

# 1 KINGS

**An Explanation  
with Notes and Quotes,  
Illustrations and Applications**

*G. Michael Cocoris*

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this commentary is to provide a practical explanation of 1 Kings. The objective is a balanced exposition—explaining the passage in context and applying its truths to life with illustrations. Some commentaries are, by design, of a technical nature, delving into the meanings of words and phrases even outside their use in the book under consideration. Those commentaries tend to ignore the context of the book and its application. Other commentaries go to the other extreme and concentrate on the application, often not fully expounding the passage. Commentaries should do both. They should offer a contextual exposition of the book and apply the truths of that book to life. Adding illustrations facilitates clarity.

First and foremost, this is a contextual exposition. The context is not just the paragraph or the chapter but the whole book. In studying any book of the Bible, the first question that should be asked is: “What is the subject of this book?” Each natural literary unit, whether a paragraph or a narrative, develops a subject. A legitimate exposition will show how the author develops his subject. That, and only that, is contextual Bible study. All details in a book must be explained in light of the message and structure of the entire book. Words only have meaning in a context. A detailed explanation of words and phrases ripped from their sentence and the broader context is not exposition. The flow of the thought of the passage in the context of the book is the message the author intends to convey.

The Bible was written for living (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Even the most brilliant explanation that stops short of the applications is an abortion of what God intended. Thus, the practical ramifications of every passage must always be considered.

The procedure of study I use is to first divide the biblical book into its natural literary units (narratives or paragraphs). Then, I analyze each unit. The analysis includes an outline of the development of thought in that unit (major points and sub-points), an explanation of each sentence, and a summary statement. After I have personally analyzed each unit, I read commentaries, deliberately reading commentaries from different theological perspectives. I credit commentators’ comments by putting their names in parenthesis, even if I had seen that point in the text during my study before I read their comments. Thus, each chapter of this material expounds a natural literary unit of the book of 1 Kings.

In the process of study, I also wrote a tentative title, introduction, and conclusion as if what I was working on was a sermon. If I stumble across an illustration, I include it, but, at this point, I do not search for illustrations. I write all of this for each literary unit in the book before preaching the first sermon in the book. As a result, when I begin speaking through the book, I have the whole book in mind.

As I prepare to preach each literary unit, I may change the tentative title, introduction, and/or conclusion. I rarely change the explanation of the text. It is as I preach each unit that I search for illustrations. Again, having studied the whole book first is helpful here. I sometimes found an illustration I knew would fit better later in the book.

The introduction of each chapter briefly relates that section to life and/or the context. The captions throughout the chapters are divisions of that portion of Scripture and correspond to the main points of a sermon. The italicized headings correspond to the sub-points of a sermon. Rather than footnotes, the author’s name is in parenthesis in the text. While applications are made throughout the exposition, the passage as a whole is summarized and applied at the end.

May the Lord be pleased to use this approach to the Scripture to enlighten, encourage, and edify believers, thus glorifying His Son.

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# INTRODUCTION

Originally, 1 and 2 Kings were a single volume, like 1 and 2 Samuel. The Septuagint divided 1 and 2 Samuel and 1 and 2 Kings. First Kings has been called the “book of the Disruption” (Baxter). It is about division.

## Author

The author is unknown. The tradition in the Talmud says Jeremiah wrote Kings. There is evidence to indicate that might be the case: 1) there are linguistic similarities between Kings and Jeremiah, 2) both have a similar, somber view of history, 3) both have preferences for phrases from the Pentateuch, 4) both have allusions to earlier prophecies. In short, there is a similar style. Whoever the author was, he used sources.

11:41 - the book of the Acts of Solomon

14:19 - the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel

14:29, 15:7 - the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah.

That sounds like the critical view of the authorship of the Pentateuch, that is, several authors with one editor or mediator and, in this case, Jeremiah is the “editor.” That is not the case at all. The Pentateuch does not claim to use sources. Kings does. The Pentateuch and for that matter, the New Testament claims Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible; Kings does not claim Jeremiah is its author. Tradition does.

There is one other difference, which is the issue. The critics contend that the material in Genesis (1-11) and in Kings are not history. Unger quotes Heiffer, saying Kings is “a religious and not a historical work.” Thus, critics claim Kings is “Deuteronomic history,” that is, the law of the central sanctuary (Deut. 12) and is said to be the criterion for judging each King, whether of Judah or Israel. Thus, the account is considered idealized and colored by the theological prejudices of the writer.

So, 1 Kings was written by someone who used sources, probably Jeremiah. That does not mean that 1 Kings was not inspired because inspiration only means truth was recorded.

## Recipients

Several things need to be noted to determine who received the book.

First, the content. First Kings covers about 123 years from David’s death to Jehoshaphat’s death (971-848 BC). Thus, the generation who received it was after Jehoshaphat.

Secondly, 1 and 2 Kings were originally one volume. Second Kings covers about 266 years from the reign of Ahaziah to Israel (Ahab’s son) and the Babylonian captivity (852-586 BC). Second Kings 25:27 extends about 26 years beyond the captivity.

Thirdly, 1 Kings 8:8 and 12:9 says, “to this day.” Many argue that this phrase indicates a time of authorship before the Babylonian captivity (586 BC).

So, some of the evidence indicates the book was written before the captivity and other evidence seems to indicate it was written after the exile. What is the solution? The book of Kings was probably written to the remaining kingdom of Judah before and after the exile. The majority was compiled by a contemporary of Jeremiah, if not Jeremiah himself (ca. 600-570 BC). The book was not finished until after the beginning of the captivity. In reviewing the history of how Israel got from the United Kingdom to captivity, the author is reminding the children of Israel in captivity of pertinent spiritual truths.

## Message

First Kings covers the reign of Solomon and the rule of several kings in Israel and Judah. It is tempting to say the subject is “Kings,” but the material is too selective to be considered a biography of the Kings. The subject is the division of the kingdom. A faltering King David, in the midst of palace intrigue, chooses his son Solomon to succeed him. At the outset, Solomon is promising but later develops a divided heart. Ultimately, the monarchy is divided. This division is traced in its successive kings, the kings of the north and the south, as the monarchy decays at the core. A divided heart in Solomon led to a division in the kingdom. The message of 1 Kings is sin leads to decline and division.

## Structure

The structure on which 1 Kings hangs is chronology. For example, 1:1 says that David was old. Later, it says, “Now the day of David drew nigh” (2:1). More specifically, it is the reign of Kings (4:1; 11:41-43; etc.).

I. The United Kingdom (Reign of Solomon)	1:1-11:43
A. Solomon’s Rule Established	1:1-4:34
B. Solomon’s Temple and Palace Built	5:1-8:66
C. Solomon’s Fame and Glory	9:1-10:29
D. Solomon’s Downfall and Death	11:1-43
II. The Divided Kingdom (Reign of Kings)	12:1-22:53
A. The Division of the Kingdom	12:1-24
B. Reign of Jeroboam in Israel	12:25-14:20
C. Reign of Rehoboam in Judah	14:21-41
D. Reign of Abijam in Judah	15:1-8
E. Reign of Asa in Judah	15:9-24
F. Reign of Nadab in Israel	15:25-31
G. Reign of Baasha in Israel	15:32-16:7
H. Reign of Elah in Israel	16:8-14
I. Reign of Zimri in Israel	16:15-20
J. Reign of Omri in Israel (Ministry of Elijah)	16:29-22:40
L. Reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah	22:41-50
M. Reign of Ahaziah in Israel	22:51-53



## Purpose

Historically, 1 Kings gives an account of the reigns of the Kings from Solomon to Jehoshaphat (Judah) and Ahaziah (Israel). Without Joshua, nothing would be known about the conquest. Without Judges, nothing would be known about the period of the Judges. Without 1 Samuel, nothing would be known about the establishment of the kingdom, and without 1 Kings, nothing would be known about the division of the kingdom.

When people think of the book of “Kings,” they automatically think of “kings.” Regarding the Old Testament, when they think of “kings,” they should automatically think of “prophets.” When the Lord established the kingdom, He raised prophets to make His will and wisdom known (see 1 Sam.). A prophet wrote First Kings and tells about the ministry of the prophets. It reveals God’s view of what was happening. In other words, Kings is not just a recording of history, but history from God’s point of view.

Thus, the purpose of 1 Kings is not just to record the history of what happened but to evaluate the kings of the Divided Kingdom. Each king is individually assessed. The author uses the voice of the prophets to judge sin. This process reaches its climax in Elijah. The standard is righteousness. (11:6; 13:33; 14:22; 15:26, 34; 16:19, 16:25, 16:30; 22:52). In addition, each king is evaluated according to the standard of Jeroboam in Israel (13:33, 34; 15:25-26, 15:33, 39; etc.) and David in Judah (14:21-24; 15:3-5, 15:11-15; etc.)

**Summary:** An unknown author, probably Jeremiah, wrote to the children of Israel about the time of the Babylonian captivity to remind them that Solomon’s divided heart led to a division in the kingdom.

Sin leads to decline and division. The issue is the heart (1 Kings 11:4, 6, 33, 38; 15:3).

Contrary to popular impression, a worm does not bore a hole in an apple from the outside. Scientists say worms began on the inside. The egg is laid in the blossom and the worm is hatched in the heart of the apple. The problem is in the heart.

For several days, a proud young soldier polished the outside of his rifle in preparation for a contest. When he took a bead on the target and fired, his hand was steady and his aim correct, but he missed! The bullet unaccountably swerved to one side. Upon examination, he found that rust had lodged inside the gun barrel! He had cleaned the firearm’s outside but failed to clean the inside.

## THE MOST LIKELY ONE DOES NOT ALWAYS WIN

Two teams meet for the championship game. Most people agree that one team is most likely to win, but the other team wins. Two stocks are competing for your investment dollars. Most people agree that one is the most likely to grow faster, but the other one makes the most money. In a spiritual discussion, two men express opposing views. Virtually everyone agrees that one of them is right, but he's the one that turns out not to be. How do you know which fellow to believe and follow in that situation?

When David was about to pass off the scene, two of his sons were candidates to succeed him. One looked like he was the most likely to succeed his father, but the other one was chosen. The story gives us insight into who to follow in similar situations.

### The King's Condition

*The Sickness* "Now King David was old, advanced in years; and they put covers on him, but he could not get warm" (1:1). David was about 70 years old at the time (2 Sam. 5:4; Ryrie; MacDonald). "The covers that David's servants placed over him to keep him warm were like sheets and blankets, not articles of clothing (Constable, BKC). "In view of David's symptoms, he may have suffered from arteriosclerosis" (Constable's Notes).

*The Suggestion* "Therefore his servants said to him, 'Let a young woman, a virgin, be sought for our lord the king, and let her stand before the king, and let her care for him; and let her lie in your bosom, that our lord the king may be warm'" (1:2). "It was customary in ancient times to warm an elderly person not only by covering him or her with blankets but also by putting a healthy person in bed with him or her. The body heat of the well person would keep the older person warmer" (Constable). "The proposal of his servants in verse 2 seems at first glance both puzzling and shocking. However, this practice was accepted at that time as being of value in the case of an illness like David's. It was not an act of doubtful morality and would not create a public scandal" (MacDonald). "Josephus (37 ca.-100 AD), a Jewish historian, and Galen (130-200 AD), a Greek physician, refer to this therapeutic practice which continued into the Middle Ages" (Constable, BKC).

*The Search* "So they sought for a lovely young woman throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king" (1:3). "Abishag (from Shunem, seven mi. SE of Nazareth) became part of David's harem and was involved in Adonijah's scheme to gain the throne. See note on '1 Kings 2:13-25' (Ryrie). "That a virgin should be sought was reasonable since an unmarried young woman would likely be in vigorous health, free from domestic responsibilities, and able to wait on David continually as his needs might demand" (Constable, BKC). "Shunammite is an alternate reading of Shulammite, a resident of Shunem in Issachar. There is no way of telling if Abishag was the Shulammite Solomon loved and wrote of in the Song of Solomon (Song of Sol. 6:13)" (Constable's Notes).

*The Service* "The young woman was very lovely; and she cared for the king, and served him; but the king did not know her" (1:4). "The fact that David did not have sexual relations with this 'very beautiful' young woman is significant because it shows that his physical powers were now weak. David had been sexually active, but now his sexual powers were depleted. This shows that it was time for a more energetic man to reign" (Constable's Notes). "It seems

probable from chapter 2 that she was considered a legal wife of David because Solomon interpreted Adonijah's later request for her as a claim to the throne (2:21-22)" (MacDonald).

"Nothing in the text suggests that David should be viewed as senile or easily manipulated" (Newkirk, cited in Constable's Notes).

## The First Candidate

*The Candidate* "Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, 'I will be king'; and he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him" (1:5). "Adonijah ('Yahweh is lord') was David's fourth son (2 Sam. 3:4) and the eldest one living at this time. Evidently, he believed it was more important that the eldest son succeed David, as was customary in the Near East" (Constable's Notes). The problem with that is that the Lord had chosen Solomon to succeed David. So, "Adonijah's revolt was primarily against the revealed will of God, secondarily against David, and finally against Solomon" (Constable's Notes). "Adonijah's preparation of chariots, horses, and 50 men to run ahead of him was probably intended to give him prestige in the people's eyes. It also helped ready his coup d'etat against his father" (Constable, BKC).

"(And his father had not rebuked him at any time by saying, 'Why have you done so?' He was also very good-looking. His mother had borne him after Absalom.)" (1:6). Adonijah "was a spoiled, undisciplined young man who had apparently received much admiration for his good looks (he was ... very handsome) more than for the quality of his character. Evidently, Adonijah expected that his plot would succeed more because he was a popular figure than because he was a capable person championing a worthy cause" (Constable, BKC).

*His Comrades* "Then he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they followed and helped Adonijah" (1:7). Adonijah conferred with Joab, David's nephew and the commander of David's army (2 Sam. 2:13) as well as Abiathar, a priest and one of David's counselors (Ryrie). As a result, these two men followed Adonijah.

"Joab had long since demonstrated his disregard for God's will in many instances (2 Sam. 3:22-30; 18:5-15; 20:8-10). He evidently sided with Adonijah now because he realized he was out of favor with David. If Solomon succeeded to the throne, he would probably demote Joab at least" (Constable's Notes).

"Abiathar had been the leading priest in Israel until David began to give Zadok priority. He had fled from Nob, after Saul massacred the priests there, to join David in the wilderness (1 Sam. 22:18-20). He had also offered sacrifices at David's tabernacle in Jerusalem while Zadok served at the Mosaic tabernacle at Gibeon. However, David had been showing increasing favor to Zadok (cf. 1 Chron. 15:11; 2 Sam. 15:24; 20:25). Abiathar was one of Eli's descendants whom God had doomed with removal from the priesthood (1 Sam. 2:30-36; cf. 1 Kings 2:27). Probably Abiathar saw in Adonijah's rebellion a promising opportunity to retain his position that he must have seen he would lose if Solomon came to power" (Constable's Notes). "Because of his commitment to David, Abiathar became an adviser and friend of the king. This incident with Adonijah was Abiathar's first recorded act of disloyalty" (Constable, BKC).

"But Zadok the priest, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and the mighty men who belonged to David were not with Adonijah" (1:8). "Zadok the priest had joined David after Saul was killed in battle (1 Chron. 12:28). He had supported David and had served as his spy during Absalom's rebellion. Benaiah (1:10) was one of David's mightiest warriors and commanders (2 Sam. 8:18; 20:23; 23:20-23). Nathan the prophet (1:10) brought the

word of the Lord to the king on at least two occasions (2 Sam. 7:4-17; 12:1-14). If Shimei is the same man who cursed David (2 Sam. 16:5-13) and was later forgiven by David (2 Sam. 19:16-23), then Shimei's loyalty now to the king is understandable. However, he may have had his own sinister plot in mind (cf. comments on 2:36-38). Or this may have been another Shimei" (Constable, BKC).

*His Celebration* "And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fattened cattle by the stone of Zohelath, which *is* by En Rogel; he also invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants. But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, or Solomon his brother" (1:9-10). "The Stone of Zohelath has been identified on the steep rocky corner that overlooks the plain where the Valley of Hinnom joins the Kidron Valley just south of Mount Zion where the City of David was situated. En Rogel is one of the two main springs in the Kidron Valley that supplied water for Jerusalem (see the map "Jerusalem in the Time of the Kings," near 9:15)... His sacrifice was evidently a feast rather than a religious offering" (Constable, BKC).

"As a prelude to taking over the throne, Adonijah held a feast but failed to invite Nathan and Solomon. He apparently was planning to kill them, for, had they eaten together, he would have been obliged to protect them" (Ryrie). "Adonijah's banquet at En Rogel, just a few hundred yards southeast of the City of David, was probably a covenant meal at which his supporters pledged their allegiance to David's eldest living son. If David's other supporters had attended and eaten with Adonijah, custom would have bound them to support and protect one another" (Constable's Notes).

From all appearances, Adonijah was the most likely son to succeed his father. He was David's oldest living son. He was good-looking (1:6). He had all the trappings, such as horses and chariots (15). He had the support of the captain of the army (1:7) and the priest (1:7). He threw a big celebration in preparation for his coronation (1:9-10).

His father had not rebuked him at any time (1:6). "A child who was not properly disciplined nor allowed to experience a result of his wrongdoing is not likely to develop self-control and a sense of responsibility. This is illustrated in 1 Kings 1:5-10 .... Adonijah attempted to seize the throne that had already been pledged to his brother Solomon.... Apparently, David had never disciplined Adonijah by saying no to him or letting him find out that everyone who sins pays the price. This failure on the part of Israel's beloved ruler also accounts for the sins and tragedy in the lives of his other sons, Ammon and Absalom (*Our Daily Bread*, 4/21/1981).

## The Second Candidate

*The Counsel* "So Nathan spoke to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, 'Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and David our lord does not know *it*?' (1:11). "The fact that Nathan took the initiative in countering Adonijah's rebellion suggests that God may have moved His prophet to this action as He had done previously (2 Sam. 12:1)" (Constable, BKC). "Adonijah had become king only in the sense that he was the people's choice at that moment. Perhaps Nathan was trying to shock Bathsheba and David by referring to Adonijah as the king" (Constable's Notes).

"Come, please, let me now give you advice, that you may save your own life and the life of your son Solomon" (1:12). "If successful in becoming king, Adonijah would have killed all other claimants to the throne" (Ryrie).

“Go immediately to King David and say to him, ‘Did you not, my lord, O king, swear to your maidservant, saying, ‘Assuredly your son Solomon shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’? Why then has Adonijah become king?’” (1:13). “David’s promise to Bathsheba that he would make Solomon ... king after him, to which Nathan referred, is not recorded in Scripture. But in view of what Nathan told Bathsheba to say here, obviously, David had made such a promise (cf. 1 Chron. 22:8-10)” (Constable, BKC). “Variations of the word ‘swore’ occur four times, emphasizing David’s oath that Solomon would succeed him (vv. 13, 17, 29, 30)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then, while you are still talking there with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words” (1:14). “Nathan wanted to make sure at least two witnesses would hear David’s promise that Solomon was his choice (cf. Num. 35:30; Deut. 17:6; 19:15). This was especially important since Adonijah’s rebellion against the Lord’s anointed was a capital offense” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Conversation* “So Bathsheba went into the chamber to the king. (Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was serving the king.)” (1:15). “Evidently, David was confined to his bed (1:15, 1:47)’ (Constable, BKC).

“And Bathsheba bowed and did homage to the king. Then the king said, ‘What is your wish?’ Then she said to him, ‘My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant, saying, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne. So now, look! Adonijah has become king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know about *it*. He has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king, Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; but Solomon your servant he has not invited. And as for you, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel *are* on you, that you should tell them who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise, it will happen, when my lord the king rests with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be counted as offenders” (1:16-21). “We should probably interpret Bathsheba’s request as a desire that David would appoint Solomon co-regent rather than that he should step down and let Solomon rule in his place. Normally, in the ancient Near East, a new king would purge his political enemies when he came to power (cf. 2:13-46). This was the basis for Bathsheba’s fear” (Constable’s Notes). “Bathsheba stated the facts about Adonijah’s uprising without exaggeration or embellishment” (Constable, BKC).

*The Confirmation* “And just then, while she was still talking with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. So they told the king, saying, ‘Here is Nathan the prophet.’ And when he came in before the king, he bowed down before the king with his face to the ground. And Nathan said, ‘My lord, O king, have you said, ‘Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne’? For he has gone down today, and has sacrificed oxen and fattened cattle and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons, and the commanders of the army, and Abiathar the priest; and look! They are eating and drinking before him; and they say, ‘*Long live King Adonijah!*’ But he has not invited me—me your servant—nor Zadok the priest, nor Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, nor your servant Solomon. Has this thing been done by my lord the king, and you have not told your servant who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?’” (1:22-27). “Nathan’s words to David (vv. 24-27) were very diplomatic and appropriate for a man in his position” (Constable’s Notes). “Rather than reminding David of his promise regarding Solomon, which might have annoyed the king, who may not have wanted many people to know of his choice, Nathan diplomatically asked David if he had planned the present circumstances. The prophet left the initiative with David rather than putting him on the defensive” (Constable,

BKC). “Nathan’s news that Adonijah’s feast was taking place at that very moment would have encouraged David to act at once” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Certification* “Then King David answered and said, ‘Call Bathsheba to me.’ So she came into the king’s presence and stood before the king” (1:28). “Bathsheba had evidently left the room when Nathan entered as was customary in that culture. David called her to return, which she did” (Constable, BKC).

“And the king took an oath and said, ‘As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from every distress, just as I swore to you by the LORD God of Israel, saying, ‘Assuredly Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,’ so I certainly will do this day” (1:29-40). “As surely as the Lord lives meant that David’s intended action was as certain to take place as God’s very existence. Those words occur frequently in the Old Testament, including 14 times in 1 and 2 Kings (1:29; 2:24; 17:1, 17:12; 18:10, 18:15; 22:14; 2 Kings 2:2, 2:4, 2:6; 3:14; 4:30; 5:16, 5:20). David could not more forcefully have guaranteed that he would indeed do what he now said he would do. The God who had delivered David would now, through David, ‘deliver’ Bathsheba and her son” (Constable, BKC).

“Then Bathsheba bowed with *her* face to the earth, and paid homage to the king, and said, ‘Let my lord King David live forever!’” (1:31). “The clause, ‘May the king live forever,’ (vv. 31, 34; et al.) occurs often in the Old Testament. It expresses the wish that, because the king had acted or would act righteously, God would bless him with long life. God had promised righteous Israelites long life under the Mosaic Law. It also expressed the desire that David might live forever through the lives of his descendants” (Constable’s Notes).

Solomon was not the most likely son to succeed his father. If for no other reason, he was not David’s oldest living son. He was the son of David’s adulterous affair. Nevertheless, he was God’s choice, as indicated by the fact that a prophet, apparently speaking on behalf of the Lord, supported him.

## The Coronation

*The Commandment* “And King David said, ‘Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.’ So they came before the king” (1:32). “Zadok, Nathan, and Benaiah were the highest ranking priest, prophet, and soldier respectively. Their leadership in the events David ordered (vv. 32-35) would have shown the people that they were acting as King David’s representatives” (Constable’s Notes).

“The king also said to them, ‘Take with you the servants of your lord, and have Solomon my son ride on my own mule, and take him down to Gihon” (1:33). “Kings often rode on mules in the ancient Near East, symbolizing their role as servants of the people” (Constable, BKC). For Solomon to be riding on David’s mule was “a sign that Solomon was David’s choice to succeed him” (Ryrie). “Perhaps the people would have recognized that mule by its trappings and concluded that David had given Solomon permission to ride it as his designated successor” (Constable, BKC).

“Gihon was in the upper part of the Kidron Valley” (Ryrie). “Two springs provided most of the water for Jerusalem: the En Rogel spring southeast of Jerusalem not far from the city wall where Adonijah was feasting his guests (1:9), and the Gihon spring about one-half mile north and directly east of Jerusalem also outside the city wall. On that day, two processions, one by rebels and one by the king’s men, were going to two neighboring springs” (Constable, BKC).



“David was bypassing preliminary steps to Solomon’s accession and arranging for his actual coronation. This would put Adonijah, who had only taken preliminary steps, in the position of having to overthrow Solomon if he wished to be king” (Ryrie).

“There let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel; and blow the horn, and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’” (1:34). “A trumpet blast (vv. 34, 39) often announced God’s activity in Israel throughout its history (Exod. 19:16; et al.), as it did here” (Constable’s Notes). “The shout, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ expressed the people’s desire and prayer that the new king’s reign would be long and prosperous” (Constable, BKC).

“Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall be king in my place. For I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah” (1:35). “The leaders had been instructed to return up Mount Zion to the city of David and place Solomon on David’s throne. This would be the ultimate proof of his election. Solomon was to commence his rule at that moment; the official seating on the throne was to be perceived not as simply a symbolic act. David clearly explained that he himself, by the authority of his kingly office, had appointed Solomon ruler over Israel and Judah effective immediately. Israel and Judah were distinguished (4:20, 4:25) because 1 Kings was written after the kingdom was divided in 931 BC and/or because a rift was already evident between the northern and southern parts of the kingdom (cf. 2 Sam. 19:41-20:2)” (Constable, BKC).

*The Compliance* “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, ‘Amen! May the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. As the LORD has been with my lord the king, even so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of mlord King David.’ So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon ride on King David’s mule, and took him to Gihon” (1:36-38). Benaiah wholeheartedly supported David’s decision and he, along with Zadok and Nathan, did as David instructed them. The Kerethites and the Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:18) were “David’s special military guards under Benaiah (2 Sam. 23:22-23). They were responsible for protecting the king, his family, and his city” (Constable, BKC). “Gihon is on the E of Mount Zion, and En-rogel (where Adonijah was, 1:9) is S of the city. Thus the whole area was filled with rival celebrations (1:41)” (Ryrie).

*The Coronation* “Then Zadok the priest took a horn of oil from the tabernacle and anointed Solomon. And they blew the horn, and all the people said, ‘Long live King Solomon!’” (1:39). “Zadok the high priest anointed (consecrated) Solomon king of Israel ... with oil from David’s tabernacle, symbolizing Solomon’s endowment with God’s Spirit for service (cf. 1 Sam. 10:1; 16:3, 12). At the same time, someone anointed Zadok as high priest (1 Chron. 29:22).... By anointing Solomon (v. 39, in 973 B.C.), the high priest identified him as David’s successor. Solomon now took his seat on Israel’s throne as David’s co-regent (v. 46). According to Warren Wiersbe, Solomon is mentioned almost 300 times in the Old Testament and a dozen times in the New Testament” (Constable’s Notes).

“The exact relationship between David and Solomon during the period of coregency is not made clear. Normally, in such coregency, the father remained in supreme command as long as he lived, with the son more or less carrying out his directives. This probably was true with David and Solomon also, though the fact that David was bedridden during this time suggests such an arrangement may have been more theoretical than actual” (Wood, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*The Celebration* “And all the people went up after him; and the people played the flutes and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth *seemed to split* with their sound” (1:40). Playing the flute and rejoicing with great joy, the people celebrated making a great deal of noise.

## The Consequences

*The Announcement* “Now Adonijah and all the guests who *were* with him heard *it* as they finished eating. And when Joab heard the sound of the horn, he said, ‘Why *is* the city in such a noisy uproar?’” (1:41). “Adonijah’s party was feasting only a half mile south of Gihon. They heard the celebration easily. But it was the blowing of the trumpet, the sign that an official function was taking place, that roused Joab to inquire about all the noise in the city” (Constable, BKC).

“While he was still speaking, there came Jonathan, the son of Abiathar the priest. And Adonijah said to him, ‘Come in, for you *are* a prominent man, and bring good news’” (1:42). “Adonijah’s optimism and complete ignorance of the plot to undercut his rebellion can be seen in his greeting of Jonathan” (Constable, BKC).

“Then Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, ‘No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king. The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, the Cherethites, and the Pelethites; and they have made him ride on the king’s mule. So Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon; and they have gone up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This *is* the noise that you have heard. Also Solomon sits on the throne of the kingdom. And moreover the king’s servants have gone to bless our lord King David, saying, ‘May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne.’ Then the king bowed himself on the bed. Also the king said thus, ‘Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who has given *one* to sit on my throne this day, while my eyes see *it!*’” (1:43-48). “Jonathan had apparently penetrated the palace or at least obtained information from within it since he reported to Adonijah what David had said in his bedroom. Characteristically, David praised God for one more blessing: allowing him to live long enough to see his successor on his throne” (Constable, BKC).

*The Anguish* “So all the guests who were with Adonijah were afraid, and arose, and each one went his way” (1:49). “Those who associated with Adonijah would be considered co-conspirators” (Ryrie). “Adonijah’s guests scattered as far from the traitor and as fast as they could so they would not be linked with him and dealt with as they felt surely he would be. In the ancient Near East, traitors could expect to be purged by a new king” (Constable, BKC).

“Now Adonijah was afraid of Solomon; so he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar” (1:50). “Adonijah fled to the sanctuary courtyard, evidently the one in Jerusalem (cf. 1 Chron. 16:1, 37), and took hold of the horns on the brazen altar. There was another place of worship in Gibeon at this time (3:4; 1 Chron. 16:39-40). In the ancient Near East and in Israel, people customarily regarded the central sanctuary as a place of refuge (Exod. 21:14; cf. Ezek. 21:1-3). The name ‘sanctuary’ to describe a church originated in the Middle Ages (Wiseman). The idea behind this custom seems to have been that God had been gracious to people by accepting their offerings. Consequently, people should be gracious to the refugee who had offended his fellow man” (Constable’s Notes). Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar, “a claim to protection, which was not automatically guaranteed (Ex. 21:14; 2:28-34).

*The Agreement* “And it was told Solomon, saying, ‘Indeed Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon; for look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword’” (1:51). Adonijah was afraid of him and asked Solomon not to kill him.



“Then Solomon said, ‘If he proves himself a worthy man, not one hair of him shall fall to the earth; but if wickedness is found in him, he shall die’” (1:52). “Adonijah could show himself worthy by acknowledging Solomon as his king” (Ryrie).

“So King Solomon sent them to bring him down from the altar. And he came and fell down before King Solomon; and Solomon said to him, ‘Go to your house’” (1:53). “Solomon could have had Adonijah removed from the tabernacle and executed, but instead showed mercy” (Constable, BKC). “Solomon, like David and like Yahweh, showed mercy” (Constable’s Notes). “Solomon followed this pattern of graciousness throughout his reign. The new king simply asked for a promise from his half-brother that he would not rebel again but would show himself to be a worthy, loyal subject. Adonijah promised and Solomon sent him home. But soon Adonijah conspired again and lost his life as a result (2:13-25)” (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** When elderly David was in poor health, his eldest son prepared to become king, but the Lord used a prophet and Solomon’s mother to see to it that Solomon was crowned king.

“The structure of the record of Solomon’s reign is as follows. Chapters 1-2 and 11:14-43 draw a frame around the whole history of Solomon’s rule. Within this frame, two similar sections form the body of the revelation. The first (3:1--8:66) is favorable to Solomon and the second (9:1-11:13) is critical of him. This is the same historiographic pattern that the writer of Samuel used in describing the reigns of Saul and David. Each of these sections begins with a dream (3:1-15; 9:1-10a), and each ends with a revelation of Solomon’s attitude toward God (chs. 6-8; 11:1-13). (Parker)” (Constable).

When it comes to spiritual things, the most likely choice is not God’s choice. He does not follow custom or tradition. He sovereignly chooses. When we need to make decisions, we need to base them on God’s choice, not custom.

“Solomon’s succession was not a smooth transition. Solomon was God’s choice to succeed David, but he was not David’s oldest son, so his succession was unnatural. Like so many others before him, God sovereignly chose to place an unusual choice in a position of blessing instead of what was traditional (cf. Isaac over Ishmael, Jacob over Esau, Joseph over Reuben, Ephraim over Manasseh). In all these cases, and in Solomon’s, various individuals resisted the will of God because they wanted what was traditional (customary)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Solomon’s succession was also unusual in that Solomon was the son of Bathsheba, whom David should not have married. We might think that God would have punished David for his sin with Bathsheba by choosing one of David’s sons by another wife, perhaps his first wife, to succeed him. But God’s choices are sovereign. He sometimes chooses to bless greatly those who have sinned greatly in spite of their sins. Indeed, He seems to delight in doing this (cf. Moses, Paul). God’s great grace to sinners stands out even more greatly when He blesses those whom He has forgiven much. As Jesus said, it is those who have been forgiven much that love much (Luke 7:47). Perhaps we do not love the Lord as much as we could because we do not appreciate how much He has forgiven us” (Constable’s Notes).

## WHEN YOU ARE PUT IN CHARGE

You may not be the president of the company or even the supervisor, but most of us have been put in charge of the people. Parents are put in charge of children. In some capacity, many people are in charge of other people and, if nothing else, all of us are in charge of our jobs and ourselves. What should you keep in mind when you are first put in charge of something? Solomon was put in charge of the kingdom and the first things that he was told to do and did things we should think about doing when we are put in charge. What were those things?

### Solomon's Charge

*Be Strong* “Now the days of David drew near that he should die, and he charged Solomon his son, saying, ‘I go the way of all the earth; be strong, therefore, and prove yourself a man’” (2:1-2). “He should show himself to be a man by being brave to stand for the right and against the wrong” (Constable, BKC).

*Be Obedient* “And keep the charge of the LORD your God: to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His judgments, and His testimonies, as it is written in the Law of Moses, that you may prosper in all that you do and wherever you turn” (2:3). “The ‘statutes’ have been explained to be the positive ordinances of the Law; the ‘commandments’ the moral precepts, not to steal, etc.; the ‘judgments’ the laws belonging to civil government; and the ‘testimonies’ the laws directing the commemoration of certain events. Compare Ps. 19:7-8” (Barnes). “These words appear to refer to the three portions of the divine law, the ceremonial, the moral, and the judicial ordinances revealed by God in the Mosaic code; while testimonies may be interpreted of those evidences of God’s will towards man which are made clear by His dealings with bygone generations. Thus, God in His word bears witness to Himself” (Lumby).

“that the LORD may fulfill His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, ‘If your sons take heed to their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,’ He said, ‘you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel’” (2:4). “Solomon’s faithful obedience would also ensure an unbroken line of rulers (implied in 2 Sam. 7:12-16)” (Constable’s Notes).

*Be Wise* “Moreover, you know also what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, *and* what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed. And he shed the blood of war in peacetime, and put the blood of war on his belt that *was* around his waist, and on his sandals that *were* on his feet” (2:5). “Joab was guilty of murdering two generals in times of peace (2 Sam. 3:27; 20:10)” (Ryrie). “David described the blood of these two innocent victims as permanently staining Joab’s belt and sandals; the blood clung to him to demonstrate his guilt” (Constable, BKC).

“Therefore do according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to the grave in peace” (2:6). “Probably David had not executed Joab himself because of Joab’s loyalty and service to him, but now he must be punished” (Ryrie). “Solomon should execute Joab for his murders (2 Sam. 3:22-30; 20:8-10)” (Constable’s Notes). “David’s instruction to put Joab to death did not manifest a vindictive spirit or a cowardly refusal to execute his commander himself. In mercy, David had not executed the punishment that Joab’s actions deserved, probably because Joab had shown David much loyalty and had served him well. But justice had to be done

and Solomon had to do it. Joab had been living on borrowed time; soon, he had to pay for his crimes” (Constable, BKC).

*Be Kind* “But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table, for so they came to me when I fled from Absalom your brother” (2:7). “Without their kindness, David might have starved to death (2 Sam. 17:27-29)” (Ryrie). “The phrase, ‘to eat at the king’s table,’ [which Barzillai’s sons enjoyed] meant ‘to be pensioned’; cf. 2 Sam. 97, 1929, below 18:19 (of the prophets at Jezebel’s table), Neh. 5:17” (Montgomery, cited in Constable’s Notes). “David charged Solomon to sustain Barzillai’s sons at his table as Barzillai and his sons had provided sustenance for David in the wilderness. David wanted Barzillai’s sons to reap what their father had sown” (Constable, BKC).

“And see, *you have* with you Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite from Bahurim, who cursed me with a malicious curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim. But he came down to meet me at the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, ‘I will not put you to death with the sword’” (2:8). David also wanted Solomon to be kind to Shimei. “Cursing a ruler was a capital crime (Exodus 22:28)” (Ryrie).

“Now therefore, do not hold him guiltless, for you *are* a wise man and know what you ought to do to him; but bring his gray hair down to the grave with blood” (2:9). “Evidently, David had reason to believe Shimei the Benjamite would threaten the throne again (cf. 2 Sam. 16:11). If he did, Solomon was to execute him (cf. vv. 36-46). Cursing the king, which Shimei had done, violated the Mosaic Law (Exod. 22:28). We see here (vv. 1-9) another instance of the theme that punishment comes on those who resist the Lord’s anointed and blessing follows those who serve him” (Constable’s Notes). “Later the Benjamite proved faithless and, like Adonijah, sealed his own doom (1 Kings 2:36-46)” (Constable, BKC).

“David’s words here recall Moses’ final words to the Israelites (Deut. 31:6), as well as the Lord’s instructions to Joshua (Josh. 1:1-9; cf. 1 Sam. 4:9). They state succinctly the philosophy of history the writer of Kings set forth in this book. It is the philosophy David had learned and now commended to his son Solomon. Careful obedience to the Law of Moses would yield success in all areas of his son’s life (v. 2). That obedience would constitute his manhood (v. 1). Since God made man in the image of God, man can realize his manhood only by placing himself under God’s authority” (Constable’s Notes).

“In a scene that could have come straight from *The Godfather*, his [Solomon’s] father, on his deathbed, transfers the authority of kingship to him with instructions to kill the rivals that could challenge Solomon’s rule. The aged patriarch whispers their names with his last breath” (Glickman, cited in Constable’s Notes). “David was wrong in passing on responsibility to Solomon to execute the judgment he himself should have ordered at the time. This was to cause his son and successors much trouble and feuding” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes).

To sum up verses 1-9: “Just before his death, David delivered a solemn charge to Solomon, urging him to be obedient to the LORD and instructing him to take appropriate action concerning certain men: Joab should be slain for murdering Abner and Amasa; the sons of Barzillai should be shown kindness because of their father’s kindness to David when he was fleeing from Absalom; Shimei should be slain eventually because he cursed David, but Solomon could work out the details” (MacDonald).

## Solomon's Chance (1 Chron. 29:22b-30)

*David's Death* "So David rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David" (2:10). When David died, he was buried in the city of David, that is, the city of Jerusalem.

*David's Duration* "The period that David reigned over Israel was forty years; seven years he reigned in Hebron, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years" (2:11). "David and Saul each reigned for 40 years (cf. Acts 13:21). Some scholars take "40 years" as a round number that equals one generation. Others, correctly, I think, take the number literally. The differences in David and Saul's personal lives and administrations were not due to differences in the time they ruled. The course of their careers sprang from God's response to them that their response to Yahweh's will determined. David experienced God's blessing as a warrior, poet, musician, military commander, administrator, and man of God. His most significant characteristic, I believe, was his heart for God. David was 70 years old when he died (2 Sam. 5:4). Saul may have been 80 when he died. However, the deaths of these two kings, as well as their lives, contrast dramatically. David died in peace, Saul in battle. David died in victory, Saul in defeat. When David began to reign, the Philistines dominated Israel. When Solomon began to reign, Israel was at peace and in control of her neighbors (v. 12)" (Constable's Notes).

*David's Descendent* "Then Solomon sat on the throne of his father David; and his kingdom was firmly established" (2:12). With his father now dead, Solomon was in charge. Now, it is his chance to obey everything the Lord and his father told him to do.

## Solomon's Changes

*Adonijah* "Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. So she said, 'Do you come peaceably?' And he said, 'Peaceably'" (2:13). Bathsheba was concerned. So she inquired if he was coming peaceably. He assured her he was, but as the passage will reveal, he was not. He "had not abandoned his hope of becoming king. (cf. 1 Kings 1:5)" (Constable, BKC).

"Moreover he said, 'I have something to say to you.' And she said, 'Say it'" (2:14). "He persuaded Bathsheba to listen to what he had to say" (Constable, BKC).

"Then he said, 'You know that the kingdom was mine, and all Israel had set their expectations on me, that I should reign. However, the kingdom has been turned over, and has become my brother's; for it was his from the LORD. Now I ask one petition of you; do not deny me.' And she said to him, 'Say it'" (2:15-16). Adonijah says the kingdom was his and that "all Israel" expected him to be king. Those two things were more like wishful thinking than reality, but he does acknowledge that Solomon was the Lord's choice. "The throne had never been his" and "There is no evidence that Adonijah was ever sincerely interested in what the Lord wanted. But there is much evidence that he was interested in what Adonijah wanted!" (Constable, BKC). Be all that as it may, he says, he asked a favor and Bathsheba asked him what it was.

"Then he said, 'Please speak to King Solomon, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as wife'" (2:17). "Although Abishag had been only David's nurse, in the eyes of the people she passed as his concubine; and among the Israelites, just as with the ancient Persians (Herod. iii. 68), taking possession of the harem of a deceased king was equivalent to an establishment of the claim to the throne" (Keil).

"So Bathsheba said, 'Very well, I will speak for you to the king'" (2:18). "His pious profession along with his apparent acquiescence to Solomon's anointing, persuaded Bathsheba

that Adonijah had no lingering aspirations to become king. So, she gave him permission to proceed with his proposal. Bathsheba apparently interpreted Adonijah's request for Abishag (cf. 1 Kings 1:3-4) as simply the desire of a handsome young man for the hand of a beautiful young woman. Bathsheba's excitement for this seemingly innocent love affair moved her to agree to present his request to the king. She probably relished the thought of having a part as a matchmaker" (Constable, BKC).

"Bathsheba, therefore, went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her and bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne and had a throne set for the king's mother; so she sat at his right hand. Then she said, 'I desire one small petition of you; do not refuse me.' And the king said to her, 'Ask it, my mother, for I will not refuse you.' So she said, 'Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as wife'" (2:19-21). "Solomon respectfully greeted his mother by standing up to meet her and bowing to her when she entered the throne room. He gave her the seat of honor at his right hand so she could converse comfortably with him. She had only one small request; at least, she perceived it as small. Assuming it was a small request, Solomon agreed to grant it" (Constable, BKC).

"And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, 'Now why do you ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him the kingdom also—for he *is* my older brother—for him, and for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah'" (2:22). "Solomon, in his wisdom, realized that the people would regard Abishag as a concubine and therefore would interpret Adonijah's marriage to her as a claim to the throne" (Constable, BKC).

"Then King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, 'May God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah has not spoken this word against his own life!'" (2:23). "Solomon correctly regarded Adonijah's request as an act of treason worthy of death" (Constable's Notes).

"Now therefore, *as* the LORD lives, who has confirmed me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has established a house for me, as He promised, Adonijah shall be put to death today!" (2:24). "Verse 24 makes it very clear that Solomon, like David, had a proper view of his role under God as Israel's king. Adonijah's rebellion was not just against Solomon personally but against the Lord and His anointed whom He had placed on the throne" (Constable's Notes). "According to the oriental custom of both ancient and modern times. The king was perfectly just in doing this" (Keil).

"So King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he struck him down, and he died" (2:25). "Solomon saw through Adonijah's request to marry Abishag (part of David's harem and thus an inheritor, 1 Kings 1:3-4) as a scheme to gain the throne and so ordered him put to death" (Ryrie). "Solomon looked upon this as being the next thing to asking for the kingdom itself, so he ordered Benaiah to execute Adonijah" (MacDonald). In this case, Solomon demonstrated justice and wisdom.

*Abiathar* "And to Abiathar the priest the king said, 'Go to Anathoth, to your own fields, for you *are* deserving of death; but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before my father David, and because you were afflicted every time my father was afflicted'" (2:26). "Abiathar, a priest of the line of Eli, was banished to his hometown Anathoth (Joshua 21:18; Jer. 1:1) for his part in Adonijah's attempt to gain the throne. He was spared execution because he remained faithful to David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15:24 ff.)" (Ryrie).

"So Solomon removed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, that he might fulfill the word of the LORD which He spoke concerning the house of Eli at Shiloh" (2:27). "Solomon granted Abiathar a parole for participating in Adonijah's rebellion. By removing him from his



office, he cut off Eli's last descendant, thereby fulfilling God's prophecy to Eli (1 Sam. 2:27-36). Eli's fertility ended because he had not obeyed God's Law faithfully. The writer of Kings drew special attention to God bringing this to pass (v. 27)" (Constable's Notes). "In this brief statement, one of the 1 and 2 Kings' author's purposes can be seen clearly: to demonstrate the faithfulness of God to His Word" (Constable, BKC). In this case, Solomon demonstrated mercy, justice and wisdom.

*Joab* "Then news came to Joab, for Joab had defected to Adonijah, though he had not defected to Absalom. So Joab fled to the tabernacle of the LORD, and took hold of the horns of the altar" (2:28). "Perhaps because Solomon had shown Adonijah mercy when he fled to the altar (1:50-52), Joab sought refuge from Solomon there too" (Constable's Notes).

"And King Solomon was told, 'Joab has fled to the tabernacle of the LORD; there *he is*, by the altar.' Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, 'Go, strike him down'" (2:29). "For participating in Adonijah's rebellion. Joab, however, was a murderer as well as a rebel. Consequently, Solomon had him executed in obedience to the Mosaic Law (Exod. 21:14). Manslayers, but not murderers, found sanctuary at the altar" (Constable's Notes).

"So Benaiah went to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said to him, 'Thus says the king, 'Come out!' And he said, 'No, but I will die here.' And Benaiah brought back word to the king, saying, 'Thus said Joab, and thus he answered me'" (2:30). "Solomon probably did not want to defile the tabernacle by shedding human blood there, so he told Benaiah to order Joab to come out" (Constable, BKC).

"Then the king said to him, 'Do as he has said, and strike him down and bury him, that you may take away from me and from the house of my father the innocent blood which Joab shed. So the LORD will return his blood on his head, because he struck down two men more righteous and better than he, and killed them with the sword—Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah—though my father David did not know *it*. "Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab and upon the head of his descendants forever. But upon David and his descendants, upon his house and his throne, there shall be peace forever from the LORD" (2:31-33). "As long as Joab remained alive, David's house (dynasty) bore some responsibility for Joab's action" (Constable, BKC). So, Solomon explained that the Lord was requiring Joab's blood. "By executing Joab, Solomon cleared the way for God to bless him and his throne. God would punish Joab's house but bless David's house" (Constable's Notes).

"So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and struck and killed him; and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness" (2:34). "Solomon honored Joab for his service to David by burying him in his own land in Judah (cf. 2 Sam. 2:32)" (Constable's Notes). "The altar of God gave no protection to anyone who broke the law of God" (MacDonald). Again, in this case, Solomon did what was just and wise and, at the same time, showed mercy.

"The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and the king put Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar" (2:35). "Benaiah was appointed commander of the army, and Zadok succeeded Abiathar as priest. Benaiah had served David since the days of Saul. He was a man of great valor and the captain of David's personal bodyguard (2 Sam. 20:23). His unflinching courage was surpassed only by his undying loyalty to the house of David. Courage and loyalty should also characterize those who serve David's greater Son, the Lord Jesus Christ" (MacDonald).

*Shimei* "Then the king sent and called for Shimei, and said to him, 'Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and dwell there, and do not go out from there anywhere" (2:36). "David had warned

Solomon to keep Shimei under close observation and to put him to death (vv. 8-9). Evidently, David realized, because of Shimei's past actions, that it would only be a matter of time before he would do something worthy of death, probably rebel against Solomon's authority. Solomon, therefore, made Jerusalem Shimei's prison. Jerusalem was only 'a small acropolis city, whose circumference has been estimated at some 4500 feet' (Montgomery)" (Constable's Notes). "Solomon did not order Shimei's execution immediately. Rather, he put him under a sort of house arrest, forbidding him to leave the city" (MacDonald).

"For it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the Brook Kidron, know for certain you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head. And Shimei said to the king, 'The saying *is* good. As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do.' So Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days" (2:37-38). "If Shimei crossed the Kidron, he would probably head home to stir up insurrection among the Benjamites" (Constable, BKC). So, Solomon told Shimei that if he crossed the Kidron Brook, he would die, which would be his own fault. "This restriction kept Shimei from returning to his home across the brook Kidron in the territory of Benjamin and kept him under the king's surveillance" (Ryrie). Shimei wisely abided by that restriction for many days.

"Now it happened at the end of three years, that two slaves of Shimei ran away to Achish the son of Maachah, king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, 'Look, your slaves *are* in Gath! So Shimei arose, saddled his donkey, and went to Achish at Gath to seek his slaves. And Shimei went and brought his slaves from Gath" (2:39-40). "When Shimei left the city, he flagrantly rebelled against Solomon's authority. Leaving the city in itself was no great crime, but the fact that Solomon had specifically forbidden it made it very serious. Thus, Shimei's disregard for and disobedience to the will of the Lord's anointed resulted in his death" (Constable's Notes). "Shimei's decision to leave Jerusalem to pursue his slaves revealed his low view of Solomon's authority" (Constable, BKC). "Gath was about 30 mi SW of Jerusalem but not across the Kidron. Though Shimei may have gone in good faith, he violated the command not to leave Jerusalem" (Ryrie). "In so doing, he broke the oath that Solomon had made him swear earlier, and he demonstrated that he was no more faithful to Solomon than he had been to David" (MacDonald).

"And Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had come back. Then the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, 'Did I not make you swear by the LORD, and warn you, saying, 'Know for certain that on the day you go out and travel anywhere, you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word I have heard *is* good. Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the commandment that I gave you?' The king said moreover to Shimei, 'You know, as your heart acknowledges, all the wickedness that you did to my father David; therefore, the LORD will return your wickedness on your own head. But King Solomon *shall be* blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever'" (2:41-45). "Solomon ... recognized that Shimei's attitude had not changed. Because Shimei had violated the terms of his sentence, Solomon had every right to execute the punishment he had graciously postponed" (Constable, BKC). In contrast to Shimei, Solomon would be blessed and the throne of David would be established before the Lord forever.

"So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he went out and struck him down, and he died. Thus the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon?" (2:46). "To lay a firm foundation for his reign Solomon, had to deal with his and his father's enemies" (Constable, BKC). "Thus Solomon made his kingdom secure by aggressively removing all whose hearts were not with him. Thereafter, his reign was one of peace. The Christian will know

the peace of God as he puts out of his life the things which oppose the reign of Christ within” (MacDonald).

“In all Solomon’s dealings with his political enemies—men who conspired against the will of God during David’s reign—the young king’s mercy and wisdom stand out. Because of his wise handling of these threats to the throne, the kingdom was then firmly established in Solomon’s hands” (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** On his deathbed, David told Solomon to be strong, obedient, wise, and kind, which Solomon began to do by removing those who disobeyed the Lord.

“The wisdom for which Solomon became famous can be seen clearly in this section of Scripture. Solomon’s wise decisions at the beginning of his reign resulted in 40 years (971-931) of peace and prosperity for Israel” (Constable, BKC). “The writer noted that Solomon’s sole reign began well. The things most responsible were God’s gift of wisdom to Solomon (the central section), his political decisions (the first section), and his administrative ability (the third section).... Solomon wrote that the fear of Yahweh is the beginning of knowledge (Prov. 1:7; cf. Eccles. 12:13; Ps. 111:10). At the very beginning of his reign, he gave evidence of being wise by the way he dealt with his political enemies. His wise decisions at this time resulted in peace and prosperity for Israel for the next 40 years (971–931 B.C.)” (Constable’s Notes).

“All of Solomon’s dealings with these enemies, who had conspired against the Lord’s anointed and violated the Mosaic Law, show that the new king had a firm commitment to keeping that Law. Moreover, Solomon was also merciful and wise, traits of God Himself, who blessed Solomon with these characteristics as His son because of Solomon’s commitment to Him. This section also vividly portrays the fate of people who oppose God: disenfranchisement (in the case of Abiathar) and death (in the cases of Adonijah, Joab, and Shimei)” (Constable’s Notes).



## IF YOU COULD ASK FOR ANYTHING ...

When you were growing up, you were probably asked at some point what you wanted for Christmas. The answer probably changed as you grew older. Suppose you were asked today what you want, not for Christmas or your birthday, just what's the one thing you want in life?

I suspect many would answer that by saying they would like to have a large sum of money. Maybe that's why so many people play the lottery. As we all know, being a billionaire is not the be-all and end-all. There are deeper needs that money cannot meet. One of those deeper needs people have is they want somebody to listen to and understand them. I think the deepest need that people have is for somebody to love them unconditionally.

Now let me ask, "If someone who had the power to give you anything you wanted ask you what you wanted, what would you tell them? Wealth? A listening ear? Unconditional love? Or something else? Suppose the someone asking you was none other than God Himself? Your reaction to that will probably be that that will never happen. Well, it has happened. There is a case in the Bible where God asked somebody what he wanted. The answer is deeply significant. What was it?

### Solomon's Positions

*With Pharaoh* "Now Solomon made a treaty with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and married Pharaoh's daughter; then he brought her to the City of David until he had finished building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall all around Jerusalem" (3:1). "Under Solomon, the relationship between Egypt and Israel reached an apex with the marriage alliance between the two nations (1 Kgs 3:1)" (Hoffmeier, cited in Constable's Notes). "This illustrates both the relative importance of Israel and the low estate to which Egypt had sunk: Pharaohs of the Empire did not give their daughters even to kings of Babylon or Mitanni!" (Bright, cited in Constable's Notes). "At this time, Israel was stronger than Egypt" (Constable's Notes). "That this is the case is clear from his [Pharaoh Siamun's, 978–959 B.C.] willingness to provide his own daughter as a wife for Solomon, a concession almost without parallel in Egyptian history since it was a candid admission to the world of Egypt's weakness and conciliation. Normally, Egyptian kings took foreign princesses but did not give up their own daughters to foreign kings" (Merrill, cited in Constable's Notes).

*With a Wife* "By marrying Pharaoh's daughter, Solomon and the Pharaoh (Siamon) were free to pursue peaceful goals for their countries. As a dowry (1 Kings 9:16), Pharaoh gave the city of Gezer, a strategic crossroad on trade routes (18 mi. NW of Jerusalem)" (Ryrie). "Solomon housed his bride in the City of David until he completed a special palace for her nearby (7:8)" (Constable's Notes).

"Should Solomon have married 'Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,' as well as Pharaoh's daughter? In view of ... Deuteronomy 17:17, there is no way we can say yes. Why, then, did the writer not point out this sin here? He may not have done so because his purpose in this part of his history was to show the greatness of Solomon. In chapter 11, he emphasized Solomon's failures. Here, it is the fact that he could marry such a person as an Egyptian princess that shows the social and political height to which God had elevated him. A descendant of former Egyptian slaves now became Pharaoh's son-in-law!" (Constable's Notes).

