

1 Kings And 2 Kings

Author

Nowhere in the Bible does it record which person or people wrote the Books of 1 and 2 Kings. The unknown author(s) composed 1 and 2 Kings primarily from various written records which were available at that time. Some of these were:

1. the book of the Acts of Solomon (1 Kings 11:41)
2. the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah (1 Kings 14:29)
3. the book of the kings of Israel (1 Kings 14:29)

Under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings selected which parts of the above to use.

Nature of 1 and 2 Kings in original Hebrew

In Hebrew, 1 Kings and 2 Kings formed one book. They were later divided into 2 books in the Greek Septuagint and Latin Vulgate translations of the Old Testament.

Date

It is difficult to precisely date 1 and 2 Kings. It is likely they were written during the Babylonian Captivity, maybe shortly after 560 B.C. The end of these 2 Books, 2 Kings 25:27-30 refers to the Babylonian Captivity but does not mention the end of this captivity.

Main Events

The main events of 1 and 2 Kings are:

1. The reign of David's son, Solomon.
2. The awesome blessings and prosperity God gave to the nation of Israel when King Solomon and most of them were faithful to Him and obeying His Word.
3. The building of God's Temple in Jerusalem.
4. The backsliding of King Solomon and the nation and God's resulting punishments.
5. The division of the nation of Israel into two nations – the southern Kingdom of Judah and Benjamin and the northern Kingdom of the remaining ten tribes.
6. The rapid backsliding and moral decay of the northern Kingdom of Israel.
7. God's amazing patience for over two hundred years with the northern Kingdom of Israel despite its great wickedness. In mercy, He continually sent one prophet after another to call His people back to Himself. But except for a small ,minority, they refused to listen to Him.

8. The people of the northern Kingdom of Israel tried to have a contemporary religion involving the worship of both the Lord and other gods and goddesses.
9. In 722 B.C. God delivered the people of the northern Kingdom into the hands of the wicked Assyrians.
10. There were times when the kings and people of the southern Kingdom of Judah were faithful to the Lord and obeyed His Word. But at other times, they backslid and lived wickedly. On some of these occasions, God punished them in various ways.
11. From 609 B.C. onwards, the kings and nation of Judah followed the example of the northern Kingdom of Israel by having a contemporary religion which mixed the worship of Yahweh with the religious and moral practices of popular pagan religions.
12. In response, God sent many prophets to warn the nation of Judah that if they did not stop compromising and did not turn from their sins to Him, He would send devastating punishment on their nation. This punishment was the destruction of Jerusalem and His Temple and the captivity in Babylon.
13. Nearly all the people of Judah refused to listen to God's warnings. So He punished them in this way.

The prophetic Word of the Lord and its fulfillment

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings emphasise the importance of the divinely-inspired Words of the Lord which His prophets receive and then speak. There are many of these prophetic Words and their fulfillments recorded in these two Books (see 1 Kings 8:20, 11:29-39, 12:15, 13:1-5, 14:4-18, 16:1-7, 16:11-13, 17:14-16, 18:1-2, 18:20-38, 18:41-45, 20:13-21, 20:35-42, 21:17-29, 22:17-38, 2 Kings 1:3-17, 2:19-22, 2:23-24, 3:14-25, 4:42-44, 6:8-12, 7:1-20, 9:1-10:30, 19:6-7, 19:20-36, 20:1-11, 20:16-18, 21:10-16, 22:14-23:30 and 24:2-4).

The author of 1 and 2 Kings interprets the history of the nations of Israel and Judah by the Words of the Lord spoken through God's prophets. But note these prophets never spoke contrary to the previously written Word of God.

Today we need God's New Testament prophets to speak His Words to the world and to the Church. These Words will always be in agreement with His written Word. 1 Corinthians 14:37 warns us of prophets who do not submit to God's written Word.

Themes

The main themes of 1 and 2 Kings are:

1. The Supreme Rule of God

1 and 2 Kings show that God has supreme power over the affairs of all nations and political leaders. 1 Kings 1:1-2:12 reveals that God's sovereign hand was working behind the scenes ensuring that Solomon and not David's other sons succeeded David as king of Israel.

1 Kings 11:14 and 11:23 reveal God raised up adversaries for Solomon after he backslid away from the Lord: *"Now the Lord raised up an adversary against Solomon, Handad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom...And God raised up another adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezer king of Zobah."*

1 Kings 11:26-12:24 and 2 Kings 9:1-10:30 show God intervening in political matters again. 2 Kings 14:23-27 reveals that even though King Jeroboam II of Israel was wicked, God sovereignly used him to save the people of Israel from their enemies. This shows how amazing is God's wisdom and power.

2. **The Judgments of God**

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings reveal that when the kings and people of the nations in Israel, northern Israel and Judah were faithful to God and His commands and statutes in the Mosaic Covenant, He would prosper and bless them greatly. But when they were continually unrepentantly unfaithful and disobedient to Him, He punished them in various ways. 2 Kings 17:5-23 records: *“Now the king of Assyria went throughout all the land, and went up to Samaria and besieged it for three years. In the ninth year of Hoshea, the king of Assyria took Samaria and carried Israel away to Assyria, and placed them in Halah and by the Habor, the River of Gozan, and in the cities of the Medes. For so it was that the children of Israel had sinned against the Lord their God, who had brought them up out of the land of Egypt, from under the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt; and they had feared other gods, and had walked in the statutes of the nations whom the Lord had cast out from before the children of Israel, and of the kings of Israel, which they had made. Also the children of Israel secretly did against the Lord their God things that were not right, and they built for themselves high places in all their cities, from watchtower to fortified city. They set up for themselves sacred pillars and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree; and there they burned incense on all the high places, as the nations had done whom the Lord had carried away before them; and they did wicked things to provoke the Lord to anger, for they served idols, of which the Lord had said to them, ‘You shall not do this thing.’ Yet the Lord testified against Israel and against Judah, by all of His prophets, namely every seer, saying, ‘Turn from your evil ways, and keep My commandments and My statutes, according to all the law which I commanded your fathers, and which I sent to you by My servants the prophets.’ Nevertheless they would not hear, but stiffened their necks, like the necks of their fathers, who did not believe in the Lord their God. And they rejected His statutes and His covenant that He had made with their fathers, and His testimonies which He had testified against them; they followed idols, became idolaters, and went after the nations who were all around them, concerning whom the Lord had charged them that they should not do like them. So they left all the commandments of the Lord their God, made for themselves a molded image and two calves, made a wooden image and worshipped all the host of heaven, and served Baal. And they caused their sons and daughters to pass through the fire, practiced witchcraft and soothsaying, and sold themselves to do evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. Therefore the Lord was very angry with Israel, and removed them from His sight; there was none left but the tribe of Judah alone. Also Judah did not keep the commandments of the Lord their God, but walked in the statutes of Israel which they made. And the Lord rejected all the descendants of Israel, afflicted them, and delivered them into the hand of plunderers, until He had cast them from His sight. For He tore Israel from the house of David, and they made Jeroboam the son of Nebat king. Then Jeroboam drove Israel from following the Lord, and made them commit a great sin. For the children of Israel walked in all the sins of Jeroboam which he did, they did not depart from them, until the Lord removed Israel out of His sight, as He had said by all*

His servants the prophets. So Israel was carried away from their own land to Assyria, as it is to this day.”

1 and 2 Kings explain why God handed the northern Kingdom of Israel over to the Assyrians and the southern Kingdom of Judah over to the Babylonians.

At the time, some Israelites and non-Israelites may have wrongly thought that the conquest of the nations of Israel and Judah by the Assyrians and Babylonians, proved that the pagan gods and goddesses of Assyria and Babylon were more powerful than the God of the Bible. But 1 and 2 Kings clearly reveal and explain that the reasons for these conquests were not God’s weakness and the supposed superiority of pagan gods and goddesses. Instead the reasons were the continual deliberate sinning of the Israelites and Judeans, their lack of real repentance and God’s resulting punishments.

1 and 2 Kings also reveal that the catastrophes which occurred in the nations of Israel and Judah were not a result of bad luck, accidents or unchangeable fate caused by some pagan impersonal god or force. Instead these events were either caused and/or deliberately permitted by God.

