

August 2022

What's the Point....of 1 Kings? Mark Garner

The books of Kings begin with Solomon succeeding David, then tell us about the kingdom splitting in two, and the cycles these divided kingdoms follow (these will continue in 2 Kings). Yet again the focus is on God's desire to have a relationship with his people. In 1 Kings, Elijah's call to Israel, 'if the Lord is God, follow him', is also implicit in the rest of the book.

If The Lord Is God, Follow Him (Overview Of 1 Kings)

As 1 Kings opens, David is dying, and the transition from David to Solomon involves dealing with troublemakers new and old (1 Kings 1-2). David's restless son Adonijah considers himself the heir; when David finds out, his response is calm and faithful, and he helps the people see that Solomon's anointing is from God. Afterwards, Solomon has to decide how to handle Adonijah and the others involved in trying to make Adonijah king.

After this comes a time of stability and peace (1 Kings 3-9), and during it we can see Solomon's closeness with God. Solomon chooses the gift of wisdom from God, instead of asking for wealth, and he builds the temple in Jerusalem. Upon completing the temple, in Solomon's prayer we also see echoes of David's faith and his awareness of God's glory and his graciousness.

Yet again when things seem to be going so well, the sad times begin (1 Kings 10-14). Solomon's heart begins to wander; he accumulates massive wealth, and worst of all becomes uncontrollably drawn to idolatrous women. He begins to worship their idols and also becomes an oppressive ruler. This provokes a permanent split upon his passing, as Jeroboam leads the northern tribes away from Judah, and even makes new 'gods' for Israel to worship.

Thus two cycles begin (1 Kings 15-22). In Judah in the south, two faithless and feeble rulers are followed by the faithful Asa, who institutes religious reforms, getting rid of idols and calling the people to worship God. In Israel (later often referred to as Ephraim or Samaria) to the north, there is a more gruesome cycle. Jeroboam's heir Nadab is struck down by the rebel Baasha, who makes himself king. These patterns will continue in 2 Kings.

In Israel, a bright spot is the ministry of Elijah in the troubled times of the notorious Ahab and Jezebel. Elijah brought truth and consolation for the faithful in Israel, while God gave him reassuring signs of his care. Elijah is often remembered for the assembly on Mount Carmel, where he calls Israel to stop wavering, and follow God. The people briefly turn to God, yet Elijah soon faces even more trouble; the prophet takes refuge in a cave, where God patiently reassures him.

Overall Thoughts

Solomon's early years remain an encouraging example of humility and gratitude to God, while his spiritual decline illustrates what can happen when we begin to rely on ourselves instead of on God. The cycles that develop in each of the kingdoms also teach us about human nature as well as about God's nature. The cycle in Judah also shows us our Heavenly Father's eagerness to pour out his grace, which is later shown fully through Jesus.

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What's the Point....of 1 Kings? Caleb Dillinger

1 Kings continues the importance of the line of King David, most famously through his son Solomon, in the life of Jewish history and the formation of God's chosen people, Israel. David is old and dying, incapable of remaining king for long. Because of this, one of his sons, Adonijah, sets himself up to be the next king. The problem was, Solomon, another son, was promised to be king. There's actually a brief rebellion in which David's senior military commander Joab supports Adonijah while the prophet Nathan supports Solomon. In the end, Solomon wins and becomes king, David dies, and the story moves along.

Solomon starts out young and wise - he actually talks to God and asks for more wisdom, which God grants! In his wisdom, and through God's blessings, a beautiful temple is built for God, the kingdom prospers and grows, and Israel is in a golden age of sorts. Then Solomon stops practicing his wisdom, and he allows a thousand women in his life (700 wives and an additional 300 concubines) who lead him to the worship of false gods. The result of these actions? Solomon's death and the civil war of Israel.

After Solomon dies, his son Rehoboam is somewhat of a brutal tyrant. God raises of Jeroboam to rival him and a division occurs where Jeroboam takes 10 tribes of Israel and Judah and Benjamin are left for Rehoboam's reign. From this point on, Israel will be the 10 tribes in the North and Judah will be the 2 tribes of the South.

The rest of the book chronicles all manner of sinful leaders for both Judah and Israel. It also shows how God raised up prophets (most notably Elijah) to bring opportunities for repentance to his people. However, rarely did they repent. Instead, sin was chosen time and time again, and rulers died in war, bloodshed, assassination, etc. This is not a pretty time in Israel's history.

Elijah will eventually challenge King Ahab and Queen Jezebel's false prophets of the god Baal on Mount Carmel, and in an epic showdown God rains fire down on an altar soaked in water and Elijah and the Israelites slaughter 400 false prophets. But this only sends Queen Jezebel into a wrathful fury to hunt down Elijah and he is forced to flee. Elijah becomes depressed and wishes to die, and in a moment of gentle encouragement, God lifts his spirit and appoints for him a successor, Elisha, to be trained up after him. 1 King ends with Ahab continuing to commit evil, being condemned, repenting (surprise!) and still dying.

So...why read this stat book of king Solomon and war book of the other kings? Well, aside from the fascinating events, 1 Kings lays out important theological teachings. Firstly, your ancestry (Solomon being David's son) doesn't absolve you of your sins or condemn you for your ancestors sins. Sin has consequences, often seen in fighting (physically and verbally). Secondly, even in dark times, God raises up godly people to proclaim repentance and truth. Thirdly, even righteous people feel depressed and God will be their staunchest defender and ally. These are just some of the reasons you should read 1 Kings today in 21st century America.