

1 Kings - Introduction & Background

Introductory Matters

Because the books of 1–2 Kings were originally considered one book, most of the introductory items addressed in this section are applicable to both books.

Title

The Hebrew title of the book (*melechim* or “kings”) is derived from the book’s opening words, which are “now king.” The LXX divides the books into two by referring to the Samuel books as first and second kingdoms and the Kings books as third and fourth kingdoms. Most see this division as somewhat arbitrary since it breaks the book in the middle of the Ahaziah narrative. The possible motivation for the division was the fact that Hebrew required less scroll space than did Greek. It was not until the 15th century that editions of the book written in Hebrew divided the book in this manner. Internal evidence also indicates that the books were originally considered one. Patterson and Austel observe, “Thematically the continuity of Elijah narrative (1 Kings 17–2 Kings 2), itself part of the prophetic section dominating 1 Kings 16:29–2 Kings 9:37, and the recurring phrase ‘to this day’ (1 Kings 9:13; 10:12 [NIV, ‘since this day’]; 2 Kings 2:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23, 34, 41; 21:25) clearly indicate that the two books of Kings form a single literary unit.”

The title of the book found in the Latin Vulgate is *Liber Regum Tertius et Quartus*, which means “Third and Fourth Book of Kings.” The English title is derived from the Latin Vulgate title.⁴ The English versions follow this same fourfold division of the Samuel and Kings books. While some believe that the English plural title comes from the Hebrew title rather than the Latin Vulgate title, this seems unlikely since the Hebrew title was derived from the singular “now king” (1:1).

Authorship

Although the book is an anonymous work, several pieces of evidence point to Jeremiah as the book’s author. First, Jewish tradition (*Baba Bathra* 15a) cites Jeremiah as the author. Second, similarities of style can be detected between the Books of Jeremiah and Kings (Jer 40–44; 2 Kings 24:18–25:30; Jer 52; 2 Kings 24:18–25:30). Third, both books speak of God’s righteous judgment upon apostasy, idolatry, and immorality. Fourth, because the phrase “to this day” is used repeatedly throughout the book (1 Kings 8:8; 9:13; 10:12; 12:19; 2 Kings 2:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23,34,41; 21:25), the book was obviously written prior to the Babylonian exile and therefore would fit the general time period of Jeremiah’s ministry.

Fifth, the book makes use of theological and historical source materials. Examples include Solomon’s proverbs (1 Kings 4:32), official court records (2 Kings 18:18), Is 36–39 (2 Kings

18–20), the book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41), the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel (14:19; 15:31; 16:5,14,20,27), and the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah (14:29; 15:7,23; 22:45). Jeremiah would have had access to these records since he descended from the priestly line of Abiathar. Sixth, the book's reference to Josiah's reign (2 Kings 22:1–23:30) fails to mention Jeremiah's ministry.

Although several objections have been posed against Jeremiah as the author of the book, most of these objections seem answerable. First, because Jehoiachin's release (2 Kings 25:27–30) occurred in 560 BC, Jeremiah would have been a hundred years old and living in Egypt (Jer 43:1–8), which is far from Babylon, at the time of this event. Thus, it is unlikely that Jeremiah recorded the book's final events. However, a Jewish captive in Babylon could have recorded this final event after Jeremiah's death.

Second, others claim that while the Book of Jeremiah uses formal names for Judah's kings, the Book of Kings uses official names. However, the official names may be "more proper for an objective history." Third, others point to differences in style between Jeremiah and Kings. For example, "differences in writing style between the books of Jeremiah and Kings...make any final determination of the authorship of the books of the Kings uncertain." However, others note that the similarity in style between the books outweighs any differences.

Date

The writing of the book was likely a process beginning after Jeremiah received his prophetic call and ending as late as 586 BC or shortly thereafter. However, because the end of the book describes the remnant's move to Babylon and the release of Jehoiachin in the thirty-seventh year of the exile in 560 BC (2 Kings 25:27–30), the book was probably completed by a Jew living in the Babylonian exile as late as 550 BC. However, the book should not be dated much later than this since it fails to mention Cyrus' 538 BC decree allowing the exiles to return to Jerusalem (2 Chr 36:22–23).

