

Kings

1Kings 1:1-2Kings 25:30

By Phil Kayser at Dominion Covenant Church on 2019-02-24

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Text to read - 1 Kings 8:54-66

1Kings 8:54 And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55 Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying: 56 “Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses. 57 May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers. May He not leave us nor forsake us, 58 that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers. 59 And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require, 60 that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other. 61 Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day.”

62 Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. 63 And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64 On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings.

65 At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days—fourteen days. 66 On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people.

Introduction - the unique prophetic nature of these histories

How many here have been able to read through 1 & 2 Kings? And how many of you enjoyed the stories? I think that at least some of that history is very captivating. I wish we could just read through both books making comments as we go. But instead of focusing on a survey, I want to dissect the book in a way that help you to read it more intelligently.

And the first thing that I want to point out this morning is that these books constitute far more than simply history. Most commentaries agree that the author of the book is very selective in which facts he would include in the history because his goal was not just to ground us in history (that is an

important purpose), but also to make theological and practical applications from the history. In other words, this is a book designed to transform us (and actually, to transform entire nations), not simply to inform us about geopolitical facts.

Just as an example of selectivity, based on archeology and secular history, most scholars acknowledge that Omri was one of Israel's most important rulers from a political standpoint, but this book dismisses his corrupt reign in a mere eight verses. He hardly spends any time on this important figure. Why? It doesn't serve his purpose. And we will look at those purposes in a bit. Likewise, he skips over decades of fascinating history in other kings' lives simply because it does not serve God's purposes for giving us this book. You will be a bit disappointed if you see this as a complete history of the kings.

Let me give another example. In the 1 Kings 22 story, where Jehoshaphat and Ahab team up to fight against the Syrians, you would expect the author to give us a lot more details about what was one of the most pivotal battles in Ahab's entire life. And actually, there was an overthrow of his kingdom. But the details the author gives us go behind the scenes and reveal the conflict between demons and angels, bad prophets and a good prophet, and why God was sovereign in the tiniest details of this history - including an arrow fired at random by a soldier that hit the disguised king Ahab in a vulnerable spot by God's providence. In fact, that is my favorite story of how God's providence guides even so-called chance events. They may be chance from our perspective, but not from God's perspective. There is no chance with God.

Likewise, the way this history was written clearly shows that the pragmatic decision of good king Jehoshaphat (and he was a good king) to align with evil king Ahab against an even worse enemy was a disastrous decision because it angered God and was covenantally unfaithful. The history of that one battle is full of lessons on God's sovereignty, the importance of nations adhering to the covenant, the need for faith in God, the need to submit to God's laws even when it is inconvenient, how spiritual principalities and powers factor into warfare, God's laws of harvest, etc. It is a rich repository of lessons.

So we can't just read these books as histories. We need to see them as God's prophetic writings to a nation that had been disregarding His covenant. And there are several features of the book that you need to understand in order to fully appreciate why this book was written. Let's go through these essential

background details.

I. 1 & 2 Kings were one book in the Hebrew

The first fact that everyone acknowledges is the unity of 1 & 2 Kings. Even though they are two books in the English Bible, they were originally written as one book in the Hebrew Bible. That's why I am preaching just one sermon on them.

The author, Jeremiah the prophet, clearly connected this book to the book of Samuel, as I pointed out in my sermon on that book. And it is connected not just thematically as a part of what has become known as the Deuteronomistic literature (or literature that applies the book of Deuteronomy to the blessings and judgments of a nation), but it was also connected tightly by the very structure of Samuel to Kings. And if we had time to dig into it, you would see that this book is tightly connected to other books by a subsequent prophet. But for this morning I will just stick to the fact that we will misinterpret this book if we do not see all of 1 and 2 Kings as one book that is unified in its purpose and theology. We will miss the central message if we divide the two books up. And you will see that more clearly in a bit.

II. When was Kings written? It was started before the temple was destroyed (cf. 1 Kings 8:8; 12:19) and was finished after the exile (cf. 2 Kings 25).

The second thing that needs to be understood is when the book was written. Unlike Chronicles, which was written by Ezra after the Babylonian exile was finished and after the people had come back to the land of Israel, Kings began to be written in the years just before the exile and the last two chapters were written after Judah was carried captive to Babylon. And there are many proofs of this. I'll just give you a couple of examples.

1 Kings 8:8 is the first example. After discussing the temple, the ark of the covenant with the cherubim and the poles to carry the ark of the covenant, the last phrase in 1 Kings 8:8 says, "And they are there to this day." That statement makes it clear that the book of Kings began to be written before the temple was destroyed. Once the temple was destroyed and the furniture of the temple was carried away, that phrase would make no sense. The author of the book says, "And they are there to this day." The same is true of chapter 12:19.

III. Who wrote Kings? Jeremiah wrote 1:1-25:26

Now, if Jeremiah wrote the book (as I believe, and as ancient authorities have clearly stated), then all of those facts make perfect sense. Jeremiah would have been writing the vast bulk of the book prior to the exile, but would record the last two chapters immediately after the exile. He was an eye witness of the destruction of the temple, and chapter 25 gives an eye witness account of the burning of the city and the temple.

But just like other histories, the very last part of the book (the last four verses) was written by the next historical prophet - Ezra. This is one of the ways that the historical books are linked together.

