

## Sunday Message Notes – Better Bible Reading in 2026

### I Kings: The Game Of Thrones

The Bible continues to unfold as complex and layered:

**Exodus 6:2-3** “God also spoke to Moses and said to him, “I am the Lord. <sup>3</sup>I appeared to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as God Almighty, but by my name ‘The Lord’ I did not make myself known to them.

-God “Almighty” (El Shaddai - *El* is the generic Northwest Semitic/Hebrew word for “God”). “**The LORD**” (small caps in most English Bibles) represents the divine name יהוה (**YHWH**), commonly vocalized as “Yahweh.”

-Yet, the name “the Lord” has already been used 242 times before we get to Exo. 6. This is evidence for **multiple sources being compiled into one redacted book**. This is not specifically a contradiction – instead it’s a window that allows us to see how the Bible came to be – brought together and preserved by different perspectives and authors. Once you see this, you begin to notice the Bible is less like a single uninterrupted speech and more like a conversation. One we have been invited into.

### **Subject: “I Kings: The Game Of Thrones (and the beginning of the end of Israel’s monarchy)”**

*The throne of Israel trembles—not from foreign armies, but from whispers in the palace halls. An aging king clings to power as rival heirs circle like wolves, each backed by cunning prophets, ambitious mothers, and loyal—or treacherous—generals. Secrets are traded in shadowed chambers, alliances forged over sacrifice and broken just as quickly. One son exalts himself, declaring destiny is his to seize; another waits, hidden yet chosen, as a fierce queen moves pieces behind the curtain with ruthless precision. In this kingdom, crowns are not given—they are taken, anointed in oil and blood alike. And as the prophet’s voice cuts through the chaos, one truth remains: the throne may belong to a king, but the kingdom answers to God alone.*

#### **I. Intro & Fun Facts:**

**A. (World Behind The Text)** Kings, like Samuel, is part of, and the end of, the Deuteronomistic History (DtH – propaganda for the Davidic kingdom – promoting proper worship over ethical action). Also like Samuel, I&II Kings were originally one book – but divided into two as the translation from Hebrew to Greek (LXX) became longer. Kings is also drawn from earlier texts (court annals: The Acts of Solomon, the Annals of the Kings of Israel, the Annals of the Kings of Judah). Like Samuel, the writers of Kings are not retelling a story of the failed monarchy, but rather crafting a story for their needs: why it failed and who is to blame.

**B. Northern kingdom = Israel** (Capital: Samaria) / **Southern kingdom = Judah** (Capital: Jerusalem).

**C. 1 Kings 1:1–4** — David is old and dying, unable to keep warm, so his servants find Abishag the Shunammite to “attend” to him and keep him warm (writer is explicit - David did not have sex with her).

**D. Solomon, the younger** son of David, becomes king instead of Adonijah, revisiting again a

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biblical resistance to cultural appropriations of blessing and inheritance. The question we might want to sit with is if the Bible resists some cultural appropriations – does this provide a framework for resisting other cultural appropriations (misogyny, homophobia, xenophobia)?

- E. God uses a “lying spirit” to bring down King Ahab (**I Kings 22:19-23**): <sup>19</sup> Then Micaiah said, “Therefore hear the word of the Lord: I saw the Lord sitting on his throne, with all the host of heaven standing beside him to the right and to the left of him. <sup>20</sup> And the Lord said, ‘Who will entice Ahab, so that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?’ Then one said one thing, and another said another, <sup>21</sup> until **a certain spirit came forward** and stood before the Lord, saying, ‘I will entice him.’ <sup>22</sup> ‘How?’ the Lord asked him. He replied, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ Then the Lord said, ‘You are to entice him, and you shall succeed; go out and do it.’ <sup>23</sup> So you see, **the Lord has put a lying spirit** in the mouth of all these your prophets; the Lord has decreed disaster for you.”

### II. I Kings in 2 Parts (c. 960 BCE – 550 BCE)

A. Part I, Ch. 1-11 events leading up to the end of the united monarchy.

1. David (who is dying) wants to ensure Solomon succeeds him. (main figure) Solomon
2. Jeroboam – first northern king (greatly maligned by the writer).

B. Part II, Ch. 12-22 first 73 years of the divided monarchy (weave back and forth between the accounts of the northern and southern kings).

