

BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR SEPT. 7

1 KINGS 1–4

AN AGING KING (1 KINGS 1:1-4)

First Kings begins with a description of the last years of King David's life. David was about 70 years old and in feeble health. He was unable to stay warm no matter how many bed covers they put on him. His servants, who might have been his physicians, suggested that they find a beautiful young woman who would come and minister to the king to warm his weak body. She would lie by him and through the heat of her body transfer warmth to David. They found a lovely Shu-nammite virgin named Abishag who came and ministered to David. The writer of 1 Kings stressed that David had no intimate, sexual relations with Abishag.

On the surface this practice sounds strange and somewhat immoral. Physicians in ancient medical practice often used a youth to provide vital warmth to the weakened body of a patient. Abishag became a kind of nurse to David. David's growing weakness probably triggered Adonijah's decision to implement his strategy to become Israel's next king.

AN AMBITIOUS SON (1:5-10)

David had six sons born to him by six different wives while he lived in Hebron and was king only of Judah. After moving to Jerusalem and becoming king of all Israel, David took more wives. He eventually became the father of 13 other sons plus daughters and sons by his concubines (1 Chron. 3:1-9). Haggith gave birth to Adonijah in Hebron, and Bathsheba later bore Solomon in Jerusalem. Of the sons listed, Adonijah was the fourth and Solomon was tenth (3:2-5). For reasons that will become evident, David's son Adonijah was consumed by ambition and sought to have himself crowned king of Israel.

Verse 5: Adonijah [ad oh NIGH juh] approached the idea of being Israel's king far differently than had his father David. When Samuel came to David's home in Bethlehem to find and anoint one of Jesse's sons as Saul's successor, Samuel and Jesse almost overlooked David. The Lord rejected seven of Jesse's sons, causing Samuel to ask Jesse if he had any others. Jesse mentioned his youngest son, David, who was out tending the sheep.

Asking that Jesse bring him forth, Samuel heard the Lord say, "Rise and anoint him; he is the one" (1 Sam. 16:12). David did not choose himself; Jesse did not choose him; Samuel did not choose him. God Himself chose David. David's son approached the situation differently. He put himself forward ("exalted himself" KJV) and declared "I will be king." Instead of letting God choose Israel's king or even letting David make that choice, Adonijah presumed his right to the throne and chose himself as his father's successor. He began bragging about how he would be the next ruler of Israel.

To fulfill his ambition he acquired chariots and horses with 50 men to run ahead of him wherever he went. Possibly he remembered how his older brother Absalom had organized his efforts to take the kingdom from David (2 Sam. 15:1). David had his special guard as king (1 Kings 1:8); Adonijah hired men to guard him.

Verse 6: In a type of parenthetical expression the author of 1 Kings revealed a sad fact about the relationship between David and Adonijah. David had never interfered with his son ("displeased him" KJV). He did not want to hurt his son's feelings. He never asked Adonijah "Why do you behave as you do?" The writer was referring either to all of the actions of Adonijah's life up to that point or specifically to his use of a chariot, horses, and 50 bodyguards or honor-guards.

This statement seems to reveal a parental weakness in David. When his son Amnon raped his half-sister Tamar, we have no record that David gave any rebuke or punishment to Amnon. The record simply says "he was furious" (2 Sam. 13:21). Scripture portrays David as a better warrior and king than a father.

Adonijah was accustomed to doing what he wanted to do without any limits being imposed by his father the king. He was also very handsome. Handsome translates a word with many nuances of meaning. The general idea is that he was an attractive man whom people liked and whose company they enjoyed. People put much significance on the physical appearance of their kings. They believed that the Lord had blessed a person who was unusually handsome and that the Lord had an important mission for that person's life. Israel's first king, Saul, had been "an impressive young man without equal" (1 Sam. 9:2).

Scripture described David as a man who presented "a fine appearance and handsome features" (16:12). Significantly, Adonijah was David's oldest living son. Of the sons listed in 2 Samuel 3:2-4, Amnon had been killed by Absalom for raping Tamar.

There is no further mention of Kileab (called Daniel in 1 Chron. 3:1) in Scripture, so he probably was dead also. Absalom had been slain in battle when he tried to overthrow his father's kingdom. Therefore, Adonijah was the oldest surviving son. In the eyes of many people, that fact made him the prime successor to his father's throne. However, this practice had not been established in Israel at that time.

Verse 7: In making his plans to take the throne, Adonijah conferred with the commander of David's army, Joab, and with one of the two high priests, Abiathar [uh BIGH uh thar]. These men were powerful and popular leaders in Israel. Joab represented Israel's military, and Abiathar represented Israel's religion. Adonijah won these two leaders to his side.

Joab was commander of Israel's militia. The militia included every able-bodied man in the nation. They were subject to being called up in case of some emergency. Joab had been a powerful though cruel military commander in David's army. Because he was involved in the death of David's son, Absalom, Joab had probably fallen into disfavor with his king. For whatever reason, he decided to support Adonijah.

Abiathar was the son of Ahimelech and a descendant of Aaron through the line of Eli. When King Saul had killed the priests at Nob, Abiathar fled to David who was hiding in the cave of Adullam. He became a priest and counselor for David (1 Sam. 23:6). When Adonijah made his bid for the throne, Abiathar was serving as a priest along with Zadok. Jealousy may have existed between him and Zadok, or perhaps David favored Zadok over him. For whatever reason, Abiathar chose to support Adonijah.

Verse 8: Not everyone pledged their support to Abiathar. Zadok [ZAY dahk] the priest, Benaiah [bee NIGH uh], Nathan the prophet, Shimei [SHIM ih igh (eye)] and Rei [REE igh (eye)], and David's special guard did not follow Adonijah. Zadok, David's other priest, was the Son of Ahitub and a descendant from Aaron through Eleazar,

Aaron's third son. Benaiah was the captain of David's professional hired soldiers, the Kerethites (or Cherethites) and Pelethites (2 Sam. 8:18). These professional soldiers were David's bodyguards. The Kerethites came originally from Crete but lived south of the Philistines. The Pelethites also lived near the Philistines. Benaiah and the special guard had been loyal to David during Absalom's rebellion (2 Sam. 15:15-18). They remained loyal during this second son's attempt to take the throne.

Nathan was the court prophet who served God and David throughout David's reign. God spoke through him, telling David that his descendant, not David, would build the temple. God also confronted David through Nathan concerning David's sin against Uriah and Bathsheba (2 Sam. 12:7). Nothing is known further about Shimei or Rei. This Shimei was not the Shimei of 1 Kings 2:8,46. He might have been the Shimei whom Solomon appointed as one of his governors (1 Kings 4:7,18).

Verse 9: Adonijah called for those who supported him to attend a gathering at the Stone of Zoheleth near En Rogel. Zoheleth was the water supply southwest of Jerusalem in the Kidron Valley. Gihon was the normal place for such meetings. Gihon, however, was closer to the palace than Zoheleth. Zoheleth put more distance between the gathering and David, but it was close enough to the city for those invited to attend.

At that gathering Adonijah sacrificed sheep, cattle, and fattened calves on which those in attendance feasted. He invited all of his brothers, the king's sons, and all the men of Judah who were royal officials of David's court. The presence of the royal officials, his brothers, Joab, and Abiathar gave the gathering a note of importance and authenticity.

Verse 10: Note those people Adonijah did not invite—Nathan the prophet, Benaiah or the special guard, or Solomon. Also, he did not invite the priest Zadok (1:26). Adonijah must not have wanted the godly prophet who was loyal to David on hand because Adonijah was seeking to do his own selfish will, not God's will. That Solomon was excluded supports the idea that Adonijah knew Solomon was slated to become king. Adonijah, of course, did not tell David of his plans.

Adonijah's ambition to become king was self-centered. In Israel God chose the king and anointed the king through

the ministry of His prophet. The Lord approved Israel's first king, Saul, and anointed him through Samuel (1 Sam. 9:16; 10:1). Later the Lord chose David and anointed him through Samuel also (16:1,12). The Lord already had chosen Solomon to follow David (1 Chron. 28:4-5). Adonijah sought neither the Lord's will about who would be Israel's king nor the Lord's way of choosing and installing the king. His actions illustrate improper ambition. God's people must make sure they govern their ambitions by God's purpose for them.

A NEW KING (1:11-53)

When Nathan learned what Adonijah had done, he went to Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. He warned her of the danger she and her family faced should Adonijah become king. He instructed her to tell David and suggested how to tell him. So, Bathsheba went to David and asked why he had appointed Adonijah as king instead of Solomon as he had promised to do (the promise is inferred from 1:17,30). Nathan then came to David and confirmed the news of Adonijah's bid to assume the throne.

David then called for Bathsheba and assured her that he would fulfill his promise to make Solomon Israel's next king. He instructed Zadok, Nathan, Benaiah, and the bodyguards to set Solomon on King David's mule, take him to Gihon, and anoint him as king. They were to blow the trumpet or ram's horn and shout, "Long live King Solomon!" (1:34) Then they were to bring Solomon back to Jerusalem and seat him on David's throne. These men carried out David's instructions. Zadok the priest anointed Solomon king over Israel. They sounded the trumpet and all the people gave out such a great shout that "the ground shook with the sound" (1:40).

When the guests of Adonijah heard the trumpet, Joab asked its meaning. Abiathar's son arrived and reported to everyone that King David had made Solomon king and seated him on the throne. The messenger also reported how David had bowed in worship on his bed and had praised the Lord for allowing him to see "a successor" on his throne (1:48).

Verse 49: When Adonijah's guests heard the news that Solomon had been anointed as king, they immediately and fearfully returned to their homes. They realized that Adonijah's move to take the throne was improper and their

gathering was illegal. Instead of being in positions of favor with a new king, they suddenly realized they were in positions of danger, having supported a pretender.

Verse 50: Adonijah knew he was in trouble. Afraid of Solomon's vengeance, he fled to the altar. He feared Solomon would do to him and his family what he probably had planned to do to Solomon, Bathsheba, and the rest of Solomon's family. The author does not identify the altar's location, but it probably was in the sacred tent on Mount Zion at Jerusalem. The priest Abiathar who had attended Adonijah's meeting was in charge of this sacred tent. He might have advised Adonijah to flee there and take hold of the horns of the altar.

On each of the four corners of the altar of burnt offering were wooden, horn-like projections overlaid with bronze (Ex. 27:2). Under certain conditions, one could cling to the horns for safety from punishment (1 Kings 2:28). This ancient custom may have been rooted in the understanding that the altar was the Lord's table (sacrifices were made to Him there). In a sense, a person clinging to the horns of the altar was the Lord's guest and was considered under his Host's protection. However, Exodus 21:14 shows that people guilty of deliberate murder were not safe at the altar. The horns provided sanctuary for those guilty of unintentional slayings, not for all crimes. Though Adonijah's rebellion and attempt to usurp his father's throne certainly were deliberate, he desperately hoped he could find refuge at the horns of the altar.

Verse 51: Someone told Solomon that Adonijah was afraid of him and had sought refuge at the altar. Solomon knew that clinging to the horns of the altar was a plea for protection and mercy. The messenger also gave Solomon Adonijah's petition to be spared execution for what he had done. In light of subsequent events, we may rightly question how sincere Adonijah was in speaking of Solomon as King Solomon and describing himself as one of Solomon's servants. Adonijah's request suggested that he knew he deserved death. He was pleading for mercy and for his life.

Verse 52: Solomon's reply was stern but merciful. He agreed to spare his half brother's life if he would meet a certain requirement, namely, proving to be a worthy man. In this context a worthy man meant Adonijah would give

up any desire to the throne, would not attempt to seek it later, and would support Solomon as king. If Adonijah would do this, not even a hair of his head would fall to the ground. But, if he did anything evil, he would die. Evil meant things such as future conspiracy or attempts to take the throne from Solomon. Adonijah's safety depended on his pledge to submit to Solomon as king and on his continuing submission in the future.

Solomon sent men to bring Adonijah to him from the altar. When Adonijah came before Solomon, he bowed in respect and submission before him as king. Solomon commanded him to go home. Adonijah promised to give no trouble to Solomon, but future events revealed his promise was self-serving rather than sincere. Though warned by Solomon about his improper ambition, he apparently still believed deeply he deserved the throne and should have it.

Solomon was generous with Adonijah. He warned him to give up any ambition to be king. His warning was an act of mercy, but it also carried a warning of what would happen if Adonijah failed to heed it—he would die. Every believer needs to heed this warning about inordinate ambition. Ambitions are normal, but they become detrimental or even fatal when they are not worthy ambitions that honor God and help achieve His purposes for us and through us. Do we control our ambitions, or do they control us? Unworthy ambitions can destroy us just as surely as worthy ones can fulfill us and honor our Lord.

A FATHER'S CHARGE (2:1-9)

David's health continued to deteriorate and death grew near. Just before he died, he gave a charge to his son Solomon. The king challenged his son to walk always in the will of the Lord. That meant to keep the Lord's decrees, commandments, laws, and requirements as written in the law of Moses. If Solomon would do that, he would prosper. Also, Solomon's obedience would enable the Lord to keep His promise to David to always have one of his descendants on the throne of Israel.

David also instructed Solomon to deal appropriately with several people who were in his court. He said to deal wisely with Joab for killing Abner and Amasa. Joab had not killed them in a war but had murdered them in a time of peace. Joab was a popular, dangerous opponent of

Solomon as king. He probably was the greatest threat to the success of Solomon's reign.

Barzillai of Gilead had given food to David and his people when they were fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 17:27-29). David asked Solomon to show kindness to Barzillai's sons and let them eat at the king's table. He also instructed Solomon to deal with Shimei who had cursed him as he was fleeing from Absalom (2 Sam. 16:7). Shimei was from the same family as King Saul and therefore opposed David's reign. David told Solomon to find a way to bring about Shimei's death, thus removing any threat from Saul's family.

A REIGN ESTABLISHED (2:10-46)

First Chronicles 29:28 reads David "died at a good old age, having enjoyed long life, wealth and honor." After his death, Solomon firmly established himself on the throne. Adonijah, apparently still aspiring to the throne, requested Bathsheba to ask Solomon for Abishag to be given as his wife.

Verse 21: Bathsheba came to Solomon with Adonijah's request. She asked her son to give Abishag [AB ih shag] in marriage to his older brother Adonijah.

Verse 22: Solomon interpreted Adonijah's request as a ploy for the throne since a conquering king would take the defeated king's harem for his own. When Absalom usurped the throne from David, he took some of his father's concubines and had sexual relations with them on the roof of the palace in plain sight of all Israel (2 Sam. 16:21-22). Abishag must have been considered part of David's harem though he never had sexual relations with her.

The king asked his mother why she had made such a request. He said that her request was the same as asking for the kingdom for Adonijah and the two who supported him—Abiathar the priest and Joab, the commander of the army.

Bathsheba's motive for agreeing to relay Adonijah's request is not clear. She might have taken his request at face value and saw no harm in giving Abishag, a young virgin, as wife to Adonijah. On the other hand, she might have had insight into Adonijah's stubborn ambition and how Solomon would respond. If so, she might have

seen that his request would result in his being removed forever as a threat to her son's reign. Whatever she really thought, Adonijah's request did remove him from being any possible future problem.