“The marriage, although politically expedient, was spiritually disastrous as well as forbidden by the law. From this point onward, Solomon’s harem grew until it contained hundreds of foreign women. Solomon thus linked himself with many foreign powers but alienated himself from the Lord (11:1-8)” (MacDonald).

*With the Lord* “Meanwhile the people sacrificed at the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days” (3:2). “The use of high places to worship the Lord before the Temple was built in Jerusalem was not the abomination it later became” (Ryrie). High places “were on hilltops and other elevations. The pagan Canaanites felt that the closer they got to heaven, the more likely was the possibility that their prayers and offerings would reach their gods. Offering sacrifices at places other than the tabernacle was prohibited in the Law (Lev. 17:3-4)” (Constable, BKC).

“High places were here used for the worship of the LORD. This was not strictly in accordance with the law; God was supposed to be worshiped only in the place which He designated. But it is here excused on the ground that there was no official house since Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines about 1050 B.C. when the ark was carried away (1 Sam. 4). After the temple was built, high places continued to be used, but for idolatrous worship. Although the ark was in Jerusalem at this time, the tabernacle was in Gibeon (1 Chron. 21:29), about six miles away” (MacDonald).

“A tabernacle, evidently the Mosaic tabernacle, and the Mosaic tabernacle’s bronze altar still stood at Gibeon (lit. little hill; 1 Chron. 16:39-40; 21:28-29; 2 Chron. 1:3, 5-6). Gibeon was one of the so-called high places where the people offered sacrifices to Yahweh. Burnt offerings symbolized the dedication of the worshipper’s person to God (Lev. 1). By offering 1,000 of these sacrifices, Solomon was expressing his personal allegiance to Yahweh (cf. Rom. 12:1-2)” (Constable’s Notes).

“The Israelites were offering sacrifices to Yahweh on the ‘high places’ that the Ras Shamra tablets describe as open-air sanctuaries throughout the land. The Ras Shamra tables are important inscriptions that archaeologists discovered at the Canaanite site of Ugarit, just east of Cyprus on the Mediterranean coast. They contain much helpful information about Canaanite life and culture. These sacrificial sites were normally on hilltops. The Israelites evidently took them over from the Canaanites and converted them into centers of Yahweh worship. Before the giving of the Mosaic Law, worship on high places was not evil (cf. Gen. 12:7-8; 22:2-4; 31:54). However, the Law forbade offering sacrifices at places other than those God approved, and especially at sites of Canaanite altars, after Israel built the temple in Jerusalem (Deut. 12:1-21; 2 Chron. 7:12). Evidently at this time the people justified their disobedience on the ground that they did not have a permanent palace where Yahweh could dwell (i.e., a temple). Another possibility is that they did not consider worship at high places wrong until the king reunited the ark and a tabernacle in a central sanctuary (i.e., the temple; cf. 1 Sam. 9:11-25)” (Constable’s Notes).

“And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except that he sacrificed and burned incense at the high places” (3:3). At this point in his life, Solomon followed in his father’s footsteps. He loved the Lord and he obeyed the statutes of the Lord that his father David had done, except he sacrificed and burned incense at high places. The fact that Solomon sacrificed and burned incense in high places does not mean that he was practicing idolatry.

“Offering sacrifices at places other than the tabernacle was prohibited in the Law (Lev. 17:3-4).... The pagan Canaanites felt that the closer they got to heaven, the more likely was the possibility that their prayers and offerings would reach their gods.... During the period of the

Judges, the Israelites adopted the Canaanite custom of offering sacrifices at ... high places” (Constable, BKC). David did not do that, but Solomon did not follow his father’s practice (Gill). One commentator says, “*In general*, Solomon was careful to follow in David’s godly footsteps, thus demonstrating his love for Yahweh” (Constable, BKC, italics added). “High places were here used for the worship of the LORD.... It is here excused on the ground that there was no official house since Shiloh had been destroyed by the Philistines about 1050 B.C. when the ark was carried away (1 Sam. 4)” (MacDonald).

The high places “had been used by the patriarchs and had become so universal among the heathen.... They were prohibited in the law (Lev. 17:3, Lev. 17:4; Deut. 12:13, Deut. 12:14; Jer. 7:31; Ezek. 6:3, Ezek. 6:4; Hos. 10:8). But, so long as the tabernacle was migratory and the means for the national worship were merely provisional, the worship on those high places was tolerated” (Jamieson).

## Solomon’s Petition

*The Revelation* “Now the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place: Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar” (3:4). “Gibeon was about six mi. NW of Jerusalem” (Ryrie).

“At Gibeon, the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, ‘Ask! What shall I give you?’” (3:5). “There seems to be a cause-and-effect relationship between Solomon’s loving generosity in making his offering to the Lord and God’s loving generosity in making him this offer” (Constable, BKC). “God’s revelation to him was in response to his offerings. God’s offer constituted a test for Solomon. Would he request something for his own glory or for God’s glory?” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Request* “And Solomon said: ‘You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day’” (3:6). “Solomon recognized that God’s kindness to David was due to his father’s faithfulness to God which manifested itself in righteous actions and upright attitudes of heart” (Constable, BKC).

“Now, O LORD my God, You have made Your servant king instead of my father David, but I *am* a little child; I do not know *how* to go out or come in” (3:7). “The Hebrew word translated ‘little child’ means “young, small, insignificant, unimportant” (BDB; Constable’s Notes: “immature person”). “‘To go out and to come in’ refers to life beyond the doors of one’s household and the city gate in the discharge of one’s duties (Deut. 31:2; 1 Sam. 18:16)” (Rice, cited in Constable’s Notes). When Solomon called himself a child, he was not saying he was a child “in age (he was about 20; 1 Chron. 29:1) but in experience” (Ryrie). “In calling himself a child, he was admitting his inexperience (cf. 1 Chron. 22:5; 29:1). Solomon was concerned that he would be able to function effectively as the vice-regent of Yahweh. His responsibility as the leader and judge of God’s people weighed heavily on him” (Constable, BKC).

“And Your servant *is* in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a great people, too numerous to be numbered or counted” (3:8). “He acknowledged his dependence on God by referring to himself as God’s servant” (Constable, BKC).

“Therefore give to Your servant an understanding heart to judge Your people, that I may discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?” (3:9). The Hebrew word translated “understanding” means “to hear, listen to, obey” and the one rendered

“discerning” means “to discern, understand, perceive.” “He requested a discerning heart (lit., ‘a hearing heart’) tuned to the voice of God so he could lead Israel as God would want the nation to be led” (Constable, BKC). “The heart (*leb*) in Israelite thought is the center of the psychic self. It includes especially mental activity but is broader in scope than English ‘mind,’ embracing the feelings and will. The heart is susceptible to become hardened, to be made fat (Isa. 6:10), and to dwell on evil (Gen. 6:5; 8:21); indeed, it is ‘deceitful above all things’ (Jer. 17:9). It is over against these capabilities of the heart that Solomon’s request is to be understood. A ‘hearing heart’ [v. 9] is one that is open, teachable (Isa. 50:4). That to which the heart of the king should be open above all else is God’s *torah*. The king ideally rules not on the basis of his own understanding but administers his realm in the light of God’s revealed will” (Rice, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*The Response* “The speech pleased the LORD, that Solomon had asked this thing. “Then God said to him: ‘Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked long life for yourself, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have asked the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself understanding to discern justice, behold, I have done according to your words; see, I have given you a wise and understanding heart, so that there has not been anyone like you before you, nor shall any like you arise after you” (3:10-12). “Solomon placed the good of God’s people above his personal peace or prosperity and above any desire to become a powerful and popular king. His values were in the right place from God’s perspective” (Constable, BKC).

“And I have also given you what you have not asked: both riches and honor, so that there shall not be anyone like you among the kings all your days. So if you walk in My ways, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as your father David walked, then I will lengthen your days” (3:13-14). The Lord “gave him much more than he asked (v. 13). Furthermore, He promised to give Solomon long life if he continued to obey His Law (v. 14)” (Constable’s Notes). “Since Solomon sought what was most important, God also promised to give him what was of secondary importance, riches and honor, to further enable him to govern God’s people effectively. Solomon was to be the richest and most honored king of his day” (Constable, BKC).

*The Reaction* “Then Solomon awoke; and indeed it had been a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, offered up burnt offerings, offered peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants” (3:15). “As is often the case, a blessing from God drew the person blessed into a closer relationship with Himself. Inspired by this revelation, Solomon turned from the high place and proceeded to the divinely appointed place of worship, the tabernacle. He did not enter the most holy place; only the high priest could enter there once a year (Lev\_16:1-34). But the king stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant, outside the tabernacle facing toward the ark. Burnt offerings expressed the complete dedication of oneself to God and fellowship offerings symbolized the fellowship people can enjoy with God and with others through God’s grace. Solomon’s feast expressed his joy and gratitude to the members of his court” (Constable, BKC). “Solomon’s expression of gratitude included more offerings.... They probably accompanied a covenant renewal ceremony that involved the commitment of his servants (i.e., government officials) to the Mosaic Law (v. 15)” (Constable’s Notes).

## God’s Provision

*The Dilemma* “Now two women *who were* harlots came to the king, and stood before him” (3:16). “The fact that the two mothers were prostitutes is important in this story because it shows

how the wise king would act on behalf of the very lowest of his subjects” (DeVries, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“And one woman said, ‘O my lord, this woman and I dwell in the same house; and I gave birth while she *was* in the house. Then it happened, the third day after I had given birth, that this woman also gave birth. And we *were* together; no one *was* with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. And this woman’s son died in the night, because she lay on him. So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from my side, while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, there he was, dead. But when I had examined him in the morning, indeed, he was not my son whom I had borne. Then the other woman said, ‘No! But the living one *is* my son, and the dead one *is* your son.’ And the first woman said, ‘No! But the dead one *is* your son, and the living one *is* my son.’ Thus they spoke before the king” (3:17-22). If that happened today, the solution would be simple. The one making the decision would order a DNA test. Solomon didn’t have that possibility.

*The Decision* “And the king said, ‘The one says, ‘This *is* my son, who lives, and your son *is* the dead one’; and the other says, ‘No! But your son *is* the dead one, and my son *is* the living one’” (3:23). Solomon began his response by summarizing the situation. Each woman claimed that the living son was her son and the dead son belonged to the other woman. This was the dilemma presented to him and he had to decide. Repeating what had been told him is an excellent technique, especially in counseling. It confirms to the other speaker that you understand what you have been told.

“Then the king said, ‘Bring me a sword.’ So they brought a sword before the king. And the king said, ‘Divide the living child in two, and give half to one, and half to the other’” (3:24-25). “According to Josephus, the order of the king was that both the living and the dead child should be divided and half of either be given to each mother. But this was not in Solomon’s thought. He was not wishing to make a fair division of the two children, but, by threatening the living one, to bring to light the maternal feeling and so to find out to which of them it really belonged” (Lumby).

“Then the woman whose son *was* living spoke to the king, for she yearned with compassion for her son; and she said, ‘O my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him!’ But the other said, ‘Let him be neither mine nor yours, *but* divide *him*’” (3:26). “Yearning with compassion, the biological mother immediately said give the child to the other woman in the other woman was willing to have the child kill! The Hebrew word translated “yearning” means “to yearn, be kindled, become hot, become emotionally agitated.” “We speak of the heart *burning* within any one” (Lumby, italics his). “Her love as a mother made her give up her own child rather than see it die” (*NKJV Study Bible*).

“So the king answered and said, ‘Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him; she *is* his mother’” (3:27). “Solomon demonstrated insight into basic human nature, here maternal instincts. This insight enabled him to understand why people behave as they do and how they will respond. This was a gift from God and is an aspect of wisdom” (Constable’s Notes).

“And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had rendered; and they feared the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God *was* in him to administer justice” (3:28). “This incident resulted in the Israelites having great respect for their king” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** When God asked Solomon what he wanted, Solomon said he wanted an understanding heart, discernment, and wisdom to govern with justice.

Ask for wisdom. Solomon chose to ask the Lord for wisdom above and beyond personal happiness, possessions, or popularity. What would it be if you could ask the Lord for one thing?

Ask for wisdom. All believers are told to ask for wisdom when they are going through a trial (Jas. 1:5). I know a man who, as a young man, asked the Lord for wisdom. That man is my brother. The Lord answered that prayer. He has unusual insights into people.

Ask for the ability to serve. As a young man, I asked the Lord to use me to have an impact on people spiritually. One of the verses that influenced me greatly records what Jesus said to the Sadducees, “You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God” (Mt. 22:29). Ask the Lord for something such as insight into the Scripture and insight into people so you can have an impact on people.



## THE ESSENCE OF WISDOM

What would you say is the essence of wisdom? Most people would agree that wisdom is more than IQ, knowledge, or understanding of something, such as the laws of physics. An English dictionary defines the English word as “the quality or state of being wise (now that’s helpful, isn’t it?), knowledge of what is true or right coupled with just judgments as to action, discernment, or insight.” It also lists one of the meanings of wisdom as “scholarly knowledge or learning,” but virtually everybody concedes that there is a huge difference between wisdom and knowledge and even insight. A brilliant scholar can have great knowledge and insight in his field and, at the same time, can be an unwise person.

So, what is wisdom? The Hebrew word translated “wisdom” means “skill, prudence, shrewdness.” For one thing, wisdom is skill in living. There is more. There is skill in dealing with people. There is more. What other kinds of wisdom are there? Solomon is an illustration.

“The writer constructed the Solomon narrative (chs. 3-11), like so many others in the Old Testament, to draw attention to the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of prophecies made earlier. The prophecy lies in 3:3-14, and we can trace the fulfillment through chapter 11” (Constable’s Notes).

### Solomon’s Officials

*Officials* “So King Solomon was king over all Israel. And these *were* his officials” (4:1-2a). Solomon’s kingdom was organized with officials, a Hebrew word which means “ruler, leader, chief, official.” “These verses [1-6] list Solomon’s high officials, or cabinet” (MacDonald). Constable calls these “chief officials.”

*The High Priest* “Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest” (4:2b). Ryrie points out that Azariah was actually the grandson of Zadok (1 Chron. 6:8-9), a not uncommon meaning for the word son.” “‘Son’ often means descendant” (Constable, BKC). “Zadok was probably elderly at this time and gave many of his duties to his grandson.... The priest is a common designation for the high priest” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Scribes* “Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes” (4:3a). The scribes “prepared official documents and acted as the king’s secretaries” (Constable’s Notes). MacDonald calls them “secretaries of state.” “This was an important office; the scribes prepared royal edicts affecting trade, commerce, and military alliances and kept official records” (Constable, BKC).

*The Recorder* “Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder” (4:3b). They “maintained diaries of daily events in the kingdom” (Constable’s Notes). They “maintained the records of all important daily affairs in the kingdom. Jehoshaphat had also served in this capacity under David (2 Sam. 8:16; 2 Sam. 20:24)” (Constable, BKC).

*The General* “Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, over the army” (4:3c). Benaiah was the “commander of the army” (MacDonald), “commander in chief of the whole army” (Constable, BKC).

*The High Priests* “Zadok and Abiathar, the priests.” (4:4a). “Zadok and Abiathar had served as co-high priests under David (2 Sam. 15:35). But Abiathar had sided with Adonijah in the attempted coup so the priest was dismissed by Solomon (1 Kings 2:20-27). Zadok continued as

high priest (1 Kings 2:35). Abiathar is listed here as one of Solomon's officials because even though he was fired from being high priest he retained the title and honor after he was deposed. Perhaps Azariah (1 Kings 4:2) and Zadok (1 Kings 4:4) then served together as Abiathar and Zadok had done previously" (Constable, BKC).

"The name 'Abiathar' in verse 4 presents a difficulty if it is the same one Solomon dismissed in 1 Kings 2:27. Perhaps he was dismissed after this period. Or perhaps he still retained the title of priest though no longer exercising priestly functions. It may, however, have been another Abiathar (see 2 Sam. 8:15-18). Matthew Poole comments: 'Some say that here mention made of all Solomon's chief officers, both such as now were, and such as had been, and such as were afterward, as they gather from verses 11 and 15, where two persons are named who married two of Solomon's daughters, which could not be till many years after this time.'" (MacDonald). "Even though Solomon had dismissed Abiathar from his official duties, Abiathar retained his title and honor" (Constable's Notes).

*The Chief Administrator* "Azariah the son of Nathan, over the officers" (4:5a). Azariah was over the officers, a Hebrew word which means "to stand, stand upright, be set (over)." He was over the 12 district officers named in 4:8-19 (Constable, BKC).

*Administrators* "Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest and the king's friend" (4:5b). Nathan was a priest, a Hebrew word which means "priest, principal officer or chief ruler. He was also Solomon's friend. Constable suggests that he was "was probably the king's personal chaplain and adviser" (Constable's Notes).

"Ahishar, over the household" (4:6a). Ahishar was over the household, which means that he was over the servants in Solomon's house. He was "in charge of the palace" (MacDonald).

"and Adoniram the son of Abda, over the labor force" (4:6.). Adoniram was over the labor force, a Hebrew word that means "body of forced laborers, task-workers, serfdom, tributary, tribute." Constable says that they "were non-Israelites whom the king conscripted to work for the government (cf. 5:13-14; 9:15; 2 Chron. 2:2; 8:8)" (Constable's Notes).

## Solomon's Governors

"And Solomon had twelve governors over all Israel, who provided food for the king and his household; each one made provision for one month of the year. These *are* their names: Ben-Hur, in the mountains of Ephraim; Ben-Deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh, and Elon Beth Hanan; Ben-Hesed, in Arubboth; to him *belonged* Sochoh and all the land of Hepher; Ben-Abinadab, *in* all the regions of Dor; he had Taphath the daughter of Solomon as wife; Baana the son of Ahilud, *in* Taanach, Megiddo, and all Beth Shean, which *is* beside Zaretan below Jezreel, from Beth Shean to Abel Meholah, as far as the other side of Jokneam; Ben-Geber, in Ramoth Gilead; to him *belonged* the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, in Gilead; to him *also belonged* the region of Argob in Bashan—sixty large cities with walls and bronze gate-bars; Ahinadab the son of Iddo, *in* Mahanaim; Ahimaaz, in Naphtali; he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as wife; Baanah the son of Hushai, in Asher and Aloth; Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin; Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, *in* the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan. *He was* the only governor who *was* in the land" (4:7-19). Solomon's organization consisted of twelve governors, each providing food for Solomon and his household one month a year. "Each officer, in rotation, was responsible for seeing that the king's household was supplied for one month" (Ryrie). "Interestingly, two of the governors were sons-in-law of Solomon (1 Kings 4:11, 4:15). All 12 of



them are mentioned only here in the Bible except for Ahimaaz, who possibly was a son of Zadok the priest (cf. 2 Sam. 15:27)” (Constable, BKC).

“These men were responsible for providing for the needs of Solomon’s large household, including his courtiers, and for his thousands of horses (v. 28). Two were Solomon’s sons-in-law (vv. 11, 15). The district arrangement seems designed to move Israel away from tribal independence to cooperation under the new centralized government. Though the district boundaries approximated the tribal boundaries, they were not the same. ‘This was a radical and decisive step, and not only because it imposed upon the people an unprecedented burden. It meant that the old tribal system, already increasingly of vestigial significance, had been, as far as its political functioning was concerned, virtually abolished. In place of twelve tribes caring in turn for the central shrine were twelve districts taxed for the support of Solomon’s court!’ (Bright). The writer did not include Judah and Jerusalem in this list of areas that Solomon taxed. This gave Judah a great advantage economically. Perhaps Solomon favored Judah because it was his tribe. This favoritism may have been a factor in the revolt of the northern tribes later (12:4)” (Constable’s Notes).

## Solomon’s Prosperity (2 Chron. 1:14-17)

*The People* “Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing” (4:20). “One explanation of the writer’s unusual reference to Judah and Israel (v. 20) is that when he wrote Kings, the nation had split, so perhaps the writer was using the designation that was common in his day. However, years before the formal division took place, northern and southern factions had already developed (cf. 1 Sam. 11:8; 15:4; 17:52; 1 Kings 1:35; et al.)” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Land* “So Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. They brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life” (4:21). The territory over which Solomon reigned included all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River, to the land of the Philistines, and as far south as the border of Egypt. During Solomon’s lifetime, all of the people within these boundaries brought tributes to him. “Usually, when a great king died, the nations subject to his leadership would withhold taxes and rebel against his successor. This forced the new king to attack those nations to establish his sovereignty over them. However, Solomon did not have to do this. God gave him a peaceful reign in which he could concentrate on building projects” (Constable’s Notes).

“Solomon reigned over almost all the territory promised to Abraham. See note on Genesis 15:18-21 and observe that the river of Egypt there and *the* border of Egypt here are not the same. See note on 1 Kings 8:65, where the Wadi el-Arish of Egypt is indicated” (Ryrie). “Much of this territory consisted of kingdoms that paid tribute to Solomon but were not considered part of Israel. Therefore Solomon’s kingdom was not the complete fulfillment of the Palestinian covenant (Gen. 15:18-21)” (McDonald). Even though Solomon controlled the land area promised to Abraham’s descendants in Genesis 15:18-20, his control did not fulfill these promises completely in his day (cf. 2 Chron. 9:26)” (Constable’s Notes), “for not all this territory was incorporated into the geographic boundaries of Israel; many of the subjected kingdoms retained their identity and territory but paid taxes (tribute) to Solomon” (Constable, BKC).

“Solomon’s throne exercised four spheres of political influence. First, there was the homeland. This was the geographical area Joshua had assigned to the 12 tribes. In Solomon’s day, Israel occupied only this area. Second, there were adjacent provinces (i.e., Damascus,

Ammon, Moab, Edom, et al.). Solomon taxed these and conscripted them for military service. They enjoyed protection and the benefits of Israel's central government. Third, there were the vassal states (i.e., Zobah, Hamath, Arabia, possibly Philistia, et al.) that Israel controlled. These enjoyed some autonomy, such as native rulers and internal fiscal policies. They recognized Solomon's authority, however, they provided some tribute and pledged loyalty to him. Israel, in return, defended them from alien forces when necessary. Fourth, there were the allied states (i.e., Phoenicia, Egypt, et al.). These countries enjoyed equality with Israel. They defended each other as needed, traded with each other, and generally cooperated with one another. Clearly, Solomon's kingdom had a large bureaucracy" (Constable's Notes).

"Solomon's kingdom was very populous (cf. Gen. 22:17) and peaceful (v. 25; cf. Micah 4:4; Zech. 3:10)" (Constable's Notes).

## Solomon's Provisions

*The Food Supply* "Now Solomon's provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour, sixty kors of meal, ten fatted oxen, twenty oxen from the pastures, and one hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl" (4:22-23). A kors was 6.25 bushels or 58 gallons (Ryrie). To feed Solomon's household for just one day took 30 kors of fine flour (Constable, BKC: ca. 185 bushels), 60 kors of meal (Constable, BKC: ca. 375 bushels), 10 fatted oxen, 20 oxen, and 100 hundred sheep, besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fatted fowl." "These provisions were made possible by the great geographical extent of the kingdom" (Constable, BKC).

*The Territory* "For he had dominion over all *the region* on this side of the River from Tiphseh even to Gaza, namely over all the kings on this side of the River; and he had peace on every side all around him" (4:24). "Tiphseh was a large town on the W side of the Euphrates" (Ryrie). He ruled over all the kings from the Euphrates to Gaza and there was peace with the other nations around him.

*The Conditions* "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, each man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan as far as Beersheba, all the days of Solomon" (4:25). Throughout Solomon's reign the entire nation of Israel from Dan to Beersheba enjoyed a period of peace with each man under his own vine and fig tree, "a proverbial expression for idyllic conditions (Micah 4:4)" (Ryrie). "Israel's geographic extent was only about 150 miles long, from Dan to Beersheba" (Constable's Notes).

*The Horseman* "Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen" (4:26). "The horses and chariots, used for national defense, served as a strong deterrent to potential foreign aggressors" (Constable, BKC).

Ryrie points out that the 40,000 should probably be 4,000 (2 Chron. 9:25)." "The figure of 4,000 stalls of horses (2 Chron. 9:25) appears to be the correct one, rather than 40,000, though Josephus also wrote '40,000.' Horses and chariots were military machines at this time. These were Solomon's weapons. 'At Megiddo, excavations have revealed stables for some 450 horses, as well as fortifications and the governor's residence. Similar Solomonic constructions are likewise attested at Hazor, Taanach, Eglon, and Gezer' (Bright). "We have a full agreement between tradition and archaeological discovery" (W. F. Albright, *Archaeology and the Religion of Israel*, p. 136)" (Constable's Notes). "Four thousand is probably the correct number since he had 1,400 chariots (10:26; 2 Chron. 1:14). Three horses were considered a chariot team and

would have been quartered together. So ‘4,000’ would be about the number of horses that Solomon needed” (Constable’s Notes).

“No one seemed to be concerned that Solomon was disobeying God (Deut. 17:16)” (Ryrie).

*The Food Suppliers* “And these governors, each man in his month, provided food for King Solomon and for all who came to King Solomon’s table. There was no lack in their supply” (4:27). “Perhaps 4,000-5,000 people who were cared for at court” (Ryrie).

“They also brought barley and straw to the proper place, for the horses and steeds, each man according to his charge” (4:28). Depending on their assignment, they brought barley and straw for the horses and cattle.

“We must remember that in order to support such lavishness, it was necessary to tax the people very heavily” (MacDonald).

## Solomon’s Wisdom

*His Wisdom* “And God gave Solomon wisdom and exceedingly great understanding, and largeness of heart like the sand on the seashore” (4:29). “Solomon’s great insight was his ability to see the core of issues (e.g., 1 Kings 3:16-27). His understanding was vast; today he would be described as a man of encyclopedic knowledge” (Constable’s Notes).

“Thus Solomon’s wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the men of the East and all the wisdom of Egypt” (4:30). “The men of the East (cf. Job 1:3) and Egypt (v. 30) were famous for their wisdom in the ancient biblical world” (Constable’s Notes).

“For he was wiser than all men—than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was in all the surrounding nations” (4:31). “Ethan was the author of Psalm 89; Heman wrote Psalm 88. We know nothing about the other men” (MacDonald).

*His Writings* “He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were one thousand and five” (4:32). “Many of Solomon’s proverbs are recorded in the book of Proverbs. Some of his songs may be reflected in the Song of Solomon” (Ryrie). “Solomon’s literary output was prolific (v. 32). His name appears on two of the psalms in the Book of Psalms (Ps. 72; 127), and he also evidently wrote the Books of Proverbs, Ecclesiastes, and Song of Solomon” (Constable’s Notes). “Solomon spoke three thousand proverbs, only a portion of which are preserved in the book of Proverbs. His songs numbered one thousand and five, the best being the Song of Songs” (MacDonald). “Several hundred of Solomon’s 3,000 proverbs have been preserved in the Book of Proverbs as well as a few in Ecclesiastes” (Constable, BKC).

“Also he spoke of trees, from the cedar tree of Lebanon even to the hyssop that springs out of the wall; he spoke also of animals, of birds, of creeping things, and of fish” (4:33). “Verse 33 means that his wide knowledge of many sciences enabled him to use object lessons from nature in expounding his wisdom” (MacDonald). “He became an authority in botany and zoology too” (Constable, BKC).

*His Worldwide Fame* “And men of all nations, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom, came to hear the wisdom of Solomon” (4:34). “Verse 34 is hyperbole. The writer meant that Solomon’s court was open to all and that as a wise man he attracted many important visitors” (Constable’s Notes). “The point is that many important visitors from faraway places visited Solomon, who received them openly at his court. He was recognized as the wisest man of his day as God had promised he would be” (Constable, BKC).

To sum up, Solomon had enormous work, elaborate wealth, and extensive wisdom. Chapter 4 records Solomon's officials, governors, prosperity, provisions, and wisdom. Perhaps these are the different things I describe Solomon. It's also possible that this chapter is an illustration of Solomon's wisdom. Wisdom is still. So, in this case, it would have been an organizational skill.

As was cited in the introduction, one commentator points out, "The writer constructed the Solomon narrative (chs. 3-11), like so many others in the Old Testament, to draw attention to the fulfillment or lack of fulfillment of prophecies made earlier. The prophecy lies in 3:3-14, and we can trace the fulfillment through chapter 11" (Constable's Notes).

"God also blessed Israel through Solomon by giving him the wisdom to organize and effectively administer the nation's political affairs. "This chapter shows God's response to Solomon's dedication to Yahweh (3:6-13)."

Wisdom is a skill, skill in handling life, skill in relationships with people and skill in organization.

In the book of Exodus, the Lord told Moses. "So you shall speak to all who are gifted artisans, whom I have filled with the spirit of wisdom, that they may make Aaron's garments" (Ex. 28:3). "I have filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 31:3). "I have put wisdom in the hearts of all the gifted artisans, that they may make all that I have commanded you" (Ex. 31:6). "And all the women whose hearts stirred with wisdom spun yarn of goats' hair" (Ex. 35:26). "He has filled him with the Spirit of God, in wisdom and understanding, in knowledge and all manner of workmanship" (Ex. 35:31). Other verses in Exodus speak of "every gifted artisan in whom the LORD has put wisdom and understanding, to know how to do all manner of work for the service of the sanctuary, shall do according to all that the LORD has commanded" (Ex. 36:1-2). In other words, in Exodus, "wisdom" is the skill of working with cloth and wood.

In 1 Kings, it is skillful in organizing. Solomon organized people and property. Wisdom is being wise enough to pick the right people for a job. Wisdom organizes things so there is a place for everything and everything in its place. However, one fellow told me there are two kinds of organization: things are organized or in a pile. The pile can be organized in the sense that you know where things are in the pile.

## Solomon's Request

*The Respect* "Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon because he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always loved David" (5:1). "Hiram probably reigned from about 980–947 B.C. Many scholars agree that his reign overlapped David's by about nine years and Solomon's by about 24 (cf. 2 Sam. 5:11)" (Constable's Notes). "Hiram had sent David laborers and wood for his public works" (Ryrie; 2 Sam. 5:11). "Hiram, king of Tyre, had been an ally and friend of King David and had supplied materials and laborers to build David's palace (2 Sam. 5:11). Hiram sent his envoys to Solomon to pay his respects to the new king, the son of his friend" (Constable, BKC).

*The Request* "Then Solomon sent to Hiram, saying: 'You know how my father David could not build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which were fought against him on every side, until the LORD put *his foes* under the soles of his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; *there is* neither adversary nor evil occurrence. And behold, I propose to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spoke to my father David, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set on your throne in your place, he shall

build the house for My name.’ Now therefore, command that they cut down cedars for me from Lebanon; and my servants will be with your servants, and I will pay you wages for your servants according to whatever you say. For you know *there is none among us who has skill to cut timber like the Sidonians*” (5:2-6). Ryrie points out that cedars from Lebanon were as large as 40 feet in girth and that “the wood was especially suitable for beams, pillows, and carved work.” “Cedars of Lebanon grew profusely on the western slopes of the Lebanon Mountains east of Tyre, though few remain today. They were very old trees with hard, beautiful wood that was excellent for construction since it was not readily subject to decay or insect infestation” (Constable’s Notes). “Cedar is still a favored building material because of its durability and beauty” (Constable’s Notes). “A house for the name of the Lord means a house for Yahweh that would communicate His reputation to the world” (Constable’s Notes).

Samon used wisdom in approaching Hiram. Hiram loved David (5:1). So Solomon began by reminding Hiram that David wanted to build the Temple (5:2). Later, he said that he intended to build the Temple as the Lord spoke to David my father, saying, “Your son whom I will set on your throne in your place, he will build the house for My name” (5:5). Wisdom with people’s understanding where they are and appealing to them from that point of view.

## Solomon’s Arrangements

*The Reaction* “So it was, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said, Blessed *be* the LORD this day, for He has given David a wise son over this great people!” (5:7). “Solomon’s suggestion met with an enthusiastic response. Hiram had regard for Yahweh, perhaps as a result of his contacts with David” (Constable, BKC). “The fact that Hiram cooperated with and even blessed Yahweh shows how God brought blessing to Gentiles as well as to the Israelites through David and Solomon’s godly dedication to the Lord” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Response* “Then Hiram sent to Solomon, saying: I have considered *the message which you sent me, and I will do all you desire concerning the cedar and cypress logs*” (5:8). “Hiram perceived Solomon’s wisdom at once. Apparently, Solomon’s total message to Hiram (1 Kings 5:3-6) was not recorded by the author of 1 and 2 Kings since Hiram agreed to provide pine as well as cedar logs” (Constable, BKC).

“My servants shall bring *them* down from Lebanon to the sea; I will float them in rafts by sea to the place you indicate to me, and will have them broken apart there; then you can take *them* away. And you shall fulfill my desire by giving food for my household. Then Hiram gave Solomon cedar and cypress logs *according to* all his desire. And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat *as* food for his household, and twenty kors of pressed oil. Thus Solomon gave to Hiram year by year” (5:9-11). “Solomon’s forced laborers were non-Israelites (2 Chron. 8:7-8)” (Constable’s Notes). “The logs would then be taken to the Mediterranean Sea, floated in rafts down to a point near Joppa, and then transported inland to Jerusalem” (MacDonald). “Hiram wanted something in return: food for his royal household” (Constable, BKC). “This would amount to 120,000 bushels of wheat and about 120,000 gal of oil” (Ryrie). “Barley and wine were also included (2 Chron. 2:10)” (Constable, BKC).

*The Relationship* “So the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as He had promised him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty together” (5:12). “The covenant between Israel and Phoenicia resulted in peace for many years” (Constable’s Notes).



## Solomon's Laborers

*The Foreign Force* “Then King Solomon raised up a labor force out of all Israel; and the labor force was thirty thousand men” (5:13). To obtain the manpower for this gigantic task of cutting lumber, Solomon drafted thirty thousand men of Israel, requiring them to go to Lebanon (MacDonald). “This forced labor became one of the causes of civil war (1 Kings 12:4, 18)” (Ryrie). “Israelites also served, but they were not slaves (9:22). Solomon’s method of providing workers for state projects became very distasteful to the people eventually, perhaps because of how it was administered (cf. 12:18)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Solomon’s massive building operations involved a great force of slave labor (cf. 1 Kings 9:15-22). But even this proved inadequate, and he was compelled to draft native Israelites (probably excluding Judah), not as slave laborers but as forced laborers. The Israelites, with their tradition for sturdy independence, bitterly resented this, and it became a major cause of the division of the kingdom (1 Kings 12:4)” (MacDonald).

“The king drafted them for temporary government service, which they worked into their schedules along with their private responsibilities. This method of conscripting forced labor eventually proved exceedingly distasteful to the Israelites, perhaps because of the way it was administered (cf. 1 Kings 12:18)” (Constable, BKC).

“And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in shifts: they were one month in Lebanon *and* two months at home; Adoniram was in charge of the labor force” (5:14). “[Adoniram, also known as Hadoram, 2 Chron. 10:18] was probably one of the most hated men in Israel, an embodiment of autocracy” (Payne, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*The Domestic Force* “Solomon had seventy thousand who carried burdens, and eighty thousand who quarried *stone* in the mountains, besides three thousand three hundred from the chiefs of Solomon’s deputies, who supervised the people who labored in the work” (5:15-16). Solomon had 3300 chiefs of his deputies supervised a domestic labor force consisting of 70,000, who carried burdens and 80,000, who quarried stone in the mountains.

“And the king commanded them to quarry large stones, costly stones, *and* hewn stones, to lay the foundation of the temple” (5:17). “Solomon’s temple rested on massive limestone blocks that he had quarried out of the hills north of Jerusalem” (Constable’s Notes).

“So Solomon’s builders, Hiram’s builders, and the Gebalites quarried *them*; and they prepared timber and stones to build the temple” (5:18). The “Gebalites were inhabitants of modern Byblos, 13 mi N of Beirut” (Ryrie). “The Gebalites lived in Byblos, 13 miles north of modern Beirut and 60 miles north of Tyre” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** Solomon used wisdom in organizing his administration, in making arrangements with Hiram, the king of Tyre, for timber, and in organizing laborers to build the Temple.

The essence of wisdom is skill. It is a skill in handling life, dealing with people, and organizing work. Solomon’s wisdom included insights into people (1 Kings 3) and the ability to organize and supervise people (1 Kings 4). He used the ability to organize and supervise the building of a temple (1 Kings 5).

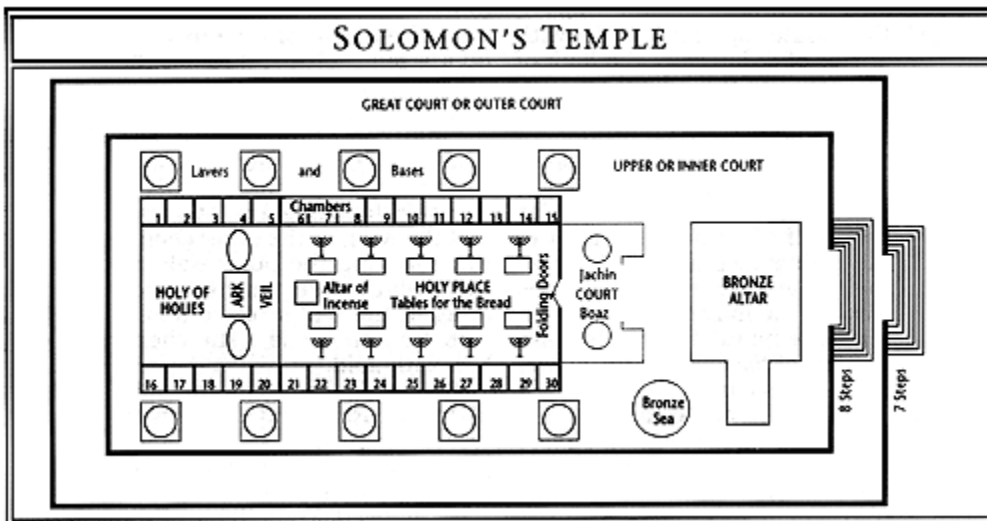
“The essence of wisdom is revealed in Solomon’s handling of this difficult case. The king had insight into basic human nature (in this case, maternal instincts) that enabled him to understand why people behave as they do and how they will respond in various situations. The opposite of this ability is seen in simply judging people’s superficial words and actions”

(Constable, BKC). “Wisdom in Israel and the ancient Near East was not synonymous with knowledge or education. It involved the ability to live life in a skillful way so at, in the end, one’s life would amount to something worthwhile. To the eye Israelites, this was possible only if a person knew and responded appropriately to (i.e., feared) Yahweh” (Constable’s Notes).

Actually, there are two kinds of wisdom. James explains, “Who *is* wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct *that* his works *are done* in the meekness of wisdom. But if you have bitter envy and self-seeking in your hearts, do not boast and lie against the truth. This wisdom does not descend from above but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace” (Jas. 3:13-18).

Worldly wisdom is selfish. Godly wisdom has pure motives that are willing to yield and full of mercy. Whatever wisdom/skill God has given you, do not use it for selfish reasons. Using it to glorify God and minister to people.

When faced with a situation, what questions do you ask? What do I get out of this? What is right? What is loving? Or what is wise? Sometimes, something is right and loving, but it’s not wise. For example, witnessing to unbelievers is the right thing to do. It is a loving thing to do, but it might not be wise, meaning this is not the right time to do it. So, be wise.



## WHATEVER YOU ARE DOING, HEAR THIS

Sometimes, we get so busy we fail to stop and listen to what the Lord wants to say to us. Our business can even be the Lord's business. It is possible to be so busy serving the Lord that we forget to listen to it. The Lord has an interesting way of communicating that truth. In the middle of a chapter describing Solomon's Temple in detail, the author records what God wants us to hear. What is that message we neglect or forget?

### The Outside of the Temple

*The Date* "And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel had come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD" (6:1). In the second month (April/May) of the fourth year of Solomon's reign, He began to build the Temple. That was four hundred and eighty years after the children of Israel came out of Egypt. The date was 967 BC (G. Michael Cocoris, *The Chronology of the Bible*, p. 8; Thiele).

"This verse is one of the most important in the Old Testament chronologically because it enables one to fix certain dates in Israel's history. The dates of Solomon's reign have been quite definitely established through references in ancient writings. They were 971-931 BC" (Constable, BKC). If Solomon's fourth year was 967 BC, the date of the Exodus was 1447 BC (Thiele; Constable, BKC: 1446 BC).

"The more popular date of about 1280 B.C. rests primarily on the assumption that Ramses II was the pharaoh of the Exodus. Those who hold this view believe historical similarities between conditions during Ramses' reign and the biblical description of the Exodus support their theory. They usually take the 480 years as a round number representing 12 generations or as having been arrived at by adding up the lengths of various concurrent or overlapping periods, as though they were placed in one lineal string of years. There are some first-rate otherwise conservative scholars who hold the later (1280) date" (Constable's Notes).

"Josephus tied the beginning of temple construction to several other important events in Old Testament history, though his computations do not seem to be correct. 'Solomon began to build the temple ... five hundred and ninety-two years after the exodus out of Egypt, but one thousand and twenty years from Abraham's coming out of Mesopotamia into Canaan; and after the Deluge one thousand four hundred and forty years; and from Adam, the first man who was created, until Solomon built the temple, there had passed in all three thousand one hundred and two years. Now that year on which the temple began to be built, was already the eleventh year of the reign of Hiram; but from the building of Tyre to the building of the temple, there had passed two hundred and forty years' (Josephus)" (Constable's Notes).

"Why did the writer of Kings tie the building of the temple to the Exodus? ... With the building of the temple Israel would have an opportunity as never before in her history to realize the purpose for which God had formed and freed the nation. That purpose was to draw all people to Himself" (Constable's Notes).

*The Size* "Now the house which King Solomon built for the LORD, its length was sixty cubits, its width twenty, and its height thirty cubits" (6:2). "Normally, the cubit was 18 inches; however, 2 Chron. 3:3 may indicate that a longer cubit (20.9 inches) was used in this



construction” (Ryrie). Using the 18-inch cubit, “the temple was approximately 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. It had about 2,700 square feet of floor space. Its large open front porch added 15 more feet to its length. It was about twice the size of the Mosaic tabernacle, three times as high, and it faced east, as did the tabernacle and other ancient Near Eastern temples. Solomon’s temple was similar to other ancient Near Eastern temples in both size and design. This is an example of acculturation: God giving revelation of Himself in forms that were familiar to the original recipients. The exterior of the temple was limestone, cedar, and gold, so it must have been extremely beautiful” (Constable’s Notes).

MacDonald summarizes the description of the Temple. He says the Temple details are “at times technical and involved, making it difficult to get the exact picture. However, we do know that the temple was built somewhat as follows. It was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high (v. 2). It was divided into two rooms. The first room was the sanctuary, measuring 60 feet long by 30 feet wide by 45 feet high (vv. 2, 17). Latticed windows, probably near the top, provided light and an escape for smoke (v. 4). The second room was the inner sanctuary, 30 feet long by 30 feet wide by 30 feet high. The vestibule added 30 more feet to the length at the east or front end and was elevated 15 feet above ground level. On the north, west, and south sides of the temple were three stories of side chambers, or rooms, for the priests. These were against the wall of the temple but were not an integral part of it.”

*The Vestibule* “The vestibule in front of the sanctuary of the house was twenty cubits long across the width of the house, and the width of the vestibule extended ten cubits from the front of the house” (6:3). The vestibule in the front of the Temple was 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. It extended across the entire front of the Temple.

*The Windows* “And he made for the house windows with beveled frames” (6:4). The Hebrew word translated “beveled” means “to shut, shut up, close.” In other words, these were “windows [with] the lattice-work of which could not be opened and closed at pleasure, as in ordinary dwelling-houses (2 Kings 13:17; Dan. 6:11)” (Keil). “On two or three sides, there were narrow clerestory windows above the three stories of side rooms that projected from the outer walls” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Chambers* “Against the wall of the temple he built chambers all around, against the walls of the temple, all around the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary. Thus he made side chambers all around it” (6:5). “A triple-decker arrangement of rooms buttressed the walls, with access by a winding staircase (1 Kings 6:8)” (Ryrie).

“The lowest chamber was five cubits wide, the middle was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for he made narrow ledges around the outside of the temple, so that the support beams would not be fastened into the walls of the temple” (6:6). “The structure around the building was built against the outer sides and perhaps the back of the temple. This structure was probably about 25-30 feet high and was divided into three stories of side rooms, each of which was 7 feet high on the inside” (Constable, BKC).

“The priests used these side rooms for storage and service purposes. They were apparently the smallest on the first floor, where there were also hallways and stairways, larger on the second floor, which also had halls and stairs, and largest on the third floor. The offset ledges were apparently supported for the upper floors that fastened to the walls of this surrounding structure. Measurements in the text are probably inside dimensions. Josephus described these rooms as follows” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Stone* “And the temple, when it was being built, was built with stone finished at the quarry, so that no hammer or chisel or any iron tool was heard in the temple while it was being

built” (6:7). “The stones were prepared at a quarry that Solomon had on the outskirts of Jerusalem” (Ryrie). “Evidently, Solomon wanted to preserve the sanctity of the temple even while it was under construction by eliminating as much noise as possible (Deut. 27:5-6)” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Doorway* “The doorway for the middle story *was* on the right side of the temple. They went up by stairs to the middle *story*, and from the middle to the third” (6:8). Gill says the stairs were on the outside of the chambers “for the sake of taking up less room.

*The Beams* “So he built the temple and finished it, and he paneled the temple with beams and boards of cedar” (6:9). MacDonald says, “Verse 9 describes the roof of the whole temple.”

*The Chambers* “And he built side chambers against the entire temple, each five cubits high; they were attached to the temple with cedar beams” (6:10). MacDonald says, “Verses 8 and 10 describe the doorway to the side chambers and the height of each story (7½ feet).”

“The temple faced east, but the entrance to the surrounding structure (1 Kings 6:5) was on the south. The side rooms on all floors were connected by internal staircases and passageways. Though no beams of this side structure were ‘inserted into the temple walls’ (1 Kings 6:6), the inner walls of the side rooms were attached to the temple by cedar beams (1 King 6:10)” (Constable, BKC).

What the author of 1 Kings is doing in the opening verses of this chapter is something like a visitor coming to church and me giving them a tour of the building, pointing out the date it was constructed and its dimensions, adding this is the vestibule, the windows, the storage unit, and the doors.

## The Promise of the Lord

*The Condition* “Then the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying: ‘Concerning this temple which you are building, if you walk in My statutes, execute My judgments, keep all My commandments, and walk in them, then I will perform My word with you, which I spoke to your father David’” (6:11-12). “Probably this word from the Lord came to Solomon during temple construction. Note that this was a conditional promise based on obedience to the Mosaic Covenant. God would establish Solomon’s kingdom forever (i.e., it would remain intact; 2 Sam. 7:13)” (Constable’s Notes). “The promise” given to David to which God referred (6:12) was that He would ‘establish the throne of [David’s] kingdom forever’ (2 Sam. 7:13). God would do this through Solomon if Solomon would obey Him (6:12). Later Solomon’s disobedience resulted in God’s removing part of the nation from the control of his son Rehoboam” (Constable, BKC).

*The Conclusion* “And I will dwell among the children of Israel, and will not forsake My people Israel” (6:13). “God also promised that if Solomon obeyed the Lord, his nation would enjoy God’s fellowship and protection. Israel experienced this only partially because of Solomon’s later apostasy” (Constable, BKC).

“He would also continue to dwell among the Israelites and not forsake them. Unfortunately, because Solomon did not continue to obey the covenant completely, God divided his kingdom after he died. Because the nation forsook the covenant, God ceased to dwell among the people and forsook them temporarily to captivity (cf. Matt. 28:20)... The writer evidently inserted this section of text (vv. 11-13) in his description of Solomon’s building activities to emphasize the centrality of obedience to the overall success of the project” (Constable’s Notes).

The Lord desires to dwell among His people, which was evident in His design of the Tabernacle and now His declaration concerning the Temple (6:13). He wants to have fellowship

with us (1 Jn. 1:4, 7). Our problem is we get distracted; when we are distracted, we lose our fellowship with the Lord. I lost my credit card because I was distracted. I went to a jewelry store to replace the battery in my watch. While standing at the counter, three teenagers came in and stood beside me, looking at the expense of jewelry in the counter. Both the jeweler and I focused on them. He handed me the watch and I left without a credit card. That distraction resulted in me losing my credit card, so our distractions in life resulted in losing fellowship with the Lord but not a relationship.

## The Inside of the Temple

*The Holy Place* “So Solomon built the temple and finished it” (6:14). Solomon is the one who began and completed the construction of the Temple, which “stood until destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 BC” (Ryrie).

“And he built the inside walls of the temple with cedar boards; from the floor of the temple to the ceiling he paneled the inside with wood; and he covered the floor of the temple with planks of cypress” (6:15). The Holy Place occupied two-thirds of the inner space of the Temple (Ryrie).

*The Holy of Holies* “Then he built the twenty-cubit room at the rear of the temple, from floor to ceiling, with cedar boards; he built *it* inside as the inner sanctuary, as the Most Holy Place” (6:16). The Holiest of Holies, which was a 30-foot room at the rear of the Temple, was paneled with cedar wood from floor to ceiling. The Holiest of Holies occupied one-third of the interior space of the Temple (Ryrie).

*The Length* “And in front of it the temple sanctuary was forty cubits long” (6:17). The Holy Place in front of the Holiest of Holies was forty 60 feet long.

*The Paneling* “The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with ornamental buds and open flowers. All was cedar; there was no stone to be seen” (6:18). The paneling inside the Holiest of Holies was made of cedar carved with ornamental buds and open flowers so that there was no stone that could be seen, just paneling.

“And he prepared the inner sanctuary inside the temple, to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there” (6:19). Inside the Holiest of Holies stood the ark of the covenant of the Lord. “The altar (vv. 19, 22) refers to the altar of incense (cf. 7:48). This altar evidently stood in the west end of the holy place (cf. Exod. 30:6; 40:5; Lev. 16:2; Heb. 9:4, 7)” (Constable’s Notes).

“The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty cubits wide, and twenty cubits high. He overlaid it with pure gold, and overlaid the altar of cedar” (6:20). The Holiest of Holies was 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 30 feet high. It was overlaid with pure gold and the altar of incense (Ryrie) was overlaid with cedar. “The altar of cedar was the altar of incense located in the holy place. Solomon’s incense altar was made of cedar and overlaid with gold; it was also called “the golden altar” (1 Kings 7:48)” (Constable, BKC).

“One problem that continues to puzzle scholars is the difference in height between the holy place (30 cubits or 45 feet, v. 2) and the most holy place (20 cubits or 30 feet, v. 20). Was the floor of the most holy place higher, and were there steps up to it from the holy place? Was the ceiling of the most holy place lower than that of the holy place? Was the most holy place a room within the holy place? We do not know” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Chains* “So Solomon overlaid the inside of the temple with pure gold. He stretched gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, and overlaid it with gold” (6:21). The Holiest of Holies was overlaid with pure gold with gold chains stretched across the front of the Holiest

of Holies. “Gold chains were hung in the holy place across the doors that led into the most holy place. 1 Kings 6:22 recapitulates part of what was stated in 1 Kings 6:14-21. The altar (1 Kings 6:22) is the incense altar located in the holy place” (Constable, BKC).

“The whole temple he overlaid with gold, until he had finished all the temple; also he overlaid with gold the entire altar that *was* by the inner sanctuary” (6:22). “The interior of the building was lined with cedar boards, completely overlaid with pure gold; no stone was seen” (MacDonald).

*The Cherubim* “Inside the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, *each ten cubits high*” (6:23). Inside the Holiest of Holies were two fifteen feet high olive wood cherubim. “The cherubim were sculptured angels, carved from olive wood. Their wings were spread out so that side by side they extended 30 feet (from the north to the south walls of the most holy place; cf. 2 Chron. 3:13). Gold covered the cherubim too” (Constable, BKC).

“One wing of the cherub *was* five cubits, and the other wing of the cherub five cubits: ten cubits from the tip of one wing to the tip of the other” (6:24). The wings of each of the two cherubs were seven feet and a half with fifteen feet between the tips of the two sets of wings.

“And the other cherub *was* ten cubits; both cherubim *were* of the same size and shape” (6:25). Both cherubim were the same size and shape, that is, fifteen feet (see also verse 23).

“The height of one cherub *was* ten cubits, and so *was* the other cherub” (6:26). Both cherubim were fifteen feet high.

“Then he set the cherubim inside the inner room; and they stretched out the wings of the cherubim so that the wing of the one touched *one* wall, and the wing of the other cherub touched the other wall. And their wings touched each other in the middle of the room” (6:27). The cherubim were inside the Holiest of Holies and their wings touched the walls and the tips of the wings touched each other in the middle of the room.

“Also he overlaid the cherubim with gold” (6:28). The two cherubim in the Holiest of Holies were made out of olive wood (6:23), but they were overlaid with gold.

“The cherubim were figures of angels carved out of olive wood (vv. 23-28). They may have resembled ‘winged sphinxes. Since there were cherubim attached to the mercy seat of the ark, these were two additional freestanding cherubim’ (House)” (Constable’s Notes). “Standing on either side of the ark, in the inner sanctuary, were two carved cherubim overlaid with gold. Their outstretched wings reached from one wall to the other. These are not the same as the cherubim on the mercy seat (Ex. 25:18; 37:9)” (MacDonald).

*The Walls* “Then he carved all the walls of the temple all around, both the inner and outer sanctuaries, with carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers” (6:29). The walls inside and outside of the Temple contain carved figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers.

*The Floor* “And the floor of the temple he overlaid with gold, both the inner and outer sanctuaries” (6:30). The floor of both the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was overlaid with gold. “Nothing but gold was visible inside the temple” (MacDonald).

*The Doors* “For the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood; the lintel and doorposts were one-fifth of the wall” (6:31). The doors leading into the Holy Places were made of wood with the lintel and doorpost making up 1/5 of the wall.

“The two doors *were* of olive wood; and he carved on them figures of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid *them* with gold; and he spread gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees” (6:32). “The folding or sliding doors leading to the inner sanctuary are described in verses 31 and 32. The rooms were also separated by a veil which hung inside the doors of the

inner sanctuary—2 Chron. 3:14” (MacDonald). “Olivewood doors separated the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place (apparently there was also a curtain, 2 Chron. 3:14), and the doors to the Temple proper matched them” (Ryrie).

“So for the door of the sanctuary he also made doorposts of olive wood, one-fourth of the wall” (6:33). “The main doors leading to the sanctuary are described in verses 33-35” (MacDonald).

“And the two doors were of cypress wood; two panels comprised one folding door, and two panels comprised the other folding door” (6:34). These two folding doors each had two panels.

“Then he carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers on them, and overlaid them with gold applied evenly on the carved work” (6:35). Cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers were carved on the doors and they were overlaid with gold.

