

1 & 2 Kings

The Authorship and Dating

The book of the Kings¹ does not reveal its author. Considering the writing's time frame, Jewish History, and his access to Jewish hierarchy, Jeremiah² makes a viable but not certain option as the book's author. Jeremiah's authorship is collaborated by Talmudic Tradition (*Baba Bathra* 15a).³ Other authors have been suggested including Ezra or Ezekiel.

Concerning the dating of 1 and 2 Kings, it must be kept in mind the initial events covered by the text take place in the early 10th century B.C.. Those events provide details related to the reign of Solomon (971-931 B.C.) and his personal activities (2-3). Kings historical record closes nearly 400 years with the release of Jehoiachin in the 37th year of his imprisonment (560 B.C.). The scriptures also indicate that the original audience was reading material of a distant past (8:8; 9:13, 21; 10:12; 12:19; 2 Kings 2:22; 8:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:34, 41; 20:17; 21:15). The return of the exiles is not mentioned which indicates a completion date before 538 B.C..⁴ Due to the lengthy time frame, it seems obvious that there was dependence upon prior written material.⁵ However, the idea of multiple authorship is not a necessary conclusion. The unity of the book suggests a single author.⁶

The Recipients

Since the book was written during the exile more than likely the book was intended for the generation who lived during the prophets of Ezekiel, Jeremiah and Daniel.

The Purpose

While the book is a historical record concerning David as well as the division between the North and South, the book is a commentary on the spiritual issues that brought the book's events.⁷ The book therefore should not be read as if it is solely an accounting of history. The book must be read as a theological treatise explaining the rulers' actions in lieu of covenant demands under Mosaic Law. The author evaluates Israel's spiritual character which results in God's chastisement. As he does this the author spends a great deal of time evaluating each King with established covenantal responsibilities.⁸ The fact that at times the author omits historical data provides even more evidence that the author was more interested in the theological and

¹ I address First and Second Kings as a whole as that is the way they were originally presented. It wasn't until the Septuagint (a Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible written in the 2nd Century BC) that these books were divided.

² Paul N. Benware, *The Essential Bible Survey of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2003) 124.

³ Gleason L. Jr. Archer, *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994) 319.

⁴ Thom Constable, ed. *1 Kings*, ed. Roy B. Zuck John F. Walvoord, *The Bible Knowledge Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor, 1983) 485.

⁵ Archer, 319.

⁶ Constable, ed. 483.

⁷ Benware, 125.

⁸ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, ed. Ronald B. Allen Earl D. Radmacher, H. Wayne House (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999) 427.

covenantal elements than merely historical.⁹ “The Books of 1 and 2 Kings were written to record history but, more importantly, to teach the *lessons* of history.”¹⁰

The Message

The book of Kings represents the story of two different paths. It represents “a story of good kings and bad kings, true prophets and bad prophets, and of disobedience and loyalty to God.”¹¹

First Kings opens where Second Samuel leaves off, this is, with the death of David (1-2). Quickly Solomon establishes himself as king and begins to demonstrate great leadership wisdom (2-4). In chapters 5-10 Solomon’s building of the temple becomes the focus (5-9) as his wealth and influence develop (9-10). However, what started out with an optimistic tone changes in chapter 11. In this chapter Solomon’s sins are exposed. He intermarries and dies leaving what will become a divided Kingdom. Due in part to Solomon’s exploits Israel splits into two political factions (12:1-15). Over the next few chapters disharmony, idolatry and oppression rule within the borders of Canaan (12-16). At this time the writer of Kings records the actions of two prophets, Elijah and Elisha. For several chapters (17-19) the prophet Elijah performs miracles demonstrating the mighty power of Israel’s covenant God. In response to Israel’s idolatry Elijah announces a drought judgment in keeping with Israel’s covenant with Yahweh (17:1-7; cf.. Deut. 28:12, 24). He also called Israel back to true worship in his meeting at Mt. Carmel (18). However, Israel as well as their leader failed to change as demonstrated by their continued rebellion (20-22).

Second Kings opens with the later end of Elijah’s ministry (1-8). After God’s mighty power is demonstrated through the death of King’s soldiers (1), Elijah anoints a successor (2). Second Kings, therefore, opens emphasizing God’s miraculous ability and then continues for the next seven chapters with more of the same through the prophet Elisha (2-8). Elisha demonstrated God’s ability to heal the water (2), provide food for the hungry (4), heal those with faith (4, 5, 8) and subdue the enemy (6). Overall, the writer emphasized through a second prophet that the covenant keeping God is able to meet their everyday needs when they come to Him in simple faith. Although God demonstrated His ability through Elijah, the writer continued to record how Judah and Israel continued steadfastly into Idolatry (8-16). The writer then spends the remaining chapters describing the approaching judgment of both Israel and Judah until both are carried into captivity (17-25).

