

OLD TESTAMENT HISTORY: THE DIVIDED KINGDOM

The books of 1 + 2 Kings continue the narrative from 1 + 2 Samuel, telling the history of Israel's kings. The story follows David through the end of his life and then follows his son, Solomon. Solomon was one of the wisest and wealthiest men who ever lived. Like his father David, Solomon had many moments of both righteousness and failure. During Solomon's reign, Israel was peaceful and prosperous. Solomon was tasked with building God's temple, a beautiful place of worship in Jerusalem.

After Solomon's death, the nation split and was divided between King Rehoboam (Judah) and King Jeroboam (Israel). While Judah remained more faithful than Israel, both kingdoms failed to worship God alone. Throughout this time, God sent prophets to warn the Israelites that their rebellion and deviation from God's law would lead them to be removed from their land. Specifically, two prophets named Elijah and Elisha led the way in calling the Israelites to repentance and challenging them to obey God alone. Eventually, both kingdoms were captured. Israel was overthrown by Assyria, and Judah was overthrown by Babylon. Despite their desire for a righteous king, the rebellion and faithlessness of the Israelites resulted in their own bondage and oppression.

MAIN IDEAS: THE LEADERSHIP OF ISRAEL + JUDAH

- **God provided Solomon with wisdom, wealth, and a long life as he ruled over Israel.** (1 Kings 3:1-15)
- **The nation split into the northern kingdom of Israel and southern kingdom of Judah.** (1 Kings 12:21-24)
- **Both Judah and Israel struggled with corrupt leadership and idol worship.** (1 Kings 12-2 Kings 23)
- **Soon after Israel was captured by Assyria, Judah was captured by Babylon.** (2 Kings 17:6, 2 Kings 25:21)

EXAMPLE OF GOD'S POWER: GREATER THAN ANY FALSE IDOL

In 1 Kings 18, the prophet Elijah challenged Israel's King Ahab, summoning him to gather his false gods for a duel. Ahab and Elijah both set up altars, trusting that whoever responded with fire was the one true God. Ahab would pray to Baal and his other false gods, while Elijah would pray to the Lord. Elijah was ready to put God's glory on display and show Ahab that idols prove useless when compared to God.

Ahab and his people called out to Baal, praying and pleading for fire. They became desperate, jumping and stomping in frustration. Ahab and the Baal worshippers started cutting themselves with knives, offering their blood to Baal. After attempting everything they could fathom, there was still no response and not even a flicker of fire.

Elijah had so much confidence in God that he soaked the wood with water, making it even less likely to catch on fire. Elijah prayed, and God immediately brought fire to the altar, burning up the offering! Everyone saw what happened and fell to the ground in awe and reverence, proclaiming that Elijah's God was the one true God.



JESUS IN 1 + 2 KINGS: HOPE IN THE DARKNESS

After the Israelites had been in Babylonian captivity for thirty years, a man named Evil-Merodach became the king of Babylon. Evil-Merodach released Jehoichin, who previously served as Judah's king, from prison. Instead of leaving him imprisoned or killing him, Evil-Merodach showed great compassion towards Jehoichin. Evil-Merodach replaced his prison clothing with new robes and invited him to eat at the king's table for the rest of his life.

The book of Kings contains many dark stories, full of rebellion and hurt; however, the book's final chapter (2 Kings 25) ends on a hopeful note. Evil-Merodach serves as an image of God's kindness. Despite our rebellion and opposition, God extends an invitation to his people to be freed from bondage and welcomed into His presence through Jesus.