

The books of Kings (originally one book) recount the declension from the glorious reign of Solomon through the division of the kingdom to the captivity of the people. There are several “high” spots, and many “low” spots. As you read through these books note what made the great men great, and what led many to stumble. Look for principles that can apply to our lives today. We’re not reigning monarchs, but we are called to be children of the King of Kings. May our lives be pleasing in his sight!

### 1 Kings

- 3 If Solomon had requested riches, honor, or victories, instead of wisdom, who would have been most directly “benefitted?” Who was most benefitted by his request for wisdom? We ought to take this into consideration when we pray. James 4:3 should challenge us to evaluate our motives when we pray, and whose “agenda” is best served by that which we request.
- 8:27-53 Compare this passage to Hebrews 4:11-16. Solomon prayed to the God who couldn’t be contained in all of heaven, much less the temple he had built. We pray to the same God through Jesus Christ, our high priest. Listen to Solomon’s entreaty for God to listen to the prayers and confessions of his people – which God is so willing to do (2Chr 7:12-16). Now consider the readiness of God to hear your prayers which are brought before him through the agency of His Son. He loves you and will listen to you!
- 9 How unfathomable must vs. 8 have seemed to everyone as they considered the grandeur of Solomon’s temple. How tragic that it came to pass because of their treating God’s commandments lightly. “Lord, O that thou wouldest keep me from evil” (cf. 1Ch 4:10).
- 11 What was Solomon’s primary mistake (cf. 3:1 too)? Do you think that Solomon was unaware of Deu 7:1-4, or 17:17? Why would he disobey God’s law? How might he justify his actions? How might he have changed the definitions? Or limited the interpretation of the prohibition to somehow exclude himself? How do we “justify” our actions of disobedience?

- 12 Boy, he sure told those folk off!! (vv. 3-4, 14) Apart from God using the situation to bring about the sentence he had pronounced on Solomon in 11:11-12, and 12:15, what was Rehoboam’s greatest error in chapter 12? Counterpoint: Is listening to one’s seniors *always* wisest? *generally* wisest? What about the *character* or *spirit* of the counselor? (cf. Pro 16:31) What difference do you observe between the two schools of thought that advise Reho.? Who had esteemed these aged men to be worthy of providing counsel? What had been his initial desire at the origin of his rule? (3:7-9) How might this have influenced policy over the course of his reign? This was the culture in which the *character* of the aged men had been steeped. Now, the aged do deserve deference, however, if Rehoboam had greater discernment of character as he listened to the voices of the two groups he might have made a different choice. Pray for wisdom and discernment to choose what is right and best, even if it may not have as much of a “rush” of glory, power and self-satisfaction. Pray for discernment to see beyond surface issues.
- 15 What do you think of Asa’s reforms in vv. 9-13? How about v. 14, or 15? Asa had a “good” start, he wasn’t perfect, but then again, we often remind ourselves, we aren’t either! He got the job done – but how about the threats in vv. 16-17? One might say, “*If I have a job to do I need to look at all my options and consider all of my choices.*” Asa did just that – or did he? What do you think of his solution to those threats (vv. 18-20)? How might he have justified taking something from God? Do we ever do anything similar? — maybe not with gold or silver, but what about time? or energy? or other resources? Asa got the job *done*, but at what cost? How will our biographies read?
- 17-21 If you were asked to give a psychological profile of Elijah, what would you say? What kind of “vocational” remarks would you make about his effectiveness as a prophet of God? Did he say what God wanted him to say? There’s a lot to examine in the life and ministry of Elijah. In between his confrontations, on what did Elijah seem to constantly focus? Why? What did he not seem to see or rest-in? Don’t you wish that you could get a hold of Elijah and shake his shoulders and say, “Look man, look at how great your God is! He’ll protect you. Look at how he

already has!” But Elijah was like us (Jam 5:17). Do you ever get depressed, or down? Consider the big picture of God, from heaven, looking down at his prophet who he loves and knowing that he will protect him and provide for him no matter what Jezebel or anyone else threatens. Now, change the image. Put yourself in Elijah’s place in the picture. In spite of your self-focused despondency, God is there. Maybe not with the obvious sound of wind or earthquake, but instead in the gentle stillness. Thank God for his presence and care for you.

- 21 Ahab was one of the most despicable characters in the Old Testament (cf. vv. 20,25-26). Because of this God send Elijah to pronounce a stinging judgment against him (vv. 20-26). Isn’t God’s forgiveness amazing? When even Ahab gave an indication of remorse, God showed mercy toward him (vv. 27-29)! We have a great forgiving God! Meditate on 1Jo 1:9.

2 Kings: Note what is said about each of the kings, their strengths, their weaknesses, their accomplishments, and their “buts” (e.g. 14:4).

- 1 Elijah to Elisha transition. (Cf. 1Ki 17-21) Why was the transition necessary? Was it “premature?” What brought it on? What are some of the lessons we can learn from Elijah’s responses to God’s direct revelation to him? What might these suggest for us? May we ever be “faithful,” i.e. “full of faith” in God that we might fulfill all of the work he has for us.
- 2 Elisha ministry (ch. 2-13). Compare and contrast Elisha to Elijah. How were they similar? How were they different?
- 9-10 Jehu’s reforms. He was zealous for God in so much – but look at the end (10:31). What a challenge to each of us to keep on going to the very end. The race isn’t won by being in the lead 99% of the time. It is won at the finish line. All of that counts, but the end-game is of critical importance! How is your race? (Cf. Heb 12:1-4)
- 18-20 Hezekiah. Great man! Great reforms — but look at the end (chapter 20). Why is it that we so often drop the baton near the end of the race after running so far and carrying it faithfully? “O God, please let me run the race you have set before me and be faithful to the end.”
- 21 Unfortunately not all of the kings of Judah even “began” right.

Manasseh and Amon were wicked from the start and brought about the end of the kingdom (cf. 23:24-27)

- 22-23 Josiah. Consider his reign. He came after two very wicked kings, but he initiated much to put Judah on the right track. List the “right” things that occurred under Josiah’s reign. Aside from the judgment that was handed down by God because of Manasseh’s wickedness, why didn’t Josiah’s actions effect longer lasting spiritual results in Judah? The prophecies of Jeremiah 1-6 were likely given during the reign of Josiah. What does Jeremiah identify as problematic, even during the midst of Josiah’s reforms? Could it be that the legislated reforms of the good king failed to reach the hearts that were corrupted under Manasseh and Amon? Is it good to legislate morality? Yes. Is it permanent, or effective – not always! Real change must begin with real repentance from the heart. How often do we settle for outward “conformity” to an established standard without recognizing that the problem is much deeper – at the heart? We do this both within our Christian community and within our own souls.