



## Introduction

Kings was most likely written after the exile.

The author is anonymous. It was most likely written by a scribe or prophet, some people have suggested that it could have been Jeremiah or Ezra but there is no conclusive proof of who the author is. The author could have written alone, or it could have been a collaborative process.

1 & 2 Kings is one book that needs to be read as a whole, but was divided into two for practical reasons (length of scroll) - we will be continuing our study of 2 Kings next year (God willing).

It covers the years from the death of David until the exile to Babylon (approx 400 years from 970-560 BC)

We need to understand Kings through the framework of the Bible writers, it is not just a story, it is not just history, it is a theological account - it was written with a clear purpose: to show God's perspective on what is happening with His people.

The author picks and chooses the content very carefully so we need to pay attention to what is included in the text and ask ourselves why the author has included the details that we find there.

It is written from the perspective of a people in exile wondering why they are there and questioning how they should move forward. It offers a framework for them to process their situation, move to repentance and have hope for the future.

So as we read it, we need to look at it with a lens that looks back, because there are patterns, types and echoes in Kings that have already been seen in Israel's history that ought to shape how we understand what we read.

At the same time, Kings is part of the big picture of God's salvation plan that finds its fulfilment in Jesus, so we need to see how it points forward to Jesus as the faithful and true king of Israel.



## Kingship in Israel:

It is clear that from the beginning God anticipated that His people would have a king.

When He made his covenant with Abraham he mentions that "I will make nations of you, and kings will come from you" (Genesis 17:6) This is echoed in the promise he makes to Jacob (Genesis 35:11). Jacob later prophesies that "The sceptre will not depart from Judah, nor the ruler's staff from between his feet, until he to whom it belongs shall come and the obedience of the nations shall be his." (Genesis 49:10) this anticipates a ruler that is not just ruling over Israel, but over all the nations.

Later prophecy in Numbers also envisions a king who will come from Israel, but will rule over an exalted kingdom and will crush all his enemies under his

feet (Numbers 24:7,17,19). This language ties in with the language from Genesis 3:15, where after the fall, God promises that a promised seed will come and crush the head of the serpent.

So with kingship already anticipated, Moses sets out the expectations for a king in **Deuteronomy 17:14-20**. This is an important passage because this is the lens the writer of Kings uses to assess the kingship in Israel and Judah.

***“When you enter the land the Lord your God is giving you and have taken possession of it and settled in it, and you say, “Let us set a king over us like all the nations around us,” be sure to appoint over you a king the Lord your God chooses. He must be from among your fellow Israelites. Do not place a foreigner over you, one who is not an Israelite. The king, moreover, must not acquire great numbers of horses for himself or make the people return to Egypt to get more of them, for the Lord has told you, “You are not to go back that way again.” He must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray. He must not accumulate large amounts of silver and gold. When he takes the throne of his kingdom, he is to write for himself on a scroll a copy of this law, taken from that of the Levitical priests. It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the Lord his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees and not consider himself better than his fellow Israelites and turn from the law to the right or to the left. Then he and his descendants will reign a long time over his kingdom in Israel.”***

So Moses shows us that the characteristics of a godly king, according to God’s standards are:

- they are an Israelite (this is more than just a descendant of Abraham, it implies that they are committed to the covenant that God has made with his people, which is shown in love for God, and love for neighbour and obedience to God’s commands)
- humility (doesn’t acquire wealth, and doesn’t think better of himself)
- has God’s Word as their priority (they will write it, read it and keep it)

This is then, what God’s people would have been hoping for as they entered the land and settled there, so it is not surprising that during the tumultuous time of the Judges the repeated refrain is “there was no king in Israel”. This was often paired with the phrase “everyone did what was right in his own eyes” (Judges 17:6, 18:1, 19:1, 21:25), conveying the anticipated hope that they need a king to lead them, and that the king would lead them to godly obedience (doing what is right in God’s eyes rather than what is right in their own eyes).

The books of 1&2 Samuel show us the transition from the time of the judges to the time of the kings, and in 1 Samuel 8 the people ask for a king. Unfortunately they are not seeking a king who will lead them in righteousness and obedience to the LORD according to Deut. 17. Rather, they are wanting someone who is “like all the nations” (1 Sam 8:6), who will lead them in battle and make them look strong in the eyes of the surrounding nations, forgetting that their true king is God. Samuel notes that in wanting this, they have rejected God as their true king (1 Sam 8:7)

The book of Samuel goes on to describe the reigns of the first two kings of Israel, Saul and David.

Saul is a “king like the nations”, tall and handsome and strong, but the narrative shows us that when Israel get what they want, it ends in disaster. David is a king who God has set his heart on, and for the most part, David is the kind of king that Deut. 17 describes.