3. **God’s Definition of Success**

1 and 2 Kings reveal that success for kings and nations in God’s eyes is *having faith in Him and resultant obedience to his commands and guidance*. Because the kings of Judah and Israel were under the Mosaic Covenant, the relevant commands for them were in the Mosaic Law (see 1 Kings 2:3, 2 Kings 10:31, 14:6, 14:6, 17:13, 22:11, 23:2 and 23:25). 2 Kings 10:31 criticises King Jehu of Israel for not obeying the Law of Moses. In 1 Kings 2:3-4, David told Solomon: *“And keep the charge of the Lord your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn; that the Lord may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”*

Constantly throughout the Books of 1 and 2 Kings, there are statements which reveal God’s appraisal of the attitudes and actions of each of the kings of Israel and Judah (see 1 Kings 15:3, 15:5, 15:11, 15:26, 15:34, 16:18-19, 16:25-26, 16:30, 22:43, 22:52-53, 2 Kings 10:29-31, 12:2, 13:2, 13:11, 14:3, 14:24, 15:3-4, 15:9, 15:18, 15:24, 15:28, 15:34, 16:2-4, 17:2, 18:3-6, 21:2, 22:2, 23:24-25, 24:9 and 24:18). Here are two examples. 2 Kings 21:20-22 says of Amon of Judah: *“And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, as his father Manasseh had done. So he walked in all the ways that his father had walked; and he served the idols that his father had served, and worshipped them. He forsook the Lord God of his fathers, and did not walk in the way of the Lord.”*

2 Kings 23:24-25 records this of King Josiah of Judah: *“Moreover Josiah put away those who consulted mediums and spiritists, the household gods and idols, all the abominations that were seen in the land of Judah and in Jerusalem, that he might perform the words of the law which were written in the book that Hilkiah the priest found in the house of the Lord. Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”*

In 1 Kings 9:4-9, God revealed the standards by which He judged each king: *“Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to*

do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, 'You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel. But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will be exalted; yet everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will say, "Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?" Then they will answer, "Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshipped them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them."'"

The Holy Spirit did not inspire the author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings to glorify any of the kings of Israel and Judah. Instead the author focused on describing each of these kings' relationship to God, obedience to His commands and the degree these kings led their nation in His ways.

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings criticise 15 out of the 18 kings who ruled the northern Kingdom of Israel after Jeroboam's their first king's time for "*walking in the ways of Jeroboam*" (see 1 Kings 15:30, 15:34, 2 Kings 3:3, 10:29, 10:31, 13:2, 13:11, 14:24, 15:9, 15:24, 15:38, 16:2, 16:7, 16:19, 16:26, 16:31 and 22:52). In other words, one of the main standards by which the God-inspired author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings gave God's verdict on the life of each king of Israel and Judah was: "Was the king a *compromiser* with *pagan ideas* and *practices* like Jeroboam I?" Jeroboam's sin involved setting up his own non-Levitical priests and calf idols at Bethel and Dan and making paganised shrines on the high places as an addition to the worship of the Lord (see 1 Kings 12:28-31, 13:33-34 and 14:9).

The emphasis on the Mosaic, Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants

1 and 2 Kings are undergirded by an emphasis on God's Mosaic, Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. The commands, statutes and promises of rewards, punishments, forgiveness, undeserved grace and mercy-based promises of the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants and the warnings of discipline to David's kingly descendants as found in the Davidic Covenant (see 2 Samuel 7:14) all operate in various ways in the Books of 1 and 2 Kings.

For example, the Books of 1 and 2 Kings focus on giving God's judgments on the attitudes and behaviour of kings, prophets and others in terms of their *heart faith* in the Lord God and *resulting* outward faithfulness to the terms and conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. The author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings give an appraisal of the character and rule of every king of Israel and Judah according to this standard.

The Mosaic Covenant taught that those who perfectly obeyed all the commands and statutes of the Mosaic Covenant would be given all of the wonderful material blessings of God as fully deserved rewards (see Deuteronomy 28:1-14). But only Jesus Christ had ever perfectly obeyed the Mosaic Covenant in this way. But note Leviticus 26:40-45 and Deuteronomy 30:1-10 promise that those people who turned in their hearts from their sins to Him and His ways could receive His material blessings and prosperity as undeserved gifts of His grace.

Similarly passages like Leviticus 16:1-34 reveal that those with saving faith in Israel could continue to receive forgiveness for their sins through God-ordained atoning substitutionary blood sacrifices and their repentant faith responses.

1 and 2 Kings do not teach humans can be justified and saved eternally by a perfect or any type of imperfect obedience to the Mosaic Law – the terms and conditions of the Mosaic Covenant. Instead the God-inspired authors of 1 and 2 Kings evaluate the outward behaviour of Israelites and Judeans in response to the Words of the Mosaic Covenant, as *subjective signs* of the presence or lack of faith in their hearts.

In 1 and 2 Kings, King David is set up as the second best example of commitment to God besides King Josiah of Judah. 2 Kings 23:25 refers to Josiah: ***“Now before him there was no king like him, who turned to the Lord with all his heart, with all his soul, and with all his might, according to all the Law of Moses; nor after him did any arise like him.”***

1 Kings 15:5 says of David: ***“because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”***

Also note in many verses in 1 and 2 Kings, various kings are compared to David’s high standards of godly attitudes and behaviour (see 1 Kings 9:4, 11:4, 11:6, 11:33, 11:38, 14:8, 15:3, 15:11, 2 Kings 14:3, 16:2, 18:3 and 22:2). But note David committed murder and adultery (see 2 Samuel 11:1-27). According to the Mosaic Covenant, David deserved to be killed for these two sins (see Exodus 21:12-14, Leviticus 14:17, 20:10 and Numbers 35:30). Psalm 51 and 2 Samuel 1-13 reveal that David received forgiveness for these two terrible sins. But obviously David was not saved by perfect obedience to the Mosaic Law. This shows the author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings were not teaching that Israelite and Judean believers were justified before God by perfect obedience to works of Law.

God’s wonderful grace and mercy in 1 and 2 Kings

1 and 2 Kings also provide many examples of God acting with *grace* and *mercy* towards:

- a) Israelites and Judeans on the basis of the grace and mercy-based promises found in the Abrahamic and Davidic Covenants. Examples of these are found in 2 Kings 13:23: ***“but the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence”*** and 2 Kings 8:19: ***“Yet the Lord would not destroy Judah, for the sake of his servant David, as He promised him to give a lamp to him and his sons forever”*** and 1 Kings 15:4, 2 Kings 19:34 and 20:6.

An example of an application of this can be seen in 2 Kings 13:14-19 when God through the prophet Elisha promised that wicked Israelite King Jehoash and his mostly wicked Israelites would defeat the Syrians in battle. As God graciously promised, this promise was fulfilled (see 2 Kings 13:25).

Also the fact that God wanted just over 200 years before severely punishing the northern nation of Israel, despite the fact that only a small minority of its people had saving faith in Him, is a marvelous manifestation of God’s grace and mercy.

- b) non-Israelites who were not under the Abrahamic, Mosaic or Davidic Covenants. Examples of these people are the widow of Zarephath near Sidon in Phoenicia (see 1 Kings 17:8-24) and Naaman the Syrian (see 2 Kings 5:1-19).

God's application of His Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic Covenants promises

The promises of the Abrahamic, Mosaic and Davidic Covenants contain many differing elements. Read my chapters on these covenants for more details of these various elements.

In 1 and 2 Kings, we observe that God applied these differing elements of His promises in these three covenants sometimes in differing ways to different Israelites and Judeans. As Supreme Ruler and Absolute Lord, God has the right to do this. This is especially since no human except Jesus Christ fully deserves any blessing from God. The only thing God is obliged to do is to be faithful to His promises, Name and character.

