



The Book Of First Kings

David's Death and Solomon's Reign

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1 Kings

OVERVIEW: “I DON’T CARE what anyone says, I’m going to do it!” he yells at his mother as he storms out of the house.

This is a familiar scene in our society. The words change, but the essential message is the same. . . the person is *not* open to advice because his mind is closed. Some advice may be sought, but it is heeded only if it reinforces the decision already made or is an easier path to take. It is human nature to reject help and to do things *our way*.

A much wiser approach is to seek, hear, and heed the advice of good counselors. Solomon, the world’s wisest man, urges this in Proverbs (see 1 Kings 11:14; 1 Kings 15:22; 1 Kings 24:6). How ironic that his son and successor, Rehoboam, listened instead to foolish advice, with devastating results. At Rehoboam’s inauguration, he was petitioned by the people to be a kind and generous ruler. The older men counseled him to “be a servant to these people and serve them and give them a favorable answer” (1 Kings 12:7). But Rehoboam agrees to the cruel words of his peers who urge him to be harsh. As a result, Rehoboam split the kingdom. Learn from Rehoboam’s mistake. Commit yourself to seeking and following wise counsel.

The main events of 1 Kings are David’s death, Solomon’s reign, the division of the kingdom, and Elijah’s ministry. As Solomon ascended the throne, David charged him to obey God’s laws and to walk “in his ways” (1 Kings 2:3). This Solomon did; and when given the choice of gifts from God, he humbly asked for discernment (1 Kings 3:9). As a result, Solomon’s reign began with great success, including the construction of the temple—his greatest achievement. Unfortunately, Solomon took many pagan wives and concubines who eventually turned his heart away from the Lord to their false gods (1 Kings 11:1-4).

Rehoboam succeeded Solomon and had the opportunity to be a wise, compassionate, and just king. Instead, he accepted the poor advice of his young friends and attempted to rule with an iron hand. But the people rebelled, and the kingdom split with ten tribes in the north (Israel) ruled by Jeroboam, and only Judah and Benjamin remaining with Rehoboam. Both kingdoms wove a path through the reigns of corrupt and idolatrous kings with only the clear voice of the prophets continuing to warn and call the nation back to God.

Elijah is surely one of the greatest prophets, and 1 Kings 17-22 feature his conflict with wicked Ahab and Jezebel in Israel. In one of the most dramatic confrontations in history, Elijah defeated the prophets of Baal at Mount Carmel. In spite of incredible opposition, Elijah stood for God and proves that *one plus God* is a majority. If God is on our side, no one can stand against us (Romans 8:31).

THE BLUEPRINT

A. THE UNITED KINGDOM (1 Kings 1:1-11:43)

Solomon was a botanist, zoologist, architect, poet, and philosopher. He was the wisest king in the history of Israel, but his wives led to the introduction of false gods and false worship in Israel. It is good for us to have wisdom, but that is not enough. The highest goal in life is to obey the Lord. Patient obedience to God should characterize our lives.

1. Solomon becomes king
2. Solomon's wisdom
3. Solomon builds the temple
4. Solomon's greatness and downfall

1 Kings 1:1-11:43

Now King David was very old, and no matter how many blankets covered him, he could not keep warm. [2] So his advisers told him, "We will find a young virgin who will wait on you and be your nurse. She will lie in your arms and keep you warm." [3] So they searched throughout the country for a beautiful girl, and they found Abishag from Shunem and brought her to the king. [4] The girl was very beautiful, and she waited on the king and took care of him. But the king had no sexual relations with her.

[5] About that time David's son Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, decided to make himself king in place of his aged father. So he provided himself with chariots and horses and recruited fifty men to run in front of him. [6] Now his father, King David, had never disciplined him at any time, even by asking, "What are you doing?" Adonijah was a very handsome man and had been born next after Absalom. [7] Adonijah took Joab son of Zeruiah and Abiathar the priest into his confidence, and they agreed to help him become king. [8] But among those who remained loyal to David and refused to support Adonijah were Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, Nathan the prophet, Shimei, Rei, and David's personal bodyguard.

[9] Adonijah went to the stone of Zoheleth near the spring of En-rogel, where he sacrificed sheep, oxen, and fattened calves. He invited all his brothers—the other sons of King David—and all the royal officials of Judah. [10] But he did not invite Nathan the prophet, or Benaiah, or the king's bodyguard, or his brother Solomon.

[11] Then Nathan the prophet went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother, and asked her, "Did you realize that Haggith's son, Adonijah, has made himself king and that our lord David doesn't even know about it? [12] If you want to save your own life and the life of your son Solomon, follow my counsel. [13] Go at once to King David and say to him, 'My lord, didn't you promise me that my son Solomon would be the next king and would sit upon your throne? Then why has Adonijah become king?' [14] And while you are still talking with him, I will come and confirm everything you have said."

[15] So Bathsheba went into the king's bedroom. He was very old now, and Abishag was taking care of him. [16] Bathsheba bowed low before him.

"What can I do for you?" he asked her.

[17] She replied, "My lord, you vowed to me by the Lord your God that my son Solomon would be the next king and would sit on your throne. [18] But instead, Adonijah has become the new king, and you do not even know about it. [19] He has sacrificed many oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and he has invited all your sons and Abiathar the priest and Joab, the commander of the army. But he did not invite your servant Solomon. [20] And now, my lord the king, all Israel is waiting for your decision as to who will become king after you. [21] If you do not act, my son Solomon and I will be treated as criminals as soon as you are dead."

[22] While she was still speaking with the king, Nathan the prophet arrived. [23] The king's advisers told him, "Nathan the prophet is here to see you."

Nathan went in and bowed low before the king. [24] He asked, "My lord, have you decided that Adonijah will be the next king and that he will sit on your throne? [25] Today he has sacrificed many oxen, fattened calves, and sheep, and he has invited your sons to attend the celebration. He also invited Joab, the commander of the army, and Abiathar the priest. They are feasting and drinking with him and shouting, 'Long live King Adonijah!' [26] But I myself, your servant, was not invited; neither were Zadok the priest, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, nor Solomon. [27] Has my lord really done this without letting any of his servants know who should be the next king?"

[28] "Call Bathsheba," David said. So she came back in and stood before the king. [29] And the king vowed, "As surely as the Lord lives, who has rescued me from every danger, [30] today I decree that your son Solomon will be the next king and will sit on my throne, just as I swore to you before the Lord, the God of Israel."

[31] Then Bathsheba bowed low before him again and exclaimed, "May my lord King David live forever!"

[32] Then King David ordered, "Call Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada." When they came into the king's presence, [33] the king said to them, "Take Solomon and my officers down to Gihon Spring. Solomon is to ride on my personal mule. [34] There Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet are to anoint him king over Israel. Then blow the trumpets and shout, 'Long live King Solomon!' [35] When you bring him back here, he will sit on my throne. He will succeed me as king, for I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and Judah."

[36] "Amen!" Benaiah son of Jehoiada replied. "May the Lord, the God of my lord the king, decree it to be so. [37] And may the Lord be with Solomon as he has been with you, and may he make Solomon's reign even greater than yours!"

[38] So Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, Benaiah son of Jehoiada, and the king's bodyguard took Solomon down to Gihon Spring, and Solomon rode on King David's personal mule. [39] There Zadok the priest took a flask of olive oil from the sacred tent and poured it on Solomon's head. Then the trumpets were blown, and all the people shouted, "Long live King Solomon!" [40] And all the people returned with Solomon to Jerusalem, playing flutes and shouting for joy. The celebration was so joyous and noisy that the earth shook with the sound.

[41] Adonijah and his guests heard the celebrating and shouting just as they were finishing their banquet. When Joab heard the sound of trumpets, he asked, "What's going on? Why is the city in such an uproar?"

[42] And while he was still speaking, Jonathan son of Abiathar the priest arrived. "Come in," Adonijah said to him, "for you are a good man. You must have good news."

[43] "Not at all!" Jonathan replied. "Our lord King David has just declared Solomon king! [44] The king sent him down to Gihon Spring with Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah son of Jehoiada, protected by the king's bodyguard. They had him ride on the king's own mule, [45] and Zadok and Nathan have anointed him as the new king. They have just returned, and the whole city is celebrating and rejoicing. That's what all the noise is about. [46] Moreover, Solomon is now sitting on the royal throne as king. [47] All the royal officials went to King David and congratulated him, saying, 'May your God make Solomon's fame even greater than your own, and may Solomon's kingdom be even greater than yours!' Then the king bowed his head in worship as he lay in his bed, [48] and he spoke these words: 'Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who today has chosen someone to sit on my throne while I am still alive to see it.' "

[49] Then all of Adonijah's guests jumped up in panic from the banquet table and quickly went their separate ways. [50] Adonijah himself was afraid of Solomon, so he rushed to the sacred tent and caught hold of the horns of the altar. [51] Word soon reached Solomon that Adonijah had seized the horns of the altar and that he was pleading, "Let Solomon swear today that he will not kill me!"

[52] Solomon replied, "If he proves himself to be loyal, he will not be harmed. But if he does not, he will die." [53] So King Solomon summoned Adonijah, and they brought him down from the altar. He came and bowed low before the king, and Solomon dismissed him, saying, "Go on home."

[2:1] as the time of King David's death approached, he gave this charge to his son Solomon:
[2] "I am going where everyone on earth must someday go. Take courage and be a man. [3] Observe the requirements of the Lord your God and follow all his ways. Keep each of the laws, commands, regulations, and stipulations written in the Law of Moses so that you will be successful in all you do and wherever you go. [4] If you do this, then the Lord will keep the promise he made to me: 'If your descendants live as they should and follow me faithfully with all their heart and soul, one of them will always sit on the throne of Israel.'

[5] "And there is something else. You know that Joab son of Zeruiah murdered my two army commanders, Abner son of Ner and Amasa son of Jether. He pretended that it was an act of war, but it was done in a time of peace, staining his belt and sandals with the blood of war. [6] Do with him what you think best, but don't let him die in peace.

[7] "Be kind to the sons of Barzillai of Gilead. Make them permanent guests of the king, for they took care of me when I fled from your brother Absalom.

[8] "And remember Shimei son of Gera, the man from Bahurim in Benjamin. He cursed me with a terrible curse as I was fleeing to Mahanaim. When he came down to meet me at the Jordan River, I swore by the Lord that I would not kill him. [9] But that oath does not make him innocent. You are a wise man, and you will know how to arrange a bloody death for him."

[10] Then David died and was buried in the City of David. [11] He had reigned over Israel for forty years, seven of them in Hebron and thirty-three in Jerusalem. [12] Solomon succeeded him as king, replacing his father, David, and he was firmly established on the throne.

[13] One day Adonijah, whose mother was Haggith, came to see Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. "Have you come to make trouble?" she asked him.

"No," he said, "I come in peace. [14] In fact, I have a favor to ask of you."

"What is it?" she asked.

[15] He replied, "As you know, the kingdom was mine; everyone expected me to be the next king. But the tables were turned, and everything went to my brother instead; for that is the way the Lord wanted it. [16] So now I have just one favor to ask of you. Please don't turn me down."

"What is it?" she asked.

[17] He replied, "Speak to King Solomon on my behalf, for I know he will do anything you request. Ask him to give me Abishag, the girl from Shunem, as my wife."

[18] "All right," Bathsheba replied. "I will speak to the king for you."

[19] So Bathsheba went to King Solomon to speak on Adonijah's behalf. The king rose from his throne to meet her, and he bowed down before her. When he sat down on his throne again, he ordered that a throne be brought for his mother, and she sat at his right hand.

[20] "I have one small request to make of you," she said. "I hope you won't turn me down."

"What is it, my mother?" he asked. "You know I won't refuse you."

[21] "Then let your brother Adonijah marry Abishag, the girl from Shunem," she replied.

[22] "How can you possibly ask me to give Abishag to Adonijah?" Solomon demanded. "You might as well be asking me to give him the kingdom! You know that he is my older brother, and that he has Abiathar the priest and Joab son of Zeruiah on his side." [23] Then King Solomon swore solemnly by the Lord: "May God strike me dead if Adonijah has not sealed his fate with this request. [24] The Lord has confirmed me and placed me on the throne of my father, David; he has established my dynasty as he promised. So as surely as the Lord lives, Adonijah will die this very day!" [25] So King Solomon ordered Benaiah son of Jehoiada to execute him, and Adonijah was put to death.

[26] Then the king said to Abiathar the priest, "Go back to your home in Anathoth. You deserve to die, but I will not kill you now, because you carried the Ark of the Sovereign Lord for my father, and you suffered right along with him through all his troubles." [27] So Solomon deposed Abiathar from his position as priest of the Lord, thereby fulfilling the decree the Lord had made at Shiloh concerning the descendants of Eli.

[28] Although he had not followed Absalom earlier, Joab had also joined Adonijah's revolt. When Joab heard about Adonijah's death, he ran to the sacred tent of the Lord and caught hold of the horns of the altar. [29] When news of this reached King Solomon, he sent Benaiah son of Jehoiada to execute him.