So just to review from previous sermons on how all that works, the last verses of Deuteronomy were written by Joshua, tightly connecting the book of Joshua immediately to the canon the moment it was written. Joshua 24:26 says, "Then Joshua wrote these words in the Book of the Law of God." It was written right into the canon. Joshua did not become canonical centuries later. That is a heretical view of canonicity. Joshua was canonized and written into the canon the moment it was written. And that is true of all the other books.

The last verses of Joshua were written by Samuel, immediately connecting 1 and 2 Samuel to the canon. The last verses of Samuel were written by Jeremiah, immediately connecting Kings to Samuel. And the last verses of Kings were written by Ezra. My book on Canon shows some of these tightly woven features illustrating how canonicity was given by the prophets who wrote the books, not by the church. The Bible is self-authenticating.

Now, keep in mind that liberal scholars won't consider you very sophisticated or academically respectable if you believe (like I do) that Jeremiah wrote this book. In fact, a number of modern evangelicals won't consider you to be very academically respectable. But ancient history says that he wrote the book, and there are stylistic features that are very similar between Kings and the book of Jeremiah. I won't bore you with all of the internal details, but quite a number of conservative scholars have shown that the modern debate on authorship is silly and that Jeremiah is indeed the author of this book.

That fact alone is going to clue us into why Kings is constantly preaching the theological and moral themes of this book to its audience. He was warning his nation that if it did not repent, they would end up in exile, and once they were exiled Jeremiah was warning people that until they repented,

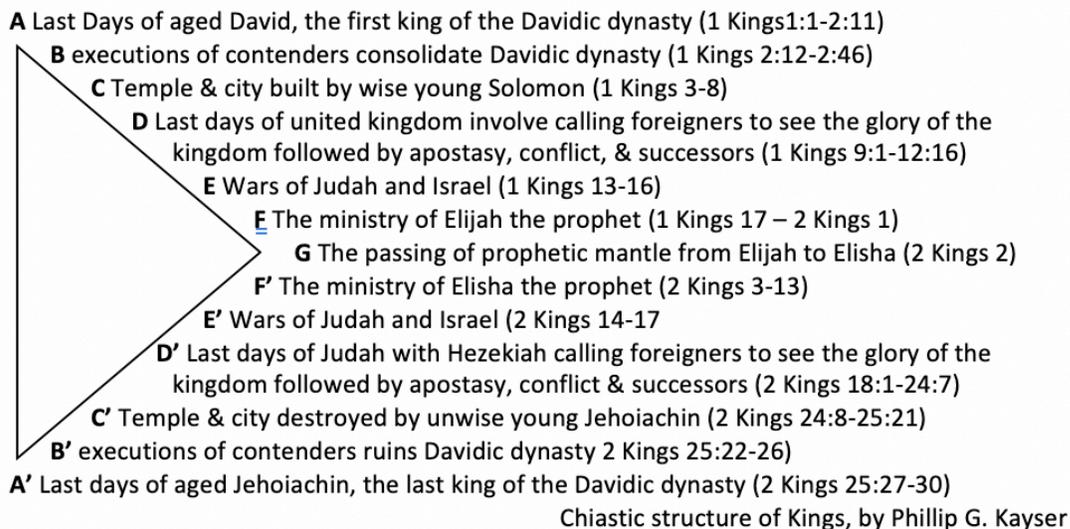
they could not count on getting back into the land. Our covenantal God does not turn a blind eye to the compromises of any nation, including our own.

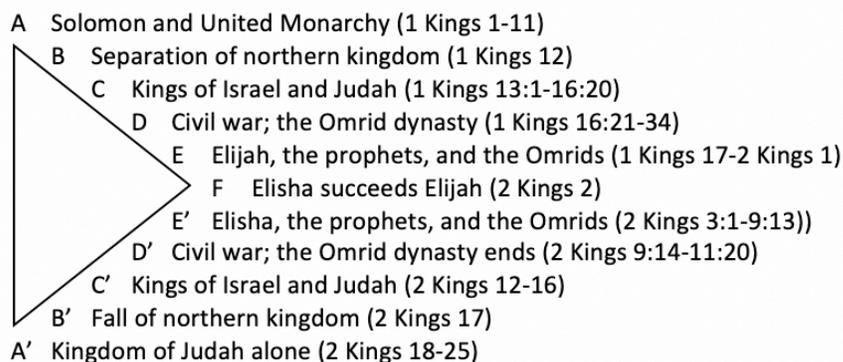
IV. The structure of the book shows that 2 Kings 2 is the heart of the book, and 2 Kings 2:9-12a is the heart of the heart

But the fourth thing that helps us to understand why this book was written is the Hebrew structure of the book. And there were various literary devices that the Hebrews used. But in the case of this book, it is another chiasm. I found that very interesting.

I try to find the structure of a book before looking at what other scholars have come up with so as not to read a structure back into the book - a kind of eisegesis. And I will admit that because we have just hosted presbytery, I have not had the time to do a thorough computer analysis of Hebrew words and phrases like I sometimes do. But it was pretty obvious anyway. A simple flipping back and forth between the beginning and ending of the book and working toward the middle, it was instantly obvious to me that this book's structure was made in the form of a chiasm - an abcdcba kind of a structure.

So I started writing down what the themes of each section were and voila, I came up with the chiasm that is in your outlines. And then I went to test it to see if any others saw the same thing. And they have. George Savran, Jerome Walsh, Robert Cohn, Peter Leithart, and others have slightly different detail, but saying much the same thing, and with the heart of their chiasms in 2 Kings 2.





