1 KINGS

BIBLE STUDY

A Verse-by-Verse Study



Solomon's wisdom and the temple filled with glory,
a kingdom torn in two, and Elijah's God who answers by fire

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Enterprises

1 Kings Bible Study

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A note before you begin. This book is written to teach the Bible and encourage faith. It shares my understanding of Scripture and is offered for study and spiritual growth. It is not counseling, medical, legal, or financial advice. If you are facing a crisis, a health problem, or a legal or money problem, please reach out to a qualified professional as well as your pastor and church family. To the fullest extent the law allows, Andrew Dominguez, Trinfinity Enterprises, and Andrew Dominguez's heirs, estate, successors, and assigns accept no liability for how this material is used.

A Note on the Bible Translation Used in This Study

My preferred Bible for personal study, teaching, and research is the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB). I chose it because it is a word-for-word translation in today's language, built on the ancient Scripture sources: the Hebrew and Aramaic of the Old Testament and the Greek of the New Testament. I prepared the SLB myself, and the Scripture in this book is taken from it.

Where a literal phrase would mislead an English reader, the SLB gives the writer's meaning in plain words. Words added for sense are set in bold italics so you can see what is in the original and what is not.

The complete Steadfast Literal Bible is free to read, search, download, and print at trinfinityenterprises.com/slb. If you want to check a verse in its full setting or read the translation's preface and principles, that is the place to go.

Above all, my desire is not to promote one translation over another, but to faithfully teach the Word of God, encourage careful examination of the Scriptures, and help readers grow in their knowledge, understanding, and relationship with the Lord.

May every page of this study direct attention not to the translation itself, but to the truth of God's Word and the One whom it reveals.

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Introduction

Welcome, and thank you for taking the time to work through this verse-by-verse study of the book of 1 Kings. My purpose in writing this study guide is the same as it was for my study of Revelation: to bring you closer to our Creator and to give you a way to grow in your Christian walk.

I have watched myself start strong and drift, many times. I could be on fire for God in public and still sinning in the dark. Solomon started well and drifted too. Starting well matters, but finishing well matters more.

1 Kings is the story of a kingdom at its height and a kingdom torn in two. It opens with King David old and dying and Solomon on the throne. It shows us Solomon asking God for wisdom, the temple built and filled with God's glory, and the queen of Sheba coming from the ends of the earth to hear him. Then it shows the wisest man who ever lived letting his heart drift after other gods, the kingdom splitting under his son, and a line of kings in the north who lead Israel deeper into idolatry. In the last chapters God sends Elijah, who stands alone against King Ahab and the prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel. I do not claim to be an authority on the Bible or on 1 Kings. I am simply someone like you who wants to grow closer to God and understand His Word. Before you read any part of this book, or any part of Scripture, I ask that you pray, asking God:

- For the Holy Spirit to be present, to help open your eyes and your heart (Psalm 119:18, 119:105)
- For discernment and knowledge (Psalm 119:66, James 1:5)

2 Timothy 2:15 (SLB)

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker not needing to be ashamed, cutting straight the word of truth."

The Bible is God's Word to us (2 Timothy 3:16), given for training in righteousness. If we cannot understand what it says, we cannot apply it to our lives or help build God's kingdom.

So how do we go about understanding God's Word?

The first rule is context. You may have heard the saying "Context is King," but what does that mean? Every word, sentence, and passage helps explain the ones around it. Before we read any passage, we should ask a few simple questions: Who wrote it? Who was it written to? What came right before it? Knowing the answers gives us a clearer picture of what God is saying, both in general and to each of us personally.

Context matters a great deal in 1 Kings. It picks up where 2 Samuel ends, and everything in it rests on God's covenant with David in 2 Samuel 7: a son who would build God's house, and a house and throne that would last forever. It also rests on the Law of Moses, especially Deuteronomy. Moses had warned that Israel's king must not multiply horses, wives, or silver and gold, and must read God's law all his life (Deuteronomy 17:14-20). He had promised blessing for obedience and

warned of drought, defeat and exile for turning to other gods (Deuteronomy 28). If we read 1 Kings without those chapters, the story looks like palace politics. Read in context, it is God keeping His word, both His promises and His warnings, king by king.

Exegesis, Eisegesis, and Hermeneutics

People typically interpret the Bible using one of two methods, Exegesis or Eisegesis. Both are explained below, along with a third word, Hermeneutics. Sometimes people use both methods to "make their case" for the interpretation they want. These definitions are based on www.merriam-webster.com, with my own notes added.

Exegesis means explaining a text, especially a passage of Scripture. Exegesis is reading and interpreting the full text of a passage, and drawing out what it is actually saying.

Eisegesis means reading your own ideas into a text. This happens when we try to find something in the text that really isn't there. It can lead to many errors, especially when we bring assumptions to a passage that aren't actually in it. This method can be used to justify a behavior, position, or belief that goes against what the text originally meant.

Hermeneutics is the study of the principles used to interpret a text, such as the Bible. "Hermeneutics" and "Exegesis" are sometimes used to mean the same thing. The difference is that Exegesis is the work of explaining a passage, while Hermeneutics is the set of principles that guides that work. In Biblical Hermeneutics, the Bible should be read literally unless the text itself gives us a different meaning.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 (SLB)

"16 Every Scripture ***is*** God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training which ***is*** in righteousness, 17 so that the man of God may be complete, fully equipped for every good work."

This passage tells us plainly that the writers of Scripture were inspired by God. Every passage in the Bible came from God and was written down by man. These are not fairy tales or made-up stories. They are God's own breath, given to us so we can be equipped and ready to do good work.

Because every word was inspired and breathed by God, I believe we must let God's Word interpret itself. We must study the Bible using Exegesis, drawing out what the text says, guided by sound Biblical Hermeneutics.

We should study God's Word using the Golden Rule of Interpretation, as Dr. David L. Cooper stated it:

"When the plain sense of Scripture makes common sense, seek no other sense; therefore, take every word at its primary, ordinary, usual, literal meaning unless the facts of the immediate context, studied in the light of related passages and axiomatic and fundamental truths, indicate clearly otherwise."

(http://www.biblicalresearch.info/page55.html)

I read the Bible as it is written. 1 Kings is history, and this study takes it at its word: Solomon really did build the temple, the glory of the LORD really did fill it, and fire really did fall from heaven on Mount Carmel. The New Testament reads it the same way. Jesus spoke of Solomon in all his glory and of the queen of the south who came to hear him (Matthew 6:29; 12:42), and of the widow of Zarephath in Elijah's day, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months (Luke 4:25-26). James says Elijah was a man with a nature like ours, who prayed and it did not rain (James 5:17-18). A note on the name of God: in the SLB, when you see "LORD" in capital letters, it stands for God's personal name, Yahweh (often written YHWH), which He made known to Moses (Exodus 3:14-15). When you see "Lord" in regular letters, it translates a word that means master. When you see "Lord GOD," it stands for the two together, Master Yahweh. When you see "God," it usually translates Elohim, the general Hebrew word for God.

This study uses the Steadfast Literal Bible (SLB) unless I note otherwise. To better understand the original Hebrew, I also used The Interlinear Bible (Jay P. Green Sr., ISBN 1-56563-977-4).

How This Study Is Laid Out

Each chapter of this study follows the same pattern as my study of Revelation:

- Scripture: the full text of the chapter, broken into sections, so you can read it straight through first.
- Preview: a short look at what the chapter covers.
- Study: the chapter again, verse by verse, with my notes on what each verse says and what it means for us.
- Summary: the main points of the chapter in a few lines.
- Study Questions: questions for personal study or a small group, from simple fact questions to questions about how we live. Some of them are personal. In a group, no one should ever have to answer one aloud, and what is shared in the group stays there.

Some chapters of 1 Kings are full of lists and measurements: Solomon's officials and districts (chapter 4), and the building and furnishing of the temple and palace (chapters 6 and 7). In those places I group the verses and say what the list is, why God put it there, and what it teaches us, rather than commenting on every measurement. Where 1 Kings tells the same events as 2 Chronicles, I note it in a short phrase so you can read the parallel if you wish.

Using This Study With a Group

This study works for one person or for a group. 1 Kings has 22 chapters, so here are two ways a group can pace it:

- One chapter a week: twenty-two weeks, or about five months. If you like, add a first meeting to read the Introduction and the Background together.

- A faster pace of about eighteen weeks: take chapters 4 and 5, 6 and 7, 13 and 14, and 15 and 16 two at a time, and the rest one at a time. Chapter 8, the dedication of the temple, is long and rich, and some groups may want to give it two weeks instead.

For each meeting, I suggest reading the Scripture out loud together first, straight through, before anyone comments. In the list chapters you may want to read only the first and last verses of each section aloud. Then walk through the Study section, stopping where the group has questions, and finish with the Study Questions and prayer. The first questions in each list can be answered from the text. The later ones are more personal, and no one should feel pressed to answer them aloud.

Some parts of 1 Kings are hard to read. Solomon has his brother Adonijah, the general Joab and the curser Shimei put to death to secure his throne (chapter 2). Solomon's many wives turn his heart to idols, one of them a god whose worship included burning children (chapter 11). A prophet is killed by a lion for disobeying God's word (chapter 13). Elijah has the prophets of Baal put to death at the brook Kishon (chapter 18). Queen Jezebel has an innocent man stoned so Ahab can take his vineyard (chapter 21), and a lying spirit goes out to deceive Ahab's prophets (chapter 22). I do not skip these passages, and I try to explain them honestly in their setting, without making them a pattern for anyone today. If you lead a group, read those sections ahead of time and be ready to listen. Some people in your group may have been hurt by the abuse of power, by family conflict, or by people who used God's name to justify cruelty. If someone shares something that puts them or another person in danger, help them get help right away.

I look forward to walking with you through the book of 1 Kings. If you'd like to share feedback, please email me at andrew@trinfinityenterprises.com.

May God bless you and your time studying and getting to know Him better.

Overview of 1 Kings

1 Kings is the eleventh book of the Bible. In our English Bibles it is one of the historical books, which run from Joshua through Esther. In the Hebrew Bible it belongs to the Former Prophets, the books from Joshua through Kings that tell Israel's history from God's point of view. First and Second Kings were one book in Hebrew. The Greek translators split it in two, and our Bibles follow that split.

In Israel's history, 1 Kings covers about 120 years, from the last days of David and the crowning of Solomon, about 970 B.C., to the death of Ahab king of Israel about 853 B.C. and the first year of his son Ahaziah. It tells of Israel's golden age under Solomon, the building of the temple, Solomon's turning from God, the split of the kingdom about 930 B.C. into Israel in the north and Judah in the south, and the first kings of both kingdoms. 2 Kings picks up the story from there and carries it to the fall of Samaria in 722 B.C. and of Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

The theme of 1 Kings is that the blessing of God's people depends on whole-hearted faithfulness to Him. Every king is measured by one standard: did he walk with the LORD as David his father did? Solomon put that standard into words when he dedicated the temple:

1 Kings 8:61 (SLB)

"And let your heart be complete with the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as ***it is*** this day."

Solomon spoke those words, and then, sadly, in his old age "his heart was not complete with the LORD his God" (11:4). The rest of the book shows king after king who failed the same test. Yet God does not give up on His people. He keeps a lamp burning for David in Jerusalem (11:36), and He sends prophets like Ahijah, Micaiah and Elijah to call His people back, and He answers by fire on Mount Carmel to show that the LORD, He is God (18:39).

1 Kings has 22 chapters and 816 verses. Here is its structure:

Part One: The Reign of Solomon (chapters 1 to 11)

- Chapter 1: David Names Solomon King
- Chapter 2: David's Charge and Solomon's Throne Secured
- Chapter 3: Solomon Asks for Wisdom
- Chapter 4: Solomon's Officials and Kingdom
- Chapter 5: Preparing to Build the Temple
- Chapter 6: Solomon Builds the Temple
- Chapter 7: Solomon's Palace and the Temple Furnishings
- Chapter 8: The Dedication of the Temple
- Chapter 9: The LORD Answers Solomon

- Chapter 10: The Queen of Sheba and Solomon's Splendor
- Chapter 11: Solomon's Wives and the Kingdom Torn Away

Part Two: The Kingdom Divides (chapters 12 to 16)

- Chapter 12: The Kingdom Divides
- Chapter 13: The Man of God from Judah
- Chapter 14: Ahijah's Word to Jeroboam and Rehoboam's Reign
- Chapter 15: Abijam, Asa, Nadab, and Baasha
- Chapter 16: Kings of Israel from Baasha to Ahab

Part Three: Elijah and Ahab (chapters 17 to 22)

- Chapter 17: Elijah, the Drought, and the Widow of Zarephath
- Chapter 18: Elijah and the Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel
- Chapter 19: Elijah at Horeb
- Chapter 20: Ahab's Wars with Ben-hadad
- Chapter 21: Naboth's Vineyard
- Chapter 22: Micaiah and the Death of Ahab

Where this book points to Christ: 1 Kings opens with the question of who will sit on David's throne, and the whole Bible answers it in Jesus, the Son of David, to whom God will give "the throne of David His father" with a kingdom that has no end (Luke 1:32-33). Solomon's wisdom, peace and glory give us a small picture of Christ's coming reign, and Jesus Himself said that in Him "something greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). The temple, where God put His name and His glory dwelt, points to Jesus, in whom the Word became flesh and dwelt among us (John 1:14), and who spoke of His own body as the temple (John 2:19-21). Solomon's question at the dedication, "will God really dwell on the earth?" (8:27), is answered at Bethlehem. And Elijah, the prophet of fire and repentance, points ahead to John the Baptist, who came "in the spirit and power of Elijah" to prepare the way for the Lord (Luke 1:17; Matthew 17:10-13).

Background of the Book

Author: The book does not name its author. Jewish tradition holds that Jeremiah the prophet wrote Kings. Whoever wrote it was a prophet-historian who used older royal records and named them: "the book of the matters of Solomon" (11:41), and the records of the kings of Israel and of Judah, cited again and again (for example 14:19, 29). 2 Chronicles also names the writings of prophets such as Nathan, Ahijah and Iddo (2 Chronicles 9:29). Many modern critical scholars believe Kings was put together over a long time as the last part of a larger history running from Deuteronomy through Kings, edited during or after the exile. I take the book as what it presents itself to be: a true and inspired record, drawn from real sources and written by a prophet who wanted Israel to see their history the way God sees it.

Who it was written to: The people of Israel, and especially the Jews in exile or soon after. They had lost their land, their king and their temple. Kings showed them why: their kings and people had turned from the LORD, just as Moses warned. It also showed them that God had not forgotten His promise to David.

Setting: The story moves between Jerusalem, the capital of David and Solomon and later of Judah, and the cities of the northern kingdom: Shechem, Tirzah, and finally Samaria, which Omri built (16:24). Important places include Gibeon, where God appeared to Solomon; Tyre and Sidon to the north; Bethel and Dan, where Jeroboam set up golden calves; Mount Carmel; and Mount Horeb (Sinai), where Elijah fled.

When it was written: The book as we have it was finished after the last event in 2 Kings, the release of King Jehoiachin from prison in Babylon (2 Kings 25:27-30), so about 560 to 540 B.C. Some notes, such as "to this day" (8:8; 9:21), show that the writer was copying from sources written while the temple still stood.

When the events happened: About 970 to 853 B.C. David reigned about 1010 to 970 B.C. and Solomon about 970 to 930 B.C. The kingdom divided about 930 B.C. Ahab reigned in Israel about 874 to 853 B.C. Solomon began the temple in his fourth year, about 966 B.C., which 1 Kings 6:1 says was the 480th year after the exodus. That is the main basis for dating the exodus about 1446 B.C.

Dates of the kings: The reign lengths in Kings overlap in places, because some kings ruled alongside their fathers for a time (a co-regency), and Israel and Judah did not always count a king's first year the same way. Bible scholars have worked out slightly different dates. In this study I follow one standard set, the dates worked out by Edwin Thiele, and I give them with "about."

Kings and Chronicles: Much of 1 Kings is told again in 2 Chronicles 1-18. Chronicles was written later, after the return from exile, and it follows only the kings of Judah. It often adds details, and now and then the two books give different numbers. Where that happens, I say so plainly and give the common explanations, such as an error in copying a number or a difference in what was counted.

Purpose: To show that God keeps His word. He kept His promise to David by giving him a son on his throne and a house for His name, and He kept His warnings by tearing the kingdom when Solomon turned to idols. The book calls every reader to a heart wholly devoted to the LORD, warns that even great gifts and a good start cannot keep a heart that will not guard itself, and shows that God never stops sending His word to call His people back to Him.

Chapter 1: David Names Solomon King

Scripture

1:1-10 And King David ***was*** old, advanced in days; and they covered him with garments, and he did not become warm. And his servants said to him, "Let them seek for my lord the king a young woman, a virgin, and she shall stand before the king, and let her be an attendant to him; and she shall lie in your bosom, and my lord the king will become warm." And they sought a beautiful young woman in all the territory of Israel, and they found Abishag the Shunammite, and they brought her to the king. And the young woman ***was*** exceedingly beautiful; and she became an attendant to the king and served him, and the king did not know her. And Adonijah the son of Haggith ***was*** exalting himself, saying, "I will be king." And he made for himself chariotry and horsemen, and fifty men running before him. And his father had never pained him in his days, saying, "Why have you done thus?" And also he ***was*** very good of appearance, and ***his mother*** bore him after Absalom. And his words were with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they helped, following Adonijah. And Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty ***men*** who ***belonged*** to David were not with Adonijah. And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and cattle and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which ***is*** beside En-rogel; and he invited all his brothers, the sons of the king, and all the men of Judah, the servants of the king. And Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty ***men***, and Solomon his brother, he did not invite.

1:11-31 And Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and our lord David does not know ***it***? And now come, let me please counsel you ***with*** counsel, and save your life and the life of your son Solomon. Go and go in to King David, and you shall say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your maidservant, saying, "Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? And why has Adonijah become king?' Look, while you are still speaking there with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words." And Bathsheba went in to the king, into the room; and the king ***was*** very old, and Abishag the Shunammite ***was*** serving the king. And Bathsheba bowed low and bowed down to the king. And the king said, "What ***is it*** for you?" And she said to him, "My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant, 'Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' And now, look, Adonijah has become king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know ***it***. And he has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and he has invited all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; and Solomon your servant he has not invited. And you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel ***are*** on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. And it will be, when my lord the king lies down with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be sinners." And look, while she ***was*** still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, saying, "Look, Nathan the prophet." And he came before the king and bowed down to the king with his face to the earth. And Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? For he has gone down today and has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and he has invited all the sons of the king and the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest; and

look, they are eating and drinking before him, and they have said, 'May King Adonijah live!' And me, I your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Solomon your servant, he has not invited. Has this thing come about from my lord the king, and you have not made known to your servant who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?" And King David answered and said, "Call Bathsheba for me." And she came before the king and stood before the king. And the king swore and said, "***As*** the LORD lives, who has ransomed my soul from every distress, surely just as I swore to you by the LORD the God of Israel, saying, 'Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' surely so I will do this day." And Bathsheba bowed low ***with her*** face ***to the*** earth and bowed down to the king, and she said, "May my lord King David live forever!"

1:32-53 And King David said, "Call Zadok the priest for me, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." And they came before the king. And the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and make Solomon my son ride on the mule which ***is*** mine, and bring him down to Gihon. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet shall anoint him there as king over Israel, and you shall blow the ram's horn and say, 'May King Solomon live!' And you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall reign in my place; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! So may the LORD the God of my lord the king say. Just as the LORD has been with my lord the king, so He will be with Solomon, and may He make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David." And Zadok the priest went down, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they made Solomon ride on the mule of King David, and they brought him to Gihon. And Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. And they blew the ram's horn, and all the people said, "May King Solomon live!" And all the people went up after him, and the people ***were*** playing on flutes and rejoicing ***with*** great joy, and the earth was split by their sound. And Adonijah and all ***those*** invited who ***were*** with him heard ***it***, and they had finished eating. And Joab heard the sound of the ram's horn, and he said, "Why ***is*** the sound of the city in an uproar?" He ***was*** still speaking, and look, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, "Come, for you ***are*** a man of worth, and you bring good news." And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, "Indeed, our lord King David has made Solomon king. And the king has sent with him Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have made him ride on the mule of the king. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him as king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there rejoicing, and the city was stirred. That ***is*** the sound which you have heard. And also Solomon has sat on the throne of the kingship. And also the servants of the king have come to bless our lord King David, saying, 'May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne!' And the king bowed down on the bed. And also thus the king has said: 'Blessed ***be*** the LORD the God of Israel, who has given today ***one*** sitting on my throne, and my eyes ***are*** seeing ***it***.'" And all ***those*** invited who ***belonged*** to Adonijah trembled and rose up, and they went, each to his way. And Adonijah was afraid because of Solomon, and he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. And it was told to Solomon, saying, "Look, Adonijah fears King Solomon, and look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" And

Solomon said, "If he will be a son of worth, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth; and if evil is found in him, then he shall die." And King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar; and he came and bowed down to King Solomon. And Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."

Chapter 1 Preview

The great King David is old and cold, and he can no longer get out of bed. He has never said in public who will sit on his throne after him. Into that silence steps Adonijah, his oldest living son, who throws himself a feast and lets his friends cheer him as king. Joab the army commander and Abiathar the priest stand with him. Nathan the prophet, Zadok the priest and Benaiah do not.

Nathan moves fast. He sends Bathsheba in to remind David of his oath that Solomon would reign, and then he walks in to confirm her words. David wakes up to what is happening and acts the same day. Solomon rides David's own mule down to the Gihon spring, is anointed by Zadok and Nathan, and the city shouts so loud the ground seems to split. Adonijah's feast breaks up in fear, and he runs to grab the horns of the altar. This chapter shows us that God's plan for David's throne stands, even when people scheme around it.

Chapter 1 Study

1:1-4 *And King David **was** old, advanced in days; and they covered him with garments, and he did not become warm. And his servants said to him, "Let them seek for my lord the king a young woman, a virgin, and she shall stand before the king, and let her be an attendant to him; and she shall lie in your bosom, and my lord the king will become warm." And they sought a beautiful young woman in all the territory of Israel, and they found Abishag the Shunammite, and they brought her to the king. And the young woman **was** exceedingly beautiful; and she became an attendant to the king and served him, and the king did not know her.*

"King David was old, advanced in days." David was about seventy years old (2 Samuel 5:4). The young man who killed Goliath and the warrior who led Israel's armies could no longer keep himself warm in bed.

His servants did what was done for old kings in that day. They looked through "all the territory of Israel" and found a young woman, "Abishag the Shunammite," from the town of Shunem, to care for him and keep him warm. The writer is careful to say "the king did not know her." She was a nurse and attendant, not a wife in the full sense. That detail will matter in chapter 2, when Adonijah asks for her.

Why begin the book this way? It shows how weak David had become. A king who cannot keep warm cannot watch his own court, and the next verses show who tried to take advantage of that.

1:5-6 *And Adonijah the son of Haggith **was** exalting himself, saying, "I will be king." And he made for himself chariotry and horsemen, and fifty men running before him. And his father had never pained him in his days, saying, "Why have you done thus?" And also he **was** very good of appearance, and **his mother** bore him after Absalom.*

Adonijah "was exalting himself," and he said, "I will be king." Adonijah was David's fourth son (2 Samuel 3:4). Amnon and Absalom were dead, and Chileab, the second son, is never heard of again, so Adonijah was likely the oldest son still living. In most kingdoms that would make him the heir. But in Israel the king was to be the one the LORD chose (Deuteronomy 17:15), and God had chosen Solomon (1 Chronicles 22:9-10; 28:5).

He copied his brother Absalom: "chariotry and horsemen, and fifty men running before him" (compare 2 Samuel 15:1). Two sad lines explain him. "His father had never pained him in his days." He never asked, "Why have you done thus?" David never corrected him. And he was handsome, like Absalom.

Parents, notice this. A child who is never told no grows up believing he should have whatever he wants. David's failure to discipline his sons cost him dearly with Amnon and Absalom, and here it shows up again.

1:7-8 *And his words were with Joab the son of Zeruiah and with Abiathar the priest, and they helped, following Adonijah. And Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty **men** who **belonged** to David were not with Adonijah.*

The court split in two. With Adonijah were "Joab the son of Zeruiah" and "Abiathar the priest." Joab had led David's army for forty years, and he had a long record of killing men when it suited him (2 Samuel 3:27; 20:10). Abiathar had been with David since the days he fled from Saul (1 Samuel 22:20-23).

On the other side stood "Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet," along with "the mighty men who belonged to David," his own loyal bodyguard. The men closest to David's heart and to God's word were not with Adonijah. That tells us something. Old loyalty and long service did not keep Joab and Abiathar from choosing against God's plan.

1:9-10 *And Adonijah sacrificed sheep and cattle and fatlings by the stone of Zoheleth, which **is** beside En-rogel; and he invited all his brothers, the sons of the king, and all the men of Judah, the servants of the king. And Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty **men**, and Solomon his brother, he did not invite.*

Adonijah held a sacrificial feast "by the stone of Zoheleth, which is beside En-rogel," a spring just south of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley. A feast like this was a coronation in all but name. He invited the king's sons and the officials of Judah.

Look at who was left off the list: "Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he did not invite." Adonijah knew exactly who would not support him. You

do not leave your rival off the guest list by accident. He knew Solomon was the one David had promised to put on the throne, and he was trying to get there first.

1:11-14 *And Nathan said to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and our lord David does not know **it**? And now come, let me please counsel you **with** counsel, and save your life and the life of your son Solomon. Go and go in to King David, and you shall say to him, 'Did you not, my lord the king, swear to your maidservant, saying, "Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne"? And why has Adonijah become king?' Look, while you are still speaking there with the king, I also will come in after you and confirm your words."*

Nathan had confronted David over Bathsheba years before (2 Samuel 12). Now he went to Bathsheba herself. "Have you not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith has become king, and our lord David does not know it?"

He was blunt about the danger: "save your life and the life of your son Solomon." When a new king took the throne in that world, rivals and their mothers were often killed. Nathan's plan was simple. Bathsheba would remind David of his oath: "Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me." Then Nathan would come in and "confirm your words."

Some see this as palace politics. I see a prophet who knew God's will for the throne (2 Samuel 12:24-25, where God through Nathan named the baby Jedidiah, loved by the LORD) and acted to protect it. Faith does not sit still when God's word is being pushed aside.

1:15-21 *And Bathsheba went in to the king, into the room; and the king **was** very old, and Abishag the Shunammite **was** serving the king. And Bathsheba bowed low and bowed down to the king. And the king said, "What **is it** for you?" And she said to him, "My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant, 'Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne.' And now, look, Adonijah has become king; and now, my lord the king, you do not know **it**. And he has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and he has invited all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the commander of the army; and Solomon your servant he has not invited. And you, my lord the king, the eyes of all Israel **are** on you, to tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. And it will be, when my lord the king lies down with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon will be sinners."*

Bathsheba went in to "the room," where the very old king lay with Abishag serving him. She bowed low and spoke plainly. "My lord, you swore by the LORD your God to your maidservant." Scripture does not record the moment David swore this, but both she and Nathan speak of it as a known fact, and 1 Chronicles 22:9-10 shows God had told David that Solomon would build the temple and reign.

She laid out the facts: Adonijah has become king, he has held his feast, he has invited Joab and Abiathar, "and Solomon your servant he has not invited." Then she put the weight where it belonged: "the eyes of all Israel are on you." Only David could settle it. If he did nothing, then when he died, she and Solomon "will be sinners," treated as traitors and likely put to death.

Her words were respectful but honest. That is a good pattern for anyone who must speak hard truth to someone in authority.

1:22-27 *And look, while she **was** still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet came in. And they told the king, saying, "Look, Nathan the prophet." And he came before the king and bowed down to the king with his face to the earth. And Nathan said, "My lord the king, have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'? For he has gone down today and has sacrificed oxen and fatlings and sheep in abundance, and he has invited all the sons of the king and the commanders of the army and Abiathar the priest; and look, they are eating and drinking before him, and they have said, 'May King Adonijah live!' And me, I your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Solomon your servant, he has not invited. Has this thing come about from my lord the king, and you have not made known to your servant who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him?"*

Just as planned, "Nathan the prophet came in" while she was still speaking. He bowed with his face to the ground and asked David a pointed question: "have you said, 'Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne'?"

Nathan told what was going on at En-rogel. The guests were "eating and drinking before him, and they have said, 'May King Adonijah live!'" He named who had not been invited, starting with himself: "me, I your servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Solomon your servant."

Then the question that left David no room: "Has this thing come about from my lord the king?" Either David had changed his mind without telling his closest servants, or someone was stealing the throne. Two witnesses, Bathsheba and Nathan, told the same story, as the Law required (Deuteronomy 19:15).

1:28-31 *And King David answered and said, "Call Bathsheba for me." And she came before the king and stood before the king. And the king swore and said, "**As** the LORD lives, who has ransomed my soul from every distress, surely just as I swore to you by the LORD the God of Israel, saying, 'Surely Solomon your son shall reign after me, and he shall sit on my throne in my place,' surely so I will do this day." And Bathsheba bowed low **with her** face **to the** earth and bowed down to the king, and she said, "May my lord King David live forever!"*

The old lion woke up. "Call Bathsheba for me." David swore again, and his oath begins with praise: "As the LORD lives, who has ransomed my soul from every distress." David looked back over a lifetime of trouble, Saul's spears, the caves, the wars, Absalom's revolt, and he saw the LORD's hand rescuing him every time.

"Surely so I will do this day." Not tomorrow. Today. Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth and said, "May my lord King David live forever!" It was the usual blessing given to a king. David would not live forever, but the throne God promised him would (2 Samuel 7:16), and it is held forever by David's greater Son, Jesus Christ (Luke 1:32-33).

1:32-37 *And King David said, "Call Zadok the priest for me, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada." And they came before the king. And the king said to them, "Take with you the servants of your lord, and make Solomon my son ride on the mule which* ***is*** *mine, and bring him down to Gihon. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet shall anoint him there as king over Israel, and you shall blow the ram's horn and say, 'May King Solomon live!' And you shall come up after him, and he shall come and sit on my throne, and he shall reign in my place; and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah." And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king and said, "Amen! So may the LORD the God of my lord the king say. Just as the LORD has been with my lord the king, so He will be with Solomon, and may He make his throne greater than the throne of my lord King David."*

David gave clear orders to the three men who stood for God's plan: Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the soldier. Solomon was to ride "on the mule which is mine," a public sign that the king himself had chosen him. They were to bring him down to Gihon, the spring on the east side of Jerusalem, within earshot of Adonijah's feast at En-rogel.

There Zadok and Nathan would "anoint him there as king over Israel," pouring oil on his head. Anointing set a person apart for God's service. The Hebrew word for the anointed one is mashiach, from which we get the word Messiah. Then they would blow the ram's horn and shout, "May King Solomon live!"

Benaiah answered, "Amen!" and added a prayer: "Just as the LORD has been with my lord the king, so He will be with Solomon, and may He make his throne greater." That is a good prayer for anyone who follows a godly leader. We should want the next generation to go further with God than we did.

1:38-40 *And Zadok the priest went down, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they made Solomon ride on the mule of King David, and they brought him to Gihon. And Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon. And they blew the ram's horn, and all the people said, "May King Solomon live!" And all the people went up after him, and the people* ***were*** *playing on flutes and rejoicing* ***with*** *great joy, and the earth was split by their sound.*

It happened just as David said. The priest, the prophet, Benaiah, and "the Kerethites and the Pelethites," David's foreign bodyguard, brought Solomon on the king's mule to Gihon. "Zadok the priest took the horn of oil from the tent and anointed Solomon." The tent was the tent David had set up for the ark on Mount Zion (2 Samuel 6:17), so the oil came from the place of God's presence.

The horn blew, and the people shouted, "May King Solomon live!" Then the crowd followed him back up the hill, playing flutes and "rejoicing with great joy, and the earth was split by their sound." Adonijah had a feast for invited guests. Solomon had the people.

I think of another King who rode into Jerusalem, not on his father's mule but on a donkey's colt, while the crowds shouted (Matthew 21:5-9). Solomon's ride is a small picture of that day.

1:41-48 *And Adonijah and all **those** invited who **were** with him heard **it**, and they had finished eating. And Joab heard the sound of the ram's horn, and he said, "Why **is** the sound of the city in an uproar?" He **was** still speaking, and look, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came. And Adonijah said, "Come, for you **are** a man of worth, and you bring good news." And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, "Indeed, our lord King David has made Solomon king. And the king has sent with him Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and the Kerethites and the Pelethites, and they have made him ride on the mule of the king. And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him as king at Gihon, and they have gone up from there rejoicing, and the city was stirred. That **is** the sound which you have heard. And also Solomon has sat on the throne of the kingship. And also the servants of the king have come to bless our lord King David, saying, 'May God make the name of Solomon better than your name, and may He make his throne greater than your throne!' And the king bowed down on the bed. And also thus the king has said: 'Blessed **be** the LORD the God of Israel, who has given today **one** sitting on my throne, and my eyes **are** seeing **it**.'"*

At En-rogel the eating was done when the noise came rolling down the valley. Joab, an old soldier, knew the sound of a ram's horn. "Why is the sound of the city in an uproar?"

Just then Jonathan, Abiathar's son, came running. Adonijah hoped he brought "good news." He did not. "Indeed, our lord King David has made Solomon king." Jonathan told it all: the priest, the prophet, Benaiah, the bodyguard, the king's mule, the anointing at Gihon, and "Solomon has sat on the throne of the kingship."

Worst of all for Adonijah, David's own servants had come to bless him, praying that God would make Solomon's name better than David's. And the old king, from his bed, had bowed and said, "Blessed be the LORD the God of Israel, who has given today one sitting on my throne, and my eyes are seeing it." David lived to see God keep the first part of His promise. He gave the glory to the LORD.

1:49-53 *And all **those** invited who **belonged** to Adonijah trembled and rose up, and they went, each to his way. And Adonijah was afraid because of Solomon, and he arose and went and took hold of the horns of the altar. And it was told to Solomon, saying, "Look, Adonijah fears King Solomon, and look, he has taken hold of the horns of the altar, saying, 'Let King Solomon swear to me today that he will not put his servant to death with the sword.'" And Solomon said, "If he will be a son of worth, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth; and if evil is found in him, then he shall die." And King Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar; and he came and bowed down to King Solomon. And Solomon said to him, "Go to your house."*

Adonijah's guests "trembled and rose up, and they went, each to his way." A crowd that gathers for a man's power scatters the moment the power is gone.

Adonijah ran and "took hold of the horns of the altar." The horns were the raised corners of the altar, and holding them was a cry for mercy and safety (Exodus 21:13-14). He asked Solomon to swear he would not kill him.

Solomon's answer was fair and firm: "If he will be a son of worth, not one of his hairs shall fall to the earth; and if evil is found in him, then he shall die." Adonijah's life was in his own hands. He bowed to King Solomon, and Solomon sent him home.

This is mercy with a condition. Solomon did not punish Adonijah for the past. He gave him a future, if he would live as a loyal subject. Chapter 2 will show what Adonijah did with that mercy.

Chapter 1 Summary

King David was old and weak, and a young woman, Abishag, was brought to care for him. His son Adonijah, never corrected by his father, declared himself king with the help of Joab and Abiathar, and held a feast at En-rogel, leaving out Nathan, Zadok, Benaiah and Solomon. Nathan sent Bathsheba to remind David of his oath that Solomon would reign, and then came in to confirm her words. David swore again that Solomon would be king that very day. He had Solomon ride his own mule to Gihon, where Zadok and Nathan anointed him, and the people rejoiced so loudly that the ground seemed to split. When Adonijah's guests heard the news, they scattered. Adonijah fled to the horns of the altar, and Solomon spared him on the condition that he prove himself loyal.

Chapter 1 Study Questions

1. What did Adonijah say about himself, and how did he get ready to take the throne? (1:5)

2. What does verse 6 tell us about how David raised Adonijah? (1:6)

3. Who supported Adonijah, and who did not? (1:7-8)

4. What did Nathan tell Bathsheba to say to David, and why was it urgent? (1:11-14)

5. How did David begin his oath to Bathsheba, and what does it show about how he saw his life? (1:29-30)

6. What did David command Zadok, Nathan and Benaiah to do? (1:32-35)

7. How did Adonijah's guests react when they heard Solomon was king? (1:49)

8. What condition did Solomon set for sparing Adonijah's life? (1:52)

9. Adonijah was never told "Why have you done thus?" by his father. Where do you need to lovingly say no to someone God has put in your care?

10. Nathan acted when God's word was being pushed aside. Is there a place in your life where you know what God wants but have been waiting for someone else to act?

Chapter 2: David's Charge and Solomon's Throne Secured

Scripture

2:1-12 And the days of David drew near to die, and he commanded Solomon his son, saying, "I ***am*** going in the way of all the earth. And you shall be strong and become a man. And you shall keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, so that you may act wisely in all that you do and in every ***place*** where you turn there, so that the LORD may establish His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons guard their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' saying, 'there shall not be cut off to you a man from on the throne of Israel.' And also you yourself know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and to Amasa the son of Jether: and he killed them, and he put the blood of war in ***a time of*** peace, and he put the blood of war on his belt which ***was*** on his loins and on his sandals which ***were*** on his feet. And you shall act according to your wisdom, and you shall not bring down his gray hair in peace ***to*** Sheol. And to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you shall show steadfast love, and they shall be among those eating ***at*** your table; for thus they drew near to me when I fled from before Absalom your brother. And look, with you ***is*** Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim; and he cursed me ***with*** a severe curse on the day I went ***to*** Mahanaim. And he came down to meet me ***at*** the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' And now, do not hold him guiltless, for you ***are*** a wise man, and you will know what you shall do to him, and you shall bring down his gray hair with blood ***to*** Sheol." And David lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the days which David reigned over Israel ***were*** forty years: in Hebron he reigned seven years, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his reign was established exceedingly.

2:13-25 And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, "***Is*** your coming ***in*** peace?" And he said, "Peace." And he said, "I have a word for you." And she said, "Speak." And he said, "You yourself know that the kingship was mine, and all Israel had set their faces on me to be king; and the kingship has turned around and has become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. And now I ***am*** asking one petition from you; do not turn back my face." And she said to him, "Speak." And he said, "Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not turn back your face, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife." And Bathsheba said, "Good. I will speak for you to the king." And Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her, and he sat on his throne and placed a throne for the mother of the king, and she sat at his right ***hand***. And she said, "I ***am*** asking one small petition from you; do not turn back my face." And the king said to her, "Ask, my mother, for I will not turn back your face." And she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as a wife." And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why ***are*** you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? And ask for him the kingship, for he ***is*** my brother older than I, both for him and for Abiathar the priest and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!" And King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "So may God do to me, and so may He add, surely

against his own life Adonijah has spoken this word! And now, ***as*** the LORD lives, who has established me and seated me on the throne of David my father, and who has made for me a house just as He spoke, surely this day Adonijah shall be put to death." And King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell on him, and he died.

2:26-46 And to Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go ***to*** Anathoth, to your fields, for you ***are*** a man of death; and on this day I will not put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted." And Solomon drove out Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, to fulfill the word of the LORD which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. And the report came to Joab, for Joab had turned aside after Adonijah, and after Absalom he had not turned aside; and Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. And it was told to King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and look, ***he is*** beside the altar. And Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, fall on him." And Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "Thus says the king, 'Come out.'" And he said, "No, for here I will die." And Benaiah brought word back to the king, saying, "Thus Joab spoke, and thus he answered me." And the king said to him, "Do just as he has spoken, and fall on him, and you shall bury him, and you shall remove the blood ***shed*** without cause, which Joab shed, from on me and from on the house of my father. And the LORD will bring back his blood on his head, who fell on two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, and my father David did not know ***it***: Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah. And their blood shall return on the head of Joab and on the head of his offspring forever; and for David and for his offspring and for his house and for his throne there shall be peace forever from the LORD." And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell on him and put him to death; and he was buried in his house in the wilderness. And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and Zadok the priest the king put in the place of Abiathar. And the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem, and you shall dwell there, and you shall not go out from there here or there. And it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the wadi of Kidron, you shall surely know that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your head." And Shimei said to the king, "The word ***is*** good. Just as my lord the king has spoken, so your servant will do." And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. And it came about at the end of three years, and two servants of Shimei fled to Achish the son of Maacah, the king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, "Look, your servants ***are*** in Gath." And Shimei arose and saddled his donkey and went to Gath, to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. And it was told to Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem ***to*** Gath and had returned. And the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, saying, 'On the day you go out and go here or there, you shall surely know that you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word good; I have heard.' And why have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the command which I commanded you?" And the king said to Shimei, "You yourself know all the evil that your heart knows, which you did to David my father; and the LORD will bring back your evil on your head. And King Solomon ***shall be*** blessed, and the throne of David will be established before the LORD forever." And the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and fell on him, and he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

Chapter 2 Preview

David is about to die, and he gives Solomon his last charge. First and most important, keep the LORD's commands as they are written in the Law of Moses, so that God will keep His promise of a lasting throne. Then David names unfinished business: Joab, who murdered two commanders in peacetime; the sons of Barzillai, who were kind to him; and Shimei, who cursed him. David dies after forty years as king, and Solomon's kingdom is firmly established.

The rest of the chapter is hard reading. Adonijah asks for Abishag, David's attendant, as his wife, and Solomon sees it as a new grab for the throne and has him put to death. Abiathar the priest is sent home to Anathoth, fulfilling God's word against the house of Eli. Joab flees to the altar and is struck down there. Shimei is put under a kind of house arrest in Jerusalem, breaks his oath, and dies. By the end, "the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon." We need to read these deaths carefully, in their own setting, and not take them as a pattern for how we deal with people today.

Chapter 2 Study

2:1-4 *And the days of David drew near to die, and he commanded Solomon his son, saying, "I **am** going in the way of all the earth. And you shall be strong and become a man. And you shall keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, and His judgments, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the law of Moses, so that you may act wisely in all that you do and in every **place** where you turn there, so that the LORD may establish His word which He spoke concerning me, saying, 'If your sons guard their way, to walk before Me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul,' saying, 'there shall not be cut off to you a man from on the throne of Israel.'*

"I am going in the way of all the earth." David knew he was dying. Death is the road every person walks, kings included.

"And you shall be strong and become a man." Then David told Solomon what real strength is: "keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways." He listed God's statutes, commandments, judgments and testimonies, "according to what is written in the law of Moses." David was echoing what God told Joshua (Joshua 1:7-8) and what Moses wrote for every king of Israel, who was to copy the Law and read it all his life (Deuteronomy 17:18-20).

Why? So that the LORD would "establish His word which He spoke concerning me." God had promised David a house and a throne forever (2 Samuel 7:12-16). That covenant would stand no matter what, and it is kept in Jesus. But each king's own enjoyment of the throne depended on whether he and his sons would "guard their way" and walk before God with all their heart. The promise was sure. The blessing on each generation called for obedience. That is still true for us. God's promises do not depend on us, but our walk with Him affects how much of His blessing we enjoy.

2:5-6 *And also you yourself know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me, what he did to the two commanders of the armies of Israel, to Abner the son of Ner and to Amasa the son of Jether: and he killed them, and he put the blood of war in* ***a time of*** *peace, and he put the blood of war on his belt which* ***was*** *on his loins and on his sandals which* ***were*** *on his feet. And you shall act according to your wisdom, and you shall not bring down his gray hair in peace* ***to*** *Sheol.*

Now David turned to unfinished business. "You yourself know what Joab the son of Zeruiah did to me." Joab had murdered Abner (2 Samuel 3:27) and Amasa (2 Samuel 20:9-10), both commanders David had made peace with. He "put the blood of war in a time of peace." He had also killed Absalom against David's direct order (2 Samuel 18:5, 14), and he had just backed Adonijah.

Under the Law, a man who murdered on purpose was to die, and the land itself was defiled by innocent blood left unpunished (Numbers 35:31-33). David had never dealt with Joab. He said of him once that the sons of Zeruiah were too hard for him (2 Samuel 3:39). Now he told Solomon, "you shall not bring down his gray hair in peace to Sheol." Sheol is the Hebrew word for the grave, the place of the dead.

We may wish David had done justice himself, years before. Leaders who put off hard decisions often leave them to the next generation.

2:7 *And to the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you shall show steadfast love, and they shall be among those eating* ***at*** *your table; for thus they drew near to me when I fled from before Absalom your brother.*

In the middle of hard words comes kindness. "To the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite you shall show steadfast love." The Hebrew word is hesed, the loyal, covenant kind of love that keeps its word. Barzillai was the old man who fed David and his men when he fled from Absalom (2 Samuel 17:27-29; 19:31-39). His sons would eat at the king's table.

David never forgot a kindness. Neither does God. Jesus said that even a cup of cold water given in His name will not lose its reward (Matthew 10:42).

2:8-9 *And look, with you* ***is*** *Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite, from Bahurim; and he cursed me* ***with*** *a severe curse on the day I went* ***to*** *Mahanaim. And he came down to meet me* ***at*** *the Jordan, and I swore to him by the LORD, saying, 'I will not put you to death with the sword.' And now, do not hold him guiltless, for you* ***are*** *a wise man, and you will know what you shall do to him, and you shall bring down his gray hair with blood* ***to*** *Sheol."*

"Shimei the son of Gera, the Benjaminite," had cursed David and thrown stones at him when he fled Jerusalem (2 Samuel 16:5-13). When David came back, Shimei begged for mercy, and David swore, "I will not put you to death with the sword" (2 Samuel 19:18-23). David kept that oath all his life.

But cursing the king God anointed was a serious crime in Israel (Exodus 22:28). David told Solomon, "do not hold him guiltless, for you are a wise man, and you will know what you shall do to him." He trusted Solomon's wisdom to deal with Shimei justly. As we will see, Solomon gave Shimei a fair chance to live.

2:10-12 *And David lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David. And the days which David reigned over Israel **were** forty years: in Hebron he reigned seven years, and in Jerusalem he reigned thirty-three years. And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his reign was established exceedingly.*

"David lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David." The city of David was the old Jebusite stronghold of Zion that David captured (2 Samuel 5:7). Peter preached at Pentecost that David's tomb was still there in his day, and that David, as a prophet, spoke of the resurrection of Christ (Acts 2:29-31).

David reigned forty years, seven in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem, about 1010 to 970 B.C. "And Solomon sat on the throne of David his father, and his reign was established exceedingly." 1 Chronicles 29 tells of David's last days and Solomon's coronation from another angle.

2:13-18 *And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, "**Is** your coming **in** peace?" And he said, "Peace." And he said, "I have a word for you." And she said, "Speak." And he said, "You yourself know that the kingship was mine, and all Israel had set their faces on me to be king; and the kingship has turned around and has become my brother's, for it was his from the LORD. And now I **am** asking one petition from you; do not turn back my face." And she said to him, "Speak." And he said, "Please speak to Solomon the king, for he will not turn back your face, that he may give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife." And Bathsheba said, "Good. I will speak for you to the king."*

Adonijah came to Bathsheba. "Is your coming in peace?" she asked. "Peace," he said. Then he made his case. "You yourself know that the kingship was mine, and all Israel had set their faces on me to be king." That was not quite true. But then he admitted the truth: the kingship "was his from the LORD."

His request sounded small. He wanted Bathsheba to ask Solomon to "give me Abishag the Shunammite as a wife." Bathsheba said, "Good. I will speak for you to the king."

Why was this a big deal? In that world, taking a king's wife or concubine was a public claim to his throne. Absalom had done it openly (2 Samuel 16:21-22), and Abner was accused of it (2 Samuel 3:7). Abishag had cared for David in his bed. To the people, she belonged to David's household. For the older brother who had just tried to seize the throne to marry her would look like a claim that he was David's real heir. Bathsheba may not have seen it. Adonijah surely did.

2:19-22 *And Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak to him for Adonijah. And the king rose to meet her and bowed down to her, and he sat on his throne and placed a throne for the mother of the king, and she sat at his right* ***hand****. And she said, "I* ***am*** *asking one small petition from you; do not turn back my face." And the king said to her, "Ask, my mother, for I will not turn back your face." And she said, "Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah your brother as a wife." And King Solomon answered and said to his mother, "And why* ***are*** *you asking Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? And ask for him the kingship, for he* ***is*** *my brother older than I, both for him and for Abiathar the priest and for Joab the son of Zeruiah!"*

Solomon honored his mother. He "rose to meet her and bowed down to her," and set a throne for her "at his right hand," the place of honor. In Judah the king's mother held a respected place in the court.

She called it "one small petition." Solomon said, "Ask, my mother, for I will not turn back your face." But when he heard it, he saw it at once for what it was. "And ask for him the kingship, for he is my brother older than I." He named Abiathar and Joab with him. Solomon understood that this was not about love. It was the old conspiracy trying again by another door.

2:23-25 *And King Solomon swore by the LORD, saying, "So may God do to me, and so may He add, surely against his own life Adonijah has spoken this word! And now,* ***as*** *the LORD lives, who has established me and seated me on the throne of David my father, and who has made for me a house just as He spoke, surely this day Adonijah shall be put to death." And King Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he fell on him, and he died.*

Solomon swore by the LORD: "surely against his own life Adonijah has spoken this word!" Solomon had spared him on one condition: that he be "a son of worth" (1:52). Now "evil is found in him." Solomon remembered that the LORD "has established me and seated me on the throne of David my father." To scheme against Solomon was to scheme against God's choice.

"Surely this day Adonijah shall be put to death." Benaiah carried out the sentence.

This is hard to read. A man asks to marry a woman and is executed for it. Here is how I understand it. Kings in that day held the power of life and death, and treason was punished by death in Israel as in every nation around it. Adonijah had already tried once to take the throne, and he had been given mercy with a clear warning. He used that mercy to try again. Solomon judged as a king protecting the throne God had given him, and Scripture records it truly. That does not make every act of every king right. It does mean we should not read this as cruelty for its own sake. And it is not a pattern for us. Jesus teaches us to forgive and to leave vengeance to God (Matthew 5:44; Romans 12:19). The power of the sword belongs to rightful government (Romans 13:4), not to us.

2:26-27 *And to Abiathar the priest the king said, "Go **to** Anathoth, to your fields, for you **are** a man of death; and on this day I will not put you to death, because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted." And Solomon drove out Abiathar from being priest to the LORD, to fulfill the word of the LORD which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh.*

Abiathar was spared. "You are a man of death," Solomon told him, meaning he deserved to die for backing Adonijah. But he was spared "because you carried the ark of the Lord GOD before David my father, and because you were afflicted in all in which my father was afflicted." Abiathar had stood with David through the years of running from Saul. Solomon sent him home "to Anathoth, to your fields," a priest's town a few miles northeast of Jerusalem. Centuries later, Jeremiah would come from a priestly family of Anathoth (Jeremiah 1:1).

Then the writer adds that this happened "to fulfill the word of the LORD which He had spoken concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh." Abiathar was the last of Eli's line in the high priest's office. More than a century earlier God had said He would cut off Eli's house from that office because of the sins of Eli's sons (1 Samuel 2:27-36; 3:11-14). God's word waited a long time, but it came true. From here on Zadok's line held the high priesthood.

2:28-34 *And the report came to Joab, for Joab had turned aside after Adonijah, and after Absalom he had not turned aside; and Joab fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar. And it was told to King Solomon that Joab had fled to the tent of the LORD, and look, **he is** beside the altar. And Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, "Go, fall on him." And Benaiah came to the tent of the LORD and said to him, "Thus says the king, 'Come out.'" And he said, "No, for here I will die." And Benaiah brought word back to the king, saying, "Thus Joab spoke, and thus he answered me." And the king said to him, "Do just as he has spoken, and fall on him, and you shall bury him, and you shall remove the blood **shed** without cause, which Joab shed, from on me and from on the house of my father. And the LORD will bring back his blood on his head, who fell on two men more righteous and better than he and killed them with the sword, and my father David did not know **it**: Abner the son of Ner, the commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, the commander of the army of Judah. And their blood shall return on the head of Joab and on the head of his offspring forever; and for David and for his offspring and for his house and for his throne there shall be peace forever from the LORD." And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up and fell on him and put him to death; and he was buried in his house in the wilderness.*

When Joab heard, he "fled to the tent of the LORD and took hold of the horns of the altar." The writer notes that Joab had turned aside to follow Adonijah, though he had not followed Absalom.

Benaiah told him, "Come out." Joab refused: "No, for here I will die." Solomon answered, "Do just as he has spoken, and fall on him." Was it wrong to kill a man at the altar? The Law gave the answer long before. The altar protected a man who killed by accident, but "if a man acts presumptuously against his neighbor, to kill him with cunning, you shall take him from My altar to die" (Exodus 21:14). Joab had murdered Abner and Amasa on purpose, by trickery.

Solomon said Joab's death would "remove the blood shed without cause, which Joab shed, from on me and from on the house of my father." Abner and Amasa were "two men more righteous and

better than he." Their blood would return on Joab, and for David's house "there shall be peace forever from the LORD." Joab was buried at his own house in the wilderness of Judah.

Joab was brave, able and loyal to David in many ways. But he did whatever he thought best, even murder, and he never repented. Long service does not cancel sin. A man can serve the king for forty years and still never bow his heart to the King's God.

2:35 *And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and Zadok the priest the king put in the place of Abiathar.*

"The king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his place over the army, and Zadok the priest the king put in the place of Abiathar." The men who had stood by God's choice of king now held the army and the priesthood. Zadok's line served as high priests for centuries. Ezekiel would later speak of "the sons of Zadok" serving in the temple of the coming kingdom (Ezekiel 44:15).

2:36-38 *And the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Build for yourself a house in Jerusalem, and you shall dwell there, and you shall not go out from there here or there. And it shall be, on the day you go out and cross the wadi of Kidron, you shall surely know that you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your head." And Shimei said to the king, "The word **is** good. Just as my lord the king has spoken, so your servant will do." And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days.*

Solomon dealt with Shimei differently. He did not put him to death. He gave him a house in Jerusalem and a rule: "you shall not go out from there here or there." If he ever crossed "the wadi of Kidron," the valley east of the city that led toward his old home in Bahurim, "you shall surely die; your blood shall be on your head."

This kept Shimei, a Benjaminite from Saul's family who had cursed David, where the king could watch him. It was a fair and clear condition. Shimei agreed: "The word is good." He swore by the LORD to keep it (2:42), and he lived safely in Jerusalem "many days."

2:39-46 *And it came about at the end of three years, and two servants of Shimei fled to Achish the son of Maacah, the king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, "Look, your servants **are** in Gath." And Shimei arose and saddled his donkey and went to Gath, to Achish, to seek his servants; and Shimei went and brought his servants from Gath. And it was told to Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem **to** Gath and had returned. And the king sent and called for Shimei and said to him, "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you, saying, 'On the day you go out and go here or there, you shall surely know that you shall surely die'? And you said to me, 'The word **is** good; I have heard.' And why have you not kept the oath of the LORD and the command which I commanded you?" And the king said to Shimei, "You yourself know all the evil that your heart knows, which you did to David my father; and the LORD will bring back your evil on your head. And King Solomon **shall be** blessed, and the throne of David will be established before the LORD forever." And the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and he went out and fell on him, and he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.*

"At the end of three years," two of Shimei's servants ran away to Achish king of Gath, the Philistine city. Shimei saddled his donkey and went after them, and he brought them back.

Solomon called him in. "Did I not make you swear by the LORD and warn you?" Shimei had broken his own oath before the LORD. Then Solomon named the deeper matter: "You yourself know all the evil that your heart knows, which you did to David my father." The old curse, the stones and the dust in 2 Samuel 16 had never been dealt with by Shimei's heart, and now his carelessness about his oath showed it.