[30] Benaiah went into the sacred tent of the Lord and said to Joab, "The king orders you to come out!"

But Joab answered, "No, I will die here."

So Benaiah returned to the king and told him what Joab had said.

[31] "Do as he said," the king replied. "Kill him there beside the altar and bury him. This will remove the guilt of his senseless murders from me and from my father's family. [32] Then the Lord will repay him for the murders of two men who were more righteous and better than he. For my father was no party to the deaths of Abner son of Ner, commander of the army of Israel, and Amasa son of Jether, commander of the army of Judah. [33] May Joab and his descendants be forever guilty of these murders, and may the Lord grant peace to David and his descendants and to his throne forever."

[34] So Benaiah son of Jehoiada returned to the sacred tent and killed Joab, and Joab was buried at his home in the wilderness. [35] Then the king appointed Benaiah to command the army in place of Joab, and he installed Zadok the priest to take the place of Abiathar.

[36] The king then sent for Shimei and told him, "Build a house here in Jerusalem and live there. But don't step outside the city to go anywhere else. [37] On the day you cross the Kidron Valley, you will surely die; your blood will be on your own head."

[38] Shimei replied, "Your sentence is fair; I will do whatever my lord the king commands." So Shimei lived in Jerusalem for a long time.

[39] But three years later, two of Shimei's slaves escaped to King Achish of Gath. When Shimei learned where they were, [40] he saddled his donkey and went to Gath to search for them. When he had found them, he took them back to Jerusalem.

[41] Solomon heard that Shimei had left Jerusalem and had gone to Gath and returned. [42] So he sent for Shimei and demanded, "Didn't I make you swear by the Lord and warn you not to go anywhere else, or you would surely die? And you replied, 'The sentence is fair; I will do as you say.' [43] Then why haven't you kept your oath to the Lord and obeyed my command?"

[44] The king also said to Shimei, "You surely remember all the wicked things you did to my father, King David. May the Lord punish you for them. [45] But may I receive the Lord's rich blessings, and may one of David's descendants always sit on this throne." [46] Then, at the king's command, Benaiah son of Jehoiada took Shimei outside and killed him.

So the kingdom was now firmly in Solomon's grip.

[3:1] Solomon made an alliance with Pharaoh, the king of Egypt, and married one of his daughters. He brought her to live in the City of David until he could finish building his palace and the Temple of the Lord and the wall around the city. [2] At that time the people of Israel sacrificed their offerings at local altars, for a temple honoring the name of the Lord had not yet been built.

[3] Solomon loved the Lord and followed all the instructions of his father, David, except that Solomon, too, offered sacrifices and burned incense at the local altars. [4] The most important of these altars was at Gibeon, so the king went there and sacrificed one thousand burnt offerings. [5] That night the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream, and God said, "What do you want? Ask, and I will give it to you!"

[6] Solomon replied, "You were wonderfully kind to my father, David, because he was honest and true and faithful to you. And you have continued this great kindness to him today by giving him a son to succeed him. [7] O Lord my God, now you have made me king instead of my father, David, but I am like a little child who doesn't know his way around. [8] And here I am among your own chosen people, a nation so great they are too numerous to count! [9] Give me an understanding mind so that I can govern your people well and know the difference between right and wrong. For who by himself is able to govern this great nation of yours?"

[10] The Lord was pleased with Solomon's reply and was glad that he had asked for wisdom. [11] So God replied, "Because you have asked for wisdom in governing my people and have not asked for a long life or riches for yourself or the death of your enemies— [12] I will give you what you asked for! I will give you a wise and understanding mind such as no one else has ever had or ever will have! [13] And I will also give you what you did not ask for—riches and honor! No other king in all the world will be compared to you for the rest of your life! [14] And if you follow me and obey my commands as your father, David, did, I will give you a long life."

[15] Then Solomon woke up and realized it had been a dream. He returned to Jerusalem and stood before the Ark of the Lord's covenant, where he sacrificed burnt offerings and peace offerings. Then he invited all his officials to a great banquet.

[16] Some time later, two prostitutes came to the king to have an argument settled. [17] "Please, my lord," one of them began, "this woman and I live in the same house. I gave birth to a baby while she was with me in the house. [18] Three days later, she also had a baby. We were alone; there were only two of us in the house. [19] But her baby died during the night when she rolled over on it. [20] Then she got up in the night and took my son from beside me while I was asleep. She laid her dead child in my arms and took mine to sleep beside her. [21] And in the morning when I tried to nurse my son, he was dead! But when I looked more closely in the morning light, I saw that it wasn't my son at all."

[22] Then the other woman interrupted, "It certainly was your son, and the living child is mine."

"No," the first woman said, "the dead one is yours, and the living one is mine." And so they argued back and forth before the king.

[23] Then the king said, "Let's get the facts straight. Both of you claim the living child is yours, and each says that the dead child belongs to the other. [24] All right, bring me a sword." So a sword was brought to the king. [25] Then he said, "Cut the living child in two and give half to each of these women!"

[26] Then the woman who really was the mother of the living child, and who loved him very much, cried out, "Oh no, my lord! Give her the child—please do not kill him!"

But the other woman said, "All right, he will be neither yours nor mine; divide him between us!"

[27] Then the king said, "Do not kill him, but give the baby to the woman who wants him to live, for she is his mother!"

[28] Word of the king's decision spread quickly throughout all Israel, and the people were awed as they realized the great wisdom God had given him to render decisions with justice.

[4:1] So Solomon was king over all Israel, [2] and these were his high officials:

Azariah son of Zadok was the priest.

[3] Elihoreph and Ahijah, the sons of Shisha, were court secretaries.

Jehoshaphat son of Ahilud was the royal historian.

[4] Benaiah son of Jehoiada was commander of the army.

Zadok and Abiathar were the priests.

[5] Azariah son of Nathan presided over the district governors.

Zabud son of Nathan, a priest, was a trusted adviser to the king.

[6] Ahishar was manager of palace affairs.

Adoniram son of Abda was in charge of the labor force.

[7] Solomon also had twelve district governors who were over all Israel. They were responsible for providing food from the people for the king's household. Each of them arranged provisions for one month of the year.

[8] These are the names of the twelve governors:

Ben-hur, in the hill country of Ephraim.

[9] Ben-deker, in Makaz, Shaalbim, Beth-shemesh, and Elon-bethhanan.

[10] Ben-hesed, in Arubboth, including Socoh and all the land of Hopher.

[11] Ben-abinadab, in Naphoth-dor. (He was married to Taphath, one of Solomon's daughters.)

[12] Baana son of Ahilud, in Taanach and Megiddo, all of Beth-shan near Zarethan below Jezreel, and all the territory from Beth-shan to Abel-meholah and over to Jokmeam.

[13] Ben-geber, in Ramoth-gilead, including the Towns of Jair (named for Jair son of Manasseh) in Gilead, and in the Argob region of Bashan, including sixty great fortified cities with gates barred with bronze.

[14] Ahinadab son of Iddo, in Mahanaim.

[15] Ahimaaz, in Naphtali. (He was married to Basemath, another of Solomon's daughters.)

[16] Baana son of Hushai, in Asher and in Aloth.

[17] Jehoshaphat son of Paruah, in Issachar.

[18] Shimei son of Ela, in Benjamin.

[19] Geber son of Uri, in the land of Gilead, including the territories of King Sihon of the Amorites and King Og of Bashan.

And there was one governor over the land of Judah.

[20] The people of Judah and Israel were as numerous as the sand on the seashore. They were very contented, with plenty to eat and drink. [21] King Solomon ruled all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River to the land of the Philistines, as far south as the border of Egypt. The conquered peoples of those lands sent tribute money to Solomon and continued to serve him throughout his lifetime.

[22] The daily food requirements for Solomon's palace were 150 bushels of choice flour and 300 bushels of meal, [23] ten oxen from the fattening pens, twenty pasture-fed cattle, one hundred sheep or goats, as well as deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl.

[24] Solomon's dominion extended over all the kingdoms west of the Euphrates River, from Tiphshah to Gaza. And there was peace throughout the entire land. [25] Throughout the lifetime of Solomon, all of Judah and Israel lived in peace and safety. And from Dan to Beersheba, each family had its own home and garden.

[26] Solomon had four thousand stalls for his chariot horses and twelve thousand horses. [27] The district governors faithfully provided food for King Solomon and his court, each during his assigned month. [28] They also brought the necessary barley and straw for the royal horses in the stables.

[29] God gave Solomon great wisdom and understanding, and knowledge too vast to be measured. [30] In fact, his wisdom exceeded that of all the wise men of the East and the wise men of Egypt. [31] He was wiser than anyone else, including Ethan the Ezrahite and Heman, Calcol, and Darda—the sons of Mahol. His fame spread throughout all the surrounding nations. [32] He composed some 3,000 proverbs and wrote 1,005 songs. [33] He could speak with authority about all kinds of plants, from the great cedar of Lebanon to the tiny hyssop that grows from cracks in a wall. He could also speak about animals, birds, reptiles, and fish. [34] And kings from every nation sent their ambassadors to listen to the wisdom of Solomon.

[5:1] King Hiram of Tyre had always been a loyal friend of David, so when he learned that David's son Solomon was the new king of Israel, Hiram sent ambassadors to congratulate him.

[2] Then Solomon sent this message back to Hiram:

[3] "You know that my father, David, was not able to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord his God because of the many wars he waged with surrounding nations. He could not build until the Lord gave him victory over all his enemies. [4] But now the Lord my God has given me peace on every side, and I have no enemies and all is well. [5] So I am planning to build a Temple to honor the name of the Lord my God, just as he instructed my father that I should do. For the Lord told him, 'Your son, whom I will place on your throne, will build the Temple to honor my name.' [6] Now please command that cedars from Lebanon be cut for me. Let my men work alongside yours, and I will pay your men whatever wages you ask. As you know, there is no one among us who can cut timber like you Sidonians!"

[7] When Hiram received Solomon's message, he was very pleased and said, "Praise the Lord for giving David a wise son to be king of the great nation of Israel." [8] Then he sent this reply to Solomon:

"I have received your message, and I will do as you have asked concerning the timber. I can supply you with both cedar and cypress. [9] My servants will bring the logs from the Lebanon Mountains to the Mediterranean Sea and build them into rafts. We will float them along the coast to whatever place you choose. Then we will break the rafts apart and deliver the timber to you. You can pay me with food for my household."

[10] So Hiram produced for Solomon as much cedar and cypress timber as he desired. [11] In return Solomon sent him an annual payment of 100,000 bushels of wheat for his household and 110,000 gallons of olive oil. [12] So the Lord gave great wisdom to Solomon just as he had promised. And Hiram and Solomon made a formal alliance of peace.

[13] Then King Solomon enlisted 30,000 laborers from all Israel. [14] He sent them to Lebanon in shifts, 10,000 every month, so that each man would be one month in Lebanon and two months at home. Adoniram was in charge of this labor force. [15] Solomon also enlisted 70,000 common laborers, 80,000 stonecutters in the hill country, [16] and 3,600 foremen to supervise the work. [17] At the king's command, the stonecutters quarried and shaped costly blocks of stone for the foundation of the Temple. [18] Men from the city of Gebal helped Solomon's and Hiram's builders prepare the timber and stone for the Temple.

[6:1] It was in mid spring, during the fourth year of Solomon's reign, that he began the construction of the Temple of the Lord. This was 480 years after the people of Israel were delivered from their slavery in the land of Egypt.

[2] The Temple that King Solomon built for the Lord was 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high. [3] The foyer at the front of the Temple was 30 feet wide, running across the entire width of the Temple. It projected outward 15 feet from the front of the Temple. [4] Solomon also made narrow, recessed windows throughout the Temple.

[5] A complex of rooms was built against the outer walls of the Temple, all the way around the sides and rear of the building. [6] The complex was three stories high, the bottom floor being 7 1/2 feet wide, the second floor 9 feet wide, and the top floor 10 1/2 feet wide. The rooms were connected to the walls of the Temple by beams resting on ledges built out from the wall. So the beams were not inserted into the walls themselves.

[7] The stones used in the construction of the Temple were prefinished at the quarry, so the entire structure was built without the sound of hammer, ax, or any other iron tool at the building site.

[8] The entrance to the bottom floor was on the south side of the Temple. There were winding stairs going up to the second floor, and another flight of stairs between the second and third floors. [9] After completing the Temple structure, Solomon put in a ceiling made of beams and planks of cedar. [10] As already stated, there was a complex of rooms on three sides of the building, attached to the Temple walls by cedar timbers. Each story of the complex was 7 1/2 feet high.

[11] Then the Lord gave this message to Solomon: [12] "Concerning this Temple you are building, if you keep all my laws and regulations and obey all my commands, I will fulfill through you the promise I made to your father, David. [13] I will live among the people of Israel and never forsake my people."

[14] So Solomon finished building the Temple. [15] The entire inside, from floor to ceiling, was paneled with wood. He paneled the walls and ceilings with cedar, and he used cypress for the floors. [16] He partitioned off an inner sanctuary—the Most Holy Place—at the far end of the Temple. It was 30 feet deep and was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling. [17] The main room of the Temple, outside the Most Holy Place, was 60 feet long. [18] Cedar paneling completely covered the stone walls throughout the Temple, and the paneling was decorated with carvings of gourds and open flowers.

