Year of accession	In the third year of Asa king of Judah,
2	Father’s name	Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel in Tirzah,
3	Length of reign	and he reigned for twenty-four years.
4	Evaluation	He did evil in the eyes of Yahweh,
5	Explanation	following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.
	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Short narrative found in 16:1-4, plus an additional comment after the concluding formula in 16:7.</i>
6	Reference to annals	As for the other events of Baasha’s reign, what he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?
7	Death and burial	Baasha rested with his ancestors and was buried in Tirzah.
8	Succession	And Elah his son succeeded him as king.

⁷³ See the extensive discussion by David Lamb in *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 8-16.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 16.

⁷⁵ Charts based on David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 9,13. Also see comments by John Olley, *The Message of Kings* (BST), 28; and Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 83.

What is noteworthy about the regnal formulas for the northern kings is that all of them are judged to have done evil in the eyes of Yahweh, and the sin of each ruler is compared to the first northern king, Jeroboam I. He was the benchmark of wickedness for the northern kings.

4). Regnal Formula – The Kings of the South

The regnal formula for the southern kings is very similar to their northern counterparts, apart from a few additional details.

#	Elements	Example – Azariah/Uzziah (2 Kings 15:1-7)
1	Year	In the twenty-seventh year of Jeroboam king of Israel,
2	Father's name	Azariah son of Amaziah king of Judah began to reign.
3	Age	He was sixteen years old when he became king,
4	Length of reign	and he reigned in Jerusalem for fifty-two years.
5	Mother's name	His mother's name was Jekoliah; she was from Jerusalem.
6	Evaluation	He did what was right in the eyes of Yahweh,
7	Explanation	just as his father Amaziah had done.
8	High places	The high places, however, were not removed; the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there.
	<i>Narrative</i>	<i>Short comment about Azariah developing leprosy, and his son Jotham ruling (v.5).</i>
9	Reference to annals	As for the other events of Azariah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?
10	Death and burial	Azariah rested with his ancestors and was buried near them in the City of David.
11	Succession	And Jotham his son succeeded him as king.

There are four significant differences between the formulas for the kings of Judah versus the kings of Israel:

1. **Age:** It was common in the south to include the age that the king ascended the throne, something not done in the north.
2. **Mother's name:** The mother's name was commonly recorded in addition to the name of their father. This may well have been due to the influence of the king's mother on his spiritual direction.
3. **Evaluation:** Unlike the wicked kings of the north, the kings of south varied between both good and evil. For them, generally the benchmark was King David himself, the ultimate example of a king who served Yahweh wholeheartedly (see 1 Kings 15:5). An evil king would fail to follow David's example (eg. Ahaz in 2 Kings 16:2), and even a good king could be judged to not have walked as righteously as David did (eg. Amaziah in 2 Kings 14:3). The exceptions were kings like Jehoshaphat, whose father was also righteous, and they could be benchmarked to him.
4. **High places:** Another unique element in the formula for the kings of Judah was an additional comment after the evaluation and explanation, about what they did with the "high places."

These were traditionally worship centres built on hilltops to serve false gods, and were meant to have been destroyed (Num. 33:52). Some like Gibeon had been re-purposed for the worship of Yahweh (where Solomon sacrificed to Yahweh 1 Kings 3), but they became a major problem in Judah. The high places became a footnote in the formula for many of the good kings in the south until they were destroyed by Hezekiah and then later Josiah.

Strongly Negative: Built, rebuilt or used the high places	Sadly Lacking: Did not remove the high places	Strongly Positive: Removed the high places
Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:31) Rehoboam (14:23) Ahaz (2 Kings 16:4) Manasseh (21:3)	Asa (1 Kings 15:14) Jehoshaphat (22:43) Jehoash (2 Kings 12:3) Amaziah (14:4) Azariah (15:4) Jotham (15:35)	Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4) Josiah (23:8,13,19)

B). The Worthless Reign of Jeroboam I (12:25 – 14:20)

The reign of Jeroboam I must be assessed against the promise that Yahweh made through the prophet Ahijah (the one who tore his cloak). Yahweh offered to be with Jeroboam and build him a royal dynasty just like the house of David, if Jeroboam would walk in obedience (1 Kings 11:38).

However, Jeroboam failed to take Yahweh at His word, and he established a pattern of disobedience and idolatry that plagued the northern kingdom for its entire history. Jeroboam's sin becomes the benchmark of evil for future northern kings as he resurrected one of the worst moments of idolatry from Israel's past – the worship of the golden calves at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32-33). Jeroboam deliberately echoes Aaron's words from that story.

Exodus 32:42	1 Kings 12:28
He took what they handed him and made it into an idol cast in the shape of a calf, fashioning it with a tool. Then they said, 'These are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'	After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, 'It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.'

"It is hard to imagine how this new king and this new kingdom could do anything more offensive and blasphemous to God than this!"⁷⁶

The story of Jeroboam's tragic reign centres on this act of blatant idolatry and two prophecies of judgment that are therefore made against him. The first prophecy is against the altars that he had built, while the final oracle was against his own royal house, that Yahweh had offered to establish if he was as faithful as David had been. Both prophecies are future-oriented, and so both have an immediate sign to show Yahweh's Word can be trusted.

In between is another story involving God's word, which the unnamed prophet does not take seriously. It highlights that Yahweh can always be trusted to be faithful to His Word.

1). Introduction: Jeroboam establishes idolatry in Israel (12:25-30)

⁷⁶ Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays, *Living God's Word*, (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2012), 100.

2). First prophecy against the altars of Jeroboam (12:31 – 13:6)

- a). Setting – the false festival established by Jeroboam (v.31-33)
- b). Oracle given – the altar will be destroyed by King Josiah (13:1-2)
- c). Sign given – the altar will split to show this is true (v.3)
- d). Sign fulfilled – the altar splits, the king’s hand healed (vv.4-6)

3). Second prophecy against the man of God (13:7-34)

- a). Setting – Yahweh’s command to the prophet (v.7-10)
- b). Narrative – an old man deceives the prophet (v.11-19)
- c). Oracle given – the prophet will die for disobeying (v.20-22)
- d). Oracle fulfilled – the prophet is killed by a lion (v.23-25)
- e). Narrative – the old man grieves for the prophet (v.26-30)
- f). Message – the prophet’s words will come true (v.31-32)
- g). Postscript – king Jeroboam refused to change his ways (v.33-34)

4). Third prophecy against the house of Jeroboam (14:1-18)

- a). Setting – Jeroboam’s son falls ill and his wife seeks a word (v.1-5)
- b). Oracle given – the house of Jeroboam will be destroyed (v.6-11)
- c). Sign given – the son who is ill will die (v.12-13)
- d). Further oracle – Israel will go into exile for her sins (v.14-16)
- e). Sign fulfilled – the son dies when his mother reaches home in fulfilment of the prophecy (v.17-18)

5). Conclusion: Jeroboam’s closing regnal formula (14:19-20)

“Jeroboam’s dynasty is sinking fast, but what really strikes us in these verses is how patient God is towards him... In view of his fake gods, his fake temples, his fake priests and his fake festivals, it really is remarkable that the Lord didn’t strike him down before the prophet from Judah confronted him. Yet even after he was healed by the prophet, Jeroboam persisted in his sin.”⁷⁷

C). The Fluctuating Fortunes of Judah (14:21 – 15:24)

⁷⁷ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 74-75.

After concentrating on the reign of Jeroboam and his sinful choices, the focus comes back to Rehoboam and the next two kings of Judah. They fluctuate between the evil kings Rehoboam and Abijah, and the righteous king Asa, who led Judah for 4 decades.

1). Rehoboam's 17-Year Reign (14:21-31)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.21)
- b). The sins of Judah under Rehoboam (v.22-24)
- c). The defeat of Rehoboam and sacking of Jerusalem (v.25-28)
- d). Closing regnal formula (v.29-31)

2). Abijah's 3-Year Reign (15:1-8)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-3)
- b). Comment on Yahweh's faithfulness to David's dynasty (v.4-5)
- c). Civil war between Israel and Judah (v.6)
- d). Closing regnal formula (v.7-8)

3). Asa's 41-Year Reign (15:9-24)

- a). Extended opening regnal formula (v.9-11)
- b). Extended explanation of Asa's commitment to Yahweh (v.12-15)
- c). Civil war between Israel and Judah, and tribute to Aram (v.16-22)
- d). Closing regnal formula (v.23-24)

“Asa was a spiritual success in exactly the areas where his father and grandfather had failed. Rehoboam had introduced many pagan practices into Judah's worship: goddess worship, ritual prostitution, and the like. Rehoboam's son Abijah repeated the sins of his father. But Asa was a reformer. Like his great-grandfather David, he had a heart for the worship of the one true God. Therefore, Asa put an end to the worship of false deities and the depraved practices of Canaanite religion. Asa brought spiritual reformation to the people of God.”⁷⁸

D). The Revolving Door in Israel (15:25 – 16:28)

⁷⁸ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 397.

“In the time it takes Judah to have three kings, Israel notches up seven kings from four separate dynasties! That’s what happens when leaders refuse to submit to the Lord... The northern kingdom is a bloodbath of instability.”⁷⁹

1). Nadab’s Brief 2-Year Reign and Assassination (15:25-32)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.25-26)
- b). Assassination and family’s complete annihilation due to Jeroboam’s sin (v.27-30)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.31-32)

2). Baasha’s 24-Year Reign – Bloodthirsty 2nd Dynasty (15:33 – 16:7)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.33-34)
- b). Yahweh’s prophecy against Baasha’s dynasty (v.1-4)
- c). Closing regnal formula and additional comment (v.5-7)

3). Elah’s Brief 2-Year Reign and Assassination (16:8-14)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.8)
- b). Assassination and family’s murder due to Baasha’s sin (v.9-13)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.14)

4). Zimri’s Short 1-Week Reign – The Ill-Fated 3rd Dynasty (16:15-20)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.15a)
- b). Omri’s revolt and Zimri’s suicide at Tirzah due to his sin (v.15b-9)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.20)

5). Omri’s 12-Year Reign – The ‘Successful’ 4th Dynasty (16:21-28)

- a). Description of civil war between Omri and Tibni (vv.21-22)
- b). Extended opening regnal formula inc. new capital city (v.23-26)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.27-28)

“Politically, Omri left a legacy – for the next hundred years the Assyrians would refer to Israel as the ‘house of Omri’ ... But that is not the emphasis of the Bible. Our writer is not overly impressed ... He is not saying he is ignorant of Omri’s achievements – he is saying

⁷⁹ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 82.

they don't matter; they are inconsequential. When the first two commandments are despised nothing else counts."⁸⁰

E). Conclusion

"The people of Israel, now split into two competing kingdoms, once again spiral downward theologically and morally. Deuteronomy is ignored and many of the kings and leaders embrace idolatry. The splendour of Solomon's empire is dismantled and his wealth is carried off bit by bit throughout 1 – 2 Kings. A few good kings in Judah (Asa, Hezekiah, Josiah) try to stop the slide, but the momentum is too great and their reforms are short-lived and swept away as soon as they die."⁸¹

⁸⁰ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 192-193.

⁸¹ Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays, *Living God's Word*, 101.

REFLECTING ON THE PARTITION OF ISRAEL: *WISDOM AND FOOLISHNESS*

King Solomon was the recipient of an incredible of wisdom and became the (human) author of some or all of the “Wisdom Books” of the Old Testament (Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Songs). His son King Rehoboam, as we commented in the notes, was the recipient of the book of Proverbs. Yet neither the author nor the recipient showed great wisdom in their reigns.

“The ‘fear of Yahweh’ is a positive response to God in reverence and awe, not a quaking in abject fear... This phrase is not saying that ‘the fear of Yahweh is the beginning...’ as if that was simply the first step. Rather, the concept of fearing Yahweh is the principle that permeates everything in biblical wisdom. In other words, a person could do everything else taught in Proverbs, but if they do not fear Yahweh, they are not biblically wise. It is the organizing principle of life.”⁸²

⁸² Taken from class notes, *Old Testament History II and Poetry (Bible 303)*, Dr. Ronald Allen, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall Semester, 1996.

THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE CURSE OF AHAB (1 KINGS 16 – 2 KINGS 17)

As we saw in the last session, Dr. Bruce Waltke suggests a chiastic structure to Kings that centres on the northern dynasty of Omri and his son Ahab.⁸³

- A Solomon and the united kingdom (1 Kings 1-11)
- B Separation of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12)
- C Kings of Israel and Judah (1 Kings 13-16)
- X The Omrid dynasty (1 Kings 17 – 2 Kings 11)
- C' Kings of Israel and Judah (2 Kings 12-16)
- B' Fall of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 17)
- A' Kingdom of Judah alone (2 Kings 18-25)

This suggestion gave us the following structure:

3. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM: THE CURSE OF AHAB

The Divided Kingdom					
1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17					
The Partition of Israel					
Separation of the Northern Kingdom	The early kings of North and South	Elijah and the sin of the House of Ahab	Elisha and the fall of the House of Ahab	The later kings of North and South	Fall of the Northern Kingdom
1 Kings 12	1 Kings 12-16	1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 2	2 Kings 2-11	2 Kings 12-16	2 Kings 17



⁸³ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 704.

The middle section of Kings, therefore, centres on the rulers of the house of Omri – most significantly Omri’s son, King Ahab – and the two key prophets that Yahweh raises up to confront and ultimately dismantle the house of Ahab – Elijah and his successor, Elisha.

Thus, the basic flow of the narrative builds around the ministries of these two prophets, and the northern and southern kings they interact with:

3). The ministry of Elijah and the Sin of the House of Ahab

(1 Kings 16 – 2 Kings 1)

- A). **Ahab of Israel:** Baal Worship and Confrontation with Yahweh (1 Kings 16:29 – 22:40)
- B). **Jehoshaphat of Judah:** Godly King, Ungodly Alliances (1 Kings 22:41-50)
- C). **Ahaziah of Israel:** Continuation of his Father’s Sin (1 Kings 22:51 – 2 Kings 1:18)

3.5). Hinge: The Transition from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2)

4). The Ministry of Elisha and the Fall of the House of Ahab (2 Kings 3-11)

- A). **Joram of Israel:** Continued Evil in the House of Ahab (2 Kings 3:1 – 8:15)
- B). **Jehoram of Judah:** Marrying into the House of Ahab (2 Kings 8:16-24)
- B). **Ahaziah of Judah:** Following the Ways of Ahab (2 Kings 8:25-29)
- D). **Jehu of Israel:** Eradicating the House of Ahab (2 Kings 9:1 – 10:36)
- E). **Athaliah of Judah:** The Last Throw of the Dice (2 Kings 11:1-21)

In the Elijah section, there is a long narrative about his confrontation with Ahab, stretching from 1 Kings 16-22. This is followed by shorter narratives about the reigns of Jehoshaphat and Ahab’s son, Ahaziah.

After the transitional story of Elijah’s ministry and mantle passing to Elisha, there is a longer narrative again involving King Joram, followed by two shorter narratives, and then a slightly longer narrative again about King Jehu, before the concluding story of Queen Athaliah who usurps the throne of Judah.

3. ELIJAH AND THE SIN OF THE HOUSE OF AHAB: (1 KINGS 16 – 2 KINGS 2)

A). Ahab of Israel: Baal Worship and Confrontation with Yahweh (1 Kings 16:29 – 22:38)

1). Opening Formula of Ahab's Reign (16:29-34)

- a). Opening regnal formula: year, father, and length of reign (v.29)
- b). Evaluation: he did more evil than any before him (v.30), including his father Omri, who'd sinned more than any before him (v.25)
- c). Extended explanation of Ahab's sinfulness (v.31-34)
 - he repeated Jeroboam's sin, which was minor for him (v.31a)
 - he married Jezebel of Sidon, and worshipped Baal (v.31b)
 - he built a Baal temple in Samaria for public worship (v.32-33)
 - God's Word was ignored so that even Jericho was rebuilt at the cost of Hiel's oldest and youngest sons (v.34)

"Ahab's marriage to the Phoenician princess Jezebel was politically important and demonstrated the rising prominence of Israel's dynasty. As in the case of the foreign wives of Solomon before him, Ahab's marriage produced tragic results... Her father was both king and priest of Baal in Sidon; similarly, Jezebel was princess and priestess of Baal...

The outrage is that Ahab had gone quite beyond a mere combining of beliefs. He became a fully-fledged worshipper of Baal. Further, Ahab established an altar for Baal [and] a temple for Baal. In these actions Ahab went a considerable distance in establishing the Baal cult as the state religion of Israel... The sin that Ahab and Jezebel brought into the nation of Israel was a total rejection of the living God."⁸⁴

To understand the narratives of Elijah and Elisha, then, we need to understand something of this Canaanite god, Baal, and his consort, Asherah. Baal was the god of the storm and the rains, and fire and lightning. And since rain was needed for crops to grow, he was also seen as the god of fertility, barrenness, life, healing, and death.

⁸⁴ Richard Patterson, *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Earl Radmacher (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999). 451-452.

“Baal was believed to be the god who sends the life-giving rains. He is often pictured with lightning and thunder, and he rides his chariot to collect the clouds, moves them into position, masturbates in his chariot, and causes the rain. Thus, to wake Baal and to encourage him to act, shrines were built on the high places and orgies were performed there to awaken the sexual desires of Baal.”⁸⁵

Many commentators now believe “that nearly everything Elijah and Elisha did was devoted to showing that Yahweh was stronger than Baal.”⁸⁶

In other words, what is happening in the narratives of Elijah and Elisha is not just some amazing miracles or random events, but a great battle where Yahweh is shown to be the one true God over the false god Baal.

Just as the 10 plagues at the time of the Exodus were powerful demonstrations of Yahweh’s greatness over the so-called gods of Egypt (see Num. 33:3-4), so the ministries of Elijah and Elisha are showing that Yahweh alone is God.

Beliefs about Baal⁸⁷	Actions of Elijah and Elisha
God of the rain	Yahweh causes a draught, and controls when the rains come (17)
God of fire	Yahweh sends fire on the altar (18)
God of fertility and harvest	Yahweh provides flour and oil through Elijah (17) and Elisha (4)
God of the clouds	Yahweh’s fiery chariot takes Elijah to heaven thru the clouds (2)
God over barrenness and fertility	Yahweh gives children (4)
God over sickness	Yahweh heals illness, leprosy (4, 5)
God over life and death	Yahweh raises the dead (17, 4)

⁸⁵ Taken from class notes, *Old Testament History II and Poetry (Bible 303)*, Dr. Ronald Allen, Dallas Theological Seminary, Fall Semester, 1996.

⁸⁶ Albert Baylis, *From Creation to the Cross*, 216.

⁸⁷ Based on a chart by Baylis, *From Creation to the Cross*, 216.

2). Ahab's Battles with Yahweh and Elijah (17:1 – 19:21)

a). Round One: Elijah, Ahab and the Drought (17:1-24)

The prophet Elijah enters the story dramatically. His name means, 'Yahweh is my God,'⁸⁸ and his ministry lives out the truth of his name. His first message is both an attack on the supposed power of Baal – the god of the rain – and also an act of judgment from Yahweh against His people who had turned from Him (Deut. 11:16-17; 28:23-24).

“The drought in Elijah’s day was not simply a random natural disaster, but a specific punishment on God’s people for their sin. According to God’s Law (see Deut 11:16-17), drought was the proper punishment for pagan idolatry. The Israelites trusted in the god of the rain; therefore, the true and living God decreed that no rain would fall on them – a specific curse that directly addressed Baal’s claim to be the rainmaker. Even the dew would dry up.”⁸⁹

- i. Yahweh gives His prophet a prophecy regarding a drought, *displaying His power over the rain* (v.1)
- ii. Yahweh provides food and water for His prophet in the drought, *displaying His power over creation* (v.2-6)
- iii. Yahweh miraculously provides for a widow of Sidon who cares for Elijah, *displaying His power in the homeland of Baal* (v.7-16)
- iv. Yahweh uses Elijah to raise the widow’s son from the dead, *displaying His power of life and death* (v.17-24)

b). Round Two: Elijah, the prophets and the Contest (18:1-46)

The famous story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal needs to be understood in its context. It is one battle in the war against Baal worship between Yahweh and the false god of Ahab and Jezebel.

The key question of the narrative is, “**who is the real God?**”

- That’s the question at the centre of the contest (v.21,24)
- That’s the issue as Elijah taunts the false prophets (v.27)
- That’s the heart of Elijah’s prayer to Yahweh (v.36-37)
- That’s the response on the lips of the people (v.39)

⁸⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 213.

⁸⁹ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 437.

“The story has all the elements of a classic underdog tale, a righteous man who has been hunted by a powerful leader, daring to confront hundreds of his competitors in an epic competition before a large crowd.”⁹⁰

The storyline follows the key ingredients of a normal plot where the tension or emotion of the story rises and falls like a bell curve:

- i. **Introduction: The Contest is Looming** – Elijah meets Obadiah, Ahab’s administrator, who saved Yahweh’s prophets (18:1-16)
- ii. **Crisis: The Contest is Agreed** – Elijah confronts Ahab and the people over their Baal worship (18:17-24)
- iii. **Climax: The Contest Intensifies** – Elijah mocks the prophets of Baal and then raises the stakes even more (18:25-35)
- iv. **Resolution: The Contest is Won** – Elijah prays and Yahweh answers his prayer by sending fire (18:36-40)
- v. **Conclusion: The Contest is Over** – Elijah prays again and Yahweh now sends rain, after slaughtering Baal’s prophets (18:41-46)

Elijah hands “home court advantage” to the prophets of Baal.

“Elijah may have specified Mt. Carmel for a reason. Carmel juts out into the Mediterranean near modern Haifa... In Egyptian records from the second millennium BC, Mt. Carmel is called ‘Holy Head,’ suggesting it was a sanctuary. In the annals of Assyrian King Shalmanesar III (841 BC), Mount Carmel appears as ‘the mountain of Baal.’ One might simply say, ‘Baal’s Bluff.’ Carmel may well have been ground sacred to Baal, and Elijah may have chosen it for that very reason.”⁹¹

“It was an uneven contest. The deck was stacked in favour of the prophets of Baal... [But] every advantage that Baalism was given only served to increase the glory of the God who answered by fire.”⁹²

⁹⁰ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 237.

⁹¹ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 236-237.

⁹² Raymond Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy: The Gospel According to Elijah and Elisha* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1999), 44-45.

Advantage ⁹³	Reason
The advantage of outcome	Baal was the god of fire and lightning
The advantage of location	Mt. Carmel was “Baal’s Bluff”
The advantage of priority	Elijah let them go first
The advantage of time	They took most of the day
The advantage of numbers	450 Baal prophets vs. just Elijah
The advantage of volume	They shouted, danced, cut themselves
The advantage of facilities	There was an established altar to Baal; but Elijah had to build one for Yahweh

As the day drags on and Baal shows no signs of sending fire, Elijah taunts the prophets of Baal, mocking their false deity (v.27) and even suggesting Baal might be busy on the toilet (the meaning of “busy”).⁹⁴

“Elijah is audaciously confident. He reminds the people of their covenant background, with twelve stones for the twelve tribes who came from Jacob (v.31). He involves the people in adding water, plenty of it! His straightforward prayer, with no dramatic actions, is to Yahweh, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel (v.36). Each element is a reminder of the God who has been theirs since before the exodus and entry into Canaan.”⁹⁵

c). Round Three: Elijah, Jezebel and Giving Up (19:1-21)

“Jezebel, an agent of death, previously sought to kill Yahweh’s prophets (18:13) and is enraged... Elijah interprets her past actions and present oath as a real threat and flees to preserve his life. Sadly, he forgets how Yahweh proved Himself Lord of life and sovereign over the impotent Baal. In the past his interactions with Ahab were filled with bold authority (17:1; 18:1-2, 18-19); now he caves before Baal’s patroness.”⁹⁶

⁹³ Adapted from the insights of Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 236-237, and Raymond Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy*, 44-45.