Benaiah put him to death. "And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon."

Why did Shimei go? Scripture does not say he meant to rebel. Maybe he thought three years had softened the rule, or that chasing slaves was a good enough reason. But he knew the terms, and he chose to break them. It is a sobering picture of how we treat God's warnings. We grow comfortable, and we start to think the line does not really matter.

Chapter 2 Summary

As David drew near death, he charged Solomon to be strong and to keep the LORD's commands written in the Law of Moses, so that God would establish His promise of a lasting throne. He told Solomon to deal with Joab for murdering Abner and Amasa, to show steadfast love to the sons of Barzillai, and to deal wisely with Shimei, who had cursed him. David died after reigning forty years, and Solomon's reign was firmly established. Adonijah asked Bathsheba to get Abishag for him as a wife, and Solomon saw it as a new claim to the throne and had him put to death. Abiathar was spared for his loyalty to David but removed from the priesthood, fulfilling God's word about Eli's house. Joab fled to the altar and was put to death there. Benaiah became commander and Zadok became priest. Shimei was confined to Jerusalem on his oath, broke it after three years, and was put to death. The kingdom was established in Solomon's hand.

Chapter 2 Study Questions

1. What did David say would make Solomon strong, and where were God's commands written? (2:2-3)

2. What promise of God did David connect to Solomon's obedience? (2:4; 2 Samuel 7:12-16)

3. Who did David tell Solomon to show steadfast love to, and why? (2:7)

4. What did Adonijah admit about how Solomon got the kingship? (2:15)

5. Why did Solomon see Adonijah's request for Abishag as a claim to the throne? (2:22; 2 Samuel 16:21-22)

6. What old prophecy came true when Abiathar was removed? (2:27; 1 Samuel 2:27-36)

7. Why did the altar not protect Joab? (2:31-32; Exodus 21:14)

8. What terms did Solomon set for Shimei, and how did Shimei break them? (2:36-42)

9. David left hard matters for his son to deal with. Is there something hard you have put off that God wants you to face now?

10. Shimei grew careless about a warning he had agreed to. Where might you be growing comfortable with something God has clearly warned you about?

Chapter 3: Solomon Asks for Wisdom

Scripture

3:1-15 And Solomon became son-in-law to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he took the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his house and the house of the LORD and the wall of Jerusalem all around. Only, the people ***were*** sacrificing at the high places, for a house had not been built for the name of the LORD until those days. And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father; only, at the high places he ***was*** sacrificing and making ***offerings*** smoke. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that ***was*** the great high place; Solomon offered up a thousand burnt offerings on that altar. At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." And Solomon said, "You Yourself have shown great steadfast love to Your servant David my father, just as he walked before You in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You; and You have kept for him this great steadfast love, and You have given him a son sitting on his throne, as ***it is*** this day. And now, O LORD my God, You Yourself have made Your servant king in place of David my father, and I ***am*** a young lad; I do not know ***how*** to go out and to come in. And Your servant ***is*** in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a numerous people which will not be numbered and will not be counted for multitude. And give to Your servant a listening heart to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" And the thing was good in the eyes of the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself many days, and have not asked for yourself wealth, and have not asked ***for*** the life of your enemies, and have asked for yourself discernment to hear judgment, look, I have done according to your words. Look, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that like you there has not been ***one*** before you, and after you ***one*** like you shall not arise. And also what you have not asked I have given you, both wealth and honor, so that there has not been a man like you among the kings all your days. And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, just as David your father walked, then I will lengthen your days." And Solomon awoke, and look, ***it was*** a dream. And he came ***to*** Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and he offered up burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and he made a feast for all his servants.

3:16-28 Then two women, prostitutes, came to the king and stood before him. And the one woman said, "Please, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I gave birth with her in the house. And it came about on the third day of my giving birth, and this woman also gave birth; and we ***were*** together; ***there was*** no stranger with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. And the son of this woman died ***in the*** night, because she lay on him. And she rose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me, and your maidservant ***was*** sleeping, and she laid him in her bosom, and her dead son she laid in my bosom. And I rose in the morning to nurse my son, and look, he had died. And I looked carefully at him in the morning, and look, it was not my son whom I had borne." And the other woman said, "No, for my son ***is*** the living one, and your son ***is*** the dead one." And this ***one*** was saying, "No, for your son ***is*** the dead one, and my son ***is*** the living one." And they spoke before the king. And the king said, "This ***one*** is saying, 'This ***is*** my son,

the living one, and your son ***is*** the dead one'; and this ***one*** is saying, 'No, for your son ***is*** the dead one, and my son ***is*** the living one.'" And the king said, "Take a sword for me." And they brought the sword before the king. And the king said, "Cut the living child into two, and give the half to one and the half to ***the other*** one." And the woman whose son ***was*** the living one said to the king, for her compassion grew warm over her son, and she said, "Please, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him." And this ***one*** was saying, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; cut ***him***." And the king answered and said, "Give her the living child, and by no means kill him; she ***is*** his mother." And all Israel heard the judgment which the king had judged, and they were afraid before the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God ***was*** within him to do justice.

Chapter 3 Preview

Solomon's reign starts with real love for the LORD, and with two warning signs. He makes a marriage alliance with Pharaoh, and he worships at the high places, because the temple has not been built yet. At the great high place of Gibeon he offers a thousand burnt offerings, and that night the LORD appears to him in a dream and says, "Ask what I shall give you." Solomon asks for "a listening heart" to judge God's people well. God is pleased, and He gives him wisdom beyond any king before or after him, and riches and honor besides.

Then we see that wisdom at work. Two women come before the king, each claiming the same living baby as her own. With no witnesses and no proof, Solomon calls for a sword. The true mother's love gives her away, and all Israel sees "that the wisdom of God was within him to do justice." This chapter teaches us what to ask God for, and it reminds us that God is generous to those who ask for the right things.

Chapter 3 Study

3:1 *And Solomon became son-in-law to Pharaoh king of Egypt, and he took the daughter of Pharaoh and brought her to the city of David until he had finished building his house and the house of the LORD and the wall of Jerusalem all around.*

"Solomon became son-in-law to Pharaoh king of Egypt." Marriages between royal houses were a common way to seal a treaty in the ancient world. For an Egyptian king to give his daughter to a foreign king showed how strong Israel had become.

The writer does not praise or condemn it here. The Law forbade Israel to marry the Canaanite nations (Deuteronomy 7:3), and it warned the king not to multiply wives or turn his people back toward Egypt (Deuteronomy 17:16-17). Egypt was not on the Canaanite list, but this marriage was the first of many foreign marriages, and in chapter 11 the writer will name "the daughter of Pharaoh" among the women who turned Solomon's heart (11:1). Small compromises at the start often become big ones later.

She lived in the city of David until Solomon finished "his house and the house of the LORD and the wall of Jerusalem all around." Those three building projects fill much of the next several chapters.

3:2-4 *Only, the people **were** sacrificing at the high places, for a house had not been built for the name of the LORD until those days. And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father; only, at the high places he **was** sacrificing and making **offerings** smoke. And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there, for that **was** the great high place; Solomon offered up a thousand burnt offerings on that altar.*

"The people were sacrificing at the high places." A high place was a hilltop or raised spot used for worship. The Canaanites worshiped their gods at such places, and God had told Israel to tear them down and worship at the one place He would choose (Deuteronomy 12:2-5). But the ark had moved around since the days of Eli, and "a house had not been built for the name of the LORD until those days." So people worshiped the LORD at local high places.

"Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father." That is a beautiful thing to say about any person. Then comes one small word: "only." "Only, at the high places he was sacrificing." Throughout Kings the high places will be a stubborn problem, even under good kings.

Gibeon was "the great high place," because the tabernacle Moses built and its bronze altar were there (1 Chronicles 16:39; 2 Chronicles 1:3-6). Solomon offered "a thousand burnt offerings on that altar." A burnt offering was an animal wholly burned on the altar, a gift given entirely to God, showing that the worshiper gave himself to Him. A thousand of them showed a young king who wanted to begin his reign by seeking the LORD.

3:5 *At Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night; and God said, "Ask what I shall give you."*

At Gibeon "the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night," and God said, "Ask what I shall give you." 2 Chronicles 1:7-12 tells the same event.

Imagine hearing those words. God was not giving a blank check for greed. He was testing what was in Solomon's heart. What we ask for shows what we value. Jesus said something like it to His disciples: "Ask, and it will be given to you" (Matthew 7:7). But He also taught them to pray first for God's name, His kingdom and His will (Matthew 6:9-10).

3:6-9 *And Solomon said, "You Yourself have shown great steadfast love to Your servant David my father, just as he walked before You in truth and in righteousness and in uprightness of heart with You; and You have kept for him this great steadfast love, and You have given him a son sitting on his throne, as* ***it is*** *this day. And now, O LORD my God, You Yourself have made Your servant king in place of David my father, and I* ***am*** *a young lad; I do not know* ***how*** *to go out and to come in. And Your servant* ***is*** *in the midst of Your people whom You have chosen, a numerous people which will not be numbered and will not be counted for multitude. And give to Your servant a listening heart to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil; for who is able to judge this great people of Yours?"*

Solomon did not start with what he wanted. He started with what God had done. "You Yourself have shown great steadfast love to Your servant David my father." That word again is hesed, God's faithful, covenant love. Solomon saw his own throne as the fruit of God's kindness to David.

Then he was honest about himself. "I am a young lad; I do not know how to go out and to come in." Solomon was likely about twenty, a grown man, but he knew he was not ready for the job. To "go out and to come in" was a way of saying to lead people in daily life and in battle. He was in charge of "a numerous people which will not be numbered," the very people God promised Abraham would be like the stars and the sand.

So he asked, "give to Your servant a listening heart to judge Your people, to discern between good and evil." In Hebrew the word for heart means the whole inner person: mind, will and feelings. A listening heart is one that hears God and hears people, and so can judge rightly. "For who is able to judge this great people of Yours?" Notice that he calls them God's people, not his own. A good leader knows the people he leads belong to God.

3:10-14 *And the thing was good in the eyes of the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing. And God said to him, "Because you have asked this thing, and have not asked for yourself many days, and have not asked for yourself wealth, and have not asked* ***for*** *the life of your enemies, and have asked for yourself discernment to hear judgment, look, I have done according to your words. Look, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that like you there has not been* ***one*** *before you, and after you* ***one*** *like you shall not arise. And also what you have not asked I have given you, both wealth and honor, so that there has not been a man like you among the kings all your days. And if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, just as David your father walked, then I will lengthen your days."*

"The thing was good in the eyes of the Lord, that Solomon had asked this thing." The SLB says "the Lord" here, meaning Master, rather than the name the LORD.

God listed what Solomon did not ask for: "many days," "wealth," "the life of your enemies." He asked for "discernment to hear judgment." So God gave him "a wise and discerning heart, so that like you there has not been one before you, and after you one like you shall not arise." And then God added what he did not ask for, "both wealth and honor."

This is how God works. Jesus said, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). It does not mean wealth always follows

godliness. It means God gives freely to those who want Him and His ways first. James says the same thing about wisdom in particular: if anyone lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all generously (James 1:5). Have you asked Him?

There was one condition: "if you walk in My ways, keeping My statutes and My commandments, just as David your father walked, then I will lengthen your days." Wisdom was a gift. A long life of blessing depended on walking in it. Sadly, Solomon would have the wisdom without always walking in it. He died at about sixty.

3:15 *And Solomon awoke, and look,* ***it was*** *a dream. And he came* ***to*** *Jerusalem and stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and he offered up burnt offerings and made peace offerings, and he made a feast for all his servants.*

"Solomon awoke, and look, it was a dream." But it was a real meeting with God. He went back to Jerusalem and "stood before the ark of the covenant of the Lord." The ark of the covenant was the gold-covered wooden chest that held the tablets of the Ten Commandments, the sign of God's presence among His people. David had brought it to a tent in Jerusalem. The covenant was the binding agreement God made with Israel at Sinai.

There he offered burnt offerings and "made peace offerings." A peace offering was a sacrifice shared as a meal, with part given to God and part eaten by the worshiper, a picture of fellowship with God. Then Solomon "made a feast for all his servants." When God blesses us, the right response is worship, and then sharing the joy with others.

3:16-22 *Then two women, prostitutes, came to the king and stood before him. And the one woman said, "Please, my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I gave birth with her in the house. And it came about on the third day of my giving birth, and this woman also gave birth; and we* ***were*** *together;* ***there was*** *no stranger with us in the house, except the two of us in the house. And the son of this woman died* ***in the*** *night, because she lay on him. And she rose in the middle of the night and took my son from beside me, and your maidservant* ***was*** *sleeping, and she laid him in her bosom, and her dead son she laid in my bosom. And I rose in the morning to nurse my son, and look, he had died. And I looked carefully at him in the morning, and look, it was not my son whom I had borne." And the other woman said, "No, for my son* ***is*** *the living one, and your son* ***is*** *the dead one." And this* ***one*** *was saying, "No, for your son* ***is*** *the dead one, and my son* ***is*** *the living one." And they spoke before the king.*

Now we see the gift of wisdom tested. "Two women, prostitutes, came to the king." The lowest people in society could bring their case straight to the king. That says something good about Solomon's court.

The first woman told her story. The two lived alone in one house, and each had a baby three days apart. "There was no stranger with us in the house." No witnesses. In the night the other woman's son died, "because she lay on him." That woman, she said, then "took my son from beside me" while she slept and laid her dead son in her arms. In the morning, when she looked carefully in the light, "it was not my son whom I had borne."

The other woman said, "No, for my son is the living one, and your son is the dead one." And back and forth they went before the king. One of them was lying, and one was grieving a stolen child. How could anyone know which?

3:23-25 *And the king said, "This **one** is saying, 'This **is** my son, the living one, and your son **is** the dead one'; and this **one** is saying, 'No, for your son **is** the dead one, and my son **is** the living one.'" And the king said, "Take a sword for me." And they brought the sword before the king. And the king said, "Cut the living child into two, and give the half to one and the half to **the other** one."*

Solomon summed up the case: each woman says the living son is hers. Then he said, "Take a sword for me." The court must have held its breath. "Cut the living child into two, and give the half to one and the half to the other one."

Did Solomon intend to kill the baby? No. He was not being cruel. He was testing the hearts of the women. He knew a real mother would rather lose her son than see him die. His wisdom went past the words to the heart.

3:26-28 *And the woman whose son **was** the living one said to the king, for her compassion grew warm over her son, and she said, "Please, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him." And this **one** was saying, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; cut **him**." And the king answered and said, "Give her the living child, and by no means kill him; she **is** his mother." And all Israel heard the judgment which the king had judged, and they were afraid before the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God **was** within him to do justice.*

"Her compassion grew warm over her son." The Hebrew word for compassion is close to the word for womb. It is the deep love a mother has for her child. She cried out, "Please, my lord, give her the living child, and by no means kill him." The other woman said, "He shall be neither mine nor yours; cut him." Jealousy would rather destroy than lose.

The king answered, "Give her the living child, and by no means kill him; she is his mother." Love gave her away, and the child was saved.

"All Israel heard the judgment which the king had judged, and they were afraid before the king, for they saw that the wisdom of God was within him to do justice." They feared him in the sense of awe and respect. They knew they could not fool him. This was the very thing Solomon had asked for in verse 9, a heart to judge God's people.

This story points us to a greater Judge. Jesus knows every heart (John 2:24-25), and the Father has given all judgment to the Son (John 5:22). Paul calls Christ the wisdom of God (1 Corinthians 1:24), and in Him "all the treasures of wisdom and of knowledge are hidden" (Colossians 2:3). Jesus Himself said that "something greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42).

Chapter 3 Summary

Solomon made a marriage alliance with Pharaoh and brought his daughter to the city of David. Because the temple had not been built, the people, and Solomon too, sacrificed at the high places. Solomon loved the LORD, and he offered a thousand burnt offerings at the great high place of

Gibeon. There the LORD appeared to him in a dream and told him to ask for what he wanted. Solomon thanked God for His steadfast love to David, admitted he was young and unready, and asked for a listening heart to judge God's people and discern between good and evil. God was pleased and gave him a wise and discerning heart beyond any other king, and wealth and honor too, with a promise of long life if he walked in God's ways. Solomon returned to Jerusalem and worshiped before the ark. Then two prostitutes came with one living baby and one dead, each claiming the living son. Solomon called for a sword to divide the child, and the true mother's compassion showed who she was. All Israel saw that the wisdom of God was in him to do justice.

Chapter 3 Study Questions

1. What two things in verses 1-3 suggest trouble ahead in Solomon's life? (3:1-3)

2. What did God say to Solomon in the dream at Gibeon? (3:5)

3. How did Solomon describe himself, and what did he ask for? (3:7-9)

4. What three things did God say Solomon had not asked for? (3:11)

5. What did God give Solomon besides wisdom, and what condition did He set? (3:12-14)

6. How did Solomon find out which woman was the real mother? (3:24-27)

7. What did all Israel conclude when they heard about the judgment? (3:28)

8. How do Matthew 6:33 and James 1:5 connect with what happened at Gibeon?

9. If God said to you, "Ask what I shall give you," what would you ask for, and what does that show about your heart?

10. Solomon admitted, "I do not know how to go out and to come in." Where in your life do you need to admit you are not enough and ask God for wisdom?

Chapter 4: Solomon's Officials and Kingdom

Scripture

4:1-19 And King Solomon was king over all Israel. And these ***were*** the officials who ***belonged*** to him: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada ***was*** over the army; and Zadok and Abiathar ***were*** priests; and Azariah the son of Nathan ***was*** over the deputies; and Zabud the son of Nathan ***was*** a priest, the friend of the king; and Ahishar ***was*** over the house; and Adoniram the son of Abda ***was*** over the forced labor. And Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, and they provided for the king and his household; a month in the year it was on each one to provide. And these ***are*** their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; Ben-deker, in Makaz and in Shaalbim and in Beth-shemesh and Elonbeth-hanan; Ben-hesed, in Arubboth; to him ***belonged*** Socoh and all the land of Hepher; Ben-abinadab, all the heights of Dor; Taphath the daughter of Solomon became his wife; Baana the son of Ahilud, Taanach and Megiddo and all Beth-shean, which ***is*** beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him ***belonged*** the villages of Jair the son of Manasseh, which ***are*** in Gilead; to him ***belonged*** the region of Argob, which ***is*** in Bashan, sixty great cities ***with*** walls and bars of bronze; Ahinadab the son of Iddo, ***at*** Mahanaim; Ahimaaz, in Naphtali; he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as a wife; Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin; Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the land of Sihon the king of the Amorites and of Og the king of Bashan; and ***there was*** one deputy who ***was*** in the land.

4:20-34 Judah and Israel ***were*** many, like the sand which ***is*** by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. And Solomon was ruling over all the kingdoms from the River ***to*** the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they ***were*** bringing tribute and serving Solomon all the days of his life. And the food of Solomon for one day was approximately 180 bushels (thirty kors) of fine flour and approximately 360 bushels (sixty kors) of meal, ten fat cattle, and twenty pasture cattle, and a hundred sheep, besides deer and gazelles and roebucks and fattened birds. For he ***was*** ruling over all ***the region*** beyond the River, from Tiphsah and to Gaza, over all the kings beyond the River; and he had peace from all his sides all around. And Judah and Israel dwelt in security, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan and to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariotry, and twelve thousand horsemen. And those deputies provided for King Solomon and for all who came near to the table of King Solomon, each ***in*** his month; they let nothing be lacking. And the barley and the straw for the horses and for the swift steeds they brought to the place where it would be, each according to his rule. And God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding, and breadth of heart like the sand which ***is*** on the shore of the sea. And the wisdom of Solomon was greater than the wisdom of all the sons of the east and than all the wisdom of Egypt. And he was wiser than all mankind, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his name was in all the nations all around. And he spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke concerning the trees, from the cedar which ***is*** in Lebanon even to the hyssop which comes out in the wall; and he spoke concerning the animals

and concerning the birds and concerning the moving things and concerning the fish. And they came from all the peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.

Chapter 4 Preview

Chapter 4 opens the books of Solomon's government. First comes a list of his chief officials: priests, scribes, a recorder, the army commander, the man over the palace and the man over forced labor. Then come twelve deputies, each in charge of a district of Israel and each responsible for supplying the king's table for one month of the year. These lists can look dry, but they show a kingdom that was organized, at peace and well fed.

The second half of the chapter pulls back to show the whole picture. Judah and Israel are as many as the sand by the sea, "eating and drinking and rejoicing." Solomon rules from the Euphrates to the border of Egypt. Every man sits under his own vine and fig tree. And above it all stands Solomon's wisdom, greater than all the wise men of the east and of Egypt, so that kings come from every nation to hear him. For a moment, Israel looks like the kingdom God promised to Abraham.

Chapter 4 Study

4:1-6 *And King Solomon was king over all Israel. And these **were** the officials who **belonged** to him: Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest; Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder; and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada **was** over the army; and Zadok and Abiathar **were** priests; and Azariah the son of Nathan **was** over the deputies; and Zabud the son of Nathan **was** a priest, the friend of the king; and Ahishar **was** over the house; and Adoniram the son of Abda **was** over the forced labor.*

"King Solomon was king over all Israel." Then comes his cabinet. "Azariah the son of Zadok, the priest" heads the list. He was likely Zadok's grandson (1 Chronicles 6:8-10), and "son" in Hebrew can mean descendant. The scribes kept royal letters and records. "Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder," had held that office under David (2 Samuel 8:16). Benaiah now held Joab's old post over the army. Some of David's men carried on, and some new ones came in.

"Zadok and Abiathar were priests." Abiathar had been removed in chapter 2, so this list probably covers the whole reign, or Abiathar kept the title while Zadok held the office. Two sons of Nathan served, one over the twelve deputies and one as "the friend of the king," a trusted adviser. Nathan's faithfulness in chapter 1 was remembered.

"Adoniram the son of Abda was over the forced labor." That is a name to remember. Forced labor, men drafted to work on the king's projects, grew heavy under Solomon, and after his death the people stoned Adoniram, also called Adoram (12:18). Good government can slide into a heavy yoke.

4:7-19 *And Solomon had twelve deputies over all Israel, and they provided for the king and his household; a month in the year it was on each one to provide. And these **are** their names: Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim; Ben-deker, in Makaz and in Shaalbim and in Beth-shemesh and Elonbeth-hanan; Ben-hesed, in Arubboth; to him **belonged** Socoh and all the land of Hepher; Ben-abinadab, all the heights of Dor; Taphath the daughter of Solomon became his wife; Baana the son of Ahilud, Taanach and Megiddo and all Beth-shean, which **is** beside Zarethan below Jezreel, from Beth-shean to Abel-meholah, as far as the other side of Jokmeam; Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead; to him **belonged** the villages of Jair the son of Manasseh, which **are** in Gilead; to him **belonged** the region of Argob, which **is** in Bashan, sixty great cities **with** walls and bars of bronze; Ahinadab the son of Iddo, **at** Mahanaim; Ahimaaz, in Naphtali; he also took Basemath the daughter of Solomon as a wife; Baana the son of Hushai, in Asher and Bealoth; Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar; Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin; Geber the son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, the land of Sihon the king of the Amorites and of Og the king of Bashan; and **there was** one deputy who **was** in the land.*

Solomon divided Israel into twelve districts, each under a deputy, and "a month in the year it was on each one to provide" food for the king and his household. Some of the district lines follow the old tribal borders, like Naphtali, Asher, Issachar and Benjamin, and some do not, like the area around Megiddo and Beth-shean or the lands east of the Jordan in Gilead and Bashan.

A few personal notes break up the list. Two of the deputies married daughters of Solomon, Taphath and Basemath, which shows how close these men were to the king. Ahimaaz may be the son of Zadok who ran with news to David during Absalom's revolt (2 Samuel 18:19-27), though Scripture does not say. The region of Argob had "sixty great cities with walls and bars of bronze," the same strong cities Israel took from Og king of Bashan in Moses' day (Deuteronomy 3:4-5).

Notice that Judah is not named among the twelve. The last line, "there was one deputy who was in the land," may refer to Judah, under a separate officer. Some think Solomon favored his own tribe of Judah with lighter taxes, and that this added to the bitterness of the northern tribes that broke away under his son (12:4).

Why put this list in the Bible? It shows that the peace and plenty of Solomon's kingdom did not just happen. God gave it, and Solomon governed it with care. It also reminds us that God knows the names of ordinary officials. Every one of them mattered to Him.

4:20-21 *Judah and Israel **were** many, like the sand which **is** by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking and rejoicing. And Solomon was ruling over all the kingdoms from the River **to** the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt; they **were** bringing tribute and serving Solomon all the days of his life.*

"Judah and Israel were many, like the sand which is by the sea in multitude." God had promised Abraham that his seed would be like the sand on the seashore (Genesis 22:17). Here the writer shows that promise coming true. And they were "eating and drinking and rejoicing." It was a time of joy.

"Solomon was ruling over all the kingdoms from the River," which means the Euphrates, "to the land of the Philistines and to the border of Egypt." God told Abraham that his seed would have the land "from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates" (Genesis 15:18). Under Solomon the nations of that whole region either belonged to Israel or paid tribute to it.

Was this the final fulfillment of the land promise? I do not believe so. These kingdoms paid tribute, but Israel did not dwell in all that land forever, and within a generation much of it was lost. The prophets, writing long after Solomon, still looked forward to a day when Israel would live safely in its land under the Son of David (Ezekiel 37:24-25; Amos 9:14-15). I believe that day is still coming, when Christ reigns on the earth for a thousand years (Revelation 20:4-6).

4:22-23 *And the food of Solomon for one day was approximately 180 bushels (thirty kors) of fine flour and approximately 360 bushels (sixty kors) of meal, ten fat cattle, and twenty pasture cattle, and a hundred sheep, besides deer and gazelles and roebucks and fattened birds.*

Solomon's court ate "for one day" thirty kors of fine flour and sixty kors of meal. A kor was a large dry measure, roughly six bushels, so this was well over a hundred bushels of flour every day. Add ten fattened cattle, twenty pasture cattle, a hundred sheep, and deer, gazelles and fattened birds.

That feeds a lot of people, likely several thousand, counting the royal family, officials, servants, guards and guests. It shows the size of the court and the wealth of the kingdom. It also shows what the twelve deputies had to bring in each month. A big court is a heavy load on the people who supply it.

4:24-25 *For he **was** ruling over all **the region** beyond the River, from Tiphsah and to Gaza, over all the kings beyond the River; and he had peace from all his sides all around. And Judah and Israel dwelt in security, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan and to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon.*

"He had peace from all his sides all around." Solomon's name comes from the Hebrew word shalom, peace. David was a man of war. Solomon was a man of rest (1 Chronicles 22:9). He ruled "from Tiphsah," a city on the Euphrates, "and to Gaza," on the coast near Egypt.

"Judah and Israel dwelt in security, each man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan and to Beersheba." Dan was the town in the far north and Beersheba the town in the far south. To sit under your own vine and fig tree meant to live in peace on your own land, enjoying what you had grown, with no enemy to fear. The prophet Micah used these same words to describe the coming kingdom, when "each man under his vine and under his fig tree" will live with no one to make him afraid (Micah 4:4). Solomon's peace was a small taste of what Christ's kingdom will be.

4:26-28 *And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariotry, and twelve thousand horsemen. And those deputies provided for King Solomon and for all who came near to the table of King Solomon, each **in** his month; they let nothing be lacking. And the barley and the straw for the horses and for the swift steeds they brought to the place where it would be, each according to his rule.*

"Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariotry, and twelve thousand horsemen." The parallel in 2 Chronicles 9:25 says "four thousand stalls of horses and chariots." Most conservative scholars think a copyist made an error in one of the numbers somewhere along the line, which is easy to do with Hebrew numbers, and that four thousand is the original. Others think the two passages count different things, stalls of single horses or stalls holding a team and chariot. Either way, the point is the same: Solomon had a large chariot force.

That point carries a warning. The Law said the king "shall not multiply horses for himself" or send the people back to Egypt to get them (Deuteronomy 17:16). In chapter 10 we will see that Solomon bought horses from Egypt (10:28). The kingdom's strength was turning into the kind of strength God told His king not to trust. "These trust in chariotry and these in horses," David wrote, but we will make mention of the name of the LORD our God (Psalm 20:7).

The deputies supplied everything, food for the king's table and "barley and the straw for the horses." Nothing was lacking.

4:29-31 *And God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding, and breadth of heart like the sand which **is** on the shore of the sea. And the wisdom of Solomon was greater than the wisdom of all the sons of the east and than all the wisdom of Egypt. And he was wiser than all mankind, than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol; and his name was in all the nations all around.*

Now the writer turns to the greatest thing about Solomon's reign. "God gave Solomon wisdom and very great understanding, and breadth of heart like the sand which is on the shore of the sea." The people were as many as the sand, and Solomon's understanding was as wide.

His wisdom was greater than "all the sons of the east," the peoples of Arabia and Mesopotamia known for wise sayings, and "all the wisdom of Egypt," which was famous in the ancient world. He was wiser than the best-known wise men of Israel, "Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman," and others. Ethan and Heman may be the men whose names stand over Psalms 88 and 89.

God had promised this in 3:12, and here He kept His word.

4:32-34 *And he spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five. And he spoke concerning the trees, from the cedar which **is** in Lebanon even to the hyssop which comes out in the wall; and he spoke concerning the animals and concerning the birds and concerning the moving things and concerning the fish. And they came from all the peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all the kings of the earth who had heard of his wisdom.*

"He spoke three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five." Only a part of these are in our Bibles. The book of Proverbs holds many of his sayings (Proverbs 1:1; 10:1; 25:1), and

Song of Songs and Psalms 72 and 127 carry his name. The rest are lost, and God did not choose to keep them in Scripture.

He spoke about the trees, "from the cedar which is in Lebanon even to the hyssop which comes out in the wall," the tallest tree and the smallest plant, and about animals, birds, creeping things and fish. Solomon studied God's creation. His wisdom was not only about religion. It was about all of life under God. That is a good model for Christians who study science, farming, medicine or any other field. All truth is God's truth, and the world shows His wisdom.

"They came from all the peoples to hear the wisdom of Solomon." The queen of Sheba will be the most famous of these visitors (chapter 10). God's blessing on Israel was meant to draw the nations to Him.

Chapter 4 Summary

Solomon ruled all Israel with a cabinet of priests, scribes, a recorder, an army commander, a palace manager and a man over forced labor. He set twelve deputies over districts of Israel, each supplying the king's household for one month a year. The people of Judah and Israel were as many as the sand of the sea, and they ate, drank and rejoiced. Solomon ruled from the Euphrates to the land of the Philistines and the border of Egypt, and the kingdoms there paid him tribute. His court used huge amounts of food every day. He had peace on every side, and every man lived safely under his vine and fig tree from Dan to Beersheba. He kept a large force of horses and chariots. God gave him wisdom wider than the sand of the sea, greater than all the wise men of the east and of Egypt. He spoke three thousand proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs, he taught about plants and animals, and people came from every nation to hear him.

Chapter 4 Study Questions

1. What was each of the twelve deputies responsible for? (4:7, 27-28)

2. Who was over the forced labor, and why is his name worth remembering? (4:6; 12:18)

3. What promise to Abraham does verse 20 remind you of? (4:20; Genesis 22:17)

4. How far did Solomon's rule reach, and what promise does that recall? (4:21; Genesis 15:18)

5. What does it mean that each man dwelt "under his vine and under his fig tree"? (4:25; Micah 4:4)

6. What did the Law say about a king and horses, and how does that cast a shadow over verse 26? (4:26; Deuteronomy 17:16)

7. What subjects did Solomon's wisdom cover? (4:32-33)

8. Why do you think people came from all nations to hear Solomon? (4:34)

9. Solomon's peace was a small taste of Christ's coming kingdom. What part of that promised peace do you long for most?

10. Solomon studied trees, animals, birds and fish. How can your daily work or study become a way of seeing God's wisdom?

Chapter 5: Preparing to Build the Temple

Scripture

5:1-18 And Hiram the king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, for he had heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had been one who loved David all the days. And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, "You yourself know David my father, that he was not able to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the war ***with*** which they surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of my feet. And now the LORD my God has given me rest all around; ***there is*** no adversary and no evil occurrence. And look, I ***am*** intending to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, just as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set in your place on your throne, he shall build the house for My name.' And now command, and let them cut for me cedars from Lebanon; and my servants shall be with your servants, and the wages of your servants I will give you according to all that you say; for you yourself know that ***there is*** no one among us who knows ***how*** to cut timber like the Sidonians." And it came about, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, and he rejoiced exceedingly, and he said, "Blessed ***be*** the LORD this day, who has given to David a wise son over this great people." And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, "I have heard what you sent to me. I will do all your desire concerning timber of cedar and timber of cypress. My servants will bring ***them*** down from Lebanon to the sea; and I will make them ***into*** rafts on the sea ***to go*** to the place which you will send to me, and I will break them up there, and you shall carry ***them*** away. And you shall do my desire by giving the food of my household." And Hiram was giving to Solomon timber of cedar and timber of cypress, all his desire. And Solomon gave to Hiram approximately 120,000 bushels (twenty thousand kors) of wheat, food for his household, and approximately 1,200 gallons (twenty kors) of beaten oil; thus Solomon would give to Hiram year by year. And the LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He had spoken to him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant. And King Solomon raised forced labor from all Israel; and the forced labor was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in relays; a month they were in Lebanon, ***and*** two months at his home. And Adoniram ***was*** over the forced labor. And Solomon had seventy thousand carriers of burdens and eighty thousand hewers in the hill country, besides the commanders of the overseers of Solomon who ***were*** over the work, three thousand and three hundred, who ruled over the people who were doing the work. And the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house, hewn stones. And the builders of Solomon and the builders of Hiram and the Gebalites cut ***them*** to shape, and they prepared the timber and the stones to build the house.

Chapter 5 Preview

David had wanted to build a house for the LORD, but God told him his son would build it. Now that son is on the throne, and the land is at rest. Hiram, king of Tyre and an old friend of David, sends greetings, and Solomon answers with a request: cedar timber from Lebanon, cut by Hiram's skilled workers, in exchange for wages and food. Hiram is glad to agree, and the two kings make a covenant of peace.

Then Solomon raises a huge work force. Thirty thousand Israelites take turns working in Lebanon, a month away and two months home. Tens of thousands more carry loads and cut stone in the hills, under thousands of foremen. Great costly stones are cut for the foundation. 2 Chronicles 2 tells the same story. This chapter shows God's promise to David taking shape, and it shows that great work for God takes planning, cooperation and a lot of sweat.

Chapter 5 Study

5:1 *And Hiram the king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon, for he had heard that they had anointed him king in place of his father; for Hiram had been one who loved David all the days.*

"Hiram the king of Tyre sent his servants to Solomon." Tyre was a rich Phoenician port city on the coast north of Israel, in what is now Lebanon. The Phoenicians were the great sailors and traders of that day, and the forests of Lebanon behind them grew the best cedar in the world.

"Hiram had been one who loved David all the days." Hiram had sent cedar and craftsmen to build David's own house (2 Samuel 5:11). The word "loved" here describes a loyal friendship between allies. When Solomon became king, Hiram reached out to keep that friendship going. Good relationships built by one generation can bless the next.

5:2-5 *And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, "You yourself know David my father, that he was not able to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the war* ***with*** *which they surrounded him, until the LORD put them under the soles of my feet. And now the LORD my God has given me rest all around;* ***there is*** *no adversary and no evil occurrence. And look, I* ***am*** *intending to build a house for the name of the LORD my God, just as the LORD spoke to David my father, saying, 'Your son, whom I will set in your place on your throne, he shall build the house for My name.'*

Solomon's answer explains why the temple had to wait. David "was not able to build a house for the name of the LORD his God because of the war with which they surrounded him." 1 Chronicles 22:8 adds that God told David he had shed much blood and fought great wars, so he would not build the house. The LORD put David's enemies "under the soles of my feet," Solomon said, using David's own words for God's victories.

"And now the LORD my God has given me rest all around; there is no adversary and no evil occurrence." The time had come. God had told David that his son would "build a house for My name" (2 Samuel 7:13), and Solomon quoted that promise.

Notice the phrase "the name of the LORD." Solomon was not building a house to hold God. He knew no building could do that (8:27). The temple would be the place where God put His name, the place where His people would meet Him and call on Him. A name stands for the person. To build a house for God's name was to build a place set apart for knowing and worshiping Him.

That promise had a second, greater fulfillment. God told David that the son who would build His house would have a throne established "forever" (2 Samuel 7:13). Solomon built a house of stone. Jesus, the Son of David, is building a house of living stones, His church (1 Peter 2:5; Ephesians 2:20-22), and His throne will have no end (Luke 1:32-33).

5:6 *And now command, and let them cut for me cedars from Lebanon; and my servants shall be with your servants, and the wages of your servants I will give you according to all that you say; for you yourself know that* ***there is*** *no one among us who knows* ***how*** *to cut timber like the Sidonians."*

Solomon asked for "cedars from Lebanon." Cedar was strong, sweet smelling, beautiful and resistant to rot and insects. It was the finest building wood of the ancient world.

He offered to send his own men to work alongside Hiram's and to pay Hiram's workers "according to all that you say." And he was honest about why: "there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians." The Sidonians, from Sidon near Tyre, were Phoenicians, and they were skilled lumbermen.

It takes humility to admit that someone else is better at a job than you are. Solomon was the wisest man on earth, and he still knew he needed the skills of others. God's work is often done by people working together, each giving what they do best (1 Corinthians 12:4-7).

5:7-9 *And it came about, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, and he rejoiced exceedingly, and he said, "Blessed* ***be*** *the LORD this day, who has given to David a wise son over this great people." And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, "I have heard what you sent to me. I will do all your desire concerning timber of cedar and timber of cypress. My servants will bring* ***them*** *down from Lebanon to the sea; and I will make them* ***into*** *rafts on the sea* ***to go*** *to the place which you will send to me, and I will break them up there, and you shall carry* ***them*** *away. And you shall do my desire by giving the food of my household."*

Hiram "rejoiced exceedingly." He said, "Blessed be the LORD this day, who has given to David a wise son over this great people." This is a foreign king, from a land that worshiped Baal and other gods, praising the LORD by name. We should not read too much into it. In that day kings often honored the gods of their allies. But it is one more sign that Solomon's wisdom was known and that the God of Israel was being spoken of among the nations.

Hiram agreed to supply "timber of cedar and timber of cypress." His men would cut it in the mountains, bring it down to the sea, tie the logs into rafts and float them down the coast. 2 Chronicles 2:16 says the rafts came to Joppa, the port closest to Jerusalem. There the rafts would be broken up, and Solomon's men would haul the timber about thirty-five miles inland and uphill to Jerusalem.

In return, Hiram asked for food for his household. Tyre was a city on a rocky coast with little farmland. Israel had grain and oil. Each kingdom had what the other needed.

5:10-12 *And Hiram was giving to Solomon timber of cedar and timber of cypress, all his desire. And Solomon gave to Hiram approximately 120,000 bushels (twenty thousand kors) of wheat, food for his household, and approximately 1,200 gallons (twenty kors) of beaten oil; thus Solomon would give to Hiram year by year. And the LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He had spoken to him; and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant.*

Hiram gave all the timber Solomon wanted, and Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand kors of wheat, more than a hundred thousand bushels, and twenty kors of beaten oil, the finest olive oil, "year by year."

2 Chronicles 2:10 gives a larger list: wheat and barley, wine and twenty thousand baths of oil for the woodcutters. The two passages may describe two different payments, one for Hiram's royal household (here) and one for the workers in the forest (in Chronicles). Some also think a number has been miscopied. Either way, Solomon paid well and kept his word.

"The LORD gave wisdom to Solomon, just as He had spoken to him." The writer wants us to see that this smooth agreement between two kings was God keeping His promise from 3:12. "There was peace between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a covenant." A covenant is a binding agreement, sworn before God, with promises on both sides. This one was a treaty of peace and trade.

5:13-16 *And King Solomon raised forced labor from all Israel; and the forced labor was thirty thousand men. And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month in relays; a month they were in Lebanon,* ***and*** *two months at his home. And Adoniram* ***was*** *over the forced labor. And Solomon had seventy thousand carriers of burdens and eighty thousand hewers in the hill country, besides the commanders of the overseers of Solomon who* ***were*** *over the work, three thousand and three hundred, who ruled over the people who were doing the work.*

"King Solomon raised forced labor from all Israel; and the forced labor was thirty thousand men." This was a labor draft. Men were called up to work for the king for a set time, like a military draft. Ten thousand went to Lebanon each month in turns, "a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at his home." That arrangement was fair at first. A man worked one month in three and spent two at home with his family and farm.

"Adoniram was over the forced labor" (4:6). Remember his name.

There were also "seventy thousand carriers of burdens and eighty thousand hewers in the hill country," cutting stone, with "three thousand and three hundred" chiefs over them. 2 Chronicles 2:17-18 says the 150,000 carriers and stonecutters were foreigners living in Israel, the remaining Canaanites, and gives 3,600 overseers. The two numbers for overseers can be explained if Kings counts the lower foremen and Chronicles counts all the officials, or if 1 Kings 9:23 (550 chief officers) is added in. 3,300 plus 550 is 3,850, and 3,600 plus 250 (2 Chronicles 8:10) is also 3,850, so the totals agree.

The draft was heavy. After Solomon's death the northern tribes complained, "Your father made our yoke hard" (12:4). Even good work for God can be done in ways that grind people down. Leaders should remember that the people doing the work are God's people too.

5:17-18 *And the king commanded, and they quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house, hewn stones. And the builders of Solomon and the builders of Hiram and the Gebalites cut **them** to shape, and they prepared the timber and the stones to build the house.*

"They quarried great stones, costly stones, to lay the foundation of the house, hewn stones." These were huge, carefully shaped limestone blocks. Some of the stones in the foundation walls of the later temple mount in Jerusalem are enormous, and visitors still marvel at them, though those walls are from a later rebuilding.

Three groups shaped the stone and timber: "the builders of Solomon and the builders of Hiram and the Gebalites." The Gebalites were from Gebal, the city the Greeks called Byblos, north of Sidon. Israelites and foreigners worked side by side to prepare the house of the LORD.

Most of a foundation is never seen once the building stands. But everything rests on it. That is true of a life too. Jesus said the wise man builds his house on the rock by hearing His words and doing them (Matthew 7:24-25). What are you building on?

Chapter 5 Summary

Hiram king of Tyre, a longtime friend of David, sent servants to Solomon when he became king. Solomon replied that David could not build the LORD's house because of his wars, but now God had given rest, and Solomon intended to build the house for the LORD's name, as God had promised David. He asked Hiram for cedar from Lebanon, cut by the skilled Sidonians, and offered to pay their wages. Hiram rejoiced, praised the LORD for giving David a wise son, and agreed to send cedar and cypress by raft down the coast in exchange for food for his household. Solomon paid wheat and oil every year, and the two kings made a covenant of peace. Solomon drafted thirty thousand Israelites to work in Lebanon in monthly shifts under Adoniram, and he had seventy thousand carriers and eighty thousand stonecutters under 3,300 foremen. They quarried great costly stones for the foundation, and builders from Israel, Tyre and Gebal shaped the stone and timber.

Accepting help from others is hard for me. I feel like I can do anything myself. Solomon asked for help from people more skilled than he was. Humbling myself and accepting the gifts of others is what is needed, more often than I like to admit.

Chapter 5 Study Questions

1. Why did Hiram send servants to Solomon? (5:1)

2. Why was David not able to build the temple, according to Solomon? (5:3; 1 Chronicles 22:8)

3. What promise of God to David was Solomon fulfilling? (5:5; 2 Samuel 7:13)

4. What does it mean to build a house "for the name of the LORD"? (5:5)

5. What did Solomon admit about the Sidonians? (5:6)

6. How did Hiram respond to Solomon's message? (5:7)

7. How did the work shifts in Lebanon work, and who was in charge? (5:13-14)

8. How do 1 Peter 2:5 and Ephesians 2:20-22 describe the house Jesus is building today?

9. Solomon asked for help from people more skilled than his own. Where do you need to humbly accept the gifts of others in serving God?

10. A foundation is hidden but holds everything up. What is your life built on, and how are you strengthening that foundation? (Matthew 7:24-25)

Chapter 6: Solomon Builds the Temple

Scripture

6:1-13 And it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, that ***is*** the second month, of the reigning of Solomon over Israel, and he built the house for the LORD. And the house which King Solomon built for the LORD: its length ***was*** approximately 90 feet (sixty cubits), and its breadth approximately 30 feet (twenty ***cubits***), and its height approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits). And the porch in front of the temple of the house: its length ***was*** approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits), in front of the breadth of the house; its breadth ***was*** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) in front of the house. And he made for the house windows of closed frames. And he built against the wall of the house an extension all around, against the walls of the house all around, of the temple and of the inner room; and he made side chambers all around. The lowest extension ***was*** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) ***in*** its breadth, and the middle ***was*** approximately 9 feet (six cubits) ***in*** its breadth, and the third ***was*** approximately 10.5 feet (seven cubits) ***in*** its breadth; for he made ledges for the house all around on the outside, so as not to take hold in the walls of the house. And the house, when it was built, was built ***of*** complete stone ***from the*** quarry; and hammers and the axe, any tool of iron, were not heard in the house when it was built. The entrance of the middle side chamber ***was*** at the south side of the house; and by stairways they went up to the middle ***one***, and from the middle ***one*** to the third. And he built the house and finished it; and he covered the house ***with*** beams and planks of cedar. And he built the extension against all the house, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) ***was*** its height; and it took hold of the house with timber of cedar. And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, "***As for*** this house which you are building: if you walk in My statutes, and do My judgments, and keep all My commandments to walk in them, then I will establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will not forsake My people Israel."

6:14-38 And Solomon built the house and finished it. And he built the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling he overlaid ***them with*** wood on the inside; and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress. And he built approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) from the rear parts of the house with boards of cedar, from the floor to the walls; and he built ***them*** for it on the inside, for an inner room, for the holy of holies. And the house was approximately 60 feet (forty cubits), that ***is***, the temple in front. And the cedar on the house within ***was*** carved work of gourds and open flowers; all ***was*** cedar; no stone was seen. And the inner room in the midst of the house within he prepared, to put there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. And the inner room in front ***was*** approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) ***in*** length, and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) ***in*** breadth, and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) its height; and he overlaid it ***with*** refined gold; and he overlaid an altar ***with*** cedar. And Solomon overlaid the house within ***with*** refined gold, and he drew ***it*** across with chains of gold in front of the inner room, and he overlaid it ***with*** gold. And all the house he overlaid ***with*** gold, until all the house was finished; and all the altar which ***belonged*** to the inner room he overlaid ***with*** gold. And in the inner room he made two cherubim

of olive wood; its height ***was*** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits). And the one wing of the cherub ***was*** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and the second wing of the cherub ***was*** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits); from the ends of its wings and to the ends of its wings ***was*** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits). And the second cherub ***was*** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits); one measure and one form ***belonged*** to the two cherubim. The height of the one cherub ***was*** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits), and so ***was*** the second cherub. And he put the cherubim in the midst of the inner house; and they spread out the wings of the cherubim, and the wing of the one touched the wall, and the wing of the second cherub ***was*** touching the second wall; and their wings in the middle of the house ***were*** touching wing to wing. And he overlaid the cherubim ***with*** gold. And all the walls of the house all around he carved ***with*** engraved carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, inside and outside. And the floor of the house he overlaid ***with*** gold, inside and outside. And ***for*** the entrance of the inner room he made doors of olive wood; the pillar ***and*** the doorposts ***were*** a fifth. And the two doors ***were*** of olive wood; and he carved on them carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid ***them with*** gold; and he hammered out the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. And so he made for the entrance of the temple doorposts of olive wood, from a fourth. And two doors of cypress wood: two sides of the one door ***were*** turning, and two leaves of the second door ***were*** turning. And he carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid ***them with*** gold made even on the carved work. And he built the inner court ***with*** three rows of hewn stone and a row of beams of cedar. In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, that ***is*** the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts and according to all its plans. And he built it ***in*** seven years.

Chapter 6 Preview

Chapter 6 begins with one of the most important dates in the Old Testament. Solomon starts building the temple in the fourth year of his reign, "in the four hundred and eightieth year" after Israel came out of Egypt. That verse is the main reason many conservative scholars date the exodus about 1446 B.C. Then the writer describes the building itself: its size, the porch in front, the side rooms around it, the stone cut at the quarry so no iron tool was heard on the site, and the cedar, cypress and gold inside.

In the middle of the building report God speaks to Solomon. The house is not what matters most. Obedience is. If Solomon walks in God's ways, God will keep His word and dwell among His people. Then the description goes on to the inner room, the holy of holies, a perfect cube covered in gold, with two great golden cherubim whose wings stretch from wall to wall. The temple took seven years. As we read, we should remember that the New Testament says the temple and the tabernacle were shadows of something greater, Jesus Christ Himself and the heavenly things He opened to us (Hebrews 8:5; 9:11-12, 24).

Chapter 6 Study

6:1 *And it came about in the four hundred and eightieth year of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, that* ***is*** *the second month, of the reigning of Solomon over Israel, and he built the house for the LORD.*

This verse is a turning point. "In the four hundred and eightieth year of the going out of the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt, in the fourth year, in the month of Ziv, that is the second month, of the reigning of Solomon over Israel, and he built the house for the LORD." 2 Chronicles 3:1-2 tells the same start and adds that he built it on Mount Moriah, where the LORD appeared to David, at the threshing floor of Ornan.

Ziv was the second month of Israel's year, in the spring, about April and May. The fourth year of Solomon was about 966 B.C. That date is fixed fairly well by working back through the kings of Israel and Judah and tying them to Assyrian records that astronomers have dated. Add 480 years to 966 B.C., and you come to about 1446 B.C. for the exodus.

Why does this matter? It ties the history of the Bible together. The exodus, the forty years in the wilderness, the conquest under Joshua about 1406 B.C., the time of the judges, and the kings all fit on one timeline. Jephthah, in the days of the judges, said Israel had lived in the land for three hundred years (Judges 11:26), which fits this date well. Paul's summary in Acts 13:17-22 also fits a long period between the exodus and David.

Many scholars today date the exodus in the 1200s B.C. instead, mainly because of how they read some archaeological finds and because Exodus 1:11 names a city called Rameses, which they link to a later Pharaoh named Rameses. Some of them read the 480 years as twelve generations of forty years, a round number, and think a real generation was closer to twenty-five years. I take the number as written. The writer gives it as a plain count of years, not a symbol, and he ties it to a month and a year of Solomon's reign. The name Rameses can be explained as the later name of the place, updated for later readers, the way Genesis 47:11 uses "the land of Rameses" for a time long before any king of that name.

Notice what the writer did. He measured Israel's history from the exodus. The day God brought His people out of slavery was the day their life as a nation began. Now, 480 years later, God would have a house among them. For believers, the cross is our exodus (Luke 9:31, where the word for Jesus' "departure" is the Greek word exodos). Everything in our life with God is counted from that day.

6:2-4 *And the house which King Solomon built for the LORD: its length **was** approximately 90 feet (sixty cubits), and its breadth approximately 30 feet (twenty **cubits**), and its height approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits). And the porch in front of the temple of the house: its length **was** approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits), in front of the breadth of the house; its breadth **was** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) in front of the house. And he made for the house windows of closed frames.*

The house was sixty cubits long, twenty wide and thirty high. A cubit was the length from the elbow to the fingertip, about eighteen inches, so the temple was about 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet tall. That is not huge by modern standards. It was twice as long and twice as wide as the tabernacle Moses built (Exodus 26), with the same basic plan. The temple was not a hall where crowds gathered inside. The people worshiped in the courts outside. The building itself was God's house, where only the priests went in.

In front was "the porch," about 30 feet wide and 15 deep. "He made for the house windows of closed frames," windows high in the walls, probably with fixed lattices, letting in light and air.

6:5-6 *And he built against the wall of the house an extension all around, against the walls of the house all around, of the temple and of the inner room; and he made side chambers all around. The lowest extension **was** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **in** its breadth, and the middle **was** approximately 9 feet (six cubits) **in** its breadth, and the third **was** approximately 10.5 feet (seven cubits) **in** its breadth; for he made ledges for the house all around on the outside, so as not to take hold in the walls of the house.*

Around three sides of the main building, Solomon built "an extension all around" with "side chambers," three stories high. These rooms were probably used to store supplies, tithes, holy articles and treasures (compare 7:51; Nehemiah 13:4-5).

Each story was wider than the one below: five cubits, then six, then seven. That is because the temple wall got thinner as it went up, with "ledges" on the outside. The beams of the side rooms rested on those ledges, "so as not to take hold in the walls of the house." Nothing was cut into the walls of God's house itself.

6:7 *And the house, when it was built, was built **of** complete stone **from the** quarry; and hammers and the axe, any tool of iron, were not heard in the house when it was built.*

"The house, when it was built, was built of complete stone from the quarry; and hammers and the axe, any tool of iron, were not heard in the house when it was built." Every stone was cut and finished at the quarry and then fitted in place in quiet.

Why? Part of the reason was reverence. This was holy ground. It may also recall the Law's command that an altar of stone was not to be shaped with a tool (Exodus 20:25). Many Bible teachers have seen a picture here. God is building His church today out of "living stones" (1 Peter 2:5), shaping each of us here, in this life, often through hard things, and one day the whole house will be put together in perfect peace. The New Testament does not tie that picture to this verse, but it fits.

6:8-10 *The entrance of the middle side chamber **was** at the south side of the house; and by stairways they went up to the middle **one**, and from the middle **one** to the third. And he built the house and finished it; and he covered the house **with** beams and planks of cedar. And he built the extension against all the house, approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits) **was** its height; and it took hold of the house with timber of cedar.*

The side rooms were reached from an entrance on the south side, with stairs going up to the middle story and on to the third. The house was roofed "with beams and planks of cedar," and the side extension, five cubits high per story, was joined to the house "with timber of cedar."

These are building notes. God cared about the details of His house, and the writer did too. We can learn from that. Careful, faithful work done for God's glory is a kind of worship (Colossians 3:23).

6:11-13 *And the word of the LORD came to Solomon, saying, "**As for** this house which you are building: if you walk in My statutes, and do My judgments, and keep all My commandments to walk in them, then I will establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father. And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will not forsake My people Israel."*

Right in the middle of the building report, "the word of the LORD came to Solomon." It is as if God stopped the construction to make sure Solomon knew what really mattered.

"As for this house which you are building: if you walk in My statutes, and do My judgments, and keep all My commandments to walk in them, then I will establish My word with you, which I spoke to David your father." The temple did not guarantee God's blessing. Obedience did. Later, Jeremiah would warn the people not to trust in the words, "The temple of the LORD," while they lived in sin (Jeremiah 7:4-11). The temple was destroyed in 586 B.C. because they did just that.

"And I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel, and I will not forsake My people Israel." This is the heart of the whole Bible: God living among His people. It began in the garden, continued in the tabernacle (Exodus 25:8) and the temple, came to its fullest when "the Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14), and will be complete when God dwells with His people forever (Revelation 21:3).