[19] Solomon prepared the inner sanctuary in the rear of the Temple, where the Ark of the Lord's covenant would be placed. [20] This inner sanctuary was 30 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 30 feet high. Solomon overlaid its walls and ceiling with pure gold. He also overlaid the altar made of cedar. [21] Then he overlaid the rest of the Temple's interior with pure gold, and he made gold chains to protect the entrance to the Most Holy Place. [22] So he finished overlaying the entire Temple with gold, including the altar that belonged to the Most Holy Place.

[23] Within the inner sanctuary Solomon placed two cherubim made of olive wood, each 15 feet tall. [24] The wingspan of each of the cherubim was 15 feet, each wing being 7 1/2 feet long. [25] The two cherubim were identical in shape and size; [26] each was 15 feet tall. [27] Solomon placed them side by side in the inner sanctuary of the Temple. Their outspread wings reached from wall to wall, while their inner wings touched at the center of the room. [28] He overlaid the two cherubim with gold.

[29] All the walls of the inner sanctuary and the main room were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers. [30] The floor in both rooms was overlaid with gold.

[31] For the entrance to the inner sanctuary, Solomon made double doors of olive wood with five-sided doorposts. [32] These doors were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and the doors were overlaid with gold.

[33] Then he made four-sided doorposts of olive wood for the entrance to the Temple. [34] There were two folding doors of cypress wood, and each door was hinged to fold back upon itself. [35] These doors were decorated with carvings of cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers, and the doors were overlaid with gold.

[36] The walls of the inner courtyard were built so that there was one layer of cedar beams after every three layers of hewn stone.

[37] The foundation of the Lord's Temple was laid in midspring of the fourth year of Solomon's reign. [38] The entire building was completed in every detail by midautumn of the eleventh year of his reign. So it took seven years to build the Temple.

[7:1] Solomon also built a palace for himself, and it took him thirteen years to complete the construction.

[2] One of Solomon's buildings was called the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. It was 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The great cedar ceiling beams rested on four rows of cedar pillars. [3] It had a cedar roof supported by forty-five rafters that rested on three rows of pillars, fifteen in each row. [4] On each of the side walls there were three rows of windows facing each other. [5] All the doorways were rectangular in frame; they were in sets of three, facing each other.

[6] He also built the Hall of Pillars, which was 75 feet long and 45 feet wide. There was a porch at its front, covered by a canopy that was supported by pillars.

[7] There was also the Hall of the Throne, also known as the Hall of Judgment, where Solomon sat to hear legal matters. It was paneled with cedar from floor to ceiling. [8] Solomon's living quarters surrounded a courtyard behind this hall; they were built the same way. He also built similar living quarters for Pharaoh's daughter, one of his wives. [9] All these buildings were built entirely from huge, costly blocks of stone, cut and trimmed to exact measure on all sides. [10] Some of the huge foundation stones were 15 feet long, and some were 12 feet long. [11] The costly blocks of stone used in the walls were also cut to measure, and cedar beams were also used. [12] The walls of the great courtyard were built so that there was one layer of cedar beams after every three layers of hewn stone, just like the walls of the inner courtyard of the Lord's Temple with its entrance foyer.

[13] King Solomon then asked for a man named Hiram to come from Tyre, [14] for he was a craftsman skilled in bronze work. He was half Israelite, since his mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali, and his father had been a foundry worker from Tyre. So he came to work for King Solomon.

[15] Hiram cast two bronze pillars, each 27 feet tall and 18 feet in circumference. [16] For the tops of the pillars he made capitals of molded bronze, each 7 1/2 feet tall. [17] Each capital was decorated with seven sets of latticework and interwoven chains. [18] He also made two rows of pomegranates that encircled the latticework to decorate the capitals over the pillars. [19] The capitals on the columns inside the foyer were shaped like lilies, and they were 6 feet tall. [20] Each capital on the two pillars had two hundred pomegranates in two rows around them, beside the rounded surface next to the latticework. [21] Hiram set the pillars at the entrance of the Temple, one toward the south and one toward the north. He named the one on the south Jakin, and the one on the north Boaz. [22] The capitals on the pillars were shaped like lilies. And so the work on the pillars was finished.

[23] Then Hiram cast a large round tank, 15 feet across from rim to rim; it was called the Sea. It was 7 1/2 feet deep and about 45 feet in circumference. [24] The Sea was encircled just below its rim by two rows of decorative gourds. There were about six gourds per foot all the way around, and they had been cast as part of the tank.

[25] The Sea rested on a base of twelve bronze oxen, all facing outward. Three faced north, three faced west, three faced south, and three faced east. [26] The walls of the Sea were about three inches thick, and its rim flared out like a cup and resembled a lily blossom. It could hold about 11,000 gallons of water.

[27] Hiram also made ten bronze water carts, each 6 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 4 1/2 feet tall. [28] They were constructed with side panels braced with crossbars. [29] Both the panels and the crossbars were decorated with carved lions, oxen, and cherubim. Above and below the lions and oxen were wreath decorations.

[30] Each of these carts had four bronze wheels and bronze axles. At each corner of the carts were supporting posts for the bronze basins; these supports were decorated with carvings of wreaths on each side.

[31] The top of each cart had a circular frame for the basin. It projected 1 1/2 feet above the cart's top like a round pedestal, and its opening was 2 1/4 feet across; it was decorated on the outside with carvings of wreaths. The panels of the carts were square, not round. [32] Under the panels were four wheels that were connected to axles that had been cast as one unit with the cart. The wheels were 2 1/4 feet in diameter [33] and were similar to chariot wheels. The axles, spokes, rims, and hubs were all cast from molten bronze.

[34] There were supports at each of the four corners of the carts, and these, too, were cast as one unit with the cart. [35] Around the top of each cart there was a rim 9 inches wide. The supports and side panels were cast as one unit with the cart. [36] Carvings of cherubim, lions, and palm trees decorated the panels and supports wherever there was room, and there were wreaths all around. [37] All ten water carts were the same size and were made alike, for each was cast from the same mold.

[38] Hiram also made ten bronze basins, one for each cart. Each basin was 6 feet across and could hold 220 gallons of water. [39] He arranged five water carts on the south side of the Temple and five on the north side. The Sea was placed at the southeast corner of the Temple. [40] He also made the necessary pots, shovels, and basins.

So at last Hiram completed everything King Solomon had assigned him to make for the Temple of the Lord:

[41] two pillars,
two bowl-shaped capitals on top of the pillars,
two networks of chains that decorated the capitals,

[42] four hundred pomegranates that hung from the chains on the capitals (two rows of pomegranates for each of the chain networks that were hung around the capitals on top of the pillars),

[43] the ten water carts holding the ten basins,
[44] the Sea and the twelve oxen under it,
[45] the pots, the shovels, and the basins.

All these utensils for the Temple of the Lord that Hiram made for Solomon were made of burnished bronze. [46] The king had them cast in clay molds in the Jordan Valley between Succoth and Zarethan. [47] Solomon did not weigh all the utensils because there were so many; the weight of the bronze could not be measured.

[48] So Solomon made all the furnishings of the Temple of the Lord:

the gold altar,

the gold table for the Bread of the Presence,

[49] the gold lampstands, five on the south and five on the north, in front of the Most Holy Place,

the flower decorations, lamps, and tongs, all of gold,

[50] the cups, lamp snuffers, basins, dishes, and firepans, all of pure gold.

the doors for the entrances to the Most Holy Place and the main room of the Temple, with their fronts overlaid with gold.

[51] So King Solomon finished all his work on the Temple of the Lord. Then Solomon brought all the gifts his father, David, had dedicated—the silver, the gold, and the other utensils—and he stored them in the treasuries of the Lord's Temple.

[8:1] Solomon then summoned the leaders of all the tribes and families of Israel to assemble in Jerusalem. They were to bring the Ark of the Lord's covenant from its location in the City of David, also known as Zion, to its new place in the Temple. [2] They all assembled before the king at the annual Festival of Shelters in early autumn. [3] When all the leaders of Israel arrived, the priests picked up the Ark. [4] Then the priests and Levites took the Ark of the Lord, along with the Tabernacle and all its sacred utensils, and carried them up to the Temple. [5] King Solomon and the entire community of Israel sacrificed sheep and oxen before the Ark in such numbers that no one could keep count!

[6] Then the priests carried the Ark of the Lord's covenant into the inner sanctuary of the Temple—the Most Holy Place—and placed it beneath the wings of the cherubim. [7] The cherubim spread their wings over the Ark, forming a canopy over the Ark and its carrying poles. [8] These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the front entrance of the Temple's main room—the Holy Place—but not from outside it. They are still there to this day. [9] Nothing was in the Ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed there at Mount Sinai, where the Lord made a covenant with the people of Israel as they were leaving the land of Egypt.

[10] As the priests came out of the inner sanctuary, a cloud filled the Temple of the Lord. [11] The priests could not continue their work because the glorious presence of the Lord filled the Temple.

[12] Then Solomon prayed, "O Lord, you have said that you would live in thick darkness. [13] But I have built a glorious Temple for you, where you can live forever!"

[14] Then the king turned around to the entire community of Israel standing before him and gave this blessing: [15] "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Israel, who has kept the promise he made to my father, David. [16] For he told my father, 'From the day I brought my people Israel out of Egypt, I have never chosen a city among the tribes of Israel as the place where a temple should be built to honor my name. But now I have chosen David to be king over my people.' "

[17] Then Solomon said, "My father, David, wanted to build this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [18] But the Lord told him, 'It is right for you to want to build the Temple to honor my name, [19] but you are not the one to do it. One of your sons will build it instead.'

[20] "And now the Lord has done what he promised, for I have become king in my father's place. I have built this Temple to honor the name of the Lord, the God of Israel. [21] And I have prepared a place there for the Ark, which contains the covenant that the Lord made with our ancestors when he brought them out of Egypt."

[22] Then Solomon stood with his hands lifted toward heaven before the altar of the Lord in front of the entire community of Israel. [23] He prayed, "O Lord, God of Israel, there is no God like you in all of heaven or earth. You keep your promises and show unfailing love to all who obey you and are eager to do your will. [24] You have kept your promise to your servant David, my father. You made that promise with your own mouth, and today you have fulfilled it with your own hands. [25] And now, O Lord, God of Israel, carry out your further promise to your servant David, my father. For you said to him, 'If your descendants guard their behavior as you have done, they will always reign over Israel.' [26] Now, O God of Israel, fulfill this promise to your servant David, my father.

[27] "But will God really live on earth? Why, even the highest heavens cannot contain you. How much less this Temple I have built! [28] Listen to my prayer and my request, O Lord my God. Hear the cry and the prayer that your servant is making to you today. [29] May you watch over this Temple both day and night, this place where you have said you would put your name. May you always hear the prayers I make toward this place. [30] May you hear the humble and earnest requests from me and your people Israel when we pray toward this place. Yes, hear us from heaven where you live, and when you hear, forgive.

[31] "If someone wrongs another person and is required to take an oath of innocence in front of the altar at this Temple, [32] then hear from heaven and judge between your servants—the accuser and the accused. Punish the guilty party and acquit the one who is innocent.

[33] "If your people Israel are defeated by their enemies because they have sinned against you, and if they turn to you and call on your name and pray to you here in this Temple, [34] then hear from heaven and forgive their sins and return them to this land you gave their ancestors.

[35] "If the skies are shut up and there is no rain because your people have sinned against you, and then they pray toward this Temple and confess your name and turn from their sins because you have punished them, [36] then hear from heaven and forgive the sins of your servants, your people Israel. Teach them to do what is right, and send rain on your land that you have given to your people as their special possession.

[37] "If there is a famine in the land, or plagues, or crop disease, or attacks of locusts or caterpillars, or if your people's enemies are in the land besieging their towns—whatever the trouble is— [38] and if your people offer a prayer concerning their troubles or sorrow, raising their hands toward this Temple,

[39] then hear from heaven where you live, and forgive. Give your people whatever they deserve, for you alone know the human heart. [40] Then they will fear you and walk in your ways as long as they live in the land you gave to our ancestors.

[41] "And when foreigners hear of you and come from distant lands to worship your great name— [42] for they will hear of you and of your mighty miracles and your power—and when they pray toward this Temple, [43] then hear from heaven where you live, and grant what they ask of you. Then all the people of the earth will come to know and fear you, just as your own people Israel do. They, too, will know that this Temple I have built bears your name.

[44] "If your people go out at your command to fight their enemies, and if they pray to the Lord toward this city that you have chosen and toward this Temple that I have built for your name, [45] then hear their prayers from heaven and uphold their cause.

