

I OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF I KINGS

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. Possibly Jeremiah or a group of prophets

TIMELINE: 970 B.C when Solomon becomes king of united Israel to around 853 B.C. when Ahab dies in battle, a period of 117 years.

SETTING: The once great nation of Israel turns into a land divided, not physically, but spiritually.

BLUEPRINT:

A. UNITED KINGDOM (1:1-11:43)

1. Solomon becomes king
2. Solomon's wisdom
3. Solomon builds the Temple
4. Solomon's greatness and downfall

B. DIVIDED KINGDOM (12:1-22:53)

1. Revolt of the Northern tribes
2. Kings of Israel and Judah
3. Elijah's ministry
4. Kings of Israel and Judah

MEGATHEMES

THEME	EXPLANATION	IMPORTANCE
The King	Solomon's wisdom, power, and achievements brought honor to the Israelite nation and to God. All the kings of Israel and Judah were told to obey God and to govern according to his laws. But their tendency to abandon God's Word and to worship other gods led them to change the religion and government to meet their personal desires. The neglect of God's Law led to their downfall.	Wisdom, power and achievement do not ultimately come from any human source they are from God. No matter what we lead or govern, we can't do well when we ignore God's guidelines. Whether or not we are leaders, effectiveness depends on listening and obeying God's Word.
The Temple	Solomon's Temple was a beautiful place of worship and prayer. This sanctuary was the center of Jewish religion. It was the place of God's special presence and housed the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments.	A beautiful house of worship doesn't always indicate that the people gathered there to offer a heartfelt worship to God. God wants to live in our hearts, not just meet us in a sanctuary.

Other gods	Although the Israelites had God's Law and experienced His presence among them, they became attracted to other gods. When this happened, their hearts became cold to God's Law, resulting in the ruin of families and government, and eventually leading to the destruction of the nation.	Through the years, the people took on the false qualities of the false gods they worshiped. They became cruel, power-hungry, and sexually perverse. We tend to become what we worship. Unless we serve the true God, we will become slaves to whatever takes His place.
The prophet's message	The prophet's responsibility was to confront and correct any deviation from God's Law. Elijah was a bolt of judgment against Israel. His messages and miracles were a warning to the evil and rebellious kings and people.	The Bible, the truth in sermons, and the wise counsel of believers are warnings to us. Anyone who points out how we deviate from obeying God's Word is a blessing to us. Changing our lives in order to obey God and get back on track often takes painful discipline and hard work.
Sin and repentance	Each king had God's Word, a priest or prophet, and lessons of the past to draw him back to God. All the people had the same resources. Whenever they repented and returned to God, God heard their prayers and forgave them.	God hears and forgives us when we pray, if we are willing to trust him and turn from sin. Then He will give us a fresh start and a new desire to live for Him.

II

SCRIPTURE

BEST LAID PLANS (5:1-18)

I Kings 5 - Preparations to Build the Temple

(1-6) Solomon's message to Hiram of Tyre: David had spoken to Hiram and told him spiritual things, as if Hiram were already an Israelite. David had forged a strong relationship with him and Solomon would build on that.

Then Solomon sent to Hiram: "According to Josephus, copies of such a letter along with Hiram's reply were preserved in both Hebrew and Tyrian archives and were extant in his day (Antiquities, 8.2.8)." (Dilday)

Solomon was going to build a temple for a living God using the best materials possible and the cedar trees of Lebanon were legendary for their excellent timber. Hiram was first mentioned in **II Samuel 5:11** as the supplier of cedar logs, carpenters and stonemasons.

It also means that Solomon was willing to build this great temple to God with "Gentile" wood and using "Gentile" labor. This was a temple to the God of Israel, but it was not only for Israel. Only Jews built the tabernacle, "but the temple is not build without the aid of the Gentile Tyrians. They, together with us, make up the Church of God." (Trapp)

(7-12) Hiram's reply to Solomon: Hiram's response shows he respected the God of Israel, likely due to David's godly influence on him. Solomon offered Hiram whatever he wanted as payment for the timber and Hiram did not take unfair advantage, asking only for food to feed his household.