6:14-18 *And Solomon built the house and finished it. And he built the walls of the house on the inside with boards of cedar; from the floor of the house to the walls of the ceiling he overlaid **them with** wood on the inside; and he overlaid the floor of the house with boards of cypress. And he built approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) from the rear parts of the house with boards of cedar, from the floor to the walls; and he built **them** for it on the inside, for an inner room, for the holy of holies. And the house was approximately 60 feet (forty cubits), that **is**, the temple in front. And the cedar on the house within **was** carved work of gourds and open flowers; all **was** cedar; no stone was seen.*

"Solomon built the house and finished it." Then the writer goes inside. The stone walls were lined "with boards of cedar" from floor to ceiling, and the floor with cypress. The cedar was carved "of gourds and open flowers; all was cedar; no stone was seen."

The back twenty cubits were walled off with cedar "for an inner room, for the holy of holies," the most holy place. The front room, forty cubits long, was the main hall, called the holy place. The same two rooms were in the tabernacle, divided there by a veil (Exodus 26:33).

The gourds and flowers suggest a garden. Many have seen in the temple's carvings a reminder of Eden, the place where God first walked with man. That is a picture, and the text does not explain it, but it is worth thinking about.

6:19-22 *And the inner room in the midst of the house within he prepared, to put there the ark of the covenant of the LORD. And the inner room in front **was** approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) **in** length, and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) **in** breadth, and approximately 30 feet (twenty cubits) its height; and he overlaid it **with** refined gold; and he overlaid an altar **with** cedar. And Solomon overlaid the house within **with** refined gold, and he drew **it** across with chains of gold in front of the inner room, and he overlaid it **with** gold. And all the house he overlaid **with** gold, until all the house was finished; and all the altar which **belonged** to the inner room he overlaid **with** gold.*

The inner room was made "to put there the ark of the covenant of the LORD." It was twenty cubits long, wide and high, a perfect cube, about 30 feet each way. It was overlaid "with refined gold."

Scripture describes another perfect cube at the very end of the Bible, the New Jerusalem, whose length, width and height are equal (Revelation 21:16). In the temple, only the high priest could enter the cube, once a year. In the New Jerusalem, the whole city is God's dwelling, and His people "will see His face" (Revelation 22:4).

"He overlaid an altar with cedar" and with gold. This was the altar of incense, which stood in front of the inner room (Exodus 30:1-6). Solomon "drew it across with chains of gold in front of the inner room." The whole house inside was covered with gold. Everything about the place said God is holy, glorious and worthy of the best.

6:23-28 *And in the inner room he made two cherubim **of** olive wood; its height **was** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits). And the one wing of the cherub **was** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and the second wing of the cherub **was** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits); from the ends of its wings and to the ends of its wings **was** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits). And the second cherub **was** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits); one measure and one form **belonged** to the two cherubim. The height of the one cherub **was** approximately 15 feet (ten cubits), and so **was** the second cherub. And he put the cherubim in the midst of the inner house; and they spread out the wings of the cherubim, and the wing of the one touched the wall, and the wing of the second cherub **was** touching the second wall; and their wings in the middle of the house **were** touching wing to wing. And he overlaid the cherubim **with** gold.*

In the inner room Solomon made "two cherubim of olive wood," each ten cubits high, about 15 feet, overlaid with gold. Cherubim are a high order of angels who guard God's holiness and surround His throne. They guarded the way to the tree of life after the fall (Genesis 3:24), and two small golden cherubim were on the lid of the ark (Exodus 25:18-20).

Each wing was five cubits, so each cherub's wingspan was ten cubits. Standing side by side, they filled the twenty-cubit room: "the wing of the one touched the wall, and the wing of the second cherub was touching the second wall; and their wings in the middle of the house were touching wing to wing." The ark would rest beneath their outspread wings (8:6-7). It was a picture of God's throne, where the LORD sits enthroned above the cherubim (Psalm 80:1).

6:29-30 *And all the walls of the house all around he carved **with** engraved carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, inside and outside. And the floor of the house he overlaid **with** gold, inside and outside.*

"All the walls of the house all around he carved with engraved carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, inside and outside." Even the floor was overlaid with gold.

Cherubim, palms and flowers again point to a garden guarded by heavenly beings. Eden was lost because of sin, and cherubim kept man out. In the temple, the way back to God's presence was opened, but only through the priest and the blood of sacrifice. In Christ, the way is open to every believer (Hebrews 10:19-20).

6:31-35 *And **for** the entrance of the inner room he made doors of olive wood; the pillar **and** the doorposts **were** a fifth. And the two doors **were** of olive wood; and he carved on them carvings of cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid **them with** gold; and he hammered out the gold on the cherubim and on the palm trees. And so he made for the entrance of the temple doorposts of olive wood, from a fourth. And two doors of cypress wood: two sides of the one door **were** turning, and two leaves of the second door **were** turning. And he carved cherubim and palm trees and open flowers, and he overlaid **them with** gold made even on the carved work.*

The doors to the inner room were "of olive wood," carved with cherubim, palms and flowers, and overlaid with gold. "The pillar and the doorposts were a fifth," which seems to mean the doorframe had five sides or was shaped in a special way. The Hebrew is not clear. The doors to the main hall were cypress, each with two folding leaves, framed in olive-wood doorposts that were "from a fourth," likely square.

2 Chronicles 3:14 adds that there was also a veil of blue, purple and crimson before the inner room. When Jesus died, the veil of the later temple "was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38). God Himself opened the way into His presence through the death of His Son.

6:36 *And he built the inner court **with** three rows of hewn stone and a row of beams of cedar.*

"He built the inner court with three rows of hewn stone and a row of beams of cedar." This was the courtyard right around the temple, where the great bronze altar would stand. The pattern of stone and timber may have helped the walls stand up to earthquakes. Jeremiah calls it "the upper court" (Jeremiah 36:10), since it stood higher than the great outer court.

6:37-38 *In the fourth year the foundation of the house of the LORD was laid, in the month of Ziv. And in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, that* ***is*** *the eighth month, the house was finished in all its parts and according to all its plans. And he built it* ***in*** *seven years.*

The foundation was laid in Solomon's fourth year, in the month of Ziv. The house was finished "in the eleventh year, in the month of Bul, that is the eighth month," in the fall. "And he built it in seven years." Seven and a half, to be exact, counted the way the Bible usually counts.

The next chapter opens by saying Solomon spent thirteen years on his own palace (7:1). Some see a contrast there. I think the writer wants us to notice it, but the main point here is that Solomon finished what God gave him to do. "He built it" according to all its plans. The plans came from God, given to David (1 Chronicles 28:11-12, 19). Solomon followed them.

We are not building a temple of stone. But God has given each of us good works to walk in (Ephesians 2:10). Will we finish the work He has given us?

Chapter 6 Summary

Solomon began building the house of the LORD in the second month of his fourth year, 480 years after Israel came out of Egypt, which places the exodus about 1446 B.C. The temple was about 90 feet long, 30 wide and 45 tall, with a porch in front and three stories of side rooms around it. Every stone was finished at the quarry, so no iron tool was heard at the site. In the middle of the work God told Solomon that if he walked in His statutes, God would keep His word to David and dwell among Israel and not forsake them. Inside, cedar lined the walls, carved with gourds and open flowers, and cypress covered the floor. The inner room, the holy of holies, was a perfect cube of twenty cubits overlaid with gold, made for the ark of the covenant. Two great cherubim of gold-covered olive wood stood there, their wings touching wall to wall. The walls were carved with cherubim, palm trees and flowers, the doors were olive and cypress wood covered in gold, and the inner court was built of stone and cedar. The house was finished in Solomon's eleventh year, after seven years of work.

Chapter 6 Study Questions

1. How many years after the exodus did Solomon begin the temple, and why does that verse matter for Bible history? (6:1)

2. How big was the temple, and how does it compare to the tabernacle? (6:2)

3. Why was no iron tool heard at the building site? (6:7)

4. What did God say to Solomon in the middle of the building work? (6:11-13)

5. What was the inner room made for, and what shape was it? (6:19-20)

6. Describe the two cherubim in the inner room. (6:23-28)

7. How long did it take to build the temple? (6:37-38)

8. How do John 1:14 and Revelation 21:3 carry forward God's promise, "I will dwell in the midst of the sons of Israel"?

9. God reminded Solomon that obedience mattered more than the building. Is there something good you are doing for God that has started to take the place of simply obeying Him?

10. God is building His church out of living stones (1 Peter 2:5). How might God be shaping you right now for your place in His house?

Chapter 7: Solomon's Palace and the Temple Furnishings

Scripture

7:1-12 And his house Solomon built ***in*** thirteen years, and he completed all his house. And he built the House of the Forest of Lebanon: its length ***was*** approximately 150 feet (a hundred cubits), and its breadth approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits), and its height approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits), on four rows of pillars of cedars, and beams of cedars ***were*** on the pillars. And ***it was*** paneled with cedar from above, over the side chambers which ***were*** on the pillars, forty-five, fifteen ***to*** the row. And ***there were*** window frames, three rows, and window ***was*** toward window, three times. And all the openings and the doorposts ***were*** squared ***in*** frame, and ***the*** front of window ***was*** toward window, three times. And the porch of the pillars he made: its length ***was*** approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits), and its breadth approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits); and a porch ***was*** in front of them, and pillars and a threshold ***were*** in front of them. And the porch of the throne where he would judge, the porch of the judgment, he made; and ***it was*** paneled with cedar from the floor to the floor. And his house where he would dwell, the other court, ***was*** inward from the porch; it was like this work. And he made a house for the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Solomon had taken, like this porch. All these ***were*** costly stones, according to the measurements of hewn stone, sawn with the saw, from inside and from outside, and from the foundation to the copings, and from outside to the great court. And ***it was*** founded ***with*** costly stones, large stones, stones of approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) and stones of approximately 12 feet (eight cubits). And above ***were*** costly stones, according to the measurements of hewn stone, and cedar. And the great court all around ***had*** three rows of hewn stone and a row of beams of cedars, and ***so*** for the inner court of the house of the LORD and for the porch of the house.

7:13-26 And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He ***was*** the son of a widow woman from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father ***was*** a Tyrian man, a worker in bronze; and he was filled ***with*** the wisdom and the understanding and the knowledge to do any work in bronze. And he came to King Solomon, and he did all his work. And he fashioned the two pillars ***of*** bronze: the height of the one pillar ***was*** approximately 27 feet (eighteen cubits), and a line of approximately 18 feet (twelve cubits) would go around the second pillar. And two capitals he made to put on the tops of the pillars, a casting of bronze: the height of the one capital ***was*** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and the height of the second capital ***was*** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits). Networks, a work of network, festoons, a work of chains, ***were*** for the capitals which ***were*** on the top of the pillars: seven for the one capital, and seven for the second capital. And he made the pillars, and two rows all around on the one network, to cover the capitals which ***were*** on the top of the pomegranates; and thus he did for the second capital. And the capitals which ***were*** on the top of the pillars ***were*** lily work in the porch, approximately 6 feet (four cubits). And the capitals ***were*** on the two pillars also above, close beside the bulge which ***was*** beside the network; and the pomegranates ***were*** two hundred, in rows all around on the second capital. And he set up the pillars at the porch of the temple; and he set up the right pillar and called its name Jachin, and he set up the left pillar and called its name Boaz. And on the top of the pillars ***was*** lily work. And the work of the pillars was complete. And he made the sea, cast, approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) from its brim to its brim, round all around, and its height approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and

a line of approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits) would go around it all around. And gourds ***were*** under its brim all around, surrounding it, ten in approximately 18 inches (a cubit), encircling the sea all around; the gourds ***were*** two rows, cast in its casting. It ***was*** standing on twelve oxen: three turning northward, and three turning westward, and three turning southward, and three turning eastward; and the sea ***was*** on them above, and all their hindquarters ***were*** inward. And its thickness ***was*** approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth), and its brim ***was*** like the work of the brim of a cup, a blossom of lily; it would hold approximately 12,000 gallons (two thousand baths).

7:27-39 And he made the stands, ten, ***of*** bronze: the length of the one stand ***was*** approximately 6 feet (four cubits), and its breadth approximately 6 feet (four cubits), and its height approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits). And this ***was*** the work of the stand: they ***had*** rims, and rims ***were*** between the crossbars. And on the rims which ***were*** between the crossbars ***were*** lions, oxen, and cherubim; and on the crossbars ***there was*** a base above; and under the lions and the oxen ***were*** garlands, hanging work. And four wheels of bronze ***belonged*** to the one stand, and axles of bronze; and its four feet ***had*** supports; under the laver ***were*** the supports, cast, ***with*** garlands at the side of each. And its opening inside the capital and upward ***was*** approximately 18 inches (a cubit); and its opening ***was*** round, ***the*** work of a base, approximately 27 inches (a cubit and the half of a cubit); and also on its opening ***were*** carvings; and their rims ***were*** squared, not round. And the four wheels ***were*** under the rims, and the hands of the wheels ***were*** on the stand; and the height of the one wheel ***was*** approximately 27 inches (a cubit and the half of a cubit). And the work of the wheels ***was*** like the work of a chariot wheel: their hands and their rims and their spokes and their hubs, everything ***was*** cast. And ***there were*** four supports at the four corners of the one stand; its supports ***were*** from the stand. And at the top of the stand ***was*** approximately 9 inches (the half of the cubit) ***in*** height, round all around; and on the top of the stand its hands and its rims ***were*** from it. And he engraved on the plates of its hands and on its rims cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the clear space of each, and garlands all around. Like this he made the ten stands: one casting, one measurement, one shape for all of them. And he made ten lavers of bronze; the one laver would hold approximately 240 gallons (forty baths); the one laver ***was*** approximately 6 feet (four cubits); one laver ***was*** on the one stand, for the ten stands. And he put the stands, five on the side of the house on the right and five on the side of the house on its left; and the sea he put on the right side of the house, eastward, opposite ***the*** south.

7:40-51 And Hiram made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. And Hiram finished doing all the work which he did for King Solomon ***for*** the house of the LORD: pillars, two; and the bowls of the capitals which ***were*** on the top of the pillars, two; and the networks, two, to cover the two bowls of the capitals which ***were*** on the top of the pillars; and the pomegranates, four hundred, for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for the one network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals which ***were*** on the face of the pillars; and the stands, ten, and the lavers, ten, on the stands; and the one sea, and the twelve oxen under the sea; and the pots and the shovels and the bowls, and all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon ***for*** the house of the LORD, ***were of*** polished bronze. In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay mold of the ground, between Succoth and Zarethan. And Solomon left all the utensils ***unweighed***, because of ***their*** very, very ***great*** abundance; the weight of the bronze was not searched out. And Solomon made all the utensils which ***were in*** the house of the LORD: the altar of the gold, and the table on which ***was*** the bread of the presence, ***of*** gold; and the lampstands, five on the right and five on the

left, before the inner room, ***of*** pure gold; and the blossom and the lamps and the tongs, ***of*** gold; and the basins and the snuffers and the bowls and the pans and the fire pans, ***of*** pure gold; and the sockets for the doors of the inner house, for the holy of holies, ***and*** for the doors of the house, for the temple, ***of*** gold. And all the work which King Solomon did ***for*** the house of the LORD was complete. And Solomon brought in the holy things of David his father: the silver and the gold and the utensils he put in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.

Chapter 7 Preview

Chapter 7 has two parts. First, the writer pauses to describe Solomon's own buildings: his palace, which took thirteen years, the great House of the Forest of Lebanon, a hall of pillars, a throne hall for judgment, and a house for Pharaoh's daughter, all built of huge costly stones and cedar.

Then he comes back to the temple and lists what was made for it. Hiram, a skilled bronze worker from Tyre whose mother was from Naphtali, cast two great bronze pillars named Jachin and Boaz for the porch, a huge bronze basin called the sea standing on twelve bronze oxen, ten bronze stands on wheels with ten basins, and all the pots, shovels and bowls. Solomon also made the gold furnishings for inside: the altar, the table for the bread, ten lampstands and the smaller utensils. This is a chapter of measurements and materials. I group the verses and explain what each item was for and what it teaches us. 2 Chronicles 3-4 describes the same furnishings.

Chapter 7 Study

7:1-12 *And his house Solomon built **in** thirteen years, and he completed all his house. And he built the House of the Forest of Lebanon: its length **was** approximately 150 feet (a hundred cubits), and its breadth approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits), and its height approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits), on four rows of pillars of cedars, and beams of cedars **were** on the pillars. And **it was** paneled with cedar from above, over the side chambers which **were** on the pillars, forty-five, fifteen **to** the row. And **there were** window frames, three rows, and window **was** toward window, three times. And all the openings and the doorposts **were** squared **in** frame, and **the** front of window **was** toward window, three times. And the porch of the pillars he made: its length **was** approximately 75 feet (fifty cubits), and its breadth approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits); and a porch **was** in front of them, and pillars and a threshold **were** in front of them. And the porch of the throne where he would judge, the porch of the judgment, he made; and **it was** paneled with cedar from the floor to the floor. And his house where he would dwell, the other court, **was** inward from the porch; it was like this work. And he made a house for the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Solomon had taken, like this porch. All these **were** costly stones, according to the measurements of hewn stone, sawn with the saw, from inside and from outside, and from the foundation to the copings, and from outside to the great court. And **it was** founded **with** costly stones, large stones, stones of approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) and stones of approximately 12 feet (eight cubits). And above **were** costly stones, according to the measurements of hewn stone, and cedar. And the great court all around **had** three rows of hewn stone and a row of beams of cedars, and **so** for the inner court of the house of the LORD and for the porch of the house.*

"His house Solomon built in thirteen years." The temple took seven years (6:38), and the palace nearly twice as long. Some teachers see in this a sign that Solomon's heart was already more on his own glory than on God's. Others point out that the palace was a much larger group of buildings, that the temple materials had been gathered by David ahead of time (1 Chronicles 22:2-5), and that Solomon built the temple first. I think both observations are fair. The writer places these verses between the building of the temple and its furnishings, perhaps to let us compare.

"The House of the Forest of Lebanon" was a huge hall, a hundred cubits long, fifty wide and thirty high, about 150 by 75 by 45 feet, larger than the temple itself. It was named for its rows of cedar pillars, which looked like a forest. Later we learn Solomon stored gold shields there (10:17), so it may have served as an armory and a great hall.

There was also "the porch of the pillars," a colonnade, and "the porch of the throne where he would judge, the porch of the judgment." This was where Solomon sat to hear cases, like the one in chapter 3. His own house and a house for Pharaoh's daughter were behind it.

Everything was built of "costly stones," some of them ten cubits, about 15 feet, long, cut with saws and finished on every side, with cedar above. A great court surrounded it all, built like the inner court of the temple (6:36).

What do we learn? Solomon was a great builder and a wealthy king, and God had promised him riches (3:13). There is nothing wrong with a king having a palace. But the Law had warned the

king that "silver and gold he shall not multiply for himself greatly" (Deuteronomy 17:17). It is worth asking ourselves whether we spend more care on our own houses than on God's work.

7:13-14 *And King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre. He **was** the son of a widow woman from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father **was** a Tyrian man, a worker in bronze; and he was filled **with** the wisdom and the understanding and the knowledge to do any work in bronze. And he came to King Solomon, and he did all his work.*

"King Solomon sent and took Hiram from Tyre." This is not King Hiram but a craftsman with the same name. 2 Chronicles 2:13-14 calls him Huram-abi and says his mother was from Dan. Here she is "a widow woman from the tribe of Naphtali." She may have been born in Dan and married into Naphtali, or the reverse. His father was "a Tyrian man, a worker in bronze."

"He was filled with the wisdom and the understanding and the knowledge to do any work in bronze." The same words were used of Bezalel, who made the tabernacle (Exodus 31:3). God gives skill as surely as He gives spiritual gifts. A gifted craftsman, artist or builder who uses that skill for God is serving Him.

7:15-22 *And he fashioned the two pillars **of** bronze: the height of the one pillar **was** approximately 27 feet (eighteen cubits), and a line of approximately 18 feet (twelve cubits) would go around the second pillar. And two capitals he made to put on the tops of the pillars, a casting of bronze: the height of the one capital **was** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and the height of the second capital **was** approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits). Networks, a work of network, festoons, a work of chains, **were** for the capitals which **were** on the top of the pillars: seven for the one capital, and seven for the second capital. And he made the pillars, and two rows all around on the one network, to cover the capitals which **were** on the top of the pomegranates; and thus he did for the second capital. And the capitals which **were** on the top of the pillars **were** lily work in the porch, approximately 6 feet (four cubits). And the capitals **were** on the two pillars also above, close beside the bulge which **was** beside the network; and the pomegranates **were** two hundred, in rows all around on the second capital. And he set up the pillars at the porch of the temple; and he set up the right pillar and called its name Jachin, and he set up the left pillar and called its name Boaz. And on the top of the pillars **was** lily work. And the work of the pillars was complete.*

Hiram cast "the two pillars of bronze." Each was eighteen cubits tall, about 27 feet, and twelve cubits around, about 18 feet, so about six feet thick. On top of each was a bronze capital five cubits high, about 7.5 feet, decorated with networks, chains, "lily work" and two hundred pomegranates in rows. 2 Chronicles 3:15 gives thirty-five cubits for the pillars. Many think Chronicles gives the length of the two pillars together, or that a number was miscopied.

"He set up the right pillar and called its name Jachin, and he set up the left pillar and called its name Boaz." Jachin means he will establish. Boaz likely means in Him is strength. Every priest and worshiper who came to God's house passed between two pillars that said, in effect, God will establish it, and in Him is strength. Boaz was also the name of Solomon's ancestor, the husband of Ruth (Ruth 4:21-22), though Scripture does not tie the two together.

These pillars did not hold up the roof. They stood free in front of the porch as a witness. In Revelation 3:12, Jesus promises the one who overcomes, "I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God." Whoever belongs to Christ is established by Him and strong in Him.

7:23-26 *And he made the sea, cast, approximately 15 feet (ten cubits) from its brim to its brim, round all around, and its height approximately 7.5 feet (five cubits), and a line of approximately 45 feet (thirty cubits) would go around it all around. And gourds **were** under its brim all around, surrounding it, ten in approximately 18 inches (a cubit), encircling the sea all around; the gourds **were** two rows, cast in its casting. It **was** standing on twelve oxen: three turning northward, and three turning westward, and three turning southward, and three turning eastward; and the sea **was** on them above, and all their hindquarters **were** inward. And its thickness **was** approximately 3 inches (a handbreadth), and its brim **was** like the work of the brim of a cup, a blossom of lily; it would hold approximately 12,000 gallons (two thousand baths).*

Hiram cast "the sea," a huge round bronze basin, ten cubits across, about 15 feet, five cubits high, and thirty cubits around. It stood on twelve bronze oxen, three facing each direction. Its rim was "like the work of the brim of a cup, a blossom of lily," and it held "two thousand baths," about 12,000 gallons. 2 Chronicles 4:5 says it held three thousand baths. Many explain that the sea usually held two thousand, and could hold three thousand if filled to the brim, or that a copyist changed one number.

2 Chronicles 4:6 tells us what the sea was for: "the sea was for the priests to wash in." Before they served at the altar or in the holy place, the priests had to be washed (Exodus 30:18-21). God is holy, and those who come near Him must be clean.

Some have asked why a basin ten cubits across is thirty cubits around, since the math of a circle would make it a little over thirty-one. The simplest answer is that the width was measured from the outside of the rim and the circumference was measured below the flared lip, or around the inside, since the wall was a handbreadth thick. The writer was giving builders' measurements in round numbers, not a math lesson.

The twelve oxen, three facing each way, may have stood for the twelve tribes camped around the tabernacle in Numbers 2. The water that made the priests clean is a picture of what Christ does for us. He cleanses His church "by the washing of water by the word" (Ephesians 5:26).

7:27-39 *And he made the stands, ten, **of** bronze: the length of the one stand **was** approximately 6 feet (four cubits), and its breadth approximately 6 feet (four cubits), and its height approximately 4.5 feet (three cubits). And this **was** the work of the stand: they **had** rims, and rims **were** between the crossbars. And on the rims which **were** between the crossbars **were** lions, oxen, and cherubim; and on the crossbars **there was** a base above; and under the lions and the oxen **were** garlands, hanging work. And four wheels of bronze **belonged** to the one stand, and axles of bronze; and its four feet **had** supports; under the laver **were** the supports, cast, **with** garlands at the side of each. And its opening inside the capital and upward **was** approximately 18 inches (a cubit); and its opening **was** round, **the** work of a base, approximately 27 inches (a cubit and the half of a cubit); and also on its opening **were** carvings; and their rims **were** squared, not round. And the four wheels **were** under the rims, and the hands of the wheels **were** on the stand; and the height of the one wheel **was** approximately 27 inches (a cubit and the half of a cubit). And the work of the wheels **was** like the work of a chariot wheel: their hands and their rims and their spokes and their hubs, everything **was** cast. And **there were** four supports at the four corners of the one stand; its supports **were** from the stand. And at the top of the stand **was** approximately 9 inches (the half of the cubit) **in** height, round all around; and on the top of the stand its hands and its rims **were** from it. And he engraved on the plates of its hands and on its rims cherubim, lions, and palm trees, according to the clear space of each, and garlands all around. Like this he made the ten stands: one casting, one measurement, one shape for all of them. And he made ten lavers of bronze; the one laver would hold approximately 240 gallons (forty baths); the one laver **was** approximately 6 feet (four cubits); one laver **was** on the one stand, for the ten stands. And he put the stands, five on the side of the house on the right and five on the side of the house on its left; and the sea he put on the right side of the house, eastward, opposite **the** south.*

Hiram made "the stands, ten, of bronze," each four cubits square and three high, about 6 by 6 by 4.5 feet. They had panels decorated with "lions, oxen, and cherubim," and garlands. Each stood on "four wheels of bronze," made "like the work of a chariot wheel." On each stand rested a bronze laver, or basin, holding "forty baths," about 240 gallons.

These were rolling carts for water. 2 Chronicles 4:6 says the ten basins were used to rinse "the work of the burnt offering," the parts of the animals offered. The sacrifices were washed before they were burned on the altar.

Five stands were placed on the south side of the house and five on the north. The sea stood at the southeast corner of the temple.

Why so much detail about carts? Every part of worship mattered to God, even the plumbing. The service of His house was to be done carefully, cleanly and in order. Paul would later say, "Let all things be done properly and in order" (1 Corinthians 14:40).

7:40-47 *And Hiram made the lavers and the shovels and the bowls. And Hiram finished doing all the work which he did for King Solomon* ***for*** *the house of the LORD: pillars, two; and the bowls of the capitals which* ***were*** *on the top of the pillars, two; and the networks, two, to cover the two bowls of the capitals which* ***were*** *on the top of the pillars; and the pomegranates, four hundred, for the two networks, two rows of pomegranates for the one network, to cover the two bowls of the capitals which* ***were*** *on the face of the pillars; and the stands, ten, and the lavers, ten, on the stands; and the one sea, and the twelve oxen under the sea; and the pots and the shovels and the bowls, and all these utensils which Hiram made for King Solomon* ***for*** *the house of the LORD,* ***were of*** *polished bronze. In the plain of the Jordan the king cast them, in the clay mold of the ground, between Succoth and Zarethan. And Solomon left all the utensils* ***unweighed****, because of* ***their*** *very, very* ***great*** *abundance; the weight of the bronze was not searched out.*

Hiram also made "the lavers and the shovels and the bowls," the tools used to carry away ashes and to catch the blood of sacrifices. Then the writer lists all Hiram's bronze work: the two pillars with their capitals, networks and four hundred pomegranates, the ten stands and lavers, the sea and its twelve oxen, and the pots, shovels and bowls, all "of polished bronze."

They were cast "in the plain of the Jordan," "in the clay mold of the ground, between Succoth and Zarethan." The clay soil of the Jordan Valley was good for making molds, and there was fuel nearby. Hiram dug the molds right in the ground and poured the molten bronze into them.

"Solomon left all the utensils unweighed, because of their very, very great abundance." There was so much bronze that no one bothered to weigh it. 1 Chronicles 18:8 says David had taken a great amount of bronze in war, and that Solomon used it for the sea, the pillars and the utensils. The spoils of David's battles became the tools of Solomon's worship.

7:48-51 *And Solomon made all the utensils which* ***were in*** *the house of the LORD: the altar of the gold, and the table on which* ***was*** *the bread of the presence,* ***of*** *gold; and the lampstands, five on the right and five on the left, before the inner room,* ***of*** *pure gold; and the blossom and the lamps and the tongs,* ***of*** *gold; and the basins and the snuffers and the bowls and the pans and the fire pans,* ***of*** *pure gold; and the sockets for the doors of the inner house, for the holy of holies,* ***and*** *for the doors of the house, for the temple,* ***of*** *gold. And all the work which King Solomon did* ***for*** *the house of the LORD was complete. And Solomon brought in the holy things of David his father: the silver and the gold and the utensils he put in the treasuries of the house of the LORD.*

Now the gold furnishings for inside the house: "the altar of the gold," the altar of incense in front of the inner room; "the table on which was the bread of the presence," where twelve loaves were set before God each Sabbath, one for each tribe (Leviticus 24:5-9); and "the lampstands, five on the right and five on the left," of pure gold. The tabernacle had one lampstand. The temple had ten. There were also gold basins, snuffers, bowls, pans and firepans, and even the hinge sockets of the doors were gold.

Each of these gives us a picture of Christ. The incense is a picture of prayer rising to God (Psalm 141:2; Revelation 8:3-4), and Jesus lives forever to pray for us (Hebrews 7:25). The bread of the presence is a picture of the One who said, "I am the bread of life" (John 6:35). The lampstands gave light in the holy place, and Jesus said, "I am the light of the world" (John 8:12).

The book of Hebrews tells us that these things were "a copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Hebrews 8:5).

"All the work which King Solomon did for the house of the LORD was complete." Solomon then brought in "the holy things of David his father," the silver, gold and utensils David had set apart, and put them in the temple treasuries. David gathered. Solomon built. God used both. The work God gives one generation often prepares for the work of the next.

Chapter 7 Summary

Solomon spent thirteen years building his own palace complex: the great House of the Forest of Lebanon with its cedar pillars, the hall of pillars, the hall of judgment where his throne stood, his own house and a house for Pharaoh's daughter, all of huge costly stones and cedar. He brought Hiram, a skilled bronze worker from Tyre whose mother was from Naphtali, to make the bronze work for the temple. Hiram cast two great pillars with decorated capitals for the porch and named them Jachin and Boaz. He cast the sea, a huge bronze basin on twelve oxen, for the priests to wash in, and ten bronze stands on wheels, each holding a laver for washing the offerings. He made the pots, shovels and bowls, all of polished bronze, cast in clay molds in the Jordan Valley, so much bronze that it was never weighed. Solomon made the gold furnishings for inside: the altar of incense, the table for the bread of the presence, ten lampstands and the smaller utensils. When the work was complete, he brought David's dedicated silver, gold and utensils into the temple treasuries.

Chapter 7 Study Questions

1. How long did Solomon spend on his own house, compared with the temple? (7:1; 6:38)

2. What was the House of the Forest of Lebanon, and how big was it? (7:2)

3. Who was Hiram the craftsman, and what gifts did he have? (7:13-14)

4. What were the names of the two bronze pillars, and what do those names mean? (7:21)

5. What was the sea used for? (7:23-26; 2 Chronicles 4:6)

6. Why was the bronze never weighed, and where did it come from? (7:47; 1 Chronicles 18:8)

7. What gold furnishings did Solomon make for the inside of the temple? (7:48-50)

8. How do the bread, the light and the incense of the temple point to Jesus? (John 6:35; 8:12; Hebrews 7:25)

9. Hiram used his craftsman's skill for God's house. What skills has God given you, and how can you use them for Him?

10. David gathered and Solomon built. What are you doing now that might help the next generation serve God?

Chapter 8: The Dedication of the Temple

Scripture

8:1-11 Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon ***in*** Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David; it ***is*** Zion. And every man of Israel assembled to King Solomon in the month of Ethanim at the feast; it ***is*** the seventh month. And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests lifted up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the utensils of holiness which ***were*** in the tent; and the priests and the Levites brought them up. And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were gathered to him ***were*** with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and cattle which could not be counted and could not be numbered for multitude. And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, to the inner room of the house, to the holy of holies, to under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim ***were*** spreading out wings toward the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered over the ark and over its poles from above. And the poles were long, and the heads of the poles were seen from the holy place on the front of the inner room, and they were not seen outside; and they have been there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of the stones which Moses placed there at Horeb, where the LORD made ***a covenant*** with the sons of Israel when they came out from the land of Egypt. And it was, when the priests came out from the holy place, and the cloud filled the house of the LORD, and the priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

8:12-21 Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said ***that He would*** dwell in thick darkness. I have surely built a house of loftiness for You, an established place for You to dwell ***in*** forever." And the king turned his face around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, and all the assembly of Israel ***was*** standing. And he said, "Blessed ***be*** the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth with David my father, and with His hand has fulfilled ***it***, saying, 'Since the day that I brought out My people Israel from Egypt, I did not choose a city from all the tribes of Israel to build a house for My name to be there; and I chose David to be over My people Israel.' And it was with the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the LORD said to David my father, 'Because it was with your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was with your heart. Only you shall not build the house, but your son who comes out from your loins, he shall build the house for My name.' And the LORD has established His word which He spoke; and I have risen in place of David my father, and I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD spoke, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, where the covenant of the LORD ***is***, which He made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt."

8:22-30 And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of all the assembly of Israel, and he spread out his palms ***toward*** the heavens. And he said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, keeping the covenant and the steadfast love for Your servants who walk before You with all their heart; who have kept for Your servant David my father what You spoke to him; and You spoke with Your mouth, and with Your hand You have fulfilled ***it***, as ***it is*** this day. And now, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for Your servant David

my father what You spoke to him, saying, 'A man shall not be cut off for you from before Me, sitting on the throne of Israel, if only your sons guard their way, to walk before Me just as you have walked before Me.' And now, O God of Israel, let Your word be confirmed, please, which You spoke to Your servant David my father. For will God really dwell on the earth? Look, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built! And turn to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today, that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant prays toward this place. And listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, which they pray toward this place; and You, may You listen at the place of Your dwelling, at the heavens; and hear, and forgive.

8:31-43 When a man sins against his neighbor, and he lays an oath on him to make him swear, and he comes ***and*** swears before Your altar in this house, then may You hear ***in*** the heavens, and act, and judge Your servants, to condemn the wicked, to bring his way on his head, and to justify the righteous, to give to him according to his righteousness. When Your people Israel are struck down before an enemy because they sin against You, and they turn back to You and praise Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this house, then may You hear ***in*** the heavens, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the ground which You gave to their fathers. When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they sin against You, and they pray toward this place and praise Your name and turn back from their sin, because You afflict them, then may You hear ***in*** the heavens, and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, for You will teach them the good way in which they shall walk; and give rain on Your land which You have given to Your people for an inheritance. Famine, if it is in the land, pestilence, if it is, blight, mildew, locust, grasshopper, if it is, if its enemy besieges it in the land of its gates, any plague, any sickness, any prayer, any supplication which there is from any man, from all Your people Israel, who know each the plague of his own heart, and he spreads out his palms toward this house, then may You hear ***in*** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, and forgive and act, and give to the man according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You, You alone, know the heart of all the sons of mankind), so that they may fear You all the days that they live on the face of the ground which You gave to our fathers. And also to the foreigner who ***is*** not of Your people Israel, and he comes from a distant land for the sake of Your name (for they shall hear ***of*** Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm), and he comes and prays toward this house, may You hear ***in*** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You ***for***, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You like Your people Israel, and to know that Your name has been called on this house which I have built.

8:44-53 When Your people go out to battle against its enemy, by the way that You send them, and they pray to the LORD ***in*** the direction of the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name, then hear ***in*** the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and do justice for them. When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin), and You are angry with them and give them up before an enemy, and their captors carry them captive to the land of the enemy, distant or near, and they bring ***it*** back to their heart in the land where they have been carried captive, and they turn and make supplication to You in the land of their

captors, saying, 'We have sinned, and we have done perversely; we have acted wickedly,' and they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who carried them captive, and they pray to You ***in*** the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name, then hear ***in*** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, their prayer and their supplication, and do justice for them; and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and give them compassion before their captors, and they will have compassion on them (for they ***are*** Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out from Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron), that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them in all their calling to You. For You, You have separated them to Yourself for an inheritance from all the peoples of the earth, just as You spoke by the hand of Moses Your servant when You brought our fathers out from Egypt, O Lord GOD."

8:54-66 And it was, when Solomon had finished praying to the LORD all this prayer and supplication, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, and his palms ***were*** spread out ***toward*** the heavens. And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel ***with*** a great voice, saying, "Blessed ***be*** the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He has spoken; not one word has fallen from all His good word which He spoke by the hand of Moses His servant. May the LORD our God be with us just as He was with our fathers; may He not forsake us, and may He not abandon us, to incline our heart to Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments which He commanded our fathers. And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God by day and night, to do justice for His servant and justice for His people Israel, the matter of a day in its day, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD, He ***is*** God; there is no other. And let your heart be complete with the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as ***it is*** this day." And the king and all Israel with him ***were*** sacrificing a sacrifice before the LORD. And Solomon sacrificed the sacrifice of the peace offerings which he sacrificed to the LORD: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. And the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. On that day the king consecrated the middle of the court which ***was*** before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings; for the altar of bronze which ***was*** before the LORD ***was too*** small to contain the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings. And Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their tents, joyful and good of heart over all the goodness which the LORD had done for David His servant and for Israel His people.

Chapter 8 Preview

This is one of the high points of the Old Testament. The temple is finished, and Solomon gathers all Israel to Jerusalem at the Feast of Booths in the seventh month. The priests carry the ark of the covenant up from the city of David and set it in the holy of holies under the wings of the cherubim.

As they come out, the cloud of the LORD's glory fills the house so fully that the priests cannot stand to serve. God has come to live among His people.

Then Solomon speaks. He blesses the people, tells how God kept His promise to David, and kneels before the altar with his hands spread to heaven to pray one of the great prayers of the Bible. He asks a question that every believer should ponder: "will God really dwell on the earth?" He knows no building can hold God, and yet he asks God to hear every prayer prayed toward that house: for justice, in defeat, in drought and plague, for the foreigner, in battle, and even in exile, if the people sin and turn back. He ends by blessing the people again and calling them to wholehearted obedience. A huge sacrifice and a two-week feast follow, and the people go home "joyful and good of heart." 2 Chronicles 5-7 tells the same event.

Chapter 8 Study

8:1-2 *Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes, the leaders of the fathers of the sons of Israel, to King Solomon **in** Jerusalem, to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David; it **is** Zion. And every man of Israel assembled to King Solomon in the month of Ethanim at the feast; it **is** the seventh month.*

"Solomon assembled the elders of Israel and all the heads of the tribes." The whole nation's leadership came "to bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD from the city of David; it is Zion." The city of David was the older, lower part of Jerusalem. The temple stood on the higher ground to the north. So the ark went "up," only a short distance, but a great step.

They gathered "in the month of Ethanim at the feast; it is the seventh month," in the fall, about September and October. The feast was the Feast of Booths, also called Tabernacles, when Israel lived in shelters for a week to remember how God cared for them in the wilderness (Leviticus 23:33-43). The temple was finished in the eighth month (6:38). So Solomon seems to have waited about eleven months, until the great fall feast, when all Israel would come. That is how most understand it.

8:3-5 *And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests lifted up the ark. And they brought up the ark of the LORD and the tent of meeting and all the utensils of holiness which **were** in the tent; and the priests and the Levites brought them up. And King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel who were gathered to him **were** with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and cattle which could not be counted and could not be numbered for multitude.*

"The priests lifted up the ark." This time they did it right. Years before, David had tried to move the ark on a cart, and Uzzah died (2 Samuel 6:6-7). The Law said the ark must be carried on poles by the Levites (Numbers 4:15; 1 Chronicles 15:13-15). David learned the lesson, and Solomon followed it.

They also brought "the tent of meeting and all the utensils of holiness." That was the tabernacle Moses made, which had stood at Gibeon. Its time was over, and its holy things were stored in the temple.

Along the way, "King Solomon and all the congregation of Israel" were "sacrificing sheep and cattle which could not be counted." David had once offered a sacrifice every six steps when he brought the ark up (2 Samuel 6:13). The people's joy and worship overflowed.

8:6-9 *And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, to the inner room of the house, to the holy of holies, to under the wings of the cherubim. For the cherubim **were** spreading out wings toward the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered over the ark and over its poles from above. And the poles were long, and the heads of the poles were seen from the holy place on the front of the inner room, and they were not seen outside; and they have been there to this day. There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of the stones which Moses placed there at Horeb, where the LORD made **a covenant** with the sons of Israel when they came out from the land of Egypt.*

"The priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD to its place, to the inner room of the house, to the holy of holies, to under the wings of the cherubim." The two great cherubim stretched over it, and the poles of the ark were so long that their ends could be seen from the holy place, though not from outside. The writer adds, "they have been there to this day," which shows he was using a record written while the temple still stood.

"There was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of the stones which Moses placed there at Horeb." Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai. The tablets held the Ten Commandments, the heart of the covenant God made with Israel. Hebrews 9:4 says the ark once also held the golden jar of manna and Aaron's rod that budded. Those were placed with the ark in Moses' day (Exodus 16:33-34; Numbers 17:10). By Solomon's time, after the ark had been captured by the Philistines and moved many times, only the tablets were left. Both statements are true for their own time.

At the very center of Israel's worship was God's Word. The throne of God, pictured by the cherubim, rested over His law. God's rule over His people is always tied to His Word.

8:10-11 *And it was, when the priests came out from the holy place, and the cloud filled the house of the LORD, and the priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.*

"When the priests came out from the holy place, and the cloud filled the house of the LORD." This was the same cloud of glory that led Israel out of Egypt and filled the tabernacle when Moses finished it (Exodus 40:34-35). The Jewish teachers later called it the shekinah, from a Hebrew word meaning to dwell. It was the visible sign of God's presence.

"The priests were not able to stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD." The men whose job was to serve could not even stand. When God shows up in His glory, human work stops. 2 Chronicles 7:1-3 adds that fire came down from heaven and consumed the offerings, and all the people bowed with their faces to the ground.

That glory did not stay forever. Centuries later, because of Judah's sin, the prophet Ezekiel saw the glory of the LORD leave the temple and go to the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 10:18-19; 11:23). Then, in

the fullness of time, the glory came back in a way no one expected. John writes of Jesus, "we beheld His glory, glory as of an only begotten from the Father" (John 1:14). And today the Holy Spirit lives in every believer, so that Paul can say our body is a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19). Ezekiel also saw the glory return to a future temple from the east (Ezekiel 43:1-5), which I believe points to Christ's reign on earth in the coming kingdom.

8:12-13 *Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said **that He would** dwell in thick darkness. I have surely built a house of loftiness for You, an established place for You to dwell **in** forever."*

Then Solomon said, "The LORD has said that He would dwell in thick darkness." At Sinai, Moses went near "the thick darkness where God was" (Exodus 20:21), and God promised to appear in the cloud over the mercy seat (Leviticus 16:2). The inner room of the temple had no windows. It was dark, and now the dark cloud filled it.

"I have surely built a house of loftiness for You, an established place for You to dwell in forever." Solomon was overwhelmed. The God who lives in unapproachable light had chosen to live in a dark room in Jerusalem, among sinful people. As we will see in verse 27, Solomon knew how amazing that was.

8:14-16 *And the king turned his face around and blessed all the assembly of Israel, and all the assembly of Israel **was** standing. And he said, "Blessed **be** the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth with David my father, and with His hand has fulfilled **it**, saying, 'Since the day that I brought out My people Israel from Egypt, I did not choose a city from all the tribes of Israel to build a house for My name to be there; and I chose David to be over My people Israel.'*

"The king turned his face around and blessed all the assembly of Israel," and everyone stood. A blessing like this was a prayer spoken over the people, asking God's good on them.

"Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who spoke with His mouth with David my father, and with His hand has fulfilled it." God's mouth promised, and His hand did it. That is the theme of Solomon's whole speech. What God says, He does.

For centuries, Solomon reminded them, God had not chosen a city to build His house in. But He had chosen David to lead His people (2 Samuel 7:6-8). God chose a man first, and then a place.

8:17-21 *And it was with the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And the LORD said to David my father, 'Because it was with your heart to build a house for My name, you did well that it was with your heart. Only you shall not build the house, but your son who comes out from your loins, he shall build the house for My name.' And the LORD has established His word which He spoke; and I have risen in place of David my father, and I sit on the throne of Israel, just as the LORD spoke, and I have built the house for the name of the LORD, the God of Israel. And I have set there a place for the ark, where the covenant of the LORD **is**, which He made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt."*

"It was with the heart of David my father to build a house for the name of the LORD." God's answer to David is worth remembering: "you did well that it was with your heart." David did not get to build the temple, but God praised his desire to do it.

That is a great comfort. Sometimes God says no to something good we want to do for Him. It does not mean the desire was wrong. God sees the heart. David gathered the materials and drew up the plans, and his son finished the work.

"The LORD has established His word which He spoke." Solomon was on the throne, the house was built, and the ark had its place, "where the covenant of the LORD is, which He made with our fathers when He brought them out from the land of Egypt." The God of the exodus was now the God of the temple.

8:22-24 *And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of all the assembly of Israel, and he spread out his palms **toward** the heavens. And he said, "O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in the heavens above and on the earth beneath, keeping the covenant and the steadfast love for Your servants who walk before You with all their heart; who have kept for Your servant David my father what You spoke to him; and You spoke with Your mouth, and with Your hand You have fulfilled **it**, as **it is** this day.*

"Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in front of all the assembly of Israel, and he spread out his palms toward the heavens." 2 Chronicles 6:13 says he stood on a bronze platform and then knelt, and verse 54 here says he was "kneeling on his knees." The king of Israel humbled himself before the King of kings in front of the whole nation.

"O LORD, God of Israel, there is no God like You in the heavens above and on the earth beneath." That is where real prayer begins, not with our needs but with who God is. He is the God "keeping the covenant and the steadfast love for Your servants who walk before You with all their heart." Hesed again, God's loyal, covenant love. God keeps His promises.

"You spoke with Your mouth, and with Your hand You have fulfilled it, as it is this day." The finished temple was the proof.

8:25-26 *And now, O LORD, God of Israel, keep for Your servant David my father what You spoke to him, saying, 'A man shall not be cut off for you from before Me, sitting on the throne of Israel, if only your sons guard their way, to walk before Me just as you have walked before Me.' And now, O God of Israel, let Your word be confirmed, please, which You spoke to Your servant David my father.*

Then Solomon asked God to keep the rest of the promise. "A man shall not be cut off for you from before Me, sitting on the throne of Israel, if only your sons guard their way." God had promised David a house and a throne forever (2 Samuel 7:16). Each king's own enjoyment of that blessing depended on obedience, as we saw in 2:4.

"Let Your word be confirmed, please." Solomon prayed God's promise back to Him. That is a good way to pray. When we pray what God has already said, we pray with confidence.

In the end, the kings of David's line failed. The throne was empty for centuries after 586 B.C. But God's word was not broken. It was kept in Jesus, the Son of David, to whom God will give "the throne of David His father," and of His kingdom "there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33).

8:27 *For will God really dwell on the earth? Look, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!*

This is the key verse of the chapter. "For will God really dwell on the earth? Look, the heavens and the heavens of the heavens cannot contain You; how much less this house which I have built!"

Solomon had just built the most beautiful building in the world, covered in gold, filled with God's glory. And he says, it cannot hold You. Not this house, not the sky, not the highest heaven. God is not limited by space. Theologians call this His omnipresence, meaning He is present everywhere at once (Psalm 139:7-10; Jeremiah 23:24). Paul said the same thing to the Greeks in Athens: God "does not dwell in temples made with hands" (Acts 17:24).

Then why build a temple at all? Because the God who cannot be contained chose to meet His people in a place. He put His name there. The temple was not a box for God. It was a meeting place, a sign that the great God had come near to His people in grace.

Solomon's question, "will God really dwell on the earth?" has a final answer. Yes. He did. In the Person of Jesus Christ, God the Son took on human flesh and lived among us (John 1:14). Paul says of Christ, "in Him dwells all the fullness of the Deity bodily" (Colossians 2:9). What Solomon wondered at, God did in Bethlehem. And one day, "the tabernacle of God is with men" in the new creation (Revelation 21:3), where the whole city is the dwelling of God.

How should this shape us? We cannot put God in a box, not a building, not a church tradition, not our own small ideas about Him. And yet He wants to be near us. Both truths should humble us and comfort us.

8:28-30 *And turn to the prayer of Your servant and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to listen to the cry and to the prayer which Your servant is praying before You today, that Your eyes may be open toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there,' to listen to the prayer which Your servant prays toward this place. And listen to the supplication of Your servant and of Your people Israel, which they pray toward this place; and You, may You listen at the place of Your dwelling, at the heavens; and hear, and forgive.*

Solomon asked God to "turn to the prayer of Your servant," and to keep His eyes open "toward this house night and day, toward the place of which You have said, 'My name shall be there.'" He asked God to listen to every prayer prayed "toward this place."

Notice where God's answer comes from: "may You listen at the place of Your dwelling, at the heavens; and hear, and forgive." The people pray toward the temple, but God hears from heaven. The temple was where they looked. Heaven was where God lived. And the first thing Solomon asked God to do with their prayers was "forgive." He knew the people's deepest need was not rain or victory, but forgiveness.

That is why Daniel, in exile, opened his windows toward Jerusalem and prayed three times a day (Daniel 6:10). Today we do not pray toward a building. We pray through a Person. Jesus is our High Priest in the true heavenly sanctuary, and through Him we come boldly to God's throne (Hebrews 4:14-16).

8:31-32 *When a man sins against his neighbor, and he lays an oath on him to make him swear, and he comes **and** swears before Your altar in this house, then may You hear **in** the heavens, and act, and judge Your servants, to condemn the wicked, to bring his way on his head, and to justify the righteous, to give to him according to his righteousness.*

Now Solomon gives seven cases where people would pray toward the temple. The first is a legal case. "When a man sins against his neighbor," and there is no clear proof, he would be made to swear an oath "before Your altar in this house." Solomon asked God to judge, "to condemn the wicked" and "to justify the righteous."

When human courts cannot know the truth, God does. Solomon, the wise judge, knew his own wisdom had limits. Only God sees every heart. The Law had a similar oath for cases where property was lost and no one could prove who took it (Exodus 22:10-11).

8:33-34 *When Your people Israel are struck down before an enemy because they sin against You, and they turn back to You and praise Your name, and pray and make supplication to You in this house, then may You hear **in** the heavens, and forgive the sin of Your people Israel, and bring them back to the ground which You gave to their fathers.*

The second case is defeat in war. "When Your people Israel are struck down before an enemy because they sin against You, and they turn back to You and praise Your name." Solomon knew the warnings of the Law, that God would let Israel be defeated if they turned from Him (Leviticus 26:17; Deuteronomy 28:25).

Notice the order. They sin, they are struck down, they turn back, they pray, and God forgives and restores. That is the pattern of repentance all through the Bible. God's discipline is meant to bring His people home.

8:35-36 *When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they sin against You, and they pray toward this place and praise Your name and turn back from their sin, because You afflict them, then may You hear **in** the heavens, and forgive the sin of Your servants and of Your people Israel, for You will teach them the good way in which they shall walk; and give rain on Your land which You have given to Your people for an inheritance.*

The third case is drought. "When the heavens are shut up and there is no rain, because they sin against You." This too was a warning in the Law (Deuteronomy 11:16-17). In chapter 17, during Ahab's reign, it will happen, and Elijah will pray for rain (17:1; 18:41-45; James 5:17-18).

"You will teach them the good way in which they shall walk." Solomon asked God not only to forgive and send rain, but to teach. Real repentance is not just being sorry. It is learning to walk God's way.

8:37-40 *Famine, if it is in the land, pestilence, if it is, blight, mildew, locust, grasshopper, if it is, if its enemy besieges it in the land of its gates, any plague, any sickness, any prayer, any supplication which there is from any man, from all Your people Israel, who know each the plague of his own heart, and he spreads out his palms toward this house, then may You hear **in** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, and forgive and act, and give to the man according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You, You alone, know the heart of all the sons of mankind), so that they may fear You all the days that they live on the face of the ground which You gave to our fathers.*

The fourth case is every kind of disaster: "Famine," "pestilence," "blight, mildew, locust," enemies, "any plague, any sickness." Solomon asked God to hear any person "who know each the plague of his own heart." That is a striking phrase. The real plague is not outside. It is the sin in our own hearts.

"Give to the man according to all his ways, whose heart You know (for You, You alone, know the heart of all the sons of mankind)." God answers knowing exactly who is praying and why. The goal was "that they may fear You all the days that they live." When God answers prayer, it is meant to lead us to reverence Him more.

8:41-43 *And also to the foreigner who **is** not of Your people Israel, and he comes from a distant land for the sake of Your name (for they shall hear **of** Your great name and Your mighty hand and Your outstretched arm), and he comes and prays toward this house, may You hear **in** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, and do according to all that the foreigner calls to You **for**, so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You like Your people Israel, and to know that Your name has been called on this house which I have built.*

The fifth case is one of the most beautiful. "And also to the foreigner who is not of Your people Israel." Solomon prayed for Gentiles who would hear of God's "great name" and His "mighty hand" and His "outstretched arm," come from far away, and pray toward the temple. He asked God to answer them, "so that all the peoples of the earth may know Your name, to fear You like Your people Israel."

From the start, God's plan was to bless all nations through Abraham's seed (Genesis 12:3). The temple was never meant to be a private club. Isaiah would later say God's house would be called a house of prayer for all the peoples, and Jesus quoted those words when He cleansed the temple (Isaiah 56:7; Mark 11:17). In chapter 10 we will see the queen of Sheba come from far away. And through Jesus, the door has been opened wide for every nation (Ephesians 2:11-13).

8:44-45 *When Your people go out to battle against its enemy, by the way that You send them, and they pray to the LORD **in** the direction of the city which You have chosen and the house which I have built for Your name, then hear **in** the heavens their prayer and their supplication, and do justice for them.*

The sixth case is going out to war. "When Your people go out to battle against its enemy, by the way that You send them." Notice the condition: a battle God sends them to fight. They would pray

"in the direction of the city which You have chosen," and Solomon asked God to "do justice for them." God's people were to depend on Him, not on chariots and horses.

8:46-50 *When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin), and You are angry with them and give them up before an enemy, and their captors carry them captive to the land of the enemy, distant or near, and they bring **it** back to their heart in the land where they have been carried captive, and they turn and make supplication to You in the land of their captors, saying, 'We have sinned, and we have done perversely; we have acted wickedly,' and they return to You with all their heart and with all their soul in the land of their enemies who carried them captive, and they pray to You **in** the direction of their land which You gave to their fathers, the city which You have chosen, and the house which I have built for Your name, then hear **in** the heavens, the established place of Your dwelling, their prayer and their supplication, and do justice for them; and forgive Your people who have sinned against You, and all their transgressions which they have transgressed against You; and give them compassion before their captors, and they will have compassion on them*

The seventh case is the hardest, and it came true. "When they sin against You (for there is no man who does not sin)." Solomon knew human nature. Paul would later say all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). If the nation kept sinning, God would let enemies "carry them captive to the land of the enemy, distant or near." Moses had warned of this (Leviticus 26:33; Deuteronomy 28:64).

But even there, hope was not gone. If "they bring it back to their heart" in exile, and pray, "We have sinned, and we have done perversely; we have acted wickedly," and "return to You with all their heart and with all their soul," Solomon asked God to hear, "and forgive Your people," and give them compassion before their captors.

