

Dickson
Teacher's Bible

1 KINGS



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WRITER

As with many of the Old Testament books, it is difficult to determine the inspired writer of 1 & 2 Kings. In reference to these two books, some Bible students have assumed that Jeremiah was the inspired writer. This assumption is based on the similarity between various sections of 1 & 2 Kings and the book of Jeremiah (Compare 2 Kg 24:18 – 25:30 and Jr 52:1-34). Other than assuming that Jeremiah was the writer, it is difficult to determine the writer.

DATE

It is not possible to determine an exact date of writing. The time that elapsed during 1 Kings was about 120 years. These years began with the death of David in 970 B.C. and the coronation of Solomon. The record of history continued to the death of King Ahab in the northern kingdom and Jehoshaphat in the southern kingdom around 893 B.C. Since the temple was still standing at the time of writing, both 1 & 2 Kings were written before the fall of Jerusalem and destruction of the temple by the Babylonian Empire in 586 B.C. However, latter portions of the book could have been written after the fall, with an inspired writer writing the final material of 2 Kings after 586 B.C.

BOOK

1 & 2 Kings were originally one book. They were divided into the two books we have in our Bibles today with the translation of the Hebrew text into Greek when the Septuagint was produced in the 3rd century B.C. The Kings and Chronicles are a history of how most the monarchies of Israel after David went wrong, and led the people after other gods. 1 & 2 Kings begin with the final years of David's reign, and continue with Israelite history to the release of Jehoiachin from a Babylonian prison.

Throughout the Kings reference is made to three sources of Israelite history that were not inspired, but were in the hands of the writer. Reference is made to (1) "the book of the acts of Solomon" (1 Kg 11:41), (2) "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel" (1 Kg 14:19; 15:31; 16:5), and (3) "the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah" (1 Kg 14:29; 15:7,23).

1 & 2 Kings and 1 & 2 Chronicles are related, but not focused on the same plot. There are many passages in both Kings and Chronicles that are almost identical. Both records contain historical information concerning both the northern and southern kingdoms of the twelve tribes. However, Chronicles focuses primarily on the history of the southern kingdom of Judah. Chronicles also deals with the religious history while Kings focuses more on the political developments and decline of the people of God in the northern kingdom.

APOSTASY

As Bible students study through the books of the Kings and Chronicles, one question will always come to mind. Why did Israel, with such a rich history of the direct work of God, fall into the extreme apostasy of worshiping imagined gods, and in some cases, sacrificing their own children to these gods? The answer to the question lies in the nature of how we, as created religious beings, conduct ourselves in reference to divine authority. We seek to be free from accountability, especially accountability in reference to our Creator. Though God gives us divine directives by which we should conduct ourselves, we seek to do that which is right in our own eyes. This desire leads to a gradual fall from a conscious responsibility to submit to the word of God. It may take generations for this apostasy to play out in the history of any particular society, but the decline and fall of all civilizations is inevitable without a conscious sense of being accountable to a High Power.

A study of the Kings and Chronicles is a classic example of how men move away from being accountable to God. God originally did not want Israel to have a king. He knew what would happen. Having a king in Israel was more than centralizing government around one man on earth. God had originally intended that He only be their King, and that He would reign from heaven through the authority of His word that was taught by the Levites. This was a very successful plan that held Israel together for over four hundred years. But Israel rejected this theocratic system, for they sought to continue to live after their own desires. They could manipulate a king, but they could not change the law of God. God, therefore, had to go and the kings with their false gods had to come in order that they could do that which was right in their own eyes.

Once a king was anointed, the rapidity of the apostasy accelerated. The kings became political in order to retain the favor of the people. This point is brought out clearly in the kingship of Saul, for he yearned for the approval of the people. In the life of David, however, it was different. David sought to direct Israel according to the commandments of God. He had a deep sense of responsibility to obey the will of God. But after David, everything changed. From the time of Solomon the mold for apostasy was established as each king, except for a few, followed after the gods of the nations they failed to eliminate from the land. The people sought to live after their own desires. It started with Solomon, David's son, who sought to please all his idolatrous wives. The religious beliefs of the people gradually changed to focus on the lusts of man, not the commandments of God that were considered too restrictive.

As a society that sought to create religious behavior after one's own desires, it was easy to create a god that would condone their desires. When the culture of the society has been established for ruin for decades, even the righteous actions on the part of a king who would seek to restore the people to God will not turn the people

from continued digression. When Israel initially arrived at the Jordan in order to possess the land under the leadership of Joshua, the Canaanites, because of their culture of sin, had given up their right for existence. However, Israel, throughout her history, followed the same social route as the Canaanites. At the end of Israel's history, the twelve tribes of Israel were left with only a remnant existence after the Babylonian captivity. It was a tragic ending to such a great nation of people who had been miraculously delivered out of Egyptian captivity. Their search for God brought them out of captivity. Their forsaking of God took them back into captivity. Only through repentance were they able to again come out of captivity.

The political desire of a king to maintain the favor of the people increased when kings started to assassinate one another. Israel digressed from God-anointed kings, to people-appointed kings, then finally to foreign-appointed kings. Paranoia developed among the kings as they turned from being obedient to God who anointed them, to politically pleasing the people who appointed them, and then finally, to pleasing the foreign nations who appointed their kings for them. The script of this play is written in the Kings and Chronicles. It is written for many nations throughout the world today who would forsake teaching the principles of God to their people.

Once the leadership of Israel was changed, then it was easy for the people to follow after that which became commonly practiced. In order for commonly accepted religious behavior to be imposed on others, false prophets were chosen to intimidate all who would not comply with the norm of social and religious behavior. Any person who would speak against the message of the community of false prophets was shunned, and thus considered a troubler of Israel. Once this religious culture was established, then there was no level too low to which the society of Israel could sink. It was for this reason that God did not want a central government in Israel that was centered around a king. He did not want the religion centralized. He did not want any particular tribe to take ownership of His presence by the construction of a temple like the religions of the nations around Israel. Unfortunately, Israel did all the preceding, and thus we have the inscription of the Kings and Chronicles that explain how this epic history played itself out in the lives of the Israelites who fell from the one true and living God.

IDOL WORSHIP

In man's inner self there is a God-created sense of worship. Regardless of God's written revelation concerning how He seeks to be worshiped, men often devise their own expressions and places of worship. This apostasy in worship is brought out clearly in the Kings and Chronicles. In reference to the worship of Israel in her digression into apostasy, three key things constantly appear in the worship of the Israelites that were related to their apostasy. (1) People seek to do that which is right in their own eyes, and then create a concept of god that conforms to their

behavior. This is the spirit of idolatry. The gods of the nations around Israel, which gods Israel adopted, were not really gods, but only the imagination of the people who sought to live according to their own desires. Once the false god was created in one's mind, then the natural thing to do was to relate to that god through an image or idol that one created to symbolize the god. The worshiper then established a place to which he could go in order to worship his imagined god. (2) People seek to sanctify a place where they can act out their worship through various acts of worship or ceremonies. By doing this they are seeking to leave the environment of their daily lives in order to "go to" a place where they can worship. This gives them the opportunity to feel that they can leave their daily conduct, and then go to face God at a place where they can feel worshipful. The places that the apostate Israelites constructed for this worshipful feeling were called the "high places." These places were often associated with sexual orgies, and in some cases, human sacrifices. Regardless of the reforms that some kings made at different times throughout the digression of Israel into apostasy, these places to which people went with offerings in order to commit deplorable acts of worship, were usually not destroyed. (3) People seem to feel closer to God on high places, and thus, the Asherah (wooded places, or groves) were built on high hills. These were sanctified places of worship. The high places were thus sacred and prevailed throughout the history of the apostasy. The high places became customary places to go for worship, and thus the reforming kings usually did not touch these places in their restoration movements.

The high places played a significant role in the apostasy of both the northern and southern kingdoms. When Israel entered the promised land, God told them to destroy all the molten images, figured idols and high places (Nm 33:52). But they failed to drive out all the Canaanites (Jg 1:19-35), and thus failed to eradicate the idolatry and high places from the land. The people served the Lord all the days of Joshua and the elders who lived after them (Ja 24:31; Jg 2:7). However, after these great leaders the worship of the Canaanites began to play a part in the worship of Israel. In the days of the judges, the worship of Baal became a strong part of Israelite worship, for the judges often had to deal with idol worship (See Jg 6:25). When Solomon became king, idol worship on high places was entrenched in the worship culture of Israel. Restorers as Hezekiah destroyed the high places (2 Ch 31:1), but apostate kings as Manasseh restored them as places to which people could go for worship (2 Ch 33:3). When Manasseh was disciplined by the Lord by captivity, and then restored to his throne, he was a changed person. However, he failed to destroy the high places to which people continually when to perform their acts of worship (2 Ch 33:17). The extent to which apostasy and restoration went in Israel depended on whether the high places were retained or destroyed in the worship culture of Israel (Compare Josiah's restoration - 2 Kg 23:1-25).

The culture of going to the high places worked against God's original plan that

worship be family oriented and conducted according to the general principles of teaching that Moses stated in Deuteronomy 6. But the simplicity of God's original plan that worship be focused at home in the daily lives of every person was too simple for the people in comparison to the Canaanites who had elaborate temples and went to the high places for entertaining worship behavior. Once this Canaanite worship culture became a part of the culture of Israel, it was not possible to detour their end in captivity, for it led them away from God.

Final Days Of David

(1:1 – 2:11)

Outline: (1) The presumption of

Adonijah (1:1-37), (2) Coronation of Solomon (1:38-53), (3) David's charge to Solomon (2:1-11)

CHAPTER 1

THE PRESUMPTION OF ADONIJAH

1:1-4 Before David breathed this last breath, Solomon was reigning as king of Israel. **A young woman:** In the final hours of life, the body temperature of David could not be maintained. We must keep in mind that David was in his 70's at this time. The custom was to use the warmth of a young woman to lie next to the one who needed the extra body heat. **Sexual relations:** Some translations use the word "know" in reference to sexual relations between a man and woman. The writer wants us to understand that the young woman was not provided for any sexual gratification, but simply to make David more comfortable in his dying days.

1:5-10 Adonijah ... exalted himself: Adonijah's selfish ambition moved him to presumptuously assume that he could work against the will of God by making himself king. Being the son of Haggith (2 Sm 3:4), he may have assumed that he

was a rightful heir to the throne of David. **His father had not rebuked him at any time:** Because Adonijah did not learn respect for authority in his youth, he had no respect for authority when he grew up. A house that does not exercise discipline of the children in the home produces children who have no respect for authority when they leave the home. **Joab ... Abiathar:** Though these two were also in their old age, we are not told why they sided with Adonijah. They had been faithful to David in the past. In this case they seem to assume that Adonijah would be the rightful heir of David. However, Zadok, Benaiah, Nathan, Shimei and Rei knew the wishes of both God and David. They were thus not invited to Adonijah's celebration of his supposed rise to the throne.

1:11-37 Nathan spoke to Bathsheba: Nathan, the prophet, knew that God's choice of who would be king was more important than the firstborn becoming the heir to the throne (See Dt

17:15). If Adonijah assumed the throne, then there would be a great threat to the life of both Bathsheba, Solomon's mother (2 Sm 12:24,25), and Solomon. **Solomon ... will reign:** This was David's reaffirmation of the reign of Solomon. There could be no doubt in the minds of those present that this was the final wish of David in reference to who would come to the throne of Israel (See comments 2 Sm 7).

CORONATION OF SOLOMON

1:38-40 David realized the seriousness of Adonijah's presumption to be king. He thus acted quickly in having Solomon publicly anointed (Compare 1 Sm 16:11-13; 2 Sm 5:3). **My own mule:** Only the rightful king could ride on the king's mule. **The earth shook:** The response of this great number of people testified to the fact that they had accepted Solomon as the new king of Israel.

1:41-53 Adonijah and his party were close enough to Gihon to hear the great

rejoicing of the people when Solomon was anointed king. Jonathan, the son of Abiathar, came to Adonijah and confirmed the fact that Solomon was the crowned king of Israel. **The guests ... with Adonijah were afraid:** They were afraid because they realized that the anointing of Solomon meant that those who aligned themselves with the presumption of Adonijah were now considered insurrectionists. They thus fled for their lives. **Took hold of the horns of the altar:** Adonijah assumed that this action would protect him from the judgment of death for his insurrectionist actions to be the king of Israel. **If he will show himself a worthy man:** Solomon's mercy on Adonijah depended on Adonijah's future behavior. He would be granted life if in the future he submitted to the kingship of Solomon. Unfortunately, Adonijah's selfish ambition led him to forsake his commitment that he made at this time. As a result, his selfish ambition cost him his life.

CHAPTER 2

DAVID'S CHARGE TO SOLOMON

2:1-4 Walk in His ways: David's greatest concern was that Solomon live in obedience to the will of God. **Statutes:** These would be guidelines that would direct one in holy living (See Ex 30:21; Lv 10:13-15). **Commandments:** See Ex 20:1-17. **Judgments:** These would be decisions concerning cases not defined in the law, but were the result of wisdom that was guided by the word of God (See Ex 21:1 – 23:5). **Testimonies:** This would be any principle that would

give witness to wisdom that came from God (See Ps 19:7; 119:88). **Not lack a man on the throne of Israel:** Obedience to God would guarantee that the descendants of Solomon would continue to reign on the throne (See 2 Sm 7:12-16).