Verse 23: Solomon swore to make Adonijah pay with his life for making such a request. He realized that Adonijah still had his sights set on the throne. Though he had promised to make no trouble for Solomon, Adonijah's heart and mind still longed deeply to rule the land. Adonijah's rationale for wanting to be king was clear and convincing to himself. Several factors contributed to his reasoning. He was David's oldest living son. Another factor was his age. He was probably about 35 years old, whereas Solomon was only around 20. Also, in other countries the oldest son usually succeeded his father as king. Aside from all that, Adonijah had the support of influential men such as Joab and Abiathar. First Kings 1:9 might suggest that all his brothers, except Solomon, and many royal officials indeed supported him as the next king. In fact, he told Bathsheba that all Israel looked to him as their king (2 Kings 2:15). Although Adonijah added that the Lord had given Solomon, not himself, the kingdom, he probably was insincere.

Verse 24: Solomon called on the Lord to deal with him "ever so severely" (2:23) if he did not put Adonijah to death. He based this decision on the firm conviction that it was the Lord who established him on David's throne. Also Solomon believed the Lord's promise to establish a dynasty for him in which Solomon's sons, not Adonijah's sons, would succeed him to the throne. The king called Benaiah and instructed him to put Adonijah to death. Benaiah obeyed his king. He went to Adonijah and struck him down—probably with a sword (2:25).

To secure his throne further, Solomon removed from the priesthood Abiathar, the priest who sided with Adonijah in his claim to the throne. He spared the priest from death because of his good relationship with David, but he sent Abiathar out of Jerusalem to his home in Anathoth, a Levitical town (2:26). The Scripture says in 2:27 that his removal from office fulfilled God's promise to remove all priests who were descendants of Eli. Eli had allowed his sons to continue evil practices in their conduct in the tabernacle. The removal of Abiathar, a descendant of Eli, from office showed the fulfillment of God's promise of judgment on Eli.

When Joab heard of these actions, he fled to the horns of the altar in the tent of the Lord (2:28). Solomon ordered Benaiah to execute him. Solomon believed that Joab's murder of Abner and Amasa not only brought guilt on Joab but also on the house of David and therefore Solomon as well. When Joab refused to come out of the tent, Solomon instructed Benaiah to kill Joab at the altar. The horns of the altar provided a place of safety for involuntary manslaughter, not for premeditated murder. Joab intentionally had killed Abner and Amasa.

Solomon confined Shimei to his own house in Jerusalem with the warning he would die if he left the city. Later, when Shimei left the city to search for a runaway slave, Solomon heard of it. He ordered Benaiah to execute Shimei (2:46). These actions firmly secured Solomon's reign.

Strong ambition that is focused on putting the Lord first and following Him at all costs is commendable. David had such an ambition throughout his life. Stubborn ambition that is self-centered and ignores the Lord and His purposes is wrong and even can be fatal. Joab, Abiathar, Shimei, and Adonijah are examples of such improper ambition. They did not focus on the Lord. Believers need to evaluate their ambitions continually and seek always to live within God's purposes.

Solomon, Israel's third king, firmly established himself in his kingdom (2:46). He removed those who opposed his reign—Adonijah, his older brother; Joab, David's military commander; and Abiathar the priest—either by death or by banishment from Jerusalem. The nation was at peace due to the effectiveness and the victories of David's reign.

Solomon had begun his 40-year reign over all of Israel. His kingdom was widespread. David had conquered Philistia, Moab, Ammon, Edom, and Syria. Solomon's rule extended over these nations as well as all of Israel. The events in chapters 3–4 cover approximately the first four years of his reign (970–966 B.C.) Solomon realized he was not prepared for his new role as king. He was a young 20-year-old man who had no experience in governing. He already had carried out the last instructions his father had given him. What he did find the help he needed and the consequences of that action are the thrust of these two chapters.

PRAYER FOR WISDOM (3:1-15)

Verse 1 refers to an alliance Solomon made with the pharaoh (or king) of Egypt. The word pharaoh was not a person's name but a king's title in Egypt. Solomon sealed an alliance with the pharaoh of Egypt, probably Siamun who ruled in 978–959 B.C., by receiving his daughter in marriage. That made Solomon Pharaoh's son-in-law. This marriage was politically motivated. Marriage between members of opposing royal families was one of the ways treaties were expressed between them. As a wedding present, Pharaoh gave his daughter the town of Gezer (9:16). Psalm 45 might have been the marriage song used at the wedding.

Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter to Jerusalem where she lived in the City of David, the fort captured by David (2 Sam. 5:7). Later Solomon built her a palace. Solomon ruled as king for 40 years. His son Rehoboam who succeeded him was 41 years old when he became king (14:21). That means Solomon married Rehoboam's mother, Naamah the Ammonite, before he became king and married the Egyptian princess. Foreign wives would play an unfortunate role in Solomon's later life.

Since Solomon had not yet built the temple, Israel worshiped at the high places and in various key cities. The high places were the tops of mountains or hills where people had built altars on which to offer sacrifices to God. Many of these high places were former places of Canaanite worship. They became a problem for Israel because gradually Israel combined the worship of God and the worship of the Canaanite idols. Moses had instructed Israel to destroy all the places of heathen worship and to worship only at the place God chose (Deut. 12:1–7). When the temple was completed, the Lord commanded Israel to cease worshiping at the high places and to worship at the temple.

In those early years Solomon loved the Lord. He walked according to the laws his father David had obeyed. However, he also offered sacrifices and burned incense on the high places (3:3). Unfortunately, later in his reign he violated Moses' instruction that called on Israel's king not to acquire a large number of horses, take many wives, or accumulate large amounts of silver and gold (Deut. 17:14–20).

Solomon went to Gibeon, eight miles northwest of Jerusalem, to offer the sacrifice of a thousand burnt offerings. Solomon regularly worshiped the Lord at Gibeon. The city was important because the tabernacle and the bronze altar that Bezalel had made for use at the tabernacle were there. The ark was in Jerusalem in the tent David had prepared for it (2 Chron. 1:3–5).

During the night, the Lord appeared to Solomon in a dream and told him to ask for whatever he wanted and He would give it to him (1 Kings 3:5). This dream experience suggests Solomon had come to Gibeon to seek the Lord's guidance and help in serving as Israel's new king. Solomon focused on the Lord in his time of need.

The Lord's offer was a challenge to Solomon's faith. This offer required Solomon to choose what he really wanted. The question also tested him about what he believed the Lord could give to him.

Solomon responded to the Lord by confessing how kind and generous the Lord had been to his father David. Solomon believed God had blessed David because David had been faithful to the Lord, honest, and sought to do what was right.

Verse 7: Next, Solomon acknowledged that the LORD was his God also. He confessed himself to be God's servant. He acknowledged that the Lord had made him king. Solomon understood that the Lord had chosen him as his father's successor. Solomon's description of himself as the Lord's servant indicated that his reign would be a service rendered to the Lord and the Lord's people. He needed help. The Lord had made him king; but he needed the Lord to tell him how to be His king.

Solomon's sense of inadequacy is obvious in his saying I am only a little child. Solomon might have been thinking of his age. He was probably about 20 years old, though some have suggested he was only 12 to 14. Solomon likely was thinking of his inexperience in matters of government. He acknowledged that he did not know how to carry out his duties as Israel's king. The Hebrew text literally says, "I do not know how to go and come." "To go and come" is an idiomatic expression meaning "able to fulfill one's responsibilities." This expression referred to his skills of leadership. He felt he did not know how to be a king.

Verse 8: Solomon was overwhelmed by the size and greatness of the nation of Israel. Solomon's experiences before taking the throne might have been limited to Jerusalem and possibly Judah. Suddenly he was responsible for all of the twelve tribes of Israel plus the people and territories his father had added to his kingdom.

Solomon was aware that Saul's reign had not gone well. Solomon's father David had experienced rebellious uprisings against him by Absalom (2 Sam. 15:10), Sheba (20:1), and most recently Adonijah. Solomon knew he needed help.

Verse 9: In response to the Lord's offering him anything he wanted as king, Solomon prayed for a discerning heart. The basic idea in the Hebrew word discerning is "to hear." A discerning heart is one that can hear intelligently what people say and thus respond appropriately. It also can hear and respond to what God says about a matter. To the Hebrews the word for heart means one's emotion, intellect, and will. It is close to our idea of mind. Solomon wanted to know with all his being how God wanted things to be done so he could make decisions that pleased Him.

Solomon asked for a discerning heart so he could govern God's people properly and could distinguish between right and wrong, enabling him to make proper decisions. The Hebrew word for distinguish means "understanding" or "insight." With God's wisdom he could know God's will about all matters of ruling as king. He asked, who is able to govern this great people? The Hebrew word for great means "heavy," as in a heavy burden of responsibility or a people who were difficult to lead. Solomon knew he needed God's wisdom and prayed for it. The greatest and the least child of God always needs wisdom to do what God wants done. The Lord instructs us to ask Him for wisdom (Jas. 1:5).

Verse 10: The Lord's offer to give Solomon whatever he asked might have been a test. What did Solomon want the most as he faced being Israel's king? The Lord was pleased that Solomon had asked for wisdom to be able to govern Israel properly.

Verse 11: Many people if given the fabled "three wishes" would certainly include long life and wealth among them. The Lord was pleased that young Solomon had not asked

for those or for the death of his enemies, which would imply a long and secure reign. Those would have been personal and self-centered matters. Instead, Solomon had asked for discernment in administering justice. Solomon wanted wisdom to be able to know how to rule in a just and righteous manner.

Verse 12: The tense of the Hebrew verb will do indicates a completed action. God already had answered Solomon's prayer. It was a "done deal." He would give him a wise and discerning heart that would make him like nobody before or after him. Solomon had not asked for wisdom to make himself a great man but to enable him to become an able king for his people. Therefore, God promised to make him a great king and a great man as well. Adonijah had exalted himself and put himself forward (1:5) as Israel's king. In contrast Solomon humbled himself, admitting his inexperience and need. Therefore, the Lord "highly exalted Solomon in the sight of all Israel and bestowed on him royal splendor such as no king over Israel ever had before" (1 Chron. 29:25).

Verse 13: Besides making Solomon the wisest man ever, the Lord gave him what he had not asked for: both riches and honor. God made him so rich and famous that in his lifetime no other king was equal to him. First Kings 10:23 says, "King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth."

This promise was made to Solomon, not to all believers. It does not imply that God will make every believer who asks for wisdom richer and more famous than other people. The Lord does promise wisdom to all who ask Him for it in faith (Jas. 1:5-6), but He does not promise everyone wealth and glory. Jesus was wisdom and truth incarnate, but He had no earthly wealth. He was not honored by most of His own people of Israel. Nevertheless, He pleased His Father and holds the highest place of honor with Him. Believers who ask for and follow God's wisdom about how to live and to serve Him also will please Him and be honored by Him.

Verse 14: This promise is part of the covenant promises God made with Israel and with David. God would bless Israel and would give David a descendant to sit on Israel's throne as long as Israel and David's descendants would obey God's laws. The length of the reign of David's descendants de-

pendent on their obedience to God's statutes and commands. Disobedience would bring removal from the throne.

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over Israel for 40 years (11:42). If he began ruling around age 20, he died at age 60. His father David had lived 70 years. The psalmist spoke of the length of a person's days as 70 or even 80 years if blessed with strength (Ps. 90:10). Solomon did not fulfill the requirement of walking in God's ways and obeying His laws (1 Kings 11:11). Therefore, he did not live an exceptionally long life. Faith makes a person a child of God, but obedience is the key to all kinds of God's blessings to His children. Obedience to the Lord's commands is a sure sign of both faith and of wisdom.

When Solomon awoke, he realized God had spoken to him in a dream (3:15). He returned from Gibeon to Jerusalem and worshiped God at the tent that housed the ark.

At this point in Solomon's life he loved the Lord and wanted to follow Him and serve Him as a faithful king. Christians who love the Lord and want to serve Him need to ask God for wisdom to enable them to fulfill the tasks God gives them. When they ask, they can expect God to answer and grant them the wisdom they need to obey the Lord. The expression is true—God's callings are His enabling. He will enable His people to do all that He calls them to do.

WISE JUDGE (3:16-28)

The wisdom God gave Solomon was many-sided. It was more practical than intellectual. God enabled Solomon to give a wise ruling when two prostitutes came to him, both claiming to be the mother of a baby. Though Israel prohibited prostitution, prostitutes still had access to the king and to justice under the law.

Both prostitutes lived together in the same house and both gave birth within three days of each other. However, one woman's baby died during the night; so she switched her dead baby with the other prostitute's live baby. The next day each woman claimed the live baby as her own. The case hinged merely on one woman's word against the other.

When the women went to Solomon for a ruling, Solomon commanded that each of the women should receive

half the baby and ordered the baby cut in two. The real mother's love prompted her to save the baby, so she told Solomon to give the baby to the other woman. Solomon knew that the woman with compassion was the real mother and awarded her the child.

Hearing about the case and the king's verdict, the people held Solomon in awe. They saw his wisdom exemplified in his ruling and knew that his wisdom came from God. Scripture does not mention any judgment or punishment of the other mother. The purpose of the account is to show an example of the wisdom God gave Solomon. God had given him wisdom to find a way to discern the truth. The people rejoiced that they had a wise judge as their king who had God's wisdom to administer justice to them.

WISE ADMINISTRATOR (4:1-28)

Blessed with God's wisdom, Solomon ruled over the twelve tribes of Israel. God's wisdom enabled him to organize the government officials in his administration in a way that brought peace and prosperity to Israel. Solomon appointed 11 chief officials (4:2-6) for his cabinet. They included 4 priests, one of whom was his personal advisor; 2 secretaries; a recorder; a commander in chief of his army; an officer in charge of his 12 district officers; an official in charge of his palace; and one in charge of his forced labor program. We cannot determine precisely the responsibilities of each position named. Likely, the secretaries kept the official documents. The recorder called matters of special attention to the king. The one in charge of the district officers was the chief tax collector. The official in charge of Solomon's palace was the royal chamberlain. (David had a commander of the army, a recorder, two priests, a secretary, a captain of his bodyguards, and his sons as advisers, 2 Sam. 8:15-18).

The king organized his kingdom into twelve districts, appointing a governor over each district. Each governor was responsible for leading his district to supply provisions for the king and his household one month of each year (4:7). Each district also provided its quota of barley and straw for the horses (4:28). Districts also provided the organization for collecting the taxes and supplying the forced labor that Solomon used in his building programs. Most of the names of these district governors are unfamiliar. Two of them were Solomon's sons-in-law

(4:11,15), indicating that the people named in this organization served at a time when Solomon had daughters old enough to marry.

The territory of Solomon's 12 districts was larger than the geographical territories of Israel's 12 tribes. The districts extended over all the area the Lord had promised to Abraham. Solomon might have wanted to divide the nation into more equitable districts than the tribal territories. Possibly, he wanted to minimize the idea of the 12 different historical territories of the 12 tribes by creating 12 new districts under his one government. Solomon's districts were a wise method of organizing for the support of his kingdom. However, his later practice of heavy taxation and forced labor caused unrest in the nation (12:4).

In the beginning of Solomon's reign, the people of Judah and Israel enjoyed a time of prosperity (4:20,25). The population grew. God had promised Abraham that his descendants would be "as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore" (Gen. 22:17). He also had told Jacob, the father of the 12 tribes, his descendants would be like the "sand of the sea, which cannot be counted" (Gen. 32:12). First Kings 5:4 contains a statement Solomon told Hiram about the conditions of those days—"the LORD my God has given me rest on every side, and there is no adversary or disaster."

Solomon's rule was extensive. In general terms it covered all the kingdoms from the Euphrates River in the east to the land of the Philistines in the west and to the border of Egypt in the south (4:21). Another verse describes the kingdom in more specific terms. His rule covered all the kingdoms from west of the Euphrates River east to the Mediterranean (4:24). It reached from Tiphshah on the west bank of the Euphrates at the northeast boundary of Israel to Gaza, the southernmost city of the Philistines. Those four areas form an "X" if connected by lines on a map. All the countries in that large area paid tribute and were Solomon's subjects all his life.

