

# THE BIBLE

## in a nutshell

### *1 & 2 Kings*

—by Peter Hammond



#### Why was Kings written?

When Jerusalem fell, and the Temple was destroyed, and the nation exiled. In essence slaves again in a foreign land, inevitably the people would have asked: What went wrong? Why did God allow all this to happen to us? The Book of Kings provides the answers.



*“How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.”*

1 Kings 18:21

The Kingdom of Israel went through three stages:

#### 1. United Kingdom:

- Saul: 40 years.
- David: 40 years.
- Solomon: 40 years.

at the heart of many of the events described, he is not mentioned in the book, indicating that he was probably the author.

#### The blessings and curses of the covenant

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings cover 400 years. It catalogues why Israel and Judah were judged, defeated, exiled and scattered. God allowed the nations to go into exile.

#### 2. Divided Kingdom:

- 10 Tribes in the North: Israel or Samaria.
- 2 Tribes in the South: Judah.
- Israel exiled by Assyria 721BC

In keeping with the Covenant God made with the people of Israel and recorded in the Book of Deuteronomy, He warned that if the people turned to idols and broke His Law, He would bring foreigners to destroy Jerusalem, to destroy the Temple, and to scatter them in foreign lands.

#### 3. Single Kingdom:

- 140 years until Judah is exiled to Babylon 587BC.

#### Who wrote Kings?

Parts of Kings are identical to the Prophecies of Jeremiah.

Although Jeremiah was a contemporary of King Josiah and

#### The message of Kings

We generally get the governments we deserve. A wicked people will be oppressed by a wicked government. If we reject God, He will reject us.

If we obey God, He will bless us. If we repent, He will restore us. Kings

## The Kings of Judah

The Southern kingdom of Judah had six good and two very good kings. They also had one, who was the worst of all, Manasseh. Idolatry and immorality marked his evil reign. Manasseh worshipped Molech and sacrificed his baby sons in the Valley of Hinnon (Gehenna). Manasseh also murdered the prophet Isaiah.

The good kings of the Southern kingdoms of Judah included Asa who did what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He expelled the prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols, casting down the pornographic Asherah poles and burning them in the Kidron Valley. Asa's heart was fully committed to the Lord all his life (1 Kings 15:11-14).



records history from God's perspective.

### Evaluation

Each king is evaluated in terms of their worship, whether they were faithful to the Lord God or not, and their ethics and policies, whether they upheld justice and morality, or

### A good king, Hezekiah

Hezekiah, who was contemporary with Isaiah, dug the tunnel to bring water into Jerusalem and secured its defences.

However, he made a huge mistake when he welcomed to his palace men from Babylon and showed them all the secrets

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not. God is no respecter of persons.

### The wicked Queen

Queen Athaliah was Jezebel's daughter and married the King of Judah in the South. She killed all the children of David's royal line and seized power. However, an aunt protected the youngest boy, Joash, and concealed him to preserve the royal line.

and treasures of his palace and the Temple.

Isaiah delivered the Word of the Lord to Hezekiah, that because of this, the Babylonians would take away everything that he had showed off to them. That was fulfilled when the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem 588BC.

## Ahab and Jezebel

Ahab stands out as one of the worst of the kings of Israel. He married a Phoenician princess from Sidon, Jezebel. It was her scheming which arranged for the false charges against Naboth, so that Ahab could seize his vineyard. It was this event which marked the beginning of the Prophet Elijah's ministry. He confronted Ahab and Jezebel and famously challenged the prophets of Baal to a contest on Mount Carmel, where God answered his prayer for fire from Heaven on his altar.



