

1 KINGS Bible Reading Schedule

2 Weeks

WEEK 1

This week's readings highlight the rise of Solomon as David's predecessor. Solomon was God's choice but the pathway to get there was not exactly smooth. A high point in the story records the invitation from God to Solomon that he was welcome to ask for anything he wanted. His answer to God pleased the Lord because he asked for wisdom. At several transition moments in Solomon's reign, he displayed amazing wisdom and discernment. However, these 10 chapters can give us a false impression that all is well. As long as Solomon would walk in the ways of the Lord he would prosper. As you read, thoughtfully consider how Solomon might be leaving room for a deviation from God's will.

DAY 1 – 1 Kings 1 & 2

I know that this is a longer reading but the message flows best as we read this introduction of Solomon's beginning as ruler over Israel. The last statement says, "So the kingdom was now firmly in Solomon's grip." (2:46) The first thing I noticed is a statement about David that we have recognized previously. Adonijah took things into his own hands because that is what he had done growing up. "Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, 'Why are you doing that?'" David's failures as a father are sobering. We usually appreciate David for his positive example of faithfulness to God. But his negative example is also something we must notice and heed. The intensity of these two chapters showed us what can happen when a father neglects his primary role with his children. At least David steps up to the plate and affirms his successor as Solomon. In 1:29, David assures Bathsheba that Solomon is God's choice as the next King of Israel. I am sure that put Bathsheba at ease because otherwise her life and her son's life were in jeopardy. Zadok, the priest, and Nathan, the prophet anoint Solomon in 1:39-40. From this point, the expected outcome would be the execution of Adonijah, Solomon's brother. Solomon gives him grace in 1:50-53, but that would not last long as Adonijah's true intentions were never far from him wanting more power and a pathway to the throne. His request to marry Abishag seems innocent enough but his words give his motivation away: "As you know, the kingdom was rightfully mine; all Israel wanted me to be the next king. But the tables were turned..." (2:15-16) Possession of the king's concubine was a mark of royal legitimacy. Adonijah could launch a claim to the throne with Abishag as his wife. This seems complicated and all the more so because David did not lead his family well. It is hard to understand the dynamics of kingship and Old Testament culture but the main premise was allegiance to God which is still true today. What stood out to you in this fascinating story of Solomon's launch as king?

DAY 2 – 1 Kings 3 & 4

There's no doubt that Solomon's choice of wisdom is the most riveting part of our reading today especially since we are studying wisdom and how to get it on Sunday mornings. It is easy to recognize the wisdom of Solomon. We have so many examples in the story and throughout God's Word. Solomon wrote Proverbs, songs (Psalms 27 & 127), love poetry (the Song of Songs), and a book we just studied Ecclesiastes. In Chapter 4 beginning in verses 29 through 33, we read about some more unexpected talents and extended intelligence. Isn't that fascinating? He was wise and smart, right? Verse 33, "He could speak with authority about all kinds of plants, from the great cedar of Lebanon to the tiny hyssop that grows from the cracks in a wall. He could also speak about animals, birds, small creatures, and fish." I actually don't ever remember reading this list of his knowledge and understanding. Verse 29 says, "God gave Solomon very great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge as vast as the sands of the seashore." God was abundantly generous to Solomon in many ways which seems marvelous and does give us a picture of God's generosity. But I know the whole story and have discovered that too much has the potential of affecting my thinking so that more is better and that I am really special on my own merit. Could it be that Solomon's wisdom and wealth were a test from God? Would Solomon remain faithful to the Lord? Would he continually put God first? I anticipate this journey with Solomon as one with eyes wide open. How about you? What would you say to God if he asked, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you?" (3:5)

DAY 3 – 1 Kings 5 & 6

Obviously, the focal point of our reading today is on building the Temple. That may seem insignificant or a reading that you can skim over. But this is such an important historical event. The task was huge, taking seven years to complete (6:18). Solomon needed to take great care to erect "a Temple to honor the name of the Lord." (5:3) Worship has been affirmed in the Scriptures, time and again, as pleasing to our God. The Temple represented the priority of worship and communion with God. David wrote these words in Psalm 27:4-6, "The one thing I ask of the Lord—the thing I seek most—is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in his Temple. For he will conceal me there when troubles come, he will hide me in his sanctuary. He will place me out of reach on a high rock. Then I will hold my head high above my enemies who surround me. At his sanctuary I will offer sacrifices with shouts of joy, singing and praising to the Lord with music." The Temple highlights the significance of worship and the closeness of God for those who seek him. King Solomon orchestrated the elaborate process of building the Temple with materials, craftsmen, workers, design, and details necessary to follow the Lord's direction in building his sanctuary. We have had the privilege of reading these steps that result in a temple for the honor of Yahweh's name. What do you notice about the construction of God's house that caught your eye? How might this speak to your dedication to worship? How eager are you to join others in worship of our great God? May the focus on worshipping as well as the building of God's house stir your heart with anticipation of lifting up His Name together with other believers.

