

good NEWS BIBLE

The books of

1 & 2 KINGS



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Around the world, millions of people are not able to engage with the Bible. This may be because the Scriptures aren't available to them, perhaps because they haven't been translated yet into their heart language, or because they don't yet recognise their value and significance for them. Bible Society works in around 240 countries and territories to translate, produce, distribute and connect with the Bible. We invite people to discover its life-changing message for themselves.

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Welcome to the Good News Bible

Welcome to this dyslexia-friendly edition of the books of 1 and 2 Kings, using text from the Good News Bible.

If you are dyslexic, you may find most Bibles very difficult to read, because of their small type, long paragraphs and thin paper. This book has been specially designed with the British Dyslexia Association's style guide in mind, so it has the following features:

- Thicker paper, so that type does not show through
- Cream-coloured paper
- Matt paper
- Plain font
- Larger type
- Wider line spacing
- Short paragraphs
- Bold headings

The Good News Bible is a clear, easy-to read translation of the Bible. It uses ordinary, everyday language so that as many people as possible can read and understand it. This has made it a very popular translation, selling over 150 million copies in the UK alone.

The first book of KINGS

The kingdom loses its way

What's it about? Israel's glory days continued under David's son Solomon, but after his death the kingdom split in two. Many of the later kings turned away from God.

Who wrote it? The author is unknown. As the action of 1 and 2 Kings spans around 400 years, there could have been more than one writer. (They may have used sources such as 'The History of Solomon' mentioned in 1 Kings 11.)

Why read it? 1 Kings tells of kings who were good, bad and worse than bad. Their stories are dark and troubling, as many of them fall into worshipping false gods. But God is still present, and the good kings, and prophets like Elijah, shine like lights in the darkness.

What's it to me? What happens when you leave God behind and do what you want? The story of Solomon gives us a good idea: his dazzling start gave way to compromise and conflict. 1 Kings asks us difficult questions about what's important to us and how we treat others.

Chapter 1

King David in his Old Age

¹ King David was now a very old man, and although his servants covered him with blankets, he could not keep warm.

² So his officials said to him, "Your Majesty, let us find a young woman to stay with you and take care of you. She will lie close to you and keep you warm."

³ A search was made all over Israel for a beautiful young woman, and in Shunem they found such a woman named Abishag, and brought her to the king.

⁴ She was very beautiful, and waited on the king and took care of him, but he did not have intercourse with her.

Adonijah Claims the Throne

⁵⁻⁶ Now that Absalom was dead, Adonijah, the son of David and Haggith, was the eldest surviving son. He was a very handsome man. David had never reprimanded him about anything, and he was ambitious to be king. He provided for himself chariots, horses, and an escort of fifty men.

⁷ He talked with Joab (whose mother was Zeruiah) and with Abiathar the priest, and they agreed to support his cause.

⁸ But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's bodyguard were not on Adonijah's side.

⁹One day Adonijah offered a sacrifice of sheep, bulls, and fattened calves at Snake Rock, near the spring of Enrogel. He invited the other sons of King David and the king's officials who were from Judah to come to this sacrificial feast, ¹⁰but he did not invite his half brother Solomon or Nathan the prophet, or Benaiah, or the king's bodyguard.

Solomon is Made King

¹¹Then Nathan went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and asked her, "Haven't you heard that Haggith's son Adonijah has made himself king? And King David doesn't know anything about it!

¹²If you want to save your life and the life of your son Solomon, I would advise you ¹³to go at once to King David and ask him, 'Your Majesty, didn't you solemnly promise me that my son Solomon would succeed you as king? How is it, then, that Adonijah has become king?' "

¹⁴And Nathan added, "Then, while you are still talking with King David, I will come in and confirm your story."

¹⁵So Bathsheba went to see the king in his bedroom. He was very old, and Abishag, the woman from Shunem, was taking care of him.

¹⁶Bathsheba bowed low before the king, and he asked, "What do you want?"

¹⁷She answered, "Your Majesty, you made me a solemn promise in the name of the LORD your God that my son Solomon would be king after you.

