

*Then he arose and followed Elijah, and served him*

Elijah left Horeb to find Elisha who was ploughing with twelve yoke of oxen. When he found Elisha, he threw his mantle on him (19). Elisha understood the significance of this act which was that he should follow Elijah and succeed him (20).

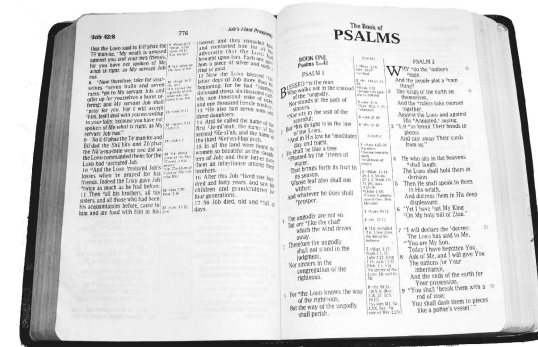
Elisha asked permission to bid his parents farewell which Elijah readily granted. You may wonder whether this showed a lack of commitment in the light of Luke 9:61–62). Dale Ralph Davis points out that ‘in Luke 9 saying good-bye is an obstacle to kingdom commitment, whereas in 1 Kings 19 it functions as an entry into kingdom service. Elisha goes back to sever his connections, not to delay his commitment. He does not return to hold back, but to cut loose’ (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY – page 281).

Elisha killed a yoke of oxen, and boiled their flesh, using the yoke, etc for fuel. He gave it to the people (perhaps his family and friends) to eat, *then he arose and followed Elijah, and served him* (21). Elisha was later described as the one ‘*who poured water on the hands of Elijah*’ (2 Kings 3:11). God had called him away from ploughing the fields to waiting upon Elijah as his personal servant. The Lord was preparing Elisha to do great things for himself, however.

Elisha was prepared to be a servant of Elijah before ever he became a prophet. When God calls us, perhaps we expect to have position or power. In our sinful hearts we may desire honour, but the Lord desires humility in us. **Are you willing to serve the Lord in performing the lowly tasks, in doing work that goes unnoticed by most people, (but not by the Lord)?** We must be truly humble like our precious Saviour (John 13:4–17; Philippians 2:3–8). *God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble* (1 Peter 5:5). *Do you seek great things for yourself? Do not seek them* (Jeremiah 45:5).

# PILGRIM BIBLE NOTES

God's holy Word simply explained and applied



**April 2017**

1 Kings chapters 7 to 19

*What are you doing here, Elijah?*

Jezebel sent a messenger to Elijah stating that within twenty-four hours she would have him killed (1–2). *And when he saw \* that, he arose and ran for his life* to Beersheba (3). He would have been bitterly disappointed that there was no evidence of national repentance following the defeat of Baal. We must not be surprised at the hardness of the human heart. The discouraged prophet wanted to die; he had had enough (4). He was physically, emotionally and spiritually drained. He keenly felt the loneliness and spiritual isolation often suffered by those who are godly (10). **It is a good thing that the Lord does not always answer our prayers as we desire.** We may pray foolishly when we are feeling discouraged or depressed. The prophet who prayed that he might die never did! He was one of two men in Scripture who went to be with the Lord without dying (2 Kings 2:11; cp. Genesis 5:24).

Notice how God cared for and encouraged his servant. Elijah rested and slept and the Lord sent an angel to feed him (5–8). He then *went in the strength of that food forty days and forty nights* until he reached Horeb (Sinai). The Lord twice asked him, *‘What are you doing here, Elijah?’* (9,13). He had been ready to give up and wanted to die, but the Lord had more work for him. He was to anoint Hazael as king over Syria and Jehu as king over Israel. God would use both of these men as instruments of judgment against the wicked house of Ahab. He was also to anoint Elisha to succeed him as a prophet (15–17). God had a faithful remnant in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal (18).

Dale Ralph Davis comments, ‘Elijah has not been Yahweh’s last broken servant. There are cases also in these new covenant days. It is hardly a state to be desired, and yet surely 1 Kings 19 teaches you that you needn’t fear being a broken servant when you have such a kind and adequate God’ (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY – AN EXPOSITION OF 1 KINGS – page 275).

\* Dale Ralph Davis argues that this is a better rendering of the Hebrew than ‘he was afraid’ as found in some translations.

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*The notes for 1 and 2 April are included with those for March*

*There is nothing*

Ahab had seen Elijah's prayer answered and though there was no sign of a break in the drought, Elijah told him that rain was on its way. After the departure of the king, he went to the top of Mount Carmel and prostrated himself in prayer to the Lord (41–42; cp. James 5:18). The prophet then told his servant to go and look out towards the sea. The servant returned, saying, '*There is nothing*' (43). This was repeated seven times before the servant saw *a cloud, as small as a man's hand, rising out of the sea*. Elijah sent the man with a message to Ahab to hasten to Jezreel before the rainstorms prevented him from reaching his palace. As the sky darkened, the hand of God came upon Elijah and he was enabled to run ahead of Ahab's chariot to Jezreel (44–46).

There is a great challenge here for us all to persevere in believing prayer. The Lord had told Elijah that he would send rain and the prophet prayed until the clouds appeared. We pray for the needs of the church in these desperate days. We pray for the salvation of relatives and friends and bring needs to the Lord in prayer. Perhaps we have been saying to ourselves when it seems that little is happening, '*There is nothing.*' **No prayer is wasted when we come to our heavenly Father!**

The devil wants you to give up on prayer. Do not listen to him! You may think that *there is nothing*, but who knows what blessings God has in store for the church before Jesus comes again? Who knows whether he may be pleased to visit us with revival and great blessing? Let us pray with faith and expectation!

*Saw ye not the cloud arise,  
Little as a human hand?  
Now it spreads along the skies,  
Hangs o'er all the thirsty land:  
Lo! the promise of a shower  
Drops already from above,  
But the Lord will shortly pour  
All the Spirit of his love!*

(Charles Wesley)

*Jachin ... Boaz*

Solomon was a great builder and some of his other buildings are described in verses 1–12. Hiram from Tyre, whose mother was from the tribe of Naphtali, was commissioned by Solomon to make all the articles of bronze in the temple (he is called Hiram in 2 Chronicles 2:13). *He was filled with wisdom and understanding and skill in working with all kinds of bronze work* (14).