*The Inner Court* “And he built the inner court with three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams” (6:36). “In addition to the inner courtyard (v. 36), there was also an outer one (2 Chron. 4:9) that was slightly lower in elevation (Jer. 36:10)” (Constable’s Notes). “In front of the temple was the inner court of the priests. There was a low wall between it and the outer court. This wall consisted of three rows of hewn stone and a row of cedar beams. In the inner court were a huge brazen altar for sacrifices, a huge laver used by the priests for cleansing, and ten smaller lavers (chap. 7). The outer court was for the people of Israel” (MacDonald).

“The inner courtyard was an open plaza surrounding the temple. There was also an outer courtyard not mentioned here (cf. 2 Chron. 4:9), which was somewhat lower in elevation than the inner courtyard (cf. ‘upper courtyard’ in Jer. 36:10). This inner courtyard (also called the ‘courtyard of the priests,’ 2 Chron. 4:9) was separated from the outer (great) court by the wall described here. This wall consisted of three courses (rows) of dressed (cut) stone (limestone) and one course (row) of cedar beams. (The outer courtyard was also surrounded by a wall.) The size of the inner courtyard is not given, but if the dimensions of the courtyards of the temple are proportionate to those of the tabernacle courtyard, as the dimensions of the temple and tabernacle structures are, the inner courtyard was about 150 feet wide and 400 feet long” (Constable, BKC).

“Scholars also debate what relationship the row of cedar beams had to the rows of cut stone (v. 36). The cedar beams may have been cedar coping on top of the stone. They may have been cedar that lined the stone interior of the temple. Possibly, cedar beams alternated with rows of stone. All of these are possibilities” (Constable’s Notes).

## Summary of the Construction

*The Starting Date* “In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv” (6:37). The foundation of the Temple was laid in the fourth month, the month of Ziv (see 6:1).

*The Concluding Date* “And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished in all its details and according to all its plans. So he was seven years in building it” (6:38). In the eighth month of the eleventh year which was the month of Bul (Oct/Nov) the Temple was finished in all of its details according to its plans. “The temple was begun in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign and was finished seven years later” (MacDonald).

“Seven years is a round number (966–959 B.C.). Actually, completion took seven and one-half years since Ziv (lit. flowers) is late March and early April, and Bul (lit. moisture) is late October and early November. Probably since most ancient Near Easterners regarded seven as a

number symbolic of perfection, the Israelites viewed their temple as a perfect structure” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** In the middle of describing the Temple, the Lord told Solomon that if he obeyed the Lord, he and his nation would enjoy God’s fellowship and protection.

“In an earlier era, scholars debunked the reality of a temple in Israel like Solomon’s because nothing similar was known from the ancient Near East. However, at ‘Ain Dara (and earlier in Tall Ta’yinat), Syria, a temple from the tenth century B.C. came to light that bore a remarkable similarity to the temple of Jerusalem. The size is approximately the same; it consists of two chambers, the Holy Place and the Most Holy Place; and it clearly accommodated cultic features like those described in the Bible. Thus, the notion that Israel had a temple in the tenth century rests on firm ground” (Merrill, cited in Constable’s Notes). “We actually possess in these chapters concerning the construction and furnishing of a temple the fullest and most detailed specifications from the ancient Oriental world” Montgomery, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Even though we have some information about the general specifications and appearance of the temple, the omission of other data makes the reproduction of a complete detailed model impossible. Essentially it followed the pattern of both the Mosaic tabernacle and other ancient Near Eastern temples” (Constable’s Notes).

“Why did not God give us more detail? All that the writer recorded of the temple tells us two things about it. We have enough information about the structure so we can find our way around it as we continue reading about it. Furthermore, its magnificence as a fitting house for Yahweh, the only true and great God, should impress us.

“Archaeologists have never been able to pinpoint the exact location of Solomon’s temple. Since Herod built his temple on the site of Nehemiah’s temple, and since Nehemiah built his temple on the site of Solomon’s temple, there is little question about the general site. It must have been somewhere on the esplanade on which the Dome of the Rock (Mosque of Omar) now stands. Modern Jews pray at the wailing (western) wall because they believe it is the closest site to the holy of holies that is accessible to them. Their rabbis discourage them from walking on the temple esplanade for fear of inadvertently treading on the actual site of the holy of holies. One writer believed the site of the second temple was just north of the Dome of the Rock. He concluded that the site of the holy of holies corresponds to that of the present Dome of the Tablets (also called the Dome of the Spirits). (Asher Kaufman, “Where the Ancient Temple of Jerusalem Stood,” *Biblical Archaeology Review* 9:2 (March-April 1983):40-59). Others believe it was closer to the site of the Dome of the Rock. The ‘second temple’ refers to Nehemiah’s temple, which Herod renovated, in contrast to the first or Solomonic temple.

“How should what Solomon did in building the temple affect our thinking with regard to modern church architecture? Since there is no earthly central sanctuary for all of Christianity, as there was for ancient Israel, there is no structure that corresponds to Solomon’s temple today. But should local churches spend vast quantities of money to build magnificent buildings to honor God? The New Testament does not comment on this, leaving it in the area of freedom for Christians. However, the New Testament teaches that now the universal church, the local congregation, and believers’ bodies are all temples of the Holy Spirit (Eph. 2:21; 1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19). We should adorn these temples with conduct that glorifies our God in the sight of onlookers” (Constable’s Notes).

Other than the details concerning the Temple, the fascinating part of this chapter is that in the middle of it, the Lord reminded Solomon that what is important is His Word and our

obedience to it and our fellowship with Him (6:11-13). We can be so busy doing something constructive that we can neglect the Word. If we neglect God's Word, we will be careless in walking. We can even get so busy building God's house that we neglect God!

The Lord wants to have fellowship with us (Rev. 3:20). Never become so immersed in work that you forget the Word. Never let your concerns for your daily duties, however necessary, cause you to forget fellowship with the Lord.



## ONE WAY TO HONOR THE LORD

If we were to list the ways we could honor the Lord, the list would be long—very, very long. Solomon did it in a way we could never duplicate, but what he did can teach us something about honoring the Lord.

### Solomon's Palace

*The Time* “But Solomon took thirteen years to build his own house; so he finished all his house” (7:1). “The king evidently completed the temple and then began work on his palace (cf. 9:10)” (Constable’s Notes). It took seven years to build the Temple (6:37-38), but it took 13 years for Solomon to build his palace. “Some think that the fact that it took six years longer to build the palace than the temple indicates a greater concern for Solomon’s ego than for God’s glory. On the other hand, perhaps the temple took only seven years because of Solomon’s zeal for God to be given a place, and his thousands of laborers built a “holy temple” (for the LORD) at a greater speed” (MacDonald). “The palace took longer to build than the temple (13 years compared with 7; cf. 6:37-38) because it was larger” (Constable, BKC). “It was located slightly southeast of the temple and just outside the wall of the inner court” (MacDonald).

Verse 1 says Solomon built his own house. Then verses 2-8 describe the House of the Forest of Lebanon (7:2-5), the Hall of Pillars (7:6), the Hall of Judgment (7:7), and houses (7:8). This raises the question as to whether his palace consisted of one building or several. “Probably one palace complex was built that contained several separate but interconnected buildings. The arrangement harmonizes with the style of other large oriental mansions and palaces” (Constable, BKC). “Another perspective of these verses sees the House of the Forest of Lebanon, the Hall of Pillars, and the Hall of the Throne (the Hall of Judgment) as all part of the palace” (MacDonald).

Ryrie says, “The total complex of buildings described in these verses, which included *the* house of the forest of Lebanon (apparently an armory, 10:16-17) connected by a colonnade (7:6) to a throne room containing a gold and ivory throne approached by six steps (10:18-19). Solomon’s own house and one for the daughter of Pharaoh (7:8; cf. 3:1) completed the complex.” “Solomon’s throne hall, the Hall of Justice [see verse 7], was attached to the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon [see verses 2-6], as were his own residence (7:8) and a separate residence (palace) for Pharaoh’s daughter, whom he had married (7:8), all of harmonious design.... A great courtyard united all these buildings into one palace complex.” (Constable, BKC).

*The House of the Forest of Lebanon* “He also built the House of the Forest of Lebanon; its length was one hundred cubits, its width fifty cubits, and its height thirty cubits, with four rows of cedar pillars, and cedar beams on the pillars. And it was paneled with cedar above the beams that were on forty-five pillars, fifteen to a row. There were windows with beveled frames in three rows, and window was opposite window in three tiers. And all the doorways and doorposts had rectangular frames; and window was opposite window in three tiers” (7:2-5). The House of the Forest of Lebanon got its name from “the extensive use of cedar from Lebanon” (Ryrie). It was 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. “The floor space was 11,250 square feet, more than four times the 2,700 square feet of the temple floor (cf. 6:2)” (Constable, BKC). Its windows, doorways, and doorposts are mentioned in verses 4 and 5.

“We do not know definitely the function of this building, but we surmise from 1 Kings 10:17 that it was an armory” (MacDonald). “The palace evidently served as an armory (10:17; cf. Isa. 22:8)” (Constable, BKC). “The Pillared Hall (called the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon) was used as an audience chamber or throne hall and was larger than the temple. It also served as a state treasury, displaying selected precious objects received as tribute (cf. 10:16-17)” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes). It “was at the southern portion of the great court” (MacDonald).

*The Hall of Pillars* “He also made the Hall of Pillars: its length was fifty cubits, and its width thirty cubits; and in front of them was a portico with pillars, and a canopy was in front of them” (7:6). “Immediately north of the House of the Forest of Lebanon was the Hall (or Porch) of Pillars.... The Hall of Pillars “was probably the entrance to the Hall of Judgment and the throne room (v. 7)” (MacDonald). “Apparently, next to it [the palace] was a pillared colonnade (a covered walkway surrounding a patio) that had a front portico (porch) with a roof and supporting pillars” (Constable, BKC).

*The Hall of Judgment* “Then he made a hall for the throne, the Hall of Judgment, where he might judge; and it was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling” (7:7). The Hall of Judgment was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling and contained Solomon’s throne.

*The Houses* “And the house where he dwelt had another court inside the hall, of like workmanship. Solomon also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh’s daughter, whom he had taken as wife” (7:8). “Adjoining the royal palace was the House of Pharaoh’s daughter, where it is likely that the royal harem lived (v. 8)” (MacDonald).

*The Building Materials* “All these were of costly stones cut to size, trimmed with saws, inside and out, from the foundation to the eaves, and also on the outside to the great court” (7:9). “All the buildings were made of costly stone blocks cut to exact measurements” (MacDonald). “The structures were all built of stone (except the roofs) and they rested on stone foundations. Each stone was cut to size ... with a saw. Palestinian limestone can be cut with a saw when freshly quarried but hardens when exposed to the elements” (Constable, BKC).

“The foundation was of costly stones, large stones, some ten cubits and some eight cubits” (7:10). The foundation was made of large, costly stones, some 15 feet and others 12 feet.

“And above were costly stones, hewn to size, and cedar wood” (7:11). The walls above the foundation were constructed of costly stones hewn to size and of cedar wood.

*The Great Court* “The great court was enclosed with three rows of hewn stones and a row of cedar beams. So were the inner court of the house of the LORD and the vestibule of the temple” (7:12). “Also, the wall around the great court was made of three rows of stone blocks covered by cedar beams” (MacDonald). “A large common courtyard evidently surrounded the temple and the palace” (Constable’s Notes). “The great palace courtyard was protected by a wall similar in design to that around the inner courtyard of the temple (cf. 6:36). The palace was probably built close to (perhaps south of) the temple, though none of its remains have been found by archeologists” (Constable, BKC).

For Solomon to build himself such a house sounds self-serving. “He did everything imaginable to show that, as Yahweh was a great God, he was a great king. What is displayed here is far more than Solomon’s ‘riches and honor’ than his ‘wisdom.’ His was undoubtedly the piety of worldly success” (DeVries, cited in Constable’s Notes). This is not about Solomon’s house. It is about the Lord’s honor. “Ancient Near Easterners did not view a king’s sovereignty as established until he had built a palace for himself (Oppenheim). Solomon’s palace, therefore, further enhanced his prestige. God blessed Solomon and Israel by allowing him to build it”

(Constable's Notes). Solomon's establishment as king honored the Lord because that is what the Lord said He would do. "In the ancient world, people regarded a king's palace as some indication of his greatness as well as the greatness of his god" (Constable's Notes).

## Furnishings Outside the Temple

*The Craftsman* "Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre. He *was* the son of a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father *was* a man of Tyre, a bronze worker; he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work. So he came to King Solomon and did all his work" (7:13-14). Hiram was not King Hiram (5:1) "but a half-Jewish artisan from the tribe of Naphtali. In 2 Chron. 2:14, it is said that Hiram's mother was of the tribe of Dan. She was probably born in Dan, but her deceased first husband was of Naphtali. Or perhaps she was a native of Dan but a resident of Naphtali, or vice versa" (Ryrie). Solomon brought in Hiram, a bronze worker filled with wisdom (Hebrew: "skill"), understanding, and skill (Hebrew: "knowledge") to do the bronze work.

*The Pillars* "And he cast two pillars of bronze, each one eighteen cubits high, and a line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of each" (7:15). In verses 7-22, the author describes "two huge pillars of bronze which stood at the entrance of the temple are described" (MacDonald). They were 27 feet high with a circumference of 18 feet.

"The two pillars on the temple porch were common features that flanked the main entrances to temples in Syria, Phoenicia, Cyprus, Assyria, and elsewhere in the ancient Near East at this time. Some of these pillars supported the porch roof, but others were freestanding, as these probably were. In various countries, they symbolized various things. In Israel, their purpose seems to have been to remind the Israelites of Yahweh's establishment of Israel and strength for Israel" (Constable's Notes).

"Then he made two capitals of cast bronze, to set on the tops of the pillars. The height of one capital *was* five cubits, and the height of the other capital *was* five cubits" (7:16). Hiram made two capitals of cast bronze to set on top of the pillars. Each capital was 7½ feet high. "Their ornateness is described in 1 Kings 7:16-20" (Ryrie).

"He made a lattice network, with wreaths of chainwork, for the capitals which *were* on top of the pillars: seven chains for one capital and seven for the other capital" (7:17). Hiram made a seven-chain lattice network for the two capitals.

"So he made the pillars, and two rows of pomegranates above the network all around to cover the capitals that *were* on top; and thus he did for the other capital" (7:18). Hiram made two rows of pomegranates above the network to cover the capitals.

"The capitals which *were* on top of the pillars in the hall *were* in the shape of lilies, four cubits" (7:19). The capitals on top of the pillars were six feet lilies.

"The capitals on the two pillars also *had pomegranates* above, by the convex surface which *was* next to the network; and there *were* two hundred such pomegranates in rows on each of the capitals all around" (7:20). There were 200 pomegranates around each capital.

"Then he set up the pillars by the vestibule of the temple; he set up the pillar on the right and called its name Jachin, and he set up the pillar on the left and called its name Boaz" (7:21). "Jachin means 'he establishes,' and Boaz means 'in him is strength'" (Ryrie). "Gray suggested that the pillars symbolized the presence and permanence of Yahweh and the king. Jones argued that they stood for the covenant between Yahweh and His people, especially between Him and the Davidic dynasty" (Constable's Notes).

“The tops of the pillars were in the shape of lilies. So the work of the pillars was finished” (7:22). “The lily and pomegranate designs probably symbolized the fertility and fruitfulness of God’s blessing and presence” (Constable’s Notes).

To summarize, “Hiram cast two huge bronze pillars, each 27 feet high and 18 feet in circumference. With their capitals, the pillars were over 34 feet high.... Much detail is given in 7:17-20, 7:22 to demonstrate the beauty and intricacy of these free-standing monuments. The pillars were erected on either side of the temple portico (the roofless front porch)” (Constable, BKC).

*The Large Laver* “And he made the Sea of cast bronze, ten cubits from one brim to the other; *it was* completely round. Its height *was* five cubits, and a line of thirty cubits measured its circumference. Below its brim *were* ornamental buds encircling it all around, ten to a cubit, all the way around the Sea. The ornamental buds *were* cast in two rows when it was cast. It stood on twelve oxen: three looking toward the north, three looking toward the west, three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east; the Sea *was set* upon them, and all their back parts *pointed* inward. It *was* a handbreadth thick; and its brim was shaped like the brim of a cup, *like a lily blossom*. It contained two thousand baths” (7:23-26). “The Sea corresponded to the laver of the tabernacle. It too was gigantic in size: 15 feet across its circular rim and 7½ feet high.... The ‘Sea’ looked like a huge basin resting on the backs of the 12 sculptured bulls that supported it, and it could contain 2,000 baths (ca. 11,500 gallons) of water. This basin served as a reservoir for the temple courtyard. 2 Ch. 4:5 includes the statement that the laver ‘held 3,000 baths’ (ca. 17,500 gallons). Perhaps this was its total capacity, but it contained 2,000 baths” (Constable, BKC). “The Sea of cast bronze was the huge laver in the inner court. It was a large basin, supported by twelve bronze oxen and placed between the temple and the altar, but to the south (2 Chron. 4:10). It supplied water for the priests to wash their hands and feet” (MacDonald).

*The Small Lavers* “He also made ten carts of bronze; four cubits *was* the length of each cart, four cubits its width, and three cubits its height. And this *was* the design of the carts: they had panels, and the panels *were* between frames. On the panels that *were* between the frames *were* lions, oxen, and cherubim. And on the frames *was* a pedestal on top. Below the lions and oxen *were* wreaths of plaited work. Every cart had four bronze wheels and axles of bronze, and its four feet had supports. Under the laver *were* supports of cast *bronze* beside each wreath. Its opening inside the crown at the top *was* one cubit in diameter; and the opening *was* round, shaped *like a pedestal*, one and a half cubits in outside diameter; and also on the opening *were* engravings, but the panels were square, not round. Under the panels *were* the four wheels, and the axles of the wheels *were joined* to the cart. The height of a wheel *was* one and a half cubits. The workmanship of the wheels *was* like the workmanship of a chariot wheel; their axle pins, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs *were* all of cast *bronze*. And *there were* four supports at the four corners of each cart; its supports *were* part of the cart itself. On the top of the cart, at the height of half a cubit, *it was* perfectly round. And on the top of the cart, its flanges and its panels *were* of the same casting. On the plates of its flanges and on its panels he engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees, wherever there was a clear space on each, with wreaths all around. Thus, he made the ten carts. All of them were of the same mold, one measure, *and* one shape. Then he made ten lavers of bronze; each laver contained forty baths, *and* each laver *was* four cubits. On each of the ten carts *was* a laver. And he put five carts on the right side of the house and five on the left side of the house. He set the Sea on the right side of the house, toward the southeast” (7:27-39). “In addition to the large laver, there were ten smaller lavers resting on four-wheeled carts or stands. No mention is made of the bronze altar until 8:64, although it too was in the inner

court” (MacDonald). “The 10 bronze movable stands were evidently used for butchering sacrificial animals. Each was six feet square and five and one-half feet high at its highest point. On the surface of each stand was a basin (7:38) that held about 230 gallons (40 baths) of water. Apparently, another basin (7:30) drained into a circular frame (perhaps a tank) below through an opening. Each stand had decorated panels on each side and four bronze wheels. These 10 ... identical work tables could be wheeled around the inner courtyard (though with difficulty) as needed. Five were stationed on the south side of the temple and five on the north” (Constable, B KC).

*Summary* “Huram made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. So Huram finished doing all the work that he was to do for King Solomon *for* the house of the LORD. The two pillars, the *two* bowl-shaped capitals that *were* on top of the two pillars; the two networks covering the two bowl-shaped capitals which *were* on top of the pillars. four hundred pomegranates for the two networks (two rows of pomegranates for each network, to cover the two bowl-shaped capitals that *were* on top of the pillars) the ten carts, and ten lavers on the carts; one Sea, and twelve oxen under the Sea; the pots, the shovels, and the bowls. All these articles which Huram made for King Solomon *for* the house of the LORD *were of* burnished bronze” (7:40-45). “Huram supervised the construction of all the burnished bronze work in connection with the temple area, including the pots, the shovels, and the bowls of the temple itself. The bronze articles were cast in clay, in much the same manner as is done today (v. 46)” (MacDonald). “This summary of Huram’s handiwork excludes the bronze altar which he also fashioned (2 Ch. 4:1). Recording the crafting of these furnishings in so much detail emphasizes the magnificent beauty, symmetry, and glory of the temple” (Constable, BKC).

“In the plain of Jordan the king had them cast in clay molds, between Succoth and Zaretan” (7:46). “The bronze objects were cast in clay molds in the ... Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan, about 35 miles north of the Dead Sea and east of the Jordan River” (Constable, BKC). “Excavations have shown that this area (Succoth was E of the Jordan and just N of the Jabbok River) was a center of metallurgy” (Ryrie). “The bronze articles were cast in clay, in much the same manner as is done today” (MacDonald).

“And Solomon did not weigh all the articles, because *there were* so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined” (7:47). “Bronze was so abundant that it was not even weighed” (Constable, BKC).

“The amount of detail the biblical writer included gives us some appreciation of the external beauty, symmetry, glory, and value of the temple. All of this contributed to the greater glory of Yahweh and helped the Israelites appreciate His greatness” (Constable’s Notes).

## Furnishings Inside the Temple

*The Furniture* “Thus Solomon had all the furnishings made for the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold on which *was* the showbread; the lampstands of pure gold, five on the right *side* and five on the left in front of the inner sanctuary, with the flowers and the lamps and the wick-trimmers of gold; the basins, the trimmers, the bowls, the ladles, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, *both* for the doors of the inner room (the Most Holy Place) *and* for the doors of the main hall of the temple” (7:48-50). “On the articles in the Tabernacle similar to these, see notes on Exodus 25” (Ryrie). “The furnishings of the holy place included the golden altar of incense, the table of gold, ten golden tables of showbread (2 Chron. 4:8), ten golden lampstands of pure gold, and the golden utensils” (MacDonald). “Whereas the



tabernacle had one lampstand, the temple had 10 lampstands in the holy place” (Constable, BKC). “The candelabra were arranged down the length of the main sanctuary to give light on these tables (Ex. 25:31-40)” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“As in the Mosaic tabernacle, the metals used expressed the glory of God. The closer to the ark, the throne of Yahweh, the more valuable was the metal used. Everything inside the temple was gold or gold plated, and outside the temple there was bronze. While the ordinary Israelite did not see the inside of the temple, he or she would have known of its glory. Perhaps this section (vv. 48-50) is shorter than the former one (vv. 13-47) because the majority of the people, who were not priests, did not see these furnishings” (Constable’s Notes).

*David’s Accessories* “So all the work that King Solomon had done for the house of the LORD was finished; and Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated: the silver and the gold and the furnishings. He put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD” (7:51). The things dedicated were “likely an enormous amount of spoils taken in wars” (Ryrie). “The priests probably placed the treasures David had collected in the rooms of the structure that surrounded the temple (6:5-6) for use in Israel’s worship as needed. The temple, then, became the treasury of Israel in that it housed the nation’s greatest treasures” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** Solomon built a palace that honored him and a magnificent Temple to honor the Lord.

“The writer gave us extensive information about the temple furnishings to increase our awe, not only of the temple itself but also of Yahweh’s greatness. The temple and all it contained reflected the God who abode there. Perhaps Solomon’s greatest contribution to Israel’s life was the building of the temple. He glorified Yahweh in the eyes of his own people, and in the eyes of his non-Israelite neighbors by building a magnificent house for the Lord. The amount of text given to the description of the temple and Solomon’s palace complex illustrates the importance of these buildings in ancient Near Eastern culture” (Constable’s Notes). This brings up the subject of honor. The Bible has a great deal of things to say about honor. The first thing that comes to mind is the children to honor their parents (Ex. 20; Eph. 6:2). That is only the beginning. Husbands are to honor their wives (1 Pet. 5:7). Slaves are to honor their masters (1 Tim. 6:1). Qualified widows are to be honored by the church (1 Tim. 5:3). Elders who rule well are worthy of double honor (1 Tim. 5:17). Believers are to honor the king (1 Pet. 2:17). Paul says, “Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor (13:7).” Peter says, “Honor all people.” The Lord will honor believers at the Judgment seat of Christ (1 Pet. 1:7).

The Scripture speaks about honoring the Lord. “Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, to God who alone is wise, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen” (1 Tim. 1:17). “Who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen” (1 Tim. 6:16). “The living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever” (Rev. 4:9). The twenty-four elders say, “You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created” (Rev. 4:11). Angels say “with a loud voice: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain To receive power and riches and wisdom, And strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (Rev. 5:12). And every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth and such as are in the sea, and all that are in them, I heard saying: “Blessing and honor and glory and power Be to Him who sits on the

throne, And to the Lamb, forever and ever!” (Rev. 5:13). “All the angels stood around the throne and the elders and the four living creatures, and fell on their faces before the throne and worshiped God, saying: “Amen! Blessing and glory and wisdom, Thanksgiving and honor and power and might, *Be* to our God forever and ever. Amen” (Rev. 7:11-12). “After these things, I heard a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, “Alleluia! Salvation and glory and honor and power belong to the Lord our God!” (Rev. 19:1).

How do we honor a person? We honor someone by our presence. For example, if someone we know dies, we attend the funeral to honor them. We honor someone by what we say about them. The deceased is honored at a funeral by what is said about them. We honor people about what we do, as in this passage. Solomon’s house honored the Lord. I do something every Sunday to honor somebody. Larry McCray was a member of our church, and elder, and a personal friend. When he passed away, his widow gave me his Bible, which I preached from every Sunday.

How do we honor the Lord? I asked a group of people and got all kinds of answers, including donating something to the Lord, such as a car or a piano, putting the Lord in your will or living trust, and inscribing something about the Lord on your tombstone. How about honoring the Lord with your house by using it for hospitality or wearing a cross?

“Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon’s *son*, who would betray Him, said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?’ This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always’” (Jn. 12:1-8).



# LEARNING TO PRAYER FROM A PRAYER

Three thousand years ago, a wise man prayed a prayer. I have a copy of the prayer, which has been preserved in writing. It is a particularly significant prayer because of when it was prayed and, of all things, because of its length. If you pay close attention to it, perhaps you could learn something about prayer. Solomon prayed at the dedication of the temple. It is recorded in 1 Kings 8 and it is the longest prayer in the Bible. What can we learn from it?

“This chapter climaxes the writer’s emphasis on the greatness of Yahweh as Israel’s God. It is the most detailed account of a dedication service in the Bible. It is also one of the most theologically significant texts in 1 and 2 Kings” (Constable’s Notes).

## Solomon’s Transfer

*The Assembly* “Now Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the chief fathers of the children of Israel, to King Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the City of David, which *is* Zion” (8:1). “After all the new furnishings, utensils, and accessories had been made and placed in position (6:1-38; 7:13-51), Solomon summoned the people for the installation of the ark and the dedication of the temple. All the heads of ... tribes and ... families in Israel received special invitations.... Formerly, the ark had rested in the tabernacle David pitched (2 Sam. 6:17) on Mount Zion, the southeast portion of Jerusalem called the City of David” (Constable, BKC).

“Therefore all the men of Israel assembled with King Solomon at the feast in the month of Ethanim, which *is* the seventh month” (8:2). “The ceremony was scheduled for the festival in the month of Ethanim (the Feast of Tabernacles in September-October [Lev. 23:33-36])” (Constable, BKC). This was “eleven months after the completion of the Temple (1 Kings 6:38)” (Ryrie).

“The ceremony of installing the ark in Solomon’s temple took place during the Feast of Tabernacles. This was one of the feasts that the Mosaic Law specified that all Israelite males had to attend (Lev. 23:33-36). This feast was a commemoration of the Lord’s faithfulness during His people’s wilderness wanderings. It looked back to their slavery in Egypt and forward to their establishment in the Promised Land. The bringing of the ark into the temple symbolized the fulfillment of that hope. Evidently, Solomon waited for this feast in order to celebrate the dedication of the temple, and used the months following the completion of construction to furnish it and to prepare for the celebration” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Move* “So all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. Then they brought up the ark of the LORD, the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy furnishings that *were* in the tabernacle. The priests and the Levites brought them up” (8:3-4). “In 2 Ch. 5:4, it is said the Levites did it, whose business it was, Deut. 31:25, and so the priests might be called; for every priest was a Levite, though every Levite was not a priest, and the priests did at all times bear the ark; see Jos. 3:15” (Gill).

“What verses 3-8 picture is the symbolic enthronement of Yahweh as Israel’s King. Israel’s God now entered into His house. As mentioned above, the people did not regard the sovereignty of a human king as firmly established until he built a palace for himself. Now they saw the sovereignty of the divine King established over Israel” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Sacrifices* “Also King Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel who were assembled with him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen that could not be counted or numbered for multitude” (8:5). The expression “could not be counted or numbered” “seems to be hyperbolic, and designed to denote a great number” (Gill). “The joy of the people is seen in the abundance of sacrifices of sheep and oxen” (*NKJV Study Bible*).

*The Ark of the Covenant* “Then the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the temple, to the Most Holy Place, under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim spread their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim overshadowed the ark and its poles. The poles extended so that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place, in front of the inner sanctuary; but they could not be seen from outside. And they are there to this day” (8:6-8). “In some way that we do not understand, the ends of the poles were visible from the holy place, but they could not be seen from outside, on the porch. The poles were not removed, as stated in the KJV” (MacDonald). “The poles extended beyond the area obscured by the veil but not so that they could be seen from the outside porch” (Ryrie).

“Perhaps the poles that carried the ark, and were fastened to the sides of the ark (cf. Exod. 25:15), were oriented so that they ran east and west. They were so long (more than 30 feet long; cf. 6:20) that they evidently extended out of the most holy place (‘the inner sanctuary’) into ‘the holy place’ (v. 8). Apparently, the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place hid the ark from sight, but not the eastern ends of the poles. They were visible from the holy place but not from ‘outside’ the temple building. ‘To this day’ (v. 8) shows that the writer wrote this part of Kings before 586 B.C. when the Babylonian army destroyed this temple (cf. 9:13, 21; 10:12, 20; 2 Kings 2:22; 8:22; 10:27; 14:7; 16:6; 17:23, 34)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Nothing was in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt” (8:9). “The two stone tablets of the Law placed in the ark by Moses were still there. They served to remind Israel that the nation was still under the blessings and responsibilities of the Mosaic Covenant” (constable, BKC). “At this time, the only items in the ark were the two tablets of stone, containing the Ten Commandments. We are not told what happened to the pot of manna or to Aaron’s rod that budded (Heb. 9:4)” (MacDonald).

Ryrie points out that Hebrews 9:4 says the Tabernacle contained the law, Aaron’s rod, and manna, so “apparently, the latter two items had been lost by this time. (Some think they were never placed in the ark but alongside it; cf. Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10.)” “Formerly a pot of manna, symbolizing God’s faithful provision of the needs of His people, and Aaron’s rod that budded, symbolizing God’s confirmation of the Aaronic priesthood, had rested near the ark in the tabernacle” (Constable’s Notes). “They may have been removed by the Philistines or some other enemy. Or perhaps the objects, being in front of the tabernacle, not in the ark (cf. Ex. 16:33-34; Num. 17:10), were added to the ark sometime later than Solomon and then eventually were lost” (Constable, BKC).

*The Cloud* “And it came to pass, when the priests came out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD” (8:10). “The shekinah (from the Hebrew root translated ‘to dwell’) cloud (Exod. 19:9; 24:15-16), symbolic of Yahweh’s presence, filled the temple. It had also filled the tabernacle at its dedication (Exod. 40:34-35)” (Constable’s Notes).

“So that the priests could not continue ministering because of the cloud; for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD” (8:11). “The Israelites perceived that their God had come to dwell among them and to bless them with His presence. Even priestly ministry was impossible

during this glorious revelation of Yahweh. All that the people could do was worship” (Constable’s Notes).

## Solomon’s Pronouncement/Blessing

*The Introduction* “Then Solomon spoke: ‘The LORD said He would dwell in the dark cloud’” (8:12). Addressing the people, Solomon told them that the Lord said He would dwell among them. “God previously said He would dwell in the cloudy pillar (Lev. 16:2)” (Constable’s Notes). “Solomon recognized the cloud as the symbol of God’s presence and favor (Exodus 19:9; Leviticus 16:2)” (Ryrie).

“I have surely built You an exalted house, and a place for You to dwell in forever” (8:13). Addressing the Lord, Solomon said he had promised to build Him a house. “Solomon hoped God would now dwell in the temple forever (i.e., from then on)” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Blessing* “Then the king turned around and blessed the whole assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing” (8:14). Facing the assembly of people, Solomon blessed them.

*The Praise* “And he said: ‘Blessed *be* the LORD God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David, and with His hand has fulfilled *it*, saying, ‘Since the day that I brought My people Israel out of Egypt, I have chosen no city from any tribe of Israel *in which* to build a house, that My name might be there; but I chose David to be over My people Israel’” (8:15-16). “The temple was not to be a ‘container’ for God (8:27) but a place for his Name to dwell (8:16-17, 8:19-20), that is, a place where His presence and character would be evident” (Constable, BKC).

“Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, ‘Whereas it was in your heart to build a temple for My name, you did well that it was in your heart. Nevertheless, you shall not build the temple, but your son who will come from your body, he shall build the temple for My name’” (8:17-19). “Solomon emphasized the desire of David’s heart to build the temple (vv. 17-18). God raised up Solomon to do that, as He had promised. The temple was a house for the reputation (name) of Yahweh; it made a statement about Him” (Constable’s Notes).

“So the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; and I have filled the position of my father David, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised; and I have built a temple for the name of the LORD God of Israel” (8:20). “‘Name’ occurs 14 times in verses 16-20” (Constable’s Notes).

“And there I have made a place for the ark, in which *is* the covenant of the LORD which He made with our fathers when He brought them out of the land of Egypt” (8:21). “The Mosaic Covenant was the basis of Israel’s ongoing fellowship with God. Solomon demonstrated humility and gratitude in what he said” (Constable’s Notes).

## Solomon’s Prayer

*Praise* “Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the assembly of Israel and spread out his hands toward heaven and he said: ‘LORD God of Israel, *there is* no God in heaven above or on earth below like You, who keep *Your* covenant and mercy with Your servants who walk before You with all their hearts’” (8:22-23). “Solomon stood and

then kneeled (8:54) on a special bronze platform that had been built in the temple courtyard for the dedication service (2 Chron. 6:13). Solomon began his prayer with worship and praise to God for His uniqueness and His faithfulness in keeping His promises” (Constable, BKC).

Ryrie points out that ‘Solomon’s great prayer [is] much longer than his previous sermon!’ “This great prayer centers on the Mosaic Covenant. That is its heart. It is the longest prayer in the Bible. Solomon introduced seven petitions with a backward look, emphasizing God’s faithfulness (vv. 23-26). He concluded with a forward look stressing God’s mercy (vv. 52-53)” (Constable’s Notes; in the BKC, Constable says there were nine requests).

MacDonald says, “The king listed various specific cases in which the Lord’s answer was especially desired.

1. In lawsuits where oaths were taken, presumably because no definite evidence was available, God was asked to punish the guilty and reward the innocent (vv. 31, 32).

2. When defeat came to Israel’s army because of sin, God was asked to forgive and restore them to their land when they confessed their sin (vv. 33, 34).

3. In times of drought, God was asked to send rain ... when the people humbled themselves before Him in repentance (vv. 35, 36).

4. If famine or pestilence, or blight or mildew, or insect plagues, or enemy siege, or any other calamity should befall them, God was requested to honor any prayers that were made to Him toward the temple and to forgive ... the land (vv. 37-40).

5. If a Gentile converted to Judaism and prayed to God, then He was asked to answer the prayer of such a proselyte (vv. 41-43).

6. Prayers for victory in battle were anticipated by Solomon, and he asked the Lord to be mindful of all such supplications (vv. 44, 45).

7. Speaking prophetically, Solomon next envisioned the time when Israel might be carried into captivity because of sin. He asked the Lord to listen to their prayer of repentance and cause their captors to be merciful to them; after all, the Israelites were His people, whom He had delivered out of Egypt. These verses found fulfillment in the Babylonian captivity and in the subsequent return under the decree of Cyrus (vv. 46-53).”

*Petition: Keep Your Promise* “You have kept what You promised Your servant David my father; You have both spoken with Your mouth and fulfilled *it* with Your hand, as *it is* this day. Therefore, LORD God of Israel, now keep what You promised Your servant David my father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man sit before Me on the throne of Israel, only if your sons take heed to their way, that they walk before Me as you have walked before Me.’ And now I pray, O God of Israel, let Your word come true, which You have spoken to Your servant David my father” (8:24-26). Because the Lord is faithful to keep His promises, Solomon asked Him to keep the promise He made to David that one of his descendants would sit on the throne of Israel if he walked before the Lord as David had done.

*Petition: Answer Prayer* “But will God indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain You. How much less this temple which I have built! Yet regard the prayer of Your servant and his supplication, O LORD my God, and listen to the cry and the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today that Your eyes may be open toward this temple night and day, toward the place of which You said, ‘My name shall be there,’ that You may hear the prayer which Your servant makes toward this place. And may You hear the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, when they pray toward this place. Hear in heaven Your dwelling place; and when You hear, forgive” (8:27-30). “In these verses,

Solomon voiced the truth that Yahweh did not really live on earth but in heaven. He did not confuse the symbols of God's presence with God Himself (cf. 1 Sam. 4:3)" (Constable's Notes). In verses 27-30, Solomon is asking the Lord to answer prayer (see "regard the prayer" in verse 28, "hear the prayer" in verse 29, "hear the supplication" in verse 30, and "hear in heaven" in verse 30).

*Petition: Practice Judgments* "When anyone sins against his neighbor, and is forced to take an oath, and comes *and* takes an oath before Your altar in this temple, then hear in heaven, and act, and judge Your servants, condemning the wicked, bringing his way on his head, and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness" (8:31-32). "This statement reflects the strong emphasis placed on justice in the theology of the Old Testament. Since God is just, He expects His representatives to be just also. The Temple was to be a place where this was recognized" (Heater Jr., cited in Constable's Notes). "He requested that God would grant mercy when His people turned to Him in situations involving violations of the covenant. These included personal sins (vv. 31-32), defeat in battle (vv. 33-34), drought (vv. 35-36), and famine (vv. 37-40)... All the calamities Solomon mentioned in his prayer are curses God promised to send on Israel if she broke the Mosaic Covenant (cf. Lev. 26:16-39; Deut. 28:22, 25, 38, 42, 59; 31:17, 29; 32:24)" (Constable's Notes).

*Petition: Forgive* "When Your people Israel are defeated before an enemy because they have sinned against You, and when they turn back to You and confess Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this temple, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the land which You gave to their fathers" (8:33-34). These verses deal with Israel's defeat.

"When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain because they have sinned against You, when they pray toward this place and confess Your name, and turn from their sin because You afflict them, then hear in heaven, and forgive the sin of Your servants, Your people Israel, that You may teach them the good way in which they should walk; and send rain on Your land which You have given to Your people as an inheritance" (8:35-36). These verses deal with drought.

"When there is famine in the land, pestilence *or* blight *or* mildew, locusts *or* grasshoppers; when their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities; whatever plague or whatever sickness *there is* whatever prayer, whatever supplication is made by anyone, *or* by all Your people Israel, when each one knows the plague of his own heart, and spreads out his hands toward this temple, then hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and **forgive**, and act, and give to everyone according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You alone know the hearts of all the sons of men) that they may fear You all the days that they live in the land which You gave to our fathers" (8:37-40). These verses deal with natural disasters.

In verses 33-40, Solomon mentions three situations in which the Israelites suffer the consequences of their sin (see "when" at the beginning of verses 33, 35, and 37). The three situations are when Israel is defeated militarily (8:33-34) when there is a drought (8:35-36), and when there is a natural disaster (8:37-40). In each case, when the sinners turn back to the Lord, Solomon asks the Lord to forgive them (8:34, 36, and 39).

The three situations illustrate sin's consequences: military defeat, devastating drought, and natural disaster. Those were the consequences for Israel in the Old Testament. In the New Testament, the consequences are physical weakness, physical sickness, and premature physical death (1 Cor. 11:30). The solution is confession (1 Jn. 1:9).

*Petition for the Foreigner* "Moreover, concerning a foreigner, who *is* not of Your people Israel, but has come from a far country for Your name's sake (for they will hear of Your great



name and Your strong hand and Your outstretched arm), when he comes and prays toward this temple, hear in heaven Your dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to You, that all peoples of the earth may know Your name and fear You, as *do* Your people Israel, and that they may know that this temple which I have built is called by Your name” (8:41-43). Ryrie says foreigner “does not mean the settled alien, but the non-Israelite who came to worship.”

*Petition: Victory in Battle* “When Your people go out to battle against their enemy, wherever You send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name, then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause” (8:44-45). Solomon anticipated that Israel would be involved in military conflict in the future. He asked the Lord to give them victory in battle when they prayed. Our battles are with the world, the flesh, and the devil. We, too, should pray for victory (Mt. 6:13).

*Petition: Return from Captivity* “When they sin against You (for *there is* no one who does not sin), and You become angry with them and deliver them to the enemy, and they take them captive to the land of the enemy, far or near. *Yet* when they come to themselves in the land where they were carried captive, and repent, and make supplication to You in the land of those who took them captive, saying, ‘We have sinned and done wrong, we have committed wickedness’ and *when* they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who led them away captive, and pray to You toward their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen and the temple which I have built for Your name then hear in heaven Your dwelling place their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and grant them compassion before those who took them captive, that they may have compassion on them (for they *are* Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out of Egypt, out of the iron furnace) that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to You. For You separated them from among all the peoples of the earth *to be* Your inheritance, as You spoke by Your servant Moses, when You brought our fathers out of Egypt, O Lord GOD” (8:46-53). Ryrie points out, “Three different words for sin are used in 1 Kings 8:47: *sinned* (missed the mark); *committed iniquity* (deliberately disobeyed); and *acted wickedly* (failed to conform to a true standard)” (Ryrie, italics his). Solomon points out that there is no one who does not sin and asks God to restore those who come to themselves.

A man in church forgot to put his phone on silent, and it rang so loud during the sermon that the pastor scolded him. After the sermon, people admonished him for interrupting the sermon. His friends and acquaintances shook their heads in disgust. You can see the shame and humiliation on his face. His wife lectured him on his carelessness all the way home. He never stepped foot in that church again. That evening, he went to a bar. Still nervous and trembling. He spilled his drink on the table, splashing some people. The bottle fell to the floor, breaking in pieces. People rush toward him. He closed his eyes, expecting words of condemnation. Instead, they wanted to know if he received a cut from the broken bottle. The waiter apologized and gave him a napkin to clean himself. The janitor mop the floor. The female manager offered him a complimentary drink, gave him a hug, and said, “Don’t worry, man. Who does it make mistakes?”

## Solomon's Benediction

*The Position* “And so it was, when Solomon had finished praying all this prayer and supplication to the LORD, that he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven” (8:55). “Solomon’s posture of kneeling with open hands uplifted to heaven symbolized his heart attitude, as posture often does in prayer. He, the earthly king, placed himself in a supplicant’s position before the heavenly King, dependent and eager to receive the blessings he requested” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Praise* “Then he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying, ‘Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised. There has not failed one word of all His good promise, which He promised through His servant Moses’” (8:55-56). Solomon began his blessing of the people by saying the Lord was to be praised for giving peace to His people according to all that He promised through Moses. Note, not one word had ever failed.

*The Petitions* “May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers” (8:57a). “Nothing is more desirable than the presence of God; Solomon could not have prayed for a greater blessing for himself and his people” (Gill).

“May He not leave us nor forsake us that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways, and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments, which He commanded our fathers” (8:57b-58). Solomon requests that the Lord not cease to aid them because of their sin but that He might enable them to keep Word, here called His statutes, commandments, judgments, and ways.

“And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near the LORD our God day and night, that He may maintain the cause of His servant and the cause of His people Israel, as each day may require that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no other” (8:59-60). Solomon adds the desire that his prayer be ever before the Lord so that He would meet the needs of His people depending on their daily needs and so that the people of the earth may know that He is the Lord God and there is no other.

“Let your heart therefore be loyal to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and keep His commandments, as at this day” (8:61). Solomon challenged the people to be loyal to the Lord by obeying His Word.

To sum up: “This benediction began with a review of God’s past faithfulness (v. 56). Solomon then voiced three wishes (vv. 57-59) with an explanation concerning his motive (v. 60). He concluded with a challenge for the future (v. 61). The three desires of Solomon’s heart were, first, that God would bless his generation with His divine presence (v. 57). Second, he asked that He would give His people the will to walk in obedience to His covenant (v. 58). Third, he prayed that God would keep Solomon’s requests dear to His heart (v. 59). Solomon’s final appeal to the people was that they would devote themselves to Yahweh wholeheartedly and express that commitment by obeying His Law (v. 61). Unfortunately Solomon himself failed to do this completely” (Constable’s Notes).

MacDonald says, “Solomon’s benediction, like the rest of his prayer, shows an immense appreciation of great spiritual truths: 1. *God is utterly reliable*. “Not one word has failed” (56)—what a testimony! 2. *The past guarantees the future* (57). Since God is unchanging (cf. Heb. 13:8), we can build upon the fact that what He has shown Himself to be in times past He will be to us (cf. Jos. 1:5). 3. *Man needs God’s help in the life of discipleship* (58), a truth which Jeremiah knew and for which he gave the reason (see Jer. 10:23; Jer. 17:9). Even the impulse of



man's free will comes from God—a paradox indeed! Compare the activity of the Holy Spirit in Joh\_16:8-11. 4. *We stand in daily need of the assistance of God* ('as each day requires,' 59). But then, He neither slumbers nor sleeps (Psa. 121:4)! 5. *God's care for His children is never for their selfish enjoyment, but that others might come to know Him* (60). 6. In view of all this, *can we give less than our absolute loyalty and obedience to Him* (61)? (*Daily Notes of the Scripture Union*)" (MacDonald, italics his).

"This prayer is also recorded in 2 Chronicles 6 (see notes), with the only differences being: In 2 Chronicles Solomon ended his prayer with three requests (2Ch\_6:40-42), omitted in 1 Kings; in 1 Kings Solomon blessed the people (vv. 54-61). This is omitted in 2 Chronicles" (MacDonald).

## Solomon's Sacrifices

*The Sacrifices* "Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, twenty-two thousand bulls and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD" (8:62-63). "The number of offerings seems incredibly large, but contemporary extra-biblical records of other sacrifices that involved thousands of animals are extant" (Constable's Notes). "One must remember that thousands of priests sacrificed on many auxiliary altars, and the celebration lasted for two weeks" (Constable, BKC). "The large number of sacrifices was certainly appropriate for this magnificent occasion and was easily financed out of Solomon's great wealth" (Ryrie). "Of the thousands of animals slain, not one was offered as a sin or trespass offering. Of the great number of animals that were sacrificed, some were used as food for the huge throng that had assembled (v. 65)" (MacDonald).

"On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that *was* in front of the house of the LORD; for there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings, because the bronze altar that *was* before the LORD *was* too small to receive the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings" (8:64). "The burnt offering represented the dedication of the worshipper's person to God and secured forgiveness. The grain offering pictured the dedication of his work to God. The peace offering expressed the joy that resulted from the fellowship God had made possible with Himself and with the worshipper's fellowman (Lev. 1-3)" (Constable's Notes).

As the king finished speaking, "fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offering and the sacrifices, and the glory of the LORD filled the temple" (2 Chron. 7:1) as it had earlier filled the tabernacle (Ex. 40:34-35; Lev. 9:23-24)" (Constable, BKC).

*The Feast* "At that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the Brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven more days—fourteen days" (8:65). "The entrance of Hamath [was] the northern boundary of Israel, 14 mi NE of Baalbek. the brook of Egypt.... The dedication of the temple lasted seven days, and the Feast of Booths lasted another seven days. See 2 Chron. 7:9-10." "People came from the far Northeast (Hamath) and the extreme Southwest (the Wadi el-Arish) to this feast. Solomon extended the celebration an extra week" (Constable's Notes).

*The Conclusion* "On the eighth day he sent the people away; and they blessed the king, and went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the good that the LORD had done for His servant David, and for Israel His people" (8:66). "Verse 66 is very significant because it shows that because of Israel's rededication in this covenant renewal ceremony, King Solomon enjoyed

blessing from his people on whom he had brought blessing. The result was joy and gladness of heart for everyone. These are what God had promised in the Mosaic Law as consequences of commitment to His will. God blessed Solomon personally, and he became a channel of blessing to the nation he served because he committed himself to obeying God's Word" (Constable's Notes).

"2 Chron. 7:9 says that a solemn assembly was held on the 'eighth day,' while verse 66 says that the people were sent away on the 'eighth day.' John Haley harmonizes these two accounts as follows: "The feast of tabernacles began on the fifteenth and ended on the twenty-second of the month, closing with a 'holy convocation' on the 'eighth day' (Lev. 23:33-39), at the end of which Solomon dismissed the people; the dismissal taking effect the next morning, the twenty-third (2 Chron. 7:10)" (MacDonald).

**Summary:** At the dedication of the Temple, Solomon transferred the Ark to the Temple, pronounced a blessing, praised the Lord, prayed, proclaimed a benediction, and presented sacrifices.

This dedication said nothing about what the people did. It speaks of praise for what the Lord did and prays for what He will do. When we dedicate a church building, that should be our focus. That should be the focus of our prayers daily.

As Hannah's prayer (1 Sam. 2:1-10) set the tone for all that followed in 1 and 2 Samuel, so Solomon's prayer here does the same for 1 and 2 Kings. The remainder of 1 and 2 Kings shows how God answered Solomon's prayer. That is why this chapter is so significant theologically. All of the possible misfortunes that the king mentioned here eventually took place in Israel's history, culminating in the Babylonian Captivity. Later in Israel's history, the writing prophets frequently alluded to conditions that Solomon mentioned in this prayer, that came to pass in the prophets' days because of Israel's sins" (Constable's Notes).

"Solomon's prayer is essential to comprehend the message of the book. The author of the Book of Kings intended for the words of Solomon to be heard at a key point in the relationship between God and His people, that is, at the time the temple in Jerusalem was dedicated. The following words of Solomon's prayer [vv. 47-48] would appeal to the exiles and would be a specific plea for repentance because of the hope of returning to the motherland. This is the essence of the book's message" (Gershon Galil, "The Message of the Book of Kings in Relation to Deuteronomy and Jeremiah," *Bibliotheca Sacra*, 158:632, October-December 2001, p.408, cited in Constable's Notes).

"This was the biggest event in Israel, in terms of its theological significance, since God gave Israel the Law at Mount Sinai. Israel was finally in the Promised Land with her God enthroned in a place of great honor. Now, Israel was in position to fulfill her calling as a nation in the world as never before in her history (cf. Exod. 19:5-6). The significance of this chapter becomes clearer when we read the Prophets section of the Old Testament. The writing prophets alluded to it often" (Constable's Notes).

So, what can we learn from Solomon's prayer? This wise man began with praise. We would be wise to do the same. This wise man prayed for forgiveness. We would be wise to do the same. This wise man prayed for other people to be blessed. We would be wise to do the same. Notice that his prayer included the Lord, himself, and others. That is a wise prayer. It is unwise for our prayers to only include petitions for ourselves. Be wise like Solomon. Include the praise of the Lord and the blessing of others in your prayers.

## WHY GOD BLESSES SOME PEOPLE

It appears that God exceptionally blesses some people. For example, He abundantly blessed Solomon. Why did God bless Solomon? Will the reason God bless Solomon work for us? Perhaps we should also ask how God blessed Solomon and how God blesses us.

“The writer next recorded what happened to Solomon and to Israel as a result of the king’s provision to exalt the reputation of Yahweh among His people. He narrated God’s covenant with Solomon (9:1-9), further evidences of Yahweh’s blessing (9:10-28), Solomon’s greatness (ch. 10), and Solomon’s apostasy (ch. 11)” (Constable’s Notes).

### God’s Faithfulness (2 Chron. 7:11-22)

*The Appearance* “And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the king’s house, and all Solomon’s desire which he wanted to do, that the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon” (9:1-2). After Solomon had finished building the Temple, his own palace, and all he wanted to do, the Lord appeared to him a second time.

*The Answer* “And the LORD said to him: ‘I have heard your prayer and your supplication that you have made before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually’” (9:3). “First, the Lord assured Solomon that He had heard his prayer of dedication [8:22-53] and that He would always abide in the temple in a special sense. His people could always count on His eyes resting on them and His heart compassionately responding to their needs as Solomon had requested” (Constable, BKC).

*The Admonition* “Now if you walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, *and* if you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, as I promised David your father, saying, ‘You shall not fail to have a man on the throne of Israel’ (9:4-5). “Second, He said He would provide a continuous line of descendants from Solomon to sit on Israel’s throne if Solomon would continue to follow God faithfully (cf. 2:1-4).... God responded to Solomon’s dedication of himself and his nation as He had responded to David (2 Sam. 7) and to Solomon earlier (ch. 3). He offered Solomon continued blessing for continued faithfulness” (Constable’s Notes).

“*But* if you or your sons at all turn from following Me, and do not keep My commandments *and* My statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them; and this house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out of My sight. Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples” (9:6-7). “Third, if Solomon, the subsequent kings, or the people abandoned the Lord’s covenant, He would do three things. He would remove the people from their land, abandon the temple, and make Israel a byword instead of a blessing. This, too, God did for Israel, because overall, Israel did not remain faithful” (Constable’s Notes). “As far as the Temple and people are concerned, it is clearly stated that it will be destroyed and they will go into captivity if they are unfaithful; but the Davidic dynasty will not be set aside (Psalm 89:30-37)” (Ryrie).

“The alternative would have been cutting off Solomon’s descendants and replacing them with descendants from another branch of David’s family (cf. the fate of Eli’s house). God maintained Solomon’s line because, generally speaking, Solomon remained faithful to the Lord” (Constable’s Notes). “The Davidic dynasty, though interrupted for centuries starting with the Babylonian Captivity, will be restored by the Messiah when He sits on David’s throne in the Millennium (Ps. 89:30-37). This judgment would cause other peoples to marvel at and ridicule Israel. Scoff (9:8) literally means “whistle in amazement.” People would know that Israel fell because of her idolatry. Not only did later kings lead Israel away from Yahweh to false gods, but also Solomon himself did (11:4-8), and the nation was on the path toward exile (2 Kings 25:1-21)” (Constable, BKC).

*The Astonishment* “And as for this house, which is exalted, everyone who passes by it will be astonished and will hiss, and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’” (9:8). “The text is uncertain, though the meaning is that the revered Temple will be destroyed (cf. 2 Chron. 7:21)” (Ryrie).