2:5-9 David had left some judgments undone during his reign. In these words he instructed Solomon to enact these judgments that he had personally failed to do. It is possible that David did not carry out these judgments because of his feelings of guilt for causing the death of

Uriah. **Joab:** Joab had blood on his hands in reference to his murder of Abner (2 Sm 3:27) and Amasa (2 Sm 20:8-10). Since David was responsible for the safety of these two men, he felt that judgment should come upon Joab for his acts of murder. Solomon was thus given the charge to judge Joab according to his crimes. **Sons of Barzillai:** Barzillai had assisted David during the rebellion of Absalom (2 Sm 17:27-29). Since Barzillai was dead at this time, David wanted Solomon to bring the sons of Barzillai into his court in order to extend the kindness of which they were deserving because of the help of their father. **Shimei:** Shimei had previously shown contempt for David, the anointed of God (2 Sm 16:5-13). However, David, at the time, did not punish Shimei according to his crime (2 Sm 19:18-23). Since David had not punished Shimei for his disrespect for the anointed of God, he asked Solomon to render just judgment.

2:10-12 The death of David was the end of a legacy that would never be repeated again in Israel. Never again would a king arise in Israel who served God while he recognized the weaknesses of his own life. On many occasions, the Holy Spirit in the Kings refers us back to the righteousness of David in keeping the commandments of the Lord. **Established:** Solomon's reign after David was firmly established because the authority of God's king on earth was passed from David to Solomon. All Israel recognized that Solomon was the rightful king. Unfortunately, by the end of Solomon's life, he would leave a legacy of idolatry that

would be followed by other kings.

The Reign Of Solomon

(2:12 – 11:43)

Outline: (1) Solomon's judgments (2:12-46), (2) Solomon's wisdom (3:1-28), (3) Solomon's wealth (4:1-34), (4) Solomon's building (5:1 – 7:51), (5) Dedication of the temple (8:1-66), (6) God's covenant with Solomon (9:1-9), (7) Solomon's fame (9:10-28), (8) Visit by a queen (10:1-13), (9) Solomon's tax of the people (10:14-29), (10) Solomon's apostasy and death (11:1-43)

SOLOMON'S JUDGMENTS

In assuming the authority of his reign, Solomon was given instructions by David concerning individuals whose judgment had to be administered by Solomon. This context records the judgments handed down by Solomon, which judgments signaled to everyone the beginning of a new era of kingship.

2:12-25 Adonijah: David had already mercifully judged Adonijah. However, there was a spirit of arrogance in Adonijah that drove him to carry out again his selfish ambition to act presumptuously. By asking for Abishag he was making a subtle effort to usurp the kingship of Israel. Abishag was part of David's kingship harem. Adonijah presumed that if he could marry Abishag, he could ease himself back into a position to usurp the throne. The custom was that if someone took ownership of a king's harem, he was claiming the right to assume the authority of the dead king (See 2 Sm 3:6-11; 16:22). Solomon

clearly understood this, and thus was not as gullible as Bathsheba concerning the desires of Adonijah. Adonijah's desires were treasonous, and thus deserved the penalty of death.

2:26,27 Abiathar: As a priest during the reign of David, it was probably difficult for Abiathar to now turn his loyalty to one who was only a child throughout the principal years of his priesthood. Because of his former loyalty to David, and because he was a rightful priest of God, Solomon extended mercy to Abiathar. He was banished to Anathoth which was a city for the Levites (See Ja 21:8,18; Jr 1:1). Abiathar was of the priestly lineage of Ithamar. His banishment thus meant the end of the lineage of Eli's heritage from being high priests in Israel (1 Sm 2:27-36).

2:28-34 Joab: Solomon rendered justice on Joab for his murderous actions in the past. If he remained unpunished, the guilt of David would have been passed on to Solomon. Joab's clinging to the horns of the altar brought him no mercy as it did for Adonijah during the days of David (1:52). He was justly executed.

2:35 Benaiah ... Zadok: With the change of a new king, came the change in leaders of the military and high priesthood. Benaiah replaced Joab as the com-

mander of the military. Zadok replaced Abiathar (See 2 Sm 20:25).

2:36-46 Shimei: It was only because of David's feelings of guilt in reaping the curse of Nathan, the prophet, concerning his killing of Uriah, that Shimei was still living. When in flight from Absalom during his rebellion, Shimei had cursed David, the anointed of God (2 Sm 16:5). He was living in Bahurim, but at this time was placed under house arrest in Jerusalem away from his kinsmen. He would be safe from the death penalty as long as he remained in Jerusalem. Unfortunately for him, he did not honor the restrictions of his confinement. His rebellious heart was manifested when he ignored the restrictions of his confinement in order to track down two of his slaves. His violation of his confinement rules under the reign of Solomon was just cause for his execution because of his crime against David. Punishment in the present brought justice for sin that was committed in the past. **The kingdom was established:** Solomon's kingdom reign was established in the sense that he exercised wise judgment in cases where justice was to be handed down to offenders. Injustices of the past had been rectified. The authority of his reign was recognized among the people.

CHAPTER 3

SOLOMON'S WISDOM

3:1-3 Made an alliance: This was a political move. Solomon practiced a custom by which alliances were sealed between two countries by marriage. In

sealing the alliance, the king of one country would take in marriage the daughter of the country with which the alliance was made. Since Israel was the stronger nation, the treaty would have been ad-

vantageous to Egypt, with whom Israel established trade agreements (See 10:26-29). In such marriages, Israelites could marry foreigners, as long as the foreigners renounced their gods (Dt 21:10-14). However, they could not marry Canaanites (Ex 34:11-16; Dt 7:1-5). **High places:** These were the common locations for Canaanite sacrifices that were made to false gods. When the Israelites came into the land of Palestine about 400 years before these events, they were to destroy all such places where pagan worship was carried out (Dt 12:1-4). God wanted the Israelites to destroy these places of worship to pagan gods lest they be influenced by the Canaanite religion that was associated with the high places. Unfortunately, by this time in the history of Israel the tabernacle ceased to be moved among the tribal territories, and thus the people sought other places to make their sacrifices. They thus adopted the tradition of worship on the high places that the Canaanites had used in their worship of false gods. In this context, reference was made to the geographical locations where the people sacrificed to God. In their apostasy, however, Israel started sacrificing to false gods on these high places. The high places, therefore, became a biblical reference to the apostasy of Israel

3:4-15 (2 Ch 1:1-13) *The king went to Gibeon:* The tabernacle was located

at Gibeon during the days of David's reign and the first part of the reign of Solomon. Burnt offerings were thus made in Gibeon. The ark of the covenant, however, was located in a tent in Jerusalem (2 Ch 1:2-4). **Ask what I will give you:** Solomon's answer to this open invitation to ask of God was based on his appreciation for all that God had done for him. Because he realized the great responsibility that was given to him to lead God's people, he was humbled, and thus asked for understanding in order that he might lead the people with justice. **The speech pleased the Lord:** Because Solomon's request was not focused on himself for long life or riches, God heard his prayer. Because of his unselfish request, God gave him more than he asked. God's answer also illustrates that He sometimes answers prayer in different ways than what we request. Our prayer is answered, and often answered in a greater way than that for which we prayed.

3:16-28 The people had direct access to the king. In this particular judgment, the wisdom of Solomon was manifested, which wisdom came to him from God. Because of his wise judgments, Solomon's fame went throughout the surrounding nations and beyond. The writer gives this one incident in judgment in order to illustrate the wise judgments that Solomon handed down to those who came before him.

CHAPTER 4

SOLOMON'S WEALTH

4:1-6 King over all Israel: In his victories over the enemies of Israel, David handed his son Solomon a kingdom that was ready for peace and prosperity. At the time of Solomon's reign, Israel was one united nation. But at the time these words were written, the kingdom had been divided into Israel, the northern kingdom, and Judah, the southern kingdom (See vs 20). **These were the princes:** Some of these chief officials of Solomon undoubtedly began their service before the reign of Solomon. These were the servants of Solomon (3:15) who were the administrators of the business of the kingdom of Israel. The interpreter must keep in mind when reading through this list of princes, priests, scribes and related administrators, that most of these functions in the kingdom reign of Solomon were a departure from God's original plan for the administration of His people. It must not be forgotten that God originally organized Israel as a theocracy to be ruled directly from heaven through the law, which was administered by the Levites. Minor decisions were to be determined by the Urim and Thummim of the Levites (Ex 28:30; Lv 8:8; Dt 33:8). God determined directly through the Urim and Thummim those minor decisions that were now, in many ways, determined by Solomon. This chapter reveals that the center for decision-making in Israel went from God through the Levitical priests to Solomon the king. The result of this transfer of

focus from God and the Levites is a lesson for us to learn from the history of the Old Testament (See Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). Solomon's reign began with grandeur, but ended in apostasy. As the fallible leader of the people who first brought glory to God, he eventually led the people away from God by turning to the gods of the wives he married. His leadership set the moral standard for the people, and thus Israel was led into division immediately after his reign because the people were provoked by the centralization of government in Jerusalem that was centered around the kingship lineage that came from David. Though Solomon was great in his administration of a kingdom, he was humanly fallible in setting moral standards for the preservation of those over whom he reigned. **Priest:** This priest functioned as an advisor to the king. **Scribe:** The scribes functioned as the correspondent for the king to the people and foreign nations. **Recorder:** This person recorded the annuals of the kingdom. **Abiathar:** Abiathar was banished from the presence of Solomon (2:27,35). However, since the high priesthood was hereditary, he still maintained his position, though not necessarily his function among the people. He was a high priest in name only. **Nathan:** This was the son of David, not the prophet, Nathan (See 2 Sm 5:14). Thus Azariah and Zabud were the nephews of Solomon. **Over the household:** This person functioned as Joseph in Egypt in that he conducted the affairs of the king's

house (See Gn 41:40). The responsibilities of this person would be daily meeting with the head of state in order to carry out the administration of the king's court.

4:7-19 The description of the duties of the officers in this context fully manifest that Israel had now moved into a monarchy. Government was centralized around the king, and the king was situated in Jerusalem, the capital of the kingdom. Administration of kingdom affairs was carried out by designated officials who collected taxes, conscripted men into the army, and exercised administrative control over the affairs of the kingdom. Government construction projects as roads and buildings were carried out by designated officials who received their orders from Jerusalem. This administration from one man in Jerusalem began the rift that would eventually divide the nation of Israel into the northern and southern kingdoms. Because the control was centered in Judah alone, the northern tribes would eventually turn from such heavy control and taxation and make Jeroboam their king.

4:20-34 *Judah and Israel:* At the time of the writing of 1 Kings, the kingdom had already divided. *Sea in multitude:* This was the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3; 22:17; 28:14). *Making merry:* This writer wants us to know that the result of the peace that prevailed throughout the land was the happiness of the people. One of the advantages of the military strength of Israel that began under David, and continued under Solomon, was the strength of a people who were able to dwell in

happiness because their enemies had been defeated. This was certainly the climax of the Israelite kingdom. The extent of Solomon's kingdom was made possible by conquest over nations within the Palestine region, and the subjection of surrounding nations who were made to pay tribute. *The River:* The River Euphrates. *Provisions for one day:* The food for the king's court for a single day was about 340 bushels of fine flour and 155 bushels of meal. This amount of grain, plus the meat of the animals of verse 23, is in conjunction with what the people were also to provide for the Levites. Some have estimated that the size of the king's court could have been as many as 5,000 people. The tax burden of such a great number of people, therefore, was great. *4,000 stalls:* The number 40,000 that is given here by some translations is possibly a scribal variant since the number is probably too large. The Hebrew number for 4,000 that is given in 2 Chronicles 9:25 would be correct. This would correspond with the 1,400 chariots of 10:26. *He was wiser than all men:* Since his wisdom came from God, we would assume that this statement was true. Though given limited wisdom in comparison to the wisdom of God, Solomon revealed through his writing of Proverbs, the Song of Solomon, Ecclesiastes, possibly Job and some of the Psalms, his great wisdom and knowledge that came to him from God. The extent of his wisdom was so great that his reputation for wisdom fascinated the nations of the Near East world. The reputation of his wisdom extended even

into Africa where it stimulated the curiosity of a queen who made a trip just to

see for herself (10:1-10).

CHAPTER 5

SOLOMON'S BUILDING

5:1-6 *I intend to build a house to the ... Lord:* This is a significant statement in reference to the existence of the temple in Israel's history from this time forward to the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. David originally felt some guilt about building his own lavish house when he said, "*See now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwells within curtains*" (2 Sm 7:2). Nathan, the prophet who stood before David, replied to David that he should do what was in his heart. However, in 2 Samuel 7 where the idea of the temple was first proposed by David, this response to David by Nathan was not a revelation from God, but Nathan's own statement. We would assume that Nathan himself was also wanting a building for God. The very night of the day that Nathan responded in approval of David concerning the building of a temple, God came to David with the question, "*Would you build for Me a house in which to dwell?*" (2 Sm 7:5). God then proceeded to chide David for his suggestion to build a physical structure for the ark. God rebuked, "*For I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day. But I have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle*" (2 Sm 7:6). For over 400 years the tabernacle was moved about among the tribes without God ever asking that any one tribe build for Him a permanent

house in which to place the ark (2 Sm 7:7). If one tribe would have built a house for the ark, then that tribe would have laid claim to the ark. But this is exactly what David and Solomon were doing with their plans to build the temple in Jerusalem. At this time, Solomon intended to carry out the desire of David and Nathan. This was not the desire of God, though He accommodated their plans. But in accommodating the plan to build the temple, God knew that it would become an occasion for the division of the twelve tribes of Israel. It is in this context that Solomon here intends to carry out his own desire, though he plans to do such in the name of the Lord. This is a case, as in the choosing of a king to reign over Israel, where God allowed something to happen, though it was never in His original plans for the nation of Israel. He never intended that the leadership of Israel be centered around a king. He never intended that the government of Israel be centralized in one city. He never intended that the faith of Israel be centralized around a building in any one city of Israel. Nevertheless, men on earth chose to follow the desire of their hearts. We keep in mind that God used what men wanted to do in His name for His continued purpose with Israel to bring the Messiah into the world. It is in this historical context that God stated in 2 Chronicles 6:6, "*Yet I have chosen Jerusalem, that My name*

may be there, and I have chosen David to be over My people Israel.” David wanted to centralize government, so God chose Jerusalem. The people wanted a king on earth, so God anointed the rightful kings of Israel. Because it is stated that God chose Jerusalem and anointed the kings does not mean that either were in the original plan of God. God simply accommodated the desires of man. But in so accommodating the desires of man, God wanted us to understand the destiny to which the desires led His people (Rm 15:4; 1 Co 10:11). In the case of Israel, the desires led Israel away from God and into a divided kingdom. God allowed Israel to follow after their own desires, but in the end, He judged them because their desires led them away from Him and His word.

