

THE FIRST BOOK
OF THE

Kings

An Exposition Of The Book Of 1 Kings As Delivered In A
Series of Messages To The Congregation of Sequoyah
Sovereign Grace Baptist Church, Cherokee, NC.

by
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Grace-eBooks.com Publications
2019

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A NOTE FROM THE PUBLISHER

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However, even in this unedited format, the material is readable, simple, and profound and will prove useful to anyone who wants to gain a better insight into the book of 1 Kings. For this reason, they are added to the library of works available on the Grace-ebooks.com website.

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MEDICINE

I Kings 1:1-4

1, Now king David was old and stricken in years; and they covered him with clothes, but he gat no heat.

2, Wherefore his servants said unto him, Let there be sought for my lord the king a young virgin: and let her stand before the king, and let her cherish him, and let her lie in thy bosom, that my lord the king may get heat.

3, So they sought for a fair damsel throughout all the coasts of Israel, and found Abishag a Shunammite, and brought her to the king.

4, And the damsel was very fair, and cherished the king, and ministered to him: but the king knew her not.

Without a doubt this passage has been a point of controversy among commentators. I read five different authors on this subject and I found little or no agreement about this incident that took place in the late days of David. This young virgin is brought in to give David what physicians in later years would call “native warmth or native heat.” This was a viable prescription for the chills of old age. Friar Bacon's “*Cures for Old Age*” prescribed this treatment, and the fact is that body heat is a reasonable treatment for being cold (Ecc. 4:11). Some have said that this was an untoward thing that David did. Some make Abishag to be David's concubine or wife. Others paint her in a much less flattering manner. Gill asserts that since it is recorded that David knew her not (as a man knows a woman), that this proved

that she was his wife. Some commentators spend time on the frailty that comes with advanced age, asserting that the weakness that attends the aged body makes resistance to suggestions more difficult because of the fortitude that is required to engage in argument. It is very clear that though David was worn out in his body, his mind was plenty sharp, as we will see in his words to Solomon and the minute and intricate details of the logistics of acquiring the materials for the temple that Solomon was to build. His body is worn out but his head is just fine.

A few things are evident here. First, this was an accepted medical practice then and is still employed today so there is no evidence that David was opposed to it. Secondly, this was not done at David's bidding and the fact that those who chose this young woman chose her because she was virgin and very comely certainly suggests that they intended for her to be more than mere medicine. Thirdly, though they would not have done this without David's permission, the only thing we truly have from David in this episode is the concise declaration, "but the king knew her not." The insertion of this fact preceded by the conjunction "but" reveals the intentions of those who brought Abishag to him, except for keeping him warm, were thwarted. What we will find in the events that follow is that Abishag will be perhaps unwittingly involved in efforts at a failed political coup de tat by the hands of Adonijah, Joab and Abiathar the high priest and even Bathsheba. "Woe unto him that striveth against his Maker." Whether this young woman was part of that scheme must be left to speculation but there is no doubt that she, wittingly or unwittingly, was used by those who opposed God and His anointed king, Solomon. Adonijah, a son of David, a

failed usurper and ersatz king tired to get Abishag to be his wife and it cost him his life at the command of Solomon (1 Kings 2:13-25). Abishag's life is recorded in just a few verses in Holy Writ. If she was considered David's wife or concubine it is not declared. What is declared and what makes her to be, if a wife, one in name only is that the marriage was never consummated—"but the king knew her not." Her function in the end of David's days was that of a nurse. The Holy Spirit inspired these words to be recorded and we thus know that these words, in some manner, are "the things of Christ" shown to the church. This is type and picture of some aspect of Christ and His church (John 5:39, Luke 24:27, 44-45).

Keeping that in mind, what does this passage teach us? As I pondered this passage, two things kept coming to my mind. First. There is the fact that David's body was weak but his mind was strong. Secondly, the matter-of-fact statement at the end of this entire episode, "but the king knew her not" is worthy of more than historical comment.

This passage begins with the description of David's physical condition. He is said to be old and stricken in years. He was, at this time, about 70 years old (Ps. 90:10). As for David, it wasn't the years but the mileage. His life had been one of battle after battle, a continual warfare with only brief respites—the sword had never left his hand. He was weary and worn and as is the case with a long life attended by continual battle the body is cold. The cold is an inward cold, one that much clothing and blankets cannot fix. David's body must be considered in its entirety and in doing so I think we can see Christ and his church, that mystical entity wherein Christ is the head and the church is His body (Eph. 1:22-23; Coll. 1:18). Just as David was weak and worn in his

body but full of strength in his head, so is the body of Christ. A short perusal of the history of the church reveals that she is often weary and weak and even cold (Rev. 2:4; 3:15-16). Declarations of the churches inward struggles, war waged against thoughts that rise against God and strongholds that defy God and must be brought down, are the estate of the body of Christ. The carnal mind and heart that resides in every believer, though subdued by the Spirit, continually wars against the Spirit of the believer. Admonitions such as “be not weary in well doing”, “faint not” “strength is found in weakness” and warnings such as “the love of many shall wax cold” reveal that the affliction of David is typical of the church throughout her history. Thank the Lord that He is the head of the church, His body, and He has taken His power unto Himself and has reigned.

The remedy for this coldness, this affliction, as I said, was a common prescription. Put a warm body with a cold one for heat. The servants of David, clearly with David's consent, drafted this young beauty into the service of the king. Her job was to cherish him (cheer his countenance, serve him, minister to him in his affliction) and to lie with him to warm his cold frame. Who are the Lord's servants? The universe and all that is therein are his servants Ps. 24:1; John 17:2). Biblical history reveals that the Lord used infidels to be of comfort and help to his people—Cyrus was raised up to deliver Israel but died and infidel. Pharaoh loved Joseph and was used to preserve Israel and grow them into a nation, but died and infidel, Belshazzar loved Daniel, and here these servants of David are used to comfort him. Christ has power over all flesh and has throughout history raised up men and kingdoms to protect and serve the church.

There are tares among the wheat but they serve a purpose and are not discovered until the judgment. Everything that takes place on this earth is for the good of the elect (Is. 43:1-4; 61:5). This fair young woman cherished and ministered to the affliction of the king's body.

The thing that teaches us that she is typical of the world in service of the church is the statement that declared the nature and extent of the relationship between the fair maiden and David— “but the king knew her not.” He had not chosen her for his wife. One thing that is paramount in the word of God is that Christ knows and has always known His bride. The language of the effect of the Gospel is the language of intimate knowledge (1 Pet. 1:23-25; Romans 8:29) It is to those who speak in His name, do wonders in His name, cast out demons in His name that He says “I never knew you.” But this can never be said of the elect, the church, the bride of Christ (2 Tim. 2:16-19).

A VAIN THING

I Kings 1:5-31

5, Then Adonijah the son of Haggith exalted himself, saying, I will be king: and he prepared him chariots and horsemen, and fifty men to run before him. 6, And his father had not displeased him at any time in saying, Why hast thou done so? and he also was a very goodly man; and his mother bare him after Absalom. 7, And he conferred with Joab the son of Zeruah, and with Abiathar the priest: and they following Adonijah helped him. 8, But Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and Nathan the prophet, and Shimei, and Rei, and the mighty men which belonged to David, were not with Adonijah. 9, And Adonijah slew sheep and oxen and fat cattle by the stone of Zohemoth, which is by Enrogel, and called all his brethren the king's sons, and all the men of Judah the king's servants: 10, But Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah, and the mighty men, and Solomon his brother, he called not. 11, Wherefore Nathan spake unto Bathsheba the mother of Solomon, saying, Hast thou not heard that Adonijah the son of Haggith doth reign, and David our lord knoweth it not? 12, Now therefore come, let me, I pray thee, give thee counsel, that thou mayest save thine own life, and the life of thy son Solomon. 13, Go and get thee in unto king David, and say unto him, Didst not thou, my lord, O king, swear unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? why then doth Adonijah reign? 14, Behold, while thou yet talkest there with the king, I also will come in after thee, and confirm thy words.

15, And Bathsheba went in unto the king into the chamber: and the king was very old; and Abishag the Shunammite ministered unto the king. 16, And Bathsheba bowed, and did obeisance unto the king. And the king said, What wouldest thou? 17, And she said unto him, My lord, thou swarest by the LORD thy God unto thine handmaid, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne. 18, And now, behold, Adonijah reigneth; and now, my lord the king, thou knowest it not: 19, And he hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the sons of the king, and Abiathar the priest, and Joab the captain of the host: but Solomon thy servant hath he not called. 20, And thou, my lord, O king, the eyes of all Israel are upon thee, that thou shouldest tell them who shall sit on the throne of my lord the king after him. 21, Otherwise it shall come to pass, when my lord the king shall sleep with his fathers, that I and my son Solomon shall be counted offenders. 22, And, lo, while she yet talked with the king, Nathan the prophet also came in. 23, And they told the king, saying, Behold Nathan the prophet. And when he was come in before the king, he bowed himself before the king with his face to the ground. 24, And Nathan said, My lord, O king, hast thou said, Adonijah shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne? 25, For he is gone down this day, and hath slain oxen and fat cattle and sheep in abundance, and hath called all the king's sons, and the captains of the host, and Abiathar the

priest; and, behold, they eat and drink before him, and say, God save king Adonijah. 26, But me, even me thy servant, and Zadok the priest, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and thy servant Solomon, hath he not called. 27, Is this thing done by my lord the king, and thou hast not shewed it unto thy servant, who should sit on the throne of my lord the king after him? 28, Then king David answered and said, Call me Bathsheba. And she came into the king's presence, and stood before the king. 29, And the king swore, and said, As the LORD liveth, that hath redeemed my soul out of all distress, 30, Even as I sware unto thee by the LORD God of Israel, saying, Assuredly Solomon thy son shall reign after me, and he shall sit upon my throne in my stead; even so will I certainly do this day. 31, Then Bathsheba bowed with her face to the earth, and did reverence to the king, and said, Let my lord king David live for ever.

Centuries ago, there was a mighty warrior-king who despised the name of Christ and those who followed Him. He made it his life's goal and promised his kingdom that he would rid the earth of the name of Christ. He refused to even say the name of Christ but rather referred to our Lord sarcastically as "that Nazarene." He had some success in persecuting Christians and striking fear in the hearts of those that loved "that Nazarene." One day in the midst of the battle, he was unhorsed when an enemy javelin pierced his bosom. As he lay dying in the dirt, his life's blood pouring out on the ground, he grabbed a handful of mud, mud formed by the mixture of his own blood with the sand. Lifting that handful

of earth and life toward the sky, with his last breath he shouted to the heavens, "Oh Nazarene, Thou has conquered!" The Lord said, through the mouth of David, "man is a lie and lighter than vanity." Solomon, considering man and all his labors cried, "All is vanity." When the Lord prophesied of the gathering of men against His Christ, he said, "Why do the people imagine a vain thing." Since our father, and federal head Adam did eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the source of all natural rebellion and the universal plague of the human character is vanity. Religion spends its time and energy in a false premise. Not only is the premise against Scripture, they are actually deceiving themselves, being false to themselves. They speak in terms of a cooperative effort between men and God, but the fact is, man cares not for cooperation; he wants sovereignty. He wants a life where he is god (Ps. 14:1—no God for me." No matter what form rebellion takes, whether societal evil, criminal activity, theological heresy or any of a myriad of sins, the core motive is, "No God for me." Man does not merely want to be God, he intrinsically thinks that he is God and spends his life trying to manipulate events to prove his right to the title (v. 5c marg.).

The passage we will consider tonight is a treatise on the utter stupidity and gross vanity that is revealed when a potsherd strives against its Maker (Psa. 33:10-11). Adonijah, Absalom's brother follows in his brother's footsteps. He is the worm who would be king. He knows, as does all of Israel, that God has purposed that Solomon would occupy David's throne when David rested with the fathers, but just as Absalom had his own designs, so does Adonijah (2 Sam. 15:10; I Kings 1:7-9, 25).

There are some elemental truths set forth in this passage, some things that teach and admonish us. First, in verse 6, bad parenting is declared as something of a reason for the ease with which Adonijah made his wretched choice. It is apparent that David did not chastise him at all, "his father did not displease him at any time." Regardless of David's reason for the absence of discipline, the core principle was that David did not love him, as he ought (Heb. 12:5-6). It is also evident that Adonijah was probably a handful because of the declaration that

David had not said to him "Why has that done so." The admonition is plain, children often need correction, and it is a good parent who exercises discipline, as it is needed.

Secondly, another very good principle is set forth. Nathan's plan to inform David of Adonijah's insurrection and declare the urgency of getting Solomon anointed was a cooperative effort between he and Bathsheba, Solomon's mother. The reason that Nathan did it this way was not because he believed that there is strength in numbers or because he feared that David would not believe him or Bathsheba if they approached David with the news alone. 1st. An accusation against a brother shall not be received except in the presence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19). This is always a good practice and has, over the years, stopped the mouth of rumormongers and gossipers. 2nd. The use of two witnesses was to establish the severity of Adonijah's rebellion (Deut. 17:6). 3rd. It is no small thing that in this Gospel Age, the end times, the Lord had established His truth in the mouth of two witnesses, His Gospel and His church (Rev. 11:13).

This entire episode is about one thing. It is about the singular exaltation of the Son of God as the only rightful heir to the throne. This is the battle of the ages, the war of all time and the outcome has never been in question. Since Adam, undeceived, willfully ate of the fruit, since Lucifer wantonly and presumptuously eyed the throne as his rightful place, since every son of Adam has vied for his place in the sun, the end has always been and always be the same. The Son of God will have no rival because He has no rival. In all the course of history there is no one like Him. He is fully God and fully man. No one ever spake like Him. No one ever died like Him. No one ever lived like Him. As for His work, it was perfect; it perfectly saved His elect. Our righteousness will not rival His. He alone is the author and the finisher of faith. He is the Word made flesh and His written word is all about Him. There are no extra-biblical revelations; He is the revelation of God. All the law and the prophets gave witness of Him. When Peter, on the Mount of Transfiguration, sought to put the law and the prophets on equal footing with Christ, God Almighty opened heaven and spoke in no uncertain terms, "This is my Beloved Son in whom I am well pleased; Hear ye Him".

Adonijah thought to thwart the purpose of God but his rebellious insurrection changed nothing one whit. The world is populated with ersatz kings. They are being born in droves who will seek the throne as if it were rightfully theirs and their every efforts will meet with utter failure. God has anointed Christ King of Kings and even now He reigns.

OVERRULED

I Kings 1:32-53

32, And king David said, Call me Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada. And they came before the king. 33, The king also said unto them, Take with you the servants of your lord, and cause Solomon my son to ride upon mine own mule, and bring him down to Gihon: 34, And let Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet anoint him there king over Israel: and blow ye with the trumpet, and say, God save king Solomon. 35, Then ye shall come up after him, that he may come and sit upon my throne; for he shall be king in my stead: and I have appointed him to be ruler over Israel and over Judah. 36, And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada answered the king, and said, Amen: the LORD God of my lord the king say so too. 37, As the LORD hath been with my lord the king, even so be he with Solomon, and make his throne greater than the throne of my lord king David. 38, So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. 39, And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon. 40, And all the people came up after him, and the people piped with pipes, and rejoiced with great joy, so that the earth rent with the sound of them. 41, And Adonijah and all the guests that were with him heard it as they had made an end of eating. And when Joab heard the sound of

the trumpet, he said, Wherefore is this noise of the city being in an uproar? 42, And while he yet spake, behold, Jonathan the son of Abiathar the priest came: and Adonijah said unto him, Come in; for thou art a valiant man, and bringest good tidings. 43, And Jonathan answered and said to Adonijah, Verily our lord king David hath made Solomon king. 44, And the king hath sent with him Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, and they have caused him to ride upon the king's mule: 45, And Zadok the priest and Nathan the prophet have anointed him king in Gihon: and they are come up from thence rejoicing, so that the city rang again. This is the noise that ye have heard. 46, And also Solomon sitteth on the throne of the kingdom. 47, And moreover the king's servants came to bless our lord king David, saying, God make the name of Solomon better than thy name, and make his throne greater than thy throne. And the king bowed himself upon the bed. 48, And also thus said the king, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which hath given one to sit on my throne this day, mine eyes even seeing it. 49, And all the guests that were with Adonijah were afraid, and rose up, and went every man his way. 50, And Adonijah feared because of Solomon, and arose, and went, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 51, And it was told Solomon, saying, Behold, Adonijah feareth king Solomon: for, lo, he hath caught hold on the horns of the altar, saying, Let king Solomon swear

unto me to day that he will not slay his servant with the sword. 52, And Solomon said, If he will shew himself a worthy man, there shall not an hair of him fall to the earth: but if wickedness shall be found in him, he shall die. 53, So king Solomon sent, and they brought him down from the altar. And he came and bowed himself to king Solomon: and Solomon said unto him, Go to thine house.

The pages of history are littered with men and women who engaged in a futile effort to frustrate or defeat the will of God. The carnal nature of humanity is ever occupied with the notion that God can be overthrown. It is a foolish notion because it is born in the fool's heart. Somewhere, deep down in the warped psyche of sinful humanity, there remains a knowledge that God is, and no amount of human effort can bring a man to assume the habitation of the Most High. It is a sad testimony to the insidious nature of sin, that though men know they cannot ever overthrow God, they cannot keep themselves from trying. The general manner in which their presumed assault on the throne is made, is the belief that a large following, great numbers, equate with power and power is their primary understanding of deity. However, whether it is a great dictator, some cruel despot, or some ecclesiastical gathering—the same thing happens when God shows up. The supposed support of the masses come to nothing, the ersatz company is scattered to the winds and like ants from a fire they run for their lives, leaving the one who started the rebellion to fall on his face begging mercy from the God he has sought to destroy. The story of Adonijah's downfall is but the rehearsal of the manifold failures of carnal men, repeated

time and time again since his original assault in the Garden of Eden. The old adages, “learn from history or be doomed to repeat it” and “we must learn from our mistakes” really are pipe dreams of the sinful mind because it is evidenced in our collective history, that we keep doing the same stupid things over and over again. One man said that the definition of insanity is “doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.” The life of David has been one assault of the throne after another and Adonijah's effort is just the latest in the Adamic trend. How corrupt is the mind, how deluded is the mind of the creature that thinks to transform himself into a creator. Knowing that God is sovereign, those who know and love that fact, can but bow to His wisdom and give thanks and praise that they were plucked as “brands from the burning” and their feet set on the path of righteousness. If we differ, we are made to differ by the same hand that suffered others to follow fast their course toward utter doom.

While Adonijah walked in the council of the ungodly and sat in the seat of the scornful, planning and plotting the glory of his realm, God was intervening on behalf of Solomon, the man He had chosen to sit on the throne of David. After David learned of the plot, he immediately went into action. He called for men he trusted, Zadok, the priest who would be named High Priest, Nathan, the prophet who told David the truth and Benaiah, one of David's might warriors. His instructions were simple. Though Adonijah had been proclaimed king by Joab, David's traitorous chief captain and Abiathar a priest, he could not take the throne until David died or either made him proxy king in his declining days, to take care of matters at court. So Adonijah

was in a state of limbo, a self-appointed king but only a king elect, awaiting his inauguration. So David acted as the king he was. The first thing he did was to assign Solomon transportation. He was to ride on David's mule, which according to Jewish canon law could be rode by none other than the king. If Solomon was carried by the mule, he was king. Secondly Zadok was to anoint Solomon, just as David was anointed by Samuel and the trumpet was to be blown signifying that the king was crowned (v. 35). Finally, and most important, the Lord was sought to honor what David had done (vv. 37-38). These things were carried out and Solomon was anointed king at Gihon. Gihon was a fountain or pool at Siloah, called in the New Testament by the name of Siloam. At this site a blind man was sent to wash and received his sight and a tower was later built that toppled and killed 18 men. Gihon means "bursting forth" and Siloah means "sent." Both of these definitions are derived from Shiloh, where God put His name and His designated place of worship and was also one of the meanings of the Savior's name—Shiloh meaning "the sent One." It was to this place that Solomon rode on the king's mule and was anointed as king. When the trumpet was sounded, the people gathered to the king (Gen. 49:10) and the noise was such that in Jewish hyperbole, the earth was rent.

Adonijah and Joab were stymied by the noise and when Jonathan, the son of Abiathar told them that David had anointed Solomon, their delusions of grandeur turned into abject fear (Goodness but not to them). What they had done, what they had conspired to do laid at their feet in ruins because their folly carried with it the sentence of death.

Solomon, the very one who they dreamed to depose is now the enthroned despot (vv. 46-48; Acts 2:36).

The support for the failed regent heads for the hills. Prior to this they had shouted and cried “God save Adonijah the king” now they run in fear hoping to save their own hides, hoping that no one will remember their connection to the lone loser who dared to strive against God (v. 49). Adonijah had incorporated an army to be led by Joab, and a religious mob to be led by Abiathar and had won the consensus of a supposed realm that had disappeared into the ether (2 Chron. 13:12).

Adonijah flees to the tabernacle and grabs hold of the horns of the altar. The altar was used as a place of refuge or asylum. This was not by divine edict but rather had become a custom of the people. To the mind of Adonijah, the altar, a holy place where God accepted sacrifice for atonement and would be a place where men would be reticent to shed human blood. He was not interested in atonement for his sin, but rather saving his hide from the wrath of the new king. When it was told Solomon that Adonijah was holding fast to the horns of the altar by someone pleading on his behalf—Solomon, operating under the OC, the conditional covenant said that if Adonijah cleaned up his act, he would not die. Long story short, Adonijah was sent for and when he was brought to Solomon, he

owned Solomon as king and was sent to his home alive (v.53). Solomon began his reign with an act of mercy and this would mark his kingdom all his days.

Finally, we would be remiss if we did not look at David and Solomon as they, in their reigns, picture the King of Kings. 5 things:

1. David was a warrior king, a man of war victorious in his battles (1 Kings 5:3). So Our Lord was a man of war, who by His death and resurrection destroyed the enemies of His people (Coll. 2:14-15; I Jn. 3:8).

2. Solomon had been chosen and ordained to the throne before he was born (1 Chron. 22 :9). Our Lord was chosen and ordained from eternity (Is 42 :1).

3. Solomon rode a mule symbolizing his humility and lowliness of heart, so did our Lord (Zech. 9:9; Matt. 21:1-9).

4. Solomon was anointed with oil (v. 39) signifying the Spirit. Our Lord was anointed with the Spirit without measure (Acts 10:38; Rev. 3:1).

5. Rest and quiet was granted to Israel throughout Solomon's reign (1 Chron. 22:18). Christ is the Prince of Peace. He established peace by the blood of His cross and gives his people peace that the world cannot give. Rejoice, the Lord is King.

THINGS SETTLED

I Kings 2:1-10

1, Now the days of David drew nigh that he should die; and he charged Solomon his son, saying, 2, I go the way of all the earth: be thou strong therefore, and shew thyself a man; 3, And keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in his ways, to keep his statutes, and his commandments, and his judgments, and his testimonies, as it is written in the law of Moses, that thou mayest prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest thyself: 4, That the LORD may continue his word which he spake concerning me, saying, If thy children take heed to their way, to walk before me in truth with all their heart and with all their soul, there shall not fail thee (said he) a man on the throne of Israel. 5, Moreover thou knowest also what Joab the son of Zeruah did to me, and what he did to the two captains of the hosts of Israel, unto Abner the son of Ner, and unto Amasa the son of Jether, whom he slew, and shed the blood of war in peace, and put the blood of war upon his girdle that was about his loins, and in his shoes that were on his feet. 6, Do therefore according to thy wisdom, and let not his hoar head go down to the grave in peace. 7, But shew kindness unto the sons of Barzillai the Gileadite, and let them be of those that eat at thy table: for so they came to me when I fled because of Absalom thy brother. 8, And, behold, thou hast with thee Shimei the son of Gera, a Benjamite of Bahurim, which cursed me with a grievous curse in the day when I went to Mahanaim: but he came down to meet me at Jordan, and I sware to him by the

LORD, saying, I will not put thee to death with the sword. 9, Now therefore hold him not guiltless: for thou art a wise man, and knowest what thou oughtest to do unto him; but his hoar head bring thou down to the grave with blood. 10, So David slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David.

In this passage in the 1st book of Kings we have the record of David's instructions and admonitions to Solomon, as he is about to go to be with the Lord and his son about to assume the throne. This is a concise report, on which will be given in greater detail in I Chronicles. In 2 Sam. 23 we looked at the "last" words of David, designated so by the Holy Spirit. They were not his actual last words but were words spoken as a prophet and also were what might be called "the last word" or the finest confession a dying of living saint could express. Here in our text, the words are concise, probably because the reign of Solomon is to be covered extensively and also because some things need to be settled, quickly handled after David sleeps with the Fathers.

In the Chronicles, this episode is recorded following the account of David gathering all the materials for the building of the temple so that Solomon could immediately begin this glorious task. David will not live to see the temple built but has done his due diligence that he will not leave any unnecessary burden for his son upon his death. There is a good life lesson here about setting our accounts while we live and leaving nothing for our children but good memories. David gathered these materials for the glory of the Lord. He spent his time, energy and money for the glory of the Lord

and His temple, though he never would see the results of his labors. Moses led the children to the Promised Land but could not enter because he smote the rock a second time rather than speaking to it. But we know that the crime was merely an instrument of providence to respect the type. Moses was the Law and the Law cannot take anyone into the Promised Land. That is a job for Joshua (the savior). God ended Moses' career, buried him in an undisclosed location, in an unmarked grave outside the Promised Land picturing the glory of Christ in fulfilling the law and setting it aside. If any inhabitant of Canaan wanted to seek Moses (the law), he must leave the Promised Land and search for what God concealed. To return to the law is to fall from grace. Likewise, David being a man of war, a victor in many a bloody battle, could not build the Temple of the Lord, a house of peace and a place of rest. Again the type is respected—God's Temple, the church, the body of Christ, is established by the Prince of Peace, who made peace by the blood of His cross. Also, the fact that David did all this work, gathered all the materials for a result he would not personally realize, ought to stand as a reminder to everyone who tells out the Gospel. You may be, probably will be long gone when your labors are brought to fruition. Stop looking for results. Rather do what you do that God might be glorified whether you see a result or not. Really, doing something for results is about your gratification, not about the glory of God. Religion thrives on results—numbers, soul winning, climbing the steps of piety, size of church (Falwell=biggest Sunday school since Pentecost). The believer is about taking care of the patch of ground that God has

given him without looking for some gratification to validate the presumed value of his efforts.

This passage begins with the declaration that David's days were almost ended and as all patriarchs of old, he takes his son aside to instruct him in the things that are of value and those accounts that should be settled. It is clear that death is not an anomaly to David. He sees it as a matter of the course of life. It is "the way of all the earth." His encouragement to His son is a simple admonition, "be strong and show thyself a man." If the admonition ended here I can think of a number of ways that machismo could use this as motto. But the words that follow define what it means to be strong and shew yourself as a man.

The best definition of courage and strength is seeking to keep the charge of the Lord or follow the Lord's word, be obedient to what the Lord has commanded, walk in the ways He has directed and attend to His testimony and His judgments. The word "prosper" in the latter part of verse 3 means, "to do wisely." Wisdom becomes a king and though experience teaches us many things that give us some life wisdom, the fear (love, worship, reverence) of God is the beginning of wisdom and that wisdom is what Christ is made to be to the believer (1 Cor. 1:30). That wisdom is found in the word of God through the Gospel (Deut. 4:6-7; 17:18-20).

Verse 4 has to do with the promise of God concerning the continued estate of the throne of David being occupied by his house. We, who have the advantage of the complete Word, revealed to us through the preaching of the Gospel, know that the eternity attached to David's throne speaks of Him who is David's son yet David's Lord, our Savior. However, under that conditional covenant in which David operated,

the blessings of the covenant could turn to cursings upon disobedience. No eternal promise is conditioned upon the obedience of fallen man, His purpose is sure and all the promises are yea and amen in Christ. That man, the man Christ Jesus, was obedient unto death and all eternal promises are secure. David admonishes Solomon about his throne occupied on earth by his lineage. So the words come out as if the promise is dependent on Solomon's obedience. Solomon, though the wisest of men, was just a man and he disobeyed the Lord on many fronts and the line of David did not inherit the throne forever, and his name as to royalty lost all authority until one of David's house, a virgin named Mary, who produced the seed of woman that would occupy the throne that was typified in the OC.

In verse 5-9 David gave charge to Solomon concerning the future of certain men. Concerning Joab, David's co-conspirator in the death of Uriah, Absalom's killer and the murderer of Abner and Ner and the fellow felon with Adonijah in the plan coup against David's throne. David charged Solomon to not let Joab die a natural death. This wasn't revenge; it was justice. The same end was to be applied to Shimei, who had cursed David—again not revenge but justice. Barzillai (v. 7). vv. 10-11, gone home after 40 year reign (the man after God's—).

SQUARE WITH THE HOUSE

I Kings 2:12-46

12, Then sat Solomon upon the throne of David his father; and his kingdom was established greatly.

13, And Adonijah the son of Haggith came to Bathsheba the mother of Solomon. And she said, Comest thou peaceably? And he said, Peaceably.

14, He said moreover, I have somewhat to say unto thee. And she said, Say on.

15, And he said, Thou knowest that the kingdom was mine, and that all Israel set their faces on me, that I should reign: howbeit the kingdom is turned about, and is become my brother's: for it was his from the LORD.

16, And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

17, And he said, Speak, I pray thee, unto Solomon the king, (for he will not say thee nay,) that he give me Abishag the Shunammite to wife.

18, And Bathsheba said, Well; I will speak for thee unto the king.

19, Bathsheba therefore went unto king Solomon, to speak unto him for Adonijah. And the king rose up to meet her, and bowed himself unto her, and sat down on his throne, and caused a seat to be set for the king's mother; and she sat on his right hand.

20, Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay.

21, And she said, Let Abishag the Shunammite be given to Adonijah thy brother to wife.

22, And king Solomon answered and said unto his mother, And why dost thou ask Abishag the Shunammite for Adonijah? ask for him the kingdom also; for he is mine elder brother; even for him, and for Abiathar the

priest, and for Joab the son of Zeruah. 23, Then king Solomon sware by the LORD, saying, God do so to me, and more also, if Adonijah have not spoken this word against his own life. 24, Now therefore, as the LORD liveth, which hath established me, and set me on the throne of David my father, and who hath made me an house, as he promised, Adonijah shall be put to death this day. 25, And king Solomon sent by the hand of Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; and he fell upon him that he died. 26, And unto Abiathar the priest said the king, Get thee to Anathoth, unto thine own fields; for thou art worthy of death: but I will not at this time put thee to death, because thou barest the ark of the LORD God before David my father, and because thou hast been afflicted in all wherein my father was afflicted. 27, So Solomon thrust out Abiathar from being priest unto the LORD; that he might fulfil the word of the LORD, which he spake concerning the house of Eli in Shiloh. 28, Then tidings came to Joab: for Joab had turned after Adonijah, though he turned not after Absalom. And Joab fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD, and caught hold on the horns of the altar. 29, And it was told king Solomon that Joab was fled unto the tabernacle of the LORD; and, behold, he is by the altar. Then Solomon sent Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, saying, Go, fall upon him. 30, And Benaiah came to the tabernacle of the LORD, and said unto him, Thus saith the king, Come forth. And he said, Nay; but I will die here. And Benaiah brought the king word again, saying, Thus said Joab, and

thus he answered me. 31, And the king said unto him, Do as he hath said, and fall upon him, and bury him; that thou mayest take away the innocent blood, which Joab shed, from me, and from the house of my father. 32, And the LORD shall return his blood upon his own head, who fell upon two men more righteous and better than he, and slew them with the sword, my father David not knowing thereof, to wit, Abner the son of Ner, captain of the host of Israel, and Amasa the son of Jether, captain of the host of Judah. 33, Their blood shall therefore return upon the head of Joab, and upon the head of his seed for ever: but upon David, and upon his seed, and upon his house, and upon his throne, shall there be peace for ever from the LORD. 34, So Benaiah the son of Jehoiada went up, and fell upon him, and slew him: and he was buried in his own house in the wilderness. 35, And the king put Benaiah the son of Jehoiada in his room over the host: and Zadok the priest did the king put in the room of Abiathar. 36, And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Build thee an house in Jerusalem, and dwell there, and go not forth thence any whither. 37, For it shall be, that on the day thou goest out, and passest over the brook Kidron, thou shalt know for certain that thou shalt surely die: thy blood shall be upon thine own head. 38, And Shimei said unto the king, The saying is good: as my lord the king hath said, so will thy servant do. And Shimei dwelt in Jerusalem many days. 39, And it came to pass at the end of three years, that two of the servants of

Shimei ran away unto Achish son of Maachah king of Gath. And they told Shimei, saying, Behold, thy servants be in Gath. 40, And Shimei arose, and saddled his ass, and went to Gath to Achish to seek his servants: and Shimei went, and brought his servants from Gath. 41, And it was told Solomon that Shimei had gone from Jerusalem to Gath, and was come again. 42, And the king sent and called for Shimei, and said unto him, Did I not make thee to swear by the LORD, and protested unto thee, saying, Know for a certain, on the day thou goest out, and walkest abroad any whither, that thou shalt surely die? and thou saidst unto me, The word that I have heard is good. 43, Why then hast thou not kept the oath of the LORD, and the commandment that I have charged thee with? 44, The king said moreover to Shimei, Thou knowest all the wickedness which thine heart is privy to, that thou didst to David my father: therefore the LORD shall return thy wickedness upon thine own head; 45, And king Solomon shall be blessed, and the throne of David shall be established before the LORD for ever. 46, So the king commanded Benaiah the son of Jehoiada; which went out, and fell upon him, that he died. And the kingdom was established in the hand of Solomon.

In this passage we see the fulfillment of the words of David to his son Solomon. I read a book sometime ago about the men who ran the execution site in a southern state. When one of the inmates was strapped to the electric chair and executed, one of the guards said of the dead inmate, "Now,

he's square with the house.” In this passage the enemies of David and Solomon are made to be “square with the house.” We may look at these three individuals, Adonijah, the worm who would be king, Abiathar, the priest who opposed God, and Joab, the traitorous captain, who lived to gain the upper hand. There are so many things about human nature that never change. Whenever there is a staged coup, three elements are always present; a would-be ruler, a religious leader and a military influence. This is the unholy trinity of rebellion. It is a counterfeit of the true. Regardless of the natural politics, the end of these three individuals is the same as that of every potsherd that strives against its maker. Men know they cannot win against God but because of the insanity of the depraved mind and heart, cannot refrain from being what they are. The aggrandizement of self is the paramount driving force of fallen man.

Adonijah had been given a conditional reprieve from Solomon. But he still believed that he could overthrow the will of God (vv. 13-15). Note well that he knows that God has put Solomon on the throne, but his Adamic sense of entitlement cannot but drive him to his undoing. His desire to have Abishag, David's nurse and comforter is such an obvious ploy that a third grader could figure what he was doing. If he could have Abishag, he would, in his mind, be a better symbol of royalty. He would look royal and all the while was sealing his doom. We may warn men of the consequence of rebellion against God but apart from a work of sovereign overcoming grace, men will continue in their futile schemes until they lie dead at the feet of their sovereign. It is a sad report of the naivete of Bathsheba that she would fall for his spiel but Solomon saw through it

immediately (vv. 22-25). One down, two to go. IN vv. 26-27, Abiathar is removed from the priesthood and replaced him with Zadok (according to prophecy, v. 27; I Samuel 2:31-35). Two down, one to go. When Joab learned of Adonijah and Abiathar, he aped the movements of Adonijah and went to the horns of the altar, perhaps hoping for the same reprieve that Adonijah had received at the hand of the merciful king and there he held on for life and death came to him at the hand of his replacement (w. 28-35). Three down and none to go as far as goes the rebellion against the throne. But there is one left, one that had received a reprieve of David. Solomon was even willing to extend the reprieve of Shimei and allow him to keep his life if he would disappear from Jerusalem and go under house arrest for the remainder of his days. But like all natural men, he really didn't believe and when he broke the commandment of the king, his life was ended (vv. 36-46). This

was not retribution or revenge, it was justice. Let us all thank God that He did not leave us to our own devices because the end of these men would assuredly have been our end and no amount of education or nurturing or environmental influence or persuasion would have altered our course to our just and merited demise.

As I pondered this passage and noted the revelation of my own sorry estate in my years of rebellion, I began to see the grace of God in the salvation of the sinner. Each of these characters represents an aspect of our carnal rebellious nature as we are born into this world. The salvation of our soul is a marvel. Scripture declares that we are dead and our lives are his with Christ in God (Col. 3:3). We are dead actually means two things. First it means we died and this

refers to Christ's death being counted as ours on Calvary. Secondly, being in the active voice and indicative mood suggests a continual dying, and refers to the Spirit subduing and dominating our flesh, though not eradicating it. Either way you approach it, it has to do with our sin as is revealed by the fact that we died and are dying is because of sin. Death is the sentence for sin (Rom. 5:12).

1. Adonijah in his rebellion against the true king, which was born of a sense of entitlement and a belief that he was really the true king, pictures our false and confused notion that we are the captain of our destiny and that our will of self determining. Both of these high notions are foolish at the get-go. We are nobody's king. If we have a destiny, we cannot be captain of it. And if our will were self determining it would mean that our will has a will. Our will is to be the king and on Calvary that king was slain by the true King of Kings.

2. Abiathar was the false priest but he represents our natural religion, our conscience and our tendency toward legalism. Primarily, he pictures the law in reference to salvation. Abiathar was not killed, he was set aside, he was put out of service. In truth, in the matter of salvation, he (the law) was an enemy of the elect and could only serve to condemn (Romans 6:13- 14; Hebrew 10:9). Was this prophesied? Yes, in type with Moses not being allowed to bring the children to the promised land, and prophetically in the promise of the Gospel in Jer. 31 where the laws (the word of God) were written on the tables of the heart.

3. Joab pictures presumed our power (military force). We believe that we can overrule God and when, in our religion, we find our power gone, we latch on the horns of the alter in repentance born of getting caught. ..we hang on—pray

through, but to no avail—we died and we were made to confess we have no power—Thank God for the work of the true King.

4. Finally Shimei pictures or old man, He died in purpose on Calvary, but by experience we know he is under house arrest and when he leaves his containment in unbelief, he dies again. On that day of our Lord's return the dead and dying carcass will finally put down. By Christ— we are square with the house. The soul that sinneth, it shall die.

WISDOM

I Kings 3:1-15

1, And Solomon made affinity with Pharaoh king of Egypt, and took Pharaoh's daughter, and brought her into the city of David, until he had made an end of building his own house, and the house of the LORD, and the wall of Jerusalem round about. 2, Only the people sacrificed in high places, because there was no house built unto the name of the LORD, until those days. 3, And Solomon loved the LORD, walking in the statutes of David his father: only he sacrificed and burnt incense in high places. 4, And the king went to Gibeon to sacrifice there; for that was the great high place: a thousand burnt offerings did Solomon offer upon that altar. 5, In Gibeon the LORD appeared to Solomon in a dream by night: and God said, Ask what I shall give thee. 6, And Solomon said, Thou hast shewed unto thy servant David my father great mercy, according as he walked before thee in truth, and in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with thee; and thou hast kept for him this great kindness, that thou hast given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. 7, And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in. 8, And thy servant is in the midst of thy people which thou hast chosen, a great people, that cannot be numbered nor counted for multitude. 9, Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this thy so great a people? 10, And the speech pleased the Lord, that Solomon

had asked this thing. 11, And God said unto him, Because thou hast asked this thing, and hast not asked for thyself long life; neither hast asked riches for thyself, nor hast asked the life of thine enemies; but hast asked for thyself understanding to discern judgment; 12, Behold, I have done according to thy words: lo, I have given thee a wise and an understanding heart; so that there was none like thee before thee, neither after thee shall any arise like unto thee. 13, And I have also given thee that which thou hast not asked, both riches, and honour: so that there shall not be any among the kings like unto thee all thy days. 14, And if thou wilt walk in my ways, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as thy father David did walk, then I will lengthen thy days. 15, And Solomon awoke; and, behold, it was a dream. And he came to Jerusalem, and stood before the ark of the covenant of the LORD, and offered up burnt offerings, and offered peace offerings, and made a feast to all his servants.

The primary emphasis that is generally placed on this passage, and rightly so, is Solomon's dream wherein he asks the Lord to give him wisdom in order to be able to rule the people well. This passage is the record of the beginning of Solomon's peaceful reign upon the throne of David. Prior to this he had some things that need to be settled, namely putting away the enemies of David, This chapter begins with, "And" which relates to the last phrase of the previous chapter (2:46b). The establishment of this reign began with a

political alliance. It is generally held that Solomon's making of "affinity" with Pharaoh was to use Egyptian laborers in the building of the temple of God. But the word "affinity" more often suggests an "in-law" relationship and is probably related to Solomon marrying the daughter of Pharaoh. The immediate reaction to this is, "Why would he marry the daughter of the sworn enemy of Israel and a pagan to boot"? We have but to consider the bride of Christ who was born an enemy of God (Hos. 1:2-3). Here Solomon pictures Christ in the kind of people He chose for his wife. Jewish history holds that Pharaoh's daughter was a proselyte of the Jewish religion and that is probably true since the 45th Psalm (called a song of loves) and the Song of Solomon was written around this time. Solomon loved this woman and she loved him. Solomon married many other pagan wives and they were instrumental in leading him and the people to incorporate pagan worship in with the true. But of this wife, there is no deity of Egypt mentioned in the worship of God. She had embraced the God of Israel as the one true God. During the time of the relationship Solomon's house as well as the house of the Lord and the surrounding wall was built.