Solomon, appropriating his God-given wisdom, continued to foster the friendly Israeli-Lebanese relationship. Today things are very different between the two nations because of Iran funding to Hezbollah.

(13-14) Labor force of freemen: This huge labor force of 30,000 men shows that the temple could only be built when Israel was blessed to be able to afford such manpower and materials. It could only be built under the peace and prosperity won by David and enjoyed by Solomon.

Solomon's wisdom was evident in the way he managed this great workforce. First, he wisely delegated responsibility to men like Adoniram. Secondly, instead of making the Israelites work constantly away from Israel and home, he worked them in shifts.

(15-18) Labor force of slaves: Solomon used 150,000 Canaanite slave laborers and established a cadre of 3,300 middle managers to administer the work required to complete such an enormous and complex project. It took 7 years, even without bureaucratic delays.

Ginzberg relates some of the legends surrounding the building of the temple. "During the seven years it took to build the Temple, not a single workman died who was employed about it, nor even did a single one fall sick. And as the workmen were sound and robust from first to last, so the perfection of their tools remained unimpaired until the building stood complete. Thus the work suffered no sort of interruption." (Ginzberg)

Solomon used high-quality materials throughout the temple, but importantly, even in the foundation where the stones could not be seen.

This speaks to the way we should work for God. We don't work for appearance only, but also to excel in the deep and hidden things. "I want, dear friends, to urge that all our work for God should be done thoroughly, and especially that part of it which lies lowest, and is least observed of men." (Spurgeon)

This also speaks to the way God works in us. He works in the deep and hidden things when others are concerned with mere appearances. "We have been the subjects of a great deal of secret, unseen, underground work. The Lord has spent upon us a world of care. My brother, you would not like to unveil those great searchings of heart of which you have been the subject. You have been honored in public; and, if so, you have had many a whipping behind the door lest you should glory in your flesh . . . All those chastenings, humblings, and searchings of heart have been a private laying of foundations for higher things." (Spurgeon)

ATTENTION TO DETAILS (6:1-7:51)

I Kings 6 - The Construction of the Temple

(1-6) Temple dimensions: This marking point shows just how long Israel lived in the Promised Land without a temple. The tabernacle served the nation well for more than 400 years. The temple was built more at the direction and will of God than out of absolute necessity.

The dating in I Kings 6:1 gives an accurate dating for the Exodus. Since the reign of Solomon began in 971 BC and ended in 913 BC, the temple was begun in 967 BC, which means that the Exodus took place in 1447 BC, 480 years prior to the construction of the Temple.

The writer of I Kings never tells us where the temple was built, but II Chronicles 3:1 indicates that it was built on Mount Moriah, the same place where Abraham went to sacrifice Isaac, and on another part of the hill, where Jesus offered Himself as a sacrifice for our sins (I John 2:1).

I Kings 6 describe the building of the temple and its associated areas:

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1. Temple proper divided into two rooms (i.e., the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies). It was approximately 90 feet long 30 feet wide and 45 feet high;
2. Entrance hall on east side of the temple proper which was 30 feet wide, 15 feet deep, and same height as the temple proper. This was like a large porch;
3. Three-storied side chambers which surrounded the temple proper on the north, south, and west sides; and,
4. Large courtyard surrounding the whole structure.

This was not especially large as ancient temples go, but the glory of Israel's temple was not in its size. The dimensions of the temple show that it was built on the same basic design as the tabernacle, but twice as large. This means that Solomon meant the temple to be a continuation of the tabernacle.

(7-10) Construction details: The stones used to build the temple were all cut and prepared at another site and assembled at the temple building site. The beams and boards were made of the cedars of Lebanon. IN honor of God, the temple was built without the sound of a hammer.

This speaks to the way God wants His work done. The temple had to be built with human labor. God did not, and would not send a team of angels to build the temple. Yet Solomon did not want the sound of man's work to dominate the site of the temple. He wanted to communicate, as much as possible, that the temple was of God and not of man.