5:7-18 Hiram: This Phoenician king was known for being a conqueror during his kingship. Before the reign of Hiram, the cedars of Lebanon were the envy of surrounding nations. Hiram was joyous in response to Solomon's request for the trees because a close political relationship between his coastal kingdom and So-

lomon would allow trade routes through Israelite territory to the inland nations of the Near East. **20,000 measures:** Since wheat did not grow in Hiram's territory, the payment of approximately 103,200 bushels of wheat was significant for the feeding of the people under Hiram's control. One "measure" (Heb., *kor*) equals about 5.16 bushels. **Hiram's builders:** These would be Canaanite builders since Hiram's kingdom consisted of those Canaanites whom Israel was supposed to drive out of the land of promise, but did not. The Canaanites were artisans in reference to building temples to their false gods, and here we see them building in cooperation with the people of God, a temple for the God of Israel. Not only was there a political and economic union between Solomon and Hiram, but also a union in labor and religious beliefs. Though Solomon at this time was faithful to the God of Israel, later in his life he would go after the gods of the nations around him. His life would be a tragedy of faith and would illustrate the spiritual tragedy of the nation of Israel in the years to come.

CHAPTER 6

6:1-10 (2 Ch 3:1-14) Israel came out of the land of Egypt: The writer gives this date of 480 years in order to establish the time for the construction of the temple in reference to the exodus from Egypt (See 2 Ch 3:2). The tabernacle had been moved among the tribal territories for this number of years, thus proving that God's plan for the movement of the tabernacle worked. It was only

when Israel started changing God's original plan that division, and eventually, destruction came upon Israel. Solomon reigned from 971 to 931 B.C. His reign is the only reign that can be relatively accurate in reference to the birth of Christ and our calendar today. The fourth year of his reign would be 967 B.C. According to the date given here, the date of the exodus from Egypt would be 1445 B.C.,

though some Bible students suggest a later date. **Cubit:** This was approximately 18 inches. According to this length, the temple would have been 90 feet long, 30 feet wide and 45 feet high. It was not built as a place for assembly, but a place in which to locate the ark of the covenant and the other articles of the tabernacle. **He built:** This phrase is used several times throughout this context. In the instructions and building of the tabernacle 480 years before, God gave all the instructions for the tabernacle's construction. It is significant here, therefore, to note that it was Solomon who was giving the instructions for the building of the temple. It was David's idea and Solomon's construction. The writer of Kings wants us to understand that the building of the temple was the idea of David and Solomon, not God. God was satisfied to allow His presence in Israel to be made known through the tabernacle, but men seek to identify the presence of God among them by building permanent structures.

6:11-13 Concerning this house that you are building: Solomon, not God, was building the temple. The exhortation of these words is not new revelation. However, it is significant that God came to Solomon with this exhortation in the midst of the building of the temple. At least the writer of the text places these words of exhortation in the middle of the temple's construction for a specific reason. The reason was surely in view of the fact that God saw that the religious pride of Israel had shifted from the temple of God in heaven where God reigns, to a

physical temple on earth where some assumed God would reside. As with the apostate thinking of the nations around Israel who housed their gods, many in Israel were surely thinking that they were going to house the God of heaven in a structure that measured 90 X 30 X 45 feet. They had forgotten the word of God concerning the purpose of the tabernacle, and now they only continued their forgetfulness in the building of the temple (See comments Hs 4:6).

6:14-38 The house: The temple was called "the house" (vss 2,16) or the "house of the Lord" (vs 1). There were three parts to the temple: the porch (vs 3), the temple (vs 17), and the inner sanctuary (vs 19). The inner sanctuary ("the oracle") was the most holy place or the holy of holies (Ex 26:33). The porch, or "vestibule," was outside the temple and faced east. This was the place of the two pillars, Jachin and Boaz (7:21). The inner sanctuary contained the altar of cedar that was overlaid with gold. In the inner sanctuary were also the cherubim and the ark of the covenant. The temple was constructed with the most elaborate materials that were available at the time and with the best workmanship of skilled laborers. The seven years of construction for such a small structure indicate that great detail went into the making of every part of the structure and its contents. In reference to the details of the structure, we have difficulty visualizing the final design. Because it was built with the help of Canaanites who were not Israelites, we can form some image of the final structure by comparing it to the con-

temporary Canaanite temples of the times. The remains of Canaanite temples at Megiddo, Shechem, Bethel, Diber and Ras Shamra give Bible students some indication of how the temple looked in its final construction. Solomon's temple was destroyed when Jerusalem fell in 586 B.C. The Babylonian conquerors destroyed the temple and carried away the remaining contents, for the original contents that Solomon placed in the temple were carried away by Shishak, the Pharaoh of Egypt. The remnant of Israel that returned from Babylonian captivity in

536 B.C. rebuilt the temple, but they mourned over the fact that it was not in the splendor of the original temple (Er 3:12). King Herod the Great built another temple in its place during his reign prior to the ministry of Jesus, but again it was not in the splendor of Solomon's temple. With the description that is given in 1 Kings 6 & 7 and Ezekiel 41, we must keep in mind that all artists' drawings of Solomon's temple are an amalgamation of concepts taken from the ruins of contemporary Canaanite temples that existed in Solomon's day.

CHAPTER 7

7:1-12 Solomon's house was an apartment complex that housed many of those of the royal court. This may explain why it took thirteen years to build his house in comparison to the seven years to build the temple. ***A porch of pillars:*** From the throne of the porch, or judgment hall, judgments were made over cases that were brought to the king by the people. From the description of Solomon's house that is given in this context, it is difficult to determine the exact details of the house. The description is given in wording that could be understood only by someone who had actual visual reference to the original structure. The purpose of the description in this context was to remind the original readers of the splendor of the house of Solomon that was destroyed by the Babylonians in the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. Both in the description of the temple and the house of Solomon, we would assume that the writer wants the

Israelites after the captivity to mourn over what their apostasy caused. It caused the destruction of these two great complexes of Solomonic construction. What was described in the context of 1 Kings 6 & 7 no longer existed because of Israel's apostasy from the word of God.

7:13-39 (2 Ch 3:15,17) The description of articles of the temple in this context indicates that the temple itself, and the palace of Solomon, were joined as one complex. Because of the loss of meaning of certain Hebrew words, what is described in this context is often difficult to understand. The biblical interpreter must not be frustrated with our impossibility to understand this description of the articles of the temple. We can be assured that the recipients of the writer's original autograph clearly understood what is herein described. We must also understand that after Solomon's death, Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, came and plundered the temple of all its gold. In

other words, in only one generation all the ornate articles that are described in this context were taken to Egypt during the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. It seems that the writer wants us to understand the vanities of gold and silver and elaborate structures. **Hiram:** Because of his reputation as a skilled artisan, this man was hired by Solomon to perform the duties of making the articles described in this context. This Hiram, not the King Hiram of Tyre, was from the same city. He was the son of an Israelite woman who was from the tribe of Naphtali who had married a Canaanite. **Jachin ... Boaz:** There was symbolic significance to the names for these two pillars that were placed in front of the temple. "Jachin" probably signified that the temple would stand forever. "Boaz" signified that God gives the temple strength and endurance. Some have suggested that Jachin referred to God establishing the throne of the king forever and Boaz signified that in the strength of God the king would rejoice. In each of the signified meanings is the thought that the king stood between God and the people. If this understanding is correct, then the two pillars reaffirmed the monarchy of Israel. Unfortunately, the role of the king of Israel was never the original plan of God. One reason why God did not want a king over His people was that when a king went morally wrong, so did those over whom he ruled. And in the case of Solomon, he led the people into idolatrous worship of pagan gods. In reference to the sins of the northern kingdom that would come into existence during the

days of Jeroboam, succeeding kings would follow in the idolatrous sins of Jeroboam. **A molten sea:** This was a great bowl 15 feet across at the top. Some have estimated that it contained approximately 10,000 gallons of water. Its purpose was to supply the water for the ceremonial cleansings (2 Ch 4:6). **Ten stands of brass:** These were smaller basins that conveniently provided water for cleansing when the priest was away from the greater basin of water. **Ten lavers:** These were bowl-shaped portable basins that also contained water for washing. The many basins for water around the temple were for the priests who prepared the many sacrifices that were offered in reference to the temple service. The portable lavers could be wheeled to different locations in order to provide water for washing during and after the sacrifices.

7:40-51 (2 Ch 4:7,8,17-22; 5:1)

Bright bronze: Some translations use "bronze," whereas some use the word "brass." Brass is a term that is used to refer to any copper alloy. Reference in this context is to burnished bronze. The Hebrew word is *nehosheth*. Discoveries of the material that was used have revealed that the material was an alloy of copper and tin. **Between Succoth and Zarethan:** These locations east of the Jordan have been discovered by archaeologists. Deposits of copper in great cauldrons have been traced back to the days of Solomon. These were the quarries where Solomon mined the great amount of copper that was needed for making the ornate structures and utensils for the

temple. **Gold:** Within the temple were articles made of pure gold (2 Ch 4:7,8,19-22). Some of the gold and silver possibly came from the spoils that David had taken from kingdoms he conquered, which spoils he had dedicated to the Lord (2 Sm 8:9-12). Many Bible students have assumed that much of Solomon's gold

came from places as far away as Africa. **The treasures of the house of the Lord:** It seems that the temple also functioned as a state treasury. One of the common purposes for temple structures in ancient times was to function as civic centers wherein was housed the treasury of the kingdom.

CHAPTER 8

DEDICATION OF THE TEMPLE

8:1-13 (2 Ch 5:2 – 6:2) Ark of the covenant: Until the building of the temple, the tabernacle was the location for the ark of the covenant. When the temple was completed, it was moved from the City of David to the permanent structure of the temple where it would stay until the temple was plundered by Shishak. **Ethanim:** As with the names Ziv and Bul (6:37,38), this was the name of the month that was used before the exile of the Jews in 586 B.C. After the exile, Ethanim would be called Tishri. **To this day:** This phrase indicates that 1 & 2 Kings were written before the Babylonian captivity in 586 B.C., for Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Babylonians. **Two tablets of stone:** These were the tablets of stone on which God had written the ten commandments at Mt. Sinai. The tablets were representative, or given in remembrance, of the covenant that God made with Israel at Mt. Sinai. The structure of the ark housed the stone tablets. **The glory of the Lord:** The presence of the cloud in the temple, as in the tabernacle when it was completed, was God's sanction of the temple (See Ex 40:34-38). **A house to dwell in:**

This, of course, is not literally true. The metaphorical meaning was that the temple was the indication of God's presence among the Israelites. Since they had forsaken God's original plan of maintaining the tabernacle and its movement among the tribal territories, God accommodated the temple, and thus manifested His presence in the temple through the cloud. The omnipresent God of heaven is not confined to temples as Solomon later stated (vss 27-30).

8:14-21 (2 Ch 6:3-11) I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build a house: If it had been God's plan originally to choose a city and build a temple in the territory of one of the tribes, then that tribe would have taken ownership of a visible symbol of God's presence. It was not in God's original plan, therefore, to centralize His presence in any tribal territory by the building of a permanent structure as the temple. **Now it was in the heart of David my father to build a house:** This statement answers the question as to why the temple came into existence in the history of Israel. Unto this time, God had "dwelt" in the tabernacle for 480 years. However, in the latter part of his reign, David, not God, wanted to

build a permanent structure to house the ark of the covenant. Though God did not allow David to build the temple, David's dream was realized on this day when Solomon dedicated the temple that he had built for his father, David. ***The Lord has performed His word:*** God had promised David that He would set one upon His throne. Solomon here expressed his gratitude that he was set upon the throne of David in fulfillment of the promise that God had made to David.