The daily provisions Solomon needed were enormous (4:22-23,27). His family grew to number 700 wives and 300 concubines (11:3). His household also consisted of his palace servants, his court officials and their families, and others who ate regularly at his table (2:7). If this passage is talking about the resources needed to sustain

Solomon's government, estimates of how many he sustained range from as many as 14,000 to 32,000 people.

Verse 22 lists some of those provisions needed daily. One cannot be dogmatic about what a biblical measurement would be today. One suggestion is that a "cor" equaled 5.16 bushels. If so, Solomon's daily needs were for about 155 bushels of fine flour and about 310 bushels of meal.

He also needed 10 head of stall-fed cattle, 20 pasture-fed cattle, 100 sheep and goats plus deer, gazelles, roebucks, and choice fowl (4:23-24). Solomon had 4,000 stalls for his chariot horses and 12,000 horses. He also had 1,400 chariots. He kept these chariots and horses in his chariot cities and Jerusalem. He imported horses from abroad and exported them to kings of other nations (1 Kings 10:26,28-29; 2 Chron. 1:14-17). These horses and chariots were in violation of Moses' instructions for Israel's kings (Deut. 17:16).

REPUTATION OF WISDOM (4:29-34)

Solomon's practical wisdom in judging court cases and his administrative wisdom in organizing his government gave him the reputation of being a most wise king. The God-inspired writer of 1 Kings was clear as to the real source of Solomon's wisdom.

Verse 29: The king did not have such wisdom in himself. His wisdom came from God. God also gave him very great insight and a breadth of understanding impossible to measure. Solomon's wisdom extended beyond the ability to govern to other areas of knowledge.

In the Old Testament wisdom pertained to all walks of life. A wise person could be one skilled in technical work such as those who made items for the tabernacle and temple (Ex. 28:3). A person might be wise in administrative matters as Solomon was. A wise person could be one who was shrewd in making right decisions, skillful in waging war, or prudent in treating others. God wants all His people and all His leaders to live and labor under the direction of His wisdom. He gave Solomon great wisdom. Verse 30: Solomon's wisdom, which was from God, was greater than the wisdom of all the men of the East. The land east of Israel was Mesopotamia and Arabia, areas noted for wisdom. Wise men from the east came to the manger of Jesus. Solomon's wisdom was also greater than all the wisdom of Egypt. Genesis 41:8 speaks of

the wise men of Egypt who tried to interpret Pharaoh's dream. Egypt was south of Israel. In other words Solomon had wisdom greater than any of the nations around his kingdom, even the nations that were known for their wisdom.

Verse 31 reports that Solomon was wiser than noted wise men of his day. Solomon's fame as a man of great wisdom spread to all of Israel's surrounding nations. God gave Solomon greater wisdom than possessed by any man or nation.

Verse 32: A proverb is a comparison drawn from life. The Book of Proverbs is named for Solomon. He both wrote and collected the proverbs found in this book. The text shows that some other people wrote some of its contents (see Prov. 30:1; 31:1). The Book of Song of Songs may be one of Solomon's songs.

Some well-known proverbs are attributed to Solomon. They offer practical and valuable wisdom for daily life. Many Christians have sought to live by God's wisdom by reading one of the 31 chapters a day. Some of his proverbs are:

"A wise son brings joy to his father, but a foolish son grief to his mother" (Prov. 10:1).

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger" (15:1).

"Better a little with the fear of the LORD than great wealth with turmoil" (15:16).

"A word aptly spoken is like apples of gold in settings of silver" (25:11).

"Do not boast about tomorrow, for you do not know what a day may bring forth" (27:1).

Verse 33: Solomon was also wise in matters of botany and biology. He could describe at length plant life from the tall, majestic cedar of Lebanon to the small, 27-inch bushy hyssop plant. He also taught about (the same Hebrew word translated "describe") animals and birds, reptiles and fish. Solomon must have been an eager stu-

dent of many subjects. God enabled him to gain wisdom in many areas.

Verse 34: People from everywhere came to Solomon to hear his wisdom. All the kings of the Near Eastern world sent representatives to learn from Israel's king. His fame went out abroad and people from places such as Mesopotamia, Arabia, and Egypt were attracted to him. They came seeking knowledge. Wherever the fame of Solomon went, testimony to Solomon's God also went. Many people from many nations benefited from the wisdom God gave His king.

These activities of Solomon indicate that he allowed God's wisdom to guide him. Solomon's experiences teach several truths about God's wisdom. The key to gaining wisdom is to give the Lord priority in one's life. Believers can expect wisdom from God if they sincerely ask for it. The mark of wisdom is to learn and to obey the Lord's commands. The benefits of having wisdom come only when wisdom is put into practice in daily life.

All of God's children need to allow God's wisdom to guide them as they establish life's priorities. Then, they need to live by God's wisdom the remainder of their lives. Would that Solomon had continued to obey in his own life the wisdom God gave him to give to others.

BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR SEPT. 14

1 KINGS 5–8

PREPARING TO BUILD THE TEMPLE (1 KINGS 5:1-18)

One of Solomon's first steps in preparing to build the temple was to obtain the assistance of Hiram, king of Tyre. Tyre was a Phoenician city on the coastal plain between the Lebanon Mountains and the Mediterranean Sea. King Hiram ruled Tyre for more than 30 years. He was no stranger to Israel. During David's reign, Hiram had sent carpenters, stonemasons, and cedar logs to Jerusalem to build a palace for David (2 Sam. 5:11). Hiram had access to timber Solomon needed to construct the temple.

When Hiram heard that Solomon had succeeded David as king, he sent a message of greetings and congratulations to Solomon. Hiram had been on friendly terms with David. He and David both had benefited from a peaceful relationship between them. David had needed access to timber and the shipping trade that Hiram could supply. Hiram needed food from the agricultural produce of Israel and access to trade routes through Israel to other nations to the east and south. Hiram was eager to develop a good relationship with Israel's new king.

Verse 2: Solomon received messengers from Hiram. He no doubt was well aware of the history between Hiram and his father David. Possibly, David had left instructions for Solomon to secure lumber from Tyre. Solomon used the opportunity this visit provided to initiate plans to secure Hiram's help in building the temple. He sent an important message back to Hiram.

Verse 3: David had not carried out his building plans because of wars waged against him. The meaning seems to be that David had wanted to build the temple; but because of the wars waged against him, he had no time to build. However, in 1 Chronicles 28:3, David is quoted as saying, "God said to me, 'You are not to build a house for my Name, because you are a warrior and have shed blood.'"

Nevertheless, David had wanted to build a temple for the Name of the LORD his God. The preposition *for* suggests

that David wanted to build a temple in honor of or to honor his Lord. A Hebrew name represented the person so named, everything that person was. Here, the expression Name stands for all that the Lord is—His character, His attributes, the essence of His being.

Solomon described David's Lord as the LORD his God. The word for LORD, spelled with small capital letters in many English translations, is the Hebrew name YHWH. This is the personal name of God revealed to Moses (Ex. 3:15; 6:3). That name became the covenant name used of God when referring to His personal relationship to His people. Some translators have expressed that name as Jehovah, others as Yahweh. Because vowels were added to written Hebrew relatively late, no one knows for sure how the name was pronounced. The name was considered so holy by the Hebrews that they substituted "the Lord" (Hebrew: 'Adonai) when reading Scripture aloud. Its proper pronunciation was lost.

The word God translates the Hebrew word Elohim. This word is a plural form for deity, signifying the fullness of the majesty of God. This is the word in Genesis 1:1—"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." For David and for all believers, God is more than just a supreme being. David had a personal relationship with Him.

David had wanted to build a temple to honor God, and Solomon had decided to do so. People built shrines to their idols in that day, but God had only a small tent. David and Solomon both wanted to build something permanent that would indicate the greatness of the Lord.

Verse 4: Solomon believed the time had come to begin building. The Lord had given him a time of peace, so he had rest on every side. He explained that there is no adversary or disaster. The Hebrew word for "adversary" is *satan*. Solomon used the word for anyone who might give him trouble. In time the word came to refer to the devil or Satan. Solomon believed the time was ripe to begin to build because there was no war nor national calamity to occupy his time and resources. He could give priority to the building project.

Verse 5: The purpose in building a temple was the same for Solomon as it had been for David: to build a temple

for the Name of the LORD my God. As was true of his father, Solomon's God was the LORD. In verses 3-6 the expressions "for the Name" and "for My name" seem to give particular emphasis to the motivation David and Solomon had for wanting to build a temple—to honor the Lord.

Verse 6: Solomon made a request of Hiram. He asked the king to order his workers to cut cedars of Lebanon for him. The mountains of Lebanon were famous for their dense forests, especially for the cedars that provided excellent and durable lumber. Solomon pledged to supplement Hiram's labor force with men from Israel. He promised to pay Hiram whatever he required. Wisely, Solomon complimented the Sidonians for their skill in felling timber. The Sidonians were the people of Sidon, a city along with Tyre that made up part of Phoenicia.

Verse 7: Solomon's message to Hiram greatly pleased him. People often would recognize the gods of other nations. Hiram praised David's God because He had given David a wise son like his father to rule over the great nation of Israel. However, Hiram might have been thinking more about a new treaty with Solomon than he was of the greatness of Solomon's God. Still, Hiram's words added to the testimony of Solomon's wisdom. Hiram agreed to provide cedar, pine, and algum (fir or juniper) logs (2 Chron. 2:8), haul them from Lebanon to the Mediterranean Sea, and float them to a place Solomon specified, probably Joppa. From there, Solomon could have them taken to Jerusalem. Cedar was ideal for a building material. It resisted dry rot and insects, its grain was suitable for carving, and it had a pleasant fragrance. In return Hiram asked Solomon to provide food for his household (1 Kings 5:8-9).

Year after year Solomon and Hiram worked this agreement. Hiram sent all the logs Solomon needed. Solomon sent Hiram more than 100,000 bushels of wheat and more than 100,000 gallons of olive oil. (While certainty about these ancient measurements is lacking, some estimate a "cor" as roughly 5.16 bushels and a "bath" as approximately 5.5 gallons.) The two kings had peace between them, and Solomon continued to reveal his wisdom (5:10-12).

To provide the laborers Solomon had promised to Hiram, Solomon conscripted 30,000 men from Israel and put Adoniram in charge of them. These he sent to Lebanon in shifts of 10,000 per month. Each man was required to devote one out of three months to the project.

Solomon also had 70,000 carriers, 80,000 stonecutters, and 3,300 supervisors working on the temple. These workers quarried quality stones for the building's foundation. The craftsmen of Solomon and Hiram plus the men of Gebal (modern Byblos) cut and prepared the timber for the temple (5:13-18).

Who were these laborers? First Kings 9:20-22 states that Solomon conscripted the conquered Canaanites for his slave labor but did not make slaves out of Israelites. The Scripture calls the 30,000 "laborers" (5:13). The workers in chapter 9:21 are called the "slave labor force." These different Hebrew words suggest that the Israelites were the temporary, conscripted laborers and the Canaanites of the land were the permanent slave labor force.

Both David and Solomon determined to build a temple to honor the Lord. Christians should determine to take specific actions to honor the Lord. Their motivation should be to show their devotion to Him.

BUILDING THE TEMPLE (1 KINGS 6:1-38)

The author of 1 Kings dated the beginning of the work on the temple in several ways. The work began in the month of Ziv (April-May) in the 4th year of Solomon's reign and in the 480th year Israel came out of Egypt. The 4th year of Solomon's reign was 966 B.C. Solomon spent 7 years building the temple and 13 years building his palace complex.

Solomon built the temple on the site of the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite. Probably he built the bronze altar or the most holy place (often called the holy of holies) on the site of David's altar (2 Sam. 24:18). That site is the place traditionally thought to be where Abraham offered up his son Isaac. Chapter 6:2-10 describes the building of the exterior of the temple. A comparison of the building of the tabernacle by Moses (Ex. 25-40) reveals that Solomon built the temple on the same general plan.

God showed Moses how to build the tabernacle (Ex. 25:9). He also showed David how to build the temple, and David passed the plan to Solomon (1 Chron. 28:11,19). The temple was rectangular: 90 feet long, 30 feet wide, and 45 feet high and faced the east (a "cubit" was about 18 inches). A portico (front porch) ran along the width of the temple and extended out about 15 feet. The narrow windows were of stone lattice work (1 Kings 6:4). Along the north, south, and west sides of the temple, Solomon built three-story structures containing rooms, probably for use by the priests.

The builders quarried and dressed the stones and lumber used in building this structure at the quarry or in the forest. Out of respect for the Lord's house, the builders used no hammer, chisel, or any other iron tool at the temple site (1 Kings 6:7).

Verses 11-12: God's word to Solomon was similar to the charge David gave Solomon (2:1-4). The Lord began His message to Solomon by acknowledging the king's work in building the temple. He wanted Solomon to know that a magnificent temple and all its ritual worship could not substitute for obeying the Lord. Only Solomon's faithful obedience would fulfill the condition attached to God's promise to keep David's descendants on the throne. The implication was that if Solomon disobeyed, he would lose his throne and the people of Israel would suffer. Later events reveal how Solomon failed to heed this warning. He disobeyed God, and a king who was not David's descendant became king of the Northern Kingdom of a divided Israel.

Verse 13: Solomon's obedience also directly affected the people of Israel. If Solomon would obey, the Lord promised to live among the Israelites and would not abandon His people. The presence of the temple would not automatically protect Israel should the people and their king disobey (see also Jer. 7:4). Learning and obeying God's commands is the primary way all believers can honor the Lord. Obedience comes from a heart of devotion and thanksgiving to the Lord.

Verse 14: Solomon had purposed to build the temple (5:5), and he carried through on his intention for seven years until he completed the project. He had good intentions about honoring the Lord, and he did not allow

anything to stop him from acting on his decision to honor the Lord.

Verses 15-38 resume the account of the building with a description of the interior of the temple. All interior stone walls were lined with cedar boards and the floors with pine. Skilled workers carved decorative gourds and open flowers for the inside walls.

A cedar wall divided the sanctuary and the inner sanctuary. The inner sanctuary, called "the Most Holy Place" (6:16), would house the ark of the covenant. Solomon lined this 30-by-30-by-30-foot room with pure gold. He also overlaid all the other interior walls and the altar of incense in the main room with gold.

Also in the Most Holy Place, the smaller west room of the two that made up the inside of the temple, craftsmen made a pair of cherubim of olive wood 15 feet high with a wingspan of 15 feet. The two cherubim stood side by side, their wings touching each other and the walls on each side of the 30-foot room. The cherubim symbolically guarded the ark of the covenant. They overlaid the cherubim with gold as well as the floors of both rooms of the temple. The craftsmen carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers on all the walls in the temple.

The builders made the doors to the inner sanctuary out of olive wood and carved cherubim, palm trees, and open flowers on them. They made the two doors to the entrance to the main room out of pine wood and placed the same kinds of carvings on them. They covered the doors to both rooms with gold. An inner courtyard surrounded the temple. Its walls consisted of stone and cedar beams. Solomon began building the temple in the 4th year of his reign in Ziv (April-May). In the 11th year of his reign, in the 8th month of Bul (October-November), he completed the temple. Ziv and Bul were the Canaanite names for the months. Solomon followed the plans for building the temple in every detail. He had fulfilled the desire that David and he shared to build a house for the Name of the Lord their God.

