

# ***SLIDE FROM KINGDOM GLORY TO KINGDOM DIVISION***

## **COMMENTARY ON BOOK OF 1 KINGS**

### **EVEN THE MOST GLORIOUS KINGDOM RAPIDLY DECLINES DUE TO IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE**

**Paul Apple (June 2021)**

For each section:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

**1 Kings 11:11** *“So the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.’”*

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## [BACKGROUND NOTES \[includes some material on 2 Kings since the 2 books are united\]](#)

**Warren Wiersbe:** The two books of Kings record about four hundred years of the history of Israel and Judah, while the two books of Chronicles see the history of the United Kingdom and then the kingdom of Judah from the priestly point of view. Besides recording history, these books teach theology, especially the faithfulness of God in keeping His covenant, the sovereignty of God in directing the destinies of all nations, and the holiness of God in opposing idolatry. Especially important is the way all four books magnify the Davidic dynasty and thus prepare the way for the coming of the Messiah.

**J. Sidlow Baxter:** The two books of the kings were originally one. They were first divided into two by the Septuagint translators in the third century B.C.; and this division has been followed in all subsequent versions. They open with the accession of Solomon, and close with the destruction of Jerusalem. At the beginning we see the temple built. At the end we see the temple burnt. The two books together cover a period of about four hundred years. . . . First Kings records the division of the one united kingdom, over which Saul and David and Solomon reigned, into two kingdoms – the two kingdoms henceforth being known respectively as *Israel* and *Judah*. The kingdom of Israel, comprising ten of the tribes, becomes the *northern* kingdom, while the kingdom of Judah, comprising Judah and Benjamin, becomes the *southern* kingdom. . .

The first eleven chapters are devoted to Solomon and his wonderful reign of forty years. The remaining eleven chapters cover approximately the first eighty years of the separate kingdoms of Israel and Judah. . . The central spiritual message of 1 Kings is unmistakable, namely, DISCONTINUANCE THROUGH DISOBEDIENCE.

**John MacArthur:**

### **Author and Date:**

Jewish tradition proposed that Jeremiah wrote Kings, though this is unlikely because the final event recorded in the book (see **2 Kin. 25:27-30**) occurred in Babylon in 561 B.C. Jeremiah never went to Babylon, but to Egypt (**Jer. 43:1-7**), and would have been at least 86 years old by 561 B.C. Actually, the identity of the unnamed author remains unknown. Since the ministry of prophets is emphasized in Kings, it seems that the author was most likely an unnamed prophet of the Lord who lived in exile with Israel in Babylon.

Kings was written between 561-538 B.C. Since the last narrated event sets the earliest possible date of completion and because there is no record of the end of the Babylonian captivity in Kings, the release from exile (538 B.C.) identifies the latest possible writing date.

### **Kings of Judah and Israel:**

For each reign described, there is the following literary framework. Every king is introduced with:

- 1) his name and relation to his predecessor;
- 2) his date of accession in relationship to the year of the contemporary ruler in the other kingdom;
- 3) his age on coming to the throne (for kings of Judah only);
- 4) his length of reign;

- 5) his place of reign;
- 6) his mother's name (for Judah only); and
- 7) spiritual appraisal of his reign.

This introduction is followed by a narration of the events that occurred during the reign of each king. The details of this narration vary widely.

Each reign is concluded with:

- 1) a citation of sources;
- 2) additional historical notes;
- 3) notice of death;
- 4) notice of burial;
- 5) the name of the successor; and
- 6) in a few instances, an added postscript (i.e., **1 Kin. 15:32; 2 Kin. 10:36**). **Second Kings 18:1–25:21** deals with the time when Judah survived alone (722–586 B.C.).

Two concluding paragraphs speak of events after the Babylonian exile (**2 Kin. 25:22–26, 27–30**).

### **Theological Themes:**

Three theological themes are stressed in Kings.

- First, the Lord judged Israel and Judah because of their disobedience to His law (**2 Kin 17:7–23**). This unfaithfulness on the part of the people was furthered by the apostasy of the evil kings who led them into idolatry (**2 Kin. 17:21, 22; 21:11**), so the Lord exercised His righteous wrath against His rebellious people.
- Second, the word of the true prophets came to pass (**1 Kin. 13:2, 3; 22:15–28; 2 Kin. 23:16; 24:2**). This confirmed that the Lord did keep His Word, even His warnings of judgment.
- Third, the Lord remembered His promise to David (**1 Kin. 11:12–13, 34–36; 15:4; 2 Kin. 8:19**). Even though the kings of the Davidic line proved themselves to be disobedient to the Lord, He did not bring David's family to an end as He did the families of Jeroboam I, Omri, and Jehu in Israel. Even as the book closes, the line of David still exists (**2 Kin. 25:27–30**), so there is hope for the coming "seed" of David (see **2 Sam. 7:12–16**). The Lord is thus seen as faithful, and His Word is trustworthy.

**Roger Ellsworth:** The books designated as 1 and 2 Kings in our Bibles were, like the books of Samuel, one in the Hebrew Bible. The division was probably made for the purpose of fitting each book on one scroll.

Together these books provide a history of the kings of Israel and Judah from Saul to Zedekiah. It would be wrong, however, to think that they are nothing more than history. Consider how various kings are sped by and summarily dismissed. In the light of this it must be said that this is history of a particular sort. It is interpreted history. This is history viewed through the lens of the prophet. . .

The content of the books of Kings leads us to believe that the author wrote for his people while

they were in captivity in Babylon. The books of the Kings showed these exiles how they had come to their deplorable state and also prepared them for the future. Their present condition was due to their failure to heed and obey the Word of God. Their future success hinged on their taking a new attitude towards the Word of God, an attitude of submission that embraced its promises and obeyed its precepts. . .

1 Kings is not only a book about human failure. It is also a book about God's sovereign purpose. His purpose cannot be thwarted and defeated by human disobedience. **Fretheim** observes: "God is the subject of more verbs in these narratives than we may be used to; certainly no modern history is like this."

God's purpose in human history is unmistakable. It is to bring eternal salvation to his people through his Son, Jesus Christ. This purpose was in place before the world began, and the Old Testament era is an integral part of it. The Old Testament is not just a collection of unrelated documents, a disjointed and piecemeal history of a nation, or a narrative of man's search for God. It is God pointing his people to the coming of his Son.

God had graciously made David part of this plan. He had promised to establish David's throne forever (**2 Sam. 7:16**). Only Christ could fulfil this promise. He sprang from David's line but, unlike David's other sons, Christ will never cease to reign. He is reigning even now in the hearts of his people and will continue to reign forever.

In the long centuries of the Old Testament, there were many times in which it appeared that God's promises regarding Christ would fall to the ground. The author of 1 and 2 Kings lived after terrible devastation had settled upon the people of God. The Babylonian invasion of 586 B.C. had left the city of Jerusalem in ruins along with the glorious temple built by Solomon. And a very large portion of the population had been deported to far-off Babylon. All of this constituted a most serious challenge to faith. How, in the light of all the ruin and devastation, could the promises of God be true? Had God failed? Did the people of God have a future?

Our vantage-point allows us to answer those questions. We know that despite seemingly insurmountable challenges, God in wisdom and grace so sustained his purpose and fulfilled his promises that Christ not only came, but came in "*the fulness of the time*" (**Gal. 4:4**); that is, at exactly the time God had foreordained.

As we study 1 Kings, we shall have plenty of opportunities to rejoice in the sovereign faithfulness of God and even have occasion to find glimpses of Christ himself.

It is all very well to suggest that 1 Kings is a book about human failure and about God's sovereign purpose. The question of keenest interest to most people is this: is 1 Kings a book for today? And the answer is, of course, that it is. The same God who called for the complete devotion of Israel of old calls for the same from his people today. The same God who would not countenance devotion to false gods will brook no rivals today. The God who strongly warned about the calamitous effects of prolonged disobedience still calls his people to love his law and govern themselves according to it. And the same God who could not be thrown off course by man's sins is the God who calls for our wholehearted, unwavering trust today. As he sent Christ

the first time to provide salvation, so he will send him again to wrap up human history and to bring his people home. We can and must, therefore, walk with the buoyant step of those who have a certainty born of the knowledge of a God who never fails.

**John Davis:** The fundamental purpose of the books of Kings is to continue the history of the theocracy until its conclusion in the Babylonian exile. Even though the author's chief concern was with the Davidic line, he included considerable material which deal with the fortunes and failures of the Northern Kingdom. The writer's approach to the subject matter was from the standpoint of the plans and purposes of God as it related to His chosen people. The writings are intensely theological and yet extremely practical. The books of Kings are very important to the Bible student because they give him the cultural and historical background of the ministry of Israel's great prophets.

**Ray Stedman:** First Kings is the gripping story of how to lose a kingdom. As we read these Old Testament books, the key to making them live and be vital in our lives is to see that they are visual aids by which God is showing us what is going on in our own lives. We can see ourselves in every one of these Old Testament stories and when we do, the words take on eyes and look at us. We discover that the words are aimed exactly and directly at us. The view that the Bible gives of man is that every one of us is intended to be a king over a kingdom. The whole purpose of the Lord Jesus coming into our lives, which is the theme of the book of Romans, is that we might learn how to reign over the kingdom of our lives in God -- given authority and victory. It is this that makes human life full and complete and fascinating when we learn to walk in God's power. .

The book of 1 Kings holds the secret of success in reigning over the kingdom of your life. It is the secret of learning to be submissive to the authority and dominion of God in your own life. In other words, man can never exercise dominion over his life unless he first subjects himself to the dominion of God. If you yield to God's dominion, you are given reign over the areas in your own life. On the other hand, if you refuse the dominion of God in your own life, you cannot under any circumstances or by any means fulfill your desire to be in authority over your life. It is impossible! This is what these books teach us. That is why all through this book you will find that the spotlight is on the throne. It is the king that is the important one -- for as the king goes, so goes the nation. In your life your will is king. What your will allows to enter in to control your life, determines how the kingdom of your life goes. . .

Outward circumstances will never dethrone you from reigning in your life. Nothing you run up against in terms of outward pressures and outward circumstances will ever succeed in dethroning you. Your dethronement, your moving back into the slavery and bondage of the flesh and the devil, will come only as you permit some rival worship to enter into your heart and dethrone God. When your emotions become attached to some place that is a rival to the worship of God, then the kingdom's days are numbered.

**Gleason Archer:** The theme of these two books was to demonstrate on the basis of Israel's history that the welfare of the nation ultimately depended upon the sincerity of its faithfulness to the covenant with Jehovah, and that the success of any ruler was to be measured by the degree of his adherence to the Mosaic constitution and his maintenance of a pure and God-honoring testimony before the heathen. The purpose of this record was to set forth those events which

were important from the standpoint of God and His program of redemption. The author had no intention of glorifying Israel's heroes out of nationalistic motives; hence he omitted even those passing achievements which would have assumed great importance in the eyes of a secular historian. His prime concern was to show how each successive ruler dealt with God in his covenant responsibilities.

**Chuck Swindoll:** First Kings was written "to record history but, more important, to teach the lessons of history." [Constable] As with other historical books in the Old Testament, the history recorded here was meant to preserve not just important events but spiritual truths learned through those events.

In the books of 1 and 2 Kings, each king is evaluated by "his reaction toward his covenantal responsibility to the Law of the LORD. That was the acid test of whether he 'did evil' or 'that which was right in the eyes of the LORD.'" [Unger] Readers will notice scathing rebukes of some kings—reports not typically recorded by purely historical writers. In addition to the kings, the prophets figure heavily in this book. They are God's spokesmen, proclaiming His word to mostly hard-hearted rulers. It is through the prophets' eyes—always connecting the nation's fortune with its kings' faithfulness (or lack thereof)—that we learn the history of Israel and Judah.

**Donald Wiseman:** The history of Kings does not set out to be a complete and exhaustive portrayal of the period but rather a selection made to illustrate God's overall control of history, even when this is not obvious to observers. The historian does this by a judicious use of his sources and by highlighting the lives of certain individuals. Thus David, king of Judah, is the ideal or model ruler, and Jeroboam son of Nebat is typical of those kings of Israel who lead the people into sin. Ahab and Jehu are singled out as those who began well yet, despite the admonishments of contemporary prophets, did not carry reforms to a final conclusion and thus influenced even Judah to err and ultimately to suffer the same fate as their northern neighbours.

One result of this **selectivity** (a common method in historiography) is that there is also emphasis on Solomon, Hezekiah and Josiah ('the new David') of Judah and on Ahab as the hoped-for reformer of Israel, while others are treated in a summary fashion. Thus the distinguished ruler Omri of Israel, renowned according to contemporary documents (e.g. The Moabite Mesha' inscription and Assyrian references to the 'House of Omri'), is passed over in only eight verses (**1 Kgs 16:21–28**) and Manasseh's long reign occupies less than a chapter (**2 Kgs 21:1–18**).

Kings is a unified work and, as argued here, probably and largely the work of one historian. The purpose for which the book was written is nowhere explicitly stated and must be deduced from the history as it now stands. **It serves for all time as a warning of the inevitable retributive judgment brought on themselves by those who deviate in worship and practice, yet as an encouragement to follow God and receive the blessings promised for those who are obedient to his law even through times of exile.** It is also a reminder of God's persevering love and grace despite his being rebuffed. Most space is given to those who, at least initially, were viewed as '*doing the right in the Lord's sight*' and thus as practically keeping his law.

Kings then is not just a chronicle, political or religious, but '**sacred**' history with appropriate



theological comment, that is, a religious commentary on history. Without the details given, little would be known of the outcome of the experiment in kingship following the promise given to David of an everlasting dynasty. Nor would the wisdom and splendour of Solomon, the exploits of the prophets Elijah and Elisha, the event and explanation of the exile of Israel and of Judah, to all of which reference is made elsewhere in Scripture, be known or understood. All peoples, since the earliest societies using writing, have given an account to themselves of the principal events known to them for the benefit of subsequent generations.

**William H. Barnes:** But the books of Kings are, in the end, mostly about **kings**—their many failings, their occasional successes, and the eventual, seemingly inevitable demise of their dynasties. These books, like the book of Judges, **end on a dismal note**, with the fall of the city of Jerusalem and the destruction of Solomon’s Temple ringing in the ears of the hearer. (I mention “hearer” because all ancient books were read aloud, even when the reader was alone.) Yet, in contrast to Judges, the book of 2 Kings concludes with a “note of modest hope” in **2 Kings 25:27–30** (see **Barnes** 1991:146–149). The exiled King Jehoiachin, in his 37th year of exile (he had been on the throne of Judah only three months before being deposed and exiled by Nebuchadnezzar), was released from prison and given “*a higher place than all the other exiled kings in Babylon.*” He dined in the presence of the Babylonian king “*for the rest of his life.*” Hardly a testimony of ringing triumph, but a testimony of modest hope. Contrary to the era of the judges (and the book of Judges), the era of the kings (and the books of Kings) ended on an **optimistic note**. Yes, the Davidic hope was still alive. Descendants of that line would still exist and still make a difference. And for the Christian believer, who follows Jesus the Christ, “*son of David, king of the Jews,*” this makes all the difference in the world.

**August Konkel:** The essence of the **covenant** is to reverence Yahweh exclusively. The covenant is the voice of God written in “*the book of this law*” (**Deut. 30:10**); their God demands uncompromising devotion of their mind and desire (cf. **6:1–6**). The words of the covenant are to be kept with the ark (**31:25–26**) as a permanent testimony to their oath of commitment. The priests as the custodians of this book of the law are responsible to renew the covenant every seven years (**31:9–13**); they review its teaching to all the assembly (women, children, and the sojourners are included), gathered at the Feast of Booths.

According to Deuteronomy, the book of this law is the particular responsibility of the king, whom Yahweh will choose. When they come to the land, they are to install their king in accordance with the divine choice (**Deut. 17:15**). The king is required to make a copy of “*this law*” from the book, which is in the charge of the priests (**v. 18**), and the king must read it regularly, so he will learn to reverence Yahweh and learn to observe its requirements (**v. 19**). The king is one with his brothers in the requirement of subservience to the covenant, but the king is responsible to ensure that the practice of the covenant is carried out in the regulations of the kingdom. This becomes the sole criterion of evaluation applied to each of the kings of Israel and Judah in the history written about them. . .

The fulfillment of prophecy is thus one of the central themes of the books of Kings. The word of Yahweh concerning the requirement of the covenant is clear, although at times the summary judgment is given in general terms, simply saying that the king did not comply with the covenant requirement completely (**1 Kings 11:4; 15:3, 14**). With this determinative principle there is the

certain efficacy of the word of God, which does not fail but is invariably fulfilled. Ahijah tells Jeroboam that his family will be terminated (**14:10–11**), an event that is noted as fulfilled when the usurper Baasha destroys the royal house (**15:29**). The judgment against Jeroboam finds its ultimate fulfillment in the end of the nation of Israel (**14:15–16**). An unknown prophet at Bethel specifically tells the idolatrous Jeroboam that a descendant of David named Josiah will kill the priests of his altar and burn human bones on it (**13:1–3**); this is fulfilled when Josiah purges the cultic places (**2 Kings 23:16–18**).

Some of the fulfillments are in reference to prophetic words antecedent to Kings. Joshua placed a curse upon Jericho, saying that anyone who rebuilt it would do so at the cost of an eldest and youngest son (**Josh. 6:26**); in disregard of this, Ahab incites an individual named Hiel of Bethel to rebuild it, with the result that he suffers precisely the penalty prescribed (**1 Kings 16:34**). On the positive side, Yahweh has determined the temple will be built by a son of David (**2 Sam. 7:13**), an achievement brought about by Solomon (**1 Kings 8:20**). Deuteronomistic theology views history as a fulfillment of the will of the Lord and therefore can be announced by the prophetic word. This prophetic word is not so much predictive as declarative of the requirement of the covenant and the consequences of failing to observe it.

**Iain Provan:** The book of Kings tells us a story; it is **narrative** literature. It is a story that is certainly about the past (whatever else it may also be about); it is literature with **historiographical** intent. It is, finally, **didactic** literature—it seeks to teach its readers a number of things about God and the ways of God. By way of introduction we shall explore each of these three aspects of the nature of the book further.

### **The Book of Kings as Narrative Literature**

A story is narrated, presenting a number of characters; events follow each other in chronological sequence; and verbal and thematic links bind the whole entity together. The main characters in the story are the Lord God of Israel, various Israelite kings and prophets, and a number of significant foreigners—although it is not always the main characters who are given prominence.<sup>4</sup> The plot is concerned with the attempt that Israel makes (or more often, does not make) under its monarchy to live as the people of God in the promised land and with how God deals with the Israelites in their success and failure. It is a plot worked out gradually, as king succeeds king, from David (**1 Kgs. 1:1**) to Zedekiah (**2 Kgs. 25:7**), with an epilog reserved for Jehoiachin (**25:27–30**), and in an ordered way, as the reign of each king finds its particular place in the book's framework. That framework characteristically tells us when, in relation to another king, a certain monarch came to the throne, how long he reigned, and the name of his capital city. We learn about his death/burial and his successor and about where to look for further information about him. We are offered an evaluation of him in terms of his religious policy. In the case of Judean (rather than northern Israelite) kings, we are told the name of his mother and his age at his accession to the throne. A good example of the full set of these so-called "regnal formulae" occurs in **1 Kings 22:41–43, 45, 50**. With their general regularity of expression throughout Kings, the formulae contribute much to the book's sense of coherence—to the sense that it "hangs together" as a single piece of work (compare, e.g., **1 Kgs. 14:22–24** with **2 Kgs. 16:2–4**, and both with **2 Kgs. 17:7–11**).

### **The Book of Kings as Historiographical Literature**



In summary, my conviction is that, although it is the text that is authoritative for the Church and not the history behind the text—the portrait and not the subject painted—the question of historical referentiality cannot be dodged. Kings must be taken seriously as a narrative about Israel’s past.

### **The Book of Kings as Didactic Literature**

The book of Kings is not only a narrative about the past. It is also a narrative that seeks to teach its readers a number of things about God and his ways. That is, the book of Kings tells us about Israel’s past, not so that we should become better informed about it in some abstract, intellectually detached way, but so that we should learn from it (**Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 10:11**). . .

Various themes are prominent in the story. First, God is indeed God. He is not to be confused with the various gods worshipped within Israel and outside—for these are simply human creations (**1 Kgs. 12:25–30; 2 Kgs. 17:16; 19:14–19**). They are part of the created order, like the people who worship them, and they are powerless, futile entities (**1 Kgs. 11:5; 16:13; 18:22–40; 2 Kgs. 17:15; 18:33–35**). The Lord, by contrast, is the incomparable Creator of heaven and earth (**1 Kgs. 8:23; 2 Kgs. 19:15**), utterly distinct from the world created (**1 Kgs. 8:9, 14–21, 27–30; 18:26–38**), yet powerfully active within it. It is God, and not any god, who controls nature (**1 Kgs. 17–19; 2 Kgs. 1:2–17; 4:8–37; 5:1–18; 6:1–7, 27**). It is God, and neither god, nor king, nor prophet, who controls history (**1 Kgs. 11:14, 23; 14:1–18; 22:1–38; 2 Kgs. 5:1–18; 10:32–33; 18:17–19:37**). This latter point is perhaps illustrated most clearly in the way that prophets generally function within the book, describing the future before God brings it about (**1 Kgs. 11:29–39; 13:1–32; 16:1–4; 20:13–34; 2 Kgs. 19:6–7, 20–34**). Nothing can hinder the fulfilment of this prophetic word—although God in divine freedom can override its fulfilment for divine purposes (**1 Kgs. 21:17–29; 2 Kgs. 3:15–27**). There is only one living God; it is the Lord (**1 Kgs. 18:15; 2 Kgs. 5:15**).

Secondly, as the only God there is, the Lord demands exclusive worship. God is not prepared to take a place alongside the gods or to be displaced by them. God is not about to be confused with any part of the created order. God alone will be worshipped, by Israelite and foreigner alike (**1 Kgs. 8:41–43, 60; 2 Kgs. 5:15–18; 17:24–41**). Much of Kings therefore addresses the problem of illegitimate worship. The main interest is in the content of this worship, which must not involve idols or images nor reflect any aspect of the fertility and other cults of “the nations” (**1 Kgs. 11:1–40; 12:25–13:34; 14:22–24; 16:29–33; 2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 17:7–23; 21:1–9**). There is subsidiary concern about the place of worship, which is ideally the Jerusalem temple and not the local “*high places*” (**1 Kgs. 3:2; 5:1–9:9; 15:14; 22:43; 2 Kgs. 18:4; 23:1–20**). The book is also concerned to describe the moral wrongs that inevitably accompany false worship. For as the worship of something other than God inevitably leads to some kind of mistreatment of fellow-mortals in the eyes of God (**1 Kgs. 21; 2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 21:1–16**), so true worship of God is always bound up with obedience to the law of God. By the same token, true wisdom is defined in terms of true worship and wholehearted obedience. It is not something that can be divorced from either (**1 Kgs. 1–11**). Worship and ethics are two sides of the same coin, in Kings as elsewhere in the OT.

Thirdly, as the giver of the law that defines true worship and right thinking and behavior

generally, the Lord is also the one who executes judgment upon wrongdoers. The world of Kings is a moral world in which wrongdoing is punished, whether the sinner be king (1 Kgs. 11:9–13; 14:1–18), prophet (1 Kgs. 13:7–25; 20:35–36), or ordinary Israelite (2 Kgs. 5:19–27; 7:17–20). It is not a vending-machine world, however, in which every coin of sin that is inserted results in individually packaged retribution. There is no neat correlation between sin and judgment in Kings, even though people are told that they must obey God if they are to be blessed (1 Kgs. 2:1–4; 11:38). This is largely because of the compassionate character of the Judge, who does not desire final judgment to fall upon beloved creatures (2 Kgs. 13:23; 14:27) and is ever ready to find cause why such judgment should be delayed or mitigated (1 Kgs. 21:25–29; 2 Kgs. 22:15–20). God’s grace is to be found everywhere in the book of Kings, confounding the expectations that the reader has formed on the basis of law (1 Kgs. 11:9–13; 15:1–5; 2 Kgs. 8:19). Sin can, nevertheless, accumulate to such an extent that judgment falls not only upon individuals but upon whole cultures, sweeping the relatively innocent away with the guilty (2 Kgs. 17:1–23; 23:29–25:26).

This brings us at the last to the theme: promise. It is promise that is usually found at the heart of the Lord’s gracious behavior towards the people of God. The most prominent of the promises in Kings is God’s promise to David of an eternal dynasty. It appears in a curiously paradoxical form. In much of the narrative it provides us with an explanation as to why the Davidic dynasty survives, when other dynasties do not, in spite of the disobedience of David’s successors (1 Kgs. 11:36; 15:4; 2 Kgs. 8:19). The promise is viewed, in other words, as unconditional. At other times, however, the continuance of the dynasty is because of the obedience of David’s successors (1 Kgs. 2:4; 8:25; 9:4–5). The promise is treated as conditional. As the book progresses this latter view seemingly prevails; accumulating sin puts the promise in its unconditional aspect under too much stress and in the end brings God’s judgment down upon Judah just as severely as upon Israel (2 Kgs. 16:1–4; 21:1–15; 23:31–25:26). And yet, Jehoiachin lives (2 Kgs. 25:27–30). His survival in the midst of near total disaster, like that of Joash before him (2 Kgs. 11), holds out the possibility of recovery for the Davidic line—the possibility that the promise transcends sin after all and that David will indeed rule again over all Israel, as 1 Kings 11:39 implies. It suggests that grace may triumph over law in the story of Israel’s future, as in so much of the story of her past. A similar possibility is clearly in mind with regard to the other great promise in the book—the promise to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob of descendants and everlasting possession of the land of Canaan. This too is a promise that influences God’s treatment of his people in the story (2 Kgs. 13:23, and implicitly in 1 Kgs. 4:20–21, 24; 18:36), and it is a promise that lies in the background of Solomon’s prayer in 1 Kings 8:22–53, as he looks forward to the possibility of forgiveness after judgment. Grace may not be presumed upon, but it can be hoped for on the basis of God’s character and promises.

**Paul House:** In many ways, it is probably most accurate to call 1, 2 Kings “**prophetic narrative**.” After all, the prophets’ lives and predictions help structure the books. Prophetic theological themes such as covenant, sin, punishment, and renewal, permeate 1, 2 Kings. Understanding God’s work in history is as important to the prophets as it is to the author of 1, 2 Kings. . .

Prophetic narrative has at least five distinguishing characteristics.

- First, it assesses the past based on God’s covenant with Israel.

- Second, it predicts the future by noting how God has blessed or punished Israel in the past and by noting what promises God has made to individuals (e.g., David in **2 Sam 7:7–17**) or to the nation as a whole.
- Third, it creates its plot by emphasizing events that fulfill a prophetic view of the past and future.
- Fourth, it assesses characters based on how they accelerate or retard the blessings or judgments God sends to Israel.
- Fifth, like the prophets did when they preached in Israel, prophetic narrative instructs its audience to turn to the Lord so they can receive blessing instead of punishment.

These characteristics are evident throughout Joshua-Kings and also in Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the minor prophets.

### Pat Seiler: Leading Themes

#### The Temple

There is too much written regarding the temple in 1 & 2 Kings not to take note of it. **1 Kings 5-9** provide details about its elaborate design and dedication. It is not too hard to imagine the joy and vibrancy of the people as they worshipped there. The ensuing chapters make consistent reference to its plundering both by enemies of Israel (**1 Kings 14:25-28**) and even their own leaders (**2 Kings 12:17-18**). It seems that the state of the temple closely paralleled the people's spiritual state.

#### The Prophets

There are two leadership roles in Kings: prophets and kings. Bad kings delivered bad leadership, taking the nation farther from God. It was the role of the prophet to deliver God's word of warning and judgement. On occasion, a good king, like Hezekiah, would seek the advice and intercession of a prophet, as he did with Isaiah (**2 Kings 19**). Prophets like Elijah and Elisha demonstrated the power, and thus the superiority, of God through miracles

#### God and the Nations.

God moves the hearts of individuals, but He also moves nations to accomplish His will. Most notably, he used Assyria (**2 Kings 17**) and Babylon (**2 Kings 25**) to bring judgement upon the peoples of Israel and Judah. But we also see His sovereign hand in the division of Israel and Judah (**1 Kings 12:15**), the raising up of Solomon's enemies (**1 Kings 11:14-25**), and the defeat of the Assyrians against Hezekiah (**2 Kings 19:35**).

#### The Cost of Compromise

Solomon strayed away from the word of God. In fact, he completely ignored God's commands. He let his heart be influenced by his ungodly wives which led to his horrible downfall. It is likely that he reasoned that he was just being like all the other kings around him, or that God would approve of his behaviour since He had appeared to him. But his compromise came at a high price, not just for himself and his subjects, but for future generations.

#### The Impact of Leadership

David's leadership impacted the generations after him. God tore the kingdom apart, partially because He wanted one tribe to remain in David's line (**1 Kings 11:13**). But the greater example

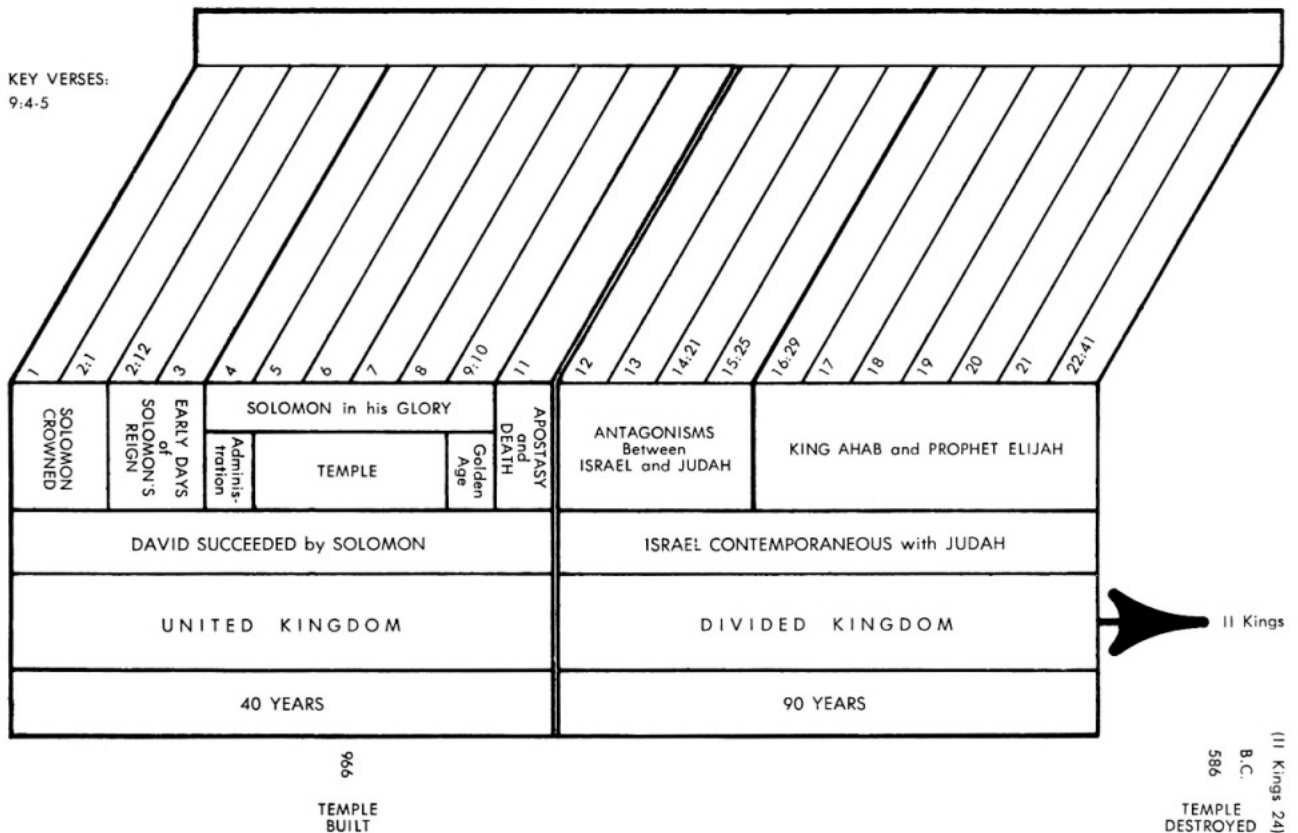
here is that each of Judah's and Israel's kings were responsible before the Lord for the direction of their respective kingdoms. If any of them would seek the Lord with all their heart, He would be faithful to protect and bless them.

**John Gates: Historical Background**

In David's day Egypt's power had waned and Assyria was weak; hence there were impotent nations on both of Israel's frontiers. However, Assyria soon awakened under Tiglath-pileser III (also called Pul, **II Kgs 15:19**; 745-727 B.C.). In 721 B.C. Samaria fell under the attack of Shalmaneser and Sargon. Later, under Sennacherib, Assyria invaded Judah and took many cities but failed to take Jerusalem because of the rear-guar threat of Egypt. Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal extended Assyrian hegemony to Egypt.

In Josiah's time Pharaoh-necho went up to help Assyria against Babylon at Carchemiah, but the two allies were defeated. Shortly the victorious Nebuchadnezzar invaded Palestine, and on his third attack against Jerusalem, plundered and destroyed the city, carrying the people off to final captivity (586 B.C.).

**Jensen's Survey of the Old Testament:**



Charles Swindoll:

## FIRST KINGS

<p><b>POLITICALLY</b> David succeeded by Solomon</p> <p><b>NATIONALLY</b> Kingdom united</p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY</b> Solid and secure</p> <p><b>SPIRITUALLY</b> Shaky</p>	<p><b>Solomon</b> <b>"In all his glory"</b> <b>(Luke 12:27)</b></p> <p>Crowned and inaugurated (1-2) Married and exalted (3-4) Temple erected and dedicated (5-8) Warned and blessed (9-10)</p> <p><b>CHAPTERS</b> 1-10</p>	<p><b>Decline and Demise</b></p> <p><b>CHAPTER</b> 11</p>	<p><b>Disruption</b> <b>"A kingdom divided against itself"</b> <b>(Mark 3:24)</b></p> <p>Internal conflict and hostility (12-14) Civil war and idolatry (15-16) Ahab and Elijah (17-22) "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).</p> <p><b>CHAPTERS</b> 12-22</p>	<p><b>POLITICALLY</b> King after king</p> <p><b>NATIONALLY</b> Kingdom divided</p> <p><b>ECONOMICALLY</b> Unstable</p> <p><b>SPIRITUALLY</b> Empty</p>
<b>Time</b>	40 years		80 years	
<b>Kingdom</b>	United and strong		Divided and weak	
<b>People</b>	Solomon		Jeroboam to Ahaziah Rehoboam to Jehoshaphat	
<b>Identity</b>	"All Israel . . . sons of Israel"		North: Israel; Samaria; Ephraim South: Judah; Jerusalem	
<b>Theme</b>	Spiritual and moral decay lead to destruction.			
<b>Key Verses</b>	9:3-9; 11:11-13			
<b>Christ in 1 Kings</b>	Solomon's wisdom, which foreshadows Him who "became to us wisdom from God" (1 Corinthians 1:30); the prophetic ministry and miracles of Elijah			

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<https://insight.org/resources/bible/the-historical-books/first-kings>

ConformingtoJesus.com List of the Kings of Israel and Judah

Kings of Israel (North)	Kings of Judah (South)
<b>Jeroboam I:</b> Led secession of Israel	<b>Rehoboam:</b> Son of Solomon; first king
<b>Nadab:</b> Son of Jeroboam I	<b>Abijah (Abijam; Abia):</b> Son of Rehoboam
<b>Baasha:</b> Overthrew Nadab	<b>Asa:</b> Probably son of Abijah
<b>Elah:</b> Son of Baasha	<b>Jehoshaphat:</b> Son of Asa
<b>Zimri:</b> Overthrew Elah	<b>Jehoram (Joram):</b> Son of Jehoshaphat; husband of Athaliah
<b>Omri:</b> Overthrew Zimri	<b>Ahaziah:</b> Son of Jehoram and Athaliah
<b>Ahab:</b> Son of Omri; husband of Jezebel	<b>Athaliah:</b> Daughter of King Ahab of Israel and Jezebel; wife of Jehoram; only queen to rule over Judah
<b>Ahaziah:</b> Son of Ahab	<b>Joash (Jehoash):</b> Son of Ahaziah
<b>Jehoram (Joram):</b> Son of Ahab	<b>Amaziah:</b> Son of Joash
<b>Jehu:</b> Overthrew Jehoram	<b>Uzziah (Azariah):</b> Son of Amaziah
<b>Jehoahaz (Joahaz):</b> Son of Jehu	<b>Jotham:</b> Regent, later King; son of Uzziah
<b>Jehoash (Joash):</b> Son of Jehoahaz	<b>Ahaz:</b> Son of Jotham
<b>Jeroboam II:</b> Son of Jehoash	<b>Hezekiah:</b> Son of Ahaz; husband of Hephzi-Bah
<b>Zechariah:</b> Son of Jeroboam II	<b>Manasseh:</b> Son of Hezekiah and Hephzi-Bah
<b>Shallum:</b> Overthrew Zechariah	<b>Amon:</b> Son of Manasseh
<b>Menahem:</b> Overthrew Shallum	<b>Josiah (Josias):</b> Son of Amon
<b>Pekahiah:</b> Son of Menahem	<b>Jehoahaz (Joahaz):</b> Son of Josiah
<b>Pekah:</b> Overthrew Pekahiah	<b>Jehoiakim:</b> Son of Josiah
<b>Hoshea:</b> Overthrew Pekah; kingdom overthrown by Assyrians under Sargon II	<b>Jehoiachin:</b> Son of Jehoiakim
<input type="checkbox"/> Good <input type="checkbox"/> Bad <input type="checkbox"/> Mixture of good & bad	<b>Zedekiah:</b> Son of Josiah; kingdom overthrown by Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar

[https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/kings\\_of\\_israel-judah\\_chart.htm](https://www.conformingtojesus.com/charts-maps/en/kings_of_israel-judah_chart.htm)



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<b>Kings of Judah and Israel</b>									
				Saul		1050-1010 BC			
				David		1010-970			
				Solomon		970-930			
Judah (and Benjamin)					Israel (Ten Northern Tribes)				
King	Reign		Character	Prophets	King	Reign		Character	Prophets
1. Rehoboam	931-913	17 years	Bad	Shemaiah	1. Jeroboam I	931-910	22 years	Bad	Ahijah
2. Abijah	913-911	3 years	Bad		2. Nadab	910-909	2 years	Bad	
3. Asa	911-870	41 years	Good		3. Baasha	909-886	24 years	Bad	
					4. Elah	886-885	2 years	Bad	
					5. Zimri	885	7 days	Bad	
					6. Omri	885-874*	12 years	Bad	Elijah
4. Jehoshaphat	870-848*	25 years	Good		7. Ahab	874-853	22 years	Bad	Micaiah
5. Jehoram	848-841*	8 years	Bad		8. Ahaziah	853-852	2 years	Bad	
6. Ahaziah	841	1 years	Bad		9. Joram	852-841	12 years	Bad	Elisha
7. Athaliah	841-835	6 years	Bad		10. Jehu	841-814	28 years	Bad	
8. Joash	835-796	40 years	Good	Joel	11. Jehoahaz	814-798	17 years	Bad	Jonah
9. Amaziah	796-767	29 years	Good		12. Jehoash	798-782	16 years	Bad	Amos
10. Uzziah (Azariah)	767-740*	52 years	Good		13. Jeroboam II	782-753*	41 years	Bad	Hosea
11. Jotham	740-732*	16 years	Good	Isaiah Micah	14. Zechariah	753-752	6 mo	Bad	
12. Ahaz	732-716	16 years	Bad		15. Shallum	752	1 mo	Bad	
13. Hezekiah	716-687	29 years	Good	Nahum Habakkuk Zephaniah	16. Menahem	752-742	10 years	Bad	
14. Manasseh	687-642*	55 years	Bad-repent		17. Pekahiah	742-740	2 years	Bad	
15. Amon	642-640	2 years	Bad		18. Pekah	740-732*	20 years	Bad	
16. Josiah	640-608	31 years	Good	Daniel Ezekiel Jeremiah	19. Hoshea	732-712	9 years	Bad	
17. Jehoahaz	608	3 mo	Bad		722 BC Fall of Isreal / Assyrian Captivity				
18. Jehoiakim	608-597	11 years	Bad						
19. Jehoiachin	597	3 mos	Bad						
20. Zedekiah	597-586	11 years	Bad						
Destruction of Jerusalem, 9th Av, 586 BC, Babylonian Captivity									

# OUTLINE OF 1 KINGS

## *SLIDE FROM KINGDOM GLORY TO KINGDOM DIVISION*

### EVEN THE MOST GLORIOUS KINGDOM RAPIDLY DECLINES DUE TO IDOLATRY AND SPIRITUAL COMPROMISE

#### **I. (1-11) THE FORTY YEAR REIGN OF KING SOLOMON – RISE, GLORY AND DECLINE**

[**Malick:** Even though Solomon's succession to the Davidic throne was certain and his rule upon the throne was magnificent in wisdom, wealth and government, his many wives turned his heart from the Lord to idolatry resulting in a prophecy that all but Judah would be taken from him (his son) and given to another.]

#### **A. (1:1 – 2:46) SOLOMON'S RISE**

1. (1:1-53) Saving the Throne for Solomon –  
The Messianic Promise of a Davidic Kingdom Survives a Bumpy Transition as Solomon succeeds David on the Throne

- a. (:1-4) Reign of King David in the Twilight Zone
  - 1) (:1) Failing in Health in His Old Age
  - 2) (:2-3) Finding Warmth from a Beautiful Young Virgin
    - a) (:2) The Suggestion
    - b) (:3) The Search
  - 3) (:4) Finishing Life under the Care of a Young Nurse
- b. (:5-10) Rebellion of Adonijah in Scheming to Seize the Throne
  - 1) (:5-6) Exaltation Factors
    - a) (:5a) Self Promotion
    - b) (:5b) Strong Presence
    - c) (:6a) Self Indulgence without Parental Discipline
    - d) (:6b) Stately Appearance
    - e) (:6c) Surviving His Older Brother Absalom
  - 2) (:7-8) Enablers Secured
    - a) (:7) Leaders for Adonijah
    - b) (:8) Loyalists to King David
  - 3) (:9-10) Enthronement Gathering
    - a) (:9a) Gathering Gravitas
    - b) (:9b-10) Guest List
- c. (:11-27) Reporting of Nathan and Bathsheba to Influence King David to Save the Throne for Solomon
  - 1) (:11-14) Nathan Exposes the Treacherous Plot to Bathsheba
    - a) (:11-12) Prophetic Counsel
    - b) (:13) Preventing Catastrophe

- c) (:14) Prophetic Confirmation
    - 2) (:15-21) Bathsheba Alerts King David of the Need to Take Urgent Counter-Measures
      - a) (:15-16) Entrance to the King by Bathsheba
      - b) (:17-19) Exposure of the Plot to Usurp the Throne
      - c) (:20-21) Endangerment of the Nation and of Bathsheba and Solomon
    - 3) (:22-27) Nathan Reinforces the Treachery of Adonijah
      - a) (:22-23) Entrance to the King by Nathan
      - b) (:24-26) Exposure of the Plot to Usurp the Throne
      - c) (:27) Endangerment to the King's Supporters Not Considered?
  - d. (:28-40) Rescue of the Throne for Solomon by King David
    - 1) (:28-31) Execution of the Royal Promise Regarding Solomon's Kingship
      - a) (:28) Bathsheba Summoned
      - b) (:29-30) Bond to Solomon Reinforced by King David
      - c) (:31) Bathsheba Bows in Gratitude
    - 2) (:32-40) Enthronement of Solomon
      - a) (:32) Summoning the King's Advisors
      - b) (:33-35) Instructing the King's Advisors
      - c) (:36-37) Affirming by the King's Advisors
      - d) (:38-40) Enthroning Solomon
  - e. (:41-53) Retaliation Against the Usurpers
    - 1) (:41) Adonijah and His Guests Alarmed by the Tumult
    - 2) (:42-49) Adonijah and His Guests Terrified by the Coronation
      - a) (:42) Hoping for Good News
      - b) (:43-48) Hearing the Bad News – Regarding Enthronement
      - c) (:49) Hiding from Retaliation
    - 3) (:50-53) Adonijah Cowering in the Temple and under House Arrest
      - a) (:50) Cowering in the Temple
      - b) (:51) Begging for His Life
      - c) (:52) Deserving of Death
      - d) (:53) Consigned to His House for Now
2. (2:1-12) Passing the Torch of Leadership Securely – Leadership Transitions Must Deal Decisively with Issues Impacting the Peace and Security of God's People
- a. (:1-4) Test of the Type of Leadership God Will Bless – Final Charge to Solomon to Obey Covenant Law
    - (:1) Introduction
      - 1) (:2-3a) Priority Responsibilities of the King
        - a) (:2) Relating to Character and Courage
        - b) (:3a) Relating to Obedience of God's Commands
      - 2) (:3b-4) Potential Blessings for Obedience
        - a) (:3b) Blessing of Success -- Prosperity
        - b) (:4) Blessing of Sustained Kingdom – Posterity

- b. (:5-9) Treatment of Various Friends and Foes to Secure the Kingdom--  
Immediate Challenges – Unfinished Business
  - 1) (:5-6) Disposition of Joab – Execute Murderers
  - 2) (:7) Disposition of Sons of Barzillai – Reward Loyalty
  - 3) (:8-9) Disposition of Shimei – Punish Disrespect
- c. (:10-12) Transition from Reign of David to Solomon –  
Peaceful Transfer of Power
  - 1) (:10) Reign of David Stops with His Death and Burial
  - 2) (:11) Reign of David Summarized
  - 3) (:12) Reign of Solomon Started
- 3. (2:12-46) Secure Establishment of Solomon’s Kingdom –  
Solomon Securely Establishes His Kingdom by Decisively Dealing  
with Arrogant Enemies
  - (:12) Prologue – Secure Establishment of Solomon’s Kingdom
  - a. (:13-25) Disposition of Adonijah – Arrogant Treason Brings Him Down --  
Lust for Power
    - 1) (:13-18) Rash Request of Adonijah via Bathsheba  
(Violating Sanctuary Provided by Solomon)
      - a) (:13) Adonijah Approaches Bathsheba
      - b) (:14-17) Adonijah Requests Abishag as a Wife
      - c) (:18) Bathsheba Agrees to Approach the King
    - 2) (:19-22) Rejection by Solomon of the Outrageous Request
      - a) (:19) Bathsheba Approaches King Solomon
      - b) (:20-21) Bathsheba Petitions Solomon on Behalf of Adonijah
      - c) (:22) Sarcastic Response from King Solomon
    - 3) (:23-25) Reaction of Solomon = Has Adonijah Executed
      - a) (:23) Swears an Oath by the Lord
      - b) (:24) Swears by Divine Providence
      - c) (:25) Sends Benaiah to Carry out the Execution
  - b. (:26-27) Disposition of Abiathar – Faithful Service Earns Him a Pass
    - 1) (:26) Solomon Initiates the Dismissal of Abiathar as Priest
      - a) Abiathar Deserved Death
      - b) Abiathar Spared Because of Mitigating Factors
    - 2) (:27) Solomon Isolates Abiathar in Fulfilment of Prophecy
  - c. (:28-35) Disposition of Joab – Arrogant Treason Brings Him Down –  
Lust for Independence
    - 1) (:28) News Comes to Joab Regarding Solomon’s Purge
      - a) Joab Thinks He is Next on Solomon’s List
      - b) Joab Takes Refuge (but No Possible Sanctuary)
    - 2) (:29-30) Negotiations Between the King, Benaiah and Joab
      - a) (:29a) Joab Seeking Sanctuary
      - b) (:29b) Solomon Commanding Execution
      - c) (:30a) Benaiah Calling Out Joab
      - d) (:30b) Joab Refusing to Leave the Sanctuary
      - e) (:30c) Benaiah Reporting Back to Solomon
    - 3) (:31-33) Narrative Justifying the Execution in the Sanctuary

- a) (:31) Joab Deserves a Violent Death
- b) (:32-33) Joab Determined His Own Fate
- 4) (:34-35) Notorious Execution Carried out by Benaiah
- 5) (:35) New Power Appointments of Benaiah and Zadok
  - a) Benaiah as Army Commander
  - b) Zadok as Priest
- d. (:36-46a) Disposition of Shimei – Arrogant Disrespect and False Confidence  
Bring Him Down –  
Lust of Money and Possessions
  - 1) (:36-38) Boundaries Set for Shimei
    - a) (:36) Rules for Continued Existence Established
    - b) (:37) Rebellion Will Bring Certain Execution
    - c) (:38a) Ratification of the Agreement
    - d) (:38b) Rules for Continued Existence Obeyed
  - 2) (:39-40) Boundaries Violated by Shimei  
(Violating Sanctuary Provided by Solomon)
    - a) (:39) Temptation Arises
    - b) (:40) Temptation Affects Sound Judgment
  - 3) (:41-45) Breach of Promise Exposed
    - a) (:41) Intelligence Report
    - b) (:42-43) Inquiry
    - c) (:44-45) Indictment
  - 4) (:46a) Benaiah Carries Out the Execution of Shimei
- (:46b) Epilogue – Secure Establishment of Solomon’s Kingdom

**B. (3:1 – 4:34) SOLOMON’S WISDOM AND REIGN**

1. (3:1-28) The Priority of Wisdom (Discernment) –  
Wisdom Must be Foundational for Governing God’s People  
In Security and Righteousness

- a. (:1-15) The Petition for Wisdom
  - 1) (:1-4) The Road Leading to the Request
    - a) (:1) Consolidating the Kingdom via Political Alliances
    - b) (:2) Cultural Compromises
    - c) (:3) Commitment to the Lord
    - d) (:4) Centralized Worship
  - 2) (:5-14) The Request for Wisdom (Discernment)
    - a) (:5) Ask Away
    - b) (:6) Acknowledgement of God’s Faithfulness to David
    - c) (:7-8) Anxiety Regarding Challenges of National  
Leadership
    - d) (:9) Articulating the Request
    - e) (:10-12) Answer Granted
    - f) (:13-14) Additional Blessings Promised
  - 3) (:15) The Response of Gratitude and Sacrifice and Celebration
- b. (:16-28) The Proof of Wisdom
  - 1) (:16-22) Difficult Case to Adjudicate Due to Conflicting Testimony

- a) (:16) Test Case to Prove the Wisdom of Solomon
    - b) (:17-21) Testimony of the First Woman
    - c) (:22) Conflicting Testimony of the Two Woman
  - 2) (:23-27) Insightful Solution Demonstrated Solomon's Wisdom
    - a) (:23) Unsolvable "She Said . . . She Said" Case
    - b) (:24-25) Unimaginable Ruling
    - c) (:26) Unthinkable Reactions Differentiate the True Mother from the False
    - d) (:27) Unclear Decision Now Crystal Clear
  - 3) (:28) Reputation of Solomon Solidified
- 2. (4:1-34) Orderly Administration of the Kingdom in Wisdom – Solomon Exercised Magnificent Wisdom in the Orderly Administration of His Kingdom of Peace and Security and Prosperity – Prefiguring the Coming Messianic Kingdom
  - a. (:1-6) Main Officials of Solomon's Kingdom
    - 1) (:1) King of Israel
    - 2) (:2-6) Listing of Main Officials
      - a) (:2) High Priest in Jerusalem
      - b) (:3a) Secretaries
      - c) (:3b) Recorder
      - d) (:4a) Army Commander
      - e) (:4b) Priests
      - f) (:5a) Manager of the Deputies
      - g) (:5b) Friend of the King
      - h) (:6a) Household Manager
      - i) (:6b) Forced Labor Manager
  - b. (:7-19) Main Deputies of Solomon's Kingdom
    - 1) (:7) Summary of Duties
    - 2) (:8-19) Listing of Main Deputies
  - c. (:20-28) Manifest Prosperity and Security of Solomon's Kingdom
    - 1) (:20) Internal Signs of Kingdom Prosperity
      - a) Populated Land
      - b) Pleasant Living
    - 2) (:21) External Signs of Kingdom Prosperity
      - a) Geographical Dominion
      - b) Tribute and Servitude
    - 3) (:22-23) Personal Prosperity of the King and His Court
    - 4) (:24-25) Peace and Security of the Kingdom
      - a) (:24) External Peace/Security Outside of Kingdom Borders
      - b) (:25) Internal Peace/Security within Kingdom Borders
    - 5) (:26-28) Military Might and Capabilities of the Kingdom
      - a) (:26) Abundant Numbers of Horses and Horsemen
      - b) (:27) Abundant Provision for King Solomon's Table
      - c) (:28) Abundant Provision for King Solomon's Horses
  - d. (:29-34) Magnificent Wisdom of Solomon's Kingdom
    - 1) (:29-31) Gift of Wisdom and Discernment Defined Solomon's Reign
      - a) (:29) Source and Depth of This Gift



- b) (:30) Surpassing Nature of This Gift
- c) (:31) Superlative Reputation of This Gift
- 2) (:32-33) Exercise of Wisdom and Discernment Demonstrated
  - a) (:32) Form of Speech = Proverbs and Songs
  - b) (:33) Subjects of Speech
- 3) (:34) Reputation for Wisdom and Discernment Attracted Attention

## C. (5:1 – 9:9) SOLOMON’S BUILDING OF THE TEMPLE AND PALACE

1. (5:1-18) Preparations for Temple Construction –  
The Alliance between Solomon (of Israel) and Hiram (of Tyre) Secured the Materials and Manpower for Temple Construction
  - a. (:1-12) Procuring the Materials for Temple Construction
    - 1) (:1) Background = Friendship between King of Tyre and King of Israel
    - 2) (:2-6) Economic Contract to Secure the Necessary Lumber Proposed by Solomon
      - a) (:3-4) Intentions of Solomon in Line with Desires of David
      - b) (:5) Intentions of Solomon in Line with Divine Prophecy
      - c) (:6) Intentions of Solomon Require this Economic Contract with Hiram
    - 3) (:7-9) Modifications to the Contract Proposed by Hiram
      - a) (:7) Recognition of Solomon’s Gift of Wisdom from the Lord
      - b) (:8-9) Ratifying the Details of the Contract
    - 4) (:10-11) Execution of the Contract
      - a) (:10) Hiram Fulfilled the Contract
      - b) (:11) Solomon Fulfilled the Contract
    - 5) (:12) Blessing of the Lord on this Alliance
      - a) Promised Wisdom
      - b) Peace
      - c) Pact
  - b. (:13-18) Providing the Manpower for Temple Construction
    - 1) (:13-14) Conscription and Deployment of Forced Laborers
      - a) (:13) Conscription of Forced Laborers
      - b) (:14a) Deployment of Forced Laborers
      - c) (:14b) Oversight of Forced Laborers
    - 2) (:15-16) Structure of the Workforce
      - a) (:15) Multitude of Workers
      - b) (:16) Multitude of Supervisors
    - 3) (:17-18) Initial Tasks
      - a) (:17) Quarrying Costly Stones for the Foundation
      - b) (:18) Preparing the Building Materials
2. (6:1 – 7:51) Details of the Temple Construction –

The Glorious Majestic Presence of the Lord Deserves Costly Building Materials and Covenant Obedience that Communicate Purity, Holiness and Beauty Accentuating our Privilege of Access

- a. (:1-10) Exterior Construction of the Temple
  - 1) (:1) Timing in Redemptive History
  - 2) (:2-3) Dimensions
    - a) (:2) Length / Width / Height
    - b) (:3) Porch
  - 3) (:4-6) Specific Details
    - a) (:4) Windows with Artistic Frames
    - b) (:5) Side Chambers
    - c) (:6) Differing Widths for the 3 Stories
  - 4) (:7) Stone Construction
  - 5) (:8) Doorway and Stairs
  - 6) (:9-10) Finishing Details
    - a) (:9a) Summary of Basic Construction
    - b) (:9b-10) Special Features
- b. (:11-13) Covenant Reminder
  - 1) (:12a) Covenant Obligation
  - 2) (:12b-13) Covenant Blessing
    - a) (:12b) Fulfilment of Davidic Promises
    - b) (:13) Personal Presence of Favor and Protection
- c. (:14-38) Interior Construction of the Temple
  - 1) (:14) Summary Statement
  - 2) (:15-18) Interior Walls for the Holy Place
    - a) (:15) Boards of Cedar and Cypress
    - b) (:16) Rear Room = Holy of Holies = Inner Sanctuary
    - c) (:17) Length of the Holy Place
    - d) (:18) Special Carvings
  - 3) (:19-36) Inner Sanctuary of the Holy of Holies
    - a) (:19-22) Summary of the Holy of Holies
    - b) (:23-28) Cherubim in the Holy of Holies
    - c) (:29-30) Other Adornments
    - d) (:31-35) Entrances
    - e) (:36) Inner Courtyard
  - 4) (:37-38) Construction Timeline
    - a) (:37) Beginning Timestamp
    - b) (:38a) Ending Timestamp
    - c) (:38b) Duration of the Construction Project
- d. (:1-12) Construction of the Royal Complex
  - 1) (:1) Summary of Construction of the Royal Complex
  - 2) (:2-5) House of the Forest of Lebanon = Great Assembly Hall
    - a) (:2b) Dimensions
    - b) (:2c) Cedar Pillars and Beams
    - c) (:3) Cedar Paneling
    - d) (:4-5) Window Frames and Doorposts

- 3) (:6) Hall of Pillars
  - a) Dimensions of the Hall
  - b) Colonnade Entranceway
- 4) (:7-12) Additional Key Structures in the Royal Complex
  - a) (:7-8) Specific Edifices
  - b) (:9-12) Similarity of Construction
- e. (:13-51) Interior Temple Furnishings
  - 1) (:13-14) Resourcing Hiram – Gifted in Bronze Work
    - a) (:13) Selected for the Bronze Work
    - b) (:14a) Son of a Mixed Marriage
    - c) (:14b) Skilled in Bronze Work
    - d) (:14c) Submissive to Solomon’s Work Request
  - 2) (:15-22) Reminding Israel of God’s Sovereignty and Strength – 2 Bronze Pillars
    - a) (:15-16) Construction of the Pillars with 2 Capitals
    - b) (:17-18) Chainwork on Top of the Pillars
    - c) (:19-20) Adorning the Capitals on Top of the Pillars
    - d) (:21-22) Significance of the Pillars
  - 3) (:23-26) Rule of God Represented by the Bronze Sea = Giant Water Supply
  - 4) (:27-37) Ten Stands of Bronze
    - a) (:27) Dimensions
    - b) (:28-29) Borders
    - c) (:30-33) Bronze Wheels
    - d) (:34-36) Supports with Engravings
    - e) (:37) Summary
  - 5) (:38-39) Ten Bronze Basins for the Ten Stands
    - a) (:38) Bronze Basins on Stands
    - b) (:39a) Positioning of the Stands
    - c) (:39b) Positioning of the Sea of Cast Metal
  - 6) (:40-47) List of Additional Bronze Temple Artifacts Made by Hiram
    - a) (:40) Basins, Shovels and Bowls
    - b) (:41-45) List of Artifacts
    - c) (:46-47) Impressive Details
  - 7) (:48-50) List of Additional Golden Temple Artifacts Made by Solomon
    - a) (:48) Temple Furniture
    - b) (:49a) Temple Lampstands
    - c) (:49b) Temple Accessories
    - d) (:50a) Temple Utensils
    - e) (:50b) Temple Door Hinges
  - 8) (:51) Completion of the Construction / Financial Endowment
3. (8:1 – 9:9) Dedication of the Temple – Shekinah Glory Fills Solomon’s Temple as the Ark of the Covenant Finds its Home for the Joyful Manifestation of the Presence and Blessing of God

- a. (:1-13) Solomon's Installation of the Ark Inaugurates the Temple
  - 1) (:1-4) Transportation of the Ark to the Temple
    - a) (:1) Sole Objective = Bring the Ark to the Temple
    - b) (:2) Special Timing
    - c) (:3-4) Sacred Accomplishment
  - 2) (:5-8) Installation of the Ark in the Holiest of Holies
    - a) (:5) Multitude of Sacrifices
    - b) (:6-8) Majestic Home for the Ark
  - 3) (:9) Contents of the Ark = Covenant Tablets of the Law
  - 4) (:10-13) Significance of the Ark in the Temple
    - a) (:10-11) Glory of the Lord Filling the Temple
    - b) (:12-13) Dwelling Place of the Lord in the Temple
- b. (:14-21) Solomon's Reminder of God's Prophetic Promise Reinforces God's Faithfulness
  - 1) (:15) Blessing the Lord for His Faithfulness to David
  - 2) (:16) Priority of the Davidic Kingdom
  - 3) (:17-19) Intention of David Regarding Building the Temple
    - a) (:17) Recognition of His Intention
    - b) (:18) Rightness of His Intention
    - c) (:19) Repurposing of His Intention
  - 4) (:20-21) Fulfilment of Divine Promise Regarding the Building of the Temple via Solomon
    - a) (:20) Raising up Solomon to Accomplish the Task
    - b) (:21) Resting Place for the Ark of the Covenant
- c. (:22-53) Solomon's Prayer of Dedication Leverages God's Responsiveness to the Ongoing Needs of His Covenant People
  - 1) (:23-26) Praise for God's Covenant Faithfulness
    - a) (:23-24) Extolling God for Past Covenant Faithfulness
    - b) (:25-26) Entreating God for Future Faithfulness
  - 2) (:27-30) Paradox of the Transcendence vs. Immanence of God
    - a) (:27) Transcendence of God = Can't be Contained in This Temple
    - b) (:28-30) Immanence of God = Responsive to His People
  - 3) (:31-53) Petitions Securing God's Covenant Blessings for 7 Key Situations
    - a) (:31-32) Wronging a Neighbor
    - b) (:33-34) Defeated by an Enemy and Led into Captivity
    - c) (:35-36) Disaster via Drought
    - d) (:37-40) Disaster via Famine / Pestilence / Sickness
    - e) (:41-43) Injustice for the Foreigner
    - f) (:44-45) Success in Upcoming Battle
    - g) (:46-53) Generic Sin Leading to Captivity
- d. (:54-61) Solomon's Benediction and Charge to Israel Ties Future Blessing and Testimony to Covenant Obedience
  - 1) (:54-55) Transition from Prayer to Benediction
  - 2) (:56) Review of God's Past Faithfulness

- a) Faithful to Give His People Rest
- b) Faithful to Keep His Promises
- 3) (:57-59) Requests of Solomon
  - a) (:57) Request #1 = Favorable Presence of God
  - b) (:58) Request #2 = Covenant Obedience
  - c) (:59) Request #3 = Responsiveness to
- Petitions for Help
- 4) (:60) Motivation = Testimony to the Nations
- 5) (:61) Charge to the People
- e. (:62-66) Solomon's Dedication Sacrifices and Celebration Feast Accentuate the Joy of Covenant Blessing
  - 1) (:62-64) Dedication Sacrifices
  - 2) (:65) Celebration Feast
  - 3) (:66) Joy of Covenant Blessing
- f. (9:1-9) Temple Dedication Prompts Covenant Reminders of Blessings and Curses
  - 1) (:1-2) Context
    - a) (:1) Mission Accomplished
    - b) (:2) Meeting with the Lord Revisited
  - 2) (:3) Consecration
    - a) Attentiveness of the Lord
    - b) Significance of the Temple
  - 3) (:4-5) Continuity in Blessing for Obedience
    - a) (:4) Responsibility
    - b) (:5) Reassurance
  - 4) (:6-9) Cursing for Apostasy
    - a) (:6) Apostasy
    - b) (:7-9) Abandonment

**D. (:9:10 – 10:29) SOLOMON'S GLORY BUT SIGNS OF SLIPPAGE**

- 1. (9:10-28) Troubling Signs of Slippage Despite Outward Kingdom Prosperity
  - a. (:10-14) Diplomacy between Kingdoms Seems Disingenuous
    - 1) (:10-11) Questionable Land Deal
    - 2) (:12-13) Quality Inspection
    - 3) (:14) Quantified Payment
  - b. (:15-24) Defense of the Kingdom Relies on Questionable Assistance
    - 1) (:15) Employing Forced Labor for Building Projects and Fortifications
    - 2) (:16-19) Egyptian Assistance
    - 3) (:20-23) Explanation of Distinction between Foreign Forced Labor and Israelite Roles
    - 4) (:24) Egyptian Influence
  - c. (:25) Dedication to Annual Sacrifices
  - d. (:26-28) Development of International Maritime Trade Increases Kingdom Wealth
    - 1) (:26) Maritime Fleet Built

- 2) (:27) Maritime Skill Acquired
- 3) (:28) Maritime Trade Developed
- 2. (10:1-29) Testimony to Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth –  
The Glory of Solomon's Kingdom as Blessed by God is
  - Witnessed by the Queen of Sheba
  - Exhibited in Impressive Fashion
    - a. (:1-13) Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth Certified by the Queen of Sheba  
and Attributed to Divine Blessing
      - 1) (:1-5) The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba to Check Out Solomon's  
Wealth and Wisdom Connected with Divine Blessing
        - a) (:1-2) Her Mission
        - b) (:3) Her Investigation
        - c) (:4-5) Her Evaluation
      - 2) (:6-9) The Testimony of the Queen of Sheba Regarding Solomon's  
Wealth and Wisdom Connected to Divine Blessing
        - a) (:6-7) Verifying Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom
        - b) (:8-9) Attributing it All to Divine Blessing
      - 3) (:10-12) The Gifts from the Queen of Sheba –  
Added to Riches from Hiram
        - a) (:10) Gifts from the Queen of Sheba
        - b) (:11-12) Riches from Hiram
      - 4) (:13) The Departure of the Queen of Sheba
        - a) Granted Abundant Gifts
        - b) Headed Back Home
    - b. (:14-29) Solomon's Wisdom and Wealth Exhibited in Impressive Fashion
      - 1) (:14-17) Impressive Gold Shields
        - a) (:14-15) Accumulation of Gold
        - b) (:16-17) Application to Shields
      - 2) (:18-20) Impressive Gold Throne
        - a) (:18) Composition of the Throne –  
Ivory Overlaid with Gold
        - b) (:19-20a) Design of the Throne
        - c) (:20b) Uniqueness of the Throne
      - 3) (:21-22) Impressive Gold Drinking Vessels
        - a) (:21) Gold More Valuable than Silver
        - b) (:22) Gold and Other Commodities Acquired via  
Maritime Trade
      - 4) (:23-25) Testimony of the Prophetic Narrator Regarding the  
Greatness of Solomon
        - a) (:23) Greatness Reflected in International Reputation  
Regarding Wealth and Wisdom
        - b) (:24) Greatness Reflected in Superior Wisdom from God
        - c) (:25) Greatness Reflected in Gift-Giving
      - 5) (:26-29) Impressive Additional Resources
        - a) (:26) Military Resources
        - b) (:27) Valuable Commodities



- c) (:28-29) Import-Export Commerce –  
Particularly Horses and Chariots

## **E. (11:1-43) SOLOMON'S FALL – DISOBEDIENCE AND IDOLATRY CAUSE THE DOWNFALL OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM REQUIRING DIVINE DISCIPLINE**

- 1. (:1-13) Downfall of King Solomon – Marriage Compromise Leading to Idolatry
  - a. (:1-4) Fatal Flaw
    - 1) (:1-2) Solomon's Mixed Marriages with Foreign Women
    - 2) (:3-4) Solomon's Huge Harem
  - b. (:5-8) Impious Idolatry
    - 1) (:5) Worshiping 2 Major Idols
    - 2) (:6) Summary Denunciation
    - 3) (:7) Worshiping 2 Other Major Idols
    - 4) (:8) Summary Denunciation
  - c. (:9-13) Kingdom Kaput
    - 1) (:9-10) The Lord's Indictment against Solomon
    - 2) (:11-13) The Lord's Sentence against Solomon
- 2. (:14-40) Divine Discipline – Three Adversaries to Solomon Raised Up
  - a. (:14-22) Hadad the Edomite
    - 1) (:14) Background of Hadad the Edomite
    - 2) (:15-18) Refuge in Egypt
    - 3) (:19-20) Relationship with Pharaoh
    - 4) (:21-22) Release from Egypt
  - b. (:23-25) Rezon Son of Eliada
    - 1) (:23) Background of Rezon Son of Eliada
    - 2) (:24) Refuge in Damascus
    - 3) (:25) Rancor Towards Israel
  - c. (:26-40) Jeroboam Son of Nebat
    - 1) (:26) Background of Jeroboam
    - 2) (:27-39) Reason for His Rebellion
    - 3) (:40) Refuge in Egypt
- (:41-43) Epilogue – End of Reign of Solomon
  - a. (:41) Recording of Solomon's Wisdom and Deeds
  - b. (:42) Length of Reign
  - c. (:43a) Death and Burial of Solomon
  - d. (:43b) Succeeded by Rehoboam

## **II. (12-22) THE FIRST EIGHTY YEARS OF THE DIVIDED TWO KINGDOMS – CONFRONTATION OVER IDOLATRY**

[Malick: After the united monarchy divided into two kingdoms under Rehoboam's heavy hand upon the people, the leaders of the two kingdoms slipped into evil only to reject the partial, gracious deliverance brought through the prophets.]

**A. (12:1-33) DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM --  
RASH ARROGANCE AND RELIGIOUS EXPEDIENCY SPLINTER GOD'S  
PEOPLE AND PROVIDE A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY**

1. (:1-24) Rehoboam's Rash Arrogance Alienates Israel Unnecessarily and Splinters God's People
  - a. (:1-5) Test of Rehoboam's Wisdom = Demand to Lighten the Yoke
    - 1) (:1) Potential for Coronation of Rehoboam at Shechem
    - 2) (:2) Potential Rival in Jeroboam Taking Refuge in Egypt
    - 3) (:3-4) Possibility of Reasonable Compromise and Peace
    - 4) (:5) Predetermined Decision-Making Process
  - b. (:6-15) Two Contrasting Courses of Action
    - 1) (:6—7) Wise Counsel of the Elders = Faithful Servants of Solomon = Servant Leadership – Treat Them Kindly
    - 2) (:8-11) Rash Counsel of the Young Men = His Peer Group = Tyrannical Leadership – Oppress Them
    - 3) (:12-15) Harsh Response to Jeroboam and the People
  - c. (:16-20) Treason of Israel Left Only the Tribe of Judah Loyal to Rehoboam
    - 1) (:16) Rallying Cry for the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom
    - 2) (:17) Reign of Rehoboam in Southern Kingdom
    - 3) (:18) Reckless Attempt to Consolidate Control
    - 4) (:19) Rebellion of Israel
    - 5) (:20) Recall of Jeroboam
  - d. (:21-24) Tempering Rehoboam's Call for Civil War
    - 1) (:21) Calling for Civil War
    - 2) (:22-24) Calming Word from the Lord
2. (:25-33) Jeroboam's Religious Expediency Substitutes Human Invention for Divine Design and Provides a False Sense of Security
  - a. (:25-27) Capital Centers -- Substitute Geography to Replace Jerusalem
    - 1) (:25) Designated Capital Cities
    - 2) (:26-27) Danger of Continuing to Worship in Jerusalem
  - b. (:28-30) Worship Symbols -- Substitute Golden Calves to Replace the Cherubim above the Ark of the Covenant – Symbolizing Strength, Power and Majesty
    - 1) (:28) Building the Golden Calves
    - 2) (:29) Locating the Golden Calves = New Worship Centers
    - 3) (:30) Worshiping the Golden Calves
  - c. (:31-33) Worship Institutions -- Substitute Religious Institutions to Replace the Sacrificial Altar, the Priests and the Mandatory Feasts
    - 1) (:31a) New Sacrificial Altars
    - 2) (:31b) New Priests
    - 3) (:32-33) New Mandatory Feast on a New Calendar Date

**B. (13:1-34) THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORD OF GOD --  
NOTHING TRUMPS THE WORD OF GOD**

1. (:1-10) The Word of God Reigns Supreme Over the Resistance Offered by Human Authority and Power –

## Interaction between Jeroboam and the Man of God

- a. (:1-3) Jeroboam Confronted by the Man of God
    - 1) (:1-2) The Scenario
    - 2) (:3) The Sign
  - b. (:4-6) Jeroboam Attempts to Attack the Man of God
    - 1) (:4) Freezing the Outstretched Hand of Jeroboam
    - 2) (:5) Fulfilling the Word of the Lord
    - 3) (:6) Freeing the Frozen Hand of Jeroboam
  - c. (:7-10) Jeroboam Attempts to Compromise the Man of God
    - 1) (:7) Compensation Offered
    - 2) (:8-9) Conviction Regarding the Word of the Lord
    - 3) (:10) Commitment to Return Home
2. (:11-32) The Word of God Reigns Supreme Over the Deception Caused by Counterfeit Authority and Power –

## Interaction between the Old Prophet and the Man of God

- a. (:11-19) Deception Can Look Harmless
    - 1) (:11) Prophet Living in Bethel Seems Harmless
    - 2) (:12-13) Pursuit of the Man of God Seems Friendly
    - 3) (:14) Pleasantries Exchanged with the Man of God
    - 4) (:15-17) Presentation of the Deceptive Temptation
    - 5) (:18-19) Perversion of Truth
  - b. (:20-25) Disobedience Will Be Judged
    - 1) (:20-22) Prophecy of Imminent Judgment
    - 2) (:23) Preparations for the Last Ride Following the Last Meal
    - 3) (:24) Particulars of this Amazing Divine Judgment
    - 4) (:25) Prophet Receives Report of the Unnatural Death Scene
  - c. (:26-32) Divine Decrees Will Be Carried Out
    - 1) (:26) Fulfilment of Judgment Prophecy against the Man of God
    - 2) (:27-30) Funeral Managed by the Old Prophet
    - 3) (:31-32) Future Fulfilment of Coming Judgment against Bethel Assured
- (:33-34) Epilogue – No Repentance for Jeroboam –  
Rejection of the Supreme Word of the Lord
- a. (:33) Dead Man Walking – Persisting in Sin of Religious Expediency
  - b. (:34) Defining Sin Wipes Out the House of Jeroboam

## C. (14:1-31) THE END OF JEROBOAM AND OF REHOBOAM

1. (14:1-20) Judgment on Jeroboam's Legacy –  
Seeking Help for His Ailing Son, Jeroboam is Condemned as an Evil Ruler for His Religious Expediency
- a. (:1-5) Attempt at Deception
    - 1) (:1-3) Burdened Sovereign Seeks to Manipulate God's Prophet
      - a) (:1) Jeroboam Concerned for His Legacy
      - b) (:2-3) Jeroboam Counsels His Wife to Deceive the Prophet Ahijah
    - 2) (:4-5) Blind Seer Enlightened by the Lord

- a) (:4a) Plan to Deceive the Prophet Carried Out
      - b) (:4b) Problem Compounded by the Prophet's Blindness
      - c) (:5) Perception Enlightened by Divine Revelation
    - b. (:6-14) Adjudication of Jeroboam's Legacy
      - 1) (:6) Exposure of the Deception
      - 2) (:7-8a) Background of Privileged Exaltation
        - a) (:7a) Privileged to be Chosen King
        - b) (:7b) Privileged with Leadership Responsibility over God's Elect
        - c) (:8a) Privileged in Contrast to Discipline against the House of David
      - 3) (:8b-9) Indictment for Religious Expediency
        - a) (:8b) You are No King David
        - b) (:9a) You Excel in Evil
        - c) (:9b) Your Idolatry Ticks Me Off
        - d) (:9c) You Have Rejected Me
      - 4) (:10-11) Harsh Judgments to Eliminate Your Legacy
        - a) (:10a) General Summary: Calamity on Your House
        - b) (:10b) Specific Judgment: Killing Every Male Descendent
        - c) (:10c) End Result: Elimination of Your House
        - d) (:11) Ultimate Humiliation: Desecration of Dead Bodies
      - 5) (:12-13) Sign = Immediate Death of Your Child
      - 6) (:14) Succession Plan = King Who Will Liquidate the Legacy of Jeroboam
    - c. (:15-16) Accumulation of Images of Calamity and Destruction
      - 1) (:15a) Strike
      - 2) (:15b) Uproot
      - 3) (:15c) Scatter
      - 4) (:16) Give Up
    - d. (:17-18) Assurance of Certain Fulfillment of Prophetic Judgments = Consummation of the Sign
      - 1) (:17a) Wife Returns Home
      - 2) (:17b) Child Immediately Dies
      - 3) (:18) Word of God Fulfilled
  - (:19-20) Epilogue = End of Jeroboam's Reign
    - 1) (:19) Recorded Deeds
    - 2) (:20a) Length of Reign
    - 3) (:20b) Death
    - 4) (:20c) Succession
2. (14:21-31) Downward Spiral of Judah Under Rehoboam – Judah Sinks Into Pagan Idolatry under Rehoboam and Surrenders Her Wealth to Shishak from Egypt
- a. (:21-24) Pagan Practices of Judah under Reign of Rehoboam
    - 1) (:21) Selected Touchpoints of Rehoboam's Reign
    - 2) (:22a) Summary Evaluation of Rehoboam's Reign
    - 3) (:22b-24) Specific Examples of Evil in the Empire

- a) (:22b) Impact of Evil = Provoking the Lord to Jealousy
- b) (:23) Idolatrous Practices = High Places / Sacred Pillar / Aherim
- c) (:24a) Immoral Religious Rites
- d) (:24b) Identification with Pagan Practices
- b. (:25-28) Plundering of Judah's Wealth by Shishak from Egypt
  - 1) (:25) Power Vacuum Exploited – Invasion by Shishak as Divine Judgment
  - 2) (:26) Plundering of Judah's Treasures
  - 3) (:27-28) Poor Substitute for the Gold Shields
  - (:29-31) Epilogue – Overall Summary of Rehoboam's Reign
    - 1) (:29) Recorded Deeds of Rehoboam
    - 2) (:30) Characterization of Rehoboam's Reign
    - 3) (:31a) Death and Burial of Rehoboam
    - 4) (:31b) Mother of Rehoboam
    - 5) (:31c) Succession

#### **D. (15:1 – 16:34) KINGS LEADING UP TO AHAB**

- I. (15:1-8) Abijam's Evil Reign in the South
  - a. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints of Abijam's Reign
  - b. (:3) Summary Evaluation of Abijam's Reign
  - c. (:4-5) Grace Shown Abijam for Sake of David
  - d. (:6-9) Overall Summary of Abijam's Reign
    - 1) (:6) War between Rehoboam and Jeroboam
    - 2) (:7a) Recorded Deeds of Abijam
    - 3) (:7b) War between Abijam and Jeroboam
    - 4) (:8a) Death and Burial of Abijam
    - 5) (:8b) Succession
- 2. (15:9-24) Asa's Good Reign in the South
  - a. (:9-10) Selected Touchpoints of Asa's Reign
  - b. (:11) Summary Evaluation of Asa's Reign
  - c. (:12-15) Specific Reforms Accomplished by Asa
    - 1) (:12a) Removed Immoral Religious Rites
    - 2) (:12b) Removed Idols
    - 3) (:13) Removed the Queen Along with Her Asherah Image
    - 4) (:14) Caveat
    - 5) (:15) Protected the Dedicated Vessels
  - c. (:16-22) Political Interaction with Baasha King of Israel
    - 1) (:16) General Climate of Warfare Between Asa and Baasha
    - 2) (:17) Blockade Fortified Against Judah by Baasha
    - 3) (:18-19) Treaty with Damascus Solicited by Asa
    - 4) (:20-21) The Effectiveness of the Alliance in Diverting Baasha's Forces
    - 5) (:22) Repurposing Construction Materials to Cities in Judah
  - d. (:23-24) Overall Summary of Asa's Reign
    - 1) (:23a) Recorded Deeds of Asa

- 2) (:23b) Infirmity in His Old Age
- 3) (:24a) Death and Burial of Asa
- 4) (:24b) Succession
- 3. (15:25-31) Nadab's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:25) Selected Touchpoints of Nadab's Reign
  - b. (:26) Summary Evaluation of Nadab's Reign
  - c. (:27-28) Nadab Killed by Baasha King of Israel
  - d. (:29-30) Baasha Purges Household of Jeroboam
  - e. (:31) Overall Summary of Nadab's Reign – Recorded Deeds
- 4. (15:32 – 16:7) Baasha's Evil Reign in the North
  - (:32) Transition – Climate of Warfare
  - a. (:33) Selected Touchpoints of Baasha's Reign
  - b. (:34) Summary Evaluation of Baasha's Reign
  - c. (:1-4) Word of Prophetic Judgment Against Baasha
    - 1) (:2) Reason for the Judgment
    - 2) (:3-4) Severity of the Judgment
  - d. (:5-6) Overall Summary of Baasha's Reign
  - e. (:7) Additional Word of Prophetic Judgment Against Baasha
- 5. (16:8-14) Elah's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:8) Selected Touchpoints of Elah's Reign
  - b. (:9-10) Conspiracy by Zimri to Assassinate Elah
    - 1) (:9a) Summary Statement
    - 2) (:9b) Circumstances
    - 3) (:10) Assassination and Ascension to the Throne
  - c. (:11-12) Destruction of the Household of Baasha
  - d. (:13) Summary Evaluation
  - e. (:14) Recorded Deeds of Elah
- 6. (16:15-22) Zimri's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:15a) Selected Touchpoints of Zimri's Reign
  - b. (:15b-18) Omri Prevails Over Zimri
    - 1) (:15b) People Camped Against Gibbethon
    - 2) (:16a) Report of Zimri's Treachery
    - 3) (:16b) Omri Made King over Israel
    - 4) (:17) Besieging Zimri at Tirzah
    - 5) (:18) Death of Zimri
  - c. (:19) Summary Evaluation of Zimri's Reign
  - d. (:20) Recorded Deeds of Zimri
  - e. (:21-22) Succession – Omri Prevailing Over Tibni
- 7. (16:23-28) Omri's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:23-24) Selected Touchpoints of Omri's Reign
  - b. (:25-26) Summary Evaluation of Omri's Reign
  - c. (:27-28) Overall Summary of Omri's Reign
    - 1) (:27) Recorded Deeds
    - 2) (:28a) Death and Burial
    - 3) (:28b) Succession

8. (16:29-34) Ahab's Evil Reign in the North
  - a. (:29) Selected Touchpoints of Ahab's Reign
  - b. (:30) Summary Evaluation of Ahab's Reign
  - c. (:31-33) Specific Offenses
    - 1) (:31a) Married Jezebel
    - 2) (:31b) Worshiped Baal
    - 3) (:32) Built Temple and Altar to Baal in Samaria
    - 4) (:33a) Made Asherah
    - 5) (:33b) Summary of Evil
  - d. (:34) Arrogant Defiance of the Divine Curse on Rebuilding Jericho

## **E. (17:1 – 19:18) ELIJAH'S CONFRONTATION WITH AHAB OVER IDOLATRY**

1. (17:1-24) Elijah's Grand Entrance –  
Trust in God as the Sovereign, the Sustainer and the Source of Life
  - a. (:1-6) Trust in God as the Sovereign over All Life Who Alone is Worthy of Worship
    - 1) (:1) The Curse of God Against Baal-Worshipping Ahab – God (not Baal) is Sovereign over Nature
    - 2) (:2-6) The Care of God for His Faithful Prophet – God is Sovereign over the Birds (Ravens)
      - a) (:2-4) Command to Trust God for Miraculous Provision of Food and Water
      - b) (:5-6) Commitment to Trust God for Miraculous Abundant Provision
  - b. (:7-16) Trust in God as the Sustainer of Life Who Will Never Let You Down
    - 1) (:7-9) Change of Plans – New Venue for God's Provision
      - a) (:7) Water Source at Cherith Dried Up – No Surprise
      - b) (:8-9) Widow of Zarephath Becomes God's Surprising Instrument of Provision
    - 2) (:10-12) Challenge of Faith for the Desperate Widow of Zarephath
      - a) (:10-11) Hard Request by Elijah for Subsistence Level Provisions
      - b) (:12) Hopeless Resignation of the Destitute Widow
    - 3) (:13-16) Call to Obedience in Making Hospitality a Priority
      - a) (:13) Obedience Requires Overcoming Our Fears
      - b) (:14) Obedience Requires Trusting the Lord's Resources
      - c) (:15-16) Obedience is Richly Rewarded by God's Grace
  - c. (:17-24) Faith in God as the Source of Life Who Will Also Raise Us Up in the Resurrection
    - 1) (:17-18) Dealing with Death Raises Key Theological Questions
      - a) (:17) Widow Dealing with the Death of Her Son
      - b) (:18) Widow Raising Theological Questions
    - 2) (:19-21) Appealing to God Who Alone Has the Power over Life and Death

- a) (:19) Intervention of the Prophet
    - b) (:20) Inquisitiveness of the Prophet
    - c) (:21) Intercession of the Prophet
  - 3) (:22-24) Deliverance from Death Prompts the Testimony of Faith
    - a) (:22) Miracle of Resurrection from the Dead in Answer to Prayer
    - b) (:23) Ministration of the Prophet to the Mother
    - c) (:24) Message of Truth Affirmed
- 2. (18:1-46) Showdown on Mount Carmel – Only the Real God is a Consuming Fire – Fear and Serve Him
  - a. (:1-16) Demanding a Showdown – Setting up Meeting with Ahab via Obadiah as the Intermediary
    - 1) (:1-2) Confrontation Commanded by the Lord
      - a) (:1) Prerequisite to God Ending the Drought
      - b) (:2) Pressure on Ahab Has Been Building
    - 2) (:3-6) Circumstances Providentially Ordered
      - a) (:3a) Two Key Players
      - b) (:3b-4) Testimony to Obadiah’s Faith
      - c) (:5-6) Territory Searched Separately by Ahab and Obadiah
    - 3) (:7-14) Concern by Obadiah for His Life
      - a) (:7-8) Dangerous Ask by Elijah
      - b) (:9-14) Desperate Angst by Obadiah
    - 4) (:15-16) Commitment by Elijah to Meet with Ahab to Set Up the Showdown
  - b. (:17-21) Defining the Showdown – Who is the Real God and Where are Your Loyalties?
    - 1) (:17-18) Assigning Blame – Based on Your Loyalties
      - a) (:17) Blame Shifting
      - b) (:18) Blame Sticking
    - 2) (:19-20) Assembling the Faithless People and the False Prophets
      - a) (:19) Elijah Commands the Assembling
      - b) (:20) Ahab Communicates the Command to Israel
    - 3) (:21) Admonishing the People Regarding Their Loyalties
      - a) Challenge = Who is the Real God and Whom Will You Follow?
      - b) Cowardice = People Unwilling to Commit Their Loyalties
  - c. (:22-40) Defeating Baal Decisively in the Showdown
    - 1) (:22-24) Accepting the Rules of Engagement
      - a) (:22) Strength is Not Necessarily in Numbers
      - b) (:23) Securing a Fair Fight
      - c) (:24a) Scoring the Showdown
      - d) (:24b) Securing Agreement Regarding the Showdown
    - 2) (:25-29) Appealing to Baal to Send Fire
      - a) (:25-26) Failed Attempt to Arouse Baal



- b) (:27-29) Futility of the Prophets of Baal Mocked by Elijah
    - 3) (:30-38) Appealing to YHWH to Send Fire
      - a) (:30a) Confidence of Elijah
      - b) (:30b-32a) Consecration of the Altar in the Context of God's Revelation as the Covenant God of the Twelve Tribes
      - c) (:32b-35) Creating the Highest Possible Degree of Difficulty
      - d) (:36-37) Calling on the Lord to Respond
      - e) (:38) Consuming Fire Falls from the Lord = Showdown Over
    - 4) (:39-40) Aftermath of the Showdown
      - a) (:39) Reaction of the People = Fear of God
      - b) (:40) Execution of the False Prophets
    - d. (:41-46) Delivering on the Promise to Lift the Discipline and Send the Rain
      - 1) (:41-44) Anticipation of Heavy Rainfall
        - a) (:41-42a) Command to Ahab to Celebrate the End of the Drought
        - b) (:42b-44) Certainty of Elijah in Watching for the Coming Rainfall
      - 2) (:45) Verification of Heavy Rainfall – Ahab Heads to Jezreel
      - 3) (:46) Vindication of Elijah – Elijah Heads to Jezreel
3. (19:1-21) Discouragement Over Lack of Visible Ministry Impact – God Works in Ways that We Cannot See So Don't Despair Over Lack of Visible Ministry Impact
- a. (:1-4) Retreating from Ministry as a Defeated Servant of God
    - 1) (:1) Testimony of Elijah's Exploits
    - 2) (:2) Threat Against Elijah's Life
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      - a) (:3) Giving in to Fear
      - b) (:4a) Giving in to Failure
      - c) (:4b) Giving in to Futility
  - b. (:5-8) Reviving the Servant of God – 2 Angelic Ministrations
    - 1) (:5-6) First Angelic Ministration – Physical Needs Refreshed
    - 2) (:7-8) Second Angelic Ministration – Purpose Renewed
  - c. (:9-18) Recommissioning the Servant of God to Press On
    - 1) (:9-10) You Need an Attitude Adjustment
      - a) (:9) God's Plans Can't Be Defeated
      - b) (:10) Man's Perspective Can Be Overly Pessimistic
    - 2) (:11-14) You Need a Fresh Vision of How the Lord Works
      - a) (:11a) Pay Attention
      - b) (:11b-12) Perceive How God Works Behind the Scenes
      - c) (:13-14) Put Aside Your Stubborn Pessimism
    - 3) (:15-18) You Need to Keep Playing Your Role in the Lord's Victorious Kingdom Program
      - a) (:15-16) Defining the Mission
      - b) (:17) Destroying the Baal-Worshippers
      - c) (:18) Delivering the Faithful Remnant

- d. (:19-21) Transition from Elijah to Call of Elisha –
  - God’s Call Demands Total Commitment
    - 1) (:19) Elijah Acts = Passing the Baton of Prophetic Ministry
      - a) Finding Elisha
      - b) Flinging His Mantle on Elisha
    - 2) (:20) Interaction = Elisha Promising Elijah His Full Commitment
      - a) Commitment to God’s Call Does Not Eliminate Human Relationships ... But Takes Priority
        - 1)) Immediate Positive Response
        - 2)) Importance of Honoring Father and Mother
        - 3)) Imperative of Full Commitment
      - b) Commitment to God’s Call Not Dependent on Others
    - 3) (:21) Elisha Acts = Pursuing the Call Wholeheartedly
      - a) Burning His Bridges with Celebratory Good-Bye Feast
      - b) Blazing New Pathway of Prophetic Discipleship

**F. (20:1 – 22:40) AHAB’S REPEATED AND FATAL OPPOSITION TO GOD’S WORD**

- 1. (20:1-43) God’s Gracious Defense of Israel against Two Syrian Attacks Fails to Compel Obedience from Wicked King Ahab
  - a. (:1-25) God Defends Israel against the First Attack by Syria at Samaria
    - 1) (:1-12) Preparations for Battle
      - a) (:1-6) Outrageous Demands of Ben-hadad
      - b) (:7-8) Wise Counsel to Refuse the Outrageous Demands
      - c) (:9-11) Undiplomatic Negotiations
      - d) (:12) Commitment to Do Battle
    - 2) (:13-14) Prophetic Intervention
      - a) (:13) Implausible Military Victory Revealed
      - b) (:14a) Identity of the Military Leaders Revealed
      - c) (:14b) Initiative to Engage the Enemy Revealed
    - 3) (:15-21) Predetermined Victory for Israel
      - a) (:15) Mobilizing the Troops
      - b) (:16-19) Exploiting the Poor Judgment of Drunken Ben-hadad
      - c) (:20-21) Winning a Decisive Victory
    - 4) (:22-25) Postscript = Preparations for Rematch
      - a) (:22) Israel Warned to Prepare for Rematch and Not Get Over-Confident
      - b) (:23-25) Syria Prepares for Rematch Based on False Confidence
  - b. (:26-34) God Defends Israel against the Second Attack by Syria at Aphek
    - 1) (:26-27) Preparations for Battle
    - 2) (:28) Prophetic Intervention
    - 3) (:29-30) Predetermined Victory for Israel

- a) (:29) Engagement after Seven Days
    - b) (:30) Escape of Ben-hadad after Destruction by Collapsing Wall
  - 4) (:31-34) Postscript = Disposition of Ben-hadad
    - a) (:31-32a) Scheming by the Servants of Ben-hadad Seeking Mercy
    - b) (:32b-34) Sparing Ben-hadad = Colossal Blunder by Ahab
  - c. (:35-43) No Defense against the Spineless Political Deal-making of Faithless King Ahab
    - 1) (:35-37) Preparation for Confronting King Ahab = Parable in Action
    - 2) (:38-40) Prophetic Ruse
    - 3) (:41-42) Pronouncement of Judgment
    - 4) (:43) Postscript = Retreat of Sulking King Ahab
- 2. (21:1-29) The Lord's Justice Catches Up to Ahab and Jezebel for Their Abuse of Power in Killing Naboth in Order to Seize His Vineyard
  - a. (:1-7) Covetous Craving of Ahab for Naboth's Vineyard
    - 1) (:1-3) Coveters Pursue Their Selfish Cravings
      - a) (:1) Salivating – Dreaming of Acquiring
      - b) (:2) Scheming – Wheeling and Dealing
      - c) (:3) Stymied – Frustrated by Insurmountable Biblical Conviction
    - 2) (:4) Denial of Covetous Cravings Results in Childish Pouting
    - 3) (:5-7) Abusers of Power Have a Quick Fix to Covetous Cravings
      - a) (:5-6) Investigating the Problem
      - b) (:7) Eliminating the Problem
  - b. (:8-16) Calculated Conniving of Jezebel to Kill Naboth and Seize His Vineyard
    - 1) (:8-14) Abusers of Power Use Unscrupulous Means to Achieve Their Goal
      - a) (:8) Deceptive Communication
      - b) (:9-10) Detailed Unscrupulous Instructions
      - c) (:11-13) Docile Lackeys Who Will Carry Out Unscrupulous Instructions
      - d) (:14) Diabolical Results
    - 2) (:15-16) Abusers of Power Revel in Their Spoils
      - a) (:15) Excitement of Jezebel in Reporting the News to Ahab
      - b) (:16) Excitement of Ahab in Taking Possession of the Vineyard
  - c. (:17-29) Courageous Condemning of Ahab and Jezebel for Their Abuse of Power as Elijah Proclaims the Lord's Justice
    - 1) (:17-19) Responsibility of Confronting Ahab Assigned to Elijah
      - a) (:17-18) Commissioning of Elijah to Confront Ahab in the Vineyard
      - b) (:19) Condemnation of Ahab for His Culpability
    - 2) (:20-26) Revelation of Divine Condemnation Proclaimed to Ahab

- a) (:20) Condemnation Brought by Elijah against Ahab
- b) (:21-22) Condemnation of Calamitous Death against Ahab and His Family
- c) (:23-24) Condemnation of Humiliating Death against Jezebel and the Royal Family
- d) (:25-26) Condemnation Due to Extreme Wickedness
- 3) (:27-29) Respite in Judgment Due to Repentance of Ahab
  - a) (:27) Repentance of Ahab
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- 3. (22:1-40) The Death of Ahab According to the Word of God – The Prophetic Word of Truth Always Hits Its Target
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    - 1) (:1-2) The Forming of the Alliance
      - a) (:1) Historical Background
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  - a. (:5-28) Two Parallel Inquiries Targeting a “Go-No-Go” Decision from God Regarding the Joint Military Campaign
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      - a) (:5-6a) Inquiry Directed Towards the 400 False Prophets
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      - c) (:7) Dissatisfaction Regarding the Counsel
      - d) (:8-9) Soliciting the Counsel of the Hated Prophet
      - e) (:10-12) Throne Scene: Emphatic Assurance – Deceptive Counsel to the Kings of Israel and Judah Falsely Attributed to the Word of God
      - f) (:13-14) The True Prophet Stands Alone on the Word of God
    - 2) (:15-28) Inquiry of Ahab, King of Israel – Hated the Truth and Resented Having to Hear It
      - a) (:15a) Inquiry Directed Towards Micaiah, the True Prophet of God
      - b) (:15b) Sarcastic Approval
      - c) (:16) Dissatisfaction Regarding the Counsel
      - d) (:17-18) Despising the Counsel of the Hated Prophet
      - e) (:19-23) Throne Scene: Certain Disaster – Authoritative Judgment from the Lord Delivered by the True Prophet
      - f) (:24-28) The True Prophet Suffers Alone for His Commitment to Truth
  - b. (:29-38) Final Demise of King Ahab in Accordance with God’s Word

- 1) (:29-30) Duplicity of King Ahab in Only Looking Out for Himself
  - a) (:29) Supposedly Acting in Partnership with King Jehoshaphat
  - b) (:30) Selfishly Acting out of Self-Preservation While Exposing Jehoshaphat to Extreme Risk
- 2) (:31-33) Deception of King Ahab Fails Miserably
  - a) (:31) Ahab is the Designated Target of the King of Aram
  - b) (:32) Appearances Lead the Troops to Pursue Jehoshaphat
  - c) (:33) Actual Identification Not Consistent with Ahab
- 3) (:34-36) Death of Ahab via a Divinely Targeted Arrow
  - a) (:34) Arrow Shot at Random
  - b) (:35) Ahab Bled Out During the Battle
  - c) (:36) Ahab's Death Signaled the Retreat and Defeat of the Combined Forces
- 4) (:37-38) Death of Ahab Recorded as Fulfillment of Divine Prophecy
  - a) (:37) Buried in Samaria
  - b) (:38) Blood Licked up by Dogs
- (:39-40) Overall Summary of Ahab's Reign
  - 1) (:39) Recorded Deeds of Ahab
  - 2) (:40a) Death of Ahab
  - 3) (:40b) Succession

**G. (22:41-53) NEW RULERS -- JEHOSEPHAT AND AHAZIAH -- THE GOOD AND THE BAD – GOD'S PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO CONSISTENTLY FOLLOW HIS WAYS**

1. (:41-50) Jehoshaphat's Good Reign in the South
  - A. (:41-42) Selected Touchpoint of Jehoshaphat's Reign
  - B. (:43-44) Summary Evaluation of Jehoshaphat's Reign
    1. (:43a) Overall Positive Summary
    2. (:43b-44) Mitigating Negative Details
      - a. (:43b) Problem with Worship on the High Places
      - b. (:44) Problem with Compromise with Israel
  - C. (:45) Recorded Deeds of Jehoshaphat
  - D. (:46-49) Additional Positive Highlights
    1. (:46) Positive Reformation
    2. (:47-49) Learning Not to Compromise
  - E. (:50) Final Summary
    1. Death and Burial of Jehoshaphat
    2. Succession
2. (:51-53) Ahaziah's Evil Reign in the North
  - A. (:51) Selected Touchpoints of Ahaziah's Reign
  - B. (:52-53) Summary Evaluation of Ahaziah's Reign

TEXT: 1 Kings 1:1-53

TITLE: *SAVING THE THRONE FOR SOLOMON*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE MESSIANIC PROMISE OF A DAVIDIC KINGDOM SURVIVES A BUMPY TRANSITION AS SOLOMON SUCCEEDS DAVID ON THE THRONE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The reign of King David is winding down. He is on his deathbed (although he will continue to live for a number of years). His physical strength has dissipated and his active involvement in governing affairs has dwindled. It can be questioned how much he was aware of what was taking place in the kingdom. Despite the Lord's clear choice of Solomon as his successor, King David had not taken any public steps to navigate an orderly transition of power. There must have been much intrigue in royal circles regarding what would take place upon the king's death. Driven by selfish ambition as well as by a sense of entitlement as the oldest surviving child of King David, Adonijah seeks to step into this power vacuum and claim the throne for himself. This was a critical juncture in Israel's history. At stake was the Messianic promise of the Davidic line through Solomon. The Lord used His servant Nathan to step into the gap and set in motion the necessary corrective action to thwart the political takeover and protect the throne for Solomon.