Until that took place the people as well as Solomon offered sacrifices on high places. Though "high places" are generally aligned with false worship, this was true worship performed in these places because the temple was not yet built. Solomon loved the Lord and walked in the statutes of his father (v. 3; 2:3) and he also offered sacrifices to the Lord in those places. The highest place, not in altitude, but in stature was Gibeon because the tabernacle was there. It was there that Adonijah and Joab had latched on to the horns of the altar in false repentance and paid with their lives. There,

Solomon offered a thousand burnt offerings over a period of days. The number suggests that Solomon was fixed on the necessary death of a satisfying substitute.

While in Gibeon the Lord visited Solomon in a dream. That was one of the ways that the Lord spoke to the fathers by the prophets. In this dream, this revelation, our Lord bids Solomon to ask Him what the Lord should give Him (Luke 11:19; John 14:13-14). In vv. 6-7 Solomon begins his conversation with the Lord. His prayer began with thanksgiving and praise for what the Lord had done for him. This is the basis of all prayer and the assurance that your prayer will be heard. Men of pray in dire circumstances but have no basis on which to do so. Praying in the name of Christ begins with acknowledgement of the great things that God has wrought on your behalf. All true prayer begins with thanksgiving and praise. It is the acceptable offering of the believer's priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5; Heb. 13:15). Prayer is also a confession of our unworthiness and inability (v. 7-8), "I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in"—and the task of governing your chosen people is too great for me.

What Solomon asked of the Lord should well be the desire of every leader of men. It is a great request. He asks for what he needs in order to properly govern this people. He asks for an understanding (hearing) heart in order to be a good judge in the matters that will be brought before him. He asks for spiritual discernment (wisdom; Prov. 1:7) between good and bad in order to judge properly. His requests are selfless. He seeks to care for the people of God. Throughout the scripture, the good works of the believer are about two things; the honor of Christ and the welfare of the children of God—care for the household of faith. What the believer is to

do is edify the saints and seek the honor and glory of Christ and this was the desire of Solomon (v 9). As kings and priests unto our God, should this not also be our request in prayer. The prayer of Solomon pleased the Lord, which also means that He was pleased to grant his request (Lk. 12:32).

In verse 11 our Lord honors Solomon for what he did not ask for and in doing so lists those things that natural men ask for (seek) in their prayers—long life, riches and destruction of your enemies. Our Lord honors faith even though it is He who gives it (great is thy faith). Our Lord gave Solomon a heart of wisdom and such wisdom that none but Christ was greater in the history of men. The wisdom of Solomon has become proverbial in the vernacular of men. Because Solomon did not ask for the things of self-gratification, our Lord gave him these things also and his renown has not been matched to this day among men. All he had however, was derived. The first words of his prayer are still the correct estimation of the man (Lk. 12; 27). Solomon's own words, inspired of God, declare that he knew that he, of himself, had nothing to offer (Ecc. 1:2, 14; Prov. 30:2-3). He owed all he had in the effective rule of the people to God alone. Our Lord approached this subject with his disciples in the same manner (Matt. 6:25-34; Ps. 90:12).

When Solomon awoke from the dream his actions proved that he was aware of how God had blessed him (v. 15). He offered up burnt offerings before the Lord (picturing the propitiatory death of Christ), peace offerings (picturing confession and transference of sin to Christ, the Lamb of God and praise for salvation) and he did it standing before the Ark of the Covenant declaring the Day of Atonement. All glory and praise was given to God in worship. And he made a

feast for all, a time of fellowship and rejoicing in the good favor of God.

HALF

I Kings 3:16-28

16, Then came there two women, that were harlots, unto the king, and stood before him. 17, And the one woman said, O my lord, I and this woman dwell in one house; and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. 18, And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered, that this woman was delivered also: and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house. 19, And this woman's child died in the night; because she overlaid it. 20, And she arose at midnight, and took my son from beside me, while thine handmaid slept, and laid it in her bosom, and laid her dead child in my bosom. 21, And when I rose in the morning to give my child suck, behold, it was dead: but when I had considered it in the morning, behold, it was not my son, which I did bear. 22, And the other woman said, Nay; but the living is my son, and the dead is thy son. And this said, No; but the dead is thy son, and the living is my son. Thus they spake before the king. 23, Then said the king, The one saith, This is my son that liveth, and thy son is the dead: and the other saith, Nay; but thy son is the dead, and my son is the living. 24, And the king said, Bring me a sword. And they brought a sword before the king. 25, And the king said, Divide the living child in two, and give half to the one, and half to the other. 26, Then spake the woman whose the living child was unto the king, for her bowels yearned upon her son, and she said, O my lord, give her the living child, and in no wise slay it. But the other said, Let it be neither mine nor thine,

but divide it. 27, Then the king answered and said, Give her the living child, and in no wise slay it: she is the mother thereof. 28, And all Israel heard of the judgment which the king had judged; and they feared the king: for they saw that the wisdom of God was in him, to do judgment.

Whether you have been a religious person or you are one who has never been interested in matters of faith, you have probably heard this story referred to in reference to wisdom. I have personally seen or read this report in novels, magazine articles, newspapers, TV and movies representing what true wisdom is. The phrase “the Wisdom of Solomon” has reached exalted linguistic heights of proverbial status in the English vernacular and well as other languages. Though this is a particular incident recorded in the word of God, it has become the universal example of the concept of wisdom.

Providentially, this is recorded immediately after the Lord has granted Solomon's prayer for wisdom and stands forever as proof that the Lord had, indeed, given Solomon his desire. Solomon's wisdom is manifest here in his understanding of maternal love. The story, itself, is well known by most but it bears repeating if peradventure there is one who is not familiar with it. It is a plain report of the decisive clarity of the mind of the wisest of men, save for Jesus Christ. The characters that make up the story are two harlots, women of ill repute and low estate. They are obviously roommates living in the same house. Each woman got pregnant and delivered their children three days apart. One of the women rolled over on her child in the middle of the night and her baby died. When she discovered that the child was dead, she

sneaked into the room of the woman with the living child and took her live baby and replaced with her dead baby. When the harlot with the live baby awoke to nurse her child, she found a dead baby in her bed. In just a few moments she realized that this dead child was not her baby. When she confronted the woman who had stolen her child, the thief declared that the live baby was truly hers and the dead baby belonged to her roommate. It was a case of she said, she said. The mother of the live baby gained audience with the king and made her case before him and the woman who had stole the baby made her case as well. In verse 23 Solomon made it clear that he understood the claims of the two women. He called for a sword and for the baby to be cut in half, each woman receiving half a dead baby. He knew that the true mother would give up her baby to keep it alive. She loved the child and would let it go, lose it rather than see it die. The response of the woman who had stolen the child was a callous revelation that she cared not for the baby but rather was all about herself. She didn't want the baby she had stolen, she just didn't want the true mother to have it. Her sin was not only kidnapping, and intent to kill. Her sin was envy. Envy is the belief that someone does not deserve what he or she has. In truth she wanted, as proved by her testimony, to divide the child, for the mother of the living child to be in the same place as she. She wanted both babies dead. Solomon had an understanding of maternal love, a love that the Lord honored (Is. 49:15). He knew that the true mother would not let her child die. Half a dead child was not an option for her. Solomon gave the child to its true mother and this incident was reported throughout the kingdom, which resulted in the fame of Solomon to be spread abroad.

That is the story of the first example of the Wisdom of Solomon.

I've thought about this story for some time, seeking to find some real Gospel applications. We all know that, no matter what the Old Testament story, it speaks of Christ. We also know that no type is a fully accurate expression of the person and work of Christ but is often metaphorical and often includes the people for whom Christ did His great work. By the providential placement in time and in the record of God's word, we can safely say that this story is about the Wisdom of Solomon. We know that it is relative to the Wisdom of Jesus Christ who is the personification of wisdom, according to Solomon's own words in Proverbs 8 (1 Cor. 1:23-24). Also it is clear in the word of God that Christ is made to be the wisdom of His elect. There is application to Christ seeing "of the travail of His soul and being satisfied, also that of a person losing his life in order to save it. Harlotry is analogous to false religion except in those cases where the choice of the kind of woman Christ took for His bride, though that application would only fit as it represents character.

I want us to consider something else—this living child—and I want us to consider it as it is. The child is living, it is alive, it has life. The child is a complete thing, a whole thing—an entire thing. The child cannot be divided and live. If it is divided, it may be dispersed in parts but the parts are dead and only have one future in common and that is to be buried out of the way. If a thing has value only if it is complete, and that value is based entirely on its wholeness, then half of the thing is worth nothing. That baby, that living, breathing, complete, whole, entire baby is a picture of the salvation of

the elect wrought by God through the propitiatory, justifying, sanctifying sacrifice of Jesus Christ, revealed to the elect by the Holy Spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. The language of the Gospel makes that clear and precise. To mess with that is to imperil your soul. No report given in this Bible ever presents the work of Christ and the effect of it for his elect as anything other than complete and whole and entire and vital (Matt. 1:21; John 6:37-38; 10:26-30; 19:28, 30; Rom. 1:29-30; II Thess. 2: 13-14; II Timothy 1:9; Heb. 10:12-18; Coll. 2:8-9). Christ, His Gospel, His Salvation, the estate of His elect is one complete thing. That blessed fact, upon which all time an eternity hangs, cannot be divided. Half of it is dead and fit only for burial.

Men speak of preachers speaking “some” truth but that cuts the baby in half which is completely satisfactory to those who don't love the baby—their dead half is enough to satisfy their envy (Matt. 23:13). Men speak of salvation as a cooperative effort between God and men spewing things such as, “God wants to save you. But you must let Him” or “God has taken the first step and you must take the next” or “God has done all He can do and the rest is up to you.” These false notions cut the baby in half and that seems completely satisfactory to those who don't love the baby; those who are enamored with death (Prov. 8:36). Men speak of human righteousness and merit as things that contribute to salvation

when the Bible teaches that Christ is the believer's only righteousness (1 Cor. 1:30; II Cor. 5:21). To attribute ought of righteousness to the sinful efforts of men is to cut the baby in half. To be satisfied with such a mangled righteousness is to hate the baby and love death. Men speak

of sanctification as being begun by God but finished by man as he, by his own efforts and power, progresses in holiness. That's cutting the baby in half and their holiness is but dead works (Phil 1:6). Men speak of children of God lacking in completeness, that there is something they can do to obtain a better standing with God. That' cutting the baby in half and satisfies those who do not love the baby. This application could be made to every aspect of salvation. A half-truth is cutting the baby in two and leaving nothing but pieces of death (Prov. 16:25).

The next time you hear someone speak of something left to do in salvation or something for you to do in your standing before God, remember this baby. Whole and complete it is alive and vital, divided it is two dead things and those who don't love the baby (the salvation wrought by Christ alone) will be satisfied with dead things (John 3:19-20; I Cor. 16:22).

KING OVER ALL

I Kings 4

1, So king Solomon was king over all Israel. 2, And these were the princes which he had; Azariah the son of Zadok the priest, 3, Elihoreph and Ahiah, the sons of Shisha, scribes; Jehoshaphat the son of Ahilud, the recorder. 4, And Benaiah the son of Jehoiada was over the host: and Zadok and Abiathar were the priests: 5, And Azariah the son of Nathan was over the officers: and Zabud the son of Nathan was principal officer, and the king's friend: 6, And Ahishar was over the household: and Adoniram the son of Abda was over the tribute. 7, And Solomon had twelve officers over all Israel, which provided victuals for the king and his household: each man his month in a year made provision. 8, And these are their names: The son of Hur, in mount Ephraim: 9, The son of Dekar, in Makaz, and in Shaalbim, and Bethshemesh, and Elonbethhanan: 10, The son of Hesed, in Aruboth; to him pertained Sochoh, and all the land of Hopher: 11, The son of Abinadab, in all the region of Dor; which had Taphath the daughter of Solomon to wife: 12, Baana the son of Ahilud; to him pertained Taanach and Megiddo, and all Bethshean, which is by Zartanah beneath Jezreel, from Bethshean to Abelmeholah, even unto the place that is beyond Jokneam: 13, The son of Geber, in Ramothgilead; to him pertained the towns of Jair the son of Manasseh, which are in Gilead; to him also pertained the region of Argob, which is in Bashan, threescore great cities with walls and brasen bars: 14, Ahinadab the son of Iddo had Mahanaim: 15, Ahimaaz was in Naphtali;

he also took Basmath the daughter of Solomon to wife: 16, Baanah the son of Hushai was in Asher and in Aloth: 17, Jehoshaphat the son of Paruah, in Issachar: 18, Shimei the son of Elah, in Benjamin: 19, Geber the son of Uri was in the country of Gilead, in the country of Sihon king of the Amorites, and of Og king of Bashan; and he was the only officer which was in the land. 20, Judah and Israel were many, as the sand which is by the sea in multitude, eating and drinking, and making merry. 21, And Solomon reigned over all kingdoms from the river unto the land of the Philistines, and unto the border of Egypt: they brought presents, and served Solomon all the days of his life. 22, And Solomon's provision for one day was thirty measures of fine flour, and threescore measures of meal, 23, Ten fat oxen, and twenty oxen out of the pastures, and an hundred sheep, beside harts, and roebucks, and fallowdeer, and fatted fowl. 24, For he had dominion over all the region on this side the river, from Tiphseh even to Azzah, over all the kings on this side the river: and he had peace on all sides round about him. 25, And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree, from Dan even to Beersheba, all the days of Solomon. 26, And Solomon had forty thousand stalls of horses for his chariots, and twelve thousand horsemen. 27, And those officers provided victual for king Solomon, and for all that came unto king Solomon's table, every man in his month: they lacked nothing. 28, Barley also and straw for the horses and dromedaries brought they unto the place where the officers were, every man according to his charge. 29, And God gave Solomon wisdom and understanding exceeding much, and largeness of heart, even as the sand that is on the sea

shore. 30, And Solomon's wisdom excelled the wisdom of all the children of the east country, and all the wisdom of Egypt. 31, For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Chalcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all nations round about. 32, And he spake three thousand proverbs: and his songs were a thousand and five. 33, And he spake of trees, from the cedar tree that is in Lebanon even unto the hyssop that springeth out of the wall: he spake also of beasts, and of fowl, and of creeping things, and of fishes. 34, And there came of all people to hear the wisdom of Solomon, from all kings of the earth, which had heard of his wisdom.

There is one thing that must be considered and remembered as we look at the person, life and accomplishments of this great king of Israel. In all his glory, he is but a type and picture. Underlying every thought and deed, every great accomplishment and every great title and accolade laid at his feet are the words of our Lord as he spoke of Himself in relation and comparison to Solomon. We have already seen how our Lord placed Solomon in comparison to natural creations to show that things which simply are, often outshine creatures who accomplish great things in the sight of men (Luke 12:27). The glory of the lily is that of the glory of the sinners saved by grace. It is not the glory of toiling and spinning (the natural glory of works) but rather the glory of the new creation wherein all glory is derived, given and bestowed freely by sovereign grace. The result is that the new creation is perfect and holy and righteous and accepted due to nothing in and of itself. Its glory is the glory that it has all that he has and is all that it is by grace alone. Solomon

arrayed in all his glory does not compare. Beyond that, our Lord also made contrast between Solomon and Himself, specific to the glory of Solomon as the wise king in contrast to himself (Mat. 12:42). This is to be our consideration as we look at the person, life and accomplishments of Solomon—a greater than Solomon is here.

The first thing declared is that Solomon reigned over all Israel as king (vv. 1, 21). Among the kings of the earth at this time, Solomon was the greatest. No other could hold a candle to him (Ps. 72:8; Zech. 9:10). But a greater than Solomon is here. Solomon's reign, as extensive as his dominion was, was limited to a specific landscape. The title given to our Savior is “Lord over all.” His reign is not restricted to a particular land boundary but is wider than the universe and encompasses the destinies of all His creation (Ps. 24). Because we are afflicted with finite minds, the subject of sovereignty is far too great for us. What we can know and can repeat is what is revealed and what is revealed is that our Lord is King of Kings and Lord of Lord. His reign is absolute and without limit. He reigns in creation, providence and salvation. The scripture never presents our Lord as anything but sovereign (1 Samuel 2; Is. 40; Is. 46; Daniel 4:34; 35; Job 33:12-13; Rev. 19:6).

The next thing before us is the record of Solomon's princes (vv. 2-6). What can be said of these men, since they are spoken of in conjunction with their fathers and grandfathers is that they have a pedigree. Though there is no indication that they did not deserve their station, the fact that their lineage is included suggests that it played into Solomon's choice of them. There is no doubt that it was a wise choice of these men. But a greater than Solomon is

here. Those whom Christ has chosen speak to the greatness of His grace. Those whom He has chosen to be His princes have no pedigree. Their life does not begin with a definable lineage of humanity, but rather their life begins with Christ Himself (1 Samuel 2:8; I Cor. 1:26-29; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10). A greater than Solomon is here. The next thing mentioned is the record of Solomon's officers. Their several offices were for making provisions for the king (vv. 7-19). And these provisions were no small thing (vv. 22-23). According to which commentator you read, this daily provision for Solomon could feed between 29,000 and 54,000 people. The gracious use of these victuals is seen in v. 27. These officers existed to give to the king all that the king required. These officers picture the church that gives to the King of Kings the glory that is due his name (Ps. 29:1-2, 9). But here, Solomon is an antitype or the King of Kings. A greater than Solomon is here. Our Lord the King does not live on the provender of His subjects, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills, the gold and silver that is in the universe is His—He has made provision for all His people out of His own abundance (Phil 4:19-20)—He has given His people all things, so much so, that they have need of nothing and are declared to be complete in Him. As those that hold office (function) in the church, the Lord's officers use what Christ has given them for the edification of the church and to live peaceably in this world (Rom. 12:4-18).

The next thing to consider is the estate of the realm under the reign of Solomon (vv. 20, 25). There was peace and joy, safety and comfort for those who were under the reign of Solomon. There is a caveat here however and it is found in the last phrase of verse 25. The peace lasted “all the days of

Solomon.” As we will see in our further studies, after Solomon went home to the Lord, except for a few brief respites, Israel was on a downhill run to the days of Malachi. This peace was temporal ; with the death of Solomon came the end of tranquility. But a greater than Solomon is here. The Lord's people, true Israel, are at peace, and like those under Solomon, are at peace all the days of the king. The difference is that of time and eternity. Our King lives forever so the peace of His kingdom will know no end. Again, Solomon is an antitype of Christ the King. The peace of the people ended with the death of Solomon but the peace of the elect began with the death of Christ (Is. 54:13-14; Col. 1; 20-22; John 14:27).

Finally, It is recorded that God gave Solomon wisdom, understanding and a great heart, which he employed for the good and the welfare of his kingdom (vv. 39-34). But a greater than Solomon is here. All of Solomon's attributes were derived—they were gifts. Even the proverbs attributed to Solomon were inspired by the Spirit of God. His understanding of the natural world derived from the creator of the natural world. But a greater than Solomon is here. Christ has not derived wisdom and understanding, He is the Wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:22-24). Christ is the understanding of the scriptures (Lk. 11:52; 24:44-45). A greater than Solomon is here.

PREPARATIONS

I Kings 5

1, And Hiram king of Tyre sent his servants unto Solomon; for he had heard that they had anointed him king in the room of his father: for Hiram was ever a lover of David. 2, And Solomon sent to Hiram, saying, 3, Thou knowest how that David my father could not build an house unto the name of the LORD his God for the wars which were about him on every side, until the LORD put them under the soles of his feet. 4, But now the LORD my God hath given me rest on every side, so that there is neither adversary nor evil occurrent. 5, And, behold, I purpose to build an house unto the name of the LORD my God, as the LORD spake unto David my father, saying, Thy son, whom I will set upon thy throne in thy room, he shall build an house unto my name. 6, Now therefore command thou that they hew me cedar trees out of Lebanon; and my servants shall be with thy servants: and unto thee will I give hire for thy servants according to all that thou shalt appoint: for thou knowest that there is not among us any that can skill to hew timber like unto the Sidonians. 7, And it came to pass, when Hiram heard the words of Solomon, that he rejoiced greatly, and said, Blessed be the LORD this day, which hath given unto David a wise son over this great people. 8, And Hiram sent to Solomon, saying, I have considered the things which thou sentest to me for: and I will do all thy desire concerning timber of cedar, and concerning timber of fir. 9, My servants shall bring them down from Lebanon unto the sea: and I will convey them by sea in floats unto the place that thou shalt appoint

me, and will cause them to be discharged there, and thou shalt receive them: and thou shalt accomplish my desire, in giving food for my household. 10, So Hiram gave Solomon cedar trees and fir trees according to all his desire. 11, And Solomon gave Hiram twenty thousand measures of wheat for food to his household, and twenty measures of pure oil: thus gave Solomon to Hiram year by year. 12, And the LORD gave Solomon wisdom, as he promised him: and there was peace between Hiram and Solomon; and they two made a league together. 13, And king Solomon raised a levy out of all Israel; and the levy was thirty thousand men. 14, And he sent them to Lebanon, ten thousand a month by courses: a month they were in Lebanon, and two months at home: and Adoniram was over the levy. 15, And Solomon had threescore and ten thousand that bare burdens, and fourscore thousand hewers in the mountains; 16, Beside the chief of Solomon's officers which were over the work, three thousand and three hundred, which ruled over the people that wrought in the work. 17, And the king commanded, and they brought great stones, costly stones, and hewed stones, to lay the foundation of the house. 18, And Solomon's builders and Hiram's builders did hew them, and the stonesquarers: so they prepared timber and stones to build the house.

With the mention of the building of the Temple our hearts and mind are immediately drawn to Christ and His Church. The prophecy of Christ building Jerusalem, which is above,

the church, the bride of Christ, His body, the sheepfold is sure throughout the entirety of the Old Testament (Zech. 6:12-13). The Temple that Solomon built is but a picture of the work of Christ in establishing his Church.

This chapter is about Solomon making preparations for building the Temple by gathering the necessary materials (the first character being gentile). As to an overall view, we may apply what is going on to that which took place in eternity past. The preparation for the building of the church began with the election of grace (Eph. 1:3-6; II Thess. 2:13-14). Ere man was made and walked this earth, the Lord God chose unto Himself an innumerable company of men and women out of a fallen race that, as of yet, did not exist. He chose them to reveal the glory of His grace, to show that grace is not for the best of men but for the worst, The placard that hangs above their head will ever be the declaration that they never could have deserved such Divine favor. Though they were yet to be born into this world as sinners, their names were written in the book of life, the book of the Lamb that was slain from the foundation of the world. That Blessed lamb, the Lamb of God, the perfect, acceptable sacrifice became the surety of the eternal covenant of grace, assumed their sin debt and entered into the world and time to pay that sin debt that He, because he had assumed it, officially owed. These poor chosen wretches were born hating the God who had eternally loved them and knowing nothing of this great plan that would eventuate in the full salvation of the their soul by the propitiatory sacrifice that would cancel guilt and make them suitable to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. Before the world began, they were named in the will of promise and

in time, at the appointed time, they would hear the Gospel and in that hearing would come voice of the Shepherd calling them to abundant life. They had no idea but they were the materials gathered for the building of the Temple.

This chapter begins with Hiram, king of Tyre sending his servants to Solomon. He sent them to offer praise that Solomon was enthroned because Hiram had great affection for David, Solomon's father (vv. 1, 7). Hiram was a gentile singing the praises of the son of David and giving glory to him. This was the promise of His coming (Is. 11:10; 43:1, 6:60:3). As I read this I thought of the account of the Gospel being brought to the Gentiles in Acts 13:38-49. This was always the plan. The gentiles were not a secondary choice. They, because the religious world believed that salvation was by religious works, were the true examples of the recipients of sovereign grace. Grace is for the unlikely, the outcast, the pariah, for sinners without hope in the world. Such ruined ones when they hear of the Son being enthroned, are quick to praise the Son for love of the Father.

Next we see Solomon honoring Hiram by employing Him in the gathering of materials for the Temple. Solomon did this from his place of rest having had all his enemies brought under the soles of His feet (vv. 3-4). And those who Christ has received do this willingly out of love for the Father (v. 8). What a picture this is of Christ sitting upon the throne of glory, having entered His rest because He finished the work of salvation. He is expecting till all His enemies be made His footstool. The enemies of His people have been defeated and when he returns He will reveal the glory of His victory. In the mean-time he employs those who he has received in the building of His church. The king supplies all

their needs (v. 11) and they go into the world to preach the Gospel. They build upon the foundation that is already laid (1 Cor. 3:10-11).

This Temple is a house built on purpose. It did not evolve or come into existence by osmosis or by ecclesiastical church planting. It was purposed from all eternity to be accomplished by Jesus Christ (v. 5; Is. 42:1-4; Matt. 1:21; Romans 8:28). It is interesting that in a subtle way two of the places referred to in this passages play a beautiful part in the work of our Lord as He taught His disciple who were the true children of God. The two places mentioned are Tyre and Sidon (vv. 1, 6). It was here, at the mouth of Tyre, that the materials for the temple were delivered to depart for Jerusalem (Matt. 15:21-28). By the work of Solomon, there was peace established between the Jews and these Gentiles and they worked together as one to build the Temple (v. 12; Eph. 2:11-22).

Finally, great and precious stones were brought to lay the foundation of the Temple. These were not gemstones but valuable building materials though in one place our Lord refers to His people as precious gemstones (Mal. 3:17). These stones picture the foundation that God has laid (Is. 28:16; I Peter 2:4-10; Zech. 4:7-8). There are those who choose to build on another foundation but they will not prevail (Matt. 7:21-27 ; Is. 8:14, 20).

BUILT

I Kings 6:1-7

1, And it came to pass in the four hundred and eightieth year after the children of Israel were come out of the land of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon's reign over Israel, in the month Zif, which is the second month, that he began to build the house of the LORD. 2, And the house which king Solomon built for the LORD, the length thereof was threescore cubits, and the breadth thereof twenty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits. 3, And the porch before the temple of the house, twenty cubits was the length thereof, according to the breadth of the house; and ten cubits was the breadth thereof before the house. 4, And for the house he made windows of narrow lights. 5, And against the wall of the house he built chambers round about, against the walls of the house round about, both of the temple and of the oracle: and he made chambers round about: 6, The nethermost chamber was five cubits broad, and the middle was six cubits broad, and the third was seven cubits broad: for without in the wall of the house he made narrowed rests round about, that the beams should not be fastened in the walls of the house. 7, And the house, when it was in building, was built of stone made ready before it was brought thither: so that there was neither hammer nor axe nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.

This is the record of Solomon building and finishing the Temple. As we saw last time this about the Lord Jesus building or establishing the church. The particulars of the design came from David and the implementation and completion was by Solomon. This is indicative of the work of the Father in design and purpose and the execution of the Father's purpose by the Son. Though the God the Father and Christ His Son are one, their respective work is taught throughout the scriptures. The work that Christ finished was the work that the Father gave Him to do (v. 12; John 17:4).

The detailed description of this temple is fabulous from the cherubim made of Olive trees that were about half as high as the ceiling to everything being overlaid in gold. Each element could probably be the source of a message but I think that an overall view is the timeliest way to approach this chapter. Suffice it to say that the opulence of the temple revealed two basic truths. First it revealed the wealth of Solomon, which pictures the wealth of the Lord Jesus to whom God has given all things into His hand. The universe and all that is therein are in the hands of the Mediator. Secondly, the opulence of the temple reveals the glory of the church, the body of Christ. The gold represents the royal priesthood of the church made up of an innumerable company of saved sinners, sanctified by Christ, robed in pristine righteousness; a marvel of the sovereign grace of God. The church, though viewed, as a ragtag bunch of misfits, the scraps of humanity is the remnant according to the election of Grace (Is. 1:9; Rom. 9:29; 11:5-6) the church is perfect (v. 38—seven=perfection—John 19:30).

Since much of this will be covered in other studies, I want us to look at just the first 6 verses tonight as a representative synopsis of the entire chapter. There are several things. The first is when the building was begun. The first thing to notice is that the beginning of the temple is relative to the deliverance of Israel from their bondage of Egypt. Many times through the history of the Old Testament Israel was commanded to remember that they were in bondage in Egypt and were delivered by the power of God and the blood of the Lamb. 480 years has passed since that great salvation but it was still the preeminent thing revealed in the building of the Temple. The Temple of God, the visible church has been established for 20 centuries but the preeminent thing, the defining thing about the church is Christ and Him crucified—He is the message, the method and the music of the Temple of God (Coll. 1:13-22). The building of the Temple has to do with the effectual salvation of the elect. The Gospel is the foundation upon which the church is built and the only message that the church has to preach.

The second thing is the month that the Temple was begun. It was the month of Zif, the second month on the Jewish calendar (also called Jair) and is mid April to mid May. It was the month of the Passover, the celebration of deliverance. It was the month in which our Lord was crucified, buried and resurrected. It was the spring of the year when the sun was bright and the flowers were in bloom and life was everywhere evident. The name “Zif” means brightness and the Targum translates this time as “the month of splendor of flowers.” Our life began there on the

cross when our Lord died and when He rose from the grave (Eph. 2:5).

The next thing to note are the windows (v. 4). The importance of the windows is that they let in exterior light, the light of the sun. Though shortly the lampstand will be installed and will give light to the holy place, these windows give light from above. The windows have a special shape. They are called “narrow lights” in our translation but the marginal reading is narrow slits on the outside that broaden on the inside. From a narrow source light is spread abroad in the Temple. Is this not a picture of the Gospel in its singularity, a narrow and single thing that spreads heavenly light abroad in the Church. This could also be representative of the difference between the church now and the church when the Lord makes all things new. Now, we look through a glass darkly and the light we see is hindered by our inability to see clearly. In the New Jerusalem, there will be no narrow windows to let light in, there will be no need of the sun; Christ will be the light of that glorious estate and the scales will fall from our eyes (1 Cor. 13:12). It can also be applied to the difference between the old and new covenants. In the Old Covenant there were, as it were, small openings where light shone through, revealing bit by bit the shrouded mystery of the Gospel. In the New Covenant, that which was hidden and narrowly lit is fully disclosed by Him who is the Light of the world. This concept is also seen in the structure of the temple chambers (vv. 5-6). The lower level was the narrowest and each level above was a cubit wider respectively supported by cedar poles positioned under rests or abutments. Looking upward, the temple widened. This

pictures the enlargement of the church in numbers, gifts and graces as it grows nearer to its heavenly estate.

Finally, in verse 7 we see the distinctive manner in which this temple was built. Every stone of this temple was cut to size and shape in a place away from the temple site. Each stone was made ready off site to specific dimension and proportion so that when it was placed in the temple, it was a perfect fit. The members of the body of Christ are called “lively stones built up into a spiritual house.” Each of these stones, was hewn and made ready in the eternal quarry of grace in election and predestination to be a perfect fit when it is laid in its proper place in the church. This predetermined specification teaches the particular redemption of the elect. When the temple was finished, there were no extra stones left over and there were no stones missing. There were no holes in the temple. All for whom our Lord died were hewn and made ready in the eternal councils of God and though there are many seats in heaven, every one has a name on it and though there is plenty of room in heaven there are no vacancies (Jer. 50:20; Eph. 1:22-23).

The reason that the temple was built this way is “that so there was neither hammer nor ax nor any tool of iron heard in the house, while it was in building.” To those who watched the building rise and saw its completion, it was as if the temple just was. This teaches us that the church was built without any efforts of human beings. Human works did not build it. What the believer sees is the stones showing up and being put in place. They are righteous stones but not hewn or shaped in the church or by the power of members in the church. When they arrived their existence and fit can only be attributed to grace. Men do not win them to Christ;

they are not shaped to what they need to be by the preacher or by the by-laws and covenants. When the stones arrive they arrive as a complete things, and fully functional as to their fit and place. No hammer or ax or tool of iron is heard. The Temple, the church is the trophy of sovereign grace alone. The Father purposed it and the Son built it and did it in a way that no man can take credit for it.

PERTAINING TO CHRIST

I Kings 7

1, But Solomon was building his own house thirteen years, and he finished all his house. 2, He built also the house of the forest of Lebanon; the length thereof was an hundred cubits, and the breadth thereof fifty cubits, and the height thereof thirty cubits, upon four rows of cedar pillars, with cedar beams upon the pillars. 3, And it was covered with cedar above upon the beams, that lay on forty five pillars, fifteen in a row. 4, And there were windows in three rows, and light was against light in three ranks. 5, And all the doors and posts were square, with the windows: and light was against light in three ranks. 6, And he made a porch of pillars; the length thereof was fifty cubits, and the breadth thereof thirty cubits: and the porch was before them: and the other pillars and the thick beam were before them. 7, Then he made a porch for the throne where he might judge, even the porch of judgment: and it was covered with cedar from one side of the floor to the other. 8, And his house where he dwelt had another court within the porch, which was of the like work. Solomon made also an house for Pharaoh's daughter, whom he had taken to wife, like unto this porch. 9, All these were of costly stones, according to the measures of hewed stones, sawed with saws, within and without, even from the foundation unto the coping, and so on the outside toward the great court. 10, And the foundation was of costly stones, even great stones, stones of ten cubits, and stones of eight cubits. 11, And above were costly stones, after the measures of hewed stones, and cedars.

12, And the great court round about was with three rows of hewed stones, and a row of cedar beams, both for the inner court of the house of the LORD, and for the porch of the house. 13, And king Solomon sent and fetched Hiram out of Tyre. 14, He was a widow's son of the tribe of Naphtali, and his father was a man of Tyre, a worker in brass: and he was filled with wisdom, and understanding, and cunning to work all works in brass. And he came to king Solomon, and wrought all his work. 15, For he cast two pillars of brass, of eighteen cubits high apiece: and a line of twelve cubits did compass either of them about. 16, And he made two chapters of molten brass, to set upon the tops of the pillars: the height of the one chapter was five cubits, and the height of the other chapter was five cubits: 17, And nets of checker work, and wreaths of chain work, for the chapters which were upon the top of the pillars; seven for the one chapter, and seven for the other chapter. 18, And he made the pillars, and two rows round about upon the one network, to cover the chapters that were upon the top, with pomegranates: and so did he for the other chapter. 19, And the chapters that were upon the top of the pillars were of lily work in the porch, four cubits. 20, And the chapters upon the two pillars had pomegranates also above, over against the belly which was by the network: and the pomegranates were two hundred in rows round about upon the other chapter. 21, And he set up the pillars in the porch of the temple: and he set up the right pillar,

and called the name thereof Jachin: and he set up the left pillar, and called the name thereof Boaz. 22, And upon the top of the pillars was lily work: so was the work of the pillars finished. 23, And he made a molten sea, ten cubits from the one brim to the other: it was round all about, and his height was five cubits: and a line of thirty cubits did compass it round about. 24, And under the brim of it round about there were knops compassing it, ten in a cubit, compassing the sea round about: the knops were cast in two rows, when it was cast. 25, It stood upon twelve oxen, three looking toward the north, and three looking toward the west, and three looking toward the south, and three looking toward the east: and the sea was set above upon them, and all their hinder parts were inward. 26, And it was an hand breadth thick, and the brim thereof was wrought like the brim of a cup, with flowers of lilies: it contained two thousand baths. 27, And he made ten bases of brass; four cubits was the length of one base, and four cubits the breadth thereof, and three cubits the height of it. 28, And the work of the bases was on this manner: they had borders, and the borders were between the ledges: 29, And on the borders that were between the ledges were lions, oxen, and cherubims: and upon the ledges there was a base above: and beneath the lions and oxen were certain additions made of thin work. 30, And every base had four brasen wheels, and plates of brass: and the four corners thereof had undersetters: under the laver were undersetters molten, at the side of every

addition. 31, And the mouth of it within the chapter and above was a cubit: but the mouth thereof was round after the work of the base, a cubit and an half: and also upon the mouth of it were gravings with their borders, foursquare, not round. 32, And under the borders were four wheels; and the axletrees of the wheels were joined to the base: and the height of a wheel was a cubit and half a cubit. 33, And the work of the wheels was like the work of a chariot wheel: their axletrees, and their naves, and their felloes, and their spokes, were all molten. 34, And there were four undersetters to the four corners of one base: and the undersetters were of the very base itself. 35, And in the top of the base was there a round compass of half a cubit high: and on the top of the base the ledges thereof and the borders thereof were of the same. 36, For on the plates of the ledges thereof, and on the borders thereof, he graved cherubims, lions, and palm trees, according to the proportion of every one, and additions round about. 37, After this manner he made the ten bases: all of them had one casting, one measure, and one size. 38, Then made he ten lavers of brass: one laver contained forty baths: and every laver was four cubits: and upon every one of the ten bases one laver. 39, And he put five bases on the right side of the house, and five on the left side of the house: and he set the sea on the right side of the house eastward over against the south. 40, And Hiram made the lavers, and the shovels, and the basons. So Hiram made an end of doing all the work that he made king

Solomon for the house of the LORD: 41, The two pillars, and the two bowls of the chapiters that were on the top of the two pillars; and the two networks, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters which were upon the top of the pillars; 42, And four hundred pomegranates for the two networks, even two rows of pomegranates for one network, to cover the two bowls of the chapiters that were upon the pillars; 43, And the ten bases, and ten lavers on the bases; 44, And one sea, and twelve oxen under the sea; 45, And the pots, and the shovels, and the basons: and all these vessels, which Hiram made to king Solomon for the house of the LORD, were of bright brass. 46, In the plain of Jordan did the king cast them, in the clay ground between Succoth and Zarthan. 47, And Solomon left all the vessels unweighed, because they were exceeding many: neither was the weight of the brass found out. 48, And Solomon made all the vessels that pertained unto the house of the LORD: the altar of gold, and the table of gold, whereupon the shewbread was, 49, And the candlesticks of pure gold, five on the right side, and five on the left, before the oracle, with the flowers, and the lamps, and the tongs of gold, 50, And the bowls, and the snuffers, and the basons, and the spoons, and the censers of pure gold; and the hinges of gold, both for the doors of the inner house, the most holy place, and for the doors of the house, to wit, of the temple. 51, So was ended all the work that king Solomon made for the house of the LORD. And Solomon brought in the things which David his father had dedicated; even the

silver, and the gold, and the vessels, did he put among the treasures of the house of the LORD.

This chapter is the detailed account of Solomon building his house and the finishing of the interior appointments of the temple. There is a great amount of intricate description of the decorations that attend the elements of the Temple. It is important to note that the elements of the tabernacle are greatly enlarged in the elements of the temple, (for example the brass laver was made to be a molten sea). Though they represent the same things as to type and picture, except for the Ark of the Covenant, lamp-stand, golden altar and table of show-bread, they are all larger. This immediately tells us two things. First the increase in size of the elements represents the vastness and perfection of Christ's work for His people. In His perfect work, He left nothing to be done for those he came to save. Secondly as immense as the elements were, they still show that salvation is not made with human hands. As grand as these appointments were, they were insubstantial in the forgiveness of sin and the salvation of the elect (Heb. 9:8-12; Prov. 8:21; Col. 1:12).

There is much for us here but rather than approach this verse by verse we'll look certain things that apply to both tabernacle and temple, certain words and objects that typify and picture Christ and the work He accomplished for His people (His church). The first thing to consider is the "porch of Judgment" (v. 7). This was built, most probably as an attachment to the house rather than the Temple but we find that the "porch of Solomon" was a part of the remade temple in Jerusalem. In the time of the early church it was a place where the rabbis and scholars gathered to discuss and

debate the scriptures. Saul of Tarsus was familiar with this place. It plays an important part in the beginning of the Apostolic age, and a place where the distinction of the Gospel is clearly declared (Acts 3:11-16).

Secondly, the foundation was made of great and costly stones (v. 10). There is no doubt that this speaks of Christ, the foundation laid by God Himself (Is. 28:16: 1 Peter 2:6; Zech. 4:6-9). The Lord is the Rock of our salvation (Deut. 32:31), the stone that the builders refused that has become the head of the corner (Is. 32; 1-2

Thirdly, the man that Solomon sent for (Hiram—actually Hiram, not the king of Tyre) was a great and skillful artist who built the appointments of the Holy Place. He was the son of a widow of the tribe of Naphtali. Jacob prophesied of this tribe in Gen. 49 and tells us that Hiram pictures the preacher of the Gospel and the singular way that these Temple appointments (element of the church) are built. Naphtali was prophesied to have “goodly words” and it is by and upon the declaration of the “good news, the Gospel” that the church is built (Mathew 16:13-18).

