

2019 Through the Bible Reading: *Bible Study Support*

The Books of 1 & 2 Kings	
Background (Who, what, why, when)	<p>1 & 2 Kings was originally a single written work, which chronicled the periods from 971 BC (the transition from David to Solomon) to 586 BC (the Babylonian exile). 1 Kings opens with the passing of King David. Although one of his sons, Adonijah, attempts to take the kingdom that was promised to Solomon, David is able to appoint Solomon as king before his death. King Solomon's reign begins in faithful service to God with Solomon asking for wisdom and discernment above all else. The result is a flourishing kingdom, which includes the completion of the Temple where the Ark of the Covenant (God's Commandments) was kept.</p> <p>King Solomon, sadly, marries many pagan wives in order to create alliances with foreign nations, and is led astray as he engages in idolatry by worshiping their many gods. In 1 Kings 11:11, God reveals his displeasure with Solomon for not keeping His commands, <i>"Since this is your attitude and you have not kept your covenant and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates"</i> (NIV). The twelve tribes of God's people divide with Israel to the north and Judah to the south.</p> <p>The majority of the kings refused to follow God and encouraged idolatry, with King Ahab and Jezebel being the most notorious. Although the succession of kingdoms are riddled with rulers that lead God's people astray, there is hope to be found in those that boldly keep God's commands, confront evil and advocate repentance, such as the prophet Elijah, who also performed many miracles. Elijah's ministry is succeeded by his apprentice, Elisha, and despite prophetic warnings, the divided nations ultimately fall – Israel to the Assyrians and later, Judah to the Babylonians.</p>
Interesting Facts in Kings	<p>Kings is a historical account of God's people being led astray by their leaders whose selfish ambitions supersede God's divine providence. Instead of keeping His commands, even the wisest king, Solomon, is lured by women and idols. What begins as a thriving and prosperous kingdom, ultimately becomes a divided nation corrupted by evil, and eventually ends in exile.</p> <p>Elijah's apprentice, Elisha, prophesized and performed a great deal more miracles than his mentor, as he asked for a double portion of his spirit before Elijah died (2 Kings 2:9).</p> <p>Although the majority of kings led God's people astray, there is good to be found in those that acted in obedience and attempted to point the people back to God and away from idolatry. Of the kings of Israel, none were faithful to God. Within Judah there were eight good kings, though all ended their reign with compromises still apparent. In Judah, both Hezekiah and Josiah repaired the Temple and gathered their people for Passover. Even though some of the God-fearing kings were successful in directing the people away from worshiping false gods, often the kings that followed once again turned away from God's commands and led with evil intentions.</p>
Reasonable Defense for Kings	<p>Kings is a great example in how faith in national identity and leadership can lead to failure (regardless of the depth of wisdom or wealth of the leader). Elijah illustrates what a faithful relationship with God looks like even in the face of religious persecution. Those who courageously step out in faith are</p>

	provided with whatever they need and hear God’s voice and guidance.
Memory Verse	<i>“And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word”</i> (1 Kings 18:21 NKJV).
Practical Application to memory verse	The Hebrew word for “opinions” is <i>sa’ip</i> , which generally refers to the boughs of a tree or clefts in a rock, but can also refer to divided thoughts. When Solomon kept his focus on God, his kingdom flourished and his wisdom and wealth were fruitful. Once Solomon engaged in idolatry, along with the other kings that succeeded him, their faith became divided. They were no longer in obedience to God or in an intimate relationship with Him. What are your idols? Is there something in your life that is taking precedence over your relationship with God? Identify what divides your heart and refocus it in pursuit of what God’s heart wants – for you to be in a symbiotic relationship with Him; reading His Word; engaged in intentional prayer time; loving and serving others, and making disciples for His Kingdom.
Life Application from Biblical Themes in Kings	<p>Although Solomon’s wisdom and power brought honor to the people of Israel and to God, he and his successors disobeyed God’s commandments. They worshiped other gods, which changed their faith and the way they governed, and ultimately led to their downfall. Wisdom, power and achievement are from God as He is in control of everything. We cannot lead well if we ignore God’s guidelines. Regardless if you are a leader or not, your effectiveness depends on listening to and obeying God’s Word. Don’t let your selfish ambitions distort what God wants for you – a heart that pursues Him and loves others.</p> <p>Each king had God’s commands, priest or a prophet, and the knowledge of the mistakes of other leaders that preceded them. Whenever they repented and returned to God, God heard their prayer and forgave them. God hears us and forgives us when we pray – as long as we trust him and are willing to turn away from sin. If our heart is in pursuit of Him, and we confess and forsake our sin, God will give us a fresh start and a desire to live for Him.</p>