1 and 2 Kings give many examples of:

- (i) God blessing those who had faith in Him and who as a fruit sincerely though imperfectly sought to obey the commands and statutes of the Mosaic Covenant.
- (ii) God punishing in differing ways those who rejected Him. 1 Kings 14:7-16, 15:29-30, 16:12-13, 2 Kings 9:30-37, 17:5-23, 21:11-15 and 22:16-17 are examples of this. But note 1 and 2 Kings also provide numerous exceptions to the above general principles:
 - a) For example, 1 and 2 Kings gives examples of people with great faith and real, but obviously imperfect, obedience to the commands and statutes of the Mosaic Covenant and Law, dying young or not experiencing the fullness of earthly prosperity promised in the Mosaic Law as a fully deserved reward to the sinless or as a gift of God's grace to those having hearts with justifying faith and repentance. Examples of those who died young are godly Hezekiah at 53 years (see 2 Kings 18:2) and Josiah at 39 years (see 2 Kings 22:1). An example of a godly believer who did not receive the fullness of God's material blessings was Elijah.
 - b) Also 1 and 2 Kings give examples of wicked individuals whom God gave more material blessings, than to Elijah and longer lives than Hezekiah and Josiah. For instance, King Ahab and Jezebel were blessed with great prosperity, despite them being two of the most wicked rulers Israel ever had (see 1 Kings 16:30-33, 20:3-7 and 21:25). Also wicked King Jeroboam II ruled 41 years in Israel (see 2 Kings 14:23) but Josiah – the most godly king in Judah's history – ruled 31 years (see 2 Kings 22:1) and generally good King Jotham of Judah only reigned 16 years (see 2 Kings 15:33-34).
- (iii) 1 and 2 Kings provide examples of God not punishing wicked unbelievers who fully deserved it, but instead Him being gracious and merciful to them and providing them with material blessings. The majority of the millions of Israelites and Judeans mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings come into this category.

The division of the nation of Israel

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings explain why the nation of Israel divided in two nations – the ten tribes of Israel in the north and the two tribes of Judah in the south. 1 Kings 11:1-13 records: *“But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites – from the nations of whom the Lord had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. For surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love. And he has seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines, and his wives turned away his heart. For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God, as was the heart of his father David. For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord, and did not fully follow the Lord, as did his father David. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon. And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.’”*

Read also 1 Kings 11:26-12:24.

The long-term catastrophic results of compromising God’s standards

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings repeatedly teach the message that any person, group or nation who compromises His teachings and commands in any way and refuses to turn from these wrong attitudes and practices, will in the *long term* but not necessarily short-term see catastrophes result in their lives. Here are some examples:

- a) King Jeroboam I of Israel compromised by modifying the Scripture-based worship of God. Jeroboam introduced a religion in which God was worshipped through two golden calf idols – one at Bethel and the other at Dan. The 10 northern tribes of Israel refused to turn from this wicked religion. Their compromise in this matter opened the door for many other later compromises with pagan religion and pagan moral practices. After patiently waiting for just over 200 years for these 10 tribes to repent, God handed them over to the wicked Assyrian nation (see 2 Kings 17:1-23).
- b) 1 Kings 4:29-32 records the amazing wisdom God gave King Solomon: *“And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore. Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the*

East and all the wisdom of Egypt. For he was wiser than all men – than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five.”

But despite this, Solomon later compromised by marrying the pagan daughters of the kings of many surrounding nations (see 1 Kings 11:1-3). This was in disobedience to Exodus 34:13-16 and Deuteronomy 7:3-4). This led to Solomon compromising further by then allowing these wives to set up their pagans in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 11:4-13). These pagan religions involved idolatry, witchcraft, human sacrifice, sexual orgies and sex with male homosexual and female temple prostitutes. As Deuteronomy 7:3-4 warned, these pagan wives turned Solomon’s heart from God.

In 1 Kings 9:4-9, God warned Solomon: *“Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel. But if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have sanctified for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will be exalted; yet everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, “Why has the Lord done thus to this land and to this house?” Then they will answer, “Because they forsook the Lord their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshipped them and served them; therefore the Lord has brought all this calamity on them.””*

Keys to ridding a nation of God’s judgment

In 1 Kings 8:33-40 and 46-50, God revealed through Solomon the keys which when practiced will result in God ceasing punishing a nation: *“When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and when they turn back to You and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this temple, and hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers. When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and give rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance. When there is famine in the land, or pestilence, blight or mildew, locusts or grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness there is; whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, or by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart You know (for You, only You, know the hearts of all the sons of men), that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers...When they sin against You (for there is no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the*

land of the enemy, far or near; yet when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness'; and when they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name: then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause, and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them."

The Temple and Jerusalem

1 and 2 Kings emphasise the importance of the building of God's Temple in Jerusalem and God's Presence being manifested at this Temple. These Books also stress that worship of the Lord should have been focused under the Mosaic Covenant at the Temple in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings 11:13, 32 and 36).

Prior to the time of the building of God's Temple by Solomon in Jerusalem, the Israelites had worshipped God at the movable Tabernacle and at other places (). This emphasis on God's Temple in Jerusalem had its basis in Deuteronomy 12:10-14: *"But when you cross over the Jordan and dwell in the land which the Lord your God is giving you to inherit, and when He gives you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, then there will be the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and sons and daughters, your menservants and your maidservants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion nor inheritance with you. Take heed to yourself that you do not offer your burnt offerings in every place that you see; but in the place which Lord chooses, in one of your tribes, there you shall offer your burnt offerings, and there you shall do all that I command you."*

2 Kings 23:1-25 also emphasises the importance of worship in Jerusalem and the abolishing of all competing types of worship.

Other important points in 1 Kings

- a) 1 Kings 1:6 reveals that King David never corrected his son Adonijah: *"(And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, 'Why have you done so?')..."* Adonijah was a typical example of the result of such poor discipline. He was spoiled, very self-centred and self-exacting. 1 Kings 1:5 records: *"Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king'; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him."*
- b) 1 Kings 3:3 shows Solomon was originally committed to God except for compromising about one matter: *"And Solomon loved the Lord, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places."*

- c) 1 Kings 3:6-14 records that after God told Solomon ***“Ask! What shall I give you?”*** Solomon did not ask for things for himself but instead asked God for wisdom to rule his people. God was very pleased with this response and responded by giving him many things he did not ask for. 1 Kings 3:11-13 states: ***“Then God said to him: ‘Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you. And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days.’”***
- d) Solomon built a massive Temple for God in Jerusalem (see 1 Kings Chapters 5 and 6). This partly fulfilled God’s Word to King David (see 1 Chronicles 17:12). This Word about David’s son building God’s Temple was also fulfilled symbolically by Jesus Christ. The members of His Church are stones in His Temple (see 1 Corinthians 3:16, 2 Corinthians 6:16, Ephesians 2:19-22 and 1 Peter 2:5).
- e) In 1 Kings 8:46, Solomon states ***“...for there is no one who does not sin...”***
- f) 1 Kings 10:14-29 records the massive wealth God gave to Solomon.
- g) Tragically, 1 Kings 11:1-13 states that Solomon disobeyed God by marrying 700 pagan wives and having three hundred pagan concubines – second class slave wives. This was in disobedience to Exodus 34:12-16 which commanded Israelites not to marry pagan wives living in the land of Israel. Also Solomon disobeyed Deuteronomy 17:17 which commanded each king of Israel: ***“Neither shall he multiply wives for himself...”***
- h) 1 Kings 11:1-8 records that Solomon’s pagan wives led his heart away from God. This is exactly what God warned would happen in Exodus 34:12-16 if Israelites intermarried with pagans from the Land of Canaan.
1 Kings 11:9-13 states that as a result God became very angry with Solomon: ***“So the Lord became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the Lord God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the Lord had commanded. Therefore the Lord said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; but I will tear it out of the hand of your son. However I will not tear away the whole kingdom, but I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen.’”***
- i) 1 Kings 11:26-12:24 states that God split the nation of Israel into two parts. He gave two tribes – Judah and Benjamin to Solomon’s son Rehoboam and ten tribes to an Israelite named Jeroboam.
- j) In 1 Kings 12:25-33 records that King Jeroboam compromised by trying to mix the worship of God with the worship of two golden calf idols. Refer to Chapter “Key background to Hosea, Joel, Amos, Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zephaniah and Habakkuk” for more details about King Jeroboam’s I’s rule.
- k) 1 Kings 13:1-10 records that God sent a prophet to the city of Bethel in Northern Israel to minister to King Jeroboam I and others there. God instructed the prophet to prophesy over

the altar at Bethel that in the future a child named Josiah would be born who would kill the priests of this compromising false religion which Jeroboam I set up. This was *almost 300 years* before Josiah of Judah was born, grew up to be king and fulfilled this prophecy (see 2 Kings 22:1-23:16).

