

The Book of 1 Kings

Listed Scriptures

1 Kings 8, 12, 16–19

Lesson Aim

- 1) That the students will have basic knowledge about the history of the kingdoms of Israel and Judah and the events in the lives of a few major kings and prophets
- 2) That the students will understand the need to be vigilant at all times and to hold fast onto God without any compromise

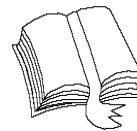
Memory Verse

“Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built.” (1 Kgs 8:27)

Bible Reading For This Week (for students and teachers)

1 Kings 8, 12, 16–19

B I B L E B A C K G R O U N D



The four books, 1, 2 Samuel and 1, 2 Kings, deal with the kingdom of Israel (including Judah after the division). Beginning with the unstable ascents of Saul and David to the throne, the whole series continues with the division of the kingdom under Rehoboam and thereafter, the separate lines of kings until the Northern Kingdom of Israel disappears in 722 B.C. After that the historical record focuses on the Judean kings up to 586 B.C., when the Southern Kingdom is taken into exile by the Babylonians.

Before the division, the name “Israel” designated the entire nation chosen by God to be His people. After the division, the Northern Kingdom was known as Israel while the Southern Kingdom was called Judah. After the post-exilic age (when the Israelites were taken into captivity in foreign Assyrian and then Babylonian lands),

the residents of Judah were regularly called the “Jews.” But the name Israel was also used. In the New Testament Israel simply referred to the Jewish people.

The chronicler of the events recorded in Kings (both parts 1 and 2) is unknown. The narratives were probably compiled during the end of the Southern Kingdom. There are many corresponding episodes found in 1, 2 Chronicles.

1 Kings contains events leading from the old age of David, through the reign of Solomon and the division of the kingdom, to the days of Ahab.

W A R M U P



We’ve often heard about the Northern and Southern Kingdoms of Israel. Do you know how the people of God divided themselves into two kingdoms? And, how many of the kings of each kingdom do you know about? Can you name at least a few of them? In addition, who were the prophets who existed during the times of the kings? Can you name a few of them and state what some of their great works or messages were?

It is not possible to study all the kings and prophets in just one or two lessons. However, in the next two lessons, we shall attempt to take a look at a few of them and learn from their lives.

B I B L E S T U D Y



Part 1

Solomon’s Reign

David’s own son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the throne. That prompted David to officially pronounce Solomon as his successor and have the priest Zadok anoint him as king.

Before his death, David instructed Solomon to “be strong and prove [himself] a man” and to “keep the charge of the Lord God; to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments and His testimonies” (2:2, 3). This is the formula of successful living that holds true even today.

Right after having been anointed king of Israel, Solomon went to Gibeon and offered sacrifices to the Lord. It was there that God appeared to him and granted him his request for wisdom to rule the country well. On top of that, God promised him wealth and prosperity for his kingdom.

Solomon never forgot the unfulfilled ambition that David had of building a temple for God. He made a pact with Hiram, the king of Tyre, to buy cedar and cypress logs from him. Hundreds of thousands of people participated in the great work of temple building. Only the best stones, metals and wood were used. It was no wonder that the temple was believed to be the most opulent of all the temples that were ever built.

After the completion of the temple, Solomon moved the ark of the covenant into the holy of holies (the most holy place). Solomon, together with all the congregation of Israel, offered sacrifices to the Lord and dedicated the temple. Solomon blessed the congregation. The acceptance of God could be seen when His glorious cloud came from heaven and filled the whole temple. That was the most glorious and peaceful moment for the people of Israel.

Thereafter, Solomon continued a series of different construction projects for himself. The number of constructions during the reign of Solomon probably far exceeded that of any other king on the face of the earth. He gained great wealth from the many tributes paid to him and his fame spread to different foreign regions.

Unfortunately, Solomon departed from the teachings of God by taking foreign wives and letting them lead him astray to worship other gods. Consequently, various enemies rose against Israel and Solomon’s life ended in turmoil. His predicament should definitely be a warning to us. It is important to hold fast onto God, especially when things are going well, for that’s when it might be easiest to become complacent and lose our vigilance.

Teaching Tips

Bring pictures of the temple with you to class. Such pictures are available in many Bible reference books and even off the Internet. Also, have a diagram of the layout of the temple. This is available in the map section of most reference Bibles. This will help the students construct a better mental representation of the temple. You can talk about the various sections of the temple, which correspond with the Tent of Meeting in many ways.



Part 2

Rehoboam and Jeroboam

After the death of Solomon, his son Rehoboam succeeded the throne. In his moment of folly, he refused the advice of the elders of the state and chose to listen to his friends who were much younger and inexperienced. So, he chose to impose greater tax burdens on the people of Israel and spoke harshly to them in an attempt to consolidate his power. His plan backfired and there was a revolt against him. That caused the great division of the kingdom into the Northern and Southern Kingdoms. Jeroboam, the leader of the revolt, gained ten out of the twelve tribes and became king of the Northern Kingdom, known as Israel. Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin continued with Rehoboam, and they formed the Southern Kingdom of Judah.