Although Kings records the actions of the both the Judean and Israel kingships, there is a overarching structure. Dorsey notes that Kings is presented in Chiastic structure.¹² That structure is provided below as an outline. Given chiastic rules the book of Kings has a central focus on the Elisha’s “miracles of kindness.” This is contrasted with Solomon’s oppressive actions and resulting division and fall of both Judah and Israel.

The Theme

Leadership’s success or failure as related to covenantal obligations

⁹ Archer, 317.

¹⁰ Constable, ed.

¹¹ *Nelson's New Illustrated Bible Commentary*, 426.

¹² David A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament a Commentary on Genesis-Malachi* (Grand Raids: Baker Academic, 1999)

Literary Outline of 1 and 2 Kings

- Solomon's Great Temple and Wealth (1-11
 - The Rise of the North Kingdom: First 7 Kings (12-16)
 - Elijah and the Rise of Omride Dynasty (17-2 Kings 1)
 - Elisha's Miracles of Kindness (2-8)**
 - Elisha and the Fall of the Omride Dynasty (8:7-13:9)
 - Fall of the Northern Kingdom: Last 7 Kings (13:10-17:41)
- Solomon's Great Temple and Wealth Destroyed (18-25)

Descriptive Outline of Kings

I. United Kingdom under Solomon 1:1-11:42

- A. Solomon's Ascension 1:1-4:34
 - 1. Solomon Chosen as Successor over Adonijah 1:1-53
 - 2. David's Death 2:1-11
 - 3. Solomon Secures Throne Against Dissidents 2:12-46
 - 4. Solomon's Proclivity to Sin 3:1-4
 - 5. Solomon's Selfless Request for Wisdom 3:5-15
 - 6. Solomon's Wisdom Concerning Two Mothers 3:16-28
 - 7. King Solomon and His Princes 4:1-19
 - 8. King Solomon and His Possessions 4:20-28
 - 9. King Solomon and His Kindly Wisdom 4:29-34

II. United Kingdom under Solomon 1:1-11:42

- A. Solomon's Ascension 1:1-4:34
 - 1. Solomon Chosen as Successor over Adonijah 1:1-53
 - 2. David's Death 2:1-11
 - 3. Solomon Secures Throne Against Dissidents 2:12-46
 - 4. Solomon's Proclivity to Sin 3:1-4
 - 5. Solomon's Selfless Request for Wisdom 3:5-15
 - 6. Solomon's Wisdom Concerning Two Mothers 3:16-28
 - 7. King Solomon and His Princes 4:1-19
 - 8. King Solomon and His Possessions 4:20-28
 - 9. King Solomon and His Kindly Wisdom 4:29-34
- B. Solomon's Expansion as King 5:1-10:29
 - 1. Solomon's Expansion of Building 5:1-9:9
 - a. Solomon Prepares to Build Temple 5:1-18
 - b. Solomon Builds the Temple 6:1-38
 - c. Solomon Builds his Homes 7:1-12
 - d. Solomon Hires Special Craftsman 7:13-51
 - e. Solomon's Dedication of the Temple 8:1-66
 - f. God Renews Covenant with Solomon 9:1-9
 - 2. Solomon's Expansion of Wealth and Influence 9:10-10:29

- C. Solomon's Decline 11:1-42
 - 1. Solomon's Sin of Intermarriage 11:1-13
 - 2. God Raises Hadad as Solomon's Enemy 11:14-25
 - 3. Prophet's Message of Coming Division 11:26-40
 - 4. The Death of Solomon 11:41-42