In 2 Samuel 6 & 7 we see David’s heart as king -wishing to see God’s name honoured and exalted and having a central place in the life and kingdom of Israel. He seeks to fulfil the directive from Deut. 12:1-14, to give the makeshift tabernacle a permanent place and form, desiring to build a temple (or house) for God, making sure that the worship of God remains central to Israel.

In 2 Samuel 7, God reveals to David His own plan for His people and for David, He makes some promises to David which build on the promises that He made to Abraham in Genesis, and indicates that the kingship in Israel will be built on David’s line, and that the son who will follow David will “build a house for [His] name” and that his kingdom would be “established forever” (2 Sam 6:13)

We know that David wasn’t perfect, but the Bible makes it clear that his dependence on God through the good and bad times in his life and his willingness to repent when he was rebuked lead the prophets and Bible writers to describe him as God’s “servant”, who “kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes.”(1 Kings 14:8) This makes him the standard for righteous kingship from then on.

The Book of Kings begins as David’s life is ending, and given the promises given in 2 Samuel 7, there are high hopes for the future.



## Study 1: A House for a King

### Read: 1 Kings 2:1-5

1- As some of David's final words to Solomon, how does David want Solomon's kingship to be defined?

*Obedience to God's Word (that the LORD may establish his word)*

*Righteous character (watch how you live, walk faithfully)*

*Teach your sons to follow the Lord*

*Carry out justice*

2- How does Solomon respond to his father's exhortation? **Read: 1 Kings 3:3-14**

*He shows his love for the LORD by following his father's instructions v.3*

3- Why does Solomon ask for wisdom?

*He wants to lead God's people and govern them well, knowing right and wrong. For discernment in administering justice. He is seeking that God show him what the difference between good and evil, so he can lead the people in God's ways and do what pleases God*

4- Why do you think God is pleased by this request?

*It shows humility and dependence on God (not doing what is right in his own eyes but wanting to do what pleases God)*

5- What does this show about God's priorities and the priorities of the anointed king?

*The priority is God's word, not wealth, or power, or honour*

6- How is the wisdom Solomon is asking for different from intelligence? (Ref. Proverbs 1:7)

*It comes from a fear of God and wanting to prioritise His word, not from experience or ability*

*It is dependent on humility and faith and comes from a heart that loves God and desires to serve Him*

*It empowers him to serve God*

In 1 Kings 2:4 and 3:14, both David and the LORD use the word "if" and tell him that God's blessing will be dependent on his obedience to God's word.

7- How is wisdom related to obedience?

*Fearing God is shown in how a person acts, obedience flows out of a heart that loves the LORD.*

8- How is obedience related to dependence?

*A heart that loves the LORD, trusts the LORD  
obedience leads to dependence and dependence feeds obedience*

9- If God's blessing is related to the king's obedience, what do we expect the outcome will eventually be?

*Humans are sinful, they cannot obey the law  
the king will disobey, and receive the consequences of disobedience*

10- What does this point to the need for?

*Israel (and we) need a king who will be perfectly obedient and faithful,  
and who will represent his people in that faithfulness*

**Read: 1 Kings 5:3-5, 7, 12**

11- What is the connection between wisdom and building the temple?

*God's wisdom gives Solomon the desire to build the temple and the  
ability to do this and follow God's instructions*

**<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/solomon-ask-wisdom/>**

**Read: 1 Kings 6:1-2, 14-22, 37-38; 8:1-11, 55-58**

These verses are just a few highlights from the 4 chapters that the writer of Kings dedicates to the description of the temple.

12- Why do you think the writer of Kings dedicates so much time to the building and fitting out of the temple?

*it highlights the importance of the temple in the life of Israel  
The artwork in the temple is full of trees and fruit -reminders of Eden  
and indicative that the temple is like a new Eden where people can  
dwell with God  
only the priests will ever see the interior, so the writer describes it for  
those who will never see it*

13- What is the role of the temple in the life of the people of Israel?

*the temple is central to God's presence among His people: the Holy  
God desires to dwell with his people but they are sinful, so the  
sacrifices for sin and purification are important for God's people to be  
able to draw near to their God.*

(Extra question) How does what happened at the dedication of the temple correspond to the dedication of the tabernacle in Ex 40:16-17, 34-35?

*The cloud of God's presence fills the temple the same way it filled the  
tabernacle, showing God dwelling with his people*

14- What is the relationship between rest, the king, and the temple?

*God gives rest so the temple can be built (1 Kings 5:4, 8:56)*

*1 Kings 7:51 Solomon finishes his "work", this wording is similar to God finishing his work of creation and resting in Gen 2:2*

*The king ruling over his kingdom in peace with God dwelling in their midst is the picture of rest, and points to an eternal kingdom ruled by the perfect king in God's presence.*

In 1 Kings 8:20 & 56, Solomon announces that God has fulfilled his promises to both Moses and to David.