Place of Writing

If the position is taken that an elderly Jeremiah wrote the entire work, then the book was completed in Egypt (Jer 43:1–8). However, if the position is taken that a Jew in exile completed the book, then Babylon is the place of the book's final composition. As argued above, this latter position seems preferable. Thus, it is best to say that Jeremiah wrote the bulk of the work throughout the course of his ministry while in Judah and then the book received its final form in Babylon.

Recipients

If it is true that Jeremiah wrote his book throughout the duration of his ministry, then the intended recipients could have been the nation of Judah even before the exile in 586 BC. However, because the final form of the book occurred in 550 BC, the intended recipients

also consisted of Judah after the exile. Perhaps it is best to say that the book was intended to be read by Judah before and after the exile.

Scope

Because the book begins with the end of David's reign and the beginning of Solomon's reign (971 BC) and ends with the release of Jehoiachin (560 BC), the book's events transpired over a 411-year period. Key events transpired within this time period including David's death, Solomon's inauguration (971 BC), Solomon's death, Rehoboam's enthronement, the division of the kingdom (931 BC), Jehu's accession and purge of both the northern and southern kingdoms (841 BC), the Assyrian captivity (722 BC), Sennacherib's threatening of Hezekiah resulting in God judging Assyria (701 BC), and the three deportations (605, 597, 586 BC). Because the books are divided in the midst of Ahaziah's reign (853–852 BC), 1 Kings ends in 853 BC and 2 Kings begins in the next year. Thus, 1 Kings covers the 118 year period between Solomon's death and the beginning of Ahaziah's reign and 2 Kings covers the 266 year period between the second half of Ahaziah's reign and the Babylonian captivity.

Structure

The Book of Kings follows a threefold structure. The first part consists of the united empire under Solomon (1 Kings 1–11) and takes place between 971–931 BC. The second part consists of the divided empire from the time of the north-south division until the Assyrian captivity of the northern kingdom (1 Kings 12–2 Kings 17) and takes place between 931–722 BC.

The third part consists of the remaining southern empire from the time of the Assyrian captivity until the Babylonian invasion (2 Kings 18–25) and takes place between 722–586 BC.

In the first section, Solomon is the king, the kingdom exists in tranquility, and Jerusalem is the kingdom's capital. In the second section, there are many kings, the nation is in turmoil, and Samaria is the capital of the north and Jerusalem is the capital of the south. The turning point transitioning the reader from the second to the third section is found in chapters 11 and 12, which speak of Solomon's sin and the division of the kingdom. The various kings depicted in the second and third sections are captured on the following chart.

The Book of 2 Kings can be further subdivided between the divided kingdom (1–17) and the remaining kingdom of Judah (18–25). The first section speaks of Israel and Judah, covers the period between 852–722 BC, covers the kings from Ahaziah to Hoshea, and ends in the Assyrian deportation. The second section speaks of only Judah, covers the period between 722–586 BC, covers the kings from Hezekiah to Zedekiah, and ends in the Babylonian deportation.

Kings of Israel

King	Lineage	Scripture	Number of years of reign	Length of reign (Thiele)	Co regency	Character	Prophet
Jeroboam I	Son of Nebat	1 Kgs 11:26-14:20	22	931-910		Bad	Ahijah, man of God from Judah, old prophet at Bethel, Iddo
Nadab	Son of Jeroboam I	1 Kgs 15:25-28	2	910-909		Bad	
Baasha	Son of Ahijah	1 Kgs 15:27-16:7	24	909-886		Bad	Jehu
Elah	Son of Baasha	1 Kgs 16:6-14	2	886-885		Bad	
Zimri	Chariot commander under Elah	1 Kgs 6:9-20	7 days	885		Bad	