After the prophet spoke the Word of the Lord at the altar of Bethel, King Jeroboam I ***“stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, ‘Arrest him!’”*** As a result, God miraculously withered and paralysed his hand. Also, God supernaturally split the altar apart and made its ashes pour out.

The king then hypocritically asked the prophet to pray to God for him that his hand would be healed. The prophet prayed and then God healed the king’s hand.

Despite the above amazing miracles, Jeroboam I still did not repent. 1 Kings 13:33-34 records: ***“After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy it from the face of the earth.”***

- l) Refer to “A gullible prophet of God” section in Chapter _____ in my writing HOW TO RECOGNIZE GOD’S VOICE for other details of what happened to this prophet of God who went to the city of Bethel to minister to King Jeroboam I.
- m) 1 Kings 14:1-20 records that after his son became sick, Jeroboam continued his religious hypocrisy and lack of repentance. Jeroboam sent his wife to Shiloh to see the prophet Ahijah who had originally told him that God had appointed him as king. Jeroboam was sure Ahijah would tell him if the child would live or die. This compromiser who worshipped both God and pagan golden calves, was sure God would speak by His Spirit. Ahijah could not see because his eyes were glazed due to age. But the Lord told him that Jeroboam’s wife would come to him pretending to be someone else. God also instructed Ahijah to tell Jeroboam’s wife that the child would die, and that later Jeroboam and all his male descendants would be killed. In 1 Kings 14:13, God said that the child would die even though he was the only one in Jeroboam’s family who had anything good in his heart towards the Lord God: ***“And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good toward the Lord God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.”*** Through Ahijah, God also predicted that the 10 northern tribes of Israel would be punished by being exiled and scattered beyond the Euphrates River. 1 Kings 14:15-16 records: ***“For the Lord will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images, provoking the Lord anger. And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin.”***
- n) 1 Kings 14:19-20 records Jeroboam’s death. 1 Kings 15:28-30 states King Baasha of Israel killed all Jeroboam’s descendants.
- o) 1 Kings 15:5 states how committed to God King David had been: ***“because David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.”***
- p) After the rule of wicked King Abijam in Judah, his son Asa reigned (see 1 Kings 15:1-24). 1 Kings 15:11-15 records Asa was devoted to God except for allowing the altars on the high places to remain: ***“Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, as did his father***

David. And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from being queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned it by the Brook Kidron. But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa's heart was loyal to the Lord all his days. He also brought into the house of the Lord the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicate: silver and gold and utensils."

In Hebrew, the phrase "*perverted persons*" here is the word "qadeshim" which means "male homosexual temple prostitutes".¹ The same word is used in Deuteronomy 23:17: "*There shall be no ritual harlot of the daughters of Israel, or a perverted one of the sons of Israel*" and 1 Kings 22:46, 2 Kings 23:7 and Job 36:14.

Asa was devoted to God. He obeyed Deuteronomy 23:17 and was more loyal to God than to his own grandmother.

- q) God sent the prophets Elijah and then Elisha to the ten northern tribes of Israel to try to lead them back to Him.

Elijah

1 Kings 17:1-21:29 and 2 Kings 1:1-2:11 record Elijah's ministry. Here is some background and a summary:

After King Jeroboam I died, the northern tribes of Israel had 5 kings before Ahab. They were Nadab (ruled 2 years), Baasha (ruled 24 years), Elah (ruled 2 years), Zimri (ruled 7 days) and Omri (ruled 12 years). 1 Kings 15:25-28 reveals that each of these kings led the 12 northern tribes of Israel into wickedness.

Omri's son was named Ahab. In Hebrew, the word "Ahab" means "love". 1 Kings 16:30-33 and 21:25 record that Ahab was more wicked than any king of Israel before his time: "*Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord, more than all who were before him. And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshipped him. Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the Lord God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him...But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up."*

Jezebel was a pagan Phoenician, the daughter of the king of the city of Sidon. Ahab and Jezebel promoted the worship of the wicked pagan god Baal in Samaria, the capital of the northern tribes of Israel.

Because Jezebel was devoted to wickedness, she with Ahab's approval severely persecuted Elijah and God's other prophets (see 1 Kings 18:4). She was a very manipulative controlling type of wife who constantly encouraged Ahab to do evil things.

¹ Harris, Archer and Waltke, page 786.

During this time, God called Elijah to announce that there would be a famine in Israel (see 1 Kings 17:1). This served two purposes. First, it was a punishment on the Israelites for their wicked lives. Secondly it showed that the Lord and not Ba'al ruled creation.

God then told Elijah to hide at the Brook Cherith where God promised to provide him with food and drink. In response, Elijah obeyed, trusting God (see 1 Kings 17:2-6). God provided him with water from the brook and miraculously with food brought by ravens. God's Word to Elijah was fulfilled.

After the brook dried up, God sent Elijah to the city of Zarephath which belonged to the city of Sidon from which wicked Jezebel came. God promised that a widow at Zarephath would feed him. Elijah obeyed, trusting God again.

The widow was almost out of food herself. So God told Elijah that her bin of flour and jar of oil would miraculously not empty until God sent rain again (see 1 Kings 17:13-14). God's Word was fulfilled in this matter (see 1 Kings 17:15-16).

The widow's son then died, but after Elijah cried to the Lord, the boy came to life again (see 1 Kings 17:17-24). This greatly ministered to the widow.

After three years of drought, God told Elijah to go to King Ahab and He promised to send rain (see 1 Kings 18:1). Elijah obeyed, trusting God.

1 Kings 18:3-19 shows that Ahab had been searching everywhere for Elijah and Ahab had an official called Obadiah who had hidden 100 of God's prophets in a cave, after Jezebel had slaughtered many others of these. Obadiah was a godly person who was faithful to God despite the great danger to his own life.

Elijah then met Ahab and told him to bring Jezebel's 450 pagan prophets of Ba'al and 400 pagan prophets of Asherah to Mount Carmel (see 1 Kings 18:16-18).

On Mount Carmel, Elijah confronted the people of Israel about their compromising. They wanted to serve the Lord while also following the idolatrous, sexually immoral religion of Ba'al. But Elijah said to them in 1 Kings 18:21: ***"...How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him..."*** But the people of Israel did not answer.

Elijah then challenged the 950 pagan prophets to a contest involving a bull each and seeing whether the Lord or Ba'al answered supernaturally by fire. 1 Kings 18:36 records God led Elijah to do this. Elijah acted in obedience to the Word of the Lord and not in presumption.

The pagan prophets sacrificed their bull and then cut themselves. But Ba'al did not respond miraculously.

Elijah made fun of Ba'al satirically saying: ***"...Cry aloud, for he is a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, or perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened."*** (see 1 Kings 18:27).

After putting the wood and bull in pieces on the altar, Elijah had 4 pots of water poured three times on these to prove he was not doing some trick. Then he prayed. In response, God sent fire which consumed the burnt sacrifice, the wood, stones and water. This was another miracle which proved that the Lord God and not Ba'al was the ruler of all creation.

After seeing this miracle, the Israelites present cried out: ***"The Lord, He is God. The Lord, He is God."*** (1 Kings 18:40) This outwardly appeared like they were turning totally to God and abandoning sinful Ba'al worship. How many Israelites had sincere conversions on this day and continued to stay faithful to God in future is not revealed in the Bible.

Elijah then told the Israelites to seize the prophets of Ba'al. Elijah then had them all executed (see 1 Kings 18:40).

On the basis of God's promise to send rain, Elijah prayed and God sent the rain (see 1 Kings 18:1 and 41-45). Once again, God showed He and not Ba'al ruled creation and the productiveness of the Earth.

Miraculously God then enabled Elijah to run faster than King Ahab's horses (see 1 Kings 18:45-46).

Jezebel then heard what Elijah had done and vowed to have him murdered. Elijah fled to near Beersheba in Judah.

Elijah became very down-hearted and depressed. He prayed that he might die (see 1 Kings 19:4). Despite this lack of faith, God miraculously gave him a cake and a jar of water. In the strength of this cake and water, Elijah traveled 40 days to Mount Horeb without further nourishment (see 1 Kings 19:8). Mount Horeb was where centuries before, God had given the Mosaic Covenant and Law to Moses.

