

THE BOOK OF 1 KINGS

Mike Glover

INTRODUCTION

In the first eleven chapters of 1 Kings, we find that Solomon becomes the king of Israel after David dies. Before dying, David tells him to walk in God's ways, and so Solomon asks for wisdom from God, which he receives.

Solomon then begins a huge building project, which includes the building of the temple, which David requested. He began building the temple four hundred and eighty years after the Exodus from Egypt.

Seven years later, the Ark of the Covenant was brought to the temple, and the glory of the Lord descended on it. Solomon then prays, and sacrifices are offered.

Although Solomon was the wisest man around, he did some pretty stupid things, such as worshipping foreign gods, which his many wives introduced him to. It wouldn't be long after these things happened that his reign would come to an end, and he would die.

In the next eleven chapters of 1 Kings, we begin to read about the end of the united kingdom of Israel. The nation as a whole finds itself in a situation where they have some decisions to make; sadly, they choose the wrong ones.

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It was during this time that Rehoboam inherited the kingdom and was relentless about enforcing high taxes, which caused the Northern tribes to begin a revolt, and Jeroboam was crowned king of Israel.

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There are also many undersigned coincidences between Jeremiah and Kings, 2 Kings 21:1-26 / Jeremiah 7:15 / Jeremiah 15:4 / Jeremiah 19:3, and events recorded in Kings of which Jeremiah had personal knowledge. These facts support to some degree the tradition that Jeremiah was the author of the books of Kings. But the more probable theory is that Ezra, after the captivity, compiled them from documents written perhaps by David, Solomon, Nathan, Gad, and Iddo and that he arranged them in the order in which they now exist.

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In the threefold division of the Scriptures by the Jews, these books are ranked among the 'prophets'. They are frequently quoted or alluded to by our Lord and His apostles, **Matthew 6:29 / Matthew 12:42 / Luke 4:25-26 / Luke 10:4 / 2 Kings 4:29 / Mark 1:6 / 2 Kings 1:8 / Matthew 3:4.**

Within 1 Kings, we find references to other books, such as 'the book of the acts of Solomon', **1 Kings 11:41**, the 'book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah', **1 Kings 14:29 / 1 Kings 15:7 / 1 Kings 15:23**. And finally the 'book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel', **1 Kings 14:19 / 1 Kings 15:31 / 1 Kings 16:14 / 1 Kings 16:20 / 1 Kings 16:27.**

THE UNITED KINGDOM

The most glorious part of the history of Israel was the United Kingdom, so-called to distinguish it from the Divided Kingdom which followed, it lasted from about 1095 to 975 B. C. and included the reigns of three great kings, Saul, David, and Solomon. The story of this period is related in the two books of Samuel, **1 Kings 1-11 / 1 Chronicles 1-2 / 1 Chronicles 9.**

SAUL, ISRAEL'S FIRST KING

You will remember that for about three hundred years, the twelve tribes of Israel had been loosely governed by judges. The last and greatest of these was the prophet, Samuel. But the children of Israel wanted to be like their neighbours; they came to Samuel and asked for a king.

Although God was much displeased with their request, He instructed Samuel to anoint as their king a young man named Saul who stood head and shoulders above the people. The people gathered at Mizpeh and were presented with their new ruler, who was so timid that he hid among the baggage.

Saul began his forty-year reign well. Israel was beset by enemies, and he undertook the task of driving them back. His army defeated the Ammonites, the Philistines, the Moabites, the Edomites and others. Soon, Saul was a popular figure among the people.

But his popularity went to his head, and he ceased to be a humble servant of God. Instead, he became self-willed, bent on doing things the way he wanted them done, regardless of the will of God.

On one occasion, he was commissioned to 'utterly destroy the Amalekites.' Instead, he spared the king and saved some sheep and cattle to sacrifice. Because he had thus disobeyed the Lord, Samuel rebuked him with the words, 'Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams,' **1 Samuel 15:22.**

From that time on, God rejected Saul as king. Saul deeply loved him and selected him as his armour bearer. David quickly rose to prominence by slaying with a sling the champion of the Philistines, the giant Goliath.

The ensuing glory given to David provoked the jealousy of Saul, who began to suspect that David was trying to supplant him as king. From that time on, Saul sought to kill David and for years hunted him as an outlaw over the hills of Israel.

Perhaps the most beautiful friendship in the Bible is that of David and Jonathan, the son of Saul, who, although he realised that David would become king instead of himself, constantly sought to save David from his father's anger. Saul and Jonathan both fell in battle with the Philistines to prepare the way for David as king.

DAVID, A MAN AFTER GOD'S HEART

After Saul's death, David was crowned king of the tribe of Judah while Saul's son, Ishbosheth, reigned over the rest of Israel. When his kingdom collapsed after seven years, David's authority was extended over all of Israel.

David selected Jerusalem as his capital and set about the task of making Israel a great nation. In successive wars, he expanded the kingdom from the Nile to the Euphrates River.

David was truly a man after God's own heart. The Lord declared of him, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after mine own heart, who shall fulfil all my will,' **Acts 13:22**.

The psalms written by David are an expression of his complete devotion to God. This consecration was especially evident in his constant willingness to obey all the Lord's commands.

We may learn from him that we cannot expect the approval of God unless we are always willing to do what He asks of us without question. Despite David's success and his faithfulness to God, he made one grave mistake that followed him to his death. He committed adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of Uriah, the Hittite.

Some stories have portrayed Bathsheba as a siren who intentionally seduced David. Nothing in the Bible bears out this idea. To cover up his sin, David had Uriah placed in the thick of battle so that he might be slain, and then, when he was dead, took Bathsheba as his wife.

All of this greatly displeased God, and Nathan the prophet was sent to rebuke David by telling him the parable of the ewe lamb, **2 Samuel 12**. David repented, but his troubles now began. His son Absalom murdered his brother. Later, Absalom led a revolt against David and died in the attempt. For a time, David was forced to flee.

Adding to his grief, another son, Adonijah, attempted to usurp the kingdom with the help of David's trusted general, Joab. To forestall the kingdom from falling into the wrong hands, David had his son, Solomon, crowned king while he yet lived. Shortly thereafter, David died, bringing to an end the forty-year reign of a great man of God.

SOLOMON, FROM WISDOM TO IDOLATRY

Solomon's rule was in sharp contrast with his father's. While David had faced turmoil for almost his entire reign, Solomon's was one of unbroken peace. He began auspiciously.

In a dream, he asked for God's wisdom rather than riches and honour, and because of his thoughtful request, he was rewarded with all three. Solomon's wisdom is known to all. Three thousand proverbs and one thousand and five songs came forth from this sage!

Much of his wisdom is recorded for us in the three books which he wrote and which we will study in another lesson. Politically, he extended the influence of Israel to its greatest height, making it a world power.

The fabulous wealth of Solomon astounds us, even to this day. He had fourteen hundred chariots, twelve thousand horsemen and an annual income of six hundred threescores and six talents of gold. And he didn't have to pay income tax!

On one occasion, he was given an outright gift of one hundred and twenty talents of gold by the queen of Sheba. When she visited Solomon to see if all the reports of his fame were true, she was so amazed that she exclaimed, 'Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard,' 1 Kings 10:7. The greatest of all Solomon's accomplishments was his building of the temple of God to replace the tabernacle in which Israel had worshipped since the wilderness wanderings.

Probably no structure in the world's history has equalled it in cost. Built by one-hundred and eighty-three thousand men in seven and a half years, it cost an immense sum of money to erect.

The great wealth of Solomon eventually led to his undoing. He sought every kind of pleasure and married seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. Most of these were idolaters, and what a time he must have had in trying to please them all. His high cost of living led him to tax the people heavily, much to their dissatisfaction.

His reign had started with wisdom and wealth; it ended with women and idolatry. When his forty-year rule ended, he was a thoroughly disillusioned and unhappy man. In his revelry, he had laid the groundwork for the division of his great kingdom after his death.

OUTLINE

The United Kingdom And The Reign Of Solomon. 1 Kings 1-11
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CHAPTER 1

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THE TEXT

'When King David was very old, he could not keep warm even when they put covers over him. So his attendants said to him, 'Let us look for a young virgin to serve the king and take care of him. She can lie beside him so that our lord the king may keep warm.' Then they searched throughout Israel for a beautiful young woman and found Abishag, a Shunammite, and brought her to the king. The woman was very beautiful; she took care of the king and waited on him, but the king had no sexual relations with her.' 1 Kings 1:1-4

The first thing the writer tells us is that David is now very old, 1 Kings 1:1. Some commentators suggest David was in his late sixties or early seventies.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He was probably now about sixty-nine years of age. He was thirty years old when he began to reign, reigned forty, and died in the seventieth year of his age, 2 Samuel 5:4 / 1 Kings 2:11, and the transactions mentioned here are supposed to have taken place about a year before his death.'

Because of his age and he's near death his body temperature couldn't be kept stable, even with covers being placed over him, 1 Kings 1:1. His attendants decide they need a young virgin to serve him and care for him, 1 Kings 1:2. As was the custom of the day a young woman would be brought to lie next to David to give him extra body heat, 1 Kings 1:2.

After an intensive search through Israel, they found a beautiful young woman named Abishag who was from a place called Shunem, 1 Kings 1:2-3. which is located on the western slope of the hill of Moreh, northwest of Jezreel, in the territory of Issachar, Joshua 19:18.

Although Abishag lay next to David to keep him warm, they had no sexual relations together, 1 Kings 1:4. She was there simply to keep David warm in his last days.

ADONIJAH SETS HIMSELF UP AS KING

‘Now Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, put himself forward and said, ‘I will be king.’ So he got chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him. (His father had never rebuked him by asking, ‘Why do you behave as you do?’ He was also very handsome and was born next after Absalom.) Adonijah conferred with Joab, son of Zeruiah, and with Abiathar the priest, and they gave him their support. But Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei and Rei and David’s special guard did not join Adonijah. Adonijah then sacrificed sheep, cattle, and fattened calves at the Stone of Zohelath near En Rogel. He invited all his brothers, the king’s sons, and all the royal officials of Judah, but he did not invite Nathan the prophet or Benaiah or the special guard or his brother Solomon.’ 1 Kings 1:5-10

While David was being kept warm on his deathbed, Adonijah, whose name means ‘Yahweh is lord’, selfishly decides to go against the will of God by making himself king, 1 Kings 1:5.

Because his mother was Haggith, 2 Samuel 2:4, he may have honestly thought that it was his right to become king.

He gets chariots and horses ready, with fifty men to run ahead of him, 1 Kings 1:5 / 2 Samuel 15:1.

It’s clear because his father never rebuked him, 1 Kings 1:6, Adonijah had no respect for any kind of authority when he was younger, and this continued into adulthood, Proverbs 19:18 / Proverbs 29:17.

Joab, David’s nephew, at this time captain of the army, 2 Samuel 8:16, and Abiathar were also old and were in the past loyal to David, but here, they appear to side with Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:7, but the text doesn’t tell us why.

It’s possible, just like Adonijah, they thought that Adonijah was the rightful heir of David. It’s also possible that Joab remembered that David had pronounced a curse upon him, 2 Samuel 3:29, and so if he joins forces with Adonijah, he may well escape the curse.

It’s also possible that Abiathar joined forces with Adonijah because he was jealous of the preference David seemed to have conferred upon Zadok, a rival High Priest.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Joab’s defection on this occasion, after his faithful adherence to David during the troubles caused by Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:2-17, may be accounted for by his fear that Solomon would be a ‘man of rest,’ 1 Chronicles 22:9, and by his preference for the character of Adonijah. He may also have thought that Adonijah, as the eldest son, 1 Kings 1:5, had almost a right to succeed.’

One thing is clear, though, and that is Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei and Rei appear to know the will of both God and David, 1 Kings 1:8. As a result, they weren’t invited to Adonijah’s celebration of his supposed rise to the throne, 1 Kings 1:9-10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Making a royal feast, in reference to his inauguration. As he had Abiathar the priest with him, no doubt these animals were offered sacrificially, and then the guests fed on the flesh of the victims. 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.’

‘Then Nathan asked Bathsheba, Solomon’s mother, ‘Have you not heard that Adonijah, the son of Haggith, has become king, and our lord David knows nothing about it? Now then, let me advise you on how you can save your own life and the life of your son Solomon. Go in to King David and say to him, ‘My lord the king, did you not swear to me your servant: ‘Surely Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne?’ Why then has Adonijah become king?’ While you are still there talking to the king, I will come in and add my word to what you have said.’ 1 Kings 1:11-14

God’s prophet, Nathan, appears to know that God’s choice of who would be king was more important than the firstborn becoming the heir to the throne, Deuteronomy 17:15.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Adonijah was David’s fourth son, **2 Samuel 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 Chronicles 22:9-10**. Adonijah’s revolt was primarily against the revealed will of God, secondarily against David, and finally against Solomon.’

He knows if Adonijah becomes king, then the very lives of Bathsheba, who was Solomon’s mother, **2 Samuel 12:24-25**, and Solomon himself would be at risk. Because Nathan mentions ‘Haggith’, **1 Kings 1:11**, the mother of Adonijah, he knew that this would cause jealousy in Bathsheba, which would motivate her to save not only her own life but also the life of Solomon, **1 Kings 1:12**.

Nathan advises Bathsheba to go and speak to David and remind him that he swore that Solomon would be the next king, **1 Kings 1:13**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is very likely that David made such an oath, and that was known only to Bathsheba and Nathan. It is nowhere else mentioned.’

Nathan will come into the room when Bathsheba is speaking to David and support her, **1 Kings 1:14**. Make no mistake about it, if Adonijah becomes king, then both Bathsheba and Solomon would not have lived. Adonijah’s failure to invite Solomon and his followers to his feast implies that Adonijah knew that David wanted Solomon to become king.

‘So Bathsheba went to see the aged king in his room, where Abishag the Shunammite was attending him. Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before the king. ‘What is it you want?’ the king asked. She said to him, ‘My lord, you yourself swore to me your servant by the LORD your God: ‘Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne.’ But now Adonijah has become king, and you, my lord the king, do not know about it. He has sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep, and has invited all the king’s sons, Abiathar the priest and Joab the commander of the army, but he has not invited Solomon your servant. My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. Otherwise, as soon as my lord the king is laid to rest with his ancestors, I and my son Solomon will be treated as criminals.’ **1 Kings 1:15-21**

Although David was very old and physically struggling, **1 Kings 1:15**, his mental health was still in good order.

Notice that Bathsheba bowed down, prostrating herself before David, **1 Kings 1:16**.

She reminds David that he swore Solomon would be the next king, **1 Kings 1:17**, and David knows exactly what he said concerning Solomon becoming king after David dies. Solomon will become king, and there should be no doubt in the minds of those present what David’s will is, **2 Samuel 7:1-29**.

After she tells David everything which has happened and is going on behind his back, **1 Kings 1:18-19**. She tells David the eyes of all Israel are on him, to learn from him who will sit on the throne next after him, **1 Kings 1:20**.

Bathsheba is concerned about her life and the life of Solomon. She knows that Adonijah would treat her and Solomon like mere criminals, **1 Kings 1:21 / 2 Kings 18:14**. In other words, they would be condemned for treason against the throne.

‘While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived. And the king was told, ‘Nathan the prophet is here.’ So he went before the king and bowed with his face to the ground. Nathan said, ‘Have you, my lord the king, declared that Adonijah shall be king after you, and that he will sit on your throne? Today, he has gone down and sacrificed great numbers of cattle, fattened calves, and sheep. He has invited all the king’s sons, the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest. Right now, they are eating and drinking with him and saying, ‘Long live King Adonijah!’ But me, your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and your servant Solomon, he did not invite. Is this something my lord the king has done without letting his servants know who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?’ **1 Kings 1:22-27**

Nathan arrived and went to David, 1 Kings 1:22, and he, too, went before David and bowed with his face to the ground, 1 Kings 1:23. He asks David if he declared Adonijah to be king without telling those close to him, 1 Kings 1:24.

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Evidently, God moved Nathan to do what he did here. It was certainly in harmony with God’s will, 2 Samuel 12:1. Adonijah had become king, 1 Kings 1:11, only in the sense that he was the people’s choice at that moment. Perhaps Nathan was trying to shock Bathsheba and David by referring to Adonijah as the king.’

He tells David everything that has been happening, 1 Kings 1:25, and he tells him that those closest to David haven’t even been invited to the feast, 1 Kings 1:26. Not long from now, Solomon will make Zadok High Priest, 1 Kings 1:32-40, and the support which Abiathar gave Adonijah, will result in his removal from the priesthood, 1 Kings 2:27, just as God had prophesied regarding the descendants of Eli, 1 Samuel 2:13-35.

Again, he asks David if he made Adonijah king without telling the people, 1 Kings 1:27.

DAVID MAKES SOLOMON KING

‘Then King David said, ‘Call in Bathsheba.’ So she came into the king’s presence and stood before him. The king then took an oath: ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who has delivered me out of every trouble, I will surely carry out this very day what I swore to you by the LORD, the God of Israel: Solomon your son shall be king after me, and he will sit on my throne in my place.’ Then Bathsheba bowed down with her face to the ground, prostrating herself before the king, and said, ‘May my lord King David live forever!’ 1 Kings 1:28-31

After hearing what Nathan had to say, David sends for Bathsheba, which implies she wasn’t present when Nathan spoke to David, 1 Kings 1:28. Despite being physically weak, David wastes no time taking action in declaring an oath in which he declared once again, 1 Kings 1:29 / 1 Kings 1:17, that Solomon would become the next king of Israel, 1 Kings 1:30 / 1 Chronicles 29:21-25.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the words ‘as surely as the LORD lives’.

‘These words were the most common form of oath among the Israelites, Judges 8:19 / 1 Samuel 14:39 / 1 Samuel 19:6. It was unique to David to attach a further clause to this oath, a clause of thankfulness for some special mercy, 1 Samuel 25:34, or for God’s constant protection of him, here and in 2 Samuel 4:9.’

Bathsheba once again bows down with her face to the ground, prostrating herself before David and declares, May my lord King David live forever, 1 Kings 1:31 / 1 Kings 1:16.

‘King David said, ‘Call in Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah son of Jehoiada.’ When they came before the king, he said to them: ‘Take your lord’s servants with you and have Solomon my son mount my own mule and take him down to Gihon. There have Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him king over Israel. Blow the trumpet and shout, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ Then you are to go up with him, and he is to come and sit on my throne and reign in my place. I have appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah.’ Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, answered the king, ‘Amen! May the LORD, the God of my lord the king, so declare it. As the LORD was with my lord the king, so may he be with Solomon to make his throne even greater than the throne of my lord King David!’ 1 Kings 1:32-37

After all the talks with Bathsheba and Nathan, David wastes no time and orders Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah to make Solomon king as quickly as possible, 1 Kings 1:32-34.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The combination of the high priest, the prophet, and the captain of the bodyguard, the Cherethites and Pelethites, 1 Kings 1:38, would show the people that the proceedings had the king’s sanction. The order of the names marks the position of the persons with respect to the matter in hand.’

After blowing the trumpet and shouting ‘long live the king, they are to go up with Solomon, and he is to come and sit on David’s throne and reign in his place because David has appointed him ruler over Israel and Judah, 1 Kings 1:34-35 / 2 Samuel 2:9 / 2 Samuel 19:11.

Notice that Benaiah said, ‘Amen, 1 Kings 1:36. This was a legal and hearty response indicating complete approval of David’s action by this great soldier. He has no doubts that God wanted Solomon to be king, and so he prays that Solomon’s rule as king would be even greater than David’s rule, 1 Kings 1:37.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The matter of conducting a business of this kind seems to have been as follows.

1. The king elect was placed on the mule of his predecessor, and caused to ride abroad to one of the public wells, or to a river where there was the greatest concourse of people, that they might see who he was that was appointed.

Solomon was here taken to the river Gihon in order to be anointed; the continual stream or constantly running fountain, denoting the perpetuity of the kingdom.

2. The priest and the prophet anointed him in the name of the Lord; and thereby signified that he should be endued with all the kingly virtues; that he should reign by, under, and for the Lord.

3. The trumpet was then to be blown, and solemn proclamation made that he was anointed king.

4. He was then brought and solemnly placed on the throne, to signify that he had now assumed the reins of government, and was about to administer justice and judgement to the people.

‘So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites went down and had Solomon mount King David’s mule, and they escorted him to Gihon. Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the sacred tent and anointed Solomon. Then they sounded the trumpet and all the people shouted, ‘Long live King Solomon!’ And all the people went up after him, playing pipes and rejoicing greatly, so that the ground shook with the sound.’ 1 Kings 1:38-40

David obviously takes Adonijah’s presumption to be king very seriously, hence why he makes publicly wants Solomon to be anointed quickly, 1 Samuel 16:11-13 / 2 Samuel 5:3.

Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah went down together with the men called Kerethites and Pelethites to Gihon, 1 Kings 1:38. The Kerethites and Pelethites were special guards who came from Crete and Philistia, they were basically soldiers whom people paid to protect the king.

They had Solomon sit on King David’s mule, 1 Kings 1:38. This was significant because only the rightful king could ride on the king’s mule. Zadok took the horn of oil from the tent that David had erected in Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 6:17, and then he poured this oil on Solomon’s head, 1 Kings 1:39. This special ceremony with the oil is called an ‘anointing’, Exodus 31:11 / Exodus 39:38.

It showed how God was acting to appoint Solomon as the king, 1 Samuel 10:1 / 1 Samuel 16:12-13. Adonijah was trying to appoint himself as the king, but God appointed Solomon. And so, as Adonijah’s guests were finishing their party, Solomon received this anointing to publicly become king of Israel.

After the sounding of the trumpet, all the people shouted, ‘long live the king’ 1 Kings 1:39. This was a time of real celebration as the pipes played and the people rejoiced, 1 Kings 1:40. Notice that ‘the ground shook’, 1 Kings 1:40. This tells us that the response of the people was so great, that they had eagerly accepted Solomon as their new king.

‘Adonijah and all the guests who were with him heard it as they were finishing their feast. On hearing the sound of the trumpet, Joab asked, ‘What’s the meaning of all the noise in the city?’ Even as he was speaking, Jonathan, son of Abiathar the priest, arrived. Adonijah said, ‘Come in. A worthy man like you must be bringing good news.’ ‘Not at all!’ Jonathan answered. ‘Our lord King David has made Solomon king. The king has sent with him Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have put him on the king’s mule, and Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king at Gihon. From there, they have gone up cheering, and the city resounds with it. That’s the noise you hear. Moreover, Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne. Also, the royal officials have come to congratulate our lord King David, saying, ‘May your God make Solomon’s name more famous than yours and his throne greater than yours!’ And the king bowed in worship on his bed and said, ‘Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has allowed my eyes to see a successor on my throne today.’ 1 Kings 1:41-48

It appears that all those who attended Adonijah’s feast were close enough to Gihon to hear the great rejoicing of the people when Solomon was anointed king, 1 Kings 1:41.

After inquiring what the noise was all about, 1 Kings 1:41, Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, 2 Samuel 15:36, came to Adonijah and Adonijah said, says, come in, a worthy man like you must be bringing good news, 1 Kings 1:42.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Jonathan had acted in a similar capacity, as a carrier of intelligence, in the time of Absalom’s attempt, 2 Samuel 15:36 / 2 Samuel 17:17, but at that time, like his father, he was faithful to David, and ‘a valiant man,’ ‘a virtuous man,’ or ‘a man of worth, 1 Kings 1:52 / Proverbs 12:4.’

Jonathan tells him that Solomon was the newly crowned king of Israel, 1 Kings 1:43. Jonathan explains everything which has happened and explains that’s the reason for the noise that he heard, 1 Kings 1:43-44.

He tells Adonijah that Solomon has taken his seat on the royal throne, and the royal officials have come to congratulate our lord King David, saying, ‘May your God make Solomon’s name more famous than yours and his throne greater than yours!’, 1 Kings 1:46-47. David bowed in worship on his bed, Genesis 47:31 / Hebrews 11:21, and praises God for allowing him to see a successor on His throne, 1 Kings 1:48.

‘At this, all Adonijah’s guests rose in alarm and dispersed. But Adonijah, in fear of Solomon, went and took hold of the horns of the altar. Then Solomon was told, ‘Adonijah is afraid of King Solomon and is clinging to the horns of the altar. He says, ‘Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.’ Solomon replied, ‘If he shows himself to be worthy, not a hair of his head will fall to the ground; but if evil is found in him, he will die.’ Then King Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar. And Adonijah came and bowed down to King Solomon, and Solomon said, ‘Go to your home.’ 1 Kings 1:49-53

After hearing the news about Solomon becoming king, Adonijah and all his guests became afraid because they realised that the anointing of Solomon as king meant that those who sided with Adonijah were now considered rebels. Their fear led them to flee for their lives, 1 Kings 1:49.

Notice that ‘Adonijah took hold of the horns of the altar’, 1 Kings 1:50 / 1 Kings 2:28. He obviously feels that if he takes hold of the horns, this will somehow protect him from being put to death, because he assumed the role of king. He pleads for mercy from Solomon, 1 Kings 1:51, and Solomon is happy to show Adonijah mercy, but that mercy would depend upon his future behaviour, 1 Kings 1:52. Solomon would show him mercy if he submitted to Solomon as king; if not, he will die, 1 Kings 1:52.

Solomon sent men, and they brought him down from the altar, and Adonijah came and bowed down to Solomon, and Solomon told him to go home, 1 Kings 1:53. Sadly, for Adonijah, he would soon forget the commitment he made to Solomon at this time, and because of this, it would cost him his life, 1 Kings 2:13-25.

CHAPTER 2

INTRODUCTION

‘When the time drew near for David to die, he gave a charge to Solomon his son. ‘I am about to go the way of all the earth,’ he said. ‘So be strong, act like a man, and observe what the LORD your God requires: Walk in obedience to him, and keep his decrees and commands, his laws, and regulations, as written in the Law of Moses. Do this so that you may prosper in all you do and wherever you go, and that the LORD may keep his promise to me: ‘If your descendants watch how they live, and if they walk faithfully before me with all their heart and soul, you will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.’ 1 Kings 2:1-4

DAVID’S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The events related in 1 Chronicles 28-29 had occurred in the interval which separates the last and this present chapter.’

Just before David passes away, he charges Solomon to live in obedience to God’s will, 1 Kings 2:1-3 / Exodus 20:1-17, which in turn would encourage Solomon to live a holy life, Exodus 30:21 / Leviticus 10:13-15.

The laws are those cases which aren’t defined in the law, but cases which were guided by wisdom from God’s Word, Exodus 21:1-Exodus 23:5. The regulations would be any principle that would give witness to the wisdom that came from God, Psalms 19:7-8 / Psalms 119:88.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning what Solomon is charged with.

1. Walk in his ways.

Not in thine own, nor in the ways of a wicked, perishing world.

2. Keep his statutes.

Consider all his appointments to be holy, just, and good; receive them as such, and conscientiously observe them.

3. Keep his commandments.

Whatever he has bidden thee to do, perform; what he has forbidden thee to do, omit.

4. Keep his judgments.

What he has determined to be right is essentially and inherently right; what he has determined to be wrong or evil is inherently and essentially so. A thing is not good because God has commanded it; a thing is not evil because he has forbidden it.

He has commanded the good, because it is in its own nature good and useful; he has forbidden the evil, because it is in its own nature bad and hurtful. Keep therefore his judgments.

5. Keep his testimonies.

Bear witness to all to which he has borne witness. His testimonies are true; there is no deceit or falsity in them. His testimonies refer also to future good things and good times, they are the signifiers of coming blessedness: as such, respect them.’

If Solomon follows God’s way and is obedient to Him, then God promises that his descendants will continue to reign on the throne, 1 Kings 2:4. In 2 Samuel 7:11-17, we find two things prophesied.

1. The Messiah would reign on David's throne forever.
2. David's dynasty would continue.

We also notice that the promise of the Messiah was unconditional, but the continuation of David's dynasty was conditional.

'Now you yourself know what Joab son of Zeruiah did to me—what he did to the two commanders of Israel's armies, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He killed them, shedding their blood in peacetime as if in battle, and with that blood he stained the belt around his waist and the sandals on his feet. Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace. 'But show kindness to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead and let them be among those who eat at your table. They stood by me when I fled from your brother Absalom. 'And remember, you have with you Shimei son of Gera, the Benjamite from Bahurim, who called down bitter curses on me the day I went to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan, I swore to him by the LORD: 'I will not put you to death by the sword.' But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood.' 1 Kings 2:5-9

During David's reign as king of Israel, he failed to carry out some judgments; here, he asks Solomon to carry out those judgments for him. One possible reason David didn't carry these judgments out was because of the guilt he carried after ordering Uriah, Bathsheba's husband, to be killed on the battlefield, 2 Samuel 11:14-16.

Joab, 1 Kings 2:5, had earlier murdered Abner, 2 Samuel 3:27, and he also murdered Amasa, 2 Samuel 20:8-10. It's clear that David felt he was responsible for the safety of these two men whom Joab had murdered, and so, he judges that Joab should be put to death, 1 Kings 2:6, and asks Solomon to judge him according to the crimes he's committed. Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Joab's chief offence against David, besides his two murders, was no doubt his killing Absalom, 2 Samuel 18:14. Another serious crime was his support of the treasonable attempt of Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:7. But besides these flagrant misdemeanours, he seems to have offended David by a number of little acts. He was a constant thorn in his side. He treated him with scant respect, taking important steps without his orders, 2 Samuel 3:26, remonstrating with him roughly and rudely, 2 Samuel 2:24-25, almost betraying his secrets, 2 Samuel 11:19-21, and, where he disliked the orders given him, disobeying them, 1 Chronicles 21:6.'

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It would have been an insult to justice not to have taken the life of Joab. David was culpable in delaying it so long, but probably the circumstances of his government would not admit of his doing it sooner. According to the law of God, Joab, having murdered Abner and Amasa, should die. And had not David commanded Solomon to perform this act of justice, he could not have died in the approbation of his Maker.'

There was a time when Barzillai, 1 Kings 2:7, had helped David out during the rebellion of Absalom, 2 Samuel 17:27-29. Barzillai is now dead but David wants Solomon to bring his sons to eat with Solomon to show that he can show kindness to them because of the help their father gave David, 1 Kings 2:7.

There was a time when Shimei, 1 Kings 2:8, had shown great contempt towards David, 2 Samuel 16:5-13, but during that time David didn't punish him for his crime, 2 Samuel 19:18-23. David here asks Solomon to pass judgment upon Shimei for his total disrespect for David as king, 1 Kings 2:9.

Some commentators believe that David was completely right in passing these judgments on Joab and Shimei because the law says that murderers must be put to death, Genesis 9:6 / Numbers 35:33.

Concerning Shimei, some believe his execution is justified because the king had no power to forgive him of his offence in blaspheming the Lord's anointed, Leviticus 24:14-23, and that David on his death bed then realised that he was a law-breaker in forgiving Shimei.

With regard to David's forgiveness of Shimei, David's remembrance of his oath to Shimei doesn't correspond with what David was reported to have said in [1 Samuel 19:23](#), where we find David saying to Shimei, 'You will not die'. It appears that David changed his mind on his deathbed. Other commentators believe that David was completely unjustified by his actions here; they point out that David himself had received forgiveness for murdering Uriah, who was innocent, [2 Samuel 12:13](#), but here David refuses to extend that same forgiveness to Joab for committing the same crime.

THE DEATH OF DAVID

'Then David rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. He had reigned forty years over Israel—seven years in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. So Solomon sat on the throne of his father David, and his rule was firmly established.' 1 Kings 2:10-12

When David died, he was buried in the City of David, [Acts 2:29](#), and he left behind a great legacy in Israel, [1 Kings 2:10-11](#). He was the only king who recognised his own weaknesses, whilst trying to live to please God completely. All the way through the Scriptures, including the New Testament, time and time again, King David is mentioned and referred to as one who keeps the Lord's commands, [1 Kings 15:5](#) / [Acts 13:22](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the years of the reign of David.

'In all forty years and six months, [2 Samuel 5:5](#) / [1 Chronicles 3:4](#). The Jewish writers almost universally omit the fractions of a year.'

After David passed away, the throne went to Solomon, and he became Israel's new king, [1 Kings 2:12](#) / [1 Chronicles 28:6](#). Now his rule is firmly established, which means all of Israel recognised and accepted him as their new king, [1 Chronicles 29:26-28](#).

However, unlike David, who left a great legacy, Solomon would leave a legacy of idolatry, which set the example for all the other kings who would follow after him.

SOLOMON'S THRONE ESTABLISHED

'Now Adonijah, the son of Haggith, went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. Bathsheba asked him, 'Do you come peacefully?' He answered, 'Yes, peacefully.' Then he added, 'I have something to say to you.' 'You may say it,' she replied. 'As you know,' he said, 'the kingdom was mine. All Israel looked to me as their king. But things changed, and the kingdom has gone to my brother; for it has come to him from the LORD. Now I have one request to make of you. Do not refuse me.' 'You may make it,' she said. So he continued, 'Please ask King Solomon—he will not refuse you—to give me Abishag the Shunammite as my wife.' 'Very well,' Bathsheba replied, 'I will speak to the king for you.' When Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah, the king stood up to meet her, bowed down to her, and sat down on his throne. He had a throne brought for the king's mother, and she sat down at his right hand. 'I have one small request to make of you,' she said. 'Do not refuse me.' The king replied, 'Make it, my mother; I will not refuse you.' So she said, 'Let Abishag the Shunammite be given in marriage to your brother Adonijah.' King Solomon answered his mother, 'Why do you request Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? You might as well request the kingdom for him—after all, he is my older brother—yes, for him and for Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruah!' Then King Solomon swore by the LORD: 'May God deal with me, be it ever so severely, if Adonijah does not pay with his life for this request! And now, as surely as the LORD lives—he who has established me securely on the throne of my father David and has founded a dynasty for me as he promised—Adonijah shall be put to death today!' So King Solomon gave orders to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he struck down Adonijah, and he died.' 1 Kings 2:13-25

Adonijah goes to Bathsheba and when he does she ask him if he comes in peace to which he said ‘yes’, [1 Kings 2:13](#).

He tells her he has something to say to her and she gives him permission to speak, [1 Kings 2:14](#).

He tells her that the kingdom was his and all of Israel looked to him as their king, but things changed, and the kingdom has gone to his brother because it came to him from the LORD, [1 Kings 2:15](#). He requests that Solomon give him Abishag the Shunammite to be his wife, [1 Kings 2:16-17](#). He possibly does this for one or two reasons.

1. He may have been very naive and ignorant of the political implications of his request, perhaps being blinded by a passionate infatuation with the beautiful Abishag.

2. He may be working together with Abiathar and Joab, who were involved in a conspiracy to take the throne away from Solomon.

Bathsheba, oblivious to the consequences of such a request agrees to speak to Solomon about his request, [1 Kings 2:18](#), and when she goes to Solomon, notice he stood up to meet her, bowed down to her and sat down on his throne, [1 Kings 2:19](#).

He had a throne brought for the king’s mother, and she sat down at his right hand, [1 Kings 2:19](#). Bathsheba goes ahead and makes Adonijah’s request known to Solomon, [1 Kings 2:20-21](#).

Solomon tells his mother that this request is crazy for obvious reasons, [1 Kings 2:22](#). Earlier, Solomon showed mercy to Adonijah, [1 Kings 1:51-53](#), but Adonijah now acts in arrogance with his request to have Abishag as his wife.

By doing this, he was trying to squeeze himself into becoming king because Abishag was a part of David’s harem.

This may appear strange to us today, but during those days, it was customary if someone took ownership of a king’s harem, this meant they were claiming authority to be king, [2 Samuel 3:6-11](#) / [2 Samuel 16:20-23](#).

Solomon was a bit wiser than Bathsheba at this point; he knew exactly what Adonijah was up to, and he knew that Adonijah deserved to be put to death for treason, [1 Kings 2:23-24](#) / [1 Kings 1:52](#). Solomon doesn’t waste any time in ordering the execution of Adonijah, who apparently was waiting near the throne for an answer, [1 Kings 2:25](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Benaiah seems to have been the public state executioner, and yet he was generalissimo of all the forces. See him employed in a similar work, [1 Kings 2:34](#) / [1 Kings 2:46](#).’

‘To Abiathar the priest, the king said, ‘Go back to your fields in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not put you to death now, because you carried the ark of the Sovereign LORD before my father David and shared all my father’s hardships.’ So Solomon removed Abiathar from the priesthood of the LORD, fulfilling the word the LORD had spoken at Shiloh about the house of Eli.’ [1 Kings 2:26-27](#)

Abiathar was of the priestly lineage of Ithamar and was a loyal priest during David’s reign. Solomon sends him away to Anathoth, [1 Kings 2:26](#), which was a city for the Levites, [Joshua 21:8](#) / [Joshua 21:18](#) / [Jeremiah 1:1](#).

He was shown mercy by Solomon, because he carried the ark of the LORD before David and shared all of David’s hardships, [1 Kings 2:26](#). His exile meant the end of the lineage of Eli’s heritage from being high priests in Israel, [1 Kings 2:27](#) / [1 Samuel 2:27-36](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We need not understand this as stating that the fulfilment of the old prophecy was Solomon’s motive, or even one of his motives. The reference is to the overruling providence of God, which thus brought about the fulfilment of the prophecy, [Matthew 1:22](#) / [Matthew 2:15](#) / [Matthew 27:35](#), etc. The deposition of Abiathar involved the rejection of the house of Ithamar, [1 Chronicles 24:3](#), to which Eli belonged, and the reestablishment of the high priesthood in the line of Eleazar.’

‘When the news reached Joab, who had conspired with Adonijah though not with Absalom, he fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. King Solomon was told that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD and

was beside the altar. Then Solomon ordered Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, ‘Go, strike him down!’ So Benaiah entered the tent of the LORD and said to Joab, ‘The king says, ‘Come out!’ But he answered, ‘No, I will die here.’ Benaiah reported to the king, ‘This is how Joab answered me.’ Then the king commanded Benaiah, ‘Do as he says. Strike him down and bury him, and so clear me and my whole family of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed. The LORD will repay him for the blood he shed, because, without my father David knowing it, he attacked two men and killed them with the sword. Both of them—Abner, son of Ner, commander of Israel’s army, and Amasa, son of Jether, commander of Judah’s army—were better men and more upright than he. May the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever. But on David and his descendants, his house and his throne, may there be the LORD’s peace forever.’ So Benaiah, son of Jehoiada, went up and struck down Joab and killed him, and he was buried at his home out in the country.’ 1 Kings 2:28-34

Before David died, he gave specific instructions to Solomon to carry out some judgments on certain individuals, 1 Kings 2:5-9. In these verses, we read about how Solomon carried out those judgments, which will let all of Israel know that Solomon has begun his reign as king.

Solomon passes judgment upon Joab because of his murderous actions in the past, having murdered Abner, 2 Samuel 3:27, and he also murdered Amasa, 2 Samuel 20:8-10. If Solomon didn’t punish Joab, then David’s guilt for not having him put to death would be passed on to Solomon.

Joab clings on to ‘the horns of the altar’, 1 Kings 2:28, thinking this action would bring him mercy, but just like Adonijah, 1 Kings 1:52, he was shown no mercy but put to death, 1 Kings 2:29.

Benaiah goes to the tent of the LORD which was now at Gibeon, 1 Kings 3:4 / 1 Chronicles 16:39, and commands Joab to come out, but he refuses and wants to die inside the tent, and so, Benaiah reports this to Solomon, 1 Kings 2:30.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The altars were so sacred among all the people that, in general, even the vilest wretch found safety, if he once reached the altar. This led to many abuses, and the perversion of public justice and at last it became a maxim that the guilty should be punished, should they even have taken refuge at the altars. God decreed that the presumptuous murderer who had taken refuge at the altar should be dragged thence, and put to death, Exodus 21:14.’

Solomon tells Benaiah to do what Job requested, to kill him, and bury him so that Solomon and his whole family will be cleared of the guilt of the innocent blood that Joab shed, 1 Kings 2:31. Solomon says the LORD will repay him for the blood he shed, because without David knowing it he attacked two men and killed them with the sword.

Both of them, Abner son of Ner, commander of Israel’s army, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of Judah’s army, were better men and more upright than he, 1 Kings 2:32.

Solomon continues and says may the guilt of their blood rest on the head of Joab and his descendants forever but on David and his descendants, his house, and his throne, may there be the LORD’s peace forever, 1 Kings 2:33. Benaiah did as Solomon commanded, he kills Joab, 2 Samuel 20:8-10, and we are told that he was buried at his home out in the country, 1 Kings 2:34.

‘The king put Benaiah son of Jehoiada over the army in Joab’s position and replaced Abiathar with Zadok the priest.’
1 Kings 2:35

Whenever there’s a change of reign, it usually means some people will lose their leadership jobs, and others will be promoted. Here we find Solomon changing his military leader and changing the high priesthood, 1 Kings 2:35.

Benaiah replaced Joab as the commander of the military, and Zadok replaced Abiathar as a priest, 2 Samuel 20:25.

‘Then the king sent for Shimei and said to him, ‘Build yourself a house in Jerusalem and live there, but do not go anywhere else. The day you leave and cross the Kidron Valley, you can be sure you will die; your blood will be on your own head.’ Shimei answered the king, ‘What you say is good. Your servant will do as my lord the king has said.’ And Shimei stayed in Jerusalem for a long time. But three years later, two of Shimei’s slaves ran off to Achish, son of Maakah, king of Gath, and Shimei was told, ‘Your slaves are in Gath.’ At this, he saddled his donkey and went to Achish at Gath in search of his slaves. So Shimei went away and brought the slaves back from Gath. When

Solomon was told that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath and had returned, the king summoned Shimei and said to him, ‘Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, ‘On the day you leave to go anywhere else, you can be sure you will die’? At that time, you said to me, ‘What you say is good. I will obey.’ Why then did you not keep your oath to the LORD and obey the command I gave you?’ The king also said to Shimei, ‘You know in your heart all the wrong you did to my father David. Now the LORD will repay you for your wrongdoing. But King Solomon will be blessed, and David’s throne will remain secure before the LORD forever.’ Then the king gave the order to Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and he went out and struck Shimei down, and he died. The kingdom was now established in Solomon’s hands.’ 1 Kings 2:36-46

The only reason Shimei was still alive was that David felt guilty about reaping what Nathan, the prophet, told him would happen because he killed Uriah, 2 Samuel 12:1-14.

When David was on the run from Absalom, it was Shimei who cursed David, 2 Samuel 16:5. When he cursed David, he was living in Bahurim, but here he is in Jerusalem, under house arrest away from his family, 1 Kings 2:36. The good news is that as long as Shimei remained in Jerusalem, he would be safe from the penalty of death, 1 Kings 2:36-37.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The object, apparently, was to keep Shimei under the immediate eye of the government. Shimei’s old home, Bahurim, lay east of Jerusalem, on the road to Jericho, 2 Samuel 17:18, and could only be reached by crossing the Kedron valley. Solomon assumes that, if he quits the city, it will probably be in this direction, 1 Kings 2:37.’ The bad news is that if Shimei didn’t stay there, he went and tracked down two of his slaves, 1 Kings 2:39-40. As a result of his disobedience and because of his past sins, Solomon had him put to death, 1 Kings 2:41-46. Solomon’s reign is now established because he exercised wise judgments on those who committed murderous sins, and his authority is now recognised by everyone in Israel, 1 Kings 2:46. Although Israel rejoiced in having a new king, the beginning of Solomon’s reign was a world apart from how David began his reign, 1 Samuel 11:11-15.

CHAPTER 3

INTRODUCTION

‘Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, king of Egypt, and married his daughter. He brought her to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem. The people, however, were still sacrificing at the high places, because a temple had not yet been built for the Name of the LORD. Solomon showed his love for the LORD by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places.’ 1 Kings 3:1-3

No one knows who this Pharaoh is, but Solomon makes an alliance with him, 1 Kings 3:1, which was the custom of the day, where two countries sealed their relationship through marriage.

By doing this, the king of one country would marry the other’s daughters, which was permissible under those circumstances, as long as those other countries gave up their gods, Deuteronomy 21:10-14.

Israel wasn’t allowed to marry any Canaanites, Exodus 34:11-16 / Deuteronomy 7:1-5. In this case, Pharaoh and Egypt as a whole would be better off because Israel at this time was the stronger nation, but both countries could easily come to an agreement about trade deals, 1 Kings 10:26-29. Solomon brought his wife to the City of David until he finished building his palace and the temple of the LORD, and the wall around Jerusalem, 1 Kings 3:2.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the city of David.

‘The city, situated on the eastern hill, or true Zion, where the temple was afterwards built, over against the city of the Jebusites, 1 Kings 9:24 / 2 Chronicles 8:11.’

