

Christ in 1 Kings

TRANSCRIPT (AUTO-GENERATED)

Good morning. Happy Father's Day. Let me add my blessing to the dads.

Happy Father's Day to my dad, and to the rest of the dads out there. This is my first Father's Day. And I...

Oh, thank you. My daughter is out the back, listening to her dad's voice. And I got to say, I have more respect and love for the dads becoming a dad myself.

Speaking of Father's Day, I thought I would start with a show and tell. This boy is my grandfather, Donald Shanks. Born 1940, he was a blond, curly haired, mischievous young boy.

He grew up to be literally a world famous opera singer. For a job, he travelled the world singing on stages in front of people. Look at this next boy.

This curly haired boy is my dad, Jonathan Shanks. Some of you might know him. My dad is also mischievous.

And he also has made a living in ministry standing on stages in front of people talking to them. The cutest boy of them all is me.

I too was a blonde, curly haired, mischievous young boy who has now grown up to make a living standing on a stage talking to people. It's interesting when you look at how it started and how it's going. How it started and how it's going.

Three generations of Shanks men who are all curly blonde haired mischievous boys who have grown up to stand on stages and talk to people for a living. It's an interesting legacy and I bring that up.

Because we come today to the Book of Kings and the idea of legacy is very interesting in Kings. From the beginning of the story of Kings to the end, there is a wild difference in the story of the Kings.

Unlike me and my father and my father's father who look the same, do similar jobs, the story of Kings could not be more different from start to finish.

In fact, I think that Kings, the Book of Kings, 1 and 2 Kings, is one of the most significant hinge points in the story of the entire Bible from start to finish.

Gary has read for us two passages that you might be wondering how they fit together in a sermon on 1 Kings. The first passage that he read are the last words of the book before Kings, and the second passage he read are the last words of 1 Kings.

And I asked Gary to read those two passages because they are worlds apart. In the first one, David doesn't want to buy an offering that would cost him nothing. He cares so much about the glory of God, that he is willing to give himself for God.

And then he cuts to the end of the story, and the kings do evil in the eyes of the Lord, following the ways of their fathers. These are wildly different moments in the story of Kings. There is a big difference between the two.

So, the question for today is how did we get from one to the other? From where it started to how it's going now? How did we get there?

On Father's Day, we wonder how families can go from being together and leading to ruin, multi-generational ruin. How is it that families fall apart? How is it that societies could devolve so much over the course of time?

That's our question. Let me pray as we begin. Heavenly Father, we are grateful for this day.

We thank you that we get to call you Father, that you welcome us. We thank you for your spirit that dwells in us, the one testifying with our spirit, that you are our Abba, our Father.

And so because you are present, we ask you to speak to us through your word. Comfort us, rebuke us, correct us, encourage us in Jesus' name, amen.

We have now finished our five part Roads to Ruin mini series, which means the lights are gone and the baptismal doors are shut. If you missed any of those five messages, you can catch up on the podcast.

But it means that we're now back in the Christ in Scripture project. Oh, that's good. I was waiting for like a, oh, okay.

Back in the Christ in Scripture project, if you haven't heard, we have an ambitious goal to spend one week over these two years of 2026 and 27, one week in every single book of the Bible, 66 books, and we are 24 messages in.

So we're over one third of the way. Within this project of finding Christ in Scripture, we're in the part of the story which is called The Former Prophets.

That is the books from Joshua to Two Chronicles that tell the story of Israel after the Torah before the exile, hence former, before the exile. Specifically, we're looking today at Christ in 1 Kings. Next week, guess what book we're studying?

Two Kings. Originally, 1 Kings and 2 Kings were 1 scroll, 1 work. And so it's a little bit arbitrary to divide these messages into 2.

And so I'm preaching next week and that next week is like a 2 part to this. I've kind of written the messages at the same time in order that you might come back again next week to hear the rest of the story.

But 1 and 2 Samuel, 1 and 2 Kings, 1 and 2 Chronicles were initially 1 scroll each. It's thought that how we got from 1 to 2 is that initially, the scrolls were written in Hebrew, that's the original language, and there's no vowels in Hebrew.