1. King Ahab and Elijah.

### C. Part I

1. As part of Adonijah’s attempt to succeed David he asks Bathsheba if he can have Abishag as his wife (but, Solomon sees the plot / **1 Kings 2:13–25**). On the surface, it sounds harmless—but in the ancient Near Eastern world, taking a former king’s concubine or wife was essentially a **claim to the throne**. It’s the same kind of political signal seen elsewhere (like Absalom taking David’s concubines). So Solomon immediately recognizes this not as a romantic request, but as a renewed bid for kingship.
2. Biblical sarcasm –(**I Kings 2:22a** King Solomon answered his mother, “And why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom as well!”).
  - a. Solomon sends his general to kill Adonijah and his general.
3. Solomon’s reign begins with wisdom. **I Kings 3:9** “Give your servant, therefore, an understanding mind to govern your people, able to discern between good and evil, for who can govern this great people of yours?” Notice, Solomon prays for wisdom, not wealth.
  - a. **I Kings 3:16-28** - he must make a judgment over the custody of an infant where two mothers are making a paternity claim. Solomon calls for a sword and orders the child to be divided—an unthinkable decree that shocks the court. In that instant, truth reveals itself: one mother pleads to give the child away to save his life, while the other coldly agrees to the split.
4. Where does it go wrong?
  - a. Remember the warning in **I Sam. 8** – the condemnation of / warning about kings: they will take advantage of your sons and daughters and seize your land.
  - b. Solomon’s “blessed rule” (**I Kings 4**): 40,000 stalls of horses, 12,000 horse men – who supplied all of Solomon’s “provisions” (**Deut. 17** – Kings are not supposed to have a lot of

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- horses).
- c. Is there a connection of Solomon's wealth with modern day mega church culture?
  - d. **I Kings 6** – it takes 7 years to build Solomon's temple (God's house).
  - e. **I Kings 7** – it takes 3 years to build Solomon's palace (his house).
  - f. **I Kings 10** - The queen of Sheba (Arabia or Ethiopia?) hears of Solomon's fame: "The report was true... but I did not believe it until I came and my own eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me." She sees his wisdom, palace, food, officials, and wealth and is overwhelmed (Solomon amasses 700 wives, 300 concubines).
  - g. Is Solomon's wealth a sign of God's blessing for proper worship?
5. (**1 Kings 12:1–16**) Before the Kingdom splits – Jeroboam (future king of the north after the split) asks Rehoboam if he will be harsh like his father, Solomon. Rehoboam, king of the south (Judah) succeeds his father, Solomon – "my rule will be harsher than Solomon's." Older advisors: "Be a servant to the people." Younger advisors (his peers): "Show strength—be harsher." Rehoboam says his "little finger is thicker" than his father's "loins" (1 Kings 12:10).

### D. Part 2

1. Ahab introduced (**I Kings 16:29-34**) "Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord **more than all who were before him;**" "he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians and went and served Baal and worshiped him;" "he laid its foundation at the cost of Abiram his firstborn and set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub."
  - a. Ahab is practicing child sacrifice (ref. **Eze. 20:25-26** "Moreover, I gave them statutes that were not good and ordinances by which they could not live.<sup>26</sup> I defiled them through their very gifts, in their offering up all their firstborn, in order that I might horrify them, so that they might know that I am the Lord").
2. **I Kings 17** – King Ahab and the prophet Elijah.
  - a. Elijah predicts drought (**I Kings 17:1-7**)
  - b. Widow of Zarephath (**I Kings 17:8-24**)
3. **Elijah as Moses (World Of The Text)**. Both are associated with **control over the elements**: Moses calls down plagues and parts the sea, while Elijah shuts the heavens in drought and calls down fire. Each stands as a mediator of God's power over creation. They also share profound **mountain encounters with God**—Moses on Sinai (Horeb) and Elijah on the same mountain generations later. In **Exodus 33–34**, God's presence "passes by" Moses, revealing His glory. Similarly, in **I Kings 19**, Elijah stands on the mountain as wind, earthquake, and fire pass by—but the Lord is ultimately revealed in the "still small voice."

### III. Solomon and Pharaoh

- A. I Kings exposes how power corrupts a community.
- I Kings 9:15a, 20-22** This is the account of the **forced labor** that King Solomon conscripted to build the house of the Lord and his own house,<sup>20</sup> All the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who were not of the people of Israel—<sup>21</sup> their descendants who were still left in the land, whom the Israelites were **unable to destroy completely**—these Solomon conscripted for **slave labor**, and so they are to this day.<sup>22</sup> But of the Israelites Solomon made no slaves; they were the soldiers; they were his officials, his commanders, his captains, and the commanders of his chariotry and cavalry.

