

Dr. John Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1, Introduction Resources from NotebookLM

1) Abstract, 2) Audio podcast, 3) Briefing Document, 4) Study Guide, and 5) FAQs

1. Abstract of Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org, BeL

Dr. Oswalt's lecture introduces the book of Kings, emphasizing its context within the Hebrew Bible and its exploration of the covenant's impact on life. He highlights the book's placement among the Former Prophets due to its portrayal of God's active communication and the predictable outcomes of covenant obedience or disobedience. **Oswalt contrasts biblical prophecy with pagan prophecy, noting that the former involves choice and consequences.** He argues that Kings seeks to explain both the exile and the ongoing consequences of covenant adherence or violation, and he addresses the accuracy and purpose of the Book of Kings, seeing it not just as a history, but an accurate account to show the exile. **He analyzes the structure of Kings, focusing on the disproportionate attention given to Solomon and the contrasting perspectives of Kings and Chronicles.** The lecture concludes with an examination of the final verses of Kings, suggesting a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness of exile, and a challenge to the listeners.

2. 30 - minute Audio Podcast Created on the basis of Dr. Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1 – Double click icon to play in Windows media player or go to the Biblicalelearning.org [BeL] Site and click the audio podcast link there (Old Testament → Historical Books → Kings).



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on01.mp3**

3. Briefing Document: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1, Introduction

Okay, here is a briefing document summarizing the main themes and ideas from the provided excerpts of Dr. John Oswalt's lecture on the Book of Kings.

Briefing Document: Dr. John Oswalt on the Book of Kings, Session 1

Overview:

This lecture serves as an introduction to the study of the books of 1 and 2 Kings, emphasizing the importance of context in understanding the Bible. Dr. Oswalt highlights the structure of the Hebrew Old Testament, the prophetic nature of Kings, the Deuteronomic theology underpinning it, and the overall purpose of the book in explaining the exile and illustrating the consequences of obedience and disobedience to the covenant. He also addresses questions of authorship and historical accuracy and offers an initial outline of the book's content.

Key Themes and Ideas:

- **Importance of Context:** Oswalt stresses that understanding the Bible requires careful attention to context: "With the Bible, there's one word: context, context, context. God is a God of relationships. Things hold together." He emphasizes that the Bible is not a collection of random statements but an interconnected narrative.
- **Structure of the Hebrew Bible:** He outlines the three sections of the Hebrew Bible: the Torah (Instructions), the Prophets (Former and Latter), and the Writings (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, the five festival songs, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah and Chronicles). He points out that the placement of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings within the "Prophets" section is crucial for understanding their role: "These are prophetic books because God is at work speaking to them, explaining what's happening, explaining what's going to happen."
- **Prophetic Nature of the Books of Kings:** Oswalt argues that Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are considered prophetic because they demonstrate God speaking and explaining events through prophets. This is contrasted with pagan prophecy, which presents predetermined, unchangeable futures. Biblical prophecy emphasizes choice and consequences: "Biblical prophecy says you've got a choice. You determine what the future is. Obey me, follow my instructions,

and the future is blessed. Disobey me, refuse to follow my covenant, and the future is bad news."

- **Deuteronomic Theology:** The books of Joshua through Kings are built upon the foundation of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy teaches that keeping the covenant leads to blessing, while breaking it results in curses: "If you keep your covenant, you'll be blessed. If you don't keep your covenant, you'll be cursed." This covenant includes worshipping only Yahweh, acknowledging His otherness, honoring His name, observing the Sabbath, and treating others justly, especially the vulnerable.
- **Purpose of the Book of Kings:** The ultimate purpose of Kings is to explain the exile of Israel and Judah: "The final purpose... is to explain why the exile happened. What went wrong?" However, before the exile, the book served to illustrate the short- and long-term effects of obeying or disobeying the covenant.
- **Kings vs. Chronicles:** Oswalt highlights the different perspectives of Kings and Chronicles. Kings explores "Why have the promises failed?" while Chronicles, written after the exile, focuses on "How do we go on from here?". Chronicles emphasizes that faith, not the kingdom itself, is the defining element of their identity as God's people: "It wasn't the kingdom that made our faith. Our faith made the kingdom."
- **Authorship and Historical Accuracy:** Oswalt rejects the theory that one person wrote Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings during the exile. He suggests that different authors compiled these books over time, sharing a common understanding of the covenant from Deuteronomy. He argues that the books were likely compiled by court prophets who had access to royal records, and that these prophets understood the broad sweep of God's actions through history. He acknowledges that Kings is not a comprehensive history but insists that its historical details are remarkably accurate, pointing to the intricate dating systems used in the records. He notes: "Is the Book of Kings a history? No. Is it historically accurate? Yes. And there's a difference between those two."
- **Outline of the Book:** Oswalt divides Kings into two main parts: the reign of Solomon (chapters 1-11) and the divided kingdom (chapter 12 to 2 Kings 25). He notes the disproportionate attention given to Solomon, suggesting his reign serves as a foundational example of both blessing and the tragic consequences of disobedience: "Look at the incredible blessings that came to this man. In the end, what I believe is the most tragic verse in the Bible, Solomon loved many women,