Hiram made two pillars of brass, a metal designed to withstand heat and fire, picturing Christ who bore the fiery wrath of God. These two pillars were given names (Jachin and Boaz). These names are descriptions of Christ. Jachin means “he shall establish” and Boaz means “in it is strength.” This is the sweet repose of every believer because it speaks to the finished work of Christ and the potency of His reign. It is He who has established us and we find our strength in Him (2 Thes. 2:13-17). These pillars were decorated with pomegranates and lilies (vv. 18-19, 22). Christ is the Lily of the Valley. The pomegranate is a red fruit

that when opened the seeds are within and floating in red nectar. This pictures the Church in Christ, His seed washed in His blood (v. 22=finished work).

The “molten sea” answered to the brass laver in the tabernacle and was for the use of the priests for cleansing and for dipping. The Talmud calls it “sea of dipping.” Its capacity was huge holding 2000 baths (bath + seven gallons) or 14,000 gallons of water. It has been disputed whether a pool of this size could not hold so much but often scholars miss the point. The amount is significant only as it points to the efficaciousness of the cleansing power of the blood of Christ and the water of the word. Our Lord told his disciples that they were clean every whit, only their feet (their walk in this sinful world) needed to be continually cleansed by the renewing of the mind through the washing of water by the word (Zech. 13:1).

The sea was set upon 12 oxen. These represent the 12 apostles facing the four corners of the earth taking the Gospel into the entire world. On the bases of brass there were images of three creatures (v. 29). Josephus, the Jewish historian, implied that the cherubim actually were alternate images of men and eagles which would align with Ezekiel 1:10. These, we know, represent Christ in his several attributes. Christ is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the king of beasts. Christ is as oxen, beasts of burden, in that He bore up under the weight of our sins and carried them away by the blood of His cross. In His humanity, He is the man Christ Jesus who is both God and man. Christ is represented by the Eagle as He resides in the heavens and is quick to His prey. If the cherubim were just cherubim then they represent the King and sin-bearer as He who alone is

the dwelling (shekinah) glory of God and he who alone glorified God. At the base of the sea were wheels representing the providence of God. Along with these, Hiram made shovels and pots and basins of bright brass, implements used in the sacrifices. So great was the amount and weight that it could not be found out (v. 47), which speaks to the unsearchable riches of Christ. (Lamp-stand, table of show-bread, golden altar or altar of incense and that which David had gathered that pertained to the temple).

THE HOUSE BECOMES A HOME

I Kings 8:1-11

1, Then Solomon assembled the elders of Israel, and all the heads of the tribes, the chief of the fathers of the children of Israel, unto king Solomon in Jerusalem, that they might bring up the ark of the covenant of the LORD out of the city of David, which is Zion. 2, And all the men of Israel assembled themselves unto king Solomon at the feast in the month Ethanim, which is the seventh month. 3, And all the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the ark. 4, And they brought up the ark of the LORD, and the tabernacle of the congregation, and all the holy vessels that were in the tabernacle, even those did the priests and the Levites bring up. 5, And king Solomon, and all the congregation of Israel, that were assembled unto him, were with him before the ark, sacrificing sheep and oxen, that could not be told nor numbered for multitude. 6, And the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the LORD unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims. 7, For the cherubims spread forth their two wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubims covered the ark and the staves thereof above. 8, And they drew out the staves, that the ends of the staves were seen out in the holy place before the oracle, and they were not seen without: and there they are unto this day. 9, There was nothing in the ark save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb, when the LORD made a covenant with the children of Israel, when they came out of the land of Egypt. 10, And it came to pass,

when the priests were come out of the holy place, that the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11, So that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud: for the glory of the LORD had filled the house of the LORD.

By any stretch of the imagination, the house that Solomon built as the abode of the Lord God, was a beautiful, ornate and splendid piece of architecture. Every thing in it had to do with the work Christ made for His people and the continuous worship of His people toward Him. One may have entered this place and immediately been struck with its beauty and felt that he was in a special place, even a sacred and sublime place. It was a house like no other.

While I was in the armed forces in the sixties, I was privileged to be able to travel to 14 different countries. I have seen and entered some of the most beautiful houses, dedicate to worship, in the western world. I once went to midnight mass at an enormous church in London, replete with all the idols and icons that define that religion. I walked the halls of Westminster Abby. I stood on Mars Hill where Paul preached to the Greeks about the Unknown God. I didn't know Christ then. I was lost and had no idea. But I remember the all too human experience of these places and the feeling that I was in a holy or sacred place. That feeling was born of fear of the unknown and conscience of my wickedness and a superstitious anxiety that I was in the presence of God. Of course I wasn't and in my ignorance I felt that these visits would count well on my merit ledger when the dust settled. As beautiful and awe inspiring as the places were, they were just places and just buildings and

what I felt was not the presence of God but rather the fascination that enters only through the eye. I was awed by what men could do without any of it bringing me closer to God. These buildings are not houses of God; His people are His house (Eph. 2:20-22).

As I read this passage I thought about my experiences and how men place such emphasis on what they call churches or houses of God. This house that Solomon built, this place was just brass and gold and cedar—it was a house but it was not a home. There was no occupancy. All the appointments that attend worship were there, but He to whom worship was due was not there. It was dedicated to God but without His presence it was just a place and even when He left that place, people still met and gathered to it because it was something they could see and touch. Religion doesn't stop when God is not there; it flourishes. When our Lord entered the house of God, He found an ongoing concern, a thriving business that ran like a well oiled machine that He described as a den of thieves. He, God incarnate, plaited a whip of cords and dispersed the crowd apace. The one thing that made that place the house of God had been absent for, some say, 150 years. In that temple, in the Holy of Holies there was no ark, no mercy seat, no cherubim with outstretched wings and no Shekinah glory. God showed up that day, but not to dwell in that house.

What make the temple, the house of God—if Christ is there. So in our text we find the temple finally ready for occupancy. Some seven or so months have passed since construction was complete and that time was probably for bringing into the Temple the things that David had gathered for its furnishing. There it sat in its comely emptiness. The

one thing needed to turn this house into a home is the Ark of the Covenant. If God is to dwell in this house, if God is commune with His people, If atonement is to be made, it will be above the mercy seat (Ex. 25:17- 22). The word “mercy seat” is interpreted propitiation and the Bible declares Christ to be our propitiation (Romans 3:25; I John 2:2; 4:10; Heb. 9:5—same word). Christ is that mercy seat where God communes with His people, the one mediator between God and men.

So in our passage we see Solomon gathering the people of Israel so the priests may go to the city of David and bring up the Ark, to its rightful place— to the house that the King of peace has built. Without the presence of the Ark, this is just a house. Without the presence of Christ, by His Spirit there can be no worship of God.

The first thing we see is that there was an abundance of sacrifice made before the Ark entered into the Most Holy (v. 5). Jesus Christ, our Ark of the Eternal covenant, our propitiation, entered the Holy place with the sacrifice of His own blood (Heb. 9:11-12, 24-26).

The next thing we see is the Holy Spirit's designation of what was in the Ark (v. 9). He singles out the table of the Law as the only thing in the Ark. We know that there was more in the Ark (Heb. 9:4) These items spoke particularly of Christ as the bread of heaven and His resurrection glory pictured by Aaron's rod that budded. The designation by the Spirit has to do with the Covenant under which the temporal temple operated, but even that covenant refers to the deliverance of Israel by the blood of the Lamb. Also, this may be an Holy Ghost designation that there no other written thing in the Ark. Primarily it is a reference to the

work of Christ as the mercy seat that completely covered the broken law. The propitiation that Christ accomplished completely answered and fulfilled the law's demands, thereby reconciling to God those for whom the propitiation was made. For the believer, who feasts on the bread of heaven, and was quickened by the resurrection of Christ, the good news is that he is free from the curse of the Law. The Holy Spirit's designation brings our minds to the Substitute.

In verse 10 we see a very elementary truth. Salvation is of the Lord and the glory of it belongs only to the Lord. It was not until the priests left the Holy Place after delivering the Ark, the smoke filled the place. This is very significant. The salvation of the elect can in no way be attributed to men. God came to dwell in His Temple, and no man saw it or had part in it. Like the building of the house; no sound of tool or hammer as heard—like the preacher of the Gospel, he delivers the Ark, he preaches Christ and Him crucified but the salvation of the elect is hidden from the eye. In the smoke and haze of predestinated purpose God gives His people faith to believe. Under the Old Covenant, on the Day of Atonement the people, the priests did not see the transaction between the High Priest and God.

Their atonement was accomplished by their representative as he sprinkled blood before God. They knew atonement had been made when the High Priest came out of the most Holy Place alive. So it is in the New Covenant, the salvation of the elect was accomplished by the representative of the elect, the Lord Jesus Christ, our mercy seat. We did not see the transaction, God turned out the lights and we do not see today as He brings His people to faith in Christ—the redeemed know that salvation is accomplished when, by

faith, they see Christ seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Finally, the glory of the Lord in His presence in the Temple, the body of Christ, is such a wonder that the priests are stopped in their tracks, unable to minister because of the glory of the Lord (Hab. 2:20). When God's glory is manifest above the mercy seat those who minister can do nothing but shut their mouths because they know that they had nothing to do with it. When the cloud appears it is not about anyone but Christ (Luke 9:28-35). When the Lord enters His temple, the house becomes a home.

WHERE GOD DWELLS

I Kings 8:12-29

12, Then spake Solomon, The LORD said that he would dwell in the thick darkness. 13, I have surely built thee an house to dwell in, a settled place for thee to abide in for ever. 14, And the king turned his face about, and blessed all the congregation of Israel: (and all the congregation of Israel stood;) 15, And he said, Blessed be the LORD God of Israel, which spake with his mouth unto David my father, and hath with his hand fulfilled it, saying, 16, Since the day that I brought forth my people Israel out of Egypt, I chose no city out of all the tribes of Israel to build an house, that my name might be therein; but I chose David to be over my people Israel. 17, And it was in the heart of David my father to build an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 18, And the LORD said unto David my father, Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart. 19, Nevertheless thou shalt not build the house; but thy son that shall come forth out of thy loins, he shall build the house unto my name. 20, And the LORD hath performed his word that he spake, and I am risen up in the room of David my father, and sit on the throne of Israel, as the LORD promised, and have built an house for the name of the LORD God of Israel. 21, And I have set there a place for the ark, wherein is the covenant of the LORD, which he made with our fathers, when he brought them out of the land of Egypt. 22, And Solomon stood before the altar of the LORD in the presence of all the congregation of Israel, and spread

forth his hands toward heaven: 23, And he said, LORD God of Israel, there is no God like thee, in heaven above, or on earth beneath, who keepest covenant and mercy with thy servants that walk before thee with all their heart: 24, Who hast kept with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him: thou spakest also with thy mouth, and hast fulfilled it with thine hand, as it is this day. 25, Therefore now, LORD God of Israel, keep with thy servant David my father that thou promisedst him, saying, There shall not fail thee a man in my sight to sit on the throne of Israel; so that thy children take heed to their way, that they walk before me as thou hast walked before me. 26, And now, O God of Israel, let thy word, I pray thee, be verified, which thou spakest unto thy servant David my father. 27, But will God indeed dwell on the earth? behold, the heaven and heaven of heavens cannot contain thee; how much less this house that I have builded? 28, Yet have thou respect unto the prayer of thy servant, and to his supplication, O LORD my God, to hearken unto the cry and to the prayer, which thy servant prayeth before thee to day: 29, That thine eyes may be open toward this house night and day, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there: that thou mayest hearken unto the prayer which thy servant shall make toward this place.

The major portion of this passage is a rehearsal of God's refusal to allow David to build the house unto the Lord and

the promise to raise up David's son to build and finish it. It is also the record of Solomon calling upon God to dwell in this house as he had promised David because God had respect to David's prayer (v. 28). As we have seen from the beginning of this study, these things speak to Christ building the Temple, His Church, His body and dwelling in the midst of them (Zech. 6:12-13). This is a picture of God sending His Son to build and establish His church. This is also the account of the Old and New Covenants. David, a man of war, one of whom it was declared that "the sword would not depart from his house" represents God as he is revealed in the Old Covenant, the God who weighs the actions of men in light of the exacting edicts of His holy law. The law was written on stone—unbendable—and blessing or cursing was conditioned upon the obedience rendered to it. That covenant was set up for failure because an imperfect offer of obedience could not be accepted (Lev. 22:21). Under that covenant the house—the temple for God—could not be built, because God's house was to be a house of established peace and forgiveness and under the law, peace and forgiveness was impossible (Rom. 3:19-21). David cannot build that house. But his son Solomon whose name means peace (a derivative of Salem), is the one who will build the house wherein is the habitation of God. Likewise it is the house of forgiveness (vv. 33-39,47-50). It is a house of forgiveness because God is just (v. 32; Rom. 3:24-26 ; I John 1:9). It is a house of forgiveness because it is a house of confession (v. 46-47). Only the king whose name is peace (our peace, the Prince of Peace) can build the house where God dwells (Heb. 10:9-10). This is the theme of this chapter.

The basis for Solomon's requests for God to come and dwell in this house is that God is the God of covenant, the God of promise. We who are privileged to have the whole account in our hands no full well that the covenant promise is manifested, realized and ratified in the hands of the mediator of that covenant (2 Car. 1:20). Solomon calls on the Lord to remember the covenant he made with David. He does not do so because he is doubtful, or fearful but because he knows that God is glorified in his covenant relationship with His people. When we pray "thy will be done" we do not do so in some sort of wishful hope but in assurance because the Lord is a covenant God (Lev. 26:45; See Ps. 130:3-4; Is. 64:6-9).

Considering this truth, I want us to look at some of what Solomon says about God.

In verse 12, Solomon explains what the elders and priests have just witnessed. The Holy Place has been engulfed with a cloud of smoke indicating that God has manifested Himself in Shekinah glory above the mercyseat. The effect was that the place became silent and the priests were unable to minister.

They were in awe and reverence to such an extent that they were immobilized. This pictures what happens when God saves a sinner. No one steps forth to take credit, or claim that he won a soul for Jesus— all present know that God has come and done a thing that has not the fingerprints of any man—the Lord is in His holy Temple, let all the earth be silent. Solomon explains the smoke and darkness by looking to the scriptures (Ps. 18:1; 97:2). The clouds are the dust of His feet. This smoke and darkness assures the presence of God and does so in the truth that no man can

see Him and live. The darkness is not the darkness of ignorance but that of hiding and mystery and is designed to make men shut up and listen (Baptism, Mt. of Transfiguration, the cross).

Secondly, the reason why the Lord glorifies Himself in abiding in the temple is always the same. It is to honor his son in the salvation of the elect (v. 21). Where the gospel is preached, God is worshipped in Spirit and Truth. Where the Gospel is not preached, the smoke of God's presence above the mercyseat (propitiation) does not fill the temple (Is. 6).

Thirdly, where God manifests Himself is based on His Word, the singular revelation of His person (V. 26). Scott Richardson used to say that we ought to preach in a manner that God Himself would be willing to sign His name to what we have said. That is a bold statement but can only be made if we preach the Gospel—His Word. In effect we are, when we preach the Gospel, reporting what God has done, we are calling on God to let His Word be verified (Is. 45:22-25 ; 55:11; Rom. 1:16-17; 1 Cor. 1:21-24).

Finally, the glory of God is His greatness (v. 27). The thought of Him being in a place, when all things are before Him and in Him and through Him and created by Him and for Him, seems ridiculous. Solomon realizes this, but he also knows that God always keeps His promises (V. 28; Jer. 23:23-24 ; Is. 66:1-2, but; Acts 7:47-50; Acts 17:22-31). He will not dwell and yet He will dwell. Where?—in His temple, in His Son's body (Eph. 2:16-22; Coll. 2:8-10; 2 Cor. 4:5-6; John 14:8-9). See: Psalm 132:13-14.

THE HOUSE OF FORGIVENESS

I Kings 8:31-66

31, If any man trespass against his neighbour, and an oath be laid upon him to cause him to swear, and the oath come before thine altar in this house: 32, Then hear thou in heaven, and do, and judge thy servants, condemning the wicked, to bring his way upon his head; and justifying the righteous, to give him according to his righteousness. 33, When thy people Israel be smitten down before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall turn again to thee, and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication unto thee in this house: 34, Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy people Israel, and bring them again unto the land which thou gavest unto their fathers. 35, When heaven is shut up, and there is no rain, because they have sinned against thee; if they pray toward this place, and confess thy name, and turn from their sin, when thou afflictest them: 36, Then hear thou in heaven, and forgive the sin of thy servants, and of thy people Israel, that thou teach them the good way wherein they should walk, and give rain upon thy land, which thou hast given to thy people for an inheritance. 37, If there be in the land famine, if there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or if there be caterpillar; if their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be; 38, What prayer and supplication soever be made by any man, or by all thy people Israel, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, and spread forth his hands toward this house: 39, Then hear thou in heaven

thy dwelling place, and forgive, and do, and give to every man according to his ways, whose heart thou knowest; (for thou, even thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men;) 40, That they may fear thee all the days that they live in the land which thou gavest unto our fathers. 41, Moreover concerning a stranger, that is not of thy people Israel, but cometh out of a far country for thy name's sake; 42, (For they shall hear of thy great name, and of thy strong hand, and of thy stretched out arm;) when he shall come and pray toward this house; 43, Hear thou in heaven thy dwelling place, and do according to all that the stranger calleth to thee for: that all people of the earth may know thy name, to fear thee, as do thy people Israel; and that they may know that this house, which I have builded, is called by thy name. 44, If thy people go out to battle against their enemy, whithersoever thou shalt send them, and shall pray unto the LORD toward the city which thou hast chosen, and toward the house that I have built for thy name: 45, Then hear thou in heaven their prayer and their supplication, and maintain their cause. 46, If they sin against thee, (for there is no man that sinneth not,) and thou be angry with them, and deliver them to the enemy, so that they carry them away captives unto the land of the enemy, far or near; 47, Yet if they shall bethink themselves in the land whither they were carried captives, and repent, and make supplication unto thee in the land of them that carried them captives, saying, We have sinned, and have done perversely, we have committed

wickedness; 48, And so return unto thee with all their heart, and with all their soul, in the land of their enemies, which led them away captive, and pray unto thee toward their land, which thou gavest unto their fathers, the city which thou hast chosen, and the house which I have built for thy name: 49, Then hear thou their prayer and their supplication in heaven thy dwelling place, and maintain their cause, 50, And forgive thy people that have sinned against thee, and all their transgressions wherein they have transgressed against thee, and give them compassion before them who carried them captive, that they may have compassion on them: 51, For they be thy people, and thine inheritance, which thou broughtest forth out of Egypt, from the midst of the furnace of iron: 52, That thine eyes may be open unto the supplication of thy servant, and unto the supplication of thy people Israel, to hearken unto them in all that they call for unto thee. 53, For thou didst separate them from among all the people of the earth, to be thine inheritance, as thou spakest by the hand of Moses thy servant, when thou broughtest our fathers out of Egypt, O LORD God. 54, And it was so, that when Solomon had made an end of praying all this prayer and supplication unto the LORD, he arose from before the altar of the LORD, from kneeling on his knees with his hands spread up to heaven. 55, And he stood, and blessed all the congregation of Israel with a loud voice, saying, 56, Blessed be the LORD, that hath given rest unto his people Israel, according to all that

he promised: there hath not failed one word of all his good promise, which he promised by the hand of Moses his servant. 57, The LORD our God be with us, as he was with our fathers: let him not leave us, nor forsake us: 58, That he may incline our hearts unto him, to walk in all his ways, and to keep his commandments, and his statutes, and his judgments, which he commanded our fathers. 59, And let these my words, wherewith I have made supplication before the LORD, be nigh unto the LORD our God day and night, that he maintain the cause of his servant, and the cause of his people Israel at all times, as the matter shall require: 60, That all the people of the earth may know that the LORD is God, and that there is none else. 61, Let your heart therefore be perfect with the LORD our God, to walk in his statutes, and to keep his commandments, as at this day. 62, And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. 63, And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64, The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the LORD was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. 65, And at that time Solomon held

a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. 66, On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people. The remainder of this chapter is the report of Solomon's prayer of dedication for the finished temple. This prayer is about the people and the fact that they are sinners and will sin and is a plea to God to forgive His people when they turn their eyes to the temple and their hearts toward God in repentance and faith. There is a comparison and contrast of this prayer at the finishing of the temple and that prayer of our Lord in the finishing of the work that God had given him to do. Solomon, whose name means "peace" ends his prayer in vs. 60 with almost the same words that our Lord employs in John 17:21, 23. Solomon has finished the temporal temple, a figure of good things to come, and our Lord has finished the spiritual temple, his body, the church, and the work of salvation that God has given Him (Jn. 17:4). Solomon's prayer is for the people whom God had delivered from the bondage of Egypt, that God would forgive their sin. Christ's prayer is for the people who have been delivered from the penalty of sin and forgiven because of His propitiatory death (v. 51; Jn. 17:9). Solomon commands the people to be perfect before God (v. 61) Christ declares the people to be

perfect because of His finished work (Jn. 17:23). In these two prayers we see the distinction between the Old and New covenants. The Old says to the people “Do” and the New says to the people, “Done”.

The overriding theme of the remainder of this chapter is forgiveness. Solomon, as it were, recites numerous scenarios wherein the people sin and if they look to the Temple, where God dwells, and seek forgiveness ; he asks God to honor His promise and forgive them. These are the conditions of forgiveness. Christ has forgiven His people and part of His great accomplished work is that He has granted them repentance and faith. In the Old Testament repentance and faith were the conditions upon which forgiveness was granted. In the New Testament forgiveness was accomplished for the people by substitution, and faith and repentance are the result of that great work. Solomon's prayer was offered on the basis of a finished type and picture. Christ's prayer was offered on the basis of the finished work. Solomon's temple was finished for a specific period of time. Christ's temple was finished for all eternity. Solomon's temple, as it was made under the old covenant was taken away by design. Christ's temple is His body, the church, the gathering of all the elect, and by design, it is eternal and will never fade away (Heb. 10:9).

These prayers (Solomon's and Christ's) are made for the elect. They are offered for the chosen people of God. Solomon's prayer is offered for that elect nation Israel, whose election is typical. It is election of a nation as a kind of people. It is the election of sinners (v. 46a; Deut. 31:16). That nation pictures the kind of people that God has chosen in the election of grace. Natural Israel is a type or picture of

true Israel, the church, the temple, the body of Christ who have been chosen out of every kindred, nation, tongue and people. This truth is even put forth in the prayer of Solomon. Even though the Temple was for Israel, gentiles were included among those who would seek forgiveness (vv. 41-43). Note well the parenthetical phrase in v. 42. Note the language of the absolute. "they shall hear of Thy great name, and of thy outstretched arm." This is the Gospel (John 5:25). This is the voice of the Shepherd (John 10:14,27; 17:6, 20). Natural Israel is not true Israel. True Israel is the church (Romans 2:28-29 ; 9:6-8; Gal. 4:28). True Israel is the children of promise (v. 56; Gal. 3; 16, 27-29).

They are the elect of God and their election is revealed in their salvation (v. 53; Jn. 17:9-10, 15, 16, 19; 2 Thess. 2:13-14. Eph. 1:3-6).

They belong to God (v. 51; Ezekiel 16:8-14; Deut. 32:9).

The Lord controls all things and all people for their good (v. 50; Romans 8:28; Is. 54:11-17 ; Zeph. 3:13-17).

God fixes it so that His people will call on Him (v. 58; Jer. 32:38-40).

God has given His people rest (v. 56). The only reason to rest is because the work is finished and that there is nothing left to do (Is. 11:10; Matt. 11:25-29 : Heb. 4:9-10).

God maintains the cause of His people at all times as the matter requires (v. 59; Is 43:3-7; Phil. 1:6; I Pet. 1:5; Is. 62:1).

Praise His name.

THE CENew TestamentRAL THING

I Kings 8:62- 9:9

1 Kings 8:62, And the king, and all Israel with him, offered sacrifice before the LORD. 63, And Solomon offered a sacrifice of peace offerings, which he offered unto the LORD, two and twenty thousand oxen, and an hundred and twenty thousand sheep. So the king and all the children of Israel dedicated the house of the LORD. 64, The same day did the king hallow the middle of the court that was before the house of the LORD: for there he offered burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings: because the brasen altar that was before the LORD was too little to receive the burnt offerings, and meat offerings, and the fat of the peace offerings. 65, And at that time Solomon held a feast, and all Israel with him, a great congregation, from the entering in of Hamath unto the river of Egypt, before the LORD our God, seven days and seven days, even fourteen days. 66, On the eighth day he sent the people away: and they blessed the king, and went unto their tents joyful and glad of heart for all the goodness that the LORD had done for David his servant, and for Israel his people.

1 Kings 9:1, And it came to pass, when Solomon had finished the building of the house of the LORD, and the king's house, and all Solomon's desire which he was pleased to do, 2, That the LORD appeared to Solomon the second time, as he had appeared unto him at Gibeon. 3, And the LORD said unto him, I have heard thy prayer and thy supplication, that thou hast made before me: I have hallowed this house, which thou hast built, to put my name there for ever; and mine eyes and mine heart shall be there perpetually. 4, And if thou wilt walk before me, as David thy father walked, in integrity of heart, and in uprightness, to do according to all that I have commanded thee, and wilt keep my statutes and my judgments: 5, Then I will establish the throne of thy kingdom upon Israel for ever, as I promised to David thy father, saying, There shall not fail thee a man upon the throne of Israel. 6, But if ye shall at all turn from following me, ye or your children, and will not keep my commandments and my statutes which I have set before you, but go and serve other gods, and worship them: 7, Then will I cut off Israel out of the land which I have given them; and this house, which I have hallowed for my name, will I cast out of my sight; and Israel shall be a proverb and a byword among all people: 8, And at this house, which is high, every one that passeth by it shall be astonished, and shall hiss; and they shall say, Why hath the LORD done thus unto this land, and to this house? 9, And they shall answer, Because they forsook the LORD their God, who

brought forth their fathers out of the land of Egypt, and have taken hold upon other gods, and have worshipped them, and served them: therefore hath the LORD brought upon them all this evil.

In this passage, after Solomon has made a great amount of sacrifices to the Lord, sacrifices that denote thanksgiving and praise for the Lord because He has honored the finishing of the Temple with His Shekinah glory, the Lord appears to Solomon in a vision or dream. The number and volume of the sacrifices reveal the heart of Solomon and the people toward the worship of God at this important event in the history of Israel (8:62-66). Since Solomon and the people have thus worshipped, the Lord's speaks to Solomon and the words that He speaks are about worship (9:4-9).

Chapter 9 begins with a reminder that Solomon had finished the work of building all the various house as well as the other things he was pleased to do (v. 1; Ecc. 2:4-6). After this had taken place, the Lord appeared to him, the second time, as He did in Gibeon (3:5). This speaks to the condescension of the Lord to speak with one whom He has favored with grace and promise.

It is a wonder that the thrice-holy God deigns to speak to His sinful creatures and it is amazing grace that he does so. Primary to that wonder is that His ear is inclined to their prayers and supplications they offer toward him. It is amazing to every believer that God hears their prayers. Yet is the promise that Christ gave to His chosen that if they ask anything in the name of Christ, it will be given them. Solomon had received evidence that God had heard him in that God had appeared in the smoke and the fire as he took

His place above the mercyseat (2 Chron. 7:1). The prayer that Solomon prayed, as all prayers are, was a form of worship seeking the presence of the Lord. We know this because of the manner of the Lord's answer. God had hallowed (declared to be and regarded as holy) this temple that Solomon built. This is a picture of the sanctification of the temple, the church, the body of Christ. God has made them holy by the work that Christ has finished on their behalf. They are holy because of His presence with them and in them (1 Cor. 1:30; John 17:23; Eph. 1:3-4). This holiness is not a progressive thing, which the Lord begins and the believer finishes (Gal. 3:1-3). They are Holy because the Lord is with them and only because of that. They worship the Lord in true holiness.

The Lord has honored Solomon's prayer by putting His name on and in the Temple. His name, the name which He has put there is Jehovah Savior (LORD). This is what our Lord was declaring in His high priestly prayer (John 17:6; 1:17- 18). The full meaning of the "Name " of God cannot be fathomed. It embraces His character, His attributes, all that He is as the great I Am. He is jealous for that name and when He places it somewhere it is indicative of His ownership of and affection for and allegiance and fellowship with that place, the temple, the church. It is also the singular place where He is worshipped as pictured by the manifold sacrifices that Solomon offered—all types of Christ's finished work on Calvary .

God is worshiped in blood and death and reveals his acceptance in smoke and fire (the presence of God and the acceptance of the sacrifice). Also, God's presence is a guarantee of His providential care (3c). We are kept by the

power of God. No weapon formed against us shall prosper. He will never leave us or forsake us. He never changes. He is the same yesterday, today and forever. He is our shield, our bulwark, our high tower, our hiding place and our exceeding great reward.

The remainder of this passage (v. 4-9) has to do with one thing and one thing only. The wording makes it clear that the Lord is speaking in terms of the Old Covenant wherein certain conditions must be met or the blessings promised for obedience would be withheld and punishment would follow. These words would prove a field day for those who believe that blessings are conditioned upon individual obedience under the New Covenant. They are not but they make for solid religious control for those who desire to make a fair show in the flesh. The blessings of the New Covenant are conditioned upon obedience but not individual obedience, They are conditioned upon substitutionary obedience, perfectly rendered by Christ our Savior. These words are not about the believer keeping the law for righteousness of the promise of reward or the threat of loss (Phil. 2).

One phrase sets this passage in true order. The Lord declares that if Solomon will walk before Him, in integrity of heart and in uprightness to do all that God had commanded and to do His statutes and judgments, he would be blessed with the promise of a never-ending throne. The key phrase to understand what is meant is "as David thy father walked." Spiritually, this could be applied to David being viewed in Christ as perfect for all these things are included in imputed righteousness. But Our Lord is admonishing Solomon in one particular arena.

Where, exactly did David walk thusly (in integrity of heart and in uprightness to do all that God had commanded and to His statutes and judgments)? David's life was filled with the normal occurrences of the flesh. How often did he forget the Lord and rather lean to his own understanding? Did he walk in integrity of heart and in uprightness to do all that God had commanded and to do His statutes and judgments, as he lusted for Bathsheba, took her, impregnated her and had her husband killed? What was the one thing where these accolades could be laid at David's door? David never wavered when it came to the worship of the Lord. The one time he faltered (returning the Ark) God drove home this truth with a vengeance, and David never faltered in the manner and singularity of worshipping God again.

God knows our frame. He remembers that we are dust and does not deal with his redeemed after their iniquities. There is one area in which God will give no quarter and that is the manner in which He is to be worshipped. Even a cursory perusal of the ceremonies and rites that He ordained under the Old Covenant reveals a precise and exacting procedure that was not to be altered in any way. It took a manifold number of exercises, people and sacrifices to worship and the complexity of that worship was needed to picture what Christ accomplished on Calvary. Solomon, in time will do many unsavory things, but he will not be dealt with in sin until he begins to accept the worship of false idols in conjunction with the worship of the true God. God is worshipped in the person and work of Christ alone. That singular Old Covenant principle has not changed because that principle spoke entirely of Christ. This alone would be and is the distinguishing factor of temple worship.

Christ alone. To walk as David walked (in integrity of heart and in uprightness to do all that God had commanded and to do His statutes and judgments) was to worship God in the manner in which He has ordained—it is to honor Christ is His perfect sacrifice that glorifies God in all His attributes and praises Him for the salvation of the elect. It is worshipping God in the declaration of the Gospel. Men and religions incorporate idols, images, crosses, and sacraments, hocus-pocus and recognition of men (waving hands, glassy eyes staring at the ceiling, supposed gifts of the spirits, emotionalism and warm and fuzzy feelings) and call it worship. The temple of the Lord, His church is known for simple, plain unadorned and unadulterated preaching and hearing the Gospel. Men want programs and plans and activities. God asserts that He is to be worshipped in Christ. The proof of true worship is its singularity .

SUBSTANCE

I Kings 9:10-28

10, And it came to pass at the end of twenty years, when Solomon had built the two houses, the house of the LORD, and the king's house, 11, (Now Hiram the king of Tyre had furnished Solomon with cedar trees and fir trees, and with gold, according to all his desire,) that then king Solomon gave Hiram twenty cities in the land of Galilee. 12, And Hiram came out from Tyre to see the cities which Solomon had given him; and they pleased him not. 13, And he said, What cities are these which thou hast given me, my brother? And he called them the land of Cabul unto this day. 14, And Hiram sent to the king sixscore talents of gold. 15, And this is the reason of the levy which king Solomon raised; for to build the house of the LORD, and his own house, and Millo, and the wall of Jerusalem, and Hazor, and Megiddo, and Gezer. 16, For Pharaoh king of Egypt had gone up, and taken Gezer, and burnt it with fire, and slain the Canaanites that dwelt in the city, and given it for a present unto his daughter, Solomon's wife. 17, And Solomon built Gezer, and Bethhoron the nether, 18, And Baalath, and Tadmor in the wilderness, in the land, 19, And all the cities of store that Solomon had, and cities for his chariots, and cities for his horsemen, and that which Solomon desired to build in Jerusalem, and in Lebanon, and in all the land of his dominion. 20, And all the people that were left of the Amorites, Hittites, Perizzites, Hivites, and Jebusites, which were not of the children of Israel, 21, Their children that were left after them in the land, whom the children of

Israel also were not able utterly to destroy, upon those did Solomon levy a tribute of bondservice unto this day. 22, But of the children of Israel did Solomon make no bondmen: but they were men of war, and his servants, and his princes, and his captains, and rulers of his chariots, and his horsemen. 23, These were the chief of the officers that were over Solomon's work, five hundred and fifty, which bare rule over the people that wrought in the work. 24, But Pharaoh's daughter came up out of the city of David unto her house which Solomon had built for her: then did he build Millo. 25, And three times in a year did Solomon offer burnt offerings and peace offerings upon the altar which he built unto the LORD, and he burnt incense upon the altar that was before the LORD. So he finished the house. 26, And king Solomon made a navy of ships in Eziongeber, which is beside Eloth, on the shore of the Red sea, in the land of Edom. 27, And Hiram sent in the navy his servants, shipmen that had knowledge of the sea, with the servants of Solomon. 28, And they came to Ophir, and fetched from thence gold, four hundred and twenty talents, and brought it to king Solomon. As we considered the first part of this chapter last time, we saw that the thrust of the words of the first 9 verses was that God was to be worshipped in the manner that He ordained and no allowance was to be made for any deviation or any introduction of the worship of false gods. That typology translated into the singular manner, the only way that God is to be worshipped and that is in

the person and work of Christ. It is in that bloody death of that perfect sacrifice that God is honored in all His attributes.

In the latter part of this chapter we have the record of Solomon building buildings and cities and amassing wealth. There are differing opinions about the words of Hiram concerning the cities that Solomon gave to him, which he evidently was not pleased with and which he returned to Solomon (vv. 11-13). Some say that since the area of the cities were called Cabul (desert like, useless, nothing), that the cities and the gift of them were disdained as well as the giver of them. Other say that since these cities were landlocked and Hiram and his people were known as masters of the seas that he was simply saying that he saw no benefit in owning these cities. It could have been, since he addressed Solomon as “my brother” that he was speaking as Jacob did when he said “I have enough” and that no gift was necessary. Yet another reason might be found in the root meaning of the word “Cabul.” It means “binding” and Hiram might have thought this gift useless because he was bound to Solomon in true love and affection and wanted their relationship to be bound on no other level. The immediacy of the historical account of Hiram's gift of gold (v. 14) seems to indicate that Hiram had neither desire or need of these cities since true gifts are not to be repaid. There is no quid pro quo with a gift. The gifts of grace and mercy and faith do not make us indebted to God—they are freely given. Much of religion strives to make men feel that they have a debt to pay for grace and faith but the believer is not working off a debt with his life, he is living as a son and heir. If thanksgiving and praise might be considered indebtedness then that is

the only debt that the believer owes to God. Nothing in the saved sinner caused God's grace and nothing in him could have prevented God's grace.

The reason for this account of the amassing of wealth and the building of cities is of historical value but it all must be held to the light of Solomon's last words. Humanity is easily impressed with the gathering of fortunes but they are temporal and therefore insubstantial (Luke 12:15-21). Life, no matter how grand the accomplishments made, is but a vapor and flies faster than a weaver's shuttle. The words of this passage are a kind of prequel to what Solomon's final assessment of all this amounted to. In the middle of the ledger there is one verse that sets the timbre for the entire passage and the measure of a man's life. In verse 25 it is recorded that Solomon offered burnt offerings (picturing the accomplishment of salvation) and peace offerings (signifying thanksgiving and praise for the finished work of salvation) and incense (picturing the intercessory work of Christ our High Priest). He made three sacrifices per year, probably on the three main feast days of Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles. Each of these represented an aspect of Christ work on behalf of His people. Passover speaks to deliverance by blood (1 Cor. 5:7). Pentecost speaks to the gathering of first fruits (bringing the sheep into the fold through the Gospel-James 1:18). And the feast of tabernacles speaks of the completion of our wilderness journey. So we see that Solomon gained a great deal of worldly wealth and continued to remember that God had been gracious to him.

Of these two things only one is of substance. One has to do with time, the other has to do with eternity. One is of value the other is empty. Before my Dad died, he said "this is

a short-cut from here to eternity.” Whether he was speaking of hospice or his life, I'm not sure, but his words would be most applicable to life. Solomon, at the end of his days, looked over his life, and everything he had accomplished in time and after adding it all up, his sum was that the totality of that which takes place in time is vanity, emptiness and vexation of spirit. The first two chapters of Ecclesiastes is about just that (2:1-11, 17). In chapter 3 he addresses this fact in very poetic, well known and mostly misunderstood language. Under heaven, in time, there is a time and purpose for everything that takes place. These things serve the eternal purpose of God but they are like the common vessel that is designed to be used and discarded. They began in time and will end in time. Time is God's possession and used for his purpose but only that which began in eternity will end in eternity. Our lives began in time and will end in time but our salvation began in eternity and will eventuate in eternal glory. Those who receive grace experience in time what began in eternity with election, predestination and suretyship. The things we observe in time are about time and we are not, in the observance of temporal occurrences, able to discern eternity by them (v. 11). Calvary happened in time but Christ was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. Since all that occurs in time serves eternal purpose, man cannot effect the outcome of things one whit. What is a believer to do? Enjoy life, it is a gift of God (vv. 12-13).

Why—because this all will end having served its temporal purpose (inside the set parameters of eternal purpose) and what God has done cannot be undone (v. 14). The fact is that this thing called temporal life is a tale that has already been

told (v. 15). So as Solomon gathered his riches and did his deeds, he remembered that behind all of this temporal busy-ness the true thing to be remembered was that God was to be worshipped (text-v. 25; Ecc. 12:13).

SOLOMON AND THE QUEEN

I Kings 10:1-9,13

1, And when the queen of Sheba heard of the fame of Solomon concerning the name of the LORD, she came to prove him with hard questions. 2, And she came to Jerusalem with a very great train, with camels that bare spices, and very much gold, and precious stones: and when she was come to Solomon, she communed with him of all that was in her heart. 3, And Solomon told her all her questions: there was not any thing hid from the king, which he told her not. 4, And when the queen of Sheba had seen all Solomon's wisdom, and the house that he had built, 5, And the meat of his table, and the sitting of his servants, and the attendance of his ministers, and their apparel, and his cupbearers, and his ascent by which he went up unto the house of the LORD; there was no more spirit in her. 6, And she said to the king, It was a true report that I heard in mine own land of thy acts and of thy wisdom. 7, Howbeit I believed not the words, until I came, and mine eyes had seen it: and, behold, the half was not told me: thy wisdom and prosperity exceedeth the fame which I heard. 8, Happy are thy men, happy are these thy servants, which stand continually before thee, and that hear thy wisdom. 9, Blessed be the LORD thy God, which delighted in thee, to set thee on the throne of Israel: because the LORD loved Israel for ever, therefore made he thee king, to do judgment and justice. 13, And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal

bounty. So she turned and went to her own country,
she and her servants.

The verses we have read compose the thrust of this 10th chapter. The remainder of the chapter is a catalogue of the riches and power of Solomon's kingdom and is reported that we might get some idea of the magnitude that was viewed by the Queen of Sheba. Her name is not given. She is designated by her office in this passage and in the New Testament she is referred to as the Queen of the South. Sheba was a rich nation in southern Arabia, probably in the area of Yemen today. "Sheba" is also the name of three different men in the Old Testament.

