

1 Kings

*This is part of an ongoing series of short articles designed to help us understand what scripture is and what is **in** each book of scripture. Previous articles can be found at www.openarms-communityofchrist.org.*

1 Kings is the first half of a set of two books (1 and 2 Kings). Both of these books make a specific point--that the moral and religious failure of the leaders and the people eventually led to the loss of Israel's national identity and autonomy.

David is dying and there is dispute over who should succeed him. Bathsheba (one of his wives) and Nathan (the prophet) meet with the king to ensure that Solomon is named heir, and he does indeed take the throne after his father dies. Solomon loved the Lord and in a dream asked God for wisdom and understanding. He was promised that—and also wealth and a long life if he would keep God's commandments. He set about building the temple that his father David had hoped to build—a magnificent building. But he also loved many foreign women, and they led him away from the worship of God. Because of this, God told him that the kingdom would be taken from him, although his son would be left with one tribe.

Solomon's son Rehoboam became king, and instead of following the advice of the older counselors, he took the advice of his young friends and made the burdens of the people of Israel very heavy. The people turned away from him and the kingdom split into two parts (Israel and Judah). Some of the tribes made Jeroboam king, but he also led the people away from God. Many more kings followed in both Israel and Judah, none of whom led the people into worshipping God.

Towards the end of the book, Ahab has become king over Israel, the most wicked king, with his wickedness encouraged by his queen Jezebel. The prophet Elijah tries to bring him back to God, but because Ahab seeks to kill him, he goes into hiding. After many days, he returns to Ahab to engage in a "competition" between God and the false god Baal. Baal's prophets cannot get him to light the fire of sacrifice, but when Elijah calls on God, the fire comes from heaven, and Elijah calls upon the people to decide who they will follow. Despite this, Elijah is still discouraged, but meets God in the silence and is told to anoint Elisha as his successor.

At Jezebel's urging, Ahab makes arrangements to kill a man who has a vineyard he desires, and is warned by Elijah that he is bringing disaster upon his people. He eventually goes to war (again) and is killed, and the following kings continue leading both Judah and Israel away from God.