And so the letters of Samuel, Kings, and Chronicles are as long as you can fit on one singular piece of parchment.

But a couple of years, a couple of hundred years before Jesus, they translated the Hebrew Bible into Greek, and Greek has vowels, which means the length of the scroll doubled.

Hence, they had to split it in half and have 1 Kings, 2 Kings, 1 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles, 1 Samuel, and 2 Samuel.

So when we come to the story of Kings, 1 and 2 Kings, we're sort of looking at it as a unified whole, because that's the way that it's meant to be read.

Kings, in fact, is the end of that long and winding story from Joshua, Judges, Ruth, 1 Samuel, 2 Samuel, 1 Kings, and 2 Kings. And as we look at 1 and 2 Kings, what's it all about? The Kingdom.

It's in the name. Kings is about the Kingdom, the Kingdom of ancient Israel. The Australian theologian, Graham Goldsworthy, has a fantastically helpful definition of Kingdom.

He says three things. Kingdom in the Bible is God's people under God's rule in God's place. God's people under God's rule in God's place.

So we're going to survey the story of 1 Kings and see these three things. And especially to see how it started and how it's going, because it changes a lot. So firstly, the Kingdom, God's people.

The first aspect of the Kingdom that we see in 1 Kings is God's people. Every kingdom needs a people, a constituency, a body of people. And ancient Israel are a people.

In fact, they are God's people.

To recap the story of the Bible, God's people are the race of humanity, sons and daughters of Adam and Eve, the family of Abraham, blessed to be a blessing to all nations, the nation of Israel, the covenant people of Yahweh, the covenant people that

were redeemed out of slavery in Egypt, and they are the 12 tribes of Jacob, led by the Spirit of God, Spirit of God into the promised land. That's the people of God that we're talking about.

And that's a real key aspect of 1 Kings, the journey of the people of God. So, we're going to see how it started and then how it's going. Firstly, how it started.

By the time of 1 Kings, Israel are united as 1 Kingdom under their 2nd King, David. Now, King David was not perfect. We've seen this in previous messages, but he was pretty good.

He was about as good as the Kings get. 1 and 2 Samuel tell the story of his victory and his unifying the Kingdom. And then we turn to 1 Kings.

These are literally the first words of 1 Kings, Chapter 1, verse 1. When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him.

So his attendant said to him, let us look for a young virgin to serve the King and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our Lord the King may keep warm.

This is David, man after God's own heart, David, Goliath slayer David, Psalm writer David, military victor David. Look how the mighty have fallen. You get to 1 Kings and David is this old, weird, failing King.

And so straight away, there is disunity in the Kingdom. In the very next verse, sorry, in verse 5, Adonijah, son of King David whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, I will be King.

So he got chariots and horses ready with 50 men to run ahead of him. Five verses into 1 Kings and the Kingdom is already fracturing. There is a coup staged by David's own son, Adonijah.

This is disunity in the people of God. So what does David do? Consolidates power and gives it to his son Solomon.

Chapter 2 verse 1. When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. I'm about to go the way of all the earth, David said.

So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the Lord your God requires. Walk in obedience to him and keep his decrees and commands, his laws and regulations as written in the law of Moses.

Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the Lord may keep his promise to me.

If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.

David here, in giving the kingship to his son, is recalling God's promise to him from 2 Samuel 7, the Davidic Covenant. God promised David that his throne would endure. So David is passing this on to his son.

He's also echoing the ending of the Book of Deuteronomy. Do you remember the two mountains? Blessing and curse, that's the terms of the Covenant.

David is bringing this up, and then David dies, and Solomon becomes king, and the Kingdom is unified again. God's people are together, and for a while, they enjoy the blessing of God, the unity of the people of God. Remember, Solomon asks for wisdom.

God gives it to him. Solomon builds a temple, brings the Ark of the Covenant into the temple, dedicates it with one of the most awesome prayers in all of Scripture, 1 Kings, Chapter 8. Then he builds a palace.