“Then they will answer, ‘Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, and worshiped them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought all this calamity on them’” (9:9). The answer to their question (9:8) will be because they forsook their God embraced, worship, and served other gods.

To sum up: “As for Solomon’s family, God promised that Solomon and his sons would always have descendants to sit on the throne if they would be obedient. But if they departed from the living God and turned to idolatry, then He would send the people into exile, destroy the temple, and make Israel ... a proverb and a byword among the Gentiles. The temple would become a heap of ruins, and visitors would be astonished at its desolation” (MacDonald). The point is God will be faithful to His Covenant.

## God’s Blessings (2 Chron. 8)

*Solomon’s Gifts* “Now it happened at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king’s house (Hiram the king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired), that King Solomon then gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee” (9:10-11). “Somewhat after the mid-point of Solomon’s 40-year reign, God was blessing him for his faithfulness. What the writer described in this section [9:10-28] took place after Solomon had completed his major building projects in Jerusalem, which took about 20 years” (Constable’s Notes). “Solomon mortgaged 20 Galilean towns (settlements) bordering Phoenicia to Hiram. This brought the border of Phoenicia farther south. This arrangement compensated Hiram for all the lumber and 9,000 pounds of gold he had sent to Solomon for his building projects” (Constable’s Notes). “Apart from the fact that Solomon shouldn’t have been so extravagant in building his ‘palace,’ he didn’t have the right to give twenty cities away just to pay his debts. All the land belonged to the Lord and could not be deeded away permanently (Lev. 25:23)” (Wiersbe, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Then Hiram went from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, but they did not please him. So he said, ‘What kind of cities are these which you have given me, my brother?’ And he called them the land of Cabul, as they are to this day” (9:12-13). The Hebrew translated Cabul means “binding.” “(Understood by some to mean ‘worthless’ or ‘good for nothing’). Evidently, Solomon later regained possession of the region (2 Chron. 8:2)” (Ryrie). “Hiram may have called these towns Cabul, a word that sounds like the Hebrew word for ‘good for nothing’

because they were not in a productive region. This cheap gift did not contribute to ongoing good relations between Israel and Phoenicia. (Josephus, *Against Apion*, 1:18, for his statement that ancient Tyrian records mentioned these things.)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then Hiram sent the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold” (9:14). “Hiram sent Solomon about 144,000 oz. (4.5 tons, or 4 metric tons) of gold’ (Ryrie). Why is this statement made here? One explanation is that earlier in the passage, Hiram is said to have “supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress and gold, as much as he desired” (9:11) and this statement (11:14) is “the reason why he (Hiram) resented Solomon’s action because so great a sum required a better recompense” (Wesley).

*Salomon’s Public Works* “And this is the reason for the labor force which King Solomon raised: to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer” (9:15). This is the reason (Hebrew: “word, speaking, thing;” MacDonald; “account”) for the forced labor was used to build the Temple, the palace, the Millo (Hebrew: “rampart” or “mound;” NIV: “terraces”), the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.

“Solomon was powerful enough to conscript laborers to build the Millo and a wall around Jerusalem. The Millo (lit. filling) evidently refers to the terraces on the east side of Mt. Zion (cf. 2 Sam. 5:9). Solomon enlarged these so they connected the City of David with the temple and palace site. He also expanded the wall that encircled the City of David so it included the temple and palace complex to the north thus doubling the size of the city. Solomon also rebuilt and fortified three large strategic defense centers: Hazor in the North (cf. Josh. 11:1), Megiddo in the Jezreel Valley (cf. Josh. 17:11), and Gezer in the West” (Constable’s Notes).

In addition to the temple (6:1-38) and his palace (7:1-12), Solomon built supporting terraces (probably large level areas between hills made by filling in land), and the wall of Jerusalem, which he extended farther to the north, more than doubling the size of the city. His wall surrounded the temple and probably the palace, which were built to the north of the old City of David” (Constable, BKC). Megiddo [was] “an important fortification controlling a pass between the plains of Esdraelon and Sharon and the site of the future battle of Armageddon” (Ryrie).

“(Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and taken Gezer and burned it with fire, had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon’s wife.)” (9:16). “This city Joshua had taken from the Canaanites, Jos. 10:33; Jos. 12:12, and it was divided by lot to the tribe of Ephraim and was intended to be one of the Levitical cities, but it appears that the Canaanites had retaken it and kept possession till the days of Solomon, when his father-in-law, Pharaoh king of Egypt, retook it, and gave it to Solomon in dowry with his daughter” (Clarke). Imagine being given a city as a wedding present.

“And Solomon built Gezer, Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, all the storage cities that Solomon had, cities for his chariots and cities for his cavalry, and whatever Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion” (9:17-19). Ryrie says Tamar is “either Tamar on the road from Hebron to Elath or Tadmor (2 Chron. 8:4), a city in the Syrian desert about 135 mi NE of Damascus, later known as Palmyra.” The storage cities were “fortified towns for stockpiling food” (Ryrie).

“Lower Beth-horon stood on a major western approach route to Jerusalem. He also fortified Baalath (site uncertain) and Tamar, south of the Salt (Dead) Sea, in Judah, and he strengthened other towns (2 Chron. 8:2-6). Solomon developed these towns to defend Jerusalem and Israel and to control the major routes into and through his empire. Were these projects partially flawed by dependence on the flesh? Possibly they were. David had evidently built defensive border cities during his reign as well” (Constable’s Notes).



*Solomon's Labor Force* "All the people *who were* left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, who *were* not of the children of Israel—that is, their descendants who were left in the land after them, whom the children of Israel had not been able to destroy completely—from these Solomon raised forced labor, as it is to this day" (9:20-21). "Solomon put the defeated native Canaanites to work on government projects (cf. Gen. 9:25-26)... [They did not have] rights as free persons." Nevertheless, this plan proved to be a source of major dissatisfaction in Israel (cf. 12:4)" (Constable's Notes).

"But of the children of Israel Solomon made no forced laborers, because they *were* men of war and his servants: his officers, his captains, commanders of his chariots, and his cavalry" (9:22). "There was a distinction in Solomon's day between Israelites whom the king conscripted for temporary service and non-Israelites who were permanent slave laborers. The former served as military supervisors over civil forced labor gangs, for example" (Constable's Notes).

"Others *were* chiefs of the officials who *were* over Solomon's work: five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people who did the work" (9:23). "The Israelites served as soldiers and supervisors. The labor force was obviously very large. (On the 550 supervisors along with the 3,300 foremen mentioned in 5:16)" (Constable, BKC).

*Solomon's Wife's House* "But Pharaoh's daughter came up from the City of David to her house which *Solomon* had built for her. Then he built the Millo" (9:24). "Solomon also built terraces [NIV; see comments on verse 15] by filling in land near the residence he had built for Pharaoh's daughter in his palace complex (cf. 7:8). She moved there from her other residence in the City of David after the palace was completed" (Constable, BKC). Ryrie says the Millo was "a fortress incorporated into the wall of Jerusalem."

*Solomon's Annual Offering* "Now three times a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he had built for the LORD, and he burned incense with them *on the altar* that was before the LORD. So he finished the temple" (9:25). "The king offered sacrifices of worship three times annually, probably at the required feasts of Unleavened Bread, Pentecost (also called Harvest or Weeks), and Tabernacles (also called Booths or Ingathering)" (Constable's Notes; Ryrie). All the offerings mentioned were for worship (on the burnt offerings cf. Lev. 1:1-17, and on the fellowship offerings; cf. Lev. 3:1-17).

"Solomon officiates at the three major festivals because, in ancient Israel, the king was a religious as well as a political leader. The king was God's son by adoption (Ps. 2:7), a priest after the order of Melchizedek (Ps. 110:4), and his chief responsibilities were to defend the powerless and to maintain justice, righteousness and peace (e.g., Ps. 72; Isa. 9:7; 11:2-5)" (Rice, cited in Constable's Notes). "Not only did Solomon show himself a faithful spiritual shepherd by leading His people in worship, but continual attention to prescribed religious duties would keep the temple 'finished,' or properly maintained" (NKJV Study Bible).

*Solomon's Navy* "King Solomon also built a fleet of ships at Ezion Geber, which *is* near Elath on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom" (9:26). "Ezion-geber is between modern Elath and Aqaba on the N end of the E arm of the Red Sea" (Ryrie). "God blessed Solomon with an effective navy that brought added wealth from the south and the east" (Constable's Notes). "Archeologists have discovered the remains of Ezion Geber at the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba. This site, on the east arm of the Red Sea, gave Israel access to the east and south by water" (Constable, BKC).

"Then Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, seamen who knew the sea, to work with the servants of Solomon. And they went to Ophir, and acquired four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought *it* to King Solomon" (9:27-28). "Ophir has been variously identified

as southern Arabia, E Africa, or India. The gold amounted to about 504,000 oz. (15.75 tons, or 14.25 metric tons)” (Ryrie; Constable, BKC: “32,000 pounds”).

**Summary:** Faithful to His covenant, in answer to Solomon’s prayer, and in response to Solomon’s obedience, the Lord abundantly blessed Solomon.

“The writer documented in this section further evidence of God’s blessing on Solomon that came to him for his dedication to God. However, ‘Solomon’s defense works and monumental buildings drained the nation’s wealth while providing only a temporary appearance of strength and grandeur [cf. 12:4]” (DeVries)” (Constable’s Notes).

“But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one is blessed in what he does” (Jas. 1:25). This verse describes how to be blessed.

The first step toward being blessed is to look into the perfect law of liberty. The Greek word translated “look” is not a mere glance; it means “to stoop and look.” The idea is to bend over to get a closer look at it. This is a reference to close observation of the text of Scripture. The Bible is like Shakespeare; it is not sufficient to read it; it must be studied. The perfect law of liberty is the law of love (Mayor; Mitton). The law of love liberates! It is the complete, perfect law.

The next step on the road to being blessed is to “continue” in the Word. This is not the usual Greek word for “continue” in the New Testament. This particular word means “to continue beside.” Alford refers to Wiesinger’s remarks that the idea is not so much of continuing to observe it in action as it is of observing it in attention. In other words, this is a reference to meditation. After observing carefully what the Word says, a believer needs to linger *beside* it, thinking through what it means and how to apply it.

The third and final step in being blessed is to do the work. The Bible was not written for meditation and contemplation but for action. Aristotle wrote on the front of one of his books, “This book was written for action, not discussion.” Believers who do what the Word says will be blessed. They will hear God speak. They will be blessed with endurance, completeness, maturity, insight, wisdom, happiness, and righteousness (1:3, 4, 5, 12, 19). They will be blessed, indeed.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You because he trusts in You” (Isa. 26:3). Like James 1:25, this verse talks about meditation. Only here it is described as having a mind stayed upon the Lord. Unlike James 1:25, this verse goes beyond meditation indicating that the result of meditation is trusting in the Lord. It is when believers are constantly thinking about the Lord and consistently trusting the Lord but the Lord blesses them with perfect peace. “People who trust in the Lord enjoy perfect (i.e., complete, genuine) peace” (Martin). “Regarding verse 3, the celebrated American Baptist hymn writer, Philip P. Bliss, used to say, “I love this verse more than any other verse in the Bible”” (MacDonald).

Like a river glorious is God’s perfect peace,  
over all victorious in its bright increase:  
perfect, yet still flowing fuller every day;  
perfect, yet still growing deeper all the way.

Trusting in the Father, hearts are fully blest,  
finding, as he promised, perfect peace and rest.



## LEARNING WISDOM FROM A WISE MAN

If you want knowledge, there are many things that you can do. For example, you could read a book on the subject. Another possibility is not just reading a book but studying the subject. If reading or studying is not your thing, you can learn a lot by listening to audio recordings or watching videos available on the Internet. Knowledge is one thing; wisdom is another. How do you learn wisdom? Again, there are many ways to do that. One way is simple and easy. What might that one be, you might ask. The answer is in 1 Kings 10.

### Solomon's Wisdom (2 Chron. 9:1-12)

*The Arrival* “Now when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with hard questions” (10:1). “Sheba may be the land of the Sabeans (cf. Job 1:15; Ezek. 23:42; Joel 3:8)” (Constable, BKC). “The site of Sheba was about 1,200 miles southeast of Israel (present Yemen and or Oman). A traditional site of the Queen of Sheba’s castle is Salalah, in southern Oman. Sheba had come to dominate the spice and incense trade that had made that region of Arabia famous” (Constable’s Notes).

The Queen of Sheba heard of Solomon. “Solomon’s expeditions to the east by sea (9:26-28) would have brought him news of this prosperous and important Arabian kingdom” (Constable, BKC) and would have brought her news of Solomon.

The Queen of Sheba “traveled 1,200 mi. on camelback [10:2] to visit King Solomon, probably because his presence on the Gulf of Aqaba threatened the caravan routes that made southern Arabia rich” (Ryrie). “The queen’s primary purpose in visiting Solomon seems to have been to make a treaty with him. Before she did so, she wanted to make sure that he really was as wise and rich as she had heard” (Constable’s Notes).

The Queen of Sheba asked questions. Perhaps she asked business questions, the kinds of questions you would ask if you were considering entering a business, making an investment, or considering a purchase. “According to Josephus, Hiram had made similar approaches. The test was not an academic exercise but to see if he would be a trustworthy business partner and a reliable ally capable of giving help” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes). “Such testing was a sport among ancient Near Eastern monarchs” (Constable, BKC). The text says she asked “hard” questions. “The *hard* (‘enigmatic,’ REB) *questions* were not just ‘riddles,’ as in Judges 14:12, but included difficult diplomatic and ethical questions” (Constable’s Notes).

There are different types of questions. There are philosophical questions. One website says, “Philosophical questions are questions that don’t necessarily have an answer.” That website goes on to say, “Philosophical questions usually ask us to think about things like the meaning of life and what we think of as good and bad” (sAsk ee “[winkl.com/homework-help/religion-homework-help/philosophy/what-are-philosophical-questions#:~:text=Philosophical%20questions%20are%20questions%20that,%2C%20and%20others%2C%20philosophical%20questions](http://winkl.com/homework-help/religion-homework-help/philosophy/what-are-philosophical-questions#:~:text=Philosophical%20questions%20are%20questions%20that,%2C%20and%20others%2C%20philosophical%20questions)”).

Ask questions. “A prudent question is one half of wisdom” (Francis Bacon). “One who never asked either knows everything or nothing” (Malcolm Forbes). “Why and how are words so important that they cannot too often be used” (Napoleon Bonaparte). “He who asks questions shows his ignorance. He who does ask questions remains ignorant.”

“She came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, with camels that bore spices, very much gold, and precious stones; and when she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart” (10:2). The Hebrew word translated “retinue” means “strength, efficiency, wealth, army” (BDB; KJV: “a very great train;” NASB: “retinue;” NIV: “caravan;” ESV: “retinue”). The Cambridge Dictionary defines retinue as “a group of people who travel with an important person to help them: The president travels with a large retinue of aides and bodyguards.” It says a synonym is entourage.

*The Answers* “So Solomon answered all her questions; there was nothing so difficult for the king that he could not explain *it* to her” (10:3). The Queen of Sheba did not ask any question Solomon could not answer.

*The Awe* “And when the queen of Sheba had seen all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his servants, the service of his waiters and their apparel, his cupbearers, and his entryway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her” (10:4-5). Ryrie says that the expression “no more spirit in her” was because she discovered she could not get the best of Solomon (cf. Joshua 5:1).

“Then she said to the king: ‘It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However, I did not believe the words until I came and saw with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me. Your wisdom and prosperity exceed the fame of which I heard. Happy *are* your men and happy *are* these your servants, who stand continually before you *and* hear your wisdom!’” (10:6-8). The Hebrew translated “happy” means “happiness, blessedness.” “She noted that God had made Solomon a blessing to those around him (v. 8), as God had promised He would do for those who obeyed His covenant” (Constable’s Notes).

“Blessed be the LORD your God, who delighted in you, setting you on the throne of Israel! Because the LORD has loved Israel forever, therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness” (10:9). The Queen of Sheba blessed (Hebrew: “to bless, kneel”) Solomon’s God. “Though probably a pagan, she was willing to credit the Lord with giving Israel a wise king in whom He delighted” (Constable, BKC). “The queen of Sheba, that daughter of opulence, was completely overwhelmed by Solomon’s wisdom and by the splendor of his kingdom. This was in fulfillment of the Lord’s promise, to which Solomon owed everything (3:11-13)” (MacDonald).

*The Gifts* “Then she gave the king one hundred and twenty talents of gold, spices in great quantity, and precious stones. There never again came such abundance of spices as the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon” (10:10). Ryrie says that 120 talents of gold was about 144 ounces (4.5 tons). “Her gifts, which included four and one-half tons of gold, appear to have been part of a covenant treaty she negotiated with Solomon for her country (cf. v. 13). In her visit, we see Israel fulfilling its God-given purpose of bringing the Gentiles to Yahweh” (Constable’s Notes).

“Also, the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought great *quantities* of almug wood and precious stones from Ophir. And the king made steps of the almug wood for the house of the LORD and for the king’s house, also harps and stringed instruments for singers. There never again came such almug wood, nor has the like been seen to this day” (10:11-12). Ryrie says, “Almug (or algum) [was] probably the red sandalwood tree, which grows up to 20 ft. in height and is still used in making musical instruments.” Ophir may have been close to or a part of the queen’s kingdom of Sheba (cf. 9:28). Almugwood is strong, beautiful (black outside, ruby red inside), and long-lasting” (Constable, BKC). Solomon used the almug wood to make steps for the Temple, for decorations in his palace, and musical instruments for the singers. “These verses (10:10-12), which seem out of place here, may reflect a trade arrangement that resulted from the queen’s visit” (Constable, BKC).

*The Response* “Now King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired, whatever she asked, besides what Solomon had given her according to the royal generosity. So she turned and went to her own country, she and her servants” (10:13). Solomon not only answered all of her questions and generously gave the Queen of Sheba gifts, he also gave her whatever she desired.

“This incident seems to have been included here to support the statements made previously that Solomon’s reign was so glorious that rulers from all over the world came to see his kingdom and observe his wisdom (4:34). Its function is similar to the story of the two prostitutes (3:16-28) which also illustrated Solomon’s wisdom. Interestingly, both stories pertain to women, though of different social strata” (Constable, BKC).

“The royal family of Ethiopia claimed descent from Solomon and the queen of Sheba. It was asserted that the queen gave birth, as a result of her visit, to Menelik I, the traditional founder of the Ethiopian royal line. This is difficult to prove, but it is also difficult to disprove. Though the queen of Sheba did not come from Ethiopia, it is quite clear that Ethiopia was colonized by Sabaeans from South Arabia, crossing the Red Sea. Her descendants could have gone to Ethiopia, and Arabic legends give details regarding the queen who married Solomon. It may be added that Josephus speaks of a relationship which the queen of Sheba had with Ethiopia (*Antiq.* II. 10. 2; VI. 5. 6)” (Wood, cited in Constable’s Notes). “All her desire has been romantically interpreted by Jewish legend as of the queen’s desire for offspring by Solomon, and so [the Middle Ages Jewish commentator] Rashi comments: ‘He went in unto her, and there was born to her Nebuchadnezzar’” (Montgomery, cited in Constable’s Notes).

A lady I know asked a friend of hers for dating advice. The lady didn’t like the advice. While telling me the story, she said her friend had been married five times. Now, it’s possible to fail and learn from mistakes, but be sure you get advice from somebody who has succeeded. So, ask questions and listen to wise and successful people.

## **Solomon’s Wealth (2 Chron. 9:13-28)**

*His Shields* “The weight of gold that came to Solomon yearly was six hundred and sixty-six talents of gold, besides *that* from the traveling merchants, from the income of traders, from all the kings of Arabia, and from the governors of the country” (10:14-15). Ryrie says this was “nearly 800,000 ounces (25 tons, or 23 metric tons).” “The revenue of gold recorded as being received annually (almost 25 tons, or 50,000 pounds) did not include what must have been vast quantities required from trading with all the Arabian kings and taxes brought in by the governors of Israel” (Constable, BKC).

“Solomon served as an international broker. He capitalized on Israel’s strategic geographic location as the land bridge that connected three continents: Europe, Asia, and Africa. He made Israel a clearinghouse through which merchandise passed and charged custom taxes as goods entered and left his country. ‘Traders’ probably refers to business people who passed through Israel and ‘merchants’ to those who did business in Israel. Solomon was probably history’s most successful Jewish businessman” (Constable’s Notes). “Solomon was a genius in trade relationships” (MacDonald).

“Those who would consider his income of 666 talents (ca. 21.6 tons) of gold exaggeration should compare this with amounts registered in ancient Egypt about this time, ‘where gold is like dust in the land’ and Osorkon I in his first four years (ca. 924–920 BC) accumulated eighteen tons of gold, to which some of the loot taken by his father Shishak from Jerusalem should be

added (*cf.* 14:25-27). Similar large-scale acquisition and use of gold in temple building is attested from Mesopotamia” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes).

Constable says, “I do not believe we should criticize Solomon simply for being wealthy, since God promised to make him rich (3:13). Neither should we blame a person who receives a fortune as an outright gift, for having money. It was the accumulation of riches and ornaments to become materially secure and independent that God forbade. To the extent that Solomon did this—and he evidently did it somewhat—he was guilty of violating God’s Law” (Constable’s Notes). Yet in the BKC, Constable says, “God had told His kings not to multiply gold (Deut. 17:17), but Solomon disobeyed.

“And King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield” (10:16). Ryrie says, “Each of these shields contained about 15 lb. of gold.”

“He also made three hundred shields of hammered gold; three minas of gold went into each shield. The king put them in the House of the Forest of Lebanon” (10:17). Ryrie says these “smaller shields” weighed 5 pounds apiece. “The gold shields he hung in the palace armory were evidently for parade use. Gold is a very soft metal and would have been inappropriate for shields that soldiers used for defense in battle” (Constable’s Notes). “In 2 Chron. 9:16, the small shields are said to be made of 300 bekas of gold. But that is the same amount expressed in a different unit of measure” (Constable, BKC)/

*His Throne* “Moreover the king made a great throne of ivory, and overlaid it with pure gold. The throne had six steps, and the top of the throne was round at the back; there were armrests on either side of the place of the seat, and two lions stood beside the armrests. Twelve lions stood there, one on each side of the six steps; nothing like this had been made for any other kingdom” (10:18-20). “Perhaps the 12 lions surrounding Solomon’s throne represented Israel’s 12 tribes” (Constable’s Notes).

*His Vessels* “All King Solomon’s drinking vessels were gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Not one was silver, for this was accounted as nothing in the days of Solomon” (10:21). “Silver was considered as of relatively minor value in the days of Solomon” (MacDonald).

*His Fleet* “For the king had merchant ships at sea with the fleet of Hiram. Once every three years the merchant ships came bringing gold, silver, ivory, apes, and monkeys” (10:22). Ryrie says that the “merchant ships” (NASB and ESV: ships of Tarshish”) were “especially large and seaworthy ships.” “Tarshish (lit. refinery; *cf.* Jonah 1:3) was probably in Spain or Sardinia” (Constable’s Notes). Solomon’s merchant ships brought “exotic items as ivory, apes, and monkeys” (MacDonald). “The apes and baboons may have been pets in vogue at the time” (Constable, BKC).

*His Greatness* “So King Solomon surpassed all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom. Now all the earth sought the presence of Solomon to hear his wisdom, which God had put in his heart. Each man brought his present: articles of silver and gold, garments, armor, spices, horses, and mules, at a set rate year by year” (10:23-25). “The whole world [“all the earth”] is a hyperbole” (Constable, BKC). “Solomon’s riches and wisdom brought him worldwide fame, and gifts poured in to him from admirers who came to visit him” (MacDonald).

“And Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen, whom he stationed in the chariot cities and with the king at Jerusalem” (10:26). “Chariots were the most effective and dreaded military machines of that day. Their mobility and versatility gave Israel a great military advantage and discouraged enemies

from invading the wealthy nation. Solomon's chariot cities, some have suggested, were Gezer, Hazor, and Megiddo" (Constable, BKC).

"Though Solomon's wealth enabled him to purchase large quantities of horses and chariots, this practice was specifically prohibited in the Mosaic Law (Deut. 17:16). The reason for this prohibition was that the Lord wanted His people to depend on Him for their protection. The presence of strong physical defenses in Israel turned the hearts of Solomon and the people away from the Lord with a false sense of security. As is often the case, an abundance of material benefits leads people to think they have no needs when in reality their need for God never diminishes" (Constable, BKC). "Solomon fell into this trap. Wealth is not sinful in itself, but it does bring temptations with it (cf. James 5:1-6)" (Constable's Notes).

"The king made silver *as common* in Jerusalem as stones, and he made cedar trees as abundant as the sycamores which *are* in the lowland. Also, Solomon had horses imported from Egypt and Keveh; the king's merchants bought them in Keveh at the *current* price. Now a chariot that was imported from Egypt cost six hundred *shekels* of silver, and a horse one hundred and fifty; and thus, through their agents, they exported *them* to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria" (10:27-29). "Kue (v. 28) was Cilicia (the Apostle Paul's home province) in modern Turkey (cf. Acts 6:9)" (Constable's Notes). "Mention is made of the fact that Solomon invested heavily in horses and chariots. Keveh (probably Cilicia) was famous for its horses" (MacDonald).

"Solomon evidently made a profit as an agent in this import-export business. An imported chariot cost 15 lb. of silver, a horse, 3.75 lb." "Solomon not only acquired chariots and horsemen and horses for national defense but also exported them to other countries" (MacDonald). "He bought a chariot for 600 silver shekels (ca. 15 pounds) and a horse cost 150 silver shekels (ca. 3-3/4 pounds). In exporting some of them to the Hittites and the Arameans, he presumably made a profit on them" (Constable, BKC).

"The purpose of chapter 10 is to emphasize Solomon's glory. From drinking vessels to sailing vessels, from an ivory throne to handcrafted chariots, he possessed everything the human heart could desire in quantities that stagger the imagination" (MacDonald). Although not mentioned here, the luxury of Solomon's reign required heavy taxation to support it. This was to lead to the disruption of the kingdom (12:3-15). 'The taxation,' writes J. R. Lumly, 'must have been crushing, and with all this oriental splendor and luxury, there was rottenness within. Solomon was the Jewish Louis XIV'" (MacDonald).

When I asked my wife about this message, she said, "There was a time when you ready to buy a house you took your father, grandfather, and uncle to go with you to look at houses. When wanted to buy a car you did the same. And when you were dating somebody you were interested in, you introduce them to the family because you wanted their opinion. You did that because they knew more than you did. Today, many think they know it all and don't seek advice; consequently, they have more debt and bad marriages." She also gave me some advice she received from her father, "Be wise enough to know when you lack wisdom."

**Summary:** Solomon had such extraordinary wisdom and enormous wealth that people came from all over the world to hear what he had to say.

One way to gain wisdom is to ask questions, listen to wise people, and watch successful people.

"The writer seems to have included this event here to support his claim that Solomon's reign was so glorious that rulers came from all over the world to meet him (4:34; cf. 3:16-18). It

also shows that some of Solomon's wealth came to him as voluntary gifts from admirers. Jesus used this queen's example to challenge His hearers to listen to God's wisdom through someone greater than Solomon, namely, Himself (Matt. 12:42)" (Constable's Notes).

"Then some of the scribes and Pharisees answered, saying, 'Teacher, we want to see a sign from You.' But He answered and said to them, 'An evil and adulterous generation seeks after a sign, and no sign will be given to it except the sign of the prophet Jonah. For as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great fish, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah *is* here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon *is* here'" (Mt. 12:38-42).

For example, Jesus said, "I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear *them* now" (Jn. 16:12).

Watching the Lord has taught me some things about evangelism. He always started where the person was. For example, the rich young ruler asked, "Good master, what must I do to inherit eternal life." Jesus started where he was by saying, "Why do you call me good? There is only one good, that is God"? He did something similar with Nicodemus and the woman at the well.



## THE STUPID WISE MAN

It is one thing to have knowledge. It is another thing to have wisdom. It is one thing to *have* wisdom. It is another thing to *be* wise. We should work at gaining wisdom, but obtaining wisdom is not the be-all to end-all. The extent of the wisdom is not the issue. In other words, *getting* more wisdom is not the solution. The issue is using the wisdom that you have. That is illustrated in the life of one of the wisest men who ever lived.

“The writer brought Solomon’s weaknesses and sins, to which he only hinted previously, into the light in this chapter. Solomon had sown some seeds of departure from God and His Word early in his reign. They bore bitter fruit as he grew older” (Constable’s Notes).

### Solomon’s Wives

*His Wives* “But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, *and* Hittites—from the nations of whom the LORD had said to the children of Israel, ‘You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their gods.’ Solomon clung to these in love” (11:1-2). Solomon loved many foreign women besides his wife, the daughter of Pharaoh. These women were from the Moabites, the Amorites, the Edomites, the Sidonians, and the Hittites, the very nations the Lord said they were not intermarry because those marriages would turn away your hearts after their God, but Solomon clung to these women in love. “Ashtoreth was the Canaanite fertility goddess whose worship involved licentious rites and the worship of the stars. Molech worship included human sacrifice, even the sacrifice of children (cf. Lev. 18:21; 20:1-5). Chemosh worship was equally cruel. Solomon at least tolerated idolatrous worship if he did not actively promote it” (Constable’s Notes).

“The large number resulted from political alliances, sealed by marriage, with neighbouring [*sic*] states: Moab, Ammon and Edom to the east; Sidon, through the treaty with Hiram (5:1), and Syria (‘Hittites’ and Arameans, 10:22) to the north.... These are cited as examples” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes). “Solomon was noteworthy for his love for God when he began reigning (3:3), but at the end of his reign, love for women characterized him (Constable’s Notes).

“And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart” (11:3). Solomon had 700 wives and 300 concubines and his wives turned his heart away from the Lord. “Solomon’s harem of 700 wives and 300 concubines (secondary wives, not mistresses in the modern sense, v. 3) was the largest of any Israelite king. Concubines were slaves who could have sexual relations with their masters, according to custom. Their children sometimes became equal heirs with the children of free wives. The next largest harem belonged to Solomon’s son Rehoboam who had 18 wives and 60 concubines (2 Chron. 11:21<sup>L</sup>). David had 15 wives (2 Sam. 3:2-5; 5:13-16; 11:27; 1 Chron. 3:1-9) and several concubines (2 Sam. 15:16). Apparently only one of David’s wives was a foreigner (2 Sam. 3:3; 1 Chron. 3:2)” (Constable’s Notes).

“The writer’s condemnation of Solomon in verses 1-2 rests on Deuteronomy 23:3-9 as well as Deuteronomy 7:3-4. The phraseology goes back to 23:3-9 and the motive to 7:3-4 (Exod. 23:31-33; 34:15-16; Ezra 9:1; Neh. 13:26). Solomon’s foreign wives were of two categories: Canaanites prohibited in Deuteronomy 7, and women from other nations prohibited in

Deuteronomy 23. Furthermore, God specifically forbade the multiplying of wives by Israel's kings (Deut. 17:17). Solomon violated both the letter and the spirit of the Law. Some writers argued that because God gave legislation in the Mosaic Law governing the conduct of polygamous Israelite men (Exod. 21:10; Deut. 21:15), He therefore approved of polygamy. Yet God had made His will concerning monogamy clear from the beginning of human history (Gen. 2:24). Both Jesus (Matt. 19:5; Mark 10:7-8) and Paul (1 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 5:31) reaffirmed monogamy. The legislation cited in Deuteronomy is only one example of many laws that regulated the conduct of disobedient Israelites" (Constable's Notes).

*His Waywardness* "For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods; and his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as *was* the heart of his father David" (11:4). The author explains that when Solomon was old his wives turned his heart away from the Lord to other gods; his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God as was the heart of his father David. "Solomon was obliged to allow his foreign wives to worship their own gods, a contagion that ultimately affected the king himself" (Ryrie). "Solomon did not abandon Yahweh, but he worshipped the gods of the nations along with Him (syncretism; vv. 4, 6). His sin was that his heart (affections) went after false gods (v. 4). He did not follow Yahweh fully (exclusively, v. 6; cf. Exod. 20:3; Deut. 30:15-20)" (Constable's Notes).

"Verse 4 means that King David's heart had been wholly true to the LORD his God as far as keeping himself from idolatry was concerned, but Solomon did not follow his father in this matter. He built idolatrous shrines on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem" (MacDonald).

"For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites" (11:5). Solomon went after Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and after Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites.

"Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and did not fully follow the LORD, as *did* his father David" (11:6). Solomon did evil in the sight of the Lord and did not fully follow him as his father David had done.

"Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, on the hill that *is* east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the abomination of the people of Ammon" (11:7). "The mountain east of (lit. before) Jerusalem, to which verse 7 refers, was traditionally south of the Mount of Olives and is elsewhere called "the mount of destruction" (2 Kings 23:13). Since the Mount of Olives is a two-mile-long ridge, it seems best to view the mount of destruction as the southern part of the Mount of Olives. Another name for 'the Mount of Destruction' is 'the hill of evil council.' Ironically, today, a United Nations building stands atop this hill. Evidently, Solomon felt compelled to support the pagan worship of his foreign wives whom he had married to secure political alliances. As often happens, one sin led to others" (Constable's Notes).

"And he did likewise for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods" (11:8). Solomon did likewise for all of his wives who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.

"Apparently, he concluded that since he was a great king, he should live like the other great kings of the world even though it meant disobeying God's Word" (Constable, BKC).

David had sinned against God deliberately on occasion, but his heart remained devoted to Yahweh. "Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it spring the issues of life" (Prov. 4:23). When a group of soldiers were told that they would be shooting at targets for a prize, they prepared their rifles with great enthusiasm. One young man showed up with a sparkling clean weapon. He positioned himself and with a steady hand and clear eye, he pulled the trigger, but

his bullet swerved to one side and missed the target entirely. He later found that there was rust inside the gun barrel. For days, he had polished the outside but failed to clean his rifle's inside.

What has turned your heart? "Has it been people, such as someone you are dating or a friend? Has it been sex or work? What has turned your heart away from the Lord? Whatever it is, according to the apostle John, it can be classified under one of three categories: the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, for the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16). In other words, it is either pleasure, possessions, or pride.

*Solomon's Discipline* "So the LORD became angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned from the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not keep what the LORD had commanded" (11:9-10). Because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the Lord became angry with Solomon. The Lord had appeared to him twice and had commanded him concerning this very thing, namely that he should not go after other gods, but Solomon did not obey the Lord.

"Therefore the LORD said to Solomon, 'Because you have done this, and have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant' (11:11). "This was the third time that God gave Solomon a special revelation (cf. 3:5; 9:2). Solomon's sin in going after other gods was the quintessence of covenant infidelity. David had sinned against God deliberately on occasion when tempted (2 Sam. 11), but his heart remained devoted to Yahweh. His sin was not as serious as Solomon's was (cf. Deut. 6:5)" (Constable's Notes).

"Nevertheless I will not do it in your days, for the sake of your father David; I will tear it out of the hand of your son" (11:12). The Lord told Solomon that even though he would take the kingdom away from him (11:11), He would not do it as long as Solomon was alive for the sake of his father David, but He would tear it out of the hand of Solomon's son.

"However I will not tear away the whole kingdom; I will give one tribe to your son for the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen" (11:13). Furthermore, the Lord said He would not tear away the whole kingdom from Solomon's descendants. Rather, for the sake of his servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, He would give one tribe to Solomon's son. The one tribe the Lord gave to the descendants of Solomon was "Judah, to which small Benjamin was indissolubly connected, for Jerusalem straddled the territory of both tribes (cf. 11:32 and 12:21). Simeon, the tribe S of Judah, had apparently migrated N and was counted with the 10 northern tribes (cf. 1 Chron. 12:23-25; 2 Chron. 15:9; 34:6)" (Ryrie). "The one tribe Solomon's heir would retain was Judah. Judah had absorbed the tribe of Simeon almost entirely by this time, though some Israelites from Simeon had moved north (2 Chron. 15:9; 34:6)" (Constable's Notes). "Benjamin; Judah is taken for granted—12:23) would be given to Solomon's son" (MacDonald).

## Solomon's Woes

*Hadad* "Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was a descendant of the king in Edom" (11:14). "Hadad hated Solomon because of Joab's severe treatment of the Edomites" (Constable's Notes).

"For it happened, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, after he had killed every male in Edom (because for six months Joab remained there with all Israel, until he had cut down every male in Edom), that Hadad fled to go

to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him. Hadad *was* still a little child" (11:15-17). The author explains that when David was in Edom (2 Sam. 8:14) and Joab was the commander of his army, Joab had killed every male in Edom except Hadad and some of his father's servants had fled to Egypt when Hadad was still a small child.

"Then they arose from Midian and came to Paran; and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt, who gave him a house, apportioned food for him, and gave him land" (11:18). Hadad and his father's servants departed from Midian, stopped off in Paran, and took men from Paran with them to Egypt, where Pharaoh gave Hadad a house, food, and lay in.

"And Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him as wife the sister of his own wife, that is, the sister of Queen Tahpenes" (11:19). Hadad found great favor in the sight of Pharaoh, who gave him the sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, to be his wife. Hadad "may have been a relation of Solomon's by marriage. Pharaoh Siamun, of dynasty 21, apparently gave his daughter to Solomon in marriage and his sister-in-law to Hadad" (Constable's Notes).

"Then the sister of Tahpenes bore him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house. And Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh" (11:20). Hadad wife gave birth to a son, Genubath, whom the Queen weaned in Pharaoh's house so that he was numbered among the sons of Pharaoh.

"So when Hadad heard in Egypt that David rested with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, 'Let me depart, that I may go to my own country'" (11:21). When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead, he requested that Pharaoh let him depart to return to his homeland.

"Then Pharaoh said to him, 'But what have you lacked with me, that suddenly you seek to go to your own country?' So he answered, 'Nothing, but do let me go anyway'" (11:22). "From there (Edom) he began military operations against Solomon from the south" (MacDonald). "The ancient hostility of the Edomites toward the Israelites must have been aggravated in Hadad's mind by David's slaughter of the Edomites, and Hadad lived for the day he could take revenge. Hearing that David had died (in 971 BC) and Joab was also dead, Hadad asked Pharaoh for permission to return to Edom. Apparently, he caused trouble for Solomon militarily (11:25)" (Constable, BKC). "The result of Hadad's opposition was not only that it lost Solomon the full control of a satellite neighbor, but it cut off his southern route for trade. If he maintained his shipping out of Ezion-geber at all, it was probably on a greatly reduced scale, and it is even possible that it stopped entirely before his death" (Wood, cited in Constable's Notes).

*Rezon* "And God raised up *another* adversary against him, Rezon the son of Eliadah, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezer king of Zobah" (11:23). God raised up another adversary against Solomon, Rezon, who had fled from his lord, Hadadezer king of Zobah

"So he gathered men to him and became captain over a band of *raiders*, when David killed those of *Zobah*. And they went to Damascus and dwelt there, and reigned in Damascus" (11:24). When David killed people in Zobah, Rezon gathered men around him, became the captain of this band of raiders, and went to Damascus where he reigned. "Losing Damascus, Syria's chief city-state, was especially significant because the kingdom of Syria would prove to be a thorn in Israel's flesh for centuries to come" (MacDonald).

"He was an adversary of Israel all the days of Solomon (besides the trouble that Hadad *caused*); and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria" (11:25). "While the southern part of Solomon's kingdom was taken by Hadad, Rezon whittled away at it in the N" (Ryrie). The

Hebrew word translated “abhorred” means “loathe, abhor, sickening dread.” “The result of Rezon’s opposition was that it cut off all contact with the satellite countries of the north. Damascus was the key to control over Zobah, Hamath, and the fortified city of Tadmor. With full control gone in Damascus, there was no possibility of maintaining supervision in these other areas” (Wood, cited by Constable’s Notes).

*Jeroboam* “Then Solomon’s servant, Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite from Zereda, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king” (11:26). “Jeroboam, who would become the first king of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, was from Ephraim, the most prominent tribe in the North” (Constable’s Notes).

“And this *is* what caused him to rebel against the king: Solomon had built the Millo *and* repaired the damages to the City of David his father” (11:27). “Solomon had given him a position of responsibility in the building of the Millo. Perhaps this power gave Jeroboam the desire to reign over all Israel” (MacDonald). “Apparently, he had worked for Solomon when the king built the supporting terraces and... filled in the gap in the wall of the City of David. As a result of his good work, Solomon promoted him over the whole forced labor force of the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh (the house of Joseph)” (Constable, BKC).

“The man Jeroboam *was* a mighty man of valor; and Solomon, seeing that the young man was industrious, made him the officer over all the labor force of the house of Joseph” (11:28). “As supervisor Jeroboam saw firsthand the discontent of the people (1 Kings 12:4)” (Ryrie).

“Now it happened at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite met him on the way; and he had clothed himself with a new garment, and the two *were* alone in the field” (11:29). Later, Jeroboam sought out Ahijah (14:1-18).

“Then Ahijah took hold of the new garment that *was* on him, and tore it *into* twelve pieces” (11:30). “One of Solomon’s subordinates (11:11) was Jeroboam, who tore the kingdom... from Solomon’s son” (MacDonald).

“And he said to Jeroboam, ‘Take for yourself ten pieces, for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: ‘Behold, I will tear the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon and will give ten tribes to you (but he shall have one tribe for the sake of My servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel), because they have forsaken Me, and worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the people of Ammon, and have not walked in My ways to do *what is* right in My eyes and *keep* My statutes and My judgments, as *did* his father David’” (11:31-33). Ahijah told Jeroboam that he was to take ten pieces for himself, signifying that the Lord would remove ten of the tribes from Solomon and give them to him, because *they* had forsaken the Lord, worshiped the gods. “Not only Solomon but also the people of Israel (they) had forsaken Yahweh by worshiping idols” (Constable, BKC).

“However I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, because I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of My servant David, whom I chose because he kept My commandments and My statutes” (11:34). The Lord explained that He would not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon’s hand, because He had made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of His servant David, whom He chose because he kept His commandments and statutes.

“But I will take the kingdom out of his son’s hand and give it to you—ten tribes” (11:35). The Lord said He would take the kingdom out of Solomon’s hands and give ten tribes to Jeroboam.

“And to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may always have a lamp before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself, to put My name there” (11:36). Ryrie



says that the lamp is posterity, adding “David’s line would not be eradicated, though his descendants would be afflicted (1 Kings 11:39). “Solomon’s son (11:35) was Rehoboam to whom would be given one tribe (cf. 11:13, 11:32). Like a lamp kept burning perpetually in a tent or home, Judah would be a perpetual testimony to God’s choice of David, who was of the tribe of Judah (15:4; 2 Sam. 21:17; 2 Kings 8:19)” (Constable, BKC).

“David’s ‘lamp’ refers to his descendant on the throne (cf. 2 Sam. 21:17) (Keil). The Hebrew noun *nid*, translated ‘lamp,’ can also mean ‘yoke,’ and that may be a better translation here (Hanson)” (Constable’s Notes). “A yoke naturally symbolizes control and possession (e.g., Genesis 27:40; Exodus 6:6-7; Numbers 25:3; Deuteronomy 28:48; 1 Kings 12:9-14; Isaiah 9:4; Jeremiah 27:2-12; and others), and its use in the five Old Testament passages mentioned above [i.e., Num. 21:30; 1 Kings 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kings 8:19; and 2 Chron. 21:7], particularly the four that refer to David, connotes the fact that David, his descendants, and the ultimate Davidic king after him would all be God’s chosen servants, kings by divine decision with a divinely-ordained purpose to their reigns, with a chosen people and promised land to rule over, the final reign being an unending one and by far the best of all, under a perfect, eternal king—the ultimate Davidic king, Jesus Christ, who is perfectly yoked to His people” (Douglas K. Stuart, “David’s ‘Lamp’ (1 Kings 11:36) and ‘a Still Small Voice’ (1 Kings 19:12),” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:681, January-March, 2014, pp. 8-9).

“So I will take you, and you shall reign over all your heart desires, and you shall be king over Israel” (11:37). The Lord told Jeroboam that He would choose him to reign over all of his heart’s desire to be king over Israel (Ryrie: “the 10 northern tribes”). “Jeroboam was told that he would rule over all that his heart desired (11:37) in Israel, that is, he would have the freedom to rule as he saw fit” (Constable, BKC).

“Then it shall be, if you heed all that I command you, walk in My ways, and do *what is* right in My sight, to keep My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, as I built for David, and will give Israel to you” (11:38). “God’s conditional promise to Jeroboam was similar to His promises to Saul (1 Sam. 13:13), to David (2 Sam. 7:11, 27), and to Solomon (9:4-7)” (Constable’s Notes).

“And I will afflict the descendants of David because of this, but not forever” (11:39). “God would afflict the descendants of David until He raised up Messiah when all Israel would come under His authority, as it had been under David and Solomon’s authority” (Constable’s Notes).

“Solomon therefore sought to kill Jeroboam. But Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon” (11:40). Ryrie says, “Shishak [was] Sheshonk I, who reigned 945-924 BC and gave political asylum to Jeroboam. Later (in 925), he invaded Palestine, exacting heavy tribute from Judah (14:25-26).” “The reference to Shishak king of Egypt (v. 40) is the first to identify a Pharaoh by name in the Bible. Shishak later invaded Jerusalem during Rehoboam’s reign (14:25-26)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Instead of facing his sin and repenting, Solomon tried to thwart the word of God by doing away with Jeroboam. It was foolish to fight against Jeroboam, though, since he was now the divinely appointed heir of the northern tribes. Saul had been unsuccessful in his attempts to kill his successor, David. Solomon was likewise unsuccessful in his attempts to murder Jeroboam” (MacDonald).

“The tribes over which Jeroboam would rule would be Reuben, Dan, Naphtali, Gad, Asher, Issachar, Zebulun, Ephraim, Manasseh, and portions of Levi and Simeon. The tribes over which Solomon’s son would reign would be Judah, Benjamin, and portions of Levi and Simeon. For the most part, Levi (2 Chron. 11:13-16) and Simeon were loyal to Judah” (MacDonald).



## Solomon's Death (2 Chron. 9:29-31)

*His Deeds* “Now the rest of the acts of Solomon, all that he did, and his wisdom, *are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?*” (11:41). “The writer of Kings referred to other ancient records (cf. 14:19, 29). “This is the first of several such sources mentioned in 1 Kings (14:19, 14:29) and 2 Chronicles (cf. 2 Chron. 9:29; 12:15; 26:22; 32:32)” (Constable, BKC). The Acts of Solomon is no longer extant (Constable's Notes).

“*And the period that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years*” (11:42). Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all of Israel for forty years

*His Death* “*Then Solomon rested with his fathers, and was buried in the City of David his father. And Rehoboam his son reigned in his place*” (11:43). When Solomon died he was buried in Jerusalem Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

**Summary:** Because Solomon disobeyed the Lord by marrying many foreign wives who got him into idolatry, the Lord took ten of the tribes away from Solomon's descendants.

“What is the image of Solomon which emerges from the narrative? He was the divinely chosen descendent (8:20) of a divinely chosen ruler (8:16), reigning in a divinely chosen city (8:44, 48). He was a righteous judge (chap. 3) and an efficient administrator (chap. 4). He ruled extensive territory and promoted the peace of his realm and the prosperity of his people. His building projects were on a grand scale, encompassing the sanctuary and palace (chap. 6), fortress, and store-city (9:15-19). He pursued an active commercial policy and indulged in a conspicuous display of wealth (chap. 10). His divinely endowed wisdom was The key to his success. He was wiser than all men, and all came to see, behold, and leave their tribute (Porten).

“Solomon brought great blessing to the nation as he followed the Lord, but he also set the nation up for great suffering because of his sinful lifestyle, especially as he grew older (chap. 11). Much of the nation's suffering occurred after his death. But his excessive spending, lack of preparation for transition, poor modeling in many areas—all these affected the next generation” (Bramer, cited in Constable's Notes).

“Few figures are more difficult to evaluate than Solomon, and that not merely because the records concerning him are neither so full as could be wished nor in chronological order. He was obviously a man of great astuteness who was able to realize to the fullest the economic potentialities of the empire created by David. At the same time, he exhibited in other areas a blindness, not to say a stupidity that hastened that empire toward disintegration” (Bright).

Solomon was a stupid, wise man. What happened? Solomon is not alone. God gave Adam a garden and he fell. Noah sinned after building the ark. After the Israelites received God's covenant and law, they made a golden calf. Aaron offered strange fire. The sons of David turned to idolatry. In Solomon's case, in the beginning, “Solomon loved the Lord” (3:3), but in the end, “Solomon loved many foreign women” (11:1). In other words, he failed to guard his heart. To say that same thing another way, he made wrong choices.

“The man best qualified to live life successfully, Solomon, chose not to do so. Success in life, from God's viewpoint, does not come automatically with the gift of wisdom, but when one applies wisdom to one's life. Spiritual success depends on choices as well as understanding. Solomon's life teaches us to avoid syncretism and to guard our hearts” (Constable).

“Solomon's beginning was better than his ending. A good start does not guarantee a good finish. He had been raised to the pinnacle of greatness, but he plunged off into the abyss of moral degradation and idolatry. If only the king had practiced what he preached in Eccl. 12:13-14: Let

us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil" (MacDonald).

"Solomon's life ended in tragedy. Solomon was greatly blessed by God but he allowed God's gifts to dominate his affections. The fault lay not with God for giving Solomon so much, but with Solomon who, though he had the wisdom to deal with such temptations, chose to set his affections on the gifts and not on the Giver. The man best qualified to live life successfully chose not to do so. Success in life in the eyes of God does not come automatically with the possession of wisdom but with the application of wisdom to one's life. Spiritual success depends not only on insight but also on choices" (Constable, BKC).

"While Solomon possessed this ability, he did not always apply it to his own life. Thus, the wisest man who ever lived (i.e., with the greatest wisdom) did not live as wisely as many others who preceded and followed him. Having insight into life does not guarantee that one will choose to do what is right.

"King Solomon was among the wisest fools who ever wore a crown" (Buechner). Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies" (1 Cor. 8:1).

"Much emphasis is placed on the value of gaining intellectual status through years of study and research. Merely filling one's mind with information, however, does not necessarily produce greatness. Sad to say, some people are little more than 'educated fools.' ... I am a firm believer in getting an education, but I would give a word of caution to anyone who is striving for academic excellence: never lose the human touch! Only when scholarship is coupled with a genuine concern for others and earnest desire to honor God in our abilities will we be truly wise and really useful" (*Our Daily Bread*, 9/27/1983).

"Teach me, O LORD, the way of Your statutes, And I shall keep it *to* the end. Give me understanding, and I shall keep Your law; Indeed, I shall observe it with *my* whole heart" (Ps. 119:33-34).

"Many a man with a head is big as a watermelon has a heart small is a watermelon seed" (*Our Daily Bread*, 3/21/1964).

## HOW TO MAKE WRONG DECISIONS

A man who worked at a bank was named successor to the retiring bank president. He went to the president and said, “As you know, I’m going to follow you as president and I’d be grateful for any advice you might have. The president said, ‘I’ve got two words for you, just two words: *right* decisions.’ The bank employee replied, ‘That’s very helpful, sir, but how does one make the right decisions?’ The bank president replied, ‘One word—experience.’ The bank employee responded to that by saying, ‘That’s also helpful, sir, but how does one gain experience?’ The bank president said, ‘Two words—wrong decisions.’” Since making wrong decisions is helpful, I’d like to speak today on “How to make wrong decisions.”

“The second major part of the Book of Kings records the histories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah (see “Dates of the Rulers of Israel and Judah” in Edwin R. Thiele, *A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings*, p. 75). During this era of 209 years (931–722 B.C.) the two kingdoms experienced differing relations with one another. For 57 years (931–874 B.C.), they were antagonistic (12:1-16:28). Then for the next 33 years (874–841 B.C.), they were allies (1 Kings 16:29-2 Kings 9:29). Then renewed antagonism erupted and continued for the final 119 years (841-722 B.C.; 2 Kings 9:30-17:41)” (Constable’s Notes).

### Rehoboam’s Decision

*The Request* “And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone to Shechem to make him king” (12:1). Shechem “was in the territory of Ephraim, near present-day Nablus” (Ryrie). “Rehoboam went to Shechem to be acknowledged as king.... Rehoboam the son of Solomon ruled in Judah for seventeen years (931/30–913 B.C.; 12:20-24; 2 Chron. 11 and 12)” (McDonald).

“It is not clear why the northern tribes had invited Rehoboam to the northern town of Shechem. They may have done so for a coronation over Israel separate from his coronation over Judah (Myers). On the other hand, the northern tribes may have invited him to go there for his coronation over the entire nation. Jerusalem was the natural coronation site. Perhaps Rehoboam chose to hold the ceremony at Shechem to accommodate, and perhaps placate, the northern tribes. In any case, Shechem was an understandable site because of its historical significance and earlier covenant renewal ceremonies (cf. Gen. 12:6-7; 33:18-20; Josh. 8; 24)” (Constable’s Notes).

“So it happened, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard *it* (he was still in Egypt, for he had fled from the presence of King Solomon and had been dwelling in Egypt), that they sent and called him. Then Jeroboam and the whole assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy; now therefore, lighten the burdensome service of your father, and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you’” (12:2-4). Jeroboam was the hardworking servant Solomon made ruler over the house of Joseph (1 Kings 11:28), the one God said would be king (1 Kings 11:29-39), and the one Solomon sought to kill (1 Kings 11:40). That is why he fled to Egypt, but when Solomon died, he became the spokesman of the people to present their grievances to the king.” “The heavy yoke Solomon had imposed on the Israelites consisted of taxation, forced labor, and other burdens. If Solomon had exempted Judah from these, the spokesmen were probably speaking for the northern tribes rather than for all the

Israelites and were demanding similar favors” (Constable’s Notes). “To maintain the oriental opulence of his court, Solomon had used forced labor and taxed heavily. So they were saying in effect: ‘Lower the taxes with which your father oppressed us, and we will serve you. Otherwise we will revolt’” (MacDonald).

*The Response* “So he said to them, ‘Depart for three days, then come back to me.’ And the people departed” (12:5). Rehoboam’s response was to tell them to come back to see him in three days.

*Elders* “Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who stood before his father Solomon while he still lived, and he said, ‘How do you advise me to answer these people?’ And they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to these people today, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever’” (12:6-7). Jesus said, “But he who is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Mt. 23:11-12). The elders told him to answer questions, which is what his father Solomon did (1 Kings 11:1-3). The elders told him to speak good words. The Hebrew word translated “good” means “good, pleasant, agreeable.” Paul wrote, “Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification” (Eph. 4:29). When used figuratively, the Greek word translated “corrupt” means “offensive and injurious.” “Harsh words hurt.... Jibes, jests, and jokes can cut to the core. (Wardlaw on Prov. 12:18). The Greek word translated “edification” means “to build up.” Are your words a “put down” or do they build up?

