

Message #1**Various Texts**

If you were born from the years 1945-1953, you have lived through 14 Presidents of the United States: Truman, Eisenhower, Kennedy, Johnson, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton, Bush, Obama, Trump, and Biden.

Depending on your political perspective, some would say some of the names on that list were good for the country and some not so good. Some would say some on that list seem to love power. Some on the list seemed to love themselves. Some on that list loved their political party. Some on the list loved money. Some on that list were immoral. Some on the list didn't tell the truth. Some were alleged to have lied, cheated, and even murdered.

Most of the Presidents were religious. Very few on the list were actually known for their love for God and His word:

- 1) Jimmy Carter was a known Southern Baptist.
- 2) George W. Bush was said to be one who loved the Bible.
- 3) James Madison was a known Episcopalian.
- 4) James Garfield actually had been a minister who learned Biblical Greek.

In other words, over the years the Presidents of the United States were religious but not real serious about Biblical truth. Frankly, most were just like the majority of politicians found in the book of I Kings.

If you seriously and accurately study I Kings, you will take a remarkable journey through 14 different kings.

One of the kings ruled over all Israel—Solomon.

Four of the kings ruled over Judah in the south—Rehoboam; Abijah; Asa; Jehoshaphat.

Nine of the kings ruled over Israel in the north—Jeroboam; Nadab; Baasha; Elah; Zimri; Tibni; Omri; Ahab; Ahaziah.

Those kings ruled over Israel from about 970 BC to 848 BC. Of those 14 kings, only three were good (Solomon, Asa, Jehoshaphat) and 11 were evil. The vast majority of political leaders were as corrupt as they could be. It was very rare when a political leader of national Israel loved God and revered His word. **This was the nation of God and it is so sad that there were so few leaders who actually cared about God and His word enough to govern the kingdom with it.**

During those days God raised up prophets like Elijah and Elisha to communicate God's truth, but the fact is very **few political leaders listened to them and obeyed the word of God.**

This is much like the United States. We are called or at least used to be called a Christian nation. Of all the political leaders of our nation, since its inception, very few were known for a love for God, for Jesus Christ and His word. God raises up men who communicate His word, but the vast majority of political leaders don't really care about that. They surround themselves with a lot of religious things, but not the truth of God's word.

I Kings is a book that politically and spiritually analyzes and describes and exposes the kings in light of God's word. I Kings is a book about politics and power. It is a book about immorality and idolatry. But I Kings is also a book about God. I Kings is not just a book designed to teach pathetic facts about most of Israel's past corrupt political history; it is a book designed to teach present important lessons from God.

You take a political leader who doesn't honor God and His word and you will see a nation collapse as a direct judgment of God. God will create problems and chaos that will bring a nation down and bring individual political leaders to ruin. Ray Stedman said, "I Kings is a gripping story of how to lose a kingdom."

As John Woodhouse said, when you study I Kings you see "the rise and fall of kings, of political intrigue, violence, betrayal, power deployed for good and for evil. We see an empire established and prospering. We will see the same empire collapse in ruins. It is a story of striking accomplishments and devastating failures. In all this it is much like any slice of human history" (*I Kings*, p. 25).

As we go through the kings, we will learn a lot about God and how a nation should be governed. We will see that God is sovereign. God is faithful. God is to be revered. God is to be obeyed. God's word is to be taken seriously. Kings and people who learn these lessons will be blessed and those who don't will be destroyed and removed.

QUESTION #1 – Why study I Kings?

Here are four reasons why we need to study I Kings.

Reason #1 - Because I Kings is one of only 66 inspired books that God has given to man.

The Hebrew title of the work is simply "Kings" (melkim) myklm . The two books of I & II Kings were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible. In fact, they were a sequel to I & II Samuel. The Greek Septuagint in 250 BC was the first to divide Kings into two books—I & II Kings. Also, the Latin Vulgate (AD 383) did the same thing.

The Septuagint actually named I & II Kings the "Kings Three and Kings Four." They named I & II Samuel "Kings One and Kings Two." **In fact, we may observe that the first word of I Kings is the conjunction "now" that connects us to II Samuel.**

The fact that I Kings belongs in the Bible has never, ever been questioned. It was first considered to be an inspired book of God by the Hebrews.

When it comes to being an inspired book of God, there are basically three parts to the process:

- 1) God inspires the written word. Someone is moved by the Holy Spirit to write the document.
- 2) God's people immediately recognize it is a written inspired book of God.
- 3) God's people collect it, protect it, copy it and preserve the written inspired book of God.

When we examine the evidence for the inspiration of I Kings, it meets the criteria. The Jews always considered I Kings to be an inspired book and they copied it and preserved it.