Two bronze pillars (15–22) were placed at the entrance of the temple. These pillars were 18 cubits high (about 27 feet or 8 metres) The capitals placed on top of the pillars were five cubits high (about 7½ feet or 2¼ metres); they were beautifully decorated with lilies and pomegranates.

The pillars stood in front of the temple and not in it. They were given names – '*Jachin*' (which means 'he will establish') and '*Boaz*' ('in him is strength'). Dale Ralph Davis observes, Here then are "He will establish" and "In him is strength" serving as sentinels in front of the temple proper. The first highlights the promise of Yahweh, the second the power of Yahweh. The first recalls what God has said, the second suggests what Yahweh can do. Jachin is to the original anchor of Yahweh's word, Boaz points to his ongoing adequacy to bring that word to pass (cf. Romans 4:21)' – THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY, page 74.

As the priests entered the temple, these names reminded them of God's power to fulfil his promise and of their need to rely on the Lord in their ministry. We do not have two bronze pillars in our places of worship but we must never forget that God will honour all the promises that he has given to us. **Let us look to him in humble dependence to meet all our needs. In him is strength.**

*God of the covenant — changeless, eternal,  
Father, Son, Spirit in blessing agree;  
Thine be the glory, our weakness confessing,  
Triune Jehovah, we rest upon thee.* (Jessie F. Webb)

4 APRIL

1 Kings 7:23–51

*Solomon brought in the things which his father  
David had dedicated*

*The Sea* supported by twelve oxen (23–26) was called *the Sea* because of its size. It contained 2000 baths of water (several thousand gallons). The priests took water from the Sea to use in their ablutions (2 Chronicles 4:6).

There were ten carts and lavers in the temple (27–39). The carts were the bases for the lavers (basins) and were on wheels so that they could be moved from one part of the temple to another. The burnt offerings were washed in these lavers (2 Chronicles 4:6). Other artefacts in the temple included pots, shovels and bowls (40,45).

The temple was not a large building compared with others in ancient times but it was very beautiful with its rich ornaments and furnishings of pure gold (47–50). David did not live to see the building work commence but his preparation was of vital importance. He had dedicated items of silver and gold for use in the temple. *Solomon brought in the things which his father David had dedicated* (51). **Our service for the Lord has far-reaching effects even after the end of our life on earth. Let us be faithful to the Lord in all that we do.**

Dale Ralph Davis comments on the beautiful decorations found in the temple furnishings. He asks the question, ‘Is not he (the writer of 1 Kings 7) suggesting that intricate, carefully wrought beauty is most fitting for the God of the Bible? Is he not implying that nothing can be too good, too lavish, too well done for such a marvellous God? We must never offer slop to him. Who would have thought that the Holy Spirit might use 1 Kings 7 to convict us of the flippant and casual procedures we sometimes call “worship”?’ (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY, page 77).

27 APRIL

Kings 18:20–40

*How long will you falter between two opinions?*

People came to Mount Carmel from all over Israel at the call of Ahab. The solitary prophet of God was not intimidated by the four hundred and fifty prophets of Baal. He challenged them to prove that Baal was able to answer prayer. Elijah wanted the great crowd to be in no doubt that Jehovah (*the LORD*) was the true and living God. They remained silent as he challenged them, ‘*How long will you falter (limp) between two opinions? If the LORD is God follow him; but if Baal, then follow him*’ (21).

Elijah continued addressing the people and laid down his challenge. Let the prophets of Baal prepare a sacrifice to their god and he would also prepare a sacrifice to Jehovah. They should call on Baal to send fire to consume their sacrifice and he would pray that the Lord would send fire upon his sacrifice: ‘*And the God who answers by fire, he is God.*’ The people supported this challenge (24–25). Elijah taunted the prophets of Baal who prayed in vain for hours and shed their own blood in the hope of persuading their god to hear and to answer them (26–29).

The dignity and calm of Elijah as he unhurriedly prepared the altar for his sacrifice stand in marked contrast to the frenzied prophets of Baal (30–35). He told the people to saturate the sacrifice and the altar with water (no doubt obtained from the sea which was overlooked by Mount Carmel). His prayer is full of longing for the honour of God (36–37). The Lord sent fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice (38). The people then *fell on their faces; and they said, ‘The LORD, he is God! The LORD, he is God!’* (39). The execution of the prophets of Baal may seem cruel (40), but they had doubtless played a major role in the massacre of the Lord’s prophets (4) and were thus justly punished.

**Are you faltering between two opinions, wondering whether there is a true God whom you should follow and obey?** Seek the Lord with all your heart and you will find him. You will then prove his reality as you follow him in joyful obedience to his Word.

*Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly*

Ahab had searched his kingdom to have Elijah arrested and silenced. The fearless prophet obeyed the Lord without any question when told to present himself to the king (1–2,10). God had another servant, a secret believer, in the very palace of evil Ahab. Obadiah (not to be confused with the prophet of the same name) held very high office, being in charge of the royal household. Dale Ralph Davis writes, ‘Obadiah is obviously very different from Elijah. Elijah’s ministry is more public and confrontational; Obadiah works quietly in behind-the-scenes fashion and yet is faithful in the sphere where God placed him. The Bible never tells us that there is only one kind of faithful servant (1 Corinthians 12:4–6).’ – THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY – AN EXPOSITION OF 1 KINGS – page 233. *Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly* (3,12). Through his inside knowledge Obadiah was able to save one hundred of God’s prophets from massacre by Jezebel (4). God places some of his people in very unlikely places.

The callousness of Ahab is revealed by his search for food for his livestock. He showed more concern for his animals than for his people who were starving in the famine (5–6). During this search Elijah met Obadiah who was full of consternation when asked to carry the prophet’s message to the king. Obadiah feared that he would be killed if Elijah failed to appear as promised, but God’s servant assured him that he would be there (7–15).