Omri	Army commander under Elah	1 Kgs 6:15-28	12	885-874		Bad	
Ahab	Son of Omri	1 Kgs 16:28-22:40	22	874-853		Bad	Elijah, Elisha, Micaiah, unnamed prophets
Ahaziah	Son of Ahab	1 Kgs 22:40-2 Kgs 1:18	2	853-852		Bad	Elijah, Elisha
Joram	Son of Ahab	2 Kgs 1:17-9:26	12	852-841		Bad	Elisha
Jehu	Son of Nimishi; army commander under Ahab	2 Kgs 9:1-10:36	28	841-814		Bad	Elisha
Jehoahaz	Son of Jehu	2 Kgs 13:1-9	17	814-798		Bad	Elisha
Jehoash	Son of Jehoahaz	2 Kgs 13:10-14:16	16	798-782	Yes	Bad	Elisha
Jeroboam II	Son of Jehoahash	2 Kgs 14:23-29	41	793-753	Yes	Bad	Jonah, Amos, Hosea
Zechariah	Son of Jeroboam II	2 Kgs 14:29-15:12	6 months	753-752		Bad	Hosea
Shallum	Son of Jabesh	2 Kgs 15:10-15	1 months	752		Bad	Hosea
Menahem	Son of Gadi	2 Kgs 15:14-22	10	752-742	Yes	Bad	Hosea
Pekahiah	Son of Menahem	2 Kgs 15:22-26	2	742-740		Bad	Hosea
Pekah	Son of Remaliah	2 Kgs 15:25-31	20	752-732	Yes	Bad	Hosea, Obed
Hoshea	Son of Elah	2 Kgs 15:30-17:6	9	732-722		Bad	Hosea

Kings of Judah

King	Lineage	Scripture	Number of years of reign	Length of reign (Thiele)	Co regency	Character	Prophet
Rehoboam	Son of Solomon	1 Kgs 11:42-14:31	17	931-913		Bad	Shemiah, Iddo
Abijam	Son of Rehoboam	1 Kgs 14:31-15:8	3	913-911		Bad	Iddo
Asa	Son of Abijam	1 Kgs 15:8-24	41	911-870		Good	Azariah, Obed, Hanani
Jehoshaphat	Son of Asa	1 Kgs 22:41-50	25	870-848	Yes	Good	Jehu, Jahaziel, Eliezer
Jehoram	Son of Jehoshaphat	2 Kgs 8:16-24	8	848-841	Yes	Bad	Obadiah, Elijah
Ahaziah	Son of Jehoram	2 Kgs 8:24-9:29	1	841		Bad	
Athaliah	Daughter of Ahab	2 Kgs 11:1-20	6	841-835		Bad	
Joash		2 Ks 11:1-12:21	40	835-796		Good	Joel
Amaziah	Son of Joash	2 Kgs 14:1-20	29	796-767		Good	Unnamed prophets
Uzziah	Son of Amaziah	2 Kgs 14:21; 15:1-7	52	767-740	Yes	Good	Isaiah, Zechariah
Jotham	Son of Uzziah	2 Kgs 15:32-38	16	740-732	Yes	Good	Isaiah, Micah
Ahaz	Son of Jotham	2 Kgs 16:1-20	16	732-716	Yes	Bad	Isaiah, Micah
Hezekiah	Son of Ahaz	2 Kgs 18:1-20:21	29	716-687	Yes	Good	Isaiah, Micah
Manasseh	Son of Hezekiah	2 Kgs 21:1-18	55	687-642	Yes	Bad	Nahum, unnamed prophets
Amon	Son of Manasseh	2 Kgs 21:19-26	2	642-640		Bad	

Josiah	Son of Amon	2 Kgs 21:26-23:30	31	640-608		Good	Jeremiah, Zephaniah, Huldah
Jehoahaz	Son of Josiah	2 Kgs 23:30-33	3 months	608		Bad	Jeremiah
Jehoiakim	Son of Josiah	2 Kgs 23:34-24:5	11	608-597		Bad	Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Daniel, Uriah
Jehoiachin	Son of Jehoiakim	2 Kgs 24:6-16; 25:27-30	3 months	597		Bad	Jeremiah, Daniel
Zedekiah	Son of Josiah	2 Kgs 24:17-25:7	11	597-586		Bad	Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel

Problems remain concerning how to fit all of the kings of the divided era into that era's scope (931–586 BC) and how to synchronize the reigns of the kings of Judah and the kings of Israel. Thiele has proposed three principles that help solve these problems. First, the northern kingdom adopted the non-accession method (counting the first year that the king took the throne as the first year of his reign) and the southern kingdom adopted the accession method (counting the second year that the king took the throne as the first year of his reign). The south eventually adopted the non-accession method in 848 BC. In 796 BC, both kingdoms shifted to the accession system. Second, while the southern kingdom followed the civil calendar (Tishri to Tishri), the northern kingdom followed the religious calendar (Nisan to Nisan). Third, there were many co-regencies or overlapping reigns.

These co-regencies began with the first year of the king's reign rather than his accession year.

Historical Background

The Book of Kings makes reference to many surrounding foreign nations. These are captured on the following chart.

REALM	RULER	REFERENCE
Egyptian	Unnamed Pharaoh	1 Kings 3:1
	Shishak [945-924]	1 Kings 11:40
	So or Osorkon [726-715]	2 Kings 17:4
	Necho [609-594]	2 Kings 23:29-35
Arameans	Rexon [940-915]	1 Kings 11:23-25; 15:18
	Tabrimmon [915-900]	1 Kings 15:18
	Ben-Hadad [900-860]	1 Kings 15:18, 20
	Ben-Hadad [860-841]	1 Kings 20
	Hazael [841-806]	2 Kings 8:15
	Ben-Hadad III [806-770]	2 Kings 13:3
	Rezin [750-732]	2 Kings 15:37
Phoenicians	Ethbaal [874-853]	1 Kings 16:31
Edomites	Hadad [?]	1 Kings 11:14-22
Moabites	Mesha [853-841]	2 Kings 3:4ff.
Assyrians	Tiglath-Pileser III [745-727]	2 Kings 15:19-22
	Shalmaneser V [727-722]	2 Kings 17:3-6
	Sargon II [721-705]	Isa 20:1; 2 Kings 18:17
	Sennacherib [704-681]	2 Kings 18-19
Babylonians	Merodach-Baladan II [703]	2 Kings 20:12-13
	Nebuchadnezzar [604-562]	2 Kings 24-25
	Evil-Merodach [562-560]	2 Kings 25:27-30

Also, "During the 457-year kingdom period, there are great shifts of world power. Egyptian and Assyrian power over Palestine fluctuates; Assyria rises to preeminence, declines, and is finally conquered by Babylon."

Message

In the Book of Kings, the kings, as the nation's representatives, are evaluated from a covenant perspective. Thus, the book traces the glory of the united kingdom under Solomon, its eventual division, and how the kings of the divided kingdom led the people into increasing idolatry culminating in the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities. Despite this downward pattern, the writer also makes it clear that God has a glorious future in store for Judah on account of her elect status. These truths are recorded so that the exiles, in light

of their history, would be encouraged and repent of their sin (1 Kings 8:33) so that God could restore them.

Purposes

The writer had several purposes in mind when he penned his work. First, he wanted to complete themes begun in Samuel such as the completion of the Davidic reign and the construction of the temple on the site that David had purchased (literary purpose). "The kingdom was established in First Samuel and consolidated in Second Samuel. First Kings records its division and decline, and Second Kings its destruction and deterioration."

Second, he wanted to deter the remnant from sinning again in light of her recent history (religious purpose). Third, he wanted to explain that despite recent covenant discipline (Deut 28), God had not cast aside His covenant purposes. Thus, Judah still has a glorious purpose in the future plan of God (theological purpose).

Furthermore, although the Book of Kings represents a single book, it is still likely that the writer composed the different parts of the book, known as First and Second Kings, with different purposes in mind. These purposes are represented on the following chart.