15- Is what Israel experiences under Solomon the final fulfilment of God's promises or is there more to come? (2 Samuel 7:12-16)

*God certainly has fulfilled his promises, but the eternal nature of the kingdom promised in 2 Samuel indicates that there is more to come. It becomes very clear when the kings fail that it wasn't the final fulfilment!!*

### **Read: John 2:13-22**

16- When Jesus connects himself with the temple, what is he declaring?

*He is saying that he is the fulfilment of everything that the temple meant: he will bring about perfect peace with God, He is God come to dwell with humanity, he will provide the perfect sacrifice to take away sin and bring the perfect rest that the temple foreshadows*

### **Read 1 Peter 2:4-9**

17- How does Jesus build a new and better temple?


*He builds it through his people, with himself at the centre*

### **Personal reflection:**

◆ Solomon prayed that if God's people and foreigners who called on God's name were to look to the temple and pray to God, that God would hear their prayers. Do we turn to Jesus, the new and better temple, and pray to Him first in everything?

◆ As “living stones”, part of the new and better temple built on Jesus, how do we live lives that reflect that Jesus’ name dwells in us?

◆ What is the role of obedience in our lives, if Jesus as our king and representative lived a life of perfect obedience on our behalf?

 **Give thanks** that by his personal obedience and faithfulness as the true King, Jesus brings every blessing from God, and because of his role as the true temple we can enter into relationship with God and rest in Him!

For further study: Read Solomon’s prayer of dedication (1 Kings 8:22-61)  
<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/most-stunning-prayer-old-testament/>



## Study 2: The Wisdom and Folly of Solomon

### Read: 1 Kings 4:20-34, 10:1-9

1- What is the kingdom of Israel like under the rule of Solomon?

*prosperous/ abundant, peaceful, safe, productive/fruitful, artistic, creative, extends to all the earth*

2- What attracts the people from the nations, including the Queen of Sheba to Israel?

*the wisdom and insight of Solomon*

*the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD*

3- What is the purpose of describing Solomon's wisdom and wealth in this way?

*shows the good and abundant gifts of God, and how living under His law brings life and peace*

*there is a picture of Solomon as a new Adam, and the land of Israel is like the garden of Eden, where people can come to know God, and Solomon shows dominion over the creation (with flocks and herds, and monkeys!, as well as studying plants and animals)*

(Extra question) How is what is described a picture of the fulfillment of God's promises? (See Gen. 15:18, 22:15-18, 32:12; Ex. 23:31; Deut. 11:24, 12:10-11)

*The descendants of Abraham are settled in the land, Solomon's dominion spreads from Egypt to the Euphrates, a descendant of Abraham is a king, they have rest on every side*

### Read: 1 Kings 3:16-28

4- What is the purpose of Solomon's wisdom? (See also 3:9)

*to be able to govern his people with righteousness and justice*

5- Solomon probably made many very wise decisions, why would the writer of Kings use this particular situation to highlight Solomon's "wisdom to administer justice"?

*shows the depth of his understanding*

*his wisdom looks past appearances to see what is in the heart- this can only come from God, it causes people to see that God is with him*

*his judgement is life giving*

*shows that he is accessible to people from all levels of the social scale*

6- Is there anything in *this* story that the writer of Kings might be using to alert the readers to a possible problem?

*while it is a good thing that Solomon's justice is accessible to all people, even the most reviled, it is very concerning that prostitution is going on in Israel (see Lev. 19:29, Deut. 23:17)*

*The reader should be uncomfortable with this*

*The biggest problem is that prostitution is almost always associated with idolatry in the Bible, most of the pagan gods worshipped were fertility gods, and sexual immorality was part of the cult worship*

### **Read: 1 Kings 10:23-29**

In the light of Deuteronomy 17:14-20, it is evident that the writer of Kings, through the description of God's generous gifts of wisdom and wealth to Solomon, is weaving some hints that there might be some underlying problems in Israel and in Solomon's heart.

7- What are the positive aspects of his kingship?

*Solomon's wisdom is attractive and people from all over come to hear what God put in his heart*

*There is safety and prosperity for the citizens, the economy is thriving*

- What are causes for concern?

*multiplication of gold and horses*

### **Read: 1 Kings 11:1-13**

8- What becomes the biggest cause for concern in Solomon's life? How does the wisest man become a fool?

*he multiplies wives, especially foreign wives*

*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, Solomon exchanges a heart of love for the LORD for love for his wives*

*instead of clinging to God's word, he is clinging to these foreign women*

*he is no longer doing what is right in God's eyes, he is doing what is right in his own eyes*

9- How does this affect the whole nation?