The Codex (book form) Cairensis, which was a series of fragment Hebrew Manuscripts discovered in Cairo, Egypt, contains I & II Kings. This Hebrew text was vowel pointed in AD 895 by Moses ben Asher.

The Aleppo Codex contains the entire Old Testament with I Kings (AD 930).

The Codex Lenningradensis, which was a copy of the Old Cairo Hebrew manuscript, contains I Kings.

Fragments of I Kings were found in the Qumran Caves #5 and #6 in the Dead Sea Scroll discovery in 1952. These manuscripts have been dated as 100 BC. They confirm the fact that the Hebrew Text was carefully copied and preserved as an inspired book of God. As we already mentioned, the Septuagint, which translated the Hebrew text into Greek in about 250 BC, clearly establishes that it was deemed to be an inspired book of God.

The two main sources we have today are the Septuagint and the Hebrew Masoretic Text (AD 900).

So the fact that I Kings is one of the books inspired by God is the only reason we need to study it.

Reason #2 - Because I Kings shows that when political leaders and people refuse to honor God and His word, they will end up in ruins and destruction.

The book of I Kings starts out wonderful. The nation Israel is prospering and flourishing. By the time you get to the end of the book the nation is destroyed, devastated, deported and defeated. How in the world did that happen?

Political leaders need to realize, God has put me here for a reason and I am accountable to Him for the direction I lead the people. When the book of I Kings opens, it is a great national story. The nation is a stable, united and blessed kingdom. But the time the book of Kings ends, it is a disastrous mess.

Many of the leaders took the position to let people do what they want and worship anything they want. They let people turn away from the God of the Bible. You give people unrestrained freedom that leaves out God and His word and the nation will eventually collapse.

One of the key reasons for studying history is so that one will not repeat the kind of disastrous decisions that brought the nation to ruins. Most politicians care more about pleasing people rather than pleasing God. The only thing pleasing people can do is get you elected to an office.

But if a leader is not interested in pleasing God, no matter who put him into office, that leader and his nation will come to destruction and ruin.

Reason #3 - Because I Kings shows the importance of a political leader and a nation of taking God's word seriously.

The word of God is to be taken seriously. It is to be heard, understood and applied. In any dispensation, the political leader who takes the word of God seriously will discover God will do some amazing things.

God's people need to know it is possible to live a wonderful life filled with the blessings of God. Life with the right government can be a joyous and glorious experience. As Proverbs teaches, when the righteous reign, the people rejoice.

However, if a leader of a nation takes God's word lightly, the end result is failure. Take God's word seriously and the end result is success.

Take God's word lightly and the end result is defeat. Take God's word seriously and the end result is victory. Take God's word lightly and the end result is tragedy. Take God's word seriously and the end result is triumph. I Kings shows us this in living color.

There is an important practical lesson to see from this book. In some respects, you are the king governing the kingdom of your own life. You are the king of your own private world. If you govern taking God's word seriously, you will see God bless your life and world. But if you don't, I Kings says you are heading to disaster.

Reason #4 - Because I Kings shows the importance of knowing proper doctrine about God.

One thing that doctrinally leaps out at us from this book is that God is sovereign over leaders and nations and He controls what happens in those nations.

There are people who think doctrine is unimportant. It is critical to understanding truth about God. There are several doctrinal points that are clearly seen in I Kings.

(Doctrinal Reality #1) - God is sovereign no matter who the political leader is.

God is sovereign over leaders who are a delight to Him and sovereign over dud balls. He is sovereign over those who are wise and those who are fools.

(Doctrinal Reality #2) - God will see to it that people who support and follow a godless political leader will be judged with disaster.

The central doctrinal point is that God is sovereign over every political leader and nation and if the leader and the people will seek to understand and apply His word, He will use His sovereignty to prosper them and give them a happy life. But if they do not seek to understand and apply His word, He will use His sovereignty to destroy them and make their lives miserable.

(Doctrinal Reality #3) - God will see to it that faithful people who purpose to obey Him will be blessed regardless of what others are doing.

Within the context of the book of I Kings are some very faithful people. God greatly blessed those people and greatly used those people in spite of the fact that the majority of people were not serious about Him and His word. This is a great lesson we will see. Stay faithful to God and His word no matter who is in political power. God honors those who honor Him.

(Doctrinal Reality #4) - God is faithful to the promises He has made to Israel.

Even though the nation Israel made a political and spiritual mess of things, God is still sovereign and still is faithful to fulfill what He promised to fulfill. I Kings will tell a sad story and when you see it you will think it is amazing God did not obliterate the nation Israel. Not only does He not obliterate it, but He sustains it and promises great future blessings to her.

(Doctrinal Reality #5) - God is patient and is slow to punish, but He will punish.

