

1 & 2 KINGS

**GOD STATEMENT FOR 1 & 2 KINGS:
THE GOD WHOSE _____(a)
SHAPES _____(b)**

1 Kings opens where 1 & 2 Samuel left off. David is the aging king of Israel, and the nation is poised to enjoy its greatest days. He had expanded Israel's borders by defeating neighbors such as the Moabites, the Ammonites, the Edomites, and the Philistines. He has captured Jerusalem and made it the central place of government and worship for the kingdom. And he has led the nation in being faithfully committed to the one true God. He certainly has had his share of personal flaws and problems, but at least none were the result of idolatry.

But the potential for great days never materialized for Israel. After David came a long line of kings who ran the nation of Israel right into the ground. The books of 1 & 2 Kings describe this _____(c) _____(d) to the national story of Israel.

These two books can be divided into four sections: (1) Solomon's rise and fall, (2) the divided kingdoms, (3) Elijah and Elisha, and (4) Judah alone and Judah's fall.

SOLOMON'S RISE AND FALL (1 Kings 1-11)

The first several chapters of 1 Kings are dominated by King David's son and heir, _____(e). As David is about to die, his hand-off of the kingdom to Solomon comes with a charge that is reminiscent of Moses' charge to Joshua, and God's charge to Joshua as well. David tells Solomon to be _____(f) and to be careful to _____(g) God's Law (1 Kings 2:1-4; see Deut 37:7-15; Josh 1:1-9).

Solomon's era started off great. When God appeared to Solomon in a dream and offered him anything he wanted (1 Kings 3:5), he didn't ask for money, fame, long life, or power. Instead, knowing that he lacked the experience to rule, he asked God for _____(h) to lead Israel (1 Kings 3:7-9). Solomon's request pleased God, so God promised not only to fill him with wisdom, but also with riches and renown (1 Kings 3:10-14).

Solomon also fulfilled his father's dream of building a _____(i) to honor God. Using the plans that God had given David, it took seven years to build (1 Kings 6:37). When it was finished, the _____(j) of the _____(k) was brought to the Most Holy Place (or the Holy of Holies), and "the glory of the Lord filled his temple" (1 Kings 8:10-12).

After the temple was finished, the era of Solomon turned from great to _____(l). Suddenly he seemed unable to make good choices, and the result was that his kingdom began to _____(m). He married a bunch—and by "a bunch" I mean hundreds—of foreign wives to make political alliances. And if that weren't bad enough, he built worship sites for their _____(n), and he even participated in the worship of these _____(o).

THE DIVIDED KINGDOMS (1 Kings 12-16)

After 120 years of a unified kingdom under the rule of a single king—Saul, David, and Solomon each reigned over Israel for 40 years—things changed. When Solomon turned his heart away from God, God pronounced a judgment—Solomon's son would only rule a fraction of the kingdom. Solomon's _____(p) heart would result in a _____(q) nation. Civil war was on the horizon.

The seeds of civil war were sown by the "heavy yoke" that Solomon placed on the people. After Solomon died, the _____(r) northern tribes of the kingdom promised _____(s) (Solomon's son) that they would serve him if he would "lighten the hard service of your father" (1 Kings 12:4). Rehoboam's response was to _____(t) them further (1 Kings 12:12-15).

Under the leadership of _____(u), an officer in Solomon's army, the ten northern tribes rebelled and seceded to form their own new kingdom. Jeroboam was made their first king. This began a chaotic period with two _____(v), two sets of _____(w), two _____(x), and two places of _____(y).

The new northern kingdom would be called "_____ (z)" and the city of Samaria would eventually become its capital. The southern kingdom consisted of only two tribes (Judah and Benjamin) and would be called "_____ (aa)." The kingdom of Judah kept its capital at Jerusalem and their kings continued to come from royal line of David.

Beginning in 1 Kings 12, the reigns of both sets of kings are reported in parallel fashion. Each kingdom had about _____(bb) kings. As far as the kings of Israel go, there was not a good one in the bunch. All were

spiritually detestable. And as far as the kings of Judah go, a few—specifically eight of the twenty—get a positive rating.