Chiastic structure of 2 Kings 2 provided by Jerome Walsh in *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative*, (Minnesota: Liturgical press, 2001).

So take a look at the first chart of the chiasm of the book and I will quickly walk you through it. You will see that the book begins with the last days of aged David, the first king of the Davidic covenant and it ends with the last days of aged Jehoichin, the last king of the Davidic dynasty. And throughout this book, every king is compared to David. The Davidic covenant pointing forwards to the Messiah is central to the thesis of this book. And the fact that the last verses of 2 Kings are about God preserving Jehoiachin in Babylon are a hint that God is not finished with the Davidic covenant yet. There is something more that is yet to come. God is preserving David's line to Jesus. And of course the genealogies of Jesus pick up on this reference to Jehoiachin.

Back to the outline. The second part of the book of Kings (the first B section) deals with executions of contenders in order to consolidate the Davidic dynasty and that section is paralleled by the second to last section of the book (the second B section) with executions of contenders that ends up ruining the Davidic dynasty.

The third part of the book deals with temple and city being built up by wise but very young Solomon, corresponding to the second C near the end of Kings where the temple and city were destroyed because of the actions of a just as young and very unwise king. In fact, this temple imagery is a central message to the book. But the parallel sides show the temple was being built on the covenant of David and being destroyed because kings had failed to keep covenant of David.

The first D section of the last days of united kingdom involves Solomon calling foreigners to see the glory and wisdom of the kingdom, and even the Queen of Sheba travels 1200 miles to see this glory. But this is immediately

followed by an astonishing and unexpected apostasy, and then conflict, and then successors. And this parallels the last days of the kingdom of Judah where Hezekiah (a second inspired Solomon) pridefully calls foreigners to see the glory of the kingdom followed by apostasy, conflict, and successors as well. But he is going to be making a theological point about these foreigners being called to see the glory of the kingdom. In the one, it was a good calling. In the other, it was not good.

The first E section outlines lessons from the wars of Judah and Israel (which for convenience sake I have left out the details), and they are paralleled in amazing ways by lessons from the wars of Judah and Israel in the second E. But it is quite obvious the chiasm interrupts these lessons by introducing the prophets, Elijah and Elisha, which is the F section of the chiasm.

The first F section deals with the ministry of Elijah the prophet paralleled with the second F section that deals with the ministry of Elisha the prophet - the prophet who has a double portion of the spirit of Elijah.

Which leads to the heart of the book, the passing of the prophetic mantle from Elijah to Elisha in 2 Kings 2. So the way chiasms work, the heart of the chiasm is the central theme of a book. (This is why I say that you need to keep these two books together.) You might have expected the central theme to be some glorious king, but the central theme points to two prophets who bring covenant lawsuits against the nation. And this makes sense since the book is a compilation of evidence being entered into the court record that will be used by Jeremiah in his prophetic covenant lawsuit against the nation of his day. This is what makes Kings so different from Chronicles.

Chronicles leaves out a lot of the bad stuff and leaves out the northern kings because its focus is to encourage the post-exilic community on God's faithfulness to the Davidic covenant. Kings focuses on the bad stuff as illustrations of why God had cast them into exile. So Kings is the evidence and Jeremiah is the prophetic lawsuit. It is no wonder that the ancient Hebrews spoke of Samuel and Kings as part of the former prophets. The prophetic is central to the message of Kings, and even the structure shows that.

And interestingly, 2 Kings 2 is also a very precise chiasm. I won't get into all the details of the parallels, but I put Peter Leithart's description of the chiasm into your outlines. He convincingly shows that even the geographical movement is in the form of a chiasm. The themes form that same chiasm too, but the geography of each parallel is very deliberate. In fact, Leithart points out that Elijah had to go way out of his way and take an odd route out

of the land. That odd route was prophetic, not just to later be the basis of a chiasm in God's providence, but also to show a reversal of the original conquest in order to show God's preparation for a new spiritual reconquest of the land. It was not accidental. It was deliberate. And let me explain what I mean.

- A Gilgal (vv. 1-2)
- B Bethel (vv. 3-4)
- C Jericho (vv. 5-6)
- D Cross Jordan (vv. 7-8) leaves sons of prophets
- E Ascent of Elijah with succession to Elisha (vv. 9-12a)
- D' Cross Jordan again (vv. 12b-18) returns to sons of prophets
- C' Jericho (vv. 19-22)
- B' Bethel (vv. 23-24)
- A' Elisha to Samaria (v. 25)

Chiastic Structure of 2 Kings 2, as produced by Peter Leithart

If you just look at the geographical locations in his outline of chapter 2 - of Gilgal to Bethel to Jericho to crossing the Jordan, those mirror the geographical locations in the entrance to Canaan in the books of Numbers and Joshua. And that is significant because throughout Kings, Elijah is presented as a new Moses and Elisha as a new Joshua. And just as the spirit of Moses rested upon Joshua and he took up the mantle of Moses to conquer the land of Canaan, the spirit of Elijah rests upon Elisha and Elisha takes up Elijah's mantle to engage in a new conquest.