⁹⁴ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 240.

⁹⁵ John Olley, *The Message of Kings*, 173.

⁹⁶ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 251-252.

- a). **Introduction:** Elijah flees from Jezebel's threat (19:1-3a)
- b). **Journey One:** Elijah journeys to the southern wilderness and has two encounters with an angel (19:3b-8a)
- c). **Journey Two:** Elijah journeys to Mt Horeb (Sinai) and has two encounters with Yahweh (19:8b-18)
 - i. Introduction: Traveling to Mt Horeb (8-9a)
 - ii. Yahweh's Question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v.9b)
 - iii. Elijah's Reply: They rejected Yahweh and tried to kill me (v.10)
 - iv. Yahweh's command to stand before Him (v.11a)
 - v. Yahweh's quiet voice (vv.11b-13a)
 - vi. Yahweh's Question: "What are you doing here, Elijah?" (v.13b)
 - vii. Elijah's Reply: They rejected Yahweh and tried to kill me (v.14)
 - viii. Yahweh's command to deal with Ahab's house (vv.15-17)
 - ix. Yahweh's calm reassurance (v.18)
- d). **Journey Three:** Elijah journeys to Elisha's home and has two encounters with Elisha (19:19-21)

What is interesting is that at the end of his encounters with Yahweh at Mt. Horeb/Sinai, Yahweh commands him to anoint three men, who between them will bring about the judgment and fall of the house of Ahab. But Elijah doesn't do that.

"The Lord gives him a new commission. The Lord commands him to anoint, in order, Hazael (as the new king of Syria), Jehu (as the new king of Israel), and Elisha (as his prophetic successor) (vv.15-18). But Elijah loses the internal struggle. He goes directly to Elisha and anoints him (v.19), as if to say to God, 'I quit – let Elisha take over.' Eventually Elisha, not Elijah, announces Hazael's rise to the throne of Syria (2 Kings 8:13) and anoints Jehu as king over Israel (2 Kings 9:6)."⁹⁷

We are left wondering whether Ahab and his family might have been dealt with much earlier if Elijah had obeyed what Yahweh told him to do. Did the northern kingdom suffer for ten or twenty years longer under the house of Ahab because of Elijah's disobedience?

⁹⁷ Robert Chisholm, *Interpreting the Historical Books: An Exegetical Handbook* (Grand Rapids, MI: Kregel Publications, 2006), 33. See also Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings*, (NIBC), 147-148, who contrasts Elijah's lack of enthusiasm for the prophetic task to Elisha's excitement and obedience.

3). *Ahab's Battles with Yahweh and Others (20:1 – 22:36)*

Elijah steps back from the spotlight from this point, and even though Yahweh still uses him at times (21:17-24; 2 Kings 1:3-4), Yahweh also uses other prophets to speak his word against Ahab and his successors.

“We must realise how the Bible writer has arranged the last three chapters of 1 Kings. As he united chapters 17-19 around the ‘God war,’ so he combines chapters 20-22 into another triad in which each chapter emphasises the failure of Ahab and how the word of God stands opposed to him... No other king receives such a literary battering from a sacred writer.”⁹⁸

- a). ***Ahab and Ben-Hadad:*** Ahab rejects the gracious deliverance of Yahweh, and is condemned for his arrogance (20:1-43)

When Ben-Hadad of Aram attacked Israel, Yahweh graciously gives victory twice to His disobedient nation, defeating the enemy in both in the hills (vv.13-22) and on the plains (vv.23-30). But Yahweh’s name is conspicuously absent. Ahab takes the glory for victory and presumes he can set the conquered king free for a few business advantages. Ahab thoroughly rejects Yahweh’s gracious acts.

- b). ***Ahab and Naboth:*** Ahab rejects the covenant ethics of Yahweh, and is condemned for his greed (21:1-29)

“Of all Ahab’s failings the text has never accused him of oppression or brutality against his people. But here the king proves himself to have even less character than was demonstrated previously, and his wife is the catalyst for this decline... Because of his ongoing wickedness Ahab will die and his dynasty will cease. His wife will die for her sins. In fact, dogs will eat her, which was a fate worse than Ahab’s, for it implied denial of a decent burial.”⁹⁹

- c). ***Ahab at Ramoth Gilead:*** Ahab rejects the prophetic word of Yahweh, and is condemned to die in battle (22:1-38)

⁹⁸ Dale Ralph Davis, *The Wisdom and the Folly*, 285.

⁹⁹ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 231, 233.

“Deception dominates this chapter. Prophets lie, a king disguises himself to deceive the enemy ... and Yahweh Himself authorises the sending of a spirit of deception... Ahab could believe the four hundred prophets whose unanimous optimistic message smelled fishy, or he could believe the one prophet whose shockingly pessimistic message had a ring of truth. Ahab chose poorly.”¹⁰⁰

4). Closing Formula of Ahab’s Reign (22:39-40)

B). Jehoshaphat of Judah: Godly King, Ungodly Alliances (1 Kings 22:41-50)

- 1). Opening regnal formula (v.41-43)
- 2). Short editorial that Jehoshaphat was at peace with the evil Ahab (v.44)
- 3). Closing regnal formula part 1 – the annals of Judah (v.45)
- 4). Short editorial comment about ridding the land of male prostitutes, and his navy being wrecked (v.46-49)
- 5). Closing regnal formula part 2 – death, burial, and successor (v.50)

“Jehoshaphat is the first king of Judah to live at peace with the king of Israel. He follows in his father Asa’s footsteps by expelling the last of the shrine prostitutes from his territory ... But Jehoshaphat also forged an unholy alliance with the kings of Israel. He didn’t influence King Ahaziah of Israel for good. He was influenced by Ahaziah instead.”¹⁰¹

C). Ahaziah of Israel: Continuation of his Father’s Sin (1 Kings 22:51 – 2 Kings 1:18)

- 1). Opening regnal formula (1 Kings 22:51-53)
- 2). Ahaziah consulting Baal-Zebub instead of Yahweh (2 Kings 1:1-17a)
 - a). The injured Ahaziah sends messengers to consult Baal-Zebub (v.1-2)
 - b). Elijah sends back a prophetic word that the king will die (v.3-6)
 - c). Two troops are sent to arrest Elisha and are razed by fire (v.7-12)
 - d). Elijah goes with the captain of the third troop (13-16).
 - e). Conclusion: Ahaziah died just as Yahweh had said (v.17a)
- 3). Closing regnal formula (v.17b-18)

¹⁰⁰ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 285-287.

¹⁰¹ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 130-132.

4. ELISHA AND THE FALL OF THE HOUSE OF AHAB: (2 KINGS 2-11)

As suggested earlier, 2 Kings 2 forms a transitional hinge between the ministries of Elijah and Elisha, as the mantle is literally passed from one prophet to another. Even though the evil King Ahab is now dead, his idolatry and sin lives on in his wicked successors, and it is left to Elisha to finish the work of destroying the tainted legacy of Ahab.

II). Hinge: The Transition from Elijah to Elisha (2 Kings 2)

This transitional narrative falls natural into two sections: the departure of Elijah in the whirlwind to heaven (vv.1-12) and the signifying of Elisha as the successor to Elijah (vv.13-25). There is also a geographical movement in the story from Bethel to Jericho to the Jordan, and back again.

1). *The Departure of Elijah in the Whirlwind (2 Kings 2:1-12)*

“The cycle opens with all the company of the prophets aware that ‘today’ Yahweh will take Elijah away from Elisha. Elijah failed to persuade Elisha at his calling to go back to farming and so escape the sufferings of his prophetic mission (1 Kings 19:20). Now, on their parting day, Elijah tries to shake him off, first at Gilgal, then at Bethel, and finally at Jericho. At each site Elijah tells Elisha to stay behind with the other prophets, either to test his perseverance or to dissuade him from assuming Elijah’s despondent leadership. Elisha, however, insists on staying with him until their parting.”¹⁰²

- a). ***On the road to Bethel***, Elijah tries to dissuade Elisha, while the company of prophets warn him Elijah is departing (vv.1-3)
- b). ***On the road to Jericho***, Elijah tries to dissuade Elisha, while the company of prophets warn him Elijah is departing (vv.4-5)
- c). ***On the road to the Jordan***, Elijah tries to dissuade Elisha, while the company of prophets watch them cross the Jordan (v.6-8)
- d). ***Across the Jordan***, Elisha requests a double portion of Elijah’s spirit, and sees Elijah being carried into heaven in a whirlwind (vv.9-12)

¹⁰² Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 724-725.

Elisha's request to "inherit a double portion of your spirit" (v.9) is not asking for double the amount of the Holy Spirit. This phrase about a "double portion" was used in Deuteronomy 21:17 as an indication of a son being the legitimate successor of his father. Thus, Elisha is requesting to be recognised by Elijah as his successor.¹⁰³

"We have already seen a number of ways in which the narratives about Elijah challenged the worship of Baal in the prophet's own day. Baal had no command over storm, rain, fire, or fertility, for those were the gifts of Yahweh... When Elisha saw the whirlwind, the fire and horses, the symbolism was unmistakable. The warrior God, the captain of the armies of heaven, had come to retrieve his servant and catch him up into his war chariot."¹⁰⁴

2). The Demonstration of Elisha as the Successor (2 Kings 2:13-25)

- a). At the Jordan, **Elisha parts the water** using Elijah's mantle, and is recognised by the prophets as Elijah's successor (vv.13-18)
- b). At Jericho, **Elisha purifies the drinking water** of the city, and gives the promise of Yahweh to the inhabitants (vv.19-22)
- c). At Bethel, **Elisha curses a gang of youths** who taunt him as Elijah's successor, and they mauled by bears in divine judgment (vv.23-25)

In this third story about the boys and the bears, debate exists around the age of the youths. The two Hebrew words used can describe very young boys through to young adults. Both are used to describe Joseph's brother Benjamin in Genesis 44:20 in his twenties.

"These bad boys lived in Bethel, where King Jeroboam had promoted idol-worship by setting up golden calves (1 Kings 12:25-33). It is hardly a surprise, therefore, that Bethel had a problem with teenage gangs – in this case a mob of more than forty... They went out of the city to attack God's prophet as he passed by. When they said, 'Go up!' they might simply have been telling Elisha to get lost. More likely, however, they were deliberately challenging

¹⁰³ See John Olley, *The Message of Kings (BST)*, 216.

¹⁰⁴ Raymond Dillard, *Faith in the Face of Apostasy*, 83-84.

his authority and ability as God's prophet... 'Let's see you disappear with chariots of fire!'"¹⁰⁵

III). The Ministry of Elisha & the Fall of the House of Ahab (2 Kings 3-11)

"In the Elisha cycle, the historian slows down the pace of his narrative and narrows the focus even more than in the Elijah cycle to glorify Yahweh and to condemn faithless Israel... He proclaims good news to the lowly, feeds the hungry, cures the sick, raises the dead, and gives the barren children... God magnifies Himself in small and big matters, leaving none in Israel, especially the kings, with an excuse for impiety and immorality."¹⁰⁶

A). Joram of Israel: Continued Evil in the House of Ahab (2 Kings 3:1 – 8:15)

1). Joram Ascends to the Throne of Israel (3:1-3)

Joram's opening regnal formula introduces a long narrative section that is focused far more on the prophet Elisha than the new king of the north. His opening formula shows that just like his father, mother and brother, Joram was an evil ruler, although the text notes that he was not as bad as the rest of his family. However, Joram would suffer Yahweh's judgment against the house of Ahab (1 Kings 21:21).

2). Elisha Advises Kings in the War Against Moab (3:4-27)

Once again, Jehoshaphat of Judah unwisely joins hands with Ahab but does encourage him to turn to Elisha for a word from Yahweh before the battle. Elisha prophesied Yahweh would supply water and victory.