[46] "If they sin against you—and who has never sinned?—you may become angry with them and let their enemies conquer them and take them captive to a foreign land far or near. [47] But in that land of exile, they may turn to you again in repentance and pray, 'We have sinned, done evil, and acted wickedly.' [48] Then if they turn to you with their whole heart and soul and pray toward the land you gave to their ancestors, toward this city you have chosen, and toward this Temple I have built to honor your name, [49] then hear their prayers from heaven where you live. Uphold their cause [50] and forgive your people who have sinned against you. Make their captors merciful to them, [51] for they are your people—your special possession—whom you brought out of the iron-smelting furnace of Egypt.

[52] "May your eyes be open to my requests and to the requests of your people Israel. Hear and answer them whenever they cry out to you. [53] For when you brought our ancestors out of Egypt, O Sovereign Lord, you told your servant Moses that you had separated Israel from among all the nations of the earth to be your own special possession."

[54] When Solomon finished making these prayers and requests to the Lord, he stood up in front of the altar of the Lord, where he had been kneeling with his hands raised toward heaven. [55] He stood there and shouted this blessing over the entire community of Israel: [56] "Praise the Lord who has given rest to his people Israel, just as he promised. Not one word has failed of all the wonderful promises he gave through his servant Moses. [57] May the Lord our God be with us as he was with our ancestors; may he never forsake us.

[58] May he give us the desire to do his will in everything and to obey all the commands, laws, and regulations that he gave our ancestors. [59] And may these words that I have prayed in the presence of the Lord be before him constantly, day and night, so that the Lord our God may uphold my cause and the cause of his people Israel, fulfilling our daily needs. [60] May people all over the earth know that the Lord is God and that there is no other god. [61] And may you, his people, always be faithful to the Lord our God. May you always obey his laws and commands, just as you are doing today."

[62] Then the king and all Israel with him offered sacrifices to the Lord. [63] Solomon sacrificed peace offerings to the Lord numbering 22,000 oxen and 120,000 sheep. And so the king and all Israel dedicated the Temple of the Lord. [64] That same day the king dedicated the central area of the courtyard in front of the Lord's Temple. He offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of peace offerings there, because the bronze altar in the Lord's presence was too small to handle so many offerings.

[65] Then Solomon and all Israel celebrated the Festival of Shelters in the presence of the Lord their God. A large crowd had gathered from as far away as Lebo-hamath in the north to the brook of Egypt in the south. The celebration went on for fourteen days in all—seven days for the dedication of the altar and seven days for the Festival of Shelters. [66] After the festival was over, Solomon sent the people home. They blessed the king as they went, and they were all joyful and happy because the Lord had been good to his servant David and to his people Israel.

[9:1] So Solomon finished building the Temple of the Lord, as well as the royal palace. He completed everything he had planned to do. [2] Then the Lord appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had done before at Gibeon. [3] The Lord said to him, "I have heard your prayer and your request. I have set apart this Temple you have built so that my name will be honored there forever. I will always watch over it and care for it. [4] As for you, if you will follow me with integrity and godliness, as David your father did, always obeying my commands and keeping my laws and regulations, [5] then I will establish the throne of your dynasty over Israel forever. For I made this promise to your father, David: 'You will never fail to have a successor on the throne of Israel.'

[6] "But if you or your descendants abandon me and disobey my commands and laws, and if you go and worship other gods, [7] then I will uproot the people of Israel from this land I have given them. I will reject this Temple that I have set apart to honor my name. I will make Israel an object of mockery and ridicule among the nations. [8] And though this Temple is impressive now, it will become an appalling sight for all who pass by. They will scoff and ask, 'Why did the Lord do such terrible things to his land and to his Temple?' [9] And the answer will be, 'Because his people forgot the Lord their God, who brought their ancestors out of Egypt, and they worshiped other gods instead. That is why the Lord has brought all these disasters upon them.' "

[10] Now at the end of the twenty years during which Solomon built the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace, [11] Solomon gave twenty towns in the land of Galilee to King Hiram of Tyre as payment for all the cedar and cypress lumber and gold he had furnished for the construction of the buildings. [12] Hiram came from Tyre to see the towns Solomon had given him, but he was not at all pleased with them. [13] "What kind of towns are these, my brother?" he asked. "These towns are worthless!" So Hiram called that area Cabul—"worthless"—as it is still known today. [14] Hiram had sent Solomon nine thousand pounds of gold.

[15] This is the account of the forced labor that Solomon conscripted to build the Lord's Temple, the royal palace, the Millo, the wall of Jerusalem, and the cities of Hazor, Megiddo, and Gezer. [16] (The king of Egypt had attacked and captured Gezer, killing the Canaanite population and burning it down. He gave the city to his daughter as a wedding gift when she married Solomon. [17] So Solomon rebuilt the city of Gezer.) He also built up the towns of

Lower Beth-horon, [18] Baalath, and Tamar in the desert, within his land. [19] He built towns as supply centers and constructed cities where his chariots and horses could be kept. He built to his heart's content in Jerusalem and Lebanon and throughout the entire realm.

[20] There were still some people living in the land who were not Israelites, including Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites. [21] These were descendants of the nations that Israel had not completely destroyed. So Solomon conscripted them for his labor force, and they serve in the labor force to this day. [22] But Solomon did not conscript any of the Israelites for forced labor. Instead, he assigned them to serve as fighting men, government officials, officers in his army, commanders of his chariots, and charioteers. [23] He also appointed 550 of them to supervise the various projects.

[24] After Solomon moved his wife, Pharaoh's daughter, from the City of David to the new palace he had built for her, he constructed the Millo.

[25] Three times each year Solomon offered burnt offerings and peace offerings to the Lord on the altar he had built. He also burned incense to the Lord. And so he finished the work of building the Temple.

[26] Later King Solomon built a fleet of ships at Ezion-geber, a port near Elath in the land of Edom, along the shore of the Red Sea. [27] Hiram sent experienced crews of sailors to sail the ships with Solomon's men. [28] They sailed to Ophir and brought back to Solomon some sixteen tons of gold.

[10:1] When the queen of Sheba heard of Solomon's reputation, which brought honor to the name of the Lord, she came to test him with hard questions. [2] She arrived in Jerusalem with a large group of attendants and a great caravan of camels loaded with spices, huge quantities of gold, and precious jewels. When she met with Solomon, they talked about everything she had on her mind. [3] Solomon answered all her questions; nothing was too hard for the king to explain to her. [4] When the queen of Sheba realized how wise Solomon was, and when she saw the palace he had built, [5] she was breathless. She was also amazed at the food on his tables, the organization of his officials and their splendid clothing, the cup-bearers and their robes, and the burnt offerings Solomon made at the Temple of the Lord.

[6] She exclaimed to the king, "Everything I heard in my country about your achievements and wisdom is true! [7] I didn't believe it until I arrived here and saw it with my own eyes. Truly I had not heard the half of it! Your wisdom and prosperity are far greater than what I was told. [8] How happy these people must be! What a privilege for your officials to stand here day after day, listening to your wisdom! [9] The Lord your God is great indeed! He delights in you and has placed you on the throne of Israel. Because the Lord loves Israel with an eternal love, he has made you king so you can rule with justice and righteousness."

[10] Then she gave the king a gift of nine thousand pounds of gold, and great quantities of spices and precious jewels. Never again were so many spices brought in as those the queen of Sheba gave to Solomon.

[11] (When Hiram's ships brought gold from Ophir, they also brought rich cargoes of almug wood and precious jewels. [12] The king used the almug wood to make railings for the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace, and to construct harps and lyres for the musicians. Never before or since has there been such a supply of beautiful almug wood.)

[13] King Solomon gave the queen of Sheba whatever she asked for, besides all the other customary gifts he had so generously given. Then she and all her attendants left and returned to their own land.

[14] Each year Solomon received about twenty-five tons of gold. [15] This did not include the additional revenue he received from merchants and traders, all the kings of Arabia, and the governors of the land.

[16] King Solomon made two hundred large shields of hammered gold, each containing over fifteen pounds of gold. [17] He also made three hundred smaller shields of hammered gold, each containing nearly four pounds of gold. The king placed these shields in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon.

[18] Then the king made a huge ivory throne and overlaid it with pure gold. [19] The throne had six steps and a rounded back. On both sides of the seat were armrests, with the figure of a lion standing on each side of the throne. [20] Solomon made twelve other lion figures, one standing on each end of each of the six steps. No other throne in all the world could be compared with it!

[21] All of King Solomon's drinking cups were solid gold, as were all the utensils in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. They were not made of silver because silver was considered of little value in Solomon's day!

[22] The king had a fleet of trading ships that sailed with Hiram's fleet. Once every three years the ships returned, loaded down with gold, silver, ivory, apes, and peacocks.

[23] So King Solomon became richer and wiser than any other king in all the earth. [24] People from every nation came to visit him and to hear the wisdom God had given him. [25] Year after year, everyone who came to visit brought him gifts of silver and gold, clothing, weapons, spices, horses, and mules.

[26] Solomon built up a huge force of chariots and horses. He had fourteen hundred chariots and twelve thousand horses. He stationed many of them in the chariot cities, and some near him in Jerusalem. [27] The king made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones. And valuable cedarwood was as common as the sycamore wood that grows in the foothills of Judah. [28] Solomon's horses were imported from Egypt and from Cilicia; the king's traders acquired them from Cilicia at the standard price. [29] At that time, Egyptian chariots delivered to Jerusalem could be purchased for 600 pieces of silver, and horses could be bought for 150 pieces of silver. Many of these were then resold to the kings of the Hittites and the kings of Aram.

[11:1] Now King Solomon loved many foreign women. Besides Pharaoh's daughter, he married women from Moab, Ammon, Edom, Sidon, and from among the Hittites. [2] The Lord had clearly instructed his people not to intermarry with those nations, because the women they married would lead them to worship their gods. Yet Solomon insisted on loving them anyway.

[3] He had seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines. And sure enough, they led his heart away from the Lord. [4] In Solomon's old age, they turned his heart to worship their gods instead of trusting only in the Lord his God, as his father, David, had done. [5] Solomon worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. [6] Thus, Solomon did what was evil in the Lord's sight; he refused to follow the Lord completely, as his father, David, had done. [7] On the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem, he even built a shrine for Chemosh, the detestable god of Moab, and another for Molech, the detestable god of the Ammonites. [8] Solomon built such shrines for all his foreign wives to use for burning incense and sacrificing to their gods.

[9] The Lord was very angry with Solomon, for his heart had turned away from the Lord, the God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice. [10] He had warned Solomon specifically about worshiping other gods, but Solomon did not listen to the Lord's command. [11] So now the Lord said to him, "Since you have not kept my covenant and have disobeyed my laws, I will surely tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. [12] But for the sake of your father, David, I will not do this while you are still alive. I will take the kingdom away from your son. [13] And even so, I will let him be king of one tribe, for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, my chosen city."

[14] Then the Lord raised up Hadad the Edomite, a member of Edom's royal family, to be an enemy against Solomon. [15] Years before, David had gone to Edom with Joab, his army commander, to bury some Israelites who had died in battle. While there, the Israelite army had killed nearly every male in Edom. [16] Joab and the army had stayed there for six months, killing them. [17] But Hadad and a few of his father's royal officials had fled. (Hadad was a very small child at the time.) [18] They escaped from Midian and went to Paran, where others joined them. Then they traveled to Egypt and went to Pharaoh, who gave them a home, food, and some land. [19] Pharaoh grew very fond of Hadad, and he gave him a wife—the sister of Queen Tahpenes. [20] She bore him a son, Genubath, who was brought up in Pharaoh's palace among Pharaoh's own sons.

[21] When the news reached Hadad in Egypt that David and his commander Joab were both dead, he said to Pharaoh, "Let me return to my own country."

[22] "Why?" Pharaoh asked him. "What do you lack here? How have we disappointed you that you want to go home?"

"Nothing is wrong," he replied. "But even so, I must return home."

[23] God also raised up Rezon son of Eliada to be an enemy against Solomon. Rezon had fled from his master, King Hadadezer of Zobah, [24] and had become the leader of a gang of rebels. After David conquered Hadadezer, Rezon and his men fled to Damascus, where he became king. [25] Rezon was Israel's bitter enemy for the rest of Solomon's reign, and he made trouble, just as Hadad did. Rezon hated Israel intensely and continued to reign in Aram.

[26] Another rebel leader was Jeroboam son of Nebat, one of Solomon's own officials. He came from the city of Zeredah in Ephraim, and his mother was Zeruah, a widow. [27] This is the story behind his rebellion. Solomon was rebuilding the Millo and repairing the walls of the city of his father, David.

[28] Jeroboam was a very capable young man, and when Solomon saw how industrious he was, he put him in charge of the labor force from the tribes of Ephraim and Manasseh.

[29] One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh met him on the road, wearing a new cloak. The two of them were alone in a field, [30] and Ahijah took the new cloak he was wearing and tore it into twelve pieces. [31] Then he said to Jeroboam, "Take ten of these pieces, for this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I am about to tear the kingdom from the hand of Solomon, and I will give ten of the tribes to you! [32] But I will leave him one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. [33] For Solomon has abandoned me and worshiped Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians; Chemosh, the god of Moab; and Molech, the god of the Ammonites. He has not followed my ways and done what is pleasing in my sight. He has not obeyed my laws and regulations as his father, David, did.