*Young Men* “But he rejected the advice which the elders had given him, and consulted the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. And he said to them, ‘What advice do you give? How should we answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?’ Then the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, ‘Thus you should speak to this people who have spoken to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, but you make it lighter on us’—thus you shall say to them: ‘My little *finger* shall be thicker than my father’s waist!’ And now, whereas my father put a heavy yoke on you, I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!’” (12:8-11). “The reference to the little finger was ‘a proverbial expression meaning, ‘my power will be greater than my father’s’” (Ryrie). Scourges were “Whips with barbed points or bits of metal attached” (Ryrie). “Perhaps the king and his counselors thought intimidation would send the potential rebels scurrying for cover and would drive any ideas of insurrection far from their minds” (Constable, BKC). This was bad advice.

*Rehoboam* “So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had directed, saying, ‘Come back to me the third day’” (12:12). “The king was no child at this time; he was 41 years old (14:21). Nor was his decision made on the spur of the moment; he had three days to think it over (12:5). It was a deliberate choice possibly based on what he believed was needed most in the nation at that time” (Constable, BKC).

“Then the king answered the people roughly, and rejected the advice which the elders had given him; and he spoke to them according to the advice of the young men, saying, ‘My father made your yoke heavy, but I will add to your yoke; my father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scourges!’” (12:13-14). “His choice was whether he would regard himself as the people’s servant under Yahweh’s authority, as David and Solomon had done, or as the supreme authority in Israel, as Saul had done. His pride led to his downfall” (Constable’s Notes).” The Hebrew word translated “roughly” means “hard, cruel, severe, obstinate.”

Rehoboam chooses slogans over wisdom, machismo over servanthood” (Nelson, cited in Constable’s Notes). What he said was unloving, unkind, and unnecessary.

“So the king did not listen to the people; for the turn *of events* was from the LORD, that He might fulfill His word, which the LORD had spoken by Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat” (12:15). “The Lord was using these events to accomplish His will (11:11, 30)” (Ryrie).

The way to make wrong decisions is: 1) Follow the advice of inexperienced and unwise people. 2) Decide to do what is unloving. 3) Determined to speak down to people.

## Israel’s Division

*The Division* “Now when all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying: ‘What share have we in David? *We have* no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now, see to your own house, O David!’ So Israel departed to their tents.’ But Rehoboam reigned over the children of Israel who dwelt in the cities of Judah” (12:16-17). “Rehoboam’s insensitivity to the Israelites’ hardships extinguished any hope they may have entertained of economic recovery. His dictatorial threat alienated his suffering subjects. Then and there, they seceded and broke the union of the 12 tribes. Only Rehoboam’s closest countrymen from Judah did not abandon him. The reply of the Israelites (12:16) evidently had become a battle cry; it was used years earlier by Sheba who rebelled against David (2 Sam. 20:1)” (Constable, BKC).

“Rehoboam lacked wisdom because he did not give God the place He deserved in his life. Because he revolted against God, the people revolted against him. In rebelling against Rehoboam, however, the Israelites were rebelling against God’s anointed king. That action could only bring divine discipline on them, and it did. This rebellion continued throughout the history of the divided kingdom and accounts for much of the misery that the nation experienced. Rehoboam’s coronation turned into a bloody lynching and inspired the coronation of his rival (v. 20)” (Constable’s Notes).

“The history of the divided kingdom begins here and continues through 2 Kings. Jeroboam reigned over the northern ten tribes, usually known as “Israel” and sometimes referred to in the prophets as ‘Ephraim.’ This kingdom had a succession of *nine* dynasties, and *all* the kings were wicked. Rehoboam reigned over the southern kingdom known as “Judah.” This kingdom had only *one* dynasty. Every king was a descendant of David. It was through this kingdom that Christ’s legal title to the throne of David is traced through Joseph, His foster father (see genealogy in Matthew 1). He was also physically a Son of David through the Virgin Mary, who was herself a descendant of David’s own son Nathan (see genealogy in Luke 3). A few of these kings were outstanding reformers, though most of them were wicked. (MacDonald, italics his; for a chart of the nine dynasties, see MacDonald).

*The Departure* “Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who *was* in charge of the revenue; but all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. Therefore King Rehoboam mounted his chariot in haste to flee to Jerusalem” (12:18). “Rehoboam, not realizing that the break was final, sent the worst possible representative, Adoram (the Adoniram of 1 Kings 4:6; 1 Kings 5:14), who had been in charge of the forced labor under both David and Solomon” (Ryrie). “The dissatisfaction with the rule of David’s house that had been brewing for years (cf. 2 Sam. 20:1) finally boiled over. Perhaps Rehoboam sent Adoram to pacify the angry mob (v. 18). Whatever his reason, this proved to be ‘the straw that broke the camel’s back’” (Constable’s Notes).



“What could have motivated Rehoboam to send Adoniram (a variant spelling of the Heb. Adoram; cf. NIV marg.), the personification of oppression, (the foreman of forced labor), to meet with the rebels at that crucial moment? Perhaps Adoniram was the best-qualified ambassador. Whatever the reason, Rehoboam’s “wisdom” proved foolish again. Adoniram died as the target of the rebels’ wrath. And Rehoboam barely escaped with his own life. What should have been a glorious national celebration (12:1) turned into a humiliating rout for Judah’s new king who fled his own coronation to escape assassination by his infuriated subjects” (Constable, BKC).

*The Duration* “So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day” (12:19). The division was not temporary. “The writer noted that the Israelites were really rebelling against the house of David, God’s appointed dynasty, which they did to this day (i.e., the time this section of the book was written)” (Constable, BKC).

*The Decisions* “Now it came to pass when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had come back, they sent for him and called him to the congregation, and made him king over all Israel. There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only” (12:20). “This action suggests that plotting had been involved in the rebellion. Only ... Judah (and Benjamin, 12:21) remained loyal to the ruler from David’s house (dynasty)” (Constable, BKC). “Jeroboam was the first of 20 kings who ruled the Northern Kingdom during its 209-year history. He reigned for 22 years (931–910 B.C.). Not one of the kings of Israel, the Northern Kingdom, turned the people to a serious recommitment to the Mosaic Covenant. Consequently, the writer judged all of them evil” (Constable’s Notes).

“And when Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah with the tribe of Benjamin, one hundred and eighty thousand chosen *men* who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, that he might restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon” (12:21). “Rehoboam’s pride led him into further trouble. He wanted to start a civil war to recapture the throne. Benjamin joined with Judah at this time and remained allied from then on (cf. 2 Sam. 19:16-17)” (Constable’s Notes).

“But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, ‘Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: You shall not go up nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel. Let every man return to his house, for this thing is from Me.’ Therefore they obeyed the word of the LORD, and turned back, according to the word of the LORD” (12:22-24). “God had to intervene through a prophet to get Rehoboam to turn back (vv. 22-24). The term “man of God” is synonymous with prophet (cf. 13:18; 2 Kings 5:8; 2 Chron. 12:5). To his credit, Rehoboam obeyed God” (Constable’s Notes).

“Shemaiah’s message goes against the perceived national interest, opposes a popular cause, and stifles the impulse to avenge wounded pride. But Shemaiah was a man of God before he was a man of Judah. His loyalty to God transcended that to king and country. His identity came from his relationship to God, not from society. He served God rather than the state. In short, he was a prophet” (Rice, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Rehoboam is harsh, despotic, and autocratic, but the worst part is that he is also stupid and incompetent” (DeVries, cited in Constable’s Notes). “Rehoboam’s decision resulted in what God had predicted to Solomon (11:11-13), Ahijah, and Jeroboam (11:31-39)” (Constable’s Notes).

“There were several reasons for the division of the kingdom. The primary one was Solomon’s apostasy. However, tribal jealousy, sectionalism, and Solomon’s exploitation of the people were contributing causes. (Wayne Brindle, “The Causes of the Division of Israel’s



Kingdom,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 141:563, July-September 1984, pp. 223-33)” (Constable’s Notes). “The date when Israel passed from a united to a divided monarchy was 931 BC” (Constable, BKC).

The consequences of Rehoboam’s bad decisions were one man died, Rehoboam had to flee for his life, the kingdom was divided over heavy taxation and harsh treatment. Wrong decisions produce division.

In 1765, to raise money to pay off their debt, the British Parliament passed the Stamp Act’s first direct tax on the colonies. That one was repealed, but other tax Acts followed, including taxes on tea, glass, lead, painters’ colors, and paper. The colonists argued that the new taxes violated the British Constitution. It was “taxation without representation.” On May 10, 1773, Parliament passed the Tea Act. The resistance culminated in the Boston Tea Party. On December 16, 1773, a band of Bostonians dressed as Mohawk Indians boarded tea ships anchored in the harbor and dumped their tea cargo overboard, worth millions of dollars today. As a result of the Boston Tea Party, the British Parliament enacted more punitive measures. In response, the first Continental Congress met and denounced taxation without representation. Other issues were involved, but the multiple decisions to impose taxation without representation was a major issue in the Revolutionary War.

## Jeroboam’s Departure

*His Residence* “Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the mountains of Ephraim, and dwelt there. Also he went out from there and built Penuel” (12:25). Jeroboam built his residence in Shechem and Penuel, which was “Located E of the Jordan, it served to keep those tribes who lived in that area from being invaded by Rehoboam or Shishak (1 Kings 14:25)” (Ryrie). “During its history, the Northern Kingdom had three capitals: first Shechem (v. 25), later Tirzah (14:17; 15:33), and finally Samaria (16:23-24). Perhaps the king strengthened Penuel in west-central Gilead as a Transjordanian provincial center. Like Shechem, Penuel (Peniel) was an important site in patriarchal times (Gen. 32:30). By strengthening these sites, Jeroboam appears to have been trying to get the residents of his kingdom to view their nation as the continuation of what God had begun in patriarchal days. One writer suggested that Jeroboam may have abandoned Shechem and moved to Penuel because Shechem was a divided city. Levitical priests who would have opposed his religious reforms lived there (Allen)” (Constable’s Notes).

*His Reasoning* “And Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom may return to the house of David: If these people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will turn back to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and go back to Rehoboam king of Judah’” (12:26-27). “Jeroboam’s fears that his subjects would kill him and return to Rehoboam were due to disbelief in God’s promises that the prophet Ahijah had announced to him (11:31, 37-38)” (Constable’s Notes).

*His Reaction* “Therefore the king asked advice, made two calves of gold, and said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!’” (12:28). “Perhaps the people at first did not actually worship the calves, but thought of God as invisibly riding on them” (Ryrie). “With the division of the kingdom, the chief symbol of God’s presence, the ark and the cherubim, was left to Judah. Needing a comparable symbol for his new state, Jeroboam chose the bull, universally admired for its strength and procreative power (Deut. 33:17; Isa. 10:13 [sic]; 34:7; Ps. 68:30; 1 Kings 7:25). It is probable that Jeroboam meant the bull to serve the same function as the ark and

cherubim, that is, as the throne or footstool of the invisibly present God. ‘Archaeological finds in Palestine-Syria of statues depicting a god astride a bull point to a function for the bull similar to that of the ark and cherubim (ANEP [*The Ancient Near East in Pictures*, ed. James B. Pritchard], nos. 470–501, 522–538)” (Rice)” (Constable. Notes).

“After making the calves, Jeroboam said exactly the same thing Aaron had said (v. 28; cf. Exod. 32:4). This is the first time that the Bible records any deliberate attempt to establish a heterodox cult as the religion of Israel. Jeroboam also followed up the making of the calves with a feast similar to the one at Sinai (vv. 32-33; cf. Exod. 32:5). Furthermore, Jeroboam followed Aaron’s example of setting himself up as covenant mediator in Moses’ absence, and as head of the cult (formal worship). In this, he was quite clearly identifying his cult with the Exodus (Halpern). Jeroboam also assumed the role of the Davidic monarch who was the Lord’s anointed and, as such, both the political and the religious leader of Israel” (Gray). (Constable’s Notes).

“Jeroboam seems to have designed his substitute religious system (vv. 28-33) to offer the Israelites convenient ‘improvements’ in the Mosaic system that tied in with certain historical events. The golden calves, for instance, recall the golden calf in the wilderness. The apis bull was a common religious symbol in Egypt. The golden calf in the wilderness and these calves may have been similar symbols. Scholars question whether the people regarded calves of this type as idols or as pedestals on which the gods stood (Albright). One writer made a good case for their being idols (cf. 14:9) (Oswalt). They certainly became idols to the Israelites in the North. However, it seems more likely that Jeroboam conceived of them as the symbols and supporters of Yahweh (Albright). Archaeologists have discovered the remains of a high place at Dan that they date from the time of Jeroboam I (Wiseman)” (Constable’s Notes).

“And he set up one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan” (12:29). “Jeroboam cleverly placed one golden calf in Bethel, which was on the road to Jerusalem and 11 mi N of the city, and the other calf in the northernmost part of his kingdom, Dan” (Ryrie).

“Now this thing became a sin, for the people went *to worship* before the one as far as Dan. He made shrines on the high places, and made priests from every class of people, who were not of the sons of Levi” (12:30-31). “Jeroboam also infiltrated the priesthood with non-Levites” (Ryrie). “How could Jeroboam have hoped to win the support of the Israelites since he revived the practice of worshipping a calf? ‘I suggest that the motivation behind Jeroboam’s action may have been an intense animosity toward the Levites. It was the Levites who had taken sword in hand to slay the worshippers of Aaron’s golden calves. Jeroboam now bypassed the Levites by appointing his own priests and, in a supreme irony, manufactured his own golden calves as a symbol of his disdain for the Levitical priesthood. Had not Moses’ own grandson, Jonathan, anticipated Jeroboam by serving as the first priest of the competing shrine at Dan [Judg. 17-18]? Besides, according to a measure of legitimacy to Dan, this story revealed that even within Moses’ family, there was room for diversity in religious practice. How could Jeroboam be faulted for his golden calves when Moses’ own grandson had officiated over a cult at Dan which worshipped idols having no connection at all with the exodus?’ (Merrill)” (Constable’s Notes).

“This may also explain Jeroboam’s choice of Dan as one of his cultic centers. But why did he select Bethel? Jacob had met God at Bethel twice (Gen. 28:10-22; 35:1-7). Perhaps Jeroboam promoted it as the birthplace of Israel’s faith. Geographically, Bethel stood on the main highway that led into Judah just north of the border. It was a convenient gathering place for Israelites who lived in the southern and central parts of the Northern Kingdom. Since they would have had to pass through Bethel if they wanted to go south to worship in Jerusalem, Jeroboam’s priests could have discouraged them from doing so there” (Constable’s Notes).

“Jeroboam ordained a feast on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the feast that *was* in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. So he did at Bethel, sacrificing to the calves that he had made. And at Bethel he installed the priests of the high places which he had made” (12:32). The feast in Jerusalem that is referred to here was “probably Booths, observed one month later (Lev. 23:34)” (Ryrie). “The feast Jeroboam set up took place one month later than the Day of Atonement when the Levitical priests offered sacrifice to atone for the sins of the nation for the past year (Lev. 16). Thus, it seems that Jeroboam had no regard for the will of God as expressed in the commands of the Mosaic Covenant. He viewed himself as a king like all the other kings of the ancient Near East. To establish himself and the Northern Kingdom as independent from Judah, he combined commonly accepted religious concepts that the surrounding pagan nations held with elements from Israel’s history” (Constable’s Notes). “Jeroboam’s sins are so far-reaching and repulsive that the author uses him as the example of how to define a morally deficient king (cf. 1 Kgs 16:7, 9 [*sic* 19], 26)” (House, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“So he made offerings on the altar which he had made at Bethel on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, in the month which he had devised in his own heart. And he ordained a feast for the children of Israel, and offered sacrifices on the altar and burned incense” (12:33). “Jeroboam instituted a new festival... like the festival held in Judah, a carefully designed counterfeit of the Day of Atonement. Israel’s festival was held in Bethel and in the eighth month (October-November) exactly one month later than Judah’s, a month of Jeroboam’s own choosing. Priests... sacrifices, and an altar were all provided to make Israel’s festival just as good as if not “better” than Judah’s. But Israel’s feast was designed by Jeroboam whereas Judah’s feasts had been decreed by God. Jeroboam set the example for his people; he personally went up to the altar at Bethel to make offerings” (Constable, BKC).

“Jeroboam could have been an instrument of blessing for Israel. He was divinely chosen and given promises that his dynasty would continue and prosper if he obeyed the Lord (11:38-39). But Jeroboam did not trust or obey the Lord; he committed many serious sins that resulted in the Israelites turning *from* God rather than *to* Him. He planted seeds that bore bitter fruit for Israel as long as it continued as a nation. Twenty kings ruled the Northern Kingdom and not one of them turned the people back to the Lord. Instead of one stable dynasty, Israel experienced several dynasties” (Constable, BKC, italics his).

Jeroboam made a wrong decision. He decided he would set up his own form of religion. In other words, he did what he wanted to do rather than what God wanted to do.

“All of Jeroboam’s so-called reforms involved religious apostasy. He set up new objects of worship, new places of worship, new leaders of worship, and new times of worship. These “reforms” proved to be the undoing of the Northern Kingdom. All the kings who followed Jeroboam perpetuated this idolatry. We need to make sure that the changes we initiate have firm rooting in biblical teaching and do not lead people to depart from it” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** Rehoboam’s decision to make the burden on the people heavier instead of lighter resulted in the division of the kingdom and the crowning of Jeroboam as king of the Northern Kingdom, where Jeroboam set up a false religious system.

The way to make wrong decisions is to not listen to wise counselors or the Lord. To say the same thing another way, the way to make a wrong decision is to listen to the wrong counsel. Decisions can have far-reaching consequences on other people besides ourselves.

“The history of the divided kingdom can be divided into four phases. *First*, there was a time of open conflict, extending from Jeroboam (1 Kgs. 12:1) to Omri (1 Kgs. 16:28). *Secondly*, the

two kingdoms settled down to a period of detente, from Omri (1 Kgs. 16:29) to Jehu (2 Kgs. 9). *The third phase*, from Jehu to the captivity of Israel by Assyria (722 B.C.), was one of relative independence (2 Kgs. 9–17). *Finally*, Judah was left as the surviving kingdom, until it was taken into captivity by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. (2 Kgs. 18–25).

“The kingdom of Israel never returned to the land as a nation. Judah remained in captivity for seventy years, and then groups returned to Jerusalem in significant numbers, as recorded in Ezra and Nehemiah. The southern tribes thus came back to the land, under Gentile rule, approximately 500 years before the birth of Christ.

“At the close of OT history, the Jews in the land were subject to the king of Persia. Later, Persia was conquered by Greece, and the Jews were ruled by this world power. Finally, the Greeks were subjugated by the Roman Empire; it was this empire that was in power when the Lord Jesus appeared.

“In studying the divided kingdom, the student frequently comes across seeming contradictions in the dates given. Most of these chronological difficulties can be accounted for by the fact that different methods were used in calculating the length of reigns in Israel and in Judah. Another important factor is that oftentimes two kings served as coregents for a while. The whole subject of the chronology of the kings has been treated capably and in great detail in *The Mysterious Numbers of the Hebrew Kings*, by Edwin R. Thiele” (MacDonald, italics his).

The way to make wrong decisions is: 1) Follow the advice of inexperienced and unwise people. 2) Decide to do what is unloving. 3) Determined to speak down to people. 4) Do it your way, not God’s way.

Decisions can have far-reaching consequences on other people besides ourselves.

The way to make the right decisions is to 1) Follow the advice of wise, experienced people. 2) Do what is loving. 3) Determined to bear people up rather than speaking down to them. 4) Do things God’s way, not your way.

I once preached a sermon entitled “The Five Principles.” I later printed them in a booklet. In that message, I said these were the principles I tried to live by, and they summarized what we’d seen in this passage.

The first principle is the Principle of Reality. The Principle of Reality is seeing and accepting what really is.

The second principle is the Principle of Revelation. The Principle of Revelation is knowing, understanding, believing, and doing what God has revealed in His Word.

The third principle is the Principle of Relationships. The Principle of Relationships is that you should advance your relationships with people close to you.

The fourth principle is the Principle of Results. The Principle of Results is understanding that all choices have consequences.

The fifth principle is the Principle of Responsibility. The Principle of Responsibility is assuming my responsibility and accountability to God.

In other words, if you want to make the right decisions, consider Revelation (what God says), relationships (how they affect others), and results. If you do that, you will know your responsibility and make the right decisions. I concluded by saying, “If we think realistically, biblically, relationally, responsibly, and about results, we will be free from being irritated, infuriated, impatient with people, inflamed with anger, and making ill-advised decisions.”

## THE OFTEN IGNORED EFFECTS OF SIN

We are aware of the consequences of sin. Sin results in a loss of fellowship with the Lord, discipline from the Lord, and, sometimes, devastating personal effects on us. There is an effect of sin, however, that is often ignored. If we thought about it more, it might just give us cause for pause. The ignored outcome of sin is dramatically demonstrated in the lives of three Old Testament characters.

### The Man of God

*The Prophecy* “And behold, a man of God went from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense” (13:1). “Seven times the phrase ‘by the word of the LORD’ appears in this story, emphasizing that this prophet was obeying God by what he said and did (vv. 1, 2, 5, 9, 17, 18, 32). When he arrived, the king was exercising his priestly function at the Bethel altar” (Constable’s Notes). “Though kings could function as priests in certain circumstances (2 Sam. 6:12-15), it was strictly forbidden for them to offer incense for this was limited to the Aaronic priests alone (Num. 16:39-40; 2 Chron. 26:16-18)” (Merrill, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Then he cried out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, ‘O altar, altar! Thus says the LORD: ‘Behold, a child, Josiah by name, shall be born to the house of David; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and men’s bones shall be burned on you’” (13:2). “The prophet spoke to the altar, not to the king, as though God no longer wanted to address Jeroboam, a man so filled with himself and his plans that he had no time to listen to God” (Wiersbe, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“This remarkable prediction, specifically naming Josiah, was fulfilled about 300 years later (2 Kings 23:15-20)” (Ryrie). “The prophet predicted Josiah by name 290 years before he became king of Judah (cf. Isa. 44:28; 45:1). God fulfilled this prophecy when Josiah destroyed Jeroboam’s religious system (2 Kings 23:15-20)” (Constable’s Notes).

“This man’s prophecy is one of the most remarkable in Scripture because it predicted the name and actions of a king who would not appear on the scene for 290 years. Josiah, who reigned from 640 to 609 BC, fulfilled this prophecy just as the man of God predicted (2 Kings 23:15-20). Josiah demolished the Bethel altar built by Jeroboam and slaughtered the false priests there” (Constable, BKC).

*The Sign* “And he gave a sign the same day, saying, ‘This is the sign which the LORD has spoken: Surely the altar shall split apart, and the ashes on it shall be poured out’” (13:3). “The sign God gave was a miracle designed to prove the truthfulness of the prophecy to those who heard it. According to the Mosaic Law, the priests were to carefully carry away the ashes from the altar to a clean place for disposal (Lev. 1:16; 4:12; 6:10-11). The pouring out of them there, along with the destruction of this altar, symbolized God’s rejection of this sacrificial system” (Constable’s Notes). “The altar was split apart and the ashes spilled out—an omen of doom for Jeroboam’s religion” (MacDonald).

“So it came to pass when King Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, who cried out against the altar in Bethel, that he stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, ‘Arrest him!’ Then his hand, which he stretched out toward him, withered, so that he could not pull it back to

himself" (13:4). Ryrie says Jeroboam's hand "stiffened, paralyzed." "Jeroboam stretched out his hand in a gesture of authority. By incapacitating his hand, a symbol of power, God showed He had greater authority than the king and was sovereign over him" (Constable's Notes).

*The Plea* "The altar also was split apart, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. Then the king answered and said to the man of God, 'Please entreat the favor of the LORD your God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me.' So, the man of God entreated the LORD, and the king's hand was restored to him, and became as before" (13:5-6). "Jeroboam had no regard for Yahweh when he called the Lord the prophet's God rather than his own God" (Constable's Notes). "In answer to the prophet's gracious prayer, the withered hand was restored to normal" (MacDonald).

"Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,'" says the Lord. Therefore, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom. 12:19-21).

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven; for He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others*? Do not even the tax collectors do so? Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect" (Mt. 5:44-48).

*The Invitation* "Then the king said to the man of God, 'Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward'" (13:7). "By offering the prophet a reward, Jeroboam was seeking to compromise him. If the prophet had gone to Jeroboam's house and accepted his reward, there would have been a question in the minds of onlookers concerning whether he was in Yahweh's service or in Jeroboam's" (Constable's Notes).

"But the man of God said to the king, 'If you were to give me half your house, I would not go in with you; nor would I eat bread nor drink water in this place.' For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, nor drink water, nor return by the same way you came' So he went another way and did not return by the way he came to Bethel" (13:8-10). "God had issued strict instructions to the prophet that he was to do nothing to indicate the slightest tolerance of Jeroboam's evil reign" (MacDonald). "The young man wisely declined even to eat with the king, which in that culture implied mutual affection and protection" (Constable's Notes). Note, when the man of God departed from Bethel, he returned home another way other than the way he came.

Learn to say "No." Eight of the 10 Commandments are negative.

"You shall have no other gods before Me.

"You shall not make for yourself a carved image.

"You shall not take the name of the LORD your God in vain.

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.

"Honor your father and your mother.

"You shall not murder.

"You shall not commit adultery.

"You shall not steal.



“You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.  
“You shall not covet anything that *is* your neighbor’s.”

When Nehemiah went to Jerusalem to rebuild the wall, he encountered opposition. “But it so happened, when Sanballat heard that we were rebuilding the wall, that he was furious and very indignant and mocked the Jews. And he spoke before his brethren and the army of Samaria and said, ‘What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they fortify themselves? Will they offer sacrifices? Will they complete it in a day? Will they revive the stones from the heaps of rubbish--stones that are burned?’ Now Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, ‘Whatever they build, if even a fox goes up on it, he will break down their stone wall’” (Neh. 4:1-3).

“Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and that there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, ‘Come, let us meet together in one of the villages in the plain of Ono.’ But they thought to do me harm. So I sent messengers to them, saying, ‘I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?’ But they sent me this message four times, and I answered them in the same manner” (Neh. 6:1-4). As someone has said, the enemies requested that Nehemiah come to the valley of Ono and Nehemiah said, “Oh, no!” Believers need to learn to say “Oh, no” to Ono.

## An Old Prophet

*The Information* “Now an old prophet dwelt in Bethel, and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel; they also told their father the words which he had spoken to the king. And their father said to them, ‘Which way did he go?’ For his sons had seen which way the man of God went who came from Judah” (13:11-12). “A second prophet was living in Bethel and was old.... Old age sometimes tends to make one lazy and complacent. This man’s complacency is further suggested by his willingness not only to live in the territory of the apostate king but at the very center of the king’s false system of worship” (Constable, BKC). The man of God went home a different way (13:10), but the son of the old prophet had seen which way he went.

*The Invitation* “Then he said to his sons, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’ So they saddled the donkey for him; and he rode on it and went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak. Then he said to him, ‘*Are* you the man of God who came from Judah?’ And he said, ‘*I am.*’ then he said to him, ‘Come home with me and eat bread.’ And he said, ‘I cannot return with you nor go in with you; neither can I eat bread nor drink water with you in this place. For I have been told by the word of the LORD, ‘You shall not eat bread nor drink water there, nor return by going the way you came’” (13:13-13-17). Again, the man of God said, “No.” Nehemiah had to say “no” four times. If you decide to say “no,” you will be tested.

“He said to him, ‘*I too am* a prophet as you *are*, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.’ (He was lying to him.)” (13:18). “Like Balaam, this prophet had true prophetic gifts but was guilty of worldly self-promotion. Consequently, he lied to get the prophet from Judah to stay with him, then announced his doom, thus currying favor with Jeroboam” (Ryrie). “The apostasy of Jeroboam had infected even a prophet who seems to have had the same selfish motives and

practiced the same brazen disobedience as the king. The spirit of apostasy was spreading quickly and was already reaping a grim harvest in Israel” (Constable, BKC).

Just because some preacher says he has a word from God doesn’t necessarily mean he does. The man of God had a clear message, and some old prophet told him an angel spoke to him. What should he do? He should say, “No.”

*The Indictment* “So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house, and drank water” (13:19). The old prophet was saying to the man of God, “Don’t listen to God; listen to me.” “The prophet of Judah, not suspecting that the old prophet was lying to him returned to Bethel and ate with him” (Constable, BKC).

“Now it happened, as they sat at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back and he cried out to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have disobeyed the word of the LORD, and have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but you came back, ate bread, and drank water in the place of which *the* LORD said to you, ‘Eat no bread and drink no water,’ your corpse shall not come to the tomb of your fathers” (13:20-22). “Even though the old prophet had sinned, the word of the Lord came to him again, as it did to many other prophets of the Lord who sinned (e.g., Jonah, Elijah)” (Constable, BKC). “Because the young prophet had not been completely faithful to God, he would have a dishonorable burial. A person’s burial made a statement about whether his life was honorable or not in the ancient Near East” (Constable’s Notes).

“The severity of God’s judgment on this man, compared with His dealings with the older prophet who was also disobedient, seems unfair. But the severity of God’s judgment was proportionate to the importance of the younger man’s mission. All of Israel would have heard about his prophecy of God’s judgment on Jeroboam for his disobedience to the word of the Lord through Moses. If God had not judged His own prophet for *his* disobedience to the word given him by God and which he had announced publicly, doubt would have been cast on his prophecy and on God’s credibility. By comparison, the older prophet’s sins were private and were judged privately by God” (Constable, BKC, italics his).

*The Fulfillment* “So it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, the prophet whom he had brought back. When he was gone, a lion met him on the road and killed him. And his corpse was thrown on the road, and the donkey stood by it. The lion also stood by the corpse” (13:23-24). “Three unusual features of this killing marked it clearly as divine judgment on the younger prophet—the uncommon circumstance of a lion being on the road, the lion’s refusal to eat the corpse, and the donkey’s standing still. “Lions were attested in Palestine until at least the thirteenth century AD” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes). “Since the lion did not eat the prophet or maul his donkey, it was clear that this was an unusual slaying. God had sent the lion to judge the young prophet”

*The Internment* “And there, men passed by and saw the corpse thrown on the road, and the lion standing by the corpse. Then they went and told *it* in the city where the old prophet dwelt” (13:25). “The death of the prophet became public knowledge” (Constable, BKC).

“Now when the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard *it*, he said, ‘It *is* the man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD. Therefore the LORD has delivered him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.’ And he spoke to his sons, saying, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’ So they saddled *it*. Then he went and found his corpse thrown on the road, and the donkey and the lion standing by the corpse. The lion had not eaten the corpse nor torn the donkey. And the prophet took up the

corpse of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back. So the old prophet came to the city to mourn, and to bury him. Then he laid the corpse in his own tomb; and they mourned over him, *saying*, ‘Alas, my brother!’” (13:26-30). “In spite of his own unfaithfulness, the old prophet admired his young friend and gave him as honorable a burial as was possible” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Instructions* “So it was, after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, ‘When I am dead, then bury me in the tomb where the man of God *is* buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the saying which he cried out by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the shrines on the high places which *are* in the cities of Samaria, will surely come to pass” (13:31-32). The old prophet “realized that the idolatrous system of which he was a part was doomed to destruction by God” (MacDonald). “Josephus described this old man as follows. ‘Now there was a certain wicked man in that city, who was a false prophet, whom Jeroboam had in great esteem but was deceived by him and his flattering words. This man was bed-ridden by reason of the infirmities of old age.... Whereupon he was afraid that this stranger and prophet should be in better esteem with the king than himself, and obtain greater honor from him’” (Constable’s Notes). “The old man is a mixture of curiosity, dishonesty, accuracy, and conviction” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“This incident illustrates the importance of complete obedience to God’s Word. God used it to impress this truth on Jeroboam, the Israelites, and all who heard about it, as well as us.... Disobedience to the Word of God, even on the advice of trusted leadership, leads to divine discipline. We must follow the Lord’s Word rather than the counsel of other servants of God when these conflicts occur. We need to obey God’s directives, not what other people say is God’s will for us.... The fate of this disobedient prophet anticipated that of Israel” (Constable’s Notes). “It also illustrates that added privilege brings increased responsibility; God dealt with the prophet who had the greater responsibility more severely than he did with the man who had less. The effects of spiritual apostasy even on God’s servants can be seen too, especially in the behavior of the older prophet” (Constable, BKC).

## Jeroboam

*The Sin* “After this event Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, but again he made priests from every class of people for the high places; whoever wished, he consecrated him, and he became *one* of the priests of the high places” (13:33). “Irving Jensen notes: ‘King Jeroboam ought to have seen a picture of himself and his own fate if he did not repent, by the fate of the prophet from Judah. Jeroboam, like the prophet, had been chosen by God for a high position. Also, like the prophet, he knew perfectly well what God would have him do. But like the prophet, he had disobeyed the word of God’” (Jensen, cited by MacDonald). “The prophecy of God’s judgment on Jeroboam and its signs (vv. 4-5) did not lead the king to repentance. The most serious aspect of his apostate system was his disregard for what God had required concerning Israel’s priesthood” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Consequences* “And this thing was the sin of the house of Jeroboam, so as to exterminate and destroy *it* from the face of the earth” (13:34). “By instituting his new priestly system, Jeroboam became responsible for its continuing practice in Israel, which eventually resulted in the Assyrian captivity of Israel” (Constable’s Notes).

“That the preceding incident was intended to teach Jeroboam and the Israelites the danger of disregarding the word of the Lord seems clear from this brief passage. The king’s sins had

been recounted (12:25-33), then he was warned (13:1-32), but still Jeroboam did not change his evil ways. Though the appointing of just anyone to the priestly office is singled out (13:33; cf. 12:31) and was perhaps the most serious aspect of his apostasy, it was his total disregard for the will of God as expressed in the Law of Moses that resulted in Jeroboam's downfall and destruction. This was the sin (i.e., apostasy) from which many others grew. Though God used political situations and social conditions to bring about His ends, this sin by Jeroboam was the root cause of Israel's fall" (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** A man of God, an old prophet, and a king disobeyed the Lord, with devastating consequences, not just personally, but on others as well, even a whole nation.

Our disobedience can result in others being disobedient. "Perhaps the fact that the biblical writer did not record the young prophet's name implies his disgrace" (source unknown).

The consequences of sin of the man of God were personal. It would not have an honorable burial (13:20). "Perhaps the fact that the biblical writer did not record the young prophet's name implies his disgrace (cf. Ruth 4:1)" (Constable's Notes). "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming" (1 Jn. 2:28).

The consequences of sin of Jeroboam were national. "This long chapter is not about young and old prophets; it's about King Jeroboam and his sins" (Wiersbe, cited in Constable's Notes). "From beginning to end, the story dwells on a single theme—the fulfillment of the word of the Lord in its due time, having transcended the weakness of its bearer and converted its violators into its confirmands" (Simon, cited in Constable's Notes).

Sin affected other people. The often-ignored effect of sin is that it affects other people. Because of his misbehavior, a man gets fired at work, affecting his family financially.

One simple, single sin can affect multitudes of people. We never know how our sin may affect other people and the effect on them affects still others. Suppose a young man was driving recklessly on one of the freeways in Los Angeles, New York, or a number of other cities and as a result of his recklessness, he had an accident. That could tie up traffic hours and literally affect hundreds, and in some cases, thousands, which in turn affects other people who weren't even on the freeway.

Recently, I was caught in such a situation. It took me 30 minutes to go 5 miles on a freeway. That's 10 miles an hour. Think of all the kinds that were wasted and money it cost because one person did something stupid. So, the motivation to not sin is its effect on other people.

Signed seen on the freeway: Do it for your family—buckle up. Obeying the Word, say "No" to disobedience because you never know how your actions will affect others.

## A TALE OF TWO KINGS

Charles Dickens wrote one of the great novels in English literature titled “A Tale of Two Cities.” The two cities were Paris and London. I like to borrow Dicken’s title. Well, I’d like to borrow it and change it to speak about “A Tale of Two Kings.

A significant chapter in the Old Testament could be called “A Tale of Two Kings.” Prior to the reign of these two kings, Israel had been united under one king. After the death of Solomon, the kingdom of Israel split into the Northern Kingdom and the Southern Kingdom. The first two kings of each of those kingdoms determined the direction of those kingdoms. Their tale is one we need to know about so that we don’t repeat their mistakes. What was it they did and what were the consequences?

### Jeroboam

*The Problem* “At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick” (14:1). The expression “at that time” connects the narrative which follows with Jeroboam’s persistence in his evil courses” (Barnes). The name Abijah means “Jehovah is (my) father” (BDB; Constable’s Notes say “My Father is the LORD”). “Jeroboam’s son, Abijah, should not be confused with Rehoboam’s son of the same name (15:1). Jeroboam’s son was just a boy at this time (14:3, 14:12, 14:17). It is not possible to determine what ailed the lad, nor is this information essential to the narrative” (Constable, BKC).

*The Proposal* “And Jeroboam said to his wife, ‘Please arise, and disguise yourself, that they may not recognize you as the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Indeed, Ahijah the prophet is there, who told me that *I would be king over this people*’” (14:2). The name Abijah (14:1) and Ahijah (14:2) look similar but are two different names. “Jeroboam probably sent his wife to see Ahijah because that prophet had previously given a favorable prophecy to him (11:29-39)” (Constable’s Notes). He told Jeroboam he would be king over the ten northern tribes.

“The queen disguised herself, perhaps for several reasons. First, to visit the man of God openly would betray a lack of faith in the idols at Dan and Bethel. Second, Jeroboam realized that Ahijah opposed idolatry and would not speak favorable things to her if he knew her identity. Third, perhaps the king thought that by fooling the prophet, he might even fool the Lord” (MacDonald).

“Also take with you ten loaves, *some cakes*, and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will become of the child” (14:3). “The gifts of food sent to Ahijah may have been simply customary, but in light of Jeroboam’s other actions they seem designed to win a positive word from the prophet” (Constable, BKC).

*The Prophecy* “And Jeroboam’s wife did so; she arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were glazed by reason of his age. Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, ‘Here is the wife of Jeroboam, coming to ask you something about her son, for he *is sick*. Thus and thus you shall say to her; for it will be, when she comes in, that she will pretend to be another woman’” (14:4-5). Ahijah was old and physically blind, but God gave His prophet spiritual sight. Abraham Lincoln is credited with saying, “You can fool some of the people all of the time and all the people some of the time, but you can’t fool all the people all the time.” But no one can deceive God any of the time.

“And so it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps as she came through the door, he said, “Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend *to be another person?* For I *have been sent to you with bad news*” (14:6). “The prophet quickly unmasked the actress” (Constable, BKC). “Ahijah’s ability to recognize the queen should have convinced her that what he said was from the Lord” (Constable’s Notes).

“Go, tell Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘Because I exalted you from among the people, and made you ruler over My people Israel, and tore the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it to you; and *yet* you have not been as My servant David, who kept My commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do only *what was* right in My eyes; but you have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molded images to provoke Me to anger, and have cast Me behind your back—therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone” (14:7-10). “Whereas the prophecy of the young prophet from Judah dealt with Jeroboam’s religious cult, this one predicted the fate of the king’s descendants. Compare Samuel’s prediction concerning unfaithful Saul’s descendants (1 Sam. 13)” (Constable’s Notes). “Jeroboam’s wife hoped to hear a message of deliverance for her boy, but instead, she heard a message of doom for her husband, herself, and her son.... The king’s wife thought she had been sent to Ahijah, but the prophet said he had been sent to her” (Constable, BKC).

“This is what the Lord had done to Eli and Saul for their similar disregard of God. Jeroboam’s descendants would not even enjoy burial” (Constable’s Notes). “Whether Jeroboam intended his golden calves to be idols or aids in the worship of Yahweh, God called them other gods and idols” (Constable, BKC). “No male would be able to perpetuate his line which God compared to dung” (Constable, BKC).

“The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Jeroboam and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field; for the LORD has spoken!” (14:11). “Only the sick son Abijah, of all the male descendants of Jeroboam, would be buried; the others would suffer the indignity of having their bodies devoured by scavengers” (Ryrie). “Wild animals would eat them, a terrible disgrace in the minds of ancient Semites (v. 11; cf. 16:4; 21:24; Deut. 28:26)” (Constable’s Notes). “This would also be true of Baasha’s family, 16:4, and Ahab’s family, 21:24” (Constable, BKC).

“Arise therefore, go to your own house. When your feet enter the city, the child shall die” (14:12). “The sign that this would happen would be the death of Jeroboam’s sick child” (Constable’s Notes).

“And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he is the only one of Jeroboam who shall come to the grave, because in him there is found something good toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam” (14:13). “None of his family would have a decent burial, except the ailing son, Abijah” (MacDonald). For the child, this was a blessing because it is better to die of a disease than die in disgrace. “His death at this time was really a divine blessing in view of what he would have experienced had he lived” (Constable’s Notes).

“The death of a little child is one of the harsh realities of life. It brings deep grief and often causes people to become bitter against God. But believers can rest in the assurance that the Lord never allows a youngster to die without a loving purpose in mind. He caused Abijah, Jeroboam’s young son, to die from an illness because he ‘found some good thing’ in the boy. By taking the boy in childhood, God kept him from a cruel execution and gave him a decent burial.



“Another of God’s purposes for taking young children is exemplified in the well-known writer Ethel Barrett. She told about an infant girl who died before reaching her first birthday. Mrs. Barrett said that the little one simply went to be with Jesus and that the youngster’s life had served a real purpose. During her brief span on earth, the child ‘had patched up an ailing marriage, brought her grandparents’ family closer together, and jolted her parents from lip service to total commitment—which influenced a neighborhood, which influenced the community, which spread to another community, which ultimately started a church!’ Mrs. Barrett concluded, ‘I’m still going to have to go some to catch up with her’” (*Our Daily Bread*, 6/12/1982).

“Moreover the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now!” (14:14). In other words, “the judgment is at hand” (Ryrie). “The king God raised up was Baasha (15:27-29)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Moreover the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam; this is the day. What? Even now!” (14:14). In other words, “the judgment is at hand” (Ryrie). “The king God raised up was Baasha (15:27-29)” (Constable’s Notes).

“For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers, and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images, provoking the LORD to anger” (14:15). “God compared Jeroboam’s Israel to a shaky reed planted in unstable water, like the papyrus reeds Jeroboam had seen in Egypt when he lived there” (Constable’s Notes). “Jeroboam had planted Israel not in the solid soil of God’s Word but in the unsubstantial waters of idolatry, like Egyptian rushes or papyrus reeds” Constable, BKC). Israel was uprooted by the Assyrians in 722 BC.

“And He will give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and who made Israel sin” (14:16). “Eventually, the nation of Israel would be led into captivity because Jeroboam had inaugurated the worship of Asherim. The Asherim were carved wooden images symbolizing fertility” (MacDonald). “God’s giving Israel up must be understood in a limited sense. He promised Abraham that his descendants would be blessed forever (Gen. 12:2-3; 18:17-18; 22:17-18). Later, God brought Israel back from captivity but still has not fulfilled all His promises of blessing, which they will yet experience (Isa. 62:1-12). God did give them up to judgment in captivity, however, which is the forsaking that is in view here” (Constable, BKC).

*The Fulfillment* “Then Jeroboam’s wife arose and departed, and came to Tirzah. When she came to the threshold of the house, the child died. And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet” (14:17-18). “Evidently Jeroboam had moved his capital from Shechem to Tirzah (modern Tell el-Far’ah), seven miles to the northeast, and was living there” (Constable’s Notes). Ryrie points out that “Tirzah, the resident of the king, superseded Shechem as capital of the Northern Kingdom (15:21).”

*The Death* “Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, indeed they *are* written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel” (14:19). “The writer wrote that the reigns of 18 of Israel’s 20 kings stood recorded in ‘The Chronicles of the Kings of Israel’ (all except those of Tibni and Hoshea). This document is different from the canonical books of 1 and 2 Chronicles and is not extant” (Constable’s Notes). It was “the official record of the kings which was kept as a public national history” (MacDonald).

“The period that Jeroboam reigned *was* twenty-two years. So he rested with his fathers. Then Nadab his son reigned in his place” (14:20). “During his reign, Israel lost control of the

area around Damascus, which subsequently became an independent Aramean state. Ironically, it was this area that produced enemies of Israel for many years. The Philistines also recovered some of their territory and became stronger (cf. 15:27). Moreover, Israel appears to have lost control over Moab about this time. Judah, Israel, and Edom invaded Moab right after King Ahab of Israel died (2 Kings 3:21-27). King Abijah of Judah also defeated Jeroboam in battle (2 Chron. 13:13-20). All of these losses are evidence of God's punishment for apostasy" (Constable's Notes).

"One may safely assume that all the territory Solomon ruled except Judah came under Jeroboam's control. Much of this was lost during his reign. This lost area included the land around Damascus to the north, which became an independent Aramean state. In the southwest, the Philistines repossessed some of their former territory and grew stronger (15:27). On the east, Moab was apparently lost. Ironically, Jeroboam's protector in Egypt (11:40), Shishak (Sheshonk I), invaded Judah (14:25) during Jeroboam's reign. This resulted in heavy damage and widespread destruction. Jeroboam was also defeated by King Abijah of Judah (2 Chron. 13:13-20). Israel suffered both in military strength and in territorial holdings during Jeroboam's reign" (Constable, BKC).

Jeroboam started out with great promise. He was a hard-working servant. Solomon promoted him. God chose him to be king of the northern kingdom. He must have been a powerful man to have separated Israel from Judah and ruled it for so long a time. But he lacked the commitment to the Lord that would have made him a great and successful king."

The point of the story of Jeroboam is stated in verse 16, where we are told that God gave up Israel "because of the sins of Jeroboam, who sinned and made Israel sin." Imagine having put on your tombstone, "Here lies the body of the person who sinned and caused others to sin. That's the tale of this king.

One of the morals in *A Tale of Two Cities* is that things are not always as they seem. Somebody who appears to be no-good and disreputable could become the most righteous person in the world. Individuals who appear to seek justice may be bloodthirsty in the end.

## Rehoboam (cf. 2 Chron. 12)

*The Defection* "And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king. He reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, to put His name there. His mother's name was Naamah, an Ammonitess" (14:21). "The first part of Rehoboam's reign [is recorded] in chapter 12. This section summarizes the significant features of his reign" (MacDonald).

"Rehoboam succeeded Solomon and reigned over Judah for 17 years (931–913 B.C.)" (Constable's Notes). "Perhaps to contrast this city with the capitals of the Northern Kingdom (Shechem, Tirzah, and Samaria; cf. comments on 12:25) the writer described it as the city the Lord had chosen, not like the northern capitals that were chosen by men. The king's mother, Naamah, was one of Solomon's foreign wives. As an Ammonite, she worshiped the detestable idol-god Molech (11:5, 11:33). Probably, she was partially responsible for the revival of Canaanite paganism that took place during Rehoboam's reign." (Constable, BKC).

"The narrator introduces a new format and style at this point that enables him to state the essence of a king's reign with an economy of words. The introduction and conclusion of the account of each reign conform to a fixed pattern with only slight variations. The following information is regularly given in the introduction to the reigns of the kings of Judah: (1) date of

beginning of reign, (2) age at beginning of reign (not noted consistently at first), (3) length and place of reign, (4) name of the queen mother, and (5) a theological evaluation. The pattern for the Israelite kings is the same, except that their ages and the names of their mothers are not given. The reign of each king, both Judahite and Israelite, is normally concluded in this manner: (1) summary of reign and referral to the royal annals for additional information, (2) notice of death and place of burial, and (3) name of a successor” (Rice, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, *sacred* pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree” (14:22-23). The author explains that the people in the Southern Kingdom built high places, sacred pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. “Perhaps the king’s Ammonite mother was responsible for some of this” (Constable’s Notes; see comment on verse 31). “The high places were sometimes places where Yahweh was worshiped but not as He had commanded. The sacred stones or pillars and Asherah poles (14:15) were aids to the worship of male and female Canaanite idols. The high hills and spreading trees were favorite locations for these cultic shrines” (Constable, BKC). “Asherah (v. 23) was the mother goddess of the Canaanite pantheon. However, the word Asherah (pl. Asherim) also describes a cult object: a tree, a grove of trees, or a pole. Eugene Peterson called the Asherim ‘sex-and-religion shrines’” (Constable’s Notes).

“And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (14:24). “Male shrine prostitutes (sodomites) were used in pagan worship. The same practices that moved God to purge the land of the moral cancer that plagued it in Joshua’s day were those to which the Israelites returned under Rehoboam’s leadership” (Constable, BKC).

*The Defeat* “It happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam *that* Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem” (14:25). “Pharaoh Shishak (Shoshenq I, 945–924 B.C.) was the king who had given Jeroboam refuge (11:40). He was a very powerful and effective ruler” (Constable’s Notes). The record of his campaigns is inscribed on the exterior of the Amon temple’s south wall at Karnak in Egypt. The 79-line inscription (which has now lost about a third of its content) shows the king’s campaigns and eventual return with booty and prisoners. It is the longest surviving continuous monumental text from Egypt. His military campaign into Judah, Israel, Edom, and Philistia netted him control of 156 cities. “This resulted in Rehoboam and the leaders humbling themselves before the Lord and God spared Jerusalem from destruction (2 Chron. 12:2-12)” (Constable, BKC).

“And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king’s house; he took away everything. He also took away all the gold shields which Solomon had made” (14:26). See 11:40. “Rehoboam bought Shishak off by giving him many of the treasures of the temple and of the palace. These included the 500 gold shields made by Solomon (10:16-17)” (Constable, BKC). “Isn’t it ironic that Solomon had sought to protect himself from Egypt by marrying Pharaoh’s daughter, but within a short time after his death, Shishak of Egypt walked off with much of the glitter of Solomon’s golden city!” (MacDonald).

“Then King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place, and committed *them* to the hands of the captains of the guard, who guarded the doorway of the king’s house. And whenever the king entered the house of the LORD, the guards carried them, then brought them back into the guardroom” (14:27-28). Rehoboam replaced gold with bronze. As the saying goes, “All is not gold that glitters.” One author said, “We must never let the bronze of man’s ideas replace the

gold of God's truth.... Often, human plans and programs of little value are put in place of divine principles and practices" (*Our Daily Bread*, 10/31/1979). What have you put in the place of an intimate relationship with the Lord?

*The Death* "Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, *are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?*" (14:29). "The events of the reigns of 14 of the 19 kings of the Southern Kingdom are said in 1 and 2 Kings not to be recorded in 'the book of the annals of the kings of Judah' (starting with Rehoboam)" (Constable, BKC).

"And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all *their* days" (14:30). "The war that kept flaring up between Rehoboam and Jeroboam was a consequence of their turning away from Yahweh. Rebellion against God brought war, but submission would have resulted in peace" (Constable's Notes). "This was a period of warfare between Judah and Israel. It continued for fifty-seven years through the reign of Asa in Judah and Omri in Israel. The Lord prevented an all-out war between Judah and Israel (12:24), but the sister kingdoms were constantly skirmishing with each other" (MacDonald).

"The continual warfare mentioned here is mentioned briefly again (15:6; cf. 2 Chron. 12:15) but is not explained. In view of Rehoboam's initial plan to regain Israel by force (12:21; which he abandoned after the Prophet Shemaiah reported God's prohibition of civil war, 2 Chron. 11:1-4), these constant wars probably involved border disputes in the territory of Benjamin. It appears that Rehoboam was more successful in these border disputes since he won both the hearts and the land of the Benjamites. The exact border probably changed many times in these early years of the divided monarchy" (Constable, BKC).

"So Rehoboam rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David. His mother's name *was* Naamah, an Ammonitess (14:31). "The fact that the queen mother was an Ammonitess (vv. 21, 31) is mentioned twice may be designed to call the reader's attention to an underlying reason for the failure of Rehoboam's rule—his father, Solomon, had married foreign wives, who led him and his family into idolatry" (MacDonald). When Rehoboam died, his son, Abijam, replaced him as king.

The point of the story of Rehoboam is that under his administration, "Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy with their sins which they committed, more than all that their fathers had done. For they also built for themselves high places, *sacred* pillars, and wooden images on every high hill and under every green tree. "And there were also perverted persons in the land. They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel" (14:22-24).

**Summary:** The sins of the first two kings of the divided kingdom caused both nations to sin (14:16; 12:28-33) and God to get angry with divesting consequences.

In a tale of two cities, I would expect one to be good and the other to be bad. Like the opening line of *A Tale of Two Cities*, "It was the best of times, it was the worst of times." In this tale of two kings, it was the worst of times and then it got even worse. Both of these nations got into idolatry and eventually religious sexual perversion. What could be more disgusting? No wonder God gets angry at sin. "For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers and will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their wooden images, provoking the LORD to anger" (14:15).

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma. But

fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things, the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them” (Eph. 5:1-7).

This passage says that believers are to imitate the Lord by living a life of love and gratitude and to avoid idolatry, fornication, uncleanness, covetousness, foolish talking, and coarse jesting because God gets angry at such sins and you don't want to be a partaker of that.

## THE STANDARD OF JUDGMENT

If the Bible teaches anything, it teaches that God judges people. What is His standard of judgment? Ultimately, the standard is God Himself (Romans 3:23). What does that look like in human terms? Acknowledging that the ultimate standard is God Himself, is it possible for us to compare ourselves with someone who God said did it right? Interestingly, that is the very thing the author of 1 Kings does. Besides the Lord, who would qualify to be a standard for judgment? The first king in the Southern Kingdom was Rehoboam, the second was Abijah, and the third was Asa. In the first part of 1 Kings 15, the second and third kings of the Southern Kingdom are evaluated.

### Abijam (Judah)

*Information* “In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah” (15:1). In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, who ruled in the Northern Kingdom, Abijam became the king over the Southern Kingdom (2 Chronicles 13:1–14:1a). “Jeroboam reigned in Israel from 931 to 910 BC. Abijam, the Abijah of 2 Chron. 13:1, reigned 913-911” (Ryrie). “The accession formulae from this reign onwards make cross-references between Judah and Israel. It is not clear whether this was to correlate the sources for the reader or to emphasize the essential unity which should have marked both peoples” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“He reigned three years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom” (15:2). Abijam, whose mother’s name was Maachah (Ryrie: “Michaiah of 2 Chron. 13:2”), and whose grandmother’s name was Abishalom (Ryrie: “Absalom”), ruled in Jerusalem for three years. “According to 2 Chronicles 13:2, Maacah was the daughter of Uriel and therefore the granddaughter of Absalom” (Constable’s Notes). “Abijah was a son of Rehoboam and Maacah, a daughter of Absalom (Abishalom is a variant spelling), David’s son. ‘Daughter’ or son does not always mean a descendant in the very next generation; it is often used of a descendant two or more generations removed” (Constable, BKC). “The mothers of the kings of Judah are named to show that the claims to the throne are legitimate” (NKJV Study Bible).