DAY 4 – 1 Kings 7 & 8

Chapter 8 easily gets my attention. The celebration and inspiration of dedicating the Temple are worth a second read. Solomon's prayer and his blessing on the Temple and on the people are moving to me. I do not question his sincerity at this point. He seems to be all in. Verse 10 is the high point as God's presence

descends to fill the Temple. There had been several months of preparation even after the Temple was completed. The festival would be the focal point for the people and a date remembered by all those who attended. They came from the North and the South to experience this grand event for themselves. They were not disappointed because God showed up through a dense cloud that was none other than the glorious presence of God. Solomon's first response is to pray and acknowledge the Lord to those gathered. I love when the Word retells stories of God showing up. It always proves to be special. Isaiah is changed forever in Isaiah 6 because he encounters the exalted One whose glory filled the Temple. I could get consumed with all of the times the Scriptures tell us about God's presence moving on an individual or on a group. The Transfiguration is a New Testament example of God's presence being seen and heard (Luke 9:28-36). I have felt God's presence many times but I don't have a memory of seeing God or hearing his audible voice. But he has whispered many times to me as we read in the Scriptures. This had to be a marvelous experience with the new Temple, the Ark of the Covenant, the throng of people, the inspiring prayer of the King, and the spiritual renewal that took place. They would go home blessed and full of joy (8:66). This demonstrates God's faithfulness as he had again chosen the people of Israel as his very own. I like what Peter wrote in 1 Peter 2:9-10 about how significant it is to be the people of God. These words apply to you as well. After this long reading, think about what it would have been like to be there in that day. How important is the presence of God? When are there times in your life when you sense he is the closest? How might this factual record of the dedication of the Temple be applied in your life?

DAY 5 – 1 Kings 9 & 10

I ask myself why the Scripture includes the extent of Solomon's riches. I think it is twofold: first, God had promised Solomon riches and honor in 3:13 because God was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom and not riches. But the Lord said he would give Solomon those as well. This shows the fulfillment of God's promise to Solomon. Secondly, it also prepares us for human decline since riches can never make one truly happy. We recall our sermon series on Ecclesiastes as Solomon describes his abundance as "hebel." It is no more than a fleeting vapor. We are reading about the height of Solomon's exploits and how he impressed the other kings in that part of the world. The most telling encounter is with the Queen of Sheba. The location of Sheba points to present-day Yemen. Southwestern Arabia was a notable center of commerce in those days. So, it would be hard to impress the Queen who was very wealthy herself. But what seems to impress her the most is Solomon's wisdom and she recognizes that the Lord YOUR God is the One who has given you this wisdom and prosperity. But our reading today began with God's visitation to Solomon. The crucial issue is allegiance. Our God will not accept a side-by-side allegiance with other gods. The Lord calls that abandonment, "But if you or your descendants abandon me... serve and worship other gods, then..." (9:6) The conditions of the covenant hinged on allegiance. Our God will not share his rightful place with any other. "You shall have no other gods before me." (Exodus 20:3) This is actually the first commandment in the Decalogue. It is similar to the greatest command, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart..." From my vantage point, Solomon had too much too easy. He drifted from humility to self-sufficiency. This will be in full view as we read chapter 11 next week. We have completed our week of readings on the rise of Solomon. What stands out to you? Why?

WEEK 2

We begin with the decline of Solomon's life, to the dismal divided kingdom, to a readied anticipation for Elijah who becomes the prophet, to a small glimpse of hope... This is our journey for this coming week. I decided that we should continue with the history of Israel following the reign of David. It may not be very pleasant but we are sure to learn what NOT to do, right?

