

1 Kings

Original Historical Setting

Author: Unknown (Traditionally Jeremiah)

Written: Perhaps around 600 B.C.

Audience: Probably Israelites living in Babylonian exile

Occasion: A selection of resources was used to compose an interpretation of the era of Solomon and the divided monarchy.

Timeline:

970 BC – Solomon becomes king

930 BC – Solomon dies and Jeroboam reigns in Israel
and Rehoboam reigns in Judah

872 BC – Jehoshaphat reigns in Judah

865 BC – Elijah begins to prophecy against Ahab

World Events that occur simultaneously

~900 B.C. – Celts of central Europe migrate to France

~887 B.C. – City of Canton, China is founded

~883 B.C. – Assyrian empire begins to expand

Genre/Literary style

An extremely selective historical account written in Hebrew

Features and Structure

- The author focuses on chronology. And for the period of the divided monarchy he maintains a cross reference system between kings of Israel and Judah, which shows both kingdoms were still God's people.
- The typical formula used is, "In the ___ year of ___, son of ___, ___ became king over Judah (or Israel), and he reigned ___ years."
- **2 Sections**
Ch 1-11 – Reign of King Solomon
Ch 12-22 – The Divided Kingdom

Key text(s)

3:16-28 – Solomon's wisdom displayed in mothers' conflict
18:39 – "The LORD, He is God" was the response when fire consumed Elijah's sacrifice

What to look for

- The author devotes considerable time to evaluating the kings according to the way they responded to the Mosaic and Davidic covenants.
- The author doesn't focus on the most accomplished kings. If he did, he would give more attention to kings like Omri (instead of just 6 verses) who was one of the most powerful rulers of the northern nation of Israel. Instead he focuses on those who were most or least obedient. He is more interested in showing what happens when rulers honor the covenant with God.

Interesting facts

- The derogatory phrase, "she is a Jezebel," meaning a shameless, immoral woman comes from 1 & 2 Kings. Jezebel was a Phoenician princess who lived in what is now Lebanon and who married King Ahab. She executed many of God's prophets and imposed on the nation her own religion. She worshipped Baal, a fertility god. Worship included having sex with cult prostitutes-male and female-as a way of persuading Baal to grant fertility to family, flock and field.
- The Ethiopians hold to a legend that the queen of Sheba gave birth to a child by Solomon who became king of Ethiopia. Falashas are a group of Ethiopian Jews who say their roots go back to this king. Before the Ethiopian emperor was overthrown in 1974, the nation's constitution said that the royal line descended from the son of the "queen of Sheba and King Solomon of Jerusalem."

Memory Verse: 1 Kings 8:57-58