Elijah then had a time of deep communion with God. The Lord told him to anoint Elisha as his successor, to anoint Hazael as king over the pagan nation of Syria and Jehu as king of the northern tribes of Israel (see 1 Kings 19:15-17). God also told Elijah that there were 7,000 people in Israel who had remained faithful to Him. 1 Kings 19:12 refers to God speaking to Elijah by His "*still small voice*".

The Syrians and their allies then invaded northern Israel and besieged Samaria (see 1 Kings 20:1-12). In His amazing grace and mercy to wicked King Ahab and the Israelites, God sent a prophet to say He would help them defeat the Syrians (see 1 Kings 20:13). God empowered the Israelites to have victory.

In the following year, the Syrians attacked the Israelites again. By His grace, God enabled the Israelites to be victorious again. God was being good to Ahab and Israel, trying to lead them to repentance. This is the principle of Romans 2:4.

After defeating the Syrians, Ahab made a treaty with their King Be Hadad. This was in disobedience to the Lord (see 1 Kings 20:31-43).

Ahab then tried to buy a vineyard from an Israelite named Naboth but he refused to sell. As a result, Ahab went home sulking like a spoilt child. Jezebel then arranged for Naboth to be murdered (see 1 Kings 21:1-16). As James 4:1-2 reveals, selfishness leads often to anger and even murder. Jezebel believed that kings of Israel should be absolute dictators (see 1 Kings 21:7).

God then sent Elijah to tell Ahab that God was going to punish Ahab and Jezebel for this murder (see 1 Kings 21:17-26). Jezebel was primarily responsible for the murder (see 1 Kings 21:7-15). But as king, Ahab permitted his wife to do this murder and did not punish her for it. So God held him responsible also. God promised that Ahab, Jezebel and all his sons would be killed (see 1 Kings 21:21-24). Ahab then humbled himself before the Lord. In response, God said He would delay His intended punishment.

About three years later, Ahab was killed in battle (see 1 Kings 22:29-40). But before he died, Ahab exhibited the typical heart of a religious hypocrite who refused to turn from their known sins. He wanted to hear only the encouraging predictions of success given by false prophets and not the words of correction of true prophets of God (see 1 Kings 22:1-28). God then told Elijah to predict that Ahab's evil son King Ahaziah would die (see 2 Kings 1:1-3). In response, Ahaziah consecutively sent 3 groups of 50 soldiers. God slew the first two groups but

commanded Elijah to go to Ahaziah with the third group. Elijah obeyed, trusting God despite the great danger.

Later just before God was about to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind, God led Elijah to go to Bethel, then to Jericho and then to the Jordan River. The prophet Elisha insisted on going with him to these places. When they came to the Jordan, God miraculously opened the waters of the Jordan River so they could cross over on dry land.

Then God took Elijah up into heaven. 2 Kings 2:11 records: ***“Then it happened, as they continued on and talked, that suddenly a chariot of fire appeared with horses of fire, and separated the two of them; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.”***

The ministry of the prophet Micaiah versus false prophets

1 Kings 22:1-28 records the ministry of the prophet Micaiah to King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah. When King Jehoshaphat visited King Ahab, Ahab requested they both retake Ramoth in Gilead from Syria. Jehoshaphat agreed but first insisted on inquiring to the Lord through a prophet of God.

King Ahab had many false prophets assisting him. These prophets usually mixed the worship of the Lord with pagan religion or where prophets of Ba'al or Asherah. One of these false prophets was named Zechariah. He claimed to speak for the Lord (see 1 Kings 22:11) and claimed to have the Spirit of the Lord (see 1 Kings 22:24). Many of the other false prophets who worked for Ahab claimed to speak for the Lord also. 1 Kings 22:12 states: ***“And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, ‘Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the Lord will deliver it into the king’s hand.’”***

These false prophets used to constantly predict whatever they felt those who employed them would wish to hear. In other words, they mostly predicted *prosperity, success* and *victory* in war to their employers.

But note King Ahab hated hearing the prophecies of Micaiah and Elijah – God’s true prophets. This is because Micaiah and Elijah gave him God’s Words of correction and warnings of punishment if he did not turn from his wickedness. Note what 1 Kings 22:8 records what Ahab said about Micaiah: ***“So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the Lord; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me but evil’...”***

One of Ahab’s messengers summoned Micaiah to appear before Ahab. The messenger insisted that Micaiah give Ahab only an encouraging prophecy. 1 Kings 22:13 records: ***“Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, ‘Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement.’”***

But note Micaiah’s godly response in 1 Kings 22:14: ***“And Micaiah said, ‘As the Lord lives, whatever the Lord says to me, that I will speak.’”*** Micaiah answered he would only say what God told him, whether this be an encouraging word, a rebuke, a warning, a promise of punishment or whatever and regardless of whether the receivers of the Word respond badly or not.

This is a real message for people who claim to be prophets in today’s church. If they just give words of encouragement and only ever prophecy success and prosperity, or continually

prophecy these things to people who *refuse* to *repent* of their known sins, these so-called “prophets” need to ask themselves: “Am I listening to the Holy Spirit or a lying spirit?”

1 Kings 22 :19-23 records the Word of the Lord which God gave to Micaiah: ***“Then Micaiah said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left. And the Lord said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner. Then a spirit came forward and stood before the Lord, and said, ‘I will persuade him.’ The Lord said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And He said, ‘You shall persuade him, and also prevail. Go out and do so. Now therefore, look! The Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the Lord has declared disaster against you.’”***

These verses reveal that in His supreme rule of all creation, God agreed to lying spirits speaking through the mouth of these false prophets in order to lure King Ahab to his deserved death.

In response to this prophecy, the false prophet struck Micaiah on the cheek. This is typical of the anger and bitterness which false prophets usually exhibit to God’s real prophets.

After hearing Micaiah’s prophecy, Ahab ordered he be locked in prison. Giving God’s Word can result in persecution and severe trials.

But note as God told Micaiah, Ahab was killed in battle. 1 Kings 22:34 records: ***“Now a certain man drew a bow at random and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor...”*** Ahab died as a result of these wounds. Note that God foreknew the results of even a randomly shot arrow.

Elisha’s ministry

The Book of 2 Kings begins with the events leading up to the ascension of Elijah into heaven. Before Elijah ascended, Elisha requested that he receive a double portion of his spirit. God granted this request (see 2 Kings 2:9-12). Elisha then struck the waters of the Jordan with Elijah’s mantle and the waters miraculously parted (see 2 Kings 2:9-12).

Elisha began his prophetic ministry to the northern nation of Israel. 2 Kings 2:19-24 records two of the first miracles. These were the cleansing of a water supply and God’s judgment on a large group of wicked youths who spoke nasty words to God’s prophet. Elisha gave God-given prophecies about Moab (see 2 Kings 3:1-27). He then performed a miracle for a poor widow (see 2 Kings 4:1-7). He predicted that a woman without a son would have one about the same time the following year (see 2 Kings 4:8-17). After the boy later died, he raised the child to life (see 2 Kings 4:18-37).

God then healed a Syrian army commander named Naaman of leprosy (see 2 Kings 5:1-19). But sadly Elisha’s servant Gehazi used this healing as a means of trying to become rich dishonestly. Elisha refused to accept payment from Naaman for the healing God gave him. But Gehazi later spoke to Naaman without Elisha being present. Gehazi lied telling Naaman that Elisha had changed his mind and now wanted one talent of silver and two changes of clothes.

When Gehazi returned to Elisha, Elisha said he received a revelation of Gehazi’s actions and greed. As a result, Gehazi received leprosy as a punishment. This example shows the crucial importance of ministries being very honest and not greedy about money.

2 Kings 6:1-8:6 records other miraculous events in Elisha's ministry involving finding a lost axe head, revealing to the king of Israel the plans of his Syrian enemies, the temporary blinding of Syrian soldiers, the predictions of the ending of the Syrian siege of the city of Samaria, the death of an Israelite army officer and of a seven year famine. Through all these wonderful miracles, God showed He and not the pagan gods had power over nature and all humans.