(11-13) God's promise to Solomon: A conditional promise to Solomon and his descendents that depended on their obedience. God promised an obedient Solomon that he would reign and be blessed, fulfilling the promises God made to David about his reign (**II Samuel 7:5-16**). He also promised that His special presence would remain among Israel as a nation.

These are essentially the same promises of the Old Covenant made to Israel at Sinai. But this was an important reminder and renewal of previous promises.

(14-38) Finished temple: Special attention was given to the Holy of Holies which was a 30-foot cube, completely overlaid with gold. It had two large 15-foot high sculptures of cherubim which were overlaid with gold. Two sculptures of olive wood cherubim inside the Holy of Holies faced the entrance to this inner room, so as soon as the High Priest entered he saw these giant guardians of the presence of God facing him.

There was gold everywhere in the temple. The walls were covered with gold (**I Kings 6:20-22**), the floor was covered with gold (**I Kings 6:30**) and gold was hammered into the carvings on the doors (**I Kings 6:32**). Solomon used 45,000 pounds of fine gold. In 70 AD when Titus destroyed the temple, the Romans took it apart stone by stone and melted them down to get the gold out.

It must be remembered that under the Old Covenant, the temple was not for the people of Israel. It was only for the priests to meet with God on behalf of the people. The people gathered and worshipped in the outer courtyard.

7 years later, when the temple was finished, it was a spectacular building. It was easy for Israel to focus on the temple of God instead of the God of the temple. **Yet without continued**

faithfulness to God, the temple's glory quickly faded. In fact, this glorious temple was plundered just 5 years after the death of Solomon (I Kings 14:25-27).

I Kings 7 - Solomon's Palace and the Temple Furnishings

(1) Solomon builds his house: Solomon spent 7 years building the temple, but 13 years building his house. The temple was glorious, but it seems that Solomon wanted a house that was more glorious than the temple. This revealed one of Solomon's weaknesses that would ultimately lead to his failure.

"It does show the place which his own personal comfort and luxurious tastes had come to occupy in the life of Solomon . . . It is often by such simple and unexpected tests, that the deepest facts of a human life are revealed." (Morgan)

(2-12) Splendor of Solomon's palace: When Solomon made his palace more spectacular than the temple it said something about his values. Similarly, our most magnificent buildings in the modern world (e.g., Las Vegas, NV), usually given over to business, shopping, or entertainment, say something about our values. **Haggai 1:3-10** speaks powerfully to those who think more about their house than they do the house of God.

(13-14) Hiram: half-Israeli and best craftsman around: Hiram was half-Israeli and half-Gentile, the best craftsman around. Solomon hired him to do all of his fine artistic work of the palace and especially the temple.

(15-51) Hiram makes furnishings for the temple after the pattern of tabernacle furnishings: The bronze pillars were actually so noteworthy that they were given names of Jachin and Boaz and also mentioned in **II Chronicles 3:17**.

Some believe that the pillars were meant to remind Israel of the twin pillars from the Exodus. The pillar of fire by night and the pillar of cloud by day were constant reminders of the presence of God in the wilderness.

"In practical terms the pillars were to be an ever-present reminder to each successive king of the fact that he was ruling by God's appointment and by his grace, and that in God lay his strength. Just so ought believers today to be ever mindful of God's grace in their lives and of their utter dependence on him." (Patterson and Austel)

The huge laver was more than 15 feet across, and was used for the ceremonial washings. **II Chronicles 4:8** says there were 10 tables of showbread. Here they are described collectively as a unit. All great works of art and articles of great value were placed in the temple.

PLACE OF PRAYER (8:1-66)

I Kings 8 - The Dedication of the Temple

The Ark of the Covenant, the heart of Israel's relationship with the Lord, was transferred from the Tabernacle to the Temple. The Tabernacle was a portable place of worship designed for the people as they were traveling towards the Promised Land. The Temple was a permanent place for Israel to worship God after they established themselves as a nation. The Ark was placed in the Holy of Holies under the wings of the statues of mighty angels.

(1-2) All Israel assembles at Jerusalem: Solomon assembled all the men of Israel including the tribal heads and ancestral leaders as he intended this to be a spectacular opening ceremony, probably on the scale of the large productions in Olympic opening ceremonies. The temple wasn't complete until the Ark of the Covenant was set in Holy of Holies.