Ahab met Elijah with the words, ‘*Is that you, O troubler of Israel?*’ (17). The prophet boldly rebuked him, telling him that he was the one who had troubled the nation because he had forsaken the Lord to follow the Baals. Elijah then told Ahab to gather all the prophets of Baal and Asherah to Mount Carmel (17–20). Elijah was accused of being a *troubler* because he stood boldly for God and for righteousness. **We too may suffer reproach if we refuse to compromise the truth as it is revealed in the Bible.**

*The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD*

When the building of the temple was completed, the ark of the covenant was brought from the tabernacle to the Most Holy Place in the temple. All the elders of the nation and tribal heads gathered for this great occasion and numerous sacrifices were offered to God (1–5). The ark was a wooden box, overlaid with gold, measuring 2½ cubits in length × 1½ cubits in width × 1½ cubits in height (Exodus 25:10–11). It contained the two tablets of stone on which were written the Ten Commandments (9; Exodus 34:28). *The glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD* after the ark was brought into the Most Holy Place (6,10–11). The priests were so overwhelmed by God’s glory that they could not continue ministering. The cloud indicated God’s presence with his people (Exodus 40:34–38).

Solomon then addressed the congregation and blessed God as he recalled his father’s desire to build a temple. Notice that the Lord commended David for having it in his heart to build a house for his name (18). He saw David’s wholesome motives though it was not his will for his servant to undertake the work (18). Solomon also recalled God’s promise that he, Solomon, would be the man to undertake this great work. The Lord had fulfilled his Word and Solomon had made a place for the ark (14–21). God’s glory and blessing came when a place was made for the ark which contained his Word.

We are all in great need of God’s blessing in our churches today. Some have resorted to all kinds of worldly and unworthy expedients in their pursuit for success and what they perceive as blessing. That is not the way! **When the ministry of God’s Word is central in the life of the church and when we submit to its teaching, then, and only then will there be real blessing.**

*When each one knows the plague of his own heart*

After speaking to the people (14–21), Solomon came to God in prayer. His prayer is one of the greatest recorded in the Bible. The glory of God filled the temple and though Solomon began his prayer standing (22), he was on his knees by the time he had finished (54). These verses point us to some of the essentials of prayer. How should we pray?

- We should begin with worship and adoration (23, 27).
- We should praise God for answered prayer (24).
- The Bible has many precious promises for us which we should use in prayer. Solomon prayed that God would fulfil his promise to David (25–26).
- Solomon prayed for the people of God (28–53). We too should pray not only for those in our own church, but also for God’s people and his work around the world. To do this, we need to be informed, we need to read missionary magazines and prayer letters.
- Solomon prayed for the Gentiles, that they too would come to a knowledge of God (41–43). We should pray for the progress of the gospel among those who are lost.
- We must confess our sin to the Lord (46–50).

We must never forget that we come as sinners into the presence of a holy God when we pray. Christians do have the remains of sin within. *There is no one who does not sin* (46; cp. 1 John 1:8–9). We must grieve over our sin and repent. – *When each one knows the plague of his own heart* (38) there is no room for careless living; there can be no light, flippant attitude in prayer as if God were our ‘pal’. The Lord is awesome and full of majesty, and in his holy presence we should know the plague of our own hearts (cp. Isaiah 6:1–5). **When we are conscious of this plague, we will not take victory over sin for granted; we will be watchful and prayerful at all times.**

*And they who fain would serve thee best,  
Are conscious most of wrong within.*

(Henry Twells)

*Now by this I know that you are a man of God*

Can you imagine the bewilderment of the Gentile widow? God had sent Elijah to her and her son, and God had kept them all alive in the famine. But now ... he takes away the life of her son. In her anguish she says to Elijah, ‘*What have I to do with you, O man of God? Have you come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to kill my son?*’ (18). The prophet carried the lifeless body of the boy to the room where he was lodging and he cried out to the Lord, taking up the widow’s words of verse 18 and turning them into prayer (20).

The Lord heard Elijah’s prayer and raised the lad from the dead. The prophet took the boy downstairs and gave him to his mother, saying, ‘*See, your son lives!*’ (23). The astonished woman said to Elijah, ‘*Now by this I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is the truth*’ (24). She saw for herself that Jehovah is not a useless god like those worshipped in Sidon. He is the supreme Lord over life and death who hears the prayers of his people.

Many of us have known grief and loss during our lives and have cried out to God in our bewilderment, ‘Why?’ Perhaps we have seen great answers to prayer and then have walked in the darkness of perplexity just as the widow of Zarephath. The ways of the Lord sometimes baffle us and we have no answer to our questions. We must commit ourselves into the loving hands of God, knowing that he is wise and that his love for us will never diminish or vanish away.

**It is often in the valley of sorrow and trial that we learn more of the Lord and are drawn closer to him.** He is the *Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation* (2 Corinthians 1:3–4).

*God shall alone the refuge be  
And comfort of my mind;  
Too wise to be mistaken, he  
Too good to be unkind.*

(Samuel Medley)

*The LORD God of Israel ... before whom I stand*

God raised up a man to prophesy to Israel in those dark and tragic times – Elijah! The very name Elijah challenged all for which Ahab and Jezebel stood; it means ‘Jehovah is God’ or ‘My God is Jehovah’. The public ministry of Elijah was dramatic and miraculous, but privately, he was a mighty man of prayer. Through his prayers God sent a drought upon the land of Israel (1; cp. James 5:17–18). Baal was supposed to be a god who provided rain and abundant harvests. The people had to learn that Baal was powerless and unable to overturn God’s Word. The famine became severe and widespread after three years of drought (cp. 18:1–2) but the Lord used ravens to sustain Elijah at the brook Cherith. This was a miracle, for ravens naturally scavenge and gobble up every scrap of meat they find, but they brought bread and meat to Elijah both morning and evening (2–6).

The Cherith eventually dried up through lack of rain and the Lord sent Elijah to Zarephath in Sidon (Jezebel country) where there was also famine. Notice the sovereignty of God in these verses: He *commanded the ravens* to feed Elijah (4) and he *commanded a widow* to provide for him at Zarephath (9). The Lord miraculously provided for this widow, her son and Elijah throughout the famine (14). While Jezebel was busily promoting the religion of Baal in Israel, the Lord was bringing a widow and her son to faith in himself in Jezebel’s own country. **It is a great encouragement to know that no country is too dark and that no land is able to close its doors to the gospel when God chooses to open them.**

Elijah was just like us but he was greatly used in prayer (James 5:14–16). What was his secret? He was always aware of God’s presence in his life. He confessed, ‘*As the LORD God of Israel lives, before whom I stand*’ (1). He obeyed God’s Word without question, being confident that God is able to keep his promises (3–5, 8–10). **The world behaves as if God were dead. It is for us to proclaim him and show that he lives!**

*There has not failed one word of all his good promise*

Solomon blessed the congregation when he finished praying (55–61) and dedicated the temple with thousands of sacrifices and with much rejoicing (62–66). You may wonder why so many animals were sacrificed (63). Most of them were peace offerings which were mainly eaten by the worshippers (cp. Leviticus 7:11–17). The festivities lasted seven days and there were so many guests at this dedication that a large provision was necessary to feed them all (66).