The high places, 1 Kings 3:2, were common places where the Canaanites sacrificed offerings to their gods, 1 Kings 11:5-7. These high places shouldn’t have been in existence because God had commanded Israel to destroy them all many years before this, because He knew that Israel would be tempted to get involved in idol worship, Deuteronomy 12:1-4.

The people had the excuse that the temple wasn’t finished being built yet, 1 Kings 3:2, but worshipping God at these high places was sinful, Leviticus 17:9. Solomon showed his love for God by walking according to the instructions given him by his father David, except that he offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places,’ 1 Kings 3:3. We must remember that God never commanded a temple to build in the first place, it was David’s idea, not God’s, 2 Samuel 7:1-17.

SOLOMON ASKS FOR WISDOM

‘The king went to Gibeon to offer sacrifices, for that was the most important high place, and Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon, the LORD appeared to Solomon during the night in a dream, and God said, ‘Ask for whatever you want me to give you.’ Solomon answered, ‘You have shown great kindness to your servant, my father David, because he was faithful to you and righteous and upright in heart. You have continued this great kindness to him and have given him a son to sit on his throne this very day. ‘Now, LORD my God, you have made your servant king in place of my father David. But I am only a little child and do not know how to carry out my duties. Your servant is here among the people you have chosen, a great people, too numerous to count or number. So give your servant a discerning heart to govern your people and to distinguish between right and wrong. For who is able to govern this great people of yours?’ The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for this. So God said to him, ‘Since you have asked for this and not for long life or wealth for yourself, nor have asked for the death of your enemies but for discernment in administering justice, I will do what you have asked. I will give you a wise and discerning heart, so that there will never have been anyone like you, nor will there ever be. Moreover, I will give you what you have not asked for—both wealth and honour—so that in your lifetime you will have no equal among kings. And if you walk in obedience to me and keep my decrees and commands as David your father did, I will give you a long life.’ Then Solomon awoke—and he realised it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord’s covenant, and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings. Then he gave a feast for all his court.’

1 Kings 3:4-15

Although the ark of the covenant was in a tent in Jerusalem, Solomon went to Gibeon, 1 Kings 3:4, because the tabernacle was located at Gibeon during the days of David’s reign and the first part of the reign of Solomon, 2 Chronicles 1:3. When he arrives, he offers burnt offerings, 1 Kings 3:4 / 2 Chronicles 1:2-13.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Solomon presented the victims. The priests were the actual sacrificers, 1 Kings 8:5. A sacrifice of a thousand victims was an act of royal magnificence suited to the greatness of Solomon. So Xerxes offered 1,000 oxen at Troy. If the offerings in this case were ‘whole burnt offerings,’ and were all offered upon the altar of Moses, the sacrifice must have lasted several days.’

Notice God appeared to Solomon in a dream, 1 Kings 3:5. God often appeared to men in dreams, but that didn’t always mean that God approved that person. We see this Pharaoh, Genesis 41:1-8, and Nebuchadnezzar, Daniel 2:1-9.

In the Old Testament, God spoke to people in various ways, Genesis 15:1 / Genesis 28:12 / Genesis 37:5, but in the Christian age, He speaks to us through Christ, Hebrews 1:1-3.

If you could ask God for anything, what would you ask for? A new car, better health, a better job, a wife who can cook or a husband who can use the Hoover! When Solomon became king of Israel, God asked him that very question. God says, Ask me for whatever you want, Solomon, and I'll give it to you, **1 Kings 3:5 / 2 Chronicles 1:7**.

He could have asked for long life or even wealth, he could have asked that God kill all of Israel's enemies, but he didn't. Solomon answered God and told Him He has shown great kindness to him, his father David, **1 Kings 1:48**, because he was faithful to Him and righteous and upright in heart, **1 Kings 3:6**.

He says God has continued this great kindness towards him and has given him a son to sit on his throne this very day, **1 Kings 3:6**. Notice Solomon says to God after having his dream that he is 'only a little child', **1 Kings 3:7**. Solomon could be referring to his inexperience in judging the people, and he could be referring to his young age as king, he is young.

Although we don't exactly know how old he was when he became king, the Septuagint gives it at age twelve, **1 Kings 2:12**, but we simply don't know. When God tells Solomon to ask for anything, we see in Solomon's answer to God, that he truly appreciated everything God had done for him, **1 Kings 3:8**.

Solomon understands that his greatest need if he is going to have this huge responsibility to lead God's people, is wisdom, he knows he needs understanding so that he can lead God's people with justice, **1 Kings 3:9**.

Solomon didn't request anything for himself such as long life or riches, he simply asks for wisdom to rule the people and because of this, God heard his prayer and God was pleased with him, **1 Kings 3:10**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Solomon's enemies, **1 Kings 3:11**.

'Hadad the Edomite, **1 Kings 11:14-22**, and Rezon the son of Eliadah, **1 Kings 11:23-25**, whom Solomon might well have wished to remove.'

So, what did Solomon ask for? He asked for discernment in administering justice, **1 Kings 3:11-12**. And God says, because you never asked for any of these other things, He will give him wisdom and a discerning heart like no one has heard of before, **1 Kings 3:12 / 1 Kings 4:29-34 / Matthew 12:42 / Luke 11:31**.

God was so pleased with his request and gave Solomon more than just wisdom. He gives him wealth and honour, **1 Kings 3:13**. God tells him if he walks in obedience to Him and keeps His decrees and commands as David did, then God will give him a long life, **1 Kings 3:14**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The promise here was only conditional. As the condition was not observed, **1 Kings 11:1-8**, the right to the promise was forfeited, and it was not fulfilled. Solomon can scarcely have been more than fifty-nine or sixty at his death.'

When Solomon woke up, he realised it was a dream and so he returned to Jerusalem, stood before the ark of the Lord's covenant and sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings, and then he gave a feast for all his court, **1 Kings 3:15 / Deuteronomy 14:29 / 2 Samuel 6:19 / 1 Chronicles 16:3**.

A WISE RULING

'Now two prostitutes came to the king and stood before him. One of them said, 'Pardon me, my lord. This woman and I live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there with me. The third day after my child was born, this woman also had a baby. We were alone; there was no one in the house but the two of us. 'During the night, this woman's son died because she lay on him. So she got up in the middle of the night and took my son from my side while I, your servant, was asleep. She put him by her breast and put her dead son by my breast. The next morning, I got up to nurse my son—and he was dead! But when I looked at him closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't the son I had borne.' The other woman said, 'No! The living one is my son; the dead one is yours.' But the first one insisted, 'No! The dead one is yours; the living one is mine.' And so they argued before the king. The king said, 'This one says, 'My son is alive, and your son is dead,' while that one says, 'No! Your son is dead, and mine is alive.' Then

the king said, 'Bring me a sword.' So they brought a sword for the king. He then gave an order: 'Cut the living child in two and give half to one and half to the other.' The woman whose son was alive was deeply moved out of love for her son and said to the king, 'Please, my lord, give her the living baby! Don't kill him!' But the other said, 'Neither I nor you shall have him. Cut him in two!' Then the king gave his ruling: 'Give the living baby to the first woman. Do not kill him; she is his mother.' When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.' 1 Kings 3:16-28

Now that he was blessed with wisdom, it wasn't long before Solomon had to demonstrate his wisdom after receiving the gift from God. Solomon is going to use the wisdom he received from God to determine who is telling the truth.

We are told that two prostitutes came before King Solomon, 1 Kings 3:16, and because he allowed two prostitutes to come to him, this shows us just how kind and generous Solomon was as a king.

The first woman basically says, 'me and this other woman live in the same house, and I had a baby while she was there, 1 Kings 3:17. Three days later, the other woman also had a baby and there was no one else around, 1 Kings 3:18.

The first woman continues and says, 'during the night the other woman's son died because she lay on him,' 1 Kings 3:19. She then got up in the middle of the night and took her son from her while she was asleep, 1 Kings 3:20.

She then swapped the kids over, and then she took the first woman's son to breastfeed him and lay her dead son next to my breast, 1 Kings 3:20. In the morning, the first woman got up to feed her son, but she discovered he was dead but when she looked at him closely, she realised it wasn't her son, 1 Kings 3:21.

It appears that the woman whose son died was absolutely desperate, even to the point of taking someone else's child. Think about this for a moment, this must be the nightmare of all nightmares for any mother.

The second woman now jumps in and says, 'No, the son who is alive is my child, the dead one is yours'. The first woman retaliates and says, 'no, the dead one is yours and the living one is mine,' 1 Kings 3:22.

I remember as a kid my brother broke a vase, and he blamed it on me and after half an hour of blaming each other, my mum didn't know who to believe, so she ended up punishing us both. Can you imagine how Solomon is feeling right now with these two women arguing in front of him?

One is saying one thing, and the other is saying another thing, and we can almost picture the scene: 'It is my baby, I want my baby back!' 'No! It is my baby. You can't have him!' 1 Kings 3:22-23. What would you do in this situation? How would you solve this issue?

Remember, they were in the house on their own, so there's no one else to call on as witnesses. There are no blood tests, there's no DNA testing, what would you do?

Notice that Solomon asks for a sword, 1 Kings 3:24. I'm sure we would be asking, What on earth is Solomon thinking about here? We would be thinking he has lost the plot. Why would he give such an outrageous command? Did he really intend to cut a baby in half with a sword? 1 Kings 3:25.

I can imagine the human rights activists holding up their banners and shouting, 'No Solomon, don't take this baby's life, let someone adopt him.' I can imagine others in the audience thinking to themselves, Solomon is in an impossible situation right now, I wouldn't want to be in his shoes.

I can't even begin to think about what's going through the mind of the real mother of the child. I can imagine everyone looking at Solomon and whispering to each other, how could he ever know which woman the baby belonged to?

Remember, he's listened to them arguing and making all kinds of claims. But also remember Solomon has been blessed with wisdom from above, and he knows exactly what he was doing.

By suggesting cutting the boy in two so that the mothers can share him, **1 Kings 3:25**, he knew that their reaction to this would make it clear to him who the real mother was.

Notice the reaction from the real mum, she was deeply moved, **1 Kings 3:26**. The KJV uses the words, for her bowels yearned upon her son, which basically tells us that she was unable to bear to see her son's life taken away.

She more or less says, 'No, do not cut the baby in half! I love the baby too much to see it hurt. I would rather the other woman have my baby. I do not want my baby to die.' She loved her son so much that she was willing to give him up to another woman just to keep him alive.

Notice the reaction of the other woman, **1 Kings 3:26**. She was heartless, lacking love, and she is so selfish, she more or less says, 'neither of us will have him, Solomon, just go ahead and cut him in two, and that will be the end of the matter.'

A real mum can't hide what's inside her heart, a real mum can't hide her emotions, and a real mum would do anything to save her child from dying. In this crucial moment, Solomon's solution not only revealed the true mother but also displayed his wisdom, **1 Kings 3:27**.

Her parental instincts had shown Solomon that she was the true mother, and the boy really was her son. We can only imagine the relief and joy in this woman's heart when Solomon ruled in her favour, **1 Kings 3:27**.

I can imagine tears flowing down her face as she embraces her son in her arms again. I can imagine her thanking Solomon for getting her out of this nightmare scenario.

I wonder what was going through the mind of the other woman at this point. From her words, I think that she would be disappointed in Solomon's ruling. I think that she would have been happier if the child had been just murdered.

I can imagine her trying to sneak out the back door, embarrassed because she's now been exposed as a liar. And look at what happened next; when everyone in Israel heard what happened, they were left with no doubts that God had blessed him with wisdom to administer justice, **1 Kings 3:28 / 1 Kings 3:12**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'They perceived that he was taught of God, judged impartially, and could not be deceived. What was done to the other woman we are not told; justice certainly required that she should be punished for her lies and fraud.'

So, what can we learn from this story?

1. The false mother put herself first.

I think we can all agree that losing a child has to be one of the most devastating things that can happen to a parent. And so maybe to a degree we can understand why that woman, in her desperation, swapped babies when her child died.

But that doesn't excuse her selfishness in the story because she knew she was lying through her teeth; she knew all along that the child who was still alive wasn't hers.

She even had the audacity to go in front of Solomon, plead her case, and call the other woman a liar. She put that poor other woman through hell, so to speak, just to get something which was never hers in the first place.

You remember the story of the rich young ruler who came and asked Jesus a question about how he could receive eternal life. The young man said he's obeyed all the commandments but knows he still lacks one thing.

Jesus tells him what he needs to do to receive eternal life, but the man couldn't do it, **Matthew 19:21-22**. Why? Was it simply because he was rich, or is there more to the story that meets the eye?

Jesus wasn't asking him to give up his wealth; He's asking him to stop being selfish with his wealth. Jesus sees what we can't see; he saw that this man's wealth was affecting him and his life to the point that he couldn't put God first.

And we, too, just like the false mother in the story, can get so obsessed with our own interests and our own needs that we put God on the back burner. And we do that in order to keep a hold of the things that are never really ours to begin with, because everything you have comes from God, everything you have belongs to God.

2. The true mother puts her child's needs first.

The true mum in the story didn't ask for this nightmare to come into her life. She didn't want to go in front of Solomon and try to prove that she was the child's real mother. She didn't ask for any of this to happen; she was forced into a situation that she would never want any mother to face.

The true mum in the story loved her son so much that she was willing to sacrifice her son in order that he would live. The true mum valued her son more than herself; she put his interests before her own, **Philippians 2:3-4**. What would happen to our homes if we practised Paul's advice?

If on the way home today, I'm thinking, 'I bet my wife has had a tough day, running the house, all the things she does at church.' 'When I get home, I'm going to see if there is something she needs and do it for her.'

And she's thinking, 'You know, I bet my husband has had a tough day, and when he walks through that door, I'm going to see if I can find anything he needs and do it.' How would that affect our home?

What if we did that for our neighbours? What if we did that for the people we work with? What if we did that for the people in our church? I wonder next Sunday, when you walk in, instead of thinking, 'I wonder if they are going to sing the songs I like, I wonder if they are going to do the things I want.'

What if next Sunday, when you walk in, you look out for others' interests and say, 'What can I do for them before I get in my car and go home?' Would that affect the church?

3. Solomon relied on the wisdom from above.

Solomon would never have known how to deal with these two women properly without the wisdom of God. He knew exactly where real wisdom comes from, and he was given it in abundance.

He knew that God is perfectly wise, and he knew that everything He does is perfect. He knew that every thought and idea He has is filled with complete wisdom.

Where do you go for your wisdom? Mr Google, Facebook, the news, your friends, or family. Or do you desire the wisdom from above? Our God loves us so much that He never wants us to lack knowledge. He just can't wait to share His wisdom with us, but we need to ask Him for it, **James 1:5**.

I remember praying for wisdom from God to help me say the right thing while I was sitting in a hospital with someone who was about to die, and God gave me those words.

I remember praying for wisdom from God to help me say the right thing when I had to approach a brother who was accusing me of something, and God guided my thoughts and words.

Kistemaker says the following.

'Every time someone comes to God with a request, He opens His treasury and freely distributes wisdom. Just as the sun continues to give light, so God keeps on giving wisdom. We cannot imagine a sun that fails to give light; much less can we think of God failing to give wisdom. God's gift is free, without interest, and without the request to pay it back.'

If you find yourself in a situation where you need to make a really important decision, then just ask God for wisdom to help you make the right decision. If you find yourself in a position where you've just stopped growing spiritually,

then ask God for wisdom on how to start growing again. If you find yourself struggling to know where you belong in His church, then ask Him to help you find your place within His church.

CHAPTER 4

INTRODUCTION

‘So King Solomon ruled over all Israel. And these were his chief officials: Azariah son of Zadok—the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah, sons of Shisha—secretaries; Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud—recorder; Benaiah son of Jehoiada—commander in chief; Zadok and Abiathar priests; Azariah son of Nathan—in charge of the district governors; Zabud son of Nathan—a priest and adviser to the king; Ahishar—palace administrator; Adoniram son of Abda—in charge of forced labour.’ 1 Kings 4:1-6

SOLOMON’S OFFICIALS AND GOVERNORS

Because David had defeated all of Israel’s enemies and there was peace in the land, Solomon was now able to rule over all of Israel as king, 1 Kings 4:1. Although Israel were still one nation under Solomon, the kingdom was already divided into two kingdoms, Israel, in the north and Judah, in the south, 1 Kings 4:20.

Some of the officials mentioned here had already begun their service as administrators before Solomon became king, 1 Kings 3:15. Azariah, 1 Kings 4:2, was a priest who functioned as an advisor to the king.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Azariah, called here the ‘son,’ but really the ‘grandson,’ of Zadok, seems to have succeeded him in the priesthood, 1 Chronicles 6:10. His position as high priest at the time when this list was made out gives Azariah the foremost place in it.’

Elihoreph and Ahijah, 1 Kings 4:3, were secretaries who functioned as the correspondent for the king to the people and foreign nations, 1 Kings 12:10. Jehoshaphat, 1 Kings 4:3, was a recorder, he basically recorded the annuals of the kingdom, 2 Samuel 20:24.

Benaiah, 1 Kings 4:4, was in charge of Solomon’s army. Abiathar, 1 Kings 4:4 / 1 Chronicles 18:16 / 2 Samuel 20:25 / 2 Samuel 8:17, was exiled from the presence of Solomon, 1 Kings 2:27 / 1 Kings 2:35.

However, since the high priesthood was inherited, he still maintained his position, though not necessarily his function among the people, he was a high priest in name only.

Zadok, 1 Kings 4:4, was also a priest who functioned as an advisor to the king. Azariah, 1 Kings 4:5, was in charge of the district governors, 1 Kings 4:8-19. Nathan, 1 Kings 4:5, was David’s son, 2 Samuel 5:14.

Ahishar, 1 Kings 4:6, was the palace administrator, he was in charge of carrying out the administration of the king’s court, 2 Samuel 20:24 / Genesis 41:40. Adoniram, 1 Kings 4:6, was responsible for those who were in forced labour.

The Adoniram, here is the same as the Adoram of the days of David, 2 Samuel 20:24.

Coffman says the following, concerning Ahishar and Adoniram.

‘One of the great weaknesses of Solomon’s administration was his insistence upon squeezing the least possible amount of money from the people and other help from his subjects. This policy brought about the division of his kingdom following his death, and Adoniram would play a most unhappy role on that occasion, 1 Kings 12:18’.

‘Solomon had twelve district governors over all Israel, who supplied provisions for the king and the royal household. Each one had to provide supplies for one month in the year. These are their names: Ben-Hur—in the hill country of Ephraim; Ben-Deker—in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth Shemesh and Elon Bethhanan; Ben-Hesed—in Arubboth (Sokoh and all the land of Hephher were his); Ben-Abinadab—in Naphoth Dor (he was married to Taphath daughter of Solomon); Baana son of Ahilud—in Taanach and Megiddo, and in all of Beth Shan next to Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth Shan to Abel Meholah across to Jokmeam; Ben-Geber—in Ramoth Gilead (the settlements of Jair son of Manasseh in Gilead were his, as well as the region of Argob in Bashan and its sixty large walled cities with bronze gate bars); Ahinadab son of Iddo—in Mahanaim; Ahimaaz—in Naphtali (he had married Basemath daughter of Solomon); Baana son of Hushai—in Asher and in Aloth; Jehoshaphat son of Paruah—in Issachar; Shimei son of Ela—in Benjamin; Geber son of Uri—in Gilead (the country of Sihon king of the Amorites and the country of Og king of Bashan). He was the only governor over the district.’ 1 Kings 4:7-19

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Kings 4:7.

‘The business of these twelve officers was to provide daily, each for a month, those provisions which were consumed in the king’s household, 1 Kings 4:22-23. And the task for such a daily provision was not an easy one.’

We don’t know anything about the names mentioned here, 1 Kings 4:8-19.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were the ones who extorted the enormous taxation that supported the bloated Solomonic government.’

Constable, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These men were responsible for providing for the needs of Solomon’s large household, including his courtiers, and for his thousands of horses, 1 Kings 4:28. Two were Solomon’s sons-in-law, 1 Kings 4:11 / 1 Kings 4:15. The district arrangement seems designed to move Israel away from tribal independence to cooperation under the new centralized government, though the district boundaries approximated the tribal boundaries. The writer did not include Judah and Jerusalem in this list of areas that Solomon taxed. This gave Judah a great advantage economically. Perhaps Solomon favored Judah because it was his tribe. This favouritism may have been a factor in the revolt of the northern tribes later, 1 Kings 12:4.’

Benson, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Kings 4:8-10.

‘The son of Hur. This person and others of them are denominated from their fathers, because they were known and famous in their generation. In mount Ephraim And the territory belonging to it, which must be understood also of the rest of the places mentioned in the following verses. Elon-Beth-Hanan or, Elon, the house, or dwelling- place of Hanan. For Hanan may be a man’s name, and this place may be thus distinguished from other Elons, or, as the word Elon signifies a plain, the meaning may be, the plain of Beth-Hanan. Sokoh. There were two places of this name, but near each other, Joshua 15:35-38. Hephher in Judah, 1 Chronicles 4:6.’

Benson, continues in his commentary and says the following, concerning 1 Kings 4:11-13.

‘The region of Dor. In Manasseh, where also were Taanach, Megiddo, and Beth-Shean. Who had the daughter of Solomon to wife Solomon had no daughters marriageable when these officers were appointed but in process of time, this man and Ahimaaz, mentioned, 1 Kings 4:15, had behaved themselves so well in their offices, that Solomon did them the honour to give them two of his daughters to wife. In Ramoth-Gilead, that is, Ramoth in the land of Gilead, Deuteronomy 4:43, so called, to distinguish it from Ramoth in Issachar, 1 Chronicles 6:73. The towns of Jair In Manasseh beyond Jordan, Numbers 32:41. With walls and brazen bars This is added by way of distinction from those towns of Jair mentioned before. For, being beyond Jordan, they were liable to the attempts of their enemies.’

Benson, continues in his commentary and says the following, concerning 1 Kings 4:14-18.

‘The son of Iddo had Mahanaim. The city and territory of Mahanaim, [Genesis 32:2](#) / [Joshua 13:26](#). If this district seem of less extent than the rest, it must be observed, these portions were distributed into larger or lesser parts, according to their barrenness or fertility and this seems to have been a very fruitful place, [2 Samuel 17:27](#). Shimei, the son of Elah. This is added to distinguish him from the Shimei who cursed and insulted David.’

Benson, continues in his commentary and says the following, concerning [1 Kings 4:19](#).

‘In the country of Gilead, that is, in the remaining part of that land of Gilead which was mentioned above. The only officer in the land Or rather, in that land; namely, in all Gilead, excepting the parcels mentioned before, the only one in all the territories of Sihon and Og. These were of large extent, and yet all committed to this one man, which is here noticed as a peculiar privilege which he had above the other officers, whose jurisdictions were of narrower extent.’

When we read these verses, it becomes clear that Israel has now become a monarchy. The government is now centralised around Solomon as king, and he is now in Jerusalem which has become the capital of the kingdom.

Managing any kingdom affairs was done by designated officials who collected taxes, enlisted men into the army, and exercised administrative control over the affairs of the kingdom.

Government construction projects on roads and buildings were carried out by designated officials who received their orders from Jerusalem. Eventually, because of this of this monarchy system, the nation of Israel would divide into two kingdoms.

Because everything was centred around Judah, the northern tribes were going to cease tolerating such heavy control and taxes and make Jeroboam their king, [1 Kings 11:26-30](#).

SOLOMON’S DAILY PROVISIONS

‘The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore; they ate, they drank and they were happy. And Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt. These countries brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life. Solomon’s daily provisions were thirty cors of the finest flour and sixty cors of meal, ten head of stall-fed cattle, twenty of pasture-fed cattle and a hundred sheep and goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl. For he ruled over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphseh to Gaza, and had peace on all sides. During Solomon’s lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree. Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses, and twelve thousand horses. The district governors, each in his month, supplied provisions for King Solomon and all who came to the king’s table. They saw to it that nothing was lacking. They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses.’ [1 Kings 4:20-28](#)

Straight away we see that the kingdom has already begun to divide into two, ‘the people of Judah and the people of Israel’, [1 Kings 4:20](#). Together, they were as ‘numerous as the sand on the seashore’, [1 Kings 4:20](#) / [1 Kings 3:8](#), which is part of the fulfilment of God’s promise to Abraham, [Genesis 12:1-3](#) / [Genesis 22:17](#) / [Genesis 28:14](#).

When there is peace in the land, people eat, drink and are happy, [1 Kings 4:20](#). Solomon ruled over all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far as the border of Egypt and it was these countries which brought tribute and were Solomon’s subjects all his life, [1 Kings 4:21](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Solomon’s empire, like all the great empires of Asia down to the time of the Persians, consisted of a congeries of small kingdoms, all ruled by their own kings. [1 Kings 4:24](#), who admitted the suzerainty of the Jewish monarch, and paid him ‘presents,’ i.e., an annual tribute, [1 Kings 10:25](#).’

The food for the king's court for a single day was about thirty cors of fine flour, 1 Kings 4:22, that is roughly five and a half tons, and sixty cors of meal, that is roughly eleven tons. This amount of grain, plus the meat of the animals, 1 Kings 4:23, is in combination with what the people were also to provide for the Levites.

Because David had defeated all of Israel's enemies, the peace he brought continued into the reign of his son Solomon. Solomon extended his kingdom by defeating those nations within Palestine, and those nations who were in subjection to him were made to pay a tribute, 1 Kings 4:24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'In Philistia, small as it was, there were five kings, 1 Samuel 6:18. Syria was divided into numerous small states, as many as thirty-two kings being mentioned on one occasion, 1 Kings 20:1. The Hittites were ruled by a great number of chieftains or princes, 1 Kings 10:29 / 2 Kings 7:6, twelve are mentioned in the Assyrian inscriptions.'

We are told that during Solomon's lifetime Judah and Israel, from Dan to Beersheba, lived in safety, everyone under their own vine and under their own fig tree, 1 Kings 4:25.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'They were no longer obliged to dwell in fortified cities for fear of their enemies; they spread themselves over all the country, which they everywhere cultivated and had always the privilege of eating the fruits of their own labours. This is the meaning of the phrase.'

Notice the text says that 'Solomon had four thousand stalls for chariot horses', 1 Kings 4:26.

Coffman makes an interesting point about the figures used here in 1 Kings 4:26.

'The parallel account in 2 Chronicles 9:25, gives the number of Solomon's horses at 4,000, a number favoured by many scholars, but our own opinion is that the number here is just as likely to be correct as of the other. The Philistines are reported to have brought 30,000 chariots into battle, 1 Samuel 13:5, and, allowing 2 horses to the chariot would indicate at least 70,000, and the Syrians boasted at least 40,000 horses, 2 Samuel 10:18. Also, the thesis of this whole section regarding Solomon is simply this, that no other king in that entire era approached the magnificence displayed by Solomon. Either number is proof of Solomon's violation of God's law in Deuteronomy 17:16.'

The district governors, each in his month, supplied provisions for Solomon and all who came to the king's table and they saw to it that nothing was lacking, 1 Kings 4:27.

They also brought to the proper place their quotas of barley and straw for the chariot horses and the other horses, 1 Kings 4:28. Although we don't know the exact number, some people believe there would have been as many as five-thousand people in the king's court. We can only imagine the burden this tax would have been upon the people.

SOLOMON'S WISDOM

'God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore. Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite—wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol. And his fame spread to all the surrounding nations. He spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five. He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon to the hyssop that grows out of walls. He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles, and fish. From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.' 1 Kings 4:29-34

Solomon's wisdom was great and he was wiser than anyone else because his wisdom came from God, 1 Kings 4:29 / 1 Kings 3:12. His wisdom was so great that his reputation for his wisdom extended to many nations in the

East, [1 Kings 4:30](#), but his reputation didn't stop there, he would become famous all the way to Africa, which in turn prompted a visit from the queen of Sheba, who wanted to see for herself, [1 Kings 10:1-10](#).

He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite, wiser than Heman, Kalkol and Darda, the sons of Mahol and his fame spread to all the surrounding nations, [1 Kings 4:31](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Ethan was probably the same as is mentioned in some of the Psalms, particularly [Psalms 89:1](#), and among the singers in [1 Chronicles 6:42](#). There is a Heman mentioned in the title to [Psalms 88:1](#). In [1 Chronicles 2:6](#), we have all the four names, but they are probably not the same persons, for they are there said to be the sons of Zerah, and he flourished long before Solomon's time.'

Solomon 'spoke three thousand proverbs and his songs numbered a thousand and five', [1 Kings 4:32](#). This is a huge number of proverbs and songs and we only have a few available today.

We have only a few proverbs which are recorded in the Book of Proverbs and we only have a few songs, which are recorded in the Song of Songs / [Psalm 72](#) / [Psalm 132](#) / [Psalm 127](#).

It's highly possible that all the other proverbs and songs were either destroyed or taken away by the Babylonians during the Babylonian captivity or it could be that they were simply not inspired by God, [2 Timothy 3:16-17](#).

He spoke about plant life, from the cedar of Lebanon, [Psalms 104:16](#) / [Song of Songs 5:15](#) / [Ezekiel 31:3](#), to the hyssop, [Exodus 12:22](#), that grows out of walls, [1 Kings 4:33](#).

He also spoke about animals and birds, reptiles and fish, [1 Kings 4:33](#) / [Genesis 1:26](#) / [Genesis 9:2](#) / [Psalms 148:10](#).

From all nations, people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom, [1 Kings 4:34](#).

CHAPTER 5

INTRODUCTION

'When Hiram, king of Tyre, heard that Solomon had been anointed king to succeed his father David, he sent his envoys to Solomon, because he had always been on friendly terms with David. Solomon sent back this message to

Hiram: 'You know that because of the wars waged against my father David from all sides, he could not build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God until the LORD put his enemies under his feet. But now the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster. I intend, therefore, to build a temple for the Name of the LORD my God, as the LORD told my father David, when he said, 'Your son whom I will put on the throne in your place will build the temple for my Name.' 'So give orders that cedars of Lebanon be cut for me. My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set. You know that we have no one so skilled in felling timber as the Sidonians.' [1 Kings 5:1-6](#)

PREPARATIONS FOR BUILDING THE TEMPLE

Solomon gets things moving in relation to having the temple built and a royal palace for himself, [1 Kings 5:1-18](#) / [2 Chronicles 2:1](#) / [1 Kings 7:1-12](#). Hiram, king of Tyre, sent envoys to Solomon because he heard Solomon had become king, and we are told that he had always been on friendly terms with David, [1 Kings 5:1](#) / [1 Kings 7:13](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It must have been at the beginning of Solomon’s reign that these ambassadors were sent; and some suppose that the Hiram mentioned here is different from him who was the friend of David, but there seems no very solid reason for this supposition. As Hiram had an intimate alliance with David, and built his palace, 2 Samuel 5:11, he wished to maintain the same good understanding with his son, of whose wisdom he had no doubt heard the most advantageous accounts; and he loved the son because he always loved the father, for Hiram was ever a lover of David.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning the numbers mentioned in 2 Chronicles 2:2.

‘The 153,600 men mentioned here were slaves, composed of ‘Descendants of those Canaanites whom the children of Israel did not drive out.’ From Kings it is clear that the Israelites were also conscripted by Solomon for such slave labour and required to devote one month of every three to his service.’

Solomon then sends a message back to him, informing him of his intentions to build a temple, 1 Kings 5:3-5 / 2 Chronicles 2:3 / 1 Chronicles 22:4 / 1 Chronicles 22:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Kings 5:5 / 2 Chronicles 2:4.

‘The name of God is God himself. I propose to build a house for that infinite and eternal Being called Jehovah.’

Remember, this idea of a temple being built came from David because he felt guilty about living in a lavish house, 2 Samuel 7:2, and Nathan the prophet told him to do what his heart’s desire was.

We must understand that his statement to David wasn’t from God; it was his own thoughts on the matter. That same night, God spoke to David and asks him, ‘are you the one to build me a house to dwell in?’ 2 Samuel 7:5.

God then proceeds to rebuke David for his suggestion to build a physical structure for the ark, God says, ‘I have not dwelt in a house from the day I brought the Israelites up out of Egypt to this day. I have been moving from place to place with a tent as my dwelling,’ 2 Samuel 7:6.

Even though the tabernacle moved around among the twelve tribes of Israel for over four hundred years, never once did God ask for a permanent house for the ark of the covenant to reside in, 2 Samuel 7:7.

Yes, God allowed the temple to be built, and yes, God allowed His people to worship Him within it, but we mustn’t lose sight of the fact, that God never desired or commanded for a temple to be built in the first place, 2 Samuel 7:4-7.

God never commanded David or Solomon to build him a house. If the temple was God’s desire, then why would He allow it to be destroyed twice, once by the Babylonians and again in AD 70 by the Romans?

The problem with a temple is that God doesn’t dwell in any temple made by human hands, Acts 7:39. The temple of Solomon became the centre of pagan worship, Ezekiel 8, and that prophet recorded the departure of God’s Spirit from it, Ezekiel 10-11.

When we read the Book of Malachi, we read that God is urging them to build the temple, so what made the temple so important during the time of Malachi? I guess all the proper sacrifices and rituals could be carried out on a makeshift altar.

But could it be that God’s reputation was at stake? Could it be that God could not be properly honoured so long as the house he called home lay in ruins? Could it be that the temple symbolised God’s presence and Israel’s priorities?

Could it be that God rebuked them so sternly to make them think about the situation? Could it be that God is so upset and then punished them to get their attention?

Solomon sent a message to Hiram king of Tyre asking for cedar logs as he did when David asked for them, 2 Chronicles 2:2. Solomon tells him that he is about to build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God and to dedicate it to him for burning fragrant incense before him, for setting out the consecrated bread regularly.

And for making burnt offerings every morning and evening and on the Sabbaths, at the New Moons and at the appointed festivals of the LORD our God, 2 Chronicles 2:3-4. He says this is a lasting ordinance for Israel, 2 Chronicles 2:4.

It appears that Solomon wanted to build the temple as a nationwide display of how great God was above all other gods, 2 Chronicles 2:5. In other words, the stronger, bigger and more grandiose the temple was, the stronger and bigger God was, 1 Kings 6:2.

When the tabernacle was built at Mount Sinai, it was to be only a symbol of the presence of God among His people. Solomon here was right when he said that no building could ever contain the one true and living God, 2 Chronicles 2:5-6.

The temple was to be built, not to contain God, but to be an indicator of His presence among His people. Notice also that the temple was built, not as a place for assembly, but only as a place where sacrifices were brought and offered, 2 Chronicles 2:6.

Solomon requests Hiram to send him a skilled worker in various metals, precious stones, yarn, and engraving, who can work with the skilled workers already in Judah and Jerusalem, 1 Kings 5:6 / 2 Chronicles 2:7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Chronicles 2:7.

‘Purple, crimson, and blue would be needed for the hangings of the temple, which, in this respect, as in others, was conformed to the pattern of the tabernacle, Exodus 25:4 / Exodus 26:1, etc. Hiram’s power of ‘working in purple, crimson,’ etc., was probably a knowledge of the best modes of dyeing cloth in these colours. The Phoenicians, off whose coast the murex was commonly taken, were famous as purple dyers from a very remote period.’

Notice what Solomon says to Hiram, the king of Tyre, in order to make an alliance with him. He says, ‘My men will work with yours, and I will pay you for your men whatever wages you set,’ 1 Kings 5:6.

Later in 1 Kings 5:11 / 2 Chronicles 2:10, we read that Solomon gave him, twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, that is, roughly three-thousand six-hundred tons, and twenty thousand baths of pressed olive oil.

That is, roughly one-hundred and twenty-thousand gallons. It’s not surprising to find out later that Solomon apparently went bankrupt and had to give up part of his territory to settle the debt.

Because most of the men of Israel were basically farmers, Solomon assessed how many skilful men he had in Israel, who could do the job of building the temple. Bezalel and his helper Oholiab were also really skilled when it came to constructing the tabernacle, Exodus 31:1-6 / Exodus 35:30-36:2.

Solomon wanted Hiram to produce enough timber from the cedars of Lebanon, so he could build the temple, 1 Kings 5:10 / 2 Chronicles 2:8. In the days of Solomon, the Phoenicians kept corn in large storerooms in north Palestine, Acts 12:20, and Solomon controlled the trade routes both from the East and from Egypt.

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning the cedar trees, juniper trees, and alnum trees, out of Lebanon, 2 Chronicles 2:8.

‘Of the two first of these, and which Hiram sent, 1 Kings 5:10. The alnum trees are the same as the alnum trees, 1 Kings 10:11, by a transposition of letters. these could not be coral, as some Jewish writers think, which grows in the sea, for these were in Lebanon, nor Brazil, as Kimchi, so-called from a place of this name, which at this time was not known, though there were trees of alnum afterwards brought from Ophir in India, as appears from the above-quoted place, as well as from Arabia.’

The Israelite servants worked together with the Gentile servants, that is, those of Hiram’s kingdom, so that the temple could be built, 2 Chronicles 2:7-9. Solomon is more than happy to pay for Hiram’s workers to help in the building of the temple, 1 Kings 5:11 / 2 Chronicles 2:10 / 1 Kings 4:22.

The barley and the wine are omitted in Kings, 2 Chronicles 2:10. The author of Chronicles probably filled out the statement that the writer of Kings has given in brief; the barley, wine, and ordinary oil would be applied to the sustenance of the foreign labourers.

‘When Hiram heard Solomon’s message, he was greatly pleased and said, ‘Praise be to the LORD today, for he has given David a wise son to rule over this great nation.’ So Hiram sent word to Solomon: ‘I have received the message you sent me and will do all you want in providing the cedar and juniper logs. My men will haul them down from

Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea, and I will float them as rafts by sea to the place you specify. There, I will separate them, and you can take them away. And you are to grant my wish by providing food for my royal household.’ In this way, Hiram kept Solomon supplied with all the cedar and juniper logs he wanted, and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, in addition to twenty thousand baths of pressed olive oil. Solomon continued to do this for Hiram year after year. The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty. King Solomon conscripted labourers from all Israel—thirty thousand men. He sent them off to Lebanon in shifts of ten thousand a month, so that they spent one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour. Solomon had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecutters in the hills, as well as thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workers. At the king’s command, they removed from the quarry large blocks of high-grade stone to provide a foundation of dressed stone for the temple. The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram and workers from Byblos cut and prepared the timber and stone for the building of the temple.’ 1 Kings 5:7-18

Hiram had a reputation for being a great leader who conquered many nations, and even before he became king, the cedars of Lebanon were famous for being a great building material.

When word got back to Hiram, there’s no doubt that Hiram was more than happy with Solomon’s request for trees, 1 Kings 5:7-8, because the alliance which Solomon made with Hiram had advantages for both nations.

Notice in Hiram’s reply to Solomon, he acknowledges the Lord’s love for His people, 2 Chronicles 2:11, and as a Gentile king, he recognises Solomon’s kingship, 2 Chronicles 2:12.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hiram’s praising of God.

‘This appears to have been a formula designating the Supreme God with several of the Asiatic nations. In the Persian inscriptions, Ormazd is constantly called ‘the great god, who gave (or made) heaven and earth.’

Hiram-Abi, 2 Chronicles 2:13, could be translated as ‘Hiram, my Father’s’, or ‘Hiram, my master craftsman’, or ‘Hiram, my trusted counsellor’. Hiram is the workman sent by the king of Tyre and not the king of Tyre’s father, 1 Kings 5:1. Hiram-Abi was a highly skilled man, and his mother was from Dan and his father was from Tyre, 2 Chronicles 2:13-14 / 1 Kings 7:13-14.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following concerning Hiram-Abi.

‘Critics love to cite this as a discrepancy with 1 Kings 7:14, which refers to her as a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, some even calling it a contradiction. Of course, the two passages teach that Hiram-Abi’s mother was, by birth, of the tribe of Dan, and by the residence of the tribe of Naphtali.’

Hiram-Abi will work alongside Judah and Jerusalem’s skilled workers, 2 Chronicles 2:14. It’s worth noting that most of the labourers who built the temple were made up of Israelites and some Canaanites who came from the king Hiram.

Hiram could have asked for a lot more for his skilled workers, but he didn’t, 2 Chronicles 2:15-16. Hiram agreed to bring the timber down by the river, 1 Kings 5:9, and bring it to the harbour at Joppa, 2 Chronicles 2:16 / 1 Kings 6:7. Joppa, 2 Chronicles 2:16 / 1 Kings 5:9, was the nearest seaport to Jerusalem, located about thirty-five miles east of Joppa, with rugged territory in between.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Solomon’s message to Hiram and Hiram’s answer, 1 Kings 5:8-9, are given much more fully in 2 Chronicles 2:3-16.’

Solomon wanted Hiram to produce enough timber from the cedars of Lebanon, so he could build the temple, 1 Kings 5:10. In the days of Solomon, the Phoenicians kept corn in large storerooms in north Palestine, Acts 12:20, and Solomon controlled the trade routes both from the East and from Egypt.

We read that Solomon gave him, twenty thousand cors of wheat as food for his household, 1 Kings 5:11 / 1 Kings 4:22, that is roughly three-thousand six-hundred tons, and twenty thousand baths of pressed olive oil, 1 Kings 5:11, that is roughly one-hundred and twenty-thousand gallons.

This is a huge annual payment, and it doesn't even include the huge expenses for the slaves and those who have forced labourers who were sent to Lebanon, 2 Chronicles 2:10.

After agreeing on the terms and conditions, Solomon and Hiram entered into a treaty, 1 Kings 5:12. This treaty would involve marrying a foreign woman, which, as we know, was the beginning of Solomon's downfall as king, 1 Kings 11:1 / 1 Kings 11:4-5.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It seems to be implied that Solomon's divine gift of wisdom enabled him to make such favourable arrangements with Hiram.'

Solomon recruited thirty thousand labourers from Israel, 1 Kings 5:13. These were men who were able to work and were forced to work one month in Lebanon and two months at home throughout the year, 1 Kings 5:14. This type of forced labour was first introduced in Israel by David, 2 Samuel 20:24 / 1 Chronicles 22:2.

Notice that 'Adoniram was in charge of the forced labour', 1 Kings 5:14 / 1 Kings 4:6. His name was Adoram, when David reigned, 2 Samuel 20:24, and he was in charge of the tax, and as a result, everyone in Israel hated him, 1 Kings 12:18.

Notice that Solomon took a census, 2 Chronicles 2:17. This means that Solomon sinned in taking the census, just as his father, David, did before him, 1 Chronicles 21:1-17.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'There is no device by which this paragraph could be construed as the Chronicler's compliment to King Solomon. In fact, right here we have the clue to what was wrong with David's 'numbering Israel', 1 Chronicles 21. Both he and Solomon were actually in the business of enslaving all of the aliens and sojourners in Israel, descendants of the original Canaanites whom Israel did not drive out, for one purpose only, that of forcing them to labour in the building of the temple. Here is also the explanation of the total number given at the head of this chapter, namely, 150,000 workers and 3,600 overseers. The census came first, and Solomon compelled all those numbered to enter his forced labour gangs.'

It was the brutal and heartless wickedness of Solomon in this very particular that precipitated the rebellion of the ten northern tribes in the reign of Solomon's son Rehoboam. It happened when Rehoboam sent the hated slave-driver Adoram to negotiate with the dissatisfied northern tribes, 1 Kings 12:18.

There were 'seventy-thousand carriers and eighty-thousand stonecutters' and 'thirty-three hundred foremen', 1 Kings 5:15 / 2 Chronicles 2:18 / 1 Chronicles 22:2.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'These were all strangers, or proselytes, dwelling among the Israelites, as we learn from the parallel place, 1 Kings 2:17-18.'

There were thirty-three hundred foremen who supervised the project and directed the workers, 1 Kings 5:16 / 2 Chronicles 2:18.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Kings 5:16 / 2 Chronicles 2:18.

'Comparing this verse and 1 Kings 9:23, with 2 Chronicles 2:18 / 2 Chronicles 8:10, the entire number of the overseers will be seen to be stated by both writers at 3,850, but in the one case nationality, in the other degree of authority, is made the principle of the division.'

Gill, in his commentary, says the following concerning 2 Chronicles 2:17-18.

'2 Chronicles 2:2, shows us how the above number of strangers were disposed of, 70,000 of them bearers of burdens, 80,000 of them hewers of wood, and 3,600 overseers of the workmen, in all 153,600, an emblem of the Gentiles employed in building the spiritual temple, the church, Zechariah 6:15.'

Solomon's men and Hiram's men worked together to cut and prepare the timber and cut and prepare the stones for the building of the temple, [1 Kings 5:17-18](#). It's worth noting that Hiram's men were Canaanites, whom Israel was supposed to drive out from the land, but failed to do so, [Joshua 1:29](#) / [Joshua 13:13](#).