That is just what happened. The northern kingdom went into exile in Assyria in 722 B.C., and Judah went to Babylon, with Jerusalem falling in 586 B.C. In Babylon, Daniel prayed almost these same words, "we have sinned, and we have committed iniquity; we have acted wickedly" (Daniel 9:5), and God moved the heart of Cyrus king of Persia, who let the Jews go home in 538 B.C. (Ezra 1:1-4). God heard, just as Solomon asked.

No sin is so great that God will not hear the one who truly turns back to Him.

8:51-53 *(for they **are** Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out from Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron), that Your eyes may be open to the supplication of Your servant and to the supplication of Your people Israel, to listen to them in all their calling to You. For You, You have separated them to Yourself for an inheritance from all the peoples of the earth, just as You spoke by the hand of Moses Your servant when You brought our fathers out from Egypt, O Lord GOD."*

Solomon ended with the reason God should hear: "they are Your people and Your inheritance, whom You brought out from Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron." Egypt was like a furnace for smelting iron, hot, hard and cruel. God had brought them out of it.

"You have separated them to Yourself for an inheritance from all the peoples of the earth." Israel's hope did not rest on their own goodness. It rested on God's choice of them. That choice still stands. Paul says that "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29), and he speaks of a day when all Israel will be saved (Romans 11:26).

8:54-58 *And it was, when Solomon had finished praying to the LORD all this prayer and supplication, he rose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees, and his palms **were** spread out **toward** the heavens. And he stood and blessed all the assembly of Israel **with** a great voice, saying, "Blessed **be** the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He has spoken; not one word has fallen from all His good word which He spoke by the hand of Moses His servant. May the LORD our God be with us just as He was with our fathers; may He not forsake us, and may He not abandon us, to incline our heart to Him, to walk in all His ways and to keep His commandments and His statutes and His judgments which He commanded our fathers.*

Solomon rose "from kneeling on his knees," with his hands still spread toward heaven, and blessed the people again "with a great voice."

"Blessed be the LORD, who has given rest to His people Israel according to all that He has spoken; not one word has fallen from all His good word which He spoke by the hand of Moses His servant." Joshua said almost the same thing near the end of his life (Joshua 21:45; 23:14). God had kept every promise.

Then Solomon prayed, "May the LORD our God be with us just as He was with our fathers; may He not forsake us." And he asked God "to incline our heart to Him, to walk in all His ways." Solomon knew the people could not keep God's law on their own strength. They needed God to turn their hearts. The new covenant promises exactly this, a new heart and God's Spirit within (Ezekiel 36:26-27; Jeremiah 31:33).

8:59-61 *And may these words of mine, with which I have made supplication before the LORD, be near to the LORD our God by day and night, to do justice for His servant and justice for His people Israel, the matter of a day in its day, so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD, He **is** God; there is no other. And let your heart be complete with the LORD our God, to walk in His statutes and to keep His commandments, as **it is** this day."*

Solomon asked God to keep his prayer near "by day and night," to help His people "the matter of a day in its day," meaning with each day's needs as they come.

The goal of it all: "so that all the peoples of the earth may know that the LORD, He is God; there is no other." Israel's blessing was meant to be a witness to the world.

Then a charge to the people: "let your heart be complete with the LORD our God." A complete heart is an undivided one, wholly devoted to God. Sadly, of Solomon himself it will be said in 11:4 that "his heart was not complete with the LORD his God." He preached it well. He did not finish it well. We should pray for each other that we will live what we say.

8:62-64 *And the king and all Israel with him **were** sacrificing a sacrifice before the LORD. And Solomon sacrificed the sacrifice of the peace offerings which he sacrificed to the LORD: twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep. And the king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. On that day the king consecrated the middle of the court which **was** before the house of the LORD, for there he offered the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings; for the altar of bronze which **was** before the LORD **was too** small to contain the burnt offering and the grain offering and the fat of the peace offerings.*

Then came the sacrifices: "twenty-two thousand cattle and a hundred and twenty thousand sheep" as peace offerings. Those numbers are huge. The feast lasted two weeks, all Israel was there, and peace offerings were mostly eaten by the worshipers, so this was also a great national meal. I take the numbers as written. "The king and all the sons of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD."

The bronze altar "was too small" for so many offerings, so Solomon consecrated "the middle of the court" in front of the house and offered there too. A grain offering was an offering of flour or baked bread, given in thanks. The fat of the peace offerings was burned to God as His portion.

All those sacrifices could not take away sin. They covered it for a time and pointed forward. Hebrews says it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins, and that we have been sanctified "through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all" (Hebrews 10:4, 10). One sacrifice did what all of Solomon's could not.

8:65-66 *And Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, fourteen days. On the eighth day he sent the people away, and they blessed the king and went to their tents, joyful and good of heart over all the goodness which the LORD had done for David His servant and for Israel His people.*

"Solomon held the feast at that time, and all Israel with him, a great assembly from Lebo-hamath to the Wadi of Egypt," from the far north to the far south. The feast lasted "seven days and seven days, fourteen days," the seven-day dedication followed by the seven-day Feast of Booths. 2 Chronicles 7:8-10 gives the same two weeks and a closing assembly, after which the people went home.

"On the eighth day he sent the people away." This seems to mean the day after the second seven, counting the way Chronicles does with the closing assembly. The people "blessed the king and went to their tents, joyful and good of heart over all the goodness which the LORD had done for David His servant and for Israel His people."

What a picture. A nation gathered around God's house, God's glory in their midst, forgiveness asked and promised, and everyone going home glad. That is a picture of what heaven will be, people from every nation gathered around the Lamb, rejoicing in all He has done (Revelation 7:9-10).

Chapter 8 Summary

Solomon gathered the leaders and people of Israel to Jerusalem at the Feast of Booths in the seventh month. The priests carried the ark of the covenant, which held only the two stone tablets of the covenant, into the holy of holies under the wings of the cherubim, while the people offered countless sacrifices. When the priests came out, the cloud of the LORD's glory filled the house so that they could not stand to minister. Solomon blessed the people and praised God for keeping His promise to David. Then, standing and kneeling before the altar with his hands spread to heaven, he prayed. He praised God as the covenant-keeping God, asked Him to keep His promise of a lasting throne, and confessed that heaven itself cannot contain Him, much less the temple. He asked God to hear from heaven and forgive whenever His people prayed toward that house: in legal cases, in defeat, in drought, in disaster and disease, for foreigners who came seeking His name, in battle, and even in exile after they sinned, if they repented. He blessed the people again, praised God that not one word of His promise had failed, and called them to hearts complete with the LORD. They offered huge peace offerings, dedicated the house, and held a fourteen-day feast, and the people went home joyful for all the LORD's goodness.

Chapter 8 Study Questions

1. When and why did Solomon gather all Israel to Jerusalem? (8:1-2)

2. What was inside the ark when it was placed in the temple? (8:9)

3. What happened when the priests came out of the holy place? (8:10-11)

4. How did Solomon describe God's faithfulness to David? (8:15, 24)

5. What question did Solomon ask in verse 27, and how did he answer it? (8:27)

6. What did Solomon ask God to do for the foreigner who prayed toward the temple, and why? (8:41-43)

7. What did Solomon say the people should do if they were carried into exile, and how did God answer that prayer in history? (8:46-50; Daniel 9:5; Ezra 1:1-4)

8. How does Jesus answer Solomon's question, "will God really dwell on the earth?" (John 1:14; Colossians 2:9)

9. Solomon prayed God's promises back to Him (8:25-26). What promise of God could you pray back to Him today?

10. Solomon told the people, "let your heart be complete with the LORD our God" (8:61), but later failed to do it himself. What helps you keep your heart undivided toward God over the long haul?

Chapter 9: The LORD Answers Solomon

Scripture

9:1-9 And it was, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the house of the king and all the desire of Solomon which he delighted to do, and the LORD appeared to Solomon a second ***time***, just as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication with which you have made supplication before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, to put My name there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days. And you, if you walk before Me just as David your father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you, ***and if*** you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I spoke concerning David your father, saying, 'A man shall not be cut off for you from on the throne of Israel.' If you surely turn back, you and your sons, from following Me, and do not keep My commandments, My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then I will cut off Israel from on the face of the ground which I have given to them; and the house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out from before My face; and Israel shall become a proverb and a taunt among all the peoples. And this house shall be high; everyone who passes by it will be appalled and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought out their fathers from the land of Egypt, and they took hold of other gods and bowed down to them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought on them all this calamity.'"

9:10-28 And it was at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the house of the king, Hiram the king of Tyre had supported Solomon with timbers of cedars and with timbers of cypresses and with gold, according to all his desire; then King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of the Galilee. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given to him, and they were not right in his eyes. And he said, "What ***are*** these cities which you have given to me, my brother?" And he called them the land of Cabul to this day. And Hiram had sent to the king approximately 9,000 pounds (a hundred and twenty talents) of gold. And this ***is*** the account of the forced labor which King Solomon raised to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer. (Pharaoh the king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and he had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and he had given it ***as*** a dowry to his daughter, the wife of Solomon.) And Solomon built Gezer and Beth-horon the Lower, and Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, and all the cities of storage which Solomon had, and the cities of the chariotry and the cities of the horsemen, and the desire of Solomon which he desired to build in Jerusalem and in the Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion. All the people who remained of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who ***were*** not of the sons of Israel, their sons who were left after them in the land, whom the sons of Israel were not able to devote to destruction, Solomon raised them for forced labor, laboring, to this day. And of the sons of Israel Solomon did not make a slave; for they ***were*** the men of war, and his servants, and his commanders, and his officers, and the

commanders of his chariotry and of his horsemen. These ***were*** the commanders of the overseers who ***were*** over the work of Solomon, five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people who were doing the work. Only the daughter of Pharaoh went up from the city of David to her house which he had built for her; then he built the Millo. And Solomon offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings three times in the year on the altar which he had built to the LORD, and burning incense with it, which ***was*** before the LORD. And he completed the house. And King Solomon made a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which ***is*** beside Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the fleet his servants, men of ships who knew the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir and took from there gold, approximately 31,500 pounds (four hundred and twenty talents), and brought ***it*** to King Solomon.

Chapter 9 Preview

When the building is done, the LORD appears to Solomon a second time, as He did at Gibeon. He says He has heard the prayer of chapter 8, and He has set the temple apart for His name. Then He sets two roads before Solomon. If Solomon walks with God as David did, his throne will stand. If he or his sons turn to other gods, Israel will be cut off from the land, the temple will become a ruin, and people passing by will ask why. The answer will be plain: they forsook the LORD.

The rest of the chapter is a report on Solomon's affairs. He gives Hiram twenty towns in Galilee, and Hiram is not pleased. He uses forced labor to build Jerusalem's walls and the strong cities of Hazor, Megiddo and Gezer, along with store cities and chariot cities. The leftover Canaanites become permanent laborers, while Israelites serve as soldiers and officers. Pharaoh's daughter moves into her new house, Solomon keeps the yearly feasts, and his ships sail from the Red Sea to Ophir and bring back gold. 2 Chronicles 7:11-8:18 covers the same ground. On the surface, everything is going well. But God's warning hangs over it all.

Chapter 9 Study

9:1-3 *And it was, when Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the house of the king and all the desire of Solomon which he delighted to do, and the LORD appeared to Solomon a second* ***time****, just as He had appeared to him at Gibeon. And the LORD said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your supplication with which you have made supplication before Me; I have consecrated this house which you have built, to put My name there forever; and My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days.*

"When Solomon had finished building the house of the LORD and the house of the king," about twenty years into his reign (9:10), "the LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, just as He had appeared to him at Gibeon." God's word had come to Solomon in 6:11, but this was the second time He appeared to him directly. Few people in Scripture had such a privilege. It made Solomon's later turning away all the worse (11:9).

"I have heard your prayer and your supplication." God answered the prayer of chapter 8. "I have consecrated this house which you have built, to put My name there forever; and My eyes and My

heart shall be there all the days." To consecrate is to set apart as holy. Solomon built the house. Only God could make it holy.

"My eyes and My heart" is tender language. Solomon had asked that God's eyes would be open toward the house (8:29). God answered with more: His eyes and His heart. He was not a distant God. He cared about what happened in that place and among that people. 2 Chronicles 7:14 records more of this answer, the well-known promise that if God's people humble themselves, pray, seek His face and turn from their wicked ways, He will hear from heaven, forgive and heal their land.

9:4-5 *And you, if you walk before Me just as David your father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded you,* ***and if*** *you keep My statutes and My judgments, then I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I spoke concerning David your father, saying, 'A man shall not be cut off for you from on the throne of Israel.'*

"And you, if you walk before Me just as David your father walked, in integrity of heart and in uprightness." David was far from perfect. He sinned terribly with Bathsheba and Uriah. But when confronted, he repented, and he never turned to idols. His heart belonged to God. That is what "integrity of heart" means here, a heart that is whole toward God.

If Solomon walked that way, "I will establish the throne of your kingdom over Israel forever, just as I spoke concerning David your father." God repeated the promise from 2 Samuel 7 and from 2:4 and 8:25. The covenant with David itself would never fail. But whether Solomon and his sons would enjoy its blessings depended on their walk with God.

9:6-9 *If you surely turn back, you and your sons, from following Me, and do not keep My commandments, My statutes which I have set before you, and go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then I will cut off Israel from on the face of the ground which I have given to them; and the house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out from before My face; and Israel shall become a proverb and a taunt among all the peoples. And this house shall be high; everyone who passes by it will be appalled and will hiss, and they will say, 'Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?' And they will say, 'Because they forsook the LORD their God, who brought out their fathers from the land of Egypt, and they took hold of other gods and bowed down to them and served them; therefore the LORD has brought on them all this calamity.'"*

Then came the warning. "If you surely turn back, you and your sons, from following Me," and "go and serve other gods and bow down to them, then I will cut off Israel from on the face of the ground which I have given to them." The temple would not protect them. "The house which I have consecrated for My name I will cast out from before My face."

"Israel shall become a proverb and a taunt among all the peoples." Moses had warned of this (Deuteronomy 28:37). The beautiful house would become a heap of ruins, and "everyone who passes by it will be appalled and will hiss." When they asked why, the answer would be plain: "Because they forsook the LORD their God." Moses had given almost these same words (Deuteronomy 29:24-26).

This came true. Solomon did turn to other gods (11:4-8). The kingdom split, the northern tribes were carried away by Assyria in 722 B.C., and in 586 B.C. Nebuchadnezzar's army burned the temple and took Judah to Babylon (2 Kings 25:9). The book of Lamentations is the cry of someone who saw those ruins.

God is not fooled by beautiful buildings. He wants hearts. Jesus wept over Jerusalem and warned that the temple of His day would be torn down so that not one stone would be left on another (Luke 19:41-44; Matthew 24:2), and it was, in A.D. 70. But God's judgment on Israel was never His last word. The same prophets who foretold the ruin also promised a return and a restored people (Jeremiah 29:10-14; Ezekiel 37:21-28; Romans 11:26-27).

9:10-14 *And it was at the end of twenty years, in which Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD and the house of the king, Hiram the king of Tyre had supported Solomon with timbers of cedars and with timbers of cypresses and with gold, according to all his desire; then King Solomon gave to Hiram twenty cities in the land of the Galilee. And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given to him, and they were not right in his eyes. And he said, "What **are** these cities which you have given to me, my brother?" And he called them the land of Cabul to this day. And Hiram had sent to the king approximately 9,000 pounds (a hundred and twenty talents) of gold.*

"At the end of twenty years," seven for the temple and thirteen for the palace, Solomon settled accounts with Hiram of Tyre, who had supplied cedar, cypress "and with gold, according to all his desire." Solomon gave him "twenty cities in the land of the Galilee," near the border of Tyre.

Hiram came to look, and "they were not right in his eyes." "What are these cities which you have given to me, my brother?" He called the area "the land of Cabul." The name sounds like a Hebrew phrase meaning as good as nothing. It seems Hiram thought he had been short-changed.

2 Chronicles 8:2 says Solomon rebuilt the cities Hiram had given to him and settled Israelites there. Many think Hiram gave the towns back, not wanting them. Hiram also sent Solomon "a hundred and twenty talents" of gold, about 9,000 pounds. Some think the towns were security for that gold, a kind of loan.

Should Solomon have given away part of the land God gave to Israel? The Law said the land belonged to God and was not to be sold for good (Leviticus 25:23). Scripture does not comment here, but this was a strange use of the inheritance of Asher. Even the wisest man can make poor deals when his projects grow too big.

9:15-19 *And this **is** the account of the forced labor which King Solomon raised to build the house of the LORD and his own house and the Millo and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer. (Pharaoh the king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it with fire, and he had killed the Canaanites who dwelt in the city, and he had given it **as** a dowry to his daughter, the wife of Solomon.) And Solomon built Gezer and Beth-horon the Lower, and Baalath and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, and all the cities of storage which Solomon had, and the cities of the chariotry and the cities of the horsemen, and the desire of Solomon which he desired to build in Jerusalem and in the Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion.*

"This is the account of the forced labor which King Solomon raised." Besides the temple and palace, Solomon built "the Millo," likely a terraced fill or fortification in Jerusalem, "the wall of Jerusalem," and three key cities, "Hazor and Megiddo and Gezer." Hazor guarded the north, Megiddo the main pass through the Carmel ridge, and Gezer the road from the coast to Jerusalem. Archaeologists have found large city gates of a similar design at all three sites, and many date them to Solomon's time, though that dating is debated.

A side note explains Gezer. "Pharaoh the king of Egypt had gone up and captured Gezer and burned it," killed its Canaanite people, and given it "as a dowry to his daughter, the wife of Solomon." The city Israel never conquered (Joshua 16:10) came to Israel as a wedding gift from Egypt.

Solomon also built Beth-horon, Baalath, "Tadmor in the wilderness," and "all the cities of storage," "the cities of the chariotry and the cities of the horsemen," and whatever else he wanted to build "in Jerusalem and in the Lebanon and in all the land of his dominion." The kingdom was strong, organized and well defended.

9:20-23 *All the people who remained of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, who **were** not of the sons of Israel, their sons who were left after them in the land, whom the sons of Israel were not able to devote to destruction, Solomon raised them for forced labor, laboring, to this day. And of the sons of Israel Solomon did not make a slave; for they **were** the men of war, and his servants, and his commanders, and his officers, and the commanders of his chariotry and of his horsemen. These **were** the commanders of the overseers who **were** over the work of Solomon, five hundred and fifty, who ruled over the people who were doing the work.*

Who did the hard labor? "All the people who remained of the Amorites, the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites," the Canaanites Israel had not driven out, "whom the sons of Israel were not able to devote to destruction." Solomon made them permanent forced laborers, "to this day."

"Of the sons of Israel Solomon did not make a slave." Israelites served as "the men of war," officers and commanders. How does this fit 5:13-14, where thirty thousand Israelites were drafted? The draft of Israelites was temporary, one month in three, for the temple. The Canaanites were made laborers for life. Even so, the Israelite draft was heavy enough to be a complaint after Solomon died (12:4).

The writer reminds us that these people were left because Israel did not finish what God commanded in Joshua's day (Judges 1:27-36). Their presence in the land would be a constant temptation toward idolatry, as God had warned (Judges 2:3). What we do not deal with fully, we often have to live with for a long time.

The chief officers over the work numbered "five hundred and fifty." 2 Chronicles 8:10 gives 250, perhaps counting only Israelite chiefs, while Kings may include others. As noted at 5:16, the totals of the two books come out the same.

9:24 *Only the daughter of Pharaoh went up from the city of David to her house which he had built for her; then he built the Millo.*

"Only the daughter of Pharaoh went up from the city of David to her house which he had built for her; then he built the Millo." 2 Chronicles 8:11 gives the reason she moved: Solomon said she should not live in David's house, because the places where the ark had been were holy. Solomon knew a foreign wife who did not worship the LORD did not belong near the holy things. But he married her anyway, and many more after her. It is possible to know what is holy and still make room in your life for what pulls you away from it.

9:25 *And Solomon offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings three times in the year on the altar which he had built to the LORD, and burning incense with it, which **was** before the LORD. And he completed the house.*

"Solomon offered up burnt offerings and peace offerings three times in the year on the altar which he had built to the LORD." These were the three great feasts the Law commanded: Passover with Unleavened Bread, the Feast of Weeks, and the Feast of Booths (Deuteronomy 16:16; 2 Chronicles 8:12-13). At this point Solomon was still faithful in public worship.

"And he completed the house." The great project was done. But a completed building is not a completed life. The question now is whether Solomon will finish well.

9:26-28 *And King Solomon made a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which **is** beside Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom. And Hiram sent in the fleet his servants, men of ships who knew the sea, with the servants of Solomon. And they came to Ophir and took from there gold, approximately 31,500 pounds (four hundred and twenty talents), and brought **it** to King Solomon.*

"King Solomon made a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, which is beside Eloth on the shore of the Red Sea, in the land of Edom." This was at the north end of the Gulf of Aqaba, the eastern arm of the Red Sea. It gave Israel a door to trade with Arabia, Africa and perhaps India.

Hiram sent "men of ships who knew the sea." Israel had never been a seafaring nation. The Phoenicians were. Once again Solomon worked with Hiram's skill.

"They came to Ophir and took from there gold, approximately 31,500 pounds (four hundred and twenty talents)." 2 Chronicles 8:18 says 450 talents. A copying difference or a difference in what was counted, such as costs paid along the way, could explain it. No one knows for sure where

Ophir was. Suggestions include southern Arabia, the east coast of Africa, or India. Its gold was famous (Job 28:16; Psalm 45:9).

Solomon had everything: wisdom, wealth, peace, buildings, ships and gold. The next chapter shows him at the height of his glory. But God's words in verses 6-9 still stand at the head of this chapter. Wealth is not the measure of a life. Faithfulness is. Jesus asked, what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his soul (Mark 8:36)?

Chapter 9 Summary

After Solomon finished the temple and his palace, the LORD appeared to him a second time. God said He had heard Solomon's prayer and had consecrated the temple for His name, and His eyes and heart would be there. If Solomon walked before Him with integrity like David, his throne would be established. But if he or his sons turned to other gods, God would cut Israel off from the land and reject the temple, and it would become a ruin and a byword among the nations because they forsook the LORD. After twenty years of building, Solomon gave Hiram twenty towns in Galilee, which Hiram called Cabul because he did not like them, and Hiram sent Solomon 120 talents of gold. Solomon used forced labor to build the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, Hazor, Megiddo, Gezer (which Pharaoh had given as a dowry), and many store and chariot cities. The leftover Canaanites became permanent laborers, while Israelites served as soldiers and officers. Pharaoh's daughter moved to her own house. Solomon offered sacrifices at the three yearly feasts, and his fleet, crewed with Hiram's sailors, brought 420 talents of gold from Ophir.

Chapter 9 Study Questions

1. When did the LORD appear to Solomon the second time, and what did He say about Solomon's prayer? (9:1-3)

2. What did God mean by "My eyes and My heart shall be there all the days"? (9:3)

3. What did God promise if Solomon walked as David did? (9:4-5)

4. What did God warn would happen if Solomon or his sons turned to other gods? (9:6-9)

5. Why was Hiram unhappy with the cities Solomon gave him? (9:11-13)

6. Who did Solomon use for permanent forced labor, and why were they still in the land? (9:20-21; Judges 1:27-36)

7. Why did Pharaoh's daughter move out of the city of David? (9:24; 2 Chronicles 8:11)

8. How did God's warning in verses 6-9 come true in Israel's history? (2 Kings 25:9)

9. Solomon finished the building, but the question remained whether he would finish well. What would it look like for you to finish well in your walk with God?

10. The Canaanites left in the land became a long-term problem. Is there something in your life you have not dealt with fully that keeps pulling you away from God?

Chapter 10: The Queen of Sheba and Solomon's Splendor

Scripture

10:1-13 And the queen of Sheba ***was*** hearing the report of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, and she came to test him with riddles. And she came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones; and she came to Solomon and spoke to him all that was with her heart. And Solomon told her all her matters; there was not a matter hidden from the king which he did not tell her. And the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house which he had built, and the food of his table, and the seating of his servants, and the standing of his ministers, and their clothing, and his cupbearers, and his burnt offering which he would offer up ***at*** the house of the LORD; and there was no more breath in her. And she said to the king, "The word which I heard in my land about your words and about your wisdom was truth. And I did not believe the words until I came and my eyes saw; and look, the half was not told to me; you have added wisdom and good to the report which I heard. How blessed ***are*** your men! How blessed ***are*** these your servants who stand before you continually, who hear your wisdom! May the LORD your God be blessed, who delighted in you to put you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loves Israel forever, and He has appointed you king, to do justice and righteousness." And she gave to the king approximately 9,000 pounds (a hundred and twenty talents) of gold, and very many spices and precious stones; there never again came like that spice in abundance, which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon. And also the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir very many almug timbers and precious stones. And the king made the almug timbers ***into*** a support for the house of the LORD and for the house of the king, and lyres and harps for the singers; almug timbers have not come thus, and have not been seen, to this day. And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she asked, besides what he had given her according to the hand of King Solomon. And she turned and went to her land, she and her servants.

10:14-29 And the weight of the gold which came to Solomon in one year was approximately 50,000 pounds (six hundred sixty-six talents) of gold, apart from ***that*** from the men of the merchants, and the merchandise of the traders, and all the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the land. And King Solomon made two hundred large shields ***of*** beaten gold; approximately 15 pounds (six hundred ***shekels***) of gold he put on the one large shield; and three hundred shields ***of*** beaten gold; approximately 3.75 pounds (three minas) of gold he put on the one shield; and the king put them ***in*** the House of the Forest of Lebanon. And the king made a great throne of ivory, and he overlaid it ***with*** refined gold. The throne ***had*** six steps, and the throne ***had*** a round top behind it, and arms ***were*** on this side and on this side at the place of the seat, and two lions ***were*** standing beside the arms. And twelve lions ***were*** standing there on the six steps, on this side and on this side; it was not made thus for any kingdom. And all the drinking vessels of King Solomon ***were*** gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon ***were*** pure gold; there was no silver; it was not reckoned in the days of Solomon as anything. For the king ***had*** a fleet of Tarshish on the sea with the fleet of Hiram; once every three years the fleet of Tarshish would come, carrying gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks. And King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth ***was*** seeking the face of

Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. And they ***were*** bringing, each his gift: vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and garments, and weapons, and spices, horses, and mules, the matter of a year in a year. And Solomon gathered chariotry and horsemen; and he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen; and he stationed them in the cities of the chariotry and with the king in Jerusalem. And the king made the silver in Jerusalem like the stones, and the cedars he made like the sycamores which ***are*** in the Shephelah, for abundance. And the export of the horses which Solomon had ***was*** from Egypt and from Kue; the traders of the king would take ***them*** from Kue at a price. And a chariot came up and came out from Egypt for approximately 15 pounds (six hundred ***shekels***) of silver, and a horse for approximately 3.75 pounds (a hundred and fifty ***shekels***); and thus for all the kings of the Hittites and for the kings of Syria, by their hand they brought ***them*** out.

Chapter 10 Preview

Word of Solomon's wisdom, and of the name of the LORD, reaches a queen in the far south. She comes to Jerusalem with a great caravan of spices, gold and jewels to test him with hard questions. He answers every one. When she sees his wisdom, his house, his court and his worship at the temple, she is left breathless. "The half was not told to me," she says, and she blesses the LORD who set Solomon on the throne. Jesus Himself later pointed to this queen as a witness against everyone who refuses to listen to Him, because "something greater than Solomon is here."

The second half of the chapter is a catalog of Solomon's wealth: gold coming in by the ton, golden shields, an ivory throne with twelve lions, gold cups, ships returning every three years with gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks, silver as common as stones, and horses and chariots bought from Egypt and Kue. It is a dazzling picture. But a careful reader who knows Deuteronomy 17 will notice that Solomon is multiplying exactly what the Law told the king not to multiply. 2 Chronicles 9:1-28 tells the same story.

Chapter 10 Study

10:1 *And the queen of Sheba **was** hearing the report of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, and she came to test him with riddles.*

"The queen of Sheba was hearing the report of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD." Sheba was a kingdom in southwest Arabia, in the area of modern Yemen, rich from the trade in spices and incense. Some think Sheba may have had lands across the Red Sea in Africa as well. It was more than a thousand miles from Jerusalem.

Notice what she heard about: not only Solomon's fame, but his fame "concerning the name of the LORD." His wisdom pointed people to his God. This is what Solomon prayed for in 8:41-43, that foreigners would hear of God's great name and come.

"She came to test him with riddles." The word means hard questions or puzzles, the kind wise people in that day used to test each other's understanding. She had real questions, and she wanted to see if his wisdom was real.

10:2-3 *And she came to Jerusalem with a very great retinue, camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones; and she came to Solomon and spoke to him all that was with her heart. And Solomon told her all her matters; there was not a matter hidden from the king which he did not tell her.*

She came "with a very great retinue, camels carrying spices and very much gold and precious stones." This was a royal visit, perhaps also a trade mission, since Solomon's ships now sailed the Red Sea near her lands.

"She came to Solomon and spoke to him all that was with her heart." She held nothing back. "Solomon told her all her matters; there was not a matter hidden from the king which he did not tell her." Every question got an answer.

Do you bring God everything that is on your heart? A greater King than Solomon invites us to. "Come to Me, all who labor and are burdened," Jesus said, "and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). There is no question too hard for Him.

10:4-5 *And the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon, and the house which he had built, and the food of his table, and the seating of his servants, and the standing of his ministers, and their clothing, and his cupbearers, and his burnt offering which he would offer up* ***at*** *the house of the LORD; and there was no more breath in her.*

She "saw all the wisdom of Solomon." She saw it in the answers, and she saw it in how he ran his kingdom: "the house which he had built," "the food of his table," the order of his servants and officials, their clothing, "his cupbearers," and "his burnt offering which he would offer up at the house of the LORD." Some translations read this as his stairway up to the temple. The Hebrew word can mean either.

"And there was no more breath in her." It took her breath away. Wisdom is not only in what a person says. It shows in how he orders his home, treats his workers and worships his God. People are watching our lives, not just listening to our words.

10:6-9 *And she said to the king, "The word which I heard in my land about your words and about your wisdom was truth. And I did not believe the words until I came and my eyes saw; and look, the half was not told to me; you have added wisdom and good to the report which I heard. How blessed* ***are*** *your men! How blessed* ***are*** *these your servants who stand before you continually, who hear your wisdom! May the LORD your God be blessed, who delighted in you to put you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loves Israel forever, and He has appointed you king, to do justice and righteousness."*

"The word which I heard in my land about your words and about your wisdom was truth." Then she admitted, "I did not believe the words until I came and my eyes saw; and look, the half was not told to me." The reality was greater than the report.

"How blessed are your men! How blessed are these your servants who stand before you continually, who hear your wisdom!" She envied the servants who got to listen to Solomon every day.

And then, the heart of her speech: "May the LORD your God be blessed, who delighted in you to put you on the throne of Israel; because the LORD loves Israel forever, and He has appointed you king, to do justice and righteousness." A Gentile queen saw that Solomon's wisdom came from God, that God loved Israel, and that the purpose of a king was "justice and righteousness." Whether she came to faith in the LORD, Scripture does not say. But she praised Him by name.

Think of her words, "the half was not told to me." Every believer who meets Christ face to face will say the same. Paul says no eye has seen and no ear has heard what God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9). And if her envy of Solomon's servants was right, how much more blessed are we, who can sit at the feet of Jesus every day in His Word?

10:10 *And she gave to the king approximately 9,000 pounds (a hundred and twenty talents) of gold, and very many spices and precious stones; there never again came like that spice in abundance, which the queen of Sheba gave to King Solomon.*

She gave Solomon "a hundred and twenty talents" of gold, about 9,000 pounds, and "very many spices and precious stones." The writer adds, "there never again came like that spice in abundance." Sheba was famous for frankincense and myrrh, the spices later brought to the child Jesus by the wise men (Matthew 2:11). Isaiah 60:6 pictures a day when camels "will come from Sheba" carrying gold and frankincense to Jerusalem and proclaiming the praises of the LORD. I believe that looks forward to Christ's coming kingdom, when the nations bring their glory to Him (Revelation 21:24).

10:11-12 *And also the fleet of Hiram, which carried gold from Ophir, brought from Ophir very many almug timbers and precious stones. And the king made the almug timbers* ***into*** *a support for the house of the LORD and for the house of the king, and lyres and harps for the singers; almug timbers have not come thus, and have not been seen, to this day.*

The writer breaks in with a note about Hiram's ships, which brought from Ophir "very many almug timbers and precious stones." No one is sure what almug wood was. Some think it was red sandalwood. Solomon used it for supports in the temple and the palace and for "lyres and harps for the singers." Such wood "have not come thus, and have not been seen, to this day."

Why mention this here? It fits the theme. Everything coming into Jerusalem was the rarest and finest of its kind. Even the music of worship was played on the best instruments.

10:13 *And King Solomon gave to the queen of Sheba all her desire which she asked, besides what he had given her according to the hand of King Solomon. And she turned and went to her land, she and her servants.*

King Solomon gave the queen "all her desire which she asked," besides the gifts he gave her out of his royal bounty. She went home with more than she brought.

That is how it is with God. No one ever comes to Him and goes away poorer. The queen gave Solomon great gifts, but she left with her questions answered and her hands full.

10:14-15 *And the weight of the gold which came to Solomon in one year was approximately 50,000 pounds (six hundred sixty-six talents) of gold, apart from **that** from the men of the merchants, and the merchandise of the traders, and all the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the land.*

"The weight of the gold which came to Solomon in one year was approximately 50,000 pounds (six hundred sixty-six talents) of gold." That is about twenty-five tons of gold a year. And that was "apart from" what came from merchants, traders, "all the kings of Arabia," and the governors.

Some readers notice that the number 666 also appears in Revelation 13:18, but Scripture does not connect the two, and I would not build anything on it.

Moses had warned that the king must not "multiply" silver and gold for himself (Deuteronomy 17:17). Solomon was doing exactly that. Wealth can become an idol.

10:16-17 *And King Solomon made two hundred large shields **of** beaten gold; approximately 15 pounds (six hundred **shekels**) of gold he put on the one large shield; and three hundred shields **of** beaten gold; approximately 3.75 pounds (three minas) of gold he put on the one shield; and the king put them **in** the House of the Forest of Lebanon.*

Solomon made "two hundred large shields of beaten gold," with six hundred shekels of gold on each, about 15 pounds, and "three hundred shields of beaten gold" with three minas each, about 3.75 pounds. He put them in "the House of the Forest of Lebanon" (7:2).

Gold shields are useless in battle. Gold is too soft and too heavy. These were for show, carried in royal parades. Just five years after Solomon died, Shishak king of Egypt came and took them all, and Rehoboam replaced them with bronze (14:25-28). Glory built on gold fades fast. God told Abraham, "I am a shield to you" (Genesis 15:1). He is the only shield that lasts.

10:18-20 *And the king made a great throne of ivory, and he overlaid it **with** refined gold. The throne **had** six steps, and the throne **had** a round top behind it, and arms **were** on this side and on this side at the place of the seat, and two lions **were** standing beside the arms. And twelve lions **were** standing there on the six steps, on this side and on this side; it was not made thus for any kingdom.*

"The king made a great throne of ivory, and he overlaid it with refined gold." It had six steps, a rounded back, armrests with "two lions" beside them, and "twelve lions" on the steps, one on each side of each step. "It was not made thus for any kingdom."

The lion was the symbol of the tribe of Judah (Genesis 49:9-10). Twelve lions may also stand for the twelve tribes. Jesus is called "the Lion who is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David" (Revelation 5:5), and He will sit on the throne of His glory (Matthew 25:31). Solomon's throne was glorious, but it was a small picture of the throne of the Son of David, who will reign forever.

10:21-22 *And all the drinking vessels of King Solomon **were** gold, and all the vessels of the House of the Forest of Lebanon **were** pure gold; there was no silver; it was not reckoned in the days of Solomon as anything. For the king **had** a fleet of Tarshish on the sea with the fleet of Hiram; once every three years the fleet of Tarshish would come, carrying gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks.*

"All the drinking vessels of King Solomon were gold." Silver "was not reckoned in the days of Solomon as anything." It was not worth counting.

"The king had a fleet of Tarshish." A ship of Tarshish meant a large ocean-going trading ship, the kind built for long voyages, wherever it sailed. "Once every three years the fleet of Tarshish would come, carrying gold and silver, ivory, and apes, and peacocks." These were long trading voyages, perhaps to Africa or India. The last word may mean peacocks or baboons. Solomon's court was filled with rare animals from far away.

10:23-25 *And King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom. And all the earth **was** seeking the face of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart. And they **were** bringing, each his gift: vessels of silver and vessels of gold, and garments, and weapons, and spices, horses, and mules, the matter of a year in a year.*

"King Solomon became greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and in wisdom." God kept His word from 3:12-13 to the letter.

"All the earth was seeking the face of Solomon, to hear his wisdom which God had put in his heart." Note again where the wisdom came from: "which God had put in his heart." Visitors came every year with gifts: silver and gold, garments, weapons, spices, horses and mules.

This was the high point of Israel's history in the Old Testament. A king of David's line sat on a throne of glory, the nations came to hear the wisdom God gave him and brought him tribute, and there was peace. Many Bible teachers see it as a preview of the kingdom of Christ, when the nations will come up to Jerusalem to be taught the ways of the LORD (Isaiah 2:2-4; Zechariah 14:16).

10:26-29 *And Solomon gathered chariotry and horsemen; and he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen; and he stationed them in the cities of the chariotry and with the king in Jerusalem. And the king made the silver in Jerusalem like the stones, and the cedars he made like the sycamores which **are** in the Shephelah, for abundance. And the export of the horses which Solomon had **was** from Egypt and from Kue; the traders of the king would take **them** from Kue at a price. And a chariot came up and came out from Egypt for approximately 15 pounds (six hundred **shekels**) of silver, and a horse for approximately 3.75 pounds (a hundred and fifty **shekels**); and thus for all the kings of the Hittites and for the kings of Syria, by their hand they brought **them** out.*

"Solomon gathered chariotry and horsemen; and he had one thousand four hundred chariots and twelve thousand horsemen." He stationed them in the chariot cities and in Jerusalem.

"The king made the silver in Jerusalem like the stones, and the cedars he made like the sycamores which are in the Shephelah, for abundance." The Shephelah was the low hill country west of Judah, full of common sycamore-fig trees. Cedar, the most precious wood, became as common as an ordinary tree.

"The export of the horses which Solomon had was from Egypt and from Kue." Kue was in Cilicia, in what is now southern Turkey, famous for horses. Solomon's traders bought chariots from Egypt for six hundred shekels of silver and horses for a hundred and fifty, and they also sold them to "the kings of the Hittites" and "the kings of Syria." Solomon was the middleman in the arms trade of the region.

Now set this beside Deuteronomy 17:16-17. The king "shall not multiply horses for himself," nor send the people back to Egypt to get them. He shall not "multiply wives for himself," lest his heart turn away. And he shall not greatly multiply silver and gold. In chapter 10 Solomon multiplies gold, silver and horses, and buys them from Egypt. In chapter 11 we will read about his wives. The writer has been setting the stage. Solomon's glory was real, and it was God's gift. But he did not guard it by God's Word.

Jesus said that Solomon in all his glory was not clothed like a lily of the field (Matthew 6:29). And He said something greater than Solomon had come. The queen of the south, He said, "will rise up in the judgment with this generation and will condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and look, something greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:42). She traveled more than a thousand miles to hear a man. How much more should we listen to the Son of God, who is the wisdom of God Himself (1 Corinthians 1:24, 30)?

Chapter 10 Summary

The queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's fame and of the name of the LORD, and she came to Jerusalem with a great caravan of spices, gold and precious stones to test him with hard questions. Solomon answered all of them. When she saw his wisdom, his house, his court and his worship, she was overwhelmed and said the half had not been told to her. She blessed the servants who heard his wisdom and blessed the LORD for loving Israel and making Solomon king to do justice and righteousness. She gave him 120 talents of gold and more spices than ever came again, and he gave her all she asked before she went home. Hiram's ships brought almug wood for the temple and for instruments. Solomon received 666 talents of gold a year, besides trade and tribute. He made gold shields, a great ivory throne overlaid with gold with twelve lions on its steps, and gold drinking vessels, and his ships brought gold, silver, ivory, apes and peacocks every three years. He was greater than all the kings of the earth in riches and wisdom, and the world came to hear him. He gathered 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horsemen, made silver as common as stones, and traded horses and chariots from Egypt and Kue.

Chapter 10 Study Questions

1. What had the queen of Sheba heard about, and why did she come? (10:1)

2. What did she see in Solomon's court that took her breath away? (10:4-5)

3. What did she say about the report she had heard? (10:6-7)

4. Who did the queen give the credit to for Solomon's position, and what did she say a king was for? (10:9)

5. What did the gold shields and the ivory throne show about Solomon's kingdom? (10:16-20)

6. Where did Solomon's wisdom come from, according to verse 24? (10:24)

7. Compare 10:14-29 with Deuteronomy 17:16-17. What three things was a king not to multiply, and which of them do we see in this chapter?

8. What did Jesus say about the queen of the south, and what point was He making? (Matthew 12:42)

9. The queen traveled a long way to hear wisdom from a man. What effort are you making to hear the words of Jesus, who is greater than Solomon?

10. Solomon's riches were God's gift, but they also became a danger. How can you enjoy God's blessings without letting them pull your heart away from Him?

Chapter 11: Solomon's Wives and the Kingdom Torn Away

Scripture

11:1-13 And King Solomon loved many foreign women, and the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, ***and*** Hittite ***women***, from the nations of which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not go in among them, and they shall not go in among you; surely they will turn aside your heart after their gods." To them Solomon clung in love. And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned aside his heart. And it was at the time of the old age of Solomon, his wives turned aside his heart after other gods; and his heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father. And Solomon went after Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the detestable thing of the Ammonites. And Solomon did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he did not fully ***follow*** after the LORD like David his father. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable thing of Moab, on the mountain which ***is*** east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable thing of the sons of Ammon. And thus he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned aside from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this matter, not to walk after other gods; and he did not keep what the LORD had commanded. And the LORD said to Solomon, "Because this has been with you, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Only in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I will tear it away. Only I will not tear away all the kingdom; one tribe I will give to your son, for the sake of David My servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

11:14-25 And the LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he ***was*** of the seed of the king in Edom. And it was, when David was with Edom, when Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, and he struck down every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom), and Hadad fled, he and Edomite men of the servants of his father with him, to go to Egypt; and Hadad ***was*** a small youth. And they arose from Midian and came to Paran, and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he gave him a house, and food he assigned to him, and land he gave to him. And Hadad found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh exceedingly, and he gave him a wife, the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. And the sister of Tahpenes bore to him Genubath his son, and Tahpenes weaned him in the midst of the house of Pharaoh; and Genubath was ***in*** the house of Pharaoh among the sons of Pharaoh. And Hadad heard in Egypt that David had lain down with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army had died; and Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Send me away, that I may go to my land." And Pharaoh said to him, "But what ***are*** you lacking with me, that look, you ***are*** seeking to go to your land?" And he said, "No, but you shall surely send me away." And God raised up to him an adversary, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from Hadadezer the king of Zobah, his lord. And he gathered men to himself and became commander of a raiding band, when David killed them; and they went to Damascus and dwelt in it and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to

Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the harm which Hadad ***did***; and he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria.

11:26-43 And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite from the Zeredah, and the name of his mother ***was*** Zeruah, a widow woman, a servant of Solomon, and he raised a hand against the king. And this ***is*** the matter for which he raised a hand against the king: Solomon built the Millo; he closed up the breach of the city of David his father. And the man Jeroboam ***was*** a mighty man of valor; and Solomon saw the young man, that he ***was*** doing work, and he appointed him over all the burden of the house of Joseph. And it was at that time, and Jeroboam went out from Jerusalem, and Ahijah the Shilonite, the prophet, found him on the road; and he ***was*** covering himself with a new cloak; and the two of them ***were*** alone in the field. And Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which ***was*** on him, and tore it ***into*** twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Look, I am tearing the kingdom away from the hand of Solomon, and I will give to you the ten tribes. And the one tribe shall be his, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, because they have forsaken Me and have bowed down to Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, to Chemosh the god of Moab, and to Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon, and they have not walked in My ways, to do what ***is*** right in My eyes, and My statutes and My judgments, like David his father. And I will not take all the kingdom from his hand; for I will make him a leader all the days of his life, for the sake of David My servant whom I chose, who kept My commandments and My statutes. And I will take the kingship from the hand of his son and give it to you, the ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for David My servant all the days before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself to put My name there. And you I will take, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. And it shall be, if you listen to all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what ***is*** right in My eyes, keeping My statutes and My commandments, just as David My servant did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, just as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the seed of David on account of this, yet not all the days.'" And Solomon sought to put Jeroboam to death; and Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. And the rest of the matters of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the matters of Solomon? And the days that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel ***were*** forty years. And Solomon lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

Chapter 11 Preview

This is one of the saddest chapters in the Bible. The wisest man who ever lived, the king who built God's house and prayed one of Scripture's greatest prayers, ends his life worshiping idols. Solomon loved many foreign women, seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines, from the very nations God had warned Israel not to marry, and in his old age they turned his heart after their gods. He built high places for Chemosh and Molech on the hill east of Jerusalem.

The LORD was angry, and He told Solomon the kingdom would be torn from his son, all but one tribe, for David's sake. Then God raised up enemies: Hadad of Edom, Rezon of Damascus, and

from inside Israel, Jeroboam, a gifted young officer. The prophet Ahijah meets Jeroboam on the road, tears his new cloak into twelve pieces, and gives him ten. Solomon tries to kill Jeroboam, who flees to Egypt. Then Solomon dies after forty years, and his son Rehoboam takes the throne. The stage is set for the kingdom to divide. This chapter warns every believer that a good start does not guarantee a good finish.

Chapter 11 Study

11:1-2 *And King Solomon loved many foreign women, and the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian,* ***and*** *Hittite* ***women****, from the nations of which the LORD had said to the sons of Israel, "You shall not go in among them, and they shall not go in among you; surely they will turn aside your heart after their gods." To them Solomon clung in love.*

"King Solomon loved many foreign women, and the daughter of Pharaoh: Moabite, Ammonite, Edomite, Sidonian, and Hittite women." Many of these marriages were political, sealing treaties with neighboring kings. But the writer says he "loved" them.

These were from the nations of which God had said to Israel, "You shall not go in among them." God had given a clear reason: "surely they will turn aside your heart after their gods" (Deuteronomy 7:3-4; Exodus 34:16). The issue was never race or nationality. Ruth was a Moabite, and she is in the line of David and of Jesus. The issue was faith. A spouse who serves other gods will pull the heart away from the LORD. That is why the New Testament tells believers not to be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Corinthians 6:14) and to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Corinthians 7:39).

"To them Solomon clung in love." The word "clung" is the same one used in Genesis 2:24 for a man holding fast to his wife, and in Deuteronomy for holding fast to the LORD (Deuteronomy 10:20). Solomon clung to the wrong things.

11:3 *And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned aside his heart.*

"He had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines." A concubine was a secondary wife, with fewer rights than a full wife. A thousand women. The Law said plainly that the king "shall not multiply wives for himself, and his heart shall not turn aside" (Deuteronomy 17:17). "And his wives turned aside his heart." It happened just as God said it would.

God's plan for marriage from the beginning was one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6). Scripture records the many wives of men like Jacob, David and Solomon, but it never holds them up as a model. Every time, the story shows the trouble it brought: jealousy, rivalry, and here, idolatry.

11:4 *And it was at the time of the old age of Solomon, his wives turned aside his heart after other gods; and his heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father.*

"At the time of the old age of Solomon, his wives turned aside his heart after other gods." It did not happen all at once. It was a slow drift over many years. The young man who loved the LORD (3:3) became an old man who bowed to idols.

"His heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father." These are the very words Solomon used when he charged the people at the dedication: "let your heart be complete with the LORD our God" (8:61). He preached it, but he did not keep it.

David sinned terribly, but he never worshiped idols, and when confronted he repented with a broken heart (Psalm 51). Solomon's sin was different. It was a divided heart that slowly gave room to other gods.

How does a wise man fall like this? Wisdom is not the same as obedience. Knowing what is right does not make us do it. Solomon himself wrote, "More than all guarding, guard your heart, for from it are the outflows of life" (Proverbs 4:23). He did not guard his own. Paul gives the warning plainly: "let the one who thinks he stands watch, lest he fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12).

11:5-8 *And Solomon went after Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, and after Milcom the detestable thing of the Ammonites. And Solomon did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he did not fully **follow** after the LORD like David his father. Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable thing of Moab, on the mountain which **is** east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable thing of the sons of Ammon. And thus he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods.*

"Solomon went after Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians," a Canaanite goddess of fertility and war, worshiped with immoral rites. He went after "Milcom the detestable thing of the Ammonites." The writer calls these gods what God calls them, detestable things.

"Solomon did the evil in the eyes of the LORD." That phrase will be repeated about king after king in the rest of Kings. Solomon was the first.

"Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable thing of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable thing of the sons of Ammon." The mountain east of Jerusalem is the Mount of Olives, facing the temple across the Kidron Valley. The worship of Molech included burning children in the fire as offerings (Leviticus 18:21; 2 Kings 23:10). The text does not say Solomon offered his children, and we should not say so. But he built a shrine for a god whose worship the Law called an abomination, within sight of the house of the LORD. These shrines stood for more than three hundred years, until King Josiah tore them down (2 Kings 23:13).

"Thus he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods." He wanted to keep everyone happy. A man who tries to please everyone ends up displeasing God.

11:9-10 *And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned aside from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice, and had commanded him concerning this matter, not to walk after other gods; and he did not keep what the LORD had commanded.*

"The LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart had turned aside from the LORD, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice." Gibeon (3:5) and after the temple was built (9:2). God had spoken to Solomon face to face, in a sense, twice, and both times He warned him. The more light we are given, the greater our responsibility (Luke 12:48).

God "had commanded him concerning this matter, not to walk after other gods; and he did not keep what the LORD had commanded." No one could say Solomon did not know better.

11:11-13 *And the LORD said to Solomon, "Because this has been with you, and you have not kept My covenant and My statutes which I commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant. Only in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I will tear it away. Only I will not tear away all the kingdom; one tribe I will give to your son, for the sake of David My servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."*

"I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to your servant." God's judgment was firm. But even in judgment there was mercy.

"Only in your days I will not do it, for the sake of David your father; from the hand of your son I will tear it away." And "I will not tear away all the kingdom; one tribe I will give to your son, for the sake of David My servant and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen."

Why "one tribe"? Judah was the tribe left to David's house. Little Benjamin, on Jerusalem's border, went with Judah (12:21), but it seems to be counted with Judah and Jerusalem rather than as a separate gift. That is why Ahijah's cloak will be torn into twelve pieces, with ten going to Jeroboam (11:30-32).

Notice how many times God says "for the sake of David." God's covenant with David held even when David's son broke faith. God keeps His promises for the sake of the one He chose. That is how the gospel works too. God forgives us "on account of His name" (1 John 2:12), for the sake of His Son, not because we deserve it.

11:14-18 *And the LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite; he **was** of the seed of the king in Edom. And it was, when David was with Edom, when Joab the commander of the army went up to bury the slain, and he struck down every male in Edom (for Joab and all Israel remained there six months, until he had cut off every male in Edom), and Hadad fled, he and Edomite men of the servants of his father with him, to go to Egypt; and Hadad **was** a small youth. And they arose from Midian and came to Paran, and they took men with them from Paran and came to Egypt, to Pharaoh king of Egypt; and he gave him a house, and food he assigned to him, and land he gave to him.*

"The LORD raised up an adversary to Solomon, Hadad the Edomite." The word adversary is the Hebrew word satan, here used of a human enemy. Solomon had told Hiram in 5:4 that there was "no adversary." Now God sent one.

Hadad was of the royal family of Edom. Years before, when David defeated Edom (2 Samuel 8:13-14), Joab stayed there six months "until he had cut off every male in Edom," meaning the men of fighting age in the area he took. Hadad was "a small youth" then, and servants of his father fled with him through Midian and Paran to Egypt. Pharaoh gave him a house, food and land.

This is a hard verse. Scripture records Joab's campaign but does not praise it, and we have already seen what kind of man Joab was. God did not forget the boy who escaped. He used him, years later, as a rod of discipline against David's son.

11:19-22 *And Hadad found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh exceedingly, and he gave him a wife, the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. And the sister of Tahpenes bore to him Genubath his son, and Tahpenes weaned him in the midst of the house of Pharaoh; and Genubath was **in** the house of Pharaoh among the sons of Pharaoh. And Hadad heard in Egypt that David had lain down with his fathers, and that Joab the commander of the army had died; and Hadad said to Pharaoh, "Send me away, that I may go to my land." And Pharaoh said to him, "But what **are** you lacking with me, that look, you **are** seeking to go to your land?" And he said, "No, but you shall surely send me away."*

"Hadad found favor in the eyes of Pharaoh exceedingly." Pharaoh gave him the sister of "Tahpenes the queen" as a wife. Their son Genubath was raised in Pharaoh's palace among the princes.

When Hadad heard that David and Joab were dead, he asked to go home. Pharaoh asked, "But what are you lacking with me?" Hadad had a comfortable life in Egypt, but he wanted his land back. He went home and caused trouble for Israel (11:25).

It is interesting that Egypt sheltered both Hadad and, later, Jeroboam (11:40). Solomon had married Pharaoh's daughter to secure Egypt as a friend. Egypt became a refuge for his enemies. Alliances made apart from God often fail us when we need them.

11:23-25 *And God raised up to him an adversary, Rezon the son of Eliada, who had fled from Hadadezer the king of Zobah, his lord. And he gathered men to himself and became commander of a raiding band, when David killed them; and they went to Damascus and dwelt in it and reigned in Damascus. And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, along with the harm which Hadad **did**; and he loathed Israel and reigned over Syria.*

"God raised up to him an adversary, Rezon the son of Eliada." Rezon had served Hadadezer king of Zobah, whom David defeated (2 Samuel 8:3-8). He gathered a raiding band and took Damascus, and "reigned over Syria." Damascus would become the capital of Aram, or Syria, a kingdom that troubled Israel for two hundred years.

"He was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon." The peace that marked the start of Solomon's reign was cracking at the edges.

Notice: "God raised up" these men. Not chance, not politics alone. When God's people turn from Him, He sometimes lets trouble come to bring them back. Hebrews 12:6 says the Lord disciplines the one He loves.

11:26-28 *And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite from the Zeredah, and the name of his mother **was** Zeruah, a widow woman, a servant of Solomon, and he raised a hand against the king. And this **is** the matter for which he raised a hand against the king: Solomon built the Millo; he closed up the breach of the city of David his father. And the man Jeroboam **was** a mighty man of valor; and Solomon saw the young man, that he **was** doing work, and he appointed him over all the burden of the house of Joseph.*

The third adversary came from inside. "Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite," meaning from the tribe of Ephraim, from the town of Zeredah. His mother was "a widow woman." He "raised a hand against the king," meaning he rebelled.

Here is the background. Solomon was building "the Millo" and repairing the wall of the city of David. Jeroboam was "a mighty man of valor," and Solomon saw that he was a hard worker, so "he appointed him over all the burden of the house of Joseph." The house of Joseph meant the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh, the heart of the northern tribes. Jeroboam was in charge of their forced labor. He saw firsthand how heavy Solomon's yoke had become, and the northern workers likely looked to him.