Theological Themes

Numerous theological themes recur throughout the Book of Kings. First, the book represents the outworking of both covenant discipline as well as His unconditional covenant promises to Judah. Second, the book mentions several prophets thereby explaining how the ministry of the prophet began to develop in the era of the divided kingdom. Third, the book shows how the kings functioned as the people's representatives. Thus, their covenant rebellion negatively impacted the entire nation.

Unique Characteristics

The Book of Kings boasts several outstanding characteristics. First, each king is identified with a consistent formula. This formula compasses an introduction (name, age at accession, and patriarchal or matriarchal reference), accession, covenant evaluation, historical record or sources, capital city (Jerusalem or Samaria), and concluding reference (death, burial, duration of reign, and successor). Second, David is the standard by which all the kings are measured (1 Kings 11:6). Third, the name of the king's mother is usually only given for the kings of Judah. This extra information is given so that the Davidic lineage leading to the messiah can be recorded through both parents.

Fourth, the Book of 2 Kings is the basis for all of the 17 prophetic books. Fifth, because the book constantly switches back and forth between the northern and southern kingdoms (except for 2 Kings 18–25 which pertains only to the southern kingdom), the book can be difficult to follow. Sixth, the book records numerous fulfillments of short-term prophecies. Seventh, the book records numerous miracles. In fact, as many have pointed out, the Elijah and Elisha era represents one of the unique periods in biblical history that miracles seem to cluster around.

Genre

The dominant genre of the book is straightforward narrative. However, sub-genres include "prophetic speeches (1 Kings 18:20-29), direct discourse (2 Kings 18:19-27), wisdom sayings (1 Kings 20:11; 2 Kings 14:9), and poetic materials (1 Kings 22:17; 2 Kings 19:21-28)."

Christ in Kings

The repeated failure of the bad kings and partial obedience of the "good kings" foreshadows a future king who will rule in perfect conformity to God's covenant. Solomon's wealth and wisdom (1 Cor 1:30) may also be typological of Christ since Christ refers to himself as Solomon's greater son (Matt 12:42). Also, the book's many references to the preservation of the Davidic lineage (2 Kings 11) points to Christ since He is the direct descendant of such lineage.

Outline

- I. United kingdom under Solomon (1 Kings 1:1—11:43)
 - (1) Transfer of the kingdom from David to Solomon (1 Kings 1:1—2:12)
 - (A) David coronates Solomon despite Adonijah's power grab (1:1-53)
 - (B) David's final exhortation to Solomon regarding covenant faithfulness and David's foes and friends (2:1-12)
 - (2) Solomon establishes his kingdom (1 Kings 2:13—4:34)
 - (A) Solomon purges the kingdom from his enemies (2:13-46)
 - (a) Adonijah (2:13-25)
 - (b) Abiathar (2:26-27)
 - (c) Joab (2:28-35)
 - (d) Shimei (2:36-46)
 - (B) Solomon marries the Egyptian princess (3:1)
 - (C) Solomon requests and receives divine wisdom (3:2-15)
 - (D) Solomon applies his wisdom in judging the proper ownership of the child (3:16-28)
 - (E) Extent of Solomon's empire (4:1-34)
 - (a) Administration (4:1-19)
 - (b) Riches (4:20-28)
 - (c) Understanding (4:29-33)
 - (d) Fame (4:34)
 - (3) Solomon builds the Temple (1 Kings 5:1—8:66)
 - (A) Solomon makes preparation for Temple construction (5:1-18)
 - (a) Solomon contracts with Hiram for materials (5:1-12)
 - (b) Solomon provides workers, administrators, and materials (5:13-18)