Were this report not repeated in the New Testament, by our Lord himself, there would still be no difficulty in seeing that Solomon and the queen are a picture of Christ and His elect among the gentiles. Solomon is a picture of the ensign of Isaiah 11 to whom the gentiles would gather and would receive from Him things of inestimable value, even eternal value—peace and rest and restoration. But we do have this report referred to in the New Testament and it assures us that this incident was a true picture and type of the Lord and His people (Matt. 12:42). In the context of the 12th of Matthew, our Lord is speaking of casting out devils by the finger of God and condemning those who have attributed the works of Christ to the devil, assuring them that they had committed a sin for which there was no forgiveness. This is designated, as a sin against the Holy Ghost because, the function of the Holy Ghost, called the Spirit of truth, is to take the things of Christ and reveal them to His people. Our Lord uses the act of the Queen of the South to condemn

those who seek a sign to show that Christ is truly the Messiah (v. 42). She had sought out Solomon to hear his wisdom and a greater than Solomon was in their midst and they had called him a devil and said that he had cast out devils by the power of Satan. He then gave the chilling account of what happens when Satan leaves a man for a while and what he finds when he returns (empty, swept and garnished religion), and the seven spirits he brings with him assures the complete and utter ruin of the occupants of his house. The message is plain. Emulate the queen of the south while a greater than Solomon is here and seek the Lord (Is. 55:6).

This truth is clearly seen in the nuts and bolts of the Queen's visit with Solomon. The particulars tell the story of why and how the sheep seek the Shepherd; the queen seeks the King.

The first thing is she came. She came because she heard of the fame of Solomon. This fame told of his riches but it was his wisdom and understanding was the preeminent reason for her journey. The book of Proverbs reveals that Solomon had a great understanding of nature and flora and fauna and this is often what men give as a reason for the Queen's interest in him. But the text tells us otherwise. She came because she heard of his fame concerning the name of LORD (Jehovah). She came with hard questions, which suggests that she had a real desire to learn about the true and living God. When the Holy Spirit take the word of God and creates a hunger and thirst in the heart of the elect, the chosen one what nothing more than to learn about the Savior (Illus. man and lion).

Secondly, her issues, her questions were not a matter of intellectual pursuit.

The Q&A involved the realm of the heart, her innermost being (V. 2c). “She communed with him all that was in her heart” (Prov. 4:23). The verb “commune” suggests a diligent and intensive inquiry.

Thirdly, she was rewarded for diligently seeking him (Heb. 11:6). Verse three declares that she got everything she asked for and more. This passage reminds me of the woman at the well who declared that Christ had told her all that she ever did (Jn. 4:29). When a sinner seeks the Lord and finds Him, he finds that nothing is held back. Everything he wants to know is given him through the word that the Lord has written in his mind and heart. He finds that all things are his and he is complete, having need of nothing.

Such grace and kindness always brings about the same result. When she saw Solomon for who he was and all that he possessed and the realm over which he was king, she was silenced and her royal estate was nothing to her by comparison (5c), “ There was no more spirit in her” (Dan. 10:5-8; Rev. 1:13-17; Is. 6) When she saw him she was emptied by the revelation of Him (Job 42:5-6).

When she spoke, her words were of him and his glory— she confessed that everything that she had heard about him was true and the half had not been told (vv. 6-7; John 3:31-33). That which is true is that which concerns the mind and heart of the one who has seen Christ and his confession is that Jesus is the Christ—He is the truth.

When she saw the king for who he was, she glorified God who raised Him up to be king and the wondrous privilege of

those over whom he reigns in peace and love (v. 8-9, Ps. 29; Phil 2:9-11).

Finally, the king gave her all that she desired (v. 13). Our Lord said that whatsoever we ask in His name would be given us. Seek the LORD (Deut. 4:29).

COSEQUENCES OF SIN

I Kings 11:1-13

1, But king Solomon loved many strange women, together with the daughter of Pharaoh, women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Zidonians, and Hittites; 2, Of the nations concerning which the LORD said unto the children of Israel, Ye shall not go in to them, neither shall they come in unto you: for surely they will turn away your heart after their gods: Solomon clave unto these in love. 3, And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines: and his wives turned away his heart. 4, For it came to pass, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned away his heart after other gods: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as was the heart of David his father. 5, For Solomon went after Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites. 6, And Solomon did evil in the sight of the LORD, and went not fully after the LORD, as did David his father. 7, Then did Solomon build an high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, in the hill that is before Jerusalem, and for Molech, the abomination of the children of Ammon. 8, And likewise did he for all his strange wives, which burnt incense and sacrificed unto their gods. 9, And the LORD was angry with Solomon, because his heart was turned from the LORD God of Israel, which had appeared unto him twice, 10, And had commanded him concerning this thing, that he should not go after other gods: but he kept not that which the LORD commanded. 11, Wherefore the LORD said unto Solomon, Forasmuch as this is done of thee, and

thou hast not kept my covenant and my statutes, which I have commanded thee, I will surely rend the kingdom from thee, and will give it to thy servant. 12, Notwithstanding in thy days I will not do it for David thy father's sake: but I will rend it out of the hand of thy son. 13, Howbeit I will not rend away all the kingdom; but will give one tribe to thy son for David my servant's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake which I have chosen.

This passage begins with the word, “but” and we know that this mighty little conjunction completely reveals an opposite of that which precedes it. What a grand report has been made of the visit of the Queen of the South and of the great wisdom of Solomon. Accolades flow like rain, as Solomon is exalted for the gift of wisdom that God had given. His name, at that time and to this day, is synonymous with wisdom. His wealth and his grandeur are magnified and his renown goes far beyond the kingdom over which he reigns (10:24). Then as if a death knell was sounded, as if the din was suddenly silenced, the 11th chapter begins with the word “But” and we know that everything that is said before must be viewed in a new light. Often, when we find the word, “But” it is followed with the name of God and usually ends in good news. Such is not the case here. The word is a harbinger of ill tidings because it is the opposite of the grand report of the exalted king. This conjunction is the beginning of the end.

In so many ways, Solomon is a type of Christ but in this passage he proves to be typical man. Many things have been employed to explain his actions. Some have said that it was politically expedient to have so many wives and concubines

and that certainly played some part by creating alliances that benefited Israel. The old adage, “politics makes for strange bedfellows” certainly rings true in this case. Others have blamed his riches and fame for the dalliances and we all have seen great men fall. But riches are not inherently evil though they often broaden the avenue of privilege and increase the sense of entitlement. But riches are not evil and many have used their wealth to good and philanthropic ends. I know and have known men and women of considerable means who while enjoying some of the finer things (products of their labor) they have exhibited charitable hearts in support of the Gospel and causes that benefit mankind (Ecc. 3:12-13).

It was neither politics nor riches that was the source of Solomon's evil choices—the problem was his heart; “but king Solomon loved'. No matter the avenues opened or the expedience of alliances sin must be laid at the heart's door (Prov. 4:23; Jer. 17:9; Matt. 12:34; Mk. 7:18:23). The love referred to is not the love of God but love between human beings, born of nature and carnal lusts and is more about self than about the loved one.

King Solomon loved many strange women. The word “strange” carries the principle of false religion or idolatry (i.e. —strange fire—strange doctrine). The result of Solomon's many loves was that he allowed and eventually even promoted the false god's and false practices of his many wives. This was overt disobedience to the command of God and the consequences were dire (Deut. 7:1, 3). Perhaps convincing himself that because he had not been punished, he felt free to follow the dictates of his heart. The last phrase of verse 2 reveals that Solomon was not thinking of God, he

“clave to these in love.” Verse 3 indicates the enormity of his sin. There is no indication that he ceased to worship the true God (v. 6—fully—sweet declaration of grace) but since he embraced the idolatry of his wives and concubines there was a mixture and this was prohibited by God. The fact that the issue was idolatry is clearly seen in the comparison or contrast between David and Solomon. We know that David erred in numerous ways and often depended on the flesh when he ought to have depended on God but the one thing that distinguished David from Solomon was that David, in all his failures and frailty, never was guilty of idolatry. Something must be considered in this passage and it is the passing of time. The idolatry is recorded to have occurred in Solomon's old age (v. 4). How many years and how much time occurred between the marriages and concubinary is not revealed. But 1000 female companions certainly suggests years and possibly decades. Solomon knew that each marital alliance was sinful but we know because of our own depraved hearts, that once temptation is succumbed to, the next carries less guilt and with 1000 the last was done with hardly any consideration of consequence. Solomon wrote of this very attitude in Ecc. 8:11; v. 6).

This is the nature of sin. It operates in a singular and predictable and set pattern. The end is always loss. In the case of Solomon, he lost the kingdom. 10 tribes were removed from his reign and only Judah and Benjamin remained. His deeds divided the nation and what followed in time was a series of evil men (save for a few) that did evil in the sight of the Lord. We can look at the acts of Solomon and see the horrible process of sin and its reasonable end. Look at James 1:13-16. Solomon's actions follow, to a tee, the

words of James. The justice of God upon Solomon was tempered with mercy (v. 13; Ps. 37:23-24; 89:28-35; Prov. 24:16). He was God's child, a sinner for sure, but a sinner saved by grace, his debts paid by Christ the Lord on Calvary's Tree.

One verse sums up this entire report. The enormity of sin is measure in terms of Who sin is against. It is against God. Sin among the lost is evil but among those who name the name of Christ it is most foul. For the child of God, all sin is sin against light, and the death it brings and the loss it causes has to do with our relationship with Christ. David spoke of the loss of the joy of salvation and sin inhibits that joy (Ps. 51:1-12). Sin does not change God's love for us nor affect the promises that He has made. Just as Solomon was dealt with in mercy for David's sake, so the believer is dealt with in mercy and grace for Christ's sake. But sin will have its pound of flesh and all that is necessary for that to happen is for God to suffer us to act in the flesh. Solomon's sin was in light of the fact that God had condescended to appear to Him twice (v. 9). Solomon's sin was in light of the fact that God had graciously appeared to him twice and warned him specifically to avoid this particular sin (9:5-7). The Lord has written his word in the hearts and minds of his people and no sin may be mitigated by claims of ignorance (all willful). See: Matt. 11:20-24. OH Lord, keep us from ourselves (Ps. 119:11).

ZERO UNEMPLOYMENT New Testament

I Kings 11:14-25

14, And the LORD stirred up an adversary unto Solomon, Hadad the Edomite: he was of the king's seed in Edom. 15, For it came to pass, when David was in Edom, and Joab the captain of the host was gone up to bury the slain, after he had smitten every male in Edom; 16, (For six months did Joab remain there with all Israel, until he had cut off every male in Edom:) 17, That Hadad fled, he and certain Edomites of his father's servants with him, to go into Egypt; Hadad being yet a little child. 18, And they arose out of Midian, and came to Paran: and they took men with them out of Paran, and they came to Egypt, unto Pharaoh king of Egypt; which gave him an house, and appointed him victuals, and gave him land. 19, And Hadad found great favour in the sight of Pharaoh, so that he gave him to wife the sister of his own wife, the sister of Tahpenes the queen. 20, And the sister of Tahpenes bare him Genubath his son, whom Tahpenes weaned in Pharaoh's house: and Genubath was in Pharaoh's household among the sons of Pharaoh. 21, And when Hadad heard in Egypt that David slept with his fathers, and that Joab the captain of the host was dead, Hadad said to Pharaoh, Let me depart, that I may go to mine own country. 22, Then Pharaoh said unto him, But what hast thou lacked with me, that, behold, thou seekest to go to thine own country? And he answered, Nothing: howbeit let me go in any wise. 23, And God stirred him up another adversary, Rezon the son of Eliadah, which fled from his lord Hadadezer king of Zobah: 24,

And he gathered men unto him, and became captain over a band, when David slew them of Zobah: and they went to Damascus, and dwelt therein, and reigned in Damascus. 25, And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria.

Those who have been given faith do not look at the decline of this great king and harbor some sense of self-righteousness. Rather, they are reminded of their own frailty and assured in their hearts that if God, but for a moment, lifts His finger of restraining grace, their end would be worse than that of Solomon. We must pray with David that our Lord would “keep us from presumptuous sins” and always cause us to take heed that when we think we stand our feet are on the rim of a slippery precipice. It is true that when the mighty are fallen the noise is greater. But for the grace of God this is the end of every believer. A dear brother told me once that men don't remember how you started out but they never forget how you end. Shakespeare said in “Julius Caesar”, “The evil that men do live after them, the good is oft' interred with their bones.” The world, pretty much, only remembers the greatness and wisdom of Solomon, but it is pure grace that the believer has the entire record as a reminder that grace not only is a record of our astounding benefits but is likewise an accounting that all we have received is unmerited favor. We all need the report of Solomon's decline as much as we need the report of his greatness. The words of Paul come to mind, “with my mind I serve the law of God, but with my flesh I serve the law of sin and death.” What we will

consider this hour is the means that God uses to chastise Solomon in his declining years. These verses are the fulfillment of a prophesy to David concerning Solomon (2 Sam. 7:12-14).

Often when men read passages like this they spend a great amount of energy trying to shield God from any wrongdoing. They think that for God to “stir up” men to do harm somehow diminishes His goodness. This notion is rampant in today's religious mind. Men look at calamity, or the brutal killing of a child or a good person and say things like how could a good God allow these things to happen. At the heart of such thinking is a carnal wish that there was no God, but the primary thought comes from a refusal to acknowledge God as the sovereign ruler of this universe holding absolute sway over every creature and every inanimate object. Barnard said, “if you think God a monster, get ready to meet a monster.” Was it not good that Joseph's brethren hated him so that in the end he would be their salvation? Was it not good to raise up Pharaoh, just to cast him down, that God would show His glory in the deliverance of His people by the blood and death of a substitute? Was it not good that evil men hated Christ and refused His reign and that lead them to crucify Him and it proved part and parcel to salvation of the elect? I wonder if Solomon was in his declining years when he wrote, by inspiration of a time to kill, a time to break down, a time to weep, a time to lose, a time to rend, a time of war, of the travail that man is exercised and that man cannot know what God is doing at any time and yet at all times, all things are beautiful in His time. To everything there is season and a time for every purpose under heaven. Our emotions and sentimentality do not equip us to see past

present circumstance, so human beings cannot help but judge before time. Thank the Lord for the faith He gives His elect. Though they may find themselves often perplexed by circumstance, there is an inward anchor that holds the mind and heart in place with the understanding that our answer is Him who holds the reigns and makes no mistakes and shall always do right. Faith does not rely on circumstance but sees what cannot be seen, believes what cannot be proven and embraces the invisible power behind all things, controlling, manipulating, guiding, gathering here, dispersing there and ruling with good, honorable, omnipotent and unchallengeable will. This is sweet solace. The title of my message is “Zero Unemployment” because in this report God is using the hatred of two men to “chasten him (Solomon) with the rod of men and with the stripes of the children of men”.

Hadad was a member of the royal house of Edom who escaped the massacre under Joab and fled with a band of followers into Egypt. After David's death, he returned to his own country. Rezon was the son of Eliadah, a Syrian, who led a band of mercenaries and established a petty kingdom at Damascus in the time of David and Solomon. These two had one thing in common. They hated Israel and the kings who ruled there. The truth here is plain and unadorned and unapologetic. These evil men, possessed of overt hatred for God and His people, were employed by the Absolute Sovereign to do whatsoever had been foreordained to be done. They were born to this end and as they vented their venom, as they did what was the desire of their hearts; they were fulfilling the purpose that had been laid out for them from all eternity. They were vessels of dishonor, vessels of

wrath fitted to destruction, gainfully employed to serve the will of the Master, to afflict one of God's elect that, in the end, the peaceable fruits of righteousness would be yielded by the exercise. In the economy of God's purpose, there is zero unemployment. ..every thing and every creature has a purpose that we will assuredly fulfill. "He doeth according to His will in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth and none can stay His hand or say unto Him, what doest thou".

And there is more here. The names of these two instruments of affliction and chastisement define one character. Hadad means mighty and Rezon means prince. The mighty prince who did well in Egypt and was an ersatz king of a band of mercenaries was used as an instrument of chastisement in the hands of the Almighty, the true King of all that is. Satan is called the Prince of the power of the air. He is called a dignity—son of the morning and with all his fame and grandeur and derived power over men, he is but God's ape, God's pawn and an instrument in the scheme of God's purpose who delights to destroy, who hates God and His people and is used by His creator to do good for the elect. He cannot touch one of God's own. He must crawl on his belly like a serpent to the throne of the Savior to get permission to touch one of the anointed. When he is given permission to act out on his hatred, when he is suffered to afflict one of the elect, he is but a scalpel in the hands of the Great Physician employed to excise the tumor of rebellion. Hadad and Rezon and Satan, whom they typify, are merely suffered to be themselves. For a moment the hand of sovereign restraint is lifted and they, in vile hatred, help and do good for the elect. Remember it was God who turned

Satan's eyes to Job, but Satan could only touch Job to the extent that God allowed for Job's good and God's glory. Satan did his job and as the waves of the sea, God said hither shalt thou go and no further. And Simon Peter, full of pride and sure of himself, sure that he would never deny Christ was confronted with these words (Luke 22:31-32). Notice one little phrase in verse 32, “ And when thou art converted—.”

The word when tells us that there is plan in force. Simon's sure conversion tells us the behind the plan there is the purpose. Part of the plan is Satan's desire to sift Simon as wheat and though he will be sifted, the restriction upon Satan is that he cannot go any farther than Christ intercession. Simon Peter, having been chastised and Satan being used as the instrument of chastisement, is told as a result of his experience, to strengthen the brethren. Everybody employed .

“Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Savior, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen.”

THE REASON

I Kings 11:25-43

25, And he was an adversary to Israel all the days of Solomon, beside the mischief that Hadad did: and he abhorred Israel, and reigned over Syria. 26, And Jeroboam the son of Nebat, an Ephrathite of Zereda, Solomon's servant, whose mother's name was Zeruah, a widow woman, even he lifted up his hand against the king. 27, And this was the cause that he lifted up his hand against the king: Solomon built Millo, and repaired the breaches of the city of David his father. 28, And the man Jeroboam was a mighty man of valour: and Solomon seeing the young man that he was industrious, he made him ruler over all the charge of the house of Joseph. 29, And it came to pass at that time when Jeroboam went out of Jerusalem, that the prophet Ahijah the Shilonite found him in the way; and he had clad himself with a new garment; and they two were alone in the field: 30, And Ahijah caught the new garment that was on him, and rent it in twelve pieces: 31, And he said to Jeroboam, Take thee ten pieces: for thus saith the LORD, the God of Israel, Behold, I will rend the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon, and will give ten tribes to thee: 32, (But he shall have one tribe for my servant David's sake, and for Jerusalem's sake, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel:) 33, Because that they have forsaken me, and have worshipped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Zidonians, Chemosh the god of the Moabites, and Milcom the god of the children of Ammon, and have not walked in my ways, to do that which is right in mine eyes, and to keep my statutes and my

judgments, as did David his father. 34, Howbeit I will not take the whole kingdom out of his hand: but I will make him prince all the days of his life for David my servant's sake, whom I chose, because he kept my commandments and my statutes: 35, But I will take the kingdom out of his son's hand, and will give it unto thee, even ten tribes. 36, And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there. 37, And I will take thee, and thou shalt reign according to all that thy soul desireth, and shalt be king over Israel. 38, And it shall be, if thou wilt hearken unto all that I command thee, and wilt walk in my ways, and do that is right in my sight, to keep my statutes and my commandments, as David my servant did; that I will be with thee, and build thee a sure house, as I built for David, and will give Israel unto thee. 39, And I will for this afflict the seed of David, but not for ever. 40, Solomon sought therefore to kill Jeroboam. And Jeroboam arose, and fled into Egypt, unto Shishak king of Egypt, and was in Egypt until the death of Solomon. 41, And the rest of the acts of Solomon, and all that he did, and his wisdom, are they not written in the book of the acts of Solomon? 42, And the time that Solomon reigned in Jerusalem over all Israel was forty years. 43, And Solomon slept with his fathers, and was buried in the city of David his father: and Rehoboam his son reigned in his stead.

This chapter ends the account of the life of Solomon in this book. It ends as things must end in the life of men, in ashes and dust. There is an obituary in our future. The last act of Solomon does not speak to his repentance. Whether he went to the grave in rebellion against God's chastisement or repented of his evil before he died is not stated. We do, however, have what he wrote after he fell into this base idolatry. The book of the preacher (Ecclesiastes) is his report and it is a detailed account of his failures and also that of humanity in general and his conclusion, at the least, seems to speak to a repentant heart and an acknowledgement of where he went astray (Ecc. 12:13-14). We know that his deeds, as evil as they were, met with chastisement from his loving Father yet did not alter the grace or mercy that he had been given. The cost was measured in time but not in eternity. He lost his reputation but not his soul and in the end he took his place with every human being. "Ashes to ashes and dust to dust" is the epitaph of every man that is born of woman. In the cold earth the king and the pauper lie together, the saint and the profligate are equalized by the worms that devour their flesh. There are but two things that can be said of all men, they sin and they die. In the end, at the conclusion of this vapor an eternity awaits and the difference between one man and another is the eternal covenant of grace, conceived, executed and consummated by the triune Godhead without any consideration of man's merit or lack thereof (1 Cor. 4:7). Solomon was a child of God and though God gives us an accurate account of his many failures, they serve to assure us that if a man is saved, it must be by grace alone.

As it has been since the beginning, the providential maneuverings of humanity serve a dual purpose, the glory of God and the good of His elect. Solomon's great reign and his carnal behavior are but tiny gears in the great machine of eternal purpose. His error eventuated in the dividing of the kingdom. Ten tribes went to Jeroboam and two tribes went to Rehoboam. Our Lord said that a kingdom divided cannot stand and so it was. Henceforth the 10 tribes and the two will remain be divided.

The reason that the Lord did not give the entire nation to Jeroboam is seen in the covenant that God made with David. A king would sit on his throne forever and that King was the seed of David in the realm of humanity and the seed of the Father from eternity. Of that king's kingdom there shall be no end, nor shall there ever be division—that king and that kingdom are one (Lk. 1:31-33).

This life of Solomon and that of his father David was about the lineage of the Messiah and the words that apply to David and the covenant that God made with him. No doubt the promises of preservation apply to the tribe of Judah of which Benjamin is here included. These promises are temporal in nature and apply to the length of the Old Covenant (See: Is. 59:21; 65:8). But they picture the purpose of God in the salvation of the elect. All that occurred; the sin of Solomon, the consequence of chastisement, the dividing of the kingdom and the preservation of Judah are but the Gospel wrapped in type and shadow .

First the “why” is clear (vv. 11-13, 32). This is about covenant promise and all that takes place in human history is for Christ's sake. No matter the circumstance. no matter the time or the occurrence, it is about God glorifying His Son

(Jn. 5:23). That seed must be preserved because He will accomplish the salvation of the elect. That seed must be born of a woman, born under the law to redeem them that are under the law (Is. 7:14; 9:6). That seed will bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 3:15). That seed made Eve cry, "I've gotten the man." That seed made Tamar play the harlot. That seed is who Abraham believed and it was accounted to him for righteousness (Gen. 15:5-6; Gal. 3:16). That seed would be seen and owned on Calvary (Isaiah 53:10). Judah must be preserved because the great High priest will not come from Levi's seed but from Judah. Judah must be preserved because that seed from Judah is Surety for His people (Gen. 43:9; 44:32; Heb. 7:22). Judah must be preserved because the Lion of the tribe of Judah is the only one worthy to open the book and loose the seals thereof. This is all for Christ's sake (v. 34).

Secondly, Judah must be preserved because it is not possible that the testimony of God would fall to the earth (V. 36). Christ is that initial revelation of light on Genesis 1. This one thing, this blessed thing, this Word of God, the Word from on high will be here when all its numerous detractors are but dust and ashes. All flesh is grass and as the flower of the field, it fades away but the Word of God abideth forever. It does not merely continue, it abides, lives, dwells and thrives forever. For nearly 4 millennia it has been the source of comfort and conviction to an innumerable company (Is. 59:21). Every believer testifies to its power. It is the means of their salvation and the record of its accomplishment. Judah must be preserved because in eternal glory, Christ is the Light of that place. That Light is ever before God and so our salvation (2 Cor. 4 :6).

Finally, Judah must be preserved because Christ is the substitute for chosen sinners and they must be saved (v. 39; John 10:16). Look again at Is. 65:8. Destroy it not. Our Lord was “cut off out of the land of the living” for God's people He was stricken. He was cut off but not for himself (Dan. 9:26a). This was as successful substitution, a true substitution where the people for whom He died were accounted as suffering with Him (Is. 54:7-14, Matt. 1:21, 2 Tim. 1:9). Its all for Christ's sake—he is the reason.

THY WILL BE DONE

I Kings 12

1, And Rehoboam went to Shechem: for all Israel were come to Shechem to make him king. 2, And it came to pass, when Jeroboam the son of Nebat, who was yet in Egypt, heard of it, (for he was fled from the presence of king Solomon, and Jeroboam dwelt in Egypt;) 3, That they sent and called him. And Jeroboam and all the congregation of Israel came, and spake unto Rehoboam, saying, 4, Thy father made our yoke grievous: now therefore make thou the grievous service of thy father, and his heavy yoke which he put upon us, lighter, and we will serve thee. 5, And he said unto them, Depart yet for three days, then come again to me. And the people departed. 6, And king Rehoboam consulted with the old men, that stood before Solomon his father while he yet lived, and said, How do ye advise that I may answer this people? 7, And they spake unto him, saying, If thou wilt be a servant unto this people this day, and wilt serve them, and answer them, and speak good words to them, then they will be thy servants for ever. 8, But he forsook the counsel of the old men, which they had given him, and consulted with the young men that were grown up with him, and which stood before him: 9, And he said unto them, What counsel give ye that we may answer this people, who have spoken to me, saying, Make the yoke which thy father did put upon us lighter? 10, And the young men that were grown up with him spake unto him, saying, Thus shalt thou speak unto this people that spake unto thee, saying, Thy father made our yoke heavy, but make thou it lighter unto us; thus shalt

thou say unto them, My little finger shall be thicker than my father's loins. 11, And now whereas my father did lade you with a heavy yoke, I will add to your yoke: my father hath chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 12, So Jeroboam and all the people came to Rehoboam the third day, as the king had appointed, saying, Come to me again the third day. 13, And the king answered the people roughly, and forsook the old men's counsel that they gave him; 14, And spake to them after the counsel of the young men, saying, My father made your yoke heavy, and I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions. 15, Wherefore the king hearkened not unto the people; for the cause was from the LORD, that he might perform his saying, which the LORD spake by Ahijah the Shilonite unto Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 16, So when all Israel saw that the king hearkened not unto them, the people answered the king, saying, What portion have we in David? neither have we inheritance in the son of Jesse: to your tents, O Israel: now see to thine own house, David. So Israel departed unto their tents. 17, But as for the children of Israel which dwelt in the cities of Judah, Rehoboam reigned over them. 18, Then king Rehoboam sent Adoram, who was over the tribute; and all Israel stoned him with stones, that he died. Therefore king Rehoboam made speed to get him up to his chariot, to flee to Jerusalem. 19, So Israel rebelled against the house of David unto this day.

20, And it came to pass, when all Israel heard that Jeroboam was come again, that they sent and called him unto the congregation, and made him king over all Israel: there was none that followed the house of David, but the tribe of Judah only. 21, And when Rehoboam was come to Jerusalem, he assembled all the house of Judah, with the tribe of Benjamin, an hundred and fourscore thousand chosen men, which were warriors, to fight against the house of Israel, to bring the kingdom again to Rehoboam the son of Solomon. 22, But the word of God came unto Shemaiah the man of God, saying, 23, Speak unto Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, king of Judah, and unto all the house of Judah and Benjamin, and to the remnant of the people, saying, 24, Thus saith the LORD, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren the children of Israel: return every man to his house; for this thing is from me. They hearkened therefore to the word of the LORD, and returned to depart, according to the word of the LORD. 25, Then Jeroboam built Shechem in mount Ephraim, and dwelt therein; and went out from thence, and built Penuel. 26, And Jeroboam said in his heart, Now shall the kingdom return to the house of David: 27, If this people go up to do sacrifice in the house of the LORD at Jerusalem, then shall the heart of this people turn again unto their lord, even unto Rehoboam king of Judah, and they shall kill me, and go again to Rehoboam king of Judah. 28, Whereupon the king took counsel, and made two calves of gold, and said unto them, It is too much for

you to go up to Jerusalem: behold thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt. 29, And he set the one in Bethel, and the other put he in Dan. 30, And this thing became a sin: for the people went to worship before the one, even unto Dan. 31, And he made an house of high places, and made priests of the lowest of the people, which were not of the sons of Levi. 32, And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made. 33, So he offered upon the altar which he had made in Bethel the fifteenth day of the eighth month, even in the month which he had devised of his own heart; and ordained a feast unto the children of Israel: and he offered upon the altar, and burnt incense.

This chapter is the record of prophecy fulfilled (11:29-32). According to your perspective, this episode is viewed with sadness because of the attitudes and actions of these two kings or held in wonder at the providence of God as He suffers these two king's to be themselves while He establishes and maintains the lineage of David in the tribe of Judah. The inhabitants of this world will always act according to the dictates of their own desires if left to themselves and though willfully ignorant of the sovereign hand of God, they precisely fulfill the purpose and will of their maker. We poor creatures cannot fathom the intricacies

of the complex machine that is the providence of God but it is clearly declared that all that occurs in this chapter is the fulfillment of God's sovereign purpose (vv. 15, 24). Acting according to their respective desires Rehoboam and Jeroboam make it humanly impossible for the kingdom to remain united but that is what God has ordained. These two kings are instruments in the hands of the master and they can but do what the Lord has ordered for their time. This fact does not excuse their behavior, nor mitigate the evil that they did because they were suffered to act according to the dictates of their depraved hearts. For a time they were simply not restrained. Leave a man to himself and no natural good will come of it, yet he will serve to glorify God and what he does will be for the good of the elect.

The particulars of this episode are plain. After Solomon is dead and buried, his son Rehoboam takes his place on the throne. There is no doubt that he knew of the prophecy of Ahijah as his father had put out a contract on the head of Jeroboam (11:40). The divided kingdom was a done deal, and to oppose it was to oppose the word of God. It is apparent that Solomon, in all his wisdom, refused to bow to God's purpose in his final hours and it is obvious that his son followed in his foot steps. When Jeroboam returned from exile in Egypt and the elders of Israel (10 tribes), especially Ephraim and Manasseh sought relief from the burden of taxation that Solomon had saddled them with, in the last years of his reign, Rehoboam, rather than taking the good advice of the elders opted rather for the council of his frat buddies and promised even a greater burden on the 10 tribes. The first piece of providence's puzzle is set in its place. One thing to note is that Israel had lived in peace and

prosperity for 40 years and the burden or yoke of taxes was proportionate with their accumulation of wealth. Even with the taxes they had been living in ease and abundance so their request was in self-interest (Prov. 30:15a). Rehoboam, however, promised them worse because he was an instrument in the division of the kingdom. Their request and his refusal and threats were just a few more cogs of the purpose's wheel. Rehoboam, just to prove his point sent a tax collector to further burden the 10 tribes and he was dispatched from the land of the living with extreme prejudice (v. 18). This made Rehoboam hightail it to Jerusalem and another piece fell in place. Israel (10 tribes) made Jeroboam king and though Rehoboam gathered an army to attack the 10 tribe the Lord sent a prophet and through him turned the minds of Judah and Benjamin and they sent the soldiers home (a moment of lucidity that preserved both kingdoms)—another piece and the division is complete. It is of the Lord and who shall turn it back.

I want us to consider some things about these two kings that are revealed in

this context. First, they exemplify unbelief on many levels. Rehoboam refused the word of the prophet and the council of wise men because didn't believe God. His attitude and actions parrot those of his father Solomon in Solomon's last years. It is ever the case, with rare exception, that a son will not seek to follow the good that his father has done but rather the take up his worst traits. Such was not the case with the Son of God. He did always that which pleased the Father. Secondly the two kings were craven, they were cowards. When Rehoboam's tax collector was stoned he did not stick around and chastise with the scorpion after all as

he had threatened but rather tucked his tail and fled from Shechem to the safety of Jerusalem and Judah. He didn't believe God concerning the dividing of the kingdom. Jeroboam showed the same cowardice. Even after he was declared king he became paranoid about loosing the 10 tribes back to Judah (vv. 26-27). He not only didn't believe God concerning the division, he decided to replace God altogether.

Thirdly unbelief always parrots the old lie. When Jeroboam and the people saw that they were refused by Rehoboam they quoted the words of another rebel against David (Comp. v. 16 with II Samuel 20:1). When confronted with God's sovereignty, rebels offer no new argument but rather regurgitate the bile of the rebels that have gone before—"we will not have this man reign over us," "God is unrighteous to love one and hate another"—"Let us sin that grace may abound"—"I believe in whosoever will"—"We have Abraham to our father" and the cards and letters keep on coming. When Jeroboam had men make two golden calves he quoted Aaron at the base of Sinai (compare v. 28 with Ex. 32:4, 8). There is nothing new under the sun. Aaron and Jeroboam were co-idolaters by naming the product of man's hands to be the savior of men. Some have tried to excuse Jeroboam by stating that he did not actually tell the people to worship the calves but was merely setting them up as symbols of his tribe of Joseph who emblem was the ox and he made two in order to represent the houses of Ephraim and Manasseh. I think this notion is suspect because he built an altar, which was surely a place of worship. Verse 30 declares that this became sin, which means that regardless of Jeroboam's intent, the end product was that these calves

were worshipped. Jeroboam did not even shoot for a mixture but called the inventions of his mind "Elohim." It matters not, however if it is mixture or pure idolatry, it is all idolatry. God alone is to be worshipped and that through the accepted sacrifice offered by the accepted and designated priest. Christ is that sacrifice and He is that High Priest and He is the God to be worshipped. Jeroboam did not believe God.

Finally, Jeroboam changed the priesthood. He opened it up to the highest bidder and chose men that were not of the tribe of Levi to sacrifice of his altar. He placed these low-lives in high places and they all sacrificed to the calves declaring that the work of his hands was the salvation of the people. But his opening up of the priesthood for all was merely a way to proclaim himself to be savior. In the last verse of this passage we see Jeroboam, the king, set himself up as the priest also. This act resulted in Uzziah being a turned into a leper, but here the Lord suffers Jeroboam to do this abomination because the kingdom shall remain divided. Anyone who holds that they, by their own hands, their own works, their own intercession (sinner's prayer, prayin' through) or their own will contributes to their salvation are proclaiming themselves the savior of their soul.

Men are saved by Christ's will, Christ's work and Christ's intercession or they are not saved at all (2 Tim. 1:9). And all men will find that whether they are saved or damned that God's will has been done (Prov. 21:1; 2 Cor. 2:14-16). Text: read vv. 15, 24.

SEPARATED

1 Kings 13

1, And, behold, there came a man of God out of Judah by the word of the LORD unto Bethel: and Jeroboam stood by the altar to burn incense. 2, And he cried against the altar in the word of the LORD, and said, O altar, altar, thus saith the LORD; Behold, a child shall be born unto the house of David, Josiah by name; and upon thee shall he offer the priests of the high places that burn incense upon thee, and men's bones shall be burnt upon thee. 3, And he gave a sign the same day, saying, This is the sign which the LORD hath spoken; Behold, the altar shall be rent, and the ashes that are upon it shall be poured out. 4, And it came to pass, when king Jeroboam heard the saying of the man of God, which had cried against the altar in Bethel, that he put forth his hand from the altar, saying, Lay hold on him. And his hand, which he put forth against him, dried up, so that he could not pull it in again to him. 5, The altar also was rent, and the ashes poured out from the altar, according to the sign which the man of God had given by the word of the LORD. 6, And the king answered and said unto the man of God, Intreat now the face of the LORD thy God, and pray for me, that my hand may be restored me again. And the man of God besought the LORD, and the king's hand was restored him again, and became as it was before. 7, And the king said unto the man of God, Come home with me, and refresh thyself, and I will give thee a reward. 8, And the man of God said unto the king, If thou wilt give me half thine house, I will not go in with thee, neither will I eat bread nor

drink water in this place: 9, For so was it charged me by the word of the LORD, saying, Eat no bread, nor drink water, nor turn again by the same way that thou camest. 10, So he went another way, and returned not by the way that he came to Bethel. 11, Now there dwelt an old prophet in Bethel; and his sons came and told him all the works that the man of God had done that day in Bethel: the words which he had spoken unto the king, them they told also to their father. 12, And their father said unto them, What way went he? For his sons had seen what way the man of God went, which came from Judah. 13, And he said unto his sons, Saddle me the ass. So they saddled him the ass: and he rode thereon, 14, And went after the man of God, and found him sitting under an oak: and he said unto him, Art thou the man of God that camest from Judah? And he said, I am. 15, Then he said unto him, Come home with me, and eat bread. 16, And he said, I may not return with thee, nor go in with thee: neither will I eat bread nor drink water with thee in this place: 17, For it was said to me by the word of the LORD, Thou shalt eat no bread nor drink water there, nor turn again to go by the way that thou camest. 18, He said unto him, I am a prophet also as thou art; and an angel spake unto me by the word of the LORD, saying, Bring him back with thee into thine house, that he may eat bread and drink water. But he lied unto him. 19, So he went back with him, and did eat bread in his house, and drank water. 20, And it came to pass, as they sat at the table, that the

word of the LORD came unto the prophet that brought him back: 21, And he cried unto the man of God that came from Judah, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Forasmuch as thou hast disobeyed the mouth of the LORD, and hast not kept the commandment which the LORD thy God commanded thee, 22, But camest back, and hast eaten bread and drunk water in the place, of the which the LORD did say to thee, Eat no bread, and drink no water; thy carcase shall not come unto the sepulchre of thy fathers. 23, And it came to pass, after he had eaten bread, and after he had drunk, that he saddled for him the ass, to wit, for the prophet whom he had brought back. 24, And when he was gone, a lion met him by the way, and slew him: and his carcase was cast in the way, and the ass stood by it, the lion also stood by the carcase. 25, And, behold, men passed by, and saw the carcase cast in the way, and the lion standing by the carcase: and they came and told it in the city where the old prophet dwelt. 26, And when the prophet that brought him back from the way heard thereof, he said, It is the man of God, who was disobedient unto the word of the LORD: therefore the LORD hath delivered him unto the lion, which hath torn him, and slain him, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake unto him. 27, And he spake to his sons, saying, Saddle me the ass. And they saddled him. 28, And he went and found his carcase cast in the way, and the ass and the lion standing by the carcase: the lion had not eaten the carcase, nor torn the ass. 29, And the prophet took

up the carcase of the man of God, and laid it upon the ass, and brought it back: and the old prophet came to the city, to mourn and to bury him. 30, And he laid his carcase in his own grave; and they mourned over him, saying, Alas, my brother! 31, And it came to pass, after he had buried him, that he spake to his sons, saying, When I am dead, then bury me in the sepulchre wherein the man of God is buried; lay my bones beside his bones: 32, For the saying which he cried by the word of the LORD against the altar in Bethel, and against all the houses of the high places which are in the cities of Samaria, shall surely come to pass. 33, After this thing Jeroboam returned not from his evil way, but made again of the lowest of the people priests of the high places: whosoever would, he consecrated him, and he became one of the priests of the high places. 34, And this thing became sin unto the house of Jeroboam, even to cut it off, and to destroy it from off the face of the earth.

This is the record of Jeroboam's continued rebellion against God as he leads the ten tribes deeper and deeper into idolatry. Though the Lord has designated him as king, it carries a two-fold purpose.

First, it is to remind the reader of what happens to men when the Lord suffers them to act according to their own pleasure without some restraint.

Secondly, it is likewise a reminder that even in the most overt displays of idolatry, when things of God seem to be clean gone, God's purpose shall stand and His truth will

confront evil through a man whom He has sent, and the glory and promise of His Son will be guarded and manifest.

In this chapter our Lord teaches many lessons that relate to the believers attitude toward idolatry. We know that this polytheism is the common religion of the carnal mind and heart. Paul dealt with it on Mars hill and the apostles, inspired by God, wrote of false teachers and false practices that were insidiously creeping into the early church. Jeroboam is prime example of these deadly errors and would have suffered the penalty of death immediately were he not designated to be an example of what it is to openly defy God. I think it is best to look at these various lessons as they are addressed in and by the three characters that are involved, Jeroboam, the prophet of God and the old prophet.

First, Jeroboam is a study in what it is to be an idolater. Last week we saw him taking upon himself the office of priest. This was strictly prohibited in the Old Covenant because the office of King-priest belonged solely to the Son of God. Christ the prophet, priest and king was typified by Melchisedec and promised by the prophets (Exodus 28 :36-38 ; 29:6; Zech. 6:12-13). Any and all who deign to assume the office of priest were to meet with horrible ends. Jeroboam cared not for the word of God nor his priests. He chose the lowliest of men to put in the priesthood. He sent the sons of Levi into early retirement so that no godly influence would interfere with his ungodly plans (2 Chron. 11:14). We find him standing at the altar preparing to offer sacrifice, the incense of intercession (type of the work of Christ). The proof of his obstinate disobedience is first seen when he commanded the prophet of God to be seized and silenced. When his hand withered and froze in place, he did not seek

repentance or confess his sin, but rather sought restoration of the temporal use of his arm. He did not call on God himself, or own the God who might heal him but besought the prophet of God to call on the name of “the Lord, *thy* God'. The height of rebellion is, when faced with the power of God, to hold to your way regardless. Punishment never brings men to repentance. The altar that he had built was riven and the ashes lay at his feet His means of approach to his false gods is taken from him but it does not put a dent in his armor of rebellion. For an idolater, even the goodness of God has no favorable outcome. When Jeroboam's arm is restored, he invited the prophet to supper and offers him money but in the end we find him exactly as he was (vv. 33- 34). A couple of things are clear. First, unbelief never turns into or becomes belief (Jer. 13:23). For one to believe will take the act of sovereign grace in the giving of faith. Secondly, God can heal the body and yet that does not necessarily equate with faith or the salvation of the soul. Here Jeroboam was healed of a temporary malady yet his destiny was eternal flames.