*it leads the whole nation astray and brings God's judgement upon them*

10- How does God show mercy in his judgment on Solomon?

*He doesn't destroy Solomon completely*

*He doesn't tear the whole kingdom away from him, but leaves a remnant (one tribe) for the sake of His promise to David*

11- What does this mean for the fulfilment of God's promises?

*It is very clear that while there is fulfilment of God's promises during Solomon's reign, Solomon is not the promised seed/anointed king*

*God's mercy and faithfulness means that the way is still open for the promises to be fulfilled in the future*

**Read: Luke 11:31/ Matthew 12:42**

12- What does Jesus mean when he says "something greater than Solomon is here"?

*He is declaring that while Israel's history reaches its peak in the time of Solomon when God's promises were fulfilled, Jesus is now the one who is going to fulfill these promises as a wiser, truer, more faithful king*

**Personal reflection:**

◆ Is there anything we can learn from reading about Solomon's life?

◆ What makes something an idol?

◆ How can we deal with idols in our own lives?

◆ Where do we find wisdom? (1 Corinthians 1:18-31, Colossians 2:1-3)



**Give thanks** that Jesus is our true wisdom and that God's promises are fulfilled in Him!

A couple of extra questions I was prompted to think of after the booklets were printed, thinking about how Solomon holds fast to his wives (1Kings 11:2b)

What would people around you say that you hold fast to?

What would show people that it is Jesus who you hold fast to above all things?



### Study 3: God's Word Ignored

After the death of Solomon, God enacts his judgement and the kingdom is torn from Rehoboam (Solomon's son) and Jeroboam (Solomon's servant) becomes the ruler of the ten Northern tribes (known as Israel) according to God's word to Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-13). Rehoboam is left ruling one tribe (known as Judah). Jeroboam was given a word from God through the prophet Ahijah and was given a similar promise to the one God gave to David and Solomon *"If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you."* (1 Kings 11:38) But due to what he sees as a political move to stop people going back to Jerusalem and possibly back to Rehoboam, he builds an alternate system of worship by installing golden calves (red alert: flashback to Exodus 32), and making up festivals *"devised from his own heart"*, and appointing anyone he wanted to be priests, mimicking the true worship of the LORD in Jerusalem. Jeroboam is doing what is at the heart of sin: failing to trust in God's word and deciding for himself what is right and wrong. The same prophet who gave him the promise then condemns him saying *"You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have aroused my anger and turned your back on me."* (1 Kings 14:9) He then becomes the standard for evil that all the other kings are measured by. The worship cult set up by Jeroboam lacks the most important elements of the worship in Jerusalem: God's presence and His Word (symbolised by the tablets of the 10 commandments in the Ark of the covenant in the centre of the most holy place).

#### **Read: 1 Kings 13:1-10**

As you read, highlight or underline each occurrence of "the word of the LORD"

1- What does the man of God do and say?

*He goes from Judah to Bethel in Israel and makes a statement about the idolatrous altar that king Jeroboam has set up as an alternative to sacrificing to God in the temple. He prophesies that a king in the line of David will destroy this shrine, and as a sign that God's word is true, the altar will split apart*

*Note: the man of God rebukes the altar, but is indirectly rebuking Jeroboam for his idolatry and for inciting the people to false worship.*

2- How does Jeroboam respond to the man of God?

*He tries to stop the man and his hand shrivels up!*

*He asks the man to pray to the LORD for his hand to be restored*

*He also invites the man home to “reward” him*

3- What should have been his response to being rebuked? And to being healed?

*Fear and repentance at the rebuke, and thanksgiving for being healed, he ought to recognise the true and Living God and turn from his false worship to worship Him as God has directed in His word.*

**Read: 1 Kings 13:11-19**

4- If we think about the old prophet’s family, are there any indications that things are not right here? (ie. how do his sons know what happened at the idolatrous altar?)

*The sons of the prophet are witnesses of what happened at the altar, (v. 11) so we can surmise that they were at the altar and participating in the false worship. It doesn’t appear that the “prophet” has spoken out against this false worship seeing as his sons are probably participating in it. Note: a prophet is not necessarily a prophet of the LORD.*

5- How clear was the man of God about the instructions he had received from the LORD?

*there is no doubt in the man of God’s mind about what God has told Him and what he ought to do - he repeats it twice*

6- After resisting the king and remaining faithful to the word of the LORD, how much convincing did the man of God need to go with the lying prophet?

*the lying prophet just claims a word from an angel (not even directly from the LORD) and the man of God follows him*

7- What does this tell us about the danger of false teaching?