Now the Canaanites are helping Israel build this temple, and I'm sure that good relationships would have been made during this time of preparation. Sadly, the Canaanites would influence Israel not only with their culture but also with their religion. Even Solomon himself would fall into the hands of worshipping false gods because the nations around him were doing so, along with his many wives.

CHAPTER 6

INTRODUCTION

'In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites came out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD. The temple that King Solomon built for the LORD was sixty cubits long, twenty wide and thirty high. The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is, twenty cubits, and projected ten cubits from the front of the temple. He made narrow windows high up in the temple walls. Against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary, he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms. The lowest floor was five cubits wide, the middle floor six cubits and the third floor seven. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls. In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built. The entrance to the lowest floor was on the south side of the temple; a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third. So he built the temple and completed it, roofing it with beams and cedar planks. And he built the side rooms all along the temple. The height of each was five cubits, and they were attached to the temple by beams of cedar.' 1 Kings 6:1-10

SOLOMON BUILDS THE TEMPLE

The building of the temple began at Mount Moriah, [1 Kings 6:1-38](#) / [2 Chronicles 3:1](#), on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite, [2 Chronicles 3:1](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:18](#) / [Genesis 22:2](#). This was the place which David prepared, [2 Samuel 24:17-25](#) / [1 Chronicles 21:16-26](#).

The temple was built on Moriah, but the city was built on Zion. The building of the temple began, which was four hundred and eighty years after Israel came out of Egypt, [1 Kings 6:1](#), which is a reference to the exodus, around 1445 B.C. [2 Chronicles 3:2](#).

Up until this point, the tabernacle was used and moved around to different tribal areas, which was God's intention. Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 B.C., [1 Kings 6:1](#), which means the fourth year of his reign would have been 967 B.C.

Notice this happened in Solomon's fourth year of reign, [2 Chronicles 3:2](#). The delay of four years was probably due to the problems in collecting all the materials which were needed to build it, [1 Kings 6:1](#).

Notice that the temple is also called 'the house', KJV, [1 Kings 6:2](#) / [1 Kings 6:16](#), or 'the house of the Lord', [1 Kings 16:1](#). A cubit is around eighteen inches, which means the temple would have been around ninety feet long, thirty feet wide and forty-five feet high, [1 Kings 6:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 3:3](#).

The portico at the front of the main hall of the temple extended the width of the temple, that is, twenty cubits, that is, thirty feet wide and projected ten cubits, that is, fifteen feet from the front of the temple, 1 Kings 6:3 / 2 Chronicles 3:4. This was the place of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz, 1 Kings 7:21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The measures of the temple, both ‘house’ and porch, 1 Kings 6:3, were exactly double those of the older tabernacle, Exodus 26:18.’

He made narrow windows high up in the temple walls, and against the walls of the main hall and inner sanctuary, he built a structure around the building, in which there were side rooms, 1 Kings 6:4-5.

The lowest floor was five cubits, that is, seven and a half feet wide, the middle floor six cubits, that is, nine feet and the third floor seven, that is, eleven feet, 1 Kings 6:5. He made offset ledges around the outside of the temple so that nothing would be inserted into the temple walls, 1 Kings 6:6.

He panelled the main hall with juniper and covered it with fine gold and decorated it with palm tree and chain designs, 2 Chronicles 3:5. He adorned the temple with precious stones and the gold he used was gold of Parvaim, 2 Chronicles 3:6.

He overlaid the ceiling beams, doorframes, walls, and doors of the temple with gold, and he carved cherubim on the walls, 2 Chronicles 3:7. In building the temple, only blocks dressed at the quarry were used, and no hammer, chisel or any other iron tool was heard at the temple site while it was being built, 1 Kings 6:7.

The entrance to the lowest floor was on the south side of the temple and a stairway led up to the middle level and from there to the third, 1 Kings 6:8 / 1 Kings 6:2.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The chambers on the ground-floor were possibly reached each by its own door in the outer wall of the lean-to. The middle and upper floors were reached by a single door in the right or south wall, from which a winding staircase ascended to the second tier, while another ascended from the second to the third. The door to the stairs was in the outer wall of the building, not in the wall between the chambers and the temple. That would have desecrated the temple far more than the insertion of beams.’

It’s worth noting that the temple wasn’t built as a place for everyone to gather together, but rather as a place in which they could place the ark of the covenant and other items which were in the tabernacle.

Remember when the tabernacle was built, the pattern they used was from God, given to Moses when he was up the mountain, Exodus 25-31. The tabernacle was built according to God’s measurements and requirements. The internal fittings were added afterwards, 1 Kings 6:9 / 1 Kings 6:15-22.

However, notice here the phrase, ‘he built’, 1 Kings 6:9-10. This tells us that the temple was being built by Solomon’s instructions, not God’s. In other words, the temple was David’s idea and Solomon putting his idea together, but it was never God’s idea; He never commanded a temple to be built in the first place, 2 Samuel 7:6-7.

‘The word of the LORD came to Solomon: ‘As for this temple you are building, if you follow my decrees, observe my laws and keep all my commands and obey them, I will fulfil through you the promise I gave to David your father. And I will live among the Israelites and will not abandon my people Israel.’ 1 Kings 6:11-13

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Some think that this is the same revelation as that mentioned 1 Kings 9:2, which took place after the dedication of the temple but to me it appears different it was a word to encourage him while building, to warn him against apostasy, and to assure him of God’s continued protection of him and his family, if they continued faithful to the grace which God had given.’

God tells Solomon that he needs to follow His decrees, observe His laws, keep all of His commands, and obey them, [1 Kings 6:11-12](#). If Solomon does these things, then God will fulfil the promise he made to David, [1 Kings 6:12](#), and He will live among His people and not abandon them, [1 Kings 6:13](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The promises made to David were as follows.

1. That he should be succeeded by one of his sons, [2 Samuel 7:12](#) / [Psalms 132:11](#).
2. That the kingdom should be established in the line of his descendants forever, if they were faithful, [Psalms 132:12](#).
3. That the Israelites should be no more afflicted than before, [2 Samuel 7:10](#).

These promises are now confirmed to Solomon, but on the express condition of obedience, and two further promises are added.’ ‘The first promise to ‘dwell among’ the Israelites had been made to Moses, [Exodus 25:8](#) / [Exodus 29:45](#), but had not been repeated to David. The next promise, ‘I will not forsake, etc.,’ if not absolutely new, seems to have been more positive and general than previous similar promises, [Deuteronomy 31:6](#) / [Deuteronomy 31:8](#) / [Joshua 1:5](#). God will not at any time or under any circumstances wholly forsake Israel.’

I find it interesting that the word of God comes to Solomon, whilst Solomon is in the middle of building the temple, [1 Kings 6:11](#). One possible reason for this was that God saw that the religious pride of His people had moved from the temple of God in heaven, where God reigns, to a physical temple on earth where God would reside.

Over a period of time, Israel forgot what the purpose of the tabernacle was all about, and Israel would soon make the same mistake again, concerning the temple, [Hosea 4:6](#).

‘So Solomon built the temple and completed it. He lined its interior walls with cedar boards, panelling them from the floor of the temple to the ceiling, and covered the floor of the temple with planks of juniper. He partitioned off twenty cubits at the rear of the temple with cedar boards from floor to ceiling to form within the temple an inner sanctuary, the Most Holy Place. The main hall in front of this room was forty cubits long. The inside of the temple was cedar, carved with gourds and open flowers. Everything was cedar; no stone was to be seen. He prepared the inner sanctuary within the temple to set the ark of the covenant of the LORD there. The inner sanctuary was twenty cubits long, twenty wide and twenty high. He overlaid the inside with pure gold, and he also overlaid the altar of cedar. Solomon covered the inside of the temple with pure gold, and he extended gold chains across the front of the inner sanctuary, which was overlaid with gold. So he overlaid the whole interior with gold. He also overlaid with gold the altar that belonged to the inner sanctuary. For the inner sanctuary, he made a pair of cherubim out of olive wood, each ten cubits high. One wing of the first cherub was five cubits long, and the other wing five cubits—ten cubits from wing tip to wing tip. The second cherub also measured ten cubits, for the two cherubim were identical in size and shape. The height of each cherub was ten cubits. He placed the cherubim inside the innermost room of the temple, with their wings spread out. The wing of one cherub touched one wall, while the wing of the other touched the other wall, and their wings touched each other in the middle of the room. He overlaid the cherubim with gold. On the walls all around the temple, in both the inner and outer rooms, he carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers. He also covered the floors of both the inner and outer rooms of the temple with gold. For the entrance to the inner sanctuary, he made doors out of olive wood that were one-fifth of the width of the sanctuary. And on the two olive-wood doors he carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and overlaid the cherubim and palm trees with hammered gold. In the same way, for the entrance to the main hall, he made door frames out of olive wood that were one-fourth of the width of the hall. He also made two doors out of juniper wood, each having two leaves that turned in sockets. He carved cherubim, palm trees and open flowers on them and overlaid them with gold hammered evenly over the carvings. And he built the inner courtyard of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams. The foundation of the temple of the LORD was laid in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv. In the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.’ [1 Kings 6:14-38](#)

Solomon built the temple and completed it, [1 Kings 6:14](#) / [1 Kings 8:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 5:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:1](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning [2 Chronicles 3:8](#).

‘This height, which so much exceeds that of the main building, 1 Kings 6:2, is probably to be corrected by the reading of the Arabic Version and the Alexandrian Septuagint, ‘twenty cubits’, 2 Chronicles 3:9.’

Solomon covered the building with cedarwood, 1 Kings 6:15-16 / 1 Kings 6:18 / 1 Kings 6:20 / 1 Kings 6:36 / 1 Kings 6:9-10, and covered the most holy place with gold, 1 Kings 6:20-22 / 1 Kings 6:30 / 1 Kings 6:32 / 2 Chronicles 3:9. All of this tells us that the temple was built with the best materials they had available and Solomon used the best labourers he could find to do the job.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The upper chambers mentioned here do not conform to any architectural description, either of their utility, or their exact location. The whole chapter appears to have a strange mixture of things that Solomon was instructed to do, and did not do, and of things which he did contrary to God’s will.’

Notice there was gold everywhere, but especially in the Most Holy Place. The walls were covered with gold, 1 Kings 6:20-22, the floor was covered with gold, 1 Kings 6:30, and gold was hammered into the carvings on the doors, 1 Kings 6:32.

The temple was made up of three different parts, firstly, there was a portico, which was outside the temple and faced east, 1 Kings 6:15-16 / 2 Chronicles 3:4-7 / 1 Kings 6:3.

This was the place of the two pillars, 2 Chronicles 3:15 / Jachin and Boaz, 1 Kings 7:21. Secondly, there was the temple itself, 1 Kings 6:17-18. Notice there were two pillars put in place, 1 Kings 7:15 / 2 Chronicles 3:15 / 2 Kings 25:17 / Jeremiah 52:21.

There is a difference in the pillars’ heights between this account and that given in the Kings; however, although the accounts in Kings and Chronicles vary as to the exact dimensions of these pillars, they will still be the same anyway. The name Jachin means ‘He will establish’ and the name Boaz means ‘In it is strength’, 1 Kings 3:17 / 2 Chronicles 3:17.

Finally, there was the inner sanctuary, 1 Kings 6:19-22, which contained the altar of cedar that was overlaid with gold; this was the most holy place or the holy of holies. This is where the cherubim and the ark of the covenant were kept, Exodus 25:18 / Exodus 26:33.

The cherubim, 1 Kings 6:23-28 / 2 Chronicles 3:10-13, symbolised protection and they were located above the ark in order to symbolise God’s protection of the covenant, Exodus 25:20 / Psalms 80:1 / Isaiah 37:16 / Ezekiel 10:3. It also had a veil in place, which was made of the exact same colours as the veil of the tabernacle, Exodus 26:31 / Matthew 27:51 / Hebrews 10:19-20.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These colossal figures violated all of Moses’ instructions regarding their use in the tabernacle. They were not supposed to fill up the house but were intended to decorate the mercy seat, which was in fact a lid for the ark of the covenant. Furthermore, they were not supposed to ‘face the house’ but to be in a posture of peering down intently into the mercy seat. One may find what these figurines were supposed to be in Exodus 25. They were to face each other, with their wings overshadowing the mercy seat, not to be standing side by side facing the outer sanctuary. Their wings were to pertain not to the whole Holy of Holies, but to the mercy seat alone. The apostle Peter referred to the symbolic significance of these cherubim in 1 Peter 1:12.’

The angels were like guards for the ark of the covenant, and they were half the height of the room. The room itself was around thirty feet high, and there were carvings of angels, trees, and flowers on the walls, 1 Kings 6:23-28 / 1 Kings 6:35. The most holy place was the place where they offered sacrifices for sin.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the cherubim, 1 Kings 6:23-28 / 2 Chronicles 3:10-13.

‘The original cherubs were entirely of gold. These, being so much larger, were of wood, merely overlaid with a golden plating. The arrangement of the wings and the direction of the faces also seem to have been different. Moses’

cherubim ‘covered with their wings over the mercy seat’, Solomon’s stretched out theirs to the full, [1 Kings 6:27](#), so that the four wings, each five cubits long [1 Kings 6:24](#), extended across the whole sanctuary, the width of which was twenty cubits, [1 Kings 6:20](#). The former looked toward one another, and were bent downward toward the mercy-seat; the latter looked outward, toward the great chamber, [2 Chronicles 3:13](#).’

Pomegranates were very small in size, but their fruit is very refreshing, [1 Samuel 14:2](#). The pomegranate was used in the temple as decorative pieces, [2 Chronicles 3:16](#) / [1 Kings 7:18](#) / [1 Kings 7:20](#) / [Exodus 28:31](#) / [Exodus 28:33-34](#). Their shape came to symbolise the fertility of the promised Land, [Numbers 13:23](#) / [Deuteronomy 8:3](#).

He built the inner courtyard of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams, [1 Kings 6:36](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:9](#). You will notice that there is no mention of a veil in Solomon’s plans; the veil is the curtain which separated the holy place from the most holy place, [Exodus 26:31-35](#). For some reason, Solomon didn’t include the veil in his plans, but it was later introduced into the temple after the Babylonian captivity, [Matthew 27:51](#).

Because it took seven years to complete, [1 Kings 6:37-38](#) / [1 Kings 6:1](#), this tells us that Solomon took his time to get every detail of the temple correct, including its contents. Despite all the effort to build such a wonderful structure, Solomon’s temple was eventually destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.

After the Babylonian captivity, the remnant of Israel began to build the temple again in 536 B.C., but struggled to continue with the build because they knew it would never be as wonderful as Solomon’s original temple, [Ezra 3:12](#).

Even though Herod the Great built another temple in its place during his reign, it looked nothing as wonderful as Solomon’s original temple. And of course, this temple was destroyed in A.D. 70 by the Romans.

CHAPTER 7

INTRODUCTION

‘It took Solomon thirteen years, however, to complete the construction of his palace. He built the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon, a hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, with four rows of cedar columns supporting trimmed cedar beams. It was roofed with cedar above the beams that rested on the columns—forty-five beams, fifteen to a row. Its windows were placed high in sets of three, facing each other. All the doorways had rectangular frames; they were in the front part in sets of three, facing each other. He made a colonnade fifty cubits long and thirty wide. In front of it was a portico, and in front of that were pillars and an overhanging roof. He built the throne hall, the Hall of Justice, where he was to judge, and he covered it with cedar from floor to ceiling. And the palace in which he was to live, set farther back, was similar in design. Solomon also made a palace like this hall for Pharaoh’s daughter, whom he had married. All these structures, from the outside to the great courtyard and from foundation to eaves, were made of blocks of high-grade stone cut to size and smoothed on their inner and outer faces. The foundations were laid with large stones of good quality, some measuring ten cubits and some eight. Above were high-grade stones, cut to size, and cedar beams. The great courtyard was surrounded by a wall of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams, as was the inner courtyard of the temple of the LORD with its portico.’ [1 Kings 7:1-12](#)

SOLOMON BUILDS HIS PALACE

Here Solomon begins to build his own palace, and straight away we see that it took thirteen years to complete, [1 Kings 7:1](#). This tells us how extravagant his palace was, and although we don’t know exactly how it looked, we know that it was very complex and it housed the many people who were a part of Solomon’s royal court.

Remember, David had spent years collecting money and materials for the temple, but this wasn't the case for Solomon's palace. It took almost twice as long to build as the temple, and I'm pretty sure it would have almost cost twice as much.

Within his palace, there were several different houses and projects, a house of the forest of Lebanon, [1 Kings 7:2-5](#), a colonnade and portico, [1 Kings 7:6](#), a throne hall and a hall of justice, [1 Kings 7:7](#), Solomon's own palace and living space, [1 Kings 7:8](#), and a house for Pharaoh's daughter, [1 Kings 7:8](#). No one knows why he chose to build a house only for Pharaoh's daughter when he had seven-hundred other wives to look after, [1 Kings 11:3](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Many have supposed that the buildings mentioned in [1 Kings 7:1-2](#) / [1 Kings 7:8](#) were three entirely distinct and separate buildings. But it is perhaps best to consider the 'house' of [1 Kings 7:1](#), as the palace proper, Solomon's own dwelling-house, [1 Kings 7:8](#), the house of [1 Kings 7:2](#), as the state apartments and the house for Pharaoh's daughter as the hareem or zenana and to regard these three groups of buildings as distinct, though interconnected, and as together constituting what is else-where termed 'the king's house', [1 Kings 9:10](#).'

All these structures, from the outside to the great courtyard and from foundation to eaves, were made of blocks of high-grade stone cut to size and smoothed on their inner and outer faces, [1 Kings 7:9](#).

The foundations were laid with large stones of good quality, some measuring ten cubits, that is, fifteen feet and some eight, that is twelve feet, [1 Kings 7:10](#). Above were high-grade stones, cut to size, and cedar beams, [1 Kings 7:11](#).

The great courtyard was surrounded by a wall of three courses of dressed stone and one course of trimmed cedar beams, as was the inner courtyard of the temple of the LORD with its portico, [1 Kings 7:12](#). It's difficult to imagine what his palace would have looked like, but it was certainly big enough to house all these people.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The palace, like the temple, had two courts [1 Kings 6:36](#), not, however, one immediately within the other. The lesser court of the palace seems to have been a private inner court among the buildings, [1 Kings 7:8](#). The greater court was outside all the buildings, surrounding the palace on every side. Assyrian palaces had always had such an external court, and had generally one or more inner courts or quadrangles.'

THE TEMPLE'S FURNISHINGS

'King Solomon sent to Tyre and brought Hiram, whose mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali and whose father was from Tyre and a skilled craftsman in bronze. Hiram was filled with wisdom, with understanding and with knowledge to do all kinds of bronze work. He came to King Solomon and did all the work assigned to him. He cast two bronze pillars, each eighteen cubits high and twelve cubits in circumference. He also made two capitals of cast bronze to set on the tops of the pillars; each capital was five cubits high. A network of interwoven chains adorned the capitals on top of the pillars, seven for each capital. He made pomegranates in two rows encircling each network to decorate the capitals on top of the pillars. He did the same for each capital. The capitals on top of the pillars in the portico were in the shape of lilies, four cubits high. On the capitals of both pillars, above the bowl-shaped part next to the network, were the two hundred pomegranates in rows all around. He erected the pillars at the portico of the temple. The pillar to the south he named Jakin, and the one to the north Boaz. The capitals on top were in the shape of lilies. And so the work on the pillars was completed. He made the Sea of cast metal, circular in shape, measuring ten cubits from rim to rim and five cubits high. It took a line of thirty cubits to measure around it. Below the rim, gourds encircled it—ten to a cubit. The gourds were cast in two rows in one piece with the Sea. The Sea stood on twelve bulls, three facing north, three facing west, three facing south, and three facing east. The Sea rested on top of them, and their hindquarters were toward the centre. It was a handbreadth in thickness, and its rim was like the rim of a cup, like a lily blossom. It held two thousand baths. He also made ten movable stands of bronze; each was four cubits long, four wide and three high. This is how the stands were made: They had side panels attached to uprights. On the panels between the uprights were lions, bulls, and cherubim—and on the uprights as well. Above and below the lions

and bulls were wreaths of hammered work. Each stand had four bronze wheels with bronze axles, and each had a basin resting on four supports, cast with wreaths on each side. On the inside of the stand, there was an opening that had a circular frame one cubit deep. This opening was round, and with its basework it measured a cubit and a half.

Around its opening, there was engraving. The panels of the stands were square, not round. The four wheels were under the panels, and the axles of the wheels were attached to the stand. The diameter of each wheel was a cubit and a half. The wheels were made like chariot wheels; the axles, rims, spokes, and hubs were all of cast metal. Each stand had four handles, one on each corner, projecting from the stand. At the top of the stand, there was a circular band half a cubit deep. The supports and panels were attached to the top of the stand. He engraved cherubim, lions, and palm trees on the surfaces of the supports and on the panels, in every available space, with wreaths all around. This is the way he made the ten stands. They were all cast in the same moulds and were identical in size and shape. He then made ten bronze basins, each holding forty baths and measuring four cubits across, one basin to go on each of the ten stands. He placed five of the stands on the south side of the temple and five on the north. He placed the Sea on the south side, at the southeast corner of the temple. He also made the pots and shovels and sprinkling bowls.’ 1 Kings 7:13-40

After reading these verses, especially the verse which describes the articles of the temple, it becomes clear that the temple itself was somehow connected to Solomon’s palace, 2 Chronicles 3:15 / 2 Chronicles 3:17 / 2 Chronicles 4:2-5.

Huram’s father was from Tyre, but his mother was a widow of the tribe of Naphtali, 1 Kings 7:13-14, and she is also described as being of the daughters of Dan, 2 Chronicles 2:14, which means that she was of the tribe of Dan by birth but was living in the territory of Naphtali.

Because of Hiram’s reputation as a very skilled metal worker, 1 Kings 7:13, and was filled with wisdom, understanding and knowledge to do all kinds of bronze work, 1 Kings 7:14 / 2 Chronicles 2:13 / 2 Chronicles 4:16, Solomon hired him to carry out the duties in making the articles mentioned, 1 Kings 7:14-45.

It’s worth noting that the bronze he used to make the bronze pillars, 1 Kings 7:15-22 / 1 Kings 7:41-42, the Sea, 1 Kings 7:23-25 / 1 Kings 7:39 / 1 Kings 7:44, and various bronze articles were from the time when David had taken the bronze from the cities of Hadarezer, 1 Chronicles 18:8.

Notice that the two pillars which were placed in front of the temple were given names, ‘Jachin’ and ‘Boaz’, 1 Kings 7:21. These names may be very symbolic; ‘Jachin’ possibly signified that the temple would stand forever and ‘Boaz’ possibly signified that God gives the temple strength and endurance.

There are a couple of other ideas concerning these names. Some believe that the name ‘Jachin’ refers to God establishing the throne of the king forever, and the name ‘Boaz’ refers to the strength of God in which the king would rejoice. If there are any symbols in these names, they all carry the idea of the king standing between God and His people.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These famous pillars, which were broken in pieces by the Babylonians when they destroyed Jerusalem, 2 Kings 25:13 / Jeremiah 52:17, were probably for ornament, standing by themselves under or in front of the porch.’

Hiram made a sea out of cast bronze, 1 Kings 7:23-25 / 1 Kings 7:39 / 1 Kings 7:44. This was designed as a great bowl, some fifteen feet across at the top. It was huge, and if the measurements are correct, it would be able to hold around ten thousand gallons of water. The purpose behind this great bowl was to supply water for ceremonial cleansing purposes, 2 Chronicles 4:6.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The ‘molten sea’ of Solomon, so called from its great size, took the place of the laver of the tabernacle, Exodus 30:18-21, which was required for the ablutions of the priests.’

Why Solomon ordered that these images of lions and bulls be built into the panels, 1 Kings 7:29 / 1 Kings 7:36, is not certain; some believe this was idolatry, Exodus 2:4-5 / 1 Kings 12:28-29.

Josephus charged Solomon with a breach of the Commandment, Exodus 20:4-5, on account of the oxen here and the lions for his throne. The charge expresses the prohibition which some Jews have conceived the Commandment to urge against the arts of sculpture and painting.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning the pomegranates, 1 Kings 7:18 / 1 Kings 7:20 / 1 Kings 7:42 / 2 Chronicles 4:13.

‘The pomegranate was one of the most common ornaments in Assyria. It was used on quivers, on spear-shafts, and mace heads, in patterns on doorways and pavements, etc. It is doubtful whether a symbolic meaning was attached to it, or whether it was merely selected as a beautiful natural form.’

The portable basins had wheels on them, 1 Kings 7:30-33, so that they could be wheeled to different parts of the temple in order to provide water for washing during and after the sacrifices.

The ten bronze basins were smaller bowls, 1 Kings 7:38-39, that were used for convenient cleansing purposes for the priest when he was away from the Sea bowl, the great bowl of water.

The sprinkling bowls, 1 Kings 7:40 / 1 Kings 7:45 / 1 Kings 7:50 / 2 Chronicles 4:8 / 2 Chronicles 4:22, which held water, were scattered around the temple so the priests could prepare the many sacrifices that were offered in reference to the temple service. The pots were the caldrons in which it was usual to boil the peace-offerings, 1 Samuel 2:13-14. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These were set on the ten bases or pedestals, and were to hold water for the use of the priests in their sacred office, particularly to wash the victims that were to be offered as a burnt-offering, as we learn from 2 Chronicles 4:6, but the brazen sea was for the priests to wash in. The whole was a building of vast art, labour, and expense.’

‘So Hiram finished all the work he had undertaken for King Solomon in the temple of the LORD: the two pillars; the two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars; the two sets of network decorating the two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars; the four hundred pomegranates for the two sets of network (two rows of pomegranates for each network decorating the bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars); the ten stands with their ten basins; the Sea and the twelve bulls under it; the pots, shovels and sprinkling bowls. All these objects that Hiram made for King Solomon for the temple of the LORD were of burnished bronze. The king had them cast in clay moulds in the plain of the Jordan between Sukkoth and Zarethan. Solomon left all these things unweighed, because there were so many; the weight of the bronze was not determined. Solomon also made all the furnishings that were in the LORD’s temple: the golden altar; the golden table on which was the bread of the Presence; the lampstands of pure gold (five on the right and five on the left, in front of the inner sanctuary); the gold floral work and lamps and tongs; the pure gold basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes and censers; and the gold sockets for the doors of the innermost room, the Most Holy Place, and also for the doors of the main hall of the temple. When all the work King Solomon had done for the temple of the LORD was finished, he brought in the things his father David had dedicated—the silver and gold and the furnishings—and he placed them in the treasuries of the LORD’s temple.’ 1 Kings 7:40-51

When Hiram finished all the work he had undertaken for Solomon in the temple of the LORD, 1 Kings 7:40, it’s clear that the building of Solomon’s palace and all the furnishings were really a remarkable undertaking, 2 Chronicles 4:17-22 / 2 Chronicles 5:1 / 2 Chronicles 4:6 / 2 Chronicles 4:10-5:1.

There’s no doubt that Solomon chose wisely in hiring Hiram to help with the furnishings of the temple because he was a very talented, skilled metal worker, 1 Kings 7:13-14.

Some translations use the word ‘bronze’, and other translations use the word ‘brass’, but this doesn’t really matter, because brass is a term that is used to describe any copper alloy.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the four hundred pomegranates, 1 Kings 7:42.

‘The ‘four hundred’, 1 Kings 7:42 / 2 Chronicles 4:13, are obtained by counting the pomegranates of both pillars together. In Jeremiah 52:23, there is an account of the arrangement of a single row of pomegranates, whereof each pillar had two.’

Solomon had them cast between Succoth and Zarethan, [1 Kings 7:46](#) / [Judges 7:22](#) / [Judges 8:5](#). These places were quarries where he had mined the huge amount of copper needed for all the furnishings.

There were also articles of gold within the temple, the golden altar, [1 Kings 7:48](#), the golden lampstands, [1 Kings 7:48-49](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:19-22](#), gold basins and sockets, [1 Kings 7:50](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:7-8](#) / [2 Chronicles 4:19-22](#).

Some of this gold, along with some silver, [1 Kings 7:51](#), came from all the kingdoms which David had earlier conquered, [2 Samuel 8:9-12](#).

Notice that the gold lampstands Solomon had made for the temple had ten branches, [1 Kings 7:48-49](#). We don't know why Solomon did this because [Exodus 25:31-32](#) tells us that God asked for the lampstands to have only three branches on each side.

When the Jews rebuilt the temple after the Babylonian captivity, they not only put the veil that Solomon didn't make back to where it belongs between the holy place and the most holy place, [Exodus 26:31-35](#) / [Matthew 27:51](#), but they also put in a seven-branched lampstand.

Notice also that Solomon had brought everything David had dedicated and placed them in the treasuries of the Lord's temple, [1 Kings 7:51](#) / [1 Chronicles 28:14-18](#).

This gives us the impression that the temple also functioned as some kind of national treasury, [1 Chronicles 26:28](#).

We know that the temple functioned as a community centre for the people, and so the people would deposit their valuables there.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The temple was built in some measure on the model of the tabernacle, and dedicated to the same use, [Exodus 25-27](#) / [Exodus 35-39](#).'

CHAPTER 8

INTRODUCTION

'Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD's covenant from Zion, the City of David. All the Israelites came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month. When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests took up the ark, and they brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and Levites carried them up, and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt. When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. Then Solomon said, 'The LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud; I have indeed built a magnificent temple for you, a place for you to dwell forever.' 1 Kings 8:1-13

THE ARK BROUGHT TO THE TEMPLE

Solomon requests that the ark of the covenant be brought from the tabernacle, which was located in the city of David and placed inside the temple, when the temple was finished being built, **1 Kings 8:1 / 2 Chronicles 5:2**.

The festival in the month of Ethanim, **1 Kings 8:2 / 2 Chronicles 5:3**, was the feast of tabernacles, **Deuteronomy 16:13 / 2 Chronicles 7:9 / Leviticus 23:36 / John 7:37**. This was one of the great feasts that everyone was required to attend.

It would have been roughly a year between the dedication of the temple and the complete work of finishing it. The feast of tabernacles took place on the seventh month, and Solomon had finished the building works on the temple on the eighth month, **1 Kings 6:37-38**.

When the Israelites returned from the Babylonian captivity, the month of Ethanim would be changed to the month of Tishri. When all the elders of Israel had arrived, the priests carried the ark and the tent of meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it, **1 Kings 8:3-4 / 2 Chronicles 5:4-5**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is generally agreed that there were now two tabernacles at Gibeon, and the other in the city of David, which one David had constructed as a temporary residence for the ark, in the event of a temple being built. Which of these tabernacles was brought into the temple at this time is not well known; some think both were brought in, in order to prevent the danger of idolatry. I should rather suppose that the tabernacle from Gibeon was brought in, and that the temporary one erected by David was demolished.’

The priests and Levites carried them, and Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted, **1 Kings 8:4-5 / 2 Chronicles 5:5-6**.

After sacrificing so many sheep and cattle, which couldn’t be counted, the priests laid the ark in the inner sanctuary of the temple, **1 Kings 8:6 / 2 Chronicles 5:7**. After the ark of the covenant was placed inside the inner sanctuary, the text tells us that ‘the cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark’, **1 Kings 8:7 / 2 Chronicles 5:8**.

These cherubim described here were different from the ones from the time of Moses, the ones in the time of Moses were firmly fixed to the lid of the ark, **Exodus 37:7**.

Notice that the poles, which were used to carry the ark, were so long that they could be seen from the Holy Place, **1 Kings 8:8 / 2 Chronicles 5:9**. This again tells us that Solomon never put a curtain between the holy place and the most holy place, **Exodus 26:31-35 / 2 Samuel 7:2 / Matthew 27:51**.

Notice also that inside the ark were only two stone tablets, **1 Kings 8:9 / 2 Chronicles 5:10 / Hebrews 9:4**. These would have been the ten commandments which Moses received at Mount Sinai, **Exodus 25:16**.

It’s possible that Aaron’s staff, **Numbers 17:10 / Hebrews 9:4**, and the golden pot of hidden manna, **Exodus 16:33-34 / Hebrews 9:4**, were placed in front of the ark, **Exodus 16:33-34 / Numbers 17:25**.

The priests then withdrew from the Holy Place and all the priests who were there had consecrated themselves, regardless of their divisions, **2 Chronicles 5:11**.

All the Levites who were musicians, Asaph, Heman, Jeduthun and their sons and relatives stood on the east side of the altar, dressed in fine linen and playing cymbals, harps and lyres and we are told that they were accompanied by one-hundred and twenty priests sounding trumpets, **2 Chronicles 5:12**.

The trumpeters and musicians joined in unison to give praise and thanks to the LORD and accompanied by trumpets, cymbals and other instruments, the singers raised their voices in praise to the LORD and sang ‘He is good, his love endures forever, **2 Chronicles 5:13**. When they did this the temple of the LORD was filled with the cloud, **2**

Chronicles 5:13.

The priests couldn't perform their service because of the Lord's glory, 1 Kings 8:10-11 / 2 Chronicles 5:14; the cloud represented God's presence, Exodus 40:34-38. It appears that the Lord's glory was too much for the priests, just as it was for Moses, Leviticus 16:2-13 / Deuteronomy 4:24 / Exodus 40:35.

Solomon says, 'the LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud', 1 Kings 8:12. It would be dark in the holy of holies because there were no windows, and here this darkness is associated with the dark storm cloud which came over Mount Horeb at the giving of the Law, Exodus 20:18 / Psalm 18:10-11.

Solomon says, 'the LORD has said that he would dwell in a dark cloud', 1 Kings 8:12. It would be dark in the holy of holies because there were no windows, and here this darkness is associated with the dark storm cloud which came over Mount Horeb at the giving of the Law, Exodus 20:18 / Psalm 18:10-11.

Common sense tells us that God wouldn't literally dwell in the temple, 1 Kings 8:13 / 1 Kings 8:27-30 / Acts 7:48.

Solomon is basically saying that the temple would represent God's presence among His people.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was under the appearance of a cloud that God showed himself present with Israel in the wilderness, Exodus 14:19-20. And at the dedication of the tabernacle in the wilderness, God manifested himself in the same way that he did here at the dedication of the temple, Exodus 40:34-35.'

'While the whole assembly of Israel was standing there, the king turned around and blessed them. Then he said: 'Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who with his own hand has fulfilled what he promised with his own mouth to my father David. For he said, 'Since the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have not chosen a city in any tribe of Israel to have a temple built so that my Name might be there, but I have chosen David to rule my people Israel.' 'My father David had it in his heart to build a temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. But the LORD said to my father David, 'You did well to have it in your heart to build a temple for my Name. Nevertheless, you are not the one to build the temple, but your son, your own flesh and blood—he is the one who will build the temple for my Name.' 'The LORD has kept the promise he made: I have succeeded David my father, and now I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD promised, and I have built the temple for the Name of the LORD, the God of Israel. I have provided a place there for the ark, in which is the covenant of the LORD that he made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt.' 1 Kings 8:14-21

After blessing the people, Solomon then goes on to quote God's words to his father, David, 1 Kings 8:14-21 / 2 Chronicles 6:3-9 / 2 Samuel 2:13. However, if God had originally planned to choose a city and build a temple in the land of one of the tribes, then that tribe would have taken ownership of a visible symbol of God's presence, but it never was God's plan.

God didn't want a temple in the first place, 2 Samuel 7:5-7. This temple was built for Solomon's father, David, because it was David's dream to build one, 2 Samuel 7:1-2. Solomon's throne wasn't established forever, and the temple he built, which bore God's Name, was claimed to be such by Solomon and the Israelites.

God appears to allow the temple to be built and used for worship at this time, but the house which God was speaking about was referring to the Lord's church, Acts 15:16-18.

Solomon goes ahead and expresses his gratitude that he was set upon the throne of David in fulfilment of the promise that God made to David, 1 Kings 8:20-21 / 2 Chronicles 6:10-11 / 1 Chronicles 28:6.

SOLOMON'S PRAYER OF DEDICATION

'Then Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of the whole assembly of Israel, spread out his hands toward heaven and said: 'LORD, the God of Israel, there is no God like you in heaven above or on earth below—you who keep your covenant of love with your servants who continue wholeheartedly in your way. You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father; with your mouth you have promised, and with your hand you have fulfilled it—as it is today. 'Now LORD, the God of Israel, keep for your servant David my father the promises you made to

him when you said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel, if only your descendants are careful in all they do to walk before me faithfully as you have done.’ And now, God of Israel, let your word that you promised your servant David, my father, come true. ‘But will God really dwell on the earth? The heavens, even the highest heaven, cannot contain you. How much less this temple I have built! Yet give attention to your servant’s prayer and his plea for mercy, LORD my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is praying in your presence this day. May your eyes be open toward this temple night and day, this place of which you said, ‘My Name shall be there,’ so that you will hear the prayer your servant prays toward this place. Hear the supplication of your servant and of your people Israel when they pray toward this place. Hear from heaven, your dwelling place, and when you hear, forgive.’ 1 Kings 8:22-30

In 1 Kings 8:22-53 / 2 Chronicles 6:12-40, we read about Solomon’s prayer of dedication. Some suggest that Solomon prayed for the wrong thing; instead of praying that God would keep His word, he should have prayed that he and his son would keep the Lord’s Word.

It’s possible that his prayer was written down and kept in The Book of the Acts of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:41, or in The Book of Nathan the Prophet, 2 Chronicles 9:20. Notice Solomon spread out his hands towards heaven, 1 Kings 8:22 / 2 Chronicles 6:12 / Psalms 28:2 / Psalms 134:2 / Psalms 141:2 / 1 Timothy 2:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following, concerning 1 Kings 8:22 / 2 Chronicles 6:13.

‘He ascended the brazen scaffold, five cubits long, and five cubits broad, and three cubits high, and then knelt down upon his knees, with his hands spread up to heaven, and offered up the following prayer, 1 Kings 8:54 / 2 Chronicles 5:12-13. The spreading out of the hands towards heaven was a usual custom in all nations, in prayer the hands were stretched out to heaven, as if to invite and receive assistance from thence, while, humbly kneeling on their knees, they seemed to acknowledge at once their dependence and unworthiness.’

It’s incredible to think that here, Solomon openly declares that ‘there is no God like you’, 1 Kings 8:23 / 2 Chronicles 6:14, but as he approaches his later years of reign, he commits idolatry, 1 Kings 11:5-12. He acknowledged that God’s promise was fulfilled, 1 Kings 8:24 / 2 Chronicles 6:15 / 2 Samuel 7:13.

He also quotes God’s words again in saying, ‘you shall never fail to have a successor to sit before me on the throne of Israel’, 1 Kings 8:25 / 2 Chronicles 6:16.

This, of course, was God’s promise to David, and from him only God would recognise someone as the rightful king of Israel. Solomon asks God to be true to His word and His promise, 1 Kings 8:26 / 2 Chronicles 6:17.

Although Solomon declared earlier that the temple would be God’s dwelling place forever, 1 Kings 8:13 / 2 Chronicles 6:2, now Solomon answers his own question when he asks, ‘Will God really dwell on earth?’ 1 Kings 8:27 / 2 Chronicles 6:18. He certainly knows that no one can confine God to one place, never mind a temple, 1 Kings 8:27 / 2 Chronicles 6:18 / Deuteronomy 10:14 / Acts 17:22-31.

Solomon asks God to hear his prayer and plea for mercy, and calls his ‘my God’, 1 Kings 8:28 / 2 Chronicles 6:19.

The name of God, 1 Kings 8:29 / 2 Chronicles 6:20, or authority of God, was once displayed through the presence of the tabernacle, and now Solomon asks God to display His Name through the presence of the temple.

The problem, however, is seen in this: if the temple demonstrated God’s presence and it also displayed God’s authority over His people, then all the nations around could claim the same thing about their temples. He once again asks God to hear his prayer, and when God hears his prayer, He would forgive, 1 Kings 8:30 / 2 Chronicles 6:21.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Both tabernacle and temple were types of our Lord Jesus, or of God manifested in the flesh, and he was and is the Mediator between God and man. All prayer, to be acceptable and to be entitled to a hearing, must go to God through Him. The human nature of Christ is the temple in which dwelt all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; therefore, with propriety all prayer must be offered to God through Him.’

‘When anyone wrongs their neighbour and is required to take an oath, and they come and swear the oath before your altar in this temple, then hear from heaven and act. Judge between your servants, condemning the guilty by bringing

down on their heads what they have done, and vindicating the innocent by treating them in accordance with their innocence. ‘When your people Israel have been defeated by an enemy because they have sinned against you, and when they turn back to you and give praise to your name, praying and making supplication to you in this temple, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your people Israel and bring them back to the land you gave to their ancestors. ‘When the heavens are shut up, and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and when they pray toward this place and give praise to your name and turn from their sin because you have afflicted them, then hear from heaven and forgive the sin of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them the right way to live and send rain on the land you gave your people for an inheritance. ‘When famine or plague comes to the land, or blight or mildew, locusts, or grasshoppers, or when an enemy besieges them in any of their cities, whatever disaster or disease may come, and when a prayer or plea is made by anyone among your people Israel—being aware of the afflictions of their own hearts, and spreading out their hands toward this temple—then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Forgive and act; deal with everyone according to all they do, since you know their hearts (for you alone know every human heart), so that they will fear you all the time they live in the land you gave our ancestors. ‘As for the foreigner who does not belong to your people Israel but has come from a distant land because of your name—for they will hear of your great name and your mighty hand and your outstretched arm—when they come and pray toward this temple, then hear from heaven, your dwelling place. Do whatever the foreigner asks of you, so that all the peoples of the earth may know your name and fear you, as do your own people Israel, and may know that this house I have built bears your Name. ‘When your people go to war against their enemies, wherever you send them, and when they pray to the LORD toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name, then hear from heaven their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. ‘When they sin against you—for there is no one who does not sin—and you become angry with them and give them over to their enemies, who take them captive to their own lands, far away or near; and if they have a change of heart in the land where they are held captive, and repent and plead with you in the land of their captors and say, ‘We have sinned, we have done wrong, we have acted wickedly’; and if they turn back to you with all their heart and soul in the land of their enemies who took them captive, and pray to you toward the land you gave their ancestors, toward the city you have chosen and the temple I have built for your Name; then from heaven, your dwelling place, hear their prayer and their plea, and uphold their cause. And forgive your people, who have sinned against you; forgive all the offences they have committed against you and cause their captors to show them mercy; for they are your people and your inheritance, whom you brought out of Egypt, out of that iron smelting furnace. ‘May your eyes be open to your servant’s plea and to the plea of your people Israel, and may you listen to them whenever they cry out to you. For you singled them out from all the nations of the world to be your own inheritance, just as you declared through your servant Moses when you, Sovereign LORD, brought our ancestors out of Egypt.’ 1 Kings 8:31-53

The text here is basically saying, if the Israelites don’t remain faithful to God and His Word, then there will be consequences to pay, famines, plagues, exile, etc., 1 Kings 8:31-53 / 2 Chronicles 6:22-39.

The terms and conditions that a person be in the presence of the temple to swear an oath, 1 Kings 8:31-32 / 2 Chronicles 6:22-23, or repent, 1 Kings 8:46-51 / 2 Chronicles 6:24-27, couldn’t be a condition for making binding oaths or bringing about personal repentance, simply because the temple was far away from most of the other Israelites.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following: 1 Kings 8:31-32 / 2 Chronicles 6:22-23.

‘Solomon puts here seven cases, in all of which the mercy and intervention of God would be indispensably requisite; and he earnestly bespeaks that mercy and intervention on condition that the people pray towards that holy place, and with a feeling heart make earnest supplication. The first case is one of doubtfulness, where a man has sustained an injury, and charges it on a suspected person, though not able to bring direct evidence of the fact, the accused is permitted to come before the altar of God, and purge himself by his personal oath. Solomon prays that God may not permit a false oath to be taken, but that he will discover the truth, so that the wicked shall be condemned, and the righteous justified.’

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following, 1 Kings 8:33-34 / 2 Chronicles 6:24-25.

‘The second case. When their enemies make inroads upon them, and defeat them in battle, and lead them into captivity, because God, being displeased with their transgressions, has delivered them up then if they shall turn again, confess the name of God, which they had in effect denied, by either neglecting his worship, or becoming idolatrous

and pray and make supplication, then, says Solomon, hear thou in heaven-and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers.’

Over and over again throughout these verses, Solomon speaks about God’s dwelling place is heaven, 1 Kings 8:32 / 1 Kings 8:34 / 1 Kings 8:36 / 1 Kings 8:39 / 1 Kings 8:43 / 1 Kings 8:45 / 1 Kings 8:48 / 2 Chronicles 6:23 / 2 Chronicles 6:25 / 2 Chronicles 6:26 / 2 Chronicles 6:27 / 2 Chronicles 6:30 / 2 Chronicles 6:33 / 2 Chronicles 6:35 / 2 Chronicles 6:39, not the temple or any other physical place.