The Queen of Sheba comes from afar to see the wealth of Solomon. 1 Kings 10, Verse 8. The Queen of Sheba says to Solomon, How happy your people must be, how happy your officials who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom.

This is the high point of Solomon's reign. The people of God, ancient Israel, are blessed. They're in the land.

They have a good king. He's wise. He rules with justice.

This is the high point of the people of God. United. That's how it started.

So how's it going by the end of the story? 1 Kings 11 is a very significant chapter in the political history of ancient Israel. After Solomon dies and passes on the kingship, the entire kingdom splits into 10 tribes in the north are called Israel.

They're led by King Jeroboam in the capital city of Samaria, and two tribes in the south, Judah and Benjamin, are led by King Rehoboam, son of Solomon. The entire kingdom fractures into disunity, the people of God divided. That's how Kings ends up.

So how did we get from united under the blessing of God to fractured into two? Where did it all go wrong? It was a failure, I think, of succession.

It was a failure of succession. David did not pass on the kingship faithfully to Solomon. He did not raise him right to continue his legacy.

1 Kings 11, as Solomon grew old, his wives, and there's 1,000, literally, 1,000 wives. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to Yahweh his god, as the heart of David his father had been.

It's a succession issue. Verse 5, he followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of Yahweh.

He did not follow Yahweh completely as David his father had done. There is a succession issue here. Israel's division came from not faithfully passing on the mantle to the next generation.

That is a sober reflection on Father's Day. Parents in general, but fathers in particular, have a very significant role in passing on the faith to their children, to making the succession of discipleship happen.

I read an article this week by Ryan Burge, who is an American political scientist and statistician.

And in this article, he was demonstrating, in America, but I think it's true outside of America as well, that the most statistically influential place of faith development is the home.

In other words, if a person is a Christian as an adult, most of the time, of course, there are exceptions, most of the time, it is because they had Christian parents who passed on the faith to them.

And so Ryan Burge is telling us that the primary place of discipleship is the home.

That is a great responsibility on the shoulders of us dads and moms, us parents, to, as much as we're able, by the grace of God, to pass on the Gospel to the next generation.

Now, I know that's an incredibly sensitive and difficult issue for a lot of us who don't have kids following the Lord. It's easy for the guy with the 10-month-old daughter to say, raise your children to be Christians. I understand.

But Israel's division, their ruin was a succession issue. David did not pass on the Gospel to the next generation. In fact, in chapter 1 verse 6, this is, I think, the damning moment of David's succession.

David had never rebuked Adonijah by asking, why do you behave as you do? David was passive. He didn't have the conversation that he knew he needed to have.

That's a challenge for us dads, us parents. Are we neglecting to have those conversations that we must have with our children? The primary place of faith formation is in our homes.

So in our families, God help us to pass on the gospel to the next generation. As a church family, God help us to pass on the gospel to the next generation. The church is only, is always, only ever one generation away from extinction.

And that mantle falls on us to pass it on. So stepping back, did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully unite God's people? No.

Zero for one. Which brings us to the second aspect of the Kingdom, God's rule. The second of three aspects of the Kingdom that we see in 1 Kings is God's rule.

Every Kingdom has a rule, a reign, as Willard would say, a range of effective will. The Kingdom has a rule, and the ancient Kingdom of Israel, that is God's people, they live under God's rule. God rules over his people.

But when you read the story of the Bible, the rule of God above all things was invested through the agency of human beings. This is right back from the beginning in Eden.

God creates Adam and Eve, the image of God, that they might rule over the world as agents of God's rule. Moses and Joshua led Israel as agents of God's rule. The kings of Israel were supposed to rule over Israel as agents of God's rule.

The rule of the humans over the kingdom under God was meant to mirror the character of God, compassionate and gracious, full of justice and righteousness. That's God's rule. Let's see how it started and how it's going.

Here is the rule of God through King Saul, 1 Samuel 10. Samuel said to the people, do you see the man the Lord has chosen? It's King Saul.

There is no one like him among all the people. Then the people shouted, long live the king. Here's the rule of God through King David.