*false teaching dresses itself up as having authority, the false prophet claims to be just like the man of God (with nothing to back it up), he makes up his own story and convinces the man of God to do the opposite from what God had told him to do. False teaching has a hint of truth, but no real substance.*

8- How do the lying prophet's actions here mirror Jeroboam's actions in Israel?

*Jeroboam sets up a false religion in Israel, made up by himself, and claims that it is true, he seems to easily convince all the northern tribes of Israel to a system of worship that is opposite to God's revealed word through Moses*

**Read: 1 Kings 13:20-25**

9- What is the irony that we see unfold?

*the lying prophet speaks the true word of God. We seem to get the impression from the way he cries out that it is even surprising to himself!*

10- What does the unusual behaviour of the lion indicate?

*the lion simply kills the man of God, it doesn't drag him away or eat him, it makes no attempt to take down the donkey, and just stands beside the body unafraid as people pass by and doesn't attempt to kill anyone else. This would indicate that it is being used of God, not following its natural instincts, but doing God's bidding, showing that the lying prophet did actually speak a true word from God.*

11- What does the death of the man of God show about the seriousness of disobedience to the word of the LORD?

*any disobedience to God's word is sin, small or great, and the penalty for all sin is death*

**Read: 1 Kings 13:26-34**

12- What is the response of the old prophet to the death of the man of God?

*we are not really given any indication about what motivates this man prior to meeting the man of God, he deliberately deceives him by falsely identifying with him as a someone with a message from the LORD, but then he is actually overcome by the true word of God. After seeing what happens when the true word of God is spoken, it appears that something shifts in him and he seems to want to truly identify with the man of God, he calls him "brother" and buries him in his own tomb insisting that he be buried alongside when the time comes. We are not told much more about him, but the final words that he speaks, (recorded by the author of Kings) confirm the truth of God's word against the altar in Bethel. This may indicate a change of attitude in him, but the text is rather ambiguous.*

13- What is the response of Jeroboam to the death of the man of God?

*The death of the man of God for disobeying the word of the LORD, which should have been a very graphic warning to him, has no affect on Jeroboam whatsoever, he does not change his evil ways*

14- How is what happens in this chapter a picture of what is going on in Israel and Judah?

*King Jeroboam is actively disobeying the word of God and refusing to listen to God's warning to him. This is a picture of the whole of the Northern Kingdom in rebellion. True worship and the word of God are still in Judah (illustrated by the man of God coming from Judah), but just as the man of God is influenced to disobey God's word by the lying prophet, so too Judah will be influenced by Israel to disobey the LORD. The result will be that they will all (both Israel and Judah) be cut off from the land and from fellowship with the LORD and His blessing (death). (as per 1 K 9:6-9)*

15- What is the warning for Israel?

*Israel need to listen to God's word and repent, they should turn back from worshiping idols to the true and Living God, not doing so will result in death*

16- What is the warning for Judah?

*Judah need to hold fast to the true word of God and not be influenced to be turned aside from it lest they too suffer the fate of Israel.*


### **Read Galatians 1:6-9**

17- What does Paul say about listening to false teaching?

*Listening to false teaching is a life and death matter, just as it was for Judah and Israel. If we have God's word of truth, nothing should convince us to turn from it even if an angel from heaven tells us they have a word from God. If it doesn't line up with what he has revealed, then we must not listen to it.*

### **Personal reflection:**

- ◆ How important is the word of the LORD to you?
- ◆ How can we encourage one another to remain faithful to God's word?

 **Give thanks** for the truth of God's word, and for our faithful King who plants his word in our hearts and enables us to walk in the truth!



## Study 4: According to the Word of the Lord

### Read: 1 Kings 16:29-17:1

Approximately 100 years have passed, and things in Israel have not improved.

1- What is going on in Israel at this time?

*Israel has continued in idolatry and the new king Ahab, has married a foreign woman and has built a temple for the worship of her god, Baal in Samaria (his capitol city). (Reminds us of Solomon 1 K 11:2-6)*

2- In 17:1 Elijah is introduced, what do his words tell us about him?

*He serves the God of Israel and speaks His word*

3- Knowing that Baal is the “deity” of storms, rain and fertility, allegedly responsible for agricultural abundance, why would God send a drought to Israel? (See also Deuteronomy 11:13-17)

*God has promised to send judgement on Israel in the form of drought if they disobey his word and worship idols.*

*God is about to show that he is the true and Living God, that it is He and not an idol who controls the weather as he says in Deut 11:11-12. God shows His supremacy and the power of His word, because by His word the rains are being withheld and it will be by His word that they are restored.*

### Read: 1 Kings 17:2-7

4- How does God sustain Elijah? Does this remind you of anything? (Exodus 16, Matthew 14:13-21)

*God provides water and food for Elijah. The bread comes to him in a supernatural way, the ravens bring him bread and meat. (Just like God provides water and manna for the people of Israel in the desert, and Jesus provides bread for the 5,000)*

5- What does this show about God and about Elijah?