**R. D. Patterson:** David was profoundly grateful to a gracious and loving God [his response to the coronation of Solomon]. The kingdom would not be removed from David at his death as was the case with Saul. Rather in Solomon there began the long line of David's descendants that would ultimately lead to the promised Messiah, who was both the son of David and the Son of God.

**Paul House:** These episodes are told with great artistry, subtlety, and care. Characters are well developed and intriguing. Themes that appear repeatedly in 1, 2 Kings are introduced (e.g., **2:2-4**), and the plot sets the stage for vital events in the rest of the story. Important issues such as the king's conduct, the survival of David's lineage, the use of power, and the nation's long-term well-being also are introduced. Readers are therefore ushered into the story through a final appearance of a familiar character, then thrust into the events and issues that will dominate the rest of 1, 2 Kings.

**Constable:** Solomon's succession was not a smooth transition. Solomon was God's choice to succeed David, but he was not the oldest son of David, so his succession was not normal. 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).

**John Davies:** Some time has elapsed between the events of the closing chapters of 2 Samuel and the opening scene of 1 Kings. The feeble old David we meet here is a pale shadow of the heroic king we know from 2 Samuel. We need to keep in mind that this is not just a biography of David. The fate of the people of God is at stake, for, as we discover, David has still done nothing regarding his succession, and it is potentially disastrous that his subjects should find themselves without effective leadership. David is passive throughout much of this narrative — a passivity that the writer is suggesting is not entirely due to feebleness, but to culpable indecisiveness. The situation prompts other officials and family members to take steps to redress the leadership vacuum. We would be wrong, however, to read the account simply as a piece of political propaganda to bolster Solomon’s claim to the throne. We look to the subtleties of character portrayal, plot and dialogue to reveal something of God’s big-picture purposes and relationship with his people. . .

This section is a classic tale of reversal of fortune and illustrates the truth that *‘whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be exalted’* (**Matt. 23:12**). While Adonijah may have had the appearance and the bearing of a leader, God looks not on such outward things, but on the heart (**1 Sam. 16:7**). Our celebrations of our own successes may be very short-lived if God has other plans, for he can turn rejoicing into mourning (**Amos 8:10**) as well as the reverse (**Jer. 31:13**).

**Wiersbe:** Familiar quote – “A crisis isn’t what makes a person; a crisis shows what a person’s made of.” The kingdom of Israel was facing a crisis because King David was on his deathbed. In facing this crisis, different people responded in different ways [e.g. Adonijah = the opportunist; the traitors; the faithful; Nathan = the loyalist; etc.]

**August Konkel:** The prophetic account of the succession to David follows the course of history, but the occurrences reported do not have equal significance and value. The narrator understands these events as a dynamic between human volition and divine purpose. The accession of Solomon is a revelation of God seen in the outcome of the struggle with Adonijah. The technique of the narrator is to reveal the divine purpose through the key characters in the story. . .

The concern of the authors is to show that God is at work accomplishing the purposes of his kingdom in spite of personal aspirations and vendettas of the individuals concerned. The purposes of the kingdom of God are not achieved through violence and greed but in spite of them. The narrative appears to be ambivalent toward government as a kind of necessary monster.

## **I. (:1-4) REIGN OF KING DAVID IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE – ABOUT TO RELINQUISH HIS THRONE**

### **A. (:1) Failing in Health in His Old Age**

*“Now King David was old, advanced in age;  
and they covered him with clothes, but he could not keep warm.”*

**Guzik:** David was about 70 at this time. He seems even older than his years; but for David, it wasn't just the years – it was the mileage. He seemed to live the lives of four or five men in his lifetime.

**Constable:** 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.<sup>2</sup> The body heat of the well person would keep the older person warmer. David's physicians chose Abishag to provide nursing care for David as well as to warm him. Since David was the king, they sought and found a beautiful nurse for him. In view of David's symptoms, he may have suffered from arteriosclerosis.

## **B. (:2-3) Finding Warmth from a Beautiful Young Virgin**

### 1. (:2) The Suggestion

*“So his servants said to him, ‘Let them seek a young virgin for my lord the king, and let her attend the king and become his nurse; and let her lie in your bosom, that my lord the king may keep warm.’”*

### 2. (:3) The Search

*“So they searched for a beautiful girl throughout all the territory of Israel, and found Abishag the Shunammite, and brought her to the king.”*

**Eccl. 4:11**

## **C. (:4) Finishing Life Under the Care of a Young Nurse**

*“And the girl was very beautiful; and she became the king's nurse and served him, but the king did not cohabit with her.”*

**Constable:** The fact that David did not have sexual relations with this "very beautiful" young woman (v. 4) 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.

**John Davies:** The fact that David 'did not have sex with' (literally 'know') Abishag as she snuggled up to him is not to be interpreted as a comment on David's moral restraint, but as a manifestation of the fact that David had become un-'knowing', uncaring and impotent to act with regard to all that was happening around him.

**Philip Ryken:** Abishag's employment as a king of human hot water bottle raises more questions than it answers. Were David's servants simply trying to keep him warm? If so, then why conduct a Miss Israel pageant to find the prettiest young thing in the whole country? The situation seems charged with sexuality, and even though we are told that David did not have sexual relations with this woman, there is a lingering sense of impropriety.

We also sense that the king is diminished. This is hardly the David who knew Bathsheba – the David who fathered Solomon and many other sons. Not even a



stunning young virgin can warm his blood. On the contrary, he has suffered the loss of vitality and virility.

**August Konkell:** The position of Abishag is left ambiguous, since she is not fully inducted into his harem. Her intimacy with David and her extraordinary beauty gives her a special status. Solomon no doubt intends to make her a part of his own harem. When Adonijah requests her as a wife, Solomon interprets it a plot for the throne (2:21–22). She becomes the occasion for Solomon to rid himself of Adonijah in taking charge of the kingdom as the rightful successor to David.

## **II. (:5-10) REBELLION OF ADONIJAH IN SCHEMING TO SEIZE THE THRONE**

### **A. (:5-6) Exaltation Factors**

#### 1. (:5a) Self Promotion

*“Now Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, ‘I will be king.’”*

#### 2. (:5b) Strong Presence

*“So he prepared for himself chariots and horsemen with fifty men to run before him.”*

**Guzik:** Adonijah had a good marketing campaign, and he knew how to present himself as king. He hoped that if he put forth the *image* of a king, he would become king in *reality*.

**August Konkell:** Adonijah is aggressive in seizing the throne (1:5, 7, 9). He employs a personal chariot force and guard of honor to give him the status of king and to prepare for his coup. Though David has made limited use of chariotry (2 Sam. 8:4), Adonijah is well aware of its power. Joab, the powerful military leader of David’s army, joins in the revolt, along with Abiathar, a leading priest.

#### 3. (:6a) Self Indulgence without Parental Discipline

*“And his father had never crossed him at any time by asking, ‘Why have you done so?’”*

**John Davies:** David’s brilliant success at the national level has not been matched by the quality of his leadership within the family.

#### 4. (:6b) Stately Appearance

*“And he was also a very handsome man;”*

**Philip Ryken:** As far as kingship was concerned, Adonijah looked the part (at least to people who look at outward appearances).

5. (:6c) Surviving His Older Brother Absalom  
*“and he was born after Absalom.”*

**Constable:** 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, than that the king of Yahweh's anointing occupy that position. God had identified Solomon as David's successor even before Solomon was born (**1 Chron. 22:9-10**). Adonijah's revolt was primarily against the revealed will of God, secondarily against David, and finally against Solomon.

**Guzik:** **2 Samuel 3:2-5** describes the sons of David and lists Adonijah as the fourth son. We know that two of the three sons older than Adonijah were dead (Amnon and Absalom), and we suspect that the other older son (Chileab) either also died or was unfit to rule because he is never mentioned after **2 Samuel 3:3**. As the oldest living son of David, by many customs Adonijah would be considered the heir to the throne. But the throne of Israel was not left only to the rules of hereditary succession; God determined the next king.

**B. (:7-8) Enablers Secured**

1. (:7) Leaders for Adonijah

*“And he had conferred with Joab the son of Zeruiah  
and with Abiathar the priest;  
and following Adonijah they helped him.”*

**Constable:** Adonijah prepared to seize David's throne as Absalom had attempted to do (cf. **2 Sam. 15:1**). 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.

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.

**Paul House:** Whatever his faults, Adonijah is able to recruit two powerful supporters: Abiathar the priest and Joab the great general. These two men had been with David since the beginning of his career (**1 Sam 22:20; 2 Sam 2:13ff.**) Joab was particularly important to David, for he conquered Jerusalem (**1 Chr 11:4-6**), led Israel's military triumphs (**2 Sam 8:1-14; 10:1-19**), and helped David through the Absalom episode.

Yet he also murdered two men in cold blood who stood in the way of his personal goals (2 Sam 3:22–39; 20:9–10). These murders could be construed as done in the nation’s best interests, but they ultimately serve Joab’s purposes more than the country’s. Finally, Joab also killed Absalom after David had commanded he be spared (2 Sam 18:1–18), then counseled David to cease mourning his son’s death, lest he lose his loyal soldiers (2 Sam 19:1–8). Joab is decisive, powerful, and politically dangerous.

2. (:8) Loyalists to King David

*“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.”*

**C. (:9-10) Enthronement Gathering**

1. (:9a) Gathering Gravitas

*“And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and oxen and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel;”*

Gravitas = dignity, seriousness, or solemnity of manner.

**John Schultz:** The place chosen for the celebration of Adonijah’s ascension to the throne is called “*the Stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel.*” The place was supposed to be an ancient Canaanite holy place with a spring of water coming out which served as a water supply to the people of the area. Bible scholars have argued about the supposed location. The name Zoheleth means “*serpent stone.*”

**Clarke:** Yet it was important that this was both a sacrifice and a feast. He had not only a splendid feast, but a great sacrifice; and he gave by this a popular colour to his pretensions, by affecting to receive his authority from God.

2. (:9b-10) Guest List

a. (:9b) Invitees

*“and he invited all his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah, the king's servants.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Adonijah’s attempted usurpation of the throne began with a ceremonial gathering of his supporters. Absalom had begun his coup in a similar manner (2 Sam 15:11-12). The participation of Abiathar and Joab in the ritual sacrifice and communal meal lent an aura of legitimacy to the occasion.

b. (:10) Non-Invitees

*“But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, Benaiah, the mighty men, and Solomon his brother.”*

**III. (:11-27) REPORTING OF NATHAN AND BATHSHEBA TO INFLUENCE KING DAVID TO SAVE THE THRONE FOR SOLOMON**

## **A. (:11-14) Nathan Exposes the Treacherous Plot to Bathsheba**

### 1. (:11-12) Prophetic Counsel

#### a. (:11) Giving Bathsheba the Scoop

*“Then 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?’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** How crucial Nathan’s role (vv. 11ff.) is in this story! He even had to inform Bathsheba. Looking back on the whole affair, everything rests on Nathan. He not only intervened but had a plan by which to stir David to action. Nathan was the man who stood in the gap – his vigilance goaded David off his couch and protected Bathsheba and Solomon from almost certain death. One non-royal servant makes the difference and preserves the kingdom.

#### b. (:12) Galvanizing Bathsheba to Speak to the King

*“So now come, please let me give you counsel and save your life and the life of your son Solomon.”*

### 2. (:13) Preventing Catastrophe

Alerting King David to Perverse Circumstances = Adonijah Seizing the Throne

*“Go at once to King David and say to him, ‘Have you not, my lord, O king, sworn to your maidservant, saying, Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne? Why then has Adonijah become king?’”*

### 3. (:14) Prophetic Confirmation

*“Behold, while you are still there speaking with the king, I will come in after you and confirm your words.”*

## **B. (:15-21) Bathsheba Alerts King David of the Need to Take Urgent Counter-Measures**

### 1. (:15-16) Entrance to the King by Bathsheba

*“So Bathsheba went in to the king in the bedroom. Now the king was very old, and Abishag the Shunammite was ministering to the king. Then Bathsheba bowed and prostrated herself before the king. And the king said, ‘What do you wish?’”*

### 2. (:17-19) Exposure of the Plot to Usurp the Throne

#### a. (:17) Reminder of the King’s Promise

*“And she said to him, ‘My lord, you swore to your maidservant by the LORD your God, saying, Surely your son Solomon shall be king after me and he shall sit on my throne.’”*

**John Schultz:** The action follows the usual course of an appeal to the king, and is not necessarily a formal lawsuit, with address (vv. 17-18), presentation of case (vv. 17-19),

request for decision (vv. 20- 21), confirmation by witness (vv. 22-27) and decision on oath (vv. 29-30).

**Paul House:** vv. 17-21 -- Bathsheba goes directly to the heart of the matter. She omits any insinuation that David approves of Adonijah's activity, reminds David of his promise to make Solomon king, then describes Adonijah's attempt to seize the throne. Four comments are intended to stir the king to action.

- First, she suggests that he has lost touch with events in his kingdom (1:18).
- Second, she discloses the identity of Adonijah's supporters (1:19).
- Third, she claims that "*all Israel*" waits to see whom he will choose as his successor (1:20).
- Fourth, Bathsheba states that she and Solomon "*will be treated as criminals*" when David dies (1:21). This last plea may refer to the fact that Solomon was not invited to Adonijah's feast.

b. (:18) Reality of Adonijah's Treachery  
*"And now, behold, Adonijah is king;  
and now, my lord the king, you do not know it."*

c. (:19a) Recapitulation of the Details of the Plot  
*"And he has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the sons of the king and Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army;"*

d. (:19b) Rejection of Loyalists to King David and Solomon  
*"but he has not invited Solomon your servant."*

### 3. (:20-21) Endangerment of the Nation and of Bathsheba and Solomon

a. (:20) Endangerment of the Nation  
*"And as for you now, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him."*

**John Schultz:** The most important part of Bathsheba's plea would be that the whole nation would be in disarray, because of David's failure to have made a clear announcement about the succession to the throne. The fact that some would side with Solomon and others with Adonijah could lead to a civil war.

b. (:21) Endangerment of Bathsheba and Solomon  
*"Otherwise it will come about, as soon as my lord the king sleeps with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be considered offenders."*

**Don Anderson:** Bathsheba has three points:

1. She speaks of the promise.
2. She spells out the problem.

3. And she has a plea.  
This is what I need for you to do.

**C. (:22-27) Nathan Reinforces the Treachery of Adonijah**

1. (:22-23) Entrance to the King by Nathan

*“And behold, while she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, saying, ‘Here is Nathan the prophet.’ And when he came in before the king, he prostrated himself before the king with his face to the ground.”*

2. (:24-26) Exposure of the Plot to Usurp the Throne

a. (:24) Reminder of the King’s Promise

*“Then Nathan said, ‘My lord the king, have you said, Adonijah shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne ’?”*

b. (:25a) Recapitulation of the Details of the Plot

*“For he has gone down today and has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and has invited all the king’s sons and the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest, and behold, they are eating and drinking before him;”*

c. (:25b) Reality of Adonijah’s Treachery

*“and they say, ‘Long live King Adonijah!’”*

d. (:26) Rejection of Loyalists to King David and Solomon

*“But me, even me your servant, and Zadok the priest and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and your servant Solomon, he has not invited.”*

3. (:27) Endangerment to the King’s Supporters Not Considered?

*“Has this thing been done by my lord the king, and you have not shown to your servants who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?”*

**IV. (:28-40) RESCUE OF THE THRONE FOR SOLOMON BY KING DAVID**

**A. (:28-31) Execution of the Royal Promise Regarding Solomon’s Kingship**

1. (:28) Bathsheba Summoned

*“Then King David answered and said, ‘Call Bathsheba to me.’ And she came into the king’s presence and stood before the king.”*

2. (:29-30) King David Reinforces His Commitment to Solomon

*“And the king vowed and said, ‘As the LORD lives, who has redeemed my life from all distress, 30 surely as I vowed to you by the LORD the*

*God of Israel, saying, Your son Solomon shall be king after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place; I will indeed do so this day.”*

3. (:31) Bathsheba Bows in Gratitude

*“Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the ground, and prostrated herself before the king and said, ‘May my lord King David live forever.’”*

**Constable:** 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.

**Philip Ryken:** Under the circumstances, this may seem like a strange thing to say. The very reason David and Bathsheba were having this conversation was that they both knew that the king *wouldn't* live forever; he was about to die. So why did she say this. Bathsheba still hoped in the promise of David's everlasting kingdom. The king still lives and so does his dynasty, to the everlasting joy of all the people of God.

**B. (:32-40) Enthronement of Solomon**

1. (:32) Summoning the King's Advisors

*“Then King David said, ‘Call to me Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada.’ And they came into the king's presence.”*

2. (:33-35) Instructing the King's Advisors

a. (:33) Regarding the Processional to Gihon

*“And the king said to them, ‘Take with you the servants of your lord, and have my son Solomon ride on my own mule, and bring him down to Gihon.’”*

**Philip Ryken:** We can tell that the king was used to giving orders and that he knew exactly what to do.

**John Schultz:** The fact that Solomon was to ride around on David's personal mule served as proof that he was officially the successor to the throne. The **Adam Clarke's** Commentary observes: “No subject could use anything that belonged to the prince, without forfeiting his life. As David offered Solomon to ride on his own mule, this was full evidence that he had appointed him his successor.”

b. (:34) Regarding the Anointing and Crowning of Solomon

*“And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there as king over Israel, and blow the trumpet and say, ‘Long live King Solomon!’”*



**MacArthur:** The blowing of the trumpet signaled a public assembly where the people corporately recognized Solomon's new status as co-regent with and successor to David (vv. 39, 40).

- c. (:35) Regarding Solomon's Succession to the Throne  
*"Then you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne and be king in my place; for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah."*

3. (:36-37) Affirming by the King's Advisors

*"And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, 'Amen! Thus may the LORD, the God of my lord the king, say. 37 As the LORD has been with my lord the king, so may He be with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David!'"*

4. (:38-40) Enthroning Solomon

- a. (:38) Processional to Gihon Led by David's Advisors  
*"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 brought him to Gihon."*
- b. (:39) Anointing and Crowning of Solomon by Zadok the Priest  
*"Zadok the priest then took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. Then they blew the trumpet, and all the people said, 'Long live King Solomon!'"*
- c. (:40) Celebration by the People Upon Solomon's Enthronement  
*"And all the people went up after him, and the people were playing on flutes and rejoicing with great joy, so that the earth shook at their noise."*

**V. (:41-53) RETALIATION AGAINST THE USURPERS**

**A. (:41) Adonijah and His Guests Alarmed by the Tumult**

*"Now Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it, as they finished eating.  
When Joab heard the sound of the trumpet, he said,  
'Why is the city making such an uproar?'"*

**Iain Provan:** It is at least a curious coincidence that the name of Adonijah's mother, Haggith, is derived, like several other Hb. names, from the verbal root *hgg*, from which we also have the noun *hag*, "a feast" (though this is not the word used in this verse). The name Bathsheba, on the other hand, probably means "daughter of the oath." Its second part (*šēḇā*) is connected with the verbal root *šb'*, which in the Niph'al means "to swear an oath"—the very verb that is found throughout **1:13–30** and that reappears in **1:51**. While the son of the feast-lady eats, the daughter-of-the-oath reminds the king of



what he has sworn and so ensures that Adonijah is dependent for his life upon Solomon's own oath. The story is constructed quite deliberately so as to make these connections between the mothers and their sons clear and to invest the characters with a sense of **predestination**.

## **B. (:42-49) Adonijah and His Guests Terrified by the Coronation of Solomon**

### 1. (:42) Hoping for Good News

*“While he was still speaking, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. Then Adonijah said, ‘Come in, for you are a valiant man and bring good news.’”*

**John Schultz:** Adonijah must have been too intoxicated by the joy of his own coronation that he suspected no danger. Contrary to Joab's suspicion, he believes that everything was fine and that his ascension to the throne was assured. So when Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived, Adonijah said, rather flippantly: *“A worthy man like you must be bringing good news.”* On the other hand, Adonijah may have been uneasy and this reference to Jonathan as a bringer of “good news” may have been an effort to hide his anxiety.

**Donald Wiseman:** Jonathan was the trusted messenger of David when Absalom rebelled (**2 Sam. 15:36**) and had remained in the city. He was a worthy man (cf. **v. 52**), i.e. ‘honourable’ (*reb*), a person of strength (*’iš ḥayil*)—mental, physical and in wealth.

### 2. (:43-48) Hearing the Bad News – Regarding Enthronement of Solomon – 6 Historical Facts that Seal the Deal:

#### a. (:43) It's a Done Deal

*“But Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah,  
‘No! Our lord King David has made Solomon king.’”*

#### b. (:44) It's Got the Support of All the Major Players

*“The king has also 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.”*

#### c. (:45) It's Turned the City Upside Down

*“And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon, and they have come up from there rejoicing, so that the city is in an uproar. This is the noise which you have heard.”*

#### d. (:46) It's Already Activated

*“Besides, Solomon has even taken his seat on the throne of the kingdom.”*

e. (:47) It's Celebrated by the King and His Servants

*“And moreover, the king's servants came to bless our lord King David, saying, 'May your God make the name of Solomon better than your name and his throne greater than your throne!' And the king bowed himself on the bed.”*

f. (:48) It's Attributed to the Sovereign Will of God

*“The king has also said thus, 'Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who has granted me to sit on my throne today while my own eyes see it.’”*

3. (:49) Hiding from Retaliation

*“Then all the guests of Adonijah were terrified; and they arose and each went on his way.”*

**Don Anderson:** You know there are going to be an awful lot of people, when Jesus returns, that are going to discover, that they have been in the wrong camp.

**Paul House:** vv. 49-53 -- Every man now attempts to save himself. Suddenly, Adonijah sits alone, the kingdom snatched from his grasp. Afraid for his own life, the loser of the power struggle takes desperate measures. Perhaps invoking **Exod 21:12–14**, Adonijah flees to the altar and holds its horns. There he begs for his life. Solomon lets him live, yet only with the stipulation that he prove himself to be “*a worthy man*” (**1:52**; cf. **v. 42**). He clearly has little room to maneuver. This almost-certain future king must now humiliate himself before the brother he disdained to invite to his “*coronation*” feast. The brothers declare a truce, but, **Long** notes, “In this moment one feels the story has a resting point, but not its end.”

**C. (:50-53) Adonijah Covering in the Temple and Consigned to House Arrest**

1. (:50) Cowering in the Temple

*“And Adonijah was afraid of Solomon, and he arose, went and took hold of the horns of the altar.”*

2. (:51) Begging for His Life

*“Now it was told Solomon, saying, ‘Behold, Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon, for behold, 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.’”*

3. (:52) Deserving of Death

*“And Solomon said, ‘If he will be a worthy man, not one of his hairs will fall to the ground; but if wickedness is found in him, he will die.’”*

**Guzik:** Solomon gave Adonijah a limited reprieve. This went against all custom in the ancient world. It was common, even expected, that when a new king assumed the throne, he would execute every potential rival. Solomon not only let a potential rival live, but one who openly tried to subvert his reign. This was a large measure of grace and mercy on the part of Solomon, and a good start to his reign.

At the same time, Solomon wanted Adonijah to know that if he should show the slightest inclination towards rebellion, he would be killed instantly. Mercy would be withdrawn and justice would be delivered quickly.

4. (:53) Consigned to His House for Now

*“So King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and prostrated himself before King Solomon, and Solomon said to him, ‘Go to your house.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Solomon showed mercy to his brother and allowed him to return to his home in Jerusalem. This amounted to house arrest because the king’s guards could keep Adonijah under constant surveillance. But Solomon also warned his brother to be careful how he behaved, for as an insurgent, Adonijah was worthy of death. If he stepped out of line, he would be executed. Adonijah bowed before Solomon, but his heart was submitted neither to the Lord nor his brothers.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What are some of the inescapable consequences of poor parenting – especially the failure to properly discipline your children?
- 2) How does the failure on the part of leaders to take decisive action lead to crisis situations?
- 3) What are some practical steps to smooth out spiritual leadership transitions in the life of a local church?
- 4) Where has selfish ambition and self-promotion shown its ugly face in your Christian experience.

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**John Davies:** The question of who will sit on David’s throne is voiced seven times between **1:13** and **1:35**. The penchant of the writer of Kings for sevenfold repetitions of

key words suggests we are to be on the lookout for any creational theme (based on the seven-day creation story of **Genesis 1 - 2**). Here it is the new Adam theme: who will be the new king under God in God's realm? Observe the skilful chiasmic pattern of the sequence of subjects and prepositional phrases:

- A. Solomon ... on my throne (13)
- B. Solomon ... on my throne (17)
- C. Who? ... on the throne of my lord the king (20)
- D. Adonijah!? ... on my throne (24)
- C'. Who? ... on the throne of my lord the king (27)
- B'. Solomon ... on my throne (30)
- A'. Solomon ... on my throne (35)

Adonijah is the central figure of the pattern, but the assertion of his kingship in **1:24** is ironic, or in the form of a question. This is bracketed by two interrogative 'Who?'s and outflanked by the fourfold reference to Solomon. Solomon is obviously a key figure for the writer, who spends eleven chapters covering his accession and reign.

**Iain Provan:** The narrative that begins our book (**1 Kgs. 1–2**) is really not a beginning at all, but the last chapter of the larger story of David, which is found in 1–2 Samuel. It is in **2 Samuel 11** that Bathsheba, who plays such a prominent role in **1 Kings 1–2**, first appears—possessed by David at the cost of her husband's life (**2 Sam. 11:6–27**). Later the lives of various of David's sons are recounted (**2 Sam. 12–18**). The end of 2 Samuel is a sorry tale of wickedness and weakness, which raises an important question in the reader's mind. The prophet Nathan, himself a major player in 1 Kings 1–2, had earlier promised David that his dynasty would last forever (**2 Sam. 7:1–17**). David's kingship would not be like Saul's, which all but died with him (**1 Sam. 31**). Instead, God would raise up one of David's sons and establish his kingdom forever (**2 Sam. 7:12–13**). How is this promise now to be fulfilled, in view of Nathan's later word of judgment to David in **2 Samuel 12** and its outworking? Where is a surviving son to be found now, to sit on David's throne? It is this question that the first two chapters of the book of Kings will resolve. **Chapter 1** tells us how it came to pass that it was Solomon, and not someone else, who succeeded David. **Chapter 2** reports David's last instructions to Solomon and tells us what Solomon did immediately after David's death to tie up several "loose ends" from the David story and consolidate his position. After this transition from David to Solomon the story of Solomon continues.

**R. D. Patterson:** The Book of Kings begins with the rather sad circumstances surrounding the accession of Solomon to the throne of his father, David. Two primary factors are involved:

- 1) David's feebleness and apparent laissez faire attitude toward government in his later years, and
- 2) Adonijah's self-willed ambition to succeed his father, based on the fact that he was the oldest of David's surviving sons.

In this ambition he was supported by some influential members of David's government, despite David's clearly expressed designation of Solomon.

**William Barnes:** That God of the Bible reigns sovereign, even in **1 Kings 1**. Whether it be prophet over king (a favorite theme throughout the books of Samuel and Kings), David over Saul, or here, Solomon over Adonijah, God's ways will win out in the end. In the next chapter, both Adonijah and Solomon publicly attest to this (cf. **2:15b, 24a**). Human machinations can and will accomplish the will of God! But this is no guarantee that the apparent victors are themselves in the will of God. The reader of the final redaction of 1-2 Kings knows well how the whole story will turn out: Solomon will not transcend his father David in status, and for that matter, neither will the kingdom of David even survive his son intact (see **ch 12**). The Davidic dynasty would long endure, but not eternally as such (contrast **2 Sam 7**, which is understood as a reference to a literal, earthly throne). There would come a day, however, when another son of David, whose kingdom is not of this world (**John 18:36**), would transcend all others by becoming the lowest of servants (cf. **Phil 2:6–8**). No prophet, such as Nathan, had to take initiative to raise Jesus from his earthly status; it was God himself who raised him up from the dead, literally to ascend into heaven, from which his kingdom will one day become evident to all (**Phil 2:9–11**).

**Mordechai Cogan:** On the compositional level, **1 Kgs 1** is often singled out as one of the finest examples of early biblical narrative (so, e.g., **Eissfeldt** 1965, 50: "magnificent literary composition"), whatever its genre and purpose may have been (see further below). The action moves forward mainly through the use of speeches, with third-person descriptions kept to a minimum. Repetition serves as a prime narrative device. Thus, e.g., the scene at the Gihon is mentioned three times, twice in reported speech (**vv. 9–10, 19, 25–26**); Nathan's stated plan (**vv. 11–14**) is carried out (**vv. 17–27**); David's order to anoint Solomon (**vv. 33–35**) is twice repeated, in its implementation (**vv. 38–40**) and in a spoken report (**vv. 43–48**). Through the use of small nuanced differences in the repetitions, the narrator succeeds in characterizing the main protagonists (see **Alter** 1981, 97–100).

TEXT: 1 Kings 2:1-12

TITLE: *PASSING THE TORCH OF LEADERSHIP SECURELY*

**BIG IDEA:**

**LEADERSHIP TRANSITIONS MUST DEAL DECISIVELY WITH ISSUES IMPACTING THE PEACE AND SECURITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The baton of kingdom leadership is here passed successfully from King David to his son Solomon. David's final charge emphasizes that the enjoyment of God's covenantal blessings are dependent on faithful obedience to God's Word. The new king must gird himself like a man and take courage to face the challenges of leadership over God's people. The first priority in establishing the peace and security of the new kingdom reign will be to deal with some unfinished business. There are some old enemies that must be executed and some faithful loyalists that must be rewarded so that the kingdom can move forward without strife or disruption.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Whether it is the Davidic king or the disciple of Jesus, true stability only comes through obedience to the Lord's commands. What is true on the personal level holds also for the people of God as a corporate body. Kingdom stability is not anchored in our experiences or profession, nor in our education or pedigree, nor in our ministerial achievement, but only in obedience to the clear word we have long possessed.

**F. W. Farrar:** A king's justice must be shown alike in his gracious influence upon the good and his stern justice to the wicked.

**Gene Getz:** We should do what we can to correct the results of our mistakes before passing our leadership role to our successors.

**Don Anderson:** Key Insights from the text:

1. The great ones when they die they are still looking to the future and being concerned about others.
2. When the great ones die they are concerned about relationships.

We have a generation that does not know how to be a man and we have a generation that does not know how to be strong when it gets rough. We do not. We have raised a whole generation that has lots of wealth, they have never had an experience of war where they have watched their friends die and they have done very little work to accumulate what they have gotten, many of them have inherited it and they do not appreciate it. And that is going to be the demise of America, I tell you. We are in **apathy** now and the next step is **bondage** in the seven cycles of a civilization that goes to **destruction**.

Well to be strong:

1. You have to be persistent in obedience.
2. You are positive in your attitude.
3. And you persevere in your living

**Philip Ryken:** The question in **1 Kings 1** was succession (who would be the next king?). This question was answered emphatically when Solomon was crowned king. The question in **chapter 2** is security (will the kingdom stand?). David was dead (**1 Kings 2:10-11**), and after Solomon received his father's final instructions, it was up to him to secure his kingdom. This question gets answered in **verse 12** and again in **verse 46**. Together these two verses form an *inclusio* – they mark the beginning and the end of a section of the Bible – and they tell us what that section is about. In **verse 12** we read that “*Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.*” **Verse 46** says the same thing in slightly different words: “*So the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.*”

## **I. (:1-4) TEST OF THE TYPE OF LEADERSHIP GOD WILL BLESS – FINAL CHARGE TO SOLOMON TO OBEY COVENANT LAW**

### **(:1) Introduction**

*“As David's time to die drew near, he charged Solomon his son, saying,”*

#### **A. (:2-3a) Priority Responsibilities of the King**

##### 1. (:2) Responsibilities Relating to Character and Courage

*“I am going the way of all the earth.  
Be strong, therefore, and show yourself a man.”*

**MacArthur:** An expression of encouragement (**Dt 31:7, 23; Jos 1:6, 7, 9, 18; 1Sa 4:9**) with which David sought to prepare Solomon for the difficult tasks and the battles in his future.

**Guzik:** Perhaps David sensed some weakness in Solomon. Perhaps he knew Solomon would be tested in far greater ways than before. Whatever the exact reason was, David knew Solomon needed strength and courage (*prove yourself a man*). Great responsibilities require great strength and courage.

**Floral Heights Church of Christ:** David admonishes his son Solomon to be strong like a man. It is likely that this admonition is given not only due to the magnitude of Solomon's work as king but also the fact that he was a young man. Solomon refers to himself as a “*little child*” at **1 Kings 3:7**. **Josephus** claimed that Solomon was 14 years old at the time of coming to be king while others say around twenty. The word of God does not give us Solomon's exact age yet it is obvious that he is relatively young to rule a nation.

**Ron Daniel:** Today, many men believe it is not manly to follow the commandments and live a godly life. For many, manhood is rated on how you hold your liquor, how



immoral you can live, how coarsely you can speak. But in reality, living the Christian life according to the Word of God is what makes a real man's man. To be a godly man is not to be a geek - it is to be struggling and persevering, keeping your strength under control, being a righteous husband and father. These things are not easy. They take effort, strength, and self-control. Any idiot can get drunk. Any bozo can curse. But it takes a real man to live a life of discipline and set an example.

**Paul House:** David's "charge" to Solomon consists of two parts. The first deals with Solomon's commitments to the Lord (**2:1-4**), while the second covers ways the younger man can secure his kingdom. The order should be understood as significant, since the second without the first would be useless. Farewell speeches appear elsewhere in the Old Testament, such as when Jacob addresses his sons in **Gen 47:29-49:33**, and in **Josh 23:1-16**, where Joshua speaks to Israel's leaders. David's directives to Solomon are similar to those given Joshua by the Lord (cf. **Josh 1:1-9**). All texts of this type move the story to new characters and events yet do so by providing continuity between the new situation and the old.

**Roger Ellsworth:** David's charge to Solomon may be divided into two parts: a call to obedience and a call to justice. **Howard F. Vos** refers to the first of these as a personal charge and the second as an administrative charge.

## 2. (:3a) Responsibilities Relating to Obedience of God's Commands

*"And keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses,"*

**R. D. Patterson:** David's legacy to Solomon was thus much more than a great kingdom with secure borders, tributary nations, and considerable wealth and prestige. Far more importantly he instilled in Solomon a love for God and his Word. He gave to Solomon a proper orientation to life and leadership and was himself an outstanding role model, despite his failures, of a man whose heart truly beat for God.

**Brian Bell:** Slight nuances of meaning;

- *Law* = instruction.
- *Testimony* = a witness to God's will & man's duty.
- *Statutes or precepts* = a collection of specific injunctions.
- *Commandment* = that which expresses the will of a personal God.
- *Fear* = that which brings reverence for God.
- *Judgments* = a group of judgments

**Donald Wiseman:** The basis of all action will be the keeping of God's law, expressed in service (v. 3, *mišmeret*, what God requires; **Deut. 11:1**, cf. **Gen. 26:5**) undertaken loyally as an obligation. The new king's manner of life is to walk in God's ways and so conduct himself in obedience to every covenant obligation (*reb* 'duty', so **Deut. 5:33** and *passim*). To do this God's decrees (declared 'statutes' rsv) must be upheld (**Deut. 6:2**, etc.) and every one of his commands, laws and requirements kept and passed on.



Only in this way will king and nation prosper (**Deut. 29:9**; *sākal* is to discern, gain insight and then prosper; rsv stresses this). This is no doctrine of believing in order to prosper economically, but a call to act wisely with any attendant benefits. This was to be a special characteristic of Solomon (**3:28**; **Matt. 12:42**), as of all godly men. In Israel the king was never the source of law but rather under it, for the covenant law was imposed on king and people alike. God's promise is conditional on whether or not Solomon's successors watch how they live (Heb. 'guard their [right] way of life') by 'walking before God in truth' (niv faithfully). 'Walk before God' is the Deuteronomic phrase most commonly found in 1 Kings (**3:6**; **8:23, 25**; **9:4**, etc.), but the same idea is conveyed by the more common 'walk to and fro before God', i.e. conduct your life in the presence of God (Heb. *hithallēk*)

#### **B. (:3b-4) Potential Blessings for Obedience**

##### 1. (:3b) Blessing of Success -- Prosperity

*"that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn,"*

##### 2. (:4) Blessing of Sustained Kingdom -- Posterity

*"so that the LORD may carry out His promise which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons are careful of their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, you shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.'"*

**Constable:** 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. "Statutes," "commandments," "ordinances," and "testimonies" are all different kinds of precepts in the Law. Solomon's faithful obedience would also ensure an unbroken line of rulers (v. 4; implied in **2 Sam. 7:12-16**).

## **II. (:5-9) TREATMENT OF VARIOUS FRIENDS AND FOES TO PROVIDE A SECURE KINGDOM— SETTLING OLD SCORES TO PROTECT THE KINGDOM – IMMEDIATE CHALLENGES -- UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

#### **A. (:5-6) Disposition of Joab – Execute Murderers**

*"Now you also know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner, and to Amasa the son of Jether, whom he killed; he also shed the blood of war in peace. And he put the blood of war on his belt about his waist, and on his sandals on his feet. 6 So act according to your wisdom, and do not let his gray hair go down to Sheol in peace."*

**MacArthur:** *Abner . . . Amasa.* These were victims of Joab's jealousy and vengeance, who were killed after warfare had ceased (**2Sa 3:27**; **20:10**), thus bringing Joab's punishment as a murderer (**Dt 19:11-13**).

**Guzik:** At the very least, David knew the complexity of Joab’s character. He knew the loyalty and sacrifices Joab made for David over the years, and he knew his violence and ruthlessness. “David felt under obligation to Joab, and though David was certainly not lacking in courage, he was not able to cope with the mixture of Joab’s loyalty and his misdeeds” (Patterson and Austel).

**B. (:7) Disposition of Sons of Barzillai – Reward Loyalty**

*“But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be among those who eat at your table; for they assisted me when I fled from Absalom your brother.”*

**August Konkel:** The name Barzillai is Aramaic, an indication of his residence in the northern part of the Transjordan in the border region between Israel and Syria. One of the purposes of retaining these men in the royal court may have been to help retain allegiance in a border area. Barzillai means “man of iron” and may refer to the profession of metalworker, since he came from the area of Succoth, famous for smelting. Since smiths did not have land of their own, they might more readily settle in Jerusalem.

**Wiersbe:** David not only remembered dangerous men like Joab and Shimei, but he also remembered helpful men like Barzillai (v. 7), who had provided him and his people with what they needed when they fled from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:27-29). David had wanted to reward Barzillai with a place at his table, but the old man preferred to die in his own home. He asked David to give the honor to his son Kimham (2 Sam. 19:31-38); but now David instructed Solomon to care for Barzillai’s sons and not Kimham alone.

**Michael Mark:** The next part of David’s charge to Solomon was to carry out judgment against threats to the peace of Israel. Joab was guilty of shedding innocent blood, and David asked Solomon to deal with him according to his wisdom. David also remembered the sons of Barzillai, who supported David when he was fleeing from Absalom, and asked Solomon to allow them to eat at the king’s table. So not only is guilt remembered, but David also remembers the kindness done to him in his life. It’s a good encouragement to always be kind to others. And finally there was Shimei, who violently called down curses on David as he was fleeing from Absalom. Shimei had a deep seated hatred of David, and David advised Solomon to watch him closely. After David had given Solomon these charges, he was laid to rest. 1 Chron 19:28 said “*He died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor. His son Solomon succeeded him as king.*” He wasn’t buried with his father down in Bethlehem, but in the city he founded, the City of David. Solomon’s rule was now firmly established.

[https://iitubf.org/sermons/2011/06/27/davids\\_final\\_days\\_and\\_the\\_rise\\_of\\_solomon.htm](https://iitubf.org/sermons/2011/06/27/davids_final_days_and_the_rise_of_solomon.htm)  
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**C. (:8-9) Disposition of Shimei – Punish Disrespect**

*“And behold, there is with you Shimei the son of Gera the Benjamite, of Bahurim; now it was he who cursed me with a violent curse on the day I went to*

*Mahanaim. But when he came down to me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' 9 Now therefore, do not let him go unpunished, for you are a wise man; and you will know what you ought to do to him, and you will bring his gray hair down to Sheol with blood."*

**Philip Ryken:** This was not merely a matter of politics but a question of obedient submission to the kingdom of God. If these men were Solomon's rivals, then they were enemies of the crown that God had placed on Solomon's head. . .

Solomon had four enemies to eliminate: Adonijah, Abiathar, Joab, and Shimei. What is important to notice about these men is that they all put their desire for money, sex, or power ahead of loving obedience to the kingdom of God. Thus, the stories of these men give us test cases in temptation.

**Constable:** 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 (**v. 9**; 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.

**John Schultz:** David feared that this man, once his protective custody was withdrawn, would again strike at the throne. Moreover, before actual penalty was imposed, Solomon gave Shimei a reprieve conditioned on obedience. **Donald J. Wiseman** in 1 and 2 Kings, observes: "Shimei, whose ancestor Gera is named in (**Gen. 46:21**; cf. **Judg. 3:15**) and whose home town was Bahurim, north of Bethany, *had uttered "grievous curses"* (AV; NIV bitter) against the LORD's anointed king. This was a capital offence (**Exod. 22:28**; **1 Kgs 21:10**), but David on oath had failed to remove the curse which still threatened. So Solomon was firmly directed to find Shimei "*not guiltless*" (AV, RSV; cf. NIV innocent). Heb. *nqh* means "*to exempt from punishment*" (cf. REB "*not go unpunished*") or "*free from oath*." To bring down ... in blood is a direct incitement to impose the death penalty (**vv. 34-36**)."

Shimei had, evidently, not accepted the fact that one of Saul's children had not inherited the crown after the death of Saul and Jonathan. He considered David to be an illegal rival, as Saul, himself, had considered David to be.

### **III. (:10-12) TRANSITION FROM REIGN OF DAVID TO SOLOMON – PEACEFUL TRANSFER OF POWER**

#### **A. (:10) Reign of David Stops with His Death and Burial**

*"Then David slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of David."*

**John Gates:** The city David had wrested from the Jebusites and claimed for his capital became the burial ground for the great king.

**Constable:** 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**).

### **B. (:11) Reign of David Summarized**

*“And the days that David reigned over Israel were forty years: seven years he reigned in Hebron, and thirty-three years he reigned in Jerusalem.”*

**Redpath:** He was a shepherd, a soldier, an outlaw, a king, a fugitive, a sinner, a saint, a poet... His experiences were the writing of God on his life, making him into a man after God's own heart.

**John Dummelow:** David's reign was more important and critical than any other in the history of Israel, both from a secular and from a religious point of view. In the first place, he consolidated into a kingdom what had previously been an aggregate of jealous tribes, and so enabled his countrymen to take a place among the nations of the Eastern world; and, in the second place, he strengthened his people's attachment to the Lord, alike by the zeal he showed for God's honour and worship, and by the obedience he rendered to the prophets who counselled or admonished him in the divine name. Consequently later times regarded the period of his rule as Israel's golden age, and the memories of it coloured the anticipations which were entertained respecting the coming of the Messiah. His character, indeed, was not free from reproach; for, besides being guilty of adultery and murder, he was cruel in war (**2 Samuel 8:2; 2 Samuel 12:31**) and negligent of justice at home (though in these respects he was doubtless no worse than his contemporaries). But if he sinned grievously, he repented sincerely; and by his humility under reproof (**2 Samuel 12:13**), his resignation in adversity (**2 Samuel 15:25-26**), and his faith in the divine mercy (**2 Samuel 24:14**), he still affords an example.

### **C. (:12) Reign of Solomon Started**

*“And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his kingdom was firmly established.”*

**Morgan:** With Solomon began, in some senses, the most splendid period in Israel's history. The splendor, however, was largely mental and material. The spiritual is noticeably absent.

**John Kitto:** It may be in this place to remark, that although Solomon was not the firstborn, nor even the eldest living son of David, but succeeded to the throne through the special appointment of the supreme king, Jehovah, there was one circumstance which, from the usual notions of the Orientals, could not but be highly favourable to him, even had all his elder brothers been alive. Amnon had been born before his father became king, and Absalom and Adonijah while he was king of Judah only; while Solomon was born when his father was king over all Israel, and lord over many

neighbouring states. And in the East there is a strong prejudice in favour of him who is the son of the king and of the kingdom, that is, who is born while his father actually reigns over the states which he leaves at his death.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What should be on your mind and heart as you are about to depart from this life and charge your descendants to carry on your legacy?
- 2) In what ways can someone today *show himself to be a man*? How would our culture react to such an exhortation?
- 3) What are some of the complexities involved in Joab's situation and how did David do a good job or poor job of dealing with those complexities?
- 4) Does it seem overly harsh to you for Solomon to dispense judgment in such severe fashion? Why or why not?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

##### **David Platt: (:2-3) Living with Courage**

We all face temptations in our lives to be timid in obedience to God's word. To be unfaithful when it comes to His laws, His rules, His commands. It is not easy to follow God's word in this world. It requires courage and strength that God promises to provide and when we trust in His provision and when we walk faithfully with Him, courageously before Him, in this world today, we can know that God will bless us. That God will lead us, guide us, provide for us, that we might know His prosperity. . .

[Not talking about Prosperity Gospel] . . . But there is a deeper, higher, more wonderful, more truer, more fulfilling, more everlasting prosperity that is found in obedience to Jesus and His commandments, statutes, rules, testimonies. Guaranteed you will experience a fullness of prosperity from Christ, according to His word, wherever you turn when you walk faithfully with Him.

**Michael Mark:** Solomon's kingdom was a preview of the kingdom that is to come. **1 Chron 29:25** says, "*The Lord highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before.*" In the kingdom that is to come, there will be one more highly exalted than Solomon, in a kingdom much more rich and glorious and any kingdom that ever existed – ruled with grace, mercy, wisdom, righteousness and justice. Those who would seek to threaten the peace of this nation will be judged, and cut off, while those who have walked faithfully

before their king with all their heart and soul will never fail to see the king of Israel. This king is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, he is the only way into the kingdom.

### **Edward Hatch: Final Words**

#### **Priority 1: Put God First --**

If Solomon wanted success, he needed to start by walking with the Lord. He would have enough advice from others as to what to do. He would also have inner thoughts on how to do things that had high risk of failure.

The way of the Lord is right. When we trust him and follow him, we avoid many failures and make the bad things that happen as human beings in this world to come out better than they would if we didn't trust Jesus.

The first priority that we should embrace and that we should pass on to the next generation is that we need to put God first in our lives. When we do, we receive a blessing.

#### **Priority #2: Deal with people --**

Isolation is not an option for the Christian. God has not called us to love him and ignore others. He has not called us to a life of spiritual blessing devoid of service to others. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love God and the second is to love others.

Sometimes we have real difficult people to deal with.

David knew that so he spoke to Solomon about certain specific people that were problem people.

#### **Conclusion:**

What will you be remembered for when you die? Will people at the gravesite be talking about your faith? Will they give stories of your commitment to Christ and how much it impacted their lives?

<https://sermons.faithlife.com/sermons/192653-final-words>

### **James Oakley: Securing the Kingdom**

There are **4 ingredients in having an established kingdom**. We need a king with 4 qualities, and happily, in Jesus, that's just what we've got.

#### **1) Faithful to God**

First, we need a king who will be faithful to God.

#### **2) Just with wrongdoers**

Second, we need a king who will be just with wrongdoers. Just with wrongdoers. We need a king who will be just with wrongdoers, punishing them when necessary. It might make us uncomfortable, but Jesus repeatedly taught that he's just this sort of king. One day he will return, and when he does there will be a judgement. Every human

being will stand before him, and we'll each give an account of our lives. Every wrong deed will be punished.

### 3) Remove enemies

Then third, we need a king who will remove his enemies. A king who will remove enemies.

Cursing a main leader of the people was also a capital crime in Old Testament law. Shimei was not innocent. David had spared him, but he should have died for his insolence.

But why now? Why does David ask Solomon to set things straight after so many years. Because again God needed to establish Solomon's kingdom. Shimei's problem was that he wasn't really on David and Solomon's side. He'd chosen to set himself against David, and he could do the same to Solomon. And as long as there were people in the kingdom who weren't really onside, it could all fall apart from within.

The way Solomon handled him was a stroke of genius. Just what you'd expect from a wise king like him. He didn't kill him. He told him that his pardon would stand provided he never left the city where he could keep an eye on him. That way, of course, he couldn't go back to his home town to try and rally an opposition.

Shimei was too stupid or careless to take the olive branch. He did fine until two of his slaves ran off to nearby Gath. He went to find them. And when he got back, he got his death sentence. His crime was not running to Gath. His crime was his disloyalty, his disrespect, his cussing attitude towards David, for which death was the correct penalty. Solomon offered him the chance to be a loyal subject. Then he could have lived. But instead he carried on as before, looking dangerously like someone who could start a rebellion in a moment. And Solomon couldn't leave enemies like this to weaken his kingdom.

We need a king who will remove his enemies.

Again, we need a king like Jesus. Here's what Jesus says will happen at the end of the age, when he returns. **Matthew 13, verses 40 to 43:** As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so will it be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their father.

This was not something Jesus said only once. He said it many times. His return will be a day of weeding out. Everyone who is not on his side will be banished. It's the only way his kingdom can be secured and established for those who are in it.

Jesus hasn't returned yet. He's putting off the day when he banishes his enemies for a long, long time. There's still time to change sides, to make sure one of his loyal subjects



when that day does come.

But ultimately, we need a king who will remove his enemies.

#### **4) Reward loyalty**

That thought of being one of his loyal subjects brings us to the fourth and final thing we need. We need a king who will reward loyalty. Reward loyalty.

Barzillai himself, you'll remember, was too old. He turned down David's hospitality. But David wants to make sure that his son, Solomon, rewards Barzillai's sons for their father's loyalty.

This is the ancient equivalent of being given a pension. They'd get somewhere to live in the royal city of Jerusalem. They'd get a daily portion of food assigned for them. They'd even get to eat with the king, perhaps on a rota. And they'd keep these benefits for life.

Because here's the final thing we need. We don't just need a king who deals with the problems – punishing wrong, and removing enemies. We need a king who rewards loyalty. Who looks after those who choose to go through life on his side. Who choose to stand up for their king, even if it's at great personal cost.

Solomon was such a king. It paid to be one of his loyal subjects.

And Jesus is such a king as well. Here's Jesus, in **Matthew chapter 10, verse 32**:  
*Whoever acknowledge me before others, I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven.*

Put yourself on Jesus' side in life, he's a king who will make sure you won't regret it.

#### **Conclusion**

If you want a stable kingdom. If you want things to end well. If the world is to end happily ever after. We need the right kind of king.

What a good thing we have the right kind of king.

- We have a king who is faithful to God in every respect.
- We have a king who is just, and who will punish wrongdoers.
- We have a king who will remove and banish his enemies.

Which means the only safe place in life is to be in his kingdom. To set our lives to follow Jesus.

- Which means it's a good thing that we also have a king who will reward loyalty.

[https://www.oakleys.org.uk/sermons/1\\_kings\\_02\\_01-12](https://www.oakleys.org.uk/sermons/1_kings_02_01-12)



TEXT: 1 Kings 2:12-46

TITLE: *SECURE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM*

**BIG IDEA:**

**SOLOMON SECURELY ESTABLISHES HIS KINGDOM BY DECISIVELY DEALING WITH ARROGANT ENEMIES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

There is a cost to establishing peace and righteousness and prosperity in a land. Security does not just happen without certain measures being taken. We have already seen the transition in power and the coronation of Solomon as the new king. But there is some unfinished business; some old enemies that must be dealt with before the kingdom can be established in security. This passage foreshadows the establishment of Christ's millennial kingdom in the future.

**Donald Wiseman:** Solomon's removal of opponents who conspired against him is taken to be the necessary and customary establishment of the Davidic kingdom (v. 12, cf. v. 46). It marks the end of David's reign (vv. 1-9) and the beginning of that of Solomon. The reprisals are presented as a legal process which required a king to punish rebels (1:12), murderers, political assassins and those who broke solemnly sworn agreements. The proper outcome was foreseen by David, who had left his son to use his own discretion (vv. 6, 9) in making the judicial decisions. Discretion and compassion were also to be exercised (vv. 7, 26-27).

**Wiersbe:** Solomon was to be a "man of peace" (1 Chron. 22:6-10), and yet he began his reign by ordering three executions. But true peace must be based on righteousness, not on sentiment. . . The land was polluted by the innocent blood that Joab had shed, and the land could be cleansed only by the execution of the murderer.

**(:12) PROLOGUE – SECURE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM**

*"And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father,  
and his kingdom was firmly established."*

*Inclusio* bookends along with vs. 46 clearly delineate this section as a distinct unit

**I. (:13-25) DISPOSITION OF ADONIJAH – ARROGANT TREASON BRINGS HIM DOWN – LUST FOR POWER**

**A. (:13-18) Rash Request of Adonijah via Bathsheba  
(Violating Sanctuary Provided by Solomon)**

### 1. (:13) Adonijah Approaches Bathsheba

*“Now Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, ‘Do you come peacefully?’ And he said, ‘Peacefully.’”*

He comes with ulterior motives and brazen ambition as we shall soon see.

**August Konkell:** The role of Bathsheba in the proceedings is left somewhat enigmatic in the narrative. She has complied with Adonijah’s request, though he is a rival and feels that his right of kingdom has been taken away (v. 15). Bathsheba is well aware of Solomon’s claim to the throne because of the promise to David (v. 24). It is possible that in delivering the request she knows Solomon will have sufficient reason to bring closure to the question of succession through eliminating her rival.

### 2. (:14-17) Adonijah Requests Abishag

*“Then he said, ‘I have something to say to you.’ And she said, ‘Speak.’ 15 So he said, ‘You know that the kingdom was mine and that all Israel expected me to be king; however, the kingdom has turned about and become my brother’s, for it was his from the LORD. 16 And now I am making one request of you; do not refuse me.’ And she said to him, ‘Speak.’ 17 Then he said, ‘Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not refuse you, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife.’”*

**Don Anderson:** Here is a proud man. He is set upon being the king of the land. And he has this passion that as the fourth born son and the other three are gone and are history that he has a right to that and he is not going to turn loose of it, it does not make any difference what is being done.

Pride will manifest itself in two ways. Did you know that? Pride will manifest itself in the words of the successful by boasting but in the words of the failure by self-pity.

John Piper in his book *Future Grace* put it this way: Boasting is the response of pride to success. Self-pity is the response of pride to suffering. Boasting says, “I deserve admiration because I have achieved so much.” Self-pity says, “I deserve admiration because I have sacrificed so much.”

Boasting is the voice of pride in the heart of the strong. Self-pity is the voice of pride in the heart of the weak. Boasting sounds self-sufficient. Self-pity sounds self-sacrificing.

The reason self-pity does not look like pride is that it appears to be needy. But the need arises from a wounded ego and the desire of the self-pitying is not really for others to see them as helpless, but heroes. The need self-pity feels does not come from a sense of unworthiness, but from a sense of unrecognized worthiness. It is the response of unapplauded pride.

**Guzik:** Adonijah seemed to suffer from delusions of grandeur. He imagined that there was widespread popular support for him as king. In reality, he only had a handful of influential malcontents to support him, and they quickly deserted him when it was evident that David favored Solomon (**1 Kings 1:49**). . .

We wonder why Adonijah – after hearing the warning Solomon made in **1 Kings 1:52** – would make such an outrageous request. Perhaps he felt that Solomon was too young, too inexperienced, or too timid to do the right thing. He soon found out that Solomon was a wise and decisive leader.

**MacArthur:** In the ancient Near East, possession of the royal harem was a sign of kingship (cf. **2Sa 3:8; 12:8; 16:20-22**). Adonijah’s request for Abishag was an attempt to support his claim to the kingship and perhaps generate a revolt to usurp the throne. Bathsheba didn’t see the treachery (**vv. 18-21**).

3. (:18) Bathsheba Agrees to Approach the King

*“And Bathsheba said, ‘Very well; I will speak to the king for you.’”*

**B. (:19-22) Rejection by Solomon of the Outrageous Request**

1. (:19) Bathsheba Approaches King Solomon

*“So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king arose to meet her, bowed before her, and sat on his throne; then he had a throne set for the king’s mother, and she sat on his right.”*

2. (:20-21) Bathsheba Petitions Solomon on Behalf of Adonijah

a. (:20) Minimizing the Request

*“Then she said, ‘I am making one small request of you; do not refuse me.’ And the king said to her, ‘Ask, my mother, for I will not refuse you.’”*

b. (:21) Making the Request

*“So she said, ‘Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as a wife.’”*

**Paul House:** Bathsheba never appears in the book again, so it is appropriate to assess her character now. Many commentators misjudge her. For example, **Whybray** calls Bathsheba “a good-natured, rather stupid woman who was a natural prey both to more passionate and to cleverer men.” **Keil** believes the implications of Adonijah’s request escaped her. **Montgomery** concludes that Bathsheba simply had a “womanly interest in his [Adonijah’s] love-affair.” In response, for a stupid woman Bathsheba wielded great powers. She lived in the palace and was a major player in her son’s rise to power. As for not realizing the significance of Adonijah’s plea, who would understand harem politics more than the queen of the harem? Finally, why would she take a “womanly interest” in the future of her son’s chief rival? Bathsheba is, rather, the first of several vital female characters in 1, 2 Kings. She cooperates with Nathan, exposes Adonijah,

and generally makes prudent moves in the halls of power. Thus, it is evident that she understands the nature of Adonijah's request and prudently warns her son of his rival's inept power play.

3. (:22) Sarcastic Response from King Solomon

*“And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, ‘And why are you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? Ask for him also the kingdom-- for he is my older brother-- even for him, for Abiathar the priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!’”*

**Constable:** Adonijah would also have found popular support among the people because he was David's oldest living son (cf. v. 22). Solomon correctly regarded Adonijah's request as an act of treason worthy of death.

**C. (:23-25) Reaction of Solomon = Has Adonijah Executed**

1. (:23) Swears an Oath by the Lord

*“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. (:24) Swears by Divine Providence

*“Now therefore, as the LORD lives, who has established me and set me on the throne of David my father, and who has made me a house as He promised, surely Adonijah will be put to death today.”*

3. (:25) Sends Benaiah to Carry out the Execution

*“So King Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him so that he died.”*

**Wiersbe:** David wasn't there to feel the pain of another son's death, but the execution of Adonijah was the final payment of the fourfold debt David had incurred (2 Sam. 12:5-6). The baby died, Absalom killed Amnon, Joab killed Absalom, and Benaiah executed Adonijah. David paid for his sins fourfold.

**Philip Ryken:** So Adonijah came to a bad end. His sinful request proved that he was not a worthy man. He knew who was supposed to be the king, but he refused to submit to his kingship. He put his lust for power and pleasure ahead of the kingdom of God. He would not give up what he wanted for the glory of God, so he perished in his sins.

**II. (:26-27) DISPOSITION OF ABIATHAR – FAITHFUL SERVICE EARNS HIM A PASS**

**A. (:26) Solomon Initiates the Dismissal of Abiathar as Priest**

1. Abiathar Deserved to Death

*“Then to Abiathar the priest the king said,*

*‘Go to Anathoth to your own field, for you deserve to die;’*”

**Don Anderson:** Abiathar fell victim to wanting to continue his priesthood under the new administration that he thought was going to come under Adonijah. So he was vulnerable and he went along with the conspiracy.

2. Abiathar Spared Because of Mitigating Factors

a. Role in Serving David as Priest

*“but I will not put you to death at this time, because you carried the ark of the Lord God before my father David,”*

b. Role in Suffering Hardship with David

*“and because you were afflicted in everything with which my father was afflicted.”*

**(Sanctuary Provided for Abiathar)**

**B. (:27) Solomon Isolates Abiathar in Fulfilment of Prophecy**

*“So Solomon dismissed Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, in order to fulfill the word of the LORD, which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.”*

**Guzik:** This refers to the prophecies found in **1 Samuel 2:27-36** and **1 Samuel 3:11-14**. In removing Abiathar from the priesthood, Solomon, without direct intention, fulfilled the promise of judgment against the house of Eli, made some 100 years before Solomon took the throne.

**III. (:28-35) DISPOSITION OF JOAB – ARROGANT TREASON BRINGS HIM DOWN – LUST FOR INDEPENDENCE – MAN OF THE SWORD DIES BY THE SWORD**

**A. (:28) News Comes to Joab Regarding Solomon’s Purge**

1. Joab Thinks He is Next on Solomon’s List

*“Now the news came to Joab, for Joab had followed Adonijah, although he had not followed Absalom.”*

2. Joab Takes Refuge

*“And Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar.”*

**(No Possible Sanctuary for Joab)**

**B. (:29-30) Negotiations Between the King, His Executioner Benaiah and Joab**

1. (:29a) Joab Seeking Sanctuary

*“And it was told King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and behold, he is beside the altar.”*

**Wiersbe:** Only people who were guilty of manslaughter could do this [take hold of the horns of the altar and seek sanctuary] and claim the right to a trial, and Joab was guilty of both murder and disloyalty to King David and King Solomon.

2. (:29b) Solomon Commanding Execution

*“Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, ‘Go, fall upon him.’”*

3. (:30a) Benaiah Calling Out Joab

*“So Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD, and said to him, ‘Thus the king has said, Come out.’”*

4. (:30b) Joab Refusing to Leave the Sanctuary

*“But he said, ‘No, for I will die here.’”*

5. (:30c) Benaiah Reporting Back to Solomon

*“And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, ‘Thus spoke Joab, and thus he answered me.’”*

**C. (:31-33) Narrative Justifying the Execution in the Sanctuary**

1. (:31) Joab Deserves a Violent Death

*“And the king said to him, ‘Do as he has spoken and fall upon him and bury him, that you may remove from me and from my father’s house the blood which Joab shed without cause.’”*

**Constable:** David’s house shared the guilt for Joab’s murders as long as he remained alive (v. 31). 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 (v. 33). Solomon honored Joab for his service to David by burying him in his own land in Judah (v. 34; cf. 2 Sam. 2:32).

2. (:32-33) Joab Determined His Own Fate

a. (:32) Unrighteous Killings of the Commanders of Israel and Judah

*“And the LORD will return his blood on his own head, because he fell upon two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, while my father David did not know it: Abner the son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah.”*

b. (:33) Unending Consequences

1) Joab’s Descendants Cursed with Bloodshed

*“So shall their blood return on the head of Joab and on the head of his descendants forever;”*

**Don Anderson:** Joab illustrates the principle that “*the wages of sin is death.*”

## 2) David's Descendants Blessed with Peace

*“but to David and his descendants and his house and his throne, may there be peace from the LORD forever.”*

### **D. (:34-35) Notorious Execution Carried out by Benaiah**

*“Then Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell upon him and put him to death, and he was buried at his own house in the wilderness.”*

**John Schultz:** Benaiah had been one of David's heroes. He had been the commander of David's body guard, the Cherethites and the Pelethites. Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute Joab. But Benaiah hesitated to kill anyone inside the tabernacle, so he ordered Joab to come out. He told Joab: *“The king says, “Come out!”*“ We don't read that Solomon had given any such order. The words are evidence of Benaiah's hesitation to kill in the sanctuary. Joab may have hoped that staying inside the tabernacle would save his life. But, at the king's orders, he is killed while holding on to the horns of the altar.

Whether it was against the law to kill someone who was inside the tabernacle and who held on to the horns of the altar is a question difficult to answer. Joab's situation was too exceptional to serve as a model. Joab may have thought that Benaiah's scruples to kill him, while he was holding on to the horns of the altar would give him a chance to cling to life. But Solomon's order ruled this out.

Although Joab was executed as a criminal, he was buried, which supposes some kind of military honor to the former commander-in-chief. The Hebrew text of **v.34** reads

literally: *“So went up, Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness.”*

The Hebrew word used for “house” is *bayith*, which has a variety of meaning, ranging from “house” to “court” to “family.” It obviously means here that he was buried on his own property.

### **E. (:35) New Appointments of Benaiah and Zadok to Positions of Power**

#### 1. Benaiah as Army Commander

*“And the king appointed Benaiah the son of Jehoiada over the army in his place,”*

#### 2. Zadok as Priest

*“and the king appointed Zadok the priest in the place of Abiathar.”*

**John Gates:** The appointment of Zadok was fraught with serious consequences, for from then on, the priesthood was subject to the political maneuvers of the state.



## **IV. (:36-46a) DISPOSITION OF SHIMEI – ARROGANT DISRESPECT AND FALSE CONFIDENCE BRINGS HIM DOWN – LUST FOR MONEY AND POSSESSIONS**

### **A. (:36-38) Boundaries Set for Shimei**

#### 1. (:36) Rules for Continued Existence Established

*“Now the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him,  
‘Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there,  
and do not go out from there to any place.’”*

**Don Anderson:** He says, sell your stuff in Bahurim and build yourself a condo in Jerusalem and do not leave here. Why? Because if he gets out of the city limits and he gets back to Bahurim he will stir up another conspiracy. And why run that risk with this guy that has got so much negative press about him. Put him here close where we can keep the surveillance on him and know what he is doing – what a great word of wisdom and yet what a gracious thing to do.

#### 2. (:37) Rebellion Will Bring Certain Execution

*“For it will happen on the day you go out and cross over the brook Kidron, you will know for certain that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your own head.”*

#### 3. (:38a) Ratification of the Agreement

*“Shimei then said to the king, ‘The word is good.  
As my lord the king has said, so your servant will do.’”*

#### 4. (:38b) Rules for Continued Existence Obeyed

*“So Shimei lived in Jerusalem many days.”*

### **B. (:39-40) Boundaries Violated by Shimei (Violating Sanctuary Provided by Solomon)**

#### 1. (:39) Temptation Arises

##### a. Loss of Servants

*“But it came about at the end of three years,  
that two of the servants of Shimei ran away  
to Achish son of Maacah, king of Gath.”*

##### b. Location Pinpointed

*“And they told Shimei, saying,  
‘Behold, your servants are in Gath.’”*

#### 2. (:40) Temptation Affects Sound Judgment

##### a. Recovery Pursued

*“Then Shimei arose and saddled his donkey,  
and went to Gath to Achish to look for his servants.”*



b. Recovery Performed

*“And Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath.”*

**Philip Ryken:** The root of Shimei’s crime was his refusal to put that kingdom of God first. His own financial prosperity was more important to him than obedience to the kingdom of God. He was like the rich young man that Jesus commanded to sell everything he had and give his money to the poor (**Matt. 19:16-22**). The man sadly refused because he loved his money more than he loved the kingdom of God. Shimei made the same ungodly calculation. He wanted to keep all his property for himself. He could not bear to let any of it go, even when that meant disobeying the king and breaking his promise to God.

**C. (:41-45) Breach of Promise Exposed**

1. (:41) Intelligence Report

*“And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and had returned.”*

2. (:42-43) Inquiry

a. (:42) Reminder of the Terms of the Agreement

*“So the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, ‘Did I not make you swear by the LORD and solemnly warn you, saying, You will know for certain that on the day you depart and go anywhere, you shall surely die? And you said to me, The word which I have heard is good.’”*

b. (:43) Reinforcement of the Penalty

*“Why then have you not kept the oath of the LORD, and the command which I have laid on you?”*

3. (:44-45) Indictment

a. (:44) Curse Decreed by God on Shimei for Disrespecting the Throne of David

*“The king also said to Shimei, ‘You know all the evil which you acknowledge in your heart, which you did to my father David; therefore the LORD shall return your evil on your own head.’”*

**John Schultz:** Shimei was a member of the same clan as Saul. Evidently, he believed that when Saul and Jonathan died, another member of Saul’s family ought to have inherited the throne. He must have thought that David’s ascension to the throne was not based on divine revelation.

**Donald Wiseman:** But pressing circumstances should not have made Shimei forget his obligations. The historian again implies that the victim brought judgment from God upon himself and that Solomon was administering the law wisely.

- b. (:45) Blessing Decreed by God on Solomon and the Throne of David  
*“But King Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD forever.”*

**D. (:46a) Benaiah Carries Out the Execution of Shimei**

*“So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and fell upon him so that he died.”*

**(:46b) EPILOGUE -- SECURE ESTABLISHMENT OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM**

*“Thus the kingdom was established in the hands of Solomon.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** These statements reflect the theological drive of the narrative: if the kingdom is to be secure, the threats against it must be neutralized. That is what “*establishing*” the kingdom demands. . .

The security of the kingdom requires the elimination of its enemies. The kingdom must be preserved from those trying to destroy and undermine it. This text then has a “last day” dimension to it, for . . .

*So it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father (Matt. 13:40b-43da, NIV; see also 2 Thess. 1: 9-10).*

**1 Kings 2** shares the same kingdom theology with the rest of Scripture. That’s why **1 Kings 2** is such a searching text. The final Davidic king will follow the same principle in finally establishing his kingdom. My only safety then is in submitting to the monarchy of Jesus.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Does this purging of old enemies make you uncomfortable? Why or Why not?
- 2) How is Jesus going to establish the security of His kingdom upon His return?
- 3) Why did Bathsheba and Solomon have such different reactions to the request of Adonijah?
- 4) Why was Shimei willing to risk leaving the security of the sanctuary which Solomon had provided for him?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Leon Wood:** A marked contrast existed between the kingships of Solomon and David, a contrast caused by the diverse backgrounds of the two rulers. David had been raised in the open, watching sheep, and later had experienced the rigors of a fugitive life. Solomon, however, had known only the ease of the palace, with its attendant luxuries. Accordingly, David became a king of action, aggressive and efficient, who could personally lead armies to victory. Solomon became a king of peace, happy to stay at home and content merely to retain the land his father had gained. David's court never grew larger than the requirements of his government, but Solomon's became lavish to suit his tastes. As a result, Solomon needed greater revenue than David, and he raised taxes accordingly. He also engaged more in foreign trade, showing adeptness, indeed, and enjoying marked success. David was more a man of the people; Solomon was a man of the court. More significant, David maintained a vibrant faith in God as a "*man after God's own heart*," while Solomon, though beginning well in spiritual devotion, failed to hold this basic relationship before God, fell into sinful ways, and finally came under God's censure.

**Kyle Sorenson:** "So, You're getting Older...What are you living for?"

What kind of legacy should a Christian leave behind? (Or should we even be asking such a question?) As we examine this list, HOW do and will you practically leave this kind of legacy? How do these 'legacies' of a Christian answer the challenges a retiree faces?

1. The legacy of forgiveness (**Genesis 50:15-21**)
2. The legacy of faith (**Genesis 50:24-25; Hebrews 11:22**)
3. The legacy of worship (verse 3 of "O Day of Rest and Gladness"; **Psalm 27:4-5**)
4. The legacy of "trust and obey" (**Ecclesiastes 12, esp. verse 13**)
5. The legacy of wisdom (**Psalm 90:10-17**)
6. The legacy of perseverance (Compare David with Solomon **1 Kings 2:1-4; 11:1-13**)
7. The legacy of a continuing covenant (**Psalm 78:5-8**)
8. The legacy of a spiritual warrior (**2 Timothy 4:6-8**)

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/917121214456.pdf>

**Caleb Nelson: Establishing the Kingdom**

- I. David's Instructions to Solomon, vv. 1-9
- II. David's Death, vv. 10-12
- III. Solomon's Kingdom Established, vv. 13-46
  - A. Adonijah Liquidated, vv. 13-25
  - B. Abiathar Banished, vv. 26-27
  - C. Joab Liquidated, vv. 28-35
  - D. Shimei Liquidated, vv. 36-46

## **Homiletical Outline**

- I. Solomon Established by Righteousness (vv. 1-9)
- II. Solomon Established by Inheritance (vv. 10-12)
- III. Solomon Established by Justice (vv. 13-46)

### **Introduction:**

**Proverbs 16:12** “*It is an abomination to kings to do evil, for the throne is established by righteousness.*” So Solomon wrote in the book of Proverbs, and so we find here in I Kings 2.

When a king truly does justice and purges the land of evildoers, that means that a lot of us are going to suffer the ultimate penalty. The Kingdom is a gift, but it nonetheless demands total submission and perfect righteousness, both in its king and its citizens. If the cosmic justice enacted by Solomon makes you uncomfortable good. It’s supposed to.

### **I. Solomon Established by Righteousness (vv. 1-9)**

### **II. Solomon Established by Inheritance (vv. 10-12)**

### **III. Solomon Established by Justice (vv. 13-46)**

So why did Solomon kill three people and banish another one, all of them under somewhat equivocal circumstances? Adonijah could argue that he was innocently in love with Abishag. Shimei had been promised his life and hadn’t crossed back to his old home. Joab’s statute of limitations had run out a long time ago. And Abiathar had gone to the wrong party. So is this really justice that corresponds to the righteous dealing counseled by David? Yes. In the literal level of the story, this was the only way to establish Solomon’s kingdom. Kingdoms aren’t established by passivity. Yes, God established his kingdom, but He did it through Solomon’s drive and initiative. In the typological level, this “bloodbath” (four people don’t have enough blood for much of a bath) foreshadows the ultimate judgment day when Christ will evaluate every human being based on whether he was loyal to the Kingdom of God or a traitor to it. There is no statute of limitations at the last assize. Things you did four thousand years ago can and will be brought up against you. Associating with and countenancing the wrong people can send you to hell. Violating the letter of the law can send you to hell. Being more committed to your own property than to God’s kingdom will send you to hell! Brothers and sisters, do not take lightly the message of the text, which is that God will establish His Kingdom and He will do so through violence that will make your blood run cold. Just as Solomon’s glory is nothing to the glory of the lily, much less to the glory of the Word who created the lily, so Solomon’s consolidation of power is nothing to the consolidation of power that Jesus Christ will someday carry out. I beg you to give up your darling sins for the sake of the kingdom! Stop that sexual indulgence, that innocent spending habit, that relentless pursuit of your own power and glory! To indulge in any of these things is to, like Adonijah and Joab, ask for your own destruction. This passage stands as a warning to anyone dissatisfied with the rule of

God, to anyone who has been a rebel in the past and who now holds his life strictly by the grace of the Sovereign. In short, it stands as a warning to every human in this room. What will you pursue? What will you give up in order to maintain a **total allegiance** to the Kingdom? Christ tells us that true discipleship demands nothing less than our lives. So give it all to Him. No hot woman, physical or digital, is worth forfeiting your life over. No pair of slaves, no matter how valuable. No support of rivals to the monarchy of Christ, however “innocent” or short-lived, is worth forfeiting your place in the kingdom of heaven. Come to Christ, giving up everything for the sake of total allegiance to Him, and He will receive you. But forsake Him, and you will get the same bloody fate as Joab, Adonijah, and Shimei. The choice is yours.  
<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/913161135187.pdf>

**Iain Provan:** As we look back over **1 Kings 1–2**, what do we see? We see, first, a dying king, now out of touch with reality, now fully in control, with a selective memory and a curiously ambivalent attitude to oaths. His oath to Bathsheba he stands by; his oath to Shimei he chooses to “interpret.” The loyalty of Barzillai he remembers, for it costs him nothing to do so; the loyalty of Joab he chooses to forget, because to remember would be to make evident that his conscience about blood-guilt has been found late and conveniently. David is a man who, once persuaded that action is needed, is willing to follow it through ruthlessly so that his kingdom should survive him. Solomon, the new king, is no different. He, too, takes oaths seriously when it suits him to do so, and “interprets” them in ungenerous fashion otherwise (**2:23, 36–46**). He, too, has a selective memory, as both his treatment of Abiathar and Joab and his speech in **2:31–33** reveal. He too is a man of ruthless action, pursuing power by all means at his disposal. What we have here, in fact, is a fairly sordid story of power-politics thinly disguised as a morality tale. So tortured are the attempts to convince us that the men who died did so because they deserved it, however, that we cannot but be aware of their speciousness. Technically they may be guilty: but is morality entirely a matter of technicalities? Surely not. And we are thus faced with the question as to whether David’s dynasty is really any more “innocent” of blood now than it has been in the past or will be in the future (**2 Kgs. 21:16; 24:3–4**). If God has truly ordained that Solomon should be king and have a dynasty, then it is not (as Solomon implies in **2:31–33**) because David’s house is innocent (cf. **Prov. 16:12**), but rather (the authors seem to be telling us) because God’s grace is sufficient to deal with their guilt. God works his purposes out through this house (he has established it), not because even its first two members are perfectly good (these opening chapters of Kings provide quite sufficient evidence that they are not), but because David’s house is the subject of his election. The conditionality of the Davidic promise, then, is only part of the story (see §2 above); its unconditional aspects are also crucially important. And that will remain true throughout the book of Kings. For without grace, law can ever lead mortal beings, be they kings or not, only to disaster.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Many have found cause to generalize that it was customary in ancient monarchies—perhaps even necessary—for a new king to eliminate political opponents in order to establish his rule, especially when he rose to the throne out of the established order of succession. In Solomon’s case, nomination by David and formal

enthronement apparently did not guarantee that his accession would remain unchallenged once David died. The resolution of the matter seems not to have been put off for too long. Upon becoming sole ruler, Solomon moved quickly against Adonijah and his supporters, who seem to have been caught unprepared for such decisiveness. Whether there was an immediate cause for concern—the request for Abishag reads too much like a dramatic artifice, the work of the pro-Solomonic author, to be the whole story—is unknowable. In rapid sequence, the king’s rivals were dispatched by Benaiah, commander of the mercenary guard, who personally had much to gain by the removal of Joab (cf. **1 Kgs 2:35**).

TEXT: 1 Kings 3:1-28

TITLE: *THE PRIORITY OF WISDOM (DISCERNMENT)*

**BIG IDEA:**

**WISDOM MUST BE FOUNDATIONAL FOR GOVERNING GOD'S PEOPLE IN SECURITY AND RIGHTEOUSNESS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The foundation for Solomon's reign is going to be its defining characteristic = Wisdom or Discernment. The ability to make righteous judgments in complex situations is a gift from God. It is to Solomon's credit that he valued this gift over any type of personal exaltation or prosperity. He humbly confesses his inadequacy to effectively govern God's elect people apart from this gift. He praises God for His faithfulness to his father David. He demonstrates a love for the Lord that will be compromised later in life as his wives and possessions corrupt his heart. But at the outset of his reign he seems positioned for governmental success and divine blessing. The proof of his wisdom comes by way of his bold solution to the convoluted dispute between the two harlots over the dead baby.

**William Sanford LaSor:** Solomon's reign can be evaluated politically and spiritually. Politically, it is splendid. Spiritually, it deteriorates into idolatry. For some strange reason, Christian literature has idealized Solomon so that he hardly resembles the scriptural portrait.

**Todd Stiles:** We're going to see that wisdom comes from God, is perfectly personified in the Son of God, and is available to the people of God to keep us from compromising our walk with God.

**I. (:1-15) THE PETITION FOR WISDOM**

**A. (:1-4) The Road Leading to the Request**

1. (:1) Consolidating the Kingdom via Political Alliances

*“Then Solomon formed a marriage alliance with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter and brought her to the city of David, until he had finished building his own house and the house of the LORD and the wall around Jerusalem.”*

This resulted in some complex political situations that required diplomatic skill and discernment.

**Edersheim:** Such a union was not forbidden by the law [which only forbade alliance with the Canaanites (**Exod 34:16; Deut 7:3**)], nor was the daughter of Pharaoh apparently implicated in the charge brought against Solomon's other foreign wives of

having led him into idolatry (**1 Kings xi. 1-7**). In fact, according to Jewish tradition, the daughter of Pharaoh actually became a Jewish proselyte. Still, Solomon seems to have felt the incongruity of bringing her into the palace of David, within the bounds of which “*the Ark of the Lord*” appears to have been located (**2 Chron viii. 11**), and she occupied a temporary abode “*in the city of David,*” until the new palace of Solomon was ready for her reception.

**Constable:** At this time Israel was stronger than Egypt.

"That this is the case is clear from his [probably 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." [**Eugene Merrill**]

There is much evidence of the immense influence and prestige that Solomon enjoyed in his day. Solomon housed his bride in the City of David until he completed a special palace for her nearby (**7:8**).

## 2. (:2) Cultural Compromises

*“The people were still sacrificing on the high places, because there was no house built for the name of the LORD until those days.”*

Discernment was needed to guard against destructive syncretistic practices that would undermine genuine worship.

**Brian Bell:** During the period of the Judges, the Israelites adopted the Canaanite custom of offering sacrifices at...*high places*. These 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.

**R. D. Patterson:** There were two basic problems with them:

- (1) they detracted from the principle of the central sanctuary (**Deut 12:1-14**); and
- (2) since worship at high places was a Canaanite custom, syncretism was not only a very real danger but an all too common occurrence.

Israel was specifically forbidden to utilize pagan high places and altars (**Deut 12:2-4, 13**) and as soon as God had established his people in the Land of Promise, they were to worship at a sanctuary in the place appointed by God.

## 3. (:3) Commitment to the Lord

*“Now Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of his father David, except he sacrificed and burned incense on the high places.”*



**Lange:** *He loved the Lord.* This is the best and greatest thing that can be said of a man. So, everyone who loves the world, has not in him the love of the Father: this is only where God is loved above all things, His word observed, and His commandments fulfilled with joy and delight (**1 John 2:5, 15; 5:3**). Happy is he who, to the question of the Lord: Lovest thou me can return the answer of Peter (**John 21:17**). Because Solomon loved the Lord he honored also his father, and walked in his ways. The want of filial piety in our day comes from want of love to the Lord.

Note word “*except*” – good indication that this practice of Solomon was inconsistent with his love for the Lord

**Ron Daniel:** What were the *high places*? They were areas up on hills or mountains in which the Canaanites worshiped their false gods (**Num 22:41**). These sites typically had altars, idols, buildings, and symbols of stone and wood. Of course, God hated the pagans' high places (**Lev 26:30; Num 33:52; Deut 33:29**), but it apparently was a common compromise among the Israelites to sacrifice on the high places. Even the prophet Samuel sacrificed on the high places (**1Sam 9:14**).

We have a tendency to think that just because something is common among believers, it must be all right. We think that as long as there are some Christians that do this or that we must be on solid ground with that practice or behavior. But sin is certainly sin, regardless of how many people are doing it.

Another thing that can throw us is the fact that God in His grace will speak or minister to us while we are involved in that practice or behavior. When that happens, we begin to think that it's actually the right place to be, since God met us there. But again, even though God is gracious and meets us where we're at, sin is sin.

**Iain Provan:** **First Kings 3:1–3** presents us, then, with a Solomon who loves God—who does share his father David's basic commitment to God (**3:3**)—but who right at the beginning of his reign also carries with him the seeds of his own destruction. His lack of wholeheartedness . . . will eventually become fully evident (**11:4**), and in the end his lack of personal unity or integrity will be the catalyst, not only for his own apostasy but also for the fracturing of Israelite unity that we shall read about in **chapters 11–12**.

#### 4. (:4) Centralized Worship

*“And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that was the great high place; Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.”*

### **B. (:5-14) The Request for Wisdom (Discernment)**

#### 1. (:5) Ask Away

*“In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream at night; and God said, ‘Ask what you wish me to give you.’”*

**Guzik:** This was an amazing promise. God seemed to offer Solomon whatever he wanted. This wasn't only because Solomon sacrificed 1,000 animals; it was because his heart was surrendered to God, and God wanted to work something in Solomon through this offer and his response.

The natural reaction to reading this promise of God to Solomon is to wish we had such a promise. We do have them.

· *Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (Matthew 7:7)*

· *If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. (John 15:7)*

· *Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. (1 John 5:14)*

## 2. (:6) Acknowledgement of God's Faithfulness to David

*"Then Solomon said, 'Thou hast shown great lovingkindness to Thy servant David my father, according as he walked before Thee in truth and righteousness and uprightness of heart toward Thee; and Thou hast reserved for him this great lovingkindness, that Thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day.'"*

**L. M. Grant:** When God asked Solomon what he desired, Solomon was careful and considerate in his request, for he first, commendably, showed his appreciation of God's great mercy to his father David, recognizing the integrity of his father, and appreciating the kindness of God now in making Solomon king.

**Rich Cathers:** Solomon uses three words to characterize David's life:

truth – 'emeth – firmness, faithfulness, truth

righteousness – ts@daqah – justice, righteousness; righteous acts

uprightness – yishrah – uprightness; from yashar – straight, upright, correct, right

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Solomon's prayer, then, is a proclamation of the fidelity of God. His prayer begins with praise of Yahweh's dependability. That is proper in itself – God should be so praised. . . Praise then becomes the basis of confidence [as we petition God].

**Donald Wiseman:** Solomon's prayer (3:6–9). This has four elements:

(i) It acknowledges God's past action. Kindness (niv) is too weak a rendering of Heb. *hesed*—'steadfast love' or 'loving-kindness'. Faithfulness, righteousness and uprightness are the required response to God's covenant, in which he pledges himself to a similar relationship.

(ii) It asks for the continuance of God's favour. The language is that of Deuteronomy (7:6, 9, 12; 9:5). The response is shown by divinely given wisdom and discernment (*bînâ*, vv. 9, 11–12), reminiscent of the Messianic passages of Isaiah (11:2) which were fulfilled in Christ (1 Cor. 1:30).

(iii) It expresses humility. I am only a little child (v. 7) shows this (cf. Jer. 1:6; Matt. 18:4) and confesses lack of experience. Heb. and av 'how to go out and come in' means to possess leadership qualities or to manage business (Num. 27:17; Deut. 31:2; Ps. 121:8), hence carry out my duties. A prayer we all need to make.

(iv) It asks for the ability to carry out his duties. The people were 'a heavy people', i.e. an onerous responsibility (v. 8). As promised to Abraham (Gen. 22:17–18), they were now numerous, too numerous to count.

### 3. (:7-8) Anxiety Regarding Challenges of National Leadership

#### a. (:7) Personal Inadequacy

*“And now, O LORD my God, Thou hast made Thy servant king in place of my father David, yet I am but a little child; I do not know how to go out or come in.”*

**Rich Cathers:** Lesson: **Usefulness** starts with **inadequacy** --

Quite a few of the people God has used the most have all suffered from feelings of inadequacy.

When God called Isaiah, he said,

*(Isa 6:5 KJV) Woe is me! for I am undone; because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips: for mine eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.*

When God called Jeremiah, he said,

*(Jer 1:6 KJV) Then said I, Ah, Lord GOD! behold, I cannot speak: for I am a child.*

When God called Moses, he responded by saying,

*(Exo 3:11 KJV) Who am I, that I should go unto Pharaoh, and that I should bring forth the children of Israel out of Egypt?*

Moses and God went back and forth to the point where God even got a little upset with Moses because he was so reluctant.

If God has called you to do something, don't be afraid of those times when you feel utterly useless and inadequate. That may make you the most useful to God because you will learn to trust Him the most.

**William Barnes:** Lit., “*I am a little child, I do not know how to go out or come in.*” The latter phrase is a common expression referring to lack of experience in military leadership (cf. **Cogan** 2001:1986). Probably the rationale for the choice of *nagid*

[TH5057, ZH5592] or “king-designate” up to this point was prior success in military leadership, and Solomon was indeed as a “little child” in this area. His humility here appears genuine, and his alternative proposal of seeking to demonstrate success in juridical “wisdom” to govern the people (cf. 3:9) is an appropriate substitute (3:10).

b. (:8) Privileged and Populous People of God

*“And Thy servant is in the midst of Thy people which Thou hast chosen, a great people who cannot be numbered or counted for multitude.”*

**Paul Kretzmann:** He felt the responsibility and the obligation of governing the chosen people of Jehovah very keenly.

**MacArthur:** Based on the census, which recorded 800,000 men of fighting age in Israel and 500,000 in Judah (2Sa 24:9), the total population was over 4 million, approximately double what it had been at the time of the Conquest (see Nu 26:1-65).

**R. D. Patterson:** The responsibilities facing Solomon were all the greater in that Israel was God’s chosen nation. She had to be governed in accordance with God’s precepts if the people were to experience his blessing. A wisdom that God alone could give was needed here.

**Stephen Gambill: The Wisdom of Solomon**

- 1.) His realization of God’s mercies (to David in the past and present)
- 2.) His humility [as a young man]
- 3.) His sense of having an overwhelming task (too great and numerous)
- 4.) His request for understanding/wisdom/discernment – more than mere doing of laws
- 5.) His ultimate desire for God’s glory - they are His people

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/101208850155.pdf>

4. (:9) Articulating the Request

*“So give Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people to discern between good and evil. For who is able to judge this great people of Thine?”*

**John Schultz:** He needed divine guidance to be able to govern a nation that had the tendency to divide itself into separate groups, as it did after Solomon’s death. The unity between the twelve tribes had never been particularly strong. As a matter of fact there were thirteen tribes, if we consider Joseph to consist of the two tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim. This was compensated for by the fact that Levi did not function as a tribe on its own. They had not been allocated to one specific area in the Promised Land. As priests and Levites, her members were spread out over the land.

**John Dummelow:** Solomon's prayer exhibits:

- (a) a strong sense of responsibility and a conviction that high position involves corresponding duties;

- (b) a consciousness that truth and falsehood, right and wrong, are not always easy to distinguish, and that to discern between them there are needed special gifts of the heart and understanding;
- (c) that such gifts are derived from God, who bestows them in answer to prayer.

**Lange:** When is our prayer pleasing to God?

- (a) When we pray in the feeling of our weakness and helplessness, and in confidence in the mercy of God and His promises;
- (b) when before all things we ask for spiritual blessings and gifts (**Matt. 6:33; Eph. 1:3**)

The true wisdom for which we have to ask God (**James 1:5**), does not consist in manifold and great knowledge, but in the understanding of what is good and bad (**Job 28:28; James 3:17; Eph. 5:17**), and is a fruit of the renewal of our mind (**Rom. 12:2**).

A ruler who does not ask God for an obedient heart for himself, can and ought not to hope for or expect that his people will yield him a submissive heart.

Youth, which as a rule places freedom in lawlessness, needs before all things to ask God daily for an obedient heart.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Our primary point, however, is: the welfare of the people of God drives Solomon's prayer. Not: how may I enhance my life? But: how may I make God's people secure? The king is a model here. We should not worry over how to succeed but over how we may most profit the people of God.

#### 5. (:10-12) Answer Granted

##### a. (:10) Pleasing to the Lord

*“And it was pleasing in the sight of the Lord that Solomon had asked this thing.”*

##### b. (:11) Prioritizing Justice for the People

*“And God said to him, ‘Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice,’”*

##### c. (:12) Passing All Other Leaders in Wisdom and Discernment

*“behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you.”*

**Constable:** [quoting Baxter] -- **J. Sidlow Baxter** distinguished between **spiritual wisdom** (insight into divine things) and **practical wisdom** (administrative discernment, sagacious judgment, intellectual grasp, aptitude for the acquisition of knowledge, and

prudence in the directing of affairs). He claimed, and I agree, that Solomon asked for and received less of the first kind but more of the second kind. . .

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 the end, one's life would amount to something worthwhile. To the Israelites this was possible only if a person knew and responded appropriately to (i.e., feared) Yahweh. [referencing **James Crenshaw**]

6. (:13-14) Additional Blessings Promised

a. (:13) Surpassing Riches and Honor

*“And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days.”*

b. (:14) Super Long Life Conditioned on Obedience

*“And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and commandments, as your father David walked, then I will prolong your days.”*

**MacArthur:** In contrast to riches and honor that were already his, a long life was dependent on Solomon's future obedience to the Lord's commands. Because of his disobedience, Solomon died before reaching 70 years of age (cf. **Ps 90:10**).

**C. (:15) The Response of Gratitude and Sacrifice and Celebration**

*“Then Solomon awoke, and behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and offered burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and made a feast for all his servants.”*

**William Barnes:** The repetition of the term “*dream*” here is neither meant to diminish the veracity nor the applicability of the vision just described, but rather it acts as an *inclusio* with **3:5** above (an *inclusio* is a narrative device to signal by some sort of repetition the beginning and the end of a prose or poetic unit).

**Constable:** Solomon's expression of gratitude included more offerings. He presented these before the ark in Jerusalem. They expressed further personal dedication (the burnt offerings) and gratitude for fellowship with God (the peace 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**).

**Philip Ryken:** presumably, this is where the king and his people should have been worshiping all along, at the tent of meeting in Jerusalem. But they started out worshiping at the high places. This is an ominous foreshadowing of their coming apostasy, for both Solomon and his people would later go back to the high places and commit idolatry.

## II. (:16-28) THE PROOF OF WISDOM

### A. (:16-22) Difficult Case to Adjudicate Based on Conflicting Testimony

#### 1. (:16) Test Case to Prove the Wisdom of Solomon

*“Then two women who were harlots came to the king and stood before him.”*

**Brian Bell:** The social position of these women (very low in social standing) demonstrates that Solomon believed justice and sound judgment should be applied to all cases and made available to all subjects, regardless of gender or social status.

#### 2. (:17-21) Testimony of the First Woman

##### a. (:17-18) Only Two Witnesses to the Event

*“And the one woman said, ‘Oh, my lord, this woman and I live in the same house; and I gave birth to a child while she was in the house. And it happened on the third day after I gave birth, that this woman also gave birth to a child, and we were together. There was no stranger with us in the house, only the two of us in the house.’”*

##### b. (:19) Tragedy Occurred

*“And this woman's son died in the night, because she lay on it.”*

**John Schultz:** One of the women stands out for her carelessness and emotional detachment. For a mother to roll on her child and not wake up in time to do something about it shows extreme carelessness. To exchange one baby for another also indicates that there had been little or no natural affection. The important thing for one of the women was to have a baby, no matter which.

##### c. (:20-21) Treachery Ensued

*“So she arose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me while your maidservant slept, and laid him in her bosom, and laid her dead son in my bosom. 21 And when I rose in the morning to nurse my son, behold, he was dead; but when I looked at him carefully in the morning, behold, he was not my son, whom I had borne.”*

#### 3. (:22) Conflicting Testimony of the Two Woman

##### a. Facts Disputed by the Other Woman

*“Then the other woman said, ‘No! For the living one is my son, and the dead one is your son.’”*

##### b. Back and Forth Argument with No Substantiation

*“But the first woman said, ‘No! For the dead one is your son, and the living one is my son.’”*



- c. End of the Case with No Corroborating Evidence  
*“Thus they spoke before the king.”*

**Ron Daniel:** Here are two prostitutes who have a dispute over whose baby remains alive. There is no photographic evidence, no hospital records, no DNA testing, no lie detectors. Both women stick to their stories, each arguing that they are in fact the true mother of the remaining baby. What will you do? How will you decide? Will you order that the women be given joint custody? Make your best guess?

**William Barnes:** A sense of urgency as well as frustration is conveyed by the verb (*wattedabbernah*).

## **B. (:23-27) Insightful Solution Demonstrated Solomon’s Wisdom and Discernment**

### 1. (:23) Unsolvable “She Said . . . She Said” Case

*“Then the king said, ‘The one says, This is my son who is living, and your son is the dead one; and the other says, No! For your son is the dead one, and my son is the living one.’”*

### 2. (:24-25) Unimaginable Ruling

*“And the king said, ‘Get me a sword.’ So they brought a sword before the king. 25 And the king said, ‘Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one and half to the other.’”*

**William Barnes:** This cuts through the rhetoric! Godly leadership sometimes requires discretion, sometimes radical decisiveness.

**Adam Clarke:** This was apparently a very strange decision, and such as nothing could vindicate had it been carried into execution; but Solomon saw that the only way to find out the real mother was by the affection and tenderness which she would necessarily show to her offspring. He plainly saw that the real mother would rather relinquish her claim to her child than see it hewn in pieces before her eyes, while it was probable the pretender would see this with indifference. He therefore orders such a mode of trial as would put the maternal affection of the real mother to the utmost proof; the plan was tried, and it succeeded. This was a proof of his sound judgment, penetration, and acquaintance with human nature . . .

### 3. (:26) Unthinkable Reactions Differentiate the True Mother from the False

#### a. True Mother Willing to Give Up the Child as Long as it Lives

*“Then the woman whose child was the living one spoke to the king, for she was deeply stirred over her son and said, ‘Oh, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him.’”*

#### b. False Mother Has No Concern for the Life of the Child

*“But the other said, ‘He shall be neither mine nor yours; divide him!’”*



#### 4. (:27) Unclear Decision Now Crystal Clear

*“Then the king answered and said, ‘Give the first woman the living child, and by no means kill him. She is his mother.’”*

**Philip Ryken:** It was a simple solution to a difficult dilemma. With brilliant insight and wise discernment, Solomon had devised the test that would reveal each woman’s heart.

#### Applications:

- Jesus has promised us justice, and we long for justice to be done. This is a fallen world, where we see so much injustice that sometimes we wonder when or even if everything will be made right. . . Sometimes we see justice done in this life, and sometimes we don’t, but justice will be done in the end. The wisdom of God is in Jesus to do justice, and he will make things right.
- What we are desperately hoping to receive, therefore, is not justice but mercy. However much we want other people to get what we think they deserve, deep down we know that what we need is not what we deserve, but the mercy of God.
- Marvel at his wisdom I providing such a simple solution for the most difficult dilemma of all – the problem of our sin. How could God maintain his perfect justice while at the same time showing mercy to sinners?