8:22-30 (2 Ch 6:21-42) Verses 22-53 are a prayer of Solomon concerning the obedience of the people. When reading the content of this prayer, the Bible interpreter must keep in mind that these are the words of Solomon that were recorded by the Holy Spirit. They are not the words of the Holy Spirit speaking to Himself. We must understand that what Solomon says, therefore, is to be understood from his understanding of the desires of God, which understanding is not necessarily in all areas the true desires of God. ***There is no God like you:*** The tragedy of Solomon's reign and theology is that he began with the faith of David, but by the time of the end of his reign, he had gone after the gods of his many wives. Though we could assume that he never gave up his belief in the one God of heaven as stated in this prayer, we must honor the Scriptures when it later states that he paid homage to the gods of other nations. In one generation, therefore, he went from what is stated here to belief in other gods, which gods were only the imagination of the minds of men. ***You will not lack a man to sit on the throne***

of Israel: This was a promise to David, that from David only would God recognize one as a rightful king in Israel. This promise to David was fulfilled until the cessation of Israelite kings in 586 B.C. when Judah was taken into Babylonian captivity. When a remnant of Israel returned from captivity in 536 B.C., the Israelites reverted back to God's original theocratic plan that He alone be their king. The theocracy of God began when He established a covenant with Israel at Mt. Sinai after Israel came out of Egyptian captivity. The theocracy continued for approximately 400 years until the anointing of Saul. The monarchy continued from the time of Saul to the Babylonian captivity of 586 B.C., approximately 400 years. The theocracy was re-established after the captivity and continued for approximately 400 years until the ascension of Jesus to the right hand of God. It is for this reason that many Bible students believe that the deliverance from Egyptian captivity was actually in the 13th century B.C., not the 15th century, or 1,445. ***But will God indeed dwell on earth:*** Solomon certainly knew that God was not confined to this earth and a temple that was made with the hands of men (See comments At 17:22-31). Only those gods who are created in the imagination of men are confined to buildings. The omnipresent God of all things is not relegated to sanctuaries that are the creation of architects. It is the spirit of idolatry for one to feel the presence of God as he goes into a sanctuary wherein he feels a great sense of God. The error of such emotions is that the

same person feels he is away from God when he is outside the sanctuary. When our minds create a sense of the presence of God in a particular location, then we have started down the idolatrous road that moves us to build idol temples in which to house our gods and religious experience. Believers must keep in mind that the spirit of idolatry is to create a religion that appeals to the sense perceptions of man. We create mechanical music to appeal to our sense of hearing. We create idols we can feel to appeal to our sense of feeling. We build elaborate buildings to appeal to our sense of sight and for the presence of our god we believe lives in our building. ***My name will be there:*** The name, or authority of God, was manifested through the existence of the tabernacle, and now at this time, Solomon prayed that the temple function in the same manner. The temple was to be the evidence of the authority of God among His people of Israel. The problem with this reasoning was that the nations around Israel maintained the same belief, that their temples were the evidence of the presence of their gods.

8:31-53 (2 Ch 6:22-39) The context of the prayer here is in reference to the warnings that God gave to Moses in Deuteronomy. If they did not remain faithful to the word of God, they would pay the price of famine, pestilence, plagues and exile. Within the early reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, Israel would pay the price in reference to all the gold and silver that was part of the temple. Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt, would carry it away to Egypt. ***In this house:*** The

condition that one be in the presence of the temple to swear an oath or repent could not be a condition for making binding oaths or bringing about personal repentance. The reason this could not be a condition for binding oaths was that the temple structure was a great distance away from most of the people of Israel. Therefore, one's personal presence at the temple was not stated as a law. We must conclude that Solomon was only seeking to exemplify the importance of the temple in making this statement. ***If they pray toward this place:*** We would not assume that this desire, which is mentioned four times in Solomon's prayer, is the desire of God. God does not prescribe any direction to which one must face when praying. These were the desires of Solomon, and thus could not be made a condition for answered prayer. God is omnipresent, and thus the answer to prayer is not conditioned on the posture of the individual during his prayer. When Mohammed initiated the faith of Islam, he took this concept of Solomon from these statements and made a legal code in Islam that in prayer all Muslims must pray while facing Mecca, not Jerusalem. In this context it seems that Solomon was urging the people to face Jerusalem when they prayed in order to give honor and allegiance to the temple. He was requesting that the condition for answered prayer was based on the position of one's bowing toward Jerusalem when in prayer. This surely did not go well with those of the northern tribes, which later proved to be true. ***Hear in heaven Your dwelling place:*** The dwelling place of God is

in a heavenly environment, not a specific physical location on earth as a building. **A foreigner:** Solomon's desire here was that the temple function as a center of reference for those who came from foreign countries. He was asking that the elaborate and lavish nature of the temple be an evidence of the presence of God to the alien. Unfortunately, the appeal of the temple did not accomplish this desire simply because the behavior of the people did not reflect obedience to the will of God. It was their ungodly behavior, not the temple, that eventually led to the blasphemy of the name of God. **Wherever You will send them:** This again is a reflection on what God warned Israel through Moses in reference to their obedience to the law of God. If they were disobedient, they would be taken into captivity. At this time in their history, the kingdoms of Assyria and Babylonia did not exist. But it would eventually be these kingdoms to which they would be taken in exile for their disobedience. **There is no man that does not sin:** See comments Rm 3:23; 1 Jn 1:10.

8:54-61 **There has not failed one word of all His good promise:** God had been true to His promises to Moses concerning the Israelites (See Gn 12:1-3). These promises had been fulfilled before this time, but Solomon wanted to remind the people that God had fulfilled His promises of the covenant. It was their

responsibility to fulfill their responsibilities of the covenant by obedience to His will. **Walk in all His ways:** This was the condition of the covenant that was to be fulfilled by the people. **That all the people of the earth may know:** Israel's obedience to the commandments of God would be an evidence to the existence of God. Since their law came to them from God, their obedience to the law would manifest that it was not a law that had been invented after the desires of men. Idolatrous nations devised their own moral laws. Such laws are usually devised in order to satisfy the lusts of the flesh. However, Israel's law was God-given, and the proof that it was from God would be proved by the righteous nature of their lives.

8:62-66 (2 Ch 7:4-10) The elaborate dedication and sacrifice of animals was a renewal of Israel's commitment to God. In their consecration of the temple, they were making a commitment to be faithful to the will of God when they returned home. **Entrance of Hamath:** This was the northern region of Palestine between Mt. Hermon and Lebanon. **River of Egypt:** This was a small brook south of Gaza in the southern part of Palestine. **Fourteen days:** This would probably have been seven days in celebration of the feast of Dedication, plus another seven days in celebration of the feast of Tabernacles.

CHAPTER 9

GOD'S COVENANT WITH SOLOMON

9:1-9 (2 Ch 7:11-22) *All Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do:* Though the temple was built after the desire of David and Solomon, God put His stamp of approval on it, and thus the temple was consecrated with the presence of God (vs 3). **But go and serve other gods and worship them:** And this they did, being led by Solomon himself. Solomon was about twenty years into his reign when the temple was completed. He reigned forty years, and thus in the latter part of his reign after the completion of the temple and its dedication he was led astray after other gods by his foreign wives. **Obey:** This was the condition for the succession of Davidic kings who would follow after Solomon (See 8:24-26). The books of 1 & 2 Kings are a history of how many of the kings of Israel led Israel astray after the sins of false gods. **Will hiss:** They would whistle in astonishment at the fall of Israel in reference to the grandeur of the temple. In fact, in the early years of Rehoboam's reign, the temple would be plundered of all its riches by Shishak, Pharaoh of Egypt. That in which they took pride would be plundered.

SOLOMON'S FAME

9:10-14 (2 Ch 8:1,2) *Cabul:* As payment for the cedar and cypress trees from Hiram, king of Tyre, Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities. However, the land around the cities was unproductive, and

thus Hiram named the land "Cabul," which means "worthless" or "nothing." 2 Chronicles states that at a later time Solomon regained possession of these undeveloped cities. They were evidently given to Hiram as security until he was paid in gold.

9:15-22 (2 Ch 8:3-10) *Forced labor:* These were those whom Solomon had brought into bondage to build both the temple and many other cities. We could conclude that they were Canaanites who were supposed to have been utterly destroyed when Israel initially came in to possess the land of Palestine. Instead of destroying the Canaanites and their culture, they were subjected as servants to the Israelites. *Millo:* Some have interpreted this to be a fortification that was built on a platform or citadel. It is not clear what this was, though the same was built in Bethshemesh and Lachish. *Cities:* The cities that are listed here are not all the cities that were built by Solomon. It was a general practice that his officers were given cities over which they ruled and in which they were to maintain storage facilities for the wealth of the nation. *Pharaoh:* This was the last Pharaoh of the 21st Dynasty of Egyptian kings. Solomon took Pharaoh's daughter as one of his wives in order to establish political ties with Egypt. *Storage cities:* Since a great amount of provisions was to be continually supplied to the court of Solomon, storage cities were set up throughout the land in order that grain be available to supply the king's court throughout the

year. Archaeologists have discovered some of these storage facilities in Bethshemesh and Lachish. Remains of the stables of Solomon have been discovered in Megiddo and Hazor. ***Their children who were left:*** The descendants of the original Canaanites, who were to have been annihilated by the army of Joshua, were in the land at this time. They were subjected to the Israelites as servants (See Ja 9:22-27). The Israelites maintained the positions of authority, and the Canaanite descendants were the servants in the land.

9:23-28 Pharaoh's daughter: Once the temple complex and the royal palace were completed, royalty moved in. ***Offerings:*** Once the temple was completed, Solomon no longer went to Gibeon to offer the three annual sacrifices of the

feast of Unleavened Bread, feast of Weeks, and feast of Tabernacles (2 Ch 8:12-16). ***A fleet of ships:*** There is a brief mention in this context of a fleet of ships that was probably very substantial. The Phoenicians were very skilled in sea travel. Combined with the wealth of Solomon, we could assume that the influence of both Hiram and Solomon extended to regions far beyond the land of Palestine. The discovery of copper smelting furnaces as far south as the Gulf of Aqabah and Ezion Geber lead us to conclude that Solomon sourced metals from great distances. From Ezion Geber it is believed that Solomon set forth his ships on voyages to Ophir. It is not known exactly where Ophir was located, though some have suggested that it was as far south as the Somali coast in Africa.

CHAPTER 10

VISIT BY A QUEEN

10:1-10 (2 Ch 9:1-12) Queen of Sheba: The name "Sheba" probably refers to an area of southern Arabia, though some believe reference here was to regions as far south as southern Egypt or northern Ethiopia. ***Heard of the fame:*** The wealth and wisdom of Solomon was so great that his reputation was spread throughout the Near East. The report seemed too great to be true, and thus out of curiosity, the queen of Sheba made this trip to confirm what she had heard. ***The half was not told:*** The queen of Sheba discovered that the reports concerning Solomon's wealth and wisdom were not exaggerated. She was overwhelmed. The Holy Spirit had this record of

Solomon's wisdom recorded to emphasize the fact that God blessed Solomon with the understanding that he requested in prayer at the beginning of his reign. He did not ask for wealth and fame. The wealth came only as he exercised his God-given wisdom, and thus God is given credit for his great wealth. Israel reached its greatest economic power and international influence at this time in history. From this time forward, however, the nation morally and economically declined to the point of being led away into captivity. When Jesus came into the world, Palestine was occupied by the Romans and the Israelites were subservient to their control. However, we must keep in mind that God used Israel's sin

as a nation to take them from glory to gloom in order to humble them in preparation to receive His Son (See Gl 4:4). We must also keep in mind that God brought them to the greatness of Solomon's wealth and fame in order that in the future after their apostasy and captivity they would have something that would remind them from where they had fallen. **Blessed be the Lord your God:** The queen rightly concluded that Israel's greatness had come from God. In the future after the Israelites had fallen because of their sin, their remembrance of the glory days of Solomon would always be an encouragement that they repent in order to receive again the blessings that came from God.

10:11-13 All her desire: Not only did the queen of Sheba bless Solomon with gifts of precious stones, metals and spices, Solomon also gave gifts to her. He gave all that she asked. Since Solomon at this time had control of the surrounding nations that he had subjugated to the rule of Israel, the queen needed trade route privileges in order for her nation to trade with other nations. In her request to Solomon, therefore, we would assume that more than gifts were included.

SOLOMON'S TAX OF THE PEOPLE

10:14-20 Gold that came to Solomon: The tax that came to Solomon was enormous. The 666 talents of gold in modern value would have been several hundred million dollars every year. This amount was in conjunction with the

taxes that came from the trade routes. **Gold shields:** There were two sizes of shields that were used by the royal bodyguards (14:27,28; 2 Ch 12:10). The larger shield, which protected the entire body, consumed 600 shekels of gold. The smaller shield was made with three minas of gold. **House of the forest of Lebanon:** This was a reference to the temple since it was constructed from the trees that came from Lebanon. **Throne:** The use of ivory indicates that Solomon's trade extended into Africa where elephants were hunted. Solomon's throne was elaborately decorated with royal symbols in gold and ivory. The beauty of the throne emphasized the authority of the king over the nation.

10:21-29 Silver: Since there was so much gold, there was little value in silver. **Trading ships:** Some translations have used the noun "Tarshish" to translate the Hebrew word here which actually means "refinery" or "smeltery." However, the term refers to the process of refining metals, not a geographical location (See 9:26-28). They were ships that carried refined metals, and thus, referred to as the trading ships that carried precious metals. **Chariots and horsemen:** See 4:26; 9:19. The accumulation of gold and horses by Solomon was a direct violation of God's instructions that were given in Deuteronomy 17:16,17. Thus Solomon's ignoring of the law indicated that during this period, the royalty had forgotten, or at least became ignorant of, the will of God in reference to the kings of Israel. Since the attention of the people had now turned from the

leadership of the Levites to the material leadership of the king of Israel, the stage was set for the apostasy of Israel that would soon follow in their history. Instead of people looking to the Levites for decisions and directions from God by the Urim and Thummim in the priest's ephod, they were looking to the king. At this time in the history of Israel, the leadership of the monarchy had overshadowed any theocratic leadership by God. ***Made silver ... common:*** Silver was used so much in Jerusalem that it was as common as wood. And thus, the people outside Jerusalem went to Jerusalem as did the queen of Sheba. They were infatuated with the elaborate materials that were used in the building of the temple and royal palace. The greatness of Israel, therefore, turned from their godly behavior to material wealth. Instead of manifesting the greatness of God through their godly behavior, they sought to manifest God to the nations by their enormous wealth. Jerusalem became a tourist spectacle that was paraded before the world. The Israelites toured people through the structures of their elaborate buildings and took pride in their enormous wealth.