Solomon asks that the beautiful temple, which he has built, be used as evidence of the existence of God when foreigners pass by, 1 Kings 8:41 / 1 Kings 8:43 / 2 Chronicles 6:32-33.

Notice Solomon asks God to hear their prayers when they are facing the temple, 1 Kings 8:38 / 1 Kings 8:42 / 1 Kings 8:44 / 1 Kings 8:48 / 2 Chronicles 6:29 / 2 Chronicles 6:32 / 2 Chronicles 6:34 / 2 Chronicles 6:38.

This is mentioned four times in his prayer, but we know God doesn’t ask us to pray in any specific direction. He hears our prayers wherever we are and in whatever direction we’re facing.

The sending of the rain, 1 Kings 8:35-36 / 2 Chronicles 6:26-27, is in correspondence with their obedience to the Law of God, and so, if they were disobedient, they would be taken into captivity. Solomon says that no one can say they haven’t sinned, and that is still true today, Romans 3:23 / 1 John 1:10.

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following, 1 Kings 8:35-36 / 2 Chronicles 6:26-27.

‘The third case. When, because of their sin, and their ceasing to walk in the good way in which they should have walked, God refuses to send the early and latter rain, so that the appointed weeks of harvest come in vain, as there is no crop, then, if they pray and confess their sin, hear thou in heaven.’

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following concerning 1 Kings 8:37-40 / 2 Chronicles 6:28-31.

The fourth case includes several kinds of evils.

1. Famine, a scarcity, or total want of bread, necessarily springing from the preceding cause, drought.
2. Pestilence, any general and contagious disease.
3. Blasting, anything by which the crops are injured, so that the ear is never matured; but instead of wholesome grain, there is a black, offensive dust.
4. Mildew, anything that vitiates or corrodes the texture of the stalk, destroys the flowers and blossoms, or causes the young, shaped fruits to fall off their stems.
5. Locust, a well-known curse in the East, a species of grasshopper that multiplies by millions, and covers the face of the earth for many miles square, destroying every green thing, leaving neither herb, nor grass upon the earth, nor leaf nor bark upon the trees.
6. Caterpillar, the locust in its young or nymphal state. The former refers to locusts brought by winds from other countries and settling on the land; the latter, to the young locusts bred in the land.
7. An enemy, having attacked their defended cities, the keys, and barriers of the land.
8. Any other kind of plague; that which affects the surface of the body; blotch, blain, leprosy, ophthalmia.
9. Sickness, whatever impaired the strength or affected the intestines, disturbing or destroying their natural functions.

All such cases were to be brought before the Lord, the persons having a deep sense of the wickedness which induced God thus to afflict, or permit them to be afflicted, for only those who knew the plague of their own hearts, 1 Kings 8:38, the deep-rooted moral corruption of their nature, and the destructive nature and sinfulness of sin, were likely to pray in such a manner as to induce God to hear and forgive.’

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following concerning **1 Kings 8:41-43 / 2 Chronicles 6:32-33**.

‘The fifth case relates to heathens coming from other countries with the design to become proselytes to the true religion; that they might be received, blessed, and protected as the true Israelites, that the name of Jehovah might be known over the face of the earth.’

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following concerning **1 Kings 8:44-45 / 2 Chronicles 6:34-35**.

‘The sixth case refers to wars undertaken by Divine appointment, whithersoever thou shalt send them, for in no other wars could they expect the blessing and concurrence of the Lord, in none other could the God of truth and justice maintain their cause. There were such wars under the Mosaic dispensation; there are none such under the Christian dispensation: nor can there be any, for the Son of man is come, not to destroy men’s lives, but to save them. Except for mere defensive war, all others are diabolical and query, if there were no provocations, would there be any attacks, and consequently any need for defensive wars?’

Clarke continues in his commentary, says the following concerning **1 Kings 8:46-50 / 2 Chronicles 6:36-39**.

‘This seventh case must refer to some general defection from truth to some species of false worship, idolatry, or corruption of the truth and ordinances of the Most High, as for it they are here stated to be delivered into the hands of their enemies and carried away captive, which was the general punishment for idolatry, and what is called, **1 Kings 8:47**, acting perversely and committing wickedness.’

‘When Solomon had finished all these prayers and supplications to the LORD, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, where he had been kneeling with his hands spread out toward heaven. He stood and blessed the whole assembly of Israel in a loud voice, saying: ‘Praise be to the LORD, who has given rest to his people Israel just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the good promises he gave through his servant Moses. May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never leave us nor forsake us. May he turn our hearts to him, to walk in obedience to him and keep the commands, decrees, and laws he gave our ancestors. And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God day and night, that he may uphold the cause of his servant and the cause of his people Israel according to each day’s need, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD is God and that there is no other. And may your hearts be fully committed to the LORD our God, to live by his decrees and obey his commands, as at this time.’ **1 Kings 8:54-61**

Notice that Solomon was kneeling to pray, **1 Kings 8:54**. This is the first mention of kneeling for prayer in the Bible. By the time we get to the New Testament, most people stood to pray, **Luke 18:11 / Luke 18:13**.

Solomon asks God to open His eyes and ears when prayers are offered in the temple, **2 Chronicles 6:40**. He asks God to arise, and come to His resting place, Him, and the ark of His might, **2 Chronicles 6:41**. Not that the ark was in the temple, this represented the presence of God being in the temple, **Numbers 10:35-36**.

Solomon asks God that His priests be clothed in salvation, **2 Chronicles 6:41**. In other words, the conduct of the religious leaders must be according to the righteousness of God.

He asks God not to reject His anointed one, **2 Chronicles 6:42**, that is, Solomon himself. He doesn’t want God to hide His face through shame at having his prayers rejected, **1 Kings 2:16**.

In his prayer, he says that God has been absolutely true to His word concerning His promises to Moses, **1 Kings 8:55-56 / Genesis 12:1-3**. These promises had already been fulfilled, but Solomon wants Israel to know that they too must fulfil their part in being obedient to God, hence why they had to walk in all of God’s ways, **1 Kings 8:57-58**.

Notice if Israel stuck to their covenant agreement with God by keeping His commandments, then ‘all the people of the earth may know that the Lord is God and there is no other’, **1 Kings 8:59-60 / 2 Chronicles 6:41-42**.

In other words, since God was the one who gave them the law, if they were obedient to His law, **1 Kings 8:61**, this would show the world that their laws weren’t man-made and God was real, **John 13:35 / John 14:15**.

THE DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

‘Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices before the LORD. Solomon offered a sacrifice of fellowship offerings to the LORD: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep and goats. So the king and all the Israelites dedicated the temple of the LORD. On that same day, the king consecrated the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple of the LORD, and there he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the fellowship offerings, because the bronze altar that stood before the LORD was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the fellowship offerings. So Solomon observed the festival at that time, and all Israel with him—a vast assembly, people from Lebo Hamath to the Wadi of Egypt. They celebrated it before the LORD our God for seven days and seven days more, fourteen days in all. On the following day, he sent the people away. They blessed the king and then went home, joyful, and glad in heart for all the good things the LORD had done for his servant David and his people Israel.’ 1 Kings 8:62-66

After praying to God, fire came down from heaven and consumed the burnt offerings and sacrifices, 2 Chronicles 7:1. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Other Biblical accounts of fire coming down from heaven to consume sacrifices are. 1. At the Mosaic tabernacle, Leviticus 9:24. 2. Before Manoah, Judges 13:20. 3. At the Davidic altar on Mount Moriah, 1 Chronicles 21:26.’

Notice that the glory of the Lord filled the temple, 2 Chronicles 7:1. This was God’s way of demonstrating that He accepted the offering that was made. The priests couldn’t enter the temple of the LORD because the glory of the LORD filled it, 2 Chronicles 7:2.

When all the Israelites saw the fire coming down and the glory of the LORD above the temple, it’s no wonder that everyone knelt, worshipped, and thanked God for His goodness and His enduring love, 2 Chronicles 7:3.

When we read about the number of sacrifices being made here, 1 Kings 8:62-63 / 2 Chronicles 7:4-5, there’s no doubt that Israel at this point in time, anyway, were totally committed to God and His laws, 2 Chronicles 7:1-10.

The priests took their positions, as did the Levites with the LORD’s musical instruments, which King David had made for praising the LORD and which were used when he gave thanks, saying, ‘His love endures forever.’ Opposite the Levites, the priests blew their trumpets, and all the Israelites were standing, 2 Chronicles 7:6.

Solomon had to consecrate the middle part of the courtyard in front of the temple, and present offerings because the bronze altar was too small to hold the burnt offerings, the grain offerings, and the fat of the fellowship offerings, 1 Kings 8:64 / 2 Chronicles 7:7.

Lebo Hamath, 1 Kings 8:65 / 2 Chronicles 7:8, was the northern region of Palestine between Mount Hermon and Lebanon, and the Wadi of Egypt was a small river south of Gaza in the southern part of Palestine.

They celebrated for a total of fourteen days, 1 Kings 8:65 / 2 Chronicles 7:9. This would be seven days of celebration at the Feast of Dedication and seven more days of celebration for the Feast of Tabernacles, 2 Chronicles 7:9 / Leviticus 23:36 / John 7:37.

The following day Solomon sent the people away, the people blessed him and then went home filled with joy and glad hearts because of all the good things God had done for his servant David and His people Israel, 1 Kings 8:66 / 2 Chronicles 7:10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘They were contented with their king, at peace among themselves, and happy in their God, so that they returned to their houses magnifying their God for all his bounty to them, their country, and their king. How happy must these people have been, and how prosperous, had their king continued to walk uprightly before God! But alas! the king fell, and the nation followed his example.’

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION

‘When Solomon had finished building the temple of the LORD and the royal palace, and had achieved all he had desired to do, the LORD appeared to him a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon. The LORD said to him: ‘I have heard the prayer and plea you have made before me; I have consecrated this temple, which you have built, by putting my Name there forever. My eyes and my heart will always be there. ‘As for you, if you walk before me faithfully with integrity of heart and uprightness, as David your father did, and do all I command and observe my decrees and laws, I will establish your royal throne over Israel forever, as I promised David your father when I said, ‘You shall never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.’ ‘But if you or your descendants turn away from me and do not observe the commands and decrees I have given you and go off to serve other gods and worship them, then I will cut off Israel from the land I have given them and will reject this temple I have consecrated for my Name. Israel will then become a byword and an object of ridicule among all peoples. This temple will become a heap of rubble. All who pass by will be appalled and will scoff and say, ‘Why has the LORD done such a thing to this land and to this temple?’ People will answer, ‘Because they have forsaken the LORD their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and have embraced other gods, worshipping and serving them—that is why the LORD brought all this disaster on them.’ 1 Kings 9:1-9

THE LORD APPEARS TO SOLOMON

After completing the building work of the temple and his royal palace, Solomon achieved all he had desired to do, 1 Kings 9:1 / 2 Chronicles 7:11. Although it was never God’s desire to have a temple built, 2 Samuel 7:5-7, God accepted it, and so the temple was consecrated with the presence of God, 2 Chronicles 7:11-22. God appears to Solomon, 1 Kings 9:2-3 / 2 Chronicles 7:12.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The design of this appearance, which was in a dream, as that was at Gibeon, was to assure Solomon that God had accepted his service, and had taken that house for his dwelling-place, and would continue it, and establish him and his descendants upon the throne of Israel for ever, provided they served him with an upright heart; but, on the contrary, if they forsook him, he would abandon both them and his temple.’

God says when He shuts up the heavens so that there is no rain, or commands locusts to devour the land or sends a plague among His people, He says there are four terms and conditions required for God to hear them, forgive them and their land, 2 Chronicles 7:13-14 / Psalms 85:6 / Jeremiah 2:2 / Malachi 3:7 / Revelation 2:4.

1. The first thing that God is looking for is for people to remember they are called by His name, 2 Chronicles 7:14 / Ephesians 4:1 / 1 Thessalonians 2:12.
2. The second thing that God is looking for is for people to humble themselves, 2 Chronicles 7:14 / Isaiah 57:15 / Revelation 3:14-22.
3. The third thing that God is looking for is for people not to have a complacent heart, 2 Chronicles 7:14 / Jeremiah 29:12-13 / Isaiah 55:6-7.
4. The fourth thing that God is looking for is for people not to have a disobedient walk, 2 Chronicles 7:14 / John 14:15 / Isaiah 1:19.

God says if they meet those terms and conditions, then His eyes will be open and His ears will be attentive to the prayers offered in this place, [2 Chronicles 7:14](#). It was God who chose and consecrated the temple so that His Name may be there forever, His eyes and His heart will always be there, [2 Chronicles 7:16](#).

God once again lays down the terms and conditions for Solomon. He had to walk faithfully with the Lord, [1 Kings 9:3-4](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:17](#). If he wanted to continue to be David's successor, then he had to obey God's commands, [1 Kings 8:24-26](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The answer given by God to Solomon's prayer is reported more fully in [2 Chronicles 7:12-22](#). When God puts His Name in the temple, He does it, in intention, 'forever.' He will not arbitrarily withdraw it; there it will remain 'forever,' so far as God is concerned. But the people may, by unfaithfulness, drive it away, [1 Kings 9:7-9](#).'

God also tells him if he or his descendants turn away from God, disobey His commands and decrees, serve other gods and worship them, then God will cut off His people, and reject the temple, [1 Kings 9:5-7](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:19](#). Sadly, this is exactly what Israel did under Solomon's reign and through Solomon's example, [1 Kings 11:5-12](#).

Notice the consequences of breaking God's terms and conditions, Israel will be cut off from the land, [1 Kings 9:7](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:19-20](#), the temple will become rubble, [1 Kings 9:8](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:21](#), and people will mock and scoff at them, [1 Kings 9:8-9](#) / [2 Chronicles 7:20](#) / [2 Chronicles 29:8](#) / [Micah 6:16](#) / [Jeremiah 18:16](#) / [Jeremiah 19:8](#).

God really wants Israel to understand just how bad things will get for them if they commit idolatry, [Jeremiah 26:18](#) / [Micah 3:12](#).

SOLOMON'S OTHER ACTIVITIES

'At the end of twenty years, during which Solomon built these two buildings—the temple of the LORD and the royal palace—King Solomon gave twenty towns in Galilee to Hiram king of Tyre, because Hiram had supplied him with all the cedar and juniper and gold he wanted. But when Hiram went from Tyre to see the towns that Solomon had given him, he was not pleased with them. 'What kind of towns are these you have given me, my brother?' he asked. And he called them the Land of Kabul, a name they have to this day. Now Hiram had sent to the king 120 talents of gold.' [1 Kings 9:10-14](#)

It took Solomon seven years to build the temple and thirteen years to build his palace, [2 Chronicles 8:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'He employed seven years and a half in building the temple, and twelve years and a half in building the king's house, [1 Kings 7:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:1](#).'

At the end of these twenty years, [1 Kings 9:10](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:1](#), his kingdom was secure, stable, and blessed.

Because Hiram, king of Tyre, [2 Chronicles 8:2](#), had supplied labourers, the cedar and cypress trees, juniper and gold for Solomon's temple and his royal place, [1 Kings 5:1-18](#), it was now time to pay him. Solomon gives him twenty towns in Galilee, [1 Kings 9:10-11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'By the spirit, if not by the letter, of the Law, Solomon had no right to give away these cities, or any part of the inheritance of Israel, [Leviticus 25:13-34](#). But the exigencies of a worldly policy caused the requirements of the Law to be set aside.'

Selman, in his commentary, says the following.

'A problem comes in reconciling the mention of the cities that Hiram gave to Solomon, because [1 Kings 9:11-14](#) indicates that they were given by Solomon to Hiram. While textual disturbance is possible, it seems more probable

that they had been returned to Solomon, either because they were unacceptable, 1 Kings 9:12-13, or because they had been collateral for a loan, 1 Kings 9:14.’

When Hiram looked at the cities and the land around them, he soon noticed that the land was unproductive, hence why he calls the land Kabul, 1 Kings 9:12-14 / Joshua 19:27, which means worthless. As time went on, this land became known as Galilee of the Gentiles, Matthew 4:15.

When we read 2 Chronicles 8:3-6, we find that Solomon gained these cities back, and the cities were actually given to Hiram as some kind of security until Solomon was able to pay him in gold. We are told that Hiram had sent Solomon one-hundred and twenty talents of gold, 1 Kings 9:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning why Hiram paid Solomon this money.

‘Apparently, to show that, although disappointed, he was not offended. The sum sent was very large, above a million and a quarter of our money, according to one estimate of the weight of the Hebrew gold talent; or about 720,000 according to the estimate adopted in Exodus 38:24-29. At any rate, it was more than equal to a sixth part of Solomon’s regular revenue 1 Kings 10:14.’

It appears when Solomon conquered a nation he put them under slave labour, the forced labourers were Canaanites, 1 Kings 9:15-22 / 2 Chronicles 8:7-8 / 1 Kings 5:15-18, the very people God had asked Israel to totally destroy when entering the promised land.

But Israel failed to do so, Joshua 16:10 / Judges 1:29. The Israelites were used to help build the temple but they weren’t forced to do so, 1 Kings 5:13-14 / 2 Chronicles 8:9-10.

‘Here is the account of the forced labour King Solomon conscripted to build the LORD’s temple, his own palace, the terraces, the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer. (Pharaoh, king of Egypt, had attacked and captured Gezer. He had set it on fire. He killed its Canaanite inhabitants and then gave it as a wedding gift to his daughter, Solomon’s wife. And Solomon rebuilt Gezer.) He built up Lower Beth Horon, Baalath, and Tadmor in the desert, within his land, as well as all his store cities and the towns for his chariots and for his horses—whatever he desired to build in Jerusalem, in Lebanon and throughout all the territory he ruled. There were still people left from the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites and Jebusites (these peoples were not Israelites). Solomon conscripted the descendants of all these peoples remaining in the land—whom the Israelites could not exterminate—to serve as slave labour, as it is to this day. But Solomon did not make slaves of any of the Israelites; they were his fighting men, his government officials, his officers, his captains, and the commanders of his chariots and charioteers. They were also the chief officials in charge of Solomon’s projects—550 officials supervising those who did the work.’ 1 Kings 9:15-

22

The forced labourers mentioned, 1 Kings 9:15, were Canaanites, 2 Chronicles 8:7-8, the very people God had asked Israel to totally destroy when entering the promised land, but Israel failed to do so, Joshua 16:10 / Judges 1:29.

No one really knows what these ‘terraces’, 1 Kings 9:15, were but some believe they were some kind of stronghold.

The cities which are listed in 1 Kings 9:16-18 are not exhaustive, because Solomon built many other cities.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer were three of the most important sites in the holy land.’

Pharaoh, after capturing Gezer, 1 Kings 9:17 / Joshua 10:33 / Joshua 12:12, gave it as a gift to his daughter, Solomon took his daughter as one of his wives in order to have some kind of political tie to Egypt, 1 Kings 3:1. There were also several grain storage cities, 1 Kings 9:19, which supplied provisions for Solomon’s court.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The cities of store contained provisions stored up for the troops, 2 Chronicles 32:28. They seem to have been chiefly in the north, in Hamath, 2 Chronicles 8:4, and Naphtali, 2 Chronicles 16:4. The ‘cities for his chariots,’ 1 Kings 10:26.’

Although God commanded all the Canaanites to be utterly destroyed, Israel failed to drive them out of the land and as a result, Israel made them slaves. The Canaanites mentioned here were descendants of those slaves, [1 Kings 9:20-21](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:7-8](#) / [Joshua 9:22-27](#).

Solomon didn't make slaves of the Israelites for his work because they were his fighting men, commanders of his captains, and commanders of his chariots and charioteers, [2 Chronicles 8:9](#).

Some cities were given to Solomon's officials, those of high ranking, for them to rule over and store the wealth of the nation, [1 Kings 9:22](#) / [1 Kings 5:13-14](#), and five-hundred and fifty officials supervised the work, [1 Kings 9:23](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:10](#) / [1 Kings 5:16](#).

'After Pharaoh's daughter had come up from the City of David to the palace Solomon had built for her, he constructed the terraces. Three times a year, Solomon sacrificed burnt offerings and fellowship offerings on the altar he had built for the LORD, burning incense before the LORD along with them, and so fulfilled the temple obligations. King Solomon also built ships at Ezion Geber, which is near Elath in Edom, on the shore of the Red Sea. And Hiram sent his men—sailors who knew the sea—to serve in the fleet with Solomon's men. They sailed to Ophir and brought back 420 talents of gold, which they delivered to King Solomon.' [1 Kings 9:23-28](#)

After all the building work was complete, it was time for people to move in, [1 Kings 9:23](#). This would include Pharaoh's daughter, [2 Chronicles 8:11](#), one of his many wives, [1 Kings 11:1-3](#).

It's incredible to think that Solomon openly admits his wife was an unbeliever and unholy, yet he marries her anyway, and as we know, this didn't go well, [1 Kings 11:4-8](#).

Three times a year, three feasts were celebrated, and sacrifices were made: the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Tabernacles, [1 Kings 9:25](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:12-13](#) / [Numbers 28:1-8](#). Notice Solomon arranged the whole temple service according to how David wanted it, [2 Chronicles 8:14](#) / [1 Chronicles 24](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning who sacrificed the offerings.

'Not with his own hand, but by his priests, [1 Kings 8:6](#) / [2 Chronicles 5:12-14](#). In sacred, as in ordinary, history, men are said to do that which they cause to be done.'

Notice they didn't deviate from the king's commands to the priests or to the Levites in any matter, including that of the treasuries, [2 Chronicles 8:15](#). The temple was finally completed, [2 Chronicles 8:16](#).

Ezion Geber, [1 Kings 9:26](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:17](#), was on the shore of the Red Sea, and Hiram's men served as sailors along with Solomon's men, [1 Kings 9:27](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:18](#) / [Numbers 33:35-36](#) / [Deuteronomy 2:8](#).

The people of Hiram's kingdom were very knowledgeable of the sea. The Israelites, however, were a farming culture of people. In the construction of the ships, it was only natural that Hiram's men construct the ships and provide guidance in sailing the seas for Solomon, [1 Kings 9:26-28](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:18](#).

Some believe that from Ezion Geber, Solomon sent his ships on voyages to Ophir to get gold, [1 Kings 9:28](#) / [2 Chronicles 8:18](#). No one knows exactly where Ophir was located; some suggest Africa, others suggest Arabia, [Job 22:24](#), and some suggest India, [1 Kings 10:22](#).

CHAPTER 10

INTRODUCTION

'When the queen of Sheba heard about the fame of Solomon and his relationship to the LORD, she came to test Solomon with hard questions. Arriving at Jerusalem with a very great caravan—with camels carrying spices, large

quantities of gold, and precious stones she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind. Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built, the food on his table, the seating of his officials, the attending servants in their robes, his cupbearers, and the burnt offerings he made at the temple of the LORD, she was overwhelmed. She said to the king, ‘The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true. But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half was told me; in wisdom and wealth, you have far exceeded the report I heard. How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom! Praise be to the LORD your God, who has delighted in you and placed you on the throne of Israel. Because of the LORD’s eternal love for Israel, he has made you king to maintain justice and righteousness.’ And she gave the king 120 talents of gold, large quantities of spices, and precious stones. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.’ 1 Kings 10:1-10

THE QUEEN OF SHEBA VISITS SOLOMON

Solomon’s fame is now beginning to spread, not only his fame but also his relationship with the Lord. He was famous because of his great wealth and the wisdom he got from the Lord, [1 Kings 3:7-12](#).

His fame reached the ears of the Queen of Sheba, [1 Kings 10:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:1](#), who was possibly from southern Arabia, Egypt or Ethiopia, [2 Chronicles 9:1-12](#) / [Matthew 12:42](#).

She came to Jerusalem to test him with hard questions, [1 Kings 10:1](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:1](#). She wanted to visit Solomon and see him and hear him for herself, [1 Kings 10:1](#).

She comes to Solomon with camels carrying spices, large quantities of gold, and precious stones, she came to Solomon and talked with him about all that she had on her mind, [1 Kings 10:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:1](#) / [1 Kings 10:10](#).

After answering all of the queen’s questions, [1 Kings 10:3](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:2](#) / [Judges 14:12](#) / [Judges 14:14](#), and seeing Solomon’s great wealth, she was overwhelmed, [1 Kings 10:4-5](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:3-4](#) / [1 Kings 4:22-23](#).

She had heard all the reports about Solomon, and she says that ‘not even half was told me in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard’, [1 Kings 10:6-7](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:5-6](#) / [1 Kings 8:63](#) / [1 Kings 9:25](#).

In other words, she now knows that Solomon’s reputation wasn’t exaggerated. Solomon never asked God for wealth or fame, but because he only asked God for wisdom, God blessed him with wisdom, wealth, and fame, and rightly so, God was given the credit for blessing Solomon with these, [1 Kings 3:10-13](#).

The queen knows that everyone is happy with Solomon’s wisdom, [1 Kings 10:8](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:7](#), and was well aware that it was God who had given Solomon everything he had, and so, she gives praise to God for everything He has done for Solomon, including making him king of Israel, [1 Kings 10:9](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:8](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This acknowledgement of Yahweh falls below the confessions of Hiram, [2 Chronicles 2:12](#), and Cyrus, [Ezra 1:3](#). It does not imply more than an admission of His power as a local deity, namely, that He is the God of the Jews and of their country.’

She blessed Solomon and gave him gifts of gold, precious stones, and many spices, [1 Kings 10:10](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:9](#).

‘(Hiram’s ships brought gold from Ophir, and from there they brought great cargoes of almugwood and precious stones. The king used the almugwood to make supports for the temple of the LORD and for the royal palace, and to make harps and lyres for the musicians. So much almugwood has never been imported or seen since that day.) King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba all she desired and asked for, besides what he had given her out of his royal bounty. Then she left and returned with her retinue to her own country.’ 1 Kings 10:11-13

As Solomon received a gift from the Queen of Sheba, Hiram's ships brought even more wealth to Solomon, [1 Kings 10:11-12](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:10-11](#), and so, Solomon gave the queen some gifts in return and everything she desired and asked for, [1 Kings 10:13](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:12](#).

As Solomon was in full control of all the major trade routes, it's possible that the queen wanted some kind of trade route privileges in order to trade with the surrounding nations.

SOLOMON'S SPLENDOUR

'The weight of the gold that Solomon received yearly was 666 talents, not including the revenues from merchants and traders and all the Arabian kings and the governors of the territories. King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold; six hundred shekels of gold went into each shield. He also made three hundred small shields of hammered gold, with three minas of gold in each shield. The king put them in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. Then the king made a great throne covered with ivory and overlaid with fine gold. The throne had six steps, and its back had a rounded top. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with a lion standing beside each of them. Twelve lions stood on the six steps, one at either end of each step. Nothing like it had ever been made for any other kingdom.' [1 Kings 10:14-20](#)

It appears that Solomon's taxation brought him even more gold and wealth, [1 Kings 10:14-15](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:13-14](#), and make no mistake about it, this is a huge sum of money, [2 Chronicles 1:14-17](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:13-28](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This would amount in our money to £4,683,675 12s. 8 1/2d. sterling. This seems to be what he got annually of bullion, but independently of this, he had tribute of all the kings of Arabia, duties from merchantmen, and the traffic of spice merchants, [1 Kings 10:25](#).'

The gold shields, [1 Kings 10:16](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:15](#), the bodyguards used came in two sizes, [1 Kings 14:27-28](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:15-16](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:10](#). The larger ones which were used for full-body protection cost six-hundred shekels of gold, that is fifteen pounds, [1 Kings 10:16](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:15](#), and the smaller ones, which were used for close-up combat, cost three minas of gold, that is seven and a half pounds, [1 Kings 10:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:16](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'These shields, together with the 500 taken by David from Hadadezer, [2 Samuel 8:7](#), were hung round the outer walls of a building, reckoned as belonging to the 'house of the Forest of Lebanon,' but separate from it, and called sometimes 'the Tower of David', [Song of Songs 4:4](#), or from its use 'the armoury', [Song of Songs 4:4](#) / [Isaiah 22:8](#). The practice of hanging shields outside walls for ornamentation seems to have existed at Tyre, [Ezekiel 27:10-11](#), Rome, Athens, and elsewhere. Traces of it are thought to be found in the Assyrian sculptures.'

Solomon places them in the 'Palace of the Forest of Lebanon,' [1 Kings 10:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:16](#), which is possibly a reference to the temple, [1 Kings 5:6-8](#). Because Solomon had a great throne made which was covered in ivory, [1 Kings 10:18](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:17](#), this tells us that he was trading with those in Africa who were slaughtering elephants for their ivory tusks.

Notice also that this great throne he made for himself was made of gold and ivory, but it was also decorated with lion figures, [1 Kings 10:19-20](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:18-19](#). The images of the lions that decorated Solomon's throne were made in violation of God's commands, [Exodus 20:4](#).

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

'The seat was supported by a golden ox or bull, with its head turned over its shoulder. As the lion was especially emblematic of Judah, so was the ox or bull of Ephraim, [Hosea 4:16](#) / [Hosea 10:11](#) / [Jeremiah 31:18](#).'

‘All King Solomon’s goblets were gold, and all the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon were pure gold. Nothing was made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon’s days. The king had a fleet of trading ships at sea, along with the ships of Hiram. Once every three years, it returned, carrying gold, silver and ivory, and apes and baboons. King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth. The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart. Year after year, everyone who came brought a gift—articles of silver and gold, robes, weapons and spices, and horses and mules.

Solomon accumulated chariots and horses; he had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses, which he kept in the chariot cities and also with him in Jerusalem. The king made silver as common in Jerusalem as stones, and cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills. Solomon’s horses were imported from Egypt and from Kue—the royal merchants purchased them from Kue at the current price. They imported a chariot from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver, and a horse for a hundred and fifty. They also exported them to all the kings of the Hittites and of the Arameans.’ 1 Kings 10:21-29

Solomon’s wealth is seen in these verses, and it appears that because there was so much gold, the price of silver must have been very cheap and of little value, 1 Kings 10:21 / 2 Chronicles 9:20. Although silver was worth very little at this time, it was still being used widely, especially in Jerusalem.

The king had a fleet of ‘trading ships’, 1 Kings 10:22 / 2 Chronicles 9:21, but some translations use the words ‘ships of Tarshish’. The actual Hebrew word for Tarshish means ‘refinery’.

This means that Tarshish isn’t the location but the process of refining metals, 1 Kings 9:26-28. In other words, these trading ships carried refined metals, which are precious metals.

As Solomon’s reputation for wisdom grows throughout the land, so does his wealth, 1 Kings 10:23 / 2 Chronicles 9:22. Solomon had become so wealthy that he had more wealth than any other king who was living at the time.

The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart, 1 Kings 10:24 / 2 Chronicles 9:23. Solomon not only acquired a lot of gold but he also acquired a great number of horses and chariots, 1 Kings 10:25-26 / 2 Chronicles 9:24-26 / 1 Kings 4:26 / 1 Kings 9:19.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Until the time of Solomon, war-chariots had not been in use among the Jews, except to a very small extent, 1 Chronicles 18:4. Hence, it was necessary for him to put himself on an equality in this respect with neighbouring powers.’

It appears that once again Solomon forgot about God and His commandments because this accumulation of gold, horses and chariots was a complete violation of God’s commands, Deuteronomy 17:16-17. Although silver was worth very little at this time, 1 Kings 10:27 / 2 Chronicles 9:27, it was still being used widely, especially in Jerusalem.

He also made the cedar as plentiful as sycamore-fig trees in the foothills, 1 Kings 10:27 / 1 Chronicles 27:28.

Solomon’s horses were imported from Egypt, 2 Chronicles 9:28, and from Kue.

The royal merchants purchased them from Kue at the current price, 1 Kings 10:28. Through the king’s traders, the horses were exported to all the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Syria, 1 Kings 10:29 / 2 Kings 7:6.

CHAPTER 11

INTRODUCTION

‘King Solomon, however, loved many foreign women besides Pharaoh’s daughter—Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians and Hittites. They were from nations about which the LORD had told the Israelites, ‘You must not intermarry with them, because they will surely turn your hearts after their gods.’ Nevertheless, Solomon held fast to them in love. He had seven hundred wives of royal birth and three hundred concubines, and his wives led him

astray. As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molek, the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and for Molek, the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods.' 1 Kings 11:1-8

SOLOMON'S WIVES

In this chapter, we read about Solomon and his many wives, as a result of marrying foreign women, led him into idolatry, [1 Kings 11:1](#). Later, we will read about his death and how the United Kingdom became the Divided Kingdom.

It appears that Solomon is so focused on his wealth that he either totally forgot about God's commands or he deliberately chose to break them, [1 Kings 11:2](#). He marries women from different nations, doing so would give him political leverage over these nations.

He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, [1 Kings 11:3](#) / [Song of Songs 6:8](#), but marrying foreign women was strictly forbidden by God, [Exodus 34:16](#) / [Deuteronomy 7:3-4](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Strictly speaking, the prohibition in the Law of intermarriage was confined to the Canaanite nations. But the principle of the prohibition applied equally to the Moabites, Ammonites, and Edomites, who all bordered on the holy land and was so applied by Ezra, [Ezra 9:1](#), and Nehemiah, [Nehemiah 13:23](#).'

Because he married foreign women, there will be a consequence to pay; in Solomon's case, it was his loyalty to God. This is why God often tells His people not to marry foreign women, because they may lead them into idolatry, [1 Kings 11:3-4](#) / [Deuteronomy 17:17](#).

Ashtoreth, [1 Kings 11:5](#) / [Exodus 34:13](#) / [Deuteronomy 16:21](#), was the goddess of the Sidonians. This is the same as Astarte, who was called Ishtar in Mesopotamia.

In Syria, she was the female consort of Baal and a model for the Greek Aphrodite. She was the goddess of fertility and erotic love. The Canaanites worshipped her with unbelievable licentiousness, and so, it's not hard to see why Solomon went after that kind of goddess.

Molek, [1 Kings 11:5](#) / [Leviticus 20:2-5](#), was the detestable god of the Ammonites; he was possibly the fire god, who was associated with child sacrifice. Later, the worship of Molech became very common in Jerusalem, with its accompanying sacrifices of children.

Solomon is nothing like his father, David, who stayed focused on trying to please God and keep His commandments, all the days of his life, [1 Kings 11:6](#) / [1 Samuel 13:14](#) / [Acts 13:22](#).

Chemosh, [1 Kings 11:7](#) / [Numbers 21:29](#), was the detestable god of Moab. This was a sun god and was worshipped by the Moabites as a god of war. He is also called a god of the Ammonites, [Judges 11:24](#).

Notice that Solomon built high places for the god Chemosh and the god Molek, [1 Kings 11:7](#); the high places would be temples. Solomon's heart is so far from God at this point in time that he's more interested in pleasing his wives, [1 Kings 11:8](#), than pleasing God, [2 Corinthians 6:14-18](#). He's more interested in worshipping these false gods than he is in worshipping the One True God who gave him everything he has.

'The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. Although he had forbidden Solomon to follow other gods, Solomon did not keep the LORD's command. So the LORD said to Solomon, 'Since this is your attitude and you have not kept my covenant

and my decrees, which I commanded you, I will most certainly tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your subordinates. Nevertheless, for the sake of David your father, I will not do it during your lifetime. I will tear it out of the hand of your son. Yet I will not tear the whole kingdom from him but will give him one tribe for the sake of David my servant and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen.’ 1 Kings 11:9-13

Because of Solomon’s disrespectful attitude towards God, God becomes very angry with him, 1 Kings 11:9. This is understandable considering Solomon has married many foreign wives, and not only committed idolatry but also encouraged it, 1 Kings 11:11 / 1 Kings 11:8.

Solomon had no one to blame but himself, as God is now going to bring to an end this United Kingdom period, Amos 9:8. Solomon’s punishment wouldn’t begin straight away; it would begin when God brings to an end the united kingdom of Israel, 1 Kings 11:11. David’s legacy would continue through Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, 1 Kings 11:12, who would reign over Judah and Benjamin.

As we shall see later, ten tribes are going to be removed from the kingdom of Solomon’s son, Rehoboam, but God was going to allow him to live long enough to see that his unwise decisions would cause the division of Israel.

In essence, what Solomon did was set the trend for idolatry within Israel, and even when the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms, the north and the south, both would get involved in idolatry, which would lead to them being taken into captivity. Notice that God says for David’s and Jerusalem’s sake, 1 Kings 11:12-13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The line of the Messiah must be preserved. The prevailing lion must come out of the tribe of Judah: not only the tribe must be preserved, but the regal line and the regal right. All this must be done for the true David’s sake, and this was undoubtedly what God had in view by thus miraculously preserving the tribe of Judah and the royal line, in the midst of so general a defection. As David was a type of the Messiah, so was Jerusalem a type of the true Church, therefore the OLD Jerusalem must be preserved in the hands of the tribe of Judah, till the true David should establish the NEW Jerusalem in the same land, and in the same city. And what a series of providences did it require to do all these things!’

He won’t ‘tear the whole kingdom from him but will give him ‘one tribe’, 1 Kings 11:13. When we read through Kings, Chronicles, and the prophets, we learn that the phrase ‘one tribe’ is a reference to the tribe of Judah. However, we must bear in mind that this also includes the tribe of Benjamin, 1 Kings 12:21.

When we enter into the Divided Kingdom period, we read that the northern kingdom consisted of ten tribes, whilst the southern kingdom consisted of two tribes, that is, Judah and Benjamin.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Benjamin was looked upon as absorbed in Judah, so as not to be really a tribe in the same sense as the others. Still, in memory of the fact that the existing tribe of Judah was a double one, 1 Kings 12:21, the prophet Ahijah tore his garment into twelve parts, and kept back two from Jeroboam, 1 Kings 11:30-31.’

SOLOMON’S ADVERSARIES

‘Then the LORD raised up against Solomon an adversary, Hadad the Edomite, from the royal line of Edom. Earlier, when David was fighting with Edom, Joab, the commander of the army, who had gone up to bury the dead, had struck down all the men in Edom. Joab and all the Israelites stayed there for six months, until they had destroyed all the men in Edom. But Hadad, still only a boy, fled to Egypt with some Edomite officials who had served his father.

They set out from Midian and went to Paran. Then, taking people from Paran with them, they went to Egypt, to Pharaoh, king of Egypt, who gave Hadad a house and land and provided him with food. Pharaoh was so pleased with Hadad that he gave him a sister of his own wife, Queen Tahpenes, in marriage. The sister of Tahpenes bore him a son

named Genubath, whom Tahpenes brought up in the royal palace. There, Genubath lived with Pharaoh's own children. While he was in Egypt, Hadad heard that David rested with his ancestors and that Joab, the commander of the army, was also dead. Then Hadad said to Pharaoh, 'Let me go, that I may return to my own country.' 'What have you lacked here that you want to go back to your own country?' Pharaoh asked. 'Nothing,' Hadad replied, 'but do let me go!' 1 Kings 11:14-22

Solomon's reign of peace over the nations was now about to come to an end as God raised adversaries beginning with Hadad, 1 Kings 11:14. A few years before this event, Edom had been under the reign of David and been restrained by Joab, who led David's army, 1 Kings 11:14-16 / 2 Samuel 8:13-14 / 1 Chronicles 18:12-13.

It was during that siege by Joab that we read that Hadad had run away to Egypt, 1 Kings 11:17. It appears that God was at work in bringing him back to Edom, along with the Edomite fighting men, to rise up against Solomon, 1 Kings 11:17-18.

Hadad, who hated Israel and ruled in Edom, would prove to be a powerful enemy of Israel, 1 Kings 11:19. It was only the providence of God that prompted Pharaoh to grant such wonderful favours to this potential enemy of Solomon.

It appears that the Pharaoh, whose daughter was married to Solomon, 1 Kings 3:1 / 2 Chronicles 8:11, had, at this time, been succeeded by another, 1 Kings 11:19-20.

While he was in Egypt, Hadad heard that David rested with his ancestors and that Joab, the commander of the army, was also dead, and so Hadad asked Pharaoh to let him go back home, 1 Kings 11:21.

Remember that Pharaoh was supposed to be in alliance with Solomon. However, he allowed Hadad to hide in Egypt and gave him land and a wife to form an alliance once he led his revolt against Israel. In other words, Solomon betrayed God to form an alliance with Egypt, only to be betrayed by Egypt.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'That Hadad should wait for the death of Joab before requesting leave to return to Idumea shows how terrible an impression had been made by the severe measures which that commander had carried out twenty-five or thirty years previously, 1 Kings 11:16.'

Pharaoh asks Hadad what he lacked that he wants to go back to his own country, to which Hadad says nothing, but insists on going home, 1 Kings 11:22.

'And God raised up against Solomon another adversary, Rezon son of Eliada, who had fled from his master, Hadadezer king of Zobah. When David destroyed Zobah's army, Rezon gathered a band of men around him and became their leader; they went to Damascus, where they settled and took control. Rezon was Israel's adversary as long as Solomon lived, adding to the trouble caused by Hadad. So Rezon ruled in Aram and was hostile toward Israel.' 1 Kings 11:23-25

After Hadad, God sent Rezon, son of Eliada, to rise up against Solomon, 1 Kings 11:23. Rezon had established himself in the far northern region of Palestine, and it appears that he had organised a raiding group of bandits who continually harassed the Israelites who had also settled in the northern region of Palestine, 1 Kings 11:24.

Under the leadership of Rezon, Israel eventually lost control of the Syrian territory, 1 Kings 11:25. Rezon managed to survive when David attacked him, 2 Samuel 8:3-8 / 2 Chronicles 8:3-4. He refused to pay tribute to Israel, and later he went on to attack northern Israel, 1 Kings 15:18 / 1 Kings 20:1.

JEROBOAM REBELS AGAINST SOLOMON

'Also, Jeroboam, son of Nebat, rebelled against the king. He was one of Solomon's officials, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah. Here is the account of how he rebelled against the king:

Solomon had built the terraces and had filled in the gap in the wall of the city of David, his father. Now Jeroboam was a man of standing, and when Solomon saw how well the young man did his work, he put him in charge of the whole labour force of the tribes of Joseph. About that time, Jeroboam was going out of Jerusalem, and Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him on the way, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone out in the country, and Ahijah took hold of the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. Then he said to Jeroboam, 'Take ten pieces for yourself, for this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: 'See, I am going to tear the kingdom out of Solomon's hand and give you ten tribes. But for the sake of my servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, he will have one tribe. I will do this because they have forsaken me and worshipped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh, the god of the Moabites, and Molek, the god of the Ammonites, and have not walked in obedience to me, nor done what is right in my eyes, nor kept my decrees and laws as David, Solomon's father, did. 'But I will not take the whole kingdom out of Solomon's hand; I have made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David my servant, whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and decrees. I will take the kingdom from his son's hands and give you ten tribes. I will give one tribe to his son so that David, my servant, may always have a lamp before me in Jerusalem, the city where I chose to put my Name. However, as for you, I will take you, and you will rule over all that your heart desires; you will be king over Israel. If you do whatever I command you and walk in obedience to me and do what is right in my eyes by obeying my decrees and commands, as David my servant did, I will be with you. I will build you a dynasty as enduring as the one I built for David and will give Israel to you. I will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever.' Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but Jeroboam fled to Egypt, to Shishak the king, and stayed there until Solomon's death.' 1 Kings 11:26-40

After Hadad and Rezon, God sent Jeroboam to rise up against Solomon, 1 Kings 11:26. He was one of Solomon's officials, an Ephraimite from Zeredah, and his mother was a widow named Zeruah, 1 Kings 11:26. We know that God sent him because God uses the prophet, Ahijah, who was from Shiloh, 1 Kings 11:29 / Joshua 18:10 / Judges 18:31 / 1 Samuel 4:3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following concerning Ahijah.

'He was one of those who wrote the history of the reign of Solomon, as we find from 2 Chronicles 9:29, and it is supposed that it was by him God spoke twice to Solomon and particularly delivered the message which we find in this chapter, 1 Kings 11:11-13.'

Jeroboam, from this moment onwards, played a huge role in Israel's history. He led God's people into idolatry again, which eventually would lead them into Babylonian captivity. He opposed Solomon when Solomon built a wall to protect Jerusalem, 1 Kings 11:27.

When Jeroboam was younger, he proved himself to be a very capable leader, and because of this, Solomon showed favour towards him, 1 Kings 11:28. Here we see him in charge of all the forced labour in Solomon's kingdom, 1 Kings 11:28.

When Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh met him wearing a new cloak, 1 Kings 11:29.

Ahijah took a new cloak and tore it into twelve pieces and told Jeroboam to take ten pieces, 1 Kings 11:30.