(3-9) Ark of the Covenant is set in the Holy of Holies: Solomon was careful to obey what God commanded about transporting the Ark of the Covenant that it was only to be carried by priests. He will not repeat the error of his father David in **II Samuel 6:1-8**. The lamp stand, table of showbread, and altar of incense from the tabernacle were also brought into the temple.

Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb: At an earlier point in Israel's history there were three items in the Ark of the Covenant. Earlier, inside the ark were the golden pot that had the manna (Exodus 16:33), Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:6-11), and the tablets of the covenant (Exodus 25:16). We don't know what happened to the golden pot of manna and Aaron's rod, but they were not in the ark when Solomon set it in the Holy of Holies.

The reminder of the deliverance from Egypt is significant, because now, some 500 years after the Exodus, the culmination of the deliverance from Egypt was complete. The dwelling of God among Israel was a building, a place of permanence and security.

(10-13) Glory of God fills the temple: When the priests left, the cloud representing God's presence filled the Temple. The cloud of glory, sometimes called the cloud of Shekinah glory.

It is hard to define the glory of God; although we could call it the radiant outshining of His character and presence. Here it is manifested in a cloud:

1. That stood by Israel in the wilderness (**Exodus 13:21-22**);
2. That God spoke to Israel from (**Exodus 16:10**);
3. That from which God met with Moses and others (**Exodus 19:9; Exodus 24:15-18; Numbers 11:25; Numbers 12:5; Numbers 16:42**);
4. That stood by the door of the Tabernacle (**Exodus 33:9-10**);
5. That from which God appeared to the High Priest in the Holy Place inside the veil (**Leviticus 16:2**);
6. That of Ezekiel's vision, filling the temple of God with the brightness of His glory (**Ezekiel 10:4**);
7. That overshadowed Mary when she conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:35**);
8. That was present at the transfiguration of Jesus (**Luke 9:34-35**);
9. That received Jesus into heaven at His ascension (**Acts 1:9**); and,
10. That will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to this earth (**Luke 21:27; Revelation 1:7**).

"There is a parallel to this event in Acts 2:1-4 in which God marks the inception of the church as the temple of the Holy Spirit by making his presence known through the sound of a mighty rushing wind and by filling those present with the Holy Spirit." (Patterson and Austel)

Priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud: The extreme presence of the glory of God made normal service impossible. The sense of the presence of God was so intense that the priests felt it was impossible to continue in the building.

We know that God is good and that God is love; why should an intense presence of goodness and love make the priests feel they could not continue? Because God is not only goodness and love, He is also holy, and the holiness of God made the priests feel that they could no longer stand in His presence.

The presence of our holy God is intense. Men like Peter (**Luke 5:8**), Isaiah (**Isaiah 6:5**), and John (**Revelation 1:17**) felt stricken in the presence of God. This was not because God forced an uncomfortable feeling upon them, but because they simply could not be comfortable sensing the difference between their sinfulness and the holiness of God.

This glory remained at the temple until Israel utterly rejected God in the days of the divided monarchy. The prophet Ezekiel actually saw the glory depart the temple (**Ezekiel 10:18**). In 586 BC, Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple. It would be rebuilt during post-Exilic times under Nehemiah.

(14-21) Solomon's speech at the temple dedication: Solomon prayed an invocation to the Lord about building Him a lovely home on earth, out of a deep sense of awe and reverence, recognizing that the temple was the fulfillment of God's plan, not David's or his. David and Solomon were human instruments, but the work was God's.

It took 480 years since the exodus from Egypt for the Israelites to build a Temple for Him. Although this was a very important step in God's covenant with man, the Temple was only a building. In **Deuteronomy 12:4-11** and again in **I Kings 8:16**, God emphasized the importance of His presence among them and the need for spiritual leadership. Later, lack of spiritual leadership will lead to the removal of God's presence amongst them and left the Temple as a sterile building and the nation of Israel in decline.

