

**Title:** Introduction to 1 Kings

**Scripture:** 1 Kings 1:1-10

**Series:** The Eternal Kingdom

1. Introduction:

- a. 1 and 2 Kings should be an incredible blessing as we learn valuable lessons that should guide our Christian walk. To fully understand these books, it's crucial to introduce their various components. This will help us better understand them in the context in which they were written.
- b. Our first point of consideration must be the theme: 1 and 2 Kings is a story of sadness and great human sin.
  - i. Our book starts with a flash of glory (Solomon's reign as king), but it quickly fades as the following kings in Israel North and Israel South give themselves over to every conceivable evil. Throughout the history of the Kings, we have just a few godly Kings in a long succession of ungodly, idolatrous rulers.
    1. 1 and 2 Kings conclude the history of Israel that began in Genesis. This history included humanity's origins, Israel's emergence through Abraham, the exodus from Egypt, the conquest of Canaan, the establishment of the monarchy, and, finally, the nation's destruction and captivity. Specifically, 1 and 2 Kings explain how and why Israel lost the land it once fought so hard to win.
- c. Readability: Bible readers are often confused as they read through 1 and 2 Kings because these books delve

into much detail, especially when they jump between the kings of Israel and Judah.

- i. At the end of Solomon's united reign, the kingdom splits into two.
  1. The Northern Kingdom was ruled by a long succession of different dynasties. It was the bigger of the two kingdoms, composed of ten tribes. The kingdom established its own religion and worship apart from what God commanded in the Scriptures. Sin was rampant, and God's destruction of this kingdom was total. No godly king ever reigned in the North.
  2. The Southern Kingdom, composed of only two tribes, Judah and Benjamin, was ruled by David's descendants. This kingdom also engaged in idolatry and forsook God's written commands in His Word. They forgot about the covenant promise made to David. Those promises were based upon the king's obedience. Eventually, the southern kingdom would be taken into captivity, but unlike the Northern Kingdom, it would be given the promise of an eventual return to the land. For the Southern Kingdom, the captivity was disciplinary. Very few godly kings ever reigned.
- ii. Making matters even more confusing, it can become overwhelming when there are two rulers named Jeroboam in one kingdom and another ruler named Rehoboam in the other kingdom who

overlaps with one of the Jeroboams. We also find Jehorams (or Jorams) in both kingdoms at approximately the same time, along with two Ahaziahs. Some of the kings also have multiple names.

- iii. All of this needs to be clarified for the average reader. We quickly lose focus on who is who. By God's grace, we will avoid this pitfall and be deliberate in our teaching so that the vital redemptive history is accurately portrayed.
- d. Structure: 1 and 2 Kings tell the story of the Hebrew monarchy from David's reign to the division of the kingdoms and each kingdom's downfall. These books cover 400 years in about 50,000 words. This means a lot of details are left out. The writer carefully chooses what to include, focusing on what's most important. The writer aims to convey a specific prophetic perspective inspired by God rather than giving a complete historical account. These two books cover the history from 968 BC to 560 BC.
  - i. The major sections of 1-2 Kings are as follows:
    1. The Golden Age, 1 Kings 1-11 - Solomon's reign
    2. The Torn Kingdom, 1 Kings 12-2 Kings 17 - Division
    3. The Last Days, 2 Kings 18-25 - The destruction of Israel North and the captivity and future hope of a greater united kingdom in the Messiah's rule.
  - ii. First and Second Kings interpret the nation's history prophetically and set the stage for the

messages of later prophets like Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Minor Prophets. These prophets lived during the era of our books and ministered faithfully to the Word of God by calling rebellious people to repent. They addressed significant themes of Israel's religious worship, such as covenant obligations, divine promises, the responsibilities of the monarchy, and the prophets' futile efforts to reconcile Israel with God.

iii. In 1 and 2 Kings, significant Old Testament concepts and practices reach their end. The land promised to Abraham is lost as Israel breaks the Mosaic Covenant, facing the consequences listed in Deuteronomy. Due to inadequate leadership from David's descendants, the idea of an eternal kingdom shifts from a physical kingdom to a future spiritual kingdom. Temple worship stops, leaving priests without guidance and sacrifices without a place. By the end of these books, there's little positivity left in Israel. The kingdom that so much looked like Christ's eternal kingdom under David is now in ruins.

1. So, the book ends with a question. Who is worthy of being the true king? Who can truly lead God's people back to God?

a. There can only be one true kingdom and beloved; we are waiting for it.

This is a kingdom not ruled by men but by the God-Man, Jesus Christ. His leadership will never fail.