and his wives turned his heart away from the Lord, and his heart was no longer perfect toward the Lord."

- **Good Kings of Judah:** While there were no good kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, Judah had several, though each with their own flaws. These kings, such as Asa, Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah, were crucial for the endurance of the faith and for delaying Judah's exile.
- **Ending with Hope:** Despite the overall darkness of the book, the final verses offer a glimmer of hope with Jehoiakim's release from prison and elevation to a place of honor: "But I'm with those who say this is the final writer's way of saying it ain't over... If David hasn't been forgotten, maybe we haven't been forgotten."

Quotes:

- "With the Bible, there's one word: context, context, context. God is a God of relationships. Things hold together."
- "These are prophetic books because God is at work speaking to them, explaining what's happening, explaining what's going to happen."
- "Biblical prophecy says you've got a choice. You determine what the future is. Obey me, follow my instructions, and the future is blessed. Disobey me, refuse to follow my covenant, and the future is bad news."
- "If you keep your covenant, you'll be blessed. If you don't keep your covenant, you'll be cursed."
- "The final purpose... is to explain why the exile happened. What went wrong?"
- "It wasn't the kingdom that made our faith. Our faith made the kingdom."
- "Is the Book of Kings a history? No. Is it historically accurate? Yes. And there's a difference between those two."
- "Look at the incredible blessings that came to this man. In the end, what I believe is the most tragic verse in the Bible, Solomon loved many women, and his wives turned his heart away from the Lord, and his heart was no longer perfect toward the Lord."
- "But I'm with those who say this is the final writer's way of saying it ain't over... If David hasn't been forgotten, maybe we haven't been forgotten."

Conclusion:

Dr. Oswalt's introduction to the Book of Kings provides a framework for understanding its place within the broader biblical narrative, its theological significance, and its historical context. By emphasizing the importance of the covenant and the consequences of obedience and disobedience, Oswalt sets the stage for a deeper exploration of this complex and challenging book.

4. Study Guide: Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1, Introduction

Covenant on the Ground: A Study Guide to Oswalt's Kings, Session 1

I. Key Concepts and Themes

- **Context is Key:** Understanding the context of scripture is paramount to understanding its message. This includes historical, cultural, and literary context.
- **Covenant Theology:** The relationship between God and humanity, particularly Israel, is defined by covenant. Blessings follow obedience, and curses follow disobedience.
- **Hebrew Bible Structure:** Understanding the tripartite structure of the Hebrew Bible (Torah, Prophets, Writings) is important for interpreting individual books.
- **Prophetic Role:** Prophets are not simply foretellers of the future; they are God's messengers, explaining God's actions and calling people to covenant faithfulness.
- **Deuteronomistic Theology of History:** The book of Deuteronomy provides the theological framework for understanding the history presented in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings. This framework emphasizes covenant obedience and its consequences.
- **Kings' Purpose:** The book of Kings seeks to explain the reasons for the exile, highlighting the consequences of disobedience and God's patience.
- **Historical Accuracy vs. Historical Exhaustiveness:** Kings is not an exhaustive historical account but a selective presentation of history, focusing on theological significance. Its historical details are considered accurate.
- **Kings vs. Chronicles:** These books offer two perspectives on the same history. Kings focuses on the failure of the promises, while Chronicles focuses on how to continue in faith after the exile.
- **Importance of Good Kings:** The good kings of Judah, despite their flaws, played a critical role in preserving the faith and delaying judgment.
- **Hope at the End:** Despite the darkness of the exile, the ending of Kings offers a glimmer of hope, suggesting that God has not abandoned his people.