You can count with your fingers how many of the kings obeyed God. After Solomon, the people of God simply went through one cycle after another of turmoil, often at the hands of foreign enemies. Yet, that did not deter them from doing evil. Neither did they pause to think about the cause of their plight, which might have led them to realization and repentance. Finally, the Northern Kingdom was destroyed when the Assyrians invaded their land about the year 722 B.C. The Southern Kingdom did not survive long after that. The Babylonian Empire arose, bringing the mighty Assyrians into its subjection and the Southern Kingdom of Judah finally fell around the year 586 B.C. It is indeed sad to see that a people specially chosen by God should fall and deteriorate from grace like this.



Part 3

Ahab and Elijah

King Ahab was one of the most wicked kings in the history of the Israelite nation. He "did evil in the sight of the Lord and did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him" (1 Kgs 16:30, 33). He further took Jezebel, the Sidonian princess, as wife (1 Kgs 16:31). The Sidonians worshiped idols, particularly Baal. Needless to say, Ahab went the way of setting up altars for the pagan gods and led the country in the many sinful acts associated with idol-worship of that time.

At such a decadent and turbulent time, God's grace was withdrawn from the peo-

ple. Elijah, a true prophet of God, foretold that there would be a severe drought for years. Unless the prophet himself said otherwise, the drought would continue.

During the great famine, God took care of Elijah. The amazing grace and power of God upon His faithful servants can be clearly seen. Elijah was firstly sent to the Brook Cherith, where God sent ravens to bring him bread and meat, and he drank of the water from the brook. When the brook dried up as a result of the drought, God sent him to the widow of Zarephath. Miraculously, the bin of flour and the jar of oil that belonged to the widow did not run dry until the day God sent rain on the land again. Today, this miracle still bears testimony to God's providence for all who trust in Him.

Another well-known miracle which God performed through the hands of Elijah was the defeat of the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal (and another four hundred prophets of Asherah; cf. 1 Kgs 18:19). Two altars were set up, one by the prophets of Baal and the other by Elijah. The false prophets cried out the whole day, invoking the name of Baal and even cutting themselves, all to no avail. After they were done, it was Elijah's turn. Water was even poured on the sacrifice and the wood and the trenches around the altar were filled. Elijah then prayed and called upon God to send fire to consume the sacrifice, so that the hearts of the people of Israel would once again turn back to God. Of course, fire came down from heaven and burned up the sacrifice. The prophets of Baal were seized and killed.

A stark contrast to the life of Elijah is none other than Ahab. While Elijah's life was full of the manifestation of God's power, Ahab did not even wake up from the stupor of sin to realize God's power. His greatest mistake was probably in his marriage. The Sidonians were an idol-worshipping people who were known to commit great evil in their worship of Baal and Asherah (such as fertility rites and even self-injury). How Ahab could marry a woman who herself practiced such evil is indeed a great puzzle. Jezebel was definitely a wrong choice of spouse for Ahab, for she stirred him up to do many wicked deeds (1 Kgs 21:25). His life ended in violence as he died in battle.

C H E C K F O R U N D E R S T A N D I N G



1

In what ways was Solomon a good king?

- 2 Why do you think Solomon did not keep his faith towards the latter part of his life?
- 3 What were some of the miracles in the life of Elijah which proved that he was indeed a prophet of God, with God's abidance?
- 4 What similarities do you see in Solomon and Ahab?

L I F E A P P L I C A T I O N



Making Choices

From the lives of Solomon and Ahab, we see that their choice of spouses was clearly a determining factor in their fall away from God's grace. Their lives teach us that the friends or loved ones we choose to be close to are crucial in our walk with God. Let us now look at three case studies and try to gather some insight into what we ought to be watchful about when we make choices in our own lives.

Case 1

Kirsten, a church sister, got into a very well known college. Unfortunately, the college was rather far from church and she could only attend services when she had her semester breaks, because that's when she returned home. There were no other brothers or sisters at her college, so she could not have any fellowship with them.

Kirsten found herself constantly surrounded by friends who did not share the same interests as her, being of different faiths and hence having different ways of life. In the first few months, she found herself struggling really hard, trying not to be an outcast and at the same time keeping the Christian teachings she was brought up to observe. It was hard to be a loner and the odd one out all the time. Slowly Kirsten gave in. It started with compromising on Sabbath Day observance. Her friends always asked her to hang out with them on Saturdays. Even though she didn't get to go to church for Sabbath services, she had resolved to keep the Sabbath by listening to the dozens of sermon cassette tapes she had brought from home. However, over time, she gave in to the invitations. Then soon enough, she found herself looking forward to the weekend as a time to go out with friends.

