



1–2 KINGS

A 12-WEEK STUDY

Gavin Ortlund



J. I. Packer

THEOLOGICAL EDITOR

Dane C. Ortlund

SERIES EDITOR

“This series is a tremendous resource for those wanting to study and teach the Bible with an understanding of how the gospel is woven throughout Scripture. Here are gospel-minded pastors and scholars doing gospel business from all the Scriptures. This is a biblical and theological feast preparing God’s people to apply the entire Bible to all of life with heart and mind wholly committed to Christ’s priorities.”

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KNOWING THE BIBLE

J. I. Packer, Theological Editor
Dane C. Ortlund, Series Editor
Lane T. Dennis, Executive Editor

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Genesis	Psalms	John	1–2 Thessalonians
Exodus	Proverbs	Acts	1–2 Timothy
Leviticus	Ecclesiastes	Romans	and Titus
Deuteronomy	Isaiah	1 Corinthians	Hebrews
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Ruth and Esther	Daniel	Galatians	1–2 Peter
1–2 Kings	Hosea	Ephesians	and Jude
Ezra and	Matthew	Philippians	Revelation
Nehemiah	Mark	Colossians and	
Job	Luke	Philemon	

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J. I. PACKER is Board of Governors’ Professor of Theology at Regent College (Vancouver, BC). Dr. Packer earned his DPhil at the University of Oxford. He is known and loved worldwide as the author of the best-selling book *Knowing God*, as well as many other titles on theology and the Christian life. He serves as the General Editor of the ESV Bible and as the Theological Editor for the *ESV Study Bible*.

LANE T. DENNIS is President of Crossway, a not-for-profit publishing ministry. Dr. Dennis earned his PhD from Northwestern University. He is Chair of the ESV Bible Translation Oversight Committee and Executive Editor of the *ESV Study Bible*.

DANE C. ORTLUND is Executive Vice President of Bible Publishing and Bible Publisher at Crossway. He is a graduate of Covenant Theological Seminary (MDiv, ThM) and Wheaton College (BA, PhD). Dr. Ortlund has authored several books and scholarly articles in the areas of Bible, theology, and Christian living.

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S E R I E S P R E F A C E

KNOWING THE BIBLE, as the series title indicates, was created to help readers know and understand the meaning, the message, and the God of the Bible. Each volume in the series consists of 12 units that progressively take the reader through a clear, concise study of that book of the Bible. In this way, any given volume can fruitfully be used in a 12-week format either in group study, such as in a church-based context, or in individual study. Of course, these 12 studies could be completed in fewer or more than 12 weeks, as convenient, depending on the context in which they are used.

Each study unit gives an overview of the text at hand before digging into it with a series of questions for reflection or discussion. The unit then concludes by highlighting the gospel of grace in each passage (“Gospel Glimpses”), identifying whole-Bible themes that occur in the passage (“Whole-Bible Connections”), and pinpointing Christian doctrines that are affirmed in the passage (“Theological Soundings”).

The final component to each unit is a section for reflecting on personal and practical implications from the passage at hand. The layout provides space for recording responses to the questions proposed, and we think readers need to do this to get the full benefit of the exercise. The series also includes definitions of key words. These definitions are indicated by a note number in the text and are found at the end of each chapter.

Lastly, to help understand the Bible in this deeper way, we urge readers to use the ESV Bible and the *ESV Study Bible*, which are available in various print and digital formats, including online editions at esv.org. The Knowing the Bible series is also available online. Additional 12-week studies covering each book of the Bible will be added as they become available.

May the Lord greatly bless your study as you seek to know him through knowing his Word.

J. I. Packer
Lane T. Dennis

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW



Getting Acquainted

The books of 1 and 2 Kings tell a sad story. The narrative begins at the height of the Israelite monarchy, as Solomon inherits the kingdom of his father, David, and goes on to acquire his own vast wealth and fame. The story ends in utter devastation, as the remaining people of the dwindling southern kingdom of Judah are carried off to Babylon in exile.¹ There are a few bright spots along the way—the prophetic ministry of Elijah/Elisha, for instance, as well as Hezekiah’s prayer for miraculous deliverance and the reforms under Josiah—but the overall trajectory of the narrative seems to plunge inexorably downward.