11:29-33 *And it was at that time, and Jeroboam went out from Jerusalem, and Ahijah the Shilonite, the prophet, found him on the road; and he **was** covering himself with a new cloak; and the two of them **were** alone in the field. And Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which **was** on him, and tore it **into** twelve pieces. And he said to Jeroboam, "Take for yourself ten pieces; for thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'Look, I am tearing the kingdom away from the hand of Solomon, and I will give to you the ten tribes. And the one tribe shall be his, for the sake of My servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen from all the tribes of Israel, because they have forsaken Me and have bowed down to Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, to Chemosh the god of Moab, and to Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon, and they have not walked in My ways, to do what **is** right in My eyes, and My statutes and My judgments, like David his father.*

"Ahijah the Shilonite, the prophet, found him on the road." Ahijah was from Shiloh, where the tabernacle once stood. Jeroboam had on "a new cloak," and the two were alone in a field.

"Ahijah took hold of the new cloak which was on him, and tore it into twelve pieces." Prophets sometimes acted out God's message. Then he said, "Take for yourself ten pieces," and he gave God's word: "Look, I am tearing the kingdom away from the hand of Solomon." Years earlier, when Saul tore Samuel's robe, Samuel told him the LORD had torn the kingdom from him (1 Samuel 15:27-28). Now God tore Solomon's kingdom.

Ahijah gave the reason: "they have forsaken Me and have bowed down to Ashtoreth the god of the Sidonians, to Chemosh the god of Moab, and to Milcom." The "they" includes Solomon and the people who followed his example. A leader's sin rarely stays private.

11:34-36 *And I will not take all the kingdom from his hand; for I will make him a leader all the days of his life, for the sake of David My servant whom I chose, who kept My commandments and My statutes. And I will take the kingship from the hand of his son and give it to you, the ten tribes. And to his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for David My servant all the days before Me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen for Myself to put My name there.*

Even here, God's mercy shows. "I will not take all the kingdom from his hand; for I will make him a leader all the days of his life, for the sake of David My servant whom I chose." Solomon would keep the throne until he died.

"To his son I will give one tribe, so that there may be a lamp for David My servant all the days before Me in Jerusalem." A lamp burning in a house was a sign that the family was still living there. God promised that David's line would never be snuffed out. That lamp kept burning through good kings and bad, through exile and return, until the true Light came, Jesus, the Son of David (Matthew 1:1; John 8:12).

11:37-39 *And you I will take, and you shall reign over all that your soul desires, and you shall be king over Israel. And it shall be, if you listen to all that I command you, and walk in My ways, and do what* ***is*** *right in My eyes, keeping My statutes and My commandments, just as David My servant did, then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, just as I built for David, and I will give Israel to you. And I will afflict the seed of David on account of this, yet not all the days.'"*

Then God made Jeroboam an amazing offer. "You shall be king over Israel." And "if you listen to all that I command you, and walk in My ways," as David did, "then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house, just as I built for David."

Jeroboam was given the same kind of promise David received, on the condition of obedience. Chapter 12 will show what he did with it. He set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan, and he became the measure of an evil king for the rest of the book.

"And I will afflict the seed of David on account of this, yet not all the days." The last words are full of hope. The division would not last forever. The prophets later promised that Israel and Judah would be one nation again under one King, David's Son (Ezekiel 37:15-24). I believe that will be fulfilled when Christ reigns on the earth.

11:40 *And Solomon sought to put Jeroboam to death; and Jeroboam arose and fled to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt, and he was in Egypt until the death of Solomon.*

"Solomon sought to put Jeroboam to death." Saul had tried to kill David, the man God chose to replace him. Now Solomon tried to kill the man God chose to take ten tribes. It never works to fight against God's word. Jeroboam fled "to Egypt, to Shishak king of Egypt," and stayed there until Solomon died.

Shishak is the first Pharaoh in the Bible named by his own name. He is known from Egyptian records as Shoshenq I, and five years after Solomon's death he invaded Judah (14:25-26).

11:41-43 *And the rest of the matters of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the matters of Solomon? And the days that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel* ***were*** *forty years. And Solomon lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.*

"The rest of the matters of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the matters of Solomon?" The writer of Kings used older royal records, which have since been lost. 2 Chronicles 9:29 names other sources, the records of Nathan the prophet, the prophecy of Ahijah, and the visions of Iddo the seer.

"Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel" for "forty years," about 970 to 930 B.C. "Solomon lay down with his fathers and was buried in the city of David his father; and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place."

Was Solomon saved? Did he repent before he died? Scripture does not say. Many believe he wrote Ecclesiastes late in life, looking back on all the emptiness of life "under the sun" and coming to the conclusion, "fear God and keep His commandments" (Ecclesiastes 12:13), and they see in it the

words of a man who returned to God. Others are less hopeful. Nehemiah later held him up as a warning: "even him the foreign wives caused to sin" (Nehemiah 13:26). We are not told, and I will leave it with God.

What we do know is this. Solomon had more wisdom, more wealth and more privilege than anyone, and it was not enough to keep his heart. Only God's grace can do that. Paul wrote that He who began a good work in us will complete it until the day of Christ Jesus (Philippians 1:6). Solomon's story points us away from even the greatest of men to the One who is greater than Solomon, who never turned aside, and who keeps all who trust in Him.

Chapter 11 Summary

King Solomon loved many foreign women from the nations God had forbidden Israel to marry, and he had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. In his old age they turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD as David's had been. He worshiped Ashtoreth and Milcom and built high places for Chemosh and Molech on the hill east of Jerusalem, and for all his foreign wives. The LORD, who had appeared to him twice, was angry and said He would tear the kingdom away and give it to Solomon's servant, but not in Solomon's lifetime, and He would leave one tribe to his son for David's sake and for Jerusalem's. God raised up adversaries: Hadad the Edomite, who had fled to Egypt as a boy, and Rezon, who took Damascus and ruled Syria. Jeroboam, a capable officer over the labor of the house of Joseph, rebelled. The prophet Ahijah tore Jeroboam's new cloak into twelve pieces and gave him ten, promising him ten tribes and an enduring house if he obeyed as David did, while one tribe would remain as a lamp for David in Jerusalem. Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, who fled to Shishak in Egypt. Solomon died after reigning forty years and was buried in the city of David, and Rehoboam his son reigned in his place.

Chapter 11 Study Questions

1. What did God warn would happen if Israel married people from the nations around them? (11:2; Deuteronomy 7:3-4)

2. When did Solomon's heart turn, and what does that tell us about how it happened? (11:4)

3. What gods did Solomon worship, and where did he build their high places? (11:5-7)

4. Why was the LORD especially angry with Solomon? (11:9-10)

5. What did God say He would do, and what did He hold back "for the sake of David"? (11:11-13)

6. Who were the three adversaries God raised up against Solomon? (11:14, 23, 26)

7. What did Ahijah do with Jeroboam's cloak, and what did it mean? (11:29-31)

8. What did God promise Jeroboam if he obeyed? (11:38)

9. Solomon wrote, "guard your heart" (Proverbs 4:23), but did not guard his own. What relationships or influences in your life could slowly turn your heart away from God?

10. Solomon started well but did not finish well. What can you do now, by God's grace, to stay faithful to the end? (1 Corinthians 10:12; Philippians 1:6)

Chapter 12: The Kingdom Divides

Scripture

12:1-15 And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. And it was, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard (and he ***was*** still in Egypt, where he had fled from before King Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt), and they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying, "Your father made our yoke hard; and you, now lighten some of the hard service of your father and of his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." And he said to them, "Go, yet three days, and return to me." And the people went. And King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had been standing before Solomon his father while he was alive, saying, "How do you counsel to bring back word ***to*** this people?" And they spoke to him, saying, "If today you will be a servant to this people, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be servants to you all the days." And he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had counseled him, and he consulted with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. And he said to them, "What do you counsel, that we may bring back word ***to*** this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten some of the yoke which your father put on us'?" And the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, and you, lighten ***it*** from on us'; thus you shall speak to them: 'My little finger is thicker than the loins of my father. And now, my father loaded on you a heavy yoke, and I, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, and I, I will discipline you with scorpions.'" And Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had spoken, saying, "Return to me on the third day." And the king answered the people harshly, and he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had counseled him; and he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, and I, I will discipline you with scorpions." And the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn ***of events*** from the LORD, in order to establish His word which the LORD spoke by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.

12:16-24 And all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them; and the people brought back word to the king, saying, "What portion ***is there*** for us in David? And ***there is*** no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!" And Israel went to its tents. And the sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. And King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who ***was*** over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. And King Rehoboam exerted himself to go up in the chariot to flee to Jerusalem. And Israel has rebelled against the house of David to this day. And it was, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, and they sent and called him to the congregation and made him king over all Israel; there was none following the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone. And Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, and he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen ***men***, makers of war, to fight with the house of Israel, to bring back the kingship to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. And the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, "Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, the king of

Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not go up, and you shall not fight with your brothers the sons of Israel. Return, each man to his house, for this thing has come from Me."'" And they listened to the word of the LORD and turned back to go, according to the word of the LORD.

12:25-33 And Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it; and he went out from there and built Penuel. And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people goes up to make sacrifices in the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah." And the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and he said to them, "***It is too*** much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" And he set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin; and the people went before the one as far as Dan. And he made a house of high places, and he made priests from the ends of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi. And Jeroboam made a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which ***was*** in Judah, and he offered up on the altar. So he did in Bethel, to sacrifice to the calves which he had made; and he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. And he offered up on the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month which he had devised from his own heart; and he made a feast for the sons of Israel, and he offered up on the altar to burn incense.

Chapter 12 Preview

Solomon is dead, and his son Rehoboam goes to Shechem to be made king by all Israel. The people, with Jeroboam back from Egypt as their spokesman, ask one thing: lighten the heavy yoke your father put on us, and we will serve you. The old men who had advised Solomon tell Rehoboam to serve the people and speak kindly to them. The young men he grew up with tell him to make the yoke heavier. Rehoboam takes the bad advice, and ten tribes walk away from the house of David. They make Jeroboam their king. About 930 B.C., the one kingdom of Israel becomes two: Israel in the north and Judah in the south. When Rehoboam gathers an army to win them back, God sends a prophet to say, "this thing has come from Me."

Then Jeroboam makes a choice that will stain the northern kingdom for the rest of its history. Afraid that his people will turn back to Rehoboam if they keep going to the temple in Jerusalem, he makes two golden calves and sets them up at Bethel and Dan. He builds shrines, makes priests who are not Levites, and invents his own feast day. This chapter shows how pride can split a family of believers, and how fear can lead a leader to rewrite worship to suit himself. 2 Chronicles 10-11 tells the same events.

Chapter 12 Study

12:1-5 *And Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king. And it was, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat heard (and he **was** still in Egypt, where he had fled from before King Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt), and they sent and called him; and Jeroboam and all the assembly of Israel came, and they spoke to Rehoboam, saying, "Your father made our yoke hard; and you, now lighten some of the hard service of your father and of his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." And he said to them, "Go, yet three days, and return to me." And the people went.*

"Rehoboam went to Shechem, for all Israel had come to Shechem to make him king." Why Shechem and not Jerusalem? Shechem was an old and holy place in the north. Abraham built an altar there (Genesis 12:6-7), and Joshua gathered the tribes there to renew the covenant (Joshua 24). Judah had already accepted Rehoboam. The northern tribes wanted to meet him on their own ground before they agreed. David himself had become king over the north by a covenant with its elders (2 Samuel 5:3).

Jeroboam, who had fled from Solomon to Egypt (11:40), came home and stood with "all the assembly of Israel." Their words were plain: "Your father made our yoke hard." A yoke was the wooden beam laid on the necks of oxen. They meant the forced labor and taxes that paid for Solomon's building (5:13-14; 4:7). They were not asking to be free of a king. They said, "lighten some of the hard service of your father and of his heavy yoke which he put on us, and we will serve you." That was a fair request.

Rehoboam said, "Go, yet three days, and return to me." Taking time to think was wise. What he did with the three days was not.

12:6-7 *And King Rehoboam consulted with the elders who had been standing before Solomon his father while he was alive, saying, "How do you counsel to bring back word **to** this people?" And they spoke to him, saying, "If today you will be a servant to this people, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be servants to you all the days."*

First he "consulted with the elders who had been standing before Solomon his father." These were men who had served in Solomon's court and knew the people and the kingdom.

Their counsel was beautiful: "If today you will be a servant to this people, and serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be servants to you all the days." Serve them, and they will serve you. A leader who serves wins hearts.

That is the very thing Jesus taught His disciples. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant (Mark 10:42-45). The Son of Man came not to be served but to serve and to give His life. Leadership in God's kingdom has always looked like a towel and a basin, not a whip (John 13:14-15). Rehoboam had the right answer handed to him on the first day.

12:8-11 *And he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had counseled him, and he consulted with the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him. And he said to them, "What do you counsel, that we may bring back word* ***to*** *this people who have spoken to me, saying, 'Lighten some of the yoke which your father put on us'?" And the young men who had grown up with him spoke to him, saying, "Thus you shall say to this people who spoke to you, saying, 'Your father made our yoke heavy, and you, lighten* ***it*** *from on us'; thus you shall speak to them: 'My little finger is thicker than the loins of my father. And now, my father loaded on you a heavy yoke, and I, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, and I, I will discipline you with scorpions.'"*

"He forsook the counsel of the elders." He went next to "the young men who had grown up with him, who stood before him." Rehoboam was forty-one when he became king (14:21), so these were not boys. They were his friends from the palace, men who had grown up in Solomon's wealth and had never carried a load of stone in their lives.

Their advice was to talk tough: "My little finger is thicker than the loins of my father." In other words, my smallest finger is bigger than my father's waist. Then: "my father disciplined you with whips, and I, I will discipline you with scorpions." A scorpion here likely means a whip with sharp pieces of metal or bone tied into it, one that stings and tears.

Notice what Rehoboam was doing. He did not want counsel. He wanted agreement. He asked the old men, did not like their answer, and went looking for people who would tell him what he wanted to hear. Solomon had written, "the way of a fool is right in his own eyes, and he who listens to counsel is wise" (Proverbs 12:15). His son did not listen. Do we ever shop for advice until we find the answer we already wanted?

12:12-15 *And Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam on the third day, just as the king had spoken, saying, "Return to me on the third day." And the king answered the people harshly, and he forsook the counsel of the elders which they had counseled him; and he spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men, saying, "My father made your yoke heavy, and I, I will add to your yoke; my father disciplined you with whips, and I, I will discipline you with scorpions." And the king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn* ***of events*** *from the LORD, in order to establish His word which the LORD spoke by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam the son of Nebat.*

On the third day Jeroboam and the people came back. "The king answered the people harshly," and he "spoke to them according to the counsel of the young men." He repeated their words almost exactly. One harsh speech cost him most of his kingdom.

Then the writer tells us what was happening behind the scenes. "The king did not listen to the people, for it was a turn of events from the LORD, in order to establish His word which the LORD spoke by the hand of Ahijah the Shilonite to Jeroboam." God had said through Ahijah that He would tear ten tribes away because of Solomon's idolatry (11:29-39). Now it was happening.

Does that mean Rehoboam was not to blame? No. He made his own proud choice, and Scripture holds him responsible for it. Yet God was ruling over it all and using it to keep His word. Both are true at once. Proverbs says the king's heart is like streams of water in the LORD's hand, and He

turns it wherever He desires (Proverbs 21:1). God does not make anyone sin, but He is never caught off guard by it, and He works even foolish choices into His plan.

12:16-17 *And all Israel saw that the king had not listened to them; and the people brought back word to the king, saying, "What portion **is there** for us in David? And **there is** no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!" And Israel went to its tents. And the sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them.*

"All Israel saw that the king had not listened to them." Their answer was a battle cry: "What portion is there for us in David? And there is no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!" It was nearly the same cry Sheba the son of Bichri had raised in David's day (2 Samuel 20:1). The old split between the north and Judah had never fully healed. Rehoboam's pride tore it wide open.

"And Israel went to its tents." From here on in Kings, the name Israel usually means the ten northern tribes, and Judah means the southern kingdom ruled by David's line.

"The sons of Israel who were dwelling in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them." Some people from the northern tribes lived in Judah's towns, and they stayed under Rehoboam.

12:18-19 *And King Rehoboam sent Adoram, who **was** over the forced labor, and all Israel stoned him with stones, and he died. And King Rehoboam exerted himself to go up in the chariot to flee to Jerusalem. And Israel has rebelled against the house of David to this day.*

Then Rehoboam made it worse. He "sent Adoram, who was over the forced labor." Of all the men he could have sent to make peace, he sent the man in charge of the very thing they were angry about. "All Israel stoned him with stones, and he died." The king himself "exerted himself to go up in the chariot to flee to Jerusalem." He barely got away.

"And Israel has rebelled against the house of David to this day." The phrase "to this day" shows the writer was using a source written while the northern kingdom still stood. The split lasted until Israel was carried away by Assyria in 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17).

12:20 *And it was, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned, and they sent and called him to the congregation and made him king over all Israel; there was none following the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone.*

"When all Israel heard that Jeroboam had returned," they "made him king over all Israel." Jeroboam reigned about 930 to 909 B.C. Ahijah's word had come true. "There was none following the house of David except the tribe of Judah alone." The next verse shows that Benjamin went with Judah too, as part of the one tribe God had promised to leave for David's sake (11:13, 32). It is likely that much of Benjamin, with Jerusalem on its border, was counted with Judah.

12:21-24 *And Rehoboam came to Jerusalem, and he assembled all the house of Judah and the tribe of Benjamin, a hundred and eighty thousand chosen **men**, makers of war, to fight with the house of Israel, to bring back the kingship to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. And the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God, saying, "Say to Rehoboam the son of Solomon, the king of Judah, and to all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and the rest of the people, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "You shall not go up, and you shall not fight with your brothers the sons of Israel. Return, each man to his house, for this thing has come from Me."'" And they listened to the word of the LORD and turned back to go, according to the word of the LORD.*

Rehoboam did what kings do. He gathered "a hundred and eighty thousand chosen men, makers of war, to fight with the house of Israel." I take the number as written. Some scholars think the Hebrew word for thousand can sometimes mean a military unit or clan, which would make the army smaller, but the text gives us this number and I leave it there.

Then "the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God." "Man of God" is a common title for a prophet in Kings, a man who speaks with God's authority. His message was simple: "You shall not go up, and you shall not fight with your brothers the sons of Israel. Return, each man to his house, for this thing has come from Me."

Notice the word "brothers." Even divided, they were still one family. And this time Rehoboam listened. "They listened to the word of the LORD and turned back to go." That was the best thing Rehoboam did in this chapter. When God says a door is closed, the wise thing is to stop pushing on it. There would still be fighting between the two kingdoms (14:30), but a full civil war was stopped that day.

12:25 *And Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it; and he went out from there and built Penuel.*

"Jeroboam built Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim and dwelt in it." To "build" here means to fortify and enlarge an existing city. Shechem became his first capital. "He went out from there and built Penuel," a town east of the Jordan where Jacob once wrestled with God (Genesis 32:30-31). Later the capital moved to Tirzah (14:17), and finally Omri built Samaria (16:24).

12:26-27 *And Jeroboam said in his heart, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David. If this people goes up to make sacrifices in the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord, to Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will kill me and return to Rehoboam king of Judah."*

"Jeroboam said in his heart." Here is where the trouble starts, inside. He reasoned, "Now the kingdom will return to the house of David." Why? Because the temple was in Jerusalem. "If this people goes up to make sacrifices in the house of the LORD in Jerusalem, then the heart of this people will return to their lord." Three times a year every man in Israel was to go up to the place God had chosen (Deuteronomy 16:16). Jeroboam was afraid that worship would pull their loyalty back to Judah, and then "they will kill me."

What had God promised Jeroboam? "If you listen to all that I command you," He said, "then I will be with you and build for you an enduring house" (11:38). God had already given him the kingdom and offered to keep it for him. Jeroboam did not trust that promise. Fear of losing what God gave him led him to disobey the God who gave it. How often does fear make us grab for control instead of trusting God?

12:28-30 *And the king took counsel and made two calves of gold, and he said to them, "**It is too** much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" And he set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan. And this thing became a sin; and the people went before the one as far as Dan.*

"The king took counsel and made two calves of gold." Then he said, "It is too much for you to go up to Jerusalem. Look, your gods, O Israel, which brought you up from the land of Egypt!" These are almost the same words Israel said about Aaron's golden calf at Mount Sinai (Exodus 32:4, 8). Jeroboam may have meant the calves as a stand or throne for the LORD, the way the cherubim stood over the ark in the temple. Many teachers think so. But God had forbidden Israel to make any image to worship Him by (Exodus 20:4-5). Whatever Jeroboam meant, the people bowed to the calves, and God counted it as idolatry (14:9).

"He set the one in Bethel, and the other he put in Dan." Bethel was near his southern border, on the main road to Jerusalem, a place where Jacob had met God (Genesis 28:19). Dan was at the far north. He made worship easy and close to home.

"And this thing became a sin." This is the sin the rest of Kings will name again and again. Nearly every king of Israel after him is said to have walked "in the way of Jeroboam" and in the sin by which he made Israel sin (15:34; 16:26). Not one northern king ever tore these calves down. Notice that his reason sounded kind: it is too much for you. False worship often comes dressed as convenience.

12:31 *And he made a house of high places, and he made priests from the ends of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi.*

"He made a house of high places." A high place was a hilltop or raised spot used for worship, which God had told Israel to tear down (Deuteronomy 12:2-5). Jeroboam built shrines on them. "He made priests from the ends of the people, who were not of the sons of Levi." God had given the priesthood to Aaron's family in the tribe of Levi, and the Levites to help them (Numbers 3:5-10). 2 Chronicles 11:13-16 tells us the priests and Levites of the north, and many faithful people with them, left their homes and moved to Judah rather than serve at Jeroboam's altars. Jeroboam simply filled their places with anyone he liked.

12:32-33 *And Jeroboam made a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which **was** in Judah, and he offered up on the altar. So he did in Bethel, to sacrifice to the calves which he had made; and he stationed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. And he offered up on the altar which he had made in Bethel on the fifteenth day in the eighth month, in the month which he had devised from his own heart; and he made a feast for the sons of Israel, and he offered up on the altar to burn incense.*

"Jeroboam made a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like the feast which was in Judah." The Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles, was on the fifteenth day of the seventh month (Leviticus 23:33-34). Jeroboam moved it one month later. It looked like the real thing, but it was his own.

The writer puts his finger on it: "in the month which he had devised from his own heart." That is the heart of false religion. Not what God has said, but what we have devised. Jeroboam kept the outward shape of worship and changed the parts he did not like. "He offered up on the altar to burn incense," taking on himself a priest's work.

We should be careful here. It is easy to point at Jeroboam's calves. But anytime we shape worship around what is easy, popular, or useful to us, instead of what God has said, we are walking down his road. Jesus said true worshipers will worship the Father "in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). The next chapter shows God's answer to Jeroboam's altar.

Chapter 12 Summary

Rehoboam went to Shechem to be made king over all Israel. The people, with Jeroboam back from Egypt, asked him to lighten the heavy yoke of labor and taxes Solomon had laid on them. The elders advised him to be a servant to the people and speak kindly, and they would serve him forever. Rehoboam rejected their counsel and followed the young men he grew up with, answering harshly that he would add to their yoke and discipline them with scorpions. This came from the LORD to fulfill His word through Ahijah. The northern tribes rejected the house of David, stoned Adoram the officer over forced labor, and made Jeroboam king; only Judah, with Benjamin, followed Rehoboam. When Rehoboam gathered an army to fight, God sent Shemaiah to forbid it, and the people obeyed. Jeroboam fortified Shechem and Penuel. Afraid that worship in Jerusalem would turn his people back to Rehoboam, he made two golden calves, set them in Bethel and Dan, and told Israel these were their gods who brought them out of Egypt. He built shrines on high places, appointed priests who were not Levites, and set up his own feast in the eighth month, a month he devised from his own heart.

Chapter 12 Study Questions

1. What did the people ask Rehoboam to do, and what did they promise in return? (12:4)

2. What advice did the elders give Rehoboam, and why was it wise? (12:7)

3. How did the young men's advice differ, and why do you think Rehoboam chose it? (12:10-11, 13-14)

4. What does verse 15 tell us about God's hand in these events?

5. Why did God tell Rehoboam not to fight against the northern tribes, and how did he respond? (12:22-24)

6. What was Jeroboam afraid of, and what had God already promised him? (12:26-27; 11:38)

7. What did Jeroboam set up in Bethel and Dan, and what earlier sin do his words echo? (12:28-29; Exodus 32:4)

8. What changes did Jeroboam make to the priesthood and the feasts? (12:31-33)

9. Rehoboam asked for advice but only followed the advice he liked. How do you seek counsel when you face a hard decision? (Proverbs 12:15)

10. Jeroboam made worship convenient and "devised from his own heart." Are there ways we shape our worship of God around what is easy for us rather than what He has said? (John 4:23-24)

Chapter 13: The Man of God from Judah

Scripture

13:1-10 And look, a man of God came from Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel, and Jeroboam ***was*** standing at the altar to burn incense. And he called out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and he said, "Altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'Look, a son is about to be born to the house of David, Josiah ***is*** his name; and he will sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and bones of man they will burn on you.'" And he gave a sign on that day, saying, "This ***is*** the sign which the LORD has spoken: look, the altar is about to be torn apart, and the ash which ***is*** on it will be poured out." And it was, when the king heard the word of the man of God which he called out against the altar in Bethel, and Jeroboam stretched out his hand from ***beside*** the altar, saying, "Seize him!" And his hand which he had stretched out against him dried up, and he was not able to bring it back to himself. And the altar was torn apart, and the ash was poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. And the king answered and said to the man of God, "Entreat, please, the face of the LORD your God, and pray for me, and may my hand come back to me." And the man of God entreated the face of the LORD, and the hand of the king came back to him, and it was as at the first. And the king spoke to the man of God, "Come with me to the house and refresh ***yourself***, and let me give you a gift." And the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half of your house, I will not go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water in this place. For thus He commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water, and you shall not return by the way which you went.'" And he went by another way, and he did not return by the way by which he had come to Bethel.

13:11-25 And a certain old prophet was dwelling in Bethel; and his son came and recounted to him every deed which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, and they recounted them to their father. And their father spoke to them, "Which ***is*** the way ***that*** he went?" And his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled the donkey for him, and he rode on it. And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under the oak; and he said to him, "***Are*** you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I ***am***." And he said to him, "Come with me to the house and eat bread." And he said, "I am not able to return with you and to go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water with you in this place. For a word ***came*** to me by the word of the LORD: 'You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water there; you shall not return to go by the way by which you went.'" And he said to him, "I also ***am*** a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, and let him eat bread and let him drink water.'" He lied to him. And he went back with him, and he ate bread in his house and drank water. And it was, ***as*** they were sitting at the table, and the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back. And he called out to the man of God who had come from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have rebelled against the mouth of the LORD, and you have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, and you went back, and you ate bread and drank water in the place of which He said to you, "Do not eat bread, and do not drink

water," your corpse shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'" And it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, and he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And he went, and a lion met him on the way and killed him; and his corpse was thrown down on the way, and the donkey ***was*** standing beside it, and the lion ***was*** standing beside the corpse. And look, men ***were*** passing by, and they saw the corpse thrown down on the way, and the lion standing beside the corpse; and they came and spoke ***of it*** in the city in which the old prophet was dwelling.

13:26-34 And the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard, and he said, "He ***is*** the man of God who rebelled against the mouth of the LORD; and the LORD has given him to the lion, and it has mauled him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him." And he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled ***it***. And he went and found his corpse thrown down on the way, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the corpse; the lion had not eaten the corpse, and it had not mauled the donkey. And the prophet picked up the corpse of the man of God, and he laid him on the donkey and brought him back; and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his corpse in his own grave, and they mourned over him, "Alas, my brother!" And it was, after he had buried him, and he said to his sons, saying, "At my death you shall bury me in the grave in which the man of God buried; beside his bones lay my bones. For the word which he called out by the word of the LORD against the altar which ***is*** in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which ***are*** in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass." After this thing Jeroboam did not turn back from his evil way, and he again made priests of the high places from the ends of the people; whoever desired, he filled his hand, and he became ***one of the*** priests of the high places. And by this thing ***it*** became the sin of the house of Jeroboam, and to wipe ***it*** out and to destroy ***it*** from the face of the ground.

Chapter 13 Preview

Jeroboam is standing at his new altar in Bethel, ready to burn incense, when a man of God from Judah walks up and cries out against the altar. He names a king who will be born to David's line, Josiah, and says that king will burn the bones of these priests on this very altar. To prove it, the altar splits and its ashes pour out, and the hand Jeroboam stretches out to seize the prophet dries up. The man of God prays, the hand is healed, and he refuses the king's invitation to eat, because the LORD told him not to eat or drink in Bethel and to go home another way.

Then the chapter takes a strange and sobering turn. An old prophet who lives in Bethel rides after him and lies to him, claiming an angel told him to bring him home for a meal. The man of God believes him, eats, and on the way home a lion kills him. The old prophet buries him in his own grave and asks to be buried beside him. This is one of the hard passages of 1 Kings. It teaches that when God has spoken plainly, no one, not even someone who claims to speak for God, has the right to change it. And it ends by telling us that Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way.

Chapter 13 Study

13:1-2 *And look, a man of God came from Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel, and Jeroboam **was** standing at the altar to burn incense. And he called out against the altar by the word of the LORD, and he said, "Altar, altar, thus says the LORD: 'Look, a son is about to be born to the house of David, Josiah **is** his name; and he will sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and bones of man they will burn on you.'"*

"A man of God came from Judah by the word of the LORD to Bethel." Scripture does not give his name. He came at the very moment Jeroboam was "standing at the altar to burn incense," probably at the feast Jeroboam had just invented (12:33).

"He called out against the altar." Not against the king, but against the altar. "Altar, altar, thus says the LORD." Then: "Look, a son is about to be born to the house of David, Josiah is his name; and he will sacrifice on you the priests of the high places who burn incense on you, and bones of man they will burn on you."

This is one of the most remarkable prophecies in the Bible. It names a king about three hundred years before he was born. 2 Kings 23:15-18 tells us that King Josiah, about 622 B.C., tore down the altar at Bethel, took bones from the graves there, and burned them on it "according to the word of the LORD which the man of God proclaimed." Burning human bones on an altar defiled it forever, so it could never be used again.

Some critical scholars think the name Josiah was added after the fact, because they do not believe God tells the future in such detail. I take it as written. The God who knows the end from the beginning (Isaiah 46:10) can name a king centuries ahead, just as He named Cyrus through Isaiah (Isaiah 44:28; 45:1).

13:3-5 *And he gave a sign on that day, saying, "This **is** the sign which the LORD has spoken: look, the altar is about to be torn apart, and the ash which **is** on it will be poured out." And it was, when the king heard the word of the man of God which he called out against the altar in Bethel, and Jeroboam stretched out his hand from **beside** the altar, saying, "Seize him!" And his hand which he had stretched out against him dried up, and he was not able to bring it back to himself. And the altar was torn apart, and the ash was poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD.*

"He gave a sign on that day." A sign was a visible proof given right then, so people could know the far-off prophecy came from God. "Look, the altar is about to be torn apart, and the ash which is on it will be poured out."

Jeroboam reacted the way proud men often do when God's word confronts them. He "stretched out his hand from beside the altar, saying, Seize him!" And at once "his hand which he had stretched out against him dried up, and he was not able to bring it back to himself." The king's arm froze, pointing at the prophet.

"And the altar was torn apart, and the ash was poured out from the altar, according to the sign." God answered the king's command with His own. The altar Jeroboam had made with his own

hands broke in front of him. God was showing Jeroboam, in front of all his people, that this new worship had no power, and that the LORD was still God over Bethel.

13:6 *And the king answered and said to the man of God, "Entreat, please, the face of the LORD your God, and pray for me, and may my hand come back to me." And the man of God entreated the face of the LORD, and the hand of the king came back to him, and it was as at the first.*

Now the king needed the man he had just tried to arrest. "Entreat, please, the face of the LORD your God, and pray for me." Notice he said "your God." Not my God. Jeroboam wanted the healing without the repentance.

"And the man of God entreated the face of the LORD, and the hand of the king came back to him." The man of God did not gloat. He prayed for the king who had tried to seize him, and God healed him. That is mercy. Jesus told us to pray for those who mistreat us (Matthew 5:44). God's kindness was meant to lead Jeroboam to repentance (Romans 2:4). Sadly, verse 33 tells us it did not.

13:7-10 *And the king spoke to the man of God, "Come with me to the house and refresh **yourself**, and let me give you a gift." And the man of God said to the king, "If you give me half of your house, I will not go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water in this place. For thus He commanded me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water, and you shall not return by the way which you went.'" And he went by another way, and he did not return by the way by which he had come to Bethel.*

"Come with me to the house and refresh yourself, and let me give you a gift." Jeroboam changed tactics. If he could not silence the prophet by force, maybe he could win him with friendship. A meal with the king, and a gift, would make it look to the people as if the prophet and the king were at peace.

The man of God refused firmly. "If you give me half of your house, I will not go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water in this place." Why? "For thus He commanded me by the word of the LORD." The command was this: "You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water, and you shall not return by the way which you went."

Why would God give such a command? To eat with someone in that culture was to be in fellowship with them. God was showing that He had no fellowship with Bethel's false worship. The prophet was to come, speak, and leave, sharing nothing with that place. Going home a different way may have kept anyone from finding him, and it was a picture that he was not going back over the ground of that place.

"And he went by another way." So far, so good. He had stood up to a king and turned down a royal gift. It was the next test that he failed.

13:11-14 *And a certain old prophet was dwelling in Bethel; and his son came and recounted to him every deed which the man of God had done that day in Bethel; the words which he had spoken to the king, and they recounted them to their father. And their father spoke to them, "Which **is** the way **that** he went?" And his sons had seen the way which the man of God who came from Judah had gone. And he said to his sons, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled the donkey for him, and he rode on it. And he went after the man of God and found him sitting under the oak; and he said to him, "**Are** you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I **am**."*

"A certain old prophet was dwelling in Bethel." He was a real prophet, as verse 20 shows. But he lived in Bethel, the center of Jeroboam's false worship, and we do not hear that he ever spoke against it. Perhaps he had grown comfortable, or quiet. His sons came home and told him everything the man of God had done and said.

He asked, "Which is the way that he went?" Then, "Saddle the donkey for me." He rode after the man of God and "found him sitting under the oak." That detail matters. The man of God had stopped to rest. He was on his way, but he was no longer hurrying out of the land.

The old prophet asked, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?" And he said, "I am."

13:15-17 *And he said to him, "Come with me to the house and eat bread." And he said, "I am not able to return with you and to go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water with you in this place. For a word **came** to me by the word of the LORD: 'You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water there; you shall not return to go by the way by which you went.'"*

"Come with me to the house and eat bread." It was the same invitation the king had given.

The man of God gave the same answer at first. "I am not able to return with you and to go in with you, and I will not eat bread, and I will not drink water with you in this place." He repeated God's command word for word: "You shall not eat bread, and you shall not drink water there; you shall not return to go by the way by which you went." He knew exactly what God had said. That is what makes the next verses so serious.

13:18-19 *And he said to him, "I also **am** a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD, saying, 'Bring him back with you to your house, and let him eat bread and let him drink water.'" He lied to him. And he went back with him, and he ate bread in his house and drank water.*

"I also am a prophet like you, and an angel spoke to me by the word of the LORD." He said the angel told him, "Bring him back with you to your house, and let him eat bread and let him drink water." Then the writer tells us plainly: "He lied to him."

Why did the old prophet lie? Scripture does not tell us. Perhaps he wanted the honor of hosting the famous man of God. Perhaps he was jealous, or wanted to prove that the stern word from Judah could be bent. We do not know. What we know is that he used God's name and an angel's authority to say something God had not said.

"And he went back with him, and he ate bread in his house and drank water." This is the man of God's failure. God had spoken to him directly and plainly. Now another man claimed a newer

word that undid the first. Instead of holding to what God had told him, or asking God about it himself, he took the easier word. He was tired and hungry, and the invitation came from a fellow prophet. It sounded spiritual.

This is a lesson every believer needs. Paul warned the Galatians, "even if we, or an angel out of heaven, should preach the gospel to you contrary to what we preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:8). John says to "test the spirits" (1 John 4:1). God does not contradict Himself. When someone claims a word from God that goes against what God has already plainly said in His Word, we do not have to wonder which to follow.

13:20-22 *And it was, **as** they were sitting at the table, and the word of the LORD came to the prophet who had brought him back. And he called out to the man of God who had come from Judah, saying, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have rebelled against the mouth of the LORD, and you have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you, and you went back, and you ate bread and drank water in the place of which He said to you, "Do not eat bread, and do not drink water," your corpse shall not come to the grave of your fathers.'"*

"As they were sitting at the table," the word of the LORD came, not to the man of God, but "to the prophet who had brought him back." The liar became the messenger of judgment. That is part of what makes this story so hard. God spoke true words through a man who had just spoken false ones.

"Because you have rebelled against the mouth of the LORD, and you have not kept the commandment which the LORD your God commanded you," and "you went back, and you ate bread and drank water in the place of which He said to you," therefore "your corpse shall not come to the grave of your fathers." To an Israelite, not being buried with your family was a sign of shame and judgment.

Notice the charge. Not that he had been fooled, but "you have rebelled against the mouth of the LORD." Being deceived did not excuse him, because he had God's plain word and set it aside.

13:23-25 *And it was, after he had eaten bread and after he had drunk, and he saddled the donkey for him, for the prophet whom he had brought back. And he went, and a lion met him on the way and killed him; and his corpse was thrown down on the way, and the donkey **was** standing beside it, and the lion **was** standing beside the corpse. And look, men **were** passing by, and they saw the corpse thrown down on the way, and the lion standing beside the corpse; and they came and spoke **of it** in the city in which the old prophet was dwelling.*

After the meal, the old prophet saddled the donkey for him, and he set out. "A lion met him on the way and killed him." This is where the story is hardest to read.

Then comes something that is clearly not natural. "His corpse was thrown down on the way, and the donkey was standing beside it, and the lion was standing beside the corpse." A hungry lion does not kill a man and then stand guard beside him and his donkey without eating either. This was not an accident. It was a sign from God, and everyone passing by could see it. Men saw it and "spoke of it in the city in which the old prophet was dwelling."

Why was this man judged so severely, while the liar seems to go on living? I want to be honest: this troubles many readers, and we should feel the weight of it. Here is what I believe the text teaches. First, the man of God was not an ordinary believer. He was God's messenger, sent to announce judgment on Bethel for disobeying God's word. If he himself disobeyed God's word in Bethel, his message would lose its force. His death made the message louder: God means what He says, even for His own prophets. Second, more is required of those who are given more (Luke 12:48; James 3:1). Third, the liar was not let off. He must answer to God, and Scripture does not tell us his end except that he grieved and asked to be buried beside the man he had deceived. God judges every person rightly, even when we are not told how (Genesis 18:25).

I do not know the eternal state of the man of God. His death was a judgment on his disobedience as a prophet, not a statement that he was lost. The old prophet himself mourned him as "my brother" (13:30). God may discipline His servants severely in this life and still welcome them home.

13:26 *And the prophet who had brought him back from the way heard, and he said, "He **is** the man of God who rebelled against the mouth of the LORD; and the LORD has given him to the lion, and it has mauled him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him."*

The old prophet heard and understood at once. "He is the man of God who rebelled against the mouth of the LORD; and the LORD has given him to the lion, and it has mauled him and killed him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke to him."

He did not admit that he had lied to him. He blamed only the man of God. That is honest about God's word, but strangely silent about his own part. Sin often finds it easy to name someone else's failure.

13:27-30 *And he spoke to his sons, saying, "Saddle the donkey for me." And they saddled **it**. And he went and found his corpse thrown down on the way, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the corpse; the lion had not eaten the corpse, and it had not mauled the donkey. And the prophet picked up the corpse of the man of God, and he laid him on the donkey and brought him back; and he came to the city of the old prophet to mourn and to bury him. And he laid his corpse in his own grave, and they mourned over him, "Alas, my brother!"*

He rode out and "found his corpse thrown down on the way, and the donkey and the lion standing beside the corpse; the lion had not eaten the corpse, and it had not mauled the donkey." The writer says it twice so we do not miss it. God was in control of the lion. Judgment went exactly as far as God allowed, and not one step further.

The old prophet brought the body back and "laid his corpse in his own grave." The man of God did not lie in the grave of his fathers in Judah, just as God had said. He lay in a stranger's tomb in Bethel. "And they mourned over him, Alas, my brother!" The grief seems real. Perhaps the old prophet finally saw the weight of what he had done.

13:31-32 *And it was, after he had buried him, and he said to his sons, saying, "At my death you shall bury me in the grave in which the man of God **is** buried; beside his bones lay my bones. For the word which he called out by the word of the LORD against the altar which **is** in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which **are** in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."*

"At my death you shall bury me in the grave in which the man of God is buried; beside his bones lay my bones." Why? "For the word which he called out by the word of the LORD against the altar which is in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass."

The old prophet now believed the message from Judah completely. He knew one day a king would come and dig up bones in Bethel and burn them. He wanted his bones to lie with the bones of the true prophet, so they would be spared.

And they were. Three hundred years later, Josiah saw the grave and asked what it was. The men of the city told him it was "the grave of the man of God who came from Judah." Josiah said, "Let him rest; let no man disturb his bones." And they spared his bones "with the bones of the prophet who came from Samaria" (2 Kings 23:17-18). God's word came true down to the last detail.

Notice that the old prophet speaks of "the cities of Samaria." The city of Samaria was not built until Omri (16:24). Either the old prophet spoke by God's word ahead of time, or the writer of Kings used the name his readers knew for the region. Both are possible, and neither takes away from the truth of the account.

13:33-34 *After this thing Jeroboam did not turn back from his evil way, and he again made priests of the high places from the ends of the people; whoever desired, he filled his hand, and he became **one of the** priests of the high places. And by this thing **it** became the sin of the house of Jeroboam, and to wipe **it** out and to destroy **it** from the face of the ground.*

"After this thing Jeroboam did not turn back from his evil way." He had seen an altar split, his own hand wither and be healed, and a prophet die by the hand of God. And still he did not repent. "He again made priests of the high places from the ends of the people; whoever desired, he filled his hand." To "fill the hand" was the Hebrew way of saying to ordain someone as a priest. Anyone who wanted the job could have it.

"And by this thing it became the sin of the house of Jeroboam, and to wipe it out and to destroy it from the face of the ground." The calves did not save Jeroboam's dynasty. They destroyed it. The very thing he did to protect his throne became the reason his family lost it. Chapter 14 and 15:29 show how.

What does this chapter teach us? God's word does not change because someone dressed in religious authority says it has. Hold on to what God has said. And when God warns us, as He warned Jeroboam, the right response is not to ask for the symptoms to go away, but to turn from our sin.

Chapter 13 Summary

A man of God came from Judah to Bethel by the word of the LORD while Jeroboam stood at his altar. He cried out against the altar, foretelling that a son of David named Josiah would burn the bones of its priests on it, and he gave a sign: the altar split and its ashes poured out. Jeroboam's hand, stretched out to seize him, withered, and was healed when the man of God prayed. The man of God refused the king's offer of food and a gift, because God had commanded him not to eat or drink in Bethel or return the way he came. An old prophet of Bethel rode after him and lied, claiming an angel told him to bring him home to eat. The man of God went back and ate. At the table the word of the LORD came through the old prophet that because he had rebelled against the LORD's command, he would not be buried with his fathers. On the way a lion killed him and stood beside the body with the donkey, eating neither. The old prophet buried him in his own grave, mourned him as his brother, and told his sons to bury him beside the man of God, because the word against Bethel would surely come to pass. Even so, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil way, and his sin brought destruction on his house.

Chapter 13 Study Questions

1. What did the man of God from Judah prophesy against the altar at Bethel, and who did he name? (13:2)

2. What sign confirmed the prophecy, and what happened to Jeroboam's hand? (13:3-5)

3. How did the man of God respond when the king asked him to pray? (13:6)

4. What three things had God commanded the man of God, and why do you think He gave those commands? (13:9)

5. What did the old prophet claim, and what does the text say about his claim? (13:18)

6. What was unusual about the lion, and what did it show? (13:24, 28)

7. How was the prophecy against Bethel fulfilled, and what happened to the bones of the two prophets? (13:2, 31-32; 2 Kings 23:15-18)

8. Why did Jeroboam not turn from his way, even after all he had seen? (13:33-34)

9. Have you ever been tempted to set aside something God has clearly said because someone who seemed spiritual told you otherwise? How can you test what you hear? (Galatians 1:8; 1 John 4:1)

10. Jeroboam wanted his hand healed but did not want to change. Are there areas where you want God to remove the consequences of sin but not the sin itself?

Chapter 14: Ahijah's Word to Jeroboam and Rehoboam's Reign

Scripture

14:1-18 At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise, please, and disguise yourself, and they will not know that you ***are*** the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Look, Ahijah the prophet ***is*** there; he spoke concerning me to ***be*** king over this people. And take in your hand ten ***loaves of*** bread and cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will happen to the lad." And the wife of Jeroboam did so; and she arose and went to Shiloh and came ***to*** the house of Ahijah. And Ahijah was not able to see, for his eyes were fixed because of his old age. And the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Look, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to seek a word from you concerning her son, for he ***is*** sick. Thus and thus you shall speak to her. And it will be, when she comes in, and she ***will be*** making herself unknown." And it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in at the entrance, and he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why ***is*** this ***that*** you ***are*** making yourself unknown? And I ***am*** sent to you ***with*** hard ***news***. Go, say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Because I raised you up from the midst of the people, and I made you leader over My people Israel, and I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who walked after Me with all his heart, to do only what ***was*** right in My eyes, and you have done evil, acting more than all who were before you, and you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and Me you have cast behind your back, therefore, look, I am about to bring calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and I will cut off from Jeroboam ***every*** one who urinates against a wall, shut up and set free in Israel; and I will sweep away after the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is finished. The one who dies of Jeroboam in the city the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken."' And you, arise, go to your house; when your feet come into the city, and the lad will die. And all Israel will mourn for him and bury him; for this one alone of Jeroboam will come into a grave, because something good toward the LORD, the God of Israel, was found in him in the house of Jeroboam. And the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel, who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day; and what? Even now! And the LORD will strike Israel, as the reed sways in the water, and He will pluck up Israel from this good ground which He gave to their fathers, and He will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and which he caused Israel to sin." And the wife of Jeroboam arose and went and came to Tirzah; she was coming to the threshold of the house, and the lad died. And they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the prophet.

14:19-31 And the rest of the matters of Jeroboam, how he waged war and how he reigned, look, they ***are*** written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel. And the days which Jeroboam reigned ***were*** twenty-two years; and he lay down with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place. And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam ***was*** forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which

the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And the name of his mother ***was*** Naamah the Ammonite. And Judah did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, by their sins which they sinned. And they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every luxuriant tree. And also ***there*** was a male cult prostitute in the land; they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed before the sons of Israel. And it was, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king; and he took everything; and he took all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and he entrusted ***them*** to the hand of the commanders of the runners who guarded the entrance of the house of the king. And it was, as often as the king went ***to*** the house of the LORD, the runners carried them and brought them back to the chamber of the runners. And the rest of the matters of Rehoboam and all that he did, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And war was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days. And Rehoboam lay down with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and the name of his mother ***was*** Naamah the Ammonite. And Abijam his son reigned in his place.

Chapter 14 Preview

Jeroboam's son Abijah falls sick, and Jeroboam sends his wife in disguise to the old prophet Ahijah at Shiloh, the same prophet who first told him he would be king. Ahijah is now blind, but the LORD tells him who is coming. Before she can say a word, he calls her by name and gives her hard news. Because Jeroboam made other gods and cast the LORD behind his back, God will sweep away his whole house. The boy will die as soon as she steps into her city, and he alone of Jeroboam's family will be buried with honor, because something good toward the LORD was found in him. Ahijah also warns that Israel itself will one day be uprooted and scattered beyond the Euphrates.

The second half of the chapter turns south to Rehoboam's seventeen years in Judah. Judah does no better than Israel. They build high places, pillars and Asherah poles everywhere, and the sinful practices of the Canaanites come into the land. In Rehoboam's fifth year, Shishak king of Egypt comes up and carries off the treasures of the temple and palace, including Solomon's gold shields. Rehoboam replaces them with bronze. It is a picture of what happens when God's people trade His glory for less. 2 Chronicles 12 tells of Rehoboam's reign at more length.

Chapter 14 Study

14:1-3 *At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick. And Jeroboam said to his wife, "Arise, please, and disguise yourself, and they will not know that you **are** the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh. Look, Ahijah the prophet **is** there; he spoke concerning me to **be** king over this people. And take in your hand ten **loaves of** bread and cakes and a jar of honey, and go to him; he will tell you what will happen to the lad."*

"At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam became sick." His name means my father is the LORD, a name that says more about God than Jeroboam's calves did.

Jeroboam told his wife, "Arise, please, and disguise yourself, and they will not know that you are the wife of Jeroboam, and go to Shiloh." Why the disguise? He did not want his people to know he was asking a true prophet of the LORD for help instead of the priests at his own shrines. And perhaps he hoped that if the prophet did not know who she was, he would give a kinder word.

Notice what Jeroboam remembered: "he spoke concerning me to be king over this people." When trouble came, he knew where the true word of God could be found. He did not go to Bethel. His calves could not answer him.

She was to take "ten loaves of bread and cakes and a jar of honey," a plain gift, the kind an ordinary farmer's wife might bring, to fit the disguise.

14:4-6 *And the wife of Jeroboam did so; and she arose and went to Shiloh and came **to** the house of Ahijah. And Ahijah was not able to see, for his eyes were fixed because of his old age. And the LORD had said to Ahijah, "Look, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to seek a word from you concerning her son, for he **is** sick. Thus and thus you shall speak to her. And it will be, when she comes in, and she **will be** making herself unknown." And it was, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet coming in at the entrance, and he said, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why **is** this **that** you **are** making yourself unknown? And I **am** sent to you **with** hard **news**.*

Ahijah "was not able to see, for his eyes were fixed because of his old age." Jeroboam had tried to hide his wife from a man who could not see anyway. But the LORD sees everything. "The LORD had said" to the prophet, "Look, the wife of Jeroboam is coming to seek a word from you concerning her son, for he is sick." God even told him she would be "making herself unknown."

So when the blind prophet "heard the sound of her feet coming in at the entrance," he spoke before she did: "Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why is this that you are making yourself unknown?" Then, "I am sent to you with hard news."

No disguise works with God. "And there is no creature hidden before Him," Hebrews says, "but all things are naked and laid bare to the eyes of Him" (Hebrews 4:13). Jeroboam had tried to hide his true worship from his people, and his wife from the prophet. He could hide neither from God.

14:7-9 *Go, say to Jeroboam, 'Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: "Because I raised you up from the midst of the people, and I made you leader over My people Israel, and I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you, and you have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who walked after Me with all his heart, to do only what **was** right in My eyes, and you have done evil, acting more than all who were before you, and you have gone and made for yourself other gods and molten images to provoke Me to anger, and Me you have cast behind your back,*

The message came straight from "the LORD, the God of Israel." God reminded Jeroboam of His grace first: "I raised you up from the midst of the people, and I made you leader over My people Israel, and I tore the kingdom away from the house of David and gave it to you." Jeroboam had been a son of a widow and a labor boss (11:26-28). Everything he had, God gave him.

Then came the charge. "You have not been like My servant David, who kept My commandments and who walked after Me with all his heart." David sinned, and badly. But he never turned to idols, and he always came back to God with a broken heart. Jeroboam had "done evil, acting more than all who were before you," and he had "made for yourself other gods and molten images." Whatever Jeroboam meant by his calves (12:28), God calls them "other gods."

"And Me you have cast behind your back." That is one of the saddest lines in Kings. God was not just ignored. He was thrown over the shoulder like something worthless. How do we treat the God who gave us everything?

14:10-11 *therefore, look, I am about to bring calamity on the house of Jeroboam, and I will cut off from Jeroboam **every** one who urinates against a wall, shut up and set free in Israel; and I will sweep away after the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is finished. The one who dies of Jeroboam in the city the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat; for the LORD has spoken."'*

"Therefore, look, I am about to bring calamity on the house of Jeroboam." God would cut off every male of Jeroboam's family. The Hebrew phrase the SLB gives word for word is a blunt way of saying every male, and "shut up and set free" seems to mean everyone, whether slave or free, or whether kept at home or out in public. "I will sweep away after the house of Jeroboam, as one sweeps away dung until it is finished." God used strong words because this was strong sin.

"The one who dies of Jeroboam in the city the dogs will eat, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat." To lie unburied was the greatest shame in the ancient world. This judgment came true when Baasha wiped out the whole family (15:29). The same words will be spoken over Baasha's house (16:4) and Ahab's (21:24). The kings of Israel kept walking in Jeroboam's sin, and kept reaping Jeroboam's end.

14:12-13 *And you, arise, go to your house; when your feet come into the city, and the lad will die. And all Israel will mourn for him and bury him; for this one alone of Jeroboam will come into a grave, because something good toward the LORD, the God of Israel, was found in him in the house of Jeroboam.*

Then the hardest word for a mother. "When your feet come into the city, and the lad will die."

But there is grace even here. "All Israel will mourn for him and bury him; for this one alone of Jeroboam will come into a grave, because something good toward the LORD, the God of Israel, was found in him in the house of Jeroboam." In a family that had turned from God, one boy had a heart toward the LORD. Scripture does not tell us what that good thing was. God saw it, and God honored it.

Why would God take the one good son? I believe this was mercy to him. Isaiah says that the righteous one is taken away from the evil to come (Isaiah 57:1-2). Abijah would be spared the terrible end of the rest of his family. He would be mourned and buried with honor. Death is not the worst thing that can happen to one whose heart is toward God. To be with Him is far better (Philippians 1:23).

This also shows us that God sees faith in the darkest homes. A child can love the Lord even when his parents do not. If you are the only believer in your family, God sees you.

14:14-16 *And the LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel, who will cut off the house of Jeroboam this day; and what? Even now! And the LORD will strike Israel, as the reed sways in the water, and He will pluck up Israel from this good ground which He gave to their fathers, and He will scatter them beyond the River, because they have made their Asherim, provoking the LORD to anger. And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and which he caused Israel to sin."*

"The LORD will raise up for Himself a king over Israel, who will cut off the house of Jeroboam." That was Baasha (15:27-29). "This day; and what? Even now!" The judgment was already on its way.

Then Ahijah looked further ahead, to the whole nation. "The LORD will strike Israel, as the reed sways in the water," a picture of a nation unstable, bending with every wind. "He will pluck up Israel from this good ground which He gave to their fathers, and He will scatter them beyond the River." The River here means the Euphrates. This came true about two hundred years later, when Assyria took Samaria in 722 B.C. and carried the people away to Assyria and beyond (2 Kings 17:6, 23).

Why? "Because they have made their Asherim." An Asherah was a wooden pole or carved image for the Canaanite goddess Asherah, a fertility goddess; Asherim is the plural. "And He will give up Israel on account of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and which he caused Israel to sin." A leader's sin rarely stays with him. Jeroboam made a nation sin.