The second character in this episode is the prophet sent from God. His message was simple. Someone is coming who will destroy all that Jeroboam had built and relied upon. That one promised was Josiah, a king who would take the throne in about 300 years and would find the disregarded books of God and restore the Passover and publicly burn the bones of the false priests and prophets. He will take the throne at 8 years of age and rule 39 years and will be taken to glory so he won't have to see the Lord punish His people. His is a great story.

Note that the prophet does not address Jeroboam but rather the altar and twice at that. The reason he spoke to a thing that could not hear was to indict Jeroboam for refusing to hear the word of the Lord. This is use of the language tool of sarcasm to reveal the indignation of the Lord against Jeroboam. Part of the prophecy was immediately fulfilled. The altar was rent and the ashes of the offerings was spilt on the ground, but Jeroboam, in his rebellion, will rebuild them because the bones of his hireling priests and prophets will be unearthed and burned on these altar at Bethel and Dan in the reign of Josiah. This prophet of God proves himself to be indeed a prophet and he also proves himself too be a mere fallible man. When invited to supper with a promise of reward he acquits himself like a man whom God has sent (vv. 8-9). These words are profoundly restrictive because they speak to the principle of separation from all that is false in doctrine and practice. There is never to be a mixture of the false and the true. Every doctrine and practice is to be held up to the searchlight of scripture and if it is found to be omitted from scripture, it is summarily dismissed and separated from (2 Cor. 6:14-18). This does not speak of matters of indifference, of which we are to measure in terms of love and edification of the brethren. There is to be no quarter given and no ground is to be invented whereupon fellowship will be accepted. Sadly the same prophet who did so well before Jeroboam did not fair as well when the old prophet tempted him to did obey the Lord (v. 19). Sometimes it is lonely out there when you embrace the truth without compromise and those who would have you falter use the, "I'm a prophet too" ruse to have you let down your guard and, if necessary, will resort to the lie to accomplish their

ends. Like old Lot when he was saved out of Sodom did not desire to become a nomad like Abraham but desired the city of Zoar saying, "Its just a little one." We strive to live at peace with men but in the matter of the Gospel, their desire is that we disobey God for the sake of some fellowship. And in moments of weakness we may be inclined to do so thinking, "what is the harm." The harm is real, and will come in the form of chastisement. In this instant, God sent a lion to kill His prophet. Some might say this is drastic but only his body was killed and his soul went to be with the Lord as a precious thing. The lion was not permitted to tear up the prophet but stood watch over his body till the lying prophet came to gather it. What a sight that must have been! The lion stood guard and did not attack the donkey or damage the body of the prophet. The prophet was carried in life and death by a beast of burden, and was slain in life and guarded in death by the kings of beasts. I'm pretty sure the Gospel is in there somewhere. The prophet of God was buried in the grave of the old prophet and that was an important thing.

The old prophet may or may not have been a true prophet of God. If he was once a prophet of God, his willingness to live in the morass of idolatry had long since removed his testimony as one who speaks for God. He was in much closer proximity to Jeroboam but the Lord did not send him. He lied to the true prophet to get him to stay and this suggests that he was a false prophet. Some would counter with the fact that the word of the Lord came to this old prophet and that must prove him a true prophet. Remember that God made King Saul prophesy and Salaam's ass to speak. The Lord use his mouth for the chastisement of

his servant and that is all that can truly be said of Him. His recovery of the body of the prophet of God was self-serving but it was serving the providence of God. His desire to be buried with the true prophet was so that his bones would be safe when Josiah would rise and burn the bones of the false prophets and priests and it worked (2 Kings 23:16-18). He believed the prophecy of the prophet he seduce to disobedience, and so have many who never have know God, believe but nit to the saving of their soul (Mk. 6:20; Acts 8:13; John 6:66). The old prophet believed and it preserved his bones but what of his soul?

In the end we see the intractable nature of unbelief (Vv. 33-34).

GOD'S GRACE

I Kings 14

1, At that time Abijah the son of Jeroboam fell sick.
2, And Jeroboam said to his wife, Arise, I pray thee, and disguise thyself, that thou be not known to be the wife of Jeroboam; and get thee to Shiloh: behold, there is Ahijah the prophet, which told me that I should be king over this people. 3, And take with thee ten loaves, and cracknels, and a cruse of honey, and go to him: he shall tell thee what shall become of the child. 4, And Jeroboam's wife did so, and arose, and went to Shiloh, and came to the house of Ahijah. But Ahijah could not see; for his eyes were set by reason of his age. 5, And the LORD said unto Ahijah, Behold, the wife of Jeroboam cometh to ask a thing of thee for her son; for he is sick: thus and thus shalt thou say unto her: for it shall be, when she cometh in, that she shall feign herself to be another woman. 6, And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings. 7, Go, tell Jeroboam, Thus saith the LORD God of Israel, Forasmuch as I exalted thee from among the people, and made thee prince over my people Israel, 8, And rent the kingdom away from the house of David, and gave it thee: and yet thou hast not been as my servant David, who kept my commandments, and who followed me with all his heart, to do that only which was right in mine eyes; 9, But hast done evil above all that were before thee: for thou hast gone and made thee other gods, and molten images, to provoke

me to anger, and hast cast me behind thy back:
10, Therefore, behold, I will bring evil upon the house
of Jeroboam, and will cut off from Jeroboam him that
pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and
left in Israel, and will take away the remnant of the
house of Jeroboam, as a man taketh away dung, till
it be all gone. 11, Him that dieth of Jeroboam in
the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth in the
field shall the fowls of the air eat: for the LORD hath
spoken it. 12, Arise thou therefore, get thee to
thine own house: and when thy feet enter into the
city, the child shall die. 13, And all Israel shall
mourn for him, and bury him: for he only of
Jeroboam shall come to the grave, because in him
there is found some good thing toward the LORD God
of Israel in the house of Jeroboam. 14, Moreover
the LORD shall raise him up a king over Israel, who
shall cut off the house of Jeroboam that day: but
what? even now. 15, For the LORD shall smite
Israel, as a reed is shaken in the water, and he shall
root up Israel out of this good land, which he gave to
their fathers, and shall scatter them beyond the river,
because they have made their groves, provoking the
LORD to anger. 16, And he shall give Israel up
because of the sins of Jeroboam, who did sin, and
who made Israel to sin. 17, And Jeroboam's wife
arose, and departed, and came to Tirzah: and when
she came to the threshold of the door, the child died;
18, And they buried him; and all Israel mourned for
him, according to the word of the LORD, which he
spake by the hand of his servant Ahijah the prophet.

19, And the rest of the acts of Jeroboam, how he warred, and how he reigned, behold, they are written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel.

20, And the days which Jeroboam reigned were two and twenty years: and he slept with his fathers, and Nadab his son reigned in his stead.

21, And Rehoboam the son of Solomon reigned in Judah. Rehoboam was forty and one years old when he began to reign, and he reigned seventeen years in Jerusalem, the city which the LORD did choose out of all the tribes of Israel, to put his name there. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess.

22, And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked him to jealousy with their sins which they had committed, above all that their fathers had done.

23, For they also built them high places, and images, and groves, on every high hill, and under every green tree.

24, And there were also sodomites in the land: and they did according to all the abominations of the nations which the LORD cast out before the children of Israel.

25, And it came to pass in the fifth year of king Rehoboam, that Shishak king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem:

26, And he took away the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house; he even took away all: and he took away all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

27, And king Rehoboam made in their stead brasen shields, and committed them unto the hands of the chief of the guard, which kept the door of the king's house.

28, And it was so, when the king went into the house of the LORD, that

the guard bare them, and brought them back into the guard chamber. 29, Now the rest of the acts of Rehoboam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? 30, And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all their days. 31, And Rehoboam slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David. And his mother's name was Naamah an Ammonitess. And Abijam his son reigned in his stead.

This chapter is the record of the Lord taking the life of Jeroboam's sick son and likewise is the record of the evil of both Jeroboam' and Rehoboam's reigns. Their reigns end, as do all the earthly reigns of earthy kings. They are buried and another takes their place. Regardless of whether their reigns are good or as in the case of these two, evil and idolatrous, they are a glad reminder to the believer that their King rules a kingdom of which there will be no end (Luke 1:31-33). His kingdom is a kingdom of righteousness in which every subject is perfectly righteous before God. His kingdom is awash in grace and mercy and though it is experientially realized in time, it is an eternal kingdom and those who have been graced to live in this kingdom shall never die but rather live forever in the eternal light and comfort of their King who is King of Kings and Lord of Lords. God raises up kings and princes and puts them down as it fits His grand scheme of predestinated providence. The record of these two kings is that of rebellion against the command of God. They openly embraced every rank form of idolatry, even erecting groves (temples) to the gods of the adulterers and sodomites who

practiced their perversions as part of their temple worship. The end of the religion of the flesh is flesh. “ They that are in the flesh mind the things of the flesh.” God describes the followers of Jeroboam (the 10 tribes) in the same way and with the same end as David described his enemies and their end (v. 10; 1 Sam. 25:22), in what we might term as colorful language, “him that pisseth against the wall.” This is merely a colloquialism that denotes a base or uncouth person who is more like a dog than a man who takes no one but himself and his own relief in account as to his actions. In short the activity described is most readily attributed to a dog. God designated these doomed idolaters as common curs, filthy mongrel cowards whose end is according to their works. God even refers to these idolaters as dung; denizens of the latrine of human religion. They will not be buried. A burial would honor their remains. They will either be eaten by the curs they emulate or will become the feast of carrion crows. Save for a few beacons of light the reigns of the kings of Israel and Judah are but a rehearsal of the darkness of the human heart, the depravity of fallen man. They stand as historical warnings of what is sure to happen when the pure worship of God is set aside for the man-made deities imagined in the mind of fallen perverse creatures. As bad as the report is, the believer can rejoice because he knows that the destruction of the enemies of Christ is an integral part of the salvation of the elect.

As I read studied this account, one thing that stood out at the initial reading continued to engage my mind and heart. It was, as it were, a beam of sunlight in an otherwise dark and ominous narrative. It takes place in the report of Jeroboam's sick son. This story is a declaration of grace in

the face of wickedness. First, this is a revelation of the idiotic machinations of the religion of

man. Paul, on Mars Hill, rightly observed that the religion of man is really just superstition. It is a vain effort to trick God into doing something for someone. Greek mythology is replete with the mind games played between mortals and their gods. We tend to write them off as ancient mythology but that mythology exists yet, in abundance, in what labors under the enormous umbrella call “evangelical Christianity.” Whether it comes in through the salty river of tears shed on some ersatz altar, or the supposed influence of ganging up on God with prayer chains or prayin' through, or working up the crowd with rousing renditions of gospelless melodies or the ignorance of bloviating, so called anointed men, commanding God—the notion is that men can stir God up to act upon their desires by the influence of their sincere and multitudinous manipulations. Jeroboam thought to fool God's prophet by having his wife dress up like a commoner. I tried to enter into this man's mind. How is it that he believes that God has power to heal his child can be tricked into doing so? Does he think that he can get a good result by pulling the wool over God's eyes? Does he apply to the prophet and deny the prophet's God? There can be no answer but that men believe themselves wiser than God while admitting that they need God's help. Is it any wonder that unbelief is set forth in scripture as insanity? His wife got an answer from God after being surprised that her commoner costume fooled no one. When she went back to Tirzah, when her feet crossed the border of the city the child died. This child shall have an honorable burial unlike those whose bones will be publicly picked clean.

The thing that engaged my minds is the description that God gives of this child in verse 13. In the midst of all this evil and darkness, shining words break forth from the prophet concerning this child that will soon die—he will be buried with honors—he will be mourned by all Israel “because in him (the child) there is found some good thing toward the Lord God of Israel.” And where was this bit of good found? It was found, of all places, in “the house of Jeroboam.” What a description—“some good thing toward God.” What a contrast is inserted by inspiration. It is in the evil, dark house of Jeroboam that this beacon of goodness toward God flames .

Is the child good? No there is none righteous and none that does good, not one. There is none good but God. If the child performed some good work, for instance, he might have refused to worship the idols and rather worshipped God alone, it is not mentioned. Something good toward God was found in him. Where did it come from—how did it arise? Was it from his carnal nature? Did it arise from his natural hatred for God? No! All good and perfect gifts come from above, from the father of lights—anything good toward God comes from God (1 Cor. 4:7). What was found in this child? Grace was found—the sovereign grace of God was found as is testified by the fact that of where it was found. This child, living in the midst of utter idolatry—his father being the chief advocate of the idolatry—found grace in the eyes of the Lord. The Lord removed him from this place to forever rejoice in the presence of the angels with eyes fixed on Christ (1 Cor. 1:26-31).

A LAMP IN JUDAH

I Kings 15:1-8

1, Now in the eighteenth year of king Jeroboam the son of Nebat reigned Abijam over Judah. 2, Three years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 3, And he walked in all the sins of his father, which he had done before him: and his heart was not perfect with the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father. 4, Nevertheless for David's sake did the LORD his God give him a lamp in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him, and to establish Jerusalem: 5, Because David did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, and turned not aside from any thing that he commanded him all the days of his life, save only in the matter of Uriah the Hittite. 6, And there was war between Rehoboam and Jeroboam all the days of his life. 7, Now the rest of the acts of Abijam, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? And there was war between Abijam and Jeroboam. 8, And Abijam slept with his fathers; and they buried him in the city of David: and Asa his son reigned in his stead.

This chapter is a short history of 4 kings; two in Israel and two in Judah. The verses that we will look at this evening concern Abijam (Abijah in Chronicles). He reigned 3 years in Judah and the account of his reign is that he did the same

evil as his father. There was a little light in the reign of Abijam in the words he spoke before the battle he made with Jeroboam that is recorded for us in 2 Chronicles 13:4-12. But the words in our text are an overall assessment of his brief reign. His mother, Maachah (or Maacah), was probably the daughter of Tamar and thus the granddaughter of Absalom. Abijam then was the great grandson of Absalom, the rebellious son of David. This does not necessarily cast an evil light upon Abijam. He was a sinner just like every son of Adam and another son (grandson) of Maachah, Asa, will have an honorable reign being also the great-great grandson of Absalom. Maachah is probably mentioned as a point of contrast in maternal influence, suggesting that she did not restrain Abijam in following in his father's footsteps. The contrast is seen in the fact that when Asa began to reign, He removed his mother (grandmother-possibly posthumously) from the office of queen because she was an idolater and publicly burned her idols (V. 13). So her mention is to show the difference between Abijam and Asa and their respective reigns. This ought to serve to remind us that even if parents do not train up a child in the way that he should go, it does not prevent the power of God's grace in overcoming parental influence. Conversely, training up a child in the way that he should go does not guarantee a favorable result, though it is a good path for a parent to follow (2 Sam. 23:5).

The epitaph of Abijam is stated in the first phrase of verse 3. His heart was not perfect before God. He followed in the idolatrous footsteps of his father. It is important to remember that his character and evil deeds are held up against a perfect standard (in God's eyes). Though the idolatry was manifest in manifold ways, the issue addressed

is singular. He and his doings are contrasted with David and his doings. We know that David's life was full of missteps and errors and sin (last phrase of v. 5). So it is not that David's life overall was contrasted with that of Abijam. The one thing, the essential thing that separates David and Abijam is that David never allowed, never countenanced any mixture in the pure worship of God. David always approached God through the prescribed manner that God ordained (Priest, altar, unblemished sacrifice). Abijam, like his father and unlike David not only allowed but promoted the worship of false gods in conjunction with or, in most cases, instead of the true worship of God alone.

But the wickedness of Abijam did not, in the least respect, alter or frustrate the purpose and will of God. The Messiah, the Christ of God must take up the throne of David, as eternal king of true Israel so after the dismal report of Abijam (v. 3) we see the word “nevertheless” beginning verse 4. (Ps 76:10: Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain”). In the loins of Abijam was a son, waiting to be born, that would take the throne of Judah and do what was right in the eyes of the Lord. He will bring Judah back to right and true worship of the true and living God (v. 4). Abijam was merely a channel for Asa and a continuing of the line that would eventuate in the birth of the King of Kings. Abijam, though against God in idolatrous rebellion, was nevertheless the instrument, the vessel of wrath that would pour out the “lamp” (Ps. 119:105) that God would set up in Jerusalem. This was all for David's sake, for the sake of Him who was to come. The singular avenue of true worship—Jesus Christ the Lord.

The result of Abijam's reign was that even in his utter wretchedness he was an unwilling, an unwitting servant of the Most High God. Believers can and should take heart that though all around there is rebellion, falsehood, error and pagan worship that all of it, to the nth degree, serve the predestinated purpose of divine providence (Deut. 32:39-40; Samuel 2:2-8 ; Job. 33; 12-13; Psalm 115: 135:5-6; Romans 8:28; Daniel 4:35). All men will worship God even those who hate Him as they bend the knee and declared with one voice that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of the father. Look around you—take note of walking men and women—see that which crawls, writhes and wriggles upon the earth—feel the wind on your face and the sun warming your skin and you have only one thing that can truly be said—“behold the servants of God”.

GOD'S “NEVERTHELESS “

I Kings 15:9-24

9, And in the twentieth year of Jeroboam king of Israel reigned Asa over Judah. 10, And forty and one years reigned he in Jerusalem. And his mother's name was Maachah, the daughter of Abishalom. 11, And Asa did that which was right in the eyes of the LORD, as did David his father. 12, And he took away the sodomites out of the land, and removed all the idols that his fathers had made. 13, And also Maachah his mother, even her he removed from being queen, because she had made an idol in a grove; and Asa destroyed her idol, and burnt it by the brook Kidron. 14, But the high places were not removed: nevertheless Asa's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days. 15, And he brought in the things which his father had dedicated, and the things which himself had dedicated, into the house of the LORD, silver, and gold, and vessels. 16, And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 17, And Baasha king of Israel went up against Judah, and built Ramah, that he might not suffer any to go out or come in to Asa king of Judah. 18, Then Asa took all the silver and the gold that were left in the treasures of the house of the LORD, and the treasures of the king's house, and delivered them into the hand of his servants: and king Asa sent them to Benhadad, the son of Tabrimon, the son of Hezion, king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, 19, There is a league between me and thee, and between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee a present of silver and gold; come and break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he

may depart from me. 20, So Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of the hosts which he had against the cities of Israel, and smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelbethmaachah, and all Cinneroth, with all the land of Naphtali. 21, And it came to pass, when Baasha heard thereof, that he left off building of Ramah, and dwelt in Tirzah. 22, Then king Asa made a proclamation throughout all Judah; none was exempted: and they took away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had builded; and king Asa built with them Geba of Benjamin, and Mizpah. 23, The rest of all the acts of Asa, and all his might, and all that he did, and the cities which he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Judah? Nevertheless in the time of his old age he was diseased in his feet. 24, And Asa slept with his fathers, and was buried with his fathers in the city of David his father: and Jehoshaphat his son reigned in his stead.

This is a brief account of the 41-year reign of Asa, the son of Abijam. The report of Asa was that he “did that which was right in the sight of the Lord.” Along with that word, we see the standard that God has raised to measure the reign of the kings of Judah, “as did David, his father’. The Lord, as it were, had hung a plummet in Israel. In the realm of nature, that plummet was David and to be plumb, a king must emulate the dedication of David in the worship of God (Is. 28:17; Zech. 4:10). This was then and is now the singular absolute in the reign of kings and the willing service of the

realm. God, the true and living God is to be worshipped and that in the precise manner that He has prescribed.

The prescribed manner is that all glory be ascribed to God. He has done great things and no one is due any honor or glory but Him (1 Cor. 15:25-28). The high priest is the leader in worship and the king is the protector of worship. It is in the king's duty to see that the pure worship of God is not discontinued and is mixed with worship of any other god. The basis and heart and motivation of idolatry, all idolatry, are a refusal to give God the glory that is due his name.

No matter the religion or the denomination, any doctrine or practice that gives glory to anyone but God, on any level or to any degree is idolatry. It may seem as innocuous as declaring salvation by grace but righteous by pursuit of holiness. It may be the insertion of man's will in the accomplishment the salvation of his soul. Whatever addition or subtraction might occur, the plummet tells the tale; if it is not plumb, it is idolatry. I know that this puts many people, because their religious practice and doctrine, in jeopardy of soul but paramount to worship is the unquestionable glory of God. Men do not miss worship in rite or ritual, they miss it in glorying.

Asa worshipped God in the way prescribed, as did his father David. He got rid of the sodomites. He dethroned his grandmother and destroyed her idol, casting it into the brook Kidron along with the refuse of the city. Her removal from her throne suggests that she shared in the execution of government with her son Abijam. There is some Jewish history about the god that his grandmother worshipped. Her name means "oppression" and that is the manner in which

idolatry operates. It oppresses by superstitious fear. Her idol, according to Jewish history and the meaning of the word “idol” in the original suggests oppression. The word “idol” here means a horrid and horrible thing whose root word means to tremble or shudder. The historians say that her God was Priapus, a terrible obscene idol that is also called Baal-peor who ruled by terror. Others say that her God was Pan from which we get our word panic.

The true God is not worshipped from fear and terror but with thanksgiving and praise for the great salvation He has wrought (the slain beast to cover Adam and Eve, Noah and his family floating above the deluge, the deliverance of Israel by the blood of the Lamb, Christ and Him crucified—Christ, the true plummet). Her idol was assigned to the slough of corruption (Kidron).

Though Asa was right and was accepted by God, he did not worship perfectly—no man can. Asa did not tear down the high places, which, by this time, were used in all manner of idolatry. But where sin abounds, grace does much more abound. Again we have the “nevertheless” from God (v. 4, 14). “Nevertheless Asa 's heart was perfect with the LORD all his days.” His heart was perfect because God perfected it (Heb. 10:12-14). He was perfect in the one King, the King of Kings, the one priest, the Great High Priest who, as priest, led the people in true worship by the perfect sacrifice of Himself and who, as king protected that worship from any mixture because he accomplished it all by himself. To God be the glory.

Part of the “right things” that Asa did was to dedicate the silver and gold that Abijam had captured from Jeroboam to be used in the temple of God. But again he, being a man,

does that which was not right. He used the things dedicated to the temple of the Lord as a bribe. He bribed the Syrian, Ben-Hadad, to break his ties with Baasha, to prevent the building of Ramah. If built, Ramah would have effectively prevented anyone from having access with Asa and with the place of worship. The account given was that in this act of bribery, Asa did not rely upon the Lord but rather sought to end the conflict by his own wiles (2 Chron. 16:7-8).

Having defeated Baasha in this battle, Asa enlists every man in Judah to tear down what Baasha had built and use the stones and timber to fortify Geba and Mizpah, two cities of Benjamin (v .22). What we can take from this is that every child of God is involved in defending the faith once delivered to the saints by refusing to become involved in or even giving any credence to idolatrous practice, doctrine or religion (granddaughter-that's an idol grandma).

We are reminded also of the infirmities of the flesh. Though a king and accepted by God, Asa in his last days was diseased in his feet. This might be taken as just a mention of fact were it not for the report of these diseased feet and Asa's response to his gout in II Chron. 16:12. The scriptures constantly and needfully remind us that though we are accepted before God and we are righteous in His sight—we are only sinners saved by grace.

RELIGION

I Kings 15:25-34

25, And Nadab the son of Jeroboam began to reign over Israel in the second year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned over Israel two years. 26, And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin. 27, And Baasha the son of Ahijah, of the house of Issachar, conspired against him; and Baasha smote him at Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines; for Nadab and all Israel laid siege to Gibbethon. 28, Even in the third year of Asa king of Judah did Baasha slay him, and reigned in his stead. 29, And it came to pass, when he reigned, that he smote all the house of Jeroboam; he left not to Jeroboam any that breathed, until he had destroyed him, according unto the saying of the LORD, which he spake by his servant Ahijah the Shilonite: 30, Because of the sins of Jeroboam which he sinned, and which he made Israel sin, by his provocation wherewith he provoked the LORD God of Israel to anger. 31, Now the rest of the acts of Nadab, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 32, And there was war between Asa and Baasha king of Israel all their days. 33, In the third year of Asa king of Judah began Baasha the son of Ahijah to reign over all Israel in Tirzah, twenty and four years. 34, And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin.

Except for a few instances, the kings that ruled in Israel and Judah proved to be evil men and their particular evil was religious evil. Though they proved themselves wicked on a societal and moral level, before God, they missed the mark by incorporating all manner of pagan worship with the true worship of God. Though immoral behavior is addressed and prohibited in scripture, the Bible is about true worship of the true and living God. The sins of the kings of Israel, which led to the sins of the people was a departure from the manner in which David worshipped God. David worshipped God in Christ and that through the effectual substitutionary sacrifice as pictured and typified in the sacrifices, rites, ceremonies, feasts and Sabbaths prescribed in the Law of Moses. The burnt offerings, sin offerings, peace offerings, wave offerings, meat offerings and Day of Atonement pointed to the perfect propitiatory death of Christ and were to be precisely observed in order to worship God. No alteration or mixture was allowed lest the worship of God be made a false and vile thing that exalted man and robbed God of His glory.

Religion plays a part in every society. For the most part religion's part in society is a good influence on the moral fiber and moral compass of society. Religion usually has its influence in the form of laws and regulations designed to assign blame and exact punishment on those who do things that are harmful to societal order and peace. Governments, magistrates, courts and officers of the law are put in place by God for the good and welfare of nations (Romans 13). These governmental entities have little or nothing to do with the law-abiding citizen but rather are put in place to punish those who seek to hurt or harm the citizenry (1 Tim. 1). The believer, the child of God operates from an entirely different

principle—the principle of love, which guarantees that no ill will be worked toward a neighbor. (Rom. 13:10). This, in effect, fulfills the law by removing its necessity. God, in Romans 13, makes this distinction very clear. The problem arises when government mixes with or takes on the traits of religion as in the case of the evil kings in Israel and throughout history. Religion finds its concepts in its estimation of truth and truth has no place for mitigation. When religion becomes government or government becomes religion, the truth becomes a matter of governmental edict and no good has ever come of that relationship. The mark of these evil kings was that they got rid of the true priests and the true way and replaced it with that which was designed to please the flesh and increase their political base. A great deal of evil has been done on the name of religion and in the name of Christianity. Crusades, and wars waged under the guise of righteous intentions fills' the pages of history. True Christianity is not interested in political power of building empires and not in any so-called crusade or such has not ever and will not ever have any spiritual significance or anything to do with God. The believer is not of this world and the Kingdom of Christ is not of this world—it is not an earthly but rather a heavenly kingdom.

Not every religious influence is evil. The concept of hospital came into existence during the black plague when believers attended the sick because they had a hope of eternal life. The ASPCA was formed on the Christian principle of proper care for one's beasts. The YMCA and YWCA were formed for caring for the unfortunate in society. The AA has its basis in the concept of a higher being but just as much, if not more, damage has been done in the name of

Christ as well as false deities. The moment that anything is added to or incorporated in the worship of God by Christ alone, it does not cease to be religion, it ceases to be true worship and the ends thereof are as manifold and as cruel and as evil as the imagination can invent. True worship is Christianity and is religion, but religion without Christ, or practices, or doctrine invented by men and incorporated with Christ—is false on every possible level.

The kings of Israel and every king that followed did not leave religion—they left Christ. They took upon themselves to make religion a part of their government and true worship was lost altogether. Men 'must have religion. It is an essential characteristic of their being. Man was made to worship and that part of his make up, though altered and mutated in the fall, is still a governing factor in what he does. He must have religion to answer the questions that befuddle him. Nadab and Baasha both practiced the religion of Jeroboam and they did evil in the sight of the Lord. They acted according to the dictates of their nature and continued until their demise.

You and I were born religious. Our parents trained us up in the tradition that was handed down to them. It began in Eden, with the works of men's hands in efforts to cover his guilt and justify his evil behavior. It remains today whether it is in a church as an organized ecclesiastical entity or in the religion of science (so called) or in (per se) the self justifying atonement of buying your way out of your carbon footprint—the language is that of moral imperative and therefore is, at its heart, religion. Religion is the panacea of the lost man's conscience and the anesthetic of the troubled mind.

Religion without Christ is a cruel and murderous thing and can never and will never please God. Religion incorporates and communicates sin and calls it good. Nadab slew the heritage of Jeroboam because he wanted to rid himself of all future threats to his throne. He fulfilled prophecy but that was not his intent. Baasha slew Nadab for political power. This was murder and sin but that is not what is recorded as their evil. They “did evil in the sight of the Lord” by continuing in the false, pagan worship that made up their kingdoms. They sinned and their action caused Israel to sin against God in leaving the true worship of God. Religion may do a thousand cruel things and a thousand moral things but all sin that is not of faith is against God and ultimately is realized in false worship. God is worshipped in Spirit and in truth that is grounded and established in the person and work of Christ alone.

ETERNALITY

I Kings 16:1-28

1, Then the word of the LORD came to Jehu the son of Hanani against Baasha, saying, 2, Forasmuch as I exalted thee out of the dust, and made thee prince over my people Israel; and thou hast walked in the way of Jeroboam, and hast made my people Israel to sin, to provoke me to anger with their sins; 3, Behold, I will take away the posterity of Baasha, and the posterity of his house; and will make thy house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat. 4, Him that dieth of Baasha in the city shall the dogs eat; and him that dieth of his in the fields shall the fowls of the air eat. 5, Now the rest of the acts of Baasha, and what he did, and his might, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 6, So Baasha slept with his fathers, and was buried in Tirzah: and Elah his son reigned in his stead. 7, And also by the hand of the prophet Jehu the son of Hanani came the word of the LORD against Baasha, and against his house, even for all the evil that he did in the sight of the LORD, in provoking him to anger with the work of his hands, in being like the house of Jeroboam; and because he killed him. 8, In the twenty and sixth year of Asa king of Judah began Elah the son of Baasha to reign over Israel in Tirzah, two years. 9, And his servant Zimri, captain of half his chariots, conspired against him, as he was in Tirzah, drinking himself drunk in the house of Arza steward of his house in Tirzah. 10, And Zimri went in and smote him, and killed him, in the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah, and reigned in his stead. 11, And it came to pass,

when he began to reign, as soon as he sat on his throne, that he slew all the house of Baasha: he left him not one that pisseth against a wall, neither of his kinsfolks, nor of his friends. 12, Thus did Zimri destroy all the house of Baasha, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake against Baasha by Jehu the prophet, 13, For all the sins of Baasha, and the sins of Elah his son, by which they sinned, and by which they made Israel to sin, in provoking the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 14, Now the rest of the acts of Elah, and all that he did, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 15, In the twenty and seventh year of Asa king of Judah did Zimri reign seven days in Tirzah. And the people were encamped against Gibbethon, which belonged to the Philistines. 16, And the people that were encamped heard say, Zimri hath conspired, and hath also slain the king: wherefore all Israel made Omri, the captain of the host, king over Israel that day in the camp. 17, And Omri went up from Gibbethon, and all Israel with him, and they besieged Tirzah. 18, And it came to pass, when Zimri saw that the city was taken, that he went into the palace of the king's house, and burnt the king's house over him with fire, and died, 19, For his sins which he sinned in doing evil in the sight of the LORD, in walking in the way of Jeroboam, and in his sin which he did, to make Israel to sin. 20, Now the rest of the acts of Zimri, and his treason that he wrought, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of

Israel? 21, Then were the people of Israel divided into two parts: half of the people followed Tibni the son of Ginath, to make him king; and half followed Omri. 22, But the people that followed Omri prevailed against the people that followed Tibni the son of Ginath: so Tibni died, and Omri reigned. 23, In the thirty and first year of Asa king of Judah began Omri to reign over Israel, twelve years: six years reigned he in Tirzah. 24, And he bought the hill Samaria of Shemer for two talents of silver, and built on the hill, and called the name of the city which he built, after the name of Shemer, owner of the hill, Samaria. 25, But Omri wrought evil in the eyes of the LORD, and did worse than all that were before him. 26, For he walked in all the way of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and in his sin wherewith he made Israel to sin, to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger with their vanities. 27, Now the rest of the acts of Omri which he did, and his might that he shewed, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 28, So Omri slept with his fathers, and was buried in Samaria: and Ahab his son reigned in his stead.

This passage is the record of several kings in Israel between the reigns of Baasha and Ahab. These reigns composed a true “duke's mixture” of kings. Some ruled by rights of royal blood while military rank and file and popularity vote appointed others. Their reigns varied for days to years but one thing rings true of every one of them. Their respective reigns produced a singular resume. To a man, they did evil

in the sight of the Lord following the course of Jeroboam in leading Israel deeper and deeper into idolatry, each progressively worse than his predecessor. Of each one of them that followed Jeroboam to the throne, it was reported that they, by their actions and edict, led Israel (the 10 tribes) to sin against the Lord. Though none of the kings claimed to be a priest, the by royal legislation, removed the priest of God and set up their own, bought and paid for, priesthood to carry out the worship of their false deities. In effect they played both priest and king and thus transgressed the law of God. Only one, in all of history is priest and king as well as prophet and that title belongs to the Great High Priest, the King of Kings. He is the Lord of Lords, Jesus Christ; the Son of God. All other who would presume to take that title are frauds and pretenders. Yet in the grand and glorious scheme of sovereign grace, the recipients of grace are so closely identified with Christ and members of His body that their status is that Christ had made them kings and priests unto God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:5-6; 5:9-10). No earthly king, no natural majesty could presume to be a priest, but every wretched sinner saved by grace is granted both titles and offices with all the benefits of both. The believers throne is not of this earth and this world, he sits in heavenly places with Christ.

This passage begins with Baasha still reigning and the Lord sending his prophet, Jehu, to tell Baasha that The Lord is going to end his reign and that the carcasses of his followers with not be buried but will be eaten by the dogs and carrion crows (the same curse put upon the Jeroboam and his reign). Baasha died of natural causes and Elah, his son, reign in his stead. Elah would reign almost two years

but he would be the victim of a coup d'état carried out by one of his servants, a captain of chariots named Zimri. Zimri caught Elah off guard while Elah was doing some heavy drinking. While he was drunk, Zimri slipped in and killed him and appointed himself king. Verse 11 says that he immediately went after the house of Baasha and slew the entire household, all his kin and even all his friends. In verse 12 we are again reminded that all men, even the worst of them are yet instruments of God in the execution of His providential purpose. Zimri was the tool in the hand of God to perform what Jehu had prophesied. Zimri made quick work of his unknown appointment because his reign was just a week long. When the word got out that he had slain the king, the people appointed Omri king in Israel and with him as their captain-king they besieged Tirzah. Rather than be taken alive, Zimri set his house afire with him in it and his reign ended in suicide. The thing that can be said of this flash in the pan was that he precisely served God's purpose and when he had, he was done for good (v. 18).

There quickly arose a faction against Omri and a man named Tibni was named king by his followers and divided the kingdom in two. That didn't last long and Omri slew Tibni and reigned alone for between 9 and 12 years. Omri purchased a hill called Samaria and built a city there, which became the seat of power for all the kings of Israel that followed. Omri was the first example of the nature of sin. It does not diminish but grows worse and that is the epitaph of Omri (v. 25). The "worse thing" he did was to make the worship of idols a matter of royal edict and statute (Mic. 6:16). Omri had his day in the sun but his night soon followed. His claim to fame was that from his loins came

Ahab who topped his son in his debauchery and idolatry (v. 30). The exploits of Ahab were worse because he actually built a temple to Baal, the god of his wife Jezebel.

There was a continuous state of calamity in Israel and it was according to plan. Kings arose and were put down. We are made to realize two things. First, these men, in all of their ruin and sin are merely examples of natural humanity. Men and women appoint themselves as majesties when they refuse to bow to God. Born rebels, they delude themselves to believe that they are masters of their own domain, captains of their own destiny a their end will be destruction and death—their best plans prove not only frustrated but they are found to be mere instrument in the hand of God. This is the second thing we are made to know. God holds the reigns from thrones to drunken stupors and his purpose is never frustrated.

This truth is displayed in a subtle way in the context and done so in a contrasting manner. These numerous kings established and deposed have another thing in common (15:33; 16:8, 15, 23, 29). Though Asa's reign also ended, all these other kings came and went during his reign, As king in Judah, he picture the king of kings who would eternally reign on the throne of David. That all of these other reigns occurred during the reign of Asa pictures the eternal and absolute reign of Christ. This gives the believer great comfort to know that the rise and fall of kings and kingdoms all occur under the auspices and during the reign of Him of whose kingdom there shall be no end. The ersatz despots are but temporal pieces on the chessboard of eternal purpose and all will serve for the glory of God and the good of the people he has call according to His purpose (Is. 40:22-24).

REBELLION AND OBEDIENCE

I Kings 16:29-34

29, And in the thirty and eighth year of Asa king of Judah began Ahab the son of Omri to reign over Israel: and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty and two years. 30, And Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of the LORD above all that were before him. 31, And it came to pass, as if it had been a light thing for him to walk in the sins of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, that he took to wife Jezebel the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Zidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him. 32, And he reared up an altar for Baal in the house of Baal, which he had built in Samaria. 33, And Ahab made a grove; and Ahab did more to provoke the LORD God of Israel to anger than all the kings of Israel that were before him. 34, In his days did Hiel the Bethelite build Jericho: he laid the foundation thereof in Abiram his firstborn, and set up the gates thereof in his youngest son Segub, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Joshua the son of Nun.

In this passage we continue in the catalogue of rogues and rebel kings with one exception, that of Elijah (Elias in the New Testament) the Tishbite, the prophet of God. The other three ignoble characters are Ahab, Jezebel and a man named Hiel whose name is recorded in this one verse in all of the scriptures. Ahab and Jezebel are notorious for their

wickedness and idolatry. Hiel is here to fulfill the prophecy of Joshua concerning anyone who would dare to rebuild the city of Jericho. Elijah, the only bit of light in this otherwise dark quartet, is set forth in plain language as the bold prophet of God who throughout his life is taken care of, kept, by the power and providence of God.

We are first introduced to Ahab at the passing of his father Omri. Of Omri it is said that, in the matter of displeasing and angering the Lord, he “did worse than all (the kings) that were before him.” Of his son, Ahab, it is said that he did evil above all the were before him. This progressive decline into idolatry suggests that this digression, by this time, has taken on the traits of tradition. The true worship of God had so been demeaned and isolated that, for all practical purposes, it had been replaced with the worship of false deities (Omri had made it law to worship idols). It is not a leap to make comparison to the tradition of worship (so-called) that permeates the religion of this day. If you would remove just those few things that have become traditional in the last two centuries, the invitation system, the teaching of the universal love of God, the replacement of justification with the false teaching of sanctification, the church altar, the mourners bench, praying through and the sinners prayer; the threats asserted for not tithing; the church (so-called) would have no ability to function or basis for existence. The true worship of God is a thorn on the flesh of religion because it allows for no worship, no practice and no doctrine save that which the Lord has prescribed. True worship is a heavenly edict, false worship paints god with a broad brush that never raises him above suggesting ways to

better yourself, or a facilitator in a salvation and improvement for which men receive all the glory.

Ahab went headlong and full bore into idolatry. He considered the worship of the two golden calves that Jeroboam made to be a light thing in comparison to the worship of God. He thought it of no consequence to mix the false with the true. When he married Jezebel, he fully embraced the worship and service of Baal (v. 31). Baal was the deification of Nimrod, of tower of Babel fame. After he died he became the Sun god that was copied and embraced all over the middle east complete with a plethora and pregnancies in their former wives producing a pantheon of other of mother/god/son of god idols; pre-counterfeits of the true. Baal was a prolific deity who went under numerous monikers but was all the object of sun worship. Ahab even reared up a personal, regal altar in the house of Baal that he built in Samaria. There is not even a hint of guilt in Ahab's cauterized conscience-Israel is in full-blown idolatry. He made a grove surrounding the temple of Baal called "asherah." It was for the worship of the goddess Ashtarte elsewhere named Ashtaroth from which we get our English word Easter, the spring solstice. Her worship included sunrise services and symbols of fertility such as bunnies and eggs. She was commonly considered a consort of Baal.

Jezebel is a name that lives in infamy. Her name means "Baal exalts" or "Baal is husband" or "unchaste." Her name is synonymous with whoredoms and wicked false religion (Rev. 2:20-23). She was a scary gal, pulled her husband puppets strings and even shook up Elijah for a time, whom she hated with a vengeance.