#### C. (:28) Reputation of Solomon Solidified

*“When all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had handed down, they feared the king; for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him to administer justice.”*

**L. M. Grant:** A case of this kind was of course reported widely, so that all Israel was made aware of the wisdom of Solomon, and people realized it would but be easy for them to get away with wrong doing by deception. They recognized that it was God's wisdom that was in Solomon (v.28).

**Robert Hawker:** Well might all Israel admire Solomon's wisdom on this occasion. And well may you and I, Reader, admire and adore Jesus, in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. He is indeed both *the wisdom of God and the power of his salvation, to every poor sinner that believeth*; and the grand object and design of redemption is, to display the grace and goodness of Jehovah in this stupendous work, *to the intent, that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God.* So that every heart interested in this great salvation may well exclaim, *Oh! the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!* **Ephesians 3:10 ; Romans 11:33.**

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is wisdom so foundational for any type of leader?
- 2) How did Solomon show his love for the Lord?
- 3) Will God give us whatever we ask for? Why or why not?
- 4) What were some of the situations in the gospel narratives where Jesus exhibited supreme wisdom in the face of complex situations or thorny questions?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Donald Wiseman:** The emphasis throughout is on Solomon's God-given wisdom (3:1–15) and his use of the gift to show that he was God's man (3:16–28). Such wisdom included ability in administration in affairs economic (4:1–19), social and military (4:20–28) as well as in learning and in culture (4:29–34). It enhanced his international standing (4:34) and was the basis for the preparation (5:13–18) and execution of work on the temple (6:1 – 9:9). The historian records Solomon's other activities (9:10–28) and describes the splendours of his kingdom, which are internationally acknowledged by the Queen of Sheba (10:1–13) and listed in detail (10:14–29). The characteristics of Solomon's wisdom and glory were not selected just to continue the picture of an ideal king by showing him in a favourable light. Throughout, and in the epilogue on his reign (11:1–13, 33), the history comments on its deficiencies in theological terms. A similar appraisal will be used to judge successive rulers against the reigns of David and Solomon. The sources for these episodes could well be the Acts (annals) of Solomon (11:41–42), which were court reports, records of legal cases and administrative state and temple archives of a kind known to have been kept by all contemporary kingdoms. .

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**Guzik: Solomon's marriages --**

i. This was not Solomon's first marriage. **1 Kings 14:21** tells us that his son Rehoboam came to the throne when he was 41 years old, and **1 Kings 11:42** tells us that Solomon reigned 40 years. This means that Rehoboam was born to his mother, a wife of Solomon named Naamah the Amonitess, before he came to the throne and before he married this daughter of Pharaoh.

ii. Solomon's multiple marriages, and marriages to foreign women, would cause great disaster in his life. Later in the Book of Nehemiah, Nehemiah was angry and frustrated

because the people of Israel married with the pagan nations around them. In rebuking the guilty, Nehemiah remembered Solomon's bad example: So I contended with them and cursed them, struck some of them and pulled out their hair, and made them swear by God, saying, "*You shall not give your daughters as wives to their sons, nor take their daughters for your sons or yourselves. Did not Solomon king of Israel sin by these things? Yet among many nations there was no king like him, who was beloved of his God; and God made him king over all Israel. Nevertheless pagan women caused even him to sin. Should we then hear of your doing all this great evil, transgressing against our God by marrying pagan women?*" (**Nehemiah 13:25-27**).

iii. The foreign wives made Solomon more than a bad example – they ruined his spiritual life. 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. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart. 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 (**1 Kings 11:1-4**).

iv. **1 Kings 11:4** says this only happened when Solomon was old, but the pattern was set with this first marriage to the Egyptian princess. It perhaps made political sense, but not spiritual sense. "Such arranged marriages were a common confirmation of international treaties, but this one was the beginning of Solomon's spiritual downfall" (**Wiseman**).

**Wiersbe:** In that day, the wise person was one who was skillful in the management of life. It meant much more than the ability to make a living; it meant the ability to make a life and make the most out of what life might bring. True wisdom involves skill in human relationships as well as the ability to understand and cooperate with the basic laws God has built into creation. Wise people not only have knowledge of human nature and of the created world, but the know how to use that knowledge in the right way at the right time. Wisdom isn't a theoretical idea or an abstract commodity; it's very practical and personal. There are many people who are smart enough to make a good living but they aren't wise enough to make a good life, a life of fulfillment that honors the Lord.

#### **Phil Layton: The Cry for Discernment**

I was always taught that Solomon asked God for wisdom. But if you look carefully at the text, it actually doesn't use the word "*wisdom*" in any of the major English translations. He asks for discernment from an "*understanding heart*" (lit. a hearing heart, truly listening to and applying God's truth) in order to judge or discern things rightly. There was another Hebrew word for wisdom that is not used for here. . .

God says clearly that Solomon “*asked for ... discernment to understand justice*” and that pleased the Lord. The ESV has “*understanding to discern what is right*” which is similar to the NKJV. Discernment to understand and obey what’s right – that is what the Lord would want all of us to ask for.

Because Solomon asked for this, it pleased the Lord so much that He gave Solomon the most blessed reign in terms of peace and prosperity of any biblical figure ever (only to be surpassed by the coming Son of David, the Lord Jesus Himself). . .

My simple definition [of discernment] would be: the ability or insight to apply wisdom or knowledge to choose what is right and prudent. **Tim Challies** suggests that ‘by studying Proverbs and other portions of the Bible, it seems that **discernment is a subset of wisdom**. There seems to be a progression from knowledge, which refers to bare facts, to wisdom, which refers to understanding moral and ethical dimensions of facts and data, to discernment, which is the **application of wisdom**. Wisdom is a prerequisite to discernment. Discernment is wisdom in action.’ (p. 57)

The Hebrew word *bin* that is sometimes translated “discernment” is more often translated “insight.” It’s an insight or prudence or perception or greater understanding of how to judge or distinguish or separate two things to determine what is best and wisest. You weigh the options, make distinctions based on God’s truth, and can make difficult decisions between what is truth and what is error (which may not be obvious to others). You can discern which path to take and which to avoid, as your insight applies biblical wisdom. Discernment is the skill of understanding and applying God’s Word with the purpose of separating truth from error and right from wrong. (p. 61)  
<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/52212124515.pdf>

**August Konkel:** David instructed Solomon to act in wisdom in order to consolidate his reign. Wisdom in that instance was to act prudently in removing rivals such as Joab, who might threaten the stability of the military (**1 Kings 2:6**), and Shimei, who still had the potential to stir up an insurrection against the throne (**2:9**). Wisdom to rule as a competent and effective king consisted of much more than acting expeditiously in securing power and control. Control established by coercive force cannot bring about justice and deliverance that characterize the rule of a good king. They might be justified in consolidating rule, but they can never be the means to the goals of good rule. Wisdom adequate for the ideals of kingship must be divinely bestowed and humbly accepted. It is the skill necessary to maintain justice in contentious situations. The legitimation of the reign of Solomon as a wise king is established in a vision that assures him of the wisdom necessary to judge a great and sometimes difficult nation (**3:9**). The challenge of his task and his readiness for it is illustrated in the story of the two prostitutes. . .

The three tasks of a king are saving, ruling, and judging. This is readily seen in the scriptural songs about kingship. In the Song of the Sea (**Ex. 15:1–18**), the Israelites celebrated the kingship of Yahweh (“*the Lord*”) over Pharaoh. The song first praises Yahweh as the “*man of war*” (v. **3**), who casts Pharaoh and his armies into the sea. The

song goes on to praise Yahweh for the redemption of his people, leading them to his holy place (v. **13**); finally the song praises the rule of Yahweh as the eternal king (v. **18**).

TEXT: 1 Kings 4:1-34

TITLE: ORDERLY ADMINISTRATION OF THE KINGDOM IN WISDOM

**BIG IDEA:**

**SOLOMON EXERCISED MAGNIFICENT WISDOM IN THE ORDERLY ADMINISTRATION OF HIS KINGDOM OF PEACE AND SECURITY AND PROSPERITY – PREFIGURING THE COMING MESSIANIC KINGDOM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This chapter ties closely with the previous chapter in extolling the wisdom of Solomon. We have already witnessed the display of that wisdom in practical matters of adjudication of complex judicial matters. Now we see that same wisdom and discernment exercised in the orderly administration of the affairs of the kingdom. Solomon understood how to delegate authority to capable leaders and how to navigate the diplomacy waters regarding relations with neighboring states. He effectively used taxation to enrich the state treasury and provide a kingdom where the people could joyfully celebrate their dominion in peace and security. His reputation captured widespread attention and adulation. This time period represented the pinnacle of the glory years for the Davidic kingdom in anticipation of the Messianic kingdom to come.

**Donald Wiseman:** Solomon’s wisdom is now shown to encompass his administration of state affairs, including his choice of cabinet members (4:1–6) and district governors (vv. 7–19) and his reordering of business to control palace and temple supplies, taxes and labour (vv. 20–28). The historian then summarizes the exceptional quality and breadth of the royal wisdom, which embraced international culture and learning (vv. 29–34).

**August Konkel:** The records show the sophistication of Solomon’s reign in contrast to the earlier stages of the kingdom and stress that his wisdom focuses on the urgent practicalities of providing an administration where the people will have prosperity and contentment (4:20). Though Solomon is famous for his thousands of proverbs on everything from a giant cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop growing out of the wall (4:33), the wisdom given to him by God that legitimizes his reign is an understanding of how to provide peace and prosperity for the people. The official records serve as a testimony to this gift of wisdom.

**I. (:1-6) MAIN OFFICIALS OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM**

**A. (:1) King of Israel**

*“Now King Solomon was king over all Israel.”*

**B. (:2-6) Listing of Main Officials**

*“And these were his officials:”*

**Iain Provan:** The chief officials are first described to us: those at the very top of the hierarchy, just one step down from the king himself.

**Constable:** Delegation of authority is a mark of wisdom in a person with more to do than he or she can personally manage effectively.

1. (:2) High Priest in Jerusalem

*“Azariah the son of Zadok was the priest;”*

**William Barnes:** The high priest in Jerusalem probably is what is meant here.

2. (:3a) Secretaries

*“Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha were secretaries;”*

**John Schultz:** “Scribe” (*spr*) or secretary (NIV) was a professional title ranging from humble writer to Secretary of State. Here the existence of two officials may mean that one covered foreign and one home affairs or, as illustrated in Assyria, that they used different methods or languages when keeping records. NEB “*adjutant-general*” emphasizes their principal administrative role based on keeping lists (*spr*).

3. (:3b) Recorder

*“Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud was the recorder;”*

**John Dummelow:** probably the keeper of the state archives (RM '*chronicler*'), though some suppose that his function was to remind the king of state matters that required his attention.

4. (:4a) Army Commander

*“and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the army;”*

5. (:4b) Priests

*“and Zadok and Abiathar were priests;”*

**MacArthur:** Zadok and Abiathar had served together as High Priests under David (**2Sa 8:17; 20:25**). Although Abiathar had been removed from priestly service and exiled (**2:26-27, 35**), he maintained his priestly title until his death.

6. (:5a) Manager of the Deputies

*“and Azariah the son of Nathan was over the deputies;”*

7. (:5b) Friend of the King

*“and Zabud the son of Nathan, a priest, was the king's friend;”*

8. (:6a) Household Manager

*“and Ahishar was over the household;”*

**Iain Provan:** Ahishar (v. 6) is in charge of the palace, i.e., the royal steward (cf. 1 Kgs. 16:9; 18:3; etc.).

9. (:6b) Forced Labor Manager

*“and Adoniram the son of Abda  
was over the men subject to forced labor.”*

## **II. (:7-19) MAIN DEPUTIES OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM**

### **A. (:7) Summary of Duties**

*“And Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, who provided for the king and his household; each man had to provide for a month in the year.”*

**Guzik:** Taxes were paid in grain and livestock, which were used to support the royal court and the central government. Each governor was responsible for one month of the year.

### **B. (:8-19) Listing of Main Deputies**

*“And these are their names:”*

**August Konkell:** The division of Israel into districts for political purposes is according to geographical areas that traditionally formed agricultural, social, and ethnic units. It is most probable that Solomon follows and reorganizes David’s district system. . .

The district governors are to levy taxes and make provision for king and court (4:7). One of their duties is to provide the royal court with food and the draft animals with fodder (4:27–28). They also assist the official responsible for the forced labor (v. 6), required for the king’s projects. Each governor is assigned one month in the year so that no period of time is missed. It is often assumed that the officers worked on a twelve month calendar, each taking a month in turn, but this is not explicit. Each of the districts varies considerably in their potential to provide tribute, so it is unlikely that they provide equal services and goods. The divisions reflect social and political realities of tribes and territories that provided a reasonable division for administration and obligation, resulting in satisfaction for everyone (v. 20).

**Constable:** The district arrangement seems designed to move Israel away from tribal independence to cooperation, and taxation, under the new centralized government. Though the district boundaries approximated the tribal boundaries, they were not the same.

1. (:8)

*“Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim;”*

2. (:9)

*“Ben-deker in Makaz and Shaalbim  
and Beth-shemesh and Elonbeth-hanan;”*



3. (:10)

*“Ben-hesed, in Arubboth (Socoh was his and all the land of Hepher);”*

4. (:11)

*“Ben-abinadab, in all the height of Dor  
(Taphath the daughter of Solomon was his wife);”*

5. (:12)

*“Baana the son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, and all Beth-shean  
which is beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-  
meholah as far as the other side of Jokmeam;”*

6. (:13)

*“Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead (the towns of Jair, the son of Manasseh,  
which are in Gilead were his: the region of Argob, which is in Bashan,  
sixty great cities with walls and bronze bars were his);”*

7. (:14)

*“Ahinadab the son of Iddo, in Mahanaim;”*

8. (:15)

*“Ahimaaz, in Naphtali  
(he also married Basemath the daughter of Solomon);”*

9. (:16)

*“Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth;”*

10. (:17)

*“Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar;”*

11. (:18)

*“Shimei the son of Ela, in Benjamin;”*

12. (:19)

*“Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the country of Sihon king of  
the Amorites and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only deputy who  
was in the land.”*

**F. W. Farrar:** We see with surprise that Judah seems to have been exempted from the burdens imposed on the other districts, and if so the impolitic exemption was a main cause of the subsequent jealousies.

### **III. (:20-28) MANIFEST PROSPERITY AND SECURITY OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM**

## A. (:20) Internal Signs of Kingdom Prosperity

### 1. Populated Land

*“Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand that is on the seashore in abundance;”*

### 2. Pleasant Living

*“they were eating and drinking and rejoicing.”*

Tone of Joy and Celebration

**Iain Provan:** The consequence of the new system of organization is that Judah and Israel ... ate ... drank ... were happy. Solomon’s concern in **3:8–9** had been that he would not be able to govern so many people. Even though the people are as numerous as the sand on the seashore (a fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise in **Gen. 22:17**), he has proved equal to the task, for his wisdom is of equal measure (as **4:29** will make explicit). He has devised an economic system that, while it ensures the royal household has enough to eat and drink, does not oppress or deprive the king’s subjects of what they need. It is government by the righteous person; when he thrives (lit. “grows great”) the people rejoice (**Prov. 29:2**). It is not government by the wicked person who makes the people groan (**Prov. 29:2**; cf. **1 Sam. 8:10–18**). This picture of harmony in Israel is, of course, implied by **1 Kings 2:5–9**—all tribal dissension is banished, and Israel and Judah are united around the king’s table as the symbol of their unity (cf. also **4:27**).

**John Schultz:** Life at the court was one of extraordinary ease and wealth. Every day was lived as a celebration as if life on earth was an image of heaven to come. **The Pulpit Commentary** comments on the king’s table: “The daily consumption of the royal household is now related to show the grandeur and luxury of the court. And it agreed well with the greatness of the kingdom. The lavish provision of Oriental palaces was evidently a subject of wonder and of boasting to the ancients, as the inscriptions and monuments show.”

## B. (:21) External Signs of Kingdom Prosperity

### 1. Geographical Dominion

*“Now Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the River to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt;”*

### 2. Tribute and Servitude

*“they brought tribute and served Solomon all the days of his life.”*

**Iain Provan: Solomon and the Nations** – The previous section, **4:1–20**, was clearly defined by its beginning and ending (“all Israel ... Judah and Israel”). It was a passage about Solomon’s rule over Israel. With **4:21** we begin a new section concerning Solomon’s rule over other kingdoms and his impact on the world more generally. It is revealed that Israel’s peace and prosperity are related to Solomon’s dominion over the surrounding kingdoms (they contribute to the prosperity and represent no threat to the peace, vv. **21–28**). It is further revealed just how great Solomon’s wisdom is: it is unsurpassed (vv. **29–34**).

**R. D. Patterson:** The countries that David had conquered remained subject to Solomon and brought him tribute throughout his reign. This was one of the noteworthy signs of God’s blessing in keeping with the Davidic covenant. The usual experience of ancient empire builders was that when the old king died, the subject nations would withhold tribute and challenge the new king in rebellion. This necessitated repeated punitive expeditions to reinforce the former king’s terms and to prove the ability of the new king to enforce his will. Solomon did not have to do this. God granted him a peaceful reign in which he could focus his energies on the temple and other building projects. He was also able to devote himself to administrative matters, to the building up of extensive and expanding foreign trade, and to his pursuit of wisdom and knowledge.

**C. (:22-23) Personal Prosperity of the King and His Court**

*“And Solomon’s provision for one day was thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal, 23 ten fat oxen, twenty pasture-fed oxen, a hundred sheep besides deer, gazelles, roebucks, and fattened fowl.”*

**Philip Ryken:** Solomon thus enjoyed what every self-respecting monarch must have: a table fit for a king. Kings do not become famous for their frugality. When people go to the palace for dinner they expect a feast, and if the king is unable to provide one, his reputation will suffer.

**D. (:24-25) Peace and Security of the Kingdom**

1. (:24) External Peace and Security Outside of the Kingdom Borders

a. Widespread Dominion

*“For he had dominion over everything west of the River, from Tiphseh even to Gaza, over all the kings west of the River;”*

b. Widespread Peace

*“and he had peace on all sides around about him.”*

**John Gill:** in which he was a type of Christ, the Prince of peace.

2. (:25) Internal Peace and Security Within the Kingdom Borders

*“So Judah and Israel lived in safety, every man under his vine and his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.”*

**Guzik:** This was a proverbial expression for a time of peace and prosperity in Israel (**Isaiah 36:16, Micah 4:4, Zechariah 3:10**), indicating safety from both internal and external enemies.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And when we dig beneath the writer’s joy we discover its foundation: **the fulfillment of Yahweh’s covenant promises.** The writer alludes to three promise components in this section.

- The first had to do with people (v. 20). He says that Judah and Israel were ‘*many—as the sand which is by the sea.*’ That is an inexact census figure, but it is covenant code from the promises to Abraham (see **Gen. 22:17**), sometimes called the seed-aspect of the promise.
- The second involves place (vv. 21, 24). These assertions about the scope of Solomon’s sway pick up the land aspect of the covenant with Abraham (**Gen. 15:18–21**), which was confirmed under the Sinaitic covenant (**Exod. 23:31; Deut. 11:24; Josh. 1:4**).
- The third component is peace (vv. 24b, 25), that is, the stability and security God designed for Israel under the Davidic covenant (**2 Sam. 7:10–11**), a foregleam of still future realities (**Mic. 4:4**).

Yahweh has heaped up fulfillments to his promises under Solomon’s regime.

#### **E. (:26-28) Military Might and Capabilities of the Kingdom**

##### 1. (:26) Abundant Numbers of Horses and Horsemen

*“And Solomon had 40,000 stalls of horses for his chariots, and 12,000 horsemen.”*

**MacArthur:** Though the Heb. text reads *40,000*, this was probably a copyist’s error in transcribing the text, and it should read *4,000* as in **2Ch 9:25**.

##### 2. (:27) Abundant Provision for King Solomon’s Table

*“And those deputies provided for King Solomon and all who came to King Solomon’s table, each in his month; they left nothing lacking.”*

##### 3. (:28) Abundant Provision for King Solomon’s Horses

*“They also brought barley and straw for the horses and swift steeds to the place where it should be, each according to his charge.”*

**Paul House:** It is interesting to realize that at this point in the story the author expresses neither approval nor disapproval of Solomon’s activities. Certainly the writer presents Solomon as a man made wise by the Lord. Of course, the people seem happy now. Yet Moses’ warnings, especially the one against collecting “*great numbers of horses*” (cf. **Deut 17:14–20**), and Samuel’s cautions against royal excesses (**1 Sam 8:10–18**) linger in the minds of seasoned readers. What long-term good can come of such traditionally non-Israelite practices?

### **IV. (:29-34) MAGNIFICENT WISDOM OF SOLOMON’S KINGDOM**

#### **A. (:29-31) Gift of Wisdom and Discernment Defined Solomon’s Reign**

##### 1. (:29) Source and Depth of This Gift of Wisdom and Discernment

*“Now God gave Solomon wisdom and very great discernment and breadth of mind, like the sand that is on the seashore.”*

2. (:30) Surpassing Nature of This Gift of Wisdom and Discernment

*“And Solomon's wisdom surpassed the wisdom of all the sons of the east and all the wisdom of Egypt.”*

3. (:31) Superlative Reputation of This Gift of Wisdom and Discernment

*“For he was wiser than all men, than Ethan the Ezrahite, Heman, Calcol and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his fame was known in all the surrounding nations.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** The one attribute most characteristic of Solomon is wisdom. Interest in wisdom was widespread in the ancient world. In the Gentile world wisdom was primarily associated with the ability to be successful. It was not a speculative discipline but intensely practical. It pertained to all walks of life . . .

He who fears the Lord receives wisdom from him, the ability to see things from God's perspective. Thus true wisdom gives discernment in spiritual and moral matters. It also enables man to discriminate between that which is helpful and that which is harmful. Every aspect of human endeavor is included: the spiritual, intellectual, secular, and practical. It covers man's relationship to God as well as his relationship to other men.

**B. (:32-33) Exercise of Wisdom and Discernment Demonstrated**

1. (:32) Form of Speech = Proverbs and Songs

*“He also spoke 3,000 proverbs, and his songs were 1,005.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Proverbs were collected in books; these *māšāl* include parables, similes, metaphors and proverb-riddles, all common in the ancient Near East from the third millennium onwards. Extensive writings from Mesopotamia and Egypt attest a similar tradition to that exercised by Solomon. The biblical book of Proverbs is said to contain 582 of Solomon's proverbs. Songs were catalogued by their initial line in antiquity. For Solomon and love songs see the Song of Solomon.

**Constable:** 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.

2. (:33) Subjects of Speech

a. Inanimate = Trees and Plants

*“And he spoke of trees, from the cedar that is in Lebanon even to the hyssop that grows on the wall;”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The cedar of Lebanon was the tallest tree with the greatest spread (cf. **5:6; Ps. 80:10**) and the Syrian hyssop (*'ezōb*) was the smallest, stunted from its usual height (50–70 cm) by growing in a wall.

b. Animate = Created Beings

*“he spoke also of animals and birds and creeping things and fish.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The sheer extent of Solomon’s wisdom, the range of his interests, is even more impressive than the quantity of his proverbs and songs. He speaks of the moral and the material and moves between living and lyrics. He appreciates the stately (cedar in Lebanon) yet notices the trivial (the hyssop sprouting out of or on the wall). His interests include both what is in the barn and what is in the lake, what graces the skies and what slithers across the kitchen floor. How liberating wisdom can be! Wisdom, Solomon shows us, is incurably and rightly curious—it ranges over the whole domain of God’s realm, joyfully investigating and describing all God’s works. Nothing is hid from the sun’s heat (**Ps. 19:6**)—nor from wisdom’s interest.

Since God has left the fingerprints of his wisdom everywhere, since there is no place where God does not furnish us with raw materials for godly thinking, Christians should be seized with a rambunctious curiosity to ponder his works, both the majestic and the mundane. The task of wisdom is joyfully to describe and investigate all God’s works. We may not be Solomons in insight, but we can gratefully examine the same data.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Wisdom based on observation of animal behavior is well represented in Proverbs (see **Forti** 1996) and is summarized in **Job 12:7–8**: *“But ask the beasts, and they will teach you; the birds of the sky, they will tell you. Or speak to the earth, it will teach you; the fish of the seas, they will inform you.”*

**Arno Gaebelin:** Creation itself was known by the great King. (See **verse 33**.) According to an apocryphal book (Wisdom of Solomon) he had knowledge of cosmogony, astronomy, the alteration of solstices, the cycles of years, the natures of wild beasts, the forces of spirits, the thoughts of men, the qualities of plants and roots. Jewish tradition even declares that he could converse with the wild beasts.

### **C. (:34) Reputation for Wisdom and Discernment Attracted Attention**

*“And men came from all peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.”*

**John Gates:** The writer here expresses himself in hyperbole. He means that Solomon’s court was open to all, and that as a wise man he attracted many important and influential visitors (cf. **ch. 10**).

\* \* \* \* \*

### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

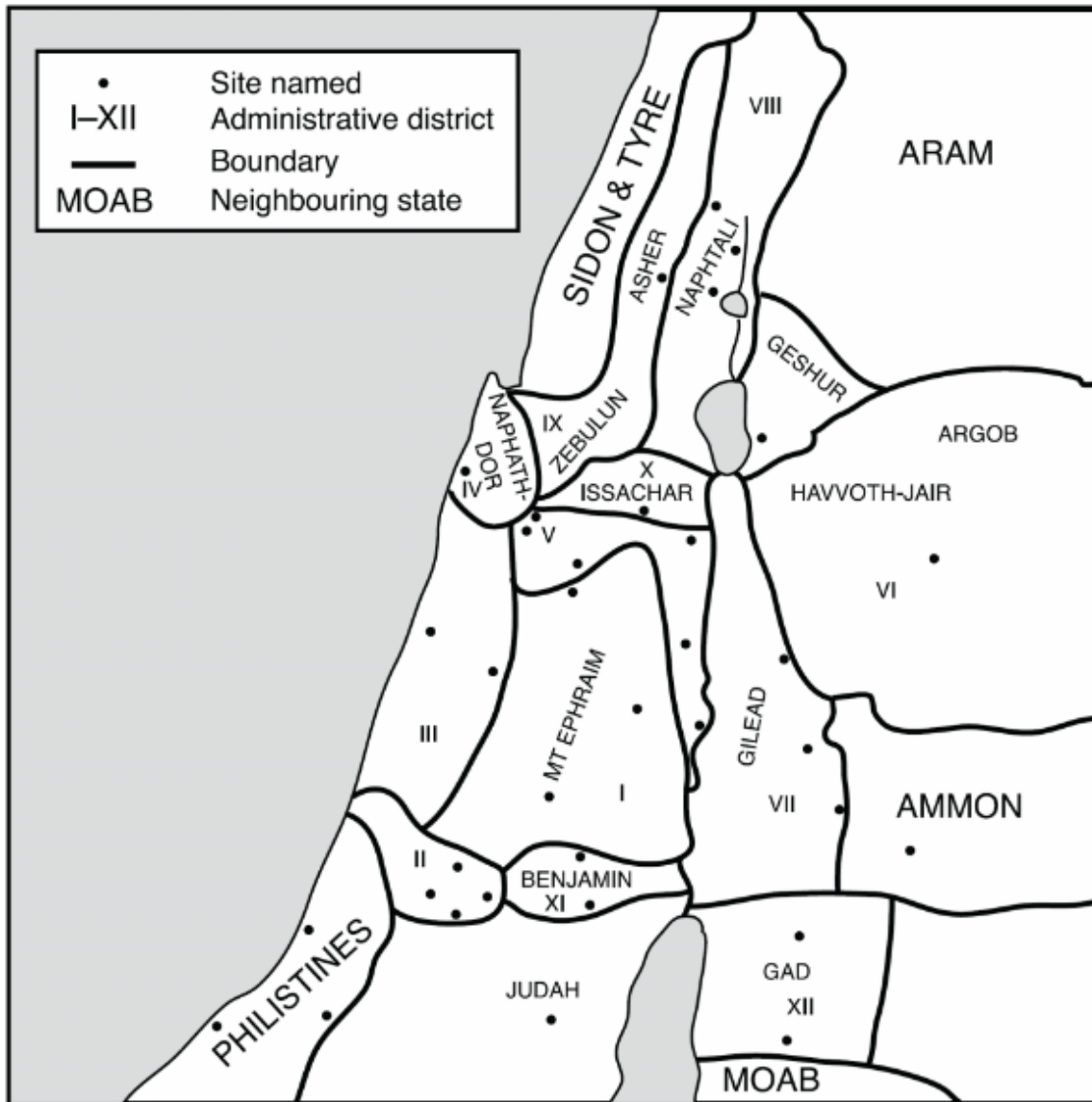
1) What are all the ways in which you picture Solomon and his kingdom here to be a type of the Lord Jesus and His coming kingdom?

- 2) What principles of leadership and effective delegation of authority can you glean from this historical account?
- 3) What was the relationship of Solomon's kingdom to the surrounding nations?
- 4) Where do you see the seeds of decline and decay that will undermine the success and grandeur of this kingdom of Solomon?

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QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

Donald Wiseman: Solomon's Administrative Districts





**Dale Ralph Davis:** These verses contain two lists:

- (1) the names of those holding cabinet posts in the state department (vv. 1–6), and
- (2) the names of the district officers with the locales of their respective jurisdictions (vv. 7–19).

This latter catalog sports some difficulties, and yet the primary function of these officers is clear: *‘they provisioned the king and his household; for a month in the year it was the responsibility of one to so provision’* (v. 7). These men made sure their districts could stock the commissary for the royal court. One catches a glimpse of their responsibility from **verses 22–23**, which tally the daily requirements for the court table. At least two of these district supervisors were Solomon’s sons-in-law (**vv. 11, 15**).

Yet what does all this have to do with anything? What does it matter to me that Zabud is the king’s personal advisor (v. 5) or that Ahinadab is over around Mahanaim rounding up royal provisions (v. 14)? Why these lists? Because they are another evidence of the wisdom God gave Solomon (**ch. 3**). The text implies that God’s gift of wisdom extends to the ordering of life and affairs. There is a wideness in biblical wisdom. It is not only concerned with moral and accurate judgments (**3:16–28**) but also with efficient and orderly structure (**4:1–19**) that keeps chaos and waste from running life. Some of us deplore having to give attention to administrative and organizational matters, and one can so tightly structure life that one squeezes the breath out of it. Nevertheless, a few moments in a chaotic home or in a workplace lacking clear lines of authority can quickly create a thirst for order. . .

Far from being the trademark of an oppressive regime, I propose that **1 Kings 3–4** want us to see the organization of Solomon’s kingdom as a reflection of wisdom from God. Does this point of view not sanctify what is frequently thought to be a most mundane ability and gift?

**August Konkel:** The reigns of David and Solomon as the unprecedented era of economic, political, and religious success are developed extensively in Chronicles. The succession of Moses and Joshua becomes a paradigm for that of David and Solomon. Both Moses and David are disqualified from achieving their chief goals. Both designate and announce their successors (**Deut. 31:2–3; 1 Chron. 22:6; 28:6–8**). Both Joshua and Solomon enjoy the wholehearted support of the people (**Josh. 1:16–18; 1 Chron. 29:23–24**) and lead the people into rest (**Josh. 21:44; 1 Chron. 22:8–9**). This highly developed unity of the two kings as the ideal period in the history of Israel is not without basis in Kings. The Conquest was not Israel’s finest hour, and certainly not the period of the judges. The inauguration of Solomon’s reign is Israel’s cultural zenith. This view of the first part of Solomon’s reign as unmitigated blessing not only demonstrates the ideal of the monarchy, but the fulfillment of the divine promise to David. . .



The very passage that extols Solomon in the success of a vast empire (4:24–25) is implicitly a warning against the failure of wisdom. Administration, taxation, and military expertise require wisdom and are a necessary provision for an empire, but the success of these items brings reliance on them. The mention of the vast number of Solomon’s horses is both a statement of his success as a wise man and his failure as a foolish man. Life in this world is never safe. Wisdom may bring the success of wealth and security, but wealth and security induce a reliance on material well-being that is a failure of wisdom. Though it is possible to have the wisdom that leads to success and the wisdom that is faithful to a trust in God, it is not easy to maintain both. Wisdom may be a victim of its own success. . .

The kingdom of Solomon began as a paragon of wise governance, making the demise of that kingdom so much more tragic. The authors of Kings regard the kingdom of Solomon as more than the achievement of good government. God has granted Solomon wisdom that gives him fame among all nations, including the renowned wise men of the east (4:29–31). His achievements are possible only through such divine provision. Mastery of the skills of governance lead to a reliance on that knowledge and a failure to depend on God. Wisdom of the fear of Yahweh is displaced with carnal pursuits. The lofty achievements of Solomon are subverted by his failure to live by the fundamental requirement that wisdom demands.

**Paul House:** Because of Israel’s size, diversity, and volatile nature, Solomon could not govern it, much less fulfill his later ambitious goals, without an extensive administrative system. Therefore, he names “*twelve district governors*” responsible for raising the revenue necessary for sustaining the central government. Four details about these appointments deserve further mention. First, Gray states that “the division of the country, if not ignoring the old tribal boundaries, was not rigidly bound by them” (cf. “Survey of Historical Issues Related to 1 Kgs 3:1–4:34”). Perhaps Solomon hoped to neutralize old enemies by linking them with non-allies.

Second, Solomon makes two of his sons-in-law, Ben-Abinadab and Ahimaaz, governors. Presumably these men could also negate enemies through their family loyalties. Third, Solomon entrusts some men with more territory than others. Though the king does reward his friends, he only places capable ones in power and allows the best of these to gain extensive authority. Again, these tendencies reveal the wisdom in Solomon’s leadership style. Fourth, through his God-given ability, Solomon manages to rule all the territory God promised to Abraham. The land Moses desired, Joshua conquered, and David subdued now lay in the hands of a man of unsurpassed wisdom.

**L. M. Grant:** In beholding the greatness and majesty of Solomon, as this chapter represents him; his riches, his courts, his retinue, his servants, and more especially his great wisdom; I desire to ascribe all due praise and glory to the Lord God of Solomon, in distinguishing his chosen with such marks of his love and favor; and to bless so bountiful a God in having given such power unto men. But from the court of Solomon, and all his grandeur, my soul desires rapidly to take wing, and flee by faith to the court of heaven, and behold Jesus in the midst of the throne, as possessing all power in

heaven and in earth. What was Solomon in all his glory compared to him who maketh the clouds his chariot, and walketh upon the wings of the wind? Nay, Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed in point of beauty like even the lilies of the field. But thy throne, blessed Jesus, as one with the Father, in the nature of the Godhead, was and is thine, from everlasting, and so must be to all eternity. And as the mediator, thou art in full right of the throne forever and ever. Methinks the thought of Solomon's court, prompts my soul to contemplate with the eye of faith the unfailing splendors of thine. Yes! heavenly King! my soul beholds thee as king over all; God blessed forever. I see thy princes like Solomon's. I view thine officers whom thou hast appointed over thine household, to give thy people meat in due season. I behold thee encircled with all the innumerable host of angels; the spirits of just men made perfect; the noble army of martyrs; the glorious company of apostles; the venerable host of patriarchs; the sacred band of prophets; the multitude which no man can number, who have come out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; the church above triumphant; the church below still militant; all Judah and Israel, and the nations that are saved by thy blood: all! all! are of thy court, and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour unto it. To thee then, King of kings, and Lord of lords, do, come to hear thy wisdom, to see thy glory, to adore thy name, and to bow my knee before thee, as my Saviour, my king, and my God.

TEXT: 1 Kings 5:1-18

TITLE: PREPARATIONS FOR TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN SOLOMON (OF ISRAEL) AND HIRAM (OF TYRE) SECURED THE MATERIALS AND MANPOWER FOR TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This section on the preparation for laying the foundation and building the temple in Jerusalem continues the theme of God's gift of wisdom to King Solomon. Even the Phoenician king, Hiram, testifies to God's blessing as he enters into this economic contract with the son of his friend King David. The details for procuring the necessary lumber, transporting it by sea, providing the costly stones for the foundation, and conscripting and deploying the necessary workforce are all spelled out here. Solomon excels in the planning and preparation for this massive project as well as in the delegation of oversight and labor responsibilities. But it is the divine promise that undergirds the successful undertaking of this highly Messianic task. The reputation and glory of the God of Israel (who is also the Sovereign of all nations) must be highlighted in this temple construction. When Messiah comes, His body will be the ultimate temple for the presence of the Lord and the focal point for worship.

**Donald Wiseman:** 5:1 – 9:9 -- The historian concentrates on Solomon's unique work in building the temple (**chapter 6**) by negotiation for supplies of wood and skills not available within Israel (**5:1–18**). The construction of the Royal Palace and Judgment Hall (**7:1–12**) is followed by the furnishing of the new buildings (**7:13–51**), the bringing in of the ark (**8:1–21**) and the dedication of the work (**8:22–66**). The account of the second appearance of God (**9:1–9**) ends like an epilogue, with the reiteration of terms for the blessing of the dynasty, just as had the prologue when the work was begun (**3:4–14**).

**August Konkkel:** Solomon's preparations for building are described in two sections. The first section (**vv. 1–12**) explains the alliance between Hiram and Solomon through which Solomon acquires the necessary materials and craftsmen. The second section (**vv. 13–18**) describes the workforce that Solomon marshals to accomplish his building projects. Though the two sections are complementary to each other, they are different in character. In the first section the prophetic authors recount the diplomatic exchange between Solomon and Hiram in terms that specifically recall the Davidic promise. Solomon's resolve to build the temple (**v. 5**) repeats the very words of the promise to David concerning his son (**2 Sam. 7:13**). The second section has the character of administrative records, detailing the number of conscripted workers, the procedures of rotation, the supervisors, and those responsible for the various aspects of skilled work.

**Constable:** The main emphasis in this chapter is on the favorable response of the Phoenician king, Hiram, with which God blessed Israel through Solomon's wisdom (v. 7). Solomon wrote that "*when a person's ways please the Lord, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him*" (**Prov. 16:7**). Such was God's blessing on Solomon at this time.

## **I. (:1-12) PROCURING THE MATERIALS FOR TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION**

### **A. (:1) Background = Friendship between King of Tyre and King of Israel**

*"Now Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, when he heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father, for Hiram had always been a friend of David."*

**Dilday:** Hiram is an abbreviation of Ahiram which means 'Brother of Ram,' or 'My brother is exalted,' or 'Brother of the lofty one'... Archaeologists have discovered a royal sarcophagus in Byblos of Tyre dated about 1200 b.c. inscribed with the king's name, 'Ahiram.' Apparently it belonged to the man in this passage.

**Donald Wiseman:** Hiram ruled Tyre c. 969–936 bc (and possibly as co-regent with his father Abi-Baal from c. 980 bc). He was on friendly terms with David (translates Heb. *'ohēb*, 'love' as used of a close covenant relationship, e.g. **Deut. 6:5; Matt. 22:37**). A trade treaty gave Tyre access to inland trade across Israel to Judah, the Red Sea and Transjordan.

**MacArthur:** Tyre was an important port city on the Mediterranean Sea N of Israel. Two towering mountain ranges ran within Lebanon's borders, and on their slopes grew thick forests of cedars.

### **B. (:2-6) Economic Contract to Secure the Necessary Lumber Proposed by Solomon**

*"Then Solomon sent word to Hiram, saying,"*

**Donald Wiseman:** The next section (vv. 2–6) is typical diplomatic correspondence naming the addressee (v. 2), giving reference to previous contacts (vv. 3, 5) and making the opening gambit for a specific economic agreement (v. 6). 2 Chronicles 2 gives additional details. David had himself planned to build the temple but was unable to carry this out because of the unstable conditions resulting from war (**2 Sam. 7:1–16**) and his family's inexperience (**1 Chr. 22:2–5**). This does not conflict with the statement that his failure to do the work was because he was a warrior and had shed blood (**1 Chr. 28:3**). David himself recognized that it would not be feasible before his death and the final victory (v. 5, **2 Sam. 7:12–13**). Many a contemporary king who had been to war built temples.

#### 1. (:3-4) Intentions of Solomon in Line with Desires of David

##### a. (:3) King David Surrounded by Wars

*"You know that David my father was unable to build a house for*

*the name of the LORD his God because of the wars which surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet.”*

**Constable:** "A house for the name of the Lord" (v. 3) means a house for Yahweh that would communicate His reputation to the world.

b. (:4) King Solomon Secured by Peace

*“But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side; there is neither adversary nor misfortune.”*

2. (:5) Intentions of Solomon in Line with Divine Prophecy

*“And behold, I intend to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, 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.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh’s promise, then, drives Solomon’s project. It is important to see this. The real foundation of the temple does not consist of huge blocks of stone; the temple rests upon the promise of Yahweh. . . The promise of **2 Samuel 7:13** shows that Yahweh wanted the temple built in its time. It was the sacrament of his presence among his people.

Is there not, however, a principle of ministry implicit in this text for all Yahweh’s servants? Does it not say that **kingdom promises encourage kingdom work**? It is Yahweh’s clear assurance to David (v. 5) that is both the justification and stimulus for Solomon’s venture. Is this not always the case? Is it not because we have—and believe—Yahweh’s promises that we serve and labor for him? Let me reduce the principle to bare bones: **eschatology drives ministry**. It is precisely because we have these big kingdom promises like **Micah 4:1–4, Habakkuk 2:13–14, Daniel 7:13–14, and Matthew 24:29–31** that we remain on our feet and do not lose heart. Where does the energy come for ministry unless from solid promises from God’s own mouth? Someone will say they are very old promises. . . So Yahweh’s promises may seem very distant but they will prove very accurate. And that is the foundation of kingdom labor.

**Donald Wiseman:** here the Name refers to the person of God and his self-revelation, presence and ownership (**Exod. 20:24; Deut. 12:5**).

3. (:6) Intentions of Solomon Require this Economic Contract with Hiram

*“Now therefore, command that they cut for me cedars from Lebanon, and my servants will be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you say, for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians.”*

**MacArthur:** The cedars of Lebanon symbolized majesty and might (**Ps 92:12; Eze 31:3**). Because it was durable, resistant to rot and worms, closely grained, and could be polished to a fine shine, its wood was regarded as the best timber for building.

**John Gates:** Having taken hundreds of years to grow, these trees were valuable for building purposes because of the beauty of the wood and its extreme bitterness, which repelled insects and worms, and therefore it did not decay as rapidly as other woods.

**C. (:7-9) Modifications to the Contract Proposed by Hiram**

1. (:7) Recognition of Solomon's Gift of Wisdom from the Lord

*"And it came about when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly and said, 'Blessed be the LORD today, who has given to David a wise son over this great people.'"*

2. (:8-9) Ratifying the Details of the Contract

a. (:8) Provision of Lumber for Solomon's Temple Project

*"So Hiram sent word to Solomon, saying, 'I have heard the message which you have sent me; I will do what you desire concerning the cedar and cypress timber.'"*

b. (:9a) Division of Labor

*"My servants will bring them down from Lebanon to the sea; and I will make them into rafts to go by sea to the place where you direct me, and I will have them broken up there, and you shall carry them away."*

**William Barnes:** Such transportation by sea was the only practicable method of movement to the Israelite region; **2 Chr 2:16** further specifies that the rafts would be broken apart at the seaport of Joppa. An Assyrian bas-relief from the palace of Sargon in Khorsabad (c. 710 bc) depicting such rafts is now in the Louvre Museum in Paris (see the picture in Aubet 1993:33, figure 9).

**Paul House:** vv. **8-12** -- Hiram's return message basically agrees to Solomon's requests in **5:6**. Tyre will provide "*cedar and pine logs*" by floating "*them in rafts by sea to the place you specify*." Two alterations are made in Solomon's request. The men from Tyre and Israel will not work together, and Hiram wants food for the "*royal household*" instead of wages for his workers. These terms are met, the nations remain at peace, the kings make a treaty, and temple construction is under way. Again, this whole episode demonstrates God's gracious giving of wisdom to Solomon.

c. (:9b) Provision of Food for Hiram's Household

*"Then you shall accomplish my desire by giving food to my household."*

**August Konkel:** The political loyalty between Hiram and Solomon was probably based on a mutual need. Israel lacked technical skills for advancing its material culture, and Phoenicia lacked adequate agricultural production. Hiram took the initiative in affirming Solomon's accession to the throne. Palestine became Phoenicia's granary,

supplying agricultural products for the king's household and workers. In return Solomon received skilled labor and materials for his massive building projects.

**D. (:10-11) Execution of the Contract**

1. (:10) Hiram Fulfilled the Contract

*“So Hiram gave Solomon as much as he desired of the cedar and cypress timber.”*

2. (:11) Solomon Fulfilled the Contract

*“Solomon then gave Hiram 20,000 kors of wheat as food for his household, and twenty kors of beaten oil; thus Solomon would give Hiram year by year.”*

**E. (:12) Blessing of the Lord on this Alliance**

1. Promised Wisdom

*“And the LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He promised him;”*

2. Peace

*“and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon,”*

3. Pact

*“and the two of them made a covenant.”*

**II. (:13-18) PROVIDING THE MANPOWER FOR TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION**

**A. (:13-14) Conscription and Deployment of Forced Laborers**

1. (:13) Conscription of Forced Laborers

a. Nationality

*“Now King Solomon levied forced laborers from all Israel;”*

b. Number

*“and the forced laborers numbered 30,000 men.”*

**Paul House:** Scholars disagree about the identity of the thirty thousand Israelite laborers mentioned in **5:13**. Part of the problem stems from **1 Kgs 9:20–22**, which describes Solomon's forced labor, then states, *“But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites”* (**9:22**). **Gray, Skinner, Matheney**, and others think these two references (**5:13–18** and **9:20–22**) contradict each other. **Keil, Patterson** and **Austel**, and **Jones** disagree. Linguistic analysis may help explain the perceived contradiction, since the text uses different terminology to describe the laborers in **5:13–18** and **9:20–22**. In the former text they are called simply “laborers” (*mas*) while in the latter they are called “servant [slave] laborers” (*mas 'obēd*). Apparently, the Israelite workers were required only to toil four months of the year until the task was done. Forced labor does not necessarily entail slavery. On the other hand, foreign workers were permanently assigned to forced labor.



**Wiersbe:** Even though the conscription involved a very small portion of the male citizens, the Jewish people resented Solomon taking 30,000 of their men to work in Lebanon four months out of the year. This critical attitude helped to strengthen the people's revolt against Rehoboam and to precipitate the division of the nation after Solomon's death (**12:1-21**). Indeed, when it came to labor and taxes, Solomon did indeed put a heavy yoke on the people.

2. (:14a) Deployment of Forced Laborers

a. Relays

*"And he sent them to Lebanon, 10,000 a month in relays;"*

b. Rotation

*"they were in Lebanon a month and two months at home."*

3. (:14b) Oversight of Forced Laborers

*"And Adoniram was over the forced laborers."*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Let us return to the main point: **verses 13–18** are to be seen in the light of **verse 12**. The administration, organization, and delegation involved in assembling and directing the temple labor force, the arrangements for obtaining stone and wood—all these flow from the wisdom Yahweh had given Solomon. Sometimes in the Bible wisdom is the skill to get things done (e.g. **Eccles. 10:10**). And, so the text implies, it is important to remember that it is a divine gift, not merely a human aptitude.

**B. (:15-16) Structure of the Workforce**

1. (:15) Multitude of Workers

a. Transporters

*"Now Solomon had 70,000 transporters,"*

b. Stonecutters

*"and 80,000 hewers of stone in the mountains,"*

2. (:16) Multitude of Supervisors

*"besides Solomon's 3,300 chief deputies who were over the project and who ruled over the people who were doing the work."*

**C. (:17-18) Initial Tasks**

1. (:17) Quarrying Costly Stones for the Foundation

*"Then the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house with cut stones."*

**John Gates:** The term *foundation* refers both to the foundation of the Temple proper and to that of its related structures.

2. (:18) Preparing the Building Materials

*"So Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders and the Gebalites cut them,*



*and prepared the timbers and the stones to build the house.”*

**August Konkel:** Thirty thousand workers serve for three-month periods, making an annual total of one hundred twenty thousand men. The rotation consists of one month of work in Lebanon and two months of work on the temple in Jerusalem. Hiram has determined that his workers will bring the wood down from Lebanon (v. 9), but according to this description they are assisted by Solomon’s work force as well.

In addition to the wood workers there are seventy thousand workers transporting materials and eighty thousand quarrying rock in the hills of Palestine. Three thousand three hundred supervising officials provide a ratio of one officer for every thirty-five workers. The amount of labor required to quarry and shape the stones to lay the foundation of the temple makes them costly (v. 17). The concluding verse explains that Solomon’s workers are assisted by the men of Gebal to finish the stone and wood in preparation for the temple construction.

**Paul House:** The forced laborers had two simple yet time-consuming and backbreaking tasks. They were to quarry and fashion the temple’s huge foundation stones. They also “*cut and prepared the timber and stone*” necessary for the main portion of the temple. Given the nature of this work, it is no wonder many men were needed, and it is no wonder only conscripted men would attempt the task.

**Constable:** The stones were used primarily for the foundation of the temple. But there was also a stone wall, a section of which is still in existence. The first few rows of stone blocks that make out the present “Wailing Wall” are the only remaining parts of what used to be Solomon’s temple.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Is Solomon dealing with Hiram as with a vassal king subject to his dominion or as with an equal sovereign?
- 2) What aspects of the wisdom of Solomon are displayed in this chapter?
- 3) How does this passage speak to the motivation to pursue excellence in our church ministries?
- 4) What type of foundation has God provided for His church?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** First, this temple construction story possesses the same **structure** as a large number of extra-biblical building accounts. This pattern included:

- (1) decision/authorization to build (cf. **5:1–5**);
- (2) acquisition of building materials (cf. **5:6–18**);
- (3) actual building process with description of buildings and furnishings (cf. **chs. 6–7**);
- (4) dedication of temple, including dedicatory prayer (cf. **ch. 8**); and
- (5) divine blessing on king (cf. **9:1–9**).

**Victor Hurowitz** argues that this is the pattern of a typical ancient Near Eastern building story. The biblical account fits this pattern, which tells us, among other things, that we are dealing with a coherent and orderly block of material. According to ancient standards, it is a unified account.

Secondly, **archaeological evidence** indicates that this description of Solomon's temple bears all the marks of authenticity, i.e. it fits the times. It is not that we have direct physical evidence of Solomon's temple. There are reasons why we cannot expect that: the Babylonian destruction in 587 bc; Herod the Great's complete alteration of the temple mount around 20 bc; the restriction on extensive archaeological work there due to combined Muslim, Christian, and Jewish claims on the area as a holy site. However, other Iron Age structures have been unearthed and Solomon's temple as described fits in well with these discoveries. Solomon's temple matches with other specimens in its tripartite plan, its dimensions (within range of others), its chisel-dressed blocks, its decorations and furnishings. For example, **William Dever** has written:

Even the smallest details of these decorations in the biblical text now ring true. The '*gourds, open flowers, cherubs, and palm trees*' (**1 Kgs. 6:18, 29**) can all be paralleled and were apparently favorite motifs that were carved not only on wooden wall panels, but also in masonry and especially on ivory inlays for furniture.

**Dever** concludes his survey by observing that 'the biblical texts, at least the vivid descriptions in 1 Kings, would appear to be based on early, authentic eyewitness accounts.' This doesn't solve all problems in these chapters, but it helps to know that we are dealing with the tabulations of a sober observer, rather than the fabrications of an inebriated propagandist.

**Iain Provan:** Solomon had suggested to Hiram a co-operative venture ("*my men will work with yours,*" v. 6) and, possibly (although the Hb. is ambiguous), that Hiram should set the level of wages to be paid to his men. Hiram responds with proposals of his own. He suggests that his own men alone should deal with the cutting and the transporting of the wood down the coast to Israel and that Solomon's men should be involved only after this has been done (v. 9). The "*wages,*" moreover, are to be paid not to the laborers, but to his royal household in the form of food supplies (v. 9). It is this second proposal upon which the narrative focuses in the first instance, describing

Solomon's compliance with it (v. 11). Solomon thus gets what he wanted (Hb. *hepes*, vv. 8, 10) in the shape of the materials for the temple, but so too Hiram has his wish (Hb. *hepes*, v. 9) for provisions granted. For the first time we hear of goods leaving rather than entering Israel, of another king besides Solomon having his household well catered for. It is a happy arrangement, sealed by a treaty (v. 12): an arrangement that is testimony to the wisdom God has given to Solomon (v. 12).

What are the implications? Is the treaty between equals? It is certainly true that Solomon treats Hiram, not as a vassal who is required to supply goods and men to his overlord, but rather as someone who is to be worked with cooperatively. It is also true that Solomon is prepared to enter into a degree of negotiation on the matter. Does this imply equality, or is it merely that Solomon in his wisdom has chosen to “rule” in a way least likely to cause himself trouble? We must read the end of the story for the answer. **5:13–18** / It is often overlooked that by **verse 13** we have heard nothing more about Hiram's first counter proposal to Solomon about work methods (v. 9). Yet this issue, picked up now in **verses 13–18**, is crucial to a proper understanding of the relationship between the two kings as it is presented in **5:1–18**. The point is this: the narrative proceeds as if Hiram had said nothing about work methods at all! In spite of his attempt to avoid cooperation of the sort that Solomon sought in **verse 6**, it is exactly such cooperation that we find described in **verses 14 and 18**. A task force was dispatched to Lebanon in shifts to help with the timber (vv. 13–14), the Israelites spending one month working in Lebanon and then two months at home. At the same time another group was working in the hills (lit. “*on the mountain*,” we know not where), cutting and collecting the stone for the foundation (vv. 15–17). The whole venture involved not only the craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram but also the men of Gebal (Byblos), on the coast to the north of Tyre. Solomon has had his own way—although he is happy to negotiate with Hiram to a certain extent, he is also prepared to ignore terms that do not suit him. It seems, then, that Solomon's “*rule*” over the kingdoms mentioned in **4:21** is real enough, even if he chooses (in his wisdom) to deal in friendly ways with some of the kings over whom he is dominant. Cooperation there may be, but it is cooperation between a senior partner and a junior who ultimately has no ability to resist his will. This becomes even more apparent in **1 Kings 9:10–10:29**, where it also becomes obvious who is the real beneficiary of the “*treaty*” between the two kings.

**John Davis:** As Solomon began to make preparations for the building of the temple, he was contacted by Hiram, king of Tyre, who had had earlier trade agreements with David (v. 1; cf. **II Sam. 5:11**). Since the land was now enjoying relative peace (vv. 3–4), it was possible for Solomon to initiate and complete the building of the temple. A formal written agreement was drawn up between Solomon and Hiram including not only the exchange of materials, but also laborers (cf. vv. 6–12 and **II Chron. 2:11**). Josephus stated that copies of the letters between Hiram and Solomon were still in existence in the days of Menandar (c. 300 B.C.) and could be seen in the archives of Tyre. In order to guarantee success for the project, Solomon “*raised a levy out of all Israel*” (v. 13) and as far as can be determined this was the first major levy ever raised from the tribes. During the reign of David, strangers were used in this manner (**I Chron. 22:2**), and apparently Israelites were used only in a limited way. It will be

remembered that Samuel warned Israel that such a policy would result from monarchical leadership as Israel desired it (**1 Sam. 8:16**). The requirement for those taken in levy was that they were to work one month out of three (**v. 14**). This was done in order that there would not be widespread discontent. Much of the skilled work, however, was done by Hiram's men who were known for their outstanding ability (**vv. 6, 18**). The use of the word "*stonesquarers*" (**v. 18**) is probably not the best translation of the Hebrew. The correct reading of the Hebrew text is "*Giblites*." These were the inhabitants of Gebal or Byblos (cf. Ezek. 27:9), an important coastal city of Phoenicia.

While Solomon achieved a high degree of organization and effective production, it led to rapid and widespread bureaucratization in his kingdom. This, in turn, led to the rapid decline of tribal rights and reduction of the force of covenant law. That Solomon's policies ultimately led to widespread discontent is made clear when Rehoboam took the throne after Solomon's death (cf. **1 Kings 12:3-4**). While the days of Solomon were indeed the golden days of monarchical success, they were also days of personal and tribal humiliation. Solomon's success came at the high price of individual freedom and tribal sovereignty.

**Robert Hawker:** It is impossible to behold Solomon laying the foundation stone for the temple without carrying our thoughts to the contemplation of that foundation stone which God hath laid in Zion: a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation. Oh! precious Jesus! thou art indeed a foundation stone, for other foundation can no man lay. Thou art most firm, most durable, most strong, and lasting, even eternal. And as thou art so precious in God my Father's view; so, dearest Lord, be thou everlastingly in mine. On thee hath Jehovah built his church. On thee do I, through his blessed Spirit, build my whole salvation. And as Solomon's builders, and Hiram's builders, did hew and square the stones for the temple, so, blessed Jesus, thou almighty master-builder, (for thou hath chosen and hewn me out of the quarry of nature), do thou polish my soul by regeneration, and rear up a structure of grace in my heart, that I may be an holy temple to the Lord.

TEXT: 1 Kings 6:1-38

TITLE: *DETAILS OF THE TEMPLE CONSTRUCTION*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE GLORIOUS MAJESTIC PRESENCE OF THE LORD DESERVES COSTLY BUILDING MATERIALS AND COVENANT OBEDIENCE THAT COMMUNICATE PURITY, HOLINESS AND BEAUTY ACCENTUATING OUR PRIVILEGE OF ACCESS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

How casual are we in our approach to the Lord? A study of the construction of Solomon's Temple should elevate our sense of privilege of the access we have to the glorious majestic presence of the God the Universe. We need to recapture a sense of the glory of the Lord; of His beauty; of His holiness; of His purity; of how precious He should be to His redeemed who can only enter His presence by the blood of His Son.

**Bob Henkins:** After their exodus from the bonds of slavery in Egypt, God revealed to Moses the blue print of the tabernacle. From that time on, the children of God dreamed of building a permanent house for their God in the Promised Land. Finally that time arrived. God allowed Solomon to build the temple in Jerusalem. It would be the place, where God's eyes and ears would be. It would be a house of prayer for all nations. It would be God's dwelling place on earth. And in the center, the very heart of the temple, would be the inner sanctuary, called "*the Holy of Holies.*" And in this most holy place, the Ark of the Covenant would be set. The Mercy Seat was placed on top of the Ark, and upon this seat sat the power, presence and glory of God, ever present, shining the wonderful light of God' mercy. This was the biggest building project in its day.

[https://iitubf.org/sermons/2014/10/12/building\\_the\\_temple.html](https://iitubf.org/sermons/2014/10/12/building_the_temple.html)

**William Sanford LaSor:** The Temple was not intended to house a congregation, neither was it a private chapel for the king. It was built to house the ark and to symbolize the presence of Yahweh.

**R. D. Patterson:** The general symbolism of the temple as the place that God indwells is continued in the church age in the temple that is the individual believer's body and in the temple that is the corporate body of believers, the church.

**Philip Graham Ryken:** emphasizes the following features of the temple and what they reveal about the person of God:

- His Beauty
- His Magnificent Glory – seen in the abundance of pure gold
- His Holiness
- Doors providing the entrance into His Presence

There was a time when God lived in Solomon's house, but his long-range plan is for us to come and live in his house, the palace of paradise.

## **I. (:1-10) EXTERIOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE**

### **A. (:1) Timing in Redemptive History**

*“Now it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year after the sons of Israel came 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.”*

**August Konkel:** The introduction sets the month in which the foundation is laid in reference to the Exodus. This is significant for two reasons.

(1) The temple represents the worldview of the Israelites that Yahweh rules in all the earth (e.g., **Ps. 24:1**), so they calculate their chronology from the founding of the temple.

(2) The Exodus is the redemptive event through which the Israelites experience the rule of God in the world (**Ex. 15:13, 18; Ps. 24:6–10**). The details of the temple are chronologically linked to the salvation event, which the temple represents.

**John Davis:** The chronological information supplied in this verse is of great importance to Bible students. If it is numerically correct, the date of the exodus must be placed in the middle of the fifteenth century B.C. According to the information supplied, the fourth year of Solomon represented a point in time which was 480 years after the exodus from Egypt. The fourth year of Solomon is generally regarded as being 967/966 B.C. This being the case, the exodus would have taken place approximately 1445 B.C.

### **B. (:2-3) Dimensions**

#### 1. (:2) Length / Width / Height

*“As for the house which King Solomon built for the LORD, its length was sixty cubits and its width twenty cubits and its height thirty cubits.”*

**John Davis:** exactly twice the size of the tabernacle (cf. **Exod. 26:16, 18**). If the cubit is regarded as eighteen inches, then the floor plan of the temple would have been 90 X 30 feet. The temple proper was divided into two sections. The inner room or the most Holy Place was a cube measuring 20 X 20 X 20 cubits (**6:16, 20**). The other room or the outer chamber called the Holy Place measured 40 X 20 cubits.

#### 2. (:3) Porch

*“And the porch in front of the nave of the house was twenty cubits in length, corresponding to the width of the house, and its depth along the front of the house was ten cubits.”*

### **C. (:4-6) Specific Details**

#### 1. (:4) Windows with Artistic Frames

*“Also for the house he made windows with artistic frames.”*

**MacArthur:** Placed high on the inner side of the temple wall, these openings had lattices or shutters capable of being opened, shut, or partially opened. They served to let out the vapors of the lamps and the smoke of incense, as well as to give light.

2. (:5) Side Chambers

*“And against the wall of the house he built stories encompassing the walls of the house around both the nave and the inner sanctuary; thus he made side chambers all around.”*

**MacArthur:** It provided rooms off of the main hall to house temple personnel and to store equipment and treasure (cf. **7:51**).

3. (:6) Differing Widths for the 3 Stories

*“The lowest story was five cubits wide, and the middle was six cubits wide, and the third was seven cubits wide; for on the outside he made offsets in the wall of the house all around in order that the beams should not be inserted in the walls of the house.”*

**William Sanford LaSor:** The three stories, each of which is wider than the one below it, suggest some kind of buttressing of the outer walls, with the use of the space above the stages or levels of the buttress.

**D. (:7) Stone Construction**

*“And the house, while it was being built, was built of stone prepared at the quarry, and there was neither hammer nor axe nor any iron tool heard in the house while it was being built.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** As an iron tool was thought to violate a holy structure, the dressing of the stone would have to be done at the quarry (cf. **Exod. 20:25**).

**R. D. Patterson:** It is not necessary to see here, with **Gray** (*Kings*, p. 165), a concession to the “long-standing taboo in the religion of Israel” against using iron in the construction of the altar (Exod 20:25), since iron was indeed used at the quarries. It does indicate excellent organization and planning. The erection of the temple could go much faster and with far less confusion by utilizing precut and prefitted materials. In addition the relative quiet would be consistent with the sacredness of the undertaking.

**E. (:8) Doorway and Stairs**

*“The doorway for the lowest side chamber was on the right side of the house; and they would go up by winding stairs to the middle story, and from the middle to the third.”*

**F. (:9-10) Finishing Details**

1. (:9a) Summary of Basic Construction

*“So he built the house and finished it;”*



## 2. (:9b-10) Special Features

*“and he covered the house with beams and planks of cedar.  
He also built the stories against the whole house, each five cubits high;  
and they were fastened to the house with timbers of cedar.”*

**August Konkel:** The description of the exterior concludes with a statement that the building has been completed (**v. 9a**); this is followed by a parenthetical note on the construction of the roof, the room extensions around the sides of the building, and the exterior paneling (**vv. 9b–10**).

## **II. (:11-13) COVENANT REMINDER**

*“Now the word of the LORD came to Solomon saying,”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Solomon’s personal fidelity to Yahweh’s covenant law is the condition for Yahweh’s gracious presence among his people through the temple. How critical one man’s obedience will be. And one must interrupt a construction report to underscore it.

### **A. (:12a) Covenant Obligation**

*“Concerning this house which you are building,  
if you will walk in My statutes and execute My ordinances  
and keep all My commandments by walking in them,”*

### **B. (:12b-13) Covenant Blessing**

#### 1. (:12b) Fulfilment of Davidic Promises

*“then I will carry out My word with you  
which I spoke to David your father.”*

#### 2. (:13) Personal Presence of Favor and Protection

*“And I will dwell among the sons of Israel,  
and will not forsake My people Israel.”*

**Wiersbe:** The Lord reminded Solomon, as He must constantly remind us, that He’s not impressed with our work if our walk isn’t obedient to Him. What He wants is an obedient heart (**Eph. 6:6**). God would fulfill His promises to David and Solomon (**2 Sam. 7**), not because Solomon built the temple but because he obeyed the Word of the Lord. A similar warning was included in the covenant God gave Moses in **Deuteronomy 28-30**, so it was not a new revelation to Solomon. This was the second time God spoke to Solomon about obedience (see **3:5ff**), and He would speak to him about it again after the dedication of the temple (**9:3-9**).

## **III. (:14-38) INTERIOR CONSTRUCTION OF THE TEMPLE**

### **A. (:14) Summary Statement**

*“So Solomon built the house and finished it.”*



## **B. (:15-18) Interior Walls for the Holy Place**

### 1. (:15) Boards of Cedar and Cypress

*“Then he built the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the ceiling he overlaid the walls on the inside with wood, and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress.”*

### 2. (:16) Rear Room = Holy of Holies = Inner Sanctuary

*“And he built twenty cubits on the rear part of the house with boards of cedar from the floor to the ceiling; he built them for it on the inside as an inner sanctuary, even as the most holy place.”*

**John Gates:** Thus the entire Temple building contained two main rooms,

- (1) the Holy of Holies and
- (2) the Holy Place before it, sixty feet long (**6:17**), reminiscent of the arrangement of the Tabernacle.

Sliding doors separating the two chambers replaced the former curtain (**6:31, 32**).

### 3. (:17) Length of the Holy Place

*“And the house, that is, the nave in front of the inner sanctuary, was forty cubits long.”*

### 4. (:18) Special Carvings

*“And there was cedar on the house within, carved in the shape of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar, there was no stone seen.”*

**John Gates:** From the floor to the ceiling, the entire interior of the Temple was covered with cypress boards, so that that stone construction was hidden. The decoration of this section of the Temple, which consisted of cedar wood carved in gourds and open flower designs, must have been very beautiful.

## **C. (:19-36) Inner Sanctuary of the Holy of Holies**

### 1. (:19-22) Summary of the Holy of Holies

- a. (:19) **Purpose** of the Inner Sanctuary = for the Ark of the Covenant

*“Then he prepared an inner sanctuary within the house in order to place there the ark of the covenant of the LORD.”*

- b. (:20a) **Dimensions** of the Inner Sanctuary

*“And the inner sanctuary was twenty cubits in length, twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height,”*

- c. (:20b-22) **Glory** of the Inner Sanctuary – Costly Pure Gold

*“and he overlaid it with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar with cedar. 21 So Solomon overlaid the inside of the house with*

*pure gold. And he drew chains of gold across the front of the inner sanctuary; and he overlaid it with gold. 22 And he overlaid the whole house with gold, until all the house was finished. Also the whole altar which was by the inner sanctuary he overlaid with gold.”*

**Constable:** 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).

**MacArthur:** Gold was beaten into fine sheets, and then hammered to fit over the beautifully embellished wood (vv. 18, 29), then attached to every surface in the temple proper, both in the Holy Place and in the Most Holy Place, so that no wood or stone was visible (v. 22).

## 2. (:23-28) Cherubim in the Holy of Holies

### a. (:23-26) Construction Details

*“Also in the inner sanctuary he made two cherubim of olive wood, each ten cubits high. 24 And five cubits was the one wing of the cherub and five cubits the other wing of the cherub; from the end of one wing to the end of the other wing were ten cubits. 25 And the other cherub was ten cubits; both the cherubim were of the same measure and the same form. 26 The height of the one cherub was ten cubits, and so was the other cherub.”*

**August Konkel:** Cherubs were a distinguishing feature of thrones in ancient Mesopotamia, Syria, and Canaan. **Keel** provides numerous examples of cherub thrones comparable to those of Solomon’s temple. They were composite creatures (a bull, a lion, an eagle, and a human head), signifying union of the highest powers of strength, speed, and sagacity. Reproductions of ancient Egyptian temples found in Phoenicia show the throne of the deity supported by two animals. The sides of ancient Canaanite thrones were commonly shaped as a cherub. The cherubs of Solomon’s temple (vv. 23–28) are distinct because they are not designed to serve as a human throne. They are attached to the ark, which serves as a footstool to the throne (cf. 1 Chron. 28:2), with the wings touching in the middle and extending to the walls of the throne room. There is no actual seat to the throne, since none is necessary. They are made of costly wild olive wood and are covered with gold.

**William Sanford LaSor:** These cherubim are not to be confused with the cherubim of the mercy seat (Ex. 25:18-20).

**R. D. Patterson:** These composite figures (cf. Ezek 1:4-14) represented the cherubim associated with the throne and government of God (Ezek. 1:22-28). They are also the guardians of the way to God (Gen 3:24). The impact to the beholder of these representations of the cherubim would be to impress on him the awesomeness of God’s holiness. Approaching God is not a light or frivolous matter and must be undertaken in

the exact way he has prescribed – through the blood.

b. (:27) Placement and Impact of the Cherubim

*“And he placed the cherubim in the midst of the inner house, and the wings of the cherubim were spread out, so that the wing of the one was touching the one wall, and the wing of the other cherub was touching the other wall. So their wings were touching each other in the center of the house.”*

c. (:28) Overlay with Gold

*“He also overlaid the cherubim with gold.”*

3. (:29-30) Other Adornments

a. (:29) Special Carvings

*“Then he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved engravings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, inner and outer sanctuaries.”*

b. (:30) Gold Overlay

*“And he overlaid the floor of the house with gold, inner and outer sanctuaries.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Above all, I suggest that the splendor of the temple is meant to reflect the splendor of Israel’s God, that the temple’s **gold** points to Yahweh’s **glory**. It was a world in which kings built or refurbished lavish temples as appropriate tributes to their gods and goddesses. In such a world why should Yahweh look like a discount store deity with a government loan house? If there is an indulgence that is sinful (cf. **Luke 12:17–21**), there is an extravagance that is godly (cf. **Mark 14:3–9**). And perhaps the message of temple gold is that nothing cheap should be offered to Yahweh but only what is a tribute commensurate with his splendor, whether, for example, in formal worship, biblical scholarship, or quality of daily work.

4. (:31-35) Entrances

a. (:31-32) Entrance of the Inner Sanctuary

1) (:21-32a) Doors and Doorposts

*“And for the entrance of the inner sanctuary he made doors of olive wood, the lintel and five-sided doorposts.  
32 So he made two doors of olive wood,”*

2) (:32b) Special Carvings

*“and he carved on them carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers,”*

3) (:32c) Gold Overlay

*“and overlaid them with gold; and he spread the gold on*

*the cherubim and on the palm trees.”*

b. (:33-35) Entrance of the Nave

1) (:33-34) Doors and Doorposts

*“So also he made for the entrance of the nave four-sided doorposts of olive wood 34 and two doors of cypress wood; the two leaves of the one door turned on pivots, and the two leaves of the other door turned on pivots.”*

2) (:35a) Special Carvings

*“And he carved on it cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers;”*

3) (:35b) Gold Overlay

*“and he overlaid them with gold evenly applied on the engraved work.”*

5. (:36) Inner Courtyard

*“And he built the inner court with three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams.”*

**Iain Provan:** Having quickly toured the interior of the temple and passed through the “two pine doors” that stand at its entrance, we discover ourselves once more outside, in the inner courtyard (v. 36) that stands before it.

**D. (:37-38) Construction Timeline**

1. (:37) Beginning Timestamp

*“In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv.”*

2. (:38a) Ending Timestamp

*“And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, which is the eighth month, the house was finished throughout all its parts and according to all its plans.”*

3. (:38b) Duration of the Construction Project

*“So he was seven years in building it.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) Should NT church buildings follow the pattern of the OT temple with lavish investments of expensive building materials so that the end result is a structure that has the ambiance of the majesty and glory of God?

- 2) What is the significance of the recording of such details about temple construction?
- 3) How did God intend this temple to impact surrounding nations?
- 4) Why are the details of temple construction interrupted with the reminder of covenant obligations?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The chapter begins with chronology-charged-with-theology:

*In the 480th year belonging to the coming out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month Ziv, i.e. the second month, belonging to the reign of Solomon over Israel, (then) he began to build the house of Yahweh.*

And to appreciate this text we must have another landmark chronological note in front of us, namely, **Exodus 12:40–41:**

*And the stay of the sons of Israel that they stayed in Egypt was 430 years. At the end of 430 years—it happened on that very day—all the hosts of Yahweh went out from the land of Egypt.*

These texts are frequently used for calculating chronology rather than understanding redemption. This is especially the case with **1 Kings 6:1**. True, it is a chronological text, but most discussions of it become so mesmerized with its chronology that they ignore its significance. The biblical writer clearly holds the date of **verse 1** as highly important, for he ties it to the exodus from Egypt and supplies us with a major numerical component (480) comparable to that of the premier Exodus text (430). Moreover, he comes back to the ‘*fourth year*’ of Solomon’s reign in **verses 37–38**, showing that the date pinpoints a landmark event for him.

Why then is this date so important? Because it marks the inauguration of a new era. The same is true of **Exodus 12:40–41**: the end of the 430 years in Egypt marked the end of bondage (see Gen. 15:13, where the period is referred to by the round number of 400 years) and celebrated the gift of freedom. **First Kings 6:1** is both similar and different. **The end of the 480 years since the exodus marks the end of wandering and celebrates the gift of rest** (see chart).

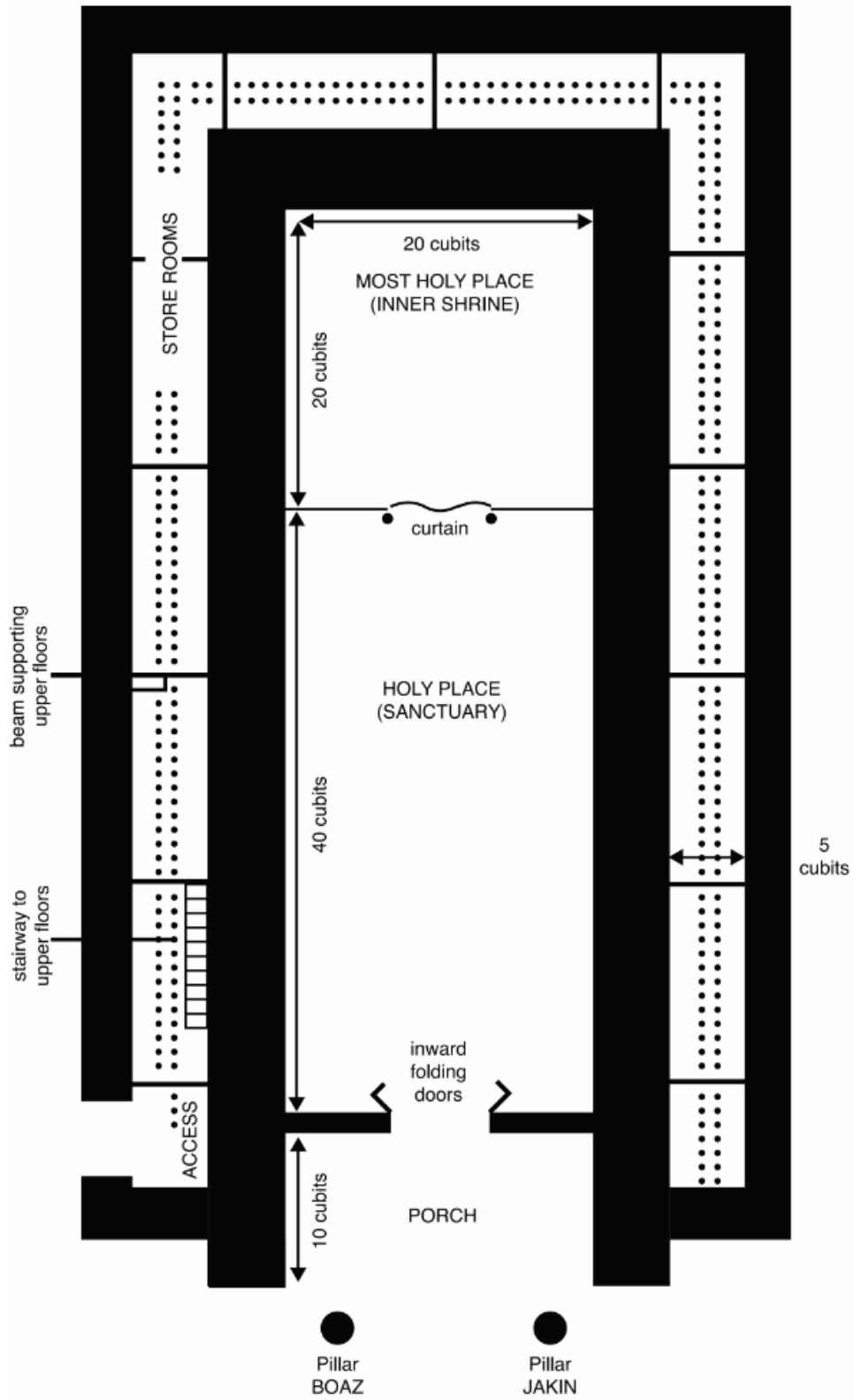
<u>Text</u>	<u>Time</u>	<u>Background</u>	<u>Significance</u>
Exod. 12:40–41	430 years	Gen. 15:13	End of bondage/gift of freedom
1 Kings 6:1	480 years	2 Sam. 7:10–11	End of wandering/gift of rest

This contention is based on the Davidic covenant passage, especially **2 Samuel 7:10–11**, where Yahweh declared that he intended through David's victories over Israel's enemies to end Israel's pillar-to-post, helter-skelter, up-and-down (mostly down), insecure existence. After he did that, Yahweh would permit a temple-house to be built. Yahweh would not rest (**2 Sam. 7:6–7**) until he had given Israel rest. Now he had done so (**1 Kings 5:3–5**); hence Yahweh's 'resting-place' could be built. One could say the exodus was now complete. Yahweh had not only intended to save Israel but to settle Israel. He shows himself as the God who both delivers and establishes.

We sometimes use the term **redemptive history** to refer to the arena in which God brings his purposes to pass. That is all right, so long as we remember that it is redemptive history, that is, that God's redemptive work may well cover long stretches of time. Like 480 years. That is a long time until exodus redemption is completed; yet it is so certain and definite that one can mark it on the kitchen calendar: it's the fourth year, the second month of Solomon's reign. God does his redemptive work both certainly and deliberately. Four hundred and eighty years is a long time; it's the space between the Protestant Reformation and our own day. Apparently Yahweh is in no hurry.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The description in **1 Kgs 6** generally follows the path that a visitor to the building might take and notes items observable on such a tour. First to be described is the overall structure, from the entrance porch to the main hall, the annex, the stonework, and the roofing (**vv. 2–10**); this is complemented by a description of the decor and appointments, especially those of the inner shrine (**vv. 15–30**). Turning to leave, one would notice the doors leading out to the courtyard (**vv. 31–36**). Looked at in detail, the Temple was a rectangular structure, approximately 105 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high (not including the inside and outside walls and the extension), set on a straight, east–west axis (cf. **Ezek 40:6; 43:4**). The approach to the Temple was from the east, and after passing through an open porch (*'ûlām*) that was set off right and left by two massive bronze columns (cf. **7:15–22**), one entered into the main hall (*hēkal*). Light entered the hall through splayed windows close to the ceiling; the roof was of interlacing cedar beams. Beyond this hall, in which most of the cultic ceremonies were held, was the shrine (*dēbîr*), the holiest space in the Temple, the abode of the Ark of the Covenant. Two wood-carved cherubs with outstretched wings protected the Ark. A three-storied extension, built on the offsets of the main building, encompassed the Temple on its two sides and back. The rooms of the extension varied in size from floor to floor in the manner of an inverted pyramid, the larger ones on the top story; they were used to store equipment and gifts dedicated to the Temple. The walls of the main hall were paneled in juniper wood, carved in floral and fruit designs, and overlaid with gold; its floor was covered with juniper planks. The shrine was even more elaborately decorated; it was entirely of gold overlay, both its floor and carved walls, competing in splendor with the golden pinewood cherubs. In all, none of the structural stonework was left uncovered. Large decorated wooden doors were hung at the entrance to the main hall and the entrance to the shrine. Outside, the inner courtyard, surrounded by a wall of stone and cedar beams, marked off the Temple precinct from the other buildings on the mount.

Donald Wiseman: Layout of the Temple



TEXT: 1 Kings 7:1-51

TITLE: CONSTRUCTION DETAILS – PART 2

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE LAVISH MAGNIFICENCE OF THE ROYAL COMPLEX AND THE TEMPLE FURNISHINGS REFLECT THE MAJESTIC IMMANENT PRESENCE OF THE TRANSCENDENT SOVEREIGN GOD OF THE WORLD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Many people today mistakenly recoil in shock and disgust over the extravagance of Solomon's temple and royal compound as detailed here. They miss the point that the centralization of worship in Jerusalem in the nation of Israel is intended to communicate to the watching nations the awesome magnificence of the sovereign God. There is no extravagance that could exceed the worthiness of such a holy and majestic God -- including the most extreme forms of worship. God's hand-picked king establishes the revealed system of worship that pleases God – along with all of its temple artifacts and bronze and gold splendor. All of this glory foreshadows the unsurpassed glory of the coming Messianic Kingdom when Christ will return to both rule and be worshiped by all the nations.

**Constable:** 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.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Is [the writer] not suggesting that intricate, carefully wrought beauty is most fitting for the God of the Bible? Is he not implying that nothing can be too good, too lavish, too well done for such a marvelous God? We must never offer slop to him. Who would have thought that the Holy Spirit might use **1 Kings 7** to convict us of the flippant and casual procedures we sometimes call 'worship'?

**August Konkel:** The temple is the palace of the great King; symbolically his feet rest on the footstool that contains the declaration of his will. The temple is a symbol of Solomon's loyalty to God as his own King, and his commitment is to fulfill the will of God in his rule of the nation. All the other buildings of the royal complex stand in the shadow of the palace of the King of kings. . .

[the temple] portrays God as the transcendent sovereign of this world, not to be identified with anything in the world. The throne room is devoid of any form of the sovereign God there, and it is inaccessible to all human sight. The cherubs mark the throne, and the words of the covenant in the footstool declare that the King of all kings is a God to them and they are his people (**Ex. 19:5–6**). . .

In ancient Israel the temple established the legitimacy of Solomon's reign, so its inclusion in the account of the kingdom of Israel was essential. The temple was



important to the rule of Solomon because it expressed the sovereign and personal relationship between God, his world, and his people. It taught the Israelites about the exclusive dominion of God and the story of their experience with him. It served to declare the immanent presence of their transcendent and holy God.

## **I. (:1-12) CONSTRUCTION OF THE ROYAL COMPLEX**

### **A. (:1) Summary of Construction of the Royal Complex**

*“Now Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house.”*

**Jim Bomkamp:** To be fair to Solomon, we really don't know why it took him 13 years to build his own house and only 7 to build the temple, but several factors could have come into play:

- David had much of the temple already prefabricated saving construction time.
- There was not the urgency to build his own house that there had been in building the temple.
- People were probably more eager to help with the building of the temple than in building things for Solomon's own personal use.

### **B. (:2-5) House of the Forest of Lebanon = Great Assembly Hall**

*“And he built the house of the forest of Lebanon;”*

#### 1. (:2b) Dimensions

*“its length was 100 cubits  
and its width 50 cubits  
and its height 30 cubits,”*

#### 2. (:2c) Cedar Pillars and Beams

*“on four rows of cedar pillars with cedar beams on the pillars.”*

#### 3. (:3) Cedar Paneling

*“And it was paneled with cedar above the side chambers  
which were on the 45 pillars, 15 in each row.”*

#### 4. (:4-5) Window Frames and Doorposts

*“And there were artistic window frames in three rows, and window was  
opposite window in three ranks. 5 And all the doorways and doorposts  
had squared artistic frames, and window was opposite window in three  
ranks.”*

### **C. (:6) Hall of Pillars**

*“Then he made the hall of pillars;”*

**William Barnes:** This is possibly more of a portico or foyer ([Sweeney 2007:117](#);

**Wiseman** 1993:112); it may have served as a waiting area for those seeking an audience with the king.

**August Konkel:** The hall of pillars (v. 6) does not seem to be an independent building but a colonnade that serves as an entrance to the great assembly hall.

1. Dimensions of the Hall

*“its length was 50 cubits and its width 30 cubits,”*

2. Colonnade Entranceway

*“and a porch was in front of them  
and pillars and a threshold in front of them.”*

**D. (:7-12) Additional Key Structures in the Royal Complex**

1. (:7-8) Specific Edifices

a. (:7) Hall of Judgment

*“And he made the hall of the throne where he was to judge,  
the hall of judgment, and it was paneled with cedar from floor to  
floor.”*

**Adam Clarke:** One porch appears to have been devoted to the purposes of administering judgment, which Solomon did in person.

b. (:8a) House of Solomon

*“And his house where he was to live, the other court inward from  
the hall, was of the same workmanship.”*

**August Konkel:** The palace of Solomon (v. 8) and the quarters for all his servants are set in another court back (west) of the hall (cf. rsv). The public buildings are situated in a separate court; the palace is not accessible to the public but has an entrance to the public court as well as the inner court of the temple. The palace of Solomon and that of Pharaoh’s daughter are similar in construction to the other buildings, since all of them are royal edifices.

**Constable:** Ancient Near Easterners did not view a king's sovereignty as established until he had built a palace for himself. Solomon's palace, therefore, further enhanced his prestige. God blessed Solomon and Israel by allowing him to build it.

c. (:8b) House for Pharaoh’s Daughter

*“He also made a house like this hall for Pharaoh's daughter,  
whom Solomon had married.”*

**Mordecai Cogan:** That special quarters were built for Pharaoh’s daughter points to her privileged position among the king’s other wives.

2. (:9-12) Similarity of Construction

*“All these were of costly stones, of stone cut according to measure, sawed with saws, inside and outside; even from the foundation to the coping, and so on the outside to the great court. 10 And the foundation was of costly stones, even large stones, stones of ten cubits and stones of eight cubits. 11 And above were costly stones, stone cut according to measure, and cedar. 12 So the great court all around had three rows of cut stone and a row of cedar beams even as the inner court of the house of the LORD, and the porch of the house.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** If the temple structures are magnified and the royal complex minimized, is the writer implying that **worship is more important than government**? Remember that the temple does not stand for any worship but for the way of public worship revealed by God. Even more: the temple is the place of sacrifice, where atonement is made. Hence, in New Testament terms, the temple would stand for public worship that is centered upon the cross. I do not mean that **1 Kings 7** implies some dichotomy between sacred and secular. Obviously the governing of the king stood under Yahweh’s sway and standards as well. But when the writer shrinks the press time given to fascinating structures, which took far longer than the temple to construct, is he not making a point? To put it in very western terms, again: worship is more important than government. And do not Christians in the west need to hear this? We who live among deity-swaggering welfare states that are always trying to convince us that government cares? Do we not need a fresh reminder that the massive reality that matters is that **God dwells among his people**?

**William Barnes:** Evidently an **outer court** surrounding the entire Temple complex is in view here (so **Cogan** 2001:256).

**Iain Provan:** After the important digression of **7:1–12** we return now to the temple, to hear how that project was completed and the “*house of the Lord*” made ready for his occupation in **chapter 8**.

## **II. (:13-51) INTERIOR TEMPLE FURNISHINGS**

### **A. (:13-14) Resourcing Hiram – Gifted in Bronze Work**

#### 1. (:13) Selected for the Bronze Work

*“Now King Solomon sent and brought Hiram from Tyre.”*

**William Barnes:** This individual (*khiram* [TH2438A, ZH2671], “*Hiram*”; cf. NLT mg note) should not be confused with the important Tyrian king of the same name. This Hiram was half-Israelite and, interestingly, by orthodox Jewish tradition, would be reckoned as ethnically Jewish (if one’s mother is ethnically Jewish, no matter the ethnic background of the father, one is reckoned to be Jewish).

#### 2. (:14a) Son of a Mixed Marriage

##### a. Jewish Mother from Naphtali

*“He was a widow’s son from the tribe of Naphtali,”*

In the far north of Israelite territory near the Phoenician coast

- b. Phoenician Father from Tyre with Experience in Bronze Work  
*“and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in bronze;”*

**Caleb Nelson:** What is this, again, but foreigners coming in to worship the true God? Ultimately, the temple is not just for Israel; the temple is for the world. The first temple was built by a Gentile. The second temple actually had a space set aside, the Court of the Gentiles, in which Gentiles could come and worship God. The significance of Hiram is that the blessing of worshipping God is not just for Israel; it is for everyone. See **Isaiah 66:18, 20-21**. And so, in establishing true worship, the true king is not afraid to call on halfbreeds and foreigners. Christianity is not a religion of exclusivity: “I don’t think we can trust him; he’s not like us.” Oh no. We welcome all God-fearing people in this church, whether you’re black, white, yellow, tattooed, whatever. The test of fellowship is not what you look like, not your physical ancestry but your spiritual pedigree. God is bringing Gentiles into His kingdom and making them true worshippers.

3. (:14b) Skilled in Bronze Work

*“and he was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill for doing any work in bronze.”*

**Mordecai Cogan:** This standard triad, “*wisdom, understanding, and knowledge,*” is applied to Bezalel, the fashioner of the Tabernacle in the desert (**Exod 31:3**); to God, as creator of heaven and earth (**Prov 3:19–20**); and to the future Davidic king (cf. **Isa 11:2**, somewhat expanded).

**L. M. Grant:** We sometimes hear of a man who is “a jack of all trades, master of none,” but here was a man who was a master of all trades. Certainly there would be nobody else who could approach his capabilities. God had specially prepared him for the purpose of building the temple. We surely see in him a picture of the Holy Spirit of God who is perfectly skilled in every detail of the work of building God's house.

4. (:14c) Submissive to Solomon’s Work Request

*“So he came to King Solomon and performed all his work.”*

**B. (:15-22) Reminding Israel of God’s Sovereignty and Strength –  
2 Bronze Pillars**

1. (:15-16) Construction of the Pillars with 2 Capitals

- a. (:15) The Pillars (with Dimensions)

*“And he fashioned the two pillars of bronze; eighteen cubits was the height of one pillar, and a line of twelve cubits measured the circumference of both.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Every indication is that they were not structurally part of the temple but were freestanding.

b. (:16) The Capitals (with Dimensions)

*“He also made two capitals of molten bronze to set on the tops of the pillars; the height of the one capital was five cubits and the height of the other capital was five cubits.”*

2. (:17-18) Chainwork on Top of the Pillars

*“There were nets of network and twisted threads of chainwork for the capitals which were on the top of the pillars; seven for the one capital and seven for the other capital.*

*So he made the pillars, and two rows around on the one network to cover the capitals which were on the top of the pomegranates; and so he did for the other capital.”*

**MacArthur:** *Pomegranates* – One of the fruits of the Promised Land (**Nu 13:23; Dt 8:8**), these were popular decorative motifs used on the he of Aaron’s priestly garment (**Ex 28:33, 34**).

3. (:19-20) Adorning the Capitals on Top of the Pillars

a. (:19) Lily Design

*“And the capitals which were on the top of the pillars in the porch were of lily design, four cubits.”*

b. (:20) Pomegranates

*“And there were capitals on the two pillars, even above and close to the rounded projection which was beside the network; and the pomegranates numbered two hundred in rows around both capitals.”*

**August Konkel:** The height of each pillar is extended by a capital at the top formed of bronze, just over 2 meters (over 7 feet) in height (**v. 16**). These are ornately decorated with seven sets of tightly woven chain work in a net pattern and two rows of pomegranates around the network (**vv. 17–18**). The two capitals have the shape of a lily, common for capitals; there is a bulge in the capital just below the lily, where two hundred pomegranates hang in rows (**vv. 19–20**). The bulge may have been a collar to fasten the capital to the pillar.

**Constable:** The lily and pomegranate designs probably symbolized the fertility and fruitfulness of God's blessing and presence, pomegranates being known fertility symbols in the ancient Near East.

4. (:21-22) Significance of the Pillars

a. (:21) Naming the Pillars –

- *He establishes*  
- *In Him is strength*

*“Thus he set up the pillars at the porch of the nave;  
and he set up the right pillar and named it Jachin,  
and he set up the left pillar and named it Boaz.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Since the pillars are likely free standing and not weight-bearing (functional), they are probably symbolic. Clearly, the names given them are significant or **symbolic**: Jachin, Boaz. . .

I suggest that ‘*Jachin*’ and ‘*Boaz*’ are like that: single words meant to conjure up a whole piece of (previous?) communication. Jachin means ‘*He [Yahweh] will establish*’ (or, it could be construed as a prayer, ‘*May he establish*’). The name comes from the verb *kûn*, used three times in Yahweh’s covenant promise to David in **2 Samuel 7:12, 13, 16** (e.g. ‘Your throne will be established [*nākôn*] forever,’ v. 16) and four times in **1 Kings 2** with particular reference to securing Solomon’s hold on the kingdom (**1 Kings 2:12, 24, 45, 46**). Jachin, I hold, means to encapsulate Yahweh’s promise that David’s dynasty would be the vehicle through which he would bring his kingdom on earth. Yahweh will establish that royal line.

Boaz seems to mean ‘*In him [Yahweh] is strength*’ or ‘*By him [Yahweh] he [the king] is mighty*.’ One writer connects this name with **Psalm 21**, where the king rejoices ‘*in your [Yahweh’s] strength*’ (v. 1, and cf. v. 13). This name implies the dependence of the king and accents his only viable recourse in all situations.

Here then are ‘*He will establish*’ and ‘*In him is strength*’ serving as sentinels in front of the temple proper. The first highlights the promise of Yahweh, the second the power of Yahweh. The first recalls what Yahweh has said, the second suggests what Yahweh can do. Jachin points to the original anchor of Yahweh’s word; Boaz points to his ongoing adequacy to bring that word to pass (cf. **Rom. 4:21**, ‘*[B]eing fully assured that what God had promised, He was able also to perform*’ [nasb]). Or one could say that Jachin emphasizes the foundation on which the king and the people are to rely, while Boaz signifies the resources upon which they must draw. Jachin then would highlight Yahweh’s gift, while Boaz would point to their task (cf. **Ps. 105:4**, ‘*Seek Yahweh and his strength; seek his face continually*’).

None of us likely sees bronze pillars outside our place of public worship. We may dispense with the pillars but must retain their testimony. Don’t Christian believers still need to be freshly gripped with **kingdom assurance** (*Jachin*) and newly impressed with their own implicit **helplessness** (*Boaz*)?

**Iain Provan:** A pillar named “*he will establish*” clearly implies that hopes for the future of the dynasty are now bound up with the temple. God will establish the throne of the temple builder, as he had promised (cf. **2 Sam. 7:13**).

- b. (:22) Topping Them with Lily Design  
“And on the top of the pillars was lily design.  
So the work of the pillars was finished.”

**C. (:23-26) Rule of God Represented by the Bronze Sea = Giant Water Supply**

“Now he made the sea of cast metal ten cubits from brim to brim, circular in form, and its height was five cubits, and thirty cubits in circumference. And under its brim gourds went around encircling it ten to a cubit, completely surrounding the sea; the gourds were in two rows, cast with the rest. It stood on twelve oxen, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east; and the sea was set on top of them, and all their rear parts turned inward. And it was a handbreadth thick, and its brim was made like the brim of a cup, as a lily blossom; it could hold two thousand baths.”

**August Konkel:** Its primary purpose in the temple court is to represent the rule of God over the cosmos.

**Iain Provan:** It is not made clear in this passage whether its function was purely symbolic, representing the forces of chaos that have been subdued and brought to order by the Lord, who is creator of the world (cf. **Gen. 1:1–23; Pss. 74:12–17; 89:5–11; 93**), or also practical. Certainly **2 Chronicles 4:6** tells us that the priests used the water for washing, and **Exodus 30:18–21** and **40:30–32** tell us of such a bronze basin for priestly washing in the tabernacle.

**Donald Wiseman:** This huge basin or reservoir was one of the great Hebrew technical works, corresponding in modern metallurgy to the casting of the largest church bell. It was viewed as a large expanse and volume of water (Heb. *yām*, ‘sea’ is only used figuratively here, v. 23) and corresponded with the bronze basin in the tabernacle (**Exod. 30:17–21**). It was used by priests for cleansing their hands and feet and perhaps also to supply water to the standing basins for the rinsing of offerings (**2 Chr. 4:10**).

**Constable:** The “sea” (vv. 23-26) was a reservoir for the temple courtyard, so called because of its largeness, according to Josephus. Some believe that it had a total capacity of 3,000 baths (**2 Chron. 4:5**), but it normally held 2,000 baths (v. 26). Others believe that the “sea” itself held 2,000 baths, and that the “sea” plus the ten movable basins (vv. 27-40a) held a total of 3,000 baths. . .

The priests evidently used the 10 movable stands (vv. 27-40a) when they butchered sacrificial animals. Each one was six feet square, five and one half feet high, and held 40 baths (about 232 gallons) of water. **Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown** estimated that each movable stand held 300 gallons of water and weighed two tons when full.

**D. (:27-37) Ten Stands of Bronze**

1. (:27) Dimensions



*“Then he made the ten stands of bronze; the length of each stand was four cubits and its width four cubits and its height three cubits.”*

## 2. (:28-29) Borders

*“And this was the design of the stands: they had borders, even borders between the frames, and on the borders which were between the frames were lions, oxen and cherubim; and on the frames there was a pedestal above, and beneath the lions and oxen were wreaths of hanging work.”*

**L. M. Grant:** On the panels of the carts were lions, oxen and cherubim (v.29).

In **Revelation 4:7** we read of four living creatures, one like a lion, another like a calf (or ox), one having the face of a man and the last like a flying eagle. In our chapter the cherubim takes the place of man and the flying eagle is omitted. This is likely because the eagle speaks of the swift execution of God's judgment, and there will be no such thing in the millennial kingdom. The lion speaks of strength, the ox, of service and the cherubim of intelligent government, all of these being important in the future kingdom of Christ.