Yet this very pattern helps to express the meaning of the books of Kings. First and Second Kings do not merely describe a litany of decline and judgment; they highlight God’s working amid that decline to fulfill his program of redemption. In the structure of 1–2 Kings, we detect a faint shadow of the gospel story itself, which arrives at resurrection only through the slow, grinding agony of crucifixion. As we consider God’s work in 1–2 Kings, we will gain a better sense of his plan to advance his purposes through all the frustrations and failures of life.

First and Second Kings display God’s enduring faithfulness, amid great opposition and against all appearance, through temple,² covenant,³ prophetic oracle,⁴ reform, and—when all other hope has faded—the coming Davidic King. (For further background, see the *ESV Study Bible*, pages 585–590; available online at esv.org.)

Placing 1–2 Kings in the Larger Story

As the era of 1–2 Kings begins, God has delivered his people from Egypt, given them his law, and led them into the land he had promised to them. They have seen their need for a leader, and God has raised up David (over Saul) as their king. The books of 1–2 Kings narrate the history of God's people during the period of the monarchy, picking up after 1–2 Samuel, which ended at the conclusion of David's reign. With its emphasis on the sin and idolatry of God's people and its concluding reference to the continuation of the Davidic line (2 Kings 25:27–30), the story of 1–2 Kings shows the need for Jesus Christ, the promised Davidic ruler who would usher in God's kingdom and lead God's people in righteousness.

Key Verse

“This occurred because the people 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 had feared other gods and walked in the customs of the nations whom the LORD drove out before the people of Israel, and in the customs that the kings of Israel had practiced.” (2 Kings 17:7–8)

Date and Historical Background

First and Second Kings were written sometime after the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 BC. They must have been completed sometime after 561 BC, because the books' final verses recount King Jehoiachin's release from prison in that year. No one knows their exact date of composition, or the identity of their author(s). Many scholars believe that earlier material was used in the construction of these books, and it is also possible that the books underwent later editing following their initial composition.

The books of 1–2 Kings were written, in part, in order to demonstrate that the exile of God's people was a judgment of God on the people's persistence in idolatry. Much of 1–2 Kings reflects the language and theology of the book of Deuteronomy, emphasizing that God's judgment had come as the promised result of disobedience to his law.

Outline

- I. The Reign of Solomon (1 Kings 1:1–11:43)
 - A. Solomon acquires the throne (1 Kings 1:1–2:46)
 - B. Solomon asks for wisdom (1 Kings 3:1–4:34)
 - C. The temple is built and dedicated (1 Kings 5:1–8:66)

- D. Solomon's wealth and other acts (1 Kings 9:1–10:29)
- E. Solomon turns from the Lord (1 Kings 11:1–43)
- II. Division and Decline (1 Kings 12:1–16:34)
 - A. The kingdom is divided under Rehoboam and Jeroboam (1 Kings 12:1–14:31)
 - B. Abijam and Asa over Judah (1 Kings 15:1–25)
 - C. Israelite kings from Nadab to Ahab (1 Kings 15:26–16:34)
- III. Elijah and Covenant Renewal (1 Kings 17:1–19:21)
 - A. Elijah protected during the drought (1 Kings 17:1–24)
 - B. The contest on Mount Carmel (1 Kings 18:1–46)
 - C. Elijah flees to Mount Horeb (1 Kings 19:1–21)
- IV. Ahab and Further Decline (1 Kings 20:1–2 Kings 1:18)
 - A. Ahab's war with Syria (1 Kings 20:1–43)
 - B. Naboth's vineyard (1 Kings 21:1–29)
 - C. Ahab's death, Jehoshaphat, and Ahaziah's death (1 Kings 22:1–2 Kings 1:18)
- V. The Ministry of Elisha (2 Kings 2:1–8:15)
 - A. Elisha succeeds Elijah (2 Kings 2:1–25)
 - B. The conquest of Moab, miracles, and the healing of Naaman (2 Kings 3:1–5:27)
 - C. Elisha and Syria (2 Kings 6:1–7:20)
 - D. Other acts of Elisha (2 Kings 8:1–15)
- VI. Jehu and Jehoash: Judgment and Reform (2 Kings 8:16–12:21)
 - A. Jehoram and Ahaziah over Judah (2 Kings 8:16–29)
 - B. Judgments through Jehu (2 Kings 9:1–10:36)
 - C. Jehoash and the repairing of the temple (2 Kings 11:1–12:21)
- VII. The Decline and Fall of the Northern Kingdom (2 Kings 13:1–17:41)
 - A. Jehoahaz to Ahaz (2 Kings 13:1–16:20)
 - B. The fall of Israel (2 Kings 17:1–41)
- VIII. Hezekiah and the Deliverance of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 18:1–20:21)
 - A. Deliverance from Sennacherib (2 Kings 18:1–19:37)
 - B. Hezekiah's recovery, and Babylonian envoys (2 Kings 20:1–21)
- IX. The Reforms under Josiah (2 Kings 21:1–23:30)
 - A. Manasseh's idolatry, and Amon (2 Kings 21:1–26)
 - B. Josiah's reforms (2 Kings 22:1–23:30)
- X. The Fall of the Southern Kingdom (2 Kings 23:31–25:30)
 - A. Decline under the final kings of Judah (2 Kings 23:31–24:20)
 - B. The fall of Judah (2 Kings 25:1–30)