ELIJAH AND ELISHA (1 Kings 17—2 Kings 17)

This section introduces us more fully to an important role in Israel's history—the _____(cc). These were God's mouthpieces to the nation. They were "covenant _____(dd)" who constantly reminded Israel of the need to _____(ee) the commands of the Law, and who constantly called on the people to _____(ff) and commit themselves to exclusively following God.

1 Kings 17 marks the beginning of Elijah's ministry. The books of Kings cover more of Elijah's life than most of the kings themselves. His name means "Yahweh is my God" and he is regarded as the greatest of Israel's prophets as his presence at Jesus' _____(gg) shows (Matt 17:1-3). His status as the greatest prophetic messenger is also seen in his non-death (2 Kings 2:1-14), as well as in Malachi's promise that Elijah would announce the coming of God's judgment through the Messiah (Mal 4:5-6). Of course, Jesus claimed that John the Baptist was this "Elijah" (Luke 7:24-25).

As idolatry spread throughout Israel (Baalism) through the support of King _____(hh) and his wife _____(ii), God commissioned Elijah to be His voice to the people. Elijah is best known for his confrontation of Ahab and 450 prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. The story of this showdown is well known. Elijah challenged the prophets of Baal to a public contest to see which God was real. God miraculously proved that He, not Baal, was real by sending down fire and consuming a sacrifice that Elijah had saturated with water. After Elijah won, he ordered the _____(jj) of the 450 prophets of Baal.

After Elijah is taken into heaven, his protégé, _____(kk), takes over as Elijah's successor. His ministry emphasized God's sovereignty over _____(ll) and _____(mm) with miracle after miracle. His miracles range from making an axhead float (2 Kings 6:7) to raising the dead (2 Kings 4:8-37) to healing Naaman of leprosy (2 Kings 5:1-27). Interestingly enough, the Bible records fourteen miracles from Elisha, while only seven is recorded from Elijah.

Both Elijah and Elisha demonstrate that the Lord not only rules Israel but the rest of the earth as well. In demonstrating this, their message is that God deserves the sole _____(nn) of the people. Sadly, though, they—along with the other prophets God sent to the northern kingdom—were _____(oo) in turning Israel

back from _____(pp). Consequently, time expired for the northern kingdom and in 722 B.C. the _____(qq) empire swooped down from the north and removed them from the face of the earth (1 Kings 17). Most of the Israelites who survived the Assyrian slaughter were exiled and dispersed throughout the ancient world (1 Kings 18:9-12).

The amount of space given to Elijah and Elisha is a reminder that God cared deeply for His people, and He gave them frequent warnings about what would happen if they _____(rr) the covenant. They alone were to blame for their destruction.

JUDAH ALONE AND JUDAH'S FALL (2 Kings 18-25)

After the northern kingdom was destroyed by the Assyrians and most of the survivors were deported, the last few chapters focus exclusively on the _____(ss) kingdom, Judah.

Will Judah learn from Israel's destruction? Unfortunately not. They will also disintegrate, but their disintegration is slowed by two godly kings: _____(tt) and _____(uu). Of the eight good kings of Judah, these two were exceptionally good.

Hezekiah repealed Ahaz's (Ahaz was Hezekiah's wicked father) pro-Assyrian policy (2 Kings 18:7) and initiated sweeping spiritual reforms. He _____(vv) all of the idols and pagan shrines throughout Judah. He trusted in God completely and was fully committed to keeping His commandments (2 Kings 18:1-6). Despite Hezekiah's faithfulness, during his reign the big bad Assyrians came knocking on his door via a devastating invasion (2 Kings 18:13—19:37). But Hezekiah continued to _____(ww) God and his _____(xx) was rewarded. God did not allow the city of Jerusalem to fall (2 Kings 19:32-37).

Like King Hezekiah, King Josiah was a bright spot in Judah's history before God closed that history in 586 B.C. Like Hezekiah, Josiah responded positively to God's revealed word. After the discovery of "the book of the law in the house of the Lord," Josiah led a religious reform (2 Kings 22:8-10). God's commandments and statutes were restored and the _____(yy) which had infected the land was stopped (at least for a brief time).