*God shows his kindness and provision in providing for Elijah, showing that in spite of the judgement on Israel, he continues to bless the one who is faithful to His word.*

*God shows that he is sovereign over nature, that even the birds do as He says. (In contrast to the people who don't!)*

*Elijah trusts God's word and depends on God to sustain him in the drought*

**Read: 1 Kings 17:8-16**

6- Why is it surprising where God sends Elijah after the brook dries up?

*He is sent to Sidon, out of Israel, to the very place where Jezebel comes from. This is the place at the heart of Baal worship, where no one would expect anyone to fear God. So it is surprising that someone here would even want to help Elijah*

7- What does this show about God's purposes?

*There are people who belong to him from outside of Israel, he has a heart for all the nations, and includes the nations in His plans.*

8- How does the widow respond to Elijah? (v. 15)

*This woman has nothing to lose, she thinks she and her son are about to die. She does what Elijah asks and is willing to share what she thinks is her last meal based on his word to her. This indicates that she is willing to trust Elijah's God rather than Baal for her survival.*

9- How does the widow view the death of her son?

*v.18 indicates that she thinks of her son's death as a judgement or punishment from God for her sin*

10- How does Elijah respond?

*He doesn't rebuke her for sin, but he brings the child before the LORD and appeals to His mercy. (God uses this death much like he uses Lazarus' death in John 11:4, 25-27- for His glory, and so that there would be belief )*

11- What is the woman's reaction to the resurrection of her son? Why might this be surprising?

*She believes and trusts in the word of The LORD.*

12- By saying that different things happen "according to the word of the LORD", or "in keeping with the word of the LORD" (16:34, 17:16) what is the writer of Kings trying to help the reader see?

*That God's word is powerful*

*That God keeps his word long term (16:34) and short term (17:6)*

*If God says it, it **will** happen*

*His word is trustworthy*

**Read: Luke 4:14-30**

13- What is Jesus saying about himself and his hearers when he brings up this story?

*Jesus is claiming to be the fulfillment of God's word through Isaiah (and all OT prophecy)*

*By bringing up the story of the widow of Sidon, he is making a statement about belief in God's Word in Israel at the time of Elijah, and of the people in his hometown. He is basically saying that those who believe from outside of Israel will put the Israelites to shame because they believe without the rich treasury of God's word throughout Israel's history. Israel was in a privileged position to believe because they had God's word dwelling with them, and yet they refuse to believe, even though the fulfillment of God's promises is standing before their eyes.*


14- Why does Jesus' audience react the way they do?

*They don't like being told that the Gentiles might have access to God and they won't if they don't believe Jesus*

**Personal reflection:**

◆ How are we participating in God's purpose to include all the nations in his family?

◆ In what ways do you need to grow in dependence on God?

 **Give thanks** that God is faithful to His word, that he brings and sustains life and that He raised his one and only Son to bring us life!



## Study 5: On the Mountain

### Read: 1 Kings 18:1-2, 17-46

1- Who does King Ahab accuse of causing trouble, and why would he do this?

*Ahab calls Elijah the troubler of Israel  
He lays the blame of the drought on Elijah, because he is the one to proclaim the word, he projects Israel's troubles on the one who is pointing fingers at him so he doesn't have to feel uncomfortable*

2- What is the big problem in Israel, and who/what is really causing the trouble?

*Idolatry, and Ahab's refusal to listen to God's word is the cause of the trouble. Instead of acknowledging his sin and repenting, he accuses Elijah of being the problem because Elijah places a spotlight on his sin.*

1- What things strike you as you read this narrative?

*Some may comment on how harsh it is that all the prophets of Baal were killed, it may be helpful to point out that in the part of the chapter we didn't read, Jezebel was hunting down and killing God's prophets (18:4). Also, in Israel, idolatry was a capital offence (Deuteronomy 13). The death of idolaters was to meant be a warning.*

2- What do you think of Elijah's behaviour in v.27?

*Is it appropriate for Elijah to mock the false priests as they appeal to their idol?*

3- What does the passage show us about God versus Baal?

*Baal has no power whatsoever  
God unquestionably has superior power and authority. He is the only true God, even when the odds are stacked against him.*

4- After the confrontation on Mt. Carmel which King Ahab witnesses, and the arrival of rain after a 3 1/2 year drought, how would Elijah be hoping/ expecting that Ahab and his wife Jezbel would respond?

*Obviously after such a convincing showdown Elijah would have hoped that they would recognise the True God and repent, that they would heed the warning of the penalty for idolatry.*

**Read: 1 Kings 19:1-4**

5- How do Ahab and Jezebel respond?