Their pride in the physical revealed the misguided focus of their hearts. We must not miss what the Holy Spirit is here telling us in these words. Israel's focus at this time in their history had turned from calling the world unto God through their obedience to His word, to being tour guides to the wealth of the nation. In order to maintain such an appearance in his own life, Solomon politically sustained his influence by catering to the foreign gods of his wives whom he had married for the purpose of maintaining his agreements with foreign nations and taxes from trade. ***Exceeded all the kings of the earth:*** This statement should be understood in the historical context of the ones to whom 1 Kings was originally written. Thus Solomon's wealth exceeded the wealth of all the kings that were known at the time Solomon lived. Reference, therefore, would be to the kings of the Near East, or kingdoms that were known by the Israelites at this time in their history. The writer wants us to understand that the great wealth of Solomon did not stop the apostasy that began with him and continued throughout Israel's history.

CHAPTER 11

SOLOMON'S APOSTASY & DEATH

11:1-8 The apostasy of Solomon reaffirms the fact that one's knowledge of God is not a guarantee that one will remain faithful to God. The legacy of his life also reminds us that the influence of an unconverted wife can lead one into compromises that eventually lead one

away from God. The focus of Solomon on maintaining the wealth of the kingdom of Israel assuredly drove him to focus on respecting the gods of the nations from which his wealth came through trade agreements. The price he paid for having many foreign wives was his total loyalty to God. His polygamist marriages to these wives were not only contrary to

the will of God, they influenced him to believe in other gods (Dt 17:17). **His heart was not loyal to the Lord:** Contrary to David, who never lost total focus on the one true and living God, Solomon conformed to the gods who had been created after the imagination of men, and to whom his wives paid allegiance. He turned from recognizing God as the one from whom all his blessings came. He turned to taking glory in his own skillful leadership to amass such great wealth through marriages and political maneuvers. His heart was not loyal to God in the sense that he added to his belief in God the gods of the foreign wives that he had married.

11:9-13 The Lord was angry with Solomon: We should have expected this. He violated too many principles of the law of God to remain faithful throughout his life. His punishment for his apostasy was not immediate. It would come through the termination of the united kingdom of Israel. Ten tribes would be removed from the kingdom of his son, Rehoboam. God allowed him to live the remainder of his life with the knowledge that his unwise actions would cause the division of the nation of Israel. We must keep in mind, therefore, that it was Solomon who set Israel on the path to captivity. He started the apostasy to idol religion and the kings of Israel after him simply followed his example. One of the reasons for the division of the tribes was because of his idolatrous practices that he introduced into Israel. Both the northern and southern kingdoms were eventually taken into captivity because they fol-

lowed the idolatrous example of Solomon. **One tribe:** Throughout the Kings and Chronicles, as well as the prophets, a very important interpretation is connected to the phrase, "one tribe" in reference to Judah. When reading this term, or simply, "Judah," the Bible interpreter must always assume that the tribe of Benjamin is included in the southern kingdom of Judah. This interpretation is explained in 12:21 where the writer stated, "*all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin.*" The northern kingdom of Israel consisted of ten tribes and the southern kingdom consisted of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin, with part of the tribe of Simeon. **For David my servant's sake:** In order that the legacy of David continue, Solomon's son would reign over Judah and Benjamin.

11:14-22 God used the rebellious nature of other tribes in order to carry out His plan to take ten tribes away from the reign of Rehoboam, the son of Solomon. **Hadad:** Edom had, under the reign of David, been subdued by Joab who led David's army (2 Sm 8:13,14). However, during that siege by Joab, the young man Hadad fled to Egypt. According to verse 14, we must conclude that God had a hand in Hadad's return to Edom and his mustering of the Edomites against Solomon.

11:23-25 Rezon: Rezon had established himself in the far northern region of Palestine. It seems that he had organized a marauding group of bandits who continually harassed the Israelites who had also settled in the northern region of Palestine. Under the leadership of Rezon,

Israel eventually lost control of the Syrian territory.

11:26-40 Jeroboam: In Israelite history from this point on, the influence of Jeroboam played a significant role. His legacy of idolatry eventually led to the captivity of the northern kingdom by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C. **The prophet Ahijah:** Jeroboam's rise was through the work of God. While young, and as a very capable leader, Jeroboam found favor in the sight of Solomon. He oversaw all the forced labor of Solomon's kingdom. **Lifted up his hand against the king:** It seems that Jeroboam became somewhat arrogant when Ahijah informed him that he would reign over the northern ten tribes of Israel. He thus acted too soon to fulfill the prophecy and did not wait until the death of Solomon. The result was that he lost his favor in the sight of Solomon, and thus had to flee to Egypt. **Ten pieces:** The fact that ten tribes would be assigned to Jeroboam, indicates that by this time in the history of Israel, the people felt the burden of the tremendous taxes that were levied by Solomon to maintain the glory of his kingdom reign. We must also conclude that the northern tribes felt slighted by the centralization of government in Jerusalem and the locating of the ark of God in the temple in Jerusalem. The rebellion would be from the vast majority of the nation. Only two tribes would remain with Rehoboam, Judah and Benjamin. **They have forsaken Me:** The primary reason why Israel was divided, and eventually was taken into captivity, was because they followed after the example of Solomon in

his idolatry, and not after David in keeping the commandments of the Lord. **A light always before Me:** The righteous influence by which David manifested the heart of God to Israel made it possible that the seedline promise that was made to David would bring about the promise that was given to Abraham (Gn 12:1-3). The house of David had to continue throughout the history of Israel, for from his seed would eventually come the Messiah into the world (Compare 15:4; 2 Kg 8:19; 2 Ch 21:7 with 2 Sm 21:17). God had promised David that his house would stand forever (2 Sm 7:16). In this prophecy was the redeeming Son of David, the Christ. Though the house of David would be affected with Babylonian captivity, a remnant would return in order to carry on the seedline promise that was made to Abraham, and narrowed to the descendants of David. **Build you a sure house as I did for David:** This must be understood in the context of God's use of the nation of Israel to bring the Messiah into the world. The northern tribes would continue to exist until the time when their separation from Judah and Benjamin was fulfilled. The purpose for their separation was fulfilled when God called the remnant of Israel out of Babylonian captivity. A remnant of all twelve tribes returned to Israel after the Babylonian captivity, which took place with the return of the initial captives in 536 B.C. By the time the Son of God was born into Israel, representatives of all twelve tribes of Israel were in Palestine for the fulfillment of all God's promises concerning the coming of the Redeemer of Israel (See comments Gl 4:4).

11:41-43 The inspired writer does not give us any information concerning the death of Solomon who had devoted himself to building a financial empire out of Israel. It is simply stated that he died and that he had reigned 40 years. Some have suggested that he repented in his old age from his idolatrous behavior. When reading his proverbs and wisdom literature, this could have been so. However, the legacy of following after the idolatry of his wives set a behavioral pattern that stayed with Israel until the days of Israel's captivity in 586 B.C. There is no indication in 1 Kings that Solomon repented of his idolatrous apostasy. Nevertheless, God used him as an inspired writer to compose the wisdom literature that we have in the Bible. Inspiration by the Holy Spirit did not mean that the Holy Spirit took control of the moral behavior of the

one He inspired (See GI 2:11-16) **Rehoboam his son reigned:** This reign over the united Israel was short-lived. He followed in the harshness of his father, and thus set the stage for the division of the nation of Israel which came shortly after he assumed the throne in Jerusalem.

Division Of Israel

(12:1 – 16:34)

Outline: (1) Rehoboam's folly and Israel's revolt (12:1-24), (2) Jeroboam's northern leadership (12:25 – 14:20), (3) Rehoboam's reign and death (14:21-31), (4) The house of David in Jerusalem (15:1-24), (5) Rule of Nadab (15:25-32), (6) Reign of Baasha (15:33 – 16:7), (7) Rule of Elah (16:8-14), (8) Insurrection of Zimri (16:15-20), (9) Reign of Omri (16:21-28), (10) Reign of Ahab (16:29-34)

CHAPTER 12

REHOBAM'S FOLLY & ISRAEL'S REVOLT

12:1-5 It seems that Rehoboam went to Shechem north of Jerusalem in order to accommodate those of the north who came down for this very crucial meeting. Jeroboam, who had been in Egypt, had possibly laid the ground work for the meeting, knowing that he had been designated by Ahijah the prophet to reign over the northern ten tribes. He thus appeared with Israel at the meeting with a known agenda. **Grievous service:** During the last years of Solomon's reign, it is evident that the people lived under the burden of Solomon's overbearing taxation. The northern tribes had a valid com-

plaint since most of the tax money was gathered from the northern tribes but was spent primarily in Judah and Jerusalem, not the northern territories.

12:6-15 The old men: These were men who stood before Solomon. In view of the complaint of the people, it is evident that their wishes were not heard when Solomon was still alive. Solomon seemingly ruled with an autocratic attitude, refusing also to listen to the counsel of "old men" who stood before him. **The young men:** These men had a tyrannical attitude toward the people. They were those who were spoiled by the lavish living of the king's court, and thus did not want to give up their life-style.

As is common with autocratic leaders, they lived in their own world that was out of touch with the common people over whom they assumed dictatorial control. Rehoboam's decision was to rule autocratically after his father in order to maintain his kingly life-style. In order to do this he had to oppress the people with more taxation. This one selfish decision brought to the surface all the divisive tension that had built up between the tribes for many years. It was the final divisive act that separated the nation. The legacy of Rehoboam was that he was more concerned over his own well being than the people over whom he ruled.

12:16-20 *What portion have we in David:* If they were to be burdened with greater taxation that would go only to the house of David in Jerusalem, then the northern tribes felt that they could not be loyal to any descendant of David as king over them. As a result, Rehoboam's reign was reduced to the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. ***Adoram:*** In an effort to restore his reign over the northern tribes, Rehoboam sent Adoram to the north in order to bring into subjection the forced labor that lived there. But he was stoned, and thus the northern tribes sealed their rebellion and separation from Judah and Rehoboam. ***Israel rebelled ... to this day:*** At the time of the writing of 1 & 2 Kings, the kingdom was still divided, but had not yet experienced the Assyrian captivity of 722/21 B.C.

12:21-24 *Judah ... Benjamin:* When the term "Judah" is used hereafter in Jewish history, one must always include the tribe of Benjamin that was as-

similated into Judah. Since the territory of Simeon was divided between the north and south, much of the tribe of Simeon was also assimilated into Judah. In the writing of the prophets, the term "Judah" referred to the southern kingdom and the term "Israel" referred to the northern ten tribes. ***The word of God came to Shemaiah:*** This word that came from God was that Rehoboam give up his plans to subjugate the northern tribes. The division of the tribes was the work of God, and thus Rehoboam was assured through Shemaiah that his plans would fail if he sought to reunite Israel against the will of God. ***Remnant:*** These were those of the northern tribes who were living in the south at the time of the division of Israel.

JEROBOAM'S NORTHERN LEADERSHIP

12:25-33 *Shechem:* This was Jeroboam's capital during his reign, though the capital was later moved to Tirzah (14:17). At the time he established Shechem as his initial capital, he added to the buildings that already existed, for the city existed long before Jeroboam (12:1; Ja 24:1). Omri later reaffirmed Samaria as the capital of the northern kingdom (16:24). ***Penuel:*** Jeroboam also fortified this city that existed long before his time (Gn 32:24-32; Jg 8:8,9,17). ***If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the Lord at Jerusalem:*** Something very significant happened at this time in reference to Israel violating a fundamental plan of God to keep Israel as a united nation throughout

their history. The tabernacle was to be used as the center for their burnt offerings throughout their history. For this reason God gave them detailed instructions in the Pentateuch as to how they were to continually repair or rebuild the tabernacle throughout their history until the Messiah came. However, they failed to do this, and thus the center of sacrifices was claimed by various tribes as the tabernacle remained too long in any one territory. God never intended that Israel centralize the place where they would go to offer the burnt offerings, and thus no tribe would ever be too far away every year (See comments Dt 12). But when Jerusalem was made the capital, and the temple was built to centralize sacrifices in Jerusalem, then the foundation was laid for the division of the nation. Building the temple in Jerusalem consigned the northern tribes to being continually too far away to go and offer their burnt offerings before the Lord. At the time of the division, centralization of the sacrifices had been going on since the completion of the temple. The northern tribes were consigned to being too far away to bring their families for the burnt offering. The resentment of the north toward the south grew, and the foundation was laid for division. Jeroboam simply took advantage of this situation. ***It is too far for you to go up to Jerusalem:*** And it was. For this reason Jeroboam went too far from the law of God by building an altar in Dan (or, Laish - Jg 18:24-31) and another in Bethel (or, Luz - Gn 28:10-21; 35:5-15). He thus kept the people away from Jerusalem and away from the

ark of the covenant that was permanently located in the temple. He simply accommodated the northern tribes in the fact that it was too far for them to go on an annual basis to offer their burnt offerings before the Lord in Jerusalem. The centralization of government around a king, and the administration of government in one capital where their faith was also centralized, eventually bore the fruit of division among the tribes of Israel. We could blame the division of the kingdom on the harshness of Rehoboam. However, the division had already started to take place years before when Israel rejected God in order to have a king on earth. The kings on earth eventually centralized the administration of the nation's affairs around a single capital where they built a temple after the nations around them. The division was inevitable. God saw their future, and thus worked to use what the people caused to His own advantage. ***Jeroboam ordained:*** Jeroboam established many religious practices that were after his own design. He restructured the religious beliefs of the people, who at this time, were ignorant of the word of God, for they had no copies of the law by which to direct their lives (See Hs 4:6). He thus made the people sin by offering them the opportunity to satisfy their religious desires according to his desires to maintain the loyalty of the people. What Jeroboam established as religious behavior was continued throughout the remainder of the history of the northern kingdom. The kings that followed him thus sinned by carrying on the tradition of his apostasy. ***Feast:*** Ref-

erence here was to a change in the time for celebrating the feast of Tabernacles.