Believers do not honor the Lord simply by outward expressions of devotion. Their acts must come from devoted and obedient hearts. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in obedience to His commands (3:3). His love

for the Lord prompted him to build the temple to honor the Lord (5:5). During the building process, the Lord spoke to Solomon and renewed His demand of covenant obedience from him (6:12). Solomon demonstrated how to honor the Lord.

BUILDING THE PALACE (7:1-12)

Solomon spent 7 years building the Lord's house. He spent 13 years building his house. These facts might indicate simply that building the temple did not take as much time due to the preparations David made before his death. However, the wording of 1 Kings 7:1 and its proximity to 6:38 strongly suggest the author wanted to call attention to the contrast in the time spent building the two structures. Solomon spent more time on his own house than he did on God's house.

Solomon built his palace just south of the temple site. His palace actually was a complex of five buildings or sections. The first structure was the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon, the largest of the buildings (7:2). This was a rectangular-shaped structure 150 feet long, 75 feet wide, and 45 feet high. The workers built the columns, beams, and roof out of cedar from Lebanon. This building probably was used as a royal storehouse. This building might have served also as an audience chamber or a throne hall.

Another section of the building was a colonnade (7:6). The colonnade was an extended porch (75-by-45 feet) on the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. This porch might have served as a waiting area for those seeking an audience with the king.

A third section was the throne hall, the Hall of Justice (7:7). This hall was the place Solomon would hear the cases of the people who came to him. The fourth and fifth buildings were palaces, one for Solomon and one for his wife, Pharaoh's daughter (7:8). These two structures were similar to the design of the Hall of Justice. Solomon built his palace complex out of the same kind of stones and timber he had used in building the temple.

FURNISHING THE TEMPLE (7:13-51)

These verses report how Solomon built the furnishings for the temple. He needed a skilled craftsman, so he sent to Tyre for a man named Hiram, who was part Jewish.

His mother was from the tribe of Naphtali and his father from Tyre. He probably was sympathetic and understood the importance Solomon and all Israel placed on their temple. In Hebrew, his name is the same as that translated "Hiram." The NIV apparently used the alternate spelling to avoid confusing him with the king.

Hiram was highly skilled and experienced in making all kinds of metal items as well as working with fabrics (1 Kings 7:14; 2 Chron. 2:7). His ability was a gift from God. He dedicated those skills to God's service and used them in his work in the temple. He made four basic items and their accessories for the temple.

His first furnishings were two freestanding bronze pillars that Solomon placed on each side of the opening of the temple (1 Kings 7:15-22). These pillars were 27 feet high with the crown or capital measuring 7.5 feet in height. The pillars were about 18 feet in circumference. They were decorated at the top with chains from which decorative pomegranates hung.

Jakin was the name of the pillar on the south side of the temple entrance; the one on the north was Boaz. The name Jakin means "he establishes" and Boaz means "by him he is mighty." The named pillars could have symbolized the stability and strength of a kingdom where God is king.

The next furnishing Hiram made was a large basin called "the Sea" (7:23-26). Its diameter was 15 feet and its depth 7.5 feet. The circumference of the basin was 45 feet. The Sea could hold more than 11,000 gallons of water. The priests washed themselves before and after performing their duties in the temple (2 Chron. 4:6). The tank rested on 12 bulls, 3 facing each of the 4 directions of the compass. Those bulls might have represented the tribes of Israel or Solomon's 12 districts.

In addition to the large Sea, Hiram made 10 movable stands and basins out of bronze (7:27-39). The stands were 6 feet long, 6 feet wide, and 4.5 feet high. Each stand had 4 bronze wheels 15 inches in diameter and 4 handles for carrying it. The basin for each stand measured 6 feet across. Solomon placed 5 stands on the south side of the temple and 5 on the north. He placed the Sea in the south-east corner of the inner court of the temple.

Hiram's fourth furnishings were some smaller basins along with some shovels and sprinkling bowls (7:40a). The priests used these items when they required less water for their particular work.

Verses 40b-47 contains a summary of Hiram's work for Solomon. The summary includes the two pillars with their capitals and decorations, the ten stands, the Sea, and various pots, shovels, and sprinkling bowls.

Hiram made these items out of bronze that had been cast in clay molds east of the Jordan between Succoth and Zarethan. The area provided the proper clay that workers needed to make the molds for the liquid metal and plenty of wood for charcoal needed by the metal smiths.

The Old Testament word translated bronze is sometimes translated as "brass" or "copper." Workmen mixed copper with tin to make bronze that was greater in strength. Hiram also made the golden altar, the golden table, 10 lampstands, and some other items such as gold basins, wick trimmers, sprinkling bowls, dishes, censers, and all the gold sockets for all the temple doors.

The three items mentioned above stood in the larger room of the sanctuary, the Holy Place. The golden altar stood before the wall of the Most Holy Place. This altar was the place priests offered incense to the Lord. The golden table held the bread called "the bread of the Presence" (7:48). On each side of this room were five lampstands made of pure gold that provided light for the Holy Place. The Most Holy Place was in darkness.

Verse 51: All the work King Solomon had done for the temple of the Lord was finished. He had acted on his desire to honor the Lord. He concluded by bringing in the things his father David had dedicated. Those things were probably gifts given to David and also the booty (won in battles) that he saved for the temple. Second Samuel 8:7-12 contains the record of some of David's victories against the Philistines, Moab, and Zobah. The booty from these victories included gold shields and great quantities of bronze.

When the king of Hamath heard of David's victories, he sent gifts of silver, gold, and bronze. David dedicated those articles to the Lord as he had done with the silver

and gold and other plunder from all the nations he had conquered. Through this act Solomon honored David's commitment to the temple. Solomon placed the valuables in the treasuries of the temple. They became part of the endowment Solomon would need to operate the many functions of the temple.

Solomon determined to honor the Lord by building the temple. This action was an out-ward expression of an inner devotion to the Lord. He acted on his determination and persevered until he completed what he set out to do. An action that honors the Lord is motivated by a desire to show devotion to Him. Such actions could include spending a day in prayer and fasting, breaking a habit that is not sinful but is hindering growth or service, making a special offering to the church, devoting time regularly to helping a person who in some way is helpless, participating in a mission trip, or taking on a particular church responsibility. Let us seek to honor our Lord who is worthy of all honor!

Solomon had established his kingdom when he decided to build the temple to honor the Lord. He enlisted the cooperation of Hiram, King of Tyre, and required 30,000 men of Israel to devote a third of their time to the project. He also forced Canaanites living in the land to work full time to provide what was needed to complete the work. The project had taken seven years, but the temple stood as a monument to the greatness of God. The time had come to formally dedicate the temple.

PREPARATION FOR DEDICATION (8:1-21)

Solomon's first step of preparation for the temple dedication was to call Israel's leaders to Jerusalem to help bring the ark of the covenant to the temple. These leaders included elders—the older, experienced, and respected men who counseled the king. Also called were the heads of the tribes and the heads of all the families. These men represented all of Israel.

The ark is called “the ark of the Lord's covenant” in 8:1 because it contained the tablets on which were written the Ten Commandments. God had established these laws as a fundamental part of His covenant with His people.

When David first became king of all the tribes, he had marched on Jerusalem and captured the fortress called

Zion, the fortified section of the city. He made Zion his home and re-named it the City of David (2 Sam. 5:6-9). Later, he brought the ark to the City of David and placed it in a tent. In preparation for dedicating the temple, Solomon, the priests, and Israel's leaders brought the ark to the temple. The tabernacle was at Gibeon, and it also was brought to the temple.

Solomon called for the dedication at the time of the Feast of Booths (also called the Feast of Tabernacles) in the month of Ethanim, the Canaanite name for the seventh month of their sacred year and the first month of their civil year. Israel also called the month “Tishri.” The date corresponds to our September-October period.

The Feast of Booths was one of the three annual national gatherings of all the people of Israel. At this feast Israel celebrated the end of the years of wandering in the wilderness. They also renewed their covenant commitment to the Lord. This festival was an appropriate time to celebrate the completion of a permanent house of worship in Israel's permanent home.

When the leaders had assembled, the priests took up the ark and brought it and the Tent of Meeting (the tabernacle) with all its sacred furnishings to the temple. Moses designated the Aaronic priests to be in charge of the ark. Along the way Solomon might have sacrificed sheep and cattle as had David when he brought the ark from the house of Ebed-Edom to the City of David. Every six steps along the route, David had offered a bull and a fattened calf as a sacrifice to the Lord. He and those who were with him danced before the Lord and shouted praises to the God of Israel (2 Sam. 6:12-15). Since the ark represented God's presence, bringing it to Jerusalem and later to the temple was a high moment of rejoicing.

The priests placed the ark in the inner sanctuary of the temple. Of the two main rooms in the temple, they called the smaller one on the west end the inner sanctuary or the Most Holy Place. They called the other room the Holy Place. Some Bible translations, including the New American Standard Bible, at times use the term “holy of holies” to refer to the Most Holy Place. The priests placed the ark beneath the wings of the two cherubim (1 Kings 6:23-28). When the priests left, the cloud representing God's presence filled the temple. The cloud also had filled the

tabernacle when it was finished. Throughout Israel's wilderness journey the cloud by day and the fire in the cloud by night guided Israel to their permanent home in Canaan (Ex. 40:34-38), and the ark symbolized the presence of God in their midst.

The cloud symbolized God's leadership and protection day and night. When the cloud filled the temple at Solomon's dedication, Solomon spoke to the Lord out of a deep sense of awe and reverence (8:12-13). Then he blessed the people (8:14-21). His blessing began with praise to the Lord for keeping His promise to David that his son would build the temple.

Solomon rejoiced that God kept that promise to David. He had succeeded his father and sat on the throne as the Lord had promised.

Solomon indeed had built the temple. That this fulfilled God's promise indicated the building actually was a work of the Lord, not just of the king. With the Lord's help, Solomon had provided a permanent place for the ark that contained the covenant God made with Israel at Mount Sinai. He and the people of Israel had gathered to dedicate the temple to the Lord.

PRAYER OF DEDICATION (8:22-53)

After blessing the people, Solomon began his prayer of dedication.

Verse 22: Solomon stood before the altar. The temple had two altars. One was inside the inner sanctuary in front of the wall of the Most Holy Place. This altar was the gold altar or altar of incense, so called because the priests burned incense on it. That altar was 1.5 feet square and 3 feet high. The other, before which Solomon stood, was the bronze altar of burnt offering on which the priests sacrificed the animals. It was placed in front of the temple. This altar was 30 feet square and 15 feet high.

As Solomon began his prayer, he spread out his hands toward heaven. Lifting hands toward heaven was a common practice in prayer. Second Chronicles 6:12-42 adds the detail that Solomon knelt on a bronze platform 4.5 feet high (see also 1 Kings 8:54). That Solomon was in front of the whole assembly of Israel indicates that Solomon's prayer was part of a public worship service.

Verse 23: The king began his prayer to the Lord by affirming that the LORD, God of Israel is absolutely unique. He acknowledged that God keeps His covenant of love with His servants who wholeheartedly keep His covenant by walking in His ways. Both the Lord and His people have covenant responsibilities. The name LORD is the personal name for God, the name He revealed to Moses. That name typically was used when speaking of the Lord's covenant of love with Israel.

Verse 24: The Lord's promise was that God would raise up David's son to build the temple (2 Sam. 7:12-13). The Lord's promises are not empty words; He does what He says He will do. That was true then, and that is true now. We can trust God's promises. His hand is powerful enough to fulfill them.

Solomon affirmed God's faithfulness in his prayer to Him. We too can affirm God's faithfulness to us in keeping His promises in the past. How many testimonies have Christians heard of God's promise-keeping faithfulness! If He has made a promise, He will keep it. That is the nature of His character.

Verse 25: God had kept His promise to give David a son to build the temple. Solomon asked God to keep other promises He made to David. One of those promises was that David always would have a descendant on the throne of Israel (see 2 Sam. 7:12-16). This was a conditional promise. Its fulfillment depended on David's sons being faithful to the Lord as David was faithful.

Verse 26: Solomon based his request on God's faithfulness to keep His word. He also claimed a promise God had made to David that involved him. He worded his prayer in accord with God's promise and asked God to keep His promise.

An effective way for any believer to pray is to pray in accord with God's promises (see 1 John 5:14). Two kinds of promises made by God can be the basis for a Christian's prayer. Some of His promises are to everyone, both the saved and the unsaved. An example is the promise made in the symbolism of the rainbow (Gen. 9:16). That promise applies to everyone.

Another kind of promise made by the Lord is a general promise to all believers. Some examples of general prom-

ises are John 14:2-3,12-14,27; 1 Corinthians 10:13; and 1 John 1:9.

A promise made at a particular time to a particular person may not be one that anyone else can claim. Solomon appropriately based his prayers on specific promises God made to David and his descendants. Of course, that promise's ultimate fulfillment will be realized at the second coming of Christ, a legal descendant of David.

Another example of a promise to a particular person is in 1 Kings 17:14. The Lord promised a poor woman that her flour and oil would last until a drought was broken, but that promise was not for anyone else.

God's promises also can be misapplied. Satan encouraged Jesus to jump from the temple and to claim a promise that He would not be harmed (Ps. 91:11-12). Jesus replied that such an action would be tempting the Lord, not trusting the Lord (Luke 4:9-12).

Basing prayers on proper promises of God is not a means of manipulating God. Such prayers, for example, do not negate the Lord's timetable. All prayers are to be prayed in faith, trusting God to do what is good, right, and appropriate in light of His love, wisdom, justice, and overall purposes.

Verse 27: Solomon revealed something of his understanding of the nature of God in this verse. He knew that no earthly building could contain God. In no way was the temple to be viewed as some kind of idol. The highest heaven translates "heaven of heavens." The ancients understood that beyond the heavens of the sky was another heaven in which the Lord dwelt. However, not even that place could contain Him, much less the temple Solomon had built. God is everywhere. Yet, the cloud filling the temple symbolized His presence with His people Israel, as did the ark.

Verse 28: Solomon affirmed that the LORD was his God, the God of the covenant. The Lord had chosen Israel, David, and Solomon for the tasks He had for each of them. Solomon was addressing God who had taken the initiative in creating this covenant relationship. Therefore, he must have had assurance that such a prayer was in keeping with that relationship. Also, he must have

had assurance that he could trust God to answer prayers based on His covenant and His promises.

Solomon used three different words for prayer in this verse. The word twice translated prayer means "intercession" or "supplication." The Old Testament uses this word most frequently for prayer. The word for plea means "entreaty" or "earnest plea for mercy." Cry means "a wailing cry of petition." The combination of these three words suggests a deep desire and seriousness in the king's heart.

Verse 29: Though the Lord was not "contained" in the temple, Solomon wanted God, whose dwelling place is on high, to keep His attention on the temple at all times. Not only would acts of worship be performed at the temple, but also the king and others would pray toward this place. Solomon asked that God be attentive to the prayers prayed toward the temple at any time.

Verse 30: Solomon asked God to hear the requests prayed toward the temple. The word hear occurs five times in 8:28-30. The Hebrew word carries the ideas of "hearing with attention or obedience," "to give undivided listening attention," or "to perceive a message." Like most Christians today, Solomon wanted to make sure God listened when they prayed, really heard their prayers, and understood the cries of their hearts. Since so many people who pray need forgiveness, Solomon prayed that God would hear and forgive.

The king talked with God about seven specific instances when a person might pray a prayer to God toward the temple (8:31-53). Each instance was common to Israel's experiences.

