1 Kings

Who, When, Where

Written by Jeremiah. Jeremiah was a young prophet in Jerusalem around the time of the Exile.
Traditionally 1 Kings was thought to have been written down by Jeremiah who lived in Israel, but wasn't born until more than 200 years after all these events. It is possible that he collated a collection of documents into one scroll.

This book covers the period from the death of David, about 970BC through to when Jehoshaphat and Ahazaiah were reigning in Judah and Israel. About 860BC.
During this period several other books were written, Proverbs, Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes. And the book of 2 Chronicles overlaps 1 Kings almost entirely.

It covers the reign of Solomon, but mostly the beginning of the divided kingdom. After Solomon died the northern tribes separated from the two southern tribes (Benjamin and Judah). The south was called Judah, the north retained the name Israel.

It was a turbulent time and there were many good kings and bad kings in both the north and south. You will read about more of them in 2 Kings, which used to be all part of the one scroll, but somewhere along the line it was divided into 1 and 2.

It is set in Israel but includes several appearances by the Syrians.

Summary

This is the story of Solomon, son of David and Bathsheba. About how he became king of Israel and what kind of a king he became.

It is also the story of how the kingdom divided into Israel and Judah after Solomon's death.
Solomon would have been a hard act to follow. But his son didn't do very well at all. Isn't it strange how the son of the wisest man who ever lived wasn't very wise. Why do we often fail so badly to pass what we learn on to our children?

It also tells us the story of the prophet Elijah. A powerful man of God.

Before You Read

If you found a genie in a bottle, what would you wish for?

Who would you travel the world to visit? Just to listen to their wisdom.
How much would you be willing to pay for the privilege?
Why haven't you done it? Do you value money above wisdom?

Solomon was David's son. We have seen that David followed Yahweh. Will Solomon break

the trend we have seen so much in the Old Testament… and follow Yahweh like his father did?

1 Kings also contains the exploits of Elijah. Perhaps the most powerful old testament prophet. He did amazing things. Yet every miracle he did, Jesus did one better. See what you think as you read about him in this book.

What do you think it would be like to **be** Elijah? As you read, think about what you would have done if you had been in his place, with his power.

Key Verses

1 Kings 2:15

He [Adonijah] said, "You know that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign. However the kingdom is turned around, and has become my brother's; for it was his from Yahweh.

From a worldly point of view, Adonijah knew he had played the politics well, and he had the position of king, "in the bag". But in one short day Solomon had been publicly appointed as king by David. Adonijah recognised that this was from Yahweh, but he didn't accept it, he kept on with his plotting and scheming.

What is happening in your life which you thought you had under control from your worldly perception, but which Yahweh has overturned? How do you feel about that?
Are you accepting it? Can you just let it go and acknowledge that Yahweh knows best? That Yahweh has the right to do whatever he wants with your life?
Or are you still scheming and plotting like Adonijah?
Adonijah wasn't fighting against his brother. He was fighting against Yahweh.
How about you? Who are you fighting against?

1 Kings 4:21

… Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, and to the border of Egypt.

"The river" is the Euphrates in what is now Iraq. The Philistines lived in what is now Gaza. So this kingdom included most of what is now Syria and Lebanon. And the boundary with Egypt was most likely the Wadi river. Quite a bit bigger than modern Israel.

1 Kings 4:22-23

Solomon's provision for one day was thirty cors of fine flour, sixty measures of meal, ten head of fat cattle, twenty head of cattle out of the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, and gazelles, and roebucks, and fattened fowl.

Wow. That guy could eat! :)
Obviously this is for his whole palace staff and guests, etc.. But that is a lot of food. Every day.

1 Kings 4:24

There were also sodomites in the land….

The word translated sodomites here (and other places in the old testament, literlaly means a male temple prostitute…
So Judah had fallen a long way from Yahweh's intended path.

1 Kings 6:37-7:1

The foundation of Yahweh's house was laid in the fourth year, in the month Ziv. In the eleventh year, in the month Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished throughout all its parts, and according to all its specifications. So he spent seven years building it.
Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.