2 Kings 6:24-33 shows that because of the severity of the famine, the king of Israel decided he was not going to wait on God any longer and wanted to kill Elisha. This was even though the famine was just about to end.

2 Kings 8:7-15 records Elisha's prediction that King Ben Hadad of Syria would die and his servant Hazael would replace him. This was a fulfillment of God's earlier Word to Elijah recorded in 1 Kings 19:15. This fulfilled a prediction that showed God ruled over pagan nations and not just in Israel. This was despite the fact pagan gods supposedly ruled in Syria and other nations. Ben Hadad was a pagan but he sought guidance from God through Elisha. This typifies some people today who want God's blessing but do not follow Him as Lord.

Other key points in 2 Kings

- a) 2 Kings 8:16-24 records Jehoram, son of Jehoshaphat was an evil king.
- b) King Joram died at the age of 40 and was replaced by his son Ahaziah. Ahaziah was an Israelite, King Ahab's son-in-law. 2 Kings 8:27 records Ahaziah led Judah in Ahab's wicked ways. This probably meant the promotion of Baal worship and associated evils.
- c) 2 Kings Chapters 9 and 10 include the fulfillment of God's earlier guidance through Elijah about the officer Jehu becoming king of the northern nation of Israel and killing Jezebel and all Ahab's wicked descendants. Once again God's sovereign rule is shown.
- d) King Jehu removed Baal worship from the northern nation of Israel. But his heart was not fully devoted to the Lord. He permitted the worship of King Jeroboam's golden calf-idols at Bethel and Dan to continue (see 2 Kings 10:18-31).
- e) 2 Kings 11:1-21 records the rule of evil Queen Athaliah in Judah, her attempt to wipe out all of David's descendants, her removal by Jehoida the High Priest and others, the covenant which the Judeans made with the Lord and their destruction of the temple of Ba'al in Jerusalem. Jehoida appointed Joash, the son of previous King Ahaziah and David's descendant as king of Judah. While he was under the influence of godly Jehoida, Joash ruled well (see 2 Kings 12:1-16). After Jehoida's death, Joash backslid and he and other leaders led Judah into turning from the Lord (see 2 Chronicles 24:17-25).
- f) After King Jehu died, Jehu's son Jehoahaz ruled for 17 years in Israel (see 2 Kings 13:1-9). He led Israel into wickedness. But note 2 Kings 13:23 reveals God was still gracious to the northern nation of Israel because of the Abrahamic Covenant: ***“But the Lord was gracious to them, had compassion on them, and regarded them, because of His covenant with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and would not yet destroy them or cast them from His presence.”*** So Jehoash ruled for 16 years. He also led Israel into wickedness (see 2 Kings 13:10-13).
- g) During King Jehoash's reign, Elisha became sick and died (see 2 Kings 13:14-20). While Elisha was sick, Jehoash came to see him and showed a concern about Israel's future.

- h) For God's own sovereign purposes, He later resurrected a Moabite raider whose dead body was placed in Elisha's tomb and touched Elisha's bones (see 2 Kings 13:20-21).
- i) 2 Kings 14:1-17:4 then records the godly reigns of Kings Amaziah, Uzziah or Azariah and Jotham of Judah, and the wicked reigns of King Jeroboam II, Zechariah, Shallum, Menahem, Pekahiah and Hoshea of Israel and Ahaz of Judah. During the reign of King Jeroboam II, God prospered the northern nation of Israel even though, he was an evil ruler (see 2 Kings 14:23-26) and most of the Israelites were following a mixture of worshipping God and pagan gods (Books of Hosea and Amos). 2 Kings 14:25 reveals God told the prophet Jonah that He was going to expand the territory of Israel under King Jeroboam II's rule. This is an example of God's grace and mercy to wicked people. During King Ahaz's reign the prophet Isaiah predicted that the Assyrians would conquer the northern kingdom of Israel and invade Judah (see Isaiah 7:1-8:10).
- j) 2 Kings 17:5-23 records the conquest of the northern nation of Israel by Assyria and the reasons God permitted this to occur.
- k) The Book of 2 Kings does not say northern Israel and Judah were conquered because the Assyrians and Babylonians were so powerful instead this Biblical Book shows the Assyrians conquered Israel and the Babylonians conquered Judah because God stopped protecting them.
- l) In 2 Kings 17:24-41, we see that the Assyrians transported pagans from other lands to live in the land which was previously occupied by the 10 northern tribes of Israel. Also these verses show these people mixed the worship of the Lord with a worship of their own previous pagan gods. Many people are willing to worship God as long as they continue their previous sins. This group were the ancestors of the Samaritans in Jesus' time.

Hezekiah's and the Assyrian siege of Jerusalem

2 Kings 18:1-20:21 records the rule of King Hezekiah in Judah. He began reigning at the young age 25 and was a very godly king. 2 Kings 18:3-6 states: ***“And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.”***

2 Kings 18:7-37 records that God prospered Hezekiah wherever he went. But God also permitted Sennacherib, the king of Assyria to siege Hezekiah's capital city Jerusalem. This was a great test of faith for Hezekiah and the people of Jerusalem.

In 2 Kings 19:1-7, we see God told the prophet Isaiah that God would cause Sennacherib to return to his own land and be killed there. 2 Kings 19:10-13 records Sennacherib then sent a message to Hezekiah to tell him not to trust that God would save Jerusalem from the Assyrian army. After receiving this message, Hezekiah prayed to God asking Him to help them on the basis of Him revealing to all the kingdoms of Earth that He alone is Lord God. 2 Kings 19:19 records the latter part of Hezekiah's prayer: ***“Now therefore, O Lord our God, I pray,***

save us from his hand, that all the kingdoms of the earth may know that You are the Lord God, You alone.”

In response, God told Isaiah to prophecy that God would defend the city of Jerusalem and destroy the Assyrian army (see 2 Kings 19:20-34). God also told Isaiah to proclaim that God had sovereignly previously used the Assyrian army to destroy many fortified cities.

2 Kings 19:35-37 recorded that some time after this, the angel of the Lord killed 185,000 Assyrian soldiers and Sennacherib went back to Assyria where two of his sons killed him.

When in 2 Kings 19:34, God promised He would defend the city of Jerusalem from the Assyrian army, He also said He would do it for His own sake and for His servant David’s sake.

Therefore, God promised to defend Jerusalem for His own glory because His guarantees in His Covenant with David God’s unmerited guarantees in the Davidic Covenant are found in 2 Samuel 7:1-17. In 2 Samuel 7:12-16, God promised: *“When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men. But My mercy shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I removed from before you. And your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever.”*

In 2 Kings 20:6, God made similar promises to those in 2 Kings 19:34. note that probably on the basis of 2 Kings 19:34 and 20:6, many inhabitants of Jerusalem later in the time of the prophet Jeremiah wrongly have thought that God would protect the city of Jerusalem from the Babylonian army. But note God did not defend Jerusalem from the Babylonians. Instead He punished the city because its inhabitants would not turn from their sins (see Jeremiah 18:11-12, 22:1-5, 2 Kings 17:19 and 2 Chronicles 36:14-21).

Hezekiah’s sickness and healing

2 Kings 20:1-11 records that Hezekiah became sick and God told him to prepare to die. After Hezekiah prayed and wept bitterly, God told Isaiah to tell him he would live another 15 years. 2 Kings 18:2 shows Hezekiah later died at the age of 53 years. So this means Hezekiah was 38 years when God had told him to prepare to die.

Hezekiah was an extremely godly believer but he did not live to 70 to 80 years. 2 Chronicles 32:25-26 sadly records: *“But Hezekiah did not repay according to the favor shown him, for his heart was lifted up; therefore wrath was looming over him and over Judah and Jerusalem. Then Hezekiah humbled himself for the pride of his heart, he and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the wrath of the Lord did not come upon them in the days of Hezekiah.”*

Venerating the bronze serpent and religious relics

In the Old and New Testaments, we can see that God used many natural objects in association with His miracle-working power.