3). Elisha's Miracles Glorify Yahweh and Display Yahweh's Compassion for People (4:1 – 6:7)

"Now we enter a segment of Elisha's ministry in which he shows that Yahweh's power is triumphant over debt (4:1-7), death (4:8-37), drought (4:38-44; two episodes), disease (5:1-27), and difficulty (6:1-7). It is, in its own way, quite a sustained argument. One might compare the section to the battery of Jesus' miracles in Mark's

¹⁰⁵ Philip Ryken, *2 Kings* (REC), 37-38.

¹⁰⁶ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 724.

Gospel (4:35 – 5:43). Some of these Elisha stories are extended narratives, while others are very brief clips.”¹⁰⁷

a). **Yahweh multiplies oil through Elisha** to care for a widow (4:1-7)

A number of Elisha’s miracles, including this one, have common elements with miracles that Elijah did, thus showing continuity between their ministries. This story is similar to the woman Elijah assisted in Zarephath, Sidon, who only had a handful of flour and a little oil. All of the miracles performed by Elisha continue to show the superiority of Yahweh over famine, disease, and even death.

b). **Yahweh gives a son through Elisha** to a barren woman, and then **restores him to life** when he dies (4:8-37)

i. **Introduction:** A wealthy woman care for Elisha (vv.8-10)

ii. **Surprising Events:** Elisha promised the barren woman a son but he died a few years after he was born (v.11-20)

iii. **Surprising Faith:** The woman showed remarkable faith by travelling and appealing to Elisha to restore her child (vv.21-30)

iv. **Surprising Power:** even when his servant confirms the boy is dead, Elisha prays to Yahweh and he is raised to life (vv.31-35)

v. **Conclusion:** the child is restored to his mother, showing the power of Yahweh even over death (v.36-37)

“Elisha heals the boy much like Elijah healed the child in 1 Kings 17:7-24... Elisha’s work here proves the same points as Elijah’s healing demonstrated: the Lord controls death, and the Lord cares for the needy and hurting.”¹⁰⁸

c). **Yahweh cures and multiplies food** through Elisha to feed His prophets during famine (4:38-44)

i. **Yahweh cures a pot of stew** that had been accidentally poisoned to protect and provide for His prophets (vv.38-41)

ii. **Yahweh multiplies a gift of bread** to miraculously feed a hundred people (vv.42-44)

¹⁰⁷ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury* (Fearn, UK: Christian Focus Publications, 2005), 53.

¹⁰⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 268.

d). ***Yahweh heals a foreign general*** from leprosy through Elisha (5:1-27)

Among the stories about the poor, lowly and barren in Israel, sits this narrative about a successful and powerful foreigner who also needed the power of God, and comes to faith in Yahweh.

- i. ***Introduction:*** Naaman, the great general of the Aramean armies was a valiant and successful soldier, but he had leprosy (vv.1)
- ii. ***Contrast #1:*** in response to his slave girl's comment, Naaman goes to Israel for healing, causing the king to despair (vv.2-8) ***(contrast between the faithful girl and the faithless king)***
- iii. ***Healing:*** Elisha told Naaman to bathe in the Jordan to be healed, and after initially refusing in anger, Naaman humbles himself and complies, and is healed (vv.9-14)
- iv. ***Faith:*** Naaman returns to Elisha, who refuses the general's gifts, but grants his request for forgiveness when he has to support his king in his temple (vv.15-19a)
- v. ***Contrast #2:*** after Elisha refuses the gifts, Gehazi pursues Naaman and lies to get some gifts for himself (vv.19b-24) ***(contrast between greedy servant and generous convert)***
- vi. ***Conclusion:*** Gehazi, the servant of Elisha, is inflicted with Naaman's leprosy for his deceit and greed (v.25-27)

"This text contains one of the great Gentile conversion accounts in the Old Testament. Like Rahab (Josh. 2:9-13), Ruth (Ruth 1:16-18), and the sailors and Ninevites in Jonah (Jonah 1:16; 3:6-10), Naaman believes in the Lord. From Genesis 12:2-3 onward in the Old Testament, God desires to bless all nations through Israel. This ideal becomes a reality here due to the witness of the Israelite servant girl and the work of the Israelite prophet."¹⁰⁹

e). ***Yahweh returns a valuable axhead*** through Elisha to one of His prophets (6:1-7)

Yahweh doesn't just care for great generals, but lowly prophets. He isn't only worried about grieving parents and starving people, but also the devastating loss of a borrowed and expensive axhead.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 273.

4). *Elisha's Prophecies Glorify Yahweh and Show Yahweh's Sovereignty over Nations (6:8 – 8:15)*

Just as the earlier cluster of stories were grouped together to highlight the miracles that Yahweh performed through Elisha, so the next few stories are clustered around the prophecies and predictions that Yahweh made through His prophet. The word of Yahweh is delivered through Elisha as Israel struggles with the kingdom of Aram to the north, showing Yahweh's sovereign power over all nations.

a). *Yahweh's word thwarts the plans of the Arameans (6:8-23)*

“The comedic effect of this passage stems from its gentle mockery of Aram... Throughout the chapter the king of Aram is shown inept: he thinks he sees, but is blind; he desires to know, but does not; he sends to no effect. His bumbling ineptitude is in contrast with Yahweh's prophet who, by Yahweh's power, succeeds where Aram fumbles.”¹¹⁰

b). *Yahweh's word relieves the siege of Samaria (6:24 – 7:20)*

“The story demonstrates the king's failure: he is powerless to provide for the people of the city; he blames Yahweh while failing to show any signs of trust in Him; and unlike four desperate lepers he fails to see Yahweh's deliverance. Here is a continuation of the contrast between the faith of the foreigner Naaman and the self-centred king... God's judgment on the whole dynasty is nearing, while his compassion for the poor who suffer is made evident, as is the reliability of the word He speaks through His prophet.”¹¹¹

c). *Yahweh's word saves a woman from famine and injustice (8:1-6)*

In between lengthy stories about Israel and Aram and the political realities of the time, is a small story about the mother whose son was raised to life. It is a story that highlights her obedience to Elisha's words (contrasting to the unbelief of the king and his officer

¹¹⁰ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings (Apollos)*, 345.

¹¹¹ John Olley, *The Message of Kings (BST)*, 244.

in the previous story), and the impact of Elisha's ministry in restoring her lands when she returns after seven years of famine.

d). ***Yahweh's word selects the new king of Aram (8:7-15)***

The power of Yahweh's words through Elisha even extends to foreign nations, as Elisha predicts that Hazael will be the new king of Aram.

This was one of the three commissions that Yahweh gave Elijah at Mt Sinai when he had fled from Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 19:15-18). However, Elijah only fulfilled one commission in designating Elisha as his successor. It was left to Elisha to appoint Hazael as the new king of Aram through his prophetic words, and he would later send another prophet to anoint Jehu as king of Israel (see 2 Kings 9:1-3).

Hazael, a key official in the court of Ben-Hadad of Aram, was sent by the ailing king to Elisha to find out if he would survive (Elisha was visiting Damascus; v.7). Elisha predicted the king would die and Hazael would take his place. The following day Hazael assassinated the king and took the throne, suggesting he may have had designs on the crown for some time.¹¹²

B). Jehoram of Judah: Marrying into the House of Ahab (2 Kings 8:16-24)

- 1). Opening regnal formula (v.16-17)
- 2). Evaluation of his evil reign, his marriage into the house of Ahab, and Yahweh's grace to maintain a "lamp" for David (v.18-19)
- 3). Warfare with Edom and its new king (v.20-22)
- 4). Closing regnal formula (v.23-24)

Jehoram came to the throne of Judah while his father Jehoshaphat was still alive (v.16), meaning a co-regency between them. However, Jehoram did not follow in his father's footsteps in walking with Yahweh, almost certainly due to his marriage to Ahab and Jezebel's daughter, Athaliah.

According to 2 Chronicles 21, he followed the idolatry of the house of Ahab (v.13), presumably bringing Baal worship into Judah. As a result, he was afflicted with a disease of his bowels as judgment from Yahweh (vv.12-15).

¹¹² Ibid., 252.

He died from this disease “to no one’s regret” (v.20) – one of the saddest epitaph’s in Scripture.

C). Ahaziah of Judah: Following the of Ahab (2 Kings 8:25-29)

- 1). Opening regnal formula including the evaluation of his evil (v.25-27)
- 2). Description of his visit to see his uncle Joram in Jezreel, who had been wounded in battle (v.18-19)

According to 2 Chronicles 21:17 and 22:1, Ahaziah was the youngest of several sons born to Jehoram and Athaliah. However, the rest were killed by Philistine and Arabian forces who attacked Jerusalem. Influenced by his evil mother (2 Chron. 2:3) and following the example of his father, he continued the idolatry of the house of Ahab (22:4; 2 Kings 8:27).

A short narrative then follows which describes him visiting his uncle Joram of Israel in the city of Jezreel, after Joram had been wounded in battle. His story then freezes there, as chapter 9 then focuses on the anointing of a new king in the north, Jehu. Jehu will not only assassinate King Joram and the entire family of Ahab, he will also kill Ahaziah as a grandson of Ahab. Therefore, there is no closing regnal formula for Ahaziah at this point.

D). Jehu of Israel: Eradicating the House of Ahab (2 Kings 9:1 – 10:36)

1). The Anointing of Jehu (9:1-13)

Having fulfilled part of Yahweh’s commands at Mt Sinai to Elijah to anoint Hazael as king of Aram, Elisha now moves to fulfil the final part of the commission and anoint a northern army commander, Jehu, as the new king of Israel to replace and exterminate the house of Ahab.

A younger prophet is sent with explicit instructions (vv.1-3) to anoint Jehu, pass on Yahweh’s instructions, and then flee. Anointing a new king could be considered an act of treason by the current ruler.

2). The Eradication of the House of Ahab (9:14 – 10:27)

- a). Jehu Assassinate Kings Joram and Ahaziah (9:14-29)
- b). Jehu Orders the Killing of Jezebel (9:30-37)
- c). Jehu Slaughters the Rest of the House of Ahab (10:1-17)
- d). Jehu Murders the Prophets and Priests of Baal (10:18-27)

“This coup punishes Ahab’s family for its idolatry ... Jehu’s killings exceed reform and become atrocities, however, a fact Hosea 1:4-5 makes clear. Eventually, Jehu becomes very much like those he replaces, which makes him more of a political opportunist than a catalyst for change.”¹¹³

3). **Summary of the Reign of Jehu (10:28-36)**

- a). **Summary:** Jehu was commended for ending Baal worship as the state religion of Israel, but condemned for still following Jeroboam’s idolatry (vv.28-29)
- b). **Prophecy:** Yahweh promised Jehu a dynasty of four generations for eradicating the house of Ahab, the longest reigning dynasty in the northern kingdom (vv.30-31)
- c). **Reality:** Although Jehu’s dynasty is secure for now, he begins to lose some of his territory as Hazael of Aram makes inroads (vv.32-33)
- d). **Closing regnal formula:** This includes the total length of his reign, since there was no opening formula for him (vv.34-36)

E). **Athaliah of Judah: The Last Throw of the Dice (2 Kings 11:1-21)**

Many commentators place the bloody coup and brief reign of Queen Athaliah with the next part of the book introducing Joash, the boy-king. But I believe it is better to see Athaliah as she was – daughter of Jezebel and last surviving member of Ahab’s house – and her coup as the last attempt to wipe out the worship and divine promises of the one true God, Yahweh.