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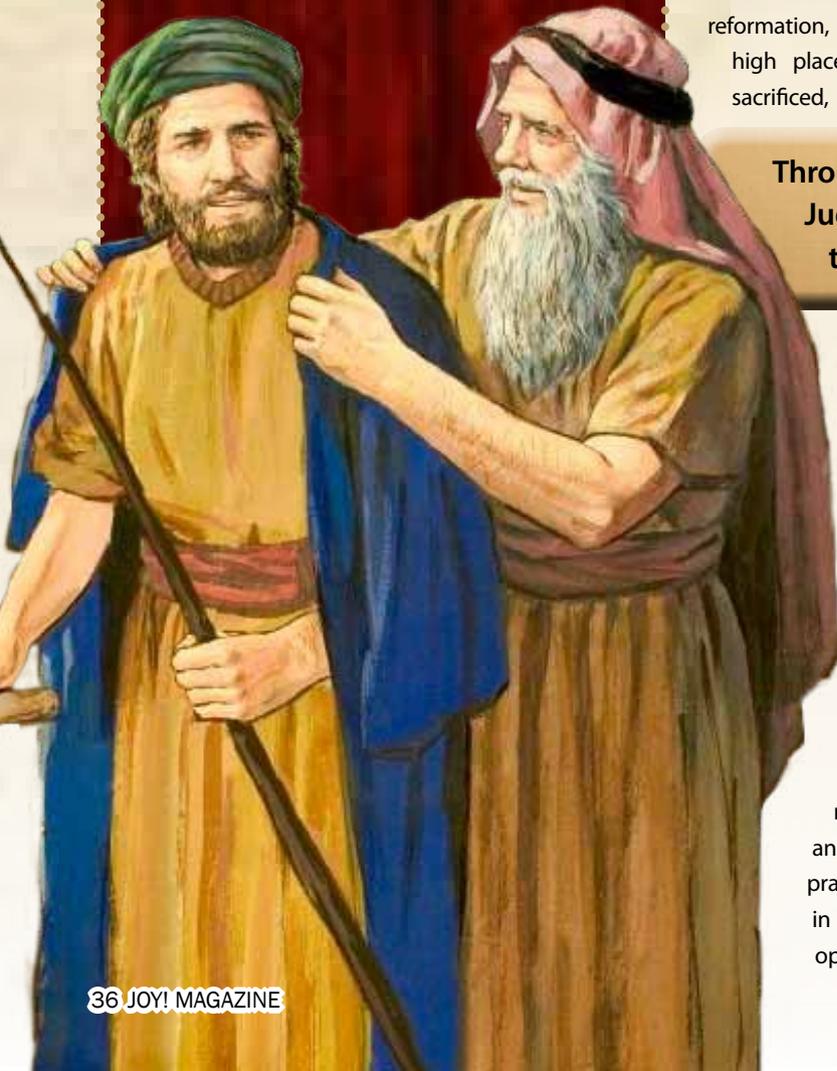
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### *Elijah and Elisha*

The prophets Elijah and Elisha were very different. Elijah was the preacher, the fighter, the one who challenged the people and the false prophets. Elisha was more pastoral and nurturing in his ministry. Elijah's confrontational ministry was likened to that of John the Baptist, who was said to have the Spirit of Elijah, as he prepared the way for the Lord. *"The Law of the Lord is perfect, converting the soul."* *"The Law of God is the schoolmaster that leads us to Christ."*



#### **Reformation under Josiah**

Another good king of Judah was Josiah, who was born in the same year as the prophet Jeremiah. When the Book of Deuteronomy was discovered by men cleaning the Temple, King Josiah was shocked to read of the requirements of God's Law and of the judgements warned for disobedience.

He ordered the population to assemble for the full reading of the Law of God and initiated a national reformation, destroying all the high places where babies were sacrificed, destroying the idols

#### **Prophets to Judah**

The main prophets to the South during the times of the kings were: Obadiah, Joel, Isaiah, Micah, Naham, Jeremiah, Zephaniah, and Habakkuk and during the time of the exile to Babylon: Daniel and Ezekiel.