The first instance (8:31-32) related to a person who wronged a neighbor but denied any guilt. The person was required to take an oath declaring innocence (Ex. 22:10-12). Solomon asked God to judge between the accuser and the accused, condemning the guilty party and establishing the innocence of the other. Apparently this would be done by use of the Urim and Thummim (Ex. 28:29-30; Num. 27:21) or by the parties experiencing consequences of blessing or condemnation. The next instance (8:33-34) covered situations in which an enemy would defeat the Israelites because they had sinned. Solomon asked God to hear His people when

they turned back to Him, confessed His name, and prayed. He also requested the Lord to forgive them and restore them to their land.

The next two situations (8:35-40) describe occasions when God would bring judgment on the people's sins by withholding rain or sending famine or plague. Again, he asked the Lord to hear their prayers, forgive their sins, and teach them the right way to live.

The fifth instance (8:41-43) concerns foreigners who heard of the Lord and came to worship Him and to pray toward His temple. He asked God to answer their prayers as a witness to all the peoples of the earth. The king also spoke of those times God would send His people into war against their enemies (8:44-45). He asked God to hear their plea for victory and to uphold their cause. Such wars would be considered holy wars because God sent them forth into battle.

The last instance (8:46-53) focused on a time when the people would sin against the Lord and he would give them over to an enemy. The enemy would take them away from Israel to a foreign land. Solomon pictured the Israelites reconsidering, repenting, confessing their sins, and turning back to the Lord. Under those circumstances, he asked God to hear their prayers, forgive their sins, and cause their conquerors to show mercy.

Solomon reminded God that the Israelites were His people and His inheritance. An inheritance is a possession to which one has received legal claim. The people of Israel belonged to the Lord. Solomon asked God to deliver them as He had delivered their ancestors from Egypt.

CHALLENGE OF DEDICATION (8:54-61)

When Solomon finished his dedicatory prayer, he rose from his kneeling position before the altar and addressed the assembly.

Verse 56: Solomon praised the LORD for giving rest to Israel from its enemies. He also praised God for keeping all the promises He made to Israel through Moses. Israel's history might have flashed before Solomon's mind, overwhelming him with the many promises that God had fulfilled to bring the people of Israel to that day. More particularly, the king may have recalled Deuteronomy 12:1-14.

Moses spoke in that passage about the one place of worship the Lord would choose in the land of promise and the rest God would give His people. God had been faithful to His part of the covenant He had made with Israel.

The faithfulness of God in keeping His promises encourages us to pray with confidence when we base our prayers on those promises. Solomon at that point blessed the whole assembly of Israel. This is the second time he blessed them during that dedication ceremony (8:14,55). The Hebrew word translated bless means "to pray," "to invoke," or "to ask a blessing of." In 8:57-59, Solomon asked four blessings on the people.

(1) "May the LORD our God be with us as he was with our fathers" (8:57). God had been with the Israelites' ancestors since the days of Abraham. He had delivered them from bondage, given them a homeland, defeated their enemies, and made them a strong nation. Solomon invoked God's presence with his generation of Israelites in the same way He had been present with the former generations.

(2) "May he never leave us nor forsake us" (8:57). The ark was a symbol of the Lord's presence. Solomon invoked God's actual presence and constant help in the future. Israel was at the height of its greatness because of the presence and grace of God. Solomon prayed for His continued blessings.

(3) "May he turn our hearts to him" (8:58). The Israelites had a history of fickleness toward the Lord. The king asked God to give them the desire and commitment to walk in His ways and keep His commands, decrees, and regulations. The word "commands" can refer to all of God's law or to the particular conditions of God's covenant with Israel. "Decrees" referred to God's statutes and commands such as the Ten Commandments that must be obeyed. It is a word similar to "commands." "Regulations" were verdicts and judgments God the righteous Judge handed down to His people. Solomon asked God to give them a heart to obey Him.

(4) "And may these words of mine, which I have prayed before the Lord, be near to the LORD day and night" (8:59). The king asked God to bless him and the people by meeting their daily needs. He believed that God's blessings on Israel would witness to all the peoples of the earth that the Lord is God and there is none other.

However, he knew God could not grant the Israelites these blessings unless they obeyed the Lord faithfully from hearts fully committed to Him.

Regardless of our circumstances, we can be confident that the Lord will hear and appropriately answer when we pray in a spirit of humility and repentance.

CELEBRATION OF DEDICATION (8:62-66)

After the prayer and the blessing, Solomon and all Israel celebrated. The king sacrificed 22 thousand cattle and 120 thousand sheep and goats as fellowship offerings to the Lord. In addition, he offered burnt offerings, grain offerings, and the fat of the fellowship offerings. The altar could not hold so many burnt sacrifices, so Solomon consecrated the middle part of the courtyard as an acceptable place to offer some of the sacrifices. The number of animals seems large, but the whole congregation of Israel was present at the celebration.

A "burnt offering" was a sacrifice that was completely consumed by fire. "Grain offerings" were a recognition of God's blessings in the harvest. Only part of these offerings was burned. The remainder went to the priests. The "fellowship offering" or peace offering was a sacrifice of a bull, cow, lamb, or goat. The priest burned only the fat and certain other parts. The people ate the remainder along with various kinds of bread. The fellowship offering was a joyous time of celebration.

People from Lebo Hamath (the far north of the nation) to the Wadi of Egypt (the far south) were in Jerusalem to participate in the temple dedication. They had come from all over the kingdom. The festival of dedication lasted 7 days and was followed by the 7-day celebration of the Festival of Booths.

When the 14 days were over, Solomon sent the people home. As they left, they blessed their king. They returned home with joyful and glad hearts for all of God's blessings. They recognized that their current peace and prosperity were the results of David's faithfulness to the Lord and the Lord's blessings on that faithfulness. They also rejoiced that God had kept His promises to David and had given them the temple.

BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR SEPT. 21

1 KINGS 9–11

CONDITIONS OF DEDICATION (1 KINGS 9:1-9)

Sometime after Solomon completed the temple and his palace, the Lord appeared to him a second time. The first time had been at Gibeon when in a dream the Lord asked Solomon what he wanted. Solomon asked for wisdom, and God gave him that plus wealth and honor. The Lord also promised Solomon a long life if he would obey the Lord (3:5-14).

At this second appearance God showed that He was pleased with Solomon's prayer and the temple. God already had sent a prophetic word to Solomon about the temple (6:11-13). In that word He had promised blessings both to Solomon and Israel if Solomon would obey His Word. This second appearance brought a message similar to that of the prophetic word.

The Lord told Solomon that He had heard the prayer Solomon prayed at the temple dedication. He announced to the king that He had consecrated the temple by putting His Name there forever. He also promised that His eyes and heart would always be there. He always would give His attention and care to that place, especially to the people's prayers. The Lord's words were answers to the prayer Solomon had prayed earlier.

Then the Lord spoke a personal word to Solomon (9:4-9). He exhorted Solomon concerning his covenant responsibilities as king. He also warned Solomon and his sons what would happen if they failed to obey Him. God challenged Solomon to walk before Him in integrity of heart and uprightness. That would mean obeying all that God commanded as David his father had done. The Hebrew word translated integrity means "completeness" or "simplicity." The word uprightness means "straightness" or "doing right" in the sight of God. Solomon needed to do the right things, motivated from a heart that was wholly focused on the Lord.

Such obedience would enable God to establish Solomon's throne over Israel forever. That had been a promise God made to David. He told David he would never fail to have a descendant on the throne of Israel.

Then God gave Solomon a strong warning. If he or his sons turned from obeying the Lord and began serving idols, He would bring judgment on them. He would send the Israelites into exile from their land and would reject the temple that Solomon had dedicated to His Name. The physical presence of the temple would not save them if they turned from God. People would see all of this and ask in a scoffing way, "Why has the Lord done such a thing to this land and to this temple?" (9:8).

The answer to their question would be that the people of Israel have forsaken the Lord and have turned to other gods. The God who delivered the Israelites' fathers from Egypt would not tolerate their worshiping other gods. Israelites must not mix the worship of idols with the worship of the Lord or turn away from the Lord to worship other gods. Any practice of idolatry would bring judgment and destruction.

The date the author of 1 Kings wrote this book was around 550 B.C. What he recorded in these verses explains the reason the Northern Kingdom of Israel fell to Assyria in 722 B.C. Also, these verses explain the reason the Southern Kingdom of Judah fell to Babylon in 587 B.C. They also indicated the reason Nebuchadnezzar was able to destroy Solomon's temple in 587-586 B.C. Solomon and the people of Israel did not heed God's warning and brought disaster on themselves.

First Kings 9:10–10:29 is largely a summary of Solomon's achievements in the first 24 years of his reign. During that time, he secured his throne and made alliances with Egypt and Threshed organized his administration, built a temple and a palace, and gave Israel 24 years of peace, growth, and prosperity. With his government in place and the temple dedicated and functioning as Israel's central place of worship, Solomon continued to build his kingdom. He expanded his building projects and developed various industries, trade relationships, and other commercial projects.

The overall theme of this study of 1 Kings is "Stay Focused on the Lord." The past four lessons about Solomon were under the unit theme "Find Your Focus." This lesson is the first of five grouped under the unit theme "Guard Your Focus." Solomon had found his focus, and it was the Lord. However, he later failed to guard that focus and

therefore lost it. Christians must guard their focus on the Lord or run the risk of losing it.

SOLOMON'S ADMINISTRATION AND PROJECTS (9:10-27)

The first 24 years of Solomon's 40-year reign had passed. They had been good, positive years. The king carried out his many responsibilities while keeping his focus on the Lord. After building the temple and his palace, he initiated many other building and commercial projects. King Hiram of Tyre provided Solomon cedar, pine, and gold for his projects. In return, Solomon gave or repaid Hiram by giving him 20 towns in Galilee. These towns might have been border towns between Israel and Tyre over which the two countries had quarreled.

Hiram was not pleased with the towns, which probably were no more than small settlements. He called the towns the "Land of Cabul." The word "Cabul" means "limitation or sterile," but it sounds like a Hebrew word that means "good for nothing," that is, "worthless." Obviously, Hiram felt cheated. Second Chronicles 8:2 implies Hiram gave the towns back to Solomon, and Solomon later rebuilt them. Nevertheless, the partnership between Solomon and Hiram continued and benefited them both.

Verse 15: Solomon's building projects were extensive and required his use of forced labor. Supporting terraces translates the Hebrew word "millo," a word that means "a rampart," that is, a place "filled in." The term probably indicated ramparts and terraces built along the northeastern slope of the east hill of the City of David. Filling in that area to build it up provided more land area for more buildings. The wall of Jerusalem probably referred to extending part of the defensive city wall to include the area occupied by the new temple and the palace complex. It also might have included strengthening and repairing the existing wall.

The king likewise fortified the cities of Hazor [HAY zawr], Megiddo [mih GID oh] and Gezer [GHEE zuhr] with stronger walls (see 2 Chron. 8:5). Archaeologists have uncovered outer walls that were five feet thick and inner walls four feet thick. Those fortified cities guarded Solomon's kingdom from other nations around Israel. The cities also provided protection for the trade routes that went past or through them.

Hazor was in the northern part of the kingdom, three miles north of the Sea of Galilee at a junction of two major trade routes. Strengthening its walls helped to protect Israel against attacks from the north. Megiddo was a fortress northwest of Jerusalem on the road between the Plain of Sharon and the Valley of Jezreel. That town provided protection from the northwest. Gezer was west on the road from Joppa to Jerusalem.

Verses 16-19: Solomon rebuilt and fortified Gezer, the city given by the Egyptian king to his daughter upon her marriage to Solomon. He also fortified Upper and Lower Beth Horon, which were northwest of Jerusalem (2 Chron. 8:5). During Saul's reign, the Philistines had attacked Jerusalem by way of Beth Horon (1 Sam. 13:17-18).

Solomon also strengthened two other towns: Baalath [BAY uh lath] and Tadmor. The location of Baalath (and several places mentioned in these chapters) is uncertain. The town might have been near Gezer on the road to Beth Horon and Jerusalem, or it might have been another name for Kirjath-jearim. Some believe Solomon built Tadmor in the northern part of the country, probably to control a caravan route. Others believe it was on the Egyptian border. Wherever their locations, these towns were strategic places that were strengthened to protect trade routes and to fortify Israel against attack.

Israel's prosperity grew under Solomon's reign. The king built store cities throughout his kingdom. These cities had rectangular buildings divided into rooms in which flour, oil, grain, and wine were stored. Often these commodities were tax payments. Some cities had sections filled with storehouses. Some also served as military store cities along the frontiers of the kingdom. Solomon built towns for his chariots and his horses. Archaeological excavations have unearthed the remains of stables in Megiddo where Solomon kept horses or other animals. The size of these stables suggests they would have housed from 300-500 horses.

Verses 20-23 explains Solomon's slave labor force (1 Kings 9:15; see also 5:13-18). A later lesson will focus on Solomon's policy of forced labor. The king needed many laborers for the extensive building projects. Verse 24 is another account of how Solomon built a palace for his Egyptian wife. He brought her up from the City of David

where David had kept the ark. As a foreigner she contaminated the City of David, considered sacred due to the ark's presence. Solomon said, "My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the LORD has entered are holy" (2 Chron. 8:11).

Verse 25: In the midst of the account of Solomon's many construction and commercial projects, the Book of 1 Kings reports Solomon's actions toward the Lord and the temple. The king was faithful to make the sacrificial offerings prescribed by the Lord.

The three times a year were the Feasts of Unleavened Bread, Harvest, and Booths, the three mandatory feasts for all Israel (Ex. 23:14-19). The people of Israel celebrated the Feast of Unleavened Bread (also called "Passover") in what would be comparable to our month of April, the first month of the Israelite's sacred new year. Passover commemorated the final plague on Egypt when God spared the firstborn of the Israelites. This feast also celebrated the barley harvest.

The Israelites celebrated The Feast of Weeks 50 days after Passover in our month of June. They also called this festival "Pentecost," "the Feast of Harvest," or the "Day of Firstfruits." The term "weeks" refers to the period of about seven weeks between the barley and the wheat harvest. Thus, it was a wheat-harvest celebration. The nation's third festival was the Feast of Booths, sometimes called the "Feast of Tabernacles" or "Ingathering." This festival was in our month of October (the first month of the Israelite's civil year). This feast reminded Israel of God's protection, provisions, and presence while they lived in tents during the wilderness wanderings. The feast was also a celebration of the harvest of grapes and other autumn fruits.

During these festivals, Solomon offered the sacrifices on the bronze altar, . . . burning incense along with the sacrifices. Those actions fulfilled the temple obligations. He no longer went to Gibeon (3:4) as he had before building the temple. Evidently, the people followed his example and began worshiping at the temple in Jerusalem. The parallel passage in 2 Chronicles 8:12-13 gives a fuller account. Solomon made daily sacrifices (morning and evening) as commanded by Moses (Ex. 29:38-41). He offered the sacrifices required for Sabbath and the time of

the New Moon. The festivals reminded the Israelites who they were and how they had become God's people. The regular times of worship helped them keep their focus on the Lord in the land of plenty.

Second Chronicles 8:12-13 relates further that Solomon followed David's orders and appointed the priests for their sacrificial duties and the Levites for their duties of leading the praise music and helping the priests. The king also appointed the gatekeepers. In summary, Solomon organized the worship at the temple and participated in it at the stated times. Regularly meeting with fellow believers for fellowship and worship is one way of maintaining our focus on the Lord. Church members should not only participate in public worship but also see that they properly administer the work of the church.

1 Kings 9:26-28 reports another of Solomon's projects. The king developed a thriving commercial shipping operation in partnership with Hiram, king of Tyre. In Ezion Geber at the head of the Red Sea (Gulf of Aqaba), Solomon built ships. Hiram supplied experienced sailors who served with Solomon's men. They brought back a huge supply of gold from Ophir. The location of Ophir is uncertain, thought to be either in southeastern Arabia, northeastern Africa, or even India. Since such voyages took three years (1 Kings 10:22), the distance could have been vast.