(22-23) Solomon recognizes the nature and character of God: Solomon raised his hands toward heaven, a posture of appeal and anticipation, and invoked **Deuteronomy 7:9**, where God is unique and above everything, being loving and kind and keeping His promises to the people who wholeheartedly keep His covenant by walking in His ways. This was a conditional promise. Solomon then referred to a promise that God made to his father (**II Samuel 7:12-13**) that He would raise up David's son to build the Temple.

There is no God in heaven above or on earth below like You: Solomon recognized that God was completely unique. The pretended gods of the nations could not compare to Him in any way (**Hosea 4:11**).

(24-26) Solomon recognizes God as the maker and keeper of promises: Solomon first thanked and praised God for His past fulfillment of promises. God had kept His promise to give David a son to build the Temple and Solomon asked God to keep other promises He made to David (**II Samuel 7:12-16; I Kings 2:4**).

This is the great secret to power in prayer, which is to take God's promises to heart in faith, and then boldly and reverently call upon Him to fulfill the promises.

"God sent the promise on purpose to be used. If I see a Bank of England note, it is a promise for a certain amount of money, and I take it and use it. But oh my friend, do try and use God's promises; nothing pleases God better than to see his promises put in circulation; he loves to see his children bring them up to him, and say, 'Lord, do as thou hast said.' And let me tell you that it glorifies God to use his promises." (Spurgeon)

(27-30) Solomon asks God to dwell in this place and honor those who seek Him here: Solomon declared that even the highest heavens cannot contain God. Yet though the heavens cannot contain Him, He is willing to live in the hearts of those that love Him. The transcendent

God, beyond the Universe, takes up residence in the lives of His people!!

Solomon talked with God about 7 specific instances when a person might pray a prayer to God toward the Temple; each instance common to Israel's experiences:

1. (31-32): Person who wronged neighbor but denied guilt. This required an oath of innocency (Exodus 22:10-12). Solomon asked God to be the judge. The Urim and Thummim (Exodus 28:29-30; Numbers 27:21) were sometimes used here;
2. (33-34): Situations where Israel was defeated by an enemy due to its disobedience;
3. (35-36): Israel's disobedience resulted in drought and famine;
4. (37-40): Israel's disobedience resulted in plague and pestilence;
5. (41-43): Solomon asked God to answer the prayers of foreigners who came to worship;
6. (44-45): At times when God sent them to war against their enemies, there was prayer for victory and upholding the cause; and,
7. (46-53): Focused on the time when the people would sin and the Lord would give them over to an enemy. Solomon prayed for confession and repentance of the people, which would lead to restoration.

(31-32) Hear when Your people take an oath at the temple: Temple grounds were used as a place to verify and authorize oaths. When a dispute arose, Solomon asked that the temple would be a place to properly swear by. He asked God, who can see what man can't, who knows the hidden heart of man, and who enforces from heaven the oaths made at the temple.

(33-34) Hear when Your people are defeated: Many times in their history, Israel suffered defeat and could only cry out to God. It was worse when the defeat was because they had sinned against the Lord Himself. Solomon asked God to hear the prayers of a defeated, yet humble and penitent Israel. God forgives and restores His defeated people when they come in humble repentance (**Isaiah 57:15**).

After Solomon's reign, the people continually turned away from God. The rest of the Kingdom era is a vivid fulfillment of Solomon's description in these verses. As a result of the people's sin, God let them be overrun by enemies several times. Then in desperation, they cried out to God for forgiveness, and God restored them.

(35-40) Hear in times of plague and famine: Drought was a constant threat for the agriculturally-based economy of Israel. If there was no rain, there was no food.

When each one knows the plague of his own heart: Solomon recognized that some plagues are easily seen, but other plagues come from our own heart. Many are cursed by a plague that no one else can see, but lives in their own heart. Solomon asks God to answer such a plague-stricken man when he humbly pleads at the temple.

(41-43) Hear when a foreigner prays: The temple was in Israel but it was always intended to be a house of prayer for all nations (**Isaiah 56:7**). God wanted the court of the Gentiles to be a place where the nations could come and pray.