*Evaluation* “And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David” (15:3). Because his heart was not loyal to the Lord, as was the heart of David, Abijam committed all the sins of his father (Rehoboam), “as an idolater” (MacDonald). “Abijam continued to tolerate the pagan worship reintroduced to Judah during his father’s reign (14:23-24)” (Constable’s Notes).” This is another case of like father like son. “The importance of one’s affections is emphasized by the reference to Abijah’s heart; one’s affections often determine his actions” (Constable, BKC).

“Nevertheless for David’s sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite” (15:4-5). “A lamp is a picturesque way of describing a successor or successors who would dispel all kinds of darkness; the figure refers to the whole of David’s dynasty (cf. comments on 11:36; also see 2 Sam. 21:17; 2 Kings 8:19)” (Constable, BKC). “Verses 4 and 5 imply that God would have destroyed the house of Abijam



had it not been for His covenant with David. Notice at the end of verse 5 how an otherwise exemplary life can be marred by a moment of passion!” (MacDonald).

“And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life” (15:6). “The war with Israel that began in Rehoboam’s reign continued through Abijam’s reign. In verse 6, Rehoboam and Jeroboam stand for Judah and Israel” (Constable, BKC). “The writer repeats what he had said in 14:30, in order to remind the reader that Abijam inherited this war from his father” (Barnes).

“He experienced chastening from the Lord because his heart did not fully belong to Yahweh (vv. 3, 6; cf. 2 Chron. 13:2-20). God’s patience with Abijam was due to His promises to David more than to Abijam’s own character (vv. 4-5; cf. 2 Sam. 21:17; 1 Kings 11:36)” (Constable’s Notes). “He tried to bring Israel back both by persuasion and by force of arms, killing 500,000 Israelites in the attempt (2 Chron. 13:1-20)” (MacDonald). “One episode is recorded in 2 Chron. 13:2-20 where Abijah’s trust in God resulted in victory in spite of his being outnumbered. Abijah did not abandon the Lord even though he tolerated idolatry” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam” (15:7). “The second reference to war with Jeroboam (15:6) suggests that the antagonism between Israel and Judah at this time was intense” (Constable, BKC).

“So Abijam rested with his fathers, and they buried him in the City of David. Then Asa his son reigned in his place” (15:8). When Abijam died, he was buried in Jerusalem and his son reigned in his place.

As mentioned in the comments on 14:21, the author follows a pattern when discussing the various kings of the Northern and Southern kingdoms. This pattern consists of basic information (the date, age, and length of his reign and the name of his mother), an evaluation (followed the Lord or did not follow the Lord), and summarization (his death, burial, and successor). In the case of Abijam, Rehoboam’s son, the significant issue is that he didn’t have the heart of the Lord like David and, consequently, he walked in the sins of his father Rehoboam (15:3), but, although the Lord disciplines him (war), because of His covenant with David and David’s commitment to Him, the Lord did not destroy the house of Abijam.

## Asa (Judah)

*Information* “In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king over Judah” (15:9). In the 20<sup>th</sup> year of Jeroboam (Ryrie: 910 BC), the king in the Northern Kingdom, Asher became king over the Southern Kingdom. “Asa (‘Healer’?) came to power close to the end of Jeroboam’s reign over Israel in 910 B.C.” (Constable’s Notes).

“And he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem. His grandmother’s name was Maachah the granddaughter of Abishalom” (15:10). “Asa reigned from 911–870 B.C., 41 years, an unusually long reign that probably began when he was quite young (cf. 15:2). It was his grandmother (NIV), not his mother (NASB), who bore the name Maacah (cf. 15:2). The queen mother (dowager), not the king’s wife, was the first lady in the kingdom” (Constable’s Notes; see comment on verse 2).

*Evaluation* “Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did his father David” (15:11). “David, of course, was Asa’s ancestor, not his immediate father” (Constable, BKC).

“And he banished the perverted persons from the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made” (15:12). For example, Asa banished the perverted people (Hebrew: “male temple prostitute”) from the land and removed all the idols that his father, Abijam allowed to be set up.

“Also he removed Maachah his grandmother from *being* queen mother, because she had made an obscene image of Asherah. And Asa cut down her obscene image and burned *it* by the Brook Kidron” (15:13). “The reforms of Asa included deposing the Queen Mother, Maacah (the word mother here indicates his grandmother, not an uncommon usage). The Hebrew word for queen is not the one normally used and may indicate special authority; it is also used of the Queen of Sheba” (Ryrie). “The rightness of Asa’s acts is clear from his removing the pagan worship practices of Rehoboam and Abijam (vv. 12-13; cf. Deut. 9:21)” (Constable’s Notes).

“But the high places were not removed. Nevertheless Asa’s heart was loyal to the LORD all his days” (15:14). “He did away with some of the high places (2 Chron. 14:3), but not all of them (v. 14). However, his heart was true to Yahweh all his days (v. 14), even though he became somewhat self-reliant later in his life (2 Chron. 16:7-10)” (Constable’s Notes).

“He also brought into the house of the LORD the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which he himself had dedicated: silver and gold and utensils” (15:15). “The silver, gold, and articles that he and his father had dedicated probably refer to the booty that Abijah had taken in his war with Jeroboam (2 Chron. 13:16-17) and what Asa had acquired in defeating the Egyptians (2 Chron. 14:12-13)” (Constable, BKC).

“Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days” (15:16). During his reign, there was a war between him and Baasha, the king of the Northern Kingdom.

“And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah” (15:17). This was a defiant action by Baasha” (Ryrie). “Many Israelites were leaving Israel to live in Judah, an indication of God’s blessing on the Southern Kingdom (cf. 2 Chron. 11:13-17). Baasha may have been building a Berlin wall type of structure at Ramah” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then Asa took all the silver and gold *that was* left in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasuries of the king’s house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants. And King Asa sent them to Ben-Hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, ‘*Let there be* a treaty between you and me, as there was between my father and your father. See, I have sent you a present of silver and gold. Come and break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel, so that he will withdraw from me” (15:18). “Tabrimmon means ‘good is Rimmon,’ the Thunderer-god, a title of Baal” (Wiseman, cited in Constable’s Notes). “To take the pressure off Baasha’s encroachment on Judah (by building Ramah), Asa entered into a foreign alliance with Aram” (Ryrie). “Instead of turning to the Lord, he sought the assistance of Ben-Hadad” (MacDonald). “Christians need to be careful not to take what belongs to God (i.e., their time, money, resources, etc.) and give it to someone else” (MacDonald).

“So Ben-Hadad heeded King Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel. He attacked Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maachah, and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali” (15:20). Ben-Hadad “attacked towns in the Galilee area, causing Israel to stop fortifying Ramah” (Ryrie). “By making a liberal payment to this foreign monarch, he persuaded him to attack Israel from the north in the region of Galilee. This drew Baasha’s forces to the north and enabled Asa to disassemble Ramah and build the fortified cities of Geba and Mizpah along his northern border (“ MacDonald).

“Now it happened, when Baasha heard *it*, that he stopped building Ramah, and remained in Tirzah” (15:21). “Asa’s plan to divert Baasha’s attention to Ben-Hadad (ca. 900–860 B.C.) worked. His treaty evidenced some lack of trust in Yahweh (2 Chron. 16:7-9). Asa’s strategy was one that God blessed, however, and it enabled him to break down Baasha’s fortifications” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then King Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none *was* exempted. And they took away the stones and timber of Ramah, which Baasha had used for building; and with them King Asa built Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah” (15:22). “Asa then proceeded to confiscate the building materials (stones and timber) Baasha left behind to fortify Ramah and used them to strengthen his own defense cities of Geba and Mizpah near Israel’s border. Asa’s plan was clever and successful, but it demonstrated a lack of trust in God. For getting help from Aram’s king, the Prophet Hanani rebuked Asa (2 Chron. 16:7-9). Asa resented the rebuke and put Hanani in prison (2 Chron. 16:10). Perhaps Asa’s successes against Egypt and Israel made him think too highly of himself” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “The rest of all the acts of Asa, all his might, all that he did, and the cities which he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet” (15:23). “At the end of his life, Asa again failed to seek the Lord. When his feet became diseased, he did not ask for the Lord’s help but relied only on the physicians (2 Chron. 16:12). Though Asa’s faith was not what it might have been, all in all, his relationship with God was characterized by fidelity and blessing during his long reign” (Constable, BKC).

“So Asa rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place” (15:24). “It may have been because of his ill health (gout?) that Asa’s son, Jehoshaphat, became coregent with him late in his reign (873–870 B.C.).... When Asa died, Ahab was reigning in Israel (874–853 B.C.)” (Constable’s Notes).

The writer of 2 Chronicles gave much more information about Asa’s reign than is found in 1 Kings. Asa’s reign began with 10 years of peace (2 Chron. 14:1). It was probably during this period that he instituted his first series of religious reforms (2 Chron. 14:2-5). At that time, he also fortified Judah’s defenses (2 Chron. 14:6-8). An invasion by Zerah the Ethiopian, a commander of the Egyptian King Osarkon, broke the peace. Judah was greatly outnumbered, but Asa defeated the Egyptians by relying on the Lord (2 Chron. 14:9-15). The Prophet Azariah warned Asa to continue to trust in God and not think that his power had saved him (2 Chron. 15:1-7). More years of peace followed (2 Chron. 15:19). Encouraged by God’s prophet, Asa embarked on a second reformation period (15:12-15; 2 Chron. 15:8-18). The expulsion of the Sodomites and the destruction of idols introduced by Rehoboam and Abijah were part of this reform, as was Asa’s deposing of his grandmother Maacah from the official position of queen mother because of her repulsive Asherah pole, which he burned... in the Kidron Valley east of Jerusalem (adapted from Constable, BKC).

“Asa was the first of eight kings of Judah whom the writer of Kings judged as good. Four of them were reformers who sought to bring the nation back to the Mosaic Covenant, and Asa was the first of these. The other reformers were Jehoshaphat, Hezekiah, and Josiah. The writer of Chronicles described Asa’s reforms more fully in 2 Chronicles 14-16.... Asa’s heart was right with God his whole reign (v. 14), as David’s had been. Nevertheless, like David, he also sinned. He experienced personal blessing in the form of a long reign and victory over his enemies because of his commitment to Yahweh. He also became a source of blessing to Judah” (Constable’s Notes).

**Summary:** As with Jeroboam, the first king of the Northern Kingdom (14:7-10), God judged Abijam and Asa, who were kings in the Southern Kingdom, by the standard of David because David's heart was loyal to the Lord (15:3), because he did that was what was right in the eyes of the Lord, except for the matter of Uriah the Hittite (15:5, 11), and because he did not turn aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life" (15:5).

David wholeheartedly served the Lord.

David did what was right in the eyes of the Lord.

David persevered in obedience.

By the way, David sinned.

Abijam "And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him; his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David" (15:3).

His heart was not loyal to the Lord.

He followed in the footsteps of his sinful father.

Asa's heart was loyal to LORD all his days" (15:14).

Asa did *what was* right, as *did* his father David (15:11)

He removed the idols (15:11).

He did not remove the high places (15:14).

He made alliances; in that case, he did not trust the Lord (15:18-19).

This chapter contrasts two men, Abijam and Asa. It also compares both of them to David. While it is true that there are a number of comparisons between the two, in all three cases, the issue is the heart.

David's heart was loyal to the Lord (15:3). It is said of the king of the Southern Kingdom, "his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father David" (15:3).

Conclusion: David's heart was loyal to the Lord.

Abijam: "his heart was not loyal to the Lord his God" (15:3).

"Asa's heart loyal to the Lord all his days" (15:15)

The issue is the heart. Jesus illustrates that.

*Hard Heart* "And these are the ones by the wayside where the word is sown. When they hear, Satan comes immediately and takes away the word that was sown in their hearts" (Mk. 4:15). Some seed fell on ground that was hard-packed. The condition of the soil made it possible for the bird to snatch it away. Satan loses no time ("immediately") in snatching away the Word. All agree this represents people who do not come to faith in Christ.

Barclay says, "There are some people into whose hearts Christian truth can find no entry. This is due to the hearer's lack of interest; and that lack of interest comes from a failure to realize how important the Christian decision is. Christianity fails to make an impact on so many people, not because they are hostile to it, but because they are indifferent.

They think that it is irrelevant to life and that they can get on well enough without it."

*Shallow Heart* "These likewise are the ones sown on stony ground who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with gladness and they have no root in themselves, and so endure only for a time. Afterward, when tribulation or persecution arises for the word's sake, immediately they stumble" (Mk. 4:17). Because they have no depth, they do not endure. They are unwilling to endure tribulation and persecution.

*Crowded Heart* "Now these are the ones sown among thorns; *they are* the ones who hear the word and the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the desires for other things entering in choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful" (Mk. 4:18-19). The Greek word translated

“world” means “age.” The cares of this age are “the present course of events” (Swete), More specifically, worry, materialism, and covetousness prevent growth to spiritual maturity.

The desire for more money, more cars, more clothes, and more toys can choke out the Word.

“We cannot hear unless we listen. It is characteristic of so many of us that we are so busy talking that we have no time to hear, so engaged in arguing that we have no time to listen, so occupied in advancing our own opinions that we have no time to attend to the opinions of Christ, so much on the move that we have no time for the essential stillness.”

*Good Heart* “But these are the ones sown on good ground, those who hear the word, accept it, and bear fruit: some thirtyfold, some sixty, and some a hundred” (Mk. 4:20).

Do you have a hard heart, a shallow heart, a crowded heart, or a good heart?

“Keep your heart with all diligence, for out of it *spring* the issues of life. Put away from you a deceitful mouth, And put perverse lips far from you. Let your eyes look straight ahead, And your eyelids look right before you. Ponder the path of your feet, And let all your ways be established. Do not turn to the right or the left; Remove your foot from evil” (Prov. 4:23-27).

## THE HUMAN STANDARD OF BAD BEHAVIOR

God used a human standard to communicate what He wanted: David, who had a loyal heart. Then, the Lord gave us a standard of what He does not want—Jeroboam. What does that standard look like?

“At this point, the historian turns to the account of the kings of Israel and will remain there until the end of the book. The story of the kings of Judah is found primarily in 2 Chronicles. David’s dynasty is mentioned in 1 and 2 Kings only where there is some interaction between Judah and Israel” (Wiersbe, cited in Constable’s Notes).

### Nadab (Israel)

*Information* Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years” (15:25). “Nadab (‘Generous’ or ‘Noble’) ruled Israel from 910–909 B.C.” (Constable’s Notes). “Nadab was the brother of Abijah who had died in childhood (1 Kings 14:17). Whether Nadab was older or younger than Abijah is not known. He was the second ruler of the Jeroboam dynasty” (Constable, BKC).

*Evaluation* “And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin” (15:26). “Nadab continued the policies begun by his father, which the Lord regarded as evil. The seriousness of Jeroboam’s sins can be seen in that he had caused Israel to commit sin as well as sinning himself” (Constable, BKC).

“Then Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him. And Baasha killed him at Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place” (15:27-28). “Gibbethon stood three miles west of Solomon’s stronghold city of Gezer near the border where Israel, Philistia, and Judah met” (Constable’s Notes). “Evidently Israel did not capture this town (16:15-17)” (Constable, BKC). “Baasha assassinated him [Nadab] during a battle with the Philistines” (Constable’s Notes). “In 908 BC, the assassin became king of Israel” (Ryrie).

“And it was so, when he became king, *that* he killed all the house of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam anyone that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins of Jeroboam, which he had sinned and by which he had made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger” (15:29-30). The word spoken by the Lord is a reference to the prophecy of 1 Kings 14:10-13. Therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam every male in Israel, bond and free; I will take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam, as one takes away refuse until it is all gone” (14:10).

“The reason for this severe judgment is reiterated by the writer here (15:30). Specifically, the worship at the golden-calf shrines is in view. This worship was continued by all of Jeroboam’s successors and was frequently condemned by the writer of 1 and 2 Kings (15:34; 16:19, 16:26, 16:31; 22:52; etc.)” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? And there was war between Asa and Baasha



king of Israel all their days” (15:31-32). The rest of what Nadab did is recorded elsewhere, but throughout his reign, there was a constant conflict between Asa and Baasha.

To sum up, Nadab ruled for two years. He did evil in that he walked in the way of his father Jeroboam, who 1) Cast God behind his back (14:9), 2) made images of other gods, and 3) made God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

## Baasha (Israel)

*Information* “In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, and reigned twenty-four years” (15:33). “Baasha’s 24-year reign (909–886 B.C.), which was the third longest of any king of the Northern Kingdom, fell within that of Asa’s rule over Judah (911–870 B.C.). The Israelite king who ruled the longest was Jeroboam II (41 years) and the second longest was Jehu (28 years)” (Constable’s Notes).

*Evaluation* “He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin” (15:34). “Baasha had an outstanding opportunity to lead Israel back to true covenantal worship after he had killed Nadab and terminated Jeroboam’s dynasty. However, he chose not to do so. He evidently regarded his elevation from a lowly origin [16:2] to Israel’s throne as an opportunity to fulfill personal ambition rather than to glorify Yahweh” (Constable’s Notes). “Baasha’s reign marks the beginning of the second dynasty in the kingdom of Israel. Conflict between Judah and Israel continued throughout Baasha’s reign. With Tirzah as his capital, he continued the idolatrous worship that Jeroboam had instituted” (MacDonald).

“Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani, against Baasha, saying: ‘Inasmuch as I lifted you out of the dust and made you ruler over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam, and have made My people Israel sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins, surely I will take away the posterity of Baasha and the posterity of his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat’ (16:1-3). “Since Baasha chose to live in sin like Jeroboam, he would suffer the same ignominious fate of Jeroboam’s family (cf. 16:11-12 and 14:10-13)” (Ryrie). “Jehu the prophet must be distinguished from Jehu the king of Israel (841-814 BC). This prophet was the son of Hanani. This Hanani may or may not have been the prophet who warned King Asa of Judah (2 Chron. 16:7-9)” (Constable, BKC).

“The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Baasha and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the fields” (16:4). “For Baasha’s failure, God announced that He would cut off his line as He had Jeroboam’s (14:11)” (Constable’s Notes). “Almost the same words used to describe Baasha’s future judgment (16:4) had been given to Jeroboam by the Prophet Ahijah (14:7, 14:10-11) and were given later by Elijah to Ahab (21:24)” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Baasha rested with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah. Then Elah his son reigned in his place” (16:5-6). As it was said of Nadab, the rest of what Baasha did is recorded elsewhere. When he died and was buried, his son replaced him.

“And also the word of the LORD came by the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha and his house, because of all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD in provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he killed them” (16:7). “Even though God had determined before that Jeroboam’s dynasty would be

destroyed (14:10-14), Baasha was held responsible for doing it” (Ryrie). “God ended Baasha’s reign for two primary reasons: his continuation of Jeroboam’s cult, and the motive and manner with which he assassinated Nadab (v. 7)” (Constable’s Notes). “The writer followed his regular recording of the facts surrounding the king’s death (16:5-6) with an additional emphasis on the reasons for Baasha’s judgment by God (16:7)” (Constable, BKC).

“Besides providing information on Baasha’s death, these verses [16:5-7] reemphasize the author’s theological approach to history. Three issues deserve mention. First, God’s word dictates history, a fact Jehu’s prophetic rebuke and prediction divulge. Second, Jeroboam and Baasha are judged unfavorably because they used their God-given political authority to preserve their position rather than glorify God among the people. Third, the text stresses cause and effect, not fatalistic determinism. God gives both Jeroboam and Baasha the opportunity to follow the covenant. Baasha eliminates Jeroboam’s family, as God said would happen, yet becomes like Jeroboam, which makes him a murderer, not a reformer” (House, cited in Constable’s Notes).

To sum up, Baasha ruled for 24 years. He did evil in that he walked in the way of Jeroboam, who 1) Cast God behind his back (14:9), 2) made images of other gods, and 3) made God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods (possessions, prosperity) with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

## Elah (Israel)

*Information* “In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel, and reigned two years in Tirzah” (16:8). “Elah the son of Baasha, of the tribe of Issachar, was king of Israel [the Northern Kingdom] for two years (886/85–885/84 B.C.)” (MacDonald; Constable, BKC: 886-885 BC).

*Evaluation* “Now his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him as he was in Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, steward of his house in Tirzah. And Zimri went in and struck him and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place” (16:9-10). “No specific accomplishments are recorded for him. He is infamous as the king who was murdered while getting drunk (16:10).” (Constable, BKC). In the twenty-seventh year of Asa, Zimri killed Elah and reigned in his place.

“Then it came to pass, when he began to reign, as soon as he was seated on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave him one male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends” (16:11). “Zimri completely destroyed Israel’s second ruling family plus friends of the family in order to avoid retaliation against his coup d’etat” (Constable, BKC). “As the prophet had foretold (v. 3), Baasha’s dynasty ended with Elah’s death (v. 11)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, by which they had sinned and by which they had made Israel sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols” (16:12-13). “Two dynasties (Jeroboam’s and Baasha’s) had risen and fallen in Israel in 46 years. The third, Zimri’s, lasted only seven days (16:15)!” (Ryrie). “Again, the writer identified the spiritual root of the judgment (16:13)” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” (16:14). The remaining acts of Elah are written in the book of the chronicles of the king of Israel.

“The dynasties that Jeroboam and Baasha established were alike in several respects. Both were only two generations long. The first king in each dynasty reigned for a fairly long time: Jeroboam 22 years and Baasha 24. Assassins who were apparently confidants the kings trusted terminated both dynasties. Each assassin not only killed the king but also all his male descendants, as was customary. Perhaps the most significant difference is that Baasha, the first assassin, successfully established his own dynasty and ruled for many years. The second, Zimri, could not do so. He committed suicide seven days after he became king. Elah reigned from 886–885 B.C.” (Constable’s Notes).

To sum up, Elah ruled for two years. Although Jeroboam is not listed, he sinned, which means he cast God behind his back, made others sin, and made God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods (pleasure) with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

## Zimri (Israel)

*Information* “In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri had reigned in Tirzah seven days. And the people *were* encamped against Gibbethon, which *belonged* to the Philistines” (16:15). “Zimri’s seven-day reign in 885 B.C. was the shortest in the history of the Northern Kingdom” (Constable’s Notes).

“Now the people *who were* encamped heard it said, “Zimri has conspired and also has killed the king. So all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp. Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon, and they besieged Tirzah” (16:16-17). “It probably took a runner two days to reach the army at Gibbethon after the assassination of Elah” (Constable, BKC). “Omri was commander-in-chief of Israel’s army. He outranked Zimri. When word of Zimri’s assassination of Elah reached the soldiers at Gibbethon (cf. 15:27), they immediately sided with their general and marched back to the capital to claim the throne for Omri” (Constable’s Notes).

“And it happened, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the citadel of the king’s house and burned the king’s house down upon himself with fire, and died, because of the sins which he had committed in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he had committed to make Israel sin” (16:18-19). “Zimri realized he could not oppose Omri successfully and chose suicide over execution. He also destroyed the palace in the process” (Constable’s Notes). “They appeared at the city walls (probably after marching about four or five days) and took control of the city” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and the treason he committed, *are they* not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?” (16:20). “It was because of his sins in following Jeroboam’s ways that God permitted Zimri to fail in his *coup* and to die” (Constable’s Notes).

“Out of the chaos portrayed in this section will come Omri, a man who will stabilize the Northern Kingdom, establish a new capital, and begin a new dynasty. His family will rule through 2 Kings 10. They will, therefore, occupy more of the story than any other northern dynasty. Omri will also serve as active opponents of the prophets and as patrons of idolatry, especially of Baal worship” (House, cited in Constable’s Notes).

To sum up, Zimri ruled for seven days. He did evil in that he walked in the way of Jeroboam, who 1) Cast God behind his back (14:9), 2) made images of other gods, and 3) made

God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods (power) with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

## Omri (Israel)

*Information* “Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half followed Omri” (16:21). “Controversy over who should succeed to Israel’s throne raged for six years (885–880 B.C.) in Israel and threatened to consume the nation. Civil war followed Zimri’s death” (Constable’s Notes).

“But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. So Tibni died and Omri reigned” (16:22). “Tibni’s strength can be seen in that he was able to oppose Omri successfully for six years (885-880 BC). During this time, civil war ravaged Israel and threatened to split the Northern Kingdom into two parts. But eventually, Omri overpowered Tibni and became the sole ruler (880-874 BC). Omri’s army support apparently proved decisive and Tibni died (16:22), probably by being executed” (Constable, BKC).

“In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, and reigned twelve years. Six years he reigned in Tirzah” (16:23). In the thirty-first year of Asa, King and the Southern Kingdom, Omri became king in the Northern Kingdom and reigned twenty years, six of which were in Tirzah.

“And he bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; then he built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, Samaria, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill” (16:24). Two talents of silver is ca. 150 pounds (Constable, BKC), “For the last six years of his 12-year reign (880–874 B.C.), Omri reigned from Samaria. This was the new capital he built on a centrally located and easily defended hilltop 12 miles west of Tirzah” (Constable’s Notes). “Archeologists have unearthed evidence that Samaria was built by skillful craftsmen. The site dominated the north-south trade routes. Samaria proved to be almost impregnable as a stronghold against alien attacks because of its elevated position” (Constable, BKC).

*Evaluation* “Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all who were before him. For he walked in all the ways of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin by which he had made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols” (16:25-26). “Omri is remembered for two things: he built Samaria, making it the capital and giving its name to the entire Northern Kingdom; and he became the most wicked king up to that time, though his son Ahab outdid him (16:33). Samaria, located about seven mi NW of Shechem, became the center of idolatrous worship (16:32; Hosea 8:5-6; Amos 3:12-15; 6:1-6; Micah 1:5-7). It fell to the Assyrians in 722 BC. (2 Kings 17:5)” (Ryrie). “Omri was probably the most capable king Israel had enjoyed since the division of the kingdom. He has often been called the ‘David of the North’ (Sachar)” (Constable’s Notes).

*Summarization* “Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and the might that he showed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? So Omri rested with his fathers and was buried in Samaria. Then Ahab his son reigned in his place” (16:27-28). The remainder of Omri’s acts and the might that he should show were written in the book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel. When he died and was buried in Samaria, Ahab, his son, took his place.

“Omri’s chronology is somewhat complex. He was proclaimed king in the twenty-seventh year of Asa (with only half of the people behind him) after the death of Zimri (v. 15). After the

four years of civil war, he became undisputed king over the northern kingdom in Asa's thirty-first year (v. 23). He died in the thirty-eighth year of Asa (v. 29). Thus he had about four years of internal strife and about eight years of relative peace" Omri was a progressive king and brought a measure of peace and prosperity to Israel. Extrabiblical sources mention Omri as the conqueror of Moab. So prominent was he in the view of the Assyrians that they called Israel 'the House of Omri' or 'the Land of Omri.' Archaeologists have found what they believe was Omri's palace in Samaria" (MacDonald).

"Assyrian records refer to Israel as 'the land of Omri.' His influence extended far. He defeated the Moabites, the record of which constitutes one of the inscriptions on the famous Moabite Stone. He also made a treaty with Ethbaal, king of Tyre and Sidon (887–856 B.C.), that involved the marriage of his son, Ahab, and Ethbaal's daughter, Jezebel. A granddaughter of Ethbaal, Dido, founded Carthage. Still, the writer of Kings did not mention these strengths, only the fact that he was the worst king Israel had had spiritually (v. 25). He was very bad because he personally followed Jeroboam's cult and caused the people to sin by allowing it to flourish in Israel" (Constable's Notes).

"Comparing the political histories of the two kingdoms [during this first period of antagonism], one is struck by the turmoil in Israel and the stability in Judah. There were three violent disruptions of government and a civil war in Israel. In Judah, by contrast, the succession was orderly and routine. The reasons for the differences are geographical, political, and theological. Judah was relatively isolated, cut off from the coastal plain by the Philistines and from Transjordan by the Dead Sea. Israel, on the other hand, was a neighbor to Syria and Phoenicia, and the major thoroughfares of Palestine passed through its territory, linking Israel to the larger biblical world and making it vulnerable to political developments there. Ethnically and culturally, Judah was comparatively homogeneous. Israel, with its ten tribes and large Canaanite population (Judg. 3:1-5), had a history of tribal rivalries (Judg. 8:1-3; 12:1-6) and had to contend with differing culture patterns. There were also basic differences in understanding kingship" (Rice, cited in Constable's Notes).

To sum up, Omri ruled for 12 years. He did worse than all before him in walking in the ways of Jeroboam, who 1) Cast God behind his back (14:9), 2) made images of other gods, and 3) made God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods (pride) with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

## Ahab (Israel)

"The first period of antagonism between Israel and Judah ended about 874 B.C. when Ahab made a treaty with King Jehoshaphat of Judah.... King Jehoshaphat of Judah made peace with King Ahab of Israel (22:44). He did so by contracting a marriage between his son, Jehoram, and Ahab's daughter, Athaliah (2 Chron. 18:1). This ended the first period of antagonism between the two kingdoms (931–874 B.C.) and began a 33-year period of alliance (874–841 B.C.)" (Constable's Notes).

*Information* "In the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years" (16:29). "The writer devoted six chapters to the reign of King Ahab, because many significant things happened in Israel then. Specifically, Ahab tried to establish Baal worship as the official religion of Israel. R. G. Lee described Ahab as 'the vile human toad who squatted on the throne,' and he described Jezebel as 'the beautiful adder coiled beside the toad'" (Constable's Notes).



*Evaluation:* “Now Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, more than all who were before him” (16:30). Ahab did more evil in the sight of the Lord than all the kings of the Northern Kingdom before him (see 16:33). “Verses 30 and 33 bracket and set forth Ahab’s unusual wickedness with special emphasis. The writer had just written that Omri was the worst king so far (v. 25), but now he said Ahab exceeded him in wickedness” (Constable’s Notes).

“And it came to pass, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took as wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians; and he went and served Baal and worshiped him” (16:31). “For Ahab, the fact that Jeroboam’s cult deviated from the Mosaic Law was ‘trivial’” (Constable’s Notes). “Ahab is remembered for two things: his wickedness and his marriage to Jezebel, who advanced Baal worship in Israel” (Ryrie).

“The writer held Ahab responsible for marrying Jezebel. This was fair because even in arranged marriages in the ancient world, the candidates, especially the son, in most cases, had the right of refusal. Ahab and Jezebel’s marriage may have been the seal to a covenant between Omri (Israel) and Ethbaal (Sidonia) that was designed to counteract the growing threat of Damascus (Aramea). Ahab and Jezebel became the most notorious husband and wife team in Scripture. Jezebel means dunghill. This must have been a name the Israelites gave her. Ahab’s greatest sin, however, was that he brought the worship of Baal—the worship of the native Canaanites whom God had commanded Israel to exterminate—under the official protection of his government” (Constable’s Notes).

“Baal (meaning ‘lord’) is a name used generally in the Old Testament for the male deity the native Canaanite tribes worshiped under various other titles. The Tyrians called him Baal Melqart, but their religion was only a cultic variation of the standard Baal worship common throughout Palestine. Evidently, Ahab was not forced to marry Jezebel; his choice to marry her is something for which the writer held him responsible” (Constable, BKC).

Jezebel, a “villainous woman, was a Baal-worshiper who succeeded in influencing Ahab to promote Baal-worship in Israel by building a temple, an altar, and a wooden image” (MacDonald; see verse 33).

“Then he set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal, which he had built in Samaria” (16:32). “Jeroboam had already refashioned Yahweh worship departing from what Moses had prescribed. Ahab went one step further: he officially replaced the worship of Yahweh with idolatry (cf. 18:4). This was a first in Israel’s history. ‘This represents a quantum leap in the history of apostasy’ (Rice). The temple and altar to Baal that Ahab erected in Israel’s capital symbolized his official approval of this pagan religion. Remember the importance of David bringing the ark into Jerusalem, and Solomon building a temple for Yahweh, and what those acts symbolized” (Constable’s Notes).

“And Ahab made a wooden image. Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him” (16:33). “Ahab built a temple for Baal in the capital of Israel and constructed an altar for Baal in it. Asherah poles (14:15, 14:23; 15:13) were idols carved to stimulate worship of Baal’s female counterpart. The writer repeated the seriousness of Ahab’s sins for emphasis (16:33; cf. 16:30)” (Constable, BKC). “The Asherah [was] the chief goddess of Tyre and mother of Baal” (Ryrie).

“In his days Hiel of Bethel built Jericho. He laid its foundation with Abiram his firstborn, and with his youngest son Segub he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD, which He had spoken through Joshua the son of Nun” (16:34). “Hiel tried to defy God’s curse on anyone who fortified Jericho (the setting up of gates showed that this was his intention) with the



result that his two sons died (either by being sacrificed in the process of building or by direct divine judgment on them)” (Ryrie). “When he laid the foundation, his oldest son, Abiram, died. As the gates were erected, his youngest son, Segub, died” (MacDonald).

“Verse 34 may at first seem to have no connection with anything in the context. Perhaps the writer included it to show that as God had fulfilled His word about Jericho, so it would be in Ahab’s case. Ahab was establishing paganism that God had already said He would judge. Similarly, Hiel had tried to set up a city that God had previously said the Israelites should not rebuild (cf. Josh. 6:26). The building of Jericho is also a tribute to Ahab’s apostasy since he must have ordered or permitted Hiel to rebuild the city in spite of Joshua’s long-standing curse. ““The foundation sacrifice, revealed by modern archaeology, is probably what was involved. The children named were probably infants, dead or alive, placed in jars and inserted into the masonry, propitiating the gods and warding off evil’ (DeVries)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Though the city had been occupied since Joshua’s day, Hiel’s reconstruction seems to have been the first serious attempt to restore it to its former condition. Joshua’s prophecy was fulfilled literally when two of Hiel’s sons perished. Perhaps this reference, which seems unrelated to Ahab’s accomplishments, was included to show that as God’s word was fulfilled in this instance so it would be in Ahab’s case. Ahab was setting up a system of worship that God said He would judge, as Hiel had tried to set up a city that God had said He would judge” (Constable, BKC).

To sum up, Ahab ruled for 22 years. He sinned more than all the others in walking in the ways of Jeroboam, who 1) Cast God behind his back (14:9), 2) made images of other gods, and 3) made God angry. He cast God behind his back and chased after other gods (perversion of religion) with the consequence of having others follow his sin.

**Summary:** God judged Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri, and Ahab, who were kings in the Northern Kingdom, by the standard of Jeroboam (16:2-3, 7, 12-13, 19, 26, 31), the first king of the Northern Kingdom, who was an idolater, led the Northern Kingdom into idolatry, and made God angry.

Nadab ruled for two years. Baasha ruled for 24 years. His problem was possessions. Elah ruled for two years. His problem was pleasure. Zimri will rule for seven days. His problem was power. Omri ruled for 12 years. His problem was pride. Ahab ruled for 22 years. His problem was perverting religion.

The lesson of this section of Scripture is that the human standard of doing evil was Jeroboam, who started by putting God behind his back. That led other people to chase after such things as possessions, pleasure, power, and pride and go so far as to pervert religion. They all ended up dead, with someone else replacing them.

This is like driving a car by putting the Lord in the back seat. So where should you put Him? Some say He should be the driver and you should be in the front passenger seat. In other words, He should be in control. The problem with that explanation is that the fruit of the Spirit is self-control, not being controlled. A more accurate picture would be that the Lord is sitting in the front passenger seat, which means that the two of you can fellowship together and He can control where you’re going by giving you directions.

## HOW GOD TRAINS HIS SERVANTS

If I ask you, “How does God train His servants?” The first thing that might pop into your head is that He sends them to seminary. That response assumes that by “servants,” I referred to those in “full-time ministry.” As we know, all believers are “servants.” How does the Lord train us to serve Him?

“The three scenes in the Elijah narrative (chs. 17-19) form one story in which we can see the rising powers of the prophet. In each succeeding episode of the story, he confronts an increasingly difficult problem. In this way, God developed his faith and taught the reader the importance of trust and obedience (“For five helpful, popular messages on incidents in these chapters, see Howard G. Hendricks, *Taking a Stand: What God Can Do Through Ordinary You*”) (Constable’s Notes).

### Elijah, the Servant

*The Man* “And Elijah the Tishbite, of the inhabitants of Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain three years, except at my word” (17:1). “Elijah means ‘Yahweh is God,’ a significant name in a time when Baal worship threatened to extinguish the worship of Yahweh in Israel” (Ryrie; Constable’s Notes: “Elijah’s name means ‘Yahweh is my God’”). “‘Before whom I stand’ is his claim to authority: it is a technical phrase used of a king’s first or ‘prime’ minister—his confidant and chief executive” (Auld, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*The Message* Elijah’s “first recorded act was to announce to Ahab that the land would suffer a drought. This was obviously a divine judgment against idolatry. God chose to use a severe drought to get the people’s attention. They did not care that idolatry had brought a spiritual drought upon the land, but they could not ignore the physical drought that typified it” (MacDonald).

Elijah “could promise severe drought because God had said this is what He would bring on the land if His people forsook Him (Lev. 26:18-19; Deut. 11:16-17; 28:23-24; 33:28). This drought would have been a challenge to Baal since Baal’s devotees credited him with providing rain and fertility. Some representations of Baal that archaeologists have discovered picture him holding a thunderbolt in his hand” (Constable’s Notes). “Why choose a drought? Why emphasize that Yahweh lives? Elijah determines to attack Baalism at its theological center. Baal worshipers believed that their storm god made rain, unless it was the dry season and he needed to be brought back from the dead. To refute this belief, Elijah states that Yahweh is the one who determines when rain falls, that Yahweh lives at all times, and that Yahweh is not afraid to challenge Baal on what his worshipers consider his home ground” (House, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“God had apparently revealed to Elijah that He would honor that promise in Elijah’s day. This would have struck at the heart of Baalism, for Baal-worshipers believed that their god was the god of rain! The drought, brought on by the true God, showed that He, not Baal, controls the weather. This was a remarkable demonstration of God’s superiority and of the total inadequacy and falsehood of Baal worship” (Constable, BKC).

“Again, God raised up a prophet to announce what He would do. Evidently, Ahab’s apostasy had been going on for 14 years before God raised up His prophetic challenge.

Normally, God gives sinners an opportunity to judge themselves and repent before He sends judgment on them (cf. 1 Cor. 11:31; 2 Pet. 3:9-10)” (Constable’s Notes).

This part of the passage introduces Elijah as God’s servant. The Lord wants all of us to serve Him by delivering his message to others.

Elijah delivers a message to Ahab in this chapter, but the encounter with Ahab does not occur until chapter 18. In this chapter, God prepares Elijah for that event.

## Elijah, the Trainee

*The Birds* “Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan’” (17:2-3). The brook Cherith was “a stream in Gilead, E of the Jordan” (Ryrie; MacDonald). “God sent Elijah to Cherith (exact site unknown) to provide for his needs, to hide him from Ahab, and to teach him a lesson (cf. 18:10)” (Constable’s Notes). He sent him there to protect him.

“And it will be *that* you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there” (17:4). “Ravens do not even feed their own young (cf. Job 38:41). God provided miraculously for Elijah to build the prophet’s faith in view of the conflicts he would face” (Constable’s Notes). God supplies our needs using natural means. We work. He sometimes does it “miraculously” by giving us the job we have.

“So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan” (17:5). So, in obedience to the command given him by the Lord, Elijah stayed by the Brook Cherith.

“The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook” (17:6). “‘Bread’ is literally ‘food’ and could include berries, fruit, nuts, eggs, etc. Elijah was learning experientially that Yahweh was the only source of food, fertility, and blessing” (Constable’s Notes). “Perhaps they were brought from a distance where the drought had not yet affected the vegetation. Through this unusual manner of nourishing His prophet physically, God was also nourishing Elijah’s faith for later feats of spiritual strength” (Constable, BKC).

“And it happened after a while that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land” (17:7). “As God had promised, drought soon began to grip the nation” (Constable’s Notes). “It is only our ignorance and neglect of Amos and Hosea that keep us from sensing the heart-shattering tragedy of II Ki. 15:8-31, 17:1-6 in its true proportions. In just under forty years, Israel, which had seemed to reach almost Solomonic glory under Jeroboam II (II Kin. 14:25, 28), collapsed into nothingness, like the wooden house whose vitals have been devoured by termites” (Ellison, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Oh, that My people would listen to Me, That Israel would walk in My ways! I would soon subdue their enemies, And turn My hand against their adversaries. The haters of the LORD would pretend submission to Him, But their fate would endure forever. He would have fed them also with the finest of wheat; and with honey from the rock I would have satisfied you” (Ps. 81:13-16).

The picture that we ought to hang on the walls of our minds from this psalm is of a wide mouth being filled. One author wrote, “As a boy, I was always thrilled to discover a bird’s nest under construction. I marveled at ‘Mama Robbin’s’ industry and skill at constructing and shaping her ‘home’ of grass and mud. When that was completed, there was the daily watch for the colorful eggs (and no one is yet improved on robbin’s-egg blue). Then, how fascinating to

observe the emergence of those little creatures with bulging eyes and gaping mouths. Standing at a distance, I could see their heads bobbing unsteadily and their mouths wide open, inviting Mrs. Robin to give them their ‘dinner’” (*Our Daily Bread*, 1/11/1969).

When you see that picture hanging on the wall of your mind, remember what Jesus said. “Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap, nor gather in the barn, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they? (Mt. 6:26). Remember what Jesus said and open your mouth wide.

*The Widow* “Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, ‘Arise, go to Zarephath, which *belongs* to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you” (17:8-9). “Zarephath was “a town on the Mediterranean coast between Tyre and Sidon, the home of Jezebel and the heart of Baal worship” (Ryrie). TZarephath was between Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia, the stronghold of the cult that Ahab had imported into Israel (cf. 16:31). Widows were poor in the ancient Near East and would have been the first to run out of food in a drought (Richard D. Patterson, “The Widow, the Orphan, and the Poor in the Old Testament and the Extra-Biblical Literature,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130:519, July-September 1973, pp. 223-34)” (Constable’s Notes). “Elijah had learned that God would miraculously provide for him, but now he would learn that God could do the same for others—even Gentiles—as well. God was preparing His servant for a great showdown on Mount Carmel” (Constable, BKC).

“So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed, a widow *was* there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, ‘Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink’” (17:10). “Zarephath was 80-90 miles from Kerith.... Going to a widow for food was a strange directive. God was again using an unusual source to feed His prophet” (Constable, BKC).

“And as she was going to get *it*, he called to her and said, ‘Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand’” (17:11). “Elijah’s request for water and then bread (vv. 10-11) evidently identified the widow God had in mind (cf. Gen. 24:10-21)” (Constable’s Notes).

“So she said, ‘As the LORD your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I *am* gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die’” (17:12). “Flour and oil signify life; they are the two common staples in any ancient, as well as modern, Near Eastern household” (Battenfield, cited in Constable’s Notes). “The famine had extended this far north, and the widow was preparing her last meal. The oath shows that she worshiped the God of Israel. God sent Elijah to a Gentile widow to rebuke the apostasy of Israel (Luke 4:24-26)” (Ryrie). “Here was a Gentile woman in Phoenicia who believed in the Lord; she said she believed He is alive (As surely as the Lord your God lives; cf. 17:1; 18:10)” (Constable, BKC).

“And Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go *and* do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring *it* to me; and afterward make *some* for yourself and your son’” (17:13). “Elijah asked the widow to put God’s interests—represented by himself, a prophet of Yahweh—before her own as the condition for her blessing (v. 13; cf. Matt. 6:33; Mark 12:41-44)” (Constable’s Notes).

“For thus says the LORD God of Israel: ‘The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the LORD sends rain on the earth’” (17:14). This message “was assuring her the rain would be sent, and that the Lord, who had the sole command of it, would send it; and that, until that time it should be sent, she would have no lack of provisions, and therefore need not scruple dressing for the prophet first” (Gill).

“So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for *many* days” (17:15). “She responded obediently to the word Elijah gave her from God, showing she really believed that Yahweh, not Baal, was the God who could provide food and fertility (v. 14)” (Constable’s Notes). “By doing this, she was, in effect, giving God the first place. When she obeyed, she learned the precious lesson that those who put God first never lack the necessities of life. Her bin of flour and jar of oil never failed. Jesus made note of the fact that Elijah was sent to a *Gentile* widow and not to any of the numerous *Israelite* widows (Luke 4:26)” (MacDonald).

“The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by Elijah” (17:16). “God honored her faith; He provided her need for food (vv. 15-16)” (Constable’s Notes). “In the absence of Baal who lies impotent in the Netherworld, Yahweh steps in to assist the widow and the orphan, and this is even done in the heartland of Baal, Phoenicia” (Fensham, cited in Constable’s Notes). “This situation undoubtedly strengthened Elijah’s faith in God’s power and faithfulness, as well as the faith of the woman” (Constable’s Notes). Elijah saw the most unlikely person, a Gentile, believe.

When Jesus spoke in the synagogue in his Nazareth, they did not believe him (Mk. 6:5). Their image of Him was that of a carpenter turned teacher. They couldn’t conceive of Him being the Messiah. They rejected Jesus because of their preconceived ideas.

Jesus “said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country’” (Lk. 4:24). Although not stated, the point is the prophets are accepted elsewhere. Jesus then said, “But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land, but to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow” (Lk. 4:25-26). The significance is the phrase “in the region of Sidon,” which was the Gentile territory. Elijah ministered to Gentiles! “So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath” (Lk. 4:28).

*The Widow’s Son* “Now it happened after these things *that* the son of the woman who owned the house became sick. And his sickness was so serious that there was no breath left in him” (17:17). “He was actually dead (17:18, 20)” (Ryrie).

“So she said to Elijah, ‘What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?’” (17:18). “The mother thought her son had died because of some sin she had committed” (Ryrie). “The widow incorrectly blamed herself for her son’s predicament (John 9:2-3)” (Constable’s Notes). “This is a common reaction among many people who do not know God’s ways well when personal tragedy enters their lives” (Constable, BKC).

“And he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ So he took him out of her arms and carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his own bed” (17:19). “Likely a room on the roof with an outside stair” (Ryrie). “The members of the most ordinary household actually lived in the upper story of their home [during this time in Israel’s history], not on the ground level as common folk had in earlier times; the ground floor was used for storage and for working quarters” (Albright, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Then he cried out to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God, have You also brought tragedy on the widow with whom I lodge, by killing her son?’” (17:20). Elijah did not answer the mother’s question. He asked the Lord if He had brought tragedy on the widow by killing her son.

“And he stretched himself out on the child three times, and cried out to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God, I pray, let this child’s soul come back to him’” (17:21). “Often in cases of

miraculous restoration, God's servant placed his hand on the afflicted one. He did so to indicate that the power of God in him was passing to the needy individual (Matt. 8:3). In this instance, Elijah placed his whole body against the boy's body for the same reason (cf. 2 Kings 4:34; Acts 9:31-43; 20:10). This is the first restoration to life of a dead person that Scripture records. Elijah prayed shamelessly, one of the fundamental requisites for obtaining one's petitions in difficult cases (Matt. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13)" (Constable's Notes).

"Three times Elijah did this, praying each time that God would restore the boy's life. Persistence in prayer is a fundamental requisite for obtaining one's petitions (cf. Mat. 7:7-8; Luke 11:5-13). It proved effective in this case" (Constable, BKC).

"Then the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came back to him, and he revived" (17:22). The Lord answered Elijah's prayer. "God restored the lad's life. In the process, Elijah learned the power of God and the power of prayer. He applied both of these lessons in his contest with the Baal prophets (18:16-46)" (Constable's Notes).

"And Elijah took the child and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and gave him to his mother. And Elijah said, 'See, your son lives!'" (17:23). "If God could raise a dead Gentile boy back to life in response to believing prayer, He could also revive the chosen people of Israel who had become spiritually dead" (Constable's Notes).

"Then the woman said to Elijah, 'Now by this I know that you *are* a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth *is* the truth'" (17:24). "His confidence in his own ability as a channel of God's blessing and word received added strength from the widow's confession" (Constable's Notes). "The best proof of the effectiveness of Elijah's preparation is that he was verified as an authentic man of God and the bearer of God's word by a daughter of the very people he opposed" (Rice, cited in Constable's Notes).

**Summary:** God trained His servant Elijah by showing him His power to meet his needs and His power in answer to prayer.

"The fact that Elijah had to sustain the widow and boy points not only to YHWH as the provider for the needy but also as one who 'trained' his prophet, as it were, to be obedient to him" (Battenfield, cited in Constable's Notes). "During the drought, Jehovah provided for His prophet in most humbling ways—first through unclean birds and then through a Gentile woman, and a poor widow at that. The king in his palace was hard-pressed, but Elijah had all he needed. God's man, obeying God's voice, will always have his needs met, despite the conditions that prevail around him" (MacDonald).

"Then David said to Saul, 'Let no man's heart fail because of him; your servant will go and fight with this Philistine.' And Saul said to David, 'You are not able to go against this Philistine to fight with him; for you *are* a youth, and he a man of war from his youth.' But David said to Saul, 'Your servant used to keep his father's sheep, and when a lion or a bear came and took a lamb out of the flock, I went out after it and struck it, and delivered *the lamb* from its mouth; and when it arose against me, I caught *it* by its beard, and struck and killed it. Your servant has killed both lion and bear; and this uncircumcised Philistine will be like one of them, seeing he has defied the armies of the living God.' Moreover David said, 'The LORD, who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear, He will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.'" And Saul said to David, 'Go, and the LORD be with you' (1 Sam. 17:32-37). The Lord trains his servants by giving them bigger and bigger challenges. Trusting for the one you are in now.



Chart: The Miracles of Elijah

Declares a long drought	1 Kings 17:1
Multiplies widow's flour & oil	1 Kings 17:7-16
Resurrects widow's son	1 Kings 17:17-24
Calls down fire from heaven	1 Kings 18:1-40
Sends a rainstorm	1 Kings 18:41-45
Outruns a chariot	1 Kings 18:46
Predicts Ahaziah's death	2 Kings 1:1-2
Ahaziah's men killed by fire from heaven	2 Kings 1:9-17
Parts the Jordan River	2 Kings 2:1-8

<b>MIRACLES INVOLVING ELIJAH</b>		
Miracle	Reference	Elements
Elijah fed by ravens	1 Kings 17:6	Water and food
Widow's food multiplied	1 Kings 17:15	Flour and oil
Widow's dead son raised to life	1 Kings 17:22	Life
Elijah's altar and sacrifice consumed	1 Kings 18:38	Water and fire
Ahaziah's 102 soldiers consumed	2 Kings 1:10-12	Fire
Jordan River parted	2 Kings 2:8	Water
Elijah's transport to heaven	2 Kings 2:11	Fire and wind

## GOD'S CHALLENGE TO YOU

Two bored buddies were looking for something to do when one said to the other I challenge you to a game of checkers or chest. That's the kind of thing guys would do, but girls would not. When I asked my wife how women would challenge each other, she said, to use her expression, "I don't have a folder for that." Women encourage people, not challenge them, as men do. Interestingly, God challenged people. What does God's challenge look like? Permit me to answer that by telling you a story.

### The Confrontation

*Elijah* "And it came to pass *after* many days that the word of the LORD came to Elijah, in the third year, saying, 'Go, present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the earth'" (18:1). "Three years at Zarephath + the time at Cherith = the 3<sup>1/2</sup> years of Luke 4:25 and James 5:17" (Ryrie). "Three years after Elijah left Israel, and three and a half years after the drought had begun (Luke 4:25), the prophet was instructed to appear before Ahab—an action that, humanly speaking, was extremely dangerous" (MacDonald). Prophets were being killed by the queen (18:4).

"So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab; and *there was* a severe famine in Samaria" (18:2). "Evidently, God made the famine especially severe in Samaria because Ahab and Jezebel were the causes of it and lived there" (Constable's Notes).

*Ahab* "And Ahab had called Obadiah, who *was* in charge of *his* house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly)" (18:3). "Obadiah (not the author of the Bible book), a believer in the Lord, had an important responsibility in Ahab's household" (Ryrie).

"For so it was, while Jezebel massacred the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah had taken one hundred prophets and hidden them, fifty to a cave, and had fed them with bread and water." (18:4). Jezebel murdered some of the prophets and "seeking to exterminate others" (MacDonald). "Jezebel's aim was to replace the worship of Yahweh with Baal-Melqart worship. Her plan included killing off the Lord's prophets" (Constable BKC). Feeding 100 prophets during the famine was not easy (Ryrie). "Surveyors have counted over 2,000 caves in the Mount Carmel area" (Constable's Notes).

"And Ahab had said to Obadiah, 'Go into the land to all the springs of water and to all the brooks; perhaps we may find grass to keep the horses and mules alive so that we will not have to kill any livestock'" (18:5). "We know from secular records that Ahab must have had several thousand horses" (Ryrie).

"So they divided the land between them to explore it; Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself" (18:6). "We can see the grievous necessity the land was in when the king himself goes forth on such a quest. No one save the two chief persons in the realm could be trusted to make this all-important search" (Lumby).

*Obadiah* "Now as Obadiah was on his way, suddenly Elijah met him; and he recognized him, and fell on his face, and said, 'Is that you, my lord Elijah?' And he answered him, 'It is I. Go, tell your master, 'Elijah *is here*'" (18:7-8). "When Obadiah met Elijah, he voiced his submission to the man of God and to Yahweh. He did so by calling Elijah his 'master' (v. 7).

However, Obadiah served two masters. Elijah pointed this out by referring to Ahab as Obadiah's master (v. 8). To rise as high as he had in Ahab's government, Obadiah had to have lived a double life of external support for Ahab while internally following Yahweh" (Constable's Notes).

"So he said, 'How have I sinned, that you are delivering your servant into the hand of Ahab, to kill me?' As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to hunt for you; and when they said, '*He is not here,*' he took an oath from the kingdom or nation that they could not find you. And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, '*Elijah is here*'!" (18:9-11). "Obadiah's confession that Yahweh lived presents him as a genuine believer (v. 10). This is exactly the same profession that both the widow (17:12) and Elijah had made (17:1)" (Constable's Notes). "Obadiah feared that this would result in his death since Ahab had been searching relentlessly for Elijah in order to silence him once and for all" (MacDonald). "Ahab had searched for him at home and abroad (18:10) to no avail" (Constable, BKC).

"And it shall come to pass, *as soon as* I am gone from you, that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to a place I do not know; so when I go and tell Ahab, and he cannot find you, he will kill me. But I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth" (18:12). Obadiah "was afraid that Elijah would disappear again" (Constable, BKC). "Ahab would kill Obadiah for his 'false' report" (MacDonald). Obadiah adds that he has feared the Lord from his youth. "To convince Elijah that his concern was sincere, Obadiah related proof that he was a devout believer in the Lord (cf. 18:3) since his youth" (Constable, BKC).