## 3. (:30-33) Bronze Wheels

*“Now each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles, and its four feet had supports; beneath the basin were cast supports with wreaths at each side.*

*And its opening inside the crown at the top was a cubit, and its opening was round like the design of a pedestal, a cubit and a half; and also on its opening there were engravings, and their borders were square, not round.*

*And the four wheels were underneath the borders, and the axles of the wheels were on the stand. And the height of a wheel was a cubit and a half.*

*And the workmanship of the wheels was like the workmanship of a chariot wheel. Their axles, their rims, their spokes, and their hubs were all cast.”*

## 4. (:34-36) Supports with Engravings

*“Now there were four supports at the four corners of each stand; its supports were part of the stand itself.*

*And on the top of the stand there was a circular form half a cubit high, and on the top of the stand its stays and its borders were part of it.*

*And he engraved on the plates of its stays and on its borders, cherubim, lions and palm trees, according to the clear space on each, with wreaths all around.”*

## 5. (:37) Summary

*“He made the ten stands like this: all of them had one casting, one measure and one form.”*



**E. (:38-39) Ten Bronze Basins for the Ten Stands**

1. (:38) Bronze Basins on Stands

*“And he made ten basins of bronze, one basin held forty baths; each basin was four cubits, and on each of the ten stands was one basin.”*

2. (:39a) Positioning of the Stands

*“Then he set the stands, five on the right side of the house and five on the left side of the house;”*

3. (:39b) Positioning of the Sea of Cast Metal

*“and he set the sea of cast metal on the right side of the house eastward toward the south.”*

**F. (:40-47) List of Additional Bronze Temple Artifacts Made by Hiram**

1. (:40) Basins, Shovels and Bowls

*“Now Hiram made the basins and the shovels and the bowls. So Hiram finished doing all the work which he performed for King Solomon in the house of the LORD:”*

2. (:41-45) List of Artifacts

a. (:41-42) Pillars and Capitals with Adornments

1) (:41a) Two Pillars and Two Capitals

*“the two pillars and the two bowls of the capitals which were on the top of the two pillars;”*

2) (:41b) Two Networks

*“and the two networks to cover the two bowls of the capitals which were on the top of the pillars;”*

3) (:42) Pomegranates

*“and the four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for each network to cover the two bowls of the capitals which were on the tops of the pillars;”*

b. (:43) Ten Stands with Ten Basins

*“and the ten stands with the ten basins on the stands;”*

c. (:44) Sea with Twelve Oxen

*“and the one sea and the twelve oxen under the sea;”*

d. (:45) Other Utensils – Pails, Shovels, Bowls – Tools for Sacrifice

*“and the pails and the shovels and the bowls; even all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon in the house of the LORD were of polished bronze.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The pots were large cauldrons used for cooking the offering meat for the fellowship offerings (**Lev. 7:15, 17**); the shovels were for handling the ash and the sprinkling bowls (*reb* ‘*tossing-bowls*’) for ritual use with blood or water (**Exod. 27:3**). The gold examples may have been employed only on special occasions, the bronze ones being for everyday use.

### 3. (:46-47) Impressive Details

#### a. (:46) Casting of the Bronze

*“In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarethan.”*

**MacArthur:** Succoth was located on the E side of the Jordan River just N of the Jabbok River (**Ge 33:17; Jos 13:27; Jdg 8:4, 5**). Zarethan was nearby. This location was conducive to good metallurgy because it abounded in clay suitable for molds and lay close to a source of charcoal for heat, namely the forests across the Jordan.

**R. D. Patterson:** The casting method used by Hiram was the *cire perdue* or lost-wax process, used from 2500 B.C. in Egypt until the Middle Ages. It is still often used for high quality sculptures. First a clay core is made, then covered with wax to the desired thickness. The wax is molded according to the intended design, then overlaid with specially prepared clay. The whole mold is then evenly baked for a period of time, possibly several days. During this time the wax is withdrawn through the outer mold through vents. Then molten bronze is poured into the same vents. Huge furnaces must have been used by Hiram and great skill required to ensure a uniform flow and distribution of molten metal and proper escape of gases. Only a master craftsman could have successfully carried out so huge an undertaking as was required here.

#### b. (:47) Weight of the Bronze

*“And Solomon left all the utensils unweighed, because they were too many; the weight of the bronze could not be ascertained.”*

### **G. (:48-50) List of Additional Golden Temple Artifacts Made by Solomon**

#### 1. (:48) Temple Furniture

*“And Solomon made all the furniture which was in the house of the LORD: the golden altar and the golden table on which was the bread of the Presence;”*

**August Konkel:** The gold work is credited to Solomon himself, though he certainly did not do it personally. The implication seems to be that the most precious objects are made by an Israelite rather than a hired foreign craftsman.

**Brian Bell:** Everything about the building & its furniture was meant as a teaching tool. Every point had a **typological value**, which pointed to Christ.

- Tabernacle (And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us).
- Lampstand (light of the world).

- Showbread (I am the bread of life).
- Veil (which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh).
- Basin (washes us).
- Altar (He is the sacrifice).
- Priest (Jesus the High Priest).

2. (:49a) Temple Lampstands

*“and the lampstands, five on the right side and five on the left, in front of the inner sanctuary, of pure gold;”*

3. (:49b) Temple Accessories

*“and the flowers and the lamps and the tongs, of gold;”*

4. (:50a) Temple Utensils

*“and the cups and the snuffers and the bowls and the spoons and the firepans, of pure gold;”*

**Constable:** 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.

**Wiersbe:** The priests required many different utensils in order to carry on their work, including wick trimmers, bowls for sprinkling water and sacrificial blood, dishes, ladles, large pots for cooking the meat from the peace offerings, and shovels for removing the ashes. The temple was an imposing structure that contained expensive furnishings made of gold and polished bronze, but the daily ministry would have been impossible without these small utensils.

5. (:50b) Temple Door Hinges

*“and the hinges both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, that is, of the nave, of gold.”*

**H. (:51) Completion of the Construction and Financial Endowment**

*“Thus all the work that King Solomon performed in the house of the LORD was finished. And Solomon brought in the things dedicated by his father David, the silver and the gold and the utensils, and he put them in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.”*

**Caleb Nelson:** Finally, the last verse highlights again how thoroughly Solomon provided for the worship of God. He even endowed the temple with all kinds of treasure, so that it would always have money to keep itself running when tithes and offerings ran low

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What are your priorities when it comes to building your own castle or advancing the kingdom of God?
- 2) When you come before God in worship, how do you remind yourself of God's sovereignty, of His assurance of future kingdom blessings and of your need for total dependence on His strength?
- 3) Why was it important for Hiram's ancestry to be detailed here?
- 4) How are you impacted by the lavish nature of the Temple and the overall royal complex?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**John Schultz:** The Pulpit Commentary observes: "The much longer period occupied in the erection of the royal palace is easily accounted for. In the first place, the buildings were much larger, and the undertaking altogether was a much more extensive one (**ver. 2**). Then, though seven years only were consumed in the actual building of the temple, yet preparations for the work had been made, both by David and Solomon, for a long time beforehand. Lastly, a special force of laborers would appear to have been employed on the temple, while it is probable that they wrought at the palaces in greatly diminished numbers. So that the longer period spent over his own house does not argue selfishness or worldliness on Solomon's part. On the contrary, it speaks well for his piety that he built the temple first and urged on that sacred work with so much vigor. The thirteen years date from the completion of the seven years of ... **1 Kings 6:38**. That is to say, the building of the temple and palace together occupied twenty years, as is expressly stated in ... **1 Kings 9:10**."

**William Sanford LaSor:** We must think of a large complex of buildings. To the N was the Temple and its court; S of the Temple, the royal palace and its court; behind it, the House of Pharaoh's daughter. S of the palace was the Hall of Pillars and the throne room, and farther S the House of the Forest of Lebanon. The whole area was enclosed within a great court surrounded by a wall of hewn stones and cedar beams.

**Caleb Nelson:** **The King Provides for Worship**

**Proposition:** **The true king establishes true worship**

- I. The King's Dwelling (vv. 1-12)
- II. The King's Craftsman (vv. 13-14)
- III. The King's Testimony (vv. 15-22)
  - A. "He Establishes"
  - B. "In Him is Strength"
- IV. The King's Provision for Worship (vv. 23-51)
  - A. A Water Supply (vv. 23-39)
  - B. Tools for Sacrifice (v. 45a)
  - C. Interior Furnishings (vv. 45b-50)
  - D. An Endowment (v. 51)

Christ establishes the true worship of God. He provides us with everything we need for that worship. Just as Solomon took his role seriously and gave good worship to Israel, so Christ provides for us. He gives a book. He gives preachers. He gives people with musical talent to write hymns and sing them. He gives us time every week, a whole day off, on which we can worship. He provides for our physical needs so that we can worship Him acceptably. So let's look at this chapter and see how the true king establishes true worship. . .

How much time have we spent on the temple? Well, most of Chapter 5 was about the temple. Chapter 6 was exclusively about the temple. Chapters 7 and 8 are pretty much all about the temple. But here, for twelve little verses, the narrator leaves the temple and tells us about Solomon's palace complex. In other words, relatively speaking, Solomon's house is nowhere near as important to the narrator as the temple is. The emphasis should jump out at you. Solomon's house is cool, but it's not the main theme. . .

The point is that as king of the earthly manifestation of God's own kingdom, Solomon had a responsibility to look good. His house had to be beautiful, because like the temple, it ultimately was saying something about the character of God. God is a God of order, of beauty, of symmetry. . . everything was set up to amazing, from the giant stones the size of UPS trucks to the huge cedar pillars. This was a reception hall fit for a king; as we said about architecture last week, this place demonstrates the grandeur and glory fitting for God's kingdom.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/101716191017.pdf>

TEXT: 1 Kings 8:1-66

TITLE: DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

**BIG IDEA:**

**SHEKINAH GLORY FILLS SOLOMON'S TEMPLE AS THE ARK OF THE COVENANT FINDS ITS HOME FOR THE JOYFUL MANIFESTATION OF THE PRESENCE AND BLESSING OF GOD ON HIS COVENANT PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This dedication of the temple with the installation of the ark of the covenant is a very meaty section in terms of both theology and Israelite history. The special manifestation of the Shekinah glory encourages the nation regarding God's covenant commitment and provides a worldwide testimony to the exclusivity and sovereignty of the God whose worship is focused around the sacrificial system in the new temple in Jerusalem. Solomon extols the faithfulness of God and exhorts the people to continue in the path of covenant obedience. The apex of joy is realized in the dedication sacrifices and celebratory feast associated with this climactic moment in Jewish history. The future promises regarding the ultimate fulfilment of the Messianic kingdom will certainly be fulfilled. But the present situation reflects God's sovereign blessing.

**August Konkel:** After the building's completion, its function as a temple must be established. The articles dedicated to God by a vow are brought to its treasuries (**7:51b**), and the ark is placed in the Most Holy Place. David devoted to sacred use gifts he had received and the spoils of war (**2 Sam. 8:10–11**). He also brought to Jerusalem the sacred chest called the "*ark of the covenant of the Lord Almighty, who is enthroned between the cherubim*" (**1 Sam. 4:4; 2 Sam. 6:2; 1 Chron. 13:6**). The "song of the ark" in the days of the wilderness gave testimony to its function (**Num. 10:35–36**). When the ark set out, Moses would say, "*Rise up, O Lord! May your enemies be scattered,*" and when it halted he would say, "*Return O Lord, to the countless thousands of Israel.*" When the priests bring the ark into Solomon's sanctuary, the glory of the divine presence takes possession of it (**1 Kings 8:11**), just as the glory accompanied it in the desert.

Ceremony is the means by which ordinary objects receive sacred significance. The prophets regularly ridiculed the worship of idols made by human hands (**Isa. 40:19–20; Hab. 2:18–19**), because the gods supposedly present in the idol either had no real existence or were insignificant before Yahweh in his holy temple (**Hab. 2:20**).

**Iain Provan:** Solomon's prayer is of the utmost importance, for it places both the temple and the law in wider perspective. The temple is an important building, to be sure. For much of the remainder of Kings it will play a central role in Israel's story, as bad kings corrupt its worship and good kings seek to reform it. But God, who is not confined by a building and who is certainly not dependent upon it, will survive even its destruction

and hear the people's prayers in exile. Likewise, obedience to the law is very important. In Kings, monarchs are judged good or bad in terms of their adherence to the law, particularly on matters of worship. Yet Solomon holds out hope for restoration beyond failure, for he holds out hope that grace will have the last word. It is a prayer upon which we shall have cause to reflect further before the story is finished.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The overall structure of **1 Kgs 8** is easily discernible and follows an agenda typical of such ceremonies (in view of similar celebrations in Mesopotamia, as shown by **Hurowitz** 1992, 260–77). Three acts are played out:

- (1) the Temple is formally inaugurated by the introduction of the Ark in the Holy of Holies (**vv. 1–13**);
- (2) the king offers blessings for the assembled and a prayer to YHWH concerning the role of the Temple (**vv. 14–61**);
- (3) celebration (**vv. 62–66**).

## **I. (:1-13) SOLOMON'S INSTALLATION OF THE ARK INAUGURATES THE TEMPLE**

### **A. (:1-4) Transportation of the Ark to the Temple**

#### 1. (:1) Sole Objective = Bring the Ark to the Temple

##### a. The Major Players

*“Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers' households of the sons of Israel,”*

##### b. The Location

*“to King Solomon in Jerusalem,”*

##### c. The Goal

*“to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David, which is Zion.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** David had moved the ark from Obed-Edom's house to newly captured Jerusalem (**2 Sam. 6:1–12; 15:24–29**) and now it moved on from Zion on the south hill of Jerusalem to the ‘*citadel*’ (jb ‘*city*’, cf. **2:10**) to the new city extension to the north. The whole city would from now on be referred to as Zion (**2 Kgs 19:31; Ps. 9:11**).

**Constable:** The Israelites regarded the ark as the throne of Yahweh. It was the place where He manifested His presence in a localized way and where He received the blood that atoned for the Israelites' sins on the Day of Atonement. The ark had rested in David's tabernacle in Zion since David had brought it from the house of Obed-edom (**2 Sam. 6:17**). It was the only item in the temple that was not new. Perhaps God did not change it to help the people realize that He, symbolized by the ark, had not changed. His person and methods of dealing with them at the mercy seat were the same as they had been.

## 2. (:2) Special Timing

*“And all the men of Israel assembled themselves to King Solomon at the feast, in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month.”*

**MacArthur:** Solomon finished building the temple in the eighth month of the previous year (**6:38**; see **2Ch 5:1**); all its detail signifying the magnificence and beauty of God’s nature and His transcendent, uncommon glory. The celebration, then, did not take place until 11 months later. Apparently Solomon intentionally scheduled the dedication of the temple to coincide with the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles held in the seventh month, when there would be a general assembly of the people in Jerusalem. That was also a Jubilee year, so it was especially appropriate (**Lv 23:33-36, 39-43; Dt 16:13-15**).

**Constable:** 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.

## 3. (:3-4) Sacred Accomplishment

### a. (:3) Sacred Task

*“Then all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark.”*

### b. (:4a) Sacred Objects

*“And they brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the holy utensils, which were in the tent,”*

### c. (:4b) Sacred Execution

*“and the priests and the Levites brought them up.”*

**MacArthur:** The ark of the covenant was transported by the priests and the Levites from the tent that David had made for it in Jerusalem (**2Sa 6:17**). They also brought to the temple the tabernacle and all its furnishings which had been located in Gibeon (**2Ch 1:2-6**). The ark was placed into the Most Holy Place (**v. 6**).

## **B. (:5-8) Installation of the Ark in the Holiest of Holies**

### 1. (:5) Multitude of Sacrifices

*“And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel, who were assembled to him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and oxen they could not be counted or numbered.”*



## 2. (:6-8) Majestic Home for the Ark

- a. (:6) Most Holy Place Provides the Home for the Ark of the Covenant  
*“Then the priests brought the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, into the inner sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim.”*
- b. (:7) Cherubim Provide Covering over the Ark and its Poles  
*“For the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim made a covering over the ark and its poles from above.”*
- c. (:8) Poles Provide Point of Reference for the Location of the Ark of the Covenant  
*“But the poles were so long that the ends of the poles could be seen from the holy place before the inner sanctuary, but they could not be seen outside; they are there to this day.”*

**Constable:** 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.

### **C. (:9) Contents of the Ark = Covenant Tablets of the Law**

*“There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone which Moses put there at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the sons of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt.”*

**MacArthur:** The pot of manna (**Ex 16:33**) and Aaron’s rod that budded (**Nu 17:10**) were no longer in the ark. See **Heb 9:4**.

### **D. (:10-13) Significance of the Ark in the Temple**

#### 1. (:10-11) Glory of the Lord Filling the Temple

*“And it came about when the priests came from the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.”*

**MacArthur:** The cloud was *“the glory of the Lord”* (v. **11**), the visible symbol of God’s presence. It signaled the Lord’s approval of this new temple. A similar manifestation took place when the tabernacle was dedicated (**Ex 40:34, 35**).

**David Guzik:** This was the *cloud of glory*, seen often in the Old and New Testaments, sometimes called the cloud of **Shekinah glory**. It is hard to define the glory of God; we could call it the radiant outshining of His character and presence. Here it was manifested in a cloud.

- This is the cloud that stood by Israel in the wilderness (**Exodus 13:21-22**).
- This is the cloud of glory that God spoke to Israel from (**Exodus 16:10**).
- This is the cloud from which God met with Moses and others (**Exodus 19:9, 24:15-18, Numbers 11:25, 12:5, 16:42**).
- This is the cloud that stood by the door of the Tabernacle (**Exodus 33:9-10**).
- This is the cloud from which God appeared to the High Priest in the Holy Place inside the veil (**Leviticus 16:2**).
- This is the cloud of Ezekiel's vision, filling the temple of God with the brightness of His glory (**Ezekiel 10:4**).
- This is the cloud of glory that overshadowed Mary when she conceived Jesus by the power of the Holy Spirit (**Luke 1:35**).
- This is the cloud present at the transfiguration of Jesus (**Luke 9:34-35**).
- This is the cloud of glory that received Jesus into heaven at His ascension (**Acts 1:9**).
- This is the cloud that will display the glory of Jesus Christ when He returns in triumph to this earth (**Luke 21:27, Revelation 1:7**).

## 2. (:12-13) Dwelling Place of the Lord in the Temple

### a. (:12) Dwelling Place Promised

*“Then Solomon said, ‘The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud.’”*

### b. (:13) Dwelling Place Provided

*“I have surely built Thee a lofty house,  
A place for Thy dwelling forever.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** In Hebrew thought there is no incompatibility between divine omnipresence and a local dwelling-place on earth where he made himself known (**Isa. 8:18; Ps. 76:2**).

## **II. (:14-21) SOLOMON'S REMINDER OF GOD'S PROPHETIC PROMISE REINFORCES GOD'S FAITHFULNESS**

*“Then the king faced about and blessed all the assembly of Israel, while all the assembly of Israel was standing. 15 And he said,”*

**August Konkel:** The blessing of the assembly begins with a declaration of the blessedness of God (**vv. 14–15**). Blessedness is an epithet of God, an acknowledgment that he is the source and dispenser of blessing. The praise addressed to God is actually an exhortation to the assembly. It makes explicit reference to the prophetic word to David concerning the divine priorities of kingdom and temple (**vv. 16–19**). The delay of

temple building was not only a matter of making the transition to one central place of worship; another factor was that David had been continuously embroiled in war (**1 Kings 5:17**). The rest David achieved was not the time for an undertaking like that of Solomon. The blessedness of God is his fulfillment of the promise that the son of David was destined to build a temple as a focus for Israel's prayers and worship.

Solomon's words express the importance of the temple in the history of the nation and the role it will have in future relationships between God and his people. The presence of the temple assures the people that God has secured a royal dynasty for his people (cf. **2 Sam. 7:12–17**). The temple is the place where the ark of God's covenant finds its rest (**1 Kings 8:21**). The ark represents the special legal bond uniting God and Israel. The presence of the ark of the covenant makes the temple the focal point for prayer, no matter where the prayer is uttered. God's eyes will constantly be directed toward the temple; prayers directed there will be received by God in heaven. The temple is central from this time forward; it represents the covenant bond and the establishment of the promised kingdom.

**Mordechai Cogan:** A hymn of praise, thanking YHWH for fulfilling His promise to David (vv. **15–21**), precedes the prayer and is complemented by a personal petition imploring YHWH to keep His promise with respect to dynasty (vv. **23–26**).

**A. (:15) Blessing the Lord for His Faithfulness to David**

*“Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth to my father David and has fulfilled it with His hand, saying,”*

**B. (:16) Priority of the Davidic Kingdom**

*“Since the day that I brought My people Israel from Egypt, I did not choose a city out of all the tribes of Israel in which to build a house that My name might be there, but I chose David to be over My people Israel.”*

**C. (:17-19) Intention of David Regarding Building the Temple**

1. (:17) Recognition of His Intention

*“Now it was in the heart of my father David to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.”*

2. (:18) Rightness of His Intention

*“But the LORD said to my father David, 'Because it was in your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was in your heart.'”*

3. (:19) Repurposing of His Intention

*“Nevertheless you shall not build the house, but your son who shall be born to you, he shall build the house for My name.”*

**D. (:20-21) Fulfilment of Divine Promise Regarding the Building of the Temple via Solomon**

1. (:20) Raising up Solomon to Accomplish the Task

*“Now the LORD has fulfilled His word which He spoke; for I have risen in place of my father David and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel.”*

2. (:21) Resting Place for the Ark of the Covenant

*“And there I have set a place for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD, which He made with our fathers when He brought them from the land of Egypt.”*

**Iain Provan:** One important feature of this speech (vv. 16–20), and also of the prayer that follows in verses 22–53, is the way in which the word *Name* is used as a way of avoiding saying that God actually dwells in the temple (cf. also 3:2; 5:3, 5). God’s presence in the temple is real enough, and people will get God’s attention by calling the name, but God is not to be thought of as “living” there in any sense that detracts from the reality of God’s transcendence. This is one way of overcoming the problem language presents us with when we want to talk of a God who is both immanent (with us) and transcendent (beyond us; cf. further Matt. 23:21–22).

**III. (:22-53) SOLOMON’S PRAYER OF DEDICATION LEVERAGES GOD’S RESPONSIVENESS TO THE ONGOING NEEDS OF HIS COVENANT PEOPLE**

*“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.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** *he spread his palms heavenward.* A gesture expressive of need and help that takes on the sense of prayer and supplication; cf. Exod 9:29; Isa 1:15.

**August Konkel:** The prayer emphasizes the loyal faithfulness of God in his covenant with those who are faithful (v. 23). “*Covenant of love*” is a paraphrase for loyalty; the Hebrew word *hesed* is used primarily to describe loyalty to a commitment made by oath. Complete faithfulness is one expression of love, one that is most critical in all relationships. Divine loyalty is evident in the promise to David already fulfilled (v. 24); Solomon’s prayer is that the divine promise might now be fulfilled in the continuity of David’s descendants on the throne (vv. 25–26). The covenant blessing is conditional on the faithfulness of the covenant partners; that is Solomon’s particular concern in this prayer, for there is no person who does not sin and incur divine wrath (v. 46). Solomon pleads for the temple to receive the divine mercy when the people pray.

**A. (:23-26) Praise for God’s Covenant Faithfulness**

1. (:23-24) Extolling God for Past Covenant Faithfulness

*“And he said, ‘O LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like Thee in heaven above or on earth beneath, who art keeping covenant and showing lovingkindness to Thy servants who walk before Thee with all their heart, 24 who hast kept with Thy servant, my father David, that*

*which Thou hast promised him; indeed, Thou hast spoken with Thy mouth and hast fulfilled it with Thy hand as it is this day.”*

2. (:25-26) Entreating God for Future Covenant Faithfulness

*“Now therefore, O LORD, the God of Israel, keep with Thy servant David my father that which Thou hast promised him, saying, 'You shall not lack a man to sit on the throne of Israel, if only your sons take heed to their way to walk before Me as you have walked.' 26 Now therefore, O God of Israel, let Thy word, I pray Thee, be confirmed which Thou hast spoken to Thy servant, my father David.”*

**B. (:27-30) Paradox of the Transcendence of God v. the Immanence of God**

1. (:27) Transcendence of God = Can't be Contained in This Temple

*“But will God indeed dwell on the earth?  
Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee,  
how much less this house which I have built!”*

2. (:28-30) Immanence of God = Responsive to His People

*“Yet have regard to the prayer of Thy servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Thy servant prays before Thee today; 29 that Thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which Thou hast said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Thy servant shall pray toward this place. 30 And listen to the supplication of Thy servant and of Thy people Israel, when they pray toward this place; hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place; hear and forgive.”*

**R. D. Patterson: v. 29** – The expression “*have the eye fixed on*” (NIV “*open toward*”) an object is a common and graphic way of signifying care and attentiveness (cf. **Pss 31:22; 34:15; 101:6**). This verse forms the core of the whole prayer. God had condescended to allow a temple to be built for his name (**5:5**). He had by this means identified himself with his people. This means that God had through the temple provided a place of contact between man and God, a way for sinful man to approach a holy God, to have his sins forgiven, and to live in fellowship with him. Solomon prayed that God might continue to acknowledge the temple and the one who comes to him by way of the temple as he had promised.

**C. (:31-53) Petitions Securing God's Covenant Blessings for 7 Key Situations**

**MacArthur:** He listed 7 typical Israelite prayers that would require the Lord's response. These supplications recalled the detailed list of curses that **Dt 28:15-68** ascribed for the breaking of the law.

**Constable:** The remainder of 1 and 2 Kings shows how God answered Solomon's prayer. That is why this chapter is so significant theologically. The possibilities that the king mentioned here eventually took place in Israel's history, culminating in the

## Babylonian Captivity.

**Donald Wiseman:** Three different words for prayer are used here:

- (i) Prayer (*tēpillā*); intercession and prayer (vv. 19-30, 33, 35, 38, 42, 44-45, 48-49).
- (ii) Plea for mercy (*tehinnā*) earnest prayer for help (vv. 45, 52), “entreaty” (JB; REB v.52), ‘supplication’ (AV. REB).
- (iii) Cry (*rīnnā*); ringing cry for joy or sorrow, petition (vv. 28, 52).

### 1. (:31-32) Wronging a Neighbor

#### a. (:31) Situation

*“If a man sins against his neighbor and is made to take an oath, and he comes and takes an oath before Thine altar in this house,”*

#### b. (:32) Petition

*“then hear Thou in heaven and act and judge Thy servants, condemning the wicked by bringing his way on his own head and justifying the righteous by giving him according to his righteousness.”*

### 2. (:33-34) Defeated by an Enemy and Led into Captivity

#### a. (:33) Situation

*“When Thy people Israel are defeated before an enemy, because they have sinned against Thee, if they turn to Thee again and confess Thy name and pray and make supplication to Thee in this house,”*

#### b. (:34) Petition

*“then hear Thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of Thy people Israel, and bring them back to the land which Thou didst give to their fathers.”*

### 3. (:35-36) Disaster via Drought

#### a. (:35) Situation

*“When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they have sinned against Thee, and they pray toward this place and confess Thy name and turn from their sin when Thou dost afflict them,”*

#### b. (:36) Petition

*“then hear Thou in heaven and forgive the sin of Thy servants and of Thy people Israel, indeed, teach them the good way in which they should walk. And send rain on Thy land, which Thou hast given Thy people for an inheritance.”*

### 4. (:37-40) Disaster via Famine / Pestilence / Sickness

a. (:37-38) Situation

*“If there is famine in the land, if there is pestilence, if there is blight or mildew, locust or grasshopper, if their enemy besieges them in the land of their cities, whatever plague, whatever sickness there is, 38 whatever prayer or supplication is made by any man or by all Thy people Israel, each knowing the affliction of his own heart, and spreading his hands toward this house;”*

b. (:39-40) Petition

*“then hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and forgive and act and render to each according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest, for Thou alone dost know the hearts of all the sons of men, that they may fear Thee all the days that they live in the land which Thou hast given to our fathers.”*

5. (:41-43) Injustice for the Foreigner

a. (:41-42) Situation

*“Also concerning the foreigner who is not of Thy people Israel, when he comes from a far country for Thy name's sake 42 (for they will hear of Thy great name and Thy mighty hand, and of Thine outstretched arm); when he comes and prays toward this house,”*

b. (:43) Petition

*“hear Thou in heaven Thy dwelling place, and do according to all for which the foreigner calls to Thee, in order that all the peoples of the earth may know Thy name, to fear Thee, as do Thy people Israel, and that they may know that this house which I have built is called by Thy name.”*

6. (:44-45) Success in Upcoming Battle

a. (:44) Situation

*“When Thy people go out to battle against their enemy, by whatever way Thou shalt send them, and they pray to the LORD toward the city which Thou hast chosen and the house which I have built for Thy name,”*

b. (:45) Petition

*“then hear in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause.”*

7. (:46-53) Generic Sin Leading to Captivity

a. (:46-48) Situation

*“When they sin against Thee (for there is no man who does not sin) and Thou art angry with them and dost deliver them to an enemy, so that they take them away captive to the land of the*



*enemy, far off or near; 47 if they take thought in the land where they have been taken captive, and repent and make supplication to Thee in the land of those who have taken them captive, saying, 'We have sinned and have committed iniquity, we have acted wickedly'; 48 if they return to Thee with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who have taken them captive, and pray to Thee toward their land which Thou hast given to their fathers, the city which Thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for Thy name;"*

**August Konkil:** **Exile** is the consequence of a ruptured relationship with God. The passage plays on the words “take captive” (*šbh*) and “turn” (*šwb*). These two words become virtual homonyms in their various forms. Captors may take them captive (*šabûm šōbêhem*) into an enemy land (**8:46**); if in the land where they were taken captive (*nišbû*) they turn in their minds (*hēšibû*), turn (*šābû*), and make confession to God (**vv. 47–48**), if they turn (*šabû*) wholeheartedly to the city God has chosen, God may hear and forgive (**vv. 49–50**). Defeat by enemies is an evidence of sin and failure (**v. 46**); the only recourse in captivity is to turn back to God in repentance, remembering his covenant and his promise. God redeemed his people and made them his special possession at Mount Sinai (**v. 53**; **cf. Ex. 19:5–6**). Solomon’s prayer is that God’s work may be completed.

b. (:49-53) Petition

*“then hear their prayer and their supplication in heaven Thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, 50 and forgive Thy people who have sinned against Thee and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against Thee, and make them objects of compassion before those who have taken them captive, that they may have compassion on them 51 (for they are Thy people and Thine inheritance which Thou hast brought forth from Egypt, from the midst of the iron furnace), 52 that Thine eyes may be open to the supplication of Thy servant and to the supplication of Thy people Israel, to listen to them whenever they call to Thee. 53 For Thou hast separated them from all the peoples of the earth as Thine inheritance, as Thou didst speak through Moses Thy servant, when Thou didst bring our fathers forth from Egypt, O Lord God.”*

**Iain Provan:** What is striking about these seven petitions is how different they are in atmosphere from the first part of the prayer in **verses 23–26**. There the stress was upon the necessity of obedience. Here, however, human disobedience is simply presupposed (esp. in **v. 46**: there is no one who does not sin), and the prayer moves beyond God’s judgment to dependence upon divine forgiveness and grace. It does so hinting that it is God’s choices, and not Israel’s, that are the crucial element in the God-Israel relationship. The land is the land given to the fathers (i.e., the patriarchs, **vv. 34, 40**), the land given as an inheritance (**v. 36**; **cf. Deut. 4:37–38**)—statements that remind us, like



the case of the foreign worshiper in **verses 41–43**, of the divine promise to Abraham in **Genesis 12:1–3; 17:1–8**. The people ... brought out of Egypt are Abraham's descendants, delivered from oppression not because of their ability to keep the law but simply because of the promise.

#### **IV. (:54-61) SOLOMON'S BENEDICTION AND CHARGE TO ISRAEL TIES FUTURE BLESSING AND TESTIMONY TO COVENANT OBEDIENCE**

##### **A. (:54-55) Transition from Prayer to Benediction**

*“And it came about that when Solomon had finished praying this entire prayer and supplication to the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread toward heaven.  
And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel with a loud voice, saying,”*

**MacArthur: vv.54-61** – Solomon arose to pronounce a benediction on the people. His words were substantially a brief recapitulation of the preceding prayer in which he affirmed the faithfulness of the Lord to Israel (v. 56) and exhorted Israel to faithfulness to the Lord (vv. 57-61).

**Mordechai Cogan:** Solomon's closing blessing of the people (vv. 54–61) is in effect a further call upon YHWH to grant them the mind to live by His ways. In terms of formal structure, the pattern of two blessings of the people (vv. 14, 55), with an intervening personal prayer, is also reported during the Tabernacle inaugural; cf. **Lev 9:22–23** (see **Milgrom** 1991, 588 ad **Lev 9:23**; **Hurowitz** 1992, 287–88).

##### **B. (:56) Review of God's Past Faithfulness**

###### 1. Faithful to Give His People Rest

*“Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel, according to all that He promised;”*

###### 2. Faithful to Keep His Promises

*“not one word has failed of all His good promise, which He promised through Moses His servant.”*

##### **C. (:57-59) Requests of Solomon**

###### 1. (:57) Request #1 = Favorable Presence of God

*“May the LORD our God be with us, as He was with our fathers; may He not leave us or forsake us;”*

###### 2. (:58) Request #2 = Covenant Obedience

*“that He may incline our hearts to Himself, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His ordinances, which He commanded our fathers.”*

###### 3. (:59) Request #3 = Responsiveness to Petitions for Help

*“And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication*

*before the LORD, be near to 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 requires,”*

**D. (:60) Motivation = Testimony to the Nations**

*“so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God; there is no one else.”*

**David Guzik:** Solomon again shows the often-neglected missionary impulse God wanted in Israel. Blessing to Israel wasn't meant to end with Israel; God wanted to bless the world through Israel.

**E. (:61) Charge to the People**

*“Let your heart therefore be wholly devoted to the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as at this day.”*

**V. (:62-66) SOLOMON'S DEDICATION SACRIFICES AND CELEBRATION FEAST ACCENTUATE THE JOY OF COVENANT BLESSING**

**A. (:62-64) Dedication Sacrifices**

*“Now the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifice before the LORD. And Solomon offered for the sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered to the LORD, 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. So the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. On the same day the king consecrated the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD, because there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings; for the bronze altar that was before the LORD was too small to hold the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings.”*

**MacArthur:** To complete the temple's dedication, Solomon led the people in offering peace offerings to the Lord (cf. **Lv 3:1-17; 7:11-21**), in which they consumed 22,000 bulls and 120,000 sheep (**v. 63**). Although the number of sacrifices offered seems high, it was in keeping with the magnitude of this event. Obviously, the single bronze altar could not accommodate such an enormous number of sacrifices. Solomon first had to consecrate the entire middle courtyard, the one directly in front of the temple (**v. 64**). After consecrating the court, Solomon probably had a series of auxiliary altars set up in the court to accommodate all the peace offerings.

**B. (:65) Celebration Feast**

*“So Solomon observed the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from the entrance of Hamath to the brook of Egypt, before the LORD our God, for seven days and seven more days, even fourteen days.”*

References northern and southern borders of Solomon's kingdom

**C. (:66) Joy of Covenant Blessing**

*“On the eighth day he sent the people away and they blessed the king. Then they went to their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had shown to David His servant and to Israel His people.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** i.e. thanked him (*brk*). Misunderstanding this, the lxx makes Solomon give a final blessing of dismissal. As in the Assyrian examples, the crowds left ‘happy in heart’ (*jb, mt tōb lēb*, ‘goodness of heart’ ranges from joyfulness and contentment to pleasure at the covenant relationship being celebrated). All the people recognized the good that Solomon had done as the Lord’s action.

**Constable:** 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.

**John Gates:** Seven days had been consumed in spiritual service centering around the dedication and the following feast. The people now left for their farms and villages, with a new sense of the divine destiny of the kingdom upon them.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why was this such a pivotal point in the history of God’s redemptive program?
- 2) What encourages you to worship in the presence of the Lord?
- 3) How do you remember and celebrate God’s faithfulness to you and your family?
- 4) What specific types of situations drive us to our knees to seek relief from the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Let us take care of a few matters of introduction. First, the **setting** for this occasion: it occurred in the seventh month (its Canaanite name is Ethanim, later known as Tishri, our September/October) at the festival (**vv. 2, 65**), apparently the Feast of Tabernacles (see **Lev. 23:33–43**), the celebration that recalled Israel’s wanderings in the wilderness. Now, however, the temple is a sign of the rest Yahweh has given (**v. 56**), putting an end to Israel’s wanderings.

Secondly, let us observe the **structure** of the chapter. Here I have found **Porten’s** work most helpful, though I have altered his scheme a bit. Hence the overall order of chapter

8 falls out like this:

- Celebration and sacrifice, vv. 1–13
- Blessing Israel and Yahweh, vv. 14–21
- Solomon’s prayer of dedication, vv. 22–53
- Blessing Israel and Yahweh, vv. 54–61
- Celebration and sacrifice, vv. 62–66

One might conclude that Solomon’s prayer carries special importance since it stands at the center of this sandwich. I think this is the case and will allude to this matter in the exposition.

Thirdly, the **teaching** of the chapter can be developed largely from this structure. Each primary segment carries its own distinct focus, as our outline suggests:

- I. Setting of the prayer, vv. 1–13  
Focus: the presence of God (note: the ark)
- II. Framework of the prayer, vv. 14–21, 54–61  
Focus: the fidelity of God (to his promise)
- III. Content of the prayer, vv. 22–53  
Focus: the grace of God (need for forgiveness)

For the present exposition, however, I want to follow a somewhat different approach. As one reads **1 Kings 8** one notes a number of fascinating combinations which, I think, will prove a fruitful way to hear the theology of this chapter. Hence I propose we look at **1 Kings 8** under the rubric of ‘what God has joined together.’ What then has God joined together?

- God has joined together clarity and mystery (see vv. 1–13)
- God has joined together fidelity and expectancy (vv. 14–21, 22–26)
- God has joined together immensity and intimacy (vv. 27–30)
- God has joined together severity and mercy (vv. 31–53)
- God has joined together particularity and universality (vv. 41–43)
- God has joined together eschatology and practicality (vv. 54–61)

### **Closing word**

‘*What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder*’ (**Matt. 19:6**, kjv). This maxim of Jesus was spoken in support of the sanctity of the marriage union. But does this principle not properly apply to the study and expression of theology,

especially to our teaching about God's character and ways? Do we not have a tendency to stress one aspect of Yahweh's character at the expense of another and so risk ending up with a distortion of the true God? With a doctrinal graven image? Is not Solomon's prayer then a theological corrective, showing us how we must hold the truth about God in a holy tension? In a different connection John Bright once wrote that when sallying forth in the morning he did not have to choose between wearing his trousers or his shirt. Decency has joined together trousers and shirts. So too we must keep together what God has joined together as he has revealed himself to us in the Scriptures. Is it not precisely in what God has 'joined together' that we see the '*beauty of the Lord*' (cf. **Ps. 27:4**)? And does not the fact that all this is expressed in the form of prayer teach us that our finest theology will be done on our knees?

**Donald Wiseman:** Effective prayer is based on three facts about God:

(i) His incomparability (**Exod. 15:11; Deut. 4:39; Ps. 86:8–10**).

(ii) His trustworthiness to fulfil his covenant, never failing to keep his word (**v. 24; Deut. 7:9**), or to show his covenant love (*hesed*, cf. **3:6**). For the promise of **verse 25, cf. 2 Samuel 7:5–16**. The answer to prayer depends also on the obedience of the person who prays (**v. 25, cf. 9:4–9; 2 Chr. 7:14, 17**).

(iii) His transcendence (**vv. 27–30**). God is both up there and down here. Where he is (his Name, **Deut. 12:5**), there is the answer (cf. Matt. 18:19–20), and God's temple will not limit or localize his activity.

**August Konkel:** The majestic and imposing structure of the temple with all its associated ritual can never be far from the minds of the covenant people. In addition to the regular daily ritual of the priests, in which burnt offering is made to God, lights are maintained, and incense is poured on the hot coals, there are the daily requirements for individual Israelites to observe the regulations of diet, cleanliness, and sacrifice for sins. There is always the danger that rituals become routine, performed without thought for their significance. The dedication of the temple is a reminder of this danger. Building the temple does not fulfill the requirements of the covenant, nor does the meticulous observance of all its associated ritual. All these are a means of confessing the holy and majestic God of the covenant and his involvement in every aspect of daily life.

**John Schultz:** In his prayer of dedication Solomon refers to God's promises to David, the first of which was that the throne of Israel would always be occupied by one of David's sons. Solomon realized that he was the first fulfillment of that promise. The fulfillment would not be automatic but would depend on the obedience of David's sons and of the nation of Israel. Solomon's sins toward the end of his life canceled the promise at least in part. The kingdom would be split into two nations and David's sons would only rule over Judah and Benjamin, the southern part of the country, which was the smaller of the two.

The Babylonian Captivity would end the rule of the house of David. Jeremiah would prophecy about the house of David and Jehoiakin, the last representative: "*O land, land,*

*land, hear the word of the Lord! This is what the Lord says: "Record this man as if childless, a man who will not prosper in his lifetime, for none of his offspring will prosper, none will sit on the throne of David or rule anymore in Judah." Ultimately, Jesus Christ would be David's Son to occupy the throne. When the angel Gabriel announced to Mary that she would give birth to the Messiah, he said: "The Lord God will give him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever; his kingdom will never end."*

## **Dale Crawford: Concealed and Revealed – vv. 1-12**

### **I. God is transcendent**

A. Transcendence is a term used to describe the otherness of God

1. God dwells in a realm totally apart from time and space
2. He is incomparable – there is nothing in our experience that can be likened unto God. Although God provides us with many anthropomorphisms, God is vastly different from humanity. He is without body, parts, or passions.
  - a. God is a person but most often we define personhood as that which distinguishes a human being from an animal. A dog is not a person.
  - b. God is a person in terms of being a self-conscious, rational being but God is vastly different from a human personality. God has perfect consciousness, infinite intellect, eternal self-existence.
  - c. The human person can be divided into various elements of personality. We possess body and soul, will and emotions. God cannot be divided. God "is." He is immutable. He is infinite, boundless, unaffected by anything outside Himself.
3. God is incomprehensible. Our Confession states that God ultimately can only be comprehended by Himself. LBC 2:1 – "The Lord our God is but one only living and true God; whose subsistence is in and of Himself, infinite in being and perfection; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself"
4. This passage describes the transcendence of God in two ways.

B. We can see God's transcendence with the symbol of the cherubim

1. The cover of the Ark was adorned with two cherubim. **Exodus. 25:18-22**  
NAU –
2. Cherubim are spiritual, heavenly creatures. Along with the seraphim, they were created to declare the holiness and infinite perfections of God. The cherubim symbolized the otherness of God. God dwells in the heavens. This is expressed in the Lord's Prayer: "Our Father, which art in heaven." The cover of the Ark was called the Mercy Seat. It was the place where God would meet with His people. It was an infinite act of condescension.
3. Now, the inner sanctuary of Solomon's Temple was adorned with two giant cherubim fifteen feet tall and each with a wingspan of fifteen feet. The Ark was placed beneath their wings. The cherubim symbolized God's heavenly domain.

C. The transcendence of God is also seen in the thick cloud **1 Kings 8:12** NAU - "Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud."

1. The cloud symbolized the veiled presence of God. He cannot be seen. He

cannot be approached.

2. God is holy, holy, holy. By nature, God is intrinsically set apart, above, beyond, unique.

3. Sin has created a great chasm further separating God and man God hid Himself within the cloud

4. The same was true at Mount Sinai

**Exodus. 19:9-12** NAU - **Exodus. 19:16** NAU

D. The very existence of the Temple was God's condescension to His people

1. God shall not be confined to a building. The earth cannot contain Him. **1**

**Kings 8:27**

2. The Temple was adorned with earthly treasures – gold and the cedars of Lebanon – yet, it was nothing to God. Isaiah described the treasures of the earth compared with the infinite greatness of God—they are less than nothing. **Isaiah 40:15-17** NAU

a. Whole continents are as a speck as viewed by God Isaiah uses the word {dak} which describes something of the smallest size – should God desire, He could lift the continents as though they were grains of dust

b. Isaiah adds - all of the nations are counted as “less than nothing.” As we place value upon material things the smallest value would be 0 – nothing. Anything less than that would be a liability.

c. There is nothing upon the earth worthy of His glory **Verse 16** - Lebanon was famous for all of its prized cedars – Hiram provided cedar for David's house and would provide the wood for Solomon's temple. But they mean nothing to God.

3. The Ark was the work of human hands made with earthly materials and yet it was a facsimile of God's holy throne in heaven. **Hebrews 9:24** NAU - "*For Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, a mere copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us;*"

## **II. God is concealed, but He has also made Himself known.**

God has revealed Himself to the comprehension of man – God cannot be known apart from Divine revelation.

A. The cloud was a veil, a separation, but at the same time it was God revealing Himself.

1. The cloud was the visible manifestation of God **1 Kings 8:12** NAU - "*Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in the thick cloud."*

2. This was true in the wilderness when God used a cloud to reveal His presence. **Exodus. 13:21** NAU - "*The LORD was going before them in a pillar of cloud by day to lead them on the way, and in a pillar of fire by night to give them light, that they might travel by day and by night."*

3. **Verse 11** refers to the cloud as the glory of God – a manifestation of His Divine essence. **1 Kings 8:11** NAU - "*the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD."*

4. The cloud both concealed God and revealed Him. God has been pleased to reveal Himself to man.

B. The Ark was the visible representation of the presence of God

1. God dwelt among His people
2. God also dwelt between the cherubim.

C. We can also see God's revelation of Himself in the description of the Ark's contents.

1. While God has revealed Himself dimly, He has made His will plainly known.
2. The Ark was empty except for the tablets of the Law – **Verse 9**
3. The Law was both a revelation of God's Divine character as well as a reminder of His covenant promises. The Law bore testimony to God's Covenant faithfulness as well as the requirement of obedience for His people.
4. In the Decalogue God revealed Himself as the one, true, existing God. *"Thou shalt have no other gods before Me."*

a. God's Words to Israel **Isaiah 44:6** – *"Thus saith the LORD the King of Israel, and his redeemer the LORD of hosts; I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God."*

b. He described Himself to Moses **Exodus 3:13-14** – *"And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them? And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you."*

c. God's proper name hwh'yh is a form of the Hebrew verb of being - hy'h' – God revealed Himself to Moses as the God who "is"

d. God has His being in Himself - All that God is comes from Himself He is self-sufficient, self-complete, self-contented, self-sustaining, self-determining - God needs nothing outside of Himself. This infinite, eternal, omnipotent God has been pleased to enter into covenant with man. These stone tablets represented this covenant.

### **III. Jesus Christ is the ultimate revelation of God's Divine glory**

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/11920144134118.pdf>



TEXT: 1 Kings 9:1-28

TITLE: KINGDOM PROSPERITY BUT SIGNS OF SLIPPAGE

**BIG IDEA:**

**DESPITE THE GIFT OF WISDOM, SOLOMON PURSUED KINGDOM PROSPERITY WITHOUT HEEDING DIVINE WARNINGS REGARDING APOSTASY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

On the surface, everything in the kingdom seems trending towards prosperity. But below the surface you can see the signs of Solomon allowing prosperity to divert his heart from full obedience to the covenant commands. That is why the Lord is so forceful in warning Solomon again of the curses for falling away into apostasy.

**West Palm Beach Church of Christ:** The temple of the Lord is completed. Symbolically the great temple is where we see the presence of God dwelling, though Solomon notes that there is nothing in creation that can contain the greatness and majesty of the Lord Almighty. **Chapter 8** records the dedication of the temple, calling upon God to be merciful to the people when they violate the covenant. When the people turn toward the temple in repentance, Solomon calls upon God who is in heaven to listen to the prayer of the people and forgive. The temple represents the covenantal promises of God and the place of mediation between God and his people. Turn your hearts to the covenant and God will extend mercy toward our sins. I believe **chapter 8** records the **pinnacle** of the kingdom of Solomon. The chapter ends with everyone going home joyful and with gladness of heart because of the goodness of the Lord. . .

Notice how things begin to **slip** from the hands of Solomon, a foreshadowing of what was to come to his rule in this kingdom. The hub of the problem seems to be found in **verse 16** where we read that Solomon married the daughter of Pharaoh. Recall that this was God's command against marrying people outside of the nation of Israel.

*You shall not intermarry with them, giving your daughters to their sons or taking their daughters for your sons, for they would turn away your sons from following me, to serve other gods. Then the anger of the LORD would be kindled against you, and he would destroy you quickly. (Deuteronomy 7:3–4 ESV)*

So with this violation we will begin to watch the disintegration of the nation. First, we see Hiram, the King of Tyre, being dissatisfied with the twenty cities that were given to him in the land of Galilee (**9:12-13**). Instead of God's name and generosity being praised among the Gentiles, Solomon damages the reputation of the Lord.

Second, we see Pharaoh doing what the people of Israel should have done but did not do. In **verse 16** we read that Pharaoh destroyed the Canaanites who lived in the city of

Gezer. This city stands as one of many failures in the days of the conquest of the land, as recorded in the book of Judges.

*And Ephraim did not drive out the Canaanites who lived in Gezer, so the Canaanites lived in Gezer among them. (Judges 1:29 ESV)*

The Gentiles do for the kingdom what the people themselves should have done but willfully did not accomplish. A Gentile is more obedient to the command of the Lord than the people themselves, an interesting foreshadowing.

Third, Solomon enslaves the Canaanites rather than utterly destroying them (9:20-21). Listen to how the book of Judges recalls this failure:

*When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not drive them out completely. (Judges 1:28 ESV)*

*Zebulun did not drive out the inhabitants of Kitron, or the inhabitants of Nahalol, so the Canaanites lived among them, but became subject to forced labor. (Judges 1:30 ESV)*

*Naphtali did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh, or the inhabitants of Beth-anath, so they lived among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless, the inhabitants of Beth-shemesh and of Beth-anath became subject to forced labor for them. (Judges 1:33 ESV)*

*The Amorites persisted in dwelling in Mount Heres, in Aijalon, and in Shaalbim, but the hand of the house of Joseph rested heavily on them, and they became subject to forced labor. (Judges 1:35 ESV)*

This is not what God commanded the people to do. The book of Judges records this act of subjecting them into forced labor as a failure because they did not drive out the people. This led to the downfall of the people of Israel in the days of the Judges. In the same way, the same people are being left in the land again, pressed into forced labor, rather than being driven out of the land as God decreed. The symbol is used to picture the coming downfall of Solomon. Solomon is not walking in all the ways of the Lord as he was warned to do at the beginning of the chapter. So we are reading about the kingdom slipping from his hand.

<https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/old-testament/1-kings/price-of-unfaithfulness.html>

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Both major sections begin with a reference to Solomon's building Yahweh's house and the king's house (vv. 1, 10). We seem to have a survey that, from a mid-reign perspective (cf. v. 10), looks back over his construction that had been completed to date. The building terminology does not tightly control the chapter but loosely holds together a highly directive (vv. 1–9) and a mostly descriptive (vv. 10–28) section, which suggest two primary emphases.

- The urgent need for faithfulness (vv. 1–9)
- The ongoing business of kingship (vv. 10–28)

**Constable:** First, God promised He would do what Solomon had petitioned in his dedicatory prayer (8:22-53; 9:3). 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 maintained Solomon's line because, generally speaking, Solomon remained faithful to the Lord. 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.

## **I. (:1-9) TEMPLE DEDICATION PROMPTS COVENANT REMINDERS OF BLESSINGS VS CURSINGS**

### **A. (:1-2) Context**

#### 1. (:1) Mission Accomplished

*“Now it came about when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all that Solomon desired to do,”*

**David Guzik:** This was some 24 years after Solomon came to the throne. The temple and the palace work at Jerusalem were finished. Now Solomon had to deal with life after completing his greatest accomplishment.

#### 2. (:2) Meeting with the Lord Revisited

*“that the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon.”*

**William Barnes:** Solomon appears to be the only king of either kingdom so honored by such divine visitations. Normally a prophet served as an intermediary between Yahweh and the king. Sadly, Solomon's experience of two theophanies only renders him even more guilty and deserving of punishment for his heinous sins of syncretism.

**Peter Pett:** This point at which Solomon had completed his desire to build the Temple and the Palace Complex is to be the second major moment of his life, the first having been when YHWH spoke with him at Gibeon. This is in itself a reminder that in spite of his great wisdom he received few direct revelations from God, for this was only his second visitation in twenty years. In it God accepted the genuineness of his attempt to please Him and accepted his gesture, but on conditions. God was already aware, as Solomon was not, of the wayward tendencies in his life. If he was to enjoy the blessing promised to David, he must walk as David walked.

### **B. (:3) Consecration**

#### 1. Attentiveness of the Lord

*“And the LORD said to him, ‘I have heard your prayer and your*

*supplication, which you have made before Me;”*

## 2. Significance of the Temple

*“I have consecrated this house which you have built by putting My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** *I have consecrated this House that you have built to place my name there forever.* A unique idea. It is usually a human who dedicates (Heb *hiqdīš*) gifts to God (cf., e.g., **2 Sam 8:11**); here it is God who endows the gift presented to Him with *holiness* (the same Hebrew verb), apparently meaning that He has agreed to receive Solomon’s gift and take up residence in the Temple (cf. **1 Kgs 8:10–11**).

**MacArthur:** God was not saying He will dwell in that building forever, since in less than 400 years it was destroyed by the Babylonians (cf. **vv. 7-9**). He was saying that Jerusalem and the temple mount are to be His earthly throne as long as the earth remains, through the millennial kingdom (see **Is 2:1-4; Zec 14:16**). Even during the New Heaven and New Earth, the eternal state, there will be the heavenly Jerusalem, where God will eternally dwell (see **Rev 21:1, 2**).

*Eyes . . . heart* – These symbolized, respectively, the Lord’s constant attention toward and deep affection for Israel. By implication, He promised them **access to His presence and answers to their prayers.**

**R. D. Patterson:** God acknowledged the temple, consecrating it by putting his name there. Neither the ritual nor the splendor of the building made it the dwelling place of God. It was God’s sovereign and gracious choice to thus dwell among his people and to acknowledge them as his own. Solomon had asked (**8:29**) that God’s eyes might be on the temple. God replied that not only his eyes but also his heart would be there. The following verses state the conditions.

### **C. (:4-5) Continuity in Blessing for Obedience**

#### 1. (:4) Responsibility

*“And as for you, if you will walk before Me as your father David walked, in integrity of heart and uprightness, doing according to all that I have commanded you and will keep My statutes and My ordinances,”*

**Donald Wiseman:** *Walk before me* is to conduct oneself (*live*) in the presence of God and his law. This is timely advice because Solomon, now in his twenty-fourth regnal year, is pressed by his own desires (**vv. 1, 19**, *ḥāpēs*, ‘*what he took pleasure in, ambition*’; cf. **2 Chr. 7:11**, ‘*all he had in mind to do*’) which led to wealth and fame and then to self-reliance. The latter can be the enemy of integrity of heart (**v. 4, 3:6**, *tām lēbāb*), ‘*completeness*’ in the sense of being in accord with truth, not perfectionism. Uprightness includes honesty. There are qualities which must distinguish God’s covenant-keeping people.

#### 2. (:5) Reassurance

*“then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I promised to your father David, saying, ‘You shall not lack a man on the throne of Israel.’”*

#### **D. (:6-9) Cursing for Apostasy**

##### 1. (:6) Apostasy

*“But if you or your sons shall indeed turn away from following Me, and shall not keep My commandments and My statutes which I have set before you and shall go and serve other gods and worship them,”*

**William Barnes:** This is the classic description of **apostasy**; the Hebrew expression for “abandon” here (*shob teshubun* [TH7725, ZH8740]) is emphatic for “turn (aside).” Once again, the emphasis is on the people’s obedience and loyalty, not on the presence or absence of any temple building.

**R. D. Patterson:** These verses give dire warning as to the disastrous consequences that result from apostasy. Solomon’s history (**ch. 11**) shows that this warning was needed and particularly at this time in his life. This appearance of God was an act of grace and was intended as an urgent reminder to Solomon to guard his heart. A second thing to note here is that the consequences of disobedience are far-reaching. As kings, Solomon and his successors were responsible for the whole nation. Failure on the king’s part affected all the people. Israel’s subsequent history amply illustrates this principle. As the king went, so went the people.

##### 2. (:7-9) Abandonment

###### a. (:7a) Rejection

*“then I will cut off Israel from the land which I have given them, and the house which I have consecrated for My name, I will cast out of My sight.”*

###### b. (:7b-9) Humiliation

*“So Israel will become a proverb and a byword among all peoples. And this house will become a heap of ruins; everyone who passes by will be astonished and hiss and say, ‘Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?’ 9 And they will say, ‘Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and adopted other gods and worshiped them and served them, therefore the LORD has brought all this adversity on them.’”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** *will whistle.* the astonished observer seems to be expressing his consternation, further shown by shaking the head and clapping the hands in **Lam 2:15**; see **Greenberg** 1997, 564 ad **Ezek 27:36**. “The horrific wounds inflicted on Jerusalem will appall those who see them, and a sharp expelling of the breath, indicative of the terror which the sight inspires, will issue as a kind of whistling” (**McKane** 1986, 453).

## II. (:10-28) TROUBLING SIGNS OF SLIPPAGE DESPITE OUTWARD KINGDOM PROSPERITY

### A. (:10-14) Diplomacy between Kingdoms Seems Disingenuous

#### 1. (:10-11) Questionable Land Deal

##### a. (:10) Project Completion

*“And it came about at the end of twenty years in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the king's house”*

##### b. (:11a) Hiram Delivered

*“(Hiram king of Tyre had supplied Solomon with cedar and cypress timber and gold according to all his desire),”*

Hiram more than held up his end of the deal.

##### c. (:11b) Solomon Disappointed

*“then King Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee.”*

Solomon had no business mortgaging these properties since the Promised Land was not allowed to be transferred out of Israelite ownership and control.

**Peter Pett:** In 18th century BC Alalakh in Syria the exchange of ‘settlements’ by contracts was seen as a means of adjusting borders. That may well be what is happening here. Solomon was ceding to Hiram a part of YHWH’s inheritance, a further indication of his casual attitude towards the covenant in spite of his protestations. The author would certainly not have been anything but displeased at the idea, but leaves us to pass our own judgment. (They may, of course, have been Canaanite settlements, especially in view of their poverty-stricken appearance, but this is nowhere stated, and the land was still part of YHWH’s inheritance. When they were later returned to Solomon he is said to have ensured their habitation by Israelites - **2 Chronicles 8:2**)

#### 2. (:12-13) Quality Inspection

##### a. (:12) Hiram’s Disapproval

*“So Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him, and they did not please him.”*

##### b. (:13) Hiram’s Dispute

*“And he said, ‘What are these cities which you have given me, my brother?’ So they were called the land of Cabul to this day.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Hiram toured the area and was unimpressed. Not much he could do about it but object. He could tell Solomon he thought they were sorry samples of towns. But Hiram is no dunce. He’s not about to be so upset that he would boycott joining Solomon in a lucrative sea trade (**vv. 26–28**).

### 3. (:14) Quantified Payment

*“And Hiram sent to the king 120 talents of gold.”*

**MacArthur:** Solomon sold these 20 cities in Galilee to Hiram in exchange for the gold (about 4.5 tons) mentioned in v. 14. Probably these cities lay along the border between Tyre and Israel, just outside the territory of Asher. Later, Hiram gave the towns back to Solomon. (**2 Ch 8:2**)

**Peter Pett:** Solomon Has So Extended His Resources That He Feels It Necessary To Obtain A Secured Loan From Hiram, Secured Against Galilean Settlements (**1 Kings 9:11-14**).

It is an indication of the wealth that Solomon had laid out on his enterprises, and the great cost involved, that even he had subsequently to resort to a private loan, in spite of the wealth continually flowing into his kingdom. But, of course, no hint is given of a commercial transaction here (unless possibly in the naming of the lands as Cabul). It simply consisted of ‘gifts’ between extremely wealthy kings. The ‘settlements’ (cities/towns/villages) are ‘given’, both as a gesture of gratitude and as security for a further loan, without any such commonplace suggestions being made. Hiram then views them and is not very pleased with their ‘quality’ but nevertheless decides to send Solomon a huge amount of gold. He knew, of course, that his investment was safe and that he would eventually get it back in return for the ‘settlements’, no doubt at a somewhat enhanced premium.

### **B. (:15-24) Defense of the Kingdom Relies on Questionable Assistance**

#### 1. (:15) Employing Forced Labor for Building Projects and Fortifications

*“Now this is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon levied to build the house of the LORD, his own house, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer.”*

Israel was supposed to drive out their enemies from the Promised Land; not use them for forced labor.

**Donald Wiseman:** Solomon fortified strategic cities to guard the main approaches to his kingdom. The list runs north to south. All show archaeological evidence of identical construction work of the Solomonic period, casemate-type walls and similar ‘six-roomed’ gate towers. Hazor (Tell el-Qedah), eight kilometers south-west of Lake Huleh (now almost drained dry), controlled the road from the north; Megiddo (Tell el-Mutesellim, see on **4:12**) the road from Phoenicia and through the Carmel range.

**William Barnes:** Returning to the issue of forced labor, such was regularly practiced, and such were the expectations of the times—kings either fought battles or built structures, and both sadly seemed to require a form of de facto slavery (i.e., the military draft and the civilian corvée) to accomplish their intended results.



**Wiersbe:** Solomon also strengthened and extended “*the Millo,*” the terraced area next to the walls of Jerusalem that buttressed the wall and gave more protection to the city. The word *millo* means “*to fill.*” This was an “earth-fill fortification” that was begun by David (**2 Sam. 5:9**) and continued by Solomon (**9:24; 11:27**). The king and his family, the people of the city, and the wealth in the temple and the palace all had to be protected.

## 2. (:16-19) Egyptian Assistance

### a. (:16) Dowry Gift of Gezer from Pharaoh

*“For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer, and burned it with fire, and killed the Canaanites who lived in the city, and had given it as a dowry to his daughter, Solomon's wife.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Gezer (Tel Jezer, south-east of Ramleh) guarded the south-west approaches from Philistia. There is no need to read ‘Gerar’ here. **Verses 16–17** are added to show how the Israelites had taken over the city from the Canaanite vassals of the Philistines (cf. vv. **20–21; Josh. 10:33; Judg. 1:29**).

**Iain Provan:** *Pharaoh ... captured Gezer:* It is interesting that the same passage that tells us (v. **21**) of Israelite inability to exterminate the Canaanites also tells us that their enemy of old, the Egyptian Pharaoh, has recently captured Gezer and killed all its Canaanite inhabitants—a city that had hitherto provided forced labor, according to **Josh. 16:10**. Why are we told of these Joshua-like exploits just at this point? Perhaps for this reason: that it helps us to see clearly just how easily Solomon, in all his glory and power, could have dealt with the Canaanites in the way deuteronomic law had commanded—if he had wished to. It points to the conclusion, in other words, that he continued to use them as labor **out of choice**, rather than **out of necessity**, because of his enthusiasm for building—and so willingly put himself at risk of their baneful influence. It should not pass unnoticed, either, that some of the building is of a highly questionable sort (v. **19**).

### b. (:17-19) Development of Cities in Conjunction with Solomon’s Multiplication of Chariots and Horsemen

*“So Solomon rebuilt Gezer and the lower Beth-horon 18 and Baalath and Tamar in the wilderness, in the land of Judah, 19 and all the storage cities which Solomon had, even the cities for his chariots and the cities for his horsemen, and all that it pleased Solomon to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon, and in all the land under his rule.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Lower Beth Horon, eighteen kilometres north-west of Jerusalem (modern Beit ‘Ur et-Tahta), commands the road through the Ayalon Valley to the west. Baalath, south-west of Beth-Horon in Dan (**Josh. 19:44**). Tadmor (mt Qēre) is read as Tamar (lxx, rsv, Kētīb) and identified with ‘Ain Husb, south of the Dead Sea. This is in the desert (‘wilderness’, neb) but the change might be unnecessary if there was a



Tadmor in the south, as distinct from the famous caravan city (= Palmyra, 240 kilometres north-east of Damascus).

### 3. (:20-23) Explanation of Distinction between Foreign Forced Labor and Israelite Roles

#### a. (:20-21) Foreign Forced Labor

*“As for all the people who were left of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites and the Jebusites, who were not of the sons of Israel, 21 their descendants who were left after them in the land whom the sons of Israel were unable to destroy utterly, from them Solomon levied forced laborers, even to this day.”*

#### b. (:22-23) Israelite Roles

*“But Solomon did not make slaves of the sons of Israel; for they were men of war, his servants, his princes, his captains, his chariot commanders, and his horsemen. 23 These were the chief officers who were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people doing the work.”*

**Constable:** Solomon put the defeated native Canaanites to work on government projects (cf. **Gen. 9:25-26**). Nevertheless this plan proved to be a source of major dissatisfaction in Israel (cf. **12:4**). 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. The latter were the native Canaanites who enjoyed no rights as free persons.

### 4. (:24) Egyptian Influence

*“As soon as Pharaoh's daughter came up from the city of David to her house which Solomon had built for her, then he built the Millo.”*

**Peter Pett:** Adding to his disapproval the prophet points out that much of this work had been carried out in order to make provision for Pharaoh's daughter. (You can almost hear himself saying, ‘that woman’). Now that the palace complex had been completed, and the Ark had been removed from the Sacred tent in David's house, the Egyptian princess, with her false deities, could be allowed to live there.

### **C. (:25) Dedication to Annual Sacrifices**

*“Now three times in a year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings on the altar which he built to the LORD, burning incense with them on the altar which was before the LORD. So he finished the house.”*

Outwardly, it seems that Solomon is on track in terms of supporting the sacrificial system as administered by the priests. But his heart attitude is starting to deviate from full obedience to the covenant requirements.

**Peter Pett:** The Temple having been built it was used as the Central Sanctuary to which the men of Israel gathered for the three great feasts, Passover, Sevens (Weeks) and Tabernacles. And during those feasts Solomon arranged for the offering of the burnt-offerings and peace-offerings as required by Law, and as required for the subsequent feasting. The burnt-offering was a dedicatory offering, and was wholly consumed. The peace or wellbeing offerings were also atoning, but parts of the animal could be eaten by the worshippers. These would be offered on the bronze altar. The incense would be burned by the priests ‘before YHWH’ on the incense altar in the Holy Place before the veil. The reference of the original word to incense is however secondary, and the word may simply refer to ‘fire-offerings’. (There is no requirement that we see Solomon as doing this himself. It was the responsibility of the **priests**. Indeed if Solomon had offered all the offerings himself he would have been a very busy man).

#### **D. (:26-28) Development of International Maritime Trade Increases Kingdom Wealth**

##### 1. (:26) Maritime Fleet Built

*“King Solomon also built a fleet of ships in Ezion-geber, which is near Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom.”*

##### 2. (:27) Maritime Skill Acquired

*“And Hiram sent his servants with the fleet, sailors who knew the sea, along with the servants of Solomon.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** A completely new approach to international trade began here as far as Israel was concerned. Phoenicia was the major shipping power in the Mediterranean, while Israel controlled the major inland trade routes in the Levant. With Israel newly exercising control of the Negev as far as the Gulf of Aqaba, new possibilities opened up. Solomon made a treaty with Hiram of Tyre that was apparently mutually attractive. Both kings would be able to conduct extensive trade throughout the Red Sea area. In this venture Hiram supplied the seamen and shipping and ship-building skills, and Solomon gave Tyre access to the Red Sea and probably undertook a major share of the financing.

##### 3. (:28) Maritime Trade Developed

*“And they went to Ophir, and took four hundred and twenty talents of gold from there, and brought it to King Solomon.”*

**Peter Pett:** The sad thing about Solomon is that such a wise man, to whom God had given so much, should have been so foolish as to destroy his kingdom because of his vanity, pride and lust. He was fulfilling all the prophetic warnings of what happened when men were given supreme kingship (**1 Samuel 8:11-18; Deuteronomy 17:16-17**).

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why was it significant that the Lord revisit Solomon with these promises and warnings at this point in his kingdom?
- 2) How would you describe the relationship between Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre?
- 3) What are some of the differences you see between the kingdom administration and skillset of Solomon vs his father David?
- 4) What seeds or foreshadowings do you see in this chapter that eventually emerged full-grown in the spiritual decline of Solomon's later years?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Iain Provan:** The first occasion upon which God appeared to Solomon (**1 Kgs. 3:4–15**) marked the beginning of Solomon's rise to greatness; he was endowed with the heavenly wisdom that enabled him to govern his empire well, to build the temple and the palace, and to achieve everything he desired to do (**9:1**)—probably a reference to other building work, as in **10:19**. This second appearance of God marks the endpoint of Solomon's upward mobility and points us ahead to disaster. The place of the temple as a focal point for prayer is certainly assured, as Solomon had asked (**v. 3**; **cf. 8:27–53**), and there is a favorable response to his request about the future of the dynasty (**vv. 4–5**; **cf. 8:25–26**). The future of the temple and the dynasty, however—as well as possession of the very land itself (**v. 7**)—is made dependent upon obedience: the obedience of Solomon (**9:4**) and the obedience of future generations of Israelites (note the plural *you* in **v. 6** and the inclusion of *your sons*). The particular focus here is on idolatry; the people must not go off to serve other gods and worship them (**vv. 6, 9**). If they do, the magnificent temple will become a ruin (**v. 8**; **cf. Deut. 29:22–28**; **Lam. 1:12**; **2:15**), and Israel will be cut off from the land, transformed from a nation renowned for its wisdom (**1 Kgs. 4:21–34**) into a nation that is a byword (i.e., “*proverb*”) and an object of ridicule. This last word pair comes directly from the list of covenant curses in **Deuteronomy 28** (**cf. v. 37**)—the list that lies behind so much of the prayer of **8:22–53** with its straightforward assumptions about the inevitability of sin (**cf. esp. v. 46**). To read **9:1–9** in the light of **8:22–53** is to see immediately, then, the inevitability of disaster. The *if* of **verse 6** cannot in reality be anything other than a *when* (**8:46**). Obedience will inevitably give way to apostasy. If this is truly the basis of God's dealings with Israel, there can be no other outcome but tears. A dark cloud now looms quite visibly over the Solomonic empire, for all the glory of **1 Kings 3–8**. The temple is no sooner built than we hear of its inevitable end; the empire is no sooner created than we hear of its inevitable destruction.

**R. D. Patterson:** The seriousness of the threatened disasters [vv. 6-9] is seen from the following considerations.

1. The word “*cut off*” (*karat*, v. 7) is frequently used in situations where a person is cut off or excluded from the fellowship of God’s people (e.g. **Lev 17:4, 9; Num 19:20**). It is a drastic measure reserved for one who has committed a serious offense against God.
2. The word “*reject*” (*sillah*, v. 7), used in connection with the temple, is the word used of a man divorcing his wife. As such it speaks of a far more serious matter than the terminating of a business arrangement. Strong emotions and grief are involved (this is also the figure used frequently by the prophets of God, as the husband putting away Israel, the unfaithful wife).
3. Israel will become a “*byword*” (*masal*) and an “*object of ridicule*” (*sninah*). These words are “expressive of extraordinary calamity” (Gray, *Kings*, p. 238) and are found also in **Deuteronomy 28:37** (where *masal* is rendered “*object of scorn*” in the NIV) and **Jeremiah 24:9**. The first of these words (*masal*) is usually rendered “*a proverb*.” The second word (*sninah*) is related to the word “*tooth*” (*sen*) and “*make sharp*” (*sanan*) and speaks of sharp, cutting taunts (c. **Ps 64:3**: “*They sharpen their tongues like swords*”).

**Ebenezer Church:** We have now reached the halfway point of Solomon’s reign. It took him around 20 years to complete his projects of building the temple and the palace. At this point he is still paying other nations for their help. If you recall back to **1 Kings 5**, the original agreement with the king of Tyre was to give them food. Here we see Solomon changing that and giving him 20 cities. It turns out that these cities are terrible. The King of Tyre called the towns “*Kabul*” which literally means “*worthless*”. That is a bold move by Solomon to do to a trusted ally.

We also learn in this section that Solomon has several other projects going on where he is building up Israel’s defenses. He is building walls around the city and fortifying other cities. He completes these projects by using slave work and the writer says that he does not use Israelites as slave labor. We learn later on that some Israelites did work on these projects so maybe they weren’t long-term slaves and just temporarily worked on the projects. We end up finding up that some Israelites become bitter about working on these projects.

<https://www.welcometoebenezer.com/stay-focused-on-god-1-kings-910-28/>

### **Peter Pett: Verses 1-10**

Solomon’s Dream Concerning YHWH’s Hallowing Of His House In Which YHWH Warns That By Itself The House Means Nothing. Its Continued Hallowing Will Depend On A Full Response By The House Of David To The Davidic Covenant And Thus Subsequently to the Mosaic Covenant.

The importance of this passage, which provides us with YHWH’s response to Solomon’s dedication, is brought out by an *inclusio* formed by **1 Kings 9:1; 1 Kings 9:10**, stressing the connection of the words with Solomon’s successful completion of

YHWH's House and the King's Palace Complex, which it is once again emphasised took up twenty years to build, taking us some way into the second half of his reign.

In it YHWH declares that He has hallowed (separated off totally to Himself) the House to put His Name there forever, so that His eyes and heart would be there perpetually. In other words He has accepted it as taking the place of the Tabernacle and the Sacred Tent, where His Name had previously been (**2 Samuel 6:2** and context). From then on there would be a sense in which His personal presence would ever be there as expressed through His eye and heart. But it was conditional. For if the house of David, and the people, failed to walk in the ways of David, the House would simply be cast out of His sight and become a place to be hissed at. The House in itself meant nothing apart from the loving and obedient response of the people.

The idea of the House being '*hallowed*' is typically Mosaic (although not Deuteronomic). In **Exodus 29:42-44** YHWH speaks of '*the door of the Tent of Meeting before YHWH, where I will meet with you, to speak there to you, and there I will meet with the children of Israel, and it will be hallowed by my glory, and I will hallow the Tent of Meeting, and the altar. Aaron also and his sons will I hallow to minister to me in the priest's office. And I will dwell among the children of Israel and will be their God. And they will know that I am YHWH their God, Who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt, that I may dwell among them. I am YHWH their God.*'

We note in the passage in Exodus the same emphasis as we find here on the hallowing of YHWH's sanctuary; on YHWH's dwelling with His people; and on them knowing that He is YHWH their God Who brought them forth out of the land of Egypt. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that **Exodus 29:42-44** was in mind in these words spoken to Solomon.

A further more indirect reference is found in **Leviticus 21:23**, where YHWH speaks of '*hallowing -- My sanctuaries*' (i.e. the whole sanctuary including the inner court). These two are the only previous references to the '*hallowing of the Sanctuary*', an idea which is not found at all in Deuteronomy, where sanctifying is always by the people (**Deuteronomy 5:12**, of the Sabbath; **Deuteronomy 15:19**, of the firstborn; **Deuteronomy 32:51**, of Moses and Aaron failing to hallow God before the people), the concept which is found most regularly throughout the Law of Moses.

It will be noted in the chiasmus of the section that this dream concerning the 'hallowing' of the House parallels the passage where the Ark was brought into the Temple and the cloud of YHWH descended on it, thus hallowing it with His presence.

#### Analysis.

*a And it came about, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of YHWH, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, that YHWH appeared to Solomon the second time, as He had appeared to him at Gibeon (**1 Kings 9:1-2**).*

b *And YHWH said to him, “I have heard your prayer and your supplication, that you have made before me. I have hallowed this house, which you have built, to put my name there forever, and my eyes and my heart will be there perpetually” (1 Kings 9:3).*

c *“And as for you, if you will walk before me, as David your father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, and will keep my statutes and my ordinances” (1 Kings 9:4).*

d *“Then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, according as I promised to David your father, saying, ‘There shall not fail you a man on the throne of Israel’.” (1 Kings 9:5).*

C1 *“But if you shall turn away from following me, you or your children, and not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but shall go and serve other gods, and worship them” (1 Kings 9:6).*

B1 *“Then I will cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them, and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight, and Israel will be a proverb and a byword among all peoples, and though this house is so high (or ‘this house shall be very high’), yet will everyone who passes by it be astonished, and will hiss, and they will say, “Why has YHWH done thus to this land, and to this house?” “And they will answer, ‘Because they forsook YHWH their God, who brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and laid hold on other gods, and worshipped them, and served them. Therefore has YHWH brought all this evil on them” (1 Kings 9:7-9).*

A1 *And it came about at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of YHWH and the king’s house (1 Kings 9:10).*

Note that in ‘a’ the emphasis is on the fact that this took place when both the Temple and the Palace Complex were complete, and in the parallel the same is emphasised. In ‘b’ YHWH declares that He has hallowed the House, so that His presence would be there, but in the parallel warns that the hallowing of the House is totally dependent on their faithfulness to Him so that if they are unfaithful it will be cut off and will become a place of hissing. In ‘c’ obedience in accordance with the ways of David is required, and in the parallel the possibility of the opposite is expressed. Centrally in ‘d’ the dynasty of David will be permanently established forever.

<https://truthaccordingtoscripture.com/commentaries/pet/1-kings-9.php#.YK-yAqhKiUk>

TEXT: 1 Kings 10:1-29

TITLE: TESTIMONY TO SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND WEALTH

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE GLORY OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM AS BLESSED BY GOD IS**

- **WITNESSED BY THE QUEEN OF SHEBA**
- **AND EXHIBITED IN IMPRESSIVE FASHION**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The greatness of Solomon's kingdom far exceeds any comparison in ancient times. Here we see the wealth and wisdom of Solomon checked out by the Queen of Sheba who goes to great lengths in her investigation. Wherever you look as you tour Solomon's kingdom you are impressed by the excessive display of gold and precious stones as well as his wealth accumulated via international trade. All of this opulence must be attributed to the blessing of the God of Israel. Unfortunately, Solomon's heart is already being diverted to boast in his chariots and horsemen rather than in faithfulness to the God of the covenant.

**Paul House:** If any doubts about Solomon's greatness remain after **chap. 9**, surely **1 Kgs 10:1–29** removes them. So far the text has presented the monarch's exploits from an Israelite's point of view. In **10:1–13**, however, an outsider's opinion is included. The queen of Sheba travels some 1,500 miles to examine his wisdom. Perhaps she also wanted to explore future trading ventures as well (cf. **1 Kgs 10:11–12**), but her primary purpose was to verify Solomon's reputation for wisdom and devotion to Yahweh (**v. 1**). She is not disappointed. Solomon exceeds her expectations. The author follows up this story with more data intended to convince readers of Solomon's political, financial, and military splendor (**1 Kgs 10:14–29**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** All of **chapter 10** can be divided into two major sections, **verses 1–13**, where the Queen of Sheba says, 'This is unreal!,' and **verses 14–29**, where the narrator exclaims, 'And get a load of this!' Does that sound like too much hype? Then let me simply point out that within each of these two primary divisions the writer places a testimony section: **verses 6–9** contain the testimony of the Queen of Sheba and **verses 23–25** the testimony of the narrator himself. These testimonies are important for communicating the writer's intended perspective. . .

we can say that **1 Kings 10** speaks a word of testimony, namely, that the prosperity of the people of God is always a gift of Yahweh's goodness, which (I would think) demands of us both **gratitude** (lest we idolize the gifts in place of God) and **joy** (lest we despise God's gifts as though they were sinful).

**August Konkel:** But the greatness of Solomon's kingdom is not a tribute to Solomon and his military exploits. Unlike Assyrian annals, the memory of Solomon is not to



immortalize a great king. The narrative will go on to make Solomon responsible for the failure of his kingdom. The greatness of Solomon is integrated with his building of the temple, particularly by the repeated reference to Hiram. Hiram was involved in providing materials, a skilled labor force, and a trade alliance that gives the empire international status. The temple is confirmation that God has fulfilled his promise to David in establishing his throne. The objective of the account is to show the kingdom established by God is not inferior to the greatest empires of its time.

**Peter Pett:** We might set what we have seen about Solomon in this chapter in contrast with Paul's words in **2 Corinthians 3:17-18**. "*We look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are unseen, for the things which are seen are temporal, the things which are unseen are eternal.*" It was that lesson of which Elisha was aware (**2 Kings 6:17**).

**Warren Wiersbe:** A Roman proverb says, "Riches are like salt water—the more you drink, the more you thirst."

**Alan Carr:** Have you ever met someone who just left you in awe? I mean, they were so great and so wonderful that you were left shaking your head and saying, "*There's nobody else like that!*". Well, those kinds of meetings are rare, but they do happen occasionally. The Bible records for us the account of one such meeting. In this passage, the Queen of Sheba was left in amazement when she met King Solomon. She went away saying, "*There's nobody like him!*".

Many years later, when Jesus was ministering here on earth, He mentioned this very event. He spoke of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba and He reminded His listeners that He was even greater than Solomon, **Matt. 12:42**. If an earthly king left that queen astounded at his glory and greatness, how much more will King Jesus amaze those who meet Him?

## **I. (:1-13) SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND WEALTH CERTIFIED BY THE QUEEN OF SHEBA AND ATTRIBUTED TO DIVINE BLESSING**

### **A. (:1-5) The Arrival of the Queen of Sheba to Check Out Solomon's Wealth and Wisdom Connected with Divine Blessing**

#### 1. (:1-2) Her Mission

##### a. (:1) Challenging Solomon's Reputation for Wisdom

*"Now when the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to test him with difficult questions."*

**MacArthur:** Sheba was located in southwestern Arabia, about 1,200 mi. from Jerusalem. The primary motive for the queen's visit was to verify Solomon's reputation for wisdom and devotion to the Lord.



**Wiseman:** The hard ('enigmatic', REB) questions (*hidot*) were not just 'riddles', as in **Judges 14:12**, but included difficult diplomatic and ethical questions. 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.

**Don Anderson:** There are three things that will characterize this woman:

- 1) She is beautiful according to historical records.
- 2) She is very wealthy, and very successful.
- 3) She has a kingdom of similar magnificence although it is not as great as Solomon.

b. (:2a) Carrying Valuable Gifts to Solomon

*“So she came to Jerusalem with a very large retinue, with camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones.”*

c. (:2b) Communicating Her Heart to Solomon

*“When she came to Solomon, she spoke with him about all that was in her heart.”*

**Ron Daniel:** people will open up their hearts to you if they perceive that you are wise.

2. (:3) Her Investigation

*“And Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was hidden from the king which he did not explain to her.”*

**Tom Ascol:** In all these ways the queen of Sheba is an example to us. She investigates what she has been told in order to determine if it is true. Once she sees that it is, she rejoices in it. This is the kind of nobility that marked the Jews in Berea who eagerly received the word that Paul and Silas preached, *“examining the Scriptures daily to see if these things were so”* (**Acts 17:11**). It is the attitude that every honest hearer of the Gospel should possess.

But the queen of the South is not only an example worth emulating, she also is an indictment on many who have spiritual privileges and opportunities that exceed what she possessed. In her we see a great response to very little opportunity whereas too often today we see very little response to great opportunities.

<https://www.ligonier.org/learn/articles/lessons-queen/>

3. (:4-5) Her Evaluation

*“When the queen of Sheba perceived all the wisdom of Solomon, the house that he had built, 5 the food of his table, the seating of his servants, the attendance of his waiters and their attire, his cupbearers, and his stairway by which he went up to the house of the LORD, there was no more spirit in her.”*

**MacArthur:** “left her breathless”

**Wiseman:** Solomon’s display of his own wealth and trust in riches will be condemned, as it can lead to trust in things other than God alone (cf. **Prov. 11:28**). The historian includes it as a by-product of wisdom, but later rejects it when vanity is involved (as in Hezekiah’s display to Babylonian visitors, **2 Kgs 20:13**).

## **B. (:6-9) The Testimony of the Queen of Sheba Regarding Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom Connected to Divine Blessing**

### 1. (:6-7) Verifying Solomon’s Wealth and Wisdom

#### a. (:6) Extraordinary Reputation

*“Then she said to the king, ‘It was a true report which I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom.’”*

#### b. (:7) Eye-Witness Verification

*“Nevertheless I did not believe the reports, until I came and my eyes had seen it. And behold, the half was not told me. You exceed in wisdom and prosperity the report which I heard.”*

### 2. (:8-9) Attributing it All to Divine Blessing

#### a. (:8) The Impact of Divine Blessing

*“How blessed are your men, how blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually and hear your wisdom.”*

**Peter Pett:** She declared that his wisdom was such that all who served him should count themselves fortunate. How this fulsome praise must have delighted Solomon’s heart. And how dangerous it was for him. It is little wonder that he began to believe that he could do anything that he liked with impunity. He saw himself as the centre of his world, and as being beyond requiring advice or rebuke.

#### b. (:9a) The Source of Divine Blessing

*“Blessed be the LORD your God who delighted in you to set you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loved Israel forever,”*

#### c. (:9b) The Motivation of Divine Blessing

*“therefore He made you king, to do justice and righteousness.”*

**William Barnes:** it is nothing less than Yahweh’s reputation that underlies all these Solomonic blessings. (Solomon’s role, as it were, is clearly to rule “with justice and righteousness” (cf. **Ps 72**, not coincidentally entitled “a psalm of Solomon”).

## **C. (:10-12) The Gifts from the Queen of Sheba – Added to Riches from Hiram**

### 1. (:10) Gifts from the Queen of Sheba

#### a. Specified: Gold, Spices, Precious Stones

*“And she gave the king a hundred and twenty talents of gold, and a very great amount of spices and precious stones.”*

About 4.5 tons of gold

**Constable:** 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 extensively—he was guilty of violating God's Law (**Deut. 17:17**).

b. Uniqueness of Her Gift of Spices

*“Never again did such abundance of spices come in as that which the queen of Sheba gave King Solomon.”*

2. (:11-12) Riches from Hiram

a. (:11) Specified: Gold, Almug Trees, Precious Stones

*“And also the ships of Hiram, which brought gold from Ophir, brought in from Ophir a very great number of almug trees and precious stones.”*

b. (:12) Uniqueness of His Provision of Almug Trees

*“And the king made of the almug trees supports for the house of the LORD and for the king's house, also lyres and harps for the singers; such almug trees have not come in again, nor have they been seen to this day.”*

**D. (:13) The Departure of the Queen of Sheba**

1. Granted Abundant Gifts

*“And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she requested, besides what he gave her according to his royal bounty.”*

2. Headed Back Home

*“Then she turned and went to her own land together with her servants.”*

**II. (:14-29) SOLOMON'S WISDOM AND WEALTH EXHIBITED IN IMPRESSIVE FASHION**

**A. (:14-17) Impressive Gold Shields**

1. (:14-15) Accumulation of Gold

a. (:14) Yearly Accumulation from Taxation

*“Now the weight of gold which came in to Solomon in one year was 666 talents of gold,”*

About 25 tons of gold

- b. (:15) Yearly Accumulation from Trade and Political Gifts  
*“besides that from the traders and the wares of the merchants  
and all the kings of the Arabs and the governors of the country.”*

**Constable:** 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.

**Peter Pett:** Gold poured into Solomon's coffers from every quarter. Some was brought by his agents, some was in respect of trading activity by the merchants, some came in tribute from the petty kings round about, including parts of Arabia, and some from the governors of the country. These may have been the officers appointed by Solomon in **1 Kings 4:1-19**.

2. (:16-17) Application to Shields

*“And King Solomon made 200 large shields of beaten gold, using 600 shekels of gold on each large shield. 17 And he made 300 shields of beaten gold, using three minas of gold on each shield, and the king put them in the house of the forest of Lebanon.”*

**Constable:** 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 (v. 17).

**Peter Pett:** The prophet might well have had a wry smile on his face when he wrote these words, for he would know that in the not too distant future he would be deliberately pointing out that these shields would be appropriated by the Pharaoh, and would be carried off to Egypt (**1 Kings 14:26**). Solomon's glory would thus not be long lasting. It was a fading glory because of his arrogance and disobedience. What YHWH supplied, YHWH could take away.

**B. (:18-20) Impressive Gold Throne**

1. (:18) Composition of the Throne -- Ivory Overlaid with Gold

*“Moreover, the king made a great throne of ivory  
and overlaid it with refined gold.”*

2. (:19-20a) Design of the Throne

*“There were six steps to the throne and a round top to the throne at its rear, and arms on each side of the seat, and two lions standing beside the arms. 20 And twelve lions were standing there on the six steps on the one side and on the other;”*

**Constable:** Perhaps the 12 lions surrounding Solomon's throne represented Israel's 12 tribes (v. 20). **John Gray** believed that they may have been sphinxes or possibly representations of the emblem of Judah.

3. (:20b) Uniqueness of the Throne

*“nothing like it was made for any other kingdom.”*

**C. (:21-22) Impressive Gold Drinking Vessels**

1. (:21) Gold More Valuable than Silver

*“And all King Solomon's drinking vessels were of gold, and all the vessels of the house of the forest of Lebanon were of pure gold. None was of silver; it was not considered valuable in the days of Solomon.”*

2. (:22) Gold and Other Commodities Acquired via Maritime Trade

*“For the king had at sea the ships of Tarshish with the ships of Hiram; once every three years the ships of Tarshish came bringing gold and silver, ivory and apes and peacocks.”*

**Peter Pett:** These large ships regularly set off on their voyages, and would be away ‘three years’ (one full year and two part years). This does not necessarily signify long voyages. Ships in those days did not just sail away into the sunset and return. They would visit different ports to trade and gather water and provisions, they would often hug the coast, they would be laid up at times because of unseasonal weather, they might remain in some ports for a long time until they had disposed of their produce and filled up with the goods they received in return. Thus it is difficult to know how much actual sailing time was included in the ‘calculation’.

They then returned with exotic goods such as gold, silver, ivory, and possibly apes and peacocks (the meaning of the nouns is uncertain, especially the latter, but they are presumably exotic creatures), which were a wonder to all who beheld them. These may not all, of course, have been obtained from their original home-lands. They may have been traded on by other vessels which had come from those places. Thus we have no real idea how far Solomon’s fleet was able to penetrate. But to Israelites, unused to the sea, it would all have seemed wonderful, and added greatly to Solomon’s glory.

**D. (:23-25) Testimony of the Prophetic Narrator Regarding the Greatness of Solomon**

1. (:23) Greatness Reflected in International Reputation Regarding Wealth and Wisdom

*“So King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom.”*

2. (:24) Greatness Reflected in Superior Wisdom from the Lord

*“And all the earth was seeking the presence of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart.”*

### 3. (:25) Greatness Reflected in Gift-Giving

*“And they brought every man his gift, articles of silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses, and mules, so much year by year.”*

**MacArthur:** The wisdom God had given to Solomon (v. 24) caused many rulers, like the queen of Sheba (vv 1-13), to bring presents to Solomon as they sought to buy his wisdom to be applied in their own nations. These gifts led Solomon to multiply for himself horses, as well as silver and gold; precisely that which God’s king was warned against in **Dt 17:16, 17**. Solomon became ensnared by the blessings of his own wisdom and disobeyed God’s commands.

### **E. (:26-29) Impressive Additional Resources**

#### 1. (:26) Military Resources

*“Now Solomon gathered chariots and horsemen; and he had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, and he stationed them in the chariot cities and with the king in Jerusalem.”*

**Wiseman:** As did the Assyrians, Solomon dispersed his mobile forces between the capital and outlying, strategically placed, military bases (e.g. Megiddo, Gezer, Hazor).

**Peter Pett:** Central to this passage is the fact that Solomon trust was now firmly in chariots and horsemen (contrast **Psalms 20:7**). This was what his greatness and wisdom had led him to, armed might and global arms-dealing. The chariot is, in fact, rarely looked on with favour in the Biblical narratives, being usually in the hands of Israel’s enemies, and in Kings such chariots are seen as in direct contrast with the heavenly chariots of YHWH which protect His people (**2 Kings 2:11-12; 2 Kings 6:17; 2 Kings 7:6; 2 Kings 13:14**; compare **Psalms 68:17**). The prophetic attitude was that men were to trust in YHWH rather than in chariots (**Deuteronomy 20:1; Psalms 20:7; Psalms 46:9; Psalms 76:6**; and see especially **Isaiah 2:6-7; Isaiah 31:1; Isaiah 31:3; Micah 5:10**), and there are no grounds for thinking that the prophetic writer here saw it any differently (he would be familiar with Isaiah and Micah, and with the Psalms). Thus what appeared to be Solomon’s high point was really in the writer’s view also his low point. He no longer trusted in YHWH, he trusted in chariots.

#### 2. (:27) Valuable Commodities

##### a. Silver

*“And the king made silver as common as stones in Jerusalem,”*

##### b. Cedar Trees

*“and he made cedars as plentiful as sycamore trees that are in the lowland.”*

#### 3. (:28-29) Import-Export Commerce – Particularly Horses and Chariots

##### a. (:28-29a) Import

*“Also Solomon's import of horses was from Egypt and Kue, and the king's merchants procured them from Kue for a price. 29 And a chariot was imported from Egypt for 600 shekels of silver, and a horse for 150;”*

b. (:29b) Export

*“and by the same means they exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and to the kings of the Arameans.”*

**William Barnes:** The curious conclusion of the present set of texts in **chapter 10** is also to be noted. Why such comments on horses and their prices? Again, they indicate Solomon's wealthy status both as a horse trader and a worthy king among his peers; but they also rest uneasily for the readers of the larger Deuteronomic texts (see the commentary on **4:20–34**, especially concerning the “*law of the king*” in **Deut 17:14–20**). There are three things that the godly king is not to do: multiply horses (and especially go back to Egypt to get them), multiply wives, and amass large amounts of silver and gold! As **Sweeney** (2007:152) has recently pointed out, placement of the notice here about the horse trade with Egypt deliberately raises questions about the godliness of King Solomon, immediately prior to the infamous account of his love of many foreign women (**11:1–13**), and his support of their gods.

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#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Do we place more value on the treasures of this world or on laying up eternal treasures in heaven? What is our value system?
- 2) What price was the Queen of Sheba willing to pay to seek out this wisdom of Solomon? How far do you go in seeking after the wisdom of God?
- 3) How can we determine whether our trust is being deflected away from the Lord to trusting more in horses and chariots?
- 4) When is the last time you have been overwhelmed and left speechless at what God has done or is doing in your life?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis: Tour Provided for Queen of Sheba**

In **verses 14–22** his operative word is ‘*gold*’ (ten times). On the way to the shield exhibit he informs us that Solomon takes in up to twenty tons of gold in a year (**v. 14**)—though, of course, that figure doesn't include it all (**v. 15**). Ah, here we are at the House of the Forest of Lebanon. Look at these shields—two hundred body-sized shields



(v. 16), three hundred smaller, hand-carried shields (v. 17). Gold-plated—with about seven and a half pounds of gold per body shield, three and three-fourths for a smaller one. Look awfully spiffy on state occasions. Now this throne (vv. 18–20)—ivory inlay, gold overlay; note the steps, the lions. Nothing like it anywhere. As we pass one of the storage rooms our host points out the gold drinking containers. Note (he says), no silver—it doesn't amount to anything in Solomon's regime (v. 21). He concludes the tour with a few remarks about Solomonic commercial ventures. Joint Israelite-Phoenician shipping periodically returns laden with gold, silver, ivory, and even apes and baboons (v. 22, *njb*, *niv*). (The latter specimens shouldn't surprise us—apparently Solomon simply had a passion for zoology very like some Assyrian kings of the 12th–9th centuries bc.) Moreover, Solomon through his merchants acts as middleman in a thriving import-export trade in chariots and horses (vv. 28–29). Egypt in the south and Kue (Cilicia) in the northwest are his sources, while Hittite groups in the north and Aramaeans to the northeast constitute his market. (Solomon was not abetting the arms trade. These chariots were likely deluxe models for royal, ceremonial [not military] use—hence the relatively high prices [v. 29]).

**August Konkel:** The purpose of Kings is not to glorify Solomon; it is to show how the intention of God is at work in the rise and demise of the nation. The summary statement of Solomon's greatness is followed by a second conclusion (10:26–29). Reading this report together with the condemnation of Solomon in **chapter 11** suggests that it is a negative evaluation of Solomon's reign against the ideal of the covenant king (cf. **Deut. 17:16–17**). Peace in Jerusalem is not achieved by military might alone, nor can all the horses of Cappadocia preserve it. Silver as readily available as common stones and majestic cedars as plentiful as the ordinary sycamore of the Shephelah will not in themselves bring prosperity and justice to the people. . .

Presumably a king with the wealth and international reputation attributed to Solomon would be in the most advantageous position to bring prosperity and justice to the people. Ironically, in some ways the opposite is the case. The glory of Solomon places a heavy burden on his people, and his primary concerns are not those of justice. Initially Solomon has the wisdom that generates wealth and fame, but he does not retain the wisdom that is characterized by covenant loyalty, the wisdom of learning the fear of Yahweh. The ideal of King Solomon (**Ps. 72**) is only a memory to what his reign should have been.

**J. Sidlow Baxter: 10:13** – The wondering-eyed Queen was fairly overcome by all the much-to-be-coveted treasures which she saw. With womanly appreciation, she simply could not resist asking for this and that and the other thing, until eventually she found herself in the quandary of seeing much more than she desired, without being able to commit the rudeness of asking still further! Solomon, however, read her heart, and gave her not only all that she *asked*, but all that she *thought*; and then, even to that, he added his “*royal bounty*.” See, then, the three measures of Solomon's generosity which we have here –



- (1) All that she ASKED;
- (2) All that she THOUGHT;
- (3) Solomon's royal BOUNTY.

With this in mind, turn to **Ephesians iii.20** – “*Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us.*” Here is the same three-fold measure of giving.

**Brian Bell: 6 Signs of a Spiritually Divided Heart: from Ps.119**

1. A spiritually divided heart is **emotionally unstable**.

- a) *Blessed are those who keep His testimonies, Who seek Him w/the whole heart. Ps.119:2*
- b) Blessed/happy. Not necessarily wealthy, successful, powerful, popular, or prominent.
  - (1) A divided heart is revealed in a saddened or discouraged countenance.
  - (2) Is my life characterized by happiness and peace or worry and confusion?
  - (3) Am I tossed into the depths of despair through every undesirable circumstance or have I entrusted my innermost source of happiness to God's word?

2. A spiritually divided heart is **wandering**.

- a) *With my whole heart I have sought You; Oh, let me not wander from Your commandments. Ps. 119:10*
- b) God's word is not a list of rules keeping me boxed in under the heavy thumb of dictatorship.
- c) God's word was inspired and written for my greatest good.
- d) The Bible clearly outlines and defines what path to travel, what attitude is appropriate. My heart is divided when I fight against the truth of God's revealed word and willfully or ignorantly choose my own path.

