

The Half Hour That Changes the World

1 Kings

Book 11

Basic Questions behind the book:

Do we always learn from hindsight? OR...

Are we doomed to continue making past mistakes?

Summary of book:

1 Kings starts with the last days of King David's reign and focuses then on his successor Solomon. King Solomon was the third and last King of the nation of Israel. After his death the Kingdom split, never to be reunited. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, handled the people too harshly leading to ten of the tribes rebelling under Jeroboam who became the alternative king. The ten tribes to the north become known collectively as the Northern Kingdom or Israel under Jeroboam. The two remaining tribes in the south around Jerusalem become known as the Southern Kingdom or Judah under Rehoboam. After Solomon's death 1 Kings tells the story of the various kings that followed, mostly in the north and, for the most part, the author is not impressed by them. On the other hand, a lot of attention is given to the Prophet par excellence, Elijah, who successfully demonstrates God's presence by works of power, who constantly challenges Israel's wayward ways, and who calls the people back to faithfulness to their covenant with Yahweh, the God of Moses.

Vital Statistics:

Purpose: To contrast the lives of those who live for God and those who refuse to do so through the history of the kings of Israel and Judah.

Author: Unknown. However, it is worth noting that the same basic theology and approach to the history of Israel is present in Deuteronomy, then in Joshua, Judges, I & II Samuel, I & II Kings. This has led Biblical scholars to theorize that there was a group of compilers from the prophetic movement at the time, who wove together different available written and oral sources to create these books. Scholars speak about Deuteronomistic Historians.

Recipients: To the people of Israel & Judah, probably written around the time of the exile, perhaps mostly just before it, seeking to answer the question: how did it come to this?

Setting: The once great nation of Israel turned into a land divided, not only physically, but also spiritually.

Other useful aspects:

- (1) 1 Kings tells of the importance of Solomon's reign, which begins with his search for and prayer for wisdom. His example is not just good but to be emulated by anyone given responsibility in God's work. Compare with Acts 6 where the deacons had to have wisdom as a prerequisite for menial service.
- (2) 1 Kings is also the place where we see the Temple in Jerusalem coming on the scene; a focal point for the worship of God's people. In the New Testament, Paul speaking about the church says that we (collectively) are the temple of God (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

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

(Elijah speaking to all Israel on Mount Carmel in 1 Kings 18:21)