"Was it not reported to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, how I hid one hundred men of the LORD's prophets, fifty to a cave, and fed them with bread and water?" (18:13). "Obadiah went to great pains to convince Elijah that he was a believer in Yahweh. He must have felt this explanation was necessary because of his position in Ahab's cabinet" (Constable's Notes). "Besides all this, Obadiah's position in the royal court was already precarious because he had protected the LORD's prophets" (MacDonald).

"And now you say, 'Go, tell your master, '*Elijah is here.*' He will kill me!" (18:14). Obadiah "obviously struggled with whether he could believe Elijah when the prophet told him he would speak to Ahab (vv. 11-12, 14)" (Constable's Notes).

"Then Elijah said, '*As* the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely present myself to him today'" (18:15). Elijah responded by assuring Obadiah that he would present himself to Ahab that day as sure as the Lord lives.

"So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him and Ahab went to meet Elijah" (18:16). "Having received a second promise from Elijah that he would not disappear (v. 15), Obadiah finally obeyed the prophet's command (v. 8) and went to Ahab (v. 16)" (Constable's Notes).

"Obadiah was similar to many believers in Yahweh who were living in Israel then. They had divided allegiances, their faith in God was weak, they were fearful for their own safety, and they were slow to respond to God's word. What a contrast Obadiah was to the Gentile widow of Zarephath (cf. Matt. 15:21-28)! Elijah saw beforehand, in Obadiah's response to him, how believers in Israel would respond to what he would soon do on Mount Carmel. Elijah would call on the people to do essentially what he had commanded Obadiah to do: obey the Lord's word through His prophet" (Constable's Notes).

## The Challenge

To Ahab “Then it happened, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said to him, ‘*Is that you, O troubler of Israel?*’” (18:17). “Ahab had a problem of perception similar to Obadiah’s (cf. v. 7)” (Constable’s Notes).

“And he answered, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father’s house *have*, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD and have followed the Baals’” (18:18). “The real source of Israel’s troubles was Ahab and Omri’s disregard of the Mosaic Covenant and their preference for idolatry (Deut. 6:5). ‘This was a crime against the state worthy of death (like that of Achan, Jos. 6:18; 7:25; and Jonathan in 1 Sa. 14:24-29)’ (Wiseman)” (Constable’s Notes). “He blamed the king for mixing the worship of Jehovah with Baal-worship and challenged him to assemble his idolatrous prophets for a contest on Mount Carmel to determine who was the true God” (MacDonald).

“Now therefore, send *and* gather all Israel to me on Mount Carmel, the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal, and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table” (18:19). Carmel is “a mountain range, rising to 1,700 ft., which juts into the Mediterranean near modern Haifa” (Ryrie). “In view of Elijah’s directive that Ahab summon the people from all over Israel, it is likely that hundreds, if not thousands, congregated on Mount Carmel. The Carmel range of mountains, 1,742 feet in elevation at its highest point, extends about 30 miles to the southeast of modern-day Haifa from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea. It is a beautiful series of rounded peaks and valleys from which the sea can easily be seen. It is not known exactly where along this ridge Elijah staged this test; any of several sites is possible; *Muhraka* is suggested by many as one of the more probable sites. The extent of Baal worship in Israel can be estimated by the number of priests Jezebel regularly fed: 450 prophets of the male god and 400... of the female goddess Asherah, Baal’s consort” (Constable, BKC). “The four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal went to Carmel, but the four hundred prophets of Asherah did not; cf. vv. 19, 22” (MacDonald).

“Probably hundreds, if not thousands of people, gathered since Elijah summoned all of Israel to Mount Carmel. Elijah probably chose this mountain, as God led him, because it stood between Israel and Phoenicia geographically, neutral ground between Yahweh’s land and Baal’s. Furthermore, the Phoenicians regarded Carmel as a sacred dwelling place of Baal. Storms with lightning and thunder were common on Mount Carmel, and Baal worshippers viewed them as manifestations of their deity. The name ‘Carmel’ means ‘the garden land,’ and it was famous for its fertility. In the minds of many, Baal had the advantage in this contest. Elijah ordered Ahab around (v. 19), as was appropriate since the prophet was the representative of the true King of Israel” (Constable’s Notes).

“To eat at the table of the king or queen was to be subsidized by the state (cf. 2 Sam. 9:9-11; 1 Kgs. 2:7). So aggressive is Jezebel that she promotes at state expense the worship of Baal and Asherah” (Rice, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“So Ahab sent for all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel” (18:20). “Surprisingly Ahab obeyed. His weak will becomes even more obvious later in 1 Kings” (Constable’s Notes). Following Elijah’s instructions, Ahab sent for all the children of Israel and gathered the prophets together on Mount Carmel.

To the People “And Elijah came to all the people, and said, ‘How long will you falter between two opinions? If the LORD *is* God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’ But the people answered him not a word” (18:21). “Lit., how long are you hopping between two forks? Israel’s

sin was not that of totally rejecting Yahweh, but of seeking to combine His worship with Baal worship” (Ryrie). “The issue is not that Israel wanted to reject Yahweh and choose Baal, but rather to serve them both. Elijah called for an either/or decision” (Childs, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Elijah stood before them and challenged them to end their doublemindedness, wavering between two opinions. It was not good to try to “walk the fence” worshipping two gods. Apparently, the Israelites thought that if Yahweh let them down, they could turn to Baal and vice versa. Elijah was saying that if One is the true God and the other false, they should follow the true One wholeheartedly and forget about the impotent impostor. The people could not argue with this statement, so they said nothing” (Constable, BKC).

“Then Elijah said to the people, ‘I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; but Baal’s prophets are four hundred and fifty men’” (18:22). Elijah was alone “as far as this confrontation was concerned, though Elijah knew there were other prophets in the land (18:13)” (Ryrie). “Interestingly, this was a contest of prophets, not priests. The priests had less influence for Yahweh in Israel than the prophets. Apparently, the prophets in Phoenicia were more powerful too” (Constable’s Notes).

“Elijah realized that he was not the only prophet of Yahweh who remained in Israel (v. 22; cf. v. 13), but he was perhaps the only one who was openly serving the Lord (Wiersbe). In this situation, the odds were one against 450. There are several similarities between Judges 4 and 7 and 1 Kings 18. All three encounters with Israel’s enemies took place on the south side of the Jezreel Valley. The Kishon figured in both Barak and Elijah’s victories over the Canaanites. Gideon faced odds of 450 to one as Elijah did, and both men experienced miraculous deliverances. In the future, Israel’s enemies will again assemble against her in this valley at Armageddon. Then Jesus Christ will be the hero and will bring an even more spectacular victory to His chosen people (cf. Rev. 16:16; 19:11-21). Elijah felt alone. His victory would require a supernatural act of God” (Constable’s Notes).

“Therefore let them give us two bulls; and let them choose one bull for themselves, cut it in pieces, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it*; and I will prepare the other bull, and lay *it* on the wood, but put no fire *under it*” (18:23). “Perhaps God accepted Elijah’s offering, by a non-priest, because there were no faithful priests in the Northern Kingdom at this time (cf. Num. 18; Deut. 18). The Israelites had been straddling the spiritual fence just as Obadiah had (v. 21). The oxen as symbols of service may have represented the people of Israel (cf. Num. 7:3). Elijah would sacrifice them as a burnt offering of worship (v. 23)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then you call on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD; and the God who answers by fire, He is God.” So all the people answered and said, “It is well spoken” (18:24). “Which ‘people’ would their respective deities accept, those the pagan priests symbolically offered to Baal or those Elijah offered to Yahweh? Aaron had previously conducted a similar test (Lev. 9). The deity who brought fire down would be the true God. By coming in fire, God illustrated His power to judge (Lev. 10:1-2)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Baal was supposedly a fertility god who sent rain, caused the crops to grow, and provided food for his people. He was the one who supposedly sent fire (lightning) from heaven. The three-and-one-half-year drought and famine had greatly embarrassed the worshipers of Baal. It seemed as if Elijah and his God, rather than Baal, were in control of the fertility of Israel. So Elijah’s test to Baal’s followers seemed like a good opportunity to vindicate their god and they readily agreed to it. When the preparations were completed, the test began” (Constable, BKC).

*To the Prophets* “Now Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one bull for yourselves and prepare *it* first, for you *are* many; and call on the name of your god, but put no fire *under it*’ (18:25). “Here is the Martin Luther of old-time Israel, who singlehandedly challenged the whole priesthood of the state religion, and all the people of the realm, to the decisive test on Mount Carmel” (Baxter, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“So they took the bull which was given them, and they prepared *it*, and called on the name of Baal from morning even till noon, saying, ‘O Baal, hear us!’ But *there was* no voice; no one answered. Then they leaped about the altar which they had made” (18:26). “Even though Baal worshippers thought the thunder represented Baal’s voice, they did not hear his voice on this occasion. This was not a rainmaking dance but a wild dance in worship of Baal” (Constable’s Notes).

“And so it was, at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Cry aloud, for he *is* a god; either he is meditating, or he is busy, or he is on a journey, *or* perhaps he is sleeping and must be awakened” (18:27). “Elijah did something that must have shocked everyone present: he mocked Baal. In the ancient East, even if a person did not worship an idol, he at least took its status as a god for granted. However, Elijah refused to acknowledge that Baal was a god at all. He suggested that Baal might be ... lit. relieving himself [so ESV]. His devotees also thought Baal accompanied the Phoenician sailors, so Elijah suggested he might be on a journey (v. 27). All of these possibilities exposed Baal’s limited powers” (Constable’s Notes).

“So they cried aloud, and cut themselves, as was their custom, with knives and lances, until the blood gushed out on them” (18:28). “Pagan worship has always proved destructive to humanity, as the priests’ cutting themselves illustrated” (Constable’s Notes).

“And when midday was past, they prophesied until the *time* of the offering of the *evening* sacrifice. But *there was* no voice; no one answered, no one paid attention” (18:29). “The prophets of Baal put on their frenzied show from noon until 3 P.M.” (Ryrie). “For six hours, the priests of Baal ranted and raved to no avail” (Constable’s Notes).

## The Conflict

“Then Elijah said to all the people, ‘Come near to me.’ So all the people came near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD *that was* broken down” (18:30). “Yahweh’s altar at that site (one of the high places?) had fallen into disrepair” (Constable’s Notes).

“And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, ‘Israel shall be your name’ (18:31). “Though the 12 tribes were divided into two nations, taking 12 stones signified their unity in God’s purposes” (Ryrie). “Elijah rebuilt it, as the Mosaic Covenant specified, with 12 uncut stones symbolic of Israel’s 12 tribes. There was still only one Lord, one covenant, and one nation with one destiny in the plans and purposes of God, even though the nation had split into two parts” (Constable’s Notes). “As Moses built an altar at Sinai and set up twelve stones for the twelve tribes (Exodus 24:4), and Joshua erected the twelve stones at Gilgal in the Gilgal covenant festival (Joshua 4:3), so Elijah built an altar of twelve stones ‘according to the number of the tribes’ of Israel (I Kings 17 [*sic* 18]:31)” (Cross, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“Then with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench around the altar large enough to hold two seahs of seed” (18:32). “About five gal (14 qt.). Because this seems too small a trench, some suggest that the trench on each of the four sides of



the altar was this size, whereas others think the trench was large enough for sowing (as in a furrow) that much seed” (Ryrie).

“And he put the wood in order, cut the bull in pieces, and laid *it* on the wood, and said, ‘Fill four waterpots with water, and pour *it* on the burnt sacrifice and on the wood’” (18:33). “There is a perennial spring near this traditional site, from which the water may have been brought” (Ryrie).

“Then he said, ‘Do *it* a second time,’ and they did *it* a second time; and he said, ‘Do *it* a third time,’ and they did *it* a third time” (18:34). “The 12 pitchers of water (vv. 33-34) likewise represented Israel, probably as God’s instrument of refreshment to the world (Constable’s Notes).

“So the water ran all around the altar; and he also filled the trench with water” (18:35). “Some wonder how Elijah obtained so much water during a time of drought. But this is not a real difficulty. Twelve barrels of water is not an impossible amount during drought time. The drought affected farmlands, but drinking water must have been obtainable, or everyone would have died. Another explanation is that this water could have come from a few miles away from the Mediterranean Sea. Williams says: ‘The Kishon (v. 40), the sea (v. 43), and a well which still exists could severally or collectively supply the water needed to fill the trench (v. 35)’” (MacDonald). Elijah may have obtained the water from a spring. The traditional site of this confrontation is at the east end of the Carmel range of mountains far from the Mediterranean Sea (Constable’s Notes). “The purpose of this soaking, of course, was to show everyone present that the burning of the sacrifice that was to take place was not a natural phenomenon or a trick but was a miracle” (Constable, BKC).

“And it came to pass, at *the time of* the offering of the *evening* sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, “LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known this day that *You are* God in Israel and *I am* Your servant, and *that* I have done all these things at *Your word*” (18:36). Elijah is reminding the Lord that he has all this in obedience to His instructions, that is, “proclaiming the drought, in gathering this assembly, and in proposing this trial” (Barnes).

“Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that *You are* the LORD God, and *that* *You* have turned their hearts back to *You* again (18:37). “Elijah prayed a simple prayer for God’s glory at 3:00 p.m., the time of Israel’s sacrifice that illustrated its daily commitment to Yahweh (vv. 36-37). Emphasizing the fact that Yahweh had been Israel’s God since patriarchal times, Elijah prayed that the Lord would reveal Himself as Israel’s God. He also asked that the people would perceive that He had accepted His servant Elijah’s offering that he had presented in harmony with God’s Law. The heart of the people needed to turn back to God, and Elijah prayed for evidence of that as well (v. 37)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood and the stones and the dust, and it licked up the water that *was* in the trench” (18:38). The fire from heaven “lightning” (Constable, BKC). “God revealed Himself as He had earlier in Israel’s history (Lev. 10:1-2). He accepted the sacrifice of the nation symbolized by the 12 stones, the dust out of which He had created the people, and the 12 pitchers of water (Charles E. Baukal Jr., “Pyrotechnics on Mount Carmel,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 171:683, July-September 2014, pp. 289-306)” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Consequences* “Now when all the people saw *it*, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He *is* God! The LORD, He *is* God!’” (18:39). “The people were thus compelled to acknowledge the LORD as the real God” (MacDonald).

“And Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal! Do not let one of them escape!’ So they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the Brook Kishon and executed them there” (18:40). “The Kishon Valley ran parallel to the Carmel range on its north side. There the people slaughtered the false prophets in obedience to the command of God through Moses (Deut. 13:12-15) and Elijah” (Constable, BKC).

“The Israelites did turn back to God. They demonstrated their repentance with obedience to the Mosaic Law and God’s prophet by slaying the false prophets as the Law prescribed (v. 40; cf. Exod. 22:20; Deut. 13:1-18; 17:2-7; 18:20)” (Constable’s Notes).

## Conclusion (of the Drought)

“Then Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for *there is* the sound of abundance of rain” (18:41). “Evidently, thunder accompanied the falling of the fire (lightning?) from heaven. Elijah told Ahab, who had personally witnessed the contest, that he could celebrate by eating. Perhaps he had been fasting to end the drought” (Constable’s Notes).”

“So Ahab went up to eat and drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; then he bowed down on the ground, and put his face between his knees, and said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked, and said, ‘*There is* nothing.’ And seven times he said, ‘Go again.’ Then it came to pass the seventh *time*, that he said, ‘There is a cloud, as small as a man’s hand, rising out of the sea!’ So he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare *your chariot*, and go down before the rain stops you” (18:43-44). “Ahab rode off down the mountain to celebrate the end of the drought by eating and drinking, but Elijah walked back up the mountain to pray for rain. His posture as he prayed reflected the earnestness of his petition, again for the glory of the Lord” (Constable, BKC). “Rain normally came on Carmel from the west, from the Mediterranean Sea. Elijah persisted in prayer, doubtless basing his request on the people’s repentance and God’s promise to bless that with rain (Deut. 28:12)” (Constable’s Notes).

On the seventh trip, the servant said there was a cloud as small as a man’s hand rising out of the sea. So Elijah instructed his servant to tell Ahab to prepare his chariots before the rain stopped him. “Perhaps the cloud shaped like a man’s hand represented God’s hand returning to the land to bless His people again (cf. v. 46)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Now it happened in the meantime that the sky became black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. So Ahab rode away and went to Jezreel” (18:45). Jezreel was “about 17 direct mi from Carmel” (Ryrie). “Jezreel was Ahab’s winter palace that stood 10 to 20 miles east of Carmel in the Jezreel Valley, depending on where these events took place on Mount Carmel” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then the hand of the LORD came upon Elijah; and he girded up his loins and ran ahead of Ahab to the entrance of Jezreel” (18:46). “Tucking his cloak into his belt enabled him to run without tripping over the long garment” (Constable, BKC). “Elijah was granted supernatural power to run this distance” (Ryrie). “Perhaps Elijah ran along the ridge of Mount Carmel while Ahab’s chariot got bogged down in the muddy valley below” (Constable’s Notes). He ran the approximate 25 miles with divinely given energy” (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** When Ahab led Israel into idolatry, the Lord brought a drought to discipline them, challenge them to decide who is really the true God, and demonstrate that He is God.

“This concludes the account of Israel’s three-and-one-half year drought (17:1-18:46; cf. Luke 4:25; James 5:17; ca. 860–857 B.C.)... The major motifs of this section are Yahweh’s

superiority over Baal and His faithfulness to withhold blessing (rain) as a punishment and to send it in response to repentance” (Constable’s Notes).

“Often in the history of the world, great issues have depended on lone individuals, without whom events would have taken a wholly different turn. Yet few crises have been more significant for history than that in which Elijah figured, and in the story of the Transfiguration, he rightly stands beside Moses. Without Moses, the religion of Yahwehism, as it figured in the Old Testament, would never have been born. Without Elijah, it would have died. The religion from which Judaism, Christianity and Islam all in varying ways stemmed would have succumbed to the religion of Tyre. It is vain to speculate how different the world’s political history might have been. But it is safe to say that from the religion of [Baal] Melkart mankind would never have derived that spiritual influence which came from Moses and Elijah and others who followed in their train” (Rowley, cited in Constable’s Notes). “One might compare Moses and Elijah to George Washington and Abraham Lincoln in American history” (Constable’s Notes).

“Because of Mount Carmel, Elijah had discredited Baal and his worshipers, but he had also humiliated vindictive Queen Jezebel” (Constable, BKC).

Ahab and Jezebel promoted the idolatry of Baal, resulting in the people developing halfhearted allegiance to the Lord. They incorporated bail worship into their lives and ended up double-minded.

The great spiritual challenge for believers today is to have a wholehearted devotion to the Lord. So many things in the world attract their attention that it’s possible to be sidetracked and halfheartedly serve the Lord.

One author wrote, “No man can serve two masters (Mt. 624). If the church is filled with compromising fence-straddlers who are neither ‘hot’ nor ‘cold.’ As a result, the testimony is insipid and their ‘salt’ has lost its savor. One of the problems, of course, is that people are just too busy today to take time out for meditation, Bible study, and prayer. You have given the Lord their bodies (Rom. 12:1-3) and most shy away from the rigors of the unfaltering allegiance required by discipleship.

A man ... tells how he was returning from visiting some friends in Washington one cold night in January when the train on which he was riding stopped suddenly. He finally asked the conductor what was wrong. ‘A coach is off the track up ahead,’ he said. ‘Come and I will show you.’ Investigating, they found the car was in such a position to block the progress entirely. Turning to the conductor, the man said, ‘It seems to me the car is not off the track; if it were, we could go on.’ ‘That’s right,’ replied the conductor, the trouble is it’s partly off and partly on” (*Our daily bread*, 1/30/1971).

Some Christians are half on and half off the track. To make any progress in your spiritual life you need to get on the track and stay on the track. World-renowned billionaires Warren Buffett and Bill Gates were once asked at a gathering to write down their secret to success in one word on a sheet of paper. They both gave the same answer: focus. Believers need to stay focused spiritually.

## **ENCOURAGEMENT FOR THE DISCOURAGED**

Everyone gets discouraged: the young and the old, males and females, the rich and the poor, and the educated and uneducated. One of the occupational hazards of serving the Lord is

discouragement. People do not respond as we expect them to and we get discouraged. People say things that discourage us. The English word translated “discourage” means “to deprive of courage, hope, or confidence; to be disheartened, dispirited.” What is the solution to discouragement? The answer is found in the way God encouraged the discouraged Elijah.

## Elijah’s Discouragement

*The Fright* “And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, also how he had executed all the prophets with the sword” (19:1). Ahab told Jezebel, his wife, all that Elijah had done on Mount Carmel, that is, the defeat and death of the prophets of Baal.

“Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, ‘So let the gods do *to me*, and more also, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time’” (19:2). “Her statement that she was willing to be dealt with severely by the gods [2:23; 20:10; 2 Kings 6:31] points up the seriousness of her threat. She was so certain she would kill Elijah that she willingly put her own welfare ‘on the line’” (Constable, BKC). “The expression “as the life of one of them” means “as one of the prophets of Baal whom Elijah killed” (Ryrie).

“Had she really wanted Elijah dead, she surely would have seized him without warning and slain him. What she desired was that Elijah and his God be discredited before the new converts who had aided Elijah by executing the prophets of Baal. Without a leader, revolutionary movements usually stumble and fall away” (Patterson and Austel, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*The Flight* “And when he saw *that*, he arose and ran for his life, and went to Beersheba, which *belongs* to Judah, and left his servant there” (19:3). “Although the gods of Jezebel had been shown impotent, her threat to kill Elijah made him run for his life to Beersheba, about 70 mi away” (Ryrie; MacDonald: “about one hundred miles away). “Beersheba was the southernmost sizable town in the Southern Kingdom” (Constable’s Notes). “The prophet whose faith had gained such a mighty victory the previous day lost courage” (MacDonald). He was defeated, discouraged, depressed, and possibly despondent (MacDonald: “despondent, defeated, and depressed”).

How soon we forget. “Elijah was surprised that the revival he had just witnessed was not more effective in eliminating Baal worship. Apparently, Jezebel’s threat drove the lessons of God’s power and provision that he had been learning at Cherith, Zarephath, and Carmel out of his memory” (Constable’s Notes). Spurgeon said Elijah “retreated before a beaten enemy.” “Just when God needed him the most, the divinely trained prophet was to prove a notable failure” (Patterson and Austel, cited in Constable’s Notes).

“It is remarkable that her threat terrified Elijah as it did. Ironically, by contrast, he had told the widow in Zarephath not to be afraid (17:13). He had just demonstrated that the gods to whom she now appealed in her curse had no power at all. Evidently, Elijah’s fear sprang from the power Jezebel possessed. Rather than resting in God for His protection as he had for the past three and one-half years” (Constable, BKC).

“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree. And he prayed that he might die and said, ‘It is enough! Now, LORD, take my life, for I *am* no better than my fathers!’” (19:4). “Perhaps the fact that Elijah dismissed his servant there and then went farther alone indicates that he was giving up his ministry. Elijah proceeded farther south into the wilderness, where the Israelites had wandered for 40 years because of their unbelief” (Constable’s Notes).

A juniper tree is “a desert shrub that sometimes grows 10 ft. high” (Ryrie; Constable, BKC: “12 feet and provides some, though not much, shade”). “He did not get much refreshment from the natural provisions of the wilderness, such as the juniper (broom) tree” (Constable’s Notes).

Elijah was so down, discouraged, and depressed that he prayed he might die. Can Christians get that discouraged?

Throughout his life, Martin Luther was given to periods of depression and anxiety (González, II, p. 15).

William Carey’s achievements in the face of oppression suggest tragedies no more deterred him than a locomotive is by butterflies. Yet this amazing missionary pioneer sometimes suffered what one biographer called “sheer black depression.”

David Brainerd experienced deep bouts of melancholy in which he despaired of ever achieving anything in God’s service. He was so discouraged that he was seriously contemplating ending his missionary endeavors.

A. B. Simpson, that highly respected missionary statesman, exceptional preacher, and founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, “was always susceptible to periods of despair” (<http://www.net-burst.net/tough/depress.htm>, accessed July 5, 2016).

Charles Haddon Spurgeon was so plagued by discouragement, depression, fatigue, and illness that he tendered his resignation thirty-two times in thirty-nine years. He wrote, “There are experiences of the children of God which are full of spiritual darkness, and I am almost persuaded that those of God’s servants who have been most highly favored have, nevertheless, suffered more times of darkness than others.... No sin is necessarily connected with sorrow of heart, for Jesus Christ, our Lord, once said, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death.’ There was no sin in Him, and consequently none in His deep depression” (Charles Haddon Spurgeon: *Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit*, 1881, vol. 27, p. 1595).

What exactly is going on here? Is this a simple case of Elijah fleeing because of the threat of a woman? Is it possible that more is involved? Based on what is said later in the passage, it is possible that Elijah was also discouraged because he *expected* a greater results from what happened on Mount Carmel (see 19:10). In other words, Elijah was discouraged because his expectations were frustrated and Jezebel threatened to kill him. We get discouraged when our expectations do not come to pass and when people say discouraging things. Elijah “said he was no better than his predecessors in purging Israel from idolatry, implying that he had expected to see a complete revival” (Constable’s Notes). “He may have fully expected that because of what had been accomplished at Mount Carmel, Jezebel would capitulate and pagan worship would come to an end in Israel—all through his influence!” (Patterson and Austel, cited in Constable’s Notes).

## Elijah’s Encouragement

**Food** “Then as he lay and slept under a broom tree, suddenly an angel touched him, and said to him, ‘Arise *and* eat.’ Then he looked, and there by his head *was* a cake baked on coals, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank, and lay down again” (19:5-6). “The angel probably appeared as a human being as was common in the Old Testament” (MacDonald). Waking up, Elijah saw, lying by his head, a cake baked on coals and a jar of water, which he ate, drank, and lay down again.

“And the angel of the LORD came back the second time and touched him, and said, ‘Arise *and* eat, because the journey *is* too great for you” (19:7). The angel, who is this time identified

as “the angel of the Lord” touched Elijah a second time and told him to rise and eat because the journey he was about to take is too great for him if he does not. “Though ‘the angel of the LORD’ sometimes refers to God Himself in the Old Testament (e.g., Exod. 3:2-6), in the books of Kings, it probably refers to a human messenger (cf. vv. 5, 7; 2 Kings 1:3; 19:35; Acts 12:7)” (Constable’s Notes). “Again, the angel woke Elijah, perhaps after he had slept for some time, and urged him to eat more food since the journey before him would require much energy” (Constable, BKC).

“So he arose, and ate and drank; and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights as far as Horeb, the mountain of God” (19:8). “God provided supernaturally for His servant in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights, as He had provided for the Israelites for 40 years” (Constable’s Notes). “It is interesting to notice God’s treatment for this severe depression: rest; food and drink; more rest; more food and drink. Thus fortified, the prophet traveled in the strength of that food 200 miles in forty days and nights to Mount Horeb (Sinai), where God had given the law to Moses” (MacDonald).

“The trip from Beersheba to the traditional site of Horeb (Mount Sinai) took only 14 days by foot. It seems that Elijah was experiencing the same discipline for his weak faith and the same education that God had given the Israelites years earlier. God sustained Elijah faithfully as He had preserved the nation” (Constable’s Notes). Ryrice says, “The journey to Horeb (Sinai) took forty days because Elijah was alternately wandering and hiding due to his despondent condition.”

“Moses had spent 40 days and nights on the mountain fasting while he waited for a new phase of his ministry to begin (Exod. 34:28). Jesus spent 40 days and nights in a wilderness at the beginning of His public ministry, too (cf. Matt. 4:1-2)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Elijah’s ‘pilgrimage’ to Sinai was a search for the roots of Yahwism. There, Yahweh had appeared to Moses when he was herding sheep, and there, He appeared to him when he gave the law. Elijah needed reaffirmation. What he thought he saw happening on Mt. Carmel did not happen, namely, the repentance of Israel. So he went to Mount Sinai (also known as Mount Horeb) to chide Yahweh for forsaking him” (Heater, cited in Constable’s Notes).

*Perspective* “And there he went into a cave, and spent the night in that place; and behold, the word of the LORD *came* to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (19:9). The Lord asked him what he was doing there (Gen. 3:9). “God had not sent him here as He had directed him to other places (cf. 17:3, 17:9; 18:1)” (Constable, BKC). “The Hebrew text has ‘the’ cave rather than ‘a’ cave, suggesting that this may have been the very spot where God had placed Moses before He caused His glory to pass before him (Exod. 33:21-23)” (Constable’s Notes).

“So he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; for the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left and they seek to take my life’” (19:10). “In a self-righteous spirit, Elijah protested his own faithfulness and denounced the children of Israel. He said, in effect, that he was the only one who had remained true to the Lord” (MacDonald).

“Elijah’s zeal for God’s covenant, altars, and prophets was admirable, but he became too discouraged because he underestimated the extent of commitment to Yahweh that existed in Israel. He was not alone in his stand for Yahweh (cf. 18:13). God asked him what he was doing there (vv. 9, 13) because He had not sent him to Horeb, as He had sent him to Cherith, Zarephath, and Samaria (cf. 17:3, 9; 18:1). Elijah had fled to Horeb out of fear” (Constable’s Notes).



“Of course, he knew that he was not the only one left of all the faithful remnant (cf. 18:13), but he felt all alone. Interestingly, Elijah spoke only of the Lord’s prophets being killed (cf. 1 Ki. 18:13); he made no mention of Baal’s 450 prophets who were killed. Fear and discouragement caused him to see only the dark side. He sensed failure in spite of his being zealous” (Constable, BKC).

“Then He said, ‘Go out, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.’ And behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind tore into the mountains and broke the rocks in pieces before the LORD, *but* the LORD *was* not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, *but* the LORD *was* not in the earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, *but* the LORD *was* not in the fire; and after the fire a still small voice” (19:11-12). “God then commanded him to stand on the mountain of the law, but Elijah did not obey. We know this because later (v. 13) he went out and stood in the entrance of the cave” (MacDonald).

“God proceeded to reproduce demonstrations of His power that He had given Israel at Mt. Sinai (Exod. 19:16-18) and to Elijah at Mt. Carmel (18:38, 45). Nevertheless, God was not in these in the sense that they were not His methods now. Rather, God was in the gentle blowing (v. 12). Some scholars believe that we should understand the Hebrew words translated ‘a gentle blowing’ (NASB) or ‘a gentle whisper’ (NIV) as ‘a roaring and thunderous voice’ (cf. Exod. 19:16-18; Job 38:1). Though there is good support for it, for some reason this view has not found popular acceptance with most Bible translators’ (Constable’s Notes). The Hebrew text says still (whisper, calm), small (thin, small, fine, gaunt) voice (voice, sound, noise). Ryrie says that, literally translated, it is “the sound of gentle stillness.”

“Standing on the mountainside outside his cave (cf. 19:9), Elijah witnessed what Moses had seen in those mountains centuries before (Ex. 19:16-18) and what he himself had seen on Mount Carmel only a few days earlier (18:38, 18:45), namely, a spectacular demonstration of the power of God, this time in the wind, an earthquake, and fire. But on this occasion, the Lord was not in any of these, that is, they were not His instruments of self-revelation” (Constable, BKC).

“So it was, when Elijah heard *it*, that he wrapped his face in his mantle and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. Suddenly, a voice *came* to him, and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’” (19:13). “Elijah covered his face because he realized that He could not look at God and live (v. 13), as Moses also realized (Exod. 33:20-22; cf. Gen. 32:30)” (Constable’s Notes). “None of them brought him out of the cave. Finally, after the fire, the prophet heard a still, small voice. It was this gracious voice of the Lord that brought him to the entrance of the cave” (MacDonald).

“And he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD God of hosts; because the children of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, torn down Your altars, and killed Your prophets with the sword. I alone am left; and they seek to take my life’” (19:14). “Elijah was to learn that whereas God had revealed Himself in dramatic ways in the past, He would now work in quieter ways. Instead of Elijah continuing to stand alone for God, God would now put him into the background while the Lord used other people. Elijah evidently got the message, but he still felt depressed (v. 14). God was dealing with him gently too” (Constable’s Notes).

“The prophet’s response was identical to his first reply (19:10), suggesting that even though he may have understood the point of God’s display of natural forces for his benefit, he still felt the same way about himself. The message God seems to have intended for Elijah is that whereas He had revealed Himself in spectacular demonstrations of His power in the past at Kerith, Zarephath, and Carmel, He would now use Elijah in gentler, less dramatic ways. In these ways,

God proceeded to explain to His servant (19:15-18). God would deal with Elijah's personal feelings about himself later in a gentle way, too." (Constable, BKC).

*Commands* "Then the LORD said to him: 'Go, return on your way to the Wilderness of Damascus; and when you arrive, anoint Hazael as king over Syria'" (19:15). "Elijah was instructed to anoint (i.e., commission for the purpose of destroying Baal worship in Israel) Hazael as king of Aram (2 Kings 8:7-15; 10:32-33; 13:3, 22-25)" (Ryrie).

"Yahweh next directed Elijah to return to Israel to do three things (vv. 15-16). Elijah anointed only Elisha personally (vv. 19-21). He anointed Hazael and Jehu indirectly through his successor, Elisha (2 Kings 8:7-14; 9:1-3). Through these three men, God would complete the purge of Baal worship that Elijah had begun and bring judgment on the hard-hearted Israelites (v. 17). God also had 7,000 other faithful followers in Israel through whom He could work (v. 18). The writer mentioned some of these loyal people in the chapters that follow. This word from the Lord marks a great crisis in Israel. God now turned from the northern tribes as a whole to deal with a faithful remnant within that nation. Evidence of this is the fact that the stories of Elisha that follow deal mainly with the remnant rather than with the whole nation, in contrast to the record of Elijah's ministry" (Constable's Notes).

"Also you shall anoint Jehu the son of Nimshi as king over Israel. And Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel Meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place" (19:16). The Lord also told Elijah to anoint Jehu as king of Israel and Elisha as his successor (Ryrie: 2 Kings 9:1-3; 10:1-36)." Elisha was a prosperous farmer who lived near Abel-meholah (v. 16) in the Jordan Valley, 23 miles south of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee)" (Constable's Notes).

"It shall be *that* whoever escapes the sword of Hazael, Jehu will kill; and whoever escapes the sword of Jehu, Elisha will kill" (19:17). The Lord told Elijah that whoever escaped the sword of Hazael, Jehu would kill, and whoever escaped the sword of Jehu, Elisha would kill.

"Yet I have reserved seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him" (19:18). The Lord also informed Elijah that He had reserved 7000 in Israel who had not bowed to Baal, not kissed him. Kissing the idol was "part of the worship" (Hosea 13:2)" (Ryrie). "Such news undoubtedly cheered Elijah. Were it not for the insight into his feelings of fear and discouragement given in this chapter, one might not believe that Elijah was indeed "a man just like us" (Jas. 5:17)" (Constable, BKC). The Lord gave Elijah something to eat, something to think about, and something to do.

*Compliance* "So he departed from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth. Then Elijah passed by him and threw his mantle on him" (19:19). "The fact that Elisha had twelve yoke of oxen indicates that he was not poor. He was probably plowing with one yoke and his servants with the other eleven" (MacDonald).

"Elisha means 'God is salvation.' His ministry spanned the reigns of Jehoram, Jehu, Jehoahaz, and Jehoash of the Northern Kingdom. He headed schools of prophets (2 Kings 4:38-44; 6:1-7) and performed more recorded miracles than anyone other than Jesus Christ" (Ryrie). "Perhaps his 12 pairs of oxen represented the 12 tribes of Israel whom Elisha would now lead spiritually.... Throwing a prophet's cloak around a person symbolized the passing of the power and authority of the office to that individual" (Constable's Notes). "Elijah recruits his attendant and successor at the workplace, as Jesus was to do with many of his followers" (Auld, cited in Constable's Notes).

"And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah, and said, 'Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and *then* I will follow you.' And he said to him, 'Go back again, for what have I done to

you?” (19:20). “‘What have I done to you’ is an idiom that means, ‘Do as you please.’ Elisha terminated his former occupation and from then on served as a prophet (cf. Amos 7:14-15; Luke 9:62)” (Constable’s Notes: Constable. BKC: “Or what have I done to stop you?”). “Elijah gave consent but warned him not to forget what had just happened to him—i.e., how Elijah had anointed him” (MacDonald).

“So *Elisha* turned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and boiled their flesh, using the oxen’s equipment, and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he arose and followed Elijah, and became his servant” (19:21). “When called by Elijah, he was plowing and responded by immediately sacrificing a pair of oxen” (Ryrie). “His sacrifice of his oxen as a burnt offering to Yahweh symbolized his total personal commitment to God” (Constable’s Notes). “Elisha’s request to say goodbye to his parents sounds dangerously like that of a would-be disciple whom Jesus pronounced unfit for the kingdom (Luke 9:61-62). The difference is that in Elisha’s case, it was a no-nonsense decision to sever ties immediately, whereas in the other case, it was a delaying tactic and an excuse” (MacDonald).

“Elisha sealed his decision by slaughtering his yoke of oxen and burning his plowing implements. He evidently hosted a farewell banquet, serving his sacrificed animals to his guests for supper. Then he set out to accompany Elijah as his attendant” (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** When Elijah was fearful, exhausted, and discouraged, the Lord encouraged him by feeding him, giving him a new perspective of himself and the Lord, and giving him something to do, which evidently greatly encouraged him.

“This closes the so-called Elijah cycle or narrative (chs. 17-19), one of the richest portions of the Old Testament for preaching and teaching” (Constable’s Notes). This passage tells us how to deal with discouragement.

1. When you are discouraged, you need to sleep and eat and, perhaps, sleep some more and eat some more, depending on the depth of the discouragement and exhaustion (19:5-8). Do not, however, do that too long. At some point, the sooner, the better, you need to get up and do something.
2. When you are discouraged, you need to ask yourself why you are where you are (19:9, 13). You need a realistic perspective of yourself and of the kind of situation you are in (19:17). Stop blaming others. Stop playing the victim. Stop jumping to conclusions. Face reality. Think biblically about yourself.
3. When you are discouraged, you need to behold the Lord (19:11-12), especially His power. “God’s way of correcting Elijah’s perspective was to bring him to the place of revelation, which is what he must do with us again and again” (Roper, cited in Constable’s Notes).
4. When you are discouraged, you need to do something constructive (19:15). You need a purpose. Remember: God loves you. God allows trouble to enter your life to purify and perfect you. God has the power to get you through every situation. God works in different ways. God is not done with you!

In short, when you are depressed, you need to address your physical needs (sleep, angel food, and exercise), your psychological needs (a biblical perspective on you and the Lord), and your spiritual needs (do something; purpose).

M. R. DeHaan wrote, “Do you ever sit down in self-pity under the ‘juniper tree’ after you have tried especially hard and found that you have little to show for your efforts? Do you sometimes wonder, what’s the use? Yesterday, I had one of those ‘DOWN’ days. Everything seemed to go wrong. My recent attack of shingles began to bother me, the mail count of the Radio Bible Class was low, and I had trouble with my car. Then, to top it off, I received a very nasty letter from a woman who tore me to pieces because of something I’d written in ‘*Our Daily Bread*.’ I was really depressed, but then the Lord gave me a good night’s sleep, and after a hearty breakfast, I went to the office and was greatly cheered by the first letter on my desk. It came from a Christian in Jamaica who wrote: ‘Last Sunday, I invited 25 of my neighbors to my house to hear your broadcasts. After listening to the message, two of them wanted to be saved! What a time we had!’ Well, the sun began to shine again; with joy, I left the ‘juniper tree’” (*Our Daily Bread*, 2/3/1966).

## DON'T LET IT SLIP THROUGH YOUR HANDS

The Bible has had an enormous impact on Western civilization. Some have argued that Western civilization is built on the Bible. It is built on the Judeo-Christian values system or Judeo-Christian ethic. The Bible has had a tremendous impact on our judicial system. Many of our legal concepts are based on the Bible. The Bible has also had an interesting impact on the English language. How can that be? The Bible was written in Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek. True, but we use numerous phrases and expressions that come straight out of the Scripture.

For example, we speak of “the writing on the wall.” That idiom is used as a warning or a sign of impending danger. For instance, if a company has financial troubles, an employee might say that the writing is on the wall for their job, meaning that they think that they may soon be made unemployed! It is from the story of Belshazzar, a king of Babylon who was warned of his impending downfall by a message written on the wall.

Take another example. How about “the apple of his eye.” That expression refers to someone near and dear to you. Parents would use it when talking about a child. It comes from the passage in the Bible where God says that the Israelites are “the apple of his eye” (Deut. 32:10).

How about “a drop in the bucket?” It refers to a small amount compared to a large amount. She spent several hundred dollars on that dress, but that was a drop in a bucket compared to what she spent on her wedding dress. That phrase comes from a passage in the Bible. “Behold, the nations or as a drop in the bucket, and are counted as the small dust on the scales. Look, He lifts up the aisles as of very little thing” (Isa. 40:15).

Others include “bite the dust” (Ps. 72:9) and “the skin of my teeth” (Job 19:20). Or “you have let slip out of *your* hand.” What does that mean? Where does it appear in the Bible?

“In this chapter, the focus is again on Ahab rather than on Elijah” (Constable, BKC). “God dealt gently (cf. 19:12) with the Northern Kingdom at this time in the Divided Monarchy to continue to move His people back to Himself. This pericope records the first of three battles the writer recorded in 1 Kings between Ahab and the kings of Aram, Israel’s antagonistic neighbor to the northeast. The first of these evidently took place early in Ahab’s reign (ca. 874). Ahab’s adversary would have been Ben-Hadad I (900–860 B.C.). The political reasons for these encounters were of no interest to the writer of Kings, but we know what they were” (Constable’s Notes).

### The Negotiations

*The Siege* “Now Ben-Hadad the king of Syria gathered all his forces together; thirty-two kings were with him, with horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and made war against it” (20:1). Ben-Hadad was “a dynasty of kings of Aram, though this particular king was likely the son of the one mentioned in 1 Kings 15:18, who now renewed war against Israel. The 32 kings were vassals” (Ryrie). “Ben-Hadad II was evidently the son of Ben-Hadad I whom Asa had hired to attack Baasha some years earlier (cf. 15:18, 15:20; 20:34). Allied with Ben-Hadad II were 32 kings, probably rulers of neighboring city-states” (Constable, BKC).

*The First Demand* “Then he sent messengers into the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, ‘Thus says Ben-Hadad: ‘Your silver and your gold are mine; your loveliest wives and children are mine.’ And the king of Israel answered and said, ‘My lord, O king, just as you say, I

and all that I have *are yours*” (20:2-4). “Ahab meekly and weakly agreed” (MacDonald). “Greatly outnumbered, Ahab submitted to these terms” (Constable, BKC).

At this point, Ahab was greatly outnumbered, overwhelmed, and overcome. He meekly and weakly agreed to the terms he was given. He was hanging on by a thread. We get like that when we are overwhelmed with problems at work and home and then the car breaks down.

*The Second Demand* “Then the messengers came back and said, ‘Thus speaks Ben-Hadad, saying, ‘Indeed I have sent to you, saying, ‘You shall deliver to me your silver and your gold, your wives and your children, but I will send my servants to you tomorrow about this time, and they shall search your house and the houses of your servants. And it shall be, *that whatever is pleasant in your eyes, they will put it in their hands and take it*’” (20:5-6). “Evidently, Ben-Hadad regretted that he had demanded such ‘easy’ terms after Ahab had accepted them. He felt he could get much more than that. So he sent his messengers back with a new demand: that Ben-Hadad’s men be allowed to enter the palace and the officials’ houses and plunder them. The king had not refused Ben-Hadad’s demands for his most valued possessions, but now the Aramean enemy wanted everything he could lay his hands on” (Constable, BKC).

“Taken by themselves, Ben-Hadad’s words ‘are mine’ [v. 3] meant no more than that Israel was a client state to the more powerful Aramean state. Ahab’s reply, ‘All ... are yours’ [or “I am yours, and all that I have,” v. 4] would then have been acceptance of such a treaty, in which Israel was the subservient party. [In] ‘20:5, 6’ T[t]he language was no longer that of political formalities; this was a demand for complete surrender of everything of value, of any person of worth, of ‘whatever’ was ‘pleasant’ [or “desirable”] in Ahab’s eyes, to be handed over to the foreign monarch” (NKJV Study Bible).

“So the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, ‘Notice, please, and see how this *man* seeks trouble, for he sent to me for my wives, my children, my silver, and my gold; and I did not deny him.’ And all the elders and all the people said to him, ‘Do not listen or consent’” (20:7-8). “The elders of Israel were indignant at this second demand and urged noncompliance” (MacDonald).

“Therefore, he said to the messengers of Ben-Hadad, ‘Tell my lord the king, ‘All that you sent for to your servant the first time I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’ And the messengers departed and brought back word to him” (20:9). “The conditions of peace Ben-Hadad II offered were rejected by Ahab and the elders of Israel” (Ryrie). “Ahab sent his decision back to Ben-Hadad through the messengers: he would hold to his first promise but not to this demand” (Constable, BKC).

*The Reaction* “Then Ben-Hadad sent to him and said, ‘The gods do so to me, and more also, if enough dust is left of Samaria for a handful for each of the people who follow me’” (20:10). In response, Ben-Hadad swore that he would destroy Samaria. The expression “if enough dust is left for each” means “if each soldier took only a handful of earth, Samaria would be leveled” (Ryrie). “The phrase [‘for handfuls’] simply means that the Syrian host can carry away the whole city by handfuls [cf. 2 Sam. 17:13]” (Montgomery, cited in Constable’s Notes). “When Ben-Hadad was notified of Israel’s refusal, he flew into a rage, boasting that he would strip Samaria so bare that there wouldn’t be a handful of dust for each of his soldiers” (MacDonald).

*The Response* “So the king of Israel answered and said, ‘Tell *him*, ‘Let not the one who puts on *his armor* boast like the one who takes *it off*’” (20:11). This was a proverbial saying that means “Let not the one who begins a fight boast of victory prematurely” (Ryrie). “Ahab replied that Ben-Hadad should not boast of victory till he had obtained it” (Constable, BKC). In other words, don’t count your chickens before they hatch.



When you're hanging on by a thread, make sure it's a thread from the hem of His garment.

## The First Victory

*The Order* “And it happened when *Ben-Hadad* heard this message, as he and the kings *were* drinking at the command post, that he said to his servants, ‘Get ready.’ And they got ready to attack the city” (20:12). As soon as Ben-Hadad heard Ahab’s response, he was ready to go to war.

*The Prophet* “Suddenly a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver it into your hand today, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD’” (20:13). “The danger Ben-Hadad posed, as his demands on Ahab continued to escalate, made the Israelite king receptive to the directives of Yahweh’s prophet. The prophet presented Yahweh as Israel’s real deliverer (v. 13). The deliverance would demonstrate Yahweh’s power and superiority over Baal (v. 13)” (Constable’s Notes).

The Lord wants us to know He will provide for and protect us.

“So Ahab said, ‘By whom?’ And he said, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘By the young leaders of the provinces.’ Then he said, ‘Who will set the battle in order?’ And he answered, ‘You’” (20:14). When Ahab wanted to know by whom this victory would come, the prophet told him that the Lord said it would be by the young leaders of the province and when Ahab wanted to know who would set the battle in order, the prophet told him that he would.

*The Assembly* “Then he mustered the young leaders of the provinces, and there were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the children of Israel—seven thousand” (20:15). “God used a small force of two hundred and thirty-two servants of the governors of the districts, followed by seven thousand of the people of Israel, to defeat the assembled armies from the north. The phrase ‘all the children of Israel’ means all the soldiers in Samaria. A small number of young servants was chosen to begin the battle, to make it all the more apparent that victory was *from the Lord* and not from the arm of the flesh” (MacDonald, italics his). “Ahab willingly followed God’s orders since he had no other hope” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Instructions* “So they went out at noon. Meanwhile Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings helping him were getting drunk at the command post” (20:16). Ahab’s forces attacked at noon, “when the Arameans and their allies were drinking and resting, Ahab’s forces routed the enemy” (Ryrie). “Even today, little is done in the middle of the day in the Near East because the weather is usually so hot” (Constable, BKC).

“The young leaders of the provinces went out first. And Ben-Hadad sent out *a patrol*, and they told him, saying, ‘Men are coming out of Samaria!’” (20:17). The young leaders of the provinces were the first to make a move and when a patrol saw the movement, they told Ben-Hadad that the men were coming out of Samaria.

“So he said, ‘If they have come out for peace, take them alive; and if they have come out for war, take them alive’” (20:18). “Evidently, it was not clear to Ben-Hadad if the 232 men (20:15) approaching him were coming to talk peace or whether they intended to fight. This probably resulted in his being unprepared for their attack” (Constable, BKC). “This, of course, gave a military advantage to the Israelites and resulted in a great slaughter of the Syrians” (MacDonald).

*The Attack* “Then these young leaders of the provinces went out of the city with the army which followed them” (20:19). The young leaders of the Northern Kingdom, with the army behind them, went out of Samaria to attack the forces that had besieged the city.

*The Victory* “And each one killed his man; so the Syrians fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-Hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse with the cavalry” (20:20). Each soldier in the army of the Northern Kingdom killed the man he confronted in the opposing army with the results that the Syrians fled, the Israelites pursued them, and Ben-Hadad, the king of Syria escaped on a horse with his cavalry.

“Then the king of Israel went out and attacked the horses and chariots, and killed the Syrians with a great slaughter” (20:21). “God’s strategy resulted in victory for Israel” (Constable’s Notes).

Ahab went from being overcome to being an overcomer, from being a victim to a victor.

## The Second Victory

*The Prophet* “And the prophet came to the king of Israel and said to him, ‘Go, strengthen yourself; take note, and see what you should do, for in the spring of the year the king of Syria will come up against you’” (20:22). Spring was “the most popular time of the year for kings to wage war (2 Sam. 11:1)” (Constable, BKC). “Late spring and early summer were seasons for military expeditions because at that time of year in the Middle East, grass was readily available for the horses” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Servant* “Then the servants of the king of Syria said to him, ‘Their gods *are* gods of the hills. Therefore they were stronger than we; but if we fight against them in the plain, surely we will be stronger than they’” (20:23). The servants of Ben Hadad, the king of Syria, told him that if he fought in the plain, he would be stronger than they. “Pagans believed that gods had limited territorial power and that Israel won because their gods controlled the hills” (Constable’s Notes). By the way, God is the God of the hills and the God of the valleys.

“So do this thing: Dismiss the kings, each from his position, and put captains in their places; and you shall muster an army like the army that you have lost, horse for horse and chariot for chariot. Then we will fight against them in the plain; surely we will be stronger than they.” And he listened to their voice and did so” (20:24-25). “Ben-Hadad’s servants attributed their shameful defeat to two factors: (1) The Israelites had won the battle in the hill country. Doubtless, their gods were gods of the hills. But they would be impotent on the plains. So the Syrians should engage them on the plains next time. (2) The thirty-two kings who fought against Ahab had apparently proved themselves unskilled in warfare. Ben-Hadad’s servants advised that they be replaced by professional captains” (MacDonald). “Victory was certain, though perhaps not known to Ahab, because of the Arameans’ limited view of Yahweh’s power (vv. 23, 28)” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Syrians* “So it was, in the spring of the year, that Ben-Hadad mustered the Syrians and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel” (20:26). The location of Aphek is “uncertain, though probably E of Galilee” (Ryrie). “The battle of Aphek ... took place on the tableland east of the Sea of Chinnereth (Galilee), the modern Golan Heights. This was not the same Aphek where Saul battled the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:1; 29:1)” (Constable’s Notes). In the BKC, Constable says this battle was in 856 BC, but in his notes, he says it was in 873 BC. The dates for Ahab are 874-853 BC (see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Chronology of the Bible*).

*The Israelites* “And the children of Israel were mustered and given provisions, and they went against them. Now the children of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside” (20:27). The army of the Northern Kingdom was assembled, given positions, and went against the Syrians, but they were camped before them like two small flocks of goats, while the Syrians filled the countryside. In short, they were outnumbered, but the enemy’s force was a mere drop in the bucket as compared to the Lord.

*A Man of God* “Then a man of God came and spoke to the king of Israel, and said, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Because the Syrians have said, ‘The LORD *is* God of the hills, but He *is* not God of the valleys,’ therefore I will deliver all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I *am* the LORD’” (20:28). “God would teach the Arameans that, as an omnipresent Being, He is not confined either to the hills or to the valleys (1 Kings 20:23)” (Ryrie). Evidently, the man of God was the prophet of verses 13 and 22 (Constable, BKC). The Arameans greatly outnumbered Israel, but God promised Ahab victory so he and all Israel, as well as the Arameans, would know that Yahweh was the true God (Constable’s Notes).

*The Victory* “And they encamped opposite each other for seven days. So it was that on the seventh day the battle was joined; and the children of Israel killed one hundred thousand foot soldiers of the Syrians in one day” (20:29). “God enabled the soldiers of Israel to defeat their enemy (v. 29), but He also used supernatural means to assist them (v. 30; cf. Josh. 6; et al.). One hundred casualties a day in ancient warfare was considered heavy, but God gave His people 100 times that number that day” (Constable’s Notes).

“But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; then a wall fell on twenty-seven thousand of the men *who were* left. And Ben-Hadad fled and went into the city, into an inner chamber” (20:30). “The Syrians who escaped tried to take up positions on the walls of the city of Aphek, but the walls collapsed, killing twenty-seven thousand of them” (MacDonald). “The striking parallels to the conquest of Jericho, as the interval of seven days before the battle and the falling of the city walls, clearly identified the battles at Samaria and Aphek as holy war” (Rice, cited in Constables Notes).

Again, Ahaz went from being conquered to being a conqueror, from being overcome to being an overcomer, from being a victim to being a victor.

## Ahab’s Disobedience

*The Servants* “Then his servants said to him, ‘Look now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel *are* merciful kings. Please, let us put sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will spare your life’” (20:31). Ben-Hadad’s servants told him that the kings of the Northern Kingdom were merciful. “The sackcloth and ropes were signs of submission. The conqueror could use the rope to hang his victim if he chose not to show mercy” (Ryrie).

“So they wore sackcloth around their waists and *put* ropes around their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, ‘Your servant Ben-Hadad says, ‘Please let me live’ And he said, ‘*Is* he still alive? He *is* my brother’” (20:32). Ahab granted their request, calling Ben-Hadad his brother, that is, “my fellow king (1 Kings 9:13)” (Ryrie).