[34] " 'But I will not take the entire kingdom from Solomon at this time. For the sake of my servant David, the one whom I chose and who obeyed my commands and laws, I will let Solomon reign for the rest of his life. [35] But I will take the kingdom away from his son and give ten of the tribes to you. [36] His son will have one tribe so that the descendants of David my servant will continue to reign in Jerusalem, the city I have chosen to be the place for my name. [37] And I will place you on the throne of Israel, and you will rule over all that your heart desires. [38] If you listen to what I tell you and follow my ways and do whatever I consider to be right, and if you obey my laws and commands, as my servant David did, then I will always be with you. I will establish an enduring dynasty for you as I did for David, and I will give Israel to you. [39] But I will punish the descendants of David because of Solomon's sin—though not forever.' "

[40] Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam, but he fled to King Shishak of Egypt and stayed there until Solomon died.

[41] The rest of the events in Solomon's reign, including his wisdom, are recorded in The Book of the Acts of Solomon. [42] Solomon ruled in Jerusalem over all Israel for forty years. [43] When Solomon died, he was buried in the city of his father, David. Then his son Rehoboam became the next king.

B. THE DIVIDED KINGDOM (1 Kings 12:1-22:53)

When the northern kingdom of Israel was being led by wicked kings, God raised up a prophet to proclaim his messages. Elijah single-handedly challenged the priesthood of the state religion and had them removed in one day. Through the dividing of the kingdom and the sending of Elijah, God dealt with the people's sin in powerful ways. Sin in our lives is graciously forgiven by God. However, the sin of an unrepentant person will be handled harshly. We must turn from sin and turn to God to be saved from judgment.

1. Revolt of the northern tribes
2. Kings of Israel and Judah
3. Elijah's ministry
4. Kings of Israel and Judah

1 Kings 12:1-22:53

Rehoboam went to Shechem, where all Israel had gathered to make him king. [2] When Jeroboam son of Nebat heard of Solomon's death, he returned from Egypt, for he had fled to Egypt to escape from King Solomon. [3] The leaders of Israel sent for Jeroboam, and the whole assembly of Israel went to speak with Rehoboam. [4] "Your father was a hard master," they said. "Lighten the harsh labor demands and heavy taxes that your father imposed on us. Then we will be your loyal subjects."

[5] Rehoboam replied, "Give me three days to think this over. Then come back for my answer." So the people went away.

[6] Then King Rehoboam went to discuss the matter with the older men who had counseled his father, Solomon. "What is your advice?" he asked. "How should I answer these people?"

[7] The older counselors replied, "If you are willing to serve the people today and give them a favorable answer, they will always be your loyal subjects."

[8] But Rehoboam rejected the advice of the elders and instead asked the opinion of the young men who had grown up with him and who were now his advisers. [9] "What is your advice?" he asked them. "How should I answer these people who want me to lighten the burdens imposed by my father?"

[10] The young men replied, "This is what you should tell those complainers: 'My little finger is thicker than my father's waist—if you think he was hard on you, just wait and see what I'll be like! [11] Yes, my father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!' "

[12] Three days later, Jeroboam and all the people returned to hear Rehoboam's decision, just as the king had requested. [13] But Rehoboam spoke harshly to them, for he rejected the advice of the older counselors [14] and followed the counsel of his younger advisers. He told the people, "My father was harsh on you, but I'll be even harsher! My father used whips on you, but I'll use scorpions!" [15] So the king paid no attention to the people's demands. This turn of events was the will of the Lord, for it fulfilled the Lord's message to Jeroboam son of Nebat through the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh.

[16] When all Israel realized that the king had rejected their request, they shouted, "Down with David and his dynasty! We have no share in Jesse's son! Let's go home, Israel! Look out for your own house, O David!" So the people of Israel returned home. [17] But Rehoboam continued to rule over the Israelites who lived in the towns of Judah.

[18] King Rehoboam sent Adoniram, who was in charge of the labor force, to restore order, but all Israel stoned him to death. When this news reached King Rehoboam, he quickly jumped into his chariot and fled to Jerusalem. [19] The northern tribes of Israel have refused to be ruled by a descendant of David to this day.

[20] When the people of Israel learned of Jeroboam's return from Egypt, they called an assembly and made him king over all Israel. So only the tribe of Judah remained loyal to the family of David.

[21] When Rehoboam arrived at Jerusalem, he mobilized the armies of Judah and Benjamin—180,000 select troops—to fight against the army of Israel and to restore the kingdom to himself. [22] But God said to Shemaiah, the man of God, [23] "Say to Rehoboam son of Solomon, king of Judah, and to all the people of Judah and Benjamin, [24] 'This is what the Lord says: Do not fight against your relatives, the Israelites. Go back home, for what has happened is my doing!' "So they obeyed the message of the Lord and went home, as the Lord had commanded.

[25] Jeroboam then built up the city of Shechem in the hill country of Ephraim, and it became his capital. Later he went and built up the town of Peniel. [26] Jeroboam thought to himself, "Unless I am careful, the kingdom will return to the dynasty of David. [27] When they go to Jerusalem to offer sacrifices at the Temple of the Lord, they will again give their allegiance to King Rehoboam of Judah. They will kill me and make him their king instead."

[28] So on the advice of his counselors, the king made two gold calves. He said to the people, "It is too much trouble for you to worship in Jerusalem. O Israel, these are the gods who brought you out of Egypt!"

[29] He placed these calf idols at the southern and northern ends of Israel—in Bethel and in Dan. [30] This became a great sin, for the people worshiped them, traveling even as far as Dan.

[31] Jeroboam built shrines at the pagan high places and ordained priests from the rank and file of the people—those who were not from the priestly tribe of Levi. [32] Jeroboam also instituted a religious festival in Bethel, held on a day in midautumn, similar to the annual Festival of Shelters in Judah. There at Bethel he himself offered sacrifices to the calves he had made. And it was at Bethel that he appointed priests for the pagan shrines he had made.

[33] So on the appointed day in midautumn, a day that he himself had designated, Jeroboam offered sacrifices on the altar at Bethel. He instituted a religious festival for Israel, and he went up to the altar to burn incense.

[13:1] At the Lord's command, a man of God from Judah went to Bethel, and he arrived there just as Jeroboam was approaching the altar to offer a sacrifice. [2] Then at the Lord's command, he shouted, "O altar, altar! This is what the Lord says: A child named Josiah will be born into the dynasty of David. On you he will sacrifice the priests from the pagan shrines who come here to burn incense, and human bones will be burned on you." [3] That same day the man of God gave a sign to prove his message, and he said, "The Lord has promised to give this sign: This altar will split apart, and its ashes will be poured out on the ground."

[4] King Jeroboam was very angry with the man of God for speaking against the altar. So he pointed at the man and shouted, "Seize that man!" But instantly the king's hand became paralyzed in that position, and he couldn't pull it back. [5] At the same time a wide crack appeared in the altar, and the ashes poured out, just as the man of God had predicted in his message from the Lord.

[6] The king cried out to the man of God, "Please ask the Lord your God to restore my hand again!" So the man of God prayed to the Lord, and the king's hand became normal again.

[7] Then the king said to the man of God, "Come to the palace with me and have something to eat, and I will give you a gift."

[8] But the man of God said to the king, "Even if you gave me half of everything you own, I would not go with you. I would not eat any food or drink any water in this place. [9] For the Lord gave me this command: 'You must not eat any food or drink any water while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.' "[10] So he left Bethel and went home another way.

[11] As it happened, there was an old prophet living in Bethel, and his sons came home and told him what the man of God had done in Bethel that day. They also told him what he had said to the king. [12] The old prophet asked them, "Which way did he go?" So they told their father which road the man of God had taken. [13] "Quick, saddle the donkey," the old man said. And when they had saddled the donkey for him, [14] he rode after the man of God and found him sitting under an oak tree.

The old prophet asked him, "Are you the man of God who came from Judah?"

"Yes," he replied, "I am."

[15] Then he said to the man of God, "Come home with me and eat some food."

[16] "No, I cannot," he replied. "I am not allowed to eat any food or drink any water here in this place. [17] For the Lord gave me this command: 'You must not eat any food or drink any water while you are there, and do not return to Judah by the same way you came.' "

[18] But the old prophet answered, "I am a prophet, too, just as you are. And an angel gave me this message from the Lord: 'Bring him home with you, and give him food to eat and water to drink.' "But the old man was lying to him. [19] So they went back together, and the man of God ate some food and drank some water at the prophet's home.

[20] Then while they were sitting at the table, a message from the Lord came to the old prophet. [21] He cried out to the man of God from Judah, "This is what the Lord says: You have defied the Lord's message and have disobeyed the command the Lord your God gave you. [22] You came back to this place and ate food and drank water where he told you not to eat or drink. Because of this, your body will not be buried in the grave of your ancestors."

[23] Now after the man of God had finished eating and drinking, the prophet saddled his own donkey for him, [24] and the man of God started off again. But as he was traveling along, a lion came out and killed him. His body lay there on the road, with the donkey and the lion standing beside it. [25] People came by and saw the body lying in the road and the lion standing beside it, and they went and reported it in Bethel, where the old prophet lived.

[26] When the old prophet heard the report, he said, "It is the man of God who disobeyed the Lord's command. The Lord has fulfilled his word by causing the lion to attack and kill him."

[27] Then the prophet said to his sons, "Saddle a donkey for me." So they saddled a donkey, [28] and he went out and found the body lying in the road. The donkey and lion were still standing there beside it, for the lion had not eaten the body nor attacked the donkey. [29] So the prophet laid the body of the man of God on the donkey and took it back to the city to mourn over him and bury him. [30] He laid the body in his own grave, crying out in grief, "Oh, my brother!"

[31] Afterward the prophet said to his sons, "When I die, bury me in the grave where the man of God is buried. Lay my bones beside his bones. [32] For the message the Lord told him to proclaim against the altar in Bethel and against the pagan shrines in the towns of Samaria will surely come true."

[33] But even after this, Jeroboam did not turn from his evil ways. He continued to choose priests from the rank and file of the people. Anyone who wanted to could become a priest for the pagan shrines. [34] This became a great sin and resulted in the destruction of Jeroboam's kingdom and the death of all his family.

[14:1] at that time Jeroboam's son Abijah became very sick. [2] So Jeroboam told his wife, "Disguise yourself so that no one will recognize you as the queen. Then go to the prophet Ahijah at Shiloh—the man who told me I would become king. [3] Take him a gift of ten loaves of bread, some cakes, and a jar of honey, and ask him what will happen to the boy."

[4] So Jeroboam's wife went to Ahijah's home at Shiloh. He was an old man now and could no longer see. [5] But the Lord had told Ahijah, "Jeroboam's wife will come here, pretending to be someone else. She will ask you about her son, for he is very sick. You must give her the answer that I give you."

[6] So when Ahijah heard her footsteps at the door, he called out, "Come in, wife of Jeroboam! Why are you pretending to be someone else?" Then he told her, "I have bad news for you. [7] Give your husband, Jeroboam, this message from the Lord, the God of Israel: 'I promoted you from the ranks of the common people and made you ruler over my people Israel. [8] I ripped the kingdom away from the family of David and gave it to you. But you have not been like my servant David, who obeyed my commands and followed me with all his heart and always did whatever I wanted him to do.'

[9] You have done more evil than all who lived before you. You have made other gods and have made me furious with your gold calves. And since you have turned your back on me, [10] I will bring disaster on your dynasty and kill all your sons, slave or free alike. I will burn up your royal dynasty as one burns up trash until it is all gone. [11] I, the Lord, vow that the members of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures.' "

[12] Then Ahijah said to Jeroboam's wife, "Go on home, and when you enter the city, the child will die. [13] All Israel will mourn for him and bury him. He is the only member of your family who will have a proper burial, for this child is the only good thing that the Lord, the God of Israel, sees in the entire family of Jeroboam. [14] And the Lord will raise up a king over Israel who will destroy the family of Jeroboam. This will happen today, even now! [15] Then the Lord will shake Israel like a reed whipped about in a stream. He will uproot the people of Israel from this good land that he gave their ancestors and will scatter them beyond the Euphrates River, for they have angered the Lord by worshiping Asherah poles. [16] He will abandon Israel because Jeroboam sinned and made all of Israel sin along with him."

[17] So Jeroboam's wife returned to Tirzah, and the child died just as she walked through the door of her home. [18] When the people of Israel buried him, they mourned for him, as the Lord had promised through the prophet Ahijah.

[19] The rest of the events of Jeroboam's reign, all his wars and how he ruled, are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [20] Jeroboam reigned in Israel twenty-two years. When Jeroboam died, his son Nadab became the next king.