Solomon spent 7 years building a house for Yahweh. Then he spent 13 years building a house for himself.
How about you? How much time do you spend building the church, the house of God? How much time do you spend building, maintaining, your own house?
How about money? How much do you give to the church? How much do you spend on your own house?

And by the way… in most countries houses are worth more after 10 years than they were when we built them. How much of that capital gain did you give to God, or did you keep it all for yourself?

1 Kings 10, 11, Deuteronomy 17:14

The king was supposed to make a copy of the scroll of Deuteronomy 17 and read it all the days of his life.
It said, "Don't multiply horses, especially not from Egypt", "Don't multiply wives, because they will lead you astray", "Don't greatly multiply gold and silver".

So how did he do?

He had 1400 chariots, 12,000 horsemen, and had to have four cities built just to house them.

He had 700 wives and 300 concubines. And… they turned his heart away after other gods. To the point that the one who was chosen to build a permanent temple for Yahweh to live in, ended up making offerings to other gods.

He had so much gold that silver was considered almost worthless. Annually he had 666 talents of gold. That's almost 25 tons of gold every year! At today's prices that is roughly a billion dollars a year. Just in gold.

The wisest man who ever lived, yet he still made such fundamental mistakes.

1 Kings 11:4-8, 1 Corinthians 15:33

When Solomon was old, his wives turned away his heart after other gods; and his heart was not perfect with Yahweh his God, as the heart of David his father was. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did that which was evil in Yahweh's sight, and didn't go fully after Yahweh, as David his father did. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the mountain that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the children of Ammon. So he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

Don't be led astray, evil company destroys good character.

Solomon's wives weren't evil. But they led him astray to other gods. (As Yahweh had warned way back in Moses' time).
Paul gives us a similar warning in Corinthians.
Our choices of companions can lead us astray. The desire to fit in with those we care about is so strong.
Choose carefully.

1 Kings 11:39

I will afflict the offspring of David for this, but not forever.

not forever. Yahweh still had a long term plan for his people. They would be back.

1 Kings 11:41

Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, aren't they written in the book of the acts of Solomon?

"The Acts of Solomon" is one of the "books" mentioned in the Bible that we no longer have.
Also, "The Wars of Yahweh", the history of Nathan, the prophecy of Ahijah, the visions of Iddo, and letters to the Laodiceans, as well as a few others.

1 Kings 12:8

But he abandoned the counsel of the old men which they had given him, and took counsel with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him.

Rehoboam went against the counsel of old men who had served Solomon, and went instead with the counsel of his young friends who had no experience.
This is the tragedy of our generation. Everything "Old School" is automatically wrong and derided. Everything "New School" is automatically better and "cool".
It will not always be that older people's advice is right. But you need a very good reason to go against their advice. Make sure it's not just "peer pressure" or trying to look cool in front of your friends.

1 Kings 12:15

So the king didn't listen to the people; for it was a thing brought about from Yahweh, that he might establish his word, which Yahweh spoke by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

So Rehoboam was destined to not listen to the wisdom of his elders. Because Yahweh was fulfilling something he had already said.
Has he said anything about our generation?

1 Kings 14:2

Jeroboam said to his wife, "Please get up and disguise yourself, so that you won't be recognized as Jeroboam's wife…

Jeroboam has been worshipping other gods. But his son is sick, so he turns back to the prophet of Yahweh who prophecied good things about him before.
But to trick the prophet he sends his wife, and disguises her.
It looks like he was thinking that if he can just get the prophet to give good news, then Yahweh will be obligated to bring it about.
He is going to Yahweh because Yahweh is all knowing and will be able to tell him what will happen with his son. Yet he tries to disguise his wife to deceive Yahweh who is all knowing.
How is our behaviour like that? What do we do in our lives that we do as if it was hidden from Yahweh?
It's not.

1 Kings 15:13

He also removed Maacah his mother from being queen, because she had made an abominable image for an Asherah.

Can you imagine that. Such a test of character to stand up to a controlling mother and remove her from her position of authority.
So many people need to do that.