These were times of change, but it was change away from the will of God.

CHAPTER 13

13:1-10 *A man of God:* God did not speak directly to the king. He spoke through His prophets, and in this case as others, we would assume that the man of God was a Levite. Since the judgment that was coming from God on the house of Jeroboam was severe, a special messenger from God was sent to bear the message to the king. *Against the altar:* Jeroboam had gone beyond what God sanctioned when He gave him kingship over the northern ten tribes of Israel. In the division, God simply wanted to relieve Israel of the great financial burden that the house of Solomon had placed on the people. But Jeroboam took the move as justification to change the law of God. He thus built two more centers for sacrifices, one in Bethel and the other in Dan. *Josiah:* This was indeed a prophecy, not a prediction. The person's name is given, which when he came would leave no doubt that God was working through Josiah to bring down the apostasy of Israel (See 2 Kg 23:17,18). *I will give you a reward:* This prophet was not going to sell out for a salary. Though not recorded, he had been given strict instructions by God not to receive pay for his work as a prophet on this occasion. If he received pay from the one, or ones, to whom he was to give a message of judgment from God, then he would have been tempted to change the message. Those preachers who are supported by a local group of God's people are always tempted to

preach that which they believe the people want to hear (See comments 2 Tm 4:3). One often loses his freedom to teach what must be said from the word of God when he is supported by those who listen to his lessons (See comments 1 Co 9:19-23).

13:11-19 *An old prophet in Bethel:* This may have been a prophet who went along with the apostasy of Jeroboam, being paid by Jeroboam to lead others into the apostasy. His lie may thus have been an effort to discredit the message of the man of God. However, because the text describes the prophet as old, it may have been that he was too old to resist the apostasy of Jeroboam, since Jeroboam recruited the lowest of the people to be his prophets (vs 32). In this case, the old prophet may have lied in desperation just to have the man of God in his presence for encouragement. Unfortunately, his lie cost the life of a fearless man of God who came out of Judah to condemn the apostasy of Jeroboam.

13:20-32 One lesson is very clear in this example. Though the man of God was innocent in believing the lie of the old prophet, he had to pay the price for his disobedience. He should have perceived that the old prophet was lying, for the lie was contrary to what God had already clearly said to him, that he not tarry in Bethel, but immediately return to his home. For a moment he forgot the instructions of God, and thus paid with his life. *The lion standing by the carcass:*

This action on the part of the lion was proof that God was working in this situation. Normally, the lion would have eaten the carcass. But instead of eating the carcass, the lion was standing on guard that the carcass not be eaten by any other animal. The lion was under the control of God.

13:33,34 In order to propagate his religious beliefs and behavior, Jeroboam hired those who would preach his message. The lowest of the people who were

looking for a job, sold themselves out to one who used the religious inclinations of the people to maintain his own political position. Those who were hired likewise used the religious inclinations of the people to get a job. Governments that put preachers on the payroll have doomed the faiths of the people of the nation to apostasy. There must always be a separation between church and state, lest the state, as did Jeroboam, use religion to lead the people against the will of God.

CHAPTER 14

14:1-20 *Go to ... Ahijah:* When times got tough, Jeroboam knew where there was a true prophet of God. *Shiloh:* This may have been a city in which prophets lived at the time (See 2 Kg 2). *Take with you seven loaves:* When one went to a prophet, he was to take food that would be given to the prophet. Not only was this the will of God, but a way of showing respect for the prophet. Those who bring no sustenance to the men of God have no consideration or respect for those who have given their lives to teach the word of God (See comments 1 Co 9:1-14). *Ahijah could not see:* Because Ahijah immediately addressed the wife of Jeroboam as his wife, Ahijah was confirmed by miracle that he was a prophet of God. This confirmation assumed that she should accept every word he said. And the word was not good. The child would die as soon as she stepped foot in the city upon her return. It may have been that she did not fully believe the message of Ahijah, for she did return to the city. If she had believed every word, then

as the mother of the child, she surely would never have returned to the city. Nevertheless, her love for the child outweighed her belief in what the prophet said. *Cast Me behind your back:* For political reasons, Jeroboam assumed the religious leadership of the people. He did this by building the altars for sacrifice in Bethel and Dan, and by hiring a clergy to maintain his apostate religion. Thus in order to maintain his political position, he had to lead the people away from devotion to the commandments of God. He did this by hiring those who would speak his message. As long as there are those who will preach for a salary, there will always be those for hire who will propagate the message of those who pay them. *Take away the remnant of the house of Jeroboam:* Abijah, the son of Jeroboam would die, and thus the kingship lineage of Jeroboam would cease. God would eventually raise up one who would cut off the house of Jeroboam from being kings. The curse of Jeroboam's house went beyond the death

of Abijah. Other than Abijah, none of Jeroboam's descendants would go to the grave in a dignified manner. Upon their death, they would be eaten by animals and birds. **Scatter them beyond the River:** This was a clear prophecy of the Assyrian captivity that took place in 722/21 B.C. Assyria conquered the northern kingdom and took the ten tribes into captivity beyond the Euphrates River. **Jeroboam ... made Israel sin:** Herein is the power of example that is in the hand of the leaders of nations. Each individual citizen is responsible for his own sin. Nevertheless, the leadership of a nation sets and maintains the social environment for the people to follow. The people of a nation will not rise above the spiritual example of their leaders. Remnants will remain faithful, but the majority will succumb to the evil influence of the national leaders. National leaders make their people sin when they lead a life of sin. The legacy of Jeroboam was contrary to the commandments of God. He ruined a nation because of his own sinful leadership. He maintained his rebellion against the commandments of God by hiring a clergy who would preach his message to the people. **Book of the chronicles of the kings:** Throughout 1 & 2 Kings reference is made to this uninspired record of the kings of Israel. The writer had access to this book when writing the inspired record of 1 & 2 Kings. The books of 1 & 2 Kings are written with focus on the history of Israel, whereas the books of 1 & 2 Chronicles are written to focus on the history of the southern kingdom. In both accounts of inspired history, ref-

erence is made to the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

REHOBOAM'S REIGN & DEATH

14:21-24 (2 Ch 11:5 – 12:8) Rehoboam reigned in Judah from 931 to 913 B.C. The account of Rehoboam's reign is given in greater detail in 2 Chronicles. One important fact that is given in Chronicles was that there was a great flight of priests to the south away from the northern apostasy of Jeroboam that happened at this time. Many Levites in the north did not go along with the apostasy of Jeroboam. They subsequently came to Judah, possibly in flight from the apostate false priests that Jeroboam set up to maintain his hijacking of the faith of Israel. There was also war between Israel and Judah throughout the reigns of Jeroboam and Rehoboam, which at one time almost led to the destruction of Jerusalem. But because the leaders of the south repented, Jerusalem was spared. **Judah did evil:** As with Jeroboam in the northern kingdom, so did Rehoboam in the south. Not only did the northern tribes build altars to gods they had created after their own imagination, so also did the southern tribes of Judah and Benjamin. **Above all that their fathers had done:** This statement in reference to the people of Israel indicates the progression of apostasy. Though there were occasional restorations throughout their history, the society as a whole continued on a downward spiral to the point that the people became polytheistic, and in some cases, possibly agnostic in reference to the existence of God. **Sodomites in the**

land: The Bible student must keep in mind that from the time of the reign of Solomon until the captivities of Assyria and Babylonia, all the tribes of Israel were in apostasy. The religious influence of the peoples that were originally to be eradicated from the land of promise had by the time of Solomon exerted great social influence on the beliefs of the Israelites. The influence was so extensive that the social and religious environment of Israel had to a great extent turned away from God by the time of Solomon. This state of progressive apostasy continued until the captivities of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. There would be brief times of restoration during the days of kings as Josiah and Hezekiah, but generally, the apostasy could not be stopped. The exile of all Israel was inevitable.

14:25-31 Shishak king of Egypt:

This would be Sheshonk who reigned in Egypt from 945-924 B.C. It is archaeologically significant that he left in Egypt an account of his raid into Palestine on the wall of the Karnak Temple in Luxor, Egypt. While Jeroboam was a fugitive in Egypt during the reign of Shishak, he evidently told the king of Egypt of the vast amounts of gold in the temple of Jerusalem. When Israel divided, war broke out between the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel (Compare 2 Ch 12:7,8). Judah was left

vulnerable for an easy assault by the Egyptians. **He took away the treasures of the house of the Lord:** This answers the question as to what happened to all the gold of the temple (See 10:16,17). The irony of history in this case is intriguing. All the riches that Solomon accumulated in Jerusalem to secure the future of Israel, were taken away within one generation, and before the death of his son, Rehoboam. We would assume that Shishak stripped the royal palace and the temple of every article of gold, and possibly the ark of the covenant. It was a time for payback. When Israel left Egypt about 500 years before in their flight from the bondage of captivity, they plundered the wealth of Egypt. Some of the gold that was taken at that time surely made its way back to Egypt in this plundering of Judah by Shishak. Because Israel cried out in captivity for deliverance from Egyptian captivity 500 years before this event, they were blessed with the riches of Egypt. Because they fell into apostasy from God under the reign of Rehoboam, God gave the gold back to Egypt. The Lord gives and the Lord takes away. We thus keep in mind that with the raid of Shishak all the wealth of the southern kingdom that was accumulated by Solomon was gone within five years of his death. Solomon confirmed that which he preached, "*Vanity of vanities, all is vanity*" (Ec 1:2).

CHAPTER 15

THE HOUSE OF DAVID IN JERUSALEM

15:1-8 (2 Ch 13:1-22) Abijam: He reigned from 913-911 B.C. This is the older form of the name for Abijah that occurs in 2 Chronicles. Abijam continued the idolatry of Rehoboam. Since the people were satisfied with religious behavior that they invented after their own desires, Abijam simply went along with the wishes of the people. He was not a religious reformer, but only a king who sought to please the wishes of the people. ***A lamp in Jerusalem:*** For the sake of David, the son of Abijam was given the right by God to continue the kingship heritage of Abijam as king in Jerusalem. ***There was war:*** That which left both the northern and southern kingdoms vulnerable to outside attack was that which prevailed throughout the early division of Israel. They continued in war with one another, fellow Israelite against fellow Israelite. By this time in their history, therefore, the Israelites had evidently lost their historical identity as the united Israel of God. Their social and economic adherence to the gods of the nations around them brought them to a time in their history that they had no allegiance to one another as fellow Israelites.

15:9-15 (2 Ch 14:1 – 16:14) Asa: He reigned from 911-870 B.C. ***Right in the eyes of the Lord:*** Asa was given a long reign by the Lord because of his obedience to the Lord in rejecting idolatry in Judah. However, because of his political insecurity, he made an unwise al-

liance with Syria (2 Ch 16:7-12). The extent of his religious reforms was revealed in the fact that he removed from high political office his mother who had the gall of making an image to the Canaanite goddess Asherah and placing it in the Kidron Valley near Jerusalem.

15:16-22 War: The division between Judah and Israel was sealed when war prevailed (See 2 Ch 16:1-6). Animosity between the two nations would not allow them to be one nation under God. Only God, who worked through their captivities, could bring them together again. ***Ben-hadad:*** He was the son of Hezion, or Rezon, who was an adversary of Solomon (11:23-25). This would be Ben-hadad I, whereas the Ben-hadad who lived during the time of Elijah and Elisha was Ben-hadad II, though some Bible interpreters make a strong case that there was only one Ben-hadad. ***Ramah:*** It is probable that Baasha, the northern king, built this city north of Jerusalem in order to form a blockade to any trade that might go between Judah and the countries of the north. ***A league between me and you:*** In order to break the league between Baasha and Syria, Asa sacrificed the remainder of the riches of the temple in order to establish an alliance with Ben-hadad of Syria. Ben-hadad accepted the payment and then broke his alliance with Israel. He not only broke his alliance with Israel, he led his armies against Israel in 879 B.C. This turned the attention of Baasha toward defending his northern borders, and thus

Judah was given relief from the aggression of her northern brothers. When this happened, Asa tore down Ramah and used the materials to construct other cities. The actions of Asa in making alliances with foreign powers established a foreign policy that was contrary to the will of God. Instead of trusting in God for leadership and protection, the Israelites placed their trust in foreign powers. Beginning with this alliance, the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel began a succession of political alliances with foreign nations that continued throughout their history.

REIGN OF NADAB

15:23-34 Asa's reign extended beyond the reign of Nadab, the king of the northern kingdom. In the record here, the writer of Kings goes back to give a brief record of Nadab's reign and a history of the northern kingdom. In the history, Nadab continued in the sins of his father, Jeroboam. This legacy would be common with the kings of the north.