#### **The kings of Israel**

In the Northern kingdom of Israel, all 20 kings were bad, 14 of which were severely condemned for being exceptionally evil. While the South had just one dynasty, the North had nine, with the succession precipitated by

**Throughout the spiritual decline of Israel and Judah, the priests were silent and ineffective; they did not remind people of the Law of God.**

which had subverted the land and brought about a nation-wide renewal.

#### **The Southern kingdom**

The South had 19 kings and 1 queen. 12 of them were condemned for having done evil in the eyes of the Lord. 8 were commended, 2, Hezekiah and Josiah, were highly praised for their diligence in uprooting idolatry and opposing immorality.

assassination six times.

#### **Prophets to Israel**

The main prophets to the Northern kingdom of Israel were: Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos and Hosea.

#### **Warnings before judgement**

Kings makes it clear that God always gives His people warnings before bringing punishment upon them for what they know is wrong. Yet, generally Israel and Judah ignored the warnings of God's messengers and preferred the soothing reassurances of the false prophets. The prophets God sent were frequently ridiculed, beaten, punished and often martyred.

# The Son of David

The prophet Elijah met with the Lord Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration. Just as Elisha had raised the widow's son, so Jesus raised a boy from the dead, in the village of Nain. Just as Elisha had fed 100 with bread, so the Lord fed over 5 000 with bread and fish.

Jesus Christ is the King of kings and the Lord of lords. He is the true son of David, whose reign will never end. Christ's Kingdom will replace and outlast all others.



## Where were the priests?

Throughout the spiritual decline of Israel and Judah, the priests should have been reminding the people of the Law of God and calling them to repentance. However, their silence and ineffectiveness led to God raising up prophets to call the people to repentance.

## Verbal, visual and violent

God's warnings came in stages. First they were verbal, through the prophets. Then they were visual and, finally, violent. The Israelites lost territory, they lost their independence.

The ten Northern tribes were deported to Assyria and finally the kingdom of Judah

stubbornly refusing to repent of their sins and return to the Lord.

## Unequally yoked

The Word of God commands us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers (2 Cor 6:14). Solomon, although he authored Proverbs, a great book of wisdom, did not practise wisdom in his own life. He married many wives, many of them unbelievers, and fell into idolatry with them.

He also overtaxed and burdened his people to maintain his lavish lifestyle. Solomon laid the foundations for the break up of the United Kingdom and provoked

The Scriptures make clear that God hates all idolatry. The division of Israel, the fall of Jerusalem, the exile and scattering of the tribes of Israel make clear that God is serious.

**The Books of Samuel and Kings make clear that the character and conduct of a king decides the fate of the nation. Nations get the government they deserve.**

in the South was deported to Babylon in three stages. No one is judged without first receiving multiple warnings.

## Solomon's falling away

Solomon's reign, which began so well, deteriorated as he accumulated excessive wealth and multiple wives, in clear violation of the specific instructions of God that kings were not to accumulate for themselves, excessive wealth or multiple wives.

## Immorality and idolatry

The sins of the people which led to the fall of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the people to Babylon, were immorality and idolatry. They hardened their hearts against the repeated warnings of God,

the revolt of the ten Northern tribes when his foolish son, Rehoboam, took up the throne. Immorality and religious apostasy go together.

## Character and conduct

The Books of Samuel and Kings make clear that the character and conduct of a king decides the fate of the nation. Kings catalogues why Israel and Judah were judged, defeated, exiled and scattered.

## Do we have idols today?

Many reading the Books of Kings may assume that we no longer have idols today. However, if you look around it will be clear that there are many. We speak of Hollywood idols, sports idols, sex idols, political idols.

## Jesus in Kings

The Gospels tell us that Jesus is greater than Solomon. Christ is our wisdom. Hebrews teaches us that Jesus is greater than the Temple. He likened His Body to the Temple. When our Lord died on Calvary, the curtain in the Temple separating the Holy place from the most Holy Place, was split from top to bottom, indicating that the Lord had made open the way for us to come to the Father. ■