1 Kings 16:33

Ahab did more to provoke Yahweh, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.

And that's saying something! Some of his predecessors did some pretty shocking stuff.
He married the princess of Sidon, (in Lebanon), and worshipped Baal. Just like Solomon before him, it seems he was tempted away from Yahweh by foreign women. In this case his wife Jezebel was a particular controlling and manipulating woman. Something which itself goes against Yahweh's design of a wife being a helper to her loving husband.

1 Kings 16:34

He laid its foundation with the loss of Abiram his firstborn, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to Yahweh's word, which he spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.

Jericho was a great victory for the Israelites led by Joshua when they had first entered the Promised Land. After the battle Joshua commanded them with an oath, "Cursed is the man before Yahweh, who rises up and builds this city Jericho. With the loss of his firstborn he will lay its foundation, and with the loss of his youngest son he will set up its gates."

And yet Asa went ahead and built it. And paid the price.
I wonder what consequences we bring on ourselves even though we know Yahweh has told us in advance that we are cursing ourselves? In our heads we can know that our "favourite" sin will have consequences, yet we can be driven to it time and time again.

1 Kings 17:18

She said to Elijah, "What have I to do with you, you man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to memory, and to kill my son!"

Elijah had been living in her house for a while. There was a drought on everywhere, yet her flour jar and oil jar were not running out since Elijah came.
Then when the woman's only son dies, her first thought is to blame Elijah, the man of God.

How about you? Do you blame God whenever things go wrong? Even after he has blessed your life so much in the past?

1 Kings 18

Yahweh shows his power on Mt Carmel

When Yahweh is **not** in it, even having 450 people doing everything they can to make something happen will not succeed.
When Yahweh **is** in it, even having 450 people doing everything they can to stop it will not be enough.

1 Kings 18:21

Elijah came near to all the people, and said, "How long will you waver between the two sides? If Yahweh is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him."

So for you I assume you're not thinking of following Baal or building an Asherah pole. But for most people there is something other than Yahweh which attracts them. Money, hedonism, worldliness, or maybe even New Age or Buddhist philosophies…
But as Elijah says, "If Yahweh is god, then follow him". When Jesus told the first disciples to follow him, they left everything behind and followed him. Following means more than just heading in the same general direction and keeping an eye on him from a great distance. Following also means keeping up.
Are you following?
Are you keeping up?

1 Kings 18:46

Yahweh's hand was on Elijah; and he tucked his cloak into his belt and ran before Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel.

Elijah ran as fast as a man on horseback! For tens of kilometers.
Why do we limit God in our imaginations!

1 Kings 19:3

When he saw that, he arose, and ran for his life…

Perhaps one of the most amazing verses in the Bible. Elijah has just killed more than 400 priests of Baal in a stunning display of Yahweh's power on top of the mountain. God has made it abundantly clear that he alone is God, and that Elijah is his servant.
Yet, when the queen threatens Elijah, instead of standing up and confronting her, … he runs for his life.

And yet somehow one of the most comforting verses too. Elijah was a totally awesome

prophet. The miracles he did are second only to Jesus himself. He had amazing power and authority. And yet, just like us, straight after his massive high he is so vulnerable to sink to his lowest low.

Its not just you that struggles after a big victory. It's all of us. Even Elijah!

1 Kings 19:11-12

Yahweh was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake; but Yahweh was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake a fire passed; but Yahweh was not in the fire. After the fire, there was a still small voice.

We want Yahweh to speak to us. We want him to do it in big powerful ways. But Yahweh speaks with a still, small voice.
Can you be quiet enough to hear it? Or do you drown it out with noise from the world around you?

James 5:17

Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years.

There was nothing about Elijah that made him able to do miracles. It was the Holy Spirit doing the miracles.
There was nothing about Elijah that made him able to stop the rain by praying. That was God at work too.
So what is it about you that stops you doing these things?
Nothing.

To paraphrase James. You are a person just like Elijah.
So what he did, you can do.
He only did them in response to God speaking to him, but expect big things. Don't limit yourself or put yourself down. You are just like Elijah.