But Leithart believes that these are also prophetic statements of exile and return to the land, and that would have been encouraging to Jeremiah's audience. As Leithart says, "The departure and return of the two prophets points ahead toward the departure and return of Israel in the exile; in both cases, two go out and one returns." Leithart sometimes reads too much into texts, but the amazingly detailed parallels between Moses and Joshua and Elijah and Elisha in this chapter have convinced me that he is correct.¹ There are way too many parallels for this to be accidental. I can't get into the details, but God is using the themes of Exodus and Conquest to show that northern Israel has become an Egypt under God's covenant curse and Judah has become a land of Canaan under God's covenant curse. It really is beautiful imagery.

But as I have already mentioned, there are themes of hope in 2 Kings 2 - hope of a return to the land and a reversal of the curse, if Israel will but repent. How does Jeremiah include those hints of hope?

¹ For an introductory look at his ideas on this passage, see <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2005/05/sermon-outline-kings-2/>

I'll give you one example. Look at 2 Kings 2:18. This occurs after Elijah dies and is taken away with no body to be found despite 50 prophets diligently looking for Elijah's body for three days. They could not find where the body was buried, just as no one could find Moses' body because God had buried it. Well, what happens after Moses dies and Joshua crosses the Jordan River? The first city that he conquers is Jericho. What city does Elisha occupy? Verse 18 says,

And when they came back to him, for he had stayed in Jericho, he said to them, "Did I not say to you, 'Do not go'?"

Keep in mind that Joshua had cursed Jericho in Joshua 6:34 and said that the one who tried to rebuild Jericho would do so by sacrificing his son on its walls. 1 Kings 16:34 shows the fulfillment of that prophecy with Hiel sacrificing his firstborn when he laid its foundation. And there is going to be another sacrifice theme in 2 Kings 3. But in our chapter, apparently even the water and ground were cursed. Look at verse 19:

Then the men of the city said to Elisha, "Please notice, the situation of this city is pleasant, as my lord sees; but the water is bad, and the ground barren."

The water had poisoned the ground and made everything barren. Everything was under the curse. And there is a reversal that is going to happen. Elisha healed the water and the ground for the sake of the prophets, and he did so with a bowl of salt, indicating a new covenant - a covenant of salt. Some think that this cursing and healing of Jericho is a prophetic foreshadowing of the return from exile, but some think it is a prophetic foreshadowing of Jesus, the greater Elisha, who takes Jerichos and turns them into new-covenant gardens. I'll explain how Elisha is indeed a type of Jesus later on. If you have ever been to Jericho, it is beautiful. It is beautiful to this day. But the chapter as a whole is strewn with hints that the prophetic evaluation of nations is at the heart of what the book is about.

And if the heart of the heart of this book is verses 9-12 (which details the transfer of office from one prophet to the next showing the constant prophetic presence of God's voice evaluating history), then it makes sense that the book as a whole will be used as the foundational evidence for Jeremiah's prophetic covenant lawsuit in the book of Jeremiah. It uses real history to warn nations not to rebel against God and numerous examples of the disaster that follows when they do not.

V. Why was Kings written? To illustrate God's covenantal blessings and judgments.

So we are into why 1 & 2 Kings was written. And I've already told you, but let me summarize it again. God had made an eternal covenant with David,

and yet Israel was in exile. And Jews may have been troubled about the truthfulness of God's promises. But this book is an apologetic to show that God had been totally consistent with promises. The history of Kings was designed to clearly demonstrate God's covenantal curses on kings who violated God's covenant and it shows God's covenantal blessings on kings who submitted themselves to God's covenant. When you see the consistency of God's blessings and curses over the course of hundreds of years, you cannot explain away these things as accidents of history. God was sovereignly in control. And throughout the histories God continually reminded Israel of why Samaria fell to the Assyrians and were scattered around its empire and why Jerusalem was about to be captured and scattered throughout the Babylonian empire. Constantly and repetitiously the writer tells us, "Here is yet another example of why this nation deserves to be destroyed." They were not destroyed by accidents of politics. They were not destroyed by economics, conspiracy, or any other geopolitical reason. Yes, God uses geopolitical issues to bless and curse nations, but ultimately it is God who blesses or curses nations - and He has been 100% faithful to His Davidic covenant. That is the message of Kings.

VI. Key word - David

The key word is "David," which occurs 92 times. Every king is compared to David. And the book is showing how God enforces the covenant of David.

VII. Key verses - 1 Kings 9:4-7 or 2 Kings 17:22-23

I was torn on what constitutes the key passage for interpreting the whole book. So I have put two up there, but I really do think that God's vision to Solomon in 1 Kings 9 captures the essence of the book, and I will only read verses 4-7 of that speech. God says to Solomon,

4 Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, 5 then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, "You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel." 6 But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, 7 then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples.

In a nutshell, nations are in covenant with God and must obey His laws, trust His Gospel, and submit to His rule. If they do not, they are sowing trouble to themselves. And it is just a matter of time before apostate nations are destroyed if there is no revival and repentance to slow down that day of

reckoning.

VIII. Overview of Kings

And by the way, it doesn't matter whether the king is as good as David, if he violates God's covenant, he suffer the consequences. And this book shows that all the kings failed in some way, from David to Jehoiachin. This not only reminds us that we must look forward to a coming Messiah (Jesus) who would be the only faithful King, but it reminds us of the need to apply the Gospel of grace to even politics. Without God's grace, no nation can be pleasing in God's sight. Let me give you a whirlwind tour of some of the key features of the book.