Because Jeroboam was told he would reign over ten tribes, 1 Kings 11:31, this tells us at this point in time, that many people in Israel were feeling the heavy burden of Solomon's tax payments, which helped subsidise his huge building efforts, 2 Chronicles 8:1-8.

This will become clear later when we see that only two tribes, that is, Judah and Benjamin, would stay with Rehoboam. For the sake of God's servant David and the city of Jerusalem, which God chose out of all the tribes of Israel, Solomon will have one tribe, 1 Kings 11:32.

God says the main reason why Israel will become a divided nation is that 'they forsook Him', 1 Kings 11:33. In other words, they followed Solomon's example of idolatry and became an idolatrous nation, 1 Kings 11:33.

This was something that David never got involved in and never promoted when he reigned as king of Israel. David sought to live and lead the nation in the ways of God, 1 Samuel 13:14 / Acts 13:22.

David's righteous influence is shown in God's heart as God made it possible that the seed line promise that was made to David would bring about the promise that was given to Abraham, Genesis 12:1-3.

It would be from David's seed that the Messiah would eventually come, 2 Kings 8:19 / 2 Chronicles 21:7 / 2 Samuel 21:17. Remember that God promised David that his house would stand forever, 2 Samuel 7:16.

God isn't going to remove the whole kingdom from Solomon because He made him ruler all the days of his life for the sake of David, whom He chose and obeyed God's commands and decrees, 1 Kings 11:34. God will take the kingdom from Solomon's son's hands and give Jeroboam ten tribes, 1 Kings 11:35.

God will give one tribe to his son, Rehoboam, so that David God's servant may always have a lamp before Him in Jerusalem, 2 Samuel 21:17, the city where He chose to put His Name, 1 Kings 11:36. Ahijah tells Jeroboam that God will take him, and he will rule over all that his heart desires, he will be king over Israel, 1 Kings 11:37.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It appears from this that Jeroboam had affected the kingdom, and was seeking for an opportunity to seize on the government. God now tells him, by his prophet, what he shall have, and what he shall not have, in order to prevent him from attempting to seize on the whole kingdom, to the prejudice of the spiritual seed of David.'

Notice once again the terms and conditions for Jeroboam's rule, he must be obedient to God as David did and if he does, God will be with him, and He will build him a dynasty as enduring as the one he built for David and will give Israel to him, 1 Kings 11:38. God says He will humble David's descendants because of this, but not forever, 1 Kings 11:39.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'David had been distinctly promised that God should never fail his seed, whatever their shortcomings, Psalms 89:28-37. The fulfilment of these promises was seen, partly in the Providence which maintained David's family in a royal position until Zerubbabel, but mainly in the preservation of his seed to the time fixed for the coming of Christ, and in the birth of Christ, the Eternal King, from one of David's descendants.'

It's clear that Jeroboam became a little arrogant when Ahijah told him that he would reign over the ten tribes of Israel. He soon fell out of favour with Solomon because he tried to fulfil this prophecy too quickly.

Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, and as a result, Jeroboam ended up fleeing to Shishak, the king of Egypt, until Solomon died, 1 Kings 11:40 / 1 Kings 14:25. This is the first time a Pharaoh is mentioned by name in the Scriptures. Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Jeroboam's flight into Egypt was possibly due to the news of Ahijah's announcement to Jeroboam having been spread over Jerusalem like wildfire. Nothing is here stated about that, but by some means or other, Solomon identified the man to whom God would give the greater part of his dominion. And evil man that he was, he made every effort to thwart God's purpose by murdering Jeroboam. Another possible reason for Jeroboam's flight to Egypt is also suggested. He was over all the forced labour of the tribe of Ephraim, and it is possible that the injustice of that situation could have provoked Jeroboam into some rebellious act against the king; and when Solomon sought to kill him, he fled to Egypt.'

SOLOMON'S DEATH

'As for the other events of Solomon's reign—all he did and the wisdom he displayed—are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon? Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel forty years. Then he rested with his ancestors and was buried in the city of David, his father. And Rehoboam, his son, succeeded him as king.' 1 Kings

In [1 Kings 11:41](#), we are told they are written in the book of the annals of Solomon. In [2 Chronicles 9:29](#), we are told that the other events of Solomon's reign, from beginning to end, are written in the records of Nathan the prophet, in the prophecy of Ahijah the Shilonite and in the visions of Iddo the seer concerning Jeroboam son of Nebat.

Just like Saul and David, Solomon's reign lasted forty years, [1 Kings 11:42](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:30](#) / [Acts 13:21](#) / [2 Samuel 5:4-5](#), and then he died and was buried in the city of David, [1 Kings 11:43](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:31](#).

There's a lot of debate as to whether or not Solomon actually repented of all his idolatrous actions before he died; some suggest the Bible doesn't tell us, and others look at the Book of Proverbs and the Book of Ecclesiastes and suggest that he did.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, took over as ruler of the United Kingdom of Israel, [1 Kings 11:43](#) / [2 Chronicles 9:31](#). Sadly, his reign really didn't last very long. He followed his father's example, which ended up being one of the reasons the United Kingdom of Israel became the Divided Kingdom.

CHAPTER 12

INTRODUCTION

The death of Solomon ended the greatest period in the history of Israel and the United Kingdom. This was followed by the Divided Kingdom, which lasted three hundred and eighty-eight years.

At Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam ascended the throne. His subjects had long chafed under the heavy taxation of Solomon. Led by Jeroboam, a general of Solomon's, they asked Rehoboam to lighten their load.

Rehoboam foolishly replied, 'My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke,' [1 Kings 12:14](#). The people were so angry with this reply that ten of the twelve tribes revolted against Rehoboam and crowned Jeroboam as their king. Jeroboam's kingdom became known as the northern kingdom of Israel.

Only the tribes of Judah and Benjamin remained with Rehoboam in the southern kingdom of Judah. The little tribe of Benjamin was so small it was virtually swallowed up by the tribe of Judah. 2 Kings and the last part of 1 Kings and 2 Chronicles tell the complete story of the Divided Kingdom.

THE NORTHERN KINGDOM OF ISRAEL

The story of the northern kingdom is not a happy one. During its two-hundred and fifty-three years of history, it had one bad ruler after another, not a single one of its nineteen kings actually being 'good'. Nine dynasties or families of kings reigned during this time.

Several kings were murdered, and their places were taken by usurpers. Jeroboam was so afraid that the people would go back to Jerusalem in Judah to worship and desire Rehoboam for their king that he set up two golden calves at Dan and Bethel for them to worship.

So angered was God at the action that He sent Ahijah to him to predict the downfall of Jeroboam's house and the doom of Israel. The prophet declared, 'The Lord shall smite Israel and he shall root up Israel out of this good land and shall scatter them beyond the river,' 2 Kings 14:15.

After Jeroboam's death, idolatry became even more rampant than before, and under Ahab, the seventh king, worship of the idol god Baal was introduced. During its first eighty years, the northern kingdom was almost continuously at war with Judah.

The ascension of Ahab to the throne sank Israel to its lowest depths. Ahab married a foreign woman, Jezebel, the daughter of the king of Tyre. She brought along her idols and soon abolished the worship of Jehovah in Israel. It is doubtful that a more evil, unscrupulous woman is described in the entire Bible, and Ahab was so spineless that he yielded to his wife's evil designs.

God sent the prophet Elijah to cry out against this idolatry. Elijah conducted a contest with the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, and when they were proved false, he had them slain. This intensified Jezebel's determination to kill Elijah, but she never succeeded in her attempt.

Perhaps the best of all the kings of Israel was Jehu, who succeeded Ahab's son as king. With a ruthless determination, he had Jezebel killed, and Baal worship abolished.

But his zeal ran out, and he never did away with the golden calves set up by Jeroboam. Of most of the kings who followed Jehu, it is said they 'departed not from the sins of Jeroboam,' 2 Kings 10:31.

Israel's political strength reached its greatest height since Solomon under Jeroboam II, but idolatry again grew worse. God carried out His promise made by Ahijah to punish and scatter Israel.

In 722 B.C., the powerful Assyrian king carried the people of Israel into Assyria. They never returned. From this point, the story of the Jews is that of the Kingdom of Judah.

THE SOUTHERN KINGDOM OF JUDAH

Judah was smaller and weaker than Israel. Yet, through its three-hundred and eighty-eight years of history, it remained much closer to God. Several kings were very good, and on the whole, the bad were not as evil as those of Israel. All were of the family of David.

Judah began to decline under Rehoboam, but during the reigns of good kings Asa and Jehoshaphat, a great revival swept the land. In the following years, Judah borrowed the religion of Baal from Israel. It remained for King Hezekiah to completely root out idolatry. He and his great-grandson Josiah were the two best kings to rule Judah.

But Hezekiah's son, Manasseh, was as evil as Hezekiah was good. In his fifty-five-year reign, he introduced every form of idol worship he could think of and even burned his own children with fire as a religious rite. This caused God to promise through the prophets that Judah would be sorely punished for its idolatry.

After Josiah became king, he set out to bring the people back to God. When the lost book of the law was found in the temple, Josiah instituted such a religious revival as his people had never seen. Following Josiah's death, Judah descended rapidly.

All the remaining kings were bad and weak. Judah was soon made a 'satellite' of Babylon, and when the kings dared to rebel, King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon in 606 B.C. carried most of the people into captivity as the Assyrians had done with Israel over one-hundred years before.

Zedekiah, the last king of Judah, governed a few that remained, but in 587 B.C., he too, and most of the rest were also carried into Babylon. This punishment of God taught the Jews a lesson. Never again did they return to idolatry.

ISRAEL REBELS AGAINST REHOBOAM

‘Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had gone there to make him king. When Jeroboam, son of Nebat, heard this (he was still in Egypt, where he had fled from King Solomon), he returned from Egypt. So they sent for Jeroboam, and he and the whole assembly of Israel went to Rehoboam and said to him: ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but now lighten the harsh labour and the heavy yoke he put on us, and we will serve you.’ Rehoboam answered, ‘Go away for three days and then come back to me.’ So the people went away.’ 1 Kings 12:1-5

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Rehoboam was probably the only son of Solomon, for although he had a thousand wives, he had not the blessing of a numerous offspring, and although he was the wisest of men himself, his son was a poor, unprincipled fool.’

Rehoboam goes to Shechem, which was north of Jerusalem to meet with the people so that he can be made king, 1 Kings 12:1 / 2 Chronicles 10:1. Jeroboam probably remembers what Ahijah the prophet told him concerning him reigning over ten tribes, 1 Kings 11:29-33.

And so, he had earlier ran away to Egypt because Solomon had tried to kill him, 1 Kings 11:40, comes with a request that Rehoboam lightens the harsh labour and heavy yoke from his people that Solomon had put on the people, 1 Kings 12:2-4 / 2 Chronicles 10:2-4.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The complaint was probably twofold. The Israelites no doubt complained in part of the heavy weight of taxation laid upon them for the maintenance of the monarch and his court, 1 Kings 4:19-23. But their chief grievance was the forced labour to which they had been subjected, 1 Kings 5:13-14 / 1 Kings 11:28.’

Solomon’s taxes were just too much for the people, and so the northern tribes had every right to make this request because most of the money from taxes came from the northern tribes, and most of it was spent in the south in Judah and Jerusalem. Rehoboam tells Jeroboam to go away for three days and back, and so the people went away, 1 Kings 12:5 / 2 Chronicles 10:5.

‘Then King Rehoboam consulted the elders who had served his father, Solomon, during his lifetime. ‘How would you advise me to answer these people?’ he asked. They replied, ‘If today you will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be your servants.’ But Rehoboam rejected the advice the elders gave him and consulted the young men who had grown up with him and were serving him. He asked them, ‘What is your advice? How should we answer these people who say to me, ‘Lighten the yoke your father put on us?’’ The young men who had grown up with him replied, ‘These people have said to you, ‘Your father put a heavy yoke on us, but make our yoke lighter.’ Now tell them, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist. My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’ Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam, as the king had said, ‘Come back to me in three days.’ The king answered the people harshly. Rejecting the advice given him by the elders, he followed the advice of the young men and said, ‘My father made your yoke heavy; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions.’ So the king did not listen to the people, for this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfil the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam son of Nebat through Ahijah the Shilonite.’ 1 Kings 12:6-15

Rehoboam speaks to the elders, 1 Kings 12:6 / 2 Chronicles 10:6. These were the men who stood before Solomon when he was alive and reigned as king, and it appears that Solomon never listened to their complaints. It appears that

Solomon was a bit of a dictator who refused to listen to the counsel of the elders, Proverbs 11:14 / Proverbs 15:22 / Proverbs 24:6.

Rehoboam asks the elders how they would advise him to answer these people? And the elders tell him that he will be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favourable answer, they will always be his servants, 1 Kings 12:6-7 / 2 Chronicles 10:6-7. Rehoboam rejects their advice and goes to the young men who had grown up with him and served him, 1 Kings 12:8 / 2 Chronicles 10:8.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The age of Rehoboam at his accession is an interesting and difficult question. According to the formal statement of the present text of 1 Kings 14:21 / 2 Chronicles 12:13, he had reached the mature age of 41 years, and would therefore be unable to plead youth as an excuse for his conduct. The general narrative, however, seems to assume that he was quite a young man, 2 Chronicles 13:7. Perhaps the best way of removing the whole difficulty would be to read in the above text ‘twenty-one’ for ‘forty-one.’ The corruption is one which might easily take place if letters were used for numerals.’

He asks them for their advice on how to answer the people’s question, and they say, ‘My little finger is thicker than my father’s waist’, 1 Kings 12:9-10 / 2 Chronicles 10:9-10.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘As much as the thigh surpasses the little finger in thickness, so much does my power exceed that of my father and the use that I shall make of it, to employ and tax you, shall be in proportion.’

The young men appear to be very dictatorial in their attitude toward the people. No doubt they were like this because they were spoiled by the king whilst living in the king’s court. In other words, they didn’t want to give up their lavish lifestyles.

The young man says, ‘My father laid on you a heavy yoke; I will make it even heavier. My father scourged you with whips; I will scourge you with scorpions,’ 1 Kings 12:11 / 2 Chronicles 10:11.

In other words, if they rebel, he will punish them. Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to Rehoboam just as Rehoboam suggested, 1 Kings 12:12 / 2 Chronicles 10:12 / 1 Kings 12:5.

We can see from Rehoboam’s decision that he wanted to follow in his father’s footsteps and rule as a dictator so that he could continue to live in luxury as king, 1 Kings 12:13-14 / 2 Chronicles 10:13-14. As always, with this type of leadership, the rich get richer and the poor pay more taxes, which results in them becoming poorer.

It’s very clear that all Rehoboam is interested in is looking after himself; he didn’t care about anyone else. Notice that this turn of events was from the LORD, to fulfil the word the LORD had spoken to Jeroboam, son of Nebat, through Ahijah the Shilonite, 1 Kings 12:15 / 2 Chronicles 10:15.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God left him to himself, and did not incline his heart to follow the counsel of the wise men.’

‘When all Israel saw that the king refused to listen to them, they answered the king: ‘What share do we have in David, what part in Jesse’s son? To your tents, Israel! Look after your own house, David!’ So the Israelites went home. But as for the Israelites who were living in the towns of Judah, Rehoboam still ruled over them. King Rehoboam sent out Adoniram, who was in charge of forced labour, but all Israel stoned him to death. King Rehoboam, however, managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem. So Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day. When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David.’ 1 Kings 12:16-20

When Israel saw that the Rehoboam refused to listen to them, they ask, ‘what share do we have in David, what part of Jesse’s son?’ 1 Kings 12:16 / 2 Chronicles 10:16.

They were basically saying if the northern tribes were to be burdened with a heavy taxation that would only go to David's house in the south, then the northern tribes would feel that they could no longer be loyal to any descendant of David who was king, 1 Kings 12:16 / 2 Chronicles 10:16.

There were several devout Israelites who emigrated to Judah so that they could remain under the rule of Rehoboam, 1 Kings 12:17 / 2 Chronicles 10:17, but also so that they can worship God in the manner in which God wanted to be worshipped in Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 11:16.

Adoniram, 1 Kings 12:18 / 2 Chronicles 10:18, or Adoram was probably the same officer as the Adoniram of 1 Kings 4:6, and some believe that he might have been either a son or grandson of David's Adoniram.

Rehoboam tried to regain his reign in the northern tribes by sending Adoniram so that he could put them into forced labour, however, he was stoned to death, 1 Kings 12:18 / 2 Chronicles 10:18.

By doing this, the northern tribes sent a clear message to Rehoboam that they were rebelling against him and they have now officially split from Judah and Rehoboam, 2 Chronicles 10:19.

Rehoboam managed to get into his chariot and escape to Jerusalem, 1 Kings 12:18 / 2 Chronicles 10:18. Israel has been in rebellion against the house of David to this day, 1 Kings 12:19 / 2 Chronicles 10:19.

When all the Israelites heard that Jeroboam had returned, they sent and called him to the assembly and made him king over all Israel, 1 Kings 12:20. Only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the house of David, 1 Kings 12:20.

Think about this: in just one day, because Rehoboam listened to the young men, and because of Rehoboam's response to the northern tribes, we see Israel dividing into two kingdoms, and Rehoboam's reign is reduced to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. The Northern Kingdom will now be known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom will now be known as Judah.

‘When Rehoboam arrived in Jerusalem, he mustered all Judah and the tribe of Benjamin—a hundred and eighty thousand able young men—to go to war against Israel and to regain the kingdom for Rehoboam, son of Solomon. But this word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God: ‘Say to Rehoboam, son of Solomon, king of Judah, to all Judah and Benjamin, and to the rest of the people, ‘This is what the LORD says: Do not go up to fight against your brothers, the Israelites. Go home, every one of you, for this is my doing.’ So they obeyed the word of the LORD and went home again, as the LORD had ordered.’ 1 Kings 12:21-24

When we read about the southern tribe of Judah, we must remember to include the tribe of Benjamin because most of them were absorbed into Judah, 1 Kings 12:21 / 2 Chronicles 11:1.

Because the land of Simeon was divided between the north and south, much of the tribe of Simeon was also included in Judah. The Northern Kingdom was to be known as Israel, and the Southern Kingdom was to be known as Judah.

Whilst Rehoboam gathered as many men together as he could to go to war against the northern king, 1 Kings 12:21 / 2 Chronicles 13:1 / 2 Chronicles 17:14-18, he received a message from God through Shemaiah the man of God, 1 Kings 12:22 / 2 Chronicles 13:2.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Shemaiah was the chief prophet in Judah during the reign of Rehoboam, as Ahijah was in Israel.’

The message was simple: Rehoboam must give up his plans in trying to conquer the northern tribes, 1 Kings 12:23-24 / 2 Chronicles 13:3-4. The reason for this is that it was God's plan to divide the kingdom, 1 Kings 11:26-39, and Rehoboam would fail in his quest to try to unite them again because he would be going against God's will.

Rehoboam wisely listens to what God says and obeys Him, and everyone returned home, 1 Kings 12:24 / 2 Chronicles 13:4.

GOLDEN CALVES AT BETHEL AND DAN

‘Then Jeroboam fortified Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and lived there. From there, he went out and built up Peniel. Jeroboam thought to himself, ‘The kingdom will now likely revert to the house of David. If these people go up to offer sacrifices at the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem, they will again give their allegiance to their lord, Rehoboam, king of Judah. They will kill me and return to King Rehoboam.’ After seeking advice, the king made two golden calves. He said to the people, ‘It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt.’ One he set up in Bethel, and the other in Dan. And this thing became a sin; the people came to worship the one at Bethel and went as far as Dan to worship the other. Jeroboam built shrines on high places and appointed priests from all sorts of people, even though they were not Levites. He instituted a festival on the fifteenth day of the eighth month, like the festival held in Judah, and offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did in Bethel, sacrificing to the calves he had made. And at Bethel, he also installed priests at the high places he had made. On the fifteenth day of the eighth month, a month of his own choosing, he offered sacrifices on the altar he had built at Bethel. So he instituted the festival for the Israelites and went up to the altar to make offerings.’ [1 Kings 12:25-33](#)

After Rehoboam was told to back away from his plans by God, Jeroboam goes on to fortify Shechem, [1 Kings 12:25](#). Shechem was going to be Jeroboam’s new capital during his rule over the northern kingdom, but he would later make Tirzah his capital, [1 Kings 14:17](#).

Later when Omri becomes king, he reaffirmed Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom, [1 Kings 16:24](#). Whilst Jeroboam ruled from Shechem, he did more building work to the already existing buildings, which were there, [Joshua 24:11](#) / [1 Kings 12:1](#).

He also fortified the city of Peniel, [1 Kings 12:25](#), and added to the buildings which were already in existence, [Genesis 32:24-32](#) / [Judges 8:8-9](#) / [Judges 8:17](#). Jeroboam knows if his people go to Jerusalem to worship, they will end up giving their allegiance to Rehoboam, and kill him, [1 Kings 12:26](#) / [1 Kings 11:38](#) / [2 Samuel 4:7](#). We must remember it was never God’s plan to have a temple built in the first place, [2 Samuel 7:5-7](#), it was never God’s plan to have a temple built in Jerusalem in the first place. Jerusalem was simply too far away from the northern tribes for them to travel and offer their sacrifices.

Jeroboam knew that Jerusalem was simply too far away, and he had two golden calves made and said, ‘Here are your gods, Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt,’ [1 Kings 12:27-28](#). These words are the same words which Aaron used when he made the golden calf at Mount Sinai, [Exodus 32:4](#) / [Exodus 32:8](#).

When the Israelites made a golden calf at Mount Sinai, God killed three thousand of them because of their idolatry, [Exodus 32:27-28](#), and it’s very clear that God wouldn’t be too pleased with what Jeroboam is doing here in his idolatrous act.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He invented a political religion, instituted feasts in his own times different from those appointed by the Lord, gave the people certain objects of devotion, and pretended to think it would be both inconvenient and oppressive to them to have to go up to Jerusalem to worship. This was not the last time that religion was made a state engine to serve political purposes. It is strange that in pointing out his calves to the people, he should use the same words that Aaron used when he made the golden calf in the wilderness, when they must have heard what terrible judgments fell upon their forefathers for this idolatry.’

He takes advantage of the situation and builds altars in Bethel, [1 Kings 12:29](#), sometimes called Luz, [Genesis 28:10-21](#) / [Genesis 35:5-15](#), and in Dan, [1 Kings 12:29](#), sometimes called Laish, [Judges 18:24-31](#).

Because he wanted to please the people so that they would stay loyal to him, he actually ended up causing the people to sin against God because of their practices and beliefs, [1 Kings 12:30](#).

By doing this, Jeroboam had deliberately kept the people away from Jerusalem, so that they wouldn’t become loyal to Rehoboam. Sadly, he also kept them away from the ark of the covenant, which was situated in the temple.

In other words, he gave the people a religious system which was more convenient for them because this would save them a lot of time and energy travelling back and forth to Jerusalem.

Jeroboam built shrines, appointed priests from all sorts of people, and notice he doesn't use Levitical priests, [1 Kings 12:31](#) / [2 Chronicles 11:13-14](#). In Bethel, he was 'sacrificing to the calves he had made,' [1 Kings 12:32](#). He wasn't making sacrifices to God anymore but to the calves.

These calves were pagan images which looked like the Egyptian idols, Apis and Mnevis. Jeroboam is now absorbed in idolatry and introduces new religious practices and brings about new religious beliefs, and he even changes the feast dates to suit the people, [1 Kings 12:33](#). He could easily do this because the people around at this time didn't have a copy of God's Word, [Hosea 4:6](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Jews held their feast of tabernacles on the fifteenth day of the seventh month; Jeroboam, who would meet the prejudices of the people as far as he could, appointed a similar feast on the fifteenth of the eighth month; thus appearing to hold the thing while he subverted the ordinance.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The entire system of Jeroboam receives its condemnation in these words. His main fault was that he left a ritual and a worship where all was divinely authorised, for ceremonies and services which were wholly of his own devising. Not being a prophet, he had no authority to introduce religious innovations. Not having received any commission to establish new forms, he had no right to expect that any religious benefit would accrue from them, [1 Kings 12:26](#).'

CHAPTER 13

INTRODUCTION

'By the word of the LORD, a man of God came from Judah to Bethel, as Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering. By the word of the LORD, he cried out against the altar: 'Altar, altar! This is what the LORD says: 'A son named Josiah will be born to the house of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests of the high places who make offerings here, and human bones will be burned on you.' That same day, the man of God gave a sign: 'This is the sign the LORD has declared: The altar will be split apart, and the ashes on it will be poured out.' When King Jeroboam heard what the man of God cried out against the altar at Bethel, he stretched out his hand from the altar and said, 'Seize him!' But the hand he stretched out toward the man shrivelled up, so that he could not pull it back. Also, the altar was split apart, and its ashes poured out according to the sign given by the man of God by the word of the LORD. Then the king said to the man of God, 'Intercede with the LORD your God and pray for me that my hand may be restored.' So the man of God interceded with the LORD, and the king's hand was restored and became as it was before. The king said to the man of God, 'Come home with me for a meal, and I will give you a gift.' But the man of God answered the king, 'Even if you were to give me half your possessions, I would not go with you, nor would I eat bread or drink water here. For I was commanded by the word of the LORD: 'You must not eat bread or drink water or return by the way you came.' So he took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel.' 1 Kings 13:1-10

THE MAN OF GOD FROM JUDAH

After Israel was divided into two kingdoms, the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, a man of God speaks to Jeroboam, [1 Kings 13:1](#). We don't know who this man is, but some suggest it is Iddo the seer, [2 Chronicles 13:22](#). Notice that God Himself didn't speak directly to Jeroboam, He used his prophet from Judah, [1 Kings 13:1](#), who was probably a Levite. Notice also that Jeroboam was 'standing by the altar to make an offering', [1 Kings 13:1](#). He had no right to be there and no right to make an offering on his own.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Like gods, like priest, he made himself high priest, and he took of the lowest of the people, and made them priests of the high places; they proved themselves to be fools by worshipping calves.'

Israel, the northern kingdom, simply wanted to get some kind of relief from Solomon's taxes, [1 Kings 12:1-5](#), but Jeroboam used the excuse that the northern kingdoms were too far away from Jerusalem to change God's laws, [1 Kings 12:25-33](#).

And so, he goes on and builds two more places of worship for sacrifices to be made, one in Bethel and one in Dan, [1 Kings 12:29](#). He denounces the destruction of this idolatrous system by crying 'altar' altar', [1 Kings 13:2](#).

The mention of the name Josiah was a prophecy, [1 Kings 13:2](#), as he wasn't born yet, this is just like the naming of Cyrus, [Isaiah 44:26](#) / [Isaiah 44:28](#) / [Isaiah 45:2](#). Because Josiah is named, this would leave no doubts that God was going to work through Josiah to bring an end to Israel's apostasy, [2 Kings 23:15-20](#).

The prophet's message wasn't good news for Jeroboam; his message was of severe punishment, which was coming upon him and his household, [1 Kings 13:2](#).

A sign was given in a visible split which was miraculously made on the altar, [1 Kings 13:3](#). Jeroboam becomes really angry with the man because of what he said and so, he stretched out his hand and ordered his attendants to seize the man, [1 Kings 13:4](#).

At that moment Jeroboam's arm became stiff and motionless, [1 Kings 13:4](#), and the altar split apart so that the fire and ashes fell on the floor, [1 Kings 13:5](#). Scared by the effects of what happened, Jeroboam begged the prophet to pray and intercede for him, [1 Kings 13:6](#). His request was granted, and the hand was restored to its healthy state, [1 Kings 13:6](#).

Jeroboam was crafty and invited the prophet to the royal table, but not to do him honour or show his gratitude for the restoration of his hand, but to win him over, [1 Kings 13:7](#), by his courtesy and liberal hospitality, a person whom he couldn't crush by his power.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It was customary to honour a prophet with a gift, if he performed any service that was requested at his hands.'

Even though Jeroboam offered the prophet some hospitality, the prophet refused; he wasn't going to be bought over by any amount he was offered, [1 Kings 13:8](#). This tells us that God was completely rejecting Jeroboam and Bethel. The prophet informed him of a divine restriction that prohibited him from mixing with any people in the place, as well as from returning the same way, [1 Kings 13:9](#).

The prohibition not to eat or drink in Bethel was because all the people had become apostates from the true religion, and the reason he wasn't allowed to return the same way was he might be recognised by any whom he had seen in going. So the man of God took another road and did not return by the way he had come to Bethel, [1 Kings 13:10](#).

'Now there was a certain old prophet living in Bethel, whose sons came and told him all that the man of God had done there that day. They also told their father what he had said to the king. Their father asked them, 'Which way did he go?' And his sons showed him which road the man of God from Judah had taken. So he said to his sons, 'Saddle the donkey for me.' And when they had saddled the donkey for him, he mounted it and rode after the man of God. He found him sitting under an oak tree and asked, 'Are you the man of God who came from Judah?' 'I am,' he replied. So the prophet said to him, 'Come home with me and eat.' The man of God said, 'I cannot turn back and go with you,

nor can I eat bread or drink water with you in this place. I have been told by the word of the LORD: ‘You must not eat bread or drink water there or return by the way you came.’ The old prophet answered, ‘I too am a prophet, as you are. And an angel said to me by the word of the LORD: ‘Bring him back with you to your house so that he may eat bread and drink water.’ (But he was lying to him.) So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house.’ 1 Kings 13:11-19

As one prophet leaves, another one appears, this time it was an old prophet from Bethel whose sons told him everything the man of God from Judah had done, and what he said to Jeroboam, 1 Kings 13:11. We don’t know who he was, but he appears to be going along and encouraging the apostasy of Jeroboam.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Probably once a prophet of the Lord, who had fallen from his steadfastness, and yet not so deeply as to lose the knowledge of the true God, and join with Jeroboam in his idolatries. We find he was not at the king’s sacrifice, though his sons were there; and perhaps even they were there, not as idolaters, but as spectators of what was done.’

After inquiring from his sons which way the man of God went, he went on a donkey and drove out to meet him, 1 Kings 13:11-14. He finds the man of God sitting under an oak tree and asks, if he is the man of God from Judah, to which the man of God replied ‘yes,’ 1 Kings 13:14.

The prophet then invites the man of God to come to his home and eat with him, but the man of God he can’t turn back and go with him, nor can he eat bread or drink water with him in this place, 1 Kings 13:15-16, because he was told not to, 1 Kings 13:17.

The old prophet lied through his teeth to the man of God, claiming that he himself is a prophet and an angel told him that the man of God must go back to the old prophet’s house to eat and drink, 1 Kings 13:18. So the man of God returned with him and ate and drank in his house, 1 Kings 13:19.

There’s no doubt that he was lying through his teeth to the man of God from Judah, but he was possibly driven by fear. He was an old man, 1 Kings 13:11; he couldn’t stand up to Jeroboam because Jeroboam recruited the lowest of the people to be his prophets, 1 Kings 13:32.

It’s possible that he lied out of desperation and wanted the man of God to be in his company for a while so he could be encouraged. It’s also possible that he suspected that the man of God was the same as him, and therefore tried to test him.

‘While they were sitting at the table, the word of the LORD came to the old prophet who had brought him back. He cried out to the man of God who had come from Judah, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘You have defied the word of the LORD and have not kept the command the LORD your God gave you. You came back and ate bread and drank water in the place where he told you not to eat or drink. Therefore, your body will not be buried in the tomb of your ancestors.’ When the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet who had brought him back saddled his donkey for him. As he went on his way, a lion met him on the road and killed him, and his body was left lying on the road, with both the donkey and the lion standing beside it. Some people who passed by saw the body lying there, with the lion standing beside the body, and they went and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived. When the prophet who had brought him back from his journey heard of it, he said, ‘It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD. The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him.’ The prophet said to his sons, ‘Saddle the donkey for me,’ and they did so. Then he went out and found the body lying on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. The lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey. So the prophet picked up the body of the man of God, laid it on the donkey, and brought it back to his own city to mourn for him and bury him. Then he laid the body in his own tomb, and they mourned over him and said, ‘Alas, my brother!’ After burying him, he said to his sons, ‘When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones. For the message he declared by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel and against all the shrines on the high places in the towns of Samaria will certainly come true.’ 1 Kings 13:20-32

When we read about what happened to the man of God here, [1 Kings 13:20-22](#), we learn that we simply can't ignore God's commands. He may have been innocent in believing the old prophet's lies, but he still had to pay the consequences for being disobedient to God, [1 Kings 13:22](#).

Whatever the old prophet's motives were for lying, the man of God should have never trusted him in the first place. Think about it, would God have told the man of God one thing, [1 Kings 13:9](#), and then have contradicted it by sending an authentic word by another? [1 Kings 13:18](#). No! [1 John 4:1](#).

He was told not to stay in Bethel and not to eat and drink with anyone there, but he did, and as a result of his disobedience, he was killed by a lion, [1 Kings 13:23-24](#).

Under normal circumstances, a lion would devour the whole carcass, but here it is standing beside the carcass, [1 Kings 13:25](#), which tells us that God was in control of this situation. It's almost as if the lion was protecting the carcass from other predators.

The people who saw the body and reported it in the city where the old prophet lived, [1 Kings 13:25](#). He lies to them and says, 'It is the man of God who defied the word of the LORD.

The LORD has given him over to the lion, which has mauled him and killed him, as the word of the LORD had warned him,' [1 Kings 13:26](#). His sons prepare a donkey for him so that he can ride and see the body for himself, however, when he arrives he notices that the lion had neither eaten the body nor mauled the donkey, [1 Kings 13:27-28](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'These strange circumstances were of a nature to call men's attention to the matter, and cause the whole story to be bruited abroad. By these means, an incident, which Jeroboam would have wished hushed up, became no doubt the common talk of the whole people.'

He takes the man of God's body back home, mourns for him and buries him and lays him in a tomb, [Matthew 27:60](#), and the mourners say, 'Alas, my brother!' [1 Kings 13:29-30](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'This lamentation is very simple, very short, and very pathetic. Perhaps the old prophet said it as much in reference to himself, who had been the cause of his untimely death, as in reference to the man of God, whose corpse he now committed to the tomb. But the words may be no more than the burden of each line of the lamentation, which was used on this occasion, [Jeremiah 22:18](#).'

He requests that when he dies, he wants to be buried in the same place as the man of God, with his bones next to the man of God's, [1 Kings 13:31](#). He now knows that the man of God was a true prophet of God because of what happened, [1 Kings 13:32](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'The Word of God actually came to this evil old prophet, and there was apparently no appropriate medium in all of Bethel who could have served the purpose of God any better than this lying old prophet. When God actually spoke through him, he not only learned that the man of God was indeed an authentic spokesman from Jehovah, but he also came to believe all of the words which the man of God had spoken.'

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Samaria, [1 Kings 13:32](#).

'The word Samaria cannot have been employed by the old prophet, in whose days Samaria did not exist, [1 Kings 16:24](#). The writer of Kings has substituted for the term used by him that whereby the country was known in his own day.'

‘Even after this, Jeroboam did not change his evil ways, but once more appointed priests for the high places from all sorts of people. Anyone who wanted to become a priest he consecrated for the high places. This was the sin of the house of Jeroboam that led to its downfall and to its destruction from the face of the earth.’ 1 Kings 13:33-34

Even after everything which happened between Jeroboam and the man of God and the man of God and the old prophet, Jeroboam still didn’t change his ways, [1 Kings 13:33](#) / [Luke 16:31](#).

In fact, he began to spread his own religion and religious beliefs among the people by appointing anyone who wanted to be a priest, [1 Kings 13:33](#). Because of this God was going to bring about the destruction of Jeroboam and his household, [1 Kings 13:34](#) / [1 Kings 15:29](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These abominations were too glaring, and too insulting to the Divine Majesty, to be permitted to last; his house was cut off, and destroyed from the face of the earth.’

Coffman, in his commentary, shares the following useful summary of Jeroboam’s wickedness.

1. He made paganism the official religion of Israel.
2. He consecrated priests of tribes other than that of Levi.
3. He erected pagan idols in Dan, Bethel, and Samaria.
4. He arrogantly intruded himself into the sacrifices.
5. He organised and promoted a corrupt Feast of Tabernacles, contrary to God’s law.
6. He persuaded the people to disobey God by not going to Jerusalem to worship.
7. He established and organised high places all over northern Israel.

CHAPTER 14

INTRODUCTION

‘At that time, Abijah, son of Jeroboam, became ill, and Jeroboam said to his wife, ‘Go, disguise yourself, so you won’t be recognised as the wife of Jeroboam. Then go to Shiloh. Ahijah the prophet is there—the one who told me I would be king over this people. Take ten loaves of bread with you, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and go to him. He will tell you what will happen to the boy.’ So Jeroboam’s wife did what he said and went to Ahijah’s house in Shiloh. Now Ahijah could not see; his sight was gone because of his age. But the LORD had told Ahijah, ‘Jeroboam’s wife is coming to ask you about her son, for he is ill, and you are to give her such and such an answer. When she arrives, she will pretend to be someone else.’ So when Ahijah heard the sound of her footsteps at the door, he said, ‘Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why this pretence? I have been sent to you with bad news. Go, tell Jeroboam that this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘I raised you up from among the people and appointed you ruler over my people Israel. I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, but you have not been like my servant David, who kept my commands and followed me with all his heart, doing only what was right in my eyes. You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made for yourself other gods, idols made of metal; you have aroused my anger and turned your back on me. ‘Because of this, I am going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam. I will cut off from Jeroboam every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will burn up the house of Jeroboam as one burns dung, until it is all gone. Dogs will eat those belonging to Jeroboam who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country. The LORD has spoken!’ ‘As for you, go back home. When you set foot in your city, the boy will die. All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. 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. 'The LORD will raise up for himself a king over Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam. Even now, this is beginning to happen. And the LORD will strike Israel, so that it will be like a reed swaying in the water. He will uproot Israel from this good land that he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, because they aroused the LORD's anger by making Asherah poles. And he will give Israel up because of the sins Jeroboam has committed and has caused Israel to commit.' Then Jeroboam's wife got up and left and went to Tirzah. As soon as she stepped over the threshold of the house, the boy died. They buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, as the LORD had said through his servant the prophet Ahijah. The other events of Jeroboam's reign, his wars and how he ruled, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel. He reigned for twenty-two years and then rested with his ancestors. And Nadab his son succeeded him as king.' 1 Kings 14:1-20

AHIJAH'S PROPHECY AGAINST JEROBOAM

When Jeroboam's son, Abijah, became ill, he told his wife to disguise herself so she wouldn't be recognised as the wife of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:1-2. She was to go and see the prophet Ahijah, who lived in Shiloh, 1 Kings 14:2, where possibly all the prophets lived at this time, 2 Kings 2:1-25.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning Abijah.

'We see by this name that Jeroboam did not intend to desert the worship of Yahweh, since its signification is 'Yahweh is my father,' or 'Yahweh is my desire,' Job 34:36.'

His wife disguised herself and took ten loaves of bread, cakes, and honey, 1 Kings 14:3. This was customary when visiting a prophet to provide some food for him. By doing so, you showed him respect and acknowledged he was dedicating his life to the work of the Lord, 1 Corinthians 9:1-14.

The undercover plan failed because God informed Ahijah about who was coming to visit him and what was about to happen, 1 Kings 14:4-5. There's no doubt that Ahijah was a real prophet because he couldn't see, but as soon as he heard the footsteps, he immediately knew it was Jeroboam's wife because told him earlier, 1 Kings 14:6.

No doubt Jeroboam's wife concluded that Ahijah was a real prophet, but the news she got from him wasn't good. Ahijah tells her that God raised Jeroboam up from among the people and appointed him ruler over His people Israel, 1 Kings 14:7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'As Jeroboam's appointment to the kingdom had been formally announced to him by the prophet Ahijah, so the same prophet is commissioned to acquaint him with his forfeiture of it, 1 Samuel 15:26-28.'

It was God who tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to Jeroboam, but Jeroboam was not like David, who kept God's commands and followed Him with all his heart, doing only what was right in God's eyes, 1 Kings 14:8.

Jeroboam had done more evil than all who lived before him and he made for himself other gods, idols made of metal and he has aroused God's anger and turned his back on God, 1 Kings 14:9.

Jeroboam had completely turned his back on God, he took over as Israel's leader, 1 Kings 12:1-17, he built altars in Bethel and Dan, 1 Kings 12:25-33, He appointed anyone who wanted to be a priest, even though they weren't from the tribe of Levi, 1 Kings 13:33. All of this was done so that he could maintain his political power.

As a result of his sinfulness, God is going to bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam, 1 Kings 14:10. God Himself was going to raise up someone who would cut off Jeroboam's household.

And even though Abijah was permitted to be buried, no one else from Jeroboam's household would die with dignity, because when they die, they would be eaten by animals and birds, 1 Kings 14:11 / Psalms 59:6 / Psalms 59:14.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘All the males of the family of Jeroboam were put to death by Baasha, [1 Kings 15:28-29](#). The phrase ‘will cut off,’ etc., appears to have been a common expression among the Jews from the time of David, [1 Samuel 25:22](#), to that of Jehu, [2 Kings 9:8](#), but scarcely either before or after. We may suspect that, where the author of Kings uses it, he found it in the documents which he consulted.’

Notice that Ahijah told her as soon as she returns home and steps foot into the city, her child would die, [1 Kings 14:12](#). Jeroboam’s son, Abijah was going to die, but God would allow him to be buried because He found some good in him, [1 Kings 14:13](#), but because Abijah was to die, this would bring an end to the kinship lineage of Jeroboam. Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Far be it from God to destroy the righteous with the wicked. God respects even a little good, because it is a seed from Himself. The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed.’

God is now in the process of raising up another king for Israel who will cut off the family of Jeroboam, [1 Kings 14:14](#). God is going to strike Israel, so that it will be like a reed swaying in the water, [1 Kings 14:15](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘See this prophecy fulfilled, [1 Kings 15:28-30](#), when Baasha destroyed all the house and posterity of Jeroboam.’ God was going to ‘uproot Israel from this good land that he gave to their ancestors and scatter them beyond the Euphrates River,’ [1 Kings 14:15](#) / [Deuteronomy 29:28](#).

This was a prophecy speaking about Israel’s Assyrian captivity, which took place around 722 B.C. The Assyrians came and conquered the northern kingdom and took the ten tribes into captivity beyond the Euphrates River.

Not only will they be taken into captivity, but God is going to give Israel up, [1 Kings 14:16](#), which basically means God abandoned them to reap the rewards of their own evil actions, [Romans 1:24](#) / [Romans 1:26](#) / [Romans 1:28](#). Not only did Jeroboam sin, but he also caused Israel to sin, [1 Kings 14:16](#). He did this by doing the following.

1. He made paganism the official religion of Israel.
2. He consecrated priests of tribes other than that of Levi.
3. He erected pagan idols in Dan, Bethel, and Samaria.
4. He arrogantly intruded himself into the sacrifices.
5. He organised and promoted a corrupt Feast of Tabernacles, contrary to God’s law.
6. He persuaded the people to disobey God by not going to Jerusalem to worship.
7. He established and organised high places all over northern Israel.

For some reason, she returns to the city and her son, Abijah, dies, [1 Kings 14:17](#) / [2 Chronicles 14:1](#). Maybe she didn’t really believe what Ahijah had told her; if she did believe everything he told her, then surely, as a mother, she would stay away from the city altogether.

It’s possible that her love for her son was simply too great; her love for her son outweighed the words of the prophet. They buried Abijah, and all Israel mourned for him, just as God said they would, [1 Kings 14:18](#) / [1 Kings 14:12](#).

Notice that ‘other events of Jeroboam’s reign, his wars and how he ruled, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel’, [1 Kings 14:19](#) / [1 Kings 14:29](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:1-20](#).

The book of annals of the kings of Israel or the book of annals of the kings of Judah is mentioned several times in the Books of Kings and Chronicles. Although these books aren’t inspired, the writer obviously had access to these books.

The Books of 1 and 2 Kings were written with a focus on the history of Israel, whilst 1 and 2 Chronicles were written with a focus on the southern kingdom. Jeroboam reigned for twenty-two years and then rested with his ancestors, and Nadab, his son, succeeded him as king, [1 Kings 14:20](#).

REHOBAM KING OF JUDAH

‘Rehoboam, son of Solomon, was king in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name. His mother’s name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. Judah did evil in the eyes of the LORD. By the sins they committed, they stirred up his jealous anger more than those who were before them had done. They also set up for themselves high places, sacred stones, and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every spreading tree. There were even male shrine prostitutes in the land; the people engaged in all the detestable practices of the nations the LORD had driven out before the Israelites.’ [1 Kings 14:21-24](#)

Solomon’s son, Rehoboam reigned in Judah from 931 to 913 B.C, [1 Kings 14:21](#). He was forty-one years old when he became king, and reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the LORD had chosen out of all the tribes of Israel in which to put his Name, [1 Kings 14:21](#).