3. A spiritually divided heart is **selfish**.

- a) *Turn my heart towards your statutes and not toward selfish gain. Ps.119:36*
- b) Left to my own devices I am bent towards selfishness.
- c) When I am offended by the opinions of others, threatened by the status of a peer, or hesitant to give of my abundance to someone in need, I am selfish.
- d) I have strayed from God's word and will and allowed my flesh to take over. My heart has been divided. I have failed to esteem others as better than myself  
**Phil.2:3**

4. A spiritually divided heart is **inconsistent**.

- a) *This has been my practice: I obey your precepts. Ps. 119:56 niv*
- b) Can I truthfully proclaim that I obey God's word without falter every second of every day? Not a chance.
  - (1) However, the undivided heart, or the heart walking through life

believing God's word, will be swayed towards obedience.

(a) Willful rebellion will be the exception, not the rule.

(b) When my daily practice is devoted to knowing and following God's word, my heart is united in truth.

5. A spiritually divided heart is **sour**.

a) *How sweet are your words to my taste; sweeter than honey to my mouth.*

**Ps.119:103**

b) When I am hurt, angry, bitter, sour, tart, or vinegary, where do I turn for guidance and comfort?

(1) Do I seek the opinions of friends, family, pastors, and teachers first or do I seek the counsel of God?

(a) The more of His words I consume, the more nourished I will be.

(b) When I neglect His guidance and first seek help from human sources I am left hungry, malnourished, w/a sour taste in my mouth.

(2) If I don't know the word of God, how will I know if the advice I'm given is biblical?

(3) The prophet Isaiah said, *Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance.*

**Is.55:2**

6. A spiritually divided heart is **fearful**.

a) *I will speak of Your testimonies also before kings, And will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in Your commandments, Which I love.* **Ps.119:46-47**

b) If my Mon-Sat life does not line up with my Sun life, I should be afraid to speak of my faith.

c) Without a living, active gospel displayed through my life, I will be put to shame when I witness to others. How can I preach to someone when my life is the opposite of my message?

**Alan Carr: There's Nobody Like Him**

## **I. THE REPUTATION OF THIS KING**

A. She Had Heard Of His Wealth - v. 7

B. She Had Heard Of His Works - v. 6

C. She Had Heard Of His Wisdom - v. 1-3, 6-7

D. She Had Heard Of His Worship - v. 1

## **II. THE RICHES OF THIS KING**

A. She Saw His Possessions - v. 4, 13

B. She Saw His Provisions - v. 5

C. She Saw His People - v. 5

D. She Saw His Piety - v. 5

TEXT: 1 Kings 11:1-43

TITLE: *DOWNFALL OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM AND DIVINE DISCIPLINE*

**BIG IDEA:**

**DISOBEDIENCE AND IDOLATRY CAUSE THE DOWNFALL OF SOLOMON'S KINGDOM VIA DIVINE DISCIPLINE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We have already witnessed the glory of Solomon's great reign. But despite the riches of God's blessing in terms of both wisdom and wealth, we have also seen the seeds of kingdom disintegration. Solomon's decline did not happen all at once. It was a slow process of his heart turning away from undivided loyalty to the God of the Covenant. Now in Chapter 11, the fatal flaw for Solomon will be magnified. His demise will lead to the dividing of the kingdom. God's discipline is dramatic and severe. We must analyze the reasons for Solomon's fall and guard our hearts against the sins of compromise and idolatry.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** some writers moan so much over what they divine of Solomon's affluence, indulgence, excesses, extravagance, exploitation, and oppression, that one can be duped into thinking that such items are the principal trouble. That's why it's so important to notice that **1 Kings 1–10** are almost wholly positive toward Solomon and then to hear **chapter 11** clearly, for the latter trumpets that the problem is not wealth or luxury or high-handedness or wisdom or popularity or renown or splendor or achievement but other gods. First commandment stuff.

**Donald Wiseman:** At the beginning of his reign Solomon had been promised and given wisdom, which he successfully employed in the accumulation of wealth and displayed in a massive building program, rearmament and government. However, the continuance of his ruling house was dependent not on this outward show but on his inner spiritual state. Thus the account of his reign ends with his decline and with the seeds of evident unrest which were to lead to the break-up of the united kingdom. The theological evaluation of this is found here in the description of his personal failure to keep the law forbidding intermarriage with non-believing wives (**vv. 1–13**), and in part attributed to his weakening internal unity in the face of external adversaries (**vv. 14–24**). All this culminated in the rebellion of Jeroboam, inspired by foreign foes (**vv. 14–25**) and fueled by internal dissent (**vv. 26–40**). The account is interspersed with theological comment to show that these events were divinely allowed as self-judgment brought upon Solomon for the sin of law-breaking, despite warnings (**Deut. 7:1–4; Exod. 34:11–16**).

**R. D. Patterson:** When one considers the grand heights of Solomon's spiritual fervor and the great wisdom granted him by God, it seems impossible that he could have been so foolish as to succumb to idolatry. Yet it did happen, not overnight, but by slow

degrees. First it was tolerated in his household. Once he became accustomed to it and comfortable with it, he also began to participate in idolatry with his wives. Solomon never renounced the Lord, but his heart was not entirely devoted to the Lord either. The syncretism that he began to display was a curse that plagued Israel through the years and ultimately led to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and to the exile of the people.

Solomon's life stands as a solemn warning against ungodly alliances and relationships that can only destroy the believer's spiritual vitality (cf. **Neh 13:26**).

## **I. (:1-13) DOWNFALL OF KING SOLOMON – MARRIAGE COMPROMISE LEADING TO IDOLATRY**

### **A. (:1-4) Fatal Flaw**

#### 1. (:1-2) Solomon's Mixed Marriages with Foreign Women

- a. (:1) Priority of Affection and Political Alliances to Foreign Women  
*“Now King Solomon loved many foreign women along with the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women,”*

**MacArthur:** Many of Solomon's marriages were for the purpose of ratifying treaties with other nations, a common practice in the ancient Near East.

- b. (:2) Persistence in Disobedience Regarding Separation  
*“from the nations concerning which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, ‘You shall not associate with them, neither shall they associate with you, for they will surely turn your heart away after their gods.’ Solomon held fast to these in love.”*

#### 2. (:3-4) Solomon's Huge Harem

- a. (:3a) Multiplication of Sleeping Companions  
*“And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines,”*
- b. (:3b-4) Misdirection of Heart Loyalties  
*“and his wives turned his heart away. 4 For it came about when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This infidelity is also subtle because it is gradual. **Verse 4** has a scary line: *‘When Solomon was old, his wives had turned away his heart after other gods.’* It was not some sudden attack or irresistible assault that explains Solomon's plunge into pagan ecumenism. No, it took years—the result of the creeping pace of accumulated compromises, the fruit of a conscience de-sensitized by repeated permissiveness.

**William Barnes:** This was not necessarily outright apostasy (a conscious forsaking of the faith), but still it was syncretism or religious compromise. In **11:4** he is designated as not being “*completely faithful to the Lord his God,*” and in **11:6**, he is described as refusing “*to follow the Lord completely, as his father, David, had done.*” Modern readers of these ancient texts will surely recognize that many formerly strong believers have walked down this path: a little compromise here, a little there, satisfying cultural expectations, glorying in God-given wealth and privilege, but ending up dooming themselves, and, alas, dooming many others as well. Even the wise King Solomon was not exempt from this sad fate; how much less any of us today?

## **B. (:5-8) Impious Idolatry**

### 1. (:5) Worshipping 2 Major Idols

#### a. Ashtoreth

*“For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians”*

Goddess of love and fertility

#### b. Milcom

*“and after Milcom the detestable idol of the Ammonites.”*

**MacArthur:** associated with the sacrifice of children in the fire (**Lv 18:21; 20:2, -5; Jer 32:35**).

### 2. (:6) Summary Denunciation

*“And Solomon did what was evil in the sight of the LORD,  
and did not follow the LORD fully, as David his father had done.”*

### 3. (:7) Worshipping 2 Other Major Idols

#### a. Chemosh

*“Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable  
idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem,”*

#### b. Molech

*“and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon.”*

### 4. (:8) Summary Denunciation

*“Thus also he did for all his foreign wives,  
who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The move away to syncretistic worship (polytheism) is stressed by the iterative forms of repeated action, burned incense (*‘made smoke’*) and offered sacrifices (repeatedly) to these gods.

## **C. (:9-13) Kingdom Kaput**

### 1. (:9-10) The Lord’s Indictment Against Solomon

*“Now the LORD was angry with Solomon because his heart was turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, 10 and had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods; but he did not observe what the LORD had commanded.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** His anger flows out of his jealousy for supreme place in his people’s worship and affection (and jealousy is simply the character of any love that is worth its salt when that love has an exclusive claim). But our culture is shocked by the Lord’s anger, for he does not conform to canonical human expectations. And—as we’ve said before—Yahweh is unique among ancient Near Eastern gods, goddesses, and godlets. No pagan deity demanded exclusive devotion of his/her worshipers. And the anger of the biblical Yahweh bothers contemporary man because it clearly tells him that the God of the Bible is not a pluralist. He does not fit our times and mentality. Why should he be so irate because someone (like Solomon) wants to spread his liturgical devotion around, to expose himself to other religious traditions, or to broaden one’s horizons by investigating alternate forms of human spirituality? Folks in our time want no truck with a God who will brook no rival, nor do they want to face Yahweh-in-the-flesh who sits on Galilee’s shore, peers across the fire, and assumes he has the right to keep probing us about our love for him (**John 21:15–17**).

## 2. (:11-13) The Lord’s Sentence Against Solomon

### a. (:11) Loss of the Kingdom

*“So the LORD said to Solomon, ‘Because you have done this, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes, which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you, and will give it to your servant.’”*

### b. (:12) Merciful Delay

*“Nevertheless I will not do it in your days for the sake of your father David, but I will tear it out of the hand of your son.”*

### c. (:13) Merciful Reservation of One Tribe

*“However, I will not tear away all the kingdom, but 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.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Clearly the principle is: **Yahweh’s judgment does not involve cancellation of Yahweh’s promise.** When Yahweh announced his judgment to Solomon he placed two restrictions on it: not now (**v. 12**) and not all (**v. 13**). Ahijah underscored these same qualifications to Jeroboam (**vv. 32, 34, 36**). The judgment will be delayed in time (in the days of Solomon’s son) and restricted in extent (Solomon’s son gets one tribe). And why these restrictions? Because Yahweh has made previous commitments, previous choices. Yahweh has an elect person (David, **v. 34**) and an elect place (Jerusalem, **vv. 32, 36**); covenant king and covenant worship are non-negotiables. They cannot be completely obliterated. Jeroboam’s rule must take place within these

confines (vv. 35, 37–38). Verse 39 implicitly suggests the restoration of David’s line to full strength: “So I will afflict the seed of David because of this—but not all the days.” Yahweh’s promise then may be eclipsed but not eliminated. Verse 39 states the principle in a nutshell: affliction but not abandonment. The rays of hope flicker from behind the clouds of judgment.

**Donald Wiseman:** Note that one tribe will survive (v. 13, cf. 2 Kgs 17:18), Judah now being merged with Benjamin.

## **II. (:14-40) DIVINE DISCIPLINE -- THREE ADVERSARIES TO SOLOMON RAISED UP**

### **A. (:14-22) Hadad the Edomite**

#### 1. (:14) Background of Hadad the Edomite

*“Then the LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he was of the royal line in Edom.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh’s work in history is in accord with his previously stated principles, his covenant policy. What covenant policy? In this case, Davidic covenant policy, and the applicable section is found in 2 Samuel 7:14: “Should he [any covenant king descended from David] commit iniquity, I shall punish him with the rod of men and with blows from the sons of men.” Yahweh is simply carrying out his previously announced measures in case Davidic royalty proved unfaithful. In Solomon’s case the rod and the blows came from Hadad, Rezon, and Jeroboam. 1 Kings 11 simply depicts Yahweh’s faithful application of Davidic covenant principles to a particular historical situation. Yahweh is so consistent.

#### 2. (:15-18) Refuge in Egypt

*“For it came about, when David was in Edom, and Joab the commander of the army had gone up to bury the slain, and had struck down every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel stayed there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom), that Hadad fled to Egypt, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, while Hadad was a young boy. And 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 and assigned him food and gave him land.”*

#### 3. (:19-20) Relationship with Pharaoh

*“Now Hadad found great favor before Pharaoh, so that he gave him in marriage the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. And the sister of Tahpenes bore his son Genubath, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house; and Genubath was in Pharaoh's house among the sons of Pharaoh.”*



#### 4. (:21-22) Release from Egypt

*“But when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, ‘Send me away, that I may go to my own country.’ Then Pharaoh said to him, ‘But what have you lacked with me, that behold, you are seeking to go to your own country?’ And he answered, ‘Nothing; nevertheless you must surely let me go.’”*

**Wiersbe:** The death of King David and his general Joab meant that it was safe for Hadad and his band to return to Edom. There Hadad planned to strengthen the nation and direct a series of attacks against the Israelites. Hadad knew he couldn’t take over Solomon’s kingdom, but the Lord used him to harass Solomon and his troops in a series of border attacks. This constant irritation from the south should have reminded Solomon that God was discipline him and calling him back to a life of obedience.

#### **B. (:23-25) Rezon Son of Eliada**

##### 1. (:23) Background of Rezon Son of Eliada

*“God also raised up another adversary to him, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah.”*

##### 2. (:24) Refuge in Damascus

*“And he gathered men to himself and became leader of a marauding band, after David slew them of Zobah; and they went to Damascus and stayed there, and reigned in Damascus.”*

##### 3. (:25) Rancor Towards Israel

*“So he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the evil that Hadad did; and he abhorred Israel and reigned over Aram.”*

**Wiersbe:** Rezon established a dynasty of strong rules in the area (known as Aram), all of whom gave trouble to the kings of Judah (**15:18-20; 20:1ff; 2 Kings 8-13** and **15-16 passim.**) Rezon was king of Aram (Syria) during the time of Isaiah the prophet (**Isa. 7:1-8; 8:6; 9:11**).

#### **C. (:26-40) Jeroboam Son of Nebat**

##### 1. (:26) Background of Jeroboam

*“Then Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephraimite of Zeredah, Solomon’s servant, whose mother’s name was Zeruah, a widow, also rebelled against the king.”*

**MacArthur:** In contrast to Hadad and Rezon, who were external adversaries of Solomon, God raised up Jeroboam from a town in Ephraim, as an internal adversary. Jeroboam was from Ephraim the leading tribe of Israel’s northern 10 tribes. He was a

young man of talent and energy who, having been appointed by Solomon as leader over the building works around Jerusalem, rose to public notice.

**Iain Provan:** A divided heart will lead to a divided kingdom: that was effectively God’s promise to Solomon in **11:9–13**. This last section on the great king pursues this theme of division. It tells us of still further seeds of destruction that were planted in the earlier part of his reign and have now grown into plants whose shadow looms darkly over the kingdom. It tells of opposition on the edges of the empire, and it introduces for the first time the man who will be the focal point of that same opposition within Israel itself—the man who will eventually become king of the northern tribes in place of Solomon’s son. He is Jeroboam son of Nebat; his name will later echo throughout the book as that of the archidolater.

## 2. (:27-39) Reason for His Rebellion

*“Now this was the reason why he rebelled against the king:”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The life and action of this usurper was to become symbolic of “sin against God and his people” and subsequent kings were warned of, or described as, “*walking in the ways of Jeroboam*” (**15:34; 16:2, 19, 26; 22:52**).

### a. (:27-28) Promotion of Jeroboam

#### 1) (:27) Defensive Fortifications

*“Solomon built the Millo, and closed up the breach of the city of his father David.”*

#### 2) (:28) Delegation of Leadership Responsibilities to Jeroboam

*“Now the man Jeroboam was a valiant warrior, and when Solomon saw that the young man was industrious, he appointed him over all the forced labor of the house of Joseph.”*

### b. (:29-33) Prophetic Indictment of Solomon and the Nation

#### 1) (:29-30) Object Lesson of Divine Discipline =

##### Tearing the Cloak

*“And it came about at that time, when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him on the road. Now Ahijah had clothed himself with a new cloak; and both of them were alone in the field. 30 Then Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces.”*

#### 2) (:31-32) Application to Jeroboam and to Solomon’s Son

##### a) (:31) Application to Jeroboam

*“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 give you ten tribes”*

b) (:32) Application to Solomon’s Son

*“(but he will have one tribe, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel), ”*

3) (:33) Explanation for the Downfall of the Kingdom

a) Idolatry

*“because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon;”*

**Iain Provan:** Solomon’s abandonment of God, it should be noted, is also the people’s abandonment of God. This is demonstrated in the plural phrase, they have forsaken me, which reflects the way that in the book of Kings, kings are characteristically models for and representative of the behavior of their subjects.

b) Disobedience

*“and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as his father David did.”*

c. (:34) Preference Shown to Solomon in Delaying Discipline for the Sake of David

*“Nevertheless I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand, but I will make him ruler all the days of his life, for the sake of My servant David whom I chose, who observed My commandments and My statutes;”*

d. (:35-39) Promise of Kingdom Division But Still Davidic Kingdom Preservation

1) (:35) Kingdom Division

*“but I will take the kingdom from his son's hand and give it to you, even ten tribes.”*

2) (:36) Kingdom Preservation

*“But to his son I will give one tribe, that My servant David may have a lamp always before Me in Jerusalem, the city where I have chosen for Myself to put My name.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** It ought to be noted in addition that not only is the line of David perpetuated as a light is kept burning, but this light is in Jerusalem, the city where God

chose to put his name. There is in view, then, a future for God's city, Jerusalem.

**Donald Wiseman:** The lamp was a symbol of:

(i) **Continuing life.** To put out a lamp (*nîr*, a rare form for *nēr*) or a brazier meant the end of the family line.

(ii) **Continuous succession** (cf. **2 Sam. 14:7**). There is no need to equate this with 'dominion' (Akkad. *nîr*, 'yoke').

(iii) And, elsewhere, **divine guidance.** For God's word is always 'a lamp to our feet' (**Ps. 119:105; 2 Sam. 22:29; Prov. 6:20, 22**). But to forsake God's law is to condemn oneself to walk in darkness.

3) (:37) Kingdom Opportunity for Jeroboam

*"And I will take you, and you shall reign over whatever you desire, and you shall be king over Israel."*

4) (:38) Kingdom Covenant Charge

a) Obligation to Obey

*"Then it will be, that if you listen to all that I command you and walk in My ways, and do what is right in My sight by observing My statutes and My commandments, as My servant David did,"*

b) Promise to Bless

*"then I will be with you and build you an enduring house as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you."*

5) (:39) Kingdom Discipline Limited in Time

*"Thus I will afflict the descendants of David for this, but not always."*

3. (:40) Refuge in Egypt

*"Solomon sought therefore to put Jeroboam to death; but Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon."*

## **(:41-43) EPILOGUE – END OF REIGN OF SOLOMON**

**A. (:41) Recording of Solomon's Wisdom and Deeds**

*"Now the rest of the acts of Solomon and whatever he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon?"*

**John Gates:** The book of the acts of Solomon mentioned here is quite evidently a manuscript no longer extant, to which the author of the book of Kings had access.

**B. (:42) Length of Reign**

*“Thus the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years.”*

**R. D. Patterson:** Solomon left a big mark in history. His memory and fame live on. He represents the first stage in the fulfillment of the Davidic covenant; and, despite his faults, he foreshadows the coming Christ, the true Son of David. In addition his inspired words of wisdom as recorded in Scripture have challenged, taught, and inspired men throughout the ages.

**C. (:43a) Death and Burial of Solomon**

*“And Solomon slept with his fathers and was buried in the city of his father David,”*

**William Barnes:** Here ends the lengthy discussion of the reign of Solomon, both the good and the bad. Like his father, David, Solomon was a compelling figure, unforgettable even when he was far from the will of God. There will not be such a king (of either of the kingdoms of the divided monarchy) until the time of Hezekiah, or even Josiah. With Solomon’s death, the golden age of the united monarchy of Israel came abruptly and irretrievably to an end.

**D. (:43b) Succeeded by Rehoboam**

*“and his son Rehoboam reigned in his place.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why didn’t Solomon’s gift of wisdom protect him against falling into disobedience and idolatry?
- 2) How does God’s faithfulness always end up trumping our unfaithfulness?
- 3) How does the Lord raise up opposition and antagonists in our lives as instruments of His discipline?
- 4) How can we avoid our later years being marked by spiritual decline and divided loyalties?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**William Barnes:** Although God often demonstrates his wrath or judgment by, as it were,

doing nothing (as seen when God abandons the wicked to the rightful results of their wayward actions; see **Rom 1:24, 26, 28**), this is clearly not the case in the present text. The text does not wrestle with the theological conundrum of the origin of evil that seems implicit in God raising up these two “*satans*” (**11:14, 23**) against Solomon and Israel. The text simply speaks in shorthand: An enemy appears—that is the will of God. An enemy triumphs—again this is God’s doing. Solomon’s two adversaries in this passage are Hadad the Edomite and Rezon son of Eliada.

Both enemies are

- (1) international (which is ironic, since a major reason for Solomon’s many marriages was to secure international peace), and
- (2) associated with the results of David’s military activities (see especially **11:15–16, 24**).

If God wills otherwise, peace cannot be guaranteed, whether by diplomatic alliances or by military activity. Solomon, whose very name means “*peace*” (cf. **1 Chr 22:9**), and who was promised peace earlier in his reign (**3:11–14**; also cf. **5:3–4**), will not leave a lasting legacy of peace, for his heart did not remain truly devoted to his Lord. What a sobering reminder to us today, who still long for the return of the Prince of Peace, until which time we will continue to have “*wars and threats of wars*” (see **Matt 24:6**).

**August Konkel:** The burden of the prophetic history in Kings is the problem of disobedience. The narrative of Solomon participates fully in that burden. Everything else about Solomon serves to accentuate the enormity of that tragedy. The greater his wealth and wisdom, the greater the tragedy of his fall. The visions have a central role in providing that orientation to the story. God has not failed Solomon in any way; from the start he is fully equipped to be the ideal king of the nation. The second vision provides the warning: Status and achievement have increased potential for vulnerability. Wisdom brings success; reliance on wisdom brings total disaster (**9:6–9**).

This lesson must be conveyed to everyone who hears about Solomon. The nations, who have no experience with God, will see the ruin of his exalted house and whistle in amazement, fully understanding that the problem is abandonment of the oath with God. All other sins or failures are a manifestation of this one sin (**11:9**). It reverses every other virtue and achievement.

**Iain Provan:** The story of Solomon is ended. He was for the most part a wise king, although his wisdom was not always used for honorable ends (**1 Kgs. 2:13–46**), and towards the end of his reign it had degenerated into a self-indulgent playing of games with words (**1 Kgs. 10:1–13**). He was for the most part a king who was committed to his God. Yet even from the start there were question marks about his integrity (**1 Kgs. 3:1–3**, etc.) and signs of a wayward heart. Eventually his accumulated individual indiscretions turned to outright apostasy, as he turned away from God (**1 Kgs. 11:1–8**). He was in many ways an ideal king ruling over an ideal kingdom, but ideal and reality were always in some degree of tension, and eventually the reality was much less than ideal. He was, most of all, a king blessed by God. Solomon consistently believed that

the blessing of God, and particularly the blessing of an eternal dynasty, was in the first instance tied up with moral virtue—his father’s and his own. That is what his father had himself told him (1 Kgs. 2:2–4), and that is what God had seemingly confirmed to him (1 Kgs. 9:3–9). Blessing in fact continued even through indiscretion, however, and eventually it appeared (1 Kgs. 11), as readers of 2 Samuel 7 would suspect it might, that there was more to God’s dealings with David’s house than David had told his son. Eventually it appeared that God’s punishment of this house would not be as bad, initially, as might have been expected (1 Kgs. 11:12–13, 32, 34, 36) and that even such punishment as had befallen was not eternal (1 Kgs. 11:39). God’s choice was in the end indeed to be more important than human choices, even if mortals could never presume on grace in order to evade the demands of law. Such a hopeful ending to the Solomon story carries with it the implication that there can also be hope (the hope expressed in Solomon’s own prayer of 1 Kgs. 8:22–53) at the end of Israel’s story, when the as yet unfulfilled threats of 1 Kings 9:6–9 finally become realities (2 Kgs. 24–25). For if David’s son is always to sit on the throne, God must forgive; a throne must be restored upon which he may sit; and a people must be reconstituted over which he may rule.

**Michael Mark:** Can we all please read v.9 together, “*The Lord became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who appeared to him twice.*” Solomon had truly turned away from the Lord. This is one way we can understand idolatry. Solomon turned away from the Lord. He has given his love to another. First, it was his wives. He held fast to them in love, disobeying God’s command about marriage. Then, he joined with them in following their idols, even building high places, homes or temples for the idols in the mountains within the territory of the kingdom. He worshipped their idols, and his love for God was now divided and shared with detestable false gods. When he opened the door to one of the gods, it opened the door for all of the others. Because he had so many foreign wives, they worshipped many different gods. And if one wife got her request, Solomon had to oblige to worship and make high places for the other gods too. So not only has he given his love to these other gods, but he serves them, building them a home and offering sacrifices to them. So Solomon turns from the Lord in three ways. First, as mentioned, he gives his affection to them. Second, also mentioned, he serves them. Third, Solomon has turned from and spurned the grace and love of God. Was it not God who had given Solomon wisdom in the first place? Was it not God who had given Solomon strength, and wealth to build such a great kingdom? And, as we read in v.9, God himself appeared to him twice. Of course, God is omnipresent, he is everywhere – but Solomon had the privilege not once, but twice to see God face to face. . . And yet, despite God’s grace, Solomon turns away from the Lord and to these worthless idols. . .

First, let’s look at the **disciplinary action** he takes against Solomon. Look at v.14, “*Then the Lord raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom.*” Prior to his idolatry, Solomon had no enemies. There was peace on all sides. And had he followed God’s commands, God may have protected him still. But now, because of his idolatry, God is raising up a rod. Hadad was no ordinary Edomite, he was a royal. He also earned the favor of Pharaoh, king of Egypt, so much so, that he became the Pharaoh’s brother in law, and his child, Genubath, was also loved by



Pharaoh's family. Hadad had some friends in high places. Hadad fled from his homeland of Edom as a boy, and probably harbored some resentment toward Israel for slaughtering his people. After he heard that King David and Joab had died, he now probably saw the opportunity to reclaim the throne, or at least give Solomon a hard time. Another adversary, Rezon, was raised up against Solomon. Because of David, Rezon also had to flee his homeland. He fled to Damascus, which today is the capital city of Syria. Although he was a refugee, he soon found himself in power. Good news for Rezon, bad news for Solomon. So Hadad gave Solomon trouble in the south, in Edom, and Rezon gave Solomon trouble in the north, from Aram.

God wasn't finished yet. There was one more adversary God raised up, who would be the primary agent to carry out God's plan to split the kingdom. This man was Jeroboam, who was one of Solomon's officials, and an Ephraimite. It was important that he was an Ephraimite, which is in the north (central), because it meant that in the future, he could lead a rebellion against Judah, which is in the south. He once worked under King Solomon, and probably before Solomon knew that he would be a potential competitor, Solomon saw that he did a great job, and put him in charge of the whole labor force of the tribes of Joseph. You know what that means? It means this man was young, highly respected, and highly capable. And he was the boss of the labor force of the tribes of Joseph, who own the largest amount of territory in Israel. You know what that means? It means he can become a formidable adversary against the Solomon's established kingdom.

Jeroboam received his commission from Ahijah, who was a prophet of God. Here we also see the beginning of a pattern that will appear later in the book of kings. The kingdom of Israel is about to be split into 2 kingdoms, and some of the respective kings will be so far removed from the knowledge of God that prophets will be coming in and out to discern God's will for the kings and the people. Ahijah may have been the same prophet to tell Solomon in **v.11-13** that God will tear the kingdom from him. Now Ahijah appears here, and he gives Jeroboam the message from God that Jeroboam will one day be king of 10 of the tribes in Israel. The passage seems to suggest that Jeroboam was rebelling against Solomon before his time. Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, and stayed there until Solomon's death. It is possible that Solomon might have heard that Jeroboam was to be a rival king. In this situation, if this was the case, we see Solomon also trying to fight the hand of God, who already revealed to Solomon that the kingdom would be split. God's will cannot be stopped, however, so Jeroboam was given safe harbor in Egypt until his time would come.

[https://iitubf.org/sermons/2014/11/02/gods\\_anger\\_with\\_king\\_solomon.html](https://iitubf.org/sermons/2014/11/02/gods_anger_with_king_solomon.html)

**Wiersbe:** Solomon's compromise wasn't a sudden thing, for he gradually descended into his idolatry (**Ps. 1:1**). First he permitted his wives to worship their own gods; then he tolerated their idolatry and even built shrines for them. Eventually he began to participate in pagan practices with his wives. His sensual love for his many wives was more compelling than his spiritual love for the Lord, the God of Israel. He was a man with a divided and disobedient heart, and people who are double-minded and unstable



are dangerous (**James 1:8**). How could Israel be a light to the Gentile nations when their king was openly worshiping and supporting the idols of those nations? He used to offer sacrifices and burn incense only to the Lord Jehovah, but when he got older, he started to include the false gods his wives worshiped (**8:25; 11:8**). . .

His love for spiritual values was replaced by a love for physical pleasures and material wealth, and gradually his heart turned from the Lord. First he was friendly with the world (**James 4:4**), then spotted by the world (**James 1:27**), and then he came to love the world (**1 John 2:15-17**) and be conformed to the world (**Rom. 12:2**).

Unfortunately, the result of this decline can lead to being condemned with the world and losing everything (**1 Cor. 11:32**). That's what happened to Lot (**Gen. 13:10-13; 14:11-12; 19:1ff**), and it can happen to believers today.

TEXT: 1 Kings 12:1-33

TITLE: *THE DIVISION OF THE KINGDOM*

**BIG IDEA:**

**RASH ARROGANCE AND RELIGIOUS EXPEDIENCY SPLINTER GOD'S PEOPLE AND PROVIDE A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Chapter 12 marks the watershed mark in the Book of Kings. The reign of Solomon has ended with serious spiritual slippage from the high water mark of its glorious prosperity and blessing. The seeds of compromise and idolatry will now quickly lead to the disintegration of the kingdom as the leadership vacuum resulting from Solomon's death is contested. The rash arrogance of Rehoboam and the religious expediency of Jeroboam lead to a divided kingdom devoid of God's covenant blessing. The narrative now switches to a two track format with occasional reform in the Southern Kingdom but persistent wickedness in the Northern Kingdom.

**Thomas Constable:** The second major part of the Book of Kings [**1 Kings 12 – 2 Kings 17**] records the histories of the Northern Kingdom of Israel and the Southern Kingdom of Judah. 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**).

Throughout this history the writer's purpose continued to be what it had been: to demonstrate that failure to honor the Mosaic Covenant brings ruin and destruction, but obedience brings blessing. This is clear from the material he chose to record. While he gave a basic historical record of the period, he departed often from official matters to record events that have theological and practical significance. He also gave more information about the Northern Kingdom of Israel than he did about the Southern Kingdom of Judah. . .

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.

**John Gates:** The immediate natural cause for the impending disruption of the kingdom was the heavy taxation brought about through the vast expenditures of Solomon (cf. **II Chr 10**). The unseen cause was the divine discipline.

**Peter Pett:** The death of Solomon, as always with the death of a king who had ruled powerfully for a long time and had been somewhat autocratic, resulted in hopes being

raised among the people that things might now be made better for them. Indeed they appear to have been quite satisfied with the thought of Rehoboam being their king, as long as he would meet them halfway, and they actually gathered at Shechem to negotiate with him for that purpose. It was a real **opportunity**. Had Rehoboam made concessions, and retained the loyalty of Israel, the combined kingdom would have remained a power, and the tributaries watching in expectation might have hesitated about making trouble. But let Israel and Judah once become divided into two nations, and the driving force and the power base would be lost, and men like Hadad in Edom and Rezon in Damascus (**1 Kings 11:14-25**) would soon ensure the collapse of the empire. And ever waiting in the wings for the collapse of the empire was the powerful Shishak of Egypt in a revived Egypt, just waiting for his opportunity to break up the trade monopoly which Solomon had built up. . .

But sadly Rehoboam had been brought up in Solomon's court, and he had been bred with a sense of arrogance and with the feeling that all Israel and Judah were there to do his bidding. He saw himself as '*a king like the kings of the nations*'. In his view the people were simply there to be whipped into line. And while when he took advice from his father's older counsellors they gave him good advice as to the need to meet the people half way, he preferred the advice of the younger arrogant aristocrats like himself who assured him that what was needed was to show them who was in charge. So what brought about Rehoboam's rejection was the arrogance that had become so much a part of Solomon's lifestyle, and which he had passed on to his son. In contrast, in the case of Jeroboam, his downfall would come about through his turning his back on the covenant and diluting Yahwism, in order, as he saw it, to protect his kingdom. This would result in his destroying the religious heart of Israel, something which would affect all the kings who followed him. Thus both aspects of Solomon's failures came out in his successors.

## **I. (:1-24) REHOBOAM'S RASH ARROGANCE ALIENATES ISRAEL UNNECESSARILY AND SPLINTERS GOD'S PEOPLE**

### **A. (:1-5) Test of Rehoboam's Wisdom = Demand to Lighten the Yoke**

#### 1. (:1) Potential for Coronation of Rehoboam at Shechem

*"Then Rehoboam went to Shechem,  
for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king."*

**Iain Provan:** We are not explicitly told why he comes to Shechem. Shechem does not appear in the narrative in relation to the kingship of David and Solomon. It is, however, a name that strikes a number of chords with those who know the story of Israel prior to the monarchy. It seems likely, given the dialog that follows, that this is significant. It is a place of covenant renewal (**Josh. 24:1-27**)—a place where the Israelites, having entered the land, first took stock of themselves and reflected upon their identity and direction. It is the place where Joseph's bones are buried (**Josh. 24:32**), bringing the exodus story to its final conclusion (cf. **Gen. 50:22-26**). It is also the place where kingship first, if briefly, intruded itself into the tribal life of Israel, a mortal being (and a wicked one at that) taking the place of God as ruler over God's people (**Judg. 8:22-23**;

9). Shechem is an ideal place, therefore, to which a prospective king might be invited if you wished to ask him (as the Israelites do) how his kingship was going to be exercised so as to be consonant with the nature of the covenant people of God—if you wished to ask him to reflect on the identity of Israel and her future direction.

**John Gates:** Rehoboam, who is the only son of Solomon mentioned in Scripture [despite all of Solomon's wives and concubines], had doubtless been appointed by his father to succeed him.

2. (:2) Potential Rival in Jeroboam Taking Refuge in Egypt

*“Now it came about when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard of it, that he was living in Egypt (for he was yet in Egypt, where he had fled from the presence of King Solomon).”*

**Constable:** Rehoboam's name means "The People Are Wide" or "May the People Be Extended." If this was Rehoboam's throne name, it appears that Jeroboam's (throne) name (meaning "May the People Be Great") may have been a deliberate attempt to raise himself to the level of Rehoboam in the minds of the people and thus snub Rehoboam.

3. (:3-4) Possibility of Reasonable Compromise and Peace

*“Then they sent and called him, and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came and spoke to Rehoboam, saying, 4 ‘Your father made our yoke hard; now therefore lighten the hard service of your father and his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The demand to alleviate taxation, forced labor and military call-up was reasonable, for they had been an increasing burden under Solomon. . .

If Rehoboam had responded by showing a right understanding of authority, which aims to serve people and make them willing to serve together, the outcome could have been far different and the break-up of that unity which should characterize God's people might never have happened. His indecision shows him unaware that immediate action (today) often influences life for 'all the days' (Heb. always). Was Rehoboam's concern for his own position? The elders' request was for 'good words' or favourable terms, i.e. for leniency, not independence.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The figure of a "yoke" (*ōl*) is frequently used when speaking of burdens and service imposed by a superior—e.g., **Gen 27:40; Deut 28:48; Isa 14:25; 47:6; Jer 27:8; Ezek 34:27**. In Mesopotamian texts, *nīru*, "yoke," is the common term signifying dominion and rule, especially in Neo-Assyrian royal inscriptions; cf. CAD N/2, 262–63.

**John Gates:** The petition asked primarily for a lightening of the economic load, but perhaps it also had in view political and social oppression.

**Bob Henkins:** The issue that was most important to them was that they might live at ease and pay lower taxes. Does that sound eerily familiar to you? What's the biggest complaint we hear about these days around election time? The unemployment rate being too high, we are taxed too much. Thousands of years after Rehoboam's time, and things haven't changed much huh. I find that interesting.

4. (:5) Predetermined Decision-Making Process

*“Then he said to them, ‘Depart for three days, then return to me.’  
So the people departed.”*

**Wiersbe:** The story reveals that, whatever gifts Rehoboam may have possessed, he didn't have the gift of relating to people and understanding their needs. . .

There's no evidence that the king sought the Lord in prayer or that he consulted with the high priest or with a prophet. We get the impression that his mind was already made up but that he was willing to go through the motions in order to please the people.

**B. (:6-15) Two Contrasting Courses of Action**

1. (:6—7) Wise Counsel of the Elders = Faithful Servants of Solomon =  
Servant Leadership – Treat Them Kindly

a. (:6a) Their Credentials as Counselors

*“And King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had served his father Solomon while he was still alive,”*

b. (:6b-7) Their Counsel

*“saying, ‘How do you counsel me to answer this people?’ 7 Then they spoke to him, saying, ‘If you will be a servant to this people today, will serve them, grant them their petition, and speak good words to them, then they will be your servants forever.’”*

2. (:8-11) Rash Counsel of the Young Men = His Peer Group =  
Tyrannical Leadership – Oppress Them

a. (:8) Their Credentials as Counselors

*“But he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had given him, and consulted with the young men who grew up with him and served him.”*

This verse is the heart of the chiasmic section of vv. 1-16. [see **Peter Pett**]

**David Guzik:** This is a common phenomenon today – what some call **advice shopping**. The idea is that you keep asking different people for advice until you find someone who will tell you what you want to hear. This is an unwise and ungodly way to get counsel. It is better to have a few trusted counselors you will listen to even when they tell you what you don't want to hear.

b. (:9-11) Their Counsel

*“So he said to them, ‘What counsel do you give that we may answer this people who have spoken to me, saying, ‘Lighten the yoke which your father put on us?’’ 10 And the young men who grew up with him spoke to him, saying, ‘Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, ‘Your father made our yoke heavy, now you make it lighter for us!’ But you shall speak to them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s loins! 11 ‘Whereas my father loaded you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Rehoboam, now aged forty-one (14:21), identified more readily with the younger group, who quoted a popular proverb (v. 10). Their uncompromising answer (vv. 10–11) seems to have swayed Rehoboam to favour increased state-imposed burdens: he would scourge them with scorpions (vv. 11, 14)—a (nail)-barbed scourge as opposed to the common ‘whip’ (neb ‘lash’). Though these human elements and possibly personality clashes leading to the breakdown are clear, the historian interprets them as divinely overruled to bring about the will and judgment of God as prophesied by Ahijah (v. 15, cf. 11:11–12).

**William Barnes:** This is the talk of mental adolescents (Sweeney 2007:170); the term “*little finger*” (*qatonni* [TH6995, ZH7782]) actually signifies “penis” (cf. Cogan [2001:348–349], citing the medieval sage David Qimhi). It was probably a popular proverb of the day (Wiseman 1993:141), and particularly apt in light of Solomon’s proverbial harem. But, like adolescent sayings of any age, it lacked in cogency and focus what it may have contained in ribald humor.

**August Konkell:** As might be expected, the opinions of the two groups of advisors are diametrically opposed. The elders, well tempered by years of political experience, urge moderation; they remind the king that he is the servant of the people (12:7), and only by acting in that capacity can he expect the people to be willing to serve him. The younger princes, having enjoyed a sense of power and status all of their lives, urge the new king to proceed in an autocratic manner, using political force to increase control over the populace. Their rhetoric is designed to inspire fear: “*My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist*” (v. 10); “*my father chastised you with whips, I will use scorpions*” (v. 11). The sting of the “scorpion” is apparently a weighted or spiked lash that can be wielded by a taskmaster. The younger counselors see no need for conciliation. They cannot conceive of a leader as a servant to the people.

**Dilday:** With a dozen rash words, Rehoboam, the bungling dictator, opened the door for four hundred years of strife, weakness, and, eventually, the destruction of the entire nation.

3. (:12-15) Harsh Response to Jeroboam and the People

a. (:12-14) Tyrannical Tone of the Harsh Response

*“Then Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day as the king had directed, saying, ‘Return to me on the third day.’ 13 And the king answered the people harshly, for he forsook the advice of the elders which they had given him, 14 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 disciplined you with whips, but I will discipline you with scorpions.’”*

b. (:15) Divine Direction behind the Harsh Response

*“So the king did not listen to the people; for it was a turn of events from the LORD, that He might establish His word, which the LORD spoke through Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.”*

**Peter Pett:** history was moving forward in accordance with the word of YHWH. . . The reply was so foolish that the prophetic author knew that there could only be one explanation for it. It was of YHWH, so as to bring about His purposes. It was in order that He might establish the word that He had spoken to Ahijah the Shilonite, to be passed on to Jeroboam (**1 Kings 11:35-39**). That did not, of course, excuse Rehoboam, whose behaviour was simply that of a spoiled and very arrogant person. He had behaved as he had been brought up to behave, following the example of his father. But the prophetic author points out that YHWH takes up such folly and uses it to bring about His purposes.

**Robert Rayburn:** Rehoboam’s listening to bad advice and his provocative statement to the representatives of the ten northern tribes were simply the means by which the Lord brought about the division of the nation as a judgment upon Solomon’s idolatry. It is one of a great many similar texts in the Bible that teach us that the Lord accomplishes his will even through the sinful thoughts and actions of human beings.

**C. (:16-20) Treason of Israel Leaving Only the Tribe of Judah Loyal to Rehoboam**

1. (:16) Rallying Cry for the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom

*“When all Israel saw that the king did not listen to them, the people answered the king, saying, ‘What portion do we have in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse; To your tents, O Israel! Now look after your own house, David!’ So Israel departed to their tents.”*

**MacArthur:** These words of Israel (v. 16) expressed deliberate, willful rebellion against the dynasty of David (cf. v. 19). Defiantly, the Israelites quoted the rallying cry used in Sheba’s failed rebellion against David (**25a 20:1**). The northern tribes declared that they had no legal tie with David and went their way.

2. (:17) Reign of Rehoboam in Southern Kingdom

*“But as for the sons of Israel who lived in the cities of Judah,*



*Rehoboam reigned over them.”*

3. (:18) Reckless Attempt to Consolidate Control

a. Failure of Adoram’s Mission

*“Then King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him to death.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** This looks like a variant form of the name Adoniram given in **4:6**; **1Chr 18:10** has Hadoram. If it is the same person, Adoniram would have been an old man by this time, since he had already held this post under David (cf. **2 Sam 20:24**), a fact that leads many to doubt the integrity of the notice. Most readers note the lack of political sensitivity in the choice of Adoniram as the person to negotiate with the rebel tribes: “how little Rehoboam and his youthful advisers understood the gravity of the situation” (**Skinner**); but such evaluations represent, at best, after-the-fact wisdom, reading back from the historical developments.

**Schultz:** In sending Adoniram as his representative, Rehoboam indicated that he regarded the people virtually as his slaves. Adoniram was “*in charge of forced labor.*” The poor man paid for his mission with his life.

b. Flight of King Rehoboam

*“And King Rehoboam made haste to mount his chariot to flee to Jerusalem.”*

**John Gates:** It seems that Rehoboam himself narrowly escaped the same fate.

4. (:19) Rebellion of Israel

*“So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day.”*

5. (:20) Recall of Jeroboam

*“And it came about when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, that they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. None but the tribe of Judah followed the house of David.”*

**Barnes Notes:** The first act of the Israelites, on learning what had occurred at Shechem, was to bring together the great “*congregation*” of the people (compare **Judg 20:1**), in order that, regularly and in solemn form, the crown might be declared vacant, and a king elected in the room of the monarch whose authority had been thrown off. The congregation selected Jeroboam. The rank, the talent, and the known energy of the late exile, his natural hostility to the house of Solomon, his Ephraimitic descent, his acquaintance with the art of fortification, and the friendly relations subsisting between him and the great Egyptian king, pointed him out as the most suitable man for the vacant post. If, according to the Septuagint, Shishak had not only protected him against Solomon, but also given him an Egyptian princess, sister to his own queen, in marriage, his position must have been such that no other Israelite could have borne comparison with him. Again, the prophecy of Ahijah would have been remembered by the more



religious part of the nation, and would have secured to Jeroboam their adhesion; so that every motive, whether of policy or of religion, would have united to recommend the son of Nebat to the suffrages of his countrymen.

#### **D. (:21-24) Tempering Rehoboam's Call for Civil War**

##### 1. (:21) Calling for Civil War

*“Now when Rehoboam had come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, 180,000 chosen men who were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel to restore the kingdom to Rehoboam the son of Solomon.”*

**Wiersbe:** Rehoboam had followed the wrong counsel, used the wrong approach, and chosen the wrong mediator. What else wrong could he do? He could declare war!

##### 2. (:22-24) Calming Word from the Lord

*“But the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23 ‘Speak to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin and to the rest of the people, saying, 24 Thus says the LORD, You must not go up and fight against your relatives the sons of Israel; return every man to his house, for this thing has come from Me.’ So they listened to the word of the LORD, and returned and went their way according to the word of the LORD.”*

**Constable:** 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**). 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.

## **II. (:25-33) JEROBOAM'S RELIGIOUS EXPEDIENCY SUBSTITUTES HUMAN INVENTION FOR DIVINE DESIGN AND PROVIDES A FALSE SENSE OF SECURITY**

### **A. (:25-27) Capital Centers -- Substitute Geography to Replace Jerusalem**

#### 1. (:25) Designated Capital Cities

*“Then Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and lived there. And he went out from there and built Penuel.”*

**John Whitcomb:** he established two northern capitals:

- Shechem, near the border of Ephraim and Manasseh at the location of Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim where Joshua had first dedicated the Promised Land to Jehovah (Josh. 8:30-35),
- and Penuel across the Jordan ( 1 Kings 12:25). This trans-Jordan capital may have been necessitated by the anticipated invasion of Pharaoh Shishak (his former protector – 1 Kings 11:40), which occurred in the fifth year following the division of the kingdom (1 kings 14:25).

- Later on, for an unknown reason, he established another west-Jordan capital at Tirzah (1 Kings 14:17; 15:33).

## 2. (:26-27) Danger of Continuing to Worship in Jerusalem

*“And Jeroboam said in his heart, ‘Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. 27 If this people go up to offer sacrifices in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, even to Rehoboam king of Judah; and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah.’”*

**Ligonier Ministries:** Jeroboam should not have feared the loss of his throne, for God had promised to establish his kingdom if he obeyed the Lord (**1 Kings 11:26–40**). Instead of trusting God’s promise, however, Jeroboam sought to maintain control his way, leading to the eventual loss of the northern kingdom (**2 Kings 17:21–23**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Jeroboam then turns away from orthodoxy, not because it is no longer true but because it is no longer useful. He does not find it false but fearful. You see his thinking then. He must hold on to ‘his’ kingdom, and, since he cannot simply trust Yahweh’s word for that, he must make himself secure. That is the stimulus here for false religion. If you cannot trust God, you will use religion. In Jeroboam’s case, what matters is not truth but position—his position.

**Donald Wiseman:** Jeroboam’s sin of making a rival capital was compounded by his disbelief in God’s promise to him made through Ahijah (**11:38**). His decision was deliberate, after seeking advice (v. 28) or ‘*after giving thought to the matter*’ (neb, cf. nrsv ‘*took counsel*’), and defensive. The two bull-calves represented fertility symbols to which the power of God was attributed, despite their ineffectual nature as idols having been shown already by Aaron (**Exod. 32:4–8**). Some think the golden calves were pedestals on which the invisible god stood (cf. the Assyrian practice of showing bulls on which deities stood). The aim was to divert worship by the Israelites far from Jerusalem and to mark the borders of the new kingdom. Jeroboam himself may not have initially intended any anti-Yahwehism.

**MacArthur:** The Lord had ordained a political, not a religious, division of Solomon’s kingdom. The Lord had promised Jeroboam political control of the 10 northern tribes (**11:31, 35, 37**). However, Jeroboam was to religiously follow the Mosaic law, which demanded that he follow the Lord’s sacrificial system at the temple in Jerusalem (**11:38**). Having received the kingdom from God, he should have relied on divine protection, but he did not. Seeking to keep his subjects from being influenced by Rehoboam when they went to Jerusalem to worship, he set up worship in the north (vv. 27, 28).

**Wiersbe:** One of the first evidences of unbelief is fear. We get our eyes off the Lord and start looking at the circumstances. “*Why are you fearful, O you of little faith?*” Jesus asked His disciples (**Matt. 8:23-27**, NKJV), reminding them that faith and fear can’t coexist in the same heart for very long. Jeroboam’s fear was that the Southern

Kingdom would attack him and his own people desert him and go back to Jerusalem to worship.

## **B. (:28-30) Worship Symbols -- Substitute Golden Calves to Replace the Cherubim Above the Ark of the Covenant for Symbolizing Strength, Power and Majesty**

### 1. (:28) Building the Golden Calves

*“So the king consulted, and made two golden calves, and he said to them, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem; behold your gods, O Israel, that brought you up from the land of Egypt.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** That was, tragically, Jeroboam’s genius. Linking his new cult with the bull worship at Sinai seems to have cast a mantle of legitimacy over his innovation. It was not apostasy but diversity. It was not novel but historical; it had roots, precedence. So much depends on how it’s pitched. False religion majors in such subtlety. It will use terms like redemptive, reconciling, atoning, etc., for their positive, emotive value but without their proper biblical content. . .

One footnote. This text breathes such an air of tragedy, for it shows us that the deviation of Israel and Aaron in **Exodus 32** and that of Micah and of the tribe of Dan in **Judges 17–18** gave the excuse to someone (Jeroboam) years later to advocate falsehood, and in such a way that finally destroyed a nation. We may think our infidelity is our own business, but, sadly, it may be embraced by those who come after and damn a whole generation. A little covenant-breaking at Sinai, a deviant cult at Dan—and a future in ruins.

**David Guzik:** Jeroboam appealed to their natural desire for **convenience**. Men will usually take the easy way out when they can; therefore, it was thought to be good if an idol in Bethel or Dan could replace the trip all the way to Jerusalem.

**John Whitcomb:** Calves or bulls were sacred to the Egyptians, and during his stay in Egypt Jeroboam had doubtless become fascinated by the popularity of this cult. . . Aaron had presented the calf as a visible symbol of Jehovah’s strength and power.

In like manner, Jeroboam, determined to satisfy the desire of the average Israelite for a spectacular symbol of his God, probably assured the people that these calves were intended only to point to Jehovah. And, after all, this was nothing really new, but was merely an amplification of that form of Israel’s wilderness religion which Aaron himself had established! Thus Jeroboam assumed the position of high priest himself, and by a clever mixture of popular pagan idolatry with the name of Jehovah, brought forth a compromise religion far more dangerous for the nation than out and out paganism could ever be. Like Satan, his supreme master, he attempted to pose as an angel of light and a minister of righteousness (**II Cor. 11:14-15**), and thus succeeded in “slaying” his tens of thousands. Twenty-one times after this, Old Testament writers refer to Jeroboam as the one who “made Israel to sin” (**I Kings 14:16**, etc.).

2. (:29) Locating the Golden Calves = New Worship Centers

*“And he set one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** What about the geography? Why were the bulls placed at Bethel and Dan? Some say because of location, Bethel at the southern and Dan at the northern end of the ten-tribe turf. Accessibility, you see. Probably not. More likely, tradition and associations were decisive. Bethel had sacred links to the patriarchs, Abraham (**Gen. 12:8; 13:3–4**) and especially Jacob (**Gen. 28:10–22; 31:13; 35:1–16**). How can Abraham’s and Jacob’s descendants go wrong worshipping in a place where their ancestors worshiped and encountered God (cf. also **Judg. 20:26–28**)? And what of Dan? Alternative worship had been established there in the time of the judges, with no less than a grandson (or descendant) of Moses as presiding priest (**Judg. 17–18**, esp. **18:30–31**). Bethel and Dan had worn halos for some time.

3. (:30) Worshiping the Golden Calves

*“Now this thing became a sin,  
for the people went to worship before the one as far as Dan.”*

**Peter Pett:** The bulls were not intended to be seen as images of God, but were rather probably intended to replace the Ark as the place where YHWH would invisibly meet with His people, stood, as it were, on the back of the bull, for elsewhere gods were regularly depicted as standing on the backs of bulls. Theoretically it still recognised the invisibility of YHWH, but dangerously the images were also reminiscent of Baal worship, for Baal was regularly depicted by means of the image of a bull. It was thus a compromise, possibly partly with the hope of placating his Canaanite subjects and integrating them into Israel, and definitely with a view to turning his people’s thoughts away from Jerusalem. He also altered the timing of the popular Autumn festival, the time when all the harvests of the year were celebrated, which occurred prior to the coming of the rain in October/November. The result could only be a Yahwism that lost its purity, and became diluted and syncretised with Canaanite worship, bringing YHWH down to the level of other ‘gods’. This was *‘the sin of Jeroboam, the son of Nebat’*.

**C. (:31-33) Worship Institutions -- Substitute Religious Institutions to Replace the Sacrificial Altar, the Priests and the Mandatory Feasts**

1. (:31a) New Sacrificial Altars

*“And he made houses on high places,”*

2. (:31b) New Priests

*“and made priests from among all the people  
who were not of the sons of Levi.”*

**John Whitcomb:** Utterly disgusted at this drastic departure from divinely revealed tradition, the vast majority of priests and Levites fled southward to Judah, taking with them the remnant of true believers from the northern tribes and leaving behind them a situation of near-total apostasy (**II Chron. 11:13-17**).

### 3. (:32-33) New Mandatory Feast on a New Calendar Date

*“And Jeroboam instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which is in Judah, and he went up to the altar; thus he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves which he had made. And he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33 Then he went up to the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised in his own heart; and he instituted a feast for the sons of Israel, and went up to the altar to burn incense.”*

**John Whitcomb:** In our own day, religious movements which possess the least Biblical truth often have the most elaborate ceremonies and the most impressive worship centers.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** So Jeroboam inaugurated his deviant religious cult. The new ‘church year’ scheduled the Feast of Tabernacles in the eighth month, a date Jeroboam ‘invented from his own heart’ (v. 33). That clause could describe all the trappings of Jeroboam’s cult.

Jeroboam clearly rejected revelation governing Israel’s worship, for Yahweh had prescribed the personnel (the priests were to come from the Levites, vv. 31b, 32b), periods (e.g. the festival in the seventh month, vv. 32a, 33b), and place (Jerusalem, not Bethel, v. 33a) for public worship. Jeroboam violated all these stipulations. Religion for Jeroboam was not a ‘given,’ but something pliable to be massaged and shaped as one prefers. . .

One must be cautious, for ‘*āsāh*’ is a common verb, but when the writer uses it with repetitive overkill one can’t help but ask the reason. I propose he is not merely reporting but ridiculing. He *made* high places, he *made* priests, he *made* a festival, he *made* bulls, he *made* an altar. Don’t you see it? The writer has dipped his pen in acid. Jeroboam’s religion, he says, is Jeroboam’s **concoction**. Concoctions should not be taken seriously.

**Donald Wiseman:** The sin of Jeroboam and his ‘*way of life*’ to which the historian often refers (15:30, 34 and twenty other times in the books of Kings; cf. Hos., Amos) is clearly described as:

- (i) Breaking up the unity of God’s people, both physically (vv. 25–26) and spiritually (vv. 26–27).
- (ii) Creating man-made idols to be worshipped as national gods (vv. 28–30).
- (iii) Increasing the role of Israelite sanctuaries. On the high places see on 3:3. For building up shrines cf. 1 Kings 13:32; 2 Kings 17:29, and for detestable practices cf. Deuteronomy 18:9–13.

(iv) Diverting worship from the Lord and his house in Jerusalem where his presence was attested and declared.

(v) Possibly taking on himself the role of priest (vv. 32–33; cf. 2 Chr. 26:16–21).

(vi) Introducing non-levitical priests taken from ‘*every class of the people*’ (v. 31, neb) against Deuteronomy 18:1–8. This action led to the evacuation of true priests (2 Chr. 11:13–14) and the introduction of priests from Canaanite shrines in the country (1 Kgs 13:33–34).

(vii) Reorganizing the religious calendar and festivals (vv. 32–33). The Feast of Tabernacles was put a month early (cf. Lev. 23:24) to forestall that at Jerusalem. There is no sure evidence that this was to link it with the common New Year Festival (Gray) at which a new king was inaugurated. It may have been a new institution and not simply to adjust the calendar to the solar year (DeVries). Nor is it likely that Jerusalem itself made the change of timing.

Each of these actions defied and broke God-given requirements in the law and implied that civil matters were considered more important than religious principle and practice. Such expediency directly forfeited God’s promise (11:38) and brought upon the sinner punishment that was self-inflicted yet divinely allowed.

**Thomas Constable:** All of Jeroboam's so-called reforms involved religious apostasy. He set up new objects of worship, new places of worship (temple and altar), 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.

**Wiersbe:** Jeroboam made himself a priest (vv. 32-33)! He offered incense and blood sacrifices just as the authorized priests did at the temple, except that the Lord never acknowledged his sacrifices.

**Clarke:** Jeroboam probably performed the functions of high priest himself, that he might in his own person condense the civil and ecclesiastical power.

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) If there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors, what motivated Rehoboam to choose the wrong course of action?
- 2) How does Rehoboam attempt to force unity by lording it over his kingdom subjects?
- 3) What was the attraction of setting up two golden calves – especially in light of the

failed hypocrisy of Aaron at Mt. Sinai when Moses was receiving the tablets of the Law?

4) Where have some Christian churches become enamored with novelty and expediency in their worship practices and neglected the simplicity of the divine design?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**William Barnes:** As we have seen, Solomon got in much trouble due to his syncretism—his religious compromise. He allowed the worship of other gods to take place in and near the capital city of Jerusalem. There were good political reasons for this, of course, such as all those foreign women living there and the diplomatic alliances many of them represented; but issues of politics must always be subsumed under the rulership of Yahweh, a self-styled “*jealous God*” (**Exod 34:14; cf. Exod 20:5; Deut 5:9**), who would not tolerate any such religious laxness. Now Jeroboam, Solomon’s northern successor, was in deep trouble as well—again syncretism, and again with good political reasons. But this was worse than Solomon’s syncretism! Jeroboam’s categories of syncretism—if not outright apostasy—included:

- (1) matters of geography,
- (2) matters of genealogy, and
- (3) matters of chronology.

The text does not say which of these three categories is the worst, but they all were serious in nature.

**Robert Rayburn:** The great kingdom of David and Solomon, the empire that had placed itself astride the ANE world, the wealth and prosperity of that fortunate people, and the impression that this kingdom and its two kings had made on the world around, this wonderful beginning is, in a few years, squandered. The empire shrinks to half its former size, its influence in the world wanes and, very soon, virtually disappears. No more visits from the Queen of Sheba. No prayers offered in the temple that the world might come to pray in the temple because of what she sees of the greatness of the kingdom of God’s people Israel.

What Solomon frittered away and what Rehoboam inherited was a kingdom and a people stripped of everything that made that kingdom and people wonderful, unique, and supernatural. Israel became, like the small countries around it that it had for a time been embraced in its empire, small and petty and looking always over its shoulder, worrying about what more powerful states might choose to do to it or to demand from it. Before Rehoboam’s days are out all the treasure of Jerusalem amassed by his father Solomon will be sitting in the treasury of the Egyptian Pharaoh and Israel and Judah will be paying a significant part of their annual tax revenues in tribute to the Egyptian



government. How swiftly the mighty have fallen! *What has happened here?* Well it is not difficult to discern reading this narrative of the division of the kingdom. . .

It is so easy – we do it every day – to slip into a way of thinking that leaves the Lord God out of account. And when we do we begin caring for things and worrying about things we needn't care or worry about; and then we begin to do stupid things that we never would have done if we would have remembered who we are and what the Lord means to us. That was Rehoboam's problem. He forgot his God and everything fell apart. He felt he had to protect his power and seize it when threatened. Forgetting that his power was in Yahweh he began to act like every man acts who thinks power actually belongs *to him*. This temptation is pressing upon us every moment of every day, to forget the Lord, to take him for granted, to slide into a way of thinking that leaves the glory of the gospel of God's grace out of account and with it our utterly wonderful life, our glorious future, and our supremely great calling that we can fulfill no matter what is happening in our lives

**Roger Nam:** **1 Kings 12** provides the genesis of this Divided Monarchy. But more than the political history, the passage gives account of two kings in the middle of this divide. Rehoboam is the son of royalty and privilege. He had enormous pressure to continue in the footsteps of his grandfather David and father Solomon. Although his name means “increasing the people” in fact, he did the opposite by reducing his land to only two tribes. Can you see the weakness and insecurity behind his oppressive actions?

Jeroboam was a talented official, reaching important roles as a youth in some of the building projects of Solomon. But he also had his own ambition to the kingship. In order to prevent pilgrimage to Jerusalem, he set false idols in the form of a golden calf at major cities of the North in Dan and Bethel. Do you see fear driving him away from faith?

Two centuries later, the northern kingdom would fall to the Assyrians and dissolve. Judah would hang on until the Babylonian destructions of 586 B.C.

We see the lives of Rehoboam and Jeroboam in retrospect with the advantage of knowing how things turned out in the end. But part of the narrative invites us to the world of their power, oppression, and rivalry. Part of the narrative reveals the humanity behind these two kings. Both kings are men of means and privilege, but in the effort to appear powerful and august, they end up acting very human. The yoke on these two kings was heavy. Regardless of the mistakes of these two kings, the narrative will continue and God will be present in the midst of these two kingdoms marked by power struggles and rivalry. In the next testament, this narrative will find a level of catharsis with the generous offer of Jesus of Nazareth to, “*Come to me all who are heavy yoked, and I will give you rest*” (**Matthew 11:28**). Thankfully, the oppressive yoke of Rehoboam clarifies the humble, gentle, and light yoke of Jesus of Nazareth who offers us lasting relief.

<https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/narrative-lectionary/kingdom-divided/commentary-on-1-kings-121-17-25-29>



TEXT: 1 Kings 13:1-34

TITLE: *THE SUPREMACY OF THE WORD OF GOD*

**BIG IDEA:**  
**NOTHING TRUMPS THE WORD OF GOD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The Word of the Lord packs a punch. It has substance. It delivers on its promises. You ignore God's Word at your own peril. Jeroboam learned that lesson here; as did the Man of God who delivered the message of judgment to Jeroboam. When you have the clear directive from God regarding how to approach Him in worship, you cannot try to establish some type of substitute man-made system as we saw in **Chap. 12**. When God has clearly defined your mission, you cannot be dissuaded by even the voice of an angel or someone claiming to have contradictory revelation. You must simply obey the clear Word of God or suffer the consequences of His judgment.

**Iain Provan:** Jeroboam stands, like Solomon (**1 Kgs. 8:22**), at the altar of his new temple, ready to dedicate it to his gods. He does not, however, get his chance to speak, for this temple has no legitimacy. And so, as Solomon's temple was built in fulfillment of a prophetic promise about both temple and dynasty (**2 Sam. 7:1-17**), the building of Jeroboam's temple evokes prophetic threats (**1 Kgs. 13:2-3; 14:7-13**), which in due course will come to fulfillment in the destruction of both dynasty and temple. The Lord is the God of history, whose word must be obeyed—even by the very prophets who deliver it—if blessing is to follow (**13:11-32**).

**Stan Anderson:** The name of that city means "House of God," so you would expect that God would be honored there. Sadly that was not the case. Bethel had become a place of corruption and a place of convenience. Jeroboam, the king, had set up an alternate place of worship that would be more convenient. It was his plan to control the people and keep them loyal. This is a clear picture of what is going on in the world today...religion that is driven by compromise and convenience. The all-important question is not, "Is it right?" but "Does it work?" God's man delivered a powerful message against the false worship and King Jeroboam was there to hear it.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/522171325150.pdf>

**Donald Wiseman:** Increased prophetic activity is attested at special times of tension among God's people (e.g. Elijah Elisha, the birth of Christ, the early days of the church, etc.). It aims to heighten awareness of God's word and the inevitable consequences of rejecting it. . . main argument = judgment will inevitably befall those who defy God's word.

**I. (:1-10) THE WORD OF GOD REIGNS SUPREME OVER THE RESISTANCE OFFERED BY HUMAN AUTHORITY AND POWER – INTERACTION BETWEEN JEROBOAM AND THE MAN OF GOD**

**A. (:1-3) Jeroboam Confronted by the Man of God**

1. (:1-2) The Scenario

- a. (:1) Man of God Dispatched to Indict Jeroboam’s Religious Expediency

*“Now behold, there came a man of God from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD, while Jeroboam was standing by the altar to burn incense.”*

**Mordecai Cogan:** *by YHWH’s word.* The term appears seven times in this chapter (vv. **1, 2, 5, 9, 17, 18, 32**), pointing to the tale’s **central theme**; cf. also **20:35**.

**David Guzik:** Apparently, there were no qualified messengers within the northern kingdom of Israel. This is a sad commentary on the spiritual state of Jeroboam’s kingdom.

- b. (:2) Message from the Lord of Coming Judgment

*“And he cried against the altar by the word of the LORD, and said, ‘O altar, altar, thus says the LORD, Behold, a son shall be born to the house of David, Josiah by name; and on you he shall sacrifice the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and human bones shall be burned on you.’”*

**Wiersbe:** 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. The message declared that the future lay with the house of David, not with the house of Jeroboam.

**MacArthur:** The prophet predicted that Josiah would slaughter the illegitimate priests of the high places of his day who made offerings on the altar at Bethel. This prophecy was realized in **2Ki 23:15-20**, executing the divine judgment on the non-Levitical priesthood established by Jeroboam (**12:31, 32**).

2. (:3) The Sign

*“Then he gave a sign the same day, saying, ‘This is the sign which the LORD has spoken, Behold, the altar shall be split apart and the ashes which are on it shall be poured out.’”*

**William Barnes:** One of the famous tests of a true prophet (**Deut 18:15–22**) refers to the accuracy of a future prediction of the would-be prophet as a confidence-inspiring test of his or her orthodoxy. I have come to refer to this phenomenon as “the test of short-term prediction,” since such a test would work best in the short-term future. This is the case in the present verse: Jeroboam’s altar will split apart and its ashes will be poured out—a prediction that comes to pass that very same day (see **13:5**).

**Thomas Constable:** According to the Mosaic Law, the priests were to carefully carry away the ashes from the altar to a clean place for disposal. The pouring out of them there, along with the destruction of this altar, symbolized God's control of Jeroboam and His rejection of this sacrificial system.

## **B. (:4-6) Jeroboam Attempts to Attack the Man of God**

### 1. (:4) Freezing the Outstretched Hand of Jeroboam

*“Now it came about when the king heard the saying of the man of God, which he cried against the altar in Bethel, that Jeroboam stretched out his hand from the altar, saying, ‘Seize him.’ But his hand which he stretched out against him dried up, so that he could not draw it back to himself.”*

The actions of God, not the actions of Jeroboam, determine the outcome.

**Mordechai Cogan:** *withered*. Literally, “*dried up*”; cf. **Zech 11:17**. The threatening hand had become inoperable.

### 2. (:5) Fulfilling the Word of the Lord

*“The altar also was split apart and the ashes were poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.”*

This is the heart of this section demonstrating that God will fulfil His Word despite any resistance or opposition.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The man of God spoke of the altar being ‘*torn*’ (vv. 3, 5). The verb (*qāra* ‘) is significant. Yahweh uses this verb (11:11, 12, 13) when he tells Solomon he is going to ‘*tear*’ the kingdom from him. The verb occurs in 11:30 when Ahijah the prophet ‘*tore*’ his new cloak into twelve ‘*torn pieces*’ (cognate noun) and explained it meant that Yahweh ‘*was tearing*’ the kingdom from Solomon (11:31). Would Jeroboam remember Ahijah and get the point? A torn cloak had meant a torn kingdom, a kingdom under judgment. Now, at Bethel, a torn altar signified torn religion, a religion under judgment.

Let me digress momentarily to emphasize how clearly Yahweh spoke to Jeroboam that day, what evidence he gave him that Yahweh himself was speaking and acting. One could say Yahweh gave Jeroboam a barrage of signs. He gave a sign of power, the paralyzed hand (v. 4), as if to say, ‘This is my servant; I sent him; and if you try to harm him, you’re toast!’ He gave a sign of truth, the torn altar (vv. 3, 5), which, as already explained, gave present proof of future fulfillment (v. 2). No one could dispute that an unseen hand had assaulted the altar before their very eyes. And yet he granted a sign of grace, for when the man of God interceded, Yahweh restored the king’s hand (v. 6). Was that not the immense kindness of Yahweh? Was it not a token of what Yahweh would delight to do for Jeroboam? Was it an invitation to return and enjoy his

goodness? Manipulation, however, was not the way back (v. 7) and Jeroboam's smooth tactic meets a direct rebuff, a sign of repudiation (vv. 8–9). Leaving lunchless was a form of acted excommunication—the true man of God was to have no dealings, enjoy no fellowship, carry on no relations with the apostate regime. Jeroboam & Co. were cut off from the true people of God. The acted sermon was as clear as the spoken.

### 3. (:6) Freeing the Frozen Hand of Jeroboam

*“And the king answered and said to the man of God, ‘Please entreat 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 it became as it was before.”*

**David Guzik:** To his credit, the man of God showed great grace to Jeroboam. He quickly moved from being under arrest to being an intercessor for his persecutor. This was great mercy from the man of God, and especially from God, who answered his prayer.

### **C. (:7-10) Jeroboam Attempts to Compromise the Man of God**

#### 1. (:7) Compensation Offered

*“Then the king said to the man of God, ‘Come home with me and refresh yourself, and I will give you a reward.’”*

**Iain Provan:** We may be intended to read Jeroboam's invitation to dine and receive a gift (v. 7), then, as an attempt to buy the Judean's loyalty. If the prophet can reverse God's judgment in the small matter of the hand, perhaps he can also exchange the curse on the altar for a blessing. The invitation from the old prophet living in Bethel (a false prophet who later spoke truly) can be understood in the same way (vv. 11, 15)—as an attempt to stave off the destruction of Bethel, and the desecration of his own tomb, which he knows must follow the Judean's words of **verse 2 (v.32)**. It is concern about the possibility of corruption, then, that may lie behind the instructions given to the Judean about his journey. He is to go directly to Bethel and come directly back. He is not even to stop for refreshment, and he is to vary his route so that he cannot easily be found and prevented from completing his mission (cf. **Matt. 2:12**). It is when he does stop (v. 14) that his troubles begin.

**The Jamieson, Fausset, and Brown Commentary:** Jeroboam was artful, invited the prophet to the royal table, not to do him honor, or show his gratitude for the restoration of his hand, but to win, by his courtesy and liberal hospitality, a person whom he could not crush by his power.

**Wiersbe:** Had the prophet eaten a meal with the king, that one simple act would have wiped out the effectiveness of his witness and ministry. In the east, sharing a meal is a sign of friendship and endorsement. The prophet certainly didn't want to be a friend to such an evil man or give others the impression that he endorsed his wicked works. . . . A compromising servant of God muddies the waters and confuses the saints.

## 2. (:8-9) Conviction Regarding the Word of the Lord

### a. (:8) Determining Factor is Not the Amount of Compensation

*“But the man of God said to the king, ‘If you were to give me half your house I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water in this place.’”*

### b. (:9) Determining Factor is Obedience to the Word of the Lord

*“For so it was commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, ‘You shall eat no bread, nor drink water, nor return by the way which you came.’”*

**MacArthur:** The prophet’s divine commission expressly forbade receiving any hospitality at Bethel. It even required him to return home by a different route from the one by which he came, lest he should be recognized. The prophet’s own conduct was to symbolize the Lord’s total rejection of Israel’s false worship and the recognition that all the people had become apostates.

## 3. (:10) Commitment to Return Home

*“So he went another way, and did not return by the way which he came to Bethel.”*

## **II. (:11-32) THE WORD OF GOD REIGNS SUPREME OVER THE DECEPTION CAUSED BY COUNTERFEIT AUTHORITY AND POWER – INTERACTION BETWEEN THE OLD PROPHET AND THE MAN OF GOD**

### **A. (:11-19) Deception Can Look Harmless**

#### 1. (:11) Prophet Living in Bethel Seems Harmless

*“Now an old prophet was living in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the deeds which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, these also they related to their father.”*

**Peter Pett:** Meanwhile dwelling in Bethel was an old prophet who had served YHWH for many years. The fact that he was not present at the celebrations taking place at the Sanctuary, but rather sent his sons, indicates that he was very old. He was no longer actively involved as a prophet.

#### 2. (:12-13) Pursuit of the Man of God Seems Friendly

*“And their father said to them, ‘Which way did he go?’  
Now his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone.  
Then he said to his sons, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’  
So they saddled the donkey for him and he rode away on it.”*

#### 3. (:14) Pleasantries Exchanged with the Man of God

*“So he went after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak;*

*and he said to him, 'Are you the man of God who came from Judah?'  
And he said, 'I am.'"*

4. (:15-17) Presentation of the Deceptive Temptation

a. (:15) Attack Against God's Directive

*"Then he said to him, 'Come home with me and eat bread.'"*

Cf. how Satan attacked Adam and Eve in the Garden

**Peter Pett:** Unless we see the old prophet as being deliberately malicious through jealousy we can only assume that what happened next was a test that he was making so as to determine whether the man of God really was a true prophet, or was simply acting on behalf of the king of Judah in order to undermine Jeroboam's authority. His reasoning was probably that if the man was a true man of God he would discern that he was lying to him. Thus he told the man of God a false story suggesting that YHWH had countermanded His previous command and was now willing for him to partake of food in Israel. When the man of God changed his mind and began to eat with him the old prophet no doubt felt himself satisfied that the man of God was not a true prophet after all.

But then, as of old, the word of YHWH came to him while they were eating, and to his horror he learned what he had really done. He had to acknowledge to himself that he had seemingly betrayed a true prophet of YHWH. But, however embarrassed he might have felt, because it was the word of YHWH for the man of God he could not hold it back, and he declared to the man of God that because he had disobeyed YHWH he would not die in peace (would not be laid in the tomb of his fathers) although no other detail was given. We are not told what the man of God's reaction was.

b. (:16) Answer Based on God's Directive

*"And he said, 'I cannot return with you, nor go with you,  
nor will I eat bread or drink water with you in this place.'"*

c. (:17) Authority Behind God's Directive

*"For a command came to me by the word of the LORD,  
'You shall eat no bread, nor drink water there;  
do not return by going the way which you came.'"*

**John Schultz:** One of my former veteran missionary colleagues, **Walter Post**, once gave me an outline of a sermon preached on this section. Referring to the prophet of Bethel, it read: "When God calls: - Do nothing less! - Do nothing more! - Do nothing else!" . .

One important lesson to draw from this is that we must not accept without question the "guidance" other people say they received regarding God's will for our life. If we keep our fellowship with the Lord clean, we may believe that He will show us personally what His will for us is. God may use others to guide us, but our obedience must be to the will of God, not to the wishes of man.

5. (:18-19) Perversion of Truth (**Gal. 1:8**)

a. (:18a) False Pretenses

1) Misrepresenting the Status and Power of His Credentials

*“And he said to him, ‘I also am a prophet like you,’”*

2) Misrepresenting the Source and Authority of His Invitation

*“and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD,”*

3) Misrepresenting the Substance and Intentions of His Invitation

*“saying, Bring him back with you to your house, that he may eat bread and drink water.”*

**Peter Pett:** The mention of the angel was probably the old prophet’s way of avoiding putting his lie directly in the mouth of YHWH, and it should possibly have caused the man of God to stop and think. This was clearly a less direct message than he had himself received. However, as he knew that angels had spoken to men in the past he let it go.

**David Guzik:** Perhaps this was true, and perhaps it was a deceiving angel. Satan and his messengers can appear as angels of light (**2 Corinthians 11:14-15**).

b. (:18b) False Story

*“But he lied to him.”*

c. (:19) Fatal Sin

*“So he went back with him, and ate bread in his house and drank water.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** At the very least the man of God should have registered suspicion, since the old prophet if only by his residence was associated with the apostatizing northern kingdom. He swallowed a counter revelation-claim in opposition to the clear word already received. That is the essential problem. And that is a recipe for disaster. . .

Did you notice how steadfast and rock-solid the man of God was in his encounter with King Jeroboam (**vv. 1–10**)? He neither succumbed to the king’s intimidation nor to his blandishments. Yet he fell when faced with the poppycock of a religious deceiver. This pattern is instructive: sometimes we have courage to face major crises but lack sense for subtle dilemmas. We can muster defiance for the danger of the hour but cannot find discernment for the ploy of the moment. Ministry must be grounded in both the power of God and the wisdom of God.

**David Guzik:** The man of God from Judah listened to the lie from the prophet of Bethel. He did this for several reasons:

- The prophet from Bethel was probably older (*an old prophet*, **1 Kings 13:11**)



- and had the respect of the man of God.
- The prophet from Bethel identified with the man of God (*I too am a prophet as you are*).
  - The prophet from Bethel claimed a spectacular experience (*an angel spoke to me*).
  - The prophet from Bethel claimed to speak for the LORD (*by the word of the LORD*).
  - The prophet from Bethel did not seem to be an idolater who should be shunned (*Bring him back with you to your house*).
  - The prophet from Bethel offered no reward, other than simple food (*he may eat bread and drink water*).

## **B. (:20-25) Disobedience Will Be Judged**

### 1. (:20-22) Prophecy of Imminent Judgment

- a. (:20) Revelation to the Old Prophet of Imminent Judgment  
*“Now it came about, as they were sitting down at the table, that the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back;”*
  
- b. (:21-22a) Reason for the Judgment Declared to the Man of God  
*“and he cried to the man of God who came from Judah, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, Because you have disobeyed the command of the LORD, and have not observed the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, but have returned and eaten bread and drunk water in the place of which He said to you, “Eat no bread and drink no water’;”*

**Iain Provan:** It is further made clear that God’s law stands over everyone—that even prophets must obey it, or face judgment—and that God can use even false prophets occasionally to speak the truth.

- c. (:22b) Reality of the Imminent Judgment  
*“your body shall not come to the grave of your fathers.”*

**Peter Pett:** Furthermore we should remember that by his folly the man of God had in effect countermanded his own message by eating and drinking in Israel, and had the matter ended there all Israel would have believed that the man of God’s message no longer applied. We must remember in considering this the vital role that hospitality played in ancient society. It was not just a casual thing. Once you had supplied hospitality, or received it, you had made a pledge of friendship which was seen as sacrosanct. It was a sign of guaranteed friendly relations. On the other hand to refrain from hospitality was a direct sign of enmity, and of evil intentions. Thus the man of God’s disobedience could have had catastrophic results on the faith of the true believers in Israel. The only way in which that could be avoided was by YHWH’s judgment falling on the man of God, thus indicating that in his act of enjoying hospitality he had not been YHWH’s representative.



**R. D. Patterson:** Because the man of God had disobeyed the full counsel of God, he would not be buried in the tomb of his father; this meant that he would meet a violent death along the way home (vv. 21-22).

2. (:23) Preparations for the Last Ride Following the Last Meal

*“And it came about after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, that he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back.”*

3. (:24) Particulars of this Amazing Divine Judgment

*“Now when he had gone, a lion met him on the way and killed him, and his body was thrown on the road, with the donkey standing beside it; the lion also was standing beside the body.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** It would be taken as a sign of the man of God’s status that the lion neither further mauled his body nor touched the donkey.

**August Konkel:** The donkey stands helplessly beside his body, just as Jeroboam stood beside the shattered altar. In subtle terms this scene shows Jeroboam to be a dumb animal.

**MacArthur:** Both the donkey and the lion acted unnaturally: The donkey did not run and the lion did not attack the donkey or disturb the man’s body. Unlike the disobedient prophet, the beasts bent their wills to God’s sovereignty.

4. (:25) Prophet Receives Report of the Unnatural Death Scene

*“And behold, men passed by and saw the body thrown on the road, and the lion standing beside the body; so they came and told it in the city where the old prophet lived.”*

**C. (:26-32) Divine Decrees Will Be Carried Out**

1. (:26) Fulfilment of Prophecy of Judgment Against the Man of God

a. Man of God Executed Because of Disobedience

*“Now when the prophet who brought him back from the way heard it, he said, ‘It is the man of God, who disobeyed the command of the LORD;’”*

b. Man of God Executed by Sovereign Governance

*“therefore the LORD has given him to the lion, which has torn him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him.”*

2. (:27-30) Funeral Managed by the Old Prophet

a. (:27-28) Observation of the Unnatural Circumstances of the Death

*“Then he spoke to his sons, saying, ‘Saddle the donkey for me.’”*

*And they saddled it. And he went and found his body thrown on the road with the donkey and the lion standing beside the body; the lion had not eaten the body nor torn the donkey.”*

b. (:29a) Retrieval of the Body

*“So the prophet took up the body of the man of God and laid it on the donkey, and brought it back”*

c. (:29b-30) Pathos of Mourning and Burial of the Man of God

*“and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him. 30 And he laid his body in his own grave, and they mourned over him, saying, ‘Alas, my brother!’”*

3. (:31-32) Future Fulfilment of Coming Judgment Against Bethel Assured

a. (:31) Burial Request

*“And it came about after he had buried him, that he spoke to his sons, saying, ‘When I die, bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones.’”*

**Iain Provan:** Given the context, it is much more likely that his concern is not so much to be remembered in the grave as to be allowed to remain in the grave. Thus, this is his alternative plan (after his hospitality stratagem failed) to avoid the desecration of his bones that he knows will otherwise take place (v. 32; cf. v. 2). As it turns out, this second plan is one that works (2 Kgs. 23:17–18).

b. (:32) Bethel Headed for Certain Judgment

*“For the thing shall surely come to pass which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria.”*

**(:33-34) EPILOGUE – NO REPENTANCE FOR JEROBOAM – REJECTION OF THE SUPREME WORD OF THE LORD**

**A. (:33) Dead Man Walking – Persisting in Sin of Religious Expediency**

*“After this event Jeroboam did not return from his evil way, but again he made priests of the high places from among all the people; any who would, he ordained, to be priests of the high places.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** He simply repaired the altar and went on worshiping there (vv. 33–34). The word of God was his mercy—and he despised it.

**B. (:34) Defining Sin Wipes Out the House of Jeroboam**

*“And this event became sin to the house of Jeroboam, even to blot it out and destroy it from off the face of the earth.”*

**Iain Provan:** The closing verses of the chapter tie the story of the prophets back to the Jeroboam narrative. True prophecy will bring forth the judgment it promises; even prophets cannot escape if they are disobedient. And if prophets cannot escape, neither can kings. Bethel, and by extension all the other shrines on the high places that center around Bethel’s cult, will indeed be destroyed (v. 32). Even in face of all that has just happened, however, Jeroboam continues in his evil ways (v. 33), appointing illegitimate priests for the high places just mentioned. That is to say, he proliferates his new cult, extending it beyond Bethel and Dan into the rest of his kingdom. And because all the warnings of **chapter 13** have led him, not to repentance (like Ahab in **1 Kgs. 21:28–29**), but to a hardening of heart, the destruction of his house is now assured (v. 34). This was the sin—this persistence in idolatry—that led him to disaster. His adherence to his religious reforms has put the prize of an everlasting dynasty out of reach; his attempt to make his own “house” secure, by building a “house” for his gods at Bethel and lesser shrines for them elsewhere, has failed.

**David Guzik:** All in all, Jeroboam is an example of sinful failure.

- He failed despite great blessing and favor from God.
- He failed for the sake of mere political advantage.
- He failed and led an entire nation into idolatry.
- He failed despite specific warnings to repent.
- He failed despite specific judgment and deliverance from that judgment.
- He failed despite a clear message and example of integrity.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What questions are raised in this passage that are left unanswered?
- 2) When it comes to receiving counsel from others (no matter how highly you esteem them), do you follow the adage of “Trust but Verify?”
- 3) What types of experience-oriented phenomena do people try to elevate today to a higher authority than the Word of God?
- 4) Do we make excuses for our failure to fully obey the Lord or do we truly understand the high cost of disobedience to His Word?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The story is gripping in its own right. One must ignore the chapter division—**chapter 12** flows right into **chapter 13**. Here is King Jeroboam standing beside or having ascended the altar, officiating at a solemn ‘bull session’ at the Bethel

sanctuary. One can imagine the aura of sanctity that must have hung in the air. The assembled worshipers parted here and there as a man ‘excused-me’ his way to the front, where he suddenly launched into a tirade against the altar, prophesying that a coming descendant of the house of David by name of Josiah would slaughter the new breed of priests upon it and profane it by offering human bones on it (v. 2). Not content to interrupt a perfectly solemn worship service the man announced an imminent sign that would authenticate his predicted threat: the altar would be torn apart and the ashes spilled out (v. 3). Looks of exasperation spread over the assembly—they knew he was a southerner, from Judah (v. 1). Naturally he would have a jaundiced view of the new wave in the north.

But Jeroboam was a take-charge type. The king would handle this interloper. The royal index finger targeted the man of God. Jeroboam’s lackeys jumped to seize him. But the authority and anger on Jeroboam’s face turned to confusion and fear: try as he might he couldn’t draw his hand and arm back to his body. They were frozen. Paralysis (v. 4). But the altar’s ashes eclipsed Jeroboam’s ashen face—the altar did split, the ashes were poured out, just as that aggravating Judean preacher had predicted (v. 5).

Jeroboam had no choice but to change his approach. Paralysis makes kings do that. He pleads with the man of God to intercede for him with ‘*Yahweh your God*’ (v. 6—Is the pronoun significant?) that his limb might be restored. He did so and the royal hand returned to normal use. Jeroboam is more than mollified. Instead of arresting him for disturbing the peace, the king now offers a reward for services rendered. How about coming home for lunch (v. 7)? Perhaps Jeroboam hoped diplomacy could tame the prophetic vigor. The man of God bluntly repudiates the invitation. He is under Yahweh’s orders to do no socializing in Bethel; he was to have no truck with the place (vv. 8–9). Off he went, like the later Magi, by another way (v. 10).

An old prophet lived in Bethel and his sons came home with one of those you’ll-never-believe-what-happened-in-church-today stories. For some reason their father wanted to chase down the Judean preacher. It so happened—and the whole story rests on this puny item—that his sons had seen the return-route the man of God had taken (v. 12b). Their father ordered the donkey saddled, started off, and actually discovered the fellow, apparently enjoying a rest stop on his journey home (v. 14). He invited him to lunch and received the same rejection as did Jeroboam and for the same reason. But the old prophet flashed his own clergy credentials and claimed that he had received a word from the Lord commanding him to bring the Judean home for hospitality. It was a pure lie, but the man of God fell for it (v. 19).

Suddenly in mid-meal the old prophet received a real word from Yahweh and announced judgment on the man of God because the latter had ‘*rebelled at the mouth of Yahweh*’ (v. 21) by agreeing to lunch when he had been ordered by Yahweh not to do so. Because of this, the man of God would not enjoy a peaceful death (v. 22). After this strange outburst, the fulfillment begins. The man of God sets out on a loaned donkey, a lion meets him, kills the man of God, but suddenly loses his appetite for both men and asses (vv. 23–25). Word filters back to town. The old prophet makes a second trip,

retrieves the corpse, performs burial rites, and assures his sons that the word the disobedient man of God had spoken would certainly come to pass (vv. 27–32). Lions may liquidate Yahweh’s disobedient prophets, but nothing can derail Yahweh’s sure word. And Jeroboam continues as before (vv. 33–34).

**Adrian Dieleman: Lessons for Us**

- 1) We should always be angry about sin.
- 2) It is always dangerous to defy the Word of the Lord
- 3) No matter who says it, it is always necessary to test everything by the Word of the Lord.
- 4) Don't be bought off from our holy God's call to obedience.
- 5) Though even servants of God may stumble and fall, God never fails and always accomplishes His decrees and carries out His purposes.

<http://www.trinityurcvisalia.com/OTSer/1ki13.html>

**Gary Reimers: God’s Work God’s Way**

- I. God provides instructions to direct the ministry of His servants (1–10)
  - A. He determines the message (1–5)
  - B. He determines the conduct (6–10)
  
- II. God allows testing to reveal the commitment of His servants (11–24)
  - A. Some are willing to deceive other people (11–18)
  - B. Some are willing to believe other people (19–24)
  
- III. God maintains control in spite of the failure of His servants (25–34)
  - A. He will confirm His Word (25–32)
  - B. He will pursue His plan (33–34)

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/714132147478.pdf>

**Caleb Nelson: The Power of God’s Word**

- I. The Word of God Fulfilled (vv. 1-24)
  - A. God’s Word Judges Jeroboam’s Idolatry (vv. 1-10)
  - B. God’s Word Judges the Judean Man of God (vv. 11-24)
  
- II. The Word of God Confirmed (vv. 25-32)
  - A. The Burial of the Man of God (vv. 25-30)
  - B. The Burial of the Old Prophet (vv. 31-32)
  
- III. The Word of God Ignored (vv. 33-34)

Indeed, Jeroboam was not impressed by this prophecy. He called for his guards to come and put a stop to this but the Lord struck him with paralysis. The Hebrew literally says that his hand *dried up*. Now, as one commentator mentioned, even a king can be a fast learner. Jeroboam quickly changed his tune. Whereas he had just defied the word of God, he now saw the reality that the word of God is always fulfilled.

Notice how much mercy God extended to this king. Jeroboam didn't claim to be a servant of the true God. He tells this man of God, "*Pray to your God.*" God literally intervened in Jeroboam's act of sin to let him know that there was mercy, and that he could turn at any time from his wicked way. God confirmed this by healing his hand.

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/2141712283410.pdf>

TEXT: 1 Kings 14:1-20

TITLE: *JUDGMENT ON JEROBOAM'S LEGACY*

**BIG IDEA:**

**SEEKING HELP FOR HIS AILING SON, JEROBOAM IS CONDEMNED AS AN EVIL RULER FOR HIS RELIGIOUS EXPEDIENCY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The serious illness of his son (and potential heir to the throne in Israel) drove Jeroboam to seek assistance from God through the prophet Ahijah. Instead of any type of positive message, Jeroboam's wife (with her deception exposed) received a wide-ranging proclamation of deserved condemnation and judgment. The death of their son served as the sign that God will fulfil the remainder of His promised judgments to wipe out the line of Jeroboam. Still there is no evidence of any remorse or repentance on the part of Jeroboam. He becomes the pattern for the wickedness of the kings of the N. Kingdom.

**L. M. Grant:** Though God had sought to reach Jeroboam's conscience by the message and actions of the man of God, this produced no effect. So God used another means, by the severe illness of Jeroboam's son. Jeroboam wanted help for the boy, and could only think of Ahijah the prophet who had told him he would be king. But his conscience so troubled him that in telling his wife to go to Ahijah, he ordered her to disguise herself (v.2). Jeroboam was totally insensible of the sovereign omniscience of God. He wanted information from God and thought he could fool God into giving him the information without knowing to whom he was giving it!

**Wiersbe:** He prayed for healing for his arm, and now he asked the prophet Ahijah to heal his son, the crown prince and heir to the throne. It's obvious that physical blessings were more important to him than spiritual blessings. Like many nominal believers and careless church members today, the only time Jeroboam wanted help from God's servant was when he was in trouble.

**August Konkkel:** In spite of his divine calling and privileged position as a successor to Solomon, Jeroboam is remembered as the king who brought destruction to himself and to his land. Though Israel has a long history with many wicked kings, the prophetic historians view the fall of Israel as the responsibility of Jeroboam. This king violated three fundamental theological propositions of the kingdom of God: The promise of God belonged to the Davidic dynasty (cf. **12:26–27**); only the temple could represent the divine presence (**12:28–29**); the worship of God was to take place in Jerusalem (**12:30–33**). Ahijah condemns Jeroboam on each of these three counts.<sup>28</sup> Jeroboam's dynasty ends because he established other symbols of worship so the people would not go to Jerusalem (**14:9–11**). The prophetic interpretation of Israel's history is that Jeroboam has fundamentally undermined loyalty to God and is thus responsible for the nation's destruction.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The reign of Jeroboam has thus come full circle and is brought to a close; its rise was prefigured by a prophecy (11:29–39), and its downfall was likewise predicted by a word of YHWH (14:7–16).

## **I. (:1-5) ATTEMPT AT DECEPTION**

### **A. (:1-3) Burdened Sovereign Seeks to Manipulate the Prophet of God**

#### 1. (:1) Jeroboam Concerned for His Legacy

*“At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick.”*

#### 2. (:2-3) Jeroboam Counsels His Wife to Deceive the Prophet Ahijah

*“And Jeroboam said to his wife, ‘Arise now, and disguise yourself so that they may not know that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh; behold, Ahijah the prophet is there, who spoke concerning me that I would be king over this people. 3 And take ten loaves with you, some cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy.’”*

**MacArthur:** “disguise yourself” – Probably for the avoidance of recognition by the people. Jeroboam did not want his subjects to know that he was consulting a prophet of the Lord.

**Constable:** “Abijah” means “My Father Is the LORD.” Jeroboam probably sent his wife to see Ahijah because that prophet had previously given a favorable prophecy to him (11:29-39). He probably hoped his gift (v. 3) would win the prophet's favor as Jeroboam had won the favor of the old prophet of Bethel.

**Donald Wiseman:** Normally high dignitaries would take a substantial gift (cf. 2 Kgs 5:5, 15; 8:8), but the ordinary person brought only a small ‘audience-gift’.

**Rich Cathers:** cracknels – *niqqud* – crumbled thing, thing easily crumbled, crumbs; apparently a kind of hard biscuit or cake

### **B. (:4-5) Blind Seer Enlightened by the Lord**

#### 1. (:4a) Plan to Deceive the Prophet Carried Out

*“And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah.”*

**Jonathan Spurlock:** Jeroboam was living Tirzah, most likely in the central part of Ephraim’s territory, at the time. The distance between Tirzah and Shiloh, Ahijah’s home, is not certain but a guess would be about a complete day’s journey between the pair. Some maps of the area also give a suggestion of a rugged or hilly type of terrain which might have made travel even more difficult.



2. (:4b) Problem Compounded by the Blindness of the Prophet

*“Now Ahijah could not see, for his eyes were dim because of his age.”*

Paradox of a blind seer – but no blindness with the all-seeing Lord

3. (:5) Perception Enlightened by Divine Revelation

*“Now the LORD had said to Ahijah, ‘Behold, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to inquire of you concerning her son, for he is sick. You shall say thus and thus to her, for it will be when she arrives that she will pretend to be another woman.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Ahijah had admonished Jeroboam to function according to the David-standard (**11:37–38**), but he had not done so; Jeroboam had determined that neo-bovinism would do more for royal stability than covenant orthodoxy. Hence his bull cult (**12:25–33**). He likely knew Ahijah would hold a ‘jaundiced’ view of his religious innovations. He therefore dare not approach Ahijah directly, nor must his wife in any recognizable form. That would be sure to bring a bad word from the prophet. But if the royal wife appeared simply as an anxious Israelite mother seeking a word from God regarding her stricken son, why, the prophet might well be prone to give her a ‘good’ word. Certainly a gift (fee for services?, v. 3) wouldn’t hurt. In fact, the situation was better than Jeroboam dared hope, for Ahijah could scarcely see a thing anymore (v. 4b)!

Here is the king, then, with his magical view of the word of Yahweh. If he can only weasel a positive pronouncement out of the prophet, his son will surely recover. Even a manipulated word will be a certain word.

## **II. (:6-14) ADJUDICATION OF JEROBOAM’S LEGACY**

### **A. (:6) Exposure of the Deception**

*“And it came about when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in the doorway, that he said, ‘Come in, wife of Jeroboam, why do you pretend to be another woman? For I am sent to you with a harsh message.’”*

We are going to deal with truth and harsh reality here; you can’t pretend to be somebody you are not

### **B. (:7-8a) Background of Privileged Exaltation**

*“Go, say to Jeroboam, ‘Thus says the LORD God of Israel,’”*

1. (:7a) Privileged to be Chosen King

*“Because I exalted you from among the people”*

2. (:7b) Privileged with Leadership Responsibility over God’s Elect

*“and made you leader over My people Israel,”*

3. (:8a) Privileged in Contrast to Discipline Against the House of David  
*“and tore the kingdom away from the house of David  
and gave it to you—“*

**C. (:8b-9) Indictment for Religious Expediency**

1. (:8b) You are No King David  
*“yet you have not been like My servant David, who kept My  
commandments and who followed Me with all his heart, to do  
only that which was right in My sight;”*

2. (:9a) You Excel in Evil  
*“you also have done more evil than all who were before you,”*

**MacArthur:** He had installed a paganized system of worship for the entire population of the northern kingdom (cf. **16:25, 30; 2Ki 21:11**).

3. (:9b) Your Idolatry Ticks Me Off  
*“and have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten  
images to provoke Me to anger,”*

4. (:9c) You Have Rejected Me  
*“and have cast Me behind your back—“*

**D. (:10-11) Harsh Judgments to Eliminate Your Legacy**

1. (:10a) General Summary: Calamity on Your House  
*“therefore behold, I am bringing calamity  
on the house of Jeroboam,”*

2. (:10b) Specific Judgment: Killing Every Male Descendent  
*“and will cut off from Jeroboam every male person,  
both bond and free in Israel,”*

**William Barnes:** Lit., *“him who urinates against a wall”*

3. (:10c) End Result: Elimination of Your House  
*“and I will make a clean sweep of the house of Jeroboam,  
as one sweeps away dung until it is all gone.”*

**Victor Yap:** God’s disdain, denigration and dismissal of Jeroboam was far worse than Jeroboam’s disapproval, denial and defiance of God. The king will sink to new low. Dung is mentioned for the first time and only time in the Old Testament (v **10**). Dogs (plural) are unclean animals. Burning (v **10**), scattering (v **15**) and “stirred up/provoked” (v **15**) are in the intensive piel form (translated with a “surely”).

There was no king as rotten and evil as Jeroboam in the eyes of God during the period of the Kings because he continued, rallied and perpetuated sin besides sinning

personally, like no one else before or after.