The first two chapters of 1 Kings are a really odd way to start a book - that is, they are odd if you want to make David out to be the ultimate ideal king. He is anything but that. He is portrayed as weak and out of touch with reality on some levels. He is not the eternal Messiah that was promised. Instead, the opening verses show him shivering in bed, unable to stay warm. Then comes the odd suggestion from his advisors that he should marry a beautiful virgin to keep him warm in bed. And he goes along with that weird, strange, ungodly suggestion - in some ways, acting like the kings of the nations. The author did not need to include this embarrassing material, but by including it he is deliberately showing that even the ideal king David is not ideal. He is not the Messiah.

David was even out of touch with reality when it came to politics - not even realizing that his son Adonijah had conspired to take away the kingdom from him. He was out of touch as a parent. The text tells us that he never disciplined his son. Joab and the high priest had sided with Adonijah. It takes a prophet, Nathan, to remedy this situation. And prophets are for the most part the strong link in this book. In any case, Bathsheba has to remind David of his promise to put Solomon on the throne - which David quickly does.

On his death bed in chapter 2, David gives instructions to Solomon to deal with issues that he has been too weak to deal with, again showing that David lacks what it takes to be the final Messiah. We are still looking for another. He tells Solomon to follow God's laws and stay in covenant with God since that is the only way that any human king can prosper. And Solomon deals fairly with the three men who had engaged in capital crimes under David's reign.

In chapter 3 we are left wondering if Solomon may be the Messiah promised. He too seems to be a man after God's own heart. He is humble.

He is dependent upon God. Verse 3 says, “And Solomon loved Yehowah, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places.” But it does appear that he is even going to correct that, by centralizing all worship in a glorious temple to God. He loves God and is devoted to God. He is serving God. And 2 Samuel 12:24 says that the God loved Solomon in those early years and 1 Chronicles tells us that God gave him the name, “Solomon,” which means “peace,” because God was going to ensure that his kingdom was a kingdom of peace. It was to be a symbol of Christ’s peace.

In those early years, Solomon recognized his desperate need of the Lord if he was to reign properly. In response to his humility, God says in verse 5, “Ask! What shall I give you?” And Solomon’s prayer of response is a magnificent prayer. Rather than asking for riches and power, he simply asks for wisdom to discern between good and evil and to rule the people in a way that is pleasing to God. It’s a great prayer. God says that He was totally pleased with this prayer and not only grants Solomon more wisdom than any of the ancients, but more wealth and power than any of the ancients. Verses 12-14 of God’s response set a tone for this book. This is 2 Kings 3:10.

1Kings 3:10 The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. 11 Then God said to him: “Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, 12 behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. 13 And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. 14 So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days.”

This is a theme that will keep coming up throughout this book. So Solomon is off to a good start. When you look at the things Solomon did in the first eight chapters (with two exceptions), he is portrayed as a king almost as ideal as David was. The Scripture actually portrays him as a symbol of Jesus Christ in the glorious period of the Messianic kingdom. The temple has images of the Garden of Eden showing how God is the only way to have paradise restored on earth. It is all of grace. It is beautiful imagery.

Solomon’s prayer at the dedication of the temple in 1 Kings 8 is one of the most heart-moving prayers you can find in the Bible. You ought to try praying it. It is marvelous. It is a model for our own prayers. Dr. Joe Morecraft is correct when he says that this prayer shows the early Solomon to be a man who knows his God, knows the Scripture, has a heart for God, loves His law, walks in His laws, and keeps his covenant. With two

exceptions, he seemed like such an appropriate symbol for the Messiah.

So the question comes, “How on earth could he backslide so far? How on earth could he violate every prohibition given to kings in Deuteronomy 17? How on earth could a man who loved God so much backslide so far when he was old in chapter 11?” It seems inconceivable. But Jeremiah’s point is that even the best kings will fail if their hearts are not constantly kept in God’s grace.

Solomon stands as a warning to all of you that when you fail to guard your heart, you can become a slave to Satan. Out of the heart arise the issues of life, and Solomon gave in to the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. All three lusts are documented in chapter 11 so well. Chapter 11 says,

1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites— 2 from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, “You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.” Solomon clung to these in love. 3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David. 5 For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6 Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as did his father David. 7 Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. 8 And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

It is easy for us to shake our heads at Solomon and wonder how a man of prayer, a man who could write the inspired book of Proverbs, a man of such intense devotion to God, and a man who warned other people not to stray from God’s laws, could himself stray so far? At the age of 17 or 18 he told his first wife by inspiration that she was his one and only - at least that is how I interpret that verse in the Song of Solomon. And there are several commentators who state that that is a statement of monogamy. Since it was said by inspiration, I have to assume that at that point, lust was not a problem for him. He had a beautiful relationship with his first wife, who by the way, was not the daughter of Pharaoh. Scripture is abundantly clear that Pharaoh’s daughter was not his first wife. That was a compromise. Just to give you one crystal clear proof that she was not his first wife, we learn from 1 Kings 14:21 that Rehoboam was born one year before Solomon even became king. He married Pharaoh’s daughter quite a bit after that. So Pharaoh’s daughter was not his first wife, and according to 1 Kings, he

shouldn't have married her. But the point is, Solomon was such a humble, sincere, godly man in his early years that it seems hard for some people to understand his transformation into the prideful and lecherous man that he became in chapter 11 with 700 hundred wives and 300 concubines.