But, alas, most of the people of Judah are too far gone. Their hearts are too far from God. Spiritually speaking, they have reached a point of no return. The book of 2 Kings ends with God destroying Judah in

judgment. His judgment comes in the form of three deportations of the people into Babylonian _____(zz). The third occurred in 586 B.C. when Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple.

However, the book ends on a note of hope as the final paragraph contains an odd and unexpected story about Jehoiachin, the king who ruled Judah for three months before being exiled to Babylon in 597 B.C. The king of Babylon released him from prison and allowed him to eat at the royal table for the rest of his life (2 Kings 25:27-30). This seems to signal that God has not abandoned His promise to David that one of his descendants would sit on his throne forever. That hope for the future will be explored further in the prophetic books of the Old Testament.

THE LESSONS OF 1 & 2 KINGS

- A spiritually good start doesn't guarantee a good _____(aaa). Here we go again. In Samuel, it was Saul. In Kings, it's Solomon.
- If you are dedicated to God's covenant truths, you can count on being _____(bbb). The prophets exemplify the cost of commitment. Commitment to the truth is almost never a safe lifestyle to choose.
- We must constantly be _____(ccc) to obey God and remain totally loyal to Him. The prophets were God's chief preachers to the nation who needed constant reminders and constant correction.
- Listening to anyone but _____(ddd) spells doom. God has spoken. He has revealed His will and it is final. No one may operate outside His _____(eee) without consequences. Jeroboam is the poster boy for trying to do so (1 Kings 12:25-33).
- God will eventually remove us from all _____(fff) and _____(ggg). When the time was right, God took Elijah to heaven and protected him from any more harm.
- Be part of the faithful _____(hhh). In Elijah's day there was a vast number of committed covenant breakers and a small "remnant" of covenant keepers (1 Kings 19:18). Be among the remnant. When others around you disobey, you be obedient.

- Without _____(iii) prosperity, earthly prosperity is merely a blessing before terrible _____(jjj). In 2 Kings 14:23-29, the northern kingdom was given a grace period in which they flourished. But it didn't change their spiritual condition and their destruction was just around the corner.
- Take God's word _____(kkk) because all He says will come _____(lll). God warned Israel that destruction would come more than two centuries before it came. But, unfortunately, none of His prophets are taken seriously. There is no lasting repentance from their preaching.
- Learn from Israel's and Judah's _____(mmm). The record of their failures is a gift to us. Don't _____(nnn) the lessons of these two kingdoms.

KEY PASSAGES IN 1 & 2 KINGS

- 1 Kings 6:11-14
- 1 Kings 12:25-33
- 1 Kings 17:21
- 2 Kings 2:11-12
- 2 Kings 5:1-14

FILL-IN-THE-BLANK ANSWER KEY:

[a] WORD	[u] Jeroboam	[oo] unsuccessful	[iii] spiritual
[b] HISTORY	[v] nations	[pp] apostacy	[jjj] consequences
[c] tragic	[w] kings	[qq] Assyrian	[kkk] seriously
[d] end	[x] religions	[rr] ignored	[lll] true
[e] Solomon	[y] worship	[ss] southern	[mmm] exile
[f] courageous	[z] Israel	[tt] Hezekiah	[nnn] ignore
[g] obey	[aa] Judah	[uu] Josiah	
[h] wisdom	[bb] twenty	[vv] destroyed	
[i] temple	[cc] prophets	[ww] believe	
[j] ark	[dd] watchdogs	[xx] faith	
[k] covenant	[ee] obey	[yy] idolatry	
[l] horrible	[ff] repent	[zz] exile	
[m] crumble	[gg] transfiguration	[aaa] finish	
[n] gods	[hh] Ahab	[bbb] persecuted	
[o] idols	[ii] Jezebel	[ccc] reminded	
[p] divided	[jj] execution	[ddd] God	
[q] divided	[kk] Elisha	[eee] jurisdiction	
[r] ten	[ll] nature	[fff] persecution	
[s] Rehoboam	[mm] nations	[ggg] danger	
[t] antagonize	[nn] allegiance	[hhh] remnant	