



## 1 Kings: The God Who Gives Wisdom

**Memory Verse:** 1 Kings 3:9 "So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

### Background

The book of 1 Kings is the 11th book of the Bible and the 6th book of history in the Old Testament. Like 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book in the Hebrew Bible and later separated into two books in the Greek Septuagint. The English name for the book is taken from the Vulgate (Latin translation of the Bible). The author of 1 and 2 Kings is unknown although scholars have suggested the prophet Jeremiah. The writing of 1 and 2 Kings likely began around 586 BC and completed several years later.

First Kings covers the events in Israel's history from approximately 971 BC to 851 BC. It begins with the death of King David and his son Solomon's succession to the throne. The nation of Israel is in its "glory days," united and strong under King Solomon's wise leadership. However, in Solomon's later years, Israel falls into spiritual decline and weakness as Solomon's foreign wives turn his heart toward other gods (1 Kings 11:4). Following his death, in 931 BC the Kingdom of Israel becomes divided into two nations. The northern kingdom retains the name Israel and consists of ten tribes formed under Jeroboam, a former official of Solomon's. The remaining two tribes form the nation of Judah in the south under Solomon's son Rehoboam. First Kings follows the parallel histories of these two nations as king after king rules them. In Israel, all of the kings were bad. In Judah, there were a few good kings with several bad kings. It is in 1 Kings that we are introduced to the prophet Elijah as he pronounces God's judgment on the evil King Ahab and Queen Jezebel of Israel and defeats, in God's power, 450 false prophets in a contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18).

### The Short Story

Israel, united and strong, becomes divisive and weak, separating into two rival nations: the northern kingdom of Israel and the southern kingdom of Judah.

### What's the Big Idea?

First Kings illustrates how the covenant relationship between God and His people affects the welfare of the people. Those kings who were faithful to God and His laws experienced God's blessings while those who did not follow God's law experienced curses. Furthermore, the kings were illustrations of the people. As the kings rejected or followed God, so did the people. Solomon had a strong relationship with God and sought God's wisdom. His kingdom experienced strength, unity, and great blessings. Solomon himself had amazing wealth and a great reputation that was widespread. Solomon had the Temple built and dedicated to the Lord as a permanent dwelling place among His people. However, Solomon wandered from the faith and served false gods in his later years and his kingdom began to weaken. The division of this kingdom and the kings that followed in the north and south reveal further moral and spiritual decline. In addition to the kings, we see many prophets proclaiming God's truth to these kings and recording the history and faithfulness or lack thereof of the nations of Israel and Judah.

### So What? Why is this book so important? What was God's purpose for the book?

First Kings is important not so much as a biography of the kings, but rather in teaching the spiritual lessons to be learned from this history. Solomon was the wisest man of his time and yet when he began to rely on his own strength, wealth, power, and political connections instead of relying on God, he fell away from his faith. Without conscious dependence on God and His wisdom, it is easy to fall into idol worship, self-reliance, and other sin. So how do we gain true wisdom from God? In Proverbs 9:10 Solomon himself states, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding."

*\*Material taken from various sources.*

## Teaching Text

1 Kings 3:9-13 So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?" <sup>10</sup> The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. <sup>11</sup> So God said to him, "Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, <sup>12</sup> I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. <sup>13</sup> Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honor—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings

## Sermon-Based Discussion Questions

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## Practical Application

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## Hitting the Highpoints

- 1 Kings 2:1-2
- 1 Kings 3:9
- 1 Kings 9:3-9
- 1 Kings 11:11-13
- 1 Kings 18:37
- 1 Cor 1:30

## Bonus Features

## Personal Takeaways and Notes