- 1). **Athaliah’s Coup** and Murder of the Davidic Family (11:1-3)
- 2). **The Counter-Coup** of Jehoiada and the Crowning of Joash (11:4-12)
- 3). **The Execution of Athaliah** and the Final End of Ahab’s House (11:13-16)
- 4). **The Renewed Covenant** and End of Baal Worship in Judah (11:17-21)

“What is most shocking is not Athaliah’s usurping of the throne of Judah. Nor is it her six-year reign of terror. It is not even her cruelty

¹¹³ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 287.

toward her own flesh and blood. The shocking thing is that Athaliah's massacre almost destroyed the house and line of David."¹¹⁴

5. THE LATER KINGS OF NORTH AND SOUTH (2 KINGS 12-16)

A). The Relative Stability of Israel and Judah (12:1 – 15:7)

The evil royal family of Ahab is finally wiped out, and King Jehu begins a new ruling dynasty in the North (the 5th dynasty). Sadly, however, Jehu persists with the idolatrous practices of Jeroboam, but because he purges the land of Ahab's heinous idolatry, Yahweh promises him a dynasty that will last four generations (2 Kings 10:28-31). This brings a period of stability in the north, which is echoed with long reigns in the south.

1). Joash's 40-Year Reign over Judah (12:1-21)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-3)
- b). Money gifted for repairing the temple (v.4-16)
- c). The payment of tribute to the king of Aram (v.17-18)
- d). Closing regnal formula, including his assassination (v.19-21)

The boy-king Joash came to the throne of Judah through the bravery of the priest Jehoiada, who then guides his rule in the early years.

“Joash's righteous regnal formula was unusual, not because it was qualified (12:3; see the evaluations of Asa, Jehoshaphat, etc.) but because his piety was explicitly connected to the instruction of an individual, Jehoiada (v.2).”¹¹⁵

However, 2 Chr. 24:17-27 tells us that after Jehoiada died, Joash descended into idolatry. When confronted by Jehoiada's son Zechariah, he had Zechariah stoned in the temple precinct, but this action led to his assassination (see 2 Chr. 24:25).

2). Jehoahaz's 17-Year Reign over Israel (13:1-9)

¹¹⁴ Philip Ryken, *2 Kings* (REC), 202.

¹¹⁵ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 390.

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-2)
- b). The anger of Yahweh and Jehoahaz' crying out to Him (v.3-7)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.8-9)

3). Jehoash's 16-Year Reign over Israel (13:10-13)

- a). Opening regnal formula (vv.10-11)
- b). Closing regnal formula (vv.12-13)
- c). Narrative of the dying Elisha's prophecies concerning Jehoash's victories over Aram, an act of divine grace (vv.14-25)

“While this chapter begins with divine anger (2 Kings 13:3), the theological theme that permeates the chapter is divine compassion. Yahweh listens to the prayer of evil Jehoahaz and sends a deliverer to rescue his people (vv.4-5). Even as Elisha is dying, Yahweh allows him to deliver two final messages of hope to Jehoash... Yahweh continues to show compassion for His idolatrous people.”¹¹⁶

4). Amaziah's 29-Year Reign over Judah (14:1-22)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-4)
- b). Executed his father's assassins but not their families (v.5-6)
- c). Foolishly goaded Israel into a civil war and lost heavily (v.7-14)
- d). Alternative closing regnal formula for Jehoash of Israel (v.15-16)
- e). Extended closing regnal formula, inc. his assassination (v.17-22)

5). Jeroboam II's 41-Year Reign over Israel (14:23-29)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.23-24)
- b). Yahweh's gracious promise through Jonah (v.25-27)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.28-29)

Even as the prophets Hosea and Amos brought strong warnings from Yahweh against the idolatry and sinfulness of the northern kingdom under the long-serving Jeroboam II (eg. Hosea 4:1-2; 8:1-6; Amos 2:6-8), Yahweh also sent Jonah with a message of grace and expansion (14:25).

“This deliverance occurs because of Yahweh's own compassion over, and commitment to, Israel. In 13:4-5, Yahweh ‘saw’ Israel's distress and gave a deliverer; this is echoed in 14:26, as Yahweh ‘sees’ the

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 402.

affliction of Israel... Because of Yahweh's grace, Israel under the Jehuities live a charmed life."¹¹⁷

6). Azariah / Uzziah's 52-Year Reign over Judah (15:1-7)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-4)
- b). Azariah's affliction with leprosy (v.5)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.6-7)

Under the long-reigning King Azariah/Uzziah, Judah, too, enjoys some of its best years. The book of Kings, however, surprisingly devotes little space to this godly king, simply noting his sad battle with leprosy.

In 2 Chr. 26 we read the rest of the story. "As long as he sought Yahweh, God gave him success" (2 Chr. 26:5). The next verses record military victories (vv.6-8), building projects (vv.9-10), and a well-equipped army (vv.11-15). But then "his pride led to his downfall" (v.16), as he usurped the role of the priests in the temple. That pride led to the judgment of leprosy, which haunted him the rest of his life (v.21).

B). The Downward Spiral in Israel (15:8-31)

"Events now move swiftly, and none of them are kind to Israel. At just the moment that Assyria becomes a belligerent, conquering nation, Israel suffers through a succession of weak kings who come to power through intrigue and assassination. Of course, the author does not view these events as simply bad luck or poor timing. God is at work, punishing the sins of a stubborn people. Two hundred years of rebellion will be judged."¹¹⁸

1). Zechariah's Short 6-Month Reign and Assassination (15:8-12)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.8-9)
- b). His assassination by Shallum (v.10)
- c). Closing regnal formula and fulfilment of God's Word (v.11-12)

2). Shallum's Ridiculous 1-Month Reign – The 6th Dynasty (15:13-15)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.13)

¹¹⁷ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 421.

¹¹⁸ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 328-329.

- b). His assassination by Menahem (v.14)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.15)

3). Menahem's 10-Year Reign – The 7th Dynasty (15:16-22)

- a). Opening comment about Menahem's brutality (v.16)
- b). Opening regnal formula (v.17-18)
- c). Payment of tribute to Pul of Assyria (v.19-20)
- d). Closing regnal formula (v.21-22)

4). Pekahiah's Brief 2-Year Reign and Assassination (15:23-26)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.23-24)
- b). His assassination by Pekah (v.25)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.26)

5). Pekah's 20-Year Reign – The 8th Dynasty (15:27-31)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.27-28)
- b). Warfare with Assyria and his assassination by Hoshea (v.29-30)
- c). Closing regnal formula (v.31)

C). The Downward Descent in Judah (15:32 – 16:20)

1). Jotham's 16-Year Reign over Judah (15:32-38)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.32-35a)
- b). Single comment about rebuilding the temple's upper gate (v.35b)
- c). Closing regnal formula, inc. a comment about enemies (v.36-38)

“Jotham ruled very well. Unlike his father, his grandfather, and his great-grandfather before him, he not only started out as a devout believer in the Lord but finished up as one too. Other than the fact that he neglected to demolish the ‘high places’ of Judah, the writer has not a single bad word to say about him. He rebuilt part of the temple. He married a godly woman. In all his actions he was a true son of David.”¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 & 2 Kings*, 209-210.

2). Ahaz's 16-Year Reign over Judah (16:1-20)

- a). Opening regnal formula (v.1-2)
- b). Extended explanation of Ahaz's wickedness inc. child sacrifice and idolatry (v.3-4)
- c). Ahaz' alliance with Assyria against Aram & Israel (v.5-9)
- d). Ahaz' new pagan altar constructed in the temple (v.10-18)
- e). Closing regnal formula (v.19-20)

After a legacy of godly kings stretching back four generations, King Ahaz becomes the most evil king to rule Judah to this point in its history. He embraced the fertility religions of the original Canaanite people, constructed a pagan altar for the temple, and even sacrificed his own son.

Ahaz was threatened by an alliance between Pekah of Israel and Rezin, king of Aram, and it is in this context that the prophet Isaiah delivered the famous prophecy of the virgin having a child who would be called Immanuel (Isa. 7:1-17).

But Ahaz refused to trust in Yahweh, and instead turned to the growing empire of Assyria. Paying tribute to the Assyrian king, the pressure is relieved as the Assyrians capture Damascus and murder King Rezin (1 Kings 16:9). But trusting in earthly rulers never works, because Judah will soon feel the heat of Assyria as well (Isa. 7:17).

“Ahaz does not receive friendly treatment from the biblical sources. He made images of Baal, sacrificed (presumably his oldest son) to Molech in the Valley of Hinnom, had the pagan altar he saw in Damascus copied by Uriah the priest in Jerusalem, which he then placed [in the temple] instead of the brazen altar prescribed by the Mosaic law. Later, he even closed the temple doors, forcing the people to worship just where and how he wanted them. It was as if Ahab and Jezebel ... had been brought back to life again, only this time in Judah.”¹²⁰

¹²⁰ Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 371-372.

6. THE FALL OF THE NORTHERN KINGDOM (2 KINGS 17)

“The Northern Kingdom of Israel endured as a separate nation for two centuries, beginning with Jeroboam I’s rebellion against Rehoboam. The rulers of Israel, from Jeroboam, to Hoshea, were consistently evaluated negatively in the text... Throughout this period, numerous prophets of Yahweh, unnamed and named, confronted northern rulers, rebuking them for idolatry and calling them to repentance. But the sins of the nations and its rulers finally caught up to them, and in 722 BC the empire of Assyria completed its conquest of the Northern Kingdom, captured Samaria, and deported many of its people. This chapter provides a theological explanation for the tragedy.”¹²¹

A). The Historical Account of the Northern Exile – What? (17:1-6)

- 1). **Opening regnal formula** for Hoshea, the last king (v.1-2)
- 2). Narrative of **the Assyrian’s invasion and defeat of Israel** (v.3-5)
- 3). **Summary of the defeat of Israel**, in place of a closing regnal formula for Hoshea (v.6)

B). The Theological Reasoning for the Defeat – Why? (17:7-23)

The heart of this sad chapter is the theological reflection of the author on why the northern kingdom was defeated and deported. This reasons for the end of the northern kingdom take up three times as much space as the report of what happened.

There seem to be three main moves in this section, describing how the people rejected and ignored God and how He responded (v.12,15):¹²²

1). **They rejected the God who had redeemed them (v.7-12)**

“As the text piles up evidence against Israel, it emphasises the comprehensiveness of their sins. They built high places in *all* their

¹²¹ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 434.

¹²² Adapted from Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, 239-246.

towns (v.9). They set up pillars on *every* high hill and under *every* green tree (v.10). They made offerings on *all* the high places (v.11). They ignored warnings by *every* prophet and *every* seer (vv.13,23). They abandoned *all* the commandments, and they worshipped *all* the host of heaven (v.16)."¹²³

2). They ignored the God who warned them (v.13-17)

It wasn't as though the people were ignorant of the consequences of their rebellion. God's Word had clearly spelt out the penalty for ongoing sin and idolatry (see Lev. 26 and Deut. 28-29). In addition, He also sent an array of prophets through the years to warn the people of their sin and call them back to covenant faithfulness. But they didn't listen:

"But they would not listen and were as stiff-necked as their ancestors, who did not trust in Yahweh their God" (2 Kings 17:14).

3). They were removed by the God who was angry with them (v.18-23)

This final section describes the consequences of this rebellion with a deliberate and sobering reference to the righteous anger of Yahweh (v.18). This results in His judgment being enacted just as He had promised in Deut. 28, where the people had been warned of discipline, defeat and ultimately deportation from the land if they continued in their sin and refused to repent. Three times in this final section this judgment is underscored, as we are told He "removed them from His presence" or "thrust them from His presence" (v.18, 20, 23).

"It may surprise us to find how frequently the Bible talks about the wrath of God. Yet if God loves all that is right and good and all that conforms to His moral character, it should not be surprising that He would hate everything that is opposed to His moral character... It is helpful for us to ask what God would be like if He were a God who did not hate sin. He would then be a God who either delighted in sin or at least was not troubled by it. Such a God would not be worthy of our worship, for sin is hateful and it is worthy of being hated. Sin ought not to be."¹²⁴

C). The Assyrian Resettlement of the Land – Who? (17:24-41)

¹²³ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 438 (italics mine).