- (B) Solomon constructs the Temple from the 4th to the 11th year of his reign (1 Kings 6:1—7:51)
 - (a) Solomon oversees the building of the Temple (6:1-38)
 - (i) Solomon builds the inner Temple (6:1-10)
 - (ii) The Lord's presence in the Temple will be tied to covenantal obedience (6:11-13)
 - (iii) Solomon builds the Temple's superstructure and courtyard (6:14-38)
 - (b) Solomon's other buildings and the Temple furniture (7:1-51)
- (C) Solomon dedicates the Temple (8:1-66)
 - (a) Ark brought into the Temple (8:1-11)
 - (b) Solomon told Israel that the Temple represents the dwelling place of God as predicted through David (8:12-21)
 - (c) Solomon's prayer (8:22-53)
 - (i) Solomon prays for God to confirm the Davidic Covenant (8:22-26)
 - (ii) Solomon prays that God would condescend and hear the people in the Temple (8:27-30)
 - (iii) Solomon prays that God would hear the people in their future captivity (8:31-53)
 - (d) Solomon exhorts the people to follow God's covenant (8:54-61)
 - (e) Solomon leads the people in sacrifices (8:62-66)
- (4) God's continual blessing upon Solomon's Kingdom (1 Kings 9:1—10:29)
 - (A) The Lord promised to bless Solomon's kingdom if he honored God's covenant (9:1-9)
 - (B) Solomon's empire described (9:10-28)
 - (a) Cities (9:10-14)
 - (b) Subjects (9:15-25)
 - (c) Navy (9:26-28)
 - (C) Solomon's international reputation (10:1-29)
 - (a) Solomon's visit from the Queen of Sheba (10:1-13)
 - (b) Solomon exceeds other Kings in gold and horses (10:14-29)
- (5) Solomon's covenant rebellion causes the disintegration of his kingdom (11:1-40)
 - (A) Solomon's many wives led him into idolatry (11:1-8)
 - (B) God promised to take the kingdom away from Solomon's son and give it to his servant (11:9-13)
 - (C) Solomon's adversaries (11:14-40)
 - (a) Hadad the Edomite (11:14-22)
 - (b) Reza of Damascus (11:23-25)
 - (c) Jeroboam (11:26-40)

(6) Solomon's death (11:41-43)

II. The divided kingdom from the North-South division until the Assyrian invasion (1 Kings 12:1—2 Kings 17:41)

(1) The division of the kingdom (12:1-24)

(A) Jeroboam asked Rehoboam to cut taxes (12:1-4)

(B) After deliberation Rehoboam sided with the younger men rather than the older men in raising taxes (12:5-15)

(C) The other tribes split from Judah and enthroned Jeroboam (12:16-24)

(2) Jeroboam's reign in the North (1 Kings 12:25—14:20)

(A) In order to prevent the Northerners from returning to Jerusalem Jeroboam established alternative worship centers in Dan and Bethel (12:25-33)

(B) Man of God from Judah condemns Jeroboam's altar but then experiences premature death for disobeying God (13:1-34)

(C) Ahijah pronounces judgment on Jeroboam's lineage (14:1-20)

(3) Rehoboam's continual war with Jeroboam (14:21-31)

(A) Rehoboam's immorality and idolatry (14:21-24)

(B) Shishak's raid (14:25-28)

(C) Rehoboam's continual war with Jeroboam (14:29-31)

(4) Abijam's reign in the South (15:1-8)

(5) Asa's reign in the South (15:9-24)

(A) His partial obedience (15:9-15)

(B) His bribing of Ben-hadad (15:16-22)

(C) His diseased feet and death (15:23-24)

(6) Nadab's reign in the North (15:25-32)

(7) Baasha's reign in the North (15:33—16:7)

(8) Elah's reign in the North (16:8-14)

(9) Zimri's reign in the North (16:15-20)

(10) Omri's reign in the North (16:21-28)

(11) Ahab's reign in the North (16:29-34)

(12) Israel during Elijah's Ministry (1 Kings 17:1—2 Kings 1:18)

(A) The Lord's supremacy over Baal (1 Kings 17:1—18:46)

(a) The Lord withholds rain (17:1-7)

(b) The Lord is the giver of grain and oil (17:8-16)

(c) The Lord is the giver of life (17:17-24)

(d) The Lord is the giver of fire from heaven (18:1-40)

(e) The Lord is the giver of rain (18:41-46)

(B) The Lord reconfirms Elijah (19:1-21)

