

2 KINGS - A STUDY GUIDE

THE CENTRAL QUESTION:

What does this book/story say to us about God?

This question may be broken down further as follows:

- a. Why did God do it/allow it?
 - b. Why did He record it for our study?
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1. What do we know about who wrote or put together 1 and 2 Kings? Is this just a summary of the histories recorded by court secretaries in each of the two nations: Israel and Judah? Who wrote the original material? It clearly could not have been written first hand by any one individual since it covers several hundred years of history. If it was edited and published by someone else from materials gathered together at some point, would it be necessary for the original writers and the editor to be “inspired” in order for the material itself to be considered “inspired”? Could we consider written reports produced by writers who chronicled the history of a given king to be “inspired” if they are a correct report of that king’s activities? Was there any continuity or connection between the production of the six historical books: 1&2 Samuel, 1&2 Kings, and 1&2 Chronicles?
2. What kind of a prophet of God would call fire from God down on the messengers who were sent to call him to see the king? (2 Kings 1:9-17; Compare Luke 9:51-55) Why did the Lord strike these men dead? (Is this what it means to come “in the spirit and power of Elijah?” Luke 1:17) What is implied by the statement, “But before the great and terrible day of the Lord comes, I will send you the prophet Elijah?” (Malachi 4:5) Some have suggested that the entire SDA church of the last days is to serve as an “Elijah.” In what way would this be true? (Matthew 17:10-13)
3. Of all the prophets we have read about, why would God choose to translate Elijah? (2 Kings 2:1-12) Having translated Elijah, why would God leave Elisha to die a slow death? (2 Kings 13:14-21) Having translated Elijah, why would God send him back here to encourage His Son on the Mount of Transfiguration? (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:2-13; Luke 9:28-36)
4. Why would God go to all the effort of dividing the Jordan River just so Elijah and Elisha could cross? (2 Kings 2:8,14)
5. Why do you think the young men were so anxious to go and try to find Elijah? (2 Kings 2:15-18)
6. Why would a prophet of God be cursing a group of young people and why did God send the she-bears to “tear them?” (2 Kings 2:23-25) What was the spiritual environment at the time? (2 Kings 1:2-6)
7. Why do you think the heathen “gods” were so attractive to the people of Israel?
8. Who were closer to being “savable”—the people in the times of Elijah and Elisha with all their heathen practices, or the Sadducees and Pharisees in the time of Christ? Which of these groups is more like us? Does this have anything to do with the “fullness of time” (Galatians 4:4,5) when Jesus was to come?
9. Didn’t the people of Israel have a mind of their own? It seems that whenever the king did evil, the people would do the same, and when the king did what was right they followed that? (See 1 Kings 15:26,34; 16:13; 22:52; 2 Kings 3:3; 10:31; 13:2,11; 14:24; 15:9,18,24,28; 23:15) See **2 Chronicles Teacher’s Guide** #14.
10. Why were there so many miracles in the days of Elijah and Elisha? If we had more faith would we see more miracles today? What do you think of a God who would go to such lengths to reach people in such difficult times? Having used all these methods in the Old Testament, why was Jesus so reluctant to use them at key points in His earthly ministry?
11. Why do we have all these stories? Why didn’t God just give us a well-worded, brief theological summary statement about Himself? How can God expect us to get anything of real spiritual significance out of these accounts in Kings and Chronicles? Or do you see these stories as giving enough detail, so we can recognize that these are “real” people, living in “real” situations who had to struggle with life’s issues just as we do, and therefore it may provide insights to us about how God relates to people?

