

I KINGS

King David is dying. Who will succeed him? Ambitious son Adonijah is preparing his own coronation. But wait, David had promised the throne to his son Solomon. Beautiful Bathsheba, mother of Solomon, goes to the king, and.... Whose coronation will happen first?

This is how First Kings begins. I and II Kings are really one book which tells what happens to God's people after David dies. The division into two books occurred when Hebrew Bibles were printed. Christians simply followed the Jewish precedent.

God had promised King David that a descendant of his would always sit on the throne. Through First and Second Kings you hear how God kept those promises while leaders and people sometimes were faithful and, far too often, were unfaithful. The author is careful to make clear why some kings receive God's approval and why others are judged so poorly.

- Watch for summary statements about each king, such as
 - Did what was right in the sight of the Lord..
 - Did what was evil in the sight of the Lord
 - Walked in the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat....

Solomon succeeds his father David. His greatest achievement is building the temple, the house of the Lord, in Jerusalem. This peaceful era includes many treaties. In those days, that also meant many foreign wives for Solomon. He built places of worship for their gods, too (Chapters 1-11). Solomon

conscripted (forced recruitment) men to build the temple, his palace, military defenses and many other public works.

Rehoboam, Solomon's son, continued Solomon's taxes and forced work in a harsher way. Ten tribes, the tribes in the north, chose **Jeroboam** as king instead. He was the gifted superintendent of Solomon's construction crews. The southern tribes of Benjamin and Judah continue to be ruled by descendants of David with Jerusalem as their capital and place of worship. (Chapters 12-16)

I Kings ends with the ministry of the prophet **Elijah**. He confronts the widespread Baal worship in the northern kingdom of Israel. **King Ahab** and his Phoenician wife **Jezebel** promote Baal worship. Elijah leads a fiery confrontation which demonstrates the power of God (YHWH). At the end of I Kings, he is tired and afraid of Jezebel, but God has more work for him to do: to name the next kings and prophets. In II Kings, his successor Elisha watches him disappear, taken to heaven in a fiery chariot.

Kings was written so that future believers will not make the same mistakes. The sins named in I Kings continue into II Kings. The northern kingdom, Israel, will be overthrown by the Assyrians. Eventually, the southern kingdom, Judah, will be overthrown by the Babylonians and the people taken into Exile. As you read, look for their sins. How were they unfaithful? What did God want them to do instead?