Gradually, she found that Bible reading just didn't shed any new light on matters of faith anymore. A heavy school work load and socializing were enough to occu-

py her time. She slowly began to lose touch with God. Prayers became shorter and lacking in content. She remembered God, but found it hard to include or feel God in her life. She picked up the ideas and ways of her friends; she enjoyed all types of movies, she loved going to parties, and dressing up like she had never dared to . . . she embraced many ideas which were contrary to the teachings of the Bible. At the time of graduation, Kirsten had become completely changed. She decided that she could no longer see herself as a Christian anymore, simply because the faith she used to have had become something she could not visualize having in her life again.

Questions to think about:

1. *What options about her lifestyle (activities) and friends did Kirsten face from the time she applied to college to the time she graduated from college?*
2. *Kirsten started out with the strong intention to worship God and keep her faith amidst people who did not know God. Why do you think she failed to keep her resolution?*
3. *What are some of the things she could have done to help herself maintain her life of faith even though she was far from church members or a church to go to for regular services?*
4. *What are some of the things her peers from the church, or other church members, could have done to prevent her from falling away from the faith?*
5. *Imagine yourself in the shoes of Kirsten when she was in her senior year in high school and when she was in college. What would you have done differently?*

Case 2

Sam was recently baptized in the True Jesus Church after a neighbor introduced him to the gospel. When he decided to accept baptism, he looked back on many of his old ways and realized that those were rather senseless things. He resolved not to go back to those activities after baptism. He attended services diligently and led a life of Bible reading and prayer. Soon he also received the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately, many of the friends Sam used to do things with were reluctant to give up on this friend so easily. They continued to ask him out often and hoped that Sam would join them like he used to. Even when Sam would go out with them the occa-

sional time, he always wanted to go home early. He was no longer interested in partying late into the night. Neither was he keen on checking out cute girls anymore. Sam's friends could not understand what had come over him, that he had become "so holy."

For Sam, it was a big dilemma. On the one hand, he wanted to start life afresh after baptism. However, it was just not possible to completely cut all ties with his friends just because he had converted to Christianity. He wanted to be able to keep his old friends while making new ones in church. He hoped that he could bring his friends to know God. Yet, he knew that if he were to continue with his old buddies, he might go back to his old ways. He just didn't feel he could win them over to Christ.

Questions to think about:

1. Sam was caught between his resolution to be a good Christian and his friendships with his non-Christian friends. What were some of his struggles and what choices did he face?
2. Sam had good intentions in wanting to bring his friends to know God. Do you think that by joining them in their activities Sam could have succeeded in winning them over? If you had been Sam, what would you have done?
3. If you were one of the brothers in church who knew Sam and his struggles, what advice would you give Sam? What are some things you would do to help him?

Case 3

Jim has always been a very good youth in the church and a good son at home. At school, he's also an exemplary student. One of his favorite past times is to chat and play games online with people from all parts of the world. One summer, when he had a lot of free time, he spent many hours a day in front of his computer. Soon, he found that he could not tear himself away. He loved some of the games so much that he even sacrificed his quiet time with God just to wait for the right opponents online. He never thought that he would be addicted to the Internet. There were even times when he got out of bed when the whole family had gone to sleep just to play another round. He found that he could not concentrate in his prayers anymore. He even skipped Bible reading. He knew that the situation had to be stopped, but he didn't know how.

Questions to think about:

1. What do you think could be some of the causes of Jim's preoccupation with chatting and playing games online?
2. Is there anything that friends or RE teachers or his parents could have done to prevent his addiction?
3. If Jim confides his problem to you, how would you advise him to stop?
4. What are some of the things that friends in church can do to help Jim?

Now that you have read the stories about others, think of your own situation. Are there internal struggles that you have that are similar to those described in the case studies? Write your own case study, incorporating your own struggles. Then, come up with some questions. After that, share your stories with the class and see if they can come up with solutions to your questions.

REFLECTION & PRAYER



King Solomon is often hailed as the wisest king that ever lived. Under his reign, the kingdom of Israel was prosperous and well-respected by nations far and wide. He himself enjoyed almost all the pleasures of this earth – education, knowledge, great cuisine, all forms of physical enjoyment. Yet, at the end of his life, he had this to say:

"Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these, God will bring you into judgment." (Eccl 11:9)

"Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil." (Eccl 12:13, 14)

Many things may seem important to us at certain points in our lives. But, the significance of these things pass

away, and other things replace them as priorities. Some things are really important, and we should never forgo them just for the sake of fleeting pleasures. As children of God, we should always pray that God will give us the wisdom to know what is truly precious and important, so that in our decision-making, we will always make the best choice, and be preserved in His grace.