His mother’s name was Naamah who was an Ammonite, [1 Kings 14:21](#). We get a more detailed account of his reign in [2 Chronicles 11:5-12:16](#). In the Chronicles account, we’re told that many priests fled to the south away from the apostasy which was happening in the north. They obviously didn’t agree with what was happening with Jeroboam’s religious reforms.

Chronicles also tell us that there was a war between Israel and Judah whilst Jeroboam and Rehoboam reigned. This almost led to the destruction of Jerusalem, but the leaders in the south repented, and so Jerusalem was spared.

Here we are told that ‘Judah did evil in the eyes of the Lord’, [1 Kings 14:22](#). Their sin was worse than that of those who were before them, [1 Kings 14:22](#), which indicates that their apostasy was progressive.

They were progressively getting more and more involved in idolatry. Just as Jeroboam built altars to other gods in the north, [1 Kings 12:25-33](#), Rehoboam built altars to other gods in the south, [1 Kings 14:23-24](#).

Notice that the people were involved in ‘detestable practices’, [1 Kings 14:25](#). This again tells us they were spiralling out of control. Ezekiel rebuked the children of Israel and told them they had become worse than Sodom and Gomorrah, [Ezekiel 16:47-52](#).

‘In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak, king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem. He carried off the treasures of the temple of the LORD and the treasures of the royal palace. He took everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. So King Rehoboam made bronze shields to replace them and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace. Whenever the king went to the LORD’s temple, the guards bore the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom. As for the other events of Rehoboam’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was continual warfare between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. And Rehoboam rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the City of David. His mother’s name was Naamah; she was an Ammonite. And Abijah, his son, succeeded him as king.’ [1 Kings 14:25-](#)

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At this point in time, Judah was very vulnerable to attack because they were busy fighting those in the northern kingdom of Israel, [1 Kings 14:30](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:15](#). After Rehoboam’s position as king was established and he had become strong, he and all Israel with him abandoned the law of the LORD, [2 Chronicles 12:1](#).

The reason why Shishak went to war against Jerusalem was that Israel was unfaithful to God, [2 Chronicles 12:2-4](#). In other words, it was God Himself who caused this to happen because Israel rebelled against God’s law, [1 Kings 14:25-28](#).

The prophet Shemaiah comes to Rehoboam and the leaders of Judah who had assembled in Jerusalem for fear of Shishak, and he tells them what God said, ‘You have abandoned me, therefore, I now abandon you to Shishak,’ [2 Chronicles 12:5](#). The leaders of Israel and Rehoboam humbled themselves and said, ‘The LORD is just’, [2 Chronicles 12:6](#).

When God saw that they humbled themselves, Shemaiah received word from God, which says, since they have humbled themselves, God won’t destroy them but will soon give them deliverance. His wrath won’t be poured out on Jerusalem through Shishak, [2 Chronicles 12:7](#).

However, they will become subject to him, so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands, [2 Chronicles 12:8](#). In other words, they would now know the difference between serving God and serving Shishak, [1 Kings 14:25-26](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:8](#).

Shishak, the king of Egypt, attacked Jerusalem, for obvious reasons, [1 Kings 14:25](#). He wanted to plunder the place and take all the valuables away, [1 Kings 14:26](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:9](#).

Shishak took away the treasures of the temple, [1 Kings 10:16-17](#). He was probably told about all the wealth in Jerusalem and all the gold in the temple by Jeroboam when he was a fugitive in Egypt, [1 Kings 12:2](#).

Pharaoh Sheshonk I is probably the Shishak that’s mentioned in this text. He was the one who provided refuge for Jeroboam when he fled from Solomon, [1 Kings 11:40](#). However, after the kingdom of Israel was divided, Jeroboam possibly fell out of favour with the Egyptian Pharaoh.

Think about this, all the gold and other riches which Solomon had collected over the years were taken away within one generation by an Egyptian. It’s interesting that after Israel was freed from Egypt when they were enslaved, they came out of Egypt wealthier than they had ever been, [Exodus 12:35-36](#) / [Exodus 38:24](#), but now it appears that God is sending the gold back to Egypt again.

All the wealth and riches which Solomon had accumulated were gone within five years of his death. No wonder Solomon, before he died, declared that ‘everything is meaningless’, [Ecclesiastes 1:2](#).

Rehoboam now makes bronze shields to replace the gold shields Solomon had made and assigned these to the commanders of the guard on duty at the entrance to the royal palace, [1 Kings 14:27](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:10](#). Whenever he went to the temple, the guards bore the shields, and afterward they returned them to the guardroom, [1 Kings 14:28](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:11](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning [1 Kings 14:28](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:11](#).

‘It appears from this verse that Rehoboam, notwithstanding that he encouraged, and perhaps secretly practised, idolatry, [1 Kings 14:22-24](#) / [1 Kings 15:3](#) / [1 Kings 15:12](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:1](#), maintained a public profession of faith in Yahweh, and attended in state the temple services, [1 Kings 9:25](#).’

Because Rehoboam humbled himself, God’s anger turned from him, and he was not totally destroyed and we are told that there was some good in Judah, [2 Chronicles 12:12](#).

Rehoboam established himself firmly in Jerusalem and continued as king and we are told that he was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, [2 Chronicles 12:13](#).

God had forbidden the Israelites to intermarry with foreigners, but Rehoboam’s mother was an Ammonitess, [1 Kings 14:31](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:13](#). Rehoboam did evil because he hadn’t set his heart on seeking the LORD, [2 Chronicles 12:14](#).

The events of Rehoboam’s reign, from beginning to end, are written in the records of Shemaiah the prophet and of Iddo the seer that deal with genealogies, [2 Chronicles 12:15](#). [1 Kings 14:29](#) tells us that they are ‘written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah,’ [1 Kings 14:29](#).

The war between Jeroboam and Rehoboam was commonplace at this point in time, [1 Kings 14:30](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:15](#), but Rehoboam died and was buried in Jerusalem, [1 Kings 14:31](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:16](#) / [1 Kings 11:43](#). Abijah, also known as Abijam, now becomes king of Judah, [1 Kings 14:31](#) / [2 Chronicles 12:16](#).

CHAPTER 15

INTRODUCTION

‘In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother’s name was Maakah, daughter of Abishalom. He committed all the sins his father had done before him; his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his forefather had been. Nevertheless, for David’s sake, the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem by raising up a son to succeed him and by making Jerusalem strong. For David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD and had not failed to keep any of the LORD’s commands all the days of his life—except in the case of Uriah the Hittite. There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam throughout Abijah’s lifetime. As for the other events of Abijah’s reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? There was war between Abijah and Jeroboam. And Abijah rested with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. And Asa, his son, succeeded him as king.’

1 Kings 15:1-8

ABIJAH KING OF JUDAH

In the eighteenth year of the reign of Jeroboam son of Nebat, Abijah reigned over Judah in the south from 913-911 B.C., [1 Kings 15:1-2](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:1-2](#). Some translations have his name as Abijam.

His mother’s name was Maakah, daughter of Abishalom, [1 Kings 15:2](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:2](#). He, just like Rehoboam, continued to lead God’s people in idolatry, [1 Kings 15:3](#), and it’s clear that he simply wanted to please the people around him because his heart wasn’t devoted to God.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was an idolater, or did not support the worship of the true God. This appears to be the general meaning of the heart not being perfect with God.’

For David’s sake, [1 Kings 15:4](#) / [1 Kings 11:36](#) / [1 Samuel 13:14](#) / [Acts 13:22](#), Abijah’s son, Asa, was given the right to rule as king in Jerusalem by God. God did this in order that the seed promise of the Messiah would be fulfilled, [Genesis 12:3](#).

David had done what was right in the eyes of God and hadn’t failed to keep any of God’s commands all the days of his life, except in the case of Uriah the Hittite, [1 Kings 15:5](#) / [2 Samuel 11-12](#).

Once again, we read about war, [1 Kings 15:6](#) / [1 Kings 15:8](#) / [2 Chronicles 13:2](#). This war was between the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom, this is brother against brother.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was mentioned in [1 Kings 14:30](#), and it can mean no more than this: there was a continual spirit of hostility kept up between the two kingdoms, and no doubt frequent skirmishing between bordering parties but it never broke out into open war, for this was particularly forbidden, [1 Kings 12:24](#). Hostility did exist, and no doubt frequent skirmishes but open war and pitched battles there were none.’

Abijah went into battle with an army of four hundred thousand able fighting men, and Jeroboam drew up a battle line against him with eight hundred thousand able troops, [2 Chronicles 13:3](#). Abijah stands on Mount Zemaraim and asks Jeroboam and all Israel, listen to him, [2 Chronicles 13:4](#).

The covenant of salt, 2 Chronicles 13:5 / Numbers 18:19, was a continuous covenant between God and Israel, Leviticus 2:13. As far as Abijah was concerned, he thought the northern tribes no longer honoured this covenant, because of the division of Israel.

Dummelow, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The use of salt in connection with sacrifice, Leviticus 2:13, probably arose from its association with a meal and ‘there is salt between us’ is said to be a phrase still employed to denote the bond which secures, for anyone who has partaken of an Arab’s hospitality, protection and in case of need, assistance.’

Abijah accused Jeroboam of rebellion, and with the help of some scoundrels, Jeroboam took advantage of the young Rehoboam because he wasn’t strong enough to resist, 2 Chronicles 13:6-7.

Jeroboam rebelled against his lord, 2 Chronicles 13:8, that is, the house of David, because God had given him the right to reign over the northern ten tribes. If anyone came with a bull and seven rams, he could be a priest, 2 Chronicles 13:9 / Exodus 29:1 / Leviticus 8:2. In other words, Jeroboam was selling the office of a priest.

He basically accused them of rejecting the covenant and hiring priests who weren’t Levites. Although God had given the ten northern tribes to Jeroboam, Jeroboam took them into idol worship.

Abijah says that the LORD is our God, and we have not forsaken him, and the priests who serve the LORD are sons of Aaron, and the Levites assist them, 2 Chronicles 13:10. Abijah goes on to speak of how the Levitical priests go about their daily duties.

Every morning and evening, they present burnt offerings and fragrant incense to God, 2 Chronicles 13:11. They set out the bread on the ceremonially clean table and light the lamps on the gold lampstand every evening, 2 Chronicles 13:11.

Abijah tells Jeroboam that they are observing the requirements of the LORD our God, but Jeroboam has forsaken him, 2 Chronicles 13:11. Abijah says that God is with us and He is their leader and His priests with their trumpets will sound the battle cry against Jeroboam, 2 Chronicles 13:12.

Abijah speaks against the northern tribes and tells them they will not succeed, 2 Chronicles 13:12, because they have moved too far away from God’s will. Jeroboam sets up an ambush to go around behind them, 2 Chronicles 13:13; however, when the battle lines unexpectedly changed, he knew that a surprise attack from an army twice as large as them left them in a very dangerous place.

The only thing they could do was cry out to God, 2 Chronicles 13:14. They cried out to God, and God struck the army of Israel, and Judah won, simply because they relied on God, 2 Chronicles 13:18.

Since Jeroboam had taken the northern tribes further away from God and since he became king over the northern tribes, God fought for Abijah, 2 Chronicles 13:15-16.

This resulted in the death of five hundred thousand Israelites, 2 Chronicles 13:17, and the defeat was so great that the north under the rule of Jeroboam was never able to regain military strength, 1 Kings 14:20 / 1 Kings 15:9.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It has been proposed to change the numbers, here and in 2 Chronicles 13:17, into 40,000, 80,000, and 50,000 respectively, partly because these smaller numbers are found in many early editions of the Vulgate, but mainly because the larger ones are thought to be incredible. The numbers accord well, however, with the census of the people taken in the reign of David 1 Chronicles 21:5, joined to the fact which the writer has related, 2 Chronicles 11:13-17, of a considerable subsequent emigration from the northern kingdom into the southern one. The total adult male population at the time of the census was 1,570, 000. The total of the fighting men now is 1,200,000. This would allow for the aged and infirm 370, 000, or nearly a fourth of the whole. And in 2 Chronicles 13:17, our author may be understood to mean that this was the entire Israelite loss in the course of the war, which probably continued through the whole reign of Abijah.’

They cried out to God and God struck the army of Israel and Judah won, simply because they relied on God, 2 Chronicles 13:18. Abijah pursued Jeroboam and took from him three towns and their surrounding villages, 2 Chronicles 13:19.

We are told that that Jeroboam didn't regain power during the time of Abijah, 2 Chronicles 13:20. Notice God struck Jeroboam down and killed him, 2 Chronicles 13:20. In other words, God used the army of Judah to judge the northern tribes because they followed Jeroboam.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Jeroboam's death was a judgment upon him for his sins. Chronologically speaking, his death is here out of place, for he outlived Abijah at least two years, compared to the marginal reference and 1 Kings 15:9, but the writer, not intending to recur to his history, is naturally led to carry it on to its termination.'

Abijah grew in strength, married fourteen wives, and had twenty-two sons and sixteen daughters, 2 Chronicles 13:21. 1 Kings 15:7 tells us that everything he did is written in the book of annals of the kings of Judah.

2 Chronicles 13:22 tells us that everything he did is recorded in the annotations of the prophet Iddo. Abijah dies, and his son Asa now becomes king of Judah, 1 Kings 15:8 / 1 Chronicles 14:1, and we are told that there was peace for ten years, 1 Chronicles 14:1.

ASA KING OF JUDAH

'In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa became king of Judah, and he reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother's name was Maakah, daughter of Abishalom. Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, as his father David had done. He expelled the male shrine prostitutes from the land and got rid of all the idols his ancestors had made. He even deposed his grandmother Maakah from her position as queen mother, because she had made a repulsive image for the worship of Asherah. Asa cut it down and burned it in the Kidron Valley.

Although he did not remove the high places, Asa's heart was fully committed to the LORD all his life. He brought into the temple of the LORD the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated.' 1 Kings 15:9-15

In the twentieth year of Jeroboam, king of Israel, Asa reigned as king of Judah from 911-870 B.C. 1 Kings 15:9-10 / 2 Chronicles 14:1-16:14. Maakah was the grandmother of Asa, 1 Kings 15:2 / 2 Chronicles 13:2 / 2 Chronicles 15:16 / 2 Kings 15:10 / 2 Kings 15:13.

She was the favourite wife of Rehoboam, 2 Chronicles 11:21, and, as may be inferred from the statement in 1 Kings 15:9-10, she held the important post of queen-mother, a very distinctive office in the Jewish government.

The name Abishalom, 1 Kings 15:10, is the same as the name Absalom, but as Absalom only had one daughter, Tamar, 2 Samuel 14:27, Maacah was probably his granddaughter. It's important to note that the Jews called any female ancestor mother and any male ancestor father.

Asa did what was right in the eyes of the Lord, 1 Kings 15:11 / 2 Chronicles 14:2, he was obedient to God because he rejected the idolatrous practices and everything related to those practices, 1 Kings 15:12 / 2 Chronicles 14:3 / 1 Kings 14:24.

Maakah as may be inferred from the statement here, she held the important post of queen-mother, 1 Kings 15:13, a very distinctive office in the Jewish government.

He removed his mother from her political position, 1 Kings 15:11-15, because she had the audacity of making an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah. Asa destroyed all these images as God commanded, 2 Chronicles 14:4-5 / Deuteronomy 16:21-22 / Deuteronomy 7:5 / Deuteronomy 12:3.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘2 Chronicles 14:3, would seem at first sight to imply that he entirely put down the worship. But idolatry, if at one time put down, crept back afterward; or while Asa endeavoured to sweep it wholly away, his subjects would not be controlled, but found a means of maintaining it in some places, not perhaps in the cities, 2 Chronicles 14:5, but in remote country districts, where the royal authority was weaker, and secrecy more practicable.’

He removed his grandmother from her political position because she had the audacity of making an image of the Canaanite goddess Asherah, Exodus 34:13, and placing it in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem, 1 Kings 15:13.

Although he didn’t remove the high places, Asa’s heart was fully committed to God all his life, 1 Kings 15:14.

It appears that the reforms that Asa made at the beginning of his reign weren’t effective in ridding Judah of all the places of worship where people went to pay homage to false gods, 2 Chronicles 15:17.

When Asa initially reigned, it was a time of prosperity for Judah, and because it was a time of peace they could easily develop economically, 1 Kings 15:14 / 2 Chronicles 14:5-7.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The great blow struck by Abijah, 2 Chronicles 13:15-19, his alliance with Syria, 1 Kings 15:19, and the rapid succession of sovereigns in Israel during the earlier part of Asa’s reign, 1 Kings 15:25-33, would naturally prevent disturbance on the part of the northern kingdom. The tender age of Asa himself would be a bar to warlike enterprises on the part of Judah.’

The men of Judah served as heavy-armed troops, while the Benjamites were light-armed, 2 Chronicles 14:8. Their numbers accord well with those of 2 Chronicles 13:3.

As the boundaries of Judah had been enlarged, 2 Chronicles 13:19, and as for ten years at least there had been no war, 2 Chronicles 14:1, the effective force had naturally increased.

Cook, in his commentary, says the following, the vast number in the army.

‘This is the largest collected army of which we read in Scripture, but it does not exceed the known numbers of other Oriental armies of ancient times. Darius Codomannus brought into the field of Abela a force of 1,040,000, and Xerxes crossed the Hellespont with more than a million combatants.’

He brought into the temple the silver and gold and the articles that he and his father had dedicated, 1 Kings 15:15.

Asa’s dedications were probably those which he pledged following his victory over the Cushites in the eleventh year of his reign, 2 Chronicles 14:9 / 2 Chronicles 15:10 / 2 Chronicles 15:18. Sadly, because Judah felt politically insecure, he made an unwise coalition with Syria, 2 Chronicles 16:7-12.

‘There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, throughout their reigns. Baasha, king of Israel, went up against Judah and fortified Ramah to prevent anyone from leaving or entering the territory of Asa, king of Judah. Asa then took all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the LORD’s temple and of his own palace. He entrusted it to his officials and sent them to Ben-Hadad son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus. ‘Let there be a treaty between me and you,’ he said, ‘as there was between my father and your father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Now break your treaty with Baasha, king of Israel, so he will withdraw from me.’ Ben-Hadad agreed with King Asa and sent the commanders of his forces against the towns of Israel. He conquered Ijon, Dan, Abel Beth Maakah and all Kinnereth in addition to Naphtali. When Baasha heard this, he stopped building Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah. Then King Asa issued an order to all Judah—no one was exempt—and they carried away from Ramah the stones and timber Baasha had been using there. With them, King Asa built up Geba in Benjamin, and also Mizpah.’ 1 Kings 15:16-22

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Baasha became king of Israel in the third year of Asa, 1 Kings 15:33. The petty warfare which ordinarily prevailed on the borders of the two kingdoms continued ‘all the days’ of Asa and Baasha. During the first ten years of Asa’s reign, he was little molested, 2 Chronicles 14:1 / 2 Chronicles 14:6.’

The United Kingdom of Israel has truly become the Divided Kingdoms of Israel. Here we read about the continued hostility between the two kingdoms, 1 Kings 15:16 / 2 Chronicles 15:16-16:6 / 2 Chronicles 14:2-3. The only person who could unite them again was God, but sadly, that wasn't going to happen until after their captivity.

Ramah, 1 Kings 15:17 / 2 Chronicles 16:1, wasn't very far from Jerusalem and in the heart of Benjamin. This shows us just how aggressive Baasha was, as he wanted to trap Asa and take the southern kingdom of Judah.

When the Cushites had invaded Judah, Asa asked God for help and guidance, 2 Chronicles 14:9-15, but now, he asked for help from the king of Syria in Damascus, 2 Chronicles 16:2-3.

Ben-Hadad was the son of Hezion, 1 Kings 15:18 / 2 Chronicles 16:2, or Rezon, who was an enemy of Solomon, 1 Kings 11:23-25. In order to break the treaty between Baasha and Syria, Asa sacrificed the remainder of the riches of the temple in order to establish an alliance with Ben-Hadad of Syria, 1 Kings 15:18-19 / 2 Chronicles 16:2-3.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'There was no reason why Asa should have emptied his treasures at this time to procure the aid of the Syrian king, as it does not appear that there was any danger which himself could not have turned aside. He probably wished to destroy the kingdom of Israel, and to effect this purpose, even robbed the house of the Lord.'

Ben Hadad accepted the payment and then broke his alliance with Baasha, the king of Israel, 1 Kings 15:20 / 2 Chronicles 16:4 / 2 Chronicles 13:17-20. Because the alliance with Israel was now broken, Baasha focused on defending his northern borders, 1 Kings 15:20, which actually brought about some relief from the aggression of the northern kingdom.

It's at this point that Asa tears down Ramah and uses the materials to construct other cities, 1 Kings 15:21-22 / 2 Chronicles 16:5-6. Asa's big mistake in all of this was that he didn't put his faith in God to help him; he put his faith in a foreign king.

We don't know much about Hanani the seer, except what he says here to Asa, 2 Chronicles 16:7, and that he was also a prophet who spoke to Baasha, the king of Israel, 1 Kings 16:1 / 1 Kings 16:7, and to Jehoshaphat, the king of Judah, 2 Chronicles 19:2.

The prophet Hanani condemned Asa for this lack of faith in God and severely rebuked him, 2 Chronicles 16:7-9, and Asa responded by placing the prophet in prison, 1 Kings 15:16-24 / 2 Chronicles 16:10 / Hebrews 11:32-40.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The rebuke of Hanani and his imprisonment by Asa, omitted by the writer of Kings, are among the most important of the additions to Asa's history for which we are indebted to the author of Chronicles.'

Notice that Asa not only went against Hanani but also against others who were committed to God and could see the king was going wrong, 2 Chronicles 16:10.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'One thing that the Chronicler most certainly had in mind here was to show the colossal failure of the whole institution of the monarchy. Even a good king like Asa could not remain uncorrupted while wielding the sceptre of unchallenged power. The constant pressure of the flattering sycophants that surround every ruler, and the constantly nourished and promoted conceit of any natural man have the power eventually to break down the strongest heart.'

'As for all the other events of Asa's reign, all his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? In his old age, however, his feet became diseased. Then Asa rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of his father, David. And Jehoshaphat, his son, succeeded him as king.' 1 Kings 15:23-24

Asa's reign lasted longer than the reign of Nadab, who was the king of Israel, the northern kingdom, 2 Chronicles 16:11-17:1. All his achievements, all he did and the cities he built, 2 Chronicles 14:6-7, and other activities, 2

Chronicles 15:9-15 / 2 Chronicles 16:7-10, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah and Israel, 1 Kings 15:23 / 2 Chronicles 16:11.

In his old age, Asa had some kind of foot disease, 1 Kings 15:23 / 2 Chronicles 16:11, which actually began in the thirty-ninth year of his reign, 2 Chronicles 16:12-13.

Whilst he had this foot disease, he once again didn't ask God for help but asked the local doctors to help him, 2 Chronicles 16:12. Asa did nothing wrong in seeking to be healed by the physicians, Colossians 4:14 / Acts 28:9 / James 5:14-15 / 1 Timothy 5:23, however, when healing power was available from God, he should have sought God's healing before consulting the physicians.

Asa dies and is buried with his ancestors, 1 Kings 15:24 / 2 Chronicles 16:13. Asa had, in his later years, turned from the zeal that he had for the Lord in his early days when he led a reformation in Judah. Nevertheless, the good of his reign was greater than his shortcomings.

When he died, great honour was given to him. The huge fire was the burning of many fragrant spices in honour of the king, Jeremiah 34:5 / 2 Chronicles 21:19. Jehoshaphat, his son, now succeeded him as king, 1 Kings 15:24 / 2 Chronicles 17:1.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'If it has been rightly supposed that Rehoboam was a young man of 21 or 22 at his accession, 1 Kings 12:8, Asa's age at this time must have been less than 50. It may seem strange to speak of 'old age' in such a case, but Solomon was regarded as 'old' at about 50, 1 Kings 11:4.'

NADAB KING OF ISRAEL

'Nadab, son of Jeroboam, became king of Israel in the second year of Asa, king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the ways of his father and committing the same sin his father had caused Israel to commit. Baasha, son of Ahijah from the tribe of Issachar, plotted against him, and he struck him down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it. Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of Asa, king of Judah and succeeded him as king. As soon as he began to reign, he killed Jeroboam's whole family. He did not leave Jeroboam anyone that breathed, but destroyed them all, according to the word of the LORD given through his servant Ahijah the Shilonite. This happened because of the sins Jeroboam had committed and had caused Israel to commit, and because he aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel. As for the other events of Nadab's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? There was war between Asa and Baasha, king of Israel, throughout their reigns.' 1 Kings 15:25-32

In these verses, we have an account of Nadab's reign and the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. Nadab reigned over Israel for two years, and it's very clear that he continued in the sins his father, Jeroboam, was involved in, 1 Kings 15:25-26.

Baasha from the tribe of Issachar plotted against him, and struck him down at Gibbethon, a Philistine town, while Nadab and all Israel were besieging it, 1 Kings 15:27.

Gibbethon is believed to be around sixteen miles southeast of Joppa, but at this point in time, it belonged to the Philistines. During the days of Joshua, Gibbethon was given to the Levites, Joshua 21:23.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'It is curious to find Issachar furnishing a king. Tola, it's one very undistinguished Judge, Judges 10:1, on obtaining office had at once settled himself in the territory of Ephraim. The tribe was as little famous as any that could be named. The 'ass crouching between two burthens' was a true symbol of the patient, plodding cultivators of the plain of Esdraelon, Genesis 49:14-15. Baasha probably owed his rise neither to his tribe nor to his social position, but simply to his audacity and his known valour and skill as a soldier, 1 Kings 16:2.'

Baasha killed Nadab, 1 Kings 15:28, and so, Nadab only reigned from 910-909 B.C., which is a relatively short period of time. Notice that Baasha ‘killed Jeroboam’s whole family’, 1 Kings 15:29-30.

This was the fulfilment of the prophecy given by Ahijah, 1 Kings 14:10 / 1 Kings 14:14. Nadab’s reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings 15:31, and once again the war continued between the two kingdoms, 1 Kings 15:32 / 1 Kings 15:16.

BAASHA KING OF ISRAEL

‘In the third year of Asa, king of Judah, Baasha son of Ahijah became king of all Israel in Tirzah, and he reigned twenty-four years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit.’ 1 Kings 15:33-34

Baasha reigned from 909-886 B.C. and he reigned twenty-four years, 1 Kings 15:33. To begin with, things were looking promising for him as king but as time went on, he too, just like Jeroboam started listening to the people and gave in to their idolatrous behaviour and worship, 1 Kings 15:34. We will read more about Baasha in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 16

INTRODUCTION

‘Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu son of Hanani concerning Baasha: ‘I lifted you up from the dust and appointed you ruler over my people Israel, but you followed the ways of Jeroboam and caused my people Israel to sin and to arouse my anger by their sins. So I am about to wipe out Baasha and his house, and I will make your house like that of Jeroboam, son of Nebat. Dogs will eat those belonging to Baasha who die in the city, and birds will feed on those who die in the country.’ As for the other events of Baasha’s reign, what he did and his achievements, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Baasha rested with his ancestors and was buried in Tirzah. And Elah, his son, succeeded him as king. Moreover, the word of the LORD came through the prophet Jehu, son of Hanani, to Baasha and his house, because of all the evil he had done in the eyes of the LORD, arousing his anger by the things he did, becoming like the house of Jeroboam—and also because he destroyed it.’ 1 Kings 16:1-7

Jehu was a prophet, and his father, Hanani, was also a prophet, 1 Kings 16:1 / 2 Chronicles 16:7-10. Jehu is mentioned in 2 Chronicles 20:34, as being the author of a history which is recorded in the book of the kings of Israel. Later, Jehu moved to Jerusalem, 2 Chronicles 16:7-10, and prophesied under Jehoshaphat, whom he rebuked on one occasion. He lived to a good age and outlived Jehoshaphat, 2 Chronicles 20:34.

Although the N.I.V tells us that God appointed Baasha ‘ruler’, 1 Kings 16:2, other translations tell us that God made him a ‘prince’. This tells us that although God brought him to the throne, it was God Himself who was the one with the final authority because a prince didn’t have the final authority of any kingdom.

Baasha, like Asa before him, led people into idolatry, 1 Kings 16:2, and because of this, God removed him from his throne. His household would suffer the same fate as Jeroboam’s because he didn’t turn the people back towards God, 1 Kings 16:3. His family would be eaten by dogs, and the birds would feed off their bodies, 1 Kings 16:4 / 1 Kings 16:7 / 1 Kings 14:7-11.

The other events of Baasha's reign, what he did and his achievements, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings 16:5 / 1 Kings 15:17-21. Baasha dies and was buried in Tirzah and Elah his son succeeded him as king, 1 Kings 16:6.

God spoke through Jehu who told Baasha and his house, he was being punished because of all the evil he had done, arousing God's anger by the things he did, becoming like the house of Jeroboam and also because he destroyed it, 1 Kings 16:7 / 1 Kings 16:4.

ELAH KING OF ISRAEL

'In the twenty-sixth year of Asa, king of Judah, Elah son of Baasha became king of Israel, and he reigned in Tirzah two years. Zimri, one of his officials, who had command of half his chariots, plotted against him. Elah was in Tirzah at the time, getting drunk in the home of Arza, the palace administrator at Tirzah. Zimri came in, struck him down and killed him in the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah. Then he succeeded him as king. As soon as he began to reign and was seated on the throne, he killed off Baasha's whole family. He did not spare a single male, whether relative or friend. So Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit, so that they aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, by their worthless idols. As for the other events of Elah's reign, and all he did, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?' 1 Kings 16:8-14

When we read these verses, we begin to get a glimpse into just how morally corrupt Israel and their leadership have become. We must also remember that in and through all of this corruption, God was going to bring about the Messiah, 1 Kings 19:18.

Elah's reign was actually less than two years, but during this time, Zimri plotted against him, 1 Kings 16:8-9. Elah is busy getting drunk, 1 Kings 16:9, which wasn't worthy behaviour of royalty; he should have been out on the battlefield fighting with his army.

He was getting drunk in the house of Arza, 1 Kings 16:9. He was probably in charge of the palace of Tirzah and probably plotted against Elah along with Zimri.

Zimri becomes king, 1 Kings 16:10, and notice that he killed every one of his predecessor's heirs, leaving no living rival to the throne, 1 Kings 16:11. What Zimri did to Baasha's son was the same as what Baasha had done before him, 1 Kings 16:3. Zimri was a professional soldier, perhaps not even an Israelite since he isn't identified with any tribe.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Zimri's measures were of much more than ordinary severity. Not only was the royal family extirpated, but the friends of the king, his councillors and favourite officers, were put to death. Omri, as having been in the confidence of the late monarch, would naturally fear for himself, and resolve to take the course which promised him at least a chance of safety.'

Zimri destroyed the whole family of Baasha, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken against Baasha through the prophet Jehu because of all the sins Baasha and his son Elah had committed and had caused Israel to commit, especially idolatry, 1 Kings 16:12-13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'We see why it was that God permitted such judgments to fall on this family. Baasha was a grievous offender, and so also was his son Elah; and they caused the people to sin; and they provoked God to anger by their idolatries.'

The other events of Elah's reign, and all he did, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, **1 Kings 16:14**.

ZIMRI KING OF ISRAEL

'In the twenty-seventh year of Asa, king of Judah, Zimri reigned in Tirzah seven days. The army was encamped near Gibbethon, a Philistine town. When the Israelites in the camp heard that Zimri had plotted against the king and murdered him, they proclaimed Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel that very day, there in the camp. Then Omri and all the Israelites with him withdrew from Gibbethon and laid siege to Tirzah. When Zimri saw that the city was taken, he went into the citadel of the royal palace and set the palace on fire around him. So he died, because of the sins he had committed, doing evil in the eyes of the LORD and following the ways of Jeroboam and committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit. As for the other events of Zimri's reign, and the rebellion he carried out, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel?' **1 Kings 16:15-20**

Because of his plotting and scheming against Elah, Zimri was only able to stay in power for seven days, **1 Kings 16:15**, which is the shortest rule of any king in Israelite history. The Israelites rejected him as king and made Omri their king, **1 Kings 16:16**.

There were two reasons why the army of Israel didn't accept Zimri as king: 1. He was a subordinate commander to Omri, and 2. His murder of a host of Elah's friends, along with Elah and all of their sons, must have made him a host of bitter enemies.

It's worth remembering that these kings of Israel were chosen by the people, not by God. God appears to be a distant memory at this point in time, and this is displayed in Israel's sinful behaviour and power struggle.

Zimri didn't have the support of the people, and so when Omri defeated Zimri's weak army of men at Tirzah, he committed suicide by burning himself to death when he set the king's house alight, **1 Kings 16:17-18**.

He is one of only four people mentioned in the Scriptures who committed suicide. The other three are Ahithophel, **2 Samuel 17:23**, King Saul, **1 Samuel 31:5**, and Judas Iscariot, **Matthew 27:5**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'It appears that, at this time, the Israelites had war with the Philistines, and were now besieging Gibbethon, one of their cities. This army, hearing that Zimri had rebelled and killed Elah, made Omri, their general, king, who immediately raised the siege of Gibbethon, and went to attack Zimri in the royal city of Tirzah, who, finding his affairs desperate, chose rather to consume himself in his palace than to fall into the hands of his enemies.'

Zimri didn't learn any lessons from Jeroboam's sins; he made the same fatal mistake of leading Israel to commit idolatry, **1 Kings 16:19**. The other events of Zimri's reign, and the rebellion he carried out, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, **1 Kings 16:20**.

OMRI KING OF ISRAEL

'Then the people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni, son of Ginath, for king, and the other half supported Omri. But Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni, son of Ginath. So Tibni died, and Omri became king. In the thirty-first year of Asa, king of Judah, Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned twelve years, six of them in Tirzah. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill. But Omri did evil in the eyes of the LORD and sinned more than all those before him. He followed completely the ways of Jeroboam, son of Nebat,

committing the same sin Jeroboam had caused Israel to commit, so that they aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, by their worthless idols. As for the other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Omri rested with his ancestors and was buried in Samaria. And Ahab his son succeeded him as king.' 1 Kings 16:21-28

Omri reigned from 885-874 B.C., and he managed to bring together the kingship of the northern kingdom after a period of turmoil among evil kings, and he had a lot of influence internationally.

In the British Museum, there is the Black Obelisk, a black limestone obelisk of Shalmaneser III, which glorifies the achievements of the king and minister. On it are written inscriptions which show tribute coming from all directions.

There are tribute bearers in five rows, identified by captions. Each row has four panels, one on each side of the obelisk, 1. Gilzanu (North-West Iran) tribute includes horses. 2. House of Omri (Ancient Israel- tribute from Biblical King Jehu 841 B.C.). 3. Musri, or Egypt tribute or gift of elephant, ape, and other exotic animals. 4. Suhi on the Euphrates, scene of animal hunting. 5. Patina in Southern Turkey.

The people of Israel were split into two factions; half supported Tibni son of Ginath for king, and the other half supported Omri, 1 Kings 16:21. However, Omri's followers proved stronger than those of Tibni son of Ginath, and so, Tibni died, and Omri became king, 1 Kings 16:22.

Notice that 'Omri the king of Israel' is mentioned, 1 Kings 16:23. This tells us that at this point in time, when Omri had become king, the northern kingdom was divided between those who gave allegiance to Tibni and those who followed Omri.

Omri triumphed in the conflict, and as a result of this, he brought some stability to the kingdom. He bought the hill of Samaria from Shemer for two talents of silver and built a city on the hill, calling it Samaria, after Shemer, the name of the former owner of the hill, 1 Kings 16:24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Omri purchased the right of property in the hill, just as David purchased the threshing-floor, 2 Samuel 24:24 / 1 Kings 21:2. Two talents, or 6,000 shekels, Exodus 38:24, about 500 British pounds or perhaps 800 pounds of our money, may well have been the full value of the ground. And while naming his city after Shemer, Omri may also have had in view the appropriateness of such a name to the situation of the place.'

He moved the capital of Israel from Tizrah to Samaria, 1 Kings 16:24, and so, by doing this, he established Samaria as the centre of government and faith in the northern kingdom.

Omri, just like those before him, led Israel into idolatry, 1 Kings 16:25-26 / Micah 6:16. He obviously was chosen by the people because he, like many before him, wanted to please the people and allowed the people to influence him.

The other events of Omri's reign, what he did and the things he achieved, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, 1 Kings 16:27. He died, and his son, Ahab, now becomes king of Israel, 1 Kings 16:28.

AHAB BECOMES KING OF ISRAEL

'In the thirty-eighth year of Asa, king of Judah, Ahab son of Omri became king of Israel, and he reigned in Samaria over Israel twenty-two years. Ahab, son of Omri, did more evil in the eyes of the LORD than any of those before him. He not only considered it trivial to commit the sins of Jeroboam, son of Nebat, but he also married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal, king of the Sidonians and began to serve Baal and worship him. He set up an altar for Baal in the temple of Baal that he built in Samaria. Ahab also made an Asherah pole and did more to arouse the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, than did all the kings of Israel before him. In Ahab's time, Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho. He laid its foundations at the cost of his firstborn son Abiram, and he set up its gates at the cost of his youngest son Segub, in accordance with the word of the LORD spoken by Joshua son of Nun.' 1 Kings 16:29-34

Ahab reigned from 874 to 853 B.C. He reigned in Samaria over Israel for twenty-two years, **1 Kings 16:29**, and his reign shows us just how evil things have become in Israel. Ahab was worse than all the previous kings, **1 Kings 16:30**.

Up to this point, the focus has been on all the power struggles within Israel, but here the focus is on how evil the kings were in their relationships with the people they reigned over.

Notice that ‘the sins of Jeroboam’, **1 Kings 16:31**, had become mainstream, Ahab considered what he was doing as trivial, not a big deal, **1 Kings 16:31**. We read that this great apostasy to lead Israel into more idolatry was led by Ahab and Jezebel, the king and queen of the northern kingdom, **1 Kings 16:31 / 1 Kings 18:4**. No wonder Israel are setting herself up to fail, no wonder God is eventually going to take them into captivity.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was the head and chief of his offending; he took to wife, not only a heathen, but one whose hostility to the true religion was well known, and carried to the utmost extent.

1. She was the idolatrous daughter of an idolatrous king.
2. She practised it openly.
3. She not only countenanced it in others, but protected it, and gave its partisans honours and rewards.
4. She used every means to persecute the true religion.
5. She was hideously cruel and put to death the prophets and priests of God.
6. And all this she did with the most zealous perseverance and relentless cruelty.

We see just how much the people have rejected God as Baal worship is now the main form of worship in both the northern and southern kingdoms, **1 Kings 16:31-32**.

There appear to be a few righteous people among all this Baal worship, but because of intimidation, their faith goes into hiding. False Baal prophets were employed by the government to impose submission to Baal, which resulted in the true prophets of God also being intimidated.

If there was ever a time for those of great faith in God, Elijah, and Elisha to step up, it was now. The righteous people and the true prophets of God needed to be encouraged and reminded that, amidst all this ungodliness and idolatry, God is still in control. Ahab also made an Asherah pole, and so, God’s people are just going from bad to worse with every king who comes to the throne, **1 Kings 16:33**.

Notice that Hiel built Jericho, **1 Kings 16:34**. Joshua had prophesied that this would happen in **Joshua 6:26**, around five hundred years before. Within his prophecy, he also warned that if anyone did rebuild it, there would be consequences to pay. Here we read about those consequences, which cost the lives of Hiel’s two sons, Abiram and Segub, **1 Kings 16:34**.

CHAPTER 17

INTRODUCTION

‘Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, ‘As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.’ 1 Kings 17:1

ELIJAH ANNOUNCES A GREAT DROUGHT

It’s not surprising, with the current spiritual condition of Israel, that one of God’s prophets appears on the scene. It was time to work miracles through Elijah, 1 Kings 17:1, who was certainly a man of great faith.

If you remember, there were already a few false prophets around who were involved in idolatry, who were put in place by Ahab and Jezebel, 1 Kings 16:29-33, but now it was time for a true prophet.

When Elijah speaks to Ahab, he tells him that God is the God of Israel and He is the living God, which is used in contrast to Baal, who wasn’t. He also prophesies that there will be no dew or rain for the next few years, 1 Kings 17:1.

This tells us that a severe drought was coming, and it was coming from God as a form of punishment for the nation’s idolatry, Deuteronomy 11:16-17 / 2 Samuel 2:3.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Drought was one of the punishments threatened by the Law, if Israel forsook Yahweh and turned after other gods, Deuteronomy 11:17 / Deuteronomy 28:23 / Leviticus 26:19, etc.’

ELIJAH FED BY RAVENS

‘Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah: ‘Leave here, turn eastward, and hide in the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan. You will drink from the brook, and I have directed the ravens to supply you with food there.’ So he did what the LORD had told him. He went to the Kerith Ravine, east of the Jordan, and stayed there. The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning and bread and meat in the evening, and he drank from the brook.’ 1 Kings 17:2-6

When we read James 4:17, we learn that the drought was the request of Elijah. This tells us that it was Elijah who was standing up against the idolatrous practices of Ahab, and he was preparing the way for God’s judgment upon the northern kingdom of Israel.

As we shall see later, this drought prepared the way for that famous showdown between Elijah and all the false prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel, 1 Kings 18:16-40.

It appears that the Lord planned to hide Elijah for a period of time in the wilderness by the Brook Kerith, 1 Kings 17:2-3, and then later, in the house of the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:8.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This brook, and the valley through which it ran, are supposed to have been on the western side of Jordan, and not far from Samaria. Others suppose it to have been on the eastern side, because the prophet is commanded to go eastward, 1 Kings 17:3. It was necessary, after such a declaration to this wicked and idolatrous king, that he should immediately hide himself; as, on the first drought, Ahab would undoubtedly seek his life. But what a proof was this of the power of God, and the vanity of idols! As God’s prophet prayed, so there was rain or drought; and all the gods of Israel could not reverse it! Was not this sufficient to have converted all Israel?’

God tell him he will drink from the brook, and He has directed the ravens to supply him with food, 1 Kings 17:4 / 1 Kings 17:24. Elijah goes to the Kerith Ravine, and stayed there as God told him to, 1 Kings 17:5.

What we read here is nothing short of miraculous, as God commands ravens to bring Elijah food, [1 Kings 17:6](#). They brought bread in the morning and meat in the evening, [1 Kings 17:6](#). God was using the ravens to provide His prophet food. This has to be miraculous because there is simply no other explanation for what has been recorded here.

ELIJAH AND THE WIDOW AT ZAREPHATH

‘Sometime later, the brook dried up because there had been no rain in the land. Then the word of the LORD came to him: ‘Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.’ So he went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, ‘Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?’ As she was going to get it, he called, ‘And bring me, please, a piece of bread.’ ‘As surely as the LORD your God lives,’ she replied, ‘I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.’ Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first, make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. For this is what the LORD, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up, and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the LORD sends rain on the land.’ She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family. For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the LORD spoken by Elijah.’ [1 Kings 17:8-16](#)

We are told that later the brook dried up because there was no rain, [1 Kings 17:8](#) / [Deuteronomy 11:16-17](#). The journey from Gilead, [1 Kings 17:1](#), to Zarephath in the region of Sidon, [1 Kings 17:8](#), was quite a journey, but this region was out of Ahab’s jurisdiction.

Zarephath was a relatively safe place because it was near where Jezebel’s father lived. When Jesus spoke about Zarephath, it was in relation to His lesson about a prophet not being accepted in his own town, [Luke 4:26](#).

We saw earlier how God miraculously fed Elijah by using ravens, now we read about how God is going to use a widow, whose name isn’t mentioned, to feed Elijah out of her poverty, [1 Kings 17:9](#). She was willing to take care of Elijah, even though she was in a desperate state of poverty and had no hope for the future.

While the widow was gathering sticks, Elijah first asks for water, [1 Kings 17:10](#), which she was gladly going to get, despite there being a drought, [1 Kings 17:7](#), but then Elijah asks for some bread, [1 Kings 17:11](#).

She is honest enough to say that she only has a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug and enough bread for one more meal for her and her son, [1 Kings 17:12](#).

Elijah tells her to go and make that bread and bring it to him because God has told him that as long as she takes care of him, the flour and the oil will never run out in your house, [1 Kings 17:13-14](#). Now she had a decision to make. Is she going to trust the God of Israel and obey Him and let Him take care of tomorrow?

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was certainly putting the widow’s faith to an extraordinary trial: to take and give to a stranger, of whom she knew nothing, the small pittance requisite to keep her child from perishing, was too much to be expected.’

She went home and she made that little bit of bread and she brought it to Elijah and they went back to her house and there was flour in that jar and oil in that jar, [1 Kings 17:15](#).

