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COMMENTARY ON THE WHOLE BIBLE

1 Kings

by Matthew Henry

To the Students of the Words, Works and Ways of God:

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AN EXPOSITION, WITH PRACTICAL OBSERVATIONS, OF

THE FIRST BOOK OF

KINGS

Many histories are books of kings and their reigns, to which the affairs of their kingdoms are reduced; this is a piece of honour that has commonly been paid to crowned heads. The holy Scripture is the history of the kingdom of God among men, under the several administrations of it; but there the King is one and his name one. The particular history now before us accounts for the affairs of the kingdoms of Judah and Israel, yet with special regard to the kingdom of God among them; for still it is a sacred history, much more instructive and not less entertaining than any of the histories of the kings of the earth, to which (those of them that are of any certainty) it is prior in time; for though there were kings in Edom before there was any king in Israel, ~~<OR>~~ Genesis 36:31 (foreigners, in that point of state, got the precedency), yet the history of the kings of Israel lives, and will live, in holy Writ, to the end of the world, whereas that of the kings of Edom is long since buried in oblivion; for the honour that comes from God is durable, while the honour of the world is like a mushroom, which comes up in a night and perishes in a night. — The Bible began with the story of patriarchs, and prophets, and judges, men whose converse with heaven was more immediate, the record of which strengthens our faith, but is not so easily accommodated to our case, now that we expect not visions, as the subsequent history of affairs like ours under the direction of common providence; and here also we find, though not many types and figures of the Messiah, yet great expectations of him; for not only prophets, but kings, desired to see the great mysteries of the gospel, ~~<OR>~~ Luke 10:24 — The two books of Samuel are introductions to the books of the Kings, as they relate the origin of the royal government in Saul and of the royal family in David. These two books give us an account of David's successor, Solomon, the division of his kingdom, and the succession of the several kings both of Judah and Israel, with an abstract of their history down to the captivity. And as from the book of Genesis we may collect excellent rules of economics, for the good governing of families, so from these books we

may collect rules of politics, for the directing of public affairs. There is in these books special regard had to the house and lineage of David, from which Christ came. Some of his sons trod in his steps, and others did not. The characters of the kings of Judah may be thus briefly given: — David the devout, Solomon the wise, Rehoboam the simple, Abijah the valiant, Asa the upright, Jehoshaphat the religious, Jehoram the wicked, Ahaziah the profane, Joash the backslider, Amaziah the rash, Uzziah the mighty, Jotham the peaceable, Ahaz the idolater, Hezekiah the reformer, Manasseh the penitent, Amon the obscure, Josiah the tender-hearted, Jehoahaz, Jehoiakim, Jehoiachin, and Zedekiah, all wicked, and such as brought ruin quickly on themselves and their kingdom. The number of the good and bad is nearly equal, but the reigns of the good were generally long and those of the bad short, the consideration of which will make the state of Israel not altogether so bad in this period as at first it seems. In this first book we have,

- I.** The death of David, 1 Kings 1 and 2.
- II.** The glorious reign of Solomon, and his building the temple (1 Kings 3-10), but the cloud his sun set under, 1 Kings 11.
- III.** The division of the kingdoms in Rehoboam, and his reign and Jeroboam's, 1 Kings 12-14.
- IV.** The reigns of Abijah and Asa over Judah, Baasha and Omri over Israel, 1 Kings 15 and 16.
- V.** Elijah's miracles, 1 Kings 17-19.
- VI.** Ahab's success against Benhadad, his wickedness and fall, 1 Kings 20-22. And in all this history it appears that kings, though gods to us, are men to God, mortal and accountable.