- (a) Need for reconfirmation: Elijah's depression after fleeing from Jezebel to Horeb (19:1-5)
 - (b) Reconfirmation (19:6-21)
 - (i) The Lord's personal ministry to Elijah (19:6-14)
 - (ii) The Lord commissions Elijah (19:15-21)
 - (a) Anoint Hazael over Damascus (19:15)
 - (b) Anoint Jehu over Israel (19:16a)
 - (c) Anoint Elisha as prophetic successor (19:16b-21)
 - (C) Ahab's ongoing covenant rebellion (1 Kings 20:1—22:40)
 - (a) Ahab's foolish treaty with the Arameans (20:1-29)
 - (b) Ahab seizes Naboth's Vineyard (21:1-29)
 - (c) Ahab's death as a result of rejecting Micaiah's prophecy (22:1-40)
 - (D) Jehoshaphat's reign in the South (22:41-50)
 - (E) Ahaziah's reign in the North (22:51-53)
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Introduction

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings were so named because they record and interpret the reigns of all the kings of Israel and Judah except Saul. [David's last days are mentioned (1 Kings 1:1—2:12) but the events in most of his reign are recorded in 2 Sam 2-24 and 1 Chr 11-29.]

In the Hebrew OT, 1 and 2 Kings were one book and were regarded as a continuation of the historical narrative begun in 1 and 2 Samuel. The Septuagint divided Kings into the two parts that constitute 1 and 2 Kings in English Bibles, though the Septuagint calls those two books "3 and 4 Kingdoms" (and calls 1 and 2 Samuel "1 and 2 Kingdoms").

The title "Kings" came from Jerome's Latin translation (the Vulgate) which was made about six centuries after the Septuagint; Jerome called the two books "The Book of the Kings."

1 and 2 Kings provide a record of Israel's history from the beginning of the movement to place Solomon on David's throne through the end of the reign of Zedekiah, Judah's last king. Zedekiah ruled until the surviving Southern Kingdom was taken captive and Babylonian governors were placed in charge of affairs in Palestine. The historical period of the Kings covers about 413 years, beginning with Solomon's coronation as co-regent with David (973 BC) and ending with Jehoiachin's release from Babylonian exile (561 BC). Most of the Kings deals with the period that spans Solomon's coronation and the destruction of Jerusalem (586 BC), a period of 387 years. At the beginning, the temple is built; at the end the temple is burnt. This historical period is more than twice that of what the Books of Samuel covered, which was about 150 years in length. The Book of Judges covers about 300 years of Israel's history.

Three major periods of Israel's history can be distinguished in Kings:

- (1) The united monarchy (during which time Israel and Judah remained united under Solomon as they had been under Saul and David)
- (2) The divided monarchy (from the rebellion of Israel against the rulership of Judean kings until Israel was carried off into captivity by the Assyrians)
- (3) The surviving kingdom (the record of Judah's affairs from the deportation of Israel to Judah's own defeat and exile by the Babylonians)

1 and 2 Kings were not divided as they are because a natural break occurs in the narrative, but because the large scroll of 1 and 2 Kings needed to be divided into two smaller, more easily manageable units. The result was two books that are almost equal in length. 2 Chronicles records the history of almost the same period as 1 and 2 Kings. First Chronicles includes the genealogies leading up to David (1 Chr 1-9), Saul's death (1 Chr 10), and David's reign and death (1 Chr 11-29).

The purposes and emphases of these two histories differ significantly. The kings of Judah were of more interest to the author of Chronicles whereas both the Israelite and Judean monarchs occupied the interest of the author of 1 and 2 Kings. The Books of 1 and 2 Chronicles emphasize especially the priestly elements in the nation's history, such as the temple and worship, while 1 and 2 Kings give attention to the royal and prophetic elements. In 2 Chronicles the kings of Judah after David are evaluated in reference to David and the worship of Yahweh; in 1 and 2 Kings the rulers of both kingdoms are evaluated in reference to the Mosaic Law.