Solomon's shipping enterprise was widespread and a vital part of the financial success of his kingdom. God gave Solomon the wisdom and excellent administrative skills to complete his many building projects. He did not let those tasks distract him from focusing on spiritual priorities. He maintained his focus on the Lord, and the Lord blessed his labors.

Christians must guard against allowing legitimate concerns to distract them from giving priority to spiritual concerns. Most folk are quite busy. They have demanding responsibilities at home, at church, in the community, and on their jobs. Becoming absorbed with legitimate concerns can distract us from focusing on the Lord and His purposes for us. In his earlier years, Solomon avoided that pitfall.

QUEEN OF SHEBA'S VISIT (10:1-13)

Solomon's fame spread to other nations. The queen of

Sheba and her actions bear witness to how Solomon's fame, including his relationship to the Lord, had spread. Many scholars identify Sheba with the ancient Sabeen kingdom in the southern part of Arabia (present-day Yemen). Job 6:19 refers to the people of Sheba as "traveling merchants." Ezekiel 27:22 records that they traded all kinds of spices, precious stones, and gold. The queen had heard Solomon's fame was due to the blessings of his Lord. She wondered who this God was who could make such a great king. She came to see for herself and to test his wisdom with some difficult questions. She probably also wanted to explore a trade alliance with him.

The queen made the 1,500-mile trip from Sheba to Jerusalem, arriving in Jerusalem with her camel caravan carrying spices, large amounts of gold, and precious stones. Solomon answered all her questions with the wisdom God had given him. The questions might have been proverbs, parables, sayings, or riddles of various kinds (Prov. 1:6). She also might have been seeking spiritual insight. Jesus later referred to the queen of Sheba, the "Queen of the South," as having come from the "ends of the earth" to listen to Solomon's wisdom (Matt. 12:42).

Verses 4-5: The queen was deeply impressed with Solomon. These two verses briefly describe what the queen observed—the wisdom of his answers to her questions to be sure, but in addition his court and his stately leadership in temple worship. The Hebrew word for overwhelmed means "totally out of breath, or spirit." One might say today it all took her breath away.

Verses 6-7: Before her visit to Solomon, the queen had decided the reports she had heard about him and his kingdom were greatly exaggerated. After seeing for herself, she decided the reports she had heard understated the king's achievements and wisdom.

The queen had been skeptical, and that is understandable. However, to her credit, she investigated. The reports of others often are helpful, but nothing can beat a firsthand experience. All of us would do well to follow her example of refusing to sit on the sidelines of skepticism and of personally seeking the truth, especially about the things of the Lord.

The queen of Sheba commented on how happy Solomon's men and officials must have been to be able to hear their king's wisdom all the time. She also praised Solomon's Lord, who must have been very pleased with Solomon to make him Israel's king. The queen saw that the reputation of Solomon was rooted in his relationship with the Lord and in the Lord's blessings on him. She also concluded that the Lord's eternal love for Israel was expressed in giving them Solomon as the king to maintain justice and righteousness in Israel. Both Solomon and Israel owed their fame and honor to the Lord God. Before the queen left, she gave Solomon an impressive quantity of gold, spices, and precious stones. Her gift of spices was the largest ever given to the king. Solomon also gave the queen gifts before she departed. He gave her things for which she had asked along with other gifts from his treasury.

The Bible does not suggest that Solomon set out to make a name for himself. Rather, Solomon's reputation was a fulfillment of God's promise to give the king wisdom, wealth, and honor. The Lord had promised that in Solomon's lifetime he would have no equal among kings (1 Kings 3:12). The Lord made Solomon wiser than any other man (4:31).

Some people believe that to succeed in life they must focus on impressing others with their accomplishments. To that end, some give all their time to advancing their careers. Christians must guard against wanting to make a name for themselves. They must keep their focus on the Lord and His purposes and let the Lord take care of the other matters.

Solomon's wealth is emphasized in 1 Kings 10:11-12, 14-29. Hiram's ships brought in gold, almuq wood, and precious stones from Ophir for the king's treasury. Almuq wood could have been sandalwood, bright red in color, heavy and close-grained, and most suitable for decorative carving and for making musical instruments.

SOLOMON'S WEALTH (10:14-29)

The author of 1 Kings already had reported on Solomon's building projects and his worldwide fame. In the following verses he described further the king's material wealth. Wealth had been one of God's promises to the young king.

Verse 14: Solomon received gold from many sources. Some of those sources already mentioned were Hiram of Tyre (9:14), Ophir through his shipping enterprises (9:28; 10:11), and the queen of Sheba (10:10). Hiram and the queen each gave Solomon 120 talents of gold. The weight of the gold he received each year was 666 talents, possibly around 25 tons.

Verse 15: Other sources of income added to the king's wealth. Revenues came into his treasury from taxes levied on the activities of merchants and traders as well as from Arabian kings and governors of the land.

Merchants and traders were business people who bought and sold goods throughout the land. The Arabian kings were the tribal chiefs in the desert to the south and east of Jerusalem. Solomon allowed them to rule over their people, but they had to pay him tribute. Wealth also came to the king from tolls or tariffs on the trade routes through his kingdom. Throughout Solomon's kingdom signs of great wealth were apparent.

The king decorated the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon with 200 large gold-plated shields and 300 smaller ones. Actual large shields were rectangular or oval in shape, designed to cover the entire body of the armed infantryman. Smaller shields were round and were used by the archers. The royal bodyguard may have used the decorative shields for ceremonial purposes in the palace. Solomon's throne was unlike any other throne of his day. He made it out of ivory and overlaid it with gold. Six steps led up to the throne-chair that sat between the figures of two lions. Also, each step had a lion on both ends. Second Chronicles 9:18 says a footstool of gold was attached to the throne. Even the king's goblets were made of gold as were the household articles in the Palace of the Forest of Lebanon. The king did not use silver, for silver was not considered of much worth. Gold was the material fit for royalty.

Solomon had great material wealth. He was "greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth" (1 Kings 10:23). God had promised Solomon wealth along with wisdom because Solomon had not asked the Lord for wealth (3:11-13). Some 24 years later, the Lord had made Solomon the wealthiest king alive.

Being devoted to the Lord and keeping one's focus on Him helps keep wealth in proper perspective. Jesus declared that one could not serve both God and money (Luke 16:13). He taught us to pray for God's kingdom to come and to trust Him for our daily bread (Matt. 6:10-11). The Lord warned that the desire for wealth could choke out the growth of the Word of God in us (Mark 4:19). He used Himself as an example of someone who did not own a "place to lay his head" (Luke 9:58).

Paul warned Timothy that "the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs" (1 Tim. 6:10). He also described the last days as a time when people will be "lovers of themselves, lovers of money" (2 Tim. 3:2).

We who are Christians should thank the Lord for material blessings, and we should use those blessings in the work of His kingdom. Nevertheless, we must always be on guard and not let material wealth distract us from our focus on the Lord.

Verse 22: Solomon's business ventures brought in some of his wealth. He had a fleet of trading ships in addition to the ships that belonged to Hiram. The words trading ships translate the Hebrew word "Tarshish." Tarshish was a trading center somewhere in the western Mediterranean Sea. Ships large enough to make a trading voyage that far and back came to be called Tarshish, meaning "large trading vessels."

Builders designed these large merchant ships to carry ore and other kinds of cargo. Eze-kiel 27:12 says that Tarshish exchanged "silver, iron, tin and lead" for the merchandise that Tyre brought to them. Solomon's fleet made a three-year trip to various foreign countries, bringing back such items as gold, silver, ivory, apes and baboons. Some scholars believe the Hebrew word translated baboons means "peacocks." Either translation shows that Solomon brought ex-otic, and thus expensive, animals or birds into his kingdom.

Solomon's alliance with Hiram played a key part in many aspects of Solomon's reign. Hiram provided Solomon both workers and materials in building the temple and probably the palace. He continued to supply lumber for

other building projects. He and Solomon had a joint venture in the shipping business. Solomon built ships and Hiram's men helped sail them in his import and export trade (9:26-28). Both kings benefited from their alliance. The report of Solomon's riches and wisdom brought people from all nations known to the inspired biblical writer to seek an audience with the king. Everyone who came brought him a gift. From these visitors he received silver, gold, robes, weapons, spices, horses, and mules. Mules usually were reserved for the king's family (2 Sam. 13:29). The common folk rode don-keys. David told his trusted confidants to put Solomon on his mule when they took him to Gihon to anoint him king (1 Kings 1:33). Solomon introduced the use of horses and chariots in Israel. Egypt and other cultures had used them, but not Israel. Solomon changed that. He had 1,400 chariots and 12,000 horses that he kept in various cities and in Jerusalem (10:26). These chariots and horses were the state-of-the-art weapons used in warfare.

Solomon's silver and gold was so plentiful that it was viewed as common as stones (see 2 Chron. 1:15). Also, cedar was as plentiful as the everpresent sycamore-fig trees in the foothills between the Mediterranean Sea and the highlands. (This tree was different from our sycamore tree.) Egyptians used it for making mummy cases. The tree's widespread branches provided welcomed shade along the wayside.

Solomon also had a lucrative horse business. The king's merchants purchased horses and chariots from Egypt and horses from Kue. Kue was probably in the area of Cilicia in Asia Minor (modern Turkey). These royal merchants exported them to the kings of the Hittites and the kings of the Arameans (Syria).

Imagine the reaction of some of the first readers of the Book of 1 Kings. The events in this book took place sometimes during Solomon's reign (970-930 B.C.). The author wrote 1 and 2 Kings, which were originally one book, around 550 B.C. after the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in 587 B.C. Imagine how those exiles in Babylon felt as they read of the wealth and prosperity of Israel in its time of greatest power and splendor. The poverty-stricken and captive people must have found difficulty in believing their nation was ever so blessed.

God gave Solomon wisdom to organize many successful business ventures, a number of which were innovative for Israel. The king had many concerns and responsibilities. Again, he did not allow them to detract him from His commitment to the Lord. The God who blessed him with such success also gave him wisdom to know how to deal with it during those first 24-plus years of his reign. One of the proverbs that might have come from him was true during those good years: "Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make your paths straight" (Prov. 3:5-6).

How do Christians guard against letting the legitimate concerns of life distract them from their focus on spiritual priorities? This lesson has mentioned the following: (1) meet regularly with fellow believers for fellowship and worship; (2) seek ways of advancing the Lord's purposes rather than yourself; (3) keep a biblical perspective on material wealth.

Underlying all of those practices is the basic need to bring every aspect of our lives under the lordship of Christ. That means making Him Lord of every part of our lives, not just the "re-ligious" part. That includes prayerfully searching the Word of God for His instructions about how to live for Him. We need to do this regularly because we need His directions each day. We are unable to obey the Lord in our own strength, so we must look to Him and claim His strength for following Him. He will help us as we consciously and consistently seek to keep our focus on Him.

First Kings 1-10 records the first 24 years of King Solomon's reign. Generally speaking, those were good years. He followed the Lord, and the Lord gave him wisdom to serve Israel successfully. He became famous for being a wise king, a successful builder, an effective administrator, and an astute businessman. The Lord made Solomon a wise and rich king who ruled a powerful and secure kingdom.

The account of Solomon's reign changes its tone in chapter 11. The inspired writer began to mention negative facts about the king. The remainder of 1 Kings records the results of the king's disobedience to the Lord on himself, his family, and his kingdom.

SOLOMON'S WIVES (11:1-13)

After the glowing reports of Solomon's achievements and splendor in chapter 10, chapter 11 begins to present a darker aspect of Israel's third king's reign. First Kings 11:1-13 reports the impact of worldly influences that enticed Solomon away from his commitment to the Lord. Verse 1: The word however alerts the reader that Solomon's focus on the Lord was endangered by the influence of his foreign wives. The king loved many foreign women from the nations surrounding Israel. Pharaoh's daughter was from Egypt, south of Israel. Moabites and Edomites lived southeast of Jerusalem, and Ammonites to the east. The Sidonians were from Phoenicia to the northwest, and Hittites lived throughout Canaan. Solomon's marriages to women of other nations were, at least in part, politically motivated. His foreign wives were part of his foreign policy through which he established peace treaties and trade alliances with their fathers who were kings of those nations.

Verse 2: While the marriages may have been politically pragmatic, they proved to be a spiritual disaster for Solomon. The women were from nations of which God specifically had said, "You must not intermarry with them" (see Ex. 34:16; Deut. 7:3-4). The Lord's prohibition against such intermarriages was for spiritual reasons, not racial reasons. Such marriages held the possibility and strong probability that the non-Israelites would lead the Israelites into idolatry.

Political motives aside, Solomon held fast to his foreign women in love. The Hebrew word translated love means "a strong emotional attachment" that implies a desire to be in the presence of the object of that love. Love for his wives eventually motivated Solomon to grant his wives their wish to have shrines where they could worship their gods.

Verse 3: The wives of royal birth were born to kings and thus were princesses. Concubines were sort of second-class wives, not having the full status of wives but belonging exclusively to Solomon just as wives belonged to him. The number of wives and concubines mentioned probably represents the total included in Solomon's harem over the span of his reign.

Polygamy was a practice of many of Israel's kings but probably not of the average family in the kingdom. David

had wives and concubines (2 Sam. 5:13). Most men could not afford to support more than one wife in the family. Regardless, God's plan in Genesis 2:24 was and is one man and one woman for life (Mark 10:6-9).

Having many wives and concubines were signs of wealth and importance. Solomon began his reign with only a desire to rule well. As God prospered his reign, his wealth and reputation grew. He apparently began to focus more on himself and the benefits of royalty than on the Lord. He enjoyed the reputation of being wiser, richer, more famous, and more powerful than kings of other nations. Many wives and concubines were among his impressive status symbols. Solomon's harem of 1,000 women indicated his great wealth with which he supported the huge household.

However, Solomon violated Moses' instructions forbidding Israelites to intermarry with the nations of Canaan. Moses also had declared that the king of Israel "must not take many wives, or his heart will be led astray" (Deut. 17:17). In disobeying God in this matter, Solomon opened himself to worldly influences and endangered his commitment to the Lord. Believers today can guard their commitment to the Lord by avoiding entangling relationships with people whose beliefs and lifestyles are oriented to this world rather than to the Lord.

Verse 4: The word heart appears four times 1 Kings 11:4,9. Three times the reference is to Solomon's heart, once it is to David's heart. The word indicates the inner being of a person, including mind, emotion, and will. These verses indicate that Solomon's loss of focus on the Lord began in his heart before it appeared in his actions. The actions occurred as Solomon grew old. However, Solomon's change of heart probably occurred slowly throughout his reign.

Solomon's wives influenced him to turn to their gods. Solomon no longer was fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. David was by no means a perfect man, but throughout his life he had maintained a deep commitment to the Lord. Verse 5: Solomon began to worship the Lord halfheartedly as he included other gods as objects of worship. He did not want to love only one wife, nor did he want to worship only one God, the God of his fathers and his na-

tion. He also followed (literally, "walked after") the gods his wives worshiped. He did not quit worshiping the Lord, but he did quit worshiping the Lord exclusively. Solomon's religion became a mixture of many religions. Two gods he worshiped were Ashtoreth [ASH tuh reth] the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech [MOH lek] the detestable god of the Ammonites. Ashtoreth is the plural of Ashtaroth [ASH tuh rahth], a goddess associated with fertility, love, and war. Her male consort was apparently Baal. Followers of Ashtoreth included in their worship lewd sexual rites. Both male and female prostitutes performed sex acts in pagan worship.