[21] Meanwhile, Rehoboam son of Solomon was king in Judah. He was forty-one years old when he became king, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city the Lord had chosen from among all the tribes of Israel as the place to honor his name. Rehoboam's mother was Naamah, an Ammonite woman. [22] During Rehoboam's reign, the people of Judah did what was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing his anger with their sin, for it was even worse than that of their ancestors. [23] They built pagan shrines and set up sacred pillars and Asherah poles on every high hill and under every green tree. [24] There were even shrine prostitutes throughout the land. The people imitated the detestable practices of the pagan nations the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

[25] In the fifth year of King Rehoboam's reign, King Shishak of Egypt came up and attacked Jerusalem. [26] He ransacked the Temple of the Lord and the royal palace and stole everything, including all the gold shields Solomon had made. [27] Afterward Rehoboam made bronze shields as substitutes, and he entrusted them to the care of the palace guard officers. [28] Whenever the king went to the Temple of the Lord, the guards would carry them along and then return them to the guardroom.

[29] The rest of the events in Rehoboam's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [30] There was constant war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam. [31] When Rehoboam died, he was buried among his ancestors in the City of David. His mother was Naamah, an Ammonite woman. Then his son Abijam became the next king.

[15:1] Abijam began to rule over Judah in the eighteenth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel. [2] He reigned in Jerusalem three years. His mother was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. [3] He committed the same sins as his father before him, and his heart was not right with the Lord his God, as the heart of his ancestor David had been. [4] But for David's sake, the Lord his God allowed his dynasty to continue, and he gave Abijam a son to rule after him in Jerusalem. [5] For David had done what was pleasing in the Lord's sight and had obeyed the Lord's commands throughout his life, except in the affair concerning Uriah the Hittite.

[6] There was war between Abijam and Jeroboam throughout Abijam's reign. [7] The rest of the events in Abijam's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. There was constant war between Abijam and Jeroboam. [8] When Abijam died, he was buried in the City of David. Then his son Asa became the next king.

[9] Asa began to rule over Judah in the twentieth year of Jeroboam's reign in Israel. [10] He reigned in Jerusalem forty-one years. His grandmother was Maacah, the daughter of Absalom. [11] Asa did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight, as his ancestor David had done. [12] He banished the shrine prostitutes from the land and removed all the idols his ancestors had made. [13] He even deposed his grandmother Maacah from her position as queen mother because she had made an obscene Asherah pole. He cut down the pole and burned it in the Kidron Valley. [14] Although the pagan shrines were not completely removed, Asa remained faithful to the Lord throughout his life. [15] He brought into the Temple of the Lord the silver and gold and the utensils that he and his father had dedicated.

[16] There was constant war between King Asa of Judah and King Baasha of Israel. [17] King Baasha of Israel invaded Judah and fortified Ramah in order to prevent anyone from entering or leaving King Asa's territory in Judah. [18] Asa responded by taking all the silver and gold that was left in the treasuries of the Lord's Temple and the royal palace. He sent it with some of his officials to Ben-hadad son of Tabrimmon and grandson of Hezion, the king of Aram, who was ruling in Damascus, along with this message:

[19] "Let us renew the treaty that existed between your father and my father. See, I am sending you a gift of silver and gold. Break your treaty with King Baasha of Israel so that he will leave me alone."

[20] Ben-hadad agreed to King Asa's request and sent his armies to attack Israel. They conquered the towns of Ijon, Dan, Abel-beth-maacah, and all Kinnereth, with all the land of Naphtali. [21] As soon as Baasha of Israel heard what was happening, he abandoned his project of fortifying Ramah and withdrew to Tirzah.

[22] Then King Asa sent an order throughout Judah, requiring that everyone, without exception, help to carry away the building stones and timbers that Baasha had been using to fortify Ramah. Asa used these materials to fortify the town of Geba in Benjamin and the town of Mizpah.

[23] The rest of the events in Asa's reign, the extent of his power, and the names of the cities he built are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. In his old age his feet became diseased. [24] When Asa died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoshaphat became the next king.

[25] Nadab son of Jeroboam began to rule over Israel in the second year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Israel two years. [26] But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight and followed the example of his father, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

[27] Then Baasha son of Ahijah, from the tribe of Issachar, plotted against Nadab and assassinated him while he and the Israelite army were laying siege to the Philistine town of Gibbethon. [28] Baasha killed Nadab in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah, and he became the next king of Israel. [29] He immediately killed all the descendants of King Jeroboam, so that not one of the royal family was left, just as the Lord had promised concerning Jeroboam by the prophet Ahijah from Shiloh. [30] This was done because Jeroboam had aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, by the sins he had committed and the sins he had led Israel to commit. [31] The rest of the events in Nadab's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[32] There was constant war between Asa and King Baasha of Israel. [33] Baasha began to rule over Israel in the third year of King Asa's reign in Judah. Baasha reigned in Tirzah twenty-four years. [34] But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight and followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit.

[16:1] This message from the Lord was delivered to King Baasha by the prophet Jehu son of Hanani: [2] "I lifted you out of the dust to make you ruler of my people Israel, but you have followed the evil example of Jeroboam. You have aroused my anger by causing my people to sin. [3] So now I will destroy you and your family, just as I destroyed the descendants of Jeroboam son of Nebat. [4] Those of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by the vultures."

[5] The rest of the events in Baasha's reign and the extent of his power are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [6] When Baasha died, he was buried in Tirzah. Then his son Elah became the next king.

[7] This message from the Lord had been spoken against Baasha and his family through the prophet Jehu son of Hanani. It was delivered because Baasha had done what was evil in the Lord's sight, arousing him to anger by his sins, just like the family of Jeroboam, and also because Baasha had destroyed the family of Jeroboam.

[8] Elah son of Baasha began to rule over Israel from Tirzah in the twenty-sixth year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Israel two years. [9] Then Zimri, who commanded half of the royal chariots, made plans to kill him. One day in Tirzah, Elah was getting drunk at the home of Arza, the supervisor of the palace. [10] Zimri walked in and struck him down and killed him. This happened in the twenty-seventh year of King Asa's reign in Judah. Then Zimri became the next king.

[11] Zimri immediately killed the entire royal family of Baasha, and he did not leave a single male child. He even destroyed distant relatives and friends. [12] So Zimri destroyed the dynasty of Baasha as the Lord had promised through the prophet Jehu. [13] This happened because of the sins of Baasha and his son Elah and because of all the sins they led Israel to commit, arousing the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, with their idols. [14] The rest of the events in Elah's reign and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[15] Zimri began to rule over Israel from Tirzah in the twenty-seventh year of King Asa's reign in Judah, but he reigned only seven days. When the army of Israel, which was then engaged in attacking the Philistine town of Gibbethon, [16] heard that Zimri had assassinated the king, they chose Omri, commander of the army, as their new king. [17] So Omri led the army of Israel away from Gibbethon to attack Tirzah, Israel's capital. [18] When Zimri saw that the city had been taken, he went into the citadel of the king's house and burned it down over himself and died in the flames. [19] For he, too, had done what was evil in the Lord's sight and followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit. [20] The rest of the events of Zimri's reign and his conspiracy are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel.

[21] But now the people of Israel were divided into two groups. Half the people tried to make Tibni son of Ginath their king, while the other half supported Omri. [22] But Omri's supporters defeated the supporters of Tibni son of Ginath. So Tibni was killed, and Omri became the next king.

[23] Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty-first year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned twelve years in all, six of them in Tirzah. [24] Then Omri bought the hill now known as Samaria from its owner, Shemer, for 150 pounds of silver. He built a city on it and called the city Samaria in honor of Shemer. [25] But Omri did what was evil in the Lord's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. [26] He followed the example of Jeroboam, continuing the sins of idolatry that Jeroboam had led Israel to commit. Thus, he aroused the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel. [27] The rest of the events in Omri's reign, the extent of his power, and all his deeds are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [28] When Omri died, he was buried in Samaria. Then his son Ahab became the next king.

[29] Ahab son of Omri began to rule over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of King Asa's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria twenty-two years. [30] But Ahab did what was evil in the Lord's sight, even more than any of the kings before him. [31] And as though it were not enough to live like Jeroboam, he married Jezebel, the daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and he began to worship Baal. [32] First he built a temple and an altar for Baal in Samaria.

[33] Then he set up an Asherah pole. He did more to arouse the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, than any of the other kings of Israel before him.

[34] It was during his reign that Hiel, a man from Bethel, rebuilt Jericho. When he laid the foundations, his oldest son, Abiram, died. And when he finally completed it by setting up the gates, his youngest son, Segub, died. This all happened according to the message from the Lord concerning Jericho spoken by Joshua son of Nun.

[17:1] Now Elijah, who was from Tishbe in Gilead, told King Ahab, "As surely as the Lord, the God of Israel, lives—the God whom I worship and serve—there will be no dew or rain during the next few years unless I give the word!"

[2] Then the Lord said to Elijah, [3] "Go to the east and hide by Kerith Brook at a place east of where it enters the Jordan River. [4] Drink from the brook and eat what the ravens bring you, for I have commanded them to bring you food."

[5] So Elijah did as the Lord had told him and camped beside Kerith Brook. [6] The ravens brought him bread and meat each morning and evening, and he drank from the brook. [7] But after a while the brook dried up, for there was no rainfall anywhere in the land.

[8] Then the Lord said to Elijah, [9] "Go and live in the village of Zarephath, near the city of Sidon. There is a widow there who will feed you. I have given her my instructions."

[10] So he went to Zarephath. As he arrived at the gates of the village, he saw a widow gathering sticks, and he asked her, "Would you please bring me a cup of water?" [11] As she was going to get it, he called to her, "Bring me a bite of bread, too."

[12] But she said, "I swear by the Lord your God that I don't have a single piece of bread in the house. And I have only a handful of flour left in the jar and a little cooking oil in the bottom of the jug. I was just gathering a few sticks to cook this last meal, and then my son and I will die."

[13] But Elijah said to her, "Don't be afraid! Go ahead and cook that 'last meal,' but bake me a little loaf of bread first. Afterward there will still be enough food for you and your son. [14] For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: There will always be plenty of flour and oil left in your containers until the time when the Lord sends rain and the crops grow again!"

[15] So she did as Elijah said, and she and Elijah and her son continued to eat from her supply of flour and oil for many days. [16] For no matter how much they used, there was always enough left in the containers, just as the Lord had promised through Elijah.

[17] Some time later, the woman's son became sick. He grew worse and worse, and finally he died. [18] She then said to Elijah, "O man of God, what have you done to me? Have you come here to punish my sins by killing my son?"

[19] But Elijah replied, "Give me your son." And he took the boy's body from her, carried him up to the upper room, where he lived, and laid the body on his bed. [20] Then Elijah cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, why have you brought tragedy on this widow who has opened her home to me, causing her son to die?"

[21] And he stretched himself out over the child three times and cried out to the Lord, "O Lord my God, please let this child's life return to him." [22] The Lord heard Elijah's prayer, and the life of the child returned, and he came back to life! [23] Then Elijah brought him down from the upper room and gave him to his mother. "Look, your son is alive!" he said.

[24] Then the woman told Elijah, "Now I know for sure that you are a man of God, and that the Lord truly speaks through you."

[18:1] After many months passed, in the third year of the drought, the Lord said to Elijah, "Go and present yourself to King Ahab. Tell him that I will soon send rain!" [2] So Elijah went to appear before Ahab.

Meanwhile, the famine had become very severe in Samaria. [3] So Ahab summoned Obadiah, who was in charge of the palace. (Now Obadiah was a devoted follower of the Lord. [4] Once when Jezebel had tried to kill all the Lord's prophets, Obadiah had hidden one hundred of them in two caves. He had put fifty prophets in each cave and had supplied them with food and water.) [5] Ahab said to Obadiah, "We must check every spring and valley to see if we can find enough grass to save at least some of my horses and mules." [6] So they divided the land between them. Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself.

[7] As Obadiah was walking along, he saw Elijah coming toward him. Obadiah recognized him at once and fell to the ground before him. "Is it really you, my lord Elijah?" he asked.

[8] "Yes, it is," Elijah replied. "Now go and tell your master I am here."

[9] "Oh, sir," Obadiah protested, "what harm have I done to you that you are sending me to my death at the hands of Ahab? [10] For I swear by the Lord your God that the king has searched every nation and kingdom on earth from end to end to find you. And each time when he was told, 'Elijah isn't here,' King Ahab forced the king of that nation to swear to the truth of his claim. [11] And now you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here'! [12] But as soon as I leave you, the Spirit of the Lord will carry you away to who knows where. When Ahab comes and cannot find you, he will kill me. Yet I have been a true servant of the Lord all my life.

[13] Has no one told you, my lord, about the time when Jezebel was trying to kill the Lord's prophets? I hid a hundred of them in two caves and supplied them with food and water. [14] And now you say, 'Go and tell your master that Elijah is here'! Sir, if I do that, I'm as good as dead!"

[15] But Elijah said, "I swear by the Lord Almighty, in whose presence I stand, that I will present myself to Ahab today."

[16] So Obadiah went to tell Ahab that Elijah had come, and Ahab went out to meet him. [17] "So it's you, is it—Israel's troublemaker?" Ahab asked when he saw him.

[18] "I have made no trouble for Israel," Elijah replied. "You and your family are the troublemakers, for you have refused to obey the commands of the Lord and have worshiped the images of Baal instead. [19] Now bring all the people of Israel to Mount Carmel, with all 450 prophets of Baal and the 400 prophets of Asherah, who are supported by Jezebel."