Chronology

The major problem facing students of 1 and 2 Kings is the chronology of the rulers, especially those of Judah. Edwin Thiele is probably the foremost scholar to reconcile the chronology of Kings [Edwin R. Thiele, *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*]. Thiele clarified that Judah and Israel counted the beginning of reigns differently. Normally Judah began counting a king's reign with the first of the calendar year in which his accession to the throne fell. Israel reckoned its kings' reigns from the time those reigns actually began. However during one period, both kingdoms used the same system. A further complication was that these kingdoms began their calendar years six months apart. Another phenomenon was co-regencies, in which the reigns of two or more kings of the same kingdom overlapped. Thiele worked out the many problems regarding these dates more satisfactorily than anyone else in the opinion of many scholars. Chronology is more important in 1 and 2 Kings than in any other books of the Bible.

Though exact dates are a problem, several different chronologies, worked out by conservative scholars, harmonize the narratives. In most cases these systems vary from each other by only one or two years.

The major dates for this period are:

- 931 BC—the division of the kingdom
- 722 BC—the fall of Israel
- 586 BC—the fall of Judah

1 & 2 Kings present Israel's history as a series of events that describe how and why the nation fell from the heights of national prosperity to the depths of conquest and exile. More specifically, 1 & 2 Kings explain how and why Israel lost the land it fought so hard to win in Joshua, and worked so hard to organize in Judges and 1 & 2 Samuel.

Purpose

The Holy Spirit led the writer of Kings to give an interpretation of history, not just a chronologically sequential record of events, as is true of all the writers of the OT historical books. Some of the events in Kings are not in chronological order. They appear in the text as they do usually to make a point that was primarily theologically edifying (i.e., to reveal a spiritual lesson from history). The writer chose the historical data he included for this purpose under the superintending inspiration of the Holy Spirit. The major lesson that Kings teaches its readers is that failure to honor the revealed will of God results in ruin and destruction. For Israel, the revealed will of God was the Mosaic Law and the later revelations of the prophets (men and women who spoke for God).

Geopolitical Horizon

In David's day, Egypt's power had waned and Assyria was weak; hence there were impotent nations on both of Israel's frontier. However, Assyria soon awakened under Tiglath-pileser III (also called Pul, 2 Kings 15:19; 745 BC). In 721 BC Samaria fell under the attack of Shalmaneser and Sargon.

Later, under Sennacherib, Assyria invaded Judah and took many cities but failed to take Jerusalem because of the rear-guard threat of Egypt. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal extended Assyrian hegemony to Egypt. In Josiah's time Pharaoh Necho went up to help Assyria against Babylon at Carchemish, but the two allies were defeated. Shortly, the victorious Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine, and on his third attack against Jerusalem, plundered and destroyed the city, carrying the people off to final captivity (586 BC).

Solomon's Ascension to the Throne

For 33 years, David aggressively guided God's united people to greatness, forging a powerful empire. As David grew older, his sons disputed over the succession. But God had revealed to David that He had chosen Solomon to succeed him (see 1 Chr 22:9-10). David had shared this revelation with Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (1 Kings 1:1,17). He had even announced it to the nation (1 Chr 22:5; 29:1). Still, Solomon was not the oldest of David's living sons. There were older brothers who understandably disputed his right to the throne. Finally, one of David's older surviving sons, Adonijah, took steps to gain the succession. Nathan the prophet and Bathsheba insisted that David act. David did. He made Solomon co-regent.

Harmony of Samuel, Kings, Chronicles

- Selected Genealogies	-----	1 Chr 1-9
- Samuel's Judgeship	1 Sam 1-8	-----
- Saul's Reign	1 Sam 9-31	1 Chr 10
- David's Reign	2 Sam 1-24	1 Chr 11-29
- Solomon's Reign	1 Kings 1-11	2 Chr 1-9
- Divided Kingdom (Pt 1)	1 Kings 12 - 2 Kings 17	2 Chr 10-27
- Divided Kingdom (Pt 2)	2 Kings 18-25	2 Chr 28-36:21
- Return from Babylon	-----	2 Chr 36:22-23