But you know what? I have read numerous testimonies of godly passionate pastors who have played the same game with pornography, which in some ways is no different than what Solomon did. And because those pastors started rationalizing their sin with pornography, they got hooked, and they made an absolutely disastrous mess of their lives. It started with one compromise, and the allure took them to another, and another, until the pastor was addicted and manifested problems similar to Solomon's idolatry. When you read Steve Gallagher's book, *Tearing Down the High Places of Sexual Idolatry*, or his book, **At the Altar of Sexual Idolatry,*" you begin to see one-to-one parallels. And as a result, these pastors lost their ministries, their reputation, their wives, children, houses, and so many other things. They gave it all up so that they could pursue their idolatrous lusts. Do not think that you are immune from falling as Solomon fell.

Of course, the pain itself is part of God's methods for bringing the elect back to Himself, isn't it? The book of Ecclesiastes was written by a broken Solomon shortly before he died at the age of 60 in order to give his testimony and to warn us not to imitate him. God did not allow Solomon to experience any joy in sex, work, research, food, entertainment, or other wonderful things of life when he was in his backslidden condition. It was all emptiness and vanity. God turns everything beautiful into ashes so that we will learn not to serve idols. And yes, our idols are just as real as Solomon's were. 1 Kings 11:2 says that Solomon clung to these women in love. He refused to give them up. And given their idolatry, it would have been lawful for him to give them up. In fact, based on Ezra I would say that he was mandated to give them up. But when you cling to pornography, you are clinging to the same demons that Solomon worshiped. In fact, you are totally opening up your life as an invitation to demons just like Solomon did. The author of this book does not try to edit out the ugliness of sin in anyone's life. So Solomon learned that lesson as an old man (probably feeling much older than his actual age warranted), and he was restored to God, and he wrote the book of Ecclesiastes to teach us to avoid his errors early. He basically says, "Don't wait as long as I did." Song of Solomon and Proverbs were written early in his life.

But interestingly, the author of this book doesn't mention Solomon's old age confession because his purpose (unlike Chronicles) is to focus on the

disasters that flow from compromise, no matter who makes the compromise. We already saw that principle at work in the book of Judges and in the book of Samuel. And this author leaves us with an image of Solomon in his old age where Solomon resembles Pharaoh more than he resembles Christ. And the consequences are ugly.

Chapter 12 begins the next section of the book showing that Rehoboam has picked up his father's evil actions. Parents, when you do not deal with the issues in your life quickly, your children may well imitate them - and perhaps go beyond you. Rehoboam was way worse than Solomon.

Not content with his insane wealth, he tries to increase already burdensome taxes on the people. And the people rebel under Jeroboam and form their own nation. Interestingly, when Rehoboam tries to force the north back into the union, God sends a prophet in verse 24 saying,

Thus says Yehowah: "You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me."

In that verse God endorses the doctrine of states seceding from tyrannical countries. And the issue was taxes; God authorized that secession. But the book goes on to show that secession is no savior either. Politics is never a savior. Though Jeroboam had the right to secede, he too violated God's covenant and created problems for the northern tribes right from the beginning. The proof that he is rebelling against God is that he builds two competing temples to Yehowah in the north and rejects the authority of the Levitical priesthood. He puts a golden calf in each of the temples, making the connection to Exodus 32 and the golden calf situation there quite explicit. The reader knows that this will not go anywhere good. God will be opposed to Jeroboam.

And the rest of the book (which we won't have time to adequately cover) will give evaluations of each king on whether he followed in the steps of faithful David or whether he rebelled against God like Jeroboam, Ahab, or one of the other evil kings. They were judged on whether they had any compromises in worship, whether they rid the nation of idolatry, and whether they were faithful to the laws and provisions of the covenant. Some kings made a pretense at loyalty to God, but the record looks past the pretense and judges them as bad kings. Others were explicitly hostile to the true faith and actually persecuted the true faith and drove it underground. Kings is an outstanding book to study during times of apostasy and persecution to see how God's people handled such pressures.

Of the 19 northern kings, not one was good, even though Jehu initially killed

all the prophets of Baal. But it is clear that he did it for self-serving reasons. Those people would have been faithful to the line of Omri. And every one of those kings had a tragic death. Seven were assassinated, one committed suicide, one was stricken by God, one was taken to Assyria. He is not painting a good picture of secular kingship. The northern kingdom lasted 209 years and then was scattered around the world in exile. Now, that by itself shows God's patience.

The southern kingdom lasted 136 years longer for a total of 345 years. The only interruption to the line of David during that time in the south was Athaliah's illegitimate reign. Of the southern kings, beginning with Rehoboam, twelve did evil, two had a mixture of evil and good, and six kings were quite good. But because of all the evil kings, many of Judah's kings also died a tragic death, with five being assassinated, two being stricken by God, and three being exiled to foreign lands. It illustrates that God is not mocked.

And the evil of most of the kings explains why the prophets played such an important role in this book. Prophets were inspired messengers of God who told Israel and the kings what God thought of them. And it usually wasn't very happy news, though there were some prophets who gave encouraging support.