[20] So Ahab summoned all the people and the prophets to Mount Carmel.

[21] Then Elijah stood in front of them and said, "How long are you going to waver between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow him! But if Baal is God, then follow him!" But the people were completely silent.

[22] Then Elijah said to them, "I am the only prophet of the Lord who is left, but Baal has 450 prophets. [23] Now bring two bulls. The prophets of Baal may choose whichever one they wish and cut it into pieces and lay it on the wood of their altar, but without setting fire to it. I will prepare the other bull and lay it on the wood on the altar, but not set fire to it. [24] Then call on the name of your god, and I will call on the name of the Lord. The god who answers by setting fire to the wood is the true God!" And all the people agreed.

[25] Then Elijah said to the prophets of Baal, "You go first, for there are many of you. Choose one of the bulls and prepare it and call on the name of your god. But do not set fire to the wood."

[26] So they prepared one of the bulls and placed it on the altar. Then they called on the name of Baal all morning, shouting, "O Baal, answer us!" But there was no reply of any kind. Then they danced wildly around the altar they had made.

[27] About noontime Elijah began mocking them. "You'll have to shout louder," he scoffed, "for surely he is a god! Perhaps he is deep in thought, or he is relieving himself. Or maybe he is away on a trip, or he is asleep and needs to be wakened!"

[28] So they shouted louder, and following their normal custom, they cut themselves with knives and swords until the blood gushed out. [29] They raved all afternoon until the time of the evening sacrifice, but still there was no reply, no voice, and no answer.

[30] Then Elijah called to the people, "Come over here!" They all crowded around him as he repaired the altar of the Lord that had been torn down. [31] He took twelve stones, one to represent each of the tribes of Israel, [32] and he used the stones to rebuild the Lord's altar. Then he dug a trench around the altar large enough to hold about three gallons. [33] He piled wood on the altar, cut the bull into pieces, and laid the pieces on the wood. Then he said, "Fill four large jars with water, and pour the water over the offering and the wood." After they had done this, [34] he said, "Do the same thing again!" And when they were finished, he said, "Now do it a third time!" So they did as he said, [35] and the water ran around the altar and even overflowed the trench.

[36] At the customary time for offering the evening sacrifice, Elijah the prophet walked up to the altar and prayed, "O Lord, God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, prove today that you are God in Israel and that I am your servant. Prove that I have done all this at your command. [37] O Lord, answer me! Answer me so these people will know that you, O Lord, are God and that you have brought them back to yourself."

[38] Immediately the fire of the Lord flashed down from heaven and burned up the young bull, the wood, the stones, and the dust. It even licked up all the water in the ditch! [39] And when the people saw it, they fell on their faces and cried out, "The Lord is God! The Lord is God!"

[40] Then Elijah commanded, "Seize all the prophets of Baal. Don't let a single one escape!" So the people seized them all, and Elijah took them down to the Kishon Valley and killed them there.

[41] Then Elijah said to Ahab, "Go and enjoy a good meal! For I hear a mighty rainstorm coming!"

[42] So Ahab prepared a feast. But Elijah climbed to the top of Mount Carmel and fell to the ground and prayed. [43] Then he said to his servant, "Go and look out toward the sea."

The servant went and looked, but he returned to Elijah and said, "I didn't see anything." Seven times Elijah told him to go and look, and seven times he went. [44] Finally the seventh time, his servant told him, "I saw a little cloud about the size of a hand rising from the sea."

Then Elijah shouted, "Hurry to Ahab and tell him, 'Climb into your chariot and go back home. If you don't hurry, the rain will stop you!' "

[45] And sure enough, the sky was soon black with clouds. A heavy wind brought a terrific rainstorm, and Ahab left quickly for Jezreel. [46] Now the Lord gave special strength to Elijah. He tucked his cloak into his belt and ran ahead of Ahab's chariot all the way to the entrance of Jezreel.

[19:1] When Ahab got home, he told Jezebel what Elijah had done and that he had slaughtered the prophets of Baal. [2] So Jezebel sent this message to Elijah: "May the gods also kill me if by this time tomorrow I have failed to take your life like those whom you killed."

[3] Elijah was afraid and fled for his life. He went to Beersheba, a town in Judah, and he left his servant there. [4] Then he went on alone into the desert, traveling all day. He sat down under a solitary broom tree and prayed that he might die. "I have had enough, Lord," he said. "Take my life, for I am no better than my ancestors."

[5] Then he lay down and slept under the broom tree. But as he was sleeping, an angel touched him and told him, "Get up and eat!" [6] He looked around and saw some bread baked on hot stones and a jar of water! So he ate and drank and lay down again.

[7] Then the angel of the Lord came again and touched him and said, "Get up and eat some more, for there is a long journey ahead of you."

[8] So he got up and ate and drank, and the food gave him enough strength to travel forty days and forty nights to Mount Sinai, the mountain of God. [9] There he came to a cave, where he spent the night.

But the Lord said to him, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

[10] Elijah replied, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

[11] "Go out and stand before me on the mountain," the Lord told him. And as Elijah stood there, the Lord passed by, and a mighty windstorm hit the mountain. It was such a terrible blast that the rocks were torn loose, but the Lord was not in the wind. After the wind there was an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the earthquake. [12] And after the earthquake there was a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire. And after the fire there was the sound of a gentle whisper. [13] When Elijah heard it, he wrapped his face in his cloak and went out and stood at the entrance of the cave.

And a voice said, "What are you doing here, Elijah?"

[14] He replied again, "I have zealously served the Lord God Almighty. But the people of Israel have broken their covenant with you, torn down your altars, and killed every one of your prophets. I alone am left, and now they are trying to kill me, too."

[15] Then the Lord told him, "Go back the way you came, and travel to the wilderness of Damascus. When you arrive there, anoint Hazael to be king of Aram. [16] Then anoint Jehu son of Nimshi to be king of Israel, and anoint Elisha son of Shaphat from Abel-meholah to replace you as my prophet. [17] Anyone who escapes from Hazael will be killed by Jehu, and those who escape Jehu will be killed by Elisha! [18] Yet I will preserve seven thousand others in Israel who have never bowed to Baal or kissed him!"

[19] So Elijah went and found Elisha son of Shaphat plowing a field with a team of oxen. There were eleven teams of oxen ahead of him, and he was plowing with the twelfth team. Elijah went over to him and threw his cloak across his shoulders and walked away again. [20] Elisha left the oxen standing there, ran after Elijah, and said to him, "First let me go and kiss my father and mother good-bye, and then I will go with you!"

Elijah replied, "Go on back! But consider what I have done to you."

[21] Elisha then returned to his oxen, killed them, and used the wood from the plow to build a fire to roast their flesh. He passed around the meat to the other plowmen, and they all ate. Then he went with Elijah as his assistant.

[20:1] Now King Ben-hadad of Aram mobilized his army, supported by the chariots and horses of thirty-two allied kings. They went to besiege Samaria, the Israelite capital, and launched attacks against it. [2] Ben-hadad sent messengers into the city to relay this message to King Ahab of Israel: "This is what Ben-hadad says: [3] 'Your silver and gold are mine, and so are the best of your wives and children!' "

[4] "All right, my lord," Ahab replied. "All that I have is yours!"

[5] Soon Ben-hadad's messengers returned again and said, "This is what Ben-hadad says: 'I have already demanded that you give me your silver, gold, wives, and children. [6] But about this time tomorrow I will send my officials to search your palace and the homes of your people. They will take away everything you consider valuable!' "

[7] Then Ahab summoned all the leaders of the land and said to them, "Look how this man is stirring up trouble! I already agreed when he sent the message demanding that I give him my wives and children and silver and gold."

[8] "Don't give in to any more demands," the leaders and people advised.

[9] So Ahab told the messengers from Ben-hadad, "Say this to my lord the king: 'I will give you everything you asked for the first time, but this last demand of yours I simply cannot meet.' " So the messengers returned to Ben-hadad with the response.

[10] Then Ben-hadad sent this message to Ahab: "May the gods bring tragedy on me, and even worse than that, if there remains enough dust from Samaria to provide more than a handful for each of my soldiers."

[11] The king of Israel sent back this answer: "A warrior still dressing for battle should not boast like a warrior who has already won."

[12] This reply of Ahab's reached Ben-hadad and the other kings as they were drinking in their tents. "Prepare to attack!" Ben-hadad commanded his officers. So they prepared to attack the city.

[13] Then a prophet came to see King Ahab and told him, "This is what the Lord says: Do you see all these enemy forces? Today I will hand them all over to you. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

[14] Ahab asked, "How will he do it?"

And the prophet replied, "This is what the Lord says: The troops of the provincial commanders will do it."

"Should we attack first?" Ahab asked.

"Yes," the prophet answered.

[15] So Ahab mustered the troops of the 232 provincial commanders. Then he called out the rest of his army of seven thousand men. [16] About noontime, as Ben-hadad and the thirty-two allied kings were still in their tents getting drunk, [17] the troops of the provincial commanders marched out of the city. As they approached, Ben-hadad's scouts reported to him, "Some troops are coming from Samaria."

[18] "Take them alive," Ben-hadad commanded, "whether they have come for peace or for war."

[19] But by now Ahab's provincial commanders had led the army out to fight. [20] Each Israelite soldier killed his Aramean opponent, and suddenly the entire Aramean army panicked and fled. The Israelites chased them, but King Ben-hadad and a few others escaped on horses.

[21] However, the other horses and chariots were destroyed, and the Arameans were killed in a great slaughter.

[22] Afterward the prophet said to King Ahab, "Get ready for another attack by the king of Aram next spring."

[23] After their defeat, Ben-hadad's officers said to him, "The Israelite gods are gods of the hills; that is why they won. But we can beat them easily on the plains. [24] Only this time replace the kings with field commanders!"

[25] Recruit another army like the one you lost. Give us the same number of horses, chariots, and men, and we will fight against them in the plains. There's not a shadow of a doubt that we will beat them." So King Ben-hadad did as they suggested. [26] The following spring he called up the Aramean army and marched out against Israel, this time at Aphek. [27] Israel then mustered its army, set up supply lines, and moved into the battle. But the Israelite army looked like two little flocks of goats in comparison to the vast Aramean forces that filled the countryside!

[28] Then the man of God went to the king of Israel and said, "This is what the Lord says: The Arameans have said that the Lord is a god of the hills and not of the plains. So I will help you defeat this vast army. Then you will know that I am the Lord."

[29] The two armies camped opposite each other for seven days, and on the seventh day the battle began. The Israelites killed 100,000 Aramean foot soldiers in one day. [30] The rest fled behind the walls of Aphek, but the wall fell on them and killed another 27,000. Ben-hadad fled into the city and hid in a secret room. [31] Ben-hadad's officers said to him, "Sir, we have heard that the kings of Israel are very merciful. So let's humble ourselves by wearing sackcloth and putting ropes on our heads. Then perhaps King Ahab will let you live."

[32] So they put on sackcloth and ropes and went to the king of Israel and begged, "Your servant Ben-hadad says, 'Please let me live!'"

The king of Israel responded, "Is he still alive? He is my brother!"

[33] The men were quick to grasp at this straw of hope, and they replied, "Yes, your brother Ben-hadad!"

"Go and get him," the king of Israel told them. And when Ben-hadad arrived, Ahab invited him up into his chariot!

[34] Ben-hadad told him, "I will give back the towns my father took from your father, and you may establish places of trade in Damascus, as my father did in Samaria."

Then Ahab said, "I will let you go under these conditions." So they made a treaty, and Ben-hadad was set free.

[35] Meanwhile, the Lord instructed one of the group of prophets to say to another man, "Strike me!" But the man refused to strike the prophet. [36] Then the prophet told him, "Because you have not obeyed the voice of the Lord, a lion will kill you as soon as you leave me." And sure enough, when he had gone, a lion attacked and killed him.

[37] Then the prophet turned to another man and said, "Strike me!" So he struck the prophet and wounded him.

[38] The prophet waited for the king beside the road, having placed a bandage over his eyes to disguise himself. [39] As the king passed by, the prophet called out to him, "Sir, I was in the battle, and a man brought me a prisoner. He said, 'Guard this man; if for any reason he gets away, you will either die or pay a fine of seventy-five pounds of silver!'" [40] But while I was busy doing something else, the prisoner disappeared!"

"Well, it's your own fault," the king replied. "You have determined your own judgment."

[41] Then the prophet pulled the bandage from his eyes, and the king of Israel recognized him as one of the prophets.

[42] And the prophet told him, "This is what the Lord says: Because you have spared the man I said must be destroyed, now you must die in his place, and your people will die instead of his people." [43] So the king of Israel went home to Samaria angry and sullen.

[21:1] King Ahab had a palace in Jezreel, and near the palace was a vineyard owned by a man named Naboth. [2] One day Ahab said to Naboth, "Since your vineyard is so convenient to the palace, I would like to buy it to use as a vegetable garden. I will give you a better vineyard in exchange, or if you prefer, I will pay you for it."