- e. Theology: First and Second Kings aren't just straightforward history books. They focus on essential theology found within its pages. These books highlight God's sovereignty over Israel and all nations. They assert that since God made the earth, He has the authority to rule it. His rule follows His characteristics, so mercy, justice, righteousness, and salvation are all part of how God shapes events in the world. Because all belongs to Him, God has the sovereign right to make a nation rise or fall, as is the case here.
- f. Key Issues: The critical issues found in these Old Testament books boil down to monotheism versus idolatry, central worship versus worship at high places, loyalty to the covenant versus spiritual rebellion, true prophecy versus false prophets, God's covenant with David versus the breakdown of David's dynasty, unity versus disunity, and God's sovereignty versus human pride. At all points, Israel failed to fulfill its covenant obligations, and therefore, the tragic ending of our book is the dismantling of the kingdoms and the captivity of the people.
  - i. But the King who will never fail and a Kingdom that will endure forever is coming. That is our hope. We do not trust in man but in God.

## 2. Verses 1-10: The Danger that Threatens the Kingdom:

### a. Adonijah's Attempt to Become King

- i. At the beginning of this book, David is presented as a shivering and impotent king. He is a shell of the man he used to be. He now lies in bed and is

unable to keep warm. The kingdom is in disarray as David dies slowly. Meanwhile, his handsome and conniving son stands ready to take over the kingdom (we have seen this before in Absalom).

- ii. We have a candidate for the throne who presents himself before the old officeholder has had time to die. The candidate is Adonijah, David's oldest surviving son. Remember, Absalom, the thirdborn, died in his revolt, but not before killing Amnon, the firstborn. The second born, Kileab, is never mentioned after his birth in 2 Samuel 3:3, perhaps dying in childhood. Therefore, it seemed only reasonable for Adonijah, the next in line, to assume that the kingdom should be his.

- 1. Beloved, I want you to notice the contrast between verses 1 and 5. Adonijah is everything David is not. Here is a vigorous would-be king! He has ambition (v. 5a), style (5b), image (6b), position (6c - he is next in the birthright order), and support (7, 9 - both military and religious).

- a. He was a potential king that the people would be proud of.

- iii. But what about Adonijah's as a man? Would he be a godly king?

- 1. Adonijah's character immediately becomes the issue. What kind of man cannot wait for his father to die before seeking power?

- 2. Secondly, what kind of man goes against his Father's wishes? As we read our passage, it will become evident that Adonijah knew that

David's choice, therefore God's choice, was Solomon.

- a. So here we have a man unwilling to bow to God. Adonijah thought that his cunning could thwart God's sovereignty. He thought that his looks and popularity qualified him for leadership.
- b. But what does the Bible say about godly leadership:
  - i. About David, we read in **Psalms 78:72** With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand.
  - ii. **Matthew 20:26-28** It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, (27) and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, (28) even as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

**b. Adonijah's Strategy and Character**

- i. The writer's description of Adonijah's handsome features reminds us of Absalom in 2 Samuel 14:25-27, Saul (1 Samuel 9:2), and Eliab (1 Samuel 16:6-7).
  1. All these men were physically impressive. However, each was either immediately or eventually rejected by God. We have learned

before and must reiterate that pious leadership comes from within, from a heart transformed by the beauty of the Gospel. Godly leadership can only flow from a Gospel-redeemed heart.

a. When seeking leaders, we often swim in the pool's shallow end. We vote for men in politics or the church who are well-dressed, self-important, handsome, quick-witted, and forceful, but we seldom pay attention to a man's heart. In other words, we see with our eyes and not by faith. As Christians, we should desire political and spiritual leadership who love—men with the highest character and are examples of the Lord Jesus Christ.

- i. **1 Samuel 16:6-7** When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD's anointed is before him.” (7) But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the LORD sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the LORD looks on the heart.”
- ii. **1 Corinthians 11:1** Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.



1. Let us pray that God's people will understand this truth and seek such people to be their leaders.
- ii. Verses 5 and 6 portray Adonijah as an aggressive, self-possessed person. **Adonijah exalted himself** by emphatically stating, "**I will be king.**"
1. By declaring his intentions, he broke the Israelite tradition of God choosing the king and confirming the choice through a prophet's ministry. Remember, not even Saul or David sought the throne, yet God told Samuel to select these men.
  2. Not only is his arrogance shown here, but it is also revealed by his choice of **fifty men to run ahead of him**. He acts like a king before being made king.
  3. Three reasons for Adonijah's sinful arrogance are revealed in our passage:
    - a. David, whom Scripture reveals as an ineffective father, never corrected Adonijah.
      - i. **Proverbs 13:24** Whoever spares the rod hates his son, but he who loves him is diligent to discipline him.
    - b. Adonijah was very handsome and well-liked by the people. He was all looks and shallow.
      - i. Today, people will make the same mistake they made with Saul.