¹²⁴ Wayne Grudem, *Bible Doctrine: Essential Teachings of the Christian Faith*, ed. Jeff Purswell (Nottingham, UK: InterVarsity Press, 1999), 94-95.

“The king of Assyria resettled the towns of Samaria with foreigners (17:24-41). As a measure against the lions that Yahweh sent as judgment against the pagan settlers, the king sends back priests of Yahweh to instruct the settlers how to worship Him. The resulting religions are a syncretism of Yahweh worship with the pagan religions of the settlers, which, of course, violates the exclusive nature of true Yahweh worship. The immigrants and their compromised religion evolved into the Samaritans whose cult center is Mount Gerizim (John 4:20). The land is now called Samaria (2 Kings 17:24), and the people are no longer to be called Israelites (v.34).”¹²⁵

D). Conclusion

“Thus ends the story of [the kingdom of] Israel, as least as far as 2 Kings is concerned. But although this story is about Israel, it was really meant for Judah (and for us). The biblical historian hints at this purpose by referring to Judah near the conclusion of the narrative (v.18-19). Although this summary may seem like a parenthesis, it is really the main point. Judah was just as guilty of idolatry as Israel was. Thus, the what and the why of God’s final judgment on the northern kingdom were meant to serve as a precautionary tale for her brothers and sisters to the south.”¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Bruce Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, 704.

¹²⁶ Philip Ryken, *1 Kings* (REC), 297.

**REFLECTING ON THE CURSE OF AHAB:
THE DANGERS OF IDOLATRY**

“Most people know you can make a god out of money. Most people know you can make a god out of sex. However, *anything* in life can serve as an idol, a God-alternative, a counterfeit god... What is an idol? It is anything more important to you than God, anything that absorbs your heart and imagination more than God, anything you seek to give you what only God can give.”¹²⁷

Where do you look for your significance, your security, or your purpose?

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¹²⁷ Timothy Keller, *Counterfeit Gods: When the Empty Promises of Love, Money and Power Let You Down*, (London, UK: Hodder and Stoughton, 2009), xvi, xvii.

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Negative Action

Positive Action

THE SOLITARY KINGDOM: THE ROAD TO EXILE (2 KINGS 18 – 25)

When the northern kingdom of Israel was conquered by the Assyrian army and carried off into captivity, it left the Kingdom of Judah surviving in the south, still led by the descendants of King David. But it was a shadow of its former self. And the sin and idolatry of its people and many of its kings over the years meant that it, too, was on the road to exile – an exile that would take place less than 140 years after fall of Israel.

Most of those years were dominated by the reigns of three kings of Judah – Hezekiah, Manasseh and Josiah. Hezekiah and Josiah were among the greatest of the southern kings, while Manasseh was the worst that Judah had ever seen.

“Alone, small and vulnerable, Judah now lives out the last 135 years of its history. At first, the nation’s fortunes seem to improve... yet not even the presence of a righteous ruler in the land can stave off ultimate judgment.”¹²⁸

The final chapters of 2 Kings divide into four key sections:

4. THE SOLITARY KINGDOM: THE ROAD TO EXILE

The Solitary Kingdom			
2 Kings 18 – 25			
The Road to Exile			
Deliverance under Hezekiah	Idolatry under Manasseh & Amon	Renewal under Josiah	Exile under the final kings
2 Kings 18-20	2 Kings 21	2 Kings 22-23	2 Kings 23-25



¹²⁸ Paul House, 1, 2 Kings (NAC), 349-350.

TIMELINE OF THE FINAL KINGS OF JUDAH ¹²⁹

DATES	King	Dates	Passages	Notes
720 BC	Ahaz	735-715 BC	2 Kings 16:1-20	<i>Prophets Isaiah, Micah</i>
	Hezekiah*	715-686 BC (29 years)	2 Kings 18:1-24	<i>Co-regency with Ahaz for 11 years (729-715 BC)</i>
				<i>Reformed the nation</i>
700 BC				<i>Resisted Assyrian oppression</i>
	Manasseh	696-642 (55 years)	2 Kings 21:1-18	<i>Co-regency with Manasseh for 10 years (696-686 BC)</i>
680 BC				<i>Worst king of Judah</i>
				<i>Captured by the Assyrians'</i>
660 BC				<i>released on his repentance</i>
	Amon†	642-640 (2)	2 Kgs 21:19-26	<i>Assassinated by officials</i>
640 BC	Josiah*	640-609 BC (31 years)	2 Kings 22:1 – 23:30	<i>Renovated the temple</i>
				<i>Renewed the covenant</i>
620 BC				<i>Prophets Zephaniah, Jeremiah, Nahum, Habbakuk</i>
	Jehoahaz	609 BC (3 mths)	2 Kings 23:31-34	<i>Removed by Pharaoh Necho</i>
	Jehoiakim	609-598 BC (11 years)	2 Kings 23:34 – 24:6	<i>1st Babylonian campaign 605</i>
600 BC				<i>2nd Babylonian campaign 597</i>
	Jehoiachin	598-597 BC	2 Kings 24:8-17	<i>3rd Babylonian campaign 586</i>
	Zedekiah	597-586 BC (11 years)	2 Kings 24:17 – 25:7	<i>Jerusalem destroyed</i>
586 BC				

† indicates the ruler who was assassinated.

* indicates a good king who followed Yahweh (8 kings total in Judah).

¹²⁹ Dates taken from Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 298-299.

1. DELIVERANCE UNDER HEZEKIAH (2 KINGS 18-20)

“So far in the story not one monarch has met the author’s high standards for a king: commitment to the Lord, rejection of idolatry, and removal of high places and all other remnants of non-Yahwistic religion. Now one of the two men who meet these criteria enters the story... Ultimately he does not save the nation from its permanent destruction, of course, but he does everything humanly possible to effect a stay of execution.”¹³⁰

A). Introduction to Hezekiah’s Reign (2 Kings 18:1-12)

1). Opening Regnal Formula of Hezekiah’s Reign (18:1-4)

- a). Opening formula: year, father, mother, and length of reign (vv.1-2)
- b). Evaluation and explanation: he did what was right in Yahweh’s eyes, just as David had done (vv.3-4)
 - removing the high places (finally!!)
 - smashing the sacred stones and Asherah poles
 - destroying the bronze snake from Moses’ day

“Hezekiah was only eleven years old when he began his co-regency with his father Ahaz in the third year of Hoshea king of Israel (2 Kings 18:1) in 729 BC; he was twenty-five years of age (2 Kings 18:2) when he began his sole reign in 715 BC. As a veritable youngster, he had little or no positive impact on the spiritual conditions that existed while his father ruled. But by the time he became sole ruler, he had seen and witnessed enough to have determined that things would definitely change when he came to power.”¹³¹

2 Chronicles 29-31 also records Hezekiah’s positive actions in reforming Judah’s worship – he repairs and reopens the temple that his father had

¹³⁰ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 357.

¹³¹ Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 376.

closed; had it reconsecrated and celebrated with extensive offerings;
and led the largest celebration of Passover since the time of Solomon.

2). *Extended Explanation of Hezekiah’s Godliness (18:5-8)*

- a). **Hezekiah’s Trust:** he had faith in Yahweh like no other king (v.5)
- b). **Hezekiah’s Obedience:** he consistently followed Yahweh and obeyed the Law of Moses (v.6)
- c). **Hezekiah’s Success:** as a result, Yahweh was with Hezekiah and gave him success (vv.7-8)

3). *Historical Context of Hezekiah’s Coming to Power (18:9-12)*

The narrator puts the reign of Hezekiah into its historical context, which was the ascendancy and dominance of the mighty Assyrian empire. It was during the early years of Hezekiah’s reign, that the northern kingdom of Israel fell to Shalmaneser (vv.9-10). At this moment, the author of Kings then pauses and once again reminds his readers that the northern kingdom fell due to its idolatry (vv.11-12).

The key rulers of Assyria during this period were:¹³²

Tiglath-Pileser III (745 – 727 BC)	Captured lands in Gilead and Galilee from Israel (2 Kings 15:29; 1 Chron. 5:25-26) Allied with King Ahaz (2 Kings 16)
Shalmaneser V (727 – 722 BC)	Besieged Samaria and conquered it, deporting the people and King Hoshea (2 Kings 17:3-4)
Sargon II (722 – 705 BC)	Mentioned in the prophecy of Isaiah about Judah not trusting in Egypt and Cush (Isa. 20)
Sennacherib (705 – 681 BC)	Attacks Judah during Hezekiah’s reign (2 Kings 18-19; also 2 Chron. 32 and Isa. 36-37)
Esarhaddon (681 – 669 BC)	Mentioned in 2 Kings 19:37 and Isaiah 37:38 as succeeding Sennacherib after he was assassinated
Assurbanipal (668 – 627 BC)	Assyrian sources mention King Manasseh as his vassal Assyria falls to Babylon 15 years after his death

¹³² Dates and details taken from Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 367-383.

B). Hezekiah's Faith During Assyria's Campaign (2 Kings 18:13 – 19:37)

1). Introduction: Opening Attack and Paying Tribute (18:13-16)

In 705 BC, the Assyrian king Sargon II died, and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib. A number of nations that were under the thumb of Assyria took the opportunity to rebel, including Judah (see 18:7). However, Sennacherib launched a huge offensive in 701 BC, capturing many of the cities of Judah and ultimately surrounding Jerusalem itself,¹³³ despite Hezekiah's unwise attempt to pay him off.

Much of what is recorded in 2 Kings 18-20 from the life of Hezekiah is also recorded in the book of Isaiah (chapters 36-39). While there is debate among scholars, given that the book of Kings was completed during the exile in Babylon, and Isaiah wrote his book a century before that, it seems that Isaiah wrote his record of the events, and the writer of Kings has copied that into his book with a few changes and additions.

2). The First Threat: The Envoys Speeches Against Jerusalem (18:17-36)

- a). **Introduction:** The Assyrian envoys meet those of Judah (vv.17-18)
- b). **First Speech:** questions the wisdom of trusting in Yahweh (vv.19-25)
 - "trust" (*batach*) used 7 times (vv.19 x 2, 20, 21 x 2, 22, 24)
- c). **Response:** a request to stop taking to the people (v.26)
- d). **Second Speech:** attacks the ability of Yahweh to deliver (vv.27-35)
 - "deliver" (*nasal*) used 9 times (vv.29, 30 x 2, 32, 33 x 2, 34, 35 x 2)
- e). **Response:** a requested silence from the people (v.36)

"The speeches utilise flowing logic, deftly addressing both Hezekiah and the assembled people. The speeches freely mix forms such as threat, taunt, and argument."¹³⁴

¹³³ Calculating the exact dates for the reign of Hezekiah is one of the most difficult chronological challenges in Kings. The issue centres 2 Kings 18:9-10, which dates the conquest of the northern kingdom (722 BC) to Hezekiah's sixth year. This would mean Hezekiah came to the throne in 729 BC.

However, Sennacherib's attack on Judah in 18:13 took place in 701 BC, which would place Hezekiah's ascension to the throne at 715 BC (fourteen years earlier). This date is generally accepted as the correct date for the start of his reign. But how do we reconcile the differences?

The best current solution is that the references to Hoshea of Israel in 18:1 and 9 are about Hezekiah becoming co-regent with his father Ahaz in 729 BC, while 18:13 points to Hezekiah becoming king in his own right in 715 BC. See Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 and 2 Kings*, 229, n.3.

¹³⁴ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 462.