*Ahab tells Jezebel what happened, but there is no indication that he tells her that they should repent.*

*Jezebel is furious and vows to kill Elijah*

6- What is Elijah's response to this?

*He's afraid and runs away!*

*He feels like a failure and gives up*

**Read: 1 Kings 19:5-8**

Elijah is clearly exhausted/ anxious/ afraid/ depressed/ overwhelmed and alone.

7- What does God do for him in this state?

*Let's him rest, and sends an angel to give him food and drink*

*Sustains him and prepares him for the next part of his journey -which he does in obedience to God*

8- What does this show us about God's character?

*God is patient and kind, he cares for people when they are weak*

*He knows Elijah's needs and gently sustains him*

*He doesn't leave Elijah to die feeling sorry for himself*

**Read: 1 Kings 19:9-18**

9- Can you identify any similarities between Elijah's experience on Mt Horeb (Mt Sinai) and Moses' experience in the same place? (Exodus 33:21-22, 34:28)

*Israel has been involved in idolatry*

*Both are led there by the word of God*

*40 days & nights*

*God appears and "passes by"*

*Fire and earthquake on the mountain*

*Both Moses and Elijah cover their faces*

*Both receive God's word*

What is different?

*Elijah is running away, afraid and complaining about the broken covenant,*

*Moses was interceding for the idolatrous people asking God to renew his covenant*

10- Why might the writer of Kings want us to make this connection?

*It shows us that both Moses and Elijah are true prophets from God, (Elijah is a prophet like Moses, Deut 18:15,18)*

*It also might be a subtle way of showing us how Elijah ought to have responded to the idolatry of Israel (like Moses in faith and intercession), but it also shows that God meets people where they are at and cares for each individual the way that is most suitable to them*

There is a debate by theologians as to whether we should see Elijah in a positive or negative light here, I don't think it is particularly clear either way, and maybe the author of Kings wants us to look from both perspectives

11- The writer of Kings highlights that Elijah brings the same complaint to God twice (v. 10 & 14), what does this show about Elijah's state of mind?

*Elijah continues to be downcast, he doesn't seem to be able to stop being afraid*

*Those who see Elijah as being portrayed in a negative light here say that he is showing a lack of faith*

*However, it might be worth saying something about lament. Elijah is clearly upset, and he is complaining, but he is bringing his complaint to the LORD, he is bringing his fears and anxieties to God. He is not necessarily acting without faith, sometimes faith shows itself in coming to the LORD and bringing all our big feelings to Him.*

12- Is what he saying true?

*yes and no!*

- yes*
- *Elijah has been zealous*
  - *Israel have rejected God's covenant*
  - *prophets have been put to death*
  - *Jezebel is trying to kill him*
- no*
- *he is not the only one left*

13- How does God respond?

*the first time (v.11-12) God has him stand out on the mountain and experience God's presence pass by! (I do think that Ex. 33:19 & 34:6-7 is being evoked here) - so he (and the reader) is being reminded of God's covenant faithfulness as well as his justice, not to mention His power and glory*

*In Exodus God's presence was felt on Mt Sinai in earthquake and fire. These elements are also seen in God's judgement, along with the wind (which is a reminder of the wind God used at the Red Sea when he judges the Egyptians), but with Elijah, God is not coming in judgement or rebuke, he is coming in the still small **voice**. God's word is how he chooses to work in Elijah's life (and in the life of Israel).*

*the second time (v.15-18) God **speaks** to him and gives him a mission and reassurance*

14- How does God's word encourage Elijah?

*God reminds Elijah that He is sovereign, and glorious*

*He tells Elijah that he still has work to do in His name and gives him an action plan*

*He gives Elijah a buddy! (Elisha)*

*He reassures Elijah that he is not the only one left, and that not all Israel has been led astray, God has preserved a remnant*

15- How does the way God responds to Elijah encourage you?

Note: the same God who was present with Elijah (in power on Mt Carmel and in glory, strength and gentleness on Mt Sinai) is now present with all his people by His Holy Spirit!

Both Moses and Elijah appear together on another mountain....

**Read: Matthew 17:1-8**

16- What does this mountain experience confirm about Jesus?

*Jesus is the true prophet that the ministries of both Moses and Elijah pointed to. (Deut 18:15-19)*


*Jesus is the fulfillment of the Law (Moses) and the Prophets (Elijah)*

*Jesus is revealed to be God's beloved Son*

17- What should be the response to this? (v.5)  
*Listen to Him (see also Deut 18:15)*

**Personal reflection:**

- ◆ What does it take for us to trust God and listen to his Word?
  
- ◆ How has God/ God's Word sustained you during difficult seasons?
  
- ◆ How can we encourage one another during tough times? (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)?