III. Divided Kingdom under Kings 12:1-22:50

- A. Initial Division under Rehoboam and Jeroboam 12:1-14:28
 - 1. Rehoboam's Intention of Harsh Reign 12:1-15
 - 2. Israel Establishes Self Rule under Jeroboam 12:16-24
 - 3. Jeroboam Establishes Ungodly Worship 12:25-33
 - 4. Israel's Idolatry Confirmed by Prophet's Death 13:1-34
 - 5. Blind Prophet announces Jeroboam's Judgment 14:1-20
 - 6. Rehoboam's Loss of Temple Utensils 14:21-28
- B. Division Marked by Godly and Ungodly Rule 15:1-16:34
 - 1. Abijam's Evil Rule over Judah 15:1-8
 - 2. Asa's Righteous Rule of Judah 15:9-
 - 3. Nadab's Evil Rule over Israel 15:25-28
 - 4. Baasha's Evil Rule over Israel 15:29-16:7
 - 5. Elah's Evil Rule over Israel 16:8-14
 - 6. The Short Evil rule of Zimri 16:15-20
 - 7. Omri's Evil Rule Purchases Samaria 16:21-28
 - 8. King Asa Builds Altar to Baal in Samaria 16:29-34
- C. Elijah's Call to Godly Worship 17:1-19:21
 - 1. Elijah Prays and Drought Begins 17:1-7
 - 2. Elijah's Care for Faith-filled Widow 17:8-16
 - 3. Elijah's Care for Grieving Mother 17:17-24
 - 4. Elijah's Commission to Ahab through Godly Prophet 18:1-16
 - 5. Elijah's Challenge at Mt. Carmel 18:17-40
 - 6. Elijah Prays and Rain Falls 18:41-46
 - 7. Elijah Flees Jezebeel's Wrath 19:1-8
 - 8. God Reestablished Frightened Elijah 19:9-18
 - 9. Elijah Calls Elisha as Disciple 19:19-21
- D. Godly and Ungodly Rule Continues 20:1-22:50
 - 1. Ahab Fails to Obediently Slay Syria's King 20:1-43
 - 2. Elijah Rebukes Ahab Concerning Naboth's Vineyard 21:1-29
 - 3. Ahab's Lack of Respect for Godly Prophets 22:1-40
 - 4. Ahaziah's Idolatrous Rule over Israel 22:51-53
 - 5. Jehoshaphat's Godly Rule over Judah 22:41-50

Questions from 1 Kings

1. Identify the writer of 1 Kings.
2. Identify the purpose of 1 Kings.
3. Identify the theme of 1 Kings.
4. In what ways did Solomon violate the covenant?
5. In what ways was Solomon's rule beneficial as well as harmful?
6. What pushed Israel to revolt?
7. How are we to God's promise to establish Israel's throne upon obedience given God's promise to the Davidic rule?
8. What role does Elijah play in the overall message of the Book?
9. What lessons can be learned from Elijah's experience on Mt. Carmel?
10. In what way did Ahab sin in chapter 20?

Outline of 2 Kings

I. God's Mighty Power in Response to Faith Displayed through the Prophets 1:1-8:15

- A. God's Mighty Power Displayed through Elijah 1:1-2:12
 - 1. Elijah Faces Ahaziah's Fifty Soldiers 1:1-18
 - 2. Elijah's Departure Recognized by Many Prophets 2:1-8
 - 3. Elijah's Departure before Elisha 2:9-12
- B. God's Mighty Power Displayed through Elisha 2:13-8:15
 - 1. Elisha Receives Elijah's Authority 2:13-18
 - 2. Elisha Healing of Waters 2:19-22
 - 3. Elisha's Response to Irreverent Children 2:23-25
 - 4. Elisha Helps United Kings Conquer Moabites 3:1-27
 - 5. Elisha's Miracle Provides for Widow 4:1-7
 - 6. Elisha's Promises Shunamite Woman a Child 4:8-
 - 7. Elisha Raises Shunamite Child From Death 4:18-37
 - 8. Elisha Cleanses Prophet's Diseased food. 4:38-41
 - 9. Elisha Multiplies Small Portion of Food in Gilgal 4:42-44
 - 10. The Healing of a Syrian Captain 5:1-27
 - a. Syria's King Request Help from Israel's King 5:1-8
 - b. Elijah Heals Faith-filled Syrian 5:9-14
 - c. Syrian Captain's Rejection of Idolatry 5:15-19
 - d. Elisha's Servant gains Naaman's Leprosy 5:20-27
 - 11. Elisha Retrieves Prophet's Lost Ax head 6:1-7
 - 12. Elisha's Power to Subdue Syrian Army 6:8-24
 - 13. Elisha Foretell's Deliverance of Beseiged Samaria 6:24-7:20s
 - 14. Elisha's Protection of Shunamite Woman 8:1-6
 - 15. Elisha Foretells Syrian's Successor to Throne 8:7-15

II. Judah and Israel's Continued Idolatry 8:16-16:29

- A. Jehoram's Evil Rule over Judah 8:16-20
- B. Joram's Evil rule in Israel 8:21-24
- C. Ahaziah's Evil Rule in Judah 8:25-29
- D. Elisha's Anointing of Jehu to Retributive Reign 9:1-10:28
 - 1. Elisha appoints Servant to Anoint Jehu 9:1-10
 - 2. Jehu Slays Joram 9:11-26
 - 3. Jehu Slays Joram's Friend Ahaziah 9:27-29
 - 4. Jehu Slays Jezebel 9:30-37
 - 5. Jehu slays Sons of Ahab 10:1-14
 - 6. Jehu Slays all Baal worshippers 10:15-28
- E. Jehu's Sin as Israel's Leader 10:29-36
- F. Judean Royal Heir Preserved 11:1-21
- G. Jehoash Repairs Temple in Jerusalem 12:1-16
- H. Jehoash Give Tribute to Hazael and Dies 12:17-21
- I. Jehoahaz' Evil Rule over Israel 13:1-9
- J. Jehoash' Evil Rule over Israel 13:10-13
- K. Elisha's Dying Prediction Concerning Joash's Victories 13:14-25
- L. Amaziah Begin Righteous Rule 14:1-7