3). The First Response: Yahweh's Reassuring Word (18:37 – 19:7)

- a). Hezekiah and his officials mourn the speeches (18:37 – 19:1)
- b). Hezekiah sends his officials to Isaiah (19:2-4)
- c). Isaiah replies with a short message from Yahweh, calling them not to fear and promising that the challenge will soon end (vv.5-7)

4). The Second Threat: Sennacherib's Letter Against Hezekiah (19:8-13)

“Sennacherib's letter begins with two exhortations (19:10) and ends with four rhetorical questions (vv.11-13). He argues that Yahweh cannot deliver Jerusalem from Assyria, just as the gods of these other places did not deliver them... This impressive list [of conquered cities] was meant to further intimidate the king. The Assyrians were uniquely gifted at psychological warfare.”¹³⁵

5). The Second Response: Yahweh's Taunting Word (19:14-34)

- a). Hezekiah takes the letter to Yahweh's temple and prays (vv.14-19)
- b). Isaiah sends Hezekiah Yahweh's message to Sennacherib (vv.20-28)
 - i. Zion's taunt (v.21)
 - ii. Sennacherib's boast (vv.22-24)
 - iii. Yahweh's promise (vv.25-28)
- c). Isaiah sends Hezekiah Yahweh's reassurance to him (vv.29-31)
- d) Isaiah concludes the message with an oracle of salvation (vv.32-34)

6). Conclusion: Yahweh Defends Judah (19:35-37)

Yahweh's promise is fulfilled as the Assyrian army is destroyed, with 185,000 soldiers dying, so that they retreat home (vv.35-36).

“Possibly this happened through an outbreak of the bubonic plague ... both the Greek historian Herodotus and the Jewish historian Josephus mention a plague of mice. In any case, Sennacherib and the few soldiers who remained in his sad army left their dead and went back to Nineveh, where the king was assassinated by his own flesh and blood – not immediately, but 20 years later, in 681 BC. Sometimes God's justice is slow, but it is always sure.”¹³⁶

¹³⁵ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 464.

¹³⁶ Philip Ryken, *2 Kings* (REC), 342.

C). Hezekiah's Faith and Foolishness (2 Kings 20:1-19)

There is debate about when these events take place, whether these chapters are chronological and these stories follow the Assyrian campaign, or whether they come before it and this part of the story is not strictly chronological.¹³⁷ In light of the promise in 20:6 that Yahweh will deliver Hezekiah and Jerusalem from the threat of Assyria, it seems best to see this as prior to the earlier narratives in chapters 18-19.

1). Walking By Faith: Hezekiah Trusts in Yahweh (20:1-11)

- a). Isaiah's distressing message and Hezekiah's heartfelt prayer (20:1-3)
- b). Yahweh's loving response and Hezekiah's ensuing recovery (20:4-7)
- c). Hezekiah's noble request and Yahweh's miraculous sign (20:8-11)

"Instead of death there will be recovery; instead of a funeral, worship; instead of defeat, deliverance! What an answer Hezekiah received to his prayer! Yahweh is hearing, healing, adding, defending. What a God He is."¹³⁸

2). Walking By Sight: Hezekiah Trusts in Babylon (20:12-19)

"This account also plays an important function in the plot of 1, 2 Kings. Judah has finally been led by a king like David. Judgment has been averted, and opportunities for ongoing commitment to the Lord put in place. At this pivotal moment, however, readers are cautioned not to raise their hopes. The reforms will not last. Babylon will eventually punish the wayward people."¹³⁹

D). Closing Regnal Formula (2 Kings 20:20-21)

- 1). Closing formula about the annals of Judah (v.20a)
- 2). Additional comment about the pool and tunnel of Hezekiah (v.20b)
- 3). Closing formula detailing his death and succession (v.21)

¹³⁷ Those in favour of a chronological sequence (ch. 20 came after chs. 18-19) include Walter Kaiser (*A History of Israel*, 381) and John Olley (*The Message of Kings*, 333). Those who see these chapter as non-chronological include David Lamb (*1-2 Kings*, 476), Bruce Waltke (*An Old Testament Theology*, 735), and Dale Ralph Davis (*2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, 291-292).

¹³⁸ Dale Ralph Davis, *2 Kings: The Power and the Fury*, 293-294.

¹³⁹ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 349-350.

2. IDOLATRY UNDER MANASSEH AND AMON (2 KINGS 21)

A). Manasseh: The Reign of Judah's Worst King (2 Kings 21:1-18)

“Manasseh was the longest-reigning rule of Israel or Judah, but also arguably the worst... Why was Manasseh allowed to remain on the throne so long, almost as long as the combined reigns of his righteous father (Hezekiah) and righteous grandson (Josiah)?”¹⁴⁰

- 1). **Opening regnal formula:** age, length of reign, mother's name (v.1)
- 2). **Evaluation:** he did evil in the eyes of Yahweh, like the Canaanites (v.2)
- 3). **Extended explanation** of Manasseh's sinfulness (vv.3-16)
 - a). **The tragic summary** of Manasseh's evil reign (vv.3-9)
 - i. He re-introduced *idolatry* to Judah (vv.3-5)
 - ii. He practiced *child-sacrifice* and *divination* (v.6)
 - iii. He *desecrated* the temple of Yahweh (vv.7-8)
 - iv. He *led the people* of Judah astray (v.9)
 - b). **The divine response** to Manasseh's evil reign (vv.10-15)
 - i. The word of Yahweh comes in judgment (vv.10-11)
 - ii. *The horror of judgment:* tingling ears (v.12)
 - iii. *The rightness of judgment:* measuring and plumb lines (v.13a)
 - iv. *The totality of judgment:* wiping out the dish (v.13b)
 - v. *The hopelessness of judgment:* forsaken by Yahweh (vv.14-15)
 - c). **The bloody carnage** of Manasseh's evil reign (v.16)
- 4). **Closing regnal formula:** annals, death, burial, succession (vv.17-18)

“Manasseh is explicitly compared to Ahab (vv.3, 13). The two are the first kings in each kingdom to erect altars to Baal (1 Kings 16:32; 2 Kings 21:3), and the only kings who made sacred poles (1 Kings 16:33; 2 Kings 21:3,7). More pointedly, only these two kings are said to have ‘committed abominations’ regarding idols as the Amorites did (1 Kings 21:26; 2 Kings 21:11). Even Manasseh's shedding of ‘innocent blood’ (v.16) evokes the murder of innocent Naboth. Truly, Manasseh is the southern Ahab.”¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 487.

¹⁴¹ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 488.

The narrative of 2 Kings 21 about the long reign of Manasseh is completely dark and bleak. However, 2 Chronicles adds a surprising twist in the story that takes place towards the end of Manasseh's life. In 2 Chronicles 33, Manasseh is defeated by the king of Assyria and taken to Babylon in captivity. Manasseh repents of his sin, and Yahweh graciously returns him to Judah. "Then Manasseh knew that Yahweh is God" (2 Chron. 33:13b).

"Eventually, Manasseh was carried off to Babylon, probably by Ashurbanipal, the son and successor of Esarhaddon... He was taken into captivity in hooks and fetters (2 Chron. 33:11), a most humiliating posture for one who was a king. There is no way to determine how long Manasseh stayed in Babylon, but it is clear that he did return to Jerusalem a changed person. He tore down all the vestiges of pagan worship and restored the worship of Yahweh."¹⁴²

Sadly, however, what is tragic about Manasseh's reign is that it is not just his own life that was utterly corrupted, but the lives of the people of Judah. 2 Kings 21:9 explicitly says that Manasseh led the people astray, and the judgment of Yahweh is proclaimed against all the people (v.14-15).

A few years after Manasseh's repentance and return to Yahweh, Jeremiah announced the condemnation of the people of Judah for the very sins that Manasseh had introduced. For example, in Jeremiah 7:30-34 and 19:1-6, the people of Jerusalem are condemned for setting up idols in the temple once again and sacrificing their children in fire. Manasseh may have repented, but the people did not.

B). Amon: The Threat of Evil Continuing (2 Kings 21:19-26)

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother's name (v.19)
- 2). Evaluation and explanation: he did evil like his father (vv.20-22)
- 3). Narrative of his assassination (vv.23-24)
- 4). Closing regnal formula: annals, burial, succession (vv.25-26)

¹⁴² Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 382-383.

3. RENEWAL UNDER JOSIAH (2 KINGS 22-23)

“It is difficult, if not impossible, to express adequately the magnitude of Josiah’s achievements or those of others whose work was enhanced by his presence. While still a young man ... Josiah leads a tremendous reform based on God’s Word. This renewal at least matches the one initiated by Hezekiah... He does not achieve all these things alone, however, for these are also the days of Huldah – who interprets the covenant for Josiah – of Jeremiah – who like Josiah is a young reformer – and of Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zephaniah, each of whom contributes significantly to the climate of reform in the land.”¹⁴³

A). Opening Formula of Josiah’s Reign (2 Kings 22:1-2)

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother’s name (v.1)
- 2). Evaluation: a good king who obeyed Yahweh and followed the example of his ancestor King David (v.2)

B). The Discovery of the Law During Temple Renovations (2 Kings 22:3-20)

The main part of the narrative begins with a time marker of Josiah’s eighteenth year on the throne, meaning he was 26 years old. That is the moment in his reign when the key event of 2 Kings 22 takes place – the discovery of “the Book of the Law.”

However, 2 Chronicles 34:3-8 provides a little more chronology to Josiah’s life and what led up to this point:

- In his 8th year on the throne (ie. as a 16-year-old), “he began to seek the God of his father David” (34:3a)
- In his 12th year on the throne (ie. as a 20-year-old), he began to purge the land of idolatry (34:3b)
- Then in his 18th year on the throne (ie. as a 26-year-old), he launched the repair program on the temple in Jerusalem

- 1). **Context:** The renovations to the temple begin (22:3-7)

¹⁴³ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 380-381.

- 2). **Discovery:** “The Book of the Law” is discovered and read (22:8-10)
- 3). **Response:** The king responds to the Word and enquires of Yahweh through the prophetess Huldah (22:11-14)
- 4). **Prophecy:** Yahweh confirms the coming judgment but graciously delays it during the lifetime of Josiah (22:15-20)

“What is the book of the law? ... Most scholars think the book of the law here was not referring to the entire Torah (Genesis through Deuteronomy). The first place the term ‘Book of the Law’ appears in Scripture is at the end of Deuteronomy (28:61; 29:21; 30:10; 31:26) in reference to itself, suggesting that the newly found book was either Deuteronomy or a portion of it.”¹⁴⁴

Another key question was why was the ‘Book of the Law’ missing, and for how long had it been unavailable? Commentator Iain Provan points out that it seems to have been available to the rulers of Israel and Judah throughout the timeframe of Kings. For example,

- Solomon was charged with keeping the Law (1 Kings 2:3)
- Jehu was criticised for not keeping it (2 Kings 10:31)
- Amaziah was commended for obeying it (2 Kings 14:6)
- Hezekiah was also commended for keeping the Law (2 Kings 18:6)

“There is no reason to think, then, that the loss or concealment of the book is being presented as anything other than a recent event, occurring during the long reign of the apostate Manasseh. It is easy to imagine (though again we are not told) why it may have been removed from its proper position beside the ark of the covenant (Deut. 31:26) during his reign. It was a book whose laws Manasseh systematically infringed... It is not a book that he would want to have in the temple.”¹⁴⁵

“Hearing Huldah’s prophecy was like getting a second opinion from a doctor who thinks your prognosis is even worse than you were first led to believe! The prophetess simply applied the law from Deuteronomy and pronounced every word of its curses against Judah. The people had broken the very first commandment; they were guilty of the great sin of having other gods, as we have repeatedly seen throughout 2 Kings.”¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 499.

¹⁴⁵ Iain Provan, *1 and 2 Kings* (NIBC), 271.

¹⁴⁶ Philip Ryken, *2 Kings* (REC), 382.

C). The Reformation of the Nation During Josiah's Reign (2 Kings 23:1-23)

“Although Josiah will be gathered to his fathers (22:20), he is not content to rest in his personal reprieve (as was Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20:19). Instead, righteous Josiah sends and gathers the people. The comprehensiveness of the diverse group is emphasised in the repeated use of the word ‘all’ (five times in vv.1-3) and mirrors the comprehensiveness of earlier covenant ceremonies (Deut. 29:1-28; 31:9-13; Josh. 24:1-26).”¹⁴⁷

- 1). Josiah led the people in **renewing the covenant** with Yahweh (vv.1-3)
- 2). Josiah **cleansed the temple** of the worship of Baal and other gods (vv.4-7)
- 3). Josiah **demolished and desecrated** the high places used for idolatry, as well as other sites used for child sacrifice around Judah (vv.8-14)
- 4). Josiah **destroyed the altar at Bethel**, fulfilling the word of Yahweh (1 Kings 13:1-3), and other shrines in the northern kingdom (vv.15-20)
- 5). Josiah led one of the greatest **Passover celebrations** ever enjoyed by the nation of Israel (vv.21-23).