[3] But Naboth replied, "The Lord forbid that I should give you the inheritance that was passed down by my ancestors." [4] So Ahab went home angry and sullen because of Naboth's answer. The king went to bed with his face to the wall and refused to eat!

[5] "What in the world is the matter?" his wife, Jezebel, asked him. "What has made you so upset that you are not eating?"

[6] "I asked Naboth to sell me his vineyard or to trade it, and he refused!" Ahab told her.

[7] "Are you the king of Israel or not?" Jezebel asked. "Get up and eat and don't worry about it. I'll get you Naboth's vineyard!"

[8] So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, sealed them with his seal, and sent them to the elders and other leaders of the city where Naboth lived. [9] In her letters she commanded: "Call the citizens together for fasting and prayer and give Naboth a place of honor. [10] Find two scoundrels who will accuse him of cursing God and the king. Then take him out and stone him to death."

[11] So the elders and other leaders followed the instructions Jezebel had written in the letters. [12] They called for a fast and put Naboth at a prominent place before the people. [13] Then two scoundrels accused him before all the people of cursing God and the king. So he was dragged outside the city and stoned to death. [14] The city officials then sent word to Jezebel, "Naboth has been stoned to death."

[15] When Jezebel heard the news, she said to Ahab, "You know the vineyard Naboth wouldn't sell you? Well, you can have it now! He's dead!" [16] So Ahab immediately went down to the vineyard to claim it.

[17] But the Lord said to Elijah, who was from Tishbe, [18] "Go down to meet King Ahab, who rules in Samaria. He will be at Naboth's vineyard in Jezreel, taking possession of it. [19] Give him this message: "This is what the Lord says: Isn't killing Naboth bad enough? Must you rob him, too? Because you have done this, dogs will lick your blood outside the city just as they licked the blood of Naboth!" "

[20] "So my enemy has found me!" Ahab exclaimed to Elijah.

"Yes," Elijah answered, "I have come because you have sold yourself to what is evil in the Lord's sight. [21] The Lord is going to bring disaster to you and sweep you away. He will not let a single one of your male descendants, slave or free alike, survive in Israel! [22] He is going to destroy your family as he did the family of Jeroboam son of Nebat and the family of Baasha son of Ahijah, for you have made him very angry and have led all of Israel into sin.

[23] The Lord has also told me that the dogs of Jezreel will eat the body of your wife, Jezebel, at the city wall. [24] The members of your family who die in the city will be eaten by dogs, and those who die in the field will be eaten by vultures."

[25] No one else so completely sold himself to what was evil in the Lord's sight as did Ahab, for his wife, Jezebel, influenced him. [26] He was especially guilty because he worshiped idols just as the Amorites had done—the people whom the Lord had driven from the land ahead of the Israelites.

[27] When Ahab heard this message, he tore his clothing, dressed in sackcloth, and fasted. He even slept in sackcloth and went about in deep mourning.

[28] Then another message from the Lord came to Elijah, who was from Tishbe: [29] "Do you see how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Because he has done this, I will not do what I promised during his lifetime. It will happen to his sons; I will destroy all his descendants."

[22:1] For three years there was no war between Aram and Israel. [2] Then during the third year, King Jehoshaphat of Judah went to visit King Ahab of Israel. [3] During the visit, Ahab said to his officials, "Do you realize that the Arameans are still occupying our city of Ramoth-gilead? And we haven't done a thing about it!" [4] Then he turned to Jehoshaphat and asked, "Will you join me in fighting against Ramoth-gilead?"

And Jehoshaphat replied to King Ahab, "Why, of course! You and I are brothers, and my troops are yours to command. Even my horses are at your service." [5] Then Jehoshaphat added, "But first let's find out what the Lord says."

[6] So King Ahab summoned his prophets, about four hundred of them, and asked them, "Should I go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?"

They all replied, "Go right ahead! The Lord will give you a glorious victory!"

[7] But Jehoshaphat asked, "Isn't there a prophet of the Lord around, too? I would like to ask him the same question."

[8] King Ahab replied, "There is still one prophet of the Lord, but I hate him. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me! His name is Micaiah son of Imlah."

"You shouldn't talk like that," Jehoshaphat said. "Let's hear what he has to say."

[9] So the king of Israel called one of his officials and said, "Quick! Go and get Micaiah son of Imlah."

[10] King Ahab of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah, dressed in their royal robes, were sitting on thrones at the threshing floor near the gate of Samaria. All of Ahab's prophets were prophesying there in front of them. [11] One of them, Zedekiah son of Kenaanah, made some iron horns and proclaimed, "This is what the Lord says: With these horns you will gore the Arameans to death!"

[12] All the other prophets agreed. "Yes," they said, "go up to Ramoth-gilead and be victorious, for the Lord will give you victory!"

[13] Meanwhile, the messenger who went to get Micaiah said to him, "Look, all the prophets are promising victory for the king. Be sure that you agree with them and promise success."

[14] But Micaiah replied, "As surely as the Lord lives, I will say only what the Lord tells me to say."

[15] When Micaiah arrived before the king, Ahab asked him, "Micaiah, should we go to war against Ramoth-gilead or not?"

And Micaiah replied, "Go right ahead! The Lord will give the king a glorious victory!"

[16] But the king replied sharply, "How many times must I demand that you speak only the truth when you speak for the Lord?"

[17] So Micaiah told him, "In a vision I saw all Israel scattered on the mountains, like sheep without a shepherd. And the Lord said, 'Their master has been killed. Send them home in peace.' "

[18] "Didn't I tell you?" the king of Israel said to Jehoshaphat. "He does it every time. He never prophesies anything but bad news for me."

[19] Then Micaiah continued, "Listen to what the Lord says! I saw the Lord sitting on his throne with all the armies of heaven around him, on his right and on his left. [20] And the Lord said, 'Who can entice Ahab to go into battle against Ramoth-gilead so that he can be killed there?' There were many suggestions, [21] until finally a spirit approached the Lord and said, 'I can do it!'

[22] " 'How will you do this?' the Lord asked.

"And the spirit replied, 'I will go out and inspire all Ahab's prophets to speak lies.'

“‘You will succeed,’ said the Lord. ‘Go ahead and do it.’

[23] "So you see, the Lord has put a lying spirit in the mouths of your prophets. For the Lord has determined disaster for you."

[24] Then Zedekiah son of Kenaanah walked up to Micaiah and slapped him across the face. "When did the Spirit of the Lord leave me to speak to you?" he demanded.

[25] And Micaiah replied, "You will find out soon enough when you find yourself hiding in some secret room!"

[26] King Ahab of Israel then ordered, "Arrest Micaiah and take him back to Amon, the governor of the city, and to my son Joash. [27] Give them this order from the king: 'Put this man in prison, and feed him nothing but bread and water until I return safely from the battle!' "

[28] But Micaiah replied, "If you return safely, the Lord has not spoken through me!" Then he added to those standing around, "Take note of what I have said."

[29] So the king of Israel and King Jehoshaphat of Judah led their armies against Ramoth-gilead. [30] Now King Ahab said to Jehoshaphat, "As we go into battle, I will disguise myself so no one will recognize me, but you wear your royal robes." So Ahab disguised himself, and they went into battle.

[31] Now the king of Aram had issued these orders to his thirty-two charioteers: "Attack only the king of Israel!" [32] So when the Aramean charioteers saw Jehoshaphat in his royal robes, they went after him. "There is the king of Israel!" they shouted. But when Jehoshaphat cried out, [33] the charioteers realized he was not the king of Israel, and they stopped chasing him.

[34] An Aramean soldier, however, randomly shot an arrow at the Israelite troops, and the arrow hit the king of Israel between the joints of his armor. "Get me out of here!" Ahab groaned to the driver of his chariot. "I have been badly wounded!"

[35] The battle raged all that day, and Ahab was propped up in his chariot facing the Arameans. The blood from his wound ran down to the floor of his chariot, and as evening arrived he died. [36] Just as the sun was setting, the cry ran through his troops: "It's all over—return home!" [37] So the king died, and his body was taken to Samaria and buried there. [38] Then his chariot was washed beside the pool of Samaria, where the prostitutes bathed, and dogs came and licked the king's blood, just as the Lord had promised.

[39] The rest of the events in Ahab's reign and the story of the ivory palace and the cities he built are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Israel. [40] When Ahab died, he was buried among his ancestors. Then his son Ahaziah became the next king.

[41] Jehoshaphat son of Asa began to rule over Judah in the fourth year of King Ahab's reign in Israel. [42] He was thirty-five years old when he became king, and he reigned in Jerusalem twenty-five years. His mother was Azubah, the daughter of Shilhi. [43] Jehoshaphat was a good king, following the example of his father, Asa. He did what was pleasing in the Lord's sight. During his reign, however, he failed to remove all the pagan shrines, and the people still offered sacrifices and burned incense there.

[44] Jehoshaphat also made peace with the king of Israel.

[45] The rest of the events in Jehoshaphat's reign, the extent of his power, and the wars he waged are recorded in The Book of the History of the Kings of Judah. [46] He banished from the land the rest of the shrine prostitutes, who still continued their practices from the days of his father, Asa. [47] There was no king in Edom at that time, only a deputy.

[48] Jehoshaphat also built a fleet of trading ships to sail to Ophir for gold. But the ships never set sail, for they were wrecked at Ezion-geber. [49] At that time Ahaziah son of Ahab proposed to Jehoshaphat, "Let my men sail an expedition with your men." But Jehoshaphat refused the offer.

[50] When Jehoshaphat died, he was buried with his ancestors in the City of David. Then his son Jehoram became the next king.

[51] Ahaziah son of Ahab began to rule over Israel in the seventeenth year of King Jehoshaphat's reign in Judah. He reigned in Samaria two years. [52] But he did what was evil in the Lord's sight, following the example of his father and mother and the example of Jeroboam son of Nebat, who had led Israel into the sin of idolatry. [53] He served Baal and worshiped him, arousing the anger of the Lord, the God of Israel, just as his father had done.

MEGATHEMES

THEME: The King

EXPLANATION:

Solomon's wisdom, power, and achievements brought honor to the Israelite nation and to God. All the kings of Israel and Judah were told to obey God and to govern according to his laws. But their tendency to abandon God's commands and to worship other gods led them to change the religion and government to meet their personal desires. This neglect of God's law led to their downfall.

IMPORTANCE:

Wisdom, power, and achievement do not ultimately come from any human source; they are from God. No matter what we lead or govern, we can't do well when we ignore God's guidelines. Whether or not we are leaders, effectiveness depends upon listening and obeying God's Word. Don't let your personal desires distort God's Word.

THEME: The Temple

EXPLANATION:

Solomon's temple was a beautiful place of worship and prayer. This sanctuary was the center of Jewish religion. It was the place of God's special presence and housed the Ark of the Covenant containing the Ten Commandments.

IMPORTANCE:

A beautiful house of worship doesn't always guarantee heartfelt worship of God. Providing opportunities for true worship doesn't ensure that it will happen. God wants to live in our hearts, not just meet us in a sanctuary.

THEME: Other gods

EXPLANATION:

Although the Israelites had God's law and experienced his presence among them, they became attracted to other gods. When this happened, their hearts became cold to God's law, resulting in the ruin of families and government, and eventually leading to the destruction of the nation.

IMPORTANCE:

Through the years, the people took on the false qualities of the false gods they worshiped. They became cruel, power-hungry, and sexually perverse. We tend to become what we worship. Unless we serve the true God, we will become slaves to whatever takes his place.

THEME: The Prophet's Message

EXPLANATION:

The prophet's responsibility was to confront and correct any deviation from God's law. Elijah was a bolt of judgment against Israel. His messages and miracles were a warning to the evil and rebellious kings and people.

IMPORTANCE:

The Bible, the truth in sermons, and the wise counsel of believers are warnings to us. Anyone who points out how we deviate from obeying God's Word is a blessing to us. Changing our lives in order to obey God and get back on track often takes painful discipline and hard work.

THEME: Sin and Repentance

EXPLANATION:

Each king had God's commands, a priest or prophet, and the lessons of the past to draw him back to God. All the people had the same resources. Whenever they repented and returned to God, God heard their prayers and forgave them.

IMPORTANCE:

God hears and forgives us when we pray—if we are willing to trust him and turn from sin. Our desire to forsake our sin must be heartfelt and sincere. Then he will give us a fresh start and a desire to live for him.

TIMELINE

David becomes king 1010 B.C.
Solomon becomes king 970
Temple completed 959
The kingdom divides 930
Shishak invades Jerusalem 925
Asa becomes king of Judah 910
Elijah begins his ministry 875
Ahab becomes king of Israel 874
Jehoshaphat becomes king of Judah 872
Ben-Hadad attacks Samaria 857
Ahab dies in battle 853

An invitation is given to open your heart's door.

Rev. 3:20

Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer:

Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

References:

Holy Bible: King James Translation

Holy Bible: Living Bible Translation

Additional comments and charts are taken from: *Life Application Study Bible*. Illinois: Tyndale House 2007. Print