The Greek form of her name is Astarte. Molech was an astral god associated with the worship and significance of the stars. Another name for Molech is Milcom [MIL kahm] (1 Kings 11:5, KJV; the NIV translates "Milcom" as "Molech" for clarity of meaning). The worship of Molech included the offering of human sacrifices (Lev. 20:2-5; 2 Kings 23:10).

Verse 6: Making or worshiping idols always is evil in the eyes of the LORD (see also Deut. 4:25). Solomon did not meet the standard God set for kings. Neither did he live up to the standard set by his father. He broke the first commandment—"You shall have no other gods before me" (Ex. 20:3).

Verse 7: To fulfill the wishes of his wives and to please them, Solomon built a high place on a hill east of Jerusalem for Chemosh [KEE mahsh], the god of Moab. He also built one for Molech, a god of the Ammonites, on the same hill. That hill was the Mount of Olives, the place where Jesus later went to pray and to worship His Father. It was directly across a valley from the temple. At the time Josiah destroyed the shrines Solomon built to the idols, it was identified as the "Hill of Corruption" (2 Kings 23:13).

Verse 8: Solomon likewise built worship sites for all his foreign wives. He must have built high places for idol shrines in many places around Jerusalem or on many hills in Israel. His actions set the stage for him and for all of Israel to become heavily involved in idol worship. Marrying foreign wives opened Solomon to worldly influences that endangered his commitment to the Lord. When he built pagan worship places for his wives, he

compromised that commitment. He no longer worshiped the Lord only or followed Him obediently. Maybe he convinced himself that building the shrines would not hurt anyone.

Nevertheless, the motivation to please his wives that moved him to build the shrines also moved him to go with his wives to worship false gods. Believers must seriously evaluate their motives and actions lest they allow the world's call to "toleration" and its denunciation of "ex-clusiveness" to lead them away from their wholehearted commitment to the Lord. They need to hold firm to biblical truth and to remain loyal to the Lord. Verses 9-10: Disobedience is costly to the one who disobeys and also impacts others. The Lord does not disregard His people's sins. When Solomon built idolatrous worship shrines, the Lord became angry with him. Moses had taught Israel that "the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God" (Deut. 4:24). He solemnly warned the nation against practicing idolatry. The LORD became angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from the LORD. For Solomon to turn from the Lord after being blessed so marvelously by Him in the past was irrational as well as irreligious.

The Lord was the God of Israel. Out of the Lord's love and sovereign grace, He had chosen the Israelites as His people. He did not choose the nations for whose national gods Solomon had built places of worship. Also, the Lord had been gracious and loving toward Solomon. When Solomon was born, God told Nathan to name him "Jedidiah," which means "loved by the Lord" (2 Sam. 12:24-25). The Lord led David to designate Solomon as his successor, even though he was younger than his brother Adonijah. Furthermore, the Lord had appeared to him twice. The first time was at the beginning of his reign (1 Kings 3:5). The Lord appeared in a dream and promised Solomon wisdom, riches, and honor. He also promised the king a long life if he would obey the Lord as his father David did.

The second appearance was 24 years later when Solomon dedicated the temple. At that appearance, the Lord promised a successful future to Solomon if he would obey the covenant obligations. He pointedly warned that if the king or his sons did not obey but began to worship other gods, the Lord would cut off Israel from the land

and reject the temple (1 Kings 9:3-7). In spite of God's rich blessings, special appearances, and personal warning against idolatry, Solomon had turned from Him. Verse 11: The Lord revealed to Solomon part of the price he would pay for allowing worldly influences to lead him astray. Since this is your attitude literally is "because this has been with you." The reference could be to Solomon's action of following other gods. Because verses 9-10 stress Solomon's "heart had turned away from the Lord," the NIV translation is appropriate. In either case, Solomon's shift of heart loyalty led to his actions of disobedience. This would cost his dynasty the kingdom. The Lord had given Solomon his reign over the whole nation of Israel; He also could take it away. God had taken the kingdom from the house of Saul because of his disobedience and had given it to David (1 Sam. 13:13-14). God would give the kingdom to one of Solomon's subordinates (meaning one who was serving Solomon), not to one of His sons. That subordinate was Jeroboam, who was in charge of Solomon's labor force. We have no record that Solomon repented when confronted by the Lord. David had repented when confronted by Nathan; Psalm 51 is his confession. As far as we know, Solomon continued in his self-chosen lifestyle until his death.

Verse 12: Though God declared His intention to take the kingdom of Israel away from Solomon, He would not do it immediately. For the sake of David, God would delay taking it away in Solomon's lifetime. Instead, He would tear it out of the hand of Solomon's son. That son was Rehoboam.

Verse 13: The one tribe over which Rehoboam would rule would be the tribe of Judah. (Later, the Benjaminites in the area near Jerusalem also sided with Judah against the northern tribes, 1 Kings 12:21.) However, giving Rehoboam one tribe would not be for Solomon's sake, but David's and Jerusalem's sake. Jerusalem was the city the Lord had chosen for His temple. Solomon's disobedience cost him dearly, but it did not defeat nor change God's plans in which Israel and David played key roles. Through Israel in general and through David in particular, God would send Jesus Christ, the seed of Israel and the seed of David.

Solomon paid the price for his disobedience. The Lord left his son only one tribe to rule, although a powerful

tribe. Solomon's experience should motivate believers to hold to their commitment to the Lord. God will bless them if they do; He will bring judgment on them if they do not. The blessings of obedience far outweigh the terrible cost of disobedience.

SOLOMON'S ADVERSARIES (11:14-25)

The Lord allowed Solomon to continue ruling until his death. Meanwhile, He raised up two adversaries as part of His judgment against Solomon. The Hebrew word translated "adversary" is *satan*. This word was later transliterated letter for letter and applied to the devil, God's arch-adversary. The peace that marked Solomon's kingdom earlier in his reign began to erode in the face of external opposition.

The first adversary was Hadad the Edomite, a member of the royal house of Edom (11:14-22). Edom was a nation southeast and southwest of the Dead Sea, between Judah and the Gulf of Aqaba. Bozrah was its capital. Its people were descendants of Esau, Jacob's brother (Gen. 19:30-36). Opposition from Hadad adversely affected Solomon's use of the route to his seaport on the Gulf of Aqaba and the important trade routes from the south and east.

Hadad's enmity toward Israel stemmed from the days of David and Joab. David had conquered Edom in a battle. Joab and some of his troops stayed in Edom six months following David's victory and sought to kill all the Edomite men. Some Edomite officials who served Hadad's father, the king, fled with the boy by way of Midian and Paran to Egypt. Midian was south of Edom, and Paran was a wilderness west of Edom and south of Judah on the way to Egypt from Edom. Hadad grew up in Egypt. The pharaoh liked Hadad so much he gave him his wife's sister in marriage.

When Hadad heard that both David and Joab had died, he petitioned the pharaoh to allow him to go back to his own country of Edom. Receiving the ruler's permission, Hadad returned to Edom and became a problem to Israel. The second adversary God raised up against Solomon was Rezon of Zobah (11:23-25). Zobah was a region northeast of Damascus, an area later called Syria. Rezon had served Hadad, king of Zobah, but ran away from him. Gathering some men around him, Rezon led a band of rebels.

After David conquered Zobah (2 Sam. 8:3-6), Rezon led his rebels to capture Damascus, where he set himself up as ruler of Aram. Aram was the geographical name of an area of towns and settlements in what is now Syria and also a part of Babylon. Rezon caused trouble for Solomon from Damascus in the north, and Hadad caused trouble from the south. Even when both men were unable to harm Solomon directly, they were always a constant threat.

Again, Solomon was learning the cost of disobeying the Lord. Let us heed the warnings of God's Word. His Word is given to guide us into good and righteous paths in which He can best bless us.

JEROBOAM'S REBELLION (11:26-40)

Solomon's most serious adversary was within his own court in the person of one of his officials, Jeroboam from Zeredah, a town in the territory of Ephraim. Whereas Hadad was an Edomite and Rezon an Aramaean, Jeroboam was an Israelite. Jeroboam's name meant something like "people who contend" or "he who contends (for justice) for the people." His name suggests the part he would play in Solomon's kingdom.

Jeroboam had attracted Solomon's attention during the days of the king's extensive building projects. He was an industrious and skilled worker. Solomon chose him as the overseer of his whole labor force from "the house of Joseph" (1 Kings 11:28). Solomon's labor force was composed of forced-laborers. The term "house of Joseph" is used sometimes as a reference to the tribe of Ephraim (and perhaps Manasseh), which is the case here. At other times the term designates the whole Northern Kingdom, of which Ephraim was the leading tribe (Amos 5:6). One day as Jeroboam was leaving Jerusalem, he met Ahijah the prophet of Shiloh (1 Kings 11:29). Shiloh was about 30 miles north of Jerusalem. The Scriptures do not record many actions of prophets during Solomon's reign, so Solomon must have ruled with very little counsel from the Lord's prophets. The prophet Nathan was involved in bringing Solomon to the throne, but we have no other word about prophets until Ahijah from Shiloh. When Jeroboam and Ahijah met (11:29), Ahijah tore his cloak into 12 pieces, and gave 10 of them to Jeroboam. Then Ahijah delivered the Lord's message. The Lord would tear the kingdom from Solomon and give Jeroboam

10 of the tribes. Solomon's heir would rule over his own tribe, the tribe of Judah. (The tribe of Simeon had been allotted land within Judah's territory and virtually had been assimilated into Judah.)

The Lord would divide the kingdom of Israel because Solomon and the people had turned from Him to worship idols (11:33). They should have been walking in the ways of the Lord, doing what was right in His eyes, and keeping His laws as had Solomon's father David. For David's sake, the Lord would not take the whole kingdom from Solomon. Also, He would allow Solomon to continue ruling Israel all the days of his life. After Solomon's death, the Lord would take 10 tribes from Solomon's successor and give those tribes to Jeroboam. The Lord would leave one tribe under the rule of David's dynasty so David would "always have a lamp" before the Lord in Jerusalem (11:36). The word "lamp" may point back to 2 Samuel 21:17 where David is called "the lamp of Israel." The rule of David's grandson in Jerusalem symbolized the Lord's keeping His promise to David—"Your house and your kingdom will endure forever before me; your throne will be established forever" (2 Sam. 7:16). Solomon's disobedience would not cancel God's promise. At times in Israel's later history, no descendant of David ruled Israel. When the Lord Jesus Christ came, He was a legal descendant of the house of David. He is the King who rules forever.

The Lord told Jeroboam that he would be king over Israel, meaning the Northern Kingdom called "Israel." If Jeroboam would obey the Lord, walk in His ways, and do what was right in the Lord's eyes as David had done, then the Lord would build a dynasty from him to rule over Israel.

Through this action God would humble David's descendants, but He would not humble them forever. David's dynasty was the eternal one. First Kings 11:26 reads Jeroboam rebelled against the king. Maybe he tried to take over the throne before it was time. Perhaps Solomon simply learned what Ahijah had told Jeroboam (11:40). In either case, Solomon tried to kill Jeroboam; but he fled to Egypt where Shishak was pharaoh. Shishak had succeeded the pharaoh who gave his daughter in marriage to Solomon. Jeroboam remained in Egypt until Solomon died.

During Saul's reign, David had waited on God's timing to become king. During David's reign, Absalom had rebelled against his father and tried to take over his throne. Adonijah also had tried to assume the crown before David died. The attempts of Absalom, Adonijah, and Jeroboam failed. David succeeded because he waited on the Lord. Obeying God also means waiting on His timing.

SOLOMON'S DEATH (11:41-43)

These three verses present a pattern for reporting the death of a king that is used throughout 1 Kings. First is the source of the research for this history. Then we find the length of the king's reign, the fact of his death, his burial, and the name of his successor. Each king is characterized according to the standard David set. Each king either did evil or he did right in the eyes of the Lord. First Kings abruptly brings the report of Solomon's life to an end. Ten chapters are used to report his reign during the period Solomon was faithful to the Lord. Only 40 verses record the remaining years of Solomon's life when he had turned from the Lord. God's servants are useful to Him only when they focus on Him and obey His instructions.

The writer of 1 Kings had various sources available when he wrote under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. He must have done as Luke, the Gospel writer, had done. Luke indicated his awareness of many accounts of the life of Jesus. He "carefully investigated everything from the beginning" and sought to write an orderly account of the good news of Jesus Christ (Luke 1:1-3). One source of information about Solomon was "the book of the annals of Solomon" (1 Kings 11:41). Second Chronicles 9:29 lists other sources, namely, "the records of Nathan the prophet," "the prophecy of Ahijah," and "the visions of Iddo the seer."

Solomon reigned in Jerusalem for 40 years. He spent the first 24 years preparing for and building the temple and his palace. He spent the last 16 years ruling his kingdom and building up his political and economic strength. However, the spiritual strength of his reign must have reached its peak at the dedication of the temple. After that, decline set in. Solomon's son, Rehoboam, succeeded him as king.

Solomon had several good traits that serve as positive examples. He began by loving the Lord and making Him the center of his life, his focus. At the beginning of his reign He was humble enough to ask God for wisdom to rule. God's wisdom made him an organizational genius and an innovator in business and industry. His foreign policies were effective and brought peace and prosperity to his realm.

The king also had some negative traits. The extent of his activities indicated a great ambition to be wealthy, powerful, and renowned. Solomon used oppressive measures to accomplish his goals. He taxed heavily and used forced labor. He apparently tried to cheat a friend when he offered worthless settlements to Hiram. Because of his love for many women, he condoned and even practiced idolatry. No record exists that he consulted a prophet for a word from the Lord concerning his plans as had David.

One can say many complimentary things about Solomon. He was a king unusually blessed by the Lord, a person richer and wiser than anyone else of his day. Sometimes, though, a person's greatest strengths can be the sources of his or her greatest temptations. David's son was not able to handle God's blessings. He failed to guard against worldly influences. Let us heed the warning that his example gives to us in the Word of God.

BACKGROUND COMMENTARY FOR SEPT. 28

1 KINGS 12–14:20

The prophet Ahijah prophesied to Jeroboam [JER uh BOH uhm], Solomon's subordinate, that the Lord would make him king over the 10 northern tribes of Israel. The days of the united kingdom, ruled over by Saul, David, and Solomon, would end. David's faithfulness to God had produced a strong kingdom. Solomon's disobedience would bring the division of the kingdom. This lesson reveals how Rehoboam [REE huh BOH uhm] and Jeroboam both heeded counsel that ignored God's Word. The result was a longstanding national and spiritual tragedy.

ISRAEL DIVIDED (1 KINGS 12:1-24)

The 12 tribes of Israel never had lived together in perfect harmony. David was a Judean; and at King Saul's death, only the tribe of Judah accepted David as king. Saul was a Benjaminite, and the northern tribes recognized Saul's son as king. Civil war followed. Eventually, David was accepted as king by the northern tribes (2 Sam. 5:3). After Absalom's failed rebellion against King David, Sheba tried to capitalize on the tension between north and south by calling for a rebellion against David (20:1). King Solomon's demanding policies had added to the longstanding tension between north and south. His reign had been extremely luxurious and terribly expensive. To meet his extravagant needs, Solomon organized the nation into 12 sections. Each section had to supply the provisions for the huge royal household for one month of the year (1 Kings 4:7). That meant food for his table and feed for his many horses. Those daily provisions were enormous (4:22-23).