18 But Adonijah has already become king, and you don't know anything about it.

19 He has offered a sacrifice of many bulls, sheep, and fattened calves, and he invited your sons, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of your army to the feast, but he did not invite your son Solomon.

20 Your Majesty, all the people of Israel are looking to you to tell them who is to succeed you as king.

21 If you don't, as soon as you are dead my son Solomon and I will be treated as traitors."

22 She was still speaking, when Nathan arrived at the palace.

23 The king was told that the prophet was there, and Nathan went in and bowed low before the king.

24 Then he said, "Your Majesty, have you announced that Adonijah would succeed you as king?"

25 This very day he has gone and offered a sacrifice of many bulls, sheep, and fattened calves. He invited all your sons, Joab the commander of your army,^a and Abiathar the priest, and just now they are feasting with him and shouting, 'Long live King Adonijah!'

26 But he did not invite me, sir, or Zadok the priest, or Benaiah, or Solomon.

^a One ancient translation *Joab the commander of your army*; Hebrew *your army commanders*.

²⁷Did Your Majesty approve all this and not even tell your officials who is to succeed you as king?"

²⁸King David said, "Ask Bathsheba to come back in" — and she came and stood before him.

²⁹Then he said to her, "I promise you by the living LORD, who has rescued me from all my troubles, ³⁰that today I will keep the promise I made to you in the name of the LORD, the God of Israel, that your son Solomon would succeed me as king."

³¹Bathsheba bowed low and said, "May my lord the king live for ever!"

³²Then King David sent for Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah. When they came in, ³³he said to them, "Take my court officials with you; let my son Solomon ride my own mule, and escort him down to the spring of Gihon, ³⁴where Zadok and Nathan are to anoint him as king of Israel. Then blow the trumpet and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!'

³⁵Follow him back here when he comes to sit on my throne. He will succeed me as king, because he is the one I have chosen to be the ruler of Israel and Judah."

³⁶"It shall be done," answered Benaiah, "and may the LORD your God confirm it.

³⁷As the LORD has been with Your Majesty, may he also be with Solomon, and make his reign even more prosperous than yours."

The second book of KINGS

The fall of the kingdom

What's it about? The nation that shone under King David ended in blood and tears and desolation. Despite some good kings, first the northern kingdom of Israel and then the southern kingdom of Judah were invaded by their enemies and the people were taken into exile.

Who wrote it? The author is unknown. The final events in the book take place around 561 BC and so it can't have been finished before that date.

Why read it? In the midst of the stories of bad kings, such as Manasseh and Jeroboam II, there are some shining lights – people living for God, such as the prophet Elisha and King Josiah of Judah.

What's it to me? When the rest of the world is living by its own rules, the bright examples in 2 Kings help us to recognise that we can still follow God.

Chapter 1

Elijah and King Ahaziah

¹After the death of King Ahab of Israel, the country of Moab rebelled against Israel.

²King Ahaziah of Israel fell off the balcony on the roof of his palace in Samaria and was seriously injured. So he sent some messengers to consult Baalzebub, the god of the Philistine city of Ekron, in order to find out whether or not he would recover.

³But an angel of the LORD commanded Elijah, the prophet from Tishbe, to go and meet the messengers of King Ahaziah and ask them, "Why are you going to consult Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Is it because you think there is no god in Israel?"

⁴Tell the king that the LORD says, 'You will not recover from your injuries; you will die!' "

Elijah did as the LORD commanded, ⁵and the messengers returned to the king. "Why have you come back?" he asked.

⁶They answered, "We were met by a man who told us to come back and tell you that the LORD says to you, 'Why are you sending messengers to consult Baalzebub, the god of Ekron? Is it because you think there is no god in Israel? You will not recover from your injuries; you will die!' "

⁷"What did the man look like?" the king asked.

8 “He was wearing a cloak made of animal skins, tied with^x a leather belt,” they answered.

“It’s Elijah!” the king exclaimed.