There was flour and oil in her house as long as the prophet lived there, [1 Kings 17:16](#), and so, she chose to obey God and trust Him for her long term future, [2 Kings 4:1-7](#).

This reminds me of the times when Jesus fed the multitude with only a few fish and loaves, [Matthew 14:13-21](#) / [Matthew 15:32-39](#). She trusted God’s Word, that His mercies were new every morning, [Lamentations 3:21-26](#). She trusted God for her daily bread, [Matthew 6:11](#), and she certainly didn’t worry about tomorrow, [Matthew 6:25-34](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is the first recorded miracle of its kind, a supernatural and inexplicable multiplication of food, [2 Kings 4:42-44](#) / [Matthew 14:15-21](#) / [Matthew 15:32-38](#).’

‘Some time later, the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing. She said to Elijah, ‘What do you have against me, man of God? Did you come to remind me of my sin and kill my son?’ ‘Give me your son,’ Elijah replied. He took him from her arms, carried him to the upper room where he was staying, and laid him on his bed. Then he cried out to the LORD, ‘LORD my God, have you brought tragedy even on this widow I am staying with, by causing her son to die?’ Then he stretched himself out on the boy three times and cried out to the LORD, ‘LORD my God, let this boy’s life return to him!’ The LORD heard Elijah’s cry, and the boy’s life returned to him, and he lived. Elijah picked up the child and carried him down from the room into the house. He gave him to his mother and said, ‘Look, your son is alive!’ Then the woman said to Elijah, ‘Now I know that you are a man of God and that the word of the LORD from your mouth is the truth.’ [1 Kings 17:17-24](#)

Sadly, sometime later, the widow’s son became ill and died, [1 Kings 17:17](#) / [Genesis 2:7](#), and she appears to be blaming Elijah for this happening, [1 Kings 17:18](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘She seems to be now conscious of some secret sin, which she had either forgotten, or too carelessly passed over; and to punish this, she supposes the life of her son was taken away. It is mostly in times of adversity that we duly consider our moral state; outward afflictions often bring deep searching of heart.’

Elijah asks for her son, takes him, and carries him to the upper room where he was staying, and lays him on his bed, [1 Kings 17:19](#). After questioning God, [1 Kings 17:19](#), Elijah throws himself on top of the boy three times and cries out to the Lord, [1 Kings 17:20-21](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It is supposed that he did this in order to communicate some natural warmth to the body of the child, in order to dispose it to receive the departed spirit. Elisha, his disciple, did the same in order to restore the dead child of the Shunammite, [2 Kings 4:34](#). And St. Paul appears to have stretched himself on Eutychus in order to restore him to life, [Acts 20:10](#).’

God graciously heard his prayer and granted his request and the boy was raised back to life, [1 Kings 17:22](#). Elijah picks up her son, carries him down from the room into the house and gave him to his mother and said, Look, your son is alive! [1 Kings 17:23](#). With this miracle, the widow was overwhelmed that her son was now alive and she then knew that Elijah was indeed a true prophet of God, [1 Kings 17:24](#).

Although this was a private event, when we get to the New Testament, we see Jesus demonstrating that He, too, could raise people from the dead for God’s glory so that the people would know He was from God, [John 11:38-43](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

Three grand effects were produced by this temporary affliction.

1. The woman was led to examine her heart and try her ways.
2. The power of God became highly manifest in the resurrection of the child.
3. She was convinced that the word of the Lord was truth, and that not one syllable of it could fall to the ground.

Hebrew tradition suggests that the boy who was raised back to life was actually Jonah, and his father, his mother's husband, was Amittai, [Jonah 1:1](#), but this can't be proven.

If Jonah was the son of the widow at Zarephath, he would have been around eighty years old at the beginning of Jeroboam II's reign. But the beginning of Jeroboam's reign is not marked by the bitter affliction of Israel.

On the contrary, the end of his father's reign, Joash, was marked by repeated victories over Syria, [2 Kings 13:25](#), and a great victory over Judah, [2 Kings 14:12-13](#).

In fact, Scripture talks about Joash in terms of 'his might', [2 Kings 14:15](#). So we see the bitter affliction spoken of in [2 Kings 14:26](#), as rising sometime afterwards during the reign of Jeroboam II.

If we allow five to ten years for the affliction to become bitter, this will place the prophecy around one-hundred years after the son of the widow of Zarephath would have been born. I think it is unlikely that Jonah was the widow's son.

But this doesn't mean that it's impossible that Jonah was the son of the widow, but it is highly unlikely. We also note that the widow was a foreigner from Zarephath in the territory of Sidon, [1 Kings 17:9](#).

Jonah was from Gath Hopher, [2 Kings 14:25](#), which was in the territory of Zebulun, about two miles from Nazareth.

If Jonah was the son of the widow, one wonders why he is said to be from Gath Hopher rather than from Zarephath.

Once again, I don't find any good evidence to link Jonah and the widow.

CHAPTER 18

INTRODUCTION

'After a long time, in the third year, the word of the LORD came to Elijah: 'Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.' So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. Now the famine was severe in Samaria, and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the LORD. While Jezebel was killing off the LORD's prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) Ahab had said to Obadiah, 'Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive, so we will not have to kill any of our animals.' So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another.' 1 Kings 18:1-6

ELIJAH AND OBADIAH

After being miraculously fed by the ravens, miraculously feeding the widow from Zarephath and her son and after miraculously raising her son back to life, [1 Kings 17](#), the Lord speaks to Elijah and tells him to go to Ahab, and God will send rain on the land, [1 Kings 18:1](#).

The drought had been in the land for three and a half years, [1 Kings 18:2](#) / [Luke 4:25](#) / [James 5:17](#), and now it was time for Elijah to meet Ahab face to face, [1 Kings 18:2](#). We are told that Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. Obadiah was a devout believer in God, [1 Kings 18:2](#).

It appears that now was the time for God to display His power through Elijah because of the idolatry in which Israel was involved with Baal. It was time to get rid of the four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal.

Notice that Jezebel was ‘killing off the Lord’s prophets’, [1 Kings 18:4](#). This tells us she wasn’t interested in what God had to say or what God’s true prophets had to say.

Obadiah was Ahab’s servant, saving one-hundred of God’s true prophets by hiding them in a cave, [1 Kings 18:4](#). He was looking for grass so that he could save the domestic animals from starvation, [1 Kings 18:5](#).

They divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another, [1 Kings 18:6](#). As always, when evil people are around, there will always be those who want to live right for God.

‘As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognised him, bowed down to the ground, and said, ‘Is it really you, my lord Elijah?’ ‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘Go tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’ ‘What have I done wrong,’ asked Obadiah, ‘that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? As surely as the LORD your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. But now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here.’ I don’t know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn’t find you, he will kill me. Yet I, your servant, have worshipped the LORD since my youth. Haven’t you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD? I hid a hundred of the LORD’s prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. And now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here.’ He will kill me!’ Elijah said, ‘As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today. So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, and Ahab went to meet Elijah.’ [1 Kings 18:7-16](#)

When Obadiah met Elijah, he asked if it was really him, [1 Kings 18:7](#), and the answer to Obadiah’s question was that Elijah was his master, [1 Kings 18:8](#). This question also tells us that Obadiah was a good, righteous man because he accepted Elijah as the spiritual leader of Israel.

Obadiah is understandably reluctant to go before Ahab, [1 Kings 18:9](#). He obviously rejected the idea of worshipping Baal, which was promoted by Ahab and Jezebel; he obviously knew that the prophets of Baal were false, and so, this tells us that he must have secretly maintained his faith in God alone.

He says, as surely as God lives, there isn’t a nation or kingdom where his master has not sent someone to look for him and whenever a nation or kingdom claimed he wasn’t there, he made them swear they could not find him, [1 Kings 18:10](#).

He says but now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here,’ [1 Kings 18:11](#). He doesn’t know where the Spirit of the LORD may carry him when he leaves him, [1 Kings 18:11](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Obadiah supposed that the Spirit of the Lord had carried him to some strange country during the three years and a half of the drought and as he had reason to think that Ahab would slay Elijah if he found him, and that the God of the prophet would not suffer his servant to fall into such murderous hands, he took for granted that as soon as he should come into danger, so soon would the Spirit of the Lord carry him away, or direct him to some hiding place.’

If he goes and tells Ahab he can’t find him, he will kill him, yet he has worshipped God since his youth, [1 Kings 18:12](#). He hasn’t, if he hasn’t heard, what he did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the LORD?

He hid a hundred of the LORD’s prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water, [1 Kings 18:13](#) / [1 Kings 18:4-5](#). He says, and now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here.’ He will kill me! [1 Kings 18:14](#).

Elijah said, ‘As the LORD Almighty lives, whom I serve, I will surely present myself to Ahab today,’ [1 Kings 18:15](#). So Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him, Ahab went to meet Elijah, [1 Kings 18:16](#)

‘When he saw Elijah, he said to him, ‘Is that you, you troubler of Israel?’ ‘I have not made trouble for Israel,’ Elijah replied. ‘But you and your father’s family have. You have abandoned the LORD’s commands and have followed the Baals. Now summon the people from all over Israel to meet me on Mount Carmel. And bring the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and the four hundred prophets of Asherah, who eat at Jezebel’s table.’ [1 Kings 18:17-19](#)

When Ahab meets Elijah, he calls him a ‘troublemaker’, [1 Kings 18:17](#). The reason he called him a ‘troublemaker’ was because in Ahab’s mind, Elijah had troubled Israel by reminding them that they were committing idolatry and had neglected to keep the Lord’s commands.

In Elijah’s case, it appears that people can be troublemakers for all the right reasons. Elijah tells him that he hasn’t troubled Israel, but Ahab and his fathers before him have, [1 Kings 18:18](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Instead of apologies and pleas for pardon, Elijah meets the charge with a counter charge, and makes a sudden demand. ‘Gather to me,’ etc. This boldness, this high tone, this absence of the slightest indication of alarm, seems to have completely discomfited Ahab, who ventured on no reply, made no attempt to arrest the prophet, did not even press him to remove his curse and bring the drought to an end, but simply consented to do his bidding. There is no passage of Scripture which exhibits more forcibly the ascendancy that a prophet of the Lord, armed with His spiritual powers, could, if he were firm and brave, exercise even over the most powerful and most unscrupulous of monarchs.’

The real troublemaker in all of this was Ahab himself because he was supposed to be Israel’s leader but instead of leading people to God, he led them into idolatry, [1 Kings 18:18](#).

It’s at this point that Elijah tells him to gather the people at Mount Carmel and bring four-hundred and fifty prophets of Baal and four-hundred prophets of Asherah, [1 Kings 18:19](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The number 400 seems to have been one especially affected by Ahab. We again find 400 prophets at the close of his reign, [1 Kings 22:6](#). The number 40 entered largely into the religious system of the Jews, [1 Kings 6:17](#) / [Exodus 26:19](#) / [Deuteronomy 25:3](#) / [Ezekiel 41:2](#).’

ELIJAH ON MOUNT CARMEL

‘So Ahab sent word throughout all Israel and assembled the prophets on Mount Carmel. Elijah went before the people and said, ‘How long will you waver between two opinions? If the LORD is God, follow him; but if Baal is God, follow him.’ But the people said nothing. Then Elijah said to them, ‘I am the only one of the LORD’s prophets left, but Baal has four hundred and fifty prophets. Get two bulls for us. Let Baal’s prophets choose one for themselves and let them cut it into pieces and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and put it on the wood, but not set fire to it. Then you call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the LORD. The god who answers by fire—he is God.’ Then all the people said, ‘What you say is good.’ [1 Kings 18:20-24](#)

We don’t know why Mount Carmel was chosen, [1 Kings 18:20](#), but it’s possible because it was located in the high hills, and this place was the main location for Baal worship.

Whatever the reason this place was chosen, the stage was not set for the great showdown between God and the false prophets of Baal. Elijah asks the people ‘How long will they waver between two opinions?’ [1 Kings 18:21](#).

Elijah set a challenge against those who wanted to live in idolatry and those who wanted to live by God, [1 Kings 18:21](#). Notice, when he asked if they would follow God or Baal, the people said nothing, [1 Kings 18:21](#). Elijah was a courageous man who loved God very much.

He knew that it wasn’t easy to stand up against Ahab and the false prophets of Baal. But he trusted in the one true God and was ready to do what God asked him to do. God told Elijah to go and face up to Ahab, and so, he went to see Ahab, and he offered him a challenge.

Elijah basically says let’s have a competition. Each of us will build an altar, prepare a sacrifice and place it on an altar. Then you will ask your god to set fire to your sacrifice, and I will ask my God to set fire to my sacrifice, and

we'll see who wins. King Ahab agreed to the competition, and he gathered all the prophets of Baal together, 1 Kings 18:23-24.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God had frequently before consumed offerings with supernatural fire, Leviticus 9:24 / Judges 6:21. The Baal-worshippers were no doubt in the habit of attributing thunder and lightning to their gods – the great Nature-power – and thus had no excuse for declining Elijah’s challenge.’

Remember, there were four-hundred and fifty prophets of Baal but only one prophet of the one true God, Elijah, 1 Kings 18:22. This made the competition even more exciting and challenging, one true prophet versus four-hundred and fifty false prophets. This was basically God versus man. What we are going to see is that this contest wasn’t really for the false prophet’s benefit but Israel’s benefit.

‘Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, ‘Choose one of the bulls and prepare it first, since there are so many of you. Call on the name of your god, but do not light the fire.’ So they took the bull given them and prepared it. Then they called on the name of Baal from morning till noon. ‘Baal answer us!’ they shouted. But there was no response; no one answered. And they danced around the altar they had made. At noon, Elijah began to taunt them. ‘Shout louder!’ he said. ‘Surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or busy, or travelling. Maybe he is sleeping and must be awakened.’ So they shouted louder and slashed themselves with swords and spears, as was their custom, until their blood flowed. Midday passed, and they continued their frantic prophesying until the time for the evening sacrifice.

But there was no response, no one answered, no one paid attention.’ 1 Kings 18:25-29

Elijah straight away takes the offensive by offering the false prophets a chance to prove themselves before the people, 1 Kings 18:25. The prophets of Baal went first, and so, they built their altar and placed their sacrifice on it. Then they started praying and calling on their god, Baal, to send fire to burn the sacrifice. They prayed and shouted for hours, Acts 19:34, and they even danced around, but nothing happened, 1 Kings 18:26.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

It seems that the priests of Baal employed the whole day in their desperate rites. The time is divided into two periods.

1. From morning until noon; this was employed in preparing and offering the sacrifice, and in earnest supplication for the celestial fire. Still, there was no answer, and at noon, Elijah began to mock and ridicule them, and this excited them to commence anew.

2. They continued from noon till the time of offering the evening sacrifice, dancing up and down, cutting themselves with knives, mingling their own blood with their sacrifice, praying, supplicating, and acting in the most frantic manner.’

Elisha, at this point, begins to mock them by telling them to shout louder, 1 Kings 18:27. He says, Hey, maybe Baal is in deep thought or busy, or maybe he’s on holiday at the moment. In Hebrew, it literally says, Maybe he’s busy on the toilet. Maybe he’s fast asleep, and your shouting isn’t loud enough to wake him.

They started shouting louder and even started cutting themselves to show their devotion to their god, but still, there was no fire, 1 Kings 18:28. Elijah watched them and listened to their frantic prophesying, 1 Kings 18:29, but he knew that their god wouldn’t answer because their god was not real. He knew that the one true God would show His power and love for His people. And so, Elijah decided to make the competition even more difficult for himself.

It’s clear they became frustrated because they started dancing, shouting louder, started slashing themselves, and frantically prophesying. The word ‘prophesying’ here means to rave on, out of control, 1 Samuel 18:10.

In this visible event, the priests of Baal staged an unbelievably outrageous and bloody demonstration of frenzy, confusion, and screaming madness. Sadly, this kind of self-delusional worship still remains today in some churches, where people run around wild, claiming that the Spirit has taken hold of them, 1 Corinthians 14:33.

Some speak in uncontrollable so-called tongues, etc. Everything in their worship is all about feelings and emotions, and like we see happening here, their god doesn't answer them, and nothing happens, Colossians 2:20-23.

'Then Elijah said to all the people, 'Come here to me.' They came to him, and he repaired the altar of the LORD, which had been torn down. Elijah took twelve stones, one for each of the tribes descended from Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, 'Your name shall be Israel.' With the stones, he built an altar in the name of the LORD, and he dug a trench around it large enough to hold two seahs of seed. He arranged the wood, cut the bull into pieces, and laid it on the wood. Then he said to them, 'Fill four large jars with water and pour it on the offering and on the wood.' 'Do it again,' he said, and they did it again. 'Do it a third time,' he ordered, and they did it the third time. The water ran down around the altar and even filled the trench. At the time of sacrifice, the prophet Elijah stepped forward and prayed: 'LORD, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, let it be known today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant and have done all these things at your command. Answer me, LORD, answer me, so these people will know that you, LORD, are God, and that you are turning their hearts back again.' Then the fire of the LORD fell and burned up the sacrifice, the wood, the stones, and the soil, and also licked up the water in the trench. When all the people saw this, they fell prostrate and cried, 'The LORD—he is God! The LORD—he is God!' Then Elijah commanded them, 'Seize the prophets of Baal. Don't let anyone get away!' They seized them, and Elijah had them brought down to the Kishon Valley and slaughtered there.' 1 Kings 18:30-40

The first thing Elijah did was 'repair the altar of the Lord', 1 Kings 18:30. This again shows us how much they neglected their true God. When Solomon reigned, instead of destroying all the high places, he allowed God's people to worship God on the formerly Canaanite high places of Israel, 1 Kings 11:7-8.

This may well have been one of those altars which Elijah repaired, and it could also have been an altar which was used by those who were faithful to God but had to hide their faith because of the persecution of Ahab.

Notice that Elijah took 'twelve stones', 1 Kings 18:31. This tells us that God still saw Israel as twelve tribes. After repairing the altar, Elijah goes on to dig a deep trench, 1 Kings 18:32, and he arranges the wood and cuts the bull into pieces, 1 Kings 18:33. He then tells them to fill four large jars with water and pour it over the wood and sacrifice, 1 Kings 18:33.

It's clear that he didn't want anyone to think that what was going to happen was his own doing. He didn't want anyone to think that there was some kind of 'secret spark' that would start the fire, so he asked them to add the water over the offering and the word three times, 1 Kings 18:34-35.

Surely it would be impossible for the fire to burn the wet sacrifice, but Elijah had faith in the one true God. Elijah then prays to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, that is Jacob, 1 Kings 18:36, which would have prompted memories in Israel's mind.

He asks God to intercede so that they will know God and know that God has turned his heart towards them again, 1 Kings 18:37, which was the main reason for this showdown in the first place.

When God answered Elijah's prayer in a very powerful way. The people were terrified and fell prostrate to the ground and cried out that 'the Lord, he is God', 1 Kings 18:38-39.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'The process of this consumption is very remarkable, and all calculated to remove the possibility of a suspicion that there was any concealed fire.

1. The fire came down from heaven.
2. The pieces of the sacrifice were first consumed.
3. The wood next, to show that it was not even by means of the wood that the flesh was burned.
4. The twelve stones were also consumed, to show that it was no common fire, but one whose agency nothing could resist.

5. The dust, the earth of which the altar was constructed, was burned up.

6. The water that was in the trench was, by the action of this fire, entirely evaporated.

7. The action of this fire was in every case downward, contrary to the nature of all earthly and material fire. Nothing can be simpler and artless than this description, yet how amazingly full and satisfactory is the whole account!’

They knew because the fire came from heaven and because the fire consumed everything in and around the altar that God was with Elijah. In other words, it was at this point that they realised that they had been wrong to worship false gods and now was the time to turn back to the one true God.

This event is far from being normal, but this miraculous event stands as a powerful revelation of who God is, and we must learn from this event, 1 Corinthians 10:6 / 1 Corinthians 10:11.

The unbelievers quickly became believers, and because of what God had done, they were now ready to obey the command of Elijah to carry out the execution of the false prophets, 1 Kings 18:40.

As the leader of the prophets of God, Elijah had all the prophets of Baal executed. Some believe that the killing of these false prophets was unjust and not necessary.

However, when we think about how Jezebel had earlier murdered a lot of God’s true prophets, 1 Kings 18:4, we see this was absolutely just and necessary. We must also keep in mind that false prophets were commanded to be put to death by God, Deuteronomy 13:1-5.

So what can we learn from this event?

1. Be aware.

We need to be aware that there are counterfeit gods out there. If any of you have travelled abroad, you will know that there is always someone trying to sell you counterfeit goods.

On the surface, they looked like the real deal and felt like the real deal and the person selling you the goods is telling you they are real. You can buy a brand new Rolex for ten pounds or a huge bottle of Chanel No5 perfume for five pounds.

Paul speaks about this in Thessalonians, and notice he uses the word ‘counterfeit’, 2 Thessalonians 2:9-10. The miracles, signs and wonders look real, feel real, but they are fake.

And why do people fall for these counterfeit miracles, signs, and wonders? Because they are being deceived into thinking they are real, and they refuse to love the truth and so be saved.

People offer us to buy cheap counterfeit goods because they know there is a need for them. They know that people are easily deceived into thinking they are real. And so, some people would rather rely on their feelings, emotions, and experience than trust what God’s truth reveals in His Word.

So in a sense, their feelings, emotions, and experiences become more important than God’s Word; they become their god, Exodus 20:3. But God’s Word doesn’t change; He still commands that we should have no other gods before Him.

And please don’t think that an idol is only a physical object because Paul says greed is idolatry, Colossians 3:5. Anything that becomes more important in your life other than God can easily become your idol. Idolatry is the ultimate betrayal of the God who created us in His image.

2. We must choose.

The Bible says that the Lord is a jealous God who demands our whole affection. He won't allow any of us to compromise our relationship with Him. He doesn't want any lukewarm followers. He wants people who choose to follow Him and serve Him, Revelation 3:15-16. We can be hot or cold, but we can't be lukewarm.

The contest between Elijah and the false prophets of Baal teaches us that there really is only one true living God, Jeremiah 10:10 / Acts 14:15. As Christians, we must learn to trust Him even when times get tough and challenging. The prophets of Baal were led astray by these false gods, but we, just as Elijah did, must choose who we are going to worship and serve, Joshua 24:14-15.

3. We must be willing to fight.

As Christians, we are Christ's soldiers, and no soldier is called to just sit back and watch others do the fighting for them. The moment you declared Christ as Lord of your life and were baptised into Him is the moment you declared war against the devil. That's why over and over again Christians are commanded to stand firm and fight against the devil's evil schemes, 1 Corinthians 16:13 / Ephesians 6:10-11.

The question is, are you in the fight or just a spectator? Are you fighting against the false teachers of this world with the truth from God's Word, or are you simply not challenging them?

Elijah stood up against the prophets of Baal because he knew the truth, and we too should stand up against the false teachers because we too have the truth within God's Word.

4. We must pray for help.

Elijah would never have won this competition without the help of God. Elijah's competition with the prophets of Baal taught the people a very important lesson about prayer.

They not only learned that there is only one true God who is all-powerful and loving, but they also learned that they should always trust and worship Him, no matter what challenges they face in life.

Elijah knew that God was with him, and we too need to remember when we're faced with our challenges that the same one true God is always with us, Hebrews 13:5. He is always ready to help us when we need Him, and He wants us to trust Him every day.

Paul tells us to pray at all times in the Spirit, to keep alert, and be diligent in prayer, Ephesians 6:18. Elijah prayed because he believed that God isn't a false god, James 5:17-18.

He knows he doesn't have to shout louder and louder to God to wake him up. He knew God was never too busy on the toilet. Elijah was just as human as we are, and he prayed and believed that God would not only hear his prayer but also act upon it.

Who are you praying to? The bank manager to give you a loan to buy a new car or the boss at your work to give you a promotion. The god of sport to make you better than others, or the god of marriage counselling to help you through your marriage problems.

Are you praying to a god who doesn't exist, or are you going to pray to the True God who longs to hear from His children and give them exactly what they need? Luke 11:11-13.

'And Elijah said to Ahab, 'Go, eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain.' So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground, and put his face between his knees. 'Go and look toward the sea,' he told his servant. And he went up and looked. 'There is nothing there,' he said. Seven times Elijah said, 'Go back.' The seventh time the servant reported, 'A cloud as small as a man's hand is rising from the sea.' So Elijah said, 'Go and tell Ahab, 'Hitch up your chariot and go down before the rain stops you.' Meanwhile, the sky grew black with clouds, the wind rose, a heavy rain started falling, and Ahab rode off to Jezreel. The power of the LORD came on Elijah and, tucking his cloak into his belt, he ran ahead of Ahab all the way to Jezreel.' 1 Kings

Elijah tells Ahab to eat and drink, for there is the sound of a heavy rain,' 1 Kings 18:41. In Old Testament times, it was widely believed that the gods were in control of the rain, which brought about life to the crops of the fields. Baal was one such god, and the people of Elijah's time believed that he controlled the weather in order to bless the people. So Ahab went off to eat and drink, but Elijah climbed to the top of Carmel, bent down to the ground, and put his face between his knees, 1 Kings 18:42.

We don't know who Elijah's servant was but when he initially looked toward the sea, he couldn't see anything, and so Elijah tells him to go back seven times, 1 Kings 18:43.

When he goes back for the seventh time, he sees a small cloud rising from the sea, 1 Kings 18:44. Elijah tells his servant to prepare a chariot and go down to Ahab before the rain stops him, 1 Kings 18:44.

The small cloud rises higher and higher, and becomes larger and larger with astonishing celerity, till the whole sky is black, and the cloud bursts in a deluge of rain, 1 Kings 18:45.

The reason for this was simple: the river Kishon would be suddenly so swollen, which meant it would be impassable. It could also be because the wheels of the chariot could get stuck in the deep layer of dust when the dust turned into mud.

It was Elijah who originally called for the drought, 1 Kings 17:1 / James 5:18, because the people of that time deceived themselves into thinking that Baal controlled the weather.

But here we see that Elijah prays again and the rains return, which now demonstrates to everyone present that it was actually the true God of Israel who controlled the weather and blessed all people with it, Matthew 5:45.

Ahab rode off to Jezreel, 1 Kings 18:45 / 1 Kings 21:1, and notice that 'the power of the Lord came on Elijah', 1 Kings 18:46. This is a reference to the sudden miraculous endowment of Elijah with the physical ability to run ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to Jezreel which was around seventeen miles away, 1 Kings 18:46. We see this supernatural empowerment happening with Samson, Judges 16:3.

CHAPTER 19

INTRODUCTION

'Now Ahab told Jezebel everything Elijah had done and how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. So Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah to say, 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if by this time tomorrow I do not make your life like that of one of them.' Elijah was afraid and ran for his life. When he came to Beersheba in Judah, he left his servant there, while he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness. He came to a broom bush, sat down under it, and prayed that he might die. 'I have had enough, LORD,' he said. 'Take my life; I am no better than my ancestors.' Then he lay down under the bush and fell asleep. All at once, an angel touched him and said, 'Get up and eat.' He looked around, and there by his head was some bread baked over hot coals, and a jar of water. He ate and drank and then lay down again. The angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, 'Get up and eat, for the journey is too much for you.' So he got up and ate and drank. Strengthened by that food, he travelled forty days and forty nights until he reached Horeb, the mountain of God. There he went into a cave and spent the night.' 1 Kings 19:1-9

ELIJAH FLEES TO HOREB

When Ahab finally met up with Jezebel and told her everything Elijah had done, [1 Kings 19:1](#). It appears that Jezebel had a more domineering character than Ahab. After hearing the report, Jezebel is now determined that she wants to kill Elijah, [1 Kings 19:2](#).

It's incredible to think that after everything that God had done through Elijah, most of Israel repented and turned back to God, [1 Kings 18:30-40](#), but Jezebel totally refuses to repent. She is so blinded by the truth, [2 Corinthians 4:4](#), and instead of repenting, she takes her anger out on Elijah.

We must understand that Elijah thought he was the only true prophet of God at this time; he didn't know that seven thousand others didn't bow down to Baal, [1 Kings 19:18](#), and so, it's understandable that Elijah ran for his life from Jezebel at this time.

He, therefore, ran away to Beersheba, which was ninety-five miles from Jezreel for several days, [1 Kings 19:3](#). He is obviously feeling very low and very tired, [1 Kings 18:46](#), and because of this, he almost contradicts himself with his prayer request.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Elijah did not feel himself safe until he was beyond the territory of Judah, for Ahab might demand him of Jehoshaphat [1 Kings 18:10](#), with whom he was on terms of close alliance [1 Kings 22:4](#). He, therefore, proceeds southward into the desert, simply to be out of the reach of his enemies.'

He had just run for his life from Jezebel, but now he's asking God to take his life. Notice that Elijah came to a 'broom bush and prayed that he might die', [1 Kings 19:4](#).

This is what Jonah did too, [Jonah 4:3](#), and just like the case of Jonah, God didn't grant Elijah's request to die. Notice the angel touched him twice, [1 Kings 19:5](#) / [1 Kings 19:7](#).

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The friendly ministration of angels, common in the time of the patriarchs, [Genesis 18:2-16](#) / [Genesis 19:1-22](#) / [Genesis 28:12](#) / [Genesis 32:1](#) / [Genesis 32:24-29](#), and known also under the Judges, [Judges 6:11-21](#) / [Judges 13:3-20](#), was now extended to Elijah.'

After being prompted to eat twice by an angel, [1 Kings 19:5-7](#), and after the angel miraculously makes and supplies food for him, Elijah took the forty-mile trip from Hebron to Mount Sinai, [1 Kings 19:8](#).

He then goes into a cave and spent the night, [1 Kings 19:9](#) / [Exodus 33:22](#). It appears that God always sends great men of faith to deserts to enjoy the tranquillity the desert offers but also to prepare them for a great movement which is coming up. He did this with Moses, [Exodus 2:11-15](#) / [Exodus 2:16-25](#) / [Exodus 3:1-15](#) / [Exodus 3:19-20](#), Jesus, [Matthew 4:1-11](#), and Paul, [Galatians 1:11-18](#).

THE LORD APPEARS TO ELIJAH

'And the word of the LORD came to him: 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.' The LORD said, 'Go out and stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by.' Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind. After the wind, there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake. After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire. And after the fire came a gentle whisper. When Elijah heard it, he pulled his cloak over his face and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave. Then a voice said to him, 'What are you doing here, Elijah?' He replied, 'I have been very zealous for the LORD God Almighty. The Israelites have rejected your covenant, torn down your altars, and put your prophets to death with the sword. I am the only one left, and now they are trying to kill me too.' The LORD said to him, 'Go back the way you came, and go to the Desert of Damascus. When you get there, anoint Hazael king over Aram. Also, anoint Jehu, son of Nimshi, king over Israel, and anoint

Elisha, son of Shaphat from Abel Meholah, to succeed you as prophet. Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu. Yet I reserve seven thousand in Israel, all whose knees have not bowed down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him.’ 1 Kings 19:9-18

After spending some time in the desert, being prepared by God for what was coming up, God asked him, What are you doing there? 1 Kings 19:9. This tells us that Elijah has a mission ahead of him, but that mission wasn’t to be in the desert. Elijah explains to God how he was zealous for the Lord, but Israel has gone from bad to worse, 1 Kings 19:10.

He again feels that he is all alone, 1 Kings 19:10 / 1 Kings 18:22, and he’s possibly thinking that the restoration of Israel should happen straight away, but as we all must learn, great things often take a great deal of time, and in God’s timetable, Ecclesiastes 3:1 / Habakkuk 2:3. God tells him to stand on the mountain in the presence of the LORD, for the LORD is about to pass by, 1 Kings 19:11.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God was now treating Elijah nearly in the same way that he treated Moses; and it is not unlikely that Elijah was now standing on the same place where Moses stood, when God revealed himself to him in the giving of the law, Exodus 19:9 / Exodus 19:16.’

Then a great and powerful wind tore the mountains apart and shattered the rocks before the LORD, but the LORD was not in the wind and after the wind there was an earthquake, but the LORD was not in the earthquake, 1 Kings 19:11.

After the earthquake came a fire, but the LORD was not in the fire and notice, after the fire a ‘gentle voice’ spoke to Elijah, 1 Kings 19:12. Some translations use the words, a ‘still small voice’.

We learn here that God doesn’t need to appear in great physical events such as earthquakes and fires in order to start His work. His power can be concealed behind a whisper.

God wanted Elijah to know that while force and spectacular demonstrations are sometimes necessary, God’s real work is accomplished by the ‘still small voice’ calling men to do God’s will.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears that the passing by of the Lord occasioned the strong wind, the earthquake, and the fire, but in none of these was God to make a discovery of himself unto the prophet, yet these, in some sort, prepared his way, and prepared Elijah to hear the still small voice.’

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It appears that another instruction to be derived from the contrast of the wind, the earthquake, and the fire with the ‘still small voice’ is that many of the problems related to God’s dealings with his rebellious human children cannot be solved quickly. Elijah demanded an immediate solution to the problem of idolatry.’ He demanded of the people, much the same prompt decision as did Joshua, who said, ‘then choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve’, Joshua 24:15, but neither Joshua nor Elijah could force the issue to a conclusion in one day, or even in one generation. The nearly infinite patience with man’s sins is a mark of God’s love of the human creation.’

Elijah heard it, pulled his cloak, Matthew 3:4, over his face, Exodus 3:6, and went out and stood at the mouth of the cave and then a voice asks him, ‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’ 1 Kings 19:13.

He repeats what he said earlier, how he was zealous for the Lord but Israel has gone from bad to worse, and he feels that he is all alone, 1 Kings 19:14 / 1 Kings 19:10.

There’s no need to waste time sulking around in the desert; God has work for Elijah to do, and it begins with anointing three people to be anointed: Hazael, 2 Kings 8-9, Jehu, 2 Kings 9:20 / 2 Chronicles 22:7, and Elisha, 1 Kings 19:15-16.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This is almost the only place where we hear of the anointing of prophets, [1 Chronicles 16:22](#) / [Psalms 105:15](#).’
There is now a great change coming, but sadly, it wouldn’t come in Elijah’s lifetime. The time was coming when all the kings of Israel and Judah would change, there’s a time coming when God’s leading prophet would change from Elijah to Elisha, [1 Kings 19:16](#).

God tells him that Jehu will put to death any who escape the sword of Hazael, and Elisha will put to death any who escape the sword of Jehu, [1 Kings 19:17](#). God tells Elijah that He ‘reserve seven thousand in Israel’, [1 Kings 19:18](#). Later in the New Testament, the apostle Paul referred to this passage as proof that, despite the general apostasy of the whole of Israel, God still retained the loyalty of seven thousand persons who had not bowed the knee to Baal, [Romans 11:4](#).

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Seven thousand is a perfect number and probably should be understood as a larger but indefinite multitude. This is the beginning of the doctrine of the ‘Righteous Remnant’ which receives so much attention in Isaiah, [Isaiah 6:13](#) / [Isaiah 10:20-23](#).’

He didn’t know that seven thousand others didn’t bow down to Baal and whose mouths have not kissed him, [1 Kings 19:18](#). The worship of Baal not only included throwing kisses at the idol but also included literally kissing the idol itself, [Hosea 13:2](#) / [Job 31:26-27](#).

THE CALL OF ELISHA

‘So Elijah went from there and found Elisha, son of Shaphat. He was ploughing with twelve yokes of oxen, and he himself was driving the twelfth pair. Elijah went up to him and threw his cloak around him. Elisha then left his oxen and ran after Elijah. ‘Let me kiss my father and mother goodbye,’ he said, ‘and then I will come with you.’ ‘Go back,’ Elijah replied. ‘What have I done to you?’ So Elisha left him and went back. He took his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them. He burned the ploughing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate. Then he set out to follow Elijah and became his servant.’ [1 Kings 19:19-21](#)

After leaving Hebron, Elijah finds Elisha, who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen, [1 Kings 19:19](#). Interestingly, God didn’t send Elijah to a city but to a field to find his successor.

It appears that Elisha was a farmer who knew how to work and prepare the fields. If anyone knows about patience and preparation work, it’s the farmers, [Ecclesiastes 3:1-2](#).

Elijah approaches Elisha and throws his cloak around him, [1 Kings 19:19](#) / [2 Kings 2:9-12](#). This was symbolic of Elijah anointing Elisha to come and follow him.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Either this was a ceremony used in a call to the prophetic office, or it indicated that he was called to be the servant of the prophet. The mantle, or pallium, was the peculiar garb of the prophet, as we may learn from [Zechariah 13:4](#), and this was probably made of skin dressed with the hair on, [2 Kings 1:8](#). It is likely, therefore, that Elijah threw his mantle on Elisha to signify to him that he was called to the prophetic office.’

It appears Elisha knew exactly what was happening, as he asks to say goodbye to his mother and father by kissing them, [1 Kings 19:20](#) / [Luke 9:61-62](#) / [Luke 14:25-35](#).

When Elijah tells him to go back and asks, What have I done to you? [1 Kings 19:20](#), he’s basically giving Elisha permission to go back to his parents. He’s telling Elisha that he doesn’t want to put any pressure on him; it’s his choice to do so, in order to fulfil his calling as a prophet.

Elisha goes to his parents, takes his yoke of oxen and slaughtered them and then he burned the ploughing equipment to cook the meat and gave it to the people, and they ate, [1 Kings 19:21](#).

Notice that Elisha became Elijah's servant, [1 Kings 19:21](#) / [Galatians 6:6](#). Although we read more about Elijah in [2 Kings 2:1-12](#), this in effect was the end of Elijah's ministry as God's prophet.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'Elisha returns to his oxen and labourers. He indicates the relinquishment of his home and calling by the slaughter of the particular yoke of oxen with which he had himself been ploughing, probably the best beasts of the twelve, and by burning the 'instruments,' the ploughs and yokes, both made of wood. Next, he feeds his people to show his gratitude for his call, Elijah apparently remaining the while and then, leaving father and mother, cattle and land, good position and comfortable home, Elisha became the 'minister' to the wanderer, [Exodus 24:13](#) / [Joshua 1:1](#).'

CHAPTER 20

INTRODUCTION

As we enter these last three chapters, we read about the last five years of Ahab's reign, and we read about war after war between Israel, Judah, and Syria. Whilst these three nations are fighting each other, in the background, there is another nation rising, a nation which is going to change the history of the northern kingdom of Israel forever; that nation is the Assyrians.

BEN-HADAD ATTACKS SAMARIA

'Now Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, mustered his entire army. Accompanied by thirty-two kings with their horses and chariots, he went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it. He sent messengers into the city to Ahab, king of Israel, saying, 'This is what Ben-Hadad says: 'Your silver and gold are mine, and the best of your wives and children are mine.' The king of Israel answered, 'Just as you say, my lord the king. I and all I have are yours.' The messengers came again and said, 'This is what Ben-Hadad says: 'I sent to demand your silver and gold, your wives, and your children. But about this time tomorrow, I am going to send my officials to search your palace and the houses of your officials. They will seize everything you value and carry it away.' The king of Israel summoned all the elders of the land and said to them, 'See how this man is looking for trouble! When he sent for my wives and my children, my silver, and my gold, I did not refuse him.' The elders and the people all answered, 'Don't listen to him or agree to his demands.' So he replied to Ben-Hadad's messengers, 'Tell my lord the king, 'Your servant will do all you demanded the first time, but this demand I cannot meet.' They left and took the answer back to Ben-Hadad. Then Ben-Hadad sent another message to Ahab: 'May the gods deal with me, be it ever so severely, if enough dust remains in Samaria to give each of my men a handful.' The king of Israel answered, 'Tell him: 'One who puts on his armour should not boast like one who takes it off.' Ben-Hadad heard this message while he and the kings were drinking in their tents, and he ordered his men: 'Prepare to attack.' So they prepared to attack the city.' [1 Kings 20:1-12](#)

Ben-Hadad gathered an army, and the thirty-two kings who were rulers of the city-states made an alliance with Ben-Hadad, [1 Kings 20:1](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He is supposed to be the same whom Asa stirred up against the king of Israel, 1 Kings 15:18, or, as others, his son or grandson.’

Together, they went up and besieged Samaria and attacked it. 1 Kings 20:1. Ben-Hadad tells Ahab that his silver and gold are his, and the best of his wives and children are his, and Ahab agrees, 1 Kings 20:2-3.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘It may be supposed that a considerable time had passed in the siege, that the city had been reduced to an extremity, and that ambassadors had been sent by Ahab to ask terms of peace short of absolute surrender, before Ben-Hadad would make such a demand. He would expect and intend his demand to be rejected, and this would have left him free to plunder the town, which was evidently what he desired and purposed.’

The messengers go to Ahab a second time and tell him that Ben-Hadad says, he demands the silver, gold, and Ahab’s wives and children, he is going to send officials to search Ahab’s palace and houses and they will take every away, 1 Kings 20:4.

Ahab knew that Baal couldn’t do anything to save him but appeared to be content to buy his life on any terms whatever. Rather than being a courageous king and defending his people, he was willing to give him gold, silver, wives, and children, 1 Kings 20:7. I guess he thought it was better to be a living poor king than to be a dead rich king. The elders, 1 Kings 21:8-14, and the people advise Ahab not to listen to Ben-Hadad, and so he sends messengers back to him informing him that they can’t meet his second demands, 1 Kings 20:8-9. This didn’t go down very well with Ben-Hadad, and so, he sends word back threatening to totally flatten Samaria, 1 Kings 20:10.

Ahab tells him that, ‘one who puts on his armour should not boast like one who takes it off,’ 1 Kings 20:11, which basically means that no one should boast as if the battle has already been won, hence you take your armour off when the battle is finished. And so the stage is set for a war between Ahab and Ben-Hadad, 1 Kings 20:12.

AHAB DEFEATS BEN-HADAD

‘Meanwhile, a prophet came to Ahab, king of Israel and announced, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘Do you see this vast army? I will give it into your hand today, and then you will know that I am the LORD.’ ‘But who will do this?’ asked Ahab. The prophet replied, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘The junior officers under the provincial commanders will do it.’ ‘And who will start the battle?’ he asked. The prophet answered, ‘You will.’ So Ahab summoned the 232 junior officers under the provincial commanders. Then he assembled the rest of the Israelites, 7,000 in all. They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the 32 kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk. The junior officers under the provincial commanders went out first. Now Ben-Hadad had dispatched scouts, who reported, ‘Men are advancing from Samaria.’ He said, ‘If they have come out for peace, take them alive; if they have come out for war, take them alive.’ The junior officers under the provincial commanders marched out of the city with the army behind them, and each one struck down his opponent. At that, the Arameans fled, with the Israelites in pursuit. But Ben-Hadad, king of Aram, escaped on horseback with some of his horsemen. The king of Israel advanced and overpowered the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans. Afterward, the prophet came to the king of Israel and said, ‘Strengthen your position and see what must be done, because next spring the king of Aram will attack you again.’ 1 Kings 20:13-22

We don’t know who this prophet was but it appears now that Ahab is in trouble, a real prophet of God came to him to tell him the truth, 1 Kings 20:13. The prophet’s message from God was that God will give the vast army into Ahab’s hands, and then Ahab will know that God is the LORD, 1 Kings 20:13.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The boast of Ben-Hadad, 1 Kings 20:10, was not without a basis of truth; his force seems to have exceeded 130,000, 1 Kings 20:25 / 1 Kings 20:29-30. In his wars with the Assyrians, we find him sometimes at the head of 100,000 men.’

Ahab asks who will do this? And the prophet tells him, the junior officers under the provincial commanders will do it, 1 Kings 20:13.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘These were probably some chosen persons out of the militia of different districts, raised by the princes of the provinces; the same as we would call lord-lieutenants of counties.’

The prophet gives him some instructions concerning what to do against Ben-Hadad. The prophet’s advice to Ahab was to take the offensive. Ahab asks the prophet the question, ‘Who will start the battle?’ 1 Kings 20:14, and I’m sure that Ahab would have been shocked when he was told that he himself would start the battle, especially since he only had two hundred and thirty-two young men, 1 Kings 20:15.

There would be no doubt in Ahab’s mind that his victory only came because of God, not because of anything he did. The total army of seven thousand, 1 Kings 20:15, was only a pitifully small handful compared to the estimated one-hundred and thirty thousand troops of Ben-Hadad.

They set out at noon while Ben-Hadad and the thirty-two kings allied with him were in their tents getting drunk, 1 Kings 20:15 / Daniel 5:1-4. The young men went out first, 1 Kings 20:16.

Meanwhile, Ben-Hadad dispatched scouts, who reported that men were coming from Samaria, and he told them if they came in peace or if they came to fight, then take them alive, 1 Kings 20:17-18.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘He was confident of victory. Do not slay them; bring them to me, they may give us some useful information.’