I handed out a timeline on legal paper of the kings and prophets so that you could place where each story in kings occurs as the story jumps back and forth from north to south. Unless you have a photographic memory, it is hard to know where you are at unless you have a chart like that to accompany your reading. If you want a much more detailed version, go to floydnojenjonesministries.com²

Anyway, the prophets that you see on that chart were constantly challenging the people as God's mouthpiece to repent and to go back to the laws of God. That's the constant refrain. They called out idolatry and injustice and brought God's covenant lawsuits against nations that refused to heed God's voice. But don't think that those named prophets were the only ones speaking out for God. 1 Kings 18:4 says that one of Ahab's officers (he was a good man by the name of Obadiah) hid one hundred prophets in two caves and had fed them with bread and water. He was protecting them from Jezebel, the Queen, the wife of Ahab. That is another kind of interposition. In fact, this book is full of examples of how we can protect one another against tyranny.

2 For a much more detailed timeline, go to <https://floydnojenjonesministries.com/files/131110929.pdf>

We aren't told the names of those 100 prophets, but it illustrates that God was faithfully bringing His Word to bear on even the northern kingdom, despite its total commitment to paganism. It was a self-declared non-Yawhest nation, and yet God's law still applied. All nations (including the United States of America and Canada) are called by God to submit to His Word, or suffer punishment. And of course, now that the Bible is complete and prophecy is finished, the Bible is the prophetic word that we bring to the nations.

The most prominent prophets in the northern kingdom were Elijah and Elisha. Ahab was the most prominent king who needed God's rebuke. He had allowed his demonic wife, Jezebel, to control him and to control politics, and the tyranny that resulted was horrible. Elijah declared a drought on the northern kingdom, and true to His Word, God did not allow a drop of rain to fall. Ahab was ticked off and hunted Elijah everywhere in order to kill him. And God sustained and hid Elijah miraculously. Finally, Elijah shows up to tell Ahab that there will be a competition on Mount Carmel to see whose God is the true God - Baal or Yehowah. When Israel shows up on the mountain, Elijah told all the people, whoever has a god that sends fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice is the true god. The people thought that was pretty cool, so they agreed to it. The prophets of Baal went first, and they prayed from morning till noon with no results. So Elijah makes fun of them, suggesting that they cry louder, because maybe their god is on a long journey and can't hear them well enough, or maybe he is sleeping and needs to be awakened. He mocks them. Desperate, the priests gash themselves with knives and dance and pray feverishly, with absolutely no effect.

It's Elijah's turn, and he not only puts the bull on the altar, he digs a trench around the altar and pours barrel after barrel of water all over it till the wood is saturated and the trench is full of water. Then a simple prayer and fire streaks from heaven consuming not only the sacrifice, but the wood, the stones, and the water. Everything is gone. Astounded, the people cry out that Yehowah is the true god. Then Elijah tells the people to seize the prophets and he proceeds to kill all of them. This was a direct attack upon the state religion and a call for them to adopt the laws of God and submit to Yehowah. And of course, Jezebel is ticked off, and vows to kill him.

As I mentioned, 2 Kings 2 is the heart of the book, and it shows the mantle being transferred from Elijah to Elisha. Elisha had asked for a double portion of the Spirit that was upon Elijah, and God seems to give it. Where only seven miracles were performed by Elijah, there are fourteen miracles recorded as being done by Elisha - exactly double.

IX. The Christ of Kings

A. Symbolized by Solomon

The Christ of Kings can be seen in a number of symbols. Where David symbolized the period of Christ's kingdom that we are living in, Solomon symbolizes a future time of peace, prosperity, and wholeness when Jesus will have evangelized the whole earth and blessed it with His righteousness.

B. Elisha

But another beautiful symbol of Jesus is Elisha. Scholars believe that Elijah was a symbol of John the Baptist and Elisha is a symbol of Jesus. And the New Testament seems to back that up. In Matthew 11:14 Jesus said that John the Baptist is the Elijah who was to come. He repeats that thought in Matthew 17:10-12, which makes Jesus the prophet who comes after John. So He corresponds to Elisha. So I think there is pretty strong evidence that he is a type of Jesus.

C. Symbolized by temple

Christ is also symbolized by the temple, the sacrifices, the prophets, priests, and kings. We have looked at all of those as symbols of Jesus in the past, and won't cover them more right now. And I won't cover the key themes of the book either, though I have listed some of them for you.

D. Symbolized by sacrifices

E. Symbolized by prophets, priests, and kings

X. Key themes

A. The temple

B. The prophets

C. God and the nations

D. Cost of compromise

E. Impact of leadership

XI. Key lessons

A. Yehowah is the only true God who controls all things

But let me list a few of my favorite lessons from the book of Kings. I've put quite a few Scripture references for each lesson that you can study on your own. But there are two ways in which Yehowah is said to be the only true God who controls all things. There are many examples of miracles showing that God controls the natural order. And there many twists and turns of human history to show that God controls all history.

We've already related the story of Mount Carmel. But Elijah's statement that no rain would come unless God commanded it to come through Elijah shows God's control of nature. So does the feeding of Elijah by crows when no one else had food, the widow of Zarapheth having a never ending supply of oil and flour, the raising of the child from death in 1 Kings 17:23, and taking the randomly shot arrow of a soldier and placing it right into the chinks of the armor of Ahab. The verses in your outline illustrate that God controls the natural order and every facet of human history. You cannot escape from that lesson when you read Kings.

He alone controls the natural order (1 Kings 17–19; 2 Kings 1:2–17; 4:8–37; 5:1–18; 6:1–7, 27)

He controls all history, including past, present, and future (1 Kings 11:14, 23; 14:1–18; 22:1–38; 2 Kings 5:1–18; 10:32–33; 18:17–19:37).