- M. Amaziah and Jehoash War 14:8-14:20
- N. Azariah Rules Judah 14:21-22
- O. Jeroboam's Unrighteous Rule over Israel 14:23-29
- P. Azariah's Righteous Rule over Judah 15:1-7
- Q. Zechariah's Evil Rule over Israel 15:8-12
- R. Shallum's Unrighteous rule in Israel 15:13-15
- S. Menahem's Unrighteous Rule in Israel 15:16-
- T. Pekahiah's Unrighteous Rule in Israel 15:23-26
- U. Pekah's Unrighteous Rule Israel 15:27-31
- V. Jotham's Righteous Rule in Judah 15:32-38
- W. Ahaz's Unrighteous Rule in Judah 16:1-20

III. God's Judgment for Idolatry 17:1-25:30

- A. Israel's Immediate Judgment 17:1-41
 - 1. Israel's Bondage under Hoshea 17:1-6
 - 2. Explanation of Israel's Bondage 17:7-23
 - 3. Assyria's Occupation of Israel 17:24-41
- B. Judah's Prolonged Judgment 18:1-25:30
 - 1. Hezekiah's Rule of Judah 18:1-8
 - a. Hezekiah's Initial Trust in the Lord 18:1-8
 - b. God Delivers Hezekiah from Assyria 18:9-19:37
 - i. Shalmaneser Had Taken Samaria 18:9-12
 - ii. Hezekiah Gives Sennacherib Gold 18:13-16
 - iii. Sennacherib Besieges Jerusalem 18:17-37
 - iv. Hezekiah Inquires of Isaiah the Prophet 19:1-7
 - v. Hezekiah Prays for Deliverance 19:8-19
 - vi. Isaiah Prophecies Deliverance 19:20-34
 - vii. Angel of the Lord Smites Sennacherib 19:35-37
 - c. Hezekiah's Lack of Concern for Nation 20:1-19
 - i. Hezekiah Given 15 Extra Years 20:1-11
 - ii. Hezekiah's Light Value of Temple Treasure 20:12-19
 - iii. Hezekiah's Death 20:20-21
 - 2. Manasseh's Unrighteous Rule in Judah and God's Promised Judgment 21:1-18
 - 3. Amon's Unrighteous Rule 21:19-26
 - 4. Josiah's Righteous Rule in Judah 22:1- 23-31
 - a. Josiah Repairs the Temple 22:3-7
 - b. Josiah Finds Book of Law and Repents 22:8-20
 - c. Josiah Lead All of Israel in Repentance 23:1-25
 - d. Yahweh's Continued Plan of Judgment 23:26-28
 - e. Josiah's Death 23:29-31
 - 5. Jehoahaz Unrighteous Rule in Judah 23:31-33
 - 6. Jehoiakim's Unrighteous Rule in Judah 23:34-24:7
 - a. Jehoiakim's Tribute to Pharaoh-necoh 23:34-37
 - b. Jehoiakim's Bondage to Nebuchadnezzar 24:1
 - c. Jehoiakim's Warring with Surrounding Countries 24:2-7
 - 7. Jehoiachin and others Taken Captive by Nebuchadnezzar 24:8-16

8. Nebuchadnezzar Appoints Zedekiah Judah's King 24:17-20
9. Nebuchadnezzar Retakes Jerusalem and Zedekiah 25:1-7
10. Nebuchadnezzar Destroys Jerusalem 25:8-26
11. Jehoiachin Treated Well by Babylon 25:27-30

Questions from 2 Kings

1. Who was the Author of 2 Kings?
2. What is the primary message of 2 Kings?
3. Why isn't the Reign of Uzziah described in 2 Kings?
4. Why does the Story end with Jehoiachin Treated Well by Babylon?
5. How does the first eight chapters contribute to the overall message of 2 Kings?
6. Exactly to what does "high places" refer?
7. What does "pass through the fire" (NAS) mean in 21:6?
8. What is expected by the Reader after Josiah's Great Repentance and Faith?
9. How does God's response to Josiah's reformation efforts and God's subsequent response impact our understanding of opportunity for service?
10. While God's prolonged His judgment across many generations of unrighteous leaders, which ruler of Judah seemingly "pushed God" too far?
11. How many times did Nebuchadnezzar take captives from Jerusalem?

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