4. (:11) Ultimate Humiliation: Desecration of the Dead Bodies

*“Anyone belonging to Jeroboam who dies in the city the dogs will eat. And he who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken it.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** All three threats are fulfilled:

<b>Vv. 17–18</b>	Death of son
<b>15:25–30</b>	Destruction of dynasty
<b>2 Kings 17:21–23</b>	Removal from land

Ahijah has been talking from **verses 6–16**. His prophecy dominates the chapter. And once you see that his word of judgment embraces son, dynasty, and nation, and climaxes in **2 Kings 17**, you realize that Ahijah’s **1 Kings 14** prophecy is a programmatic piece that controls the whole history of the northern kingdom. That’s what the writer(s) of **1–2 Kings** intended.

**E. (:12-13) Sign = Immediate Death of Your Child**

*“Now you arise, go to your house. When your feet enter the city the child will die. 13 And all Israel shall mourn for him and bury him, for he alone of Jeroboam's family shall come to the grave, because in him something good was found toward the LORD God of Israel in the house of Jeroboam.”*

**Wiersbe:** Abijah would die, have a dignified burial, and be mourned by the people. The one son of wicked Jeroboam who could have ruled justly would be taken from them, not because he was wicked but because he was good and God wanted to spare him the suffering that lay ahead of the kingdom (**Isa. 57:1**). As he looked ahead (**v. 14**), Ahijah then saw Nadab, Jeroboam’s son and heir, reign for two years and then be assassinated by Baasha, a man from the tribe of Issachar (**15:25-31**). Baasha would not only kill Nadab, but he would exterminate the family of Jeroboam, in fulfillment of Ahijah’s prophecy (**15:29**).

**F. (:14) Succession Plan = King Who Will Liquidate the Legacy of Jeroboam**

*“Moreover, the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel who shall cut off the house of Jeroboam this day and from now on.”*

**Iain Provan:** *This is the day! What? Yes, even now:* A better translation is: *“This is the day! What more can there be now?”* It is a strange line, but it evidently functions to lead us from a description of what will happen in the short term (beginning on the same day, cf. **v. 17**), which might be thought bad enough, to a description of what will happen in the longer term, which is catastrophic. Surely there can be no news worse than the news about son and house—but there is (**vv. 15–16**)!

### **III. (:15-16) ACCUMULATION OF IMAGES OF CALAMITY AND DESTRUCTION**

#### **A. (:15a) Strike**

*“For the LORD will strike Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water;”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** Up until this point, the focus of Ahijah’s prophecy has been the personal misconduct of Jeroboam for which he will be punished; now the sinful ways of the entire nation will bring about their scattering beyond the Euphrates. A similar double indictment is found in the concluding peroration on Israel’s downfall in **2 Kgs 17:7–23**, but in that passage, national responsibility (vv. 7–17) outweighs the blotted record of Jeroboam (v. 21).

#### **B. (:15b) Uproot**

*“and He will uproot Israel from this good land which He gave to their fathers,”*

#### **C. (:15c) Scatter**

*“and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger.”*

**MacArthur:** Ahijah announced God’s stern judgment on Israel for joining Jeroboam’s apostasy. Struck by the Lord, Israel would sway like a reed in a rushing river, a biblical metaphor for political instability (cf. **Mt. 11:7; Lk 7:24**). One day, the Lord would uproot Israel from Palestinian soil and scatter it in exile E of the Euphrates. The fulfillment of this prophecy is recorded in **2Ki 17:23**.

#### **D. (:16) Give Up**

*“And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam, which he committed and with which he made Israel to sin.”*

### **IV. (:17-18) ASSURANCE OF CERTAIN FULFILMENT OF PROPHETIC JUDGMENTS = CONSUMMATION OF THE SIGN**

#### **A. (:17a) Wife Returns Home**

*“Then Jeroboam's wife arose and departed and came to Tirzah.”*

**Constable:** Evidently Jeroboam had moved his capital from Shechem to Tirzah (modern Tell el-Far'ah), seven miles to the northeast, and was living there (v. 17).

#### **B. (:17b) Child Immediately Dies**

*“As she was entering the threshold of the house, the child died.”*

#### **C. (:18) Word of God Fulfilled**

*“And all Israel buried him and mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through His servant Ahijah the prophet.”*

**(:19-20) EPILOGUE = END OF JEROBOAM'S REIGN**

**A. (:19) Recorded Deeds**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he made war and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel.”*

**B. (:20a) Length of Reign**

*“And the time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years;”*

**C. (:20b) Death**

*“and he slept with his fathers,”*

**D. (:20c) Succession**

*“and Nadab his son reigned in his place.”*

**Rich Cathers:** There is a measure of God’s “longsuffering” here. Even though there has been a warning of judgment, God is being patient and giving the nation a chance to repent. But they still will continue in their sin.

**Iain Provan:** The boy duly dies as Jeroboam’s wife returns to her house in Tirzah, to which Jeroboam has apparently moved his court. Like the splitting of the altar in **13:5**, the fulfillment of this immediate prophecy functions as a sign that everything else will also come to pass. We cannot regard the succession of Nadab, then, as anything other than temporary; for we know that Jeroboam’s house is doomed, just as surely as we know that David’s is secure.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What type of disguises do people put on to futilely attempt to hide from God?
- 2) Why do people turn to God for help or to hear a Word from Him in times of desperation while they avoid Him and His Word at all other times?
- 3) What type of grace and mercy did the Lord extend to Jeroboam and his family?
- 4) How difficult of a mission must this have been for the queen mother who ended up just walking back into her home as her child passed away?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

### Christian Cheong: The Folly of Man

**Summary:** Jeroboam seeks God only when he wants something, only on his own terms, only to fix his problems, and only for himself. We are to seek God for WHO He is. We worship Him and obey Him because He is the Lord of our lives.

His son was sick, seriously sick, it seems. It worries him because he was the likely heir to the throne. . .

But I cannot be the one going. I've rejected what he said back in **chapter 11**. He would be unhappy with me and might reprimand me and not give me a good answer. . .

This is the folly of man. On the one hand, he believes Ahijah is a true prophet who has the truth, and yet at the same time, thinking that he can deceive him. . .

The death of his son turned out to be merciful because he had a proper burial.

- The prophet says, *“He is the only one belonging to Jeroboam who will be buried, because he is the only one in the house of Jeroboam in whom the Lord, the God of Israel, has found anything good.” (14:13)*
- We do not know what that good is, but God gave him a decent burial and spared him from being eaten by dogs or birds. God is still gracious!

**Robert Rayburn:** After an interruption of a month we return to 1 Kings, so let's remind ourselves where we are in the history recorded for us in this great and important book of the Bible. King David was followed on the throne by his son Solomon whose reign began in wisdom, godliness, and splendor, but finished with a moan. Distracted from full devotion to the Lord by the spiritual interests of his many foreign wives and succumbing to the temptation to conform to the moral and political standards of ANE royalty, Solomon condemned his nation in following years to suffer the consequences of his disloyalty to Yahweh. The Lord took the largest part of his kingdom from his son, Rehoboam, and gave it to one of Solomon's officials, an able but unbelieving man by the name of Jeroboam. Jeroboam might have made something better of the situation, but in everything that mattered, he was worse than Solomon, transforming Israel – that is, the northern ten tribes – into a nation and a church that in most respects were increasingly indistinguishable from their ANE neighbors. Israel's calling was to be unique among the nations of the world, unique in every way the knowledge of Yahweh and his love should make a people unique; but under Jeroboam Israel lost its uniqueness. Jeroboam departed from the Law of Moses and the worship of Yahweh appointed in that Law almost completely and replaced it with a system that he thought would be more congenial to his own welfare and the welfare of his royal house. . .

Instead of doing the right thing and trusting the Lord for his house and kingdom, Jeroboam made his calculations and changed Israel's religious life root and branch.

We read at the end of **chapter 13**, what the Lord thought of Jeroboam's innovations. He had done evil and it would lead by God's judgment to the destruction of his kingdom as well as his own house. As we now learn, his house was fated for destruction sooner than anyone would have thought. God's judgment is often very slow in coming – such is his patience and mercy – but at other times, when the spiritual die has been cast, it is swift. And so it is here. . .

**v. 11** -- Jeroboam's wife had gone to find out whether her son would live or die. She got a great deal more than she bargained for: the announcement of the end of her entire family and a violent end at that. It was a sign of being cursed to die unburied, as later would be the case with King Baasha (**1 Kgs 16:4**) and Queen Jezebel (**1 Kgs 21:24**). . .

**v. 16** -- So there is a short term promise – the violent end of Jeroboam's dynasty – and a long term one – the exile and destruction of the northern kingdom some 200 years later. Both result from Jeroboam's sins though the latter will result as well from the sins of many others along the way. There is always in OT prophecies of doom a conditional character; there remains, almost to the very end, the possibility of averting the judgment. The prophecy of coming judgment, as so often in the wilderness with Moses, was an invitation to plead with God and to repent and be saved. The threatened outcome could be averted if only the king and people would repent and trust the Lord. But Jeroboam didn't plead and didn't repent and his proud refusal was a virus that, as it happened, eventually so thoroughly infected Israel that she would not repent even when circumstances became far more threatening still, even when it was perfectly obvious that her life depended upon it. . .

Jeroboam is a very significant figure in the history of Kings. We will read his name many more times before we are done usually with reference to some later evil king of Israel who is described as walking in the way of Jeroboam. Jeroboam set the standard for bad behavior by a king and many others, unfortunately *every* other king in the northern kingdom, followed in his steps. One commentator suggests that he is more important to the history of Kings than Solomon, Hezekiah, or Josiah, because it was through this able but unfaithful man that Solomon was punished for the sins of his old age, through this man that the ten tribes were torn from the house of David, through this man that Israel's fate was sealed. And, it was against the backdrop of what Jeroboam made of Israel that the prophets of the Lord take on such great significance as the one remaining source of the true Word of God and knowledge of God's will. [House, 193] Without Jeroboam, in other words, there would be no Elijah, Elisha, Jonah, Amos, and Hosea!

But I want us tonight to notice and to ponder this message of divine judgment that is pronounced upon the house and kingdom of Jeroboam. There will be much more of this in Kings, of course, as we make our way to the consummation of this judgment in Israel in 701 B.C. and Judah in 586. But it is well for us to notice some characteristics of the revelation of God's judgment as we have it here early in the book.



**I. First, notice the perfection of divine knowledge of man's sin and disobedience of his entire life. God knows everything.**

**II. Second, take note of the interplay between anticipation and consummation in the judgment of God.**

Jeroboam lost his son and then his dynasty in just a few years. The family as a royal house ceased to exist two years after Jeroboam's death when his son was assassinated and all the rest of his sons then were murdered. But Ahijah's prophecy extended to events that would not occur for another two-hundred years. It was all the same judgment and for the same sins but one came suddenly and the other – involving so many more people piling up so many more sins – came slowly. The judgment of his people, casting them away from himself is what Isaiah calls God's "*strange and alien work*" (**Isa. 28:21**). We know of the Lord's patience and of his mercy; we read in Holy Scripture that he does not wish for anyone to perish but for all to come to repentance and, further, that he delights to show mercy, but it never says he delights to pass judgment. Indeed, it is very possible to see the destruction of Jeroboam's house as part of the Lord's mercy. He was warning his people what happens to those who betray the covenant of God and disobey God's commandments with wantonness and willfulness as Jeroboam did. It was a demonstration to all of the perils of disobedience to God and of a failure to trust in the Lord. Everyone should have drawn the obvious conclusion: we must not do what Jeroboam did; we must not be faithless as he was. It was unmistakably a warning; but it went unheeded.

<https://www.faithtacoma.org/kings/2010-08-22-pm>

**August Konkel:** Judgment against the house of Jeroboam begins with the illness and death of his son Abijah. The name of his son meant "*my father is Yah(weh)*," suggesting a pretentious claim on the part of the king. The illness of the son is so severe the king seeks the help of the prophet Ahijah, who brought him the original oracle of his appointment as king. He sends his wife from his residence in Tirzah (**v. 17**) to Shiloh in Ephraim, where the prophet resides. She is to be disguised so Ahijah will not know who is coming with the request, possibly because Jeroboam hopes to receive a more favorable response. She carries a modest gift (cf. **2 Kings 5:22–23**) as a tribute to the prophet. The physical sight of Ahijah has failed, but he has inspired vision, which not only enables him to identify his visitor but declare the harsh message he has for her. The condemnation of Jeroboam is in terms of his call (**14:7–11**; cf. **11:33–35**).

Jeroboam has received the kingdom at the expense of the Davidic dynasty because Solomon failed to be loyal to God. That Jeroboam is "*more evil than all who lived before [him]*" (**v. 9**) is stereotyped language found repeatedly in Kings; David was not evil as Jeroboam, but Jeroboam has committed the same sins as Solomon and leaders before David. The judgment that came on Solomon will also come on Jeroboam. His whole royal house will die without receiving a proper burial (**vv. 10–11**). The idiom "*him that pisseth against the wall, and him who is shut up and left in Israel*" (**v. 10**, kjv) refers to royal descendants. The expression refers to males who are privileged to relieve themselves in royal quarters, those who are to be a ruler and deliverer. A comparison of



related verses (**16:11**; **2 Kings 14:26**) indicates a reference to leaders as helpers or deliverers, and the contexts are always in reference to the royal family.

The judgment against Jeroboam begins the moment his wife enters the city (**vv. 12–13**). His son will die and will be mourned by all Israel. Only this child of the house of Jeroboam will be buried with dignity. Yahweh will raise up another king in place of the descendants of Jeroboam (**v. 14**), but ultimately the whole nation will go into exile beyond the Euphrates because of his sins (**vv. 15–16**). The metaphor of a reed shaken in the water may refer to the many dynastic changes that will shortly take place or to the uncertainty that comes with the instability of leadership. The Asherah poles, which are so offensive to Yahweh (**v. 15**; cf. **Judg. 6:25, 28**), are associated with the worship of Baal, representing the goddess of fertility. Jeroboam has introduced the key elements of Canaanite worship that will be a continual sin in Israel, known thereafter as “*the sins of Jeroboam son of Nebat*.”

The concluding notice of the reign of Jeroboam makes special note of his great feats in warfare and rule (**14:19–20**). His twenty-two years are 930–908 b.c. Information from the royal annals of the kings, referred to as “*the book of the annals of the kings of Israel*,” must have been incorporated into the sources the prophetic authors used to compile their history. Reference to these records becomes a fixed and formalized framework for the reign of each king. The authors adapt information from their sources to serve their purposes and are responsible for giving the regnal résumé its standard form. The flow of thought around common themes is developed from the story of each king, and the sequence is indicated by standard summaries of each reign.

TEXT: 1 Kings 14:21-31

TITLE: *DOWNWARD SPIRAL OF JUDAH UNDER REHOBOAM*

**BIG IDEA:**

**JUDAH SINKS INTO PAGAN IDOLATRY UNDER REHOBOAM AND SURRENDERS HER WEALTH TO SHISHAK FROM EGYPT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The narrator is now alternating between examining the reign of each king of the Northern Kingdom (having just covered Jeroboam) and each king of the Southern Kingdom (here summarizing Rehoboam). It is amazing to witness how quickly Judah spirals down into such a pitiful condition. Despite maintaining the focal point of the prescribed worship system revolving around Solomon's Temple in Jerusalem, the people adopt the pagan practices of their surrounding neighbors. God's blessing of material prosperity as symbolized in the plentitude of gold is now plundered by the enemy to the south that represents the ungodly world system that is opposed to the God of Israel.

**Iain Provan:** Rehoboam's story, begun in **chapter 12**, has been delayed until Jeroboam's is over. We now return to find out what has happened in Judah in the meantime, and we shall, in fact, hear of three kings of Judah (**1 Kgs. 14:21–15:24**) before we are told again of Jeroboam's son Nadab (**1 Kgs. 15:25–32**). The way in which their story is told before we read of his will make quite apparent the different ways the kings of Israel and Judah are being treated by God. . .

Yet what is noticeable in this brief account of Rehoboam's reign is that there is no prophetic oracle about the end of David's house to match the oracle of **14:7–16** about the end of Jeroboam's. . . Judah will, in fact, have a stable dynasty throughout the period when Israel is "*like a reed swaying in the water*"; and Asa, the descendant of two wicked Judean kings, will be sitting comfortably on the Judean throne at the very point when Nadab, the descendant of one wicked Israelite king, loses the Israelite throne.

**I. (:21-24) PAGAN PRACTICES OF JUDAH UNDER REIGN OF REHOBOAM**

**A. (:21) Selected Touchpoints of Rehoboam's Reign**

1. Who was His Father?

*"Now Rehoboam the son of Solomon"*

2. Which Kingdom?

*"reigned in Judah."*

3. How Old Was He?

*“Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king,”*

4. How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned seventeen years”*

5. What was the Significance of His Capital City?

*“in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there.”*

6. Who Was His Mother?

*“And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess.”*

**Constable:** quoting **Rice** -- 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 successor.

**William Barnes: Synchronistic History of the Early Divided Monarchy (1 Kgs 14:21–16:34)** -- We now move into several chapters featuring the “leapfrog” treatment of the northern and southern kings, with their order of presentation apparently based solely on chronological factors. . . Two main observations are made about Rehoboam's time as king: The people sadly grew even more heterodox in their worship (**14:22–25**); and King Shishak attacked Jerusalem early in Rehoboam's reign, ransacking the treasuries of palace and Temple, and, in particular, removing Solomon's ceremonial gold shields from the palace (**14:25–28**; cf. **10:16–17**).

**Peter Pett:** And his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess. With rare exceptions the introductory formulae for the kings of Judah regularly refer to the name of the king's mother, thus confirming that the king's blood line was genuine. It emphasised that he was born of a known wife of the previous Davidic king. Naamah may well have been one of the wives who led Solomon astray. She was no doubt a treaty wife. Rehoboam was thus half Ammonite.

## B. (:22a) Summary Evaluation of Rehoboam's Reign

*"And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD,"*

You have to check the record over in Chronicles to see that there was some good performed by Rehoboam before he fell away from the Lord.

**Donald Wiseman:** He began well under the influence of priests loyal to the Lord (Yahweh) who had been driven out of the north, but he later turned away from them by allowing local cult centres to develop (**12:24; 2 Chr. 11:17; 12:1**). The historian is not afraid to castigate the favoured house of David.

## C. (:22b-24) Specific Examples of Evil in the Empire

### 1. (:22b) Impact of Evil = Provoking the Lord to Jealousy

*"and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed."*

### 2. (:23) Idolatrous Practices = High Places, Sacred Pillar and Aherim

*"For they also built for themselves high places and sacred pillars and Asherim on every high hill and beneath every luxuriant tree."*

**August Konkel:** Most notable about Rehoboam is the way he leads Judah in the sins of Canaanite worship, no less than what Jeroboam does in the north. This includes the erection of sacred stones along with the sacred poles representing Asherah, the goddess of fertility. It was legitimate to set up stones as a memorial (**Gen. 28:18; 35:14**), or as a witness (**31:45**), but it was not permissible to follow the practice of the Canaanites to use such stones for worship (**Ex. 23:24**). Worship "*on every high hill and under every spreading tree*" may be a way of referring to the domain of the deity and the associated fertility. Worst of all are the "shrine prostitutes," a collective term that perhaps refers to both males and females. Sexual relations were part of sacrificial rites as a means of achieving fertility and prosperity (**Hos. 4:14**). Cult practices and prostitution were explicitly forbidden by the covenant (**Deut. 23:18**).

**John Schultz:** The idolatry, which had been introduced by Solomon's foreign wives, began to shoot its roots deeper in the ground during Rehoboam's reign. We do not read that Rehoboam practiced it himself, but he must not have taken any measures against it either.

### 3. (:24a) Immoral Religious Rites

*"And there were also male cult prostitutes in the land."*

**John Schultz:** Since Asherah was connected to the concept of fertility, her worship involved ritual sexual practices, such as homosexual ones, that were strictly forbidden in the Mosaic Law.

### 4. (:24b) Identification with Pagan Practices

*"They did according to all the abominations of the nations*

*which the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** I think the focus on Judah collectively rather than on Rehoboam individually is deliberate. **Verses 22–24** are not meant only for Rehoboam’s reign. The writer wants to give a summary of the whole trend of Judah’s kingdom, which began with Rehoboam, and of the dark end that kingdom will meet. **Verses 22–24** constitute a programmatic text. As **14:15–16** depicts the tragic end of the northern kingdom, beginning with Jeroboam, its first king, so **14:22–24** relates the fatal errors of the southern kingdom, beginning with its initial king, Rehoboam. In both cases, the seeds of demise are there at the beginning. This then is not going to be a happy history that we read. **The divided kingdom is a depressing story from the very first.**

## **II. (:25-28) PLUNDERING OF JUDAH’S WEALTH BY SHISHAK FROM EGYPT**

### **A. (:25) Power Vacuum Exploited – Invasion by Shishak as Divine Judgment**

*“Now it came about in the fifth year of King Rehoboam,  
that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem.”*

**August Konkell:** One of the main events of the reign of Rehoboam is the invasion of Shoshenq I of Egypt, known to the Hebrews as Shishak (**14:25–28**). The division of Israel, along with internal union and peace in Egypt, provide opportunity for political and commercial exploitation. A fragmentary victory stela from Thebes (Karnak) provides a description of a border skirmish that may have been the immediate occasion for the invasion.

**Peter Pett:** Shishak must have chuckled with delight when he saw his protégé Jeroboam made king of Israel, and then the two countries battling with each other. He had bided his time, waiting for them to weaken each other, and now he was ready to strike. He came with massive forces and his aim was twofold, firstly to secure the trade routes for Egypt, and secondly in order to obtain booty. He would die a year later.

### **B. (:26) Plundering of Judah’s Treasures**

*“And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD  
and the treasures of the king's house,  
and he took everything,  
even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.”*

### **C. (:27-28) Poor Substitute for the Gold Shields**

*“So King Rehoboam made shields of bronze in their place, and committed them  
to the care of the commanders of the guard who guarded the doorway of the  
king's house. 28 Then it happened as often as the king entered the house of the  
LORD, that the guards would carry them and would bring them back into the  
guards' room.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Our passage also contains a symbolic representation of Judah's demise. After Shishak hauled off, among other spoil, the ceremonial gold shields Solomon had made (v. 26b), we read that '*King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them*' (v. 27a). These shields were carried by the royal guard whenever they escorted the king to the temple. Gold shields replaced by bronze. The splendor is fading. But the pomp and ceremony must continue. And if we cannot have shields of department store quality, we shall have ones of discount store variety. The show must go on. We may willingly sacrifice the pure worship of God (vv. 22–24), but we must not give up our sorry attempts to imitate the old glory with our trinkets and tinsel.

**Peter Pett:** The 'glory' of Judah had been lost because of the behaviour of the people at the high places, and the consequence was that YHWH took away its shields of gold, replacing them with shields of bronze. Its glory was thus twice adulterated. And the result was that the shields no longer needed the security of the House of the Forest of Lebanon, but were kept in the guard house.

**John Schultz:** Rehoboam's substitution of gold with bronze may have been more than an indication of economic decline; it also shows a tendency to maintain a front of affluence where no substance exists to back it up. It seems that Rehoboam continued the tendency, began by his father Solomon, to keep up the outer appearance, even when there was no longer any spiritual content.

## **(:29-31) EPILOGUE – OVERALL SUMMARY OF REHOBOAM'S REIGN**

### **A. (:29) Recorded Deeds of Rehoboam**

*"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?"*

### **B. (:30) Characterization of Rehoboam's Reign**

*"And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam continually."*

**Leon Wood:** It is stated that Rehoboam had continual conflict with Jeroboam (**I Kings 14:30**). There is no indication that this was in violent open warfare, however; in fact, this manner of conflict had been directly forbidden by God (**II Chron. 11:1-4**). The strife likely centered in repeated border disputes, especially involving the Benjamite area. Rehoboam felt that he needed Benjamin as a buffer zone, and Jeroboam naturally would have wanted it too. In that Benjamin does come to be listed with Judah, it follows that Rehoboam won in these disputes more often than Jeroboam.

### **C. (:31a) Death and Burial of Rehoboam**

*"And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David;"*

### **D. (:31b) Mother of Rehoboam**

*"and his mother's name was Naamah the Ammonitess."*

**William Barnes:** This is a curious repetition with the accession formula in **14:21b**. **Cogan** (2001:388) takes this as an erroneous duplication, but I wonder if there is more to this notice than that. I have argued that the curious duplications of regnal formulas found in **2 Chr 21:5, 20** for Jehoram; **2 Chr 27:1, 8** for Jotham; and the familiar dual notice concerning Josiah's 18th year (**2 Kgs 22:3; 23:23**, paralleled in **2 Chr 34:8; 35:19**) signify in Chronicles every fifth monarch after Solomon in the Davidic king-list (see **Barnes** 1991:142–144). In short, **repetitions are often intentional**, and that may be the case here.

**Peter Pett:** The repetition of his mother's name, which is unusual in Kings, was probably an indication of the author's unhappiness with the fact that Solomon had married an Ammonitess. The Ammonites were one of the peoples excluded from becoming true worshipping Israelites (**Deuteronomy 23:3**), and his Ammonite wives had led him astray.

#### **E. (:31c) Succession**

*“And Abijam his son became king in his place.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How can you track the downward spiral of Judah back to the covenant curses specific in Deuteronomy for specific transgressions of God's commands?
- 2) What was the impact of intermarriage with foreign women on the overall Jewish culture?
- 3) Why is Rehoboam's mother mentioned at both the beginning and the ending of the analysis of his reign?
- 4) What is the significance of the plundering of wealth coming from the nation of Egypt?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Iain Provan:** **14:21–24** / It is a feature of the regnal formulas of Kings (cf. the introduction) that each king is evaluated in terms of his commitment to the Lord as evidenced by his religious policies. The case of Rehoboam is, however, unusual; for here we are told (v. **22**), not that Rehoboam did evil in the eyes of the Lord, but that Judah did so. The emphasis falls upon the nation as a whole, rather than simply upon the king himself (cf. **15:3**), although it is presumably his role in instigating the evil that is indicated by the interesting repetition of the information about his mother in **verses**

**21 and 31.** What else would we expect from the son of an Ammonite woman (cf. **11:1–6**)?

Nevertheless, it was the whole nation that became involved in setting up high places at which idolatrous worship could take place, that engaged in those practices that had been current in the land before God had driven out its previous inhabitants. The threat is implicit rather than explicit—sinning in the same way will lead to Judah being “*driven out*” of the land as well, just as following the sin of Jeroboam will lead the people of the northern kingdom into exile (**14:15–16**). We are reminded of those as yet unfulfilled threats of **1 Kings 6:11–13** and **9:6–9**. Right at the beginning of their account of the divided kingdom, in other words, the authors are hinting to us that both north and south are equally sinful (Judah also did these things) and thus heading for the same fate. It is no surprise, then, that in the summary account of the reasons for the exile of Israel in **2 Kings 17:7–17** we should find the language of **1 Kings 14:22–24** so plainly reflected (cf. **2 Kgs. 17:8–11**).

**Peter Pett:** The sad thing about Rehoboam’s reign would be its extreme bankruptcy. He reigned over a country which went to the excess in religious apostasy and sin, he saw all his treasures which had been built up by David and Solomon stripped away, and he spent much of his time fighting with Jeroboam and thus weakening Judah. And he did it while ruling in the city which YHWH had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel to put His Name there, chosen because it had been the city chosen by His servant David. But there is one thing indicated in his favour. While the country appear to have gone wild over false religion Rehoboam himself is not said to have been implicated and indeed is said to have worshipped regularly in the Temple. (The Chronicler is not quit so lacking in criticism, but even he does not condemn Rehoboam wholeheartedly).

The one thing that appears to have saved Rehoboam’s reign from being as catastrophic as Jeroboam’s was the true worship maintained in the Temple, which would partly explain the comment about him reigning in the city where YHWH had set His Name. It would appear from this that initially the future of Yahwism in Judah was being secured by the true worship of the Temple, the place where YHWH had set His Name, and in both Judah and Israel by the activities of the prophets, who certainly in Israel must have arranged sanctuaries at which those who were faithful to YHWH could truly worship. Problems would therefore begin to arise in Judah when the Temple itself went astray. But that would not be for some time.

**John Whitcomb:** It was at this time that the remnant of true believers in each of the northern tribes began to follow the priests and Levites in the permanent abandonment of their homes because of Heroboam’s religious revolution (**II Chron. 11:13–15**; cf. **13:9**). . this influx of spiritually-minded Israelites “*strengthened the kingdom of Judah and made Rehoboam the son of Solomon strong, three years*” (**II Chron. 11:17**) and modified God’s otherwise negative evaluation of his entire reign: “in Judah there were good things found” (**II Chron. 12:12**).

In a vain and ridiculous attempt to match the glory of Solomon, Rehoboam took



eighteen wives (including granddaughters of Jesse, David, and Absalom) and sixty concubines, and begat eighty-eight children (**II Chron. 11:18-23**). Proud of his harem, building projects, and great prosperity, Rehoboam forsook the Lord. This time, God's instrument of chastening and humiliation was Shishak, king of Egypt, equipped with 1200 chariots, 60,000 horsemen, and countless soldiers (**II Chron. 12:1-4**). Because of a timely repentance at the preaching of Shemaiah the prophet (**I Chron. 12:5**; cf. **1 Kings 12:22**), Rehoboam and the kingdom were spared the tragedy of total defeat and subjugation at the hands of the Egyptians. (How the situation had changed since the early days of Solomon when the pharaoh was happy to give his daughter to the king of Israel!) Stripping the temple of all its golden vessels and ornaments symbolized the fact that the glory had already begun to depart. The continuance of the southern kingdom for another three hundred years is a marvelous tribute to the longsuffering of God!

TEXT: 1 Kings 15:1-31

TITLE: *RATING THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD DESIRES LEADERS WHO DEMONSTRATE A FAITHFUL HEART LIKE KING DAVID RATHER THAN THOSE WHO CONTINUE IN THE PATTRN OF SIN, INSTABILITY AND STRIFE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

We are now immersed into the evaluations of the various kings who governed over the southern and northern kingdoms. God constantly monitors our degree of faithfulness and obedience. We know that the Lord's evaluation of Israel will be that they continually practiced wickedness and idolatry. Down south in Judah there will be occasional kings who demonstrated some measure of spiritual reform and faithfulness to the Lord. Asa is the first of those. But even Asa fell away in his later years. We see the impact of the previous generation on their children as well as the personal responsibility of each king to choose for himself to obey the covenant requirements. It is so important not just to start with fervor and commitment, but to persevere in faith and obedience and end well.

**Iain Provan:** We remain for the moment in Judah, with Rehoboam's immediate successors. Abijam is the characteristically bad Judean king, indulging in the idolatry of Solomon's later years and of Rehoboam. Asa is the characteristically good Judean king, behaving relatively faithfully like David and the younger Solomon. These two between them set the pattern for all subsequent Judean kings, who are measured in terms of whether they have been "like David" or not.

**Thomas Swope:** There now follows information concerning the reigns of seven kings, each of which is dealt with briefly. The first two kings were kings of Judah. The first, Abiyam, shared the condemnation of Rehoboam. He was a warning against compromise and half-heartedness. The second, Asa, turned out truly to be a lamp for he did what was right in the eyes of YHWH, and his heart was right towards YHWH. Nevertheless, due to his failing to fully trust YHWH he lost the treasures that he had built up and ended up diseased in his feet. He was a warning against the danger of not fully trusting with all his heart.

Due to Asa's long reign the next five kings were kings of Israel. The picture in that case was one of continual decline as things got worse and worse. It began with Nadab who followed in the way of his father, and was assassinated as a result of God's judgment on Jeroboam, continued with Baasha who not only continued in the way of Jeroboam but also sought to prevent Israelites from entering Judah in order to worship YHWH, and was continually hostile towards Judah, with the result that his son, who followed in his ways, was also assassinated for the same reason. The man who carried out the assassination was Zimri, a chariot commander, who lasted only seven days, and after a

period of civil war he was followed by Omri, Israel's commander-in-chief who not only walked in the way of Jeroboam but also began to lay a greater emphasis on the open worship of Baal. The sad state displayed that no king of Israel concerned himself with purifying the worship of YHWH, but instead contributed to the continuing deterioration. Had it not been for the rise of Elijah faith in YHWH in Israel may well have died out. . .

We see that the kings of Judah were compared to David and his love for Yahweh. With the kings of Israel we see that they are compared to Jeroboam and all the sin he committed.

<https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/seeing-life-through-gods-eyes-thomas-swope-sermon-on-david-234852?page=3&wc=800>

## **I. (:1-8) ABIJAM REIGNS OVER JUDAH – CONTINUING IN THE SINS OF HIS FATHER**

### **A. (:1-2) Selected Touchpoints of Abijam's Reign**

#### 1. When Did He Become King?

*“Now in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam, the son of Nebat,”*

#### 2. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“Abijam became king over Judah.”*

**Peter Pett:** We are never told the age of Abi-yam, but the Chronicler tells us that he had fourteen wives, twenty two sons and sixteen daughters (**2 Chronicles 13:21**), so that he was well matured when he began to reign, possibly approaching forty.

**Jerry Thrower:** After the death of Rehoboam, Abijam ascended to the throne in Judah. Abijam was not Rehoboam's oldest son. He was the son of his favorite wife Maachah.

#### 3. How Long Did He Reign?

*“He reigned three years in Jerusalem,”*

#### 4. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.”*

### **B. (:3) Summary Evaluation of Abijam's Reign**

*“And he walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David.”*

Sins of his father Rehoboam and grandfather Solomon

**Donald Wiseman:** Abijah (*‘My father is Yah-[weh]’*) continued the war with his contemporary Jeroboam of Israel. He is here censured for his religious corruption and divided loyalty to the Lord God yet, for David's sake and in response to his faith, he

was allowed a spectacular victory over the encircling Israelites whom he had challenged, for being even more apostate than he (**2 Chr. 13:3–20**). His position and power was increased in Jerusalem (v. 4), and by the annexation of Bethel, Jeshanah and Ephraim (Ophrah) and their environs in the hill-country, he pushed the boundary northwards. This is an instance of God blessing the unworthy for the sake of the worthy.

**John Whitcomb:** Abijam was capable, like his father (cf. **II Chron. 11:4, 17; 12:6, 12**) of occasional acts of faith in a life of general disobedience to the revealed will of God.

### C. (:4-5) Grace Shown Abijam for Sake of David

*“But for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, to raise up his son after him and to establish Jerusalem; 5 because David did what was right in the sight of the LORD, and had not turned aside from anything that He commanded him all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** One wonders whether ‘on account of David’ (v. 4a; or, ‘for the sake of David’) means ‘on account of David’s fidelity’ (as v. 5 may suggest) or whether it means ‘on account of Yahweh’s promise to David’ (**2 Sam. 7:12–16**). I think **2 Kings 8:19** (cf. also **1 Kings 11:13, 32, 34**) favors the latter option. Hence there may be a double rationale for the kingdom’s continued existence: Yahweh’s covenant commitment (v. 4) and David’s covenant consistency (v. 5). The latter was not perfect (note the ‘except’—clause) but typical. If Jeroboam was poison and death to his kingdom (**14:15–16**), David was blessing and life to his. . .

Asa’s reign, therefore, was one of Yahweh’s mercies; he raised up one who—despite his faults—nevertheless slowed the slide to infidelity. Here is an argument against a fatalism that despairs over the alarming and increasingly unfaithful condition of the church. There are times, says our text, when Yahweh intervenes to reform, renew, and restore. What else would we expect from One who has decreed always to keep a lamp in Jerusalem?

**Iain Provan:** Because of the special place held by David and Jerusalem in God’s affections, however (**11:11–13, 31–39; 14:21**), the idolatry of Solomon and Rehoboam had not brought upon them the judgment of God that had been expected. It is no different with Abijam.... This dynasty, unlike Jeroboam’s, is secure; sin cannot affect its fortunes in any ultimate sense.

**Jerry Thrower:** God could have ended the Davidic line, but He promised David He would not end it. And God keeps His promises! God promised to give David a **lamp** which is a reference or term for “*descendant*.” To have one’s lamp put out meant the removal of a family line.

**Proverbs 13:9** *The light of the righteous rejoiceth: but the lamp of the wicked shall be put out.*

**Proverbs 20:20** *Whoso curseth his father or his mother, his lamp shall be put out in obscure darkness.*

God allowed Abijam to rule because of the merits of David.

**D. (:6-9) Overall Summary of Abijam's Reign**

1. (:6) War Between Rehoboam and Jeroboam

*“And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life.”*

2. (:7a) Recorded Deeds of Abijam

*“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?”*

3. (:7b) War Between Abijam and Jeroboam

*“And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam.”*

4. (:8a) Death and Burial of Abijam

*“And Abijam slept with his fathers and they buried him in the city of David;”*

5. (:8b) Succession

*“and Asa his son became king in his place.”*

**II. (:9-24) ASA REIGNS OVER JUDAH – DEMONSTRATING A FAITHFUL HEART AFTER THE MODEL OF KING DAVID**

**A. (:9-10) Selected Touchpoints of Asa's Reign**

1. When Did He Become King?

*“So in the twentieth year of Jeroboam the king of Israel,”*

2. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“Asa began to reign as king of Judah.”*

3. How Long Did He Reign?

*“And he reigned forty-one years in Jerusalem;”*

4. Who Was His Mother?

*“and his mother's name was Maacah the daughter of Abishalom.”*

**Wiersbe:** There were three major divisions to Asa's life and reign.

- (1) Peace and victory (1 Kings 15:9-11; 2 Chron. 14:1 – 15:7).
- (2) Reformation and renewal (1 Kings 15:12-15; 2 Chron. 15:8-19).
- (3) Relapse and discipline (1 Kings 15:16-24; 2 Chron. 16:1-14).

## B. (:11) Summary Evaluation of Asa's Reign

*"And Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father."*

**William Barnes:** In sum, Asa was a godly king who pleased his Lord. He significantly cleansed the land of idolatry, and he acted decisively to protect his capital city. Such protection was costly, but apparently necessary and apparently in God's will. Even his foot disease did not disqualify him from being reckoned positively as only 8 out of 19 southern kings (and no northern kings) would be. God does work in mysterious ways, his wonders to perform.

**Jerry Thrower:** Why do kids reject the teachings of Believing parents? Why does one child turn from God while another follows the Lord?" Only God knows the heart and the reasons. Whether kids have godly parenting or ungodly parenting, they still have the responsibility to choose for themselves! God holds the parent responsible for the testimony presented and children responsible for the choices they make! Asa rejected the instructions of his mother/grandmother for he knew idolatry was wrong and wickedness was wrong.

## C. (:12-15) Specific Reforms Accomplished by Asa

### 1. (:12a) Removed Immoral Religious Rites

*"He also put away the male cult prostitutes from the land,"*

### 2. (:12b) Removed Idols

*"and removed all the idols which his fathers had made."*

### 3. (:13) Removed the Queen Along with Her Asherah Image

*"And he also removed Maacah his mother from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image as an Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned it at the brook Kidron."*

**MacArthur:** "horrid image" – This term is derived from the verb "to shudder" (**Job 9:6**). "Horrible, repulsive thing" suggests a shocking, perhaps even a sexually explicit, idol. [phallic symbol]

**Thomas Constable:** "Asa" ("Healer"?) came to power close to the end of Jeroboam's reign over Israel in 910 B.C. 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. Maacah was "a sort of Jezebel of Judah" who "made a horrid image as an Asherah," which Asa "cut down" and "burned... at the brook Kidron" (v. **13**).

### 4. (:14) Caveat

*"But the high places were not taken away; nevertheless the heart of Asa was wholly devoted to the LORD all his days."*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Granted, there were limitations to his reform (v. 14a), but there was no doubt about the sincerity of Asa's heart-orientation (v. 14b—in contrast to his father in v. 3).

**John Schultz:** One thing lacking in Asa's understanding of God's will was the fact that he did not consider the place of worship of God to be the important issue. Although he removed the symbols of idolatry, he did not regard the temple in Jerusalem as the only place where God ought to be worshipped as He had indicated. As far as that was concerned he did not have David's vision.

5. (:15) Protected the Dedicated Vessels

*“And he brought into the house of the LORD the dedicated things of his father and his own dedicated things: silver and gold and utensils.”*

**Peter Pett:** Since the removal by Shishak of Egypt of the treasures from the Temple and the king's house in the days of Rehoboam more treasures had been accumulated by raiding spoils, by tolls from trading and by 'taxation', and these had presumably been stored in the House of the Forest of Lebanon as dedicated to YHWH. Asa now brought them into the Temple, together with what he himself had gathered and dedicated to YHWH. He was concerned lest YHWH think that he was retaining it all for himself. It included silver, and gold (there was no coinage) and vessels. The dedication of such things to the gods was common throughout the Ancient Near East.

**C. (:16-22) Political Interaction with Baasha King of Israel**

1. (:16) General Climate of Warfare Between Asa and Baasha

*“Now there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.”*

2. (:17) Blockade Fortified Against Judah by Baasha

*“And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And Baasha stirred up a political crisis. He came down to Ramah of Benjamin and fortified it (lit., 'built it,' v. 17a). Ramah was strategic: it was only five-plus miles north of Asa's Jerusalem, sat astride the north-south trunk road, and controlled Judah's best western access to the coastal plain via Beth-horon. Baasha's design was no secret; it smells like an economic blockade (v. 17b).

**Donald Wiseman:** This was a reaction to Israel's blockade of the north route from Jerusalem (cf. 9:17). They had penetrated as far south as Ramah (Er-Ram, nine kilometres north of Jerusalem). Asa counted on his existing treaty-relations (of which Kings gives no detail) and possibly the queen mother's Aramaean origin to invoke help from Ben(Bar)-Hadad I of Damascus. It is noteworthy that the Chronicler rebukes Asa for trusting in this treaty relationship rather than the Lord and for his suppression of

those who opposed his policy (2 Chr. 16:7–10). This is not mentioned here, as the stress is on the good and right Asa did as David’s successor.

**John Whitcomb:** Baasha’s invasion of Judah and his fortification of Ramah (five miles north of Jerusalem) was his Berlin wall response to the powerful magnet of revival in Jerusalem to the south (cf. II Chron. 15:9). The king of Israel realized full well that it was his most stalwart citizens who were leaving him, the very life blood of the nation, and he took drastic means to stop it.

### 3. (:18-19) Treaty with Damascus Solicited by Asa

#### a. (:18a) The Payment

*“Then Asa took all the silver and the gold which were 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.”*

#### b. (:18b-19) The Plea for Help

*“And King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Aram, who lived in Damascus, saying, 19 ‘Let there be a treaty between you and me, as between my father and your father. Behold, I have sent you a present of silver and gold; go, break your treaty with Baasha king of Israel so that he will withdraw from me.’”*

**Wiseman:** Tabrimmon (v. 18) means 'good is Rimmon', the Thunderergod, a title of Baal.

### 4. (:20-21) The Effectiveness of the Alliance in Diverting Baasha’s Forces

#### a. (:20) Offensive Initiative of Ben-hadad

*“So Ben-hadad listened to King Asa and sent the commanders of his armies against the cities of Israel, and conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, besides all the land of Naphtali.”*

**MacArthur:** The army of Beh-hadad I invaded Israel and took cities in the land N of the Sea of Galilee, a conquest giving Syria control of the trade routes to the Mediterranean coast, and Israel’s fertile Jezreel Valley, and also making Syria a great military threat to Israel. Baasha gave up fortifying Ramah and went to live in Tirzah, the capital of the northern kingdom.

**August Konkel:** Ben-Hadad is more than willing to accept money from both Baasha and Asa in their war against each other (15:19–20). The Aramean breaks his treaty and attacks northern Israel, capturing all the land of Naphtali. That means all Galilee is taken, almost all the country north of the Jezreel Valley and east of Lake Kinnereth. Ijon is a large village in the southern Beqa’ Valley, on the southern border of modern Lebanon. It is usually listed together with Abel Beth Maacah, Dan (Laish), and Hazor in northern Israel. Abel Beth Maacah is located near a major waterfall of the Jordan



tributaries, at the juncture of the Huleh Valley and the Beqa' Valley in Lebanon. 'En Gev on the eastern side of the lake is likely taken by the Arameans as well.

The absence of Hazor from the list of cities taken by Ben-Hadad is remarkable, since it was the major fortified city of the area. Baasha may have been able to resist the Aramean army and retain the territory around Hazor. Ben-Hadad gains control over the corn land of the Hauran and the trade routes, which run to Tyre and Sidon and south to the plain of Jezreel. The northern attack forces Baasha to abandon his southern fortification.

b. (:21) Defensive Posture Forced on Baasha

*“And it came about when Baasha heard of it that he ceased fortifying Ramah, and remained in Tirzah.”*

5. (:22) Repurposing Construction Materials to Cities in Judah

*“Then King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah-- none was exempt-- and they carried away the stones of Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had built. And King Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and Mizpah.”*

**Thomas Constable:** 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 and use their materials to rebuild two towns on Judah's side of the border (v. 22).

**Wiersbe:** Everyone was happy with the results of the treaty except the Lord. He sent the prophet Hanani to rebuke the king and give him the Word of the Lord. . . The prophet's message was clear: if Asa had relied on the Lord, the army of Judah would have defeated both Israel and Syria. Instead, Judah merely gained a few towns, the Lord's treasury was robbed and the king was now in a sinful alliance with the Syrians.

**D. (:23-24) Overall Summary of Asa's Reign**

1. (:23a) Recorded Deeds of Asa

*“Now the rest of all the acts of Asa and all his might and 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?”*

2. (:23b) Infirmity in His Old Age

*“But in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet.”*

**David Guzik:** All in all, Asa was a good man who did not finish well. The last years of his life were marked by unbelief, hardness against God, oppression against his people, and disease. Age and time do not necessarily make us better; they only do if we continue to follow God in faith.

**R. D. Patterson:** The parting notices concerning Asa deal with the loathsome disease in his feet (v. 23) that served only to harden his heart. For his funerary observance Asa had the air filled with sweet spices (**2 Chron 16:12-14**); but no amount of manmade perfume can hide the noxious stench of the life of a believer alienated from God! How far he had fallen and from what great spiritual heights! Asa's life remains as an exemplary admonition to the believer to abide humbly in Christ, lest his life become totally unproductive for God (cf. **John 15:5-6; 1 Cor 9:27**). . .

Various suggestions have been made as to the nature of Asa's diseased feet. **The Talmud** decides for gout, and **Montgomery** (p. 278) for dropsy. **Snaith** (p. 136) suggests that "*feet*" is a euphemism for the reproductive organ; hence Asa had venereal disease.

3. (:24a) Death and Burial of Asa

*"And Asa slept with his fathers  
and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father;"*

**Peter Pett:** There are numerous lessons from Asa's long life.

- The first is that we need to walk faithfully in accordance with God's requirements, with a heart that is right towards God.
- The second is that we need to root out of our lives all our 'idols'.
- The third is that we need to learn to trust fully in God rather than in men.
- The fourth is that we need to take every opportunity to build up our defences (Ephesians 6:10-18).

4. (:24b) Succession

*"and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place."*

### **III. (:25-31) NADAB REIGNS OVER ISRAEL – CONTINUING IN THE SINS OF HIS FATHER AS WELL**

#### **A. (:25) Selected Touchpoints of Nadab's Reign**

1. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*"Now Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel"*

2. When Did He Govern?

*"in the second year of Asa king of Judah,"*

3. How Long Did He Govern?

*"and he reigned over Israel two years."*

#### **B. (:26) Summary Evaluation of Nadab's Reign**

*"And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin."*

**C. (:27-28) Nadab Killed by Baasha King of Israel**

*“Then Baasha the son of Ahijah of the house of Issachar conspired against him, and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines, while Nadab and all Israel were laying siege to Gibbethon. 28 So Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his place.”*

**MacArthur:** This city, located about 32 mi. W of Jerusalem, within the territory of Dan, was given to the Levites (**Jos 19:44**) but controlled by the Philistines, on whose border it lay.

**Clarke:** Thus God made use of one wicked man to destroy another.

**D. (:29-30) Baasha Purges Household of Jeroboam**

*“And it came about, as soon as he was king, he struck down all the household of Jeroboam. He did not leave to Jeroboam any persons alive, until he had destroyed them, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, 30 and because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, because of his provocation with which he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger.”*

**E. (:31) Overall Summary of Nadab’s Reign – Recorded Deeds**

*“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?”*

**Peter Pett:** The lessons we may learn from Nadab’s life, are:

- 1). The brevity life. It is a reminder that in the midst of life we are in death.
- 2). The certainty of God’s judgment on sin.
- 3). A recognition of the holiness of a God Who so hates sin that He allowed the wiping out of a family because of its sinfulness.
- 4). The folly of following in the footsteps of those who have turned against God and His ways. If only he had repented he might have avoided God’s judgment.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How powerful is the example of the parents in impacting the life of their children?
- 2) Why is it so important to end your life well ... despite whatever degree of obedience you have demonstrated earlier in life?
- 3) What actions would a leader need to take today to implement spiritual reforms in a land characterized by secularism?
- 4) How can we develop a heart like David’s that is primarily loyal to the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**William Barnes:** there is little new in this section (which will often be the case in the chronological leapfrog treatment of every northern and southern king in **1-2 Kings**, from now on). As here, stereotypical repetitions of faithfulness-of-David or unfaithfulness-of-Jeroboam evaluations will often sharply color otherwise brief, bland recitations of a few historical minutiae. The editor's overall agenda is clear in all this: List each king of either kingdom in strict chronological order (usually synchronizing with the corresponding king of the rival kingdom), perhaps include some concise historical notices, give a clear theological evaluation of the king, and then quickly move on. Such is the case in the present passage, and for the next seven kings up to King Ahab in **16:29–34**, about whom discussion continues off and on throughout the final six chapters of **1 Kings**.

Constant warfare is the repeated refrain characterizing the early period of the divided monarchy (see **15:6, 7b, 16, 32**; also cf. **14:19a, 30**). The peace between north and south brought about by the prophet Shemaiah back in **12:21–24** was lost, and it would not be until the reigns of Ahab of Israel and Jehoshaphat of Judah (according to the MT) that peace was finally restored between the two kingdoms at Jehoshaphat's initiative (see **22:44 [45]**). The references to warfare have so far been brief but insistent (indeed, they will grow even more compelling in the Asa section). Coupled with the Davidic references in the present passage, they might evoke the reminder that David himself was a man of war (**5:3**; cf. **1 Chr 22:7–10; 28:3**), but that is at best only an implied comparison. No, the multiplied references here are surely meant to be understood quite negatively, reminding the reader that the seemingly constant skirmishing between the two kingdoms (both representing significant numbers of God's people) could, and indeed would, lead to disasters in the future. What a melancholy reminder of how God's people often fight with each other, rather than with their common foes. We will sadly have to return to this topic in more detail in the next section.

**Iain Provan:** Asa's reign in Judah was a long one and he saw five Israelite kings rise and fall (**15:25–16:28**) before Ahab began to rule in the north (**16:29ff.**). Baasha was the second of these (cf. **1 Kgs. 15:33–16:7**). Why has this particular story been selected by the authors for inclusion at this point? The answer may well lie in the further parallels between Asa and Solomon that it accentuates. Even though Asa was like the early Solomon, he did not know the kind of peace that Solomon knew: there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel throughout their reigns (**15:16**, repeated in **15:32** for emphasis). So precarious was Asa's position as Baasha pushed into Benjamin and fortified Ramah, only a few miles north of Jerusalem, that instead of receiving treasures flowing into the city from places like Aram, Asa was forced to send a substantial gift (strictly a "bribe," Hb. *šōḥad*) to Aram to try to buy a new friend (**vv. 18–19**). This was a "wise" thing to do (**Prov. 17:8**). Yet one cannot help but notice that

whereas Solomon very much had the upper hand in his treaty with Hiram of Tyre (**1 Kgs. 5; 9:10–14**), Asa is quite clearly the suppliant in regard to Ben-Hadad of Aram. He does not even receive any help with the stones and timber for the building work that results from the treaty (**v. 22**; cf. **5:18**)—he has to resort to the imposition of forced labor upon his Judean citizens. Nor can it escape our attention that, whereas Solomon’s political arrangements contributed to the maintenance of the empire, Asa’s strategy results in the loss of parts of Israel to a foreign king (**v. 20**). Faithfulness like Solomon’s no longer brings Solomon’s glory in its wake. These are different times—times of humbling for David’s descendants (**11:39**). Solomon held his head high while he obeyed his God; Asa’s ultimate reward is diseased feet (**15:23**)—or is there just a hint here that Asa, too, departed from God in his old age (cf. **11:4**) and was punished for doing so?

**Mordechai Cogan:** A generation of hostilities between Judah and Israel reached new heights during the reign of Asa, with Baasha’s approach to Jerusalem; the latter’s fortification of Ramah gave him control over Judah’s commercial life and posed a continual threat to the security of the Southern capital (**1 Kgs 15:17**). In an open admission of weakness, Asa turned to Ben-hadad I of Aram-Damascus, and asked that he violate his non-aggression treaty with Israel in favor of the one with Judah, smoothing the way for this treachery with a heavy payment (**v. 19**). It thus seems that the earlier hostility between Jerusalem and Damascus that followed upon the Aramean move for independence during the reign of Solomon (**11:23–25**) had evolved into a treaty relationship between the two, perhaps urged upon Jerusalem by the breakaway of the North. Asa’s hoped-for relief was not long in coming; as a result of the Aramean incursions into Israel’s Galilee, Baasha withdrew from the southern border with Judah to defend his Northern district. There is no way of knowing how successful he was against Ben-hadad, and just how long Ben-hadad was free to move about Galilee at will; the destruction levels at several key Northern sites and their rebuilding suggest that Israel regained its foothold in the territory within a short time. As for Asa, his political machinations having paid off, he moved to fortify Judah’s border; he tore down Baasha’s constructions at Ramah and pushed the border a few miles farther north into Benjamin, to Mizpah and Geba (**15:22**).

**Wiersbe:** Keep in mind that the books of Kings and Chronicles don’t record history from exactly the same perspective. The focus in 1 and 2 Kings is on the kings of Israel, but in 1 and 2 Chronicles, the emphasis is on David’s dynasty in Judah. The Northern Kingdom of Israel, later called Samaria, is mentioned in Chronicles only when it had dealings with Judah. Another thing to remember is that the two kingdoms used different systems in keeping official records. In Judah, the king’s reign was counted from the beginning of the next calendar year after he began his reign, while in Israel, the count began with the year the king actually ascended the throne. Also, some kings had their sons as coregents during the closing years of their reign. These factors complicate calculating how long some kings reigned, and this helps us understand why biblical chronologists don’t always agree.

**Richard Rohlin: Who is Abijah anyway?**

Abijah's primary claim to fame is a successful war against Jeroboam. – Specifically, the Battle of Mount Zemaraim – This was a tremendous victory that Judah had against Israel despite 2:1 odds (**2 Chron. 13**). When the war breaks out, Abijah decides to go on the offensive despite the fact that he has a smaller military, and he takes the battle into the territory belonging to the tribe of Ephraim. – Ephraim was the most powerful of the tribes of Israel. – Jeroboam is from Ephraim. So Abijah is effectively taking the war onto Jeroboam's home turf.

Abijah's speech has essentially four points:

- The right to rule belongs to the house of David (**v. 4-7**)
- Israel is wicked (**v. 8-9**)
- Judah is righteous (**v. 10-11**)
- God is on Judah's side (**v. 12**)

Abijah "walked in all the sins that his father did":

- Pride
- Fleshliness
- Masculinity out of control
- Allowed sin to run rampant
- Strength was surrendered

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/63111112146.pdf>

TEXT: 1 Kings 15:32 – 16:34

TITLE: FIVE SUCCESSIVE EVIL KINGS OF ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE EVIL DYNASTIES OF THESE FIVE ISRAELITE KINGS PAINT A GRIM PICTURE OF DEATH, DESTRUCTION AND BLOODSHED**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This is not pleasurable reading. There are not many glimmers of hope in these kingdom vignettes where entire households are brutally destroyed as one dynasty is replaced by the next. Each seems equally devoid of genuine faith and divine blessing.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This text has it all: carousing and conspiracy, assassination and civil strife—everything that gives the evening news its reason for existence. The northern kingdom appears to be careening down the waterslide of history, bashing along to its own self-destruction when, suddenly, it levels out on the hill of Samaria and enjoys a bit of stability under Omri's reign. Kings have their own interests. One prefers to drink himself silly (v. 9); another practices treachery and commits spectacular suicide (vv. 10, 18); another struggles for dominance and builds himself a new capital (vv. 22, 24). Yet they have something in common: each of these politicians stands under divine judgment.

**August Konkel:** In the accounts of Kings and Chronicles, there is the consistent perspective that God is about the business of bringing his purposes to fruition. The book of Kings struggles with the division of the nation and the internal conflicts that represent God's kingdom. God is seen to be actively at work in each of the capitals, in discipline and judgment, but with continued frustration of the covenant relationship.

**I. (15:32 – 16:7) BAASHA'S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**(:32) Transition – Climate of Warfare**

*“And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days.”*

**A. (:33) Selected Touchpoints of Baasha's Reign**

**1. When Did He Become King?**

*“In the third year of Asa king of Judah,”*

**2. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?**

*“Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel at Tirzah,”*

**3. How Long Did He Reign?**

*“and reigned twenty-four years.”*

## **B. (:34) Summary Evaluation of Baasha's Reign**

*“And he did evil in the sight of the LORD,  
and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** The impression that the short text leaves concerning Baasha's two-decade rule is that it was one of continuous strife. It began in a bloody revolt against the House of Jeroboam, while the army was engaged in the northern Shephelah fighting the Philistines (**15:27**); the lack of success on that front is notable, because a quarter of a century later the same adversaries still stared at each other across the same battle line (**16:15**). Nor did Baasha's moves against Judah meet with much success: Baasha was outmaneuvered by Asa's renewal of the treaty between Damascus and Jerusalem, which brought Aramean troops to the Israelite Galilee (**15:17–21**). This dismal record may have instigated the military revolt against Baasha's son Elah within a year of his assuming the throne.

## **C. (:1-4) Word of Prophetic Judgment Against Baasha**

*“Now the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha,  
saying,”*

### 1. (:2) Reason for the Judgment

#### a. Privileges Bestowed

*“Inasmuch as I exalted you from the dust  
and made you leader over My people Israel,”*

#### b. Provoking God to Anger

*“and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam  
and have made My people Israel sin,  
provoking Me to anger with their sins,”*

**Guzik:** The Bible tells us that by nature, *God is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in mercy (Psalm 103:8)*. Because He is slow to anger, it took a lot of wickedness on the part of Baasha to succeed in *provoking Him to anger*.

### 2. (:3-4) Severity of the Judgment

#### a. (:3) Destruction of Posterity

*“behold, I will consume Baasha and his house,  
and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of  
Nebat.”*

#### b. (:4) Desecration Instead of Proper Burial

*“Anyone of Baasha who dies in the city the dogs shall eat,  
and anyone of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens  
will eat.”*



**MacArthur:** Baasha had angered the Lord by following the sinful paths of Jeroboam. Appropriately, he faced the same humiliating judgment Jeroboam had (**14:10, 11**). Though he waded through slaughter to his throne, he owed it to the permission of God, by whom all kings reign. His judgment was that no long line of heirs would succeed him; instead, his family would be totally annihilated and their corpses shamefully scavenged by hungry dogs and birds.

**Constable:** 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 (**v. 2**) to Israel's throne as an opportunity to fulfill personal ambition rather than to glorify Yahweh. For Baasha's failure, God announced that He would cut off his line as He had Jeroboam's (**vv. 3- 4**; cf. **14:11**). The prophet God used was Jehu, whose father, Hanani, was also a prophet in Judah (cf. **2 Chron. 16:7**). 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**).

#### **D. (:5-6) Overall Summary of Baasha's Reign**

##### 1. (:5) Recorded Deeds of Baasha

*“Now the rest of the acts of Baasha and what he did and his might, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

##### 2. (:6a) Death and Burial of Baasha

*“And Baasha slept with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah,”*

##### 3. (:6b) Succession

*“and Elah his son became king in his place.”*

#### **E. (:7) Additional Word of Prophetic Judgment Against Baasha**

*“Moreover, the word of the LORD through the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani also came against Baasha and his household, both because of all the evil which he did in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it.”*

**August Konkel:** The prophets never find it contradictory to hold wicked individuals responsible for their actions, even when God accomplishes his purposes through them. Peter in addressing the men of Israel on the day of Pentecost speaks in exactly the same terms as the condemnation of Baasha in Kings. The leaders in Jerusalem through their own wicked deeds have carried out the purpose of God in killing Jesus of Nazareth, a man they knew to be of God through the great deeds he did in their midst (**Acts 2:22–23**). For this act they are guilty, even though through it God overcomes the power of death and fulfills the promise he made to David (**vv. 24–31**). Human deeds are never regarded as a divine coercion. Humans act freely of their own volition for good or ill. In the prophetic viewpoint, all are responsible for the choices they make. At the same time, God never fails to accomplish his purpose, whatever may have been the human volition and intent.

**Peter Pett:** But Baasha had been so evil that the prophetic author could not leave it there, and he repeats that YHWH had sent his prophet Jehu to him, and this time it is emphasised that it was with *'the word of YHWH'*, Being YHWH's word its effectiveness was certain (compare **Isaiah 55:11**). And the double charge was that he had continued in the way of Jeroboam, and especially that he had murdered the house of Jeroboam (*'because he smote him'*). For both of these sins he was to be especially punished.

Once again we have a lesson concerning God's holiness and hatred of sin, and the certainty of punishment for those who continue in sin and who allow other 'gods' to interfere with their worship of Him. It is a recurrent lesson of this book.

## **II. (16:8-14) ELAH'S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

### **A. (:8) Selected Touchpoints of Elah's Reign**

#### 1. When Did He Become King?

*"In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah,"*

#### 2. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*"Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel at Tirzah,"*

#### 3. How Long Did He Reign?

*"and reigned two years."*

### **B. (:9-10) Conspiracy by Zimri to Assassinate Elah**

#### 1. (:9a) Summary Statement

*"And his servant Zimri, commander of half his chariots, conspired against him."*

#### 2. (:9b) Circumstances

*"Now he was at Tirzah drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household at Tirzah."*

**Wiersbe:** Elah appears to be a dissolute man who would rather get drunk with his friends than serve the Lord and the people. Arza was probably the prime minister. Both men forgot the words of Solomon, who knew a thing or two about kingship:

*"Woe to you, O land, when your king is a child, and your princes feast in the morning! Blessed be you, O land, when your king is the son of nobles, and your princes feast at the proper time – for strength and not for drunkenness."*

**(Ecc. 10:16-17)**

#### 3. (:10) Assassination and Ascension to the Throne

*"Then Zimri went in and struck him and put him to death, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and became king in his place."*

**Wiersbe:** Baasha had fulfilled the prophecy of Abijah and Zimri fulfilled the prophecy of Jehu. But it must be pointed out that a person who fulfills divine prophecy is not innocent of sin. Both Baasha and Zimri were murderers and guilty of regicide, and the Lord held them responsible and accountable. The dynasty of Jeroboam was no more and the dynasty of Baasha was no more. In Judah, the dynasty of David continued.

**C. (:11-12) Destruction of the Household of Baasha**

*“And it came about, when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he killed all the household of Baasha; he did not leave a single male, neither of his relatives nor of his friends. 12 Thus Zimri destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke against Baasha through Jehu the prophet,”*

**Knapp:** In less than fifty years the first two dynasties of Israel’s kings had come to an end and every member of their families been exterminated. God meant to make their doom an example to those who should thereafter live ungodly.

**D. (:13) Summary Evaluation**

*“for all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and which they made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their idols.”*

**E. (:14) Recorded Deeds of Elah**

*“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?”*

**III. (16:15-22) ZIMRI’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:15a) Selected Touchpoints of Zimri’s Reign**

1. When Did He Become King?

*“In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah,”*

2. How Long Did He Reign?

*“Zimri reigned seven days”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** He reigned **seven days** and made no change of policy. We, of course, would lighten up. What’s seven days more of Jeroboamism? But Yahweh seems to regard this perversion as so **culpable** that he judges a man for not making a change within a seven days’ reign! Seven days is a brief time; seven days is a **responsible** time. It’s long enough to show your colors.

3. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“at Tirzah.”*

**B. (:15b-18) Omri Prevails Over Zimri**

1. (:15b) People Camped Against Gibbethon

*“Now the people were camped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines.”*

2. (:16a) Report of Zimri’s Treachery

*“And the people who were camped heard it said, ‘Zimri has conspired and has also struck down the king.’”*

3. (:16b) Omri Made King over Israel

*“Therefore all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that day in the camp.”*

4. (:17) Besieging Zimri at Tirzah

*“Then Omri and all Israel with him went up from Gibbethon, and they besieged Tirzah.”*

5. (:18) Death of Zimri

*“And it came about, 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 over him with fire, and died,”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Zimri was ruthless and efficient. When he cut down tipsy Elah (vv. 9–10), he wasted no time in obliterating Baasha’s whole household, whether relatives or friends (v. 11). Zimri reigned from Tirzah, six miles northeast of Shechem (v. 15), while the army was assaulting Gibbethon (v. 15b; see 15:27), a good way to the southwest in the Philistine sphere of influence. Zimri was a military man (v. 9) but was not with the army at Camp Gibbethon. The field army there was pro-Omri. Zimri learned to his chagrin that one dare not carry out a coup without the army’s support. When news of Zimri’s deed reached Gibbethon the army felt that one coup deserved another and so proclaimed Omri king (v. 16). They then marched on Zimri and Tirzah and took the outer city (vv. 17–18a). Zimri went into the inner bastion of the king’s house and burnt it and himself in one blaze of despair (v. 18b).

**Guzik:** Zimri is one of the few suicides in the Bible, along with Samson (**Judges 9:54**), Saul (**1 Samuel 31:4**) and Ahithophel (**2 Samuel 17:23**). The Bible never approves of suicide. It is sin; the sin of self-murder. Yet we are wrong if we regard it as the unforgivable sin, and anyone who does commit suicide has given in to the lies and deceptions of Satan, whose purpose is to kill and destroy (**John 10:10**).

**Morgan:** Suicide is always the ultimate action of cowardice. In the case of Saul, and in many similar cases, it is perfectly natural; but let it never be glorified as heroic. It is the last resort of the man who dare not stand up to life.

**C. (:19) Summary Evaluation of Zimri’s Reign**

*“because of his sins which he sinned, doing evil in the sight of the LORD, walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, making Israel sin.”*

#### **D. (:20) Recorded Deeds of Zimri**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Zimri and his conspiracy which he carried out, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

#### **E. (:21-22) Succession – Omri Prevailing Over Tibni**

*“Then the people of Israel were divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; the other half followed Omri. 22 But the people who followed Omri prevailed over the people who followed Tibni the son of Ginath. And Tibni died and Omri became king.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Zimri’s cremation did not clear up Israel’s political dilemma. The people were divided, some devoted to Omri and some to Tibni son of Ginath (v. 21). Tibni may have had more social clout than Omri (note his patronym, ‘son of Ginath’), but the truth is we simply know next to nothing about them. Political limbo went on for about four years (compare vv. 15 and 23) with Omri’s partisans gathering strength (v. 22a); then we read that marvelously laconic statement, ‘So Tibni died and Omri became king’ (v. 22b, niv). Was Tibni knocked off? Or did pneumonia or a ruptured appendix get him? We have no certainty either way—only that Tibni has his funeral and Omri his coronation.

### **IV. (16:23-28) OMRI’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

#### **A. (:23-24) Selected Touchpoints of Omri’s Reign**

##### 1. (:23a) When Did He Become King?

*“In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah,”*

##### 2. (:23b) Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“Omri became king over Israel,”*

##### 3. (:23c) How Long Did He Reign?

*“and reigned twelve years; he reigned six years at Tirzah.”*

##### 4. (:24) Acquisition of Samaria

*“And he bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver; and he built on the hill, and named the city which he built Samaria, after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill.”*

**MacArthur:** The hill of Samaria, named after its owner, Shemer, was located 7 mi. NW of Shechem and stood 300 ft. high. Though ringed by other mountains, it stood by itself so that attackers had to charge uphill from every side. This new capital amounted to the northern equivalent of Jerusalem. Its central location gave Israelites easy access to it.

**August Konkell:** Though the establishment of the capital of Israel at Samaria is never declared to be the divine will and is not accomplished by a king subservient to the

covenant, Samaria becomes an icon of political success. With the strategic location of the capital and the alliances with neighboring countries, Israel became a nation of considerable political force. The splendor of Samaria can still be seen in the ruins uncovered by archaeologists.

### **B. (:25-26) Summary Evaluation of Omri's Reign**

*“And Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD, and acted more wickedly than all who were before him. 26 For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sins which he made Israel sin, provoking the LORD God of Israel with their idols.”*

**Constable:** 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

**Peter Pett:** In some ways it spoils the prophetic author's purpose to outline the greatness of Omri, for his purpose was to indicate that (religiously speaking) Omri was a disaster. With all his greatness he was a nothing. The book of Kings is not written to man's glory but to God's glory, and as far as the author was concerned Omri was a bad lot. He was simply the builder of Samaria and part of the reason for the final destruction of Samaria. But in view of the probable historical interest of the reader we will consider what we know from external sources about Omri.

1). Israel was known in Assyrian annals for centuries as 'Bit-Humri'. the house of Omri, and their kings as 'the son of Humri' (even when they were not). From their spies and political contacts Assyria had clearly been impressed with the power and effectiveness of Omri (although of course his founding of Samaria might have contributed to his fame), and saw him as someone to be reckoned with and treated with respect.

2). We know from the Moabite Stone that he 'humbled -- and occupied the land of Medaba' and built fortresses at Ataroth and Yahez. As a result northern Moab would be subject to Israel for the next forty years.

And we must remember that these two examples are simply two 'accidental' pieces of information. Without the external inscriptions we would never have known of them. We may yet discover more of his exploits if other inscriptions are found in the surrounding nations. And all this, we should note, was after recovering from a cruel and extended civil war.

3). He also married his son Ahab to a princess of the Sidonians, presumably

with a view to it sealing a treaty relationship with that important centre.

**R. D. Patterson:** Despite Omri's forward-looking vision for restoring Israel's strength and his many accomplishments, spiritually he was more destitute than all his predecessors (vv. 25-26). Not only did he perpetuate the spiritual sins of Jeroboam, but his ties with Phoenicia were to unleash on Israel the common pagan social and religious practices known to the ancient world. Therefore the scriptural record concerning Omri is both brief and condemnatory.

### **C. (:27-28) Overall Summary of Omri's Reign**

#### 1. (:27) Recorded Deeds

*"Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did and his might which he showed, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?"*

#### 2. (:28a) Death and Burial

*"So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria;"*

#### 3. (:28b) Succession

*"and Ahab his son became king in his place."*

**House:** Omri, the builder of Samaria and a man of high international fame, is dismissed in eight verses (**1 Kgs 16:21-28**). Why? Probably because he plays no particularly significant role in Israel's decline. Again, characterization is based largely on its role in plot development, not on how it will or will not satisfy modern historians.

## **V. (16:29-34) AHAB'S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

### **A. (:29) Selected Touchpoints of Ahab's Reign**

#### 1. Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*"Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel"*

#### 2. When Did He Become King?

*"in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah,"*

#### 3. How Long Did He Reign?

*"and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years."*

### **B. (:30) Summary Evaluation of Ahab's Reign**

*"And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD more than all who were before him."*

### **C. (:31-33) Specific Offenses**

#### 1. (:31a) Married Jezebel



*“And it came about, as though it had been a trivial thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he married Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians,”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** The reign of Ahab is introduced in typical fashion, with synchronism and length of reign. The critical evaluation of the king as being the worst to have come to Israel’s throne is supported by the notice of his having taken the Phoenician princess Jezebel to wife and his worship of Baal and Asherah; the juxtaposition is evidently meant to intimate the corrupt influence of this marriage. In this, Ahab’s apostasy follows that of Solomon (cf. **11:1–10**); both monarchs were led astray by their foreign wives. Such evaluations are typical of Deuteronomic thought, which saw outmarriage as the root of all sin against YHWH (cf. **Deut 7:3–4**; cf. **Josh 23:12**). The formulaic conclusion to Ahab’s reign is not given until **1 Kgs 22:39–40**, because Dtr has introduced a lengthy series of prophetic stories of varied origin and interest; in most of them, Ahab plays a leading role in his opposition to the heaven-sent men of God.

**Peter Pett:** Ahab’s marriage to Jezebel was clearly a political one, sealing a treaty between Israel and Tyre, securing for Israel a market for their agricultural produce and their olive oil, and for Tyre the supply of these products on a permanent and lasting basis. But there is no doubt that Ahab was enamoured of his wife, and deeply influenced by her and her worship of Baal Melkart.

2. (:31b) Worshiped Baal

*“and went to serve Baal and worshiped him.”*

3. (:32) Built Temple and Altar to Baal in Samaria

*“So he erected an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he built in Samaria.”*

**Constable:** 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. Evidently Baal worship became widely accepted in the Northern Kingdom.

4. (:33a) Made Asherah

*“And Ahab also made the Asherah.”*

5. (:33b) Summary of Evil

*“Thus Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel than all the kings of Israel who were before him.”*

**William Barnes:** Once again, we find here mostly formulaic denunciations, but with even more “mustard” than in the past. Ahab is the worst king of all so far! Among other things, such statements prepare us for Elijah’s harsh words of condemnation for both Ahab and Jezebel in the next chapters; and ironically, these words also prepare us to be



shocked by the events of **chapter 21**, where Ahab's repentance brings about a startling delay of the inevitable disaster awaiting the dynasty and kingdom. (Cf. **21:27–29** with **2 Kgs 22:19–20**, the only two places in 1-2 Kings containing the term “*humble oneself*,” a Niphal of kana' [TH3665, ZH4044].) So, notwithstanding the present harsh, condemnatory passage, as well as the next several chapters of repeated, deserved prophetic denunciations, there is always **hope**, it would seem, for even the most wicked of leaders if they repent of their sins and change their ways. This seems to be the overall agenda of the editor(s) of 1-2 Kings. But for the present, it is only condemnation, severe condemnation, and, eventually, monstrously disastrous condemnation.

#### **D. (:34) Arrogant Defiance of the Divine Curse on Rebuilding Jericho**

*“In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; he laid its foundations with the loss of Abiram his first-born, and set up its gates with the loss of his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which He spoke by Joshua the son of Nun.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** This is not a piece of unrelated trivia about construction work. The writer includes it as what was characteristic of Ahab's reign. The opening phrase, ‘*in his [Ahab's] days*,’ implies that Hiel did not undertake this project on his private initiative but under Ahab's direction. To ‘*build*’ (*bānāh*) here means to ‘rebuild’ or ‘fortify’ as in **15:17**. After the destruction of Jericho Joshua had pronounced a curse upon anyone who would rebuild Jericho (**Josh. 6:26**), the curse to which our writer refers in the last half of this verse. The curse did not prohibit folks from living on the site, for there seem to have been post-conquest settlements there (cf. **Josh. 18:21; Judg. 3:13; 2 Sam. 10:5**). The curse was on anyone who dared to rebuild Jericho as a fortress.

..

The text is telling you that open defiance of Yahweh's word typified Ahab's regime. Our writer makes this clear in that he does not merely say Hiel's sons died in accord with Joshua's curse; rather, he explicitly says it was ‘*in line with the word of Yahweh which he spoke by the hand of Joshua*.’ Was Jericho fortified? Oh yes—a monument to Ahab's defense strategy. But there were other monuments. Walk outside Bethel to Hiel's family burial plot and see the graves of Abiram and Segub, monuments to Yahweh's certain judgment. But that was the reign of Ahab—folks thought nothing of flying in the teeth of Yahweh's word.

**William Barnes:** the unfortunate actions of Hiel are probably meant to reflect negatively on the reign of Hiel's king, Ahab. While any king can repent and thus bring blessing to himself, his land, and perhaps to his future dynasty, no king can undo a truly prophetic word from God, whether it be from an unnamed “*man of God*” (cf. **ch 13**), or from the renowned leader Joshua. Perhaps the continuing conundrum of free will versus predestination has never been illustrated so clearly as in these parallel passages: God literally has the last word in history, but authentic repentance can remarkably change the future, at least to some extent (yet not rendering void any clear long-term prophecies from God). What a divine mystery this is! What a hope and what a warning to believers in any age!

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How is it that God can hold man morally accountable for the sinful actions that fulfill the divine prophecies and carry out the decrees of God? What does this teach us about God's control over history?
- 2) Why are some of the more positive exploits of some of these kings (like Omri) glossed over in this summary account in 1 Kings?
- 3) What attributes of God can you glean from this section of Scripture?
- 4) What do you make of all the death and destruction and bloodshed associated with the dynasties of these early Israelite kings?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Just step back for a moment and take in Baasha's whole reign (15:33–16:7). Here is a 24-year reign, yet there is nothing here about 'his might' (16:5), only minimal factual data (15:33), a negative assessment (15:34), a sermon against him (16:1–4), a mention about what doesn't matter (16:5), an obituary notice (16:6), and the reason he was denounced (16:7). Out of nine verses, six are prophetic critique, three contain minimal necessary detail. When all the ink is spilt what do you learn about Baasha? He was like Jeroboam. More of the same.

Have you ever wondered why parts of the Bible are boring? Like this text? They're boring because they are the records of sinful men who simply repeat the sins and evil of those before them. Sin is never creative but merely imitative and repetitious. Maybe you can sin with a flair but you can't sin with freshness. You can only ape what's already been done. Goodness has an originality inherent in it which evil hasn't got. Evil can distort and ruin and corrupt and do re-runs, but it can't be original, nor even scintillating. Evil carries a built-in yawn. '*And he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin*' (v. 34a). What tedious stuff! If the Bible is boring, blame Baasha. It's his fault.

**Iain Provan:** As we look back over 1 Kings 12–16, it seems evident that their major theme is "**God's control over history**." Monarchs may think that the Lord is not or should not be involved in politics, but the Lord is involved, directing their affairs in ways that make the ultimate kingship over the world absolutely obvious. Everything comes to pass just as the prophets say it will. David's house stands firm even as God's judgment falls upon Solomon, just as Nathan has said (2 Sam. 7:1–17); Jeroboam's house is destroyed, just as Ahijah has predicted (1 Kgs. 14:7–13). Judah knows political stability, as the prophets have prophesied (2 Sam. 7:1–17; 1 Kgs. 11:31–39); Israel's

royal houses come and go, as prophets announce their doom (1 Kgs. 14:7–13; 16:1–4). Beyond human control—even prophetic control (1 Kgs. 13)—what God wills comes to pass, whether in the short term (13:3, 5; 14:12–13, 17–18) or in the long term (13:2; 2 Kgs. 23:15–20). It is no coincidence that the close of 1 Kings 16 (16:34; cf. Josh. 6:26) reminds us of the fulfillment of prophecy over the longer term. For it is noticeable that Omri, unlike Jeroboam and Baasha, has not received any word of the fall of his house; his son is to reign for twenty years more than theirs. Has this most sinful of Israel’s royal houses confounded the prophecy about Israel’s fate as a “reed”? By no means. Judgment will eventually be spoken and enacted, even though Omri’s house in the end holds the throne for over a hundred years. Its first channel will be the most significant prophetic figure so far in northern Israel’s history. The most sinful of Israel’s kings, Ahab, will have to reckon with the most powerful of prophetic interventions, in the shape of Elijah. God will certainly act, even if on a timescale that is slightly different than hitherto. This is a message that the NT also picks up in relation to God and history. We should never confuse God’s long-term planning with an unwillingness or inability to communicate and to act in human history. Prophets will eventually speak, and the prophetic word will always come to pass (e.g., John 1:19–28; 6:1–15; Acts 3:17–26; 2 Pet. 3:3–13; Rev. 22:7–20). God’s silences are not long when seen in the context of eternity; God’s inactivity is really patience in disguise.

**R. D. Patterson:** Ahab was a man of complex character. The remainder of this chapter makes it clear that he was unconcerned with true, vital faith (cf. 21:20). Not only did he participate personally in the sins of Jeroboam, but having willingly married Jezebel, he followed her in the worship of Baal-Melqart, officially instituting and propagating Baal worship throughout his kingdom.

An example of his spiritual infidelity is seen as he granted to Hiel of Bethel the authority to rebuild Jericho as a fortified town, despite Joshua’s long-standing curse. The undertaking was to cost Hiel the lives of his eldest and youngest sons, in accordance with Joshua’s prophetic pronouncement (Josh 6:26).

The subsequent chapters of 1 Kings show that Ahab was selfish and sullen (20:43; 21:4–5), cruel (22:27), morally weak (21:1–16), and concerned with luxuries of this world (22:39). Though he could display real bravery (ch. 20; 22:1–39) and at times even heed God’s word (18:16–46; 20:13–17, 22, 28–30; 21:27–29; 22:30), nevertheless he was basically a compromiser as far as the will of God was concerned (20:31–34, 42–43; 22:8, 18, 26–28). The divine estimation of his character stands as a tragic epitaph: “*There was never a man like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord*” (21:25; cf. 16:33; 21:20).

#### **Daniel Whedon: The Beginning of Ahab’s Reign**

Critics have not failed to notice that with the beginning of Ahab’s reign commences a new epoch in the history of Israel: new, not so much in the more flagrant forms of wickedness that manifest themselves, as in the relative importance of the kingdom of Israel during the reigns of Ahab, Ahaziah, and Jehoram. With the exception of Jeroboam the reigns of Ahab’s predecessors are very briefly noticed, occupying but

parts of two chapters; but the incidents of the three following reigns, embracing a period of about thirty-five years, extend from this passage to the tenth chapter of 2 Kings. During this period the kingdom of Judah receives comparatively little notice, and then only as an ally of the northern kingdom, which stands out predominantly as the mightiest ruling power in the land. During this period appeared those greatest, sternest, most mysterious of prophets, Elijah and Elisha, whose lives and acts, with strange romantic blendings, present on the one hand the fierce vindictiveness of the theocratic spirit towards sin, and on the other the tender and shrinking humanity which shows them up as men of like passions with ourselves. By means of Jezebel, the Zidonian princess, Phenician idolatry is introduced and sanctioned in the kingdom, and Baal's prophets are multiplied by hundreds. Wars, attended with varying fortunes, are carried on with several hostile kingdoms, while within the land the few pious weep in desolate sadness, and hide themselves in caves and dens of the earth.

<https://www.studylight.org/commentaries/eng/whe/1-kings-16.html>

TEXT: 1 Kings 17:1-24

TITLE: ELIJAH'S GRAND ENTRANCE

**BIG IDEA:**

**TRUST IN GOD AS THE SOVEREIGN OF LIFE, THE SUSTAINER OF LIFE AND THE SOURCE OF LIFE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Israel's apostate condition had blossomed into full foliage with the widespread adoption of Baal worship. Pagan practices were overtaking the land at a rapid pace. King Ahab and his wicked wife Jezebel were a blight on the nation. But God would not remain silent. The sudden intervention of Elijah highlights the importance of his judgmental message of coming drought by the Word of the Lord. The gauntlet has been thrown down and it will soon be evident to all that the fertility god of Baal stands impotent before the true sovereign of the universe. God alone can be trusted for all of our needs.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The present chapter is the first part of a larger canonical unit that extends to **1 Kgs 19**; it comprises all that remains of the life work of the prophet Elijah, introducing him without fanfare in **17:1** and concluding with the appointment of Elisha as his successor in **19:19–21**.

**Thomas Constable:** 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 confronted an increasingly difficult problem. In this way God developed his faith and taught the reader the importance of trust and obedience.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh is at work preserving life and yet in every segment some frustration, some obstacle arises, that threatens to prevent his work: the wadi dries up (**v. 7**); or the channel of supply is herself destitute (**vv. 10b–12**); or death attacks one of their lives that has been preserved to date (**vv. 17–18**). Rip **verses 17–24** from the rest of the chapter and you wreck what seems to be a deliberate, cohesive literary pattern. In **verses 17–18** death itself seems to assault Yahweh's reputation as life-giver and this climactic difficulty must be resolved (**vv. 19–22**) as the previous hindrances (**vv. 7, 10b–12**) were. **Verses 17–24** are simply interlocked with **verses 2–16** and must not be separated from them.

**Iain Provan:** The threat of death has twice been overcome. The Lord has proved to be sovereign over all the world, controlling both life and death. Elijah and the widow seem convinced; for when death does eventually catch up with the family, both know that it must be the Lord's doing. The woman speaks of it obliquely, blaming God's prophet for reminding God of her sin (**v. 18**). Elijah, on the other hand, speaks directly of the Lord's action against the family (causing her son to die, **v. 20**). The essential difference is that the woman apparently thinks this the end of the matter (**v. 18**), while Elijah is not

content to let it rest (vv. 19ff.). Here is the ultimate test of the Lord's authority. It is one thing to rescue people from the jaws of death, but can he do anything when death has clamped tight its jaws and swallowed the victim up? He can act across the border from Israel in Sidon, but is there a "border" that he ultimately cannot cross, a kingdom in which he has no power? When faced by "Mot," must the Lord, like Baal, bow the knee? Elijah knows the answer, even if the woman does not, and so he prays and the boy's life is restored (v. 22). Even the underworld is not a place from which the Lord can be barred (Ps. 139:7–12). Life can storm even death's strongest towers and rescue those imprisoned there (cf. the further echoes of the story in **Luke 7:11–17; Acts 9:32–43; 20:7–12; Heb. 11:35**).

## **I. (:1-6) TRUST IN GOD AS THE SOVEREIGN OVER ALL LIFE WHO ALONE IS WORTHY OF WORSHIP**

### **A. (:1) The Curse of God Against Baal-Worshipping Ahab – God (not Baal) is Sovereign over Nature**

*“Now Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the settlers of Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD, the God of Israel lives, before whom I stand, surely there shall be neither dew nor rain these years, except by my word.’”*

**MacArthur:** His name means “*the Lord is God.*” The prophet Elijah's ministry corresponded to his name. He was sent by God to confront Baalism and to declare to Israel that the Lord was God and there was no other. Elijah lived in a town called Tishbe, E of the Jordan River in the vicinity of the Jabbok River. . . . Elijah had prayed for the drought (cf. **Jas 5:17**) and God answered. It lasted 3 years and 6 months according to James (**5:17**). The drought proved that Baal, the god of the rains and fertility, was impotent before the Lord.

**John Whitcomb:** Like a meteor suddenly flashing across the darkened sky, Elijah appears on the scene without genealogy, without historical background, and without warning. One thunderous judgment from heaven through his lips and he disappeared without a trace . . .

God permitted neither debate nor dialogue between His prophet and Ahab, the apostate king of Israel . . . Not that the nation had no warning at all. Centuries before, Moses had said that national apostasy would cause the rains to cease (**Deut. 11:17; 28:24**). And now that Jehovah had been officially repudiated, His providential blessings upon this land came to an end.

**Wiersbe:** For the next three years, the word of Elijah would control the weather in Israel!

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The rain delay will also strike a blow at the alleged prowess of Baal. However one cuts it Baal was a **fertility god**, a storm god, who, among other life-giving activities, sent rain to fructify the earth. In Canaanite mythology Lady Asherah thanked El for permitting Baal to have his own palace since

“Now Baal will begin the rainy season,  
the season of wadis in flood;  
and he will sound his voice in the clouds,  
flash his lightning to the earth.”

Such meteorological displays were signs of Baal’s vitality. Elijah’s ‘no dew or rain’ then constitutes a **challenge to Baal**. Ahab and Israel will now be able to see what sort of fertility god Baal is. If he cannot produce in the area of his expertise, in his specialty, his reputation will suffer a shattering blow. Baal’s deity will shrivel as the cracks in the fields get wider. Elijah so much as says that Yahweh has decided to shut Baal’s faucet off. Yahweh has decreed that Baal will pale.

**William Barnes:** This threat was dire indeed, since rain (and dew) were crucial for Palestinian agricultural prosperity, in clear contrast to both the lands of Egypt and Mesopotamia, where great rivers were used to irrigate the land. In Palestine, the rains would generally fall during the wet winter season (early rains in late October, and the latter rains tapering off by March or April, but with much variation possible year by year); these rains were essential, especially for the cereal crops raised in this region of the Near East. The dew was crucial, too; it often falls heavily in Israel throughout the year, and it is also important for agricultural success, especially for the grapes, which ripen throughout the dry summer season (Baly 1974:44–46).

## **B. (:2-6) The Care of God for His Faithful Prophet – God is Sovereign over the Birds (Ravens)**

### 1. (:2-4) Command to Trust God for Miraculous Provision of Food and Water

*“And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 3 ‘Go away from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 4 And it shall be that you shall drink of the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there.’”*

**R. D. Patterson:** To impress the message and its deep spiritual implications further on Ahab and all Israel, God sent Elijah into seclusion. Not only would Ahab’s frantic search for the prophet be thwarted, but Elijah’s very absence would be living testimony of a divine displeasure (cf. **Ps 74:1, 9**). Moreover Elijah himself had much to learn, and the time of solitude would furnish needed moments of divine instruction.

**David Guzik:** There is an emphasis on the word *there*. God promised that the ravens would feed Elijah as he stayed at Cherith. Of course, theoretically the ravens could feed him anywhere – but God commanded that it be at Cherith. Elijah perhaps wanted to be somewhere else, or be preaching, or doing anything else. Yet God wanted him there and would provide for him there.

### 2. (:5-6) Commitment to Trust God for Miraculous Abundant Provision

*“So he went and did according to the word of the LORD, for he went and lived by the brook Cherith, which is east of the Jordan. 6 And the ravens*



*brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he would drink from the brook.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** Our obedience is an essential aspect of God’s protecting grace. The means God uses may be varied.

**William Barnes:** These are **generous provisions**; rarely would meat be eaten daily by the common people, still less, twice a day. The LXX reads “bread” (with no mention of meat) in the morning, and “meat” (with no mention of bread) in the evening, which is more typical of the Middle Eastern diet (**Cogan** 2001:427); this possibly represents a more original text (but note that it is parallel with **Exod 16:8**, as pointed out by **Cogan**). In any case, the emphasis here is on the abundant nature of God’s provision for his servant.

## **II. (:7-16) TRUST IN GOD AS THE SUSTAINER OF LIFE WHO WILL NEVER LET YOU DOWN**

### **A. (:7-9) Change of Plans – New Venue for God’s Provision**

#### 1. (:7) Water Source at Cherith Dried Up – No Surprise

*“And it happened after a while, that the brook dried up, because there was no rain in the land.”*

**Wiersbe:** It has well been said that the will of God will never lead us where the grace of God cannot keep us and care for us, and Elijah knew this from experience. (see **Isa. 33:15-16.**)

**Meyer:** Why does God let them dry? He wants to teach us not to trust in His gifts but in Himself. He wants to drain us of self, as He drained the apostles by ten days of waiting before Pentecost. He wants to loosen our roots ere He removes us to some other sphere of service and education. He wants to put in stronger contrast the river of throne-water that never dries. . . God kept transplanting Elijah: From home to Jezreel to Cherith to Zarephath. This transplanting made him stronger and stronger.

#### 2. (:8-9) Widow of Zarephath Becomes God’s Surprising Instrument of Provision

*“Then the word of the LORD came to him, saying, 9 ‘Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and stay there; behold, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.’”*

A destitute widow is a surprising choice for providing resources; God loves to use our weakness to magnify His strength.

**MacArthur:** A town on the Mediterranean coast about 7 mi. S of Sidon. Elijah was sent to the live there, in a territory controlled by Ahab’s father-in-law, Ethbaal. In this way, he showed the power of God in the very area where the impotent Baal was worshiped, as He provided miraculously for the widow in the famine (**vv. 10-16**).



**Matthew Henry:** The place he is sent to, to Zarephath, or Sarepta, a city of Sidon, out of the borders of the land of Israel, v. 9. Our Savior takes notice of this as an early and ancient indication of the favor of God designed for the poor Gentiles, in the fullness of time, **Luke 4:25, 26**. Many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, and some, it is likely, that would have bidden him welcome to their houses; yet he is sent to honor and bless with his presence a city of Sidon, a Gentile city, and so becomes (says another theologian) the first prophet of the Gentiles. Israel had corrupted themselves with the idolatries of the nations and become worse than they; justly therefore is the casting off of them the riches of the world. Elijah was hated and driven out by his countrymen; therefore, lo, he turns to the Gentiles, as the apostles were afterwards ordered to do, **Acts 18:6**. But why to a city of Sidon? Perhaps because the worship of Baal, which was now the crying sin of Israel, came lately thence with Jezebel, who was a Sidonian (**ch. 16:31**); therefore thither he shall go, that thence may be fetched the destroyer of that idolatry, *‘Even out of Sidon have I called my prophet, my reformer.’* Jezebel was Elijah’s greatest enemy; yet, to show her the impotency of her malice, God will find a hiding-place for him even in her country. Christ never went among the Gentiles except once into the coast of Sidon, **Matt 15:21**.”

## **B. (:10-12) Challenge of Faith for the Desperate Widow of Zarephath**

### 1. (:10-11) Hard Request by Elijah for Subsistence Level Provisions

#### a. (:10a) Random Meeting = Divine Appointment

*“So he arose and went to Zarephath, and when he came to the gate of the city, behold, a widow was there gathering sticks;”*

#### b. (:10b) Request for a Little Water

*“and he called to her and said,  
‘Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink.’”*

#### c. (:11) Request for a Piece of Bread

*“And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, ‘Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand.’”*

**William Barnes:** These were **modest requests** (contrast the provisions of “*bread and meat*” twice a day in **17:6**, MT) but still far beyond the widow’s ability to supply. Those perhaps dismayed by Elijah’s seeming selfishness here should be reminded that Yahweh had commanded Elijah to do this (**17:9**). Elijah, therefore, was to expect a miracle here.

### 2. (:12) Hopeless Resignation of the Destitute Widow

#### a. Down to My Last Meal

*“But she said, ‘As the LORD your God lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar;”*

#### b. Death Awaits Both Me and My Son

*“and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and*

*prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** To have a stranger ask a bit of water is one thing (v. 10b), to hear him claim first crack at your last meal is quite another (v. 11). Hence the widow goes on oath (she seems to know he’s an Israelite and swears by his God) to assure Elijah she has no food and only scant materials for baking her last meal (v. 12). Her hopelessness could not be more dismal: *‘See, I am gathering a couple pieces of wood, and I shall go and make it for myself and my son, and we shall eat it and die’* (v. 12b). She is at the end of her resources. A handful of meal, a skiff of oil, and, literally, the last supper. Almost cruelly Elijah intensifies her trouble; he asks for the first helping of the last supper (v. 13). *‘But first make me a little cake of it’* (nrsv).

Let us leave Elijah’s heartless request for a moment simply to sketch the development of the text:

- Assurance and demand, v. 13
- Explanation and promise, v. 14
- Obedience and fulfillment, vv. 15–16

### **C. (:13-16) Call to Obedience in Making Hospitality a Priority**

#### 1. (:13) Obedience Requires Overcoming Our Fears

*“Then Elijah said to her, ‘Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first, and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son.’”*

**Spurgeon:** God indeed chose this woman, but He chose her for more than a miracle. He chose her for service. “The choice of this woman, while it brought such blessedness to her, involved service. She was not elected merely to be saved in the famine, but to feed the prophet. She must be a woman of faith; she must make the little cake first, and afterwards she shall have the multiplication of the meal and of the oil. So the grace of God does not choose men to sleep and wake up in heaven, nor choose them to live in sin and find themselves absolved at the last; nor choose them to be idle and go about their own worldly business, and yet to win a reward at the last for which they never toiled. Ah, no! The sovereign electing grace of God chooses us to repentance, to faith, and afterwards to holiness of living, to Christian service, to zeal, to devotion.”

#### 2. (:14) Obedience Requires Trusting the Lord’s Resources

*“For thus says the LORD God of Israel, ‘The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** And don’t forget that there was something continuous about this miracle (vv. 15b–16). It’s not as though there were suddenly several twenty-five pound bags of meal slouching against the wall of the widow’s kitchen. Instead it was a quiet daily drama of the jar and the jug. When she went to the cupboard on Monday there was enough meal in the jar and still some oil in the jug for that day. And so it went on through the weeks. Every morning was a fresh episode of the faithfulness of Yahweh to

his promise. He had not said ‘the jar of meal will overflow’ but only that it ‘will never come to an end.’

3. (:15-16) Obedience is Richly Rewarded by God’s Grace

a. (:15) Sustenance for the Widow and Her Household

*“So she went and did according to the word of Elijah, and she and he and her household ate for many days.”*

**John Gates:** For a Gentile woman, her faith is unsurpassed. Our Lord’s endorsement of this widow is found in **Lk. 4:26**.

b. (:16) Vindication of the Prophet Elijah

*“The bowl of flour was not exhausted nor did the jar of oil become empty, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke through Elijah.”*

**III. (:17-24) FAITH IN GOD AS THE SOURCE OF LIFE WHO WILL ALSO RAISE US UP IN THE RESURRECTION**

**A. (:17-18) Dealing with Death Raises Key Theological Questions**

1. (:17) Widow Dealing with the Death of Her Son

*“Now it came about after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was so severe, that there was no breath left in him.”*

**Wiersbe:** This is the first recorded instance in Scripture of the resurrection of a dead person. The evidence seems clear that the widow’s son actually died and didn’t just faint or go into a temporary swoon. He stopped breathing (v. 17) and his spirit left his body (vv. 21-22). According to **James 2:26**, when he spirit leaves a body, the person is dead. The great distress of both the mother and the prophet would suggest that the boy was dead, and both of them used the word “slay” with reference to the event (vv. 18 and 20, KJV).

2. (:18) Widow Raising Theological Questions

*“So she said to Elijah, ‘What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance, and to put my son to death!’”*

**B. (:19-21) Appealing to God Who Alone Has the Power over Life and Death**

1. (:19) Intervention of the Prophet

*“And he said to her, ‘Give me your son.’ Then he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was living, and laid him on his own bed.”*

2. (:20) Inquisitiveness of the Prophet

*“And he called to the LORD and said, ‘O LORD my God,*

*hast Thou also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?”*

3. (:21) Intercession of the Prophet

*“Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD, and said, ‘O LORD my God, I pray Thee, let this child's life return to him.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Certainly his posture indicated total identification with the boy and his need, and this is an important factor when we intercede for others.

**C. (:22-24) Deliverance from Death Prompts the Testimony of Faith**

1. (:22) Miracle of Resurrection from the Dead in Answer to Prayer

*“And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah, and the life of the child returned to him and he revived.”*

2. (:23) Ministration of the Prophet to the Mother

*“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 is alive.’”*

3. (:24) Message of Truth Affirmed

*“Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth.’”*

**R. D. Patterson:** God’s purpose was now evident. Her sin was not at issue (cf. **John 9:3**), but the testing had come in order that her newly found faith might be brought to settled maturity. Yahweh (“*the Lord*”) was not only the God of the Jews (**v. 24**) but of all those who believe (cf. **Rom 3:29**); he was not only the God of the living but the God of resurrection (cf. **Luke 20:38; John 11:25-26**).