B. Yehowah saves by unconditional election (powerful examples used by Jesus are the widow of Zarepheth and Naaman the Syrian)

A second major lesson is God's unconditional election - the second point of the five points of Calvinism. There are many stories of God's elective grace in this book, but the two that Jesus singled out (and which infuriated the Jews of His day) were the widow of Zarepheth and Naaman the leper, both of whom were Gentiles. And most of you know the beautiful story of Naaman the leper. Well, here is the point that Jesus made from that story. Jesus said,

25 But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land; 26 but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, in the region of Sidon, to a woman who was a widow. 27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed except Naaman the Syrian.”

What marvelous examples of unconditional election.

C. Yehowah demands exclusive worship

He alone is to be worshiped, whether the worshipers or Jews or Gentiles (1 Kings 8:41–43, 60; 2 Kings 5:15–18; 17:24–41)

Another major lesson is that God demands exclusive worship. I give verses that show that whether Jew or Gentile, all nations are called to worship God.

He dictates the nature, content, and place of worship (1 Kings 11:1–40; 12:25–13:34; 14:22–24; 16:29–33; 2 Kings 16:1–4; 17:7–23; 21:1–9)

And I have given several verses that show that God dictates the nature, content, and place of worship. We call this the regulative principle of worship - that we must worship God as He wants, not as we think He should want. Jereboam didn't worship foreign gods; he worshiped Yehowah. But he worshiped Yehowah contrary to God's explicit instructions. This book speaks against the false worship that plagues evangelical churches who

worship the true God, but they worship according to the dictates of their own hearts, not according to the dictates of Scripture. Deuteronomy 12 had commanded, “You shall not worship Yehowah your God in that way... Whatever I command you, be careful to observe it; you shall not add to it nor take away from it.” And you can study some of those Scriptures on your own, but I think they beautifully illustrate the regulative principle of worship. It is a major lesson of this book.

He opposes false worship (1 Kings 3:2; 5:1–9:9; 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kings 18:4; 23:1–20)

D. Yehowah’s laws are binding on all men (1 Kings 2:3,43; 3:14; 6:12; 8:58,61; 9:4,6; 11:33-34,38; 13:9,21; 14:8; 15:5; 18:18; 2 Kings 10:31; 14:6; 17:13-16,19,34,37; 18:6,12; 22:8,11; 23:3,24-25,35; 24:3)

Another major lesson of this book is that God’s laws are binding on all men, not simply on true believers. God enforced the laws upon believer and unbeliever alike. When David violated God’s laws, he suffered. When Manassah, the most wicked of the kings, violated God’s laws, he suffered more. But both were subject to the law.

One interesting story that illustrates this is in 1 Kings 20 when God allows Ahab to win against the Syrians. But the only reason that God allowed him to win was because the Syrians had spread the propaganda that Israel’s God, Yehowah, was only the god of the mountains and couldn’t win against the god of the plains. He allowed the defeat of the Syrians to teach them not to blaspheme. And in verse 24 the prophet tells Ahab,

Thus says the Yehowah: “Because the Syrians have said, ‘Yehowah is God of the hills, but He is not God of the valleys,’” therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yehowah.

God didn’t give Ahab that victory for Ahab’s goodness; He did it to show that all nations are judged by Him. And by the way, that is one reason God allows bad nations to continue - they are convenient tools of His judgments. And Ahab should have learned the lesson, and worshiped Yehowah rather than Baal. But he was so under the thumb of his wife, Jezebel, that he couldn’t.

E. Yehowah always keeps His promises (1 Kings 2:24; 5:5,12; 8:18,20,24,25,56; 9:3,5; 13:1-34; 2 Kings 8:9)

But another lesson seen throughout the book is that God is faithful to always keep His promises. His promise to David keeps coming up, but God also

keeps His promises made to others. It is a very encouraging theme. I love the theme of God's promises. He is a promise keeping God.

F. Yehowah's hatred of syncretism and lawlessness (most kings)

Most of the kings in this book end up having some syncretism. And it is crystal clear that God hates the mixing of presuppositions from false religion with the true religion. He wants His people to be people of the book. So the book of Kings is a constant rebuke to evangelicals who think like the world and act like the world.

G. Never put your confidence in princes (virtually all kings)

Yet another lesson is that the repeated failures of kings in this book illustrate the saying, "It is better to trust in Yehowah than to put confidence in princes" (Ps. 118:9), or "Do not put your trust in princes, nor in a son of man, in whom there is no help" (Ps. 146:3) This is a book that brilliantly shows the wisdom of that saying.

H. God is faithful despite our unfaithfulness (cf. Rom. 9:6-7)

Paul summarizes yet another lesson of this book by saying that the unfaithfulness of the Jews does not mean that God was being unfaithful to His promises. He always had the elect to whom He was utterly faithful. And in teaching election Paul comes to the inescapable conclusion that not all Israel is Israel. There is an invisible church of the elect. So Paul says, Rom. 9:6 But it is not as though the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, 7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." 8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

I. Only grace can stop the downward slide of depravity

And finally, this book illustrates that only grace can stop the downward slide of depravity in even believers. Don't ever presume upon God's grace or you might become like Solomon. Every day recognize that there but for the grace of God every one of us would go. And every day ask God to keep you from stumbling. Jude tells us that He is able to keep us from stumbling. May it be so, Lord Jesus. Amen. Let's pray.