The next character mentioned is a one hit wonder named Hiel. He is not mentioned after this in the word of God and he serves his limited sentence of purpose to reveal two things. First, his actions reveal the depths of depravity that idolatry has brought about in this nation. Some have said that Hiel (God lives) might not have known of the prophecy of Joshua and did what he did in ignorance. But the fact that he was named “God lives” suggests that his actions were in direct rebellion, purposed rebellion against knowledge of what would occur when he assayed to rebuild Jericho. To understand the wording we must look at the prophecy of Joshua (Jos. 6:26). He built this city with full knowledge that it would cost the lives of his sons but idolatry had so taken his mind that he regarded that sacrifice as nominal. With every brick he laid and every trowel of mortar he spread, his own name condemned what he did—“God lives.”

Finally, in chapter 17 we get some character relief. Elijah, the prophet of God, is introduced in specific manner that not only sets the course of his ministry, but defines him as the man whom God has sent. There is no genealogy, no pedigree, no accolades. He is known by what he said. We are not privy to the anything leading up to his confrontation with king Ahab. It is as if he simply appears before the king and gives him some seriously bad news. He does not speak to Ahab of repentance but speaks to him of the consequence of his blatant idolatry. He told Ahab that he stood before the Lord God of Israel and the Lord would shut up the heavens for three years. The ramifications of this are phenomenal. Israel will be covered with bodies and carcasses from heat and starvation. Elijah did not soften his rhetoric or tremble before the king. He was, as the Gospel preachers are

described in the New Testament “a son of thunder.” Underlying this three years drought was the greater purpose of divine election and the right of God to bless whom He will in the face of those who feel entitled to His blessing (Luke 4:25-26). The Old Testament is temporal occurrences that teach spiritual lessons. Ahab will reign 22 years. Elijah will finish his ministry and will be called home to glory. Jezebel will meet a horrible end. Hiel will never be mentioned again, and God is in the heavens and all is right in the world. Natural logic looks at this devastating event and sees Ahab getting his just deserts and reasonably so. The spiritual man looks at the course of these events and sees the sovereign God ordering all things for the glory of His name and the good of His people.

Finally James gives us the measure of the man Elijah (James 5:16b-18). The religious man would look at this account and raise Elijah up to some kind of super prayer warrior. I have personally heard this used to tell men and women that their prayer life is weak because they are not righteous. If they were, their prayer would be effectual and people would be healed and the heavens would shut and open at exercise of their fervent prayers. One thing can be sure, this is not an accusation of the brethren's lack of righteousness, nor the use of fervency as a guarantee that your prayer will be answered in the way you intend. It is God who heals the sick and it is God who sends the rain. The caveat given to assure us that the eventuating result of prayer is the business of God is “Elijah was a man subject to like passions as we are.” He was a man who sang psalms when he was merry and prayed when he was troubled (v. 13). Who does that sound like? He was righteous because he

was a sinner saved by grace and Christ was his righteousness. The Word is not a cattle prod and no accusation will ever be laid at your door. Elijah was a real man who believed God.

RAVENS

I Kings 17:1-7

1, And Elijah the Tishbite, who was of the inhabitants of Gilead, said unto Ahab, As the LORD God of Israel liveth, before whom I stand, there shall not be dew nor rain these years, but according to my word. 2, And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying, 3, Get thee hence, and turn thee eastward, and hide thyself by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 4, And it shall be, that thou shalt drink of the brook; and I have commanded the ravens to feed thee there. 5, So he went and did according unto the word of the LORD: for he went and dwelt by the brook Cherith, that is before Jordan. 6, And the ravens brought him bread and flesh in the morning, and bread and flesh in the evening; and he drank of the brook. 7, And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.

In this passage is the account of Elijah being sent from the presence of Ahab and Jezebel to dwell in the wilderness by the Brook Cherith where he abode for about a year drinking from the brook and being fed by ravens with bread and flesh. As we saw last week, this story has to do with the sovereignty of God in electing grace wherein men are faced with the irrefutable fact that God does not operate according to man's view or thoughts concerning entitlement to blessings. He does as He pleases, when He pleases, with whom He pleases; being gracious to whom He will be

gracious. When He declares that His thoughts and ways are not our thoughts and ways, He is not saying that our respective thoughts are not alike, or that there are some differences in the way we think. He is declaring that His thoughts cannot ever be the thoughts of men and no matter the searching that man may do, a worm would be more likely to do calculus than a man would conjure up one of God's thoughts. The historical aspects of this story are, in themselves a marvel, but they take place to form a type and picture of Christ and the salvation of His people.

After Elijah prophesies and prays concerning the heavens beings shut up for three and a half years, The Lord commands Elijah to go into the wilderness and hide by the Brook Cherith. History has lost the exact location of this brook but what is known is that it was a tributary that emptied into the Jordan and was probably located between Bethel and Jericho and flows from Mount Ephraim. Since the word “hide” (v. 3) is used, it is probable that Ahab and Jezebel sought to kill Elijah because of his hard prophesy. We know that by this time, as Israel had declined deeper and deeper in idolatry that the kings of Israel had hired a plethora of prophets, bought and paid for, whose job was to tell the kings what he wanted to hear (1 Kings 22:18).

Elijah's was nobody's hireling and not only was his prophecy hurtful and scary it must have appeared as unadulterated presumption and treasonous audacity to Ahab. It is reasonable that Ahab would be livid and, knowing something of the character of his wife, it is no leap to believe that Elijah's life, humanly speaking, was in danger. But again, the temporal circumstances of time and tide find their significance, their niche in the spiritual realm where they

play out their roles in the grand scheme of grace. Elijah hid from Ahab and Jezebel but he was concealed by the Lord for a year of schooling wherein he learned that he was utterly dependent upon God and was likewise fully sustained by God and that by most unlikely creatures. He was to abide by the Brook Cherith, Cherith finds its origin in a word that means “cut -off.”

Another preacher, many years after Elijah, will speak of being taught by Christ for 3 years on the backside of the Arabian desert to insure that what he preached was not by man but by the one-on-one teaching of Christ. Elijah will not get his education in the seminary for prophets he will be taught by observing the manner in which he is kept safe and alive. He will not work for it, pray it down, or name it and claim it. He will sit and wait and listen for the sound of wings upon which his sustenance arrives. Not one morsel of his life can be attributed to his doing, trying or willing. An ignoble, unclean creature will be sent to him with food carried in a carrion-eating mouth delivered in the morning and the evening and all he had to occupy his time was sitting, receiving and pondering. Labor-intensive, multi-tasking religion cannot abide such idleness and so they despise the doctrine of grace. Elijah's only earthly companion was a carrion crow—a raven.

The raven is the largest bird in the crow family and the blue jay is the smallest, which may account for the jay's strident character, having received the short end of the stick. The raven is carnivorous, a meat eater and a scavenger. It seems an insatiable bird and so it is used in our language as such. We get our words “ravens” and “ravenous” meaning rapacious, greedy, insatiable, hungry, predatory and

voracious from the character of the raven. When we consider the wolf, we think of a very effectual predator.

But our Lord, when describing the character of false prophet, attaches the adjective relating to the character of the raven to give a greater weight of insidiousness to the nature of the false prophet (Matt. 7:15). That which would make the wolf a more dangerous predator would be to make him insatiable, greedy and voracious. These are not traits that are characteristic of wolves but they are those of the false prophet hence the raven is employed. It is also suggested that ravens are uncaring, only interested in their own survival to the point that they do not even care for their hatchling offspring. Twice in the Word of God this uncaring attitude of the raven is addressed (Job 38:41; Ps. 147:9)

The historical account is, itself a wonder of sovereign providence. Here is a man being fed by meat eating birds whose character and drive is overridden by God to be a food delivery service to a singular man in the wilderness. Did the raven cease to be a raven? Were its desires to eat flesh abolished? Did it not search the earth to feed its belly with raw meat? Did its nature change? No, it was a raven, and its nature is important to teach that God is the God of the raven and twice a day for a year this bird held flesh and bread in its scavenger's mouth and laid it in the hands of God's isolated child. There is, likewise, a legal issue involved. A Jew may not eat raw flesh and unbaked or half-baked bread is synonymous with sin and idolatry (Hosea 7:8). So this raven brought prepared food to Elijah, which may account for its not consuming it (not putrefied carrion or raw). Where did the raven get cooked flesh and baked bread? There is no way of knowing save that God fixed it so. Commentators

speculate that the ravens stole it from Ahab's table and some say that it came from the tables of the 7000 that had not bowed their knee to Baal. Regardless of our speculation, God's hand is the governing factor. Christ said that God could turn stones to bread, so as full of wonder as this episode is, it was not difficult for the raven's creator.

As I considered this raven and its employment in God's hands for feeding His child, I thought of myself as a preacher of the Gospel. Our Lord tied the raven and the preacher together in the declaration of who He is and what He has done in Isaiah 46:10-11 in reference to the sure defeat of all that oppose Him. I am a minister of the Gospel. Did I aspire to this or was I put in the ministry? Was I educated in a seminary or called from a meat block. I am a new creature in Christ but yet retain my old nature that has not improved one iota since I was freely graced of God. Am I not the least of the saints? Am I not among the “not many noble, not wise, base, common nothings that God has called? Is there not yet in me, that is me.. . that is utterly worthy of death and damnation? Am I not ravenous when it comes to self-preservation? Does not scripture declare that I drink iniquity like water and am possessed of a mind that is at enmity with God? Carrion eater.. .if not a raven, then a maggot that cannot survive, save on corruption. Can I see good in myself when evil is ever present with me? Let others speak of a part of themselves that cannot sin—for the life of me; I cannot find it, feel it or see it. Nothing about me is, of itself, worthy—everything that recommends me to God is outside myself—seated at the right hand of the Father. It is grace, all grace—solo gratia—only grace by which this raven is employed to bring flesh and bread to the children of God. Simon quit the

preaching business, angry and dissatisfied that things had not turned out as he had hoped. It was to this man that the Lord said, “feed my sheep.” Saul of Tarsus set out to wipe the name of Christ from the earth and it was to him that the Lord taught the Gospel and sent him out to feed the sheep. Our Lord said, “except ye eat my flesh and drink my blood, ye have not eternal life”—“my words, they are spirit and they are life”—“I am the bread from heaven” The food of the child of God is flesh (Christ in His Gospel) and bread “manna from heaven, Christ, the sustenance of His people conveyed through the Gospel. The raven is the preacher, unlikely, unworthy unclean in himself, whose nature is overridden by grace to bring flesh and bread to his children, alone in the wilderness and pursued by the enemy and camped by the brook that is the water of life—utterly shut up to the grace of God. Marvelous grace this, and a redundant reminder that we are nothing and He is all.

FIRST

I Kings 17:7-16 ;

7, And it came to pass after a while, that the brook dried up, because there had been no rain in the land.
8, And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,
9, Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which belongeth to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee. 10, So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman was there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink. 11, And as she was going to fetch it, he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand. 12, And she said, As the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I am gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die. 13, And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. 14, For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. 15, And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days.
16, And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

The public's notion of a preacher, especially that of organized religion, is a man or woman that is a facilitator, organizer, builder, manager, counselor and scheduler whose daily calendar is filled and scheduled in precise time increments. I remember seeing a bulletin some time ago that had the church activities scheduled in 15-minute increments and was set for a 12-hour day. Every possible club or committee was included. No one could look at that bulletin and think that this was not a busy and involved church with an equally engaged pastor. I remember also a time when I was speaking with some of my Southern Baptist relatives who spoke with authority about the role of the pastor's wife and the list of her duties was lengthy and involved, yet without any scriptural support. The concept of church is that of a organization, a business rather than a body, a living organism whose head is Christ. Business is a hard taskmaster, requiring constant tweaking and innovation and needing a continual influx of new ideas. A body however, an organism is about living and that which sustains life-food and drink. The pastor, the preacher of the Gospel is interested in life and the sustaining of it and he knows that what is necessary for him and for those to whom he ministers is the bread of life and the water of life. Imagine, if you will, a modern ecclesiastical organization considering Elijah as a pastor. What would be the gist of his resume? He sat by a brook for a year after preaching to one man just one message and then he left his country and his people and when to the land of the gentiles, to the native land of the wife of the king that he preached to and for two years did nothing but mooch off of a widow and her son. I think that it would be a brief employment interview. He preached one message

in three years and the rest of his time was spent living off the kindness of ravenous birds and then a widow who, when he met her, was preparing her and her son a last meal. What in the world was he doing? He was waiting on the Lord (Lam. 3:25-26). Like Israel in the wilderness, they waited under the shade of the cloud and only broke camp and moved when the cloud moved; not much of a mission statement. I have often enjoyed the looks on the faces of folk who have asked me what I do when I answer "I live off the kindness of the Cherokee Indians." Naturally speaking, Elijah lived off a bird and a destitute widow. Spiritually it was all providential preparation for our learning so that we might believe. As I read this passage, two other passages came to my mind. First was the woman with the issue of blood that interrupted our Lord's trip to the house of Jairus to aid his dying daughter. Did it not teach Jairus what happens when you believe Christ (Mark 5: 23-36). Secondly, I was reminded of Simon Peter while at the house of Simon the tanner (sheet with all manner of animal-eat-not so Lord- do not call unclean what I've made clean). This was but preparation for Peter to take the Gospel to the gentiles. The Lord sent Elijah into obscurity to be fed by a raven and to have his thirst slaked by the Brook Cherith until a year had passed and the results of his prophecy were realized. With no rain, the brook dried up and by then, most of the animals that rendered meat were dead or dying. The widow had no meat, and grain was scarce because of the drought and life consisted of the hope of the next meal. Elijah was, in truth, reduced from a tenable situation to a drastically precarious one, human speaking. But it was God who had ordered Elijah's steps and

he was taught a lesson from the Lord that Paul had learned—how to abound and how to suffer want.

Did meat from the mouth of a carrion crow not make Elijah ready to receive sustenance from a gentile dog? The fact that the widow lived in the land of Zidon, the land of Jezebel was likewise a preparation to face 400 hundred of the prophets of her god, Baal. But we must also view Elijah as a picture of Christ seeking out his elect, his lost sheep. In Matthew 15, our Lord went to these very coasts of Tyre and Sidon to find one of His sheep, a gentile woman, a self proclaimed dog, who only desired crumbs from the Master's table. Our Lord proclaimed of her "Great is thy faith." How great was the faith of this woman of Zarephath, who instead of preparing a cake for her and her son's last meal prepared first a cake for the prophet of God. Some might consider it presumptuous for the prophet to make such a request (vv. 10-13). The firstfruits belong to God. This request mirrors the words of Christ in Matt. 6:25-33. This woman was God's child, God's elect (Luke 4:25-26). She had God-given faith because she did what she did based on a promise (v. 14). The children of God are heirs according to promise and God gives them faith to embrace what they cannot see and trust for what they do not physically possess (Rom. 8:24; Heb. 11:1).

Elijah told the widow to make him a little cake (v. 13) from a little meal and a little oil (v. 12). David said, "despise no the day of small things." Manna was a little thing yet it pictured the Savior. A little leaven leaveneth the whole lump. Often the word little speaks to singularity. This little bit of meal and this little bit of oil was the last meal of this widow and her son (v. 12). Being the last, there was no other. It was

not a meal; it was the meal. What she possessed was a matter of life and death. How plainly this points to the Savior. He that hath the Son hath life and he that hath not the Son hath not life. Singular and absolute is the Savior. He seems little in how he is described in promise—a root out of dry ground—a tender plant—rejected of men—a son of Joseph—a Nazarene, yet He alone is life. Without Him, there is no next meal. He is indeed all to the believer, which addresses everything that God abundantly has for His child, but “all” must also be viewed in the doctrine of reduction, which declares that there is nothing and no one else—He is little in the estimate of humanity and He is all there is (Ps. 37:16; Prov. 16:8).

Herein is the Gospel (v. 16). That handful is a handful on purpose. And His supply of grace and mercy and all things needful will never diminish (Hab. 3:17- 19; 2 Cor. 9:8-10; Phil. 4:19).

GUILT

I Kings 17:17-24

17, And it came to pass after these things, that the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, fell sick; and his sickness was so sore, that there was no breath left in him. 18, And she said unto Elijah, What have I to do with thee, O thou man of God? art thou come unto me to call my sin to remembrance, and to slay my son? 19, And he said unto her, Give me thy son. And he took him out of her bosom, and carried him up into a loft, where he abode, and laid him upon his own bed. 20, And he cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, hast thou also brought evil upon the widow with whom I sojourn, by slaying her son? 21, And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the LORD, and said, O LORD my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again. 22, And the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came into him again, and he revived. 23, And Elijah took the child, and brought him down out of the chamber into the house, and delivered him unto his mother: and Elijah said, See, thy son liveth. 24, And the woman said to Elijah, Now by this I know that thou art a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in thy mouth is truth.

This passage is the record of the first time someone is raised from the dead in scripture. As all things that are revealed in

the Word of God, they speak to the person and work of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was a miracle but as all miracles are pictures and types of the spiritual, they speak of eternal things. This was the first rehearsal of One who in eternity was the Lamb slain yet alive and enthroned in grand and glorious design and purpose. This being the case, because the type was temporal and accomplished on the earth, the prince of the power of the air had set about to counterfeit it and did so in religion and mythology. Satan's miracles are earthly and therefore temporal and can never rise above the influence that earthly religion can produce. When all that are raised from the dead, die again only those who believe in the resurrection and the life, will see the reason for their resurrection as they see, face to face, He who was and is and is to come. The effect of the resurrection is seen in the latter part of this passage but along with that glorious truth there are several things revealed for our learning that we might believe.

This passage takes place near the end of the 3½ years of famine where no rain fell and no dew was upon the morning. Chapter 18 begins with Elijah being sent of God to tell Ahab that the drought is about to end. For the duration of this time, Elijah had lived on the miracle of the unceasing meal and oil (v.16). as the prospect of the end of the famine appears on the horizon, the elect widow's son falls sick and dies (v. 17). Since we know the end of this story we are also privy to the fact that this sickness and death was indeed a sickness and death that was not unto death but rather for the glory of God. We are reminded of the blind man and also Lazarus in John 9:1-2 and 11:2-4. Every believer can take heart in this because if we live long enough, sickness will

take us and oft times we are sick in our vital years but it is for the glory of God and for the good of his people. Religion makes sickness a curse brought on by the devil and a thing that can be removed by faith or getting right with God. They play on the natural guilt of carnal man and men in women come in droves to healing crusades and such. But the believer knows that though his body is sick, he or she is not sick at all because the cause of sickness and death has been removed by the blood of the cross (Is. 33:24). This does not mean that believers have found a climate where there is no sickness or death while on earth. Until the cause of it is finally destroyed at the return of Christ, sin will have its pound of flesh (Romans 5:12). It means that inhabitants of the body of Christ understand and view sickness in a different way, knowing that behind every frown of providence there is the smiling face of grace. This is what David meant when he said in Psalm 103 that the Lord “forgives all our iniquities, who heals all our diseases.” Sickness is but the sweet stroke of loving chastisement for the blood bought sinner (Heb. 12:6). The pain of sickness, the depression that attends it is not removed but the reason for it is clean gone (1 Cor. 15:54-56). The sting of sickness and death is sin and for the believer Christ has put away their sin by the sacrifice of himself. In these words of Paul to the church at Corinth there is the revelation of the reason why the widow, though a believer, reacted to her son's sickness and death as she did. The strength of sin is the law.

Born legalists, every believer is prone to immediately react to any painful experience as it relates to the pain they feel rather than the purpose for it, which understanding usually comes somewhat later as they have had time to

ponder the grace of God. Though guilt finds no purchase in the renewed mind, the flesh immediately assumes, upon some discomfort, that God is punishing them. It is not only a symptom of the lost religionist ; it is the human condition that besets every believer also.

The widow's reaction to the sickness and death of her son was that something she had done, some sin she had committed was the cause of her son's death. Believers, though they know better, often react in the same manner. She felt that she had done something amiss and her son's sickness was her punishment. She was not a Jew. She was not under the conditional covenant of works instituted on Sinai. Yet her natural thoughts of God lined up with the OC concepts of conditional cursing or blessing. She, as all of humanity is, was born with a warped knowledge of God. It was right concerning the punishment of sin but entirely wrong is thinking that something she might have done was the cause of it or that if she had done differently it might not have happened (Rom. 2:14-15). Believers are not done with the flesh and guilt is often their first reaction to any painful thing that assaults their life. This widow could not at that moment of woe reach any other conclusion but that her son's malady was a product of anything other than her sin (John 9:1-3). Guilt is a response of conscience and conscience operates in the realm of the law, the sting of the death is sin and the strength of sin is the law. But, for the believer, there is the inward knowledge and understanding that where a perfect sacrifice is offered and accepted there remains no conscience (guilt) of sin (Heb. 10:1-2, 12-18). This widow's reaction was human but wrong .

Note well the reaction of the prophet. He does not rebuke the widow. He does not disclose her error. He neither encourages nor discourages. He promises her nothing. Instead he sets the precedent for proper reaction to all pain and sorrow. He takes the child to the Lord in prayer and supplication. He first calls upon God to remember that He has been merciful to this widow for the last three years (v. 20). Then he stretched himself out upon the dead child three times. In biblical numerology, three is the number of God and this may have some numerological significance. Some have suggested that three times, since there is a resurrection involved, suggested the three days and nights that our Lord spent in the grave prior to His resurrection. Though it is not indicated here, Jewish historians say that Elijah performed mouth-to-mouth resuscitation, as did Elisha in 2 Kings 4:34. Regardless of the particulars, Elijah acted as a man of faith, knowing that the child's only hope was that God give life to him, return his soul to him. Would to God that our reaction be always that of Elijah—that we would cast our cares upon the Lord because He “careth for us.” The fact that he laid himself on the boy three times could well represent the intercession of the Christ as the fullness of the Godhead. It pictures the work of Christ standing between men and God; the one mediator between man and God—the daysman. That part of prayer that is supplication is purely intercession. The lesson here is simple, though often difficult to immediately apply when pain and sorrow finds us. Fly to Christ—pray and faint not, “and the LORD heard the voice of Elijah; and the soul of the child came unto him again, and he revived’.

When Elijah returned the living child to his grieving mother she was astonished (v. 23-24). What she said to

Elijah is put by some commentaries as a revelation of her lack of faith—that it took something huge to make her believe. But she had believed for 3 1/2 years, reminded every time she went to the barrel and the cruise that God was faithful. There are times in the life of God's children that he overwhelmingly reveals his glory in the face of Christ. It is not unusual at those times to cry as Peter did, “thou art the Christ, the son of the living God”. Every trial brings about such declaration from the heart of the believer, “Now by this I know .” This does not reveal a previous lack of faith, or the absence of it—it is speaking words from the joyous heart. Many a saint in the Bible has had moments of seraphic joy and spoke like words as these. Though the gift of faith removes all boasting in self, the experience of grace often opens his mouth in praise. Thanks are not given in a vacuum—it has a basis in what great things that God has done.

But I think there is something else here. It is the resurrection of this child (the first one) that brought about this assurance and words of praise. In this action she reveals that which gives reason to what we preach. After the death of Christ and prior to his resurrection, those who had followed him were in disarray. Whether it was Peter returning to the fishing business or the disciples on the road to Emmaus dismayed over their assumed loss, their attitudes changed drastically after the resurrection. As you consider the words of this widow think of Thomas (referred to as “Doubting Thomas”) in John 20:24-28. It is the resurrection that backs up all that we preach (1 Cor. 15:13-20). What doctrine do we have without the resurrection—*Lordship*: Romans 1:1-4; 14:9; *Judgment*: Acts 17:31; *The eternal purpose of salvation*:

Acts 2:23-24; Rom. 4:25; *Imputation and substitution and justification*: Rom. 4:23-25; *Regeneration*: 1 Cor. 6:14; Eph. 2:4-7; *Final resurrection and redemption of the body*: Rom. 8:11; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; *The return of Christ*: 1 Thes. 1:10; Titus 2:13-14. This widows reaction to the resurrection speaks volumes.

FEAR OF THE KING

I Kings 18:1-18

1, And it came to pass after many days, that the word of the LORD came to Elijah in the third year, saying, Go, shew thyself unto Ahab; and I will send rain upon the earth. 2, And Elijah went to shew himself unto Ahab. And there was a sore famine in Samaria. 3, And Ahab called Obadiah, which was the governor of his house. (Now Obadiah feared the LORD greatly: 4, For it was so, when Jezebel cut off the prophets of the LORD, that Obadiah took an hundred prophets, and hid them by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water.) 5, And Ahab said unto Obadiah, Go into the land, unto all fountains of water, and unto all brooks: peradventure we may find grass to save the horses and mules alive, that we lose not all the beasts. 6, So they divided the land between them to pass throughout it: Ahab went one way by himself, and Obadiah went another way by himself. 7, And as Obadiah was in the way, behold, Elijah met him: and he knew him, and fell on his face, and said, Art thou that my lord Elijah? 8, And he answered him, I am: go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 9, And he said, What have I sinned, that thou wouldest deliver thy servant into the hand of Ahab, to slay me? 10, As the LORD thy God liveth, there is no nation or kingdom, whither my lord hath not sent to seek thee: and when they said, He is not there; he took an oath of the kingdom and nation, that they found thee not. 11, And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here. 12, And it shall come to pass, as soon as I am gone from thee, that the Spirit of the LORD shall carry thee whither I

know not; and so when I come and tell Ahab, and he cannot find thee, he shall slay me: but I thy servant fear the LORD from my youth. 13, Was it not told my lord what I did when Jezebel slew the prophets of the LORD, how I hid an hundred men of the LORD'S prophets by fifty in a cave, and fed them with bread and water? 14, And now thou sayest, Go, tell thy lord, Behold, Elijah is here: and he shall slay me. 15, And Elijah said, As the LORD of hosts liveth, before whom I stand, I will surely shew myself unto him to day. 16, So Obadiah went to meet Ahab, and told him: and Ahab went to meet Elijah. 17, And it came to pass, when Ahab saw Elijah, that Ahab said unto him, Art thou he that troubleth Israel? 18, And he answered, I have not troubled Israel; but thou, and thy father's house, in that ye have forsaken the commandments of the LORD, and thou hast followed Baalim.

Before we look at tonight's passage, I think I need to revisit last weeks message for a moment or two. It is apparent that my approach to the topic of sin and sickness as it relates to the believer's often, yet erroneous, view that when sickness comes his way, it is due to judgment for some sin he has committed, was about as clear as mud. Sickness, we all know, is a result of and effect of the fall of man. All men are subject to sickness and death as a result of the fall. But the elect are redeemed from the curse of the law and restored from the loss of the fall. What I was trying to say was that, for the believer, sickness is not a result of something, some sin, that he has done because, before God, his sin is gone, is

not remembered, and he will never be charged with it. That being the case, when a believer falls sick, he is not being judged for some sin, which is the flesh's natural and immediate reaction to pain and suffering. Since the believer is not under the law and the law has no place in his life and since where there is no law no sin is imputed, the believer is not to look for any other answer for his sickness than the grace and the goodness of God. Christ bore our sins in His body on the cross and we are not guilty before the bar of God. So we are to look to Christ and guard against the carnal notion that trouble comes our way because we are being judged for something we have done. For the believer sickness is not judgment. When we are sick, and at some time all believers will be, we are to view that sickness in the realm of grace. Will we be able to master this train of thought? Not while we remain in the flesh. Just as the widow immediately looked for some sin she had done as reason for her son's sickness and death, Obadiah, when directed to tell Ahab that Elijah was looking for him, had the same immediate reaction, as did the widow (18:9). Our ability to grasp and apply the truth that we are not sick as a judgment for something we have done is woefully wanting, but whether we can grasp it or not does not diminish that is still the truth. Our sins have been put away, therefore our sickness cannot be attributed to some sin we have committed. It is hard to view trouble as a matter of grace but for the child of God it is exactly that (Mk. 10:30; Romans 5:1-5; 1 Cor. 10:13; 2 Cor. 4:8-18 ; James 1:2-4 ; 1 Pet. 1:6-7). Consider this, if some sin is the cause of our sickness then some righteousness must be the cause of wellness—that is natural carnal works religion.

Now let's consider this passage in chapter 18. This passage is a report of the preparation of a showdown. Elijah is about to go head to head with 800 prophets of Baal, the bought and paid for priests in the church of Jezebel. But first he must leave the widow's house and confront Ahab, a man sworn to kill him, face to face. 3 ½ years of drought has ravaged the land and the gauntlet is about to be thrown down in the matter of who is God, the God of Jacob or the multiplicity of deities that go under the name of Baalim.

Several things:

The first thing that is revealed is the basis upon which value is established (vv. 5-6). If there is nothing but death and despair abounding and your next meal is in question, what has value? The king has gold, the king has men, the king has houses, the king has lots of gods but they amount to nothing when compared to water and a blade of grass. We all have misplaced confidence in the things we possess. Our full barns will account for nothing when our soul is required of us. The king chose one way and told Obadiah to go the other—to conquer worlds?—to hunt for riches? No—my kingdom for a blade of grass. The value of anything, of everything is assessed the light of the concept of eternity and will be proved when death comes to our door. I heard a story once of a very wealthy man who lay dying. Friends and family had gathered to hear his last words in hope gaining some bit of wisdom as to the nature of his success—with sight fading and breath at a premium he said “I would give everything I have to see one more sunrise.” You do the math.

The second thing is that some believers are not boldly open in their profession, due to circumstance. Obadiah was a believer and a governor in the house full of unbelievers. He

had done a bold but clandestine thing. When Jezebel began to slaughter the prophets, Obadiah gathered 100 of them and hid them in 2 caves, feeding them bread and water (meager or metaphor) for 3 ½ years. Though there is no indication that Obadiah participated in the false worship of Baal, circumstance dictated that he not boldly proclaim his faith in the true and living God. When Elijah met him and told him to tell Ahab that the prophet was looking for him, he was fearful for his life and for the 100 prophets. Whether every believer will come to the place of life and death in the face of the enemy is not for us to know. There have been and are now many believers who meet secretly and are known only by their brethren in places all over the world. The Lord hid Elijah the prophet from Ahab. Obadiah hid 100 prophets from Ahab. Both men did what they did in secret until the appointed time of revelation. When a believer is called to the occasion, he may falter as did Peter when he thrice denied Christ, but in the end the strength and courage for the task at hand is from the Lord and the most timid will stand as at Pentecost and in the face of death do what God has appointed him to do. You may wonder if you have such grace in you but remember if the situation has not risen, the grace for it is not needed. Accomplishing grace is in the present tense, “my grace is sufficient for thee” (v. 16).

Thirdly, Elijah pictures the believer going into the world with the Gospel. When He met with Ahab it was to confront him with his sin. Ahab accused Elijah of troubling Israel (shutting up the heavens). Barnard said that the Gospel makes some glad, some sad and some mad and leaves a trail of blood wherever it goes. Ahab blamed the drought and the trouble it had caused on Elijah. He had heard Elijah preach

only once and he wanted to kill him. Elijah, like Paul with Simon Peter at Antioch told Peter, face to face, “thou art to blame.” Elijah told Ahab that he and his father in their mad pursuit of false deities were the cause of Israel's troubles. Though false religion always accuses the believer and the preacher of the Gospel of causing trouble, the Gospel declares that the troubles are brought about by rebellion against God. The believer cannot just go along to get along. The believer seeks to be kind and generous and his actions are not the cause of division. It is his word that causes religion to get their dander up because the singularity of Christ and him crucified is death to the multiplicity of the gods of men. No man ever hated Christ for His miracles and the selfless kindness he showed—they took up stones to kill Him for what he said (John 10:31-33). The Gospel is the declaration of whom God has saved and how He did it. Religion only hears and perceives, though it is not declared, that they are not of that blessed number. The Gospel troubles them because it reveals that they are the cause of the trouble. The issue is actually very simple (V. 21).

ETERNAL WEIGHT

I Kings 18:19-21

19, Now therefore send, and gather to me all Israel unto mount Carmel, and the prophets of Baal four hundred and fifty, and the prophets of the groves four hundred, which eat at Jezebel's table. 20, So Ahab sent unto all the children of Israel, and gathered the prophets together unto mount Carmel. 21, And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word.

There are some questions in scripture that stand as a measure of things eternal. Though they fit into the context in which we find them, they yet are so precise and unadorned and singular that they must be addressed singularly as if they transcend the context. They, as it were, bear eternal weight and gravity. After our Lord had cleaned the temple of the moneychangers and scourged them to the streets, declaring that they had turned the house of prayer into a den of thieves, the Pharisees, who evidently were ok with what was going on, asked our Lord where He got the authority to do what He did. He put a question to them. Is John the Baptist's ministry from heaven or from the earth? He stripped them of ability to theorize or theologize. They did not answer because one answer would get them in trouble with the people and the other would get them in trouble with God. Though Christ demanded that they answer they were

as mute as a cadaver. Amos asked the question, "Can two walk together except they be agreed." Our Lord asked the question, "What think ye of Christ," which ended the Q and A of the legal religionists and they "durst not ask Him any more questions." David asked "If thou, O Lord, should mark iniquity, who shall stand?" Moses cried, "Who is on the Lord's side" and scratched a line in the dirt—the wrong answer cost thousands their lives. In Job we find the question, "How can a man be just with God?" Our Lord cried from the cross "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and if you don't know the answer, you don't know the Gospel. When Paul addressed the required dogmatism involved in preaching the Gospel, he said to the people of Corinth; "And even things without life giving sound, whether pipe or harp, except they give a distinction in the sounds, how shall it be known what is piped or harped? For if the trumpet give an uncertain sound, who shall prepare himself to the battle? So likewise ye, except ye utter by the tongue words easy to be understood, how shall it be known what is spoken? for ye shall speak into the air". Our Lord said in Matt. 5:37 "But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil." It is a common motto in religion that "Christ is the answer." The problem is that men do not know the question. The Bible is replete with such eternal questions. I have quoted but a few. Our text this evening is such a question (v. 21).

When Elijah confronted the people on Carmel concerning the mixture of true and false worship, he did so in the narrow and desperately despised dictum of the dogmatist. The carnal nature despises dogmatism and usually accounts it as arrogance and, to them, reeks of absolutes—and it does

— regardless of the rancor if there is only one way then there is not another. Vacillation is for the vacuous and straddling the fence only increases the probability of a groin injury. Since there is but one way, two ways are evil. V. 21 “And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him;” and the response of the people revealed that such an exclusive, narrow, intractable view of God and the manner in which He was worshipped did not satisfy their need for the menagerie rather than the monotheism, the pantheon or the plethora of personally produced palatable potentates. The latter part of the verse says “And the people answered him not a word.” They were not stumped. They, in their convoluted conviction, saw Elijah as narrow-minded, parochial, provincial and pedantic—a sad hold-over from the former days of non-hireling prophets—not like their horde of purchased priests and prophets, so numerous as to meet every whim they could imagine. Their opinion was that they need not have one or the other but that having both was not only possible but also preferable. The price they paid for their determinate dithering was the pointy end of Elijah's cutlass. Elijah was saying that it is right to serve the God who is worthy of worship and it is wrong to serve and worship any other God and it is impossible to be right worshipping both. “How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him.”

These will-worshippers opted for the very reasonable notion that there was power and peace in the diversity of the conglomerate, that no religion was innately wrong and that all gods and religions had some positive value. The sovereign God, for example, was convenient to have anytime you

couldn't come up with an explanation for something, or when you needed someone to blame for something outside the limits of human control. The malleable god of questionable purpose, who exists and acts by permission and whose sole purpose is facilitating the whim of the human will, was good for worship, because you could do anything you felt like doing in his name—and since having a good ole' time is preferable to pain—worship can be a rock concert. “Nope!” says Elijah—its one or the other. There is only one God, and He alone is to be worshipped (Rev. 19:10; 22:9). There is an old adage that says “they can't hang you for your thoughts” but 800 priests and prophets were whittled joint, sinew and tallow that day for what they *thought*.

A wrong opinion here will cost you your soul. This wrong opinion is integral to every son and daughter of Adam. It is our mutated and warped birthright and is as natural to us as breathing. Intelligent beings must worship—we were created to worship—all our faculties; mind will, emotions and conscience lead us to worship—it is what we cannot help but do. As a result of being ruined in the fall of our father Adam, we come into this world with a concept of God that looks a lot like what we see in the mirror. Our imaginations are deity mass production assembly lines, and the product that is rendered is a god (an idol) amenable to our human proclivities. Now, we (in western civilization), have evolved to the higher plane of not openly worshipping the stone-masons creations, or the wood whittlers Teraphims, though the molded or painted trinkets of artistic religion do garnish our lives, and make us feel as if we are witnessing or sharing our faith. Chromed trouts on car

trunks certainly suggest that there's a Christian on board. A miniature trinket of a person suffering capital punishment on a Roman gibbet, fashionably placed on a lady's earlobe or on a sparkling chain around the neck removes all doubt of piety and commitment. True faith surely is evidenced by renderings of Jesus on canvass or as a bobble headed Messiah. Such ersatz deities are willing to accept men on the condition of their opinion of what a god ought to be and they can rest assured that there is a gathered assembly somewhere that would embrace them on that basis—a god that accepts them and approves of them conditioned on what they accomplish for him and how artfully they display him. Such a god is one to whom men and women reveal themselves, give their hearts to, accept into their lives, open their hearts door to, makes him lord, and invites into their hearts, unties his hands, adds feet to the supplication they make to him, help themselves so he can help them, do what he is unable to do and bring honor to him by the sheer value of their association with him—in effect, causing him to exist by their declaration of him. To such a dependent deity they give credit for what they have actually done so they reasonably call him god.

But Elijah, alone, surrounded by over 800 of such dedicated dunghill denizens, gives no quarter, takes no prisoners and leaves no enemy standing. Two opinions won't cut it (Deut. 6:4; John 14:6; Eph. 4 :4-6). How long halt ye between two opinions? Eternity hangs on this nail in a sure place!

REAL OR IMAGINED

I Kings 18:21-40

21, And Elijah came unto all the people, and said, How long halt ye between two opinions? if the LORD be God, follow him: but if Baal, then follow him. And the people answered him not a word. 22, Then said Elijah unto the people, I, even I only, remain a prophet of the LORD; but Baal's prophets are four hundred and fifty men. 23, Let them therefore give us two bullocks; and let them choose one bullock for themselves, and cut it in pieces, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: and I will dress the other bullock, and lay it on wood, and put no fire under: 24, And call ye on the name of your gods, and I will call on the name of the LORD: and the God that answereth by fire, let him be God. And all the people answered and said, It is well spoken. 25, And Elijah said unto the prophets of Baal, Choose you one bullock for yourselves, and dress it first; for ye are many; and call on the name of your gods, but put no fire under. 26, And they took the bullock which was given them, and they dressed it, and called on the name of Baal from morning even until noon, saying, O Baal, hear us. But there was no voice, nor any that answered. And they leaped upon the altar which was made. 27, And it came to pass at noon, that Elijah mocked them, and said, Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is in a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked. 28, And they cried aloud, and cut themselves after their manner with knives and lancets, till the blood gushed out upon them. 29, And it came to pass, when midday was past, and they

prophesied until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that there was neither voice, nor any to answer, nor any that regarded. 30, And Elijah said unto all the people, Come near unto me. And all the people came near unto him. And he repaired the altar of the LORD that was broken down. 31, And Elijah took twelve stones, according to the number of the tribes of the sons of Jacob, unto whom the word of the LORD came, saying, Israel shall be thy name: 32, And with the stones he built an altar in the name of the LORD: and he made a trench about the altar, as great as would contain two measures of seed. 33, And he put the wood in order, and cut the bullock in pieces, and laid him on the wood, and said, Fill four barrels with water, and pour it on the burnt sacrifice, and on the wood. 34, And he said, Do it the second time. And they did it the second time. And he said, Do it the third time. And they did it the third time. 35, And the water ran round about the altar; and he filled the trench also with water. 36, And it came to pass at the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice, that Elijah the prophet came near, and said, LORD God of Abraham, Isaac, and of Israel, let it be known this day that thou art God in Israel, and that I am thy servant, and that I have done all these things at thy word. 37, Hear me, O LORD, hear me, that this people may know that thou art the LORD God, and that thou hast turned their heart back again. 38, Then the fire of the LORD fell, and consumed the burnt sacrifice, and the wood, and the stones, and

the dust, and licked up the water that was in the trench. 39, And when all the people saw it, they fell on their faces: and they said, The LORD, he is the God; the LORD, he is the God. 40, And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there.

This is the record of Elijah challenging Ahab and the prophets of Baal to put up or shut up and the children of Israel to no longer halt between two opinions. In their temples and groves were numerous images of Baal and the remnants of the altar to the true and living God. Elijah, standing alone as the prophet of God (hundreds of others being secreted in caves) against 450 prophets of Baal, institutes a deity challenge. Two bullocks are to be chosen. One for the 450 and Elijah will take the other. The bullocks are to be slaughtered and dressed and placed on altars. The prophets of Baal are to call on their god and Elijah will call on his God. The God that answers by sending fire to consume the sacrifice will be acknowledged as the true God (vv. 22-24). This is the paramount aspect of true worship, acknowledging God as He is (Rom. 1:28 ; Eph. 1:17). There are many gods invented in the imaginations of men, but there is but one true God and the acknowledgment of Him is the disallowing of any and all others. I know that in this time of tolerance and acceptance of every opinion that arises and consideration of every wind of doctrine that comes long, dogmatic resistance of any god but the true God is counted as bigotry. But nothing has changed since the beginning. Man may not halt between two opinions. God alone must be

acknowledged and worshipped on pain of death. The god who is not God is not worthy of notice, acknowledgment and in fact is a laughable buffoon, whose existence relies on the cries and sacrifices of his inventors to keep him up and going. The people to whom Elijah made this challenge agreed to it and so the preparation began.