Nadab's short reign from 910-909 B.C. was filled with the continuation of the ways of his father. By this time in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel, idolatry was a part of the culture of the Israelites. The kings were credited with leading the people into idolatry, but the fact was that the kings conformed to the wishes of the people. Nevertheless, because the kings could have turned the people from their idolatry by taking a strong stand against idolatry, they were held accountable for the idolatrous state of the people. Leaders who lead must go against the wishes of the people if the people persist in sin. ***He killed all the house of Jeroboam:*** This was the fulfillment of the prophecy of 14:10, and thus the termination of the house of Jeroboam.

REIGN OF BAASHA

15:33,34 Baasha reigned from 909-886 B.C. Though his reign showed promise at the beginning, he too conformed to the wishes of the people by condoning their idolatrous worship.

CHAPTER 16

16:1-7 *Prince:* God addressed Baasha as a "prince," not a king. A prince was not the final authority in any kingdom. Because God had worked to bring Baasha to the throne, God was the final authority. And because Baasha led the people to follow after the imagination of their own minds (idolatry), he was to be removed from the throne. Baasha's house would suffer the same fate as Jeroboam's house because he did not turn the people to God away from idolatry.

RULE OF ELAH

16:8-14 *Drinking himself drunk:* The Bible interpreter must keep in mind that the leadership of Israel during these years was morally corrupt. There was no true spiritual leadership in Israel since the days of David. For this reason, one must not be misled into thinking that God condoned behavior as that which was here manifested in the life of Elah and Zimri. Israel was a morally degraded society that continued to exist through-

out these years only because of a remnant of righteous people within the society who had not bowed themselves to idolatrous gods. The Kings and Chronicles only give us the historical picture of the morally corrupt leadership of Israel after David, not an account of the righteous few who remained faithful to God. We must keep in mind that God sustained the corrupt leaders of Israel at this time in history only for the purpose of maintaining a government under which a small morally righteous remnant could live by faith in God and in hope of the Messiah to come (See 19:18). **According to the word of God:** God foreknew the end of those who chose to live degraded lives. He knew the whirlwind one would reap if he sowed to the wind. Because God foreknows does not mean that He predestines to happen that which He foreknows.

INSURRECTION OF ZIMRI

16:15-20 In response to the conspiracy of Zimri, the people, who did not want him as their king, made Omri king. We must keep in mind that these kings of Israel were chosen by the people. They were not made kings by the anointing of God. At this time in the history of Israel the people had long forgotten God as their king, and the fact that He only was to anoint the kings of Israel. The concept of the monarchy of Israel had developed to the point of being void of any concept that God ruled through anointed kings. **For his sins:** Zimri did not have the support of the people. When Omri defeated Zimri's weak army of men at Tirzah, he committed suicide by burning himself to

death when he set the king's house alight.

REIGN OF OMRI

16:21-28 Omri, who reigned from 885-874 B.C., consolidated the kingship of the northern kingdom after a period of turmoil among evil kings. He was one of the most internationally influential kings of Israel. In archaeological discoveries of the records of Shalmaneser III and Sargon II, kings of Assyria, mention is made of the kings of Israel to be of the "house of Omri." At the time Omri became king, the northern kingdom was divided between those who gave allegiance to Tibni and those who followed Omri. Omri prevailed in the conflict, and thus brought some stability to the kingdom. Omri subsequently moved the capital of Israel from Tirzah to Samaria. By doing this He established Samaria as the center of government and faith in the northern kingdom. **By their idols:** Total dedication to God cannot exist in a society that has given itself over to idolatry. Idolatry is the desire of men to follow after their own imaginations in reference to religion. One first desires to follow after his own behavior, which desire is then sanctioned by the creation of a god in one's mind that condones the behavior. The idolater, therefore, takes his focus off God and places it on himself as the authority of his religious beliefs and behavior. Israel went into apostasy because the majority of the people sought to determine their own behavior. They thus chose leadership that would sanction their own evil practices.

REIGN OF AHAB

16:29-34 Ahab: From 874 to 853 B.C., Ahab's reign in the northern kingdom exemplified the evil by which the kings socially functioned in reference to the people. The previous records of the kings to this point in the history of the north focused on their political struggles among themselves. With the reign of Ahab, the inspired writer wants us to understand how evil the kings were in their relationship with the people over whom they reigned. It was during this time also that those who worshiped Baal were about to dismiss any worship of God from the societies of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel. At the time, the kings of both kingdoms had adopted Baal worship, and thus the righteous few were intimidated to go into hiding with their faith. False Baal prophets were hired by the government to impose submission to Baal, and thus the true prophets of God were also intimidated. It was a time for giants in the faith to step forward in order to encourage the righteous few that God was still in control. It was a time, therefore, that the two prophets, Elijah and Elisha, had to lead the faithful few to stand fast in their faith. **Ahab ... Jezebel:** The king and queen of the northern kingdom led in the apostasy to take the people of Israel further into following after their own lusts. **A light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam:**

The "sins of Jeroboam" had become the culture of the people. Their conscience was seared by the commonality of their behavior. In this social state, therefore, Israel was doomed to fulfill all those prophecies where God said that they would be led into captivity because of their sins. We must also keep in mind that throughout this time the prophets of Israel began their ministry to cry out to the people, warning of the impending exile that was coming on the northern kingdom. **Hiel ... built Jericho:** The rebuilding of this city was prophesied by Joshua (Ja 6:26). However, Joshua also prophesied that the rebuilding would come with consequences. It cost the lives of the two sons of Hiel. This was the fulfillment of a prophecy that was made over 500 years before. When God says that something will happen, the passing of time does not lessen the certainty of the fulfillment of the prophecy.

Ministry Of Elijah (17:1 – 22:53)

Outline: (1) Drought in the north (17:1-24), (2) Contest on Mt. Carmel (18:1-46), (3) Elijah flees to Horeb (19:1-14), (4) Victory over Syria (20:1-43), (5) Naboth's vineyard (21:1-29), (6) Ahab's death (22:1-40), (7) Reign of Jehoshaphat (22:41-50), (8) Reign of Ahaziah (22:51-53)

CHAPTER 17

DROUGHT IN THE NORTH

17:1-7 Elijah: This was a time in Israel when God had to work miracu-

lously through the faith of a great man. The fact that Elijah at this time came to the forefront in the history of Israel is

evidence of the fact that there were true prophets of God working among the people, but were often intimidated by the government sanctioned false prophets who had been set up by Ahab and Jezebel. **Elijah ... said:** From James 5:17 we learn that the drought was the request of Elijah (See comments Js 5:17). It was Elijah, therefore, who took the initiative to stand against the evils of Ahab and prepare the northern kingdom for the judgment of God. The drought prepared the way for the confrontation between the false prophets of Baal and Elijah who represented God. Before the confrontation on Mt. Carmel, God first hid Elijah for some time in the wilderness by the Brook Cherith, and then in the house of the widow of Zarephath.

17:8-16 It is significant that the widow, in her state of poverty, was willing to take care of the man of God. She was a willing believer, though she had no hope of recovering from her destitu-

tion. When one takes care of a man of God, he is showing respect and worship to God. **The barrel of meal was not exhausted:** We are reminded of the event when Jesus fed both the 4,000 and 5,000 from a few fish and loaves. This was a miracle of creation, and only God can create (See comments Mt 14:13-21; 15:32-39).

17:17-24 See, your son lives: This account of a resurrection of the dead reaffirms the fact that God has power over death. The record of this resurrection established the basis upon which the righteous could believe that Lazarus, and then Jesus, were actually raised from the dead. Though at this time this was a private event known only to Elijah and the mother, it was recorded later in order to prepare the minds of those who walked by faith to believe that God would cause His Son to be raised for the hope of the world.

CHAPTER 18

CONTEST ON MT. CARMEL

18:1-6 Show yourself to Ahab: The drought had been in the land for three years, and now it was time for Elijah to face Ahab. The drought had prepared the minds of the people for a significant miracle of God and the execution of 450 false preachers. **Jezebel cut off the prophets of the Lord:** The true prophets of God worked underground. Only the state supported false prophets were allowed to religiously lead the people. It was a social environment in which evil religious leaders prevailed over the righ-

teous leaders of God. As a representative of the spiritual leadership of God, Elijah took his stand with God, and thus God stood by him in his time of fear that would come. **Obadiah:** Obadiah, a servant of Ahab who had saved 100 true prophets of God by hiding them in a cave, was looking for grass in order to save the domestic animals of Ahab from starvation. When studying the history of the wicked leadership of kings and prophets in the Kings and Chronicles, we must not forget that there were those who quietly maintained their faith in God and carried

on with their lives.

18:7-16 *Is it you, Elijah, my master:* The answer to Obadiah's question was that Elijah was his master. The question reveals that Obadiah was a righteous person, and thus accepted Elijah as a spiritual leader in Israel. Obadiah's reluctance to go before Ahab indicates that he secretly maintained his faith in God alone while rejecting the idolatrous worship of Baal that was promoted by Ahab, Jezebel and their contingency of false preachers.

18:17-19 *Are you he who troubles Israel:* Elijah troubled Israel because Israel had turned from the commandments of God. The one who causes the trouble, therefore, is sometimes the one who is standing for that which is right. When men do not take a stand for that which is right, evil will rule. True leaders for God will take a stand for what is right even though it causes trouble among the people. *I have not troubled Israel:* The unrepentant Ahab who rebelled against God was the real spiritual troubler of Israel. His refusal to recognize the sin of his behavior moved him to accuse as a troubler in society the prophet who sought to turn the people away from the prophets of Baal.

18:20-24 It could have been that Mt. Carmel was a special location for Baal worship, since it is a range of high hills. Whatever the case, it offered the ideal location for a contest between God and the imaginations of the Baal prophets. What Elijah here proposed was a challenge to those who have created a belief after their own desires. This was to be a

contest between God and man. Idolatry is simply men following after their own desires. This contest, therefore, was between God and those who desired to follow after their own religious inventions. What transpired in this event was for the purpose of the people, not the prophets. Elijah took the offensive in offering the false prophets an opportunity to prove themselves before the people. Once they failed, then Elijah took another offensive opportunity to kill all the false prophets.

18:25-29 *Elijah mocked them:* We can be assured that the taunting of Elijah intensified the emotions of the false prophets. In their frustration they went into a frenzy of self-imposed hysteria. Religious groups throughout the world involve themselves in such assemblies of uncontrolled hysteria. This uncontrolled emotionalism deceives one into thinking that he is "spiritual." But actually, it is the result of misguided religionists who have given themselves over to their own self deception. The uncontrolled emotional frenzy of the Baal prophets that was manifested on this occasion is too often the nature of those who allow themselves to be carried away by their own emotions. As in this case, God does not answer those who call out of a state of irrational hysteria. He does answer those who conduct themselves soberly before Him (See comments C1 2:20-23).

18:30-40 *He repaired the altar of the Lord:* In the days of Solomon, Solomon allowed worship of God on the formerly Canaanite high places of Israel. Instead of destroying these altars that were used for worship of false Canaanite

gods, Solomon initially used them for sacrifices to God. This appears to have been one of those altars which Elijah repaired on Mt. Carmel. The altar could have been an altar that was used by those who maintained their faith in God, but were driven underground by the persecution of Ahab. **Twelve stones:** God still considered Israel to be a nation of twelve tribes. **Waterpots:** Elijah did not want anyone to believe that what was about to happen was the result of his own invention, or a spark that might ignite the wood of the altar. It took some time in order to apply this great amount of water to the wood and pour it into the trench that surrounded the altar. **Turned their heart back again:** This was the reason for the contest on Carmel. It was a time for restoration. And in order to generate a paradigm shift of restoration, drastic measures had to be taken. These measures were about to happen. **Fell on their faces:** The first drastic measure to affect a restoration on this occasion began by God giving an overwhelming manifestation that He was with His prophet. The fire that fell from heaven that con-

sumed the altar and all that was on it, terrified the unbelievers who were present. Their terror prepared them to obey the command of Elijah to carry out the execution of the false prophets. **He killed them there:** The second drastic measure that was necessary in order to continue the restoration of Israel was the termination of those who had maintained the lies of a religion that was created after the sensual lusts of man. As the leader of the prophets of God, Elijah had all the prophets of Baal executed.

18:41-46 As in most false religions of ancient peoples, the gods were supposedly in control of the rains that brought life to the crops. In the case of Baal, it was believed that Baal also controlled the weather in order to bless his subjects. Elijah's call for the drought, therefore, was a direct attack against those who were self-deceived in believing that Baal controlled the weather (17:1; Js 5:17). In this case, Elijah prayed again and the rains came, reaffirming that the God in which he believed actually controlled the rains.

CHAPTER 19

ELIJAH FLEES TO HOREB

19:1-8 Ahab told Jezebel: It seems that Jezebel was a dominant personality over Ahab. Ahab thus ran to Jezebel, telling her that Elijah had killed her prophets of Baal. When she heard the report, she determined to kill Elijah. The miracle of Carmel did not move her to repent. It only made her angry, and then she moved to take her anger out on Elijah. **Ran for**

his life: It would appear that Elijah felt that he alone stood against the wrath of Jezebel, not knowing that there were yet 7,000 who had not bowed to Baal (19:18). He thus took flight for several days, fleeing to Beersheba in the southern part of Palestine. **Take away my life:** Elijah was depressed. He was physically exhausted. In his exhaustion, he spoke in contradictory terms. He had fled for

his life, and yet he was complaining to God to take his life. **To Horeb:** It was a 40-day walk to Mt. Sinai, a place where Elijah needed to connect again with God. When God uses great men for great movements, He takes them into the desert. He did the same with Moses, Jesus and Paul, and now Elijah needed to experience the tranquility that only a desert can provide.