9 Then he sent an officer with fifty men to get Elijah. The officer found him sitting on a hill and said to him, “Man of God, the king orders you to come down.”

10 “If I am a man of God,” Elijah answered, “may fire come down from heaven and kill you and your men!” At once fire came down and killed the officer and his men.

11 The king sent another officer with fifty men, who went up^y and said to Elijah, “Man of God, the king orders you to come down at once!”

12 “If I am a man of God,” Elijah answered, “may fire come down from heaven and kill you and your men!” At once the fire of God came down and killed the officer and his men.

13 Once more the king sent an officer with fifty men. He went up the hill, fell on his knees in front of Elijah, and pleaded, “Man of God, be merciful to me and my men. Spare our lives!

14 The two other officers and their men were killed by fire from heaven; but please be merciful to me!”

15 The angel of the LORD said to Elijah, “Go down with him, and don’t be afraid.” So Elijah went with the officer

^x was wearing... with; or was a hairy man and wore.

^y One ancient translation went up; Hebrew answered.

to the king ¹⁶and said to him, “This is what the LORD says: ‘Because you sent messengers to consult Baalzebub, the god of Ekron — as if there were no god in Israel to consult — you will not get well; you will die!’ ”

¹⁷Ahaziah died, as the LORD had said through Elijah. Ahaziah had no sons, so his brother^z Joram succeeded him as king in the second year of the reign of Jehoram son of Jehoshaphat, king of Judah.

¹⁸Everything else that King Ahaziah did is recorded in *The History of the Kings of Israel*.

Chapter 2

Elijah is Taken Up to Heaven

¹The time came for the LORD to take Elijah up to heaven in a whirlwind. Elijah and Elisha set out from Gilgal, ²and on the way Elijah said to Elisha, “Now stay here; the LORD has ordered me to go to Bethel.”

But Elisha answered, “I swear by my loyalty to the living LORD and to you that I will not leave you.” So they went on to Bethel.

³A group of prophets who lived there went to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?”

^z Some ancient translations *his brother*; Hebrew does not have these words.

“Yes, I know,” Elisha answered. “But let’s not talk about it.”

⁴Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Now stay here; the LORD has ordered me to go to Jericho.”

But Elisha answered, “I swear by my loyalty to the living LORD and to you that I will not leave you.” So they went on to Jericho.

⁵A group of prophets who lived there went to Elisha and asked him, “Do you know that the LORD is going to take your master away from you today?”

“Yes, I know,” Elisha answered. “But let’s not talk about it.”

⁶Then Elijah said to Elisha, “Now stay here; the LORD has ordered me to go to the River Jordan.”

But Elisha answered, “I swear by my loyalty to the living LORD and to you that I will not leave you.” So they went on, ⁷and fifty of the prophets followed them to the Jordan. Elijah and Elisha stopped by the river, and the fifty prophets stood a short distance away.

⁸Then Elijah took off his cloak, rolled it up, and struck the water with it; the water divided, and he and Elisha crossed to the other side on dry ground.

⁹There, Elijah said to Elisha, “Tell me what you want me to do for you before I am taken away.”

“Let me receive the share of your power that will make me your successor,”^a Elisha answered.

^a *the share... successor*: Elisha asked for the share that the firstborn son inherited by law from his father.



“My father! ... You are gone!” (2.12)

¹⁰“That is a difficult request to grant,” Elijah replied. “But you will receive it if you see me as I am being taken away from you; if you don’t see me, you won’t receive it.”

¹¹They kept talking as they walked on; then suddenly a chariot of fire pulled by horses of fire came between them, and Elijah was taken up to heaven by a whirlwind.

¹²Elisha saw it and cried out to Elijah, “My father, my father! Mighty defender of Israel! You are gone!” And he never saw Elijah again.

In grief, Elisha tore his cloak in two.

¹³Then he picked up Elijah's cloak that had fallen from him, and went back and stood on the bank of the Jordan.

¹⁴He struck the water with Elijah's cloak, and said, “Where is the LORD, the God of Elijah?” Then he struck the water again, and it divided, and he walked over to the other side.