David reigned over all Israel, doing what was just and right for all his people. Here's the rule of God through King Solomon.

When all Israel heard the verdict that King Solomon had given, they held the king in awe because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice. Now, the first 3 kings were flawed people. They made mistakes.

But on the whole, they're pretty good kings, especially compared to what happens later on. The rule of God is at first faithfully stewarded among God's people by the kings.

That's what the kings are supposed to do, justice and righteousness, faithfulness to God and worship. That's how it started. So how does it finish by the end of kings?

Remember, 1 Kings, Chapter 11 is when the kingdom splits. The very next chapter, Chapter 12 of 1 Kings, this is what we read. King Rehoboam, King of Judah in the South, answered the people harshly, rejecting the advice given him by the elders.

He followed the advice of the young man and said, My father made your yoke heavy. I will make it even heavier. My father scorched you with whips.

I will scorch you with scorpions. The king is supposed to rule on behalf of Yahweh. You know Yahweh?

Compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love, maintaining love to thousands. Look at Rehoboam. He's starting to sound like another character in the Bible.

Do you know who that is? Pharaoh. The Hebrew slaves are worked hard.

The new Pharaoh comes and works them even harder. So there's a twisting of the power. This king is supposed to represent Yahweh, but he looks like the most anti-Yahweh character in the Book of Exodus.

Pharaoh. He's not faithfully stewarding the rule of God over the people of God. And this is King David's grandson.

This is a succession issue. And unfortunately, the story only gets worse and worse with time. When you read through 1 and 2 Kings, the kings decline.

I remember in November 2024, we had a sermon series called Kings and Characters Season 2. And I preached a message called Not On My Watch.

And I spent literally hours going through the verdict of every single king in the Book of 1 and 2 Kings because I'd never worked out what the kind of the balance is. I don't think I did I get the slide up? I think I forgot.

I forgot. Bummer. Nineteen kings in the north, 19 in the south.

Do you know how many were good in the north? Zero. Every single one of the kings of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, it's said they did evil in the eyes of the Lord, did not follow the ways of David and Solomon.

In the south, 19 kings, do you know how many were good? 8 of 19 says, they were pretty good, like they got rid of the high places.

This is the sorry decline of the kings of Israel, not faithfully stewarding the rule of God, but leading Israel into ruin.

The very low point, I think, is 2 Kings 23, King Josiah desecrated Tofeth, which was in the valley of Ben Hinnom, so no one could use it to sacrifice their son or daughter in the fire to Molech. To be clear, this is good.

King Josiah is stopping the child's sacrifice, but why does he have to do that in the first place? The kings were sacrificing their children. This is wicked, wicked, evil stuff.

The rule of God has declined and descended into the pit. The valley of Ben Hinnom, son of Hinnom, is in the New Testament translated Gehenna, hell. Twelve times, the New Testament uses that word, 11 times on the lips of Jesus himself.

So when the rule of God declines, when the people of God, when the kings that are supposed to rule on his behalf, when they fail to steward the power that God has given them, it literally creates hell on earth.

The valley of the son of Hinnom, Gehenna. Without the rule of God, we end up in hell on earth. That's where it ended up.

Not faithfully stewarding the rule of God. So where did it all go wrong? They turned away from God.

Do you remember Solomon's wives? They turned his heart away. Then he did not raise his children right to turn back to God.

When the true God, Yahweh, compassionate and gracious, is not on the throne, three things happen. Idolatry, injustice, and immorality. When God is not on the throne of a people, idolatry, injustice, and immorality.

Idolatry is God making. To take something which is not God and to worship it as God, to make a good thing an ultimate thing in the language of Tim Keller. God making.

Injustice is God playing, to play God in the life of somebody else. So the tens or hundreds of millions of human beings in bonded labor today, that is slavery, they are in slavery because somebody else is playing God over them. This is injustice.

And immorality is God forsaking. Do you remember that refrain in Judges? In those days, Israel had no king, everyone did.

What was right in their own eyes. Immorality comes when you don't have a God above you whose laws you obey. You do what you think is right.