God used Moses’ staff in relation to His miracle-working power when turning the Nile River and the other rivers, streams, pools and reservoirs of water in Egypt into blood (see

Exodus 7:14-24). God also used Moses' staff in relation to bringing a plague of frogs (see Exodus 8:1-15) and then a plague of gnats on the people of Egypt (see Exodus 8:16-19). God used a few handfuls of soot from a furnace in association with His miracle-working power when bringing a punishment of boils on the sinful Egyptians (see Exodus 9:8-11). The Lord used the raising of Moses' hand in connection with bringing a devastating hailstorm (Exodus 9:13-26), a plague of locusts (Exodus 10:1-15) and three days of total darkness on the land of Egypt (Exodus 10:21-26). God also used Moses' hand in relation to miraculously opening the Red Sea (Exodus 14:19-31). God used a piece of wood in association with supernaturally turning bitter water into drinkable water (Exodus 15:22-25).

God used Moses' staff, a few handfuls of soot from a furnace, the raising of Moses' hand and a piece of wood in relation to manifestations of His awesome power. But God did not need these things. He could have easily performed these miracles without any of these added natural occurrences. He merely used these natural *signs* to the unbelieving Egyptians and spiritually weak Israelites of the impending miracles.

In a number of instances in Moses' ministry, God performed wonderful miracles without using any associated natural occurrence. God performed the miracles of slaying all of the first born of Egypt (Exodus 11:1-12:36) and of feeding the multitudes of Israelites in the desert with manna for forty years (Exodus 16:1-35), without using any accompanying natural occurrence as a *sign*.

Throughout history, God has used different natural objects in relation to manifestations of His infinite miraculous power. But note that in not one instance does God in His Scriptures encourage anyone to burn incense to and venerate a natural object which He has employed previously in connection with manifestations of His spiritual power.

In Numbers 21:4-9, we see the Lord told Moses to make a snake out of bronze and to put it on a pole. God stated that anyone who had been bitten by a real snake on that day and who looked at the bronze snake on the pole would be healed from the poison. Numbers 21:4-9 states: ***“Then they journeyed from Mount Hor by the Way of the Red Sea, to go around the land of Edom; and the soul of the people became very discouraged on the way. And the people spoke against God and against Moses: ‘Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water, and our soul loathes this worthless bread.’ So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and many of the people of Israel died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said, ‘We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.’ Then the Lord said to Moses, ‘Make a fiery serpent, and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it, shall live.’ So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”***

Verse 9 shows what God said came to pass. Those who had been bitten by a poisonous snake were healed if they looked at the bronze snake. This bronze snake on a pole had no miraculous ability itself. Instead, it was used by God in association with His healing of many poisoned people. If God had wanted, He could have used any one of thousands of natural objects or could have healed without using any natural object in relation to the healings.

The Israelites did not leave this bronze serpent in the desert. Nor did they destroy it. Instead they kept it. We do not know exactly when but some years later, many of the Israelites began to burn incense to this bronze serpent on a pole. This is revealed in 2 Kings 18:1-7: ***“Now***

it came to pass in the third year of Hoshea the son of Elah, king of Israel, that Hezekiah the son of Ahaz, king of Judah, began to reign. He was twenty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-nine years in Jerusalem. His mother's name was Abi the daughter of Zechariah. And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done. He removed the high places and broke the sacred pillars, cut down the wooden images and broke in pieces the bronze serpent that Moses had made; for until those days the children of Israel burned incense to it, and called it Nehushtan. He trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him. For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses. The Lord was with him; he prospered wherever he went. And he rebelled against the king of Assyria and did not serve him."

Verse 4 states the bronze serpent had been given the name "*Nehushtan*" and King Hezekiah broke it into pieces. We can see from verses 3, 5 and 6 which surrounds the verse which says Hezekiah destroyed the bronze snake, that God approved of everything Hezekiah was doing at that time. Verse 3 says Hezekiah did all that was right in the sight of the Lord: "*And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, according to all that his father David had done.*"

Verse 5 reveals Hezekiah had been the most godly king ruling Judah up until that time: "*He trusted in the Lord God of Israel so that after him was none like him among all the kings of Judah, nor any who were before him.*" Taking verses 3 and 5 together, we see Hezekiah's commitment to God was even more than King David's.

Verse 6 reveals Hezekiah kept God's commandments and clung to God: "*For he held fast to the Lord; he did not depart from following Him, but kept His commandments, which the Lord had commanded Moses.*"

Therefore, it is obvious from verses 3 to 6 above that God approved of Hezekiah breaking the bronze serpent into pieces.

In fact, this destruction of the bronze serpent called Nehushtan is linked to the destruction by Hezekiah of the wicked pagan Asherah idols and pagan so-called "sacred" pillars and the removal of the high places – places of pagan worship. Exodus 34:13, Deuteronomy 7:5 and 12:3 reveal God hated the Asherah idols and sacred pillars and told the Israelites to destroy these pagan religious objects.

It is obvious God hated the offering of incense to this natural object that had once been associated with a manifestation of His awesome healing power. This is considering in 2 Kings 18:1-7 it was linked with Asherah idols, sacred pillars and high places of pagan worship.

In the whole of the Old Testament the only person that incense was commanded to be burnt to was to God Himself. Exodus 30:1-9 reveals this: "*You shall make an altar to burn incense on; you shall make it of acacia wood. A Cubit shall be its width – it shall be square – and two cubits shall be its height. Its horns shall be of one piece with it. And you shall overlay its top, its sides all around, and its horns with pure gold; and you shall make for it a molding of gold all around. Two gold rings you shall make for it, under the moldings on both its sides. You shall place them on its two sides, and they will be holders for the poles with which to bear it. You shall make the poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. And you shall put it before the veil that is before the ark of the Testimony, before the mercy seat that is over the Testimony, where I will meet with you. Aaron shall burn on it sweet incense every morning;*

when he tends the lamps, he shall burn incense on it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at twilight, he shall burn incense on it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations. You shall not offer strange incense on it, or a burnt offering, or a meal offering; nor shall you pour a drink offering on it.”

The burning of incense to any other person – no matter how godly – or any natural object is never once sanctioned in either Old or New Testaments. This is even if the person or object has been used in association with manifestations of God’s miraculous power.

Isaiah’s prediction about the Babylonian conquest of Judah

God prospered Hezekiah greatly (see 2 Chronicles 32:27-30). God permitted envoys from Babylon to visit Hezekiah to test what was in Hezekiah’s heart. 2 Chronicles 32:31 states: *“However, regarding the ambassadors of the princes of Babylon, whom they sent to him to inquire about the wonder that was done in the land, God withdrew from him, in order to test him, that He might know all that was in his heart.”*

2 Kings 20:12-19 records that after the envoys from Babylon visited Hezekiah in Jerusalem, God inspired Isaiah the prophet to predict that the Babylonians would conquer Jerusalem and Judah and would take the Jews to Babylon. 2 Kings 20:16-18 states: *“Then Isaiah said to Hezekiah, ‘Hear the word of the Lord’: ‘Behold, the days are coming when all that is in your house, and what your fathers have accumulated until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left,’ says the Lord. ‘And they shall take away some of your sons who will descend from you, whom you will beget; and they shall be eunuchs in the palace of the king of Babylon.’”*

Manasseh’s wicked reign

In 2 Kings 21:1-26, we see that Manasseh son of Hezekiah began to reign at age 12 when Hezekiah died. This means Manasseh was born in the extra 15 years God granted Hezekiah.

2 Kings 21:2-9 and 16 record how wicked Manasseh was: *“And he did evil in the sight of the Lord, according to the abominations of the nations whom the Lord had cast out before the children of Israel. For he rebuilt the high places which Hezekiah his father had destroyed; he raised up altars for Baal, and made a wooden image, as Ahab king of Israel had done; and he worshipped all the host of heaven and served them. He also built altars in the house of the Lord, of which the Lord had said, ‘In Jerusalem I will put My name.’ And he built altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the house of the Lord. Also he made his son pass through the fire, practiced soothsaying, used witchcraft, and consulted spiritualists and mediums. He did much evil in the sight of the Lord, to provoke Him to anger. He even set a carved image of Asherah that he had made, in the house of which the Lord had said to David and to Solomon his son, ‘In this house and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put My name forever; and I will not make the feet of Israel wander anymore from the land which I gave their fathers – only if they are careful to do all that I have commanded them, and according to all the law that My servant Moses commanded them.’ But they paid no attention, and Manasseh seduced them to do more evil than the nations whom the Lord had destroyed before the children of Israel...Moreover*

Manasseh shed very much innocent blood, till he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another, besides his sin with which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of the Lord.