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**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How much courage did it take for Elijah to proclaim such a message of judgment?
- 2) When has the Lord shown His providence in a special way to provide for your needs?
- 3) Why did God choose to use a widow in this location to supply Elijah’s needs?
- 4) Why do we often assume a link between sickness (or death) and our own sins?

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## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**John Whitcomb:** To prevent His prophet from being besieged by the desperate entreaties of the dying and the dire threats of Ahab and Jezebel (who doubtless concluded that it was the magical power of Elijah rather than Jehovah that had cast this evil spell upon their land), the Lord whisked him away to a secluded spot just east of the Jordan in the rugged hill country of Gilead. We may also assume that Elijah himself needed this time of retreat and this spectacular reminder that God alone was his source of supply and strength. As the ravens fed him each morning and evening, Elijah was made aware of the basically supernatural character of his ministry in a day of desperate spiritual darkness when Israel stood at the crossroads of her destiny. . .

The widow of Zarephath was subjected a very severe test of faith and she passed it. When Elijah challenged her to give him the last morsel of food, “*she went and did according to the saying of Elijah*” and was richly blessed for her obedience. Our Lord later enunciated this principle: “*Seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you*” (**Matt. 6:33**).

Her final test was to trust Elijah’s God concerning her dead son. . . God allowed this tragedy to occur in order that He might be glorified through it (cf. **John 9:3**). Great is the mystery of God’s providential purposes!

**Dale Ralph Davis:** the structure of **verses 17–24:**

Setting, **v. 17**

Widow’s accusation, **v. 18**

Elijah takes her son away from her dead, **v. 19**

Elijah’s prayer, **v. 20** [Accusation]

Elijah’s action, **v. 21a**

Elijah’s prayer, **v. 21b** [Petition]

Yahweh’s answer, **v. 22**

Elijah takes her son back to her alive, **v. 23**

Widow’s confession, **v. 24**

**Peter Pett:** Corrie Ten Boom, a Dutch Christian who hid Jews during the second world war, tells of how she and her sister were hauled off to Ravensbruck Concentration Camp when their activities were discovered. They had no idea of the horrors that lay ahead, (nor how long they would last), but because her sister was infirm she managed to secrete into that camp of horror a small bottle of liquid containing vital vitamins. From this bottle she daily gave her sister a small amount, hoping to eke it out as long as possible so that it might help her to survive. But one day another sickly inmate spotted what she was doing and asked what was in the bottle. On learning that it was vitamin supplement she asked if she might have some. Corrie hesitated. There was so little and her sister was dependent on it. But then recognising as a Christian that she could not

turn from someone in need she gave her a small amount from the bottle. Soon the news inevitably spread among desperate women and it was not long before every day there were a queue of women wanting vitamins. Corrie said that as she dispensed it she never dared to look into the bottle. It should have run out long before. But day by day and week by week the women came, and the bottle never ran out. And this went on until by chance another continuing source of vitamins became available. And then the bottle ran out. Furthermore this was not something done in private. It was witnessed by a good number of people.

**Thomas Constable:** Chart of Parallels in 3 Major Events in **Chaps. 17-19**

<b>"A. Announcement</b>		
by Elijah (17:1)	by God (18:1)	by Jezebel (19:2)
<b>B. Journey</b>		
from Israel (17:2-5)	to Israel (18:2)	from Israel (19:3-4)
<b>C. Two encounters</b>		
ravens (17:6-7)	Obadiah (18:7-16)	an angel (19:5-6)
widow (17:8-16)	Ahab (18:17-20)	the angel of the Lord (19:7)
<b>D. Miracle</b>		
resuscitation (17:17-23)	fire (18:21-38)	theophany (19:9-18)
<b>E. Conversion</b>		
widow (17:24)	Israel (18:39-40)	Elisha (19:19-21)
	Ahab (18:41—19:1)	

TEXT: 1 Kings 18:1-46

TITLE: *SHOWDOWN ON MOUNT CARMEL*

**BIG IDEA:**

**ONLY THE REAL GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE – FEAR AND SERVE HIM!**

**INTRODUCTION:**

God's discipline is intended to drive His people to repentance and full dependence on His provision. King Ahab and Queen Jezebel had established a thriving counterculture of Baal worship, but the pressure of the long drought set up this showdown between God and Baal. Elijah challenged the people to declare their loyalty to the one true God. He spelled out the terms of the contest in such a way that it was clear he did not mind giving every advantage to the camp of Baal worshipers. But the futility of idol worship is captured in this dramatic scene on Mount Carmel and the false prophets are summarily executed. There can be no denying the impotence of Baal and the sovereign power of the Lord. When God relents from His discipline and sends the much-needed rain, there is cause for celebration.

**August Konkell:** There are three episodes in the account of the confrontation at Mount Carmel. Elijah meets Obadiah the prophet and asks him to inform Ahab he is present (**18:1–15**); Elijah confronts the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel (**18:16–40**); and rain comes on the drought-stricken land (**18:41–46**).

**Donald Wiseman:** Elijah challenges Ahab prophetically through Obadiah (**vv. 1–19**), and Baalism through the demonstration that '*the Lord Yahweh is the (true) God*' (**vv. 20–40**). Prophecy and prayer are fulfilled in the acceptance of the burnt offering and the end of drought (**vv. 41–46**). This most dramatic story marks the turning point when the worship of the Lord is almost wiped out by the opposition. A single prophet challenges the whole state to return to God.

**Iain Provan:** **Chapter 17** launched Elijah suddenly into the public arena of Israel's politics (**v. 1**) only to whisk him away again into the privacy of the Transjordanian wilderness and a Sidonian home. There he has contributed in a small way to the war that the Lord is now waging upon the worship of Baal, while leaving the drought to do most of the damage. The time has now come for his reappearance on the main stage—for the great battle of the war, indeed. The drought is to end, but before it does it must be indisputable, not only to the widow of Zarephath but also to "*all Israel*," who is God. There must be a public test of strength—a face-to-face confrontation between the prophet of the Lord and the prophets of Baal.

**J. Hampton Keathley, III:** The Bible is not only **confrontational** but **comforting**. It not only confronts us with our self-centeredness, sin, rebellion, and independent ways, but it offers us grace, reconciliation, power, and many other blessings of the gospel given to



bring forgiveness, designed to change us, and designed to lead us into God's blessing and protection.

**Whitcomb:** The contest on Mt. Carmel was a spectacular vindication of the uniqueness and sovereignty of Jehovah in a day of satanic darkness. Never in all history was the point more clearly made that *"no idol is anything in the world and there is no God but one"* (1 Cor. 8:4). The three-and-one-half-year famine had doubtless shaken the confidence of many in the ability of Baal, the god of fertility, to answer their prayers. But if any yet hesitated, Elijah's demonstration would remove every excuse for following this vile system of worship.

## **I. (:1-16) DEMANDING A SHOWDOWN – SETTING UP MEETING WITH AHAB VIA OBADIAH AS THE INTERMEDIARY**

### **A. (:1-2) Confrontation Commanded by the Lord**

#### 1. (:1) Prerequisite to God Ending the Drought

*"Now it came about after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying,  
'Go, show yourself to Ahab,  
and I will send rain on the face of the earth.'"*

#### 2. (:2) Pressure on Ahab Has Been Building

*"So Elijah went to show himself to Ahab.  
Now the famine was severe in Samaria."*

**John Gates:** The famine was now most acute. So dire and devastating had been its effects upon the vegetation of Israel that the cattle could no longer find grazing spots.

### **B. (:3-6) Circumstances Providentially Ordered**

#### 1. (:3a) Two Key Players

*"And Ahab called Obadiah who was over the household."*

**Donald Wiseman:** Obadiah ('servant of Yah[weh]') was a high royal official (Heb. 'who was over [in charge of] the house/palace', see on 4:6). He 'revered the Lord greatly' (nrsv), i.e. was a devout believer.

#### 2. (:3b-4) Testimony to Obadiah's Faith

*"(Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly; 4 for it came about, when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water.)"*

#### 2 Views of the character of Obadiah:

**Constable:** 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. . .

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.

**Wiersbe:** Was he a courageous servant of God (his name means “*servant of Jehovah*”) or a timid compromiser who was afraid to let his witness be known? The text informs us that Obadiah “*feared the Lord greatly*” and proved it during Jezebel’s “*purge*” by risking his life to rescue and support one hundred prophets of the Lord. That doesn’t sound like a man who was compromising his testimony!

3. (:5-6) Territory Searched Separately by Ahab and Obadiah

*“Then Ahab said to Obadiah, ‘Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the valleys; perhaps we will find grass and keep the horses and mules alive, and not have to kill some of the cattle.’  
So they divided the land between them to survey it; Ahab went one way by himself and Obadiah went another way by himself.”*

**John Schultz:** The fact that the king of Israel had to go around the country, looking for grass, is the most ridiculous scene imaginable. It emphasized what happens when the living God, the Creator of the universe is being replaced by idols. Idols cannot create anything, not even grass!

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Here (vv. 3–6) is an interesting contrast between Ahab and Obadiah. Obadiah saves prophets. Ahab wants to save mules and horses (v. 5). That is typical of kings and governments: the economy is everything.

**C. (:7-14) Concern by Obadiah for His Life**

1. (:7-8) Dangerous Ask by Elijah

*“Now as Obadiah was on the way, behold, Elijah met him, and he recognized him and fell on his face and said, ‘Is this you, Elijah my master?’  
And he said to him, ‘It is I. Go, say to your master, ‘Behold, Elijah is here.’”*

2. (:9-14) Desperate Angst by Obadiah

a. (:9) **Fear for His Life** – Why are you putting me in such danger?  
*“And he said, ‘What sin have I committed, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death?’”*

**William Barnes:** This is ironically parallel to the conundrum the Phoenician widow faced in 17:18. When a prophet of God shows up, the situation often escalates to life-

or-death levels. Note that Obadiah says in his speech three times that Ahab will kill him (18:9, 12, 14). [This becomes the refrain of vv. 7-14]

b. (:10-11) Finding Elijah is a Priority for Ahab

*“As the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my master has not sent to search for you; and when they said, ‘He is not here,’ he made the kingdom or nation swear that they could not find you. And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your master, Behold, Elijah is here.’”*

c. (:12a) **Fear for His Life** – How can I be sure you will stay here?

*“And it will come about when I leave you that the Spirit of the LORD will carry you where I do not know; so when I come and tell Ahab and he cannot find you, he will kill me,”*

d. (:12b-13) Faithful Service Should Count for Something

*“although I your servant have feared the LORD from my youth. 13 Has it not been told to my master what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, that I hid a hundred prophets of the LORD by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water?”*

e. (:14) **Fear for His Life** – What are you thinking?

*“And now you are saying, ‘Go, say to your master, Behold, Elijah is here;’ he will then kill me.”*

**D. (:15-16) Commitment by Elijah to Meet with Ahab to Set Up the Showdown**

*“And Elijah said, ‘As the LORD of hosts lives, before whom I stand, I will surely show myself to him today.’  
So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him;  
and Ahab went to meet Elijah.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** This first occurrence in Kings of ‘*the Lord of Hosts*’, which also occurs in other prophetic utterances (19:10; 2 Kgs 3:14; 19:31), denotes more than the heavenly hosts (*Yahweh Sabaoth*) or all subordinate gods or the armies of Israel (1 Sam. 17:45). It includes the idea of God as the God of order and hence refers to his irresistible royal majesty and power (niv, *the Lord God Almighty*).

**II. (:17-21) DEFINING THE SHOWDOWN – WHO IS THE REAL GOD AND WHERE ARE YOUR LOYALTIES?**

**A. (:17-18) Assigning Blame – Based on Your Loyalties**

1. (:17) Blame Shifting

*“And it came about, when Ahab saw Elijah that Ahab said to him, ‘Is this you, you troubler of Israel?’”*

Unrepentant sin will stir up trouble and disrupt the peace and prosperity of the people of God. The problem is often laid at the feet of the one who exposed the sin. But the real culprit is the one committing the sin.

**August Konkel:** This accusation of Ahab is itself a contradiction. If Baal is truly god, Elijah could have no power over Israel at all. If Elijah does have power to bring drought, then Baal is not really god.

**J. Hampton Keathley, III:** Ahab's heart was filled with evil treasure--with resentment, hatred, the desire for revenge, and with his solutions for dealing with Elijah. So, immediately, when he saw Elijah, his volcano of corruption erupted in accusations, name calling, maligning, criticism, and blame.

2. (:18) Blame Sticking

*“And he said, ‘I have not troubled Israel, but you and your father's house have, because you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have followed the Baals.’”*

**B. (:19-20) Assembling the Faithless People and the False Prophets**

1. (:19) Elijah Commands the Assembling

*“Now then send and gather to me all Israel at Mount Carmel, together with 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of the Asherah, who eat at Jezebel's table.”*

**Constable:** 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.

2. (:20) Ahab Communicates the Command Throughout Israel

*“So Ahab sent a message among all the sons of Israel, and brought the prophets together at Mount Carmel.”*

**John Schultz:** We are not told how much time elapsed between Elijah's private meeting with King Ahab and the gathering on Mount Carmel. It must have taken several weeks to organize a large meeting like that, where not only the Baal priests, but most of the people of the kingdom gathered.

**Peter Pett:** In what follows we gather that there was at Mount Carmel, a long mountain ridge stretching out into the sea, divided by many ravines, a true sanctuary dedicated to YHWH which had been allowed to fall into disuse. There was also there a sanctuary and altar of Baal which were flourishing, no doubt encouraged by Jezebel. Mount Carmel with its periodic rains and storms, which regularly included lightning, together with its abundant fruitfulness, would be very suitable as a site for Baal worship. (The lightning dancing around the hills is a spectacular feature of life in Palestine). It may

have been partly this contrast in the sanctuaries that made Elijah choose Mount Carmel, for it was his purpose to illustrate the revival of Yahwism, and this site on the borders of Israel and Phoenicia, revered by all, was a good place to do it. There is also a good possibility that it was because he knew that the true prophets of YHWH were hiding in the caves there.

**C. (:21) Admonishing the People Regarding Their Loyalties**

1. Challenge = Who is the Real God and Whom Will You Follow?

*“And Elijah came near to all the people and said,  
‘How long will you hesitate between two opinions?  
If the LORD is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.’”*

**MacArthur:** Lit. “limp along on or between two twigs.” Israel had not totally rejected the Lord, but was seeking to combine worship of Him with the worship of Baal. The issue posed by Elijah was that Israel had to choose who was God, the Lord or Baal, and then serve God wholeheartedly.

**B. S. Childs:** 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.

2. Cowardice = People Unwilling to Commit Their Loyalties

*“But the people did not answer him a word.”*

**III. (:22-40) DEFEATING BAAL DECISIVELY IN THE SHOWDOWN**

**A. (:22-24) Accepting the Rules of Engagement**

1. (:22) Strength is Not Necessarily in Numbers

*“Then Elijah said to the people, ‘I alone am left a prophet of the LORD, but Baal’s prophets are 450 men.’”*

**William Barnes:** We already know that this is not literally the situation, although Elijah must surely have felt very much like it was an accurate summary of the case, both here and in **19:10, 14**.

2. (:23) Securing a Fair Fight

*“Now let them give us two oxen; and let them choose one ox for themselves and cut it up, and place it on the wood, but put no fire under it; and I will prepare the other ox, and lay it on the wood, and I will not put a fire under it.”*

3. (:24a) Scoring the Showdown

*“Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD, and the God who answers by fire, He is God.”*

4. (:24b) Securing Agreement Regarding the Showdown

*“And all the people answered and said, ‘That is a good idea.’”*

**Alan Carr:** The whole tragedy lies in the fact that the people are even willing to consider that Baal might be real. After all the things that God had done for them, how could they stoop to the place where they would even consider a contest of this nature? Imagine them expecting God to **prove Himself** to them after all He had already done for them and their nation!

## **B. (:25-29) Appealing to Baal to Send Fire**

### 1. (:25-26) Failed Attempt to Arouse Baal

*“So Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one ox for yourselves and prepare it first for you are many, and call on the name of your god, but put no fire under it.’ Then they took the ox which was given them and they prepared it and called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, ‘O Baal, answer us.’ But there was no voice and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they made.”*

- You have first crack at choosing the ox you want to use
- You have the advantage of greater numbers
- You have the home-field advantage here on Mt. Carmel
- You have the advantage of going first in the contest
- You can use as much time as you need – no time pressure put on your efforts
- You can use whatever theatrics and gymnastics you want to try to arouse Baal

**Peter Pett:** Elijah then turned to the prophets of Baal and called on them to go first because they were many. He wanted them to have as much time as they wanted. He knew perfectly well that what he was asking of them was impossible, for there was no one who would hear their cries. Then they were to prepare their sacrifice, but without putting fire under it, and pray as much as they liked. The more they prayed, the more futile their prayers would appear.

**Bob Deffinbaugh:** We find no mention of these prophets having to construct or rebuild an altar. I suspect that there was already a functioning pagan altar there, which they utilized.

### 2. (:27-29) Futility of the Prophets of Baal Mocked by Elijah

*“And it came about at noon, that Elijah mocked them and said, ‘Call out with a loud voice, for he is a god; either he is occupied or gone aside, or is on a journey, or perhaps he is asleep and needs to be awakened.’ So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. And it came about when midday was past, that they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention.”*

- Maybe your god can't hear you; Cry out louder
- Maybe your god is sitting on the toilet and can't respond

- Maybe your god is away and not able to hear you at this time
- Maybe your god is asleep
- Maybe your god is impotent and can't respond because he doesn't exist!

**Clarke:** Rabbi S. Jarchi gives this the most degrading meaning; I will give it in Latin, because it is too coarse to be put in English; *Fortassis ad locum secretum abiit, ut ventrem ibi exoneret*; 'Perhaps he has gone to the ———.' This certainly reduces Baal to the lowest degree of contempt, and with it the ridicule and sarcasm are complete.

**August Konkell:** The customary gashing with knives and blades may be part of a blood ritual seeking the first rainfall. Blood letting was a rite of imitative magic to prompt a release of vital rain. Ecstatic prophesying may be a frenzied activity indistinguishable from mad behavior (cf. **1 Sam. 19:24**). These rituals would take place at a fall festival for the Baal cult in anticipation of the early rains.

**MacArthur:** "no . . . no . . . no." This 3-fold declaration emphasized the complete lack of response on the part of Baal. The fact that there was no response indicated Baal's impotence and non-existence (**Jer 10:5**).

**David Guzik:** This is the sad result of worshipping an imaginary god or the god of our own making. We may dedicate great sincerity, sacrifice, and devotion to such gods, but it means nothing. There is no one there to answer.

### **C. (:30-38) Appealing to YHWH to Send Fire**

#### 1. (:30a) Confidence of Elijah

*"Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come near to me.' So all the people came near to him."*

**Whitcomb:** The calm assurance and dignity of Elijah provides a startling contrast to the heated frenzy of the pagan prophets.

**Alan Carr:** true faith, unlike false worship, has absolutely nothing to hide! You had better watch the group that talks of secret things and hidden truth! My friend, do not be afraid to put Christianity under the microscope, it can stand the test!

#### 2. (:30b-32a) Consecration of the Altar in the Context of God's Revelation as the Covenant God of the Twelve Tribes of Israel

*"And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. 31 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.' 32 So with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD,"*

**Peter Pett:** The initial 'and he repaired the altar' may have been a summary, which was then filled in with the detail. This would be a typically Hebraic way of presenting

information, first in summary, then in detail (compare **Judges 6:24-26**). But it may be that we are to differentiate the building up of the altar with earth, from the placing within it of stones to take the heat of the fire.

**Constable:** Yahweh's altar at that site (one of the high places?) had fallen into disrepair (v. 30). 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.

**Iain Provan:** Strictly speaking, this represents the restoration of a “*high place*”; and the authors of Kings are generally opposed to worship at such local shrines. They are even more opposed to idolatry, however, and it is unlikely that in a context where Israel has given itself over to idolatry, they intend us to think critically of Elijah for acting thus. Centralization of the worship of the Lord is the ideal (cf. **Deut. 12**), but any worship of the Lord is better than worship of Baal. And the Lord removes the altar, of course, after it has served its purpose (v. 38)!

### 3. (:32b-35) Creating the Highest Possible Degree of Difficulty

*“and he made a trench around the altar, large enough to hold two measures of seed. 33 Then he arranged the wood and cut the ox in pieces and laid it on the wood. And he said, ‘Fill four pitchers with water and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood.’ 34 And 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. 35 And the water flowed around the altar, and he also filled the trench with water.”*

**John Gates:** Elijah insisted on making the test as difficult as possible for God to meet, that the answer might stand out in clearer, sharper contrast to the impotency of Baal and his prophets.

### 4. (:36-37) Calling on the Lord to Respond

*“Then it came about at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near and said, ‘O LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel, today let it be known that Thou art God in Israel, and that I am Thy servant, and that I have done all these things at Thy word. 37 Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that Thou, O LORD, art God, and that Thou hast turned their heart back again.”*

Note the brevity and directness of Elijah’s prayer.

**John Schultz:** Elijah opens his prayer with the words: “*O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.*” The Pulpit Commentary comments: “Two things are to be noticed here: first, that this formula had only once before been used, and that by God Himself, before the giving of law, at the burning bush. It was when God revealed Himself in flaming



fire that He had proclaimed Himself the God of Abraham, etc. Secondly, that the variation ‘*Israel*’ is made designedly (cf. **ver. 31**), not only to proclaim the Lord as the ‘God of Israel’ (cf. ... **1 Kings 17:1**), but also to suggest that the name and privileges of Israel belonged to all the sons of Jacob.”

**R. D. Patterson:** At the precise moment when all hope of igniting the wood seemed totally lost, Elijah stepped forward and called on God (**v. 36**). He pled with the covenant God of Israel to validate that he alone was still God in Israel and this Elijah, who had prophesied the drought and was now calling for a miracle, was truly his servant. He asked God to answer him so that all would know that the Lord was ever anxious for their repentance and return to him (**v. 37**). Striking with lightning like power, God answered, and such an answer! Heavenly fire fell and consumed not only the wood and sacrifice, but the stones, the soil, and even the surrounding water (**v. 38**). What a contrast! The prophets of Baal had kept up their wailing and wild ritual for the better part of a day and met with dead silence. Elijah’s petition had lasted less than a minute but produced spectacular results. The difference lay in **the One addressed**.

**Alan Carr:** His prayer was constructed to accomplish three things.

- A. That God be glorified.
- B. That the prophet be vindicated.
- C. That the people be revived.

5. (:38) Consuming Fire Falls from the Lord = Showdown Over

*“Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench.”*

**August Konkel:** The “*fire from God*” anticipates the advance of the rain. The fiery apparition indicates the divine presence (cf. **Ex. 3:2; 19:18; 24:17**). Fire also attests the divine acceptance and approval of the sacrifice (**1 Chron. 21:26**). Fire may indicate both approval of the sacrifice and the divine presence, as with Gideon (**Judg. 6:20–22**) and Moses (**Lev. 9:22–24**).

**Clarke:** The action of this fire was in every case downward, contrary to the nature of all earthly and material fire.

**Donald Wiseman:** The simple prayer (cf. **v. 24**) contrasts with the long Baalistic ravings. He asks not just for a miraculous demonstration that Yahweh is God but for the conversion of Israel. He reminds God of his previous interventions, using ‘*Jacob*’ for Israel possibly as a term of rebuke for the latter’s apostasy. On ‘*fire from heaven*’ (**v. 38**) as demonstrating God’s power and judgment, see **2 Kings 1:10, 12; Job 1:16**. The people’s acknowledgment (**v. 39**) is itself an answer to prayer (cf. **vv. 21, 24**).

**D. (:39-40) Aftermath of the Showdown**

1. (:39) Reaction of the People = Fear of God



*“And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, He is God; the LORD, He is God.’”*

**David Guzik:** Tragically, this was only a momentary persuasion. This was no lasting revival in Israel. The people were decidedly persuaded, but not lastingly changed.

## 2. (:40) Execution of the False Prophets

### a. Capturing Them

*“Then Elijah said to them, ‘Seize the prophets of Baal; do not let one of them escape.’ So they seized them;”*

### b. Killing Them

*“and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** The slaughter of the Baal prophets was not an act of wanton cruelty but the necessary retribution, ordered by Elijah as the ‘new Moses’ on behalf of God, against false prophets as decreed in Deuteronomy (11:5, 13-18; 17:2-5) following the action of Moses and Phinehas (Num. 25:1-13).

## **IV. (:41-46) DELIVERING ON THE PROMISE TO LIFT THE DISCIPLINE AND SEND RAIN**

### **A. (:41-44) Anticipation of Heavy Rainfall**

#### 1. (:41-42a) Command to Ahab to Celebrate the End of the Drought

*“Now Elijah said to Ahab, ‘Go up, eat and drink; for there is the sound of the roar of a heavy shower.’ 42 So Ahab went up to eat and drink.”*

**Alan Carr:** His confidence was based on:

- **The Precious Word Of God** - In **1 Kings 18:1**, God told Elijah to confront Ahab and He would send the rain. Elijah did as he was commanded, and he knew the rain was coming. Elijah believed God when God said something.
- **The Perfect Will Of God** - In **1 Kings 17:1**, Elijah had been God's instrument to bring the drought upon the nation. Elijah knew that the drought had been sent because of the idolatry of the people. The rain had stopped because the people were worshiping Baal instead of Jehovah. Now, the Baal prophets were dead, the people had repented and had returned to the Lord God. Elijah knew it was time for the rains to return.
- **The Prior Work Of God** - Elijah knew that he could trust God to send the rain because of all that he had already seen the Lord do. *Remember, he had already witnessed the faithfulness of God at the brook, in the barrel, with the boy, in the bull and over Baal.* He has seen the Lord work many miracles before and there was no reason to think that God could not continue to move in power and glory.

## 2. (:42b-44) Certainty of Elijah in Watching for the Coming Rainfall

*“But Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he crouched down on the earth, and put his face between his knees. 43 And he said to his servant, ‘Go up now, look toward the sea.’ So he went up and looked and said, ‘There is nothing.’ And he said, ‘Go back’ seven times. 44 And it came about at the seventh time, that he said, ‘Behold, a cloud as small as a man's hand is coming up from the sea.’ And he said, ‘Go up, say to Ahab, ‘Prepare your chariot and go down, so that the heavy shower does not stop you.’”*

**Wiersbe:** Elijah’s unusual posture was almost a fetal position and indicated the prophet’s humility, his great concern for the people, and his burden for the glory of the Lord.

**Constable:** Rain normally came on Carmel from the west, from the Mediterranean Sea (v. 43).

**Alan Carr:** How he prayed can help us to be more effective prayer warriors for the glory of God.

- **He Was Humble** - v. 42b, He bowed himself before the presence of the Lord. *The man of God had stood tall as an ambassador of the Lord, now he bows low as an intercessor before the Lord!* It would do us good to remember that God does not exist merely to answer our prayers or fulfill our wishes. He is God and he will honor the person who comes into his presence humbly, **1 Pet. 5:5-6; James 4:6; 10**

- **He Was Specific** - v. 43, **James 5:17-18** tells us that Elijah was very specific in his prayer life. He did not waste time on mere generalities, but he prayed in faith specifically naming the things that needed to be done.

- **He Was Earnest** - Elijah was sincere about his prayer, **James 5:16-18**. He did not take a spiritless attitude toward his prayer life, but he prayed with fervency. His soul was moved with the need of the people. He felt the pressure of the thing he prayed for!

- **He Was Persistent** - v. 43, eight times the servant is told to go and look toward the sea. Seven times there is nothing there. Yet, Elijah kept praying and kept believing. He did not allow the outward circumstance affect his inward assurance that the answer was on the way. He was persistent!

- **He Was Expectant** - v. 41, 43 - Elijah kept praying and kept sending his servant to look to the sea. Why? Because he was operating in faith in the promise of God. He knew the rains were coming. He was expecting big things from God! (Note: the word for "rain" in **verse 41** refers to a heavy downpour. Elijah was expecting big things from a big God!)

-**He Was Answered** - v. 44 - On the eighth trip, the servant saw a little cloud rising out of the sea. When this news is brought to Elijah, the prophet knew that God's answer had come. His prayers had prevailed and God was sending the rains!

**B. (:45) Verification of Heavy Rainfall – Ahab Heads to Jezreel**

*“So it came about in a little while, that the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy shower. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel.”*

**MacArthur:** A town located in the tribal allotment of Issachar at the eastern end of the Jezreel Valley, N of Mt. Gilboa, about 55 mi. N of Jerusalem. Jezreel was Ahab’s winter capital (see **21:1**), situated between 15 to 25 mi. E of the Carmel Range.

**Peter Pett:** Ahab did what Elijah had said, but it was not soon enough for the heavens grew black with cloud and wind, and there was drenching rain. And once that rain began to fall it would turn the road into a sea of mud, in which Ahab’s chariot would find the going hard, as he made his way towards his chariot city of Jezreel.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** “*Then a heavy rain came*” (v. 45). Rain meant life, water for soil, people, and livestock, grain for food, grass for animals (cf. **18:5**). Yahweh then is the God of dramatic intervention (vv. **31–39**) and of daily provision. Israel’s apostasy and divided mind had forfeited these material benefits (**Deut. 11:16–17; 28:23–24; Lev. 26:19–20**). Now Yahweh graciously restores them. **Wallace** is right: ‘Israel is to learn again this day that the God who sends fire to convert their hearts will also send rain to refresh and feed their bodies.’ Yahweh is the God of the spectacular and of the routine, who sends both fire and food (see **Ps. 65:9–13**). Whenever we fail to acknowledge these latter down-to-earth provisions as Yahweh’s gifts, we apostatize to naturalism (a more contemporary, sophisticated form of Baal worship). Whenever we begin to assume that they are ours by some inalienable right, we have become blind to the Father’s hand. We forget that the common is special.

**C. (:46) Vindication of Elijah – Elijah Heads to Jezreel**

*“Then the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and outran Ahab to Jezreel.”*

**William Barnes:** The Hebrew literally says “*the hand of Yahweh*” was upon him (cf. **2 Kgs 3:15**); the idiom connotes divine power invigorating the prophet, giving him strength to run the roughly 17 miles (27 km) to Ahab’s estate at Jezreel.

**Wiersbe:** This was quite a feat for an older man and itself was another sign to the people that God’s powerful hand was upon His servant.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) When we are confronted with our sin, do we respond defensively like Ahab and lash out and try to lay blame on others?

2) What relationship does the Word of God have to Elijah's behavior vs. Obadiah vs. Ahab?

3) What other biblical texts speak to the need to be whole-hearted in our commitment to the Lord and not to mix our loyalties?

4) Why do you think God doesn't manifest Himself in such dramatic and spectacular fashion more often?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** 'Who is the real God?' is the question that dominates the text (note vv. 21, 24, 36, 37, 39). Yahweh discloses himself as the real God and because of his disclosure we make certain discoveries about the real God. I will allow these discoveries to structure the following exposition.

- **The service of the real God is so diverse (vv. 3–15)**

Sometimes Yahweh attacks evil with the in-your-face style of an Elijah (17:1), and sometimes he frustrates it by the simple subversion of an unobtrusive agent. . . Obadiah is obviously very different from Elijah. Elijah's ministry is more public and confrontational; Obadiah works quietly in behind-the-scenes fashion and yet is faithful in the sphere where God placed him.

- **The demand of the real God is so disturbing (vv. 20–21)**

You hear him [the real God] in 1 Kings 18:21, and, if you transpose that text into New Testament theology, you will realize it does not permit nonsense like having-Jesus-as-your-Savior-but-not-as-your-Lord. He doesn't give you that option.

- **The nature of the real God is so different (vv. 19–39)**

Yahweh is the God with whom geography is no hindrance (vv. 19, 20).

Yahweh is the God for whom numbers are of no consequence (vv. 22, 25).

Yahweh is the God for whom activity is no inducement (vv. 26–29, 36–38).

Yahweh is the God for whom handicaps are no obstacle (vv. 32–35).

- **The provision of the real God is so gracious (vv. 30–38)**

There is, on the whole, a severe tone about 1 Kings 18. It makes sense: Israel is in frightful shape if Yahweh must stoop to raw miracle to penetrate her density and extract an orthodox, first-commandment level confession from her. Yet, for all that, there is a hint of mercy and a glimmer of hope in the text. If Elijah is Yahweh's prosecutor, he is also his evangelist. If Carmel is Israel's rebuke, it is also her invitation. . . In light of its Old Testament parallels the miraculous fire shows that Yahweh has accepted Elijah's sacrifice (cf. v. 36, 'and that I am your servant'). Is this not Israel's hope? Does this not hint to Israel that there is a way back?

- **The severity of the real God is so condemning (v. 40)**

We simply don't understand Yahweh's violence against rebellion in his people.

**Whitcomb:** The evils of idolatry are twofold:

- (1) it involves a forsaking of nature's testimony to the conscience that only one true God can exist; and
- (2) it pictures God (or the gods) in terms of human sin and frailty (compare the double denunciation in **Jer. 2:13**).

In the light of such religious irrationality on the part of God-created minds and hearts, it is understandable that "*He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh . . .*" (Ps. 2:4). So Elijah taunted these desperate men in their well-deserved hour of public humiliation . . .

**Bob Deffinbaugh: Showdown at the Mount Carmel Corral**

I am fascinated and somewhat troubled by the fact that Obadiah brings up the matter of the 100 prophets whose lives he saved. We have already been told this in **verses 3 and 4**, when we were first introduced to Obadiah and told of his character. Now, Obadiah feels obliged to tell Elijah about it, or at least to remind him of it in **verses 12 and 13**. Why does he feel he must do so? It sounds as though Obadiah wants to convince Elijah of his piety. And if he can do this, Obadiah seems to hope that this will change Elijah's mind about sending him to Ahab. Does Obadiah think that being pious is a guarantee that one will not suffer for his faith? I hope not, but the description of this man does leave some serious questions. Of course we would like Obadiah to be flawless in his faith, but when we look in the Bible we see that even the greatest saints had their flaws. And so why should we expect perfection of this man? Elijah does not promise Obadiah that he will be safe, but he does assure him that he will be there when Ahab returns (**18:15**). And so Obadiah makes his way to Ahab, to tell him this amazing news. . .

When they met, Ahab could not restrain himself from verbally getting in the first blow: "*Is that you, O troubler of Israel?*" (**verse 17**, NKJ). Ahab could have used a basic course in logic. He was right, of course, that Israel was in a lot of trouble. It was Elijah who announced that this trouble was coming, in the form of a drought. But Ahab was completely off track in concluding that Elijah was the source of his troubles, and those of his nation. Israel's troubles were the result of Ahab's sins, those of his father, and those of the Israelites whom he led. . .

Whatever was going to happen up there, it was going to be interesting, and many were there to see it for themselves. It is obvious that they were not taking sides with Elijah at the outset, but neither were they openly siding with Ahab. Initially, the people did not say a word; they did not commit themselves, one way or the other (**verse 21**). It is only after Elijah spells out the challenge that the people openly agree that it is a fair contest (**verse 24**). . .

Baal was a “god” with human qualities, and Elijah forcefully drives these home, along with their implications. Perhaps their “god” is preoccupied in thought, like a husband who ignores his wife while reading his paper. He might be busy, on the toilet. Is their god suffering from constipation? It’s crude, but it presses the point of the inferiority of their “god.” What a pathetic “god” this would be! Maybe their god is just “out of the office” at the moment and can’t be reached. He doesn’t even have a beeper or a cell phone. Perhaps he has dozed off, like some people do in church, oblivious to what’s being said by another. If he was sleeping, there was only one solution: yell louder to get his attention. Elijah was brutal in his attack, but this was no time for subtlety. Either their “god” was God, or he was not. If he was not available at a critical time like this, then he could never be counted on; he should never be trusted, and especially if the God of Israel did respond. . .

In all the excitement of the contest on Mount Carmel, we almost forget about the rain. But this is what this whole contest is all about. God told Elijah to present himself to Ahab, and to tell him that it was going to rain. All of the events at Carmel simply lead up to this climactic event. If we were honest, we might be willing to admit that the coming of the rain is a bit anti-climactic after the calling down of fire from heaven and the slaughter of the 450 prophets of Baal. But it is the conclusion to this three-and-a-half-year famine. . .

The point is this. Israel’s sin resulted in divine discipline—God ceased to give rain. Elijah was instructed to announce this to Ahab before the drought began (**17:1**). But when God orders Elijah to appear before Ahab in chapter 18, He does not say to Ahab, “It’s going to rain.” He does not even mention rain until after the confrontation on Mount Carmel, until after Israel proclaims the LORD to be God, until after the 450 prophets of Baal have been killed. It is not until **verse 41** that Elijah brings up the subject of rain, and that is because God will only withdraw the drought when Israel repents. The confrontation on Mount Carmel, then, was designed to turn Israel away from her idolatry and back to God, in order that God might once again send the rains.

TEXT: 1 Kings 19:1-18

TITLE: *DISCOURAGEMENT OVER LACK OF VISIBLE MINISTRY IMPACT*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD WORKS IN WAYS THAT WE CANNOT SEE SO DON'T DESPAIR OVER LACK OF VISIBLE MINISTRY IMPACT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

I have grown up all my life with a misunderstanding about this controversial text of Scripture. I just assumed that it was a psychological profile of a broken man who had given in to self-pity and was totally focused on his own sorry lot in life. The commentary of Dale Ralph Davis (summarized in the Notes section of my pdf commentary) has enlightened me to a different approach to this passage.

All of God's servants have experienced the discouragement of thinking they have ministered in vain. When the desired visible results are not evident; when it seems like you are not making a difference; you can succumb to the temptation to want to call it quits. Especially when you have a heart that is passionate to see God's kingdom agenda advanced and God's people repent and mature in the faith.

**Iain Provan:** Elijah has been involved in a mighty battle. He seems to think it decisive and so he has left the battlefield for Jezreel. Yet there have been several hints in the narrative thus far that it is the queen, and not the king, who is the real general of the opposing forces. She will not be so easily cowed as her husband, and Elijah is now to see that to win a battle is not necessarily to win the war. That realization will send him into retreat, both physical and mental, as victory becomes defeat. Retreat will in turn lead him to another mountain, to confront, not Baal, but the Lord himself—whom Elijah serves, but whose ways he only partly understands and accepts.

**Thomas Constable:** 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.

**I. (:1-4) RETREATING FROM MINISTRY AS A DEFEATED SERVANT OF GOD**

**A. (:1) Testimony of Elijah's Exploits**

*“Now Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done,  
and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword.”*

It was natural for Elijah to expect that the report of God's dramatic display of power and sovereignty on Mount Carmel would move the hearts of Israel's leaders to repent of

their idolatry and fix their loyalties to the one true God. But such was not the case. How quickly Satan can turn our victories into defeats.

**The Pulpit Commentary:** We can readily understand with what a sense of humiliation and shame the weak and excited king, who must have been awed and impressed by the strange portent he had witnessed, would recount the day's proceedings to his imperious and headstrong consort, and with what intense mortification and rage she must have heard of the triumph of the proscribed religion and of the defeat and death of the priests of Baal. One might almost have expected that the testimony of an eyewitness, and that her husband, to the greatness and completeness of Elijah's victory; that his unprejudiced, and indeed unwilling, account of the sacrifices, of the descent of the heavenly fire, of the cries it wrung from the people, etc., would have brought conviction to her mind and taught her how useless it was to kick against the pricks. But there are eyes so blinded (... **2 Corinthians 4:4**) and hearts so steeled against the truth that no evidence can reach them, and this fierce persecutor of the prophets had long been given over to a reprobate mind. She listens to his story, but her one thought is of revenge.

#### **B. (:2) Threat Against Elijah's Life**

*"Then Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, 'So may the gods do to me and even more, if I do not make your life as the life of one of them by tomorrow about this time.'"*

**Peter Pett:** she immediately dispatched a messenger in order to disillusion him and inform him that she intended to execute him as he had executed the prophets of Baal. The act was one of someone who was controlled by her emotions, hated the thought that anyone should think that they had got one over on her, and could not wait for the actual event. She wanted Elijah to know immediately what was in store for him. . .

#### **C. (:3-4) Temptation to Call It Quits**

##### 1. (:3) Giving in to Fear

*"And he was afraid and arose and ran for his life and came to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah, and left his servant there."*

**MacArthur:** A city located 100 mi. S of Jezreel (18:45, 46) in the Negev, it marked the southern boundary of the population of Judah.

Was he afraid because he did not want to die? Not entirely the whole story because he is going to request that the Lord take his life. **Allen** suggests that he did not want Jezebel to be the one to take his life and gain a perceived victory over God. Elijah was still concerned for God's reputation.

We can speculate regarding what would have happened if Elijah had stayed there and held his ground and depended on the Lord to protect him. Certainly we don't see any word from the Lord directing him to flee. Instead we see the Lord questioning him twice later in the passage: *"What are you doing here, Elijah?"*



**The Pulpit Commentary:** It is evident that for the moment Elijah had lost faith in God, otherwise he would certainly have waited for the ‘*word of the Lord*,’ which had hitherto invariably guided his movements (**1 Kings 17:2, 8; 18:1**). No doubt other emotions besides that of fear were struggling in his breast, and prominent among these was the feeling of profound disappointment and mortification. It is clear that he had hoped that the ‘day of Carmel’ would turn the heart of the entire nation back again (**1 Kings 18:37**), and the great shout of **ver. 39**, and the subsequent execution, at his command, of the men who had deceived and depraved the people, might well justify the most sanguine expectations. We can readily imagine, consequently, how, especially after the excitement and fatigues of that day, the threatening and defiant message of the queen would seem the death blow of his hopes, and how, utterly dispirited and broken down, he lost all trust, all faith, and, while fleeing for his life, ‘*requested for himself that he might die.*’

**Wiersbe:** For three years, Elijah had not made a move without hearing and obeying the Lord’s instructions (**17:2-3, 8-9; 18:1**), but now he was running ahead of the Lord in order to save his own life.

### 2. (:4a) Giving in to Failure

*“But he himself went a day’s journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree;”*

Isolation from spiritual fellowship can deplete our ability to fight temptation.

**MacArthur:** A desert bush that grew to a height of 10 ft. It had slender branches featuring small leaves and fragrant blossoms.

### 3. (:4b) Giving in to Futility

*“and he requested for himself that he might die, and said, ‘It is enough; now, O LORD, take my life, for I am not better than my fathers.’”*

My prophetic ministry has proven to be no more effective than those who preceded me. What is the point in continuing on in such futile ministry? The very reason for his living was to serve God. If that made no difference, than what was the point?

**David Guzik:** Thankfully, this was a prayer not answered for Elijah. In fact, Elijah was one of the few men in the Bible to never die! We can imagine that as he was caught up into heaven, he smiled and thought of this prayer – and the blessed no that answered his prayer. To receive a no answer from God can be better than receiving a yes answer.

## **II. (:5-8) REVIVING THE SERVANT OF GOD – 2 ANGELIC MINISTRATIONS**

### A. (:5-6) First Angelic Ministration – Physical Needs Refreshed

*“And he lay down and slept under a juniper tree; and behold, there was an angel touching him, and he said to him, ‘Arise, eat.’ 6 Then he looked and*

*behold, there was at his head a bread cake baked on hot stones, and a jar of water. So he ate and drank and lay down again.”*

**Peter Pett:** God had seen the need of His servant for sustenance, and would not leave him to die. It was both an act of infinite compassion, and a pointed reminder to Elijah that God still had a purpose for him.

**B. (:7-8) Second Angelic Ministration – Purpose Renewed**

*“And the angel of the LORD came again a second time and touched him and said, ‘Arise, eat, because the journey is too great for you.’ 8 So he arose and ate and drank, and went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to Horeb, the mountain of God.”*

**Peter Pett:** At times of great stress godly people regularly seek out a hallowed place which they associate with God, and what better place than that where YHWH had made His covenant with Israel? Steeped in the Scriptures Elijah would see it as the very birthplace of the nation. And now that the nation had rejected YHWH he may well have decided that he wanted to go and die there, in the place where he knew that God had given a full manifestation of Himself to Moses and Israel (**Exodus 3:1; Exodus 19-20**). There was nothing left for him to do.

**Peter Pett:** We can compare the forty days and forty nights of the rain at the time of the Flood (**Genesis 7:12**), and the forty days and forty nights twice spent by Moses in the Mount (**Exodus 24:18; Exodus 34:28**). Compare also the forty days (morning and evening) during which Israel were challenged by Goliath (**1 Samuel 17:16**). It was the indication of a crisis point in divine affairs.

**David Guzik:** Elijah’s forty-day journey is not without significance. Indeed, a straight trip from Beersheba would require little more than a quarter of that time. Therefore the period is designedly **symbolic**. As the children of Israel had a notable spiritual failure and so were to wander forty years in the wilderness, so a defeated Elijah was to spend forty days in the desert. (**Patterson and Austel**)

**III. (:9-18) RECOMMISSIONING THE SERVANT OF GOD TO PRESS ON**

**A. (:9-10) You Need an Attitude Adjustment**

**1. (:9) God’s Plan’s Can’t Be Defeated**

*“Then he came there to a cave, and lodged there; and behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”*

**John Schultz:** Obviously, the question is not meant for the omniscient God to be informed about something He didn’t know. As God asked Adam after he committed his first sin: “*Where are you?*” to make Adam realize what he had done. So here the same question is asked of Elijah. God had not sent Elijah on this journey; it had been Elijah’s panicky reaction to Jezebel’s threat. God wanted His prophet to realize that he was

outside the will of the Lord. Elijah no longer believed his life to be in God's hand. That is a very dangerous condition for any believer to be in. What Elijah needed was a new experience of the Lord.

**John Whitcomb:** Elijah's answer revealed his keen disappointment and impatience with God's ways and an exaggerated pessimism concerning the condition of the nation. Why did not God strike Jezebel dead in his presence and then cause a great host of men to follow his spiritual leadership?

2. (:10) Man's Perspective Can Be Overly Pessimistic

*"And he said, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.'"*

**Donald Wiseman:** The reasons for Elijah's depression include sadness at Israel's apostasy (cf. **18:18**), desecration of sacred places and martyrdom of the Lord's prophets (cf. **18:13**) despite Elijah being zealous. This word (av 'jealous', 'ardent', Heb. *qānā* meaning 'to be enthusiastically and exclusively devoted') is used both of God (**Exod. 20:5**) and of man in his disruptive passions (envy, jealousy, 2 Kgs 10:16).

**B. (:11-14) You Need a Fresh Vision of How the Lord Works**

1. (:11a) Pay Attention

*"So He said, 'Go forth, and stand on the mountain before the LORD.' And behold, the LORD was passing by!"*

**MacArthur:** The 3 phenomena, wind, earthquake, and fire, announced the imminent arrival of the Lord (cf. **Ex 19:16-19; Ps 18:7-15; Hab 3:3-6**). The Lord's self-revelation to Elijah came in a faint, whispering voice (v. 12). The lesson for Elijah was that Almighty God was quietly sometimes imperceptibly, doing His work in Israel (v. 18).

**Wiersbe:** All Elijah needed to get renewed for service was a fresh vision of the power and glory of God.

2. (:11b-12) Perceive How God Works Behind the Scenes

a. (:11b) Not Always in a Strong Wind

*"And a great and strong wind was rending the mountains and breaking in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind."*

b. (:11c) Not Always in an Earthquake

*"And after the wind an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake."*

- c. (:12a) Not Always in a Fire  
*“And after the earthquake a fire,  
but the LORD was not in the fire;”*
- d. (:12b) But Usually Behind the Scenes in the Stillness  
*“and after the fire a sound of a gentle blowing.”*

**Donald Wiseman:** God does not always speak so clearly through these manifestations as he does through his individual word to his prophet. The ‘*still small voice*’ (av) was a gentle whisper (cf. Heb. ‘*a thin [fine] subdued sound*’), rather than ‘a low murmuring sound’ (neb); ‘stillness’ is not incompatible with the words for ‘sound, voice’ (‘a sound of sheer silence’, nrsv) and the word ‘thin’ (*dāqqâ*). The soft voice of God speaking to the conscience, illuminating the mind and stirring resolve in individual and nation may follow and is often preferable to the loud roaring and thunder of cosmic events at Sinai and Carmel.

**Thomas Constable:** 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.

**David Guzik:** Elijah perhaps thought that the dramatic display of power at Mount Carmel would turn the nation around. Or perhaps he thought that the radical display of God’s judgment against the priests of Baal following the vindication at Mount Carmel would change the hearts of the nation. Neither of these worked. This example is important for Christian ministers today, especially preachers. It shows that displays of power and preaching God’s anger don’t necessarily change hearts. Instead, the still small voice of God speaking to the human heart is actually more powerful than outward displays of power or displays of God’s judgment.

### 3. (:13-14) Put Aside Your Stubborn Pessimism

- a. (:13) Get Back in the Game  
*“And it came about when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out and stood in the entrance of the cave. And behold, a voice came to him and said, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’”*

**Wiersbe:** if he was a faithful servant, what was he doing hiding in a cave located hundreds of miles from his appointed place of ministry?

- b. (:14) Get Rid of that Pessimistic Attitude  
*“Then he said, ‘I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of hosts; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Thy covenant, torn down Thine altars and killed Thy prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away.’”*

### C. (:15-18) You Need to Keep Playing Your Role in the Lord's Victorious Kingdom Program

#### 1. (:15-16) Defining the Mission

*“And the LORD said to him,  
‘Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus,’”*

**William Barnes:** In other words, it was time to get back to work. The servant of God is not to worry about the Jezebels on life's journey.

**John Schultz:** God tells him that he is “in the wrong desert.” He is told to “*go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus.*”

**R. D. Patterson:** God again dealt graciously with his prophet. He was to go back to the northern kingdom (v. 15), the place where he had veered off the track with God in his spiritual life (cf. Abram, **Gen. 13:3-4**; John Mark, **Acts 15:39**). Elijah still had work to accomplish for God.

- a. (:15b) Anoint Hazael  
*“and when you have arrived,  
you shall anoint Hazael king over Aram;”*
- b. (:16a) Anoint Jehu  
*“and Jehu the son of Nimshi  
you shall anoint king over Israel;”*
- c. (:16b) Anoint Elisha  
*“and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abel-meholah  
you shall anoint as prophet in your place.”*

**Wiersbe:** God was calling Elijah to stop weeping over the past and running away from the present. It was time for him to start preparing others for the future. When God is in command, there is always hope.

**August Konkkel:** The commission of Elijah is the pledge that conflict with Baal will end in victory over the house of Ahab (**19:15–18**). Anointing the kings of Aram and Israel is the harbinger of judgment on the nation for its political compromise and a purge of the Baal cult within Israel. The Arameans will eventually control all the territory on the east side of the Jordan, from the Arnon at the Dead Sea northward, all of Gilead and Bashan (**2 Kings 10:32–33**). Jehu, the successor to the Omride dynasty, carries out a total purge of the Baal cult and is rewarded with a dynasty of four generations, even though he does not institute pure Yahweh worship (**10:30–31**). The anointing of Elisha assures Elijah that the prophetic challenge will not end with him.

**Iain Provan:** A new order is to succeed the old, and it is this order that will bring about the final victory over Baal-worship. Victory will come, in other words, as a result of

political process—not through obviously spectacular demonstrations of divine power. It will arrive, not as a result of Elijah’s efforts, but through the efforts of others. Elijah’s role in the overall strategy is now clear. It is partly to fight, and he has done that well. But it is also partly (and now more importantly) to prepare the way for others. The Carmel event is only one event in a series that will stretch beyond his lifetime (cf. **2 Kgs. 8:7–15; 9–10**). God has other ways of working—some of which make Elijah’s God seem almost as nonexistent as Baal (a still small “voice” being only marginally noisier than no “voice” at all, cf. Hb. *qôl* in **18:26, 29**). The Lord also has servants other than Elijah (not least the seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed down to Baal or kissed him in veneration, **v. 18**; cf. **Rom. 11:1–6**). If the spectacular has not produced final victory, that is no reason for despair. For the overall strategy was always more long term and more subtly conceived than Elijah imagined. From the beginning it had involved the gentle but devastating whisper as well as the all-consuming fire, the quiet ways of God’s normal providence as well as the noisier ways of miraculous intervention. Elijah must be content with being part of the plan and not the plan itself.

### 2. (:17) Destroying the Baal-Worshippers

*“And it shall come about, the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu shall put to death, and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha shall put to death.”*

**Ellison:** I have never been impressed by the view that the command to anoint Hazael, Jehu and Elisha was the expression of God's disapproval of Elijah's flight from Jezebel, and that thereby his prophetic work was as good as terminated. He had a considerable period of activity still before him, and there is absolutely nothing in the story of his departure to justify such a conclusion. For Elijah to anoint those who were to carry on his work, whether he did it personally or by proxy, is rather to stress with what authority they would act, when they brought judgment and destruction on Israel.

**Peter Pett:** He named the names of the three agents through whom He intends finally to rid Israel of Baalism, and called on Elijah to anoint them, and secondly He emphasised that there were still a good number who had also heard, and would hear, the still, small voice. The point was not that the three would arise in the order indicated, but that YHWH would tackle the problem from three angles which would make sure that no one was missed. They would be dealt with either by external warfare at the hands of Aram, bringing judgment on the unbelieving in Israel, or by political cleansing by a Yahwist king, who would purge Israel of Baalism, or at the hands of His future prophet who would eventually take Elijah’s place.

### 3. (:18) Delivering the Faithful Remnant

*“Yet I will leave 7,000 in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal and every mouth that has not kissed him.”*

**Thomas Constable:** 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.

**John Whitcomb:** in spite of outward appearances, God is doing a work in the hearts of men – So has it ever been from Adam to the present: “*A remnant according to the election of grace*” (**Rom. 11:5**).

\* \* \* \* \*

### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What have been some of the roller coaster experiences of your Christian journey and ministry?
- 2) If Jezebel really wanted to kill Elijah, why did she issue this threat rather than just send soldiers to kill him?
- 3) How do we encourage Christian ministers who are discouraged?
- 4) Are we in the place where God wants us to be, involved in the ministry that He has for us?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** In the traditional Hebrew text the first word of verse 3 is a form of the verb *rā'āh* and may be rendered, ‘*And/then he saw,*’ or ‘*When he saw (that).*’ However, a few Hebrew manuscripts read a form of *yārē*, ‘*to fear, be afraid.*’ The LXX and derivative versions follow this latter reading. This reading (‘*Then he was afraid*’) seems to fit so naturally that most all modern English versions adopt it (e.g. niv, nasb, nrsv; the last does not even indicate ‘*he saw*’ as an alternative). These two verbs look very much alike, especially in the ‘imperfect’ verb form used here, and so can be easily confused. Which was likely original? How can we tell? Ask which reading better explains the other. That is, is it more reasonable to assume that ‘fear’ was original and was changed to ‘see’, or that an original ‘see’ was changed to ‘fear’? If ‘fear’ (*yārē*) were original we have a problem, for it fits so naturally after Jezebel’s threat in **verse 2** that we can’t imagine any scribe ever changing it to ‘see’ (*rā'āh*) and that reading then appearing in the bulk of Hebrew manuscripts. But if ‘he saw’ were original we can easily understand someone looking at that and thinking that the text must have meant to use the very similar looking ‘he was afraid.’ (At this point I am afraid to ask if you see that!) The upshot is that ‘see’ is more likely the true text.



Supposing then that *'he saw'* is the original reading, how does it fit the context, coming as it does between Jezebel's threat in **verse 2** and the following clauses of **verse 3** (*'he rose and went for his life'*)? We must remember **chapter 18**, where Yahweh, in living color and on turf known to be sacred to Baal, had publicly and irrefutably shown Baal to be the non-god he was; by both fire and rain Yahweh had proven he was the only real God—and the people had confessed as much (**18:39**). Ahab, of course, told Jezebel all about this and about Elijah's execution of the prophets of Baal (**18:40**). Then Jezebel sent her death-threat to Elijah (**19:2**). Hence Elijah saw that in spite of the Carmel Apologetic **nothing was going to change in Israel**; Jezebel was still wearing not only the pantyhose but the pants in the kingdom and calling the shots. Since he was not required to be meek meat under Jezebel's guillotine, Elijah left the kingdom, but not because he was afraid of dying. Rather,

“He wanted to die, for he was broken. He did not wish to die at Jezebel's hand, for that would be judged her victory—hence his flight. But south of the proverbial southernmost city of the southern kingdom, in the wilderness of Judah, where none would give Jezebel credit for his death—there he begged Yahweh to take his life.” [Allen]

I think Allen is right. Elijah was broken. But one can be broken without being psychotic.

When Elijah arrives at Beersheba he is roughly 100 miles south of Jezreel, in the Dixie of Judah, and surely secure from Jezebel's clutches. When he therefore goes a day's travel into the wilderness (**v. 4**), it can hardly be for fear of Jezebel. Instead of the death he pleads for, Yahweh sustains his life (**vv. 5–7a**; cf. **17:4, 9**), and the Angel of Yahweh himself suggests the impending journey to Elijah (**v. 7b**), which, in time, brings him to Horeb (**v. 8**). If we accept the traditional location in southern Sinai, Elijah is at Horeb some 200 miles south of Beersheba. Geography undercuts a good bit of the fear-interpretation. To use a very rough (American) analogy: if Jezebel is in Philadelphia, one could understand Elijah's fleeing to Washington, D.C.; but why go all the way to Raleigh, North Carolina, if you only want to get away from Jezebel? The map suggests we are **dealing with plan rather than panic**.

Elijah arrives at Horeb (**v. 8**), Moses' Place, Covenant Mountain. The Moses-Elijah parallels may not be tight but are nevertheless obvious. Horeb/Sinai was where the covenant was both given and broken . . . Both occasions focus on covenant business: in Exodus, covenant intercession by Moses (**chaps. 32–33**) leads to covenant renewal and restoration (**ch. 34**), whereas in 1 Kings, to anticipate, covenant accusation (**vv. 9–14**) results in covenant judgment and restriction (**vv. 15–18**). Such parallels suggest that at the very least we may be dealing with matters of redemptive-historical moment and not merely with a whining prophet. . .

Elijah claims he is upset for God's sake, for God's cause. The Hebrew [**v. 14**] underscores this by placing the emphasis on the direct objects, especially *'your altars'* and *'your prophets.'* Note that Elijah only mentions his own case as illustrative, as a



confirmation of the general Prophets' Liquidation Programme. It sounds like Elijah is charging Israel with apostasy rather than crying over a failed ministry. Indeed I think **verses 13–14** constitute a formal lawsuit against Israel. After the covenant Lord comes, he puts the formal question to the prosecutor (v. **13b**), who then levels the formal charges against the accused (v. **14**). In my view, **Elijah's mission at Horeb was to bring covenant accusation against Israel for breach of the covenant.** . .

This (vv. **15–18**) is Yahweh's response to Elijah's accusation (v. **14**). We might catch the flavor via a paraphrase. It is as if Yahweh says, 'You're absolutely right, Elijah! I agree with your assessment and your charges are true. Therefore, I am going to bring covenant judgment, and I want you to return and to set apart my instruments of judgment. And yet there will be a remnant that I will keep faithful.' Yahweh does not rebuke Elijah but agrees with him; he does not condemn Elijah but confirms his diagnosis! **Claus Schedl** is right on the money:

"The theophany is thus not meant to chide the prophet; quite the contrary, it is a full endorsement of his zeal in behalf of Yahweh's sole kingship."

the text is teaching that Yahweh is present especially in his **word** (which the following context will show to be a **word of judgment and of grace**). . .

Now let us trace the thread of the text: The 'voice' (*qôl*) of **verse 12b** appears again in **13b**, where the *qôl* asks Elijah the what-are-you-doing-here question. In **verse 9b** the same question had been asked by '*the word of Yahweh*'. I assume then that the 'voice' in **13b** is to be identified with the *word of Yahweh*. The following context seems to confirm this, for after the voice (*qôl*) asks the question in **13b** and Elijah answers in **14**, **verse 15** begins with '*Then Yahweh said to him,*' and proceeds to announce both judgment (vv. **15–17**) and grace (v. **18**). Perhaps we are to see a contrast: you may not find Yahweh in the spectacular explosions of 'nature', but you can be sure he is present in his quiet word given to his prophet(s), a word that directs history (vv. **15–17**) and preserves a people (v. **18**).

Much ink has been spilt arguing for a proper approach to and interpretation of **1 Kings 19**. This has been necessary because the passage has been—for the most part and in my view—**grossly misinterpreted**. One can understand this. We as readers seem to identify so readily with Elijah's situation and perhaps with how he must have felt that we are almost sure that we understand what's happening from the start. And so, almost immediately, we become **fixated on prophetic feelings rather than on biblical text**. I know. In my first pastorate I preached 'The path to spiritual depression' from this passage and offered useful psychological advice baptized in biblical narrative. But I have repented. And I have dragged you through pages arguing for a more excellent way. But does it all make any difference? Does the chapter provide teaching or only stir debate? Hence we must move on to the teaching and preaching points of the text, and I propose that our **covenantal' interpretation** yields richer applications than the usual 'psychological' approach.

Remember the drift of this study. I have agreed with **Ronald Barclay Allen** that Elijah was not terrified by Jezebel but broken by her unrepentant paganism and by her continuing power throughout the nation. Keep the redemptive-historical situation in mind, especially the significance of Horeb. Elijah was meeting God at Moses' Place; Yahweh's own nudge had directed him there. And Elijah's mission there was to bring accusation against Israel for ongoing breach of covenant. In light of this the text teaches

### **1. The limitations of evidence, or, the 'frustration' of revelation (vv. 1–3)**

Just because there has been clear proof on Carmel (**ch. 18**) doesn't mean Jezebel will receive that proof or that such clear evidence will change her. One can imagine the semi-apocryphal scene. Ahab mildly protests, 'But Jezebel, honey, when Elijah prayed to Yahweh, fire came down and zlurped up everything right there in front of our eyeballs!' The queen glares through mascara-laden lashes at Ahab and with that familiar derisive turn of Revlon-tended lips retorts, 'So?' This response surprises us if we have swallowed the education fallacy that pervades our culture and governments, i.e. get people the right information and it will change them.

### **2. The tenderness of God toward his desponding servants (vv. 9, 13)**

#### **3. The one holy passion that should stir God's servants (vv. 10, 14)**

Is he depressed? Is he despondent? I think so. Over what? Over Yahweh's interests—his covenant, his altars, his prophets. Such intensity and God-centeredness seem strange to us; indeed it exposes our frivolity by comparison.

### **4. The hiddenness of Yahweh's work and presence (vv. 9–14)**

I find it difficult to let go of the tantalizing contrast between Yahweh's not being 'in' the wind, earthquake, and fire, and his apparent presence in the quiet voice (vv. 11–12). Might this suggest that Yahweh will not be giving many dramatic, overt proofs of his reality, as at Carmel (ch. 18), now that such revelation has been officially rejected? Instead his presence and reality will primarily be seen in his ongoing work of judgment (vv. 15–17) and grace (v. 18), which through his voice and his word he has disclosed to his prophet (see Amos 3:7–8). The 'quietness' of Yahweh's work does not mean he is not at work, but rather that the kingdom of God has gone into its mustard-seed mode.

### **5. The stubbornness of the covenant-keeping God (v. 18)**

This climactic declaration puts a thrill into one's theological bones. '*And/but I shall leave seven thousand in Israel ...*' It is the Old Testament equivalent of Jesus' '*I will build my church*' (**Matt. 16:18**). Grace will have a remnant. The God of grace insists on it. Yahweh, so the text teaches, will always have a people, even an Israelite people (**Rom. 11:1–6**), to worship him upon the earth. He has decided that he will have a true people, and he will have them and keep them, and there is nothing any Jezebel can do about it. It is the infectious assurance, the defiant certainty, the holy dogmatism, of this text that keeps some of us on our feet.

**William Barnes:** Was Elijah a second Moses? Commentators are not reluctant to make such a comparison, especially in their discussions of the present passage of 1 Kings. Both Elijah and Moses were considered, of course, prophets par excellence, and both were singled out, for example, by the prophet Malachi at the end of the Minor Prophets scroll as particularly relevant in the last days (see **Mal 4:4–6**). But the similarities between Moses and Elijah in the present chapter of Kings are particularly impressive (cf. **Cogan** 2001:456–457; also **Dillard** 1999:54–55):

1. Both Moses and Elijah escaped into the wilderness, fleeing from non-Israelite rulers who were actively seeking their death, after each had brought about the death of subordinate(s) of that ruler (see **18:40; 19:1–8; Exod 2:11–15**).
2. Both Moses and Elijah at one point expressed their wish to die.
3. For both of these “prophets,” significant references are given to a period of “forty days and forty nights” (**19:8; Exod 24:18; 34:28**).
4. Moses took no food or water during his second stay on Mount Sinai (**Exod 34:28**); Elijah made his long trek to the mountain sustained only by the food he had eaten in the wilderness near Beersheba (**19:8**).
5. Elijah came to a cave on Mount Sinai (**19:9**), and was told to “stand before” Yahweh on the mountain as the deity “passed by” (**19:11**), just as Moses had stood “in the crevice of the rock” until Yahweh had “passed by” (**Exod 33:22**).
6. As Yahweh passed by, Elijah wrapped his face in his cloak (**19:13**); Moses was covered by Yahweh’s hand, and thus protected while Yahweh passed by (**Exod 33:22**).
7. The fire and thunder of Yahweh at Sinai (**Exod 19:18**; cf. **Exod 3:2**) were reenacted for Elijah (**19:11–12** of the present passage), although in Elijah’s case, those signs did not serve adequately to represent the deity (they certainly did serve in that capacity, however, in the previous chapter of 1 Kings!). As **Seow** (1999:144) puts it, “The point is made quite deliberately that God is not locked into any one mode of appearing.”
8. Less immediate, but nonetheless quite compelling, is the parallel between Moses and Elijah, both fierce servants of God who were not allowed to see the final fruit of their labors. Moses was eventually forbidden to enter the Promised Land, and Elijah did not personally experience the final triumph of Yahwism over Baalism in his lifetime; both had to trust that their successors (Joshua and Elisha, respectively) would meet with greater success.

**Ray Stedman: When God Does Nothing**

The unexpected reply shakes him and is it not true that most, perhaps, of the black moods of despair that grip us come at times when we have been disappointed in some result that we have expected? Some unexpected turn of events has caused us to lose faith - for the time being, at least. Things do not turn out as we hoped and, as a result, we hit rock bottom. We feel the dark cloud of gloom pass over our spirit and we are in the grip of this despondent attitude. That is almost always the immediate, external cause of despondency, disappointment, unexpected results. But it also reveals a deeper reason.

If you look beneath this account of Elijah, you can see that behind the unexpected

results and their affect upon him is a revelation, both to him and to us, of an incomplete trust in his own life. What Elijah was doing was going along with God, as long as God was doing what Elijah expected him to do. There was no doubt, as you read the previous chapter of the great victory on Carmel, that Elijah knew what God was going to do, that Elijah knew that God was going to answer with fire and follow it with rain from the sky. There is no shadow of doubt in his mind and heart as he goes through this confrontation with the powers of evil on Mount Carmel. He knows what God is going to do. The God of Elijah lives. But this event has shaken him, because he does not expect it. In other words, his faith was placed, not upon God, but upon his knowledge of God.

This is frequently the cause of our despondency, is it not? We discover that it is not that we are really reckoning upon God, the Adequate One, to do anything that He wants to do, but we are reckoning upon what we expect God to do and when He does not act the way we think he ought to act, our faith hits rock bottom. Now, there is the cause. I think we have put our finger here upon the major cause of despairing attitudes among Christians – not only the unexpected turn of events, but also, the unsuspected trust in ourselves.

Look at the characteristics of this. I think we will recognize them very easily. First of all, there was this fear, which is evidenced by the flight of Elijah. . .

Notice the second characteristic of despondency always, invariably, is this unreasonableness that accompanies it. Elijah finds himself under a broom tree, or a juniper tree, as the King James has it, and he says he wants to die. Yet, the reason he is running away is because he is afraid he will be put to death. What an unreasonable, inconsistent attitude! . .

Then a third mark here, evidence of this despondent attitude, is self-pity. Elijah says, It is enough; it is enough, which is simply an elegant way of saying he is fed up with the set up. He is tired of the whole situation. He feels put upon. He feels he has done his share. He has had all that he can take. He has reached the limit of his capacity. . .

The first step in God's program of resuscitation for this prophet here is to feed him and put him to bed. He meets the physical first. . .

The second step is *emotional*. **Verse 8** -- He went back to the place, which, even in its very associations, reminded him—every stone, every rock, every crag, every cave of the mountainside spoke in eloquent terms of a God Who cared and a God Who could do. . .

The third aspect of Elijah's cure and the essential one, of course, is *spiritual*. . . Elijah's great lesson is to come to a clear understanding of the processes of God's working and, in typical oriental fashion, God taught it to him through the parable of this scene here. . . God works when things, apparently, are at a standstill. Throughout the Scripture, you have again and again, this lesson driven into our hearts by these old stories that when

things seem to be utterly hopeless – nothing is happening – in the resources and activity of God, the greatest things of all are happening. . .

This is the great lesson of Elijah's, that when we come to the place where things seem to be going bad and nothing seems to be happening - these times that press great trials upon our spirit when things seem to be going quite counter to what we expect, we are to lift our eyes from the situation unto the Savior and reckoning upon His resources, remembering this account of Elijah - that God accomplishes His purposes and cannot be stopped.

TEXT: 1 Kings 20:1-43

TITLE: *AHAB CAN'T HELP HIMSELF – TRUSTING IN POLITICAL COMPROMISE*

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S GRACIOUS DEFENSE OF ISRAEL AGAINST TWO SYRIAN ATTACKS FAILS TO COMPEL OBEDIENCE FROM KING AHAB**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The amazing part of this story is the graciousness of the Lord to intervene on behalf of the Northern Kingdom and deliver them from two assaults by Syrian forces under King Ben-hadad. Surely King Ahab did not deserve such merciful treatment after he failed to stand up to Jezebel and repent of the nation's idolatry upon the Lord's dramatic demonstration of power and sovereignty directed against the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel in chapter 19. But King Ahab could not get out of his own way. Instead of trusting in the Lord for the future of the nation, he capitulated to King Ben-hadad and entered into a compromising political and economic treaty. He failed to cut off the head of Israel's enemy when the Lord provided the opportunity and even the mandate to do so. The prophetic parable of imminent judgment was the predictable response by the Lord.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** We must therefore realize how the Bible writer has arranged the last three chapters of 1 Kings. As he united **chapters 17–19** around the 'God war', so he combines **chapters 20–22** into another triad in which **each chapter emphasizes the failure of Ahab and how the word of God stands opposed to him**. Because of Ahab's spineless moderation, both Ahab and Israel stand under doom (**20:42**); because of his heartless oppression, his household will be exterminated (**21:21–24**); and because of his thickheaded obtuseness, his life is forfeit (**22:19–23, 29–38**). No other king receives such a literary battering from the sacred writer, but no other king the likes of Ahab had come along (**21:20, 25**; cf. **16:30, 33**). **Chapters 20–22** then intend to display **Ahab's repeated (and fatal) opposition to the word of Yahweh**.

**Donald Wiseman:** The history turns from that of Elijah to recount two wars in the campaign between Aram and Israel at Samaria (**20:1-21**) and Aphek (vv. **22-34**). Both accounts underline that this was the final opportunity for Ahab to show whether he would obey God's word through his prophet, and both stress the danger of punishment and reverse if the LORD's command was not carried out to the full. These narratives prepare for the death of Ahab and the abandonment of a rebellious Israel.

**Dan Bockenfled:** For the past few passages, we have been focusing on Elijah and how God has been using him and helping him understand the nature of God, but now, there is a shift in the narrative and the focus is on King Ahab.

**Peter Pett:** The prophetic author's interest, however, is not in the history of the period, but in the fact that after His revelation of Himself at Mount Carmel YHWH was making

clear that if only Ahab would turn back to YHWH with all his heart, YHWH would be able to deliver him from all his enemies.

**Mordechai Cogan:** The relations between Israel and Aram-Damascus, previously dealt with briefly in **1 Kgs 15:18–20**, are the subject of the present chapter and are narrated through the perspective of prophetic narration.

## **I. (:1-25) GOD DEFENDS ISRAEL AGAINST THE FIRST ATTACK BY SYRIA AT SAMARIA**

### **A. (:1-12) Preparations for Battle**

#### 1. (:1-6) Outrageous Demands of Ben-hadad

##### a. (:1) Siege Against Samaria to Secure the Trade Routes

*“Now Ben-hadad king of Aram gathered all his army, and there were thirty-two kings with him, and horses and chariots. And he went up and besieged Samaria, and fought against it.”*

**Thomas Constable:** 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.).

**Wiersbe:** Ben-hadad wanted to control the trade routes through Israel because he had lost the northern routes to Assyria, and he also wanted to be sure that Israel would provide men and weapons in case of an Assyrian invasion.

**Donald Wiseman:** The thirty-two kings would include minor tribal chiefs.

**Peter Pett:** This war would appear to have been occasioned by a refusal by Ahab to pay the tribute due under a vassalage treaty. Because of this Benhadad came with his allies to enforce the treaty, at which point Ahab submitted. But when Benhadad then tried to extract considerably more than was due, and to humiliate Ahab, Ahab resisted, and was promised by YHWH that victory would be his so that he would recognise YHWH for Whom He was. And the result was that he achieved a great victory. . . It was Benhadad who now controlled the trade routes, and had grown rich and powerful.

##### b. (:2-4) Seizure of Tribute and Members of the Royal Family Expected

*“Then he sent messengers to the city to Ahab king of Israel, and said to him, ‘Thus says Ben-hadad, 3 Your silver and your gold are mine; your most beautiful wives and children are also mine.’ 4 And the king of Israel answered and said, ‘It is according to your word, my lord, O king; I am yours, and all that I have.’”*

**The Pulpit Commentary:** Nothing reveals Ben-hadad's object more clearly than the mention of Ahab's wives. When we consider how jealously the seraglio of an Eastern prince is guarded, and how the surrender of the harem is a virtual surrender of the



throne (... **2 Samuel 16:21, 22** ...), and certainly a surrender of all manhood and self-respect, we see that his aim was to wound Ahab in his tenderest point, to humble him to the lowest depths of degradation, and possibly to force a quarrel upon him.

- c. (:5-6) Shocking Escalation of Demands = Seize Anything We Want  
*“Then the messengers returned and said, ‘Thus says Ben-hadad, Surely, I sent to you saying, You shall give me your silver and your gold and your wives and your children, 6 but about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants; and it shall come about, whatever is desirable in your eyes, they will take in their hand and carry away.’”*

## 2. (:7-8) Wise Counsel to Refuse the Outrageous Demands

*“Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land and said, ‘Please observe and see how this man is looking for trouble; for he sent to me for my wives and my children and my silver and my gold, and I did not refuse him.’ 8 And all the elders and all the people said to him, ‘Do not listen or consent.’”*

## 3. (:9-11) Undiplomatic Negotiations

*“So he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, ‘Tell my lord the king, All that you sent for to your servant at the first I will do, but this thing I cannot do.’ And the messengers departed and brought him word again. 10 And Ben-hadad sent to him and said, ‘May the gods do so to me and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people who follow me.’ 11 Then the king of Israel answered and said, ‘Tell him, ‘Let not him who girds on his armor boast like him who takes it off.’”*

The proverbial: “Don’t count your chickens before they hatch”

**Wiersbe:** his covetousness led to his defeat. In addition to taking the king’s wealth and the royal family, Ben-hadad wanted to send officers to search all the royal buildings and take whatever they wanted! Agreeing with this request was much too humiliating for proud Ahab, so he and his advisers refused to accept it.

**David Guzik:** The elders of Israel rightly saw that such surrender to Ben-Hadad and the Syrians was the first step to a total loss of sovereignty for Israel. If they wanted to remain a kingdom at all, they had to resist this threat.

## 4. (:12) Commitment to Do Battle

*“And it came about when Ben-hadad heard this message, as he was drinking with the kings in the temporary shelters, that he said to his servants, ‘Station yourselves.’ So they stationed themselves against the city.”*

Ben-hadad was not taking his enemy seriously. His judgment was impaired by his drinking and feasting.

## **B. (:13-14) Prophetic Intervention**

### 1. (:13) Implausible Military Victory Revealed

*“Now behold, a prophet approached Ahab king of Israel and said, ‘Thus says the LORD, Have you seen all this great multitude? Behold, I will deliver them into your hand today, and you shall know that I am the LORD.’”*

This victory was not due to any virtue on the part of Ahab or Israel; but to the Lord’s love for his people and desire to give them opportunity to repent. This victory had a specific divine goal in mind = to promote the knowledge of YHWH and loyalty to the covenant.

**MacArthur:** The victory would show Ahab that the Lord was in every respect the mighty God He claimed to be. Though the people and king of Israel had dishonored God, He would not utterly cast them off.

### 2. (:14a) Identity of the Military Leaders Revealed

*“And Ahab said, ‘By whom?’ So he said, ‘Thus says the LORD, By the young men of the rulers of the provinces.’”*

**Peter Pett:** Ahab had been sufficiently impressed by what had happened at Mount Carmel to listen, and he then asked the prophet by whom this deliverance was to take place. Who were those to be involved? The reply brings out YHWH’s sense of humour. Benhadad had demanded Ahab’s children, had he? Well, he could have them. The deliverance would be by ‘*the young men*’ (the word can also mean children) of the princes of the provinces, those not defiled by contact with the court and the Baalism of Samaria.

### 3. (:14b) Initiative to Engage the Enemy Revealed

*“Then he said, ‘Who shall begin the battle?’ And he answered, ‘You.’”*

## **C. (:15-21) Predetermined Victory for Israel**

### 1. (:15) Mobilizing the Troops

*“Then he mustered the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and there were 232; and after them he mustered all the people, even all the sons of Israel, 7,000.”*

**Thomas Constable:** The “young men [Heb. *na’ar*] of the rulers of the provinces” were apparently the servants of these rulers, since the Hebrew word elsewhere (**3:7; 11:17; 14:3, 17, 28; 18:43; 19:3**) describes young male servants (not elite soldiers). Thus God ordered a relatively weak force to oppose the Arameans initially, as in the past (**Judg. 7:7; 1 Sam. 17:33**), so that it would be obvious that He had granted the victory.

**Patterson and Austel:** The battle strategy appears to have been to send out the small but well trained advance party who could perhaps draw near to the Syrians without arousing too much alarm and then, at a given signal, initiate a charge that, joined by Ahab's main striking force, would both catch the drunken Arameans off guard and throw them into confusion. The plan was more successful than Ahab dared to imagine.

2. (:16-19) Exploiting the Poor Judgment of Drunken Ben-hadad

*“And they went out at noon, while Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the temporary shelters with the thirty-two kings who helped him. 17 And the young men of the rulers of the provinces went out first; and Ben-hadad sent out and they told him, saying, ‘Men have come out from Samaria.’ 18 Then he said, ‘If they have come out for peace, take them alive; or if they have come out for war, take them alive.’ 19 So these went out from the city, the young men of the rulers of the provinces, and the army which followed them.”*

**MacArthur:** The battle strategy was to send out the young leaders who could perhaps draw near to the Syrians without arousing too much alarm and then, at a given signal, initiate a charge, joined by Ahab's main striking force that would catch the drunken Syrians off guard and throw them into confusion. The glorious victory, won so easily and with such a small force, was granted so that Ahab and the people would know that God was sovereign.

3. (:20-21) Winning a Decisive Victory

a. (:20) Dominating the Individual Duels – but Allowing Ben-hadad to Escape

*“And they killed each his man; and the Arameans fled, and Israel pursued them, and Ben-hadad king of Aram escaped on a horse with horsemen.”*

**Peter Pett:** It is possible at this stage that recognising in the young men the usual offer of a 'trial by combat' in which chosen men of each side would first fight in order to see whose side the gods were on, Benhadad's captains sent out the equivalent number of young men to do battle.

b. (:21) Slaughtering the Fleeing Arameans

*“And the king of Israel went out and struck the horses and chariots, and killed the Arameans with a great slaughter.”*

**D. (:22-25) Postscript**

1. (:22) Israel Warned to Prepare for Rematch and Not Get Over-Confident

*“Then the prophet came near to the king of Israel, and said to him, ‘Go, strengthen yourself and observe and see what you have to do; for at the turn of the year the king of Aram will come up against you.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** If, as stated, hope comes by a word of promise, **verse 22** shows that security comes through a word of warning. The same prophet approaches Ahab again, giving him a vital piece of intelligence: next year the king of Aram will be coming up against you again. Victory is sweet but vigilance is essential. Ben-hadad will be back; prepare to meet him. Here is more grace, Yahweh's protective revelation to shield his people.

**Peter Pett:** God was now making a determined attempt to win Ahab away from the worship of Baal and the syncretism of Jeroboam to a true worship of Him, and to make him realise that his only hope lay in full submission to Him as YHWH. Thus he sent a prophet to keep Ahab in touch with events, and to remind him of His ever present eye. This prophet advised Ahab to build up his fighting capabilities, and to be careful what he was about, because within a year he could be sure that Benhadad would be back. He was seeking to teach Ahab continual dependence.

**Thomas Constable:** "*The turn of the year*" (v. 22) could mean the coming around again of any time of the year, but, since kings usually resumed warfare in the spring and early summer, that time of the year is probably in view here. 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.

#### 2. (:23-25) Syria Prepares for Rematch Based on False Confidence

*"Now the servants of the king of Aram said to him, 'Their gods are gods of the mountains, therefore they were stronger than we; but rather let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. 24 And do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put captains in their place, 25 and 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, and surely we shall be stronger than they.' And he listened to their voice and did so."*

**David Guzik:** The idea of the localized deity was prominent in the ancient world. They felt that particular gods had authority over particular areas. Because the recent victory was won on hilly terrain, the servants of the king of Syria believed that the God of Israel was a localized deity with power over the hills, not the plains.

## **II. (:26-34) GOD DEFENDS ISRAEL AGAINST THE SECOND ATTACK BY SYRIA AT APHEK**

### **A. (:26-27) Preparations for Battle**

*"So it came about at the turn of the year, that Ben-hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. 27 And the sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned and went to meet them; and the sons of Israel camped before them like two little flocks of goats, but the Arameans filled the country."*

**MacArthur:** Though several towns in Israel bore the name Aphek, the one mentioned here probably lay about 3 mi. E of the Sea of Galilee, N of the Yarmuk River. . .

Compared to the massive herd of Arameans covering the land, Israel looked like two little goat flocks. Goats were never seen in large flocks or scattered like sheep; hence the description of the two compact, small divisions.

**Peter Pett:** It was not likely that Benhadad would take this reverse lightly. While his forces had fled in panic with the result that he had forfeited all the gains and tribute that he had been expecting, and had lost a good number of men, he was still militarily strong, and now he had the further motive in that there was a humiliation to wipe out and a rebellious one-time vassal to subdue. Thus he began to prepare himself for a second attempt on Israel.

## **B. (:28) Prophetic Intervention**

*“Then a man of God came near and spoke to the king of Israel and said, ‘Thus says the LORD, Because the Arameans have said, “The LORD is a god of the mountains, but He is not a god of the valleys; therefore I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you shall know that I am the LORD.”’*

**Peter Pett:** But there was one difference, and that was that YHWH was with Israel, and intended to make quite clear that the foolish words of the Aramaeans about His limitations were nonsense. This is emphasised by the repetition of the words from **1 Kings 20:23**. This is spelled out to Ahab with the assurance that the folly of their words would be made clear when Ahab gained the victory. Then he would know truly Who YHWH was, which was the whole point of the exercise.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Consider the argumentation. By the coming victory Yahweh will both show goodness to Israel and get glory for himself. The latter is the primary concern in **verse 28**. Syrian stupidity has distorted the truth about Yahweh, casting him in the image of a humdrum pagan deity. When Israel levels them on level ground Yahweh shall have exposed their theological nonsense for what it is. After disaster number two (**vv. 29–30**) what an opportunity Syrians have to see the truth, if they will. However, the man of God stresses the impact the prophecy and the victory should have upon Israel: *‘and you shall know that I am Yahweh.’* Frequently, it is God’s professed covenant people who most need convinced of Yahweh’s power and omnipotence. We may stand within Israel’s camp but keep lapsing into Syrian modes of thinking.

## **C. (:29-30) Predetermined Victory for Israel**

### 1. (:29) Engagement after Seven Days

*“So they camped one over against the other seven days. And it came about that on the seventh day, the battle was joined, and the sons of Israel killed of the Arameans 100,000 foot soldiers in one day.”*

**Thomas Constable:** The Arameans greatly outnumbered Israel (**v. 27**), but God promised Ahab victory so he and all Israel, as well as the Arameans, would know that

Yahweh was the true God (v. 28). 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 1,000 times that number that day.

2. (:30) Escape of Ben-hadad after Destruction by Collapsing Wall

*“But the rest fled to Aphek into the city, and the wall fell on 27,000 men who were left. And Ben-hadad fled and came into the city into an inner chamber.”*

**Rice:** 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.

**D. (:31-34) Postscript**

1. (:31-32a) Scheming by the Servants of Ben-hadad Seeking Mercy

*“And his servants said to him, ‘Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings, please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will save your life.’ 32 So they girded sackcloth on their loins and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel and said, ‘Your servant Ben-hadad says, Please let me live.’”*

**August Konkel:** A rope on the head indicates servitude, either as a prisoner of war or as someone who has given up his rights to one who has the power of life and death.

2. (:32b-34) Sparing Ben-hadad = Colossal Blunder by Ahab

*“And he said, ‘Is he still alive? He is my brother.’ 33 Now the men took this as an omen, and quickly catching his word said, ‘Your brother Ben-hadad.’ Then he said, ‘Go, bring him.’ Then Ben-hadad came out to him, and he took him up into the chariot. 34 And Ben-hadad said to him, ‘The cities which my father took from your father I will restore, and you shall make streets for yourself in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria.’ Ahab said, ‘And I will let you go with this covenant.’ So he made a covenant with him and let him go.”*

**David Guzik:** Ahab felt a kinship towards this pagan king with exceedingly pagan ideas of God. Perhaps Ahab wanted Ben-Hadad and Syria’s friendship as protection against the powerful and threatening Assyrian Empire. If so, he looked for friends in the wrong places.

**Thomas Constable:** 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 (v. 33). This was an honor. 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.

**Wiersbe:** Ben-hadad immediately entered into a treaty with Ahab and gave back to Israel the cities his father had taken (**I Kings 15:20**). He also gave Ahab permission to sell Israel's produce and wares in the market at Damascus, which amounted to a trade agreement. That the king of Israel should make such a treaty with the enemy is remarkable, but Ahab had no convictions (except those of his wife) and always took the easy way out of any situation. Furthermore, he needed the support of Aram in case the Assyrians should decide to move south. This treaty lasted three years (**22:1**).

### **III. (:35-43) NO DEFENSE AGAINST THE SPINELESS POLITICAL DEALMAKING OF FAITHLESS KING AHAB**

#### **A. (:35-37) Preparation for Confronting King Ahab = Parable in Action**

*“Now a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to another by the word of the LORD, ‘Please strike me.’ But the man refused to strike him. 36 Then he said to him, ‘Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as you have departed from me, a lion will kill you.’ And as soon as he had departed from him a lion found him, and killed him. 37 Then he found another man and said, ‘Please strike me.’ And the man struck him, wounding him.”*

#### **B. (:38-40) Prophetic Ruse**

*“So the prophet departed and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with a bandage over his eyes. 39 And as the king passed by, he cried to the king and said, ‘Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and behold, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, Guard this man; if for any reason he is missing, then your life shall be for his life, or else you shall pay a talent of silver. 40 And while your servant was busy here and there, he was gone.’ And the king of Israel said to him, ‘So shall your judgment be; you yourself have decided it.”*

**David Guzik:** In the prophet's story, he was unfaithful in guarding something that was entrusted to him. Ahab rightly judged that he should be held responsible for his failure to guard what was entrusted to him.

**MacArthur:** *a talent of silver.* This was about 75 lbs. of silver, more than a common soldier could afford and for which debt he would face death.

#### **C. (:41-42) Pronouncement of Judgment**

*“Then he hastily took the bandage away from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him that he was of the prophets. 42 And he said to him, ‘Thus says the LORD, Because you have let go out of your hand the man whom I had*



*devoted to destruction, therefore your life shall go for his life, and your people for his people.”*

**Thomas Constable:** The obedient 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**). 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.

**Peter Pett:** Then the prophet made clear that he had been speaking about the king himself. He in his blindness had let go the very man whom YHWH had devoted to destruction. His judgment thus returned upon himself. He had failed YHWH and he and his people would have to pay the price of his failure.

**John Gates:** the spiritual principle set forth is that believers must not extend toleration, even in the name of mercy, to the forces of Satan. It had lain within the power of Ahab to end forever the life and death struggle between Syria and Israel. Now with Ben-hadad free, the struggle would continue, with disastrous results.

**Donald Wiseman:** An acted parable is used to lead Ahab to realize his inconsistency and guilt in going against God's express will and postponing judgment on Ben-Hadad. This was to cost Israel dearly in death and destruction (cf. **2 Kgs 10:32**) and lead to the final fall of the Northern Kingdom. The literary device of the story to bring conviction or error can be compared with Samuel's condemnation of Saul (**I Sam. 13:14-30**), and Nathan of David (**2 Sam. 12:1-13**). It is the responsibility of a prophet to direct one who errs to the right interpretation of events and so lead to self-judgment. Here we are reminded that not even a king is above the law but is subject to divine-justice (**v.42**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Yahweh here labels Ben-hadad, literally, *'the man of my destruction [herem],'* Ahab had spared the man Yahweh meant to destroy; he had been *'busy here and there'* (**v. 40**) preening his image as the moderate, temperate, reasonable victor, and had let Yahweh's prisoner escape. Hence the destruction designed for Ben-hadad will fall upon Ahab and his people. This is the import of Yahweh's word. Ahab begins by sparing his enemy (**vv. 31-34**) and will end by destroying his people (**v. 42**).

#### **D. (:43) Postscript = Retreat of Sulking King Ahab**

*“So the king of Israel went to his house sullen and vexed, and came to Samaria.”*

**Thomas Constable:** This section is similar to the one that recorded Saul's failure to follow Yahweh's command that also resulted in God cutting him off (**1 Sam. 13:13-14**). The parallels between Saul and Ahab are remarkable throughout this record of Ahab's reign.

**Warren Wiersbe:** Instead of repenting and seeking the Lord's forgiveness, Ahab went home and pouted like a child.

**MacArthur:** Ahab was resentful and angry because of the Lord's reaction to his actions (cf. **21:4**).

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#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) The goodness and mercy of the Lord is designed to bring men to repentance. Why was Ahab so blind and stubborn?
- 2) Where have you seen the Lord demonstrate His power in your weakness – just as he used the young men here to accomplish victories after the manner of David vs. Goliath?
- 3) How does the privilege of access to divine revelation (note all of the prophetic messages addressed to King Ahab) increase one's accountability before the Lord?
- 4) When have you responded to the Lord's discipline with a childish attitude of sullen sulking?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dale Ralph Davis:** General Structure - [I adopted this basic structure for the passage]

- Syrian threat (against Samaria), **1–12**
  - Prophetic intervention, **13–14**
  - Israelite victory, **15–21**
    - Aftermath: Prophetic counsel, **22**
    - Syrian theology, **23–25**
- Syrian threat (at Aphek), **26–27**
  - Prophetic intervention, **28**
  - Israelite victory, **29–30**
    - Aftermath: Syrian probing, **31–32a**
    - Royal clemency, **32b–34**
- Preparation: dangerous word, **35–37**
- Confrontation: prophetic ruse, **38–40**
- Disclosure: divine decision, **41–42**
- Aftermath: royal response, **43**

**Bill Kynes: A Failed King and a Great God**

**Chapters 20, 21, and 22** all portray the failure of Israel's king to live faithfully before the Lord. . .

The Lord's interactions with Adam, with Israel, and with the king of Israel help us see who God is and who we are, and, therefore, help us to see what we should do. . .

Ben-hadad's army was a formidable force—so things look bad for King Ahab. He appears trapped in his capital city— a city, I remind you, where he had built a temple to worship Baal. . .

Ahab accepts this insult to his independent rule and recognizes his vassal status— he is servile, compliant, groveling, and obsequious. And already we are suspicious— Ahab makes no attempt to seek the Lord Yahweh in this crisis— Israel's almighty God who had displayed his great power on Mount Carmel. In fact, Ahab treats Ben-hadad as his "lord." And things only get worse in his dealings with this bully from the north. Not content with just an assertion of control, Ben-hadad wants to escalate the conflict.

I don't just want your submission, I want your stuff, and I want it now! You've got 24 hours to comply or else!

We don't expect a prophet of the Lord— Most of them had been wiped out by Jezebel, the others had been hiding in caves, and Elijah was somewhere, but this was not Elijah. He wouldn't be described as "*one prophet*" as this one is. . .

There is no good reason why should the Lord deal with Ahab in this way because God's grace never has an explanation outside of his own desire to display something of his own character. . .

This leads to the prospect of a renewed conflict, and in the next scene, each king receives counsel from his advisors. Again unsolicited, the prophet comes to Ahab and urges him to prepare for a new attack in the spring. While Ban-hadad's officials offer military strategy based on a theological assessment. . .

Now at this point, Ahab has got to be feeling really good about himself. I mean, think about it. He was making Israel great again! With not one but two great military victories, he has secured the peace with a hated enemy. He had bargained back captured land and signed a new trade deal with great prospects for significant economic expansion. And on top of that, Ahab had acquired a reputation as merciful monarch. What more could he want?

It was a common ploy of the prophets when approaching a king with a bit of bad news to tell him a story that draws a response that is then turned back upon the king. . .

We've seen how Ahab fails as Israel's king— He fails to seek the Lord, and to know him as the one true God. He fails to trust him and to live righteously before him in obedience to his word. He fails to deal decisively with evil in the form of this king, as the Lord had commanded Israel to do.

<https://cornerstonefree.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/1-Kings-20-Sermon-2020.pdf>

### Dan Bockenfeld: Infinite Mercy

It is amazing to note how God defeated the Arameans. They were handily routed by an inferior force. The Israelites had no tactical advantage over the Arameans, but God gave them victory over their enemy. Again, we come to the question of why is God doing this. Why did the Lord give this victory to Ahab and Israel? They abandoned him and committed horrible acts of sin against him, but God showed **mercy** upon them. We even know that God knows everything, so he knows what Ahab is going to do next and set his enemy free. Ahab is going to disobey God's will one more time. I am certain that God knows that, but he still helps Ahab out. It doesn't seem fair or productive. All the work that God does to show that he is God is just set aside after the victory.

This is the Lord's **infinite mercy**. God's mercy is so vast that it can cover over a multitude of sin. God said to Moses, "*I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion.*" (**Romans 9:14, Exodus 33:19**) It is up to God to choose who he wants to have mercy on. This might sound arbitrary. It almost looks like God can just pick and choose whomever he wants to show mercy to. It sounds almost like a corrupt politician, bending the rules to suit his own agenda. However, God is good and just. Even though God shows mercy on whomever he wants, he still makes sure that justice is still served.

In this passage, Ahab sees an opportunity with Ben-Hadad's humiliating defeat. He makes a treaty with him and sets him go. It almost looks like Ahab is having mercy on Ben-Hadad, but really, it is for a self-seeking purpose.

What I really want to focus on here is not Ahab or Ben-Hadad, but God and his mercy. God's mercy truly knows no bounds. No matter how bad you are or what evil that you have done, God is still willing to show mercy. Ahab is a prime example. Ahab is an evil dude who is just oblivious about God. It's like he majored in going against the Lord, and yet, God is willing to show his mercy to him. Now, you might be thinking that Ahab doesn't deserve God's mercy and he should just fry in hell for what he did. He needs to be punished for his actions. It is not fair for God to show this mercy to him. You would be right. God is not fair. The Bible never calls God fair. God is good. He is righteous. He does not show favoritism. God is just, but nowhere is God referred to as fair, at least how we know fair. When Jesus hung on the cross, two criminals flanked him. One of them hurled insults at Jesus and the other repented of his actions and asked Jesus to remember him. Jesus, on the cross, forgives the one criminal right before his death. The man was able to live a complete life of sin and repented on his deathbed. How fair is that? He was shown so much grace.

God's mercy is truly infinite. No matter how bad you might be, no matter how much evil you might have done, God's mercy is greater still. The Universe might be 91 billion light years across, and all of it could be filled with sin, but God's mercy knows no bounds. God loves you. He will do and has done everything to make sure that you that. Some people see more mercy and grace than others but that is because it is a longer road back to God for them. It is not about how much grace and mercy someone

receives, but the fact that they are brought back to God. And, until the day they die, each person is given countless chances to receive God's mercy.

There is a song called Drops in the Ocean and part of it says:

*If you wanna know how far my love can go*

*Just how deep*

*Just how wide*

*If you wanna see how much you mean to me*

*Look at my hands*

*Look at my side*

*If you could count the times I'd say you are forgiven*

*It's more than the drops in the ocean*

[https://itubf.org/sermons/2015/03/08/infinite\\_mercy.html](https://itubf.org/sermons/2015/03/08/infinite_mercy.html)

### **Bob Deffinbaugh: The Life and Times of Elijah the Prophet— Israel's Deliverance**

Whether or not Ahab was given direct revelation about Ben Hadad, he was given very clear general orders by God in the law; lest he not understand the application of this law, he need only look at the transgression of Saul in this same regard. God takes disobedience seriously.

I want you to notice that the Scriptures clearly identify the actions of Saul, and later Ahab, as disobedience. They knew better, or they should have. In the case of Ahab, he not only had the law itself, but a lesson from history to guide him. How sad that he did not listen and learn. Here, as in Saul's case, we see a very important principle: **PARTIAL OBEDIENCE IS DISOBEDIENCE.**

The irony of it all is that disobedience is carried out in the guise of compassion. Both Agag and Ben Hadad were brutal killers and men who were opposed to God and His people. Here were men who, if permitted, would have killed the Israelite kings who showed kindness to them.