As You Get Started

Do you have a sense at the outset of this study of any specific themes in 1 or 2 Kings? Are there any stories from these books that have particularly stood out

WEEK 1: OVERVIEW

to you in the past? How would you summarize the contributions you believe that 1–2 Kings makes to the message of the entire Bible?

What is your current understanding of what 1–2 Kings contributes to Christian theology? That is, how do these books clarify our understanding of God, Jesus Christ, sin, salvation, the end times, or other doctrines?

What aspects of 1 or 2 Kings have confused you? Are there any specific questions you hope to have answered through this study?

As You Finish This Unit . . .

Take a few minutes to ask God to bless you with increased understanding and a transformed heart and life as you begin this study of 1–2 Kings.

Definitions

¹ **Exile** – Several relocations of large groups of Israelites/Jews have occurred throughout history, but “the exile” typically refers to the Babylonian exile, that is, Nebuchadnezzar’s relocation of residents of the southern kingdom of Judah to Babylon in 586 BC. (Residents of the northern kingdom of Israel had been resettled by Assyria in 722 BC.) After Babylon came under Persian rule, several waves of Jewish exiles returned and repopulated Judah.

² **Temple** – A place set aside as holy because of God’s presence there. Solomon built the first temple of the Lord in Jerusalem, to replace the portable tabernacle. This temple was later destroyed by the Babylonians, rebuilt, and destroyed again by the Romans.

³ **Covenant** – A binding agreement between two parties, typically involving a formal statement of their relationship, a list of stipulations and obligations for both parties, a list of witnesses to the agreement, and a list of curses for unfaithfulness and blessings for faithfulness to the agreement. The OT is more properly understood as the old covenant, meaning the agreement established between God and his people prior to the coming of Jesus Christ and the establishment of the new covenant (NT).

⁴ **Oracle** – From Latin “to speak.” In the Bible, this term refers to a divine pronouncement delivered through a human agent.



THE BOOKS OF 1–2 KINGS describe the period of monarchy in ancient Israel, highlighting a clear contrast between the covenant-keeping God and the covenant-breaking people of Israel.

Walking readers through these two books, this 12-week study guide helps us see God's mercy and grace as he offers blessings instead of curses to his people in response to their disobedience—pointing forward to the faithfulness of the Redeemer yet to come.

ABOUT THE *KNOWING THE BIBLE* SERIES

Over the course of 12 weeks, these studies explore books of the Bible and:

- Ask thoughtful questions to spur discussion
- Show how each passage unveils the gospel
- Tie the text in with the whole story of Scripture
- Illuminate the doctrines taught in each passage
- Invite you to discover practical implications
- Help you better understand and apply God's Word

“Knowing the Bible brings together a gifted team of Bible teachers to produce a high-quality series of study guides.”

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“Here are carefully wrought studies that will ignite the mind and the heart.”

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BRYAN CHAPELL

“Provides a very welcome variation on the general run of inductive Bible studies—pointing to the way the text links with the gospel, the whole Bible, and the formation of theology.”

GRAEME L. GOLDSWORTHY

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Gavin Ortlund (PhD, Fuller Theological Seminary) is the author of several articles as well as *Ascending Toward the Beatific Vision: Heaven as the Climax of Anselm's Prosligion*.