The writer of Kings has structured this part of the narrative to focus on the cleansing of the temple and the destruction of the altars and places of worship around the land. This is highlighted through the sheer quantity of verses devoted to these acts (vv.4-20), as well as their placement between the positive acts of renewing the covenant (vv.1-3) and celebrating Passover (vv.21-23), both of which are told in fewer verses.

Interestingly, when this passage is compared to 2 Chronicles 34, we find that the cleansing of the temple and destruction of the false places of worship actually took place six years **before** the ‘Book of the Law’ was found in the temple renovations. Thus, the writer of Kings has chosen to tell Josiah’s story in a non-chronological format to highlight his righteous acts.

In addition, whereas the writer of Chronicles devotes much more space to the celebration of the Passover, the author of Kings spends most of his narrative on the cleansing of the temple and the land. This is to contrast the godly rule of Josiah from the ungodly and idolatrous reigns of most of the previous kings.

¹⁴⁷ Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 505-506.

D). The Uniqueness of Josiah and the Resolve of Yahweh (2 Kings 23:24-27)

- 1). **Summary of Josiah's actions** in cleansing Jerusalem, and his wholehearted response to the Word of Yahweh (vv.24-25)
- 2). **Summary of Yahweh's anger** against the people, and His continued resolve to judge sin and wickedness (vv.26-27)

“The prophet Jeremiah reveals what really happened during King Josiah’s revival. He says that, although it all looked good on the outside, it didn’t transform people on the inside. In Jeremiah 3:10, the Lord dismisses the revival as *sheqer* – the Hebrew word for *a lie* or *pretence*... Promises of obedience in the future cannot atone for disobedience in the past. It takes more than loud religious protestations on the outside to change us on the inside.”¹⁴⁸

E). Closing Formula and the Death of Josiah (2 Kings 23:28-30)

- 1). Closing formula about the annals of Judah (v.28)
- 2). Additional narrative about defeat in battle against Necho (v.29)
- 3). Closing formula detailing his burial and succession (v.30)

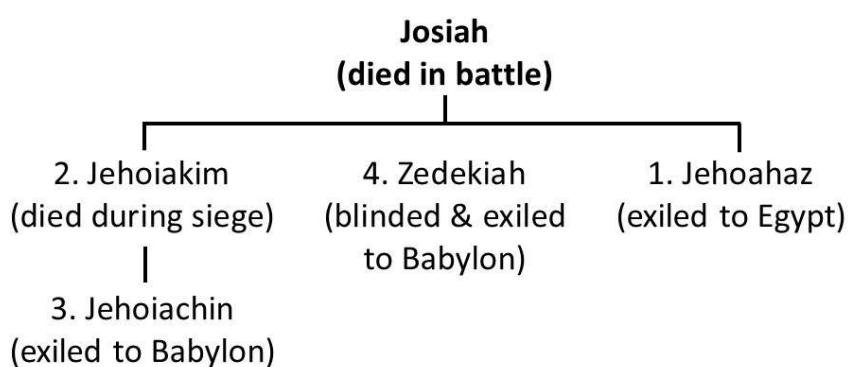
“At this point in time Judah was in the midst of a power struggle involving Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon. After the death of Ashurbanipal in 630 BC, the power of Assyria in the region was waning while that of Babylon was waxing [increasing]. When Necho’s army defeated Josiah’s at Megiddo (23:29; 609 BC), he was marching to assist the Assyrians against Babylon. But the Egypt-Assyrian alliance would lose decisively at Carchemish (605 BC) to the Babylonians under the command of the crown prince, Nebuchadnezzar, who plays a major role in the demise of the Southern Kingdom.”¹⁴⁹

¹⁴⁸ Phil Moore, *Straight to the Heart of 1 and 2 Kings*, 251.

¹⁴⁹ David Lamb, *1-2 Kings* (SOGBC), 497-498.

4. EXILE UNDER THE FINAL KINGS (2 KINGS 23-25)

“After the reforms of righteous Josiah come the reigns of his four evil heirs (Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah) ... While the narratives of these four rulers are relatively short in Kings, Jeremiah provides additional details about their reigns, particularly for the two longer-reigning ones, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah (both reigned eleven years), and how they persecuted or killed Yahweh’s prophets.”¹⁵⁰



A). Jehoahaz: The Pro-Babylon Usurper (2 Kings 23:31-35)

Jehoahaz was actually the youngest of Josiah’s four sons (see 1 Chron. 3:15; the oldest son Johanan seems to have died before his father). Jehoahaz, also known as Shallum (1 Chron 3:15; Jer. 22:11), was 23 years old when he became king (v.31), but his older brother Eliakim/Jehoiakim was 25 (v.36).

Josiah had gone to battle against Necho of Egypt, and so it is thought Jehoahaz shared his father’s anti-Egyptian foreign policy, whereas his older brother may have been more supportive of the Egyptian-Assyrian alliance.¹⁵¹ Hence, the “people” in power (v.30) continued Josiah’s policies by ignoring the oldest surviving prince and putting Jehoahaz on the throne. However, Pharaoh Necho removed Jehoahaz within three months of his ascension and imprisoned him, and placed the crown prince Eliakim on the throne with the new name Jehoiakim (v.34).

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 510.

¹⁵¹ See Lissa Wray Beal, *1 & 2 Kings* (Apollos), 516.

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother's name (v.31)
- 2). Evaluation: he did evil like his predecessors (v.32)
- 3). Narrative of his removal by Necho, the appointment of his brother, and his subsequent death in Egypt (vv.33-34)
- 4). Postscript about the tribute and taxes of Jehoiakim (vv.35)

B). Jehoiakim: The Pro-Egypt Puppet (2 Kings 23:36 – 24:7)

“Jehoiakim rules from about 609 BC to 598 BC. Nothing about him impresses the author. Jeremiah offers an even more scathing appraisal, He denounces the king as one who oppresses, extorts, and sheds innocent blood to get the money to build himself a new palace during tough economic times in Judah (Jer. 22:13-17). Furthermore, Jehoiakim kills or threatens truthful prophets (Jer. 26:1-24) and shows no regard for the prophetic word... Clearly, Josiah's reform is dead.”¹⁵²

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother's name (23:36)
- 2). Evaluation: he did evil like his predecessors (23:37)
- 3). Narrative of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, and the Babylonians invasion as judgment from Yahweh against Manasseh's sin (24:1-4)
- 4). Closing regnal formula: annals, death and succession (24:5-6)
- 5). Postscript about the defeat of Egypt by Babylon (24:7)

While Jehoiakim was pro-Egypt when he first came to the throne in 609 BC, he became a vassal of the Babylonian prince Nebuchadnezzar four years later (24:1a). Nebuchadnezzar had defeated an Assyrian-Egyptian coalition at Carchemish that included Pharaoh Necho, and then after pursuing and annihilating the Egyptian army, he then briefly besieged Jerusalem. He left Jehoiakim on the throne, but carried off treasure from the temple and a number of young nobles, including Daniel and his friends (Dan. 1:1-2).

However, in 601 BC, King Nebuchadnezzar invaded Egypt and was soundly defeated, leading to his return to Babylon, during which a number of states including Judah rebelled (24:1b). In December 598 BC, Nebuchadnezzar left Babylon to launch a second campaign against Judah, only for Jehoiakim to die in the same month and leave his son Jehoiachin to face the music.¹⁵³

¹⁵² Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 393.

¹⁵³ See Walter Kaiser, *A History of Israel*, 399-406.

4. THE SOLITARY KINGDOM: THE ROAD TO EXILE

First invasion in 605 BC under Jehoiakim

- made Judah a vassal state of Babylon
- took temple treasure and young nobles, inc. Daniel

Second invasion in 597 BC under Jehoiachin

- carried off King Jehoiachin into exile in Babylon
- took 10,000 people into captivity, inc. Ezekiel

Third invasion in 586 BC under Zedekiah

- blinded Zechariah and took him into exile
- destroyed Jerusalem and carried off the people

convinced
2022



C). Jehoiachin: The Conquered Captive (2 Kings 24:8-17)

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother's name (v.8)
- 2). Evaluation: he did evil like his predecessors (v.9)
- 3). Extended narrative of his surrender to Nebuchadnezzar, and his deportation to Babylon along with 10,000 soldiers and skilled workers from Judah, in fulfillment of Yahweh's word (vv.10-16)
- 4). Postscript about Nebuchadnezzar placing his uncle Mattaniah on the throne and renaming him, Zedekiah (v.17)

"Babylon's domination of Judah could hardly be more complete... Most of its societal leaders are gone, as is its military. Stripped of everything but an existence that lacks integrity and dignity, Judah stumbles closer to the end. Only a few faithful persons, most notably Jeremiah, attempt to change the people's hearts and the nation's destiny."¹⁵⁴

D). Zedekiah: The Stubborn Rebel (2 Kings 24:18 – 25:7)

- 1). Opening regnal formula: age, length of reign, mother's name (24:18)
- 2). Evaluation: he did evil like his brother Jehoiakim (24:19)
- 3). Editorial comment about Yahweh's anger against Judah (24:20)
- 4). Narrative of his rebellion against Nebuchadnezzar, the conquest of Jerusalem, and the death of his sons and his blinding (25:1-7)

¹⁵⁴ Paul House, *1, 2 Kings* (NAC), 395.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, is as rebellious and evil as his brothers and nothing like his father, Josiah. At times he would consult the prophet Jeremiah, asking for a word from Yahweh (eg. Jer. 37:17), but he would then ignore or disobey that word, even cutting up and burning one scroll of Jeremiah's prophecies (Jer. 36:1-26).

E). The Fall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:8-30)

- 1). ***The fall and destruction of Jerusalem*** (25:8-21)
 - a). The final destruction of the city, particularly its buildings (inc. the temple), its walls and its remaining people (vv.8-12)
 - b). The destruction of the temple and its equipment, and the theft of the bronze, silver and gold (vv.13-17)
 - c). The execution of the remaining temple priests and royal officials by Nebuchadnezzar (vv.18-21a)
 - d). Conclusion: "so Judah went into captivity" (vv.21b)
- 2). ***The appointment and assassination of Gedaliah*** as governor, with the people then fleeing to Egypt (25:22-26)
- 3). ***Epilogue: the subsequent restoration of King Jehoiachin*** to a place of honour in Babylon (25:27-30)

"The end of this chapter in the Story is tragic beyond comprehension. The Promised Land lies in ruins, ravaged by the brutal Babylonian army. The presence of God is gone, and the temple lies in ashes; indeed all of Jerusalem has been destroyed. The defeated, shattered remnants of the once-powerful kingdom of Israel trudge off sorrowfully into exile in a foreign land."¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Scott Duvall and Daniel Hays, *Living God's Word*, 99.

**REFLECTING ON THE ROAD TO EXILE:
*LESSONS FROM THE BOOK OF KINGS***

“The Babylonians have brought death and destruction to the holy city of Jerusalem. The people of God get carried off into the darkness, destined for seventy long years of captivity in Babylon. But before the final credits, we catch a glimpse of King Jehoiachin, son of David, surviving and even thriving in the imperial courts, and in the light of his presence we see the hope of our salvation rise.”¹⁵⁶

Lessons from the human kings of Israel	Lessons from the divine King of Israel

**The Davidic line failed
because of human frailty and wickedness
but the Davidic Covenant stands secure
because of divine faithfulness and love.**

¹⁵⁶ Philip Ryken, *2 Kings* (REC), 414.