The violation of this principle made Jesus angry. When He came to the temple and found the outer courts, the only place where the Gentile nations could come a pray, more like a swap meet than a house of prayer, He drove out the moneychangers and the merchants (**Matthew 21:13**).

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(44-53) Hear when Israel goes out to battle and prays from captivity: Solomon prayed that God should answer the prayers for victory made in foreign lands towards the temple, but only when they battle as God sent them. Solomon also asked God to hear Israel's prayer from captivity in a foreign land. This recognized that the God of the temple could answer prayers made away from the temple.

When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin): This is a succinct Old Testament statement of the principle most clearly stated in Romans 3:23: for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.

(54-61) Blessing: may God answer my prayer, that we'll be blessed: Solomon finished his dedicatory prayer and then addressed the assembly. He had 5 requests: (1) For God's presence (8:57); (2) For a desire to do God's will in everything (8:58); (3) For help with daily needs (8:59); (4) For a desire to live good/perfect lives (8:61); (5) For the ability to obey God's laws/commandments (8:61).

God promised to be with Israel, but Solomon knew it was important to ask God to fulfill His promise. He comes pleading the promises of God.

That all the peoples of the earth may know that the Lord is God: Solomon again shows the often-neglected missionary impulse God wanted in Israel. Blessing to Israel wasn't meant to end with Israel; as God wanted to bless the world through Israel.

(62-66) Feast of dedication for the temple: The temple was dedicated by sacrificing peace offerings to the Lord. The celebration lasted 14 days, with so many sacrifices that the bronze altar that was before the Lord was too small to receive all of them. This was the Feast of Tabernacles, which was extended beyond its normal seven days on this special occasion.

For all the good that the Lord had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people: This account of the dedication of the temple ends where the story of the temple began; with David, not Solomon. It was David's heart and vision that started the work of the temple (II Samuel 7:1-3 et seq).

CHARGE TO KEEP (9:1-9)

I Kings 9 - God's Warning to Solomon

(1-5) God confirms the answer to Solomon's prayer: Some 24 years after Solomon came to the throne, after the temple and the palace work at Jerusalem were finished, God confirmed the answer to Solomon's prayer. Solomon had to deal with life after completing his greatest accomplishment and needed some reinforcement. God was good to give Solomon a special appearance at the beginning of his reign in I Kings 3:5-9. It was even better of God to grant a unique appearance to Solomon a second time.

"It was the hour when the accomplishment of work means the relaxation of effort. That is always a perilous hour, and the greater the work done the graver the peril. A life which has been full of activity, when that activity ceases, demands some new interest, and will find it, either high or low, noble or ignoble." (Morgan)

I have heard your prayer: The great prayer of Solomon in I Kings 8 meant nothing unless God heard the prayer. The true measure of our prayer is if God in heaven answers the prayer. This answer seems to have come many years after the actual dedication of the temple.

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However, God also gave Solomon an immediate answer of approval at the time of dedication, when the sacrifices were consumed with fire from heaven (**II Chronicles 7:1-7**).

I have consecrated this house which you have built: The building was Solomon's work, done in the power and inspiration of the Lord. The consecration of the building was God's work. Solomon could build a building, but only God could hallow it.

God's answer to Solomon's previous prayer had a great condition. If Solomon walked before God in obedience and faithfulness, he could expect blessing on his reign and the reign of his descendants, and the dynasty of David would endure forever.

God did not demand perfect obedience from Solomon. David certainly did not walk perfectly before the Lord and God told Solomon to walk before Me as your father David walked. This was not out of reach for Solomon.

(6-9) God warns Solomon: The positive promise of **I Kings 9:1-5** is followed by a negative promise. If Solomon or his descendants turn from following the Lord, God promised to correct a disobedient Israel and ultimately He would send Israel into exile in 586 BC.

Under the Old Covenant, God promised to use Israel to exalt Himself among the nations one way or another. If Israel obeyed, He would bless them so much that others had to recognize the hand of God upon Israel. If Israel disobeyed He would chastise them so severely that the nations would be astonished at the hard work of God among His disobedient people, and they would know that the Lord has brought this calamity upon them.