Because of the grace of God, people tend to think nothing bad will ever happen to them. But God's grace opportunity does have a time factor and if one does not respond to the grace of God, one will be chastised by God. I Kings is a book that clearly proves that.

QUESTION #2 – Who wrote I Kings?

When you read the background works on I Kings almost all of them will say we don't actually know who wrote I & II Kings. But then almost all of them end up mentioning Jeremiah. Even those who say it was compiled by different people, end up mentioning Jeremiah. Leon Wood said, "Jewish tradition points to Jeremiah as the author of Kings, and it is likely that this is correct" (*Israel's United Monarchy*, p. 15).

There does seem to be one style of writing and one linguistic style which would seem to suggest this was one single writer who wrote the book and the writer was a very careful researcher.

The person who wrote the book was a serious student of research:

- 1) He studied the written book and writings that pertained to Solomon (I Kings 11:41).
- 2) He studied the written book of the kings of Israel (I Kings 14:19; 22:39).
- 3) He studied the written book of the kings of Judah (I Kings 14:29).

We do know that the last verses of II Kings tell us that King Jehoiakim was released from prison by the king of Babylon around the year 561 BC. So someone living around that time would have written it, which does fit Jeremiah.

Ancient Rabbis in the Talmud teach that the book was written by Jeremiah. Actually there is a good reason to think this.

- 1) The author lived before the Babylonian captivity, which is stressed by the phrase "to this day."
I Kings 8:8; 12:19

- 2) The book contains the truth of a prophet that idolatry and immorality brought the judgment of God (I Kings 11:1).
- 3) The style of the writing is very similar to that of Jeremiah. There does seem to be a very close parallel to what Jeremiah writes in Jeremiah 52 and what is written in II Kings 24-25.

QUESTION #3 – When was I Kings written?

The great majority of the book was written before the Babylonian captivity in 586 BC.

This point may be established by the fact that the writer uses the phrase “to this day” to describe the iniquity of the people before the captivity (i.e. II Kings 17:34, 41).

Also the last two chapters of II Kings describe the Babylonian captivity. It runs from 605 BC when Jehoiachin was taken captive to 568 BC when he was released.

When one examines the text of II Kings 25:27-30, **we certainly cannot be far from the date of writing when we say it was somewhere around the year 550 BC.**

It covers about a 400 year time span from the end of King David’s life, which is around 970 BC to the release of Jehoiakim in 561 BC.

QUESTION #4 – Why was I Kings written?

There are several reasons why God had I Kings written:

Reason #1 - The historical purpose—to give an accurate history of what happened from the glory days of David and Solomon to the divided kingdom and captivity.

There are four centuries of Israel’s history found in the books of the Kings. What a story. A nation starts out blessed of God and ends up a disaster. It is exactly what happened in history.

Reason #2 - The doctrinal purpose—to show the importance of a doctrine that teaches people to fear God and obey His word. God’s word brings prosperity, but apostasy leads to captivity.

Reason #3 - The Christological purpose—to show that God is faithful to the Davidic promise that the Messiah would come through him (II Sam. 7).

Reason #4 - The political purpose—to show that a political leader may take a nation into the blessings of God or out of the blessings of God.

God wanted a history of the kings written so that people would see what happens to His people when leaders are godly and when leaders aren’t godly.

A leader who is godly has a huge impact on the whole group. A leader who is not godly will always have a huge impact on the group. One will bring the blessings of God to the group and the other will take the blessings of God away from the group.

Reason #5 - The spiritual purpose—to teach God’s people that they need to be spiritually minded in obeying His word in the kingdom of their own life.

You are the ruler of your own world and you need to take God and His word seriously or else our story will end like the story of I Kings.

QUESTION #5 – Why are the books named I & II Kings?

The simple answer to this is because the chief subjects of the books are the kings of Israel and Judah. The various kings are tracked from the time of Solomon to the time of the Babylonian exile.

QUESTION #6 – How does I Kings break down?

- 1) The Kingdom is united under Solomon. I Kings 1-11
- 2) The Kingdom is divided under Jeroboam and Rehoboam. I Kings 12-22.

QUESTION #7 – What is the theme of I Kings?

The main theme is that God delights in blessing nations and individuals who love Him and His word and seek to obey it, but those nations and individuals who do not will experience one disaster after another and will come to ruin.

The last verse of I Kings sums it up well: “So he served Baal and worshipped him and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger according to all that his father has done” (I Kings 22:53).

As Ray Stedman said, I Kings is the gripping story of how to lose a kingdom. It is the gripping story of how to destroy a kingdom. It is the gripping story of how to lose the blessings of God. It is the gripping story of how to go from the highs of God’s blessings to the lows of God’s cursings.

May God use I Kings in our lives to govern ourselves in the way that pleases Him because we don’t want happening in our world what happened in I Kings.