In his blessing of the people, Solomon praised God for his goodness to them. He had earlier referred to the promise of God to his father David (24); now he recalled the promise that God made to Moses in which he had promised to give his people rest and they now had that rest (cp. Deuteronomy 12:10–11). The king said, ‘*There has not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised through his servant Moses*’ (56). Remember, God cannot lie (Titus 1:2) and he will keep every one of his promises. The Lord will always be faithful to his Word! Let us think about some of God’s good promises:

- He has promised to complete the good work which he has begun in us (Philippians 1:6). Our salvation will be completed when the Lord Jesus comes again. Our bodies will be raised and we will then be perfect and complete in every way.
- He has promised never to leave us nor forsake us (Hebrews 13:5) and when he comes again, Jesus will take us to be with himself for ever (1 Thessalonians 4:15–18).
- He will supply all our need (Philippians 4:19).

The Lord has done, is doing, and will do, great things for us. What does he expect of us? ‘*Let your heart be loyal therefore to the LORD our God*’ (61). The word translated *loyal* means ‘complete with’. The English Standard Version translates the text, ‘*Let your heart therefore be wholly true to the LORD our God.*’ **Our loyalty and devotion to God are shown by our obedience to his Word.**

*Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?*

This chapter gives an account of God’s second appearance to Solomon (1–9). Verse 10 begins at the mid-point of Solomon’s reign and the following verses record his exchange of gifts with Hiram, king of Tyre (11–14), of his building enterprises (15–25) and of his merchant fleet which traded with Ophir (India according to Jewish historian, Josephus; cp. 10:22). Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in Galilee in exchange for the bountiful supply of timber and gold from Tyre (11–12). It appears that these cities were in poor condition because Hiram was displeased with them. He called them *Cabul* which means ‘Good for nothing’ (13).

*The LORD appeared to Solomon a second time, as he had appeared to him at Gibeon* (1–2; cp. 3:5; 2 Chronicles 7:12). God again promised to establish his throne as long as he and his descendants remained faithful to him and obeyed his commandments (3–5). God also gave him a solemn warning against disobedience and idolatry. The people of Israel would be taken from their land and the magnificent temple would *become a heap of ruins* (8; ESV). Such a catastrophe would have been unthinkable at the time and those who passed by would hiss with astonishment and ask, ‘*Why has the LORD done thus to this land and to this house?*’ (8; cp. similar warnings in Deuteronomy 29:24–25; Jeremiah 22:8–9). Why would God do such a thing? Because he is holy and he cannot tolerate sin.

Whatever blessing we may presently enjoy, we must remember that God will bring judgment upon us and remove our lampstand from its place if we are unfaithful to him (cp. Revelation 2:5). Countries where the gospel flourished in the first and second centuries AD (eg. North Africa and Turkey) are now in much darkness because coldness of heart and unfaithfulness took root among their early churches. **We are all prone to wander away from the Lord. Let us be watchful and prayerful at all times!**

*According to the word of the LORD*

Zimri’s reign lasted just seven days. He did not have the support of the army which marched against him. Omri, the army commander led his troops from Gibbethon (see map, page 15) and took Tirzah. When Zimri saw that he had no hope of escape, he set fire to the palace and died (16:15–20).

Israel was divided for the first four years of Omri’s reign with part of the nation being ruled by Tibni. Omri eventually defeated Tibni and ruled a united Israel (21–23). The royal palace at Tirzah had been destroyed by Zimri (18) and Omri decided to build a new capital city. He called the city *Samaria*, naming it after Shemer from whom he had purchased the hill on which it was built (24).

Omri enjoyed military and political success but he was more wicked than any of the previous kings of Israel. *He did evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all who were before him* (25). His son Ahab, who reigned after him, was even worse (30).

Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, daughter of the king of Sidon (31), was an extremely wicked woman who massacred the prophets of the Lord (18:4). She zealously promoted the worship of the idol Baal and made this the official religion of Israel. Ahab built a temple in Samaria for Baal and also made a wooden image of the goddess Asherah (31–33).

A man called Hiel, from Bethel (where Jeroboam had set up a golden calf; 12:28–29) openly defied God and rebuilt Jericho. Joshua, under divine inspiration, had pronounced a curse on any who dared to rebuild Jericho, warning that he would lose his first-born and his youngest son (Joshua 6:26). This happened in the case of Hiel, *according to the word of the LORD* (34; cp. 15:29). **God never makes idle threats! Wicked men may scoff at his Word, but the day of reckoning will surely come (cp. 2 Peter 3:1–10).** It is very foolish to pretend that there is no God, or that there is no day of judgment for sin (Psalm 14:1).



*He had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger*

The remainder of 1 Kings (except for part of chapter 22) deals with the northern kingdom, which is referred to as 'Israel'. Judah enjoyed stability during the forty-one year reign of Asa, but Israel had seven monarchs during this time when there was an orgy of wickedness and instability (see table of kings on page 14).

Nadab succeeded his father Jeroboam to the throne of Israel, but like his father, he too was disobedient to God. He had only reigned for two years when he was assassinated by Baasha who seized the throne and then killed all the house of Jeroboam, fulfilling the prophecy of Ahijah (25–32).

Baasha reigned for twenty-four years, during which time, he was continually at war with Judah (16,32). God's prophets were fearless men and Jehu a lesser known prophet boldly denounced the wicked Baasha. He reminded him that the Lord had made him king over Israel. He then warned the king that God would destroy his posterity, making it like the house of Jeroboam. The Lord would also punish Baasha because he had killed the house of Jeroboam (16:7). This prophecy was fulfilled when Baasha's son Elah was murdered by Zimri while in a drunken stupor. *Zimri then destroyed all the household of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD* (16:1–14). God uses evil men as his instrument to accomplish his purposes, but he will also punish them for their own wickedness (Isaiah 10:5–19).