The young men then marched out of the city with the army behind them, and each one killed their opponent, and so, the Arameans fled while being chased by the Israelites, 1 Kings 20:19-20. Ben-Hadad managed to escape on horseback with some of his horsemen, 1 Kings 20:20.

Ahab advances and overpowers the horses and chariots and inflicted heavy losses on the Arameans, 1 Kings 20:21. Sometime later, the prophet came to Ahab and told him, Ben-Hadad isn’t finished yet, he will return the following spring for another go, 1 Kings 20:22.

‘Meanwhile, the officials of the king of Aram advised him, ‘Their gods are gods of the hills. That is why they were too strong for us. But if we fight them on the plains, surely we will be stronger than they. Do this: Remove all the kings from their commands and replace them with other officers. You must also raise an army like the one you lost—horse for horse and chariot for chariot—so we can fight Israel on the plains. Then surely we will be stronger than they.’ He agreed with them and acted accordingly. The next spring, Ben-Hadad mustered the Arameans and went up to Aphek to fight against Israel. When the Israelites were also mustered and given provisions, they marched out to meet them. The Israelites camped opposite them like two small flocks of goats, while the Arameans covered the countryside.’ 1 Kings 20:23-27

Ben-Hadad believed, as many people believe these days, that each deity only lived in certain places. Here we see that he believed that Israel’s God only lived in the hills, 1 Kings 20:23.

The reason they believed God lived in the hills is that this is where Israel offered their sacrifices, in the high places. And so, because of this belief, he decided that his army should fight Israel on the plains, 1 Kings 20:23, thinking that Israel’s God didn’t live there.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The local power and influence of deities was a fixed principle of ancient polytheism. Each country was considered to have its own gods, and wars were regarded as being, to a great extent, struggles between the gods of the nations engaged in them. This is apparent throughout the Assyrian inscriptions, [2 Kings 18:33-35](#) / [2 Kings 19:12](#).’

The Syrians wanted to allow the kings to determine the battle plan but allow the captains of the soldiers to engage the enemy on the battlefield, [1 Kings 20:24](#). Compared to the Syrian army, [1 Kings 20:25-26](#), Israel’s army looked like two small flocks of goats, [1 Kings 20:27](#), but what the Syrians didn’t take into account was that God Himself was going to fight this battle for Israel.

Even though Israel was an idolatrous nation, He never gave up on them, He still fought their battles, [Joshua 6:2](#) / [Joshua 6:16](#) / [Joshua 8:1](#) / [Joshua 8:18](#) / [Judges 7:2](#) / [Judges 18:10](#) / [1 Samuel 23:4](#) / [1 Samuel 24:4](#). God wasn’t and can never be confined to one place, He is everywhere, [1 Kings 8:27](#) / [Psalm 139:7-12](#).

‘The man of God came up and told the king of Israel, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘Because the Arameans think the LORD is a god of the hills and not a god of the valleys, I will deliver this vast army into your hands, and you will know that I am the LORD.’ For seven days, they camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day the battle was joined. The Israelites inflicted a hundred thousand casualties on the Aramean foot soldiers in one day. The rest of them escaped to the city of Aphek, where the wall collapsed on twenty-seven thousand of them. And Ben-Hadad fled to the city and hid in an inner room.’ [1 Kings 20:28-30](#)

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following concerning the man of God.

‘Evidently not the prophet who had spoken to Ahab the year before, [1 Kings 20:13](#) / [1 Kings 20:22](#). He probably dwelt in the neighbourhood of Samaria. Now that Ahab and his army had marched out into the Trans-Jordanic territory, another prophet, a native probably of that region, announced God’s will to them.’

Once again, we’re reminded that God never does anything without a reason. God was going to fight with Israel, and Israel would win, so that they, Israel and the Syrians, by default, would know that He is the Lord, [1 Kings 20:28](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘God resents their blasphemy and is determined to punish it. They shall now be discomfited in such a way as to show that God’s power is everywhere, and that the multitude of a host is nothing against him.’

For seven days, they camped opposite each other, and on the seventh day, the battle began, [1 Kings 20:29](#). Notice how many of the Syrians died, one-hundred and twenty-seven thousand in total, [1 Kings 20:29-30](#).

There can be no doubt that a supernatural God was behind this. If Israel and the Syrians didn’t believe that God was real and won this battle, then nothing would. Ben-Hadad flees to the city and hides in an inner room, [1 Kings 20:30](#).

‘His officials said to him, ‘Look, we have heard that the kings of Israel are merciful. Let us go to the king of Israel with sackcloth around our waists and ropes around our heads. Perhaps he will spare your life.’ Wearing sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, they went to the king of Israel and said, ‘Your servant Ben-Hadad says: ‘Please let me live.’ The king answered, ‘Is he still alive? He is my brother.’ The men took this as a good sign and were quick to pick up his word. ‘Yes, your brother Ben-Hadad!’ they said. ‘Go and get him,’ the king said. When Ben-Hadad came out, Ahab had him come up into his chariot. ‘I will return the cities my father took from your father,’ Ben-Hadad offered. ‘You may set up your own market areas in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria.’ Ahab said, ‘On the basis of a treaty, I will set you free.’ So he made a treaty with him and let him go.’ [1 Kings 20:31-34](#)

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Ben-Hadad’s officials realise that there is nothing they could do, and so they go to Ahab with sackcloth around their waists and ropes around their heads, [1 Kings 20:31-32](#). Oh, how the roles have swapped, [1 Kings 20:9](#). The sackcloth was a sign of humility, and the ropes were a sign of submission.

Ben Hadad begs for his life and notice that Ahab says that Ben Hadad was his brother, [1 Kings 20:32-33](#). This wasn’t literal, but it was said because Ahab didn’t want to kill Ben-Hadad because the Assyrian Empire in the north was beginning to grow at this time.

The Assyrians were a real threat, and because Syria stood between Israel and Assyria, Ahab wanted to keep an alliance with Syria, [1 Kings 20:34](#). This agreement explains why the Syrians and the Israelites fought together at the battle in Qarqar in 854/53 B.C.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘What an incredibly stupid and ridiculous thing was this that Ahab did, allowing Ben-Hadad to announce the terms upon which he received his life and his freedom. What about all that gold and silver that Ahab had paid prior to the first battle? Why did he not demand its repayment? Ben-Hadad did not even promise to build streets for Ahab in Damascus, but would allow Ahab to build them! And those cities Ben-Hadad promised to give to Ahab, they already belonged to Israel! Poor Ahab here ‘brothered’ himself out of the spoils that should have belonged to the victor; and as a prophet soon would tell him, he had ‘brothered’ himself out of his own life as well!’

A PROPHET CONDEMNS AHAB

‘By the word of the LORD, one of the company of the prophets said to his companion, ‘Strike me with your weapon,’ but he refused. So the prophet said, ‘Because you have not obeyed the LORD, as soon as you leave me, a lion will kill you.’ And after the man went away, a lion found him and killed him. The prophet found another man and said, ‘Strike me, please.’ So the man struck him and wounded him. Then the prophet went and stood by the road waiting for the king. He disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes. As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, ‘Your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, ‘Guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver.’ While your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared.’ ‘That is your sentence,’ the king of Israel said. ‘You have pronounced it yourself.’ Then the prophet quickly removed the headband from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognised him as one of the prophets. He said to the king, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘You have set free a man I had determined should die. Therefore, it is your life for his life, your people for his people.’ Sullen and angry, the king of Israel went to his palace in Samaria.’ [1 Kings 20:35-43](#)

Here again, we find another unnamed prophet of God, who was one of a company of prophets, [1 Kings 20:35](#) / [1 Samuel 19:20](#). He tells his companion to strike him with his weapon but his companion refused, [1 Kings 20:35](#). The prophet tells him because he hasn’t obeyed the LORD, as soon as he leaves the prophet a lion will kill him, and as soon as he leaves he is killed by a lion, [1 Kings 20:36](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This seems a hard measure, but there was ample reason for it. This person was also one of the sons of the prophets, and he knew that God frequently delivered his counsels in this way, and should have immediately obeyed, for the smiting could have had no evil in it when God commanded it, and it could be no outrage or injury to his fellow when he himself required him to do it.’

The prophet finds another man and asks him to strike me, and so, the man does and wounds him, [1 Kings 20:37](#). The prophet goes out to wait for the king and disguised himself with his headband down over his eyes, [1 Kings 20:38](#). When Ahab walks by, the prophet calls out to him, and says, ‘your servant went into the thick of the battle, and someone came to me with a captive and said, ‘guard this man. If he is missing, it will be your life for his life, or you must pay a talent of silver, [1 Kings 20:39](#).

He tells Ahab while your servant was busy here and there, the man disappeared, and so Ahab tells him that is your sentence, you have pronounced it yourself, [1 Kings 20:40](#).

The prophet then removes his disguise, [1 Kings 20:38](#), and Ahab recognises him and so, the prophet tells him, that judgment is coming upon Ahab because he allowed Ben-Hadad to go free, [1 Kings 20:41-42](#) / [Leviticus 27:28](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘This was fulfilled at the battle of Ramoth-Gilead, where he was slain by the Syrians, [1 Kings 22:34-35](#).’

It appears that despite God slaughtering the Syrian army, Ahab didn’t recognise that God was behind the victory for Israel. It’s almost as if he happily makes an agreement with the Syrians, but at the same time, he totally ignores that it was God who had protected them.

Several years ago, King Saul failed to kill Agag, who was king of the Amalekites, and Saul was punished because of it. Ahab makes the same mistake by allowing Ben Hadad to live, [1 Samuel 15:17-33](#).

Notice that Ahab was ‘sullen and angry’, [1 Kings 20:43](#) / [1 Kings 21:27](#). He obviously believed the rebuke he had from the prophet. The joy he must have had after the victory quickly turned into deep disappointment because he now knows that God didn’t approve of him allowing Ben-Hadad to live and go free.

CHAPTER 21

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we begin to see what kind of king Ahab really is. We see a selfish, ambitious king who will go to any length to get his own way. We also read about his selfish, ambitious wife, Jezebel, who appears to dominate everything in Ahab’s life. What he wants, he gets; what she wants, she gets!

NABOTH’S VINEYARD

‘Some time later, there was an incident involving a vineyard belonging to Naboth the Jezreelite. The vineyard was in Jezreel, close to the palace of Ahab, king of Samaria. Ahab said to Naboth, ‘Let me have your vineyard to use for a vegetable garden, since it is close to my palace. In exchange, I will give you a better vineyard or, if you prefer, I will pay you whatever it is worth.’ But Naboth replied, ‘The LORD forbid that I should give you the inheritance of my ancestors.’ So Ahab went home, sullen, and angry because Naboth the Jezreelite had said, ‘I will not give you the inheritance of my ancestors.’ He lay on his bed sulking and refused to eat.’ [1 Kings 21:1-4](#)

Here we read of Ahab’s selfishness. There’s a vineyard in Jezreel which belongs to a man named Naboth, and Ahab asks him for it, [1 Kings 21:1-2](#). Many years ago, Samuel had prophesied that when Israel got a king of their own choosing, then that king would take their fields and their vineyards, [1 Samuel 8:14](#), and it appears that Ahab is fulfilling that part of the prophecy.

Ahab wants to give Naboth in exchange for his vineyard, a better vineyard or, if he prefers, he will pay him whatever it is worth, [1 Kings 21:2](#). Naboth couldn’t sell his vineyard to Ahab because it was part of his inheritance, [1 Kings 21:3](#). God’s law forbids him from selling the inherited land, [Leviticus 25:23-28](#) / [Numbers 36:1-9](#).

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘No man could finally alienate any part of the parental inheritance; it might be sold or mortgaged till the jubilee, but at that time it must revert to its original owner, if not redeemed before; for this God had particularly enjoined, [Leviticus 25:14-17](#) / [Leviticus 25:25-28](#).’

Ahab was well aware of this law, but he selfishly still wanted the land; all he was thinking about was himself and not Naboth. After being told he couldn’t have the vineyard, he goes home ‘sullen and angry’, [1 Kings 21:4](#) / [1 Kings](#)

20:43, because he couldn't get what he wanted. He threw himself a pit party by sulking in bed and refusing to eat, 1 Kings 21:4.

'His wife Jezebel came in and asked him, 'Why are you so sullen? Why won't you eat?' He answered her, 'Because I said to Naboth the Jezreelite, 'Sell me your vineyard; or if you prefer, I will give you another vineyard in its place.' But he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.' Jezebel, his wife, said, 'Is this how you act as king over Israel? Get up and eat! Cheer up. I'll get you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.' So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, placed his seal on them, and sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city with him. In those letters she wrote: 'Proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people. But seat two scoundrels opposite him and have them bring charges that he has cursed both God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death.' So the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed in the letters she had written to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place among the people. Then two scoundrels came and sat opposite him and brought charges against Naboth before the people, saying, 'Naboth has cursed both God and the king.' So they took him outside the city and stoned him to death. Then they sent word to Jezebel: 'Naboth has been stoned to death.' As soon as Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned to death, she said to Ahab, 'Get up and take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite that he refused to sell you. He is no longer alive, but dead.' When Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, he got up and went down to take possession of Naboth's vineyard.' 1 Kings 21:5-16

Jezebel, who was from Sidon, 1 Kings 16:31, comes and asks Ahab why he is so sullen and refusing to eat, and he tells her it's because Naboth refused to give him his vineyard, 1 Kings 21:5-6.

Here we see the selfishness of Ahab's wife; she had absolutely no respect for God's laws, and we also see that she had absolutely no respect for Naboth and his life.

The domineering factor of Jezebel is seen in what she says to Ahab, 'Is this how you act as king over Israel?' 1 Kings 21:7. As far as she is concerned, Ahab was king, and he could do whatever he wanted, regardless of what God's laws say and regardless of who he hurt in the process, Judges 17:6 / Judges 21:25 / Proverbs 21:2.

After writing letters in Ahab's name and sealing them, she sent them to the elders and nobles who lived in Naboth, 1 Kings 21:8. They are to proclaim a day of fasting and seat Naboth in a prominent place among the people, 1 Kings 21:9.

Notice that she arranges for two scoundrels to bear false witness against Naboth, 1 Kings 21:10. This tells us that she has some knowledge of God's laws because, in any trial, where the death penalty could be applied, there had to be at least two witnesses, Numbers 35:30 / Deuteronomy 17:6-7 / Deuteronomy 19:15.

We see the same thing happened to David, Psalms 27:12, and centuries later with Jesus, Matthew 26:60 / Mark 14:56, and Stephen, Acts 6:13. Jezebel also knew what the law said concerning the death penalty, Leviticus 24:13-16.

The elders and nobles who lived in Naboth's city did as Jezebel directed and proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth in a prominent place, 1 Kings 21:11-12. They took Naboth outside the city and stoned him to death, and sent word to Jezebel that he had been stoned to death, 1 Kings 21:13 / 2 Kings 9:26.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'As they pretended to find him guilty of treason against God and the king, it is likely they destroyed the whole of his family, and then the king seized on his grounds as confiscated, or as escheated to the king, without any heir at law. That his family was destroyed appears strongly intimated, 2 Kings 9:26.'

It appears that even those who knew Naboth were terrified of Jezebel and submitted to her idea of killing Naboth. It appears that even the elders were terrified of Jezebel and submitted to her idea of killing Naboth. This shows us just how evil Jezebel is; she is selfish and ambitious and will do whatever it takes to get what she wants.

Coffman, in his commentary, asks and answers the following question.

'What about Naboth's heirs? 'Jezebel's knowledge of the Books of Moses enabled her to take care of that also. The pretence of that false trial was modelled after the example of Joshua and the stoning of Achan, Joshua 7:1-25, and it

will be remembered that not only Achan but his wife and all of his sons and daughters were also stoned with him. Yes, Jezebel took care of everything. They stoned all of Naboth's sons, 2 Kings 9:26, at the same time as the stoning of Naboth, so that there would not be any heirs!

'Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Go down to meet Ahab, king of Israel, who rules in Samaria. He is now in Naboth's vineyard, where he has gone to take possession of it. Say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: Have you not murdered a man and seized his property?' Then say to him, 'This is what the LORD says: In the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood—yes, yours!' Ahab said to Elijah, 'So you have found me, my enemy!' 'I have found you,' he answered, 'because you have sold yourself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD. He says, 'I am going to bring disaster on you. I will wipe out your descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel—slave or free. I will make your house like that of Jeroboam, son of Nebat and that of Baasha, son of Ahijah, because you have aroused my anger and have caused Israel to sin.' 'And also concerning Jezebel, the LORD says: 'Dogs will devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel.' 'Dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country.' (There was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel, his wife. He behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel.) When Ahab heard these words, he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth, and fasted. He lay in sackcloth and went around meekly. Then the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite: 'Have you noticed how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has humbled himself, I will not bring this disaster in his day, but I will bring it on his house in the days of his son.' 1 Kings 21:17-

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Nothing goes unnoticed by God, nothing is hidden from His eyes, Proverbs 15:3 / Hebrews 4:13. God knew exactly what Ahab had done and sent Elijah to him to tell him his and Jezebel's fate, 1 Kings 21:17-18. The message which Elijah brought to Ahab wasn't good.

Because they had murdered Naboth and taken his property, Ahab and Jezebel were to die, but their death was going to be a horrible death, 1 Kings 21:19. Elijah tells him, 'in the place where dogs licked up Naboth's blood, dogs will lick up your blood, yes, yours!' 1 Kings 21:19.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'Now dogs did lick the blood of Ahab but it was at the pool of Samaria, where his chariot and his armour were washed, after he had received his death wound at Ramoth-Gilead but some think this was the place where Naboth was stoned, 1 Kings 22:38. And how literally the prediction concerning his son was fulfilled, 2 Kings 9:25, where we find that the body of Jehoram his son, just then slain by an arrow that had passed through his heart, was thrown into the portion of the field of Naboth the Jezreelite; and there, doubtless, the dogs licked his blood, if they did not even devour his body.'

Ahab knows that Elijah is now his enemy, 1 Kings 21:20 / Romans 7:14, and because he was God's prophet, he would also know that God is now his enemy, James 4:4.

Notice that their death was to be a very public affair. The reason for this public death was to send a powerful message to the Israelites and let them know that when this prophecy was fulfilled, everyone would know that Elijah was a true prophet of God and God Himself was their God.

God is going to bring disaster on Ahab, and He will remove his descendants and cut off from Ahab every last male in Israel, slave or free, 1 Kings 21:21. Ahab's household would become like that of Jeroboam and Baasha, 1 Kings 21:22.

In other words, his dynasty would come to an end. Jezebel will be devoured by dogs by the wall of Jezreel, 1 Kings 21:23 / 2 Kings 9:36, and the dogs will eat those belonging to Ahab who die in the city, and the birds will feed on those who die in the country, 1 Kings 21:24.

We are told by the author that there was never anyone like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil in the eyes of the LORD, urged on by Jezebel, his wife, 1 Kings 21:25. We are also told that Ahab behaved in the vilest manner by going after idols, like the Amorites the LORD drove out before Israel, 1 Kings 21:26.

It appears that Ahab still had some kind of conscience because he tore his clothes, put on sackcloth and fasted, 1 Kings 21:27. Jezebel probably thought the words of Elijah were a bunch of rubbish. Ahab also ‘went around meekly’, 1 Kings 21:27, which possibly means he went around barefoot.

Elijah’s words of judgment must have had a big impact on Ahab because God spared his life. However, the judgment wouldn’t come in his lifetime, 1 Kings 21:28-29; it would come later, as his sons would have to pay the price for Ahab stealing Naboth’s vineyard.

Joram, who carried the blood of Ahab, was the last of Ahab’s house, and he was thrown by Jehu upon the very plot of ground where the dogs licked Naboth’s blood at Jezreel, 2 Kings 9:26.

CHAPTER 22

INTRODUCTION

‘For three years, there was no war between Aram and Israel. But in the third year, Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went down to see the king of Israel. The king of Israel had said to his officials, ‘Don’t you know that Ramoth Gilead belongs to us and yet we are doing nothing to retake it from the king of Aram?’ So he asked Jehoshaphat, ‘Will you go with me to fight against Ramoth Gilead?’ Jehoshaphat replied to the king of Israel, ‘I am as you are, my people as your people, my horses as your horses.’ But Jehoshaphat also said to the king of Israel, ‘First seek the counsel of the LORD.’ So the king of Israel brought together the prophets—about four hundred men—and asked them, ‘Shall I go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or shall I refrain?’ ‘Go,’ they answered, ‘for the Lord will give it into the king’s hand.’ But Jehoshaphat asked, ‘Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?’ The king of Israel answered Jehoshaphat, ‘There is still one prophet through whom we can inquire of the LORD, but I hate him because he never prophesies anything good about me, but always bad. He is Micaiah, son of Imlah.’ ‘The king should not say such a thing,’ Jehoshaphat replied. So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, ‘Bring Micaiah son of Imlah at once.’ Dressed in their royal robes, the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them. Now Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, had made iron horns, and he declared, ‘This is what the LORD says: ‘With these you will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed.’ All the other prophets were prophesying the same thing. ‘Attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious,’ they said, ‘for the LORD will give it into the king’s hand.’ 1 Kings 22:1-

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MICAHIAH PROPHECIES AGAINST AHAB

Israel made an alliance with Syria which lasted for three years, 1 Kings 22:1 / 1 Kings 20:26-29 / 1 Kings 20:34.

However, at the end of those three years, Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Judah, 1 Kings 22:2-4, so that he could secure himself from the threat of Syria and Assyria in the north, 1 Kings 22:1-38 / 2 Chronicles 18:1-27 / 2 Chronicles 17:12-19.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘From this time until the displacement of Ahab’s dynasty by Jehu, very intimate relations subsisted between the two kingdoms, 1 Kings 22:49 / 2 Kings 3:7 / 2 Kings 8:28-29 / 2 Chronicles 20:36, etc.’

Jehoshaphat allied himself with Ahab by marriage, 2 Chronicles 18:1, which tells us he is trying to unite the kingdoms of Israel and Judah. However, this was the wrong way of going about it. It was to be a huge mistake for

Jehoshaphat to go to Ahab because this alliance, or any marital alliance, was never given approval from God, **2 Chronicles 19:2**.

Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, was given in marriage to Jehoram, the son of Jehoshaphat. Sadly, the evil influence of Ahab and Jezebel came into the life of Jehoram, and so, when he came to the throne, wickedness once again came into the royal family of Judah.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We find that there was a good understanding between Jehoshaphat and Ahab, which no doubt was the consequence of a matrimonial alliance between the son of the former, Jehoram, and the daughter of the latter, Athaliah, **2 Chronicles 18:1 / 2 Kings 8:18**. This coalition did not please God, and Jehoshaphat is severely reprov'd for it by Jehu the seer, **2 Chronicles 19:1-3**.’

Jehoshaphat also tells Ahab that he needs to consult God for advice, **1 Kings 22:5 / 2 Chronicles 18:4**. It was to be a huge mistake for Jehoshaphat to go to Ahab because this alliance or any marital alliance was never given approval from God, **2 Chronicles 19:2**.

He also ignored the huge differences which were happening between the two kingdoms. This was the first time that a king of Judah, of the house of David, had visited one of the kings who had revolted from that dynasty.

It appears that even though four hundred and fifty false prophets of Baal were killed at Mount Carmel, **1 Kings 18:19 / 1 Kings 18:19 / 1 Kings 18:40**, there were still other false prophets around, **1 Kings 22:6 / 2 Chronicles 18:5 / Isaiah 9:15 / Jeremiah 5:13 / Jeremiah 5:31 / Jeremiah 23:11 / Jeremiah 23:15-16 / Hosea 4:5 / Micah 3:5-7**. The king of Israel brought four hundred prophets, **1 Kings 22:4-39**; however, they were being paid by Ahab, which would mean they would be biased in their political judgments. Jehoshaphat’s asking for a prophet of God dramatically states that the four hundred prophets of Ahab were not prophets of God.

Ahab’s god was Baal, and his prophets were automatically prophets of Baal, not of God, **1 Kings 22:53**. In other words, what they said couldn’t be trusted, and so, it’s not surprising that Jehoshaphat was sceptical about what they said.

After consulting the prophets, it’s clear they were ‘ear-tickling’ prophets who told Ahab what Ahab wanted to hear, **1 Kings 22:6 / 2 Chronicles 18:6 / 2 Timothy 4:3**.

It’s also clear that the false prophets of Ahab were very confident in what they were saying because Jehoshaphat was present. They obviously assumed that because the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were united at this point in time, victory in the battle with the Syrians was certain.

He wanted a second opinion, and so he went to a true prophet of God, Micaiah. The good news is that Jehoshaphat wasn’t like Ahab; he still relied on God for guidance, hence why he asks, ‘Is there no longer a prophet of the LORD here whom we can inquire of?’ **1 Kings 22:7 / 2 Chronicles 18:6**.

Ahab tells Jehoshaphat that he knows about the prophet Micaiah, but he hates him, **1 Kings 20:35**, because he never prophesies anything good about him, but Jehoshaphat tells Ahab he shouldn’t say such a thing, **1 Kings 22:8 / 2 Chronicles 18:7**.

Ahab now calls for Micaiah, **1 Kings 22:9 / 2 Chronicles 18:8**, because he knows that Micaiah will only speak the truth, no matter who he is being supported by. Since Ahab was living in wickedness, Micaiah could only say that which was contrary to the wicked wishes of Ahab.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

‘We may be certain that Ahab called Micaiah reluctantly, and that while Micaiah was being summoned, the false prophets redoubled their efforts in the hope of convincing Jehoshaphat. The occasion was a spectacular display of the kings on their thrones dressed in all their royal regalia at the gate of Samaria, and those four hundred false prophets

putting on a vigorous display of their false prophecies. It seems very likely that Micaiah was in prison when Ahab sent for him; this is indicated by the fact of his ready availability to Ahab and his being sent for by a eunuch, the type of officer usually in charge of the harem and of the prison, and likewise by the fact of Zedekiah's arrogant slap of the defenceless Micaiah.'

We are told Ahab and Jehoshaphat were dressed in their royal robes and were sitting on their thrones at the threshing floor by the entrance of the gate of Samaria, with all the prophets prophesying before them, **1 Kings 22:10 / 2 Chronicles 18:9**.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following, concerning **1 Kings 22:10 / 2 Chronicles 18:9**.

'They had removed from the banquet, **2 Chronicles 18:2**, to the void place, or empty space at the entrance of the gate, **Ruth 4:1 / 2 Samuel 15:2**, where Ahab daily sat to hear complaints and decide causes. Each was seated upon his throne, the Oriental kings having portable thrones, which they took with them upon their journeys.'

Zedekiah had made iron horns, which symbolise power, **Deuteronomy 33:17 / Psalms 44:5 / Daniel 8:4**, and he declares that God says with these he will gore the Arameans until they are destroyed and all the other prophets were prophesying the same thing, attack Ramoth Gilead and be victorious, because God will give them the victory, **1 Kings 22:11-12 / 2 Chronicles 18:10-11**.

'The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, 'Look, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king. Let your word agree with theirs and speak favourably.' But Micaiah said, 'As surely as the LORD lives, I can tell him only what the LORD tells me.' When he arrived, the king asked him, 'Micaiah, shall we go to war against Ramoth Gilead, or not?' 'Attack and be victorious,' he answered, 'for the LORD will give it into the king's hand.' The king said to him, 'How many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' Then Micaiah answered, 'I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, 'These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace.' The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, 'Didn't I tell you that he never prophesies anything good about me, but only bad?' Micaiah continued, 'Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there?' 'One suggested this, and another that. Finally, a spirit came forward, stood before the LORD, and said, 'I will entice him.' 'By what means?' the LORD asked. 'I will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets,' he said. 'You will succeed in enticing him,' said the LORD. 'Go and do it.' 'So now the LORD has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of yours. The LORD has decreed disaster for you.' **1 Kings 22:13-23**

The messenger who had gone to summon Micaiah said to him, the other prophets without exception are predicting success for the king, and so, let your word agree with theirs, and speak favourably, **1 Kings 22:13 / 2 Chronicles 18:12 / Isaiah 30:10**.

Micaiah, however, tells the messenger that he can only say what God tells him to say, **1 Kings 22:14 / 2 Chronicles 18:13**. Ahab now asks Micaiah, if he should go to war or not and Micaiah tells him to go to war because God will give him the victory, **1 Kings 22:15 / 2 Chronicles 18:14**.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'These were the precise words of the false prophets, **1 Kings 22:6 / 1 Kings 22:12**, and were spoken by Micaiah in such a tone and manner as at once showed to Ahab that he did not believe them; hence the king adjures him, **1 Kings 22:16**, that he would speak to him nothing but truth; and on this the prophet immediately relates to him the prophetic vision which pointed out the disasters which ensued.'

It's clear that Ahab was very familiar with Micaiah because he asks, 'how many times must I make you swear to tell me nothing but the truth in the name of the LORD?' **1 Kings 22:16 / 2 Chronicles 18:15**. Ahab was also very familiar with other prophecies which Micaiah had made, **1 Kings 20:13 / 1 Kings 20:35**.

After asking that question, Micaiah replies by saying, ‘I saw all Israel scattered on the hills like sheep without a shepherd, and the LORD said, ‘These people have no master. Let each one go home in peace,’ 1 Kings 22:17 / 2 Chronicles 18:16. These words are the same words which God told Moses concerning Israel, Numbers 27:17.

Notice that Ahab said that Micaiah never prophesied anything good for him, 1 Kings 22:18 / 2 Chronicles 18:17, but this isn’t the case, 1 Kings 20:13-34. Micaiah tells Ahab that he saw the LORD sitting on his throne with all the multitudes of heaven standing around him on his right and on his left, 1 Kings 22:19 / 2 Chronicles 18:18.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘David’s Psalms had familiarised the Israelites with Yahweh sitting upon a throne in the heavens, Psalms 9:7 / Psalms 11:4 / Psalms 45:6 / Psalms 103:19, etc, but to be allowed to see in vision the ineffable glory of the Almighty thus seated was a rare favour. It was granted to Isaiah, to Daniel, to Ezekiel, Ezekiel 1:26, and in Christian times to Stephen, Acts 7:56, and John, Revelation 4:2.’

God asked the question, ‘who will entice Ahab into attacking Ramoth Gilead and going to his death there? 2 Chronicles 18:19, one suggested this, and another that, 1 Kings 22:20.

Finally, a spirit comes forward and volunteers to entice Ahab, 1 Kings 22:21 / 2 Chronicles 18:20. God asks how the spirit will do this and the spirit says he will go out and be a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all his prophets, and God says that the spirit will succeed, 1 Kings 22:22 / 2 Chronicles 18:20-21.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

‘The difficulties which attach to this passage are considerable. On the one hand, it is hard to suppose one of the holy Angels a ‘lying spirit’, on the other, hard to find Satan, or an evil spirit, included among ‘the host of heaven’, 1 Kings 22:19, and acting as the minister of God. Still, Job 1:6 / Job 2:1, lend countenance to the latter point, and 2 Thessalonians 2:11, to the former. But it may be doubted whether we ought to take literally, and seek to interpret exactly, each statement of the present narrative.’

So now God has put a deceiving spirit in the mouths of all these prophets of Ahab’s and decreed disaster for him, 1 Kings 22:23 / 2 Chronicles 18:22. Everyone was well aware of the judgment which God brought upon Ahab and Jezebel because of the way they dealt with Naboth in order to steal his inherited vineyard, 1 Kings 21:17-29. And so, failure to win this battle would provide the perfect opportunity for God to fulfil his judgment on Ahab, 1 Kings 22:23. Micaiah exposed the false prophecies of the false prophets whom Ahab had asked to help him with his desires, and at the same time, he also revealed the judgment which was now coming upon Ahab, 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12.

When we go back and look at the attitude of Ahab, 1 Kings 21:25-26 / 1 Kings 22:8 / 1 Kings 22:19-23, it becomes evident that God didn’t in reality command that the false prophets lie to Ahab.

He simply permitted them to do so, as they had already been doing. Micaiah’s vision simply related in figurative language how God would use Ahab’s own false prophets to bring about his downfall.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

‘Is it requisite again to remind the reader that the Scriptures repeatedly represent God as doing what, in the course of his providence, he only permits or suffers to be done? Nothing can be done in heaven, in earth, or hell, but either by his immediate energy or permission.’

The fact that Ahab was punished shows that Ahab himself was held responsible for rejecting the truth and believing the lie. God didn’t lie to Ahab, nor did He put lies in the mouth of Ahab’s prophets.

God simply made use of them in a providential way for those who were already lying to Ahab. The false prophets lied because they chose to lie, and Ahab believed them because he chose to believe them, Romans 1:24-25.

‘Then Zedekiah, son of Kenaanah, went up and slapped Micaiah in the face. ‘Which way did the spirit from the LORD go when he went from me to speak to you?’ he asked. Micaiah replied, ‘You will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room.’ The king of Israel then ordered, ‘Take Micaiah and send him back to Amon, the ruler of the city and to Joash, the king’s son and say, ‘This is what the king says: Put this fellow in prison and give him nothing but bread and water until I return safely.’ Micaiah declared, ‘If you ever return safely, the LORD has not spoken through me.’ Then he added, ‘Mark my words, all you people!’ 1 Kings 22:24-28

Zedekiah slapped Micaiah in the face and demanded to know which way the spirit from the LORD goes when he went from me to speak to you? Micaiah tells him he will find out on the day you go to hide in an inner room, 1 Kings 22:24-25 / 2 Chronicles 18:23-24.

The people were frightened to death of Ahab, and because of men like Zedekiah, no one would say anything bad against him. However, when the truth is spoken against what most people believed, the fulfilment of the prophecy was actually proof that the prophecy was from God Himself, Deuteronomy 18:18-22.

Micaiah is taken and sent back to Amon and to Joash the king’s son, 1 Kings 22:26 / 2 Chronicles 18:25 / 2 Chronicles 28:7. The command is that Micaiah be placed in prison and will only be given bread and water, 1 Kings 22:27 / 2 Chronicles 18:26. Having Micaiah thrown in prison is usually what happens when people speak the truth and others don’t like it, Acts 14:22 / 2 Timothy 2:8-13 / 1 Peter 4:16.

The prophecy was very clear, and everyone present would have heard the words that Ahab would die at Ramoth Gilead. Micaiah accepted the test of all true prophecy, namely, that it will come to pass, 1 Kings 22:28 / 2 Chronicles 18:27 / Jeremiah 28:9.

AHAB KILLED AT RAMOTH GILEAD

‘So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat, king of Judah, went up to Ramoth Gilead. The king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, ‘I will enter the battle in disguise, but you wear your royal robes.’ So the king of Israel disguised himself and went into battle. Now the king of Aram had ordered his thirty-two chariot commanders, ‘Do not fight with anyone, small or great, except the king of Israel.’ When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought, ‘Surely this is the king of Israel.’ So they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, the chariot commanders saw that he was not the king of Israel and stopped pursuing him. But someone drew his bow at random and hit the king of Israel between the sections of his armour. The king told his chariot driver, ‘Wheel around and get me out of the fighting. I’ve been wounded.’ All day long, the battle raged, and the king was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening he died. As the sun was setting, a cry spread through the army: ‘Every man to his town. Every man to his land!’ 1 Kings 22:29-36

Ahab and Jehoshaphat go up to Ramoth Gilead, 1 Kings 22:29 / 2 Chronicles 18:28. When we read these verses, it appears that Ahab to a degree anyway, believed what Micaiah has said, because he wants to go into battle in disguise, 1 Kings 22:30 / 2 Chronicles 18:29.

Because of this, he asks Jehoshaphat to wear his royal robes, 1 Kings 22:30 / 2 Chronicles 18:29, so that the Syrians wouldn’t be able to identify him asking of Israel in the battle.

It appears that Ben-Hadad, the king of Aram, wants his soldiers to focus on the king of the northern kingdom, not Jehoshaphat. Ben-Hadad commands his men not to fight with anyone, except Ahab, the king of Israel, 1 Kings 22:31 / 2 Chronicles 18:30.

The reason behind this is simple enough to understand. If any king of any nation was captured or killed in battle, then the opposing side would automatically claim the victory.

When the chariot commanders saw Jehoshaphat, they thought he was Ahab, and so, they turned to attack him, but when Jehoshaphat cried out, the chariot commanders saw that he was not Ahab and stopped pursuing him, 1 Kings 22:32-33 / 2 Chronicles 18:31-32.

Notice that someone drew their bow at ‘random’ and killed Ahab, **1 Kings 22:34 / 2 Chronicles 18:33**. It’s surely possible that this arrow didn’t randomly hit Ahab but was guided by God Himself.

The bloody battle lasted all day long, **Isaiah 8:7-8**, and Ahab was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans, **1 Kings 22:35 / 2 Chronicles 18:34**. The blood from his wound ran onto the floor of the chariot, and that evening Ahab died, **1 Kings 22:35 / 2 Chronicles 18:34**.

Remember this was God’s judgment upon Ahab, and although he disguised himself, he couldn’t escape the judgment of God. After the news got around that the Israelite army had learned that Ahab was dead, every man dispersed and returned to his home, **1 Kings 22:36**.

‘So the king died and was brought to Samaria, and they buried him there. They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria (where the prostitutes bathed), and the dogs licked up his blood, as the word of the LORD had declared. As for the other events of Ahab’s reign, including all he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, and the cities he fortified, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel? Ahab rested with his ancestors. And Ahaziah his son, succeeded him as king.’ **1 Kings 22:37-40**

Because Ahab died, **1 Kings 22:37 / 2 Chronicles 18:34**, this was the fulfilment of God’s judgment upon him because of his sinfulness and the way he treated Naboth and in the taking of his vineyard.

They washed the chariot at a pool in Samaria where the prostitutes bathed, and the dogs licked up his blood, just as God said they would, **1 Kings 22:38 / 1 Kings 21:19 / 1 Kings 20:42**.

Josephus, in his writings, says the following.

‘The ‘pool of Samaria,’ which was stained with Ahab’s blood by the washing of his chariot in it, was the usual bathing-place of the Samaritan harlots. A large tank or reservoir, probably identical with this pool, still remains on the slope of the hill of Samaria, immediately outside the walls.’

The other events of Ahab’s reign, including all he did, the palace he built and adorned with ivory, **Amos 3:15**, and the cities he fortified, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Israel, **1 Kings 22:39 / 1 Kings 14:19 / 1 Kings 15:31 / 1 Kings 16:5 / 1 Kings 16:14 / 1 Kings 16:20 / 1 Kings 16:27**. Ahaziah his son now succeeded him as king, **1 Kings 22:40**.

JEHOSHAPHAT KING OF JUDAH

‘Jehoshaphat, son of Asa, became king of Judah in the fourth year of Ahab, king of Israel. Jehoshaphat was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother’s name was Azubah, daughter of Shilhi. In everything, he followed the ways of his father Asa and did not stray from them; he did what was right in the eyes of the LORD. The high places, however, were not removed, and the people continued to offer sacrifices and burn incense there. Jehoshaphat was also at peace with the king of Israel. As for the other events of Jehoshaphat’s reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah? He rid the land of the rest of the male shrine prostitutes who remained there even after the reign of his father, Asa. There was then no king in Edom; a provincial governor ruled.’ **1 Kings 22:41-47**

Jehoshaphat now becomes king of Judah, **1 Kings 22:41**, and he was thirty-five years old when he began to reign, and he reigned for twenty-five years in Jerusalem, **2 Chronicles 20:31 / 1 Kings 22:44 / 2 Chronicles 17-20**. His mother’s name was Azubah; she was the daughter of Shilhi, **1 Kings 22:42 / 2 Chronicles 20:31**.

Unlike the idolatrous practices of the northern kingdom, Jehoshaphat refused to get involved in, or even promote any kind of idolatrous practices at this time in the history of the southern kingdom, **2 Chronicles 17:1-20:37**.

He walked in all the way of Asa his father, doing that which was right in the eyes of God, 1 Kings 22:43 / 2 Chronicles 20:32 / 2 Chronicles 16:2-12. Jehoshaphat is credited with being a godly and righteous king, doing that which was right in the eyes of the Lord.

However, because Asa, his father, tolerated the sodomites and allowed the high places of the Canaanite sacrifices to remain, 1 Kings 14:21-24, he didn't remove the high places, and so, the people still sacrificed and burnt incense there, 1 Kings 22:43 / 2 Chronicles 20:33.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'In 2 Chronicles 17:6, it is expressly said that he did take away the high places. Allowing that the text is right in 2 Chronicles, the two places may be easily reconciled. There were two kinds of high places in the land.

1. Those used for idolatrous purposes.

2. Those that were consecrated to God, and were used before the temple was built. The former he did take away, the latter he did not.'

He shouldn't have made peace with Ahab, 1 Kings 22:44. The other events of Jehoshaphat's reign, the things he achieved and his military exploits, are written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah, 1 Kings 22:45 / 2 Chronicles 20:34.

Barnes, in his commentary, says the following.

'The biographer of Jehoshaphat appears to have been Jehu, the son of Hanani, 2 Chronicles 20:34.'

It's obvious that the king's removal from the land of Judah of all of the practitioners of 'male shrine prostitutes', 1 Kings 22:46, was a God-approved act of Jehoshaphat, 1 Corinthians 6:10. We are told that there was then no king in Edom, but a provincial governor ruled, 1 Kings 22:47 / 2 Kings 8:22.

'Now Jehoshaphat built a fleet of trading ships to go to Ophir for gold, but they never set sail—they were wrecked at Ezion Geber. At that time, Ahaziah, son of Ahab, said to Jehoshaphat, 'Let my men sail with yours,' but Jehoshaphat refused. Then Jehoshaphat rested with his ancestors and was buried with them in the city of David, his father. And Jehoram his son succeeded him as king.' 1 Kings 22:48-50

Just as Solomon had done before him, 1 Kings 9:26-28, Jehoshaphat starts the big rebuilding process in the southern kingdom of Israel by sending trading ships to Ophir, 1 Kings 22:48 / 2 Chronicles 20:36.

Clarke, in his commentary, says the following.

'In the parallel place, 2 Chronicles 20:36, it is said that Jehoshaphat joined himself to Ahaziah, to make ships to go to Tarshish, and they made the ships in Ezion-Geber, 1 Kings 9:26-28 / 1 Kings 10:11 / 1 Kings 10:22.'

It appears that Ahaziah of the northern kingdom wants to join in; however, Jehoshaphat didn't think this was a good idea because he knew Ahaziah's men would influence his sailors into idolatry, 1 Kings 22:49 / 2 Chronicles 20:35-37.

He was very much aware that Ahaziah would want to get involved in his affairs as king. The account in 1 Kings 22:49-50 speaks of Ahaziah's attempt to continue as a partner with Jehoshaphat in that ship-building venture, but it is to the great credit of Jehoshaphat that, acting upon the warning of the prophet, he refused to allow it.

God's punishment of Jehoshaphat for this alliance was the destruction of the ships, 1 Kings 22:48 / 2 Chronicles 20:37 / 2 Chronicles 8:18, that he had built to go to Tarshish, a city somewhere in Spain.

Coffman, in his commentary, says the following.

'Although, in the general sense, Jehoshaphat did that which was right in the eyes of Jehovah, there were nevertheless some failures on his part. His failure to remove the high places, which had been removed, of course, but had been rebuilt by the people, again and again, and his alliance with Ahaziah, mentioned in the final paragraph here, were two

examples. A third, which we should mention, was his choice of a wife for his son and heir Jehoram. Jehoshaphat evidently hoped to promote peace between Israel and Judah by arranging for the marriage of Jehoram to the daughter of Jezebel and Ahab. This might not have been considered a sin by some, but it was an unqualified disaster, nevertheless, and it resulted in great sorrows for God's people.'

Jehoshaphat dies, and his son, Jehoram, succeeds him as king of Judah, **1 Kings 22:49-50 / 2 Chronicles 21:1**.

AHAZIAH KING OF ISRAEL

‘Ahaziah, son of Ahab, became king of Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, because he followed the ways of his father and mother and of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. He served and worshipped Baal and aroused the anger of the LORD, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.’ **1 Kings 22:51-53**

We don't know much about Ahaziah, but we do know that he became king of Israel and he reigned for two years, **1 Kings 22:51**. Notice that he ‘followed the ways of his mother’, **1 Kings 22:52 / 1 Kings 16:31**. This is the only place in the Scriptures where we find this phrase, but this tells us that he continued in the ways of Jezebel, even after Ahab had died.

He continued to encourage sacrifices to be made at the altars that Jeroboam set up in Bethel and Dan, **1 Kings 12:29**, and he continued to encourage sacrifices to Baal, **1 Kings 22:53**.

It was because of these actions that the northern kingdom would eventually be led into captivity by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. When we read **2 Kings 1**, we see that these final verses of **1 Kings 22** are very closely related.