Elijah lets the prophets of Baal go first and it doesn't run well for the false prophets. After dressing their sacrifice they begin and all day prayer-meeting. In modern vernacular they would be prayin'-through, putting feet to their prayers, hitting the altar. They were a dedicated group of prayer warriors. It must have been a holy-ghost meeting because when nothing happened they began to leap up and down the altar (vv. 26-27). They could stir things up. There was crying, praying, shouting and leaping up and down—surely their god will show up, though why that would be necessary I don't know, since all this was going on without his presence. They had been doing this sort of thing all along without Baal being anything more than a statue, a stone or wood deity that they themselves invented. This was the first time that Baal's existence was questioned as to whether he was anything more than an artifact created by the talent of the sculptor. Up until now the stone did not need to speak. The people spoke for him and that was enough. They were his hands and feet and tongue—to them, the fact that they did what they did was proof enough that their whittled deity was really God. They had long forgotten the true God and had no interest in His word. Even His altar lay in ruin and His memory was put on the shelf along with the rest of their pantheon.

As they were in the throes of Baal worship, trying to pray down power from heaven. Elijah the prophet of God began to mock their god (v. 27). This would be considered a mean and despicable thing in this day and I'm sure it was not that well received on Carmel. Why not mock such a feckless deity? What god is it whose hands are tied, who can do nothing unless you let him, who waits on the will of its worshippers to act? Is the god of this day's preaching so different than the stone idol that these prophets prayed to? I think not! The god who in any way shape or form relies on his worshippers to do his bidding is false and no God at all. So Elijah calls these Baal worshippers and their god to task, laughing in their faces. He says, pray louder, pray harder—cry aloud with one voice. Your god is a god isn't he? Maybe your god is talking—maybe your on hold— Maybe your God is pursuing some other interest or pursuit—maybe he's on a trip (some Jewish scholar say this phrase is extremely offensive). They assert that Elijah said, “Maybe your god is on the toilet.” “Maybe he is sleeping (Ps. 121:4). Maybe if you prayed hard enough, cry loud enough, you'll wake him up.”

The response to Elijah's mockery was to re-double their efforts and do what religion without Christ does. For millenniums the notion that God must pay attention to suffering has caused million to injure themselves, bring blood from their own bodies to get God's attention. No human suffering has merit before God, save that of His innocent, blameless Son. Especially, the notion of self inflicted punishment is in fact rebellion against God (Lev. 19:28; Deut. 14:1). Human suffering, even the worst sort is better than sinners deserve. Believer's hope is that they have fellowship with Christ suffering because it was

substitutionary and propitiatory. To fellowship with that suffering has to do with God viewing the sinner in Christ. Note well that this was the false prophets common practice. It was “after their manner.” They continued to do this until the time of the evening sacrifice and there was no response, no answer and no attention paid to them by their God. When the god of men does not act, they invent way to prove his existence, things of the flesh that appeal to the flesh. What person could doubt their faith in the non-existent deity? The world would eat this up. These prophets meant business and they were. Unbelief is not lack of believing, it is believing in someone other than the true God.

(Exp. Vv. 30-36—remember, no rain-water precious) Elijah's prayer in v. 36-37 is the prayer of every believer in the face of the opposition of rebels. It is simple. How will he do that? How will He glorify himself? He will glorify Himself by consuming and accepting the sacrifice and will turn the heart of His people (V. 38). They will not cut themselves or try to suffer for His sake— they will acknowledge Him as God. (sovereign, separate, true and singular).

GLORY AND PROMISE

I Kings 18:40-45

40, And Elijah said unto them, Take the prophets of Baal; let not one of them escape. And they took them: and Elijah brought them down to the brook Kishon, and slew them there. 41, And Elijah said unto Ahab, Get thee up, eat and drink; for there is a sound of abundance of rain. 42, So Ahab went up to eat and to drink. And Elijah went up to the top of Carmel; and he cast himself down upon the earth, and put his face between his knees, 43, And said to his servant, Go up now, look toward the sea. And he went up, and looked, and said, There is nothing. And he said, Go again seven times. 44, And it came to pass at the seventh time, that he said, Behold, there ariseth a little cloud out of the sea, like a man's hand. And he said, Go up, say unto Ahab, Prepare thy chariot, and get thee down, that the rain stop thee not. 45, And it came to pass in the mean while, that the heaven was black with clouds and wind, and there was a great rain. And Ahab rode, and went to Jezreel.

As we saw last, the Lord has answered Elijah's prayer and revealed Himself in the consumption of the sacrifice offered by His prophet. This is a revelation of how God makes himself known. He shows Himself as God when the sacrifice that He has ordained is offered. This is typical as it pictures the necessity of preaching the Gospel. Just as at the east of

Eden when Abel's sacrifice was accepted by the flaming sword of justice, so ere on Carmel the sacrifice was accepted by fire. Fire represents justice and wrath satisfied, which is the ground upon which mercy and grace are bestowed. Natural religion speaks of "God showing up" because of the committed efforts of prayer and self-sacrifice. But there could be no greater example of committed religion than that of the 450 prophets of Baal, yet their prayers and tears and personal suffering availed nothing though the whole ceremony was assuredly impressive to the flesh. There is no doubt that the crowd was worked into frenzy but just as at the beginning so it was in the end, nothing but emptiness, their stone deity a mute, superfluous ornament. Religion is accomplished at creating momentary, fleeting fits of emotion and sentimentality. Such upheavals have the effect of a rock concert and last about as long but afterwards there is nothing, which is proved in that it must be repeated and generally in a more fantastic way. It is no wonder false religion is compared to adultery because it is not unlike the man or woman who after the romance of the honeymoon wears off they forget their vows and promises and look for that lusty rush of carnal lasciviousness. There is no commitment except to the feeling of immediate gratification and when met it is on to the next adventure. But the prophet of God has a plain and simple message, "Lord, let it be known this day that thou art God" and his prayer is offered over the acceptable sacrifice, the death of the victim. As it was true then, so it is now. God will make Himself known only when the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified is preached. The primary function of God, the Spirit, is to speak of Christ and to take His things and reveal them to His

elect. This is only done through the singular preaching of the Gospel and is the only way God will make himself known and show who his servants are. The results of the Gospel are not revelry and upheaval but a quiet and peaceful spirit that is at everlasting peace with God—a peace that never needs a jumpstart nor wanes, because it is not dependent on the inventions of men to buck it up or recharge its batteries (Is. 32:17). Note well, that the response of those who saw God reveal Himself, was not tears, emotions and calling attention to self—it was the simple and profound declaration that the Lord is the God (the only God). This does not appeal to the flesh—it is not exciting—it is quite assurance born of the knowledge that God has accepted the sacrifice on your behalf and sin and iniquity will never be charged to you and no matter the trial or trouble that will never change. What do you want, entertainment or eternity? “How long halt ye—?”

Part and parcel with God revealing Himself through the Gospel is the destruction of the enemy. The final manifestation God in His glory will occur at the return of Christ when His redeemed will be gathered to Himself and all that is false, every enemy in Babylon's religion will be utterly destroyed. The death sentence came down at Calvary and the enemies of Christ are living on borrowed time, happy in their delightful delusion of great numbers and flashy ceremony. Soon the frivolity will end and the lake of fire will show them at last that when the God who is a consuming fire puts a final end to their party and religious play pretties. This is picture by the slaying of the 450 prophets. No reprieve was made. no appeal allowed and no quarter given. It is the Gospel or death—plain and simple.

Two thousand years ago on a lonely hill outside Jerusalem, God let it be known that He is God. When the fire of His wrath fell on Christ and our Lord's heel was bruised, Satan's head was crushed and the fire from heaven consumed the sins of the elect and engulfed all that is false. The burning began there and will consummate when the Lord appears and melts all things with a fervent heat.

But for now, because God has accepted the sacrifice of His Son and has “condemned sin in the flesh” grace and mercy is the order of the day for the elect. Christ accomplished the salvation of the elect. Christ and His chosen have been “baptized with fire” and now the promise comes to fruition. Those who brought about the ruinous idolatry have been summarily eliminated. The religious party has been shut down and there is the sound of the “abundance of rain” is at hand. Seven times the prophet looks to the heavens and at the appointed time, according to eternal purpose of perfection, the prayers of the prophet are answered—not in thunder and lightening, nor in hail and whirlwind but a little cloud in the form of a man's hand (Zech. 13:7).

“Despise not the day of small things.” It was said of a party of twelve, fisherman, shepherds, tax collectors and the like, “they turned the world upside down.” Our Lord, a root out of dry ground, born in a stable hanged of a cross, saved His people from their sin. And words, nothing but words is the instrument of making the elect aware of their salvation. In, what seems to the world, quiet insignificance, the Gospel is preached and the sheep are brought into the fold. As the dew invisibly forms on the blade of grass, so are the Lord's people made “willing in the day of His power”. And what is

His power? The Gospel preached is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes. This is the former and the latter rain. This is the rain of promise, these are the showers of blessings (Deut. 32:2-4; Isaiah 55:8-11; 45:22-25). The rain comes and even the enemies of God benefit from it but it comes for the elect. This world is secure in the hand of the mediator until the last one of the sheep is secure in the fold (John 17:1-2; 10:14-16, 26-30; 6:37; 18:1-9).

NOT OF MEN

I Kings 19

1, And Ahab told Jezebel all that Elijah had done, and withal how he had slain all the prophets with the sword. 2, Then Jezebel sent a messenger unto Elijah, saying, So let the gods do to me, and more also, if I make not thy life as the life of one of them by to morrow about this time. 3, And when he saw that, he arose, and went for his life, and came to Beersheba, which belongeth to Judah, and left his servant there. 4, But he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness, and came and sat down under a juniper tree: and he requested for himself that he might die; and said, It is enough; now, O LORD, take away my life; for I am not better than my fathers. 5, And as he lay and slept under a juniper tree, behold, then an angel touched him, and said unto him, Arise and eat. 6, And he looked, and, behold, there was a cake baken on the coals, and a cruse of water at his head. And he did eat and drink, and laid him down again. 7, And the angel of the LORD came again the second time, and touched him, and said, Arise and eat; because the journey is too great for thee. 8, And he arose, and did eat and drink, and went in the strength of that meat forty days and forty nights unto Horeb the mount of God. 9, And he came thither unto a cave, and lodged there; and, behold, the word of the LORD came to him, and he said unto him, What doest thou here, Elijah? 10, And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: for the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only,

am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 11, And he said, Go forth, and stand upon the mount before the LORD. And, behold, the LORD passed by, and a great and strong wind rent the mountains, and brake in pieces the rocks before the LORD; but the LORD was not in the wind: and after the wind an earthquake; but the LORD was not in the earthquake: 12, And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. 13, And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle, and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah? 14, And he said, I have been very jealous for the LORD God of hosts: because the children of Israel have forsaken thy covenant, thrown down thine altars, and slain thy prophets with the sword; and I, even I only, am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. 15, And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: 16, And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room. 17, And it shall come to pass, that him that escapeth the sword of Hazael shall Jehu slay: and him that escapeth from the sword of Jehu shall Elisha slay. 18, Yet I have left me seven thousand in Israel, all the knees which have not bowed unto Baal, and every mouth which hath not kissed him. 19, So he

departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle upon him. 20, And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? 21, And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him.

One of the beautiful things about the Bible is that though sin is never excused, it is honestly accounted and recorded. There is a notion in religion that once a person accepts the precepts of religion and puts them into practice that he becomes possessed of power to overcome and has willpower to keep himself from fear and temptation. Anyone who knows Christ also knows that such thoughts are delusional. No one can doubt the authenticity of Elijah as exemplary of a prophet of the one true God. He prayed and the Lord shut up the heavens for 3½ years. At the end of that period he threw down the gauntlet and challenged the prophets of Baal to prove that their god was God. When the true and living God made Himself known with fire from heaven, Elijah slew the 450 false prophets, all Jezebel's hirelings. There can be no question of his boldness before God and men. Yet, in this chapter, we find him fleeing for his life at the threat of Jezebel and wishing himself to die. He did not desire to

depart, as did Paul; to be with the Lord, but to be relieved and released from his troubles and fears. James was true when he said of EM)ah; he was a man “subject to like passions as we are.” He was not special, some example of transformed humanity. He was real and subject to the fears and frailties that attend the human creature. This is not an anomaly in the life of the child of God. Great courage may be shown in a moment and a moment later the same courage can turn to a quivering mass of fear and failure. We have but to think of Simon Peter denying the Lord thrice just hours after he had proclaimed his unshakable allegiance to Christ, and yet again as he gave into the Judaizers at Antioch and left the fellowship of those saved by grace to align himself with the circumcision. Take heed, lest when you think you stand, you fall.

As in every case we must remember the overriding scheme of divine providence. Elijah's steadfastness served to glorify the grace of God, so will his timidity and fear. The steps of Elijah are not haphazard. He was reacting as a frail human being but every aspect of his story was to glorify the grace that sustained him on the mountain and in the valley. It was grace that sustained him when he faced seemingly insurmountable odds against the organized and well oiled machine of Baal's horde and it was grace that sustained him with sustenance and direction in his darkest hour. On Carmel and on Horeb, Elijah could accomplish nothing of himself—in both cases he was shut up to the grace of God.

This account is about the Gospel and its sure success in a world gone mad with religion. God has never and will never leave Himself without a witness. Till time ends, there will be men who will declare the Gospel and there will be a church

to hear and receive the message. Anyone who names the name of Christ, whether they know Him or not, find themselves under attack from individuals as well as global governmental consensus. The account before us assures us that there is nothing new under the Sun. This is the course laid out for the Gospel and will continue until the LORD returns and reveals that global consensus is but kindling for the fire and the fear often struck in the hearts of believer was but a way to bolster the confidence of the infidel until the ax is laid to the root, the stops are kicked out and the entire edifice tumbles into ruin.

Jezebel's threat, whether sincere or just an effort to get rid of Elijah served to start Elijah's journey on another mission. Though God will, in time, grant Elijah's request and take him to glory, there is much left for Elijah before he finishes course. He has some things to learn in order to teach us, and a young prophet to train that will take his place. Providence will bring these ordained things to their appointed end.

Elijah, after asking for death and taking refuge under a Juniper tree is fed bread and water by an angel twice. This was done to give him strength to travel to Horeb (Sinai). There he will be supernaturally sustained for 40 days and nights until he is brought to see things as they are. The specific number of days is used to reveal that this was a time of trail of faith and testing and revelation (flood, Moses on the Mount; Christ's temptation). The trial of faith will make faith to be revealed as more precious than fine gold after patience has had her perfect work.

That this takes place on Sinai is no coincidence. This entire episode has something to teach us about the law and

about grace. On Sinai, where Elijah had taken refuge in a cave, still desiring to die and be released from his troubles—cowering under the threat of Jezebel—he hears the word of the Lord. The Lord's question to Elijah is “What are you doing here.” Why are you here? Now the Lord knows the answer, especially the answer that Elijah doesn't even know. But the question is to bring Elijah to confession, to face the truth. For Elijah, he is there out of fear and believing that he is the only servant left on God's earth even though he stood stalwartly against the prophets of Baal. It may seem like a little bit of a pity party but unless you have been in the midst of a bunch of religious nuts ready and willing to put you out of business, unless you have experienced the difficulty of raising the banner of Christ when you're the only one in the room who believes the truth, don't be too hard on Elijah.

Verses 11-13 tell us the lesson that Elijah is to be taught.

The first lesson is that wrath, judgment and punishment do not affect the heart of the rebel (Is. 1:5). Being afraid of hell does not equate with looking for it. Baal and his followers, and his chief promoter Jezebel, have been dealt a harsh blow. Her god has been revealed to be ineffectual, powerless and a laughingstock. The true God has manifested himself in power and her bought-and-paid-for prophets are decimated carcasses. Her response is to seek to kill the prophet of God. Judgment only made her angry.

Secondly, Sinai is no place to hide. The law never has and never will be a place of comfort. The poet said “I cannot go unto the law, nor hope nor comfort from it draw.” That

mountain said with frowning face, “this mountain is no hiding place.”

Thirdly, Elijah could not be about the business of God while on Sinai, so at the end of this account Elijah is sent away from Sinai. Finally, while hiding in fear and having given up all hope, God reveals the Gospel.

The Lord told Elijah to go to the mouth of the cave and there showed him three things, a tornado, an earthquake and fire. These three things wrought great destruction. After showing these phenomena, each ends with the declaration that the Lord was not in any of them. We know from the word of God that He uses each of these elements to reveal Himself. Just prior to this, the Lord let it be known that He was God by sending fire to consume the sacrifice. What does it mean that the Lord was not in the wind, the earthquake and the fire? It has to do with what capacity or in what character the Lord reveals Himself. The elements are generally employed to represent God in justice and judgment but are not a full revelation of God in all His attributes especially those that He declares to be His very glory. In that which most honors Him, He is seen in mercy and grace. He is said to not be in the wind, earthquake and fire because He does not reveal himself in judgment to his elect. The Gospel is the good news that there is no wrath against the elect rather only the expression of mercy and grace revealed in the finished work of Christ. Our Lord said to the prophet and the preachers of the Gospel, “comfort ye my people” (speak to their heart) and whirlwinds and earthquakes and fires offer no comfort .

Then came a still, small voice. Note the chronology. After the wind, the quake and the fire comes the still small voice.

The Gospel comes to the elect after judgment and justice has been executed on the substitute. But the Gospel does not come in a noisy earth-shaking manner (teacher, not a preacher—shouting, on fire—). It comes, as a general rule, in a still (silent) small (seemingly insignificant) voice (word that is heard in the heart). See John 10. When Elijah heard the voice he covered his face, everywhere in scripture it is common to clothe the eyes from seeing God's glory (Moses, eyes covered in the cleft of the rock). When Elijah was sent to anoint new kings in Syria and Israel it was to assure Elijah that Ahab and Jezebel's days were numbered and that Elijah need not fear for his life or wish it ended.

Finally, in grace, the Lord showed Elijah that though it seemed he was alone and all the world was against him, there were yet many elect who had not followed the false gods of Jezebel (v. 18; Romans 11:4-6 ; Acts 18:9-10).

See: Heb. 12:18-24; Ps. 89:15)

ELISHA

I kings 19:15-16

15, And the LORD said unto him, Go, return on thy way to the wilderness of Damascus: and when thou comest, anoint Hazael to be king over Syria: 16, And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room.

The account of the calling of Elisha as the prophet that will take Elijah's office when the Lord has finished Elijah's course is found in v. 19. The entire scenario is matter-of-fact in its execution. Men look at such instances from a human standpoint and refer to them as callings, suggesting that they are exercised in hope of a positive response. With God, however, calling is not up for an optional response. God has assigned men to call others to belief and repentance, and the general call to all is made effectual to some (the elect). When we see God calling in scripture it is connected to God's sovereign will in his predestinated purpose (Romans 8:30; 2 Thess. 2:13-14). One man said that God's callings are God's enablings. Scripture declares that God's callings are without repentance. In truth God's callings are disclosures of His eternal purpose. In the matter of calling one to the office of prophet, it is a revelation of eternal purpose (Jer. 1:4-5). In truth, every sinner saved by grace is ordained to salvation and when he or she is called by the grace of God, through the preaching of the Gospel, that call is a disclosure that

Christ has already redeemed him or her and finished the work of their salvation. The Gospel reveals that until they heard they actually possessed eternal salvation though they, up till the time of hearing, were unaware of it. The Gospel discloses that they have been saved (Eph. 1:13). Elisha was born a prophet because he was ordained to be a prophet.

The fact that he was already a prophet is suggested when Elijah was commanded to anoint him as prophet in the room of Elijah. Elisha's anointing is grouped in with the anointing Hazael's as King in Syria and Jehu's anointing as king of Israel (vv. 15-16). Though Elijah was commanded to anoint these two kings, it actually appears that they were anointed by Elisha (2 Kings 8:13; 9:1-3). Though Elijah had yet things to accomplish in the course of his ministry, Elisha was already ordained to the office in the purpose of God. For a time, Elisha will serve Elijah, be trained and seasoned by him but at the appointed time he will stand in the room and stead of Elijah. The fact that Elisha was anointed before he assumed his office is a revelation that there will be a time when the Lord God is without a witness to testify His Word. Even during those 400 years of silence between Malachi and Matthew, wherein no prophet arose, the Pharisees kept the Word safe until the promised Prophet would come and would be preceded by Elijah himself with the Gospel (Mal. 4:5; Matt. 11:9-14; Luke 9:30-31).

The two prophets name differ by one letter. Elijah is a combination of two of God's names—Eli-God and Jah-Jehovah. Elisha is also a combined name—Eli-God and Sha is salvation. Though the name Jehovah carries with it the concept of deliverance. He revealed Himself as such after

delivering Israel from Egypt. The term “is salvation” declares God as He is revealed in Christ. Perhaps that is why John the Baptist was designated as Elijah returned. He spanned the breach between the old and new covenants and is the last Old Testament prophet and the first New Testament Gospel preacher. He declared Christ to be God—the Savior come—mediator and ratifier of the New Covenant, and the setting aside of the Old. Elisha being named as “God is salvation” may have to do with the place of his nativity. Little is said about Elijah in his introduction save that he was a *Tishbite*. Elisha was from Abel-mehola, a place where God revealed Himself as salvation (Judges 7:16-22). It was there that God trimmed Gideon's army down from 32,000 to 300 men and routed the Midianites with broken pitchers, lamps and trumpets. The first weapon He issues to His people is a trumpet. The trumpet is used to call to war, to the feast, to announce the Day of Atonement and the beginning of jubilee. All these are elements of our calling and that which we call men to do. *Our* call is not effectual. We through the Gospel call upon men and women to repent and believe, announcing that the war is won and atonement has been made and the acceptable year of the Lord is at hand. It is a sound, a noise, a clarion call. As I said, our call is general and of itself is not effectual. Though it is not effectual, it is essential because God has chosen through the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. The Holy Spirit makes the same general call given from us for all men to repent and believe effectual to the elect. It remains a wondrous mystery, but our task is simple. When the Captain blows His trumpet we are to do as he does.

The second weapon is the torch. It is light, which pictures both the written and the living word. The Psalmist said of the word of God that the entrance of it gives light and that it is a light unto our path. Christ himself is the light of the world, the light that shineth in a dark place until the daystar arises in your heart. Light is what God commands to shine in the heart of men to reveal the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. Light, dispels darkness and discloses all things. That night on the field of battle, the captain and His army entered into the darkness. But before the night was spent, that battlefield shone with effulgent light. The light strikes fear in the heart of the enemy because he cannot hide from it (John 3:19-20). This is not due to our ability to shine the light but entirely based upon God's ability to afflict the mind and the heart men. We can't scare anybody. Our weapons seem useless to the world. They look at us and snicker. But God can disperse a mighty army with a thought, a dream of a cake of barley, a trumpet or a torch.

Thirdly, the torches are hidden from view in earthen vessels. These earthen vessels are clay pots and they represent the church, made up of vessels of Adamic clay. It is into the insignificant pots that our Lord has invested the light of the world. They have no glory. They are common utensils. God has chosen the foolish, base, weak and empty to confound the great and the mighty. This assures us that all that takes place in the salvation of a sinner and his use in the preaching of the Gospel is of grace and grace alone. The Lord has put the glorious Gospel into earthen pots for the purpose of His glory (2 Cor. 4:6-7). The Gospel however is not to remain hidden in the vessels. Our Lord spoke in this kind of language (Matt. 5:14-16). We need to continually

rehearse in our own minds that we are nothing but dirt pots (Gal. 6:3; 1 Cor. 2:2-5).

These dirt pots were to be cast to the ground and broken. For the benefit of the battle here recorded, this would create a loud noise immediately followed by a great light and would further serve to frighten the enemy. This is, however, a true representation of those who are used of God to bring the Gospel. The Gospel is in them but is truly dispensed from them when they are cast to the ground and broken (Is. 66:1-2; Ps. 51:17). The Lord has fixed it so that the Gospel, that Christ has preeminence. He must increase and we must decrease (1 Cor. 3:4-7; 15:10 ; Eph. 3:8).

Finally, we have a singular word (V. 20). The believer declares the sword of the Lord and of Gideon. This has changed slightly from the original interpretation of the dream (v. 14). The significance of this change is two fold. The original reads the sword of the Lord, of Gideon. Spiritually this is the declaration of the Title that Christ earned by His righteous death. Because He was obedient unto death He was given a name above every name and declared to be Lord over all. Our savior, our deliverer is LORD. This also applies to the Gospel. What we preach is God's Gospel but it is also our Gospel (2 Thess. 2:14).

The wonder of this, our Gospel is its singularity. The phrase is cryptic. It is not even a sentence. It makes no sense except to those who use it and those in whose hearts God strikes fear. The Gospel is the power of God unto salvation. But the Gospel is not a theological discourse. The Gospel is not "many things." The Gospel is not a pie chart that men can divide according to their particular conviction or disposition. It is one thing. It is Christ; not a sentence, a

singular subject. To the world it is foolishness. To the religious it is a stumbling block. To them that are called, both Jews and Greeks it is the power and wisdom of God. Men will say there must be more, there must be explanation, there must be evidence, there must be works but the cast down and broken dirt pot spills out the light and the message is cryptic—The sword of the Lord and of Gideon—Christ and Him crucified. The simplicity and singularity of the message send the enemies fleeing and screaming while the believer stands in his place (v. 21). Scripture says, “ a fool fleeth when no man pursueth “ (Romans 1:14-17). The location of Elisha's birth declared “God is salvation”.

BENHADAD, A STUDY IN DEPRAVITY

I Kings 20:1-30

1, And Benhadad the king of Syria gathered all his host together: and there were thirty and two kings with him, and horses, and chariots: and he went up and besieged Samaria, and warred against it. 2, And he sent messengers to Ahab king of Israel into the city, and said unto him, Thus saith Benhadad, 3, Thy silver and thy gold is mine; thy wives also and thy children, even the goodliest, are mine. 4, And the king of Israel answered and said, My lord, O king, according to thy saying, I am thine, and all that I have. 5, And the messengers came again, and said, Thus speaketh Benhadad, saying, Although I have sent unto thee, saying, Thou shalt deliver me thy silver, and thy gold, and thy wives, and thy children; 6, Yet I will send my servants unto thee to morrow about this time, and they shall search thine house, and the houses of thy servants; and it shall be, that whatsoever is pleasant in thine eyes, they shall put it in their hand, and take it away. 7, Then the king of Israel called all the elders of the land, and said, Mark, I pray you, and see how this man seeketh mischief: for he sent unto me for my wives, and for my children, and for my silver, and for my gold; and I denied him not. 8, And all the elders and all the people said unto him, Hearken not unto him, nor consent. 9, Wherefore he said unto the messengers of Benhadad, Tell my lord the king, All that thou didst send for to thy servant at the first I will do: but this thing I may not do. And the messengers departed, and brought him word again. 10, And Benhadad sent unto him, and said, The gods do so

unto me, and more also, if the dust of Samaria shall suffice for handfuls for all the people that follow me. 11, And the king of Israel answered and said, Tell him, Let not him that girdeth on his harness boast himself as he that putteth it off. 12, And it came to pass, when Benhadad heard this message, as he was drinking, he and the kings in the pavilions, that he said unto his servants, Set yourselves in array. And they set themselves in array against the city. 13, And, behold, there came a prophet unto Ahab king of Israel, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou seen all this great multitude? behold, I will deliver it into thine hand this day; and thou shalt know that I am the LORD. 14, And Ahab said, By whom? And he said, Thus saith the LORD, Even by the young men of the princes of the provinces. Then he said, Who shall order the battle? And he answered, Thou. 15, Then he numbered the young men of the princes of the provinces, and they were two hundred and thirty two: and after them he numbered all the people, even all the children of Israel, being seven thousand. 16, And they went out at noon. But Benhadad was drinking himself drunk in the pavilions, he and the kings, the thirty and two kings that helped him. 17, And the young men of the princes of the provinces went out first; and Benhadad sent out, and they told him, saying, There are men come out of Samaria. 18, And he said, Whether they be come out for peace, take them alive; or whether they be come out for war, take them alive. 19, So these young men of the princes of the provinces came out

of the city, and the army which followed them. 20, And they slew every one his man: and the Syrians fled; and Israel pursued them: and Benhadad the king of Syria escaped on an horse with the horsemen. 21, And the king of Israel went out, and smote the horses and chariots, and slew the Syrians with a great slaughter. 22, And the prophet came to the king of Israel, and said unto him, Go, strengthen thyself, and mark, and see what thou doest: for at the return of the year the king of Syria will come up against thee. 23, And the servants of the king of Syria said unto him, Their gods are gods of the hills; therefore they were stronger than we; but let us fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. 24, And do this thing, Take the kings away, every man out of his place, and put captains in their rooms: 25, And number thee an army, like the army that thou hast lost, horse for horse, and chariot for chariot: and we will fight against them in the plain, and surely we shall be stronger than they. And he hearkened unto their voice, and did so. 26, And it came to pass at the return of the year, that Benhadad numbered the Syrians, and went up to Aphek, to fight against Israel. 27, And the children of Israel were numbered, and were all present, and went against them: and the children of Israel pitched before them like two little flocks of kids; but the Syrians filled the country. 28, And there came a man of God, and spake unto the king of Israel, and said, Thus saith the LORD, Because the Syrians have said, The LORD

is God of the hills, but he is not God of the valleys, therefore will I deliver all this great multitude into thine hand, and ye shall know that I am the LORD. 29, And they pitched one over against the other seven days. And so it was, that in the seventh day the battle was joined: and the children of Israel slew of the Syrians an hundred thousand footmen in one day. 30, But the rest fled to Aphek, into the city; and there a wall fell upon twenty and seven thousand of the men that were left. And Benhadad fled, and came into the city, into an inner chamber.

At the time of this chapter, Elisha has left all behind and followed Elijah. His story and his ministry will take place later. As for now, he is, as it were, in prophet boot camp. What we can glean from his willing departure from his hearth and home and that he left all his worldly goods behind (even burned) are the words of our Lord when he said “he who saves his life shall lose it and he who loses his life for my sake shall save it.” One man said that the first place a man goes after he comes to Christ is the graveyard, there to bury all he is and has. If a man will follow Christ, he must take up the cross and deny himself because everything but Christ becomes secondary in value. We will look more at the character of Elijah as we look at his ministry in the coming weeks.

Tonight we will look at Benhadad. He is one of the more unsavory characters in scripture and he is a study in depravity, pride, arrogance and presumption. In consideration of this man we see, to a degree, that which plagues our own soul and reminds us again that if we are

Christ's, we are so entirely by grace. To look at Benhadad is to see ourselves in the looking glass. But Benhadad alone is not full definition of depravity. We have also Ahab, king in Israel, who rather in arrogant pride revels another side of sin, the side of vacillation, cowardice and craven self-preservation. The only character in this story that stands with some rectitude is the un-named prophet who promises victory to Ahab. Most historians believe that this prophet is Micaiah. He is introduced in chapter 22. Ahab hated Micaiah because, unlike the 400 prophets bought and paid for by Jezebel, he never prophesied good things for Ahab (22:8). Rather than looking at this passage expositionally, we seek to find some things here that teach us some aspects of the Gospel.

In reading this passage, two things stand out. The first is that it is folly to go against the true and living God. That seems to be a no-brainer but every rejection of God's council is rebellion and insanity. The second thing is that the grace of God is often revealed as acting in spite of our ignorance. Ahab, a notoriously wicked and cruel king was delivered in spite of his cowardice and his attitude of appeasement at any cost. We can look at Ahab and thank God for His grace and that He does what He does, not for our sakes, but for His name's sake. Several things:

First, Benhadad is Benhadad Jr. (1 Kings 15:18-19). This may explain why Benhadad Jr. felt that he was entitled to all the king's gold, silver, wives and sons and daughters. He was, after all, his father's son and as Asa, king of Judah, had made a gift of abounding booty to his father, so Ahab, king of Israel, should do likewise. Ahab's conciliation can only be viewed as a craven effort to save his own life. But, for

Benhadad, seeing that he already had Ahab by the throat, he decided to require not only the possessions of his house but everything that Ahab and his princes and his servant loved most (vv, 2-6). Knowing that this order would require more that Ahab was able to give and would require that his princes and his servants would also have to join in his appeasement of Benhadad, he called a counsel of the elders to ask them what should be done. His response to Benhadad, based on the word of he elders, revealed that he probably thought that they would cave as he had. In verse 9 he does not refuse Benhadad from a place of acquired intestinal fortitude—with the words “I may not do,” he effectively shifts the blame to the elders. Benhadad's response was that he was going to annihilate Israel—grind them to dust. Finally, Ahab shows some semblance of courage (v. 11). This means “don't count your chickens before they hatch.”

Benhadad was not moved by his response. He and his 32 kings (tribal lords) were having a pre-victory party, getting drunk knowing full well that Israel was but a lamb for the slaughter. He told his soldiers to put on their armor and get ready for the win. Man proposes and God disposes.

The prophet of the Lord came to Ahab and told him that the Lord would give him the victory (v. 13). Then we have an interesting use of numbers. Benhadad had with him 32 kings. Ahab was to choose 232 servants. The rest of Israel's army was to number 7000 other men. Though it is not stated, it bears some consideration that the Lord had told Elijah that there were 7000 in Israel that had not bowed the knee to Baal. When word came to Benhadad that the Israelites approached he wasn't fazed. He was so confident of

victory that he was drunk by noon along with his 32 regal cohorts. He was so sure that the Israelites would cower like Ahab did that he told his warriors to take them alive (v. 18). Israel's army slew Benhadad's army man for man 7,232 and Ahab then pursued Syria with a great slaughter. Benhadad's bravado turned to mush and he and a few of his men went into hiding.

The prophet told Ahab that Benhadad would be back in a year to try again and to make preparation for that day. True to the Lord's words, Benhadad began to build his army again to go against Israel. He did so on the logic of his servants who had figured out why Israel had won the battles. The war counsel came up with what they thought was a brilliant strategy. The Israelites were all about the hills and mountains—Sinai, Carmel etc. Their gods must be the gods of the hills. Now there is some wise, intellectual calculation. All we have to do is make the battle in the valleys and victory will be ours. One man said that the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over again and expecting a different result. These servants had put the true God into their pantheon and had assigned to Him the attributes of their false deities. Since Babylon, men had sought a multiplicity of gods, one to cover every occasion—gods of hills and valleys, or rivers and seas, of fire and wind, of love and hate of war and peace. This is what Paul faced on Mars hill when face with the Greek fullness, he spoke to them of the true and living God to whom they had erected a (cover you bets) statue called the “Unknown God.” Romanism has replaced the pantheon with the saints for every possible equation of life. There is but one God and he will countenance no rivals (v. 28). Israel slew 100,000 in one day and Benhadad found

out that the God of Israel was the God of the hills and the valleys and most assuredly the God of war (Ex. 15:3; Ps. 24:1). The rest of Benhadad's army fled to Aphek and there 27,000 more were crushed when the wall of their refuge fell on them. God is also the God of walls evidently .

As I said before, two things are evident here. It is folly to go against God (Is 45 :5-9) and God will honor himself in spite of our weakness, cowardice and vacillation (Ezek. 36:32). What's a fellow to do? Hide from God. How do you do that? Hide in God!

WE HAVE HEARD

I Kings 20:31-34

31, And his servants said unto him, Behold now, we have heard that the kings of the house of Israel are merciful kings: let us, I pray thee, put sackcloth on our loins, and ropes upon our heads, and go out to the king of Israel: peradventure he will save thy life.

32, So they girded sackcloth on their loins, and put ropes on their heads, and came to the king of Israel, and said, Thy servant Benhadad saith, I pray thee, let me live. And he said, Is he yet alive? he is my brother.

33, Now the men did diligently observe whether any thing would come from him, and did hastily catch it: and they said, Thy brother Benhadad. Then he said, Go ye, bring him. Then Benhadad came forth to him; and he caused him to come up into the chariot.

34, And Benhadad said unto him, The cities, which my father took from thy father, I will restore; and thou shalt make streets for thee in Damascus, as my father made in Samaria. Then said Ahab, I will send thee away with this covenant. So he made a covenant with him, and sent him away.

As we saw last time, Benhadad was a picture of depravity and as such pictured every one of us as we are born into this world. Rebels all, we assume to know how God works and assign to him the areas of power (God of the hills, not the valleys) that we think we can overcome. The audacity of sinners is that they believe that there are areas where God is

not in control and therefore believe themselves able to rule in those areas. Sadly, this ultimately translates to deadly error in the matter of salvation and is the seed of that false damning notion that assumes that, finally, salvation is removed from the power of God except in the area of intent. He is the God hills (high, noble plans and good intentions of saving) but not the God of the valleys (where man's will reigns supreme)—so goes the track of men's thoughts.

Man will remain on that course unless or until he is brought to the place where he can do nothing, is nothing and realizes that the only thing that awaits him is a just and horrible death. Men do not seek mercy and life if they feel that they have any other option. If you are among the elect of God, the best place to be is at the end of your rope—all human hope long-gone and knowing because of what you are and what you have done, you should and must die. If you are not among the elect, the end of your rope is merely another bad place for you to be and though such dire circumstance may become a teaching moment, they will never eventuate in your salvation. The saving of a natural life, in scripture, does not necessarily result in salvation of the soul but in most cases point to and pictures the salvation of the soul as they represent man and women in a helpless estate seeking Christ as their last, their only hope.

I have often quoted the little axiom, “Man's extremities are God's opportunities.” It has a nice poetic ring to it but it is erroneous to the core. It suggests that God waits for opportunities and cannot really act except in the face of extremities. The very idea of God waiting for an opportunity, waiting for opportunity to knock is ridiculous. God creates His own opportunities. If He brings one down and suffers

him to pull himself up by the bootstraps to give him confidence in the flesh and damn his soul, that man is but a vessel made to destroy.

If however God brings one of His own down to the sloughs of despond it is always to bring him up to the glories of grace. God does not wait on an opportunity, He kills and He makes alive; he brings low and raises up; He takes the beggar from the dunghill and sets him among princes having created both places as the abode of His people until the appointed time of the revelation of their salvation. Circumstance and opportunity are men's words that help them explain what they cannot control. God's purpose and will create and control circumstance and opportunity, time and tide. Part of that great purpose of grace is that those who have been brought low by grace will seek mercy, camp at mercy's door and do so knowing that they, in no way deserve it (Abraham vision, Gen. 15: 12-14) As we look at this account of Benhadad's servants (and thus Benhadad) suing for mercy at the hand of King Ahab, we must set aside their collective characters, their respective ends and the fact that what Ahab does is in direct disobedience to God and look rather at their thoughts and actions as they picture a ruined sinner coming to Christ for mercy.

Benhadad's situation is dire (v. 30). He had sought to outwit God due to the false thinking of sin and had met with utter failure. His army decimated, he hides in a hole inside a hole. All he has is a few servants who are more of a burden than a blessing. He is a dead man—all that awaits him is starvation or falling in the hands of the enemy, which is sure death. If he thought otherwise, he would not be secreted in this ersatz tomb. Look at every sick sinner who comes to

Christ in the New Testament. They have tried all, spent all and are worse off than when they started. They come to Him hopeless, having nothing and without hope save that Christ will do what none other can (Leper, demoniac, woman with the issue, blind Bartimaeus). But in some cases it was not the sinner that pleaded for mercy. Their dilemma was so dire that they were as dead people (i.e. Jarius's daughter, the Syrophenician woman 's daughter, the man lowered through the ceiling). When Christ saw their faith he healed the sick. In this text we have both. It is the servants who ask Benhadad if they can approach the King on his behalf (v. 31). Should this not give us encouragement to pray for our children and our loved ones who we desire to know Christ.

They came up with this plan because they had heard a hopeful thing. Perspective changes when life is in jeopardy. Only one thing matters; life! These had heard that the kings of Israel were merciful kings. That's a ray of light in a dark place. Their kings and their gods were known for cruelty and anger, always in need of mollifying. The thought that a king, a God might be merciful suddenly becomes all that matters. But how shall he be approached? Shall we, as Jesse Jackson said to President Clinton that if you apologize it will obligate the offended to show mercy. No, that is but a revelation that Rev. Jackson has never needed or sought mercy. The core concept of seeking mercy involves two things. First is the knowledge that one cannot be obligated to show it. If received, it is utterly undeserved. Secondly, absolute sovereignty must be attributed to the one from whom mercy is sought. You must come as a dead man with the noose around your neck and your raiment, the beggar's rags. And you will not come unless, from a place of complete need, a

word of mercy is all you ever want or desire. Mercy is for ruined, hopeless, condemned sinners (v. 32).