II. Short-Answer Quiz

1. Why does Oswalt emphasize the importance of "context" when studying the Bible?
2. Describe the three sections of the Hebrew Bible and list the books contained within each.
3. Explain why Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are considered part of the "Prophets" section in the Hebrew Bible.
4. How does biblical prophecy differ from pagan prophecy, according to Oswalt?
5. What is the central theme of the book of Deuteronomy, and how does it relate to the books of Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings?
6. According to Oswalt, what is the primary question that the book of Kings attempts to answer?
7. Explain the difference in perspective between the books of Kings and Chronicles.
8. Why does Kings devote so much attention to Solomon (11 chapters) compared to other kings?
9. How does the ending of the book of Kings offer a glimmer of hope despite the devastation of the exile?
10. What evidence does Oswalt give for believing that the book of Kings is historically accurate?

III. Short-Answer Quiz - Answer Key

1. Context is key because God is a God of relationships, and the thoughts in the Bible are connected within a setting. Understanding the context helps us understand the interconnectedness of the Bible and God's relationship with humanity.
2. The three sections are the Torah (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy), the Prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve), and the Writings (Psalms, Job, Proverbs, Ruth, Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes, Lamentations, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Nehemiah, Chronicles). The Writings are a miscellaneous collection that do not quite fit in the Torah or the Prophets.
3. These books are considered prophetic because they demonstrate how God spoke through prophets to explain and predict events. The Israelites saw these books as

showing God's active involvement, connecting actions with God's prior announcements.

4. Biblical prophecy presents choices and consequences (obedience leads to blessings, disobedience to curses), while pagan prophecy describes predetermined and unchangeable events. Biblical prophecy allows people to determine their future by covenant faithfulness.
5. Deuteronomy emphasizes that covenant faithfulness leads to blessing and covenant disobedience leads to cursing. This theology of history provides the lens through which the events in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings are interpreted.
6. The book of Kings primarily seeks to explain why the exile of Israel and Judah occurred. It examines the consequences of obedience and disobedience to the covenant over time, leading to the predicted exile.
7. Kings focuses on why the promises failed, examining the reasons for the exile and the loss of the kingdom. Chronicles, written after the exile, focuses on how to continue in faith without a kingdom, emphasizing the importance of faith over political power.
8. Solomon receives so much attention because his reign is seen as setting the pattern for the rest of the book. His initial blessings and subsequent disobedience serve as a cautionary tale, illustrating the consequences of turning away from God.
9. The ending of Kings describes Jehoiakim, the last legitimate king of Judah, being released from prison and given a place of honor in Babylon. This suggests that God has not forgotten David's line and may still have plans for the future.
10. Oswalt argues that the way the years are reported indicates that those who wrote Kings had access to royal records and were therefore historically accurate. By figuring in discrepancies in counting the new year and co-regencies the years and dates in the book work out almost perfectly.

IV. Essay Questions

1. Discuss the significance of the Hebrew Bible's structure (Torah, Prophets, Writings) in understanding the book of Kings. How does placing Kings within the "Prophets" section influence its interpretation?
2. Explain the concept of "Deuteronomic theology of history" and analyze how it shapes the narrative and theological message of the book of Kings. Provide specific examples from the text to support your argument.
3. Compare and contrast the perspectives and purposes of the books of Kings and Chronicles. How do these books offer different interpretations of the same historical events, and what are the implications of these differing viewpoints?
4. Analyze the role of the "good kings" in the book of Kings. Despite their flaws, how did these rulers contribute to the preservation of the faith and the delay of judgment, and what does this suggest about God's working in history?
5. Explore the theme of hope in the book of Kings, particularly as it is expressed in the final paragraph. How does this glimmer of hope offer encouragement in the face of devastating exile, and what does it imply about God's future plans for his people?

