



Preface

First Kings covers such a swath of history, in royal time from the death of David to the death of Ahab, or in prophetic time from Nathan to Micaiah, blending together royal records, detailed descriptions, repetitive formulas, and tense narratives in the whole effort. I try to avoid both being aridly historical and sentimentally devotional. As with my previous commentaries, I seek to grasp the theological nerve of the text and cast it in an expository form, without being allergic to application.

One always owes thanks. I pushed one of my Hebrew exegesis classes through some of the least interesting material in 1 Kings just to see if we could preach it. They did grandly and proved an immense help to me. The powers that be at Reformed Seminary have accelerated the pace of writing by granting an eight-month sabbatical. Ken Elliott and John McCarty have been more than gracious with research space in 'their' library. And Ruth Bennett's sharp eye nailed numerous glitches and follies before the manuscript was in the mail.

The appearance of this volume coincides with a milestone. Knox Chamblin, my colleague in New Testament, will soon retire from full-time teaching duties at Reformed Theological Seminary, Jackson, Mississippi. He is both Jesus' disciple and Paul's admirer, as one should be. This book goes forth as a small tribute to Dr. Chamblin, for we have found and enjoyed him as a rigorous scholar, moving preacher, mischievous colleague, and gracious friend.

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Abbreviations

ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i>
ANET	<i>Ancient Near Eastern Texts</i> , 3 rd ed.
BDB	Brown, Driver, and Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
DCH	<i>Dictionary of Classical Hebrew</i> (ed. D. J. A. Clines)
IDB	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible</i>
IDBS	<i>Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible/ Supplementary Volume</i>
ISBE	<i>International Standard Bible Encyclopedia</i>
JB	Jerusalem Bible
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
KJV	King James Version
LXX	The Septuagint
NASB	New American Standard Bible
NBD	<i>New Bible Dictionary</i>
NIDOTTE	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology & Exegesis</i>
NIV	New International Version
NJB	New Jerusalem Bible
NJPS	Tanakh: A New Translation of the Holy Scriptures according to the Traditional Hebrew Text (1985)
NKJV	New King James Version
NLT	New Living Translation
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
REB	Revised English Bible
RSV	Revised Standard Version
TDOT	<i>Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament</i>
TEV	Today's English Version
TWOT	<i>Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament</i>
ZPEB	<i>Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible</i>



Introduction

Sorry about the title. It would be nice to call this volume *The Power and the Glory*, but 1 Kings' story of the sadness and stupidity of sin forbids it. The power and the glory is not yet. There is, to be sure, a flash of glory (Solomon) but it fades.

Bible readers who have braved their way through 1 and 2 Kings are sometimes dazed by the apparent maze of detail, especially when the writer takes us through the various kings of Israel and Judah, switching back and forth along the way. We can handle two Jeroboams in one kingdom and a Rehoboam in the other contemporary with one of the Jeroboams, but when there is a Jehoram (or Joram) in each kingdom at about the same time, not to mention double Ahaziahs, we go into historical overload. Like warm jello it all seems to melt into hopeless confusion. 'Too much history!', we sigh.

Not really. Actually, the writer has been very kind to us, deliberately trying to prevent cranial fatigue. No one has said it better than Charles Martin:

1 and 2 Kings ... give a continuous narrative of the Hebrew monarchy from the time when David handed on a rich and extensive kingdom to the time of its final destruction. Four hundred years in little more than 50,000 words means a drastic reduction of detail.¹

In other words, the writer of Kings left out most of what he could have said! Four hundred years in little more than 50,000 words. The history of my own country (USA) extends a little over half that long but its history is written in thick tomes not brief booklets (like 1–2 Kings). This means, as Martin says,

1. '1 and 2 Kings,' *The New Layman's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1979), 425.