And so when you take God off the throne, idolatry, injustice and immorality, that is a perfect picture of the sorry state of the Kingdom of Ancient Israel by the end of Kings. So you and I live 3000 years after the events of Kings.

And we live a couple of hundred years into a cultural and intellectual project dedicated to separating God from regular life. It's called secularism, to separate.

So you can believe in God if you want, privately, at home, but when it comes to the way that we lead our nations, our families, our countries, this world, we're gonna pretend that God doesn't exist.

So you believe in God if you want, but we're gonna separate him. When you take God out of the picture, these three things happen. And so is that not a pretty good picture of our world?

Idolatry, worshiping things that are not God, money, sex, power, 100 million things, injustice, human beings playing God in the lives of others, and immorality, everyone doing what is right in their own eyes.

Even in our families, to bring it back to the fathers. In our families, when God is not on the throne of our families, we become little gods that make gods play gods and forsake God in our family.

We, I mean, the power kind of tends to corrupt fathers, parents, but fathers especially, and it leads to the most horrific abuse of children. Injustice, when God is not on the throne.

Idolatry of worshipping family, worshipping your children's achievements, putting them in too higher place above God. And immorality, parents turning to things that help them cope with the stress and the anxiety of parenthood.

When you take God out of the picture, you're left with these three things. So as fathers, can we put God back in his place, on the throne of our families, on the throne of this church, in order that we might not be idolatrous and unjust and immoral?

We might put God back. So stepping back, did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully unite God's people? Did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully reflect God's rule?

No and no. Zero from two. So let's go to the third point.

God's place. The third aspect of the Kingdom that we see in 1 Kings is God's place. Every Kingdom has a place, a land, a territory, and the Kingdom of Israel have a place, the promised land.

How it started is way back in Genesis 12, God promised Abraham land. In Exodus, God says, a land flowing with milk and honey. Through the Book of Joshua, God leads his people to settle the land and to allot it into the tribal inheritance.

By the time we get to 1 Kings, the people are in the land, settled, and relatively peaceful. In fact, we read in 1 Kings 4, the people of Judah and Israel united at this stage in the story, were as numerous as the sand on the seashore.

They ate, they drank, and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms, from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.

Verse 24, for King Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tif-Tif-Sah to Gaza, and had peace on all sides.

During Solomon's lifetime, Judah and Israel from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and their own fig tree. Dan to Beersheba is north to south, from Wollongong to the Central Coast. Peace in the whole land.

So how's the place of God going? Good, at the start. Everyone's in the land, we got a good king, the people are united.

But how does it end up? I apologize, we have to technically creep into 2 Kings, but remember, they're one story, so I apologize. 2 Kings 17.

In the ninth year of Hoshia, the last king of Israel, the king of Assyria captured Samaria and deported the Israelites to Assyria. He settled them in Hala and Gozan on the Harbo River and in the towns of the Medes.

So the people of Israel were taken from their homeland into exile in Assyria and they are still there. Taken from the place of God, exile, the exile of Israel. Not too long after, we read this, 2 Kings 25.

On the seventh day of the fifth month, in the 19th year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuchadnezzaradon, commander of the Imperial Guard, an official of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem.

He set fire to the temple of Yahweh, the royal palace and all the houses of Jerusalem. Every important building he burned down, so Judah went into captivity away from her land. Exile.

How's the place of God going? It's barren and desolate. Because of their unfaithfulness to God, first Assyria and then Babylon come over and take Israel out of their land.

And so this promised land, the land flowing with milk and honey, is left barren and destitute and missing the people of God because they were taken away. How did we get from there to there?

How did we get from blessing and prosperity to devastation and emptiness? Israel became just like all the nations around them. Back in Leviticus, there's a lot of text in this sermon.

I'm not apologizing, I'm just acknowledging. Leviticus 20, God says, keep all my decrees and laws and follow them so that the land where I am bringing you to live may not vomit you out.

You must not live according to the customs of the nations I'm going to drive out before you. Because they did all these things, I abhorred them. Where it went wrong for Israel in the place of God, is they acted like all the nations around them.