14:17-18 *And the wife of Jeroboam arose and went and came to Tirzah; she was coming to the threshold of the house, and the lad died. And they buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the prophet.*

"The wife of Jeroboam arose and went and came to Tirzah." Tirzah had become Jeroboam's royal city, a few miles northeast of Shechem. "She was coming to the threshold of the house, and the lad died." Just as God said, at the very moment.

"They buried him, and all Israel mourned for him, according to the word of the LORD." God's word about the boy came true in every detail. That should give us confidence that God's word about the rest of the family, and the nation, would come true too.

14:19-20 *And the rest of the matters of Jeroboam, how he waged war and how he reigned, look, they **are** written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel. And the days which Jeroboam reigned **were** twenty-two years; and he lay down with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his place.*

"The rest of the matters of Jeroboam, how he waged war and how he reigned, look, they are written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel." This was an official court record of Israel's kings, now lost. It is not the same as our books of 1 and 2 Chronicles.

"The days which Jeroboam reigned were twenty-two years," about 930 to 909 B.C. 2 Chronicles 13:20 adds that the LORD struck him and he died. "Nadab his son reigned in his place." Nadab would last two years (15:25-28).

14:21 *And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam **was** forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there. And the name of his mother **was** Naamah the Ammonite.*

Now the writer goes back to Judah. "Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem," about 930 to 913 B.C.

Notice how the writer describes Jerusalem: "the city which the LORD had chosen from all the tribes of Israel to put His name there." Rehoboam had the temple, the priests, and the true worship of God right in his capital. He had every advantage Jeroboam lacked.

"The name of his mother was Naamah the Ammonite." The writer mentions it twice in this chapter (14:31). She was one of Solomon's foreign wives, from the people who worshiped Milcom (11:1, 5). A mother's influence goes deep.

14:22-24 *And Judah did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, by their sins which they sinned. And they also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every luxuriant tree. And also **there** was a male cult prostitute in the land; they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed before the sons of Israel.*

"Judah did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done." God's jealousy is not petty envy. It is the right and holy love of a husband who will not share his wife with another (Exodus 34:14).

"They also built for themselves high places and pillars and Asherim on every high hill and under every luxuriant tree." The pillars were standing stones set up in Canaanite worship, often as symbols of a god. These shrines were everywhere.

"And also there was a male cult prostitute in the land." Canaanite religion included sexual rites at its shrines, thought to bring fertility to the land. God had strictly forbidden this (Deuteronomy 23:17). "They did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD had dispossessed before the sons of Israel." God had driven those nations out of the land for these very sins (Leviticus 18:24-28). Now His own people were copying them.

How did Judah fall so far, so fast, with the temple standing right there? A building cannot keep a heart. Solomon had built the temple and then built shrines to idols beside it. His son's generation simply followed the example.

14:25-28 *And it was, in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. And he took the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king; and he took everything; and he took all the shields of gold which Solomon had made. And King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze, and he entrusted **them** to the hand of the commanders of the runners who guarded the entrance of the house of the king. And it was, as often as the king went **to** the house of the LORD, the runners carried them and brought them back to the chamber of the runners.*

"In the fifth year of King Rehoboam, Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem." That was about 925 B.C. Shishak is known from Egyptian records as Shoshenq I. A list carved on a temple wall in Egypt names many towns he claimed to have taken in Judah and Israel. 2 Chronicles 12:2-12 adds that this came because Rehoboam and the people had forsaken the LORD, that the prophet Shemaiah warned them, and that when they humbled themselves God did not let Shishak destroy them.

"He took the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king; and he took everything; and he took all the shields of gold which Solomon had made." Only a few decades after the queen of Sheba saw Solomon's glory, the gold was gone. Solomon's five hundred gold shields (10:16-17) went to Egypt.

"King Rehoboam made in their place shields of bronze." He kept up appearances. Every time the king went to the house of the LORD, the guards still carried shields before him, and then locked them away again. From far off, bronze shines a little like gold. But it is not gold.

That is a sad picture of a people who have lost God's glory but keep the show going. Churches and believers can do the same. The forms are still there, the procession still goes on, but the real thing is gone. God is not fooled by bronze. He calls us back to the real thing, a heart truly given to Him (Revelation 2:4-5).

14:29-31 *And the rest of the matters of Rehoboam and all that he did, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And war was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days. And Rehoboam lay down with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David; and the name of his mother **was** Naamah the Ammonite. And Abijam his son reigned in his place.*

"War was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days." Shemaiah had stopped a full war (12:24), but there was ongoing fighting along the border.

"Rehoboam lay down with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David." To lie down with one's fathers is the Bible's gentle way of saying a king died. "And the name of his mother was Naamah the Ammonite." The writer says it again, almost like a quiet explanation. "And Abijam his son reigned in his place."

Two kings, two kingdoms, and the same sad end of the chapter. One made new gods, and the other let the old idols in. Neither walked with the LORD as David did. But God kept His word in both kingdoms, His warnings to Jeroboam and His promise of a lamp for David in Jerusalem.

Chapter 14 Summary

When Jeroboam's son Abijah fell sick, Jeroboam sent his wife in disguise to the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh. Ahijah was blind, but the LORD told him who was coming, and he named her as soon as she entered. He gave her God's word: because Jeroboam had not been like David, but made other gods and cast the LORD behind his back, God would cut off his whole house, and its dead would be left for dogs and birds. The boy would die when she reached the city, and he alone would be buried and mourned, because something good toward the LORD was found in him. God would raise up a king to destroy Jeroboam's house, and one day He would uproot Israel and scatter them beyond the Euphrates for their Asherah poles and for Jeroboam's sins. The boy died as she reached her door in Tirzah. Jeroboam reigned twenty-two years and Nadab followed him. In Judah, Rehoboam reigned seventeen years, and his mother was Naamah the Ammonite. Judah did evil, building high places, pillars and Asherah poles everywhere, and there were male cult prostitutes in the land. In Rehoboam's fifth year Shishak of Egypt took the treasures of the temple and palace and Solomon's gold shields, and Rehoboam replaced them with bronze. There was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days, and Abijam reigned after Rehoboam.

Chapter 14 Study Questions

1. Why did Jeroboam send his wife in disguise, and why to Ahijah? (14:2)

2. How did Ahijah know who she was? (14:5-6)

3. What did God remind Jeroboam that He had done for him? (14:7-8)

4. What does it mean that Jeroboam had cast God "behind your back"? (14:9)

5. Why was Abijah the only one of Jeroboam's house to be buried with honor? (14:13)

6. What did Ahijah prophesy about the future of Israel, and when did it come true? (14:15-16; 2 Kings 17:6)

7. What sins did Judah commit under Rehoboam? (14:22-24)

8. What did Shishak take, and what did Rehoboam put in place of the gold shields? (14:25-27)

9. Abijah had "something good toward the LORD" in a family that had turned from God. How does that encourage you if you are the only believer in your home or workplace?

10. Rehoboam replaced gold with bronze and kept the procession going. Are there places in your life where you are keeping up the look of faith without the heart of it? (Revelation 2:4-5)

Chapter 15: Abijam, Asa, Nadab, and Baasha

Scripture

15:1-8 And in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. Three years he reigned in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother ***was*** Maacah the daughter of Absalom. And he walked in all the sins of his father which he had done before him; and his heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father. But for the sake of David the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by raising up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem, because David had done what ***was*** right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from all that He had commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. And war was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. And the rest of the matters of Abijam and all that he did, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And war was between Abijam and Jeroboam. And Abijam lay down with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his place.

15:9-24 And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa king of Judah became king. And forty-one years he reigned in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother ***was*** Maacah the daughter of Absalom. And Asa did what ***was*** right in the eyes of the LORD, like David his father. And he made the male cult prostitutes pass away from the land, and he removed all the idols which his fathers had made. And also Maacah his mother, he removed her from ***being*** queen mother, because she had made a horrid image for the Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned ***it*** in the wadi Kidron. And the high places were not removed; only the heart of Asa was complete with the LORD all his days. And he brought the holy things of his father and the holy things of the house of the LORD: silver and gold and utensils. And war was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and he built the Ramah, so as not to permit ***anyone*** going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah. And Asa took all the silver and the gold which remained in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king, and he gave them into the hand of his servants; and King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, "***There is*** a covenant between me and you, between my father and your father. Look, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, and let him go up from me." And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and he sent the commanders of the armies which he had against the cities of Israel; and he struck Ijon and Dan and Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. And it was, when Baasha heard, and he ceased from building the Ramah, and he stayed in Tirzah. And King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none ***was*** exempt; and they carried away the stones of the Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had built; and King Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and the Mizpah. And the rest of all the matters of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? Only in the time of his old age he was sick in his feet. And Asa lay down with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.

15:25-34 And Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of his father and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin. And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which ***belonged*** to the Philistines; and Nadab and all Israel ***were*** laying siege to Gibbethon. And Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned in his place. And it was, when he became king, he struck down all the house of Jeroboam; he did not leave to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and with which he caused Israel to sin, by his provocation with which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger. And the rest of the matters of Nadab and all that he did, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And war was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty-four years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin.

Chapter 15 Preview

This chapter moves quickly through four kings, two in Judah and two in Israel. From here on, the writer of Kings goes back and forth between the two kingdoms, dating each king by the reign of the king next door. Each one gets the same kind of summary: when he began, how long he reigned, who his mother was (for Judah's kings), and the verdict that matters most, whether he did right or evil in the eyes of the LORD.

In Judah, Abijam reigns three years and walks in his father's sins, yet God keeps a lamp burning in Jerusalem for David's sake. Then comes Asa, the first good king of Judah since the split. He clears out idols and cult prostitutes and even removes his own grandmother from her place as queen mother because of her Asherah image. But when Baasha of Israel builds a fort to choke off Judah, Asa pays the king of Syria with temple silver to attack Israel instead of trusting the LORD. In Israel, Jeroboam's son Nadab reigns two years before Baasha kills him and wipes out Jeroboam's whole family, just as Ahijah said. Baasha then walks in the same sin. The parallel accounts are in 2 Chronicles 13-16.

Chapter 15 Study

15:1-2 *And in the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah. Three years he reigned in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother* ***was*** *Maacah the daughter of Absalom.*

"In the eighteenth year of King Jeroboam the son of Nebat, Abijam became king over Judah." He reigned "three years," about 913 to 910 B.C. 2 Chronicles 13 calls him Abijah and tells of a battle where he spoke to Jeroboam's army about the LORD and won.

"The name of his mother was Maacah the daughter of Absalom." In the Bible, "daughter" can also mean granddaughter or descendant. 2 Chronicles 13:2 names her father as Uriel of Gibeah, and it gives her name as Micaiah, which many take as another form of Maacah. Many think Maacah was Absalom's granddaughter through his daughter Tamar (2 Samuel 14:27), who married Uriel. Verse 10 will name Maacah again as Asa's "mother," meaning his grandmother, who kept the title of queen mother.

15:3-5 *And he walked in all the sins of his father which he had done before him; and his heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father. But for the sake of David the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by raising up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem, because David had done what **was** right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from all that He had commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite.*

"He walked in all the sins of his father which he had done before him; and his heart was not complete with the LORD his God, like the heart of David his father." These are the same words used of Solomon (11:4). A divided heart passed from father to son to grandson.

Yet "for the sake of David the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by raising up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem." God had promised David a lamp, a son on his throne (11:36). Abijam did not deserve it. God kept it anyway because He keeps His word.

Why? "Because David had done what was right in the eyes of the LORD, and had not turned aside from all that He had commanded him all the days of his life, except in the matter of Uriah the Hittite." That one exception was David's adultery with Bathsheba and his murder of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11). Scripture does not hide it. But David repented, and God forgave him (2 Samuel 12:13; Psalm 51), and the rest of his life was marked by a heart that sought God.

This is grace in action. Our standing with God does not rest on our record. It rests on His covenant and on the One He has chosen. For David's line, that was David. For us, it is David's greater Son, Jesus.

15:6-8 *And war was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. And the rest of the matters of Abijam and all that he did, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And war was between Abijam and Jeroboam. And Abijam lay down with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his place.*

"War was between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life." The writer repeats the line from 14:30, likely to say the fighting went on under Abijam too. Verse 7 says it plainly: "And war was between Abijam and Jeroboam."

"Abijam lay down with his fathers, and they buried him in the city of David; and Asa his son reigned in his place." Three short years, and a life that left the lamp burning but did little to brighten it.

15:9-10 *And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa king of Judah became king. And forty-one years he reigned in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother **was** Maacah the daughter of Absalom.*

"In the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel, Asa king of Judah became king." He reigned "forty-one years," about 910 to 869 B.C. He saw seven kings of Israel come and go: Jeroboam, Nadab, Baasha, Elah, Zimri, Omri and Ahab. Kings in Israel rose and fell in a few years. In Judah, David's line held steady.

15:11-13 *And Asa did what **was** right in the eyes of the LORD, like David his father. And he made the male cult prostitutes pass away from the land, and he removed all the idols which his fathers had made. And also Maacah his mother, he removed her from **being** queen mother, because she had made a horrid image for the Asherah; and Asa cut down her horrid image and burned **it** in the wadi Kidron.*

"Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD, like David his father." What a change. After two generations of drift, here was a king who turned back.

"He made the male cult prostitutes pass away from the land, and he removed all the idols which his fathers had made." Asa cleared out what Rehoboam had allowed (14:24) and what Abijam had kept.

Then he did something that took real courage. "Also Maacah his mother, he removed her from being queen mother, because she had made a horrid image for the Asherah." The queen mother had real power and honor in Judah's court. Asa took it from her. "Asa cut down her horrid image and burned it in the wadi Kidron," the valley just east of Jerusalem.

That cannot have been easy. It is one thing to tear down a stranger's idol. It is another to confront your own family. Jesus said that whoever loves father or mother more than Him is not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:37). Asa loved the LORD more than his grandmother's approval. Sometimes faithfulness costs us at home.

15:14-15 *And the high places were not removed; only the heart of Asa was complete with the LORD all his days. And he brought the holy things of his father and the holy things of the house of the LORD: silver and gold and utensils.*

"And the high places were not removed." Asa did not finish the job. The high places here were probably places where people worshiped the LORD, but in the wrong place and the wrong way, rather than outright idol shrines. They would linger for two hundred years until Hezekiah and Josiah removed them (2 Kings 18:4; 23:8).

"Only the heart of Asa was complete with the LORD all his days." Even with his gaps, God judged Asa's heart as wholly His. That is encouraging. God does not demand that we be flawless before He calls our heart true. Asa's obedience was not perfect, but his heart was turned toward God.

"He brought the holy things of his father and the holy things of the house of the LORD: silver and gold and utensils." Asa restored the temple treasuries that Shishak had emptied (14:26). Ironically, he would soon give them away again.

15:16-17 *And war was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. And Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and he built the Ramah, so as not to permit **anyone** going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah.*

"War was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days." Baasha "came up against Judah, and he built the Ramah." Ramah was a town about five miles north of Jerusalem on the main road. Baasha fortified it "so as not to permit anyone going out or coming in to Asa king of Judah." He was choking Judah's main road to the north, and probably trying to stop people from the north moving south to worship in Jerusalem (2 Chronicles 15:9). 2 Chronicles 16:1 dates this to Asa's thirty-sixth year, but Baasha had died by Asa's twenty-sixth year (16:8), so many think Chronicles counts from the division of the kingdom.

15:18-19 *And Asa took all the silver and the gold which remained in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king, and he gave them into the hand of his servants; and King Asa sent them to Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus, saying, "**There is** a covenant between me and you, between my father and your father. Look, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel, and let him go up from me."*

What would Asa do? He "took all the silver and the gold which remained in the treasuries of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the house of the king," and sent them to "Ben-hadad the son of Tabrimmon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, who dwelt in Damascus."

He asked Ben-hadad to break his treaty with Israel. "There is a covenant between me and you, between my father and your father. Look, I have sent you a gift of silver and gold. Go, break your covenant with Baasha king of Israel."

It worked, at least on the surface. But 2 Chronicles 16:7-9 tells us that God sent the seer Hanani to rebuke Asa: because you relied on the king of Syria and not on the LORD your God, you have acted foolishly, and from now on you will have wars. Years before, Asa had trusted God against a huge army from Cush, and God gave him victory (2 Chronicles 14:9-12). Now he trusted gold and a pagan king.

Isn't it strange how a believer can trust God in one great crisis and then reach for a worldly solution in the next? Asa used God's money to buy what God would have given for free. What do we reach for first when pressure comes?

15:20-22 *And Ben-hadad listened to King Asa, and he sent the commanders of the armies which he had against the cities of Israel; and he struck Ijon and Dan and Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. And it was, when Baasha heard, and he ceased from building the Ramah, and he stayed in Tirzah. And King Asa made a proclamation to all Judah, none **was** exempt; and they carried away the stones of the Ramah and its timber with which Baasha had built; and King Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin and the Mizpah.*

"Ben-hadad listened to King Asa," and his armies struck "Ijon and Dan and Abel-beth-maacah and all Chinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali." These were towns in the far north of Israel, around the Sea of Galilee, which was then called Chinnereth. Dan, where one of Jeroboam's calves stood, was among them.

Baasha "ceased from building the Ramah, and he stayed in Tirzah." Then Asa called up all Judah, "none was exempt," and they carried off the stones and timber Baasha had used. With them Asa built "Geba of Benjamin and the Mizpah," two forts that pushed his own border a little north. Jeremiah 41:9 mentions a cistern Asa dug at Mizpah for this conflict.

15:23-24 *And the rest of all the matters of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? Only in the time of his old age he was sick in his feet. And Asa lay down with his fathers and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place.*

"The rest of all the matters of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah?"

"Only in the time of his old age he was sick in his feet." 2 Chronicles 16:12 adds that "also in his sickness he did not seek the LORD, but sought among the physicians." The point is not that seeing a doctor is wrong. It is that Asa turned to people and left God out of it. A man who once cried out to God against a million-man army spent his last years not seeking Him at all.

"Asa lay down with his fathers," and "Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his place." We will meet Jehoshaphat in chapter 22.

15:25-26 *And Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of his father and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin.*

Now back to Israel. "Nadab the son of Jeroboam became king over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years," about 909 to 908 B.C. Hebrew writers often counted part of a year as a year, which is why two years can begin in Asa's second year and end in his third (15:28).

"He did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of his father and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin." The son kept the calves.

15:27-30 *And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha struck him down at Gibbethon, which **belonged** to the Philistines; and Nadab and all Israel **were** laying siege to Gibbethon. And Baasha killed him in the third year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned in his place. And it was, when he became king, he struck down all the house of Jeroboam; he did not leave to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the Shilonite, because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and with which he caused Israel to sin, by his provocation with which he provoked the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger.*

"Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him." This Ahijah is not the prophet. Baasha struck Nadab down "at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines," while the army was laying siege to it, a town on the western edge of the land.

"When he became king, he struck down all the house of Jeroboam; he did not leave to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed it, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of His servant Ahijah the Shilonite." Ahijah's terrible word (14:10-11) came true within about two years of Jeroboam's death.

The writer gives the reason: "because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned and with which he caused Israel to sin." Jeroboam made the calves to protect his family's hold on the throne (12:26-27). The calves are what cost his family the throne. Sin never delivers what it promises.

Baasha did what God had foretold, but that did not make Baasha a godly man. God used his ambition as a tool of judgment, and later judged Baasha too (16:7). Being used by God is not the same as walking with God.

15:31-34 *And the rest of the matters of Nadab and all that he did, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And war was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty-four years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin.*

"The rest of the matters of Nadab and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel?" Again, "war was between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days."

"In the third year of Asa king of Judah, Baasha the son of Ahijah became king over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty-four years," about 908 to 886 B.C.

"He did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin." He had just destroyed Jeroboam's house for this very sin, and then he did the same thing himself. How quickly we can condemn someone's sin and then fall into it. Paul warned, "you who judge practice the same things" (Romans 2:1). The next chapter shows what came of it.

Chapter 15 Summary

Abijam became king of Judah in Jeroboam's eighteenth year and reigned three years. He walked in his father's sins, and his heart was not wholly the LORD's, but for David's sake God kept a lamp in Jerusalem, because David had done right except in the matter of Uriah. Asa followed him and reigned forty-one years. He did right like David: he removed the male cult prostitutes and the idols, removed Maacah from being queen mother because of her Asherah image, and burned it at the Kidron. He did not remove the high places, but his heart was wholly the LORD's. When Baasha of Israel fortified Ramah, Asa sent the temple and palace silver and gold to Ben-hadad of Syria, who attacked northern Israel, and Asa used Baasha's materials to build Geba and Mizpah. In old age Asa was diseased in his feet, and Jehoshaphat reigned after him. In Israel, Jeroboam's son Nadab reigned two years and did evil. Baasha killed him at Gibbethon and destroyed all of Jeroboam's house, as the LORD had said through Ahijah. Baasha then reigned twenty-four years in Tirzah and walked in Jeroboam's sin.

Chapter 15 Study Questions

1. Why did God keep a lamp for Abijam in Jerusalem, even though Abijam did evil? (15:3-5)

2. What one exception is named in David's life, and what does that teach us about how Scripture tells the truth about its heroes? (15:5)

3. What reforms did Asa carry out? (15:12-13)

4. What did Asa do about his grandmother Maacah, and why was that hard? (15:13)

5. What did Baasha do at Ramah, and how did Asa respond? (15:17-19)

6. How did the prophecy against Jeroboam's house come true? (15:29; 14:10-11)

7. What did Baasha do after destroying Jeroboam's house? (15:34)

8. What do 15:14 and 2 Chronicles 16:7-12 together teach about a heart that is true to God and still makes mistakes?

9. Asa trusted God in one crisis and trusted money and alliances in the next. What do you tend to reach for first when pressure comes?

10. Asa removed an idol from his own family. Is there anything in your home or habits that you need the courage to remove for the Lord's sake? (Matthew 10:37)

Chapter 16: Kings of Israel from Baasha to Ahab

Scripture

16:1-14 And the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, "Because I raised you up from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have caused My people Israel to sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins, look, I am about to sweep away after Baasha and after his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The one who dies of Baasha in the city the dogs will eat, and the one of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat." And the rest of the matters of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Baasha lay down with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place. And also by the hand of Jehu the son of Hanani the prophet the word of the LORD came against Baasha and against his house, because of all the evil which he had done in the eyes of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it down. In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel in Tirzah, two years. And his servant Zimri, commander of half the chariotry, conspired against him; and he ***was*** in Tirzah, drinking ***himself*** drunk ***in*** the house of Arza, who ***was*** over the household in Tirzah. And Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned in his place. And it was, when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, he struck down all the house of Baasha; he did not leave him ***one*** who urinates against a wall, either of his redeemers or of his friends. And Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken against Baasha by the hand of Jehu the prophet, because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and with which they caused Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. And the rest of the matters of Elah and all that he did, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel?

16:15-28 In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. And the people ***were*** encamped against Gibbethon, which ***belonged*** to the Philistines. And the people who were encamped heard, saying, "Zimri has conspired, and he has also struck down the king." And all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel on that day in the camp. And Omri went up, and all Israel with him, from Gibbethon, and they laid siege to Tirzah. And it was, when Zimri saw that the city was captured, and he went into the citadel of the house of the king, and he burned the house of the king over himself with fire, and he died, because of his sins which he sinned, in doing the evil in the eyes of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to cause Israel to sin. And the rest of the matters of Zimri, and his conspiracy which he conspired, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? Then the people, Israel, were divided into halves: half of the people were after Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half ***were*** after Omri. And the people who ***were*** after Omri prevailed over the people who ***were*** after Tibni the son of Ginath; and Tibni died, and Omri became king. In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, twelve years; in Tirzah he reigned six years. And he bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for

approximately 150 pounds (two talents) of silver; and he built ***on*** the hill, and he called the name of the city which he built after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria. And Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he did more evil than all who ***were*** before him. And he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. And the rest of the matters of Omri which he did, and his might which he did, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Omri lay down with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place.

16:29-34 And Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD more than all who ***were*** before him. And it was, was it a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat? And he took ***as*** a wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and he went and served the Baal and bowed down to him. And he set up an altar for the Baal ***in*** the house of the Baal which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him. In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; with Abiram his firstborn he laid its foundation, and with Segub his youngest he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun.

Chapter 16 Preview

The northern kingdom goes from bad to worse. The prophet Jehu son of Hanani tells Baasha that because he walked in Jeroboam's way, his house will end the same way Jeroboam's did. Baasha's son Elah reigns two years and is murdered while drunk by Zimri, one of his chariot commanders. Zimri wipes out Baasha's house and reigns just seven days before the army makes Omri king and lays siege to Tirzah. Zimri burns the palace down over himself. For a few years Israel is split between Omri and a rival named Tibni, until Omri wins. Omri buys a hill and builds a new capital, Samaria, and he does more evil than all the kings before him.

Then comes his son Ahab. Ahab does not just keep Jeroboam's calves. He marries Jezebel, a princess of Sidon, and brings the worship of Baal into Israel, building a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria. The chapter closes with a dark note about Jericho, rebuilt at the cost of a man's two sons, just as Joshua had warned. The stage is set for Elijah. Notice the pattern in this chapter: four kings in a row, three of them killed or dead by violence, each one following the one before into sin. Sin does not stand still. It grows.

Chapter 16 Study

16:1-4 *And the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, "Because I raised you up from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel, and you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have caused My people Israel to sin, to provoke Me to anger with their sins, look, I am about to sweep away after Baasha and after his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. The one who dies of Baasha in the city the dogs will eat, and the one of his who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will eat."*

"The word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha." This Jehu is a prophet, not the later king Jehu. His father Hanani was the seer who rebuked Asa (2 Chronicles 16:7), and Jehu himself would later rebuke King Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 19:2). Prophets in that day often came from families who served God.

God's message to Baasha sounds like His message to Jeroboam. "Because I raised you up from the dust and made you leader over My people Israel." Baasha came from nothing. God gave him the throne. "And you have walked in the way of Jeroboam and have caused My people Israel to sin." Notice that God still calls them "My people." Even in their rebellion, they were His.

"Look, I am about to sweep away after Baasha and after his house, and I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." The same words of dogs and birds that Ahijah spoke over Jeroboam's family (14:11) are spoken again over Baasha's. Baasha had seen what happened to Jeroboam's house. He did it with his own sword. He still did not learn.

16:5-7 *And the rest of the matters of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Baasha lay down with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place. And also by the hand of Jehu the son of Hanani the prophet the word of the LORD came against Baasha and against his house, because of all the evil which he had done in the eyes of the LORD, to provoke Him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it down.*

"Baasha lay down with his fathers and was buried in Tirzah; and Elah his son reigned in his place." He died in peace, but his family would not.

Verse 7 adds an important detail. God's word came against Baasha "because of all the evil which he had done in the eyes of the LORD," "in being like the house of Jeroboam, and because he struck it down." Wait. Hadn't God said Jeroboam's house would be destroyed? Yes. So why judge Baasha for doing it?

Here is the answer. God used Baasha to carry out His judgment, but Baasha did it for his own ambition, not out of obedience to God. He killed to take a throne, then sat on that throne doing the very sins he had punished. God judged his heart and his motives. Hosea says something similar about the later King Jehu, who wiped out Ahab's house as God said, yet God would still visit the bloodshed of Jezreel on Jehu's house (Hosea 1:4). Being an instrument of God's plan never excuses a wicked heart.

16:8-10 *In the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah, Elah the son of Baasha became king over Israel in Tirzah, two years. And his servant Zimri, commander of half the chariotry, conspired against him; and he **was** in Tirzah, drinking **himself** drunk **in** the house of Arza, who **was** over the household in Tirzah. And Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned in his place.*

Baasha's son Elah became king "in the twenty-sixth year of Asa king of Judah" and reigned two years, about 886 to 885 B.C.

"His servant Zimri, commander of half the chariotry, conspired against him." Where was the king? He was "in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza, who was over the household in Tirzah." While his army was at war, laying siege to Gibbethon (16:15), the king was getting drunk at a party. "Zimri came in and struck him down and killed him, in the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and he reigned in his place."

A drunk king is a defenseless king. Proverbs warns that wine is not for kings (Proverbs 31:4-5), because it makes them forget what is right. Paul says, "do not be drunk with wine" but be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). A man who loses control of himself cannot guard anything else.

16:11-14 *And it was, when he became king, as soon as he sat on his throne, he struck down all the house of Baasha; he did not leave him **one** who urinates against a wall, either of his redeemers or of his friends. And Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken against Baasha by the hand of Jehu the prophet, because of all the sins of Baasha and the sins of Elah his son, which they sinned and with which they caused Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. And the rest of the matters of Elah and all that he did, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel?*

"As soon as he sat on his throne, he struck down all the house of Baasha." He left no male alive, "either of his redeemers or of his friends." A redeemer here means a close relative whose duty was to protect the family or avenge a death (Numbers 35:19). Zimri made sure no one was left to avenge Elah.

"Zimri destroyed all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken against Baasha by the hand of Jehu the prophet." Once again God's word came true. The reason is given: "because of all the sins of Baasha" and his son, "to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities." The word vanities means empty, worthless things, here the idols. The Hebrew word is hevel, breath or vapor, the same word Ecclesiastes uses for life without God. Idols are nothing but air.

16:15-18 *In the twenty-seventh year of Asa king of Judah, Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah. And the people **were** encamped against Gibbethon, which **belonged** to the Philistines. And the people who were encamped heard, saying, "Zimri has conspired, and he has also struck down the king." And all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel on that day in the camp. And Omri went up, and all Israel with him, from Gibbethon, and they laid siege to Tirzah. And it was, when Zimri saw that the city was captured, and he went into the citadel of the house of the king, and he burned the house of the king over himself with fire, and he died,*

"Zimri reigned seven days in Tirzah." That was about 885 B.C. It is the shortest reign in Israel's history.

The army was still "encamped against Gibbethon," and when they heard that "Zimri has conspired, and he has also struck down the king," they made their own choice: "all Israel made Omri, the commander of the army, king over Israel on that day in the camp." Zimri was a chariot officer. Omri was the general. The army followed its general.

Omri "went up, and all Israel with him, from Gibbethon, and they laid siege to Tirzah." When Zimri "saw that the city was captured," he "went into the citadel of the house of the king, and he burned the house of the king over himself with fire, and he died." He took his own life in the palace he had seized a week earlier.

16:19-20 *because of his sins which he sinned, in doing the evil in the eyes of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to cause Israel to sin. And the rest of the matters of Zimri, and his conspiracy which he conspired, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel?*

The writer adds that he died "because of his sins which he sinned, in doing the evil in the eyes of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam." In just seven days, Zimri had already shown which way he would walk. It does not take long to show what is in a heart.

"His conspiracy which he conspired" was recorded in the royal annals. His name became a byword. Years later, Jezebel would taunt Jehu with it when he killed her son: she called him a Zimri, the murderer of his master (2 Kings 9:31).

16:21-22 *Then the people, Israel, were divided into halves: half of the people were after Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king, and half **were** after Omri. And the people who **were** after Omri prevailed over the people who **were** after Tibni the son of Ginath; and Tibni died, and Omri became king.*

"Then the people, Israel, were divided into halves." Half followed "Tibni the son of Ginath," and half followed Omri. Israel was now split within the split. This civil war seems to have lasted about four or five years, comparing verses 15 and 23.

"The people who were after Omri prevailed." Then, simply, "Tibni died, and Omri became king." Scripture does not tell us how Tibni died.

16:23-24 *In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, twelve years; in Tirzah he reigned six years. And he bought the hill Samaria from Shemer for approximately 150 pounds (two talents) of silver; and he built* ***on*** *the hill, and he called the name of the city which he built after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill, Samaria.*

"In the thirty-first year of Asa king of Judah, Omri became king over Israel, twelve years; in Tirzah he reigned six years." Omri was first made king in Asa's twenty-seventh year (16:15-16). The thirty-first year is likely when he became sole king after Tibni died. The twelve years count from his start, about 885 to 874 B.C.

Then Omri did what made him famous. "He bought the hill Samaria from Shemer," for two talents of silver, about 150 pounds, "and he built on the hill." He named the city Samaria "after the name of Shemer, the owner of the hill." Samaria sat on a high, steep hill, easy to defend, on a main trade road. It was a wise choice. It stayed Israel's capital until Assyria took it in 722 B.C., and in time the whole northern region, and later its people, came to be called by its name.

Omri was a strong king in the eyes of the world. Records outside the Bible mention him. The Moabite Stone, a monument of King Mesha of Moab, speaks of Omri ruling over Moab, and Assyrian records called Israel the house of Omri long after his family was gone. But the Bible gives him only a few verses. God does not measure a king by his buildings or his fame.

16:25-28 *And Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he did more evil than all who* ***were*** *before him. And he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat and in his sin with which he caused Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger with their vanities. And the rest of the matters of Omri which he did, and his might which he did,* ***are*** *they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Omri lay down with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place.*

"Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he did more evil than all who were before him." The writer does not tell us exactly what Omri did beyond the sins of Jeroboam. Micah 6:16 later speaks of the statutes of Omri as something Israel kept to its shame. Whatever it was, he set the stage for his son.

"Omri lay down with his fathers and was buried in Samaria; and Ahab his son reigned in his place."

That is how God's Word sums up a powerful king. A city, a dynasty, and a verdict of evil. What will be said of our lives when the summary is written? Not how much we built, but whether we did right in the eyes of the LORD.

16:29-30 *And Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. And Ahab the son of Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD more than all who* ***were*** *before him.*

"Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah; and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years," about 874 to 853 B.C. The rest of 1 Kings is mostly the story of his reign, and of the prophet God sent to confront him.

"Ahab the son of Omri did the evil in the eyes of the LORD more than all who were before him." Each king seemed to go a step lower. Jeroboam made calves. Omri did more evil than all before him. Now Ahab did more evil still.

16:31-33 *And it was, was it a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat? And he took **as** a wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, and he went and served the Baal and bowed down to him. And he set up an altar for the Baal **in** the house of the Baal which he built in Samaria. And Ahab made the Asherah; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him.*

"Was it a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat?" The writer speaks with a kind of grief. As if the calves were not enough.

"He took as a wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians." Ethbaal was king of Tyre and Sidon, on the coast to the north. His name means "with Baal." The marriage was a political alliance, but it brought a strong-willed woman into Israel who was fully devoted to Baal and would try to wipe out the worship of the LORD (18:4). Her name became a byword for false teaching even in the New Testament (Revelation 2:20).

"He went and served the Baal and bowed down to him." Baal was the chief god of the Canaanites and Phoenicians, a storm god believed to send rain and make the land fruitful. The word baal means lord or master. Ahab "set up an altar for the Baal in the house of the Baal which he built in Samaria." This was something new. Jeroboam's calves were a corruption of the LORD's worship. Ahab brought in another god altogether and built him a temple in Israel's capital.

"Ahab made the Asherah," the wooden pole or image of the goddess thought to be Baal's partner. "And Ahab did more to provoke the LORD, the God of Israel, to anger than all the kings of Israel who were before him."

Why does this matter so much? Because the whole question of the next chapters will be: who is God in Israel? Who sends the rain? Baal, or the LORD? God is about to answer that question, beginning with a drought.

16:34 *In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho; with Abiram his firstborn he laid its foundation, and with Segub his youngest he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun.*

"In his days Hiel the Bethelite built Jericho." When Israel conquered Jericho about 1406 B.C., Joshua put a curse on anyone who would rebuild it as a fortified city: "with his firstborn he shall lay its foundation, and with his youngest he shall set up its gates" (Joshua 6:26).

More than five hundred years later, in Ahab's day, Hiel rebuilt it. "With Abiram his firstborn he laid its foundation, and with Segub his youngest he set up its gates, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Joshua the son of Nun." The text does not tell us how the sons died. Some think they died by God's hand as the work went on. Others think Hiel offered them as foundation sacrifices, a pagan practice of that time. Scripture does not say, and I will not go beyond it.

What we do know is that God's word had not been forgotten in heaven, even if Israel had forgotten it. In a land that had turned to Baal, God's word through Joshua still stood after five centuries. The next verse brings Elijah onto the stage, and God's word is about to speak again.

Chapter 16 Summary

The LORD sent the prophet Jehu son of Hanani to tell Baasha that because he walked in Jeroboam's way, his house would be swept away like Jeroboam's. Baasha died and was buried in Tirzah, and God judged him both for his sins and for striking down Jeroboam's house. His son Elah reigned two years and was murdered while drunk by Zimri, a chariot commander, who then destroyed all of Baasha's house as the LORD had said. Zimri reigned seven days; the army at Gibbethon made Omri king, besieged Tirzah, and Zimri burned the palace over himself. Israel was divided between Tibni and Omri until Omri prevailed. Omri reigned twelve years, bought the hill of Samaria and built his capital there, and did more evil than all before him. His son Ahab reigned twenty-two years in Samaria and did more evil still. He married Jezebel, daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, served Baal, built a temple and altar for Baal in Samaria, and made an Asherah. In his days Hiel of Bethel rebuilt Jericho at the cost of his firstborn and youngest sons, as Joshua had foretold.

When God gives His verdict on my life, I want it to be that I lived to serve Him. I want it to say I gave people resources to draw closer to Him, and to help them draw others to Him. That is a big reason these studies are free.

Chapter 16 Study Questions

1. What did Jehu the prophet say would happen to Baasha's house, and why? (16:1-4)

2. Why was Baasha judged for striking down Jeroboam's house, if it fulfilled God's word? (16:7)

3. What was Elah doing when Zimri killed him, and what lesson does that teach? (16:9-10; Ephesians 5:18)

4. How long did Zimri reign, and how did his reign end? (16:15-18)

5. Why do you think the army chose Omri? (16:16)

6. What did Omri build, and how is he described by the writer? (16:24-25)

7. What new sins did Ahab bring into Israel? (16:31-33)

8. How was Joshua's word about Jericho fulfilled? (16:34; Joshua 6:26)

9. Each king in this chapter went a little further into sin than the one before. What small compromises can lead us further than we ever meant to go?

10. The world remembered Omri as a strong king, but God's verdict was "evil." What do you most want God's verdict on your life to be, and what would need to change for that to be true?

Chapter 17: Elijah, the Drought, and the Widow of Zarephath

Scripture

17:1-16 And Elijah the Tishbite, from the sojourners of Gilead, said to Ahab, "***As*** the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew and rain these years, except according to my word." And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the wadi Cherith, which ***is*** east of the Jordan. And it shall be ***that*** you shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there." And he went and did according to the word of the LORD; and he went and dwelt by the wadi Cherith, which ***is*** east of the Jordan. And the ravens ***were*** bringing him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and from the wadi he drank. And it was, at the end of days, and the wadi dried up, because there had been no rain in the land. And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which ***belongs*** to Sidon, and dwell there. Look, I have commanded a widow woman there to provide for you." And he arose and went to Zarephath, and he came to the entrance of the city; and look, there ***was*** a widow woman gathering sticks. And he called out to her and said, "Please get me a little water in the vessel, that I may drink." And she went to get ***it***, and he called out to her and said, "Please get me a piece of bread in your hand." And she said, "***As*** the LORD your God lives, I have no cake, except the fullness of a palm of flour in the jar and a little oil in the jug; and look, I am gathering two sticks, and I will go in and prepare it for myself and for my son, and we will eat it, and we will die." And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do according to your word; only make me a small cake from it first, and bring ***it*** out to me; and for yourself and for your son you shall make ***some*** afterward. For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'The jar of flour shall not be used up, and the jug of oil shall not be lacking, until the day ***that*** the LORD gives rain on the face of the ground.'" And she went and did according to the word of Elijah; and she ate, she and he and her household, ***many*** days. The jar of flour was not used up, and the jug of oil was not lacking, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Elijah.

17:17-24 And it was, after these things, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was very severe, until there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, "What ***is there*** to me and to you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was dwelling, and he laid him on his own bed. And he called out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought harm on the widow with whom I am sojourning, by putting her son to death?" And he stretched himself over the lad three times, and he called out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, please let the soul of this lad return into his inward parts." And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the lad returned into his inward parts, and he lived. And Elijah took the lad and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and he gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son ***is*** alive." And the woman said to Elijah, "Now this I know, that you ***are*** a man of God, and the word of the LORD in your mouth ***is*** truth."

Chapter 17 Preview

Without any introduction, a prophet steps into the story and into Ahab's court. Elijah the Tishbite, from Gilead east of the Jordan, tells the king that there will be no dew or rain for years except by his word. Ahab has made Baal, the supposed god of rain and storm, the god of his kingdom. Now the LORD shuts the sky. Then God hides Elijah, first by the brook Cherith, where ravens bring him bread and meat morning and evening, and then, when the brook dries up, with a widow in Zarephath, a town in Sidon, Jezebel's own homeland.

The widow has only a handful of flour and a little oil left and is gathering sticks for a last meal for herself and her son. Elijah asks her to make him a small cake first, and promises in the LORD's name that her flour and oil will not run out until the rain comes. She believes and obeys, and God keeps His word every day. Later her son dies, and Elijah carries him upstairs, cries out to the LORD, and the boy comes back to life, the first time in the Bible that God raises someone from the dead. Jesus pointed back to this widow at the start of His ministry (Luke 4:25-26). This chapter teaches us that God provides for those who trust Him one day at a time, often in ways we would never expect, and that His word is truth.

Chapter 17 Study

17:1 *And Elijah the Tishbite, from the sojourners of Gilead, said to Ahab, "**As** the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew and rain these years, except according to my word."*

"Elijah the Tishbite, from the sojourners of Gilead, said to Ahab." That is all the introduction he gets. No family line, no call story. He simply appears.

His name means my God is the LORD (Eli-jah, Yahweh is my God). His very name was a challenge to a king who had made Baal his god. He was from Tishbe, a town in Gilead, the rough hill country east of the Jordan. "Sojourners" suggests his family may not have been longtime landowners there.

"As the LORD, the God of Israel, lives, before whom I stand." Elijah began with an oath on the living God. Baal was believed to die and come back each year with the seasons. The LORD lives. And Elijah said he stood before Him, like a servant standing ready before his master. He did not stand before Ahab. He stood before God.

Then the message. "There shall not be dew and rain these years, except according to my word." Why drought? God had warned in His Law that if Israel turned to other gods, He would shut up the heavens so that there would be no rain (Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 28:23-24). And Baal was believed to be the god who rode the clouds and sent rain. God struck Baal at the very point of his claim. If Baal is lord of the rain, let him make it rain.

"Except according to my word" does not mean Elijah controlled the weather. James tells us how it happened: "Elijah was a man of like nature to us, and he prayed with prayer that it would not rain; and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months" (James 5:17). Elijah prayed

God's own warning back to Him, and God answered. James says the same kind of prayer is open to us: "The prayer of a righteous man, being at work, prevails much" (James 5:16).

17:2-4 *And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the wadi Cherith, which **is** east of the Jordan. And it shall be **that** you shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there."*

Right after the bold word came a quiet command. "Go from here and turn eastward, and hide yourself by the wadi Cherith, which is east of the Jordan." A wadi is a stream bed that runs with water in the rainy season and dries out in the dry season. Scripture does not tell us exactly where Cherith was, only that it was east of the Jordan.

Why hide? Ahab would soon be searching every nation for him (18:10). God protected His prophet. And for three years Israel would also go without God's prophet among them. The drought of rain came with a drought of the word.

"You shall drink from the wadi, and I have commanded the ravens to provide for you there." Ravens. They were unclean birds under the Law (Leviticus 11:15), known for taking food, not giving it. God commanded the most unlikely helpers to feed His servant. Notice also the word "there." God's provision was at the place of His direction. If Elijah had gone somewhere else, the ravens would not have found him.

17:5-7 *And he went and did according to the word of the LORD; and he went and dwelt by the wadi Cherith, which **is** east of the Jordan. And the ravens **were** bringing him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and from the wadi he drank. And it was, at the end of days, and the wadi dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.*

"He went and did according to the word of the LORD." No argument. Elijah obeyed.

"The ravens were bringing him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and from the wadi he drank." Twice a day. That is the same pattern God used when He fed Israel in the wilderness with manna in the morning and quail in the evening (Exodus 16:8, 12-13). God was teaching Elijah to live day by day on His supply. Jesus taught us to pray, "Give us today our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11).

At the end of days, "the wadi dried up, because there had been no rain in the land." The prophet who prayed for the drought felt it himself. God's servants are not always spared the hardships that fall on everyone around them. And what then? Did God forget him? No. When one source of supply dries up, God already has the next one ready. Sometimes God lets the brook dry up because He wants to move us somewhere else.

17:8-9 *And the word of the LORD came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which **belongs** to Sidon, and dwell there. Look, I have commanded a widow woman there to provide for you."*

"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there." Zarephath was a coastal town between Tyre and Sidon. That was Jezebel's homeland, the heart of Baal worship. God sent Elijah to hide in the enemy's own country.

"Look, I have commanded a widow woman there to provide for you." First ravens, now a widow. A widow in that world was usually among the poorest of the poor, with no husband to earn for her and often no one to protect her. God chose the weakest person in the land to feed His prophet. Paul tells us God chooses the weak things of the world to put the strong to shame (1 Corinthians 1:27).

17:10-12 *And he arose and went to Zarephath, and he came to the entrance of the city; and look, there **was** a widow woman gathering sticks. And he called out to her and said, "Please get me a little water in the vessel, that I may drink." And she went to get **it**, and he called out to her and said, "Please get me a piece of bread in your hand." And she said, "**As** the LORD your God lives, I have no cake, except the fullness of a palm of flour in the jar and a little oil in the jug; and look, I am gathering two sticks, and I will go in and prepare it for myself and for my son, and we will eat it, and we will die."*

Elijah came to the city gate and saw "a widow woman gathering sticks." He asked her, "Please get me a little water in the vessel, that I may drink." Water was precious in a drought. Still, she went to get it.

Then he called after her, "Please get me a piece of bread in your hand." That stopped her. "As the LORD your God lives, I have no cake, except the fullness of a palm of flour in the jar and a little oil in the jug." A handful of flour and a little oil, enough for one last small cake. "Look, I am gathering two sticks, and I will go in and prepare it for myself and for my son, and we will eat it, and we will die."

That is a woman at the end of herself. She had nothing left and no hope left. Notice that she said "the LORD your God." She knew he was an Israelite, and she knew the LORD's name. Whether she yet trusted Him herself, we are not told. Verse 24 suggests her faith grew over time.

17:13-14 *And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do according to your word; only make me a small cake from it first, and bring **it** out to me; and for yourself and for your son you shall make **some** afterward. For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel: 'The jar of flour shall not be used up, and the jug of oil shall not be lacking, until the day **that** the LORD gives rain on the face of the ground.'"*

"Do not fear." It is the word God speaks over and over to people at their weakest. "Go, do according to your word; only make me a small cake from it first, and bring it out to me; and for yourself and for your son you shall make some afterward."

Make me one first? That sounds hard, even selfish, until we hear the promise. "For thus says the LORD, the God of Israel." And the promise: "The jar of flour shall not be used up, and the jug of oil shall not be lacking, until the day that the LORD gives rain on the face of the ground."

Elijah was not asking her to give up her last meal for him. He was asking her to put God first and trust His word. That is the heart of faith. Jesus said, "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you" (Matthew 6:33). The question was not whether she had enough. It was whether she would believe God when He said He would supply.

17:15-16 *And she went and did according to the word of Elijah; and she ate, she and he and her household,* ***many*** *days. The jar of flour was not used up, and the jug of oil was not lacking, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Elijah.*

"She went and did according to the word of Elijah." A pagan widow in Baal's country obeyed the word of the LORD, while Israel, with the Law and the prophets, would not.

"She ate, she and he and her household, many days." God did not fill her pantry. He gave her enough flour for one more day, and then one more, and then one more. Every morning she went to the jar, and there was just enough. It is the same lesson as the ravens. God often provides for today, not for next year, so that we keep trusting Him.

"The jar of flour was not used up, and the jug of oil was not lacking, according to the word of the LORD which He spoke by the hand of Elijah."

Jesus brought up this widow in His first sermon at Nazareth:

Luke 4:25-26 (SLB)

"But in truth I say to you, many widows were in the days of Elijah in Israel, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when a great famine came upon all the land; and to none of them was Elijah sent, except to Zarephath of Sidon, to a woman, a widow."

His hometown wanted signs, but they did not want to believe. Jesus reminded them that in Elijah's day God passed by many widows in Israel and blessed a Gentile woman who trusted His word. They were so angry they tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29). God's grace has always reached beyond Israel to anyone who will believe, and that is good news for every one of us who is not Jewish.

17:17-18 *And it was, after these things, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was very severe, until there was no breath left in him. And she said to Elijah, "What* ***is there*** *to me and to you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!"*

"After these things, the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became sick; and his sickness was very severe, until there was no breath left in him." The boy died. The phrase "no breath left in him" means just that. Some have argued he was only very ill, but the woman, Elijah, and the whole story treat him as dead, and so do I.

Her grief came out as an accusation. "What is there to me and to you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!" Like many grieving people, she thought her son's death was God punishing her for some past sin. Having a holy man of God living in her house had made her more aware of her own sin.

Have you ever felt like that, that a loss was God paying you back for something? Jesus spoke against that kind of thinking when His disciples asked whose sin caused a man's blindness

(John 9:2-3). Not every sorrow is a punishment. God was about to show this woman His mercy, not His anger.

17:19-21 *And he said to her, "Give me your son." And he took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was dwelling, and he laid him on his own bed. And he called out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, have You also brought harm on the widow with whom I am sojourning, by putting her son to death?" And he stretched himself over the lad three times, and he called out to the LORD and said, "O LORD my God, please let the soul of this lad return into his inward parts."*

"Give me your son." Elijah did not argue with her. He "took him from her bosom and carried him up to the upper room where he was dwelling, and he laid him on his own bed."

Then he prayed, honestly. "O LORD my God, have You also brought harm on the widow with whom I am sojourning, by putting her son to death?" Elijah did not understand either. He brought his confusion straight to God. Prayer can be that honest.

"He stretched himself over the lad three times." Scripture does not explain why. It may have been a picture of his whole self pleading for the boy's life, or an act of faith identifying with him. Elisha later does something similar (2 Kings 4:34). Then the heart of the prayer: "O LORD my God, please let the soul of this lad return into his inward parts." The word soul here is nephesh, the life or living self. Elijah asked God to give the boy his life back.

17:22-23 *And the LORD listened to the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the lad returned into his inward parts, and he lived. And Elijah took the lad and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and he gave him to his mother; and Elijah said, "See, your son **is** alive."*

"The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah, and the soul of the lad returned into his inward parts, and he lived."

This is the first time in the Bible that a dead person is brought back to life. Elisha would raise a boy (2 Kings 4:32-37), and Jesus would raise the widow's son at Nain (Luke 7:11-15), Jairus' daughter, and Lazarus. Hebrews 11:35 says by faith "Women received their dead by resurrection." These were people brought back to this life, who later died again. But they pointed ahead to the resurrection of Jesus, who rose never to die again (Romans 6:9), and to the day when all who belong to Him will be raised (1 Corinthians 15:20-23).

"Elijah took the lad and brought him down from the upper room into the house, and he gave him to his mother." Jesus did the same thing at Nain: He "gave him to his mother" (Luke 7:15). "See, your son is alive." Three simple words in Hebrew, and the greatest words a grieving mother could hear.

17:24 *And the woman said to Elijah, "Now this I know, that you **are** a man of God, and the word of the LORD in your mouth **is** truth."*

"Now this I know, that you are a man of God, and the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth."

She had seen the flour and oil every day. But it was the resurrection that settled her faith. The God of Israel had power over life and death. Baal, the god of her own people, was said to die each year and need to be brought back. The LORD brought back her son.

Notice what she confessed: the word of the LORD is truth. That is the theme of this chapter. God said there would be no rain, and there was none. God said the ravens would feed Elijah, and they did. God said the flour would not run out, and it did not. God's word can be trusted. Jesus prayed to the Father, "Your word is truth" (John 17:17). We can stake our lives on it, one day at a time.

Chapter 17 Summary

Elijah the Tishbite told Ahab, by the living LORD before whom he stood, that there would be no dew or rain except by his word. God sent him to hide by the brook Cherith east of the Jordan, where ravens brought him bread and meat morning and evening and he drank from the brook. When the brook dried up, God sent him to Zarephath in Sidon, where He had commanded a widow to provide for him. She had only a handful of flour and a little oil, and was preparing a last meal for herself and her son. Elijah told her not to fear, to make him a small cake first, and promised in the LORD's name that her flour and oil would not run out until the rain came. She obeyed, and the jar and jug did not fail. Later her son became sick and died. She cried out that Elijah had come to bring her sin to remembrance. Elijah carried the boy to his upper room, cried out to the LORD, stretched himself over him three times, and prayed for his life to return. The LORD heard, and the boy lived. Elijah gave him back to his mother, and she confessed that he was a man of God and that the word of the LORD in his mouth was truth.

Chapter 17 Study Questions

1. How did Elijah introduce himself and his message to Ahab? (17:1)

2. Why was a drought a fitting judgment on Israel's worship of Baal? (17:1; Deuteronomy 11:16-17)

3. How did God provide for Elijah at the brook Cherith, and what happened when the brook dried up? (17:4-7)

4. Why is it surprising that God sent Elijah to a widow in Zarephath? (17:9; Luke 4:25-26)

5. What did Elijah ask the widow to do first, and what promise did he give her? (17:13-14)

6. How did God provide for her household, and why do you think He did it one day at a time? (17:15-16)

7. What did the widow think when her son died, and how did Elijah pray? (17:18-21)

8. What did the widow confess after her son was raised? (17:24)

9. Has God ever let a "brook" dry up in your life to move you somewhere new? How did you see His provision in the next place?

10. The widow had to put God first before she saw the supply. What would it look like for you to "seek first the kingdom of God" in an area where you feel you do not have enough? (Matthew 6:33)

Chapter 18: Elijah and the Prophets of Baal on Mount Carmel

Scripture

18:1-16 And it was ***after*** many days, and the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and let Me give rain on the face of the ground." And Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. And the famine ***was*** severe in Samaria. And Ahab summoned Obadiah, who ***was*** over the household. And Obadiah was fearing the LORD greatly; and it was, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, and Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty men in the cave, and provided them ***with*** bread and water. And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we will find grass and keep horse and mule alive, and we will not cut off ***any*** of the livestock." And they divided the land between them to pass through it; Ahab went by one way by himself, and Obadiah went by another way by himself. And Obadiah was on the way, and look, Elijah ***came*** to meet him; and he recognized him, and he fell on his face and said, "***Is*** this you, my lord Elijah?" And he said to him, "I ***am***. Go, say to your lord, 'Look, Elijah ***is here***.'" And he said, "What have I sinned, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death? ***As*** the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you; and they said, '***He is*** not ***here***,' and he made the kingdom and the nation swear that it had not found you. And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your lord, "Look, Elijah ***is here***."' And it will be, I will go from you, and the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to where I do not know; and I will come to tell Ahab, and he will not find you, and he will kill me. And your servant has been fearing the LORD from my youth. Has it not been told to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, and I hid a hundred men of the prophets of the LORD, fifty ***by*** fifty men in the cave, and I provided them ***with*** bread and water? And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your lord, "Look, Elijah ***is here***"'; and he will kill me." And Elijah said, "***As*** the LORD of armies lives, before whom I stand, surely today I will present myself to him." And Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.