They wanted a man of outward beauty to lead them.

c. Adonijah was the oldest living son of King David. He felt entitled to reign.

i. **1 Peter 5:5-6** Likewise, you who are younger, be subject to the elders. Clothe yourselves, all of you, with humility toward one another, for “God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.” (6) Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time he may exalt you,

c. Adonijah's Unholy Coronation - 9-10

- i. Adonijah pushes forward with his plans to become king. He offers sacrifices and invites strategically important persons to a meal, all of which is intended to unite the group. His brothers are included so they can relinquish their right to the throne. The "men of Judah who were royal officials" are invited so that the most prestigious leaders in David's court can give Adonijah's claim more validity. By inviting these men and men like them to the feast, it became a foregone conclusion that Adonijah had succeeded. He would be the next king.
- ii. Verse 10 - Those not invited to this premature coronation are also prominent. Three names are highlighted. Nathan has religious authority, while Benaniah bears the sword. They pose religious

and military threats to Adonijah's plans. Solomon is also mentioned for the first time. Solomon is a threat to Adonijah's plans. It becomes apparent that Adonijah understood that David had intimated that Solomon would be king. That is why he has done all that we have seen. He tries to solidify the kingdom under himself so Solomon can be killed later. Adonijah does not believe that Solomon should ever be king!

1. How could a son of Bathsheeba, a son from a woman taken by David from another man, and one of the youngest in the family ever be king?

a. To a certain extent, we must agree with Adonijah. It hardly seems fair that a son of a dubious relationship and the youngest should usurp the next in line. Solomon was young and inexperienced. His credentials were lacking. He was not strong or important in the family. Why would David choose him? Or better yet, why would God choose him?

b. The answers to these questions are found in Scripture. Why? For the same reason that God has chosen you and me: to bring Himself glory in the transformation and salvation of the most wretched sinners.

i. **1 Corinthians 1:26-28** For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise

according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. (27) But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; (28) God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are,

- ii. This truth is played out throughout all of scripture. God chose Issac and not Ishmael, Jacob and not Esau, David and not Eliab, sinners and not Pharisees, fishermen and not nobles, poor and not the rich. This is God's work, and I praise Him for it.

d. When verse 10 ends, Adonijah sits eating with his supporters, seemingly possessing His Father's empire.

- i. The question that arises is: What will become of the kingdom?

1. Can a man take it by force or cunning? Can man elevate himself to a position that God would give another? The close of our portion of Scripture seems bleak, but it is not. God is sovereign, and men can never thwart His will. God elevates or removes whom He wills.

- a. **Psalm 75:7** but it is God who executes judgment, putting down one and lifting up another.
- b. **Daniel 2:20-21** Daniel answered and said: “Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might. (21) He changes times and seasons; he removes kings and sets up kings; he gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to those who have understanding;
- c. As God’s children, we must believe this truth.
  - i. Sometimes, God lifts a leader for a nation’s good.
  - ii. Sometimes, God lifts a leader for a nation's judgment.
  - iii. However, none in power are there because they outsmarted God.
  - iv. Adonijah is seemingly the king. He looks unstoppable, but he is not. God has determined the next king, Solomon. No amount of human conniving can change that.

3. Our passage teaches us several truths.

- i. Sometimes, God’s kingdom and church pass through dangerous moments. It may be the passing of Joseph and the rise of slavery (Gen. 50- Exod. 1), the burial of Joshua, the apostasy to

Baal worship (Josh. 24 - Judg. 2), the resurrection of Jesus, and the persecution of the church.

1. We learn that in the most dangerous moments, Christ's hands steady His church. Sovereignty guides us both in the valley of green pastures and still waters and in the valley of the shadow of death. Therefore, we shall fear no evil, for God is with us. If God is for us, who can be against us?
- ii. The text also suggests that the kingdom of God can suffer from unqualified leadership.
  1. Our writer sees Adonijah as unqualified for kingdom leadership. Lust for power and position are not the marks of leadership among God's people.

#### 4. Benediction:

- a. **Psalms 61:6-7** Prolong the life of the king; may his years endure to all generations! (7) May he be enthroned forever before God; appoint steadfast love and faithfulness to watch over him!

### Public Reading of Scripture Psalms 61