DAY 1—1 Kings 11 & 12

"In Solomon's old age, they (his wives) turned his heart to worship other gods instead of being completely faithful to the Lord his God, as his father, David, had been." (11:4) You knew this was coming because I had alluded to it previously. It is still hard for me to understand how this could happen after God had been so good to Solomon and made him successful in so many ways. The main influence in Solomon's decline is attributed to his wives. To please his wives, he would include their pagan rituals and bring their idols into his life, and defiled the city of David as well as the surrounding area. He did not heed his father's warnings, leading to the chaos found in the following chapters as God's people are divided and will be at war with each other. The story of Jeroboam and Rehoboam unfolds for the majority of our reading today. The possibility of restoration and working together seems within reach if Rehoboam would have listened to wise advice (12:6-14). Wise counsel has served me well many times. Rehoboam violated an important principle. Those who have lived longer have a better view of the implications of what to do next. Rehoboam listened to his peer group and peer pressure was his undoing. We have been studying wisdom on Sundays. We can grow in wisdom through the counsel of others. But Solomon's wives gave him ungodly advice and it weakened his resolve and he disobeyed the Lord by going along with his wives. Rehoboam listened to his peers and would live a life of conflict for the rest of his days. "Plans go wrong for a lack of counsel; many advisers bring success." (Proverbs 15:22) That is "wise" advisers bring success. It is very important to have the right people giving you advice and influencing your life. "Bad company corrupts good character." (1 COR 15:33) Who are your main influencers? How will others help you gain wisdom?

DAY 2 – 1 Kings 13 & 14

Jeroboam and Rehoboam set the stage for repetition as king after king will do what is evil in the eyes of the Lord. At first, I didn't like the story in chapter 13. The man of God seems tricked by the older prophet. It doesn't seem fair. Maybe you feel similarly but I have thought more deeply about this and I have discovered a powerful lesson for me. Yesterday I highlighted the wisdom gleaned from other wise people. But the input of people is always secondary to God. The man of God had his instructions and a human told him otherwise. How quickly do I give into the advice of others when I have clearly heard from God? In the story, Jeroboam is not off the hook just because the man of God was killed. Another prophet will add to the rebuke of God over the life and descendants of Jeroboam. "Do not worship the Lord your God in the way these pagan peoples worship their gods. Rather, you must seek the Lord your God at the place of worship he himself will choose from among all the tribes—a place where his name will be honored." (Deuteronomy 12:4-5) Neither Rehoboam or Jeroboam considered the commands of God regarding idols as worth obeying. The theme of exclusivity for Yahweh seems to be the most significant violation for both of these kings and the people they led. I have mentioned this already but

the first commandment says it all, “You shall have no other gods before me.” I am sure that these disobedient kings had other sins in their lives but nothing matches the lack of wholehearted devotion to God. This is the most grievous sin to God. Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these other things will be added as well. That’s my wording for Matthew 6:33. How do you respond to our reading today? Is there a warning for you to consider?

DAY 3 – 1 Kings 15 & 16

Let me assure you that interesting days are ahead. We are on the cusp of Ahab & Jezebel; names I am sure you recognize. But in tomorrow’s reading, we will meet Elijah. Until then, let’s be encouraged by a king named Asa. He will reign for 41 years with this description, “Asa did what was pleasing in the Lord’s sight...” (15:11) Asa led many reforms which were also pleasing to God which goes along with 2 Chronicles 15:1-7 which tells us that the prophet Azariah had a positive spiritual impact on Asa. The rest of our readings pertain to Israel and leave us feeling empty. There is one ugly act after another leading up to the most wicked king of them all, Ahab. Ahab had some military success but this did not matter because his moral character and his disloyalty to God stained anything and everything that might seem positive. Ahab was nothing more than a traitor to God. God is about to raise up the prophet Elijah to confront Ahab and Jezebel’s prophets and to reassert the supremacy of God. No one appears to be learning from the mistakes and sins of others. Jeroboam grievously sinned against God and God destroyed Jeroboam’s descendants. Baasha repeats the sins of Jeroboam thinking he could get away with it and yet his descendants have the same outcome. (16:11-13) The evidence of repeated sins is clear in these chapters but soon we will see that something positive can be handed down as well. Asa lives in allegiance to God and his son Jehoshaphat will follow in his footsteps (15:24). We will have to wait a few days before we get to read about Jehoshaphat. I know enough to tell you that it will be an uplifting to read. “You must not make for yourself an idol of any kind or an image of anything in the heavens or on the earth or in the sea. You must not bow down to them or worship them, for I, the Lord your God, am a jealous God who will not tolerate your affection for any other gods. I lay the sins of the parents upon their children; the entire family is affected—even children in the third and fourth generations of those who reject me. But I lavish unfailing love for a thousand generations on those who love me and obey my commands.” (Deuteronomy 5:8-10) Why might this motivate you to live closer to the Lord and obey his commands?