18:17-29 And it was, when Ahab saw Elijah, and Ahab said to him, "***Is*** this you, troubler of Israel?" And he said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and the house of your father, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have walked after the Baals. And now send, gather to me all Israel to the mountain of Carmel, and the prophets of the Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah, four hundred, who eat at the table of Jezebel." And Ahab sent among all the sons of Israel, and he gathered the prophets to the mountain of Carmel. And Elijah drew near to all the people and said, "How long ***will*** you ***be*** limping on the two crutches? If the LORD ***is*** the God, walk after Him; and if the Baal, walk after him." And the people did not answer him a word. And Elijah said to the people, "I, I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; and the prophets of the Baal ***are*** four hundred and fifty men. And let them give us two young bulls, and let them choose for themselves the one young bull, and let them cut it in pieces and put ***it*** on the wood, and they shall not set fire; and I will prepare the other young bull and put ***it*** on the wood, and I will not set fire. And you shall call on the name of your god, and I, I will call on the name of the LORD; and it shall be ***that*** the god who answers by fire, he ***is*** the God." And all the

people answered and said, "The word ***is*** good." And Elijah said to the prophets of the Baal, "Choose for yourselves the one young bull and prepare ***it*** first, for you ***are*** the many; and call on the name of your god, and do not set fire." And they took the young bull which he gave them, and they prepared ***it***, and they called on the name of the Baal from the morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" And there was no voice, and there was no one answering. And they limped around the altar which he had made. And it was, at noon, and Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a great voice, for he ***is*** a god; for ***he is*** musing, and ***he has*** gone aside, and ***he is*** on a journey; perhaps he ***is*** sleeping, and let him awake." And they called out with a great voice, and they cut themselves according to their custom with swords and with lances, until blood poured out over them. And it was, when noon passed, and they prophesied until the offering up of the grain offering; and there was no voice, and there was no one answering, and there was no attention.

18:30-46 And Elijah said to all the people, "Draw near to me." And all the people drew near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." And he built the stones ***into*** an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench like a container of approximately 14 quarts (two seahs) of seed around the altar. And he arranged the wood, and he cut the young bull in pieces, and he put ***it*** on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars ***with*** water, and pour ***it*** on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do ***it*** a second time." And they did ***it*** a second time. And he said, "Do ***it*** a third time." And they did ***it*** a third time. And the water went around the altar; and also he filled the trench ***with*** water. And it was, at the offering up of the grain offering, and Elijah the prophet drew near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You ***are*** God in Israel, and I ***am*** Your servant, and at Your word I have done all these things. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, ***are*** the God, and You have turned their heart back." And the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and the water which ***was*** in the trench it licked up. And all the people saw, and they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, He ***is*** the God! The LORD, He ***is*** the God!" And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of the Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there. And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for ***there is*** the sound of the roar of the rain." And Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of the Carmel, and he crouched to the ground and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, "Go up, please, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked, and he said, "***There is*** nothing." And he said, "Go back," seven times. And it was, at the seventh ***time***, and he said, "Look, a small cloud like the palm of a man ***is*** coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Harness and go down, and the rain will not hold you back.'" And it was, in a little while, and the heavens grew dark ***with*** clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab until you come to Jezreel.

Chapter 18 Preview

After more than three years without rain, God tells Elijah to go and show himself to Ahab, because He is about to send rain. On the way Elijah meets Obadiah, the man over Ahab's household, a faithful believer who has secretly hidden a hundred of the LORD's prophets from Jezebel. Then

Elijah faces the king. Ahab calls him the troubler of Israel. Elijah tells him the real troubler is Ahab, who forsook the LORD for the Baals, and he calls for a showdown on Mount Carmel: all Israel, and the 450 prophets of Baal and 400 prophets of Asherah.

On the mountain Elijah asks the people how long they will limp on two crutches. He proposes a test. Each side will prepare a bull on an altar but light no fire, and the God who answers by fire is God. The prophets of Baal cry out from morning to evening, dancing and cutting themselves, and no one answers. Then Elijah rebuilds the LORD's broken altar with twelve stones, soaks it three times with water, and prays a short, simple prayer. The fire of the LORD falls and burns up everything, even the water in the trench. The people fall on their faces and cry, "The LORD, He is the God!" Elijah has the prophets of Baal put to death at the brook Kishon, one of the hard passages in this book. Then he prays on top of Carmel seven times until a small cloud rises from the sea, and the rain comes at last.

Chapter 18 Study

18:1-2 *And it was **after** many days, and the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, "Go, present yourself to Ahab, and let Me give rain on the face of the ground." And Elijah went to present himself to Ahab. And the famine **was** severe in Samaria.*

"The word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year." Luke and James tell us the drought lasted three years and six months (Luke 4:25; James 5:17). The likely answer is that "the third year" counts from when Elijah went to Zarephath, or from his word to Ahab, after the normal dry months had already begun. Either way, the whole drought was about three and a half years.

"Go, present yourself to Ahab, and let Me give rain on the face of the ground." Three years earlier God told Elijah to hide. Now He told him to show himself. Both took faith. The rain would come by God's gift, but God chose to send it after His prophet confronted the king and His people turned back to Him.

"And the famine was severe in Samaria." By now the drought had become famine. People and animals were dying.

18:3-6 *And Ahab summoned Obadiah, who **was** over the household. And Obadiah was fearing the LORD greatly; and it was, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, and Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty men in the cave, and provided them **with** bread and water. And Ahab said to Obadiah, "Go through the land to all the springs of water and to all the wadis; perhaps we will find grass and keep horse and mule alive, and we will not cut off **any** of the livestock." And they divided the land between them to pass through it; Ahab went by one way by himself, and Obadiah went by another way by himself.*

Ahab called "Obadiah, who was over the household," the steward of the palace. "And Obadiah was fearing the LORD greatly." His name means servant of the LORD, and he lived up to it. "When Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD," Obadiah "took a hundred prophets and hid them, fifty men in the cave, and provided them with bread and water." In a famine, feeding a hundred men in secret was costly and dangerous. He did it under the nose of the queen who wanted them dead.

Obadiah is a picture of a believer serving God faithfully in a hard place. He did not leave the palace. He used his position to protect God's people. God has His people in every kind of place, even in Ahab's house.

And what was Ahab worried about? "Perhaps we will find grass and keep horse and mule alive." His people were starving and God's prophets were being hunted, and the king was out looking for grass for his horses. He and Obadiah split the land between them and went searching.

18:7-8 *And Obadiah was on the way, and look, Elijah **came** to meet him; and he recognized him, and he fell on his face and said, "**Is** this you, my lord Elijah?" And he said to him, "I **am**. Go, say to your lord, 'Look, Elijah **is here**.'"*

"Look, Elijah came to meet him; and he recognized him, and he fell on his face and said, Is this you, my lord Elijah?" Obadiah honored the prophet with deep respect.

"I am. Go, say to your lord." The message was, "Look, Elijah is here." Notice "your lord." Elijah reminded Obadiah, gently, whose servant he was in the palace. Elijah's Lord was the LORD.

18:9-14 *And he said, "What have I sinned, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death? **As** the LORD your God lives, there is no nation or kingdom where my lord has not sent to seek you; and they said, '**He is** not **here**,' and he made the kingdom and the nation swear that it had not found you. And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your lord, "Look, Elijah **is here**."' And it will be, I will go from you, and the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to where I do not know; and I will come to tell Ahab, and he will not find you, and he will kill me. And your servant has been fearing the LORD from my youth. Has it not been told to my lord what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD, and I hid a hundred men of the prophets of the LORD, fifty **by** fifty men in the cave, and I provided them **with** bread and water? And now you are saying, 'Go, say to your lord, "Look, Elijah **is here**"'; and he will kill me."*

Obadiah was terrified. "What have I sinned, that you are giving your servant into the hand of Ahab, to put me to death?" He explained that Ahab had searched "no nation or kingdom" without sending to look for Elijah, and had made each one swear it had not found him.

His fear was this: "the Spirit of the LORD will carry you to where I do not know; and I will come to tell Ahab, and he will not find you, and he will kill me." Elijah had a way of disappearing. If Obadiah reported him and he vanished again, Obadiah would pay with his life.

He reminded Elijah, "your servant has been fearing the LORD from my youth," and asked if he had not heard "what I did when Jezebel killed the prophets of the LORD." He was not boasting. He was pleading. Twice he repeated, "he will kill me."

Obadiah is easy to relate to. He was a real believer, faithful and brave in secret, but afraid of being exposed. Many of us are like him. God did not scold him for his fear. He gave him a promise through Elijah.

18:15-16 *And Elijah said, "**As** the LORD of armies lives, before whom I stand, surely today I will present myself to him." And Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah.*

"As the LORD of armies lives, before whom I stand, surely today I will present myself to him." The LORD of armies, sometimes translated LORD of hosts, is a title for God as commander of all the armies of heaven. Elijah stood before Him, so he did not have to fear Ahab.

"Obadiah went to meet Ahab and told him; and Ahab went to meet Elijah." The king came to the prophet, not the other way around.

18:17-18 *And it was, when Ahab saw Elijah, and Ahab said to him, "**Is** this you, troubler of Israel?" And he said, "I have not troubled Israel, but you and the house of your father, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have walked after the Baals.*

"Is this you, troubler of Israel?" To Ahab, Elijah was the problem. No rain, no crops, all because of this man.

Elijah turned it around. "I have not troubled Israel, but you and the house of your father, in that you have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and you have walked after the Baals." The Baals in the plural refers to the many local forms of Baal worship.

It is an old pattern. People blame the messenger for the trouble that comes from their own sin. Ahab wanted the rain without repentance. Elijah would not let him pretend. The man who tells the truth about sin is not the troubler. The sin is.

18:19-20 *And now send, gather to me all Israel to the mountain of Carmel, and the prophets of the Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah, four hundred, who eat at the table of Jezebel." And Ahab sent among all the sons of Israel, and he gathered the prophets to the mountain of Carmel.*

"Gather to me all Israel to the mountain of Carmel." Carmel is a ridge of mountains running from near the coast at modern Haifa inland toward the southeast. It sat near the border with Phoenicia, Jezebel's homeland, and it was a place where Baal was worshiped. Elijah chose to meet Baal on his own ground.

He called for "the prophets of the Baal, four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the Asherah, four hundred, who eat at the table of Jezebel." The queen supported them from the palace. "Ahab sent among all the sons of Israel, and he gathered the prophets to the mountain of Carmel." The text does not mention the prophets of Asherah again. Perhaps they did not come.

18:21 *And Elijah drew near to all the people and said, "How long **will** you **be** limping on the two crutches? If the LORD **is** the God, walk after Him; and if the Baal, walk after him." And the people did not answer him a word.*

"Elijah drew near to all the people." This chapter is not finally about Ahab, or even about Baal's prophets. It is about the people of God, who had to choose.

"How long will you be limping on the two crutches?" The picture is of someone hobbling back and forth between two supports, never standing firm on either. They had not given up the LORD entirely. They just added Baal, to be safe. "If the LORD is the God, walk after Him; and if the Baal, walk after him."

"And the people did not answer him a word." Silence. They knew the right answer, but they did not want to commit.

This is still the question God puts to us. Jesus said, "No one is able to serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24). Many people today want a little God and a little of the world, a little faith for the hard days and a lot of self for the rest. God does not accept half a heart. How long will we limp on two crutches?

18:22-24 *And Elijah said to the people, "I, I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; and the prophets of the Baal **are** four hundred and fifty men. And let them give us two young bulls, and let them choose for themselves the one young bull, and let them cut it in pieces and put **it** on the wood, and they shall not set fire; and I will prepare the other young bull and put **it** on the wood, and I will not set fire. And you shall call on the name of your god, and I, I will call on the name of the LORD; and it shall be **that** the god who answers by fire, he **is** the God." And all the people answered and said, "The word **is** good."*

"I, I alone am left a prophet of the LORD; and the prophets of the Baal are four hundred and fifty men." Elijah knew of Obadiah's hundred hidden prophets, but they were in hiding. He was the only one standing in the open.

Then he set the test. Two bulls. Each side would prepare one "and put it on the wood, and they shall not set fire." Baal was supposed to be the god of storm and lightning. Surely he could send fire. "And you shall call on the name of your god, and I, I will call on the name of the LORD; and it shall be that the god who answers by fire, he is the God."

"And all the people answered and said, The word is good." They would not answer Elijah's call to choose. But they were glad to watch a contest.

18:25-26 *And Elijah said to the prophets of the Baal, "Choose for yourselves the one young bull and prepare **it** first, for you **are** the many; and call on the name of your god, and do not set fire." And they took the young bull which he gave them, and they prepared **it**, and they called on the name of the Baal from the morning until noon, saying, "O Baal, answer us!" And there was no voice, and there was no one answering. And they limped around the altar which he had made.*

Elijah let the prophets of Baal go first. "Choose for yourselves the one young bull and prepare it first, for you are the many." He gave them every advantage: first choice of bull, first turn, and the most people.

"They called on the name of the Baal from the morning until noon, saying, O Baal, answer us!" Hour after hour. "And there was no voice, and there was no one answering." "And they limped around the altar which he had made." It is the same word as in verse 21. They were doing a kind of ritual dance, hopping around the altar.

18:27-29 *And it was, at noon, and Elijah mocked them and said, "Call out with a great voice, for he **is** a god; for **he is** musing, and **he has** gone aside, and **he is** on a journey; perhaps he **is** sleeping, and let him awake." And they called out with a great voice, and they cut themselves according to their custom with swords and with lances, until blood poured out over them. And it was, when noon passed, and they prophesied until the offering up of the grain offering; and there was no voice, and there was no one answering, and there was no attention.*

At noon, "Elijah mocked them." Noon was when the sun was strongest, when a sun or storm god should be at his most powerful. "Call out with a great voice, for he is a god." Maybe he is "musing," thinking deeply, or he has "gone aside," which may be a polite way of saying he went to relieve himself, or he is "on a journey; perhaps he is sleeping, and let him awake."

Is it right for a man of God to mock? Elijah was exposing the foolishness of idolatry in front of the whole nation. The prophets did the same thing in writing. Isaiah laughed at the man who cuts a tree, burns half for a fire, and bows down to the other half (Isaiah 44:15-17). Elijah's words were not meant to be cruel to people. They were meant to show that Baal was nothing.

"They called out with a great voice, and they cut themselves according to their custom with swords and with lances, until blood poured out over them." The Law forbade Israel to cut themselves for the dead or in worship (Leviticus 19:28; Deuteronomy 14:1). False religion often demands that people hurt themselves to get a god's attention. The true God gave His own blood for us.

"When noon passed, and they prophesied until the offering up of the grain offering;" That was the time of the evening sacrifice in the temple, the middle of the afternoon. They kept going in a frenzy for hours. "And there was no voice, and there was no one answering, and there was no attention." Three times the writer says it. Nothing. Baal did not answer, because Baal was not there.

18:30-32 *And Elijah said to all the people, "Draw near to me." And all the people drew near to him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down. And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, to whom the word of the LORD had come, saying, "Israel shall be your name." And he built the stones **into** an altar in the name of the LORD; and he made a trench like a container of approximately 14 quarts (two seahs) of seed around the altar.*

"Elijah said to all the people, Draw near to me." He wanted them close enough to see that there was no trick.

"He repaired the altar of the LORD which had been torn down." There had once been an altar to the LORD on Carmel, perhaps from before the temple was built, and it had been torn down, as Israel had torn down the LORD's altars (19:10). Elijah rebuilt it. Before God's fire falls, true worship must be restored.

"Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob." The kingdom was divided, but in God's eyes there were still twelve tribes, one people. Elijah's altar

said that Israel belonged to the LORD, all of it, and not to Ahab's Baal. He recalled God's word to Jacob: "Israel shall be your name" (Genesis 35:10).

Around the altar he dug a trench that would hold about two seahs of seed, roughly fourteen quarts.

18:33-35 *And he arranged the wood, and he cut the young bull in pieces, and he put **it** on the wood. And he said, "Fill four jars **with** water, and pour **it** on the burnt offering and on the wood." And he said, "Do **it** a second time." And they did **it** a second time. And he said, "Do **it** a third time." And they did **it** a third time. And the water went around the altar; and also he filled the trench **with** water.*

Elijah laid out the wood and the bull. Then he said, "Fill four jars with water, and pour it on the burnt offering and on the wood." A burnt offering was an animal wholly burned on the altar as a gift to God. "Do it a second time." "Do it a third time." Twelve jars of water in all, during a drought. Where did they get it? Carmel is near the sea, and there may have been a spring that had not dried up.

"The water went around the altar; and also he filled the trench with water." Why? So that no one could say it was a trick or a spark. Elijah made it humanly impossible. When God acts, He sometimes waits until every human way out is closed, so that no one can doubt who did it.

18:36-37 *And it was, at the offering up of the grain offering, and Elijah the prophet drew near and said, "O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You **are** God in Israel, and I **am** Your servant, and at Your word I have done all these things. Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, **are** the God, and You have turned their heart back."*

"At the offering up of the grain offering," the time of the evening sacrifice, "Elijah the prophet drew near." The prophets of Baal had shouted and danced all day. Elijah prayed a prayer you can say in less than a minute.

"O LORD, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Israel, today let it be known that You are God in Israel, and I am Your servant, and at Your word I have done all these things." He called on the God of the covenant, the God of the fathers. He asked for three things: that the LORD would be known as God, that Elijah would be known as His servant, and that everyone would see this was done at God's word, not Elijah's own idea.

"Answer me, O LORD, answer me, that this people may know that You, O LORD, are the God, and You have turned their heart back." Elijah's deepest desire was not to win. It was for God's people to come back to God. That is the heart of every true servant of God.

18:38-39 *And the fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and the water which **was** in the trench it licked up. And all the people saw, and they fell on their faces and said, "The LORD, He **is** the God! The LORD, He **is** the God!"*

"The fire of the LORD fell and consumed the burnt offering and the wood and the stones and the dust, and the water which was in the trench it licked up." Not just the bull. The wood, the stones, the very dirt, and the water. Nothing was left.

Fire from God had fallen before, on the altar of the tabernacle when worship began (Leviticus 9:24) and at the dedication of Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:1). Now it fell on a rebuilt altar on a mountain, to call an entire nation back.

"All the people saw, and they fell on their faces and said, The LORD, He is the God! The LORD, He is the God!" At last they answered. This is what Elijah's name means: my God is the LORD. The whole nation now said it.

Do we need fire from heaven to believe? God has given us something even greater. He sent His Son, who died and rose again. Paul says God has given proof to all people by raising Him from the dead (Acts 17:31). The question is the same one Elijah asked. If the LORD is God, follow Him.

18:40 *And Elijah said to them, "Seize the prophets of the Baal; let not one of them escape." And they seized them; and Elijah brought them down to the wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there.*

"Seize the prophets of the Baal; let not one of them escape." The people seized them, and "Elijah brought them down to the wadi Kishon and slaughtered them there." The Kishon is the stream that runs along the foot of Mount Carmel.

This is a hard verse, and I do not want to rush past it. Here is how I understand it. Israel was a nation in covenant with God, and its Law was the law of the land. That Law said that a prophet who led the people to serve other gods was to be put to death (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 17:2-5). These 450 men were not just people with different beliefs. They were the paid servants of a queen who had murdered the LORD's prophets (18:4, 13), and they had led the whole nation away from God into a religion of self-cutting and, as other Scriptures show, much worse. Elijah carried out the sentence the Law required, at a moment when the whole nation had just confessed the LORD as God. It was a judgment under Israel's covenant, not a private act of revenge.

It is not a pattern for us. The church is not a nation with a sword. Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world" (John 18:36). When James and John wanted to call down fire like Elijah on a village that rejected Jesus, He rebuked them (Luke 9:54-55). Paul says "the weapons of our warfare are not fleshly" (2 Corinthians 10:4). We fight false teaching with truth and prayer, and we love those who oppose us (Matthew 5:44). No one today may use this verse to justify harming anyone over religion.

18:41-43 *And Elijah said to Ahab, "Go up, eat and drink, for **there is** the sound of the roar of the rain." And Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of the Carmel, and he crouched to the ground and put his face between his knees. And he said to his servant, "Go up, please, look toward the sea." And he went up and looked, and he said, "**There is** nothing." And he said, "Go back," seven times.*

"Go up, eat and drink, for there is the sound of the roar of the rain." Not a cloud in the sky, but Elijah heard the rain by faith in God's promise (18:1).

"Ahab went up to eat and to drink." Elijah went up too, but not to eat. He went "to the top of the Carmel, and he crouched to the ground and put his face between his knees." He bowed low in humble, earnest prayer.

"Go up, please, look toward the sea." The servant looked over the Mediterranean and said, "There is nothing." "Go back," Elijah said, "seven times."

Notice that God had already promised the rain. Elijah still prayed for it, and kept praying. God's promises do not make prayer unnecessary. They give us a reason to pray with confidence. James points to this very prayer: "he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth sprouted its fruit" (James 5:18).

18:44-46 *And it was, at the seventh **time**, and he said, "Look, a small cloud like the palm of a man **is** coming up from the sea." And he said, "Go up, say to Ahab, 'Harness and go down, and the rain will not hold you back.'" And it was, in a little while, and the heavens grew dark **with** clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode and went to Jezreel. And the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab until you come to Jezreel.*

"At the seventh time," the servant said, "Look, a small cloud like the palm of a man is coming up from the sea." A cloud the size of a man's hand. To Elijah, that was enough. "Go up, say to Ahab." The message: "Harness and go down, and the rain will not hold you back."

In a little while, "the heavens grew dark with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain." The drought was over. God had shown that He, not Baal, sends the rain.

"Ahab rode and went to Jezreel," a royal city about seventeen miles away. And then a remarkable thing: "the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he girded up his loins and ran before Ahab." To gird up the loins meant tucking the long robe into the belt to run. God gave Elijah strength to outrun the king's chariot all the way to Jezreel. He ran ahead like a herald before a king, as if to say that the king could still return to the LORD.

What a day. Fire, judgment, prayer, rain, and a run in the storm. But the next chapter shows that even after a great victory, God's servants are still human.

Chapter 18 Summary

In the third year of the drought, God sent Elijah to show himself to Ahab, promising rain. Elijah met Obadiah, Ahab's steward, who feared the LORD and had hidden a hundred prophets from

Jezebel; Elijah assured him he would surely meet Ahab that day. Ahab called Elijah the troubler of Israel, but Elijah said Ahab and his father's house were the troublers, because they forsook the LORD for the Baals. Elijah gathered all Israel and the prophets of Baal to Mount Carmel and asked the people how long they would limp on two crutches. He proposed a test: the God who answers by fire is God. The prophets of Baal called on Baal from morning to evening, limping around their altar and cutting themselves, but there was no answer. Elijah rebuilt the LORD's altar with twelve stones, dug a trench, and had water poured on the offering three times. At the time of the evening offering he prayed that the people would know the LORD is God and that He had turned their hearts back. The fire of the LORD fell and consumed the offering, the wood, the stones, the dust and the water, and the people fell down crying, "The LORD, He is the God!" Elijah had the prophets of Baal seized and killed at the Kishon. Then he prayed on top of Carmel, sending his servant to look seven times, until a small cloud appeared. A great rain came, and the hand of the LORD was on Elijah, and he ran before Ahab's chariot to Jezreel.

Chapter 18 Study Questions

1. How did Obadiah serve the LORD in Ahab's palace, and why was he afraid? (18:3-4, 9-14)

2. Who did Ahab say was the troubler of Israel, and who did Elijah say it was? (18:17-18)

3. What question did Elijah ask the people, and how did they respond? (18:21)

4. What was the test Elijah set, and why was it a fitting test against Baal? (18:23-24)

5. How did the prophets of Baal try to get an answer, and what happened? (18:26-29)

6. Why did Elijah rebuild the altar with twelve stones and pour water on it? (18:30-35)

7. What did Elijah ask for in his prayer, and what did God do? (18:36-38)

8. How does the New Testament help us understand that 18:40 is not a pattern for believers today? (John 18:36; Luke 9:54-55)

9. Elijah asked, "How long will you be limping on the two crutches?" Are there areas where you are trying to follow the Lord and something else at the same time? (Matthew 6:24)

10. Elijah kept praying seven times for what God had already promised. What promise of God are you praying about, and what does his example teach you about persistence in prayer? (James 5:16-18)

Chapter 19: Elijah at Horeb

Scripture

19:1-14 And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and all how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "Thus may the gods do, and thus may they add, for about this time tomorrow I will make your life like the life of one of them." And he saw, and he arose and went for his life, and he came to Beersheba, which ***belongs*** to Judah, and he left his servant there. And he himself went into the wilderness a day's journey, and he came and sat under a certain broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and he said, "***It is*** enough now, O LORD; take my life, for I ***am*** not better than my fathers." And he lay down and slept under a certain broom tree; and look, here ***was*** an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." And he looked, and look, at his head ***was*** a cake ***baked on*** hot coals and a jug of water; and he ate and drank, and he lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, for the journey ***is too*** great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb. And he came there into the cave and spent the night there; and look, the word of the LORD ***came*** to him, and He said to him, "What ***is there*** for you here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, Your altars they have torn down, and Your prophets they have killed with the sword; and I, I alone am left, and they have sought my life, to take it." And He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And look, the LORD ***was*** passing by, and a great and strong wind ***was*** tearing the mountains and breaking the rocks before the LORD; the LORD ***was*** not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake; the LORD ***was*** not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; the LORD ***was*** not in the fire. And after the fire a sound of a thin silence. And it was, when Elijah heard, and he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood ***at*** the entrance of the cave. And look, a voice ***came*** to him, and it said, "What ***is there*** for you here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, Your altars they have torn down, and Your prophets they have killed with the sword; and I, I alone am left, and they have sought my life, to take it."

19:15-21 And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; and you shall come and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint as king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. And it shall be ***that*** the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death; and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will put to death. And I will leave in Israel seven thousand, all the knees which have not bowed to the Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him." And he went from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, and he ***was*** plowing, twelve pairs ***of oxen*** before him, and he ***was*** with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his cloak on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and I will walk after you." And he said to him, "Go, return, for what have I done to you?" And he returned from following him, and he took the pair of oxen and sacrificed it, and with the equipment of the oxen he cooked them, the flesh, and he gave ***it*** to the people, and they ate. And he arose and walked after Elijah and served him.

Chapter 19 Preview

Right after the fire on Carmel, Jezebel sends Elijah a message: by this time tomorrow you will be dead. And the bold prophet runs. He flees south through Judah to Beersheba, leaves his servant, goes a day's journey into the wilderness, sits under a broom tree, and asks God to take his life. God does not scold him. He lets him sleep and sends an angel with bread and water, twice. In the strength of that food Elijah walks forty days and nights to Horeb, the mountain of God, where the LORD gave the Law to Moses.

There God asks him, "What is there for you here, Elijah?" Elijah pours out his complaint: I have been zealous, Israel has killed Your prophets, and I alone am left. Then the LORD passes by. A great wind tears the mountain, then an earthquake, then fire, but the LORD is not in any of them. After the fire comes a sound of a thin silence, and Elijah wraps his face and goes out. God gives him new work: anoint Hazael over Syria, Jehu over Israel, and Elisha as prophet in his place. And He corrects him gently: I have left seven thousand in Israel who have not bowed to Baal. Elijah goes and throws his cloak over Elisha, who leaves his plow to follow him. This is a chapter for every tired and discouraged servant of God. Paul uses it to show that God always keeps a remnant (Romans 11:2-5).

Chapter 19 Study

19:1-2 *And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and all how he had killed all the prophets with the sword. And Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah, saying, "Thus may the gods do, and thus may they add, for about this time tomorrow I will make your life like the life of one of them."*

"Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and all how he had killed all the prophets with the sword." Notice what Ahab told her. Not that the fire of the LORD fell. Not that the people confessed the LORD as God. Only what Elijah had done, and the deaths of her prophets.

Jezebel's answer was swift. "Thus may the gods do, and thus may they add, for about this time tomorrow I will make your life like the life of one of them." This was a curse-oath: may the gods punish me if I do not kill you. She had seen what the LORD did on Carmel, or at least heard it, and she was not moved. Some hearts do not soften even in the face of fire from heaven.

Why did she send a messenger instead of soldiers? If she wanted him dead at once, she could have just had him seized. Perhaps she wanted to frighten him away, to break the movement that Carmel had started by making the prophet run. If so, it worked.

19:3-4 *And he saw, and he arose and went for his life, and he came to Beersheba, which **belongs** to Judah, and he left his servant there. And he himself went into the wilderness a day's journey, and he came and sat under a certain broom tree; and he asked for himself to die, and he said, "**It is** enough now, O LORD; take my life, for I **am** not better than my fathers."*

"He saw, and he arose and went for his life." The man who faced 450 prophets of Baal ran from one woman's threat. He went "to Beersheba, which belongs to Judah," the far southern edge of the land, out of Ahab's kingdom. There "he left his servant."

Then "he himself went into the wilderness a day's journey, and he came and sat under a certain broom tree." A broom tree is a desert shrub that gives a little shade. "And he asked for himself to die." "It is enough now, O LORD; take my life, for I am not better than my fathers."

How could this happen right after Carmel? It often does. Great spiritual highs can be followed by deep lows. Elijah was worn out in body, after the long day, the run to Jezreel, and the flight south. He was alone. He had hoped Carmel would turn the nation, and the queen was still on her throne. He felt like a failure, no better than those who came before him.

James reminds us that "Elijah was a man of like nature to us" (James 5:17). Even great servants of God get tired, afraid and discouraged. Feeling this way does not mean you have no faith. And notice that Elijah did not take his own life. He took his pain to God and said it honestly. If you have ever felt this low, you are not alone, and God has not left you. Please tell someone you trust, a pastor, a friend, or a doctor, and let them help you carry it. If you are thinking about ending your life, reach out for help today.

19:5-8 *And he lay down and slept under a certain broom tree; and look, here **was** an angel touching him, and he said to him, "Arise, eat." And he looked, and look, at his head **was** a cake **baked on** hot coals and a jug of water; and he ate and drank, and he lay down again. And the angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, "Arise, eat, for the journey **is too** great for you." And he arose and ate and drank, and he went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb.*

"He lay down and slept under a certain broom tree; and look, here was an angel touching him, and he said to him, Arise, eat." God did not give him a lecture. He let him sleep, and then He fed him. "At his head was a cake baked on hot coals and a jug of water." Fresh bread, warm from the coals.

"He ate and drank, and he lay down again." More sleep. Then "the angel of the LORD came back a second time and touched him and said, Arise, eat, for the journey is too great for you." The angel of the LORD is a special messenger who often speaks as the LORD Himself in the Old Testament. Many Bible teachers believe this was the Son of God appearing before His birth in Bethlehem. Whether or not that is so here, the tenderness is striking. God knew the journey was too much for Elijah, and He gave him what he needed for it.

Sometimes the most spiritual thing you can do is eat a meal and get some sleep. God made us as bodies and souls. He "knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust" (Psalm 103:14). Before God spoke to Elijah's heart, He cared for Elijah's body.

"He went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights to the mountain of God, Horeb." Horeb is another name for Mount Sinai, where God gave Moses the Law and made His covenant with Israel. Moses had been on that mountain "forty days and forty nights" (Exodus 24:18), and Jesus would later fast forty days and forty nights in the wilderness (Matthew 4:2). Elijah went back to where it all began, to the place where God first spoke to His people.

19:9-10 *And he came there into the cave and spent the night there; and look, the word of the LORD* ***came*** *to him, and He said to him, "What* ***is there*** *for you here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, Your altars they have torn down, and Your prophets they have killed with the sword; and I, I alone am left, and they have sought my life, to take it."*

"He came there into the cave and spent the night there." In Hebrew it is "the cave," with "the." Some think it may have been the very cleft in the rock where God put Moses while His glory passed by (Exodus 33:21-23). We cannot be sure, but the parallels in the next verses are clear.

"The word of the LORD came to him, and He said to him, What is there for you here, Elijah?" God asked a question, not because He did not know, but to help Elijah see his own heart. It was like God's question to Adam, "Where are you?" (Genesis 3:9). What are you doing here, so far from where I sent you?

Elijah answered with his whole complaint. "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, Your altars they have torn down, and Your prophets they have killed with the sword; and I, I alone am left, and they have sought my life, to take it."

Some of that was true. He had been zealous. Israel had broken the covenant. Prophets had been killed. But "I alone am left" was not true. Obadiah and his hundred prophets were alive (18:13). Discouragement often tells the truth about our pain and lies about our situation. It makes us feel more alone than we are.

19:11-12 *And He said, "Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD." And look, the LORD* ***was*** *passing by, and a great and strong wind* ***was*** *tearing the mountains and breaking the rocks before the LORD; the LORD* ***was*** *not in the wind. And after the wind an earthquake; the LORD* ***was*** *not in the earthquake. And after the earthquake a fire; the LORD* ***was*** *not in the fire. And after the fire a sound of a thin silence.*

"Go out and stand on the mountain before the LORD." Then God passed by, just as He had passed by Moses on this mountain (Exodus 34:5-6).

"A great and strong wind was tearing the mountains and breaking the rocks before the LORD; the LORD was not in the wind." Then "an earthquake; the LORD was not in the earthquake." Then "a fire; the LORD was not in the fire." Wind, earthquake and fire were signs of God's power. At Sinai the mountain had shaken and smoked when God came down (Exodus 19:18). Elijah had just seen God answer by fire on Carmel. But this time, God was not in them.

"And after the fire a sound of a thin silence." Many of us grew up hearing this called the still small voice. The SLB gives a closer rendering of the Hebrew: a sound of a thin silence, or a soft whisper, a gentle stillness. After all the noise, quiet.

What was God teaching Elijah? I believe He was showing him that His work is not always done in fire and earthquake. Carmel was real, and the fire was from God. But the fire had not changed Jezebel's heart, and Elijah had expected it to change everything. God often works quietly, in

hearts, over time, through His word. He was also meeting His worn-out servant gently. Elijah did not need another storm. He needed to hear God's voice.

That is true for us too. We want God to show up in big, dramatic ways, and sometimes He does. But most of the time He speaks through His Word, quietly, to a heart that is listening. Jesus said, "My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me" (John 10:27). Are we quiet enough to hear?

19:13-14 *And it was, when Elijah heard, and he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood* ***at*** *the entrance of the cave. And look, a voice* ***came*** *to him, and it said, "What* ***is there*** *for you here, Elijah?" And he said, "I have been very zealous for the LORD, the God of armies; for the sons of Israel have forsaken Your covenant, Your altars they have torn down, and Your prophets they have killed with the sword; and I, I alone am left, and they have sought my life, to take it."*

"When Elijah heard, and he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave." He covered his face in awe, as Moses hid his face at the burning bush (Exodus 3:6). He knew he was in the presence of God.

"A voice came to him, and it said, What is there for you here, Elijah?" The same question. And Elijah gave the same answer, word for word. He had seen God pass by, and still his heart was saying the same thing. God did not argue with him. He gave him a new assignment and a new perspective.

19:15-17 *And the LORD said to him, "Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus; and you shall come and anoint Hazael as king over Syria. And Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint as king over Israel; and Elisha the son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place. And it shall be* ***that*** *the one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death; and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will put to death.*

"Go, return on your way to the wilderness of Damascus." Go back. Your work is not done. When we are discouraged, God often gives us not a long explanation but the next step of obedience.

He gave Elijah three people to anoint. "You shall come and anoint Hazael as king over Syria." "Jehu the son of Nimshi you shall anoint as king over Israel." "And Elisha the son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah you shall anoint as prophet in your place." To anoint meant to pour oil on someone as a sign that God had chosen him for a task.

Elijah himself anointed only Elisha, by throwing his cloak on him (19:19). Elisha later told Hazael he would be king (2 Kings 8:7-15), and one of Elisha's young prophets anointed Jehu (2 Kings 9:1-10). Elijah's work went on through the one who took his place. God's plan was bigger than one prophet.

"The one who escapes from the sword of Hazael, Jehu will put to death; and the one who escapes from the sword of Jehu, Elisha will put to death." Judgment on Baal worship was coming, through a foreign king, through a new king in Israel, and through the word of the prophet. Elijah thought Jezebel had won. God told him the end of her house was already planned.

19:18 *And I will leave in Israel seven thousand, all the knees which have not bowed to the Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him."*

Then God corrected Elijah's "I alone." "I will leave in Israel seven thousand, all the knees which have not bowed to the Baal, and every mouth which has not kissed him." To kiss an idol was an act of worship (Hosea 13:2).

Elijah was not alone. God had a remnant, a faithful few kept by His grace in the middle of a nation that had turned away. Elijah did not know them. God knew every one.

Paul pointed to this very verse when he asked whether God had rejected Israel:

Romans 11:2-5 (SLB)

"God did not reject His people whom He foreknew. Or do you not know what the Scripture says in Elijah, how he pleads with God against Israel, saying, Lord, they have killed Your prophets, and they have torn down Your altars, and I alone was left, and they are seeking my life? But what does the divine answer say to him? I have left for Myself seven thousand men who did not bow the knee to Baal. So then also in the present time there has come to be a remnant according to the election of grace."

God had not given up on Israel in Elijah's day, and He has not given up on Israel now. In Paul's day there was a remnant of Jewish believers in Jesus, and Paul goes on to say that one day "all Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26). I believe God will keep every promise He made to Abraham and David for the nation of Israel. And for each of us, this verse is a comfort. When you feel like the only one standing for the Lord, you are not. God has His people where you cannot see them.

19:19-21 *And he went from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, and he **was** plowing, twelve pairs **of oxen** before him, and he **was** with the twelfth. And Elijah passed over to him and threw his cloak on him. And he left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, "Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and I will walk after you." And he said to him, "Go, return, for what have I done to you?" And he returned from following him, and he took the pair of oxen and sacrificed it, and with the equipment of the oxen he cooked them, the flesh, and he gave **it** to the people, and they ate. And he arose and walked after Elijah and served him.*

"He went from there and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, and he was plowing, twelve pairs of oxen before him, and he was with the twelfth." Twelve teams of oxen meant a well-off farming family. Elisha was working hard at an ordinary job when God called him, as Peter and Andrew were fishing when Jesus called them.

"Elijah passed over to him and threw his cloak on him." The prophet's cloak was a sign of his office. Throwing it on Elisha said, without words: you will take my place.

Elisha understood at once. "He left the oxen and ran after Elijah and said, Please let me kiss my father and my mother, and I will walk after you." Elijah answered, "Go, return, for what have I done to you?" His meaning seems to be: go, say your goodbyes, but think about what I have just done to you. This call is from God, and it is your choice to answer it.

Elisha did more than say goodbye. "He took the pair of oxen and sacrificed it, and with the equipment of the oxen he cooked them." He burned his plow and yoke for firewood and gave a farewell feast to his people. There would be no going back to farming. Jesus later said, "No one having put his hand on the plow and looking at the things behind is fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62). Elisha put his hand to God's plow and burned the old one.

"He arose and walked after Elijah and served him." The man who would do great miracles began as a servant. And the discouraged prophet who thought he was alone now had a companion and a successor. God answered Elijah's loneliness with a friend.

Chapter 19 Summary

When Ahab told Jezebel what Elijah had done, she swore to kill him within a day. Elijah fled to Beersheba, left his servant, went a day into the wilderness, sat under a broom tree and asked the LORD to take his life. He slept, and an angel woke him twice with bread and water, saying the journey was too great for him. In the strength of that food he went forty days and nights to Horeb, the mountain of God. There the LORD asked, "What is there for you here, Elijah?" Elijah said he had been zealous, that Israel had forsaken the covenant, torn down God's altars and killed His prophets, and that he alone was left. The LORD passed by: a great wind, an earthquake and a fire came, but the LORD was not in them; then came a sound of a thin silence. Elijah wrapped his face and stood at the cave's entrance, and God asked the same question and heard the same answer. God sent him back to anoint Hazael king of Syria, Jehu king of Israel, and Elisha as prophet in his place, and told him that He had kept seven thousand in Israel who had not bowed to Baal. Elijah found Elisha plowing and threw his cloak on him. Elisha said goodbye to his parents, sacrificed his oxen, cooked them on the plow equipment, fed the people, and followed Elijah as his servant.

Chapter 19 Study Questions

1. What did Jezebel threaten, and how did Elijah respond? (19:2-3)

2. What did Elijah pray under the broom tree, and why do you think he felt that way? (19:4)

3. How did God care for Elijah before He spoke to him about his complaint? (19:5-8)

4. What question did God ask Elijah twice, and what was his answer? (19:9-10, 13-14)

5. What happened when the LORD passed by, and where was the LORD not? What came after the fire? (19:11-12)

6. What three people was Elijah told to anoint, and how was that carried out? (19:15-16)

7. How did God correct Elijah's belief that he was alone, and how does Paul use this in Romans 11:2-5? (19:18)

8. How did Elisha show that he was leaving his old life to follow God's call? (19:19-21; Luke 9:62)

9. Have you ever had a spiritual low right after a high? What helped you, and what can you learn from how God cared for Elijah?

10. Elijah expected God to work through fire and earthquake. Where might God be speaking to you quietly right now, and how can you make room to listen? (John 10:27)

Chapter 20: Ahab's Wars with Ben-hadad

Scripture

20:1-12 And Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his army, and thirty-two kings ***were*** with him, and horse and chariotry; and he went up and laid siege against Samaria, and he fought against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab, the king of Israel, into the city, and he said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad: 'Your silver and your gold, it ***is*** mine; and your wives and your sons, the good ***ones***, they ***are*** mine.'" And the king of Israel answered and said, "According to your word, my lord the king: I ***am*** yours, and all that ***is*** mine." And the messengers returned and said, "Thus says Ben-hadad, saying, 'Indeed I sent to you, saying, "Your silver and your gold and your wives and your sons you will give to me." But about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants; and it will be, every desirable thing of your eyes they will put in their hand, and they will take ***it***.'" And the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and he said, "Know, please, and see that this ***one*** is seeking evil; for he sent to me for my wives and for my sons and for my silver and for my gold, and I did not withhold ***them*** from him." And all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen, and do not consent." And he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Say to my lord the king, 'All that you sent to your servant ***for*** at the first I will do; and this thing I am not able to do.'" And the messengers went and brought him back word. And Ben-hadad sent to him and said, "Thus may the gods do to me, and thus may they add, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who ***are*** at my feet!" And the king of Israel answered and said, "Speak: 'Let not ***one*** girding on boast like ***one*** loosening.'" And it was, when he heard this word, and he ***was*** drinking, he and the kings, in the booths, and he said to his servants, "Set ***yourselves***!" And they set ***themselves*** against the city.

20:13-25 And look, a certain prophet drew near to Ahab the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I am about to give it into your hand today, and you will know that I ***am*** the LORD.'" And Ahab said, "By whom?" And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'By the young men of the officials of the provinces.'" And he said, "Who will begin the battle?" And he said, "You." And he mustered the young men of the officials of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the sons of Israel, seven thousand. And they went out at noon. And Ben-hadad ***was*** drinking ***himself*** drunk in the booths, he and the kings, thirty-two kings helping him. And the young men of the officials of the provinces went out at the first. And Ben-hadad sent, and they told him, saying, "Men have come out from Samaria." And he said, "If they have come out for peace, seize them alive; and if they have come out for battle, alive seize them." And these went out from the city, the young men of the officials of the provinces, and the army which ***was*** after them. And they struck down each his man; and Syria fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse, and horsemen ***with him***. And the king of Israel went out and struck down the horses and the chariotry, and he struck down among Syria a great slaughter. And the prophet drew near to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself, and know and see what you will do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria ***is*** coming up against you." And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Gods of mountains ***are*** their gods; therefore they were stronger than

we. But let us fight with them on the plain; surely we will be stronger than they. And do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put governors in their place. And you, you shall muster for yourself an army like the army that fell from you, and horse like the horse, and chariotry like the chariotry; and let us fight with them on the plain; surely we will be stronger than they." And he listened to their voice and did so.

20:26-34 And it was at the return of the year, and Ben-hadad mustered Syria and went up to Aphek for battle with Israel. And the sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned, and they went to meet them. And the sons of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, and Syria filled the land. And the man of God drew near and said to the king of Israel, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because Syria has said, "The LORD ***is*** a god of mountains, and He ***is*** not a god of valleys," I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you will know that I ***am*** the LORD.'" And these encamped opposite these seven days. And it was on the seventh day, and the battle drew near; and the sons of Israel struck down Syria, one hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day. And the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who remained. And Ben-hadad fled and went into the city, a room within a room. And his servants said to him, "Look, please, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel, that they ***are*** kings of steadfast love. Please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and let us go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will keep your soul alive." And they girded sackcloth on their loins and ropes on their heads, and they came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let my soul live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He ***is*** my brother." And the men were watching for an omen, and they hastened and caught ***it***, whether ***it was*** from him, and they said, "Your brother Ben-hadad!" And he said, "Go, take him." And Ben-hadad came out to him, and he brought him up on the chariot. And he said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will return; and you will make streets for yourself in Damascus, just as my father made in Samaria." "And I, with the covenant, will let you go." And he made a covenant with him and let him go.

20:35-43 And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his companion by the word of the LORD, "Strike me, please." And the man refused to strike him. And he said to him, "Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, look, you are about to go from me, and the lion will strike you down." And he went from beside him, and the lion found him and struck him down. And he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him, striking and wounding. And the prophet went and stood for the king by the way, and he disguised himself with the bandage over his eyes. And the king was passing by, and he cried out to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and look, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man. If he is indeed missing, then your life will be in place of his life, or you will weigh out approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of silver.' And your servant was doing ***things*** here and there, and he was not ***there***." And the king of Israel said to him, "So ***is*** your judgment; you yourself have decided ***it***." And he hastened and removed the bandage from over his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him, that he ***was one*** of the prophets. And he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let go from ***your*** hand the man devoted by Me to destruction, your life will be in place of his life, and your people in place of his people.'" And the king of Israel went to his house sullen and furious, and he came to Samaria.

Chapter 20 Preview

Ben-hadad king of Syria comes against Samaria with thirty-two allied kings and demands Ahab's silver, gold, wives and children. Ahab gives in at first, but when Ben-hadad demands the right to search his palace and take whatever he likes, Ahab and the elders refuse. Then something surprising happens. The LORD sends a prophet to wicked Ahab with a promise of victory, "and you will know that I am the LORD." With a small band of young officers leading the way, Israel routs the drunken Syrian army.

A year later the Syrians come back, convinced the LORD is a god of the hills who cannot win on the plains. Again God gives Israel victory, at Aphek, to prove He is LORD of the valleys too. But when Ben-hadad comes begging for his life, Ahab calls him "my brother," makes a treaty with him, and lets him go. A prophet then acts out a parable, and tells Ahab that because he let go the man God had devoted to destruction, his own life will be required. Ahab goes home sullen and angry. This chapter shows how patient God is with an evil king, giving him chance after chance to know Him, and how Ahab wasted every one.

Chapter 20 Study

20:1-4 *And Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his army, and thirty-two kings **were** with him, and horse and chariotry; and he went up and laid siege against Samaria, and he fought against it. And he sent messengers to Ahab, the king of Israel, into the city, and he said to him, "Thus says Ben-hadad: 'Your silver and your gold, it **is** mine; and your wives and your sons, the good **ones**, they **are** mine.'" And the king of Israel answered and said, "According to your word, my lord the king: I **am** yours, and all that **is** mine."*

"Ben-hadad, the king of Syria, gathered all his army, and thirty-two kings were with him." These were likely rulers of small city-states and tribes allied with or under Damascus. This is probably Ben-hadad II, the son or grandson of the Ben-hadad Asa paid (15:18), though some think it is the same man. He "laid siege against Samaria."

His first message was blunt. "Your silver and your gold, it is mine; and your wives and your sons, the good ones, they are mine." Ahab answered, "According to your word, my lord the king: I am yours, and all that is mine." He gave in completely. He may have thought it was a formal way of saying he would become Ben-hadad's servant and pay tribute.

20:5-9 *And the messengers returned and said, "Thus says Ben-hadad, saying, 'Indeed I sent to you, saying, "Your silver and your gold and your wives and your sons you will give to me." But about this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants; and it will be, every desirable thing of your eyes they will put in their hand, and they will take* ***it****.'" And the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and he said, "Know, please, and see that this* ***one*** *is seeking evil; for he sent to me for my wives and for my sons and for my silver and for my gold, and I did not withhold* ***them*** *from him." And all the elders and all the people said to him, "Do not listen, and do not consent." And he said to the messengers of Ben-hadad, "Say to my lord the king, 'All that you sent to your servant* ***for*** *at the first I will do; and this thing I am not able to do.'" And the messengers went and brought him back word.*

But Ben-hadad wanted more. "About this time tomorrow I will send my servants to you, and they will search your house and the houses of your servants; and it will be, every desirable thing of your eyes they will put in their hand, and they will take it." Not just tribute, but open plunder of the city.

Ahab "called all the elders of the land." "Know, please, and see that this one is seeking evil." The elders and people said, "Do not listen, and do not consent." So Ahab sent word back. He would give what was first demanded, but "this thing I am not able to do."

Bullies are rarely satisfied. Give in once, and they ask for more. Sin works the same way. It never stops at what it first asks of us.

20:10-12 *And Ben-hadad sent to him and said, "Thus may the gods do to me, and thus may they add, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who* ***are*** *at my feet!" And the king of Israel answered and said, "Speak: 'Let not* ***one*** *girding on boast like* ***one*** *loosening.'" And it was, when he heard this word, and he* ***was*** *drinking, he and the kings, in the booths, and he said to his servants, "Set* ***yourselves****!" And they set* ***themselves*** *against the city.*

Ben-hadad swore an oath: "Thus may the gods do to me, and thus may they add, if the dust of Samaria will suffice for handfuls for all the people who are at my feet!" His army was so big there would not be enough dust in Samaria for each soldier to carry off a handful. He would grind the city to powder.

Ahab answered with a proverb: "Let not one girding on boast like one loosening." The man putting on his armor before the battle should not brag like the man taking it off after he has won. It was a good answer. Don't count your victory before it happens.

Ben-hadad got the message while "he was drinking, he and the kings, in the booths." Booths were temporary shelters in the camp. He gave the order, "Set yourselves!" and they took their positions against the city.

20:13-15 *And look, a certain prophet drew near to Ahab the king of Israel and said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I am about to give it into your hand today, and you will know that I **am** the LORD.'" And Ahab said, "By whom?" And he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'By the young men of the officials of the provinces.'" And he said, "Who will begin the battle?" And he said, "You." And he mustered the young men of the officials of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty-two; and after them he mustered all the people, all the sons of Israel, seven thousand.*

"Look, a certain prophet drew near to Ahab the king of Israel." This is surprising. Ahab, the worst king Israel had seen, who served Baal and whose wife killed the LORD's prophets. And God sent him a promise.

"Thus says the LORD." Then: "Have you seen all this great multitude? Look, I am about to give it into your hand today, and you will know that I am the LORD." Why would God help Ahab? Not because Ahab deserved it. God was showing His glory before Israel and Syria, and He was giving Ahab another chance to know Him. After Carmel, after the rain, here was one more proof. God "is patient toward us, not wishing any to perish, but all to come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9).

"By whom?" asked Ahab. "By the young men of the officials of the provinces." These were likely young aides or soldiers serving the district governors, not the main army. "Who will begin the battle?" "You." God chose a small and unlikely force so that the victory would clearly be His.

Ahab mustered them, "two hundred and thirty-two," and behind them "all the sons of Israel, seven thousand." It is interesting that God had just told Elijah He had seven thousand faithful in Israel (19:18). Whether these numbers are connected, Scripture does not say.

20:16-21 *And they went out at noon. And Ben-hadad **was** drinking **himself** drunk in the booths, he and the kings, thirty-two kings helping him. And the young men of the officials of the provinces went out at the first. And Ben-hadad sent, and they told him, saying, "Men have come out from Samaria." And he said, "If they have come out for peace, seize them alive; and if they have come out for battle, alive seize them." And these went out from the city, the young men of the officials of the provinces, and the army which **was** after them. And they struck down each his man; and Syria fled, and Israel pursued them; and Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse, and horsemen **with him**. And the king of Israel went out and struck down the horses and the chariotry, and he struck down among Syria a great slaughter.*

"They went out at noon. And Ben-hadad was drinking himself drunk in the booths, he and the kings." The Syrian king was drunk in the middle of the day while his city siege was underway. When he was told men had come out of Samaria, he gave a careless order: "If they have come out for peace, seize them alive; and if they have come out for battle, alive seize them."

The young men went out first, and the army behind them. "They struck down each his man; and Syria fled, and Israel pursued them." Syria, called Aram in Hebrew, was the land of the Arameans. "Ben-hadad the king of Syria escaped on a horse." The king of Israel "struck down the horses and the chariotry, and he struck down among Syria a great slaughter."

Pride and drunkenness together are a dangerous mix. Ben-hadad had boasted about the dust of Samaria. Now he was running for his life. "Let not one girding on boast like one loosening" (20:11).

20:22-25 *And the prophet drew near to the king of Israel and said to him, "Go, strengthen yourself, and know and see what you will do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria **is** coming up against you." And the servants of the king of Syria said to him, "Gods of mountains **are** their gods; therefore they were stronger than we. But let us fight with them on the plain; surely we will be stronger than they. And do this thing: remove the kings, each from his place, and put governors in their place. And you, you shall muster for yourself an army like the army that fell from you, and horse like the horse, and chariotry like the chariotry; and let us fight with them on the plain; surely we will be stronger than they." And he listened to their voice and did so.*

"The prophet drew near to the king of Israel" again. "Go, strengthen yourself, and know and see what you will do; for at the return of the year the king of Syria is coming up against you." Kings went to war in the spring, after the rainy season (2 Samuel 11:1). God warned Ahab ahead of time.

Meanwhile Ben-hadad's servants had a theory. "Gods of mountains are their gods; therefore they were stronger than we. But let us fight with them on the plain." In the ancient world people thought each god ruled a certain area. Samaria was in the hills, so the LORD must be a hill god. On flat ground, where chariots were strong, they would win.

They also advised him to "remove the kings, each from his place, and put governors in their place." Professional officers instead of allied kings. And to rebuild his army "like the army that fell from you." It was sound military advice, built on a false idea of God.

20:26-28 *And it was at the return of the year, and Ben-hadad mustered Syria and went up to Aphek for battle with Israel. And the sons of Israel were mustered and were provisioned, and they went to meet them. And the sons of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, and Syria filled the land. And the man of God drew near and said to the king of Israel, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because Syria has said, "The LORD **is** a god of mountains, and He **is** not a god of valleys," I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you will know that I **am** the LORD.'"*

At the return of the year, "Ben-hadad mustered Syria and went up to Aphek for battle with Israel." Aphek was likely east of the Sea of Galilee, on open ground.

"The sons of Israel encamped before them like two little flocks of goats, and Syria filled the land." Israel looked tiny and weak.

Then "the man of God drew near" with God's word. "Because Syria has said, The LORD is a god of mountains, and He is not a god of valleys, I will give all this great multitude into your hand, and you will know that I am the LORD." The Syrians had insulted God by making Him small. God would show He was LORD of every place. "The earth is the LORD's, and its fullness" (1 Corinthians 10:26; Psalm 24:1). There is no valley in our lives where God is not God.

20:29-30 *And these encamped opposite these seven days. And it was on the seventh day, and the battle drew near; and the sons of Israel struck down Syria, one hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day. And the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who remained. And Ben-hadad fled and went into the city, a room within a room.*

"These encamped opposite these seven days." On the seventh day the battle began, "and the sons of Israel struck down Syria, one hundred thousand foot soldiers in one day." The rest fled into the city of Aphek, "and the wall fell on twenty-seven thousand men who remained."