When God specifically told them to be different from all the nations around them, to be a light to the nations, the salt of the earth.

Instead, Israel just mimicked, they intermarried, they blended with all the nations, child sacrifice, even doing things worse than the nations around them. So the land vomited. That's a strong image.

The land itself revolts from the injustice and the idolatry of Israel. It's another interesting reflection on our families, our place that we live in, our families, our workplace, our university, our marriage.

They go wrong when we mimic everyone around us. As the church, we're called to be different. The salt of the earth, the light on the hill.

But when we, the church, in our families, marriages, workplaces, when we copy the nations around us, we become just like them, and we fail to be the witness that we're called to be.

You remember Joshua 24 verse 15, as for me and my household, we will serve the Lord. That's what our family needs. All of our families.

That's what us dads need to say. That's what we need to say as a church. No matter where the world is going, no matter what it says is right, as for me and my household, as for us, the people of God, we will be faithful to him.

We will not act the way that the world acts. We will live different the way God is calling us to live. Do you remember when Jesus said, not so with you?

Can that be our prayer? Not so with us. We will live different to the world around us.

Stepping back, did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully unite God's people? Did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully reflect God's rule? Did the Kingdom of Israel faithfully inhabit God's place?

No, no, and no. Zero from three. This is Kings.

This is a low point in the story of the entire Bible. The Kingdom of God, God's people under God's rule in God's place, is meant to be a place of flourishing and blessing and overflow. But in Israel, it's no, no, and no.

The low point of the story of the Bible. What happens when the people of God are not united, they're not reflecting God's rule and they're not inhabiting God's place, the result is exile.

We're going to talk more about exile next week as a theme in the Bible, but then also as a theme in our lives. But when we don't unite as God's people, reflect his rule and inhabit his place, we forsake the blessing of God upon us.

And so, I wonder if that is your experience of life today. If you relate to the story of Kings in any way, maybe in your life, you're not connected to God's people the way you used to be.

You're not experiencing the freedom and the justice and righteousness of living under God's rule, and you're not walking in the abundance, in the place that God has put you. I wonder if exile kind of feels like your lived experience right now.

I wonder if how it's going now is a long, long, long way away from how it started. I wonder if this is kind of a turning point, a moment when you realize how far you have fallen, and that you might turn back to God.

Speaking of how it started and how it's going, this is the city of Ephesus, an artist's depiction of Ephesus at its prime. Remember Paul's letter to the Ephesians, this is the city today. I had the honor of walking that street a couple of years ago.

There's nothing there, it's just rocks. There's no church. 2000 years ago, there was a thriving community of faith in that city.

Now there's nothing there. How it started and how it's going, worlds apart. I wonder if that kind of feels like your life.

Out of connection with God's people, not living under God's rule, and not faithfully inhabiting the place that God has put you. If it is, then let me encourage you with the words.

Well, it's not an encouragement, it's a poke actually, but maybe it's an encouraging poke. Jesus wrote a letter to this church in Revelation. He says this, I hold this against you.

You have forsaken the love you had at first. Consider how far you have fallen. Repent and do the things you did at first.

That's not encouraging, that's pokey, but it's a gracious poke from our Lord Jesus. Because the word repent doesn't mean to cry because someone's bashing you on the head with the Bible. It literally means think about your thinking.

In other words, take stock of the state of your life. If you look around and your life is like the ruins of Ephesus, then Jesus' invitation this morning is to repent, to realize that, and to turn towards him.

In the Gospels, the Kingdom of God is the number one topic that Jesus talks about. And when he introduced the Kingdom, he said, the Kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news.

Repentance is the first thing. To take stock of the mess that I have made of my life, of how far I have fallen from where I have started, and to turn back to him in trust. Next week, we are going to look at the believe side of that equation.

But as we finish today, we land on repentance. As our lives are not what they once were, we turn back to God, and we realize that. The Kingdom of God is God's people under God's rule in God's place.

And if you have fallen from that, if I have, in my family, in our church, can we repent together and turn back to him?