DAY 4 – 1 Kings 17 & 18

For being such a monumental figure in the history of Israel, we don’t know much about Elijah up to this point. He appears on the scene suddenly and announces the absence of rain. This is a direct confrontation with Baal, a Canaanite fertility god of storm and rain. But Elijah is not exempt from the retaliation of Ahab so he has to hide for these three years of drought. Chapter 17 is the record of Elijah’s life of seclusion but it isn’t boring. The widow he helps announces, “Now I know for sure that you are a man of God and that God truly speaks through you.” (17:24) Chapter 18 raises the stakes and Elijah boldly presents himself to King Ahab. This is an especially powerful chapter because it clearly reveals Yahweh as the only true God who has power over the events of mankind. The storyline of the confrontation on Mount Carmel is classic. Elijah’s taunts match how the people thought about their gods as if they had human needs. Egyptian priests would actually awaken their god, then feed, wash, and

dress the idol in fresh clothing. Elijah goes so far as to suggest that their god is relieving himself. The courage and faith of Elijah are such a strong example to us even when outnumbered and facing death if he should lose the contest. After a closer read, I realized that Elijah utilized 12 stones for the altar, and yet the kingdom was divided at this time so Israel was technically only 10 tribes. This could have offended the people. But Elijah's focus is on the faithfulness and immutability of God. He put all of his eggs in one basket. God would come through or Elijah would meet God sooner than expected. These two chapters are so interesting and stir our faith. How did God speak to you through the reading today?

DAY 5 – 1 Kings 19 & 20

If you like war movies, you might be more drawn to chapter 20. But the story of chapter 19 speaks to me more powerfully and personally than any war story. Of course, there's nothing about King Ahab that makes me want to see him succeed; and in the end, he disobeys God as you would expect. The Lord did not give Ahab victory because of his righteousness but only because of God's mercy for the people. However, in chapter 19, I read about confrontation, discouragement, loneliness, God's visitation, and God's solution. There are so many applicable aspects of Elijah's journey that my main attention was on this chapter. Elijah is such a fascinating character. He displayed amazing courage in chapter 18 and the first thing we read about in 19 is that he is afraid. Add to that, by verse 4, he wants to die. But an angel intervenes with nourishment and direction. He ends up at the Mountain of God, a mere 200-mile trip. Some have suggested that Elijah arrived at the very cave where God appeared to Moses (Exodus 33:21-23). The whisper of God is an unforgettable scene that highlights a repeated theme in the Bible of God speaking softly. The personal effect on Elijah is evident in verse 13. Elijah needed direction & guidance... that's God's solution which is given to him from the Lord in verses 15-18. This is really a recommissioning for this dynamic prophet. Both Hazael and Jehu will be used by God to carry out God's judgment in 2 Kings 8 & 9. Also, Elijah's prophetic ministry will be transferred to Elisha as Elijah will help prepare this new prophet for God's call on his life. These instructions help Elijah to get his eyes off of himself and continue serving God with courage. I really believe in the whisper of God. I wouldn't testify that God whispers to me often but I have heard to gentle whisper from him from time to time, which often means so much to me, at just the right time; just like Elijah needed to hear from God. What part of chapter 19 means the most to you? Why?

DAY 6 – 1 Kings 21 & 22

In order to finish 1 Kings this week, I have given you 6 readings, as you can tell. Also, because the story flows right into 2 Kings, I plan for us to spend two more weeks reading the history of the divided kingdom. Of all the different events in these chapters, my attention was drawn to Jehoshaphat because I know he was a good king and honored the Lord unlike any of the rulers in Israel. But his story seems to conclude with the record of his death in 22:50, but we learn more about him by 2 Kings 3. His story does inspire me, as you will see. But the aspect of the reading that provoke my concern was the devilish arrogance of Jezebel and the prophetic warning to Ahab. The story of Naboth is upsetting, to say the least. He actually was honoring the law of Leviticus 25 which required inherited property to stay in the family or tribe that originally owned it. Ahab knew that law but God's law did not matter to his wife, Jezebel, nor did the value of human life matter to her. Even though it doesn't say that Naboth's sons were stoned as well. The chances are they were so that Naboth would no longer have any male heirs.

Ahab could then exercise the royal prerogative to confiscate the property. Elijah proclaims disaster on Ahab in verses 20-22. But Jezebel is equally as guilty. The time frame of judgment and the mercy of God, because Ahab repents, makes me uncomfortable. But justice is certain even though it is delayed in this case. In fact, three years would pass before Ahab would meet his doom and even longer for his wife (2 Kings 9:21f). After Ahab repents (21:27), our merciful God seemingly gives Ahab the opportunity to display genuine repentance which does not happen. Chapter 22 seals his fate. Our God is amazingly patient. We are ready for the Lord to bring judgment sooner than later. However, the heartbeat of God is summarized in 2 Peter 3:9, "The Lord isn't really being slow about his promise (the day of Judgment, 3:7), as some people think. No, he is being patient for your sake. He does not want anyone to be destroyed, but wants everyone to repent." Do you believe God is just? What would it mean for you to have more patience in a world that ignores God? How does the conclusion of 1 Kings speak to you?