V. Glossary of Key Terms

- **Torah:** The first five books of the Hebrew Bible (Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy); also known as the Pentateuch. The word "Torah" means "instructions."
- **Prophets:** The second section of the Hebrew Bible, containing both former prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings) and latter prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, The Twelve).
- **Writings:** The third section of the Hebrew Bible, a miscellaneous collection including Psalms, Job, Proverbs, and other books.
- **Covenant:** A binding agreement or relationship between God and humanity, particularly Israel, outlining responsibilities and consequences.
- **Deuteronomic Theology of History:** The theological framework found in the book of Deuteronomy, which emphasizes that covenant obedience leads to blessing, and covenant disobedience leads to curses. This framework shapes the historical narrative in Joshua, Judges, Samuel, and Kings.
- **Exile:** The period in Israel's history when the northern kingdom (Israel) was conquered by the Assyrians (722 BC) and the southern kingdom (Judah) was conquered by the Babylonians, leading to the deportation of its inhabitants.
- **Revelation:** God's communication of himself and his will to humanity.
- **Verbose Prophets:** A term Oswalt uses to describe Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel; contrasting them with The Twelve, the concise prophets.
- **Concise Prophets:** A term Oswalt uses to describe the twelve minor prophets, pointing out that minor here means concise.
- **Co-Regency:** A period when a son is forced onto the dad.

5. FAQs on Oswalt, 1 & 2 Kings, Session 1, Introduction, Biblicalelearning.org (BeL)

FAQ on the Book of Kings

- **What is the primary focus of the Book of Kings?** The Book of Kings aims to explain why the exile of Israel and Judah happened. It explores how the people's obedience or disobedience to the covenant with God, as outlined in Deuteronomy, led to either blessings or curses, ultimately resulting in the nation's downfall and exile. The book serves as a theological reflection on Israel's history rather than a comprehensive historical record.
- **How does the Book of Kings fit into the Hebrew Bible's order of books?** In the Hebrew Bible, Kings is part of the "Prophets" section, specifically the "Former Prophets," along with Joshua, Judges, and Samuel. This placement emphasizes that these books are viewed as prophetic because God communicated through prophets to explain events and predict consequences based on the nation's adherence to or rejection of the covenant. The actions of God cannot be separated from the words of God.
- **What is "Deuteronomic theology of history," and how does it relate to the Book of Kings?** Deuteronomic theology of history is the principle that obedience to the covenant, particularly the Ten Commandments, brings blessings, while disobedience brings curses. This theological framework is central to the Book of Kings. The book illustrates how the kings and the people of Israel and Judah experienced the consequences of their actions based on whether they upheld or violated the covenant.
- **Why is Solomon given so much attention in the Book of Kings?** The extensive focus on Solomon in the early chapters of Kings (11 chapters) serves to establish a pattern. Solomon's reign is presented as a period of immense blessing and prosperity due to his initial faithfulness. However, his eventual turning away from God, influenced by his foreign wives, becomes a cautionary tale, illustrating the tragic consequences of covenant infidelity. His story sets the stage for understanding the subsequent decline of the kingdom.

- **How do Kings and Chronicles differ in their perspectives and purposes?** While both Kings and Chronicles recount the history of Israel and Judah, they do so from different perspectives and with different purposes. Kings was written during the exile to explain why the exile happened by showcasing the failures of the kings and the people to uphold the covenant. Chronicles, written after the exile, aims to encourage the returning exiles by emphasizing the enduring nature of their faith, even in the absence of a kingdom. Chronicles focuses on the role of faith in shaping the kingdom rather than the kingdom defining their faith.
- **Were there any "good" kings in the northern kingdom of Israel, according to the Book of Kings?** According to the Book of Kings, there were no good kings in the northern kingdom of Israel. All the "good" kings were from the southern kingdom of Judah. This distinction has led some to speculate about the bias of the author(s), but the text also dedicates considerable attention to the northern kingdom.
- **What is the significance of the final paragraph of the Book of 2 Kings?** The final paragraph of 2 Kings describes how Jehoiakim, the last legitimate king of Judah, was released from prison and given a place of honor in Babylon. This seemingly minor detail is interpreted as a glimmer of hope amidst the darkness of the exile. It suggests that God has not entirely abandoned his covenant with David and that a future restoration may be possible.
- **Is the Book of Kings historically accurate?** While the Book of Kings is not a comprehensive history in the modern sense, it is considered historically accurate in its details. The dating system used in the book, which initially seemed inconsistent, has been shown to be precise when accounting for different calendrical practices in Judah and Israel and the existence of co-regencies. This accuracy suggests that the authors had access to royal records and other reliable sources.