In approaching and pleading for mercy the sinner looks for a word, a gesture to hang his hopes on (v. 33a). All sinners who come to Christ in faith do so believing that God is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him. What might cause such hope? What word might encourage a sinner to come to Christ for mercy. In this case the servants latched onto the word "brother." Can this be? Can one so wronged speak in such absolute familial terms. There is mighty grace at work here. Ahab is a cruel man, but here his mind is overcome and the word of his mouth is a word of mercy. "Is he alive, he is my brother." Ahab does not say, "Well, let him show me some repentance, let him work off his debt, if he come then I'll see if he is worthy of my help." Blessed Gospel this! The Gospel does not offer a way or a contingency plan whereby the sinner may deserve mercy or contribute to receiving it. When a ruined sinner hears the Gospel, he hears that Christ is his brother and is not ashamed to call him brother. The Gospel is a revelation of what is, not what might be. Is he alive, he is my brother!

Benhadad was immediately welcomed into the presence of the king (v. 33). The king did not invite Benhadad to come into his chariot; he caused him to (Ps. 65:4). Every sinner saved by grace has immediate access into the grace wherein he stands. There is no church council to determine his worthiness, of some watch care program to make sure he meets some ecclesiastical behavior condition. The Lord causes His brethren to come up into His chariot with complete, unbridled access (Heb. 10:19-23).

Finally, the king returns all that had been taken from Benhadad's father. The word "Benhadad" is in italics and though added by the translators, simply does not square with scripture (v. 34). It was Omri, Ahab's father that had taken the cities from Benhadad's heritage (1 Kings 16:16-18, 27). It was Ahab who returned these to Benhadad, which pictures Christ recovering for us all that lost in Adam and much more (Romans 5:9-10, 15, 17, 20).

Though this is a type, a picture of a sinner seeking and receiving mercy, there *is* something wrong here.

Ahab's merciful reaction to Benhadad was against the direct order of God to kill Benhadad and all that followed him. Benhadad is set free with promise but it leaves bad taste in the mouth because justice has not been served. Mercy only comes on the wings of satisfied justice and that by the substitutionary, propitiatory work of Christ for His people. But God, in a unique way reveals that His justice always gets its due. Look at verse 42. Here the Lord speaks to Ahab. Though the chronology is reversed, the concept of substitution and the satisfaction is clearly stated. You let this man go free whom I had appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life (John 18:7-9). To God be the glory!

SINFUL MERCY

I Kings 20:35-42

35, And a certain man of the sons of the prophets said unto his neighbour in the word of the LORD, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man refused to smite him. 36, Then said he unto him, Because thou hast not obeyed the voice of the LORD, behold, as soon as thou art departed from me, a lion shall slay thee. And as soon as he was departed from him, a lion found him, and slew him. 37, Then he found another man, and said, Smite me, I pray thee. And the man smote him, so that in smiting he wounded him. 38, So the prophet departed, and waited for the king by the way, and disguised himself with ashes upon his face. 39, And as the king passed by, he cried unto the king: and he said, Thy servant went out into the midst of the battle; and, behold, a man turned aside, and brought a man unto me, and said, Keep this man: if by any means he be missing, then shall thy life be for his life, or else thou shalt pay a talent of silver. 40, And as thy servant was busy here and there, he was gone. And the king of Israel said unto him, So shall thy judgment be; thyself hast decided it. 41, And he hasted, and took the ashes away from his face; and the king of Israel discerned him that he was of the prophets. 42, And he said unto him, Thus saith the LORD, Because thou hast let go out of thy hand a man whom I appointed to utter destruction, therefore thy life shall go for his life, and thy people for his people.

This passage declares, in no uncertain terms, an absolute Biblical principle. Though we viewed this last week as a

picture of a sinner seeking mercy and receiving it and saw that the issue of justice being executed is either in the perpetrator or a substitute, the principle still remains. Death is the penalty for sin and where sin is found punishment must be executed. We can go back to the garden and see that Adam died spiritually and began to die physically when he partook of what God had clearly prohibited. Paul made that point in very plain language when he said that the existence of death in the world is a proof that sin is in the world (Romans 5:12-14). The only truly complete display of the truth that the answer for sin is death is seen in Him who hung on the cross of Calvary. After or Lord suffered men to do their worst and then in 3 hours of darkness suffered the eternal punishment due the sin of the elect, He willingly freely gave up his life, was obedient unto death and answered the requirement of law and justice—sin's end must always be death. The only time in the history of the world that sins requirement was met was there on Calvary (Zech. 13 7). The eternal punishment of hell is a living and death and will never end because it can never satisfy justice. Only the perfect sacrifice dying in perfect obedience unto the prefect justice of the perfect Judge can put an end to sin. We rejoice in the substitutionary death of Christ because we know it means grace and mercy to us but to God, the righteous Judge, it means that justice is satisfied. Sin will, must be punished but only one death ever satisfied fully, the holiness of God—only one.

This absolute is typically displayed in this passage. All sin is disobedience to God. Men, as David did, may sin in diverse ways and sin against many of their peers (lust, adultery, conspiracy, murder) but David knew that all the

things he did, all the sin he committed was actually and only sin against God (Ps. 51:3-4). Ahab's sins were manifold and against many but his death will come because he disobeyed God. Benhadad was marked for death. God had told Ahab to kill him because he blasphemed God. Instead of killing him, Ahab showed him mercy and we see the principle even more fully elaborated—*mercy* is sin where justice is not satisfied. God himself would sin if He showed mercy without justice being executed. Ahab's mercy was sinful disobedience and blasphemy and cannot go unpunished. The false prophet cries “peace” when there is no peace. Peace was established, peace was made through the blood of the cross and all for whom peace was made were reconciled to God. There is no peace elsewhere. Those who believe and preach that Christ's death was but an effort to answer justice, commit the sin of Ahab—saying that God shows mercy and love and grace where justice has not been absolutely satisfied. Their mercy is sin. Ahab's death and eventually Benhadad's also, will but typify the fact that sin requires death. They are alive now; dying yet never dead in the fiery bowels of eternal perdition but their physical death declares that disobedience to God is death. This truth is thoroughly displayed here in this passage.

Like Nathan did with David, this prophet sets up and elaborate parable to trap Ahab with his own words. Ahab had let a man loose whom God had sentenced to death. Ahab is, at this time, basking in Israel's victory and congratulating himself in his own munificence and magnanimity—proud to think that he has mercifully disobeyed God. The prophet here is most likely Micaiah, because he, as we will see, like to spin a tale and particular

likes to mess with Ahab's head. It was probably this occasion that caused Ahab to toss Micaiah into jail and ultimately to slap Micaiah upside the head at a later date. Ahab will describe Micaiah as a prophet he hates because he never prophesies any good thing about him and it started right here.

Micaiah is going to pretend, before Ahab, to be a soldier that has received command from his captain to guard a prisoner. He is not to lose the prisoner upon pain of death or an extreme fine. He pulls this off by having a man wound him in the face and by wrapping his head and covering his face in ashes to disguise himself. It is because Ahab knew this prophet and that he disguised himself. He will ask Ahab what he should do because he has, because of lack of attention, has lost the man whom he was commanded to guard. Ahab tells him that he already knows the answer so he will have to pay the price for disobedience (vv. 37-40). When Ahab has hanged himself on the rope that Micaiah has given him, Micaiah reveals himself and declares that Ahab is the man and has condemned himself with his own words (vv. 41-42). Ahab must die because he has disobeyed God and his sinful disobedience must be punished with death.

But this principle is first proved in the death of another, most likely a prophet like Micaiah, and perhaps even a close acquaintance of Micaiah (vv. 35-36). This may seem harsh. I think it would to anyone. We might even be prone to show mercy in such a case but our mercy would be sin because it would come without justice being satisfied for this disobedience. In the matter of justice there is no mitigation, no extenuating circumstance. Disobedience requires, yea demands death. This man didn't want to harm his fellow.

Perhaps he had true affection for Micaiah and could not bring himself to smite him. But the Lord had commanded it and he disobeyed and became a lion's lunch. Why? The soul that sinneth, it shall die. There is no exception to this holy principle—ever!

How about some good news? We are commanded to love one another, to forgive one another of sin, to forbear with one another and be longsuffering with one another. We are told that with our brethren, love covers a multitude of sin. How can that be? Because justice has been satisfied for them. A death for sin has been recorded for them. Their sin has been paid for and their debt settled. We can be merciful because God has been propitiated by the substitution of Christ—substitution, satisfaction and imputation (2 Cor. 5:21). Good news indeed!

LAWFUL AND UNLAWFUL

I Kings 21

1, And it came to pass after these things, that Naboth the Jezreelite had a vineyard, which was in Jezreel, hard by the palace of Ahab king of Samaria. 2, And Ahab spake unto Naboth, saying, Give me thy vineyard, that I may have it for a garden of herbs, because it is near unto my house: and I will give thee for it a better vineyard than it; or, if it seem good to thee, I will give thee the worth of it in money. 3, And Naboth said to Ahab, The LORD forbid it me, that I should give the inheritance of my fathers unto thee. 4, And Ahab came into his house heavy and displeased because of the word which Naboth the Jezreelite had spoken to him: for he had said, I will not give thee the inheritance of my fathers. And he laid him down upon his bed, and turned away his face, and would eat no bread. 5, But Jezebel his wife came to him, and said unto him, Why is thy spirit so sad, that thou eatest no bread? 6, And he said unto her, Because I spake unto Naboth the Jezreelite, and said unto him, Give me thy vineyard for money; or else, if it please thee, I will give thee another vineyard for it: and he answered, I will not give thee my vineyard. 7, And Jezebel his wife said unto him, Dost thou now govern the kingdom of Israel? arise, and eat bread, and let thine heart be merry: I will give thee the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite. 8, So she wrote letters in Ahab's name, and sealed them with his seal, and sent the letters unto the elders and to the nobles that were in his city, dwelling with Naboth. 9, And she wrote in the letters, saying, Proclaim a fast, and set Naboth

on high among the people: 10, And set two men, sons of Belial, before him, to bear witness against him, saying, Thou didst blaspheme God and the king. And then carry him out, and stone him, that he may die. 11, And the men of his city, even the elders and the nobles who were the inhabitants in his city, did as Jezebel had sent unto them, and as it was written in the letters which she had sent unto them. 12, They proclaimed a fast, and set Naboth on high among the people. 13, And there came in two men, children of Belial, and sat before him: and the men of Belial witnessed against him, even against Naboth, in the presence of the people, saying, Naboth did blaspheme God and the king. Then they carried him forth out of the city, and stoned him with stones, that he died. 14, Then they sent to Jezebel, saying, Naboth is stoned, and is dead. 15, And it came to pass, when Jezebel heard that Naboth was stoned, and was dead, that Jezebel said to Ahab, Arise, take possession of the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, which he refused to give thee for money: for Naboth is not alive, but dead. 16, And it came to pass, when Ahab heard that Naboth was dead, that Ahab rose up to go down to the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite, to take possession of it. 17, And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 18, Arise, go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, which is in Samaria: behold, he is in the vineyard of Naboth, whither he is gone down to possess it. 19, And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, Hast thou killed, and also taken possession? And thou shalt speak unto him, saying, Thus saith the LORD, In the place where dogs licked the blood of Naboth shall dogs lick thy blood, even thine. 20, And Ahab said to Elijah, Hast thou found

me, O mine enemy? And he answered, I have found thee: because thou hast sold thyself to work evil in the sight of the LORD. 21, Behold, I will bring evil upon thee, and will take away thy posterity, and will cut off from Ahab him that pisseth against the wall, and him that is shut up and left in Israel, 22, And will make thine house like the house of Jeroboam the son of Nebat, and like the house of Baasha the son of Ahijah, for the provocation wherewith thou hast provoked me to anger, and made Israel to sin. 23, And of Jezebel also spake the LORD, saying, The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. 24, Him that dieth of Ahab in the city the dogs shall eat; and him that dieth in the field shall the fowls of the air eat. 25, But there was none like unto Ahab, which did sell himself to work wickedness in the sight of the LORD, whom Jezebel his wife stirred up. 26, And he did very abominably in following idols, according to all things as did the Amorites, whom the LORD cast out before the children of Israel. 27, And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28, And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

Once again, Ahab and his wife Jezebel prove themselves to be the poster kids for total depravity. They are examples of religion without Christ, of idolatry and of the unlawful use of the law and a source of uncomfortable recollection of every believer. Paul told Timothy of men who used the law

unlawfully whose design was to do away with the successful work of Christ and bring those who had been forgiven back under the bondage of sin and guilt. For false religion, the law is a convenient tool to accuse or excuse behavior. The realm of the law is sin so those who employ it unlawfully can only and do only address behavior. The illegal use of the law is manifest in many ways. For example, men who would exalt themselves pick a particular aspect in which they might excel and make that law important. Some use the law to trick people as in the case of the Pharisees when that asked Christ if the harlot should be stoned or which was the greatest law. Other use the law to excuse themselves of guilt as did the priests did when they refused to take the money back that they had given to Judas to betray Christ. They had paid Judas to bear false witness and then said the money was blood money which was illegal for them to receive. The law is one thing, whether it come in the form of command or edict or it comes in rite or ceremony where a sacrifice. is offered. The law simply, concisely and precisely says that the sinner must die. To use it or to teach it in any way as a motivation to good behavior and as an accomplisher in any form of righteousness except for self righteousness which the law summarily condemns with the sentence of death, is to abuse it. But this does not stop wicked religion from employing the law for personal gain and this is what is before us in this passage in several manifestations.

After just about every encounter with the prophet we see Ahab going into some kind of blue funk. In the last verse of the previous chapter, Ahab, after he had been told that he would die because he has released Benhadad walks away sad and discouraged. In this chapter we find him once again

his old self, feeling kingly, and figuring that what he sees he has a right to possess. He sets his eyes on the vineyard belonging to Naboth. There does not seem to be any evil business behavior on the part of Ahab. He offers to buy the vineyard or to trade for it with a greater piece of property. This seems like good business. What he was doing was against the law. It was unlawful for a Jew to sell his property to anyone. It was his inheritance from the Lord and even if the owner became impoverished and had to pawn his land, it was freely returned to him in the year of Jubilee. For Ahab to seek to buy this vineyard was against the law. Naboth knew that he could not legally sell his land and said to Ahab “The Lord forbid it to me” (v. 3 see: Lev. 23:25). Rather than accepting the fact, Ahab got all-sullen and collapsed into the sulking mode, refusing to speak to anyone and even refusing to eat. The essential mark and cardinal trait of depravity is *self*. One said that the opposite of love is not hate; it is self. Ego-centrism is easily understood in children, but the fact is that apart from grace, all that adults do is seek to perfect ways of *self gratification*. It began in the garden with Adam blaming the woman that God gave him for his sin. He was saving himself because the world was ultimately his oyster and all circumstance was about him. Ahab didn't get what he wanted and had himself a pity party. Naboth had honored God in refusing to do what God had forbidden. Ahab had transgressed the law in seeking to possess what could not be lawfully his.

What follows is a course in the unlawful use of the law. The teacher in this course is Jezebel and she is well versed in the subject matter. She has a MBSCSDD in the subject. After she sees her husband in the whining mode, wallowing

in self-pity, she berates him and tells him that the law doesn't apply to him. He is the king and he needs to start acting like it. She tells him to cheer up because she will give him that vineyard. You can't give what you don't possess so it stands to reason she believed that Naboth's vineyard already belonged to her. It was her's to give (vv. 5-7). Depravity has its core in the concept of entitlement.

How can she use the law to get that vineyard? Well, if Naboth is dead and he has no heirs, the land can be claimed for the realm. Naboth has some sons and the record in Chronicles is that she had them put to death also. She can't just go out and murder them. She has to appear to put them to death legally. The first thing to do is stir up the people. She sends out letters and calls for a fast. This was not a fast of hunger but of adjudicating some wrong or some transgression. It was an open public court. Doing this always produced in the people a sense of anticipation that some wrong had been done and somebody is going to get their come-uppings. This practice of public trial for differences among believers is forbidden in 1 Cor. 6. But under the covenant of law and works it was a common thing and had a common result among the populace (Crowe—if he's arrested must be guilty).

Though the law forbids false witness against your neighbor it also requires that a legal matter cannot be settled except in the face of two or three witnesses. So many decisions—so little time. Jezebel liked the sound of the latter better. She actually hires two false witness to establish that Naboth is guilty of blasphemy, a crime punishable by death. She unlawfully uses the law to get Naboth out of the picture.

She transgresses one law and unlawfully uses another to get the job done. She is a multitasking transgressor (vv. 8-14).

Her treachery, her disregard for life and for the law (except when it served her purpose) got her gift for her husband. Ahab was now the proud owner of Naboth's vineyard (vv. 15-16). This same tactic was used by the law-lovers to accuse our Lord and his servant Stephen. Even Saul went out and wreaked havoc on the church with letters from the lawyers to do so. Even in the misuse of the law in all these instances, the end result is the same—when the law is employed all that can result is death (Romans 3:19-20 ; I Cor. 15:56). Remember that our Lord fulfilled the law by willingly dying under its curse (Gal. 3; 13). The law employed lawfully or unlawfully always has the same result—death. Life exists where the law has no ground to accuse and therefore has no function (Gal. 3:21).

Ahab is about to find out the result of the lawful use of the Law. The Lord sends Elijah to Ahab to tell him the result of the evil he has done (v. 17-19). Ahab's response is instructive. He calls Elijah and the law he brings as his enemy (v. 20). The law has no friends because all have sinned and come short of the glory of God. Those who seek to bring a believer under the law are not friends but enemies because the law is against men. Our Lord was declared to have rid us of our enemy when He died on the cross for us (Col. 2:13-15). Note well that Elijah is willing to wear that title—enemy (v. 20b).

Ahab had sold himself to sin and evil. He had gained the world and lost his soul. The judgment is just (vv. 24). His claim to fame is the title of treachery, the accolade of ignominy, the placard of perfidy, the epitaph insidiousness

(vv. 25- 26). The law can be used lawfully or unlawfully but it is always the pale rider whose name is death and hell.

REGRET

I Kings 21:27-29

27, And it came to pass, when Ahab heard those words, that he rent his clothes, and put sackcloth upon his flesh, and fasted, and lay in sackcloth, and went softly. 28, And the word of the LORD came to Elijah the Tishbite, saying, 29, Seest thou how Ahab humbleth himself before me? because he humbleth himself before me, I will not bring the evil in his days: but in his son's days will I bring the evil upon his house.

This the account of Ahab's response to the word of the Lord concerning the destruction of his house and all his posterity because of his shameful idolatry and his causing of Israel to sin likewise. It is also the account of God viewing Ahab humbling himself and responding with a reprieve concerning the destruction of his house in his time or while he lived and rather postponing it until after his death. This postponement or reprieve has nothing to do with the promise and manner of Ahab's death. He will die as God has said, at the appointed time and in the ordained manner and the dogs will lap up his blood.

This outward show of humiliation would be called, has been called by many to be repentance. There are many things that reveal that Ahab's repentance, so called, never went past that of a change of behavior or a temporary reformation born of sorrow and regret that he got caught and was exposed. There is no indication that he regretted the

acts of Jezebel in the murder of Naboth or the thievery that gained him that dead man's vineyard. There is no rebuke of Jezebel and there is no record of the return of the vineyard. Things that attend repentance such as Godly sorry, or sorrow toward God or conviction of sin in light of the Gospel or something that touches the heart or flows from it are not evident in the life of Ahab.

In the very next chapter we will find him up to his old tricks, not in sackcloth and ashes but in regal resplendence consulting with the 400 prophets of Baal. All that really changed was his behavior and that, very temporarily. But under the Old Covenant the concept of true repentance did not exist. It was a conditional covenant and blessing or cursing depended on individual personal obedience or disobedience. Reprieves or pardons were given when regret was shown or when one turned from his wicked ways and changed his behavior.

In the Old Testament there are two words that are interpreted as repent. All but three times the word used means regret or sorrow or ruing the day that one was caught in some wicked doing. The other three times the word means turn, or return. It is the same word that throughout the Old Testament is translated turn or return. The word "repentance" is found only once in the Old Testament, in Hosea, and it is one of the three times the word "turn" or "return" is used. Ahab did what he did to express sorrow or regret but had he not been caught, he would have never acted in this manner and this is proven by his refusal to rebuke his wife and his hasty return to the counsel of the false prophets.

Had his regret been for the evil he had done, his sackcloth and ashes would have been attended with recompense or some effort at compensation for his deed. With Ahab we have a picture of the human reaction to fear of loss or fear of censure, neither of which could be construed as true repentance. It was not driven by guilt or conviction but rather by self preservation and a belief that he could remedy his situation by doing something that would, under the OC, recommend him to God or obligate God to forgive him. Most of what is called repentance in the religion of this day, as it has been throughout the ages, is akin to OC repentance and can be equated with reformation, turning over a new leaf, getting religion or straightening up and flying right. It has nothing to do with the spirit, the heart or the mind but rather with behavior.

In truth, we ought to be glad when men change from being hindrances to lawful behavior and become law-abiding citizens. It is certainly better for society in general. However changing behavior is not true repentance though true repentance does result in changing behavior. The fact is, our carnal nature believes that a change in behavior recommends us to God's even possibly obligates God to bless us. True repentance has nothing to do with gaining something from God. It flows from the benevolence of God and in fact is granted in the Gospel as it is applied to the heart of the elect by the spirit through the preaching of the Gospel. True repentance is granted by God and is a realization that nothing you are and nothing you do or do not do recommends you to God (Luke 18:10-14).

Repentance is preached throughout the New Testament. Our Lord's last words on the earth addressed the necessity

of preaching repentance and remission of sins. Neither of these is accomplished by men. Both are results of the work of Christ and understood as the Gospel is received (Lk. 24:26-27, 44-48).

What then is New Testament repentance? There is one word in the original that is translated repentance throughout the New Testament. That one word means one thing. Repentance in the New Testament means a change of the mind. This is the work of God in the new creation. It is a new mind and the change is radical. It is that mind that minds the things of the spirit and not of the things of the flesh. Though it may result in a change of outward behavior, true repentance is as invisible as is faith. There is no evidence that may be applied to repentance that can be seen of men. It has to do with the mind. I can't see your mind and you can't see mine.

Repentance is a radical change of mind because it is recognition and an understanding of precisely what recommends us to God. The radical aspect of it is that recommendation has nothing to do with us, our ability, our doing, our trying, our behavior, our prayers, attendance, giving, or even our believing. It is the mind, the mind-set, the absolute knowledge that Christ alone recommends us to God. He, as our wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption is the only recommendation we have. It is a guard-post; a roadblock that put the skids on our notions that we do stuff that recommends us to God. Sadly, we seek to skirt the roadblock often. We know and would disavow any notion that our sin would recommend us to God. However we inwardly hold that the religious things we do somehow count. ..that character and conduct must

recommend us to God. The radical change of mind is that when our delusions of righteousness rear their ugly heads, graciously, this new mind that God has put in us turns our eyes to Christ and causes us to confess that it is He alone that recommends us to God. This is repentance, true repentance—a state of mind that checks our forays into the flesh, not by changing our behavior but by making us to remember and to know that our behavior is nothing more than changeable behavior and can change again with the next wind that blows. The only one who cannot and does not ever change is God and it is He who granted us this radical change of mind. His gifts and his callings are without repentance.

Ahab abased his body, altered his appearance and changed his posture and as soon as he found that punishment was not immediate he returned to his former behavior (Ecc. 8:11). True repentance looks to Christ and declares that salvation is of the Lord.

AHAB 'S END

I Kings 22:1-40

1, And they continued three years without war between Syria and Israel. 2, And it came to pass in the third year, that Jehoshaphat the king of Judah came down to the king of Israel. 3, And the king of Israel said unto his servants, Know ye that Ramoth in Gilead is ours, and we be still, and take it not out of the hand of the king of Syria? 4, And he said unto Jehoshaphat, Wilt thou go with me to battle to Ramothgilead? And Jehoshaphat said to the king of Israel, I am as thou art, my people as thy people, my horses as thy horses. 5, And Jehoshaphat said unto the king of Israel, Enquire, I pray thee, at the word of the LORD to day. 6, Then the king of Israel gathered the prophets together, about four hundred men, and said unto them, Shall I go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall I forbear? And they said, Go up; for the Lord shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 7, And Jehoshaphat said, Is there not here a prophet of the LORD besides, that we might enquire of him? 8, And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, There is yet one man, Micaiah the son of Imlah, by whom we may enquire of the LORD: but I hate him; for he doth not prophesy good concerning me, but evil. And Jehoshaphat said, Let not the king say so. 9, Then the king of Israel called an officer, and said, Hasten hither Micaiah the son of Imlah. 10, And the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah sat each on his throne, having put on their robes, in a void place in the entrance of the gate of Samaria; and all the prophets prophesied before them. 11, And Zedekiah the son of

Chenaanah made him horns of iron: and he said, Thus saith the LORD, With these shalt thou push the Syrians, until thou have consumed them. 12, And all the prophets prophesied so, saying, Go up to Ramothgilead, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the king's hand. 13, And the messenger that was gone to call Micaiah spake unto him, saying, Behold now, the words of the prophets declare good unto the king with one mouth: let thy word, I pray thee, be like the word of one of them, and speak that which is good. 14, And Micaiah said, As the LORD liveth, what the LORD saith unto me, that will I speak. 15, So he came to the king. And the king said unto him, Micaiah, shall we go against Ramothgilead to battle, or shall we forbear? And he answered him, Go, and prosper: for the LORD shall deliver it into the hand of the king. 16, And the king said unto him, How many times shall I adjure thee that thou tell me nothing but that which is true in the name of the LORD? 17, And he said, I saw all Israel scattered upon the hills, as sheep that have not a shepherd: and the LORD said, These have no master: let them return every man to his house in peace. 18, And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, Did I not tell thee that he would prophesy no good concerning me, but evil? 19, And he said, Hear thou therefore the word of the LORD: I saw the LORD sitting on his throne, and all the host of heaven standing by him on his right hand and on his left. 20, And the LORD said, Who shall persuade Ahab, that he may go up and fall at Ramothgilead? And one said on this manner, and another said on that manner. 21, And there came forth a spirit, and stood before the LORD, and said, I will persuade him. 22, And the LORD said unto him, Wherewith? And he said, I will go forth, and I will be a lying

spirit in the mouth of all his prophets. And he said, Thou shalt persuade him, and prevail also: go forth, and do so. 23, Now therefore, behold, the LORD hath put a lying spirit in the mouth of all these thy prophets, and the LORD hath spoken evil concerning thee. 24, But Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah went near, and smote Micaiah on the cheek, and said, Which way went the Spirit of the LORD from me to speak unto thee? 25, And Micaiah said, Behold, thou shalt see in that day, when thou shalt go into an inner chamber to hide thyself. 26, And the king of Israel said, Take Micaiah, and carry him back unto Amon the governor of the city, and to Joash the king's son; 27, And say, Thus saith the king, Put this fellow in the prison, and feed him with bread of affliction and with water of affliction, until I come in peace. 28, And Micaiah said, If thou return at all in peace, the LORD hath not spoken by me. And he said, Hearken, O people, every one of you. 29, So the king of Israel and Jehoshaphat the king of Judah went up to Ramothgilead. 30, And the king of Israel said unto Jehoshaphat, I will disguise myself, and enter into the battle; but put thou on thy robes. And the king of Israel disguised himself, and went into the battle. 31, But the king of Syria commanded his thirty and two captains that had rule over his chariots, saying, Fight neither with small nor great, save only with the king of Israel. 32, And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots saw Jehoshaphat, that they said, Surely it is the king of Israel. And they turned aside to fight against him: and Jehoshaphat cried out. 33, And it came to pass, when the captains of the chariots perceived that it was not the king of Israel, that they turned back from pursuing him. 34, And a certain man drew a bow at a

venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded. 35, And the battle increased that day: and the king was stayed up in his chariot against the Syrians, and died at even: and the blood ran out of the wound into the midst of the chariot. 36, And there went a proclamation throughout the host about the going down of the sun, saying, Every man to his city, and every man to his own country. 37, So the king died, and was brought to Samaria; and they buried the king in Samaria. 38, And one washed the chariot in the pool of Samaria; and the dogs licked up his blood; and they washed his armour; according unto the word of the LORD which he spake. 39, Now the rest of the acts of Ahab, and all that he did, and the ivory house which he made, and all the cities that he built, are they not written in the book of the chronicles of the kings of Israel? 40, So Ahab slept with his fathers; and Ahaziah his son reigned in his stead.

This is one of my favorite accounts in the Old Testament. I admit that it appeals to my love of satire as a tool of language and the courage of this prophet of God in deriding the false prophets that outnumbered him four hundred to one. I was going to entitle this message "Don't go Hatin' on the preacher" because much of this story is about Ahab's hatred for this lone prophet. In fact when the prophet is summoned he is in jail for telling Ahab things he did not want to hear, and after he tells the truth, he winds up in jail again.

This is the record of the fulfillment of the prophecy that Ahab's life would be taken for the life of Benhadad whom Ahab had spared in direct disobedience to God's command. This is the record of Ahab's end (20:42).

About 3 years have passed since Ahab's ersatz repentance. Since sentence has not been quickly executed, Ahab has returned to his old ways. He has put the words of Elijah far from his mind and is once again seeking counsel from those he has paid to tell him what he wants to hear (What do you preach? What do you want to hear?).

Ahab's desire to take Ramoth-gilead is not necessarily a bad one. Ramothgilead was one of the cities of refuge and rightfully belonged to Israel. In order to more probably insure victory, Ahab asks Jehoshaphat, king of Judah for assistance. Jehoshaphat, King of Judah had, at this time, made peace with Ahab and when asked was willing to join with Ahab in the battle. However, Jehoshaphat, being a good king and doing what was right in the eyes of God, desired a word from the Lord before he went to battle against Assyria. Ahab sought to oblige him and called out his and Jezebels' 400 false prophets to get a word from the Lord. The lord of these prophets was Baal. Though they gave a favorable report, Jehoshaphat knew that they were Baal's buffoons and asked Ahab, in a very kind way, if there was not one prophet of the LORD (Jehovah) that they might inquire of. Elijah and Elisha were not around, and the only prophet available was in prison because Ahab hated him. But to assuage Jehoshaphat 's concerns, Ahab gets Micaiah out of jail. The messenger sent to release Micaiah told him what the prophets of Baal had said (go for it King, you'll win) and encouraged Micaiah to go with the flow. So Micaiah agrees

with the 400, and immediately, Ahab knows that he is not telling him the truth. When Micaiah tells Ahab the truth, Ahab gets mad because it is not what he wants to hear. Micaiah derides the false prophets and gets slapped in the face and tossed back in the slammer for it. But His prophecy is fulfilled and Ahab is killed and the dogs licked his blood. That's the gist of the story but the particulars teach many things that relate to the preaching of the Gospel and religions response to it.

The first thing that is plainly evident is that false religion requires theater and visual aids. When the Kings had gathered in the hall, dressed in their regal finery to get the word from the prophets as to whether they should go to war, they were in for some entertainment. The head prophet had some antlers made of iron and he held tern on his head and acted as if he were a bull in a china shop. While he was plowing through the imaginary enemy he proclaimed that this is what Ahab would do to his enemies, promising absolute victory (vv. 11-12). What these prophets did was not about telling the truth. It was about keeping their job and securing it with a big show. Whether anyone remembered what they said is irrelevant—the show was impressive. It had charisma and made folks feel good even though they were lying through their teeth and were promising what they could not produce. They played to the ego of Ahab who was more that willing to receive accolades about his presumed prowess than hear the truth. Sound familiar?

Secondly, the desire of the false prophet is to have the preacher of the Gospel to go along just to get along (v. 13). Over the years folks have asked me and some of the congregation why it is that Sequoyah doesn't join in with the

religious and political endeavors along with the rest of the community. They usually say things like we all believe the same God or are headed to the same place. What really gets me is exactly what took place in this passage. What was the false prophet actually asking of Micaiah? He was asking him not to speak the truth but rather to simply agree with the majority decision. Join up with us, get along with us—just don't tell what you believe. The only problem is that there is a very elemental difference between life and death and this is precisely what is at stake. It is not some truth that sets men free it is *the* truth that sets men free. Men perish for lack of love for the truth. Men only believe *after* they have heard the word of truth. The souls of men are turned to merchandise when the popular lie is put forth as the way to glory. The Gospel settles the things of eternity for those that hear it (Savor of life and death). A doctor who prescribes a band-aid for a brain tumor should be hounded out of the profession—he is not a doctor he is a murderer.

Thirdly, it is sometimes the job of the preacher to answer a fool according to his folly. Micaiah knew some things. He knew that Ahab hated him because he was always at odds with Ahab's hireling clergy. He knew that Ahab hated the truth and preferred to have his ego stroked by his prophets but at the same time Ahab knew that Micaiah always told him the truth. Ahab had a strange measure when it came to preachers. He knew if it made him mad it was the truth and he didn't want to hear it. He opted to believe the lie. So Micaiah, in a clever piece of linguistic license agrees with the false prophets (v. 15). He knew that Ahab would not believe him but did what he did to show Ahab his folly (I can believe that flower is God—go ahead then).

Fourthly, false teachers understand the truth, they just know that it will not work for their agenda and so they will die rather than face the censure of men (if I preached that I'd lose my job or split up the church). Ahab knew the truth. He knew that his life was at stake because God had told him that he would die. But understanding the truth, if it costs you what you are not willing to give up, will be cast aside or that which is more convenient. Those pulpit denizens who claim not to comprehend or claim confusion concerning the truth of salvation by grace alone are lying. They understand that the truth would cost them their ministry and they ain't willing to pay that price (v. 16). Ahab was hoisted on his own petard. He loved the lie, demanded the truth and refused to recognize the consequence.

Fifthly, when the truth is heard it makes the lie-lover fit to be tied (vv. 17-18). Don't ask a Gospel preacher to tell you what he preaches unless you want to hear it. Folks don't really want the truth, they want someone to tell them that they are safe in their unbelief or in the false teaching. Ahab wants a victory at Ramoth gilead and Micaiah has just told him that he was not going to make it off the battlefield and that he was the only one who was gonna die that day. Ahab preferred what the prophets of Baal offered up.

Finally, for this part of the study, the preacher of the truth has no compunction about holding false prophets in derision. The story that Micaiah told in vv. 19-23 could not have taken place. God neither take or asks counsel from anyone. Scripture declares that He put no trust in angels. Micaiah's story is a parable to reveal the false prophet's to be the liars that they are. His words are a real piece of literary genius (Exp).

EFFECTUAL

I Kings 22:34

34, And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.

The man Ahab, the king of Israel, as we have seen, is an exemplar of total depravity. He continued in the idolatry of his father's, worshipping the golden calves, continuing to mix the worship of God with the worship of Baal and Ashtaroath, refusing to tear down the groves and the high places where every manner of debauchery was committed under the guise of worship. He had no concern for human life, not even flinching when his wife had Naboth killed to acquire him a vineyard. Even in the face of God's mighty hand he showed no sense of his own guilt as God shut up the heavens for 3½ years and as he witnessed the fire from heaven on Carmel. He was not moved when 430 prophets of Baal cried and wailed to no avail and he sat mute as Elijah summarily slaughtered the false prophets. He was intractable in his rebellion and only made a show of repentance when he got caught. After a brief foray into sackcloth and ashes, he immediately returned to his old ways in his fatal pursuit of Ramoth gilead. His nominal repentance (outward acts of contrition-rededication) bought him some time as God gave his family a temporary reprieve in judgment. His repentance was Old Testament repentance,

which under that conditional covenant was accepted and for the offender, recommended him to God. New Testament repentance, which has nothing to do with acts of contrition or anything visible, is the heart and mind recognition, and acknowledgement, that the only thing that recommends us to God is Christ and Him crucified. Old Testament repentance never reaches the mind and heart but rather addresses behavior and visible manifestations of humiliation (acting contrite, voluntary humility). As vile and rebellious as Ahab was, he is but a mirror of our selves as we are born in this world in our carnal depravity and his demise is not one whit different that any one of us, by nature, deserves. We have seen the enemy and it is us.

In our text tonight we come to the end of Ahab. He is going to be square with the house. It is his life for Benhadad's, and his rebellious reign will come to an end with the dogs will lapping up his hemoglobin. "The wages of sin is death." "The soul that sinneth it will die." Justice will have its pound of flesh.

Ahab has sought to escape the execution of his sentence by dressing in the garb of the common soldier. He has instructed Jehoshaphat to dress in regal array painting a target of the king of Judah's back. That plan fails when Jehoshaphat cries to God and is delivered. And we have this brief, concise report of how this king, met his promised, appointed end. He has, in his mind, dodged the bullets many times. He has taken refuge in the lies of the four hundred false prophets and hidden in falsehoods while rejecting the true counsel of the one prophet that told him the truth. His false prophets will soon be looking for holes to hide in and Ahab will soon be "a gone Jesse." The brevity of this account

is its beauty; its succinctness is its strength. “And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness: wherefore he said unto the driver of his chariot, Turn thine hand, and carry me out of the host; for I am wounded.” And there you have it, no frills, no ifs, no ands—no buts.

This account begins with “a certain man.” This is an intriguing little phrase often employed in Holy Writ. It can be basically taken in three ways. First it can be taken as every man and every man is an instrument in the hands of the Sovereign God. Humanity is God's property and every man woman and child serves Him in His grand scheme of the salvation of the elect (Dan. 4:35). Men act according to their corrupt nature and depraved will and all the while they serve the Almighty in His great purpose (Acts 4:28). This certain man is one of God's instruments. Secondly, “a certain man” can be taken a particular, specific man whose use is specified in the context that we find him. Thirdly “a certain man” can be taken to mean no man in particular, one who, among many, is present at a given occasion. Seeing that God holds the reigns in every scenario, any or all of the three would apply to this “certain man.” This certain man, whether every man, a specific man or any man or no man of consequence is any instrument employed to fulfill the judgment against Ahab.

This “certain man” drew a bow at a venture. This is like that little children's poem “I shot an arrow in the air, it fell to earth I know not where.” He drew a bow at a venture. He drew no bead on any target. In the throes of battle engagement, he drew the quarrel from his quiver and loosed it into the fray. “At a venture” is language fit for human

beings. It might well be rendered “on a chance.” That is a word employed by impotent humanity to designate a thing to be outside their control. But venture or chance is not outside any control, just man's control (Ecc. 9:11). What men call a venture is but the mystery of the secret of sovereign providence employing all things to bring the elect of God to their expected end.

That arrow was a guided missile. This bullet had a name on it. It was a predestined projectile of prophecy, a dart destined for the heart of the king and with ballistic accuracy, outside the pale of science and technology, it pierced the bosom of Benhadad's benefactor (20:42). So Ahab dies. His reign ends and he is buried with his fathers while the dogs lick his blood in the street.

In this “certain man” and his act and its result we do not have to stretch our imaginations to see the efficaciousness of the Gospel. Whether text or context the scriptures, the written word is about the true and living Word (John 5:39; Luke 24). In type and picture the “certain man” is the preacher of the Gospel (in pulpit or pew). He is everyman, a specific man, any man and no man of consequence. He is described in scripture as a voice, a noise, the chief of sinners, the least of all saints, a son of thunder who, before the cock crows, will deny Christ thrice. He is anything but special yet the words he speaks are matters of life and death. You will not hear of Christ without one (Rom. 10). He is a dirt pot in whom God has invested eternal treasure. He is the definitive example that salvation is by grace and grace alone. He and his preaching is foolishness to the world, but it is through that foolishness of preaching that God saves them that believe.

He has but one arrow in his quiver and one string on his guitar. That arrow is the Gospel and though he is looking for lost sinners, the sheep, the elect, he draws his bow at a venture, loosing it into the crowd. He has no idea of the results of his action. He knows that it will be a savor of life or death, but he likewise knows that the results have nothing to do with him. What he does, in theological terms, is described as a general call. He preaches, as it were, to dead men relying on the Spirit to breathe upon the dead bones, to take the things of Christ and reveal them to the elect. However, that general call, that bow drawn at a venture, that arrow shot into the fray is in the hands of Him who “doeth all things after the counsel of His own will.” The general call (the preaching of the Gospel) does not differ from the effectual call in essence. It differs in application as its results lie solely and entirely in the intent and design of the Majesty on High.

It will hit the mark and produce the predestinated result and the Bowman is unaware of the mark it hit or even if anyone was hit. He will have no award ceremony or receive a medal though it was his arrow that pierced and ended the career of the royal rebel. He would remain nameless and faceless, without pedigree, without title, without recognition. Aiming at nothing, aiming at everything unbeknownst to him the arrow he looses hits the precise mark between the joints of the harness, into the marrow of the ersatz monarch (Heb. 4 :12-13).

And the sinner dies. He dies the death or he dies to the death but he dies. He dies in self or to self, but he dies (Col. 3). There must be death for sin in the sinner or the substitute. We meet and pray and preach the apostles'

doctrine and break bread and the Lord adds to the church, daily, them that should be saved. And all we can say is “to God be the glory”.

“And a certain man drew a bow at a venture, and smote the king of Israel between the joints of the harness.”