An important lesson we should learn here is to **beware of sin cloaked in the garb of compassion.** A parent who has a disobedient child may refuse to discipline that child as they should, doing so in the name of compassion or "unconditional love." The church at Corinth knew that one of its members was living in immorality—with his father's wife. They knew they should have "*handed the guilty sinner over to Satan,*" but they did not, and they were proud of it! How could this be? I would imagine they congratulated themselves for their "compassion." I was reminded of this great Old Testament text, which speaks of God's compassion:

*5 And Yahweh descended in the cloud and stood with him there; and he made proclamation of Yahweh by name. 6 And Yahweh passed by before him and proclaimed: "Yahweh, Yahweh, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, and abounding in loyal love and faithfulness, 7 keeping loyal love for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression and sin. But he by no means leaves the guilty unpunished; visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children*

*and on the children's children, to the third and fourth generation”*  
(**Exodus 34:5-7**, emphasis mine).

God is the supreme example of **compassion**. No one has ever come close to the compassion He has shown to His people. But notice that His compassion does not leave guilt unpunished. He does not look the other way and refuse to deal with the guilt of our sin. In His great compassion, He sent His Son, Jesus Christ, to bear the guilt and penalty for our sins, so that we may experience His mercy and grace. Our guilt was punished in the person of Jesus Christ. Guilt must always be punished. Ahab's "compassion" was not godly compassion; it was self-serving. For this, Ahab would pay with his own life. The penalty Ahab should have meted out for Ben Hadad would now be meted out on him. Both he and Israel would suffer for his disobedience. **Beware of disobedience carried out in the name of compassion.**

*1 “When the LORD your God brings you to the land that you are going to occupy and forces out many nations before you—Hittites, Girgashites, Amorites, Canaanites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, seven nations more populous and powerful than you—7:2 and he delivers them over to you and you attack them, utterly annihilate them; make no covenant with them nor show them compassion” (Deuteronomy 7:1-2, emphasis mine).*

There is a lesson for us to learn here regarding our response toward sin. **We are to put to death the deeds of the flesh:**

*8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. 9 We know that since Christ was raised from the dead, he is never going to die again; death no longer has mastery over him. 10 For the death he died, he died to sin once for all; but the life he lives, he lives to God. 11 So you too consider yourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:8-11).*

*10 But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is your life because of righteousness. 11 Moreover if the Spirit of the one who raised Jesus from the dead lives in you, the one who raised Christ from the dead will also make your mortal bodies alive through his Spirit who lives in you. 12 So then, brothers and sisters, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh 13 (for if you live according to the flesh, you will die), but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body you will live (Romans 8:10-13; cf. also 13:14; 2 Corinthians 4:11; Colossians 3:5).*

When it comes to sin, we must be brutal and merciless in doing away with it, or anything which promotes it:

*27 “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ 28 But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to desire her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. 29 If your right eye causes you to sin, tear it out and throw it away. It is better to lose one of your members than to have your*

*whole body thrown into hell. 30 If your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better to lose one of your members than to have your whole body go into hell” (Matthew 5:27-30, emphasis mine).*

Is this not very close to the admonition God gave to Cain in **Genesis 4**?

*6 Then the LORD said to Cain, “Why are you angry, and why is your expression downcast? 7 Is it not so that if you do what is right, you will be fine? But if you do not do what is right, sin is crouching at the door, and its desire is to have you, but you can have the mastery over it” (Genesis 4:6-7).*

Sin’s desire is to kill us. Our duty is to kill it, to mortify the flesh, and to reckon ourselves dead to sin. To seek to coexist with sin is to nurture that which seeks our death and destruction.

What an important lesson we have here regarding the lessons we should learn from history. It would seem that Ahab had little regard for what God had done for His people, Israel. He seems to have had little or no regard for God’s law, which prescribed his duty toward the Syrians in general and Ben Hadad in particular. He seems not to have heeded the lessons of history, which would have spared him from this folly and disaster. Surely it is not too much to expect a king to read the inspired Scriptures regarding those kings who have gone before him. If he had, he could have avoided repeating the sin of Saul and facing virtually the same consequences.

How sad it is that we now live in a day when history is not regarded as highly as it should be! Now, justification is made for revising history to make it conform to our current beliefs and practices. To embrace this view of history is to wipe out all the lessons of the past. From Ahab’s folly, let us learn to heed the lessons of history as they illustrate the blessings for those who obey God’s Word—and the disaster for those who disobey.

Once again, we are reminded that God is never hindered by the impossible. Indeed, once again God has orchestrated this confrontation in such a way as to give Israel little human hope so that His sovereign hand may be seen in this victory. We should see from this great divine intervention of mercy and grace what we should recognize everywhere—God’s grace is not His response to our piety or worthiness. It is His unmerited favor, in spite of our sin, and it is done for His glory. It is not our goodness which prompts God to act, but His desire to display His glory. It was not that Israel was deserving of divine deliverance, but that the Syrians had made this a battle of the gods. The Lord—He alone is God—and He demonstrates this for His glory and for the good of His people. To God be the glory!

<https://bible.org/seriespage/12-life-and-times-elijah-prophet-israel-s-deliverance-1-kings-201-43>

**August Konkell:** Know that I am Yahweh.

Twice the prophetic message to Ahab is that he will learn the significance of the name of God: “*You will know that I am the Lord*” (**1 Kings 20:13, 28**). This signifies victory



after the manner of holy war, one in which God joins the army as a soldier. In the first instance God brings triumph through a small band led by untrained junior officers, normally assistants to the regional commanders (v. 14). Ahab is to prepare for battle by mustering his troops; seven thousand is a small but complete force (v. 15). In the second instance the Aramean army is forced into retreat to Aphek, where the soldiers who manage to escape are crushed under the rubble of falling walls (v. 30). Ben-Hadad begins with demanding the surrender of Ahab, but ends with imposing on himself humiliating concessions in order to earn his own release. The prophetic word declares these wars to be of the same order as the great battles of the past in which the few triumph over the many under divine direction (e.g., **Judg. 7:1–8**). Victory comes through allegiance to the name of Yahweh.

Learning to know the name was at the heart of the Exodus story. God spoke to Moses saying, “*I am the Lord*” (**Ex. 6:2**). Before that time God had been known as the *Almighty* (*šaddāy*), but from that time on the Israelites understood the meaning and significance of the name *Yahweh* (**6:3**). The name was identified with the covenant promise that God would give the land of Canaan to his people (**6:4**). The name was associated with redemption, bringing the oppressed people out of bondage into the land of their inheritance (**6:5–6**). God’s word of the covenant was: “*I will take you as my own people, and I will be your God*” (**6:7**). “*I am the Lord*” not only makes confession of redemption; it signifies the oath of the promise (**6:8**).

The battle against Pharaoh will teach the meaning of the name as revealed to Israel. Pharaoh had a logical question for Moses from an Egyptian point of view: “*Who is the Lord, that I should obey him?*” (**Ex. 5:2**). Pharaoh had no reason to believe this God would be a threat to his own divine status. His question set the motif for the narrative to follow; the whole story of the plagues and the crossing of the Reed Sea was the answer to this question. Egyptians and Israelites learned the meaning of the name as judgment came against Egypt in the redemption of Israel (**7:5, 17; 8:18; 10:2; 14:4, 18; 16:12**). At the Song of the Sea the Israelites triumphantly declared their victory in the name of Yahweh; he is the “*man of war*,” he delivered them by casting the Egyptians into the sea (**15:3–6**). The sign of the Sabbath was a fundamental confession of the covenant, setting this people apart from all the others (**31:13**); the distinction of this sanctification was to know what it meant for God to say, “*I am the Lord*.” The divine provision through forty years in the desert taught Israel the name, so they would be prepared to enter the land of promise (**Deut. 29:5**).

The power of God’s name is as effective in bringing judgment against Israel as it is in victory. The call of Ezekiel fell during that brief period between the first exile of Nebuchadnezzar (598 b.c.) and the fall of the city of Jerusalem (586 b.c.). His task was to deal with the recalcitrant and corrupt leadership in Jerusalem, who treated the covenant promises as unconditional guarantees. Convinced that the city was theirs for exploitation, they used the temple as the place to plot their schemes (**Ezek. 11:1–5**). It fell to Ezekiel to bring the message of doom: Their corpses would fill the streets; God was wielding the swords that came in the hands of the Babylonians (**11:6–8**). The God of Ezekiel was the cosmic king whose chariot moved effortlessly and instantly to the

farthest corners of the earth, but in the exercise of his authority over the nations, his focus was always on Israel.

From beginning to end, God is passionate about his relationship with his people and is willing to stake his reputation on their fate or fortune. Ezekiel repeatedly uses the covenant formula: “*I will be your God and you will be my people*” (**Ezek. 11:20; 14:11; 34:24, 30–31; 36:28; 37:23**). His prophecy leaves the impression that when Yahweh acts in judgment against his people, it is not primarily to punish them but that they and the world may know him. Ezekiel uses the redemptive declaration from the Exodus story over seventy times: “*You will know that I am the Lord.*” God’s primary goal in bringing down foreign powers is not to destroy the enemies of Israel (such as Gog and his hordes), but to manifest his greatness, glory, and holiness.

TEXT: 1 Kings 21:1-29

TITLE: AHAB'S ABUSE OF POWER IN SEIZING NABOTH'S VINEYARD

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE LORD'S JUSTICE CATCHES UP TO AHAB AND JEZEBEL FOR THEIR ABUSE OF POWER IN KILLING NABOTH IN ORDER TO SEIZE HIS VINEYARD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

How many of the Ten Commandments can Ahab and Jezebel break in this short story? Here we have a case study regarding **Covetousness** – but other commands are violated as well. The depths of their depravity are exposed in this selfish land grab of poor Naboth's family vineyard. Naboth stands on his biblical convictions but is quickly removed from the scene by a wicked abuse of power on the part of Jezebel who shows no remorse or even a conscience. Ahab is more than just complicit in this sordid affair as he salivates at the prospect of taking over this coveted vineyard just outside the palace grounds. Elijah is dispatched to courageously confront Ahab and pronounce judgment.

**Rice:** The story of Naboth warns against the use of piety and legality to cloak injustice. It teaches that those who support the plots of a Jezebel, whether by silent acquiescence or overt complicity, share her crime. It is a resounding affirmation that injustice touches God, that *'as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me'* (**Matt. 25:40, 45**), that in the cosmic order of things there is a power at work that makes for justice. And the story attests that there is awesome power in the conscience and protest of the individual servant of God.

**David Guzik:** **Alexander Maclaren** noted three types of dangerous characters in this chapter:

- (1) Ahab, who was wicked and weak.
- (2) Jezebel, who was wicked and strong.
- (3) The Elders of Jezreel, who were wicked and subservient.

**William Barnes:** Villainy may take the guise of weak-willed petulance, wily maneuverings, or strong-armed brazenness; villains must and will meet their just deserts, but repentance is available to all, no matter how far from God they may happen to be. Our God is always and ever a most faithful God, and it is he who remains sovereign in all situations.

**Wiersbe:** Ben-hadad as the man Ahab should have killed, but he set him free; and Naboth was the man Ahab should have protected, but Ahab killed him! When you sell yourself to do evil, you call evil good and good evil, light darkness and darkness light (**Isa. 5:20**).

## **I. (:1-7) COVETOUS CRAVING OF AHAB FOR NABOTH'S VINEYARD**

### **A. (:1-3) Coveters Pursue Their Selfish Cravings**

#### 1. (:1) Salivating – Dreaming of Acquiring

*“Now it came about after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard which was in Jezreel beside the palace of Ahab king of Samaria.”*

**Peter Wallace:** Think of the symbolism here. Every day Ahab has to look out his window at this Israelite vineyard— this symbol of the permanence of the blessing of Yahweh upon his people. And he wants to turn it into a vegetable garden— a symbol of Egypt—of transience. I doubt that Ahab was thinking of this, but the author of Kings probably was. Ahab is the antichrist, who is leading an assault on the inheritance of Israel, turning the Promised Land into a waste land.

#### 2. (:2) Scheming – Wheeling and Dealing

*“And Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, ‘Give me your vineyard, that I may have it for a vegetable garden because it is close beside my house, and I will give you a better vineyard than it in its place; if you like, I will give you the price of it in money.’”*

**David Guzik:** This account begins as a simple attempted real estate transaction. Ahab wanted the vineyard near his royal house in Jezreel so that he might have it as a vegetable garden. He was willing to trade for the land or to pay for it.

**Provan:** When one realizes that Israel is sometimes portrayed in the OT as a vine under God's special care (e.g., **Isa. 3:13-15**; cf. **Mark 12:1-12** and parallels; **John 15:1-17**), then it becomes clear that Ahab's desire to replace a vineyard with a vegetable garden is meant to be seen as symbolic of a deeper desire. This is a king who wants to make Israel like Egypt [see **Deut. 11:10**], as did that earlier king [i.e., Solomon] with his foreign wives (cf. ... **3:1**; **4:21-28**; **9:10-14**; **10:14-29**).

#### 3. (:3) Stymied – Frustrated by Insurmountable Biblical Conviction

*“But Naboth said to Ahab, ‘The LORD forbid me that I should give you the inheritance of my fathers.’”*

**MacArthur:** Naboth's words implied that trading or selling his property would be a disregard of the law and thus displeasing in God's eyes (cf. **1Sa 24:6**; **26:11**; **2Sa 23:17**). The reason was that the vineyard was his ancestral property. The Lord, the owner of all of the land of Israel, had forbidden Israelite families to surrender ownership of family lands permanently (**Lv 25:23-28**; **Nu 36:7-9**). Out of loyalty to God, Naboth declined Ahab's offer.

**Peter Wallace:** Naboth believed God's promises. And he was content with that inheritance. Content enough that he did not fear the power of the king. Therefore,

Naboth died in faith—murdered by Jezebel’s henchmen. He deserves a place among the heroes of **Hebrews 11:37**, those who were stoned to death for their faith. Are you content in your inheritance? We don’t have a piece of real estate as the token of our inheritance today! We have something better! We have the Holy Spirit. Naboth had the glory of God dwelling in a temple of stone in the middle of the land. We have the glory of God dwelling in a temple of living stones, dwelling in our hearts by faith.

**B. (:4) Denial of Covetous Cravings Results in Childish Pouting**

*“So Ahab came into his house sullen and vexed because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him; for he said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers.’ And he lay down on his bed and turned away his face and ate no food.”*

**Peter Pett:** Ahab is behaving like a petulant small boy, an indication that he is unworthy to be king. [Cf. **20:43**]

**C. (:5-7) Abusers of Power Have a Quick Fix to Covetous Cravings**

1. (:5-6) Investigating the Problem

a. (:5) What’s Up?

*“But Jezebel his wife came to him and said to him, ‘How is it that your spirit is so sullen that you are not eating food?’”*

b. (:6) Rejection of Covetous Cravings

*“So 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 a vineyard in its place. But he said, I will not give you my vineyard.’”*

**Peter Pett:** Note how bluntly he puts Naboth’s reply. It gives the impression that Naboth was just being awkward, when it has previously been emphasised that in fact he was being loyal to his family and to YHWH.

2. (:7) Eliminating the Problem

*“And Jezebel his wife said to him, ‘Do you now reign over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be joyful; I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.’”*

**II. (:8-16) CALCULATED CONNIVING OF JEZEBEL TO KILL NABOTH AND SEIZE HIS VINEYARD**

**A. (:8-14) Abusers of Power Use Unscrupulous Means to Achieve Their Goal**

1. (:8) Deceptive Communication

*“So she wrote letters in Ahab’s name and sealed them with his seal, and sent letters to the elders and to the nobles who were living with Naboth in his city.”*

**Mordechai Cogan:** Though he is depicted as a passive bystander to the plot against Naboth, Ahab was implicated by Jezebel's use of his name and his authority in carrying out her design.

## 2. (:9-10) Detailed Unscrupulous Instructions

*“Now she wrote in the letters, saying, ‘Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people; 10 and seat two worthless men before him, and let them testify against him, saying, You cursed God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.’”*

**Provan:** Every legal system can become the tool of politicians, if the values of those responsible for it have been sufficiently corrupted.

**John Schultz:** The suggestion that the council proclaim a day of fasting makes the whole deal a godless mockery. Fasting suggests invoking God's Name and seeking His will. Jezebel had no qualms using God for the achievement of her own evil purposes. . . . Jezebel orders them to employ ‘scoundrels’ to give false testimonies. The fact that they obeyed made them scoundrels themselves. The word ‘scoundrel’ is the translation of the Hebrew ‘sons of Belial,’ meaning ‘sons of Satan.’

## 3. (:11-13) Docile Lackeys Who Will Carry Out Unscrupulous Instructions

*“So the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who lived in his city, did as Jezebel had sent word to them, just as it was written in the letters which she had sent them. 12 They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people. 13 Then the two worthless men came in and sat before him; and the worthless men testified against him, even against Naboth, before the people, saying, ‘Naboth cursed God and the king.’ So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death with stones.”*

**William Barnes:** Being executed “outside” the town would avoid contamination by contact with the dead (**Lev 24:13–14, 23; Num 15:35–36**). If the procedure detailed in **Deut 17:2–7** was followed here, the accusers (here, the “two scoundrels” of **21:10**) would have had to throw the first stones.

**Christian Cheong:** Injustice thrives because of two things – **man's WICKEDNESS and man's WEAKNESS.**

- The wickedness of Jezebel and the weaknesses of the elders and nobles.
- Jezebel's scheme went on like clockwork. We read nothing of any protest or any attempted defense of Naboth from the ELDERS AND NOBLES from his town.
- Everyone played right along. No one took a stand. They feared the consequences.

## 4. (:14) Diabolical Results

*“Then they sent word to Jezebel, saying, ‘Naboth has been stoned, and is dead.’”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Did you notice a certain heartlessness about the way **verses 8–14** read? I don't mean the writer himself was so, but that the way he writes up the account conveys a sense of the heartlessness of the deed. Look over **verses 8–14** again. See how matter-of-fact it all is. Here is what the queen wrote; here is what her toadies did. Just the hard facts, that's all. All that mattered was that Naboth was dead (a fact mentioned five times in **vv. 13–16**). **God's people must expect to suffer injustice in this world.**

**Mordechai Cogan:** Though the letter of instructions had borne the seal of the king, the elders reported back to the queen; obviously, they knew who had penned the letters.

## **B. (:15-16) Abusers of Power Revel in Their Spoils**

### 1. (:15) Excitement of Jezebel in Reporting the News to Ahab

*“And it came about 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.’”*

**Carl Greene:** The final scene of this first section which encompasses **vs. 15, 16** has Ahab walking down to Naboth's vineyard in order to lay claim on it. Upon this closer examination, we see this is a complex story. One that presents varying degrees of evil whose net effect is murder of a human being, and theft from God. It is these degrees of evil that trace how the organized and bureaucratic power of a king, and yes, government can be dangerous. What began with a pouting king, led to the telling of half-truths, to the manipulation of others lower in the hierarchical structure... the elders and scoundrels in this case ... to the perversion of religion and holiness for political gain, and finally to the plotting and execution of murder and theft from God. In Naboth's story, we see how a certain kind of power has been let loose with the resulting effect of polluting an entire community. Guilt in this case is universal, for it incorporates the whole.

### 2. (:16) Excitement of Ahab in Taking Possession of the Vineyard

*“And it came about when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.”*

**Thomas Constable:** The elders and nobles of Jezreel were under Jezebel's thumb (**v. 11**). They were not faithful to Yahweh. They probably could not have been to stay in office under Ahab. Jezebel also executed Naboth's sons (**2 Kings 9:26**). 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**).

## **III. (:17-29) COURAGEOUS CONDEMNING OF AHAB AND JEZEBEL FOR THEIR ABUSE OF POWER AS ELIJAH PROCLAIMS THE LORD'S JUSTICE**

### **A. (:17-19) Responsibility of Confronting Ahab Assigned to Elijah**



1. (:17-18) Commissioning of Elijah to Confront Ahab in the Vineyard

*“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18 ‘Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, who is in Samaria; behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth where he has gone down to take possession of it.’”*

**Thomas Constable:** 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.

2. (:19) Condemnation of Ahab for His Culpability

a. Exposing Ahab’s Culpability

*“And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, Have you murdered, and also taken possession?’”*

b. Picturing the Lord’s Condemnation

*“And you shall speak to him, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD, In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth the dogs shall lick up your blood, even yours.’”*

**David Guzik:** because of Ahab’s sorrow and repentance at the end of the chapter, God relented from this judgment and instead brought it upon Ahab’s son (in **2 Kings 9:24-26**) as the LORD said He would in **1 Kings 21:29**.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** We mustn’t allow our quandary over the timing of Yahweh’s justice to eclipse our comfort over the fact of it; indeed, the way Yahweh takes up the cudgels here for his wronged people is what, in part, makes him such an attractive God.

**Donald Wiseman:** The fulfilment of prophecy is sometimes by stages. Here it was partially fulfilled by the dead body of Ahab being exposed at Samaria (**22:38**) and then, due to the deferment promised by God (v. 29), when the body of his son Joram was left on Naboth’s ground (**2 Kgs 9:25–26**).

**B. (:20-26) Revelation of Divine Condemnation Proclaimed to Ahab**

1. (:20) Condemnation Brought by Elijah against Ahab

a. Elijah Viewed as Ahab’s Personal Enemy

*“And Ahab said to Elijah, ‘Have you found me, O my enemy?’”*

**Wiersbe:** Previously, Ahab called Elijah *“the troubler of Israel”* (**18:17**), but now he makes it more personal and calls the prophet *“my enemy.”* Actually, by fighting against the Lord, Ahab was his own enemy and brought upon himself the sentence that Elijah pronounced.

- b. Elijah Acting as the Designated Judicial Representative of the Lord  
*“And he answered, ‘I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do evil in the sight of the LORD.’”*

**August Konkel:** Ahab’s response to Elijah betrays knowledge of his own guilt: *“So you have found me, my enemy!”* (21:20). Elijah is Ahab’s enemy because the latter has violated his responsibility as a king under the covenant. Elijah describes Ahab’s guilt for what it is: *“You have sold yourself to do evil”* (v. 20). Greed has led Ahab into the sin of murder and theft, so there is none who can be compared to him (v. 25). Though Jezebel is an accomplice in his crime, Ahab is still culpable as the instigator of her actions. Murder and theft are the results of desecrating the covenant (v. 26), a manifestation of his disrespect for God and the relationships that are divinely ordained.

2. (:21-22) Condemnation of Calamitous Death against Ahab and His Family

*“Behold, I will bring evil upon you, and will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, both bond and free in Israel; 22 and 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 because you have made Israel sin.”*

**David Guzik:** This was a severe judgment against anyone, in particular against a king. A king’s legacy was in his posterity succeeding him on the throne, and here God announced an end to the dynasty of Omri (Ahab’s father). His dynasty would come to a dead-end, just like the dynasties of Jeroboam and Baasha.

3. (:23-24) Condemnation of Humiliating Death against Jezebel and the Royal Family

- a. (:23) Humiliation of Jezebel in Death

*“And of Jezebel also has the LORD spoken, saying, ‘The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the district of Jezreel.’”*

- b. (:24) Humiliation of the Royal Family in Death

*“The one belonging to Ahab, who dies in the city, the dogs shall eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of heaven shall eat.”*

4. (:25-26) Condemnation Due to Extreme Wickedness

- a. (:25) Evil of Yielding to the Influence of Jezebel

*“Surely there was no one like Ahab who sold himself to do evil in the sight of the LORD, because Jezebel his wife incited him.”*

**John Schultz:** In spite of this repentance, Ahab went down in Israel’s history as the king *“who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the Lord.”* His repentance did not wipe clean his past slate.

- b. (:26) Evil of Idolatry after the Pattern of the Pagan Amorites  
“And he acted very abominably in following idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD cast out before the sons of Israel.”

**C. (:27-29) Respite in Judgment Due to Repentance of Ahab**

1. (:27) Repentance of Ahab

“And it came about when Ahab heard these words, that he tore his clothes and put on sackcloth and fasted, and he lay in sackcloth and went about despondently.”

**Peter Pett:** When Ahab heard these words he was genuinely moved. His heart was torn, something which he symbolised by tearing his clothes. And he divested himself of his royal robes and dressed in sackcloth, and went without food, and lay down before YHWH in sackcloth, and began to reform himself. Sackcloth was the clothing of the very poor, and was rough on the skin, especially sensitive royal skin. It was seen as a way of humbling oneself. Fasting (going without food in order to denote repentance) was another way of demonstrating sorrow. ‘*Going tenderly*’ probably represents a temporary change of attitude and a willingness to consider YHWH’s Laws and walk in them (being careful how he walked).

2. (:28-29) Respite in Judgment

“Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29 ‘Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days, but I will bring the evil upon his house in his son's days.’”

**Wiersbe:** Later events proved that Ahab’s repentance was short-lived, but the Lord at least gave him another opportunity to turn from sin and obey the Word. How much more evidence did Ahab need? But the influence of his wife couldn’t easily be broken, for when Ahab married her, he sold himself into sin.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How do you evaluate your own life along the spectrum of Covetousness to Contentment?
- 2) What price are you willing to pay for standing firm on biblical convictions?
- 3) Why are so many people in today’s culture put off by such pronouncements of severe judgment as we see in this passage?

4) What do you find amazing about the opportunity for repentance afforded to King Ahab at this point in his life?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Peter Pett:** The story of Naboth's Vineyard is introduced here in order to illustrate how grasping and inward-looking Ahab had become, and how greatly he was manipulated by his evil wife Jezebel, leading on to the prophecy by Elijah that proclaims his demise and the demise of his house, something which begins to come about in **chapter 21**. Central to the story is the right of every Israelite to hold his family's property, given to them by YHWH, in perpetuity. It was one of the cardinal statutes of Israel. And to retain that land gave the family great prestige. The evil of Jezebel is especially illustrated in the setting up at her instigation of false and lying witnesses, followed by the cold-blooded murder of an innocent man, something in which she also involved a number of others causing them also to disobey the Law of YHWH. Her pollution was thus spreading among the leaders of Israel, causing them to ignore the covenant. It is a reminder of the direction in which Baalism was taking Israel, and goes on to explain that this was why YHWH's judgment was coming on Ahab. Despite all YHWH's appeals, and the goodness that He had shown to Ahab, Ahab demonstrates that he was still far from YHWH and His ways in his inner heart.

**Mordechai Cogan:** Concerning **land ownership**, traditional law protected the rights of the individual against the alienation of family property in perpetuity through the **law of Jubilee (Lev 25)**; in the absence of a male heir, provision was made for female inheritance of ancestral land in order to guard against its transfer outside the tribe (**Num 36**). In all of these matters, the king had no right of confiscation or preemption. From the Naboth case, however, it does seem that the property of convicted criminals (or perhaps only the property of criminals guilty of lèse-majesté) was transferable to the crown.

**James Mansfield: The Man Who Wouldn't Give Up the Inheritance of His Fathers**  
Naboth was a man who stood in the way of officialdom. Naboth was a nuisance to those who were in charge. And Naboth was simply removed. It didn't matter what the Word of God said. It didn't matter that they were a people of God. They didn't refer to the Word of God. They just removed Naboth out of the way because he was the problem as far as they were concerned. Here was a man who was unwilling to give up the inheritance that God had given him to a wicked king. He stood his ground and he paid the price. . .

Now, the first thing I want to leave with you tonight is that the Christian's standard of behavior must always be governed by God's Word. . .

Secondly, Christians are sometimes called to pay the price of upholding God's Word. . .

Thirdly, will you notice that God will always be vindicated? God will always be vindicated. No matter whether people flout his Word or not, his Word will always prevail. It must, for it is God's immutable Word. It is unchangeable. "*Heaven and earth may pass away, but my Word,*" says God, "*will never pass away.*" It is more permanent than this earth. It is more permanent than the sky above us. . .

Not everything is revealed to us, but what we know is that despite Ahab's wickedness the Lord did acknowledge Ahab's repentance.

### **Curt Arend: Covetous Murder and God's Justice**

#### **I. Introduction (Ps. 115; Rom. 1:18-32)**

#### **II. The Wicked are Greedy and Never Satisfied – vv. 1-4**

A. Ahab covets his neighbor's property, vv. 1-3 (**Lev. 25:23; Num. 36:7; Deut. 11:10; Matt. 10:28**)

B. Ahab pouts when he does not get his way, vv. 4

#### **III. The Righteous Often Suffer at the Hands of the Wicked, vv. 5-16**

(**Rev. 2:10; 3:10; 1 Peter 4:12**)

A. Jezebel challenges Ahab's despondency, vv. 5-7 (**Prov. 28:15**)

B. Depraved Jezebel devises a scheme to frame and murder Naboth, vv. 8-14 (**Ps. 64:6; Jer. 17:9**)

C. Heartless Ahab takes possession of the vineyard, vv. 15-16 (**2 Kings 9:26**)

D. Application (**Isa. 5; Matt. 4:9; Acts 2:23; Rev. 6:9-11; Lk. 18:7**)

#### **IV. The Lord is Faithful to Intervene and Bring Justice to His Wronged People, vv. 17-26**

A. Elijah is dispatched to the scene, vv. 17-19

B. Justice is dispensed to Ahab and his household, vv. 20-26 (**1 Kings 16:4; Pro. 27:6**)

#### **V. God Extends Mercy as Ahab humbles Himself, vv. 27-29**

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/111609134150.pdf>

### **Bruce Goettsche: The Lust for More**

A father was walking down the street with his two small sons, both of whom were crying loudly. A neighbor passing by inquired, "What's the matter? Why all the fuss?" The father responded, "The trouble with these lads is what's wrong with the world. One has a piece of candy and the other wants it!"

This is the kind of situation we in **1 Kings 21**. The King, Ahab, saw a beautiful vineyard next to his summer castle and wanted it. His desire for what someone else had led him to engage in despicable actions. An entire community was compromised, a man was murdered, and Ahab came face to face once again with the prophet Elijah. . .

Jezebel was guilty of forgery, injustice, deception, religious perversion (in charging him with blasphemy), murder, and theft. And all of this to get Ahab a piece of land he wanted. . .

Ahab, the proud and wicked King, actually adopted a posture of repentance. He believed Elijah, and we suspect, on some level, really was sorry for what had taken place. I think it is a mistake to conclude that Ahab became a believer but he did respond to the Lord's declaration. As a result, God extended a measure of mercy to Ahab and said the punishment would be postponed until Ahab's son was on the throne.

Practical Applications:

**First**, obedience is sometimes costly. We don't really know the whole story about Naboth but it does seem that he was a man that tried to do what is right. I suppose he could have found a way to justify selling the family vineyard to Ahab. He might have even found a way to capitalize on Ahab's lust for more and made a nice little profit for himself. But that is not what he did. He stood firm on the Word of God.

**Second**, Riches do not satisfy; faithfulness brings satisfaction.

The Bible talks frequently about contentment. The 10th Commandment warns us of covetousness (the passionate desire for what another has). When we believe riches and stuff will make us happy two things happen,

We dishonor God. The lust for stuff begins to control us. We start to view everything as a means to an end. Sometimes we even view our faith, our giving and our service not as a way to show love to God but as a way to get God to give us the payoff we desire. Possessions become our God.

We find happiness illusive. Happiness is always just out of reach because we will never have "enough". The person who is imprisoned by the lust for more will always require something more before they can find happiness.

**Third**, There is a warning that there is no end to the sin that people can justify. Once our desires dictate our behavior rather than the Word of God, we are in trouble. We will be shocked at how calloused a heart can become.

**Fourth**, people around us influence us more than we realize (**v. 26**) Our text tells us that Ahab was wicked and he was urged on by his wife Jezebel. God told the Jews that they should not marry those from pagan lands. Ahab didn't listen. Perhaps he thought God didn't mean him. Maybe he thought it was an old-fashioned law that no longer applied. Perhaps he thought Jezebel would change.

**Fifth.** Sin will be dealt with. We see examples of God's judgment throughout the Bible. God may not always judge immediately but he sends us these examples of notorious people so that we will know that He does indeed deal with wickedness.

**Finally,** The mercy and grace of God is extended to any who will receive it.



TEXT: 1 Kings 22:1-40

TITLE: *THE DEATH OF AHAB ACCORDING TO THE WORD OF GOD*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PROPHETIC WORD OF TRUTH ALWAYS HITS ITS TARGET**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This passage brings us to the sad conclusion of the life of King Ahab – just as the Word of God promised. The contrast between the multitude of false prophets and the one true prophet points to the need for discernment in evaluating those who claim to speak the mind of God. There are differing perspectives towards the truth adopted by the main players in this scene. The Word of God is elevated as the only reliable standard for judging truth claims. Ahab tried to dodge the Word of God; but in the end the seemingly random arrow was actually the Word of God hitting its intended target and accomplishing God’s decreed will.

**Peter Pett:** Ahab’s life has been one of continual contact with prophets of YHWH as YHWH has sought to win him back to true obedience. Indeed that is the only reason why it has been portrayed in such detail, for the prophetic author’s concern has been to demonstrate that the final fall of both Israel and Judah occurred in spite of all YHWH’s attempts to prevent it. And now Ahab’s life will end with a description of one final conflict with a prophet of YHWH, a conflict which illustrates the fact that Ahab’s previous repentance had only been temporary, and that he had soon fallen back into his old ways.

**William Barnes:**

“In this story we see just how recalcitrant human beings can be. Here is Ahab, a man who has personally witnessed the manifestation of God’s power, who has heard the word of the Lord through several prophets, and, despite his sins, has experienced the grace of God when he expresses penitence. Still, he does not seem to understand what it is that God demands. He has little understanding of the nature of God. He has a personal agenda that he is determined to carry out. So he musters all his resources. He gets his subordinates and allies to do his bidding and does not hesitate to manipulate the religious establishment to support his questionable goals. He ignores what he knows to be the truth and suppresses any voice of dissent. He even tries to thwart God’s will by deceit in order to achieve his goal. Ahab is a model of what we can become when we are not attentive to the will of God.” (Seow 1999:166)

But, as Seow himself goes on to point out, the will of God is often not easy to discern! As is the case here, we may be confronted with competing truth claims, which can only be verified or falsified unequivocally after the event. Certainly, majority opinion may well prove misleading, and feel-good messages can be positively pernicious. And as

**Seow** points out there always will be those “who are all too ready to pander to the powerful.... Perhaps we should listen especially carefully when the word makes us uncomfortable” (**Seow** 1999:166).

And there is yet more to this. Our God can be very tricky, too! As **Seow** puts it, “God may not fit our preconceived image of unimpeachable goodness. The passage jolts us into the realization that such a notion of deity, ironically, is too limiting for God. Such a god would be an idol, a god of our own creation.... The God of the Bible is a sovereign deity who oversees all that goes on in the world, darkness as well as light, woe as well as weal (**Isa 45:7**).... The sovereign God will use whatever means necessary to bring about divine will—whether in judgment or in salvation. (**Seow** 1999:166–167)

This, I submit, is the basic message of the “*hardening of the heart*” passages in Exodus (as even the Philistines ironically recognize in **1 Sam 6:5–6**). This is also, I submit, the difficult teaching found in **Job 42:2–6**. **God is absolutely sovereign, but at times, inscrutable.** And this is the message of the present passage. King Ahab may attempt to bypass his God, but God may choose to bypass him, too. For it is not only Ahab who knows about “lying spirits.” In short, it may well be God’s will (for us) not to know God’s will. In any case, to God be the glory!

## **(:1-4) THE TARGET OF THE ALLIANCE BETWEEN THE KINGS OF JUDAH AND ISRAEL WAS THE RESCUING OF RAMOTH-GILEAD FROM SYRIA**

### **A. (:1-2) The Forming of the Alliance**

#### 1. (:1) Historical Background

*“And three years passed without war between Aram and Israel.”*

**MacArthur:** Israel had peace for 3 years following the two years of war with Syria described in **20:1-34**. During this peace, Ben-hadad, Ahab, and 10 other kings formed a coalition to repel an Assyrian invasion. Assyrian records described the major battle fought at Qarqar on the Orontes River in 853 B.C. Though Assyria claimed victory, later events show that they were stopped from further advance southward at that time. With the Assyrian threat neutralized, Ahab turned his attention to the unfinished conflict with Syria.

#### 2. (:2) High Stakes Summit Meeting

*“And it came about in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel.”*

**Peter Pett:** The visit of Jehoshaphat to Israel may have been simply a ceremonial one, or it may have been to do with trading arrangements. Or it may even have been with the venture that follows in mind. Whichever way it was he was clearly invited to the council meeting which Ahab held with a view to his plan to regain Ramoth-gilead.

**Wiersbe:** Jehoshaphat's son was married to Ahab's daughter, so Jehoshaphat had to be friendly toward Ahab and help him fight his battles. He was disobeying the Lord when he took this step (**2 Chron. 19:1-3**), but one compromise often leads to another. As the descendant of David, Jehoshaphat should have kept his distance from Ahab and never allowed the Davidic line to mingle with that of Ahab.

## **B. (:3-4) The Focus of the Alliance**

### 1. (:3) Key City Still Controlled by Syria

*“Now the king of Israel said to his servants, ‘Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are still doing nothing to take it out of the hand of the king of Aram?’”*

**MacArthur:** Ramoth-gilead was a Levitical city E of the Jordan River in Gilead, on the N border of Gad the home of Jephthah (**Jdg 11:34**) and a key administrative center in Solomon's kingdom (**4:13**). It seems to have been one of the cities that Ben-hadad should have returned to Israel (**20:34**).

**John Schultz:** During Jehoshaphat's visit Ahab brings up the matter of Ben-Hadad's failure to fulfill his promise of returning Ramoth Gilead to Israel. The king of Judah offers his cooperation in terms of providing troops and armament. But he suggests consulting the Lord before finalizing the plans.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** True, Ramoth-gilead belonged to Israel. But shekels probably weighed more heavily than rights in swaying Ahab's policy. Ramoth-gilead (probably Tell Ramith) stood twenty-five to thirty miles east of the Jordan, astride the north-south King's Highway leading to Damascus in the north. A road also ran westward from Ramoth-gilead to Beth-shan and other points west of the Jordan. Incense and spice caravans trucked through Ramoth-gilead. That meant whoever controlled the site collected 'caravan transit revenues'. In short, it's a shame to have a turnpike running through a place if you aren't sitting in the toll booth.

### 2. (:4) Kindred Spirits in Conducting a Military Campaign to Regain the City

*“And he said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?’ And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.’”*

## **I. (:5-28) TWO PARALLEL INQUIRIES TARGETING A “GO-NO-GO” DECISION FROM GOD REGARDING THE MILITARY CAMPAIGN**

### **A. (:5-14) Inquiry of Jehoshaphat, King of Judah –**

#### **Wanted His Initiatives to be Corroborated by the Truth**

##### 1. (:5-6a) Inquiry Directed Towards the 400 False Prophets

*“Moreover, Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, ‘Please inquire first for the word of the LORD.’ 6 Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said to them, ‘Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle or shall I refrain?’”*

King Jehoshaphat had already made up his mind regarding his course of action before consulting the Word of the Lord. So he was looking for the Word of God to back up his initiatives. That prejudices his inquiry.

**Peter Pett:** From their reply ('*Lord*' not YHWH) it is clear that these were mainly not prophets of YHWH. They were probably mainly prophets of Baal or Asherah, which have already been mentioned as consisting of such numbers (**1 Kings 18:19**), those slaughtered by Elijah having been replaced. Others of them (like Zedekiah) may have been prophets from the syncretistic sanctuaries at Bethel and Dan, half Yahwist and half Baalist. They were, however, all agreed that he should go ahead because '*the Lord*' would deliver it into their hands. It was the common practise among such prophets to say what would please the king. But they saw their prophecies as doing more than this. The belief was that their 'inspired words' would help to bring about what was predicted. They considered that the more they 'prophesied' the more the chance of success.

2. (:6b) Unanimous Approval

*"And they said, 'Go up, for the Lord will give it into the hand of the king.'"*

3. (:7) Dissatisfaction Regarding the Counsel

*"But Jehoshaphat said, 'Is there not yet a prophet of the LORD here, that we may inquire of him?'"*

4. (:8-9) Soliciting the Counsel of the Hated Prophet

*"And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'There is yet one man by whom we may inquire of the LORD, but I hate him, because he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. He is Micaiah son of Imlah.' But Jehoshaphat said, 'Let not the king say so.' 9 Then the king of Israel called an officer and said, 'Bring quickly Micaiah son of Imlah.'"*

Micaiah = "*Who is like the Lord?*"

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Ahab hated Micaiah; he hated the word he spoke. Why? He could not stomach the frankness of the word, its candor. The king's fixation, however, was not upon what was true or false but upon what was supportive or non-supportive.

5. (:10-12) Throne Scene: Emphatic Assurance -- Deceptive Counsel to the Kings of Israel and Judah Falsely Attributed to the Word of God

*"Now the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah were sitting each on his throne, arrayed in their robes, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets were prophesying before them. 11 Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made horns of iron for himself and said, 'Thus says the LORD, With these you shall gore the Arameans until they are consumed.' 12 And all the prophets were*

*prophesying thus, saying, 'Go up to Ramoth-gilead and prosper, for the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.' ”*

**David Guzik:** Zedekiah used a familiar tool of ancient prophets – the object lesson. He used horns of iron to illustrate the thrust of two powerful forces, armies that would defeat the Syrians. Zedekiah had the agreement of 400 other prophets (all the prophets prophesied so).

This must have been a vivid and entertaining presentation. We can be certain that every eye was on Zedekiah when he used the horns of iron to powerfully illustrate the point. It was certainly persuasive to have 400 prophets speak in agreement on one issue. No matter how powerful and persuasive the presentation, their message was unfaithful.

#### 6. (:13-14) The True Prophet Stands Alone on the Word of God

*“Then the messenger who went to summon Micaiah spoke to him saying, ‘Behold now, the words of the prophets are uniformly favorable to the king. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak favorably.’ 14 But Micaiah said, ‘As the LORD lives, what the LORD says to me, that I will speak.’ ”*

**Constable:** Like Elijah, Micaiah was willing to stand alone for God against hundreds of false prophets (v. 14; cf. 18:22). Micaiah had stood before Ahab many times before (v. 8). This time he told the king what he wanted to hear sarcastically (v. 15). Ahab's reply was also sarcastic (v. 16); He had never had to tell Micaiah to speak the truth in Yahweh's name.

**Peter Pett:** This was the difference between true prophecy and false prophecy. False prophecy was an attempt to make the gods do what the prophet wanted. True prophecy conveyed the mind of YHWH.

**John Gates:** Here was a prophet who was above mercenary considerations, who would not “tailor” his message to suit the situation. He bore the Lord’s message, and that only would he declare. This prophet would not compromise himself as Zedekiah and the others had so willingly done.

### **B. (:15-28) Inquiry of Ahab, King of Israel – Hated the Truth and Resented Having to Hear It**

#### 1. (:15a) Inquiry Directed Towards Micaiah, the True Prophet of God

*“When he came to the king, the king said to him,  
‘Micaiah, shall we go to Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?’ ”*

#### 2. (:15b) Sarcastic Approval

*“And he answered him, ‘Go up and succeed,  
and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king.’ ”*

**John Schultz:** Most Bible scholars believe that Micaiah repeated the false prophets' words in a tone of voice that made them sound unbelievable, thus ridiculing their prediction. **The Pulpit Commentary** observes: "As Ahab's inquiry is the echo of the question of ver. 6, so is Micaiah's response identical with the answer of the prophets. He simply echoes their words, of which, perhaps, he has been informed by the eunuch. There was an exquisite propriety in this. The question was insincere; the reply was ironical (cf. ... **1 Kings 18:27**). Ahab is answered '*according to the multitude of his idols*' (... **Ezekiel 14:4**). He wishes to be deceived, and he is deceived. No doubt Micaiah's mocking tone showed that his words were ironical; but Ahab's hollow tone had already proved to Micaiah that he was insincere; that he did not care to know the will of the Lord, and wanted prophets who would speak to him smooth things and prophesy deceits (... **Isaiah 30:10**)."

Whether it was Micaiah's tone of voice or facial expression, Ahab knew the truth, which he hadn't wanted to know. And when Micaiah prophesied that the king's campaign would be victorious he knew that it would not be. Ahab didn't need false prophets to deceive him; he deceived himself.

3. (:16) Dissatisfaction Regarding the Counsel

*"Then the king said to him, 'How many times must I adjure you to speak to me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?'"*

4. (:17-18) Despising the Counsel of the Hated Prophet

*"So he said, 'I saw all Israel Scattered on the mountains, Like sheep which have no shepherd. And the LORD said, These have no master. Let each of them return to his house in peace.' 18 Then the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Did I not tell you that he would not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?'"*

**John Gates:** A picture of hopelessness, confusion and despair.

5. (:19-23) Throne Scene: Certain Disaster -- Authoritative Judgment from the Lord Delivered by the True Prophet

*"And 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 Him on His right and on His left. 20 And the LORD said, Who will entice Ahab to go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And one said this while another said that. 21 Then a spirit came forward and stood before the LORD and said, I will entice him. 22 And the LORD said to him, How? And he said, I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. Then He said, You are to entice him and also prevail. Go and do so. 23 Now therefore, behold, the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has proclaimed disaster against you."*



**Peter Pett:** Micaiah then explained the meaning of his parable. He very much saw God as the ‘first cause’ of everything, simply because He was sovereign over all things. He thus knew that in the end everything that happened was ‘God’s doing’. But the point was that that was because He had created man and was allowing him to live out what he was. He was allowing man’s behaviour within His sovereign purpose, not instigating it. “*God has spoken evil concerning you.*” That is, through the false prophets He has allowed them to hear lies about the future (but has combated it by sending His true prophet).

**Constable:**

"... God Himself instigated and authorized the deception of Ahab, as indicated by the Lord's initial question to the assembly (**22:20**), His commission to the spirit (**v. 22**), and Micaiah's willingness to prophesy a lie after he had vowed to speak only the word of the Lord (**vv. 14-15**). If the spirit of **verses 20-23** can be identified with the divine spirit that energizes prophecy (**v. 24**), this thesis is further corroborated. The introduction of the truth, rather than ameliorating the deception, shows how effective it was. Even when faced with the truth, Ahab insisted on charging into battle, for the lying spirit working through the prophetic majority had convinced him he would be victorious."

"... God is truthful in that He keeps His unconditional promises to His people and fulfills His sovereign decrees and oaths. God's commitment to truthfulness, however, does not mean that He never uses deceit as a method of judgment on sinners. But He does so without compromising His truthful character and commitment to righteousness." [quoting **Robert Chisholm Jr.**]

Another view is that Satan initiated and superintended demonic activity, which God permitted (cf. **2 Sam. 24:1; 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1:13-22; 2:7; Zech. 3:1; Matt. 12:24; John 8:44**).

6. (:24-28) The True Prophet Suffers Alone for His Commitment to Truth

a. (:24-25) Suffering Inflicted by Zedekiah, Leader of the False Prophets

*“Then Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah came near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, ‘How did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak to you?’ 25 And Micaiah said, ‘Behold, you shall see on that day when you enter an inner room to hide yourself.’”*

**MacArthur:** This was a rebuke by the leader of the false prophets (**v. 6**) for the perceived insolence of Micaiah and his claim to truly speak for God. It was followed by a sarcastic question asking if the prophet could tell which direction the spirit in Zedekiah had gone.

b. (:26-27) Suffering Inflicted by Ahab, King of Israel

*“Then the king of Israel said, ‘Take Micaiah and return him to*



*Amon the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son; 27 and say, Thus says the king, Put this man in prison, and feed him sparingly with bread and water until I return safely.”*

**William Barnes:** Both names are otherwise unknown. “Amon” probably means “*master workman*” (BDB 54c), but it could refer to the famous Egyptian deity of that name. “Joash” (“*Yahweh has given*” [HALOT 393]) is probably literally a descendant from the royal family (Cogan 2001:492–493),

**August Konkel:** The confrontation with Micaiah reaches its climax in the assault of Zedekiah (22:24) and the confinement imposed by the king until the truth of his words can be verified (vv. 26–27). “*Amon the ruler of the city*” and “*Joash the king’s son*” represent civil and regal authority. They are jointly responsible for sustaining Micaiah with sufficient physical provision until the king returns safely from battle. Restraint imposed on the prophet will prevent him from disseminating his pernicious views among the people. Micaiah for his part simply responds according to the prophetic test of truth as found in **Deuteronomy 18:21–22**. If Zedekiah and Ahab are vindicated, death is his well-deserved fate.

- c. (:28) The Prophet of God Will be Vindicated by History  
*“And Micaiah said, ‘If you indeed return safely the LORD has not spoken by me.’ And he said, ‘Listen, all you people.”*

## **II. (:29-38) FINAL DEMISE OF KING AHAB IN ACCORDANCE WITH GOD’S WORD**

### **A. (:29-30) Duplicity of King Ahab in Only Looking Out for Himself**

#### 1. (:29) Supposedly Acting in Partnership with King Jehoshaphat

*“So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat king of Judah went up against Ramoth-gilead.”*

#### 2. (:30) Selfishly Acting out of Self-Preservation While Exposing Jehoshaphat to Extreme Risk

*“And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘I will disguise myself and go into the battle, but you put on your robes.’  
So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle.”*

**David Guzik:** Going into the battle, Ahab did not want to be identified as a king and therefore be a special target. He thought this would help protect him against Micaiah’s prophecy of doom. It is more difficult to explain why Jehoshaphat agreed to go into the battle as the only clearly identified king. Perhaps he was either not very smart or he had very great faith.

**Iain Provan:** The donning of disguise is no more than a harbinger of disaster; it recalls the actions of Jeroboam and Saul (**1 Sam. 28**) just before their own deaths (cf. **1 Kgs. 14:1–18**). Disguise cannot possibly thwart the purposes of God. Jehoshaphat, though

wearing royal robes (v. 30), is saved from death because his Judean shout (in form or content) reveals that he is not the man Ben-Hadad is after (vv. 31–33). Ahab, however—playing the commoner—is struck down. An arrow shot at random flies unerringly to its divinely ordained target (v. 34)—to a single figure in the vast crowd, to one of the few undefended spots on his body. He stays on the battlefield all day long, perhaps to encourage his troops, but at sunset he dies and the army withdraws leaderless (vv. 35–36, cf. v. 17). The Lord’s deception of Ahab has succeeded; Ahab’s attempted deception of the Lord has failed. It was the only possible outcome.

## **B. (:31-33) Deception of King Ahab Fails Miserably**

### 1. (:31) Ahab is the Designated Target of the King of Aram

*“Now the king of Aram had commanded the thirty-two captains of his chariots, saying, ‘Do not fight with small or great, but with the king of Israel alone.’”*

**MacArthur:** The very Syrian king, Ben-hadad, whose life Ahab had spared (20:34), ungratefully singled him out for death.

### 2. (:32) Appearances Lead the Troops to Pursue Jehoshaphat

*“So it came about, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, ‘Surely it is the king of Israel,’ and they turned aside to fight against him, and Jehoshaphat cried out.”*

### 3. (:33) Actual Identification Not Consistent with Ahab

*“Then it happened, when the captains of the chariots saw that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him.”*

## **C. (:34-36) Death of Ahab via a Divinely Targeted Arrow**

### 1. (:34) Arrow Shot at Random

*“Now a certain man drew his bow at random and struck the king of Israel in a joint of the armor. So he said to the driver of his chariot, ‘Turn around, and take me out of the fight; for I am severely wounded.’”*

**Donald Wiseman:** It took a bow-shot at random (av ‘at a venture’ gives the force of the Heb. ‘in his simplicity’, i.e. without particular aim) to bring down the prophesied target (nrsv ‘unknowingly’). Armour made up of linked small metal plate segments from this period has been found at Lachish and at Nuzi and Nimrud in Iraq, the shot appears to have struck between the chain mail (Heb. *dēbāqîm*) and the breastplate.

**Constable:** However, Ahab's plan to thwart God's will failed. He could not fool or beat Yahweh. One arrow providentially guided was all God needed (v. 34). **Josephus** wrote, "But Ahab's fate found him out without his robes ..." Wounded Ahab watched the battle from his chariot until he died that evening (v. 35).

"The Achilles' heel of Ahab was not the crack in his armor but his willful rebellion against God." [Whitcomb]

"There are those today who think they have escaped the hand of God. But I want to tell you that God has an arrow with your name on it; it will find you one of these days. No matter how much you try to deceive and cover up, that arrow will find you. That is what happened to Ahab." [McGee]

2. (:35) Ahab Bled Out During the Battle

*"And the battle raged that day, and the king was propped up in his chariot in front of the Arameans, and died at evening, and the blood from the wound ran into the bottom of the chariot."*

3. (:36) Ahab's Death Signaled the Retreat and Defeat of the Combined Forces

*"Then a cry passed throughout the army close to sunset, saying, 'Every man to his city and every man to his country.'"*

**D. (:37-38) Death of Ahab Recorded as Fulfillment of Divine Prophecy**

1. (:37) Buried in Samaria

*"So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria."*

2. (:38) Blood Licked up by Dogs

*"And they washed the chariot by the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood (now the harlots bathed themselves there), according to the word of the LORD which He spoke."*

**Peter Pett:** The prophetic author is not really interested in the details of the battle. His concern is with the failure of the subterfuge which sought to prevent the fulfillment of Micaiah's prophecy, and with the subsequent death of Ahab and his 'ritual' disgracing. For while the king's body was no doubt being buried with all honours, as a hero of the battlefield, YHWH was revealing his true worth by arranging for his blood, his very life source, to be licked up by scavenger dogs and mingled with the dirt washed from common prostitutes. It was a picture of YHWH's view of him.

**David Guzik:** This was an almost fulfillment of God's word through Elijah in **1 Kings 21:19**, where Elijah prophesied that dogs would lick the blood of Ahab. This proved true, but not in the place Elijah said it would happen. God relented from His original judgment against Ahab announced in **1 Kings 21**, but because of Ahab's false repentance and continued sin, a very similar judgment came upon him.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Our writer stresses the fulfillment of Yahweh's word. What Ahab had tried to avoid, what the king of Aram could not achieve, Yahweh has brought to pass in line with what he had spoken. Actually, **verses 37-38** depict the fulfillment of three distinct prophecies: that of **20:42** (via the anonymous prophet), **21:19** (from Elijah), and **22:17, 23** (Micaiah). Hence a triple fulfillment concludes this triad of narratives (**chps. 20, 21, 22**) about Ahab's failure under the word of Yahweh. Perhaps Micaiah will enjoy supper at home tonight while Zedekiah et al. eat crow.

Some puzzle, however, over whether **verse 38** really ‘fulfills’ **21:19**. There Elijah had threatened, ‘*In the place where the dogs have licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick your blood, yes yours.*’ The writer seems to have **21:19** in mind in **22:38** when he writes, ‘*And the dogs licked his blood ... in line with the word of Yahweh which he had spoken.*’ The problem is that Naboth was stoned, most likely, outside of Jezreel (**21:10, 13**), whereas Ahab’s chariot was washed down at the pool of Samaria. If, however, the pool of Samaria was outside that city (or at least outside the wall enclosing the fortified acropolis), we could understand the ‘place’ of **21:19** as indicating not a precise but a generic location. That is, dogs would also lick Ahab’s blood outside of town (not necessarily Jezreel). At any rate, the biblical writer saw no major rubs between **21:19** and **22:38** or he would never have claimed the latter fulfilled the former. And what a moment: dogs feverish for every trace of blood, prostitutes calmly preparing for the night’s work. Some things go on, even when kings die.

So the writer wants to tell you: that no-name prophet was right (**ch. 20**); Elijah was right (**ch. 21**); Micaiah was right (**ch. 22**). All this came upon Ahab ‘*in line with the word of Yahweh which he had spoken*’ (**v. 38b**). The King’s word (cf. **vv. 19–23**) will come to pass. For the writer of Kings, history is no accident but is directed by the word Yahweh speaks. Both the unwilling and the unknowing only fulfill it. Precisely here a bit of gladness reaches out of this dark narrative and grabs the people of God, for if **Yahweh’s word is certain** (the writer’s point), we know that Yahweh’s words of hope must be as solid as his words of judgment. His glory word must be as sure as his gory word. The coming of a kingdom (**Dan. 2:44**) is as sure as the departure of a king (Ahab); **2 Peter 3:13** must be as certain as **1 Kings 21:19**. This point will not resolve all your personal problems—but it will pour some concrete into the bottom of your pit.

## **(:39-40) SUMMATION OF AHAB’S REIGN**

### **A. (:39) Recorded Deeds of Ahab**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Ahab and all that he did and the ivory house which he built and all the cities which he built, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Israel?”*

**Constable:** Ahab was really a capable ruler in spite of his gross spiritual idolatry, which the writer of Kings emphasized. Other extra-biblical references to him indicate that he was generally successful militarily. This was due to the natural abilities God had given him, and because God showed mercy to Israel.

**Peter Pett:** The ivory house would be built of stone, but with ivory inlaid in the royal furniture and decorations with Phoenician, Egyptian and local motifs. Such houses are known to have been popular amongst great kings (e.g. Nimrud), and were seen as very prestigious. See **Amos 3:15** for his view of them. Ahab is also credited with fortifying many cities. He would no doubt have completed Samaria when his father Omri died, and we also know from excavations of his building work at Megiddo and Hazor. Jericho was also rebuilt in his time (**1 Kings 16:34**).

**B. (:40a) Death of Ahab**

*“So Ahab slept with his fathers,”*

**C. (:40b) Succession**

*“and Ahaziah his son became king in his place.”*

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**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What are your motivations in seeking counsel regarding a difficult decision?
- 2) Why can't you depend on the "majority view" when it comes to discerning the interpretation of the Word of God?
- 3) How many opportunities did the Lord give King Ahab to listen to divine revelation and respond in repentance and faith?
- 4) Are you prepared to endure rejection and isolation and even physical suffering for standing alone on the Word of God?

\*\*\*\*\*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Dale Ralph Davis: Proposed Structure for 1 Kings 22:1–40**

[I followed this structure in my outline]

Setting, **1–4**

Inquiry, **5–6a**

Approval, **6b**

Dissatisfaction, **7**

Hated prophet, **8–9**

Throne scene: emphatic assurance, **10–12**

True prophet and clear pressure, **13–14**

Inquiry, **15a**

Approval, **15b**

Dissatisfaction, **16**

Hated message, **17–18**

Throne scene: certain disaster, **19–23**

True prophet and overt suffering, **24–28**

The king's disguise, **29–30** (fear)  
Deliberate plan of king of Aram, **31–33**  
Accidental fulfillment of Yahweh's word, **34–36**  
The king's death, **37–38**

Summary, **39–40**

### **John Dryden: Four Attitudes towards Truth**

Truth is absolutely indispensable to our relationships with both God and man. Nothing can take its place! Everything that can be done must be done to secure and safeguard the truth.

The man who would be God's servant is admonished to:

- (1) call upon Jehovah in truth (**Psa. 145:18**);
- (2) serve Jehovah in truth (**1 Sam. 12:24**);
- (3) walk before Jehovah in truth (**Psa. 86:11**); and
- (4) worship Jehovah in truth (**Jn. 4:23-24**).

Our service to God and our relationship with Him must be founded upon truth, because truth is an inherent characteristic of deity. Jehovah is a God of truth (**Psa. 31:5**). Jesus is the very epitome of truth (**Jn. 14:6**). The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (**Jn. 15:26**). Our service to God and our relationship with Him must be based upon the word of God, because it is the word of truth (**Jn. 17:17**). Now, I've said all this to emphasize the fact that our attitude toward truth is of supreme importance. In a letter to Anthony Collins, Esq., **John Locke** said, "To love truth for truth's sake is the principal part of human perfection in this world, and the seed-plot of all other virtues." (Oct. 29, 1703).

There is a true story preserved in **1 Kings 22** that illustrates four different attitudes toward truth. Four principle characters play their respective roles in this drama: Ahab, the wicked king of Israel; Jehoshaphat, the good king of Judah; the 400 prophets of Israel; and Micaiah, the son of Imlah. They each manifest a different attitude toward the truth and provide a mirror to help us look at our own attitude toward truth.

If you are familiar with this story, you know that Ahab wanted to attack Ramoth-Gilead to recover this city of refuge from the Syrians. He asked Jehoshaphat to become his ally and he agreed. The 400 prophets of Israel assured Ahab that he would be victorious. However, when Micaiah was consulted, he prophesied Ahab's defeat and death.

#### Four Attitudes Toward Truth:

**1) Ahab hated the truth.** There are at least five things that clearly demonstrate that Ahab did not care about the truth:

- (1) He decided what he wanted to do before he even consulted truth (**1 Ki. 22:3**);
- (2) He consulted with the prophets who would approve what he already wanted to do (**1 Ki. 22:6**);

- (3) He did not want to consult Micaiah, because he knew that he would not tell him what he wanted to hear (**1 Ki. 22:8**);
- (4) He rejected the truth when Micaiah gave it to him, because it wasn't what he wanted to hear (**1 Ki. 22:17-18**); and
- (5) He soothed his conscience by getting rid of the messenger of truth (**1 Ki. 22:26-27**).

2) **The 400 prophets perverted the truth.** In fact, they perverted the truth in two different ways.

- First, Zedekiah and the other prophets were willing to tell the king whatever he wanted to hear to gain his favor (**1 Ki. 22:6, 11-12**). They loved popularity, peace, and harmony, more than truth.
- Second, the messenger who went to summon Micaiah pleaded with him to confirm the words of the other prophets, because he was more concerned about pleasing the king than telling the truth (**1 Ki. 22:13**). In essence, he told Micaiah: "Get on the band wagon!" "Don't rock the boat!" "Don't make waves!"

3) **Jehoshaphat wanted truth on his side.** In my opinion, Jehoshaphat's attitude toward the truth is the hardest to pin down; but I believe I have accurately described it. Unlike Ahab, Jehoshaphat did want to consult and consider the truth (**1 Ki. 22:5, 7**), and this is an admirable quality. But Jehoshaphat's attitude toward the truth was flawed and imperfect. I say that for two reasons. First, Jehoshaphat had already decided what he was going to do before he suggested that they "inquire for the word of the Lord" (**1 Ki. 22:4**). He had already agreed to become Ahab's ally. Second, he was unwilling to change his practice to conform to the truth. Despite the warning, Jehoshaphat joined Ahab in battle against Ramoth Gilead (**1 Ki. 22:17-18, 29-33**). Jehoshaphat was interested in the truth if it supported what he already believed and wanted to do. Now he would have been very happy if he could have confirmed his practice by truth; but he was unwilling to change his practice to conform to truth.

The Jews in Jeremiah's day were a lot like Jehoshaphat. They asked Jeremiah to seek Jehovah's will for them in prayer, and they promised to obey the Lord no matter what (**Jer. 42:1-6**). Jeremiah prayed and Jehovah answered. He promised to bless His people if they remained in the land and to punish them if they fled to Egypt (**Jer. 42:9-22**). When Jeremiah delivered Jehovah's message, the leaders accused Jeremiah of speaking falsely, and the people went down to Egypt despite God's will and despite their promise to obey (**Jer. 43:1-7**). These people were willing to obey God as long as God told them what they wanted to hear.

4) **Micaiah wanted to be on the side of truth.** Ahab hated the truth. The prophets perverted the truth. Jehoshaphat wanted truth on his side. But Micaiah wanted to be on the side of truth; and there is a big difference. **Richard Whately** wisely observed: "It is one thing to wish to have truth on our side, and another to wish sincerely to be on the side of truth" (Essay on some of the Difficulties in the Writing of the Apostle Paul, No. 1. On the Love of Truth).



Obviously, Micaiah's attitude toward the truth was the right attitude for at least two reasons. First, he was willing to speak the truth regardless of the sacrifice, or the pain it caused, or the consequences (**1 Ki. 22:14**). **R. L. Whiteside** wisely said:

“Much is said about preaching the truth in love, and so it should be preached. But in love of what? The preacher should so love the truth that he will not sacrifice any of it nor pervert it, and he should so love people that he will not withhold from them even an unpleasant truth. He that does either of these things loves neither the truth nor the people. We frequently fool ourselves; we think we do this and so to spare the feelings of others, when it is our own feelings that prompt us. ‘Preach the word; be urgent in season, out of season, reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching’ (The Shively Messenger, 5/15/84, 24:9).

Second, Micaiah was willing to speak the truth even though he had to pay a price for doing so. Zedekiah struck him and mocked him (**1 Ki. 22:24**), and finally, he was imprisoned (**1 Ki. 22:26-27**); but none of this silenced this mighty messenger of God. Those today who love the truth, will speak the truth regardless of the sacrifice, or the pain it causes, or the consequences. Those who want to be on the side of truth will pay a price. That is just inevitable.

Quoting **Gary Henry**:

“In the past, the quality of gold or silver samples was determined by the use of a ‘touchstone,’ a hard, black stone such as jasper or basalt. The sample was rubbed against this touchstone and the resultant streak was compared to that made by a standard alloy. The ‘encounter’ of the sample with the touchstone said nothing about the touchstone -- it was what it was -- but it said everything about the sample. So it is with some of the most significant things in life: they assay us by our reaction to them. We are shown to be what we truly are by our contact with these things.

“Truth is such a touchstone. You can tell a lot about a fellow by the way he reacts when confronted with reality. What a person does when he stands face to face with truth says volumes about his character, the kind of human being he has chosen to be. If we will not accept truth and adapt ourselves to it, we not only demonstrate our character to be inferior, we doom ourselves to the suffering that inevitably comes from living on the basis of illusion and error. A life built on unreality is not a good one. Truth is what it is, with or without our right response to it. But our response makes all the difference for us” (“Truth the Touchstone,” Brass Tacks, 2:3:2).

<https://www.bible.ca/ef/expository-1-kings-22.htm>

**Craig Keener: When Most Prophets Are Wrong**

It is possible to live in a generation where a **consensus of people speaking for God declares that everything is well**, that we are now on the right track, and that everything is about to get better. There are some circles in my country today where that

seems to be the dominant message. One would expect God's spokespeople to communicate what God is saying, not just what people want to hear. One would also expect them to hear from God directly and not to just follow the trend of other prophets they respect.

Unfortunately, **leaders themselves are vulnerable to being misled**. If we do not immerse ourselves in God's voice in Scripture, we can sometimes miss the voice that is genuinely God's when His Spirit speaks to us. That happened in Jeremiah's day: the **consensus of prophets** was that everything would be well with God's people; God would defend them from their enemies, who were far worse than they (**Jer 6:14; 8:11**). Among the prophets, Jeremiah stood virtually alone, for years, in warning the nation of coming judgment. Jeremiah was an outlier; who would believe his ornery preaching against the consensus of prophets that God would defend His special people? The consensus of prophets, however, was illusory; too many were stealing God's words from one another (**Jer 23:30**).

We encounter the same sort of setting in **1 Kgs 22**, back in the time of Elijah the prophet. There all the king's court prophets unanimously promise that King Ahab will win back the city he is trying to capture (22:6). Yet the God-fearing King of Judah, King Jehoshaphat, is uncomfortable with their unanimous message. That he wants to inquire from a prophet of the LORD (**22:7**) suggests that he recognizes that the prophets on Ahab's payroll are not speaking for God alone. King Ahab seems to view prophets the same way that some people view "positive confession": speak what is positive in the Lord's name and so help bring it to pass. Without a genuine message from God's Spirit, however, that is a sure formula for false prophecy (cf. **Lam 3:37**).

Ahab's false prophets use symbolic gestures just like true ones do (**1 Kgs 22:11**). They claim to speak in the LORD's name, just like true ones do (**22:11-12**). Formal features do not distinguish the false prophecies from true ones; only truth can do that. But Jehoshaphat insists on hearing an independent witness, so Ahab reluctantly summons the prophet Micaiah, who consistently confronts Ahab with unpleasant messages (**22:7-9**). Why should Ahab believe this isolated, grumpy prophet who prophesies coming judgment on Ahab, when despite Micaiah's past prophecies Ahab remains alive? Micaiah will just put a damper on confidence for the battle!

Ahab's messenger thus warns Micaiah what the consensus of prophets is, and invites him to speak accordingly (**22:13**). It is easy to hear what we want to hear, whether under political pressure or favor or personal desire. Micaiah at first seems to echo the other prophets (**22:15**), yet in such a way that it seems clear that he does not believe it (**22:16**). Micaiah is committed to speak what he hears from God (**22:14**). Thus Micaiah prophesies that the king will die (**22:17**), and that God himself, as a means of judgment, ordained a false message for Ahab's prophets in order to lure him to destruction (**22:19-23**). Not every feeling of inspiration that anyone has is from God's Spirit.

As far as Ahab is concerned, this is just characteristic, contrarian Micaiah, trying to oppose him (**22:18**). Moreover, Zedekiah, one of the other leading prophets, strikes

Micaiah, challenging him. Why should anyone suppose that Zedekiah, a renowned royal prophet, heard wrongly whereas isolated Micaiah heard correctly (22:24)? Micaiah informs him that he will know when the Lord's true word comes to pass, and Zedekiah has to hide in a time of judgment (22:25). The king takes precautions to forestall any bad luck from Micaiah's prophecy (22:26-27), as if Micaiah rather than the LORD is the source (22:28). (Against what others sometimes suppose, those who prophesy judgment may not personally want it to happen; **Jer 28:6; Luke 19:41-44.**) Yet Micaiah's word comes to pass (1 Kgs 22:34-37), as does an earlier prophecy of Elijah that had been deferred for a time on account of Ahab's remorse (22:38; cf. 21:19, 27-29).

Not all dreams are from the Lord (**Jer 23:27, 32**); some messages come only from people's own minds (23:26, 36). It is often easier to get popular by telling people what they want to hear (2 Tim 4:3) and then attributing the corporate emotional thrill to God's anointing. Yet cheap thrills from rhetoric alone are not the same as the stirring power of the true word of the Lord in one's heart (**Jer 5:14**), and imitations of prophetic form are not the same as the true word of the Lord (**Jer 23:28**).

The biblical solution is not to throw out the baby with the bathwater, to discard Micaiah or Jeremiah along with the prophets who curry favor. The biblical solution is to use discernment (1 Cor 14:29; 1 Thess 5:20-22). Even Israel's false prophets could have become true prophets had they truly feared and heeded God first (**Jer 23:21-22**). Consensus of people genuinely seeking God is important (Acts 15:28; 1 Cor 14:29), but when a generation becomes too corrupted by its own desires we must heed instead the transgenerational succession of the true prophetic word (**Jer 28:8**). If prophets have been announcing judgment for a land and no major transformation has occurred, then the burden of proof is on prophets who prophesy peace (28:9).

It is too easy to go along with what others tell us, rather than stand for what God alone is saying. One true prophet who believed another prophet's "white lie" ended up paying for this error with his life (1 Kgs 13:11-25). Let us immerse ourselves in what we all can agree is God's Word—Scripture—so we will rightly discern God's voice when He speaks to us in other ways. Otherwise, we may follow an entire generation toward destruction, silencing the erratic yet genuine voices that warn of less pleasant realities. <https://craigkeener.com/when-most-prophets-are-wrong-1-kings-22/>

**David Guzik:** From **2 Chronicles** we learn many of Jehoshaphat's other accomplishments.

- He sent teachers of God's Word out to his entire kingdom (**2 Chronicles 17:7-10**). "By this little band of princes, Levites and priests, sixteen in all, Jehoshaphat did more toward impressing the surrounding nations with a sense of his power than the largest and best-equipped standing army could have secured to him" (**Knapp**).
- He established a permanent military garrison along the northern frontier (**2**

**Chronicles 17:1-2, 12).**

- He trained and equipped a sizeable army (**2 Chronicles 17:14-19**) that was able to quell a Transjordan invasion (**2 Chronicles 20:1-30**).
- He placed Edom under Judean control, controlling an important caravan route to the south (**2 Kings 3:8-27; 2 Chronicles 20:36**).
- God blessed his reign so much that the fear of the LORD came upon neighboring nations so that they did not make war against Jehoshaphat (**2 Chronicles 17:10**).
- Jehoshaphat was also an able administrator, implementing judicial reforms (**2 Chronicles 19:5-11**) and religious reforms (**2 Chronicles 17:3-9**).
- Jehoshaphat was also the king connected to the famous incident when the army of Judah saw a great victory won as the Levites led the battle with praise (**2 Chronicles 20:15-23**).

**William Barnes:** In summary, Ahab was a complicated person. He did have moments of heroism (mainly in **ch 20**, but even there, the evidence is mixed), and he certainly had many moments of treachery (much of **chs 18, 21**, and also here in **ch 22**). His marriage to Jezebel was probably not by choice, but rather arranged by his parents, and certainly he represented the result of diplomatic pressures that we rarely face today. He did repent at one point (**21:27-29**), but such repentance seems not to have lasted very long. In short, Ahab was a crafty, conniving, sometimes cowardly leader during an era when such personality traits were probably necessary to survive long on the throne. But the final verdict on King Ahab must be as negative as the initial verdict found back in **16:30-33**: “*He did more to provoke the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.*” What a sad legacy to leave to posterity. We must be suitably chastened so that we are in no danger of following him in his fate. Truly, “*a (spiritual) warrior girding for battle should not boast like one who has already won*” (an adaptation of Ahab’s apt words as found in **20:11**; cf. Paul’s similarly sober words in **Phil 3:12-14**: “*Forgetting the past ... I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize*”). Let us redouble our dedication to run the good race and fight the good fight to the very end.

TEXT: 1 Kings 22:41-53

TITLE: THE GOOD AND THE BAD – JEHOSHAPHAT AND AHAZIAH

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD’S PEOPLE STRUGGLE TO CONSISTENTLY FOLLOW HIS WAYS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This seems like a strange place to finish off the book of 1 Kings. Not much happening of significance in this short account of the reign of Jehoshaphat in Judah and of Ahaziah in Israel. Actually, the breaking point is more due to how much material could fit on one scroll. The books of 1 and 2 Kings should be understood as a unified whole. But we have here a good contrast between the occasional good king in the South and the persistent reign of evil in the North.

**William Barnes: Seow** (1999:198) contrasts the legacy of Jehoshaphat in **22:50** (“buried with his ancestors in the City of David”) with that of Ahaziah in **22:53** (“provoked the anger of the Lord ... just as his father [Ahab] had done”). One king’s legacy is relatively positive, the other utterly negative. But the real difference between the two is that one of them was heir to the throne of David, the other was not; and this was due only to the sovereign will of God. (Our legacies, likewise, depend much on God’s utter sovereignty and the resulting parental legacy we inherit.) This will be the burden, not so much of the brief discussions found in the final 13 verses of the present chapter (**22:41–53**), but of the entirety of the next. “*Is there no God in Israel?*” (**2 Kgs 1:3, 16**) is the question repeated therein. Thus, in conclusion, we need to realize that we cannot control either our parental legacies or our birthright, but we can control our theological responses to whatever setting they may place us in (cf. **2 Kgs 3:2** about Ahab’s other son, Joram). And we are indeed responsible for those responses. This very biblical message is something we can and must take away from the present short passages about Jehoshaphat of Judah and Ahaziah of Israel.

**I. (:41-50) JEHOSHAPHAT’S GOOD REIGN IN THE SOUTH**

**A. (:41-42) Selected Touchpoint of Jehoshaphat’s Reign**

1. (:41a) Which Kingdom Did He Govern?

*“Now Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah”*

**John Schultz:** With this section we return to the kingdom of Judah and the reign of Jehoshaphat. If we want a fuller account of Jehoshaphat’s reign we have to turn to the book of Second Chronicles, where four chapters are dedicated to him.

2. (:41b) When Did He Become King?

*“in the fourth year of Ahab king of Israel.”*

**Constable:** Jehoshaphat began ruling over Judah as coregent with his father Asa (873-870 B.C.). When Asa died, he reigned alone for 17 more years (870-853 B.C.). He concluded his 25-year reign with another period of coregency with his son Jehoram that lasted five years (853-848 B.C.). For all but Ahab's first year on Israel's throne, Jehoshaphat ruled over Judah. Jehoshaphat became Judah's sole ruler in Ahab's fourth year (v. 41).

3. (:42a) How Old Was He When He Became King?

*“Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king,”*

4. (:42b) How Long Did He Reign?

*“and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem.”*

5. (42c) Who Was His Mother?

*“And his mother's name was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi.”*

**Peter Pett:** As was usual with the kings of Judah his mother's name is given, demonstrating that he was a true 'son of David'. The queen mother appears to have held a high position in Judah.

**J. A. Macdonald: He came of a good stock.**

(1) He was "of the house and lineage of David." The traditions of that house were in many respects a glorious inheritance. David was a "man after God's own heart." In no instance was he found inclining to idolatry.

(2) He was the son of Asa. Of his mother we have this significant mention: "*And his mother's name was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in the ways of Asa his father, and departed not from it, doing that which was right in the sight of the Lord.*" This suggests the healthiness of his mother's moral influence. The reference here to Asa, too, is highly honourable.

(3) The blessing of pious parents is inestimable. It works beneficially in example, in precept, in solicitude. This last is most effectual in prayer to God. Those who are favoured with godly parents should praise God evermore. Wicked children of pious parents are doubly culpable.

**B. (:43-44) Summary Evaluation of Jehoshaphat's Reign**

1. (:43a) Overall Positive Summary

*“And he walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing right in the sight of the LORD.”*

2. (:43b-44) Mitigating Negative Details

a. (:43b) Problem with Worship on the High Places

*“However, the high places were not taken away; the people still sacrificed and burnt incense on the high places.”*

**Peter Pett:** There was now the Temple and there were legitimate high places (such as formerly on Mount Carmel - **1 Kings 18:32**) where the worship was kept pure by the priests and prophets, but along with these there were many syncretised high places, which were ancient local sanctuaries, often also containing a Baal pillar and an Asherah pole/image, where the worship became a mixture of Yahwism and Baalism. These did not retain the purity of worship of the Temple and the legitimate high places, and would in fact later lead the people of Judah into grosser sin. But Jehoshaphat's position was complicated, as we might have expected when considering such a complicated situation. And it would appear from **2 Chronicles 17:6; 2 Chronicles 19:3-4** that he did make an effort to remove those which had become too obviously syncretistic, and came to his attention. What was lacking was a full-scale purge.

b. (:44) Problem with Compromise with Israel

*“Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.”*

Does the author view this development as primarily good or bad? It is a complicated question.

**Constable:** The peace that existed between Israel and Judah (v. 44) 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).

**Peter Pett:** Jehoshaphat was also the first king to officially establish peace with Israel. This was mentioned because it was always YHWH's desire that His people be one in spirit. That had been the reason for the Central Sanctuary among diverse tribes from the beginning. But the author makes no mention here of his marrying of his son Jehoram to the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel as a 'treaty wife' (see **1 Kings 8:18; 2 Chronicles 18:1; 2 Chronicles 21:6**). The prophetic author appears to have approved of the idea of peace, but like the Chronicler he did not approve of the marriage, especially in view of its results (**1 Kings 8:18**).

**Dale Ralph Davis:** The cooperative commercial venture was a product of Jehoshaphat's statecraft (v. 44). He had made peace with the king of Israel, certainly with Ahab (**22:1-40**) but also with Ahaziah his son. I think the writer of Kings views that alliance **negatively**, as a perilous precedent. Certainly Chronicles does; there prophets read the riot act to Jehoshaphat for teaming up with such apostate kings (**2 Chron. 19:2-3; 20:37**). But Kings is critical as well, if not so directly. The previous narrative had already rehearsed Jehoshaphat's insane naivete (**22:29-33**) when he had locked arms with Ahab. A few chapters later Kings will inform us that nuptials provided the cement for the alliance: Ahab's daughter became the wife of Jehoram, Jehoshaphat's son (**2 Kings 8:18**). Hence Jehoram aped Ahab rather than Jehoshaphat, as did Jehoram's son Ahaziah (**8:18a, 25-27**). In **2 Kings 11** our writer(s) will show that redemptive history almost ended in 841 bc. Why? Because Ahab's daughter remained very much alive after the deaths of Jehoram and Ahaziah, and, as queen mother of Judah, nearly wiped out the whole divinely-chosen Davidic line of kings. How did such a tragedy ever get afoot? Because godly king Jehoshaphat imagined one could practice ecumenism with



apostates (**1 Kings 22:44**). ‘Now Jehoshaphat made peace with the house of Israel.’ It was not astute but asinine. Look how it nearly decimated Yahweh’s redemptive plan.

**The Pulpit Commentary:** One great feature of his reign was this: that the hostility which had lasted, even if it sometimes slumbered, between the two kingdoms for seventy years, from the date of their separation to the time of Asa’s death, gave way to peace and even alliance. Judah now recognized the division of the kingdom as an accomplished fact, and no longer treated Israel, even theoretically, as in rebellion.

**C. (:45) Recorded Deeds of Jehoshaphat**

*“Now the rest of the acts of Jehoshaphat, and his might which he showed and how he warred, are they not written in the Book of the Chronicles of the Kings of Judah?”*

**D. (:46-49) Additional Positive Highlights**

1. (:46) Positive Reformation

*“And the remnant of the sodomites who remained in the days of his father Asa, he expelled from the land.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Purging the land of remaining male cult prostitutes (or sodomites, v. 46; see **14:24** and **15:12**) shows Jehoshaphat was no paper reformer.

2. (:47-49) Learning Not to Compromise

a. (:47) Power Vacuum in Edom

*“Now there was no king in Edom; a deputy was king.”*

**Dale Ralph Davis:** But why three verses about ships? **Verse 47** explains how it was that Jehoshaphat could aspire to shipping entrepreneur: Edom’s power was in eclipse just then. Edomite politics boasted no king, only a deputy acting as such. Edom was subservient, probably to Jehoshaphat and Judah (cf. **2 Kings 3** and **2 Chron. 20**). Hence Jehoshaphat had unhindered access to ply his maritime pursuits from Ezion-geber on the Gulf of Aqaba. Shipbuilders found full employment, and the government, it was hoped, would enjoy lucrative commerce (v. **48a**). But the latter was not to be; the ships were smashed up while still in port (v. **48b**). Perhaps the writer wants to portray Jehoshaphat as aspiring to Solomon-level ventures (**9:26–28**) while falling far short of Solomon-like success. In this way he could imply that the days of glory have given way to an era of decline. But I doubt it. I think the writer mentions the naval fiasco because Ahaziah of Israel was mixed up in it (v. **49**). It may be that when the fleet was bashed to bits Ahaziah had suggested they try again with a greater Israelite contribution. But Jehoshaphat had had enough (v. **49**). This understanding would mesh with the parallel in **2 Chronicles 20:35–37**.

b. (:48) Aborted Attempt at Marine Commerce

*“Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, but they did not go for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber.”*

- c. (:49) Attempt by Ahaziah to Revive the Joint Venture  
“Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, ‘Let my servants go with your servants in the ships.’ But Jehoshaphat was not willing.”

**MacArthur:** Jehoshaphat controlled Edom, which gave him access to Ezion-geber. He sought to emulate Solomon’s fleet and wealth (**9:26-28**), but was unsuccessful. According to **2Ch 20:36, 37**, the Lord destroyed his fleet because of Jehoshaphat’s alliance to build it with Ahaziah, king of Israel. **First Kings 22:49** apparently refers to a subsequent attempt by Ahaziah to continue the joint venture after the disaster.

**Mordechai Cogan:** the Chronicler was able to reorder and reinterpret the entire episode: the initiative for the joint venture issued from Jehoshaphat, who was condemned by the prophet Eliezer son of Dodavahu for joining up with Ahaziah, a condemnation that was followed by YHWH’s wrathful destruction of the ships (**2 Chr 20:35–37**).

**The Pulpit Commentary:** We are told in ... **2 Chronicles 20:37** that the ships were broken, according to a prophecy of Eliezer, the son of Dodavah, because Jehoshaphat had joined himself with Ahaziah. The explanation is that the fleet had been built by the two kings conjointly, and manned by the subjects of Jehoshaphat exclusively; and that, after the disaster, Ahaziah proposed either to repair the injured vessels, or to construct a second fleet, which should then be partly manned by sailors of the northern kingdom, ‘men probably accustomed to the sea, perhaps trained at Tyre’ .... This proposal was declined by the king of Judah, not so much on account of the ‘reflection on his subjects’ skill contained in it,’ as because of the prophecy of Eliezer, and the evidently judicial disaster which had befallen the fleet already built.

**J. A. Macdonald: His friendship with Ahaziah.**

(1) This son of Ahab was no more a companion fit for Jehoshaphat than Ahab. For Ahaziah "*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 made Israel to sin: for he served Baal and worshipped him, and provoked to anger the Lord God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.*"

(2) Yet Jehoshaphat formed a trade alliance with Ahaziah. They jointly fitted out a fleet at the port of Ezion-Geber, on the Red Sea, to sail to Ophir for gold. But for this God rebuked him, and "*the ships were broken*" in the port (see 2 Chronicles 20:35-37). Let no money consideration, no gold of Ophir, induce godly young men to enter into trade partnerships with the ungodly.

(3) This judgment of God had a salutary effect upon Jehoshaphat. For when Ahaziah would renew the attempt at Ezion-Geber, Jehoshaphat declined (**ver. 49**). Let us be careful never to repeat a blunder.

**E. (:50) Final Summary**

1. Death and Burial of Jehoshaphat

*“And Jehoshaphat slept with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of his father David,”*

2. Succession

*“and Jehoram his son became king in his place.”*

**II. (:51-53) AHAZIAH’S EVIL REIGN IN THE NORTH**

**A. (:51) Selected Touchpoints of Ahaziah’s Reign**

1. Which Kingdom Did He Govern

*“Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria”*

2. When Did He Become King

*“in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah,”*

3. How Long Did He Reign

*“and he reigned two years over Israel.”*

**David Guzik:** Ahab reigned 22 years, but his son only reigned two years. Though his repentance was shallow, when Ahab repented after an announcement of judgment in **1 Kings 21**, God relented from the immediate judgment and promised to bring judgment in the days of Ahab’s son. Ahaziah’s short reign was a fulfillment of this prophecy in **1 Kings 21:29**. . . With this, the Book of 1 Kings ends on a low note. It began with the promise of the twilight of Israel’s greatest king, David. It ends with the sad reign of one of the most wicked kings over one of the kingdoms coming from the divided tribes of Israel.

**B. (:52-53) Summary Evaluation of Ahaziah’s Reign**

*“And 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 caused Israel to sin. 53 So he served Baal and worshiped him and provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger according to all that his father had done.”*

**John Schultz:** Jezebel’s evil influence sealed the doom of the Northern Kingdom. Israel would never recover from the idolatry that was introduced during the reign of Ahab. Israel would be taken into captivity by Assyria and never return.

**Dale Ralph Davis:** Ahaziah embraced all the perversion and paganism that had accumulated in Israel to date, both the syncretism of Jeroboam and the Baalism of his parents. Lest we pass over the latter the writer specifically underscores it in **verse 53a**: ‘*So he served Baal and bowed down to him.*’ This is sheer rebellion; there can be no doubt about the destiny of such a kingdom.

The writer hints at Ahaziah’s end in his very last line: ‘*so he provoked [traditional translation] Yahweh the God of Israel in line with all his father had done*’ (**v. 53b**). ‘*Provoked*’ is the verb *kā’as* again. The writer means that Ahaziah’s godlessness

aggravated, galled, indeed goaded Yahweh to anger in order to destroy Ahaziah. It is almost as if Ahaziah has flaunted his wickedness, defying Yahweh to judge him. Had he any sense of his danger?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Why is Jehoshaphat not viewed in a completely positive light?
- 2) How long of a shadow did Jezebel cast over the sad history of the Northern kingdom of Israel?
- 3) Why did the Lord judge so severely the commercial marine joint venture of Jehoshaphat and Ahaziah?
- 4) Where have you learned from previous mistakes so that you did not repeat a particular blunder or transgression?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Wiersbe:** 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**).

**Peter Pett:** The Chronicler gives us a great deal of further information about Jehoshaphat, which the prophetic author of Kings was not interested in, for Jehoshaphat was a capable and vigorous ruler as well as being a godly one.

- 1). He established garrisons, both throughout Judah (**2 Chronicles 17:2; 2 Chronicles 17:14-19**), and in the parts of Israel that his father had retaken (**2 Chronicles 17:2**).
- 2). He totally reorganized the judicial system in the land seeking to make it fair for all (**2 Chronicles 19:5-7**).
- 3). He dispatched teachers throughout Judah to teach the Law of YHWH to the people (**2 Chronicles 17:7-9**).
- 4). He built up the wealth of Judah (**2 Chronicles 17:12-13**).

5). He was successful beyond the borders of Judah, and received tribute from some of the Philistines and from some Arabians (**2 Chronicles 17:11**).

6). And all this as well as assisting Ahab in his venture at Ramoth-gilead (**1 Kings 22:1-38; 2 Chronicles 18**), and Jehoram of Israel against Moab (**2 Kings 3:1-27**).

**Iain Provan:** A description of Jehoshaphat's and Solomon's similarities is followed by a description of their striking differences. At first we read of peace and think we may soon be seeing the recovery of the empire. Jehoshaphat apparently rules over Edom, just like Solomon; he is therefore able, like Solomon, to build ships at Ezion Geber (near Elath in Edom; cf. **1 Kgs. 9:26–28**). Being "*ships of Tarshish*," they recall the Solomonic expeditions to Ophir and other, far-flung places (**1 Kgs. 10:22**). They remind us, then, of Solomon in all his glory, of the days when the whole world contributed to the king of Israel's wealth. But these are days of humbling (**1 Kgs. 11:39**), not glory. And having built up our expectations through comparison, our authors immediately bring them crashing down. These ships never went to Ophir (contrast **1 Kgs. 9:28; 10:11–12**); they were wrecked as they lay in port (**22:48**). This peace was sometimes simply absence of hostility, rather than real unity within the Solomonic empire. . . He is like the early Solomon then, but this is not the Solomonic empire, whatever the achievements (and pretensions) of the Judean kings who are Solomon's successors.

### **Caleb Nelson: The Folly and the Folly**

#### **I. The Folly of the Righteous: Compromise, vv. 41-50**

A. Jehoshaphat's Basic Info, vv. 41-42, 45, 50

B. Jehoshaphat's Godliness, vv. 43, 46

C. Jehoshaphat's Major Compromise, v. 44

To be kind to the wicked, to reach out to the wicked, to host the wicked — that's all acceptable and even mandatory. But to make a full and conclusive peace with idol worshippers, to say "You and I really want the same thing; our desires head in the same direction" — that is not acceptable. Chronicles tells us that Jehoshaphat was excoriated by multiple prophets for his insistence on being all chummy with the house of Ahab. He not only refused to fight against Ahab, which was laudable and even noble; he insisted on fighting for Ahab, on making his goals identical with Ahab's. And that's where compromise came back to bite his family.

D. Jehoshaphat's Folly Judged, vv. 47-49

#### **II. The Folly of the Wicked: Rebellion, vv. 51-53**

A. Ahaziah's Short Reign, v. 51

B. Ahaziah's Triple Tradition of Treachery, v. 52

C. Ahaziah's Provocation of God, v. 53

### III. Application

Here, in **1 Kings 22**, we see a glimpse of **what God thinks of sin**. God wrecked Jehoshaphat's ships because Jehoshaphat was planning to use them to profit from an evil relationship. God was provoked against Ahaziah because Ahaziah worshipped and served Baal, to his own destruction. And do you know what? God is so enraged about your sin, He takes it so seriously, that He punished His own Son in your place. That's how much God hates sin — and how much He loves sinners. So when you read this passage and consider what it says, remember this: that God is holy, and thus a hater of all moral impurity. That fact is one of the bedrock realities of the gospel proclamation that Jesus Christ died for sinners.

- A. Honor Christ the Lord as Holy
- B. Recognize God's Wrath against Sin
- C. Don't Compromise with Evil
- D. Don't Provoke God
- E. Do Engage in Proper Worship!

<https://media-cloud.sermonaudio.com/text/7417125582.pdf>

**Alan Conner:** APPLICATION: **BEWARE OF FELLOWSHIP WITH DARKNESS.**  
NATIONAL DARKNESS –

- When we legalize sin, we invite the judgment of God.

CHURCH DARKNESS -

- 1) Alliances with the world.
- 2) Alliances with apostates.

PERSONAL DARKNESS -

- in marriage -
- in business –
- in committing sin -
- in money matters -

**John 8:12** *Again therefore Jesus spoke to them, saying, "I am the light of the world; he who follows Me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life."*

**Donald Wiseman:** The historian concentrates on Jehoshaphat's political relations with his northern neighbours and makes only a formal note of one aspect of his reforms as an example of his doing the right (**v. 43a**). This was his removal of male prostitutes, referring the reader to the official Judean annals for further details (**v. 45**). At the beginning of his reign Jehoshaphat began a religious revival with a teaching mission to bring the people back to the Lord (**2 Chr. 19:4**). The consequence was a call to root out corruption and reform the judiciary by appointing district or provincial courts centred on the main fortified towns, and possibly in every large settlement. These were able to concern themselves with civil (taxation) and military (levy) affairs (cf. **Deut. 16:18–20**) based on administering the law of the Lord (**2 Chr. 19:5–7**). It is not clear how far the

jurisdiction of the older tribal system and of the elders were affected. However, in Jerusalem the court was reorganized both to act as higher court over all the kingdom and, with priests on it, to include religious sanctions and cases (**2 Chr. 19:8–11**; cf. **Deut. 17:13–18**).

**August Konkel:** A distinction between the function of the government and the practice of faith is necessary, even under the ideal of a theocracy (the belief that God is the real ruler of the nation). Nations around Israel practiced a kind of theocracy in which the king was anointed by his god so long as he ruled; his rules were the rules of the gods. Citizens of the state could not question his legitimacy. The king made the rules for citizens as if received from the gods. An offense against the rules of state was an offense against the king himself.

In the biblical world, the values of life are given by God, not by the king; offenses are against the victim and against God, not against king and state. The king did not establish the law, but under the covenant he was responsible to enforce the law as given. God declared the way of life that was right for his people; prophets and priests told the king whether he was fulfilling that role. God did not rule through the king alone; the function of the king was to obey the will of God, punish offenders, and provide for their victims. Prophet and priest provided guidance, accountability, and reconciliation; when they failed in their task, the will of God also failed.

The roles of king, priest, and prophet were clearly specified (**Deut. 17:14–18:22**). The responsibility of the king was to know the covenant, which was managed by the priests, and to fulfill its requirements (**Deut. 17:18–20**). The king had no privileged status in religious practice or knowledge of the divine will. He was dependent on other mediators to know God's will. Priests or Levites were normally consulted for divination under the covenant, usually through the use of the Urim and Thummim. When the priest wore his vest in the inner sanctuary, he not only represented the people to God but also inquired for divine judgment on their behalf. In the choice of Joshua as successor to Moses, Eleazar the priest consulted the Urim on his behalf before the entire assembly (**Num. 27:12–23**). This method was capable of giving more than a positive or negative reply (**Judg. 1:1–2; 20:18; 1 Sam. 10:22; 2 Sam. 5:23–24**).

Consultation with prophets rather than with priests in preparation for battle was outside usual procedure. Instead of the venerable Urim and Thummim were ecstasies who brandished symbolic tools (**1 Kings 22:11–12**). Jehoshaphat's suspicion appears well founded. Nevertheless, prophecy was a legitimate means of discerning the divine will. God promised to raise up a prophet like Moses who would continue to fill the revelatory role, as opposed to other forms of divination that were the abomination of the nations (**Deut. 18:9–22**). The role of the prophets was serious; failure to deliver the divine word was at the cost of their own life.

In governance Israel distinguished between the sacred and the common, or what we might call the secular. Among the other nations the king mediated the laws of the gods, so religion and governance functioned as a seamless entity. The king regulated and



enforced the religion of the people. In Israel kings could be called to account by priests and prophets.

The prophet Amos, for example, was a farmer from Tekoa in the hill country of Judah (**Amos 1:1**). God called him to leave his own country to confront the evils of Jeroboam II king of Israel. Amaziah was serving as the priest of Jeroboam at Bethel (**7:10**). The judgment pronounced by Amos was unacceptable to him, as it threatened king and country, so he demanded the prophet leave (**7:12–13**). Amos in turn declared his unqualified independence from the religion of the state. He was not a prophet, nor the son of a prophet; he was called by God from his vocation as a farmer to speak God's word against the house of Jeroboam and the state of Israel (**7:14–15**). This calling of Amos could not be altered by the protestations of a priest in the service of the king. Israel was destined for exile according to the truth of his word (**7:16–17**). Neither king nor priest had control over the message of the prophet.

The indictment of the prophets who wrote Kings is that the kings of Israel never followed the covenant. They attempted to create a state religion of their own making, like the other nations. Ahab had his prophets who made it their priority to say what the king wanted to hear (**22:13**). The king also maintained the cult centers where the people worshiped. Ahab was typical of the other kings with whom he made alliances. There was only one exception to the support of the prophets: Micaiah. In the end Micaiah had no influence over the four hundred prophets in the service of the king; he merely determined the fate of the king in his declaration of God's plan.

Jehoshaphat is presented as a vacillating king; he calls for additional prophetic consultation, yet he submits to Ahab in going to war and risking his life. His reign is briefly summarized in Kings, as compared with the detailed account of his reforms and conquests in Chronicles (**2 Chron. 17:1–20:36**). The Chronicler read Kings as expressing a negative view of Jehoshaphat and is unequivocal in retaining that viewpoint. Jehoshaphat does follow the policies of Asa his father, who removed cult prostitution and idolatry (**2 Chron. 20:32**). Like Asa, he fails to remove the country shrines, which compromise worship at one central sanctuary (**v. 33**).

Particularly reprehensible is the alliance Jehoshaphat has with the northern kingdom, the one sin for which he is severely castigated. After the battle at Ramoth Gilead, Jehu the son of Hanani confronts Jehoshaphat in the palace to reprimand him and declare that great wrath rests on him, though no consequence is noted (**2 Chron. 19:1–3**). Later, Eliezer son of Dodavahu declares that the achievements of Jehoshaphat will be destroyed (**20:37**); the loss of his trading fleet is because of his union with Ahaziah son of Ahab.

In Chronicles, one of the lessons to be learned from Jehoshaphat is that judgment can be mollified, if not averted, by timely action. The warning of Jehu is followed by the report of a major judicial reform (**2 Chron. 19:4–11**), as justice comes more centrally under the jurisdiction of the king in Jerusalem. More significantly, judicial reform is followed by an account of a major war against the hordes from Transjordan. Unlike the war

against Moab reported in Kings, Jehoshaphat acts in complete dependence on God without any reliance on Israel or other allies (**20:1–30**). The result is an outstanding triumph for the Judean armies without any warfare on their part; their only action is the recovery of an enormous spoil.

The importance of humility, repentance, and complete reliance on God in the face of grave danger needs to be made repeatedly. For all this Jehoshaphat is not completely exonerated; approval for his reign remains qualified. Jehoshaphat does not achieve purity of worship. He continues to experience divine wrath to the extent that his efforts at economic success fail with the loss of his ships, but that judgment is certainly not what it might have been.

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