19:9-18 What are you doing here: After some time in the desert, this question by God assumed that Elijah had a great ministry before him. But the ministry was not in the desert. **Still small voice:** God does not need to appear in great physical events as earthquakes and fires in order to initiate His work. His power can be concealed behind a whisper. **I alone am left:** This was a complaint that came forth from one who was emotionally exhausted. It seems to be the words of one who felt that the restoration of Israel should have been immediate. What Elijah did not realize was that great restorations take a great deal of time, sometimes beyond the lifetime of the ones who initiate them. It takes great faith and knowledge of the word of God, therefore, for true restoration leaders to initiate and stand firm in the direction to which they lead the people of God. **Anoint Hazael ... Jehu ... anoint Elisha:** God's answer for depression is to get to work. Change was coming, but it would not come in the lifetime of Elijah. Not only would the kings change in Israel and Judah, the work of the leading prophet of God would change from Elijah to E-

lisha. When a great shift of social behavior is to be made toward God after decades of apostasy, it takes more than one generation to complete the paradigm shift. The pioneers of the restoration never realize the full effect of their dreams. However, once they establish the foundation for change upon the word of God, the heirs of their dreams will complete the restoration. It may take decades to accomplish the restoration, and thus those who would restore the faith of the righteous must be content to walk by faith, not knowing the final end of their efforts.

19:19-21 Twelve yoke of oxen: Elisha was apparently a successful farmer, as well as one who knew the culture of work. In finding a successor for Elijah, God sent him to the farms and not to the city. Farmers know how to struggle for survival in a culture of work. **Elijah ... cast his mantle on him:** This was symbolic of Elijah anointing Elisha to come follow him. Elisha realized the significance of the gesture, and thus asked to bid farewell to his mother and father according to the custom of the land. Elisha realized that the ministry to which he was called demanded that he leave his father and mother (Compare comments Lk 14:25-35). **Ministered to him:** The disciple ministered to the master. It was not the case where the master took care of the disciple (See comments Gl 6:6). One never learns discipleship if he is cared for as a child, and thus is never allowed to grow in order to learn the responsibility of caring for others.

CHAPTER 20

VICTORY OVER SYRIA

The events that are recorded in the last chapters of 1 Kings took place in the last five or six years of the reign of Ahab. There were three nations involved in the conflicts of these years of chaos. Israel, Judah and Syria were the primary nations in conflict. However, at this time another nation was arising in history that would eventually play a significant role in the history of the northern kingdom of Israel. This was the Assyrian Empire. A significant battle took place at Karkar (854/853 B.C.) where both Ahab of Israel, and Ben-hadad of Syria were allied against the Assyrians. Though mentioned in the historical records of the *Monolith Inscription* of Shalmaneser, this great historical battle is not mentioned in the Bible.

20:1-12 *Thirty-two kings:* These were mayors, or provincial rulers of city-states that were in alliance with Ben-hadad. Ahab agreed to the request of the alliance of kings under Ben-hadad by paying gold, silver and giving hostages to Ben-hadad. However, he rejected Ben-hadad's entrance into the capital. Of course, this did not set well with Ben-hadad who subsequently threatened that he would level Samaria. ***Do not let him who puts on his armor boast:*** The one going to battle should not boast as the one who has already won the battle and is taking off his armor.

20:13-22 *A prophet:* Now that Ahab was in trouble, a true prophet was available to speak the truth to him. It took

times of trouble for Ahab to listen to the prophets of God. The prophet came to give instructions concerning what to do in reference to the threat of Ben-hadad. The prophet's advice was to take the offensive.

20:23-27 *Gods of the hills:* The pagan armies believed that the gods went to battle with them in particular places. The Syrians thought they could escape the help of the "Israelite gods" by engaging the Israelite army in the plains, where they thought the Israelite gods did not work. It was easy for them to perceive this from Israel's behavior of going to the high places to offer their sacrifices. Where one worships his god is where others believe his god is located. The strategy of the Syrians in this battle was to allow the kings to determine the battle plan, but allow the captains of the soldiers to engage the enemy on the battle field. ***Flocks of kids:*** In comparison to the army of the Syrians, the Israelite army was like a small group of goats. What the Syrians did not know was that God was going to use this battle for an occasion to prove that He still fought for His people. The omnipresent God of Israel was the only true and living God who was with His people wherever they were. He was not a God who was confined to a certain location, but an omnipresent God in whom we live and have our existence.

20:28-30 *100,000 ... 27,000:* The casualties on the side of the Syrians was massive. It was so massive that anyone would conclude that there was supernatu-

ral empowerment in the lives of every Israelite soldier from the God in whom he believed.

20:31-34 Sackcloth ... ropes: The sackcloth indicated that they humbled themselves before Ahab. The ropes were a signal that they would submit to him. **He is my brother:** Ahab did not want to kill Ben-hadad, for the Assyrian Empire to the north of Syria was growing. Syria stood between Israel and the Assyrians, and thus Israel would need an alliance with Syria in order that Syria be a buffer between Israel and Assyria. This agreement with Syria explains why the Syrians and Israelites fought as a united front against the Assyrians at the battle of Karkar in 854/853 B.C.

20:35-43 A certain man: The fact that this prophet was not named indicates that the prophets were simply the spokesmen for God. God did not work through His prophets in order to bring them fame. The true prophets worked in order to bring glory to God. They exerted no political leadership as did the judges who

ministered in the early history of Israel. Since the Mt. Carmel contest between Elijah and the Baal prophets, and the subsequent execution of the 450 Baal prophets, the true prophets of God were no longer working underground in Israel. In this case, a prophet brings judgment upon Ahab because he allowed Ben-hadad to go free. Though the victory of Israel over Syria clearly proved that God was working for Israel, Ahab refused to recognize God's work in the army of Israel. He thus made a political agreement with the Syrians while snubbing God's protection. As in the case of Saul failing to kill Agag, the king of the Amalekites, Ahab rendered only partial obedience to the will of God when he spared Ben-hadad (Compare 1 Sm 15:17-33). **Heavy and displeased:** Ahab believed the rebuke that came to him through the prophet. The joy of his victory was turned into disappointment, knowing that God did not approve of his actions to allow Ben-hadad to live.

CHAPTER 21

NABOTH'S VINEYARD

21:1-4 This incident reveals the personality of a spoiled king who always had his way, and his relationship with his wife who seemed to be a dominant figure in the spoiled king's life. **Inheritance:** Naboth could not sell his vineyard simply because the land was part of the inheritance of his family (See Lv 25:23-28; Nm 36). If he sold this inherited land, he could not buy from another person because others were under the same re-

striction not to sell the inheritance of their families. Ahab knew this principle, but still wanted the land. He arrogantly thought of himself and not the family of Naboth. He thus pouted when he could not have that which he wanted.

21:5-16 Jezebel, who was from Tyre, had no respect for the laws of the Israelites. And in this case, she had no feelings for the life of another. **Do you not govern the kingdom:** Jezebel's reasoning was that since Ahab was the king, he

could rule without respect to the law. As the king, she reasoned, he could do what he wanted. This thinking had permeated the kings of Israel. Contrary to the spirit of David, they disregarded the law of God in order to do that which was right in their own eyes. They did not respect the rule of law in the lives of all men. **Men of his city, even the elders:** It is appalling that even those who knew Naboth succumbed to the intimidation of Jezebel to murder Naboth. Even the elders of the city were intimidated to conform to the desires of a wicked woman. When the leaders of a nation are intimidated to conform to the desires of the president, king or chief, then the people often suffer the brutality of all the leadership. **Two worthless men:** Or, sons of Belial. In carrying out their murder scheme, they obeyed the law by securing two witnesses (Dt 17:6,7), as well as carrying out the process of execution by stoning (Lv 24:13-16). They obeyed laws in order to break the law. Such were the actions of the religious leaders of Jesus' day who conformed to their legal practice of the

law to crucify Jesus in order to commit murder that was contrary to the law.

21:17-29 O my enemy: When one sets himself against the will of God, those who represent God are his enemies (See comments Js 4:4). In this case Elijah became Ahab's enemy in that he brought words of judgment from the Lord. The message was death to both Jezebel and Ahab. It was not only death, but the horrible manner by which they would die. The message to both was public, and thus in their death the people would realize that the prophecy concerning the manner of their deaths was the fulfillment of a prophecy from God. **Tore his clothes and put sackcloth on his flesh:** Ahab had some conscience still in him, though Jezebel probably thought the words of Elijah were rubbish. But because the words of Elijah affected Ahab to cause him great sorrow, God spared him so that his judgment would not come about in his life. His sons would pay the price for his wickedness in reference to his stealing the vineyard of Naboth. His posterity would be cut off from Israel.

CHAPTER 22

AHAB'S DEATH

22:1-12 Third year: Israel's alliance with Syria lasted for three years. This is probably the three years from the battle of Aphek (20:26-29) to Israel's attempt to take Ramoth Gilead. At the end of the three years, Ahab made an alliance with Jehoshaphat and Judah in order to secure themselves against the threat of Syria and Assyria from the north. **Gathered the prophets:** Though 450 false prophets

were executed by Elijah at Mt. Carmel, another group of false prophets eventually developed to take their place and were often called by the northern kingdom king for advice (See Is 9:15; Jr 5:13,31; 23:11,15,16; Hs 4:5; Mc 3:5-7). Their advice to Ahab was based on their perception of what they thought he wanted to hear. **Is there not here a prophet of the Lord:** Jehoshaphat had not left the counsel of the Lord as did his

counterpart in the northern kingdom. He still relied on the prophecy of the Lord.

22:13-23 Since Jehoshaphat was present, the false prophets of Ahab probably felt confident, and thus assumed that because the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel were united, that victory in the battle with the Syrians was certain. **Micaiah:** Everyone, including Micaiah, knew of the judgment that had been given by the man of God concerning Ahab's theft of Naboth's vineyard. Failure in this battle with Syria, therefore, presented the opportunity for God's judgment to come upon Ahab. In his prophecy, Micaiah exposed the false statements of the prophets whom Ahab had called to support his desires. He also revealed that judgment was now to come upon Ahab.

22:24-28 Zedekiah: The reason the false prophets always spoke things that were favorable to Ahab was because of actions from men as Zedekiah who were always eager to punish anyone who spoke something against the king. This type of religious intimidation is common when preachers succumb to what is commonly accepted among those who are supposed to be the spiritual leaders of the people. In this case, as in other cases when truth was spoken against the common beliefs of the day, the fulfillment was the proof that the prophet was truly from God (See Dt 18:18-22).

22:29-36 I will disguise myself: It seems that Ahab somewhat believed what Micaiah had said concerning his fate. He subsequently asked Jehoshaphat to wear his royal clothing in order that the Syr-

ians in the battle not identify him as the king of Israel. **Fight ... only with the king of Israel:** If the king of a nation were killed or captured in battle, then victory was claimed. In this case, Ben-hadad wanted to focus his soldiers' attention on the king of the northern kingdom, not Jehoshaphat. **At random and struck the king of Israel:** Was this an arrow that was guided by the will of God? Since this was Ahab's judgment from God, we would conclude that nothing that Ahab could have done would change his destiny in reference to the judgment from God. When the report that Ahab had died was spread throughout the Israelite army, they disbursed and every man fled to his own home.

22:37-40 Ahab died in fulfillment of God's judgment on him for his sinful ways, specifically his theft of Naboth's vineyard (21:19; 20:42). **Ivory ... pool:** Archaeologists have discovered pieces of ivory in Samaria, confirming the existence of the ivory palace of Ahab. A large pool has also been discovered, which was probably the place where the chariots of the army were cleaned after a battle.

REIGN OF JEHOSEPHAT

The books of 1 & 2 Kings were originally one book. The union between the two kingdoms of Israel begins with the reign of Jehoshaphat and continues through to 2 Kings 17:23 when Samaria fell to the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C.

22:41-46 (2 Ch 17:1 – 20:37) There is a more complete explanation of the reign of Jehoshaphat in the Chronicles' account. Contrary to the idolatrous prac-

tices of the northern kingdom, Jehoshaphat did not adopt idolatrous practices at this time in the history of the southern kingdom. **Sodomites:** Asa, the father of Jehoshaphat, was tolerant of the sodomites and allowed the high places of the Canaanite sacrifices to remain (14:21-24). However, Jehoshaphat removed the sodomites, but failed to tear down the high places.

22:47-50 Fleet of trading ships: Jehoshaphat, as Solomon, started to rebuild the southern kingdom of Israel by sending trading ships to Ophir (See 9:26-28). Ahaziah of the northern kingdom wanted to join in this venture, but Jehoshaphat refused to allow his idolatrous

sailors to join his sailors on the ships.

REIGN OF AHAZIAH

22:51-53 Little is said of the reign of Ahaziah, other than his efforts to align with Jehoshaphat in the acquisition of copper from Ophir and his idolatrous behavior that he continued from his father, Ahab. He continued the sacrifices before the altars that Jeroboam set up in Bethel and Dan. He also continued sacrifices to Baal. The religious culture of the northern kingdom had been established, and thus the continuation of this idolatrous culture would eventually lead to the captivity of the northern ten tribes by the Assyrians in 722/21 B.C.