1 Kings 19:28

A man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, "Yahweh says, 'Because the Syrians have said, "Yahweh is a god of the hills, but he is not a god of the valleys"; therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am Yahweh.'"

Israel didn't win this battle because of their army. They won it because Yahweh wanted his enemies to know that he is the one true God.
Just like Moses and Pharoah, just like David and Goliath, just like Gideon and the Philistines.
Just like now. Armies don't decide victories. Neither does money. Or technology. Yahweh has always decided who wins a battle, and he still does.
Don't give up. Unless you're fighting for the wrong side!

1 Kings 20:28-29

Yahweh's word came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "See how Ahab humbles himself before me? Because he humbles himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days; but I will bring the evil on his house in his son's day."

When Yahweh condemned him, Ahab repented and fasted. And Yahweh relented and postponed the judgement until after Ahab had died.
Not the image of the quick to judge, fire from the sky old testament god that we often have.
Yahweh has always been merciful. Way more than we deserve.
Same with you and me right… He has put off the judgement we deserve until after we die. And then someone else will have to bear it. His own son!

1 Kings 21:26

But there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do that which was evil in Yahweh's sight, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up.

Sadly Ahab wasn't the only weak willed, sulky man who was stirred up by his dominating wife, and manipulated into wickedness.
There are some amazing women in the church. There are some amazing wives.
But this is all too common, especially in churches where women are not permitted to have positions of leadership. Too often they usurp the power of the men in charge by manipulating their own husbands to undermine them.
Of course there are some great leadership teams and great leadership marriages, but I have seen Jezebel still in action too many times.

1 Kings 22:19-22

I saw Yahweh sitting on his throne, and all the army of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. Yahweh said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth Gilead?' One said one thing; and another said another.
A spirit came out and stood before Yahweh, and said, 'I will entice him.'
Yahweh said to him, 'How?'
He said, 'I will go out and will be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.'
He said, 'You will entice him, and will also prevail. Go out and do so.'

Yahweh OK's a spirit to go out and lie to his prophets.
What was that? He did what?
This is a very difficult passage. Yahweh told a demon it was OK for him to go and decieve his prophets.
He did it because his judgement had fallen on Ahab.

1 Kings 22:28

Micaiah said, "If you return at all in peace, Yahweh has not spoken by me."

This is the test of a prophet. Did what he say come to be?
This is an amazing story. Ahab knows that Yahweh has prophecied against him. But he tries to outsmart God by disguising himself so the enemy doesn't know he is the king. And an archer, shoots "at random" into the air, and the arrow pierces the gap in his armour!
There is no random. There is no chance. There is no luck. Yahweh is master of every minute, of every day. He alone has decided if you will live long enough to read the rest of this paragraph.
How does that make you feel?

After You Read

What verses really stood out to you?

How would you summarize this book in a sentence or two? What is it about? What is God trying to say to us?

What is the wisest thing you have ever heard?
What is the wisest thing you have ever said?
(or perhaps the wisest thing you ever did was to keep your mouth shut :) (Proverbs 17:28)

After Solomon died, did you notice a few things reminiscent of their time in Egypt?
Tahpenes was raised in Pharaoh's house as one of his own sons… like Moses was.
Jeroboam made two golden calves for the people to worship as "the gods who brought you out of Egypt", like Aaron did.
Do we ever learn anything from history? Or do we always just repeat the same mistakes over and over?

How about you? Are you learning anything?
Sin is kind of like that. Just when you think it will never come back, … bang. You fall again.
Call on Yahweh. He will help you up again. And hopefully your falls will get further and further apart.

What did you think about Elijah? Do you think you would have been impressed by him in real life?
And yet, James tells us he was just like us. His power came from God, not from anything special about him.
How does that make you feel? Powerful?
Have you ever stopped the rain?

And what about Jezebel? Do you know anyone like that? What can you do about it? We haven't read the end of her story yet, what do you think Yahweh has planned for her? Do you think she will get away with it?

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