The phrase *he had provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger* is used with reference to Jeroboam. Similar words are also used to describe the wicked kings of Israel who followed him (15:30; cp. 16:2, 7, 13, 26, 33). **God is not indifferent to human wickedness and he will surely bring judgment on all who despise his Word.** How we need to pray for our land in these evil and confusing days and plead with God to spare the judgement that we deserve. Let us also pray that God may be pleased to send the revival we so greatly need.

*I did not believe ... the half was not told me*

This chapter describes the splendour that surrounded Solomon. Solomon's court and the prosperity of Israel at that time. There was gold in abundance and the merchant fleet of Solomon and Hitam traded successfully and brought further prosperity (23–25). People came to Jerusalem from all parts of the world to hear the wisdom of Solomon and to seek his advice, bringing costly gifts to the king (23–24). One such person was the queen of Sheba. She was so overwhelmed by Solomon's wisdom, the splendour of the temple and the opulence of the palace, that *there was no more spirit (breath) in her* (4–5). Sheba was probably the Yemen of today, which had rich gold mines in the north of its land. She probed Solomon with all manner of difficult questions, all of which Solomon answered (2–3). The queen confessed, *'I heard in my own land about your words and your wisdom. However, I did not believe the words until I came and saw it with my own eyes; and indeed the half was not told me'* (6–7).

There was a time when we did not believe in God as he is revealed in the Bible. We were ignorant, without God and without hope (Ephesians 2:12). Then the Lord opened our eyes to see the wonder of his greatness and his grace. We 'saw' that we were under condemnation, but also that the Lord Jesus died on the cross to save sinners. We were born again through the mighty working of the Holy Spirit in our lives. We found forgiveness and peace with God through the Lord Jesus Christ. Being a Christian is more wonderful than we had ever imagined. We are able to rejoice and echo the words of the Queen of Sheba, *'I did not believe ... the half was not told me.'* Wonder of wonders, the best is yet to be! Heaven and glory await us.

Christian reader, ponder the greatness of your salvation and worship and praise God. **If you are not a Christian, I urge you to seek the Lord and his free forgiveness for your sin. Turn from your sin and trust in the Lord Jesus. You will not be disappointed, but will find that the half was not told you.**

*The LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice*

These verses stand in stark contrast to all that we read in the previous chapter and they make very distressing reading. Solomon had defied God's command forbidding intermarriage between his people and those of other nations (2; cp. Deuteronomy 7:3–4). Through the influence of his pagan wives Solomon turned away from the Lord to serve false gods (1–6). The builder of the temple of the Lord became a builder of idol shrines (7–8). Solomon had urged his people at the dedication of the temple, 'Let your heart be loyal therefore to the LORD our God' (8:61). We now read of Solomon himself that *his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God* (4). God was angry with him and told him that he would tear the greater part of his kingdom from his son and give it to his servant (9–13).

Does it not amaze you that Solomon could turn away from *the LORD God of Israel, who had appeared to him twice* (9)? On the first occasion the Lord answered his prayer for wisdom (3:4–15). The next time God specifically warned him against idolatry (10; cp. 9:1–9). Solomon had also witnessed fire falling from heaven to burn up the sacrifices as the glory of the Lord filled the temple (2 Chronicles 7:1). Does it not shock you that Solomon, who had prayed so eloquently for the heathen nations (8:41–43) should turn to worship their false gods? Does it not sadden you that Solomon, who built the temple, also built high places for idol worship (7–8)? Does it not astound you that Solomon, renowned for his wisdom, became such a fool?

**Let Solomon be a warning to us all! Great spiritual experiences are no guarantee against backsliding. Satan is always looking for ways to entice us away from the Lord. He never gives up!** Many a believer has disobeyed God to marry an unbeliever. Others have faithfully followed the Lord only to go astray in their later years. It was *when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other gods* (4). Let us beware of complacency in our Christian lives. Let us be determined to *fully follow the LORD* (6). Let us repent of any backsliding before we drift away from God and from his people.

*Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD*

Abijam only reigned for three years but he left a strong kingdom for his son, Asa. Abijam's mother, Maachah, was an evil woman (13), but his son, Asa became one of the best of Judah's kings. The *lamp in Jerusalem* almost certainly refers to Asa (4).

*Asa did what was right in the eyes of the LORD* (11). He enjoyed peace for the first ten years of his long reign (2 Chronicles 14:1) although he declared war on idolatry, removing all the idols that his fathers (ancestors) had made. He also banished the sexual perverts and their vile religion. Obedience to God is often very costly and Asa had to remove his grandmother, Maachah from the palace because of her evil influence. He also destroyed the obscene image of the goddess Asherah which she had made (12–13). A more detailed account of his reign is found in 2 Chronicles, chapters 14 to 16.

Asa began well and was loyal to God all his days (14). He never turned to idols but he failed to do *what was right in the eyes of the LORD* in his latter years. Ramah in Benjamin was strategically placed on the main north/south trade route. Baasha, king of Israel, built Ramah in Benjamin to blockade Jerusalem which lay just over 5 miles south (17). Asa bribed (the meaning of the Hebrew word translated 'present') the king of Syria to break his treaty with Baasha to make war against Israel (18–19). Baasha had to abandon his construction in Ramah to deal with the Syrian attacks. Asa was able to recycle the building materials left by Baasha at Ramah to build Geba and Mizpah (18–22).

Asa's tactics may have made political sense, but he should have relied on the Lord both in this situation and when he was severely ill with his feet (probably gout) at the end of his life (16–24; cp. 2 Chronicles 16:7–12). **Are you doing what is right in the eyes of the LORD?** Do not be like Asa who began his reign with so much promise, but who later failed to trust God in testing times.

*A lamp in Jerusalem*

Abijam, son of Rehoboam, only reigned three years, which were marked by war with Jeroboam. Though the Lord had given him a great victory over Jeroboam, he was not wholehearted in his devotion to him (3; see 2 Chronicles chapter 13 for more details. Variations of names of kings are frequently used in Chronicles, where he is called Abijah).