2 Kings 21:10-15 records God spoke through His prophets promising Jerusalem would be punished because of the dreadful wickedness it practiced under Manasseh's reign. Manasseh had the longest reign of any king of Judah. But this shows the length of a reign as a political ruler does not signify God's approval of the ruler's attitudes and behaviours.

2 Chronicles 33:12-16 reveals Manasseh sincerely repented later in his reign, removed much of the pagan idols and altars he had set up in Jerusalem and commanded Judeans to serve the Lord. Manasseh had murdered many people, murdered his son as a human sacrifice and committed other dreadful acts of wickedness. But God still forgave him after he turned back to God from his wickedness.

Amon's evil reign

After Manasseh's death at the age of 67 years, his son Amon reigned in his place, abandoned the Lord and promoted pagan religion in Judah again (see 2 Kings 21:19-21).

Josiah's reign

After Amon's death, his 8 year old son Josiah became king of Judah. God's prophet had predicted Josiah's reign almost 33 years earlier (see 1 Kings 13:1-2). 2 Kings 22:2 states: ***“And he did what was right in the sight of the Lord, and walked in all the ways of his father David’ he did not turn aside to the right hand or to the left.”***

2 Chronicles 34:3 records that when Josiah was only 16, he began to seek God and when he was 20 to rid Judah of all compromising pagan religion. This was a *wonderful* example for *young people today*.

When King Josiah was 26 years, Hilkiah the high priest discovered a copy of Scriptures in the Temple. This suggests that during Amon's reign and possibly also Manasseh's long reign, the Scriptures were not read or taught in Judah and Jerusalem.

After hearing the Scriptures read, Josiah humbled himself before the lord (see 2 Kings 22:10-13 and 19). In 2 Kings 22:16-20, God then instructed Huldah the prophetess to tell Josiah: ***“Thus says the Lord: ‘Behold, I will bring calamity on this place and on its inhabitants – all the words of the book which the king of Judah has read – because they have forsaken Me and burned incense to other gods, that they might provoke Me to anger with all the works of their hands. Therefore My wrath shall be aroused against this place and shall not be quenched. But to the king of Judah, who sent you to inquire of the Lord, in this manner you shall speak to him, “Thus says the Lord God of Israel: ‘Concerning the words which you have heard – because your heart was tender, and you humbled yourself before the Lord when you heard what I spoke against this place and against its inhabitants, that they would become a desolation and a curse, and you tore your clothes and wept before Me, I also have heard you,’ says the Lord. ‘Surely, therefore, I will gather you to your fathers, and you shall be gathered to your grave in peace; and your eyes shall not see all the calamity which I will bring on this place.’” So they brought the word to the king.’”***

2 Kings 23:1-24 records how Josiah tried with all his power to rid Judah and Jerusalem of pagan religion and lead the Judeans into being devoted to God. Josiah destroyed all idols,

images, altars and other outward traces of every pagan religion in Judah. He rid Judah of human sacrifice and the sexual immorality linked to Baal and Asherah worship. He read all the Scriptures to the Judeans and led them to commit themselves to following the Mosaic Covenant (see 2 Kings 23:2-3).

Many of these conversions to the Lord seem to have been superficial because after Josiah died in battle at the age of only 41 years, most of the Judeans returned to pagan religion.

The return to paganism under the next 4 kings of Judah

After Josiah died, four other kings reigned in Judah. These were Jehoahaz for 3 months, Jehoiakim for 11 years, Jehoiachin for 3 months and Zedekiah for 11 years. Each of these kings led Judah and its capital Jerusalem into wickedness.

The prophet Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of these four kings revealing their wickedness and the great backslidings away from God of most Judeans. Jeremiah had began his prophetic ministry in the time of Josiah (see Jeremiah 1:1-2) so he had seen the attempts of Josiah to lead the nation of Judah back to God and the partly superficial results of Josiah's great efforts.

After continual warnings through Jeremiah, Habakkuk, Ezekiel and God's other prophets over these 22½ years, God sent King Nebuchadnezzar and his pagan Babylonians to conquer Judah and Jerusalem (see 2 Kings 25:1-30). 2 Kings 24:13-16 and 25:11 records the Babylonians took many Judeans back to Babylon. 2 Kings 25:22-26 states that many other Jews later fled to Egypt out of fear of the Babylonians.

A possible misinterpretation of God's promises

In the reigns of wicked Judean Kings Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin and Zedekiah, religious Jews may have misinterpreted Psalm 18:50, 89:3-4, 89:19-37 and 144:10 to mean that God would always defend the Judean kings who were descended from King David, from being conquered by pagan foreign enemies no matter how wicked the kings and people of Judah became. Psalm 18:50 states: "*Great deliverance He gives to His king, and shows mercy to His anointed, to David and his descendants forevermore.*"

Psalm 144:10 promises: "*The One who gives salvation to kings, Who delivers David His servant from the deadly sword.*"

God's faithfulness to His covenant with David

The Book of 2 Kings ends with a record of how the king of Babylon released Jehoiachin, king of Judah from prison and treated him well for the rest of his days (see 2 Kings 25:27-30). This was an expression of God's faithfulness to His covenant with David. Jehoiachin was also called Jeconiah and Coniah (see 1 Chronicles 3:16 and Jeremiah 22:24). Matthew 1:12-17 records Jeconiah was an ancestor of Jesus Christ.

Problems of chronology

In the past, some writers criticised the chronology of the Books of 1 and 2 Kings. They argued that if we add up all of the years in which the kings of Judah reigned, the figure was greater than the number of years from the death of Solomon to the fall of Jerusalem. But this argument was false because²:

- a) The author(s) of 1 and 2 Kings includes the number of years in which some of the kings of Judah ruled as *co-regents* with their fathers. Examples of these kings who ruled as co-regents and then solely by themselves were Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, Uzziah (Azariah), Jotham, Ahaz, Hezekiah and Manasseh. Therefore to work out the number of years from the death of Solomon to the fall of Jerusalem we must subtract these co-regency years. An example of a co-regency is recorded in 2 Kings 15:5.
- b) The Northern Kingdom of Israel used a different dating system than used in the Southern Kingdom of Judah. In Judah, the seventh month of the religious year was Tishri or Ethanim (see 1 Kings 8:2). But in Judah, Tishri was used as the first month of the year for computing dates and reigns. In both the Northern Kingdom of Israel and in Judah, the first month of the religious year was Nisan or Abib (compare Exodus 12:2, 13:4, 23:15, Deuteronomy 6:1 and Esther 3:7). But in Northern Israel, the first month for calculating dates and reigns was also Nisan or Abib.

The 10 “lost” tribes of Israel

In 722 B.C., the Assyrians conquered the 10 tribes of the Northern nation of Israel (see 2 Kings 17:5-23). These tribes were Ephraim, Manasseh, Zebulan, Reuben, Gad, Dan, Simeon, Naphtali, Asher and Issachar. The Assyrians transported these Israelites to other parts of the Assyrian Empire. The Bible does not record any of these 10 tribes ever returning to the Land of Israel. So in one sense, it is right to call them the ten lost tribes of Israel.

But note that many centuries before the Assyrians conquered these ten tribes, Judges 21 reveals that the men of the tribe of Benjamin intermarried with the women of Jabesh Gilead which was a part of the tribe of Manasseh. The tribe of Benjamin united with the tribe of Judah to form the southern kingdom of Judah later during the time of King Rehoboam, Solomon’s son.

Also, 2 Chronicles 11:13-17 and 15:9 reveal many people from the 10 tribes of the Northern nation of Israel moved to Judea or its capital Jerusalem to live in the regions of Kings Rehoboam and Asa of Judah.

The above facts reveal why the Jews who returned to Palestine from Babylon and remained in Palestine until the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, who then scattered throughout the nations of the Earth and who then returned in the 20th Century to form the nation of Israel, included Israelites from the tribe of Benjamin and from the ten tribes of the Northern kingdom of Israel which were conquered by the Assyrians in 722 B.C.

² Bromiley, Volume 1, pages 681-684 and Gleason L. Archer, “A Survey of Old Testament Introduction”, Moody Press, Chicago, 1994, pages 320-323.