12. What is the purpose of the story of Elisha's death, and the sudden resurrection of the corpse thrown into that cave where Elisha was buried? (2 Kings 13:20,21) Can you picture this whole story in your imagination? Compare the story of the water being stirred at the pool of Bethesda. (John 5:1-18)
13. We read that the King of Moab sacrificed his firstborn son on the wall of the city to try to stop the battle from completely destroying his kingdom. What relation was there between this barbaric practice and the end of the battle? (2 Kings 3:26,27) How many others worshiped Molech by offering their sons or daughters? (Deuteronomy 18:10; 1 Kings 11:5-8; 2 Kings 16:3; 17:17,31; 23:10; 2 Chronicles 28:1-3; 33:1,6; Jeremiah 7:31; 19:4-6; 32:35; Ezekiel 16:20,21,36; 23:37,39; compare Amos 5:25-27 as quoted from the Septuagint in Acts 7:42,43; Molech was often worshiped just outside Jerusalem in the valley of Hinnom.)
14. Look at the description of the people in 2 Kings 17:7-23. How could God's people possibly have fallen so far? What else could God do with such people? They: 1. worshiped other gods, 2. followed the customs of the Canaanites, 3. built pagan places of worship in all their towns, on top of every hill and in every shady place, 4. put up Asherah poles, 5. burned incense on all the pagan altars, 6. disobeyed the Lord's command not to worship idols, 7. worshiped the stars, 8. served Baal, 9. sacrificed their sons and daughters as burnt offerings to pagan gods, 10. consulted mediums and fortunetellers, 11. devoted themselves completely to doing what is wrong in the Lord's sight. What could God do to make an impression on such people? "They worshiped worthless idols and became worthless themselves" (vs. 15). Compare Psalms 115:1-8; Hosea 9:10; Jeremiah 2:5,17,19; 7:6) Compare Ezekiel 5, 16, 20 and 2 Chronicles 36:15,16.
15. How do you explain what happened to the people who were imported into "Samaria" to take the place of the Israelites who were exported? (2 Kings 17:24-41) These are the ancestors of the Samaritans. Notice how they tried to mix different religions, even offering their children as sacrifices (vs. 31).
16. Compare 2 Kings 19 and Isaiah 37—who borrowed from whom? If we cannot believe in prophets who borrow, which of these books are we going to throw out? How do you think Kings and Chronicles were actually written?
17. Is 2 Kings 19:35 an example of what God would have done to drive out the inhabitants of Canaan if Israel had allowed Him?
18. What do you think of Isaiah changing his statement about King Hezekiah's death? Does this make Isaiah a false prophet? (2 Kings 20:1-11) Did Isaiah change his mind, or did God change His mind? What was the result?
19. Why did Hezekiah show all his wealth to the Babylonians? (2 Kings 20:13-15) What do you think Hezekiah said to the emissaries as he was showing them around? Don't you think he probably said, "Look at how the Lord has blessed me?" In 2 Chronicles 32:31 it suggests that God allowed the Babylonian emissaries to come as a test for Hezekiah. How many of our messages to the world sound like "look how God has blessed us?" The really good news is that God is so gracious that He blesses even us!
20. Look at the story of Manasseh (2 Kings 21:1-18; 2 Chronicles 33:1-20). After living such a wicked life, including putting Isaiah into a hollow log and sawing him in half (See the Pseudepigraphical book of *The Martyrdom of Isaiah*; Compare Hebrews 11:37; *4BC* 1137; *Patriarchs and Prophets* 381,382) notice the apparently genuine repentance that he showed at the end of his life. But did this repentance reverse all the effects of those years of sinning? (2 Chronicles 33:10-25) What do you think Isaiah will think and say when he sees Manasseh in the kingdom before he has a chance to learn the "rest of the story?" Will Isaiah walk up to Manasseh and not be able to remember anything that took place and say, "I am so happy to see you, we were such good friends all our lives?" Or will Isaiah walk up to Manasseh and say, "I remember all that you did to me, but I just have one question: "Has God forgiven you? If so, I'll be glad to have you as my neighbor?" Or would it be safe to live next door to Manasseh if he had only been forgiven and not been really changed? See **2 Chronicles Teacher's Guide** #16.

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