A bad example and a good example are mentioned in verse 3. There was the bad example of Abijam's father Rehoboam, which he followed. There was also the good example of his father (ancestor) David which he failed to follow. Abijam *walked in all the sins of his father ... his heart was not loyal to the LORD his God, as was the heart of his father, David* (3). Dale Ralph Davis comments, 'Here we notice the concern for heart condition ... Obviously, the condition of the heart (3b) determines the walk of the feet (3a)' – (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY, page 166).

The Lord brought terrible judgment upon Jeroboam whose son was taken in death at an early age (14:9–16). You may wonder why it is that God did not deal with Rehoboam and Abijam in the same manner. We are supplied with the answer. *Nevertheless for David's sake the LORD his God gave him a lamp in Jerusalem, by setting up his son after him and by establishing Jerusalem; because David did what was right in the eyes of the LORD ...except in the matter of Uriah* (4–5). God was honouring his promise to David (2 Samuel 7:12–16).

Abijam's mother, Maachah was an evil woman (13), but his son, Asa became one of the best of Judah's kings. The *lamp in Jerusalem* almost certainly refers to Asa (4). He was a light in the spiritual darkness that had come upon Jerusalem. **We too are called to be lights in the dark world around us (Matthew 5:14–16; Ephesians 5:8–14).**

*Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon*

Solomon had peace in his kingdom while he walked with God (5:4) but things changed for the worse as he became unfaithful to the Lord. This was no accident, but was the hand of God working against him: *Now the LORD raised up an adversary against Solomon* (14; see also verse 23). He had trouble on the southern border of his country from Hadad the Edomite (14–22) and from Rezon in the north (23–25). It is a wonderful privilege to know God's blessing in our lives, but, oh, it is so terrible when he works against us.

Solomon also had rebellion within his country from a trusted servant, Jeroboam (26–40). God sent the prophet Ahijah to speak to Jeroboam, promising that he would tear the kingdom from Solomon and give ten tribes to him (31). He would also be blessed if he obeyed the Lord's commandments (37–38). The one tribe (32) refers to Benjamin which remained in the southern kingdom with Solomon's own tribe of Judah. The Levites were scattered throughout Israel and became part of both kingdoms.

Solomon may have heard about God's promise to Jeroboam through Ahijah. He sought to kill Jeroboam but this was foolish. He knew that God would give Jeroboam most of his kingdom (11, 40) and he should have realised that he could not thwart the Lord's sovereign purpose (Isaiah 14:27). Solomon had made a treaty with Pharaoh, king of Egypt early in his reign and married his daughter (3:1). It is ironic that Hadad the Edomite and Jeroboam both found sanctuary in Egypt, a nation whose friendship Solomon had cultivated earlier in his reign.

We may not be tempted to worship idols of stone or wood like Solomon, but there are idols of covetousness, materialism and a love of the passing pleasures of this world which can draw us away from the Lord (Colossians 3:5; 1 John 2:15–17). **If we forsake the Lord, we will find trouble and an aching void the world can never fill. The way of the unfaithful is hard (Proverbs 13:15).**

*The turn of affairs was from the LORD*

The nation of Israel was heavily taxed to pay for the extravagant lifestyle of Solomon in the latter part of his reign. After Solomon's death Jeroboam returned from exile in Egypt to lead a delegation to appeal to the new king for an easing of the tax burden (1–5). Rehoboam sent them away for three days so that he could seek counsel from those around him. He rejected the advice of the elders who counselled a sympathetic approach and listened to the hawkish young men.

When Jeroboam and his delegation returned three days later, Rehoboam dealt with them in a rough and uncompromising manner. He told them that his regime would be far more severe than that of his father (6–15).

Rehoboam was forty-one years old when he succeeded to the throne of Israel (14:21) Why did a man of his age fail to take the more sensible advice of his elder statesmen (6–8)? Why did he refuse to listen with some sympathy to the complaints of the people? The answer is found in verse 15: *For the turn of affairs was from the LORD, that he might fulfil his word. God is in absolute control of all kings and of all political leaders (Proverbs 21:1).* Dale Ralph Davis comments, 'Verse 15 testifies that human hubris never catches Yahweh by surprise. He uses it! Big men (especially royal, arrogant ones) are simply little servants of Yahweh's word. Contrary to our fears, human stupidity is not running loose, but is on the leash of God's sovereignty.' (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY, page 131).

We must pray for kings and all who are in authority (1 Timothy 2:2). Who would have imagined, forty years ago, that the vast Soviet communist empire would collapse? Who would have believed that in China, where there was fierce persecution, there are now millions of Christians? Who would have thought that the gospel is now being preached in countries where Christians were once so vigorously persecuted? **We live in unstable and uncertain times but the Lord reigns supreme. Let us be encouraged!**

*King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place*

Our attention is now directed to the southern kingdom where the spiritual state of the nation was no better than that of its northern neighbour. Solomon had left a dreadful legacy of idolatry and all kinds of wickedness in Judah. When national leaders are godless or pay only lip-service to God's Word, there is bound to be a drift into all kinds of sin. We have seen this in the western world for many years. Pagan worship, which involved sexual perversion and homosexual practices, began to flourish in Judah. *There were also perverted persons in the land* (24). Homosexuality is unnatural and is a vile abomination in the sight of God (cp. Romans 1:27). This sin is not beyond forgiveness however to those who truly repent (cp. 1 Corinthians 6:9–11).

Rehoboam's Ammonite mother is mentioned at the beginning and the end of the account of his reign (21,31); this may point to the fact that he was influenced by her heathen ways. The Lord did not turn a blind eye to the sins of Rehoboam and his people any more than he did to those of Jeroboam. *Now Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins* (22). God had set his love upon Israel and had richly blessed his people. Is it any wonder that they provoked him to jealousy? He was jealous because he loved them! Christian, when you sin and when you grow cold in your love to God, you too provoke him to jealousy and you grieve the Holy Spirit.

Though the king of Judah had fortified his cities south of Judah, they were taken by the Egyptians who attacked Jerusalem and plundered the treasures of the temple (25–26; see also 2 Chronicles 12:1–12). The gold shields were taken and *King Rehoboam made bronze shields in their place* (27). The devalued shields speak volumes! **If we forsake God's Word, there will be a devaluation of spiritual things. To exchange spiritual 'gold' for the pleasures of sin, which bring no lasting satisfaction and which lead to death, is the height of folly!**

*In him there is found something good toward the LORD God*

The wife of Jeroboam did not have time to bring her request to Ahijah. He told her as soon as she entered his house that he had bad news. His message for Jeroboam was that the Lord would visit terrible judgment on him and his descendants (6–12).