Solomon also had launched a massive building program throughout the nation. To obtain workers and finances, he had conscripted men from Israel and had levied heavy taxes. From the Israelites, he had conscripted 30,000 men. He organized them to serve in shifts of 10,000 men a month, meaning each man had to serve the king 1 month out of 3 (5:13-16; 9:15,22). Furthermore, Solomon made slave laborers out of the Canaanites who still lived in his kingdom. When Solomon died, his kingdom was in a state of unrest.

Solomon's son, Rehoboam, succeeded him as king. Rehoboam went to Shechem [SHECK uhm], an important city of the north, so the northern tribes could ratify him as king. Jeroboam, the Ephraimite to whom the Lord through Ahijah had promised the rule over 10 tribes, had sought refuge from Solomon in Egypt. Hearing of Rehoboam's trip to Shechem, Jeroboam returned to Ephraim. The stage was set for a confrontation. The leaders of the northern tribes came to Shechem for Rehoboam's confirmation as king, but they sent for Jeroboam. They asked him to go to Rehoboam and request that the burden of labor and taxes be reduced. Jeroboam did so, promising the new king that Israel (the northern tribes) would serve him as king if he would grant their request.

The northern tribes' request for relief showed their resentment of Solomon's policies. Much of their tax money and mandatory labor had been used in the south, not the north where they lived.

Note that Jeroboam did not ask Rehoboam to release the people from Solomon's oppressive measures. Rather, he requested the new king to lighten their load. Rehoboam instructed Jeroboam and the people to come back in three days for his answer.

Verse 6: In trying to decide on the best course of action, Rehoboam wisely sought advice. First, he turned to the elders who had served Solomon. These were older men, experienced in matters of government and well aware of political realities. They were well-equipped to give solid counsel.

Verse 7: Some Bible students believe the elders' advice for Rehoboam to be a servant-king was sound and appropriate, especially in light of Israel's deep dissatisfaction with the present situation. Others view the elders' advice as sneaky and conniving. They think the elders were telling the new king to act as though he were giving in and helping the people. After he had their commitment, he could demand that they continue to serve him as before.

The first interpretation seems best, for the elders no doubt were aware of the growing resentment under Solomon's reign. The elders recognized the principle of

reaping what is sown when they said in essence—serve the people, and the people will serve you. People generally appreciate and follow leaders whom they trust to do what is best for all concerned.

Verse 8: These young men must have grown up in or around the palace with Rehoboam and have served him in some capacity. They came from the more privileged families and represented a new generation that wanted greater wealth and prosperity than their fathers had under Solomon.

Verses 10-11: The young men's advice was in the form of a slogan that announced Rehoboam the son would be much more demanding and tougher on the people than was his father. In the mouths of those young men it expressed ambition, greed, and indifference for the people's well-being. The young advisors believed that giving in to the people's demands would show weakness and would result in an erosion of the king's authority and power. They thought the people would cave in to intimidation. They failed to understand that a bullying leadership style, which typically is rooted in insecurity, seldom retains a loyal following.

No record exists that the new king sought the Lord's wisdom as Solomon had at the beginning of his reign (3:1-15). David also had asked the Lord what to do when Saul died (2 Sam. 2:1). Rehoboam sought and evaluated advice on the basis of pride and selfish purposes. He ignored his responsibility as God's king to make decisions based on God's revealed wisdom and righteousness. Verses 13-14a: After the three days, Rehoboam gave Jeroboam and all the people his answer. Instead of showing understanding and compassion, the new king answered the people harshly. He had rejected the advice of the elders to grant the people's request. Instead, the king followed the advice of the young men, advice that was brash, selfish, and callous.

The advice of the elders does not imply that older men always give valuable advice or that younger men always give poor advice. Neither does this account teach that a wide gulf always divides generations. The verses simply report that the king received good advice as well as bad advice and chose to act on the bad advice. The Lord holds us believers responsible for following

godly advice that is in harmony with the His purposes and His Word. Over time we will receive solicited and unsolicited advice from many sources. We will be wise if we choose to follow the advice that is in line with biblical truth.

Rehoboam announced the policy he would follow as the new king (12:14b-15). He declared that he would make the people's burdens heavier, not lighter. He would scourge them with scorpions instead of whips. The word "scourge" was the term used to beat a slave. Rehoboam insulted the people by implying they were his slaves. He failed to view them as God's inheritance whom the king was to serve on the Lord's behalf.

Verse 16a: Rehoboam's decision not to listen to (that is, to hear and to heed) the people cost him dearly. When all Israel, meaning the northern tribes, heard Rehoboam's position, they declared their intentions. The rhetorical question "What share do we have in David?" was a declaration that they were severing all ties with David's tribe of Judah. "To your tents, O Israel!" was a call for the leaders of the northern tribes to return home. "Look after your own house, O David!" was a way of telling Rehoboam he could reign over Judah if that tribe so desired. As for the northern tribes, they would have nothing to do with Rehoboam.

The Israelites went home to their tribes in the north, leaving Rehoboam king over only David's tribe of Judah. (As noted previously, the tribe of Simeon, located within the borders of Judah, had been virtuously assimilated by Judah. Also, the people of Benjamin who lived near Jerusalem apparently sided with Judah against the northern tribes.) Rehoboam chose to follow bad advice, a choice that precipitated the end of 80 years of the united kingdom. The tribes never were reunited.

Rehoboam quickly sought to regain lost ground (12:18-19). While still in Shechem, he sent Adoniram either to make peace with the northern tribes or to force them to obey Rehoboam. Adoniram was the official in charge of forced labor, a position he had held under both David and Solomon (2 Sam. 20:24; 1 Kings 4:6; 5:14). Perhaps Rehoboam assumed his maturity and experience would provide him a hearing. However, the new king had misjudged badly the depth of hostility against

the royal policies. The people violently rejected Adoniram and stoned him to death.

King Rehoboam barely escaped the outbreak of violence and fled to Jerusalem. He reigned there over Judah, the Southern Kingdom. The 10 tribes in the north chose Jeroboam as king over the Northern Kingdom, sometimes called "Israel." Rehoboam determined to put down the northern tribes' rebellion. He mustered 180,000 fighting men from Judah and Benjamin for that purpose. The Lord stopped him from fighting Israel by sending a word through an unnamed man of God. The message was not to war against the Israelites, for their separation from the united kingdom was the work of the Lord. Rehoboam obeyed the Lord and did not attack. The prophecy of Ahijah to Jeroboam about the Lord's intent to give him 10 tribes had come to pass (1 Kings 11:29-39).

RIVAL RELIGION ESTABLISHED (12:25-33)

As king of the Northern Kingdom, Jeroboam began to consolidate his kingdom. He made Shechem his capital and fortified it. He also fortified Peniel, a town across the Jordan on a major east-west road from Gilead to Damascus. Peniel would protect him from an invasion from the Arameans and from the Ammonites who lived east of Shechem (12:25).

Verses 26-27: Jeroboam had sought to secure his reign politically and militarily, but he worried that his kingdom would revert to the house of David. He feared that the people would change their minds and accept Rehoboam as king. His apprehension was rooted in the Lord's command that the temple in Jerusalem be the established central place of worship for His people.

Jeroboam feared that if the people continued to go there to offer sacrifices, they eventually would be won over to Rehoboam of Judah. Then they would kill Jeroboam and reunite with the Southern Kingdom.

Verse 28: Jeroboam evidently shared his concerns with an unspecified source and sought advice. The advice given apparently suggested or agreed to a plan he had proposed concerning worship practices. He acted on the advice he received. Jeroboam made two golden calves (young bulls) and set them up as objects of worship. He told the people that for them to travel all the way to

Jerusalem to offer sacrifices and worship at the temple was too demanding. He declared, Here are your gods, O Israel, who brought you up out of Egypt. Jeroboam almost quoted verbatim Aaron's words at the time Aaron had made the golden calf idol in the wilderness (Ex. 32:4). Egypt had a cow-goddess called Hathor. The Egyptians also worshiped a sacred bull named Apis. Jeroboam had spent time in Egypt during his exile from Solomon. Some Bible students believe his two golden calves represented Egyptian idols. However, Israel viewed bulls as representing strength and creative power. The large reservoir that held water at the temple stood on supports fashioned in the form of 12 bulls. Perhaps Jeroboam meant for the bulls to represent the Lord God. Whatever he had in mind, making and worshiping the golden calves violated the first two of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-6). By following bad advice, Jeroboam planted the first seeds of destruction of the northern tribes. The king set up one of the golden calves in Bethel and the other in Dan. Bethel was near Jerusalem in the southern part of his kingdom, and Dan was in the far north. He hoped providing convenient alternate locations would encourage the people to offer their sacrifices nearby rather than in Jerusalem. Jeroboam's plan to keep them out of Jerusalem, however, was not of God. Worshiping the calves at either Bethel or Dan was sin. Jerusalem was the Lord's appointed place of sacrifice and worship. Jeroboam made other religious changes.

He built shrines on high places. He appointed people who were not Levites as priests to serve at the high places. Jeroboam himself offered sacrifices at Bethel, the royal house of worship. He changed the Feast of Tabernacles from the seventh month to the eighth month. This festival was Israel's most joyous religious festival. Harvest time might have been somewhat later in the north than in the south. Maybe the king hoped that changing it to the eighth month would lead his people to think the festival was uniquely theirs. His hope was that they would not want to travel to Jerusalem to observe the festival.

King Jeroboam was not willing to rely on the Lord's promise to give him a kingdom and a dynasty. He did not have faith that the God who gave him the tribes could keep him in power. Instead, he took matters into his own hands. Maybe he told himself he was being realistic.

He likely rationalized that he was simply helping the Lord fulfill His promise by cutting off the people from Jerusalem.

Before we throw too many stones at Jeroboam, perhaps we need to evaluate how we are justifying particular practices of our own. Are we placing our full trust in the Lord and following His ways?

IDOLATRY CONDEMNED (13:1-34)

Jeroboam established his own brand of religion for his people. He followed his own ideas and the advice of those he consulted, but he did not consult the Lord. So, the Lord sent a man of God from Judah to Bethel to deliver a word from God to Jeroboam. Man of God is a term used to describe a true prophet sent by God.

Jeroboam was standing by the altar to make an offering in the worship center in Bethel. Since the king was preparing to make a sacrifice as did Solomon at the temple dedication in Jerusalem (8:22,62-63), some Bible students think Jeroboam was dedicating that altar to the Lord.

The king was breaking several of God's laws that day. He was worshiping before a golden calf, thus breaking two of the Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-6). He also had set up an idol-calf in Dan and built places for idol worship on high places throughout the land. He was at a worship center in Bethel, whereas God had chosen Jerusalem as the place to worship. He was standing by an altar he must have made; the temple altar in Jerusalem was the place to offer sacrifices. Jeroboam was not a Levitical priest. Only priests could offer sacrifices.

God had made Jeroboam king as judgment on Solomon because of Solomon's idolatry. Conditioned on Jeroboam's obedience, the Lord also had offered him an opportunity to have his descendants rule after him (11:37-38). Jeroboam proved he did not have a heart for God.

When the man of God approached Jeroboam and the altar, he proclaimed God's words against the altar, condemning the idolatry Jeroboam had brought to Israel. He prophesied that Josiah of the house of David would be born and would sacrifice the illegal priests of Jeroboam's high places on that altar. (Jeroboam was king of Israel

930-909 B.C., and Josiah was king of Judah 640-609 B.C., some 300 years later.) Burning human bones on the altar would pollute it, making it unacceptable for sacred use.

The prophet then gave a sign that his message was a true word from God. If the sign came true, then people would know the prophetic word would come true. His sign was a prediction that the altar where Jeroboam stood would split apart and the ashes on it would pour out. Jeroboam angrily pointed toward the man of God and ordered those nearby to seize him. As he did so, his hand shriveled up; he could not pull it back. Also, the altar split apart and the ashes spilled out. The prophet's sign had come to pass. The king begged the man of God, "Intercede with the LORD your God" and ask Him to restore the hand (13:6). The prophet prayed and God healed the hand.

Jeroboam invited the man of God to eat with him so he could give him a gift. A custom dictated that one give a gift to the person of whom he asked a favor. Custom declared also that to eat with another was to enter a special relationship with that person. The prophet declined, for the Lord had commanded him neither to eat or drink in Bethel nor to return from Bethel the same way. God had rejected Jeroboam's idolatry, and God's prophet must have nothing to do with him or the people of Bethel. He was not to give the king any opportunity to influence him or to win him over.

After the man of God from Judah delivered his message, he began his journey home by a different route. An old prophet of Bethel heard what the man of God had done in the city. The prophet invited the man of God to come back to Bethel and eat with him. The man of God declined and cited the same reason he had given to Jeroboam. Lying to the man of God, the old prophet said an angel told him to invite the man of God to his house. The prophet from Judah consented and went to the man's home.

The man of God heeded a reported word of an angel that contradicted the sure word he had received from God. He chose to follow ungodly advice and paid dearly for it. Even sincere Christians must not follow advice that contradicts God's revealed Word.

The Lord then gave the old prophet a genuine message for the man of God. Because the man of God had not obeyed the Lord's command not to eat or drink in Bethel, he would not be buried in his fathers' tomb. After the prophet from Judah resumed his journey, a lion killed him on the road. The old prophet from Bethel brought the Judean prophet's body back to his house, mourned over it, and then buried the body in his own grave. He instructed his sons to bury his bones beside the man of God. He declared his belief that the Judean prophet's message against the Bethel altar and all the shrines on the high places certainly would come true.

The prophetic message and the miraculous shriveling and healing of his hand did not move Jeroboam to change his evil ways (13:33-34). Even though God condemned Jeroboam's form of religion, the king did not repent. God's message implied good advice to him by letting him know that the new approach to religion was unacceptable. The king ignored the good advice. He continued what he had been doing. His action in the realm of religion was the sin that led to the destruction of his house or dynasty. Also, his sin was another step toward the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

JUDGMENT ANNOUNCED ON JEROBOAM (14:1-20)

Jeroboam's son Abijah became ill. He told his wife to disguise herself so no one would know she was the king's wife. She was to go to Ahijah at Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim to learn whether his son would recover. Ahijah was the prophet who had told Jeroboam he would become king of the northern tribes (11:29-39). No explanation is given for the disguise. Maybe it was for protection. Perhaps Jeroboam was embarrassed for others to know he consulted a prophet of God. The king evidently respected the man whose prophecy that he would become king had been fulfilled. Possibly he felt guilt for his religious apostasy and did not want Ahijah to recognize the woman as his wife.

The Lord told Ahijah that Jeroboam's wife was coming and gave him a message for her. Jeroboam had sent his wife to find out about their son's fate. She learned that and more. She would return with bad news about Jeroboam's son, himself, his entire family, and the nation of Israel.

Jeroboam had failed to keep God's commands or to follow Him with all his heart as had David. Rather, he had done more evil than anyone who lived before him. Jeroboam's specific sin was making idols and leading the nation into idolatry. He had turned his back on God. In oriental society, people did not turn their backs to a king. The essence of Jeroboam's idolatry was turning his back on the King of kings. As judgment, every male in Jeroboam's line would be wiped out. His sick son would die when his mother arrived home.

The Lord would raise up a king over Israel who would cut off Jeroboam's family. That king was Baasha (15:28-30). The Lord would uproot the people of Israel from their own land and scatter them beyond the Euphrates River. He would send them into exile because they provoked him with idolatry, especially that at Dan and Bethel. After hearing all of this bad news, Jeroboam's wife went to Tirzah. Tirzah was the second location of the king of Israel's residences (after Shechem and before Samaria under Omri, 16:23-24). Her son died just as Ahijah had said. Jeroboam reigned for 22 years and died. Nadab his son succeeded him as king.