“Now the men were watching closely to see whether *any sign of mercy would come* from him; and they quickly grasped *at this word* and said, ‘Your brother Ben-Hadad.’ So he said, ‘Go, bring him.’ Then Ben-Hadad came out to him; and he had him come up into the chariot” (20:33). “Ahab said he was willing to receive Ben-Hadad as his brother, not as a servant. He was, of

course, not his real brother; Ahab had in mind a treaty for defense against Assyria in which he and Ben-Hadad would join as brothers” (Constable, BKC). The Hebrew word translated “quickly grasped” means “diligently observe” (BDB; NASB: “quickly catching;” NIV: “quick to pick up;” ESV: “watching for signs”). When Ahab said to bring Ben-Hadad, Ben-Hadad came into Ahab’s chariot. “Ahab’s plan was contrary to God’s Law that called for the deaths of Israel’s enemies (Deut. 20:10-15). Ahab welcomed Ben-Hadad into his chariot. This was an honor” (Constable’s Notes).

*The Treaty* “So Ben-Hadad said to him, ‘The cities which my father took from your father I will restore; and you may set up marketplaces for yourself in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.’ Then Ahab said, ‘I will send you away with this treaty.’ So he made a treaty with him and sent him away” (20:34). Quoting the NASB, Ryrie says, “You shall make the streets for yourself in Damascus,” which means “Sections of Damascus would be set aside for commercial purposes.”

“The Aramean king was quick to make concessions in return for his life (v. 34). Compare Saul’s refusal to execute Agag. The covenant the two men made involved the return of Israelite cities that Aram had previously taken and trade privileges for Israel with Damascus (v. 34). Ahab figured that it would be better for him and Israel to make a treaty than to obey God’s Law (cf. Exod. 23:32). Perhaps the reason Ahab was so eager to make this treaty was that the Assyrian Empire was expanding toward Israel from the northeast” (Constable’s Notes).

“Three years later (853 BC), Ahab and Ben-Hadad faced their mutual foe, Assyria, led by mighty King Shalmaneser III (859-824 BC and repelled him at Qarqar on the Orontes River in Aram. Ahab supplied 10,000 troops and 2,000 chariots for this coalition. This battle is not referred to in Scripture, but a record written by Shalmaneser has survived. It is now in the British Museum. (See James B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts Relating to the Old Testament*. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1955, pp. 278-9.)” (Constable, BKC).

At this point, Ahaz is disobedient. He does not trust or obey the Lord.

*A Certain Man* “Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his neighbor by the word of the LORD, ‘Strike me, please.’ And the man refused to strike him” (20:35). “The sons of the prophets were students in the schools of the prophets, well-established institutions in Israel designed to perpetuate the Law of Moses and the Word of the Lord” (Constable, BKC). “The prophet needed to appear to be a wounded soldier to reinforce his message and to keep Ahab from recognizing him as a prophet” (Ryrie).

“Then he said to him, ‘Because you have not obeyed the voice of the LORD, surely, as soon as you depart from me, a lion shall kill you.’ And as soon as he left him, a lion found him and killed him” (20:36). “What happened to the man who refused to strike the prophet was exactly what would happen to Ahab and for the same reason, disobedience to the word of the Lord. Compare Samuel’s first sentence against Saul for his disobedience (1 Sam. 13). Again, a lion was God’s agent of execution (cf. 13:24)” (Constable’s Notes). “If a good prophet were thus punished for sparing his friend and God’s when God said *Smite*, of much sorer punishment, should a wicked king be thought worthy, who spared his enemy and God’s when God said *Smite*” (MacDonald, italics his).

“And he found another man, and said, ‘Strike me, please.’ So the man struck him, inflicting a wound” (20:37). That “certain man” asked another man to strike him and, this time, the man did, inflicting a wound on the certain man.

“Then the prophet departed and waited for the king by the road, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. Now as the king passed by, he cried out to the king and said, ‘Your

servant went out into the midst of the battle; and there, a man came over and brought a man to me, and said, ‘Guard this man; if by any means he is missing, your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver’” (20:38-39). The prophet told Ahab that as he was in the midst of a battle, a man brought him a prisoner and instructed him to guard the prison and if the prisoner came up missing, he would be killed or pay a talent of silver (Constable, BKC: “ca. 75 pounds”). “The meaning is this: Just as a soldier must not allow a prisoner of war to escape, so Ahab should not have allowed Ben-Hadad to live” (Ryrie). “He had been warned that if the prisoner escaped, he would have to pay either with his own life or with the exorbitant figure of one talent of silver” (MacDonald). “The prophet’s parable recalls the one Nathan told David (2 Sam. 12:1-7). Ahab condemned himself by what he said. God would kill Ahab for not killing Ben-Hadad (22:37)” (Constable’s Notes).

“While your servant was busy here and there, he was gone. Then the king of Israel said to him, ‘So *shall* your judgment *be*; you yourself have decided *it*’” (20:40). The prophet then explained to Ahab that as he was busy. The prisoner escaped and Ahab said to the prophet that he should suffer the consequences because of his decision.

“And he hastened to take the bandage away from his eyes; and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets. Then he said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Because you have let slip out of *your* hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people’” (20:41-42). The prophet told Ahab that the Lord said because he had let slip out of his hand a man whom I (the Lord) appointed to utter destruction, his life shall go for Ben-Hadad’s life and his people would be taken for Ben-Hadad’s people. “He would also cause Israel, which Ahab headed and represented, to suffer defeat rather than the Arameans (v. 42; cf. 1 Sam. 15:22-29). Ahab foolishly chose to follow his own plan instead of obeying the Lord. Obedience probably would have terminated the conflict with the Aramean army” (Constable’s Notes). “The king showed no leniency; he insisted that the original terms of punishment be carried out. Then the prophet sprang the trap” (MacDonald).

Ahab “believed Ben-Hadad’s help against Assyria would be more valuable to Israel than Ben-Hadad’s death. Therefore, Ahab would forfeit his own life in exchange for Ben-Hadad’s (cf. 22:37). Also, Ahab’s people, the Israelites, would die in place of Ben-Hadad’s people. Ahab returned to Samaria sullen because of this prophecy and angry (21:4) at himself as well as at God’s prophet” (Constable, BKC).

“So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and displeased, and came to Samaria” (20:43). The Hebrew word translated “sullen” means “stubborn, implacable, rebellious, resentful, sullen” (BDB; Strong: “heavy, sad; NASB and NIV: “sullen;” ESV: “vexed”). The Hebrew word translated “displeased” means “angry, raging, out of humor, vexed” (BDB; Strong: “angry, and displeased;” NASB: “vexed;” NIV: “anger, ESV: “sullen.” He “stormed off to his palace to pout. Instead of asking the Lord for mercy, he continued to incite the Lord to wrath, as we read in the remaining chapters of 1 Kings” (MacDonald).

**Summary:** Even after the Lord assured Ahab of victory twice (20:13, 22), he disobeyed the Lord by allowing Ben-Hadad to live (20:42), which resulted in his death and the death of others.

He let an opportunity to trust the Lord slip out of his hand. We miss opportunities to give thanks, praise, minister to people, and witness. Missing opportunities to do our God-given responsibilities results in losing rewards at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Israel saw God perform miracles in Egypt, protect them from the Egyptians, and provide for them in the wilderness. But when God allowed them to enter the land, they let it slip through

their fingers. As a result, that generation was not allowed to go into the land, wandered in the wilderness, and died in the wilderness. The next generation used the opportunity God gave them and they inherited the land.

See the handwriting on the wall.  
Do not let opportunities slip out of your hands.  
Be the apple of God's eye; grab every opportunity.

Do not get to the end of your life and say, "I wish I had." Get to the end of your life and say, "I'm glad I did."



## JUSTICE, MERCY, OR BOTH

According to the Scripture, we are to exercise justice and mercy. Sometimes, that poses a dilemma. The question becomes, “Should we exercise justice or mercy?” Is it possible to do both—at the same time? The answer is in 1 Kings 21.

### Ahab’s Pouting

*The Request* “And it came to pass after these things that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel, next to the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. So Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden, because it is near, next to my house; and for it I will give you a vineyard better than it. Or, if it seems good to you, I will give you its worth in money’” (21:1-2). The scene is in Jezreel, where Ahab and Jezebel had a palace (MacDonald). “A vineyard, like an olive-orchard, is not just land that may have been in the family for a long time: it represents a high investment in many years of unfruitful care before it reaches maturity” (Auld, cited in Constable’s Notes). Ahab wanted Naboth’s vineyard for a vegetable garden and offered to give Naboth a better vineyard for it or pay him for it. That sounds like a fair offer, but there is a problem with it (see the next verse).

*The Refusal* “But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you!’” (21:3). MacDonald says, “Naboth refused to sell or exchange his land, since the law of Israel decreed that property should remain in the family to which it was originally assigned (Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7; Ezek. 46:18). In his Notes, Constable says, “Naboth was a God-fearing Israelite. In obedience to the Mosaic Law, he refused to sell his paternal inheritance (cf. Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7). In BKC, Constable says, “Naboth sought to live by the Mosaic Law (Lev. 25:23-28; Num. 36:7).”

*The Reaction* “So Ahab went into his house sullen and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no food” (21:4). In the previous chapter, when Ahab was given the news that because he disobeyed God, he would be punished, the text says he was “sullen and displeased (20:43). The Hebrew word translated “sullen” means “stubborn, implacable, rebellious, resentful, sullen” (BDB; ESV: “vexed”). The Hebrew word translated “displeased” means “angry, raging” (BDB; NIV: “anger). He “stormed off to his palace to pout” (MacDonald). “Ahab’s ... feelings were the result of his perception that Naboth’s position was unassailable legally. Compare Saul’s moodiness following his disobedience and sentence” (Constable’s Notes). This grown man is acting like a spoiled child.

### Jezebel’s Plotting

*Her Instructions to Ahab* “But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said to him, ‘Why is your spirit so sullen that you eat no food?’ He said to her, ‘Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite, and said to him, ‘Give me your vineyard for money; or else, if it pleases you, I will give you another vineyard for it.’ And he answered, ‘I will not give you my vineyard’” (21:5-6). When

Jezebel saw her husband pouting and not eating, she wanted to know what was troubling him. That's what any wife would do. Ahab told his wife what had happened but did not tell her why Naboth hadn't accepted his offer.

“Then Jezebel his wife said to him, ‘You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food, and let your heart be cheerful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite’” (21:7). “She had grown up in a culture where the rights of individuals were not honored as they were in Israel. It seemed incredible to her that Ahab would not just take what he wanted. That was how a king should act, according to her way of thinking” (Constable, BKC). “Jezebel believed Ahab was the supreme authority in Israel, an opinion he shared (cf. 20:42). This was the root of many of Ahab and Jezebel's difficulties (cf. Saul and his daughter Michal, and Ahab and his daughter Athaliah). They failed to acknowledge Yahweh's sovereignty over Israel” (Constable's Notes).

*Her Instructions to the Leaders* “And she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed *them* with his seal, and sent the letters to the elders and the nobles who *were* dwelling in the city with Naboth. She wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth with high honor among the people; and seat two men, scoundrels, before him to bear witness against him, saying, ‘You have blasphemed God and the king. Then take him out, and stone him, that he may die’” (21:8-10). The Hebrew word translated “scoundrels” means “worthless, good for nothing, unprofitable, base fellow.” “Jezebel elevated cursing the king to a crime on the same level with cursing Yahweh” (Constable's Notes). Cursing God was a capital offense (Lev. 24:16). The Mosaic Law required two witnesses in capital cases (Deut. 17:6-7).

“So the men of his city, the elders and nobles who were inhabitants of his city, did as Jezebel had sent to them, as it *was* written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast, and seated Naboth with high honor among the people. And two men, scoundrels, came in and sat before him; and the scoundrels witnessed against him, against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, ‘Naboth has blasphemed God and the king!’ Then they took him outside the city and stoned him with stones, so that he died. Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned and is dead’” (21:11-14). The elders and nobles of Jezreel were not loyal to the Lord. “They probably could not have been to stay in office under Ahab” (Constable's Notes). “The leading men of Jezreel obviously feared Jezebel more than they feared the Lord because they carried out her orders exactly” (Constable, BKC). They were “under Jezebel's thumb” (Constable's Notes). “Since the property would pass on to Naboth's sons after his death, Jezebel had them murdered as well (2 Kings 9:26). The iniquitous queen was as thorough as she was wicked” (MacDonald). The leaders informed Jezebel that they were loyal to her in carrying out her request.

*Her Instructions to Ahab* “And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, ‘Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for money; for Naboth is not alive, but dead.’ So it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab got up and went down to take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite” (21:15-16). “When Ahab heard what his wife had done, he did not reprove her but took advantage of her actions and in doing so approved them (v. 16). Naboth's vineyard was in Jezreel, not Samaria” (Constable's Notes). “The most heinous act of Ahab came in the matter of Naboth. A king's primary responsibility was to render justice in the land. Ahab egregiously violated this requirement by stealing from a man he had murdered (through Jezebel)” (Heater, cited in Constable's Notes).

## Elijah's Proclaiming

*The Command* “Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who *lives* in Samaria. There *he is*, in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it” (21:17-18). “Again God told Elijah to ‘go’ (v. 18; cf. 17:3, 9; 18:1; 19:15). As a faithful servant, he went to confront the king again” (Constable’s Notes).

“Verse 18 contains a problem. Elijah was told to go “to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he [Ahab] has gone down to take possession of it.’ However, Naboth was a ‘Jezreelite,’ and his vineyard was in ‘Jezreel’ (v. 1). The NIV translators got around this problem by translating verse 18: ‘Ahab king of Israel, who *rules* in Israel.’ They evidently took the mention of Samaria as a reference to Ahab’s capital and assumed that Elijah went to Jezreel, not Samaria” (Constable’s Notes; Keil: “who lives at Samaria”).

“You shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘Have you murdered and also taken possession?’ And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth, dogs shall lick your blood, even yours” (21:19). “Even though Jezebel was behind the murder of Naboth, God held her husband Ahab responsible. Jezebel’s evil influence over her husband stands out in this story. Ahab was willing to murder a godly Israelite to obtain a mere vegetable garden” (Constable’s notes). The place where dogs licked up the blood of Naboth was “outside the city. Naboth was executed outside Jezreel (21:13), and Ahab’s blood was licked up outside Samaria (22:38, the ‘pool’ being outside the city)” (Ryrie).

*The Compliance* “So Ahab said to Elijah, ‘Have you found me, O my enemy?’ And he answered, ‘I have found *you*, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD” (21:20). Between verses 19 and 20 Elijah went to see Ahab. Ahab addressed Elijah as his enemy. “Elijah was Ahab’s enemy because the prophet was God’s representative whom the king had decided to oppose. Ahab had sold himself in that he had sacrificed his own life and future to obtain what he wanted (cf. Saul)” (Ryrie). “When Elijah said the king had sold himself, he meant the king had sacrificed his principles to obtain what he wanted” (Constable, BKC).

*The Confrontation* “Behold, I will bring calamity on you. I will take away your posterity, and will cut off from Ahab every male in Israel, both bond and free” (21:21). “The wages God would pay him for this would be trouble and death (cf. Rom. 6:23). God would remove all human support from Ahab and would sweep him away like so much filth. The Hebrew word translated ‘disaster’ [calamity] in verse 21 is similar to the one translated ‘evil’ in verse 20. This wordplay emphasizes the correspondence between Ahab’s sins and their punishment” (Constable’s Notes).

“I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked *Me* to anger, and made Israel sin” (21:22). The Lord would make Ahab like the house of Jeroboam (14:11), and the house of Baasha (16:4). “God would also cut off Ahab’s dynasty for the same reasons He terminated Jeroboam and Baasha’s houses (Constable’s Notes; 2 Kings 9:9).

“And concerning Jezebel the LORD also spoke, saying, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel” (21:23). The Lord added the dogs would eat her by the wall of Jezreel (2 Kings 9:35-37). Ryrie says, “Packs of dogs running wild acted as scavengers.” “As for Jezebel, wild dogs, which normally lived off the garbage in cities, would eat her” (Constable’s Notes).

“The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field” (21:24). “All of Ahab’s descendants would experience ignoble deaths (cf. 14:11; 16:4)” (Constable’s Notes).

“But there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up” (21:25). The Hebrew word translated “stirred” means “to incite, allure, instigate, entice” (BDB; NASB and ESV: “to incite;” NIV: “urged on”). “The writer’s assessment of Ahab was that he was the worst ruler in Israel yet (cf. 16:30)” (Constable’s Notes).

“And he behaved very abominably in following idols, according to all *that* the Amorites had done, whom the LORD had cast out before the children of Israel” (21:26). “He was as bad as the Canaanites whom God drove out because of their wickedness (Lev. 18:25-30). Nevertheless, he was a king over God’s chosen people, though not of the Davidic line. Samson was also very Canaanitish in his thoughts and ways, even though he was a judge in Israel” (Constable’s Notes).

“Elijah predicted that Ahab himself would be slain, that his male descendants would be slain, ending his dynasty, that the body of Jezebel would be eaten by dogs in Jezreel, and that Ahab’s descendants would not be given a decent burial (v. 24). The severity of Ahab’s punishment is explained by the extremes to which he went in idolatry—’there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness” (MacDonald).

*The Consequences* “So it was, when Ahab heard those words, that he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his body, and fasted and lay in sackcloth, and went about mourning” (21:27). “Tearing one’s clothes (Est. 4:1; Job 1:20), wearing sackcloth (Gen. 37:34; 1 Kings 20:31-32; Est. 4:1; Neh. 9:1; Dan. 9:3), and fasting (Neh. 9:1; Dan. 9:3) all manifested a spirit of grief and contrition” (Constable, BKC). “In this particular, he seems to have gone beyond the usual practice. We do not read elsewhere of mourners passing the night in sackcloth” (Barnes).

“And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, ‘See how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the calamity in his days. In the days of his son I will bring the calamity on his house” (21:28-29). “The whole penalty was not inflicted on Ahab (21:19); some was reserved for Jehoram (2 Kings 9:24-25)” (Ryrie). “The Lord decreed that the judgments on his wife and family would not take place until after Ahab’s death” (MacDonald).

**Summary:** When Jezebel had Naboth killed so her husband could have his vineyard, the Lord sent Elijah to tell Ahab he would be punished, but when Ahab humbled himself before the Lord, the Lord lightened the sentence.

Ahab was guilty. “Jezebel was directly responsible for Naboth’s death, but Ahab was ultimately responsible since Jezebel’s letter to the elders ordering Naboth’s murder had been sent out over Ahab’s name (1 Kings 21:8)” (Constable, BKC). This is like a person hiring a professional killer to kill someone. The professional killer directly killed the victim, but the one who hired him is ultimately responsible.

Ahab was punished; that was justice. R. G. Lee (1886-1978) was ordained in 1910. After pastoring four churches, including First Baptist Church of New Orleans, he was pastor of Bellevue Baptist Church in Memphis, Tennessee, from 12/1927 until 4/1960. During his pastorate at Bellevue, over twenty-four thousand people joined the church, over seventy-six hundred of these for baptism. Dr. Lee preached his famous sermon on 1 Kings 21, “Pay Day—Someday,” over 1200 times in the United States and other countries. Ahab met his payday one day. That was justice.

Ahab repented. Ryrie does not think Ahab genuinely repented. He says, “Ahab’s repentance was not accompanied by acts (such as restoring Naboth’s vineyard to his family or tearing down the altars to Baal) that would prove it was genuine” (Ryrie). Constable thinks it was. “Ahab’s genuine repentance when he heard of his fate—from Israel’s true King—resulted in God’s relenting and lightening His sentence (cf. Exod. 32:14; Num. 14:12, 20; Ps. 106:44-45; Jer. 18:6-12). Samson also repented (Judg. 16:28). Not Ahab but his son Joram (i.e., Jehoram) would bleed on Naboth’s land in Jezreel (v. 19; 2 Kings 9:25-26). There is no indication here or elsewhere that Jezebel ever repented” (Constable’s Notes; in BKC, Constable says it was a sincere repentance; JFB say it was sincere repentance “for a while”). Keil says Ahab “felt deep remorse, and for a time at least was sincerely penitent.”

Barnes says, “The repentance of Ahab resembles that of the Ninevites Jonah 3:5. It has the same outward signs—fasting and sackcloth—and it has much the same inward character. It springs not from love or hatred of sin but from fear of the consequences of sin. It is thus, although sincere and real while it lasts, shallow and exceedingly short-lived.”

Ahab repented. Some students of this passage think that Ahab did not genuinely repent (Ryrie). Some say it was a shallow repentance. Barnes says, “The repentance of Ahab resembles that of the Ninevites Jonah 3:5. It has the same outward signs—fasting and sackcloth—and it has much the same inward character. It springs not from love or hatred of sin, but from fear of the consequences of sin. It is thus, although sincere and real while it lasts, shallow and exceedingly short-lived.” Others think he did repent (Constable, BKC; JFB say it was sincere repentance “for a while;” Keil says Ahab “felt deep remorse, and for a time at least was sincerely penitent”). Apparently, the Lord thought so. He said Ahab “humbled himself” (21:28).

The Lord lightened his sentence. That was mercy. “Ahab’s genuine repentance when he heard of his fate ... resulted in God’s relenting and lightening His sentence.... There is no indication here or elsewhere that Jezebel ever repented” (Constable’s Notes).

The Lord was merciful and just. “If we learn anything from these verses, it is that God is a God of grace and mercy. ‘As I live,’ says the Lord GOD, ‘I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die?’ (Ezek. 33:11)” (MacDonald).

Years ago, while studying the Scriptures, I discovered a major emphasis in the Bible on God’s justice and love. The Old Testament emphasizes that God is holy (Lev. 11:44) and the New Testament stresses God is love (1 Jn. 4:8). Around holiness can be grouped such attributes as truth, righteousness, and justice; clustered about love are grace, mercy, and kindness. Thus, the two major attributes of God are holiness (truth, righteousness, justice) and love (grace, mercy, kindness).

The Psalmist said, “For Your mercy *is* great above the heavens, and Your truth *reaches* to the clouds” (Ps. 108:4). Here, God’s mercy and truth are praised.

Micah says, “He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

Jesus says, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier *matters* of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Mt. 23:23).

Paul says, “But, speaking the truth in love, (you) may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ” (Eph. 4:15).

Righteousness is doing what is right. Love is doing what is best for other people. Righteousness without love is judgmental. Love without righteousness is sentimentality.

I have sometimes added to that list God's attribute of wisdom, suggesting that it takes wisdom to know when to apply justice and when to apply mercy. That's true, but it's also true that there are times when we do both. It's not either-or; it's both-and.

The ultimate illustration of God's justice and mercy is His response to our sin. He says the wages of sin is death. Justice is making sure the penalty is paid. God is also merciful; He sent his Son to pay our sin debt. Listen to Paul explain this: "Being justified freely by His *grace* through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth *as* a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His *righteousness*, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be *just and the justifier* of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Rom. 3:24-26, italics added).

When Adam and Eve sinned, God responded with justice and mercy. He said if they disobeyed, they would die. When they disobeyed, they died spiritually, but God was also merciful. Granted, God condemned them to pain during life and physical death at the end of it, but He permitted them to live, labor, love each other, bear children, and believe victory was coming.

Be godly. Be Christlike. Be righteous and be gracious. Sometimes, you have to choose between the two. In those cases, you need wisdom. As much as possible, however, do both at the same time.



## BEWARE OF PREACHERS

Believers who get deeply interested in spiritual things, read Christian books, listen to Christian radio, and watch Christian television. That can be a dangerous activity! Although all Christian preachers claim that they are communicating what God said. That does not always happen. They contradict each other! How should believers handle that situation? There is a vivid illustration of that very kind of thing in 1 Kings 22.

“Another significant battle occurred between the battle of Ramoth-gilead that the writer recorded in chapter 22 (853 B.C.) and the battles he recorded in chapter 20. Ahab and his Aramean ally Ben-Hadad II (860–841 B.C.) defeated their mutual foe King Shalmaneser III of Assyria at Qarqar on the Orontes River in Aram (also in 853 B.C.). Assyrian records set the date for this battle, making it one of the clear benchmarks in Old Testament chronology. The writers of Scripture did not refer to this battle, but a record of it that Shalmaneser wrote has survived and is now in the British Museum. Perhaps it was this victory that encouraged Ahab to challenge his ally at Ramoth-gilead” (Constable’s Notes).

### Ahab’s Deliberation (2 Chron. 18:1-33)

*Ahab’s Request* “Now three years passed without war between Syria and Israel” (22:1). “In the third year (853 BC), shortly after Ahab and Ben-Hadad had fought Shalmaneser at the Battle of Qarqar, Ahab decided that he needed to retake the important city of Ramoth in Gilead from the Arameans who had taken it from Israel earlier” (Constable, BKC).

“Then it came to pass, in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to visit the king of Israel” (22:2). In the third year of peace between the Northern Kingdom and Syria, Jehoshaphat, the king of the Southern Kingdom, went to visit Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom.

“King Jehoshaphat of Judah had come to Judah’s throne in 873 B.C. and had formed an alliance by marriage with Ahab (2 Chron. 18:1). He had undoubtedly come down from Jerusalem (topographically and symbolically) to Samaria at Ahab’s invitation. Verses 1 and 2 seem to introduce the events in verses 3-40 as they read in the text. However, several years passed between Jehoshaphat’s visit in verse 2 and Ahab’s invitation to him in verse 4 (cf. 2 Chron. 18:1-2). Evidently, the three years of peace mentioned in verse 1 followed the Battle of Aphek (20:26-30; 873 B.C.)” (Constable, Notes).

“And the king of Israel said to his servants, ‘Do you know that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, but we hesitate to take it out of the hand of the king of Syria?’” (22:3). “Ramoth was one of the chief cities of the tribe of Gad, 28 miles east of the Jordan and 15 miles south of the Sea of Kinnereth, almost directly east of Jezreel” (Constable, BKC). “Apparently, it [Ramoth in Gilead] had not been restored to Israel after the treaty of 1 Kings 20:34” (Ryrie). “Ben-Hadad had promised to return Israel’s cities when he received amnesty from Ahab (20:34), but he apparently had failed to do so” (MacDonald).

“So he said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Will you go with me to fight at Ramoth Gilead?’ Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses’” (22:4). “Ahab’s invitation to Jehoshaphat to join him in battle against the Arameans at Ramoth-gilead (vv. 3-4) must have taken place in 854 or 853 B.C.” (Constable’s Notes). “To field an

army large enough to defeat the Arameans, Ahab asked Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, to ally with him against Ben-Hadad II. Jehoshaphat agreed for political reasons, though he should not have done so for spiritual reasons; he was a godly king, faithful to the Lord” (Constable, BKC).

*Jehoshaphat’s First Request:* “Also Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, ‘Please inquire for the word of the LORD today’” (22:5). “Jehoshaphat was a devotee of Yahweh. It was typical of him to inquire concerning the Lord’s will, though Ahab could not have cared less to do so” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall I go against Ramoth Gilead to fight, or shall I refrain?’ So they said, ‘Go up, for the Lord will deliver *it* into the hand of the king’” (22:6). “Not Jezebel’s 400 prophets of Baal, but prophets of the Lord. Yet because they were on Ahab’s payroll, they said what they knew the king wanted to hear” (Ryrie). “Baal prophets would have been unacceptable to Jehoshaphat” (Constable, BKC).

*Jehoshaphat Second Request* “And Jehoshaphat said, ‘*Is there* not still a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of Him?’” (22:7). “The 400 prophets Ahab assembled may have been apostate prophets of Yahweh since Baal prophets would probably have been unacceptable to Jehoshaphat (vv. 11, 12, 24). We should therefore interpret Jehoshaphat’s request for a prophet of Yahweh as a request for a faithful prophet” (Constable’s Notes).

“So the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘*There is* still one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may inquire of the LORD; but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil.’ And Jehoshaphat said, ‘Let not the king say such things!’” (22:8). “Micaiah [was] a fearless prophet who was hated by Ahab because of his uncompromising messages” (MacDonald). “Ahab hated Micaiah because he always told the king the truth. Ahab wanted to feel good more than he wanted to know the truth. This is another evidence of Ahab’s continuing antagonism toward Yahweh and His representatives (cf. 21:20)” (Constable’s Notes). “Ahab was more concerned about feeling good than he was about knowing the truth” (MacDonald).

“Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, ‘Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly!’” (22:9). Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom, told one of his officials to bring Micaiah, the prophet, to him quickly.

*Zedekiah’s Recommendation* “The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, having put on *their* robes, sat each on his throne, at a threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them” (22:10). Ahab, the king of the Northern Kingdom, and Jehoshaphat, king of the Southern Kingdom, put on their royal robes, sat on their royal thrones at the threshing floor, which was at the gate of Samaria, and all the prophets prophesied before them.

“Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah had made horns of iron for himself; and he said, ‘Thus says the LORD: ‘With these you shall gore the Syrians until they are destroyed’” (22:11). “Zedekiah made horns of iron to depict the irresistible power of Ahab and Jehoshaphat against the Syrians” (MacDonald).

“And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, ‘Go up to Ramoth Gilead and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the king’s hand’” (22:12). All the prophets agreed that the two kings should fight for Ramoth Gilead and the Lord would give them victory.

*Micaiah’s Revelation* “Then the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, ‘Now listen, the words of the prophets with one accord encourage the king. Please, let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak encouragement’” (22:13). “Micaiah was

informed that his message should agree with that of the other prophets, but the advice was wasted on him” (MacDonald).

“And Micaiah said, ‘As the LORD lives, whatever the LORD says to me, that I will speak’” (22:14). “Like Elijah, Micaiah was willing to stand alone for God (v. 14; cf. 18:22). Micaiah had stood before Ahab many times before (v. 8)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then he came to the king; and the king said to him, ‘Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall we refrain?’ And he answered him, ‘Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver *it* into the hand of the king!’” (22:15). “When Ahab asked if the campaign against Ramoth Gilead should be undertaken, Micaiah first said the same thing as the prophets: ‘Go and prosper, for the LORD will deliver it into the hand of the king!’ But it is probable that he said it in a mocking manner. The tone of his voice must have dripped with irony and sarcasm” (MacDonald). “Apparently, Micaiah’s tone of voice and gestures showed that he spoke sarcastically (cf. 1 Kings 22:16)” (Ryrie; Constable’s Notes).

“So the king said to him, ‘How many times shall I make you swear that you tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?’” (22:16). Ahab’s response was to ask Micaiah how many times he would make him swear before he would tell him what the Lord really said. “Ahab put Micaiah under oath to tell the truth (Lev. 5:1)” (MacDonald). “Ahab’s reply was also sarcastic; He had never had to tell Micaiah to speak the truth in Yahweh’s name” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then he said, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, as sheep that have no shepherd. And the LORD said, ‘These have no master. Let each return to his house in peace’” (22:17). “The prophet then related a vision in which Israel was scattered because they had no shepherd, intimating that Ahab would be killed and his army dispersed” (MacDonald). “The truth was that Ahab would be killed and his army scattered” (Ryrie). “Micaiah’s vision of Israel was of defenseless sheep without a human shepherd, namely, Ahab. They would come home after the battle peacefully” (Constable’s Notes).

“And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Did I not tell you he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?’” (22:18). “The king responded to this prophecy of his death glibly. He could not have believed the Lord’s word and gone into battle. Saul had done the same thing (1 Sam. 28; 31)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Then *Micaiah* said, ‘Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of heaven standing by, on His right hand and on His left’” (22:19). “Whether the conversation Micaiah then described (22:20-23) actually took place in heaven or whether it was a revelation given in anthropomorphic terms to help Micaiah and his audience visualize what was taking place on the threshing floor before them, the point was clear to all: The 400 prophets spoke with a lying spirit (22:22-23) to deceive, and to lead Ahab to disaster in battle and his death (22:20). Micaiah, however, spoke the truth” (Constable, BKC).

“And the LORD said, ‘Who will persuade Ahab to go up, that he may fall at Ramoth Gilead?’ So one spoke in this manner, and another spoke in that manner” (22:20). In Micaiah’s vision, the Lord asked the heavenly host who would persuade Ahab to go that he might be killed at Ramoth Gilead and various members of the heavenly host presented different possibilities.

“Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD, and said, ‘I will persuade him’” (22:21). “The Lord permitted a deceiving spirit to control the prophets and give Ahab the wrong advice” (Ryrie).

“The LORD said to him, ‘In what way?’ So he said, ‘I will go out and be a lying spirit in the mouth of all his prophets.’ And the LORD said, ‘You shall persuade *him*, and also prevail.

Go out and do so” (22:22). “The identity of the spirit that stood before the Lord and offered to entice Ahab (v. 21, cf. v. 6) is problematic. This ‘spirit’ may be the personified spirit of prophecy, or it may have been a demon or Satan. Saul also saw a spirit shortly before he died (1 Sam. 28; 31)” (Constable’s Notes). In the BKC, Constable says, “The Lord had apparently permitted a ‘lying spirit’ (i.e., a demon) to speak through the 400 prophets as a means of bringing Ahab to his death.”

“Therefore look! The LORD has put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these prophets of yours, and the LORD has declared disaster against you” (22:23). “This is an example of how God, while not the author of evil, uses it to achieve His ultimate ends. He sent the lying spirit only in the sense that He permitted it” (MacDonald). “Micaiah proceeded to explain that Ahab was the target of God’s plan. He would lure him into battle. Still Ahab remained unbelieving. God was Ahab’s real enemy, not Aram” (Constable’s Notes).

“Now Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near and struck Micaiah on the cheek, and said, ‘Which way did the spirit from the LORD go from me to speak to you?’” (22:24). “The point of this parable was not lost upon Zedekiah. Realizing that he and the other prophets were being accused of lying, he struck Micaiah and asked, ‘Which way did the spirit from the Lord go from me to speak to you?’ In other words, Zedekiah was saying: ‘I spoke by the Spirit of God when I advised Ahab to go against Ramoth Gilead. Now you profess to speak by the Spirit, yet you advise the very opposite. How did the Spirit go from me to you?’” (MacDonald).

“And Micaiah said, ‘Indeed, you shall see on that day when you go into an inner chamber to hide!’” (22:25). “To Zedekiah’s challenge of Micaiah’s authority, the true prophet predicted that when Israel was defeated, Zedekiah would realize the truth” (Ryrie). “Micaiah answered calmly that Zedekiah would know the truth when he would hide in terror in a secret place—evidently when Ahab’s death would expose Zedekiah to the fate of a false prophet” (MacDonald).

“So the king of Israel said, ‘Take Micaiah, and return him to Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king’s son; and say, ‘Thus says the king: ‘Put this *fellow* in prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and water of affliction, until I come in peace’” (22:26). “King’s son is apparently a title of a royal official and is not to be taken as the literal son of Ahab (cf. 2 Chron. 28:7; Jer. 36:26; 38:6)” (Constable, BKC).

“But Micaiah said, ‘If you ever return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me.’ And he said, ‘Take heed, all you people!’” (22:28). Micaiah responded by saying that if Ahab came back in peace, the Lord and not spoken to him and he told all the people to take heed.

## Ahab’s Death (2 Chron. 18:34)

*Ahab’s Disguise* “So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramoth Gilead” (22:29). “Despite Micaiah’s warning Ahab, the king of Israel, and Jehoshaphat, his ally, went up to Ramoth Gilead to face Ben-Hadad II, the king of Aram” (Constable, BKC).

“And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘I will disguise myself and go into battle; but you put on your robes.’ So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle” (22:30). “By this cowardly suggestion Ahab showed that he secretly feared that Micaiah’s prophecy might be true” (Ryrie). “Ahab decided to disguise himself before going into battle, hoping in this way to avoid the disaster predicted by Micaiah. Jehoshaphat, on the other hand, would wear his kingly robes, exposing himself to the very danger that Ahab was trying to escape. Ahab thus attempted to fool the Lord and the king of Syria; ‘God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will

also reap' (Gal. 6:7)" (MacDonald). "Perhaps Ahab suggested his plan to enter the battle disguised (probably as a regular soldier or officer) out of fear for his life in view of what Micaiah had said" (Constable, BKC).

*Ahab's Death* "Now the king of Syria had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, 'Fight with no one small or great, but only with the king of Israel'" (22:31). "The Syrians had been ordered to kill the king of Israel; this was their prime military objective" (MacDonald).

"So it was, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, 'Surely it is the king of Israel!' Therefore they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out" (22:32). "At first, they mistook Jehoshaphat for Ahab. The king of Judah cried out in terror, perhaps revealing his true identity in this way" (MacDonald).

"And it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it *was* not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him" (22:33). When the captains of the Syrian chariots saw that the man they were pursuing was not Ahab, they ceased their pursuit.

"Now a *certain* man drew a bow at random, and struck the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, 'Turn around and take me out of the battle, for I am wounded'" (22:34). The expression "at random" means "without taking specific aim. This is a fascinating example of God using something apparently accidental to fulfill His directive will (cf. 1 Kings 21:19).

"The battle increased that day; and the king was propped up in his chariot, facing the Syrians, and died at evening. The blood ran out from the wound onto the floor of the chariot" (22:35). "He was propped up in his chariot so that his army would not lose heart" (MacDonald).

"Then, as the sun was going down, a shout went throughout the army, saying, 'Every man to his city, and every man to his own country!'" (22:36). "When he died at sunset, the fact became known, and his soldiers retreated to their homes" (MacDonald).

"So the king died, and was brought to Samaria. And they buried the king in Samaria" (22:37). "The body of Ahab was returned to Samaria where he was buried. Had he not repented earlier (21:27) Ahab would not have been buried at all (21:28-29)" (Constable, BKC).

"Then *someone* washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood while the harlots bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken" (22:38). "Ahab died as God had predicted he would (20:42; 21:19, 21:21)" (Constable, BKC). "This was only a partial fulfillment of Elijah's prophecy (21:19); it took place in Samaria rather than in Jezreel. Because Ahab had humbled himself (21:29), God compassionately deferred the complete fulfillment to the king's son, Joram (2 Kings 9:25-26)" (MacDonald).

"Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, the ivory house which he built and all the cities that he built, *are* they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel?" (22:39). "In excavating Samaria archeologists discovered more than 200 ivory figures, panels, and plaques in one storeroom" (Constable, BKC).

"In addition to the projects just mentioned, Ahab ruled capably in spite of the gross spiritual apostasy that characterized his administration. He was generally successful militarily because of his own native ability and God's mercy on Israel. His alliance with Judah under Jehoshaphat began the first real period of peace between the Northern and Southern Kingdoms since the monarchy had split and it lasted about 30 years until the reign of Jehu began in 841. But in spite of Ahab's other accomplishments his building a Baal altar and temple and encouraging Baal worship (16:32-33) weakened Israel as never before" (Constable, BKC).



**“So Ahab rested with his fathers. Then Ahaziah his son reigned in his place” (22:40).**

“Ahab received three separate prophetic warnings of his death. One was pronounced by an unnamed prophet when Ahab spared Ben-Hadad (20:42); one was given by Elijah when Ahab took the vineyard of Naboth (21:19); and the third prophecy was uttered by Micaiah on the eve of the eventful battle (vv. 17-23)” (MacDonald).

“Ahab’s reaction evidences the blindness and folly that overtakes those who disregard the Word of the Lord. Rather than repenting, as he had done previously (21:27), now hardened in sin to the point of insensibility” (Constable, BKC).

**Summary:** Even though Ahab heard a prophet tell him the truth, he chose to listen to the prophets who were not telling him the truth, resulting in his death.

This happened in the New Testament. In 1 Timothy, it was misinterpreting the Word of God. “Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, *from* a good conscience, and *from* sincere faith” (1 Tim. 1:5). The order is the teaching of the Word (see “doctrine” in 1:3), faith, a good conscience, a pure heart, and love. Paul continues, “from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk” (1 Tim. 1:6). Instead of the word *summer* teaching fables (1:3), which produced idle talk.

In Ruth 3:3, Naomi tells Ruth, “Therefore wash yourself and anoint yourself, put on your *best* garment and go down to the threshing floor; *but* do not make yourself known to the man until he has finished eating and drinking.” A good preacher, one I respect, preached a sermon on that verse entitled “Five Ways to Draw Closer to Jesus.” His outline was, “First, if we want to draw near to God, we must be freshly cleansed. Second, we must be fragrantly consecrated. Third, we must be fitly clothed. Fourth, we must be fully committed. Finally, we must be faithfully compliant.” That is a total misinterpretation of the passage of Scripture.

In Galatians, it was misrepresenting the gospel (Gal. 1:6-9). “I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed” (Gal. 1:6-9). “O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?” (Gal. 3:1-2).

Salvation depends on what Christ did not and what we do, but some preachers today make it sound like you have to do something. They preach repentance as if it were turning from sin. That is like saying, “Wash the car before you take it to the car wash. They proclaim, “Give your life to Christ.” That’s backward. You don’t get saved by giving your life to Christ; you get saved because Christ gave his life for you. They declare, “Follow Him,” as if you must obey Him. You don’t get saved because you obey Christ; you get saved because Christ was obedient unto death.

In Colossians, it was the mishandling of the spiritual life (Col. 2:16-23). “So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ. Let no one cheat you of your reward, taking delight in *false* humility and worship of angels, intruding into those things which he has not seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind, and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase *that is* from God. Therefore, if you died with Christ from the basic principles of the world, why, as *though* living in



the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations— ‘Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,’ which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men? These things indeed have an appearance of wisdom in self-imposed religion, *false* humility, and neglect of the body, *but are* of no value against the indulgence of the flesh” (Col. 2:16-23). This passage indicates that some were teaching things contrary to a true spiritual life, such as legalism, mysticism, and aestheticism. Today, some preachers reduced Christianity to rules and regulations. Biblical Christianity is a relationship.

The point is to beware of preachers who misinterpret the Scripture, misrepresent the gospel, and mishandle the spiritual life.

Years ago, I heard a Bible teacher whom everyone knew had a brilliant mind and a godly life. He could read Hebrew and Greek as fluently as most could read English and had studied the Word and theology for years and years. Those who knew him and heard him, loved him, and respected him. If there was ever a Bible teacher one could trust, surely it was this godly man. Yet, I remember hearing him say, “Don’t take my word for it. Check it out in the Word of God. I even remember hearing him pray one day, “Lord, there is chaff and there is wheat in what I have said. May they forget the chaff and may the wheat produce a bumper crop.”

## SHOULD YOU FOLLOW YOUR FATHER?

According to the Scripture, children are to honor and obey their parents. When those children become adults, they are to still honor their parents, even if they no longer have to obey them. There is one area, however, where the Scripture warns children about following their father. First Kings ends with the story of two kings who followed their father. One of them should have done that and the other should not have done that. When should a child not follow his father?

### Jehoshaphat's (Judah) (2 Chron. 20:31-37)

*Information* “Jehoshaphat the son of Asa had become king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel” (22:41). In the fourth year of Ahab, the King of the Northern Kingdom, Jehoshaphat, the son of Asa became king in the Southern Kingdom. “A much more detailed account of good King Jehoshaphat’s reign in Judah (873-848) is given in 2 Chron. 17-20” (Ryrie).

“Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem. His mother’s name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi” (22:42). Jehoshaphat began ruling over Judah as *coregent* with his father Asa (873 BC) because of Asa’s poor health (15:23) and it continued for three years until Asa’s death in 870 BC. This was the first instance of coregency since Solomon had ruled jointly with David for a brief time. When Asa died, Jehoshaphat reigned *alone* for 17 more years (870–853 BC). He concluded his reign with another period of *coregency* with his son Jehoram that lasted eight years (853–848 BC). Altogether, Jehoshaphat was king for 25 years (873-848 BC; these dates for Jehoshaphat were taken from Constable; for the dates 872-848 BC, see G. Michael Cocoris, *The Chronology of the Bible*).

“For all but Jehoshaphat’s first year on Judah’s throne, Ahab ruled over Israel. Jehoshaphat became Judah’s sole ruler in Ahab’s fourth year. Jehoshaphat was one of the eight good kings of Judah and one of the four reforming kings. He was better than his father Asa but not as highly acclaimed by the writers of Scripture as Hezekiah and Josiah, the other reforming kings who followed him years later” (Constable’s Notes).

*Evaluation* “And he walked in all the ways of his father Asa. He did not turn aside from them, doing *what was* right in the eyes of the LORD. Nevertheless, the high places were not taken away, *for* the people offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places” (22:43). Even though Jehoshaphat himself did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, the high places were not taken away; the people offered sacrifices and burnt offerings on them. “Especially in his earlier years, Jehoshaphat walked with Yahweh. He removed idolatry from Judah (v. 46) except for the high places (v. 43). Evidently, earlier in his reign, he removed these (2 Chron. 17:6), but when the people rebuilt them, he let them stand (2 Chron. 20:33). The Israelites sometimes used these ‘high places’ in the worship of Yahweh (cf. 3:2-4)” (Constable’s Notes).

“According to 2 Chron. 17:6 Jehoshaphat removed the high places, but 1 Kings 22:43 and 2 Chron. 20:33 indicate that he did not remove them. Apparently, he did, but when the people restored them, he did not again obliterate the restored high places. Other kings of Judah who did not remove the high places were Joash (2 Kings 12:3), Amaziah (2 Kings 14:4), Azariah (2

Kings 15:4), and Jotham (2 Kings 15:35). Ahaz sacrificed at the high places (2 Kings 16:4), perhaps ones he restored. Those were then removed by Hezekiah (2 Kings 18:4), rebuilt by Manasseh (2 Kings 21:3), and demolished again by Josiah (2 King 23:8, 23:13, 23:15, 23:19)” (Constable, BKC).

“Also Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel” (22:44). Jehoshaphat also made peace with Ahab, the King of the northern kingdom. “The peace that existed between Israel and Judah gained strength through the marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son, Jehoram, and Ahab’s daughter, Athaliah (2 Kings 11). A prophet rebuked Jehoshaphat for his alliance with Israel (2 Chron. 19:2)” (Constable’s Notes). “His son Jehoram married Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel (2 Kings 8:16-18), opening the door to Baal worship in Judah” (Ryrie). “Unfortunately, this treaty involved the marriage of Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram to Ahab’s daughter Athaliah, who followed Jezebel’s example and caused Judah problems later (cf. 2 Kings 11:1-21)” (Constable, BKC).

“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, the might that he showed, and how he made war, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah?” (22:45). “Jehoshaphat’s achievements and attitudes are more fully expounded in 2 Chronicles 17-20. These included ordering the teaching of the Law of Moses throughout Judah. God miraculously delivered Judah from the united armies of Moab, Ammon, and Edom in response to the king’s prayers and his obedience to the Lord. He was a strong ruler whose favor Philistia and Arabia courted. Jehoshaphat instituted many judicial reforms in Judah also” (Constable, BKC).

“And the rest of the perverted persons, who remained in the days of his father Asa, he banished from the land” (22:46). “The writer of Kings noted his purge of the remaining male shrine prostitutes (cf. 14:24; 15:12)” (Constable, BKC).

“There was then no king in Edom, only a deputy of the king” (22:47). “Edom had been under Judah’s control but revolted during Jehoshaphat’s reign. It may well have been the Edomites who destroyed his ships at Edom’s port of Ezion-geber (v. 48). (Bartlett)” (Constable’s Notes).

“Jehoshaphat made merchant ships to go to Ophir for gold; but they never sailed, for the ships were wrecked at Ezion Geber” (22:48). “As a result of the unstable political situation in Edom in his day (22:47), Jehoshaphat was able to build a fleet of trading ship at Ezion Geber on the northern tip of the Gulf of Aqaba with Israel’s king Ahaziah, Ahab’s eldest son (cf. 2 Chron. 20:36). The plan was to bring back gold from Ophir, in southwestern Arabia (9:28; 10:11) as Solomon had done. But in some way, the fleet was wrecked and never fulfilled its mission” (Constable, BKC).

“Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Let my servants go with your servants in the ships.’ But Jehoshaphat would not” (22:49). “Jehoshaphat had refused to let Ahaziah’s men sail with his own. This venture resulted in failure and frustration for Jehoshaphat as did all his other joint efforts with Israel” (Constable, BKC).

*Summarization* “And Jehoshaphat rested with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the City of David his father. Then Jehoram his son reigned in his place” (22:50). “Jehoshaphat’s son Jehoram began reigning as coregent with his father in 853 BC. When Jehoshaphat died in 848 BC, Jehoram continued to reign till 841” (Constable, BKC). “Jehoshaphat compromised three times, and each one proved costly for him: (1) his ‘bride compromise,’ when he married his son to Ahab and Jezebel’s daughter (2 Kings 8:16-19; 2 Chron. 18:1; 21:4-7), (2) his ‘battle compromise,’ when he went into war with Ahab (18:2-19:3), and (3) his ‘boat compromise,’

when he joined with Ahab's son Ahaziah in a commercial venture (22:48-49; 2 Chron. 20:31-37)" (Wiersbe, cited in Constable's Notes).

"Ahab's ineffective attempts to achieve victory and security for Israel, in unbelief, contrast with Jehoshaphat's trust in God and God's provision of victory for Judah. Jehoshaphat submitted to Yahweh's sovereignty, but he relied on human wisdom and resources at crucial moments in his life. This resulted in mixed blessing and discipline for both himself and Israel" (Constable's Notes).

"We have already been introduced to Jehoshaphat in verses 2-4, where he made a shameful alliance with the wicked king of Israel and nearly lost his life as a result. In general, however, his reign was good. The following are significant features of Jehoshaphat's administration.

1. He followed his father's example in combating idolatry, though he did not successfully eradicate it completely (v. 43).

2. He reigned jointly with his father Asa.

3. He made peace with Ahab, king of Israel (v. 44).

4. He expelled the male cult prostitutes from the land (v. 46).

5. His kingdom included the land of Edom (2 Sam. 8:14), where he was represented by a deputy (v. 47). His son Jehoram later lost Edom through a revolution (2 Kings 8:20).

6. He allied himself with Ahaziah, Ahab's son, in a shipbuilding project at Ezion Geber (2 Chron. 20:35-36). Their plan was to send the ships ... to Ophir for gold. But the ships were wrecked before they ever left port (v. 48), no doubt by a windstorm. The prophet Eliezer told Jehoshaphat that this was because the Lord disapproved of the unholy alliance with Ahaziah (2 Chron. 20:37). When Ahaziah suggested renewing the project, Jehoshaphat declined (v. 49).

## Ahaziah's (Israel) 1 Kings 22:51-2 Kings 1:18

*Information* "Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and reigned two years over Israel" (22:51). "Ahaziah ('Yahweh Has Grasped') was the elder son of Ahab and Jezebel" (Constable's Notes). "A short summary of Ahaziah's reign concludes 1 Kings, but the events of his rule follow in 2 Kings. Ahaziah of Israel began his reign of two official years (one actual year) in 853 BC and he ruled until 852, during Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. Ahaziah was the elder son of Ahab. Since Ahaziah had no son his brother Joram (also called Jehoram) succeeded him when he died. His mother was Jezebel" (Constable, BKC).

*Evaluation* "He did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who had made Israel sin" (22:52). "Ahaziah followed his parents' evil ways and those of Jeroboam. Baal worship continued in Israel under his protection and encouragement" (Constable, BKC).

"For he served Baal and worshiped him, and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger, according to all that his father had done" (22:53). "Ahaziah is described in the worst possible way" (Ryrie; 2 Chron. 20:35-21:1). "A short summary of Ahaziah's two-year term as king (853-852 B.C.) concludes 1 Kings. The events of his reign continue in 2 Kings 1" (Constable's Notes).

"The reign of Ahaziah was one of gross idolatry and wickedness. His mother, Jezebel, no doubt urged him on in ungodliness even as she had pushed his father. He worshiped Baal and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger. Like father, like son" (MacDonald).

**Summary:** Children should follow their fathers when their fathers follow the Lord and they should not follow their fathers when their fathers do not follow the Lord.

“There is no formal close to 1 Kings, since 1 and 2 Kings were originally one book, and the break was made strictly for convenience. Second Kings continues the narrative from this point” (MacDonald). “This unusual breaking between 1 and 2 Kings was due to the need to divide this long book into two parts, each of which could fit on a standard scroll” (Constable’s Notes).

A father’s example comes in three forms: all good, all bad, or a combination of both. Whether or not they are aware that, as the adage says, “Like father, like son.”

Children, of course, are responsible for their conduct. They do not have to choose the example of their father. Or they can pick and choose what parts of the example of the father they want to follow. Jehoshaphat wisely chose to emulate the good example of his father and eliminate the bad example of his father. Sons would be wise to follow in the footsteps of Jehoshaphat.

There is a biblical example of a spiritual son following a spiritual father. Paul opened his second letter to Timothy by saying, “Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, a beloved son: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord” (2 Tim. 1:1-2). Paul was Timothy’s spiritual father; Timothy was his beloved spiritual son.

Later in that letter, Paul said, “But know this, that in the last days, perilous times will come: For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! (2 Tim. 3:1-6). These are the bad examples of what goes on in the world that no son or daughter should follow. Follow Paul’s advice and “from such people turn away.”

Still later in that same passage, Paul says, “But you have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra—what persecutions I endured. And out of *them*, all the Lord delivered me” (2 Tim. 3:10). Notice that Timothy “carefully followed” Paul’s teaching and “manner of life,” that is, what Paul said publicly and did privately. Timothy followed Paul’s exhortation and his example.

Notice also the specific qualities that Timothy carefully followed: “purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions.”

If you do not have a biological father or spiritual father who provided an example for you to follow, find believers who have the qualities that Timothy found in Paul and follow their example.

In the final analysis, the ultimate example is Jesus. Peter said, “For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps” (1 Pet. 2:21). In fact, Paul said, “Imitate me, just as I also *imitate* Christ” (1 Cor. 11:1).

The two great godly virtues to emulate are righteousness and love. Using these terms similar terms (synonyms), these two virtues are mentioned throughout the Scriptures. The Psalmist said, “For Your mercy *is* great above the heavens, and Your truth *reaches* to the clouds” (Ps. 108:4). Here, God’s mercy and truth are praised.

As God’s children, believers are to be God-like. Micah says, “He has shown you, O man, what *is* good; and what does the LORD require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah 6:8).

What happens when the son does not have a father to follow? My mother and father were divorced when I was six years old. Consequently, I do not have an example of a father to follow. In those cases, some have a spiritual father whose example they can follow.

In my case, the pastor who led me to Christ was an example that literally molded the rest of my life. In the first place, he was the most zealous, ardent, consistent soul winner I've ever known. No doubt, my passion for evangelism came from the Spirit of God, but my spiritual father was a human example for me to follow. In the second place, he was a Bible teacher. Again, no doubt, the Holy Spirit gave me the spiritual gifts and motivation to teach the Scripture, but sitting under the ministry of my spiritual father was the human example that had an enormous impact on me personally.

Beyond that, there were other men who had an enormous impact on my life, including Dr. Banta, who taught me how to study and Haddon Robinson, who not only taught me things about preaching but deep commitment to the Scripture.

Follow the example of believers who follow the Lord.



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