 **Give thanks** that God is the true and powerful God, that He is compassionate, gracious and kind, and that his Word gives encouragement as well as rebuke!



## Study 6: Justice and Mercy

### Read: 1 Kings 21:1-16

1- If we understand a vineyard as a picture of God's people planted in His land, enjoying his presence (see *Isaiah 5, 27:2-3*), how does the image of what Ahab wants to do in v.2 help us understand how God sees what is going on in Israel at this time? (especially in the light of *Deuteronomy 11:10*)

*Ahab wants to destroy the vineyard and plant a veggie patch*

*He is destroying what God has planted in Israel by leading them in idolatry*

*In doing this Ahab is making Israel like Egypt, they are enslaved to sin in their own land*

2- Why is it right for Naboth to **not** want to sell his vineyard and wrong for Ahab to want to take it? (See *Numbers 36:7*)

*The land belongs to God, and he gives it as an inheritance to the people, each family had its own inheritance, and it belonged to that family, and they were to pass that heritage to their descendants, no one was to covet or take from the inheritance of others.*

*Ahab should have been content with what God had given him*

3- What do we learn about about the character and motivations of Ahab and Jezebel?

*They are self seeking, they do not care about equity and justice, they are prepared to do anything to get what they want*

4- What is going on in Israel now compared with during the time of Solomon? (See *1 Kings 4:25*)

*Early in Solomon's time each sat under his own vine and fig tree, and there was provision for all*

*Although later, in 1 K 9:11 we see Solomon giving away Israelite land to the king of Tyre, so Ahab is continuing the "Egyptianisation" of Israel that began with Solomon*

5- What does this show about the current kingship in Israel? (See *1 Samuel 8:10-18* especially v.14)

*The kings of Israel are looking like the kings of the nations, and they are taking for themselves and for their own gain*

6- Can you identify any patterns or images in this story that are seen in other parts of the Bible? How does this help us understand the passage better or give us a bigger picture?

*Ahab looks at a prohibited thing from his palace and takes it (reminds us of David and Bathsheba- 2 Sam 11)*

*Jezebel takes a forbidden thing and gives it to her husband (like Eve- Gen 3)*

*an innocent man is framed and put to death (Matt 27, Mk 15, Lk 23, Jn 18-19)*

*Jesus uses the image of the vineyard when pointing to his own death in the parable of the vineyard (Matt 21:33-40, Mk 12:1-9, Lk 20:9-16)*

### **Read: 1 Kings 21:17-29**

7- Elijah pronounces God's judgement on Ahab. The words of v.24 have been seen previously in 14:11 & 16:4, what does the language about "in the city" and "in the country" indicate about God's judgement?

*the idea is that no matter where you go, you cannot escape God's judgement*

8- How does Ahab respond?

*Surprisingly he humbles himself before God, indicative of repentance (but the writer of Kings doesn't make the repentance explicit)*

9- What does God say about Ahab's response and what does this show about the way he wants people to respond to His word?

*God draws Ahab's response to Elijah's attention, and then relents in bringing immediate disaster on him*

*This shows that God desires repentance from his people, he is willing to forgive when people repent*

10- What do we learn about God's justice and mercy?

*initially it seems like Ahab and Jezebel are getting away with murder, but we are shown that God sees their actions and he judges them, and ultimately they will be punished for what they have done.*

*we also see that God shows mercy to those who humble themselves before him and repent*

11- How might this shape our response to injustice?

*it shows us that God hates injustice and so should we, so this should give us courage to speak up against injustice and evil  
it also reminds us that even if people seem to be “getting away with things”, God’s justice will prevail, and it is inescapable when it arrives so we can trust him to deal with things eventually  
it also reminds us of God’s mercy and the need for repentance and forgiveness, but at the same time, sometimes even when there is repentance, there are still consequences that need to be faced*

**Read: Revelation 19:11-21**

Note any images in this passage that remind you of what we have read in 1 Kings.

*birds eating the flesh/ devouring those who have done evil*

12- What encouragement do we get from **knowing** about the justice that God’s true King will ultimately bring, especially when we feel that people are getting away with injustice?

*There is a day set for judgement, and perfect justice will be done, we can trust in the justice of God,  
we can also rejoice that Jesus bore the punishment we deserve for our sins, and that we are forgiven when we repent which puts us in the armies of heaven (v.14) rather than with the armies making war against the LORD (v.19)*

13- How does knowing that God will bring judgement to the world motivate you to share the gospel?

*this drives us to hope and pray for repentance so that people will not have to experience this*



**Personal reflection:** After a brief dip into 1 Kings,

- ◆ What has stood out to you?
- ◆ Is there anything you would like to find out more about?
- ◆ What has challenged you?
- ◆ What has encouraged you?

 **Give thanks!**