God's message was, *'You have done more evil than all who were before you, for you have made for yourself other gods and moulded images to provoke me to anger, and have cast me behind your back — therefore behold! I will bring disaster on the house of Jeroboam'* (9–10). He had cast God behind him and would suffer the consequences. The Hebrew of the remainder of verse 10 is more accurately translated in the Authorised Version: 'The one urinating against the wall will be taken away as a man takes away dung.' Jeroboam's house smells and radical action is needed to deal with the problem.

Ahijah's message was that God would *'give Israel up because of the sins of Jeroboam who sinned and made Israel sin'* (16). Dale Ralph Davis comments, 'The first king of the ten tribes finished them ... Jeroboam damned a whole people ... Our times are impatient with orthodoxy and with the intolerant God of the Bible who won't negotiate on the first commandment' (THE WISDOM AND THE FOLLY, page 166). We have a great responsibility toward God and our families to be faithful to his holy Word.

Ahijah told the queen that as soon as she came to her home in Tirzah, the child would die. This prophecy was fulfilled when she arrived home but Jeroboam still refused to repent of his sin (17). In Abijah there was *found something good toward the LORD God of Israel* (13). This may mean that he worshipped God. We are not told how Abijah who lived in such an ungodly household came to be a believer (perhaps he had a godly nurse?). **What an encouragement this is for us to persevere in making the gospel known to children from ungodly homes who come to our Sunday School and children's meetings!**

*What portion have we in David?*

Rehoboam had not listened to good advice and he soon had a major rebellion on his hands. His folly only hardened the rebels in their attitude. They responded with the words, *'What portion have we in David? We have no inheritance in the son of Jesse. To your tents, O Israel! Now see to your own house, O David!'* (16). *There was none who followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only* (and the small tribe of Benjamin; 20–21).

The repeated references to David are a reminder of the covenant which the Lord made with him, *'Your house and your kingdom shall be established forever before you. Your throne shall be established forever'* (2 Samuel 7:16). It now appeared that the covenant was falling apart because of the foolishness of Rehoboam, but no one can destroy a covenant which God makes. The covenant still stands and is fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ. When the angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and told her that she would be the mother of the promised Messiah, he said of Jesus, *'He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give him the throne of his father David. And he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end'* (Luke 1:32–33). When people called Jesus the Son of David, they were recognising that he was the promised Saviour and King (Matthew 21:9; 22:41–45).

Rehoboam sent Adoram, his chief tax official to impose his will upon the rebels, but they stoned the man to death (18). The kingdom was divided as Jeroboam was crowned king over Israel (20–21). Rehoboam was determined to crush the rebels but the Lord sent his servant Shemaiah to warn the king against going to war and against fighting the rebel Israelites. On this occasion Rehoboam wisely obeyed God's Word and disaster was avoided (22–24). We sometimes behave foolishly and sinfully but the Lord continues to speak to us through his Word. **Never be angry when he makes you uncomfortable and miserable because of your folly, but be thankful and repent.**

**Kings of the Divided Kingdom (after the death of Solomon)**

Judah		Prophets	Israel	
930 – 913	Rehoboam		Jeroboam I	930 – 909
913 – 910	Abijam		Nadab	909 – 908
910 – 869	Asa		Baasha	908 – 886
			Elah	886 – 885
			Zimri	7 days
			Omri	885 – 874
872 – 869	Jehoshaphat		(Tibni)	885 – 881
(co-regency)			Ahab	874 – 853
872 – 848	Jehoshaphat	Elijah		
(total reign)				
853 – 848	Jehoram		Ahaziah	853 – 852
(co-regency)			Joram	852 – 841
853 – 841	Jehoram			
(total reign)				
841	Ahaziah	Elisha	Jehu	841 – 814
841 – 835	Queen Athaliah		Jehoahaz	814 – 798
835 – 796	Joash	Joel?	Jehoash	798 – 782
796 – 767	Amaziah		Jeroboam II	793 – 782
792 – 767	Azariah (Uzziah)		(co-regency)	
(overlap with Amaziah)		Amos, Jonah	Jeroboam II	793 – 753
792 – 740	Azariah		(total reign)	
(total reign)		Hosea	Zechariah	6 months
750 – 740	Jotham		Shallum	1 month
(co-regency)			Menahem	752 – 742
750 – 735	Jotham		Pekah	742 – 740
(official reign)		Isaiah	Pekahiah	742 – 740
750 – 732	Jotham		Pekah	752 – 732
			(total years)	
735 – 732	Ahaz (overlap with Jotham)			
732 – 715	Ahaz (official years)		Hoshea	732 – 723
			Captivity to Assyria	
715 – 686	Hezekiah	Micah		
697 – 686	Manasseh (co-regency)			
697 – 642	Manasseh (total reign)			
642 – 640	Amon			
640 – 609	Josiah	Zephaniah, Nahum, Habakkuk		
3 months	Jehoahaz			
609 – 598	Jehoiakim	Jeremiah		
3 months	Jehoiachin			
597 – 586	Zedekiah			
	Captivity to Babylon			

**17 APRIL**

**1 Kings 14:1–6**

*Why do you pretend to be another person?*

Jeroboam had seen prophecies fulfilled and had witnessed miracles (11:29–40; 12:20; 13:3–6) but he persisted in his rebellion against the Lord. False gods are no use to anyone and when his son, Abijah, became seriously ill, he did not send to the golden calves at Bethel or Dan for help. Jeroboam wanted to know whether or not his son would recover. He knew that the aged prophet Ahijah who lived in Shiloh would have an answer from God. Many people are just like Jeroboam. They despise the Bible and refuse to obey its teaching, but they turn to God for help when they are troubled.

Jeroboam had not obeyed the Word of God delivered by the prophet (11:38) and was not willing to make his own identity known to Ahijah. He perhaps feared that the prophet would refuse to listen to him on account of his idol worship. He sent his wife to enquire of Ahijah whose sight was failing because of age (and cataracts?). She would remove her royal clothing and disguise herself to appear like any other Israelite woman. Bearing gifts of food, she would make her request known to the prophet (1–3).