I take these numbers as written. Some scholars read the Hebrew word for thousand here as a unit or company of soldiers, which would mean fewer men. Either way, the text presents a crushing defeat from God's hand, including a wall falling, much like the walls of Jericho.

"Ben-hadad fled and went into the city, a room within a room." He hid in an inner chamber, the great king now cornered.

20:31-34 *And his servants said to him, "Look, please, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel, that they **are** kings of steadfast love. Please let us put sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads, and let us go out to the king of Israel; perhaps he will keep your soul alive." And they girded sackcloth on their loins and ropes on their heads, and they came to the king of Israel and said, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let my soul live.'" And he said, "Is he still alive? He **is** my brother." And the men were watching for an omen, and they hastened and caught **it**, whether **it was** from him, and they said, "Your brother Ben-hadad!" And he said, "Go, take him." And Ben-hadad came out to him, and he brought him up on the chariot. And he said to him, "The cities which my father took from your father I will return; and you will make streets for yourself in Damascus, just as my father made in Samaria." "And I, with the covenant, will let you go." And he made a covenant with him and let him go.*

Ben-hadad's servants had another idea. "We have heard that the kings of the house of Israel, that they are kings of steadfast love." The word for steadfast love is hesed, loyal covenant kindness. The Syrians had heard that Israel's kings were merciful. They put "sackcloth on our loins and ropes on our heads," signs of humble surrender, and went to Ahab. "Your servant Ben-hadad says," they told him, "Please let my soul live."

Ahab answered, "Is he still alive? He is my brother." Brother was the word kings used for an equal partner in a treaty. The servants "were watching for an omen" and quickly took it up: "Your brother Ben-hadad!"

Ahab "brought him up on the chariot," a place of honor. Ben-hadad promised to give back cities his father had taken, and to let Ahab set up "streets," trading areas or markets, in Damascus. Ahab said, "And I, with the covenant, will let you go." And he did.

Why was this wrong? Mercy can be good. But God had given this enemy into Ahab's hand twice, and Ahab made his own deal for trade and politics without asking God. He called the enemy of God's people his brother. Many think Ahab wanted Ben-hadad as an ally against the rising power of Assyria. Assyrian records say that in 853 B.C. Ahab joined Damascus and other kings at the

battle of Qarqar against Shalmaneser III. Whatever his reasons, Ahab trusted a treaty more than the God who had just given him two victories.

20:35-36 *And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his companion by the word of the LORD, "Strike me, please." And the man refused to strike him. And he said to him, "Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, look, you are about to go from me, and the lion will strike you down." And he went from beside him, and the lion found him and struck him down.*

Now comes another hard story. "A certain man of the sons of the prophets said to his companion by the word of the LORD, Strike me, please." The sons of the prophets were groups of prophets who lived and learned together, often under a leader like Elijah or Elisha. This man had a message from God that required him to look wounded.

"The man refused to strike him." He would not hit a fellow prophet. That seems kind. But the prophet had spoken "by the word of the LORD." "Because you have not listened to the voice of the LORD, look, you are about to go from me, and the lion will strike you down." And it happened.

This echoes chapter 13. In both stories, a man who knew he was hearing God's word set it aside, and a lion was the result. The lesson is the same: when God has spoken, our own ideas of what is kind or reasonable do not outrank His word. Samuel had told Saul, "to listen is better than sacrifice" (1 Samuel 15:22). This story sets up the next one. A man who would not obey God died, and Ahab, who also would not obey God, was about to be told the same.

20:37-40 *And he found another man and said, "Strike me, please." And the man struck him, striking and wounding. And the prophet went and stood for the king by the way, and he disguised himself with the bandage over his eyes. And the king was passing by, and he cried out to the king and said, "Your servant went out into the midst of the battle; and look, a man turned aside and brought a man to me and said, 'Guard this man. If he is indeed missing, then your life will be in place of his life, or you will weigh out approximately 75 pounds (a talent) of silver.' And your servant was doing **things** here and there, and he was not **there**." And the king of Israel said to him, "So **is** your judgment; you yourself have decided **it**."*

The prophet found another man. "Strike me, please." "And the man struck him, striking and wounding." Then he waited by the road for the king, "and he disguised himself with the bandage over his eyes."

When the king passed, he called out a story. In the battle, someone had given him a prisoner to guard. "Guard this man. If he is indeed missing, then your life will be in place of his life," or he would have to pay a talent of silver, about seventy-five pounds, a huge sum. "And your servant was doing things here and there, and he was not there." He was busy, and the prisoner got away.

Ahab gave his verdict at once. "So is your judgment; you yourself have decided it." You agreed to the terms. You pay.

This is the same method Nathan used with David (2 Samuel 12:1-7). Tell a story, let the king judge it, and then show him that he is the man in the story.

20:41-43 *And he hastened and removed the bandage from over his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him, that he **was one** of the prophets. And he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have let go from **your** hand the man devoted by Me to destruction, your life will be in place of his life, and your people in place of his people.'" And the king of Israel went to his house sullen and furious, and he came to Samaria.*

The prophet "removed the bandage from over his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him, that he was one of the prophets."

Then came God's word. "Because you have let go from your hand the man devoted by Me to destruction, your life will be in place of his life, and your people in place of his people." "Devoted to destruction" translates the Hebrew herem, something given over completely to God for judgment. God had placed Ben-hadad under that judgment. Ahab let him go for a trade deal, just as Saul spared Agag (1 Samuel 15). The prisoner God had put in his hands got away while the king was busy here and there.

Ahab's life would be required. Chapter 22 tells how. And the Syrians whom Ahab spared would go on to bring terrible suffering on Israel (2 Kings 6-10).

"The king of Israel went to his house sullen and furious, and he came to Samaria." He was angry, but not sorry. He resented God's word instead of repenting. We will see the same words, sullen and furious, in the next chapter, over a vineyard.

Chapter 20 Summary

Ben-hadad king of Syria besieged Samaria with thirty-two kings and demanded Ahab's silver, gold, wives and children. Ahab agreed, but when Ben-hadad demanded to plunder his palace and the houses of his servants, Ahab and the elders refused. Ben-hadad boasted that Samaria's dust would not be enough for his army, and Ahab answered that the one putting on armor should not boast like the one taking it off. A prophet told Ahab the LORD would give the multitude into his hand so he would know the LORD. The young men of the provincial officials led the attack while Ben-hadad was drunk, and Israel routed Syria. The prophet warned that Syria would return in the spring. The Syrians decided the LORD was a god of the hills and came to fight on the plain at Aphek. A man of God said the LORD would give them into Israel's hand to show He is LORD of the valleys too. Israel struck down a great army, and a wall fell on many more. Ben-hadad came begging in sackcloth, and Ahab called him his brother, made a treaty, and let him go. A prophet who had been wounded at the LORD's command, after another man who refused to strike him was killed by a lion, disguised himself and told Ahab a parable of a prisoner who escaped. Ahab condemned the man in the story, and the prophet told him that because he let go the man God devoted to destruction, his life would go for Ben-hadad's life. Ahab went home sullen and furious.

Chapter 20 Study Questions

1. What did Ben-hadad demand at first, and what did he demand next? (20:3, 6)

2. What proverb did Ahab use, and what does it mean? (20:11)

3. Why do you think God sent a prophet to promise victory to a king as wicked as Ahab? (20:13; 2 Peter 3:9)

4. Who led Israel's army into battle, and why does that matter? (20:14-15)

5. What did the Syrians believe about the LORD, and how did God answer it? (20:23, 28)

6. Why was it wrong for Ahab to make a treaty with Ben-hadad and let him go? (20:34, 42)

7. How does the story of the prophet and the lion connect with chapter 13? (20:35-36)

8. How did the prophet use a story to bring Ahab to judge himself? (20:39-42; 2 Samuel 12:1-7)

9. The Syrians thought God ruled the hills but not the valleys. Is there a "valley" in your life where you have acted as if God had no power?

10. Ahab went home "sullen and furious" instead of repentant. When God's Word corrects you, how do you usually respond?

Chapter 21: Naboth's Vineyard

Scripture

21:1-16 And it was after these things: a vineyard belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, which ***was*** in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab, the king of Samaria. And Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, and let it be mine for a garden of vegetables, for it ***is*** near beside my house; and I will give you in place of it a vineyard better than it. If ***it is*** good in your eyes, I will give you silver, the price of this ***one***." And Naboth said to Ahab, "Far be it from me, from the LORD, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you." And Ahab came to his house sullen and furious on account of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him, and he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and he turned away his face, and he did not eat bread. And Jezebel his wife came to him and spoke to him, "Why ***is*** this, ***that*** your spirit ***is*** sullen and you are not eating bread?" And he spoke to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for silver; or if you desire ***it***, I will give you a vineyard in place of it.' And he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" And Jezebel his wife said to him, "You, now, do you exercise kingship over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be glad. I myself will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite." And she wrote letters in the name of Ahab, and she sealed ***them*** with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who ***were*** in his city, who dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people. And seat two men, sons of worthlessness, before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' And take him out and stone him, and let him die." And the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did just as Jezebel had sent to them, just as ***it was*** written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people. And the two men, sons of worthlessness, came and sat before him; and the men of worthlessness testified against him, against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed God and the king." And they took him outside the city, and they stoned him with stones, and he died. And they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned, and he has died." And it was, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and had died, and Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for silver; for Naboth is not alive, for he has died." And it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth had died, and Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.

21:17-29 And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel, who ***is*** in Samaria. Look, ***he is*** in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. And you will speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered, and also taken possession?"' And you will speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours."'" And Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he said, "I have found ***you***, because you have sold yourself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD. Look, I am about to bring evil to you, and I will sweep away after you, and I will cut off from Ahab ***every*** one who urinates against a wall, and ***the one*** shut up and ***the one*** left free in Israel. And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah,

because of the provocation with which you have provoked ***Me*** to anger, and you have caused Israel to sin. And also of Jezebel the LORD has spoken, saying, 'The dogs will devour Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.' The one of Ahab who dies in the city the dogs will devour, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will devour." Surely there was not ***one*** like Ahab, who sold himself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife incited. And he acted very abominably, walking after the idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD dispossessed from before the sons of Israel. And it was, when Ahab heard these words, and he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh, and he fasted, and he lay down in the sackcloth, and he went about softly. And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; in the days of his son I will bring the evil on his house."

Chapter 21 Preview

Naboth of Jezreel owns a vineyard next to Ahab's palace there. Ahab wants it for a vegetable garden and offers a fair trade or a fair price. Naboth refuses, because the land is the inheritance of his fathers, and God's Law said family land was not to be sold away. Ahab goes home and sulks on his bed. Jezebel mocks him, then takes over. She writes letters in Ahab's name to the elders of Jezreel: proclaim a fast, seat Naboth up front, bring two worthless men to accuse him of cursing God and the king, then take him out and stone him. The elders do exactly as she says. Naboth is murdered under the cover of a religious fast and a fake trial, and Ahab goes down to take the vineyard.

God sees. He sends Elijah to meet Ahab in the vineyard with the question, "Have you murdered, and also taken possession?" Elijah announces that dogs will lick Ahab's blood where they licked Naboth's, that Ahab's house will be swept away like Jeroboam's and Baasha's, and that dogs will eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. Then something surprising happens. Ahab tears his clothes, puts on sackcloth, fasts and goes about quietly, and the LORD tells Elijah that because Ahab has humbled himself, the disaster will come in his son's days instead. This is one of the hardest chapters in Kings: the murder of an innocent man by those in power. It is also a chapter about a God who sees injustice, judges it, and still shows mercy to the humble.

Chapter 21 Study

21:1-3 *And it was after these things: a vineyard belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, which **was** in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab, the king of Samaria. And Ahab spoke to Naboth, saying, "Give me your vineyard, and let it be mine for a garden of vegetables, for it **is** near beside my house; and I will give you in place of it a vineyard better than it. If **it is** good in your eyes, I will give you silver, the price of this **one**." And Naboth said to Ahab, "Far be it from me, from the LORD, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you."*

"A vineyard belonged to Naboth the Jezreelite, which was in Jezreel, beside the palace of Ahab." Ahab's capital was Samaria, but he also had a palace at Jezreel, in the fertile valley about twenty-five miles to the north.

Ahab made what sounded like a reasonable offer. "Give me your vineyard, and let it be mine for a garden of vegetables, for it is near beside my house; and I will give you in place of it a vineyard better than it. If it is good in your eyes, I will give you silver, the price of this one." He offered a better vineyard or a fair price.

But Naboth said, "Far be it from me, from the LORD, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers to you." Why would he refuse a good deal? Because the land was not just property to him. God had given each family in Israel its share of the land, and the Law said it should stay in the family. "The land shall not be sold in perpetuity, for the land is Mine," God said (Leviticus 25:23). "The sons of Israel shall cling, each man to the inheritance of the tribe of his fathers" (Numbers 36:7). Naboth was not being stubborn. He was being faithful. He would rather keep God's law than please the king.

21:4 *And Ahab came to his house sullen and furious on account of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him, and he said, "I will not give you the inheritance of my fathers." And he lay down on his bed, and he turned away his face, and he did not eat bread.*

"Ahab came to his house sullen and furious." These are the very words used at the end of chapter 20, after the prophet rebuked him. Now he was in the same mood over a garden. "He lay down on his bed, and he turned away his face, and he did not eat bread."

The king of Israel, who had palaces, an army and a house of ivory (22:39), lay on his bed and pouted like a child because one farmer would not sell him a field. That is what coveting does. The tenth commandment says, "You shall not covet the house of your neighbor" or anything that belongs to your neighbor (Exodus 20:17). Coveting means wanting what belongs to someone else so badly that it eats at you. It makes rich men feel poor. Jesus warned, "guard yourselves from covetousness" (Luke 12:15). James says that wanting what we do not have leads to fighting and even murder (James 4:2). This chapter shows exactly how.

21:5-7 *And Jezebel his wife came to him and spoke to him, "Why **is** this, **that** your spirit **is** sullen and you are not eating bread?" And he spoke to her, "Because I spoke to Naboth the Jezreelite and said to him, 'Give me your vineyard for silver; or if you desire **it**, I will give you a vineyard in place of it.' And he said, 'I will not give you my vineyard.'" And Jezebel his wife said to him, "You, now, do you exercise kingship over Israel? Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be glad. I myself will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."*

"Jezebel his wife came to him." "Why is this, that your spirit is sullen and you are not eating bread?" Ahab told her, leaving out Naboth's reason. He made it sound like Naboth simply refused. He said nothing about God's law.

Jezebel's reply was full of scorn. "You, now, do you exercise kingship over Israel?" In her homeland of Sidon, kings took what they wanted. She did not understand, or did not care, that in Israel even the king was under God's law (Deuteronomy 17:18-20). "Arise, eat bread, and let your heart be glad. I myself will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite."

21:8-10 *And she wrote letters in the name of Ahab, and she sealed **them** with his seal, and she sent the letters to the elders and to the nobles who **were** in his city, who dwelt with Naboth. And she wrote in the letters, saying, "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people. And seat two men, sons of worthlessness, before him, and let them testify against him, saying, 'You have cursed God and the king.' And take him out and stone him, and let him die."*

"She wrote letters in the name of Ahab, and she sealed them with his seal." The royal seal was pressed into clay or wax to make an order official. Ahab must have let her use it, or at least did not stop her.

She sent the letters "to the elders and to the nobles who were in his city, who dwelt with Naboth." These were his neighbors, the leaders who were supposed to judge fairly at the city gate.

Her plan was cruel and careful. "Proclaim a fast, and seat Naboth at the head of the people." A fast was usually called when some great sin or disaster had come on a town. Seating Naboth at the front would make everyone think he was the cause. "And seat two men, sons of worthlessness, before him, and let them testify against him." The charge was to be, "You have cursed God and the king." "Sons of worthlessness" means wicked, lawless men. The Law required two witnesses for a death sentence (Deuteronomy 17:6), so she provided two false ones. Cursing God was punishable by stoning (Leviticus 24:16). "And take him out and stone him, and let him die."

Notice how she used God's own law as a weapon. A fast, two witnesses, the charge of blasphemy, stoning outside the city. Every outward form was kept. The heart of the law, justice, was murdered. Evil is never more dangerous than when it wears religious clothes.

21:11-14 *And the men of his city, the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did just as Jezebel had sent to them, just as **it was** written in the letters which she had sent to them. They proclaimed a fast and seated Naboth at the head of the people. And the two men, sons of worthlessness, came and sat before him; and the men of worthlessness testified against him, against Naboth, before the people, saying, "Naboth has cursed God and the king." And they took him outside the city, and they stoned him with stones, and he died. And they sent to Jezebel, saying, "Naboth has been stoned, and he has died."*

"The men of his city, the elders and the nobles who dwelt in his city, did just as Jezebel had sent to them." Not one of them refused. Not one warned Naboth. They were afraid of the queen, or they wanted her favor, or they simply went along. Their silence made them partners in murder.

"The two men, sons of worthlessness, came and sat before him," and testified, "Naboth has cursed God and the king." "And they took him outside the city, and they stoned him with stones, and he died." 2 Kings 9:26 tells us that Naboth's sons were killed too, so that no heir was left to claim the land.

Then they reported back, "Naboth has been stoned, and he has died." It was all done by the book.

This is very hard to read. An innocent, faithful man was killed by the people in power, with lying witnesses, in the name of God. I will not try to soften it. But I want to point out what this picture brings to mind. Centuries later, the chief priests and elders "were seeking false testimony against

Jesus so that they might put Him to death," and at last "two false witnesses" came forward (Matthew 26:59-60). Jesus too was charged with blasphemy and was put to death outside the city (Hebrews 13:12). Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was taken "out of the city" and stoned on false testimony (Acts 7:58). Naboth was not Christ, but his story is a picture of what the world often does to the righteous. And God saw every one of them.

If you have suffered injustice from those with power over you, God sees that too. He is the Judge of all the earth, and He will set things right (Romans 12:19). And if you know of someone being hurt in this way, do what the elders of Jezreel did not do. Speak up, and help them get help.

21:15-16 *And it was, when Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and had died, and Jezebel said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for silver; for Naboth is not alive, for he has died." And it was, when Ahab heard that Naboth had died, and Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it.*

"When Jezebel heard that Naboth had been stoned and had died," she said to Ahab, "Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give you for silver; for Naboth is not alive, for he has died." She said it as if she were handing him a gift.

"When Ahab heard that Naboth had died, and Ahab arose to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it." He did not ask how Naboth died. He did not want to know. He just went to collect. Ahab did not throw a stone, but he wanted the vineyard, he let Jezebel use his seal, and he gladly took the profit. God would hold him responsible.

21:17-19 *And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Arise, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel, who **is** in Samaria. Look, **he is** in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it. And you will speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "Have you murdered, and also taken possession?"' And you will speak to him, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours."'"*

"The word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite." No one in Jezreel spoke up for Naboth. God did.

"Arise, go down to meet Ahab the king of Israel." "Look, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, where he has gone down to take possession of it." Ahab was walking among the vines, planning his garden, when the prophet appeared.

God's question was sharp: "Have you murdered, and also taken possession?" Two sins, and God named both. Then the sentence: "In the place where the dogs licked up the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick up your blood, even yours."

It is a picture of perfect justice. Naboth's blood was spilled and left for the dogs. Ahab's would be too. Paul says, "whatever a man sows, this he will also reap" (Galatians 6:7).

21:20-22 *And Ahab said to Elijah, "Have you found me, O my enemy?" And he said, "I have found **you**, because you have sold yourself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD. Look, I am about to bring evil to you, and I will sweep away after you, and I will cut off from Ahab **every** one who urinates against a wall, and **the one** shut up and **the one** left free in Israel. And I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, because of the provocation with which you have provoked **Me** to anger, and you have caused Israel to sin.*

"Have you found me, O my enemy?" Ahab had called Elijah the troubler of Israel (18:17). Now he called him his enemy. A man who hates God will see God's messengers as his enemies.

Elijah answered, "I have found you, because you have sold yourself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD." To sell yourself is to give yourself over as a slave. Ahab had sold himself to sin for a vegetable garden. Jesus asked what good it is for a man to gain the whole world and lose his soul (Mark 8:36).

Then came the word on his whole family: "I will sweep away after you, and I will cut off from Ahab every one who urinates against a wall." This is the same blunt Hebrew phrase meaning every male that was spoken over Jeroboam (14:10). "I will make your house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah." Both of those dynasties had been wiped out. Now Ahab's would be too, "because of the provocation with which you have provoked Me to anger, and you have caused Israel to sin."

21:23-24 *And also of Jezebel the LORD has spoken, saying, 'The dogs will devour Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel.' The one of Ahab who dies in the city the dogs will devour, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will devour."*

"And also of Jezebel the LORD has spoken." The word was, "The dogs will devour Jezebel by the rampart of Jezreel." The rampart was the city wall. More than ten years later, Jehu came to Jezreel, Jezebel was thrown from a window, and when they went to bury her, only her skull, feet and hands were left. Jehu said it was the word of the LORD spoken through Elijah (2 Kings 9:30-37).

"The one of Ahab who dies in the city the dogs will devour, and the one who dies in the field the birds of the heavens will devour." The same judgment spoken over Jeroboam and Baasha. The kings of Israel kept walking in the same sin, and kept meeting the same end.

21:25-26 *Surely there was not **one** like Ahab, who sold himself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife incited. And he acted very abominably, walking after the idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD dispossessed from before the sons of Israel.*

The writer stops the story to give his verdict. "Surely there was not one like Ahab, who sold himself to do the evil in the eyes of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife incited." Jezebel stirred him up, but he chose it. Her sin did not excuse his.

"He acted very abominably, walking after the idols, according to all that the Amorites had done, whom the LORD dispossessed from before the sons of Israel." The Amorites were among the

nations God drove out of Canaan because of their wickedness (Genesis 15:16). Ahab had brought their sins back into the land.

21:27 *And it was, when Ahab heard these words, and he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh, and he fasted, and he lay down in the sackcloth, and he went about softly.*

Then a surprise. "When Ahab heard these words, and he tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh, and he fasted, and he lay down in the sackcloth, and he went about softly." Tearing clothes and wearing sackcloth, a rough cloth of goat's hair, were signs of grief and repentance. Ahab, the worst king Israel had seen, humbled himself.

Was it real? Many readers doubt it, because in the next chapter Ahab still hates God's prophet and goes his own way. Scripture does not say he tore down Baal's temple or gave back the vineyard. I think it is wise to say his humbling was real but not deep or lasting. He was truly afraid, and he truly bowed before God's word, at least for a time. But he did not turn his whole life around.

21:28-29 *And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, "Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before Me? Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; in the days of his son I will bring the evil on his house."*

"Have you seen that Ahab has humbled himself before Me?" God Himself pointed it out to Elijah. "Because he has humbled himself before Me, I will not bring the evil in his days; in the days of his son I will bring the evil on his house."

This is amazing grace. God saw even the imperfect humbling of a very wicked man, and He responded with mercy. The judgment on Ahab himself still came (22:38), but the destruction of his house was put off until his son Joram. It came true when Jehu killed Joram and threw his body on Naboth's land (2 Kings 9:24-26).

Does that seem unfair to Joram? Joram was not punished for his father's sin alone. Joram himself did evil in the eyes of the LORD and held on to the sins of Jeroboam (2 Kings 3:1-3). God delayed the judgment. He did not punish an innocent man.

What does this tell us about God? He would rather show mercy than judgment. "I take no pleasure in the death of the wicked man, but in a wicked man turning back from his way" (Ezekiel 33:11). If God paid attention when Ahab humbled himself, how much more will He welcome anyone who comes to Him with a broken heart today? "Be humbled before the Lord, and He will exalt you" (James 4:10). No one is too far gone to humble himself before God. But do not stop where Ahab stopped. True repentance is not just being sorry for what is coming. It is turning from sin to God, and trusting the One who took the judgment for us.

Chapter 21 Summary

Naboth of Jezreel had a vineyard beside Ahab's palace. Ahab offered him a better vineyard or a fair price, but Naboth refused to give up the inheritance of his fathers, as the LORD's law required. Ahab went home sullen and angry, lay on his bed and would not eat. Jezebel mocked him and promised to get the vineyard. She wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed with his seal,

telling the elders and nobles of Jezreel to proclaim a fast, seat Naboth at the front, set two worthless men to accuse him of cursing God and the king, and stone him. They did it, and reported Naboth's death. Jezebel told Ahab to take the vineyard, and he went down to possess it. The LORD sent Elijah to meet him there and ask, "Have you murdered, and also taken possession?" Elijah declared that dogs would lick Ahab's blood where they licked Naboth's, that his house would be swept away like the houses of Jeroboam and Baasha, and that dogs would devour Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. The writer says there was no one like Ahab, who sold himself to do evil, stirred up by Jezebel. When Ahab heard these words he tore his clothes, wore sackcloth, fasted and went about quietly. The LORD told Elijah that because Ahab had humbled himself, the disaster on his house would come in his son's days.

Chapter 21 Study Questions

1. What did Ahab offer Naboth, and why did Naboth refuse? (21:2-3; Leviticus 25:23)

2. How did Ahab respond when he did not get what he wanted? (21:4)

3. What was Jezebel's plan, and how did she use the outward forms of the law to carry it out? (21:8-10)

4. Why do you think the elders and nobles of Jezreel went along with it? (21:11)

5. What two sins did God name in His question to Ahab? (21:19)

6. What judgments did Elijah announce on Ahab, his house, and Jezebel? (21:19-24)

7. How did Ahab respond to God's word, and how did God answer? (21:27-29)

8. How does Naboth's death call to mind the trial of Jesus and the death of Stephen? (Matthew 26:59-60; Acts 7:58)

9. Coveting turned a king into a sulking child and led to murder. Is there something you want so badly that it is stealing your peace or tempting you to compromise? (Exodus 20:17; Luke 12:15)

10. God showed mercy when even Ahab humbled himself. What does that tell you about how God will respond if you come to Him humbly today? (James 4:10)

Chapter 22: Micaiah and the Death of Ahab

Scripture

22:1-12 And they remained three years; there was no war between Syria and Israel. And it was in the third year, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead ***belongs*** to us, and we are keeping still from taking it from the hand of the king of Syria?" And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle ***at*** Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "As I ***am***, so ***are*** you; as my people, so ***are*** your people; as my horses, so ***are*** your horses." And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Inquire, please, today ***for*** the word of the LORD." And the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about four hundred men, and he said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, and the Lord will give ***it*** into the hand of the king." And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD still, that we may inquire of him?" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "***There is*** still one man by whom to inquire of the LORD, and I, I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil: Micaiah the son of Imlah." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so." And the king of Israel called a certain officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly." And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah ***were*** sitting, each on his throne, clothed ***in*** garments, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets ***were*** prophesying before them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you will gore Syria until ***you*** destroy them.'" And all the prophets ***were*** prophesying so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed, and the LORD will give ***it*** into the hand of the king."

22:13-28 And the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Look, please, the words of the prophets ***are*** good to the king ***with*** one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good." And Micaiah said, "***As*** the LORD lives, surely what the LORD says to me, that I will speak." And he came to the king, and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he said to him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give ***it*** into the hand of the king." And the king said to him, "Up to how many times will I make you swear that you will not speak to me ***anything*** but truth in the name of the LORD?" And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like the flock which has no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no masters; let them return each to his house in peace.'" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not say to you, 'He does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil'?" And he said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of the heavens standing by Him, on His right and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And this ***one*** said thus, and this ***one*** was saying thus. And the spirit came forth and stood before the LORD and said, 'I, I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what?' And he said, 'I will go out, and I will be a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all his prophets.' And He said, 'You will entice, and also you will prevail. Go out and do so.' And now, look, the LORD has put a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you." And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah drew near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "Which

way did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak with you?" And Micaiah said, "Look, you are about to see on that day, when you go into a room within a room to hide yourself." And the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and bring him back to Amon the official of the city and to Joash the son of the king, and you will say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this ***one*** in the house of confinement, and feed him bread of oppression and water of oppression until I come in peace."'" And Micaiah said, "If you indeed return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, O peoples, all of them!"

22:29-40 And the king of Israel went up, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into the battle; and you, put on your garments." And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. And the king of Syria had commanded the commanders of the chariotry which ***belonged*** to him, thirty-two, saying, "Do not fight with small or with great, but with the king of Israel, him alone." And it was, when the commanders of the chariotry saw Jehoshaphat, and they said, "Surely he ***is*** the king of Israel." And they turned aside against him to fight, and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it was, when the commanders of the chariotry saw that he ***was*** not the king of Israel, and they turned back from after him. And a man drew the bow in his innocence and struck the king of Israel between the joints and the body armor. And he said to his charioteer, "Turn your hand and take me out of the camp, for I am wounded." And the battle increased on that day, and the king was made to stand in the chariot opposite Syria; and he died in the evening, and the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. And the cry passed through the camp as the sun went ***down***, saying, "Each to his city, and each to his land!" And the king died, and he came ***to*** Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot at the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken. And the rest of the matters of Ahab, and all that he did, and the house of ivory which he built, and all the cities which he built, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Ahab lay down with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.

22:41-53 And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat ***was*** a son of thirty-five years when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother ***was*** Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing what ***is*** right in the eyes of the LORD. Only the high places were not removed; the people ***were*** still sacrificing and making ***offerings*** smoke on the high places. And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel. And the rest of the matters of Jehoshaphat, and his might which he showed, and how he waged war, ***are*** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And the rest of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of Asa his father, he swept away from the land. And there was no king in Edom; a deputy ***was*** king. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, and it did not go, for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." And Jehoshaphat was not willing. And Jehoshaphat lay down with his fathers, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoram his son reigned in his place. Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he

walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. And he served the Baal and bowed down to it, and he provoked to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.

Chapter 22 Preview

After three years of peace with Syria, Ahab wants to take back the city of Ramoth-gilead, and he asks Jehoshaphat king of Judah to join him. Jehoshaphat agrees, but asks first for the word of the LORD. Ahab gathers four hundred prophets who all say, "Go up." Jehoshaphat is not satisfied and asks if there is not a prophet of the LORD. There is one, Micaiah son of Imlah, and Ahab hates him because he never prophesies good about him. Micaiah is brought in. First he mocks the king by repeating the four hundred, and then he tells the truth: Israel will be scattered like sheep without a shepherd. Then he describes a vision of the LORD on His throne, asking who will entice Ahab to go up and fall, and a spirit that offers to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets. This vision is one of the hard passages of 1 Kings.

Ahab throws Micaiah in prison and goes to battle anyway, in disguise. Jehoshaphat nearly dies in his royal robes, but a soldier draws his bow at random and the arrow finds the gap in Ahab's armor. Ahab dies that evening, propped up in his chariot, and the dogs lick his blood at the pool of Samaria, just as the LORD had said. The book closes with a short look at good King Jehoshaphat of Judah, and at Ahab's son Ahaziah, who walks in the ways of his father and mother. No disguise can hide a man from the word of God. 2 Chronicles 18 tells the same story.

Chapter 22 Study

22:1-4 *And they remained three years; there was no war between Syria and Israel. And it was in the third year, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to the king of Israel. And the king of Israel said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead **belongs** to us, and we are keeping still from taking it from the hand of the king of Syria?" And he said to Jehoshaphat, "Will you go with me to battle **at** Ramoth-gilead?" And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "As I **am**, so **are** you; as my people, so **are** your people; as my horses, so **are** your horses."*

"They remained three years; there was no war between Syria and Israel." This was likely the time when Ahab and Ben-hadad stood together against Assyria (see 20:34).

In the third year, "Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went down to the king of Israel." The long war between Israel and Judah had ended. 2 Chronicles 18:1 tells us that Jehoshaphat "allied himself by marriage to Ahab." His son Jehoram married Ahab's daughter Athaliah (2 Kings 8:18, 26). That marriage would bring terrible trouble to Judah later.

Ahab said to his servants, "Do you know that Ramoth-gilead belongs to us, and we are keeping still from taking it from the hand of the king of Syria?" Ramoth-gilead was an important fortified city east of the Jordan. It seems Ben-hadad never gave it back as he had promised (20:34). The king Ahab spared was now his problem again.

"Will you go with me to battle at Ramoth-gilead?" Jehoshaphat answered, "As I am, so are you; as my people, so are your people; as my horses, so are your horses." In other words, we are one. It was a generous answer, but it was a godly king tying himself to an ungodly one. The prophet Jehu later rebuked him: "Should you help the wicked, and will you love those who hate the LORD?" (2 Chronicles 19:2).

22:5-8 *And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, "Inquire, please, today **for** the word of the LORD." And the king of Israel gathered the prophets, about four hundred men, and he said to them, "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" And they said, "Go up, and the Lord will give **it** into the hand of the king." And Jehoshaphat said, "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD still, that we may inquire of him?" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "**There is** still one man by whom to inquire of the LORD, and I, I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil: Micaiah the son of Imlah." And Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."*

To his credit, Jehoshaphat said, "Inquire, please, today for the word of the LORD." He should have asked before he promised, but at least he asked.

"The king of Israel gathered the prophets, about four hundred men." These were not the prophets of Baal, who had died at the Kishon. They were prophets who spoke in the LORD's name, probably attached to Jeroboam's shrines and to the court. "Shall I go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall I refrain?" With one voice: "Go up, and the Lord will give it into the hand of the king."

Jehoshaphat was uneasy. "Is there not here a prophet of the LORD still, that we may inquire of him?" Four hundred voices agreeing with the king did not sound like the voice of God to him.

Ahab admitted, "There is still one man by whom to inquire of the LORD, and I, I hate him, for he does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil: Micaiah the son of Imlah." What an honest confession of a dishonest heart. Ahab did not hate Micaiah for lying. He hated him for telling the truth. Paul warned of a time when people "will heap up teachers for themselves" who say what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3).

Jehoshaphat said, "Let not the king say so."

22:9-12 *And the king of Israel called a certain officer and said, "Bring Micaiah the son of Imlah quickly." And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah **were** sitting, each on his throne, clothed **in** garments, at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets **were** prophesying before them. And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron, and he said, "Thus says the LORD: 'With these you will gore Syria until **you** destroy them.'" And all the prophets **were** prophesying so, saying, "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed, and the LORD will give **it** into the hand of the king."*

Ahab sent an officer to bring Micaiah "quickly." Meanwhile the scene was set for a show. "The king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah were sitting, each on his throne, clothed in garments," their royal robes, "at the threshing floor at the entrance of the gate of Samaria." A threshing floor was a wide, flat open space, good for a large gathering. "All the prophets were prophesying before them."

"Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah made for himself horns of iron." Horns were a picture of strength, like a bull goring its enemy. "Thus says the LORD." Then: "With these you will gore Syria until you destroy them." He acted out the message to make it more convincing. All the prophets joined in: "Go up to Ramoth-gilead and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

Zedekiah used the LORD's name. He had a dramatic sign. He had four hundred others agreeing with him. But he was wrong. A message is not true because it is loud, or popular, or uses God's name.

22:13-14 *And the messenger who had gone to call Micaiah spoke to him, saying, "Look, please, the words of the prophets **are** good to the king **with** one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good." And Micaiah said, "**As** the LORD lives, surely what the LORD says to me, that I will speak."*

The messenger tried to prepare Micaiah. "Look, please, the words of the prophets are good to the king with one mouth. Please let your word be like the word of one of them, and speak good." Go along with everyone else. Do not make trouble.

Micaiah's answer is one every preacher and every believer should remember. "As the LORD lives, surely what the LORD says to me, that I will speak." He would not shape the message to please anyone, not the king, not the crowd, not the messenger. Paul said the same: "if I were still pleasing men, I would not be a slave of Christ" (Galatians 1:10).

22:15-16 *And he came to the king, and the king said to him, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And he said to him, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give **it** into the hand of the king." And the king said to him, "Up to how many times will I make you swear that you will not speak to me **anything** but truth in the name of the LORD?"*

The king asked, "Micaiah, shall we go against Ramoth-gilead to battle, or shall we refrain?" And Micaiah said, "Go up and succeed, and the LORD will give it into the hand of the king."

Those were nearly the exact words of the four hundred. Was Micaiah lying? No. His tone must have made it clear he was mocking them, because Ahab knew at once he did not mean it. "Up to how many times will I make you swear that you will not speak to me anything but truth in the name of the LORD?" Ahab demanded the truth, though he had already said he hated the man who told it.

22:17-18 *And he said, "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like the flock which has no shepherd. And the LORD said, 'These have no masters; let them return each to his house in peace.'" And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "Did I not say to you, 'He does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil'?"*

Then Micaiah told him plainly. "I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains like the flock which has no shepherd." In the Bible a king is often called the shepherd of his people. Israel without a shepherd meant Israel without its king. Ahab would die. God's word followed: "These have no

masters; let them return each to his house in peace." The army would come home, but the king would not.

Moses had prayed that the LORD's people would not be "like sheep which have no shepherd" (Numbers 27:17). Jesus, seeing the crowds, had compassion on them because they were "like sheep not having a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep (John 10:11). Ahab led his sheep to ruin. Jesus gave His life for His.

Ahab turned to Jehoshaphat. "Did I not say to you," he asked, "He does not prophesy good concerning me, but evil?" He heard the warning only as proof that Micaiah was against him.

22:19-23 *And he said, "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of the heavens standing by Him, on His right and on His left. And the LORD said, 'Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?' And this **one** said thus, and this **one** was saying thus. And the spirit came forth and stood before the LORD and said, 'I, I will entice him.' And the LORD said to him, 'By what?' And he said, 'I will go out, and I will be a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all his prophets.' And He said, 'You will entice, and also you will prevail. Go out and do so.' And now, look, the LORD has put a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you."*

Micaiah went on. "Therefore hear the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on His throne, and all the host of the heavens standing by Him, on His right and on His left." The host of heaven here means the angels, the armies of heaven. Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1-3) and Daniel (Daniel 7:9-10) also saw the LORD on His throne surrounded by heavenly beings.

The LORD asked, "Who will entice Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramoth-gilead?" Various ones gave different answers. "And the spirit came forth and stood before the LORD." It said, "I, I will entice him." "By what?" asked the LORD. "I will go out, and I will be a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all his prophets." The LORD said, "You will entice, and also you will prevail. Go out and do so."

Then Micaiah gave the meaning. "The LORD has put a spirit of falsehood in the mouth of all these your prophets; and the LORD has spoken evil concerning you."

This is a hard passage, and I want to go slowly. Does God lie? No. Scripture is clear: God "cannot lie" (Titus 1:2), and "it is impossible for God to lie" (Hebrews 6:18). James says God tempts no one to do evil (James 1:13). So what is happening here?

Here is how I understand it. First, Ahab had already chosen falsehood. He had rejected Elijah, hated Micaiah, and surrounded himself with prophets who told him what he wanted to hear. He had been warned that his life was forfeit (20:42; 21:19). God's judgment on him was to give him over to what he had chosen. Paul describes the same kind of judgment: because people "did not receive the love of the truth," God sends "a working of delusion, so that they believe the falsehood" (2 Thessalonians 2:10-11). God gave them up to the desires of their hearts (Romans 1:24).

Second, God did not do the lying. A spirit offered to do it, and God permitted it and used it to bring about His just sentence, the way He permitted Satan to test Job (Job 1:6-12). God is sovereign even

over evil spirits, and He can use their wickedness to accomplish His righteous judgment, without Himself doing wrong.

Third, and this is the part we often miss, God told Ahab exactly what was happening. In the very same breath, through Micaiah, God revealed the plan, exposed the lying prophets, and warned Ahab that disaster was coming. Ahab was not tricked without warning. He was told the truth plainly, and he chose the lie anyway. Even in judgment, God gave him one last chance.

Bible teachers read the vision in more than one way. Many take it as a real look into the throne room of heaven, with a real spirit, perhaps an evil spirit or demon, permitted to deceive. Some think the spirit was Satan himself, as in Job 1. Others take the vision as a picture, given in the form of a heavenly council, to show that God was sovereignly using the false prophets' lies to bring Ahab to judgment. Either way, the lesson is the same: God rules over all, God does not lie, and those who refuse the truth will in the end be given over to the lie they love.

22:24-25 *And Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah drew near and struck Micaiah on the cheek and said, "Which **way** did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak with you?" And Micaiah said, "Look, you are about to see on that day, when you go into a room within a room to hide yourself."*

"Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah drew near and struck Micaiah on the cheek." Then he sneered, "Which way did the Spirit of the LORD pass from me to speak with you?" In other words, if the Spirit was with me, how could He be with you?

Micaiah did not strike back. "Look, you are about to see on that day, when you go into a room within a room to hide yourself." When the defeat came, Zedekiah would be the one hiding in an inner room, like Ben-hadad once did (20:30). Then he would know who had spoken the truth.

Being struck on the face for telling the truth puts us in mind of Jesus, who was struck in the face at His trial (John 18:22-23). Faithful servants of God have often been treated the same way.

22:26-28 *And the king of Israel said, "Take Micaiah, and bring him back to Amon the official of the city and to Joash the son of the king, and you will say, 'Thus says the king: "Put this **one** in the house of confinement, and feed him bread of oppression and water of oppression until I come in peace."'" And Micaiah said, "If you indeed return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." And he said, "Hear, O peoples, all of them!"*

The king ordered Micaiah taken back to the governor of the city and to Joash the king's son. "Put this one in the house of confinement, and feed him bread of oppression and water of oppression until I come in peace." Prison, and barely enough to stay alive.

Micaiah's last word was a test that anyone could check. "If you indeed return in peace, the LORD has not spoken by me." That is exactly the test God gave in the Law: if what a prophet says in the LORD's name does not happen, the LORD has not spoken it (Deuteronomy 18:21-22). Micaiah staked his life on it. "And he said, Hear, O peoples, all of them!" Let everyone remember what I said. Nearly the same words open the book of the later prophet Micah (Micah 1:2).

We never hear of Micaiah again. Scripture does not say what became of him in prison. But his word came true, and he is remembered as a man who would say only what the LORD said.

22:29-33 *And the king of Israel went up, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, to Ramoth-gilead. And the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat, "I will disguise myself and go into the battle; and you, put on your garments." And the king of Israel disguised himself and went into the battle. And the king of Syria had commanded the commanders of the chariotry which **belonged** to him, thirty-two, saying, "Do not fight with small or with great, but with the king of Israel, him alone." And it was, when the commanders of the chariotry saw Jehoshaphat, and they said, "Surely he **is** the king of Israel." And they turned aside against him to fight, and Jehoshaphat cried out. And it was, when the commanders of the chariotry saw that he **was** not the king of Israel, and they turned back from after him.*

"The king of Israel went up, and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, to Ramoth-gilead." Why did Jehoshaphat go, after what he heard? Scripture does not say. He had given his word, and perhaps he did not want to back out. It nearly cost him his life.

Ahab had a plan. "I will disguise myself and go into the battle; and you, put on your garments." He partly believed Micaiah. He tried to dodge God's word by dressing as an ordinary soldier, while his ally rode in royal robes.

"The king of Syria had commanded the commanders of the chariotry," "Do not fight with small or with great, but with the king of Israel, him alone." Ben-hadad wanted Ahab, the man who had spared his life.

When the commanders saw Jehoshaphat in his robes, they said, "Surely he is the king of Israel." They closed in on him, "and Jehoshaphat cried out." 2 Chronicles 18:31 adds that he cried out and the LORD helped him. When they saw he was not Ahab, "they turned back from after him." God protected the king of Judah even when he was in the wrong place.

22:34-36 *And a man drew the bow in his innocence and struck the king of Israel between the joints and the body armor. And he said to his charioteer, "Turn your hand and take me out of the camp, for I am wounded." And the battle increased on that day, and the king was made to stand in the chariot opposite Syria; and he died in the evening, and the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot. And the cry passed through the camp as the sun went **down**, saying, "Each to his city, and each to his land!"*

"A man drew the bow in his innocence." He was not aiming at anyone in particular. He shot at random. And the arrow "struck the king of Israel between the joints and the body armor," in the one small gap where armor plates met.

No disguise could hide Ahab from God. An arrow shot at random, by a man who did not know whom he was aiming at, found the one man in the army God had marked. "Into the lap the lot is thrown, and from the LORD is its every judgment" (Proverbs 16:33). There is no such thing as chance when God has spoken.

Ahab said to his driver, "Turn your hand and take me out of the camp, for I am wounded." But the battle grew fierce, "and the king was made to stand in the chariot opposite Syria." He was propped up so his troops would not lose heart. "He died in the evening, and the blood of the wound flowed into the bottom of the chariot."

At sunset the cry went through the camp: "Each to his city, and each to his land!" Just as Micaiah had said, the sheep were without a shepherd, and they went home.

22:37-40 *And the king died, and he came **to** Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria. And one washed the chariot at the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken. And the rest of the matters of Ahab, and all that he did, and the house of ivory which he built, and all the cities which he built, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Israel? And Ahab lay down with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place.*

"The king died, and he came to Samaria, and they buried the king in Samaria."

Then this detail: "one washed the chariot at the pool of Samaria, and the dogs licked up his blood, and the prostitutes bathed, according to the word of the LORD which He had spoken." The proud king's blood ended up licked by dogs and washed in a pool where prostitutes bathed, a picture of utter shame. Elijah had said the dogs would lick Ahab's blood (21:19). God's word came true, though it came in Samaria, and the full judgment on his house came later, at Naboth's field in Jezreel, in the days of his son, just as God had said after Ahab humbled himself (21:29; 2 Kings 9:24-26).

"The rest of the matters of Ahab, and all that he did, and the house of ivory which he built, and all the cities which he built." Archaeologists digging at Samaria have found many carved ivory pieces from this period, which fits the "house of ivory." Ahab was a builder and a capable ruler in the world's eyes. Assyrian records say he brought a large force of chariots to the battle at Qarqar. But God's verdict was written long before his obituary: "there was not one like Ahab, who sold himself to do the evil" (21:25).

"Ahab lay down with his fathers, and Ahaziah his son reigned in his place."

22:41-44 *And Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab the king of Israel. Jehoshaphat **was** a son of thirty-five years when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem; and the name of his mother **was** Azubah the daughter of Shilhi. And he walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing what **is** right in the eyes of the LORD. Only the high places were not removed; the people **were** still sacrificing and making **offerings** smoke on the high places. And Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel.*

Now the writer turns to Judah one more time. "Jehoshaphat the son of Asa became king over Judah in the fourth year of Ahab the king of Israel." "Jehoshaphat was a son of thirty-five years when he became king, and he reigned twenty-five years in Jerusalem," about 872 to 848 B.C., counting a few years when he ruled alongside his father Asa. "The name of his mother was Azubah the daughter of Shilhi."

"He walked in all the way of Asa his father; he did not turn aside from it, doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD." Jehoshaphat was one of Judah's good kings. 2 Chronicles 17-20 tells much more: he sent teachers through Judah with the Book of the Law, appointed judges and told them to judge in the fear of the LORD, and trusted God in a great battle when the singers went out before the army.

"Only the high places were not removed; the people were still sacrificing and making offerings smoke on the high places." Like his father, he did not finish the job.

"Jehoshaphat made peace with the king of Israel." This ended about sixty years of conflict between the two kingdoms. Peace is good, but this peace came through the marriage alliance with Ahab's house, and it would cost Judah dearly when Athaliah later tried to wipe out the royal line (2 Kings 11:1).

22:45-50 *And the rest of the matters of Jehoshaphat, and his might which he showed, and how he waged war, **are** they not written in the book of the matters of the days of the kings of Judah? And the rest of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of Asa his father, he swept away from the land. And there was no king in Edom; a deputy **was** king. Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold, and it did not go, for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber. Then Ahaziah the son of Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "Let my servants go with your servants in the ships." And Jehoshaphat was not willing. And Jehoshaphat lay down with his fathers, and he was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father; and Jehoram his son reigned in his place.*

"The rest of the matters of Jehoshaphat, and his might which he showed, and how he waged war." He also finished what Asa began: "the rest of the male cult prostitutes who remained in the days of Asa his father, he swept away from the land."

"There was no king in Edom; a deputy was king." Edom, south of the Dead Sea, was under Judah's control, ruled by a governor. That gave Jehoshaphat access to the port of Ezion-geber on the Red Sea, the same port Solomon had used (9:26).

"Jehoshaphat made ships of Tarshish to go to Ophir for gold," trying to bring back the glory days of Solomon. "It did not go, for the ships were broken at Ezion-geber." 2 Chronicles 20:35-37 tells us why: he had joined with Ahaziah of Israel in building them, and a prophet said that because he allied himself with Ahaziah, the LORD had broken his works. Here in Kings, Ahaziah asked to send his own servants along on the next attempt, "And Jehoshaphat was not willing." It seems he had learned his lesson.

"Jehoshaphat lay down with his fathers," "and Jehoram his son reigned in his place."

22:51-53 *Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years. And he did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who caused Israel to sin. And he served the Baal and bowed down to it, and he provoked to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done.*

"Ahaziah the son of Ahab became king over Israel in Samaria in the seventeenth year of Jehoshaphat the king of Judah, and he reigned over Israel two years," about 853 to 852 B.C.

"He did the evil in the eyes of the LORD, and he walked in the way of his father and in the way of his mother and in the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat." Three bad examples, and he followed all of them. "He served the Baal and bowed down to it, and he provoked to anger the LORD, the God of Israel, according to all that his father had done."

That is where 1 Kings ends, with another king walking the same dark road. The story goes on in 2 Kings, where Elijah will confront Ahaziah, be taken up to heaven, and pass his cloak to Elisha. The book that began with Solomon's glory ends with Baal worship in Samaria. But it does not end with God silent. He has kept His promise to David in Jerusalem, and He has kept sending His word, by Ahijah, by Jehu, by Elijah, by Micaiah, to any who would listen.

Chapter 22 Summary

After three years of peace, Ahab asked Jehoshaphat of Judah to join him in retaking Ramoth-gilead, and Jehoshaphat agreed but asked to hear the word of the LORD. Ahab's four hundred prophets all said, "Go up," and Zedekiah made iron horns to show victory. Jehoshaphat asked for a prophet of the LORD, and Ahab named Micaiah son of Imlah, whom he hated. The messenger urged Micaiah to agree with the others, but he swore to speak only what the LORD said. He first echoed the prophets mockingly, then told the truth: Israel would be scattered like sheep without a shepherd. He described a vision of the LORD on His throne and a spirit who offered to be a lying spirit in the mouth of Ahab's prophets to entice him to fall, and said the LORD had spoken disaster against Ahab. Zedekiah struck Micaiah, and Ahab had him imprisoned until he returned in peace; Micaiah said that if Ahab returned in peace, the LORD had not spoken by him. Ahab went into battle disguised while Jehoshaphat wore his robes. The Syrian chariot commanders chased Jehoshaphat until they saw he was not Ahab. A random arrow struck Ahab between the joints of his armor, and he died at evening propped in his chariot. He was buried in Samaria, and the dogs licked his blood as the chariot was washed, according to the LORD's word. Jehoshaphat reigned twenty-five years in Judah and did right, though the high places remained; he made peace with Israel, removed the remaining cult prostitutes, and his ships for Ophir were wrecked. Ahaziah son of Ahab reigned two years in Israel and served Baal like his father and mother.

Chapter 22 Study Questions

1. Why did Ahab want to go to war at Ramoth-gilead, and what did Jehoshaphat ask for before going? (22:3-5)

2. Why was Jehoshaphat not satisfied with the four hundred prophets? (22:6-7)

3. Why did Ahab hate Micaiah? (22:8)

4. What did Micaiah promise when he was urged to agree with the other prophets? (22:13-14)

5. What did Micaiah's vision of the sheep without a shepherd mean? (22:17)

6. How does the rest of Scripture help us understand the lying spirit in Micaiah's vision? (22:19-23; Hebrews 6:18; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-11)

7. How did Ahab try to escape God's word, and how did God's word find him anyway? (22:30, 34-35)

8. How did the end of Ahab fulfill what God had said through Elijah and Micaiah? (22:17, 28, 38; 21:19)

9. Micaiah said, "what the LORD says to me, that I will speak," when everyone else was saying the opposite. When have you been pressured to go along with the crowd, and what helps you stand on God's Word?

10. Ahab surrounded himself with voices that told him what he wanted to hear. Who are the voices in your life that will tell you the truth, even when it is hard to hear? (2 Timothy 4:3)

Conclusion

1 Kings begins with a crowded palace and an old king. David is dying, and the question on everyone's lips is who will sit on his throne. It ends with another king walking the road of Jeroboam and serving Baal in Samaria. In between, we watched Solomon ask for wisdom, build the house of the LORD, and see God's glory fill it. Then we watched the wisest man who ever lived let his heart drift after other gods, and the kingdom tear in two. King after king in the north followed Jeroboam's calves, and Ahab and Jezebel brought Baal into the land. Through it all, God kept sending His word: Ahijah, Shemaiah, the man of God from Judah, Jehu son of Hanani, Elijah and Micaiah.

As I said at the start of this study, the guiding principle throughout has been to read God's Word plainly, as it is written, and let Scripture explain Scripture. Read that way, 1 Kings shows us a God who keeps His word, every time. He kept His promise to David and left a lamp burning in Jerusalem when David's sons did not deserve it. He kept His warnings too, down to the dogs at the pool of Samaria and the arrow at Ramoth-gilead. Solomon said it best at the dedication of the temple: "not one word has fallen from all His good word which He spoke by the hand of Moses His servant" (8:56). The same God shut the sky at Elijah's word and opened it again, fed a prophet by ravens and a widow from an empty jar, and answered by fire on Mount Carmel until the people cried, "The LORD, He is the God!" (18:39).

1 Kings also shows us that no earthly king could give God's people what they needed. Solomon had wisdom, wealth and peace, and his heart still turned. Every king after him was measured by the heart of David, and most of them fell short. The book leaves us waiting for a better King. God promised that a Son of David would reign forever, and the angel told Mary that the Lord God would give her Son "the throne of David His father" and that "of His kingdom there will be no end" (Luke 1:32-33). Jesus is that King. He is greater than Solomon, He is the true temple where God dwells with us, and He never turned aside. I believe He will come again, first for His church and then visibly to the earth, to reign from Jerusalem on David's throne, just as God promised.

I hope this study has done what I set out to do: bring you closer to God, help you grow in your walk with Him, and give you confidence that the God of 1 Kings is the same God today. Elijah's question on Mount Carmel is still the question for each of us: "If the LORD is the God, walk after Him" (18:21). God does not want half a heart. Jesus died on the cross for our sins and rose again, and "neither is there another name under heaven which has been given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:12). The only thing required of us to spend eternity with God is to receive His Son, Jesus, as our Lord and Savior.

If you haven't yet entered into a relationship with Jesus, or if you want to deepen the one you already have with Him, I invite you to pray this prayer with me:

Lord Jesus, You are the Savior of the world, and You forgive all who come to You. I come before You to confess that I have sinned against You. I have rebelled against You and put myself first above You and all others. I want to have a deep, meaningful relationship with You where I can show others by my demeanor and character that You are first in my life. I am asking for Your forgiveness

for all my sins. You died for me on the cross so that I could be forgiven and made right with God. Please help me not forget that You gave Your very life for me. I am asking that You take control of my life and make a new creature out of me and into the person You want me to be. I thank You, Lord, and I love You. Amen.

If you prayed this prayer, tell another believer, ask a pastor about being baptized, and find a church where you can grow and serve, and give the Lord your whole heart, as Elijah called Israel to do: "If the LORD is the God, walk after Him" (1 Kings 18:21).

Bibliography

The following source was consulted throughout this study. The commentary reflects my own study and convictions, and any direct quotation from an outside source is identified and cited at the point where it appears.

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