Ahijah did not need eyes to see through the deception because he was told by the Lord that the queen was coming and of the nature of her mission. The Lord told the prophet to expect the royal visitor and gave him a very solemn message for her to take to her husband (4–5). As the queen approached the prophet’s house, she would have been shocked to hear him call, ‘*Come in, wife of Jeroboam. Why do you pretend to be another person?*’ (6). She thought that her disguise would fool the prophet but her pretence was exposed. God sees through all of our pretence. *All things are naked and open to the eyes of him to whom we must give account* (Hebrews 4:13). **Are you a pretender or is your Christianity real? You may deceive men, but you cannot deceive God!**

*The man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD*

There was an old prophet living in Bethel who was not present when the man of God prophesied against Jeroboam's altar. His sons told him what had happened and he was determined to meet the man of God. He went after the man and found him sitting under an oak tree. He told him that an angel had brought the word of the Lord to him telling him to bring the man back to his house. The man of God believed the lies of the old prophet who then denounced him for his disobedience (15–22).

The man of God was very courageous in denouncing Jeroboam in the presence of his subjects but his mission ended in personal disaster. He was killed by a lion after he left the house of the old prophet but it was a miracle that the lion did not eat his corpse or attack the donkey (23–28). The perverse old prophet lamented the death of the man he had so wickedly deceived and described him as *'The man of God who was disobedient to the word of the LORD'* (26, 29–31).

What went wrong? The Lord had told him not to eat or drink in Bethel and to return home by a different route; it was for this reason that he had refused Jeroboam's offer of hospitality (7–10). He knew that Jeroboam's religion was false, but he failed to discern that the old man was a false prophet. He should have questioned why the Lord had not used the old prophet to denounce Jeroboam's idolatry. He should have realised that the old prophet was contradicting the Word of God. **However kind or convincing a person may appear, if they deny the teaching of God's revealed Word, we must not listen to them. They will trick us into disobedience and into denying God's Word.**

The Lord Jesus warned, *'Beware of false prophets'* (Matthew 7:15). Satan is the master deceiver. We need to know the teaching of the Bible and to walk with the Lord. *Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour* (1 Peter 5:8).

**Note on Chart of Kings and Prophets**

An accurate chronology for this period is very difficult to ascertain:

1. Some kings appointed their sons as co-rulers during their lifetime so that there is an overlap in some reigns.
2. In Israel years of kings were calculated from the month of Nisan (Spring). In Judah years of kings were calculated from the month of Tishri (Autumn).
3. Dates given here are based on Thiele's chronology (see Edwin R. Thiele – 'A Chronology of the Hebrew Kings' published by Zondervan).

**Kingdoms of Israel and Judah after death of Solomon**

... *In the month which he had devised in his own heart*

Jeroboam fortified Shechem and made it his capital. He later moved to Penuel and then made Tirzah his capital (25; cp. 14:17). The Lord had given him some very reassuring promises (11:29–39). He was now king over the greater part of Israel just as God had said. The new king was fearful that his people might return to worship at Jerusalem and so be influenced to serve Rehoboam (25–33). He was not trusting in God's Word! He had no need to resort to devious plans to keep his kingdom intact (26–27).

God hates idol worship. Jeroboam knew this but he embarked on a course of rebellion against the Lord who had been so gracious to him (11:31–33). He followed advice which was perverse (28) and made two golden calves, one for the north of the kingdom in Dan, the other for Bethel in the south. It was a wicked and appalling thing for him to point the people to those dumb idols and to say, '*Here are your gods, O Israel, which brought you up out of the land of Egypt*' (28; cp. Exodus 32:8). He also erected idol shrines throughout the land and appointed priests from other tribes, ignoring the Levites whom the Lord had chosen to provide his priests. Though the Levites were not priests of idol shrines, Jeroboam's actions degraded the sacred office of the priesthood (25–33). He also *devised in his own heart* a religious festival in the eighth month to replace the Feast of Tabernacles which God had set exactly one month earlier in the seventh month (Leviticus 23:34). False religion is always an invention of the sinful human heart and is more dangerous when it imitates aspects of true religious practice.

Jeroboam had experienced the hand of God on his life and he knew the Word of God, but he set the northern kingdom of Israel on a path of rebellion against God from which they would never recover. Jeroboam went down in history as the man '*who made Israel sin*' (14:16; 15:26,34; 16:19,26; 21:22; 22:52). **If you know God's Word and refuse to obey it, you are no better than Jeroboam!**

*Pray for me*

God was gracious to rebellious Jeroboam in sending a man of God from Judah to cry out against his altar at Bethel. The man prophesied that a king of Judah would one day defile that very altar. He named the king (Josiah) and this prophecy was fulfilled almost three hundred years later (2; cp. 2 Kings 23:15–20). He gave a sign to confirm his word from the Lord, saying that the altar would be split apart and its sacrificial ashes poured out.

An angry Jeroboam ordered the arrest of the man of God, but his outstretched hand was paralysed (*withered* – Hebrew = 'dried up' as in the Authorised Version and English Standard Version). The altar was split just as the man had indicated (1–5). Jeroboam was humbled by these two miracles and he pleaded with the man of God, '*Pray for me, that my hand may be restored to me*' (6). The Lord answered the prayer for Jeroboam's healing and the king offered the man hospitality and a reward. He refused this because God had told him not to eat nor drink in that place. He was determined to obey God and no manner of persuasion would change his mind (7–10).

Many believe that signs and wonders are necessary if the gospel is to have any success today. Sign seeking is not a sign of spirituality, but of unbelief (Matthew 16:1–4). Jeroboam saw real miracles (4–6) but he did not repent (33–34). He wanted prayer for the healing of his hand, but he was unconcerned for his soul. He despised the goodness of God and he deserved the judgment that was to befall him (14:9–11).

**If you are not a Christian, beware of despising God's goodness to you. You may have physical needs but do not make the same mistake as Jeroboam. Your greatest needs are spiritual!** You need to be saved from your sin through the forgiveness that God offers through the Lord Jesus Christ. Do not harden your heart but repent of your sin while you have the opportunity to do so.